1 - Batemans Marine Park (BayPost 12-3-08)

Eurobodalla Shire Council, the Nature Coast Marine Park Group and the Marine Park Authority teamed up recently to help local students discover the natural beauty of our marine environment. This joint venture was in aid of Seaweek, a national initiative that is conducted annually, to focus community awareness, provide information, and encourage an appreciation of marine coastal environments. Batemans Marine Park ranger Shamaram Eichmann and Eurobodalla Shire Council education officer Bernadette Davis were on hand at Moruya Library to take local children on a "hands on" educational experience.

"We took them through why it is important to look after the coast" Ms Eichmann said.

"We explained why they are lucky to have a marine park in their local area and why it is so important it remains protected."

As part of the program students were shown a range of living animals they would otherwise be hard pressed to find.

"We took them through the animals in the tank and gave them an experience explaining what each one ate, etc."

"After this we took the children through the different sanctuary zones, reinforcing the message that the zones are in place so the animals have a safe place to live.

2 - Marine park study yields a bonanza (Town & Country Magazine 3-3-08)

Dedicated recreational divers came face to face recently with science and some interesting fish when the Jervis Bay Marine Park was visited by a select team to study the biodiversity of rocky reefs.

Over five days, divers were taught methods and skills from researchers from the University of Tasmania similar to those that have been used to monitor the reef diversity in the Marine Park during the past five years and prior to the Marine Park zoning. Close to four kilometres of reef was covered over five days and 132 fish and 42 invertebrate species was identified and counted.

Jervis Bay Marine Park manager Leigh Harris said the research program was undertaken in collaboration with the Jervis Bay Marine Park and such surveys continued to indicate a recovery of species such as the Red Morwong in its sanctuary zones.
"The marine scientists recognised there was a wealth of dedicated recreational divers with good local knowledge and passion, who could contribute to our growing knowledge of temperate reefs".

"All the divers needed was a helping hand to refine their species identification and teach them the methods of the surveys".

"These budding ecologists could be let loose to gather data on temperate reefs and feed it back to a data base at the University which was now analysing the data collected last week and compare it other surveys from around Australia" Mr Harris said.

3 - Collecting in the intertidal zone of the Batemans Marine Park

Recently the Friends of Durras had an enquiry from a South Durras visitor concerning the possibility of some people who may have been illegally harvesting invertebrates in the intertidal zone of Wobbegong Bay

An enquiry made to staff of the Batemans Marine Park indicates it is possible to hand collect invertebrates in all habitat protection zones except those at Mullimburra Point, Black Bream Point, Wagona Head and Handkerchief Beach. However all collecting is subject to Department of Primary Industries (State Fisheries) bag and size limits. Check their website for details.

If you suspect someone is collecting illegally it is more than appropriate to contact either the Batemans Marine Park Authority on 02 4476 4800 (please leave a message, this is checked regularly or your local Fisheries Office.)

4 - South Durras Crown Land Portions 92-95

The South Durras crown land portions were discussed during the Friends of Durras general meeting held over the Easter holiday break. At this meeting a decision was made to put together a more detailed conservation proposal as a lobbying tool to highlight the important flora and fauna values of these crown land portions. Once this proposal is completed it will then be sent to various Ministers of the NSW State Government and Department heads for their consideration.

If any development occurs on parts of the South Durras crown land portions 92-95, possibly the sort of vegetation removal (as depicted in this photograph) may be required to satisfy existing bushfire legislation to protect built assets.
During the Easter break Friends of Durras Secretary John Perkins organised and lead an outing to the South Durras crown land portions so that members could familiarize themselves with this area. On dusk John conducted a spotlighting survey for those on this walk. Over a distance of about 300 metres six Greater Gliders were observed. Greater Gliders have big bushy ears, a long tail and have jet black hair. They can climb trees and in one glide it can go from tree to tree. They have a gliding membrane that stretches from the elbow to the ankle, they live alone and the male defends its territory fiercely. Greater Gliders are a leaf eating only species of possum and occupy territory of between one to four hectares. Greater Gliders spend half their lives occupying tree hollows. These tree hollows are only found in very old trees of more than 100 years old. Greater Gliders can use up to 20 different hollow bearing trees over a 12 month period. There are various reasons for this. During the warmer months Greater Gliders prefer hollows in living trees because of the moisture retained in the fibrous material of these trees that have an insulating effect. During winter Greater Gliders prefer tree hollows in dead trees because of the decomposing material in these trees that generate heat. Other reasons that Greater Gliders occupy different tree hollows are to minimise predation by the large forest owls and because of tree hollow parasite infestation.

5 - Koalas and Greater Gliders at risk as trees lose nutrients (The Australian 5-4-08)

Koalas and other leaf eating animals face a bleak future with new research showing eucalypts are becoming inedible because of climate change.

