



Streamlines

Newsletter of the Pullen Pullen Catchments Group Inc.

August 2023

Welcome to the August edition of Streamlines, the quarterly newsletter from Pullen Pullen Catchments Group. This issue continues several stories commenced in the May edition. Our series of articles from the Watergum website on toads and frogs continues with images of toads of varying shapes and colours. John Ness continues discussing the size of the trees in Woodward Place Park and Irene Darlington brings us up-to-date with her life as a wildlife carer.

We grew up on Dorothea McKellar's description of the United Kingdom's 'ordered woods and gardens'. Well, an organisation in the UK has had a total rethink and now promotes 'No Mow May'. The idea has spread to America as the article commencing on page 5 indicates. Not mowing lawns allows a wide range of grasses, weeds and native plants to flower and seed and encourages pollinators and consequently increases biodiversity.

The most exciting article in this issue is a report combined from two submitted by John Ness and Ron Tooth about a highly successful Tree Planting Day involving students from Pullenvale State School and PPCG. It is illustrated with photographs supplied by Ron Tooth. The energy, interest and enthusiasm shown by the students bodes well for the future of our environment.

Finally, a brief article on Forest Bathing, a therapeutic immersion into a natural environment – without a weeder or rake or shovel!

All members are invited to submit articles to Streamlines via helian@pretirementresorts.com.au. The deadline for the next issue is 15th November 2023.

Happy reading!

Helen Ogle
Editor

CONTENTS

Page

Pullen Pullen Catchments Group.....	2
Adult Cane Toad or Native Frog?.....	3
Wonders of Wood (continued)	4
No-Mow Alternatives to a Grass Lawn.....	5
National Tree Week – Planting for the Future.....	7
To Be or Not To Be a Wildlife Carer (Part 2)	8
Forest Bathing.....	10
Report Koala Sightings.....	10



Pullen Pullen Catchments Group

A Landcare Group

Website

www.pullenpullencatchments.org.au

Meetings

Meetings are held at 6 pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre, 250 Grandview Road, Pullenvale unless advised otherwise.

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Membership Options

Membership fees are:

Annual Membership – \$10 per person payable on March 1 each year; Life Membership – \$100 per person

We are delighted to accept donations.

- Send a cheque payable to PPCG to PO Box 1390, Kenmore, 4069 or
- Transfer the funds electronically to BSB 064 152, Account No.10107038 Ref: your name.

Working Bees Tools, gloves, etc are provided at Working Bees. Just wear sturdy boots and sunsafe clothing and bring water and a hat!

Anstead Bushland Reserve – 1st Sunday of the month, 8.30 – 11 am (April-September), 7 – 9.30 am (October-March); 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month when advertised, 2-4.30 pm (April-September), 3.30-6 pm (October – March)

Pullenvale Forest Park – 2nd Sunday of the month, 8.30 – 11 am (April-September), 7.30 – 9.30 am (October-March)

Woodward Place Park – 3rd Sunday of the month, 8.30 – 11 am (April-September), 7.30 – 9.30 am (October-March)

See also the Events Calendar on the website (<https://www.pullenpullencatchments.org.au/events-calendar/>)



