It was very good to see that list of snake catchers beside my ‘Nature Notes’ for October. Copy it and stick it on your refrigerator door. There have been TV reports of more than usual numbers of sightings of snakes in Western Australia and there have been several sightings around Paluma area already this season. So, you have been warned.

I started off my life in natural history, including snake-catching, at about the age of 10 when I was given a beautiful specimen of the harmless Diamond Python. I do not keep snakes now but I do keep my eyes open to see what snakes are still about. They often do appear on our roads and while many do get killed, some unnecessarily, and our bus is burnt more regularly, they are diminishing in numbers.

I have only once been bitten by a venomous snake and that was by a Death Adder. I have told you the story before about that episode. Here is a photograph of me being carried by the locals from the southern slopes of the Adelbert Range to the hospital in Madang. I revived to be walking before we got to Madang. It did happen. Studies by the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, Parkville, Victoria show that about (only?) 18% of bites from the Death Adder are fatal. This may be because the others, like me, did not get a full bite.

While many people think that the only good snake is a dead one, disregarding the good they do in reducing the numbers of rats and mice, some people think they show bravery in trying to kill one. The Green Tree Snake and the Brown Tree Snake which might be resting in the roof of your house do good work in keeping you free of rats and mice.

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**Paluma In the Clouds.. Colwyn Campbell**

A wine and cheese evening was held at the Paluma Hall on 4th October, at which awards were presented to the winners of the Garden Competition held a few weeks earlier. The competition, generously sponsored by Bunnings North Shore warehouse, showcased Paluma gardens at their best. Awards were given in several categories and the trophy for best overall garden went deservedly to Brenda and Phil Davies. Best commercial property went to Ann and Andy Bishop of ‘Forest Mist’, best residential property to Ross and Bronwyn Murray, highly commended in village to Peter and Dorothy Clumpp, best acreage block to Don Battersby, highly commended acreage to Devron and Linda. For most interesting plant or display, two awards were given to Wilfred Karnoll and to Greg and Cheryl Burraston. Special mentions went to Les and Lynn Hyland, Donna and Michael Drew, Colwyn Campbell, Graham and Judy Malpas, Nick and Glenda van Rynswold, Anne Bruyeres and Staff and Merle Browne.

The twentieth anniversary of the official opening of Gumburu Environmental Education Centre was celebrated over three days on the weekend of 17 to 19 October. Gumburu was constructed during 1993 to provide a venue for students at Catholic schools to study environmental education in the rainforest. This need became apparent in the 1980's when popularity of bookings led to access to the Paluma Environmental Education Centre being restricted to State School students. A formal meeting of principals of schools in the Diocese was held on Friday; for some this was their first visit to Gumburu. Saturday was the big day with celebratory and historical addresses, reminiscences and reflections on the aims and achievements of the school, interspersed with prayers and guided walks in the rainforest. Guests were welcomed on arrival by the Townsville Diocesan Executive Director Dr Cathy Day. Special guests included the former Director, Sister Mary McDonald, former teacher and Holy Spirit Principal Paul Lucas and former Paluma Environmental Centre Principal, Cam McKenzie, all part of the driving force behind the construction of the new centre. Other guests included the Director - Leadership and School Development, Ross Horner, the Director - Learning, Teaching and Catholic Identity, Ernie Christie, the architect, Kerrie Prescott, members of the Gumburu In-Service Team, current Paluma EEC Principal Linda Venn, teachers at Catholic schools and members of the Paluma community. Presentations were made to people instrumental in the development and running of the centre, including a twenty year service award to Janette Furber. As usual, Gumburu was beautifully presented and the catering was superb with delicious food prepared by Janette Furber and Jodie Pace. Sunday was a quieter day of reflection with most guests departing by mid-day.

Extensions to the Paluma Environmental Education Centre are progressing well, with the framework up for the new accommodation block and the new kitchen well under way. There has been little disruption to activities for visiting students who always enjoy the out-door classrooms and walks in the rainforest.

Traffic in Paluma has been busy with many tradesmen’s vehicles in and out of the village and trucks bringing in building materials. This brings me to the subject again of road safety. Over the past few weeks there have been several incidents on the Range road resulting in damage to vehicles and one resident was the victim of a very unpleasant episode of road rage. Please take care on the road as some drivers do not drive carefully or courteously. Often when confronted by another vehicle on the wrong side of the road you are too concerned with taking evasive action to be able to note and remember the registration number. If, however you do manage to, or to get the name of the company who owns the vehicle, please report it to the local police on 4770 7144. A dash cam is a useful accessory; maybe it will one day become a necessity.

On a less serious note, Paluma’s version of the Melbourne Cup, the Paluma Pick, will be held on Saturday, 1st November at 6.30 pm at the Paluma Community Hall. Bring a plate to share and join in the fun...... Colwyn Campbell