

Inside this edition:

	Page
➤ Butchulla Marine Debris Project Ends	1
➤ 4WD Queensland K'gari Clean Up	2
➤ GREAT News from the Gympie Region	3
➤ FINIA Website 2023 in Review	4
➤ What 4 July Means for Australia	4
➤ Pest Spotters: Watch Out for Fire Ants	5
➤ Dates for the Diary	6
➤ Funding Opportunities	8

After the high level of bushfire alert that accompanied the November edition, a cyclone or two (Jasper and Kirrily) have kept things hot, wet, and humid for the last couple of months (particularly for people in FNQ). No doubt the wet conditions will provide plenty of work to reduce fuel loads during the upcoming prescribed burn season.

The climate of K'gari, like the rest of Australia, is changing. Likewise, our management of the island's vegetation will need to adapt to these changes if we are to keep K'gari healthy and resilient.

The Editor

Butchulla Marine Debris Project Comes to an End

Littering on the Fraser Coast impacts amenity, tourism, habitats, wildlife, and Butchulla cultural heritage and connection to Country. Plastics from marine debris and discarded fishing lines, pots and nets impact seabirds, shorebirds, fisheries resources, and endangered species, including our milbi (turtle), buthu (dolphin) and yuwang'kan (dugong).

Between 2021 and 2023, the Land and Sea Rangers conducted the Butchulla Country – Marine Debris Clean-Ups project – funded through a Queensland Government's Community Sustainability Action Grant.

The plan was to coordinate a series of twenty-four (monthly) clean up events collaborating with schools, community groups and volunteer participants to clean up Butchulla country. Activities were to be held on the mainland, K'gari, and on the islands and waters of the Great Sandy Strait, including mangroves and tidal wetlands (with both land and boat-based activities). But no one predicted the impacts of the March 2022 SEQ flood event.

By the end of the project the BLSR team had conducted clean-ups over an area of 112Km² targeting 12 sites with 30 events, removing a total of 328Kg of litter/marine debris. A total of 63 volunteers worked alongside 8 staff to conduct these activities.

Additional funds were provided to assist with the post-flood clean-up effort, which resulted in a further 51.8Km² clean-up area, targeting 10 sites with 13 events, removing a further 95.7Kg of debris with 35 volunteers working alongside 10 staff.

Litter collected was sorted and recorded, with data collected uploaded to the Australian Marine Debris (AMDI) Initiative database. The team shared their knowledge training Wullu Wullu rangers participating in a cultural exchange in September about collecting and recording litter data using the AMDI methodology.



Abandoned crab pots continue to be an issue for marine wildlife and can only be legally removed by a designated officer (Photo: BAC).



BAC's Rangers undertook cleanups on the mainland, Great Sandy Strait, and K'gari – partnering with organisations including Fisheries Patrol and schools (Photo: BAC)

Rangers were pleased with the number of interested volunteers and new partnerships supported through the project, not only with schools, but Youth Justice Australian Red Cross girls' program.

Rangers also reported an immediate improvement in creek flows and the appearance of sites, especially flood-impacted sites where an excessive amount of rubbish was removed. Creeks now flow more smoothly, with wildlife returning to these areas.

Although the project has been completed, marine debris clean-ups will continue within the regular work plans of the Butchulla Land and Sea Ranger team.

Article contributed by Chantel Van Wamelen, Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation

4WD Queensland K'gari Clean Up

Four Wheel Drive Queensland (4WD QLD) is the peak body representing 4WD affiliated clubs and their members. We advocate and aim to improve recreational four-wheel driving, protection of the environment, encourage education and knowledge sharing whilst creating fun and active outdoor communities across Queensland.

The *Four Wheel Drive Queensland K'gari Clean Up* is an annual event that takes place over a weekend, where members of 4WD QLD affiliated clubs and event sponsors generously offer their time to participate to remove marine debris and other waste from the World Heritage-listed paradise, stunning K'gari.

