

Gecko reNews

Official Newsletter of Gecko -
Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

DECEMBER 2004

FREE!

gecko.org.au

FREE!

Volume 15 No. 12

'The Geckos!'

Water Supplies - Very GC

The Plan for South East Qld

Gecko Recycle Xmas Workshops

Volunteering Boosts Community Happiness

Horse Trails

Peak Oil & Climate Change

Gecko reNews

Newsletter of Gecko - Gold Coast
and Hinterland Environment Council

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DECEMBER 3

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New Members!

A warm welcome to our new members:
Kym Wright, Sabine Schleicher, Jacky Stewart,
Gary & Chris Bance, and Stephen & Julie Dignan.

Your used paper wanted!

Your Gecko office is in
desperate need of your clean
A4 sheets of paper that have
only been used on one side.

We can pick them up if that is
easier. Call Ben on 5534 1412.

pic

Astrological Environmental Guide for Sagittarius

22/11 - 21/12

You're most enthusiastic and inspired about environmental issues when it comes to freedom of movement for our fellow creatures. No life form should be locked in a cage and you can be almost fanatical in your criticism of those who restrict the natural motion of our cohabitants in such a manner. Good on you!

By *David Harris*

Hinze Dam Daily Statistics

Readings taken on 19 November, 2004

Water consumption for yesterday: 196.88 million litres

Target consumption: 170 million litres pic

Rainfall at Dam wall to 9am today: NIL

Hinze Dam - today/last year: 73.22% / 43.51%

The total capacity of the Hinze Dam is 163,500 million litres.

Join Gecko via the Internet

By *Karen Williams, Membership Coordinator*

Those wishing to join Gecko, renew their Gecko membership, or perhaps even make a donation, etc, might find it easier to do via the internet.

Here are the Suncorp-Metway account details:

- BSB: 484-799
- Account No: 05156-4234

Please ensure your name is evident to us, otherwise we won't know who has given us some \$\$.

Also, if you can, it is important that you make some sort of reference that it is for Membership or donation, etc. Let me know if you have any further queries or suggestions.

EPA logo

The Queensland Government's Environmental Protection Agency provides funding to assist in the production of this newsletter.

Earths Choice
logo

Gecko supports
earth'schoice

QR logo

QR is a sponsor of the
Old Conservation
Council and Gecko.



The annual Gecko awards evening – The Geckos – will be held on Friday December 10th at Gecko House. The celebration begins at 6.30pm, with the presentation of awards commencing at 7:30pm. Please RSVP by Wednesday, December 1st, 2004. Phone 5534 1412 or email info@gecko.org.au. Minimal food and drinks will be provided, so please bring a plate of your favourite food, wine and a few beers. The theme is 'Being in the Web of Life – Celebrating Earth Connections'.

Themed dress:

- Air (light blue)
- Water (dark blue)
- Soil (brown)
- Plants (green)
- Animals (red)

The Geckos

~ Friday 10 December 2004 ~

The Geckos is a lovely opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the past year, and to recognise the commitment of our volunteers and others in the community to protecting and restoring the natural environment.

The Geckos is always a terrific evening spent with terrific people, enjoying fine wine and song, and this year will once again feature live performance and gourmet food.

The awards to be presented on the night include Certificates of Appreciation, acknowledging the consistent and diligent work of our volunteers throughout the year. We like to thank those that have contributed to Gecko, and given freely of their inspiration, perspiration and dedication.

Silver Gecko Awards are presented to those people who have demonstrated a significant commitment to the environment movement, and have made a sustained and significant contribution during the year.

Golden Gecko Awards are presented to those people who have also made a significant contribution to the environment movement and have dedicated several years of outstanding service to the environment.

Life Membership of Gecko is presented to a special someone each year, in recognition of their long-standing support of, and involvement in, Gecko over many years.

Your homework is to mark December 10th in your diary, and to join us for this very special evening! We'd love to see you there.

For more information, please contact Ben at Gecko on 5534 1412. We need volunteers to help with all aspects of this event!

Gold Coast Waterfutures Committee

by Sheila Davis, Campaign Coordinator

Gecko has been involved in the consultation for Gold Coast's water future where about twenty representatives from various stakeholders and government agencies have been meeting to determine the best options for providing for our City's water supply needs, with all aspects considered, and to report back to full Council by April 2005.

Gold Coast Water has come up with a 'five taps' strategy, bringing together multiple initiatives, including water conservation, traditional water sources (such as dams and pipelines), alternative sources (including desalination), groundwater and stormwater harvesting, source substitution (such as the use of recycled water), greywater re-use and rainwater tanks, together with maintenance and pressure management to reduce leakage.

Raising of the Hinze Dam to Stage 3 at this stage is not seen to be a viable option, both because the cost far outweighs the benefits and because there can be no delays to the raising of the dam for flood storage, which has already been approved.

The additional water being provided by the Wivenhoe Pipeline will ensure that we don't need to raise the dam wall for water supply for another fifteen years.

At this point, the State Government will not fund any further raising of the dam for water supply as it is not the least cost, most viable option, leaving all the costs to be borne by the ratepayers.

Yet at a recent meeting Council voted to raise the dam wall, pre-empting the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

They argued that the public wanted the dam wall raised. Council set up an Advisory Committee to provide informed decision-making then used the uninformed public as a reason to override the advice of their informed committee.

pic

The Eden Project

by Lois Levy, Management Committee

pic

Some of you will know that I recently returned from a six-week trip to the UK, Ireland and Spain and I would like to tell you a little about one experience I had in Cornwall.

I had been told about the Eden Project before I left Australia, but really had little idea of what it was, other than some kind of environmental education project.

We only had two days in Cornwall so I wanted to make sure the Eden Project was on the agenda and gathered the necessary directions and information. It is situated in a huge abandoned quarry and is an astonishing sight when viewed for the first time from the lip of the quarry. Far below us was a huge terraced garden dominated by two enormous white domes made of hexagonal pieces of some type of plastic: these were the biospheres. Inside these domes the ecosystems of the tropics and the dry Mediterranean climate areas of the world had been recreated, while the rest of the quarry featured the open-air biosphere of plants which can grow naturally in Cornwall and other places with similar climatic conditions. It is intended to build more biosphere domes representing different climate/vegetation regions of the world as more funds become available.

It is a botanist's dream.

