

# SAVANNAH GUIDES

## Communicator

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April 2015

Welcome to our April Newsletter!

After the wet season break we are ready to go for another exciting tourist season in beautiful northern Australia.

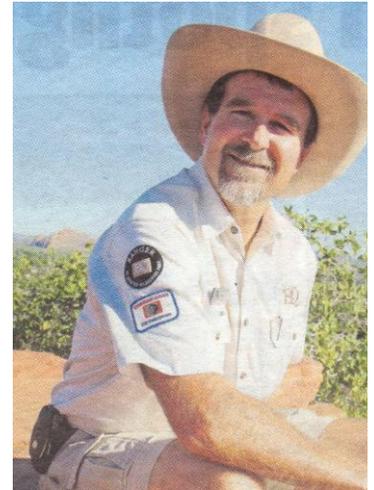
Thanks to those who made it to our very successful Savannah Guides school at Undara Experience. It was a great mix of learning and fun exploring the region and meeting new participants.

We have some great plans for 2015 that have already started with our review of accreditation categories and rules. We hope that many members will be a part of our new training initiatives and that everyone will be able to promote Savannah Guides through our new "Supporters" initiative.

More details in the pages inside!

*Mick Clark*

President - Savannah Guides



## Undara School – Storytelling in the Savannahs!

*The Undara Savannah Guides School showed great collaboration from many of our members and stakeholders to bring the Gulf Savannah landscape to life.*

Many long-term members and new friends came together at Undara for a memorable four days. Our storytelling theme was supported by presenters including geologist extraordinaire David Johnson and Australian Tropical Herbarium partner Darren Crayn. We looked at interpretive themes through signage and commentary exercises and options for tourism development on field trips to Undara Crater and Talaroo Hot Springs. At night we were dazzled again by Jim's astronomy and kicked back to some campfire classics with headline acts Ross Rogers and the Deadly Delta Downs Dudes.

### INSIDE ...

-  Undara Memories
-  New Category Names
-  New Supporters Program
-  Indigenous Astronomy
-  Lots of Research Links
-  Where Birdsong Began

We welcomed new Members Moreton Telegraph Station (Site) and Special member Pete Schlothauer, plus Mac Jackson, Kane Bassett and Liz Fisher (Site Interpreters), and Uncle Nev Prentice, Mark Pugh and James Boettcher, (Roving Interpreters). Senior Savannah Guide Rick Edwards was invited to join the Board to replace John Colless. Many thanks to both members for their outstanding commitment. Our sincere appreciation to the Undara team, Joe Lockyer and all who made the School such a success.

## SAVANNAH GUIDES

Savannah Guides is a network of professional tour guides with a collective in-depth knowledge of the natural and cultural assets of Northern Australia. It is a not-for-profit company with enterprise and individual members. Savannah Guides works with many of Australia's leading tourism, environmental and community organisations to pursue its mission:

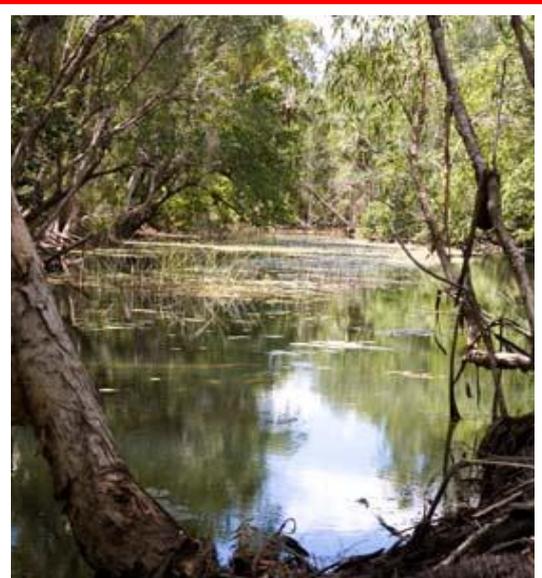
Being an economically sound, community based, professional body maintaining high standards of: interpretation and public education; training and guiding leadership; and through the promotion of ecologically sustainable tourism principles, enhancing regional lifestyles and encouraging the protection and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of the Tropical Savannahs of Northern Australia.



The next **SAVANNAH GUIDES SCHOOL** will be held at  
**Adel's Grove**  
**15-18 October 2015**

Explore the stunning Lawn Hill Gorge, World Heritage listed Riversleigh Fossil Fields and outback icon Adel's Grove at our next Savannah Guides School. We'll be swimming, canoeing, walking and of course learning a lot about this unique landscape featuring a massive sandstone gorge, natural springs and their calcium tufa deposits, the fossil mammals of 20 million years ago and maybe even a purple-crowned fairy wren on your twitchathon list. A full range of accommodation is available and we plan to have transport available from Cairns. The Information and Registration Form will be available soon at:

<http://savannah-guides.com.au/about/savannah-guide-schools/>



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Board and Members of Savannah Guides Limited are in the process of some rule changes aimed at strengthening our membership, which is fundamental to our ongoing success. A strong and growing membership means greater benefits for all members and their communities, great Schools with strong involvement, a more financially secure organisation, and increased credibility with funding and tourism authorities.

