

a flourishing partnership

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA (CVA) AND SOCIETY FOR KIMBERLEY INDIGENOUS PLANTS AND ANIMALS (SKIPA) MADE POSSIBLE A DRY-SEASON TRIP TO A REMOTE AND SPECTACULAR PART OF THE KIMBERLEY.

The unseasonable rain didn't dampen the spirits of the group, who were happy to have cool weather and cloud cover as they scrambled over escarpments.

The collection area is one of the lesser-known gorges of the western Kimberley, on the Hann River at the southern edge of the Phillips Range.

We hiked through low woodlands of red-brown sandy loams, exposed sandstone outcrops topped by spinifex, pockets of vine thickets growing on rocky screes and escarpment up to up to 450 metres high.

Canoes and kayaks allowed the group access to more remote country.

A surprising array of flora for this time of year was in flower or fruit: *Eucalyptus miniata*, *Melaleuca argentea*, *Brachychiton viscidulus*, *Calytrix exstipulata* (both white and pink flowers), *Cochlospermum fraseri* (kapok), *Grevillea* (*G. refracta*, *G. pteridifolia*, *G. wickamii*, *G. agrifolia*) as well as many varieties of Hibiscus.

In the water course, significant trees flourished: *Terminalia bursarina*, *Barringtonia acutangula* (freshwater mangrove) and a great population of *Adansonia gregorii* (boabs).

The vegetation growing in the nooks, crannies and waterholes of the gorge country took first prize: tiny ferns, liverworts (*Riccia*), waterlilies, *Stylidium* (trigger plants) and *Drosera* in flower (insectivorous plants).

We collected many specimens to send to the W.A. Herbarium for confirmation of identification — some new localities may be recorded. Seeds collected will be used in growing trials during the wet season.

The fauna was equally abundant. We found evidence of echidna, pale field rock rats, dingo, quoll, rock wallabies, fruit bat colonies, freshwater crocodiles, sooty grunters, cherabin, freshwater crabs, water scorpions, black-headed python, tiny brown frogs which may have been *Littoria*



rubella (desert tree frogs). There was an astonishing number of butterflies, including the blue argus.

Then there were the birds—blue-winged kookaburra, whistling kites drawn to the smoke of our campfires, sea eagles that had followed the rivers inland, willy-wagtails, restless fly-catchers, bee-eaters, fairy martins, bottle swallows (named for the bottle-shaped mud nests they build under rock ledges). On one of the hikes, we discovered a bower filled with bleached bones.

Three days into the camp came the Kimberley Kids' Gorge Challenge. Armed with a rope, a pot and a flint, all those aged 16 and under were sent into the wilderness to fend for themselves for the day.

Under the watchful eye of Beau Bibby, the kids hiked to one of the lesser gorges with specific tasks in mind. There were prizes for specimens bought back to camp: the most interesting scat, plant and invertebrate; others for cheerfulness, seed collection, the grossest thing eaten. The booby prize, for whiners and carpers — an egging and dunking in the river.

After their diet of green ants, termites, gubinge, boab nut and pandanus seed, and plentiful fresh gorge water, the children came back ravenous.

Dave Dureau (Father Christmas on a diet), regaled the group with campfire stories of crocodile attacks and fleet-footed dingoes.

Martine and the ACV volunteers impressed the group with their sand sculpture and culinary expertise, creating monster turtles out of river sand and baking bread (not damper), scones and chocolate birthday cakes in camp ovens.

CVA and SKIPA will continue to collaborate in vital work collecting and documenting indigenous native plants and animals from lesser-known parts of the Kimberley.
Jacqui Wright



REPORT FROM **THE CHAIR**

Hello all

Every now and again, when I learn something new about EK, I am struck by how far the organisation has come through the years — from its emergence in 1996 as a community group opposed to the damming of the Fitzroy River, passing the milestones of incorporation, moving into a permanent office and the employment of its first paid staff member — to now, still at Lotteries House, but with six staff spread across three small offices.

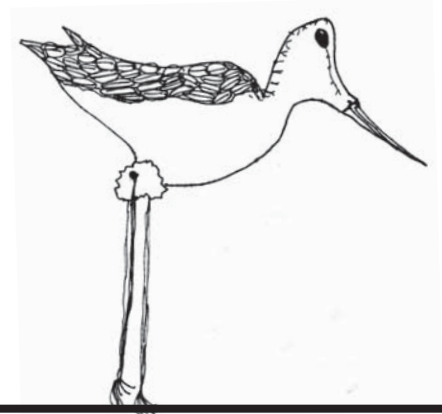
During this time, guided by its mission of environmental protection, EK's business has changed significantly. For example, with the advent of the Kimberley Weed Eradication Education Delivery (WEED) Project in 2007, EK began providing much sought-after environmental planning and management services to Kimberley communities. Its successor, the West Kimberley Nature Project, has continued to work directly with land managers, ranger groups and communities on a variety of natural and cultural resource management activities — and, on the way, has taken on two young local staff as trainee environmental managers. Martin's report outlines the myriad development pressures that EK is actively campaigning against or maintaining watching briefs on — and they are mind-boggling to contemplate: coal and uranium to

the south-east of Derby and in the Fitzroy Valley, iron ore and uranium in the east Kimberley, copper near the Horizontal Falls.

