



Topic of Capricorn

September 2012
a voice for the environment

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CCC AGM 2012

There are a few new faces on the committee. Paul Bambrick is president; Bethlea Bell, Vice-president; Ian Herbert, Treasurer; Lauren Hunt, secretary and the four committee members are Bruce Zimmer, Mike Danaher, John McCabe and Steve Heyer. Paul presented the CCC 2011-12 Annual Report, particularly noting the great success in working with the UNESCO World Heritage Committee Great Barrier Reef WHA Mission (Fanny Douvère-WHA, Tim Badman IUCN) along with other local groups. Paul noted that CCC needs to continue our communications with UNESCO on their review of the GBR World Heritage and associated progress by Australian and Queensland Governments on the GBR Strategic Assessment.

Flying Fox Protection lost

Flying foxes are ecologically critical mammals adapted to Queensland's diverse natural environment. Hard won protection for our five species (two listed as vulnerable) would be lost if decades of research and enlightenment of the community and the horticultural industry is tossed out for populist knee-jerk reactions based on fear and ignorance. The [CCC submission](#) to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee expressed opposition to the *Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012*.

Help protect flying foxes by writing to your local, state and federal representatives asking for lethal controls to be banned.

World Environment Day 2012

5th June was world environment day. CCC marked day with three main activities. ECOFEST Gladstone – Chantelle set up a CCC display at the Gladstone Ecofest in conjunction with the brand new Gladstone conservation council. Margaret Hale Park, North Rockhampton – Michael set up a display working with GRMPA, FRCC and others. The event targeted school children and the theme was Protecting our Biodiversity. The third event was the Bimblebox showing at Yeppoon.

Help Save Bimblebox N.R. – Sign the Petitions

Take this opportunity to remind our Governments that the issue of mining on protected areas isn't forgotten. Please sign the *No Mining on the Steve Irwin Reserve or the Bimblebox Nature Refuge* petition for Queensland residents only, petition number 1930-12, closing date 27/11/2012 .

[No Mining Bimblebox Nature Refuge Petition](#) and everyone can sign petition to the Senate:

[Community Run Bimblebox NR Petition](#) Thanks for your support *Paola Cassoni* Bimblebox Nature Refuge

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Bimblebox Screenings

About 100 people from Yeppoon and surrounds came to the Bimblebox showing and information session on Tuesday 5th June. All the stalls and displays were well subscribed. Groups represented were KAFDA, CTC and many others. Jai and Den Rickard catered with yummy pies. CCC sold several books and recruited new members too. A most enjoyable and informative time.

Coral Sea Marine Parks declared

Hot on the heels of the report, the Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke announced the protection of 3.1 million square kilometres of marine reserves. It was good television. The Prime Minister added her bit for populism pointing out that only 1% of recreational fishing spots will be affected. She has her eye on the next election. Nothing has been said about protecting the marine areas from chemical waste being pumped into the river systems by the mining industry.

Last Galapagos tortoise

Lonesome George, the last of a giant Galapagos Islands tortoise subspecies of the, has died. The Pinta Island tortoise (*Chelonoidis nigra abingdonii*), also known as the Pinta giant tortoise was a subspecies of Galápagos tortoise. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinta_Island_tortoise
Did you know that Australia seventy-five species of frogs, birds and native animals have become extinct in our recent history and that there are forty-one species currently on the critically endangered list? [EPBC Act List of Threatened Fauna](#)

Building Nature's Resilience - A Biodiversity Strategy for Queensland

In 2011 Queensland introduced a **biodiversity strategy** with two primary goals. *By 2020 Queensland will:* 🌱 *Reverse the decline in biodiversity;* 🌱 *Increase the resilience of species, ecosystems and ecological processes.* CCC urges project proponents and the decision makers (Federal Environment Minister and Qld Coordinator General) to adhere to these goals and stop fobbing off genuine concerns and scientific advice with 'weasel words', like "any ecological harm will be minimised, mitigated and monitored", or pretend that the biodiversity offset policy BOP actually works. The Federal Government is preparing to hand over responsibility for the EPBC Act decisions to State Governments and our new LNP Government is slashing into the environmental and legal protections gained after decades of community struggle. Help stop the 'green-washing' and watering down of laws, policies and compliance staffing designed to protect declining habitat in our rivers, wetlands coastlines, islands and seas from the fossil fuel rush, port expansions, urban sprawl. **Write letters to the editor, to your state and federal members and Ministers to stop more species sliding towards endangered status or extinction.**

