



Mammal Mail

Newsletter of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Inc.

May 2003

Tree kangaroos - Whaddya know, whaddya reckon and how much are you willing to pay for them?

or, for those who favour tabloid journalism:

41% Favour Harvesting Tree Roos

by Larry Crook

An answer to the above questions could determine the well being of tree kangaroos and other Australian tropical native animals. What role does knowledge and awareness play in stimulating the hip-pocket nerve when a person is asked to contribute financially to the conservation of tree kangaroos? And how much would this contribution be if it could be attributed to the tree kangaroo's *existence* value rather than its *use* value?

Professor Clem Tisdell and Dr Clevo Wilson and colleagues from the University of Queensland School of Economics have won an Australian Research Council grant to explore the economic constraints on conservation, and assess the impact of commercialisation. Their study is *Economics of Conserving Australian Wildlife: An Analysis of the Role of Economic Valuation, Property Rights and Commercialisation*. They are focussing their attention on Tropical Australia to redress the bias of Australian economic studies towards temperate species.

"One of our studies is to find out more about what people know about tropical wildlife and

how much people are prepared to save it," Professor Tisdell said.

"Economists use the concept of the willingness to pay, but our opinion is that this is very much influenced by experience and knowledge."

For the Ecology 2002 Conference in Cairns they presented their work to date which is on the economic valuation aspect and included tree-kangaroos. The presentation was titled *Tree Kangaroos in Australia: Public Knowledge, Attitudes and Willingness to Pay for Their Conservation*.

A survey was conducted of a sample of 204 Brisbane residents in the second half of 2002 to determine their evaluation of Australia's tropical wildlife, including their assessment of tree-kangaroos. The sample was obtained mainly through the distribution of flyers by letter-box drops to obtain respondents with a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds.

The sample was given two structured questionnaires. The first was answered on the basis of respondents' existing information. The second questionnaire (to take home) was

answered after receiving additional information about Australian tropical wildlife, including tree kangaroos. The additional information consisted of a presentation by the Curator of Mammals and Birds (Queensland Museum) and a booklet illustrating all animals mentioned in the questionnaires and providing detailed information on each.

The third questionnaire follows a visit to David Fleay's Wildlife Park where a tree kangaroo could be seen. Information was gathered at each of these stages about the respondents' general knowledge of tree kangaroos and their general support for the conservation of this species. Specific questions were also asked to determine the extent of their knowledge about tree kangaroos and whether they believed that tree kangaroos should be protected and why. In addition, two methods were used to determine the willingness of individuals to contribute financially to the conservation of tree kangaroos. One involved their willingness to contribute from their own pocket for tree kangaroo research, protection and conservation. The other method determined how much of such a contribution could be attributed to its existence value rather than to its use value.

The third part of the survey is not finished as yet. This will involve looking at economic valuations of respondents when they have had a chance to visit the Wildlife Park and see the tree kangaroos.

The survey details are displayed on Page 3.

The concluding comments on the research carried out to date are as follows:

- Knowledge of the general public (in Brisbane) about tree kangaroos is very poor
- Increased knowledge of tree kangaroos results in greater support for their protection

- The willingness of the public to provide financial support for conservation of tree kangaroos increases with their knowledge of tree kangaroos
- Economic support for conservation of tree kangaroos reached on average about \$75 per respondent per annum
- About $\frac{3}{4}$ of this sum is for non-use values (e.g. existence and bequest values)
- Non-use economic valuation of tree kangaroos increases as individuals' knowledge of them rises. Use-value declines.
- Education can be a very effective means of promoting wildlife conservation

Another area of the research will focus on the impact of property rights on conservation, with an evaluation of a scheme in the Northern Territory to provide incentives for farmers to preserve the habitat of the red-tailed black cockatoo.

"Farmers knock down trees in which these birds nest, so what the Government is trying to do is allow them to collect a limited number of baby cockatoos to sell, in the hope they will leave the trees alone," Professor Tisdell explained.

Other schemes to be considered include licensing Aboriginal people to conduct crocodile hunts, and the move by many non-government wildlife bodies to buy up huge tracts of land to preserve species.

