



MOONBI 126

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

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There is an ever-growing concern about the impact of alien species (plant and animal) on the natural integrity of Fraser Island. This issue features a number of stories on how FIDO is fighting off the alien invaders. (pp 3-6)

Weeds: FIDO has received some welcome support for its continuing War on Weeds from the Commonwealth Government in the form of a \$19,950 Caring for Country Grant. This will enable FIDO to double our efforts over the coming twelve months to address the problems in one of the four major centres of infestation on Fraser Island at Eurong

The gain in funding for this specific proposal though may not help FIDO's funding to survive. All of this money has to be expended on the actual weed replacement project in Eurong. It will not help cover any of FIDO's administrative expenses. (Story p4 and the flier on this MOONBI's Wrapper).

Japanese Lessons: John Sinclair has written two articles on his recent study tour to Hokkaido that included the Shiretoko World Heritage area. On p4 he describes the consciousness with quarantine, something very significant for the management of Fraser Island. Managing Fraser Island dingoes is a breeze compared with the problems posed by 200 x 200 kg brown bears wandering around the Shiretoko. Many useful lessons are to be learnt from there. (See p 8).

Cane toads are other aliens impacting on Fraser Island's natural integrity. Discover the impact. (See p 6).

Queensland's Political Landscape: The biggest news since MOONBI 125 has been the replacement of 20 years of Labor government in Queensland that is resulting in a massive shake-up of Government and the public service. . The responsibilities of the former "super-department" DERM have now been hived off to six different departments. FIDO has already felt the pain with two years of promised \$5,000 grants being taken away. (See p 7)

Changes to the Bureaucracy: Few state responsibilities have been shaken up more profoundly than the "environment". Fraser Island now falls under the direct responsibilities of two Ministers. Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, Andrew Powell is responsible for all matters relating to wildlife including the review of the dingo Management Plan as well as protecting the Island's World Heritage values. Minister Steve Dickson includes National Parks in his very mixed portfolio. The destinations of the components that were in DERM are covered on page 7.

Dingo Attacks and the Review: A German Backpacker who may have consumed a lot of alcohol got disoriented and then got lost. He decided to go to sleep on the road 800 metres away from his camp only to wake up to find his life threatened by a mauling pack of dingoes. That story got headlines but it also found a surprising number of people support the dingo Management Plan and want to fence people in areas free from dingo threats. (See pp 8-9)

Founders: There have been some sad losses for FIDO with the recent passing of two people, Freda Goodsell and Arthur Harrold who played critical roles in setting FIDO up on strong foundations. Story p2

Backgrounders: The two backgrounders accompany this issue of MOONBI. Both relate some interesting recent history of Fraser Island. One backgrounder describes the history of naming features on Fraser Island. The other backgrounder traces the history of the village of Orchid Beach and how it evolved with land swaps and some questionable political deals.

Volunteers are still wanted for FIDO's six bush regeneration at weeks Eurong over the next 10 months. FIDO provides comfortable accommodation plus island tours in return for valuable work. See details on this MOONBI's Wrapper

Biennial Fraser Island Conference: FIDO has already begun planning for its biennial Fraser Island conference tentatively scheduled for July 2013 to be held in Brisbane. The theme will be "Great Sandy - a Natural Laboratory". FIDO is inviting scientists to nominate abstracts of papers they would like to present by the end of 2012



FIDO objected to allowing a carpark and vehicle movements in the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) because that would cause sediment to flow down towards the lake. In March hundreds of tonnes of sediment overtopped the sediment traps.

In This Issue

FIDO is about People, Freda Goodsell & Arthur Harrold.....	2
Confronting the Aliens — FIDO's War on Weeds	3
Support for the War on Weeds — Japanese Parks Quarantine	4
New invaders, Irukandji, Human Invaders	5
Clearing Fraser of Cane Toads	6
Changing Queensland's Political Guard	7
Shiretoko's Brown Bears and Fraser's Dingoes	8
Dingo Management, Scats and Collar and La Ninas.....	9
George Haddock Track, 2013 Conference, Inskip etc	10

FIDO is also about people

Whilst pursuing the “*wisest use of Fraser Island’s natural resources*” over the past 41 years, many great personal relationships have been forged through FIDO. FIDO members share common interests not only just in protecting the outstanding natural values of Fraser Island. We were recently reminded of that with the death of two of our founding stalwarts. The recent passing of two of the founders of FIDO back in January 1971 is marked with some sadness although both Freda Goodsell and Dr Arthur Harrold were both in their 90s. MOONBI remembers them. Friendships and networks continue to build through FIDO’s continuing efforts and the sharing of experiences.

Vale Freda Goodsell

The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation is mourning the passing of one of the last three founding executive members, Freda Goodsell who died on 29th March at age 92. Freda Goodsell was born in Tasmania and grew up there. In 1983 she returned to Tasmania with fellow FIDO VP Ronda Cook to participate in the Franklin Dam blockade. They endured rough conditions and were arrested and went to jail for the cause.

In the 1960s with her husband Tim, her mother and her three sons, Freda settled in Hervey Bay and quickly became engaged in the conservation movement to the extent that when the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation was formed in January 1971 she was a founding Vice President. Her home quickly became a second hub of FIDO activities with most of our meeting held there until the Goodsell family moved to the Mossman area of North Queensland in the mid 1980s.

Despite her geographical separation from Hervey Bay, Freda never abandoned her commitment to Fraser Island while engaging in moves to better protect the Wet Tropics. Freda was one of a group of feisty women who assisted John Sinclair in those difficult campaigns throughout the 1970s. He said that she was his staunchest supporter. She organized a campaign that saw him named as “*The Australian*” newspaper’s “*Australian of the Year*” for 1976.

