Australia's largest snake
the Amethystine Python
The mountains of the Wet Tropics
Map of visitor centres and attractions

Published by WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
WELCOME TO THE 2005-06 edition of Australia’s Tropical Rainforests World Heritage Magazine. About 120,000 copies of the magazine are distributed to residents and visitors to the Wet Tropics 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 continually surviving tropical rainforests on earth.

Management of the World Heritage Area is the responsibility of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, a Cairns-based agency funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Authority and, while every effort has been made to check the accuracy of articles, the Authority cannot accept responsibility for any errors and omissions.

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Those of us who live near the coast often look up in awe at the nearby mountains towering above, covered in lush rainforest. Distant summits look out of reach as they stretch across the landscape while deep green forests contrast with the white clouds that drift across the slopes. These mountain ranges of the Wet Tropics provide a picturesque background to the region. They also play an important biological role.
The journey from south to north

As the crow flies, the journey over the Wet Tropics mountains takes you 450km over one of the most biologically diverse and scenic forests in the world. The environmental importance of these forests was recognised on a global scale when they were listed as a World Heritage Area in 1988.

Map 1 Paluma to Cardwell

We begin our journey at the most southern end of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area at the quaint rainforest village in the mist, Paluma, perched atop the coastal range. Surrounded by rainforest, this small community is a heavenly escape in the hotter months. Next is Ingham with Australia’s longest single drop waterfall, Wallaman Falls located inland from here. Wallaman Falls is one of the starting points for the Wet Tropics Great Walk. We continue north past the small town of Cardwell that looks out onto Hinchinbrook Island to the east and the Cardwell Range to the west.

Map 2 Cardwell to Cairns

Travelling north we find the township of Tully that lies between Mt MacKay and Mt Tyson. The Walter Hill Range stretches far into the west from here. The range is famous for the Misty Mountains walking trails, Australia’s longest network of high altitude rainforest tracks. Moving further north along the Bruce Highway, Queensland’s highest mountains – Mt Bartle Frere at 1622m and Mt Bellenden Ker at 1582m are a picturesque backdrop between Innisfail and Cairns. These mountain peaks are usually hidden by cloud, giving them an ancient and mystical feel. Further west the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands contain numerous mountain ranges and large areas of diverse upland rainforest. They are easily accessible by foot or car and you can blissfully explore the forests and waterfalls for hours. The Tableland communities of Atherton, Yungaburra, Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Ravenshoe and Herberton all offer overnight accommodation if you need to rest before continuing your rainforest exploration.

Map 3 Cairns to Cooktown

Past Cairns and the rainforest village of Kuranda, nestled in the Macalister Range, we head for the resort town of Port Douglas. Turning inland, towards Mossman, we see the rugged and mountainous Mossman Bluff with the Mount Carbine Tableland to the west. These are some of the most scenic areas in the Wet Tropics.
Next we arrive at some of the most biologically diverse rainforests in Australia. The Daintree Coast is considered by scientists to be one of the most significant homes to primitive plants on the continent. Jagged mountains rise above Cape Tribulation and the Daintree while Thornton Peak dominates the landscape. Passing through Mt Finnigan and Mt Thomas with a quick stop at the mysterious Black Mountain National Park, we reach the most northern area of the Wet Tropics - Cooktown.

**Climate**

The climate in the higher mountain regions, above 400 to 600m, is consistently cooler than the warm, tropical climate of the coastal lowlands. Temperatures in these mountain uplands may fall well below 5°C, particularly on the peaks that are often cooled by strong winds. Annual rainfall in the Wet Tropics averages from less than 1.3m to over 6.4m on the higher mountains such as Mt Bellenden Ker.

The cooler temperatures, higher rainfall and frequent cloud cover on mountain summits supports vegetation that can differ dramatically from the coastal forests, containing their own suite of narrowly restricted plant species found nowhere else on earth.

**Wildlife**

The Wet Tropics is renowned for its amazing and unusual wildlife, from colourful and noisy birds, tiny frogs and curious possums to tree-climbing kangaroos. Because many of these species are unique to the region, wildlife spotting is a fascinating and rewarding pastime and a huge attraction for visitors and locals.

A striking aspect of the Wet Tropics’ mountaintop fauna and flora is the restriction of many species to high altitude areas. Most of the fauna found exclusively in the Wet Tropics is confined to the cool, wet upland rainforests. A number of species are considered to be the last survivors, or relicts, from formerly widespread cooler environments of the past. Sometimes species may be unique to a particular mountaintop. Other times a species may be found on numerous mountaintops throughout the Wet Tropics, but nowhere else.
This tells us that the species was once more widespread. These species restricted to the upper slopes have continued to evolve in relative isolation. Because of these unusual conditions, no area in Australia has greater biological significance than the upland rainforests of the Wet Tropics.