4WD QLD in collaboration with Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES), Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS), Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) and Tangaroa Blue promote responsible use of the environment and support the event to keep our public land in pristine condition not only for today but also for future generations to come.

The *K'gari Clean Up* has been successfully running since 2001. The 2024 event is fast approaching and will be held on the 17-20th May. This annual event draws a remarkable turnout of volunteers from over 20 different Queensland four wheel drive clubs. Together volunteers actively engage in the critical task of eradicating noxious weeds from QPWS identified high-risk areas and clearing away substantial amounts of debris from Hook Point on the lower end of the Island to the furthest point, Sandy Cape.



Some of the 640 volunteers in the 2023 K'gari Cleanup – it's a family affair (Photo: 4WD QLD)



Debris is carefully sorted and entered on the AMDI database (Photo: 4WD QLD)

Since 2018, the *K'gari Clean Up* has been recording comprehensive marine waste data which is diligently collected and documented in the Australian Marine Debris Initiative Database (AMDI) which is managed by Tangaroa Blue. If we only just clean up the beach that is all we will ever do!

During the *K'gari Clean Up* all debris collected is weighed with a portion of the debris collected across the Island sorted into 144 different waste categories to identify and stop the waste at the source. This data is used by scientists, all levels of government, environmental agencies, communities and organisations for both research and educational purposes.

Over the past 23 years the event has collected and removed over 150 tonnes of debris. In 2023, the event saw 640 volunteers from 20 Four Wheel Drive Queensland affiliated clubs attend the event with a staggering 6,309.6kg of waste removed from the Island.

The event receives no government or grant funding and relies solely on businesses supporting the incredible work that we do to ensure the event's success and continuation in the future. This year to assist with the rising event costs we are running an online raffle to raise much needed funds. Raffle tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased at <https://rafflelink.com.au/fraserislandcleanup4>.

K'gari Clean Up registrations are now open to attend this year's event, if you are interested in attending reach out to your local 4WD QLD affiliated club and register today, we look forward to seeing you there. For more information on the event feel free to check out our website and follow our social media platforms <https://linktr.ee/kgaricleanup>.

Article contributed by Charlene Brown, 4WD QLD K'gari Clean Up Coordinator

GREAT news from the Gympie Region!

Inspired by FINIA, another environmental alliance has formed and grown in impact and size in the Gympie Region. GREAT (Gympie Region Environmental Advocacy Team) is a collaborative, unincorporated association of environmental organizations operating within the Gympie Regional Council area. GREAT's primary role is to provide opportunities for connection and collaboration between the diverse range of environmental groups in the region, to promote a cohesive approach to the protection and regeneration of the regional environment, and to maximize the impact of the advocacy of its members with local, State and Federal agencies.

It includes representatives of Gympie's most active environment groups, namely:

- Gympie & District Landcare
- Cooloola Coastcare
- Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC)
- Koala Action Gympie Region (KAGR)
- Australian Native Animals Rescue and Rehabilitation Association (ANARRA)
- Gympie & District Field Naturalists
- Gympie and District Sustainability Alliance (GADSA)
- Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council (WBPEC)

Collectively, these groups unite thousands of Gympie region residents to contribute to the environmental action, education, and advocacy in the Gympie Regional Council region and beyond. The impetus for the creation of the GREAT started with the current Gympie Council removal of the Environment Levy, removing embargoed funding for the environment.

Since forming in 2021, the group has been meeting twice per year addressing issues relevant to the groups. The group has recently increased meetings from twice per year to quarterly as members value to collaboration and sharing of their expertise, systems, policies, and procedures as well as their collaborative actions for the GREATER good of all the groups.

Contact for GREAT is greatconsortium1@gmail.com

Article contributed by Lindy Orwin, President, Cooloola Coastcare

FINIA website – 2023 in review

As another busy year came to an end on the FINIA website, it was time to reflect on the remarkable digital journey FINIA has continued to take with provider WordPress.