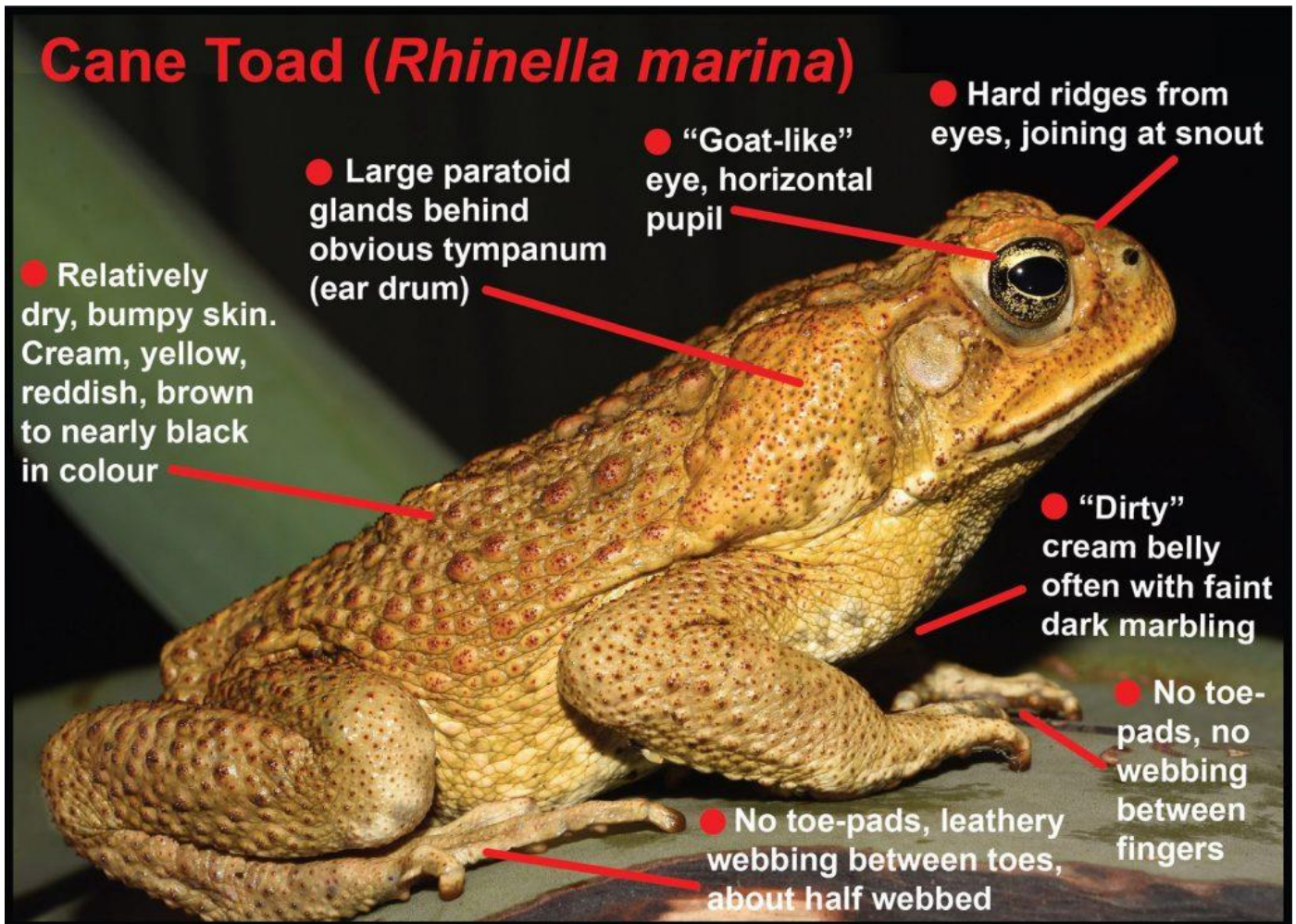
"The PPCG acknowledges the support of the Lord Mayor's Community Sustainability and Environmental Grants Programs for a grant to help with administrative, bushcare and educational costs"

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Published with permission from Watergum, a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that helps the community engage in real, on-ground work to restore, maintain and protect the natural environment. It is based in Burleigh Heads and has a very helpful and easy to read website.

Adult Cane Toad or Native Frog?

As there are over 240 different species of native frog in Australia, the best way to tell them apart from cane toads is to become really familiar with cane toads and what they look like.



During winter, cane toads hibernate and you won't see very many. The ones you do see will be lethargic, sickly and slow and most likely small. They will come out of hibernation when the warmer weather stabilises, generally September to May. During the day they hide under rocks, logs and leaves, and they will even burrow underground. As dusk sets in they will emerge from their day-time hiding places, sometimes in great numbers. They love lawns, patios, anywhere where there are plenty of insects, so they are often found near houses and streets where there is night-time lighting.

