



Summer 2009-10 Number 1/2010

Newsletter

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SIMO was formed in 1978 to stop a bridge from the mainland. Since then, SIMO has waged many campaigns to protect Stradbroke Island's environment and to lobby for conservation, sustainability and wise development.

Spat of koala deaths on NSI is cause for anxiety

NSI wildlife carers are dismayed at the high number of koalas being killed on island roads or by dogs. Over September and October we lost more than ten koalas. The entire island population is estimated to be only between 300-1000 individuals, so this rate of deaths is a considerable worry.

Despite state and local government efforts to secure habitat on the mainland and reverse the steep decline in numbers, the koala population of South-East Queensland is expected to be 'functionally extinct' within 18 months. This means that the residual pockets of animals will not be able to breed, thrive and increase, and so these remnant communities will wither away. This awful prospect would leave Stradbroke as the only remaining viable habitat for koalas in the region, a shocking tragedy and a daunting responsibility.

Reliable, current, comprehensive information about the Stradbroke population is essential to conserve and manage koalas on the island. However, there aren't yet reliable statistics on how many koalas are here, and nor do we know whether the island population is static, declining or increasing. Also, there are substantial gaps in knowledge about all the places on Stradbroke where koalas roam – or traditionally where they roamed in the past.

What we do know is that most koalas these days are concentrated in western and northern areas of the island and near waterbodies. It is of concern that proximity with the three towns puts koalas at heightened risk of vehicle strikes and maulings by dogs.

Another thing we know is that the island population is healthy and not showing signs of stress – which makes it all the sadder when healthy animals are being killed needlessly on the road.

The proposed State government koala protection measures have limited effect on Stradbroke because mining is exempt and koala habitat can be destroyed on mining leases. Unfortunately, the Federal Minister for Environment wants more time to consider whether or not to declare the koala endangered; but meanwhile, time has run out in our region.

SIMO and other groups continue to push for urgent and effective measures to protect Stradbroke's koalas. We advocate more national park on NSI to extend and safeguard koala habitat (and all wildlife habitat); planting koala corridors in mining rehabilitation areas to establish a linked network of koala territory throughout NSI; inclusion of mining activities in the laws prohibiting destruction of koala habitat; and slowing down the main road, a major killing field.



Jack Jackson of Stradbroke Wildlife Rescue displayed two dead koalas killed Friday 9 October by traffic from Dunwich. The hit and run drivers didn't stop to check on the animals or move them off the road. The protest cum education display at Point Lookout was a real shock to many, seeing actual bodies. The East Coast Road traverses major koala habitat. Report wildlife hits immediately, as animals could be saved if reached quickly.

**Wildlife rescue hotline
0407 766 052**

Photo: Jan Aldenhoven



RIP KOALA: Cross at Two Mile where a koala was killed in October. White crosses made by locals have been placed at roadkill sites over the summer.
Photo: Glen Carruthers

Wildlife encounters

August: A 2m long Elegant Sea Snake washed up dead on Deadman's Beach
Gail Bell came across a small Stonefish at the western 4WD exit at Amity.
Dead adult Dugong floating in North Gorge

September/October:

Large groups of up to 24 Devil Rays and Pygmy Devil Rays gathering off the headland
Storm birds (koel cuckoos) can be heard calling.
Small flock of Shearwaters travelling south through The Group (should be thousands of them).
Manta Rays have begun to arrive.

November: 11 Last Humpback whales for the year, heading south

20 Dugong in Frenchman's

21 4 Shovel-nosed Rays in Bathing Gorge shallows, ranging from 4-6ft
A pod of Common Dolphins travelling fast through the Alley, northwards; many calves

Two turtle nests already: at Main Beach, Frenchman's

Truman 2009 whale count:

1989 whales counted – quite a lot less than 2008's tally of 2349.

Urban koala count on NSI

Redland City Council organised an urban koala count on NSI on Saturday 17 October. Local and mainland volunteers undertook counts in each township, slowly walking every street and craning necks for any signs of life up in the branches as well as looking out for scratchings on trunks and scats underneath trees.

The day's total tally of koala sightings was 32:

- 15 in Amity (including a mother and baby),
- 8 in Dunwich (including a mother and baby),
- 5 in Flinders and
- 4 in Point Lookout.

All information was fed into the Stradbroke Island koala database.