This year we had 16,518 page views, as searchers engaged with our content - a testament to the website's ongoing appeal and reach.

In 2023, we added 35 new articles (posts) to the website. The website now has a total of 421 posts archived on the website since its launch in May 2011. You can check them all out [here](#).

The articles received five likes and two comments on the website – with many more shares and likes on FINIA's Facebook page.

July 19 was FINIA's best online day in 2023, with 1% of all visits for the year, our day in the digital spotlight.

Other than FINIA's home page – our top five articles over the last 12 months were:

- Blackberry nightshade – environmental weed (1278 views)
- Postan’s logging camp revisited (1257 views)
- A plant out of place – the beach almond (931 views)
- What to do if you get stung by an Irukandji? (755 views) and
- New wongari safety sticks for island walkers (701).

Our most popular recent (2023) articles were: A Historical Perspective on Dingo Attacks in Australia (36 views), Pest Spotters: Watch out for Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA)! (18 views), K’gari Land and Sea Country Conference 2023: Djaa-ngarawinj (18 views), Genetic Health and Status of K’gari Wongari (Dingoes) (17 views), Reflecting on Tin Can Bay Seagrass Decline (17 views) and Wongari-Wise, Dingo-Safe - Get the Message! (17 views).

Spanning continents, FINIA resonates with an international audience. Your articles are read around the world in 175 countries to date. Most of our readers in 2023 came from Australia, The United States, Indonesia, and India.

Facebook.com continues to be a major contributor to our site’s traffic, a nod to our targeted SEO and marketing efforts. WordPress will continue to host our site in 2024, with an almost perfect 99.999% uptime, keeping the FINIA website live and accessible for 525,594 minutes out of 525,600 this year.

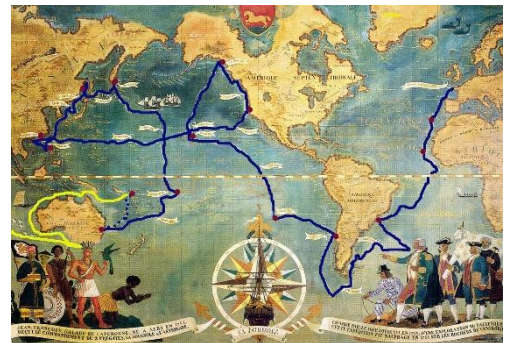
That’s a year to be proud of all round.

Article contributed by Sue Sargent, FINIA

What 4 July Means for Australia

I’m writing on 26 January 2024, the day on which Australia effectively celebrates the 4 July 1776 Declaration of Independence of Britain’s North American colonies. The colonists may have been revolting against the imposition of unfair taxes in the name of the British Crown, but the eventual expulsion of Great Britain from its American colonies ended the transportation of Irish unfortunates to Virginia, where they had been put to work on cane and tobacco plantations that had formerly been swamps, until they died of malaria and replacement convicts sought. The newly independent USA had a shortage of the slave labour it now needed.

Meanwhile, prisons in England were soon overflowing. After failed attempts to establish penal colonies in West Africa (the prison transports would then transport malaria-resistant Africans to the Americas) convicts were transported to Australia instead. Had the British not lost their American colonies then American plantation owners would have continued working Irishmen to death instead of buying malaria-resistant Africans, and Australia could have been colonised by the French. The First Fleet encountered the explorer Lapérouse at Botany Bay on 24 January 1788.



The journey of French explorer Lapérouse and his ships Astrolabe and Boussole

The French expedition departed Botany Bay a couple of months later and were never seen again. A young Napoléon Bonaparte had unsuccessfully applied to join Lapérouse’s expedition before it departed France; had Bonaparte left France with Lapérouse in 1785, he too would have disappeared from world history, with no legacy.

The Bastille was stormed by the mob in 1789, and many political prisoners released - yet of Lapérouse’s expedition there was no trace. Even as he faced the guillotine in 1793, King Louis XVI was still asking if any word had been heard.

