TREAT Newsletter Wet Season January - March 2004

Planting Dates

Date	Location	Group	No. of Trees Approx.
January 24	Picnic Crossing Reserve	Mabi Forest Working Group	1000
January 31	Peterson Creek (Burchill's)	TREAT	3000
February 14	Peterson Creek (Burchill's)	TREAT	3000
February 21	Millaa Millaa	Harold West Track Group	200
February 28	Clark's Track (Karen Coombs)	Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group	1500
March 13	Wet Tropics Wildlife Corridor (El Arish)	CTR	3000
March 27	Wet Tropics Wildlife Corridor (El Arish)	CTR	3000

- 8 am start for all plantings
- Bring water, shovel or trowel, hat & sunscreen

TREAT Visitor Centre

By Joan Wright

Have you been to see the TREAT Visitor Centre yet? On the positive side, you will find it most interesting and colourful. On the negative side, some folk may never find it at all because there are, as yet, no signs on Mcleish Road directing people. Of course, all the Visitor Centres on the Tablelands know about it and direct people to find it.

Volunteers who man (and woman) the display often have a lonely time punctuated with the occasional visit from members of the public finding it out. But when a group of overseas back-packers or a tree planter from the south comes in, an interesting interaction takes place.

The TREAT committee hopes to get enough money from the Gaming Fund to provide furniture. Volunteers have offered to make a chest of drawers for our maps, etc. Shelves and a video site with some chairs will help furnish the room sufficiently.

In the new year, it is planned to organise a program of visits by groups of students from schools and colleges. A program will be developed, with the nursery, in order to give a good idea of the aims, methods and membership of TREAT and our vital relationship with the CTR. Any members who would like to contribute to the increasing use and usefulness of our display will be welcome.

TREAT is very grateful to the Wet Tropics Management Authority who obtained the NHT grant and so enabled us to set up our display. Stan and Kaisa Breedon's work in creating the display is much admired and appreciated.

Inside this issue

Kids Page Cassowary Capers

Stockwellia Walk

By Jill Crawford

In November we joined a group of thirty or so TREAT members, led by Tony Irvine, to go to see the stand of Stockwellia trees in the foothills of Mount Bartle Frere. We met outside the Butcher's Creek School at 2.00pm and then drove about 5km into the forest where we parked up and set off on foot.

"This is the track," said Tony, diving into a lantana thicket, and we all trustingly followed. As usual, with his encyclopaedic knowledge and gift for sharing information, Tony made it a memorable walk. We were shown rare trees, unusual and interesting species, and given a mass of information on the various fruits, flowers, ferns and seeds that we came across.

The actual walk is about 2km, mainly on an old logging track which is now becoming overgrown and in places littered with fallen trees. The first part is moderately level, then comes a hill and then a sharp rise to the first of the Stockwellia trees. These are quite big trees but Tony said that we must go on a further 400 metres or so, over the crest and down the other side to see the best specimens.

When everyone had caught up Tony took us to the spectacular giant Stockwellias. These are truly enormous trees. We couldn't see the leaves as they were in the canopy many metres over our heads but Tony showed us leaves from nearby seedlings and found fruit to show their curious shape. He explained that these trees are members of the Myrtaceae family and have characteristics that one might expect in an ancestral group that could have led to the evolution of Turpentine (*Syncarpia*) and Eucalypts, and were only officially named *Stockwellia quadrifida* this year although they were first discovered some twenty years ago. As we listened to him the entire group was standing in the angle between two enormous buttress roots, then we walked through the hollow trunk and into another huge buttressed area the other side.

Sadly it was then time to return but we had had the awe-inspiring experience of standing beside a living organism hundreds of years old, previously only known from fossil specimens and also we had had the pleasure of listening to Tony's entertaining and educational explanations about the many things we had seen.

Hypsi Forest and Tree Kangaroo Recovery Project

By Tania Simmons

The Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group (TKMG) received the news that their new Hypsi Forest project will be funded under the Federal Natural Heritage Trust Envirofund program.

Hypsi Forest is a local endangered rain forest type that gets its name from the delightful Musky Rat Kangaroo, otherwise known as "*Hypsiprynodon moschatus*" that makes this forest type its home.

Musky Rat Kangaroos are our smallest and arguably most unusual macropod. They are dark brown in colour and by day can be seen foraging in the litter on the forest floor. Much of their diet consists of forest fruits and seeds which they help to disperse through their feeding and hoarding habits. They nurture their young in a pouch, usually giving birth to twins (but 3 and even 4 young have been recorded).

