



# RGSQ Bulletin

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## From the President

All of the capital city daily newspapers in Australia are easily accessed via the internet with updates on feature stories throughout the day. I always focus on the *Weekend Australian* on weekends and I'm never disappointed. There's always a wealth of geographic content. Last weekend, 5-6 November, was no exception.

I would like to draw members attention to *The Australian* Innovation Challenge highlighted on page 14 of the *Weekend Australian*. While I can't relate the full story in the limited space here, all 5 finalists in this Challenge were involved in something related to the study of geography. All involved were from various Australian universities and one from CSIRO (Australian National University, University of NSW, CSIRO, University of Queensland, and the University of Sydney). [www.theaustralian.com.au/innovati onchallenge/new-industries](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/innovati onchallenge/new-industries)

In order, the 5 finalists were involved in: 1. The calculation of aquifer recharge and subsurface flow rates, critical when related to bore water

extraction; 2. The genetic identification of toxic algae in waterways; 3. Hydrological sensor web real time stream flow forecast across a river catchment; 4. Soil remediation technology; and 5. A biological 'toad versus toad' toxin scenario to eliminate the spread of the cane toad.

One only needs to turn to the pages of the "Weekend Professional", page 4 in the same weekend newspaper, to realize the importance of continuing research and education within Australian universities in addressing the shortfall in environmental planners when related to environmental sustainability. The outstanding depth of talent displayed by all finalists in *The Australian* Innovation Challenge is really outstanding stuff and I'm sure will go a long way towards addressing some of the environmental challenges left behind in the wake of 200 years of European settlement.

I mentioned in my October 2011 *RGSQ Bulletin* 'From the President' that I would be visiting The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust on the outskirts of Nairobi (Nairobi National Park), Kenya on 9 October.

This outstanding conservation sanctuary is just one small part of a larger conservation effort centred on Kenya's Tsavo East National Park ("the only park in Africa where natural processes and vegetational progression have been allowed to proceed to a natural conclusion devoid of human intervention" – Dr Daphne Sheldrick). In 1992, Dr Daphne Sheldrick MBE MBS

received the Global 500 Award, an award launched in 1987 by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) to recognize and honour environmental achievement.

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust runs a baby elephant orphanage where Daphne Sheldrick has been rearing and rehabilitating orphans of misfortune for most of her life. I guess you could refer to this as the 'feel good' part of her operation but she is also involved further with the 'Elephants and Ivory' debate and as I mentioned in our October *Bulletin* is one of the world's outstanding conservationists.

If you would like any further information log onto [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/html/debate.html](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/html/debate.html) – it's a very interesting read. Later on during our tour to East Africa I visited Tsavo West National Park and the scenery and scope of this part of Africa and the national park is truly outstanding. [www.kenya-travel-packages.com/tsavo-national-park.html](http://www.kenya-travel-packages.com/tsavo-national-park.html)

Patron: H.E. Ms P Wensley AC,  
Governor of Queensland  
President: Mr Leo Scanlan

The Royal Geographical Society  
of Queensland Inc  
237 Milton Road  
Milton Qld 4064

Tel: (07) 3368 2066  
Fax: (07) 3367 1011  
Email: [admin@rgsq.org.au](mailto:admin@rgsq.org.au)  
Web: [www.rgsq.org.au](http://www.rgsq.org.au)

In conclusion and to wrap up our 'Geographic Year' for 2011, our lecture series has been well attended throughout 2011 and our geography on the ground excursions have also been well attended, new members are slow but steady, our plaque has finally been placed at Haddon Corner, our continuing support and lobbying for geographical education continues, our planning for the Pungalina-Seven Emu Scientific Study is on track, and our ongoing organisation of the Geography Competition has again been well supported within the wider community.

I would like to sincerely thank the office staff of Keith, Kath and Hayley, and all of the RGSQ Council for their efforts in 2011 and I look forward to another interesting year of geographical activities in 2012.

To each and every one of our members and their extended families I wish you a very happy Christmas 2011 and may you all enjoy a prosperous and happy 2012. See you all at the RGSQ Christmas festivities on 6 December at 7.30pm.

Leo Scanlan

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## Christmas Close

The Society's office will be closed for Christmas from 22 December, reopening 3 January.

Please note that the Society does not publish a January *Bulletin*. Next year's lecture and trip programme will be sent out with the February *Bulletin*.