"The problem for most states – including Queensland – is that the Crown owns all the wildlife, which often doesn't give an incentive to the landowner to preserve habitat. If we can change those incentives we may be able to support conservation, and improve the economic situation of many Aboriginal

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people in remote areas," Professor Tisdell said.

The research aims to contribute to economic theory as well as contribute to public policy decision making.

Professor Tisdell told *Mammal Mail* that he and his colleagues would like to do some work on economic incentives and disincentives confronting landholders in

conserving tree kangaroos and other wildlife, and are interested in the possibility of doing a case study in the Atherton Tablelands.

"Ideally we would like to do it in conjunction with TKMG and other interested conservation groups. It will however, take a little advance planning," he said.

References were made to *UQ Business* Spring 2002 Issue 5, p.8. (University of Queensland publication)

Tree Kangaroos in Australia: Public Knowledge, Attitudes and Willingness to Pay for Their Conservation – Results comparing Questionnaire 1 (Q1) with Questionnaire 2 (Q2).

Tree kangaroos – General Knowledge

% Q1 % Q2

Percentage of those who did not know of the species	26.5	5.0
Those with poor knowledge of tree kangaroos (TKs)	48.5	36.0
Said that TKs occur in Australia	48.0	
Said that TKs occur outside Australia	20.0	
Like or strongly like TKs	77.0	91.0
Favoured commercial harvesting of TKs	19.0	1.0
Opposed commercial harvesting of TKs	59.0	96.0
Knew that there are two species of TKs in Australia	3.5	
Could not identify where TKs occur in Australia	72.0	
Said that tree kangaroos are rare	52.0	
Reasons given for protecting Tree Kangaroos		
They are unique	63.0	82.0
I would like to see them in the wild	59.0	68.0
I would like my children to see them in the wild	62.0	70.0
I would be happy to know they exist in the wild	76.0	87.0
We have a responsibility to protect all the species	85.0	85.0
They are an interesting evolutionary phenomena	44.0	51.0
They provide food and skins for native peoples	10.0	8.0
They perform certain ecological functions	53.0	54.0
Economic Evaluation of Tree Kangaroos		
If given \$1,000 to be distributed between 9 listed mammals. (Equal allocation would give 11.1% to TKs)	8.0	12.4
Willingness to pay dependent on use value (chances of seeing TKs in the wild or personal and direct benefit in the wild)	25.4	21.5
Willingness to pay dependent on non-use value (e.g. existence and bequest values)	74.6	78.5
Maximum amount willing to pay per week for next 10 years for TK conservation if simultaneously requested to contribute to conservation of the golden-shouldered parrot and the hawksbill sea turtle	\$1.13 (\$58.76 per year)	\$1.42 (73.82 per year)

Roads: How do we stop the killing?

By Tania Simmons

Dr. Miriam Goosem (James Cook University) presented a most informative talk at the TKMG April meeting about the impact of roads on wildlife and, in particular, mammals.

The most obvious and disturbing impact of roads on wildlife is mortality. Miriam's data was based on observations of a 2km section of the busy Kennedy Highway near Cairns, where it passes through forest. Over 38 months of observations, more than 4000 vertebrates were killed, approximately 500 of them mammals.

Extrapolating this data, one could expect around 10,000 road kills, per kilometre of forested road, per year - that equates to around 856 mammals. Although the extrapolation of data like this brings with it uncertainties as to the accuracy of the numbers, the figures are none the less staggering.

Many of us travelling our local roads, no doubt contemplate the various squished, unrecognizable blobs of fur and so on that cause us to grimace and wonder at the impact of such mortality on local populations.

In regard to Tree Kangaroo mortality, analysis of results from the TKMG survey conducted back in 2000 indicated road kill hotspots at Curtain Fig, Winfield Bridge, Palmerston Highway at Tarzali, East Evelyn Road and Kennedy Highway at Longlands Gap. The majority of road kills occurred within 100m of creeks and were mostly on main roads with increased traffic flow.