Tania Simmons, TKMG president explained the focus of the project. "Like most of our projects we aim to raise community awareness of our wonderful wildlife and promote local activities to protect and build on remaining habitat. We need to realise how important remnant vegetation is, how we need to protect it and build linkages for safe movement of wildlife."

Partners to the project include Eacham Shire Council, Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme, Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Association, TREAT and QPWS Centre for Tropical Restoration.

Two properties in the Millaa area, known to be important for Tree-Kangaroos and with remnants of the endangered Hypsi Forest, have been selected.

Each landholder involved with the project will receive a detailed report on the flora and fauna on their property along with a professionally developed property management plan. Planting of 4500 trees will be strategically located to protect and build onto remnant forest and a field day will be held to promote the project's program of farm habitat management.

Tania invited the community to become involved. "We look forward to lots of community support at our tree planting and field days." Meantime if anyone wants more information, they can contact the **Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group**.

CTR Seed Collections November to January

- Acacia mangium
- Aceratium megalospermum
- Acronychia vestita
- Agathis robusta
- Aglaia sapindina
- Aleurites rockinghamensis
- Allocasuarina cunninghamiana
- Alstonia scholaris
- Arytera divaricata
- Austromeullera trinervia
- Blepharocarya involucrigera
- Brachychiton acerifolius
- Bridelia insulana
- Carallia brachiata
- Cardwellia sublimis
- Carnarvonia araliifolia
- Castanospora alphandii
- Cryptocarya hypospodia
- Cryptocarya triplinervis
- Cupaniopsis anacardioides
- Darlingia darlingiana
- Davidsonia pruriens
- Diploglottis diphyllostegia
- Dysoxylum mollisimum
- Dysoxylum parasiticum
- Elaeocarpus eumundi
- Eucalyptus crebra
- Eucalyptus tereticornis
- Ficus crassipes
- Ficus destruens
- Ficus opposita
- Ficus pleurocarpa
- Ficus racemosa
- Ficus virens
- Flindersia bourjotiana
- Flindersia pimenteliana forma oppositifolia
- Halfordia sclerozyla
- Omalanthus novo-guineensis
- Myristica insipida
- Parachidendron pruinosum
- Podocarpus dispermus
- Sarcopteryx martyana
- Sloanea langii
- Syzygium gustavioides
- Syzygium leuhmannii

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Nursery News

By Peter Dellow

On behalf of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, all nursery staff extend best wishes to TREAT for 2004 and trust all members enjoyed a safe and relaxing Christmas. Given the strong turnout of members at the resumption of TREAT for 2004, it certainly looks positive for another productive planting season. With a variety of plantings scheduled for the Tablelands, coastal lowlands and a number of National Parks there will be plenty of opportunity for members to get their hands dirty helping TREAT and CTR empty what is a bulging nursery. With the recent good rains many TREAT members have already accessed their free trees however nursery staff would like to encourage those who haven't to come on in and make the most of the favourable tree planting weather.

The latest climate information suggests a return to extended dry weather later this year so it may prove beneficial to get in early and plant those areas that have been prepared. Don't forget nursery staff are happy to provide advice on species selection, site preparation and maintenance so drop in any Friday morning for a yarn.

Q. If NASA can land the Spirit probe on Mars, what can NIASA do for the nursery?

Those members familiar with the nursery would have at some time noticed the NIASA sign fixed to the misting room wall - but what does it stand for and how does it affect nursery operations?

The Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme of Australia or NIASA has provided a blueprint for the professional management of production nurseries and growing media suppliers across Australia since 1994. NIASA is an audited industry 'Best Management Practice' program operating under these national guidelines. NIASA guidelines are reviewed annually to ensure they cover relevant and current production and environmental issues.

The Centre for Tropical Restoration is one of 63 accredited nurseries within Queensland and recently received a Certificate of Recognition for more than 7 years of compliance under NIASA. Maintaining NIASA accreditation involves 2 formal inspections per year performed by the Nursery Industry Development Officer based in Brisbane and requires compliance in three main areas;

- Crop hygiene (disease, pest and weed control)
- Crop management practices (nutrition and environment control)
- General site management

These guidelines translate to management practices within the nursery which I will be discussing in more detail in the next newsletter however it is important to recognise the overall health of plant stock and condition of the nursery is obligatory under the NIASA program.

TREAT, through their activities in the nursery significantly contribute to the maintenance of production standards that are required by NIASA and this is why our plants come with quality assurance - something we should all be proud of. Stay tuned for more info on NIASA.