Keith, Kath and Hayley wish you and yours a safe and joyous Christmas and look forward to a productive year for the Society in 2012.




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## 2012 Renewals

Society members who need to renew their subscription for 2012 will find a renewal form enclosed with this *Bulletin*. We hope that all of you will decide to renew to support the work of the Society and/or take advantage of our interesting programme of lectures and treks.

If you'd like to change to receiving your *Bulletin* by email, please fill that in on the renewal form. Members who already receive the *Bulletin* by email and who are due to renew will be sent a renewal form in the post.

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## New Members

We have much pleasure in welcoming as new members:

Edith and Lionel Lusty

We hope your association with your new Society is long and mutually enjoyable. We look forward to getting to know you at Society functions.

## Can YOU Help?

As most members would realise, our Society organises the National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition. Approximately 80,000 secondary school students entered the 2011 Competition. We need to call on our generous members again for their help. We will be packing the initial mail-out to schools on Tuesday 17 January, and maybe finishing off the last bits on Wednesday 18 January.

In this mailing, all schools get the same so it's relatively straightforward – no matching codes nor counting large numbers involved! (I can even do it sitting down, though some people prefer to stand.) If you can't help on those dates but can fit in some time earlier in January, you could help prepare the mailing envelopes. Other jobs come up in March, April and May.

If you can give a few hours of your time, please ring or email me [=Kath] and let me know you can help in January, or later in the year. Thanks very much.

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## Vale – Glenville Pike

Still writing almost to the end, Society member, historian, author and publisher, Glenville Pike, 85, died on 4 May at Mareeba.

Glenville, a Fellow and life member of the Society, was at the time of his death the Society's longest-standing member, having joined our Society in 1950.

At a time when publishers were little interested in Australian history, Glenville started his own publishing company and, apart from writing books himself, sales of which ran in excess of 150,000, he helped many other people in northern Australia to publish their histories. He wrote for the *North Queensland Register* for more than 70 years nonstop, surely some kind of record in the annals of Australian journalism.

The Society's library holds over 20 books authored or edited by Glenville, on aspects of the history of north Queensland or the Northern Territory. They are a great resource.

## Prawn Farm

The first activity for 2012 is a bus trip to the Rocky Point Prawn Farm at Woongoolba on Friday 24 February. Full details in the next *Bulletin*, or ring Jeanette on 3379 5571.

From the *Courier Mail*, 13-11-2003:

"Prawn farms don't come much greener than a Gold Coast operation whose environmental standards have won international recognition and fooled 20 million baby crustaceans into thinking they live in the open sea.

Serena Zipf and her family operate the hatchery at Woongoolba, near Beenleigh, and the venture's green credentials have made it the world's first prawn farm to achieve a voluntary environmental accreditation with the International Standards Organisation.

The standard of environmental awareness, including improved water quality, recycling and water treatment ponds, is so high the farm is being used as a model for others. Aquaculture businesses have previously been criticised for their environmental impact, particularly on water use and quality, and many businesses refuse to deal with companies which don't have a proven concern for the environment.

"Everything is about the prawns," Mrs Zipf joked yesterday. "But really, this is about doing the best thing for both your business and the environment. What it does is, it says 'you are using a natural resource, have a look at your impact and how you can manage it so that you can sustainably use it for a long time'. Just look at feeding the prawns. If we feed them too much, the water quality deteriorates and so does the crop so we reduce feeding which gives us cleaner water and my prawns grow faster and stronger."

Federal Fisheries Minister Senator Ian Macdonald ... said the prawn farm had created an unprecedented situation in Japan where the company's products were "the benchmark of the premium market in the world".

## Historic CSIRO Surveys

The CSIRO Division of Land and Water has published online 39 detailed reports and 120 associated maps from the pioneering Land Research Series of surveys in Australia and Papua New Guinea. They can be found at: [www.publish.csiro.au/nid/289.htm](http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/289.htm).

These studies were initiated in 1946 by the then Northern Australia Development Committee which commissioned CSIRO to undertake systematic reconnaissance surveys of the land resources and development potential of areas of Northern Australia, across Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland, that were sparsely populated and largely unproductive. The aim was to identify areas that were suitable for agricultural development. Of the 39 reports now online, 10 cover areas of Queensland and are based on field surveys undertaken between 1947 and 1961 though some studies were not finally published until 1977. One of the earliest Queensland surveys was undertaken in 1950 to assess land use potential for the area to be served by the Burdekin Falls Dam.