What animals to look for

During daylight hours you can search the rainforest clad mountains for elusive and secretive birds confined to the uplands such as the golden bowerbird, tooth-billed catbird and grey-headed robin.

Searching the rainforest at night is challenging but the rewards can be great. Most rainforest animals are active after dark. If you go out at dusk or spotlighting at night, you might find amazing marsupials such as the Lumholtz tree-kangaroo, Bennett's tree-kangaroo, the Atherton antechinus and four different ringtail possum species (lemuroid ringtail, green ringtail, Herbert River ringtail and Daintree River ringtail possums). For those with patience and who don't mind getting wet, there are also numerous frogs calling at night to be found around creeks or hiding in the leaf litter.

Rainforest Aboriginal culture

The rugged forest landscape, with its waterfalls and gorges, has been a part of Rainforest Aboriginal life since time immemorial. Stories from the dreamtime include the plants and animals that are a part of their cultural heritage, and many areas are significant cultural sites where traditional ceremonies are still held.

Although the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is not listed for its cultural values, we recognise the spiritual and cultural connection Rainforest Aboriginal people have with the land.

Many Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups use animals as their totem. The cultural significance of rainforest wildlife is shown through traditional dances and paintings that represent the many rainforest animals.

Mountains cloaked in cloud

Even on a fine, clear day, the mountain summits of the Wet Tropics are often cloaked with mist. Have you ever wondered why clouds behave like this and what role they play in the rainforest ecosystem? Recent scientific discoveries have begun to reveal some of the amazing secrets that lie within those cloud forests.

Cloud stripping

In tropical regions along the coast of north-east Australia, the winds are from the south-east for the majority of the year. As these winds encounter the coastal mountain ranges, the warm moist air rises and cools, forming clouds. Rainforest researchers have been studying the associations between these clouds and high altitude or ‘cloud’ forests.

We have known for years that rainforests found on the highest peaks of the Wet Tropics such as Mt Bartle Frere and Mt Bellenden Ker receive an extraordinarily high rainfall. As much as 10m of rain may fall on these mountaintops annually. However, recent research has shown that in addition to this high rainfall, up to 40% more water is harvested from the clouds that drape the
Clearing of cloud forests could result in severe water shortages during the dry season. While upland rainforests in the Wet Tropics are largely protected from clearing, this knowledge is important for land use and water supplies in countries where upland rainforests are under threat from development and agriculture. Studies overseas have also shown that clearing of forests in lowland areas can decrease the formation of cloudbanks over nearby mountains.

Another threat to cloud forests is global warming. Scientists predict that a temperature increase of 1°C to 2°C over the next 50 years would cause cloudbanks to gain altitude and subsequently be out of reach for harvesting by upland forests. This could result in the loss of up to 75% of high altitude rainforests in the region. This loss would have a major impact on both stream flows and the wildlife that lives here.

Climate change in the Wet Tropics

Although accounting for only 0.2% of the Australian continent, the Wet Tropics supports an incredible proportion of Australia’s plants and animals. The region contains about a quarter of all Australia’s frogs and reptiles, a third of all mammals, half of all birds, 60% of all butterflies, and at least 70 vertebrate animal species that occur nowhere else on earth. Furthermore, the region has about 3,000 plant species from over 200 different families, with 700 of these species found nowhere else.

In fact some plants found here are more similar to those found in Tasmania and the highlands of Papua New Guinea than anywhere else in the Wet Tropics. With such a huge number of species within such a small area it is little wonder that scientists are concerned about the consequences of climate change on the survival of the region’s biodiversity.

Upland rainforest diversity

Many of the species found only in the Wet Tropics are restricted to the cool upland rainforests. These upland species may not be able to adjust to predicted increases in temperatures. It is predicted that many of the unique upland rainforest animals will lose up to half of their current range of distribution with a 1°C increase in temperature. Animals that will be threatened include several frog species, ringtail possums, several lizard species confined to particular mountaintops, and birds such as the golden bowserd.
Dry season severity

One aspect of global climate change that is of great concern is changes in the length and severity of the dry season. If temperature extremes and long periods without rain become more common, the stresses on plant and animal populations will increase dramatically. Biologists already know that many animals confined to upland rainforest do not cope well with high temperatures. Hotter and longer dry seasons, associated with more frequent El Nino type conditions, are predicted to have severe impacts on populations of many species. These impacts may be a direct effect of increased temperature, or the environmental effects of lower rainfall and increased fires.