The project was begun in 2001 with a grant of £50 million (about \$120 million) from the Millennium Fund and the other £50 million has been raised from banks, donations and gate fees. Some 4000 per day pass through the gate!!! All this in 3 years.

The philosophy behind the Eden Project is to reconnect urban people with the world of plants and for them to gain some understanding of how essential plants are to our existence and lifestyles. To this end, the layout and presentation of the vegetation emphasises the uses of plants to humans and the need to ensure this use is sustainable.

All the soil in the quarry was 'made' for the project, as they did not want to take soil from elsewhere. It is self-supporting in water thanks to some ingenious engineering and the biospheres generate their own climate. Some birds and reptiles have now adopted them as their home

For the average European or citizen of the United Kingdom, it was obviously a revelation to see the amazing plants from the tropics and Mediterranean climates and with the English love of gardening the comments from those around us demonstrated their appreciation of it

all. We were familiar with many of the plants because of Australia's amazing climatic diversity, so I concentrated on observing other visitors and the interpretation provided.

The written interpretation in booklets is excellent, but this is not carried through as effectively inside the domes themselves. It is difficult to read the book and look at the plants while wandering through a hot steamy jungle, which is a pity because the story is exciting. I did not have time to examine the children's education program, though we encountered a school group busy exploring the domes to answer their quiz questions. I was also impressed with their use of art, sculpture, music and literature quotations to create a holistic experience and which served as a highlight or just to delight the eye or ear.

I came away excited by the concept and dreaming of something similar at home by presenting all our ecosystems in one place to excite the curiosity and imaginations of young and old alike. I felt sure that our Gecko Ed team would make a much better job of the interpretation and we could help people reconnect with the fruits of the earth and go home inspired to protect their living heritage.

Horse riding in sensitive areas

Letter to the Editor, Gold Coast Bulletin, by Sheila Davis, Gecko Campaign Coordinator

We refer to recent statements by the horse riding lobby and their criticism of the state government's decision to exclude horse riding from the newly declared National Parks as part of the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement. Horses cause damage to fragile ecosystems in at least four ways - through their feet trampling vegetation and eroding steep slopes and waterways; through their feeding activities on shrubs and grasses, some of them rare and threatened; through the spread of weeds and insects through their faeces; and through the spread of the root-rotting phytophthora fungus which kills both trees and soils.

In areas such as the Gold Coast hinterland where we have extremely high rainfall, steep slopes and

unstable soils characteristic of much of the SEQ region, it is beyond question that the continued use of these trails for horse riding will lead to further degradation and consequential siltation of streams. We believe that some of the existing horse trails in the Gold Coast hinterland are degraded to the point where they pose a danger to public safety and for public liability reasons alone they should be closed and the area rehabilitated.

Gecko supports the Queensland Government's investigation of other areas for such recreational uses, away from those areas protected for their high nature conservation values and extreme landscape constraints. Private land in appropriate areas outside our water catchments and in flatter

landscapes away from core ecological areas should be encouraged or acquired for these active recreational uses. National Parks and National Park recovery areas should be protected for their primary purpose - that is, conservation of our biodiversity and the provision of ecological services, such as clean water, fresh air, and healthy, stable soils, on which all life depends.

pic

Fishing - like shooting

by Ben Perkins and Janine Cairns, Librarian

A recent article in Australian Geographic (Apr-Jun 2004, No.74, pp.32) highlights the damage inflicted by recreational fishing on wildlife. Lance Ferris, founder and President of Australian Seabird Rescue, details his horrific experiences with entangled birds. On a recent trip through southern NSW, Victoria and South Australia, he found crippled pelicans with fishhooks in their legs, wings and beaks and others hopelessly

tangled in fishing line in all but a few of the estuaries he visited. One bird had a lure and 9 hooks embedded in its body - 3 of them in its throat.

Estimates are that at least 5,000 pelicans are injured by fishing tackle each year. Hidden beneath birds' feathers is a festering underbelly of suffering. Yet fishing, like shooting, is still called a sport!

See the Gecko Library for more information regarding this article.

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Green Light for Cycling to Work

Bicycle Victoria's new guide to a Cycle-Friendly Workplace is helping organizations reduce their environmental impact by encouraging more people to ride to work.

The Cycle-Friendly Workplace booklet details five easy steps to make workplaces more cycle friendly, including encouraging businesses to discover the benefits, improve facilities, provide incentives and create a cycle-friendly culture.

The ideas outlined in the guide make good practical sense and the case

studies are very helpful. Cycling to work is a great way for people to stay fit, help the environment, and enjoy the benefits of a health active lifestyle. The booklets can be obtained from www.bv.com.au (Keyword: workplace).

The TravelSmart Australia website www.travelsmart.gov.au includes links to cycling organisations around Australia and information for employers and workplaces about green travel planning.

Source: *Greenhouse News, Winter 2004.*

Thousands of Species "Co-Endangered"

An international team of biologists released a report last week warning that when endangered species go extinct, they take down other dependent species with them.

The upshot of the finding is that up to 50% more species may be endangered than can be currently accounted for by biologists.

Source: www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/27082/

Leading by example

The New Zealand Ministry for the Environment has slashed the waste it sends to landfill by 80% by introducing a simple employee education program asking people to recycle, reuse, compost food scraps and print double-sided.

Source: *Environmental Hope, Oct 2004*

Seahorse Struggle

by Rebecca Bowe

Seahorses may have the best love lives of any fish in the ocean.

These delicate, swirled-tail members of the syngnathid family (pipefish, sea dragons) are frequently depicted in mythology, rapturously entwined.

But this millennia-old dance may soon be over, as seahorses are increasingly endangered.

Source: www.emagazine.com/view/?2015

Volunteering 'boosts community happiness'

Why should people get involved and volunteer in their local community? Well, a new British study has found that voluntary work may hold the key to happiness which builds on the already solid evidence about the health and welfare benefits of involvement in community.

This won't come as any great shock to people involved in communities where the level of voluntary work and volunteerism is high but the British study which surveyed 101 randomly-selected district authorities and volunteer projects found that those with the best quality of life had high levels of informal voluntary activity. People living in areas where many citizens gave up their time for others enjoyed better health, suffered less crime, and claimed to be "very satisfied" with their lives.

Students from these communities also achieved higher grades at school.

Professor Paul Whiteley, from the University of Essex in Colchester, whose team produced the findings, said the research had revealed an interesting link between helping others and enjoying a good quality of life. "It seems that when we focus on the needs of others, we may also reap benefits ourselves."

