Five Must-See's for the Tropics
Cassowaries in Crisis
New Logo for the World Heritage Area
W E L C O M E  T O  T H E
2002 Dry Season edition
of Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage Magazine. Over 130,000 copies of the magazine are distributed to residents and visitors to the World Heritage Area, from Townsville to Cooktown.

The magazine is packed with stories about the animals, plants and people that live in and around Australia’s Tropical Rainforests. These forests were placed on the World Heritage list in recognition of their importance as the oldest continuously surviving tropical rainforests on earth.

A CH year conservationists enthusiastically observe the annual migration of the majestic Pied Imperial Pigeon (Ducula bicolor) from Papua New Guinea to the northern tropics of Australia. Commencing in August, this migration heralds the start to another breeding season.

The pigeons return coincides with the fruiting of our various tropical plants when the supply of fruits in Papua New Guinea is low. Pigeons prefer to roost on islands as there are fewer predators present. Males and females form breeding pairs and take turns to fly to the mainland and feed each day. The respective ‘spouse’ stays at home to look after the nest. Pigeons commence their journey back to Papua New Guinea in February.

Following a decline in numbers earlier this century, the population of Pied Imperial Pigeons is now on the increase. Last year pigeon counters recorded 35,000 pigeons returning from the mainland to North Brook Island off Cardwell at the end of the day. This figure represents approximately half the breeding population on the island.

The pigeons are also playing an indirect role in rainforest conservation. Seed traps are placed under trees where the birds roost and, once the fruit flesh is digested, the hard inner seeds are passed unharmed. These are then sent to conservation groups for revegetation programs around Australia’s Tropical Rainforests.

LEAN off those hiking boots – planning is underway for an extensive new walking track system.

Approximately 100 km of tracks have been proposed in previously isolated rainforest bounded by the towns of Ravenshoe, Tully, Innisfail and Millaa Millaa.

The tracks will build on the north’s current reputation as a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts.

They follow extensive river systems, cross mountain ranges, and provide views of some of Australia’s spectacular waterfalls. Walkers will be able to stroll for several hours or spend seven days walking the network, depending on their fitness levels and holiday schedules.

It is envisaged the track development will not only create jobs during track construction, but will generate opportunities for Rainforest Aboriginal people and local businesses who will be providing transport, accommodation, food and guiding services. The tracks are expected to be finished in 2003.
RAINFOREST IN REVIEW

WORLD HERITAGE LOGGER SENTENCED TO 12 MONTHS IN PRISON

A man who cut down 23 trees in the World Heritage Area will spend 12 months in prison.

Brett Dempsey pleaded guilty to “destroying forest products” on the Herberton Range, an area managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The illegal logging affected one hectare of forest, and scientific reports indicate it will take more than a century to fully recover. The largest tree removed was estimated to be over 300 years old.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority’s executive director, Russell Watkinson, said he hoped the sentencing would send a strong message that deliberate logging would not be tolerated.

“Going to prison isn’t pleasant and I feel sorry for Brett Dempsey’s family,” Mr Watkinson said. “However, this was a serious offence and I hope the judge’s decision will deter any other would-be offenders.

“Australia’s Tropical Rainforests are like a natural savings bank for our children. People who steal from the World Heritage Area are stealing this precious legacy from future generations for their own personal gain.”

VISITORS HELP RESEARCHERS

Visitors to the World Heritage Area are providing important information to rainforest researchers.

Ten selected visitor sites between the Daintree and Paluma are being surveyed as part of a long-term monitoring program.

Researchers will be asking visitors how they heard about the site, why they chose it, and its good and bad points.

The results will help the Wet Tropics Management Authority to manage the World Heritage Area better by understanding the needs of visitors and matching them to suitable sites.

GREEN LIGHT FOR FOREST INSTITUTE

A new Australian Tropical Forest Institute would establish Cairns as a world leader in tropical forest research and management and diversify the regional economy, an independent report has found.

A feasibility study by Gibsons Consulting estimates the Institute will bring long-term economic flows to the region and provide a best practice model for integrating science, management, commercial and Aboriginal expertise.

Government funding is now needed for the first stage – a two-floor circular building with conference and lecture rooms, theatre, laboratories and public displays.

The building will provide a hub for satellite buildings encouraging commercial operators and government departments to co-locate to the site, beside James Cook University at Smithfield, Cairns. The Institute hopes to attract funding so it can open its doors for business in 2004.

ABORIGINAL NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN

The World Heritage Area is made up of the traditional lands of over 20 different Rainforest Aboriginal groups, who have customary obligations to manage their country according to their cultures.

In recognition of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ rights and interests, negotiations have begun to develop a regional agreement between Rainforest Aboriginal and government management agencies.

The process is expected to take more than 12 months. The intent is to develop arrangements for better involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people in management of the World Heritage Area, recognising their native title rights and obligations to the land.

