



Mammal Mail

October 2008

Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group Inc.

The TKMG membership revealed their confidence and support in the way the group is being run by returning the entire Executive and the committee to their positions at the September Annual General meeting.

Jack Grant was returned as President, Alan Gillanders as VP, Larry Crook as Treasurer and Ian Sinclair as Secretary. Re-elected committee members are Margit Cianelli, Ilona Moerman, Ruth Whiston, Dale Rogers and Ceinwen Edwards. Larry decided to relinquish a few very late nights and handed over the newsletter editor position to Lee Beechen who will assume that position as from the December issue.

With the AGM business over, Dr Nicky Moore treated the assembled to a fascinating trilogy of stories, a "movable feast" as she sub-titled her '*Origins of Mammals*' presentation. Nicky is the lecturer in Tropical Urban & Regional Planning at the Cairns campus of James Cook University with a research background in environmental management issues and, of course, the origin of mammals.

The three stories are, in chronological order, *The Shuffling of the Planet*, *The Sexiness of Plants* and *The Ark Load of Mammals*. Your reporter, Larry, interpreted the stories this way:

The Shuffling of the Planet

240 mya (million years ago) dinosaurs were wandering around Pangaea in the northern hemisphere. 165 mya, around the end of the Palaeozoic era, Pangaea separated into Laurasia in the north and Gondwanaland drifting off southwards. 135 mya Africa cuts its ties with Gondwanaland and seeks a life of its own. Not to be outdone, India, 35 million years later, packs a cut lunch and drifts north, lives a hermit's existence for 50 million years before finally bumping rather solidly into Eurasia and discovers mountain climbing by inventing the Himalayas.

70 mya South America, upset with Africa for always leaving hairs in the sink, decides to split and head north until it bumps into North America at Panama, likes the lifestyle and settles back with a margarita. On board the

massive raft that is South America are leaves and marsupials.

55 million years pass before New Zealand is fed up with Australia and moves off to form its own rugby team and develop its own unique accent. New Caledonia follows EnZeds example and it too splits from the apparently not-so-great southland. Antarctica and Australia remain huddled together covered in rainforest at the bottom of the Earth. Things were starting to get a bit cold so Australia began its march north. Antarctica was happy where it was, thank you very much, didn't budge and 5 mya began to freeze.

The Sexiness of Plants

135 mya angiosperms spread across Gondwanaland and Pangaea, reaching Australia 120 mya. Prior to that there were no flowering plants, only mosses, ferns etc.

Skip to Gondwanaland 40 mya and we find rainforest beginning to spread west towards Adelaide in search of a nice Chardonnay. 30 mya, as drying and cooling commences, eucalypts and acacias emerged.

Incredibly slowly, there was a bang as Australia hit the Pacific plate around 15 mya. The huge rainshadow of the New Guinea Highlands caused a massive retreat in rainforest. All went a tad pear shaped with the onset of the glacial period 10 mya. Xeric plants spread, taking advantage of the cold and dry conditions, producing drought hardy plants and

AGM

grasslands. 1 mya Australia was pretty much desert. From 10 mya ago to present we merrily amble along in a balmy interglacial period.

The Ark Load of Mammals.

Mammals are believed to have evolved around 230 mya. There are three basic models of mammals in Australia; monotremes, marsupials and placentals. 45 mya when Australia began to move northwards, she had leaves and marsupials on board, as did South America 25 million years earlier. The oldest marsupial found is the *Deltatheridium* in Texas, dated 120 mya. Victoria is home to the 120 my old *Ausktribosphenos nykton*.

Eric the giant opalised platypus nestled into Lightning Ridge 115 mya. 70 to 55 mya marsupials began to arrive in Australia. Murgon is the 55 million year old home for placental and marsupial fossils.

Riversleigh in northern central Queensland was where one Mike Archer uncovered a 28

mya *thingadont* (just two teeth and nowt else) and the remains of a giant python which of course he named *montypythonoides*.

The closest genetic link to the tree-kangaroo is the rock wallaby. Nicky explained that possums came down from the trees when grasslands became dominant, evolving into kangaroos and rock wallabies with some of the latter returning to the trees much later, and this occurred in Papua New Guinea. This is a feasible theory because tree-kangaroos do not have thumbs or a prehensile tail which are pretty much standard equipment for tree dwellers. "They are safer on the ground", says Nicky.

Rats have been dated back 12 million years in South East Asia, colonised PNG 8 mya and moved down to Oz 5-6 mya. They died out as the rainforest retreated. As for bats, they flew into Oz 26 mya.

