

FIDO's K'gari E-News No 11 (17th November, 2017)

Some FIDO initiatives to address the threats of Colton Coal to Great Sandy Strait

The probability of long-term and on-going impacts from the proposed Colton Coal mine on Great Sandy Strait are too serious to ignore. Our concerns have led FIDO, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) and other concerned groups including Great Sandy Strait Saviours, Lock the Gate and others to form a coalition to coordinate actions all directed at stopping this polluting mine.

Research. FIDO and MRCCC, with a \$20,000 fund, are embarking on a quest to finance some basic research projects to test our hypothesis that a mine, Colton Coal Mine, in wallum country between Maryborough and Hervey Bay City could have serious sustained impacts on the Ramsar listed Great Sandy Strait. Once we know the impacts based on real science we will be in a much stronger position this time next year to know how to proceed. Details of the questions to be addressed are on p2.

Great Sandy Strait Cruise/s: The campaign to stop Colton Coal is growing into a formidable coalition involving many conservation groups. FIDO is seeking to add to the initial \$20,000 Research FUND by reinstating Great Sandy Strait Cruises, reviving memories of our "In the Wake of the Rafters" Safari cruises through Great Sandy Strait in the late 1970s. Details of these are on p3.

Fundraising Event: Other Fund-raising events are being organized by the Great Sandy Strait Saviours. They are holding a concert at Noosaville Sunday afternoon 26th November.

Cadmium

Of the long-term threats to Great Sandy Strait resulting from the Colton Mine, the most enduring could be the accumulation of Cadmium. This is of great concern to our coalition. There are already scientific papers showing that *"the pathway within the food chain starts in case of cadmium in the soil via roots to plants, in case of lead by the air dust and in case of arsenic and mercury in the polluted water. During the transfer from one link in the chain to another some heavy metals may be accumulated up to the final link, man."* The anticipated levels of cadmium in the water released into the Mary River tidal reaches are 340 times higher than guidelines. While this isn't as high as Chromium (940 times higher than guidelines) and the very high levels of Manganese, the toxic effects of Cadmium are potentially much greater. It is possible that a result may be "Maaroom Disease" based on Cadmium poisoning instead of the now well-known Minimata Disease based on Mercury pollution.

Seasonal Volunteers

FIDO has a problem with our weeding program. The weeds grow best in warmer months but volunteers are keener to work in the winter months. As a result our July Working Bee in 2018 was fully booked within a few weeks of the call going out but we are lacking a full complement for our weed-busting / bush regenerations programs at Happy Valley from **4th – 10th February**, and at Eurong from **25th February to 3rd March**. FIDO Urgently needs to know that we have full complements to tackle the weeds that are normally at their most vigorous before they become more difficult to deal with. Our commendable results in bringing K'gari's urban weeds under control through our ongoing program is a result of having full teams throughout the year. We would like to thank all volunteers and our generous collaborators and sponsors in helping to achieve this. To sustain the progress made so far we need a few more volunteers. Fuller details of our weed-busting program and application form are on pp 5-6 but we need a few more summer volunteers.



Collaborators

FIDO's very effective weeding program is the result of a number of very effective collaborations.

- Firstly we receive funds from the National Landcare program through the Burnett Mary Regional Group's (BMRG) "Keeping it Great" Program. Without this base funding we couldn't afford the number of weed-busting weeks and sand couldn't plan ahead.
- We have wonderful collaborations with the Fraser Island Retreat at Happy Valley and the Eurong Resort. FIDO has established Weather Stations at both resorts whose owners have also provided other facilities and cooperation.
- The Kingfisher Group has also contributed to ferry crossings, accommodation for some overflow personnel at Eurong and with evening meals at the Eurong Bistro
- Working with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to expand the capacity of the service's Eurong Nursery has made available sourcing propagation material as well as much appreciated other assistance.
- The Fraser Coast Regional Council has provided us with a shed for storing equipment as well as cooperating on several projects.

The Sad Story of "Duckz"

For less than 24 hours FIDO had a fleet of two 4WDs to assist with our projects on K'gari due to a very generous donation of a Ford Courier by Peter Duck and Jenny Watt of Hervey Bay. We had already given this vehicle the nickname "Duckz". Sadly, tragedy happened as Duckz was being delivered and before the registration could be changed. While heading south, a hose blew abruptly draining the radiator and causing more damage to the engine than justified the cost of repairs. FIDO still has a five passenger Landcruiser wagon "Tahka" but we regret not being able to capitalize on Peter and Jenny's generosity with this second vehicle.