CONTACT

Nigel Hedges at The Wet Tropics Management Authority on (07) 4052 0555 or Jim Petrich at The Cape York Peninsula Development Association on (07) 4031 3432.

WALKING STRATEGY

A total of 148 existing tracks and 53 potential new walks have been identified in the Wet Tropics Walking Strategy released late last year.

The strategy aims to provide a new, coordinated approach for bushwalking in the Wet Tropics bio-region.

The strategy highlights a need for more long distance walking track networks, overnight walks, heritage walks and Aboriginal guided walks.

It also tackles issues such as developing standards for track construction and maintenance, monitoring environmental impacts and promotion of tracks.

The 90-page document or a 12-page summary brochure and map are available from the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

CHECK IT OUT

Contact Campbell Clarke at the Wet Tropics Management Authority on (07) 4052 0542 or www.wettropics.gov.au/mlr/managingtourism.htm

Help Preserve Australia’s Tropical Rainforests for Future Generations

The Australian Rainforest Foundation says instead of buying flowers or gifts to mark a special occasion, people can purchase a rainforest seedling which will be planted in Australia’s Tropical Rainforest World Heritage Area.

Foundation President, George Mansford, said the opportunity of marking the birth of a newborn child, celebrating an anniversary or birthday or simply remembering a loved one - by giving a gift of life to the rainforest - was becoming a popular gift alternative.

Order a unique Trees for Life gift for a special friend or loved one - or support the foundation in other ways.

- Yes! I would like to become a Foundation Trees for Life supporter by ordering ____ trees @ $55 each (including GST)
- I would like to join the Rainforest Supporters Program @ $55 per year
- Please accept my tax-deductible donation of $____
- Payment details:
  - Cheque (made payable to the Australian Rainforest Foundation)
  - Visa □ Mastercard - Number:_________________________ Expiry date:____/____ Amount: $____
- Name on card: _______________________________________
- Signature: ___________________________________________
- Date: ______________________
- Name: _____________________________________________
- Address: ___________________________________________
- State: _____________________ Postcode:____________
- Email:______________________________________ Phone Number: _______________________________
- Please mail or fax this coupon to: Australian Rainforest Foundation, PO Box 3006, Cairns QLD, 4870 Ph: 07 4051 2000 Fax: 07 4031 2400
Five must see’s for the Tropics

Now is the time to take a drive under the cool forest canopy, swim in clear creeks - and enjoy the natural beauty of our World Heritage listed rainforests. Here are five fun activities for the tropics...

1. HEAD FOR THE HILLS

Escape the coastal heat and head up to the Tablelands or Paluma for a weekend, but don’t forget your warm clothes - even in summer. Make a bed and breakfast or a classic old pub your weekend base and explore some of the World Heritage Area’s beautiful natural features. You can start by working your way through the list of attractions shown on the magazine map on pages 8 and 9. Visit the Wet Tropics Visitor Centre at Ravenshoe (pictured above) and Malanda for the inside story on what to see and do in the area.

2. VOLCANIC LAKES

Lake Eacham and Lake Barrine are crater lakes created 12,000 years ago by high-pressured steam. Despite their violent past, these serene lakes are a great place for a bushwalk, picnic, devonshire tea or boat cruise. Wet Tropics volunteers are often stationed at Lake Eacham on weekends to answer questions and lead walks around the lake. For more information contact the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service office at Lake Eacham, phone (07) 4095 3768.

ABOVE: Tchupala Falls

ABOVE: Ravenshoo Visitor Centre

ABOVE: Aerial view of Lake Barrine

BELOW: Lake Eacham visitor display

LEFT: The pontoon at Lake Eacham
3. WATERFALLS GALORE

When the weather is wet, it’s time to load the camera with film and visit the World Heritage Area, the waterfall capital of Australia.

During these periods it’s wise to stay on sealed roads or you may end up staying longer than you expected.

Luckily, there are fantastic waterfalls of every shape and size serviced by bitumen roads. Take a drive along the Bruce Highway and visit Murray Falls near Tully and Jourama Falls near Ingham. Travel along the Palmerston Highway and visit the picturesque Nandroya and Tchupala Falls. Then if you’re not waterfalled-out, tour the Tablelands taking in the Millaa Millaa Waterfall Circuit, Millstream Falls near Ravenshoe and Dinner Falls at Mt Hypipamee.

4. TAKE THE STING OUT OF SUMMER

Stinging jellyfish make swimming along the coast from November through to April dangerous. Instead, cool off in a freshwater swimming hole. They are fed by rainforest creeks and the water is refreshingly clean and cool. But remember – tragedies occur when people are swept over waterfalls, trapped under submerged logs, or drowned in floodwaters. Swim only at approved areas which are properly signposted and managed.

Remember to consider the local wildlife and other visitors and:

- stay on tracks and cleared areas so you don’t accidentally trample the undergrowth
- take plastic, not glass
- insect repellent and sun blocks pollute creeks, so try to wash off any excess before you get in the water
- use the local toilet facilities – don’t pollute the water or the forest
- leave your pets at home
- carry out all rubbish.

