



Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands Inc
The right tree in the right place for the right reason

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TREAT Newsletter January 2002

Holidays are over - Back to work!

Staff at the Centre welcome all members back from the Chrissy/ New Year break and trust the festive season has sufficiently recharged the batteries in preparation for another epic planting season. In fact this year holds special significance with the greatest number of TREAT funded projects in a season aptly coinciding with TREAT's 20th anniversary, a clear reflection of both the commitment of TREAT members and indeed the increasing recognition of TREAT's role in addressing issues associated with landscape fragmentation.

TREAT in conjunction with the Centre will again schedule a series of mid week member plantings for those volunteers who are interested in additional tree planting opportunities within the local area. Planting schedules and registration forms are available from the Centre on any Friday morning and your participation is encouraged. This seasons schedule builds on the success of last year and will allow members to assist like minded landholders promote nature conservation and rebuild biodiversity.

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Plant Production

With the summer months now upon us, seed collections are yielding an increase in species diversity and staff are busy ensuring framework species are being presented to members for the appropriate processing and sowing. High volume production levels continue to be necessary in order to support services the Centre is now providing. With clients such as Queensland Rail, Main Roads, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Powerlink Queensland, the Centre in conjunction with TREAT continues to expand it's range within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, promoting both on ground conservation outcomes and advances in management priorities. To ensure quality services are being consistently provided, an increase in effort within the nursery hardening bays will be required over the next few months. Members who are able to provide assistance to staff on Friday mornings in the outside bays are reminded to bring a long sleeved shirt, hat and raincoat (just in case).

TREAT Environmental Benefit Fund

The Fund was last mentioned in the July 2001 Newsletter. Since then, over \$1,500 has been donated, so the Fund now stands at just under \$3,000. Most was donated in small amounts by members but \$400 came from Ron Farrant's family and friends in his memory. Ron died recently but before his death requested that instead of flowers at his funeral, donations should be made to TREAT to plant trees.

We have now received a gift of \$5,000 from the Hayles Charitable Fund. When this is deposited, the Benefit fund will reach the dizzy height of \$8,000.

It is interesting to note that the Hayles Charitable Fund arises from the estate of Robert and Alison Hayles of Townsville. In 1899 Robert Hayle's father built the first hotel on Magnetic Island, developed ferry services in Townsville, Cairns, Brisbane and Darwin and made enormous contributions to tourism. In his will, Robert Hayle directed that on his death, the residue of his estate be invested in perpetuity with the income being distributed amongst charitable organisations, north of Townsville. He died in 1978 and ever since, the Perpetual Trustees of Australia have managed the fund.

The TREAT Environmental Benefit Fund came into being in 2000 when the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment & Heritage approved our application for entry onto the National Register of Environmental Organisations. Soon after, the Commissioner of Taxation approved our entry onto the Australian Business Register and gave the Fund the status of a "tax deductible fund" under Subdivision 30-B of the Income Tax Assessment Act of 1997.

Such status is not given lightly and we are required by law to manage the Fund as a "Public Fund" under a proper constitution. To do this, a set of rules was drawn up and a special management committee appointed. Members are:TREAT Vice-President, TREAT Honorary Treasurer and two members drawn from the general public; currently, these are David Prete (Deputy Principal Herberton High School) and Peter Chapman (Administrator, CSIRO, Atherton).

TREAT needs the Fund as a financial "cushion" for our many activities, so far it hasn't been necessary to use it but the time will undoubtedly come. So, please continue to help with your donations. Cash can be dropped into the Fund's box anytime during the Friday working session or during a community planting. If requested, a receipt can be given or mailed for any amount over \$2 received directly by the Treasurer. Receipted donations are of course "tax deductible".

Staff News

Whilst Assistant Manager Tania Murphy takes her well deserved Long Service Leave, Peter Dellow will assume operations management and coordinate the 2002 planting season.

Peter holds high expectations for the upcoming season and looks forward to working closely with TREAT members to achieve best practice outcomes.

The Centre welcomes the appointment of Phillip Anning as Indigenous Trainee, who follows in the footsteps of Syb Bresolin, Warren Canendo and Keith Barlow. Phillip is a Traditional Owner from the Tableland Yidinj and will certainly offer skills and knowledge that will benefit all who have the opportunity to work alongside.

