Mammal Mail

The Newsletter of the Tree-Kangaroo & Mammal Group

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

Sep 6th: 5:30pm TKMG Committee general business meeting @ the Malanda Hotel
Oct 4th: 5:30pm TKMG Committee general business meeting @ the Malanda Hotel, followed at 7:00 pm by a General Meeting and the Annual General Meeting. Following the AGM, Carol Esson will give a presentation about the snow leopard project that she has been involved with in Mongolia.

TKMG GENERAL MEETING and ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There will be a General Meeting of the TKMG prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) starting at 7PM at the Malanda Hotel on October 4th. All members are encouraged to attend, especially because members will be asked to vote on revised Rules for the association. The AGM will be held immediately following the General Meeting and will involve voting in Committee officers and members.

Following the AGM, veterinarian Carol Esson, will speak about the work she has been doing in Mongolia with the Snow Leopard Trust. Carol has been part of an international team of scientists who have been using GPS radio collars to track the rare and elusive snow leopard in the South Gobi desert of Mongolia. During recent fieldwork, travelling through steep and rocky mountain outcroppings, the team was able to locate the den of a snow leopard. For the first time ever, they were able to document a snow leopard den site with cubs. Using quick thinking and ingenuity, they were able to obtain video footage of a female snow leopard and her cubs in their den.

The snow leopard is a rare and endangered cat. It is renowned for being elusive, sometimes being referred to as the "ghost" of the mountains. Come hear Carol talk about her experiences in Mongolia stalking and working on this elusive cat.

Note: Articles included in Mammal Mail do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group and are included in the newsletter for the interest of the members.

CLOUDLAND FIELD DAY

By Dave Hudson

There will be a field day on Saturday, August 25th, at Cloudland Nature Refuge on Seamark Road, commencing at 1:30pm. Cloudland is one of the sites chosen for the Caring for Our Country (CFOC) project 'Making connections: landholders restoring connectivity in the Wet Tropics'.

TKMG has been part of this collaborative project which is helping to restore habitat in high-altitude areas to benefit unique rainforest species (e.g. golden bowerbirds, ringtail possums, prickly skinks) which are adapted to cool conditions and threatened by rising temperatures. The project is based around work done by scientists at James Cook University who undertook targeted research to map priority areas for protection and restoration. The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) secured CFOC funds to initiate on-ground activities and brought together an extensive network of scientists, conservation practitioners and community groups. (See TREAT newsletter Oct-Dec 2010 for further information).

This field day will highlight the research being conducted by Dr. Luke Shoo from the University of Queensland and Prof. Carla Catterall from Griffith University. They are now working with landholders to investigate cost-effective ways of rapidly converting disused pasture to rainforest, and new approaches to encourage ground-dwelling animals to move into revegetated areas, introducing structures that mimic their natural habitat of fallen and decaying wood. Early results are very promising.

The field day will also allow another look at the revegation plantings in two broad corridors across an open pasture area which we (Dave Hudson and Robyn Land) established from 1996-2010.

Cloudland is 8.5 km along Seamark Road off the Malanda-Millaa Millaa highway. Parking at the property is limited so car-pooling is necessary. Meet at the beginning of Seamark Road—there's plenty of parking on the roadside there. A minibus will be provided as a shuttle. It is a steepish 100 metre walk down to the trial plot sites but a 4WD will be provided for those unable to make the walk. The trial plots themselves are easy going. TREAT will be providing afternoon tea.

Community Award from National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility

By Dave Hudson

The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) has given its 2012 Community Category award to the Wet Tropics Management Authority's (WTMA) "Making Connections" project which is largely funded by the Australian Governments' "Caring for Our Country (CFOC) initiative. TKMG is one of the project partners in 'Making Connections'. Other community project partners include TREAT, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Tablelands Regional Council Community Revegetation Unit, School for Field Studies and Malanda and Upper Johnstone Landcare Association.

The 'Climate Change Adaptation Champions' were announced at the 2012 NCCARF-CSIRO National Climate Adaptation Conference in Melbourne on 27th June. The "Making Connections" project is outstanding in that it involves scientists, government and non-governmental organizations, landholders, local community groups and individuals, all working collaboratively to restore wildlife corridors and habitat in high-altitude areas of the Wet Tropics, benefiting rainforest species which are adapted to cool conditions and threatened by rising temperatures.

The East Evelyn and Rock Road corridors form part of the project. The research being done by Dr. Luke Shoo and Professor Carla Catteral is a part of this project (see 'Cloudland Field Day' article). So come along and to a firsthand look at this award winning project. (see TREAT newsletter DrySeason 2012 for further details).

Lumholtz Tree-Kangroo Community Action Plan Workshop

By Amy Shima

Friday the 13th may be regarded by some as an unlucky day but for Tree-kangaroos, it was a very auspicious day. Why? The Lumholtz Tree-Kangaroo Community Action Plan Workshop was held at the Lodge at Lake Tinaroo. Hosted by Conservation Volunteers Australia and with assistance from Terrain NRM, the workshop enabled Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group to help bring together nearly 50 interested individuals to brainstorm about future directions for community action concerning Tree-kangaroos, and identify research priorities and gather ideas about projects that would increase public awareness, community engagement and scientific knowledge about these unique animals. In addition to presentations by Dr. Sigrid Heise-Pavlov, Dr. Dave Hilbert, Keith Smith, Roger Martin and Dr. Andrew Krockenberger; facilitator Penny Scott from Terrain NRM got the attendees working in small groups to identify problems and possible actions that could be taken to address issues that had been raised about Tree-kangaroos.

