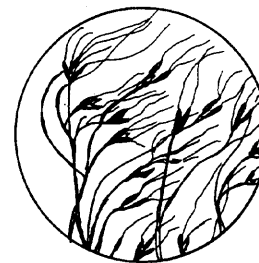




BUSH NEWS

from the Natural Areas of Kedron Brook & Environs



No 34, Spring 1997

GreenBrook Association

IS THIS OUR OWN 'SILENT SPRING'?

Mid 1996: A teacher at the Nudgee Beach Environment Centre notices that visiting schoolchildren are finding fewer and fewer mussels and pippies when they go onto the mud flats.

A volunteer marine biologist, Sue Quinnell, starts to sample the sediments along the northern shoreline of Moreton Bay, looking for benthic organisms 1mm and larger. She finds that areas which previously contained 25000 organisms per square metre are now virtually lifeless.

She calls for an urgent investigation into the decline, claiming that it could damage fish, wader birds and other small species that live off the sediment.

October 1996: The Queensland Environment Minister, Brian Littleproud, reports to Parliament that traces of a new pesticide, *Bifenthrin*, have been found in the sediments.

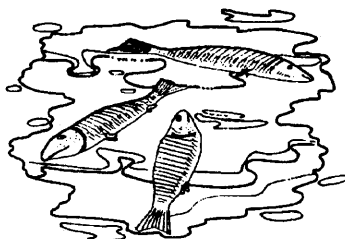
Bifenthrin is used as an underslab treatment for termites, and was recently released for garden use under the name *Triumph*.

A scientist from the Environment Department reports that Bifenthrin has been measured in Breakfast Creek at a concentration of **9 parts per billion**. According to the United States Environment Protection Agency, Bifenthrin is

lethal to fish at a concentration of only **0.1 parts per billion**.

The Queensland Government promises to treat the matter as "a high priority".

November 1996: Less than a month later, Minister Littleproud seems to go cold on the issue, claiming that "the company which markets Bifenthrin ... has expressed concern over the situation and is working with the Department of Environment in conducting further tests".



He goes on to talk about "the alleged die-off", saying that "even if such a die-off is occurring, departmental officers advise that there is nothing to link it with ... any chemical contamination".

August 1997: A consortium of community groups approaches the Federal Government for funds to boost voluntary research into the problem, claiming that the State Environment Department seems to be hoping the problem will go away.

September 1997: An expert panel convened by the Department of Environment meets for the first time.

Little is achieved, the Dept of Environment insisting that there is no evidence of chemical contamination.

The future?: It still remains to be seen whether the problems identified at the mouth of Kedron Brook occur elsewhere in Moreton Bay.

It also remains to be seen whether there is a link between the fish poisonings that occur occasionally in the brook and this absence of life at the mouth of the brook.

The Dept of Environment appears to be playing games on this issue. There seems little doubt that benthic life has collapsed at Nudgee Beach. The first step is to determine if this is a natural fluctuation and, if not, then what is the cause.

People eat what comes out of Moreton Bay. Without knowing what is causing this decline, how do we know that we are not also affected?

Waders fly down from the northern hemisphere every summer and recover from the trip by feeding on the Moreton Bay mudflats. What will they eat this year?

The only positive sign at this stage is that our universities are now interested in the issue. So much for our government!

Frank Box

MILESTONES

Consultants for:

- *Organisational Change*
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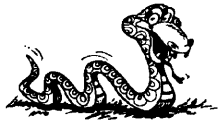
Contact: Jeni Neary

Ph-3856 4771 Fax-3856 4702

NUISANCE WILDLIFE

Occasionally our native animals do get too intimate. Sometimes this is of our own doing, like the lady who rang me recently with a 'possum in the roof' problem. She knew that there were seven because she fed them every night.

Others turn up uninvited. Take snakes for example. A lady at Albany Creek recently found one in her birdcage; having eaten the bird, it couldn't get out.



Or the resident who woke rather suddenly one morning when a snake bolted from under the toaster on the kitchen bench.

Needless to say, snakes are not always popular guests. In fact some people will go to extreme lengths to be rid of them. One gentleman, on seeing a green tree snake disappear under his concrete garden path, took to the path with a jack-hammer. The snake was rescued unharmed, but the path was a disaster.

From the snake's perspective, this business must be a real nuisance. Few realise that a snake's life is not all curling up in the sun with a full belly. In fact the range of snake problems is definitely depressing and includes pneumonia, ticks, canker or mouth-rot, bronchial and

respiratory problems, colds, mites, scale rot, abscesses ...

Most snakes avoid humans. When seen, they will usually freeze and rely on their camouflage to protect them. Only when they are convinced that they are no longer being watched will they move off.

If you find yourself with a guest that leaves you cold, you can now call on the services of a new fauna relocation business operating locally.

David Farrimond, from *Possums 'n' Pythons*, has a long association with the NPWS, Police, the 000 network and the RSPCA and has recently turned professional. He can relocate unwanted guests in the nicest way.

Contact phone is 3352 7822, mobile 0414 675 522, seven days per week.

THE AMAZING SILVEREYE

Silvereyes are one of the most common native birds throughout much of the Kedron Brook catchment. They will often stay in gardens all year, and can raise 2-3 broods in that time from nests

hidden in shrubbery.

Every winter the numbers of our silvereyes are boosted by visitors from Victoria and Tasmania, a distance of some 1500 km. They travel mainly at night, so the migration generally goes unnoticed.

Silvereyes mate for life and travel together in pairs. Some banded pairs from Tasmania have returned to the same garden every winter for several years in a row.

SUPPORT BUSH NEWS

Bush News is produced and distributed by volunteers. We are looking for assistance to deliver in the following streets. If you can help, please contact me.

- Orchid, Laurel & Willandra Sts, Enoggera
- Stevenson, Evelyn, Frome & Robe Sts, Grange

Our next working bees are on 19 October and 16 November. Meet at the Blandford St entrance to Grange Forest Park at 8.30am.

Bob Devine (3356 6577)

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Austromyrtus 'Aurora'

This shrub has beautiful velvet-like foliage which changes from a light rose flush during the warmer months through red to a deep burgundy in winter. Grows to 2.5m with a weeping habit. Both the flowers and fruit are attractive to birds. A good screen plant.

Available from
Perrotts Nursery,
Elkhorn St, Enoggera