CTR staff from the Indigenous Programs Unit continue to develop relationships and programs across the Northern Region promoting cooperation and practical understanding of contemporary and traditional land management principles.

New Initiatives on Cape York Peninsula

CTR staff are gearing up to tackle an increasing volume of work on Cape York. The Centre has 3 projects on CYP at present, with staff recently submitting another 2 for funding consideration. These projects will give staff and volunteers insights into new and different environments and the restoration problems they present.

Sicklepod control strategy

Late last year the Federal Government announced it would fund a joint OPWS CTR / Qld University of Technology (QUT) project to tackle the problem of Sicklepod invasion on the Cape. Sicklepod is a major weed of the world's tropics and already covers over 30,000ha of CYP. OPWS and QUT have been funded to develop a control and restoration strategy for areas degraded by this plant. Initially, research will be undertaken in the Iron Range National Park area.

Alloterospis recovery

A second project already underway involves the propagation of *Alloterospis semialata*, a species of grass that is common on Cape York. At the start of the wet season, *Alloterospis* seed is especially important for seed eating birds such as parrots and finches, including the rare and spectacular Gouldian finch.

Unfortunately, *Alloterospis* can be heavily grazed by stock, reducing both the availability of seed and the plants ability to recover when heavily grazed. This may have serious consequences for the grass and the seed eating birds that rely on it. Our plan is to grow a large crop of *Alloterospis* seed and then to establish some direct seeding trials to look at how efficient this technique might be.

In December, OPWS staff under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Garnett, collected around 200 *Alloterospis* suckers near Coen and these were potted up the next day by TREAT volunteers at CTR. Plants have already begun to produce seed (after only 4 weeks), ready for storage and use in next season's trials.

Recovering sacred sites

CTR has recently been asked to work with the Olkola people to assist in the recovery of a site on western Cape York. This will involve stabilising an eroding gully to stop silt filling a sacred waterhole on a former cattle property. The job will be co-ordinated by indigenous ranger Syb Bresolin, who now has her hands full managing projects throughout the Wet Tropics and Cape York. Keep an eye out for CYP progress reports in upcoming newsletters.

Tree Growing and Identification Workshops

The two workshops held on the 17th and 24th November were each attended by about 30 people.

Everyone was very keen to learn and Tony Irvine and the Centre for Tropical Restoration staff were keen to teach.

Tony brought along lots of interesting specimens of leaves and twigs for use in his talk about identifying rainforest trees, and the Centre staff had lots of seeds of various shapes and sizes to illustrate their talk on how to prepare and plant seeds to be able to grow the rainforest trees.

During afternoon tea, the new TREAT video, *TREAT yourself* was shown, giving information on practical tree planting and it was well received.

The enthusiasm of people at the workshops meant that both sessions went overtime, and next year an earlier start may be made to allow for this.

Peterson Creek Planting

This year's Peterson Creek TREAT tree planting was a great success with somewhat more than 80 people attending, to plant 5300 trees on the day. This is a record number of trees for a TREAT tree planting in recent years. This was the 5th year of the Peterson Creek project, which started in 1998.

Due to the losses suffered in the 2001 planting due to frost, work started in that section to replace those lost to frost. From there the planting continued downstream planting a large section and returning along the opposite bank of the creek to get to the marquee for the well deserved and traditional TREAT BBQ lunch.

A number of the TREAT members put in a major effort to water the trees after they had been planted.

The day provided perfect tree planting weather, as it was overcast for most of the morning, with a brief shower of rain during the BBQ, and a total of about 6mm of rain in the twenty-four hours immediately after the planting.

A Japanese film crew was on site and in a helicopter flying over, to produce a program for Japanese television, it is good to see the Centre for Tropical Restoration and TREAT receiving international coverage.

Thanks to the land-holders - the Palumbo, de Tournour and Brynes families for continuing support for the project. Thanks to all the nursery crew who put in a big effort to get everything ready for the day so soon after the Mazlin Creek planting and thanks to all the TREAT members who came along.

Bigger plans for TREAT on TAP

TREAT's plans for our educational program for 2002 are taking shape.

Three primary schools on the Tableland and one on the coast have been invited to take part in the 4-session series.

These take place between Christmas and Easter so that the students can learn to do tree planting in their school grounds and with TREAT at a community planting while there is rain.

