

27th April
2022

Hello there Professor Many

From ABC radio heard your request for our own personal flood stories - well here is mine absolutely full of pain and hope & have relayed something useful that really shone through for me was peoples willingness to help - practically & supportive. The extreme generosity of donations and all the tireless volunteers from all over Australia.

My experiences are very superficial as I was not impacted with home & possession losses, therefore I had no need for many of the services provided so I don't know how they function. The few volunteers I encountered were very willingly giving up their time and living rough in their car or sleeping out in tents while here.

I personally get great enjoyment from nature and our wonderful natural environment. I kept myself busy going out with a billy cart a few times a day and picking up any type of rubbish I came across, and what a variety there was. I am appalled at our single use plastic mentality, but then not even to dispose of it safely - disgusting.

Blown up disposable nappies are so heavy and disgusting to gather up.

Polystyrene is the most annoying rubbish to collect and dispose of particularly if it's old and falls apart when any pressure applied.

Humanity really needs to clean up our garbage act. Oh yes I forgot to mention in my epistle about the horrid plastic film that many tray boxes are wrapped in these days, I think every tree along any flood river has great waving lengths of that green or black or that blue other colour, hauntingly blowing in the breeze. Rather difficult to reach to remove. I guess it just hangs there until it falls apart and then lands in our waterways. We saw amazing colourful sunsets reflecting on the murky flood waters - we could almost forget it was flood water we were viewing.

Chas.

My Flood Experiences

2022

Now we know how precious our wee piece of hill on the outskirts of Coraki really is.

Our small herd of beef cattle had wandered up to the hill the week before the flood as the swampy flats were totally water logged. Thankfully they were all high. As the waters started to rise on Monday 28th Feb, and the rain continued relentlessly we began to wonder if it would ever stop rising. The speed the water was rising at and the extremely strong flow washing all kinds of large & small household and farm items including very large green wrapped hay bales sailing past at a great speed.

We went to bed on Monday night, thankfull that the rain had eased off, but we had lost electricity, wondering what the morning would bring. What a great relief on Tuesday 1st of March when the waters peaked a few metres below the garden fence. We considered ourselves very lucky. So much loss and devastation on a huge unprecedented scale.

Due to loss of power we had no outside news from 6pm previous evening so we could only imagine what was happening to our family friends & local community. No phone connection for next 8 days. Charging mobiles became a major issue along with extremely poor reception.

Tuesday 1st several days after were very hot, humid. We were kept busy locating, setting up the one old generator we had, then trying to siphon out some fuel to keep it running. Oh those unsettling days of generator motor noise, petrol fumes combined with humidity, heat and ragged emotions not to mention the worry of what to feed the cattle to keep them going. Suck they were mostly in prime condition so could hold their mojo for the first week or so but then the weight loss became visible. We were so relieved to be dry & safe but so upsetting to think about the devastation unfolding all around us. Not knowing what was happening beyond our view was disconcerting.

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ISOLATION: The road into Corakie + westwards to the cemetery, small aboriginal settlement as well as about 6 other small allotments was under water. We could walk across the golf course to an agro care facility - they too were totally isolated from the township the first few days.

GENERAL: - The flood waters spread for miles + miles in all directions, council boats SES, police + other emergency services along with locals in all types of water vessels were out sightseeing, or just getting from one place to another were zooming around back + forth over our paddocks. It all seemed no strange and certainly aroused the cattle's curiosity. Along with helicopter activity there was never a dull moment. The helicopters started landing up near the cemetery close to aboriginal settlement delivering emergency supplies and attending medical emergencies. The SES boats then transported the supplies into Corakie.

We even witnessed a chopper rescue of 2 teenager first nations people from a tree on the golf course, they were out in a boat in the extremely fast + strong flowing flood waters. The roar of the water as it flowed over the road and into the golf course sounded like Niagara Falls - even though the rapid effect was only 4-6 inches.

Five cows washed up onto golf course were happily grazing on the short but lush green fairways. Some came from 20-30 kms up stream. I even spotted an emu strutting his stuff around the edge of water adjacent to the common 'scrub' area. My first Emu sighting here in 40 years. Black swans, Brahmas, Galahs, Pelicans are still present. Huge flocks of Ibis helping to clean up farm land + road side as water recedes. Now I see the yellow billed Spoonbill following the cattle in short grass. The wild duck population has exploded.