Road kills occur where road widths are narrower, close to creeks or gullies and in forested areas. Creeks appear to provide movement corridors for animals, supporting plans to restore waterways creating opportunities for animal movement between forest patches but alerting us to the problems

of safe movement of animals where creeks and roads meet.

Less road kills occur in wider road clearings, away from creeks where the roads have grassy or weedy verges. This illustrates another impact of road clearings, the 'Barrier Effect'. In simple terms, a barrier effect is created by wide roads without forest edges where decreased mortality reflects the unwillingness of animals to cross at these points. This sort of barrier is detrimental to the population dynamics of animal communities, where the need to relate to and breed with surrounding populations is essential for their continued health and vitality.

Roads also impact negatively on animal populations and surrounding forests by creating 'Edge Effects'. Road edges are known to have increased sunlight levels, increased temperatures, and higher numbers of pioneers, vines, weeds and other disturbance indicators - all leading to negative impacts for resident forest animals living in proximity to roads.

Miriam suggested a range of options to mitigate the negative impacts of roads, including:

- Avoid positioning roads through forested areas
- Minimizing road widths
- Maintaining canopy closure over roads
- Providing connectivity under roads, especially at creeks and gullies
- Installing traffic calming
- Rehabilitation of old roads

In regard to the East Evelyn Road Project, Miriam reported on the various animals known to be using the underpasses specifically installed to create safe passage for wildlife. Animals were detected using sand

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traps and limited camera surveys. They included:

- Brushtail possums
- Birds
- Scrub turkeys
- Feral cats (numbers have declined to very few since underpasses first became operational)
- Rodents
- Dingo/dogs
- Pademelons (good numbers)
- Bandicoots (good numbers)
- Frogs/lizards (occasional)
- And quite recently one TREE KANGAROO!!

Canopy rope bridges have also been trialled in a couple of locations on the Tablelands and are proving very successful. Nigel Weston (Co-operative Research Centre) has been doing this research and has collected evidence of usage by a wide range of species, including: Lemuroid Possums, Herbert River Possums, Green Possums, Striped Possums, Coppery Brushtail Possums, and Melomys. Whilst Tree Kangaroo hair samples have been found at one end of the bridge, we have no evidence as yet that they cross the bridge. With an offer of funding from the Department of Main Roads, Miriam is currently putting together priority areas for additional rope bridges to be installed. *Thanks Miriam, for a most interesting presentation*

BORN IN THE USA

Goodfellow born in captivity

Scarlett and *Randolph*, Goodfellow's tree kangaroos at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, became first time parents on June 11, 2002. This is the Zoo's first birth of this rare species and the only 2002 Goodfellow's birth reported among North American zoos.

Why the delay in announcing such important news? Because Goodfellow's tree kangaroos are born the size of a lima bean so the big event can go unnoticed. Further obscuring the birth date, tree kangaroo babies remain in the pouch much longer than other 'roos - up to 10 months. The June birth date was calculated based on the breeding date and a known 44-day gestation period for this species.

Only three zoos in North America exhibit Goodfellow's tree kangaroos. "Cleveland

Metroparks Zoo was selected to receive a breeding pair due to our experience, knowledge and expert care of this rare and vanishing species", said Curator of Mammals, Alan Sironen.

Goodfellow's tree kangaroos are very un-kangaroo-like in appearance. Adults weigh about 16 pounds and their fore and hind limbs are almost of equal length. These 'roos move from tree to tree with remarkable agility assisted by their sharp, curved claws.

Goodfellow's tree kangaroos live solitary lives in the forests of Papua New Guinea. Their main threat to survival is dwindling habitat from logging, mining, and agriculture.

Scarlett and her joey are on exhibit in the Koala Building at Australian Adventure.

Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Inc

MEMBERSHIP is only \$11.00 for singles or family (\$11.00 = one vote at the AGM) and is due every June 30th. (Join now and get one month *Free!!*). Join at our meetings or send your details (name, address, e-mail) and cheque (donations gratefully received) to TKMG, PO Box 1409, Atherton 4883.

DAINTREE RESCUE

Last call to save the Daintree



Cape Tribulation

Beautiful one day, gone the next. Will nature lovers stand by and watch a national icon on its final descent? We're about to find out.