Whether colonisation by France rather than Britain might have been better, worse, or pretty much the same for Indigenous Australians and for Australian landscapes is something we may never know.

In a presage of the weed problems of K’gari, under the scientific advice of Sir Joseph Banks, the First Fleet brought with it sugar cane and prickly pear - the red of British redcoat uniforms was made from crushed cochineal insects, and prickly pear was the plant on which these insects grew. In Australia the insects soon



Prickly pears - one of Australia's first environmental weeds (Photo: Biosecurity Queensland)

died out, but the prickly pear spread to become a major environmental scourge until the introduction of the *Cactoblastis* moth and remains a problem today.

Thanks to such botanical imperialism (see Garritt van Dyk's "[The botanical imperialism of weeds and crops: how alien plant species on the First Fleet changed Australia](#)") much has already been lost and the future of much more is at risk. In this now rapidly changing world, there is much restoration, repair and recovery that must be undertaken.

The Good News is we have a fair idea of what we need to do and how to go about it.

Reflection contributed by David Arthur, Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council

Pest Spotters: Watch out for Fire Ants after Wild Weather

The Invasive Species Council has called on communities in South-east Queensland and northern NSW to be on the alert for fire ants, warning that the recent heavy rainfall and wild weather in the region could accelerate the spread of the deadly pest.

"Fire ants are more active before or after rainfall and can form large floating rafts which move with water currents to establish footholds in new areas. We have recently seen evidence of this rafting behaviour on cane farms south of Brisbane," said Invasive Species Council Advocacy Manager Reece Pianta.

The good news is that it will be easier to spot fire ants and their nests at this time. So be on the lookout for fire ants, including your backyards, local parks, beaches, or bushland.



Red Imported Fire Ants are the masters of adaptation even forming floating rafts and spreading during floods

It's easy to do your part. Just take a picture of any suspicious ants and report it. Don't worry if you're not sure what type of ant it is, every picture that is sent in will be vital information for the eradication program.

Six nests were reported by a property owner in South Murwillumbah in north-eastern NSW, 13 kilometres south of the Queensland border. A nest was also identified in mid-December on the Queensland-New South Wales border at Currumbin Valley.

With any building work underway, be careful when moving materials that might contain fire ants. Fire ants are also clever stowaways – materials like mulch and soil are ideal for transferring fire ants to new sites.

Ongoing containment and suppression mean it is still possible to eradicate fire ants from Australia if we all do our part. While out in the garden, at the park, taking a walk, camping or on K'gari, we should all be on the lookout for suspicious ants.

Fire ants are dangerous. Don't put yourself, clothing, or belongings in direct contact with ants or their nests,' said Mr Pianta.

The Invasive Species Council welcomed a recent \$70 million four-year commitment from Victoria towards the national fire ant eradication program in addition to the recent funding boosts from the federal, NSW, Queensland, ACT and NT Governments. However, there is still a \$56 million funding shortfall for the national program.

Fire ants are one of the world's worst super pests and, if they are allowed to spread across the continent, their economic impact will be greater than cane toads, rabbits, feral cats, and foxes combined.

They will devastate Australia's environment and agriculture, cost our economy billions annually and we could see over 140,000 extra medical visits every year as they sting Australians at the park or in the backyard.

**** IMPORTANT: IF YOU ARE ATTACKED BY FIRE ANTS SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION ****

How to look, snap and report a suspected fire ant nest:

Keep your eyes peeled for suspicious ants or ant mounds whether you're out in the garden, at the park, taking a walk, or camping or at the beach. Don't worry if you're not sure what type of ant it is, every report is vital information for the eradication program.

Be mindful of your safety if you think you have found fire ants. Keep your distance and do not put yourself, clothing, or belongings in direct contact with fire ants or their nests.

Take a photo or short video of the ants on your smartphone. Try to take a few close ups of the ants and their nest.