These changes will:

- Maintain our position as the highest standard Tour Guide Accreditation program in Australia and leader in professional development delivery
- Increase Individual Guide Membership to build Savannah Guides' network, capacity and benefits
- Support Savannah Guides commercial growth in delivering guide programs, mentoring, workshops, training and associated services
- Simplify Membership structure and access for better public understanding

The recent General Meeting at Undara Experience saw the passing of some important changes to our Constitution. These are the most significant branding developments for Savannah Guides in over ten years and, together with the new Supporters initiative (see below) will have "the phantom" out there like never before:

1. All Enterprises (Savannah Guides Sites, Savannah Guides Stations and Savannah Guides Operators and Savannah Guides Master Operators) will now be known as **Savannah Guides Enterprises**.
2. Individual Members will be first accredited as a **Savannah Guide** (removing the Site Interpreter and Roving Interpreter categories). The higher level will now be called **Senior Savannah Guide**. This senior accreditation has the same status as the previous Savannah Guide level, earned through contributions to the organisation. Savannah Guides and Senior Savannah Guides will both wear the Savannah Guide Patch / Badge.

We are currently designing and producing the new Savannah Guides Enterprise logo, new style name badges designating Senior and Retired Savannah Guides and Life Members, and many more Savannah Guide patches and badges to send out. Current Site and Roving Interpreters can receive up to three new Savannah Guide patches for free, with more patches and the name badges available for purchase. We'll advise by email when these are available. In the meantime please wear your existing patches proudly.

The Savannah Guides Board is currently working through the feedback received in recent weeks, especially at the General Meeting, about changes to the By-Laws enabling applicants to receive their accreditation at their first School after a significantly more stringent assessment process, including more education about Savannah Guides. We understand the sincere concern about maintaining and even increasing the standards Savannah Guides has set and will not be lowering the bar.

It has been very gratifying to see the level of member passion and input to discussions – this is the true strength of Savannah Guides and continues to drive us forward. Thank you.

Please don't hesitate to contact me about any matters or just call for a friendly chat.

Regards

*Mick Clark*

President - Savannah Guides



## Cyclone Marcia Hits Capricorn Caves

In the early hours of Friday 20 February 2015 Cyclone Marcia escalated from category 2 to Category 5 as it crossed the Queensland coast. At 11.30 am the eye of Marcia passed over Capricorn Caves, just to the north of Rockhampton.

Trees fell like matchsticks covering the caravan park and blocking the roads but missing all of the buildings. Tracks, paths and boardwalks into the caves were impassable. In one cave entrance an uprooted tree was held up by a vine over a suspension bridge. Surprisingly no buildings were damaged except for dints in the gutters but the mass destruction to the dry rainforest was overwhelming and soul destroying.

The clean up began the next day. Hacking through the jungle of vines, chain sawing the iron barks to open up essential roads and pathways was hard yakka. High humidity, temperatures over 35 degrees, green ants attacking, snakes slithering away and thorns from the vine thicket piercing very limb made the whole process incredibly challenging. The staff put in three weeks of hard labour but on Monday 23 February they magnanimously volunteered their labour and brought along partners and family members yielding rakes and chain saws. Such a day was very emotional.

With no electricity to pump water and treat waste water, no communications systems and no refrigeration for 11 days we were closed for visitation, reopening on 2 March. Mains power was reconnected just before Easter.

As for the caves there is not a single piece of evidence that the eye of Marcia had passed over the limestone ridge.

*Ann Augusteyn, Capricorn Caves*

## Savannah Guide Freia Lee alerts RSPCA: Who shot this pelican with an arrow?



**In November 2014 wildlife authorities found a pelican that had been shot in the leg with an arrow.**

The pelican was spotted by residents at Tinaroo Dam on the Atherton Tablelands with an arrow protruding from its leg.

Resident Freia Lee says it was a terrible sight. "I was devastated," she said. "Why would you go out and shoot an animal for fun and the thing is going to die a horrible death, it's just so upsetting, it's really awful."

Ms Lee was kayaking with her friends when she saw the injured bird. "We came across a pelican sitting on the point with an arrow through the top of its leg," she said.

The pelican was finally captured but had to be put down due to an infection around the arrow wound.

A curlew was recently put down after being found with an arrow through its body at Tully Heads. If found the offenders could face up to two years in gaol.

*From ABC News and The Cairns Post*



Senior Savannah Guide Amanda inspects the damage



Capricorn Caves tank saves the office

## ... and out of the wreckage

Capricorn Caves won the 2014 Bronze Australian Tourism Award for Tourist Attractions on April 10 2015. Congratulations Ann, Amanda and all of the team.



