



Mammal Mail

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group

Vol 17 No 1 March 2017

Up-coming events

Thursday 4th May at the Malanda Hotel - 5:30pm

TKMG Committee meeting - members are welcome to attend

Thursday 1st June at the Malanda Hotel - 5:30pm

TKMG Committee meeting - members are welcome to attend

Thursday 1st June at the Malanda Hotel - 7:30pm

Jess Koleck from the World Wildlife Fund will present a talk on current research on the Northern Bettong.

Faunal Emblem Proposal for the TRC - *By President Peter Valentine*

Following up on the Community Action Plan for the Lumholtz Tree Kangaroo, the Committee has been working on our commitment to encourage the Tablelands Regional Council (TRC) to adopt the LTK as a Tablelands Faunal Emblem. In many ways it is already recognised as such with images and allusions to the LTK on Council publicity and in the community. Many will have seen the TRC fridge magnet calendar with our LTK featuring. Some will have seen the huge new mural in Malanda (on the wall of the hardware store in full view from the Spar car park). The dominant feature is a tree kangaroo although the artist has clearly struggled with the face. Thanks to assistance from Dave Hudson and through him Kirsty Lamperd (Manager Regulatory Services at TRC) we were able to present our case to the Council last week. The Mayor warmly welcomed Margit Cianelli and I to the meeting and we were able to make a case. However, almost before I began to speak our principal ambassador, Dobby the orphan LTK, attracted the attention of Councillors. Before long every Councillor was being photographed with Dobby and thanks to David Anthony, a few ended up in *The Tablelander* (28/3/2107 page 10). Thanks again to Dobby and Mum Margit!

Council intends holding a workshop to reach a decision about this. I offered our services to assist in any way and pointed out that our group is determined to work for the conservation of all our regional mammals. Margit came up with a perfect suggestion. If TRC was to appoint the LTK as its faunal emblem then the LTK could on a regular basis introduce the people of the TRC area to other mammals that are special to our region. We talked about the prospect of a quarterly (or even monthly) publicity article in the media about our species. This would actually be a very good outcome for all. I hope that members can use their influence with your own local councillor to promote this idea. Having broad community recognition of the very large number of mammal species in our region, their particular attributes and their conservation needs would be a terrific outcome for wildlife. Please do what you can do to help get the Council on side with this.

Winners of the 2016 Serventy Wildlife Conservation Award

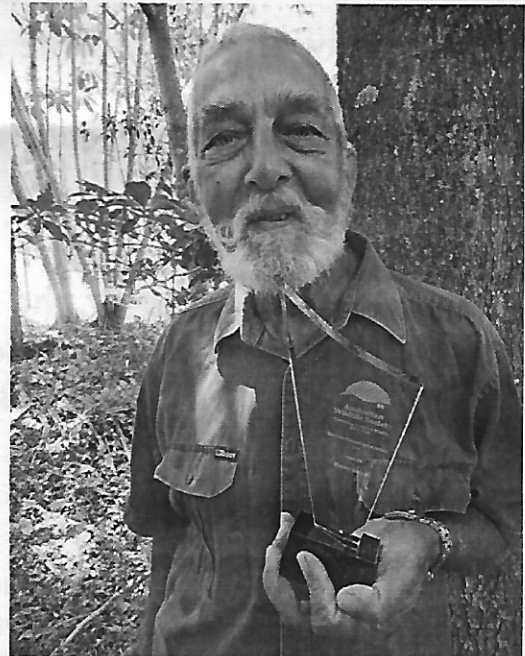
Rupert Russell and Graeme Sawyer

Since 1999, the Australian Wildlife Society has been commemorating the outstanding conservation work of the Serventy family by awarding first a medal and now a Conservation Award. For the first time in 2016 the judging panel could not separate two outstanding nominations and decided to make two awards, to Rupert Russell of Mt Molloy, North Queensland and Graeme Sawyer of Darwin, Northern Territory. For more information on Graeme's achievements in Environmental education and frog and reptile conservation, please see <http://www.aws.org.au/pdf/award/Graeme%20Sawyer.pdf>.

