

**The Coastwatchers Association Inc**  
**Newsletter February 2010**

**From The President**

The recent substantial rainfall has cheered Eurobodalla environmentalists. At long last the stresses on our ecosystems caused by the severe drought have been relieved. Our rivers, estuaries and other wetlands now have a chance of returning to a more healthy state. Let us hope that we have good follow up rain to further improve the situation. The imminent connection of the new pipeline to Deep Creek dam will hopefully raise the water storage level from the rivers and reduce the need to pump the proposed five to seven million litres a day from bores in the Tuross catchment. Extracting this large amount of underground water could have detrimental effects on this important river and its estuary.

Philippa Rowland, who was in Copenhagen, recently gave an excellent presentation on the outcomes from this important climate change meeting and explained why they are not as bad as the press would have us believe. The summary of her presentation in this newsletter might be useful for members when speaking to family and friends who have become disillusioned with international efforts to meet the climate change challenge. Coastwatchers has recently signed on to the Boobook Declaration which highlights Australia's worsening biodiversity crisis and the need to act now. During the year we will be highlighting the importance of the biodiversity found in Eurobodalla as part of our work towards persuading the Federal Governments to implement the suggestions in the declaration by the end of 2010. Our healthy functioning ecosystems can slow the rate of global warming by permanently storing the large amounts of carbon they extract from the atmosphere. It is important to note that the tree planting scheme proposed by the Federal Leader of the Opposition is quite different. Planting large areas of same species trees does not create functioning ecosystems.

Forests NSW Regional Manager Ian Barnes attended the last Council meeting for 2009. Councillor Keith Dance asked him about the viability of a biomass plant to produce electricity from waste wood in this region and how many it might employ. Mr. Barnes said there was a great deal of low grade residual wood in the area and that a series of biomass plants on the coast could become viable. Since this residual wood can only come from the woodchipping and logging of our local native forests Coastwatchers would express strong opposition to such a proposal.

Sheila Monahan

**Feedback on Copenhagen Conference**

by Sheila Monahan

Philippa Rowland from Clean Energy For Eternity gave an informative presentation on her visit to Copenhagen during COP 15 (the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). The thirty plus people in the audience enjoyed a report on the machinations and outcomes of the Conference. They also got a sense of what it was like to be part of the Klima Forum, which provided a platform for approved community group members from all over the world to have their say.

Philippa returned home humble but hopeful. She pointed out that, despite the negative publicity, progress was made. For example there appeared to be general agreement among the conference

delegates that we should be aiming for a rise in temperature of 2oC (as opposed to the 4.8oC from business as usual). There was also a genuine effort to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries including a decision to fast track US\$30 billion, between 2010-12, to help the developing world reduce emissions. A commitment to try to raise a further \$100 billion by 2020 for this purpose was also given.

President Obama also brokered the Copenhagen Accord between USA, Brazil, China, India and South Africa (the 5 big emitters). Whilst not legally binding this political accord was “noted” by the UNFCCC. Participating countries had until 31 January 2010 to nominate the size of their reduction in emissions. The challenge will be to turn “the deal” into reality. Efforts to reach international agreement on the way forward are continuing and COP 16 will be held in Mexico in December 2010.

The Klima forum ended with a people’s declaration signed by 295 non government organisations from 192 countries which demanded action at the political level to deploy the climate change solutions already available to us. Each day a fossil award was given, with good humour, by one of these organisations to the country judged to have done the most to disrupt progress that day. Australia was given two fossil awards: one for pressuring Pacific Island nations to accept a temperature rise of greater than 2oC, and the other for chairing a meeting of a group of nations trying to get carbon capture and storage accepted as a valid clean energy development mechanism.

Philippa concluded by reminding us that Australia is not immune from the effects of climate change and that action must be taken at a personal, community and political level.

