



MOONBI 137

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchulla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "K'gari"

MOONBI is the newsletter of Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited

FIDO, "The Watchdog of Fraser Island", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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Since MOONBI 136

25 years since K'gari's World Heritage Listing: There were great celebrations at Kingfisher on World Heritage Day on 18th April to mark this landmark event.

SeaLink Acquires Kingfisher: Probably the most far reaching event of the last six months on K'gari has been that the Kingfisher group that dominates commercial tourism on the island is now owned by the Adelaide based SeaLink group. It fits in well with their portfolio of investments around Australia and should bring a fresh approach to management of the island's two largest resorts and tour operations. Story p3

Great Sandy Strait — FIDO's Top Priority: The threat posed to the natural integrity of Great Sandy Strait by the huge volume of polluted mine waste water discharge into the Mary River from the proposed Colton Coal mine is so significant that it has become FIDO's major project. Since the last MOONBI FIDO has organized and conducted five cruises on internationally significant waterway that is on the Tentative World Heritage List to allow people to experience the enormous environmental values of this double ended estuary. The cruises have also added to our Research Fund to produce new information that will justify a full review of government decisions to approve the mine or any proposals to enlarge it without proper environmental scrutiny. Story p5

Citizen Science Aids K'gari Management: FIDO continues to operate on many other fronts simultaneously. We are exploring options for conducting another BioBlitz for a very public engagement in Citizen Science. Developments will be announced as soon as we have a green light to proceed. In the meantime there is an inspiring story on page 6 of one person's project that is shedding light on a huge weed problem. The weed problem continues to be another major FIDO focus with a large contingent working to eliminate the thick Easter Cassia and lantana surrounding Happy Valley.

An insider's history: There is lots of news on other fronts including the completion of the first draft of John Sinclair's 100,000 word history of K'gari and Cooloola. It will be revised to address reviewers comments. The aim is to have the volume ready for release by the end of 2018

FIDO on Facebook: FIDO's Facebook page is now managed by Suzanne Wilson. It continues to gain popular appeal.

Short Articles: Many interesting stories are covered briefly on pages 7 to 9. IUCN applauded K'gari in the World Heritage 2017 Outlook Report for being a model for collaborative management. However, as we gain more knowledge on the impacts of Myrtle Rust our alarm bells are ringing louder and the threat to the ecosystems is as potent as climate change.

FIDO's K'gari E-Newsletters: FIDO has a comprehensive array of data on our web site www.fido.org.au If you aren't already receiving updates of developments through our E-Newsletters, please notify john@fido.org.au

Backgrounders: A sample of early K'gari visitation features in a photographic backgrounder (No 85). Another backgrounder (No 86) questions when is a native plant a weed and explores the new nature resulting from climate change. There have previously been backgrounders on fens but No 88 attempts to simplify understanding the process that has enabled Fraser fens to form in a way so different from other fens around the world.



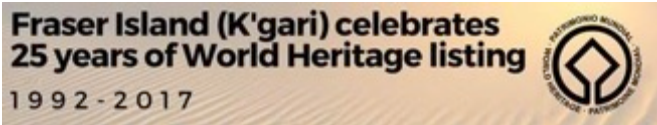
This plaque unveiled by Federal Assistant Minister for Environment, Hon Melissa Clarke and Queensland Environment Minister Leeanne Enoch commemorates the tireless work of John Sinclair AO and the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland that resulted in Fraser Island's inscription on the World Heritage List on 7th December 1992. (Story p2)

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Background to K'gari's World Heritage Listing

The celebration of K'gari's World Heritage listing might well have occurred years earlier in a different political environment as explained in these extracts from John Sinclair's book, "K'gari and Cooloola — a history" that is approaching finality. The first calls for the listing were made in 1974.



Getting K'gari onto the World Heritage List was a long and sometimes bitter struggle strewn with numerous obstacles. Including Cooloola has proved to be even more difficult and protracted.

In August 1974, Australia became one of the first countries to ratify the Convention. It had to wait until 1980 before the requisite number of countries had ratified it before it could become operational. Almost immediately after Australia's ratification, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) began imagining what Australian sites should be on the World Heritage List. They initially identified just four. Fraser Island was included with the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu and South West Tasmania. The following year ACF included Cooloola to be nominated with Fraser Island as one site as a self-evident Australian priority site for World Heritage listing.

While exploring the Commonwealth's responsibilities, the 1975 Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry into sandmining also examined the question of Fraser Island's World Heritage values even though it would be another five years before the convention became operative. As a result of the Inquiry's recommendations, on 11th November 1976 Environment Minister Kevin Newman declared to the Australian Parliament that Fraser Island would be nominated for World Heritage when the Convention became operational. However, there was a political change in Canberra after that statement.