In August, EK co-founder Pat Lowe and I had the opportunity to spend a day on a boat with Deb Thiele, a marine biologist who has been studying Snubfin Dolphin populations in the waters of Roebuck Bay since 2005. Deb has identified 161 individuals so far, the highest known concentration, many of whom appear to call the Bay home. Deb has concluded that Roebuck Bay may be the Snubfins' most significant habitat anywhere. The research has also revealed that nearly 63% of the population has been injured by human activities — struck by boat propellers and/or falling foul of fishing gear. In the report, *Collision Course: Snubfin Dolphin injuries in Roebuck Bay* (July 2010), Deb outlines a number of simple actions for boating and fishing in the Bay that would help to reduce the incidence of injuries. The report is available on the WWF Australia website.

Finally, in the last newsletter I mentioned that the inquiry into the 2009 Montara oil accident off the north West Australian coast — the spill that lasted 106 days — was due to release its findings in July. This has still not happened. We will keep you posted.

Kate Golson



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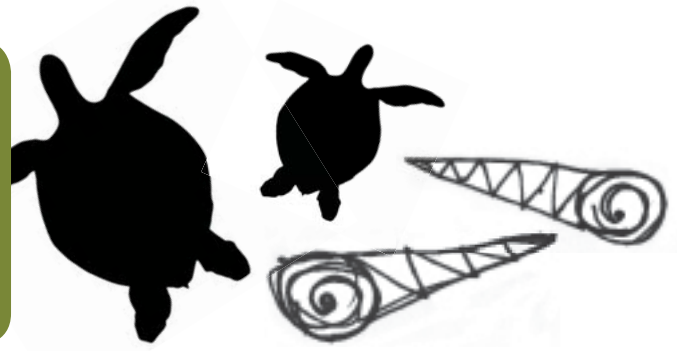
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Environs Kimberley welcomes letters
to the Editor. We accept comment and
criticism, and print all letters that are not
obscene, offensive or libellous. If you have
a bone to pick, pick it with us.

WHERE WILL ALL THE SAND GO?



Roebuck Bay without any sand – a disturbing thought! Cable Beach without any sand – an economic disaster! One of our supporters, Jon Armstrong, recently told us how important it is that a physical oceanographic study for the entire Dampier Peninsula and Roebuck Bay be conducted before any work begins on building a port at James Price Point.

He believes there is a risk to the natural movement of sand and sediment up the coast, which returns to Broome's beaches in a cycle, and this could cause long term erosion to the sand dunes and ocean floor. EK understands that such a study may be in progress but no report has been released. We'll keep you posted.

Physical oceanography is the study of physical conditions and processes within the ocean, especially the motions and physical properties of ocean waters. A study is needed of the currents, tidal movement and long-shore drift of sand and sediment, not just at James Price Point but for the entire Peninsula.

Locals know that a current runs up the coast past Roebuck Bay, along the Roebuck Deeps and up towards James Price Point, taking sand from the beaches of Broome and then returning it to different locations around Roebuck Bay at different times of the year. There are times when Broome's beaches are covered in sand and other times when

much bare rock is exposed. This natural cycle could be affected by the creation and constant dredging of a deep-water channel for a port at Price's Point and, until a physical oceanographic study is done, we will not know the full extent of the impact. The sand dunes surrounding Broome protect it from extreme weather conditions. If the sand does not return to Broome's beaches, then the dunes could start to slip into the ocean. Our famous Cable Beach could permanently become bare rock in front of the Cable Beach Club Resort. Without sand it will no longer be the greatest beach in the world. How can Cable Beach be saved from such environmental destruction?

Roebuck Bay is one of several sand depositories of the Dampier Peninsula system, along with Carnot Bay and Beagle Bay to the north. An artificial deep-water port at James Price Point could have devastating effects on the entire Dampier Peninsula. And a significant loss of sand would reduce seagrass cover, with widespread detriment to populations of dugong, turtles and the like. Jobs and investment in the Broome economy can be a good thing, but at what cost?

The clearing of 25 hectares of natural bushland at James Price Point, recently approved by the government, should not begin until all the appropriate studies have been carried out.

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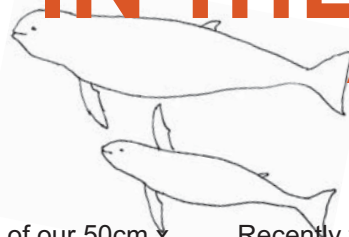


THANKS FROM SKIPA

Thank you to Biodiversity Protection WA, who has kindly donated a microscope to SKIPA/EK so that we can use it for identifying plants in our herbarium collections. Already, it has been put to use by our fabulous visiting volunteer Rosemary Jasper who has been working with Taran to identify plants collected on the previous SKIPA trip to Moll Gorge.

