

MAMMAL MAIL

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group

Volume 21 No 4 – September 2021



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

Thursday 07th October: 7.00pm (instead of the usual 7.30pm) Malanda Hotel
TKMG Annual General Meeting – All members welcome

Thursday 07th October: following AGM Malanda Hotel
PUBLIC PRESENTATION by Dr Alexander Watson
'Northern Bettong in the spotlight'

Northern Bettong efforts at Mount Zero-Taravale Wildlife Sanctuary by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy

Thursday 4th November: 5.30pm Malanda Hotel
TKMG Committee Meeting – All members welcome

Thursday 02nd December: 5.30pm Malanda Hotel
TKMG Committee Meeting – All members welcome
Meeting and presentation to be announced: 7.30pm

Please observe all COVID restrictions and use Check-in Queensland when you arrive at the meeting

From the President

Peter Valentine

As I write this I am reflecting on the pleasure derived from having had two talks for members and the public in the past few weeks. It makes a nice change from the challenges of COVID-19 and both talks were excellent. Alan Horsup gave us a detailed analysis of progress in the recovery of the northern hairy-nosed wombat, a good news story given the challenges of protecting threatened species. From being one of the world's rarest mammals just 20 years ago, the small population seems to be thriving and enabling some translocation of animals to better secure the population. Several TKMG members have been "volunteers" with QPWS at the Epping Forest National Park (not open to the public) and have contributed to the recovery program while enjoying their time there. Thanks to Malanda locals Gary and Jean Hardy for facilitating this opportunity. Alan enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with TKMG members he knew from his PhD days at James Cook University.

The second talk from Tom Bruce, was a well-crafted presentation on a topic of great interest – the story of feral cats in the tropical rainforest. Like many others, I had wondered about the extent of feral cat invasion within our rainforests and am particularly concerned at the likely target species for these voracious alien predators. Australian wildlife never had to evolve skills of evasion for cats and many species are completely vulnerable, and some have already been driven extinct by the feral cats. Tom's research revealed many interesting aspects including the challenge of trapping feral cats (no success), and the value of critter cams to "capture" their presence. Importantly, Tom has shown that in rainforests the presence of dingoes does not suppress feral cats which leaves the situation somewhat disconcerting for those of us who want our wildlife safe from feral cats. More work on solutions is desperately needed before the annual death toll (2 billion native animals a year) takes out more species. For those who were unable to make the talks we are hoping to provide video recordings of these two talks on our website and via Facebook. A very big thankyou to Geoff Spanner for offering to record the talks and for turning up with the appropriate equipment and skills.

In our *Mammal Mail* from November 2020 there was an interesting article from John Winter about the separation of the Sugar Glider into three distinct species. This month John has followed up with a written request to the Australian Mammal Society to adopt better names than the ones proffered by the scientists at the time. In their paper, our local Sugar Glider became Krefft's Glider. John's contrary argument was careful, logical and appropriate and TKMG in turn wrote a letter of support for his proposal. We have suggested that Krefft's Glider (*Petaurus notatus*) become the **Inland Sugar Glider**, and that the Sugar Glider (*P. breviceps*) become the **Coastal Sugar Glider**, and that the third species, confined to the western gulf, the top end and Kimberley region (*P. ariel*), that was proposed as Savanna Glider, become **Savanna Sugar Glider**, although we recognise that it could, with equal justification, become the Northern Sugar Glider. A key element is to retain the familiar and common name Sugar Glider in each case. It will be interesting to see how the Australian Mammal Society responds.



Krefft's Glider (*Petaurus notatus*)
Photo: Alan Gillanders



Krefft's Glider (*Petaurus notatus*)
Photo: Alan Gillanders



Bramble Cay Melomys (*Melomys rubicola*)
Photo: QLD Government

One serious issue being brought before the National Parliament at this time is the long-promised reform of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This follows a major independent review, headed up by Professor Graeme Samuels, and delivered to the Government in October 2020. In the report, critical components include National Environmental Standards and the establishment of an independent Environment Assurance Commissioner, expert advisory committees, transparent decision-making, access to data and information, strong independent compliance and enforcement, effective monitoring and evaluation, access to justice and investment in restoration. All these steps were identified as being needed urgently, and the independent review report noted they should be completed by early 2021.