Freda leaves a wonderful legacy for her family and FIDO, having seen three areas she fought to protect, the Tasmanian Wilderness, Fraser Island and the Queensland’s Wet Tropics all become World Heritage sites. Her contribution to protecting Fraser Island was her greatest achievement.



John Sinclair presented Freda her certificate as a FIDO Honorary Life Member at her Wonga Beach home.

Arthur Harrold’s Role

Arthur Harrold died in Noosa in April aged 94. Arthur Harrold and Lew Wyvill were influential mentors of the early FIDO leaders and generously passed on their experience from the 1970 Cooloola campaign. Few people other than John Sinclair know the significant part they played in the early days of FIDO and the fight of Fraser Island. The very name FIDO, the aim, “*To achieve the wisest use of Fraser Island’s natural resources*” and the plans to establish the organization were dreamt up in Arthur Harrold’s Noosa living room in January 1971 as a strategy to counter the newly advertised sandmining claims mapped out. Within a few weeks both would be undertaking a marathon march across Fraser Island’s Top End to Sandy Cape along the now completely overgrown Ho Chi Minh Trail to study the mining lease applications in this remote area. A black snake was seen to slither between Arthur’s feet in the fast fading light near the end of the trek and that suddenly put new pep into everyone’s step. Although Arthur’s Harrold’s name is synonymous with the conservation of Cooloola and Noosa, FIDO will not forget his contributions to the Fraser Island.



L to R: John Sinclair, Dick Eckert, Arthur Harrold and Lew Wyvill set out at Ngkala Rocks for Sandy Cape in 1971. Their effort caused two mining lease applications to be withdrawn.

Terry Hampson recognized

One of the great stalwarts of FIDO has been Terry Hampson who has been President, Vice President and Treasurer. Because of the breadth of his varied interests and contacts from sport, folk music, politics, philosophy, history and heritage amongst others, Terry is the initiator of many most interesting conversations around the table at FIDO meetings. His contribution to FIDO was recognized when FIDO recently conferred life membership on him. MOONBI apologizes for not reporting this event earlier. His certificate depicts some of Terry’s more memorable connections with Fraser Island although not the time when he was made an honorary woman so that he could help lead a safari of 53 feminists to Fraser Island

Confronting the Aliens

The impact of alien species on Fraser Island is a major problem now being tackled collaboratively by FIDO and 17 other agencies through FINIA. The problem is enormous. The number of weeds on Fraser Island has grown and the number of weed species has more than trebled in the 20 years since World Heritage inscription. The 1991 World Heritage nomination listed only 51 introduced plant species for Fraser Island. QPWS's latest weed list identifies 194 species of weeds increasing almost monthly.

The QPWS weeds list doesn't include many alien plants growing in domestic gardens on the island. Many of these have already become invasive weeds such as the Coral Creeper in Eurong. More have the potential to become weeds. The QPWS list identifies 106 species as "Localized" and, alarmingly 45 as "Widespread". 10% of the plants on the list are now believed to have been eradicated. The others are described as "Status unknown".

Many of the most recent weeds to arrive on Fraser Island as *Praxellis*, *Lotononis* and many grasses most likely found their way to the island as vehicle stowaways. Fraser's roads and walking then become corridors along which weeds are spreading. FINIA will be fighting a losing battle in the War on Weeds if any gains made against existing weeds are lost through new weed species finding their way to the island.

Grasses are major invaders: Of the 194 weed species identified on Fraser Island, the largest single group is composed of 40 species of grasses. This represents more than 20% of the weeds recorded on the island. Grasses comprise a disproportionate number of recent weed introductions. Many of these are pasture grasses indicating that grass seeds are being carried to the island by unsuspecting vehicle owners as stowaways in luggage and equipment or hidden under the vehicle bodies.

Australians expect their government maintains tight quarantine controls to prevent the introduction of new pests and diseases. They would expect that similar controls would be introduced to prevent alien introductions to such a special natural place as Fraser Island.



Frontline FIDO volunteers attack an avenue of exotic Brazilian Cherries in Eurong. These plants have escaped from home gardens into the bush and while originally limited just to Eurong's Second Valley, one has been discovered near Eurong's waste transfer station almost a kilometre away. Seeds can be carried by birds and may have been spread further into the surrounding Great Sandy National Park like lantana. However the most invasive weeds on Fraser Island are those spread by wind blown seed. These include the 40 species of grasses on the list.

The Battle Plan

The war against weeds on Fraser Island is being fought on several fronts simultaneously.

In the **direct firing line** are the target weeds that we aim to bring into submission. One front is controlling and attempting to eliminate the weeds that are there. In the last 20 years only 18 of the 193 weed species identified on Fraser Island are believed to have been eradicated. It is the objective to increase this success rate and hopefully eliminate the 106 species so far classified as "Localized".

A second front is to persuade landholders not to take any new plants onto the island. This will eliminate potential escapees into the natural environment becoming invasive weeds. Part of this **strategy** is to demonstrate to all landholders that they should only plant species native to the island. Part of this education is being done through demonstration gardens in Eurong village that FIDO has helped to establish. These aim to show landholders the attractiveness of native plants and to dissuade them from seeking to establish exotic plants.

Another part of this strategy is to **build up the capacity** of the QPWS Eurong nursery so that in future landholders as well as the QPWS can obtain all of the landscaping plants on the island without needing to import any.

Using only plant stock from the Eurong nursery helps the natural integrity of Fraser Island in a number of ways. As well as preserving the natural appearance of the townships that are an integral part of the Fraser Island World Heritage site, it also improves the biosecurity of Fraser Island.

