



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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Coming Events

Date	Event	Location
Sat 14 October 2pm	Weedbuster Field Day at Peterson Creek	Meet at Palumbo's Farm
Sat 4 November 2pm	Second Weedbuster Field Day at Peterson Ck	Meet at Palumbo's Farm
Sat 18 November 9am	Tree Identification & Seed Propagation Workshop	Held at Lake Eacham Nursery
Sun 10 December 7:30am	Green Corridor Planting 2000 trees	Meet at Barron River, Jim Chapman Bridge
Fri 22 December 10am	Christmas Break-up	Held at Nursery

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Pythons, Possums and Corridors

Alastair and Amanda Freeman

When it comes to hopes for fauna movement through planted corridors, two species always get special mention on the Atherton Tablelands - the Lumholtz tree-kangaroo and the Cassowary. However, there is a third charismatic vertebrate species that may be even more reliant on planted corridors for movement between forest fragments and that is the amethystine or scrub python (*Morone kinghorni*). The amethystine python is considered the largest snake in Australia. It is probably the largest extant terrestrial predator in Australia and is certainly the largest carnivore in the Wet Tropics. An unconfirmed report from the late 1940's is of an animal attaining 8.5m in length. The largest confirmed size is 5.6m, an animal that was removed from the roof of a house in the northern beaches of Cairns in the late 1990's.

For the last four years we have been collecting roadkill and incidental data on this species throughout its range in north Queensland. At the same time for the last 28 months we have been radiotracking six individual animals (for varying lengths of time) at the School for Field Studies at the top of the Gillies Highway. This work has shown that on the Atherton Tablelands the amethystine python is strongly associated with closed forest habitat, either rainforest or rainforest regrowth. Unlike the more widespread carpet python (*Morone spilargyrea*) we have never recorded amethystine pythons in open paddocks, urban areas or in roadside grass thickets. The odd amethystine python that appears in fragments to the south and east of Tarzail, and in the vicinity of Malanda, almost certainly reach these fragments by using corridors of forest vegetation, usually riparian corridors, to move through the landscape.

One of the mysteries of amethystine python distribution on the Atherton Tablelands is their apparent absence from the rainforest fragment at Curtain Fig, an area that has high densities of folivorous mammals (tree-kangaroos and possums). As the Peterson Creek corridor is completed, and connectivity between Lake Eacham (and its seemingly high densities of amethystine pythons) and Curtain Fig is established, chances are that amethystine pythons will be one of the species that makes use of this corridor. What impact the arrival will have on the densities of possums and tree-kangaroos in Curtain Fig will be interesting indeed.

Landcare Conference a Huge Success

By Alan Gillanders

As a sponsored community representative, I attended the 2006 Queensland Landcare Conference along with about 510 others from four days of events in August. The 17th annual conference, with the theme, 'Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide', featured more than 100 speakers, 35 concurrent sessions and eight field trips.

Catching up with a few old friends was wonderful but it was particularly pleasing for me to be one of the oldest rather than the younger generation of landcarers. While some of the younger set were employees and others students, it was a great source of satisfaction to observe that many volunteers in their thirties and forties were able to make it to the conference.

The keynote address presented by Professor Robert A Cummins was entitled "Wellbeing within the rural-urban divide: Does it matter where you live?" Since 2001 the subjective wellbeing of Australians has been monitored using the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index. Wellbeing was defined as "A normally positive state of mind that involves the whole of life". In broad terms the research has found that the highest levels of wellbeing are found within regional towns and the lowest wellbeing found in cities and very remote regions. The prospect for those of us living in areas with the highest wellbeing values is that others will move in and change the dynamics so that it will not be the place it used to be.

Peter Andrews spoke on "Natural Sequence Farming: A cost effective and sustainable mainstream option for landscape management". Natural Sequence Farming provides Australia with a low-cost, widely applicable method of reducing drought severity, and boosting productivity on farms and the natural fertility of the landscape. Peter provided insights into the technique, which is based on ecological principles, low input requirements and natural cycling of water and nutrients to make the land more resilient. While I was impressed with its application to large areas of Australia, I am yet to be convinced that the same applies to the Wet Tropics.

