

FOR THE LOVE OF ANIMALS

A MESSAGE FROM SUE ARNOLD

Dear Friends,

Writing a newsletter for animals and the environment in 2016 is now an exceedingly difficult task as most news is bad news.

In fact, reading all this dark stuff is a great turn-off. Somehow we have to find a way to get good hearted, aware people inspired enough to take back our democracy, to not allow the political parties to trash hard fought for laws to protect animals and the environment to ensure the protection of the non-humans and the Earth which gives us life.

So AFA is going to try and write a newsletter which may bring a smile to your face and a deeper understanding of why it is so important to support AFA and other grass roots organisations – because we collectively are the guys who do the hard work and more often than not, pay for it out of our own pockets. Money importance pales into comparison when we're faced with the need to help an animal or wildlife in distress.

Unfortunately, these days the issues are huge. There's no small stuff any more unless there's an animal cruelty case which AFA always deals with. Most of the environmental campaigns now involve major understandings of the science, laws, international conventions, learning

how to deal with foreign corporations, corrupt bureaucrats and politicians, and a totally biased media – definitely NOT for the faint hearted.

Sue is writing this newsletter as I think its time to get personal with the wonderful angels who have supported the charity all these years. Without the ongoing support, compassion, generosity and such obvious love for animals and the earth, AFA would not have achieved many victories. AFA is all of you, and not a day goes by without me giving thanks for the love and support you have given me.

There are times when everything seems bleak but knowing you all exist, that your love for the animals is truly awesome, makes work a humbling experience and a true blessing.

After more than 30 years of activism with AFA and witnessing how people come together in their communities when faced with massive destruction of the environment, or koalas, or other wildlife.. to see how ordinary people muster up the courage to fight against horrendous odds, I really believe that grass roots communities are the 21st Century manifestation of the Australian Spirit. It ain't dead and there's so many ways to be part of that flame.

Here's the first good news story.

Baby Butcher Bird takes over house



For the last ten years, husband Norm Sanders and I, together with the odd grandkid, have fed generations of butcher birds who see our north facing verandah as the Butcher Bird Café – always open and good for a feed.

Over time, we've realised how incredibly intelligent these little birds are. Norm has taught them tricks, the birds have managed to distinguish themselves by their behaviour so we know most of them individually. We don't feed them very much as they can't be dependent on humans but we see how much they enjoy human company as well as the food.

This year, a late baby came in to watch the older birds being fed by one of us. Gradually, she got over her fear and would only take a tiny bit of mince if it was gently thrown towards her. As late baby grew, her behaviour transformed from fearful to downright aggro, chasing off every intruder. At the same time, any fear of humans completely disappeared.

Now we can walk into the kitchen and find late baby sitting on a counter or a chair, happily enjoying the scenery. She also likes the mats on the dining room table and often lifts them up to see what's underneath.

The pottery whale tail didn't taste so good but otherwise, she likes being in the kitchen. No matter what the day is like, seeing this little creature sitting in the kitchen – oblivious to the dog, two cats – who are all equally dis-

interested in bird – is a miracle which brings us great joy.

Late baby is also skilled at finding me in the house. She flies to the nearest window and chirps at me.

When it rains heavily, baby butcher birds like to practice singing and making calls which can go on for at least 30 minutes with no detectable repetitions. The songs are glorious and it's hard to believe anything that small can make such beautiful noises.

A previous generation had two special birds known as Floor (because he demanded to be fed on the floor) and Smart Baby. Smart Baby knew when Norm was working in the garage, would fly in, sit on the workbench and demand to be fed. If Norm raised his arm and pointed to the front of the house, went inside and upstairs to the verandah Smart Baby would be there.

At the moment, every early morning and late afternoon there's a mob of birds. This time of the year the Drongo appears and this year, we have one that requires throwing some mince high in the air hoping that the rest of the bird fraternity won't get to it first. Other Drongos have been much more willing to come close to the verandah.

Backyard birds who make themselves known to humans are one of the great pleasures of life. We'd love to hear your bird stories as we know some of you have written to me with wonderful tales.

**HELP
STOP
OCEAN
NOISE**



noisyoceans.org

GETTING INTO ACTION

As you all know, AFA works tirelessly on the international arena and we've had some amazing results from these efforts.

Because of the sheer complexity of issues such as the Great Barrier Reef which involves major US corporations, US law and US public interest law firms, it's now almost impossible to lobby with any success unless environmental organisations get on a plane and lobby overseas.

In December last year, I flew to San Francisco to take part in the 7 day scientific conference which the Society for Marine Mammalogy runs every two years. This conference is always quoted as the most significant and important event for marine mammals globally.

Two important workshops on underwater noise were held over the first weekend and I managed to get to most of the noise presentations throughout the week – although this was a mission as the conference rooms were so over-crowded and there was no possibility of questions or discussion on such a critical issue.

Most of the focus on underwater noise impacts has been on cetaceans, the bigger issues are the impacts on the thousands of species of fish, crustaceans and marine life which create and ensure a healthy ecosystem. Very little emphasis has been

directed at the dreadful injuries which underwater noise inflicts or the impacts on communication between mothers and calves which is seriously disrupted.

It was very clear at the SMM meeting that there were huge gaps in the science, research, policy, laws, and information needed to ensure proper management of these impacts. Equally clear is the fact that the SMM makes no recommendations at the end of conferences and no briefs are provided to governments on critical issues.

AFA has spent years now attempting to get underwater noise on the Federal government's policy agenda as there's currently no legislation at the federal or state level which protects marine life from noise. The charity has written to every single member of the House of Representatives and the Senate with no response. Sue met with Minister Greg Hunt last year who promised to address the noise issues. Nothing transpired.

