



# Mammal Mail

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group

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## What's Going On? Don't Miss These Upcoming Events

**Thurs, March 5<sup>th</sup>: 5:30pm** Committee meeting at the Malanda Hotel; interested members are welcome to attend.

**Thurs, April 2<sup>nd</sup>: 5:30pm** Committee meeting at the Malanda Hotel followed by a presentation at **7:30pm by John Grant** entitled "Community nature conservation in Bali: the reintroduction of the critically endangered Bali Myna to the wild."

**Thurs, May 7<sup>th</sup>: 5:30pm** Committee meeting at the Malanda Hotel; interested members are welcome to attend.

**Thurs, June 4<sup>th</sup>: 5:30pm** Committee meeting at the Malanda Hotel followed by a presentation at **7:30pm by Mia Derhé** entitled: 'Assessing the responses of mammal and dung beetle communities and their associated ecosystem functions to reforestation in the Wet Tropics'.

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Tree-kangaroo and Mammal Group, Inc. held its' Annual General Meeting at the Malanda Hotel on 2 October 2014. Thirty-four members were in attendance. The minutes of the Annual General Meeting from 2013 were accepted.

Committee member, Dave Hudson explained that TKMG would like to register for status as a Deductible Gift Recipient with the Department of Environment. In order to do this, the Rules needed to be revised to set up an eligible fund, which will be call the "Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Conservation Fund". There will be a separate committee to administer this fund. No questions from the audience were raised; the revised Rules of Association and application for DGR status was endorsed by the membership.

All positions on the Committee were declared vacant and election of office bearers yielded the following results:

President:	Dr. John Kanowski
Vice-President:	Amy Shima
Secretary:	Simon Burchill
Treasurer:	Ruth Whiston

Committee members for 2015: Margit Cianelli; Leanne Hales; Dave Hudson; Kate Dall, Ceinwen Edwards.

Account signatories for TKMG were designated as any two of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer or Secretary and it was agreed that TKMG will continue to retain Eacham Accounting as auditors.

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## Update on the Conservation Status of Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo

*By David Hudson*

On 30 January 2015, the Cairns Post published an article about the conservation status of the Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo being changed from 'near threatened' to 'least concern', as of December 2014. Needless to say, this prompted a great deal of discussion and concern amongst TKMG members. We would like to clarify the position of TKMG and the background behind the decision by the Queensland Government:

In 2008-2009 the government decided to bring its classifications for threatened species (under the Nature Conservation Act 1992) into line with those used by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), which involved removing the 'rare' category (at the time, this included Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo). The Species Technical Committee (STC) was tasked with reviewing all the species listed as 'rare' and reassigning them.

At this stage, TKMG decided to make a submission to the STC nominating the Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo to the 'vulnerable' category. Dr. John Grant was tasked with writing the submission. At its meeting of 30 July 2009 STC deferred making a decision until its November 2009 meeting. Feedback to TKMG at the time was...

*"The case for vulnerable listing is based on continuing loss of habitat extent and quality mainly on the Tablelands where people live. (Many records of this species are road kills). The Tablelands are highly fragmented habitat and there are well documented threats in this area. However the Species Technical Committee would like more information about rest of distribution of the species which is substantially in protected areas. What are the populations in these regions and are there the same threats? Has a similar search effort occurred in these areas? While there are documented pressures on the species in some localities, the Committee will assess the species on its situation across its whole distribution."*

TKMG simply did not have the data so was not able to respond. In the absence of more data the STC again deferred making a decision, instead recommending that the LTK (along with a host of other species) be 'parked' in the near threatened category until further reviews could take place.

The recommendations of the STC meetings of 2009 were enacted in May 2010. The following is taken directly from the EHP website:

*"The following changes involve the transfer of all species from the rare category to other categories for protected wildlife under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. These changes relate to the expiry of the rare category in order to be more consistent with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories for protected wildlife.*

*Table 1 ( <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/changes-additions-table1.html> ) lists species that have been reviewed by the Species Technical Committee (STC) and reclassified from the rare category into another category, as well as a number of species that have been reclassified from other categories, and a series of name changes and corrections.*

*Table 2 ( <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/changes-additions-table2.html> ) lists all rare species that are yet to be reviewed by the STC. These species have been transferred to the near threatened category as an interim measure until they can be reviewed by the STC to determine the appropriate category. The near threatened category is used internationally and has replaced the rare category in Queensland, but provides the same protection as the rare category.*

Here is the link to Table 2, which includes LTK. <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/changes-additions-table2.html>

The STC again considered TKMG's nomination in March 2011 and the Species Technical Committee assessment was:

- *No further information since initial submission. Certainly are some threatening processes in fragmented areas but does not support V or even NT. Large areas of habitat in Wet Tropics protected areas*
- *Recommend change to least concern because of better knowledge of population size and/or extent and/or threats*

This recommendation was implemented in late 2014 <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/changes-additions-december-2014.html>

So prior to May 2010 LTK was listed 'rare', then temporarily listed as 'near threatened' until the review of December 2014 when it was re-assigned to 'least concern'. Ironically the recently released Mammal Action Plan (Woinarski et al. 2014) lists LTK as '**near threatened**'. The Mammal Action Plan is considered authoritative – it will be used to revise the listings of species at the Commonwealth level.