"It means that voluntary activity in the community is associated with better health, lower crime, improved educational performance and greater life satisfaction," he said.

Volunteering had a positive influence irrespective of a community's social class or wealth, the Economic and Social Research Council study found. The areas that recorded the highest percentage of people who said they were "very satisfied with life" were also the areas that enjoyed high levels of voluntary activity.

Source: *Our Community Matters, Sep '04*

Operations Report - Oct/Nov 2004

by Ben Perkins, Operations Manager

pic

NEWSLETTER

- The January edition will require that the deadline is one week earlier in December, i.e. Dec 3, not Dec 10.
- A Member Survey is being developed.
- A new information package is being prepared to post out to potential newsletter advertisers.

WEBSITE

- Continues to be updated and developed. Contributions welcome always.

HALL HIRE

- Is going well thanks to the 'no parties' policy
- There has been an art exhibit and other tame one-off events.
- There are regular bookings for martial arts, reiki and Buddhists and soon there will be a small church service every Sunday morn.
- Bookings for 2005 have already been taken - Pilates will be every Thursday morn, and 5 teacher education sessions will occur throughout the year.
- Bicycle Gold Coast now have a home here for their meetings.

VOLUNTEERS

- Flora is resigning but will seek a replacement first and train them.

GECKO HOUSE

- A small rock went through the Hall window over the weekend of Oct 16 and cost us \$125!
- Heavy rain showed up a slight leak in the Hall roof on Oct 18.
- Termites and other 'pests' were taken care of this month.
- Some worn floorboards in the Hall and verandah are to be replaced - Brian is organizing that.
- Fire extinguishers are due for service - I'll organize.

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Wastewater treatment night was very well attended - a full house of around 50.
- There will be no speaker in December (22nd) or January (26th - 'Aust Day')
- Feb 23, 2005 will be Toby, QCC Campaign Coordinator, along with their Smogbusters Day Coordinator

STALLS

- The stall kit has been updated and boxed in the Store Room near the Museum.
- Stalls have been set up at Griffith Uni (Sheila, Oct 12), and Wollumbin Fest (Sheila, Oct 20-22). A stall at TAFE (Flora/Graham, Oct 20) was planned but TAFE were a bit disorganised and it was wet so we cancelled.
- Parts of the stall kit have been displayed in the office entry area, in lieu of anything else. We will need duplicate copies of these to save taking them off the wall every time we have a stall. This would be a good time to update the photos and some of the text. Volunteer(s) needed! A new look office entry has been devised and will be (slowly) realised.

MEDIA

- Media Release on our 15th birthday went out with good response. Gold Coast Sun journalist was interested especially because it mentioned a different Gecko name (Brian Talbot). A feature and picture was done on Brian. Brian was also on Hot Tomato radio. Gold Coast Mail also ran a picture and story.

COMPUTER NETWORK

- Steve tidied up a few things and he says it is possible to network our computers with Regen's.

EVENTS

- Clean Up Aust Day - Steve has set up a specific computer log in password for the Coordinator, plus their own email address - cleanup@gecko.org.au.
- A log in and password has also been set up for events@gecko.org.au that could be used for the do! and even The Geckos, etc.

GENERAL

- Various requests and inquiries and heaps of mail and email have been received as usual this month.
- New pigeon holes have been set up.
- Phone contact lists are now updated.
- A booklet on 'Gecko's Green Office' has been drafted and almost completed. I need to also arrange various signs for different parts of the House and office to indicate that what we do in the House changes the world!
- On October 28, I attended a seminar presented by the 'Our Community' group where we discussed developing various types of partnerships between community groups (e.g. Gecko!) and businesses. A booklet I collected outlines the various types of partnerships that we could develop with businesses. This has been given to Bardhold as Chair of the Business and Admin Sub-Committee for further discussion at a future meeting. It really does require a volunteer(s) to take it on and specifically work on this issue only.
- I will be spending the working day at QCC on Thursday Nov 25, to see if I can learn anything about how things operate up there.

100% recycled office paper

EVOLVE 100% recycled office paper is manufactured from 100% post-consumer waste and has the quality appearance and performance of traditional virgin fibre papers. The production of EVOLVE, which is totally chlorine free and uses biodegradable soaps, combines a strict waste collection and selection process which is critical to the production of premium recycled paper. EVOLVE office paper is produced at

an advanced recycling plant in the UK which has ISO 14001 environmental management systems in place.

The products are dust free and visibly cleaner than other similar quality recycled grades, ensuring consistent performance for office applications.

EVOLVE is also accredited with ISO 9706, the international standard guaranteeing long life and permanency of the paper.

EVOLVE 100% recycled office paper is available from KW Doggett Fine Paper in A4 reams.

Source: Eco Voice, Oct 2004

Editor's Note: Call Ben at Gecko for info on where to purchase. To me it seems like better quality than Reflex etc. and is at the same or cheaper price!

COMMON NAMES FOR BIRDS

The Australian King Parrot, also known as the King Lory, has the ornithological name of *Alisterus scapularis*. The derivation of the name is from Latin [L] . Here, I think someone really became "carried away" with names, as *Alisterus* is from the personal name Alister, the son of G M Mathews [1876-1949], prominent Australian ornithologist. Whereas, *scapularis* = shouldered. "Alistar shouldered"??? Seems crazy to me.

The other common name, "Lory", is a common name of various small brightly coloured parrots of Australia, Indonesia and New Guinea.

Some members of the "Rosella" parrot family bear the name "Lowrie" which is a variation of the spelling, "Lory".

The Crimson Rosella or Mountain Lowrie is one example. Scientifically, the bird's name is *Platycercus* - Greek - Flat Tail and *Elegans* - L = Handsome.

Another example is the Yellow Rosella or Murrumbidgee Lowrie. Scientific name - *P. Flaveolus* - L = Yellow].

The common name, "Rosella" derives from the "now" Sydney suburb of Rose Hill. In the early years of European settlement, the Eastern Rosella - [P. *Eximius* - L. = Excellent] was very common in the area. Hence the nickname "Rose Hillers" which contracted to "Rosellas".

