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## WHAT'S HAPPENED

### ***Fruits of your labour***

For more than ten years Envirocare has been concentrating on revegetation of the Envirolink Wildlife corridor. Some of our regular Saturday morning volunteers can well remember the first tree planting at Big Sands on the Barron River. This wet season we've planted over 7,500 seedlings already, with the help of community plantings.

Now we're working on riverbank sites and plan to include some plantings on private land. If you're keen to have an area of your block reforested, come join us for a few mornings to see what we do and then we'll plan strategic plantings with you. We may not plant till next wet season but it pays to plan ahead as the best site preparation is done well in advance, letting the seasons do some of the work. Our nursery manager has over 20 years experience growing cabinet timbers on his block so come and chat on nursery days if you're interested in growing a few of your own .

### ***Agribusiness at Kuranda District State College and Envirocare***

What's this all about some of you have asked? Well, Envirocare and the Kuranda College have agreed on a joint development in relation to the agribusiness vocational training centre which is being developed at the school farm site. Envirocare has a landcare and community nursery facility which is used only two or three mornings per week and we have offered this facility to Kuranda College. We will provide a "working" nursery for the students undertaking certificated training units in horticulture and conservation and land management, with authentic work experience woven into the training courses. In return the College will provide a permanent location for the nursery. Envirocare's aims and principles involve advocacy, education and competency, so this development is a very good "fit". Working alongside Envirocare volunteers and seeing the product of their training being put to good use in Envirocare's landcare operation, students will hopefully be proud of their contribution, at the same time learning to value and protect biodiversity in our natural environment during "potting bench chats". We're all looking forward to this exciting new collaboration!

### ***Plant of the month***



Photo courtesy of Damon Ramsey

**Rose Butternut – *Blepharocarya involucrigera***  
What a mouthful ! You may have seen these distinctive seed capsules on your walks along Jum Rum creek or Kuranda village entrance off Kennedy Highway. This very hardy tree can withstand relatively dry conditions, being found in rainforest and monsoon forest from Torres Straits to Lake Eacham. Listed by Banks and Solander at Endeavour flats in mid 1770 , it will sulk if the seedling is lifted rather than grown from seed, grows strongly when established, and will stay quite leafy low down if given the space. Definitely not for under powerlines but a very shapely feature tree, it gives good shade and can be used in windbreaks and screens. It has attractive foliage and decorative new pink growth. So a top tree for revegetation here and a bonus, also a must to include in any plantings of rainforest cabinet timbers. It's timber closely resembles that of Queensland maple (*Flindersia brayleana*), being fine grained medium density furniture timer and is easy to work. We will have good sized seedlings available before next wet season and can take orders.

### ***Flying foxes as seed dispersers*** *by Druce Horton*

One of my early childhood memories was a feeling of wonderment as I watched the rivers of flying foxes flowing and eddying across the evening sky. Where were they going? Why didn't they just stay there rather than returning in the morning? And why did some of them seem to randomly wander about while the majority seemed to move with such uniform purpose?

Today, as the human population in FNQ rapidly expands, fruit bats are commonly regarded as pests. This is unfortunate as they are vital for effective dispersal of many of the larger rainforest seeds. Research conducted in Tonga found that the effectiveness of flying foxes at seed dispersal dropped rapidly once their numbers fell below a threshold level – in this study when they were abundant, the flying foxes dispersed more than 60% of seed away from trees. This figure dropped to less than 1% when

flying fox numbers fell below the threshold level. There wasn't a gradual tapering off in their seed dispersal role. As their numbers fell below a critical level, there was a huge and sudden drop off.

What was going on? Well, when flying foxes were abundant, they fought over the available food. We have all heard those squabbles piercing the still tropical nights. So they would get their fruit then fly off to another tree where they could eat it in peace. Thus they dispersed the seeds.

When their numbers fell below the threshold level, they could stay and eat in the fruiting tree because there wasn't much competition. There was no need to leave the tree. The seeds were just dropped below. The fruiting tree had been cheated. It had fed these freeloaders and got nothing in return – its seeds had gone nowhere. What a rip-off!

With cassowary numbers dwindling, if flying foxes do not disperse the larger seeds, there are few other alternatives. Trees with large seeds will become moribund.

An important aspect of this study was that the flying foxes ceased to be effective seed dispersers long before they became rare. If we continue to wait for species to tick the "rare and endangered" box before we take action to protect them, the broad consequences may be dire.

### ***Cassowary in calamity***

Congratulations to all the participating artists and to Kuranda Conservation for their support in staging "This is Cassowary Country" exhibition in the Cairns Art Gallery. A fabulous promotion of the dire predicament of our iconic rainforest species and its rainforest habitat.

## **WHAT'S COMING UP**



### **Plant identification Courses**



We're running our regular plant i.d. courses again in July and August. We have a few spaces left and will run a week day and a week end day course. So if you're interested and not yet booked, could you please contact Cathy on 40 93 9926 or Margaret on 40 938393 to register your interest and your preference.

The plant i.d. walkway revamp is near completion, just awaiting tree labels, of a more vandal proof nature we hope.

### ***Time for mulching***

Clear skies and cool nights, its seems time for mulching. We have our first stock of small bales of mulching hay (lovely compact bales of Rhodes grass ). Call 40 93 9926 to arrange pickup. You can even borrow the trailer to get your bales home!

### ***Speaker Meeting , 6<sup>th</sup> May 7pm***

Our local speaker from JCU is Dr Robyn Wilson. Dr Wilson has been researching arboreal mammals and their aptitude for highwire antics on highway overpasses

All welcome, light supper provided.

***Recreation centre, Fallon Road***