



# Mammal Mail

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group

Vol. 21 No. 1 November 2020

## What's Going On? Don't Miss This Upcoming Event



Please join us on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020, 7:30pm at the Malanda Hotel to enjoy a public presentation by well-known local wildlife carer, Margit Cianelli.

Her talk will be on 'The Role of the Wildlife Rehabilitator'.

Coronavirus restrictions are still in place so be aware that you will need to fill out Covid trace forms and we may have to limit the number of attendees to what promises to be a very interesting and informative talk.

We hope to see you at the meeting on 03<sup>rd</sup> December!

## ***2020 Annual General Meeting of Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group (TKMG)***

### **President's Report**

*by Peter Valentine*

**On behalf of TKMG I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners, past, present and emerging, of the lands on which we meet and undertake our activities.**

This year has been like no other. Across the world the COVID19 pandemic has not only brought millions of people a challenging and life-threatening experience from which many did not recover; it also disrupted the lives of most people. Our organisation was also affected and the Committee had to make a number of decisions and change many of our plans in the face of the pandemic.

The year started normally following our previous AGM in October 2019, with an excellent turnout at the Malanda Hotel in December to enjoy **Stan Breeden's** award-winning Tiger film including an interesting introduction from Stan himself. In February a visiting Canadian academic **Dr Helen Gould** give an excellent talk on Lemurs. Family commitments meant I was away for February and March and Leanne Hales stepped up as Acting President, for which I am very grateful.

By the end of March it was clear that COVID19 was making a dramatic impact on Australia and borders were closed and various management decisions meant people needed to isolate and quarantine to limit the risks. We all experienced the effects in many ways and the Committee decided we had to cancel the planned presentations for 2020. The Committee work continued using email and thanks to Amy Shima and other Committee members we were able to continue keeping up with essential tasks while we waited for the COVID19 precautions to be eased. The Committee was able to resume its monthly meetings face-to-face in July and that has continued in August and September. In October 2020, the AGM, we saw the first resumption of our presentations with an excellent and well-attended talk on the use of scent-detecting dogs for conservation, by **Jacqui Diggins** from Terrain NRM. I express the gratitude of the Committee for all these speakers and look forward to a resumption of our regular talks soon.

Sadly, in the last 12 months, we have also witnessed the death of Margit Cianelli's wonderful **Kimberley**, the extraordinary Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo that was really part of Margit's family. Our sympathy went to Margit as she grappled with the loss, made even more heartfelt because the death was due to wild dogs. The TKMG Committee has progressed the design and printing of three roadside signs and reached an agreement with the Tablelands Regional Council to ensure they are used to highlight sightings, road kill and dog kill of tree kangaroos across the tableland. These signs have now been placed in a number of locations and I express my appreciation to Leanne Hales for taking the lead on this project. I also thank Kirsten Pearce for her work on the design.

Separately, the Treasurer, Simon Burchill, has tabled our financial statements for the year and members may note that TKMG has significant reserve funds that we are applying to our various projects. These records have been audited and the auditor's report is also available for examination by members. The effects of COVID also impacted on our monthly markets at Yungaburra after March but these resumed in September and I thank **Simon Burchill** and **Ceinwen Edwards** for their work in setting up and running the displays and the sales of products. This not only helps raise funds but communicates a great deal about TKMG conservation efforts to the wider public. TKMG now has 204 members.

As one excellent outcome from a previous Wettenhall Foundation grant, TKMG now has a good set of wildlife monitoring cameras (Critter Cams) and these are available for projects to use and for members to borrow. **Leanne Hales** has taken on the role of equipment manager and has done a terrific job of maintaining and managing these assets. During the COVID19 pandemic several members have borrowed some of the critter cams to check what wildlife is in their backyards and there have been interesting results recorded. Please take advantage of this resource. Each camera comes ready to go and with a simple set of instructions. There is an easy application form on our website to place a request.

Following the great success of a previous grant application by David Hudson, this year a new application was prepared for a Department of Environment and Science Community Sustainability Action Grant (CSAG) with very helpful input from several members with the idea to focus on monitoring the Wet Tropics Yellow-bodied Gliders. I am grateful for **Leanne Hales** in pulling this together and for the **YBG working group** to assist in preparing the application. I was delighted to receive a letter from the Minister, Leanne Enoch affirming that TKMG has been awarded the full amount requested (\$35,005) to do the monitoring on the Windsor Tablelands. The final Deed of Grant will be negotiated in the near future with the project scheduled to start in April 2021. Almost all the funds will go to purchase audio-recording field devices (song-meters) that will allow us to record presence and absence at particular feed trees and den trees over a long period. I also wish to acknowledge the wonderful work of **Amanda Kaiwi** in her regular observations of YBGs in Toumulin Forest. The active work of **John Winter**, **Rupert Russell** and **Amanda Kaiwi** has TKMG well-placed to contribute to the better conservation of Yellow-bellied Gliders.

