

# Gecko reNews

Official Newsletter of Gecko -  
Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

SEPTEMBER 2004

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Volume 15 No. 9

Gecko Celebrates Biodiversity Month

Sustainable Urban Development

National Threatened Species Day

Gecko Needs You!

The Plastic Bag Famine

Volunteer Profiles

Notice of AGM

Gecko Recycle's 4th Birthday

Springbrook LAP

July Guest Speaker Report

2004 Environmentalist of the Year

# Gecko reNews

Newsletter of Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION IS:  
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## New Members!

*A warm welcome to our new members:*

**Luke Hancock, John Taylor, Danielle Bohata, David Condor, Rhonda Ireland, Cheryl Munro and Georgie Belz.**

## Clarification

The August edition of reNews carried an article from the Sydney Morning Herald by Paul Sheehan called 'Nothing to show but a wasteland' (page 10). With sincere apologies to our environment groups up north, Gecko would like to clarify that, while we might agree with the majority of Senator Heffernan's remarks as quoted about the unsustainable agricultural development of Australia, we are thoroughly against his contention that the answers to Australia's water woes lie in expanding agriculture into the north of the continent. This is just more of the same - illogical, inappropriate, unecological and unsustainable.

## Gecko's Budget, 2004-05

The budget has been approved  
and is available for viewing at Gecko House.

## GREAT GREEK MEETING

*by Lois Levy*

Dear Members and friends,  
The Greek/Olympic Members' Gathering held at Gecko House on Wednesday August 11 was a great success and we all had fun. About half turned up in various degrees of costume and we were sorry that we hadn't organised a prize. The quiz, developed by Maureen Marsh, was won by the Delphic Oracles team and they received the 'laurel' crown and block of choccy. The food was great and complemented the company and chat. We did a brief visioning activity about the future direction of our city in coping with the onslaught of growth. This will be summarised and

incorporated into a submission to state minister Mackenroth's new Office of Urban Management. The next themed dinner/General Meeting will be on the 10th of November at Gecko House at 6:30pm. The theme has not been decided on yet - so get your ideas in. Help with food and setting up from our members and volunteers would be appreciated. There will be no General Meeting on the 2nd Wednesday in September. Instead, our Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Wednesday, September 29. A nomination form is in this newsletter. Nominations close on September 22.

## AGM Reminder!

**A gentle reminder that only paid up Members are entitled to vote at the AGM. Member Groups are entitled to one vote, to be cast by a nominated representative known to Gecko. Please contact Karen or Rose for any Membership enquiries.**

**An AGM form is in this newsletter.**

**Nominations close 3pm, Wednesday September 22.**

EPA logo

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

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

# GECKO CELEBRATES BIODIVERSITY MONTH AND NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY

## SEPTEMBER IS BIODIVERSITY MONTH.

To celebrate this theme and to raise community awareness, the Gecko Events team has a number of activities planned in the local region.

- **artGecko** - on August 28th will be themed Thylacine, last seen ... (distinction for extinctions).
- **POETREE**. As part of National Poetry Week (Sept 4-11th), we are planning POETREE. This is an installation where we will encourage local students to write poems about endangered species. We will then, with permission from GCCC, attach the poems to trees in council parks.
- **Gecko Ed** will be announcing its

schools program with a day of activities for school students at Gecko. This is planned for September 7th, National Threatened Species Day.

- **The SpringFest Parade** is on Sept 11th and this year our entry in the parade will be themed 'Celebrate Biodiversity'. Please show your support for Gecko and our environment by joining us in the street parade. It's always an enjoyable morning. We will meet at Gecko at 9.00 am.
- **Swell of Art** is a sculpture festival on Currumbin Beach. In keeping with our month of celebrations around Biodiversity, we will make an ephemeral sculpture to represent and raise awareness of the need to protect

threatened species.

- **Nesting Box Workshop**. It is hoped to negotiate with Gecko Recycle and the Carpenters Workshop to conduct a workshop on making nesting boxes.

- **Sign**. It would be good to have a sign in place reminding people that it is Biodiversity Month.

The sign, if carefully designed, could be used in the street parade.

Helpers please!!!!

We will need helpers to assist us with each of these activities.

If you can lend a hand in any way please call Gecko on 55341412 or Lindy & Dom on 5533 8162.

## A NEW WARNING FOR EARTH'S BIODIVERSITY

The latest assessment of the world's endangered plant and animal species paints a stark picture of rapidly declining biodiversity across the planet. Although scientists have only scratched the surface of assessing all known plant and animal life on Earth, 12,259 species are known to be threatened with extinction, according to the 2003 Red List of Endangered Species released by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Based on information from a network of 7,000 experts and data from a number of partner organisations, the IUCN Red List is the world's most authoritative inventory of the conservation status of plants and animals. It provides the "best available knowledge necessary for sound conservation action," according to IUCN Director General Achim Steiner. The world needs to find the "political will and resources to stem the loss of biodiversity," Steiner said, but the Red List provides daunting evidence that stemming this tide will require a monumental effort.

The main threat to the planet's biodiversity is not difficult to identify - humans. Scientists estimate that the current species extinction rate is between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than it would naturally be.

2003's inventory contains more than 2,000 new entries compared with the 2002 list.

Species threatened with extinction fall into three categories - critically

endangered, endangered, or vulnerable. A total of 6,774 plants are considered under threat.

This represents some 2 percent of the world's described plants, the IUCN reports, but only 4 percent of those species have been evaluated.