They spend most of their life on land and will go down to the water to breed. They like easily accessible, still water so they love dams, ponds, flood-plains and slow running creeks. If the water is difficult to access, ie, surrounded by thick vegetation, they are less-likely to make the effort. Females will make their way to the water when they become gravid and males will call out to females from the water to tell them they are ready to mate.

When you approach a toad, it will most likely puff out its chest and sit upright. Their only defence is their toxin, so they aim to be grabbed so they can release toxin from their glands to poison you. Their other alternative is to attempt to escape which is more likely to result in their injury if grabbed by the legs from behind.

The images below are all cane toads and demonstrate how varied their appearance can be in terms of colour, pattern and physique. You will notice that their expressions appear angry due to their ridged brows and they have horizontal pupils. Most sit upright and you can see their marbled bellies. The paratoid glands are clearly visible on each toad, regardless of size, shape and health.



The next issue of Streamlines will feature images of native frogs that could be confused with toads.

Wonders of Wood (Continued)

John Ness

The most recent addition to the areas that the PPCG helps to maintain is the aptly named Woodward Place Park as this has perhaps the best collection of large trees in the catchment. The growth pattern of trees is not unlike that of humans where the maximum height is reached well before the maximum girth and with advancing age both get considerably less profuse on top. During its youth the height of a tree provides a reasonable estimate of its age but for mature trees the area of the trunk at the conventionally measured “breast height” level is probably a better indicator of the age of the tree. On this basis it is possible to arrive at approximate age estimates for some of the very large trees in Woodward Place Park.

The size of some of the trees in Woodward Place Park can be appreciated from the summary in the table below.

Tree	Circumference (m)	Diameter (m)	Height (m)	Volume* (m ³)	Age estimate (Years)
Hoop pine	3	0.96	42	~11.5	115
Silky Oak	2.63	0.84	26.2	5.2	115
White Cedar	2.75	0.88	15.5	7.2**	??
<i>E. tereticornis</i>	5.5	1.75	39.5	36	270

*Includes below ground estimate

**This tree has ~34 m spread.

To check the estimate that the area of a tree was roughly proportional to its age, Bunya pines of known ages were measured at three locations namely, local, Sherwood Arboretum and City Botanical Garden. The trees within any particular group had a rather large variation in circumference so the average of the largest 2 or 3 was selected as the representative size. The approximate ages of the trees at each site were 40, 100 and 160 years and the maximum average circumferences were about 1.8, 2.4 and 3.9 m respectively.

These data points give a reasonable approximation to a straight line fit of age versus area so indicating that the area is a reasonable relative estimate of age. Consequently, in the table the approximate ages of the large trees in Woodward Place have been based on trees of known age in the local and Sherwood Arboretum sites. A white cedar with a reference age was not known so no age estimate was done for the large white cedar in Woodward Place. The Brisbane red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) is clearly a very old tree but whether it is more than twice the age of the large hoop pines and silky oaks is an interesting question.

Recently the tallest tree yet found in the Amazon rainforest was measured and it had a height of 88.5 m and a circumference of 9.9 m so the estimated volume is around 265 m³ or about 7.5 times larger than the Woodward Place *E. tereticornis*. The USA claims the title of the tallest tree which is a 116 m tall redwood although there have been claims that some of the *Eucalyptus regnans* (Mountain Ash) trees chopped down in Victoria during the late 1800s were 120 m tall!

No-Mow Alternatives to a Grass Lawn

The image of a perfectly manicured, neatly mown lawn is baked into the idea of the American dream. In fact, in many places, you can get fined for allowing your grass to grow beyond a certain height. So it's no surprise that there's some controversy surrounding a movement called "No Mow May" that's encouraging people not to mow their lawns for the entire month of May. However, the divide in opinions on this movement isn't just about keeping up lawn appearances—it's about pollinators. Keep reading to learn more about No Mow May, how it started, and what people are saying about its pros and cons.