**Vanuatu Disaster Relief:** Vanuatu is struggling to rebuild after its cyclone devastation.

To help contact: [Red Cross](#) : [Save the Children](#) : [Oxfam](#) : [Unicef](#)



Undara Memories: 26-29 March 2015



Pete on Moreton Telegraph Station



Kane on Tour



Undara Crater

Scrambling on the Undara Crater



Andres at the Gaol Gym



Rick Edwards grilling Uncl Nev in the Hot Seat



Ivor serves Bush Brekky

Campfire Jamming



## Savannah Guides Supporters Program

A new “Supporter” Program has been introduced to better promote our Member Enterprises by referring visitors to other members.

The aims of the program are to promote the Savannah Guides brand and its Enterprise Members by:

- Facilitating consumer subscription to our E-newsletter, where we can further promote Enterprises
- Encouraging more on-tour commentary about what SGL is, and referrals to other Members’ experiences
- Directing visitors to our website where they can research Members’ products

Savannah Guides will supply enterprises (and individual guides on request) with Savannah Guides car bumper stickers and bookmarks with the Savannah Guides logo and website. Guides are asked to include a short commentary about SGL on every tour, including that guests can receive a free sticker/bookmark if they leave their email address for subscription to the SGL E-newsletter. Guides can also give recommendations of other Enterprises here. SGL will provide suggested commentary information. SGL will also make a poster available on A3 and A4 sized corflute explaining SGL activities, for display at Enterprises.

Different Enterprises will collect the email addresses in different ways according to what works best with their vehicle, reception, booking process etc. Completed forms are faxed or emailed to SGL where they will be entered into the e-newsletter database.

Our e-newsletter will include additional consumer oriented content to encourage visits to other enterprises. This will require content (images and paragraphs) and any special events or offers from Enterprise Members. This will also build awareness of products within our own membership.

This is a great initiative to increase visitor awareness and share our customers around. We will have the signs, stickers, bookmarks and commentary suggestions to you very soon.

### FINDING HAPPINESS

A great idea from the TED series of talks found on You Tube:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work)

We are pushing happiness and success to the next step – always wanting more to be satisfied. We think success = happiness. Maybe we shouldn’t keep expecting so much of ourselves. Take stock of what you have. Happiness can be very productive in the workplace too.

To build happiness try:

- ⊕ 2 mins exercise a day
- ⊕ 3 gratitudes to other people
- ⊕ Meditation for a better focus
- ⊕ Journaling your positive experiences
- ⊕ Perform random acts of kindness

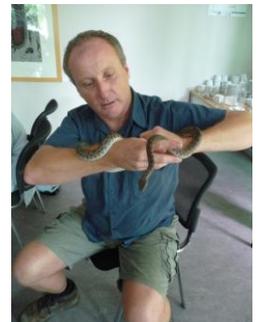
Check [www.ted.com/talks](http://www.ted.com/talks) for more motivating talks!

### WET TROPICS TOUR GUIDE PROGRAM

Savannah Guides continues to work with its partner, the Wet Tropics Management Authority, to develop the Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program.

Our latest Field School was held in Port Douglas and Mossman with a great range of topics including:

- Tangaroa Blue’s waste collection and analysis
- FNQ Wildlife Rescue’s President on animal First Aid tips
- Lunch with the Lorikeets and behind the scenes at Wildlife Habitat
- Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tours at Cooya Beach
- Mossman Gorge Centre Site Inspection and lunch with native foods
- Guiding Tips from Chris O’Dowd of Venture Deeper
- Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program Update and Certificate Presentation
- Mossman Gorge for a Cooperative Interpretation rainforest walk



Andrew James



Brandon Walker

Our TQUAL Grant has now finished, so there are no more scholarships available for the online 3 unit course, but we are looking at ways we can deliver this in an affordable way so will have more news soon.

If you’d like to know more about the program please visit: [www.wettropics.gov.au/tour-guide-training](http://www.wettropics.gov.au/tour-guide-training) or contact Russell to receive the Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program E-newsletter.



## My time at the Undara Savannah Guides School

Savannah Guide Schools have become a big part of Oz Tours training and bonding for our staff for the coming season. It is great to meet guides from other companies and it was especially important for me to catch up and also to meet some of the retired Savannah Guides, some of who I had not met before. The wealth of knowledge these people have to pass on is invaluable.

The highlights for me were leading the feasibility study on the loop walk around the entrance at Undara and giving input to both the Undara Crater walk and Talaroo Hot Springs. It is really good to see Moreton Telegraph Station become a Savannah Guides Enterprise after all the hard work put in by Mike and Wendy Hintz and Pete Schlothauer and past Managers Jim Fitzgerald and Susanne over the years. It was also great to see new guides get their patch - it shows the continuing good work from Savannah Guides Ltd.

Leaving the best till last I am very proud to now be a Savannah Guides Board Member and am looking forward to contributing to our great organization.

Rick Edwards – Oz Tours Safaris



Rick Edwards

## Lock In Your Visit!

Opening this month, [Fremantle Prison YHA](#) provides unique accommodation where guests can sleep in nineteenth century prison cells of the World Heritage-listed Fremantle Prison with history interpreted throughout the building.