On another front FIDO is fighting a sort of **guerilla war** as it strengthens Fraser Island's defences to **stop the infiltration by new weed species**. Most of the recent weeds that have found their way on to Fraser Island have arrived secretly without anyone being aware. That is because the weed seeds have been stowaways in the mud under vehicles or in the luggage and gear of hitch-hikers. Most of the more recent introductions have been pasture grasses that are now invading and being spread along the road corridors by vehicles. This has given rise to one very perceptive observation, "*Wherever fishermen go green panic follows*".

To stop this infiltration FIDO is advocating that new rules be introduced to require all vehicles to be clean underneath prior to getting to the island. FIDO proposes that the new Management Plan, now being drafted, allow for random vehicle inspections as vehicles arrive on the island and on-the-spot-fines for vehicles failing to comply with the standard of underbody cleanliness of carrying no mud under the body. Any vehicle failing the inspection should also be expelled from the island before it can spread its mud about.

There is a war on weeds. If we aren't to lose this and let the weeds conquer Fraser Island we need to strengthen our defences and increase our capacity to launch new assaults.

Support for the War on Weeds

FIDO is gaining more support to help it prosecute its War on Weeds. We now have a Battle Plan taking shape and we are being armed by the Commonwealth Government who announced in July that FIDO would receive \$19,950 to help it in the fight.

The announcement of the grant stated, “Township areas have been identified as a major source of weed infestation and spread on Fraser Island. This project will reduce the threat of non-indigenous plant species on the natural environment of Fraser Island by providing: seed collection and propagation of on-island sourced native species for use in home gardens and revegetation sites; development of an indigenous plant species selection guide for the Island's residents and private landholders; weed control and removal from public and private land areas within Eurong; and the re-establishment of native vegetation in areas degraded by weed invasion.”

Translated that means that Michael Lowe, an environmental consultant who worked as a volunteer for FIDO's last three working bees will be leading three trips to work on Eurong's weeds during the next twelve months. This project has an additional task to help landscaping demands from both the QPWS and the island's private landholders.

Michael is seeking volunteers for the three assaults on Eurong's weeds that he is planning for 14th to 20th October 2012 and 3rd to 9th February and 26th May to 1st June 2013. Michael's project will help extend the work already begun to restore the natural integrity of Eurong and build the capacity of the Eurong nursery to be the exclusive supplier of the landscaping plants needed for Fraser Island.

In addition to those three exercises, John Sinclair will also lead three other Bush Regeneration teams of volunteers to Eurong in the coming year. FIDO received a \$5,000 grant from the Mary Burnett Regional Group (BMRG) that has enabled us to make an impressive start in transforming Eurong Village from “Weedsville” to becoming a showplace for the island's natural integrity. These will have an additional role in furthering FIDO's monitoring of Fraser Island for impacts on its natural integrity.

Plan a Break on Fraser Island

Plan to have a week on Fraser Island discovering its natural beauty and helping to restore its natural integrity.

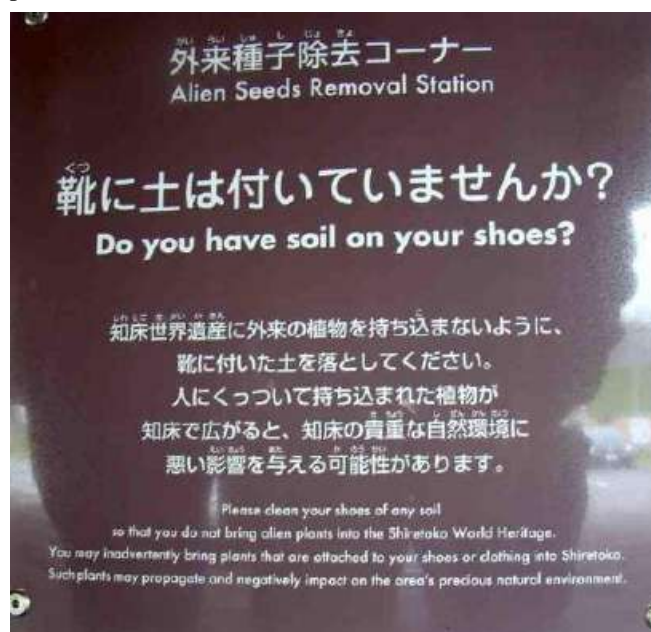
FIDO is calling for volunteers to for six separate weeks on Fraser Island between October 2012 and early June 2013. FIDO is seeking volunteers willing to give an undertaking to work a minimum of 20 hours during the weeks 14 to 20th October, 2012 and 3rd to 9th February and 26th May to 1st June, 2012 led by Michael Lowe an experienced bush regenerator and environmental consultant who has extensive experience in restoring Fraser Island's natural integrity.

John Sinclair who has led countless Fraser Island expeditions and safaris for FIDO over the past 41 years will lead three weeklong working parties: 25th November to 1st December, 10th to 16th March and 21st to 27th April, 2013

Details and Application Form's are on FIDO's web site www.fido.org.au.

Japan's World Heritage Quarantine By John Sinclair Honorary Project Officer

The first thing anyone notices before they enter any building in Japan's Shiretoko World Heritage area is the quarantine. These measures are not limited to Shiretoko. Every National Park or Ramsar Site Visitor Centre made everyone remove every evil pest before they entered into the protected areas they were visiting. One has to stand on a mat to disinfect the soles of one's footwear. There are signs warning people not to carry alien seeds with them past the entry point. These very innovative ways certainly raised public awareness on the threat of invasive weeds and other pests entering the parks.