5. WILD WHITE WATER ACTION

Waterways pick up volume and speed when the summer rains come, creating a roller coaster ride of white water thrills and spills. High water levels and submerged logs can create dangerous conditions, so the best idea is to join a professional raft or kayak guide who knows the river and can supply safety equipment. Then hold on to your paddle and get ready for some adrenalin-packed action!
A butterfly sharing accommodation with hundreds of ants may seem a little strange to most of us but, to the Apollo Jewel butterfly and the Golden Ant this peculiar relationship is normal.

The Apollo Jewel butterfly (Hypochrysops apollo apollo) is an endangered species confined to coastal paperbark swamps of north-eastern Queensland between Cooktown and Ingham. Their larvae feed exclusively on the bulbous body of the Ant Plant (Myrmecodia beccarii) that grows on the trunks and branches of melaleuca and other coastal trees.

When the adult butterfly lays an egg on the outside surface of the Ant Plant, the Golden Ant (Philidris cordatus) carries the larva inside and cares for it until it has matured. Being the only native ant that lives in and pollinates the Ant Plant, it is a very important part of the Apollo Jewel butterfly’s life cycle.

The two species co-operate by the larvae eating the internal tissues of the Ant Plant, enlarging pathways that the ants use. The feeding larvae also exude a sugary substance from their backs that the Golden Ants feed on.

Before the larva matures into a butterfly, it does some forward planning and makes an exit hole big enough for its emergence as an adult. Next, it spins a cocoon as part of its pupation stage - this is where the transformation from a larva to butterfly occurs. Once the transformation is complete, the butterfly leaves the plant through the exit hole and flies off into the wide blue yonder.

As an endangered species the Apollo Jewel has numerous pressures affecting its survival. Some of the threats are from human interference - such as the extensive clearing and drainage of paperbark swamps in which the larval host grows. Feral ants can also be a menace when they invade the Ant Plant, forcing the Golden Ants to relocate and leave the Apollo Jewel larvae unattended.

BOOK REVIEWS

**JIRRBAL RAINFOREST DREAMTIME STORIES**
Maisie Yarrcgi Barlow, $18.65
Walker’s Bookshop, Cairns

Maisie (Yarrcgi) Barlow’s Jirrbal Rainforest Dreamtime Stories are witty and wise moral fables from the Jirrbal People of Ravenshoe. The stories were told to Maisie when she was a child growing up in the rainforest of the Far North – a time she remembers fondly in her book.

A Jirrbal Elder and grandmother and great-grandmother, Maisie now tells her people’s stories to the children of Ravenshoe where she teaches Jirrbal language and culture at the Ravenshoe State School.

Whilst nothing can beat hours of story telling around the bushfire, Jirrbal Rainforest Dreamtime Stories is the next best thing to listening to an Elder. Maisie’s stories are brought to life in her first book by the beautiful and charming illustrations of Michael (Boiyool) Anning. A local artist, Michael was the first Queenslander to win a major Indigenous arts award in the Northern Territory.

All stories are breathtakingly simple but full of wisdom and insight. Targeting readers from 6 to 10 years old, this book is definitely a treat for the entire family.

**SHARING CULTURE - RAINFOREST**
Denise Ellen Ashman, Photographs by Stanley Breeden $19.95
Walker’s Bookshop, Cairns

This addition to the series of books for young people about Australian Indigenous cultures is based on the Jumbun community, a group of Aboriginal Rainforest Peoples from neighbouring lands between Cardwell and Innisfail.

Sharing Culture - Rainforest introduces members of the Jirrbal, Girramay, Jiru and Gulngay peoples and their traditional habitat, their hunting methods and food sources in the rainforest. Superb photographs and factual narratives illustrate amongst many other things how the shell of a snail is used to slice up the poisonous Black Bean, which can cause painful diarrhoea if not prepared correctly. It also shows how to make string from the inner bark of the fig tree, and how to cut a shield from the buttress of a rainforest fig.

Whilst the book is designed for young people in the upper primary and lower secondary age range, many adults will enjoy this beautiful publication and Stanley Breeden’s brilliant photographs of the natural riches of Far North Queensland.

The book is ideal for studies in society, Indigenous culture, natural history and the environment. It is the perfect gift for friends overseas and tourists who are interested in Aboriginal Australia.
Leeches can consume several times their own weight in just one bloody meal, before dropping off and finding a dark spot to rest and digest. After a good meal, a leech can survive several months before feeding again. Everyone has their favourite theory on how to keep leeches from biting them. Probably the best idea is to cover up your legs and avoid brushing against lower vegetation when you’re in damp or wet places.

To detach a leech, carefully expose it to a flame, or sprinkle it with salt, tree or eucalyptus oil or rubbing alcohol. If you just want to move the leech on, try sliding a fingernail under the biting end. The hirudin might cause the bite to bleed for some time, and the bites are often itchy.