Green ringtail possum

Green ringtail possums for example, are very selective about the leaves they eat and are adapted to living in cool upland rainforest. They do not tolerate high temperatures for long and if temperatures exceed 30°C for over three hours a day, over seven consecutive days, these unique marsupials have difficulty maintaining their body temperature. If the climate in the mountain highlands continues to get warmer and drier, these possums will either have to adapt very quickly or they will become restricted to the coolest areas, or may even become extinct.

Climate change research

Most scientists agree that global climate change will have impacts on the plants and animals of the Wet Tropics, particularly species in the mountain ranges. However, the magnitude of the impacts and resulting changes to habitats within the Wet Tropics remains unknown. Predictions of the likely effects of climate change vary, but even the smallest increase over the next 100 years could severely affect many of the unique Wet Tropics animal species. Some biologists have even predicted that there is a distinct possibility that between 30 and 50 vertebrate species will become extinct before the end of the century.

More information is urgently needed to determine how to manage rapid and unprecedented climate change. Climate change makes it even more urgent to ensure landscape connectivity and to minimise other stressors on ecosystems such as weeds and feral animal species.

Acknowledgement: Dr Martin Cohen and Julia Cooper

WHAT CAN WE DO?

To reduce the impacts of climate change in the Wet Tropics we must:

• Ensure corridors of vegetation across the landscape connect to help wildlife move and adapt to climate change.
• Provide wildlife crossings in upland areas across roads and powerline corridors.
• Identify and protect refuge areas for wildlife.
• Continue to research and monitor the impacts of climate change on forests and animals.

What you can do to reduce the impacts of climate change:

• Check out www.greenhouse.gov.au
SO UTHE RN WET TROPICS

1. **Tully Gorge (Lower)**
   - The 42km scenic drive through lower Tully Gorge begins at the town and offers camping, lookout points, walkways to the river and white water rafting. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4066 8601

2. **Mission Beach Visitor Centre**
   - The Wet Tropics Visitor Centre at Mission Beach is run by local volunteers from environment and tourism groups. 🆕 (07) 4068 7197 or 🆕 (07) 4068 7099

   - **Lilacu Forest**
     - 350m children’s walk, 1.2km rainforest circuit & 7.8km rainforest walk from the Tully-Mission Beach Road to Lacey Creek. 🆕 (07) 4061 5900

   - **Lacey Creek**
     - Look out for cassowaries on this 1.2km rainforest walking track off the Mission Beach – El Arish Road. QPW S Innisfail. 🆕 (07) 4061 5900

   - **Clump Point**
     - A 2.5km circuit track winds through rainforest at Bigil Bay to a spectacular lookout on Bittion Hill. QPW S Innisfail. 🆕 (07) 4061 5900

3. **Hull River Aboriginal Settlement Interpretive Display**
   - Built as a memorial to the Aboriginal settlement and those who lost their lives during the cyclone in 1918. On the corner of the Kennedy Esplanade and Butterfly Park at South Mission Beach (take the South Mission Beach Road).

4. **Palmerston Highway**
   - Named after bushman Christie Palmerston, this scenic rainforest highway between Innilad and the Atturton Tableland gives access to short walks, waterfalls, picnic spots and camping. QPW S Palmerston. 🆕 (07) 4066 5115

5. **Innisfail Information Centre**
   - Open 7 days Mon to Fri 9am to 4pm, Sat 10am to 3pm. On the Bruce Hwy next to the Australian Sugar Industry Museum. Free. 🆕 (07) 4063 2655

6. **Josephine Falls**
   - Queensland’s highest mountains, Belenden Ker and Bartle Frere, loom above this popular picnic area. Short track to falls. A rough track leads to the summit of Mt Bartle Frere (1622m) for fit, experienced walkers only. QPW S Josephine Falls. 🆕 (07) 4067 6304

7. **Babydina Boulders**
   - The Boulders, 11km from Babinda, has a reputation for claiming the lives of unwary visitors. Locals put this down to an Aboriginal legend, but it could be a combination of fast water, slippery boulders and careless behaviour. Babinda Information Centre. 🆕 (07) 4067 1008

8. **Goldsborough Valley**
   - This is a popular place for families and school groups to have a barbecue and enjoy a swim in the hot summer months. Camping sites are also available. Goldsborough is an hour’s drive south-west of Cairns. The road is unsuitable for caravans. QPW S 12km. 🆕 (07) 4066 2597