I learnt that there was a very big volunteer program in Shiretoko. Because the area surrounding the most popular visitor site within the National Park (Shiretoko-Goko or Five Lakes) was cleared for farming in the early 1900s before farming was abandoned by the 1970s, volunteers work through the summer re-establishing the mixed forest that previously occurred there. Incidentally the lakes attract 3,000-4,000 visitors per day during the summer months (1,200,000 plus annually).

It was difficult to establish just how big a problem weeds were in Shiretoko because I didn't know what plants were weeds. For example, it was Spring and the height of the Spring wildflowers. The fields were carpets of yellow but most of those flowers were healthy Dandelions. For a week I dismissed these as weeds until I realized that they were authentic wildflowers like the wild azaleas and the cherry trees in full blossom peppered through the forests. The fact that weeds were not discussed in any literature we saw seems to indicate that Shiretoko's focus was on avoiding a problem. I did notice though at Mt Nasudate National Park there were photos of the most wanted weeds they were fighting to eliminate stuck on the back of public toilet doors.

Fighting off Invaders

Over the Easter period Kristopher Kupsch from the University of the Sunshine Coast noted the presence of a serious environmental weed *Praxelis clematidea* on the Fraser Island dunes at the entrance to Dilli Village. He notified everyone and there was a prompt response. The QPWS NRM crew was on the job within 24 hours. Luckily the patch had not yet seeded because the seeds are fluffy and are easily spread by wind. It is yet a new weed to be added to the numbers that have turned up on Fraser Island.

Praxelis is yet another weed that has windborne seeds that has arrived on Fraser Island. The threats of this and other new weed species making it to Fraser Island further heightens the need to ensure that all vehicles coming on to the island are clean and free of hitch-hiking weeds. It is inevitable that more weeds will reach the island without adequate quarantine measures in place and being enforced.



This photo on a backpacker's blog demonstrates just how dingoes are encouraged to lose their fear of humans

A different unwelcome Invader

In April a five-year-old girl was airlifted from the Hervey Bay side of Fraser Island near Moon Point to spend four days in intensive care. She had been stung by an Irukandji jellyfish. These very small deadly creatures are now regularly turning up near Fraser Island, hundreds of kilometres south of the deadly stinger's traditional home waters in north Queensland.

This extremely venomous jellyfish is able to fire its stingers into its victim, causing symptoms collectively known as Irukandji syndrome. Its size is roughly no larger than a cubic centimetre. Irukandji are usually found near the coast, attracted by the warmer water, but blooms have been seen as far as five kilometres offshore.

Following the reporting of Irukandji in the same Moon Point area by a marine stinger expert a few years ago, there have been moves by tourism promoters to hush up the occurrence of this dangerous and almost invisible jellyfish in Hervey Bay for fear of triggering any kind of tourism downturn. However the latest incident is proof positive that these tiny creatures are expanding their range, probably due to global warming. Other unwelcome invaders can be expected to follow suit as a result of climate change impacts.

So while skeptics scoff at the reality of climate change some people are suffering and some will die prematurely as the Irukandji continue to expand their range.

CROCODILES: The Great Sandy Region's warmer waters this year resulted in a large crocodile taking up residence in the Mary River late last summer. It defied all efforts to trap it. It seems that crocodile sightings may become a norm

The State of the Tourist Invasion

Tourism is high on the agenda of the new LNP "Cando" Queensland Government. Campbell Newman has cited tourism as one of the four pillars of Queensland's economic development. It was also a focus of Federal Liberal Leader Tony Abbott when he visited Hervey Bay in April. In one of his very first moves as Premier, Campbell Newman visited Hervey Bay, an area suffering a significant tourism downturn. He described a "thriving tourist industry" as "critical to reinvigorating the Queensland economy." He said, "Jobs in tourism account for about 10 per cent of the state's total employment, and nearly 30 per cent of all registered businesses in the state are involved in the industry." Mr Newman specifically mentioned Fraser Island.

Fraser Coast off the National Landscapes: Despite the promises to help revive Fraser Coast tourism the downturn continues. In August Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke announces Queensland's Wet Tropics as the fourteen National landscape being promoted by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia. The list includes most of Australia's natural World Heritage sites and adds a few others such as the Great Ocean Road and South Western Australia but conspicuously omits the Fraser Coast. It doesn't look as if the rhetoric about promoting the Fraser Coast is matching the reality when the Fraser Coast is so obviously omitted from the list and all of the promotional effort and energy that go with it. The National Landscapes program again demonstrates Fraser Island's Cinderella status to the Feds.



Hervey Bay loses Backpackers: At the same meeting to launch this new emphasis on tourism, Tourism Minister Jann Stuckey acknowledged Rainbow Beach's status as the island's mainland gateway. Many Hervey Bay businesses are currently feeling the pain as Rainbow Beach is rapidly displacing Hervey Bay as the main entry point for Fraser Island backpacker tours. Some former Hervey Bay backpacker businesses have relocated to Rainbow Beach.

Tourist Accidents: The recent dingo mauling of a German backpacker prompted some politicians to remark that they can't legislate against stupidity. Three accidents on Fraser Island over Easter kept medivac helicopters busy. The availability of helicopters on-call may be contributing to increased risk-taking on Fraser Island. Such a service wasn't available when FIDO was operating its Fraser Island safaris from 1971 to 1990 and there were no accidents that required professional medical attention. A 39-year-old from Burpengary had to be rescued by helicopter after he crashed a make-shift toboggan on sand dunes near Waddy Point dislocating his shoulder. Two Gold Coast women had to be rescued from the surf at Eurong after they capsized an inflatable boat. A 27-year-old, was floating face down when beachgoers pulled her from the water, while her 24-year-old friend suffering from exhaustion was also assisted back to the beach near Eurong. A Brisbane woman was camping with family at Ngala Rocks when she fell causing an injury to her hip requiring her to be airlifted to Bundaberg Base Hospital.