**MARCH FLIES**

**ARCH flies (or Tabanids)** are medium to large biting flies with broad triangular heads and a long, horned proboscis. Widespread throughout warmer parts of Australia, they will attack humans, livestock and domestic pets to obtain blood. Adults are more abundant in moist rainforests and woodlands and are a particular nuisance near water.

It’s the females of the species that usually cause havoc at your family picnic. They are responsible for seeking out blood for their supper while the males feed on nectar and plant juices. The females are voracious feeders, often hovering persistently before landing.

They have two large blade-like mouthparts, used to slash the skin, and a proboscis that pierces the skin, inflicting a painful puncture wound that will continue to ooze blood long after the fly has departed.

As the blood flows the fly gorges itself unless it is disturbed. March flies sometimes hover so much before landing that they are easy targets for a good swatting. Because the flies see in ultra violet, studies have shown that they are attracted to darker colours, such as dark blue, so if you’re planning an outing in an area known for its march flies wear light coloured clothing! Insect repellent containing DEET will generally deter most biting flies - look for it on the label.

A small consolation is that the average life span for an adult march fly is only three to four weeks.

**STINGING TREES**

**A** USTRALIA is well known for its venomous snakes and spiders, but what a lot of people don’t know is that we also have the world’s most painful plant – the aptly named stinging tree.

There are six species of stinging tree in Australia. They live along the east coast of Australia from Cape York in the north to Victoria in the south. You’ll see them along tracks, the banks of creeks, and where the rainforest canopy has been broken by a falling branch or tree. They also pop up after a cyclone has ripped through a forest, or after an area has been cleared for development.

Stinging trees play an important part in the ecology of a rainforest. Many native Australian animals, including birds and insects are not bothered by the sting, and happily devour the leaves and fruit. But they are very nasty to introduced species such as humans, horses and dogs.

Even though they don’t hunt in packs, these stinging trees are pretty vicious. The sting is delivered through tiny silicon hairs that cover the leaves and fruit. You can think of the silicon hairs as tiny fibres of non-transparent glass which penetrate your skin, and then break off. They’re so tiny that often the skin closes over the hairs and you can’t remove them.

The silicon hairs cause pain because they carry a neurotoxin. You can release the neurotoxin from the hairs by heating or cooling your skin, or just touching it. The pain comes immediately after touching the plant, and it gradually increases to a peak after about 20-30 minutes.

What is really weird is that the pain is real and intense, but your body does not suffer any damage. Fire and snake bites cause pain, AND they damage you as well. But it seems that the pain from this tree could be the only pain that is not related to any damage. If we look at the neurotoxin involved, we might learn a lot about the mechanism of pain.

So what’s the best way to get the hairs out of you, once you’ve accidentally got stuck on a stinging tree? The best method is to remove the hairs with a hair-removal wax strip. It might sound like a good way to get a free leg wax - but the pain is certainly not worth it.

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Australasia's Tropical Rainforests World Heritage - One of the reasons the Wet Tropics was listed as a World Heritage Area is its spectacular scenery. Here are some spots you shouldn't miss...

**Central Coast**

- **Tully Gorge** - The Rim Walk: swim in the pools at the base of this waterfall, then hike down the steps to the waterfall. QPWS Tully Gorge (07) 4434 0899.
- **Mission Beach Visitor Centre** - Of interest for any visitor; the wet tropics section starts on the second floor. QPWS Mission Beach (07) 4044 3177.
- **Clarence River Cataract Falls** - One of the prettiest in north Queensland. QPWS Cardwell (07) 4066 8779.

**Southern Wet Tropics**

- **Josephine Falls** - An old arch bridge provides access to this four-day hike - numbers are limited so bookings are essential. QPWS Barron Gorge National Park (07) 4068 7197.
- **Lynd River** - Day use area and camping area. 45km west of Ingham, an hour's drive from the highway. QPWS Josephine Falls (07) 4052 7431.
- **North West Lake Forest Park** - 35km north-west of Ingham, 2km north-east of Tully, with walking tracks and a picnic area. QPWS Tully Gorge (07) 4044 0899.
- **Clayoquot Creek** - A short 2km walking track takes you to Falls Creek, 15km west of Ingham. QPWS Tully Gorge (07) 4044 0899.

**Tablelands Region**

- **Baron Falls** - The Baron River drops dramatically from the Tablelands to the Devonian-aged rocks beneath. The falls are 175km west of Cairns. QPWS Cairns (07) 4068 7197.
- **TRNC National Park** - Scenically stunning and one of Australia's most bio-diverse rainforests. Information Centre: 07 4066 8779. QPWS Tully Gorge (07) 4066 8779.

**Northern Region**

- **Nakupenda** - A coastal drive through the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef. Ferries leave from Cardwell - book well ahead (07) 4066 8779. QPWS Cardwell (07) 4066 8779.
- **Australian Nature Sanctuary** - More than 200 species from around the world - available for guided tours. QPWS Cairns (07) 4068 7197.