Data entry isn't everyone's cup of tea. But then, very few people have experienced the delight of working with Seagrass Watch data — that's a whole other kettle of fish, crabs, snails, anemones, featherstars and jellies. It's so enjoyable to examine the waterproof data sheets that have been filled in by volunteers during field trips out to Roebuck Bay's seagrass meadows.

DIVERSITY IN THE MEADOWS



**A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION
—AND A NICE CUP OF TEA**

The data tell us the exact contents of each of our 50cm x 50cm quadrats (those white square things you may have seen us with), including the density of seagrass coverage, the species type and composition, algae cover, canopy height, sediment type, dugong feeding trails and types of fauna present. It's a real buzz to see the abundance of biodiversity often found in just one quadrat of seagrass. For example, according to the data sheet in front of me, at our last visit to the Demco site one quadrat of seagrass contained: 1 x brittle star; 1 x dugong feeding trail; 1 x shrimp; 1 x green paddle worm; 2 x spotted egg sacs; and 14 x worm tubes (little tube homes built by worms from calcium carbonate). The same quadrat also had a lovely 20% of seagrass coverage (it might have been more but for that hungry dugong!) composed of 50% *Halophila ovalis* (the oval-leafed seagrass species) and 50% *Halodule uninervis* (the glossy, strand-like species). To think that while we carry on our lives on the land, out in the bay hundreds of communities of tiny benthic critters are living together and interacting, scrambling over each other as they carry on their daily business of exploring, building or digging homes, eating (sometimes each other!), snoozing, reproducing and enjoying the wonderful web of life.

Recently there has been some great news for all that biodiversity; we learned that our project secured another year's worth of funding from Coastwest to continue baseline studies. I can hear the sea cucumbers cheering from here!

This season it was business as usual with the successful completion of another round of monitoring and mapping events — thank you to the dedicated volunteers who made it possible. Community education continued with presentations delivered to audiences at the Kimberley Whale Festival, National Science Week events, Roebuck Bay Working Group and to students from schools across Broome. With primary school groups we had an especially fun time practising monitoring on the grass of their school ovals. It's about the only time you'll see ants or grasshoppers entered as fauna into a Seagrass Watch data sheet! By the time you read this we will have completed our Seagrass Watch community training workshops for 2010. We'd like to extend a special thank you to the Bardi Jawi, Nyul Nyul and Djarindjin rangers who travelled the extra distance from the Peninsula to attend the training. It's great to know our project is helping build capacity, not only within the Broome community but throughout our region.



OCTOBER SEAGRASS MONITORING
5.30 am Monday 11 Oct Port slipway
6.00 am Tuesday 12 Oct Demco carpark
6.30 am Wednesday 13 Oct Town Beach

Our pre-monitoring tradition will be honoured with freshly baked muffins and coffee before we head out.




THE BROOME COMMUNITY SEAGRASS MONITORING PROJECT IS FUNDED BY COASTWEST AND THE PORT OF BROOME, CO-MANAGED BY ENVIRONS KIMBERLEY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION AND SUPPORTED BY SEAGRASS WATCH, THE WORLD'S LARGEST SCIENTIFIC SEAGRASS MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM.

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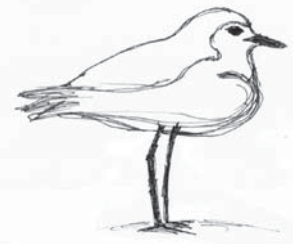
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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

THE PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
COLIN BARNETT
IS TAKING A KEEN INTEREST
IN THE KIMBERLEY.



Take this quote from the West Australian, September 4:

Surprisingly and somewhat ironically considering this week's James Price Point furore, Mr Barnett said that over the next two years one of the government's highest priorities would be environmental issues, particularly the Kimberley.

'One of our priorities is protection of the Kimberley, which I think is WA's greatest responsibility environmentally. We're working on Camden Sound, which is the whale nursery, but also working more broadly across the marine and terrestrial environment of the Kimberley,' he said. 'Hopefully during this term of government we'll be able to demonstrate that we have taken on big environmental issues, the ones that really matter.'

Meanwhile, the Premier's agenda to industrialise the Kimberley has given the green light to the mining industry. Exploration for copper at one of the Kimberley's spectacular natural attractions, the Horizontal Falls, is about to commence (see Emma's article). Rey Resources' coal mining tenements, holding perhaps 11 billion tonnes, are not the only ones in the region. Canning Basin Coal, a subsidiary of TPL, has been granted 740km² of exploration tenements next

to Rey Resources'; another 14,000km² awaits approval. This could become a coal province comparable to the Hunter Valley and Bowen Basin. With the outcry over a coal mine in Margaret River and the Premier hinting that that the State Government may oppose that project, our local members haven't said a word about coal in the Fitzroy Valley and beyond. Perhaps they need an email from you?