Then you come to another branch of the parrot family, the Lorikeet and all its variations. "Lorikeet" is a contraction of "Lori" and "Parakeet". The derivation of the name "Parakeet/ paraquet/ paroquet/ parrakeet/ parraket/ parroquet" is interesting. It comes from Italian and means literally, "Little Parson" [Parochito - Parochetto - Parocco]. Maybe there is a connection with the derivation of the name, "Parrot" - From French - Perrot, Pierrot, diminutive of Pierre "Peter". Maybe there are religious connotations here that have been lost. Finally, we come to the derivation of "Lory".

This generic name for birds of the parrot family came into English via Dutch C1700 from Malay Luri or Nuri.

SPECIAL SURVEY WALKS

Our 2004 Program of Special Survey Walks has now been completed.

The schedule for 2005 will be advised in the next edition of Gecko's reNews.

NORMAL SURVEY WALKS

These take place once a month on a Sunday morning.

The walks begin at 8am and are of about one hour's duration.

At the conclusion of a walk, we have our BYO morning tea.

Our 2004 Program of Normal Survey Walks has now been completed.

The schedule for 2005 will be advised in the next edition of Gecko's reNews.

2004 PROGRAM OF SPECIAL SURVEY WALKS

Elanora Wetland Habitat

These occur every fortnight on a Tuesday morning beginning at 7.30am. Interested participants meet at the front entrance to Elanora Wetlands Habitat (EWH). To get to EWH - From the Gold Coast Highway Palm Beach, enter Tallebudgera Drive and proceed west. At the end of Tallebudgera Drive, turn into the bitumen lane and thence left under the Pacific Motorway. You will then be directly facing the entrance to Elanora Wetlands Habitat.

December 14th, 28th

DON'T FORGET: All members of Gecko, associated groups and visitors are welcome to attend any of these activities.

**For more information on any of these activities please call:
Maureen (07) 5598 7900, Arthur (07) 5534 3824 or Tom (07) 5598 4145**

pic

Walk with Wildlife

by Tom Fletcher

ELANORA WETLANDS HABITAT

These occur every fortnight on a Tuesday morning beginning at 7.30am. Interested participants meet at the front entrance to Elanora Wetlands Habitat [EWH].

To get to EWH - From the Gold Coast Highway Palm Beach, enter Tallebudgera Drive and proceed west.

At the end of Tallebudgera Drive, turn into the bitumen lane and thence left under the Pacific Motorway.

You will then be directly facing the entrance to Elanora Wetlands Habitat.

- Dec 14th 04
- Dec 28th 04

ELANORA WETLANDS HABITAT BUSHCARE GROUP

The group meets on the first Tuesday of the month for bushcare on the site.

Work begins at 8am and finishes at 10am with a BYO morning tea.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the group's activities.

There are no joining fees.

But, you are asked to ensure you bring a bottle of water and wear solid shoes, shady hat and sunscreen.

Gloves, tools and other equipment are provided by Walk with Wildlife.

A responsible adult must accompany all children.

Next Bushcare Date:
7th December

cartoon

Cassowaries might fly, Just one thousand left!

Julie Olsen gives the low down.

Life on the ground used to have its benefits. It was all about finding a nice territory of your own, raising a chick or two and foraging for brightly-coloured fruits on the forest floor. Flightlessness just wasn't an issue. Thousands of years passed and during this time, many generations of seedlings sprouted from the fruits you and your kind had eaten and unwittingly spread throughout your range. Like so many other creatures around you, you became inextricably linked to the rainforest - and it became linked to you.

These days, when scientists talk about the rapid decline of the Cassowary, Australia's largest flightless bird, they're also concerned about the unravelling of the ecological relationships that hold a rainforest together through time.

"We cannot afford to lose the Cassowary," says biologist Tim Low. "Many rainforest trees in the Daintree depend upon this big bird to spread their seeds. The trees in question produce massive seeds full of starch to help their seedlings grow in the dim rainforest understorey where sunlight rarely falls ... The trees are doomed without the Cassowary because it is the only animal large enough to swallow the big fruits they produce and thereby spread their seeds."

But despite grave warnings from scientists and conservationists, the Cassowary's numbers continue to plummet. Already, experts fear that as few as one thousand are now left in the whole of Australia. That's simply nowhere near enough.

The lowland Daintree rainforests are one of the last bastions for this great bird but even here, threats from cars, dogs and land clearing are pushing the local population to the brink of collapse. The bird's inability to fly makes the effects of land clearing and habitat fragmentation all the more devastating. Other Australian ground-dwelling birds, like Mallee Fowls and Ground Parrots, are in a similar boat. Scientists are beginning to argue that by meeting the needs of our more sensitive, 'charismatic' species - like the Cassowary - vegetation managers will also raise the survival prospects for so many other Australian animals.

Not for profit organisation Rainforest Rescue has embraced the Cassowary as flagship for conservation. With the support of ordinary Australians and nature lovers from around the world, they are raising funds to buy rainforest that would otherwise be lost to housing.

Cassowaries are currently living in these patches of rainforest - they have done so for thousands of years and for a species with so few representatives left, every square metre is going to count.

Who knows? If enough habitat is saved, perhaps, one day, life on the ground won't be so bad after all.

To help save the Cassowary you can make a tax-deductible donation to Rainforest Rescue. Your donation will assist with the purchase of freehold land in the Daintree currently at risk of development. Each \$20 buys and protects ten square meters.

So far six properties have been purchased by project partners the Daintree Rainforest Foundation and placed in the recently declared Baralaba Nature Reserve.

For more details, visit www.rainforestrescue.org.au or write to Rainforest Rescue: PO Box 102, Toowong, Queensland, 4006 or phone (02) 6629 1395.

BIG BIRD FACTS:

Did you know that Cassowaries:

- are an endangered species;
- are recorded as weighing 90kg - red kangaroos weigh 60kg;
- eat the fruit of more than 100 rainforest plants, swallowing them whole;
- digest only the soft flesh of fruits, dispersing seeds through the forest;
- have reversed gender roles - males incubate the eggs and raise the chicks;
- were far more common before Europeans settled and began clearing the rainforests;
- are now a rare sight on the Atherton Tablelands;
- are seriously threatened by habitat clearing and fragmentation, cars, dogs and hand feeding;
- depend on the Daintree for their survival.

*This article was written by
Julie Olsen for Rainforest Rescue.*

pic

Clean Up Coordinator needed!

The GCCC is once again inviting expressions of interest to coordinate Clean Up Australia Day (CUAD, March 6, 2005) on the Gold Coast.

Gecko will be submitting a tender similar to that of last year.

