

## **FURTHER INFORMATION ON THORSBORNE TRUST ACTIVITIES**

### **Arthur Thorsborne Arboretum**

The creation of this Arboretum, situated north of Cardwell on an area of degraded land at the entrance to Edmund Kennedy National Park, began in August 1992 with the support and cooperation of the then Queensland Dept. of Environment and Heritage. Its primary aim was to become a resource for both the Torres Strait pigeons and the cassowaries. To this end food trees important to both species were selected for planting. More broadly, it was intended that the arboretum would 'show the beauty and usefulness of trees which support local wildlife and encourage widespread plantings throughout the district' (TT newsletter 1993)

In the first year 300 trees were planted by local residents, QDEH staff, friends and visitors of the Thorsbornes and Outward Bound participants. Taps and hoses were purchased by the Trust to aid watering in drought times. Planting continued over the following years alongside the constant work of weeding, watering and mulching to ensure that the trees survived and flourished. While a major part of this work was carried out by Margaret herself, she had many willing helpers. The annual visits of 'Outward Bound' groups, over a 14-year period from 1992 and 2005, were hugely important. The happy tradition of spending a day working in the arboretum at the completion of their course was enjoyed equally by Margaret and the course participants, many of whom left comments in Margaret's visitor's book, expressing profound gratitude and appreciation. Another group, which took time out from study for some hands-on conservation work, came from one of the Australian study programs of the US-based Arcadia University, while other friends and visitors have also helped out when passing through.

As the Arboretum matured, proof of its worth was the sight of a cassowary feeding on fallen fruit and Torres Strait pigeons, and other frugivorous birds, in the branches of its trees. After surviving many years of drought, the Arboretum was in peak condition before being struck by two severe cyclones. Cyclone Larry did considerable damage in 2006, but a positive aspect was found in its restoration. With much of the region's banana crops destroyed, some of those who had lost their jobs in the industry found at least temporary employment helping to repair the Arboretum.

Despite this set-back, the prolonged wet seasons of 2009 and 2010 meant that the arboretum was looking better than ever before being struck by the full force of severe category 5 Cyclone Yasi in February 2011. Following the storm, the arboretum, like the surrounding forest, was a scene of complete devastation, with many trees completely felled and those still upright resembling broken matchsticks. In the space of a few hours the terrible force of the winds had rendered it completely unrecognisable from what had stood there just a few hours before.

Recovery from such a disaster must inevitably be long-term but repair and restoration began swiftly with the invaluable efforts of Neil Parker, from DERM, who travelled from Cairns on a regular basis to work in the Arboretum, with Margaret's advice and assistance. In subsequent years it has

continued to recover and now once again provides a life-sustaining resource for wildlife and displays the “beauty and usefulness of trees” as first intended.

### **Protection of Hinchinbrook Channel land (Lots 33 and 34 USL38644)**

In August 1997 the Trust became aware that Cardwell Properties Pty Ltd (the company responsible for the Port Hinchinbrook development) had made an application to lease an area of unallocated state land on the western shore of the Hinchinbrook Channel. This land was situated south of Stoney Creek and the Port Hinchinbrook development and was known to have significant conservation values. These related particularly to the endangered mahogany glider, the rare and threatened palm, *Livistonia drudei*, and several important vegetation communities classified as 'at risk', 'vulnerable' or 'of concern'.

The application by Cardwell Properties was for Lots 33 and 24 on USL38644. In order to forestall the loss of this public land to private interests, the Trust immediately took the initiative of lodging its own application to lease USL38644, as well as an adjacent and equally important area (USL38632) which extended to the existing National Park boundary, and 2 small islands in the nearby Channel (USL 38943, lots 5 and 6). The Trust stated that its lease application was for conservation purposes only and made it clear that the application would be withdrawn if it received assurance that the State Government would manage the land for conservation. Should this be the case the Trust offered to assist with such management.

In the event, the Trust's application was unsuccessful, but nonetheless the action was believed to have been an important factor in helping to keep this land in public hands and protect its conservation values. All of the above-named areas were subsequently gazetted to form part of what later became the Girramay National Park.