## North Queensland Natural History Group News

From Mike Anthony

- Next Field Weekend is 6-8 June at Gilberton Station
- Visit the new Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NQNaturalHistory>
- On the revamped ALA site [www.ala.org.au](http://www.ala.org.au) – you can now print off a field guide for a specified area – click on ALA Apps at the top, choose “Explore your area” from the drop-down box, put in a location - town, address or lat & long, then choose the group you want to download – can do All Species, Animals, Plants or one of the groups, then click Downloads and fill out the details then a field guide will download!

## Scientists catch a feral cat killing a large mammal on camera 'for the first time'

A Tasmanian scientist has caught on camera a feral cat killing and eating a 4kg Pademelon, providing the best direct evidence of feral cats killing mammals heavier than two kilograms.

Scientists suspected that feral cats were capable of taking down the larger animals after the remains of 3-4 kilogram animals were found, but until now a feral cat had not been caught in action.

The images showed an adult Pademelon, similar to a small kangaroo, hop in front of the camera to graze before the cat pounced on its back and killed it by biting into its neck.



<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-30/scientists-catch-a-feral-cat-killing-a-large-mammal-on-camera-f/6357868>



Night sky over Lake Tyrell in Western Victoria - home of the Wergaia people

## Indigenous Astronomy

We can easily find information on scientific aspects of the cosmos – just ask Jim Fitzgerald! However many traditional stories around the meaning of the stars have been lost. One essay from Victoria has been recently unearthed. Check out:

<http://www.emudreaming.com/literature/Stanbridge1857.pdf>

There is also an informative Australian Indigenous Astronomy blog at:

<http://aboriginalastronomy.blogspot.com.au/>

Research your region to add value to your interpretation and remember to link to Traditional owners where possible as per our Cultural Protocols principles.



**A Tale of Two Pascoes**

Geoffrey Pascoe of the Gulflander Train meets Ian Pascoe of Outback Aussie Tours



**Follow Up from Niilo Gobius**

Our Undara School Presenter on Spatial datasets sends these links to free datasets:

**Geoscience Australia**

<http://www.ga.gov.au/data-pubs>

**Queensland Government**

<https://data.qld.gov.au/maps-geospatial>

This site includes the Queensland Globe which brings in all the spatial datasets for viewing in Google earth

*Cheers*

*Niilo Gobius*



**LEARN TO IDENTIFY TROPICAL RAINFOREST PLANTS!**

Short course in Rainforest Plant Identification at the Daintree Rainforest Observatory. Spaces are limited, and enrolments close on Monday 8th June. Residential course at Paluma in November.

<https://alumni.jcu.edu.au/PIC2015>

Stuart Worboys Ph: 07 4232 1757



**Kakadu National Park**

Walking Track Strategy details are here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/walking-strategy>

**Key to Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants** edition 6,

available FREE online at

[www.ath.org.au/JCUPRD\\_042124.html](http://www.ath.org.au/JCUPRD_042124.html)

**Running Away to the Zoo?**

Try this link to Australasian Society of Zookeeping for jobs around Australia:

[http://www.australasianzookeeping.org/Zoo\\_Positions\\_Vacant.htm](http://www.australasianzookeeping.org/Zoo_Positions_Vacant.htm)

**For those who know the road to El Questro**

– some Wet Season photos from President Mick Clark



No getting to town today...



The Grotto near Wyndham



...rare collector's shots of the SGL President out of uniform...



# More Awesome Resources:

Senior Savannah Guide Jim Fitzgerald is currently studying [Origins - Formation of the Universe, Solar System, Earth and Life](#) free online from the University of Copenhagen. It has lots of good resources including:

- [Meteorites](#) and how they explain the origins of the Solar System
- The [international chronostratigraphic chart](#) (Solar System evolution timeline)
- Free resources from the [Howard Hughes Medical Institute](#).
- The [EarthViewer app](#) is a great means of understanding geologic time
- [Vision Learning](#), lots of free knowledge!
- The Smithsonian Museum's [Evolving Earth](#), including geologic dating techniques, Earth and life processes
- The [Burgess Shales](#) in Canada which helps explain the origin of animals and the Cambrian explosion
- NASA - [the carbon cycle](#)
- [Diversity in obscurity](#): fossil flowers and the early history of angiosperms
- [Human evolution](#)

## Museum Visits:

<a href="#">Tate</a>	<a href="#">Stanford School of Medicine</a>
<a href="#">The British Museum</a>	<a href="#">Crash Course</a>
<a href="#">The Museum of Modern Art</a>	<a href="#">American Museum of Natural History</a>
<a href="#">The J. Paul Getty Museum</a>	<a href="#">Wi-Phi (Wireless Philosophy)</a>
<a href="#">California Academy of Sciences</a>	<a href="#">Asian Art Museum</a>
<a href="#">Exploratorium</a>	<a href="#">NASA</a>
<a href="#">All-Star Orchestra</a>	<a href="#">Big History Project</a>

### Channel View Publications

has some interesting new tourism research titles at: [http://www.multilingual-matters.com/results.asp?nat=true&stem=true&sf1=keyword&st1=ref\\_no&sqf=/1:75&sort=sort\\_date/d](http://www.multilingual-matters.com/results.asp?nat=true&stem=true&sf1=keyword&st1=ref_no&sqf=/1:75&sort=sort_date/d) including **Tour Guiding Research** Insights, Issues and Implications by Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black

## MAP TIME!

- Check out the mapping and heritage resources at QLD Department of Natural Resources and Mines: <https://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/mapping-data/maps>
- NT Natural Resource Maps also has information at [www.nrmmaps.nt.gov.au](http://www.nrmmaps.nt.gov.au)

## TURTLE POISONING

The Wet Tropics Tour Guide Field School recently discussed the indigenous hunting practice of removing a marine turtle's gall bladder while it was still alive to prevent the release of toxins into the meat.

