

**Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary Support Group Inc.**

P.O.Box 32 BLI BLI Q.4560

# UCA

Wetland Sanctuary News



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**Support Group Inc.**

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**November meeting: 14<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm at  
the Mangrove Room.**

**Note change of time!!!!!!!!!!**

**Next Bird Observers' Group Outing.**

**15<sup>th</sup> December 7am**

Alex Forest Bushland Park, Mari Street Alexandra Headland.  
Park at the end of Mari Street next to the Ten Pin Bowling Alley

President: Derek Foster 5448 5025 mob: 0402 3520 77

Vice President: Vacant

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Lyn Ireland, 0404371362

**To receive your newsletter / meeting minutes by email please send contact details to**

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**Email:** [mwssgi@gmail.com](mailto:mwssgi@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.maroochywetlandssupport.org.au](http://www.maroochywetlandssupport.org.au)



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## ***President's Column***

Folks,

Last month the Bilai Environmental Education Centre donated a data projector to our group. We thank very much for this great gift. It is hoped that we can set up a more permanent theatre option for Sunday visitors as well as have the flexibility for meetings with guest speakers. To further this acquisition we have authorized John Tucker to source a new folding screen for us to use with the projector. This will further allow us to use the projector at other locations and particularly in conjunction with the Education/Display Trailer when it is ready to go.

We have heard that there is a delay in the development of the new boardwalk due to soil testing that needs to be done. Although there have been a number of issues impacting upon the establishment of the new sections of boardwalk the end result will well worth the wait. We continue to appreciate the contribution of the Sunshine Coast Council in their commitment to maintaining the natural environment systems on the Coast. In particular we thank Cr Stephen Robinson and staff Peter Nagel and Eric Stewart.

I have attached a copy of a newsletter from Unity Water. This explains some of the efforts being undertaken by the company to help maintain environmental integrity of the coast water systems. We have no affiliation with Unity Water and supply the article for your information and as a service to allow you contact them if you have any issues.

As indicated on the front of the newsletter the next birdo outing is on the 15<sup>th</sup> December at Alex Forest Bushland Park, Mari Street Alexandra Headland at 7am. Judy Hewett continues to provide great outings and this will be a great finale to the year. She suggests that you park at the end of Mari Street next to the Ten Pin Bowling Alley.

Our **Annual General Meeting** will be coming up soon and very shortly I will let you know when and where this meeting will be held. You will notice that there have been a couple of vacancies this year and it is hoped that there may be people interested in filling these position next year.

I have attached some information about a display by the Bli Bli Historical Society at the Bli Bli Hall on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December. If can, please support our local group that has done a huge amount of work preserving our local history.

All for now

Derek

**P.S. It is that time of year again and our membership subs are due. I have attached to your email a membership form so you can keep your membership current. See article further on.**

***Through the Sanctuary***  
**with**  
***Robyn Howard***

**Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*)**

The Royal Spoonbill is an easily identified bird. It is 75 to 80 cm tall, with white plumage, naked black face and throat, black bill and long black legs. The bill is long with a structured upper surface, and becoming wide and flat towards the tip, its spatulate shape leading to the common name “Spoonbill”. Calls are rarely heard, and generally only at nesting sites, but infrequently, “bill-clacking” may be practiced.



**Royal Spoonbill in waterside vegetation**

There is a second spoonbill species that may occasionally be sighted around the Sunshine Coast. The Yellow-billed Spoonbill is slightly larger, with dull yellow to grey bill and legs. It is normally found along inland rivers or at inland dams.

The habitat preference of the Royal Spoonbill is either fresh or salt shallow water areas, so these waders frequent freshwater floodplains, marshes, billabongs, farm dams or sewage ponds, as well as tidal mudflats, mangroves, and estuaries. Feeding birds are often solitary, or in twos or threes, but sometimes may be in larger groups. These groups employ the “V” formation for long flights.



**Royal Spoonbill and White-faced Heron near the far Crab Hide at MWS**

Royal Spoonbills wade in the shallows, swinging partly open beaks through the water to encounter food. Once an item is sensed, the bill automatically snaps shut, and if prey has been captured, the neck is thrown back to allow the food to be swallowed. If unsuccessful, the bird may chase the prey or resume its sweeping search. Favourite food items include fish, crustaceans, insects and frogs. In fresh water, the bird may seek amongst aquatic vegetation for snails that it will also consume. They will relocate from place to place following food sources.

During breeding, both male and female sport additional plumes emanating from the rear of the head and nape of the neck. A red mark appears on the black skin of the forehead, with a strong small yellow mark above each eye. The breast may have a light buff wash, making it appear stained. Their nest is a platform of sticks located above water on the branch of a paperbark or mangrove or other suitable tree. Small numbers create colonies



with other waterbirds such as ibis, darters, and cormorants. The male selects twigs, presenting them to the female who constructs the nest, then lines it with leaves or aquatic vegetation. Nests may be up to 60 cm wide. Usual clutch size is from 2 to 4 eggs which are incubated by both parents for 20 to 25 days, with both parents then feeding the young.