Australian National University science professor Bill Foley says "what we're seeing essentially is that the staple diet of these animals is being turned to leather. This is potentially a very significant development for the future of some marsupial populations. Life is set to be become very difficult for these animals"

James Cook University researcher Ivan Lawler found through experiments in greenhouses that increases levels of carbon dioxide reduced the level of nitrogen and other nutrients in eucalypt leaves and boosted tannins a naturally occurring chemical toxin.

As a result the levels of protein in the leaves essential to the survival of leaf-eating marsupials fell sharply.

Dr Lawler said eucalyptus leaves were already poor nutritionally with low protein levels, requiring a Koala to eat 700g a day to survive.

"With more carbon dioxide, animals need to eat more and more leaves to get the required protein levels" he said.

"The balance in the leaves shifts from nutrients to non-nutritional fibre. It eventually reaches a threshold when leaves are no longer tenable as a food source"

"The food chain for these animals is very finely balanced and a small change can have serious consequences."
Koalas and Greater Gliders depend entirely on eucalyptus leaves for food, while some other marsupials including Brush tail and Ring tail possums and many Wallaby species feed extensively on the leaves. And numerous insect species feed exclusively on eucalyptus leaves.

Scientists have reported mysterious declines in populations of Greater Gliders and Brush tail possums in parts of Queensland where the bushland remains in pristine condition, and where there are no apparent pressures from hunting, disease of other factors. Greater Gliders have disappeared from places where they were numerous 20 years ago.

Zoologist Jane De Gabriel said the falling nutrient levels in eucalyptus leaves could explain the population declines. Ms De Gabriel found from her research in woodlands west of Townsville that Brush tail possums bred more frequently in areas of bushland with high levels of protein in the eucalyptus leaves. The breeding success was five times that of possums in areas with low protein levels.

"This suggests that in areas where nutrient levels are inadequate, animals will not be able to reproduce successfully," Ms De Gabriel said.

"What follows from that are extinctions of wildlife populations. It's pretty scary stuff."

Climate change has been linked to changes in the status and distribution of many wildlife species. Animals at most risk in this country are those living at high altitudes in Queensland's wet tropics and in the Alps.

6 - Radical overhaul of parks needed by Rosslyn Beeby, (Canberra Times 1-4-08)

Australia must create bigger, more ecologically diverse national parks if native plants and animals are to survive the rapid onslaught of climate change a new CSIRO report says.

It calls for a radical overhaul of the way Australia's protected areas are designed, and revegetation of agricultural land to offset habitat fragmentation.

Urgent revision of laws and guidelines protecting native species is needed to allow more active conservation practices such as re-establishing habitat and translocating species.

The reports co-author, Michael Dunlop, said, "We need to question whether our current notion of a national park is an outdated idea"

"There are going to be enormous habitat range changes, with climate change possibly driving species out of parks and reserves. We need to accept change is inevitable and is happening quite fast. The look, sound and smell of landscapes is all going to change.

Temperatures across Australia are projected to rise by roughly one degree by 2030, and by two degrees by 2070, effecting habitat, distribution, abundance and genetics of species.

The report warns "there will be some extinctions, possibly many"
Australia's alpine regions, including Kosciuszko National Park, will be among those hardest hit, with reduced snow cover, less water from snow melt and more frequent bushfires. Other changes include higher levels of ultraviolet radiation, loss of alpine wildflowers and further declines in mountain pygmy possum numbers due to warmer temperatures reducing its hibernation period.

Warming temperatures will result in loss of Wet Tropics habitat for 74 per cent of Australia's rainforest birds and 24 per cent of migratory bird species will lose coastal habitat as sea levels rise.

The report says there are "significant gaps" in the national park reserve system. Many reserves and national parks "due to the history and pattern of Australia's land development - chiefly acquiring land that was unsuitable for agriculture rather than "through strategic acquisition" or representative ecosystems.

The report confirms Australia's 9000 protected areas are critical for conservation in a warming world, but Dr Dunlop said new protected areas would be needed.

Four "wicked threats" to biodiversity from climate change are listed - more frequent bushfires, shifts in the range of native and feral plants and animals, changing land use and changes to landscape hydrology.

Dr Dunlop said fine - scale ecosystem changes such as the loss of insect and fungi species would also drive bigger ecosystem changes.