At present, the Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo is listed by the Queensland Department Environment & Heritage Protection as 'near-threatened'. This workshop sought to look at what can be done now to increase

knowledge (both in the scientific and lay communites) about Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo and, though community engagement and action, prevent this iconic species from becoming endangered.

Dr. Sigrid Heise-Pavlov gave a 'big picture' presentation encouraging the group to work towards a community action plan for Lumholtz Tree-kangaroos and talked about how students from the School for Field Studies (SFS) have been involved in projects concerning Tree-kangaroos. Dr. Dave Hilbert from CSIRO spoke on ways in which climate change might impact Tree-kangaroos and their habitat. He pointed out that solutions were needed for potential future (rather than past) scenarios. Keith Smith from Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection spoke about habitat restoration, pointing out that statutory protection is not adequate. He also talked about issues related to restoring landscape connectivity for wildlife (including Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo) and the need to be selective about where efforts on restoration and rehabilitation of the landscape are focused. Basic population biology was the focus from Roger Martin. He spoke on the importance of population biology and the need for gathering basic information about the population structure and dynamics of Tree-kangaroos. Information about mortality, natality as well as where animals are living are essential building blocks in a Community Action Plan for the conservation of Tree-kangaroos. Dr. Andrew Krockenberger from James Cook University spoke on the potential relevance of field techniques developed to study Tree-kangaroos in Papua New Guinea for work on Lumholtz Tree-kangaroos.

In addition to the presentations by the invited speakers, there were several posters. Including some excellent information by Dr. Karen Coombes on the issue of dogs and their impact on Tree-kangaroos; habitat restoration and the Tree-kangaroo related projects from students at the School for Field Studies.

There was lively and enthusiastic discussion; wonderful brainstorming sessions and great ideas about actions that can be undertaken; directions for research. TKMG members are actively working on several different research projects and opportunities for community engagement. Collaboration with SFS, CVA, Terrain NRM and governmental agencies is ongoing. A report on the workshop is in the works.

DID HE JUMP, OR WAS HE PUSHED?
An interesting tale of a Tree-kangaroo
by Dale Rogers

An idyllic morning along a wide deep reach of the Johnstone River, bordering a farm at Malanda on the Atherton Tableland. Birds in the rainforest and along the river go about their daily chores and the small furry creatures on the forest floor scurry about in search of their next meal. An Old Man water dragon pretends to be unconscious, as he lies in a sunny spot and waits for his breakfast to drop.

Suddenly, chaos at the sound of a heavy object hitting the water. The birds are suddenly silent. On the ground, the small furries run from the noise and even the water dragon opens one rheumy eye and surveys the scene.

A rapidly expanding circular wave spreads across the river, and in the entre can be seen only a small head and ears and two feet, desperately and most inefficiently dogpaddling for the bank. As the creature reaches the edge of the steep bank and struggles to climb out, it is dragging behind it (with great difficulty) a long thick and very wet tail! This has been, and continues to be, a great impediment to his progress but he eventually reaches the top of the river bank and finds the base of a big old wattle, with high branches reaching far out over the river. Casting behind him a somewhat embarrassed (and infinitely relieved) glance, he climbs high up that tree and once again, out over the water!

The surroundings are soon back to normal. The birds are singing loudly, the furry ones have forgotten the incident and only the water dragon, still waiting for a candlenut to drop, seems to ponder on the strange sight of a swimming tree kangaroo.

So…did he jump? Was he pushed? Or did he just accidentally fall off the branch?
Some observations from the human bystander:

- The incident occurred mid-morning on a calm and sunny day
- The tree kangaroo apparently fell approximately 15 metres
- He swam about 10 metres to the bank of the river
- He was not an efficient swimmer and the long tail appeared to be a serious impediment to swimming.

Additional Notes: The ability of macropods (wallabies and kangaroos) to swim has been observed and documented in the past. This may be the first published report of a swimming Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo.

Photo of Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo by Noel Preece

Mammal Mail invites TKMG members to submit their observations about and sightings of Tree-kangaroos (and other mammals). Send your stories to: tkmgnewsletter@gmail.com

Items submitted should be in "Word" format (.doc or .docx) and may be edited for space and clarity. If possible, include gps coordinates or other location data along with your observations.

What's in a Name?