9. **Lake Morris**
   - Beautiful artifical lake surrounded by rainforest in the hills 20km from Cairns. Kiosk and picnic area open daily from 8am, gates close at 6pm. Great views, no swimming. 🆕 (07) 4055 7414

10. **Crystal Cascades**
    - Enjoy a picnic at this municipal park and swim in the clear waters of Freshwater Creek, 2km from Cairns. Secure your valuables. 🆕 (07) 4044 3044

11. **Skyrail Cableway**
    - Treetop view of the rainforest from a cableway over Barron Gorge to Kuranda, with stops at lookouts and information centre. Make it a round trip with the historic Kuranda train. Admission charge. 🆕 (07) 4038 3355

12. **Lake Placid**
    - Lake Placid is a municipal park on the Barron River beside the Barron Gorge National Park. 12km from Cairns. Day use facilities, restaurant and kiosk. 🆕 (07) 4044 3044

13. **The Gateway Discovery Centre**
    - Features interpretive and interactive displays and is the only accredited visitor information centre in Cairns. In the heart of Cairns on the Esplanade. Open 7 days a week 8.30am to 6.30pm. 🆕 (07) 4053 3588

**NOTE:** This symbol indicates that disabled toilets are available. It does not indicate that tracks are accessible to wheelchairs.

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**CENTRAL COAST**

1. **Paluma**
   - This mountain-top village is a great weekend retreat. There is camping at Big Crystal Creek at the base of the range or Lake Paluma (bookings essential www.nqwater.com.au) 12km past the village. Walking tracks range from 600m to 2.6km. QPW S Paluma. 🆕 (07) 4277 2822 or QPWS Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4061 5900

2. **Frosty Mango**
   - This popular tourist rest stop between Ingham and Townsville has Wet Tropics displays on local birds. 🆕 (07) 4777 8184

3. **Jourama Falls**
   - Cascading falls over salmon-coloured granite make this a favoured camping and picnic area among locals. A 3.5km track leads to falls. QPW S Jourama. 🆕 (07) 4777 3122

4. **Hinchinbrook Visitor Centre, Ingham**
   - Volunteers staff the centre on the corner of the Bruce Highway and Ingham’s main street from Mon-Fri 8.45am to 5pm, weekends 9am to 2pm and most public holidays. 🆕 (07) 4777 5211

5. **Wallaman Falls**
   - The waterfall itself is the largest single drop waterfall in Australia, tumbling 350m to a large pool. The falls are 51km west of Ingham, 18km of which is unsuited road. No open fires. For directions, road conditions and bookings contact QPW S Ingham. 🆕 (07) 4777 2822

6. **Broadwater**
   - Day use and camping area, 45km west of Ingham, an hour’s drive from the highway. QPW S Broadwater. 🆕 (07) 4777 2822

7. **Five Mile Creek**
   - This is a great place to take a break from the heat, just 20km from the Bruce Highway on the southern outskirts of Cardwell. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8779

8. **Rainforest and Reef Centre, Cardwell**
   - Visitor centre in the main street near the jetty to make bookings for Hinchinbrook and other coastal islands, and for Wet Tropics information. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8601

9. **Hinchinbrook Island**
   - Hinchinbrook borders two World Heritage areas - the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef. Ferries leave the mainland at Cardwell and Lucinda. Thorsborne Trail is a four-day hike; numbers are limited so bookings are required. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8601

10. **Edmund Kennedy National Park**
    - Mangrove walk through diverse coastal park. Explorer Edmund Kennedy travelled through here during his 1848 expedition to Cape York. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8601

11. **Blencoe Falls Drive**
    - The 20km drive from Kennedy to Mt Garnet features coastal views, Blencoe Falls and north Queensland countryside. The road is unsuited and caravans are not recommended. Make sure you and your vehicle are prepared. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8601

12. **Murray Falls**
    - Excellent camping facilities in the foothills of the Kramara Range between Cardwell and Tully. The 20km drive is one of the prettiest in north Queensland. QPW S Cardwell. 🆕 (07) 4766 8601.

(QPW S Q-land Parks and Wildlife Service)

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**WE TROPICS World Heritage Area**

There are visitor centres scattered throughout north Queensland, offering a wide variety of displays and information. A new symbol has been introduced for centres which focus on visitor information. These centres meet professional standards of facilities, staff, information and displays before they can display the symbol. As you travel around the region, look for the符号 in the towns below and ask the friendly volunteers about their favourite things to do in the area!