The Department of Environment and Science has indicated a desire to establish a memorandum of understanding with TKMG that relates to our ongoing work on threatened species. Several Committee members met with a DES representative to discuss the possibilities and at this stage the MOU is being prepared. The Committee hopes the MOU will enhance our ongoing relationships with the Department and further support our conservation work.

My thanks also go to the independent fund committee (**Keith Smith**, **Alan Gillanders** and **Leanne Hales**) who manage the donations to TKMG that are tax deductible.

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, and has very efficiently managed the work of the Committee. Treasurer **Simon Burchill** was a stable influence and contributes significantly at the stall at Yungaburra Markets each month, as did Committee member **Ceinwen Edwards** whose help on many fronts is appreciated. **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** has been extremely active in support of the Committee work and is much appreciated. The Committee was delighted to welcome **Wise Lum** for his excellent skills and for his youthful enthusiasm.

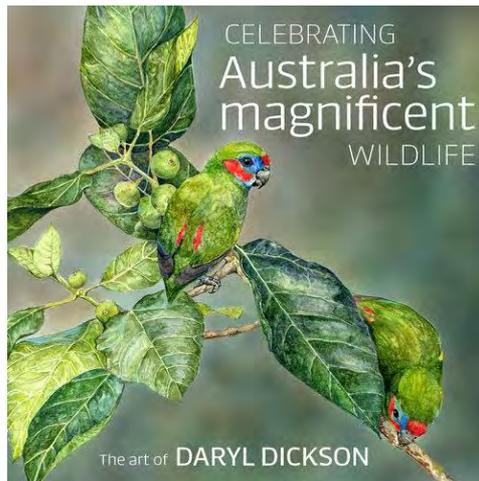
It is with regret we see the departure of retiring Committee members **Ruth Whiston** and **Kirsten Pearce**. Ruth has been a long-standing Committee member with many roles including a long stint as Treasurer. We will miss Ruth's contributions but she will continue as an active member and supporter of TKMG. Kirsten brought a youthful energy to the Committee and contributed significantly to our projects. Not surprisingly other roles with a young family demand more attention at this time. We look forward to her ongoing support as a member. **Lee Woma** has stepped down from her engagement with the Mammal Mail production work due to other commitments and the Committee thanks her for those contributions in the past two years. In the context of Mammal Mail, I am pleased to note that from November **Sharon Williams** will be producing our regular Mammal Mail newsletters and I welcome Sharon to TKMG and this work. We also appreciate Sharon's work on our Facebook site, which has attracted a lot of engagement with over 700 members.

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*); the Malanda Hotel who host our Committee meetings and our many other partners in our various projects. It is deeply disappointing to note the demise of the *Tablelander*, another example of the flaws inherent in our media concentration in Australia and our region.

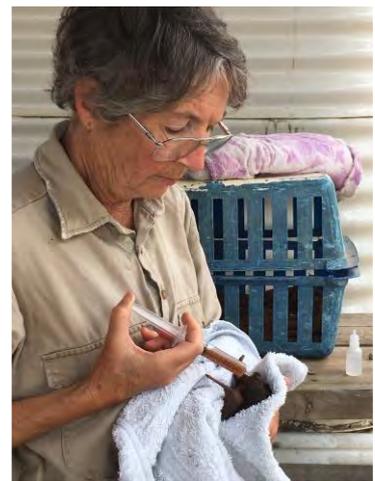
I would invite and encourage any members who have the inclination, to join the TKMG committee or volunteer to assist in an area where your skills will be valued.



**Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo**  
Photo: Peter Valentine



**Daryl's Dickson's 'magnificent' new book**



**Ceinwen providing care to a flying fox**

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Peter Valentine

Since the AGM we have continued to see the benefits of the COVID19 management in Queensland enabling further returns to a more interactive society. We are hoping this will lead to more opportunities for face-to-face meetings including guest speakers and presentations in the Malanda Hotel. At this stage we plan to have a talk in December from Committee member Margit Cianelli who will share her extensive experiences with wildlife rehabilitation and especially with Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos. This will take place on Thursday the 3rd

December. The Committee is already planning for a return to regular presentations in 2021 and have several offers available for the first few months of the year.

Since the AGM we have signed the Grant Deed with the Department of Environment and Science for the \$35,005 Community Sustainability and Action Grant for three years of monitoring of the Yellow-bellied Glider (Fluffy Glider) population on the Windsor Tablelands. Most of the money is to purchase audio recorders that will be put in place during next year and will record presence and absence of gliders at feed and den trees. Keep an eye out for future updates from our very active YBG team.

