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Wetlands Become Nature Refuge

The Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve is shortly to be formally gazetted as a Nature Refuge by the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM). The Reserve was established by the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland (then the Mareeba Wetland Foundation) in 1995 and is managed under a joint Trusteeship with the Tablelands Regional Council. A nature refuge designation provides a stronger tenure protection than the underlying gazetted purpose of the Reserve (Natural Resource Management) and allows the Conservancy to access a wider range of funding targeted at nature conservation.

The first funding that the Conservancy has been able to access under the Nature Refuge designation is to construct accommodation for volunteer wardens. Al-

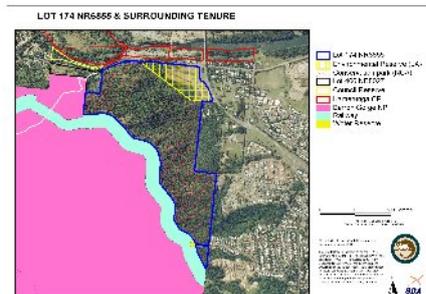
though we have made strong progress with control of feral species and invasive weeds, this has diverted our limited resources from other important activities including ecological monitoring and management of native species such as buff-breasted button quail and the Gouldian finch programme. It is therefore important to have on-site accommodation for experienced volunteer wardens who are able and willing to undertake this work for periods up to 12 months at a stretch.

We hope to construct the new accommodation before the forthcoming wet season and be in a position to appoint suitable wardens later in 2010, as part of what will be a rolling programme. Until then, a big thank you to Keith Smith (DERM) and Lisa Collins, for all their help with the process

Kamerunga Reserve

Our biggest project over the past 12 months will be, without doubt, finalising the requirements for management of the land at Kamerunga, and the commencement of plans to build a Wildlife Conservation Centre and associated supporting visitor infrastructure. We are now ready to enter the final stage in the handover process with the State Government, and expect to be able to report very soon that final

agreement has been reached and detailed master planning has been commenced.



Kadimakara Hits the News



Tim Nevard with Osamu Ito of Earth Spirit at the Wetlands

The massive stainless steel sculpture 'Kadimakara' (donated by Mitsuaki Tanabe, the famous Japanese sculptor), has again become a focus of attention. Tanabe San first identified the Mareeba Wetlands in 2006 as a location for the sculpture to draw attention to the need to conserve the genetic variability in wild rice, of which Australia is a centre of diversity. This has recently been picked-up by a Japanese TV company, Earth Spirit Co, who have filmed Tanabe San's sculptures elsewhere and are incorporating the Mareeba Wetlands into a forthcoming feature programme on art and nature conservation.

Tanabe San himself is visiting the Reserve on the 15th August, when Mareeba Rotary will unveil the plaque donated to mark the installation, and to explain the role of Rotary in Japan and Australia in bringing 'Kadimakara' to its final home. In keeping with the scale of Kadimakara, the plaque will be affixed to a huge granite boulder. We're waiting for the next change in Google Earth's images to pick-up the great 8 metre Silver Lizard!

Local Groups Benefit from Emms Donation



Wildlife carers to benefit from new release aviaries

Thanks to the generosity of Carolyn Emms, the Conservancy has been able to make available much needed funds to local conservation and wildlife organisations. These include FNQ Wildlife Rescue, Eagles Nest Wildlife Hospital, Batreach, Tolga Bat Hospital and the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group for projects ranging from wildlife rehabilitation to conservation and community education. These funds have been used to provide educational literature, weed management in reserve areas, wildlife care, conservation research and will also be used to fund the forthcoming master planning of the Kamerunga Reserve.

If you know or are part of any local conservation or wildlife group and are in need of funds, do get in touch with the Conservancy by email as quickly as possible before all funds are committed. Recipient groups will be invited to a thank you function at the Wetlands in September.

New Vehicle for Wetlands



New safari vehicle at Wetlands

Tourism Naturally are excited to commence guided tours at the Mareeba Wetlands in their new, purpose built, safari vehicle.

The 4WD vehicle is open sided which makes it great for birders. The roof can also be removed for tours at

cooler times of day. The vehicle can take up to seven people comfortably, all enjoying birds eye views from their seats.

