



WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

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Cassowary Awards celebrate World Heritage conservation

Ten Cassowary Award winners were honoured by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) at Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and Skyrail Rainforest Cableway on Saturday (8 November).

This now makes a total of ninety-six award winners, as the Cassowary Awards celebrate their tenth anniversary.

WTMA board Chair Lt Gen John Grey AC said “the Cassowary Awards are an opportunity to honour the passion and dedication of the community”.

“This is our chance to publicly thank the Wet Tropics community for their ongoing support. These individuals and groups have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and presentation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. We couldn’t do it without them,” he said.

“I’m always impressed when I see over 250 guests turn up to recognise the community’s achievements in a wide range of fields such as tourism, conservation, arts, science and Rainforest Aboriginal culture. It’s inspiring to see so many talented and creative people come together to celebrate their collaborative efforts.”

The Young Cassowary Awards were once again a highlight of the evening. The winners enjoyed travelling through tropical rainforest on Skyrail as well as learning about Rainforest Aboriginal culture at Tjapukai – a well deserved reward for their efforts planting trees, writing cassowary books, building wetlands and recycling.

“This is the next generation of ambassadors for the Wet Tropics. It’s fantastic to see such well-informed students. They not only care for their environment, but are already actively involved in protecting it,” John Grey said. “I congratulate the students, teachers and parents who put in so much effort and who influence so many others.”

Mr Grey emphasised that the Cassowary Awards would not be possible without the ongoing support of its hosts and sponsors.

Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and Skyrail Rainforest Cableway provided a unique setting for the awards this year. The Young Cassowary Awards were sponsored by Daintree Discovery Centre, Terrain NRM, Steve and Meredith Russell and Hartley’s Crocodile Adventures. All our sponsors have been extremely generous with their time, advice and prizes. I would also like to thank the Australian Government which funds the Authority to hold the awards each year,” Mr Grey added.

Cassowary Award winners for 2008 are:

UNsung HERO

Mrs Linda Venn (from Paluma)

Linda is a teacher with a passion for environmental education, history and ecotourism, particularly in Paluma. She has worked consistently with her local community imparting her knowledge about the southern Wet Tropics and its people. This has involved working with WTMA, EPA and NQ Water. Linda has authored a book about the history of Paluma 'Paluma the first eighty years 1870s – 1950s'. For the past eight years she has been an active member of the of the Authority's Community Consultative Committee (CCC).

CONSERVATION

Mike Berwick (from Daintree)

Mike has done so much for conservation at all levels. Currently the Chair of Terrian NRM, Mike still commits his time, energy and passion to conserving the Wet Tropics WHA. In the 1980s he was committed to the campaign to protect the Daintree rainforest. As mayor of Douglas Shire Council he led the way for local councils in achieving a balance between tourism, industry, agriculture and the environment. Mike is a man of immense vision and drive and a powerful advocate for sustainability.

SCIENCE

Assoc. Prof Steve Williams (from Townsville)

Steve is Director of the 'Centre for Tropical Biodiversity and Climate Change' at James Cook University. Over the past 15 years Steve has undertaken internationally acclaimed and ground-breaking research on the biodiversity of the Wet Tropics fauna and its susceptibility to climate change. He has modelled the bioclimatic distribution of all the Wet Tropics vertebrates and predicted impacts of an increased temperature. His vital work has been used by Australian and international scientists and management agencies.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Ms Barbara Lanskey (from Tablelands)

Barbara has been the president of 'Trees for the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands' (TREAT). Since 2001 her invaluable work has involved working bees, tree planting days and newsletter publications. Barbara was instrumental in developing the TREAT visitor centre and instructs local and international students about revegetation. Her unswerving enthusiasm is a wonderful example of how to succeed with community conservation.

NATURE BASED TOURISM

Ms Angela and Peter Freeman (from Wangetti)

Angela and Peter's commitment to nature based tourism is evident at 'Hartley's Crocodile Adventures'. Creating a tourism experience that promotes education and awareness for the Wet Tropics, they have committed resources to wildlife rescue, helping to rehabilitate and release cassowaries with the EPA. Leading by example they support and implement sound conservation and land management practices in their business.

NATURE BASED TOURISM

Walker Family Tours (from Bloomfield)

The Walker family recognised there was an opportunity to share their passion for the local area with visitors to the region. Walker Family Tours now offer a short walk to Wujal Wujal (Bloomfield) Falls, a warm and insightful indigenous rainforest experience intertwined with interpretation and conservation messages. Five local women lead the tours and provide a friendly insight into their links with the country. This successful venture has become a valued part of visitors' rainforest experience for some major tour companies, adding a unique aspect to their tourism products.

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Mr Leonard Andy (from Mission Beach)

Leonard is a true ambassador of Rainforest Aboriginal Culture. For many years he has helped to manage the 'Clump Mountain Community Education Centre' in Mission Beach. Sharing his traditional knowledge he helps to educate the local community about World Heritage values. He is passionately devoted to cassowary conservation and has assisted scientists with their cassowary research. Leonard is also a talented artist who has produced a range of art work for public display in Mission Beach.

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GOVERNMENT

Ms Stella Martin (from Cairns)

Stella has written the 'Ranger Diary' media articles and 'Tropical Topics' newsletters for tour guides for many years, providing a public face and easily accessible information to the wider community. Over the past 20 years as a committed conservationist she has been dedicated to community education. Stella is a committed advocate for the sustainability of the region's future.

ARTS

Ms Daryl Dickson (from Cardwell)

Daryl is a brilliant wildlife artist and wildlife carer who also rehabilitates injured and orphaned native wildlife. Daryl's work reflects her dedication to the environment. Daryl and her partner, Geoff, share a passion for mahogany glider conservation and habitat protection. The first captive bred mahogany glider to return to the wild was successfully released on their Kennedy property. This year Daryl illustrated her first children's book – a story about a mahogany glider.

EDUCATION

Mr Neville Simpson (from Tablelands)

Neville has taught environmental education at Malanda State School since 1973 and has worked in the far north all his life. He has been involved in the development of a diverse range of environmental education products in the region and has written many publications. Neville provided the inspiration and content for much of the Authority's Rainforest Explorer school curriculum and helped design the TREAT on Tap program for primary schools.

YOUNG CASSOWARY AWARD

Hambledon State School (from Edmonton)

Hambledon State School has a holistic approach to environmental education. Children of all ages have undertaken a wide range of outstanding environmental projects. These include: A rainforest canopy diorama, community environment art competitions, hosting a group of American students on a national geographic tour, collecting and recycling old mobile phones and presenting ideas to the Cairns 2020 summit.

YOUNG CASSOWARY AWARD

Wonga Beach State School (from Wonga Beach)

Year 6/7 students have given up their free time over the past year to design and build their own mini wetland. Developed in consultation with Australian experts the wetlands were constructed within the school grounds. This newly created habitat has been carefully designed to mimic the function of a natural wetland. This project is a great addition to the school both aesthetically and environmentally.

YOUNG CASSOWARY AWARDS

Outstanding Achievement Award

- Middle School, Kuranda District College for producing the Be-cassowary children's storybook.

Continuing Excellence Award

- Aloomba State School for organising the annual Tilapia Terminators fishing challenge.

Encouragement Awards

- Isabella State School for the ongoing environmental efforts of the Eco Warriors project.
- Heatley Secondary College for the creation of the butterfly garden by The Lepidoptera Club.

ENDS.

For further information and media opportunities contact:

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