Howid cane floods everywhere en masse, thankfully several big flocks squashed on the road as traffic resumed. Worrying to see many dead blotched wombats and wee marsh frogs in water puddles and just lying around anywhere. The mosquitos became a real nuisance.

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The pungent penetrating smell all around as the water receded blended in with the fuel smell from generators. Our peace was shattered by the noise of generator roared on for 8 days. The flood smell still evident when working in water logged fields.

Fauna - native wild life.

Summary Birds. - Emu, Brdgas, Galahs, Horons, Pelicans, Yellow-billed Spoonbills. & lots of mass large flocks of cockatoos & eastern as well as green rosellas. Small groups of black cockatoos & king parrots. Along with all our other regular cheerful, happy and hope inspiring birds. Kookaburras, magpies, butcher birds, pea wees, plovers, balsiblows, willy wag tails, the welcome swallow warms and many other wonderful species.

Numerous eggs of different sizes washed up - presumably from water bird nests.

Kangaroos galore, groups of up to 15 making our back yard their home - not at all shy.

Snakes - The common green tree snake - I love these

Red belly blacks out sunbaking in every sunny nook & cranny

Eastern Browns - not so keen on these fellas - all sizes & types.

blatantly invading our outdoor areas. Sunbaking on any dry surface, hiding under all sorts of objects - even curled up in old plant hay bales have become a favorite hide out. I guess because we try to keep them covered - dry - perfect snake haven. But I do understand why as dry spots would be hard to find. Many shedded snake skins lying around just where they wriggled out of them.

Unfortunately our long term nest of honey bees in a hollow of a live camphor laurel tree was invaded by the flood water and since then there has been no bee activity around the hollow. We have never harvested the honey but got great pleasure in watching the bee activity. The honey used to run out the bottom. Now it is totally abandoned. What a loss for this time of bee health and survival uncertainty.

Just the other day I spotted a frog I had not seen before. On referring to my trusty 'frog book' it appears to be a flood plane frog - how appropriate. Unfortunately we are missing our normally huge healthy population of larger small tree frogs that love these weather conditions. The scientist have but it down to a devastating fatal fungal infection introduced by yet another imported frog species in recent years. God do say this orange - - - something fungal infection does not effect our disgusting health care system. More are terrible environmental impacts from some of these unwillingly known imports from man made decisions. (which I could remember the name of the fungal infection & why these frogs were introduced) Fish of all sizes & types discovered swimming in our pastures as water needed - unfortunately none I could identify as those horrid carp.

Flora

Everytime I walked down our driveway in the early flood days my faith & hope was restored by the floating fragrance from the abundant Loquat blossom. So full and rich in sweetness.

It was a bumper passionfruit season resulting in many fruit being bobbed up onto paddocks by the tide. Also saw the occasional pumpkin.

Unfortunately many weed seeds are now germinating along the tide mark areas, the most troublesome being the Endemic Coral Tree. Just 6 weeks post flood these seedlings are up to 8" high with obvious hairs when attempting to pull them out. They also exhibit a very strong deep root system. They are abundant and I was hoping the cattle might eat them as they are so hungry and the seedlings are so green & choice looking - but oh no! Smart weed is another horrid water weed and spreading fast. Some small camphor laurel trees along with madecaster pines (both environmental weeds) obviously don't like being submerged in flood water for long periods, are looking rather browned off - hopefully they dont recover. I am already trying to germinate some Hoop Pine seeds to replace a 2 metre 2 year old tree which was exceeding all expectations at the base of our hill, but the excess flood water has turned it brown & very suspect. The Hoop Pine is the signature tree of Sismon.

Some garden shrubs are wilting one day and looking magnificent the next, but overall I hope they survive.

Keen gardeners and garden proud homeowners are at a total loss where and when to restart their personal haven, as so many gardens are still under inches of silt, debris and muddy slush. But going on the amount of plastic plant pots of all sizes that have collected in the paddocks I think the gardeners will soon resume their passion & have a trailer load of pots to take to the recycle centre when things open up again.