I attended a number of the concurrent seminars including:

Links between Landcare and the protection of coastal systems - Simon Baltas, Seagrass Watch. Research by the Coastal CRC suggests that Australia's coastal natural resources could be worth more than \$200 billion a year... equivalent to one third of the total value of all goods and services traded in Australia during 2004-05. Landcare is as much about protection of our coastal zone as it is about protecting the land. The use of volunteer researchers is important to the success of this program.

Urban communities investing in healthy land: a case study from the Cooby Dam Catchment - Rick Gailbraith, Crows Nest Shire Council. Landholders are increasingly being expected to undertake management activities to protect and enhance the natural resources under their custodianship. Community expectations are increasing, while the ability of the land managers to fulfil these expectations is often limited. This session provided an overview of an ecosystem service incentive model trials in the Cooby Dam catchment (which provides water for Toowoomba City and surrounds). It was hoped that by looking at the processes used to engage and support landholders in their management actions, participants would be able to take ideas and tools with them to trial on projects in their own regions, but there is a need for further development. Again it is difficult to calculate the service provided. If urban dwellers are not getting 'value for money' they will not support landholders in fulfilling their duty of care.

Down the Drain - water in urban and rural environments - with Graeme Milligan (NRM&W), David Matthews (Brisbane Valley Kilcoy Landcare), Darren Hayman (Gold Coas Water), Peter Schneider (SEQ Water), Kevin Flanagan (Toowoomba City Council). This was the most stimulating of all the sessions. David Matthews pointed out that it made little sense to harvest water from where there was least rainfall and use that to supply areas with more rain. Examples of how much water was wasted from urban storm water runoff were remarkable. The integration of water services by the Gold Coast Council proved inspiring and provided optimism, but failure of the controversial Water Futures Toowoomba Project left participants shaking their heads at their fellow man. For a conference entitled "Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide", it was disturbing how often country folk derided the values of our city cousins and their actions. Understanding cannot be a one way street. It still seems that decision making will continue to be made on too small a scale. Even the Queensland Murray Darling Committee made too much of this being Queensland and we are different up here. Yes we are, as are our landscapes, but it worries me that we are demanding the right to make the same mistakes others have made.

The Green Corridor

By Kim Forde

What is the Green Corridor about?

The Green Corridor Project is a community partnership project to revegetate and remediate the Barron River from the upper catchment to the mouth, involving volunteers to create a green corridor of restored riverine ecosystems. The **project aims to restore the health of the river system**. The Green Corridor is a 20 year plus initiative that is to be delivered through a partnership between community, landholders, industry and government.

What makes it different to many other projects is the intent to:

- Undertake the works with corporate sponsorship and not rely on NHT and other government funding and the associated accountability that goes with that.
- A designated project manager and site supervisor to ensure works happen according to contractual requirements and business principles.
- Undertake works at a larger scale than previously (20 ha annually) and with a mix of methodologies, including those used in farm-forestry and large scale mine rehabilitation if appropriate sites and funding can be generated.

Current sponsors:

The Cairns Port Authority joined the project in November 2005 with sponsorship of \$250,000 annually for three years, with an option of two more years. The GSRMPA has agreed to \$10,000 annually for three years to provide assistance to promote and educate the community about the options for involvement and the benefits of the project.

The Cairns River Improvement Trust will provide \$20,000 annually for three years of works within the River to aid in bank stabilization works etc. and the Cairns City Council is about to sign on for \$20,000 annually for 5 years worth of in-kind support - plants and assistance from Council staff to prepare sites along the river.

Why is it needed?

The Barron River Management Action Plan was generated in 2000 by a panel of experts. It identified approximately 140 km of the total 165 km of the river as being in need of a degree of rejuvenation (in many cases works are necessary on both banks of the river). Assuming the width of revegetation works extends 70 m from the bank on average (based on experience at Kuranda) the approximate area of riverbank requiring works is in the order of 980 ha.

Who is involved?