Comprehensive enabling reforms should have been completed within 12 months and a full overhaul by 2022. I am saddened to observe that this recalcitrant government has not acted yet, almost 12 months after receiving a very clear statement of action and a timetable. Not only that, the government is refusing to bring in the National Environmental Standards, said by the independent review to be critical and urgent, and is trying to get by with temporary ineffective guidelines. Luckily some independent senators are putting pressure on the government to do better and have stated they will not support the government's half-hearted proposal. TKMG has written to these senators to urge them to ensure a more effective result. We have also written to the Member for Leichhardt (Warren Entsch) imploring him to act on behalf of threatened species. The first mammal in the world to go extinct from Climate Change impacts (Bramble Cay Melomys) was in his electorate and he has a good reason to lead the charge for better outcomes for our threatened species and more real action on climate change. We hope that his influence in the Government will be significant. I should add that many other organisations are also urging the government to act in this matter, it is an Australia wide campaign by wildlife conservation groups.

On the horizon locally, is an application for a very large windfarm, right next to the Bush Heritage property Yourka and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This does not involve using degraded land as would be the best practice, but rather it is proposed to involve substantial clearing including destroying critical habitat for threatened species. The proposal is now before the federal government and hopefully the minister will ensure that the proposal is not allowed to go forward in its present form. Much as we might all support the rapid transition to alternative energy sources (away from fossil fuels), proposals need to keep their development activities sustainable and with conservation at the forefront. Unfortunately, there seems little appetite at any level for governments to take leadership in these issues, instead they simply wait for proposals to come forward from the current landowner. There are much more effective approaches to environmental planning, but sadly these are almost non-existent in Australia today. I suspect that aligns with the relative slothfulness of present parliaments and their members and the pattern of duck-shoving between federal, state and local governments.

Our next TKMG meeting is the Annual General Meeting on October 7th, and I would encourage all our members to consider whether a **position on the committee** would be feasible. We have an excellent committee and I am hoping many members will choose to continue, but there is always room for new members to offer their skills and to help share in the work we do to try and help our magnificent mammals. In the meantime, members might care to add their voice to one or more of the current issues that threaten our wildlife.

Northern Queensland Threatened Mammals 2021

It is now almost 12 months since the independent review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act was presented to the Australian Government. This 1999 Act was a famous piece of environmental legislation, prepared by Senator Robert Hill, the Environment and Heritage Minister under liberal party prime minister John Howard. It replaced several key pieces of legislation, including the Endangered Species Protection Act. The EPBC Act was well regarded at the time but after 20 years it was considered in need of reform by most observers. It had clearly failed to protect many threatened species and it had fallen well short of protecting the environment.

A review of the Act and proposals for reform was undertaken by an independent review, chaired by Professor Graeme Samuels. The report recommended urgent action by the government, unfortunately not seen as quite so urgent by this government. As the Australian government strolls out the reform of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act (EPBC) it is worth considering just one element of the concern – threatened species. There are now 39 species of Australian mammals that are extinct – many very recently listed as extinct, and one contributing factor being official neglect (for example the Christmas Island Pipistrelle). Here in northern Queensland the EPBC Act identifies 18 species of mammals that are threatened, about half Endangered and others soon to become so. Many of these have no recovery plan and no investment in actions to assist them recover. In most cases funding for recovery remains a major problem. The box below shows those tropical Queensland species considered threatened by the EPBC (in 2021).

DON'T FORGET!

As a member of Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group;
If you're on the Atherton Tablelands you are eligible to borrow 'CRITTER CAMS' to see what is foraging around in your garden.

More information on our website: www.tree-kangaroo.net



Species Name	Scientific Name	Status	Plan Y/N
Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat	<i>Lasiorhinus krefftii</i>	CE (EPBC)	N (expired)
Northern Bettong	<i>Bettongia tropica</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2001)
Northern Quoll	<i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2010)
Spotted-tailed Quoll	<i>Dasyurus maculatus gracilis</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2016)
Yellow-bellied Glider	<i>Petaurus australis ssp</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2011)
Mahogany Glider	<i>Petaurus gracilis</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2008)
Cape York Rock-wallaby	<i>Petrogale coenensis</i>	E (EPBC)	N
Proserpine Rock-wallaby	<i>Petrogale persephone</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2010)
Spectacled Flying-fox	<i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>	E (EPBC)	Y (2010)
Semon's Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros semoni</i>	V (EPBC)	Y (2001)
Ghost Bat	<i>Macrodermis gigas</i>	V (EPBC)	N
Black-footed Tree-rat	<i>Mesembriomys gouldii ssp</i>	V (EPBC)	N
Greater Glider	<i>Petauroides volans</i>	V (EPBC)	N
Koala	<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	V (EPBC)	N
Grey-headed Flying-fox	<i>Pteropus poliocephalis</i>	V (EPBC)	Y (2021)
Large-eared Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus robertsi</i>	V (EPBC)	Y (2001)
Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat	<i>Saccolaimus s. nudiclunatus</i>	V (EPBC)	Y (2007)
Water Mouse	<i>Xeromys myoides</i>	V (EPBC)	Y (2010)