Dr Col Limpus, leading Australian and international researcher of marine turtles advises that there is no information in support of this idea, despite there being cases of toxic turtles. He advises that there is no biological or medical basis that green turtles will be toxic if the gall bladder is not removed while the turtle is still alive.

"There are many areas where green turtles are killed and subsequently butchered with no such toxic consequences. The only case in recent decades in Australia that I am aware of for people getting sick from eating a green turtle occurred in Arnhem Land about a decade or so ago and in that case the meat was contaminated with Salmonella resulting from butchering the turtle in a site that was not being cleaned and sterilised between butchering events. This case involving severe illness with multiple indigenous folks was investigated by health officials in Northern Territory."

### HOW TO WRITE GOOD

1. Avoid Alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. They're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
5. Be more or less specific.
6. Writes should never generalize.
- Seven: Be consistent!
8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.



# Olive Python meets Juvenile Saltwater Crocodile



**Please remember that Savannah Guides is your vehicle for continual professional development.**

Consider how you can:

- Be nominated for a Savannah Guides award – these are available to accredited guides employed by Member Enterprises
- Upgrade your accreditation to Senior Savannah Guide by contributing to Savannah Guides activities & Mission
- Stand for election to the Board
- Join a project to assist developing businesses or integrate Responsible Tourism into member activities
- Contribute to the newsletter

Ask Russell or a Savannah Guides Board member for details.

**Don't you need one of these on your nice cool wheel hubs?**



**News from**

**SAVANNAH WAY LIMITED**

The Local Tourism Organisation for the Gulf Savannah has been busy:

- ◆ A new A3 tear-off map of the “Gems and Gorges Trail” south of Georgetown is targeted for release at the Brisbane Caravan Show in June thanks to support from TTNQ.
- ◆ The Gulf Savannah Tourism Futures Conference was held at Undara on 27 March. Valuable input was gathered from tourism and local government participants and will be aligned to our regional Destination Tourism Plan to maximise our Regional and State support.
- ◆ The 2015 Gulf Savannah Visitor Guide, new Bird Watching Guide and A4 Savannah Way brochure are being distributed.
- ◆ Architects and engineers have completed designs for the new Barramundi Discovery Centre in Karumba as a part of Savannah Way Limited’s TIRF project with Carpentaria Shire Council. Construction funding has not yet been sourced.
- ◆ New Members joining now will receive a bonus two months membership.



[www.savannahway.com.au](http://www.savannahway.com.au)

Spanish highway safety sign



A Huge Dust storm in Western Australia 2013



# More of the Undara Savannah Guides School



Tracey and Greg at morning tea



Rick, Rick and Jim



Lee, Catherine and Fern at the campfire

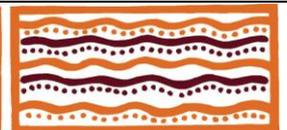
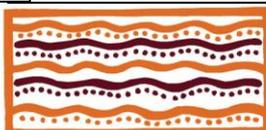
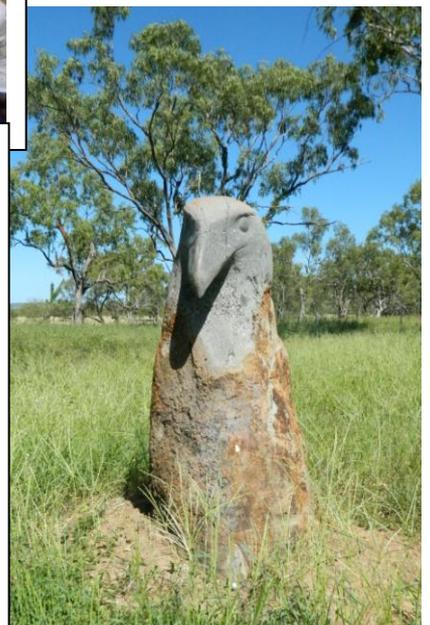


David Morgans at the Tourism Futures Conference

Jen Bartlett from QPWS



The Delta Downs team: Bradley, Warren, Cedric, Joseph, Bronwyn and Layla



## NEW EQUIPMENT



At the Undara Savannah Guides School James Boettcher was modelling a very effective sling strap for nursing cameras while on the move! James says it's great for hiking/birding/photography enthusiasts and there are many varieties.