Queensland opposition: Still bristling after the Commonwealth Government stopped K'gari sandmining, Queensland Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen saw World Heritage listing as a further threat to his state's sovereignty. He believed that allowing any Queensland sites could be ceding powers to his detested political rivals in Canberra or even foreign powers. He was smarting over the listing of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef. This was a Commonwealth Government initiative that to some extent sidelined Queensland into a subservient position. After the controversial inscription of Queensland's Wet Tropics despite Queensland's opposition, the Commonwealth agreed

that no future Australian site would be nominated for World Heritage listing without the support and endorsement by the relevant State Government. That gave Joh the power to veto future World Heritage proposals and he unflinchingly exercised that throughout his tenure as Premier. Despite their obvious World Heritage values, K'gari and Cooloola were left behind as other Australian sites were listed.

In an attempt to break the deadlock, in 1984 the ACF commissioned Leigh Hemmings and John Sinclair to draft a World Heritage nomination to build a case based on the World Heritage merits of K'gari and Cooloola. That failed to soften Queensland's position. When presented with their draft nomination for the Great Sandy Region for World Heritage, Premier Bjelke-Petersen emphatically responded that *not one more inch of Queensland would be given World Heritage status*. Meanwhile despite the implications for the timber industry, the Labor opposition supported K'gari and Cooloola's claims for World Heritage listing. That stalled the proposal until there was a change of government in Queensland in 1989.

Queensland support: When elected after over 30 years in opposition in Queensland, the new Goss Labor Government initially hesitated in its pre-election commitment to K'gari and Cooloola. In response to the clamour, it resolved some internal party conflict by appointing the highly respected Mr. E.G (Tony) Fitzgerald to recommend a plan for the future of the area. He chaired the *Commission of Inquiry into the Conservation, Management and Use of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region*. During 1990-91, Fitzgerald and a team of experts inspected the areas and sifted through the 300 submissions from 238 persons and organizations to reach its conclusions that the whole of K'gari and Cooloola were worthy of inclusion on the World Heritage List. With that recommendation, both the Goss and Hawke Governments agreed to proceed with the nomination. This was promptly prepared and submitted to UNESCO in December 1991.

The whole of K'gari was finally inscribed on the World Heritage list when the World Heritage Committee met for its 16th Session in Santa Fe (USA) in December 1992.



SeaLink Acquires Kingfisher

The most significant news impacting on K'gari in the last six months has been the announced sale of the island's dominant tourist operator, the Kingfisher Group. In a \$43m deal the listed South Australian based SeaLink tourism and transport operator has acquired the Kingfisher Group from the Japanese company Cosmos Initia.

Cosmos Initia had been trying to sell the Kingfisher Group for more than a decade and sale price is less than the \$50M the group expected. The deal includes the two well-established resorts as well as Fraser Explorer Tours and Fraser Island Ferries and covers 90 per cent of accommodation options and the majority of touring experiences on K'gari

Included in the deal were land and buildings, plant and equipment, three vehicular ferries, a 30-vehicle touring coach fleet, all contracts, licences, intellectual property and goodwill. The Kingfisher group turned over \$55 million in 2016 and made a net profit of about \$7 million. First developed in 1992 by Japanese backers, the Kingfisher Bay Resort Group was sold by interests including Tourism Leisure Corporation

The four star Kingfisher Resort 152-room hotel is located on freehold land, with management and caretaking rights to a further 109 self-contained villas/houses and lease of a 174 bed Wilderness Lodge (leased from private investors) for the educational and backpacker market.



The Kingfisher site in October 1990. This site has since grown to be the largest resort on K'gari and one of the island's busiest hubs. For many K'gari visitors, Kingfisher is their only K'gari experience.

The Eurong Resort with 108 rooms including two-bedroom apartments, studio units and group rooms (4 to 6 share) is set on 3.4 hectares of beachfront land along K'gari's eastern shore. It is the busiest hub on the whole of the island and is more popular and more profitable than the Kingfisher resort

The resort features a 200-seat restaurant, beach bar, grocery and convenience store, bakery and fuel outlets. It is located on a perpetual lease, and the direct beach front area of resort land consists of approximately 1.4 hectares of freehold land.

This block may be developed differently from the main part of Eurong Resort that is located on a different tenure.

SeaLink began through developing ferry services to Kangaroo Island and it has since extended its marine interests into an Australia wide network. It now also owns the Vivonne Bay Lodge on Kangaroo Island. Amongst SeaLink's other recent acquisitions are Transit Systems ferry operations in Queensland and Captain Cook Cruises in Perth. SeaLink managing director Jeff Ellison said that SeaLink aimed to expand its product offerings to iconic Australian destinations, with the dominant hospitality, touring and marine transport operations.

To manage its Queensland operations SeaLink plans to open a new business hub in Brisbane to manage and grow its Sunshine State operations that also covers servicing Magnetic Island and Palm Island from Townsville, the LNG Plants on Curtis Island from Gladstone, North Stradbroke Island and the islands of Moreton Bay.

Since the Kingfisher acquisition SeaLink has made another critical acquisition. The \$400 million tourism and ferry group has acquired a 10 per cent stake in a Hong Kong-based technology company UWAI Limited to drive more Asian tourists to its Australian operations and give it greater clout in the booming Chinese tourist market. This strategic move also puts SeaLink on the front foot as technology and digitisation transforms the tourism market.

