



Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands Inc

The right tree in the right place for the right reason

T R E A T

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TREAT Newsletter July 2001

TREAT on TAP

What a great first semester for TREAT on TAPI TREAT volunteers and QPWS staff have been busy in Millaa Millaa, Ravenshoe, Carins, Atherton and Tully and Mt. Molloy schools involving kids in hands on environmental learning activities.

Millaa Millaa and Ravenshoe students learnt more about the rain forests, local fauna and the threats posed by roads. They were introduced to the fauna crossing concept being used in the McHugh Road upgrade. Culverts will be installed in strategic locations with TREAT trees planted at the entrances in an attempt to funnel wildlife to safer crossing points.

90 Atherton Primary School students helped plant over 100 trees to replace those lost in the construction of a new car park at the school. The school had been the recipient of a TREAT on TAP program last year.

Two Year 6 classes at Tully Primary School lined up for a great TREAT on TAP program with classroom activities and a field day where they visited the C4 nursery, Clump Mountain Aboriginal Reserve and Walter Hill Ranges planting sites. The program concluded with a tree planting at the school. Students were set the challenge of writing a story book aimed at 5-6 year olds to tell them about cassowaries. We're waiting for the final drafts to come through and are hoping to have the book illustrated and printed. If preliminary drafts are any indication we're in for some wild cassowary stories - there's nothing to beat a child's imagination!

150 TREAT trees have been planted at the new Bentley Park College at Edmonton near Cairns by an enthusiastic group of 90 Year 6, 7 and 8 students. The newly constructed school has plenty of room for more trees.

Mt. Molloy Primary school are planting bird habitat areas in their school ground and visited TREAT's Friday Morning Nursery Working bee to learn more about growing trees.

The Atherton High School Mabi program has continued into its second year with Year 11 Horticulture/ Agriculture students learning about their local endangered rain forest remnants and learning to grow their own local trees for revegetation projects at Hailorans Hill Environmental Park.

Special thanks go to all staff, volunteers and kids involved in the TREAT on TAP program. A commitment to tree planting is a great thing to have for people of all ages.

We'll be conducting a series of one day environmental excursions during second semester. If you would like to be involved in a great day out contact Tania Murphy 4095 3406.

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Walter Hill Ranges Project

Another 12 000 TREAT trees have been planted this year in the Walter Hill Ranges Project. 3000 trees were planted at the Massey Creek site and 9000 trees have been planted on cane farms in the El Arish/ Tully area.

This is the fourth year of the project and some great gains have been made through the total number of trees planted (now over 40 000) and the amount of community interest that the project has engendered. Every cane farmer with Whing Creek frontage is now involved in the project - that's 5 farmers that are now seeing the benefits of reduced rat damage in their crops through habitat manipulation rather than traditional baiting programs. The El Arish Golf Club and El Arish State School are also participating in tree planting activities using local species.

The coastal plantings have achieved the best site capture and tree growth to be seen at any of our sites. Three year old sites that were once covered with grass and weeds now support diverse and interesting vegetation. Trees have grown quickly and are now a 6 to 8 m closed canopy with a range of young native species germinating underneath and negligible weeds.

Its a rewarding experience to walk along the creek under a canopy of flowering Golden Penda and River Cherries and listen to the farmers talk about the eels they now see in the creek and the abundant bird life that lives in the newly planted trees.

This TREAT project receives funding support from the Natural Heritage Trust and in partnership with QPWS - CTR, C4, BSES and landholders. For further information on the project contact project manager Tania Murphy 4095 3406.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting for 2001 will take place in the Yungaburra Community Hall, Cedar St, Yungaburra on Friday 24th August. It will begin at 7:30pm with reports of the year's numerous activities and elections for next years committee. The Guest speaker will be Dr Robyn Wilson of James Cook University, Cairns. The subject of her illustrated talk will be 'Some Tableland Tree-dwellers'. She recently studied for her PhD at the CSIRO in Atherton and knows possums well. Supper and a chat will round off the evening (please bring a plate!). Everyone will be very welcome.

TREAT membership

TREAT is keen to sign up new members. Broad community support for our environmental work is significant and effective. New members pay an annual subscription of \$10 which covers the whole family and runs from the date they joined up. They receive advice and trees from the nursery, four informative newsletters per year and invitations to field days and workshops.

On their part they join in the nursery work and good fellowship at the Friday morning working-bees at the nursery (if they are able) and all our other activities as they wish.

Present members can suggest to friends and work mates that TREAT membership is a good idea and membership makes a good gift. Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible and we would also welcome bequests.

