

February 2020

Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

The Richmond River Fish Kill

By Noelene Plummer



The front page of our December/January Village Eco News had a storey about the importance of a Healthy Richmond River. If you go to www.bangalowlandcare.org.au and click on the news icon you will be able to read it. Unfortunately the Richmond River is not at all healthy and on 23 January experienced another fish kill of at least 10,000 fish.

Richmond Valley Council's General Manager Vaughan Macdonald said "the fish kill stretches between 3.5km and 5km upstream of Jabour Weir in the Richmond River". He added "fish kills of this scale are not unprecedented, but they are uncommon, it's a combination of the fact that the river flows were very low, so the temperature's very high, there was a blue-green algae in the river and then high flows where

we've had nutrients come in - phosphorous and nitrogen - and then it becomes a competition for the dissolved oxygen, unfortunately this leads to fish kills like which have happened in the Richmond River and are happening in other rivers on the north coast".

Affected species include mullet, bass, catfish, shrimps, crayfish, fingerlings and bullrout. The focus needs to be on what we can and should be doing immediately to help prevent or reduce these events from happening more frequently. The degradation and destruction of our natural environment needs to STOP NOW if we want humans and animal species to have a chance of survival.

Before the last state election our state member of parliament made a promise to do something about the Richmond River and had a Plan of Management done. I will be contacting the member so we can find out what has happened since the election and find out if anything has been implemented.



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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. **Raffle winner for December: Maeve from Bangalow**

Go Electric - Why buy an EV?



In the wider community there is considerable, ongoing, discussion on the pros and cons of electric vehicles so we decided to ask Chris Sanderson for his opinion on owning and driving the new Hyundai Kona Highlander EV, both are pictured above.

Q: What are you doing to reduce your carbon emissions?

Well, we've done a few things. In 1994, with some partners, we bought a 113-acre former dairy farm in Fowlers Lane. Sleepy Creek runs through the property, providing water for gardening and animals.

With Council consent, we created an intentional community for 12 families. The beautiful volcanic soil makes it ideal for growing most vegetables and fruit trees. Over the years, we have also regenerated more than 11,000 fire-resistant rainforest trees in a number of zones, providing privacy and sequestering carbon.

In 2006, we moved from the original Fowler farmhouse into a passive-solar designed house, which takes full advantage of the prevailing nor-easter wind to cool the house in the summer. As a visual buffer, we also planted about 200 native trees around it.

In 2011, we further reduced our emissions by installing 10kW solar panels. That gave us enough electricity to fuel the house during day-time and pay off the set-up costs over the following five years. Recently, we added a couple of batteries to the solar system, which allows us to avoid using the grid for other than emergencies.

Q: Why did you buy an electric car? What kind?

Having practically eliminated the use of the electricity grid, in practice, we found we still had around 5kW of solar power available most days. This meant we had enough to fuel an electric vehicle (EV). So in 2018, rather than continuing to incur the considerable costs of running a petrol-fuelled vehicle, we started to review our EV options.

Sight unseen, we had ordered a Tesla 3 a few years earlier. However it wasn't until April 2019 that we actually found an EV that better suited our needs. We chose a Hyundai Kona Highlander EV as soon as they became available, in the Tweed.

Q: How do you charge it?

We use the 5kW available from our solar panels. If the sun provides less than this from time to time, we may use the grid for back-up, or plug in to a charge point at The Farm in Ewingsdale.

Q: Do you get range anxiety? If not, why not?

The advantage of the Kona EV is that it has a 450km range and uses the CCS2 type plugs (the new Australian standard plug). These are progressively being installed around Australia. So no, we don't need to get range anxiety since 99% of our recharging is done at home where we both live and work.

Q: What did you drive before?

For the previous 10 years or so, we drove a Prius. It halved our petrol costs and as a hybrid, had far fewer emissions. (But the annual service fee was around \$450, and running costs were higher than the Kona.)

Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages?

The major advantages are environmental and financial and it's far more fun to drive! Our fuel is currently free, and the annual service fee is a fixed \$140. (This is likely to change once the NSW government decides how much EVs should pay p.a. as our fair share of road maintenance.) The current high up front cost is a disadvantage. But it is possible to buy second hand EVs costing around \$21,000+.

