



Newsletter
**Moreton Island Protection
Committee Inc.**

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Moreton Bay Marine Park Natures Nursery, Brisbane's aquatic playground

Lissa Barr, Moreton Bay Education Officer, Australian Marine Conservation Society

Moreton Bay Marine Park is a beautiful tapestry of islands, beaches, corals, rocky reefs and seagrass beds. The Park stretches 125 km from Caloundra in the north to the Gold Coast in the south and includes both sheltered waters and open ocean beaches and reefs.

The Park sits in the transition zone of both tropical waters and temperate waters and is a relatively shallow marine environment. These characteristics, combined with a large input of freshwater from coastal rivers, produce the Park's complex yet fragile marine ecosystems and south east Queensland's most important aquatic nursery.

Moreton Bay Marine Park is home to over 740 recorded fish species, all 6 species of turtles recorded in Australian waters, whales, dolphins and dugongs. Amazingly, the Park is the only place in the world where significant populations of dugongs and turtles can still be found close to a major metropolitan city.

For the shark lovers, the critically endangered grey nurse shark can be found off Moreton and Stradbroke Islands and stingrays absolutely abound in Moreton Bay's sheltered shallows.

Looking in parts more like the Florida Everglades, Moreton Bay Marine Park is also a Ramsar wetland of international significance because of the migratory birds that travel there to breed and feed. Over one

quarter of the world's shorebirds regularly migrate along the east coast of Australia from as far north as the Arctic Circle and Siberia and roost in the Park over the summer months.

Moreton Bay Marine Park is truly a wondrous place, yet like other coastal areas around the world, its health and beauty is under threat from human related causes.

Every year 200 turtles are found dead in Moreton Bay Marine Park. These threatened and endangered animals migrate thousands of kilometres across the world's oceans only to be killed in Moreton Bay by boat strike, fishing nets and plastic bags. Unfortunately, these are not the only animals under threat in the Park.

In the last 30 years, dugong numbers have plummeted by more than 90% along our urban coast. In Moreton Bay 15 dugongs wash up dead each year. Once measured in herds several kilometres wide, we now count dugongs one-by-one. **Accidental boat strike, pollution, marine debris and fishing gear entanglements are killing these vulnerable mammals faster than they can reproduce.**

A loss of seagrass habitats, the dugong's main source of food, is also threatening the survival of these charismatic, gentle mammals. Since 1987, over 20% of Moreton Bay's seagrass beds have been lost.

The critically endangered grey nurse shark is also under threat in Moreton Bay. Less than 500 individuals now exist

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Please take extra care of our Pied Oyster Catcher when driving on the beaches!!!!

Moreton Island Protection Committee Inc.

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Statement of Aims

1. To promote the preservation of Moreton Island as a natural area to be managed for public recreation and enjoyment, provided always that the recreational uses are consistent with conservation aims.

2. To foster the conservation of the vegetation, fauna and natural features of Moreton.

3. To facilitate public awareness and appreciation of Moreton Island as a natural area and encourage support for its preservation and management in accordance with these objects.

4. To co-operate with, or promote co-operation by any means with and among persons, trusts, corporations, firms, associations, institutions, governments, instrumentalities or government, municipal authorities and other bodies in the Commonwealth or its Territories or elsewhere for the purpose of carrying out any object of the organisation.

5. To oppose any development or usage of Moreton Island which is contrary to the preservation and good management of the island in accordance with these objects.

6. Generally, to take such lawful action as it considers necessary or appropriate in the interests of promoting the preservation and good management of Moreton Island in accordance with these objects.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Moreton Island Protection Committee or its members.

Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, but the editors accept no responsibility for alterations made to articles.

Printed by Rex Leo ph. 3878 5248

Editor Alan Gennings,
Printed 15th December 2006

Moreton Bay Manager meets MIPC executive.

Greg Carter Moreton Bay Bay Manager met with the MIPC executive on Sunday 10th, to update us on Parks news and to discuss to review the Cape volunteer program. We were all appreciative of Greg giving up his time on Sunday night. Greg reported that he had received several favourable comments about the Information Centre Volunteers from Parks visitors. Greg advised that he would be recommending the program continue in 2007.

Management Plan stuck on Ministers desk.