Clearing Fraser of Cane Toads

The greatest biological disaster to reach Australia to date has been the release of cane toads *Rhinella marina* (formerly *Bufo marina*). In terms of the extinctions it is causing, it seems to be having a greater impact than foxes, cats or rabbits. There is now greater awareness and a belated (perhaps too late) desire to address the threat that cane toads pose to the ecology of northern Australia. There is also increasing attention being given to ways to control the cane toads and hopefully purge Fraser Island of this scourge.

Sixty years after the release of a very small population near Cairns in 1935, the Northern Territorians were fully aware of the potential destruction of their wildlife with the advent of the toads moving west. Unhappily those predictions proved to be correct. While efforts to prevent toads arriving on the scene have so far proved to be just as futile in the longer term as the attempts to protect the wildlife tempted to eat them, there has until now been no attempt to clear significant areas of cane toads to re-establish some of the victim species.

FIDO's Trial Toad Traps: Being very aware of the impact of toads, some years ago FIDO imported three cane toad traps from Darwin to be trialed on Fraser Island. To work effectively they required an electric light to draw insects to them at night. Because they required daily attention and FIDO didn't have a daily presence on the island, we gave them away to be trialed by two groups that had access to a 24 hour electricity supply.

Two traps went to the University of the Sunshine Coast to be trialed at Dilli Village and Kingfisher. Because the University Ethics Committee couldn't agree on a humane way to dispose of the trapped toads, these were never used. Now nobody can remember where they were stored. The third trap was given to the QPWS to be trialed at Eurong but FIDO was never given any progress report of how it did or didn't work.



The culprit for the extermination of many species—the cane toad aka *Rhinella marina*

Fraser Island: Cane toads arrived in Maryborough in the mid 1940s and were almost immediately responsible for the extirpation of the district's quolls although at the time nobody bothered to draw the nexus between that ecological disaster and the cane toad's arrival. With similar indifference nobody recorded exactly when the first cane toad arrived on Fraser Island but it is believed to have been in the late 1950s or early 1960s. However, once on the island, the dispersal of cane toads away from water would have been slow because they need to rehydrate themselves regularly. Their migrations are aided by prolonged wetter periods. Thus it is uncertain when they reached some of the inland lakes.

The impact on Fraser Island's fauna wasn't noted except anecdotally. However it is known that the eggs, tadpoles and toads themselves are toxic to almost every species of animal that tries to ingest them, fish, birds, reptiles and mammals. It is also known that cane toads decimate the invertebrate fauna wherever they occur. Apart from quolls, the most obvious impact of toads on Fraser Island has been on the island's reptile population but more research is required to know the full impact and the extent.



Happy Valley 2010 — The death adder and cane toad both died as a result of each others toxins.

A few huge but non-breeding female cane toads were discovered near Lake Coomboo during the Fauna Survey for the George Haddock Track. There were no tadpoles and no small toads though. It was concluded that the acidic water in the lakes stopped them breeding except when there was a very wet season that diluted the acidity in the lake and lagoon waters and raised the pH enough for the tadpoles to survive. There is also some evidence to suggest that it may be a long period between when cane toads can successfully breed on Fraser Island such as after a big rain event.

If this hypothesis that Fraser Island's acid water prevents breeding for long periods is correct, it may be possible to clear large parts of Fraser Island away from the coast and creeks of cane toads. Thus FIDO is excited that some people are now seriously exploring the option of controlling these cane toads that can lay more than 30,000 eggs at a time when conditions are right and the pH rises to a level tolerable to their eggs and tadpoles.

Research Needed: There is scope for plenty of research on Fraser Island but it should be more possible to cull cane toads from Fraser Island than most parts of Queensland except the arid lands.

Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance (FINIA)

In 2005 FIDO attended a weeds workshop at Dilli Village convened by the Burnett Mary Regional Group to help coordinate the approach to the weed problems on Fraser Island. The meeting gave rise to FINIA that has grown to be a formidable coalition of 7 groups from State and Local government, indigenous and conservation groups and volunteer organisations all wanting work on weeds.

Changing the Political Guard

The defeat of the Bligh Labor Government in Queensland on 24th March marked the biggest swing in Australian political history since Federation. While many commented on the scale of the swing, it should be noted that the Australian electorate has become increasingly volatile with the scale of political swings progressively increasing for at least the last three decades.

The new Newman Queensland Government has set about changing the structures of the various State Departments. None underwent a bigger change than the former Department of Environment and Resource Management. Its functions have been widely dispersed amongst other departments. For Fraser Island the most significant changes are that wildlife and World Heritage have been split off from national parks.

Previously two Ministers were responsible for different aspects of the Department of Environment and Resource Management in the Bligh Government. Now these responsibilities have been distributed to more than six Ministers. However because the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is a statutory organisation, different parts are now to be administered by two different Ministers. "Wildlife" has been separated from National Parks. Ecology is based on the interactions of all elements of the environment and few interactions are more inseparable than the nexus between plants and animals. This is one of the less rational decisions in the allocation of the new portfolios.

Here is the list of environmental responsibilities with ministerial seniority:

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP) Minister Andrew Powell (Seniority No 11) assumes all wildlife matters (dingoes, crocodiles, koalas and maybe flying foxes) and shaping environmental policy. FIDO sees merit in separating the responsibility for overseeing the protection of World Heritage values. Significantly Fraser Island dingoes have been identified as specific part of this portfolio.

