



# Media Release

Wednesday 21 July 2010

For immediate release

## Tracking Turtles on South Straddie

The small offshore island of South Stradbroke may not have a large human population, but it is densely and richly inhabited by a diverse and spectacular range of fauna. In fact, two endangered species of marine turtles have been found to utilise South Stradbroke Island for nesting, a discovery that is hugely important for the long-term conservation of these animals.

Leighton Upton, one of only a handful of residents of South Stradbroke Island, is the community and volunteer coordinator for marine science studies. He is also the island's official 'turtle-tracker' and 'bird-bander' and is an active volunteer in Marine Turtle Monitoring Programs, a combined effort of the Gold Coast City Council, Griffith University and locals.

Mr Upton will discuss the current research into endangered marine species such as the turtles, and the importance of public involvement in wildlife conservation at Gecko's monthly guest speaker night at Gecko House, 139 Duringan St, Currumbin at 6:30pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July. All are welcome to attend.

"Turtle monitoring activities have confirmed the presence of the Green Turtle and the Loggerhead Turtle on the island, which are both threatened species of marine turtles. The long term viability of the current population are severely compromised by threats such as excessive vehicles with beach access, increased tidal and storm activity, rising sea temperature, developments along the coastline and introduced predators", said Mr Upton.

Ample support from locals and visitors to the island, who have a keen interest in wildlife, have offered great assistance to marine studies volunteers, in both the rescuing and recording of the marine turtles. Other animals on the island, including mammals and shore birds, are also taken good care of.

Earlier this year, Mr Upton was fortunate enough to witness the rare nesting of Loggerhead turtles during the day on South Stradbroke Island. In the same month, it was reported that South Stradbroke Island had recorded the highest nesting rate among loggerhead turtles since record-keeping began.

Despite the obvious success of the monitoring and conservation work done by volunteers such as Mr Upton, the endangered turtles still face an uncertain future with the threat of climate change and population growth of growing concern. "South Stradbroke Island, though small, is a dynamic part of the world, its ecology full of mystery, danger, tragedy, romance, espionage and beauty" said Mr Upton.

*Gecko presents a free guest speaker night on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month on topical environmental issues. For catering purposes and to prevent waste, RSVP by 3pm on the day before the event to [speakers@gecko.org.au](mailto:speakers@gecko.org.au) or call 5534 1412. For more information, visit [www.gecko.org.au/guest-speaker](http://www.gecko.org.au/guest-speaker)*

*A gold coin donation is requested per glass of wine and nibbles. Alternatively, Gecko encourages the contribution of vegetarian/organic/environmentally-thoughtful food options at all of its events.*

### ENDS

Information for media:

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|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Guest Speaker   | Leighton Upton | 5597 9000    |
| Gecko Secretary | Lois Levy      | 0412 724 222 |