For information on tour times, contact Jabiru Safari Lodge on 1800 788 755, email: info@jabirusafarilodge.com.au

Wetlands Wildlife Report

As the dry season sets in and water levels subside in the lagoons on the Mareeba Wetlands, so the bird species change. Resident bird guide at the Wetlands, Chook Crawford, reports the first waders of the year, a pair of Marsh Sandpiper, have been spotted at the margins of Pandanus Lagoon. Between 1-2 hundred cranes, both brolga and sarus, are now roosting at Pandanus Lagoon, and undoubtedly numbers will increase through to October.

Regular sightings of a Baillon's Crake have been delighting visitors on the Clancy's Lagoon boat cruise—a rare treat for birders.

One of the recent star attractions at the Visitor Centre has been a rescued Great Bower Bird. This young blade narrowly escaped being a snack for the lions at the Cairns Wildlife Safari

Reserve, where he was being raised. He was brought to the Wetlands for release where, after several attempts to raid incoming guests especially painted toe nails, he was gently removed to Pandanus Lagoon. Other regulars include a black headed python, also gently removed, and no doubt attracted by the finch aviary.

Chook reports regular views of wallaroo, and plenty of quolls in the Reserve at the moment. And he was excited to see a pair of Red-backed Kingfisher, winter arrivals from out west where the nights are too cool!

Finally, good news on the bird numbers for the Reserve, which have climbed to a staggering 221, with the recent addition of two new species, a Little Lorikeet, and a female Brown Songlark.



BB the bowerbird taking a bath at the Visitor Centre.



Early winter arrival. A Red-backed Kingfisher

Bird Week and Discover Cape York

After the success of the inaugural Cairns Highlands Bird Week in 2008, the experience is offered again for 2009. A week of birding and natural history based at Jabiru Safari Lodge at the Mareeba Wetlands, from Sunday 27th September to Sunday 4th October. Includes guided trips to all areas from Mt Lewis to the southern Tablelands, targeting 12 endemics of FNQ.

And there are still places available on

Tourism Naturally's Cape York Bird Tour. The eleven day tour, guided by Wetlands bird guide Chook Crawford, runs from Sunday 18 to Wednesday 28th October, including Lakefield National Park, Iron Range, Morton Telegraph Station, and finally Weipa, ending with a flight back to Cairns.

Bookings and enquiries : Phone 1800 788 755 , or

info@jabirusafarilodge.com.au



Agile mother and joey enjoy the green pick around the Visitor Centre.

Finches At Large – At Last!

Many of you will have seen the media coverage of our exciting news that the Gouldians are again breeding in the Mareeba area. Photos taken nearby show finches that can be identified from their colour coded leg bands as having been banded by former Reserve Warden Tim Gale and released from the breeding aviaries at the Wetlands in October 2007. The additional presence of juvenile

unbanded birds indicates the finches are again breeding in the wild. The cheer has gone up around the world from all those who have contributed, as far afield as Ireland where researcher Dr Fintan Bracken who spent several months working with the Gouldians at the Wetlands in 2005 has posted photos of the Mareeba Gouldians on Facebook!



Wild Gouldian, released in 2007



Upcoming Dates:

September:

- Sat 19th—AGM
- Sun 27th to Sun Oct 4th—Bird week

October

- Sat Oct 3rd —Annual Crane Count
- 18-28th—Cape York

AGM!

The Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife Conservancy will be held at the Mareeba Wetlands Visitor Centre on Saturday 19th September, commencing 10.30am. All positions on the Board fall vacant, so if you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Gwyneth to find out what is involved in becoming a Board member. New faces would be most welcome! All paperwork regarding the AGM is attached.

Light refreshments will be served and resident Reserve Guide Chook

Crawford will give a short talk on the birds of the Mareeba Wetlands, and how you get a species list of 221! Please RSVP to Gwyneth at info@wildlifequeensland.com



Resident staff at the Wetlands, Chook and Tracey.

Rock-wallabies: *There are currently 15 recognised species and eight subspecies of rock wallaby. The Mareeba Rock-wallaby is part of a complex of species that includes Sharman's Rock-wallaby, the Unadorned Rock-wallaby and the Allied Rock-wallaby. The only way to be sure which species you are looking at is the shape and number of chromosomes – not easy to do in the field! So locality is the best guide to determine which species you are seeing. Freshly moulted individuals are typically greyish on the back but as the year advances the colour changes to pale through to dark brown. Some individuals are almost black. .*



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