

22 Jan 11
Hi All,

It has been a wild and windy day at the mouth of the Johnstone River. I do hope the little terns on the spit come through this weather unharmed. A gale warning has been issued from Cooktown to Cardwell with winds expected to increase this evening. The low that was over Cairns has only moved slightly to the north. Met expects it to move out to sea and form into a cyclone to-morrow.

The strong winds, river flood and king-tide were too much for the 'Little Red Boat' it again dragged anchor and is now up against the mangroves but the anchor appears to be holding in the mud. The foresail came loose and has ripped to shreds in the wind.



Believe it or not more pig problems this week! Last Sunday some tourists found a dead pig on the beach in front of my house.



I rang Cassowary Coast Regional Council's emergency line at 11am Sunday morning. No ring back from anyone on Sunday. On Monday morning I called Council and explained again that there was a large, dead and now very smelly pig on the council Esplanade in front of the house. At 11.15 one of Subloo's Waste Management officers had a look at the now even more smelly, decomposing pig and went away shaking his head. Not a job he could do. Tuesday council officers came, but at high tide and the pig was floating out of reach in the mangroves. Wednesday again they came at high tide and of course it was a 'floater'. I told them to come back at low tide. I checked on the pig at midday and noticed that the carcasses had somehow come loose from the mangroves and was now out into the river. As I watched, the carcasses disappeared; there was no splash, no swirl: it just disappeared beneath the murky brown water. Was it Charlene the resident crocodile?

I reported the incident to Rachelle at the council 'Health Office' and she told me that there had been a large storm on the Atherton Tablelands and a lot of pigs had died and they had been washed into the river and were turning up in Innisfail!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Rather interesting, particularly knowing Innisfail gets its drinking water from the Johnstone River. Pig carcasses may carry diseases such as leptospirosis, Q fever, brucellosis, sparganosis, meloidosis and tuberculosis, all can affect humans as well as other animals.

On Wednesday afternoon, a local mother with her child were fishing on the beach, I warned them about the crocodile.



To add to my normally very busy Monday, Fiona from the ABC asked me to do a segment on Pawpaw growing and two officers from Biosecurity inspected the nursery for myrtle rust: they were here for three hours, no myrtle rust. They also had a look at and smell of, the dead pig.

Just to keep my week interesting at 7pm in the twilight of Wednesday evening a helicopter was stationed very low over the mangroves around the nursery and house. For some fifteen minutes they hovered over the mangroves and melaleuca swamp searching with an infra red light. I went out to investigate and I saw hundreds of flying foxes airborne and screeching in alarm. I watched in horror thinking that the flying foxes might be swept up into the blades. I grabbed my camera but by then the helicopter had moved out over the river.



Apparently Canberra had detected a signal from an emergency locator beacon at Coquette Point. The police searched the river mouth at Coquette Point on Thursday until 5pm but nothing was found. I rang the helicopter base and expressed my concern. There is about 20 hectares of melaleuca swamp-forest at Coquette Point, [they are included in the Wet Tropics estate], and at the moment the trees are all in full flower. The sweet, caramel scent of the flowers fill the humid air. The high protein nectar is the spectacled flying foxes favourite food. All this week, at sunset, they have been arriving in their hundreds and they feed through the night. In responding to the distress call early Wednesday evening the SES helicopter crew really put their life on the line. It appears the signal was a hoax!

On Friday snapped a photo of 'Brown Casque' a young male Coquette Point Cassowary, he looked in prime condition. He is easily recognisable by the brown colouring on the left hand side of his rippled casque. He also has a spot of red wattle colouring low on his neck. 'Brown Casque' did not have any chicks this year.



At Coquette Point we still have three cassowary chicks surviving this season. However, no one has reported seeing 'Jessie' the matriarch cassowary since I last saw her behaving strangely on the 24th November 2010. I heard the two Garners Beach chicks have died. They are the ones taken into care by DERM after their Dad was euthanased following the pig cage incident.

Cheers Yvonne C.