

MEET YOUR COTTON RESEARCHER

Maggie Campbell-Jones

Research Assistant, University of the Sunshine Coast

PROFILE

AUGUST 2024

RESEARCH AREA

Bat and bird activity in cotton

**CRDC Research Project
Impacts of landscape
connectivity on bat and bird
activity in cotton and value of
acoustic monitoring
technology: benefits for
natural pest suppression**

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I grew up in the Southern Highlands in NSW where I spent most of free time in the bush getting to know the local wildlife and plants. I pursued my interest in Ecology into university where I completed a Bachelor of Biological Science and further research looking at the impact of fire severity on arboreal mammals. After graduating I moved around Australia and internationally working in a variety of roles from weed and pest management along the Great Ocean Road, studying meerkats in South Africa, rearing calves in Victoria, testing soil quality in Canada and researching household



waste in Queensland. I currently work as a research assistant with the University of the Sunshine Coast. In many of my roles I have worked closely with a range of growers and farmers, and developed an appreciation for their hard work and their knowledge of the landscapes they rely on.



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HOW DID YOU END UP IN COTTON RESEARCH?

In early 2024 I accepted a research assistant position working with a team from the University of the Sunshine Coast and QUT looking at bat and bird activity in Cotton. This is my first role working in cotton research, and I'm looking forward to learning more and working in the industry.

WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT WORKING IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY?

I am excited to learn from the growers and their experiences. Everyone we have met in the cotton industry has been incredibly welcoming and it is a great space to be working in. I am also eager to see how some of our native bats and birds may be contributing to integrated pest management.

EXPLAIN YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH

Insect eating bats and birds are known to provide important pest control services to cotton. This project is looking at elements in the landscape, such as connectivity of native vegetation, to help understand what may attract these pest eating species to cotton farms.

We are recording the calls of bats and birds using custom designed acoustic monitors. The devices will sit in cotton or neighbouring vegetation and record the calls of passing bats and birds. The monitors use AI to remotely identify which species are present on farms through their calls. We will compare different birds and bats found at each site to determine where they are most active. We are hoping this technology assists in measuring on farm biodiversity and informs growers on how to attract beneficial bat and bird species to their fields.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT RESEARCHING?

When I'm not researching, I like to be outside hiking, camping, or taking the dog down to the beach. On rainy days you may find me behind a pottery wheel trying to improve my mug making skills.



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