Gecko has been successfully managing this event on the Gold Coast in collaboration with the GCCC for the last 10 years, and for the last 4 years has been able to pay a coordinator to take on this mammoth but rewarding task.

Assuming we are successful, Gecko will be once again looking for the right person to take on this job in 2004.

Below is a sort of job description, so if you feel you have what it takes, please get in contact with Ben in the office.

The CUAD Coordinator position involves:

- Identifying areas in need of a Clean Up and advertising for, encouraging, enlisting and assisting community groups to clean up these areas. (In many cases groups have been doing this for years and merely need to re-enrol).

- Liaising with the GCCC and the CUAD

council in Sydney to ensure these groups have all the equipment they need to do this successfully.

- Responding to general enquiries from the community and connecting people to groups cleaning up in their areas.
- Encouraging the media to assist with editorials and advertising.
- Travelling all over the Gold Coast hanging banners and posters.

The CUAD Coordinator needs to:

- Be available at least 10am-3pm, Mon-Fri in January, February and the first week of March.
- Be able to work independently and as part of a team.
- Know how to use a computer, especially the internet.
- Have good communication skills and be able to take lots of phone calls!
- Have a sound knowledge of the Gold Coast and the waste management/litter issues we face.
- Have transport, and
- Be committed to another successful CUAD campaign.

SEQ Plan – Sustainability, the 4th Option

by Sheila Davis, Campaign Coordinator

In a room of several hundred people at a workshop on 'Our Community, Our Future' in the Sheraton Brisbane Grand Ballroom, I was the only person who raised their hand as a critic of the SEQ Plan. I was then asked by the facilitator, futurist Richard Neville, to explain my concerns.

While I hedged by saying that we are still seeking town planning and legal advice, I was able to say that the Plan does not correct the mistakes of the past but seems to be repeating them, and that we are concerned about the loss of wildlife habitat and rare and threatened plants and animals that are part of the community with which we share this region.

I also said that the Plan wasn't about sustainability, but about cramming one million more people into this region without any consideration of the fact that we may already be overpopulated. As one of the panellists, Professor Ian Lowe, had already raised that issue, I didn't have to explain it further.

But, as we're still reading the fine print, and we are getting conflicting advice, I didn't have the facts at my finger tips. We are now developing a list of dot points about the problems with the Draft SEQ Plan, and will be distributing these so that others can address them in their submissions to the Plan. A copy of these will be available in the very near future and members are urged to use them in writing your submissions. Hopefully, the points below will give you an idea of what to be looking out for when reading through the Plan yourself. Copies of the Plan are on-line at

www.oum.qld.gov.au or can be sent to you upon request by phoning 1800 021 818.

The Plan itself must be read together with the recent amendments to the Qld Integrated Planning Act, which allow the Plan to override a local government planning scheme. The IPOLA legislation says that this plan overrides our planning schemes. Together with this, the Draft Regulations in the back of the Plan will be the rules by which state and local government cooperate and which the Planning and Environment Court will uphold.

The Plan only allows for 3 options – continued urban sprawl; increased density within the urban boundary; and expansion into the western corridor of Ipswich/Beaudesert and the further west of Caboolture. While these are presented as options, the Plan allows for and even requires all 3 to take place.

Continued urban sprawl will happen because the government has decided to not reverse any past poor planning decisions, allowing an expansion of the urban footprint into areas that never should have been considered.

Increased density within the footprint will happen at state government's discretion and as land values rise due to high density near-by, requiring landholders to sell their land and move further out on to acreage to retain their current lifestyle; or succumb to the lifestyle of high density living.

The western corridor is seen as the new greenfields and regional centre development area, even though temperatures are more extreme and

air quality is poorer throughout this area. Nature conservation, wildlife habitat and corridors will suffer both in the Ipswich area and the hinterland behind Caboolture in the Sunshine Coast with the expansion of the urban footprint.

There is no guarantee or requirement to increase the amount of open space within the urban footprint to balance the increase in density; and there is inadequate provision of publicly accessible open space for recreational or tourism use in the areas outside the urban footprint other than within the protected estate. These options, either alone or all together, do not seek to achieve sustainability, as the Integrated Planning Act requires. We want a 4th option – "The SEQ Plan – The Sustainable Option", which will:

- Contain the urban boundary
- Conserve our natural areas
- Constrain population growth
- Control infrastructure and major projects

Further, we want the Plan's right to prohibit development to be extended to local planning schemes, and we want the use of the Minister's discretionary power to approve development to require the whole of Cabinet endorsement.

Our full list of dot points will be on-line in the near future at www.gecko.org.au. Though the deadline for submissions is 28 February, 2005, members are urged to get their submissions in early, i.e. by 10 December, 2004, so that they might be adequately considered.

Clean Up Australia Day – Sunday March 6, 2005

by Ben Perkins, Operations Manager

It's almost that time again.

It's time to start thinking about or looking for a site near you that is in need of a clean up on March 6, 2005. Then simply register the site via Gecko's Clean Up Coordinator by phoning 5534 1412 or emailing cleanup@gecko.org.au.

Around seven billion cigarette butts and eighty million plastic bags end up in our waterways each year, creating a serious threat to the health of our waterways, and to the wellbeing of our precious marine life.

In 2004, volunteers spent almost one and a half million hours collecting over 8,000 tonnes of rubbish and recyclables.

The most common source of rubbish was plastic, which includes chips and confectionery bags, and recyclable bottles and caps.

Recycling one tonne of plastic saves enough energy to run a refrigerator for a month!

Cigarette butts made up a staggering 15% of all rubbish collected. Two new additions to the top ten rubbish items

were plastic packaging and plastic straws. Some of the stranger objects found included dentures, a glass eye, a leopard print lounge suite, and beer kegs.

For a full version of the rubbish report see www.cleanup.com.au.

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Eco Voice – Australia's Environment Newspaper

Eco Voice is an independent monthly publication, now available in newsagents around Australia for \$2. Eco Voice was established to provide a voice for environmentalists.

Editorial content comes from the public, environmental groups, government departments, businesses, the education sector and individuals.

As a result, it reflects a wide range of views and perspectives from the darkest of green through to paler greenies, from school kids to the elderly, from community groups to the corporate world, without prejudice. Eco Voice is inclusive: they welcome submissions from everyone with a point of view on anything environmental. Articles should be short (maximum 500 words) and with photos where possible. Advertising of eco-friendly products and services is sought to support the green economy. Article guidelines, ad rates and subscription forms can be downloaded from www.ecovoice.com.au or phone (08) 8338 0033.

