

MAMMAL MAIL

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group

Volume 22 No 4 – September 2022



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

Thursday 06th October – Annual General Meeting
Malanda Hotel 7pm

PUBLIC PRESENTATION – Following AGM
By renowned photographer Steve Nowakowski

November/December TKMG Committee Meeting
**** Time, date and place to be confirmed**

** If you are interested in attending, please email tkmg-secretary@tree-kangaroo.net for times and locations.

FINALLY!

A fence wire that is stock & wildlife friendly

Whites Group Wire retailers in Nth Qld

TULLY - GF Rural Tully, Wayne Morton, ph. 07 4068 1002

ATHERTON - Tableland Fertilizer, Drue Debney m. 0447 915 524

TOLGA - TGT Tolga, Brian Rowling, m. 0447 983 651

Whites are currently looking at manufacturing this product in November 2022.

Please feel free to contact any of the above stores to pre-order

MURRAY Barbed Safe-Twist Wire
HIGH TENSILE 1.8mm

Features:

- Provides strength without causing injury
- Contains no joints
- Supplied on wooden spools
- Manufactured in Albany, Australia

Product Code	SPR01
Structure	800x1000mm
Net Length (m)	100
Net / Pkg	25
Net Weight	10
Net Volume	100
Product Standards	AS/NZS 4554
Coating	Galvanneal (Zinc/Aluminum)
Core Material	2 x 1.8mm twisted
Twisted Core (mm)	3.6
Twisted Core (kg)	0.4



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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Peter Valentine

Since the last Newsletter your committee organised and held the group's 25th birthday celebrations. Many of our members and supporters attended the function held in the Malanda Hotel. While it was definitely a celebration and a chance to reflect on the history of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, it was also a moment to gather our strength for what we know will be a catastrophic period for wildlife ahead. It was a tragedy of another sort for several Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos that launched our organisation and we were fortunate to have as our guest Graeme Newell, who in 1996 was undertaking research on the ecology of tree kangaroos. Part way through his study, on Thomas Road near Yungaburra, the owner of the Mabi rainforest patch he was studying decided to clear it and suddenly the tree kangaroos were homeless. Graeme realized they were strongly territorial and simply stayed on the cleared site until they all died. It was that tragedy that led to the establishment of TKMG through the concern of Margit Cianelli, Beth Stirn and others, with John Winter persuaded to take on the founding President role.

It was great to hear directly from Graeme at the dinner and he showed us photos of before and after and explained what he had learned through the tragedy of those tree kangaroos. It was a pleasure to see many supporters and partners along for the dinner and I recognised the value of that support on the evening. TKMG has always relied upon and received great support from community members and organisations and has partnered with many. That has been our strength. A glance around the room revealed many representatives of our partners – including WTMA Chief Scientist (Ellen Weber), Terrain Board Chair Keith Noble and CEO Stewart Christie and also Terrain Emerging Leader Lucy Friend. Keith Smith from QPWS has been both a former President and a great partner in so many ways. Bush Heritage Australia is an ongoing partner, not just because of Leanne Hales splendid role with the TKMG Committee and her great efforts in organising the event. I was also delighted to see Alexander Watson from Australian Wildlife Conservancy who has been helping out with science aspects of our survey work. We also appreciate the engagement with the Tablelands Regional Council over a number of years and acknowledged Councillor Dave Bilney's presence, the Chair of the Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee.

At the birthday event, I presented a brief review of our organisation and its work in the 25 years since we were formed. The highlights of our work, with partners and the community, included the following: *wildlife corridor vegetation* projects; the *Community Action Plan* for Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo; various *research projects* on our mammal fauna; *community awareness projects* including signage on roadkill and dogs, *monitoring* presence of some species; with tourism using the *Virtual Tree Kangaroo* project (led by Dave Hudson); the regular operation of *our stall at the Yungaburra Markets* each month (thanks especially to Ceinwen Edwards and Simon Burchill); *education and engagement* both within local schools and also through the *long-running series of talks* in the Malanda Hotel, often in partnership with James Cook University and other research organisations; *advocacy* has also been part of our role and that has been with *local, state and national governments* often through specific submissions to formal inquiries and writing to our various politicians; *lobbying* including the State Government to achieve **Mungurra Wabu National Park** on Wabubadda country – the old Tumoulin State Forest.