The studies were undertaken by teams of scientists and technicians both in the field and in the laboratory. The list of authors reads like a who's who of Australia's pioneering physical geographers – names such as Chris Christian, Alan Stewart, Ray Perry, Jack Mabbutt, Charles Twidale, Gene Fitzpatrick, Than Speck and Henry Nix. The approach developed by Christian and Stewart, which integrated information on geomorphology, soils, geology, vegetation and climate to identify relatively homogeneous 'land systems' across the large areas surveyed, and assess their developmental potential, was revolutionary.

Doing such analysis today is relatively easy thanks to GIS and satellite imagery, but at the time these studies were undertaken, only manual methods were available with (generally very poor) paper maps, file cards, air photos, hard slog in the field and much debate by team members each evening over numerous rums!

The PNG series began in 1953 in the Buna-Kokoda area that had been devastated by the eruption of Mt Lamington in 1952. The same land systems approach was followed to identify areas of potential development, especially in Papua, the Highlands, Sepik and Bougainville areas. As a very callow 20 year-old technical assistant I earned my field work stripes on the 1961 survey in the Southern Highlands of PNG as assistant to the late John McAlpine. That experience set me irrevocably on the path to being a geographer.

For anyone with an interest in the geography of Northern Australia and PNG these reports are an absolute gold mine, not only of fundamental geographic knowledge but also of how to undertake such integrated surveys – a skill that has, sadly, almost been lost.

*Ken Granger*

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## Mapping Conference

"Global Connection through Mapping", the Brisbane International Geospatial Forum, 8-10 July 2012, is shaping up to be the largest cartographic event held in Australia for many years.

The Forum is planned as a joint effort between the Australian and New Zealand Map Society (ANZMapS), Mapping Sciences Institute, Australia (MSIA) and the International Map Trade Association (IMTA). There will be a significant trade show component for the conference, to be held in the new events spaces at the State Library of Queensland.

A preliminary brochure is available via the ANZMapS website at – [www.anzmaps.org](http://www.anzmaps.org).

The conference will feature an array of expert papers, tours, displays, conference dinner, receptions and so on. It will have the added dimension of a map trade show with exhibits from across the Asia-Pacific region, greater networking opportunities, and an international keynote. Registration will be costed reasonably. The conference promises to be a landmark occasion for Australia, New Zealand and the region.

## Myrtle Rust

A new exotic disease is attacking native plants in South-East Queensland. Myrtle rust has been confirmed in national parks as well as gardens and nurseries. You can take some simple steps while you're in bushland areas to help reduce the further spread of myrtle rust within natural environments. These include:

- arrive clean, leave clean
- pack light
- be aware
- keep to tracks
- don't move plants

More information: [http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790\\_19788.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_19788.htm)

## Earth: Fire & Rain

The Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference will provide a forum to examine the issues surrounding natural and man-made hazards.

The 2012 conference will be held 16-18 April at the Brisbane Convention Centre. The programme format will consist of keynote addresses, concurrent sessions and workshops. There will be more than 50 presentations.

Further information:  
email: [conference@anzdmc.com.au](mailto:conference@anzdmc.com.au)  
web: <http://anzdmc.com.au>

## Strange Maps

Our son found this blog devoted to weird maps which is worth looking at: <http://bigthink.com/blogs/strange-maps>.

One we've liked recently is a map of Twitter languages. As blogger Frank Jacobs writes:

"What a joy these maps are to behold. It's as if someone took one of those composite satellite maps – you know, impossibly showing the whole world at night, the darkness broken by hubs and strings of artificial light – and gave it the power of speech."

*Karen Nunan*

# RGSQ Bulletin

December 2011

**Meeting**, Tues 6 Dec, 7.30pm  
What: Christmas Party

**Christmas Close**  
When: 22 Dec - 2 Jan

**Volunteer Days**, Tues 17 - Wed 18 Jan  
For: Geography Competition

**Lecture**, Tues 7 Feb, 7.30pm  
Speaker: to be advised

**Day Trip**, Fri 24 Feb  
What: Tour of Prawn Farm  
Where: Woongoolba

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc  
237 Milton Road, Milton Q 4064

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