- **Cooktown** 🆕 (07) 4069 6004
- **Atherton** 🆕 (07) 4061 4222
- **Kuranda** 🆕 (07) 4093 9311
- **Babinda** 🆕 (07) 4067 1008
- **Innisfail** 🆕 (07) 4063 2655
- **Mabu** 🆕 (07) 4096 6957
- **Hareeba** 🆕 (07) 4092 5674
- **Mission Beach** 🆕 (07) 4068 7099
- **Ravenshoe** 🆕 (07) 4097 7700
- **Cairns** 🆕 (07) 4051 3588
- **Tully** 🆕 (07) 4066 2286
- **Ingham** 🆕 (07) 4776 5211
- **Townsville** 🆕 (07) 4778 3355
- **Townsville south** 🆕 (07) 4721 3600

*We hope you enjoy visiting the World Heritage Area.*

*We recommend this guide be used together with a regular road map.*
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...

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<td>Mount Cook National Park</td>
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<td>Nature’s Powerhouse, Cooktown</td>
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For information on walking tracks look up our website at www.wettropics.q.gov.au under ‘Things to Do’. 
Margit Cianelli is a wildlife carer living in the Tablelands. She started her career in wildlife caring almost 37 years ago when she worked as a zookeeper at the Stuttgart Zoo in Germany. Margit cared for animals that had been injured or that had been rejected by their mothers – from hummingbirds to bears. When she moved here 32 years ago, it was only natural that she carried on her profession, albeit on a volunteer basis.

To combat these threats, Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre researchers from James Cook University and officers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Department of Main Roads have combined forces to successfully design and construct safe crossings for our rainforest fauna.

**Faunal overpasses**

Canopy dwelling species such as the rare rainforest ringtail possums hardly ever venture to the ground, meaning that some are unable to cross even narrow roads. For these animals roads pose a severe barrier, with the potential to completely divide populations. Short-term effects of a divided population could lead to potential extinctions in small forest fragments while long-term effects include an increased likelihood of inbreeding. Global warming is likely to further restrict the area of habitat available to these upland species.

A solution to this problem has been the creation of faunal overpasses in the form of rope bridges or rope tunnels which connect canopy trees high above the road. These artificial canopy linkages provide a safe crossing point for canopy dwelling species.

**Faunal underpasses**

For many other rainforest species, the hot dry open road areas, traffic noise and vehicle movement constitute such a threat. Roads have combined forces to successfully design and construct safe crossings for our rainforest fauna.

Margit has long been the voice for those who have no voice in the Wet Tropics and has cared for hundreds of animals over the years. In Margit’s words, “we can’t all be animal carers but we can all care for animals.”

Margit has won a Cassowary Award last year for her work as a wildlife carer in the region.
Wildlife crossings - (continued)

Harsh contrast to the natural forest that roads become partial or complete barriers to ground-dwelling animals. To reduce the risk of road kill and combat the fragmenting effect of roads on species movements, faunal underpasses have been constructed. Some of these underpasses are large enough to allow animals as big as the cassowary to move easily through them. Food and cover plants are used to attract target species to the entrances of the underpasses. Inside the underpass rocks and logs provide cover for small ground-dwelling fauna while large tree branches and ropes hanging from the top of underpasses provide refuge for the tree climbing species beneath the road.

The continued incorporation of faunal crossings in new road designs will help safeguard a number of rare and threatened species, and assist Australia to meet its international obligations to protect our unique wildlife under the World Heritage convention. The demonstrated effectiveness of the faunal over and under passes has recently led to their use in road upgrades throughout Australia. Globally, the north Queensland research team lead the field in rainforest road ecology and the design of innovative measures to reduce the impacts of roads on rainforest fauna.

Launching Ngadjonji culture to the world

The Rainforest Aboriginal tribal elders from the Ngadjonji people (pronounced ‘nudge-in-gee’), whose traditional lands cover the area around Malanda on the Atherton Tableland, are using the internet to educate the world about their history and culture.

The web site is based on the Ngadjonji historical and cultural educational display at the Malanda Falls Visitor Centre. Both the display and the web site feature artwork by contemporary Ngadjonji artists; information about the their traditional lands, history, language and culture; and photographs dating from as early as 1890.