Landcare Working Bee

The Bangalow Landcare Saturday morning working bee will be resuming in March, weather permitting.

Our group is made up of volunteers who enjoy a break over Christmas to be with family and friends and we are grateful for their ongoing support. We also take a break over January and February owing to the hot and humid conditions.

We will continue to maintain our existing sites in 2020, namely Bangalow Sportsfields and the All Souls' planting that make up the length of the Bangalow Riverwalk and Little Maori Creek at Cedardale, liaising with Paddy's Creek community group and the BSC on the Bangalow Wetlands.



Top: A stabilised bank on Byron Creek Above; the Fig Tree in the planting at Little Maori Creek, Cedardale



Platypus Extinction By Noelene Plummer

The iconic platypus are on the brink of extinction according to a recent study by the University of New South Wales.

Platypuses have been found dead in dried up creeks in NSW due to drought and human activity. Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner says "the drought has had a huge impact on the platypus habitat, leaving their burrows exposed and vulnerable to collapse from livestock trampling in their burrows and exposing them to feral animals. The rivers have silted up and become heavily polluted".

Tim Faulkner further stated that water management needed to be improved to help protect the platypus. "Platypus are a Gondwanan dinosaur species, they are monotremes, egg-laying mammals, some of the oldest lineages of mammals on earth. They've been in this constant east coast temperate environment, largely unchanged, for millions of years".

Professor Richard Kingsford who co wrote the study said "climate change was exacerbating the problem - there was a need for national action to minimise the risk of the platypus vanishing due to habitat destruction".

We have Platypus in our creeks at Bangalow thanks to community support at our riparian plantings over the last 20 years. A simple, quick solution for other sites that can be done NOW is to fence off the waterways from livestock and agriculture. A riparian buffer zone can then be planted to help restore the health of our precious waterways before it's too late.



Nine Things you Love that are Being Wrecked by Climate Change

There are so many stories flying around about the horrors already being wrought by climate change, you're probably struggling to keep up. So perhaps it's timely to look at how climate change is affecting you, by wrecking some of the things you love.

1. Not the holiday you hoped for

Your usual destinations will become less inviting, and maybe even disappear entirely, your favourite beach retreat being drowned, or the Great Barrier Reef decaying before you see it. Extreme weather events are already causing significant risks to travellers including travel disruption and delayed flights due to storms, not to mention getting caught in cyclones, floods, snowstorms and volcanic eruptions.

2. Last chance to see some wildlife

There are more and more examples of animals, birds, frogs etc falling victim to climate-change induced extreme weather events, such as the millions killed in the recent bush fires.

3. History and heritage at risk

The Italian city of Venice recently flooded. More than 13,000 archaeological sites in North America alone are threatened if sea levels rise by 1m. UNESCO is worried that underwater heritage sites, such as ruins and shipwrecks like the *Titanic* are also being damaged.

4. Taking the piste

In Australia, ski resorts are expected to see significant drops in snow fall by 2040 and as temperatures warm they will be unable to compensate for this by snow-making as it does not work if ambient temperatures are too high.

5. Too hot for sport and exercise

It's not just snow sports. We have already seen the affect on tennis, cricket and the early start of the football season. In fact outdoor exercise may become a thing of the past.

6. Pay more for your coffee

As the climate changes, your coffee hits will probably become rarer and more expensive. A report by the Climate Institute in 2016 suggested coffee production could drop by 50% by 2050.

7. You and your family's health

The health of your children, your parents and your grandparents will be at greater risk through increases in air pollution, heat waves and the spread of viruses and tropical diseases.

8. Home, sweet home

The recent bush fires in Australia and the United States reveal how dramatic and destructive fires are becoming while occurring more frequently and more ferociously. All around the world more and more houses are being destroyed by rising seas and increasingly wild storms.

9. Not the wine, please!

Less water, soil degradation and higher temperatures earlier in the season has all ready lead to dramatic negative effects on vines, grapes and wine-making.

Source: The Conversation

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:

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

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