



Spot Tales Newsletter # 3

Far North Quoll Seekers Network
(FNQSN) – 2009 end of year report



Spotted-Tailed Quoll
Photo: Luke Jackson

2009 Sightings

As a result of significant exposure of the network in the media and due to a mass mail out, a large number of sightings were recorded this year. The network received a total of 28 sightings with 21 being northern quolls and 7 being spotted-tailed quolls. We have also obtained around 40 historic spotted-tailed quoll sightings.



Northern Quoll checking out some bookshelves, Lakeland

Photo: Susan Marsh

Some of the sightings were quite surprising with a northern quoll seen wandering along the access road to the Cairns Airport late at night, a northern quoll was seen curled up with a possum in the corner of the Mareeba RSL, a spotted-tailed quoll seen in the laundry of a dwelling near Innisfail, a spotted-tailed quoll on the highway near Bellenden Kerr, and several northern quolls found under car bonnets from the suburbs of Cairns. A sighting of a northern quoll devouring a snake at a camp ground on the Wenlock River on Cape York was encouraging

news. It is hoped that northern quolls will begin to reclaim Cape York as part of their home range once again in the future.

From this research it has become apparent that northern quolls are moving between towns, suburbs and properties in motor vehicles and this may explain some of the more unusual sightings. Sightings of northern quolls on the Yarrabah Road at East Trinity and one from Bingil Bay near Mission Beach were surprising.

Where can I see a quoll in the Far North?

In the Wild.

Seeing a quoll in the wild is often one of the highlights of any nature lovers experience. As quoll are nocturnal they are more regularly seen at night but are sometimes seen in the day, particularly the morning and afternoon. Quolls are meat eaters and will readily eat carrion so they are sometimes seen along roads. In some places quolls visit camping areas and buildings. Good places to see quolls in North Queensland are:

Northern Quolls.

Mareeba Wetlands (just off the Peninsula Development Road 5km north of Mareeba) has good populations with visitors staying overnight often having them visit the safari tents.

Granite Gorge near Mareeba has Rock Wallabies as well as quolls. Camping is available.

Tinaroo Dam has regular sightings and a variety of accommodation including camping.

Emerald Creek and Davies Creek Camping Area (accessed off the Kennedy highway a few kilometres east of Mareeba on the way to Kuranda), Mt Cook (near Cooktown), Lakeland and Brooklyn Sanctuary near Mt Molloy are also good places to see northern quolls.

Spotted-Tailed Quolls.

Spotted Tailed quolls are harder to find as they live in more inaccessible areas of the Wet Tropics and tend to stick to higher altitude Rainforest.

Good places to witness them are Mt Bartle Frere, Mt Bellenden Kerr, Mt Lewis, Lamb Range (northern side of Lake Tinaroo), Windsor Tableland, Cape Tribulation, Thorntons Peak in the Daintree National Park, any of the trails

leading off the Palmerston Highway in Wooroonooran National Park (between Innisfail and Milla Milla), and the Tully Falls area.



A Spotted-tailed quoll looking for scraps near the camp fire.

Photo: Luke Jackson

In Captivity.

If you haven't got the time or in some cases the energy to run around trying to find quolls in the wild, there is another option for seeing them in the far north. Local wildlife reserves display a variety of quoll species for public viewing. A list of these and the type of quoll on display is provided.

Atherton Birds of Prey
Atherton Chinatown (1km south of Atherton on the Herberton Rd)
Cairns Pier/Esplanade
Ph 0428 316 896 for times as they vary
Macca the Spotted-Tailed Quoll on display

Hartleys Crocodile Adventures
Captain Cook Highway

Wangetti (40km north of Cairns)
Ph 4055 3576
Spotted-Tailed Quolls on display

Daintree Wildlife Sanctuary
2054 Captain Cook Highway
Wonga (approx 20km north of Mossman)
Ph 4098 7272
Northern Quolls, Spotted-Tailed Quolls and Eastern Quolls on display

Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary
Port Douglas (turn off the highway and its 200m on the left)
Ph 4099 3235
Spotted-Tailed Quolls on display

Rainforestation Kuranda
Kennedy Hwy Kuranda (3km east of Kuranda on the highway)
Ph 4085 5008
Spotted-Tailed Quolls on display

Far North Quoll Seekers network wins award

At this year's Your Voice for Your Wildlife Awards, Wildlife Queensland's presentations for outstanding achievements in conservation, the award for best project went to the Far North Quoll Seekers Network (FNQSN). The FNQSN was presented the award for their passion for the conservation of quolls through generating significant media interest.

The FNQSN held 3 presentations in Mareeba, Malanda and Cow Bay areas, released a dozen articles in news papers in the region, had several radio interviews, held a stall at the cassowary summit and co-ordinated a mass mail out to 2,500 land owners in the region. This work generated significant numbers of sightings including several in areas which there had previously been no records. The award recognises the significant effort put in by the network in saving the far north's quolls.