What is No Mow May?

No Mow May is a campaign that started in 2019 in the United Kingdom by Plantlife, a conservation charity. The group's mission is to "secure a world rich in wild plants and fungi" for the health of the environment. No Mow May, which calls for people to leave their lawns untouched for the month of May, is an extension of that mission statement. Research has shown that consistently mowed lawns can diminish biodiversity, as they don't provide vital food for pollinators, like bees and butterflies. So, the purpose behind No Mow May is to allow grass and wildflowers to grow unbothered for a month to create habitats and food sources for early-season pollinators—when other flowers are scarce.

The No Mow May movement has started to gain more popularity in the United States. In 2020, Appleton, Wisconsin became the first locality to create an ordinance giving people a choice not to mow their lawns in May — and more and more communities have started participating. However, there is some debate as to whether the movement is as helpful to pollinators as it intends to be.

The Pros of No Mow May

One of the primary pros of No Mow May is that it's raising more awareness about the importance of promoting biodiversity—and how individuals can participate in the effort. As the Plantlife campaign page explains, "even the smallest grassy patches add up to a significant proportion of our land which, if managed properly, can deliver enormous gains for nature, communities, and the climate."

- **Save the Bees** No Mow May can play a part in supporting initiatives to save the bees. Bees are crucial to healthy ecosystems, because, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, in the United States, more than one-third of all crop production requires insect pollination — and honeybee colonies are our primary pollinators. So it's a circular relationship between us and the bees: We help provide food for them; they help provide food for us.
- **Reduce Pollution** Reducing the frequency of lawn mowing can also help decrease pollution. According to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#), one hour operating a new gasoline lawn mower emits the same amount of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide as driving a new car 45 miles.

- **Strengthen Lawns and Use Less Water** Mowing your grass too often or too short can have adverse effects on your lawn—weakening it and limiting its nutrient supply. So, reducing the frequency of mowing can also help to strengthen your lawn and make it more drought tolerant—which, in turn, helps conserve water.

The Cons of No Mow May

The most significant critiques of No Mow May aren't coming from anti-environmentalists or pollinator-haters. In fact, it's the opposite. Critics of No Mow May have concerns that the movement could be unintentionally harmful for pollinators, providing only a temporary safe haven, but failing to put in place more long-standing efforts. The Wall Street Journal spoke with Doug Tallamy, a University of Delaware professor who has a Ph.D. in entomology, for his opinion on the month-long movement. As the article states, "Dr Tallamy sees little logic in letting lawns grow longer for a few weeks. If people simply let their grass grow for a month and then revert to a clipped green monoculture, they are teasing pollinators with short-term snacks followed by starvation, he said."

Another expert, Tamson Yeh, turf specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County in New York, told The Associated Press that she also finds the short-term solution counterproductive. "Bees tell each other where the food is, and pollinators—when they discover an unmown lawn—will remember to come back to it again and again," Yeh told the outlet. "Then on June 1st, when the food disappears, it's not good for them." She added that pollinators can get confused when the grass is suddenly low again, giving predators more opportunity to take advantage of them.

These experts, and other critics of the No Mow May movement, advocate instead for providing more permanent habitats for pollinators. This can be done by replacing lawns—or at least part of them—with native plants and trees that will feed pollinators all season long.

From the 'Real Simple' website, written by Morgan Noll and published on 6 May 2023

No Mow May does not just apply to gardens, it has been extended to roadside verges, parklands and other areas that are routinely mown, as these photos taken by member Jim Williams on a recent trip to the UK show.



National Tree Week – Planting for the Future

John Ness and Ron Tooth

The planting in Airlie Road Park of about 60 trees and 10 Lomandras by 25 excited and very enthusiastic year 3 students from Pullenvale State School on July 28 proceeded basically as planned with a few last minute improvements. As well as these 60 trees, 10 of the hoop pines ringbarked by BCC contractors were replaced. The project was relatively small in size but required a fair degree of coordination and assistance.