It was recognized that to generate and continue corporate sponsorship, the Green Corridor would need to provide resources and appropriately qualified people to project manage the proposed works. This led to the search and selection of Conservation Volunteers Australia to supervise the onground works and the appointment of their responsible officer, Geoff Onus. Geoff has many years experience within this area in rehabilitation works, having started working at the GPWS Lake Eacham Nursery approximately 15 years ago, and moving on to a range of projects across the region. Next, through the involvement and assistance of FNQ NRM, the appointment was made of an overall Project Manager, responsible for ensuring that the project Action Management Plan is effectively implemented, gaining new sponsors and maintaining relationships with them and encouraging community involvement and engagement. I was offered that role, based on my long experience in this region across a range of projects, including working for Wet Tropics Management Authority, the CRC-Rainforest, and for industry (Dept of Main Roads and Stanwell Corporation). I am employed 3 days per week to keep this project on track.

How is it going to happen?

On identified prioritized sites, an implementation plan is developed that takes proposed rehabilitation actions, develops budgets, identifies required resources and appropriate regimes to implement the plans- the How to! The project aims to rehabilitate 20 ha of the river edge per year - one site on each of the upper, middle and lower Barron, if possible. It will link in with community group and government agency priorities, where possible, and utilize volunteer labour - in its many forms, under the supervision and processes of Conservation Volunteers Australia.

How can a landowner on the banks of the river get involved?

The intent is to approach landholders within the prioritized areas to see if they are interested in being involved. Identifying what their priorities and long term plans for the site are, and seeing where we can achieve mutually satisfactory outcomes.

The project is preparing a Landholder Agreement which will clearly identify who will be responsible for the various elements within the project: land preparation, access, planting, watering, weed management, in-fill planting, long-term maintenance responsibilities, promotion and recognition, incentives for conservation, exclusion of cattle, feral animal management, fire management, monitoring.

Because the project recognizes it has a limited budget (although larger than many previous projects) and is accountable to its corporate sponsors to provide defined outcomes and value for money invested, all approaches to be involved with the project will be reviewed against the Barron River Management Action Plan to see where it fits in the priority list, whether there are sufficient resources to address the issue immediately (funding and people), what its chances of success are and the willingness of the landholder to embrace the project, become involved and protect the investment in the long term.

How will the work be done?

Work will be undertaken by volunteers, including the general community, Landcare groups and those assisted by Conservation Volunteers Australia (Green Corps, holiday backpackers and others).

Identified community supporters of the project already include TREAT, Kuranda Envirocare, Malanda Landcare Group, Treeforce, Lake Eacham Landcare, Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, Eacham Shire Nursery, Cairns City Council Nursery and School for Field Studies, Mareeba Shire, Atherton Shire, Eacham Shire and Cairns City Councils have also indicated support for the project.

Green Corridor plantings

Mark Dwyer & Bronwyn Robertson

Plantings along the Barron River have already started as part of BRICMA's Green Corridor project. Well in excess of 9,000 trees have been planted since June at two sites - Myola and Cairns (near the junction of Freshwater Ck. and the Barron River). Over 50 international and local volunteers have been involved with the plantings. There has also been assistance from students from the TAFE Conservation and Land Management course, James Cook University and the Cairns High School Inclusion Program. Rain every 2 to 3 weeks over winter has helped the plantings become established. Once the wet season begins, plantings can start in earnest, with hopes for a further 20,000 trees to be planted this season. An additional site in the Upper Barron River Catchment at the Jim Chapman Bridge will also be planted this season.

A planting of 2,000 trees is scheduled to take place there on Sunday 10th December, which is "Tropical Tree Day". Regular volunteer days are already being held at planting sites through the week and on week-ends. Locals are encouraged to become involved in this significant project and can get more information an volunteer activities from Geoff Onus at Conservation Volunteers Australia (Ph: 4032 0844).

Peterson Creek Planting

Barb Lanskey

It was a beautiful Spring morning for our "infill" planting at Peterson Ck. on 23rd September. Fifty-four people turned up which included 27 students from the School for Field Studies. These enthusiastic young people, under the guidance of a few experienced SFS staff, are always a welcome addition to our numbers. It was also very pleasing to have at least six other new faces come to the planting, three of whom were recent contacts.