SIMO advocates bi-annual, island-wide population counts. We need to locate all current habitat pockets and build a historical map of past habitat to identify areas that could be rehabilitated and linked to current known habitat.

If you sight a koala, please send information to Jan Aldenhoven: jan@wildlifefilms.com.au

History of roadkill

Here is a snippet from the CSIRO website, Wildlife Research Management and Conservation: a 1989 report on NSI roadkills during 11 months in 1982. As in 2009, 27 years later, there is a strong correlation between vehicles exiting the barges and animals being killed on the trans-island road, especially at night. This suggests that either we are not effectively informing visitors about island wildlife, or drivers don't care enough to slow down and be alert for animals. The East Coast Road passes right through koala habitat.

'Road-Kills of the Swamp Wallaby, *Wallabia-bicolor*, on North-Stradbroke-Island, Southeast Queensland

R Osawa

'A total of 127 road-kills of the swamp wallaby, *Wallabia bicolor*, on North Stradbroke Island in south-east Queensland was recorded between May 1981 and April 1982. The majority of kills were of adults. Road-kills occurred mainly at night, suggesting that *W. bicolor* is nocturnal, and were significantly correlated with the number of vehicles brought onto the island by ferries. Faecal pellet counts were made in classified habitats along the road in order to determine the relationship between the population density and road-kills of *W. bicolor*. Road-kills were significantly correlated with the faecal pellet counts in the Disturbed Area (narrow, artificially cleared areas adjacent to the road) but not with the counts in the Native Area (i.e. native forest). This indicates that the wallabies were attracted to the disturbed area and became more susceptible to being killed by vehicles. There was no significant variation in the number of road-kills between lunar phases.'

Recorded figures of wildlife deaths and injuries on NSI in 2009 include: 8 kangaroos; 26 koalas; 2 glider possums; 11 wallabies; 50 birds; 9 snakes; 1 goanna. There might be more cases that did not get recorded.

These records are of all animals attended by NSI wildlife carers. Not all died; some were taken into care and saved. Causes of death include car strikes (10), dog attacks (6), broken limbs (5); 'sick' (4); dehydrated (1); orphaned (2).

SIMO salutes the Stradbroke Wildlife Rescue team. Their work is largely invisible to the general population. They deserve recognition for the significant, difficult, humane caring role they perform on our behalf for endangered wildlife.

Fluoride in island water

Fluoride benefits young children only. SIMO has protested against the mass medication of the island's water supply.

Powerlines mar headland



Department of Main Roads refused permission for Ener-gex powerlines to go under Mooloomba Road. The cats' cradle of wires now strung over the road above Frenchman's – and duplication of electricity poles – is a parlous outcome for the headland. What is stopping RCC and DMR de-maining this road and returning it to a local road?

Welcome butt bins

RCC has installed two butt bins at the water taxi jetties, and eight at Point Lookout (to be emptied by the community). Butts are poisonous pellets trapping some 3900 toxic chemicals. Butts are mistaken for food by wildlife, harming birds, sea turtles and other marine life. Butts take years to degrade in seawater.

savestraddie.com website

FOSI, Queensland Conservation Council, Wildlife Preservation Society Qld, Fraser Island Defenders Organisation, Moreton Island Protection Committee, Community Alliance for Responsible Planning have joined forces to launch a campaign for national park, not mining, on NSI, saying it's time.

NSI fox control program

Wildlife spotter and catcher Michael Dickinson is employed by Redland City Council to conduct a fox eradication program on NSI. The program is essential because foxes have overrun the island. They are causing significant damage to wildlife, including migratory seabirds and turtles, whose nests they raid. Jack Jackson of Stradbroke Wildlife Rescue estimated in the Spring 2009 *Straddie Island News* that 19 foxes taking one animal each every night would kill 6935 animals a year. That's a very conservative figure as there are many more than 19 foxes on Stradbroke.

During 2009, Michael trapped 28 foxes at various sites including beaches (where fox activity is high). He uses fumigation, softjaw traps and quickly euthanases trapped animals. To catch a fox, first he must research where the dens are, then painstakingly observe and track the animals. In some areas trafficked by humans and dogs, where regular fox prints are also found, he cannot set traps because of the risk of domestic dogs being caught.