More about Mabi Forests

By Tony Irvine

Remember the definition, Mabi Forest is a tall nutrient-rich, vine forest with a dense shrub zone below. It is associated with a rainfall regime of 1300-1600 mm per annum and occurs on a seasonally-dry upland (700-850 m altitude) in rich, volcanic soil. The name "Mabi Forest" arises from the fact that the forest supports high populations of Lumholtz Tree Kangaroos (*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*) and both the Dyirbal and Yidiny Aboriginal Languages call the tree kangaroo, "**mabi**".

Mabi Forest is confined entirely to the Atherton Tablelands and today remnants consist of Curtain Fig including Thomas Road, Picnic Crossing, Kairi Research Station, Cullamungie Pocket (slightly south of Pelican Point but on the eastern side of Tinaroo Dam), Halloran's Hill, Nasser's Property (Wongabel), Wongabel State Forest, Nicholas Creek, Tolga Scrub and other small scattered areas of less than 0.5 ha on private property. Curtain Fig is the largest remnant, roughly consisting of slightly less than 4 square kilometres in area.

There are six characteristic species that dominate the shrub zone. Atherton Turkey Bush (*Hodgkinsonia frutescens*), Dwarf Phaleria (*Phaleria octandra*), Moluccan Codiaeum (*Codiaeum variegatum var. moluccanum*), Atherton Sauropus (*Sauropus macranthus*), only known in Mabi Forest and margins, Green Mackinlaya (*Mackinlaya macrosciadea*) and the shrub form of the vine Papuan Dichapetalum (*Dichapetalum papuanum*). Usually Atherton Turkey Bush is dominant, but combinations and presence vary within and between fragments. Generally at least four of the shrub species can be readily observed.

Scrambling vines are dominated by Fishtail Lawyer Vine (*Calamus caryotoides*) and to a lesser extent Hairy Mary (*C. australis*) and Vicious Hairy Mary (*C. radicalis*). Other conspicuous vines are *Dichapetalum papuanum*, Millaa Millaa Vine (*Elaeagnus triflora*), Leichhardt's Vine (*Melodorum leichhardtii*), Broad-leafed Parsonsia (*Parsonsia latifolia*), Headache Vine (*Clematis glycinoides*) and New Holland Pepper (*Piper novae-hollandiae*). Large lianes are Black's Blood Vine (*Austrosteenisia blackii*), Cockspur Vine (*Maclura cochinchinensis*) and Antarctic Grape (*Cissus antarctica*).

The forest is rich in fig species - there are some 12 species and two varieties that may be present - Green Fig (*Ficus virens var. virens*), Light Green Fig (*F. virens var. sublanceolata*), Superb Fig (*F. superba*), Small Leaf Fig (*F. obliqua var. obliqua*), Watkin's Fig (*F. watkinsiana*), Gabi Fig (*F. pleurocarpa*), Fraser's Fig (*F. fraseri*), Plentiful Fig (*F. copiosa*), Hairy Fig (*F. hispida*), Septic Fig (*F. septica*), Sandpaper Fig (*F. opposita*), Red Leaf Fig (*F. congesta*) usually on stream banks, as is Riparian Fig, (*F. adenosperma*) and Cluster Fig (*F. racemosa*).

There are more than 200 species of trees in the forest but if one walked into a Mabi Forest one is very likely to see Candle Nut (*Aleurites rockinghamensis*), Black Bean (*Castanospermum australe*), Red Cedar (*Toona ciliata*), Red Tulip Oak (*Argryodendron peralatum*) and/or substitutes Brown Tulip Oak (*A. trifoliolata*), Boonjie Tulip Oak (*A. sp.*), Floppy Leaf Ash (*Flindersia schottiana*), Queensland Maple (*F. brayleyana*), Bollywood (*Litsea leefeana*), Northern Laurel (*Cryptocarya hypospodia*), White Cedar (*Melia azedarach*), Brown Tamarind (*Castanospora alphandii*), Rose Tamarind (*Arytera divaricata*), Northern Tamarind (*Diploglottis diphyllostegia*), Damson (*Terminalia sericocarpa*) and Lemon Aspen (*Acronychia acidula*).

One could go on but suffice to say that because the forest occurs on rich soils it has a rich array of animals. Birds can be heard in the forest throughout the year whereas in wetter forests and nutrient poor forests, birds appear to be seasonally prominent.