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (DNPRSR) Minister: Steve Dickson (Seniority No 17) has responsibilities as the name suggests and includes most of the old Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service but without World Heritage, policy issues and wildlife. Having seen the vastly more generous budget allocations for sport and recreation in the past, FIDO sees some merit in combining recreation and national parks. This may help us advance our George Haddock Track proposal that has been stalled due to insufficient financial resources.

Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) Minister John McVeigh (No 10) It still isn't clear where the responsibility for Marine Parks lies.

Department Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) Minister Andrew Cripps (No 12) handles all of the old water and lands parts before they went into DERM.

Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and Commonwealth Games – Minister: Jann Stuckey (No 18).

Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts Minister Ros Bates' responsibilities include the Herbarium. FIDO is particularly disappointed to see the Herbarium separated from the environment and national parks.

What it means for Fraser Island

It has been indicated that although the expanded Great Sandy is on Australia's indicative World Heritage list for nomination with the next few years and Cape York isn't, the Newman Government intends putting the Great Sandy on the slow burner and fast tracking moves to nominate Cape York Peninsula.

This is most disappointing. While the Wild Rivers protection may be withdrawn from some Cape York Peninsula catchments, we are assured that Fraser Island will remain a "wild river". Despite some suggestions of opening up some national parks for logging and grazing and even revoking some recent National Park gazettals, Fraser Island seems immune from these threats.

The FIDO-NPAQ proposal to build the 50 kilometre George Haddock Track to extend the Fraser Island Great Walk from Lake Garawongera to Arch Cliffs may be advanced by the combination of "recreation" and "national parks" in the one portfolio.



Fraser Island dingoes were part of the Newman Government's election platform. This collared dingo observed after the McKenzie area fire November 2011 provided great data.

FIDO's Funds Cut

In 2011, the Bligh Government had established that FIDO would receive \$5,000 per year for the next three financial years. That grant had provided the bulk of FIDO's income and it was judiciously eked out to achieve an incredible benefit for the government for this small investment. In recent years this small amount has helped FIDO:

1. stage the biennial conferences,
2. subsidize weeding operations on the island,
3. carry out planning work for the George Haddock Track,
4. produce educational backgrounders and MOONBI,
5. maintain a most visited web site
6. respond to calls by the Queensland Government for submissions on a wide range of issues,
7. participate in public consultations
8. provide a picnic shelter at Eurong,
9. monitor impacts on Fraser Island and more.

All office bearers for FIDO work entirely in an honorary capacity and provide their own office equipment and office space helping to make the \$5,000 provided to FIDO one of the best spent grants given to any voluntary organisation in terms of community benefits for dollars outlaid. The new Newman Government has now abrogated that undertaking leaving FIDO \$10,000 poorer.

The Government grant won't cause FIDO to go cease operating, but we now have fewer resources and we will be much more dependent on the generosity of members and supporters to function as we have functioned in recent times at a time when there is a greater need for the protection of the Island.

Coping with Fraser's Dingoes is easy compared with Shiretoko's Brown Bears

By John Sinclair who included the Hokkaido World Heritage on a recent study tour to Japan.

Despite the geomorphological and climatic difference, there are some surprising similarities between the Fraser Island and Shiretoko World Heritage sites. One of the most striking similarities was the problems of managing tourists and bears, these large potential predators. Shiretoko has 2.4 million visitors annually but the visitors most exposed to these 200 kg animals are the 500,000 who visit the five beautiful Shiretoko-goko lakes.

Shiretoko Peninsula is a UNESCO World Heritage listed area and has the highest concentration of brown bears in Japan. They are as important a value to Shiretoko as the dingoes are to Fraser Island. Like Fraser Island the bears that have been habituated to human handouts and habituation become aggressive. They can also smell if any visitors are carrying food. There can be little said that is different to the interactions between Fraser Island dingoes and humans.

To minimize unwanted threats from bears, Shiretoko has erected fences to exclude bears from the major settlements just as Fraser Island has fences around its settlements and campgrounds. Bears are also excluded from the Shiretoko-goko elevated boardwalks by electric fences.



Most of the 500,000 visitors to Shiretoko Goko's Five Lakes use this elevated highly electrified board-walk to keep them safe from possible bear attacks but for those seeking a closer contact with nature there are alternatives. This allows visitors to obtain postcard beautiful photos of the volcanic range reflected in the beautiful lakes. On the day of our visit the mountains were obscured by a dense fog but the lakes were beautiful in a different setting.

These present a risk to humans, particularly if humans habituate them by feeding them or are careless in their lack of respect for these large wild animals.

Because I was visiting in late May just as the bears were coming out of hibernation and were ravenously hungry, I had to be accompanied by a professional guide for the two hour walking tour. We were lucky to have an Ainu (indigenous Japanese) guide. He was experienced in avoiding close contact with bears and just in case he carried a capsicum spray that he hoped would be a deterrent to the bears. We each paid 5,000 yen (about \$AU65) for this most informative three-hour tour. A maximum of 300 visitors a day are allowed to do this guided walk.

We also had to undergo a preliminary lecture and were purged of any sort of food we might be carrying from fruit to biscuits. It was a fascinating three hour three kilometre walk that ended up on the 500 metres elevated walkway back to one of the four visitor centres for the Shiretoko World Heritage area.

The requirements from August onwards when the bears pose a lesser threat are relaxed and the accompanying guide is not required and the walkers fees are reduced from 5,000 to 250 yen but the comprehensive briefing and ban on carrying food remains.