By Julie Olsen

Without a second to lose, excited tourists press their camera lenses up against the bus window to get that allusive shot. If it's what they're hoping for, this could be their closest, most exciting encounter yet.

It's much bigger than they expect - a great hairy-looking creature nearly two metres tall, helmeted, with blue and red 'war paint' splashed across its long neck. At the end of its short stout legs are massive claws, sharp enough to disembowel the largest of predators.

But as road kill, the cassowary's marvellous adaptations are of little use. Nearly ten years ago, just fifty-four of these large, flightless birds were recorded for the whole of the Daintree region. Just like the great Moas of New Zealand, they could soon disappear forever.

Their dangerously low numbers are already sending hundreds of dependent rainforest species into decline. According to Dr Tony Parkes, Chair of Rainforest Rescue, the critical habitat of the Cassowary is being devastated at an alarming rate.

"Two-thirds of the tropical rainforest extending up the coast from the Daintree River to Cape Tribulation is freehold land," said Dr Parkes. "These privately-owned, one

hectare blocks are of immense conservation value yet there are no laws or regulations to prevent clearing."

"Developers began subdividing the lowland rainforest in the 1980s, after the land was rezoned by Council."

With the road to Cape Tribulation now bituminised, settlement of the privately owned allotments within the Daintree is escalating. Twenty allotments were developed for rural residential housing last year.

Roads slice through the home ranges of the cassowaries and with large areas of habitat continuing to be cleared for settlement or lost to weeds, the handful of surviving birds are forced to dodge cars, dogs and aggressive feral pigs to access a dwindling food supply.

"Weed invasion is a real worry," says biologist Tim Low, author of *Feral Future* and *The New Nature*. "Pond apple - one of Australia's 20 worst weeds - is sprouting behind the beach, where exotic coconuts are also invading," he said.

"Cultivated plants escaping from gardens into coastal forests is a nightmare prospect, especially when some landholders are growing weird tropical fruits, rare palms and unusual permaculture plants."

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"The result is a very wide variety of potential weeds that we don't know much about."

Mr Low predicts a continued trend of piecemeal destruction and weed invasion if areas are not purchased and set aside for conservation.

Weeds pose a serious threat to the Daintree rainforest which, until recently, has survived as an unbroken stream of evolution since the appearance of the world's first flowering plants.

"These forests are home to thirteen of the nineteen primitive plant families," says Dr Julia Playford, Director of the Conservation Sciences Unit with the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency. "Ten of these are found on private land between the Daintree River and Cape Tribulation."

Given her special interest in plant evolution and genetics, Dr Playford's concern for the future of the privately owned forest comes as no surprise.

Over one hundred rare and threatened plant species are found in the area. Forty-three occur on freehold land in the Cooper Creek area alone and twelve have not been found in any National Park areas.

The Cow Bay, Bailey's Creek, Coppers Creek area is a significant tract of Cassowary habitat. It is also vital habitat for the primitive Musky Rat-kangaroo, the rare Bennett's Tree Kangaroo, endangered Spotted-tailed Quoll, and a myriad of smaller creatures little known to science.

"Look out at night for all the gigantic white-tailed rats," says Tim Low, whose love of native species is only equalled by his passion to put a stop to invasive weeds. "Also look for fig parrots and bumpy satinash which produces big white and golden flowers right down the trunk to ground level, providing nectar for pygmy possums at night."

For tourists, the Daintree is the only place in Australia that serves up World Heritage rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef together. Some call it the heart and soul of the Wet Tropics.

Whether bush walking or wildlife spotting, its rich, tropical rainforests give nature lovers from all walks of life a taste of 'ecology in action'.

But according to scientists, it won't take much to unravel the intricate web of the Daintree rainforest ecosystem. The loss of even one species to extinction could have a devastating result.

"Without cassowaries, over 100 native rainforest plants are not able to regenerate," said Dr Playford. "They are the only bird in the region capable of swallowing the large fruits whole."

Eager to act before it is too late, Rainforest Rescue is raising funds to buy back the privately owned blocks of rainforest.