Purple Fruit with Wood as White as a Belly

By Tony Irvine

It was a typical Friday morning at the TREAT/ QPWS Nursery and Margaret immediately began to prepare for sowing - a bowl of bright purple, fleshy fruit, labelled *Gmelina fasciculiflora* (White Beech), Verbenaceae family. The fruits varied in size between 10-20mm diameter. They were globose and compressed in shape, like pumpkins. Unfortunately, Margaret in her enthusiasm to do the job, forgot to put on gloves before she started squashing the fruit, to remove the white flesh from the seed. She noticed that the flesh had a rather strong unpleasant odour and as it became exposed to the air, began to turn yellow. But this was not the only colour change. Her fingers were immediately stained brown and looked like the fingers of a heavy smoker.

Margaret quickly washed her hands, which diluted the stain slightly. She then put some rubber gloves on and continued to process the fruit. The flesh surrounded a hard, brown, globose shell (7-15 mm diameter), with vertical striations on the wall. Margaret cracked the shell open. The inside had four cells (locules), each of which could have a single seed. As it was difficult to crack open the shell (endocarp) without damaging the seeds, Margaret decided the best thing to do was sow the shells whole. This of course meant the seeds would take longer to germinate and some sown shells may have no seeds inside at all. The seeds consequently take around 230 days (8 months) to germinate. Margaret asked the National Parks Officer, Peter, what did the tree look like. "The leaves look like Bollywood (*Litsea leefeana*) but if you look closely you will see that they are opposite simple leaves, not alternate as they are on Bollywood. It is a canopy tree and has a medium to fast growth rate."

Danny Janggaburru (a Yidinyji man) and Betty Bunyji (a Ngajonji woman) had just arrived at the Nursery to show Sam Mcoy, a timber cutter, what they did at this here TREAT nursery. Danny laughed when he saw Margaret's stained fingers and said "I could have told you that and yes the fruit has a bitter smell but it doesn't seem to worry **gindaja** (Yidiny for cassowary). We saw him eating some fruit early this morning. The shells of the fruits had also been chewed open by rats looking for seeds." (Bush Rats, Fawn-footed Melomys and White-tailed Rats). "Sometimes the tree has white to yellowish flowers but often they are purple and it looks very pretty." "So you actually grow timber trees here as well" uttered Sam. "Yes" replied Margaret, "they are part of the biodiversity mix in our rehabilitation plantings and if the flowers and fruit are utilised by animals then it makes them even more valuable for our plantings."

"It produces beautiful timber," said Sam. "It is soft and yet very durable. You can cut it in any direction, it's just so easy to work and it makes a great carving wood. It's used for window sills, floorboards, boat decking, house stumps and fence posts. I have some beautiful slabs at home that I am cutting up. Come and see them." As they were travelling to Sam's place, he commented, "Fallen logs of this tree seem to last for ages on the ground and the inner central area hardly ever seems to dry out." "Yes," said Danny, "but if you do find dry logs the timber is great for kindling a hot fire. We call the tree **duwur** and firewood was our main use for it." Sam continued "I have cut it in the lowlands and in these new-fangled **Hypsi** and **Mabi** forests which we just used to call Scrub, but I have never seen it higher than about 800 m altitude. I never cut a tree on Mt. Baldy." At Sam's place, he walked proudly into his shed and showed the floor boards that he was producing for a verandah decking and a slab he was keeping for a friend who carves a lot. Margaret gasped at the wood. "It is so beautifully white." "That's right," chirped in Betty, "It is as white as a belly and that's why we give it the same name as belly - **dubuu**."

TREAT in Millaa Millaa

By Joan Wright

This year TREAT and the nursery will help the citizens of Millaa Millaa with a small planting on the Harold West Track on Saturday February 21st. This planting will follow on a great deal of TREAT work in Millaa many years ago. When our organisation began in 1982, a regional branch was formed in Millaa by Elaine and Henry Tranter. They got together a group of interested citizens and did a lot of pioneering work.

The first planting I recall was completed in January 1983 to mask the new Council rubbish dump which had been established beside the tourist road to the Millaa Millaa Falls. Another early planting was done at the Falls, in conjunction with the Eacham Shire Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme. The Elinjaa Falls on the Falls Circuit Road was a site of great importance to the Tranters. Over several years in the mid-80s, the Tranters, CTR, many volunteers and the Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme extended a rainforest area adjacent to the Falls Reserve.

With the annual rainfall Millaa Millaa usually enjoys, the trees have flourished so that the area looks just like native forest now (the planting near the car park at the top of the access path to the Falls was planted by the WTTPS).

TREAT has also worked previously with the Millaa Millaa School and has always had a friendly association with staff and pupils. The biggest planting was done there just outside the fence on one side of the grounds. A bank was planted and a TREAT sign was erected. Amazingly, that sign is still there, though old and somewhat battered.

It is encouraging to see the interest Millaa Millaa citizens and the Eacham Shire Council are taking in tree planting and walking tracks in their beautiful area.

