

FIDO's K'gari E-News No 15 (12th October, 2018)

A FIDO Review issues impacting on K'gari, Cooloola and Great Sandy Strait between Biannual MOONBI newsletters

Calendar of Significant K'gari events 2018

4th November Great Sandy Strait Boat Cruise
18-24 November Happy Valley Weeding & bush regeneration

2019

February Cooloola Colloquium University of Queensland
13-15 March BMRG's Australian Biosphere Conference, Maryborough Brolga Theatre
17-19 May Cooloola BioBlitz #2
31 August Community, Culture, Collaborations Conference, Hervey Bay

Restructuring FIDO

For almost 48 years John Sinclair AO has lead FIDO through all of its campaigns and initiatives. The fact that he was able to support himself throughout that period with paid employment as an adult education organizer and as leader of GO BUSH Safaris meant that FIDO was able to operate as a purely voluntary organization with a low budget and a low income.

For more than five years John Sinclair (now 79) has been battling with prostate cancer and FIDO is wisely planning a future without him. It is likely to result in a new constitution, a new business model and a different mode of operation. FIDO plans to complete these transformations during the current financial year. It will involve significant changes and members and supporters are being given notice of the changes being planned. Anyone wishing to make suggestions or have any input should feel free to volunteer or contribute to this process.

Cooloola BioBlitz – Spring 24-26 August 2018



BioBlitz:

A BioBlitz...is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area. Groups of scientists, naturalists and volunteers conduct an intensive field study over a continuous time period.

Source: Wikipedia

MOONBI 138 will have a much fuller report of the wonderful BioBlitz that has sent large ripples through the scientific world with the discovery of many new species and significant ecological implications resulting in international media coverage of the discovery of 37 new species of spiders. The discovery of the Boronia Moth resulted in further ripples through the media and the Cooloola communities. Head of the prestigious Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research, Prof Doug Hilton AO has a private passion for entomology. The moth discovery led him to make a private trip to study Cooloola's boronias and insects for himself. While this was going on FIDO and Cooloola Coastcare met to review BioBlitz#1 and plan BioBlitz#2 17th to 19th May to be even better.



By the numbers:

3 Days
48 Hours of Science
16 Expert Leader (Professional & Amateur)
97 Participants
5 Presentations
700+ Species records (so far)
4 Nocturnal field trips
2 Early morning bird walks
3 Artists

More Boronia moths discovered at Cooloola

Many more species of moths were discovered during a mini BioBlitz of Cooloola's four Boronia species by Prof. Doug Hilton last weekend (5-6 October)

Prof Doug Hilton AO is one of Australia's leading medical researchers who has a private passion for studying insects with a special interest in the tiny moths that pollinate Boronias which are in the *Heliozelidae* group

His trip to Queensland was the result of learning about the new moth discovered on *Boronia rosmarinifolia* during the August Cooloola BioBlitz.

Prof Hilton said that he expects that some of the specimens he has collected will be new to science which he will discover when he has had the opportunity to examine these in more detail back in his Melbourne laboratory.



Prof Doug Hilton AO pinning out the tiny insects collected in Cooloola for further study when he returns to his Melbourne Laboratory

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He said that his Cooloola research is part of an on-going project to unravel many of the complex interactions between these tiny insects and the boronias that include many threatened and endangered species and he is committed to returning to Cooloola next May with a larger team to continue his project.

During his visit to Rainbow Beach Prof Hilton presented a fascinating talk on his study of the pollination of Boronias that has taken him to every Australian state with a special focus on Western Australia which has the greatest diversity of species and also a long history of studying the moths adapted to each species. This public presentation formed part of the Gympie Regional STEM Hub's Science in the Pubs, Halls and Cafes program sponsored by Inspiring Australia.

While he was in Rainbow Beach Prof Hilton donated a valuable microscope to Cooloola Coastcare to facilitate the work of citizen scientists who want to assist his continuing project by undertaking field observations of the Boronias and any insect activity associated with them.

Cooloola Coastcare Coordinator, Dr Lindy Orwin, said Prof. Hilton's interest in Cooloola was just one of the outcomes of the Cooloola BioBlitz that had excited interest in the scientific community and amongst citizen scientists and she said that these collaborations will continue to grow with future BioBlitzes being planned with the next being 17th to 24th May 2019.

Website: www.cooloolacoastcare.org.au/projects/bioblitz



Prof Doug Hilton AO inside the net assessing what insects he has caught in his insect net during his visit to the Cooloola heathlands. Field Assistant, Marlene Walter (Germany) is similarly engaged.

FIDO 2019 Volunteering Program

Although weeds won't stop growing when the funding support cuts out because of the costs, FIDO is not yet able to commit to our proposed 2019 bush regeneration and weed management programs. Because the programs are centred on the villages of Eurong and Happy Valley, we are seeking financial support from the Fraser Coast Regional Council. When this has been settled, we will advise all those registered on our potential Weed volunteers list by Emailing our Call for Volunteers. If successful we aim to conduct six weeklong trips during 2019. We are also anticipating a small working bee on the George Haddock Track over the Easter Weekend.

Community Collaborations and Culture Conference

FIDO is continuing to advance the planning for the 2019 *Community Collaborations and Culture Conference*. We are collaborating with the Butchulla to stage our first conference on Butchulla Country at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Fraser Coast Campus on **Saturday 31st August 2019**. It is shaping up to be the most interesting and interactive of FIDO's 8 biennial conferences. Over the next few weeks we expect to lock in the speakers for the Conference and their details will be posted on FIDO's web site. The message now is to set the date on your Calendar for a fascinating weekend in Hervey Bay.

