



BUSHLAND NEWS

KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY NEWSLETTER
Autumn 2025

Greetings from Katandra

The bushland in Katandra remains healthy and essentially weed free, although the bush very open with not a lot of undergrowth in many areas. The exception to this is the area near the yurt in which the undergrowth continues to recover well from the controlled burn 5 or so years ago.

Plants seen flowering over the summer months in Katandra include *Banksia spinulosa* (Hair-pin Banksia), *Platysace lanceolata* (Native parsnip), *Platysace linearifolia* (Carrot Tops), *Pimelea linifolia* (Rice Flower), *Epacris pulchella* (NSW Coral Heath), *Synoum glandulosum* (Scentless Rosewood) and *Acacia linifolia* (flax-leafed Wattle).

Wallabies continue to be seen regularly throughout Katandra, including young wallabies, suggesting that they are breeding in the Sanctuary. Other notable sightings include water dragons, goannas, brush turkeys, some fireflies (but not in the swarm numbers of the previous year) and the sounds of the lyrebird.

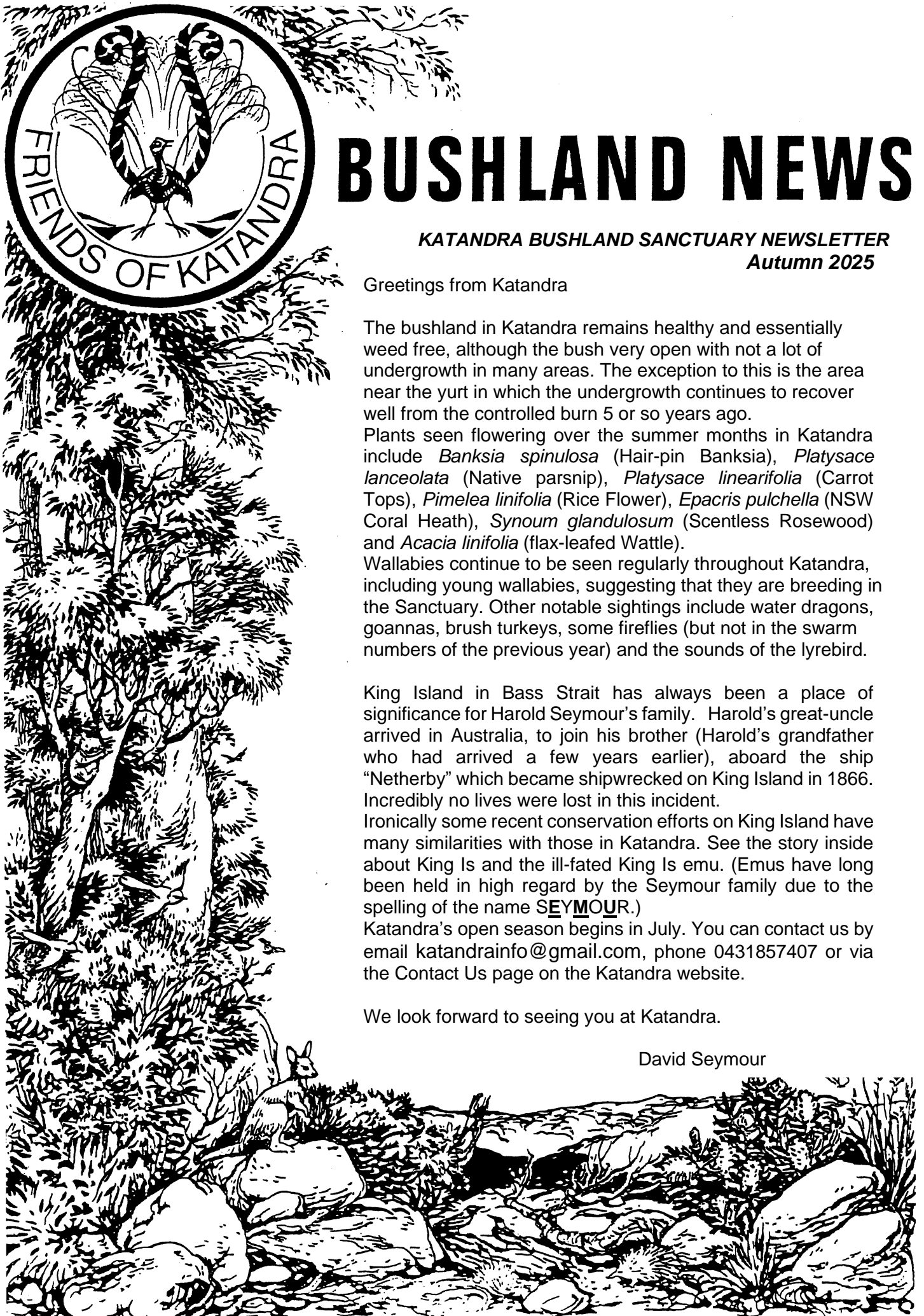
King Island in Bass Strait has always been a place of significance for Harold Seymour's family. Harold's great-uncle arrived in Australia, to join his brother (Harold's grandfather who had arrived a few years earlier), aboard the ship "Netherby" which became shipwrecked on King Island in 1866. Incredibly no lives were lost in this incident.