Identification & Propagation Workshops

by Barb Lanskey

Forty five people attended the TREAT / CTR workshops held in November over two days. Twenty seven were TREAT members. It was pleasing to see a lot of Friday morning volunteers - their appetite for knowledge no doubt whetted by Peter Dellow's very popular "Show and Tell" sessions.

After introductions, the people attending each workshop are divided into 2 groups. One group is instructed about identifying trees from leaves while the other group learns about propagating trees from seeds. There are 2 lecture sessions each day so the groups can learn about both identification and propagation. Refreshments are served between the sessions.

Tony Irvine gave the lecture on tree identification and the lecture on propagation was given by Peter Dellow on the first day and Peter Snodgrass on the 2nd day. I was in charge of the refreshments and trying to keep everything to some timetable. Because people always want to know just a bit more at each lecture it was decided to forego the showing of the TREAT Yourself video between sessions, to allow more time for the lectures.

Both lectures are quite technical. Tony talks about 9 significant plant families in rainforest canopies of north Queensland. These account for about 56% of tree species. For each family he lists 16 different leaf features to help in identification. Some features such as leaf shape and smell can be easily noted, but others such as oil dots and glands can require the use of a hand lens made available for the workshops by TREAT. Tony hands out explanatory notes and illustrates his lecture with leaves and twigs collected from his property. People can see, feel and smell the different leaf features. Interspersed with humorous anecdotes, his lecture keeps everyone wanting to hear more when time is up.

CTR's lecture is concerned with seeds and their propagation. The 2 Peters talk about how and when to collect different seeds, how to treat them before sowing and how to sow the different types. They group the seeds into 8 main types and use examples from the nursery stock. Their talk is also hands on, with more questions always to be answered when time is up. People are referred to part 2 of the book Repairing the Rainforest by Dr Steve Goosem and Nigel Tucker for more information.

Everyone is grateful when refreshments are served after the 1st session. TREAT makes up fresh sandwiches to have with tea and coffee. Some very satisfied people made donations to TREAT for the event. The workshops are a great example of the energy and enthusiasm of the TREAT / CTR team and thanks must be given to all involved.

Tree Kangaroo goes to School

By Tania Simmons

Students from Herberton State School had a lesson with a difference late November, 2003 when they were visited by a range of visitors including a young Tree Kangaroo, Susan.

Local community group, the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group organised the day with help from TREAT (Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands) and Far North Queensland Wildlife Rescue Tree Kangaroo carer, Margit Cianelli and Roger Williams Park Zoo (USA) education staff.

Chris Doyle, Education Coordinator for the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program based in Providence, Rhode Island, USA at the Roger Williams Park Zoo, explained,

> "Each year, since 1994, researchers have traveled to the Huon Peninsula of Papua New Guinea to study the Matchies Tree Kangaroo and its habitat. In 1999, the Conservation Education Program started. It involves an art exchange program between PNG and USA schools and we wanted to include an Australian school".

The exchange has been so successful that it has become a permanent part of the curriculum presented in both PNG and US schools. The students seem to benefit greatly from this exchange of ideas, questions/ answers and artwork. This year, the program was expanded to include Herberton State School.

TKMG president, Tania Simmons explained the connection between the USA zoo, Tree Kangaroo research in PNG and a local school. "Like PNG, the Atherton Tablelands is home to a unique group of animals known as 'Tree Kangaroos'. They are found nowhere else in the world - apart from zoos. Because we are fortunate enough to still have populations of Lumholtz Tree Kangaroos locally, teaching our kids about them and involving local children in an international art exchange program seemed like a great idea. Not only do local kids get to learn about their own environment but they get to share knowledge and experiences with children growing up in a very different world. The kids were fascinated to learn more about both native PNG and native American cultures and were especially thrilled to see a real Tree Kangaroo in their classroom."

Susan the Tree Kangaroo was orphaned when her mother was killed on the road. Taking Susan into schools teaches children more about their beautiful local wildlife and warns them of the threat that roads and dogs pose to wildlife.

The TKMG would like to thank TREAT on TAP for their support during this most enjoyable activity. We will run the program again in 2004 and look forward to bringing some of the children's artwork up to the TREAT display/ nursery to show it off.

A Library for TREAT

A new TREAT member, Malcolm Ferguson, is an avid book collector and is keen to share his passion for books with other TREAT members. He has kindly donated various books to TREAT, so we now have an offical librarian, Jill Crawford, to keep track of things.

Malcolm will be giving a series of five minute talks on various book groups to members of Fridays.

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