



MOONBI 123

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchalla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "Kgari"

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

FIDO's Registered Office: c/- Stephen Comino & Arthur Comino, G2 425 Milton Road, Milton, 4065 ABN 59 009 969 135

FIDO's Postal Address: PO Box 909 TOOWONG QLD 4066 Editor: John Sinclair, #1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO Q 4151

MOONBIs since 1996 and all FIDO Backgrounders can be found at www.fido.org.au Email: john@fido.org.au

ISSN 0311 - 032X

31st March, 2011

January 2011 marked FIDO's 40th birthday. Four decades have elapsed since the threat of sandmining to vast areas of Fraser Island brought a coalition of conservation interests from Maryborough, Hervey Bay and Bundaberg to form FIDO. FIDO is celebrating this landmark by organizing the best Fraser Island conference yet, (p9) proceeding with projects to lessen the human impact on Fraser Island (p7) and by unveiling more than 1000 of our archival photos on the web.

Since MOONBI 122

Six months have raced past since the last MOONBI and the pace of FIDO activity has jumped up a few notches with Honorary Project Officer, John Sinclair ceasing paid work and now devoting much more time to Fraser Island matters.

What FIDO has done in the last six months: The projects that have largely occupied FIDO over the past six months have been Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora), the review of what World Heritage has meant for Fraser Island, the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the George Haddock Track, convening two Fraser Island forums, preparation for the forthcoming FIDO@40 Conference, trying to salvage what is left of Stradbroke Island from sandmining, conducting weeding operations on Fraser Island, trying to promote more research and understanding of Fraser Island values, liaising with other conservation groups, preparing our photographic archive to go on line within the next few months, and dealing with a plethora of issues from dingoes and pursuing our ongoing objectives to improve the protection of Fraser Island's World Heritage values.

Walking Pace: The development of the George Haddock Track has been a particularly interesting and fascinating process although it is stretching the NPAQ and FIDO's resources to fund the field work necessary to gather the requisite data to qualify for approval before any actual work on the track can be carried out. We have had volunteers from as far away as Darwin work with us on fauna and flora surveys and on the cultural heritage assessment see story p 7.

Advocacy: FIDO is playing an active part in a campaign to see the end of the destructive era of sandmining on Stradbroke Island. Every week the Queensland Government delays its decision to cancel expired leases more another 2.5 hectares of irreplaceable natural habitat it destroyed and churned up by the dredges. FIDO joins other groups in saying enough is enough and it is time to cancel expired leases and stop this needless destruction.

Judging Aesthetics: The discovery of yet another plantation occurring on Fraser Island where there were no plantations before has put the agency the Queensland Government entrusted with protecting the State's Nature, the QPWS, into an agency trying to improve on Nature. It is a dangerous and unnatural act. There are articles on pp3 & 4 and on p6.

Conference: Our FIDO @40 conference will present a lot of new data and information about the island to improve our knowledge and understanding and be better placed to protect its outstanding natural values.

The AGM: FIDO is incorporated as a company limited by public guarantee. However The constitution was amended in to meet the requirements of the Charities Act. This may no longer be necessary and the AGM plans to rectify this with constitutional amendments. See p9.

Note: Because of the proposed dual naming for Fraser Island (Kgari) *Kgari* is used more frequently in this MOONBI.

Backgrounders: MOONBI 123 carries 2 backgrounders. FIDO backgrounders analyze issues or attempt to summarize some very significant aspects of Fraser Island that need to be How do I link files in My Drop box considered as part of the total Fraser Island picture. All can be downloaded from our web site: www.fido.org.au.

The Fauna of Fraser Island summarizes some of the more significant animals found on Fraser Island.

The Impacts of Getting to Specific Sites summarizes the major impacts of some of Fraser Island's.



Only walkers are able to see these magnificent contorted Melaleucas in Hidden Lake - part of the George Haddock Track.

FIDO is an entirely voluntary organization with no paid staff relying almost entirely on the financial and voluntary support of its members to carry out its program.

In This Issue

A Question of Aesthetics – Improving on Nature?	2
Trying to understand the QPWS <i>greenfields</i> concept	3
Potent New Threat to Fraser's Forests	4
Has World Heritage benefitted Kgari? & FIDO's Weeds War	5
No More Footprints on Fraser & Playing God on Kgari	6
Vehicle Free Beaches; Top End Vandalism; Keeping on Track	7
News in Brief: Wet summer; New Names; Top Tours ends etc ..	8
Notice of FIDO's AGM; News of FIDO's 4th Conference	9

Backgrounders: 49 Fraser's Fauna — 50 Impacts of Fraser Travel

Protecting Kgari's aesthetic values

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and some people will see beauty in different things. However beauty is one of the critical natural values of Fraser Island (Kgari) that may be being overlooked and be in danger of being replaced by artificial values. The QPWS now seems to be engaged in trying to improve on Nature