**We recommend this guide be used together with a regular road map.**
EXT time you’re admiring the splendour of our tropical rainforest landscapes, keep in mind not all “visitors” to the rainforest are welcome.

Weeds are quietly creeping their way into our rainforest habitat and if left unchecked, have the potential to destroy the integrity of our World Heritage Area. A weed is basically a plant growing in the wrong place. Some weeds can be quite appealing to the eye, however they pose an environmental threat to our World Heritage rainforests. New plants are transported into the forest either through animal droppings, clinging to animals’ coats or even in the mud on your car tyres, or hiking boots. Once taken out of their natural environment and away from their predators, they thrive and compete with native plants for nutrients and space and become a weed.

Some weeds are sold at local nurseries as exotic plants and have the potential to be spread by domestic gardeners. Weeds are a problem for graziers and farmers too. Noxious weeds can poison cattle and infiltrate areas set aside for pastures and crops. Plants grown for commercial crops in agricultural areas are also common as weeds in the World Heritage Area. Animals may spread weeds further by eating its fruit and scientists are investigating the role of cassowaries and feral pigs in the dispersal of Pond Apple (Annona glabra) one of the major environmental weeds in our tropical rainforests.

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A Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre project showed feral pigs can retain Pond Apple seeds in their digestive system for up to 95 hours, and could potentially deposit seeds anywhere within their home range of up to five square kilometres.

Pond Apple seeds may remain in the cassowary digestive system for up to 28 hours resulting in seed dispersal hundreds of metres, possibly kilometres away.

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If you think you’ve found a weed, take a cutting and obtain positive identification and the latest control information from your local council’s weed inspector or Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) land protection officer.

Guides can be purchased from your local council. The weed guide is a handy pocket companion for weed identification in the field. It’s a comprehensive pocket companion with colour photos, descriptions of the weeds and their preferred habitat and seasonal flowering times.

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Miniature worlds in the rainforest

The soft, green carpets lining creeks and blanketing rainforest logs can be easy to overlook and pass by. But these miniature forests have a lineage which goes back 360 million years, when the first water plants evolved to survive on land.

Most people call all these plants “mosses,” but botanists describe them as “bryophytes” which includes a diverse range of mosses, liverworts and hornworts.

Unlike other plants, they don’t have true roots, stems or leaves. They reproduce from spores or fragments of plant. In fact, any part of a bryophyte can grow into a new plant identical to the parent!

In the past, these plants have been used for wound dressings, to burn as fuel, and in medicines. They are also an important part of the rainforest ecosystem, soaking up nutrients, providing a refuge for insects and protecting soil from erosion.

Tropical north Queensland has over 430 different species of mosses, and a single rock beside a stream can be home to over eight different bryophytes.

Take a closer look at these miniature worlds in the rainforest on your next school excursion or family outing.

To help you explore these new worlds, you need a hand lens and a field guide. We recommend “Plants of the Tropics” available from James Cook University Bookshop on Cairns (07) 4042 1111 or Townsville (07) 4781 4111, Walker’s Bookshop in Cairns and Mary Who in Townsville.

Rainforest DETECTIVE

MOVE over Sherlock Holmes, north Queensland has its very own rainforest sleuth tracking down a ruthless rainforest killer.

Enter mild mannered botanist Paul Gadek who is waging a campaign to reveal the truth about a mass murderer. The criminal in question is the soil fungus Phytophthora cinnamomi, and it is responsible for the deaths of millions of plants in Australia and overseas.

Recent outbreaks in the World Heritage Area killed every plant in patches of up to two hectares.

“These dieback sites are very eerie places,” says Paul. “The leaves wither on the trees and branches die and fall to the ground. The only sign of the fungus is a chestnut coloured stain under the bark.”

Paul organised a team of investigators at James Cook University to work on the case using satellite imagery, high-tech computer maps and genetic testing.

They have found 12 different Phytophthora species in the rainforest and at least some are found here naturally.

Many of the outbreaks are near old roads, so the fungus may have arrived on machinery. Recent dieback patches may have been triggered by people, feral pigs or changes to drainage patterns.

The researchers continue to test the sites, trial inoculation methods, measure regeneration and look for new ways to detect outbreaks.

“We’ve still got a long way to go before we solve the whole Phytophthora mystery,” says Paul, “but we’re on the way to understanding what we’re up against.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you have been walking or camping, wash your boots and tent pegs in disinfectant before entering the World Heritage Area. If you find a dieback patch, contact the Wet Tropics Management Authority on (07) 4052 0555.

TREAT the Seed

THINK reconciliation and the word “nursery” is not likely to immediately spring to mind. But just west of Cairns on the Atherton Tableland, a reconciliation success story is occurring at a small local nursery.

