



Newsletter May 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Coastwatchers hosted a very successful Annual Regional Conference of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) in Batemans Bay in early May. Environmentalists who attended discussed marine protection, forests, climate change and planning issues in NSW. Local problems were highlighted through a presentation on the current key issues, lessons and challenges in Eurobodalla.

The opportunity to share knowledge and experiences enabled NCC members to better plan upcoming campaigns. It was also an ideal time to look at the complex structure the new State Government has set in place to deal with environmental issues and the possible outcomes for the environment.

On the Sunday the field trip to the Surf Beach Industrial Site and Wharf Road development sites enabled a discussion of Eurobodalla planning processes and issues of coastal erosion and sea level rise.

Planning issues will remain a priority over the next few months. The second draft of the Eurobodalla Local Environment Plan (LEP) will be out for public comment as will the Draft Eurobodalla 2030 Community Strategic plan. It is important for everyone in Eurobodalla to look at these two important documents and take the time to make submissions where necessary.

Sheila Monahan

THANKS

Thankyou to all our members who have generously given donations over the years. You have greatly assisted our work and we hope that you and others will continue to support us in the year ahead.

Tax deductible donations of \$2 or more can be made by **cheque or money order** to **The Coastwatchers Association Inc. Environment Fund** (Post to The Treasurer Coastwatchers Assoc, PO Box 521, Batemans Bay 2536) or

EFT or Direct Deposit to The Coastwatchers Association Inc. Environment Fund

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Please key in the name of the person making the EFT or Direct Deposit, and say it is a donation so your transaction can be tracked on the monthly bank statement and a receipt provided for tax purposes

QUARTERLY MEETING

Saturday 18 June at 2pm
Tomakin Community Hall

GUEST SPEAKER – Fiona Whitelaw lives in Moruya and has a small planning consultancy business. She has been very active in the **No M in Moruya** campaign and made an excellent presentation to Council giving reasons for the community's opposition to having this fast food outlet in the town.

Fiona will give us some insights into the likely impacts of the new Draft Development Control Plans (guidelines only) and Draft Local Environment Plan that sets the zones and permissible uses. These documents, especially the LEP, will have a huge influence on how the shire develops so we hope as many people as possible will speak up for the environment, the basis of all we love about this area.

DIGITAL SHIFTS

Coastwatchers has a new website – www.coastwatchers.org.au and new email address: coastwatchers@netspeed.com.au

COMMENTING IN THE DARK

Coastwatchers wrote to Council asking for an extension of time to comment on the 3 new Draft Development Control Plans (and 7 amended ones). They refer often to parts of the Draft Local Environmental Plan which has been held up in Sydney and has yet to be exhibited. Comments on the DCPs are due by 8 June but the Draft LEP may not go on exhibition until the second half of this year.

Council says there have been significant changes to the standard LEP, which is the template for all of the state, including definitions to include beekeeping, camping grounds and ecotourism. Other changes include split zonings and changes to the land use table for different types of tourist operations.

We need to know where land has been zoned to suit environmental constraints and the permitted land uses in those zones before we can make sensible comments on the guidelines for development in those areas.

Jenny Edwards

RARE SNAKE FOUND AT SOUTH DURRAS

A Golden Crowned snake (*Cacophis squamulosus*) was found on a sand dune ecosystem at South Durras. For it to turn up at this location so far south is very unusual. There are no records for Murrumbidgee National Park for this species of snake.

This is a common snake in the sandstone country of northern Shoalhaven and the Illawarra. It likes to forage at night in moist gullies and can appear quite aggressive and try to strike but rarely bites, however it is venomous.

Photo & text - John Perkins



COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON POPULATION

Mark O'Connor's audience at the Air Raid Tavern café was very impressed by his talk and questions came thick and fast. Mark is an environmental activist and member of the Stable Population Party as well as poet and writer. Copies of his latest book, *Overloading Australia*, co-written by W J Lines, were available at the café.