Check out:

<http://www.blackrapid.com/products/sport>



James Impersonator

## SAVANNAH GUIDES PARTNERSHIPS

Savannah Guides Limited has a range of valued partners who assist our organisation work towards its mission:

### Our Corporate Partners

*Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service* – support our Schools through expert presentations and participation and continually liaise with Savannah Guides on access and park monitoring issues.

*Tourism NT* – long term partners acknowledging Savannah Guides Limited's role in experience development.

*Savannah Way Limited* – promotes the Cairns to Broome drive route and features SGL Enterprise Members.

*Price Waterhouse Coopers, Townsville* – leading accountancy firm who complete our Annual Financial Review.

### Our Project Partners

*Wet Tropics Management Authority* – protectors and presenters of the ancient rainforests in north Queensland who contract Savannah Guides to run tour guide workshops for rainforest guides.

*Ecotourism Australia* – developing links between guides and promoting excellence in interpretation.

SAVANNAH GUIDES



*Protectors and Interpreters of the Outback*

## Rogue owl caught after year-long reign of terror in Dutch town

A rogue owl that has terrorised a northern Dutch city for the past year, forcing citizens to arm themselves with umbrellas at night, has been caught, officials have announced.

Dubbed the "terror owl" by residents of Purmerend, north of Amsterdam, the aggressive European eagle owl is suspected of more than 50 attacks on humans, swooping silently from above and leaving many of its victims bloody and bruised.

"The animal was trapped by a falconer today," the Purmerend city council said on Friday evening.

"It's in good health and is currently being kept in a temporary facility awaiting a transfer once a proper permanent home has been found," it added.

In one of the many assaults, two members of a local athletics clubs were attacked last month, with one runner requiring stitches for six head wounds caused by the nocturnal bird of prey's talons.

Owl experts have said the bird's behaviour was unusual, meaning it was either raised in captivity and associated humans with food, or had heightened hormone levels because of the start of the breeding season.

The European eagle owl is one of the largest owl species, with a wingspan of up to 1.8 metres and weighing up to 3kg.

City council member Mario Hegger said he had mixed feelings about the owl's capture.

"On the one hand, you would of course rather leave such a magnificent beast alone," he said. "But on the other hand, the situation could not continue. We had to do something."



An excerpt from: <http://www.traveller.com.au/the-worlds-best-tour-guides-follow-the-leaders-133c3j>

featuring our WA mate Brian Lee:

## The world's best tour guides: Follow the leaders

A good tour guide can make your whole holiday, but a bad tour guide can sour your impressions of a destination forever. A guide can have a key role in shaping our memories (and that's some responsibility). Before we visit them, every destination can be just a scene from a movie, or a photo we saw in a magazine or a book, or perhaps a recommendation from a friend or family member; or a story we read in a travel section like this one.

A guide is the person, should we engage them that we entrust to bring a destination to life. And so a good guide is one who instills their passion for a destination or an experience in us ... if they're smitten (and they should be: after all, if they can't love their destination or experience, how do they expect us to?) it's their task to make us fall head over heels in love, too.

We don't need hours of pointless, regurgitated information on holiday, we don't wish to be talked at as if we're high school kids on a science excursion, we want to be taken on a journey. We want to discover that which we won't find in a Google search. We want to feel befriended, but not overwhelmed. We want to feel like locals, privy to secrets. We want to leave a destination hoping, and praying, that we'll come back again one day.

The best guides understand this, and it's for these reasons that those on these page have been nominated by Traveller's writers as being among the finest exponents of their craft on the planet.

**THE GUIDE:** Brian Lee, Tagalong Tours, The Kimberley, Western Australia

**SKILL SET:** Bush tours of the beautiful Cape Leveque region, including insights into local history and culture and a bush tucker lunch.



Secrets shared in Western Australia with Tagalong Tours' Brian Lee.

## GUIDE TO THE GUIDE

"Jump in your car and follow me!" It's not the usual way to start a tour but then, Brian Lee's Tagalong Tours are a long way from ordinary. We are at Kooljaman on Cape Leveque, a peninsula north of Broome that is all long sandy beaches, scrubby bush and rust-red soil. This is four-wheel-drive country. Lee leads the way in his vehicle, the rest of us steer our vehicles in his wake. We are headed into tribal territory, where whites need an invitation to enter.

"I want to give people an insight into Kooljaman, how people lived here before European settlement, and how they lived here after," says Lee, who has been running his tours for four years.

We start by racing the tide along a glorious sweep of a white sandy beach, an experience guaranteed to appeal to any revheads in the group. Eventually we pull over for a spot of beachcombing on the shell-strewn sand, during which Lee, an elder of the Bardi tribe, demonstrates how to whistle through a periwinkle shell.

He also gives us a rundown of the area's multicultural history, from the indigenous inhabitants to European settlers and Japanese pearlers. Lee himself has a typically mixed ancestry, with Japanese and English blood, a Chinese stepfather, and an Italian wife. "I'm a very coloured person," he says happily.