The Elders were assisted by the late Margaret Huxley of Malanda, with the research and preparation for both the display and the web site. Together, they spent many long hours in regional museums and historical societies sifting through thousands of old photographs searching for anything relating to their tribe. The Elders also contributed copies of their own treasured photographs. However perhaps their greatest generosity was the sharing of their memories, some of which are of overwhelming hardship. In appreciation of Margaret’s help, she was honored with the tribal name of ‘Dulabul’.

The present day Ngadjonji Elders continue their generous willingness to share much of their rainforest lore with the wider community. It is their intention to contribute to a greater understanding of their culture and to highlight the effect that European settlement had on Rainforest Aboriginal people.

Check it out!

Learn more about the Ngadjonji people and their culture on the web at: www.koori.usyd.edu.au/ngadjonji.

The Malanda Falls Visitor Centre is open 7 days a week from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Ngadjonji rainforest walks are conducted from the centre. To book ph: 07 4096 6957.
Snakes are the silent and highly skilled hunters of our forests. They slither their way through rainforest canopies, nooks and crannies, leaf litter and across rivers and streams. With lightning speed and accuracy they strike at and quickly subdue their prey. For a small mammal, bird, lizard or frog there is probably nothing more frightening than being tracked by one of the most skilful predators in the rainforest ecosystem.

The Wet Tropics is home to many different snakes that play an important role in the food chain. These include Australia’s largest snake, the amethystine python, and the world’s second most venomous snake, the coastal taipan.

Generally, there are four different types of snake that live in the Wet Tropics:

- pythons
- colubrids (fangs to the rear of the mouth)
- elapids (fangs to the front of the mouth)
- blind snakes.

**Pythons**

Pythons are non-venomous and use constriction to overpower their prey. Like all snakes they consume their prey whole. Five python species live in the Wet Tropics. These are the amethystine python, the spotted python, the water python, the carpet python and the black-headed python.

The amethystine python is the largest of all Australian snakes and can reach lengths up to 5m – although, there is an unofficial record of an amethystine python caught in Gordonvale that measured 8.5m. Pythons are often seen at night preying on mammals such as bandicoots, wallabies, rats and birds, including domestic chickens.

**Colubrid snakes**

There are six species of rear-fanged colubrid snakes in the Wet Tropics. This group has either no fangs or fangs toward the back of their mouths. While they will readily bite you if provoked, they pose no threat to humans. Snakes in this group include tree and water snakes and the slatey-grey snake. One species, the freshwater or keelback snake can eat small cane toads without any ill effect.

**Elapid snakes**

Elapid snakes are the most widespread and diverse group in Australia. They are identified by a pair of short, hollow or deeply grooved fangs in the upper jaw.

**Dental characteristics of snakes**

- Pythons and most colubrids
- Colubrid - rear fanged
- Elapid - front fanged
AMETHYSTINE PYTHON FACTS

Species: Morelia kinghorni
Common Name: Scrub Python
Status: common
Distribution: found only in Queensland, from north of Townsville to the tip of Cape York
Habitat: mostly ground dwelling in rainforest, coastal scrub and adjacent woodlands. Can be found basking in more open areas in the cool dry season
Weight: adults around 20kg (depending on last feed)
Length: around 5m
Behaviour: nocturnal predator which will sit and wait to ambush prey. Heat sensory pits on lower lips detect prey by body heat. Kills prey through constriction and suffocation
Diet: mostly mammals and birds including domestic chickens
Mating season: late in the dry season when temperature increases. Male will actively search for female and stay with her for days or weeks. May wrestle each other for the chance to mate with a female
Mating season: July and August
Clutch: varies from 5 to 17 eggs. Some pythons coil around their eggs and use muscular shivering to warm them
Threats: habitat destruction and vehicle strike

Wet Tropics Snakes

- 41 different types of snakes live in the Wet Tropics.
- 5 of the world’s 10 most venomous snakes are found here. These include the coastal taipan, common death adder, king brown snake, eastern brown snake and red-bellied black snake.
- Most Australian snakes evolved relatively recently (up to 15 million years ago) from Asian species.
- A snake’s internal organs are elongated to match their body shape.
- 4 major groups of snakes in the Wet Tropics are:
  1. Pythons (5 species).
  2. Rear fanged and solid toothed colubrid snakes (6 species).
  3. Front fanged or elapid snakes (26 species).