Next year Michael plans to access mining leases. He wants to hit the fox population before the next breeding season gets under way, and to extend trapping locations. He also wants to prevent foxes from taking turtle hatchlings in future. Given what he knows from the work of this past year, he considers that the 2010 tally could be double the numbers caught in 2009.

This is vital work. SIMO hopes that Michael can continue to reduce fox numbers on the island, and we are very grateful to him and the Council for undertaking this program.

Difficult bushfires season predicted

Even before summer had begun, NSW and South Australia experienced emergency fire risk days and severe fires. On NSI in mid-November, ten kilometres south of the Tazi Road, lightning strikes ignited a fire that burned for 19 hours. As reported by the *Redland Times* on 20.11, 'seven Queensland Fire and Rescue Service crews, three QFRS helicopters, three Redland City Council vehicles, three Consolidated Rutile Limited vehicles and four Department of Environment and Resource Management crews were involved in fighting the fire.'

Authorities have held meetings with residents at Dunwich, Amity Point and Point Lookout about the change in philosophy on fire management. The traditional advice about staying to defend your home is discredited following the great fires in 2008 in Victoria. Police and CFA personnel are advising people to make a fire plan but also to be prepared to leave their homes in the event of uncontrollable fires. Residents should report to their local Hall, or to the jetty/boatramp in the case of Amity; and keep in touch with news and fire updates on a battery-operated radio. In a big fire, electricity is one of the first services to go.



Heavy rains doused any imminent threat of summer fires.

An island banksia regenerates after bushfire

The Camel takes a tumble: following more than 40mm of rain, the north face of the headland collapsed.

Camel Rock shock

On the night of the 20 October, a very large wall of rock fell off the front of Camel headland between Deadman's Beach and

Frenchman's Bay at Point Lookout.

The crash must have made an impressive noise. This is the largest of two falls in recent years – the last being approximately four years ago when lightning struck the headland, causing a small rockfall.

Camel Headland is volcanic rock known as rhyolite and is about 120-200 million years old.

This recent rockfall event caused me to ponder my personal history with the headland: falling down mutton bird burrows as a child; as a teenager being caught by mum at the back of the headland kissing a handsome boy (future husband); being nearly struck down by a low-flying F-111 while standing on the top watching schools of bait fish pass.

I have known this rocky headland

as 'Camel Rock' all my life. Others call it Dune Rock. I googled Camel Rock (as you do) and found there was a Camel Rock at Bermagui; it looks a lot more like a camel than ours does. Bermagui by the way also has a Horseshoe Bay.

Camel Rock and the surrounding dunes are probably the most painted and photographed vista at the Point. But why is it called Camel Rock? I pointed out to long-time local, Mike Hines, what I believed to be two camel head silhouettes protruding from the front of the headland, but he looked at me as if I was deranged and said words to the effect that I was tripping.

I asked our very wise local elder and another long-time Point Lookout resident, Ellie Durbidge, where the name 'camel' comes from and she told me with a straight face that in the war years the American soldiers stationed on the island used to take their lady friends to this secluded headland to 'hump' them. Ellie did point out, though, that the headland would have had a name before the war, but could think of no other name that came to mind.

There used to be a small colony of mutton birds which struggled to maintain a rookery on top of the headland. The colony was doomed from the start, with the chicks and adults preyed upon by dogs and snakes. A large resident carpet snake was removed from the site on a few occasions but managed to find its way back. A Dunwich resident was so adamant about saving the birds he was known to patrol the area with a shotgun.

The mutton birds nesting on Camel in summer were Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. The colony was first recorded on Camel in 1983 by Mike Hines. The 1990-91 season saw 248 burrows. The colony soon became unsustainable because of attacks by foxes which killed 300 birds in a single night in 1991, discovered by Reg Lambert.

So next time you are walking around the beaches from Deadman's to Frenchman's, see if you can see the camel heads in the rock formation to prove I'm not batty, or maybe imagine the laughter of the American soldiers and giggles of their sweethearts. *Jennie Truman*



Photos: Mike Hines



Weeding the Reserve

Hard to believe it but asparagus grass fern was cultivated in pots at Point Lookout only 20 or so years ago. Now asparagus grass is choking very large swathes of the heritage-listed Reserve, the bright red berries spread by birds. Other rampant weeds are umbrella trees, morning glory and gloriosa lily. The herculean challenge of removing these weeds from the Reserve has been taken up by Darren Burns and a group of 11 young Indigenous people from Dunwich. They recently made a very good start on the high ground above Frenchman's Bay, clearing extensive areas.



