

TKMG President's Annual Report

By Jack Grant, September, 2006

The past year has largely been one of consolidation for the Tree-kangaroo and Mammal Group. With a 'new' committee, as the last of the founding executive stepped down, it has been a challenge to try and maintain the energy and momentum that has characterized the group over the past few years. The effort that has been necessary to even maintain the *status quo* has been considerable, highlighting mostly just how dedicated and hard-working the past executives have been, despite all being just as busy professionally and personally as the current committee. We thank them warmly for all their time and energy.

T-K Conference

There have, even so, been some notable highlights of the past year. In November 2005 we had the International Tree-kangaroo conference that a few years previously had seemed an unattainable dream – a collection of the planet's most knowledgeable and experienced Tree-kangaroo devotees gathered at Lake Tinaroo for three days of presentations around the conference themes of 'Ecology and conservation of Tree-kangaroos: current issues and future directions'. As well as our local representatives, we welcomed delegates from all over Australia, the U.S. and Papua New Guinea. The papers included a wide range of perspectives from field studies on the Australian and New Guinean species as well as a variety of captive studies. The atmosphere throughout the proceedings was notably cordial and inclusive and at times festive, as the delegates enjoyed a good 'old-fashioned' retreat-style conference, aided by a well-stocked bar. The final outcomes included a number of working groups set to co-ordinate activities on the many important future areas of research and conservation, and we also look forward to the published proceedings of the meeting. The success of the conference was due in no small part to the Amazonian organisational effort led by Karen Coombes, who deserves our everlasting appreciation.

Projects

The year also saw the successful completion of some project work sponsored by the group, with Dr. John Winter finishing his round of Brush-tailed Possum surveys on Cape York Peninsula, and Larry Crook steering the 'Hypsi' forest case studies to a close. With these ventures winding down, we have been developing a new idea for a major future project, involving a public survey similar to the

previous tablelands-based community survey of Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroos. The new project will attempt to replicate insofar as possible the successful community involvement of the first survey, but focusing on a new geographic area – the northern part of the Wet Tropics, home to the Bennett's Tree-kangaroo. The status of this species is even more poorly known than that of Lumholtz's. The generally sparse human population throughout the range of Bennett's will present different challenges than the previous survey, but significant potential exists to advance our general understanding of the species' distribution and habitat requirements. In addition the new survey area will include the region where the ranges of the two Tree-kangaroo species of the Wet Tropics separate or overlap, and we may be able to shed some light on this interesting aspect of their biogeography. Development of this and potentially related projects is currently underway.

Our role in the Community

The role of TKMG in community representation has continued, with our regular seat at the Conservation Sector Liaison Group (CSLG) meetings at the Wet Tropics Management Authority, and our attendance at the first general forum for north Queensland environmental organizations, held and well-attended in Cairns in November 2005. In addition, we have been kept abreast of issues in Mabi Forest by our 'man on the inside', Alan Gillanders, who chairs the Mabi Forest Working Group. Our involvement with on-ground conservation work in the community has also continued, by our sponsorship and support of a number of Envirofund applications.

Our public meetings over the past year have been generally well-attended and have featured a range of speakers including Annabelle Olson – on the new Wildlife Conservancy of North Queensland, Karen Coombes and Jack Grant - the highlights of the November conference, Jim Thomas – the wonderful work of the Tenkile Conservation Alliance in the Torricelli Mountains of PNG, Jack Leighton – who showed his Platypus film to a packed house at the Lake Eacham Hotel, and John Winter, who graced our AGM in September 2006 with a retrospective on the history and highlights of TKMG over its first nine years. We thank all our speakers for their valued contributions to the life of the group and the community.

Thankyous

Some important additional "Thank You's" go to the Malanda Hotel for their continued support of the group by providing a free and welcoming venue for our meetings; the Lake Eacham Hotel for genially hosting our extremely successful July meeting, the first time we have ventured further afield; the Lake Eacham Caravan Park for kindly storing our merchandise and market stall display gear; the Yungaburra and Malanda Falls visitor centres and the Lake Eacham Caravan Park for supporting us as our merchandise outlets; to Maureen at the Eacham Times for publishing all our notices and articles, the staff at the Genazzano Centre for all their hard work to help make the conference such a success; the Little Bottler liquor store in Malanda for giving us terrific service and conditions on providing alcohol for the conference; Marie Beckwith who donated a beautifully hand-carved Tree-kangaroo mirror frame for a raffle fundraiser, P&E glass and aluminium who donated the mirror itself; McAuliffe's Mensland in Atherton and Cedars Café in Yungaburra who kindly displayed the mirror in the lead-up to the raffle. We also extend our thanks to all the members of the community who attended our meetings, tree plantings and other functions during the year; we look forward to another good and active year and look forward to seeing many of you at our future events.

*Jack Grant
President*