### **Torres Strait pigeon monitoring project**

The annual monitoring survey of the Torres Strait pigeon breeding colony on North Brook Island, was begun by Margaret and Arthur Thorsborne in 1965. This activity went hand-in-hand with their concerted campaigns to stop the indiscriminate slaughter of the birds by local shooters and to protect the birds' food source in the coastal woodlands of the mainland. Each year the Thorsbornes, sometimes accompanied by friends, conducted counts on the island, carefully recording and reporting their totals. Charlie Roff, Chief Fauna Officer of Queensland Department of Primary Industries recommended they continue their counts for 10 years. In the mid 1970s Dr John Winter of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service formalised recording of the counts and encouraged the Thorsbornes to continue the counts 'for ever'.

In the 1980s the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service assumed financial and organisational responsibility for the annual surveys, for many years under the expert guidance and passionate commitment of QPWS officer Dave Green. The project is one of the longest, continuous wildlife monitoring surveys in Australia and the records show an amazing success story with numbers rising from a low point of 1600 birds (following a large scale shoot in 1968) to pre-Yasi totals of between 35,000 and 47,000 birds.

Following its establishment the Trust, through the key involvement of trustees Margaret Thorsborne and John Winter, has given invaluable support to the continuation of this survey, while the seed collection and revegetation activities of the Trust have further supported the survival of these

beautiful birds and the health of their colony. The full effects of Cyclone Yasi, which devastated the birds' nesting habitat and their mainland food source, are still being investigated with Trust support.

A major commitment to the project was made by the Trust at the beginning of the 2015-16 season, when Queensland Marine Parks announced it was unable to provide the financial and logistical support for the October and December counts. In order to ensure these essential counts continue, and to maintain the integrity of the project, the Trust stepped in to finance the hire of a vessel for these counts. Trustee John Winter is currently working to ensure that the counts are established on a permanent and sound scientific basis so that they will continue to provide invaluable data, to aid the conservation and management of this colony into the future.

### **Donations to libraries**

- Adams, Jeannie. Mangroves alive! (Cardwell library, Tully library)
- Braby, Michael. Butterflies of Australia: their identification, biology and distribution, Vols 1-2 (Cardwell, Tully, Ingham, Mission Beach libraries; Ingham SHS, Tully SHS)
- Braby, Michael. Complete field guide to the butterflies of Australia (Cardwell, Tully, Ingham, Mission Beach libraries)
- Finney, C.M. To sail beyond the sunset: natural history in Australia 1699-1829 (Cardwell library, Ingham SHS, Innisfail SHS, Townsville Correctional Centre library, Gold Coast WPSQ student library)
- Frith, Dawn and Frith, Cliff. Cape York Peninsula: a natural history (Cardwell library)
- McArthur, Kathleen. Looking at Australian wildflowers (Cardwell library)
- McKay, Judith. Brilliant careers: women collectors and illustrators in Queensland (Cardwell library)
- Scarth-Johnson, Vera. National treasures: flowering plants of Cooktown and northern Australia (Cardwell library, Ingham SHS, Tully SHS)
- Skull, Stephen. Plants of the Melaleuca woodlands (Cardwell library, with a further 30 copies to schools and libraries)
- Strahan, Ronald (ed.) Complete book of Australian mammals (Cardwell library)
- Suzuki, David. Good news for a change (Cardwell, Tully, Ingham, Mission Beach libraries)
- Wieneke, Jo. Birds of Townsville (Cardwell library)
- Wieneke, Jo. Where to find birds in North Queensland (Cardwell library)
- Williams, Keith. Native Plants of Queensland Vols 1-3 (Cardwell library)
- Wildlife Australia Magazine – annual subscriptions donated to Cassowary Coast libraries

### **Articles for newsletters and magazines**

- Wildlife Australia Magazine, vol. 31, no. 2, Winter 1994. Jewels in paper by Michael Braby.
- Wildlife Australia Magazine, vol. 31, no. 2, Winter 1994. Introducing Queensland's wet tropical lowlands by Peter Stanton.
- Wildlife Australia Magazine, vol. 31 no. 3, Spring 1994. Afternoon flight: conserving Torresian Imperial-Pigeons by John Winter.
- Newsletter, Cardwell Neighbourhood Watch (1990s). Plants of the Cardwell Seashore, regular weekly articles by Margaret Thorsborne.