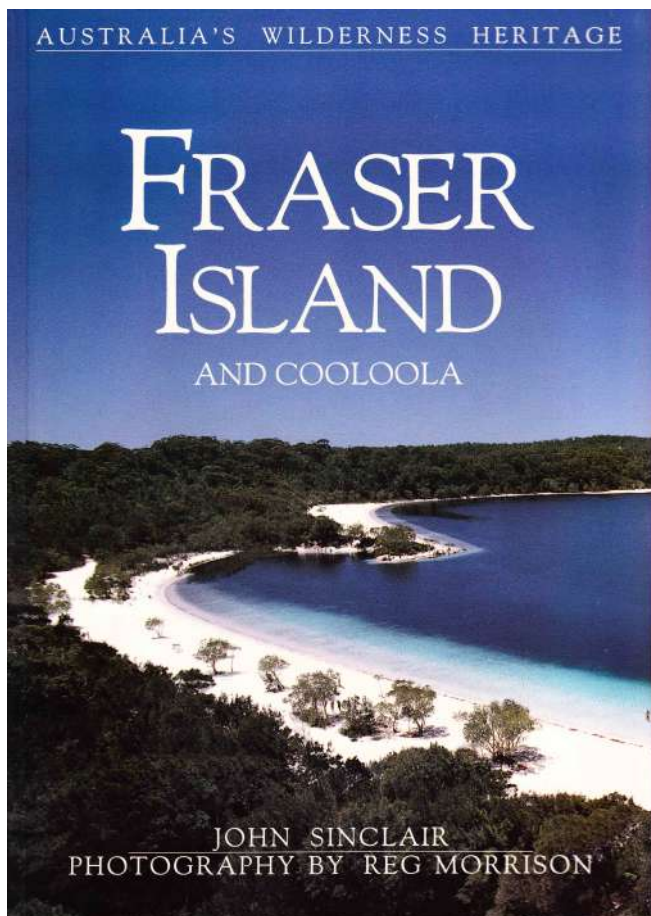
One of the values for which Fraser Island was inscribed on the World Heritage List was its aesthetic values. This meant that it had to be judged to meet this criteria: *to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;*

The Australian Government's describes the values that Fraser Island displayed to satisfy this criteria is as follows:

Fraser Island, the largest sand island in the world, has exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance and contains superlative natural phenomena including:

- * *over 250km of sandy beaches with long, uninterrupted sweeps of ocean beach, with more than 40km of strikingly coloured sand cliffs, as well as spectacular dune blowouts; and*
- * *ocean surf beaches, strikingly coloured sand cliffs, spectacular tall rainforests growing on low nutrient sands, perched dune lakes including both clear "white water" lakes and dark "black water" lakes, banksia woodlands, heath, patterned swampy fens and sheltered mangrove areas in a spectacular mosaic landscape.*

In 1991 John Sinclair provided the text for a coffee table book, "Fraser Island and Cooloola" published by Weldons with a brilliant cover photo featuring the iconic Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora).



This cover photo showing the iconic beach and the book's publication only slightly preceded Fraser Island's World Heritage nomination.

FIDO has been very critical of the way in which Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) was proposed for redevelopment. There was some dismay about the aesthetic appeal of the fencing and the benches around the Melaleucas when the Fraser Island joint advisory committees inspected the site in March, 2010.



The fencing raised many comments but now the landscaping of the beach has gone much further. FIDO was alarmed to discover the dramatic transformation of Boorangoora's beach with a totally unnatural plantation (albeit all native plants to the area). **With the new fencing and the artificiality Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) one of Fraser Island's best known icons has lost an enormous amount of charm and naturalness.**



The penchant for plantations on beaches has been previously well demonstrated by the QPWS at the Pinnacles where another plantation was established.



Trying to understand the QPWS *greenfields* concept

The QPWS regards “*Preserving/protecting greenfields*” as having priority over the protection of some of the more critical environmental values on Fraser Island such as stopping sediment movement degrading some World Heritage lakes. That is why this MOONBI analyses the undefined terms and some contradictions and implications. FIDO looks at just three aspects of where there appear to be inconsistency arising from the priority now being given to protecting “*greenfields*”. These are: (a) Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora), (b) firebreaks, and (c) wanton felling of trees.

FIDO takes the QPWS use of the “*greenfields*” term to mean existing (possibly previously unmodified) vegetation. We have to make assumptions because the term was never defined. It was trotted out as justification for QPWS inflexibility on getting all 4WD traffic movement out of the Lake McKenzie basin catchment. In view of some observed inconsistencies FIDO has been trying to interpret what “*protecting greenfields*” means for World Heritage values and how this new priority impacts on management.

Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora): The QPWS refused to budge from their preconceived 2003 concept plan to redevelop Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) because they claimed that any alternative would destroy “*greenfield*”. So despite FIDO’s strongest environmental objections the redeveloped day-use area now runs a major risk of accelerating sediment movement towards this iconic lake.