The planting was to replace trees lost during the flooding from prepared the Larry and Monica. There was also a very small section planted on Burchill's property close to the barbecue area. Nursery staff had cycloned the site for planting and about 1700 trees were planted, most of them on the lower banks. TREAT had organised bales of mulch, and this was put around the newly planted trees and around others which had been struggling with weed competition. In places, these trees were often only identified by their position, a few leaves and new shoots, so locating them was quite a task. The mulch will be a big help in their recovery. This added to the morning's work, but the planting was completed by about 11am. Nursery staff were much later returning for the barbecue as they were busy shifting irrigation. With irrigation, the trees are doing well.

While waiting for the last of the sausages to be cooked, Colin Hunt asked Doug Burchill to talk to the students about how the plantings on his property had affected his farming operations. Doug related how he wished to plant trees to provide a buffer against the prevailing winds and initially planted trees such as Tallowwoods sourced from the Dept. of Primary Industries. After meeting with Geoff Tracey who advised planting trees native to the area, he started planting these as they became available, and started growing them himself for planting. Gradually, the wind buffers along Pearamon Road and other places became established.

Some of the benefits of these buffers have been that the grass doesn't dry out so quickly and lasts longer for the cattle, and the cattle are a lot happier (and therefore fatter) with a shelter belt from the wind. Doug began planting along Peterson Creek to prevent cattle becoming bogged in the para grass which chokes the stream. With TREAT's help, the creek has now been planted along its length on his property. With fencing and off-creek watering points, cattle no longer get bogged in the creek. Doug also mentioned the personal benefits of having the trees, such as making his farm a more pleasant place and providing a habitat for wildlife, particularly the birds.

TREAT's barbecue was eaten with gusto, and Barb Walsh's vegetarian patties disappeared as quickly as the sausages. Thanks to all those who made the morning such a success.

Annual General Meeting

Barb Lanskey

The AGM on 18th August was well attended and proceedings went smoothly.

Ken Schaffer presented a summary of the Financial Report on the big screen, showing us the yearly income, expenditure and balance for the various accounts (each funded project has a separate account).

Nick Stevens gave a screen presentation of nursery activities and other OPWS Restoration Services work for the year. TREAT volunteers put in a total of 4355 hours at the nursery and potted up about 60,000 trees. The total of trees leaving the nursery for projects totalled only 17,500 due to the late start of the wet season and then the disturbing influence of cyclone Larry.

I presented the President's Report verbally, summarising TREAT's activities for the year. The main activity of revegetation work resulted in another 6,600 trees added to the Peterson Creek corridor. Approximately 700 trees were planted at a small creek at Malanda, and assistance was given with 3 private plantings. Our work in community education is large and includes field days, workshops, school programs, displays, publicity and a quarterly newsletter.

Committee Changes

The Management Committee now has 3 new faces - to replace Tony Irvine, Simon Burchill and Possum Rosser. They are Bronwyn Robertson, Colin Hunt and Maxine Pitts. They all bring expertise to the committee, and Bronwyn and Colin have served on the committee previously. Bronwyn is taking on the position of newsletter editor from Rosmarie Pilmer and Maxine is keen to be responsible for managing our Rainforest Display Centre.

Geoff Errey is now our Vice President, replacing Tony, but otherwise the remaining committee positions are the same as last year. I'm President for another year, Doug Burchill is General and Minutes Secretary, Noel Grundon is Grants Secretary, Ken Schaffer is Treasurer and Barb Walsh is Membership Secretary.

Earlier in the year, Helen Adams was seconded to the committee to replace Col Walsh, and Helen, Bryony Barnett and Dawn Schaffer continue as committee members.

Geoff is our media man. Dawn is our TREAT on TAP organizer, Bryony is our FNQ NRM Ltd. Contact, and Helen is our liaison lady for the Green Corridor project. Colin is teaching at the School for Field Studies and will bring useful contacts from there to add to his general community expertise.

Joan's Book

David Leech, one of the earliest TREAT members, officially launched Joan's book about her recollection of the first 10 years of TREAT. It was very well received and Joan was kept busy signing copies at the meeting. Joan recently had her 88th birthday and the book is a great achievement of which she should be justly proud. Congratulations, Joan!

A thousand copies were printed and volunteers are welcome to obtain a free copy at the nursery. We have made copies available at the Display Centre for visitors and tourists, and encourage a donation of \$5 to the Environmental Benefit Fund to help cover costs. Complimentary copies have been sent to the local schools and libraries, and agencies involved in our revegetation programs.