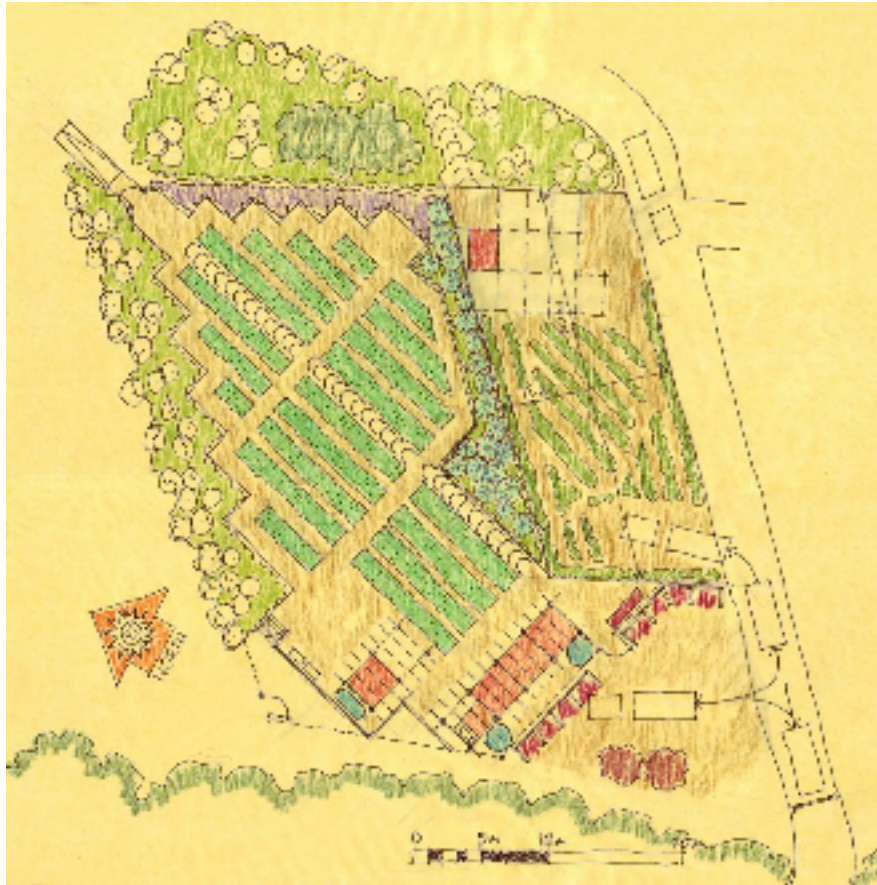
Area at Frenchman's steps cleared of dense asparagus grass infestation

There is much more to tackle, some it on precipitous terrain. The group has been working down the hill, behind the dunes, and also up along the ridge above Frenchman's Bay.

This is a long-term, phased project. It's tough, difficult work and takes utmost commitment. SIMO is very pleased to see the great progress being made by these young environmental custodians of the island. Redland City Council is finding other projects for the group to undertake.

Community garden for Point Lookout

A gardening initiative by Point Lookout resident, Paul Mergler, is bearing fruit. The proposed Point Lookout Community Garden is planned on the site of the old dump at the end of Bimba Street.



A notional sketch showing the community garden (left), Bushcare site (right) and a demonstration native garden addressing Bimba Street; north-south garden plots; arbours both for vines and climbers, and passionfruit and grapes; herb plots; fruit trees; compost bays; mulch mounds; potting shed; tools storage, composting toilet, barbecue; water tanks for rainwater harvesting

In November, about 25 gathered at the site for the first meeting of the gardening group. It is proposed to build raised garden plots oriented north-south, and perimeter fencing to keep out kangaroos and dogs. The garden needs power and water. Rainwater will be harvested from the roof of shed structures built incrementally as funds permit. The garden will be wheelchair-friendly, and a special plot is planned for kids. Also planned are fruit trees and herbs and a worm farm. Chickens, ducks and honey bees are all possibilities.

Compost is a serious priority. The garden will use a lot of compost, and residents and local businesses will be able to contribute biodegradable scraps in the future, rather than consign them to the general rubbish collection, saving on garbage collection fees.