Marine Superhighway — Wonders of the Kimberley Coast was our National Science Week project this year. Guest speakers at Cable Beach and the Broome Markets talked about Snubfin Dolphins (Marine Scientist Marty Gent), dugong tagging (Chris Sampi of Bardi Jawi Rangers), Humpback Whales (Richard Costin – Kimberley Whale Watching), turtles (Kevin Smith – Conservation Volunteers Australia) and seagrass (Fiona Bishop – Broome Community Seagrass Project with EK and DEC). We heard how whales, dugongs and turtles travel up and down our coast and how important our seagrass beds are in the chain of life in the sea. The Snubfin and the elusive River Dolphin are found only in northern Australia. Marty Gent and Chris Sampi talked to over 180 students about the Snubfin and Dugong at Broome, Djarindjin and One Arm Point schools. A dozen people took part in the Humpback Whale survey at Andrew Bowles's Two Moons whale research centre at Pender Bay. The survey from

the cliff top is showing how important the coast is to the Humpback Whales that give birth and breed in these waters before returning to Antarctica.

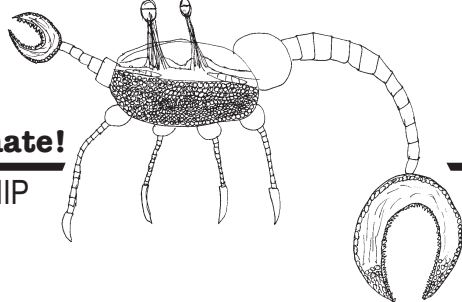
Our school competition attracted 150 entries. We were delighted to see local children taking so much interest in our wildlife.

A new report, *Kimberley Whale Coast Tourism: A review of opportunities and threats* by the Curtin Sustainable Tourism Centre at Curtin University, looks at tourism and related business in the West Kimberley; the Broome and Kimberley tourism 'brands'; government funding for tourism versus other industries; and the implications of a gas processing plant for the future of tourism. The report is available on request or on the EK website.

In response to the Premier's compulsory acquisition of the land at James Price Point, KLC CEO Wayne Bergmann said, 'This project, at the moment, is headed for a train wreck,' and '... the entire process over James Price Point has been marred by dishonesty.' Indigenous Leader Mick Dodson said, 'I think compulsorily acquisition is, in a sense, another act of colonialism, it's another theft of our land, it's another invasion. It should never ever be contemplated at a political level.'

There is a new government in Canberra and we need leadership on this. We do not want to see Browse gas processed in the Kimberley.

Martin Pritchard



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Mine, Mine, Mine!

This article provides a brief overview of exploration for copper near Horizontal Falls and for coal in the Canning Basin.

Pegasus Metals are about to conduct exploration works prior to mining for copper adjacent to the Horizontal Falls. Despite company assurances of 'low visual impact' at this exploratory phase, many Kimberley residents, tour operators and tourists are worried. Meanwhile, both the Minister for Tourism and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy seem enthusiastic about the way in which, they say, mining and tourism can be mutually beneficial – which seems a very long bow to draw. This is another instance of ad hoc development in the absence of a masterplan for sustainable, locally appropriate development for the region.

Traditional Owners have not yet expressed a view on the proposal to mine at the Falls. The prospect of mining also makes it timely to consider how all activities, including tourism, are conducted in this location. There are real opportunities for tour operators to work more closely with Traditional Owners and provide all tourists with an experience that respects the Indigenous culture of this special place. For our part, EK will be conducting research on the likely scope of mining in this area, proposed mining methods, and environmental impacts of any exploration and mining.

Coal exploration in the Canning Basin, through which the mighty Fitzroy River runs, is also on the agenda. Coal is a heavyweight of Australia's major greenhouse gas emitters — we are the world's largest coal exporter. Exports from Australia have doubled since 1992 and are set to do so again by 2020. Coal's contribution to climate change has led globally renowned climate scientist James Hansen to point out that agreement to phase out coal use, except where the CO₂ is captured, is 80% of the solution to the global warming crisis¹.

More localised concerns about coal include water, human health impacts and pollution in the Kimberley. Coal production uses huge volumes of water through coal washing and waste discharge, and scientist Dr. Mark Diesendorf describes coal as 'one of the most damaging sources of environmental pollution used by humankind. Every stage of coal use – from mining, to washing, to transportation, to burning and to disposing of the wastes – brings substantial environmental and health damage, and social impacts'².

OF LATE, IT'S EASY TO FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THE SHEER VOLUME AND VARIETY OF MINING PROPOSALS RIGHT ACROSS THE KIMBERLEY. ONE COULD ALMOST BREAK INTO SONG (APOLOGIES TO OLD MACDONALD AND HIS FARM) – HERE A MINE, THERE A MINE, EVERYWHERE A MINE, MINE... AH YES, IT'S BEEN A BUSY TIME HERE AT EK HQ.

In QLD and NSW there are massive problems with collapsing land surface from underground coal mining activity. Long-wall coal mining has cracked stream beds, draining creeks and wetlands, some in catchments important to Sydney's water supply. In QLD, coal-seam gas mining is causing major concerns about the pollution of groundwater systems upon which local communities and agricultural industries depend. Mining for coal amongst the complex exchanges between groundwater aquifers and the river flowing above in the Fitzroy catchment would be a worry.

