



WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

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Cassowary Awards celebrate World Heritage conservation

Eleven Cassowary Award winners were honoured by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) at Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park on Saturday (7 November). The awards were presented by Mr Steve Wettenhall, Member for Barron River, and Senator Jan McLucas.

The Cassowary Awards are an opportunity to honour the passion and dedication of the community said WTMA board director, Dr Alastair Birtles.

“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 extraordinarily 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 to conserve and promote our magnificent World Heritage Area.”

The Young Cassowary Awards were once again a highlight of the evening. The winners enjoyed learning about Rainforest Aboriginal culture at Tjapukai – a well deserved reward for their efforts planting trees, writing environmental reports, performing cassowary plays, growing butterfly gardens and recycling at their schools.

“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,” Dr Birtles said. “I congratulate the students, teachers and parents who put in so much effort and who influence so many others.”

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

Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park provided a unique setting for the awards this year. The Cassowary Awards were sponsored by Cairns Regional Council and Events NQ. The Young Cassowary Awards were sponsored by Daintree Discovery Centre, Terrain NRM, Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, 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,” Dr Birtles added.

ENDS.

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2009 Cassowary Award winners

ARTS – Mr Mike Procriv (from Cairns)

Mike is a professional photographer who has taken a large range of high quality pictures of the Wet Tropic forests and their wildlife. These images are often rare and difficult to find elsewhere. His images have been used in a wide variety of sources to help promote the Area and educate the public about the Area's unique plants and animals. Mike has now published two books about the Area with a third in preparation. Mike's first book won the Queensland Multimedia Awards and the second was taken up as a text book at Innisfail High School. Mike says he feels a great sense of achievement that his books and imagery can inspire young people and get them thinking about the environment.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION – Mr John Beasley (from Kuranda)

John has helped to protect biodiversity around Kuranda through a long involvement in local development and planning issues and his role in the Speewah District Residents' Association and Kuranda EnviroCare. He has written many submissions and worked on planning for protection of biodiversity, especially within the EnviroLink Corridor and Fairyland Link. John has spent over eleven years planting and maintaining revegetation areas with EnviroCare. His book 'Plants of Tropical North Queensland' has now sold over 8,000 copies – that's almost a best seller. He has spent the past three years working on a new book, 'Plants of Cape York', to be released later this month. He is also a well-known local artist, having done numerous public works of art.

EDUCATION – Ms Sandra Charlton (from Gordonvale)

Sandra has a passion for the environment which is reflected in her work and her life. At Gordonvale and Aloomba State Schools she has made huge advances in environmental education and involved the entire school and community. Among many environmental initiatives, Sandra initiated the Tilapia Terminators Fishing Challenge in 2005 – an event which now involves 31 schools and catches tonnes of tilapia each year. Sandra also coordinates the Green Wise Schools Program and has worked on a team to develop the Excelsior Program. In 2009 Sandra won Clean-up Australia's State and National Green Teacher Award and the 2009 Pride of Australia Medal for her work in environmental education.

GOVERNMENT – Mr Keith McDonald (from Atherton)

Keith works for the Threatened Species Unit within the Department of Environment and Resource Management and has been known to as the foremost frog researcher in the Wet Tropics for over 30 years. He has authored over 100 scientific papers, mostly about Queensland and Australian frogs. He has described several new species in the Wet Tropics and discovered many others. He has been honoured by his peers – having an earthworm genus and two species, a frog, a spider, and a snail named after him. Keith received the Queensland Museum Medal in 2000 for his contributions to the museum collections and the taxonomy of invertebrate and vertebrate species. He was a member of the Amphibian Disease Research Team which was awarded a prestigious CSIRO Medal in 2000 for their world renowned and ground-breaking research into chytrid fungus.

NATURE BASED TOURISM – Mr Oliver Schreiber – Wooroonooran Safaris (from Cairns)

Oliver owns and runs Wooroonooran Safaris, a dedicated family business devoted to high quality rainforest tours with a personalised service and accurate information. The company's tours give a professional insight into the best features of our tropical lifestyle, cuisine and wildlife. Oliver's naturalist tour guides present a wealth of knowledge about this region's wonderful fauna and flora. In 2005 the company won the Australian Tourism Export Council's Excellence Award for Best Tour Operator in Australia. Oliver's philosophy is that wet weather is usually not an excuse to stay home – rather, it is a good reason to get out and enjoy the rainforests in their natural glory!