Plants are believed to be declining most rapidly in Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

The IUCN says that analysis of the data clearly shows that birds and mammals have shown an increasing move towards the higher threat categories. One in every four mammals and one in every eight birds are facing a high risk of extinction in the near future ... There are similar trends for reptiles, fish and invertebrates ... a number of amphibian species have shown rapid and unexplained disappearances, in Australia, Costa Rica, Panama and Puerto Rico.

There are similar indications that freshwater fish species may be suffering a serious deterioration, particularly river dwelling species ... The IUCN reports that the invasive species in particular are wreaking havoc with island ecosystems, many of which are considered biological hotspots ... Continental species are not faring much better

The story is sadly similar for the world's marine species, even though they are "widely believed to be resilient to extinction," according to David Brackett, chair of IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC).

There are a few glimmers of success amid a list dominated by concern. The golden lion tamarin, for example, has been downgraded from critically endangered to endangered. Thirty years of conservation efforts have paid off for the primate species, the IUCN reports, and it demonstrates that humans have the ability to change the fate of endangered species in a positive way.

"Above all, the Red List is a wake up call to all of us," said IUCN/SSC Red List Program Officer Craig Hilton-Taylor says. "By working together we can help conserve what remains of Earth's biodiversity."

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# Gecko needs YOU!

Dear Members and friends,

Gecko has achieved a lot over the years with the support of its Members, friends and volunteers. Our activities and achievements include ...

- **Gecko's World Environment Day do!** ... the 2003 Gold Coast Community Event of the Year!
- **Volunteer Organisation of the Year** ... for the entire Gold Coast region in 2002!
- **Clean Up Australia Day (CUAD)** ... we co-ordinate this annual event for the Gold Coast.
- **CUAD Most Successful Co-ordinators in Australia** ... for 2001, as voted by the CUAD Head Office!
- **Gecko Regen** ... revegetates Gold Coast landfill sites and other degraded areas to critical acclaim, all via its very own nursery!
- **Gecko Recycle** ... The Resource Supermarket collects industrial off-cuts and other discards for public sale (to prevent them going to landfill) and runs very popular educational workshops for kids.
- **Best Work for the Dole Activity in Australia** ... to Gecko Recycle in the Category of Caring for our Environment, 2002.
- **Campaigning** ... to protect our natural environment, including landclearing, flood plains, threatened species, the GCCC planning scheme, waste management and National Park protection. You name it, and our Campaign Co-ordination Sub-Committee probably knows about it!
- **GCCC Committees** ... Gecko has representatives on numerous GCCC committees and working groups.
- **Submissions** ... all spheres of government seek Gecko's input into policy and discussion papers.
- **Community response to enquiries and concerns** ... from our main office at Gecko House, Currumbin.
- **'The Geckos'** ... our annual Xmas awards celebration where we acknowledge those committed to environmental care.
- **Meetings** ... the 2nd Wednesday every month. Discussion of Gecko activities and campaigns etc.
- **Meeting of Member Groups** ... our Member Groups meet to discuss their activities every month.
- **artGecko** ... the internal environment is fostered through entertainment & support for local visual & performing arts.
- **Guest Speakers** ... the 4th Wednesday every month. Wine & cheese evenings covering a wide range of environmental topics.
- **Bushcare** ... e.g. Elanora Wetlands Bushcare Group and dunal

revegetation at Burleigh, Miami, Broadbeach, Currumbin, etc.

- **Walk with Wildlife** ... a monthly program of events including walks, surveys and bird watching.
- **Gecko Research** ... environmental scientists, students and passionate people who follow up on our campaigning.
- **Promotions** ... at many stalls and open days, such as Springfest, GUGC Rainbow Day etc.
- **Conferences** ... in 2002, we organised and hosted the State Conference of the Queensland Conservation Council.
- **Churaki Museum** ... an exhibit of historical photographs and artefacts relevant to the local community.

## PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD ON GECKO MEMBERSHIP.

It would be great if each one of us could persuade another one or two people to join.

Membership benefits include:

- **Newsletter** ... our monthly newsletter, Gecko reNews, delivered to your door or emailed, with your contributions welcomed, and good ideas shared.
  - **Environmental Resources Library** ... borrow a wide range of selected books, reports and other publications.
  - **Representation** ... inform us of your environmental concerns so we can change the world together.
  - **Guest Speaker presentations** ... on a wide range of environmental issues
  - **Experience** ... access Gecko's expertise, fellowship and support on specific issues.
  - **Information** ... stay informed with updates on local, state, federal and global environmental issues.
  - **The environment community** ... become a part of it!
  - **The creative community** ... Earth-caring - worth sharing!
  - **Voting rights** ... at Gecko meetings and on other key policies and issues.
  - **Volunteer** and improve your résumé, your knowledge and your connections in the community.
  - **Feel good about what you are doing** - every little bit you do changes the world. Educate your friends and family!
  - **Make new friends**, have fun and meet extraordinary people doing extraordinary things.
- Join Gecko now, or give Membership as a gift every year to friends and family for all occasions ... birthdays, Christmas etc.
- Thank you.

## Astrological Environmental Guide for Virgos - 23/8–22/9

by David Harris

Dirt is good! It is a shame some Virgo invented a line of cleaning products.

There are now so many on the market that infinitely more damage is caused to the environment through their overuse than accepting dirt as a part of life. Rather than imagining you are sick all the time, do all you can to look after the environment, which really is sick.