Rio +20

The UN recently published a report that measured the effectiveness of all the environmental think tanks, conferences, international agreements, billions of words and talking heads and so on since the first Rio and came up with the conclusion that instead of getting better, the environment is suffering much more than ever before. The 45,000 people and the 190 countries at the Rio 20 conference signed off on the usual goals. Let's hope that that does not mean things are going to get even worse.

Richland Wasteland Author Visits CQ

Sharyn Munroe author of Rich Land Wasteland on ABC (Wide Bay) – includes mention of Xstrata's Rolleston Coal Mine threatening to destroy sustainable grazing on Queensland Bluegrass and important wetlands at "Springwood" near Rolleston. Coal from Rolleston Mine is destined to be shipped through Keppel Bay from the proposed Balaclava Island Coal Export terminal. [ABC Interview](#)

Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment

The GBR Region and Coastal Zone [Strategic Assessment](#) terms of reference have been released. CCC attended the GBR Southern Region workshop with eighty cross-sectional representatives. After an overview of the Strategic Assessment feedback was given on; GBR values (Social, Economic, etc); opinions on whether these are in decline, stable or improving, and suggested changes to the 25 year vision for the Reef. GBRMPA will hold further workshops in December after collating responses. The Australian Government is required to provide a report of 'substantial progress' to UNESCO WHA Committee in February 2013 with the draft Strategic Assessment released in March 2013 final consultation and sign-off by Minister Burke in June. No advice yet on the Queensland Government action plan for Coastal Zone Strategic Assessment!

Gladstone Conservation Council

CCC welcomes the creation of GCC from a small core of volunteers meeting in late 2011 just as the ecological harm from the dredging associated with the three Curtis Island LNG plants and Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal was gaining national and international attention. Chantelle James CCC Project Officer will continue joint actions with GCC through their first year of incorporation and beyond. Gladstone/Curtis Island Port and industrial expansion on the Great Barrier Reef World heritage Area was the trigger for the UNESCO World Heritage mission to Australia.

[Gladstone Conservation Council - Facebook](#). Gladstone Conservation Council President Jan Arens and State MP Liz Cunningham successfully 'launched' the group with members at the Gladstone Ecofest in June. There was great interest in the group, their displays and talks given at their Ecofest site. A successful fundraiser event with local musicians and a talk by Sharyn Munroe, author of Rich Land Wasteland, was well attended in Gladstone in mid-August. If you would like to join GCC, contact gladstoneconservationcouncil@hotmail.com or 0499 577 115. CCC also has membership brochures and forms available at the Environment Centre in Rocky. [Gladstone Conservation Council - Facebook](#) [photo] MP Liz Cunningham (back row on right) with GCC members at the group's 'launch' at Ecofest.

Queensland's big step back from environmental assessment

The defining characteristic of the Newman government's environmental policy seems to be a Great Leap Backwards: an old-fashioned determination not to let environmental concerns get in the way of expanding the mining industry in general and the coal industry in particular. It really is a coal-ition government. Article by Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor, School of Science at Griffith University <http://theconversation.edu.au/queenslands-big-step-back-from-environmental-assessment-9238>

Qld waters down protection for vegetation (VMA)

From Toby Hutcheon (QCC): We welcome that the LNP have confirmed they will not change the VMA or reduce vegetation protection in QLD but are concerned that any relaxation of penalties and compliance will result in an increase in illegal clearing. Any review must have as its central goal a compliance regime designed to stop illegal clearing not encourage it! A review should also include opening the door for carbon farming to allow landholders to be financially rewarded for maintaining regrowth. We need stronger assurances about existing codes regulating clearing of high value regrowth and any review should be open to public comment and be transparent. The VMA has been good for the environment, for biodiversity and for emission reductions.