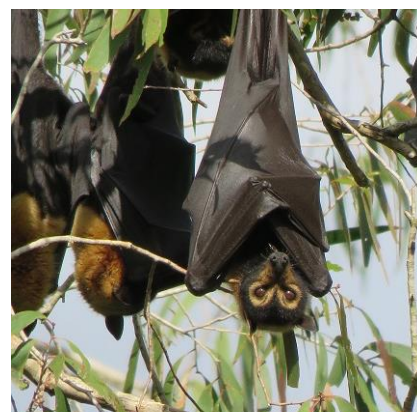
Source: Australian Government EPBC website, accessed 17th August 2021.



Black-footed tree-rat
(*Mesembriomys gouldii*)
Photo: Sharon Williams



Northern Bettong (Bettongia tropica)
Photo: David White



Spectacled flying-fox
(*Pteropus conspicillatus*)
Photo: Michael Williams/It's A Wildlife

Proposal to increase membership dues for Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group, Inc.

Proposal to increase membership dues for Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group, Inc. Membership fees for Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Inc. have been kept at \$11 per year (household subscription-up to 2 adults plus children under age 18) for many years. The Management Committee is proposing to raise membership fees to \$15 per year for the same household subscription (an increase of only 34c a month). Multi-year memberships (you won't have to remember to renew every year!) will be adjusted accordingly (2 year = \$30, 3 year = \$45, 4 year = \$60, 5 year = \$75).

This proposal will be voted on at the Annual General Meeting, to be held at 7pm, Thursday 7th October
As a member, you have a say!

GLIDER NEWS

Contributed by Jan Bode and the glider team

Our last newsletter brought exciting news from Mt Windsor. Yellow-bellied Glider Group volunteers had erected song meters, in two forest patches, to collect data on the presence of gliders. This month sees volunteers return to Windsor to take down the song meters, as removal prior to commencement of the annual fire management program was a condition of the QPWS permit. Song meter memory cards will then be removed and analysed, under Amanda's guidance, to check for glider calls. As this project is funded for three years, the process will be repeated next year and in 2023.

For some time YBG group members have had concerns about the uncertain tenure of the Tumoulin Forest Reserve. Earlier this year, a detailed proposal was sent to Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon to support conversion of Tumoulin Forest Reserve to Conservation Park. This step was taken in the hopes of providing the necessary permanent protection of the conservation and cultural values of this small but amazingly biodiverse area, while also allowing low impact recreational activities. Months of meetings and other contact with Ravenshoe community, Traditional Owners (Jirrbal People), conservationists and National Parks personnel culminated in the writing of this submission, which was supported by the Traditional Owners through the Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation. Huge thanks go to John Winter who drove this whole process, ably supported by Amanda Kaiwi. Meanwhile, we'll keep our fingers crossed that the proposal will lead to a successful outcome for the environment and the community.

Two field trips have been conducted in Tumoulin Forest to assess the potential for developing fauna crossings under the Ergon power line bisecting the forest. One interesting find, away from the power line corridor, was a patch of delightful Helmet Orchids, *Corybas barbarae*, identified by participant Ceinwen. The group was also excited to see an active glider sap-tree covered in glider cuts, some fresh with birds visiting. The tree base was blanketed in a dense layer of freshly teased bark dropped by the gliders. Current practice has been to clear a wide swathe, under and beyond the power line, thus breaking connectivity for wildlife. As regrowth is occurring, it is proposed that Ergon maintain vegetation cover along the corridor to act as fauna crossings.



Our band of volunteers – Amanda, Ceinwen, Jan, Sally and John



*Helmet Orchid (Corybas barbarae)
Photo: John Winter*

KID'S CORNER

MATCH THE CLUE TO THE ANIMAL

I'm a macropod and I climb trees

I am an endangered flying mammal

My fur is a mix of grey, white and caramel colours

I am one of the largest rodents in Australia

I am a glider who was thought to be extinct until the 1980s

I am a monotreme with a 'duck-like' bill

I am a carnivorous marsupial with white spots

I glide from tree to tree and my tail is like a feather

I am a macropod and I help disperse fungi spores

I am a monotreme (egg-laying mammal) with spines

Platypus

Northern Quoll

Feathertail glider

Tree-kangaroo

Giant white-tailed rat

Green ringtail possum

Mahogany glider

Echidna

Bettong

Spectacled flying-fox



Find us on Facebook at tree-kangaroo headquarters www.facebook.com/groups/tkmghq



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TKMG thanks Sustainable Solutions Global Inc. for their generous sponsorship of the newsletter and website.

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