The past year at TKMG has seen the completion of some long-term projects, steady progress on others, and the continuation of the group's various community-based activities.

The recently installed Tree Kangaroo display at Malanda Falls Visitor Centre is the culmination of a joint effort between TKMG, the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and the visitor centre. The large space was offered to the group in early 2007, and WTMA stepped in with an offer to cover the graphic design costs. We provided the text and many of the photos and illustrations, and with the expertise of designer Tim Parker the display achieved an attractive and useful format. Our mounted Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, on display for the past three years at the centre, has also become part of the new exhibit. There was an official launch on September 12th, when the centre also opened its Cyclone Larry display. Many thanks to all concerned for a display that has already attracted numerous positive comments from visitors.

The Australian Geographic Society was another of our major benefactors in the past year, by means of a fundraising effort aimed at conservation of Bennett's Tree Kangaroos. The funds raised have been passed on to TKMG and Daintree Rainforest Rescue, to tackle different aspects of the issue – Rainforest Rescue will use its half to help purchase Bennett's Tree Kangaroo habitat, while TKMG will use the money to help kick-start a community survey on distribution and

The President's Report 2008

habitat. It is hoped that the funds (just over \$7000) can be used as 'seed' funding to access a larger pool to cover the survey costs.

TKMG has again been involved in local revegetation efforts, sponsoring three Envirofund projects on members' properties and receiving Eacham Shire Council funding to conduct follow-up maintenance at another site. As always Larry Crook has been our man at the helm, and special thanks are due to Larry for his tireless efforts on this front over many years, as well as his other critical roles at TKMG, as our treasurer and newsletter editor. Larry does all of these jobs with modesty and efficiency and I think it is safe to say that he contributes more time and energy than any of us. Thanks Larry!

In addition to our regular roles on community consultative committees such as the Conservation Sector Liaison Group at WTMA, it was a pleasure to also contribute this year to the Atherton High School's science academy by providing a presentation (by yours truly) on

Mabi Forest Mammals. The endangered Mabi forest ecosystem is the main theme for the academy, and the presentation was given to primary and high school children from Atherton and Tolga.

It has been good to see some new faces joining the TKMG committee this year. We welcomed Ian Sinclair, Ruth Whiston, Ilona Moerman and Dale Rogers, and I would like to thank them and all committee members for their time and energy over the past year. Many thanks also to our wonderful speakers this year who included Sarah Kerr, Lisa Dabek, Gabriel Porolak, Susan Tallarico and Trevor Madin.

Finally, thanks to the community members and organisations who support us in different ways

– Yungaburra and Malanda Falls Visitor Centres, Malanda Medical Centre and Lake Eacham Caravan Park for distributing our merchandise, Liz and Lionel Carroll for storing our merchandise and other paraphernalia, the Lake Eacham Hotel for hosting two meetings this year, and finally a huge thank you to the Malanda Hotel for hosting all our other meetings in such friendly and stylish surroundings.

We look forward to seeing you all at our meetings in the coming year.

Jack Grant
President
September 2008

The Group is in a strong and steady financial state. We have a healthy bank balance of almost \$8000, an increase of \$1000 from this time last year.

Receipts for the year were \$44000, excluding GST. Receipts included grant monies of \$32000 for three Envirofund tree planting projects which the group is sponsoring and administering. A donation of \$7000 has been provided from donations to Australian Geographic towards the Bennett's Tree-kangaroo Survey.

Excluding these grants and the donation, the group's actual income was \$5000. Most of the \$5000 came from memberships, donations, T-shirt sales, the Possum picture raffle and bank interest.

The group's expenditure was \$20000, again excluding GST. \$16000 of this was paid out of the grant income to contractors for tree planting and so on.

The group's actual expenditure was \$4000. Most of this was spent on merchandise such as T-shirts, caps and carry bags.

Our membership is steady, with many members taking up the 2 to 5 year option that is available.

The Treasurer's Report 2008

I wish to thank all those members who add a donation to their membership fee and a thankyou to Maria Pesavento who has donated her valuable time to maintaining our web-site. Maria can help you with all your web-site needs. Also thankyou go to Shirvington Accountants in Malanda for giving us a budget priced audit, and to the Malanda Hotel and the Lake Eacham Hotel for allowing us to use their venue free of charge. And huge thanks to those members such as Ceinwen, Ruth and Jack who man our stall at the Yungaburra markets.

