

The Islander

Incorporating the *Dead Whale Bay Intelligencer* and *Uglets Advertiser*

July

Editorial

Commercial fairness

A certain shopkeeper and councillor who shall remain nameless is aware that it is time for ironwood felling, and she has asked us to publicise that she has taken delivery of a shipment of chains for chainsaws and other tools, but she declined our offer to allow her to place a paid advertisement.

That being the case, we will not inconvenience our readers by failing to alert them of this alleged bargain, but the choice of wording is ours. We note here that a local store has obtained a large shipment of second-rate goods and hopes to unload them at exorbitant rates. In an entirely unrelated matter, may we note that Chuffer Harris is offering his usual chain sharpening and repair business, at remarkably low prices?

The case for the gliding frogs

The ironwood season for the past three years has seen considerable heated argument about the needs of the ecosystems of our islands, and in particular, the way we extract ironwoods.

It is true that ironwoods have been part of our life for a hundred years or so, but if we want to maintain the islands life the way it is, we may need to make some changes.

A little bird has told us that Jean Grey is at it again (see the Council notices) and wants to woodchip a large part of the inwit. She says this would actually be good for the ecosystems there, because we could then set up ironwood plantations that could be harvested in an organised way in the future.

This idea may in fact have some merit, but it leaves open the question of what we would use for ironwood until the first of the plantation trees become available in twenty years time. And what is she going to do with the wood that is there?

She is going to turn it into woodchips and sell it to somebody to make paper — and all without checking to see

if the wood chips of ironwood can even be made into paper in the first place!

According to Peg Wilkins, the idea is bad, because it shows a complete misunderstanding of what a forest is about.

“Schemes like this show what is meant by not seeing the forest for the trees,” she said. “There is much more to a forest than the few straight, regular trunks that the loggers take out. And for all that people criticise the traditional loggers, they manage to leave the old growth, the stuff of no economic value that keeps the whole ecosystem ticking over.”

Peg also believes that we lack the necessary knowledge to make these judgements, because we don’t know what are the keystone species, the ones that stop the whole system collapsing, just as the keystone in a stone arch is kept up by that one stone.

She is convinced, for example, that “the gliding frog” is really “the gliding frogs”, that the two species are distinct and quite different. And until we have answers like that, she says, we need to hold off.

In council this month

This month’s Council agenda includes the vexed question of whether or not the Council will allow the capture and removal of breeding pairs of hairyoddities from the islands.

The previous assumption that this was a get-rich-quick scheme by a multinational has now been shown to be false: these animals are, it seems, extremely useful as a ‘model’ for diabetes, a killer disease in many parts of the world.

Is it possible we might persuade the researchers to do their work here?

And next month, according to what we have heard, the question of woodchipping the inwit is back on the agenda again.

More on the ‘tummy bug’

The ‘tummy bug’ that we reported last month continues to wreak havoc, and it now seems to be more common in the Uglets. This raises the question: is it something to do with the tanks, or could it be spread in some other way? Peg Wilkins believes she and Hyacinth have the answer, but they are not saying until they have done some more tests.

Apologies and corrections

We regret the reference in our last issue to the “grey mare”, when the context makes it obvious that we were actually referring to Mayor Grey. This was due to a misunderstanding during a shouted conversation as “The Chuffer” left the wharf, after Chuffer had shouted himself horse.

The anonymous complainant from the Pony Club: please stop now — leave well enough alone. Stop being filly.

Letters to the editor

Sir,

I refer to the Second Editorial in your last issue. I take it that I am being referred to when you imply that I was going to take all of the money from the tickets sold to watch the boat pulling, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Nor did I want us to stage boat pullings every month: only in those months when the Cloudwalker Hotel had a large convention booking. You imply that we would be opening up our customs for outsiders to watch, but these would be very select outsiders, given the prices that the Cloudwalker management plan to charge.

So your objections, as always are groundless and ill-founded.

Jean Grey

Sir,

Peg Wilkins argued last month that we have no right to exploit the hairyoddity, but if that is the case, neither do the multinationals who are planning to grow the hairyoddities in large numbers, for their own reasons.

They can get away with that sort of 'roll over them' behaviour in the developing world, but not here. You may be very sure that *they* will be taking out parents on whatever they do, and will we see any money from these potents?

People who live on top of oil-fields are entitled to sell the oil, and we are just as entitled to sell other people the right to use our wildlife, but it must be a right that we can revoke.

Observer

Sir,

I believe that there are at least some tourists who are responsible, but they are the ones who are willing to fit in with us, and do what we do, rather than demand that we do what they want.

Chuffer

Sir,

Hamish Lim, as we all know, is entirely one-eyed when it comes to snarks, because of the damage they do to his short-legged sheep, and he only keeps those because he is too lazy to build decent fences.

The snark is a magnificent creature, and has long been part of the Ugly Islands ecosystems. To call for the utter destruction of any species is a crime against Nature, against God, and against our common humanity

Buck Mulligan

Sir,

Limmo is right to be concerned about barrages interfering with the Plughole Rush, but that is surely just a matter of having some liftable spans, or a section that can be swung out of the way when the race is on. As an alternative, if a barrage was used, there could be openings to allow racers to shoot the rapids, as it were.

That said, most barrage designs would not completely block the passage in any case, but operate as a series of waterwheels might do, though using carbines instead.

Watcher

Sir,

I understand that some of our greener-hearted compatriots are worried about the risk of harm to the sliding grog during the coming ironwood felling in the inwit.

While I do not believe that they come to any harm, what is all the fuss about? There are plenty more up on Cloudmaker that can glide down into the inwit to replace any that were killed.

QED

Sir,

When you've seen one frog, you've seen enough. All they do is eat agenbites anyhow. Who cares?

Doggo

Sir,

Most of my time at the moment is being taken up with trying to explain what is going on with the 'gummy bug' in The Uglets, but I need to deal, at least briefly, with the question of the gliding frogs. There is no doubt in my mind that even though they may *look* similar, these frogs live in different places and have different habits, aside from their gliding skills. So while they may have evolved from a common ancestor, if you kill one, it is gone forever.

If our resident puzzle setters have not posed a problem for this month -- or even if they have, I would like to see what the clever young people can make of the available evidence: is it one gliding frog, or two gliding frogs?

However you look at it, extinction is demeaning of life, and we should want to part of it.

Peg Wilkins

Sir,

I am delighted to report that I have had a letter from Professor Fenwick, indicating that he will be back on the islands later this month.

This is exciting news, as I have recently found some wombah sign in the inwit.

Bill James

Ironwood offcuts

Chuffer Harris is willing to take any amount of offcuts and scrap to use as fuel. Beach pickup, anywhere by agreement, or as far up river as he can get the boat. Prices on application, with special deals for those using his boat to transport their logs.

Chuffer also advises that he has a good supply of nicely matured floatwood logs available for those wishing to bring ironwood down from the Riverrun by water.