SNAKEBITE FIRST AID

- In the unlikely event of snakebite the priority is to stop the venom reaching the body’s general circulation and to keep the patient very still and calm.
- Wrap an elastic or crepe bandage tightly over the wound and over the entire limb at the same pressure as for a sprained ankle.
- Elevate and immobilise the limb by applying a splint and a second bandage.
- If the snakebite is to the head or trunk keep the patient as still as possible.
- Do not attempt to capture or kill the snake for identification as this may lead to further bites. If possible identify the snake or at least note some of its features.
- Seek medical help immediately. It is also very important that you:
  - Stay calm and keep others calm.
  - DO NOT wash the wound (the snake can be identified from venom traces).
  - DO NOT attempt to suck or cut the bite site.

If you find a snake in or near your house contact the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service for advice on its removal on the EPA hotline: 1300 130 372 (Cairns and Townsville).
After nearly four years of negotiations and over two decades of rallying by Rainforest Aboriginal people, the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement has been completed. The Agreement heralds a new era in cooperative cultural heritage and land management between the Queensland and Australian Governments and Traditional Owners in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Over 400 Traditional Owners and several senior government officials witnessed the signing of the Agreement at a ceremony held at Warrina Lakes at Innisfail. Nearly 40 people signed the document. They included representatives from the Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Greg Hunt; Queensland Minister for the Environment, Desley Boyle; the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Stephen Robertson; and Wet Tropics Management Authority Board Chair, John Grey.

The Wet Tropics Regional Agreement provides the foundation for the involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people in decision-making and on-ground management activities in cooperation with government agencies in the World Heritage Area. Negotiations for the Agreement were facilitated by the Wet Tropics Management Authority and funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

Chair of the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, Russell Butler Jnr, said he was keen to see the procedures outlined in the Agreement taken on board by the government agencies responsible for the World Heritage Area.

“We are very excited at the opportunities the Agreement creates for the Indigenous community. Traditional Owners will be able to share knowledge with government agencies as well as play a significant part in the decision-making and consultation process regarding the management of our traditional lands,” Mr Butler said.

Wet Tropics Management Authority Board Chair, John Grey, said the Agreement was a positive step forward for the many Traditional Owner groups in the Area.

“The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is truly an amazing place. Just as the rainforest is naturally diverse with many plant and animal species, it is also culturally diverse. The Authority is proud to be a part of this success story and will continue to actively support Rainforest Aboriginal people to be meaningfully involved in managing the World Heritage Area.”

Central to the Agreement artwork is a rainforest ceremonial fighting shield. The shield design is contemporary and symbolises Rainforest Aboriginal people coming together as ‘one voice’ from throughout the Wet Tropics area to work with government agencies to manage cultural and natural heritage.

Surrounding the shield are traditional foods and medicinal resources that represent Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ customary use of the Wet Tropics area. The outer artwork is made up of tribal totems that represent the cultural identity and the spiritual connection that each Rainforest Aboriginal tribal group has with their country.
Living in a mud hut in Africa and working with very limited resources without getting paid, may not be everybody’s idea of a holiday – but for Wet Tropics Project Officer, M’Lis Flynn, it was a Kenyan paradise for three months.

In addition to her work at Wet Tropics, M’Lis is a volunteer at the Ugunja Community Resource Centre in a participatory mapping project, mapping out important resources in the area for villagers.

M’Lis has worked as a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) officer with the Wet Tropics Management Authority for five years and recently joined the Authority’s Aboriginal Resource Management Team. The Authority’s GIS officers create maps of the World Heritage Area that show vegetation types and areas of high environmental value for land management purposes. With the Aboriginal Resource Management Team, M’Lis works with Rainforest Aboriginal people in cooperative management of the World Heritage Area.

Using her professional skills, M’Lis is helping the villagers map and document essential information for the very first time. Facilities such as wells for fresh water, medical clinics, hospitals and schools are shown. Environmental mapping is also important. Identifying agricultural crops, their seasonal success or failure, malaria outbreaks and forests where firewood can be collected are vital. So far M’Lis has trained 10 volunteers at the community centre in GIS, with the goal that those volunteers will be able to train others.

M’Lis works in the Aboriginal Resource Management Team at the Authority.

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Meet one of our staff ~ M’Lis Flynn

More than just a pretty place...

Forests are extraordinary places. Full of vibrant colours, towering trees, and unique animals. Our north Queensland rainforests are filled with thousands of different species of animals and plants. The fact that so many species can coexist means something special is going on under that vast canopy.

Each animal and plant species serves a special purpose for the proper function of the environment. It is well known that forest species provide and receive benefits from each other. But did you know that they also help farmers?

For example, birds and sugar gliders help to control pest insects. Birds eat up to 60% of insects found on woodland trees and sugar gliders help out eucalypt trees by eating around 25 Christmas beetles a day.