Larry Crook
Treasurer
September 2008

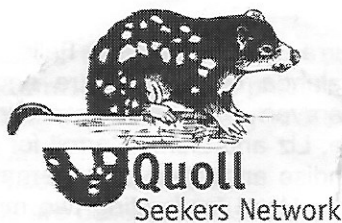
Where can I buy that TKMG gear?

Crew & polo T-shirts, brightly coloured kiddies T's and caps, books, shopping bags, postcards, cards, fridge magnets, posters and TKMG CDs can all be purchased from our public meetings and the December Yungaburra Markets..

Also look for our products in the Ravenshoe & Malanda Falls Visitors Centres, Yungaburra Visitors Centre, shopping bags in the Eacham Medical Centre and the Malanda Fairy Shop, T-shirts in the TREAT Interp. Centre and at the Tree Kangaroo Café you will find CDs & postcards

If the outlets have run out or for any merchandising

Enquiries? Ring Jack Grant on 0410810427

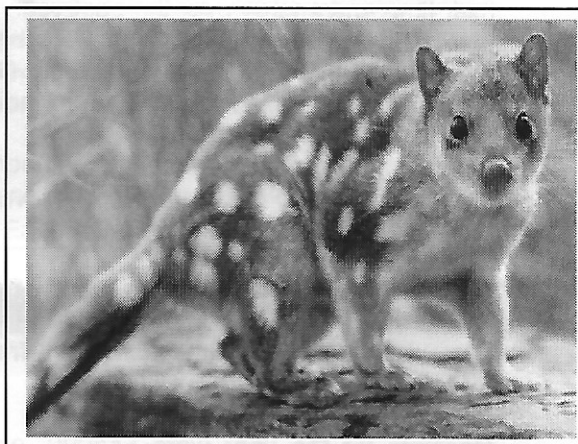
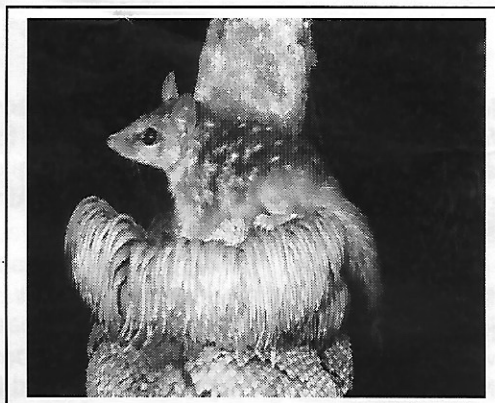


Quolls – in a spot of trouble

Glen Kvassay and Luke Jackson from the Quoll Seekers Network will give an overview of the decline of marsupial carnivores across Australia, focusing on the biology and threatening processes of North Queensland two quoll species (northern and spotted tailed quolls).

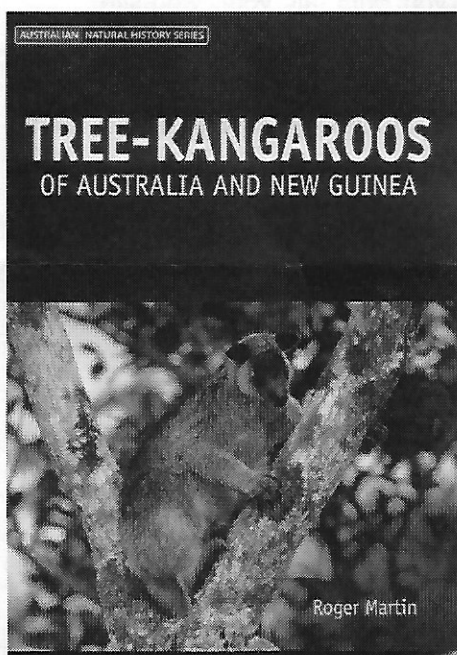
They will also go through how to identify quolls in the field (scats, prints etc).

Special guest **Macca** (pictured right) will be there too!



Come and see a presentation about these charismatic animals and learn where they can be found, threats to their survival and what can be done by landowners and the public to prevent these animals from becoming another extinction statistic.

TKMG presents Glen, Luke & Macca at the Malanda Hotel, Thursday Nov 6th @ 7.30pm.



By Roger Martin

Available from TKMG \$35

The TKMG website -
www.tree-kangaroo.net
is maintained on
a volunteer basis by
www.pesavento.biz



Aims and Objects of TKMG

The objects for which the Association is established are:

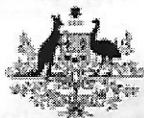
To conserve tree kangaroos and other North Queensland mammals.

To promote awareness and education of tree kangaroos and NQ mammals.

To increase knowledge of tree kangaroos and NQ mammals.
To undertake and/or assist with scientific research of tree kangaroos and NQ mammals.