We would be pleased to welcome you any Friday morning at the Lake Eacham nursery to sign you and your friends up.

Anderson Road Landscape Linkage Project

Trees planted in March this year are doing well on the Mappa's property. The next phase of this one year project involves increasing local awareness of the endangered status of Type 1b rain forest, and the major threats to the special fauna that calls this rain forest home.

The project target area centres around an un-named creek running from Pearamon Scrub to remnant vegetation on the North Johnstone River. Luckily we can still see tree kangaroos in the project site, but of course this area was also once home to cassowaries, musky rat kangaroos and several ring tail possums.

A local graphic designer and wildlife illustrator is currently working on designs for a road sign, poster and brochures. Material will be distributed over the next couple of months to inform residents of the unique flora and fauna in their back yards.

The project working group guided by TKMG volunteer, Neil McLoughlin are designing a "tree kangaroo/ wildlife shelter pole". Poles will be donated and erected by Ergon Energy, and will be fitted with a specially designed "shelter" structures. Poles will be positioned in places where dogs are a known threat to tree kangaroos and where there are few trees for possible escape. Once installed the poles will be monitored for usage.

The project is a cooperative effort between TREAT, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service - Centre for Tropical Restoration and TKMG with funding support from the WWF Threatened Species Community Grants fund. A continuing project application has been submitted for a further year of funding. For further information on the project contact Tania Murphy 4095 3406.

DONATIONS TO TREAT

Don't let us forget - for the past year, members and anyone else in fact, have been able to make a donation to TREAT's Public Fund. For any donation over \$2 a receipt is issued, because your donation is tax deductible!

On 8th March 2000, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage approved our application for entry onto the National Register of Environmental Organisations - the first step in establishing a Public Fund. The Commissioner of Taxation followed soon after with the second step and confirmed our entry onto the Australian Business Register. He then took the third step, giving our "TREAT Environmental Benefit Fund" the status of a "tax deductible gift recipient". Now a year, one bequest and several donations later, the fund stands at only \$1,450.

To maintain momentum in all our activities - from rearing and planting trees, monitoring projects, running school programs, making videos, publishing a Newsletter, to managing TREAT - we need funds. For the principal activities, we apply for grants and often get them, but for many supporting activities where we can't prove that trees have actually been planted in the ground, grants are hard to come by. That is why the Benefit Fund is needed.

So, please help with your donation - mail a cheque or drop some cash in at the nursery on Friday mornings. To make it easier, it is planned to have collection boxes at community plantings, at shows and other public events. There is a pamphlet with this edition of the Newsletter which explains more - if you don't need it, please pass it on to a friend.

Mazlin Creek Rehabilitation Project

This is the third year for the Mazlin Ck works and we are well on track with fulfilling the goals of the project. The community planting day in February this year resulted in 1500 trees being put in, despite bleak and damp weather (better suited to trees than people!).

About 50 volunteers came (including a group of local scouts and two scout masters) to do the job upstream of the Beantree road bridge.

Following the hard yakka, the Tucker Team served hot drinks and refreshments from Col's "Smoko Wagon" to grateful workers.

Highlights of the project to date have been:

- 10 000 trees along a 3km stretch of the creek in prime platypus country
- a happier, wealthier macadamia nut farmer due to better rat management
- contented cattle (the new stock crossing is much safer for cattle crossing the creek)
- informed local signage lets people passing know what is being done there
- continuation of the work along Mazlin Ck - TREAT has involved the Barron River Catchment Management Group in further works (at Kaiiri Atherton Rd bridge)

Want to try something new??

New opportunities to get involved in interesting TREAT activities including:

1. Small mammal monitoring - come along for around 3 hours of field work to look at what small mammals are colonising revegetation sites. We conduct small mammal field work every 3 months.
2. Monitoring Vegetation Workshop - a 5 week training program on how to record changes in vegetation will be conducted by CTR staff for interested TREAT volunteers Workshop - commence in August, 2001.
3. TREAT on TAP - our schools program can use your help. If you'd like to spend a day out with some youngsters learning about our local environment, think about getting on board with the TREAT on TAP schools program.

Call Tania for further details Ph: 4095 3406

Fruit of the Month

Syzgium alliligneum - Onionwood

What does the name mean?

The Syzgium genus is one of the most common in the Wet Tropics comprising over 50 species. Syzgium actually refers to the joining of flower petals which form a hood or cap and are shed as the flower expands. The species name 'alliligneum' refers to the concentric 'onion like' rings of bark which grow into the wood. Because bark is secreted into the wood, the tree is not used commercially for timber. Syzgium's are also found in other countries including Africa, New Zealand and Asia.