Report all suspected fire ants to: Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or www.fireants.org.au

Adapted from an article by the Invasive Species Council

Dates for the Diary

What: FINIA Meetings
Where: Town Hall, Maryborough
When: Tuesday 13 February 2024, May (date to be advised), Tuesday 13 August 2024 and Tuesday 12 November 2024
For: FINIA's partners meet quarterly to provide updates and collaborate on projects. Three meetings are held on the mainland, generally at Maryborough Town Hall (in February, August, and November), with an annual field trip to K'gari in May each year.
Cost: Free
More info: To register for the meeting, please email Sue Sargent at contactFINIA@gmail.com.

What: Find a Frog - Mini-BioBlitz
Where: Cooloola
When: Saturday 24 February, *AFTER DARK TO 9PM*
For: Join us for this mini-bioblitz with a focus on Cooloola's frogs. It aims to raise awareness about frogs, their habitat needs, the threats they face and the actions we can all take to care for them and our natural world for the long-term health of our support system. This activity is suitable for adults and children over the age of 11. Children must be accompanied by a supervising adult.
Cost: TBA
More info: <https://www.cooloolacoastcare.org.au/projects/bioblitz>

What: K'gari 4WD Clean Up
Where: K'gari (East Coast)
When: Friday 17 to Monday 20 May 2024 (registration opens in November).
For: Held annually over a weekend with Four Wheel Drive Queensland affiliated club members and event sponsors volunteering their time to clean marine debris from World Heritage-listed K'gari. Four Wheel Drive Queensland K'gari Fraser Island Clean Up does not receive government funding for this event which is delivered with the generous support of sponsors.
More info: To register <https://linktr.ee/kgaricleanup>

What: Bush Regeneration and Monitoring
Where: Eurong, K'gari
When: Monday 18 to Sunday 24 March, Sunday 16 to Saturday 22 June, and Sunday 1 to Saturday 7 September.
For: FIDO has been conducting weeklong weeding-bush regeneration programs in Eurong since 2005. These have progressively transformed Eurong and dramatically reduced the weed threats there. Based at Tallinga, the former Sinclair family home in Eurong Village, work will focus on weeding, bush regeneration, building the Eurong nursery's capacity, and continuing FIDO's ongoing environmental monitoring programs. The program is supported by Eurong Resort, providing dinner for the volunteers each night.

Cost: \$300 (\$200 for concessions) to subsidise costs.
More info: Please send any questions to weeding@fido.org.au.

What: Weed Management

Where: Happy Valley, K'gari

When: Sunday to Saturday 18-24 February (6 nights), 12-18 May, 14-20 July, and 20-26 Oct 2024.

For: Peter Shooter leads these trips to help tackle the heavy weed infestation around Happy Valley. A group of up to eight will share "Kurrawa", a comfortable holiday house in the Centre of Happy Valley. The group will work to contain a particularly aggressive weed with poisonous seeds, *Abrus prectorius* Var. *Africanus*. This weed heavily impacts the vegetation but isn't found anywhere else on Fraser Island. As the *Abrus* comes under control, the team will increasingly eliminate large woody weeds, Easter cassia and lantana. Again, fitness is needed to carry heavy chemical backpack sprays across steep terrain.

Cost: \$300 (\$200 for concessions) to subsidise costs.

More info: Please send any questions to weeding@fido.org.au.

What: Bob Brown – John Sinclair Memorial Lecture

Where: Mt Coot-tha Auditorium, Mt Coot-tha Botanical gardens, Brisbane

When: Saturday 15 June 2024

For: In 1996 Bob Brown was the Greens' first candidate to be elected to the Australian Senate. His priorities included greenhouse gas emissions reduction, forest conservation, and reform of Australia's asylum law. He was re-elected by a comfortable margin in 2001, and in 2005 he was made leader of the Australian Greens. In the years after Brown's election as leader, the Greens posted impressive gains at both the federal Senate and the state level. He was elected to a third term in 2007. Since leaving Parliament in 2012, Bob has been active in environmental causes, cofounding the Bob Brown Foundation, which had a particular focus on protecting Tasmanian wildlife and lands.