It isn’t only in planning the redevelopment of day use area that the QPWS has used the excuse of “*protecting greenfields*” to avoid action to save other values. Truckloads of sludge washing off the road into Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) could be avoided by rerouting the road well away from the lake. That would destroy *greenfields*. It is therefore this option that has been ruled out for two decades so far even though other parts of the Lake McKenzie access road have been rerouted at the expense of *greenfields*. ***Forests can be re-established but unique perched dune lakes can’t.*** It appears that the QPWS would sooner see Lake McKenzie continue to degrade rather than lift a finger to address this very serious problem.

None of the trees in the redeveloped area were deemed sacred. A number of very large trees removed as part of this \$3.4M project. However the QPWS conscience has been assuaged by replanting carried out on the redeveloped site and making unwanted plantings on the beach.

The question is why has the QPWS decided that “*preserving (one or two hectares of) greenfields*” is more important than saving a World Heritage lake when there are over 150,000 hectares of *greenfields* (that can be re-established if necessary) and there are only a few irreplaceable perched dune lakes on Fraser Island?

(b) Firebreaks: MOONBI 113 May 2006 dramatically illustrated the huge swathe cleared on Fraser Island for firebreaks. It was then estimated that at the rate of clearing “*Fraser Island firebreaks would expose more bare ground than five years of sandmining from the start of 1972 and to the end of 1976*”. There was a temporary moratorium following the exposure of the devastation of the firebreaks. However since then the vegetation beside more and more roads has been whittled away and for some miraculous and inexplicable reason removing this vegetation is not deemed as destroying “*greenfields*”.

The justification for widening the roads to such a width that a light aircraft could land in them was that in fighting fires, in the interests of safety the QPWS needed to be able to turn around 6WD fire-fighting trucks even though there are no such trucks used on Fraser Island.

In September 2009 a wild fire broke out in southern Fraser Island. It eventually burnt out 22,500 hectares. It ignored the network of wide firebreaks within the area and devastated the southern part of the island. It will take decades to for much of it to recover from such ferocity. The infamously wide Dillingham road failed to stop this fire despite the QPWS attempts. The loss of a vast area of roadside *greenfield*” was lost in vain as the fire just ignored it and raced northwards almost reaching Lake Boomanjin before it was finally contained.

If “*preserving greenfields*” is such a priority and if there are no huge trucks that have to be able to do “U” turns on the super-wide firebreaks and such firebreaks are no more effective than existing tracks, why does the development and maintenance of such wide firebreaks continue?

(c) Beware of anyone bearing chainsaws on Fraser Island: For some years now FIDO has observed and commented on the a series of chainsaw massacres of trees on Fraser Island carried out in the interests of public safety. We have seen perfectly good healthy specimens of trees laid flat and we have photographic evidence to show that the arborists got their assessments wrong on many occasions. It seems that the enthusiasm to squeeze the throttle trigger on a chainsaw may at times have over-ridden better judgement.

However it isn’t just in the felling of trees supposedly in the interests of public safety that *greenfields* are being grossly violated on Fraser Island. FIDO has become alarmed at a new methodology being employed to close off areas to the general public by going through with a chainsaw and felling quite healthy and substantial trees across the tracks. In closing the North Wabby Lakes walking track access at least five very substantial cypress pines were deliberately and vandalistically felled across one of the feeder tracks for the Fraser Island Great Walk to make it such an obstacle barrier as to stop people from now using it. However this technique has been observed elsewhere on Fraser Island.



The question is that if roads can’t be diverted because any new diversions would “*destroy greenfields*” (e.g. Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)) why can large, healthy trees be felled at will and why are tracks closed elsewhere without any prior environmental assessment?

Potent New Threat to Fraser's Forests

FIDO is now aware of a threat to Fraser Island's forests greater than that posed by logging that has the potential to decimate the forest. Myrtle rust is a serious fungal disease that affects plants in the Myrtaceae family. That includes most of the larger trees on Fraser Island. Myrtle Rust is now loose in Queensland and it is almost impossible to stop it spreading to Fraser Island. This heightens the need to address the long-neglected the effective quarantining of Fraser Island from the introduction of pests.

Myrtle Rust (*Uredo rangelii*) is a new fungal disease that has already been demonstrated to impact on an ever expanding list of plants in Australia's most widespread botanical family — *Myrtaceae*. Turpentines (*Syncarpia spp*) potentially including Fraser Island's famous Satinays are particularly vulnerable as are Paperbarks (*Melaleuca spp.*), bottle brush (*Callistemon spp.*), eucalypts and lillypillies (*Syzygium spp.*) Palms, Wattles, Grevilleas, Banksias, and Orchids are not affected. — only Myrtaceae.

Myrtle rust attacks young, soft, actively growing leaves, shoot tips and young stems as well as fruits and flower parts of susceptible plants. It can cause deformed leaves, heavy defoliation of branches, dieback, stunted growth and even plant death.