Tassie Devil Report

As many of you would be aware the Tassie Devil is fighting for its survival with the Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD). Many of the lessons from the Devils plight are applicable to all marsupial carnivores and have implications for Tasmania's two species of quoll (Spotted-tailed and Eastern quoll). It is expected that the Devil may be extinct in the wild in less than 50 years if a solution can not be found.

The loss of Devils from Tasmania may reduce competition to quolls in the short term, but may have other implications if foxes become established in Tasmania. It is thought that a strong wild devil population is one reason why foxes have not taken hold in Tasmania. There is strong concern that, if the Devil population continues to diminish while fox numbers increase, it may be difficult for the Devils to ever recover back into the wild. Foxes in conjunction with a disease are thought to have contributed to the extinction of the Eastern Quoll on the Australian mainland. It is encouraging to see the Australian government is taking this threat seriously and implementing a rigorous monitoring and eradication fox control program in Tasmania.

Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) is a contagious cancer that is spread between individuals, through biting. About 20 years ago a single devil developed an abnormal cell around the sheath of a nerve cell. Due to a lack of genetic diversity among Tasmanian Devils their bodies don't recognise the cells as foreign so the cells aren't rejected by the animal's immune system. Animals usually die within a few months of the cancer becoming visible.

The first cases discovered were found in north-east Tasmania in 1996. As at December 2008, DFTD had been confirmed at 64 separate sites covering more than 60% of the State. There has been a decline of Devil sighting by 70% since the disease has affected the population.



Picture of a Tasmanian Devil with Facial Tumour Disease

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program was established in 2003 to investigate

the disease and identify management options including population monitoring, disease diagnostics, wild management and the establishment of an insurance population. A diagnostic blood test that confirms DFTD (even before the Devil develops tumours) has been developed and is a major breakthrough for disease identification and suppression.

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program established its Insurance Population in 2005, gathering animals from areas of the State where there had not been evidence of DFTD. As at February 2009, the Insurance Population had grown to 145 disease-free Tasmanian devils. It has been determined that an effective Insurance Population of around 500 breeding Devils is needed to maintain the genetic diversity of the species over a period of 10 to 20 years. This may mean having as many as 1,500 devils being intensively managed in captivity – a massive task.

If you wish to obtain further information about Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Appeal you can visit www.tassiedevil.com.au or phone the University of Tasmania Foundation on +61 3 6226 2053. Another useful link is <http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au>

Did you know that marsupial carnivores such as the devil have been part of the Australian landscape for over 23 million years and went extinct on the mainland only 450 years ago (Western Australian fossil). This is very recent considering that Dutch explorers landed in Australia at around the same time. It makes you wonder how recent the last Devil actually occurred on the Australian mainland? It is a little known fact that no less than five Devils have been collected from the wild in mainland Victoria during the 88 years between 1903 and 1991. (for further details- www.mainlanddevils.com).

We will keep you posted on future recovery plans for the devil which may one day be used as a model to re-introduce other quoll species that have gone extinct in the wild. Re-introducing Eastern quolls back to mainland Australia and Western quolls back to the western parts of Australia would be good candidates. Perhaps the greatest lesson that can be learnt from the Facial Tumour disease is that we can overcome great obstacles and bring back marsupial carnivores back to all areas of Australia.

Trigger Cameras

The Wildlife Preservation Society of QLD has provided the QSN with two trigger cameras on loan. The FNQSN intends to use these in various areas to verify quoll populations and hopefully record quolls in areas where they have not previously been recorded. The trigger cameras are handy as they can be set up in an area and left for two weeks and provide a good record of all the species in an area, not just quolls. We are currently obtaining permits to undertake camera

surveys in the wet tropics and will keep you posted on opportunities to go quoll hunting in the wild.....



Cassowaries taken on a property near Kuranda
Source: Trigger Camera



Northern Quoll Mareeba

Source: Trigger Camera

Plans For 2010

We have a number of plans this year and look forward to peoples input and involvement. As mentioned earlier we plan to do a number of camera surveys and to develop a quoll education package for schools across Australia.

One of our recent quoll Seekers members Jack Leighton plans to obtain footage and photographs of a Spotted-Tailed quoll to be included in his DVD on "Mammals of Australia's Wet Tropics". Many of you would be aware of Jack's other DVD's including "Rainforest Birds of Australia's Wet Tropics" and fishing on Lake Tinaroo and one on the Platypus.

Further down the track we would like to develop projects which involve developing management outcomes or projects designed to bring back quolls to areas which have become locally extinct. We will keep you posted on any projects that come up....or even better you can let us know of any ideas you have to help protect or marsupial carnivores... Be sure to let us know if you would like to be part of any of the above projects.

Special Thanks

The FNQSN would like to thank everyone who has assisted us this year with all

our activities.

We would like to thank Mark Culleton of the Atherton Birds of Prey for taking the time to bring 'Macca' to our quoll presentations.

A final big thanks to Claire Garner for continually updating our ever growing sightings registry.

Thanks to Mike Trenerry for increasing our historic Spotted tailed quoll database five fold with his extensive knowledge of north Queensland.

Luke Jackson and Glenn Kvassay, FNQSN