With this support, the Daintree Rainforest Foundation has already purchased four properties in the past two years. Protected forever, and soon to be declared a Nature Refuge, the rescued areas are now being managed for their conservation values. With the purchase of just two more properties, they will form a corridor for Cassowaries in the area.

"The average price for allotments is between \$20,000 and \$35,000. This makes acquisition of allotments realistic and affordable," said Dr Parkes from Rainforest Rescue. "A donation of \$20 buys back approximately ten square meters," he said.

Details of Rainforest Rescue's Daintree Buy Back and Protect Forever Campaign can be seen online at www.rainforestrescue.org.au
To order a gift card, phone (07) 3902 4433 or email info@rainforestrescue.org.au.

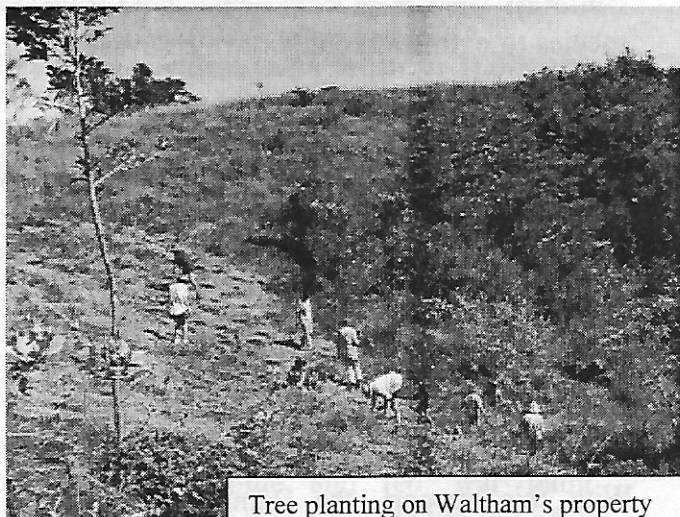
CASE-STUDY PROJECT

Wildlife corridors established

by Larry Crook (Joint Project Manager)

Part 2 of the TKMG Case-Study project, *Conservation of remnant vegetation on the Atherton Tablelands*, is in its final stages. On-ground works have been completed on two properties, with the third nearing completion.

A wildlife corridor of 1,000 trees linking a rainforest remnant on Ithica River with regrowth on the Johnstone River was planted by volunteers during February. They were planted along the bank of the Ithica on Brett and Carmen Fry's property down to its confluence with the Johnstone.



Tree planting on Waltham's property

A second corridor of nearly 500 trees was planted at Reg and Olive Waltham's property linking two patches of regrowth along a creek. The downstream regrowth patch connects with a large 6 ha remnant. This means that one side of the creek is almost completely vegetated. A small gap will be left on the other side of the creek to allow

platypus and other wildlife viewing by farm stay guests.

Also on Waltham's property, volunteers planted 1,200 trees during March to enhance regrowth in two areas at the top of a second creek system on the northern side of the property. This will expand the tree covered area, narrowing the gap between the 16 ha remnant and the regrowth that follows the creek down to the Beatrice River.

The unusually dry period in March and April (up until Easter when a mini-wet deluged the Tablelands) meant that the seedlings had to be hand watered.

The plantings at Frys and Walthams will be, in the main, maintained by the Eacham Shire Council based Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme for one year.

Exclusion fencing is being erected on the third case-study property, Neil and Lyn Coleman's, to protect a patch of endangered Type 5b (or *Mabi* - meaning tree kangaroo) rainforest.

The rainforest (Type 1b) on the other two properties is also listed as endangered.

Next TKMG Meeting

7.30pm Thursday 2nd June. Malanda Hotel Dining Room

Researchers from Queensland University of Technology will present their research on small mammal populations around the Tablelands.

Everyone, including non-members, is warmly welcome to attend and a light supper (gold coin donation please) will be served. For further details, ring Tania Simmons on 4095 1085.

TKMG says a big **THANKYOU** to **Simmone Rose** for her work as secretary and as a willing tree planting volunteer on the Case Studies project. We wish her well in her forest research work overseas.