At the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, Royal Spoonbills survey both edges of the river or wade through the waterway beside the crab-hides. They are generally solitary or in pairs, using the area jointly with White-faced Herons (as photographed), egrets, and Striated Herons.



**Royal Spoonbill in flight – Photo from Wikipedia**

# Unity Water

Unity Water has supplied details of a project that they have underway to support clean systems in our area.

*Unitywater invested \$5.9 million in the Sewage Overflow Abatement Program in 2012/13 and we will spend a further \$5.8 million this financial year. Works include significantly upgrading infrastructure, examining the network with CCTV and undertaking extensive smoke testing to detect leaks and illegal or incorrect connections. Since July 2010, we inspected approximately 37,450 properties and found 5 per cent or 1,868 homes had illegal or incorrect stormwater-to-sewer connections. The vast majority of these have since been fixed.*

I have attached their complete newsletter for your perusal. Please contact them direct if you have questions;

**Kirsty Stewart** | Communications Specialist, Infrastructure

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## Visit to the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary – 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

Robyn Howard

This was one of those almost perfect days. After about seven weeks of dry weather, there had been a good fall of rain on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Also, the first high tide of the season when some of the crab areas are inundated had occurred during the night. Throughout the dry, crabs had been hard to find as they feed underground in their burrows (the surface detritus is not available to them,) so I chose this particular day looking forward to the crab activity.

On arrival, the honeyeaters were feeding in flowering trees in the garden. One Brown Honeyeater seemed to go to every flower on a *Callistemon salignus* beside the ramp, while Lewin's and Scarlet Honeyeaters flitted elsewhere. Bar-sided Skinks were sunning on the building, Eastern Yellow Robins were chasing moths on the lawn, the Little Shrike-thrush was finding insects in the foliage, and an Emerald Dove quietly wandered near the path. It did not like my presence and swiftly returned to the rainforest. The Bar-shouldered Doves pecked their way along the emergency access track, and I listened to Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves in the rainforest, but did not find them.



**Fantail Cuckoo**



**Eastern Yellow Robin**

Over the previous few weeks, our spring/summer migrants had been arriving, and I found the first of the Brush Cuckoos with a Fantail Cuckoo nearby. As I progressed along the boardwalk, I was greeted by Varied Trillers, Golden Whistlers, Grey and Rufous Fantails, a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, and several White-throated Treecreepers which were highly vocal, probably establishing or reinforcing territories for breeding. The Eastern Whipbirds were cracking loudly, and quite unwary. Several species were nest-building or carrying caterpillars off to feed young.

Once out into the mangrove forests and the more open areas, the kingfishers were prevalent – Forest, Sacred, and Collared – and I was listening to the Azure Kingfisher calling, but it was perched somewhere out of sight. The Rufous Whistlers which were always a reliable sighting near the river were not there, and when I thought back, it was several months since I had noticed them.

For a long period – probably close to two years – I had been unable to find our colony of Two-toned Fiddler crabs since the habitat had changed. The wide expanse of open area had been invaded by young Grey Mangroves, many pneumatophores, and other mangrove seedlings. However, I finally found at least thirty of them in another open area, further from the boardwalk unfortunately, but I was excited to see them again.

The River Mangroves are blossoming, but not yet at their peak. The fruit which dropped early from the Grey Mangroves have resulted in many seedlings. The Striped Toadfish were common in all waterways, along with a single Common Toado. Some relatively large mullet swam along the “creek”. Opposite the far crab hide, at least 30 Mud-skipper flipped around just above the waterline, disturbing the Orange-clawed Fiddler Crabs.



**Female Semaphore Crab with Male Orange-Clawed Fiddler**

To my pleasure, many crabs were visible in all of the main crab areas – Semaphores, Maroon Mangrove Crabs, Red-fingered Marsh Crabs, Scarlet Three-spined Mangrove Crabs, Furry-clawed Crabs, and so forth, but I found no Pacific Blue-clawed Sentinels whose behaviour I usually enjoy.

As I began my return, a beautiful Brahminy Kite flew just above the mangroves, giving its “kee-yah” call, and the sun glistening on its wonderful chestnut and white plumage. The last exciting event was on the walk back. As I came past the last of the more open crab areas, a bird rose up in front of me. It was a White-throated Nightjar, and by its odd plumage, it must have been a sub-adult in transition to adult plumage. It seems that there is at least a breeding pair resident at the sanctuary, although it would not be the habitat normally preferred.