The disease was first detected in Australia (New South Wales) in April 2010. It has now spread to Queensland. Scientists believe that myrtle rust can't be eradicated. It produces large numbers of spores that are easily spread by wind, human activity and animals. It has the potential to spread rapidly and that is already evident in Queensland.

Although the fungus that causes Myrtle rust has not been found before in Australia it disease may have been present in Australia for at least two years. It belongs to a complex of diseases native to South America and also present in Mexico and parts of the USA (Florida and Hawaii). It isn't known how this disease entered Australia, but rust fungi produce microscopic spores which are easily carried by wind current, on people's clothing, plants or on goods that are shipped around the world.

The rust poses no threat to human health.

Myrtle rust produces lesions on young, actively growing leaves and shoots as well as on fruits and sepals. Leaves may become buckled or twisted as a result of infection. On turpentine and callistemon, rust lesions are purple in colour, with masses of bright yellow or orange-yellow spores.

Already Fraser Island (Kgari) Satinays (*Syncarpia hillii*) are threatened by climate change because they are at the northernmost limit of their range. However if this new rust reaches Fraser Island (and it can be spread very easily) it may impact many more species than just the Satinays. With *Melaleuca quinquinerva* and Blackbutts (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) on the susceptible list it is a grim outlook for Fraser Island. The range of species affected could result in an entirely different looking forest on Fraser Island in a generation's time if the disease is as potent as foreshadowed.

Scientists are baffled as to how to address this disease and sat that it's a "look and learn" situation in Australia at the moment. The only light on the horizon is that so far is that the disease is not responsible for 100% kill of infected plants and that eventually more rust resistant plants will increase just as the few rabbits that survived the initial myxomatosis plague were able to bred up a population of more myxomatosis resistant rabbits. That solution though may be along time coming and be too late for some species.

Fungal Attacks — A hoary chestnut

The American Chestnut was once the most significant tree in the Eastern United States. In 1904 a few chestnuts fell ill at New York's Bronx Zoo and the reasons were soon discovered to be a fungus that came to be known as the Chestnut Blight Fungus. It wasn't long before it this epidemic spread throughout the region. It is easily transmitted It had reached Ontario by the 1920s. By 1930 every American Chestnut had been exposed. By 1940 the blight had taken a toll on a staggering 3.5 billion trees. In 1950, the tree that had been so mighty and prevalent was placed on a threatened species list.

There have been other introduced diseases that have decimated what were once common such as Dutch Elm disease. The lesson to be learnt from the impact of introduced diseases in America is do not allow them to be introduced. The blight that killed this once dominant Chestnut trees in America came from Japan or China where it has little effect on their chestnuts. One Chestnut in the Yakushima World Heritage site is over 7,000 y.o.

Rusts are highly transportable. Their spores can be spread via contaminated clothing, infected plant material, on equipment and by insect movement and wind dispersal. These types of rust affect commercial plant growing operations and native ecosystems. They typically attack young plants and new growth on established plants. Although it can be controlled in commercial operations with the use of fungicides this is not feasible nor necessarily desirable on a large scale.



Blackbutt stumps in Block 14 are marked by people after clear-felling in 1988. Myrtle Rust may be as effective as chainsaws in decimating Fraser Island's forests.

Has World Heritage benefitted *Kgari*?

When preparing a paper on Fraser Island for the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland on “South East Queensland’s Dune Islands”, to be included in a forthcoming publication, John Sinclair was astonished by an unexpected conclusion that World Heritage listing had failed to protect *Kgari*’s unique values.

In considering what World Heritage listing has meant for Fraser Island (*Kgari*) he found:

- Visitor numbers had increased from 200,000 visitors to the Island annually at the time of listing in 1992 to almost 340,000 on the most recent statistics.
- Lake McKenzie attracts 217,800 people annually including about 117,000 free and independent travellers;
- In 2006-07 Queensland allocated \$8.81 per hectare to its National Parks while the Commonwealth spent \$26.80 per hectare and New South Wales spent \$24.8/ha.
- In the 1990s managing the dune island national parks cost more than four times per hectare the average for all Queensland parks.
- A 2002 independent study showed that 6% of the Fraser Island road network had moderate smothering and 7% had moderate down-cutting while a further 3% of the network suffered severe down-cutting or smothering. More than a tonne of sand is shifted 30 cms downhill for every visitor to Fraser Island.
- Sludge and runoff is being washed from roads into Lake McKenzie (Boorangoor), Lake Allom and other Fraser Island lakes in significant volumes.
- Fire ecologists continue to argue that the fire regime is far from optimal due to a lack of priority and resources.
- There has been a failure to adequately monitor the environment as epitomized by the delays in monitoring water quality in the lakes.
- Dingoes were not a problem when Fraser Island was inscribed in 1992;
- The number of weed species on Fraser Island has more than doubled on Fraser Island since 1992;
- The amount of research on Fraser Island has fallen off ;
- Studies on the carrying capacity transport and access systems were stopped in their tracks just as they were reaching conclusions that would have meant that hard decisions needed to be made.
- There has been a disregard of a free and open process for public consultation which has been reduced at time to tokenism and at other times in important areas such as determining Strategic Directions to farce.
- Natural landscape values that are part of its identified World Heritage values are being ignored and degraded.
- There is startling evidence that climate change is going to see every sandblow on *Kgari* disappear during the 21st Century at the current rate of colonization .

