



Australian Freshwater Turtle Conservation and Research Association

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Dear Members and Friends,

We hope you and your families are well!

It may appear that AFTCRA Inc. has gone quiet.....it is quite the opposite! We have been travelling at a frantic pace and there is no sign of slowing down any time soon.

Firstly, we have received many generous donations as people are starting to appreciate our cause! Some of the people we would like to thank are Peter Johnson, Dorian McCartney, Bernard Devaux S.O.P.T.O.M (of France) and Don and Gail Johnson. Thanks also to Mark Hamann and Scott Thomson for donating so much of their time and expertise to assisting us with numerous permit applications and Michael Frith for designing and maintaining our current website and offering to develop several databases to make administration and data collection more streamlined for us. One member has even offered to pay to have our website designed by a web design company and is prepared to pay \$8.5K as per the quote we recently received! Thanks again to everyone for all of your efforts; we really couldn't do this alone!

We have been negotiating with several reputable zoos and wildlife parks for free and discounted entry for our members. So far, Underwater World, Mooloolaba QLD have offered a 20% discount and the Australian Reptile Park, at Somersby NSW has offered free entry which is a fantastic result. Thanks to all institutions who have agreed and who are considering helping us make membership more beneficial and exciting for everyone.



UnderWater World
SUNSHINE COAST

Mooloolaba, Sunshine Coast, QLD



Located at Somersby, Sydney's Central Coast, NSW

This year we have applied for 5 environmental grants, published several documents and articles and most importantly we have been lobbying hard to stop the construction of a mega-dam in the mid catchment of the Mary River at Traveston, near Gympie. This dam will have dire consequences on the fauna of the Mary River particularly the endemic Mary River Turtle *Elusor macrurus* (MRT) and the Mary River Cod *Maccullochella peelii mariensis*. In July and October, Craig and I staffed a stall with a live MRT to educate people about the possible plight of these unique turtles. The stall received a lot of interest and helped raise some much needed funds for AFTCRA Inc.! Also in July, I designed our mascot, 'Travis' the Mary River Turtle. We now have 'Travis' T-shirts and Christmas cards available for purchase for further fundraising and raising public awareness! The Christmas cards have information about MRT's on the back.

Pricing is as follows -	Single Card	\$3.00
	Pack of 5 cards	\$12.50
	T-shirt (S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL)	\$20.00
	T-shirt (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14)	\$15.00

Orders can be placed by contacting us at aftcra@bigpond.com or (07) 5447 9540.

T-shirt design

TRAVIS THE MARY RIVER TURTLE SAYS
"OUR FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS!"
 PLEASE HELP SAVE THE MARY RIVER,
QUEENSLAND



www.AFTCRA.org.au

Christmas card



Our major project, expected to start in December will involve a two and a half year survey of the 6 species of turtle within the Mary River with emphasis on the endangered Mary River turtle within the proposed mega-dam impoundment area. Craig has already completed a 45km preliminary study of Mary River Turtles in the wild. This involved Craig snorkelling 5 -13 kilometre stretches of the river each day and a second person, usually me, in a canoe taking notes and GPS coordinates of all MRT habitat and nesting banks as well as Mary River Cod, Queensland Lungfish and Platypus sightings.



Gabrielle & Craig Canoeing & Snorkelling the Mary River



Freshwater Turtle Research Base Camp on the Fitzroy River

AFTCRA Inc. has received a lot of support from the Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) of the Environmental Sciences Division of the Environmental Protection Agency, lead by Dr Colin Limpus. Craig was invited and attended two training sessions with the TCP, one to the Fitzroy River and one to Tiaro. Craig and I have been invited to attend further TCP training at Mon Repos research station, in Bundaberg, in December. The next training session will include skills training in capture, handling, measuring and tagging as well as turtle embryology and anatomy. During his trip to the Mary River (Tiara) Craig was bitten on the chin by a large Southern Snapping Turtle *Elseya albagula*, whilst diving in zero visibility water. This did not deter Craig from catching and taking her back to base camp for processing (measuring and tagging)! It also impressed the locals who were lining up to photograph the wound during their annual fishing competition!

Craig is currently working with the company completing the EIS for the Traveston mega-dam on the Mary River to ensure they get an accurate sample size to identify the true impact the dam will have on the turtles. So far, he has located over 140 MRT's, over 200 Lungfish and approximately 50 MR Cod. He has even had two platypus forage for food within two feet of him! For his efforts, Craig has negotiated with the company to make a sizable donation to AFTCRA Inc. for the purchase of essential equipment needed for our own studies.

Craig and I have donated several photographs to publishing agencies for inclusion into two books and the new Australia and New Zealand School Curriculum, Endangered Species module.

Lastly, we will be starting filming of a short documentary film, this week, on the wildlife of the Mary River to educate people about what will be lost if this dam does go ahead! This film will be between 5 and 10 minutes long and detail the life of a Mary River Turtle from hatching. It will include other wildlife of the river and some predators and other threats to their survival. Thanks to Nick Hill and Wendy Gillespie who have donated their time and equipment for this project!

If any members are interested in becoming Management Committee members, we could sure use your help! Also, we need more general members so please spread the word!

We literally are lucky we found some time to finally do this, our first Newsletter!

Take care and kind regards,

Gabrielle Latta- Secretary AFTCRA Inc.