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL CULTURE – Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Tours (from Mossman)

Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Tours started in 1987 when Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku (BBN) started conducting guided tours along private tracks through the rainforest adjacent to Mossman Gorge. This grass-root tourism business was established to promote employment, cultural education and economic development for the local Aboriginal community. The tour provides visitors with an insight into Kuku Yalanji culture as well as the natural environment of the World Heritage Area. Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime currently provides walking tours for local and international guests – including a large number of student groups and over 40 different operators. The business has been expanded to include a large art gallery, supplied by over 30 local artists who are developing new art forms and revitalising their culture. There is also a small café. Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime is

ecotourism accredited – and the first Indigenous operator in Queensland to be certified under the Respecting Our Culture program. The business has recently been inducted into the TTNQ Hall of Fame for winning the prestigious Heritage, Cultural and Indigenous Tourism Award three years running.

SCIENCE – Prof Nigel Stork and Prof Steve Turton (from Cairns)

Steve and Nigel worked together to lead the Rainforest CRC for over ten years. Both have distinguished careers in science. Nigel and Steve collaborated to produce 'Living in a Dynamic Tropical Forest Landscape' in 2008, a vast collation of the diverse research that occurred under the Rainforest CRC. Steve is a climatologist and biogeographer who has specialised in rainforest microclimates and the dynamic, physical factors that affect them. This includes study of the impacts of cyclones and climate change. Nigel has focused on rainforests and, in particular, the canopy – where the atmosphere and the biosphere interact. Over the last twenty years Nigel has become more focused on rainforest conservation and the wise use of forests. Their vision for research in the Wet Tropics has expanded rainforest research to incorporate a broad spectrum of investigations into the Wet Tropics landscape and community. They both continue to work nationally and internationally to conserve the Wet Tropics rainforests.

UNsung HERO – Pam Tully (from Kuranda)

Pam came to Cairns in 1990 and fell in love with the rainforest and its animals – she still loves spotlighting among the tall eucalypts on the Lamb Range. After caring for a few orphaned flying foxes, Pam soon found herself opening a wildlife hospital at Millaa Millaa because she was so concerned by the extent of tick paralysis amongst a nearby flying fox colony. In 1999 Pam opened BatReach, a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facility in Kuranda. She invited the public to attend and learn about native wildlife, particularly flying foxes. Pam finances BatReach herself with help from donations. Volunteers also come in daily to assist to clean enclosures and feed the wildlife. Pam rehabilitates thousands of injured and orphaned native animals each year and organises comprehensive release programs to ensure the animals' successful release and return to the wild. She is always on the other end of the phone for other wildlife carers or members of the public who need advice or support.

WORLD HERITAGE NEIGHBOUR – Mr Peter Salleras (from Mission Beach/Tully)

Peter and his wife, Alison, both came from cane farming families. In 1983 they bought a 220 acre property at Feluga. Over two thirds of the block is rainforest and adjoins the World Heritage Area. On the cleared areas of the block Peter grows over 100 species of exotic tropical fruit trees such as rambutans, durians, soursops and pomellos. Peter says that the rainforest on the block has lots of benefits – a good supply of gravity-fed water, windbreaks, favourable microclimates for growing fruit trees, more moderate temperatures, and tall trees as anchor points for netting. Peter has also been revegetating creek banks and wildlife corridors on his block with rainforest species. Peter has worked tirelessly to improve the management of his land. With other rambutan growers in the area he has worked to slow water run-off and minimise erosion and silt loss using detention basins and silt traps. Peter is also working on techniques for farmers to live on friendly terms with native wildlife.

YOUNG CASSOWARY AWARD – Excelsior Program, Gordonvale State School

The Excelsior Program is a new and innovative Whole School Sustainability Program that was integrated into Gordonvale State School's curriculum at the beginning of 2009. The Excelsior Team contribute to the School Environment Management Plan, collect data through audits, surveys and observations and then write an Action Plan incorporating the areas of Biodiversity, Energy, Water and Waste. These students then promote and implement various sustainability initiatives throughout the school and community encouraging all members of the school community to be involved in the projects.

OTHER YOUNG CASSOWARY AWARDS

Outstanding Achievement Award

- Year 4/5 Trinity Anglican School, for writing and performing their play, *Plight of the Cassowary*.

Encouragement Awards

- Kimberley Hardwick and Emma-Louise Stokes from Aloomba State School for developing a butterfly garden.
- Ivana Klaasen from Bentley Park College for her report on the proposed Kuranda Range Road upgrade.