Emma Belfield

ENDNOTES

1. Pearse, G 2010, Land of the Long Black Cloud, The Monthly. No.60 September 2010 p.22.
2. Diesendorf, M 2006, 'Can geosequestration save the coal industry?' in Byrne, J, Glover, L & Toly, N (eds) Transforming Power: Energy as a Social Project, Vol. 9 Energy and Environmental Policy Series. Pp.223-248.



Mine, Mine, Mine!

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KIMBERLEY URANIUM AWARENESS ROAD SHOW



Almost from the moment the Barnett state government was elected, uranium mining and exploration companies commenced a strong push into the Kimberley, attempting to convince Traditional Owners that uranium is perfectly harmless and their interests will be served by saying 'yes' to exploration and mining.

With significant high-grade uranium resources in WA, Premier Barnett appears determined that this state will become a major player in the nuclear game. The Kimberley is foremost in his sights.

Until recently, Kimberley Aboriginal communities and TOs only had ready access to biased pro-nuclear published material supplied by the Uranium Industry Association and supportive government agencies. Issues of ground and surface water contamination, radioactive pollution and the environmental, security and human rights implications of the nuclear industry have been neglected. Alarming, in one instance members of a TO group were told that uranium was no more dangerous than bananas.

The main thrusts to Kimberley Aboriginal communities to date have been that: the world 'needs' Australia's uranium; nuclear power is 'clean and green' and doesn't cause pollution like coal-fired power stations; and there are no problems with mining it and milling it. Some communities have been warned not to pay heed to the concerns of 'greenies', who were out of touch with reality.

Many of the older people are cautious about uranium mining as they remember the radioactive contamination at Maralinga and the disasters of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Chernobyl. The younger generation, however, often don't share such disquiet and may be seduced by industry claims that big royalty payments will come their way.

To address this information deficit, the Kimberley Uranium Awareness Road Show (KUARS) took leading experts in radiation health (Dr Bill Williams) and

surface and groundwater contamination from uranium mining (Dr Gavin Mudd) to the communities in a series of community forums from Kununurra to Broome. They were accompanied by traditional owners from South Australia who have been affected by mining on their lands, and a range of other experts.

One of the many highlights of the trip was a forum at the Looma Community, not far from Myroodah Crossing on the Fitzroy River, where Rey Resources and its joint venture partner Uranium Exploration Australia, hope to extract uranium from the aquifer under the river using an acid leaching process. Over 40 community members attended and the event was broadcast live throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara on the PAKAM radio network.

Other communities visited were Halls Creek, Mimbi, Fitzroy Crossing, Mowanjum and Derby, and attendance and interest was strong at all locations.

The Road Show successfully delivered a range of information to the communities that had not been available previously. The conclusion of all audiences was that they had not fully understood the potential impacts of the uranium industry until attending the forums. Paul Marshall

The Roadshow was organised by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Environs Kimberley, the Conservation Council of WA, the Anti-Nuclear Alliance of WA and Friends of the Earth; we are now producing a DVD from video footage taken at the forums to allow a wider audience to have access to the information. In the meantime, to see a slideshow presentation go to: http://www.acfonline.org.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=3048

living green — painlessly

Here are some tips to improve the sustainability of our daily lives without too much effort. The principle is to **use no more of anything than you need to get a job done** (See Einstein article).

CONSERVING WATER

Take shorter showers —it doesn't take long to get clean. Install a water-saving shower head. Turn off the tap while you are cleaning your teeth, preparing food, washing dishes etc. Water your garden, not the path or the street. Buy durable water bottles, fill them from your tap and keep in your fridge for when you need them. Cold water from stainless steel bottles tastes divine. If you worry about chlorine, leave the top off the bottle for 15 minutes to let the chlorine evaporate.

REDUCING ELECTRICITY USE (AND BILLS)

We expend a lot of energy changing the temperatures of things: cooling or freezing our food, heating our water, cooling our houses. We use more energy running our numerous appliances.

Buy low-wattage appliances and only turn them on when you need them. Never leave an iron on when you are not using it — irons consume a lot of electricity, and modern ones heat up in seconds. Turn off lights and appliances when you go out. Try cooling your house by air flow: a larger opening on the lee side than the windward side draws air through. When you must use your aircon, set its thermostat only as low as you need to; there's no need to shiver.

If you do all this already but want to do more, you could let your plants die, wear crumpled clothes and sit in the dark.

More tips in the next edition.

And the **winner** (finally!) is...

For the political tragics out there – I am one – the past few weeks have been fascinating. The Federal Election was always going to be close, but few anticipated it would be *this* close, nor that it would take 17 days to return a minority Gillard Labor government.