TKMG also supports conservation and the arts through the William T. Cooper Award beginning in 2015. Our small organisation has also brought a large amount of money into the region, through grants we have applied for and received, to improve knowledge and conservation outcomes. Our members include many active citizen scientists who support our many projects.

When I reflect on conservation concerns in our region, I see major issues for our wildlife. The badly managed and poorly planned National and State delivery of alternative energy seems so bad it is difficult to imagine how they could be worse. Instead of embracing the fact that we have the world's best offshore wind

resources, we have denied innovative businesses a chance to put these into place – a denial driven by fossil fuel interests and their corrupt influence on governments. The enabling legislation for offshore wind resources has come a decade late but the new Federal Government now needs to stop some of the poorly designed and located energy schemes proposed for our region. Our alternative energy needs can be met without ruining some of the last remnant forests left from centuries of destructive practices and further contributing to our massive biodiversity loss.

Climate change impact adaptation requires global action, but it is essential that we embrace changes at all levels from local government through to national and the UN. Some Australian communities are taking local action and show that much can be achieved locally. Sadly, many local communities are poorly served by their councils, who remain oblivious to the consequences of climate change on the future lives of people and wildlife. It is hard for anyone to avoid awareness of the actual impacts from climate change now being reported daily and yet our governments seem hopeless and our media fail to engage in the solutions required. It is disappointing to me that the Tablelands Regional Council does not take a stronger stand in supporting local environmental concerns, especially as the beauty, wildlife and natural wonders of the area are such an important part of our lives and livelihoods. The Council has taken some positive steps, including the recently approved Natural Asset Strategy, and belatedly joining the Climate Resilience Alliance, but more action is needed. I am saddened by the loss of the talented Natural Resource Officer Scott Morrison, whose resignation probably reflects a less than fulsome support from Council. Similarly, the resignation of long-time nursery officer, Kylie Freebody, is a blow.

On the ground TKMG continues good work with Yellow-bellied Gliders on the Windsor Tableland and Tumoulin and it is exciting to see the start of work on our distinctive koala populations in northern Queensland. Roger Martin and Amy Shima are leading this project and I look forward to learning more. On the national scene, with further evidence of the huge impacts on our mammals from feral cats, is it time that we took this issue seriously and came up with a solution? Even without climate change we are losing too many individuals and species.

I have been reading a new book by Australian climate scientist Joelle Gergis called *Humanity's Moment*. It is a brilliant account of what is happening to us by one of the lead authors of the recent 2022 IPCC Report. The personal story associated with clear descriptions of Australian impacts set in the global context is highly readable and deeply affecting. We are all living in the midst of climate change impacts that are horrendous for our wildlife and yet collectively we have our heads in the sand. What should we do?



GLIDER NEWS

Compiled from contributions by John Winter, Amanda Kaiwi, Rupert Russell, Andrew Hedges and Jan Bode

Tumoulin National Park

In an exciting development, the Minister for the Environment and Great Barrier Reef, Meaghan Scanlon, announced the upgrade of Tumoulin Forest Reserve to the permanent tenure of Tumoulin National Park on Friday 1st July. Dr John Winter, from TKMG and its Yellow-bellied Glider group and Liam Roberts, representing the Jirrbal people, were in Cairns for the announcement. Whilst the Millstream Conservation Park, in Tumoulin Forest's north east corner, maintains conservation park status and hoped for bits of State Forest were not included in the National Park, it is still a very positive outcome. We look forward to the park being managed for its biodiversity and cultural values in a partnership between QPWS and Partnerships and the Jirrbal people. At a gathering in Tumoulin National Park of Jirrbal people, Terrain and TKMG personnel, the Jirrbal people gave the park the Jirrbal name of Mungurru Wabu, meaning Glider Forest. It is anticipated this will become the recognised name of the park.

This recent addition to Queensland's protected areas has been a long time in the making. Acknowledgement and huge thanks go to John Winter for his dedication, persistence, and foresight in organising and training many volunteers, citizen scientists over the years. While these volunteers are too numerous to name, their contribution to building the case for permanent protection deserves recognition. Amanda Kaiwi merits special mention for her long standing involvement and major commitment to this cause.

