

**Newsletter May 2018**

**Issue one**

**National Park Opportunity in the Conondales**  
***Honouring the spirit of the historic SEQFA***

When the Newman government took the axe to the Southeast Queensland Forest Agreement, it left something of a "dog's breakfast" of land tenures in the Conondales. Parcels of state forest that were being logged for native hardwood one last time before transitioning into national parks remain as state forest while a mosaic of disjoint NP outliers find themselves stranded in a sea of state forest.

On one level the land tenure doesn't matter one iota to the critters that live there, the whole functions as an impressive biological reserve but on another, tenure matters enormously when a government regime with little understanding of the need for retention of wild places finds itself behind the levers of power.

For this reason we're keen to see, not so much a return to the historic SEQFA, but an exercise to look at the scattered pieces and create a far more cohesive National Park status for a more secure future.

Central in this is the impressive forest area between the bulk of Conondale National Park in the south and that of Wrattens National Park to the north. As well as the isolated outliers of each park, there are significant areas of state forest that were identified as transitioning to national park; this process stalling when the Newman government walked away from the agreement.

Also central are the incredibly impressive Yabba Falls and local geographer Ian Stehbens has been very active in documenting a case for National Park around the falls and those on Kingaham Creek to the north. We have made submissions on this matter to both the current Environment Minister and her predecessor and are heartened by the commitment of the present government to increase the national park estate. The Department of Environment and Science is at present finalising a Protected Area Strategy that will guide further expansion of the protected area estate. Ian Stehbens has taken his excellent and detailed submission to the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) and both he and I have met with them to advance it.



**Yabba Falls**

*"I would like to propose that the Conondale National Park, a biodiversity jewel in SE Queensland, be extended to the north to connect with Wrattens National Park. Creating a conservation corridor of this kind would connect isolated sections of both Conondale and Wrattens National Parks and ensure the ecological resilience of this region.*

*We commend your government's commitment to increasing the extent of the conservation estate in Queensland. The corridor proposed above would provide an opportunity to transition State Forests to National Park as originally intended in the*

*South East Queensland Forest Agreement. After visiting the Conondale Range in 2014, international connectivity pioneer Harvey Locke commented that this range is integral to landscape conservation in SE Queensland and beyond. By expanding the conservation estate and creating conservation corridors in the northern Conondale Range, we will achieve significant outcomes for our rich biodiversity".*

From a letter to the Minister for Environment  
- Susie Duncan, Coordinator

Hinterland Bush Links

[www.hinterlandbushlinks.org](http://www.hinterlandbushlinks.org)

# Presidential Ponderings

A couple of years back, a new-to-SCEC, Leah Hays had landed the task of organising for World Environment Day and she roped me in to be one of the MCs. "Make sure you mention the long-standing member groups of SCEC," she said. "Some of them are so old they no longer come to World Environment Day."

I had to chuckle because that was us, CRC, around longer than SCEC itself, and we had long since fallen by the wayside when it came to setting up our own World Environment Day stall.

Not always the case though. Who could forget Greg Wood's bold plan to hire a train, fill it with paying greenies and descend on a big Regional Forest Agreement rally in King George Square back in Peter Beattie's day. The Labor Party was having its state conference in the crest Hotel, high above the square and the stakes were high. Fortunately, displays, street theatre, and some impassioned spruiking from Vivien Griffin and others at World Environment Day produced the scarcely credible

outcome that, one week later, the train to the rally was packed out.

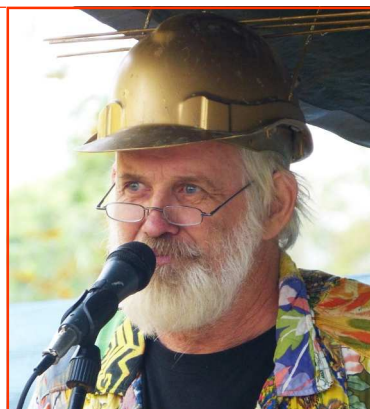
The outspoken Wilson Tuckey later sought to downplay the turnout, claiming SCEC had put on a free train but it wasn't the first time Wilson had his facts wrong. Everyone on the train paid up their ten dollars, each carriage had its resident musicians and the whole colourful lot descended on King George Square to hear speakers and Powderfinger and leave little doubt as to what they wanted to see come out of the Agreement.

