

## Community Nursery and Landcare

Caring for Kuranda's environment  
"by standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before"

Box trailers for hire. Members discount. All plugs catered for  
Contact Hans on 0459 978 842 to book.

### Ecosanctuaries and Predator free NZ 2050 – Experience and vision (submitted by Grounded Kiwi)

This edition celebrates the Amphitheatre and the great vision of people who made it happen. It reminded me how in New Zealand (NZ) a country-wide vision has repaired the environment.

New Zealand now has more than 80 ecosanctuaries. They have one important thing in common, the opportunity to see native birds thriving in their natural habitat. This was not the case when I was growing up in the 1960s.

I could count on my fingers the number of native bird species I heard while hiking. I knew the calls well, courtesy of the radio, but had never heard a bellbird, stichbird, keruru, kokako, kakariki or kakapo in the wild. The radio was it for most of us, with little habitat left from land clearing and no safe habitat for the majority of ground hugging native birds, evolving without mammalian predators when NZ broke off from Gondwanaland. Introduced pest animals like rats, stoats, ferrets, weasels and the Australian brush tailed possum, decimated these birds.

The very first rat eradication operation in 1960 was on the tiny 2ha Ruapuke islet in the Hauraki Gulf. In 2001, all rats were removed from 11,300ha sub-antarctic Campbell Island, and now more than 110 of NZ islands are free from pests. Lessons learned on the islands are now applied to the mainland, through wildlife sanctuaries – both fenced, (like Wellington's Zealandia) and unfenced (like Te Urewera 'mainland island'). Pest control techniques are constantly refined and more effective. Possums are now so well controlled that NZ farms are close to being free from Bovine

Tuberculosis.

Some visionaries realised that not control but eradication was needed. The imagination of some influential NZers was fired and 'New Zealand's moonshot', The Predator Free NZ Trust was born. Volunteers stepped up pest and weed control in Abel Tasman National Park and reintroduced long disappeared threatened species, such as whio (blue duck)



and the parrots kākā and kākāriki.

Recognising growing public appetite for more action to protect native biodiversity, the NZ Prime Minister, in 2015, announced the creation of Predator Free 2050 Ltd, a charity to direct Crown investment to rid forests of five predatorspecies by 2050. I've been overjoyed in the past 10 years on bush walks to hear and see some of those 'disappeared' birds. Maybe I'll be around to hear again what Captain Cook described as the "deafening" dawn chorus.

Happy birthday Amphitheatre!



Saddleback. Photo: Rob Lynch, NZ Birds online 2013

### Speaker meeting – Barry Muir on Fundamental Fungi

Thursday 7 October  
at  
Kuranda  
Recreation Centre,  
Fallon Road



Barry's talk will discuss the two types of mycorrhizae and what each does, the mechanism by which the plants and fungi communicate, and how we can turn that to our advantage to improve crops and gardens.

About Barry Muir: he is a widely travelled and published ecologist and university lecturer, now retired. His interest is in environmental education and the role of fungi in the environment.

### • Date Claimers •

**Saturday working bees.** Working bees resume as the wet season approaches.

**3 October.** Kuranda Envirocare Stall at the 40th Kuranda Amphitheatre celebration.

**20–27 October Frog monitoring.** Monitoring starts after 7pm. Check our Facebook page for dates and sites or call 0419 624 940.

### We are the invasive resist-ants



#### Welcome Luna and Pretzel

Fury, the Wet Tropics Management Authority's first odour detection dog has new canine friends to join her in the field. Meet Luna and Pretzel, the newest recruits and the canine frontline for the Authority's yellow crazy ant eradication program. Luna and Pretzel arrived in early September 2021 from Brisbane, where they received yellow crazy ant odour detection training from Credible Canines Pty Ltd. Both Luna and Pretzel are female black Labrador Retrievers. Luna is two and Pretzel is three years old.



Lunar and Pretzel

Dog handler, Stuart Biggs will take on Pretzel as his second working dog, alongside Fury. Israel Hajbi, the second dog handler who joined the Authority earlier this year, will be the handler for new teammate, Luna (pictured) and both are already forming a strong bond.

The dogs and handlers were sent to Townsville for training which involved transitioning the dogs from detecting yellow crazy ant odour on dollies and botanicals to detecting live yellow crazy ants in the field. The Authority's program has reduced yellow crazy ant numbers in the Cairns region to the point where there are insufficient sites that can reliably provide ants for this transition training. When the dogs can successfully transition to detecting live ants in the field, they will then go through a validation process.

Validation is a series of tests to ensure the dogs are detecting yellow crazy ants in different settings and environments. If Luna and Pretzel can pass validation, they will be approved to work in the field.

Odour detection dogs improve the detection rate when normal survey methods can't detect low numbers of remaining yellow crazy ants.

#### Minister David Littleproud pays a visit

The Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia, the Honourable David Littleproud, got up close and personal with yellow crazy ants early in September, to learn first-hand about the efforts to eradicate them from the Wet Tropics Area and environs. While in Cairns, he met with the Authority's yellow crazy ant eradication team and representatives of the sugar industry. The Minister learned about how the Authority works with the community to eradicate yellow crazy ants and reduce the risk of moving them during farming operations.

Sugar cane accounts for 33% of the total area treated for yellow crazy ants and farmers are the first line of defence for the World Heritage Area. Minister Littleproud also took the opportunity to join local sugar cane harvesting contractor David Veronese, in his harvester, to hear first-hand how yellow crazy ants impact on local agriculture, and the long-standing partnership between the sugar industry and the Authority.

#### Kuranda Amphitheatre celebrates 40 years

Kuranda Amphitheatre is celebrating 40 years and the Taskforce will be there with a yellow crazy ant stall.

WHERE: Kuranda Amphitheatre

WHEN: Sunday 3 October 2021 from 12 noon–6pm.

If you would like to get involved or volunteer please contact coordinator@communitytaskforce.com



Yellow Crazy Ant Community Taskforce stall Steiner Spring Fair 2021

#### Cairns and Hinterland Steiner School Spring Fair

The Taskforce joined with Mike Greasley from Biosecurity Queensland's National Electric Ant Eradication Program, to attend the Cairns Hinterland Steiner School Spring Fair. Almost 40 people visited our stall and we received requests for five back yard checks from residents in Kuranda and North Cairns. Kuranda has both yellow crazy ants and electric ant infestations, which is why it's so important for our community to be aware of these invasive ants and report them. A huge thanks to our two volunteers, Tim and Bernd, for representing the Community Taskforce at the Spring Fair.

#### FUN FACT:

**Did you know?** The male yellow crazy ant has wings, is rarely seen because he does not contribute to colony foraging or maintenance? His sole purpose is to mate!

Sylvia

### Join the invasive resist-ants

Yellow Crazy Ant Community Taskforce  
envirocare.org.au/yellow-crazy-ants-taskforce  
yca.ciara@gmail.com