Cost: TBA

More info: Please contact fido@fido.org.au

What: Cooloola Bioblitz

Where: Rainbow Beach

When: 2-4 August 2024

For: Join us for our next Bioblitz - an intense period of biological surveying as we attempt to record all the living species within the Rainbow Beach area. Groups of scientists, naturalists and volunteers will be conducting an intensive field study over a continuous 3-day period. This activity is suitable for adults and children over the age of 11. Children must be accompanied by a supervising adult.

Cost: TBA

More info: <https://www.cooloolacoastcare.org.au/projects/bioblitz>

What: IGEM Bushfire Recovery Project

Where: East Coast, K'gari

When: **ALL PLACES FILLED FOR 2024**

For: FIDO's bushfire recovery project 2022-25 is being conducted on the east coast of K'gari. Volunteers are restoring the low coastal vegetation complex on the foreshore and undertaking Pandanus recovery works by monitoring, establishing a seed collection and restoration protocol and on-ground works, including restoration training. FIDO is also interested in hearing from other groups interested in partnering on the project.

More info: For more information or to register your group's interest in this activity, please get in touch with Mark Dwyer at mdwy.dbq@gmail.com.

Funding Opportunities

What: Gambling Community Benefit Fund

For: Provide one-off grants for not-for-profit organisations up to \$35,000 to help provide community services or activities that benefit the Queensland community.

When: Round 120 is open now and closes on 29 February 2024.

Email: cbf@justice.qld.gov.au

Phone: 1800 633 619

Website: <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/community-grants>

What: Ian Potter Foundation – Environment Program

For: The Environment program supports ambitious and transformative environmental initiatives, including strengthening the environment sector, applied environmental science research, on ground conservation of natural resources and preservation of threatened biodiversity and ecosystems.

When: EOIs opened 7 December 2023 and close 26 March 2024.

Info: Information session [video](#).

Website: <https://www.ianpotter.org.au/what-we-support/program-areas/environment/>

What: Wettenhall Environment Trust —Small Environmental Grant Scheme

For: Objectives of the Small Environmental Grants Scheme (up to \$15K) are flora and fauna conservation and threatened mammal conservation with one or more of the following: monitoring/recording data, community education, community capacity building (training), and research/science.

When: Next round opens on 18 March 2024 (funding released May 2024)

Phone: (03) 5472 1316 or 0431 219 980 - Elizabeth (Beth) Mellick, Executive Officer

Email: beth@wettenhall.org.au

Website: <https://wettenhall.org.au/grants/small-environmental-grants/>

What: Purves Environmental Fund

For: Support 12-month proposals of up to \$50,000, that meet the Fund's current focus areas: degradation of wilderness, over exploitation of natural resources and pollution. Grant applications are through an EOI process.

When: Applications are open year-round.

Website: <https://www.purvesenvirofund.org.au/funding>

What: Fraser Coast Council Community Grant (Round 3)

For: Opportunities for groups to apply for support to undertake activities that benefit the community of the Fraser Coast Local Government Area. Max grant \$15,000 with most activities up to \$5,000.

When: Application open 15 April 2024 and close 12 May 2024.

Website: <https://www.frasercoast.qld.gov.au/grants-and-awards>

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari is a non-incorporated, not-for-profit umbrella organisation for its partners. As a non-incorporated organisation with no dedicated funding to support our meetings, administration, barge transfers, or accommodation, we rely on our partners to support activities on the K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage site. We acknowledge Fraser Coast Regional Council, Sealink – Kingfisher Bay Resort & K'gari Explorer Tours, the University of the Sunshine Coast and our outstanding contributors, volunteers and donors for their generous support.

Without this generosity, FINIA's activities would not be possible.

Thank you