



Queensland's NRM *Rumble*

ENGAGING A NEW GENERATION OF LAND STEWARDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Making scrub fun at festival time

Imagine yourself crawling through a dark, shrubby tunnel. Suddenly you spot a Black Breasted Button Quail! This is what faced kids visiting the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) display at Ecofest in Gladstone this year.

FBA's Boyne Calliope Sub Region ran the activity to help young people in the Gladstone region understand the relationship between ecosystems and animals.

Boyne Calliope Sub Region field officer Vicki Dart said the display featured a tunnel with the walls lined with images of dry rainforest. "Stuck onto the walls of the tunnel were laminated images of different critters like birds, frogs, snakes and lizards that rely on dry rainforests for food and shelter," Ms Dart said.

Children were given the mission to crawl through the tunnel and find the local endangered creature, the black breasted button quail, which is commonly found in areas of semi-evergreen vine thicket (known as dry rainforest), which is also an endangered ecosystem. "If they correctly identified the quail, they got a stamp in their Ecofest passport, and by filling their passport with stamps from a certain number of stalls they were able to receive a show bag full of environmental goodies," she said.

"Kids rule at Ecofest – hundreds of families attend the event

every year. So we wanted to create an interactive and simple way for young people to understand why dry rainforests matter.

"There are some important patches of this endangered ecosystem in our region and we want to work more closely with the community and harness the enthusiasm of young people to increase stewardship of these areas," Ms Dart said.

Ecofest was organised by Gladstone Regional Council to promote environmental sustainability through educational displays and interactive activities promoted by local industry, business and community groups as well as promoting products with an 'environment' theme.

The event has occurred annually since 1999 and is held in June to help mark World Environment Day. The concept was originally developed by the Boyne Island Environmental Education Centre after staff attended a seminar by world environmental expert, David Bellamy, in 1998 who suggested the Gladstone region should be promoting its environmental performance.



NRM, Far North Queensland style!

Terrain is rising to the challenge of how to get more young people interested and involved with natural resource management (NRM). Using social media seems to be an obvious way to give some new ideas a go.

In a creative attempt to engage and attract younger recruits to the business of NRM and volunteerism, Terrain asked visiting prospective students at James Cook University's (JCU) Open Day, to take a pair of 'Terrain' thongs and post photos of them on facebook. The best photo reflecting what NRM means to them, wins 1 month of paid work experience with Terrain.

Almost 100 pairs of 'Terrain' branded thongs were handed out at the Open Day, with the competition now being further promoted to encourage more participants.

Those who have taken a pair home have been directed to Terrain's facebook page where they can post their photos. They are encouraged to 'Like' the organisation so to ensure they are kept up to date with competition details and entries. The one image that receives the most 'likes' will be further considered by Terrain staff for relevance and appropriateness. Once all boxes are ticked, the winner will receive their valuable prize along with broader promotion of their winning picture.

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Black Breasted
Button Quail

Science leader takes a trip for sake of catchment

A Toowoomba scientist will use a travelling bursary to create a report card on the state of the Condamine catchment.

Condamine Alliance Science Leader Lucy Richardson accepted the 2011 Murray Darling Association Travelling Bursary award at the annual Murray Darling Association conference in Dalby on Thursday 8 September.

The bursary is awarded each year to allow a younger catchment management authority employee to expand their knowledge and skill base by visiting other areas of natural resource management significance across the Murray Darling Basin.

Ms Richardson is wasting no time in making use of the bursary. Lucy will travel to Newcastle in New South Wales and West Gippsland in Victoria to learn how other organisations have developed report cards on their significant areas.

While reports cards have been developed for several coastal areas including the Gippsland area and South East Queensland, nothing exists for inland catchment areas. "With this project, Condamine Alliance will be the first inland catchment regional body to create a report card on its catchment area. This will be an opportunity to learn from other efforts across Australia and find out what worked well and what could be improved," Ms Richardson said.

"This will ultimately improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our chosen approach and help us avoid any significant issues. What I learn as part of this process can be applied to all regions of the Murray Darling Basin and other inland catchments.

Report cards are used to identify pressures affecting the catchment's natural resources, the state of those resources and the community's responses to these. The information is then used to help guide future activities and investment in the catchment.



Lucy Richardson



Left to Right: Joe, Gerry and Sam Deguaras

Passion, environment and lifestyle lures young land stewards

The future is bright for the Deguara family, a Mackay Whitsunday sugar cane family who not only works the land, but has expansion of their operations on the cards with a strong focus on improving the environment.