Dingo Attacks on Fraser Island

While Shiretoko visitors quickly learn to have great respect for Hokkaido's 200 Brown Bears, many Fraser Island visitors can't differentiate a dingo from a domestic dog and treat them with a casualness that defies description. While the number of attacks have been reduced in recent years, they are still happening. On the night of 28th July a 24 y.o. German backpacker who wants only to be known as Justin was lucky to escape with his life when he was savagely mauled by two or three dingoes 800 metres from the Kgari Campground.

After having to be evacuated by helicopter and having two operations to clean and close gaping wounds, he told a reporter that he had watched two dingoes try to steal a bag containing food at the K'Gari centre earlier in the evening.

MOONBI will not make comment on how the man came to be attacked but it did show a lack of appreciation for the risks that dingoes present and a total unpreparedness to cope with the attack. His comments indicate that at least some dingoes at Kgari have become habituated to human food.

The story of the attack went worldwide and promoted a lot of comment. The *Fraser Coast Chronicle* Editorial demanded that all Fraser Island dingoes be rounded up and locked into a fenced off compound on the island to prevent any more attacks. The majority of respondents though were much more measured and on balance thought it better to fence in the visitors. That is exactly what is happening. Like the other Fraser Island townships and campgrounds Kgari is about to be fenced in and it will hopefully prevent other visitors becoming disoriented at night and going to sleep on the road.

QPWS figures show since 2002, when the current recording system was introduced, there have been 103 dangerous attacks by dingoes on the island.

One Fraser Island dingo pack attacked numerous tourists in the weeks leading up to Easter in the vicinity of the Kgari campground. After monitoring the situation at Kgari for some weeks rangers had "humanely destroyed" one animal that had been identified as being part of that aggressive pack but the identity of other dogs involved remain unknown.



Where did all this sand go? It ended up filling in Yidney Lake!

Reviewing the Dingo Management Plan

The new Government has moved quickly to implement its policy commitment for Fraser Island.

- *The LNP is committed to ensuring the long-term survival of a healthy and sustainable wild population of dingoes on Fraser Island.*
- *The LNP will commission an immediate independent scientific peer review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy.*

Within 100 days Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, Andrew Powell appointed a private consulting company Ecosure to review the Fraser Island Dingo Management Plan. He then appointed Professor Hugh Possingham, University of Queensland Professor of Ecology to chair the independent Review Steering Committee that will include Sue Sargent. While FIDO has some differences with the QPWS over other issues such as Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) we have been most impressed by the Service's handling of dingo management and the recent research that has been conducted that has helped understand dingo movements and behaviour and the diets of dingoes through radio tracking and scat analysis.

FIDO is comfortable with that policy, particularly the part that refers to maintaining a **WILD** population of dingoes because that is the most crucial part of the dingo management if the ecology of Fraser Island is to be maintained.

Skeptics of Dingo Science skeptics

The Newman Government may find it difficult to appease the "Save Fraser Island Dingo" group that believes that Fraser Island dingoes are starving and on the brink of extinction. Many of this group's supporters refuse to accept the research being undertaken by the QPWS and supervised by University of Queensland scientists to get a better understanding of Fraser Island dingoes. They have come up with their own estimate that the Fraser Island dingo population is closer to 70. The scientists reviewing the data obtained through satellite tracking believe the population ranges from 100 to 200 depending on the season and when the new litters of pups are born.

The data provided by the dingo tracking has been invaluable to the understanding of dingo movements and behaviour on Fraser Island. Despite independent observations by FIDO and others that the dingo tracking collars seemed to have no impact on the dingoes they were fitted to, even the tracking program came under criticism. A spokesperson claims, "*The size and weight of the radio collar apparatus used in this research, weighing half a kilogram, may be excessive with the potential to interfere with the dingoes' ability to interact normally with its natural environment, including its ability to hunt efficiently*".

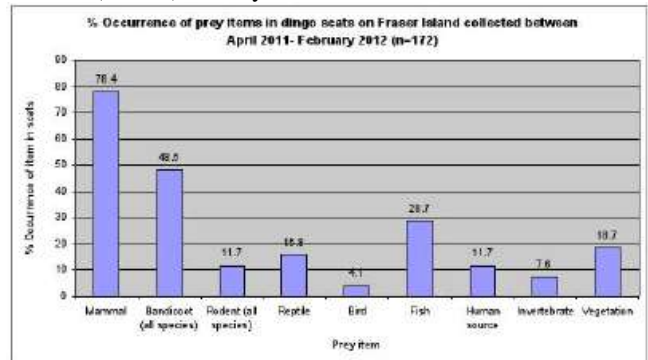


The QPWS is now working to rehabilitate the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)'s beach by removing the unsightly fence posts and the matting used to establish the plantation. FINIA is monitoring possible future degradation.

The Scat Analysis

For some time the Parks Service with the assistance of volunteers have collected dingo scats from across Fraser Island to investigate and report on dingo diet. The first lot of scats have been collected and independently analysed - the results are shown on the graph below.

The first batch of 172 scats were collected from areas from one end of the island to the other in late 2011 and early 2012. These were analysed to determine the different prey items present. Others just had a single item. Only 11.7% of the scats contained human sourced items indicating that the majority of Fraser Island's dingo population is sourcing natural foods. The results demonstrate the opportunistic diet of island dingoes. It also indicates that bandicoot (48.5%) and fish (28.7%) are key food sources.



This Fraser Island dingo scat graph shows that the main diet of the opportunistic Fraser Island dingoes is natural prey (Source: QPWS)

Two La Ninas impact Fraser Island

Two successive La Nina years have raised water levels in Fraser Island lakes to brimming full. While these years saw no heavy cyclones lashing Fraser Island, they brought a series of low pressure systems that impacted on the beach and roads, exposing beach rocks that hadn't been seen for a long time.