This very large rain forest tree grows between Tully and Cape Tribulation only, occurring from sea level to around 700m in altitude. It can be found on metamorphic soils but is probably more common on the red basalt soils, especially in the Palmerston area of Woornooroan Nation Park. A large specimen can be seen directly opposite Crawfords Lookout, near the Palmerston Ranger station.

The plant grows to 30 metres tall, with reddish, slightly papery bark. Leaves are simple / opposite, and (small white) oil dots can often be seen on the leaf with the naked eye. The new leaf flush is bright red and very attractive. Flowers are cream, with stamens up to 30mm long and look very showy on full bloom. The edible fruits are bright red / pink, around 45mm x 35 mm, and are a key cassowary food at this time of the year (June - September). The seeds germinate well after the flesh has been removed - around 90% will strike between 3 and 6 weeks after sowing. Seeds can be sown into trays or individually placed in a single pot.

Because it bears a large fruit, Onionwood dispersal can only be effected by large dispersers such as cassowaries. The loss of these dispersers from many forest fragments means the plant has limited opportunities to colonise these areas. As tree planters, TREAT members can help overcome this loss of natural dispersal by actively propagating and replanting Onionwood into areas of its former range. The plant copes reasonably well with open, degraded conditions and is most suitable for planting in Groups 2,3,4,5 (Repairing the Rainforest).

TREAT field day at Allumbah Pocket

Lower Petersen Creek Revegetation Project

On Saturday June 23rd, 25 TREAT people and interested members of the public visited a new riparian rehabilitation site in Yungaburra. David Leech and his group, along with various volunteers and trainees have reclaimed the weedy creek bank near the roundabout in Yungaburra and have made a little park. Young native trees cover the slope and paths lead down to an area with a shelter, a map and a platypus viewing bench.

A forest path leads downstream from Allumbah Pocket through some remnant forest and a replanted area. We passed an old weir built about 80 years ago by members of the Williams family when they had a big establishment in the village. Further on the creek runs swiftly over rocky rapids into a calm pool which was used by the villagers. The wife of one of our members learned to swim there!

The creek side path also leads upstream from the little park as far as the bridge taking the road to Atherton over the creek. This bridge will soon be replaced by the Main Roads Department (but the platypus viewing platform will continue!).

David Leech, who was one of the original TREAT committee members, his adviser Geoff Tracey, and helper Wally Courts are to be congratulated on their imaginative work. TREAT is glad to know that their planting on the lower part of Petersen Creek adds to the work we are doing on the upper section. Thus, one of the tributaries of the Barron River is being effectively rehabilitated as part of the plan to restore natural health to the catchment.

Volunteers are welcome to help David on Friday mornings if they are interested. Contact David on Ph: 4095 3680.

Nursery Production

Our winter inspection has just taken place with the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme of Australia (NIASA). Accreditation with NIASA requires us to adhere to strict standards and practices, routine inspections allow us to spring clean the nursery concentrating on problem areas.

Since changing last year from plastic bags to supra tubes, potting production has increased. TREAT volunteers could pot 1000 bags on a good day, now with supra tubes, 1500 to 2500 are potted in a Friday morning working bee. Supra tubes grow a good tree, they have root trainers which encourages a well balanced root mass, leading to a healthier plant.

Also our potting media has changed from 1 part peat - 1 part sand - 1 part saw dust, to 7 parts composted pine bark - 1 part river sand with added dolomite (to correct pH) and slow release fertiliser. This new media combination has several advantages such as:

- Pine bark is renewable
- Weight - much lighter
- Drainage - no water logging
- Even root development

The nursery has also been "racked out" which provides a more organised and efficient set up. Racks allow seedlings to freely drain, air prunes roots, addresses the ferul worm problem and provides air movement slowing fungal outbreaks. The combination of supra tubes and racks has meant plant stock carrying capacity has increased from 50,000 to 75,000.

A new irrigation system is currently being installed to increase the water use efficiency of the nursery and improve watering. Works should be completed by the end of July.

Sowing

Seedling during April and May was busy, slowing down in June indicating the end of the "busy season" and the start of lean times for forest fruit eaters. We sowed around 200 trays representing 20 families and 70 species. April and May were big months for sowing Fig seeds such as:

- Ficus destruens
- Ficus congesta
- Ficus copiosa
- Ficus hispida
- Ficus oblilqua
- Ficus pleurocarpa
- Ficus septica
- Ficus superba
- Ficus watkinsiana

The genus Ficus or "figs" belongs to the family Moraceae. Figs represent 15 to 20% of our plant stock and play an important role in restoration site plantings. They provide abundant fruit "bait crops" attracting birds and bats, have extensive root systems helping with soil retention and create excellent wildlife shelter. Figs are considered a "keystone" species fruiting throughout the year and playing a key role in ecosystem function. (Further Reading: Goosem and Tucker (1995), Repairing the Rainforest).

