



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, 5th December: Malanda Hotel: 5:30pm Committee meeting; followed by a special showing of a film by Stan Breedan about tigers.

Note: there will not be a meeting of TKMG in January 2020

Thurs, 6th February 2020: Malanda Hotel: 5:30pm Committee meeting following by a presentation (yet to be announced). Please keep an eye out for an email with details on the February presentation.

Thurs, 5th March: Malanda Hotel 5:30pm Committee meeting, all TKMG members welcome to attend

Is your membership up for renewal? Please check (contact either Simon or Amy) and RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP. Please remember that TKMG memberships run for the **financial** year so memberships were **due for renewal July 1st**. Look for a date on your mailing label or email version of the newsletter.

Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Annual Report 2019. *October 3rd, 2019 presented at the Annual General Meeting of TKMG,* by TKMG President *Peter Valentine*

The last 12 months has seen an active program of work by the members and committee of TKMG. Our membership consists of about 130 financial members, a slight drop on last year, and many other supporters who participate in activities and otherwise engage in support for our conservation outcomes. We have continued work with our various projects, thanks to financial support from different funding bodies and partners in each project.

Some Highlights of the Year

Kenny Road fauna overpass – following successful installation of the rope ladder bridge last year we have been monitoring the bridge to document use. We had the first image of a possum (Brushtailed) successfully using the bridge which might be considered surprising given that the regrowth is still so young. We intend to continue monitoring use.

“Kickstart” Natural Regeneration Project

The final work to complete this project at Cloudland Nature Refuge was undertaken and we expect the project to be formally completed soon.

Kimberley – the 3D Virtual Reality tree-kangaroo

Despite applying for grants we have failed to raise funds to continue the upgrading of Project Kimberley and will be reviewing options in 2020.

Crittercam Project: As announced at the previous AGM, we have established a set of cameras suitable for wildlife monitoring and these have been widely used during the past year. Members of TKMG are able to borrow these free of charge and discover what wildlife they may share their places with. The Committee appreciates **Leanne Hales** efforts in establishing and managing this excellent facility.

The Yellow-bellied Glider Project: This year the project has hosted two groups of students from the US. In April/May, Wildlands Studies, a university-level study group from the western parts of the US and Canada, joined local volunteers to clear lantana from around large *Eucalyptus grandis* ranked as potential den trees, assist with a night time census of the gliders and map key tree species in unsurveyed areas of the Tumoulin Forest Reserve. In July the Travel for Teens group of students from the US helped in Gilbey Forest raking around den trees to protect them from fire. In November, a group of volunteers undertook a mini-census of the gliders in the Sawmill Gully section of Tumoulin Forest, the first of more planned for other areas of the forest.

New acoustic recording technology is being used in the form of song meters to detect the loud and distinctive calls of YBG up to 250 metres away. This will allow more accurate monitoring of numbers and trends in the disjunct populations on the Atherton and Carbine Tablelands. A library of glider calls has been collected which will enable identification of calls from future song meter work. We are supporting the fieldwork of Tom Bruce, a PhD student at James Cook University studying the abundance and distribution of feral cats in the Wet Tropics, using camera traps, including in YBG habitat. Cats are a potential threat to gliders when they are feeding low on the trunks of their feed trees.

After years of lobbying to protect valuable glider habitat, this year saw the re-establishment of a Scientific Area in Gilbey Forest, which had been deregistered because of changing tenure.

Involvement of other groups includes close liaison with QPWS and Threatened Species Unit, student projects with School for Field Studies, School for International Studies and James Cook University. We wish to acknowledge the support of the Jirrbal people for the glider project in Tumoulin and Gilbey forests.

The TKMG Committee thanks the continuing contributions for the YBG Project from **John Winter, Rupert Russell and Amanda Kaiwi**, and others, for maintaining this project.

Outreach Programs: **Margit Cianelli** and **Amy Shima** gave presentations to year 3 and 4 students in **Natalie Hooks** classes at Atherton Primary school in March. Also in March, Peter Valentine gave two lessons to two sets of classes at Malanda High School on Tropical Rainforest ecology and wildlife. This was an initiative of teacher **Kimberley Dunell**. In early June, **Margit Cianelli** gave a presentation to the Malanda Kindy. It was an effort above and beyond the call of duty as Margit had just gotten back from visiting her mother in Germany.