To liaise with international and other organizations with related interests.

To liaise with all levels of government and have input into all planning and development that impacts on the environmental well being of tree kangaroo and mammal habitat.



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Toolkit to improve rainforest revegetation outcomes

Deforestation is a major threat to the health of rainforests worldwide. Although the best way to deal with this threat is to avoid clearing in the first place, it is possible to revegetate cleared areas such that rainforest ecosystems – including both animal and plant biodiversity – can recover.

However, researchers from the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) recently found that much of the government-funded tree-planting effort in cleared areas of the Wet Tropics may not have produced the desired outcome.

"Our analysis of projects funded by the Natural Heritage Trust indicates that less than half of the area reported as revegetated is actually now on its way to recovering rainforest ecosystems," said Associate Professor Carla Catterall of Griffith University, who led the research team.

"It's pretty clear that just planting tree seedlings and then leaving them to fend for themselves is too risky. That's what happened with short-term funding. Longer-term monitoring of the condition of the plantings and regular maintenance interventions are necessary if you want to recover anything like a rainforest ecosystem," she said.

To help improve the success rate of rainforest revegetation projects, Associate Professor Catterall's team has produced a toolkit entitled *Monitoring rainforest revegetation projects for biodiversity in rainforest landscapes*. The latest version of this toolkit is available for free through the website of the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), and can be downloaded at http://www.rrrc.org.au/publications/biodiversity_monitoring2.html.

"The toolkit is a fantastic resource for community organisations like ours," said Dr Alice Crabtree, the Cairns coordinator of Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). "We're already incorporating its

recommendations into our rainforest revegetation programs."

In cooperation with Shell EcoVolunteers, CVA will commence their latest round of community-based rainforest revegetation, maintenance and monitoring on the Atherton Tablelands in late November this year..

Ms Sheriden Morris, CEO of the RRRC, was pleased that the community was already using this research. "This is another example of how the publicly-funded, public-good research managed by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre is helping to improve the environmental sustainability of north Queensland," she said.

The RRRC manages the \$40 million MTSRF, which is part of the Australian government's Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities program. Through a consortium of over 300 researchers, the RRRC aims to deliver solution science that will help ensure sustainable use and management of north Queensland's key environmental assets: the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and the Torres Strait.

Kylie Freebody, TKMG member, botanist and co-manager of the Tablelands Community Revegetation Unit, is part of the research team. Kylie is collecting floristic data from revegetation projects up to twenty years old in the Wet Tropics area in order to measure their progress.

A second TKMG member, Amanda Freeman, is collecting bird data in some of the revegetation sites.

New EPBC listing

Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia" has now been listed as a threatened ecological community under EPBC. This includes Wet Tropics bioregion. Details are on EPBC Act website.

Bluewater Update

The Tablelands Regional Council has imposed a revegetation condition on the proposed Bluewater residential development east of Malanda. The development's western boundary is an unnamed creek that flows from Peeramon Scrub Reserve to the Johnstone River. This is an important tree-kangaroo pathway.

The condition is that the developer must revegetate to a width of twenty-five metres of the eastern bank of the creek, including at least ten metres of the top bank. This will provide a forested corridor for animals traveling that creek.

There has been no response to date from the principal Mr Euan Bruce to TKMG's letter requesting that the TK poles remain untouched.

Dusky Bilby's on the Tablelands

If one was to believe reporter Naomi Cascotto's article in the October 29 issue of the *Tablelander*, then we would be despairing at her opening line that *'precious native wildlife like the dusky rat kangaroo and bilby are under threat of extinction on the Tablelands because rabbits are running at increasingly higher numbers'*.

Naomi's lapse in adhering to Rule No 1 in journalism, checking her facts, marred an otherwise reasonable account of the rabbit problem facing the Tablelands.

TK Status to be Audited

The TKMG committee has appointed TKMG president Jack Grant to assess the status of the Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo and prepare a submission to the Environmental Protection Agency. As reported in the August 2007 *Mammal Mail*, it is a likely scenario that the current *rare* status of the tree-roo, under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act, will be downgraded to *'of least concern'* unless it can be shown that the animal is under considerable threat and the population is properly assessed.

Grants for Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations

Applications for 2008-09 grants under the Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations program are now open.

This program provides assistance for their day-to-day running such as office rental, utilities, office supplies, staff and volunteer training and are open to national, state/territory, regional and local organisations geared towards the protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment; or the protection and /or conservation of Australia's historic heritage. The multi-year grants allow for forward planning by groups and cut the administrative costs of reapplying each year.

