

Threats to these mammals are water pollution (which can kill off their food insects), rubbish which can ensnare them, breaking down of banks over their burrows by cattle and from dogs and cars when they venture across land in wet weather. As male platypus have a poisonous spur on one rear hind leg, it can be hazardous to pick one up. Look, but don't touch!

What's On

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 12 May | Sustainable Gardening Workshop at CREEC 9.30 - 12.30 |
| 25 -26 May | Beauesert Eco Expo |
| 2 June | Sustainable Living Fair at CREEC |
| 5 June | World Environment Day |
| 22-25 August | Queensland Landcare Conference - Mackay |
| 3-6 September | River Symposium - Brisbane |
| 3-9 September | Landcare Week |
| 9 September | National Threatened Species Day |
| 9 September | Sustainable House Day |
| 14-16 September | Clean up the World Weekend |
| 17-20 September | Qld Coastal Conference - Bundaberg |
| 2-5 October | Greenhouse 2007 - Sydney |
| 21-27 October | National Water Week |



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

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.

We thank the Caboolture Shire Council for their assistance.



Caboolture Region
Environmental
Education Centre
Ph : 3888 8751
Fax : 3888 3211
Email :marshw@
caboolture.qld.gov.au

We're on the web
www.creec.org.au

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| News | page 2 |
| Did you know? | page 2 |
| Person of the month | page 3 |
| Environmental Weeds | page 4 |
| Threatened Species | page 5 |
| Wildlife Conservation | page 6 |
| Spotting Platypus | page 7 |
| What's on | page 8 |

Friends of CREEC
Winner of
Excellence in
Business Award
2005

C.R.E.E.C.



caboolture shire

April 2007

EDITORIAL

WATER, WATER,WHERE ?

How much water do we really need, to suit our lifestyles? How hard will it be to adjust to using half as much as we have become used to?

How will you ration 140 L per day between bathroom, kitchen, laundry, garden and pool ? Should those who can afford it be further subsidised \$2150 to make changes to save water? How will we cope if Our average rainfall drops by 20%? Should we spend \$9 billion in south-east Queensland on pipe lines, dams, desalination plants and recycled water? Will you happily pay more than three times current prices for water? Can you find a plumber?

These are just some of the questions the community and residents are asking about the effects of the record dry period which started the new millennium. The 20th century started the same way with years of drought.

Spare a thought for the impacts on the natural environment. Nature is extremely resilient, but a little help may be something to think about, if you have any 'nature' left. Conserving wildlife is a responsibility of us all, regardless of land ownership.

* * *

The loss by evaporation from Queensland dams is 1 million megalitres each year. That is enough to irrigate 200,000 hectares of crops.

News

Friends of CREEC has received another grant for computer equipment for our office. This Gambling Community Grant was initially applied for by Nursery volunteer John Smith to replace the old CREEC computer donated by himself some years ago.

Sadly John is no longer with us but the grant will be put to good use by FOC members and volunteers, hopefully to help produce this newsletter and also for the Library data base.

Did you know?

Australia has 28,000 introduced plant species. 4600 of these plants are potentially invasive and could become naturalised. 3700 of them are introduced garden plants, like lantana, mock orange, ochona, Singapore daisy, easter cassia, duranta. The next wave of weeds is ready to jump the fence, given the right conditions and our neglect – according to Biosecurity Australia.

* * *

Between 1991 and 2001, Australia's five mainland capital cities added just 6% of their population growth to the inner city, 94% to the suburbs. The 1.24 million extra people in the outer areas place strain on the supply of jobs, transport, water, energy, food, housing, schools.....Australian city dwellers are world leaders in the consumption of resources. By the way, half of our population growth is imported.

* * *

About 30 million hectares of land are certified to organic standards. 40% (or 12 million hectares) of this is in Australia. World production is valued at about \$50 billion per year.

* * *

The world total area of genetically modified crops is over 100 million hectares, with more than 10 million growers.

* * *

the benefits these will bring to wildlife, with some measurements of the changes over time. Envirofund can assist with funds for the monitoring of water quality, the condition of habitats, species diversity and developing the knowledge and skills needed to measure environmental or ecological processes. Faunawatch is a Council – WPS program to record wildlife in the Shire. Residents are invited to identify what species are seen in their local area, preferably at regular intervals, so that changes over time can be tracked. Forms are available from CREEC.

Spotting Platypus

ER

You can be walking alongside Caboolture's main waterways and spot a beautiful azure kingfisher perched above the water. What has this to do with platypus? If you look carefully you are likely to see that a platypus is feeding below that platform and is managing to stir up food items for the kingfisher!



In winter, platypus spend more time later in the day on the surface of the water and that is usually a good time to see them – particularly near the middle of Caboolture.

This monotreme (egg-laying mammal) can live up to 15 years in the wild and with a body temperature of 35 C (lower than most mammals) and with two layers of woolly undercoat and longer shiny guard hairs, it is well insulated.

Incredibly they eat 15-30% of their body weight in a day and as males can weigh 2.6 kg, that's a lot of worms, yabbies and insects. They find food by detecting vibrations and electric currents with sensors on their bill. They feed only in water and rest for about 17 hours per day in burrows.

They usually have several burrows on the banks of their home creek where they rest. Females have one nesting burrow – a much longer elaborate burrow – where they give birth and feed their young from two milk-secreting patches on their bodies. The mother, when she ventures out to feed, plugs the burrow entrance to prevent predation of her young.

Cont over

Threatened Species

JP

The earth is experiencing a great wave of extinction, a process being driven by human destruction of habitats and the introduction of non-native plants and animals into them. Biodiversity is decreasing at a rapidly increasing rate. Current extinction rates are 50 – 100 times greater than the historical average. As many as a quarter of the world's species could disappear in the next 25 years, half may be gone within this century.