FIDO's collaborations with Kingfisher

Despite historical differences over the environmental impacts created by the resorts, over the last decade FIDO has worked closely and collaboratively with the Kingfisher Group especially the Eurong Resort, the centre of a major FIDO bush regeneration project. The support of Kingfisher through its ferry concessions and other tangible help has been constructive and assisted us getting on top of the weed problems of Eurong. In return FIDO has been active in landscaping work at the resort to develop an image befitting a natural World Heritage site. Interestingly the opening of the Kingfisher Bay resort 25 years ago coincided with K'gari's World Heritage listing. They have been mutually beneficial to each other.

It isn't only FIDO that Kingfisher is collaborating with. The group is working with the University of the Sunshine Coast to convert one of their buildings into a Visitor Centre that will be accessible 24 hours a day and have impressive interpretation conveniently located close the Resort's accommodation units. Kingfisher also collaborates with the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation.



Fraser Explorer Tours
Fraser Island



Fraser Island Barges
Fraser Island



Eurong Beach Resort
Fraser Island



Kingfisher Bay Resort
Fraser Island

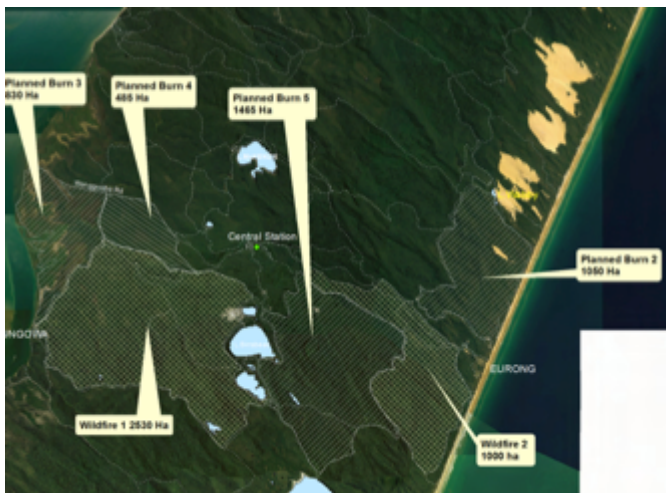
Burnt Fingers

As most people quickly learn, if you don't release a lighted match soon enough you get your fingers burnt. Something similar has resulted from the QPWS extending the seasons for carrying out controlled management burns on K'gari.

In September 2017, FIDO witnessed a wildfire on K'gari at very close quarters while driving from Eurong to Wanggoolba Creek to catch a ferry. The fire originated in a planned 830 Ha burn around Ungowa that got out of control and then over a number of days burnt its way across K'gari taking out 63120 hectares instead of the scheduled 830 Ha that was just 15% of the area burnt. The two aspects that worry FIDO the most is why the QPWS was even initiating a "Controlled Burn" in September when conditions are so dry and there is a risk of wind changes to North Westerly. FIDO believes that unless there has been significant rain in the preceding few weeks, it is folly to be setting off fires in K'gari after the coolest months of June and July. While 1,950 Ha of the area burnt has been described as "Planned Burns", they weren't planned to be burnt in that single fire.

The environmental impact of what FIDO is regarding as a single wildfire burning from coast to coast is quite alarming. It was devastating in the area of the southern lakes and ferociously consumed important heathlands. More significant was a large area of Brushbox-Satinay wet sclerophyll forest that was consumed. It will take at least a decade for this fire sensitive forest that is virtually unique to K'gari to recover. Evidence of the impacts are most noticeable when driving either way between Eurong and Central Station and when driving on the Southern Lakes (once) Scenic Route.

FIDO supports the policy of controlled burns on K'gari but amongst our caveats are that the burning program should aim to be completed in the first half of the year provided that there has been reasonable summer rain and that the wind is light and predictable. We also advocate a mosaic of many much smaller patches than many of the planned burns and that fires should be lit late in the day preferably by aerial ignition to achieve that outcome. The use of drones may now make it possible to achieve a better outcome in future K'gari fire management.



Map shows the management burn at Ungowa in September 2017. It became a wildfire that burnt across K'gari to Eurong causing great environmental impact especially in wet sclerophyll areas.

The Sanctity of Naturalness

At the end of the summer holidays, James Bird was so offended by the blaring music from a radio playing at Lake McKenzie that he wrote to the newspaper saying, *"It gave an unpleasant atmosphere and it dishonoured the spirituality of the lake. I'm sure most people on the beach felt the same way. All lovers of Fraser Island know that one of the reasons we go there is to escape the trappings of modern life and get some peace."*

His pleading for authorities to ban the use of radios met with some outrageous reactions epitomized in some of the published comments: *"Oh grow up if people want music let them have it. You don't own the place."* *"Always good to have a little music when you're sucking on a few stubbies on a hot day."* *"People go there to enjoy themselves next he will want to ban people from using the lake."* *"Lets just all stop going to Fraser Island. Take away their tourism. This country has gone completely mad and just another demand from a minority."*

Preserving the sanctity of K'gari's naturalness is an important issue that can't be allowed to go unregulated. Once Australians prided themselves on having mutual respect for other people's values and rights. If this cultural tradition of respect has been so abandoned that the sanctity of enjoying natural places is being wantonly violated then it is time to take action.