## THE PLASTIC BAG FAMINE

On August 21 and 22, National Science Week and Planet Ark challenged all Australians to The Plastic Bag Famine! The task was to try to go plastic bag free for one short weekend ...

To Refuse, Re-use and Recycle ...

To try not to accept a single plastic bag from a retailer and use re-usable bags instead.

Visit the website - [www.plasticbagfamine.com](http://www.plasticbagfamine.com) to find out:

- All about plastic bags and some clever solutions;
- If you have a 'habit';
- The 12 steps to quitting;
- Teacher resources; and
- Which celebrities took the challenge.

# BIODIVERSITY MONTH BLOSSOMS ON NATIONAL WATTLE DAY

Biodiversity Month kicks-off in September with a celebration of Australia's national floral emblem, says Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Heritage.

"Wattle has a unique place in our national culture. As well as being one of our most readily recognisable plants and part of the Coat of Arms, it is also the inspiration for our national colours, green and gold," Dr Stone said.

"Wattle seed bush-tucker has even made its way onto our trendy restaurants menus, and also features in some Anzac biscuit recipes."

Worldwide there are around 1500 different species of wattle.

Australia is home to over 900 species, with all but 10-15 species found only

in Australia.

"Wattle is a fascinating species because of its great contrasts. As well as being one of our most beautiful flowering plants, some species such as the prickly and coastal wattle are now on the move, colonising areas where they push out less vigorous plants."

Wattle has also been the subject of a major Natural Heritage Trust project. A national electronic database identifies and maps the location of Australia's wattle species.

**Flora of Australia: Guide to Australian Acacias** (wattle) will be a valuable resource for community groups, researchers and farmers.

Dr Stone said September was a great month to celebrate Australia's 'mega-diversity', with wattle blooming and spring blossoming around the country.

"Australia is only one of 12 'mega-diverse' nations in the world. What makes it even more special is that the vast majority of Australia's precious plant and animal species are found nowhere else on the planet."

"Over the past 200 years European settlement has had a devastating impact on our unique and fragile natural resources."

"70% of all native bushland has been cleared or modified, dryland salinity has wasted around 2.5 million ha of productive land and we have lost 20 mammal, 9 bird and 97 plant species through extinction," Dr Stone said.

"Biodiversity month is all about raising awareness of the importance of our unique plant and animal species and fragile eco-systems with city and country communities."

Source: [www.deh.gov.au](http://www.deh.gov.au)

## Gecko Regen

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Tom Caamano : 0414 890 650

139 Duringan St, Currumbin Qld 4223

Ph: 07 5534 6395 Fx: 07 5534 7139 Email: [geckoregen@ausinfo.com.au](mailto:geckoregen@ausinfo.com.au)

## Gecko reNews

*by Sheila Davis*

It's 16 pages chock full of the latest in environmental news, views and blues. Pulled together every month by our very busy manager of operations, Ben Perkins, together with his team of copy editors, computer experts and contributors, and embellished by the very talented arts of Wendy Johnson, Gecko reNews is a great network tool. Deb Newman, our Desktop Publishing expert who puts it all together, distributes the newsletter on a regular run to various shops where people might be interested.

If you have any suggestions for where we can place 10 copies of Gecko reNews on a monthly basis, please let Ben Perkins know via email or phone.

In our family's house, we leave it next to the loo, so we can continue to visit it for renewal of our knowledge, our humour and our spirit.

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# VOLUNTEER PROFILES

## Julie Walters

Julie's background is in teaching and also as a library technician, making her ideal for the role she plays at Gecko. Every Tuesday she spends the day searching newspapers for relevant articles on a wide variety of environmental issues.

These are categorised, photocopied and stored for future reference in the vertical filing system.

This information is easily accessible and provides an extensive research base for all members.

Julie has had a long running interest in caring for the environment.

As a former Tasmanian, her interest was aroused by the controversy over the damming and consequent flooding of Lake Pedder, and she marched in protest to this.

Since moving to the Gold Coast about 14 years ago, she has worked for a

local landcare group involved in regeneration in the Elanora area.

Nine months ago, she responded to a job notice at Volunteering Gold Coast and has been at Gecko ever since.

Having had her own business since moving here, she now works as a folk artist selling her work through local galleries.

Her interests include reading, gardening and all sorts of painting including oils and chalk.

She is most concerned about the future development of the Gold Coast as a threat to our natural environment and sees her volunteer role here as a way of actively expressing her concerns.

**(Editor's note:** *Thank you, Julie, for your quiet, consistent and reliable volunteering at Gecko and the valuable contribution that you make.*)

## Steve Johnson

Steve joined Gecko over 3 years ago as he wanted to achieve a positive outcome for the environment - "to do my bit". He also wanted to meet like-minded people and work in a 'stimulating atmosphere'.

Steve performs a variety of tasks spending many hours of his week on them. He works on Tuesdays with Julie Walters on scanning all the newspapers for relevant articles on a wide variety of environmental issues, then cataloguing and filing them in the library. In addition to this, he also performs a variety of library tasks including updating members' details, correcting and updating catalogue information, as well as other general computer work.

He also maintains borrowing and returning procedures and helps

members and friends access information.

Steve moved here 12 years ago from Northern NSW where he ran a health food shop as a qualified naturopath. He no longer practises professionally, but enjoys spending time following AFL football and surfing contests, studying Eastern philosophies and listening to a wide variety of music. He also keeps an active interest in all issues related to health and the environment by reading widely.

**(Editor's note:** *Over the past three years, Steve has also always been a helping hand whenever needed, such as setting up and packing up for our World Environment Day do! and much more. He quietly gets on with the job and is so reliable.*)

Thanks, Steve, for all that you do.