In a certain nursery at Lake Eacham you are likely to be greeted by young Aboriginal men and women working side by side with elderly volunteers, potting and transplanting Silky Oak and Black Bean seedlings. It’s an all too rare sight in rural Australia but one made possible by the efforts of local Aboriginal and non-indigenous people, conservationists and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

It all began in 1982 when a group of Yungaburra residents wanted to plant local native species on their land but found that only exotic plants were available from the Forestry Department.

Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT) was formed to encourage the planting of local native rainforest tree species.

An agreement was reached between TREAT and the QPWS and the Centre for Tropical Restoration nursery evolved. TREAT and the Centre for Tropical Restoration nursery went from strength to strength but was missing one element - involvement by the local Aboriginal owners.

An Aboriginal trainee program was established and Yidinji woman Syb Bresolin and Ngadjon man Warren Canedo joined the nursery. The two trainees had a lot of cultural knowledge to share with their fellow workmates.

QPWS Ranger Tania Murphy enjoys learning language names and the spiritual aspects of looking after country through the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT) Centre.

“They are the real “caring-for-country” ethic in Aboriginal culture and getting a better understanding of this gives us, as conservationists, an extra dimension to our work that’s very important,” she said.

After starting her one-year traineeship Syb contacted her former teachers in the Caring for Country program at the Cairns TAFE and invited the students to the Centre. Since then, the students have been taught skills in restoring country by Aboriginal and non-indigenous trainers who work at the Centre.

“When the students first arrive they’re a little shy, but by the time they leave the nursery, their heads are up, full of pride and confidence from all they’ve learnt. There’s something positive happening that makes me feel hopeful for our future. I’ve found since I started here that there is a lot of healing for reconciliation happening,” Syb said.

If you would like to become a volunteer at the nursery you can contact TREAT on (07) 40953 406.


Below: Plants of the Tropics
Author Andi Cairns sometimes has to resort to climbing ropes to reach bryophytes high in the rainforest canopy!
LOSS OF HABITAT

The loss of habitat and lack of links to other rainforest areas at Mission Beach has resulted in birds sharing unnaturally small territories. Normally, cassowary territories are large, some measuring up to seven kilometres. Being a solitary animal, sub-adults are chased from the home range by their father and go in search of their own territory. With fierce competition for habitat already, it starts to get a little crowded.

Forced to seek food from farming areas, cassowaries are drawn closer to the human community. Many people make the mistake of feeding them, resulting in the association of people with food. This can cause their behaviour to become more aggressive as they wander into settlements searching for food. Dog attacks are often common in these situations.

ROAD DEATHS

At least four known cassowary-crossing points occur along the stretch of road from El-Arish to Mission Beach where protection of the habitat is considered vital for the species survival. The Wet Tropics Management Authority worked closely with the Department of Main Roads during a road upgrade in 2001 to include cassowary warning signs and speed reduction areas.

The design incorporated road markings to show known cassowary-crossing areas, yellow caution signs, rumble strips and coloured shoulders to create the perception of a narrow road. All of these measures are aimed at encouraging motorists to slow down.

Regardless of planning safer roads for cassowaries, their survival in Mission Beach and surrounds depends on the local community. Most road kills in the area are by residents driving to and from work. It’s vital to look at the big picture, take a bit of time out of our busy schedules and slow down. By pulling together we can try to save our “big birds” before it’s too late!
A S REGULAR users of the Mission Beach Road, tour companies operating in the World Heritage Area have been enlisted to help save the cassowary by placing yellow "take care" stickers in prominent places on their buses.

The Cassowary Advisory Group (CAG), a community based organisation, received funding from the Natural Heritage Trust for the project. With vehicle strike being a major cause of cassowary deaths in the Mission Beach area, it is hoped the stickers remind drivers to be on the look out for the endangered species.

CAG Chair, Steve Russell said the group has received positive feedback from a number of diverse groups.

“We’ve had comments from timber haulers and ice delivery companies as well as mums and dads,” he said.

As a volunteer for the Mission Beach Tourism Information Centre Mr Russell said tourists constantly ask him where they can see a cassowary.

“The tourists see all the signs and photos and want to know where they can see a cassowary in the wild.

“We see cassowaries here every day, but usually it’s the same one or two birds wandering their home range.

“Tourists acknowledge the cassowary is an icon species here. They are also sympathetic to the fact that the cassowary is an endangered species and are interested in what we are doing to try and protect them.”

Keep an eye out for the stickers (and cassowaries) on your travels and if you hop on a tour bus without a sticker on it ask the driver why he doesn’t have one!

NOW kids can get involved in cassowary conservation with the launch of the Wet Tropics Management Authority’s Cassowary Education Kit.

The kit is a comprehensive teaching tool for primary school grades five to seven and was produced by the Cassowary Advisory Group.

It was funded by PNG Gas and developed in consultation with Education Queensland and with support from Channel Ten’s Totally Wild television programme and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

It contains an activity book for teachers, an endangered species video produced by Totally Wild and posters and brochures.

It’s hoped the education kit will inspire children to take an active role in saving the cassowary and encourage their mums and dads and other family members to get involved as well.

