

## 2008 Environment Calendar

The United Nations has declared 2008 the International Year of Planet Earth. Some dates to celebrate, be aware of, promote the values of .....over the next five months.

21 March	World Forestry Day
22 March	World Water Day
22 April	Earth Day
26 April	22 <sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Chernobyl, when a power surge caused explosions that blew the top off a nuclear reactor, with 10,000 deaths, 3.5 million ill as a result
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity
23 May	World Turtle Day
5 June	World Environment Day – established 1972
8 June	World Ocean Day, set at the 1992 World Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro
17 June	World Day to Combat Desertification, to draw attention to the efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable development and reach the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals
25 July	Schools Tree Day – first celebrated in 1890
27 July	National Tree Day – last year 290,000 volunteers planted 1.2 million native plants in Australia

### 2 Months to go...

**Caboolture Sustainable Living Expo** - Saturday 17 May 2008 - for more information contact **Wayne** at CREEC Phone - 3888 8751

*This newsletter is produced and distributed by volunteers. We believe in its value in communicating information to members of our community who are interested in the environment and the work of CREEC. Contributions welcome*

*We thank the Caboolture Shire Council for their assistance.*

Please recycle this newsletter by passing it to friends or neighbours.



Caboolture Region  
Environmental  
Education Centre

**This Newsletter is  
on the web at  
[www.creec.org.au](http://www.creec.org.au)**

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**March  
2008**

## Caboolture Sustainable Living Expo

**Saturday 17 May at CREEC 9am - 3pm**

The Sustainable Living Expo is a gold coin donation annual event held at the Caboolture Region Environmental Education Centre.

Each year the Friends of CREEC Assoc. Inc. transforms the Centre into a hive of activity. As they showcase, this one day Expo provides information and products to help people from Caboolture and the surrounding regions improve the environment and social impacts of their day-to-day living.

The 2008 Expo will feature over 100 exhibitors of products, services and information, along with activities on a variety of sustainability and green living topics. Attractions will include talks, displays, food, entertainment, demonstrations and activities for children.

The theme for 2008 is **'Sustainability in the Suburbs'** and will concentrate on providing information and ideas that can be utilised at home.

The Expo will be held in conjunction with the **'Organic & Natural Living Festival'** which will incorporate **'The Market Place'**. Both of these NEW areas will serve to showcase organisations that provide products, services, resources and information for Expo visitors.

For more information, phone CREEC on 3888-8751.

## Welcome and Congratulations

Welcome to all new councillors and Mayor of the Moreton Bay Regional Council.

We hope you will take an interest in the Caboolture Region Environmental Education Centre and its activities, especially the Sustainable Living Expo on Saturday 17 May 2008.

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## Snow Geese

*From article by Phil McKenna*

Off the coast of Siberia, Wrangle Island has had a Russian weather station since 1928. Mean annual temperature increased 2 degrees between 1970 and 2005, consistent with average temperature changes throughout the Arctic. The breeding season for snow geese starts as soon as the snow pack melts and the goslings need to be on the wing, heading towards Canada and USA, before winter returns. Breeding is commencing 5-7 days earlier than in the 1970s, resulting in large increases in population.

Instead of spreading across California, it is now warm enough to spend the winter in Washington State – the population there has doubled to 83,000 in the last 10 years. They eat farmer's pastures and young grain crops. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife has paid farmers to plant wheat and rye to try to lure geese away from other farms. Canada geese have now joined the snow geese for the annual festival. The hunting season has been extended by two weeks this year, A case of global warming coming home to roost?

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## Shark Attack

*Based on article by Joe Dupree*

In 2006, four people died from 62 shark attacks around the world. We killed 73 million sharks, many of them just for their fins. Over the last 50 years, devastating declines in shark populations have occurred, having disastrous effects on marine food chains in every ocean on the planet. Without the top predators, the system gets out of balance. Having an image problem is really bad for creatures considered to be on the "functionally extinct" list.

## Global Warming

What will happen to polar bears when the Arctic ice thaws and they can't catch seals? They'll learn to dive for fish, but will have to move to land for reproduction and other lifestyle necessities, as they can't paddle for long. A recent report predicts that two – thirds of the world's polar bears – including all bears in Alaska – will disappear by 2050, unless.....

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## Did you know?

In 1986, 96% of the population of China were farmers, Rural population is now 60% and heading for 20% by 2040. Every year for the last 20 years, 20 million people (equal to our population) have moved to the cities. As a result of this huge migration, water is already in short supply in 200 cities. And we had difficulty managing for just 2 million in South east Queensland!

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30 years ago, the World Bank began to invest heavily in prawn farms throughout the tropics, hoping the industry would produce cheap protein and generate revenue for developing countries. At that time, a kilo of shrimp was worth \$10, now from \$1.50 to \$ 4.50. 300,000 hectares of mangroves were cleared for shrimp farms in northern Sumatra, contributing to the tragic loss of life and property from the 2004 tsunami. A storm surge breaking against a 250 m wide belt of mangroves loses at least 75% of its energy before moving on shore.

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## Nature of Caboolture

In partnership with the Queensland Museum, Caboolture Shire Council has provided a pocket wild guide. Several authors have combined to cover our physical and biological assets, as well as the work of the regional organisations which community members support so importantly. *Pick up a copy.*

## Managing Climate Variability

As our climate changes, Australia's weather will become even more variable. How do we manage the weather, so as to better plan for bushfires, migrating pests, environmental flows in streams, planting crops and trees, buying and selling livestock, saving for a rainy day?

Seasonal weather forecasts which are reliable are part of the information needed to make better decisions about resource management. Several research organisations have joined in a constructive program to investigate how the Met Bureau might improve its seasonal forecasts and how to access, understand and use them.