## GREEN CAR GUIDE

[www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au](http://www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au)

The Green Vehicle Guide provides ratings on the environmental performance of new vehicles sold in Australia. You can use this site to see how vehicles compare on greenhouse and air pollution emissions. When buying a new car, use the site to identify the vehicle with the highest ratings which meets your needs. The Guide is regularly updated to include a comprehensive listing of new passenger cars, 4WDs and light commercial vehicles sold in Australia. The ratings are based upon government recognised test standards for measuring and regulating motor vehicle exhaust emissions. Greenhouse ratings are based on the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Air Pollution ratings are based primarily on the emission standard to which the vehicle has been tested and certified for supply to the Australian market. Fuel consumption information for 1986-2003 vehicles is available by visiting [www.greenhouse.gov.au/transport/fuelguide](http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/transport/fuelguide).

## World Habitat Day, October 4

Every year, since 1985, when it was designated by the General Assembly, World Habitat Day has been celebrated on the first Monday in October. This day has been set aside by the United Nations for the world to reflect on the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter and to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat.

The theme of this year's World Habitat Day will be Cities - engines of rural development. It underlines the importance of mutually beneficial linkages that are essential for the development of both cities and rural areas. In this reciprocal relationship, urban markets provide a powerful incentive for increased rural production and income, while expanding rural markets create increased demand for production of goods manufactured in urban areas. In the long run, cities drive secondary and tertiary investment of capital derived from primary production in rural areas. This year, the global ceremonies will be coordinated from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, on Monday, 4 October 2004. The choice of Nairobi, Kenya, for the global celebration of the World Habitat Day this year, is to highlight the phenomenal rate and social-economic significance of the urbanisation in the developing world, which Kenya represents.

For Nairobi, and for cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the locus today of the fastest urban growth in the world, this year's theme highlights the importance of treating urban and rural issues holistically to maximise the positive impacts of rural-to-urban migration. It also draws on lessons learnt and best practices from the highly industrialised cities of Europe and North America where 80 per cent of the total population now live in urban areas.

The theme Cities - engines of rural development thus seeks to generate ideas on integrated approaches which reinforce the beneficial interrelationships rural and urban areas as it is only by considering cities and urban areas as part of a continuous dynamic system that we can truly create sustainable development in both cities and rural areas.

## COMMON NAMES FOR BIRDS

Have you ever compared the common names of birds with the literal derivation of the ornithological ones? If you do, you may be surprised with how similar the derivation of both types of names is.

The ornithological names are mainly derived from either Greek or Latin whilst the common ones are naturally in English.

[No, I am not a language buff. In fact, I got a lot of my information from out of "What Bird Is That" by Neville W Cayley plus a Latin/English dictionary]. I begin with the bird we all know well. The Willie Wagtail. The name is self-explanatory. But when you come to the ornithological name you have *Rhipidura leucophrys* = "White-browed fantail". [Rhipis, rhipidos = Fan, ura = Tail; Leucos = White, Phrus = brow.]

Yes, the Willie Wagtail is of the fantail family and has a white brow but, naturally, will remain in my mind as Willie Wagtail.

Then you come to the Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - sometimes referred to as Chestnut Finch, Bullfinch or Barley sparrow. The other common names are obvious but you may ask where does 'Mannikin' come from? (Another form of the word 'Manikin'). And when you observe the bird up close in your binoculars, with a little imagination, there is a resemblance to a tiny man in a dinner jacket wearing a very bright shirt.

The scientific name for the bird is *Lonchura castaneothorax*. [Lonche = spear, oura = tail, castaneus = chestnut, thorax = chest]. This name certainly comes close to the mark as the bird does have a tail that tapers to a point and is 'Chestnut Breasted'.

## 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.

- **September 19th - Ingleside School & Lions Park** [ISS & LP], Tallebudgera Valley.  
Travel southwest along Tallebudgera Creek Road. Meet in the car park in front of the Ingleside School.
- **October 17th - Burleigh Knoll Conservation Park** [BK].  
Meet at Barwon Street, Burleigh Heads [off Deodar Drive and Gold Coast Highway].
- **November 21st - Tallebudgera Creek Conservation Park, North** [TCN]. Meet at Fleay's Wildlife Car Park, West Burleigh.

## 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.

September 7th, 21st • October 5th, 19th • November 2nd, 16th, 30th • December 14th, 28th  
*Suntown Landfill Winter Survey*

Date to be advised.

**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**

# Walk with Wildlife

by Tom Fletcher

pic

## ELANORA WETLANDS 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 September, 5th October,  
2nd November, 7th December

## GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS COULD BE HALVED

Australia's greenhouse emissions, currently the highest, per capita, in the world, could be halved by 2040 if government supported the renewable energy sector, according to a report released last month.

Wind, solar, hydro, biomass and natural gas stocks could easily replace ageing coal-fired power stations, says research by the Australia Institute, the Sustainability Centre and Energy Strategies.

By 2040, thirty percent of the nation's

energy could come from natural gas and the remainder from renewable energy sources.

It comes as the Federal Government commits \$5.5 million to a new sustainable energy research centre at Murdoch University in Western Australia. The new centre is called the Research Institute for Sustainable Energy (RI SE).

The Research Institute for Sustainable Energy (RI SE) would fill some of the functions of the former

CRC for the Renewable Energy, which closed last year after controversially missing out on government funding.