Guest Speaker

Dr David Westcott gave a very informative screen presentation on the research and aftermath by CSIRO into seed dispersal in tropical rainforests, including forest fragments. David is passionate about the recent and afterwards fielded many questions from the audience.

TREAT on TAP

By Dawn Schaffer

We have had a busy year with our education Tree Awareness Program. Our volunteers often comment how they are rewarded as they see the enthusiasm shown by the students. This was particularly so with the visit of 160 students from the Loreto Nornanhurst School in Sydney. The Year 9 students were participating in a new curriculum program which encompasses life skills within their education. To this end, their North Queensland trip was not just a holiday, but the students had to complete many assignments and daily diary tasks. It was interesting to discuss colour, shape and texture of leaves with the Art students, the community government arrangement and social aspects of TREAT with the Social Science students, and the usual rainforest biodiversity with the Science students.

Forty students visited each day for 4 days. While Alan and Lyn took 20 students for a guided walk through Lake Eacham, TAP volunteers guided the other 20 students through the Rainforest Display Centre and nursery. A highlight of this for the students was the opportunity to do some potted-on. After morning tea we swapped groups and repeated the program. Multiply this program by 4 days and you will realize what a busy time it was for the TAP volunteers. However, we were repaid many times over by the respect shown to us, the very mature discussions we had and the questions asked by the students.

The school has indicated they are interested in returning next year. It will be a pleasure to have students from Innisfail again. It was only a couple of weeks after this we had a similar program with 120 Good Counsel High School students from Lismore.

Thank you to the TAP volunteer team.

Events and Other News

Lessons from Larry Forum

FNQ NRM Ltd. Organized this forum in Innisfail on 16th September for people and organizations interested in landscape changes as a result of the cyclone, and possible actions for mitigating those changes in future cyclones.

Whilst many of the participants were necessarily FNQ NRM employees, also present were many researchers, Landcare and industry organizations, traditional owners, and some government representatives - about 75 altogether.

The day's activities began with a few presentations on the cyclone and some expectation for future cyclones, then each group at the tables (randomly seated) shared their individual stories, a series of subjects and questions were listed for later discussion. After a break, groups formed to discuss their favourite subject listed (I chose Revegetation) and those groups noted actions which could increase future landscape resilience and could improve the cyclone response efforts from a landscape perspective.

After lunch several research programs were highlighted and a group of researchers answered questions and raised others for consideration and future action. All participants will receive a detailed and summary report of the proceedings, and hopefully the fruitful discussions will reap rewards in suitable on-ground actions for the future.

Monitoring Revegetation Workshop

At Malanda on 18th September, I attended a workshop followed by John Kanovsky and Carla Catterall on an effective way to measure the development of revegetation sites for biodiversity. Following the workshop, those present had hands-on experience in measuring the basic indicators at a nearby revegetation site and then entering the data into a computer program designed to create summaries and graphs of trends in the data over time.

The basic indicators correlate with the use of rainforest sites by wildlife, particularly birds, and measure aspects of forest structure such as canopy cover and height, density and diameter of trees and shrubs, and ground cover and debris. These can be measured easily and rapidly, without specialist knowledge, and provide information on the development of a revegetation project. A monitoring program would usually obtain baseline data before revegetation commenced, then do surveys at appropriate intervals to compare with surveyed Reference Sites.

Some monitoring programs may track the progress of a site for many years or even decades, and proper recording of information about a project is therefore essential. This would include the project location and description of objectives etc., establishment statistics of the on-ground works and costs, and a record of the maintenance activities.

We were given a Monitoring Toolkit book (labelled Toolkit Version 1 as improvements are expected from feedback with its use) and it is a great starting point for TREAT's involvement with future monitoring projects.

Tree and Seed Workshop

The annual tree identification and seed propagation workshop will be held at the Lake Eacham nursery this year on Saturday 18th November from 9am to 12:30pm.

This workshop shows how trees can be identified by different leaf features. It also shows different methods of germinating seed depending on seed type. The workshop is in 2 parts, separated by a morning tea supplied by TREAT. The workshop is free, but places are limited, so would those wishing to attend please register with Barbara Lanskey (Ph: 4091 4468).