Following the re-election of the Beattie government MIPC wrote to the new Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism The Hon. Lindy Nelson-Carr MP. In response to questions about the use of Moreton's ground water as a water supply the Minister stated.

"The QPWS is aware that some community members have suggested investigating the possibility of the future use of Moreton Island ground water to augment the greater Brisbane Water supply. Although QPWS has not been approached to discuss this issue, it would have grave concerns about the potential impacts and sustainability of such a project."

We also asked when the management plan would be released and the Minister replied "The Queensland Park and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has been developing a management plan for Moreton Island with key stakeholders, including your Committee, to set the future direction for important management issues on the Island. **It is envisaged that the final management plan will be released in the coming months.**"

Hon Lindy Nelson-Carr MP
Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism,
PO Box 15155,
City East QLD 4002

Phone 3227 6309

AGM apology

Dear Sir,

I regret I am a very inactive member but I am impressed with the work you are doing.

I fell in love with Moreton Island when I got my 30ft mast head slop. I loved the overnight anchorage at the sandhills and the walk over to the ocean beach. I was careful not to lie down on the sand for fear of being run over.

I think I joined early on and went to a few outings long ago including Blue Lagoon.

Now at 86 years I have had to give my boat to my daughter in Sydney because of poor eyesight. I have also had to stop driving so it s difficult to get out on trips. I cannot get to Fort Lytton for the next meeting but hope someday I may be able to see it.

I wish you success in your efforts to keep the island beautiful,
Yours sincerely, Bill Horsfall,
Toowoomba.

The executive members all appreciate the many notes of encouragement that accompany your membership renewals ,thanks!.

Tangalooma pledges support for 2007

Tangalooma has pledged to continue providing transport to Moreton and to the study site for the eel grass volunteers. The MIPC site is one of the most remote in the Bay and so Tangalooma's generous assistance with transport is a most valuable contribution to this project.

Editor's note

A special thanks to Patricia Cavanagh who arranged for Lissa Bar from the Australian Marine Conservation Society to write the timely article about the status of Moreton Bay.

Having opposed the fish cage project **MIPC is well aware of the lack of meaningful protection offered by Marine Park status.**

Probable Grassland Melomys sighting.

In early September this year, whilst camping at the Little Sandhills on Moreton Island, a group of four of us had an extended view of a small mouse-like mammal, eating scraps and generally scrabbling around our camp in the early evening. We watched it in torchlight for several minutes getting a very good view of a round reddish brown body with long stringlike tail, and one of our party suggested it may be a Melomys. On consulting our 'Wildlife of Greater Brisbane' we confidently identified it from the photo illustration as a Grassland Melomys (*Melomys burtoni*) especially as its habitat and range is stated as 'grasslands and heath fringes bordering swamps and mangroves on North Stradbroke and Moreton Island'. We felt privileged to have seen it as it is described therein as 'rarely encountered'.

When reporting this sighting to Lisa Ford, Conservation Officer for Moreton Bay District, she was initially sceptical, offering that it was probably a Pale Field Rat (*Rattus tunneyi*) as she did not think that the Melomys had ever been found on Moreton. However, she agreed that if it was listed in the W of GB the Qld Museum must have record of a positive identification. It's hard to be absolutely positive about our identification without a photo or specimen, but we are sure the animal we saw was not a rat. Maybe its time for a fauna survey at the Little Sandhills area to confirm this sighting, and see what else might be there.

Linda Back

Seagrass Watch Report

Four times per year we (one of many groups) survey eel grass sites in Moreton Bay. On Friday, 18 August, Paul Finn eel grass watch coordinator, gave his time to further educate us to distinguish between two very similarly looking seagrasses. He also installed a new gadget to monitor temperatures at the site. For this occasion, Neville (EPA Senior ranger), Michael (EPA ranger) and Paul Finn took us (Nanette and Petra) on the rubber dingy from Raby Bay across to our site at Moreton. At Moreton, Linda and Phillip joined us using 4WD transport provided by Parks and Wildlife. Again, we were delighted to see the many, various creatures/species in the mud flats at low tide such as, sponges, sea pens, anemones, tube worm, fan worm, razor clams, top snails; nudibranchs and sea cucumbers.