TKMG resolved at its February 2015 meeting to write to the relevant authorities, asking them to re-list Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo as 'near threatened'. TKMG president, Dr. John Kanowski, has prepared a formal submission, based on evidence marshalled in the original submission by John Grant; the authoritative assessment in the Mammal Action Plan; and his own expertise. Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo clearly meets the criteria for 'near threatened', and could meet thresholds for vulnerable if it declines as predicted in the face of projected climate change.

We will keep members informed as to further developments on this matter. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact the TKMG Committee.

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## Everyone's Environment Conservation Grant-Completion of the Rock Road Wildlife Corridor

*By Amy Shima*

TKMG was successful in applying for funding under Round 3 of the Everyone's Environment Grants for completion of the Rock Road Wildlife Corridor. The Rock Road Wildlife Corridor a critical landscape linkage that commenced in 2011. To date, the site has been fenced and approximately 4.6 hectares has been revegetated. In this project, the remaining seven hectares will be planted with 22,750 native plants. This project will address issues of habitat loss and landscape-scale fragmentation of rainforests on fertile soils in the cloudy wet highlands of the southern Atherton Tablelands.

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## Public Presentations at TKMG Meetings

*By Amy Shima*

Just in case you missed out on the past few TKMG public presentations—given at **7:30pm on the first Thursday of even numbered months at the Malanda Hotel**, here's a brief rundown on what you missed:

**Mason Campbell**, a PhD candidate with Dr. Bill Laurance's research group at James Cook University gave a presentation at the February meeting on his work looking at the **woody vine (liana) community of plants** in the Wet Tropics rainforests. In order to maximize the conservation values of forest fragments requires not only that the fragments are protected but also that they are managed effectively. This requires an understanding of their complex ecology, which involves not just the trees but also other components such as

lianas. Lianas interact in a complex manner with the remaining biota of habitat fragments often providing considerable food resources for surviving animal populations whilst harming the remnant trees. Very little is known about how lianas respond to fragmentation of the forest and Mason's research into the response of lianas to fragmentation of the forests on the Atherton Tablelands made for a fascinating and thought provoking talk.

Tim Hughes, Director of the South Endeavour Trust (SET) at the December meeting, described the Kimberley to Cape Initiative (KtC). KtC is an ambitious initiative started in 2013 committed toward achieving a sustainable and prosperous future for the savannah landscapes of Northern Australia by working with business, industry, Indigenous organisations, community groups, NRM groups, environment groups, governments, researchers and others. Northern Australia is home to the world's last relatively intact tropical savannah which is under threat from processes which little is known about. With a grounding in strong science, traditional knowledge, business expertise and local as well as international experience, KtC focuses on innovation, building on and value adding to existing work, creating jobs and improving well-being in Indigenous communities in rural areas. Informing government, business and the public about the uniqueness and irreplaceable nature of the northern savannah can only help in responsible, sustainable management and development choices which respect the environment while still allowing for prosperity and community well-being. KtC hopes to inform the debate, popularize the science and facilitate the collaboration of many different interests present in the North to manage the land in a way that enhances its resilience and keeps the last great tropical savannah truly great.

**Damien Marrant** returned to TKMG for the October meeting to give an update on his PhD work (now finished) on **Dingoes of the Wet Tropics**. Damien pointed out that dingoes are often considered to be one of the major vertebrate pests in the Wet Tropics, often being cited as a threat to populations of endangered fauna such as the Northern bettong and Southern Cassowary. Damien's work investigated the ecology of dingoes in the coastal lowlands (previous work on dingoes had only been done in the upland Wet Tropics). Through painstaking work to investigate movement patterns, habitat use and diet of dingoes in the coastal lowlands, Damien has made some fascinating discoveries. He found that while dingoes roam over large areas covering many habitat types, they do not use all habitats equally. Interestingly, he found that open, disturbed habitats (i.e. sugarcane) were used most often during daytime high activity times when dingoes are likely to be hunting. Damien found that the primary prey of dingoes in the coastal lowlands consisted of mammals such as northern brown bandicoots, agile wallabies and rodents. No threatened species were found in the diet of dingoes. Dingoes were found to generally avoid rainforest and their activity in natural habitats (eg. wet sclerophyll forest) consisted mostly of resting. His conclusions indicated that, by primarily feeding on abundant 'pest' species in disturbed, open areas, dingoes may actually be providing an important ecological service rather than posing a threat to biodiversity.