Petaurus gracilis (de Vis, 1883) Mahogany glider

Pronounciation: *pet-or'-us grah-sil-is*

The scientific (or 'Latin') name for the Mahogany glider means 'slender rope-dancer'. It's a lovely, descriptive name for a creature with an interesting history. Although a relatively large animal, the Mahogany glider was 'lost' to science for more than a century. It was first described as a new species in 1883 by Charles de Vis the 'Curator' of the Queensland Museum, called *Belideus gracilis*. Somewhere around 1888, British mammologist Oldfield Thomas relegated the Mahogany glider to a synonym for the much better known Squirrel Glider *Petarus norfolcensis*. It wasn't until 1986 that, thanks to the discovery in the Queensland Museum of 3 poorly preserved specimens (collected near Cardwell back in 1886) that scientists first started to seriously look for this animal. A living specimen was finally found in December 1989 near Tully, QLD. Unfortunately this bit of Mahogany glider habitat was wiped out to make way for banana and pineapple plantations. After over a year of searching, another population was located nearby. Even so, confirmation of 'full' status as a species distinct from Squirrel gliders did not occur until 1993, over 100 years after first being described.

The Mahogany Glider feeds on the nectar and pollen from the flowers of eucalypts and melaleucas and extracts sap from species of Acacia, Xanthorrhoea and Albizia. It is also reported to eat insects, lerps, honeydew, lichens, some types of mistletoe fruit and parts of seeds from 3 species of Acacia. It is reliant

on a high diversity of plants and complex seasonal food availability. As such, it is particularly vulnerable to habitat loss and disruption.

At present the Mahogany Glider is known to occur coastally in the narrow and highly fragmented habitat of open woodland from Ollera Creek (south of Ingham) and the Hull River near Tully. This endangered species, once 'lost' to science is now in danger of being lost to habitat destruction.

For further information, check out:

http://www.wildlife.org.au/wildlife/speciesprofile/mammals/gliders/mahogany_glider.html

Information for this article was sourced from The Mammals of Australia 3rd edition; edited by Steve Van Dyck & Ronald Strahan and the website of Wildlife Preservation Society of QLD

Community Action Grant Projects Reports Update

By Dave Hudson

The Rock Rd Community Action Grant project is complete and a final report has been prepared. This will appear on our website shortly. In summary the project -
Prepared and planted a 1.5 hectare pasture site with 3100 local native trees; erected exclusion fencing; involved a number of community groups and volunteers for a successful planting; maintained the site to control weeds after planting; removed old fencing that separated existing vegetation from the planting site; & successfully negotiated with Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) to assume responsibility of planting and expansion of the site after the life of this project. 2012 saw the planting expanded to almost 3.5 hectares with funding supplied by a CfOC grant via WTMA.

The Evelyn Gap CAG project is progressing well.

Two offstream watering points and new fencing have been installed to exclude cattle from a creekline which provides connectivity between the highway and WHA to the north. This will enable some targeted revegetation to be undertaken and for riparian forest to naturally regenerate.

Photo by Dave Hudson

Our latest CAG project will see the focus back on Petersen Creek, complementing the tremendous work undertaken by TREAT and Yungaburra Landcare. 3 sites will be targeted.
Site 1 will build a 1 hectare riparian wildlife corridor between two remnant/regrowth forests, increase habitat and exclude cattle from impacting on a creek source. The landholder will fence the site. 3000 local native spp to be planted, fertilised and mulched.

Site 2 will address severe erosion on Peterson Ck, the boundary between private property and Curtain Fig N.P. Severe erosion on the creek is being caused by run off across the property from a road. The site will be covered with jute biodegradable erosion control matting and local shrubs and trees planted into the matting. Earth 'Whoa-boys' to be built to divert and slow water flow

At Site 3 *Asparagus plumosus* (WONS candidate) & Turbina vine on lower Peterson Creek will be targeted. The weeds blanket vegetation and are a serious threat to rainforest margins.

The Landcare/Toshiba funded "kickstart" pasture conversion trial is progressing well. This funding has allowed us to implement a broader variety of treatments than originally proposed in the CFOC "Making Connections" project. This project will be showcased at the Field Day on 25 August (see article in this issue of the newsletter).

TKMG General meeting and Annual General Meeting will be held 7 pm on October 4th at the Malanda Hotel.

All members are encouraged to attend. Subscriptions will be accepted at the AGM. Not sure about the status of your membership? No worries. There will be a list of members available and you will be able to check the status of your membership.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: Nominations for the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer may be made by members (2 members need to nominate a person and the person being nominated must agree to stand for election) either in writing or via e-mail to the Secretary. Please submit your nominations at least 14 days prior to the date of the AGM.

There will be a brief report on the outcome of the recent Community Action Plan for Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo as well as updates on TKMG projects. The President and Treasurer will present their annual reports. The election of TKMG office bearers and committee members for financial year 2012-13 will follow. Members are reminded that they must be financial in order to vote for the new committee. Subscriptions will be accepted at the AGM.

Mammal Mail—the newsletter of Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group invites input from the membership. Send your articles, photos (jpg format, please), ideas, and reports on mammal sightings or comments to:

tkmgnewsletter@gmail.com

Would you like to see more photos? Are you interested in articles focused on animals, habitat and connectivity issues, predators, animals under care? Please keep in mind that colour photos will need to be reproduced as black & white photos (for the print version of Mammal Mail).

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http://www.tree-kangaroo.net

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A Big THANK YOU to Pesavento Web Development & Marketing for your invaluable assistance in enabling TKMG to get their message out to the community and to the world.