Japanese Lessons

John Sinclair has been assessing overseas World Heritage sites since 1993 to see what he can learn that might assist the management of our Fraser Island World Heritage site. He has now seen over 100 sites on six continents. His special focus is on Natural sites. Having previously visited all four of Japan's natural World Heritage sites, he recently visited the Ryuku Islands where parts of four islands stretching over 700 kms between the most northerly Amami Oshima and the most southern Iriomote which is only 330 kms from Taiwan but over 2,000 kms from Tokyo, are proposed for World Heritage Listed.



The four components of the proposed World Heritage site stretch over 700 kms

John Sinclair was keen to discover the World Heritage Outstanding Universal Value of these four islands that have been proposed for World Heritage and will be considered for Listing in 2018. They are subtropical islands at similar latitude and longitude to K'gari but in the northern Hemisphere. There are some similarities such as whales, turtles and dolphins but except for weeds a very different array of flora and fauna. There were many curiosities such as the total absence of seagulls and terns. There were some interesting Visitor Centres that invited envy from a Queensland where the State Government is so disinterested in establishing Visitor Centres. John Sinclair's Diary of his Japan Study Tour can be emailed on request by contacting john@sinclair.org.au.

Seeds on the Ocean

In MOONBI 136 we revealed that a new plant species, *Thespesia populnea* was discovered during a FIDO working bee. It was growing at the edge of a swamp in the first swale back from the ocean beach. The new discovery for K'Gari (Fraser Island) thrives on sandy coastal soil and is found widely in coastal areas of the tropics and warm subtropics but it seems it is the first time that one had been identified on Fraser Island. At first glance they look so much like cottonwoods (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) that are not uncommon on K'gari that they might easily be mistaken for them except for the leaves and it is surprising that it has taken so long to be registered as occurring on Fraser Island. However it appears that the seed may have been caught in the Fraser Island gyre, a small circular oceanic water flow between Double Island Point and Eurong and carried ashore.

Having just made this observation on Fraser Island in September, John Sinclair was blown away by how many *Thespesia* he saw in Japan's Ryuku group of islands. Here many had developed into large trees even small forests. It was easier to explain because the Kuroshio Current which is the North Pacific's equivalent of the Gulf Stream flows right past these subtropical islands. Keep an eye out. There may be other species on Fraser Island waiting to be recognized.



Thespesia populnea, common on Amami Oshima

The Queensland Elections

For the first time ever Queenslanders will be voting for a Parliament with fixed four-year terms on 25th November. FIDO trusts that we can get a government that won't be seduced by industries demanding government subsidies, or waive proper environmental scrutiny on the inflated promises of "thousands of jobs" and political donations. Whoever forms government in Queensland, we trust, will stop the rush to get rid of so called "Green Tape" at the behest of environmental destroyers so that they can maximize profits at the expense of the environment.

PROPOSAL FOR STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

A consortium of groups and organisations have grave concerns over the environmental impact of the proposed Colton Coal Mine on the Ramsar listed Great Sandy Strait and the Fraser Island World Heritage area that includes part of the Great Sandy Strait.

The consortium already has \$20,000 to fund student projects to test their hypothesis of serious and sustained damage to the ecology of the Great Sandy Strait resulting from the release of acidic water polluted with abnormal concentrations of heavy metals into the Mary River and also the impacts from containment dams at the mine site in the Susan River Catchment breaching or overtopping.

The research projects that the consortium is interested in funding require a basic interest and scientific background that will address the following questions, which may be broken down into a series of smaller projects:

Question 1

- a) What is the pH of the water likely to be released at the rate of 200 litres per second in the Mary River estuary 8kms from the Ramsar boundary?
- b) What will be the effect of river flow and tidal movements on this discharge both upstream and downstream of this discharge point?
- c) How will the cessation of flow across the tidal barrage affect the dispersal of the discharge water?

Question 2

- a) What will be the effect of lower pH at various levels on the biota of the lower Mary River and the Great Sandy Strait?
- b) How far are the heavy metals in the water discharged from the Colton Mine likely to be dispersed?
- c) How long are the heavy metals likely to persist in abnormal concentrations?
- d) What impacts can be expected on the fauna and flora of the affected area in the short, medium and long term?

Question 3

What data already exists relating to water quality and stream flows in the lower Mary River and Great Sandy Strait and what is the known impact of heavy metals to be discharged from Colton Mine on the ecosystem and human health.

TO SUBMIT BIDS

Students individually or as teams are invited to submit bids to fund projects that will address any of the above questions.

The Research Oversight Committee will consider bids on what they deem give the best bang for buck.

