

# *The Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo*

Yes, there really is a kangaroo which lives in trees!

The Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo (*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*), listed as 'rare' under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act, is one of two species of tree-kangaroos found in Australia. It lives in the rainforests and adjacent wet sclerophyll forests of far North Qld, from approximately Ingham to the Daintree River, where the Bennetts Tree-kangaroo's range then begins and continues up to around Cooktown. The Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo is thought to occur in highest densities on the Atherton Tablelands. At least eight other species of tree-kangaroos are found in neighbouring New Guinea.



## **Interesting Facts About Them**

- Tree-kangaroos are leaf-eaters, and occasionally eat fruits or flowers.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation, vehicles and dogs are major threats to tree-kangaroos. Many are killed on the Atherton Tableland's roads each year. Forests on the Tablelands are already highly fragmented, and whilst some of the fragments currently support good populations of tree-kangaroos, the majority of their habitat is outside the protected World Heritage Area.
- It was thought tree-kangaroos are mainly nocturnal, but they do also move around during the day
- They are usually solitary, but young can remain with their mother for up to two or even three years
- Females give birth to one young at a time.
- *Dendrolagus* (part of their scientific name) means 'tree-hare'
- Tree-kangaroos are thought to have evolved from other kangaroos, which in turn evolved from possum-like creatures. No-one knows why tree-kangaroos returned to the trees where their possum-like ancestors lived.
- Tree-kangaroos have some distinct body characteristics which enable to live in trees, unlike their ground-dwelling kangaroo cousins. These include: their exceptionally long tail used for balance; stronger forelimbs, shorter and broader hind feet, and longer curved claws on all feet for climbing and gripping; and teeth adapted for a 'shearing' rather than a 'grinding' action. Tree-kangaroos are also the only macropod able to move their hind feet independently of each other, ie they can "walk" as well as "hop"! Look for them doing this along branches.

## **Where To See Them**

Tree-kangaroos are commonly seen around the Malanda Falls at Malanda, Winfield Park at Malanda, Mt Hypipomee National Park (locally known as "the Crater") along the Kennedy Hwy between Atherton and Ravenshoe, Wongabel State Forest just outside Atherton, and the Curtain Fig-Tree at Yungaburra, all on the Atherton Tablelands. Try looking when the weather is still or drizzly, first thing in the morning or late afternoon/evening, or by torch/spot-light at night. Be warned - these creatures are extremely cryptic, and may escape your vision even when in a tree directly above you! Lots of patience, good ears and eyes to notice any movement of branches, and binoculars will help. When you are lucky enough to see one, the experience will be unforgettable.

## **How to Recognise Them**

You will be looking for something the size of a basketball if it is high in a tree, or a small dog if you can see it more closely. The key characteristics for identifying the Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo include an extremely long tail, a black face, and black paws. The underbelly is light in colour, with the back ranging in colour from a rusty colour to dark grey. Their eyeshine by spotlight at night is a pale red, with the eyeshine spaced further apart than a possums. They are usually seen up a tree, and occasionally on the ground or running across the road. Drive carefully when driving through forest on the Tablelands, especially at night and early in the morning. Please contact Margit Cianelli on 4095 0292 if you ever come across an injured or dead tree-kangaroo.

*Good Luck!*

*For more information, please contact:*

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