A new educational poster titled What a wonderful tree has been produced, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust, and this will be used in classroom sessions at the schools. A copy of the poster will be given to each school and the students also receive specially designed books with activities to help them understand the importance of trees in the environment. Therese Taurins was the graphic artist who designed the beautiful poster and it has been produced entirely in Atherton and Cairns.

The TREAT on Tap program is presented at the schools by a team including volunteers and members of the Centre for Tropical and Restoration staff. Barbara Lanskey, our president, usually leads the team. Any offers of help would be warmly welcomed.

A special environmental excursion was organised in early November for the top grades of Kairi Primary School. The students' principal and other adults joined TREAT at the Tolga Scrub and spent a morning experiencing Mabi rainforest, seeing some restoration work and meeting Jenny McLean with her flying foxes, and also Geoff Onus form the Centre. This visit was much appreciated by the school which is in the middle of the agricultural land once covered by Mabi rainforest. The contrast was very obvious to the student.

TREAT now has two videos. The first *Treatwise* was designed to be used at school to show our aims and methods. The second video, *TREAT yourself*, which shows our method of tree planting in practical detail, will also be used with students.

Any members wishing to access the videos or any other TREAT material are welcome to contact Joan Wright on 4091 3474.

Pelican Point Papers

Elinor Scambler, TREAT member and former president, has produced a scientific study of the bird counts carried out by herself and TREAT volunteers at Pelican Point, Tinaroo.

Pelican Point was a major revegetation project (1991-1997) coordinated by TREAT.

As a result of extensive tree planting, the area is now an open air recreation area for the public where they can see hundreds of birds, many wallabies, etc in a beautiful lake side setting. It is under the ultimate control of Sunwater.

Elinor recently presented her paper describing the community monitoring effort at Pelican Point at two conferences, a CRC conference in Cairns and an ornithological conference in Bathurst. The paper was well received. A conference poster with description and photos of the project has been given to TREAT and is well worth seeing at the nursery.

One outcome of the study is that it appears that the number and diversity of birds increased in the wooded areas over the period, and the number of grassland birds decreased.

Elinor is much to be congratulated on her scientific account of our community project. Other papers about Pelican Point, its history, aims and method, and studies of mammals and vegetation are also being produced.

A Memorable First Planting

Around 60 enthusiastic volunteers were on hand on Saturday the 12th, to plant the next stage of the Mazlin Creek Mabi recovery project.

The sun shone, sixty people planted 1500 Mabi forest trees before 9:30am, and later in the day rain fell to water them in.

2002 is the year of TREAT's 20th birthday. There is a full program of seven plantings for the first three months of the year, so there is plenty of work for all our volunteers to do to celebrate.

About 45 species were established in a 40m wide x 200m long belt adjacent to the Beantree Bridge on the property of Georgina Kattenberg.

This planting joins previous works undertaken on the 2 neighbouring properties and will significantly improve the in-stream environment, bank stability and the quality of habitat available for local wildlife.

Funding for the project came from Bushcare, part of the Natural Heritage Trust of the Federal Government.

Members of the family of TREAT member, Mr Ron Farrant, formerly of Atherton, joined in the day's activities and planted a grove of 100 trees in his memory. Ron was a great wood-worker, using rainforest timbers, and he requested that trees be planted instead of flowers given at his funeral.

TREAT was glad to be able to organise this memorial planting and was grateful to receive over \$400 in donations from the friends and relatives of this far-sighted man.

Mabi Forest Update

There have been a number of recent actions of interest to members relating to the conservation and management of Mabi.

Conservation of this endangered forest was the theme for the International Year of the Volunteer celebration in Malanda in October.

This is significant in itself as it represented the first meeting when members of Community Nature Conservation groups (TREAT and the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal group) have met with the local landcare groups to discuss options for conserving the last Mabi remnants. During the night of celebration, all attendees were asked to fill in a survey form containing 5 options for future management of Mabi. The five options were;

1. Purchase existing fragments;
2. Fund tree planting and restoration programs;
3. Provide more incentives for landholders with endangered regional ecosystems;
4. Put greater funding into direct weed control efforts;
5. Educate and inform landholders and the broader community of the values of Mabi.

Options 2 and 3 were placed first and second respectively whilst education was a clear third. Whilst one might expect option 2 to be the most popular (considering the background of those attending), it is obvious the community considers incentives to be a better way to preserve forests than purchasing fragments.

These results will be used by the Mabi Forest Working Group to guide its Mabi conservation efforts in the future.

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