Excerpts of articles from the November edition (Issue 14) appear below:

RECYCLE

Last year, 900 million aluminium cans were littered or thrown away. That's \$15 million worth of cans wasted, which could all have been recycled. According to Planet Ark, the energy saved by recycling just one aluminium can will power a TV set for 3 hours. So you think you're recycling?

Most people think they have recycled once they have sorted their recyclables and put them out for collection. But recycling is completed only after 'closing the recycling loop' to ensure that collected materials have been reprocessed into new products and then sold again. Ultimately the demand generated by the purchasing decisions of consumers will secure a successful and growing Australian recycling market.

THE CHALLENGE OF URBAN WASTE MANAGEMENT

The disposal of solid waste is one of the most critical economic, social and environmental issues currently facing Australia and other consumer societies around the world. In Australia, 80% of saleable products become waste on average within 6 months. The adverse long term environmental and economic impacts of waste disposal methods such as landfill will be felt more by future generations than they are today, mainly through contamination of groundwater and waterways and the production of greenhouse gases. A new approach to this problem is needed. We need to develop an industry generating income from the recovery of recyclables, the conversion of organic waste to fertilisers and the use of greenhouse gases to make electricity.

EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY DR JOHN WHITE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GLOBAL RENEWABLES LTD.

Beyond recycling: towards a zero waste society

Every time we dispose of materials that have consumed a great deal of energy, resources and effort to produce instead of reclaiming them, we fail to maintain the earth's natural asset base for current and future generations and all other species. The Worldwatch Institute's Good Stuff? Guide gives the example of aluminium cans. To make 1, million tonnes of cans from virgin materials, 5 million tonnes of bauxite ore and the energy equivalent of 32 million barrels of crude oil are needed. Recycling the cans saves all of the bauxite, more than 75% of the energy and associated greenhouse gas emissions and avoids about 75% of the pollutants! Recycling plays an important role in managing our 'matter'. The next challenge for the zero waste society is to go beyond recycling to further slow the rate we are consuming our natural capital.

EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY SHARON EDE, ZERO WASTE, SA.

Closing the resource cycle in cities
In our present urban environments, after we consume we produce waste. Waste is pollution: material we have failed to re-insert into the cycles of nature. There is no waste in nature. The miracle of life transforms our planet's rocks and minerals into things that creep, leap and reproduce: everything is recycled. If we are serious about long-term survival, we must learn to replicate nature's waste-free cycles in our cities.

Gecko Recycle's

Kid's Xmas Workshop

pic

Start 13th December

Cost is \$7.50 per child

- Monday: Xmas decorations
- Tuesday: Clay play
- Wednesday: Magnets
- Thursday: Free expression
- Friday: Plaques

Sessions: 10:30am and 11:30am Queensland time.

Public holidays are excluded.
PARENTS WELCOME.

Phone Gecko Recycle on
5525 0161
for bookings.

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

Gecko Website www.gecko.org.au

by Gary Bance, Webmaster

Website alert!!!!

Look what I have created for you!
Hello to all Gecko reNews readers for December 2004.

I have been talking to many environmentalists lately. They are normal everyday people who care about the whole of our region, the quality of life here and even the environmental problems we all experience. When they find out I am the webmaster for Gecko, this is an amazing experience.

To my surprise, there are 3 types of groups of internet users amongst you! The point here being you all are some of these people.

I rarely find amongst you anyone who actually uses the Gecko website to its full capacity.

The 3 groups of you are actually people with 3 levels of internet ability. As webmaster this is a great challenge, to actually get you to see how this can work. The environment can gain via this website by everyone being aware of current issues, awareness being an integral part of moving in the right direction. Relevant current and archived environmental information is found throughout about 30 webpages I have made for you and with an easy to use "navigation system".

I have also given you a "Quick View Blackboard" linked from the Crimson Rosella picture on the home page, and from anywhere within the site via the "navigation system".

This blackboard is usually changed daily and it is for you to use to see at a glance what is current or about to happen with all Gecko activities or concerns. I suggest that you drop in on the website as often as you can, and by checking the blackboard first you can save time by going from there to the most relevant subject for you. As well, you can keep in touch with your areas events, campaigns, meetings, etc. without ever missing or forgetting one. Remember, the Gecko website is like a 24/7 open office on the internet, containing most of the Gecko information you would ever require to keep up with, anything current or pending etc. Please visit regularly, as awareness of current and day to day things in general can sometimes lead you to seeing how you can help or get involved in ways you may never have thought of.

Happy surfing, and please come back often!

Cheers!

Gary

webmaster@gecko.org.au

News from Greenpeace

Japan's biggest beer company Asahi Breweries announced it has suspended the introduction of a newly developed plastic beer bottle thanks to pressure from our cyber-activists in Japan supporting the Japanese Zero Waste Campaign.

Greenpeace Japan was working against Asahi Breweries because of its decision to use "recycle-unfriendly and unreturnable" PET plastic bottles for their beer.

The brewery was targeted via letters, cyber-actions and a web opinion poll. After about 2 months of campaigning, the company phoned Greenpeace Japan to tell the campaigners that it was suspending its plans.

The beautiful Bolama Beach in the West African country of Guinea Bissau will not turn into a scrapyard for old toxic ships.

Spanish companies cancelled their plans after thousands of Greenpeace cyber-activists from all over the world sent concerned messages to UNESCO in 2003.

'A major victory!' says Marietta Harjono, Greenpeace shipbreaking campaigner.

Source: Greenpeace Activist News, Vol. 4, No. 10

Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases and Peak Oil

by Sheila Davis, Campaign Coordinator

Nearly the entire September 2004 edition of National Geographic is taken up with reports about the impacts of climate change. Recent entreaties by James Lovelock for a return to nuclear energy in order to prevent increasing carbon emissions, which if unchecked will cause a tip over within the next 10 years into escalating climate change, indicate that we have little choice. Reports in the June 2004 issue of National Geographic that we are running out of cheap oil and gas seem to be pushing governments towards the burning of more coal and the as yet unproven solution of carbon sequestration.

All of this points to a crisis in energy and carbon-based products which will have an impact on everything we do - water supply and sewerage treatment, food growing, transport, cooling and

heating, travel, tourism and other industry. The documentary The End of Suburbia contains some frightening statistics which should shock us out of our complacency.