TKMG Website: Amy Shima is working on getting the new look website populated and updated.

On behalf of TKMG I offer thanks to the people who made excellent presentations through the year, beginning with **Macey Hales** who talked about the wildlife awareness project and critter cams at the AGM last year with **Jesse Rowlands** who gave us insights into Quolls; **Andrew Dennis** who shared his insights on African conservation management with us while noting differences and similarities with Queensland in December; then again this August **Andrew** gave us another wonderful presentation on our very own Musky Rat-kangaroo; ; **Amy Shima** spoke in February about the links and interactions between pets and wildlife; **Steve Williams** for his instructive presentation on climate change and wildlife in the wet tropics (and now on our website). **Denise McGregor** shared her work with Greater Gliders in June and now we look forward to **Martin Willis** for his appreciation of our wildlife from reef to rainforest at this AGM.

As a result of the Federal election the submissions about our **Faunal Extinction Crisis** were re-opened earlier this year and so your Committee made an additional short submission drawing attention to two matters particularly. First the report by the Queensland Auditor-General that showed the management of threatened species in Queensland was in a parlous state with no vision and little accomplished. It is to be hoped that the Queensland Government will now take steps to lift their performance in this area. The second issue was to further highlight the predicted impacts of climate change on our wildlife, notably using the evidence from Professor **Steve Williams'** work (presented to us in April) and the statement of concern issued by the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board. As if there was not enough harm already, evidenced by the severe mortality of the keystone flying fox species last summer, it remains extremely disappointing that the present Australian Government is either in disbelief about the climate change reality or cares nothing of its consequences. We have no national plan to tackle this matter and instead the Government intends to add further to the global tragedy ahead by expanding coal mining. Historians will, without doubt, point to this as a wilful act against the environment and the next generations. In the mean-time the Government is turning its back on the many prospects for employment and innovation inherent in taking this issue seriously. The Tableland offers many prospects for investment with a much better conservation outcome for our wildlife.

I want to conclude by acknowledging the outstanding support that the members of our Committee provide for the ongoing activities of TKMG. Without such a vibrant committee, little could be achieved. Secretary **Amy Shima** was always available for help when needed, often assisted by **Sherri Huntress**. Treasurer **Simon Burchill** was a stable influence and contributes significantly at the stall at Yungaburra Markets each month, as does Committee member **Ceinwen Edwards** whose help on

many fronts is appreciated (and thanks to **Lee Beecheno** for stepping in when Ceinwen was away). **Ruth Whiston** was always there to support the Committee discussions and to facilitate links with the visitor centre. **Dave Hudson** yet again showed outstanding leadership in the search for funds for many different purposes, and managing the grants we already had and the on-ground work they supported. **Margit Cianelli** managed to keep us all grounded in the reality that individual animals are continually impacted by our human activities and showed the importance of caring for those many damaged individuals. It has been terrific to have **Kirsten Pearce** on the committee, bringing a younger voice and novel ideas to our roles. **Leanne Hales** contributed as a Committee member at our meetings when possible despite her active work requirements and took the leadership on some new projects, especially the wonderful work with critter cams and our new resources. I also thank **Keith Smith** and **Alan Gillanders** who have stepped up to assist with the necessary independent fund management committee associated with the tax deductible arrangements.

In conclusion let me thank our many supporters, especially **Global Sustainability Solutions** who have sponsored our web site and our newsletter; our local newspapers who have provided much needed publicity about our activities (*The Tablelander*, and the *Mareeba Express*); **Wendy Cooper** for support of the William T. Cooper Award; the **Malanda Hotel** who host our Committee meetings and our many other partners in our various projects.

Finally, I applaud the winner of the William T. Cooper Award for Conservation of North Queensland Mammals in 2019 – **Dave Hudson**. The citation recognizes the many years of effort to both raise funds and implement projects to ensure improved habitat for our wildlife. Nominated by several members, Dave was seen as eminently deserving this acknowledgement. We both congratulate Dave on the Award and express our gratitude for his contributions.