Meanwhile, a report commissioned by the Australian Greenhouse Office found the national electricity market could accommodate as much as 8,000mW of wind-generated energy, 40 times the current level.

(From WME - the Waste Management and Environmental magazine).

**Source: H.O.P.E. Newsletter, August'04**



Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

## Meeting of Member Groups

Saturday, 4 September, 2004

8.30am - Noon

*Venue: Gecko House  
139 Duringan Street, Currumbin*

*Member Group Representatives and all members welcome.*

Purpose of the meeting: To support our Member Groups and represent their issues and campaigns to our members and appropriate levels of government - local, state and federal.

### AGENDA FOR MEETING OF MEMBER GROUPS

1. Welcome & apologies.
  2. Minutes of the last meeting and business arising.
  3. Summary of Correspondence.
  4. Rapid Round Up - each group's report.
  5. General Business.
  6. Campaigns to work together on.
  7. Announcements.
  8. Next meeting - Saturday, 2 October, 2004.
- 

Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

## Annual General Meeting

29 September, 2004

*Venue: Gecko House  
139 Duringan Street, Currumbin*

See Page 15.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE  
**NO GENERAL MEETING**  
ON THE SECOND WEDNESDAY IN SEPTEMBER.  
INSTEAD, OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
WILL BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 29.

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Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

## Guest Speaker Night

Wednesday, 22 September, 2004

6.30pm - 9pm

Gecko House, 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin

### **'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation'**

*Presented by Lyndall Kennedy, EPBC Unit Co-ordinator, WWF*

Lyndall will give an overview of the EPBC Act (1999), and look at how the Act works and how the community can use it to achieve conservation outcomes.

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# Dear Councillor, Re: Springbrook LAP

by Ken O'Shea, Vice President, Springbrook Wunburra Progress Association

Springbrook Wunburra Progress Association is urging you to reconsider the framework for the draft Local Area Plan for Springbrook and requesting that today's Strategic Growth Management Committee meeting recommend in favour of wider community and government consultation prior to the release of this LAP for State interests check.

We believe that it is important, when considering the Springbrook Local Area Plan, to remember that while it is recognised that Springbrook has World Heritage values and habitat for threatened species in its national park, these same values, which are important enough to warrant this international declaration, occur not only in the Springbrook National Park, but also in freehold land throughout the Springbrook Plateau and in the wider hinterland area.

However, because of its geophysical characteristics and its isolation,

Springbrook Plateau forms a unified repository of these values and as such should be protected from development.

We believe that in developing the LAP for Springbrook, the protection of this core should be the primary intent of this LAP.

Springbrook should not be seen as the only place that can provide the opportunity for ecotourism and nature-based visitation.

These same values occur in other fragmented areas throughout Gold Coast City, and these other, less important areas, can provide the same experience and in doing so, protect the core area of this ecological system. How to achieve a vision which provides for ecotourism development while protecting this internationally important area can only be established through rigorous research and development of priorities which protect those values.

Planning for the future of ecotourism in the Gold Coast City should include the protection of Springbrook and investigate other opportunities, including the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Interpretive Centre at Nerang, for presentation of its World Heritage values.

We request that Council engage in the Joint Planning Process for the protection of Springbrook's World Heritage values, agreed to by the former Mayor Gary Baildon and the former Environment Minister Dean Wells, together with scientific and expert advisors and the wider community in developing this LAP.

Note: Despite this heartfelt request, Council voted to proceed with the Springbrook LAP as drafted.

Please, if you haven't already done so, send in your submission letter from last month's newsletter to Gecko.

Or, you can write your own letter and send us a copy.

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Email: [eco-worldunited@hotmail.net.au](mailto:eco-worldunited@hotmail.net.au)

## 2004 Environmentalist of the Year

Ché Wall, who has built a career based on award-winning environmentally sustainable design, was named this year's Prime Minister's Environmentalist of the Year at the prestigious Banksia Environmental Awards dinner on June 5, earlier this year.

Mr Wall, a 34-year old British-trained engineer, is the Group Director of Lincolne Scott Consulting Engineers and its specialist division, named Advanced Environmental Concepts (AEC).

He is also a founder and director of the Green Building Council of Australia, and Chair of the World Green Building Council, which is incorporated in New York.

Source: [www.gbcaus.org](http://www.gbcaus.org)

## SA Government Backs \$600m 'Green' City Development

South Australia has demonstrated Government leadership by committing to lease up to 10,000 square metres of 'green' office space in Adelaide.

There is a proposed 17-storey office tower in the City Central district. The development is aiming to be the first office building in South Australia to achieve a 5-star rating under the Green Star rating system.

Source: [www.gbcaus.org](http://www.gbcaus.org)

# July Guest Speaker Report - Gecko Regen - July 28, 2004

by Tom McDade

It was good to get back to one of Gecko's Guest Speaker Nights after a short break to fit in all the intense activity associated with World Environment Day. And what an excellent choice as guest speaker Tom Caamano from Gecko Regen turned out to be! Not only did he attract the largest audience in 12 months but also quite a few new faces ... not to mention some younger ones as well!!