The Brisbane City Council organised for Oxley Creek Catchment Association to prepare the site by spreading mulch and digging holes. Approximately 20 m³ of mulch was spread over about 120 m² in an approximately triangular shape so there was about 1.5m spacing between the trees which should allow adequate room for growth and, at the same time, help provide sufficient cover and shade for weed suppression.

The PSS students arrived after a 700m walk from the school, and Ron Tooth and Brendan McIntyre gave them a brief introduction to the park and the plans for the planting. Somehow, the brief educational talk to the children was timed to coincide with a fly over by a small flock of black cockatoos! The children worked in groups of 6 to plant trees and then water them. It was wonderful to see their faces full of commitment as they shovelled soil, moved mulch and placed trees in the holes. The students were interested, enthusiastic and well behaved and seemed to feel the activity was important. Perhaps it may be possible to get the school more involved in further planting activities in the park. As well as two teachers, three parents were available to assist and these along with PPCG members ensured the planting proceeded smoothly.



Pullenvale State School students enjoying planting trees in Airlie Road Park

There are a number of people to thank for the success of the morning including Brendan and Nomusa Nzama for providing BCC support and funds, the PSS Principal Natala Crawley and the children's teacher Jenny McLeod for enthusiastically embracing the concept and giving it priority, the PPCG members who came along to assist and, in Ron's case, provide an excellent and educational introduction to the park and planting. Most of all, the students themselves should be thanked for their enthusiasm and willingness to learn with one young fellow even commenting that the trees would take up a lot of carbon! There is some hope that this generation will be much more attentive to, and respectful of, the biosphere than their predecessors which is sufficient reward in itself for the effort involved in the project.

To Be or Not To Be a Wildlife Carer (Part 2)

Irene Darlington

Well, In Part 1, I ended up leaving a rather lucrative career to replace one of the founders of WIRES. It was not a job, but a passion I had to devote every waking moment to. Some weeks we fundraised enough to pay ourselves minimum wages, while most weeks, there was no pay at all. WIRES had not been formalised nor launched as yet. The overwhelming need for a coordinated wildlife information and rescue service not only in Sydney but throughout NSW, was overwhelming.

I continued to work together with the other wonderful coordinator on the WIRES, on our constitution, formalising policies and procedures, obtaining assistance in funding, premises for the office, telephone procedures, information handbooks for volunteers and endless meetings with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service rangers, politicians and other bodies on our management committee.

Concurrently, I started fostering wildlife. It was a natural progression for me I decided. It was 1982. I had a brilliant mentor in Helen George, who had been a carer all her life but had never put pen to paper on how to do it! No laptops back in those days!

I took wildlife I could manage looking after in my flat, raising and learning about wildlife. All the time I was writing everything down, I was also attending to postgraduate studies at Sydney University, attending to my 'job' or new life as a state coordinator for WIRES and somewhere in there trying to hold a marriage together. Something had to give ... my marriage did. I can't blame my husband. We both changed and my passion for helping wildlife just grew and grew. His passion for overseas travel and surfing grew as well. We parted on very friendly terms.

Becoming a wildlife carer was not an easy life. I learned so much from Helen. It was just overwhelming how much she knew and my learning curve was steep! The death and euthanising aspect of wildlife caring is the hardest part in my opinion.

As a carer you just want to save them all and return them to the wild, healthy and strong. Sadly, it just doesn't work that way. As wildlife licences dictate, the wildlife is the property of the Crown, and if it cannot be released into the wild, it has to be euthanised. In cases of rare species, such as the platypus, NPWS made exemptions to locate un-releasable wildlife into approved captive breeding programs. Otherwise euthanasia.