So, how did the result play out in this enormous, safe Liberal seat of Durack? The table below sets out the results: Durack is the country's largest electorate, taking in the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the Gascoyne, all the way south to Merredin. To give a clearer local picture, Kimberley booths within Durack are tallied separately. Our long-time local member, Barry Haase, suffered a small swing (-1%) against him; the ALP candidate a far stronger negative swing (-8.84%). These votes were largely mopped up by Nationals candidate Lynne Craigie, who secured an impressive swing (+9.72%) to achieve 17.75% of the primary vote. Another strong performer was the Greens candidate Julie Matheson, with a positive 3.30% swing to achieve a primary vote of 9.22% across Durack as a whole, and 16.91% in Kimberly booths, consistent with an historic result for the Greens across the country.

CANDIDATE & PARTY	DURACK AS A WHOLE	KIMBERLEY BOOTHS IN DURACK
Barry Haase (LIB)	32,107 (45.08% of vote) -0.99% swing	3041 (37.10% of vote)
Shane Hill (ALP)	17,094 (24% of vote) -8.83% swing	2352 (28.71% of vote)
Lynne Craigie (Nats)	12,618 (17.72% of vote) +9.69% swing	1184 (14.45% of vote)
Julie Matheson (Greens)	6,574 (9.23% of vote) +3.30% swing	1386 (16.91% of vote)
Mac Forsyth (CDP)	1105 (1.55% of vote) -0.33% swing	85 (1.04% of vote)
Jane Foreman (Family First)	1,721 (2.42% of vote) +1.1% swing	147 (1.79% of vote)

Agreements signed since the election between the Government and the Greens and each of the Independents could have a big impact on how politics plays out in the coming parliamentary term. Even process reforms will have implications for access to and scrutiny of parliamentary processes by the community.

Thanks to these Agreements, we will soon have a referendum on Constitutional recognition of Indigenous people. This achievement by the Greens and the Independents puts paid to the opinion of some commentators that a shared power arrangement will simply see a range of 'fringe' issues promoted by cross-benchers.

Regional Australia is firmly back on the agenda. Locally, there is a renewed opportunity to argue for investment in the outstanding natural and cultural values of the Kimberley e.g. through cultural and nature-based tourism. Natural resource management programs such as fire management, via a joint management model, could feature prominently. We must also promote as important environmental matters on land and sea. Many metropolitan decision-makers interpret investment in Regional Australia as a green light to massive industrial development. We must put our alternative viewpoint effectively.

During the election campaign, two issues of note in the Kimberley emerged beyond the national messages of either party: marine park planning in Commonwealth waters, and the assessment of the West Kimberley for National Heritage Listing. With a Labor government returned, we must ensure that both these processes remain on track. It will be interesting to see how the Commonwealth views Premier Barnett's move to compulsorily acquire land for the proposed LNG hub at James Price Point.

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RUMINATING *with* MAD COW



cui bono?



As we watch helplessly while our elected leaders make destructive decisions about the future of our region, our country and our planet, we

must often ask ourselves the question, why?

Some things are plainly wrong, harmful to the entire plant and animal kingdoms, including ourselves. The most obvious of these right now is global warming, aka climate change. Forget the so-called sceptics, the deniers who would rather see the world cooked than change their ways or, perish the thought, reduce their consumption and simplify their lifestyle. We can see the effects of planetary warming as we speak: islands drowning, glaciers receding, Himalayas melting, polar ice floes breaking up and an increase in extreme weather, of which the Pakistan floods are the latest tragic example.

In the face of such a catastrophic future for the world, how is it that our leaders are failing us so badly? How can it be that our governments give significant financial support to oil, gas and even coal industries, while the planet-saving proponents of renewable energy are fed peanuts?

The answer, dear friends, is simple. The resource energies are powerful: more powerful than governments, as we saw recently when our own leaders

were forced to retreat from the mining super-profits tax. And, what boils down to the same thing, they are rich; as long as they can make unimaginable wealth selling the fossil fuels they dig, suck and blow out of the earth, they will never stop doing it. As Mad Cow has said before in this column: you can't sell sunlight and you can't sell wind. This is a wonderful thing: nature freely gives us the energy we can harness to our needs; to companies trading in fossil fuels, it's an enormous threat.

True, there are jobs in renewable energy; more jobs than in mining. And there is money to be made from solar displays and windmills, as there is from the electricity they generate. But the fuel itself, that clean, pure, non-polluting energy that never runs out, is free — and there's the rub.

Alarmed by murmurings, however muted, about a carbon tax some time in the receding future, mining companies are racing to extract every drop of oil and fart of gas from the earth while carbon remains cheap. All the faffing around by our leaders, far from doing anything to mitigate the mischief, is accelerating the emission of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. By the time we see a carbon tax, all the taxable carbon will be up there already.

When governments fail to act in the interests of their citizens, or act against them, there is just one question to ask: Cui bono? Who gains? The answer is usually obvious. But, in the long run, all of us lose.



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The West Kimberley Nature Project

The unseasonable heavy rains this year have created some interesting ecological scenarios throughout the west Kimberley. Not only did Jason find himself sleeping in an instant river whilst conducting the Lurujarri Heritage Trail, many plants have also been taken by surprise and found themselves growing and blooming longer or opportunistically throughout the season.