Once again, this year I'll be one of the MCs and as well as recognising the work of long-established groups, I reckon it's absolutely vital to acknowledge that it's only the work of those who respect and value the natural environment on the sunshine coast, and who have been prepared to stand up for it, that have shaped its trajectory.

"We don't want to be another Gold Coast" is the common call, and that would have been our destiny but for a host of campaigns on all sorts of fronts. Elaine Green, in her book "Green Legends: People Power on the Sunshine Coast", leaves us in no doubt as to how the coast would have looked by now and this message is as timely as ever.



Conondale Range Conservation presents  
**Kenilworth Poets Breakfast**  
**Saturday 29 September 2018**  
 8am to 11am behind Kenilworth Hall  
 Entry \$5  
 Hosted by local performance poet  
**Ian Mackay**  
 Hot Breakfast and great beverages  
 More info Ian 07 54460124  
 Overnight camping available  
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## Remembering Eric

On Saturday May 12 family and friends of the late Eric Glassop gathered at Booloumba Creek to plant a tree in his memory and to see the signage and seats erected by QPWS in recognition of Eric's long involvement with the Conondales. Eric had been the ranger in charge at Kenilworth since 1979 and whereas it would seem only logical that a forester and a group like the CRC may find themselves on opposing sides, that's not how things panned out.

The plaque at Booloumba is a fitting and lasting tribute. The tree planted that day (a native Tamarind), is alongside the one we all planted in Memory of Eric's wife Ann almost 20 years ago.

I find it hard to have memories of the Conondales that don't somehow include Eric Glassop. One of my fondest memories, though, was meeting and sitting down in Mapleton with Mark Cody, Don Burgher (Sunshine Coast Bushwalkers), Cheryl, Jackie and Eric to start talking of a route that would become the Conondales Great Walk. The funding had been announced, a project driver, Mark, appointed, and we had the luxury of creating a walk that wasn't constrained by private property, major roads etc, as had been the case with the Hinterland Great Walk around Mapleton.

The idea to use old logging trails as much as possible, rather than constructing new walking trails was Eric's, and his superb knowledge of these and of features to include in the walk were most important.

After the tree planting we headed along the Great walk trail, up towards the old goldmine, to "Eric's Rest" a log seat overlooking a patch of Booloumba Creek with some magnificent Flooded Gums in full view. Wrestling that log seat into its final resting place can't have been easy but it makes a very fitting tribute.



Ian, Cheryl and Barb resting at "Eric's Rest"

A large memorial plaque for Eric Glassop, set against a background of a forest landscape with a river and mountains. The plaque features the name "Eric Glassop" in a large, white, cursive font, with "1947-2015" below it. To the right of the name is a circular logo featuring a koala. The plaque contains several paragraphs of text about Eric's life and work. At the bottom right is the Queensland Government logo.

©

*Eric Glassop*  
1947-2015

Warmly remembered as a good natured bloke with a deep connection to the Conondales and a passion for native flora and fauna, Eric dedicated his work life to managing this diverse forest from 1979 to 2006.

Over the years, the national park area increased and Eric was instrumental in guiding the transition from timber harvesting to more conservation focused management.

Eric was highly respected, personable and always ready to lend a hand. He was a great communicator who willingly shared his extensive insights of forest management and conservation with anyone interested in learning about the bush.

He worked closely with the community and enjoyed mentoring others, with many a ranger gaining invaluable knowledge. Eric had a lot to offer, gathered over a 50 year career that began when he was 16 and took him to scenic workplaces including Fraser Island.

Eric's love for the Conondales was evident to everyone lucky enough to have spent time with him.