After completion of our monitoring we awaited the rangers to pick us up by boat. Sadly, there was a dying passenger on board: a Loggerhead Turtle. She showed signs of starvation and may be, this was due to a swallowed plastic bag.

The highlight of our return trip to Raby Bay was seeing dugong feeding on their precious seagrass Ovalis. I was extremely excited to see dugongs. After 7 years in Brisbane, I had so far only read and listened

to stories about these ancient mammals. Neville turned of the motor and there they were: huge shadows under clear water, coming up to breathe, circling the boat. We counted 5, 10, 15, mother and calve ... At least 25 animals. Wow! I still can't stop sharing my excitement with all people in my neighbourhood. *Petra Janoschka*

Parks fees paid by Tangalooma

"To simplify the discussion, the landing fee for the vehicles and the situation for visitors to Tangalooma have been excluded (Tangalooma ferries, as they do not land on the recreation area, do not need a recreation area permit to land on Moreton Island)" from Page 2 MIPC Newsletter Vol 28 No 3

In response to the above paragraph I would like to clarify how Tangalooma fits within the new fees being charged by the barge operators providing transport to the Moreton Island National Park, for the information of yourself and all other members of MIPC.

Tangalooma Island Resort is all private property and is not part of the Moreton Island National Park, as you would agree, visitors to Tangalooma not venturing into the National Park should not be required to pay this fee.

- All tours operated by Tangalooma into the National Park, pay a per person fee that is almost as high as an over night camping fee. (An individual going on a Tangalooma Tour for a few hours pays marginally less than a camper on the island for a 24hr period). I would surmise that you would agree with me in that a camper would generally have a far greater impact on the National Park than an individual on tour. This statement is particularly highlighted bearing in mind that they are under the supervision of an environmentally conscious tour guide, just as they are when they are on one of the day tours that you operate on the Island.
- All in-house guests visiting Tangalooma in their own four-wheel drives do not receive any fee exemptions. They pay the same as all other visitors to the National Park. This is only fair, as users should pay.
- All Tangalooma vehicles that are used within the National Park are fully permitted at our choice by paying the annual fee, even though some of these vehicles are exempted from this fee.
- Last month was generally quiet for the Resort, yet we contributed just under \$6,000.00 in tour bus fees alone to the EPA.

On another note, the resorts stance is that we agree with MIPC on statements regarding ATV's within the National Park and congratulate you on your efforts.

Regards, Trevor Hassard, Tangalooma.

(ed note; Trevor has been a long time member and supporter of MIPC joining prior to his association with Tangalooma. ATV, quad bike by another name)

AGM Reports August 2006

Guest speaker

Miles Yeates, District manager provided a report on various QPWS activities during the past year.

Barge Agreements have been finalised with the major operators of services to Moreton Island. The establishment of a booking system for camping permits is still being set up but is not yet operational. QPWS is actively fostering good relationships with traditional owners and seeking their input. Feral pig numbers are plummeting. This is due mainly to the baits that have been laid in sites where feral pigs are active.

Visitor infrastructure has been improved. The North Point campground has been completed and is now operational. Composting toilets have been installed. Solar pumps have been installed in several areas including Ben Ewa, Comboyuro and North Point. Brochures and signage are gradually being improved. Several monitoring programs are underway – shore birds, dugongs and turtles and Grey Nurse sharks. Miles also spoke about QPWS goals for the coming year.

He concluded with a presentation by JCU researcher Amanda Hodgson. This consisted of aerial footage of dugong herds in Moreton Bay, and clearly showed boats traveling over several dugongs. The footage was obtained from cameras mounted on a blimp over the bay. The most stunning footage was of a mother and calf separated by a slow moving launch. The separated calf panicked and in trying to rejoin its mother went straight under the launch in shallow water exposing it to propeller strike.

Presidents Report

Through lobbying MIPC and our members have been trying to ensure that the management plan will adequately protect Moreton Island. Of major concern is the fact that after several years, the Management Plan has still not been approved. In 1988 the MIPC newsletter announced that Mark Gough, from QNPWS had been set the task of developing a management plan for Moreton Island over the next 6 months. Eighteen years later and we're still anxiously awaiting the release of a management plan for Moreton Island.