Saturday 31st August 2019
8th Biennial K'gari (Fraser Island) Conference
 Fraser Coast Campus, University of the Sunshine Coast
Community, Culture and Collaborations
 This Event is a collaboration between the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation

The one day conference runs 9.00am to 5.00pm. Allowing visiting guests to join a whale-watching trip before heading home on Sunday.

Four sessions 9.00am to 5.00pm

Session 1 Community: will cover aspects of K'gari that have important implications for the whole community. **Steve Biddulph**, internationally acclaimed social psychologist and advocate for wilderness experiences, and Keynote speaker for this session. He is author of 10 Things Girls Need Most, Raising Girls, Raising Boys, Complete Secrets of Happy Children and The New Manhood.

Session 2 Culture: covers a range of issues the K'gari has on our culture, with a heavy emphasis on Butchulla culture. **Wayne Blair** prominent Butchulla actor of national standing, ("Redfern" & other TV series & plays and producer of the movie "The Sapphires").

Session 3 Collaborations: covers the many collaborations working to manage the K'gari and protect its World Heritage Outstanding Universal Value. It is planned to have speakers from Federal, State and local government and other K'gari stakeholders will participate in this session.

Session 4 Open Community Forum: This session will operate along the lines of ABC's Q&A with members of the audience invited to submit their questions to the panel. It will be free and open to the public.

Further conference details will be posted at www.fido.org.au as they are established.

Great Sandy Strait Research progress

A research program into Great Sandy Strait partially funded by FIDO (\$10,000) to assess any environmental impact of the proposed Colton coal mine on the Ramsar and World Heritage site is progressing positively. However the research team from the University of Queensland led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ron Johnstone plus Dr Sarah McSweeney and Dr Dan Harris has yet to dip a finger in the waters of Great Sandy Strait.

So far they have been refining their modelling and research methodology and expect to be in the field and testing the water two or three times to gather critical data to establish just how far pollutants proposed to be discharged into the Mary River reach out into the biologically rich Great Sandy Strait and the possible environmental consequences.

If the study establishes that heavy metals released from the coal mine are likely to be carried into Great Sandy Strait, it will have far-reaching implications for the whole Fraser Coast marine ecosystems. It would also invoke the Commonwealth Government to take action under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to make the Colton Coal mine a controlled action.

Prince Harry's Visit & 37 New Spider Species

FIDO has been making lots of news lately. This is mainly a product of on-going activity. News requires something happening that is worth reporting and FIDO has been doing that.

The Royal Visit and the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy:

Few people were aware of the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy (QCC) for indigenous forests, nor of the role of Prince Harry as an ambassador for that program until the announcement of the Royal visit to K'gari (Fraser Island) on 22 October. Similarly few people took note when Prince Charles, declared in Bundaberg during an April visit that the K'gari and Bulburin (between Monto and Miriamvale) forests in Queensland had been added to the QCC. The visit of the glamour royal couple has changed the level of awareness. FIDO has been capitalizing on the visit to draw attention to the paltry contribution that the Commonwealth Government makes to protecting K'gari's natural resources including its forests. MOONBI due out next month will have more coverage of the royal visit.

Spiders: The BioBlitz referred to earlier generated very significant coverage. However that coverage was dramatically amplified when the media discovered that spider expert, Robert Whyte had discovered and identified 37 new species of spiders. The news was taken up nationally and internationally. Robert who has taken amazing spider photographs has allowed FIDO to place his report showing all of these fascinating critters on the FIDO web page. The impact of this has been more than just providing prurient interest. Spiders have been widely reviled and feigned arachnophobia has become popular. Robert's work is now giving some very tiny but very significant critters new appeal. It is helping to change public attitudes that have focussed interest on larger (whales) cuddlier (koalas) critters in preferential judgements. This results in other vital role players in the ecosystem such as earthworms, insects or spiders being overlooked by the public. Apart from being a great exercise in citizen science, the BioBlitz's are slowly bringing the whole ecosystems into new focus and slowly changing public attitudes.



One of the major discoveries is believed to be a new Australian spider family. (Supplied: Robert Whyte)



The crab spider has been declared the "most beautiful" of the 37 new species. (Supplied: Robert Whyte)

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Discover the greatness of Great Sandy Strait



Sunday 4th November 2018

**FIDO's last 2018 cruise departs Urangan
9.30 am returns 3.30 pm**

**The Cruise starts and finishes at the Hervey Bay
Boat Club, Urangan where parking is available.**

Join John Sinclair on probably the last tour that he will guide to explain the rich biodiversity and history of the wonderful Ramsar Listed Great Sandy Strait to where the two tides meet in this rich sub-tropical estuary.

Great Sandy Strait is now being considered for World Heritage listing but it faces some significant environmental threats, particularly from the millions of litres of heavy metal contaminated water that are to be dumped into the Mary River if the Colton coalmine proceeds.

Cost \$100

Cost includes morning tea, a sandwich lunch and a contribution to the Great Sandy Strait Research Fund into potential environmental impacts. The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation has long experience exploring this internationally recognized waterway. This will be revealed in the expert running commentary by John Sinclair and others. FIDO ran its first cruises on Great Sandy Strait in the 1970s. This is FIDO's final cruise for 2018 and due to John Sinclair's uncertain availability it may be our last. To allow better communication passenger numbers are strictly-limited to a maximum of 60.

Bookings are essential. Bookings can be made and confirmed by **Emailing: cruises@fido.org.au** Payments by credit card can be paid in advance.