The experts AFA works with in the US have huge concerns about the damage noise from shipping is doing to the Reef. There's almost no information out there in the



media on deep seabed mining proposals or the fact that the world's seabeds and oceans are now being industrialised.

Most scientists working on noise in the US are funded by the US Navy which is in the process of seeking approval for five year projects which will kill or injure thousands of

whales and dolphins. With a significant lack of independent scientific research in the US and zero research or political attention in Australia, the very serious threats which underwater noise presents to the world's oceans continues to be ignored.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITES



australiansforanimals.org.au
greatbarrierreef.org.au
noisyoceans.org

HISTORIC UNDERWATER NOISE WORKSHOP IN SAN FRANCISCO

In the face of a mountain of political inaction and misinformation, AFA decided it was time to organise a workshop in San Francisco to bring together some of the expert lawyers, scientists and researchers to find ways to address this looming industrialisation in ways that would ensure political attention.

With a lot of good connections in the USA, it wasn't too difficult to get some of the right people to come to a one day workshop. AFA's many visits to the US has ensured that we have excellent contacts with politicians, lawyers, scientists and NGOs.

The workshop outcomes would be very helpful in Australia as well where legislation is urgently needed.

Many of you know that 7 or 8 years ago AFA set up the California Gray Whale Coalition in the US – a Coalition which is now the largest whale coalition on the west coast of the US representing many whale watching companies as well as environmental groups. The Coalition is financially self sustaining and it has provided valuable help in lobbying the

US government as it is a registered 501 © non profit US environmental organisation.

Lobbying and running lawsuits in the US on noise issues have important ramifications for Australia and as the west coast of the US is highly industrialised, the problems there are entirely relevant to what we are seeing on the east and west coasts of this continent.

So... after listening to the talk fest at the SMM conference, and realising that as usual, it was unlikely any US conservation organisation would set up a workshop to focus on the big gaps in science and policy, working through AFA, the Coalition organised an historic workshop at the Center for Biological Diversity's conference room in Oakland, California.



We brought together lawyers from the three leading public interest law firms, NRDC, Earth Justice and the Center for Biological Diversity. Emeritus Professor Arthur Popper, the leading US expert on impacts of noise on fish and crustaceans agreed to be the keynote speaker. As well, we invited one of the Board members of the Pacific Federation of Fishermen's Associations, a west coast organisation which represents commercial fishermen. His attendance was very welcome and helped to begin a badly needed conversation on finding ways to work together.

This really is another good news story as the power-point presentations and information will now be passed on to the environmental organisations in Australia who are fighting hard to stop BP carrying out seismic exploration in the Great Australian Bight. Home for Blue Whales and other species of whales and dolphins, and the tuna industry.

BP destroyed the Gulf of Mexico with its catastrophic oil spill and it is now vital that this corporation is not allowed to proceed in the Bight.



ANIMAL HEROES

Animals save lives. Their unique ability to hone in on health problems is well known. When will the medical profession realise animals are health allies ?

The lovely young lass at the local DVD shop wanted to tell me a story about her amazing dog.. Jessie, a female Boston Terrier rescue dog. My friend has Diabetes Type 1 and three months after she and her husband got the dog, this extraordinary event unfolded. Late one night when my friend was apparently sound asleep, Jessie tried to wake her up without success. So our heroine then lay on top of husband's chest, licked his face until he finally woke up, felt his wife was really clammy and found her blood sugar was so low if the dog

hadn't woken him up, the outcome could have been very serious.

Jessie knows when her blood sugar goes up and when it goes down (although only a night). Amazing animal.

The painfully long struggle to get legal recognition of the intelligence of animals must continue as those of us who know these creatures so well can testify, these are really bright guys and their skills need to be recognised ! Barely a day goes past without a media story about animals who have performed heroic rescues and compassion.



WHAT MAKES CAMPAIGNS WORK? MONEY!

Without doubt, the biggest need is for funds. In these difficult times it's very hard to make any kind of difference without money.

Funds can commission expert opinions, bumper stickers, trips to lobby politicians (does make a difference eyeballing these people), running advertisements, sending letters to the Parliaments in Canberra, Sydney and other states. With stamps now \$1, its expensive to send out newsletters. But the reality is that these days, given the forces of darkness we are up against, unless grass roots groups have funds, their ability to campaign is limited.

AFA has said it before and we'll say it again. The big conservation groups are very well funded. They pay big

salaries and have access to governments and corporations. Do they get the job done ? AFA doesn't think so as most campaigns run by the big groups must be guaranteed to bring in a financial return, otherwise it's just a lost cause.

So please, help keep AFA doing its work. The charity is quite a remarkable organisation when you look back at the achievements we've made over the years and continue to make. The focus and inspiration for our work has never changed. We help animals and the earth – you are all part of that miracle.

**For the Animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends.**

THE GREAT BARRIER REEF SAGA

Okay. This is not a good news story but... if voters try hard enough, there's a good possibility that the Reef may become an election issue.



Bleached Acropora coral (foreground) and normal colony (background), Keppel Islands, Great Barrier Reef

AFA has listened carefully to the major parties and although we think that Labor's carbon emission policy is much better than the Coalition, not a word has been said by either party about Adani and the approval given by Minister Hunt.

There's no way Australia can lower its carbon emissions unless these massive coal corporation approvals are revoked. Right now there's a tiny bit of hope in the Australian

Conservation Foundation's lawsuit against the Federal Government over the Adani carbon emissions and the ensuing impacts on the Reef.

It is pretty concerning that the environment is almost completely disregarded save for the never ending arguments over climate change. Especially when the latest news is demonstrated more than 93% of the Reef's coral is bleached and dead.

Please Give Generously

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**AUSTRALIANS FOR ANIMALS
PO BOX 414
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