As I continued to work as a state coordinator for WIRES, I continued foster caring wildlife. I could bring my baby possums, gliders, bats, birds, etc to work at the 'office' (a cramped room wherever someone was willing to put us up for cheap rent ie.'us' being WIRES admin and operational staff). I would bottle feed, change nappies and pouches, clean dirty mouths and bottoms and keep filling empty tummies whilst holding the phone between my shoulder and my ear and coordinating the next animal rescue. Wildlife needing to be rescued and brought to a vet, or organising firemen to rescue wildlife in peril dangling from trees or jammed in downpipes, etc. So many scenarios. So many tears and learning to accept that often the very best you must do is to have the poor animal put out of its pain.

The WIRES phone NEVER stopped ringing! We kept putting on more lines, with fundraising to pay the phone bills, of course. The more word spread of this new wildlife rescue service, the greater the demand there became for our work. It was nuts!

Foster caring wildlife just became part and parcel of my life. It was my job. my hobby, my learning about wildlife needs and conservation, habitats, etc. This is where I learned that habitat restoration is as important a part of the puzzle to enable species survival as the raising and good management of the wildlife is.

So, fast forward to today, my involvement in PPCG is based on the need to restore wildlife habitat back to its pristine state for the wildlife. If the wildlife we painstakingly raise to release is released into unsuitable habitats with weed infested waterways and lack of healthy native flora and fauna, there's no point to raising these animals and releasing them to their demise! They don't survive in unhealthy habitats. This is why the restoration and maintenance of healthy habitats such as the work of volunteer groups such as Pullen Pullen Catchments Group, is imperative.

Being a wildlife carer means far more than just obtaining a permit or licence. It entails a severe lifestyle change. Kiss goodbye to holidays and camping trips with friends or family members, getting to dinner or a date on-time or even at all. To get all the feeds, temperatures for pouch babies, feeds and everything organised even for just one evening out, can be very difficult. As for anything overnight entailing a carer being away without the animals – forget it!

I recall once I was in Queensland, a decade after my divorce, a boyfriend took me away for a long weekend camping trip. This entailed my finding a solo wildlife carer to come and stay at my house, with my presenting my friend carer with a 25 page manual on duties and requirements of each animal, café, aviary, etc. Another carer specialising in raising the bottle fed babies, formulas, etc had to be organised to take on my pouched orphaned babies ... the work this entailed in preparation was over whelming. Upon my return, my bedraggled carer friend told me 'don't ever ask me to do this babysitting again, Irene. I didn't stop and I'm exhausted after 3 days. I love you as a friend but don't ever ask me to do this again. Good luck!' And that was my one and only time since that I've been away from my home longer than a single night since that single long weekend break in 1998 and prior to that single time, since 1982.

These are the small sacrifices as a carer in my opinion. Not having a 'normal' kind of life where you can socialise with others, be spontaneous, think more of yourself. It's a life full of endless washing machine loads of pouches and animal towels/blankets, getting used to buying various and endless supplies of animal foods, including live worms, crickets, wood cockroaches, maggot eggs, seed, meat, frozen mice, protein supplements, milk replacer formulas ... the list is so long. Cages, equipment, not to mention huge power bills and telephone/water bills. Picking leaf and native blossoms constantly for the animals, dealing with being trolled by toxic (sub)humans, endless runs to vet clinics, rescues and wildlife carers ... the list goes on and on. Even now, I have two family size washing machines running daily, with four fridge freezers running constantly. It's challenging.

Being tired and burning candles at both ends is all part of foster caring if it's your full time passion. Getting up for those 3 am formula feeds for the babies in my care through the freezing temperature of winter ... Hmmm that's a necessary pain. I DO miss being able to sit quietly in front of the TV watching it myself instead of listening to it whilst I'm feeding babies. I miss other comforts like shopping for myself, cooking, going away on the spur of the moment, or even going out. I get tired obviously. Waking up early to feed birds in my care, calling out for their breakfast for once! BUT no one is forcing me to do this. It's MY choice.