The last edition of the newsletter featured a summary of Rupert's long contribution to wildlife conservation in North Queensland - here is his response upon learning of his successful nomination, as featured on the Australian Wildlife Society website:

(My) Thoughts on receiving the award: initial response is surprise, then pleasure. Next, come memories of Dr Serventy's lifelong opposition to the degradation of this land and the oceans. I feel shy to learn that I am added to the company of people recognised for their love of our land and its animals: Margaret Thorsborne, protector of pigeons, Hinchinbrook and Cardwell, Jenny Maclean, protector and healer of bats, John Weigel, snake wrangler and devil protector, the outspoken Bob Irwin and many more worthies. And now, somehow, me. People who love and work for the bush and its native animals never think of retiring from the core of their reason for living, but the Serventy Conservation Award, symbolic of being included in grand company, offers the strength of mateship.

...always a naturalist, but my life was changed by an ABC Radio National Science Show circa 1980 describing opposition to logging in Terania Creek by people like Hugh and Nan Nicholson. This led me to question Forestry in North Queensland rainforests which resulted in my political and physical opposition to logging in native forests. These efforts proved to be a step along the way to gaining World Heritage listing for much of North Queensland's rainforests, mainly through the calm, tireless, highest calibre work of Dr Aila Keto. Opposition to logging led me into the Tall Eucalypt Forests of Windsor Tableland where one night I caught a Northern Bettong. The beautiful little animal was transferred to National Parks, serving to prove the occurrence of these rare Bettongs at Windsor. This led to gazettal of a very large Scientific Area for the benefit of the Bettong and a good population of Yellow-bellied Gliders, accomplished with the help of Sam Dansie, a well-respected forester. Discovering Yellow-bellied Gliders in a patch of country near Herberton where logging was imminent brought about a small Scientific Area and began my study of these best-of-all gliding possums. Arrested once at Windsor for stopping logging trucks, twice at the Daintree blockades and arrested but not charged for distracting duck shooters in Victoria are satisfying memories but sadly, duck shooting hasn't yet stopped.



Who is Dobby?

Dobby, an abandoned 370g joey, was rescued from the Mount Hypipamee Crater in November 2016, and is now a bouncy, adventurous youngster, cared for by Margit Cianelli. You can see photos of Dobby and other rescued tree kangaroos on the [Lumholtz Lodge facebook page](#).

Climate Change Challenge

By Denise Bond

Excellent local coverage of April's Climate Change talk can be read as a call to action ...

TKMG joined with BirdLife Northern Queensland to present a talk on climate change by Adjunct Professor Steve Turton at BirdLife's AGM on the 10th March. The talk described current predictions for how climate change will be felt in North Queensland. Professor Turton used the "Goldilocks effect" to explain that with no greenhouse effect, the planet would be too cold, with too thick a layer of greenhouse gases, the planet will get too hot, and the "just right" situation - the temperature range to which humans have adapted as we evolved. Human-induced climate change is pushing us above the "just right" range, which in North Queensland is predicted to mean higher average temperatures, more intense rainfall events and fewer but more intense cyclones. Professor Turton's talk referred to the research behind climate change predictions, which he showed on clear summary graphs. The talk and accompanying slides are an excellent resource, available on YouTube at : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKh-vedtkCg>.

The talk received good coverage in The Tablelander of 21 March 2017 (page 7) and on the Opinion page and Editorial on page 12. Editor David Anthony made the point that he tries to publish as many letters as possible, the more concise the better, so if more climate sceptic letters are published, it may well be because more are being sent in. When was the last time you wrote to your local paper to explain an aspect of climate change and the impact it is having on the environment and how we live? Professor Turton's talk provides ample material for writing letters, and the latest information on the impact of climate change on the ancient, endemic, rare and threatened vertebrates of the Wet Tropics can be found in the *State of the Wet Tropics Report (2015-16)* at <http://www.wettropics.gov.au/site/user-assets/docs/sowt2015-16b5-lres.pdf>.