Generations of Australians grew up accepting and respecting the rules of cricket, gun control, religious freedom and unwritten rules of courtesy. If people can't accept such unwritten rules in the case of respect for the sanctity of natural places by controlling artificial and imported sounds then an official response is more than warranted. We don't let littering and defacing trees, why should we be allowed to let unnatural noise destroy the tranquility of K'gari's greatest icons.

Respect for Vicarious Visitors

FIDO's view is that K'gari has meaningful values for infinitely more people than actually visit it. Many people value these great natural areas vicariously. Some carry memories of visits many years ago and feel that those memories have been violated by changes that have seen significant degradation since. Some have never actually visited K'gari but have developed an appreciation from images and writings. Many feel that their rights are being disregarded by the overuse of sites such as Lake McKenzie, Double Island Point and Eli Creek. Many non-visitors are offended at the beach becoming a highway. They would like to see K'gari or at least a large part of it revert to wilderness. We don't need to go to Antarctica to feel inspired by wilderness. We don't need to visit the Amazon to be affected by the vast environmental loss occurring there. Just because people don't physically visit K'gari, their concerns for its future shouldn't be ignored.

It is FIDO's view that the management of K'gari has tipped too much in favour of the actual on-ground visitors with not enough respect for either the vicarious visitors or the protection of their natural resources that originally justified their World Heritage nomination.

Great Sandy Strait — FIDO's Top Priority Issue

While the Colton coal mine initially crept in under FIDO's radar, it has become FIDO's highest priority issue. FIDO is working with Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) and the Greater Mary Association (GMA) on a program to prevent Colton's potentially devastating impact on Great Sandy Strait. It is now on the top of FIDO's agenda.

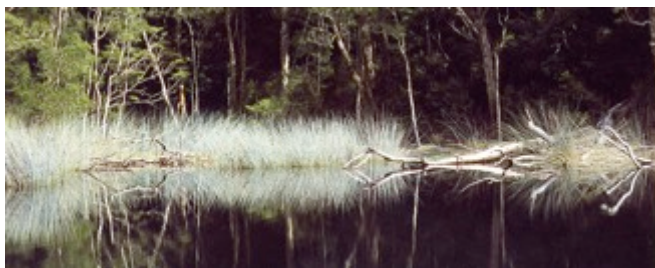
FIDO wasn't the only group for whom the Colton mine's potential impacts on Great Sandy Strait got under the radar. Most bureaucrats who initially assessed the proposal and most politicians seemed oblivious to the full environmental impacts on the World Heritage and Ramsar listed Great Sandy Strait. It is now our job to ensure that it rises to the top of their agenda too.

This will be done by presenting facts and data on the impacts on Great Sandy Strait to decision makers and to raise public protests to the same level as led to the cessation of Fraser Island (K'gari) sandmining in 1975 and the end of K'gari logging in 1991. While FIDO would prefer to work cooperatively with the Queensland Government to avoid such a confrontation, we need to be prepared.

Approval of this mine was totally inconsistent with the Queensland Government's recognition of the World Heritage values of Great Sandy Strait. The company's Environmental Management Plan identifies a range of heavy metals in test bores dug on the site. It recognises the potential for the coal body to acidify water and thus further mobilise heavy metals and yet proposes to discharge this water directly into the Mary River and thence Great Sandy Strait. This coal mine will employ only 100 men. Even at the end of its 10-year life, the mine pit, over 100 ha in size and up to 50 metres deep would represent a serious environmental threat. It will fill with a mix of groundwater and rainwater and will continue to acidify

Many questions have been asked about the very weak position taken by Queensland's Department of Environment and Heritage at the time of the mine's approval that almost seemed to ignore the risks of any impacts reaching Great Sandy Strait. We would like to see a more rigorous review of the potential impacts of the mine undertaken before the mine proponents seek their inevitable request to expand.

FIDO believes that without further approvals to expand the mine size and capacity, the mine will be unviable. The Department of Environment and Science needs to be in a strong position to stand its ground when that inevitable application to extend the size of the mine is lodged. Similarly politicians of all persuasions need to understand that not withstanding all the duchessing by mining interests, we are not going to allow the health of our world-class waterway to be put in jeopardy by the release of a poisonous potion of toxic heavy metals into our waterways. This legacy could linger forever when all the 100 men employed by the mine have long retired.



Our strategy:

FIDO has embarked on a three pronged strategy.