I have to say, releasing successfully an animal I've raised into the wild is its own reward. I don't make a difference to the species, but I know I've changed the life of each individual animal I've helped. Even if that means the poor animal didn't die slowly in agony but died with dignity and in minimum pain by a vet euthanising it humanely, it's still a 'help' to that animal in agony.

It is a strange life, but it's my choice.



Forest Bathing

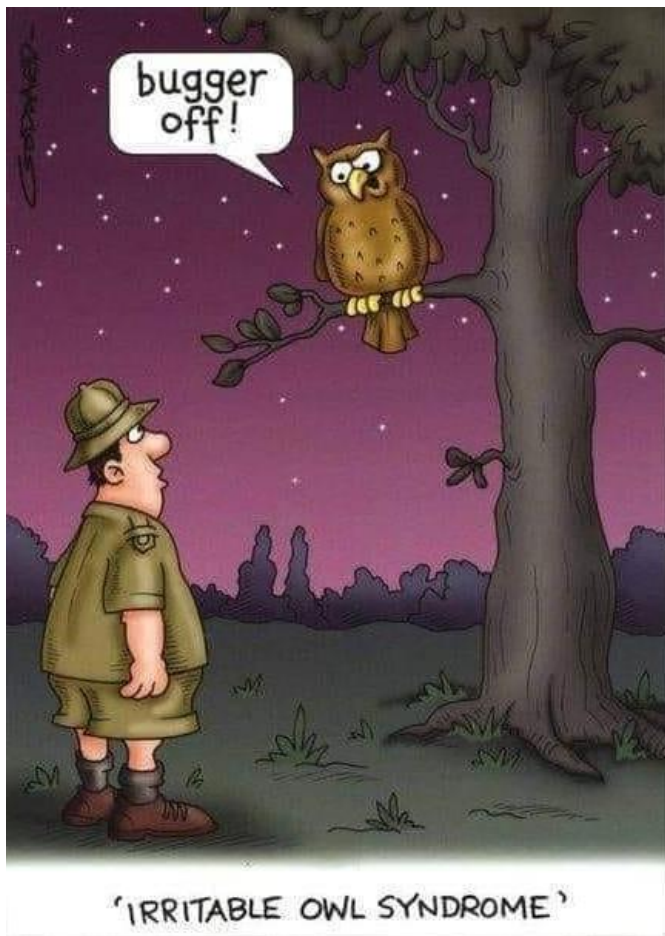
Forest Bathing is a practice as old as time in Japan called Shinrin-yoku. It is taking the opportunity to just be in nature and one with nature. It does not involve jogging, hiking or exercising in any way, in fact the opposite.

Forest bathers are encouraged to just be in the forest and take time to appreciate all of your senses, sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. Outside there is opportunity to smell the flowers, taste the fresh air, look at the changing colours of the trees, hear the birds sing and feel the breeze on your skin. When we open up our senses we are able to connect to the natural world.

Connecting with nature is a biological need and fundamental to our health. The term for connecting with nature is biophilia which is Greek and means 'love of life and the living world'. Shinrin-yoku is viewed as a bridge in which we can bring our own rhythms back in step with nature. When we are in harmony with the natural world we can begin to heal, be refreshed and restored.

A two-hour forest bathe will help you unplug from technology and slow down. It will bring you into the present moment and [de-stress](#) and relax you. The research into forest bathing has found that it can reduce blood pressure, lower stress, improve cardiovascular and metabolic health, improve concentration and memory and lift depression.

Most importantly you don't need to go far to forest bathe. Whilst many of us would like to find a wonderful forest we could just pop too, it is not always practical. So, the effects of forest bathing can also be achieved in your local park, botanical garden, your own garden, a nearby golf club, beach or reserve. The idea is that you just get into and connect with nature for a couple of hours and relax, re-energise and heal.



The QWildlife koala app makes it easy to report koala sightings in the wild.

App users can upload information about a koala's location as well as photos and observations about their appearance and condition.

Successful koala conservation relies on a collaborative approach across all sectors, and for individuals and communities to also play a role in protecting local koalas.