As a tribute to Eric a tree has been planted and you can sit at "Eric's Rest", overlooking Booloumba Creek on the Conondale Range Great Walk, and enjoy the tranquillity and beauty of the forest he cherished.

Queensland Government

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## President's Report

It is with great pleasure that I make the annual President's Report for the past twelve months in the life of the Conondale Range Conservation Association. Forty-two years is a pretty good innings for a voluntary group and there's no sign of leaving the crease any time soon. The theory proffered by the late Mark Ricketts that curry nights play a not insignificant role still seems to be holding and, though it's been a pretty sedate year, the decision to "hang in there, still watching over the Conondales" has been well and truly justified.

Every group needs to generate some form of income and fortunately our annual Poets' breakfast fits the bill and saves us from having to resort to chook raffles and the like. We're grateful to the poets who give of their time and talents so generously and to the helpers who chip in to make it come off. I think this year's will be the 19th, the first being not a fundraiser but a humble breakfast at the scout hut to welcome a group from NPAQ who were visiting the Conondales.

Again we held our information stall at The Food and Wine Festival in Kenilworth at Easter, selling a number of books in the process.

We've had some correspondence with the Minister for Environment over National Park opportunity in the area around Yabba Falls and the more northerly part of the Conondales (see detail elsewhere).

We must enthusiastically commend the work of the Track Maintenance Crew volunteers who regularly work with QPWS in maintaining walking tracks in the Conondales.

I was guest speaker at the AGM of Hinterland Bush Links in Maleny, taking a bit of a verbal ramble through the Conondales and its conservation history. I'd like to thank all those involved in supporting us, but particularly Cheryl for her tireless work as secretary and organiser and Colleen who stepped up this year to capably take on the duties of treasurer.

**Punk rocker Mary River turtle now one of the most endangered reptile species on the planet**

***A MOHAWKED Aussie turtle — which breathes through its genitals — is making global headlines for all the wrong reasons.***



THE Sex Pistols reckon they invented punk in the 1970s but Australia had its own mohawk-wearing rebels thousands of years before anyone had ever heard of Johnny Rotten.

With fleshy barbels like spiked piercings under its chin and an uncanny ability to breathe through its genitals, the Mary River turtle was thrust into the international spotlight overnight.

This is because the striking creature was placed on the [Zoological Society of London \(ZSL's\) Evolutionary Distinct and Globally Endangered \(Edge\) Reptiles list](#) meaning it is now one of the most endangered reptile species on the planet. Native to Queensland and the Sunshine Coast River it is named after, the Mary River turtle has a head crowned by vertical strands of algae that also grow on its body. In addition, it sports face furniture in the form of long fleshy growths under its chin.

However, perhaps the Mary River turtle's most unusual feature is its ability to breathe through its genitals.

The turtle has gill-like organs within its cloaca — a multipurpose orifice used by reptiles for excretion and mating — that allow it to stay underwater for up to three days.

The turtle, which measures up to 40cm, is only found in the Mary River in Queensland.

Its docile nature — more hippy than punk — historically made it a popular pet. In the 1960s and 1970s its nest sites were mercilessly pillaged for the pet trade.

Today, the Mary River turtle is one of the world's most endangered turtle species.

Other Aussie reptiles appeared on the Edge list, with eight species making the top 100, and seven

## Scientists focus world spotlight on Mary River Turtle

Much excitement recently when the Zoological Society of London placed the Mary River



Turtle (*Elusor macrurus*) as one of the most endangered reptile species on the planet. The classification uses more than number and distribution, and recognises the fact that the Mary River Turtle is the only member of its genus and, what's more, it looks like it hasn't had a close relative for millions of years.