It was also very pleasing to be able to offer the **2019 Wildlife Carer Award** to **Jenny Mclean** and the **Tolga Bat Hospital** for their outstanding support to the many distressed bats that have had to be taken into care. Some of these are undoubtedly the result of the impacts from climate change on our northern Queensland environment. We know that the \$1,000 award will be used to assist their incredible program and their many volunteers. It is sad to know that future summers are likely to see even more needs for rescue of our keystone species. Well done Jenny and the team.

I would invite and encourage any members who have the inclination, to join the TKMG committee or volunteer to assist in an area where your skills will be valued.

William T. Cooper Award for Conservation of North Queensland Mammals

The Tree-kangaroo and Mammal Group, Inc. instituted the William T. Cooper Award for Conservation of North Queensland Mammals in memory of the internationally acclaimed artist, naturalist, conservationist, and member of TKMG, Bill Cooper.

This is an award to recognise a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the conservation of tree-kangaroos or other north Queensland mammals.

The first Award went to **John Winter** (in 2015) and the second was awarded to **Rupert Russell** (2016), **Daryl Dickson** and **Geoff Moffatt** (2017) and **Keith Smith** (2018).

The 2019 Winner of the William T. Cooper Award for Conservation of North Queensland Mammals is David Hudson.

David Hudson has had an astonishing career in conservation and land management that in the last two decades have seen him extremely active in the Wet Tropics Region. His role with Conservation Volunteers Australia involved numerous projects that had on-ground outcomes for natural resource management and he served significant terms as a Director of Terrain with further engagement with revegetation programs for wildlife, especially focused on improving ecological connectivity. He and his wife Robyn established the Cloudland Nature Refuge on Seamark Road between Malanda and Millaa Millaa, with substantial plantings to benefit high altitude species including ringtail possums and other specialists.

In 2012 Dave was the recipient of a Cassowary Award from the Wet Tropics Management Authority for his conservation contributions. Dave has been an active member of TREAT and other community groups and has been a key member of the TKMG leadership group for many years. His past experience led to him taking a leading role within TKMG in seeking and attracting funds for very many community re-vegetation projects to benefit many species of rainforest wildlife. His success in this role has been remarkable and numerous projects, all with partnerships that he nurtured, led to many areas of regenerating tropical rainforest. Dave also has been the leader of other significant wildlife projects including the innovative virtual tree kangaroo-Project Kimberley. It was his vision and his negotiation with James Cook University information technology experts that established the project viability. He then raised the funds for the project development and subsequently further funds so that the finished product could be show-cased at the Malanda Falls Visitor Centre where it remains today. Even now Dave is pursuing the idea of an improved version with potential establishment in a future Cairns-based World Heritage Gateway.

David Hudson has never lacked vision and he has backed that up with extreme efforts to bring these ideas to practical outcomes that support ongoing wildlife conservation. Those who have worked with Dave attest to his complete commitment to the tasks, to the point of exhaustion in some cases. His passion and action provides a model for citizen commitment and contribution to conservation. TKMG congratulates Dave Hudson for his exceptional contributions to conservation.

INTERESTING EVENTS, LINKS, LISTENING & READING

The Rescue Project podcast features several aspects of the Atherton Tablelands and can be found on the Landcare Australia's website. 'Rescue' is a partnership between Landcare Australia and UNSW. It forms part of a research project into the power of citizen storytelling in environmental communication. TKMG's own Peter Valentine and wildlife carer, Karen Coombes are included in the podcast. The discussion includes Dr Coombes, who has a PhD in ecology and behaviour of Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo, on her rescue centre for tree-kangaroos and her hypotheses about blindness in tree-kangaroos becoming increasingly common due to changing climatic conditions. There is very little hard evidence,

just correlation and speculation. There is **considerable** debate as to whether blindness is really a widespread problem in free-ranging tree-kangaroos. Research and work by wildlife veterinarian Dr Amy Shima and a specialist veterinary ocular pathologist have not found convincing evidence that blindness or ocular disease is a problem in free-ranging tree-kangaroos. So, listen with a critical ear, not everything you hear are indisputable facts and blindness in tree-kangaroos is an issue of ongoing investigation and debate. You'll need an hour to listen to the whole thing!