"Fungi are one of the hidden drivers of ecosystem health and the loss of these species could have bigger ramifications than the loss of more charismatic wildlife species. That's why we need to rethink our current approach to conservation"

The report warns choosing new conservation goals for national parks will be controversial. Adapting parks to climate change could require more intensive management and intervention in a manner "more akin to gardening than nature conservation"

It says more frequent fuel reduction burns to reduce fire risk in protected area "could lead to ecological impacts much greater that those might be expected from natural change in fire frequency". Accepting the inevitability of changed fire regimes in protected areas and managing the consequences may be more productive and effective than "trying to suppress all fires through broad - scale hazard reduction"

7 - Eurobodalla Shires Manager Jim Levy is leaving. (BayPost 30-1-08)

Jim Levy will be retiring at the end of June 2008. Mr Levy has been on Council’s senior staff for 21 years, the last eleven in his present position. During this time the Council’s annual budget has grown to more than $100 million. The Council has assets worth $680 million and more than 400 employees.
8 - Eurobodalla Shire seeks skills from the UK. (Canb Times 2-3-08)

Eurobodalla Shire Council has sent a senior staff member to Britain to recruit professional staff in short supply in Australia. The Council’s general manager Jim Levy, said it had been unable to fill eight vacant positions for town planners and engineers, despite extensive advertising.

9 - Sea Change Property (SMH 23-2-08)

With share prices tumbling many Mum and Dad investors will have been wondering if they should have put their money into the sea change property they've dreamed about.

"Over the past decade the highest acceleration in capital growth has been in coastal property" says Grant Dearlove, managing director of PRD nationwide.

The sea change is far from over says Tim Lawless, RP Data's national research director. Demand for coastal properties will continue. The only thing is that affordability is starting to pinch this market.

The figures back that up. The best performing sea change suburbs have been Dora creek, near Lake Macquarie on the Central Coast where median prices shot up 40 per cent between 2006 and 2007.

Even in the previously underperforming south coast, investors in Long Beach in Eurobodalla Shire have enjoyed 36 per cent growth during the past year.

10 - National Parks add to real estate value

We all know that National Parks are important in protecting biodiversity and maintaining water catchments. But here is another interesting value.

Recently a Friends of Durras member emailed to the FOD website a photograph of a real estate sign located at a property for sale in South Durras. The heading on this real estate sign said "my backyard is a national park" extolling the advantages of the ambience and privacy of living in a bushland setting. The national park backyard described is Murramarang National Park which was formerly crown land. It was only through the efforts of the Friends of Durras over many years that this vulnerable to development crown land was converted to National Park. It certainly is reassuring to have this recognition of National Park values by a real estate agent.
11 - Coastal Plan not on the sea level (The Australian 12-3-08)

In a portent of how climate change could transform town planning laws along the nations coastlines, the South Australian Supreme Court has ruled that predicted sea level rises are a valid reason to reject beachfront housing developments.

The rejection of a subdivision on Yorke Peninsula, west of Adelaide is likely to be repeated across the country as councils progressively write climate change provisions into their planning regulations. The South Australian Supreme Court cited local sea level rises of 30cm over the next 50 years in ruling against Northcape Properties plans for 80 holiday homes at Marion Bay, 150 kilometres west of Adelaide. The changes which the court ruled was expected, not merely a probability would encroach on the proposal’s "erosion buffer and coastal reserve".

The Australian understands the decision is the first of its kind across the nation with no other court so pointedly referring to climate change and its effects.

Council’s chief executive officer Ricki Bruhn was delighted the court had vindicated his Council’s decision to add climate change clauses to its development plan in 2004. "We're aware of rising sea levels and erosion in that area now" he said.

Planning Institute of Australia chief executive Di Jay Welcomed the court’s ruling and praised Council for preparing for climate change. She said the Marion Bay case would be repeated across the country as councils added climate change provisions into their planning rules. If councils don't respond, then the risks for local government and for the development community are substantial.

12 - New seawall to protect Tuross Caravan Park (BayPost 12-3-08)

A new seawall is now under construction at Tuross Beach Holiday Park after Eurobodalla Shire Councillors voted to proceed immediately with the $290,000 erosion control project.

With heavy equipment on standby at the site, councillors met to decide a course of action to confront the erosion currently threatening the park.

Construction of the rock wall will take around 13 days, according to Council project engineer Russell Burke.

Mayor Neil Mumme said that despite calls for Council to simply remove the cabins and allow the area to erode, councillors decided that protection of the park is in the best interests of Council, the community and the local tourism industry.

A further report will be submitted to Council shortly to determine how the 2007 / 08 works program can be reprioritised to fund the costs of the erosion control project.

13 - Coastwatchers claim Council fails first test (BayPost 12-3-08)
Environmental group Coastwatchers claims Eurobodalla Shire has failed its first test on how to deal with climate change induced erosion.