#### **Quarterly Meeting Saturday 6th March At 2pm Tomakin Community Hall**

Guest speaker—Bishop Browning, an inspiring speaker

by Linda Chapman

When Rachel Carson’s seminal work Silent Spring was published in 1962 she suffered considerable ridicule and animosity from industries that were threatened by her condemnation of the widespread use of DDT. Her work led to the withdrawal of the chemical from sale to the public and its restriction to certain controlled situations. Her work saw the beginning of the modern environmental movement and the widespread desire to work with nature, respecting its balances and cycles, rather than trying to manipulate it for human greed.

It is tragic that to day we are seeing similarly frenetic (and effective) activity on behalf of industries that want business as usual. This activity is heaping ridicule on the science of climate change and frightening the public into believing that the cost of change will impact heavily on the home budget. The environmental movement and environmental scientists are being accused of creating an industry for themselves and worse, of falsifying or exaggerating documents to create the worst possible case. The truth of course is that industry is investing countless millions in the lobbying industry to convince politicians that they can ignore what science is telling them. An example of this is easily illustrated from the much publicised but vacuous visit of Viscount Monckton.

Bishop Browning will be addressing this challenge and urging a strengthening of resolve to stay on song and for the various participants in the environmental debate to sing from the same simple song sheet

## **Signing of the Boobook Declaration**

Coastwatchers has signed the Boobook Declaration along with more than forty other environmental groups. The declaration has been written by an alliance of groups to highlight Australia's worsening biodiversity crisis and the need to act now. Biodiversity plays a vital role in sustaining life on Earth and humans are an integral part of the planet's biodiversity. The Earth's biodiversity endows nature with its resilience and adaptative capabilities, and at the same time, provides the large permanent carbon stocks essential for slowing global warming. The United Nations recognises the importance of global biological diversity to sustaining life on earth and urges all nations to prevent further irreversible losses. It has designated 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity to celebrate biodiversity and raise awareness of the huge loss of biodiversity on Earth. At a time when we are realising the importance of resilience many populations of animals and plants in Australia are collapsing and disappearing. Australia has failed to achieve its 2010 Biodiversity Target and it is now well documented that Australia could face a biological catastrophe.

As a nation, we can avert this impending disaster. The Boobook Declaration calls upon the Australian Government to act decisively to fulfill its international and national promises to protect biodiversity. Specifically in 2010 -- the International Year of Biodiversity -- it calls on the Australian Government to:

- Acknowledge the critical importance of safeguarding biodiversity as part of Australia's climate change response and commit to correspondingly urgent action.
- Substantially increase investment in biodiversity and ecosystem protection, restoration and management
- Restore and increase the capacity for publicly funded biodiversity research, auditing monitoring, accounting and communication
- Provide education and training programs for all sectors of the Australian community and business on the value of conserving our biodiversity and ecosystems

More details can be found at: [www.boobook.org.au](http://www.boobook.org.au)

## **Our Forests– Our Future forum 11th Sept in Batemans Bay**

by Mike Thompson

Eurobodalla shire is a blessed land of many waters and forests. Waterways are being addressed, but cash-strapped Forests NSW is wood-chipping our local forests more intensively than ever. Seventy three percent of Eurobodalla is forest ecosystems.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. Environment Ministers from the Australian Government and States are due to sign-off on a new national Biodiversity Strategy on the 19th of March. This document provides an over-arching reference for our submissions on regional and local environment plans.

Submissions have already been requested by the NSW Government on their draft South Coast Regional Conservation Plan (RCP) which covers three local government areas – Eurobodalla and our neighbours in the Bega Valley and Shoalhaven.

Koala protection is one iconic issue. Reserve proposals for corridors linking National Parks across the region are required for many other good reasons too. We assume Eurobodalla's next draft Local Environment Plan and the South Coast RCP need to be consistent with the NSW Government's commitment to Australia's new Biodiversity Strategy.

Sustainable towns are being promoted via government funding at all levels. Renewable energy and recycling are important home and business sustainability issues. We welcome ESC's work with regional partners on these new urban projects which aim to reduce both our carbon and ecological footprints.

