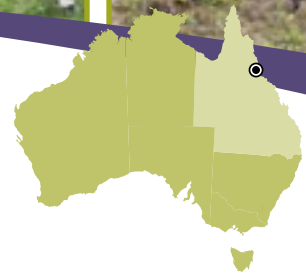




A growing concern



From little things, big things grow.

That's certainly been the case with TREAT – Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands.

It all began with a local meeting on the Atherton Tableland in 1982 and the formation of a group to encourage people to plant native rainforest trees. Today, TREAT has more than 500 members and an ambitious agenda aimed at enhancing the landscape and conserving biodiversity.

TREAT's activities now range from tree planting to information and education. Its tree planting efforts have included establishing a one kilometre corridor to reconnect an isolated fragment of remnant rainforest within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, as well as revegetating seven hectares of land on the foreshores of Lake Tinaroo.

A major focus is to rehabilitate and revegetate areas of Mabi rainforest. This is a critically endangered plant community, specified under the *Commonwealth Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, which now covers less than two per cent of its original area. The complex semi-evergreen Mabi vine forests are home to many animals including 114 bird species such as the Lesser Sooty Owl, the Tooth-billed Bowerbird and Victoria's Riflebird and rare or threatened mammals such as Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo, Green Ringtail Possum and Large-eared Horseshoe Bat.

The group's communication efforts have resulted in an information and education program with a quarterly newsletter and a website www.treat.net.au linking to other tree planting rehabilitation initiatives in the Wet Tropics.



Propagating rainforest

More than half a million native plants have been propagated at the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's Lake Eacham Nursery in the past 20 years with TREAT's help. The group works with Restoration Services at the nursery, raising trees for rainforest rehabilitation on the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands.

Propagation involves people in collecting and preparing seed and raising seedlings until they are ready to be planted out. The nursery endeavour is one of the group's major undertakings. Volunteers meet once a week at the nursery to learn propagation techniques, help staff and to participate in planning environmental work for their region.

A pool of talent

TREAT members now provide a large talent pool for the region.

This includes landowners with practical experience in land management, scientists, education experts and people with administrative and clerical experience. Such a variety of skills has been critical for TREAT's work. For, as well as planting trees, volunteers also plan and manage large projects involving significant monitoring and financial management to meet public accountability requirements.

A productive and resourceful community group has resulted from the commitment and different talents which people have brought together on large projects. As well as benefiting TREAT and its specific aims, this has helped to develop a stronger regional community at large and to provide both practical and educational opportunities.



Established partnerships

TREAT works in partnership with a number of key government and non-government agencies and organisations. These include the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (with which it has a special and long-term relationship); the Wet Tropics Management Authority; the Far North Queensland Natural Resource Management Group; Eacham and Atherton Shire Councils; and Greening Australia. TREAT has a long term relationship with the Ngadjon and Dulguburra Yidinji clan traditional owners of the area, and also combines its efforts with other active local environmental groups as well as community groups and landowners. Among these are the local Landcare groups; Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group and Southern Atherton Tableland Revegetation Alliance. More recently, the group has been involved in a national project, managed by CSIRO and funded under the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, to map a sample of vegetation enhancement work to assess biodiversity benefits.

Projects

TREAT has been managing projects since 1983 that have had a total budget of \$1.5 million with \$560,000 of this total provided by the Natural Heritage Trust. Much of the remaining funding has come from community groups with in-kind contributions from TREAT volunteers.

Some key projects in which the group is currently involved are described below.

- Revegetating 20 hectares of cleared land along five kilometres of Peterson Creek to form a wildlife corridor between Yungaburra State Forest and Lake Eacham Section Crater Lakes National Park. The Peterson Creek Corridor has been identified as a priority project in the Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy.



- Assisting the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in rehabilitating vegetation linkages along the Walter Hill Ranges, to maintain a crucial link between the tableland rainforests and those of the coastal lowlands.
- Undertaking restoration work along the Upper Barron River to maintain vegetation linkages, increase wildlife habitat, reduce streambank erosion and improve water quality.



Creating a wildlife corridor

One of TREAT's major successes with the Parks and Wildlife Service has been to develop Donaghy's Corridor on the Atherton Tableland, a life-giving link for wildlife in the Lake Barrine Section of Crater Lakes National Park.

Clearing the land to give farmers access to the Tablelands' prized soils has left much of the remaining rainforest as isolated remnants. Small areas can't maintain the same number of species as continuous rainforest and planting wildlife corridors is now an accepted way of preventing further local and regional extinctions.

