



## Mammal Mail

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group

Vol. 21 No. 2      March 2021

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

**Thursday 8th April:** 5.30pm Malanda Hotel  
TKMG Committee Meeting – **All members welcome**

**Thursday 8th April:** 7.30pm Malanda Hotel  
**PUBLIC PRESENTATION** by Stephanie Todd (James Cook University): *Northern bettong population genetics: understanding genetic diversity and structure to help prevent the extinction of an endangered species.*



*Photo: Stephanie Todd*

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April**  
Working At Heights & ladder safety training for volunteers on the Yellow-bellied glider/Mt Windsor project.  
For more information please contact Rupert Russell on [rj.russell@bigpond.com](mailto:rj.russell@bigpond.com)

**Thursday 06<sup>th</sup> May:** 5.30pm Malanda Hotel  
TKMG Committee Meeting – **All members welcome**

**Thursday 03<sup>rd</sup> June:** 5.30pm Malanda Hotel  
TKMG Committee Meeting – **All members welcome**

**Thursday 03<sup>rd</sup> June:** 7.30pm Malanda Hotel  
**PUBLIC PRESENTATION** by Roger Martin: *Bennett's Tree Kangaroo distribution also including information about distribution of Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo from Cardwell to Cooktown.*

**Thursday 01<sup>st</sup> July:** 5.30pm Malanda Hotel  
TKMG Committee Meeting – **All members welcome**

**Thursday 05<sup>th</sup> August:** 7.30pm Malanda Hotel  
**PUBLIC PRESENTATION** by Tom Bruce (James Cook University): *The impact that cats have on local wildlife and forests.*

**\*\* COVID SAFE PRACTICES WILL BE IN PLACE AT ALL EVENTS \*\***

## TRIBUTE TO PETER PATTISON

How wonderful it was to know you Peter,  
A fellow friend anew.  
From our fondness and love of nature,  
A wonderful friendship grew.

The miles we walked in Tumoulin to better the gliders home  
Will always be remembered,  
Each time I walk this country.  
The country we loved to roam.

We worked together in unison,  
you, Jan and I.  
Not much conversation to be had,  
But a pleasure to have you by.

Before I say goodbye my friend,  
I want to let you know,  
Your beloved Jan is filled with grief,  
But held in loving arms.

Jan and I will always be good friends,  
And continue our work in the forest.  
Tho we will also explore new horizons  
When our work is done.

Now my friend I must say goodbye,  
A sadness to behold.  
Know your footprints will always be,  
There beneath Tumoulin's unique forest floor.

*Your friend, Amanda.*



*Peter Pattison died suddenly on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and will be sadly missed by all. His dedication to the Yellow-bellied Glider Project in Tumoulin Forest Reserve was genuine and his absence will be sincerely felt.  
Our condolences to his beautiful partner Jan and family.*

## THREATENED SPECIES SYMPOSIUM

Cairns, 16 -17 February 2021

*by Dr Siggy Heise-Pavlov*

TKMG sponsored three members of its Yellow-bellied glider (YBG) subcommittee to participate in the Far North Queensland Threatened Species symposium. Amanda Kaiwi, Andrew Dennis and Sigrid Heise-Pavlov hoped that this event could help them answer some questions on how to most effectively conserve the habitat of the YBG. They wanted to see how other recovery groups engage local community members, how they collaborate with indigenous people and how they lobby State and Federal Governments for their conservation aims.

The two days of the symposium were packed with information and the organisers wanted to fit as possible into the program and highlight research and activities that the Threatened Species Recovery Hub offer. This Hub was created to help land managers and policy makers to make the right decisions for the recovery of threatened species. The Hub received about AU\$30 million from the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), but also received co-contributions from its partners (nine universities and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy), ending up with about AU\$60 million over 5 years (for further information see the Hub's webpage: [www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au](http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au)).

The North Queensland Alliance (a partnership of TERRAIN, Gulf NRM and Cape York NRM) secured AU\$16 million. The funding was spread over eight themes which are: Identifying threats; Identifying threatened and endangered species; Review of the adequacy of monitoring; Re-introductions and using refuges; Better tools to develop effective policies; Community engagement; Synthesizing knowledge and Post-fire recovery (for more information on the Hub's projects, go to: Threatened Species Recovery Hub projects). Dr Sally Box, the Threatened Species commissioner, spoke about the high extinction rate in Australia (4th highest country with respect to its extinction rate in the world) and that 188 threatened species on Australia's threatened species list are here in North Queensland! She mentioned that the first Threatened Species Strategy (2015 to 2020) is currently under review (a report will come out soon) and a new 10 year Action plan (2021 to 2031) is at its finalising stage. DES has released a new Threatened Species Program 2020 to 2040 (Threatened Species Program 2020-2040). The second phase of the NESP will start at the end of this year and will look a bit different; (four themes instead of eight)