Some believe that the end of cheap oil is a good thing, and may even lead to a lowering of greenhouse gas emissions. However, when we look more closely at the consequences we realise that they will be devastating. End of Suburbia says that we do not have enough cheap fossil fuels left to develop the alternatives for electricity supply and transport in time.

Some people have made significant lifestyle changes in order to lower their dependence upon fossil fuels in the light of global warming and in an effort to lower their ecological footprint. For example, knowing that beef requires 23 times the amount of water compared to vegetables to grow

1 tonne, and that a kilo of beef takes almost 7 litres of oil to produce, many have become vegetarians. Others have eschewed motor vehicles in favour of cycling and public transport. We may soon have little choice as our current unsustainable lifestyle becomes unaffordable.

One of our volunteers, David Harris, has summarised much of the material on peak oil and has even written a poem to express his concerns, printed elsewhere in this newsletter. It is clear that we need to make changes in order to create a sustainable future for our communities.

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Environmental activity of my group

by Glenda Murrell

As a Gecko Member, I enjoy the Guest Speaker Nights, learning more about care for the environment and helping to save fragile areas and public space in our area. In my church, Gold Coast North Anglican Church, I mentor a group in "Education for Ministry" (EfM), a four-year course. We are creating a Garden of Reflection at present, beside the Holy Rood Family Centre, behind the church at Oxenford. It features a screen of wooden sleepers, behind which will be a large cross, garden edging, garden seats and trees along the side nearest the road. We still have soil and planting to go.

We will be using native plants and the Garden is provided by the EfM group and church members.

Reflection about God's love for us, where He has been in our lives, people we have known, His presence with us today, where He is leading us—linking all this with Scripture and our culture is the essence of EfM.

Our group travelled in June to the Brookfield Centre of Spirituality at Kenmore for a day exploring Eco Spirituality. Don Gibson and Miriam Nyrene from St Philip's Anglican Church, Annerley, coordinated the presentation where they have created an oasis in a

concrete jungle.

They are also involved in revegetation around Moggill Creek. They really made us stop and think about our role in caring for the environment and especially within our Parish!!

We had some thought-provoking discussions after sharing our experiences of nature, Celtic traditions and women mystics. A meditation followed the reading of the creation stories from Genesis in the Bible.

Following a picnic lunch at Moggill Creek, we relived our childhood with 'pond dipping' to discover evidence of 'water life' in the creek and discussed the purity of the water and the benefits of revegetation. Back at Brookfield, it was more 'hands on' as we planted a grove of small native trees.

We then prepared a Liturgy for the evening Eucharist, using our experiences from discussions throughout the day. We each participated in the Eucharist, which was attended by other unknown people as well, and it was a wonderful way to finish a really special day.

The information gleaned from this day was invaluable for the creation of our own Garden of Reflection, which we are still working on.

Daintree Buy Back

The Daintree Rainforests are one of the most significant areas of ecological importance in Australia.

They now face the ultimate threat - human progress.

Two thirds of the World Heritage-value Daintree lowland rainforest is privately owned and laws are inadequate to prevent clearing and development of them.

You can help protect the Daintree by making a donation or by ordering a Daintree Gift Card.

The gift cards are ideal presents for family and friends and demonstrate how many square metres of the Daintree you have saved on their behalf. Each \$20 saves ten square metres. Give a gift that will last for generations.

Visit www.rainforestrescue.org.au or phone (02) 6629 1395 to place your order or find out more.

12 places the earth could change real fast

by Ian Sample, *The Guardian*, 14 Oct 2004

The climate is changing.

But where will we see the devastating effects first? Ian Sample reports on Earth's 12 most fragile places.

Cast an eye over the many forests' worth of scientific literature on global warming and it quickly becomes clear that working out what a temperature rise of a few degrees will mean for life anywhere on the planet is far from straightforward. Vast ice sheets may melt, sea levels

will rise, and faced with a new climate, species must adapt, move or perish. Yet the precise details of how any of it will happen are, frankly, unknown. Now it seems the future has become even more uncertain. Climate scientists say they have identified a dozen weak links around the world, regions where global warming could bring about the sudden, catastrophic collapse of vital ecosystems. The consequences will be felt far and

wide. For the full story, visit: www.guardian.co.uk/life/feature/story/0,13026,1326273,00.html

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Peak Oil Reality

by David Harris

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

The concept of 'Peak Oil' says that since there is a limited amount of oil on earth, we're going to reach the top of the curve at some point between the years 2005-2020. After that, prices will increase dramatically, and since so much of what we need to exist is tied to oil, it is predicted that the world population through war and starvation, will be reduced from its current level of 7-8 billion to 1-2 billion, by the end of the century. The hopeless performance of renewables at generating energy in anything like the amounts needed to replace oil and the other fossil fuels hardly makes one optimistic that somehow solar energy can run bulldozers, elevators, aircraft, automobiles, etc!

Peak Oil reality is that for every barrel of oil discovered, the world consumes 5 barrels. With the price of oil rising it is clear that for the less economically advantaged individuals or countries, the chances of equal access to the diminishing supply are negligible.

The situation calls for a massive localisation of travel, manufacturing of basic commodities, food production and other resources. We must learn to cope with less. China has made incredible progress in recent years and you would think that it would continue to provide more and more wealth and resources for its population of over 1.3 billion.

Peak Oil reality, however, is that China's oil supply is at its peak now and will decline at 4% a year. These facts, combined with advancing desertification and falling water tables mean that China will be unable to sustain its population in any degree of comfort. The danger of conflict between China and its neighbours over oil is a very real one.

The onset of oil decline undermines the very foundations of the economic system, which will have to undergo massive changes. Hard decisions will soon have to be made.

Population control is a necessity. We don't have the oil (or the environment) to cater for present population levels and yet the Australian government is providing financial incentives for more children.

Can we cope with the changes that Peak Oil will demand?

October Guest Speaker Report

by Tom McDade

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Dean Cameron was a topical choice as Gecko's Guest Speaker for October. Dean is an environmental scientist and inventor of the Biolytix Filter secondary waste treatment system. Locally, nationally and globally, the use and preservation of valuable water resources is a major concern, so it was no surprise that this particular topic attracted a good audience to listen to Dean.