On a more positive note the absence of a cane toad population on Moreton is nothing short of a miracle. Masses of cane toads have been on Fraser, Stradbroke and Cooloola for years. Cane toads have been found on Moreton Island, but evidence to date suggests they have not yet bred on the Island. Why has Moreton remained toad free despite several individual toads making it to Moreton. Part of the answer may be the largely undisturbed condition of Moreton Island. Moreton's predators such as the

carpet snake found dead with a dead cane toad in its mouth may be killing the individual toads before they breed. On the mainland the toads seem to advance as a wave apparently overwhelming predators by their large numbers. I appeal to everyone to keep a look out for toads in any freight coming to the Island and also on the Island itself.

The majority of effort by our members has been volunteer work on Moreton. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the executive for giving up Sunday nights to attend the monthly executive meetings. Special thanks are also due to those who keep the organizational wheels turning – checking phone machine and emails, maintaining membership lists and keeping the books in order. A special thanks to Dennis who is largely responsible for the rapid sell out of the 500 copies first edition of Sands of Time. Reports from representatives of the volunteer projects follow.

Alan Gennings

Sea grass survey Since March 2003, several MIPC members have been undertaking a survey of Seagrass beds on the western side of Moreton Island. The site is located at the Kounungai Red/White Light south of Tangalooma between the big and little sandhills. It is surveyed three times per year. The actual site is 50metres x 50metres. Information is recorded from 11 x 1 square metre quadrats along each of 3 transects (33 quadrats). These surveys assist in monitoring the health and type of seagrass and record the incidence of *Lyngbya* present at different times of the year. Seagrass monitoring is co-ordinated by EPA and a number of sites are surveyed in Moreton Bay. This is part of an ongoing Australia wide and worldwide seagrass-monitoring programme. MIPC is sponsored by Tangalooma Resort, which provides transport to and from the island and the survey site.

Trish Cavanagh

Weeds programme MIPC members have been undertaking weeding activities on Moreton Island for many years. I have volunteered to co-ordinate a MIPC project and to prepare a comprehensive project plan for QPWS. Various weeds will be mapped, the weeds removed or treated and the sites monitored for re growth and/or re infestation. (For further details see Janet's article in MIPC's previous Newsletter, July 2006)

Janet Dovers

Information Centre Volunteers It has now been nearly two years since Greg Carter (Snr Ranger - Moreton Bay District) first suggested to me the idea of MIPC members providing a volunteer force for QPWS principally with the object of regularly manning the Information Centre situated in one of the old lighthouse keeper houses at Cape Moreton. This culminated in February this year with a training day conducted by QPWS officers, here at Fort Lytton, attended by 20 keen

MIPC members, with a couple more, not able to come along on the day, expressing their intention to be involved. Subsequent reports in newsletters and by word of mouth, from those who have taken part in the 'on site' training weekends which followed at the Information Centre, have drawn further interest and enquiries from potential participators, so we are developing a solid base of volunteers to draw from; a very pleasing outcome so far. Once 'inducted', to remain listed as an active volunteer requires a minimum time commitment of one weekend per year. A long term aim is to have volunteers staffing the Information Centre on weekends all year round.

The training day at Fort Lytton was mainly an introduction to the staff, and management set up of the Environmental Protection Agency and QPWS, how volunteers fit into a government system, and what are their responsibilities, commitments and expectations. All this information is set out clearly in the 'Volunteer Manuals' which are issued to individuals when they commence duties at the Information Centre. The 'on-site' training sessions concentrated on becoming familiar with the various items of equipment located in the Information Centre office, and on safety and emergency procedures.

It is not a requirement that volunteers be very knowledgeable in all matters concerning Moreton Island when they are manning the Information Centre. Enthusiasm and a commitment to caring for the Island are the most valuable credentials. Primarily, they are providing a point of contact with the general public which is becoming harder for departmental staff to maintain as the administrative burdens of their jobs increase. To assist volunteers in answering questions from visitors, the Centre office has excellent resources in the way of reference books, and an online computer through which they can access the Department's website. Some members have already taken it upon themselves to research some topics raised by visitors.

Miles Yeates has recently given permission for us also to be able to display and sell our oral history book, 'Shifting Sands: Memories of Moreton Island' at the Information Centre whilst our volunteers are on duty. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to promote this excellent publication and the information contained therein has even greater relevance when available from the historic site of Cape Moreton. My sincere thanks to Miles for his support in this regard.