Christmas beetles are serious pests for the native eucalypt.

While some insects are harmful to plants, others play a critical role in their survival. Some species of insects found in the rainforest also provide a pollination service to farms. Native insects also pollinate the fruit and vegetables we grow in our backyards. It is important to take care of our native wildlife and our natural ecosystems to keep them working in harmony and to preserve them for the future.

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Sugargliders help to control pests of eucalypt trees by eating around 25 Christmas beetles a day.

HELP FOR INJURED WILDLIFE A PHONE CALL AWAY

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone contacts for wildlife carers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Townsville</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile: 0414 717374</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cairns</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile: 0409 517 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tablelands</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile: 0409 2683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daintree Coast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile: 0428 736 029</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Julatten</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile: 0409 1177</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cooktown</strong></td>
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<td>Mobile: 0406 6229</td>
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A gift that'll last forever

Show your loved one how much you love them - have a Rainforest tree planted in their honour.

On your behalf, the Australian Rainforest Foundation will plant a tree in your loved one’s name. The tree will continue to grow and rejuvenate the tropical rainforest, bringing timeless beauty for generations to come.

Your friend will receive a beautifully presented, crush-proof cylinder containing a personalised certificate suitable for framing. In addition they will receive:
- a personal letter from the Australian Rainforest Foundation confirming the tree has been planted
- a map indicating the location and details of the planting site
- a unique reference number for tracking your tree

This timeless gift can be sent to your loved one for less than the price of a bunch of flowers.

$55 Call 1300 559 095 or buy at www.arf.net.au

Phone and mail orders only. $55 includes Standard postage within Australia. Other postage options: $64 Express Post - Australia, $65 Standard overseas.
The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is famous for its breathtaking scenery of lush green mountains, cascading waterfalls and extraordinary plant and animal species. Travellers from Australia and abroad visit the region to immerse themselves in the environmental wonders of our tropical forest haven.

The Wet Tropics was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1988 for its natural values. The forests are recognised as being internationally significant and their conservation important for current and future generations. Although not yet listed for its cultural values, Rainforest Aboriginal cultural heritage is closely linked with the natural environment and has helped to shape the forests that we see today.

Within approximately 900,000ha of World Heritage Area, a range of fragile and sensitive ecosystems interact. These include tropical rainforest, open eucalypt, swamp and mangrove forests. The Wet Tropics Management Authority, the community and other government agencies work together to protect the World Heritage Area from pressures such as fragmentation, weeds, feral animals and diseases. Many threats come from outside the World Heritage Area, and the Authority encourages sustainable tourism, agriculture and ecologically sensitive activities throughout the region.

Stretching for 450km from Townsville to Cooktown in Tropical North Queensland, the Wet Tropics covers just 0.2% of Australia, but is one of the most biologically diverse and environmentally important regions of the world. The forests found here are a living museum of ancient plant species and a record of the major stages in the earth’s evolutionary history.

It has retained most of the ancient plant species that existed on earth almost 450 million years ago when Australia was part of the supercontinent Gondwana.

As you walk through the cool understorey and look deep into the forest you can imagine a prehistoric landscape with primordial creatures seeking out their food. You may come across the elusive and endangered cassowary, with its enormous clawed feet and horned casque, studiously picking its way through the undergrowth, or the oldest marsupial species, the musky rat-kangaroo foraging in the leaf litter.

Ancient king ferns with the largest fronds in the world tower above, while below cycads compete for sunlight through the canopy. Lichens and fungi nestle in the huge buttresses of rainforest trees that have withstood the test of time as the shrill cry of the remnant bird species, the chowchilla, echoes through the forest.

The Wet Tropics is an environmental treasure we must care for and pass on to future generations. It provides us with a recreational and scenic backdrop to our urban lifestyle. It provides us with clean water and filters our air so that we can live in a healthy environment. Our rainforest heritage attracts domestic and international visitors, creating jobs to support the local economy. As caretakers of this rich natural heritage, let’s look after it.

What you can do:

• Put rubbish in the bin or take it with you - pack it in, pack it out.
• Stick to walking tracks.
• Camp in designated camp sites.
• Leave domestic pets at home.
• Resist the temptation to feed wildlife, it harms them.
• Most of all - enjoy our World Heritage treasure!

The Wet Tropics was inscribed on the World Heritage list because:

• It is the oldest tropical rainforest on earth.
• It has Australia’s greatest diversity of animals and plants.
• It protects areas where rare and threatened species still survive.
• It contains areas of exceptional natural beauty.