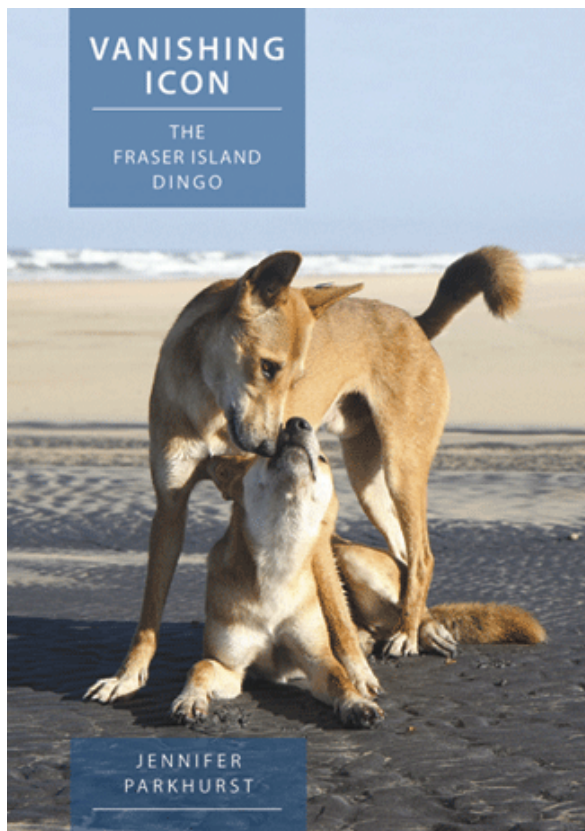


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The private lives of dingoes

Michele Sabto

Vanishing Icon, by photographer and dingo enthusiast Jennifer Parkhurst, is an ode to the dingo population of Fraser Island, believed to represent the purest strain of dingo in eastern Australia.



Vanishing Icon

The Fraser Island Dingo

Jennifer Parkhurst

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World Heritage listed Fraser Island is one of the last remaining places where this animal may easily be seen in the wild. Parkhurst spent nearly three years photographing the life of one particular dingo family group. Her photos and accompanying commentary tell an intimate story of the everyday lives of these strongly social animals that tend to mate for life and maintain orderly and enduring pack structures.

Parkhurst is a long time campaigner for the dingoes of Fraser Island where the expansion of the tourism industry has reduced hunting areas and food sources for the dogs!

Behaviours that will be familiar to dog lovers are given simple, affecting explanations. 'Like humans', writes Parkhurst, 'dingoes are tactile animals and appreciate the comfort of touch. Research has found that a canid's heart rate is reduced when it comes into

contact with a comforting touch.'

'One of their most endearing characteristics is the 'snuff' ... a quick exhalation of air which despite its low intensity can be heard by other pack members at short distances'.

Photos of dingo pups sprawled lazily over each other and their mothers and fathers reinforce this message, as do many beautiful images of dingoes engaged in the greeting ritual of touching noses and mouthing each other's muzzles.

Other photos of dingoes feeding attest to the variety in their diet, from small mammals, fish, and carrion (including turtles washed up on the beach), to fruit such as mango, coconut and pandanus.

A wide range of mating, hunting, nurturing and play behaviours are depicted, and many images capture touching moments of solitude and togetherness.

¹ see ECOS 151 for more information on the conflict between tourism and dingo welfare on Fraser Island http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?act=view_file&file_id=EC151p18.
http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?act=view_file&file_id=EC151p18.pdf

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