I am also very pleased to report that the scope of activities which can be carried out by volunteers when on duty at the Cape, has broadened to include helping with a Weed Control Program, co-ordinated by Janet Dovers, or with a project to re-locate and utilise the plant nursery (basically a shed, and some irrigation equipment) which has been languishing in

the Rangers' Base at Ben-Ewa. One of our long-time members and keen volunteer, Merv Tyler, has indicated his willingness to help with the initial planning and physical labour involved in the nursery set up. I will be working with him and Greg Carter on the 'Project Proposal and Work Plan' which, we hope, will result in an active seed collection and plant propagation program providing a steady supply of endemic, native vegetation for regenerating degraded areas in the Park.

Sincere thanks to everyone who has committed their time to this project, especially Greg Carter for his encouragement and support and Katya Thompson (Interpretive Officer) for her help at the Information Centre. All the rangers stationed on the Island and the staff at Cleveland have been particularly friendly and cooperative and I look forward to a continuing, mutually beneficial arrangement. *Linda Back*

Treasurer's Report MIPC is in better shape financially than one year ago. The main reason for this is the publication of *Shifting Sands – Memories of Moreton Island*. Although the loss this year is similar to last year, we have accumulated stocks at cost of over \$3,750 dollars. When sold this income will be more than offset the loss this year of \$2,503.

Income	2005	2006
T shirt sales	78	738
Donations	348	951
Conservation activities	1260	2525
Oral history project	0	6532
Memberships	905	1180
Interest	257	378
Total income	2848	12304
Expenses		
Auditing fees	770	605
Bank charges	18	2
Depreciation	23	0
Donations	45	45
Conservation activities	885	2122
Insurance	871	930
Misc	271	
Printing newsletters	1021	571
Postage and stationary	489	460
Oral history project	177	8870
T shirt supply	510	824
Telephone	294	204
Subscriptions	20	74
Total expenditure	5393	14807
Net profit (Loss)	loss \$2546	loss \$2503

Balance sheet as at 30th June

	2005	2006
Cash at bank	\$17,147	\$14,644

Stocks held at 30 June 2006

T/Shirts at cost estimate \$750

Sand of Time at cost estimate \$3000

Estimated value of stock at cost **\$3,750.** *Pam Schindler*

What's on!!! Ph 3321 1463

March 31 to 1st April 2007 National Parks Association Affiliated groups meeting hosted by FIDO at Elanda Point

National Parks Day 2007

The National Parks Association affiliated groups meeting for 2007 will be held on the weekend before Easter; 31 March/ 1st April . The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO) is hosting the event at Elanda Point.

Continued from Page 1 **Moreton Bay Marine Park Natures nursery, Brisbane**

along the east coast of Australia, yet we continue to kill them with fishing and shark control measures, such as shark nets.

But all is not lost. Moreton Bay Marine Park can still remain a wonderful aquatic paradise if we act now.

The world's marine scientists are recommending that between 20-50% of each marine habitat type in our oceans must be highly protected in marine national parks. If we can do this, we will secure the long term health and productivity of special places like Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Currently, only 0.5% of Moreton Bay Marine Park is highly protected in a no-take Marine National Park.

In 2007, the Queensland Government will carry out a 10 year review of Moreton Bay Marine Park. This process offers us the exciting opportunity to ensure that the health and productivity of Moreton Bay Marine Park is restored and its marine species are protected for future generations to enjoy.

You can help us at critical times by becoming one of our treasured email Ocean Activists. Visit the Australian Marine Conservation Society website to learn more and sign up as a Moreton Bay Ocean Activist – www.marineconservation.org.au/moreton_bay

What are Marine Parks?

A multiple use Marine Park is an area that allows people to do most things within the park including extractive activities such as mining, fishing and collecting.

What are Marine National Parks?

Marine National Parks (also known as green zones, protection zones or marine reserves) are places where all marine wildlife and their habitats are highly protected from extractive activities (e.g. oil and gas exploration, fishing). Marine National Parks have the same protection given to plants and animals in National Parks on land.

Does the public have access to Marine National Parks?

Yes - The general public has access to Marine National Parks - to swim, snorkel, scuba dive, sail, carry out research or any other activity as long as it does not involve the removal of wildlife.