TREAT as a Case Study

The Commonwealth Dept of Environment and Heritage has developed 14 leaflets to showcase biodiversity success stories across Australia. TREAT was one of two case studies chosen from Queensland. Our story is titled - 'A Growing Concern' (subtitled - From Little things, big things grow) and is told in a glossy 4 page leaflet with appropriate photos.

Headings include: A pool of talent; Established partnerships; Projects; and Creating a wildlife corridor. The successful Donaghy's Corridor is given special emphasis.

Two of the concluding 'Lessons learnt' are:

- With commitment and enthusiasm, community organisations that begin small can make a lasting contribution to conserving biodiversity; and
- Developing a productive relationship with a related government agency - like the Qld Parks and Wildlife Service - can make a major contribution to the success of a community group's efforts.

The leaflet was made available at the AGM and is available from TREAT at the Lake Eacham nursery.

Nursery News

By Peter Snodgrass

Peterson Creek: as good as it was to have plenty of rain, it was equally as good to see the sunshine of a regular basis. The fine conditions opened the door of opportunity to finally catch up on some much needed site maintenance. This was a pleasant surprise to find that there were not as many losses at the Peterson Creek 2006 site as might have been expected following back to back cyclones that saw the site under floodwater twice. A concerted effort by TREAT and SFS volunteers combined with nursery staff as well as assistance from the C.J.P (Community Jobs Program) crew to clear debris and para grass that was covering the trees enabled a success rate of over 80% which could have been far worse, possibly as low as 50% or 40%, if this task was not carried out. So thanks to all who chipped in to help achieve such a positive result. All the trees have been fertilised and rain has fallen since, so everything is looking very healthy.

The Peterson Ck infill planting on the 2006 site was a success thanks to all who were involved, particularly the 27 enthusiastic SFS students who were a big help on the day. At the end of the morning there were 1854 trees planted, which at this stage are doing great. We still have 300 trees to plant, on a Friday morning yet to be organized.

Nursery Trees: Due to unforeseen circumstances, some trees that had been allocated to plantings supported by TREAT, have not left the nursery due to the cancellation of the scheduled plantings, leaving us with limited space in the hardening bays. So those who wish to be carrying out small plant-outs on their own place and are able to give them the care they need to survive at this time of year (i.e. water) feel welcome to pick up their yearly quota of trees. Although the nursery is quite full at this stage, it has been the greatly appreciated efforts of people out in the hardening bays weeding out the runts, consolidating and weeding in general, that has kept things running smoothly and looking very tidy. Well done!

The **Wet Tropics Wildlife Corridor** project was completed by the due date of 30/9/2006 and was a huge success. Again thank goes out to all those who travelled all the way to El Arish to assist with the plantings that took place over the past five years that were the contract term. The end of this contract brings about the ability to concentrate on a more structured maintenance schedule for the Peterson Creek project a concept that we at the nursery are all looking forward to.

Fruit Collection Diary March to September 2006

Species	Common Name	Collection Provenience
Acrotylechia acida	Lemon Asplenium	RE 7.8.2, 7.8.3
Aristolochia acuminata	Native Dutchmen Pipe	
Arctostaphylos fitzalanii	Brown Gardenia	RE 7.8.2
Castanospermum australe	Black Bean	RE 7.8.2
Callistemon viminalis	Bottle Brush	RE 7.8.2
Ficus rubiginosa	Port Jackson Fig	RE 7.8.3
Ficus pleurocarpa	Banana Fig	RE 7.8.2
Ficus crassipes	Round Leaved Banana Fig	RE 7.8.2
Homalium coccinifolium	Brown Boxwood	RE 7.8.3
Melicope elleryana	Butterfly Tree	RE 7.8.2, 7.8.3
Neolitsea brassii	Grey Bellwood	RE 7.8.3
Pultea strateri	Hard Alder	RE 7.8.4
Rhodamnia blairiana	Blair's Maltewood	RE 7.8.2
Rochinghamia angustifolia	Mountain Kamala	RE 7.8.2
Schefflera actinophylla	Umbrella Tree	RE 7.8.2
Syzygium canicortex	Yellow Saltnash	RE 7.8.2
Syzygium comiflorum	Bumpy Saltnash	RE 7.8.2

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