We also want our Governments to focus on the enormous carbon pollution and ecological cost of intensified logging and wood-chipping of over 80% of the logs currently being wastefully trucked out of Eurobodalla's forests. Science also suggests logging is thinning and drying out our native forests and making them more fire prone. Logging is Forests NSW's only source of income. We solve this problem in overseas countries by paying loggers to stop logging, using carbon credits.

Governments are telling us to accept change in our homes, change on our farms and change in our businesses. In 2010 Governments themselves must equally be open to change in Forests NSW.

Jobs, Biodiversity and Climate Action Plans 2010-2020 addressing our transition to a low-carbon economy, are the focus of the 'Our Forest – Our Future' Forum being hosted by Coastwatchers in Batemans Bay on Saturday the 11th of September 2010. Please mark it in your diary. Keynote speakers already confirmed include Professor Brendan Mackey and Dr. Judith Ajani from the Australian National University. I am the organiser of this national event and details will roll-out as it evolves over the coming six months. Registrations of interest are welcome to [Mike@ForestFestival.net](mailto:Mike@ForestFestival.net)

### **Should Campers be allowed on all Public Land?**

There is a growing trend for campers, especially those with mobile homes, to set up on Council reserves and other public land rather than stay in caravan parks. In some cases they bring their pets too, as in the case pictured at Maloneys Beach where a cat was allowed to roam free in the National Park. The Friends of Durras are asking Council for a policy on this issue. What do you think such a policy should contain?

### **2010—International Year of Biodiversity**

By Jenny Edwards

The loss of biodiversity is often over-shadowed by other news but it is a major problem. This is one reason why Coastwatchers has spent so much time and energy trying to get more sustainable use of native forests. They are rapidly being converted to young even aged stands without the number of tree-hollows and intact understorey that ensured a healthy ecosystem. The younger trees also take more water which can lead to a reduction in flows, especially crucial for the ecosystems of minor creeks.

*G-Online* reported that ecosystems around the world are at risk, with invasive introduced species placing among the top three threats to life on our planet. It is all very depressing when we see

plants we know to be potential weeds on sale at nurseries and stalls and when potential animal pests are still being imported.

However, there are actions you can take to help remedy the situation. Here are a few and we welcome your suggestion of others –

- Remove potential weeds from your garden – if its not a native to the area but is tough, seeds easily and the seeds/fruit are carried by wind or birds then try something else. If you can't bear to part with it then take off the seeds before they mature. Diplomatically spread the word to your neighbours and plant sellers.
- Report infestations of noxious weeds such as lantana or bitou to Council – Council has several good brochures on noxious weeds and other problem plants if you are not sure what is what.
- Join an eradication program – the Indian Mynah bird program is just one local example.
- Join a protection program – each year volunteers help protect the nests of endangered shore birds from predators including foxes.
- Report large populations of animal pests – rabbits are out of control on many reserves but they are also living in yards of houses.
- Give donations to organizations working to preserve native habitats and their animals.

### **Jelly fish & Chips?**

The international sustainable seafood summit in Paris earlier this month was told that jellyfish could soon be on the western menu if overfishing continues. Speaking in an interview on ABC radio, Darren Kindleysides, director of the Australian Marine Conservation Society, said that seafood itself is at a crossroads, global fisheries are largely overfished, catches are declining and fisheries face real challenges through climate change. "We've heard that if we don't change how we manage our fisheries that the future for seafood could be jellyfish burgers or jellyfish and chips. An ocean that is warmer has less fish in it and is actually a better habitat for jellyfish and already we're seeing around the world blooms of jellyfish, increases in the numbers of jellyfish.

Guy Leyland of the National Seafood Industry Alliance says that Australian fisheries are in good shape. "Australians at least won't have to change their eating habits in the slightest, the only difference may be the impact on their hip pocket. I think the fish-consuming public is increasing, we can only supply so much fish, there's a gap and the gap will probably be filled by imports.

Professor Jessica Meeuwig, Centre for Marine Futures, University of Western Australia disagrees. "We know that most of the fish stocks around world are overexploited quite heavily, in some cases for some species particularly the open ocean fisheries, the estimates are that only 10 to 20 per cent of their pre fishing biomass remain. So we've really moved to a place where hunger for seafood has led to an emptying of the oceans globally."