Australia is unique in being surrounded by three oceans which predominantly influence our regional climate. Because they don't always have the same directional influence, it is difficult to predict seasonal weather changes. One ocean will produce more rain, but two others at the same time, will give less – which wins? El-Nino and La Nina in the Pacific, changes in Coral Sea and Indian Ocean sea-surface temperatures and the Southern Annular Mode (changes in windiness and storm activity over the Southern Ocean and Antarctica) drive our climate, having effects on rainfall in autumn in some places and spring in others, on temperature, evaporation and wind direction.

While Australian agriculture generally has dealt with the short term crisis of floods and drought using new technologies, changed cropping systems, improved varieties of crops and breeds of livestock, there's no guarantee that the productive base of farming (managing the climate – soil – plant – animal - money complex) is protected in the long term. There's a real challenge ahead for the climatologists as well as our primary produce.

*Based on articles by Colin Creighton, Whenju Cai and Bryson Bates*

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### Calling for Items ...

Don't forget to drop us a line (or two or three) if you would like to contribute an item for the newsletter. We appreciate members sharing even a paragraph or two about their adventures. You can email them in at [creec@moretonbay.qld.gov.au](mailto:creec@moretonbay.qld.gov.au) or by post.

## Weed Invasions

Have you noticed that certain plants seem to prevent the growth of other species in their near vicinity, as if they were poisonous to them? This phenomenon, called allelopathy (Greek, *allel* = one another, *pathos* = suffering), seems to result from specific chemicals (allelochemicals) being exuded from roots, stems, leaves, or seeds, which harm other plants, but not themselves, so they become dominant.

It is particularly noticeable in bladey grass, nut grass, sorghum, thistles, mist flower and to a lesser extent with lantana, camphor laurel and Chinese elm. 33 of Australia's most important weeds, including some water weeds, have allelopathic properties.

Many different legacies of allelopathy have been described, including effects on preventing seedling germination, affecting soil microbes and changing the balance of available nutrients. Interestingly, some allelochemicals appear to be more potent, or be produced in greater amounts, in new environments than in their original range.

Crofton weed is particularly difficult to control, as it prevents other plants growing near it, and for some time after its removal. It was named after a Lismore Shire Councillor of the 1920s. The plant was introduced to the Nimbin area as an ornamental from Sydney by one of his neighbours. It spread rapidly on to Cr Crofton's property and beyond. It is now a serious weed in India, Southeast Asia, China, Pacific Islands and New Zealand as well as along the coastal NSW and SE Qld border from Newcastle to Gympie.

It may be a coincidence, but many of the weeds which exhibit allelopathy here are prized in Chinese medicine. Nevertheless in the Yunnan province of SW China, where there are 4 million hectares of Crofton weed, there is an active program to remove it, partly because of the need to restore biological diversity and ecosystem function. Use of expensive activated carbon to reduce the negative effects of the allelochemicals in the soil showed that even two years after removal of the weeds, residual chemicals remained, preventing the growth of *Setaria* and *Brachiaria* grasses.

**Mangroves***Based on article from Anke Sparmann*

Shorelines of the tropics are being de-stabilised by the clearing of mangroves for housing and resort development. Over the last 20 years, more than a third of all mangrove forests have been destroyed, for marinas, roads, ports, golf courses, rice fields, prawn farms and vacation and retirement homes.

Most mangroves grow in the intertidal zone where water temperatures stay above 22 degrees – 30 degrees north and south of the equator. They are adapted to extreme heat, salt water and soggy conditions.

About 70 species belonging to 24 families are considered mangroves; they range in size from 50 cm to 40 meters. They have unique filtration systems for voiding salt, a capacity to absorb oxygen through bark and special roots, and seeds and seedlings that can float for a month at sea and still grow.

Scores of bird species depend on mangroves, as do seaweeds, anemones, sponges, lobsters, jelly fish, crabs and fish. A UN estimate put the value of mangroves' contribution to coastal protection, tourism and pollution control as high as \$35,000 per hectare in Thailand. Smelly wastelands or the most precious of all habitats on the planet?

By 2030, it is expected that five billion people will live on coastlines, three billion more than now. Converting mangrove forests to prawn farms releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere 50 times faster than it was stored. Changing 1 hectare to almost any other use negates all of the advantages that 50 hectares of mangroves contributes as a carbon sink.

**Endangered Species**

Australia's 10 most endangered animal species include a frog, a fish, a turtle, a dolphin, three marsupials and three birds. Which one is a mostly nocturnal, solitary, marsupial carnivore with spots?

**National Threatened Species Day is 7 September.**

**TV and the Weather***Based on article by Larry J Sweiger*

Cynics in USA have suggested that Americans will not address global warming until it interferes with their television reception. When Radio Free Europe and the BBC reported that the rate of methane release due to melting of the Siberian permafrost was five times the previous estimate, US TV was covering the story of Jon Benit Ramsay's warped admirer, and it didn't get a mention.

CNN and other major networks didn't cover the recent evidence that the Arctic melt is 100 years ahead of earlier predictions and the Arctic will be ice-free some time during the summer of 2013 (not 2050 ). They also chose to ignore important moments at the Bali Climate Conference.

The US Society of Professional Journalists believes that "public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy". We need to be confronted by the bad news, as well as good, especially when our very future is at stake. Are we becoming too used to entertainment masquerading as news, advertisements as scientific discovery?

**Millennium Development Goals**

Eight years ago the United Nations set out eight goals for future development around the world. In order, but not necessarily in importance, cost or time to make significant changes, they are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

On which one of these, at least, will you make a difference?