Mount Windsor Project

Song meters were recently retrieved from Mt Windsor National Park, as part of the second year of the three-year project. In early June, 16 bio-acoustic song meters were placed in chosen trees in two specific areas of the park, to monitor the presence of the endangered Yellow-bellied Glider. Access for the June trip required moving and detouring around vegetation (with QPWS permission), in order to reach study sites. As usual, the process was not plain sailing, with on the spot repair of a faulty solar panel, though made more efficient by using two ladders for each installation, with Rolley and Rupert mounting one song meter and solar panel at a time. Early September saw volunteers remove the gear in damp conditions. Now Amanda will spend many hours retrieving the data, by listening for and recording the glider calls from each song meter. Further analysis will be conducted by ecologist Don Franklin. This study is funded by a Queensland Government Community Sustainability Action Grant.

Gilbey Forest

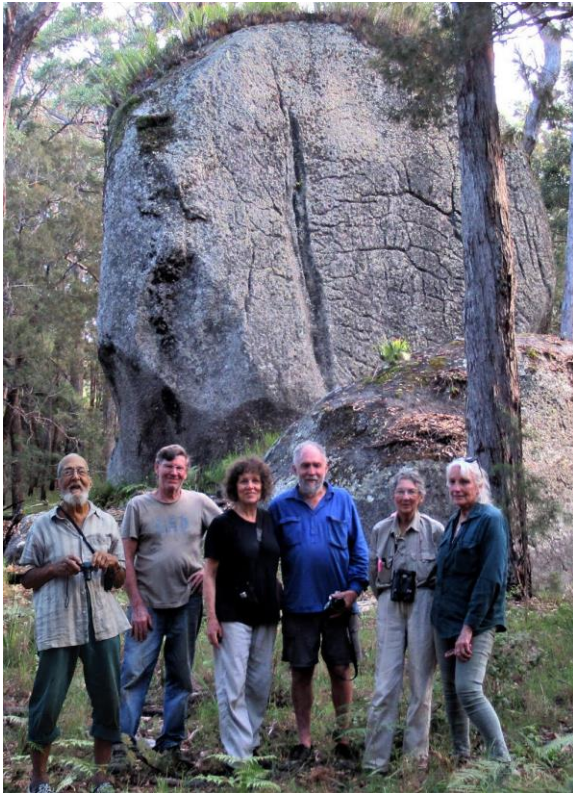
Fieldwork as was conducted in Gilbey Forest in June to fill in the gaps of data recorded on Eucalyptus resinifera sap trees and large potential E. grandis den trees, in order to submit this information to the Queensland Government's Wildnet data base. Elsewhere Andrew Dennis has written on recent lantana removal from a significant section of Gilbey Forest, to improve it's long-term health and regeneration and support the glider population.

Daintree Census

This year in July, Rupert Russell and Andrew Hedges conducted a Yellow-bellied Glider census in a remote section of Daintree National Park. Conducted generally every two years since 1997, the census project provides valuable long-term data, allowing future results to be considered in relation to climate change and fire treatments. With the assistance of a small group of volunteers, the 2022 census found some 16 YBG present in the study area, though it is likely that other gliders may have been present but not sighted/heard at the time.

Glider Name

Last newsletter mentioned debate over an appropriate common name for the Yellow-bellied Glider sub-species occurring in the Wet Tropics. While the official process has yet to commence, Northern Yellow-bellied Glider appears to have the local tick of approval. Any name change must be considered and approved by the Australian Mammal Society once the DNA evidence is presented.



CARING FOR GILBEY FOREST

By Andrew Dennis

For several decades, the community has been caring for the tall eucalypt forests at Gilbey and studying and monitoring the Yellow-bellied Gliders that inhabit that forest. The Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group are now the custodians of that work. The Yellow-bellied glider sub-committee of TKMG identified that the removal and control of *Lantana camara* was a critical issue for the long-term health and regeneration of the forest that supports the gliders. To support the existing and historical investment into Gilbey Forest by community, state government agencies, traditional owners, local landholders and researchers, Terrain NRM applied for funding through the Queensland Government's Natural Resource Investment Program to remove the lantana from 20ha of this forest where gliders are most abundant.

To ensure this tall eucalypt forest continues to recruit the correct mix of species to maintain its long-term structure and condition, it is necessary to remove lantana without impacting native shrubs, saplings and seedlings. Therefore, teams of people from North Queensland Land Management Services manually pulled or cut plants and painted stems with herbicide. This approach has been tested and developed in similar habitat in other parts of the Wet Tropics and found to be the most effective local technique for removing lantana while protecting native vegetation.

