

Hi All,

A very Merry Christmas and let us hope for a more enlightened world next year. Martin came home for Christmas, both his boats are now in the marina at Hinchinbrook. On his way home, about 1pm Thursday, near the servo at Mourilyan, Martin observed a Cassowary trying to cross the highway, towards the west. Maybe it knew bad weather was coming on the coast. Martin rang me and I tried to ring the Cassowary hotline and got onto someone in Townsville who said to ring a Wildlife Carer!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I rang the ABC and put out a call to any National Park rangers in the area to come to the assistance of the Cassowary. I do not know what happened to it.

Cyclone Tasha has come and gone and the clean-up here in the nursery at Coquette Point has been completed thanks to Martin. One banana plant lost, some mesh down and lots of palm fronds to clean up. That was the effect of Tasha on the nursery.

In the forest at Coquette Point many small branches have been broken from the canopy and this will result in a short term windfall for all the ground dwelling animals dependant on fruit, especially Cassowaries. Damson plum and native olive, are in fruit now, both have brittle wood and shed their canopy in strong winds, seemingly to protect the tree. However, in the long term it will reduce the fruit production of the rainforest. With the continuing rain this year fruit set in the rainforest is already sparse.

The Johnstone River is in minor flood. The largest falls in the Johnstone Catchment over the last 24 hours, Topaz 291mm and Bartle View 241mm. Now the heavy rain has shifted south with the monsoon trough.

Meanwhile a seemingly never ending, fast moving debris laden flood moves past the house. Caught in the flood and transported on this flood-elevator into the Coral Sea is every imaginable bit of rubbish. Large trees with plastic containers caught in their branches and banana trees and bags clearly identified.

At 1pm a flock of 31 frigate birds flew in circles over Coquette Point for about an hour before deciding that it was safe to return to their watery hunting grounds. They flew very high-up and silhouetted against a fast-moving, turbulent, grey, monsoonal sky they disappeared out to sea.

Our cool, southerly breeze has been replaced by a steamy north-westerly as the monsoon moved south of us.

When Martin sees the high silt load in the river he gets very distressed. I myself am distressed to know that the fertility of the Wet Tropics horticulture lands has again gone out to sea. I know that next year the fertility will have to be replaced by ever-increasing amounts of very expensive artificial fertilisers.

Martin sees the result of the run-off at sea. The last flood, a week ago, affected water quality extending out to sea some 20kilometers. Martin has observed that the year-around turbidity in the water adjacent to coastal streams south of Port Douglas has resulted in a dramatic shift in coral diversity. The only coral surviving now are gorgonians and soft coral. The previous dominant hard corals in the shallower waters are either dying or dead. The sand paddocks are covered in a layer of greasy, red loam. Martin said it is criminal.

Martin observed many very large turtles in December in waters out from Innisfail, however, all mating appears to be finished. Martin saw a large pod of Humpback Whales on the continental shelf 40 miles ENE of Innisfail last week.

David Cook from Flying Fish Point said as a result of the pig baiting at Ella Bay "Pigs are coming out of the forest and falling dead, everywhere". One large bore died behind his house. he called the Council to remove it.

If these pig carcasses laden with 1080 are not removed by the baiting contractors, everyday, promptly, I believe there will be deaths of all the carrion-eaters: birds of prey, Flies, Snails, Crocodiles, Cassowaries and more.

On Wednesday I called into see the Mau family, who are resident at Ninds Creek and they have not seen the matriarch Cassowary, 'Jessie' for three weeks. Most unusual. They have seen many dead pigs and did not know why. No one had been to advise them that baiting was in progress in the Moresby Range national Park at Coquette Point!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

This week they observed peculiar behaviour from their large resident crocodile. Tail-trashing and complete surfacing in the water during the day. Of course I fear that 'Jessie' and the Crocodile have both eaten pig carrion infected with 1080.

On the good side we had power during the cyclone and now and the sun has come out.
cheers Yvonne C.