His talk covered the early days of Gecko Regen, its developmental growth and some vision for its future when he outlined the various stages Gecko Regen has passed through and how its original mission statement has evolved to fit the more complex operation it has now become. Many of the early undertakings when it began 6 years ago were of a repair and restore nature - basically fixing some ugly aspects of development and hiding what had been done. This usually involved land fill sites and creation of screen or buffer zones. The introduction of a business plan to give the organisation a strategic direction allowed the expertise of Regen's people to become an integral part of a much larger environmental role. Through this came the establishment of a nursery seed bank

which has allowed the planting of an estimated 600,000 natives throughout South -East Queensland. Clients such as Powerlink, Gold Coast City Council and Energex now use Gecko Regen to provide solutions through planning and maintenance in screening, erosion control, site preparation and recreational area development. Tom also indicated other spheres of involvement such as natural habitat restoration, weed eradication and wetland plantings. Among local projects they had worked on were sites at Molendinar, Windaroo Creek and community projects like Federation Walk on The Spit. Tom emphasised how the growth and success of Gecko Regen was built on the quality and commitment of the people who worked for the enterprise, as this had cemented the ongoing relationship with the client organisations. This had led to the establishment of 4 divisions in the organisation with responsibility for: (1) accredited seedbank nursery (2) formalised contracts (3) maintenance and (4) consultancy.

During the talk the audience posed a wide range of questions about ethical or philosophical differences vis-a-vis the developmental/environmental

debate, how Regen's income was used, species of flora, water management and planning. Tom replied confidently, without shirking any issues, that good planning and management had produced an ongoing methodology which encompassed staff stability, seasonal troughs and the essential component of a good working relationship between environmentalists and business clients. He foresaw a steadily increasing demand for the service that Gecko Regen was providing and possible expansion into wholesale, consultancy and a broader client base in the private sector.

Altogether an interesting insight into a sector of Gecko that does not appear to get the recognition worthy of its contribution ... at least from the media ... but who prints success stories these days!

Bryne Smith finished off by giving some highly deserved praise to the guest speaker, Tom Caamano and the Gecko Regen Staff which was endorsed by a very appreciative audience.

Come along and enjoy the next Guest Speaker Cheese and Wine Night. They're on the fourth Wednesday of every month ... it's a good night!

## Find a Word

by David Harris

S U S T A I N A B L E  
E S O R S T O L E N S  
T O N E L A D I T U U  
T O O T A I R H I N O  
L N I A B U S E R A H  
E I L W O K C E G U N  
M B E B K O A L B E E  
E L M E A G L O B E E  
N A U K P U D N U O R  
T E R M I N A T I N G

Find the words below.  
All of them are there,  
except one.

Which one and why?

Rhino	Okapi	Terminating
Roundup	Lemur	Water
Greenhouse	Lion	Koala
Gun	Settlement	Elm
Oak	Stolen	Ear
Globe	Sustainable	Nun
Gecko	Air	Lie
Balsa	Rose	Heel
Bee	Albino	Tone
Bus		

Send entries into Gecko.  
First correct entry gets a T-shirt.

# Sustainable Urban Development - AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

by Sheila Davis

I had the great privilege of attending the first ever course held at the Gondwana Centre in Binna Burra during the first week of August. Director Sally MacKinnon gathered about 50 teachers, students, people from government and industry, NGOs and activists to learn about "Sustainable Urban Development". What is it? Why do we need it? How can we achieve it?

Is it energy efficiency and 5-star ratings on \$800,000 homes an hour from nowhere adjacent to national parks with no controls on dogs, cats or garden plants? Or is it a modern commune on a greenfield site, which caters for every romantic notion we've ever had about sustainability and self-sufficiency? Or even an expensive retrofit of a townhouse in the centre of the city?

Leaders in sustainability such as Professor Ian Lowe, ACF's Michael Krockenberger, and Alastair Pilbeam from the Queensland EPA Office of Sustainable Industries - together with planners, architects and developers - presented their vision of what it means to be sustainable. Progressive local government councillors, activists and students all shared their experiences of seeking to achieve sustainability. We need more energy- and water-efficient housing, with conservation of those resources embedded in our everyday living habits.

We also need to conserve our arable land in this ancient continent of fragile, shallow, nutrient-deficient soils. As well, we need to preserve our wildlife habitats in this land of extremely high biodiversity and allow room for them and ourselves to adjust to climate change.

With the realisation that the fossil

fuels with which we have been so aggressively developing have poisoned our atmosphere, and that the glut of cheap fuel we rely upon is coming to an end, we need to create better solutions. The communication age has made us realise that we can't keep continuing down this path. Our culture of consumption is clearly not sustainable - economically, socially or environmentally.

We must develop better technology and adopt more sustainable management practices.

We must also use better measures of well-being than our current economic system allows. The worth of an ecosystem and the cost of its loss must be accounted for. We must share our knowledge, wealth and resources, not to continue to spread the unsustainable lifestyle that we have enjoyed, but to create a sustainable future for the world and all its species.

The South East Queensland Regional Environment Coordination Network (SEQRECEN) is calling for the Queensland Government through its Office of Urban Management (OUM) to create that future with us in our region. Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Gold Coast environment councils, together with the Queensland Conservation Council, are urging the government towards this sustainable future.

The OUM is offering us one of three scenarios in the development of our region - 'Business as Usual', i.e. continuing urban sprawl across the landscape, slowly adopting ratings and incentives systems as they become cost neutral; 'Western Corridor' - where development is spread past Ipswich with 200,000 people living in this

newly settled area; or 'Urban Containment', where seven storey medium density is the norm, with no rights to object.

We believe that none of these solutions is sustainable, and that there is another option - the sustainability option. The time has come for all governments everywhere to recognise the need to both lower our consumption and stabilise our population.

An economy built on continuous growth is not sustainable. We are calling upon the government for a policy of containment of the urban form, contraction of the projected amount of development, and constraint of resource use.

