

March 2019

Free

# Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

## Vote for Climate Action

By Dawn Lotty

Voters in New South Wales will be asked to elect a state and federal government in the next couple of months. We will be told by the political parties that it's about the economy, about jobs, border security, reliable energy including law and order.

Large amounts of money will be promised for health, education, affordable housing, transport and to first nations people will be told that an effort will be made to 'close the gap'

What will all these assurances afford us if we live in a country that is racked by drought and record temperatures, watch our major rivers, including the fish they support die, suffer severe storms, experience coastal erosion, loose our homes in fire storms, not to mention the loss of native animals and their habitat.

People who enter politics want to win and to win they need our vote. What we need from them is urgent action on climate change supported by well financed and resourced organisations and individuals who can bring support and solutions where it is needed. What we don't need is half baked regurgitated proposals, and unscientific nonsense.



**A snapshot of 2019**

*Top: Tasmanian bushfire. Middle: NSW drought  
Bottom: Townville Qld, flood  
Left; Walgett, a town with no water*

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### Landcare Working Bee

Our team of friendly volunteers work every Saturday morning, weather permitting from 8.30am to 10.30am rotating through the various sites around Bangalow. All welcome.

# Who Knew – Rat, Mouse or Native Antechinus?

by Liz Gander



I knew of our native Antechinus but I'd had never seen one until a recent camping trip.

I had left a chicken bone on the picnic table in the evening in the hope of seeing a Quoll, yes naughty I know but fairly harmless as I was quite remote. When I heard the movement and flicked on the torch I had what I thought was a rodent looking at me.

It was very cute and I suddenly realized what it was, it was an Antechinus, in a flash it bolted into the bush with the bone. I couldn't wait to research this little critter when I got home.

What I read has led me to be concerned for their welfare because Antechinus look so much like mice, many of these harmless natives are killed with baits and poison.

However, Antechinus are actually small carnivorous marsupials that belong to a family of native animals known as *Dasyurids*, which include the Quoll and Tasmanian devil. There are 10 species in Australia and like other marsupials have a pouch.

Their primary habitat is swamps, woodlands, tropical or temperate rainforests but they can also make visits to kitchens or anywhere insects might be as their main diet is spiders, cockroaches, beetles etc.

The Antechinus is one of very few vertebrate animals that practices suicidal reproduction.

In winter, virgin males go on a mating frenzy in what will be their only chance to pass genes on to the next generation.

During this time the male does not eat, but spends several hours at a time seeking out and mating with as many females in his neighborhood as possible.

Eventually the male will exhaust himself so thoroughly that his immune system will fail and he will die, a reproductive cycle known as semelparity. Males live for about 11 months while the females can live a few years but usually die after weaning their first litter.

Some ways to identify an Antechinus are their large thin crinkly ears, sparsely haired tail, same length as body, small sharp catlike teeth (no incisors), scats that will have bits of insect in them and they don't have the musty smell of mice. I also believe they can run up vertical brick walls while mice cannot.

Please be careful when dealing with mice in your home to avoid killing protected native wildlife like the Antechinus who help to maintain the fragile balance of biodiversity in our local forests.

Never use rat poison, it's a horrible death and most are residual so kill anything else that finds the dead animal. Try to use traps that catch the animal alive, Antechinus are not so easy to tell from mice so if you trap it and take it out to the bush it won't matter what you caught.





## Saving the Platypus in our Creeks

by Noelene Plummer

We are lucky to have Platypus living in Byron Creek at Bangalow while they are on the threatened list in many parts of Australia.

The Bangalow Parkland Weir was first constructed in 1925 using logs and later replaced in the 1960's when the community built a concrete dam.

The dam had altered the water level upstream from the weir for 90 years and the Platypus had adjusted to the higher creek level and had built their burrows accordingly.

Then the weir was damaged by tree roots in 2012 and the water level in Byron Creek dropped very quickly. Upstream from the weir the water level dropped by up to 1.5 mtrs.

The Platypus burrows were left high and dry and for a long time we feared the worst. There have now been sightings of Platypus and more exciting Puggles (baby Platypus) in various locations.