Applications are available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts at www.environment.gov.au/about/programs/gveho email gveho@environment.gov.au or call 02 6274 2422

¼ of World's Mammals Facing Extinction

A survey by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has published the Red List of Threatened Species in the journal *Science* and it says populations of more than half of world's mammals are falling, with Asian primates particularly at risk.

The updated 'Red List' was released at the World Conservation Congress in Spain, with Australia ranking poorly. The biggest threat to mammals is loss of habitat, including deforestation.

788 species in Australia have been listed as threatened, including fish, birds and plants. Of that number, 57 of the country's native mammals are at risk of extinction.

Zoologist from the University of Adelaide Professor Chris West says Australia's ranking in the Red List is one of the worst for developed countries "I'm afraid what it does is point up the fact that Australia has a poor record so far," he said. Professor West says habitat destruction, conversion to farmland and pollution are root causes and climate change is also a threat.

One of the mammals at serious risk is the Tasmanian devil. Its population has declined by 60 per cent in 10 years, due to viral face cancer. It is now listed as endangered, and its prospects as a species are extremely bleak.

But there is good news for the African elephant; increased numbers have led to its removal from the high-risk list.

The Red List is compiled every four years by the IUCN.

By Stephanie Kennedy

Tree Kangaroo & Mammal Group Inc.

www.tree-kangaroo.net e-mail: info@tree-kangaroo.net
ABN 66 316 466 220

Subscription is \$11 (incl. GST) per year per couple (two votes at the AGM) or single (one vote). Due July 1st.
YOU MAY APPLY/RENEW FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS.

To make a direct deposit into the TKMG bank account, please put your name/s in the reference section of the deposit form. THEN COMPLETE AND MAIL THIS FORM TO

1691 Topaz Rd, TOPAZ, QLD, 4885.

TKMG Bank details are:

Bank: Bendigo

Account Name: Tree Kangaroo & Mammal Group Inc.

BSB: 633 000 Account Number: 126142801

Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone No: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Subscription: \$_____ Donation: \$_____

Please tick the appropriate box

Renewal ☐ New Member ☐ Receipt Required ☐

☐ I have made a direct deposit into the TKMG bank account

Newsletter

☐ I wish to receive the newsletter via the website. (Overseas members to use this method).

☐ I wish to receive the newsletter by post.

Cheque/Money Order to be made out to:

Tree Kangaroo & Mammal Group Inc.

Please post Form and Payment to: TKMG Treasurer,

1691 Topaz Rd, TOPAZ, QLD, 4885

Membership Application / Renewal Form

Memberships due

If your *Mammal Mail* newsletter address label has 08 on it, then your valued membership is due.

Please use the above form or you can renew at the November 6th TKMG public meeting.

Coming Soon!

Live Music

Butchers Creek Hall

ONLY \$10/\$4 \$20 family
Saturdays 6.30 - 11pm

November 15th

Paronella & Co

Popular R 'n R band
Italian meal \$8

December 13th

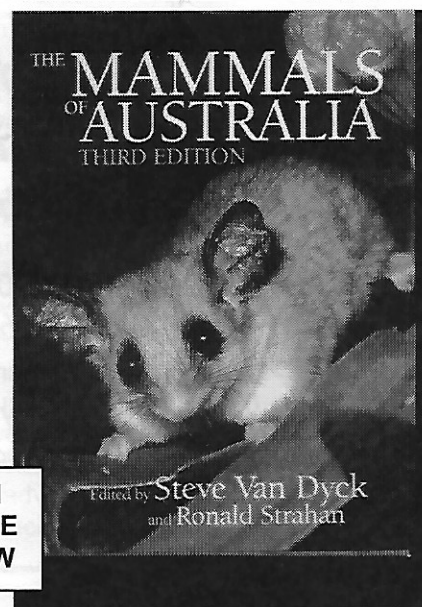
**Hillbilly
Goats**

Yee-hah! Hillbilly
hoedown fancy dress
Xmas Dinner Party
and the

*Tribal Pulse
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Lo-priced Bar
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ON
SALE
NOW

What's On?

Quolls – in a spot of trouble

Mark, Luke & Macca
present an overview on
quolls
Malanda Hotel 7.30pm

**Thursday Nov 6
TKMG Public Meeting**

All welcome - Supper (gold coin donation)



Lumholtz tree-kangaroo, Malanda Falls Photo by Colleen Creaney



Drawing by William Cooper

Mammal Mail

October 2008

Newsletter of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Inc.
PO Box 1409, Atherton, Q, 4883

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