Boom Goes the Reef - Coal or Coal?

Keppel and Fitzroy Delta Alliance campaigns in Melbourne, along with the renowned author of "Rich Land, Wasteland", Sharyn Munro whose extraordinary book exposes the real story of coal: how people are hurting, and rebelling, as coal pushes into hitherto unthinkable areas; how the true costs outweigh any benefits; and how all of us will ultimately pay the price. (Reading Hawthorn, 1 Oct and St John's Hall Camberwell, 14 Oct). www.protectkeppelbay.org

BEYOND COAL & GAS FORUM - Chantelle James

CCC members attending Beyond Coal and Gas Forum at Louisa Creek thoroughly enjoyed the weekend, learnt an amazing amount and connected with some wonderful people all working to help the environment, people, communities and their local economies from the impacts of coal and gas. It was a fantastic event with excellent speakers and presentations on the environmental, social and economic impacts of coal and gas from a cross section of landholders, campaigners and academics. A full list of the program is available at www.beyondcoalandgas.org/program.html Some of the highlights of the weekend for me included: the 'Gasfield-free community strategy' presentation by Aiden Ricketts (check out www.csgfreenorthernrivers.org); a the Tyson's presentation of "Springwood" experiences with coal mining next door and an expansion planned over their property; presentation on social impacts of the boom in CQ by Shane Hopkins; a presentation on the health impacts of coal, including noise and dust pollution by Bowen resident and health professional, Maria McDonald; and meeting and networking with positive and passionate people working to protect our land, water, people and environment from the impacts of the boom. For a summary: <http://www.beyondcoalandgas.org/summary.html> . Congratulations to organisers, Mackay Conservation Group and Ellie Smith – Event Coordinator, on the event's success.

CONNORS RIVER DAM By Chantelle James, Project Officer.

Good news for the Connors River and the Fitzroy River Turtle came out of a recent financial decision by the Queensland Government and SunWater to suspend the proposal. This came nearly 3 months after CCC and other environment organisations requested a Statement of Reasons from Minister Burke on the decision to approve the project. SunWater advised in a letter to CCC that the project 'will not be proceeding at this time' because 'we failed to obtain the required contractual and financial commitment from customers and therefore the business case for the project is no longer viable'. Whilst the decision has been based on financial reasons and not environmental reasons, it is a win for the Fitzroy River Turtle (FRT); no Connors dam (at the moment) equates to undisturbed and unaltered breeding and feeding aquatic habitat for the FRT, no threat of injuries or death from toppling over a dam wall, and no physical barrier to movement and genetic mixing of the species in the Connors River.

Given the decision was based on financial commitment, and the project has already been approved by the Queensland and Federal Government, we should not become complacent in thinking that the project is 'shelved' never to come out again. It also means that mining companies, Sunwater and the Government will be looking elsewhere for a water supply to the Bowen and Galilee Coal basins for new coal projects, especially towards existing infrastructure of nearby Fairbairn and Burdekin Dams (there are rumours Gina Rinehart is actively purchasing water from Fairbairn via producers selling their allocations). CCC is communicating our concerns in regards to the conservation and management of the Fitzroy River Turtle, particularly in relation to the proposed dam and weir projects in the Fitzroy Basin (there are four), with Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke. Even though the project is approved and has conditions under the EPBC Act, CCC aims to have these conditions amended and improved for the FRT, in case the project receives financial backing and proceeds in the future. Links: [ABC/2012-08-01/ search for Connors River Dam alternative](http://www.abc.net.au/2012-08-01/search-for-Connors-River-Dam-alternative) ; [CQ News/2012/08/17/producers-alarmed-as-water-allocations-sold/](http://www.cqnews.com.au/2012/08/17/producers-alarmed-as-water-allocations-sold/) ; [CCC/Connors Dam](http://www.cccqld.org.au/Connors-Dam)

FBA MUSTER - 17-18 October 2012

Open to anyone interested in learning about Natural Resources management changes in CQ (registration fee applies) Visit website www.fbamuster.org.au

CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL *a voice for the environment*

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