The criteria includes :

- a) **Timing:** The projects need to be completed by 15 October 2018
- b) **Capability:** The experience of individuals and collaborators to complete the projects
- c) **Availability of funds:** Projects can only be funded if resources are available. Early applications are advised.
- d) **Proximity:** Preference will be given to applicants close to the impact area

Proposals should be submitted by email to admin@mrccc.org.au

There is no closing date so as long as funds are available applications will be considered. It is hoped to begin the allocation of funding in March 2018

For further details contact admin@mrccc.org.au or john@fido.org.au

Online References to the Colton Coalmine can be found at

<http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/files/files/02%20Environmental%20Management%20Plan%20-%20May%202014.PDF>

Discover how great is our Great Sandy Strait

Wednesday, 13th December 2017

Departs Urangan 9.00 am returns 3.00 pm

Starts and finishes at the Hervey Bay Boat Club, Urangan where parking is available. The price includes a sandwich lunch on board.

Cost \$100 per person

(payment by cash only when boarding)

(Includes a contribution to the Great Sandy Strait research program now being launched)

The cruise is limited to 50 people. Only people who have previously registered by Email and received confirmation can be included. The \$100 per person will be collected on the morning of the cruise. This cruise is expected to be the forerunner for further similar cruises to raise funds for environmental research on Great Sandy Strait.

This pilot cruise aboard the Hervey Bay Boat Club's *MV Amaroo* aiming to explore the major geographical features and the environmental and historical values of this Ramsar listed wetland offers a special opportunity to learn about this wonderful wetland.

The cruise is being organized for a consortium of public interest /conservation groups aimed at raising public awareness and funds for research on the environmental impacts of the Colton Coal mine through the release of acidic and polluted water. This pilot trip will include as specialist guide, John Sinclair, OA from the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation, Lindsay Titmarsh, a local grazier who is an expert on mangroves plus leaders of the campaign reviewing the environmental impact of the mine.

From July to October *MV Amaroo* is part of Hervey Bay's whale watching fleet. It is a shallow draft 20 metre Catamaran that is able to explore places that most other cruise vessels are unable to access. For this cruise the anticipated travelling speed will be approx. 17kt . The route travels down Great Sandy Strait to Sheridan Flats, Garry's Anchorage, and Stewart Island, the most biodiverse part of Great Sandy Strait and the part that will be most heavily impacted by the release of polluted water from the proposed Colton Coal mine. It will also divert up the Mary River to *Tandora*.



To register: Contact Liz Diggles: lizdiggles4562@bigpond.com

If you are interested in future such cruises during January or March please also contact Liz. Your name will be added to a list to be advised by Email of future cruise dates

Call for Volunteers to work on K'Gari 2018



FIDO has been conducting week-long working bees to tackle the urban weeds of Fraser Island for more than a decade. These are both enjoyable and very satisfying projects mixing work, recreation and exploring Fraser Island.

Details of FIDO's past working bees based at Eurong can be found at www.fido.org.au. These projects are funded with grants from the Burnett Mary Regional Group for natural resource management. FIDO asks volunteers to contract to undertake a minimum of 20 hours voluntary work.

With support of other organizations aiming to improve the natural integrity, FIDO is determined to bring the urban weeds in the townships of Eurong and Happy Valley and close environs under control. Volunteering has progressively grown with each new event offered. Many volunteers are returning (some more than four or more times). As a result more recently our logistics have been unable to accommodate all applicants.

The houses we rent can accommodate up to 9 and with FIDO's 4WD we can provide transport from Brisbane to Fraser Island for up to 6 volunteers. We can assist volunteers who wish to take their own 4WDs.

FIDO provides the transport, catering and accommodation in comfortable shared houses as well as tours of World Heritage Fraser Island. Volunteers are asked to contribute 20 hours of on-the-ground work in return. Volunteers also need to provide their own towels and bed linen.

FIDO also seeks voluntary contributions to meeting some costs not covered by our grant (tours, travel and some additional catering – Happy Hours etc). This is a voluntary payment but for budgetary reasons preference is given to contributors. As a guideline we suggest \$200 (\$100 for concessions). This allows a more generous budget to provide a little extra and helps maintain FIDO's 4WD.

Eurong – Bush Regeneration and monitoring **25th February to 3rd March, 15th to 21st July and 21st to 27th October, 2018** **(Sunday to Saturday)**

FIDO has been conducting weeklong weeding –bush regeneration programs in Eurong since 2005. These have progressively transformed Eurong and dramatically reduced the weed threats there. All volunteers will be based at "*Talinga*", the former Sinclair family home. Work will focus on weeding, bush regeneration and building the capacity of the Eurong nursery as well as continuing FIDO's ongoing environmental monitoring programs. In 2018 this program will be led by Suzanne Wilson who has made such a great contribution to the nursery. John Sinclair will be pleased to show volunteers as much of Fraser Island as is possible in the time and he knows the island better than anyone else. Eurong Resort supports this program and provides dinner for the volunteers each night.