Mark's talk touched on many of the themes covered in the book including:

- Why we have already passed the sustainable population level in Australia
- All governments' lack of population policies
- The myth of the skills shortage needing more immigrants
- The myth of the ageing population needing more young adults and babies
- Why greenhouse emissions will rise with increased population
- The economic costs of a growing population
- How we could take in the same number of refugees but stabilise population

Australia is a small country wrapped around a big desert. The Stable Population Party wants to maximise our population at 24million but current policies are likely to mean 100 million by the end of the century. In 2010 Bob Brown called for an enquiry into the costs of population growth and the Australian Conservation Foundation filed a formal nomination to have population growth listed as a "key threatening process" to Australia's biodiversity under federal environmental law. For more information go to www.populationparty.com

Jenny Edwards

euobodalla2030

Council has been developing a "Vision" for the Shire's future with the aid of a consultant and much public input. The resulting document will be exhibited later in the year.

An early document has the Vision as the Shire being '*friendly, responsible, thriving, and proud*'. We are disappointed that 'sustainability' is not mentioned, let alone 'ecological, environmental and economical sustainability' despite so many people at the meetings saying how much they wanted the environment of the Shire maintained.

Nor does there seem to be appropriate consideration of the need to change our ways of doing things in the face of climate change, and the need to reduce waste and minimize transport.

Summary of an article by Brian Versey

BROULEE BIOCERTIFICATION PLANS

The area between the airport and Candlagan Ck, Broulee, supports one of the largest occurrences in NSW of the endangered ecological community (EEC) known as the Bangalay Sand Forest. The 770 hectares represents approximately 46% of the remaining area of this EEC in the state. A large part of it has also been mapped as important habitat for the threatened Yellow-bellied Glider, including land on the western side of the current Broulee Village.

55 hectares of this forest habitat adjacent to the village is currently undeveloped. This privately owned land was zoned for urban development before the gazettal of the Bangalay Sand Forest as an EEC. Council has decided that the landholders have a legitimate expectation to be able to develop this land.

Biodiversity certification was recommended by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water as a way of achieving this. Council recently won funding to initiate this process which, if successful, will enable the 55 hectare block of land to be cleared of the Bangalay Sand Forest. If biodiversity certification is granted for this land, any development will not require a species impact statement. The development will be regarded as not likely to significantly affect threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitat.

Sheila Monahan

NCC CONFERENCE

The one and a half day conference provided an ideal opportunity to explore opportunities for achieving better outcomes for conservation in NSW.



Pepe Clarke, Chief Executive Officer of NCC, spoke about the new political scene in NSW. He emphasized the importance of local and regional areas to the new government especially to Members from the National Party. Whilst we have a long hard fight ahead to progress conservation, opportunities do exist. Newly elected MPs may not have entrenched views about the environment especially if it can be demonstrated that local constituents want and need change. It is time to develop a new language of advocacy around

compliance, to find different pressure points and to develop new alliances to draw people in.

To pass legislation the Coalition needs the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party along with the Christian Democrats. Here lies the biggest threat since the Premier will probably use marine parks to win over the Shooters and Fishers Party who want sanctuary zones removed. To this end the Government has already committed to a scientific review of zoning after which it will probably put out rezoning plans for public comment. Batemans Marine Park supporters need to be vocal and focus on the benefits of sanctuary zones (backed up by ongoing local research) and the importance of the marine park to the Eurobodalla economy.

Local environment groups have reported systemic recurring forestry breaches on the South Coast, including illegal logging of endangered ecological communities, old growth and rocky outcrops. NCC is so concerned about the state of NSW's native forests that it has commissioned the Environmental Defender's Office to prepare an independent assessment of forestry breaches and the implications for native species and the environment. Meanwhile, the volume of woodchips from SE native forests has increased since the global financial crisis. A small wood pellet plant is soon to be erected at the SEFE chip mill site in Eden which will open up another export market. It is not yet clear how the proposed power station at the chip mill will be dealt with.

The Surf Beach and Wharf Road sites visited on Sunday morning highlighted the need for an overhaul of existing planning laws to ensure that planning decisions are based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development and to re-establish public participation. It will be vital to make sure that the second draft of the Eurobodalla LEP reflects local priorities.

Sheila Monahan



The photos are of a koala that dropped in to offer a roadside greeting to the Eurobodalla Bicycle Users Group while they were cycling at Beechworth, Victoria recently. Not something you can experience in the Eurobodalla Shire any more, unfortunately! On the other hand, the Eurobodalla BUG offers a great opportunity to explore many of our local spots where potential koala habitat still exists, because of the vegetation type.