Millaa Millaa Falls: a controversial ramble

by Larry Crook

The Friends of Irwin Track (FIT), a dedicated group of Millaa Millaa residents, believe that residents, visitors and tourists are being denied their rightful on-foot access to the iconic Millaa Millaa Falls and are therefore missing much that the two Scenic Reserves that house the Falls offers.

The Falls are featured in many tourist campaigns, locally, nationally and internationally. It is also filmed and photographed in the promotion of the Far North Queensland region by domestic and international crews. It is a jewel in the scenic crown of Eacham Shire.

At present the only access to the Falls is via road. An alternative route to the Falls exists that can take the walker from the main street of Millaa Millaa, along a section of Irwin Road and into the Scenic Reserves (Lots 481 and 490) that contain the Falls. What people are missing out on at present are stands of giant Black Walnuts (*Endiandra palmerstonii*), Watergums (*Syzygium gustavoides*), Maiden's Blush (*Sloanea australis*) and the north Queensland Silky Oak or Bull Oak (*Cardwellia sublimus*). The walking track that the group have re-opened meanders through a Scenic Reserve that dates back to the early 1900s. The walk takes you through open understorey beneath a shady canopy of beautiful old forest. There are two creek crossings before you reach the top of the Falls for a different point of view before descending to the base of the Falls.

The drawback with taking the walking track is the access to the first Scenic Reserve (Lot 490). At present, the public can walk along Irwin Road until they reach a gate that signals the section of Irwin Road that has been granted a temporarily road closure licence. This was granted to allow a farmer to move his cattle about his adjoining property. From hereon to the Scenic Reserve, the public have been granted an easement to access the Reserves. FIT are not happy that this

easement is the steep bank that falls off the road down to the fenced paddocks of Lots 470-473. To walk this access you have to negotiate long grass, tree roots and tree debris on a steep, rocky bank, as well as a creek a few metres downstream of a perfectly good railway bridge. Both the bridge and the road remain inaccessible because the farmer who has the licence is exercising his right to close the road to the public. FIT wish to have the road returned to the public, preferring that people instead of cows walk along the firm based road. As well as establishing a walking track to Moregatta Road, FIT plans to revegetate the road as a tree kangaroo corridor. They also propose to install old railway signals along Irwin Road as part of an exciting bushwalking experience past the Scenic Reserves for locals and visitors alike, attracting much needed tourism.

Where it all began

Until recent times, Millaa Millaa residents had two access roads through to Moregatta Road, Grey Road and the rail-bed of the old Malanda – Millaa Millaa railway line. Grey Road was not frequented by locals. It fronted a dairy farm and was the official milk collection road from the dairy. However, the old railway line route was accessed by Scout and Guide groups and members of the public over many years as an alternative route to the Falls.

In 1964 a bridge was damaged and made untrafficable along Grey Road. Grey Road gave town access to the Irwin family whose farm was further along the old railway line. Council did not repair the bridge and the Irwin family was given permission to use the former railway track as a road. It became known as Irwin Road.

In 1968 the rail-bed was officially designated a road by the Lands Department following a request by the Eacham Shire Council. Initially, it was to give access to Irwin's farm, but was later amended to extend to the Scenic

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Reserve which contains the Falls (Lot 481) and to a leasehold property (Lot 447) which, up until 1967, was also a Scenic Reserve. Lot 447 is along the railway route. The Reserve had previously been cleared. In 1995, a Special 20 year Lease on Lot 447, backdated to 1987, was granted to the lessee to be purchased freehold in 2007. The associated portion of railway reserve is included in the sale. FIT want this land to be also restored to the public to allow a walking path through to Moregatta Road. They also want to revegetate the land for tree kangaroo and other wildlife habitat.

In 1977 Irwin's farm was purchased by the current owner who used Irwin Road to move cattle about his property.

When the cow pats began to hit the fan

In 1998 the Millaa Millaa Chamber of Commerce sought advice from Eacham Shire Council as to the provenance of the roads. Council stated both roads were open to Theresa Creek. This information was partly correct. While Grey Road only goes to Theresa Creek, Irwin Road, at that stage, was still open to as far as Lot 447.