<https://landcareaustralia.org.au/rescue/listen-to-the-rescue-project-on-the-atherton-tablelands/>

LISTEN TO The Rescue Project - On the Atherton Tablelands

Posted on July 19, 2019 by Gretchen Miller

Hello there! In this special, longer episode of the Rescue Project Podcast, we're in the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland. Prepare to immerse yourself in the wettest part of the driest continent on earth, a tiny patch of emerald green. A World Heritage area.

We're walking through the landscape with people living here and collaborating on interconnected projects – looking after tree kangaroos whose fragmented forest habitat needs re connecting, finding seeds for propagation, replanting great tracts of rain forest, and protecting the whole from a tiny but deadly invader – the yellow crazy ant.

How are people doing this work and what drives them? How do they remain hopeful and passionate in the context of global climate disruption?

So pop on your headphones to be transported and inspired.

GLIDER NEWS: Report on Daintree yellow-bellied glider census

By Rupert Russell

The Yellow-bellied Glider census on the northwest slopes of Carbine Tableland was conducted during the week of 26th-30th August. Of 33 known tapped trees inspected within the 200 hectare census site, nine were in use by the gliders during the week of the census. A total of at least 18 gliders was counted by 13 observers, which was a satisfactory result as this was the same total recorded in 2015 and also in 2017. There is a good chance that twenty animals were recorded this year, but a count of 18 is entered to err on the conservative side. This biennial census, started in 1997, was in its 21st year. Funding and planning is wholly provided by Mossman-based Rangers from Qld National Parks and Wildlife Service, with the work undertaken by Resource Ranger Ben Jones this year.

Opportunity to help out with Project Kimberley: the virtual reality tree-kangaroo experience

The TKMG Committee is keen to hear from anyone who may be interested in helping with the ongoing development of 'Kimberley-the 3D virtual reality tree-kangaroo' experience project. Over the past 18 months, the Kimberley VR experience has been trialled at the Malanda Falls Visitor Centre. The VR experience has demonstrated potential to be a very powerful education tool, helping raise awareness about tree-kangaroos at schools, field days, Eco-Fiesta and tourism venues. To fulfil its potential,

this pilot program requires further upgrades and work to make the virtual tree-kangaroo behaviours and movements more realistic and to introduce an interactive element between viewers and the virtual tree-kangaroo. No special technical skills are required as our IT partners will take care of all the programming and animation. What we are looking for is someone to work with them to make it happen based on our input. Time to work on the project and an interest in the fields of community education, new technologies and tree-kangaroos (of course!) would be advantageous. The existing 'champion' of this project needs to step down in the coming months but will work with you to develop a plan for how to proceed. If you would like to learn more about this opportunity to become more engaged with TKMG (or want to step up and volunteer), please send an email to: info@tree-kangaroo.net. If you aren't quite ready to take up this opportunity to work with furthering the development of Kimberley-the VR tree-kangaroo experience, but ARE interested in helping with the ongoing work of TKMG, please let us know as there are plenty of opportunities to help raise awareness about the unique and amazing animals found in our region.

Sad news

Our community was devastated with the news that 'Kimberley' the tree-kangaroo, as a joey had been rescued from the waters at Malanda Falls in September 2013 and chose even as an adult, free-ranging tree-kangaroo, to remain involved in the life of her dedicated and loving carer, Margit Cianelli, was killed by wild dogs. The relationship between Margit and Kimberley was truly remarkable. Kimberley was a very special and unique ambassador, both as the model for the 'virtual-reality' tree-kangaroo and for the many people with whom she came in contact at her 'human' home at Lumholtz Lodge. Kimberley trusted Margit enough to bring her joeys 'home' and Margit even had the privilege of serving as 'baby-sitter' while Kimberley enjoyed the occasional 'girl's night out'. Dogs are a great danger to tree-kangaroos and predation by dogs—both pet dogs and wild dog/dingoes—is one of the great and possibly significant but unquantifiable sources of mortality in free-ranging tree-kangaroos.



Happy memories...Kimberley sitting on Margit's shoulder while Margit holds (right arm) Dobby who had been found as a little joey alone at Mt Hypipamee—eventually released near Possum Valley and (left arm) Kimberley's joey, Holly.



Please Post to:

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