Ironically some recent conservation efforts on King Island have many similarities with those in Katandra. See the story inside about King Is and the ill-fated King Is emu. (Emus have long been held in high regard by the Seymour family due to the spelling of the name SEYMOUR.)

Katandra's open season begins in July. You can contact us by email katandrainfo@gmail.com, phone 0431857407 or via the Contact Us page on the Katandra website.

We look forward to seeing you at Katandra.

David Seymour



Conservation on King Island

King Island is the second largest island in Bass Strait, Flinders Island being the largest. Situated about half-way between North-west Tasmania and Cape Otway in Victoria, it forms part of the official land divide between the Great Australian Bight and Bass Strait.



King Island, together with three other much smaller islands (New Year, Christmas and Councillor Islands), form what is known as the New Year Group of Islands. These islands were connected to Tasmania and the Australian mainland during the last ice-age, coming isolated when sea-levels rose about 14,000 years ago. Even during this relatively short period of isolation, King Island has evolved many of its own unique flora and fauna. Despite its isolation, King Island has not been immune to the many environmental issues facing other areas of Australia. When first seen by European explorers in 1799, there were abundant fur seals and elephant seals along the shorelines. These seals, along with the King Island emu, were soon hunted to local extinction. (see the following article about the fate of the King Island emu).

In recent decades there has been a major conservation effort to address many of the other environmental issues on the Island. It is interesting to note that some of these issues are the same as some being faced in Katandra.

Katandra has suffered its own local extinction, that of the koala, the last ones seen in the area about 70 years ago when they were removed to be placed in a private zoo.

Asparagus scandens (commonly known as Bridal Veil) is an exotic weed that has become rampant in some areas of the island, smothering the native

understory. Fortunately, a small outbreak of *A. scandens* in Katandra a few years ago was quickly eradicated, however there is still a constant need to remove other asparagus fern species whose seeds are often brought in and dropped by birds.



An outbreak of A. Scandens smothering bushland on King Island. Photo – King Island Landcare

Feral cats a major danger to native fauna populations on King Is, particularly endangered birds such as the Orange-bellied parrot. Feral deer also cause a lot of damage to local flora. Like most of the Sydney area, Katandra does have some similar issues with feral cats and foxes.

Large areas of King Island have been cleared for farming, reducing the amount of native vegetation present. Efforts are being made to return some areas back to native bushland and to maintain corridors linking areas of conserved bushland. Additionally, as part of the conservation program on King Island, enclosure cages have been constructed to monitor issues of overgrazing of native seedlings by kangaroos and possums. Similarly in Katandra, there are constant battles to prevent nearby overdevelopment destroying bushland corridors linking Katandra to Ku-ring-gai National Park in the north and Garigal National Park to the south. The development around Katandra has also given rise to some overgrazing of native seedlings by the local Swamp Wallaby population which are now more restricted in their movements. Some small cage areas have been built in Katandra to monitor for and protect from this overgrazing.

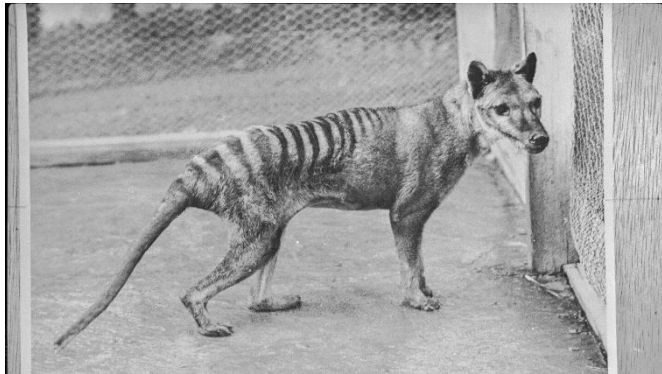
King Island Emu

(Dromaius novaehollandiae minor)

Many Australians are familiar with the story of the extinction of the Tasmanian Tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*). Unfortunately, the fate of the King Island Emu follows a very similar story line.

Intensive hunting by farmers and the destruction of native habitat led to the extinction of wild

populations of the thylacine. Farmers believed that tigers were responsible for killing sheep and other farm animals. More recent studies suggest that the thylacine's jaws were not strong enough to kill large prey such as sheep and the farm killings were more likely to be caused by other feral dogs. The last known thylacine died alone in captivity at Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart in 1936.