The evidence is clear that we have a poor outcome in Queensland from our Threatened Species Program (following the Auditor General Report) and that is matched by the interim report on the EPBC Act of the Federal Government where reviewer Graeme Samuels considers the act has serious flaws, or perhaps that should be the Government has failed our wildlife. I am concerned that the limited interest in nature conservation from the National Government (failing to prepare and fund recovery plans for instance) will simply mean more and more species relegated to extinction. We are still waiting for the Extinction Crisis Report to be finalised (from last year) but I am not confident any action will follow.

Sometimes regional groups might do better by working closely with local governments so it will be interesting to see how our Local Councils develop plans for local response to the climate change threats to wildlife. As we have learned from long term biological study (Steve Williams work for instance) we do have many high elevation specialists that are likely to be adversely affected by climate change. One reason to keep our "critter cams" going across the tableland is to increase the chance of incidental observations of some of our less well known mammals. I would encourage members to take up the opportunities.

In case you missed it, a wonderful new book has been written by our 2018 William T Cooper winner Daryl Dickson. Called Celebrating Australia's Magnificent Wildlife, it includes many plates of Daryl's art including Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, Northern Quolls, Mahogany Gliders and several possums as well as Echidna and Platypus. It's always a pleasure to see such combinations of wildlife and art, and especially so when it is by one of our TKMG members.

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## **THANK YOU and BEST WISHES to former Committee members.**

Long-standing TKMG Committee member, Ruth Whiston, opted not to renominate for the 2021 Committee. Ruth first became involved with TKMG Committee in 2007 when she moved to the Atherton Tablelands. In her early days serving on the Committee, Ruth helped out with the Yungaburra Market stall and more recently filled the role of Treasurer. Ruth has the distinction of having successfully hand-reared both Bennett's and Lumholtz's tree-kangaroos. Her calm, rational, knowledgeable and 'unflappable' manner made her a valued committee member. Her presence on the Committee will be missed. Ruth will continue to be an active member of TKMG but will enjoy not receiving so many emails and having more time to enjoy life on the Tablelands and beyond.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the contribution of another retired Committee member, Kirsten Pearce. While a master of 'multi-tasking', Kirsten decided that she needed to focus on family so stepped down from Committee responsibilities. Kirsten brought a youthful, 'get it done' perspective to the group. Her focus on engaging and educating students and her energy and enthusiasm were a fantastic addition to the Committee. She was instrumental in getting many TKMG projects (the TKMG banner, educational posters and the road-signs to name a few) from the 'great idea' stage to being a reality. Her presence on the Committee is missed but her dedication to the wildlife of the region and educating students about wildlife remains. The Committee would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Lee Beecheno who stepped down due to family and other commitments.

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## GLIDER NEWS

### Tumoulin Forest Frolics

by John Winter and YBG Members

#### Tumoulin Forest Reserve:

On the 15th September TKMG in partnership with Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation made a joint submission to Leanne Enoch, the then Queensland Minister for Environment, that Tumoulin Forest Reserve be converted to National Park. It is the home of a population of the Endangered Yellow-bellied Glider and the Vulnerable Greater Glider and Magnificent Brood frog. Tree-kangaroos are regularly seen in the forest. We argued that TFR contained an amazing rich biodiversity on the doorstep of Ravenshoe and that its conversion to National Park would be of long-term benefit for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community of the Ravenshoe district. On 17th November we met with the Ravenshoe Chamber of Commerce to present our ideas. Our PowerPoint presentation by John Winter and Amanda Kaiwi from TKMG and Tony Bean from Wabubadda, was followed by a lively discussion about the merits and otherwise of converting the area to National Park or State Forest which would allow logging. We asked that the Chamber support our proposal, but before doing so the President asked that we provide more detailed maps of what we propose.

#### Beat this if you can.

On 25<sup>th</sup> September Alan Gillanders recorded eight Yellow-bellied Gliders, three Krefft's Gliders (more about this new ugly name for what was the Sugar Glider) and five Feathertail Gliders visiting a single tree over a 40 minute period in Gilbey Forest. This number has not been seen since the days of Rupert Russell's study in the 1980s.

#### What's in a name?

Krefft's Glider, yes that's the new name for our Sugar Glider which has been split into three separate species. The Sugar Glider (*P. breviceps*) is now restricted to a relatively small area east of the Great Dividing Range from the Victorian border in the south to north of Brisbane. The Savannah Glider occurs in the Top End of the Northern Territory and Kimberly region. Krefft's Glider (*Petaurus notatus*) is the most widespread occurring from northern Queensland to South Australia and east of the Great Dividing Range, inland of the Sugar Glider.