The ground needs a lot of preliminary work as well as fencing.

The community garden group will seek funding from Redland City Council for necessary infrastructure: fencing, framing of the raised garden beds, materials for the no-dig gardens.

Bushcare will relocate its operation to the site, where it will have more area than at present and easy access for its trailer.

Paul hopes to start planting in the autumn. pmergler@bigpond.com

Profits from public open space

The Council is developing a policy to manage the commercial uses of public open space on NSI. Forty-four potential sites on the island have been identified for temporary and periodic commercial activities. These sites include the grassy headland above Main Beach; South Gorge; places on the Gorge walk; the old tennis courts; Frenchman's headland; Endeavour Park; Pub cove; Home Beach; Adder Rock; Point Lookout oval; Amity Point oval; Amity picnic park; Polka Point park; Dunwich oval; Brown Lake; Myora Springs. SIMO considers that some sites, by virtue of their semi-wilderness character or cultural or environmental sensitivity, should never be given over to commercial uses, for example wedding receptions or large coach tours. It is important to identify these special sites and preserve their individual sense of place.



Wedding marquees on Home Beach



The Island Vibe festival is growing, prompting questions how large should it get, and is Point Lookout oval the right location?

Minjerribah Camping update

The story so far: In August 2009, Redland City Council proposed to grant a 30-year lease for the management of NSI's camping grounds to a large corporate holiday parks operator. Island community groups, SIMO included, objected, and a petition signed by over 1000 locals asked the Council to halt the process and allow an alternative community bid to be developed.

A natural fit exists with managing the camping grounds and Indigenous interests in caring for country. Also, many islanders want to boost the island economy and generate employment for local residents.



Quandamooka Forum meeting to discuss Minjerribah Camping, 3.9.2009. Above: Glynn Carmichael, Housing Co-op, Pete Kelleher, Lucy Trippett, SIMO. Top right: Aunty Joan Hendriks, Howard Guille, Bernadette Ryan. Right: Darren Burns, QLC Land Council and Lex Smith, RCC



In September, a community-based management plan developed by the NSI community, black and white, was presented to RCC. Indigenous Business Australia, a Commonwealth Statutory Authority, came on board with funding and business and tourism consultants. IBA is finalising the financial plan to be presented to Council in late January for a decision in February.

The NSI Aboriginal and Islander Housing Co-operative Society and Quandamooka Land Council are the Indigenous bodies bidding to manage the camping grounds currently being run by RCC. Under negotiation is how employees would continue in their jobs. If the bid is successful, the hand-over to Minjerribah Camping could occur in July 2010.

SIMO endorses this historic initiative. The Indigenous community has the capacity to manage the camping grounds. The NSI Housing Co-op employs 50 people from the local community and manages the only currently compliant camping ground on NSI, the Myora Caravan Park. The Co-op also runs the island's Centrelink Agency which commenced in 1990, as well as the Minjerribah Respite Centre and the Nareeba Moopi Moopi Pa Aged/Frail Hostel. These excellent services are open to all islanders.

Minjerribah Camping will be a proving ground for island youth, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to train in numerous trades, including land care and tourism occupations.

This is an unprecedented opportunity to take control of Stradbroke's economic and environmental future and to reduce dependence on a damaging, destructive industry: sand mining.



Vale Bill Orr

The Redland Times in November announced the death of W L Orr (Bill). The notice gave no indication of Bill's special qualities or of the role he played in fighting the proposal to link North Stradbroke Island to the mainland by a bridge. Bill was involved in protest marches and demonstrations. He also employed his journalistic skills to fight the issue.

Bill's colourful character can best be summarised by his own comments written on the back of this photograph taken by a television cameraman during a 1983 protest march at Point Lookout. 'A TV bloke came over to me and asked: "Are you marching, reporting or did you start the whole bloody thing?" And I replied: two and a half out of three'.

Ellie Durbidge

Gail Bell (seen behind Bill's right shoulder) adds another comment: Bill had a real joie de vivre, whether it be when eating mangoes with great gusto as the juice ran down to his elbows, or enjoying a glass of red and a spirited discussion at sunset and into the evening.

Jurek Grodecki, our first SIMO president (in white) and a young Gretchen Durbidge, fourth generation fighter for Stradbroke's environment (marching behind the banner).