Lantana camara is a weed of National Significance and a transformer weed. It has been particularly successful at establishing dense thickets in tall eucalypt forest in the wet tropics where it suppresses fire and the regeneration of native species and displaces some native fauna. In this project, the regional ecosystem being managed is also listed as endangered. The work has progressed well and completed in June 2022.

THE STORY BEHIND WHAT LED TO THE FORMATION OF TREE-KANGAROO & MAMMAL GROUP: A Study of Tree-kangaroos in Secondary or Regrowth Forest

Graeme Newell – Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research

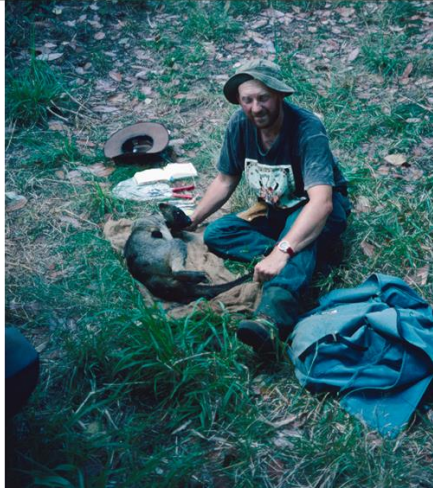
In early 1995 I arrived on the Atherton Tablelands for a postdoctoral fellowship with the CRC for Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Management in CSIRO Atherton. The job was to study fauna in secondary or regrowth rainforests. Coming from Victoria, ecological research in the tropics was totally novel for me! The most intriguing idea centred on understanding the basic ecology of Lumholtz's tree kangaroo, given that it was often seen in regrowth and little was known about the species. Two factors were critical for the study to occur. Access to a study site was accomplished because CSIRO had good relationships with local landholders, including one property where tree kangaroos were readily seen. Permission was granted for the work, with the understanding that part or all of the forest may be cleared in the future. The other important factor was that Roger Martin was working on Bennett's tree kangaroo up at Shipton's Flat. I'd known Roger from Victoria, and his insights and technologies allowed me to humanely capture tree kangaroos to fit radio collars.

The study finally began in early 1996. Over six-months I fitted radio collars and tracked ~6 animals on a small forest block at Thomas Road, Yungaburra. I began to understand how little area the animals actually used (~0.7ha Female, ~2ha Male), and how solitary they appeared to be. These observations fitted well with a previous study within the Curtain Fig forest by Elizabeth Proctor-Grey.

Unexpectedly in early September 1996 clearing of the southern section of the 20 hectare block commenced and was completed by early November. This was a distressing time for those concerned with the welfare and conservation of tree kangaroos and other species. People suggested translocating animals to other sites, taking them into captivity or abandoning the study. Radio-collared animals proved very difficult to recapture as they continued to use the fallen timber as habitat within their original home range. Hence, translocation was not feasible and the study continued, although the questions being investigated changed dramatically. Perversely, the slow process of felling and opening up the forest meant that 'new' animals were detected and fitted with collars.

Most animals responded to the clearing by remaining in a tree just prior to felling, then fleeing but returning within 12–24 hrs. Six females and five males directly impacted by clearing continued to use their original home ranges amongst the fallen woody debris. Contrary to expectations, animals did not relocate to nearby forest blocks with only one animal establishing a new home range. The mortality rate appeared to increase post felling, with at least four animals perishing from attacks by domestic dogs or dingoes. Although some surviving tree-kangaroos lived within the debris for several months, the prospects for longer-term survival were curtailed when the debris was burnt in late 1997 to create cattle pasture.

If there has been a positive outcome from this distressing episode, it is the increased community awareness of the uniqueness of the local fauna combined with a desire to support a better local environment. TKMG was formed in response to what happened to my study site and the 25th anniversary of TKMG is tangible evidence that the Tablelands Community still cares about our wildlife and environment – Congratulations on this milestone!



October 1996



1997





Please Post to

Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, Inc. (TKMG)

PO Box 1409, Atherton, QLD 4883

e-mail: info@tree-kangaroo.net

Website: www.tree-kangaroo.net

President: Peter Valentine peter.valentine@jcu.edu.au

Vice-President: Leanne Hales halesfng@gmail.com

Treasurer: Simon Burchill 0407-091-347 sbburchill@gmail.com

Secretary: Amy Shima 0499-180-961 tkmg-secretary@tree-kangaroo.net

Newsletter Editor: tkmgnewsletter@gmail.com

Donations: <http://www.givenow.com.au/tkmgconservationfund>

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