Why name our glider after a person rather than a feature of the glider? It's a name that's not been well received by many of us in Far North Queensland. Krefft was a well regarded zoologist in the 1800s, Director of the Australian Museum 1864 to 1874, described many Australian animals and collected the type specimen of *P. notatus*.

Can we suggest a different common name? Here are a few suggestions: **Eastern** Glider (because it occurs along the entire east coast of Australia), **Marked** Glider (notatus is derived from the Latin, marked) and refers to the dorsal stripe extending the full length of the back. **Everywhere** Glider because of its wide distribution and it occurs in a wide range of habitats from rainforest to dry eucalypt forest. Members might like to give this some thought and send in suggestions.

Yellow Bellied Glider (YBG) Project volunteers placed a song meter and solar battery out in the Tumoulin Conservation Park, in late September, to record Glider calls. Song meters collect and store vast amounts of audio data, and are a valuable tool to gather evidence of the presence, or absence, of wildlife. Dedicated volunteer Amanda spends many hours analysing the recordings to further our understanding of these unique creatures.



Amanda installing a song meter / Photo: Jan Bode

No feed or den tree surveys were undertaken in Tumoulin Forest Reserve in October, due to fire season dangers. Gilbey Forest activities were also low key, though permission was granted for a survey on private property on the south western edge. Five members completed transects, with the conclusion that the area is not supportive of YBG habitat.



Yellow-bellied Glider / Photo: Peter Valentine

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## GRANT SUCCESS FOR OUR GLIDERS

*Contributed by Leanne Hales*

TKMG has secured funding from the Community Sustainability Action (CSA) grant program to conduct a three year survey to establish presence-absence of Yellow-bellied gliders in Mount Windsor NP in the Daintree.

**This exciting project will provide volunteer opportunities for our members:**

- Survey **fieldwork** including the deployment and retrieval of acoustic recorders
- **Home-based** data analysis of glider calls

If you would like to get involved when the project kicks of in 2021, contact Leanne Hales on [tkmg.crittercams@gmail.com](mailto:tkmg.crittercams@gmail.com)

A second **successful grant application to Volunteering Qld** will also help us secure critical field equipment and deliver volunteer training over the coming months, in readiness for the Mt Windsor Glider survey and ongoing work by our YBG sub group.

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**Don't forget!** If you would like to see what critters visit your garden you can borrow **critter cams** A fantastic project for the family.

### BORROW CRITTER CAMS

If you would like to borrow some Critter Cams you can complete an online application form on the TKMG website: <http://www.tree-kangaroo.net> Or email [tkmg.crittercams@gmail.com](mailto:tkmg.crittercams@gmail.com) (Non-contact, home delivery of cameras may be arranged at this time).



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## BUSHCRAFT SKILLS FOR TKMG VOLUNTEERS

*By Leanne Hales*

Last month Paul and I had the pleasure of hosting a TKMG training event at Yourka Bush Heritage Reserve. Members of the Conservation Wildlife Management (CWM) North Qld branch of the Sporting Shooters, who are partner with Bush Heritage Australia to conduct feral animal control on our Queensland conservation reserves, delivered a short course in essential field craft skills such as navigation, remote area first aid and even knot tying for volunteers currently involved in TKMG fieldwork.

The weekend was a success on many levels. Not only was the training relevant and well received but it also provided the opportunity for two very different groups to find their common ground thanks to a shared desire for conservation outcomes and a love of the Australian bush and its fauna. Course participant, Wayne Young commented that *“Exposure to CWM for us was fantastic. It was great to see a group that have allied values to us, and execute on-the-ground works in such a professional and competent way. I think they provided a new appreciation for participants of this avenue of direct-action conservation methods and the reality of delivering real conservation outcomes on a huge project like Yourka”*.

The weekend was made possible thanks to the generous support of CWM and Bush Heritage Australia. Accredited CWM trainers, Bob Knight and John Paterson delivered the course free of charge and BHA provided the venue, some catering and logistical support.

While on reserve, TKMG members also supported our seasonal arboreal mammal surveys, Ceinwen and Amanda were able to rescue a Little Red Flying Fox and a Yellow-bellied sheath tailed bat and Paul nabbed a couple of feral cats under spotlight. All fantastic outcomes.

We are planning to host more courses of this type in the future. Active TKMG members are invited to nominate their interest by emailing: [info@tree-kangaroo.net](mailto:info@tree-kangaroo.net)



Paul Hales with the CWM trainers and TKMG participants / Photo: Leanne Hales



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*The opinions expressed in Mammal Mail are not necessarily those of the Tree Kangaroo & Mammal Group, Inc.*



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