The Platypus is one of Australia's most unusual and unique animals, it's the emblem of NSW. Platypus are only found in Australia on the east coast, south east coast of Tasmania and South Australia. Platypus are semi-aquatic egg laying mammals, known as Monotremes.

Platypus are about 60cm long with a rubbery duck like bill. They use their bill to dig for food from the riverbed using electroreception, by closing their eyes and using their bill to detect movement underwater.

They are carnivorous eating mostly beetles, bugs, insect larvae, tadpoles, worms, snails and shrimp/yabbies and are nocturnal coming out at dusk to search for food for up to 10 to 12 hours.

### THREATS:

Habitat destruction, waterway pollution, water extraction and diversions to flow. Run off from pasture, sediment and nutrient load.

Dogs can disturb their habitat making the water muddy, disturbing their burrows and chasing the Platypus.

Riparian plantings like Bangalow Land and Rivercare has planted along Byron, Maori and Paddy's Creeks provide safe havens for many native animals, marsupials, birds, insects and aquatic life as well as stabilising the creek banks and shading the waterways.



## Miner's Challenge becomes a Climate Change Win

The Chief Justice of the NSW Land and Environment Court, Justice Preston, dismissed an appeal by developers of the Rocky Hill open cut coal mine near Gloucester.

Stating in part that "it would have a significant adverse social impact on the community" going on to say "the coal from the mine will result in emissions of greenhouse gasses which will contribute to climate change" and "it (the mine) was in the wrong place at the wrong time".

The decision is expected to reverberate across every community fighting coal and coal seam gas in Australia and the result was being watched with interest internationally. Climate litigation, particularly in the US and European nations is growing as climate campaigners frustrated by insufficient political action seek alternative routes to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Source SMH



## Produce Stickers

by Liz Gander

I have a new pet hate, well not that new but for some time it's bothered me so I did some research. This time it's those insidious little stickers on virtually every piece of fresh produce.

These things appeared in the mid 1980's but I only really noticed them a few years ago. I guess we just accept without questioning why some things are and I'm surprised to learn that they have been around so long.

I would always put them into my compost until my daughter pulled me up telling me they were plastic. I do find them in my garden when I turn out the compost bin, in fact sometimes it looks like confetti!

So I wondered why this became necessary, surely people can read the labels in the shops and know what they are buying, surely the cashier knows what they are selling and if your eyesight is like mine and like me you are resisting glasses they are too small to read.

So, I looked them up to read they are edible, really? The glue is at least but if they don't compost I don't think so. Called a PLU – 'product look up' and it is a worldwide system, the same number on a banana in Australia is the same everywhere.

If you know the codes on them you can tell where the produce came from, 4 digits are conventionally grown, if it's organic it begins with an 9 or if it's GMO it's an 8.

An inventor in New York is working on a sticker that dissolves to become a fruit wash while a farmer in Florida has invented a laser to print on the fruit, only approved for citrus. In China a grower puts a stencil on the young fruit so as it grows the discoloration makes the label but these are Rolls Royce apples at \$100 each, glad I'm not an apple connoisseur.

My rebellious nature sees me peeling them off in store as a protest, not much of one but it's all I've got. I just see these as another bit of crap in the ocean and landfill that we can certainly live without, bring on the dissolvable labels if we have to have them at all.

## Sydney Mardi Gras Goes Green

Mardi Gras Chief Executive, Teresa Casu, plans for the event to go carbon neutral within 5 years. Ms Casu explained that about 3 tonnes of glitter goes into the gutter and ends up in our oceans and also plans to join other festivals in banning balloons.

The parade is encouraging the use of fluro lights, LEDs and lanterns. They will also be recycling and reusing props and floats from previous festivals.

### *Village Eco News*

Our aim is to inform, interest, amuse and educate our readers on all things environmental. We welcome you to submit your contributions or to subscribe to this free Newsletter send your name and email address to:

[bangalowlandcare@gmail.com](mailto:bangalowlandcare@gmail.com)

Please pass this publication on to your family and friends. Receiving our Newsletter online will help to save the environment we work to preserve.

editor, design and layout, Dawn Lotty

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Winner of our *ByronatByron* Raffle was Annette Ward

