

Tree-Kangaroo and Mammal Group

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TREE - KANGAROO
& MAMMAL GROUP

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1998/9

Another eventful year during which the Group has consolidated and matured. Our regular monthly meetings at the Malanda pub have been well attended and we have seen a steady trickle of new faces joining us. Thank you to the Malanda pub for providing us with such an excellent venue and to the hotel staff for their help.

The main event of the year was our success in obtaining two Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) grants. The largest was for \$51,038 for 'Protecting and enhancing rainforest remnants as wildlife habitat' using tree-kangaroos on over the tablelands area between Julatten and Ravenshoe as the icon species. We were given this funding providing we incorporated the objectives of another submission we made for a project on wet sclerophyll forest and Yellow-bellied Gliders between Herberton and Ravenshoe, which we agreed to. We were also successful in another NHT grant for \$7 200 to prepare a draft recovery plan for the Spotted-tailed Quoll.

This funding has enabled us to employ two project officers, Carol Schmidt and Beth Stirn, to run the rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest projects. Their main activity so far has been to organise a public survey seeking information on the distribution of tree-kangaroos between Julatten and Ravenshoe. This has involved posting nine thousand questionnaires and a media blitz. The questionnaires, with the relevant map for various sections of the survey area, were stuffed into envelopes at a very smoothly organised function held at the School for Field Studies by students of the school and volunteers from our Group. Replies are beginning to pour in to Carol and Beth.

The Malanda area was not included in this latest survey because it was the location for the first stage where we tested the method. The results of the Malanda survey were very useful in deciding how to proceed with the much bigger effort now under way. Trinity Bay High School, Cairns, under the direction of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, is undertaking a Geographical Information System (GIS) study on the Malanda data and we look forward to seeing their results.

Now that the tree-kangaroo survey is underway, more time can be spent on the wet sclerophyll forest part of the project. This is being done in close liaison with the Herberton Shire's Environmental Audit, another NHT project, which is providing much of the vegetation mapping. CSIRO has also very kindly given us maps of the wet sclerophyll forest. In late August we had a very successful field trip to Tumoulin where 13 members of the

Group had excellent views of the Yellow-bellied Gliders gliding and feeding at sap cuts on Red Stringybark trees. We also had excellent views of Feathertail Gliders.

Scott Burnett has the contract to prepare the Spotted-tailed Quoll draft recovery plan. His first task is to produce a brochure to be distributed in areas where the quoll comes into contact with people.

Members have been kept busy with a number of other activities. The Ecofest at Minamoulka was enjoyed by all and it was fantastic to see GW Swamp full of water and covered with water birds. Our T-shirts with Bill Cooper's tree-kangaroo designs hit the stalls this year and are proving to be very popular. Plus the frig magnets continue to sell like hot cakes. We now have a permanent display in the Post Office Gallery, Atherton, and our display material has been used at a number of other venues such as the Malanda Show and the Frog Tent at the Yungaburra Festival. We now have our very own letter-head design, again courtesy of Bill Cooper.

At a think-tank on the impact of dogs and roads on tree-kangaroos we had a very lively forum with the Tablelands Dog Obedience Club, Main Roads Department, Wet Tropics Management Authority and Department of Natural Resources all providing very valuable contributions. Our contact with Main Roads was further strengthened with a presentation they gave us on proposed upgrading of the McHugh Road, particularly the section up Gentle Annie which traverses an important area between two sections of the World Heritage area.

Our Group has established close liaison with other like-minded projects, notably the 5b Rainforest rehabilitation project with members helping on the fauna side, the Herberton Shire Environmental Audit and the Department of Natural Resources pig control program.

Sadly Graham Fayne-Scott, an active member who kept us on the straight and narrow in procedural matters, died unexpectedly. We will miss him.

Finally, I am delighted with the vigor of the group and the way in which a very broad cross section of members participate in all our activities. Thank you all, and I believe we are raising community awareness of the value mammals in our environment.

John Winter
2 September 1999