The down-cutting of the roads has caused countless thousand of tonnes of sediment to continue smothering many areas adjacent to the roads. While the flow of sediment directly into Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) seems to have been stemmed for the present, sediment continues to overflow the silt traps installed in the redeveloped day use area and fill the swale behind the lunette.

Restoring McKenzie's Natural Integrity

The Lake McKenzie beach almost disappeared as the water levels rose and drowned most of the artificial infrastructure that had been installed on the beach.

Mercifully the QPWS has moved to address a lot of the concern about the state of the beach and its visual appearance. Most of the fencing that could be removed with machinery has been removed but some remain in water too deep for machines to access. A larger problem has been the removal of the matting laid on the beach to assist the plantation to become established. It is proving to be more difficult to remove than to install. Unfortunately there has not yet been a decision to remove the plantation and some trees have become well established and may yet form a small forest. In a very positive response, the QPWS has invited FINIA to monitor the beach to ensure that the natural integrity is not degraded. FINIA is to establish photo monitoring sites.

George Haddock Track progress

When George Haddock died in in March 2008, in partnership with the NPAQ, FIDO immediately sought to honour his contribution to national parks in Queensland, national parks in general and Fraser Island in particular. It took more than a year before conditional Ministerial approval was given for our organisations to proceed with this project using volunteers. The main condition was that FIDO and the NPAQ would have to undertake all of the planning and produce its own Environmental Impact and Cultural Heritage Assessments before work could begin.

The route we have chosen will extend the existing Fraser Island Great Walk by 51 kms from Lake Garawongera to Arch Cliffs. This section will create a magnificent 160 kilometre walking track through Fraser Island's interior from Hook Point on Great Sandy Strait in the south to Arch Cliffs on Hervey Bay. These are the only two places where the walk reaches the coast. It will pass beside 12 spectacular lakes and traverse spectacular heathlands and rainforest. We aim to have the whole long-distance track named the Kgari Track. It will complement the 102 kilometre Cooloola Great Walk from Noosa to Rainbow Beach on the adjacent mainland.

Progress has been slow on the George Haddock Track due to very limited finances and the difficulty in getting adequately qualified volunteers to carry out the surveys. However we now have the data and are advancing to complete the pre-requisite assessments with the view to being able to commence construction next year on this most ambitious project tracking through some of the most beautiful and pristine parts of Fraser Island.



FIDO's four previous Fraser Island conferences have raised a wide range of issues from rail lines and off shore submarine features to dingoes and botanic topics. They have provided valuable new insights into the island's values and management.

Fraser Island — A Natural Laboratory

FIDO's Fifth Biennial Fraser Island Conference will be held in **Brisbane on Thursday 25th July 2013**. The conference theme will be *"A Natural Laboratory"*.

Call for Papers: This will give researchers in a wide range of disciplines a chance to present the findings of their research as it may relate to Fraser Island and its management. While we may use the shorthand "Fraser Island" to identify the central area of interest, FIDO is interested in the whole of the Great Sandy Region and particularly getting more data on the marine components Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait.

Details of the venue are still being explored and the Web site is being launched in September. However please reserve this date in your 2013 diaries now.

Fraser Island — Not a place to live

An article in *The Sunday Mail* in July announced that 47 of the island's 287 dwellings were on the market for sale. The asking prices ranged from \$190,000 for two-bedroom, fully furnished villas at Kingfisher Bay Resort to more than \$1.8 million for a four-bedroom beachfront pole house at Happy Valley.

The reasons for this high turnover in property has been attributed to the lack of services available and the cost of getting any item needed on the island. One resident pointed out, *"There's no bank, no post office, no medical centre, no chemist, no doctor, no hospital, no newsagents, no hairdresser, no school."* There are also no sealed roads, mains power or water and everything needed —fuel, food and hardware and even maintenance tradesmen have to be taken to the island at extra cost. To stock up on groceries, residents catch a barge to the mainland, which can add \$100 to the shopping bill and take the whole day. Residents also have to know how to operate a generator and water pump, and deal with their own sewage and waste disposal.

Revealingly only 56 private homes are lived in. In the 2006 Australian census 360 people claimed Fraser Island as their "usual residence". This number almost halved five years later with only 194 claiming residence in 2011.



Waiting at the End of the Rainbow

FIDO was a party that objected to the proposed development of Stage 2 of Rainbow Shores that proposed extending the Rainbow Beach urban footprint for several kilometres northwards along the Inskip Point peninsula and occupying most of the land between the bitumen road and the beach. Over 700 objections, including the majority of local residents and FIDO were presented to Council. In July, 2009 the State Government had also refused approval. After the Gympie Council's predecessor rejected the development application that would see the 3,000 dwelling units built, Rainbow Shores Pty. Ltd. appealed against the decision in the Planning and Environment Court. The trial ended three years after the Queensland Government's refusal.

Some of the unresolved issues dealt with in the appeal hearings included problems of storm surges on this exposed erodible and low lying peninsula, loss of critical wildlife habitat, problems of effluent disposal and there being no demonstrated demand for such a development. While FIDO was actively represented in the preliminary hearings, it was left to saveinskip.org.au to join with the Gympie Regional Council and the Queensland Government to sit through the heavy sessions of dissecting the evidence of expert witnesses. While Rainbow Shores is pursuing this protracted saga seeking a pot of gold, the majority of Rainbow Beach residents are opposed to this ribbon development that could destroy the tranquility and nature of their community. Details of the case may be found on Save Inskip web site: www.saveinskip.org.au