My garden only rain affected just站在 me down day after day as it becomes overgrown & unruly. There always seems to be more important & urgent jobs. Having a garden you enjoy is so vital for our well being - so I have planted some snowpeas, they are thriving so I am now ready to tackle the rest.

GENERAL

The public set up a donated goods for immediate survival for those many people left homeless eg gas camping stoves & gas cylinders, cleaning products and implements, mops, brooms, scrubbing brushes, buckets, gloves & cloths, huge shovels, wheel barrows. The list was endless, all so necessary and very much appreciated. I reckon everyone in Coraki & surrounds now has a pair of gum boots complimentary of donations. We are still utilising these on a daily basis as the most insignificant shower turns everywhere back to mud & grim puddles. Personal hygiene, along with mostly community donated clothing & bedding were a great help. People from all walks of life & Australia wide were arriving with trailer and truck loads of new & used donations. Pet food was another plentifully supplied item. Kids toys, books and disposable nappies were also abundant.

Our roads are in an appalling state of continuous huge pot holes with large areas of bitumen surface disintegrating with the days & would not even thinking of driving after dark - too dangerous.

Food

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Initially fruit, vegetables, bottled water & long life milk arrived by helicopter and then road transport once the roads opened up. Bottled water very abundantly available and necessary as water supply contaminated in the first few weeks. Non perishable food items eg canned everything, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, tea & coffee to name a few, were plentiful.

Many voluntary set ups offering free prepared meals and food for flood evacuees, volunteers and workers plus the general locals whose lifestyle were disrupted due to no power & loss of refrigerated perishables. Many volunteers walking around the streets where evacuees were camping and areas where others were cleaning out their homes, offering salad rolls, sausage sandwiches etc along with fresh fruit, bottled water or fruit juice poppers. Individuals and organized voluntary group driving around the outer areas offering pre cooked meals in take-away containers eg vegetable curries with rice, lentilburgers all so very much appreciated by those in need.

Within 10 days or so the pop up amenities, shower, toilets, laundry facilities materialized guess people were just using public, school & church amenities prior to this.

Medical health outreach tent, medical personnel for those sick and wounded were set up as soon as roads opened up. & even saw the Queen Doctor in Coraki

The DPI supplied veterinary help for all animals they would assess and treat wounded or sick animals accordingly. They also oversaw removal of carcasses and burial, along with euthanizing any animal beyond treatment.

Cattle Fodder

D.P.I (department of primary industry) also issued fodder rations for those farmers with a PIC number. This included air drops in the early days. When our first air dropped fodder fell from the sky unexpectedly on day 8 it like manna from the heavens the cattle really enjoyed it.

The large truck loads came into town on day 10 post flood and once again depending on cattle numbers allocations were worked out. The fodder was assembled at a pick up point, then it was up to the individual to collect and transport. Transport became a major issue as lots of people had lost their means of transport, or driveways were washed out or boggy and unsafe. Commercial carriers were very hard to get in touch with & likewise some had lost their trucks. Those lucky enough to be share holders at the Casino Food Co Op were allocated some free fodder, but once again transport a major hitch. Voluntary groups helping with distribution of donated hay from other rural areas in NSW, Qld & Vic included.

- Feed for Friends - a wonderful lot of local girls who get donated hay and co-ordinate distribution and in many cases personally deliver the hay via their own private 4x4 drive vehicles, horse float & sizeable trailers complete with their kids all secure in safety car seats - enjoying all the interaction
- Need 4 Feed a Lions club intervention - transporting vast amounts of donated ^{hay} from other areas. Once again transport a hitch from drop off collection point, but Disaster Relief Australia were most co-operative in that arena.

We will need to supplement our very minuscule natural pastures as only approximately 5% currently able to be grazed, all over winter and maybe longer depending on weather.

My 3 year old grandson who had never heard of hay 8 weeks ago, now every game he plays involves hay! Be it carrying it, lifting it on top of his toys or feeding it to the cows. Hay hay hay.

One vision that I will never forget was a front end loader with its bucket full of animal butchered bodies out on full display speeding up the main street and onto highest point on bridge and dumping them into the still fast flowing Richmond. I guess from the butchery unpowered cool room for 8 days. Horrible sight.