1. Our most challenging issue is raising the public awareness so that people realize the full impact and toll that the heavy metals could have on all marine life in Great Sandy Strait. Few people appreciate the toxic impact of heavy metals such as cadmium could have on all marine life. It is readily taken up by plants (sea grass and mangroves). Therefore it can rapidly move into the marine food chain and bio-accumulate with the potential to impact dugong, turtles, crustaceans etc. FIDO doesn't want to see an environmental disaster similar to Minimata Disease that would result from the discharge of polluted mine-water from the Colton mine into the Mary River at the rate of 200 litres per second.
2. We are gathering compelling scientific data to expose the potential impacts if the mine goes ahead so that the potential impacts will be better understood and more than just hypotheticals. We are working through this with MRCCC and GMA.
3. Another prong is challenging the viability of the mine. The main reason that the mine got under the radar in the first place is that the mine's proponents claimed that they would not mine more than 500 megatonnes per annum. This was probably fudging the truth to avoid having to produce an Environmental Impact Statement. However there is much evidence to show that unless approval can be obtained to increase the production beyond 500 megatonnes, the mine won't go ahead.

The Great Sandy Strait Cruises

Our five Great Sandy Strait cruises to date have raised almost \$5000 for the Great Sandy Strait Research Fund as well as raising awareness of the features of the World Heritage and Ramsar listed waterway. These cruises were provided with a fascinating commentary. We encourage anyone to join the last planned cruise on 4th November if they want to experience and learn about our wonderful waterway.

Promote our next Cruise
Sunday, 4th November

Planned research program

The research that the \$30,000 Research Fund is assisting with is based on establishing the water flows from the Mary River into Great Sandy Strait and to establish more precisely the dispersal of sediments that includes any toxic heavy metals that are most likely to settle. Our \$30,000 isn't going to meet all of the expenses involved in this multidisciplinary study and we are relying on the goodwill of some eminently qualified academic researchers to get this study underway. It is an exciting project that could lead to a whole new understanding of Great Sandy Strait. **Tax Deductible donations** to help extend this research can be made through Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee.

Citizen Science Aiding K'gari Management

FIDO recognize the amazing contribution that citizen science can make to natural resource management. Our 2016 BioBlitz based at Dilli Village was a stocktake of the biological resources at some specific sites. Pete Dorney (Boreen Point) illustrates that not all citizen science needs to be actually organized by

A terrible weed on Fraser Island

Abrus precatorius subsp. africanus (Crab's Eye Vine)

This rampant weed could potentially overtake much of the native bushland on Fraser Island. FIDO has been conducting eradication working bees several times a year but it is, and will be, a battle to get on top of the problem. When I joined one working bee in March 2016, Crab's Eye Vine had naturalized an area within a radius of several kilometres around Happy Valley township, exacerbated by a resident of Happy Valley who was refusing to clear a large area of seeding vine on her own property.

Abrus precatorius subsp. africanus is originally from southern Africa. It is a woody twiner and its seeds, which are bright red with a black spot which really does look like a crab's eye, are extremely poisonous if broken and ingested (www.saveourwaterwaysnow.com.au). It is very suited to the environmental conditions on Fraser Island, and will climb and completely 'blanket' native shrubs and trees, eventually causing them to die. The seeds are thought to be transported by birds; if they pass through the bird's gut without being broken they will be innocuous to the bird and will be ready to germinate.

There is a native species of Crab's Eye Vine, *Abrus precatorius subsp. australis*, but it is only native well north of Fraser. It is difficult to distinguish between the Australian and the African species unless they are already in seed, as the distinction is that the African species has a satin, furry surface to its seed pods, while the native has a smooth surface, but neither should be present on Fraser Island anyway.

One important thing that F.I.D.O. was unsure about was the longevity of viability of the seeds. If for example only a small percentage actually germinate, and their viability lasts less than a year, then leaving some seeds in/on the ground when weeding the vines, which is inevitable, would not be so serious as the next season's crop would all have to be from newly-spread seeds: so if the seed source could then be eradicated it would make it relatively easy to control the weed. Unfortunately we don't appear to be that lucky.

So, when I was with the eradication working bee, I collected some several thousand seeds with which to experiment at home, as I do have horticultural qualifications and a wide nursery and bushcare experience.

The discoveries I have made to date are shown below.

The main Trial – to test whether the seeds have delayed germination.

- I counted out 1,000 seeds, sowed them into a large pot, and then left them out in the weather with no further treatment; that is no watering, which means they would be in a fairly natural environment, in full heat of the sun when sunny, and only receiving watering when it rains.
- Sowing took place in late March 2016 and, with good rains in April, 149 seeds (~15%) germinated. As the rains continued fairly consistently seeds continued to germinate, albeit in small numbers, until September 16, with a total of ~20%.

- From October 16, despite each month's rainfall continuing to be reasonable, no seeds germinated again until March 17 when heavy rains occurred, though even then only 16 seeds germinated bringing the total up to a little over 21% of the original 1,000.
- Again, after March 17, no seeds germinated until February 2018 when we had heavy rains of 422mm. And, the time of writing at the end of March 18, it appears only one further seed has germinated despite consistent March rain of 174mm.