Coastwatchers president Mark Fleming comments, "On Monday Eurobodalla Shire Council held an extraordinary meeting to decide on how to address the erosion of the mouth of the Tuross Lakes. However they already had the machinery ready to roll before the councillors had considered the issue. No other views were sought on the matter, particularly from the public"

Mr Fleming claimed the Council used a new State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) on infrastructure to get around conducting proper public consultation and were able to build a rock wall to attempt to stabilise the erosion at Tuross.

"This might seem like a reasonable course of action in the circumstances but may have long term implications for the sensitive coastal environment" he said.

The sensible action for the Council would have been to remove these cabins and look to long term solutions of the erosion issues."

14 - Sea Spurge control along the Murramarang Coastline

Since the discovery of the invasive beach weed Sea Spurge along the Murramarang coast some years ago, Friends of Durras members have lead the way controlling this weed by organising hand pulling working bees on a regular basis. The most challenging locations to keep on top of this problem weed have been Richmond and North Head beach where Sea Spurge has almost completely covered the beach above the high water mark.
Recently NPWS Staff have put in a tremendous effort to spray this weed at these locations. Because of the difficulty of getting a vehicle onto these beaches Parks staff now have a hose reel with a 300 metres hose capacity to spray some considerable distance from the vehicle. As a result of this effort all of the Sea Spurge at Richmond beach has been sprayed and except the last 20 metres of North Head beach (the hose would not reach) all of this area has been covered. Friends of Durras volunteers recently hand pulled the remaining 20 metres of Sea Spurge on North Head beach.

A big thank you to the staff of the Ulladulla NPWS for putting the effort into battling this problem weed.

15 - Australia's Shorebirds in crisis (ABC website 11-4-08)

Almost three quarters of Australia's migratory and resident shorebirds have disappeared over the past twenty five years a study has revealed.

A large scale aerial survey of eastern Australia by researchers from the University of NSW show migratory shorebird populations have plunged by 71 per cent between 1987 and 2006.

During the same period the populations of Australia's resident shorebird species have dropped by 81 per cent.

Professor Richard Kingsford, author of the report, said bird populations were in decline because their habitat was disappearing in Australia, South East Asia, China and Russia.

"The wetlands they rely on for food and recuperation are shrinking virtually all the way along their migratory path" Professor Kingsford said.

16 - The Dumping of rubbish in Murramarang National Park

The dumping of bulk household rubbish including green waste is still occurring in Murramarang National Park. Green waste including lawn clippings can cause weeds to grow in our beautiful bushland. It is perplexing that rubbish dumping persists in the bushland reserves adjacent to South Durras village when Eurobodalla Shire Council provide regular rubbish pickups including green waste and household goods.

The Regional Illegal Dumping Squad a joint venture of Shoalhaven City Council, Wingecarribee Shire Council, Eurobodalla Shire Council, the Department of Environment and Conservation are investigating these latest dumping and have produced "wanted posters" asking for information from the public concerning these thoughtless dumping. The Rid Squad can be contacted on 02 4474 1323

17 - Eurobodalla Shire Planned Fire Mitigation works in South Durras Village

These works are required to reduce the risk of bushfires to the Durras community. The works will occur in the following areas
A - Canberra Avenue north of Third Street, the eastern side of the road.

B - Fern Drive, the first section of this road in from Durras Lake Drive.

C - The reserve area behind Mill Close and Village Road.

These works are planned to take place prior to the end of the current financial year.

If you have any questions please contact Quinton Pendergast, Acting Fire Mitigation Officer on 02 4474 7406

18 - Kioloa Multi Purpose Building Project

The Kioloa Field station of the Australian National University (ANU) has been extensively refurbished and developed since the ANU was gifted the property in 1975. Use of the station has increased substantially over the past five years and user groups have identified a particular need for a flexible learning space that can be used for a variety of purposes ranging from large scale meetings to performances and presentations. As a result it is proposed that a Multi - Purpose building be constructed to meet these needs. The field station is being developed as an Environmental showcase of the University and the new landmark building will accord with highest standards of environmental and design principles.

19 - Pretty Beach Camping area revegetation

The northern entrance or "gateway" to Murramarang National Park has seen an enormous effort by the NPWS to revegetate this area. Due to the drift of salt laden winds and its impacts on nearby forests contributing to dieback it has been a high priority to replant this important area as an additional buffer to provide protection to these forests.

For Friends of Durras members it certainly is recommended to visit this area. It is a stunningly beautiful part of the Murramarang National Park coastline. There is a real feeling of "remoteness" when you walk this location from Pretty beach to Pebbly beach.
20 - Friends of Durras membership renewals

FOD membership renewals are now due. Please fill out the form sent out to you all recently and post it with your payment to PO Box 174, Batemans Bay 2536 NSW.

May all Friends of Durras members enjoy Australia's best kept secret, the South Coast in NSW during Autumn and Winter!

Lorna Tilley
Friends of Durras Convenor