Gecko, at its August Members' Gathering, workshopped what we would like to see happen here in SEQ, and will be using this as a basis for our submission to the SEQ2021 Regional Plan.

Our members want better controls on growth and development, careful long-term planning of infrastructure, energy- & water-efficient technology and lower consumption of resources, alternative public transport and bikeways, no more greenfield developments, more land for wildlife and controls on domestic pets, increase and maintenance of protected areas, protection of indigenous rights and cultural heritage, and better community consultation and incentives for better land management.

The Plan will be drafted and out for public comment in October.

To feed into that draft, please let us hear from you about your vision for the future of our region as soon as possible.

**S SOLICITORS** — David Spain B.A; LL.B (Hons.); LL.M, Jonathon Spain B.A. LL.B. (Hons.)

**P PHONE** (07) 5574-0755, fax (07) 5574-0855, Email dspain@spains.com.au

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# PEACEFUL PATHWAYS

## *Walking with the earth: A Sculptural Installation*

Inspired by local artist, Kandy McCouat, Peaceful Pathways is a sculptural installation, symbolic of a vision for a more peaceful and harmonious way of living: with ourselves, alongside others and in close connection with the earth.

Representing the link between inner and global peace, it is a unique installation which captures the heart and 'sole'-felt visions for peace of over 300 participants within the Gold Coast community.

In a symbolic process, participants place their footprint in clay and with this, their wishes and gifts towards a more peaceful, intentional and connected way of living. The

installation includes the contributions of people of all ages, backgrounds and 'walks' of life.

Peaceful Pathways incorporates leaf, stone and other imprints from the natural world, paw prints of animals and birds and many other symbolic patterns of connectedness.

Peaceful Pathways was conceived in March 2004 and the project launched at Gecko's World Environment Day do! at Currumbin on June 6.

It is an interactive installation with participant workshops held at each exhibition site, enabling ongoing community contribution to this growing 'sole' journey.

Peaceful Pathways will be installed at

various sites in 2004-2005, beginning with SWELL, the Currumbin Sculpture Festival that runs from the 16th to the 23rd of September.

SWELL is an outdoor sculpture exhibition showcasing some of Australia's and the world's leading artists along the picturesque Currumbin foreshore.

There are more than 40 sculptures on display using all types of mediums. SWELL is a free outdoor event and all sculptures are for sale.

Saturday and Sunday festivities begin at 9am until 4pm.

Twilight sculpture tours are on Sunday & Tuesday nights 6-7pm.

More info: [www.swellsculpture.com.au](http://www.swellsculpture.com.au)

## WORLD PEACE CONCERT

*by Ken Jacob*

Saturday,

**18th September**

4-8pm

### ALBERT WATERWAYS COMMUNITY CENTRE

Cnr Sunshine & Hooker Blvds,  
Broadbeach (directly behind Pacific Fair  
Shopping Centre - next to library)

Entry – FREE for all ages.

*Healthy food & drinks  
will be available for purchase.*

This is to be part of the United Nations  
International Day of Peace.

(See [www.worldpeace.org/peaceday](http://www.worldpeace.org/peaceday))

This special concert will feature only  
female performers (a truly heart-opening  
experience) who have a total passion for  
peace & unity in their music & share a  
common vision for a more peaceful world.  
Each performer will do 3 songs of their  
choice in line with the theme.

**All artists are donating  
their time for FREE!**

Artists, so far, are: Nadia Sunde, Jaya  
Lewis, Camilla Nova (crystal bowls),  
Spirits in Voice (choir), Andrea Soler,  
Amanda Driessen, Lindy Davidson, The  
Turkish Delight Belly Dancers, Kristy  
London & Natalie Weir.

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\$20 (or \$10 for Members)

**Membership!**

From \$16.50

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\$ Gold coin donation

**Calico Bags**

\$2 (various designs)

**Eco-Pack  
Shopping Bags**

\$10 for all 3 bags

1. A very large and strong shopping bag (normally \$5).
2. A large 6-bottle bag (normally \$5).
3. A Gecko calico bag (normally \$2).

## STEADY STATE ECONOMICS

*by David Harris*

The steady state is defined as an economy in which the total population and the total wealth are maintained constant at some desired levels by a minimal rate of maintenance.

The steady state economy can only be executed through a revolution in public opinion ... a process by which the universal inborn cherishing of economic growth, regardless of social or environmental cost, is replaced by a healthier view.

Sadly the concept of 'Steady State Economics' does not compute in the current vision of the world which sees economic growth as being fundamental to survival.

The reality is that our population and our environment cannot cope with economic growth any longer.

That is the message which politicians, economists and even more reasonable people such as you and me need to understand.

If 'Steady State Economics' is not introduced, then not only will so many of our creatures be under severe threat of extinction, but so will we.

It is our responsibility to look at what we truly need and value in a different way and it is our responsibility to look at 'economic growth' as a disease which cannot be tolerated any longer. Only with a change of attitude towards our material possessions can these kinds of changes be made.

# Important Workshop for Environmentalists and Campaigners

by Irene Wareing

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth) is the Australian Government's principal piece of national environmental law.

The EPBC Unit has accepted Gecko's invitation to present a free workshop at Gecko House on the operation of the EPBC Act. The EPBC Unit is a community information service run as a joint project of WWF Australia, the Australian Council of National Trusts, and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.

## Workshop Details

The Workshop will be held on Wednesday, 22 September at 6.30pm at Gecko Hall, 139 Durling Street, Currumbin. It will begin with an overview of the EPBC Act, looking at how the Act works and how the community can use it to achieve conservation outcomes.