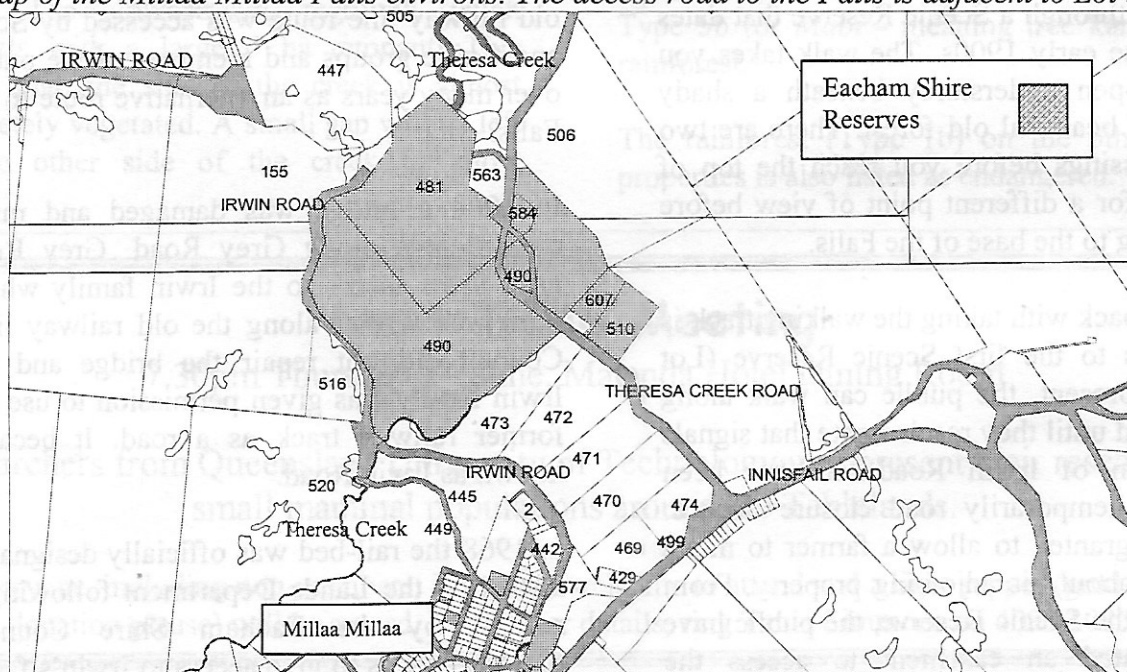
In February 2001, a licence for a "temporary

road closure' was granted for use of Irwin Road as a cattle run. The farmer's land includes Lots 442, 2 and 445. FIT questions whether correct procedures were followed in notifying the public of the proposed closure. It is FIT's concern that the road is now heavily polluted with cattle manure and urine which runs off, via 'soaks', into the Falls catchment. It is not known whether this is a contributing factor to the Falls pollution.

The licence provoked public outcry in Millaa Millaa and a community meeting resulted in a petition to Eacham Shire Council to cancel the temporary licence and return the road for use as a walking track and to act as a buffer zone between farming practices and the Falls catchment. The basis for protest is that FIT believes the closure contravenes the Land Act 1994 which states in S.98' Closing Roads and the Public Interest. Environmental Value – Some roads form important corridors and refuges for flora and fauna and, on the basis of 'caring for the land' should not be closed.'

Eacham Shire Council's position is that a workable solution needs the support of all parties including the farmer. Council has reconsidered the original decision and have decided to support the temporary road

Map of the Millaa Millaa Falls environs. The access road to the Falls is adjacent to Lot 563



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closure. It also believes that proper public process was followed regarding public objections to the proposed closure. Council also believes that public access to the Scenic Reserves is adequately made available by the easement. FIT believes there is room for compromise explaining that there is plenty of room for cattle laneways on either side of the road for use by the farmer. The author spoke to the landholder concerned who said that he was not willing to negotiate with FIT and that he intends to keep his Road Licence active and the public out for all time.