He outlined the many problems facing us in the wider sphere with our collective need for water and how these needs could not be met or sustained in either the short or long term. The obstacles, apart from geographical or climatic conditions, mainly involve economic and infrastructure considerations. Dean pointed out that with the present method of centralised system provision of water, approximately 70% of funding does little to supply water. He asserted it was essential to cut infrastructure costs and move to more viable on-site treatment plants and to export the surplus requirements elsewhere. This would not only reduce the economic costs but also considerably lessen environmental impacts. The system he has developed in recent years gives the opportunity to treat and re-use our precious water resource for secondary purposes. Additionally it can be structured incrementally to cater for individual or larger group requirements.

Surprisingly, the method itself is stunning in its simplicity and has the ability to treat effectively all household waste products and to convert them to a high quality water supply for secondary purposes. Basically, it works around the immediate separation of solids by using millions of worms to create a humus bed, followed by drainage layers which continue to filter and allow a rapid turnover to the re-usable water supply.

Trials and installation of systems both here and overseas have demonstrated the effectiveness, efficiency and economic benefits of the system in rural and low-density locations.

As always with a Gecko audience, there were a lot of pertinent questions with regard to the nuts and bolts of the system. Costs, reliability, maintenance, power, longevity and statutory approvals were high on the priority list. Dean was happy to discuss all these issues in some detail. Rounded off with the usual Gecko hospitality of cheese and wine, the evening was informative and interesting. Many of the appreciative audience thanked Dean Cameron personally for giving of his time and expertise.

There will be no speaker in December due to the Xmas break, nor in January because the 4th Wednesday is Australia Day. So, the next Guest Speaker Night will be on Wednesday the 23rd of February, 2005.

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Wastewater spurs timber growth

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI &F) is working with local councils and businesses to re-use high-nutrient treated wastewater to irrigate native hardwood species. Forestry researchers have recorded impressive results after using wastewater effluent in timber plantations, with trees in some areas

growing up to nine metres in less than 2 years – a 30% increase in growth compared with rain-fed plots.

If you would like further information on this exciting project, send an email to Mark Podberscek at mark.podberscek@dpi.qld.gov.au

Source: EQ-News from EPA, 26 Sep '04

New report on green procurement

by Petar Johnson, Australian Environmental Labelling Association

A report by the Australian Environmental Labelling Association (AELA) launched in September finds that Australia is on the threshold of powerful changes in markets based on the environmental performance of goods and services. The report, *The State of Green Procurement Australia*, tries to provide a comprehensive picture of green procurement activities in Australia's institutions and the environmental purchasing choices of everyday Australians. The findings point to a groundswell of government and corporate initiatives to establish procurement practices involving more environmentally responsible products and services. Everyday Australians demonstrate very high levels of environmental commitment and are willing to translate this into consumption choices. This is not likely to be every purchase, but it seems shoppers will choose more

environmentally friendly products when clear information is available and the product competes on other grounds. This points to a significant business opportunity that to date has not been realised.

Unfortunately, very limited environmental information is being provided by manufacturers, making it almost impossible for consumers to exercise their environmental preferences except for a very narrow range of products.

This has restricted the pricing and demand signals required to reform markets and create incentives for corporate environmental innovation in product design and delivery. A primary challenge for Australian markets is the uptake of suitable instruments to ensure that environmental information on products is accurate, relevant and not misleading to consumers. The Australian Environmental Labelling

Association Inc (AELA) delivers the national environmental label 'Good Environmental Choice - Australia' for a diverse range of consumer and building products.

Two new websites by AELA provide information for specific markets.

A comprehensive overview of the environmental impacts of different products is available at www.goodenvironmentalchoice.org.au.

The second website, www.greenprocurement.org.au, is a resource to assist green procurement officers establish credible environmental criteria in their request for tender documents.

It also has the AELA report available for free download.

More info: www.aela.org.au

Petar Johnson is president of AELA and has spent 20 years working in the Australian environmental sector.

Source: *Eco Voice*, Oct 2004

Peak Oil Reality

Poem by David Harris

*Many years ago life seemed so simple and clear
Communities would do all they could do to survive without fear
Bulldozers, aircraft and fast cars had not been invented
People managed to cope and were reasonably contented*

*Fossil fuels eventually came into focus for humankind
We have used them in every way our imagination could find
It's been awesome, driving and flying at incredible speeds
For a period of time oil has been the answer to our needs*

*However, the fact is that fossil fuels are running out
There's no denying that reality, no matter how loud you shout
It's been said that the end of oil will be humanity's biggest test
Maybe we'll go the way of dinosaurs? How does that digest?*

*Perhaps forms of renewable energy can be our saving grace?
Can the sun, wind and water prevent us from disappearing
without trace?
Sadly no. They can't generate energy at the amounts required
Brainpower, our least used resource, needs to be inspired.*

*If we do use our brains and work together, maybe we can survive
Wasting the fuel we have left must stop now! Walk, don't drive!
Seeing air shows and careless polluters makes me sick to the core
Oil is devoured in nauseating quantities that are hard to ignore*

*The reality is that we must learn to live with less
Less people, less fossil fuels, less luxuries, less stress
Localisation is the key word for our survival, that's for sure
Communities must work together if we are to endure ...*

Sacred Ibis

Poem by Sally Spain

Dedicated to David Dillon and Alex Griffiths.

*So you come to our garden, white bird
In a shaft of morning sun, on a grey day
Transient vision amidst the lank green rain-soaked sparkling grass
Almost concealed by a tree of glittering emeralds
You stepped delicately, cautious
Like a Timor Warrior
Circling about, checking the perimeter
Danger lurks, weaponless warrior
"harried" and "almost spent"
- not silent vanishment like others
but proliferating in a small defiant gesture
amongst the city's rubbish dumps
some say you are many
but your white-winged hosts
are a tiny testament
amongst the introduced species
who crowd into a checked, sieved landscape
sold out from air-conditioned offices
I was the watcher at the window
You are safe in this garden, I said silently
You must have seen me
Framed in the window
Idly raise my hand
For when I looked back you were gone
One moment a vision in a dream
sacred ibis, white, white bird
The next, nothing
Only a hand still raised
Danger signal - flight
A learned response
But we have not yet learned our danger signals
The end of extermination, of the raised fist
No white bird, no garden, no hands
But thank you for trying to stay a moment
You are no sculpted still form, nor frieze
Or transient nijinsky -
You are perpetual, perfected grace
In simple stillness, swift shadow
Forever stately sacred dancer
Making beautiful the morning
As you retreated in silent flight.*