The first part of the workshop will provide an outline for those unfamiliar with the EPBC Act and an update for those already working with it.

There will also be a discussion of the Heritage amendments that form the basis of the new Heritage regime.

The second part of the workshop will

be more interactive, working through some case studies to put what was learnt in the first part of the workshop into action (before you forget it all!). Finally, to finish up there will be an open Q& A session. Free EPBC Unit publications will also be available.

## What is the EPBC Act?

As stated above, the EPBC Act is the Australian Government's principal piece of national environmental law. It brought in major changes in the Australian Government's responsibility for protection of nationally significant natural and cultural heritage. This includes threatened and migratory species and their habitat, threatened ecological communities, Ramsar wetlands, World Heritage and National Heritage places, and actions by the Commonwealth.

These changes include the way actions are assessed and approved, making it easier for conservation groups to go to court, and giving the Australian Government legislative powers over what happens on Ramsar wetlands and National Heritage places.

All welcome. To RSVP, please contact Ben Perkins at Gecko on 5534 1412.

## Students Tackle Big Issues

Several hundred Queensland school students voiced their thoughts on the environment at an exciting two-day conference held in Toowoomba in July, 2004.

Conference convenor, Arron Wood, said the Queensland Youth River and Landscape Conference was a chance for students, teachers and celebrities to come together and consider the 'big issues' that affect the environment.

"The conference provided hands-on, student-centred learning to bring about a cultural change in the way we perceive our natural environment, and to raise awareness of the importance of environment education," Mr Wood said.

The conference involved a series of workshops, project site visits and presentations by leading industry figures, politicians and students.

"Students worked with scientists and community leaders to study an environmental topic of their choice, such as floodplain management, water

quality or the threat of blue-green algae, and develop local environment management solutions," he said.

"Students then came together at the conference to present their findings to others. The conference was really about students presenting to students and providing a platform for the next generation to become involved with natural resource management."

Not only did the conference give students a chance to talk about the environmental issues that concerned them, but more than 500 trees were planted at a waterbird habitat in Toowoomba as part of the event.

The conference was one of eight regional conferences to be held across the country in coming years.

For more details, visit the website on [www.riverhealth.com](http://www.riverhealth.com).

Source: *Education Views Vol. 13, Number 14, August 6, 2004*

(Editor's Note: Arron Wood featured on 'Australian Story' on ABC TV, August 16, 2004.)

## LEARN LIFE SKILLS AND HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

The Earthwatch Institute is calling on students to take up the 2004 Earthwatch Student Challenge.

The challenge involves working in the field with leading scientists to help solve critical environmental conservation problems.

By participating in the projects, Year 10 and 11 students will learn about teamwork, scientific techniques and environmental issues. They will also gain an insight into possible career directions for the future.

Students choose between three seven-day live-in projects during which they are involved in all aspects of field research, including radio-tracking or spotlighting to locate animals, capturing and handling animals and collecting and recording data.

Scientists conducting the research projects will provide all necessary training – a science background is not necessary.

The Echidnas and Goannas on Kangaroo Island project aims to further research into the world's oldest mammal – the echidna – and its natural predator and to shed light on how to help protect the delicate balance of this island ecosystem.

This exciting project runs from January 8th to 14th, 2005.

Alternatively, students can study Australia's Vanishing Frogs.

This project involves monitoring and assessing populations of six endangered frog species and their habitats for clues to the amphibians' worldwide decline.

Project dates are from December 15th to 21st this year and January 4th to 10th, 2005.

The Tasmanian Lizards project will investigate the effects of environmental stresses on alpine skinks to ensure their conservation.

The expedition dates are from December 11th to 17th, 2004.

The closing date for applications has been extended to August 31st.

Visit: [www.earthwatch.org/australia/fellstud.html](http://www.earthwatch.org/australia/fellstud.html) or call Earthwatch Australia office on (03) 9682 6828.

Source: *Education Views Vol. 13, No. 14, August 6, 2004*

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 15th Annual General Meeting of Gecko will be held at  
**Gecko House**  
**139 Duringan Street, Currumbin**  
**At 6:30pm on**  
**Wednesday, September 29th, 2004**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies. Record members present.
2. Confirmation of minutes of last AGM.
3. Receiving and adoption of President's Report on behalf of the Committee of Management.
4. Receiving and adoption of the Treasurer's Report on the Audited Statement of Income and Expenditure, Assets and Liabilities affecting the property of the Association for the year 2003-2004.
5. Receiving the Auditor's Report.
6. The election of members of the committee of Management The Management Committee of the Association shall comprise three (3) Executive Members; namely the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer; all of whom shall be eligible to vote as members of the Association at any General Meeting (Refer Rule 5 (7)), and not less than three (3) ordinary members as determined at the annual General Meeting, The Management Committee may, at its own discretion, appoint one of its members as a Vice President.
7. Resolutions notified in writing not less than fourteen days (14) before the meeting.
8. Any other business.
9. Date for next Annual General Meeting.

Signed (Secretary): \_\_\_\_\_ (Rose Adams)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## GECKO AGM NOMINATION FORM, 2004-2005

***I would like to nominate:*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Nominee)

***For the position of:***

President   Vice President  Secretary   Treasurer  Management Committee  Support Committee   
(Circle one)

Nominated by: \_\_\_\_\_

Seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Agreed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Return via post, in person, or fax back to 5534 1401.