The Road Licence is automatically renewed each year on payment of rent. This arrangement can be cancelled at any time by the Department of National Resources and Mines (DNR&M) should Council make a request to DNR&M on the basis that the area was required for its gazetted purpose as a road. It can also be surrendered at any time by the other party. A 'temporary' road closure means that the road remains as a road but can be used for another purpose.

Without the cooperation of the farmer and with the current Council supporting the road licence, it falls upon the Council, FIT and other interested bodies, (e.g. Heritage Trails and the Sustainable Regions Development Programme) to cooperate in providing a safe walking track along the easement, next to the road, absurd as it may seem. Proving impropriety and/or conflict of interest beyond reasonable doubt regarding Lot 447 and the Road Licence will be very difficult for FIT. A safe track is what is needed now. Other matters can be explored in the long term.

A **second issue** that concerns FIT is the pollution of the Millaa Millaa Falls swimming hole below the falls. Public concern caused the Minister for Health to request that the Eacham Shire Council carry out water testing readings at the Falls and subsequently the erection of warning signs. To date, the Council has not released the results to the public. The warning signs erected in June 2002 were also done at the request of the Minister for Health. Theresa Creek flows over the Falls. Its headwaters are in dairy farmland to the west of the Reserve. St Patrick Creek flows into Theresa Creek above the Falls within the Scenic Reserve. This creek flows past the township of Millaa Millaa where some stormwater drains flow into it. The upper section of St Patrick Creek which flows through the town was diverted under the Palmerston Highway many years ago to prevent flooding at the old Butter Factory (now the undercover markets). It now flows into a creek which flows into the North Beatrice River.

Tests conducted by the Environment Protection Agency in September 2001 found that pollution in the Falls pool was 470 times the safe level for drinking and 3 times the safe level for swimming. Most visitors pay no heed to the two warning signs.

The Friends of Irwin Track say they will pursue every avenue to have Irwin Road declared a Heritage Trail and wildlife corridor from Millaa Millaa to Moregatta Road. The group conducts regular walks into the Falls.

Interested persons may contact the Friends of Irwin Track on 4097 2625, 4097 2187 or 4095 1038.

TKMG Comments on Davies Road Sub-division Development Plan

TKMG was notified of a development application before Eacham Shire Council for Lots 50 and 51, Davies Road. These two large blocks (>60ha each) contain significant remnant vegetation that backs onto the Johnstone River Estate. Both blocks also contain significant riparian vegetation along the North Johnstone River. At the April TKMG meeting it was decided that the group would send a letter with some background information to the Council regarding the development application. The cover letter and attached information submitted was not aimed to criticise Council but to strongly urge Council to use appropriate planning means to see that the proposed sub-division conserves and enhances the habitat of the tree-kangaroo.

For further information contact Tania Simmons (4095 1085) or Kylie Freebody (4096 8243).



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Photo by Steve Parish



Lumholtz's
TREE-KANGAROO

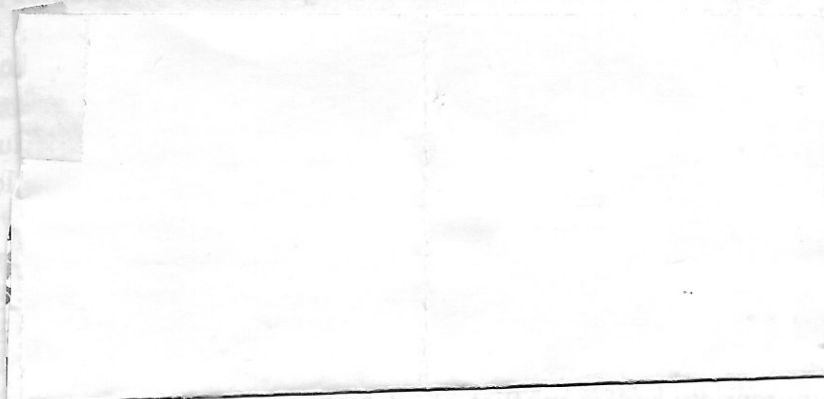
Drawing by W. Cooper

Mammal Mail

May 2003

Newsletter of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group Inc.
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Next Mammal Mail deadline: 31st July, 2003