Sugarcane grower Gerry Deguara heavily involves his two sons, Sam and Joe, in his farming operations. Based in the Reef Catchments area of Mackay Whitsunday, Gerry says a key ingredient to keeping younger growers interested in being land stewards is to offer a bit more of a challenge. Environmental issues certainly makes this possible with a great effort into improving their soil, irrigation, chemical and nutrient to improve water quality through their participation on 'Project Catalyst', a project with partners including NRM groups Reef Catchments, NQ Dry Tropics, Terrain in addition to the Coca-Cola Foundation, WWF and the Australian Government through the Caring for our Country's Reef Rescue program.

Gerry's sons play a vital role in the operations of their farm and Gerry says they are successful at farming because his kids are part of the decision making process which helps them to take ownership of not only the land, but the operations towards their farm expansion.

Gerry said, "I never tried to make them stay on the farm, but it's something they have done all their lives. Sam has wanted to be a farmer since he was one year old and Joe came back onto the farm after he had a few years with a trade diesel fitter and in the mines."

All three Deguaras are part of Project Catalyst. Sam Deguara said, "Project Catalyst is looking towards the future and its always good to have young farmers involved. We'll get more benefit from the

project in the longer term." Sam said a key to engaging young farmers like him was that you need to have the passion for it. "You don't go into farming for the money aspect, but for the lifestyle. I couldn't do a 9-5 job. I'd get bored. I'm more hands on and like the freedom of working on the land."

For Joe Deguara, the lure of coming back onto the farm was that he enjoyed the people, the industry and the work. "From a family point of view, I loved growing up on the farm. It's what I'm passionate about. The biggest thing I like is working for yourself and being able to expand and get ahead a bit.

Joe said Project Catalyst was a positive incentive, as "we are surrounded by different positive ideas and the people involved are a good bunch." Pessimism can be rife in some quarters of the sugar industry, so the Deguaras ensure they keep a positive approach and find like-minded people to engage with.

One aspect to engaging young land stewards like Sam and Joe is the cost of living. Joe also belongs to the Young Farmers Group, who he says are all those involved in this group are keen to work on the land. "A lot of my mates would love to be farming full time if they could. Most of them have full time jobs and work on the farms when they can. It comes down to finances. They are saving like mad to be able to buy their farms and ensure their future."

The Deguaras feel strongly that it is a matter of passion and attitude which engages land stewards. Joe said, "Dad always told us to get stuck into it." Interestingly, it's not just the sons who are keen. Joe added, "With Sam and I here on the farm, I think it keeps dad keen too."

Bunya Mountains Kids on Country

The 'Kids on Country' Program which is run by the Bunya Mountains Murri Rangers got off to a flying start in 2011!

With some seed funding provided through Fauna & Flora International and the Coca Cola Australia Foundation and supported by the Burnett Mary Regional Group, the Department of Education and Training and Education Queensland, the team worked to develop a curriculum based on the culturally significant Bunya Mountains in South East Queensland, before trialling activities with schools.

Between April and June, the Bunya Mountains Murri Rangers attended Wheatland's, Murgon and Moffatdale State Schools conducting workshops with students and teachers. Feedback was extremely positive, with students and rangers thoroughly enjoying the workshops.

The workshops were used as an introduction to the Bunya Mountains and Murri Ranger Program as well as identifying native flora and fauna as part of the lesson plan. The rangers were accompanied by Felicity Evans, Department of Education and Training and Zela Bissett from Education Queensland.

Steve McCarthy, Murri Ranger Coordinator, gave talks on the 'Elements of the Forest'

and 'Animals of the Bunya Mountains'. The students were given the option of what they wanted to learn more about on future visits to the school.

Similar visits are planned for the latter half of the year, with future plans to visit schools in the North Burnett, Darling Downs and Toowoomba region.

The school curriculum for the 'Kids on Country' program was formally endorsed by the Bunya Mountains Elders Council at their meeting in Wondai in August.

"Fauna & Flora International is committed to working with local communities to conserve biodiversity and we see the Kids on Country program as being one way of building partnerships for the future as well as reconnecting Indigenous youth to Country," said Jack Whelan, Executive Director for Fauna & Flora International Australia.

Now that the curriculum has been finalised and endorsed, there are a number of exciting new opportunities arising including a 'Junior Rangers' program that is

under development. Junior Rangers will be specifically aimed at engaging a small group of Indigenous high school students looking for career pathways in Natural Resource Management.

"The Kids on Country program allows us to build bridges and understanding between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous community which is reconciliation in action," said Mal Collinge, Chair of the Bunya Mountains Elders Council, adding "The long term aims of the program will also help generate more indigenous employment – Closing the Gap."



Kids on camera at Murgon State School

Good signs for environment and culture on the Cape

Cape York Natural Resource Management is working with South Cape York Catchments to inspire community members to take part in environmental and cultural preservation.