This list is not exhaustive but it gives an indication of a slow but progressive degradation. It illustrates that Fraser Island has suffered serious environmental degradation and that World Heritage Listing Fraser Island has failed to protect Fraser Island’s outstanding natural values. The degradation seems to have accelerated since 2002.



While the Listing of Fraser Island on the World Heritage was expected to add an extra layer of protection because the Commonwealth Government have particular responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention to protect those values. However, because the Federal Government delegated day-to day-management of *Kgari* to the Queensland Government and then failed to contribute more than a token amount to its management, it has done a Pontius Pilate and turned a blind eye into how Fraser Island is being managed.

FIDO still believes that Fraser Island still meets the World Heritage criteria for which it was nominated, but many of these values are increasingly under threat. More resources are required to monitor and manage them. Without more Commonwealth Government financial contribution to the management of the island’s World Heritage values and critical scrutiny of the day-to-day management, the environmental degradation will only continue.



Improving the Aesthetics of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoor) ?

The War On Weeds

FIDO continues to play a lead role in the war on weeds particularly in the townships of Eurong and Happy Valley. For the past three years the overall weeding operations on Fraser Island involving residents, QPWS, other government departments, Fraser Coast Regional Council, Burnett Mary Regional Group, the University of the Sunshine Coast and other voluntary organizations has been coordinated under the umbrella organization FINIA (Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance). Much progress was made through FINIA over three years through its employment of Jason Harvey as its weeds coordinator. Unfortunately the funding of Jason’s position has expired and he has moved on. However the goodwill developed between the above groups mean that FINIA will continue its efforts.

FIDO played a key role in weeding operations on Fraser Island. Based at Eurong in August 2010, the team worked with local residents to remove Asparagus fern, Mother of Millions and other pesky weeds in Second Valley. In February 2011 FIDO volunteers worked with Happy Valley residents to tackle Easter Cassia, crabeye vine (*Abrus precatorius subsp. africanus*) and Lantana.

Register your interest in participating in FIDO’s weeding bees with weed@fido.org.au



Buses once drove right on to Kgari's Lake Birrabeen beach; vehicles could drive almost to the edge of Wabby Lakes in the 1970s; camping occurred within metres of the waters of many of Kgari's creeks. Patterns of recreation have changed. They can be changed further for the better with goodwill,

No More Footprints on Fraser

In closing his tour business, "Footprints on Fraser", Kgari's only hosted walking tour program after several years, proprietor Bill Henderson told the QPWS:

"The success of walking tours on the island are hampered by the perception of Fraser Island as a fishermen's haven and 4WD adventurers' destination and few people in the community seem to be aware of this amazing Great Walk.

Changes to Lake McKenzie are welcome for the convenience of bus-loads of day trippers which at 3.30pm on 3rd November amazingly numbered 9 large buses for just one company alone. However the placement of their parking area and pathway to the lake seems to be thoughtlessly designed in running within metres of the walkers' campsite. I think it would be most appropriate to relocate the walkers' campsite to a more intimate and remote site around the lake.

Another disincentive to continue was that despite allowing nine buses at one time to drive right up to the fence surrounding the Boorangoora camp and non-hikers also using the camp, he wasn't able to use a vehicle to deliver supplies to the Lake Benaroon hikers camp:

This thoughtlessness for the walkers is most noticeable to me as the above mentioned inconvenience at Lake Benaroon was due to the respective ranger deciding that the presence of my 6-seater 4WD and trailer overnight there would be disruptive to the other campers there and meant that I had to park one kilometre away.

Problems for his walkers at Lake McKenzie Bill also cited problems at the Central Station campground:

"Perhaps it is a coincidence of the downturn in the backpacker market that noise levels due to drunken behaviour at Central Station during a tour in September were not as intrusive as they had been a year before but it would be good to think it was also a result of discussions between DERM management and industry representatives. For the peace of mind, pleasure and convenience of Australian families enjoying a traditional Australian camping holiday I do hope that behaviour never returns to the disgraceful levels to which they sunk during the years 2006-09."

FIDO is keen to promote Fraser Island as offering Australia's premier long distance walking track system with the 52 kilometre George Haddock Track extension.

Playing God on Kgari

While the QPWS has successfully prosecuted people who have played God by feeding dingoes on Fraser Island, the organization is yet to see the irony of their actions in playing God to establish tree plantations where no tree occurred naturally. Both actions are interfering with the laws of Nature.