From the President

By Peter Valentine

We have been very busy on your behalf since the AGM last October. A lot of effort has gone into the development of our plans for Yellow-bellied Glider surveys and especially the attempt at crowd-funding. Members have supported Rupert Russell in getting this going and we are now in the midst of a campaign to raise funds for the census work on YBG. I hope you can have a look at the video and promote the idea amongst friends.

One unfortunate outcome of the early wet season rain is that we now have to postpone the talk on the effects of climate change on our north Queensland wildlife. Professor Steve Williams had agreed to present this on the 6th April but that was before his wet season field work (on the Windsor Tablelands) was seriously washed out. He and his team had to be evacuated by helicopter due to the road closures (and running out of food). Recovery stretched over a long period and in the end disrupted Steve's program to the extent he will now be in Canberra at that time. We hope to re-schedule this presentation later this year.

I hope members were able to attend the presentation by Professor Steve Turton on the science of climate change. This was meant as a lead in to Steve Williams' presentation. There is no doubt we are facing a significant transformation of our environment and we are way too late in addressing the issue. At times I wonder whether our political masters live on the same planet.

Progress on Project Kimberley

By Dave Hudson

The very clever people at JCU's Information Technology Academy have now taken Kimberley past the proof-of-concept stage to the demonstration stage. PhD candidate Aidan Possemiers together with undergrad students have created a more realistic rainforest habitat (rather than the 'off-the-shelf' open woodland which was used in Stage 1) and have added a background of rainforest sounds. They have also set it up to operate with the HTC Vive 3D equipment. With this setup the user dons a 3D visor and can then walk around a 3 metre x 3 metre square with sensors in the corners which give a warning when you get to the 'edge'. You can look up and see the sun filtering through the rainforest canopy, and a babbling stream runs past you. It's a stunning experience. Quite a few people have now experienced Kimberley as we seek to gain feedback and support from key organisations (such as the Wet Tropics Management Authority). Aidan will be coming up to Malanda in April to do a demonstration; we'll put a notice on the [TKMG facebook page](#) when we have a date and time.

At this stage Kimberley simply walks up and down a branch, now we need to move on to the stage where we can build in educational messages and the user can have a more interactive experience, which will allow us to take her public. This just requires time; time for the tech wizards to do all the programming. We are currently seeking grant funding to meet these costs (about \$12,000).

Yellow-bellied Glider Citizen Science funding application

As part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda, the Federal Government is providing funding of up to \$4 million over the next four years (\$1 million each year) for Citizen Science Grants for projects which will:

- provide opportunities for community participation in scientific research projects that have a national impact and include the collection or transformation of data
- empower citizens by including them in the research process while increasing scientific literacy and understanding of the scientific method.

So over the festive season, our Yellow-bellied Glider sub-committee worked very hard to put together an application for an exciting project to engage citizen scientists in developing, testing and applying techniques to help conserve the northern sub-species of the Yellow-bellied Glider.

The project seeks \$199,907 over five years, and would draw on existing experience and knowledge to develop tools and techniques for citizen scientists to:

- identify and map remaining glider habitat;
- measure and monitor occupancy;
- determine the status and trajectory of change in overall habitat and key resources within that habitat;
- develop systems for dissemination of that information to stakeholders and the public.

While this may sound rather specific, the project would have a national impact by developing sophisticated, non-invasive population monitoring techniques that could be applied to related Yellow-bellied Gliders distributed along the east coast of Australia and to similar threatened species, particularly vocal ones.

The TKMG committee would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to get this detailed proposal together.