So what does this show?

- Firstly it is worrying that seeds viability lasts at least 2 years in 'the ground'. Only the continuation of the trial, which will be done, will determine whether seed viability does last longer, but even two years is not good.
- Secondly, it does appear that good, consistent rains, and probably the warmer weather of February/March, is necessary for at least the older seeds to germinate.
- Thirdly, over 1 in 5 seeds have germinated over two years; which makes over 200 for every 1,000, which is an awful lot of new weeds.

Other discoveries I have made.

- Of seeds kept in the fridge for 18 months, 7% only germinated when sown under irrigation. However they were sown in Sep/Oct and it does seem the warmer weather of summer is a significant factor.
- I potted up 10 germinants to check how soon seed pods would form; which was around 10 months: but the seedlings were in unnatural conditions being constrained in 5cm tubes.
- I heat stressed seeds on my roof under black plastic for 15 weeks. 100 were sown under irrigation from May 2016. Some of these actually germinated every month to March 2017; that is even through winter, to a total of 49% germinated. So this treatment did not kill the seeds as hoped (it improved them!!).
- One positive finding though is that of 100 seeds which I placed in boiling water for 30 seconds, zero germinated when placed under irrigation. So this appears an effective way to kill seeds.

In Conclusion: I will continue the main trial, of the 1,000 seeds under natural conditions, for as long as possible to determine whether they do have a delayed germination, beyond two years anyway.



Fraser-K'gari Island Symposium: Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Understanding

The Fraser-K'gari Island symposium is being held at the Hervey Bay campus of the University of the Sunshine Coast on the 7-8 June 2018.

The aim of the symposium is to share the work of USC's Fraser-K'gari Island Research Archive and the findings of a collation of research undertaken on Fraser-K'gari Island over the years. The symposium is an opportunity for those who participate to share their knowledge and understanding of the unique values of the island. The gathering will generate further research questions, opportunities and collaborations.

A focus of the symposium is a celebration of 25 years of World Heritage status, what this means and how we protect the unique natural values of the island. It is also a celebration of K'gari's cultural values and how they can be protected.

Registration for the symposium starts at 9.00-10.00 on Day 1 and the event finishes after lunch at 3.00 on Day 2. Morning tea and lunch is included on both days and afternoon tea on Day 1. The cost for registration is \$149. Registration and program will be available through the USC website on the 1st May. Any inquiries can be directed to Dr Kim Walker at kwalker4@usc.edu.au

Wonderful Weather for Weeds

Due to FIDO's online weather stations at Happy Valley and Eurong wherever we are we can now visually see the rainfall temperature and wind patterns at these places. We were keen to see how much rain there was in Eurong following the planting of 150 trees and scrubs that had been raised by FIDO volunteers in the Eurong nursery that we had planted out on 28 February to assess their survival prospects.

The weather has been perfect for getting these plants strongly established. For example, it happened after excellent rainfall in early March and when there were only 5 days between 23 March and 9 April when it didn't rain. However the heaviest fall in one day in that well spaced total of 130mm was 35mm. It was perfect growing weather.

That then started ringing alarm bells on how the weeds would also be taking advantage of this wonderful growing season. When the volunteers left Eurong on 3rd March, it was about the most weed free it has been since Jason Harvey released the Weed Management Strategy for the island prepared for FINIA and the Burnett Mary Regional Group in 2010. However with such regular and consistent rainfall and heat, we anticipate that countless thousands of seeds that have laid dormant in the ground will have been encouraged to spring into life.

Since 2011 FIDO's assaults on Eurong's weeds have been limited to three main working bees annually. Returning each time after four months, we found a new crop of weeds would have germinated and set seed. This encouraged some volunteers with the assistance of Eurong Resort to start interim working bees. Last year FIDO received support in the form of a CONSERVATION SUSTAINABILITY grant to allow these to become regular events. Thus when a small team of four returns on 14th May, they hope to be able to deal with this anticipated prodigious crop of new weeds before they set viable seeds.



This French owned cruise ship stopped off at Kingfisher on 3rd March on the 38th day of its 40-day around Australia cruise. Almost all the 300 passengers were Australians. Most passengers didn't go further ashore than the resort.

News from the Eurong Nursery From Suzanne Wilson FIDO's nursery coordinator

Fraser Island landholders looking to replace exotic plants with local native plant species, can now source them for free. The Eurong nursery has grown in capacity, stocking species that are sourced and grown on K'Gari. These include: groundcovers, shrubs, as well as bird and butterfly attracting plant species.