The kit has been distributed to schools in known cassowary habitat areas, from the Daintree in the north to Paluma in the south.

Cassowaries in Schools

Cassowaries were listed as a nationally endangered species in 1999.

Cassowaries belong to a group of flightless birds called “ratites” which includes the cassowaries and emus of Australasia, the ostriches of Africa and Asia, the rheas of South America and the kiwis of New Zealand. Ratites also includes the now extinct elephant birds of Madagascar and the moas of New Zealand.

Cassowaries stand up to 2 metres tall. Males weigh up to 35 kilograms, females up to 60 kilograms.

Courtship occurs during May and June. Females mate with males of their choice. The pair remains together for a few weeks until the female lays about 4 large pale green eggs.

After egg laying the female leaves the male to incubate the eggs and rear the chicks. She may then take another mate and lay another clutch of eggs.

The male incubates the eggs for about two months. He looks after the young for about nine months and then chases them away to fend for themselves. Eggs hatch from July to September.

The cassowary has three toes. The inside toe has a large claw that is used to defend itself.

The large keel shaped helmet on the cassowary’s head is called a casque.

They are the sole disperser of the larger rainforest seeds and are an important factor in rainforest revegetation.

Cassowaries are culturally significant to Rainforest Aboriginal people.

Cassowary feathers, bones and nails are used in ceremonies.

Cassowaries have been known to live for up to 40 years.

If you would like a copy of the kit and attend a school in a cassowary habitat area, call the Wet Tropics Management Authority on (07) 4052 0555.

Alternatively, the activities and book are available on our website www.wettropics.gov.au
ALEXANDRA BAY STATE SCHOOL

This award is in recognition of the school’s dedication to environmental education and cassowary conservation. The staff at Alexandra Bay have worked hard to ensure an environmental focus in school programs, establishing such interesting subjects as “Rainforest Maths.”

Eight years ago the Daintree Cassowary Care Group set up a community nursery in the school grounds. With the help of the children and their parents, they have raised and planted many thousands of cassowary food trees throughout the district.

Their tree planting efforts have won the school national and international recognition, but perhaps the highest seal of approval came from a wild cassowary which now visits the school’s revegetation plot.

SYB BRESOLIN

Syb is a Yidinji woman who completed a four-year ranger training program at TAFE before going to work on revegetation projects with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Centre for Tropical Restoration at Lake Eacham.

In just a few years, she has enriched the staff’s understanding of the importance of Rainforest Aboriginal cultural heritage and the spiritual significance of “Caring for Country”. Syb also plays an important role in teaching Aboriginal students the science and practice of revegetation.

This cross-cultural training is a ground-breaking development for government agencies and adds a new dimension to environmental management.

Syb has not only been busy planting trees, she has also been planting the seeds of reconciliation with the international dignitaries, community volunteers and students who visit the Centre’s nursery. They have learned from Syb the art of accepting people for who they are, and valuing their cultural differences. See Syb’s story on page 11.

GEORGE MANSFORD

After a military career spanning three wars, most people would be ready to relax. But George Mansford didn’t flinch when it came to leading local people into yet another battle to save the cassowary from extinction.

George has always led from the front and by example, and devoted enormous time and effort to encouraging the community to participate in World Heritage conservation and management.

He played a pivotal role in knocking on doors in Brisbane and Canberra and convincing both State and Federal Governments to support critical funding for cassowary conservation.

George was a Wet Tropics Board member and Chair of the Landholders and Neighbours Group for six years, and continues to play an important role in World Heritage conservation as president of the Australian Rainforest Foundation.
HAZEL DOUGLAS

Over 400,000 people visit the Daintree Coast each year, and a small percentage of these are lucky enough to have Hazel Douglas as their guide.

Hazel’s award winning company, Native Guide Safaris, is an excellent role model of Indigenous tourism.

As a traditional owner and member of the Yalanji people, Hazel is highly qualified to introduce visitors to the rainforest and beaches where she grew up.

Hazel teaches guests from all over the world about customary bush foods and medicines, and gives them an authentic cultural experience in the rainforest.

But perhaps her greatest gift to visitors is her generosity in sharing her spiritual connection with the land. It is this generosity of spirit which has made Hazel an outstanding ambassador of tourism in Tropical North Queensland.

GEORGE DAVIS

George is from the Malanbarra-Yidinji clan group and grew up in the traditional way under the guidance of his grandfather. He went on to spend the next 50 years travelling all over northern Queensland’s rainforests cutting timber.

Since retiring in Atherton, he has dedicated his time to his cultural heritage as both an artist and educator.

He is widely respected in the Aboriginal community for his skill in making traditional artefacts such as shields, dilly bags and boomerangs.

George is committed to community education and visits local schools and other centres to talk about his culture and share stories about the country he loves. He is also the author of the book “The Mullunburra People of the Mulgrave River”.