KOALA PROJECT UPDATE

Since the last Coastwatchers newsletter, the volunteer Eurobodalla Koalas project discussion paper has been released publicly. Following the release there has been a period of intense follow-up by a small group of people (**we need more!**), as the next practical actions begin.

A presentation was made to the Quarterly Meeting of Batemans Bay Bushwalkers. Discussions have been held with a variety of interested community members, several groups of private landholders and the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Lands Council CEO. ABC South East Radio has continued its interest and organized another interview for Tim Holt's morning program.

John Clement, who used to be the teacher at the old Nelligen School, has become our latest project partner, and will take on the koala history role. John will focus on oral history, talking with members of long-standing farming, forestry and fishing families, initially around the Nelligen, Shallow Crossing and Bolaro areas. Anyone with memories or family history related to koalas is invited to contact John on 4471 1477 or 0418 296 570.



Although a submission canvassing several aspects has been forwarded to the Board of the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Lands Council, and contacts with other Lands Councils are planned, the Eurobodalla Koalas project will at this stage refrain from involvement with Aboriginal heritage in relation to koalas. Respected and qualified personnel from the University of Wollongong are already working with local Aboriginal Elders, through a Shire Council-managed project. This project uses a carefully designed research model and its next phase might uncover koala knowledge. The Eurobodalla Koalas project volunteers wish to avoid contaminating the UOW research methodology and are conscious of the complex cultural issues that might prevent transfer of certain knowledge amongst even Aboriginal people, let alone to non-Aboriginal individuals or groups. Our volunteers have taken the stance that we do not need to be the owners of koala knowledge, and are happy to help generate self-sustaining activities that persist by themselves without our future involvement.

Amongst these activities are potential joint projects between interested private landholders, researchers, public agencies and businesses. To that end, a field-kit has been prepared and visits to properties have begun to examine vegetation, connectivity with neighbours (public and private) and history, as well as the longer-term possibility of eco-tourism ventures in some instances. Landholders, researchers and business owners who would like to become involved in this initiative are invited to contact Keith Joliffe on 0427 546 156, however there are already more locations to work with than we have volunteers, so the biggest need for new participants is researchers. Coastwatchers has offered to help any participating university students with billeted accommodation and modest travel subsidies.

Related to this initiative is the effort to build a GIS map of the Eurobodalla's existing and potential koala habitat and breeding corridors, showing where koalas could live and move in our Shire if human population, industry and development patterns can be coordinated to allow them to. Discussions with professional and volunteer map-makers are continuing, and a search for the necessary funds or in-kind resources is continuing. It appears the necessary data are already available, together in one place at Eurobodalla Shire Council, so Council would be the ideal patron if that can be achieved.

Work so far suggests we are probably at or past the tipping point for koala extinction in the Eurobodalla, and that the status quo (ie implementing the national and state recovery plans at their present slow speed and insufficient levels of intensity and resources, and hoping for rehabilitation of prime alluvial river flats on private farmland) will ensure extinction here, and probably in the adjacent Shires where a few wild koalas persist. Accordingly, we have to this point by default made the political decision as a community that the small zoo scenario is sufficient, but enough science is in (despite the lack of surveys locally and nationally) for a political call to be made on whether we are content with that.

The Eurobodalla Koalas project is testing the hard-nosed reality of the argument that coordinating and protecting viable habitat and connectivity corridors would be the best way to ensure we can keep koalas in some form larger (at least as low-density wild populations) than the couple of hand-reared specimens Birdland Animal Park currently accommodates. The habitat and corridor protection option appears at this stage technically feasible and relatively cheap, but remains politically very difficult and inert while the range of vested interests (private

landholders, Forests NSW, other government agencies and their employees, environmental campaigners, researchers) maintain their strongly held positions. The Eurobodalla Koalas project has as one of its ambitions the bringing together of the interest groups to create a solution. This emphasis conflicts somewhat with the view that State Forests should be turned over to non-logging purposes, but is not necessarily incompatible in the long run.