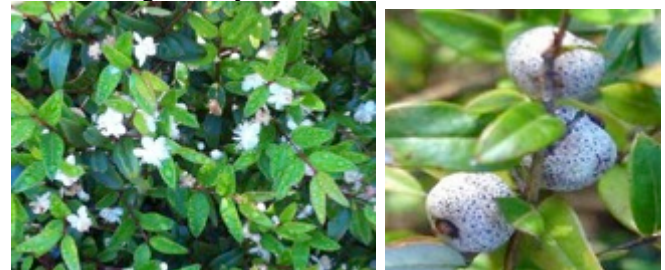
Contact Suzanne for more information on receiving free plants* at coolungypsy@yahoo.com.au (*conditions apply)

Midyim

One of my favourite small shrubs or groundcovers is *Austromyrtus dulcis*, common name Midyim Berry. *Austromyrtus* - from the Latin, *australis*, southern and *myrtus*, from the Greek name for myrtle and *dulcis* - Latin for sweet

The natural distribution for this species is the Coastal areas from Fraser Island down to Northern New South Wales. Growing to less than 1 metre, Midyim has attractive, coppery pink new growth, 10 mm white flowers from Spring to Autumn, followed by a succession of small, sweet edible berries; that are white speckled with purple. They grow well in full sun or part shade and semi exposed coastal conditions. Midyim respond to pruning and if planted closely together can be trimmed to form a tidy, small hedge.

The low spreading bushes provide habitat cover for ground dwelling birds and a seasonal food source for seed eating birds and mammals. The flowers are also very attractive to butterflies and Native Bee species. Many local native Fraser Island plants including *Austromyrtus dulcis* are in stock now at the Eurong Nursery.



Help promote the last Great Sandy Strait cruise on 4th November 2018

Ferals on Fraser

The Great Sandy Strait Barrier

Camera traps have revealed more about wildlife on K'gari than was previously known. They have revealed a much larger population of feral cats than had previously been suspected. They have also identified a secretive mob of brumbies lurking away in the more remote northern part of K'gari. Of greater concern is the prospect of new feral species populations such as foxes and pigs becoming established on K'gari.

Foxes: Camera traps have captured images of foxes on K'gari six times since July 2012. However they arrived isn't known but there is now real anxiety about the impact they could have on wildlife if they establish a permanent population. Wildlife at risk includes the black-breasted button quail, beach stone-curlew, ground parrot, waders, marine turtles, long-nosed potoroo and water mouse. The QPWS has detector dogs trained to track down foxes to stop foxes predated on Mon Repos turtle nests. It is proposed to use these animals to sniff out fox dens on K'gari.



It is vital that foxes are not allowed to run wild on K'gari. Eradicating foxes before they become well established will avert major harm to wildlife.

Pigs: In 2016 there was evidence of a feral pig on K'gari but there has been no firm evidence since. Again the environmental impact if pigs become established is quite daunting.

Some ubiquitous intruders: While we are concerned about the more obvious feral fauna on K'gari, there are so many lesser critters that have slipped in and become established on K'gari at the expense of the native fauna. For example, rats and domestic mice now occupy dwellings in a territory previously exclusively occupied by native rodents and marsupials. There are many other species that have arrived as hitchhikers in cargo or luggage. The worst of these are probably alien ants who are taking over from native ant species. We have no idea of where the earth-worms that arrived in pot plants have gone or how far they may spread. The Asian geckoes now are established where once only native geckoes were found. It is for these reasons that FIDO continues to advocate better quarantine measures for K'gari.

Great Sandy Strait has long been a barrier stopping new species arriving on K'gari but obviously it doesn't stop everything. For example, the Pandanus Leaf-hopper *Jamella* was able to make the crossing with devastating effect. The Strait wasn't wide enough to stop the arrival of cane toads that eliminated a few of our native marsupials and many reptiles. More recently a Scrub Turkey has been captured by a camera. For eons Great Sandy Strait daunted scrub turkeys that are commonly found on the adjacent mainland. Population pressures though are causing wildlife to cross barriers that were previously prohibitive deterrents. We need to keep an open mind on the possibility of other wildlife species both native and alien crossing Great Sandy Strait.

Myrtle rust threat to K'gari's ecosystems

There are more plants on K'gari belonging to Family Myrtaceae than any botanic family and so Myrtle rust disease which is already present on K'gari represents an enormous potential threat to the island's ecosystems especially as the spore load accumulates reducing resistance. It particularly attacks young shoots and new suckers. While so far *Syncarpia* (Pibins) and brush box seem relatively immune, Paperbarks (*Melaleuca quinquinerva*) are vulnerable.

Myrtle rust threatens trees and shrubs in the Myrtaceae family of plants which includes Australian natives like bottle brush (*Callistemon spp.*), tea tree (*Melaleuca spp.*) and eucalypts (*Eucalyptus spp.*, *Angophora spp.*, and *Corymbia spp.*). Myrtle rust is a disease caused by the exotic fungus *Austropuccinia psidii*. At this stage Australia has only one strain.

The disease can cause deformed leaves, heavy defoliation of branches, reduced fertility, dieback, stunted growth, and plant death.

Myrtle rust was first detected in Australia in 2010 on the NSW central coast. It has since spread rapidly. It is established along the east coast of Australia from southern NSW to far north Queensland with impacts recorded across a range of ecosystems.