Upcoming public presentations at TKMG promise to continue the tradition of engaging and entertaining talks on a variety of subjects. The presentation at the meeting on **Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>** will be by **Dr. John Grant** on **"Community nature conservation in Bali: the reintroduction of the critically endangered Bali Myna to the wild."** While Bali myna (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) aren't mammals (they are a beautiful and endangered bird), we're certain that the talk will be of interest to our members!

The **June 4<sup>th</sup>** presentation will be by another TKMG member, **Mia Derhé** on **'Assessing the responses of mammal and dung beetle communities and their associated ecosystem functions to reforestation in the Wet Tropics'**. Mia will be presenting some of the findings from her PhD investigation of the responses in biodiversity and ecosystem functions to ecological restoration of previously cleared rainforests in the Wet Tropics. The talk will focus on terrestrial small-medium size mammals and dung beetle communities. Mia will also discuss the efficiency of active restoration plantings on the Atherton Tablelands in restoring rainforest-like wildlife communities.

These talks promise to be interesting, thought provoking and relevant to our area so...**mark those dates in your diary!** Come hear the talks at the Malanda Pub and support TKMG.

## TKMG Investment Plan

By John Kanowski, President TKMG

In March 2015, the TKMG committee resolved to support an 'investment plan' aimed at supporting some of the key objectives of the group. For the information of TKMG members, an outline of the investment plan is presented below.

### **1. Annual 'Tree-roo' award**

**Purpose:** to publicly recognise the work of a person (or group) who has made an outstanding contribution to the conservation of tree-kangaroos or other north Queensland mammals.

**Nominations** called from TKMG members and decided by vote of TKMG committee.

**Award:** a relevant work of art, commissioned from a (local) artist, to the value of \$1000. Presented at AGM.

**Meets Goal 1 of 'Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo Community Action Plan':** *An aware and engaged community*

### **2. Annual research grant.**

**Purpose:** to support the conduct of research relevant to the conservation of tree-kangaroos or other north Queensland mammals.

**Nominations** called from TKMG members and the research community, decided by vote of TKMG committee. Criteria include the relevance of the proposed research to the objectives of TKMG and/ or LTK CAP and the availability of alternative sources of funding to the applicant.

**Award:** one or more grants to the total value of \$2500. Presented at AGM.

**Meets Goal 5 of 'Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo Community Action Plan':** *Knowledge of the species is adequate to guide conservation actions.*

### **3. Annual carers grant.**

**Purpose:** to support the work of a person (or persons) who devotes their time and resources to caring for injured tree-kangaroos or other north Queensland mammals, and educating the public/ advocating for the mitigation of threats.

**Nominations** called from TKMG members, and decided by vote of TKMG committee. Criteria would include the work done by the person including care of north Queensland mammals and public education/ advocacy for mitigation of threats, and the availability of alternative sources of funding to the person.

**Award:** one or more grants to the total value of \$1500. Presented at AGM.

**Meets Goal 1 and 3 of 'Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo Community Action Plan':** *An aware and engaged community; Direct human-related threats are mitigated*

### **General issues**

**Potential conflict of interest:** in deciding awards, committee members need to declare any potential conflict of interest and stand down from that part of the decision-making process.

**Reporting:** grant recipients should provide TKMG committee with a brief report on expenditure against the grant at the end of the relevant financial year (i.e. if grants awarded October, recipients to report by August following year).

**Review:** scope of investment plan to be reviewed annually by TKMG committee.

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## Update on Field Studies on Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo

by Amy Shima and Roger Martin

Fieldwork has commenced in earnest and we are already collecting some interesting data. We have caught and examined several animals and have tracking collars on 3 animals. We've identified several interesting field sites (thank you to the landowners who generously allow

us to work on their properties) and are trying to spend 2 or 3 days a week just looking for tree-kangaroos. Please feel free to contact us if you regularly see tree-kangaroos on your property and would like them to be included in the study. Not all animals are fitted with tracking collars-- most are captured, examined, have medical samples (i.e. blood, faeces, parasites) collected and then after fully recovering from the tranquilization (usually within 2-4 hours) are released back at the site of their capture. The captures have gone smoothly and the animals fitted with tracking collars seem to be unaware and not at all bothered by the collars.