*A Thylacine at Beaumaris Zoo in 1936.
Photo - Public domain.*

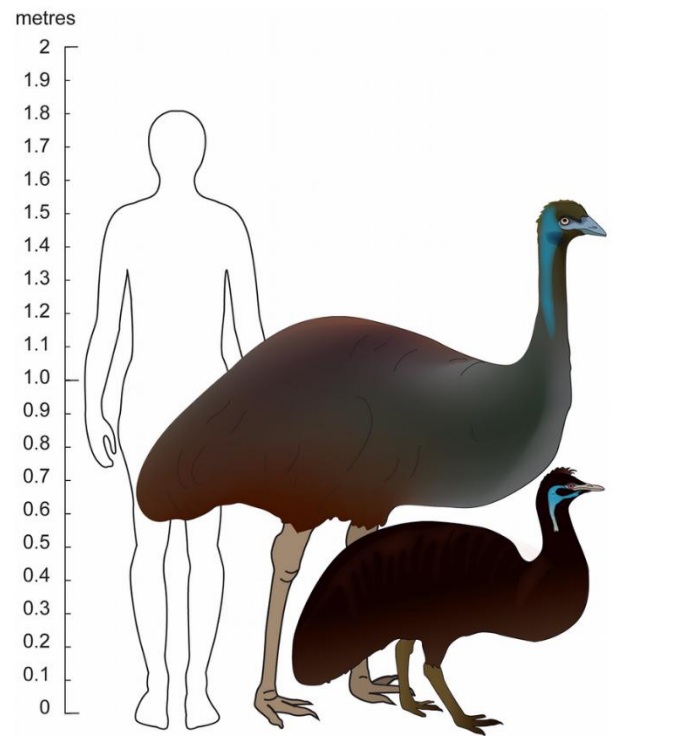
Extensive hunting (likely for food) and destruction of habitat also decimated the emu population on King Island.

The King Island emu was a distinct subspecies of emu that was endemic to King Island. It was the smallest of all known emus, less than half the size of mainland species, and had a darker plumage. The small size may be an example of '*insular dwarfism*', which is common on isolated islands. Like the Tasmanian Tiger, the last known individual King Island emu also died in captivity, not in Tasmania but in the gardens of Chateau de Malmaison in Paris, home of Empress Josephine, consort to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Science writer Zoe Kean relives this story in an article titled "The Last King Island Emu Died a Stranger in a Foreign Land" republished in "The



An illustration of the King Island emu by John Gerrard Keulemans (1842-1912)



The relative sizes of the King Island and mainland emus are depicted in this illustration attributed to Tim H. Heupink, Leon Huynen, David M. Lambert.

Best Australian Science Writing 2024" (NewSouth Publishing – UNSW Press).

The King Island emu was one of a number of native animals, and many plants, that were taken to France aboard the ship "*Geographe*", one of the vessels of a scientific expedition led by Nicolas Baudin. The emu arrived in Brittany, France in March 1804, 15 months after it was put on the ship. Many of the animals taken on board did not survive the trip. In fact, many of the sailors and scientists also died, including Baudin, as the ship was plagued with scurvy, dysentery and tuberculosis on its journey home. Entries in Baudin's journal described the struggle to keep the animals alive, noting –

"since the emus refused to eat, we fed them by force, opening their beaks and introducing pellets of rice mash into their stomachs".

The Empress was said to be very pleased with the live animals that did survive, keeping these "exotic treasures" in her Chateau garden. The last King Island emu died in 1822, having outlived the Empress who had died in 1814 of pneumonia. By the time this emu died it had also outlived all the remaining emus on King Island. It is held in the French National Museum of Natural History as a taxidermied specimen. One feather from this last individual was "gifted" back to Tasmania by the French museum in the year 2000.

Another sad ending for a lost species.

KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY

Foley's Hill, Lane Cove Rd, Ingleside NSW
Department of Lands Reserve No 86487
Founder: the late Harold Alfred Seymour
Managed by Katandra Bushland Sanctuary Trust.
Phone: 0431857407

OPEN: Every Sunday: July, August, September, October

HOURS: 10 am — 4 pm

ADMISSION: \$5 donation

KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY TRUST PO Box 485 Mona Vale NSW 1660

President: David Seymour

Secretary: David Seymour

Treasurer: Peter Hammond

Trustees: Marita Macrae OAM

Antony Westwood

Myles Holloway

Bushland News Editors: Marita Macrae OAM

David Seymour

(Cover Design by the late Walter Cunningham)

**Enquiries: phone – 0431 857 407,
email - katandrainfo@gmail.com
or via the Contact Us page on the Katandra
website**

Katandra website -
katandrabushlandsanctuary.com

DONATIONS

Donations to Katandra to help maintain the Sanctuary can be made by direct deposit. Katandra's bank details are below

Account Name –

Katandra Bushland Sanctuary Trust

BSB – 082132

Account No. - 509347998

PUBLIC OPEN DAYS 2025

Each Sunday of July–October

10 am – 4 pm

Picnic tables are available for use should you wish to bring along a picnic lunch to enjoy in the Sanctuary.

DIARY DATES 2025

SANCTUARY MAINTENANCE 2025

Maintenance days are generally the third Sunday of the month from March to November, from 9am. Please check by contacting us on 0431 857 407 as these dates and times may vary.

Volunteers are needed

If you can assist on maintenance days or with welcoming visitors to Katandra on open days, please phone 0431 857 407.

Katandra Bushland Sanctuary Trust
PO Box 485 Mona Vale NSW 1660