Marilyn Connell from Tiaro Landcare who has been studying the turtle for years was besieged with media enquiries with stories subsequently appearing around the globe. Some delved into the science, some had their interest peaked by the adaptation of "cloacal respiration" (ie bum breathing), and all were fascinated by Chris van Wyk's wonderful photo, the green algae on the turtle's head leading some headlines to refer to it as the "punk turtle"

The Guardian, in its story "Researchers forced to sell chocolates to save Queensland 'punk' turtle from extinction: Recovery plan for threatened Mary river turtle and other species drafted in 2013 but never approved." picked out probably the most important point



from P4... of those appearing in the top 40. These include the critically endangered western swamp tortoise, the pig-nosed turtle and the Gulbaru gecko, a critically endangered Qld species that was only discovered in 2001. Conservationists have today attacked the federal government threatened species strategy which only targets 20 mammals, 20 birds and 30 plants, but no reptiles.

"Australia is one of the richest places in the world when it comes to reptile biodiversity, yet our federal government's threatened species strategy doesn't even include reptiles," Australian

though, that, despite its status, the federal government doesn't have a Recovery Plan in place for Elusor. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/19/researchers-forced-to-sell-chocolates-to-save-queensland-punk-turtle-from-extinction> It's not for want of trying.

MRCCC worked closely with the federal Department of Environment government following the Traveston decision to draw up the "Mary River Threatened Species Recovery Plan" which identified recovery actions for all five threatened aquatic species in the Mary but the government seems to have gone quiet on finally implementing it. The story of the discovery of the Mary River turtle is a fascinating one. Somehow it escaped notice in a study of the Mary's turtles back around the 1890s, perhaps due to its elusive nature. Thousands of hatchlings were much later sold to pet shops as "penny turtles" and it was generally thought they were the young of a quite different species until Sydney turtle expert John Cann saw one that had grown to a mature adult which and was like no turtle he had ever seen. After a lot of searching he finally tracked it down to the Mary (and only the Mary, (hence its common name) and it was in 1994 that it was formally scientifically described. Its classification as "endangered" came later. For more information about the Mary River Turtle, and how to order a T-shirt with Chris van Wyk's classic photo, visit the MRCCC website. [www.mrccc.org.au](http://www.mrccc.org.au)

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Conservation Foundation policy analyst James Trezise told [The Guardian](#).

"It is an entire class of species missing from the current national recovery efforts."

The Edge program uses a complex formula to award a threat score to unusual species at risk of extinction.

"Reptiles often receive the short end of the stick in conservation terms, compared with the likes of birds and mammals," Edge reptiles co-ordinator Rikki Gumbs told PA yesterday. "Just as with tigers, rhinos and elephants, it is vital we do our utmost to save these unique and too often overlooked animals.

"Many Edge reptiles are the sole survivors of ancient lineages whose branches of the Tree of Life stretch back to the age of the dinosaurs.

"If we lose these species, there will be nothing like them left on Earth."

— John von Radowitz from PA

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

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☐ Single/family \$10 ☐ Total \$

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PO Box 150 KENILWORTH 4574  
Email: admin@exploreconondales.com  
www.exploreconondales.com

Support the Conondale Range Committee  
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STILL... WATCHING  
OVER  
THE CONONDALES



The Marbled Frogmouth  
can now relax in the  
Conondale National Park  
It's taken 25 years!

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Available on line: [www.exploreconondales.com](http://www.exploreconondales.com)

**Conondales 'Wilder Side' Books**  
Available at:

- \*Kenilworth Information Centre
- \*Fairhill Native Plants, Yandia
- \*Coop bookshop Sunshine Coast University
- \*Maple St Coop, Maleny
- \*Barung Landcare, Maleny
- \*Rosetta Books, Maleny
- \*CRC Mail Order or on line

**[www.exploreconondales.com](http://www.exploreconondales.com)**

*A must for any visitor to the Conondales,  
this book includes history, a comprehensive bird  
list, description of walks, recreation and maps of the  
area.*

*Plus lots of great photos.*



Johnno Glassop planting a tree next to the sign in memory of  
his father Eric at Booloumba Creek Picnic Area.  
Ian is saying a few words and telling some stories of our long  
association with Eric and the Conondales.  
Native Tamarind, *Diploglottis australis*