Nursery News

Staff

Trainee Keith Barlow of Malanda graduated at the end of June with his Land Conservation and Restoration Certificate - congratulations Keith. In recognition of his hard work and dedication, Keith will continue as a member of CTR's staff, joining our other indigenous rangers Syb Bresolin and Warren Canendo. New trainees Ryan Wolfe and Lenny Mackay are the new faces at the nursery - both are learning fast and developing and sharing some great skills.

Peter Dellow, Warren and Syb recently received their Work Place Trainer and Assessor qualifications from TAFE - congratulations all! With Geoff Onus having qualified earlier, CTR now has 4 staff qualified to deliver a range of new training and education packages. This is an increasingly important part of our work and a great way to ensure expertise and skills are passed on to as many people as possible. Steve McKenna recently completed his Honours research and in July is continuing our CRC research project with surveys of restoration plots in northern NSW and south east Qld. Nigel Tucker has completed his Masters thesis.

Plans for the new CTR building are well underway and work is expected to commence in the next month or two. The new facility will house office space, laboratory facilities, a training/meeting room and student/ visitor accommodation. At present our old building is bursting at the seams and all nursery volunteers and staff are looking forward to the new facility becoming a reality.

Over the next couple of months several students will be based at CTR undertaking a range of projects as part of their studies. At present, Bruce Dunn (University of Queensland) is undertaking his Honours research, examining the influence of edge on seedling regeneration and growth in replanted areas. In the next month he will be joined by Kevin Rowe from the US (PhD - Uni of Illinois), who will be working on the genetic effects of forest fragmentation, and Bryan Grant (Uni of Qld - Gatton) an Industrial Placement student who will be mapping the Petersen Creek project and establishing some new study sites. The work of students at our facility adds greatly to our store of knowledge on ecosystem restoration. Their interaction with TREAT members and landholders during their stay is an important part of their training for work in the real world. Students are often looking for field assistants if you're interested please give us a call at CTR.

On volunteers

For many years I have had the benefit of working alongside volunteers from many community groups, none more so than TREAT. In this the International Year of the Volunteer I thought it timely to reflect on how TREAT volunteers have contributed to our community well being. Many members may be surprised to learn just how many different things TREAT volunteers really do, and how much of a difference this makes to the community as a whole. So what do members do?

Plant production

Members complete over 4000 hours of nursery work each year, sowing, potting and weeding over 60,000 plants. These plants are used by all members for planting on their own properties, by TREAT and QPWS in joint projects, and for QPWS use in national park projects.

Tree planting

TREAT volunteers plant around 30,000 trees annually on private and public land. These plants are used to improve the conservation value of our local landscapes, stabilise agricultural soils, improve water quality, enhance agricultural productivity and generally improve the amenity of the surrounding landscape.

Education

Students from pre-school, primary, secondary, technical and tertiary level all interact with TREAT members at the nursery, in the field and in the school environment.

Working with others

TREAT volunteers work alongside community service workers, visiting students and training groups, and local and international students of all ages. Members also provide a good source of social interaction for intellectually impaired people from throughout our community, providing a good environment which stimulates many of the senses.

Indigenous Groups

Regular visits by indigenous groups to the nursery and by indigenous nursery staff to work with groups in the field has stimulated significant interest in restoration from within indigenous communities. By working with TREAT volunteers at the nursery, indigenous trainees not only get the opportunity to learn new skills but also to interact with non-indigenous people in a friendly and cooperative way.

Data Collection/ Surveys/ Data Base Management

Many TREAT volunteers help out with our research and project monitoring efforts including fauna surveys based on birds and small mammals. Volunteers also have great skills to help in data management like data entry and setting up computer spreadsheets.

Committee Workers

The voluntary efforts of the TREAT committee are incredible. The secretarial and accounting duties are quite demanding and committee members work together in many other ways to make TREAT the dynamic successful community group that it is.

Promotions - Field days/ Stalls/ Website

TREAT volunteers bring a range of promotional skills as well. TREAT displays are compiled and organised by active and talented TREAT members later to share their skills around. Volunteers organise interesting and informative field days for TREAT members. The TREAT website was designed and is maintained by TREAT volunteers with a flair for computers.

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