The presentations summarised the findings of researchers, land managers and conservationists who have been working on projects under the eight themes. Very interesting were talks about community engagement and how to use **positive messaging**, rather than demonstrating failure, to win people for species recovery actions. I personally was taken by the talks of Stephen Garnett who I describe as positive conservation messenger (see the book 'Recovering Australian Threatened Species – A book of hope' by S. Garnett, P. Latch, D. Lindenmayer and J. Woinarski/ CSIRO Publishing, 2018). He emphasised that all successful recoveries had a recovery plan, a diverse team of people from non-governmental and governmental bodies, strong and well-managed networks utilising many different resources, good governance and a long-term champion, suggesting that these success stories need to be told to keep the public interested and engaged.

There were simultaneous presentations and workshops and our group split to capture the presented information as well as we could. My marriage with Piggy, who did a lot of research on feral pigs, drove me towards a talk from a representative of CSIRO talking about pig control on Cape York to protect turtle breeding sites and to address biosecurity threats. I was thrilled by the use of drones and helicopters in combination with various APPS and even AI to monitor the movements and population densities of feral pigs in areas which are often inaccessible. It was mind-blowing! Andrew and Amanda went to presentations on Traditional Owner engagement in threatened species/community recovery, highlighting that genuine indigenous engagement was strongly promoted by the indigenous groups present, however, some noted a sense of being overwhelmed by too many people wanting too much from too few indigenous individual representatives. Despite this, there was a strong desire for indigenous knowledge and action to be respected as equal in value to western science.

Stephen Garnett and Bradley Moggridge (Indigenous Liaison Officer, NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub) presented a protocol of Indigenous involvement into species/community recovery that they had developed, containing several basic principles and one of them, that I remember well, was called “Triple T” which stands for Time-Trust-Tea. Yes! Lots of cups of tea while you take your time to build up trust as basis for a solid partnership.

In a workshop about Fire Management the caring for country with cultural fires by Indigenous Australians has been presented and discussed. Cultural fire management involves patchy, small scale, cool fires at the right time of the year. Country will reveal when it is appropriate to burn, by showing ‘indicators’ such as, the seasons, animal breeding times, plant flowering and seeding times. Cultural fires will over time improve the environment and lower fuel reduction and the risk of wildfires. Patchy low intense fires allow animals, lizards and insects to escape unharmed while hot intense fires can destroy the canopy which in turn destroys the understory promoting weeds.

Twelve groups working on threatened species or communities spoke about their work and most were local, grass roots groups like us and only a few were formal recovery teams. Andrew Dennis gave a brief presentation about the work on Yellow bellied gliders by **TKMG**/YBG subcommittee. All groups are making impressive gains and doing good work, but all mentioned the lack of funding and lack of volunteers (there were even “groups’ consisting of only one member). It became clear that only a very small number of our threatened species have an advocacy and action group working on their recovery! There were also presentations about fire management, emerging diseases (e.g. phytophthora, myrtle rust), the role of private protected areas (such as Nature Refuges), and citizen science programs. The presentation from Rochelle Stevens (UQ) about citizen science was very informative, but also showed us that our group is quite advanced in applying the principles of effective citizen science projects.

Altogether it was a good symposium. The program was full and perhaps more time could have been allocated to Q&A and time to chat with contributors. Participants did have a chance to voice their support for the adoption of the 38 recommendations put forward in the **final report** of the review of the EPBC (submitted by Prof Graeme Samuel to the Federal Government). This support was noted by the organisers and we hope that it will be transmitted in a letter to the Feds. I hope that the participants will remind the organisers to do that! Another suggestion was to collate the information given by the 12 recovery teams and present it in a booklet and on some web pages (TERRAIN; WTMA) so that people who want to become involved in species conservation have easy access to it and can contact relevant groups.

If you want to keep yourself updated about the Threatened Species Recovery Hub, subscribe to their newsletter or get the latest news at [www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news-and-media/latest-news](http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news-and-media/latest-news)





## WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

### What's on the menu for Green Ringtail Possums?

by Alan Gillanders

#### Green ringtail possum (*Pseudochirops archeri*)

In the dry season one of the green ringtail possum's favourite figs is Green Nipple Fig (*Ficus watkinsiana*). When the rains and new flushes of growth occur they move to other figs including the Fig of Plenty (*Ficus copiosa*). In the dry alkaloid and other toxin levels in many tree species are high. Even though Green Ringtails have adapted to a nasty diet, they prefer the lesser nasty bits if possible, so in October and November they eat only the petiole (leaf stalk) of the Candlenut (*Aleurites rockinghamensis*), and sometimes the leaf blade to the first large lateral vein.