South Cape York Catchments recently worked with the Laura Rangers to hold a cultural plant awareness event for World Environment Day with community elders, pupils and teachers of Laura State School and the local community. The excursion was part of a combined South Cape York Catchments and Laura Ranger project to preserve traditional knowledge and install an interpretive cultural plant trail at the Split Rock and Mushroom Rock art galleries.

Signs identifying the plant species and its traditional use will allow tourists visiting these sites to gain an insight into the Aboriginal culture of the Laura area. The enthusiastic World Environment Day participants searched the banks of the Laura River and Mossman Creek looking for plants with traditional uses.

During the short walk fifteen plants with medicinal, nutritional or material uses were found with Laura Elders Aileen Gale and

Fred Coleman explaining their preparation and use in traditional culture.

Mrs Gale explained that an excursion on country is the best way to learn about the resources available in the bush. "The children learnt not only how to identify useful and dangerous plants but also, by seeing the plants in their natural environment, to learn where they are likely to be found," she said.

The group was taught how to recognise when a food plant was ready for harvest and traditional harvesting methods were explained and demonstrated. Laura Ranger Brian Ross gave a spear making demonstration, which enthralled the children.

Laura State School principal Susan Kersland, was delighted to see the community, school, local police and rangers working together to make the excursion interesting and fun. "It is great to see the children connecting with their heritage and I am very happy that this type of event is supported within the school curriculum," she said.

The interpretative signs were funded by a NRM Community Awareness Grant from the Department of Environment and Resource Management. It was the unanimous decision of the group that a second excursion be arranged later in the year when different bush tucker will be ready to harvest.



Alerah Ross (SCYC) holding fallen Cluster Figs before they had ripened.



NRM, Far North Queensland style! cont'd

Terrain's CEO Carole Sweatman said, "We think this is a great opportunity as it could get a keen young person's foot in the door, connecting with various Terrain projects and related networks whilst providing them with real NRM experience. There's potential here to set them up for a great career whilst bringing some fresh young talent to the cause!"

In addition to the competition, Terrain has capitalised on other opportunities to connect with youth through the University. Terrain this year has become involved in JCU's Employer Connect program which provides networking opportunities for students whilst improving their job prospects, helping to clarify career options and understanding employer expectations. Terrain sees value in getting involved in this program so to raise awareness of the business and opportunities of NRM in the region amongst students. In addition, Terrain seeks to create opportunities for student involvement in both paid and volunteer roles around the breadth of programs and organisations making a difference in NRM across the region.

Carole said, "The cost of involvement in the program is nil, apart from occasionally investing staff time. This is worthwhile and exciting as engaging young people demands creativity and modern communication approaches.

"It's only a new initiative and so has not had significant results for us to date, however watch this space for what Terrain anticipates to be some great outcomes for NRM in the region, whilst enriching positive experiences for students."

Outdoor classroom hosts new biodiversity lessons

Students at Thuringowa State High School are the first to try out a new biodiversity learning initiative that's allowing them to get up close and personal with some scaly and furry friends.

NQ Dry Tropics has developed 'Healthy Habitats for Schools' to enable schools to meet new Education Queensland curriculum requirements relating to the management of grounds and the teaching of biodiversity concepts.

Community Support Officer, Laura Dunstan, said over the past two days, NQ Dry Tropics and local group Hands on Wildlife have hosted special outdoor classroom lessons for Year 9 students. "Schools are now required to meet targets in relation to biodiversity on their school grounds, along with water, waste and energy use".

"The clear message we received from local schools was that they needed help to meet their biodiversity targets, and that's why we developed this program.

"Aside from assisting schools to improve school grounds, it's really designed to teach students about their natural environment, and about the importance of protecting native Australian animals and their habitats," Laura said.

This morning's outdoor classroom activity involved a biodiversity lesson for students in their school's rainforest area, followed by a walk around habitats on their grounds, and time with some native animals.

Shelley DeRuyter from Thuringowa State High School's Math and Science Department welcomed the initiative. "What better way to enhance a child's understanding of biodiversity concepts than by allowing them some hands on experience. The interaction with animals is really engaging, and reinforces the message more than any book possibly can," she said.

"We hope these direct experiences, and the worksheets and lessons that form part of this initiative, will give students some very clear ideas on how to protect our unique environment."

A free online tool kit is also available to all schools, covering topics such as planting cyclone resistant native trees, avoiding dangerous plants and declared weeds, companion planting for school vegetable gardens and ideas for student activities.

The Healthy Habitats for Schools kit can be found at www.nqdrytropics.com.au.



To find out more about natural resource management projects or contact details for your regional natural resource management group, visit

the Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective website - www.rgc.org.au or ph 07 4699 5000.

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