Playing God by feeding dingoes: Some people are upset because some dingoes left to their own devices will inevitably starve to death. That is a law of Nature. Nature is naturally cruel on the weak. Evolution demands survival only of the fittest and all wild populations are limited by the source of available food. Many compassionate people find it hard not to intervene when they see hungry dingoes because of the relationship between humans and dogs for millennia. There is much less compassion though for the dingoes' natural prey, wallabies and bandicoots that are savagely and inhumanely killed.

Not all of the dingoes on Fraser Island are starving and there is a healthy population of quite fit animals and these are the Alpha males and the Alpha females that produce more pups than the island can sustain. That means that the weakest of these will inevitably go hungry and get progressively weaker. Some will starve but that doesn't mean that the whole population is starving. The fittest are in incredibly good condition but these are rarely seen because they have no reason to scavenge near humans. It is only the weaker and leaner animals that are most visible to Fraser Island visitors.

Compassionate people who want to feed dingoes should also spare lots of thoughts for their prey and how it dies.

Playing God with unnatural plantings: When and how the mentality became established in the minds of the agency entrusted by the Queensland Government to protect our Nature is unknown. What is clearly evident is the QPWS is guilty of an obsessive compulsion to plant up bare ground when it is natural for the ground to be bare.

In 1993 John Sinclair was threatened with prosecution because he removed a plantation of casuarinas established in a sandblow at Eurong. The QPWS though still hasn't got the message that, while some planting might be necessary to replace pre-existing vegetation damaged by human intervention, it is neither necessary nor desirable that any planting should occur where there was no pre-existing vegetation. That should rule out plantings in sandblows and on beaches.

JUST A THOUGHT

Nobody should hesitate to express passion for the environment. In the contest between economics and the environment, economics only prevails because environmentalists have been wrongly dissuaded from appearing too passionate about protecting the environment they love. Conservationists are told to be rational (as in rational economics) implying that they should be dispassionate and put aside their deeply held feelings for the environment. However passion and rationality are not mutually exclusive. By expressing our passion with relish and enthusiasm we can become more convincing and ultimately remove the supremacy of economics over the environment in decision-making.

Vehicle Free Beaches

Preserving Wilderness: The northern end of Fraser Island is the only Class 7 Wilderness in all of South East Queensland apart from a small part of Lamington National Park. The main reason FIDO supports to closing Fraser Island's Ocean beach north of Ngkala Rocks is to preserve the wilder qualities of Fraser Island's top End. Where motor vehicles access any area it shrinks the wilderness. How much it shrinks it is quite subjective. If wilderness was deemed to be only one kilometre from any area a motor vehicle could access, 25 square kilometres of wilderness is lost just by allowing beach traffic north of Ngkala Rocks.

Much of the Northern Fraser Island has already been eroded by the presence of beach traffic. If the North Wathumba Road was to be reopened (as many Orchid Beach landholders are pushing for) it would shrink it much further.

Apart from preserving the conceptual notion of wilderness, there is the matter of the protecting birds and other wildlife. An increasing number of endangered sea turtles nest in the Sandy Cape area. This is seasonal and almost exclusively nocturnal. Much more significant all year round is the impact on seabirds and shorebird. Fraser Island's Pied Oystercatchers and Red-capped plovers have been decimated since the volume of traffic grew and Beach Stone-curlews have retreated to the only part of the island that has vehicle free beach, the western side and the numbers of this endangered species has shrunk according to the shrinkage of its habitat.

It is the fate of the birds and other littoral life that particularly is also behind FIDO's support for the closing of the beach traffic on the southern end of the island and from Waddy Point to Middle Rocks.



Top End Vandalism on a Grand Scale

Vandalism and lawlessness is rife in the Orchid Beach area where there are blatant and open attempts to defy the Great Sandy Region Management Plan with people stealing government property, and using power tools and heavy machinery to break into a closed area.

FIDO has been concerned that last August we discovered that traffic was freely travelling along the full length of the North Wathumba/Platypus Bay road. When we inquired about this open use of the road when there is an alternative access to Platypus Bay via the South Wathumba Road we were advised that the road was not reopened by QPWS.

There has been flagrant vandalism and criminal activity to open this road to traffic from Orchid Beach despite QPWS attempts to keep it closed for more than a decade. Infrastructure barriers to prevent access at the Orchid Beach end of the road have been repeatedly destroyed. This has included gates, chains, concreted-in steel and timber posts and signs. Some of these barriers have required the use of heavy machinery and/or generators with cutting equipment to remove. A surveillance camera was even installed in an attempt to capture the vandalism / illegal entry, but the camera was discovered and stolen. 12 infringement notices and 25 warning notices were issued last year.

Defining a new Track

One of FIDO's most demonstrable traits during its first four decades has been putting the motto "*Conservation has to be fun*" into practice. In the last year this rule has been rigidly observed during our monthly meetings, inspections of the both Kgari and Stradbroke Island, weeding working bees and especially during the field trips to prepare the Environmental Impact Statement and Cultural Heritage Assessment for the George Haddock Track. It is small wonder that FIDO has never had to pay staff to achieve its outstanding accomplishments when there is so much in rich experiences and enjoyment to be gained just from participation.