Wet ground and green grass precluded early season burning plans to protect priority vine thicket sites in Bardi country in the northern Dampier Peninsula. The extended growing season has also meant that, once it dries out, the grass fuel is likely to be heavier and a greater fire threat than in other years. The last few weeks have enabled the Bardi Rangers to implement some of the planned protective burns. They have been taking the opportunity to burn in the afternoons when the winds have died down and heavy dews are only hours away.

On the upside, the persistent green foliage on weeds like buffel grass has allowed incursions in priority areas to be easily targeted and controlled. This is particularly important in areas of monsoon vine thicket that have become degraded by fires and subsequent weed invasion. The targeted areas vary from large to small incursions, but each has the damaging consequence of further fire promotion and loss of a threatened and culturally significant ecosystem.

The WKNP has been supporting Djarindjin Bardi Oorany (women) Rangers to undertake further seed collection and propagation, with a particular focus on vine thicket plants to restore some of the areas subject to weed control. We are also eagerly watching the construction of the new Djarindjin nursery by KRICI, which will really kick the program off in a

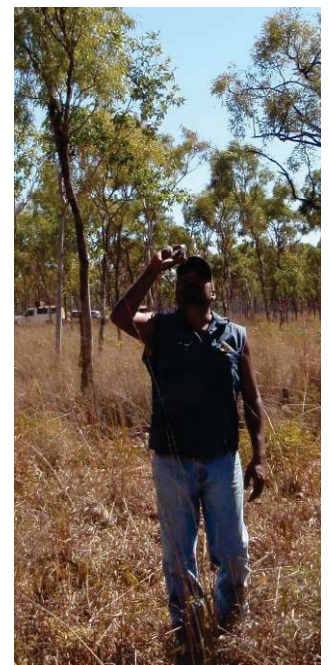
great way! Gemma Chequebeor has been an enthusiastic driver of the project and it has been wonderful working with her. Just last week we were together able to assist the Bardi Rangers IPA management planning by contributing, via film, some of our combined knowledge and experience with vine thickets.

Following their training in 'Facilitation' in Perth, Jason and Taran bravely gave their first presentation by themselves in Beagle Bay. They presented the plans they had developed with the Nyul Nyul rangers for a number of sites to the new Steering Committee. Following approval of the plans, we have been working with the rangers to design fencing and signage to protect the Middle Lagoon vine thicket patch from 4 wheel driving, excessive erosion and vegetation damage.

We have been working with Sally Black to have the write-up of previous Broome Botanical Society survey and research on Dampier Peninsula monsoon vine thickets completed and published for use by on-ground managers. This will be available shortly.

The WKNP is collaborating with Fisher Research, with technical and practical support from Kings Park, UWA and DEC, to identify key biological indicators and design scientific monitoring protocols for the assessment of vine thicket health. These will be designed to be easy for rangers to use and cost effective for statistical analysis to be undertaken, and produce meaningful data to inform management planning. They can be used by groups managing vine thickets as part of IPA's or other Caring for Country activities beyond the life of the WKNP.

Louise Beames



top to bottom

- Jason learns how to use an inclinometer to measure tree height. The WKNP was visiting Wunggurr Country to see how the North Kimberley Fire Project is using monitoring protocols to calculate stored carbon.
- Taran works with Gemma and Coral of the Djarindjin Bardi Oorany Rangers to collate seed collection and germination records.
- Dwayne and Chris of the Bardi Jawi Rangers conduct roadside burning to protect nearby vine thicket patches from fire damage later in the season.
- Chris (Bardi Jawi Rangers) and Louise prepare weed-grass patches for spraying, in open, degraded areas of vine thicket.



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY





YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE EINSTEIN

Anne Pettit on sustainable living

'Opera under the Stars' brings all sorts of people to Broome, this year including Anne Pettit of Pettit Projects, who took the opportunity to talk to the Roebuck Bay Working Group about sustainability in Broome.

Anne's presentation was refreshingly straightforward and easy to follow, as well as totally practical. She began by pointing out that sustainability boils down to maintaining three conditions necessary for healthy life on Earth: clean air, healthy soils and safe and adequate water for all.

We had a quick look at the energy cycle: how the Sun is the Earth's main source of energy, how plants capture energy from sunlight and use it to take carbon dioxide from the air and water and nutrients from the soil to maintain their own life and growth. When plants die, over millions of years they become compressed and form fossil fuels. When we dig up and burn these fuels for energy, we release the carbon trapped in them to the atmosphere. Over time, as our use of these fuels has increased, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has risen, affecting the stability of systems we rely on to support life and contributing to global warming.

Then there's water: water too moves in a cycle through clouds, oceans and earth, returning from land to sea via our rivers, and maintaining life as it goes.

Nitrogen and phosphorus are essential elements for plants and animals. They naturally cycle through water, plants, animals and soil. When they are used in high concentrations in garden fertilisers they can leach into our waterways, upsetting the balance of nutrients and causing algal blooms and other problems.

