



## Fraser Coast Branch Annual Report for 2017/18

### By President, Audrey Sorensen

Here on the Fraser Coast winter time highlights how special our area is. The Wallum has begun to bloom, the whales are about, the beaches beckon with clear waters. It is nature that makes this place so special and attracts so many visitors at this time of year and why our Branch's efforts are so centred around educating the public to appreciate and conserve our natural habitat and wildlife.

We have had another busy year and saw a slight overall increase in membership. We have about 85 members presently. We have a core team of about 12 who keep things going and many supporters. Despite our busyness and successes, some executive positions are still hard to fill; as it was with president this year. With much hesitation I took on the role again, which I have done in the past also on several occasions. However, considering my age and health it will be the last time and I will not nominate at our AGM this September.

In August last year we said our final farewell to Joan Coutts, with her passing at age 89. She had served as president of our group for many years and in recent times as patron of our branch.

Also in August we celebrated 50 years of Wambaliman. Wambaliman is the quarterly newsletter of our branch but has a colourful history, originating as the newsletter of Maryborough Field Naturalists and carrying the messages of several local conservation and wildlife groups over the years. Four of its five editors in that time, John Sinclair AO, Pam Soper OAM, Jenni Watts and Rod Jones attended the celebratory evening. We also published the booklet "This Wambaliman Life" which traces the history of the newsletter. Butchulla man, Dustyn Currie presented our group with a coolamon he had crafted from a Stringbark.

We hosted four "Wildlife Friendly Gardens" workshops in conjunction with the Fraser Coast Regional Council at three different venues catering for 25-35 people each time. Speakers include our branch members and Council staff. In March we hosted a "Butterfly ID Day" with Kelvin Neilson from Cooloola Nature speaking. We included displays from local groups. 75 people attended.

In the past few years our Walks and Talks program has been well received and we continued this year with similar success. Once a month we organise a speaker in the Hervey Bay Library. Bookings are essential, and the talks are invariably booked out with 50 people attending. Similarly, our walks program, now in its fifth year and held on the first Saturday each month, is often booked out. Depending on the walk we may have 25-45 people attend. For most walks we offer the main walk and a separate shorter less strenuous botanical / birding walk. The walks are varied; beach walking, mountain trekking, rainforest and wallum walks. These events attract a mix of members and non-members.

Our youth education team have visited schools on several occasions. One school invites our group each year to talk on bats.

We have had a couple of static displays in the library foyer which included our efforts to promote Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee's "Find a Frog in February". One of our members, Carol Bussey, also spoke to some local groups in February about frogs.

As with any Branch we attempt to promote ourselves and our cause at events. We have participated in Council's National Tree Day event in July last year and the Hervey Bay Botanical Gardens Open day in May this year among others.

Once a month we have a short segment on local radio. This year we started “Wildlife Matters” a monthly contribution in our local newspaper.

We maintain our webpage and Facebook page which has about 200 followers.

Behind the scenes we have a hardworking secretary who coordinates our letter and submission writing. A lot of effort was put into a submission concerning a proposed development including high density living and shops at River Heads precariously close to salt pans and mangroves and important wader bird feeding and roosting sites.

Our donation box, Fraser Frog, a beautifully crafted gift to our branch some years ago, is often present at our functions. It is testimony to the appreciation of the public that we have received about \$500 in donations in the past year. However, we consider our main fundraising efforts have been four sausage sizzles at Bunnings Hardware which have raised \$1400.

Our Branch has committed (for at least three years) to offering a student award at our local regional campus of the University of the Sunshine Coast. The \$500 annual prize, beginning this year, is awarded to a first year student of the Degree in Animal Ecology.

We had a couple of projects spilling over from previous years. The tree planting and assisted revegetation work in Woocoo Park, Tinana, has been taken over by Council’s Community Environment Program. Having been a Branch project which is now continued as a community project is a huge success. Member, John Williams continues with Indian Myna trapping and monitoring. Our branch received further funds to continue this work.

Recently we have decided on a branch shirt. It is pale green with the logo in bottle green and orange. We had such diverse preferences about materials that we decided on a few options from acrylic to cotton blends – with varying green shades. For those that prefer a long sleeve shirt the pale green was hard to source so we have a second option of stone or faun.

Finally, we have a very proud group of members who played a role in the recent single use plastic shopping bag ban. For years these people have spread the message with the large Poly Pelican model that debuted as a float and visited shopping centres, a “Say No to Plastic Bags” pantomime which was played to hundreds of school children and the making and selling of tulle vegetable bags.

Hopefully we have enabled people to experience, to appreciate, and to learn more about this wonderful world – if only we could change the attitudes of some of our decision makers.

\*Audrey Sorensen. July 2018