From the beach, we go bush, heading up to Hunter Creek. We cool off with a dip in the clear turquoise waters, while Lee demonstrates the finer points of spear fishing. None of us can boast any skill with the spear, but fortunately Lee bags enough trevally to feed us all for lunch.

As the fish cooks over a campfire, he tells us more stories, ranging from bush lore to tales of his great grandfather, after whom the Hunter River was named. Lee's extraordinary knowledge and his mischievous sense of humour make hanging out with him a joy.

"Want to try a local delicacy?" he asks at one point. "Oorlgoo: they are tiny little birds. We wring their necks and suck out the juice." We are horrified at the idea: only to find the "birds" are actually bird-shaped growths on a plant filled with sweet juice.

*Craig Tansley Feb 16 2015*

## CONGRATULATIONS!

**Hirani Kydd and Bec Kilpatrick** have been accredited as Savannah Guides under our new rule changes (see page 3). Hirani will be guiding for Oz Tours in the Gulf Savannah and Bec will be at the new Savannah Guides Enterprise, **Moreton Telegraph Station** (<http://www.moretonstation.com.au/>).



**Through our link with the World Responsible Tourism movement we have had contact from a fellow tour operator in Africa - Elyon Tours Tanzania ... here's their story.**



A Journey to Tanzania can truly be a memorable experience for any traveller. Ever wonder how safaris into the wild looks like? We offer fascinating Wildlife safari national parks, a once in a lifetime adventure that will definitely keep you stunned!

Tanzania is a home to some of the best tourist attractions and heritage sites of the world. As a result, travellers all over the world desire for Tanzania experience.

There are many exciting places to explore and many facts to know and study about Tanzania while you're here. The country contains a great wealth of biological diversity in its wildlife areas, forests, Wetlands, historical museums, cultural diversities, Marine and serene beaches and its highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro . On each destinations, accommodations are available, varies from comfortable lodges with swimming pools to budget camping but both lodges and tented camps offer high quality service and accommodation. Although camping is more basic, it is still comfortable. We can easily arrange for you to stay in different types of accommodation during your safari if you want to sample a bit of everything.

We can also organize study tour for university students in the country where this tour will give an opportunity to the students and researchers to explore the natural beauty of Tanzania in northern sector including Lake Manyara , great Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater using standard camps. Extension tour to Idyllic beach of Zanzibar is available subject to budget, where you will wind up your tour before flying back home. If you have friends who want to travel to Tanzania to explore Africa with friendly company you are mostly welcome.

Pendaeli Amos

**Elyon Tours Tanzania**

[info@elyontours.com](mailto:info@elyontours.com)

[www.elyontours.com](http://www.elyontours.com)



**Kimberley Protection**

Rio Tinto has announced it will relinquish its claims to mine bauxite on the Mitchell Plateau in the Kimberley.

The WA Government has also created a new law that will permanently ban mining from the majority of the north Kimberley coastline.



**From OUTSIDE and INSIDE a PUBLIC TOILET in Houston, Texas**



## 8 Really Old Things in Nature

Rachel Sussman, a New York-based contemporary artist has spent 10 years researching and photographing some of our planet's oldest living entities in her book [The Oldest Living Things In The World](#).

"The ages of the organisms were important in so much as they were individuals, and that because they were long-lived individuals that was a way to create some personal connection and context for our own very small short time frames here on Earth," Sussman says. So what are the world's oldest life forms?

### Human

French woman Jeanne Calment holds the undisputed title of the oldest verified person, having survived to the age of 122 years and 164 days. Her longevity has been variously attributed to good genes, chocolate consumption, unflappability, or the fact she rode a bicycle until she was 100. She died in 1997, but following in her footsteps, Japanese woman Misao Okawa recently died after celebrating her 117th birthday.

### Mammal

Age can be somewhat harder to prove in creatures without a formal birth certificate, but the title of oldest living mammal has been claimed by the [bowhead whale](#) (*Balaena mysticetus*). Second only in size to the blue whale, the longevity of bowheads was revealed when some were found to be carrying antique ivory and stone harpoon heads embedded in their flesh, suggesting they live up to 200 years. Further research, analyzing amino acids in the eye, has since confirmed this.

### Reptile

In 1777, Captain James Cook's third tour took him to the island nation of Tonga. Like all good guests, he brought a gift for the Tongan royal family: a baby giant tortoise he had taken from Madagascar. That tortoise, called Tu'i Malila — meaning 'King Malila' — remained with the royal family and their descendants for 188 years. After its death, King Malila was actually revealed to be female, but to this day remains the longest lived tortoise.

### Bird

There are a large number of contenders for the title of world's oldest bird, including a foul-mouthed macaw that allegedly belonged to Sir Winston Churchill. However the Guinness World Records recognises an ex-pat Aussie, Cookie, an 82-year-old Major Mitchell cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*) as the official title-holder. Cookie has far outstripped his expected lifespan of 40 to 60 years, having spent 81 years as a resident of Brooklyn Zoo after being transferred from Taronga at just one year old.

