

Bimblebox at a glance



- **Relevant History**

- The 8000 hectare Glen Innes Station was bought for the explicit purpose of saving it from land clearing in 2000 by a group of concerned citizens and nearby landowners.
- The Federal Government wanted the property to be part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas in recognition of its high conservation values, and they contributed around \$300,000.
- A perpetual Nature Refuge Agreement was signed with the Qld State Government in 2003 and Glen Innes Station became Bimblebox Nature Refuge.
- In 2007 Waratah Coal became interested in developing a massive open cut and underground thermal coal mine on Bimblebox, and in 2008 exploratory drilling began.
- Current State legislation does not provide any protection for the ecological riches above ground.
- During the next 8 years the daily workload was compounded by the struggle to save Bimblebox. The owners were grateful to a handful of great passionate people made their time available to help in the following:
 - *writing letters to the scientists who had conducted research on Bimblebox asking for their support;*
 - *writing letters to and meeting with the Queensland Premier and relevant State and Federal ministers and the International Union for Conservation of Nature*
 - *writing submissions to both federal and state departments;*
 - *writing letters and articles to newspaper and journals;*
 - *conducting media interviews, launching petitions, making contact with many NGOs, distributing information posters and postcards, making contact with other affected landholders and interested organisations; participating in rallies; setting up a website, Facebook page and Twitter account*
 - *Commissioning the documentary 'Bimblebox' by Mike O'Connell, released nationally and internationally; speaking at many national screenings; later two 5-minute online videos on Bimblebox, one by Tangible Media and one by Wendy Rogers;*

- *Meeting with concerned people and landholders, attending mining information sessions, visiting the port development area of Abbot Point and Caley wetlands;*
- *Birds Australia, botanists, ecologists, zoologists and other volunteers visited Bimblebox many times to help in the surveying and recording of species;*
- *Stalls to raise awareness and funds.*
- We recorded the damage from the exploration holes on the Nature Refuge and lodged a formal complaint with state environmental agency EHP.
- We engaged with Waratah ecologists, surveyors and hydrologists at the Nature Refuge (some were asked to leave).
- In 2013, we called for proper scrutiny to be given to the 'opening up' of the Galilee Basin by objecting in the Land Court in Brisbane to the Alpha Coal Project, the first of the 9 mega mines in the Galilee Basin to receive government approval, and located just twelve kilometres north of Bimblebox. In a landmark recommendation in April 2014, the approval was refused, or approved with additional conditions, but the decision was later overturned by the State.

In late 2013, the Galilee Coal Project (aka China First Mine) was approved by State and Federal Governments (approval viable until 2073).

- Epic work by Maureen Cooper, another nature refuge owner, included the editing, publishing and financing of the book 'Bimblebox: A Nature Refuge under Siege' (2013). She donated the sales to the cause, and has another ongoing fundraiser by creating various articles which have creatures and plants of Bimblebox appliqued and embroidered on to them.
- Late 2014 saw the founding of The Bimblebox Alliance Inc (TBA). The protection of Bimblebox becomes the starting point to secure protection for all Queensland conservation areas under threat from the expansion of extractive industries and other inappropriate development.
- Artist Jill Sampson instigated annual artist camps at Bimblebox, culminating in exhibitions in many Australian Art Galleries. Another project by Jill is to do with the 153 birds species found on Bimblebox thus far.
- During the Queensland election in January 2015, we wrote to the candidates asking them to protect nature refuges from mining.

- **Reasons for regional significance**

- Located in the Desert Uplands, a Biodiversity Hotspot, but where less than 5% of the area is held in conservation reserves;
- Is one of the largest tracts of intact remnant woodland (Poplar Box/Silver-leaf Iron Bark) in the Jericho subregion of the Desert Uplands;
- On the eastern edge of the Desert Uplands bioregion, it is an important stepping stone between the Brigalow Belt and the Desert Uplands bioregion.

Threatened species:

- A flock of Endangered (by EPBC listing) Black-throated Finch (*Poephila cincta cincta*) was sighted by a Birds Australia observer in May 2011. This is a highly significant record due to its southern extent. The last record at a similar latitude was in Rockhampton in 2004. The species' range used to extend right down into NSW.
- There are also Near Threatened (by EPA listing) Black-chinned Honeyeater, Black-necked Stork and Large-podded Tick-trefoil, a plant species.
- Squatter Pigeon, which are Vulnerable (by EPBC listing) have also been sighted on the property.

Species of conservation significance regionally (by EPA listing)

- Twelve bird species which, significantly, comprise over 50% of bird species of conservation significance in the Desert Uplands.
- Four mammal species: Common Dunnart, Spectacled Hare Wallaby, Rufous Bettong and Koala.
- At least one reptile, the Mulga Snake (*Pseudechis australis*).

Biodiversity more generally:

- 153 bird species have been found on the property so far;
- Has one of the most diverse flora communities in the region;
- Abundant and diverse population of reptiles.

- **Unique management**

- A strong focus on biodiversity conservation in co-existence with cattle production;
- Long-term science research projects being conducted on the property, notably from Queensland Herbarium.