The field work on the researching the route for the George Haddock Track and identifying potential environmental impacts has been particularly good fun. Two teams set out to define the proposed route that would have least environmental impact by utilizing pre-existing roads or logging tracks but avoiding any currently used roads. Working from a base camp at Lake Coomboo, one team worked between Lake Garawongera and Lake Coomboo while the other worked north to Arch Cliffs. They have been successful in finding 44 of the 52.5 kilometre route that now only has to be linked up with 8 kms of new track.

The next challenge was to assess the flora and fauna that might be found along the route to see how any impact can be minimized. This has meant another base camp at Lake Coomboo while the expert plant and animal botherers set off to discover as many plants and critters as they could identify particularly at the four proposed campsites that are likely to be most heavily impacted.

The Cultural Heritage Assessment field-work produced the most exciting adventure. It produced a story which John Sinclair has placed on the internet describing how it took more than seven hours to be extricated from being bogged in one of Fraser Island's infamous "black holes". Ironically despite the stress at the time this was one of those wonderful adventures that added fun to the experience



Jo Gala is in despair as attempt after attempt fail to extricate the impossibly bogged 4WD from a black hole during the cultural heritage survey. He succeeded though in the end by coopting the Butchulla Cavalry who came to the rescue.

The results of the field work is now being collated into a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that FIDO will place on the web when complete because it adds to our understanding of the island and its fragile environment.

News in Brief

A Very Wet Summer:

A very wet La Nina summer has filled all of the Fraser Island lakes. They haven't reached the levels of 1974 yet but much of what beach the QPWS didn't cover with its new plantation at Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) has now been submerged. It is also coincidental that the number of dingo attacks is linked to seasonal factors. There are usually fewer attacks in wetter years when dingoes have a greater natural food supply. Shark experts attribute the increase in shark sightings to a very wet summer.

The season adversely affected tourist industry. There were fewer campers and many of those truncated their plans for longer stays due to the unpleasant conditions. Traffic on the barges in January was 40% down on the January 2010 figures. As with the rest of Queensland other tourism has also fallen. Some of the decline could though be attributed to economic factors. The wet conditions took a toll on the Kgari's roads resulting in more and deeper black holes and more tree roots exposed.

The impact of floods in the Great Sandy Region isn't yet known. However massive amounts of sediment laden fresh water were discharged into Great Sandy Strait. The resulting turbidity in the water and on the sediment foliage impacts on the productivity of seagrasses slowing or stopping photosynthesis. Seagrasses are highly dependent on sunlight for growth. Persistent turbidity will eventually lead to seagrass losses. 1992 floods in the Mary River devastated Great Sandy seagrasses. This led to an immediate and significant decline in the dugong population (approximately 45%). Seagrasses are also food sources for marine turtles, fish nurseries and fish habitat, habitat for crustaceans and microorganisms that sustain creatures higher up the food chain. Seagrasses may over time benefit from the additional nutrients of the flood silt that may also carry agricultural pesticides and trace metals from industrial and mining activities.

Mercifully the cyclones which devastated the coast in northern Queensland avoided Fraser Island and so far the beach has not been stripped of as much sand as might have been expected.



Many Kgari Places to be Renamed:

After an inordinate delay Queensland Government has finally moved to recognise the Indigenous heritage on Fraser Island applying indigenous names to features that had never been officially given place names and by giving some locations dual names. Most of the island's original place names remain with some changes to the names of sandblows.

Most significantly, many indigenous will now be recognized beside the official name such as Fraser Island (**Kgari**); Lake McKenzie (**Boorangoora**); Basin Lake (**Tahwan**); Middle Rocks (**Berabee** and **Callah**); Indian Head (**Tuckee**); Waddy Point (**Binngih**); Big Woody Island (**Tooliwah**); Little Woody Island (**Walangoora**); Stewart Island (**Coonangoor**); Yankee Jack Creek (**Tumbowah**); Fig Tree Lake (**Goomboor**); North White Cliffs (**Balarran**).

Kingfisher Acquires Top Tours:

In late October the Fraser Island Company (that ran Top Tours) went into administration owing what is believed to be more than \$3m is owed to the Australian Taxation Office, the Fraser Coast Regional Council and various other various unsecured investors. The Fraser Island Company won several regional, state and national awards for the tour and accommodation services operated at Cathedral Beach. A number of companies tendered to acquire the assets of the Top Tours part of the business. Kingfisher won out. So far though administrators have failed to yet sell two other major assets of the Fraser Island Company, the Cathedral Beach and Happy Valley Resorts.

When Kingfisher Resort relocated its passenger service hub from Hervey Bay has brought pain and gain to various businesses. One year after the transfer Marina-based businesses in Hervey Bay have been badly hit by the decline in the numbers of people passing through, while the River Heads economy with local traders positive about the future. The Kingfisher Group is undergoing other significant changes in its Fraser Island operations. There is no longer a vehicular ferry service operating between Urangan and Moon Point which was formerly the entry point to Fraser Island for Top Tours. Also Kingfisher's long-time Island Manager, Ivor Davies, has retired.