Yellow-bellied Glider Crowd-Funding campaign

- please help publicise

John Winter and Rupert Russell, with a band of dedicated volunteers, have been monitoring a population of the northern sub-species of Yellow-bellied Glider since 1997. There is little government funding for long-term monitoring, and most of the work has been done on a voluntary basis. To get to the site requires a gruelling 8 hour walk through dense forest, so this year, we decided to raise money for hiring a helicopter to air-lift volunteers in as close to the site as feasible.

We are experimenting with Crowd-funding through Chuffed.org, which has involved developing a campaign webpage and setting up "Stripe" and "PayPal" accounts to receive the funds. The hardest thing is to spread the campaign through social media, and this is where we are asking for your help (and possibly your kids' help!) - the more people share the [campaign page](#) and "like" us on facebook, the more likely the campaign is to appear on searches, and feature on facebook pages. So please, even if you can't donate, spreading the campaign through your networks is a great contribution to helping us reach the target (we have raised \$2735 so far, and have 6 weeks to go).

This link takes you to the campaign: <https://www.chuffed.org/project/yellow-bellied-glider-census>

Rock Road Corridor Update

By Dave Hudson

Another great year for revegetation at Rock Road. The 3,000 seedlings so generously provided by QPWS were again planted in the northern section of the corridor (Lemuroid Leap). 2,000 were allocated to a 'new' planting just below the hut, and 1,000 were used as infill in the 2016 planting. Unfortunately a very hot, dry start to last year's 'wet' season led to higher than expected mortality, despite having water available. It's now looking fantastic. The new planting was supported by our fabulous partners TREAT, with site and planting preparation expertly performed by Mark McCaffrey. The planting coincided with a field day facilitated by Terrain NRM & TREAT which was very well attended, see the photos on [Terrain's Facebook page](#).

Apart from on-going maintenance this largely completes the revegetation of this part of the corridor. There may be some infill plantings next year and we still need to get the fauna crossing (rope ladder) installed over Kenny Rd, but all-in-all a stunning achievement.

South Endeavour Trust engaged North Qld Land Management Services to undertake further revegetation on the southern section of the corridor (Dirran's End). By the time Geoff Onus and his crew have finished this season there will have been about 14,000 seedlings planted, with a similar amount planned for next year. Those magnificent TREAT volunteers turned up in droves one wet Saturday morning in early February; walking all the way down (and back up) the long track to the site where 3,000 seedlings were planted as the community's contribution. Fantastic effort everyone, and thanks again to Tim Hughes and the South Endeavour Trust for investing so heavily in this critical corridor. The latest [State of the Wet Tropics Report 2015/16](#) highlights the importance of restoring these upland habitats.

Malanda Gold: the tale of a unique rainbowfish

Extracted from original paper by Denise Bond

What is a fish doing in the TKMG newsletter you may ask? Your editor feels justified to include it on the basis that it is a unique part of the complex ecosystem that supports mammals of the Wet Tropics ... read on and see if you agree!

The article below is a precis of the paper: *Malanda Gold: the tale of a unique rainbowfish from the Atherton Tablelands, now on the verge of extinction* by P. J. Unmack, K. C. Martin, M. P. Hammer, B. Ebner, K. Moy & C. Brown, published in the December 2016 edition of the Journal of the Australia New Guinea Fishes Association (*Fishes of Sahul: Vol 30 No 4*, pages 1038 to 1054). The full paper (with great photos) will be available from: The Australia New Guinea Fishes Association (ANGFA) (although it has not yet been made available on-line).

Don't be too concerned if you have never heard of the Malanda Rainbowfish. It is a new common name for a striking gold and red coloured, dwarf-sized rainbowfish (*Melanotaenia* sp.) that is currently waiting to be formally described. Its taxonomic status has not been well understood until very recently, and it is now in danger of becoming extinct before it can be formally named!