The mortality database project is ongoing. We would like to thank all of the people who have taken the time to ring Amy to report dead tree-kangaroos. We would especially like to thank Margit Cianelli; Alan Gillanders; Dr. Karen Coombes, PhD; John Kanowski and Karen Winlaw for reporting road killed tree-kangaroos. We know it is upsetting to find dead or injured animals and really appreciate it when people take the time to let us know where they've seen a dead tree-kangaroo. It means that the death of that individual tree-kangaroo can contribute to our knowledge about the species. More people are aware of the project (and calling in their sightings of dead tree-kangaroos) thanks to the great folks at the **EACHAM TIMES** newspaper who have regularly been publishing a notice encouraging people to report dead or injured tree-kangaroos to Amy. In addition to being a licensed and experienced wildlife veterinarian, Amy is now authorized by Queensland Parks and Wildlife to care for injured tree-kangaroos. We have a purpose-built facility to house injured tree-kangaroos while they are under veterinary care.

We are developing collaborations with a range of individuals and institutions in an effort to learn as much as we can about Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo. It is hoped that what we learn can eventually be applied to studies on Bennett's tree-kangaroo (found further north in the Cape York Peninsula) as well as to endangered species of tree-kangaroos in Papua New Guinea.

If you find a dead or injured tree-kangaroo, please report it as soon as possible to Amy on **0499-180-961**.

### **Heritage Bank Volunteer of the Year Award**

*By Ceinwen Edwards*

Congratulations to Jenny Maclean of the Tolga Bat Hospital for winning first prize in the Heritage Bank Volunteer of the Year Award. With the most votes from the public, Jenny wins \$10,000 for the Bat Hospital and acknowledgement of her over 20 years' dedication to the care and welfare of bats. Jenny's facilities draw volunteers and researchers from all over the world and The Bat Hospital Visitor Centre caters to both local and overseas visitors.

Dr. Karen Coombes was also in contention for this award for her work rescuing and caring for injured tree-kangaroos. Over the past 15 years she and her husband, Neil, have devoted much time and energy to caring for tree-kangaroos.

## Turn Out to Plant Trees for Tree-kangaroos!!!

*By Dave Hudson & Amy Shima*

We're calling on all TKMG members to turn out Saturday **March 21** and **March 28**, to **help plant trees for tree-kangaroos**. Be a part of a great collaboration between **TKMG, TREAT** and **TRC** as we plant trees on a property recently purchased by the **South Endeavour Trust (SET)** (<http://www.southendeavour.com.au/index.html>.) This property and the plantings will help complete a corridor connecting a 1000 hectare rainforest outlier to the Herberton Range National Park. Once completed, the corridor will be about 2km long and up to 500 metres wide. volunteers from TREAT and TKMG to plant 2500 trees at Rock Road, Upper Barron. The outlier of upland rainforest is largely protected by some of its various owners under Nature Refuge Agreements with the State Government. The eastern end of the outlier will also be connected to the Herberton Range NP by the corridor being established by the McCaffrey's on their Ringtail Crossing Nature Refuge.

DETAILS: Cnr Rock Rd and Kenny Rd. Look for the TREAT signs. Planting starts at 8.00am. Please car-pool if at all possible. Bring a hat, sunscreen and water, plus gloves and a trowel if you have them. Check for likely changes due to weather conditions by ringing David Hudson on [0428742308](tel:0428742308) or Angela McCaffrey 07-4097-2426. TREAT will provide a BBQ after the planting.

### **An Alternative Way to Help Out Tree-Kangaroos**

If you'd rather not get 'down and dirty' planting trees, you can still help out TKMG by volunteering to help 'person' the TKMG Yungaburra Market Stall on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March. It's a fun morning (and a great deal easier on the knees than planting trees!). You can help for an hour or all morning. For further information, please contact Simon: 0407-091-347

### **School for Field Studies Student Project on Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo wins award**

You may remember an article entitled, "Finding a Home Where Tree-kangaroos Roam: A spatial analysis of current and future habitat using Arc GIS" (Mammal Mail Vol 14 No 3) by Erin Emmons and Wes Hauser, students at the School for Field Studies (SFS). Leslie Granese, Vice President for Institutional Relations and Enrollment of SFS contacted the newsletter editor to let TKMG know that Erin and Wes (and Dr. Sigrid Heise-Pavlov, their SFS supervisor) had received the Forum on Education Abroad's Undergraduate Research Award.

Erin and Wesley will be presenting their research to the Forum of Education Abroad's 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana in late March. Ms. Granese expressed appreciation for the community support given to SFS and the roll the local community played in providing data to the students. Congratulations to Dr. Dr. Sigrid Heise-Pavlov and Erin and Wesley and the School for Field Studies on this award.

## Mammal Mail

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