

**We The People**  
Program 42  
The Gold Coast Ibis



In ancient Egypt people and their pagan gods were sometimes depicted with the head of an ibis as the African sacred Ibis was worshiped and revered. This long beaked bird comes in numerous forms including the spectacular scarlet Ibis from South America and the Caribbean. On the Gold Coast the Australian white Ibis is found routinely foraging in parks and gardens.

The Ibis is a beautiful exotic bird with highly specialised features including a very long curved beak for sifting through shallow water and mud catching crustaceans and small creatures by feel. It is a superbly created bird and has existed for millennia. Now enter mankind on the scene and as with so much of our planet we begin to systematically plunder and destroy and the Ibis falls from favour. As an aside, remember the magnificent cocas palm once applauded as a tropical symbol are now classed as a noxious weed on the Gold Coast because we changed our minds. Well back to the Ibis and we popularly declare our Australian native bird a pest as it freely roams through our suburban yards and parks. The same stupid mentality applies and an utter lack of respect for wild life and the natural world. There is further proof with the likes of Bob Katter who wants to shoot the various bat colonies into extinction because they don't suit his short sighted intolerant mentality. When will it stop.

Around the world so many species teeter on extinction and in Australia it's a major problem. Australia is estimated to be home to more than 500 000 animal and plant species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Australia is faced with unprecedented loss of biodiversity. Over the last two hundred years the destruction of our plants and animals and biodiversity has been cataclysmic and more mammals have died out in Australia, than in any other continent. Our ecosystems are also at risk and only a small proportion of forests, woodlands and grasslands remain. The status of many thousands of species is unknown and in SEQ the Koala will be extinct around 2020. Our human record of living in harmony with the planet is appalling.

Now back to the Gold Coast Ibis. My perception is that this marvellous bird so often seen foraging in dust bins and on dumps has now been unkindly branded the 'Tip Turkey'. It is simply trying to adapt to a new environment as we destroy its habitat and elsewhere in Australia its numbers are plummeting. I think it's sad to see the Ibis having to pick up after us but then again it's trying to survive even in the face of being called a filthy bird. Its anything but that and surely we have enough compassion and humanity to let the Ibis live and try and adapt. Teach your children and grand children to appreciate the Ibis and to explain why it is so commonly seen around our waste and its intrinsic value in nature. As we break the finely honed links that hold biodiversity together do we actually think no single link matters and that the natural chain will remain strong. No it won't.

I feel a great admiration for the Gold Coast Ibis as it tries to survive in spite of mankind and in spite of us taking its natural wetlands and forests. At present the new mayor is alarmingly silent on environmental issues and seems hell bent on expansion at any cost. That does not bode well for we the people or for the Ibis on the Gold Coast. I delight in carefully hand feeding lorikeets, cockatiels, ducks and waders, possums, magpies, water dragons, swans and a myriad of other creatures who visit my residential plot. First up each morning is a lone Ibis called Ian and a friendly butcher bird I've named Kevin and they happily tuck in together. Some will say it's not good to feed them but these creatures have lost their habitat so it's the least we can do and I derive great satisfaction from it along with my grand children when they come to visit. Today when you see an Ibis, stop and marvel at the wondrous creation this bird is and be kind to them and don't support any movement to see them culled. To do otherwise is foolish.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**