The distinguishing features of the Malanda rainbowfish are its size (smaller than 61mm head to tail), and a more snub-nosed head than either the Eastern or Lake Eacham rainbowfish. The colour varies between male and female and during the breeding cycle - males sport a bright gold body with thin red stripes during the breeding season.

The fish is named due to its restricted distribution in the headwater streams of the North Johnstone River near Malanda, a small area of upland rainforest habitat on the southern Atherton Tablelands. This habitat is particularly interesting as five distinct species have so far been identified in this small area. In other areas of Australia, rainbowfish species can co-exist, but these North Johnstone headwater species appear to form hybrid populations if they live in the same area, suggesting that they evolved in sections of streams which stayed isolated from each other. Some of the small, cool and fast flowing streams through upland rainforest have been heavily modified through the clearing of forest and construction of in-stream farm dams. Now the streams are warmer, with a silty substrate and much more aquatic vegetation, and species are moved between the streams through flood events and by people moving fish from streams to dams and vice versa.

The Malanda Rainbowfish faces a very real and urgent battle against extinction through hybridisation with other rainbowfish. To stave off pollution of its genome and ensure its long term survival will require a concerted effort from a broad range of scientific and community groups. A formally sanctioned and carefully considered program in conjunction with Queensland Fisheries to urgently translocate fish from wild, genetically pure populations to refuge habitats has begun and is the first step towards securing the future of this unique fish.

Sandy Carroll appeal

Many members will know local wildlife photographer Sandy Carroll and her beautiful wildlife photos and videos. Sandy is currently running a campaign to fund treatment to fight the progression of multiple sclerosis (MS), a degenerative and chronic disease. To donate to her cause, please visit <http://www.gofundme.com/sandy-carroll>.



THREATENED WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The **Australian Wildlife Society Threatened Wildlife Photographic Competition** is a national competition that awards and promotes endangered Australian wildlife through the medium of photography. The Australian Wildlife Society invites photographers to raise the plight of endangered wildlife in Australia. Our Society aims to encourage the production of photographs taken in Australia, by Australians, which reflects the diversity and uniqueness of endangered Australian wildlife.

An annual judge's prize of \$1,000 will be awarded and an annual people's choice prize of \$500 will be awarded.

Rules of entry:

- 1) The subject of each entry must be a threatened Australian species – fauna or flora
- 2) The entry must be the work of the entrant
- 3) The photograph must have been taken within the twelve months prior to the date of entry
- 4) The name of the threatened species, photographer and date taken must be in the 'file name' of each photograph submitted
- 5) Entrants retain the copyright to their entries but accord the Australian Wildlife Society (AWS) the right to use them in any of its publications or any reprint arising therefrom
- 6) Entries to be submitted by electronic means to – photo@aws.org.au
- 7) All entries must be accompanied by a short paragraph (maximum 150 words) describing the status of the endangered species, the location of the photograph and the reasons and circumstances for choosing to photograph it
- 8) Directors of AWS or their families are ineligible to submit entries
- 9) There shall be no charge for entry and entrants may submit more than one entry
- 10) The final result is at the discretion of the Directors and will be announced in August each year.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES: 30 JUNE 2017

ONLINE VOTING FOR THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE WILL BE OPEN FROM 1 JULY TO 30 JULY 2017

Some new Quoll resources ...

A full report on *The population and distribution of the Spotted Tailed Quoll in the Cairns Regional Council Area* by Luke Jackson and Alberto Vale (2016) is available at <http://www.quolls.org.au/quolls.html>.

The Australian Quoll Conservancy (run by Luke and Alberto) has also just published its first Magazine, with articles on Quolls throughout Australia. The Magazine is available on line at: https://issuu.com/australianquollconservancy/docs/aqc_magazine_1.

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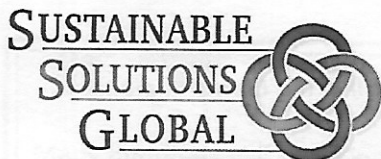


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