Another option for returning koalas to our local forests is the very contentious translocation of koalas from places like Kangaroo Island to the Eurobodalla's National Parks. The difficulties with this option are touched upon in the discussion paper. In collaboration with an interested local Councillor and Far South Coast Advisory Committee on National Parks member, who also wants the matter addressed openly, the Eurobodalla Koalas project will be represented at the next committee meeting in Narooma, where the translocation issue is expected to be revisited.

Keith Joliffe, Coordinator, Eurobodalla Koalas Project

MARINE MATTERS

Is the fox in charge of the hen house

The announcement by the NSW Coalition Government that the Department of Primary Industry will have responsibility for the management of NSW marine parks is of enormous concern to marine conservationists. Coastwaters believes that Marine Parks should be managed by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, which has the primary purpose of resource conservation. We do not feel that it is appropriate for any aspects of the management of Marine Parks or marine threatened species to be assigned to the Department of Primary Industries. A government agency which is a resource developer in charge of a marine conservation resource is not a good outcome. It will lead to a management culture centred on fish stocks and their use rather than protecting marine biodiversity.

NSW marine parks are of considerable benefits for tourism. The world wide trend is to responsible and sustainable tourism and visitors want to feel confident they are spending their precious holiday time in a place in tune with these principles.

John Perkins

Ocean Day is 8th June.

For ocean health this year is the probably the worst since the last mass extinction when a meteor crash signaled the end of the dinosaurs. Over fishing, pollution and warming waters are having a direct affect on marine life. More extreme weather is destroying habitats in the shallow, more productive seas. And acidification is seriously affecting coral reefs and all other marine organisms that use calcium carbonate, from tiny photosynthetic algae to animals with shells and bones.

Yet in spite of all this a few greedy fishers are twisting the NSW Government's arm to have marine protection reduced!

Please contact the Premier and let him know you support marine parks and no-take zones, ask that the scientific review he has promised is done by reputable marine scientists (not just fisheries experts), and call for action to reduce greenhouse emissions in NSW.

Jenny Edwards

The Hon Barry O'Farrell
Premier of New South Wales
Parliament House
SYDNEY 2000

Email: office@premier.nsw.gov.au

Photo by John Perkins – Batemans Marine Park from Pt Upright



WANTED VIDEO EDITOR/S AND SOCIAL NETWORKER

We would like to make better use of social media to contact younger people and spread the word about local issues. We have a digital video camera but need a person or people with the time and skills to edit the results. Please contact Jenny 4471 5032 if you can help.

We would also love to hear from you if you, or someone you know, would like to be our social networking person. Your committee members do not have the time or skills to set up and monitor a Facebook page, keep up with tweets / blogs etc but we realize that Coastwatchers needs to make use of these modern methods.

CSIRO STUDY ON SEA LEVEL RISE AND MANAGED RETREAT

A recent CSIRO on-line survey sought the attitudes of coastal dwellers at risk from sea level rise on a possible managed retreat option. The findings by Kim Alexander, et al are reported in a SEED CSIRO Working Paper titled *Managed Retreat of Coastal Communities: Understanding Responses to Projected Sea Level*.

Managed retreat - the relocation of homes and infrastructure under threat from coastal flooding - is one of the few policy options available for coastal communities at risk from sea level rise. While the managed retreat option may be the most appropriate or most cost-effective policy response for some locations, it could be unfavourable for pre-existing coastal communities as it has the potential to increase market uncertainty and reduce land values.

In considering a request from the CSIRO for a suitable south coast location for further face-to-face discussions, Council took into account physical factors such as erosion, previous community responses to public consultation and its closeness to Canberra.

Long Beach was considered suitable as it was ranked the highest priority site for targeted investigation in the Eurobodalla Coastal Hazards Scoping Study and there had been numerous requests from the community for detailed scientific, social and economic issues studies.

The CSIRO discussion was also seen as an ideal opportunity for cost-effective independent research to be undertaken relating to community concerns about projected sea level rise given that strong interest and diversity of views had been expressed by the Long Beach community about sea level rise issues.

The discussions were held in early May and the findings are yet to be released.



Recent erosion at Long Beach caused by large waves and high tides



NEWS IN BRIEF *(copies of submissions are on our website)*

Dargues Reef Update – Coastwatchers made another submission objecting to the proposed gold mine near the headwaters of Majors Creek. This one was to the federal environment department who has to decide if threatened species are being adequately protected. We are also contacting state and federal members of parliament with our concerns about the possible impact of a spill from the tailings dam on the Shire's water supply. Not only will the dam contain harmful chemicals but its planned location is geologically unstable.