Happy Valley – Weedbusting **4th to 10th February, 29th April to 5th May, 5th to 11th August and 18th to 24th November,** **2018 (Sunday to Saturday)**

Peter Shooter leads these trips to help tackle the heavy weed infestation in and around Happy Valley. A group of up to 8 will share "*Kurrawa*", a comfortable holiday house in the centre of Happy Valley. The group will work to contain a particularly aggressive weed with poisonous seeds, *Abrus prectorius* *Var Africanus* that is heavily impacting on the vegetation but isn't found anywhere else on Fraser Island. Peter's groups continue their long-term battle to eradicate *Abrus* and prevent seeds being set for another crop of this virulent weed. As the *Abrus* comes under control the teams are increasingly turning to eliminate large woody weeds Easter Cassia and Lantana. As the major *Abrus* infestations come under control there is increasingly less need for the use of chemical sprays.



Fraser Island Defenders Organisation

FIDO — The Watchdog of Fraser Island

Aim: To ensure the wisest use of the natural resources of Fraser Island

Volunteering Application Form 2018

E-mail to john@sinclair.org.au or post to FIDO, 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO Q 4151

Places are limited. If a selection is necessary places will be filled in order of receipt of Application Form

Bush Regeneration — Eurong

Sunday to Saturday

- 25th February to 3rd March, 2018
- 15th to 21st July, 2018
- 21st to 27th October, 2018

Weed Management — Happy Valley

Sunday to Saturday

- 4th – 10th February, 2018
- 29th April to 5th May, 2018
- 6th -12th August, 2018
- 18th to 24th November, 2018

Title: Name:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Phone:..... Mobile

Date of Birth:..... Email:

Personal contact in case of emergency:

Title: Name:..... Relationship to

you.....

Address: Post Code:

Phone:..... Mobile:

Are there any medical or fitness condition we should know about for your safety? Yes No

Details if yes:

Any Special Dietary Requirements:

Do you need or transport Yes No If so from where?

Do you wish to use your own 4WD? Yes No If so make and model and rego:.....

How did you find out about FIDO's weeding bees?.....

Volunteer Work Agreement: As a Volunteer, I agree to abide by FIDO's Workplace Health & Safety instructions given by supervisors on the job. I acknowledge that my work is voluntary and that there is no financial payment. I have advised the Team Leader prior to commencement of the trip of any medical condition/s that may affect my work and medications that I may require in an emergency.

I have paid a \$ donation into the *Fraser Island Defenders Organisation Commonwealth Bank account:*

BSB: 064-007 Account Number 0090 2881 that should show on FIDO's bank statement

Signed:Date:

Butchulla Celebration Day at Central Station, K'gari

Saturday 28th October 2017

Report by Suzanne Wilson who led FIDO's contingent.

This was the last day of our week long Eurong working bee and our group of seven were invited to attend the celebrations.

On arrival every invited guest and Butchulla attendee were cleansed with smoke and water as they entered the ceremonial grounds. We then walked around the pathway which guided us around a beautifully constructed artwork of the Rainbow serpent made by Butchulla artists from coloured sand found on K'gari. Other artworks made from K'gari sand included birds, butterflies and turtles.

MC for the day was Gayle Minniecon, who kept the celebrations moving along nicely.

There was gift giving from the Butchulla people to the various sponsors including QPWS and Kingfisher Bay Resort. I presented a plant gift from FIDO to Elder, Nai Nai Bird, keeper of plant knowledge and explained the gift was to say thank you for the invitation to the determination day celebration and as a symbol of our ongoing friendship and collaboration.



Nai Nai Bird receiving FIDO's goodwill gift from Suzanne

The attendees were then entertained by the Butchulla men, women and children who showcased their culture and connection to country through song and dance. They performed on a stage of shimmering white sand that illuminated the dancers and the surroundings.

Everyone in attendance was then asked to call out to K'gari, "K'gari, K'gari, K'gari."

Afterwards food was served and a celebration cake was cut, and the celebration was over. It was then time for

us and many others to head home, via the last barge of the day to River Heads.



Butchulla art and dancing was on display around Central Station

All in all a wonderful day never to be forgotten.

Thank you and congratulations.

Three Butchulla lores:

1. *What is good for the land comes first.*
2. *Do not touch or take anything that does not belong to you.*
3. *If you have plenty you must share.*

More photos and videos from the day can be found on the Facebook page -Butchulla Country and People