However, designing and creating a wildlife corridor is a complex task involving thorough research, planning and community liaison. A primary task is to find out just what local native plant species will thrive in the region and what will provide the best wildlife habitat. Then, before any planting can begin, the permission, and hopefully support and involvement, of the landholders owning the land between the remnant vegetation, has to be obtained. And, finally, the vital funds needed to do the work have to be found.

Together with the Parks and Wildlife Service, TREAT managed to meet all these challenges and developed Donaghy's Corridor in four main stages. These were:

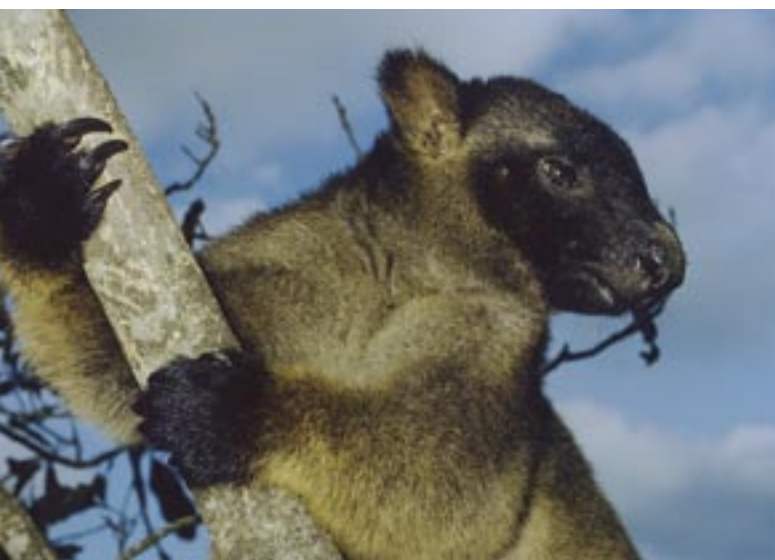
- excluding cattle grazing by fencing and providing alternative watering facilities;
- establishing plants that attract seed dispersing animals to help recreate a diverse ecosystem;
- planting an inner and outer windbreak to protect plants along the Corridor;
- implementing a maintenance program together with a long-term monitoring system.

Work on Donaghy's Corridor began in 1995 and more than 18,000 trees were planted out along a kilometre of Toohey Creek over the next four years. The corridor linked the isolated fragment of the Lake Barrine Section, Crater Lakes National Park to the west with Gadgarra State Forest to the east. The end result stemmed from cooperation between the landowners, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Natural Resources and Forestry and TREAT.

Donaghy's Corridor is now regarded as a great success and is protected in perpetuity by a Nature Refuge Agreement under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act. It has not only provided the much-needed wildlife link, but is also a demonstration site for the successful integration of agriculture, forestry and conservation for the mutual benefit of the community. Many animals should benefit from the development of the Corridor. Some of those specifically targeted include Cassowary, Green Ringtail Possum, Herbert River Ringtail Possum, Musky Rat Kangaroo and possibly Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo. The Donaghy's Corridor initiative shows what can be done to secure the long-term future of diverse flora and fauna by a committed community with a common vision.

Lessons learnt

- With commitment and enthusiasm, community organisations that begin small can make a lasting contribution to conserving biodiversity;
- Developing a productive relationship which a related government agency – like the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service – can make a major contribution the success of a community groups efforts;
- Ongoing communication efforts such as a coordinated information and education program can increase the effectiveness of the volunteers as well as improve community awareness of issues and of the group's activities.



Biodiversity encompasses the variety of all living things. Conserving biological diversity gives us the best chance of adapting to our rapidly changing world.

This leaflet is one of a series showing how farmers, Indigenous communities, local government and community groups have either initiated special biodiversity projects, or have successfully incorporated biodiversity protection into their work and daily lives.

We hope these success stories provide useful information and inspiration to others in similar situations.

For more information: www.nrm.gov.au; or freecall 1800 552 008

Australian Government Biodiversity Facilitator annie.keys@csiro.au

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Photo Credits

Front: Mabi rainforest at edge of grazing land; C'wealth Dept of Environment & Heritage. TREAT President, Barbara Lanskey showing revegetation; Roland Breckwoldt. Planting day; Rosemarie Pilmer. Mabi rainforest; C'wealth Dept of Environment & Heritage.
 P2: Victoria's Riflebird; Stanley Breeden. TREAT volunteers extracting seed; Roland Breckwoldt.
 P3: Revegetation work party; Rosemarie Pilmer. Mabi rainforest boardwalk; C'wealth Dept of Environment & Heritage.
 Back: Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo; Green Ringtail Possum; both Stanley Breeden.
 Banner: Bark; Joseph Lafferty. Lichen; Peter Ranyard. Hand; Andrew Tatnell.