

Recent Ecological Changes Around Rocky Headlands

Pictures tell thousands of words. This photographic backgrounder illustrates some changes to Fraser Island's environment by comparing recent photos with older ones. Backgrounder No 14 is dedicated to the memory of Catherine (Kit) Mackay (20 June, 1918 to 7 August, 2003). Kit was a foundation member FIDO member as well as being a Maryborough local historian. It is appropriate that this backgrounder too should illustrate historical changes that have occurred in an area of her interest in her lifetime. It is prepared by the Fraser Island Defenders Organization as a supplement to MOONBI 106.



Above — Indian Head in August 1974 (Photo by Cynthia O’Gorman)

Note: There are no casuarinas behind Indian Head. There is no evidence of the now well worn trail extending to the summit although the fishers shack at the base is clearly visible and much smaller than at present.



Above — Indian Head in July, 2003 (Photo by John Sinclair Jr)

The dramatic degradation of Indian Head in just 30 years epitomises the many changes particularly to the coastal sandblows which are rapidly disappearing being colonized by beach spinifex (which was absent until 1970) casuarinas.

Backgrounder No. 14 — Photographic evidence of environmental change on Fraser Island



Above — Middle Rocks Waddy Point 1974 (Photo by Cynthia O’Gorman)

The land behind the Middle Rock outcrops was every grassy in contrast with its current state there is no evidence of spinifex and the fringe of casuarinas which now fringe most of the beach and which are rapidly covering the sandblow behind Waddy Point.



Indian Head Summit 2003 (Photo John Sinclair Snr)

The rapidly expanding area of bare soil and rock at the summit of Indian Head is cause for alarm as this is one of the rarest ecosystems on Fraser Island. This erosion has occurred since 1983. The tracks leading to the summit are not as wide but are being ever gouged deeper. “The Desert” to the south behind Corroboree beach is rapidly being covered over by casuarinas.