All these and other cycles working together provide the conditions that support life on Earth – the clean air, healthy soils and safe, adequate water that we all rely on.

Anne went on to talk about human beings and our place in the world. Rather than wag the finger about over-consumption, she takes the view that if we understand that our choices directly affect environments we can choose to be much more resourceful and less wasteful in what we consume. We can meet our needs and our desires for satisfying, rich lives in ways that do less harm to the health of our planet.

Anne also explained that there is more to waste than what goes in our bins. Waste is using more than we need of anything, for example more shampoo than it takes to get a lather or water to wash hands, leaving on air-con, lights, TV etc in empty rooms or buying bigger cars or appliances than we need. Simply valuing things and taking care not to waste anything is a powerful action for sustainability.

Water is not only precious, it is heavy and has to be pumped from its source to our taps, consuming energy. Using less conserves water, reduces energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and saves money: wins all round. As for buying drinking water from distant wells in plastic bottles: don't get me started.

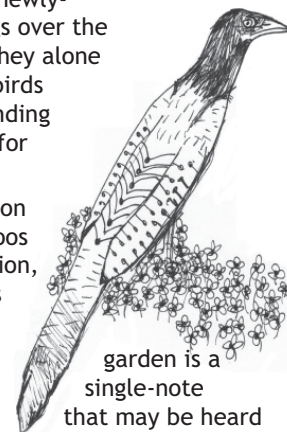
Anne gave us a number of useful suggestions for maintaining a healthy Earth and reducing waste, which we will include in future issues of the Newsletter in our new column of green living.

IN SEPTEMBER CUCKOOS MIGHT SEND YOU CUCKOO

Recently, some wonderful documentary footage revealed cuckoos parasitising the nests of other birds in close-up – showing how adults stake out the nests of favoured species, how female cuckoos disguise their eggs so they won't be recognised by the nest owners, how newly-hatched cuckoos heave other nestlings over the side of a nest on their backs so that they alone get all the attention, and how small birds work ceaselessly to feed huge, demanding young cuckoos that call continuously for food.

Action like this does not only happen on TV; right now, in the Kimberley, cuckoos are out and about preparing for invasion, and this is the month when their calls can be heard.

The most likely cuckoo in a town garden is a single-note Brush Cuckoo. It has a mournful call – 6 to 8 slow descending notes that may be heard in the middle of the night or at first light as well as in the day. While the call is very distinctive, the bird itself is not so easy to see. It's a medium-sized brown bird with ventriloquist tendencies. Try looking on an outer branch about half way up a tree, and repeating the call to the bird as this will sometimes draw it out to have a look. Male Brush Cuckoos have another call used to advertise for a mate – a frantically rising *de-de-duh, de-de duh* call (2 short notes then a long one) which gives the species its nickname, the dementia bird. It's well named; this bird can keep calling for several hours. If it's not crazy at the end, you might well be! Brush Cuckoos' favourite hosts are honeyeaters. In your garden Singing, Yellow-tinted and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters breed once the rain begins (Brown Honeyeaters breed later), so they are the likely candidates.



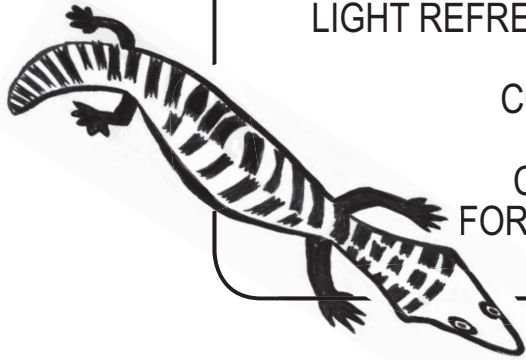
Nearer to Coconut Wells another larger cuckoo's raucous call can be heard – the first note longer and louder than those that follow. If you see a bird that looks like a 'flying broomstick', this will be a Channel-billed Cuckoo. The bird is grey with a long barred tail and a huge curved bill, and it eats fruit. Sparrowhawks and crows' nests are most likely to be parasitised by that one.

The Pheasant Coucal is easier to spot – the large black and tan bird skulking in the undergrowth, running across the road or gliding down from the top of a tree, its long tail fanned and trailing. Unlike other Australian cuckoos this bird is not a parasite; it builds its own nest and raises its own young. But it is a killer, eating frogs, mice, insects and the eggs and young of other birds. The frantic cries of honeyeaters when a Coucal flaps into their nesting tree is testimony to this bird's murderous ways. I once saw a Coucal decapitate a Singing Honeyeater caught in my mist net with one snip of its bill and run off through the undergrowth with the body. It's their bubbling call that you will probably hear first – a sound likened to water being poured out of a bottle – although they also have a harsh scolding call.

Enough on cuckoos....let the silly season begin! Now I'm wondering where the phrase 'cloud cuckoo land' originates – and hoping future plans for James Price Point will be sent there.

Jan Lewis

Cloud Cuckoo Land is a direct translation of the Greek, *Nephylokokkygia*, from the play *The Birds*, by Athenian playwright Aristophanes. Ed.



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