SALLY DRIML

In the early 1980’s Sally graduated as an environmental economist. Not long after graduation, the Federal Government seconded Sally from her job in Townsville to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the future of our regional economy prior to World Heritage Area listing.

After assessing the job opportunities for displaced workers, Sally needed to convince the politicians in Canberra that considerable compensation should be given to our area.

As a result of her study she had come to understand the relationship of our environment, its people and industries. Her dedication to the area was illustrated when she decided to research, unpaid, for a number of years the relationship between environmental protection and the economic health of a community.

DR ROSEMARY HILL

An outspoken leader of the conservation movement, respected researcher and academic, Rosemary Hill has an enduring passion for north Queensland’s rainforests.

Back in the 1970’s when most people thought rainforest was only good for its timber, Rosemary was ahead of her time in recognising its global importance.

She and other conservation activists lobbied politicians and the media, ran community education programs and, when necessary, stood in front of bulldozers to stop logging. Rosemary’s determination paid off, playing a major part in World Heritage listing.

Since then, Rosemary has continued her interest in World Heritage management and has worked tirelessly on many committees to ensure its ongoing protection. She serves as a member of the Board of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australia’s leading national environment group. Her PhD collaboration with Kuku Yalanji people about fire management practices shows she’s still one step ahead in recognising the role of Rainforest Aboriginal people in World Heritage management.
Welcome to Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage

A NEW year and a new symbol for our World Heritage Area. Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage frog and leaf logo now lets you know you are in a World Heritage Area.

The new logo is a result of the Nature Based Tourism Strategy produced by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA). The strategy aims to create a partnership between WTMA and the tourism industry to accurately reflect World Heritage Area values to visitors. Extensive consultation was undertaken with tourism operators, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the conservation sector and Aboriginal groups to decide on the frog logo above.

Around the world, tropical rainforests are under threat from human pressure. Here in Australia’s Tropical Rainforests, our rare animals and plants are no exception. Our frogs – a sign of environmental health – are disappearing. Six species are declining rapidly and another has disappeared, presumed extinct.

The frog in our logo symbolises more than 100 animal species, which are rare or endangered – from the giant flightless cassowary to tiny butterflies.

The leaf symbolises over 3,000 plant species found here – the greatest diversity of plants on the Australian continent. Over 460 of these plant species are considered rare or threatened. They are a living record of the evolution of plants on earth. The simple ferns, the primitive cycads and pines which were the precursors of flowering plants, and the overwhelming profusion of plants and trees which can be seen in these World Heritage listed forests today.

The white keyline around the frog on our logo design is also intended as a vivid reminder of the cultural heritage of more than 20 Aboriginal tribal groups who are recognised as the traditional owners of Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage. The forest forms a diverse set of living cultural landscapes, their natural features interconnected with Aboriginal religion and spirituality.

The frog and leaf will replace the existing cassowary and cycad leaf on road signs and tourist brochures in the World Heritage Area, so keep an eye out for it. WTMA will retain the cassowary and leaf as its corporate logo.

The white keyline around the frog in our logo design is also intended as a vivid reminder of the cultural heritage of more than 20 Aboriginal tribal groups who are recognised as the traditional owners of Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage. The forest forms a diverse set of living cultural landscapes, their natural features interconnected with Aboriginal religion and spirituality.

If you find wildlife injured beside the road, who are you going to call?

There are dedicated wildlife carers throughout northern Queensland. Before you phone the numbers below, get a precise location of the animal. If you are in a remote area and have some wildlife handling experience, you may decide to pick up the animal and take it to the nearest wildlife carer.

Approach injured and distressed animals with caution. Normally shy wallabies have a nasty kick and bite if they are in pain. Often the best thing to do is approach animals from behind and throw a towel over them. If the animal is cold and wet, the towel will soak up some moisture and trap their body heat. Many wildlife carers keep an emergency towel, pillowcase and cardboard box in their cars for this purpose. Keep the animal in a darkened, quiet environment (not the boot of the car) and keep children and family pets away from the animal.

Phone contacts for wildlife carers

- Cairns Area
  (07) 4053 4467
  a/h 0407 962 075
- Tablelands Area
  (07) 4094 2030
  (07) 4092 2359
- Daintree Coast Area
  (07) 4098 9236
  ph/fax 4098 9079
  0428 736 029
- Townsville Area
  (07) 0414-717374

ROADSIDE VICTIMS

HAVE you been to a Wet Tropics Visitor Centre or visited our World Heritage listed rainforests? Been there, done that – but have you got the T-shirt?

Visitors to the World Heritage Area can purchase Wet Tropics merchandise as worn by staff and volunteers of Wet Tropics Visitor Centres throughout Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage Area.

Wet Tropics shirts and caps are made in Cairns by Marlin Sportswear and are now available at up to 30% off at Wet Tropics Visitor Centres. As well as the shirts pictured above, there are frog T-shirts in adult and child sizes and platypus T-shirts just for the kids.

While you look good you can also feel good because a percentage of each sale goes towards the management of our World Heritage Area.