

1.1.2011

Hi all,

It is hard to conceive the flood disaster that is happening to such a wide area of Queensland: my heart goes out to them all. I grew up in the Burdekin and experienced many floods in the 60's but our house was up on stilts and the devastation was minimised. The old Queenslanders were built up to keep them out of the floods and to keep them cool in summer. Just look at Ingham. Why have we lost that good design sense?

Coming home on Tuesday 28th, the cassowary 'Young Dad' crossed the road in front of me without his chicks. I stopped the car and the next minute a chick ran across the road in front of me to join Dad. Fortunately I had the camera ready and caught the chick and Dad before they disappeared.



'Young Dad' previously had two chicks but Nathan Morton from Ninds Creek told me that on Christmas night during TC Tasha the chicks got separated from 'Young Dad'. They cried all night, Nathan said but he could do nothing in the strong winds. The next morning 'Young Dad' turned up but there was only one chick. This is 'Young Dad's' second breeding season last year he reared one chick to subadult stage. In its first week as an independent bird it ventured deep into the suburb of East Innisfail. EPA came to capture it but it died of stress. Or so I was told by a local who witnessed the capture. Let us hope this last chick of 'Little Dads' fares better. I wrote to the CCRC as the roadside maintenance at Coquette Point is overdue and I am concerned that the mower could kill a cassowary chick. Nathan Morton has volunteered to be a 'Cassowary Look-out' during road-side maintenance programmes.

On my way to open the gate for an early start on Friday I saw a rush of shadows in the orchard. I stood quite still and waited and two bush stone curlews appeared with one quite deeply striped chick. The parents and chick were quietly whistling as the chick followed them in quick darts through the orchard. At strategic points they stopped and sounded ear-piercing screeches through the orchard and then returned to low whistling. The birds disappeared into the forest still whistling softly to each other. Over the next three hours, until about nine am I heard curlew screeches from different locations on the property. It was as if the adults were marking out territory to the young bird.

My next door neighbour John Wilson is a real hero. Early Christmas morning when Martin and I were busy cleaning up the nursery we were oblivious to any drama on the water. John saw two yachts stranded on the sandbar at Coquette Point in the middle of the flood.

He commandeered a canoe and a mate from across the road and they paddled through the mangroves along the river trying to find the back-eddy of the flood. The boats were caught in a huge tree jam which had taken their anchors and they were being slammed together by the action of the waves and the flood. On board the larger boat, a 12m ketch, was a man and his wife. No one was on the little boat. John and his mate tied a rope to the little boat and they got to shore on the sandbar at Coquette Point and tied the other end of the rope to a tree. And pulled. Eventually they pulled them apart and to safety. The ketch and the little boat were left high and dry: careened by a flood tide on the large sandbank at Coquette Point.



The little boat was removed this week, by the grateful owner who was in Adelaide at the time of the flood, and put back to anchor up town. However the ketch will be waiting for a little while perhaps until the next spring tide latter this month. Another boat was also caught in the flood with one person on board. The owner of the stranded ketch saw the boat adrift in the flooded river and launched his rubber boat at the height of this flood and got a rope to the man in the boat and pulled the boat into the slipway at the Coconuts. Another heroic act. Lucky, lucky boat owners. see photo.

I went around to check on the little terns nesting on the sandbar at Coquette Point today and asked the owner of the stranded yacht to be careful and not walk on the sandbar as there were four little tern nests in the debris above high water mark. He said "Young Lady I know all about them I'm a member of the RSPCA and the reason I go to sea is so no one can tell me what to do". He can't be all bad he called me 'Young lady'. I did tell him that the little terns are on the Queensland endangered species list.



There should be plenty of food for prawns this year. The detritus from the rainforest is spread the whole length of the beach at Coquette Point. Detritus is the main food source for prawns. Unfortunately mangrove dieback has increased this year and at least another five metres width of mangrove forest has disappeared from the ocean-front at Coquette Point



This year I choose the little Uromyrtus from the Atherton Tableland 'Weeping Beauty' for my tree planting to celebrate the first day of the new year. I hope your happiness grows in the coming year. best wishes for 2011
Yvonne C.