### Fish

The age of fish can be difficult to determine. Even the accepted method of counting rings in their scales, much like the growth rings of a tree, has been challenged in the case of Hanako, a koi-carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) who supposedly lived to 226. Hanako, who died in 1977, had been cared for by several generations of the same family, but even such TLC may not have been enough to extend the normal life-span of koi of 50 to 100 years to such a great age. A more certified ancient marine creature is the less attractive more impressive 507-year-old Quahog clam (*Arctica islandica*), from the freezing waters of the North Icelandic Shelf.

### Flowering plant

The deserts of South America are the unlikely home for the world's oldest flowering plant, the Llaretta (*Azorella compacta*). You wouldn't find this plant in any table arrangement; its branches, leaves and tiny flowers are so tightly compacted together that the moss-like mounds can support a person's weight. This relative of parsley grows at just 1.5cm per year, and one plant has been aged at more than 2,000 years old. Unfortunately, it burns very well and is often harvested as fuel.

### Tree

New South Wales is home to a tree so ancient and endangered that its name is concealed to protect its location. The eucalyptus grows shoots from roots estimated to be as much as 13,000 years old, and there are only five known specimens in existence. A more famous, younger relative is the 5,064-year-old bristlecone pine (*Pinus longaeva*) of California. A tree-ring sample was taken in the late 1950s and the age determined only recently. Like the NSW eucalypts, this tree's identity has also been concealed to protect it.

### Colony

The title of oldest living thing was never going to go to something cute, or majestic. It is held by Siberian Actinobacteria: single-celled organisms that have existed in one continuous culture in the Arctic permafrost for hundreds of thousands of years before our species ever evolved. Their age is estimated to be between 400,000 and 600,000 years old, but there are fears climate change and melting permafrost may bring an end to their superlative lives.



*Eucalypt in NSW with 13,000 year old roots*



*The Llaretta - a 2,000 year old flowering plant.*

Llaretta # 0208-1203 (2,000+ years old, Atacama Desert, Chile)

Bianca Nogrady ABC Environment 10 Mar 2015



## Some Interesting Facebook Pages:

Savannah Guides  
 Australian Parrots and Birds  
 Venture Deeper  
 The Kimberley Echo  
 Australian Wildlife Conservancy



**PLEASE SEND YOUR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS!**

It's great to hear your news, learn about something you've seen or share a nice image. Please email your contribution for the November 2015 newsletter or your E-newsletter updates to Russ at: [info@savannah-guides.com.au](mailto:info@savannah-guides.com.au)

## Where Song Began

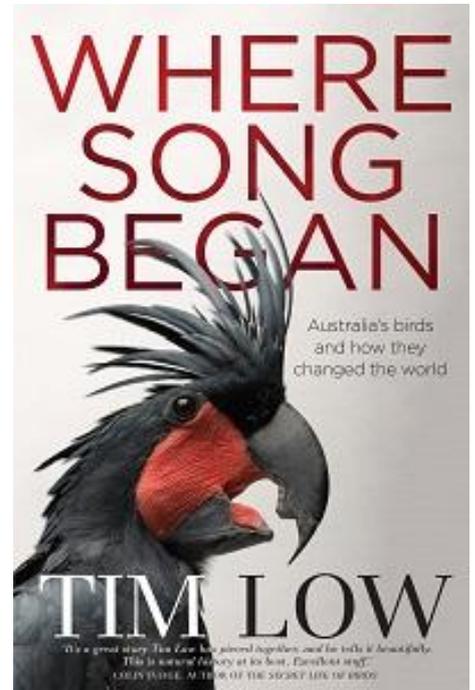
Australia has unusual birds. A recent article in *Ecology* talks, for example, about 'despotic aggressiveness' in woodland bird communities. Australian birds are more likely than most to be intelligent, to live in complex societies, to be long lived, loud, to attack other species, and to eat sugary foods secreted by trees. Reasons why all this might be so have emerged from recent research, which Tim Low draws together into a synthesis, called *Where Song Began*, which was published in 2014 by Penguin.

This book, along with several recent articles linked below, will explain the evolution of birds and importance of the Gondwanan history of Australia in this research. Riversleigh Fossil Field features through the discovery of a 54 million year old finch bone.

[Tim Low – "Where Song Began: Australia's birds and how they changed the world"](#)

Some other interesting articles:

- [Research paper: Interactions between the superb lyrebird \(\*Menura novaehollandiae\*\) and fire in south-eastern Australia](#)
- [Bird song – it's not just a male gig](#)
- [Mulder Lab – Evolutionary Ecology of Birds](#)
- [Bell Miner Associated Dieback \(BMAD\)](#)
- [Tim Low's blog - bird research of the century](#)
- [Special issue, Science: genomics and the avian tree of life](#)



## Geotourism

Several Savannah Guides members have been interested in the development of Geotourism, promoting geological wonders for visitors. Check out the following discussion:

<http://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/index.php/geotourism-industry-groups/>



Spanish Ecofood



Octopus Eggs



**SEE YOU AT THE ADELS GROVE SCHOOL: 15-18 OCTOBER 2015!**

