

The 2012 Celebration of Nature

For the second consecutive year, in perfect weather conditions, the Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition sponsored the Festival of Nature celebrations at Jeff and Debbie Keayes' Sportsman Creek Conservation Area at Dilkoon, 30km north of Grafton on the Summerland Way.

Jeff is managing his property as a carbon offset site with a focus on biodiversity conservation, and has so far identified no less than 600 species of plants, animals insects and fungi on that property.

Much of the land has been heavily modified by past land clearing and logging activities, and probably bears little resemblance to the forests the land once supported. However, healthy regeneration is occurring, and most importantly a significant number of old-growth, hollow-bearing trees have survived to provide crucial habitat for a range fauna including gliders, parrots, forest owls and microbats.

An area of relatively intact riparian woodlands have survived along Sportsman Creek which is subjected to periodic flooding and contains some magnificent specimens of Flooded gum, Narrow-leaved Apple, and Forest Red Gum.



Sportsman Creek riparian zone, a relatively intact remnant of Forest Red Gum-Swamp Box Forest of the Clarence Valley Lowlands.

That floodway also supports populations of two uncommon species, the Port Jackson Pine and a shrub, *Micrantheum ericoides*.



The *Micrantheum* is an attractive two metre tall shrub with small white flowers followed by a green berry. It normally grows in heath and dry sclerophyll forests, so its occurrence in a relatively fertile floodway is unusual.

I was given the honour of leading a nature walk on the day, identifying plants and ecosystems, and the opportunity to explain how the various ecosystems work.



Participants on the nature walk.

Jeff had prepared a 'gallery' of photographs of many of the 600 species found on his land, and displayed some examples of rustic and stick furniture that he makes as a sideline.

Sharon Lehman took on the most challenging task, that of keeping the younger participants entertained, with her usual infectious enthusiasm.

To cap it all, Jeff and Debbie were perfect hosts which ensured an enjoyable and informative day for all participants. Thanks Guys.

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