Turtles in Trouble research wins international award

Marine biologist Dr Kathy Townsend of the University of Queensland Moreton Bay Research Station won the US-based Goldring Fellowship for her research into threats to marine turtles. Thirty-five per cent of stranded turtles die through eating marine debris, much of it plastic. The fellowship, presented by Earthwatch Institute, will provide Kathy with \$205,000 in funding over three years to support her marine research and that of a PhD student. *Congratulations Kathy.*

Vale Jani Haenke

Jani's many friends missed her witty and self-deprecating Christmas newsletter. Jani died in September. She was an active force at Point Lookout, a founder member of Friends of Stradbroke Island and generous in supporting NSI's planning and environmental causes throughout her lifetime.

Jani will be well remembered for championing the island's environment and for setting up the successful Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival organised with Rachel Smith, which we hope to see continue as one of her legacies. FOSI has dedicated to Jani's memory the campaign to stop sand mining on NSI and replace it with national park.



Join SIMO
Help SIMO
fight against NSI becoming
a very large sand quarry

Receive the SIMO
Newsletter by email or post:
please tell us which
you prefer

SIMO membership

Single \$11.00

Family \$13.20

Concession/student \$5.50

Please send your member-
ship application with contact
details, mailing address
and payment to

The SIMO Secretary
PO Box 190

Point Lookout 4183

or pay by EFT: BSB 064138

Acc no:10137450

Let us know by email

Members who have not yet
renewed their annual
membership are invited to
send their details (as above)
and payment to

The SIMO Secretary

SIMO perennials

SIMO derives an income
from the sale of two special
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Stradbroke Island and

A Taste

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North Stradbroke Island
revised edition \$25.80 inc
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A Taste of Stradbroke
\$15 inc GST, or \$10 each
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Please add \$9 postage to
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Co-respondents appeal against court decision for QCM

Prior to a full hearing of Consolidated Rutile Limited/Queensland Construction Materials' appeal against Redland City Council's refusal of a development application to sell sand for construction purposes, in March 2009 the Planning & Environment Court heard preliminary points put by co-respondents. The Court decided in favour of QCM. SIMO, FOSI, Birkdale Progress Association, Wildlife Preservation Society Queensland and other co-respondents will appeal this decision. The appeal is set down for 26 March 2010.

CRL is wholly-owned by Unimin Australia Limited.

Unimin to be prosecuted for selling 'stolen' sand

In December 2009 Unimin was charged by the State Government for breaches of its permit to mine under the Mineral Resources Act 1989. The case begins in the Cleveland Magistrates Court on 22 January; observers might like to be present in court. The charges were laid immediately following a judgement in the Queensland Supreme Court which found that Unimin has no authority to sell sand from its mining operations, apart from the mineral silica sand.

Unimin and its precursors have mined for silica on NSI for 35 years. It appears that the illegal sand selling may have been going on for a very long time.

SIMO is concerned about the systematic removal of sand that should be dedicated to re-forming the land after mining. Unlike CRL's mineral sand mining, which removes 1 per cent of what is mined, Unimin's mining operation takes virtually all the sand. Now we learn Unimin has also been taking remaining sand not good enough for glass making and selling it for construction uses, instead of putting it back on the island to recreate the landscape destroyed by mining.

What are the environmental consequences of years – perhaps even decades? – of skimping on the sand needed to re-form the post-mining landscape, or the potential impacts to the aquifer of removing large quantities of sand (the aquifer consists of sand)?

Is Unimin fit to hold mining licences on NSI? It has withheld knowledge of the unlawful construction and landscape sand business from stakeholders, SIMO and FOSI. DERM has had the company under investigation, raiding its offices in December 2008.

In addition to charges concerning breaches of Unimin's mining

authority, SIMO understands the company could be indicted for offences relating to the theft of sand and the consequential environmental damage to NSI.

Unimin is a private, US-registered, Belgian family-owned corporation. It controls mining leases that cover 75 per cent of Stradbroke.

A Unimin silica lease, unrehabilitated: Without enough sand, the 'restored' landform has craters and ruts, producing an unattractive landscape and altering surface and subsurface water flow.



Island books and bandannas

SIMO's pure cotton bandannas come in burnt orange (shown), aqua, teal, royal blue and pale orange. They are \$8.00 each (inc GST).

To order, contact Jennie Truman, 34098523.