### **Details of funding for publications and film**

- \$1000 for production of Lucy Smith's illustrations in Stephen Skull's *Plants of the Melaleuca woodlands*, published by James Cook University.
- \$1700 (2000) to cover the cost of scientific line drawings produced by students at the University of Newcastle, in Michael Braby's *Butterflies of Australia*, published CSIRO.
- \$1836 for the publication of 3 anthologies of environmental poetry *Caring for the Environment; Come gently; And look beyond*, edited by Alan Webb, published by North Queensland Conservation Council.
- \$3000 (2014) to Tyto Consulting for production of the documentary film *The coming of the white birds* (DVD)
- \$620 (2016) for 100 copies of the research article *Population trends over 50 years of a Pied Imperial-Pigeon breeding colony on North Brook Island*, Winter, J et al. *Emu*, 116(1),

### **Details of funding for research, conservation and monitoring**

- \$6000 (1995-1998) to Stephen Jackson for mahogany glider doctoral research.
- \$1000 (1995) to Joan Bentrupperbaumer for research on Cape York cassowaries.
- \$500 (2000) for research into pollinators of the rare blue banksia, by JCU Honours student James Robertson.
- \$200 (2000) for research into the vulnerable beach stone-curlew by JCU student, Jodie Collins, aimed at assisting the bird's conservation by developing a public awareness strategy.
- \$2000 (2007) to support QPWS overseas volunteers Yumiko Asari and Morgane Heriot, for mahogany glider work.
- \$1000 (2008) to Paul Ferraro, Museum Victoria and James Cook University, for mahogany glider DNA research.
- \$500 (2008) to Dr Lyndon deVantier, for travel expenses in connection with rapid field assessment of the North Brook island corals.
- \$1600 (2009) to Dr Stephen Jackson for travel and other expenses connected with mahogany glider research and management.
- \$3000 (2011) to Birds Australia NQ, to support CSIRO's DNA analysis of cassowaries following cyclone Yasi.
- \$9600 (2012-2017 @\$1600 each year) to Dr Stephen Jackson for travel and other expenses relating to mahogany glider research and management
- \$3000 (2013) to Dr Julia Hazel for research project on PIP ecology and population dynamics
- \$1200 (2015-2016 @ \$600 each year) to support Green island TSP counts (\$600 each year)
- \$2090 (2015-2016) to provide Brook Island TSP counts (this expense will be ongoing and increasing)

### **Details of funding for wildlife protection and care**

- \$800 to wildlife carers Virginia McGrath (Ingham) and Tanya Schuett (Magnetic Island).
- \$150 for cassowary alert road signs.
- \$500 WPSQ Bilby fund, for purchase of fence materials to exclude feral predators from the bilby re-introduction site at Currawinya National Park.

- \$500 (2009) to Rupert Russell in support of project to protect greater gliders from barbed wire fencing, boundary of Blackbraes NP.
- \$400 (2010) to Tolga Bat Rescue & Research Inc., towards wildlife friendly fencing brochures.

#### **Details of funding for habitat restoration**

- \$1000 (1995) – pledged to Gold Coast City Council for care of the Pine Ridge Reserve
- \$380 (2002) – for cost of videos Habitat in danger and Rehabilitation of our wetlands produced by Ross Digman, distributed to Government departments and agencies, conservation groups and other interested parties.
- \$2000 (2004) – to Riversdale Murray Valley Water Management Board towards creation of lagoon for water quality improvement and aquatic wildlife habitat.

#### **Details of funding for school projects**

- Murray Upper Sate School: presentation of \$50, a selection of butterfly host plants and informative leaflets, in support of the school's butterfly garden project.
- Toobanna State School: presentation of \$50 to support school's submission to Main Roads for tree planting and beautification of roadside and to keep a photographic record of the project.
- Kennedy State School: presentation of 2 disposable cameras to photograph plants found in the Edmund Kennedy NP, as part of the school's swamp display project.
- Kennedy State School: donation of \$100 towards cost of an environmental outing.

#### **Trustees**

Margaret Thorsborne AO (Principal Trustee)  
 Daryl Dickson (WPSQ)  
 John Muller (WPSQ)  
 Suzanne Smith (WPSQ)  
 Peter Stanton (Australian Wildlife Conservancy, formerly QPWS)  
 John Thorsborne (Family)  
 John Winter (formerly QPWS)

*This Thorsborne Trust information was written and updated by Liz Downes, with valuable assistance from Suzanne Smith.*