



# RGSQ Bulletin

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## From the President

### Volunteers

At the beginning of this new financial year, I would like to thank all those who volunteered and helped to sustain our Society over the past twelve months.

I would especially like to thank Maureen Meier for distributing the *Bulletin*, and Audrey Johnson who fills in for her when Maureen is unavailable, plus all those who helped with the various mail-outs associated with the Geography Competition. There are just too many of you to mention by name here. Volunteers worked extremely hard as there were bulk mail-outs in January, March and May.

We can be assured of a very successful 2012 Pungalina-Seven Emu Scientific Study. Currently we have a volunteer group led by Tony Hillier on site at Pungalina Station in the Northern Territory, preparing the initial setup for our next Scientific Study to be held mid 2012.

We have also had an extremely good year with our Treks and Activities Committee ably led by Brian McGrath. We held a very successful

trek to western Queensland during the year, and our numbers for weekend excursions have been extremely healthy.

To all our volunteers and on behalf of myself and everyone at The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland – a very sincere thank you. Without your efforts our Society would not be anywhere near as successful as it is.

### Coal Seam Gas Industry

Over the past couple of weeks we have once again celebrated the connection between the City and the Bush in Queensland with the Royal National Association's Agricultural and Industrial Show held right here in Brisbane. This has been a very timely reminder of the role the agricultural industry plays in our food supply.

On Sunday (8 August) I have just witnessed 'Landline' on the ABC Television Network and for the second week in succession it has featured the fast emerging conflict between coal seam gas extraction companies and Australian farmers in some of the most productive food growing areas in Australia, namely the Darling Downs in Queensland and the Liverpool Plains in New South Wales.

The coal seam gas industry is developing at breakneck speed without proper environmental impact assessment and according to the agricultural lobby, somewhat weak government regulation, particularly here in Queensland. This development has driven together some elements of formerly conflicting

groups from the farming community and the green alliance.

A Federal Government Senate Inquiry is struggling to catch up with the social and environmental impacts so that future legislation will ensure the sustainability of our best cropland and our equally precious great artesian basin aquifers underneath. The environmental impact of mining in the Murray Darling Basin is not yet fully understood and the CSIRO are to collaborate with industry on a new research program.

In Queensland there is a possible conflict of interest with the Queensland Government being both the regulator and the receiver of considerable royalties from this new industry. In NSW large parcels of land have been purchased by mining corporations determined to mine, and who now face an equally determined opposition from farming communities and organizations determined to protect valuable agricultural land and arrest some of the unbridled development that has already occurred in parts of Queensland.

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Farmers have been intimidated and forced to deal with trillion dollar companies over the legalities of access to their own properties. According to published statistics, there are already 2700 gas wells in Queensland alone and an ever growing network of pipes and roads throughout rural properties. Hopefully in the not too distant future, legislation will protect our extremely important agricultural industries and our irreplaceable natural resources. Alarm bells are ringing. This is not just a concern for country people – sustainable food is a necessity and a concern for us all. You can view *Landline* on [www.abc.net.au/landline](http://www.abc.net.au/landline).

Finally, I would like to wind up my September message with a couple of brief good news stories.

Sharyn and I recently returned from our visit to New Zealand – land of some quite remarkable birds, most notably the kiwi. According to *Australian Geographic* (May 2011) Manukura, an extremely rare white kiwi chick (apparently the first all-white chick to be hatched in captivity) is one of a rare sub-species found on a remote sanctuary in the North Islands, Little Barrier Island. Staff at Pukaha Mount Bruce, home to many kiwi, remarked 'Every now and then something extraordinary comes along to remind you of how special life is'.

While at home here in Australia scientists have successfully bred a mountain pygmy possum from two genetic groups. These animals are only found at Mt Hotham and Mt Buller in Victoria, and Mt Kosciuszko in New South Wales. A temporary liaison by relocating Mt Hotham males into female territory at Mt Buller has resulted in two genetically different populations of marsupials.

While these 2 examples are just a sample of what's happening in the wider world, future generations will quite rightly applaud those people who fight for, and so successfully muster science, advertising, publicity, national parks, industry, and our politicians to ensure we do arrest the decline of, and protect the world's extremely important biodiversity.

Leo Scanlan

## Pungalina-Seven Emu Scientific Study

As mentioned in previous *Bulletins*, our Society is organising a multi-disciplinary scientific study in 2012 to Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary, a property of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in the Northern Territory.