She says we might be doing better than some highly populated poor areas but there is no room for complacency here. "If you take Western Australia for example, we have a very large coast here and not a very big population, and that I think has led people to believe it would be difficult to overfish, but what we've seen in the last few years is significant declines in western rock lobster, which is the

world's best managed fishery and we've also seen significant declines in species like dhufish, baldchin groper and pink snapper.”

“As we're fishing out the oceans we start at the top of the food chain, we deplete those species then we move further down and at the end of the process you end up with not much other than jellyfish. And we do have areas where jellyfish have become a plague problem such as the Black Sea. I see no reason why with care we can't keep eating seafood, I think the lesson is to say that we do actually need to act and make sure that we're not overfishing and make sure that we create opportunities for stocks to recover.”

While people have been commenting on the lack of jellyfish in the Clyde River this summer, there were thousands of another species stranded on our beaches last October.

### **Yet Another Draft LEP**

by Jenny Edwards

After years of studies, strategies and “public consultations” a draft Local Environmental Plan (LEP) was exhibited last year. However, the feedback was less than enthusiastic, especially from some rural landholders who thought they were being deprived of rights. As a result a new draft LEP has been written.

Coastwatchers is very concerned that electricity generation by the burning of native forest products was permitted by the draft LEP and will still be allowed by a state government State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP). However, correspondence with Council about this matter has revealed that the new draft LEP will no longer list this land use although it will still be allowed by the SEPP.

This apparently applies to all SEPPs. So much for a simplified planning system! People will still have to go to numerous local and state government documents to find out what is allowed on their land and what is not.

The draft of the new draft LEP still has to be sent to the Dept of Planning for approval to exhibit. This may take a couple of months. Meanwhile we have written to the Department, the Minister and Council about our concerns.

### **COMING EVENTS!!**

#### **NAROOMA SUSTAINABILITY FESTIVAL - Sunday 28 February NATA oval**

A special market is being organized by the combined Rotary Club and the Shared Pathway Committee. It will be at the NATA oval near Narooma swimming pool from 8.30am to 1pm. Coastwatchers intends to have an information stall at this event and your help would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Sheila Ph 4473 6204

#### **CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY - Sunday 7 March**

Coastwatchers will not be organizing a clean up site but, as usual, many of our members will be helping their local Landcare or community associations on the day. After the holidays many of our

roadsides and beach dunes are looking a bit littered to say the least so if you can lend a hand please do.

### **MORUYA HOSPITAL AUXILLIARY FAMILY DAY - Easter Saturday 10 April**

This event will be held at Moruya racecourse. Members on our email news list will receive more details electronically. There are also sure to be notices in the papers and on local radio closer to the date. This is another opportunity for Coastwatchers to have contact with the general community. Again we are looking for help. Please contact Sheila Ph 4473 6204

### **Council Sites to be insured against rising sea levels**

Is this a foretaste of what will happen in Eurobodalla?

ABC online 4 Feb 2010 Wollongong council says it will be able to insure against the damage caused by sea level rises impacting on its land, but will not take responsibility for private land. Wollongong council's director of planning and environment, Andrew Carfield, says council needs to look at what the hazards are and how the hazards can be managed.

"Council is a landowner of many of these sites which may be affected and certainly council would have an interest in managing those risks on our own sites and assets," he said. "We've got surf clubs and other structures that are built within these areas, so council has an insurance policy which covers those things."

## **COASTWATCHERS COMMITTEE 2008-09**

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### **COASTWATCHERS COOPERATE WITH THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:**

Broulee Community Association, Congo Area Association, Eurobodalla Landcare / Dunecare, Friends of Durras, Friends of the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, Long Beach Landcare, Maloneys Residents Association, Mossy Point Community Association, Nature Coast Marine Group, South East Region Conservation Alliance, Tomakin Community Association, Tross Lakes Preservation Group,

Coastwatchers is a member of -

The NSW Nature Conservation Council and Conservation Council ACT Region