In a really dry spring many trees become tough, with concentrated toxins and unappetising to the herbivores. One of the first to respond to a thunderstorm is Stinging Tree (*Dendrocnide moroides*) and it is in those times that Green Ringtails feed on them. The Shiny Leaf Stinger (*D. photinophylla*) is part of their diet through much of the year and usually they are eating from larger trees with no stinging cells. With a flush of new growth trees may revert to juvenile characters and this includes the stinging cells but that does not deter our little friend.

With powerful salivary glands, huge livers, large colon and a relatively small caecum for a ringtail, the Green Ringtail has a gut and diet like no other animal I know.

#### TOP FIVE FEED TREES THIS TIME OF YEAR

- Any fig with youngish leaves
- Tulip Oaks (*Argyrodendron spp.*)
- Ribbonwood (*Euroschinus falcate*)
- Candlenut (whole leaf during the wet) (*Aleurites rockinghamensis*)
- Native Elm or Wild Holly (*Aphananthe philippinensis*)



If you are a member of **TREAT** (a community based, volunteer tree-planting group), there is plant nursery for **members only**, with local native species available to suit your property.

Read about TREAT's work: [www.treat.net.au/info/about.html](http://www.treat.net.au/info/about.html)

Membership benefits: [www.treat.net.au/info/member\\_benefits.html](http://www.treat.net.au/info/member_benefits.html)

Current Covid-19 policies: [www.treat.net.au/info/covid19.html](http://www.treat.net.au/info/covid19.html)

Comprehensive food tree lists are available on the TKMG website.

<https://www.tree-kangaroo.net/habitat-food-and-revegetation>



Green ringtail possum eating Tulip Oak

Photo: Michael Williams / It's A Wildlife



Find us on Facebook at Tree-kangaroo headquarters [www.facebook.com/groups/tkmgqhq](https://www.facebook.com/groups/tkmgqhq)

## GLIDER NEWS

Yellow-bellied glider group members have been active on a number of fronts this year, with emphasis on glider monitoring plans and fieldwork, plus forest rehabilitation and security of tenure proposals. Last month Amanda K, Siggy H-P and Andrew D attended the Threatened Species Symposium, to represent the Yellow-Bellied Glider group, as reported elsewhere. Leanne Hales has done a great job updating equipment used in day to day fieldwork and sourcing gear for future projects. She's also busy planning a ladder training course so key Mount Windsor project participants can work safely. Thank you Leanne.

### GILBEY FOREST

Gilbey has a 'new' feed tree with a small family of YBGs that usually feed from a nearby tree.

During February, some feed tree activity ended abruptly with one large Carpet Python taking up residency in a fork of a feed tree (F012 Stub Tree).



*Photo: Geoff Spanner*

A smaller Carpet Python was spotted on F015 Mid Tree.

Geoff & Rosemarie picked up the tail of a YBG near the car park on Byers Road. They have also had numerous sightings of a Rufous Owl in the vicinity.

Lantana clearing is continuous with a **big** thank you to Rosemarie.

## TUMOULIN FOREST

Fieldwork has been limited so far this year, with the forest and roads often too wet to enter. Amanda Kaiwi, volunteer supremo for Tumoulin Forest, is busy developing a new monitoring format to gain more focused information on glider feed tree use, timing and extent of flowering of tree species known to be part of YBG diet and to ascertain presence of insects, such as cicadas, which also help sustain our fluffy friends. Inquiries are being made into the possibility of developing fauna crossings along the 50 metre wide power line bisecting part of Tumoulin Forest. Containing rainforest, wet sclerophyll and dry forest habitats Tumoulin forest has high bio-diversity. In addition to the Yellow-bellied Glider, Greater Glider, Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo and Magnificent Broodfrog, many other species would benefit from easing this disconnect.

## MOUNT WINDSOR

Planning is underway for commencement of the three year YBG song meter trial at Mt Windsor, in order to monitor the glider population. Members have sourced song meters and other required gear, met with Traditional Owners and organised safety training.



## KID'S CORNER

### MAMMALS OF THE WET TROPICS



Find the following words in the puzzle.  
Words are hidden → ↓

ANTECHINUS  
BANDICOOT  
DUNNART  
ECHIDNA  
MAHOGANY GLIDER  
MELOMY

MUSKY RAT KANGAROO  
NORTHERN BETTONG  
PADEMELO  
PYGMY POSSUM  
QUOLL  
STRIPED POSSUM

TUBE NOSED BAT  
WALLABY  
WHITETAILED RAT



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