The Myrtle Rust National Management Group has concluded that myrtle rust cannot be eradicated and will continue to spread in Queensland, as it produces large numbers of spores that are easily spread by wind, human activity and animals.

Biosecurity Queensland is leading the Queensland Government's response to the disease and is working with industry to restrict trade of infected plants in Queensland, track its distribution and range of host species, and inform the community on measures to minimize the impact of the disease.

FIDO is now viewing the environmental impact of Myrtle Rust as more immediate and potentially as serious as getting the fire regime right. The long term consequences for K'gari may be as adverse as resulting from climate change.



Soldiers from the Fraser Commando School training at Lake McKenzie during WWII. This is one of the historic images from K'gari and Cooloola — An Insider's History. John Sinclair is seeking similar photos to tell K'gari's history. The image of the Jabiru flying past during this exercise wasn't photo-shopped.

K'gari & Cooloola - An Insider's History

In April John Sinclair completed the first draft of the 100,000 word history of *K'gari and Cooloola* that he has been working on for the past two years in his spare time.

As a person very closely involved in many events and political dramas involving K'gari since the late 1950s, Sinclair thought that it was important to record the history of this area. K'gari is already on the World Heritage List and now both Cooloola and Great Sandy Strait are on the Tentative World Heritage List. It is an insider's history of this area that is hasn't been carefully recorded.

The book has eight (8) chapters. The first three are in general chronological sequence covering a period from the Dreamtime to 2010. The next two chapters cover the periods of the sandmining and logging industries followed by a chapter on the human settlements of the region and their role in shaping the history of the region. This is followed by a chapter on the tourist industry in this region. The final chapter deals with World Heritage and maintaining the natural integrity.

Sinclair is seeking comments and suggestions before moving on to the next stage to review and where necessary rewrite the book before it is published. He is hoping to complete the task by the end of the year. He is also inviting anyone with photos that may help illustrate the history to make them available.

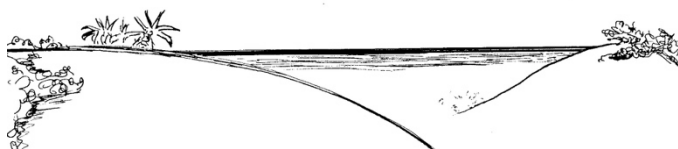


The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy

During the Prince of Wales Bundaberg visit after opening the Commonwealth Games, he unveiled a plaque to commemorate the two new additions to the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy. These were the Bulburin National Park in the hinterland between Miriam Vale and Monto and K'gari (Fraser Island). Both were added with the support of the respective traditional owners.

The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy involves 53 Commonwealth countries and aims to raise awareness of indigenous forests, facilitate knowledge exchange and allow participating countries to share best practice for forest conservation. The declaration of K'gari and Bulburin National Park will further assist and enhance ongoing conservation activities at these sites, ensuring they are protected for future generations.

FIDO trusts that this recognition assists in the management of K'gari's forests particularly in helping to get the burning regime right.



New Land and Sea Rangers for Fraser Island area

The Palaszczuk Government has announced four new ranger positions for Fraser Island and the surrounding area as part of the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program. It is FIDO's understanding that these rangers will be mainly working on Butchulla country other than K'gari including Great Sandy Strait and its islands and mainland areas.

The Butchulla rangers will help protect and manage cultural heritage values in Butchulla country. They will also work with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and other groups to rehabilitate land and water systems and restore natural landscapes, implement programs to control weeds and pests and help manage marine conservation and habitats.



IUCN K'gari Outlook Report 2017

Some anxiety has been expressed about the processes of assessment but having looked at the resulting Outlook reports, of Australian natural World Heritage sites including K'gari, FIDO believes that their overall assessments are pretty right.

Since 2014 the IUCN has instituted triennial reviews of all natural World Heritage sites to ensure that they are meeting the requisite standards of integrity to maintain their place on the World Heritage List. In 2017 the IUCN evaluated the condition of all natural World Heritage sites publishing their assessments in the Global Outlook Report. <https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/explore-sites/wdpaid/67730>

The 2017 Outlook Report judged Fraser Island (K'gari) judged to be **“good with some concerns.”** The main concerns were related to **“pressures from tourism and recreational use, as well as climate change, (that) will require continuing monitoring.”**

The 2017 Outlook Report also held up Fraser Island (K'gari) as **“a model in participatory conservation management between many different stakeholders and a number of excellent management plans for a variety of issues have been put in place.”**

K'gari's Integrity: When K'gari received World Heritage Listing IUCN deemed that K'gari was **“sufficiently large, diverse and free from disturbance to contain all ecosystem components required for variable populations of all species and for continued maintenance of all natural phenomena.”** UNESCO noted amongst other comments on integrity that **“While the tall forests have been affected to some extent by logging, this practice has stopped and the forests have the capacity to return to their former grandeur.”** It also noted that **“Weeds, plant diseases and feral animals are present but in low numbers and are subject to active management.”** It was satisfied that the conditions of integrity were being met despite a number of other identified threats.