Council Advisory Committees – Council is restructuring its advisory committees to have more “ordinary people”. As a result representatives from environmental groups are being edged out.

Wharf Rd tourist devt - The tourist units across the road from Easts Van Park at Batemans Bay were approved despite being in such a low-lying site.

Even ducks will be safer

Moruya South Head residents led by Jenny Butt OAM and helped by some young girls who letter box dropped at Moruya Heads, collected signatures for a petition to have a roundabout installed at the intersection of the Princes Hwy and South Head Road. They see the project as having many benefits including better access to town for South Head residents, better safety for road users and a better chance of survival for the many ducks that inhabit the creeks and ponds on the Moruya Golf Course in the vicinity of the South Head Road intersection. Council is fully supportive of the roundabout with a recent letter going to the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to get them to speed up funding for this much needed infrastructure



*L-R: Pat and Jenny Butt, Andrew Constance, Kevin Quick
Front: Phebe and Sarah Towers, Elka Pike and petition*

SERRROC Forum at Moruya

Several members of Coastwatchers attended a forum organized by Geoff Pryor of the South East Region (Resource Recovery) Organisation of Councils. The aim is to develop hubs where resources can be fully utilized by re-use, recycling and recovery of materials. The process is in its early stages but it is hoped that eventually there will be no such thing as waste. Places that already have a sustainability focus are likely to be considered as locations for the hubs so we think Moruya should be in the running.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT AT WORK

TEC's Waste campaigner Lisa Wriley's, recent visit to Adelaide for the National Association of Charitable Recycling Organisations' (NACRO) conference provided a great opportunity to visit five community recycling centres, four of them run by the Scouts, and the Supercollector Statewide Recycling.

The Container Deposit Scheme is simple, it works and in South Australia it is so normal that people are bemused that you want to talk about it and take photographs of it. (Next year it will be introduced into the Northern Territory). Our EPA driver joked that the streets had been cleaned up just for us. I saw two bottles on the ground in three days of extensive travels and I knew that they would be picked up in no time at all. Interestingly I could have counted on my hand the number of other litter items that I saw.

What a contrast to the rest of Australia where litter is so common we think it is normal. Recyclable containers routinely get mixed up with other rubbish when we are out and about or left in the streets, in trees, on fences and in our waterways. Our kerbside recycling is working to a point but we are only rescuing about 50% of our beverage containers. This is way too random.

A National Container Deposit Scheme is such a neat solution. It will increase our beverage container recycling from about 50% to 80% (putting 330,000 tonnes of material back into circulation), reduce litter and climate pollution, help charities, establish hundreds of convenient community recycling centres for containers and other items including e-waste and batteries and my favourite benefit: provide a way for beverage companies to share responsibility for the whole life cycle of their containers.

You can make a donation to the campaign, join the email list of supporters or invite Lisa to visit your community. The online letter to the Environment Minister can be found on the TEC website www.tec.org.au/waste-a-recycling and if you are a facebooker check out the cash for containers facebook page.

Lisa Wriley

COASTWATCHERS COMMITTEE 2010-11

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If undelivered return to;

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COASTWATCHERS COOPERATE WITH THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

Broulee Community Association
Congo Area Association
Eurobodalla Landcare / Dunecare
Friends of Durras
Friends of the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens
Long Beach Landcare
Maloneys Residents Association
Nature Coast Marine Group
South East Region Conservation Alliance
Tomakin Community Association
Tuross Lakes Preservation Group

Coastwatchers is a member of -
The NSW Nature Conservation Council
Conservation Council ACT Region and
Climate Action Network Australia



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment and climate action group

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EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Members can receive the newsletter by email and save our association paper, time and postage. The email contains a link to a choice of full or text-only PDF files that you can download when convenient

For more information, or to subscribe, send a message to
coastwatchers@netspeed.com.au

COMING EVENTS

Ocean Day 8th June

**Coastwatchers Quarterly Meeting, 18 June
Tomakin Hall at 2pm**