Fraser Fishing Zone Opposed:

Opposition continues to Federal Government plans to create no take zones in the Coral Sea and off the southern tip of Fraser Island. While the Gympie Regional Mayor is fighting the proposal the Australian Marine Conservation Society is claiming that *"The vast majority of fishers who actually operate in the area are happy for the area to be protected as long as they receive fair compensation."* In addition to moves by the Federal Government the Queensland Government is also trying to compensate for the overfishing that has occurred by adding some fishing bans of its own. In February it introduced a six-week ban on snapper, teraglin jew and pearl perch is a move by Queensland Government to allow the overfished species to regenerate. Even the fishing industry acknowledges that snapper are overfished and that's snapper.

Dingo Lover In the News:

There have been headlines, book launches, fundraisers, and TV programs covering the story of Jennifer Parkhurst who copped a \$40,000 fine and a three year suspended jail sentence when she pleaded guilty to regularly and knowingly feeding Fraser Island dingoes in contravention of the law. FIDO needs to point out that the Law of Nature is that it is because more animals are born than can survive, it is inevitable that some will starve to death. Nature is cruel but we shouldn't be playing God and interfering with Nature by feeding dingoes and building up a larger unsustainable population. Some of the information provided in the Save the Dingo campaign is plain wrong. The dingo population on Fraser Island is overall very healthy and are not in danger of being obliterated by current government policies and there is no basis for claiming that any are being poisoned.

**FRASER ISLAND DEFENDERS ORGANISATION
LIMITED**

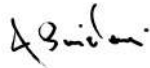
NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited will be held at 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO 4151 at 7.30 p.m., Wednesday, 17th 8th August, 2010.

BUSINESS:

1. To receive the Profit and Loss Statement, Balance Sheets and Reports of the Directors and Auditors
2. To elect Directors for the ensuing term in accordance with the Articles of Association.
3. Agreeing to be no longer be registered under the Charities Act.
4. To amend Articles of Association by deleting from 15. the words "but not later than two months after the end of the financial year" and in Article 46, replacing "will" with "may" and deleting "at least once in every calendar month and may",
The 1976 constitution was altered with the above wording to enable FIDO to be sanctioned under the Charities Act which isn't now deemed necessary. It adds considerable extra expense to comply with both the State Charities Act and the Federal Companies Act
5. General Business.

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD



John Sinclair Honorary Secretary
DATED this 31st day of March, 2011

Forty Years of FIDO

FIDO is now officially 40. It began as an unincorporated association as the Fraser Island DEFENCE Organisation in February 1971. Because of political hostility became decided to incorporate as a company limited by public guarantee, a process free of political interference and has had that constitution since 1976.

This year is a significant one in FIDO's proud history and we are marking it with what we plan to be our best biennial conference yet.

The conference should have a very colourful opening by the very talented and entertaining Butchulla, Joe Gala

FIDO is honoured to have Prof Arthur Georges as the Conference Keynote Speaker. Having done his PhD studies on Fraser Island, Prof Georges now heads the University of Canberra's Institute for Applied Ecology which does a lot of conservation research, including on endangered fish and limnology.

The conference will then concentrate on papers dealing with papers addressing Fraser Island's and the Great Sandy Region's natural attributes during the morning session and papers addressing influences and impacts on the Fraser Island management in the afternoon session. We already have in hand a number of abstracts but plan to post the final program on and all of the abstracts on the FIDO web site by mid April

Already we have had interest from interstate and overseas and it promises to be a most interesting and lively conference and we look forward to building on the experience of previous conferences to stage the best Fraser Island conference yet. Pre-bookings are not necessary. Registration will be accepted at the door on the day but if you are interested in Fraser Island in any way this is a conference that shouldn't be missed. Check out the details at www.fido.org.au.



URGENT

Section 248 of the Companies (Queensland) Code provides that all members be given 21 days notice of any meeting (including A.G.M.s) at which they are entitled to vote. It is important that as many proxies as possible are received. The Proxy Form is also taken as your apology for non-attendance. This form (or a copy) should be completed under Article 31 of the constitution. **If you cannot attend the meeting please photocopy this form and return it promptly** to reach Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by Tuesday, 10th August, 2010

Nomination Form for FIDO Office Bearers

To be returned to: Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by Tuesday, 16th 8th August, 2010

We,and
being financial members of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization
hereby nominate
for the position of for the 2011 - 12 term
Signed..... Nominator
Signed..... Seconder

Fourth Biennial Great Sandy Conference

FIDO @ Forty

Friday, 29th July, 2011

9.00 am to 5.00 pm

**Walkabout Creek Visitor Centre
Mt Nebo Road, The Gap, Brisbane**

**COST: \$60 for FIDO members — \$80 for non-members
includes a light lunch**