In Queensland, threatened plants and animals are categorized as either extinct in the wild (they now exist only in botanical gardens and zoos), endangered, vulnerable, near threatened or of least concern. Federally, there's also a class referred to as 'conservation-dependent'. All of the species in the lists need protection; from current land use practices, expanding urbanisation, feral pests, loss of habitat, broken linkages due to subdivision or land clearing, climatic variability, impacts of global warming, changed fire frequency.....

We need to know not only what species are on our local lists, but also where they are located, what are the specific threats to their survival, and how we manage, reduce or remove the threats.

In our Shire we have a considerable area of public reserves, riparian zones, properties where vegetation and wildlife are protected, areas of remnant and regrowth vegetation. Since no species exist in isolation, it is necessary to look at larger scale conservation, to provide the essential linkages or corridors if long-term survival is to be assured. It may even be necessary to provide suitable habitats to enable fauna to escape to safer areas, to survive in the wild.

We must therefore prioritise and then focus on what needs to be done, where and how. There are limited resources available to be used by individuals and groups for eligible activities. Some cash funding is available through Envirofund – applications close 27 April.

Eligible activities include planting native vegetation, fencing to protect remnants or control stock access to watercourses, controlling weeds and feral animals to protect threatened species and rehabilitating coastal areas.

It is important to accompany our activities in improving native vegetation, and

Keeping Alive the Sense of Wonder

27 May is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rachel Carson, US author and biologist, whose 'Silent Spring' helped to launch the modern environmental movement. Her landmark book on some of the dangers of the misuse of pesticides prompted the phasing out of DDT, as well as new ways of looking at biological controls, integrated pest management, chemical resistance in plants and animals, and the need to properly evaluate the long term effects of synthetic compounds on the complex inter-relationships which are a part of nature.

Less well known are her eloquent writings on the importance of nurturing the stewards of tomorrow. Here are some extracts from a 1956 US "Woman's Home Companion" magazine

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that, for most of us, that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. --- If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder --- he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

"I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. Once the emotions have been aroused -----, then we wish for knowledge about the subject of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning ..."

* * *



RACHEL CARSON

Born: 27May, 1907

Died: 14 April 1964

Environmental Weeds

JP

There are two classes of weeds – those considered serious enough pests to warrant their control being enforced under state legislation, and those that aren't. Under the State Act, an owner of private land is required to remove or control declared plants. There are three classes – really nasty, nasty and could be. Nastiness is based on ability to cause social, economic or environmental harm. There are trees, water plants, bushes, grasses, succulents and vines on the list of declared weeds. Land owners need to know them and make a conscious effort to get rid of them.

Weeds that are not declared are referred to as environmental weeds – mostly introduced plants used as ornamental garden plants that have escaped to invade our waterways, beaches and bushland. They degrade our natural environment in different ways – crowd out native plants, increase fire-risk, are toxic, choke waterways, restrict our access to places, reduce scenic amenity.

Environmental weeds are worthy foes. They reproduce prolifically, grow quickly, tolerate a range of soil and climate conditions, thrive following disturbance, and spread by wind, water, animals and human activities. As a consequence, they are usually difficult to control. If not managed, it is likely that many of them will need to be declared. We need to halt their spread and replace them with environmentally beneficial alternatives. This will assist in restoring habitats for bio-diverse ecosystems to operate better.

The Council is preparing a poster dealing with a part of the weed problem – photographs of the worst ones to enable their identification and suggestions for different types of plants to grow in their place. Technical advice on these issues is available to participants in Land for Wildlife and Urban Wildlife programmes. Replacement plants may be available from CREEC and SGAP. Look out for the 'Dirty thirty three' poster when it becomes available.

The best ways of dealing with environmental weed problems include

- Learn to recognise them and how best to control them
- Where weeds once dominated, prepare sites for the planting of suitable alternatives – non-invasive, but competitive and preferably natives
- Learn the strong and weak points of the weeds to devise a control plan
- Provide conditions for natural regeneration wherever possible
- Don't bite off more than you can chew.

Wildlife Conservation

JP

All landowners have some responsibility for conserving wildlife. Wildlife is more than fur and feathers. Invertebrates make up more than 70% of the animal biodiversity on earth (see below). They have significant influence on a number of ecosystems; as predators and parasites. Habitat conservation is the key to conservation of all animals.

Ecosystems include the physical and biological components of a community. Natural ecosystems have evolved over millions of years. We do not automatically live in harmony with them. We may never properly understand the way they operate and how to interact with them. Protecting them in reserves won't be sufficient; our reserve system is not designed to cope with our dry continent, nomadic species and seasonal migrations.

We try to overcome this by protecting regional ecosystems for plants; this may not be adequate for wildlife, which needs more resources than the species attached to the soil by roots.

There are many habitat types such as wetlands, grassland, bushland, riparian zones, and rainforests. Several of these are present at CREEC, many altered. A grassy woodland usually contains several elements; - a tree layer with a range of tree ages, mature trees with hollows, a shrub understorey, fallen and standing dead timber, a ground layer of tussock grasses, litter and a water source. This complex structure provides opportunities for different species to feed, shelter, breed and interact with other species.

Where previous management has eliminated some of the wildlife requirements, it may be possible to reinstate them. It may take a long time (hollows can take 100 years to form in a gum tree), but it is critical that we put in the effort now; before it is too late. There are many species in the world, man is but one of them.

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|----------|--------|--------|--|
| Animals | 751 000 | Higher plants | 248 000 | Protozoa | 30 800 | Others | |
| Insects | 281 000 | Fungi | 69 000 | Bacteria | 4 800 | | |
| Other animals | | Algae | 26 900 | Viruses | 1 000 | | |
| | | Plants | | | | | |