The fieldwork period will extend from 25 June to 23 July 2012. We are asking for expressions of interest from members interested in volunteering to help with the Study. We'd particularly like to hear from someone willing to take on the role of "Camp Cook / Meals Organiser". This person will be in charge of coordinating all the meals and water distribution for the main camp and the three out-camps. There will be a team of volunteers to help in this task of feeding our participants. This person would ideally stay for the whole length of the camp. Other volunteers are needed for periods from a week or two before the study period to prepare the site, to a week after for the clean-up.

Recently, our Organising Committee members plus a few other volunteers travelled up to Pungalina Station starting the week of 25 July 2011 and have recently returned. The aim of the visit was initial preparation of the site, with the upgrading of facilities, such as toilets, kitchen and showers. This was successfully organised by the our "hard working man" Tony Hillier.

Would all those members who have, or are intending to volunteer for the 2012 expedition to Pungalina, Please note that you **must have a FULL 4WD with low range transmission**. Light or medium duty all-wheel drive vehicles without a transfer case and high clearance will not be able to access the homestead or move around the property.

There is more information on the Study and its components on our website, [www.rgsq.org.au/whatson](http://www.rgsq.org.au/whatson). If you think you might be available to come and share the Pungalina-Seven Emu experience with us, please contact Hayley Freemantle by email at [projectofficer@rgsq.org.au](mailto:projectofficer@rgsq.org.au), or by phone 3368 2066.

## Day Trip – Toowoomba

Members and guests are invited to join us for a **day bus excursion** visiting Toowoomba Gardens – native and exhibition.

This trip has been especially scheduled for the school holidays – bring your children and grandchildren along! It's also the final day of the Carnival of Flowers celebrations, so Toowoomba's gardens should be magnificent.

When: Sunday 25 September 2011, 8.00am till 5.30pm

Where: Pick-up at, and return to Gregory Park, Baroona Road, Milton

How: Sunstate Coach

BYO: lunch and drinks. Lunch will be in Society member Greg Lewis's garden, and will followed by a talk by a member of Friends of the Escarpment Park, and then by a conducted tour of the University of Queensland's Boyce Gardens.

Cost: \$35 per person, covers the bus cost, morning tea, luncheon talk and Boyce Gardens tour. Cost for children is only \$25, and there's a special rate of \$100 for 2 adults and 2 accompanying school children.

**Please book and pay the office by 9 Sept 2011.** Numbers are limited (by the coach size), so don't delay booking.

Members from Toowoomba and nearby are invited to join us at the lunch venue for the afternoon's activities.

Jeanette Lamont

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## Annual General Meeting

As notified in the last *Bulletin*, the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 6 September 2011.

The Council's annual report will be presented, as will the statement of income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the Society. The meeting will elect the Society's Council for 2011/12 and appoint the auditor for the same period. This is your opportunity to get an overview of the

work of our busy Society over the course of a year and to ask questions about it.

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## Council Vacancies

At this stage we are expecting two of the Society's current Councillors not to stand for re-election. All members are asked to consider serving the Society in this role, and nominating for Council. If you would like more information, please talk to a Councillor, or ring Keith or Kath in the office.

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## Victoria Falls to Cape Town Tour 2012

Departing Australia on 16 April 2012 and travelling to Victoria Falls, Chobe, Okavango Delta, Etosha, Cape Cross, Swakopmund, Namib Naukluft, Fish River Canyon, Cederberg, Stellenbosch, Cape Point and Cape Town.

Sound interesting?

All airfares Brisbane/Brisbane flying Singapore Airlines with 3 star accommodation for 23 days. For further information, a copy of the itinerary and cost please phone Lynn Law from Travel Concepts on 3420 6397 or mobile 0419 779 448, or Leo Scanlan on 3343 4398. Don't miss out on this RGSQ trip, numbers are strictly limited.

*Leo Scanlan*

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## Vale – Jon Stephenson

Dr Philip Jon Stephenson died on 24 May 2011. Jon was awarded the Society's J.P. Thomson Medal "for exploration and contribution to the geographical knowledge of North Queensland through research and publication". Jon was renowned for his work on the Undara lava tubes, but this followed earlier significant work in Antarctica. Jon was geologist and glaciologist on the 1957-58 Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, the first ever crossing of Antarctica, at the same time, making Jon the first Australian at the South Pole. An obituary, written by David Carstens, is on our website at [www.rgsq.org.au/JonSt](http://www.rgsq.org.au/JonSt).

## New Members

We have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members: Nicholas Assaf; Robert and Jacqueline Manktelow. We hope your association with your new Society is long and mutually enjoyable. We look forward to getting to know you at Society functions.

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## Remembrance Day 2011

Friday 11/11/11 we will celebrate Remembrance Day with an appropriate activity.

We will meet at 9.30am at the Yeronga Memorial Park Memorial Entry Gates in Park Road, between Villa Street and School Road, Yeronga. We'll stroll the 1 km along the Memorial Walk towards Ipswich Road, reading the many memorial plaques at the trees lining the walk, and pausing at the Yeronga State School Memorial Garden.

We will hear the story of one of these WW1 soldiers from a relative, then join the RSL Remembrance Day commemoration at the Cenotaph; this will conclude with the Last Post at 11am.

We'll then drive to the Stephens Branch RSL Hall, at the rear of the Muddy Farmer hotel at the corner of Ipswich and Annerley Roads for morning tea, and to inspect their heritage Honour Boards.

Next we'll drive to Yeronga Services Club for 2 course lunch with tea or coffee (other drinks at own cost). The day should conclude about 2pm.

The cost for this day, including morning tea and lunch is \$26 pp.

If you wish to travel by train, please arrive at Yeronga Station in time for the short walk up Killarney St to the Memorial Gates by 9.30am. The Station is also quite handy to the Services Club for the return journey. Let us know if you are travelling by train, and car transport will be arranged to and from the RSL Hall and Services Club. Bookings close on Friday 4 November.

More details from Brian McGrath, email: [brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com](mailto:brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com).

## National Geographic World Championship

The Australian team has come fourth at the National Geographic World Championship, held at the end of July in San Francisco – the best result since 1995. Representing Australia were:

- Michael Gu, Melbourne Grammar School
- Riley Kernaghan, MacGregor State High School, Brisbane
- Jesse Tong, Brisbane Grammar School

Competing in the National Geographic World Championship were teams of students 16 years old and younger from: Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Taiwan, UK and USA. The interaction with students from diverse countries is as important as the tests or exploring the host city.

All teams completed a written test and then a second test held at San Francisco Zoo which included map reading and geographical questions on places and environments related to the animals the students could see. On the basis of these two tests, Russia, Taiwan and Canada made it through to the final. Australia came fourth, tying with the United States.

The final was held at Google headquarters in nearby Mountain View. Russia took out first place, with Canada second and Taiwan third. All the teams then had lunch in a Google staff cafeteria (an experience in itself) followed by a tour and presentations on aspects of Google Earth and Google Maps. It was interesting to hear about their work on disaster response and the diplomatic challenges of some geopolitical boundaries, and fun for some students to take a ride in a Street View car.

However, perhaps the most interesting part was seeing how Google's corporate culture worked in practice: multiple free cafeterias which specified every ingredient of the food and the cooking method, with recyclable, compostable or reusable containers; staff playing

pool or volleyball because it was good to have a break and come back refreshed to work; bicycles (in Google colours) everywhere for staff to use to go between the many buildings on the extensive grounds.

The students also visited Point Reyes. The visitors' centre is located in the San Andreas Fault Zone, and the students walked a trail with a park ranger to see evidence of the 1906 earthquake. The land to the east is on the North American Plate, and Point Reyes itself is on the Pacific Plate. The weather can be quite different as well with the ridge immediately to the west of the San Andreas Fault Zone stopping the fogs that affect Point Reyes – and

San Francisco as well during our stay – spreading farther inland. On the way back to San Francisco, we visited Muir Woods to see the impressive coastal redwoods.

There was some free time during the programme and during these periods, the Australian team visited the California Academy of Sciences Museum and the Cable Car Museum, rode the cable cars (though the queues were so long that was a struggle), strolled along Fishermans Wharf, caught a bus over the Golden Gate Bridge, and much more, including attending a baseball match, which we went to with the Taiwanese and UK teams.

The food was also part of the San Francisco experience reflecting the diverse elements that make up San Francisco – waffles, pancakes and sweet pastries for breakfast, hotdogs at the baseball, the Empress of China Restaurant in Chinatown, Bubba Gump Shrimp Restaurant at Fishermans Wharf, and Chevy's Fresh Mex Restaurant.

One of our team, Jesse Tong, sums up the experience: "I have greatly enjoyed competing in the National Geographic World Championship and also seeing the sights of San Francisco. The highlight of the trip has been meeting other young geographers from many countries and cultures around the world."

# RGSQ Bulletin

September 2011

**Meeting**, Tues 6 Sept, 7.30pm  
What: Annual General Meeting

**Trek**, 12 - 19 Sept  
What: Haddon Corner Revisited

**Day Trip**, Sun 25 Sept, 8.00am  
What: Coach to Carnival of Flowers  
Where: Toowoomba

**Lecture**, Tues 4 Oct, 7.30pm  
Speaker: Assoc Prof Greg Brown  
Subject: Public Participation GIS in Forest  
Planning: the Wisdom of the Crowd or  
the Tyranny of the Masses?

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