



# Queensland News

Rainforest Live

September 22, 1997

Volume 2, Number 1

LINKING CLASSROOMS AROUND THE WORLD TO RESEARCH SITES AROUND THE WORLD

## Queensland Rainforest full of diversity...



**Ken Weagle**  
Center Director  
Sept. 18, 1997

Here at the Center for Rainforest Studies we have about 2,000mm (7 ft.) of rain per year. Now that is a lot of water, and it means that things are usually wet, very wet! In most places after a rain, when the sun comes out, things dry fairly fast, this is a result of the sunlight reaching the ground. In the rainforest, because of all the leaves in the canopy, the sun rarely reaches the ground and things never get very dry.

Things have to be done differently here because of the moisture.

We have computers but have many problems using floppy disks. Disks are a perfect place for mold to grow and this ruins the disk and disk drives. This has caused many headaches to students and means that all data must be stored on the computer hard drives. The mold

also gets into your clothes, shoes, camera, binoculars, furniture, and everything else. It also gets into scientific equipment so it must be very well sealed and cleaned regularly.

The rainforests also present a few animals that make life a little unpleasant. The students are always shocked when they get their first leech. The leeches get on your skin and clothes as you walk through the forest. These leeches are not poisonous but can surprise you. When

everything dries out along comes the ticks. These crawl onto you as you walk, sometimes embedding themselves in your skin. Only one species carries a disease, and although they are unsightly, they are generally not dangerous. Both leeches and ticks can be combated by wearing long pants and long sleeved shirts, which may be a bit uncomfortable in the hot and humid rainforest.

A final problem with work in



### QUOTABLE QUOTE

*“One must learn by doing the thing; for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.”*

Sophocles

the rainforest is the staggering number of species of plants and animals you can find and how to learn them all. It is said that on the 1 kilometer you drive along our access road you pass more species of plants than are found in all of the USA. This can discourage the students at first, but as they become used to the diversity they soon learn to recognize many of the species. In the end working in the rainforest can be a great experience. Because of the diversity it is constantly full of surprises and provides an opportunity to see and work with some of the most beautiful plants and animals in the world.

## EXTRA! EXTRA!

- 9/15** Went on a birdwalk before breakfast. Attended lectures all day on various topics ranging from ecological economics and Australian biogeography to writing and critiquing a scientific paper.
- 9/16** Lectures in the morning on forest fragmentation. Took a trip after lunch to Toohey's Creek Corridor to learn about forest corridors and how they help wildlife.
- 9/17** Spent the morning mistnetting birds. We were able to band about ten birds in all! Attended field lectures in the "Stockwellia" forest.
- 9/18** Attended field lecture on Wet Sclerophyll Forest and a special lecture on endangered species in the wet tropics forest by special guest, Dr. John winter.

### Inside this Issue...

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by Kristen Haley

**Arrival**  
by Katie Reeve

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by Jeremy Clark

**The Dawn Chorus**  
by Pedro Marques



**Student Journals**



**Katie Reeve**  
**Duke University**  
**Arrival**

We arrived on a Tuesday around noon at the Cairns airport baggage claim. We were 32 individuals embarking together on a what we hoped would be a great adventure. Immediately, we mingled and began to talk. Lea began to memorize all of our names and I said hello to Daniel, a guy I know from my school. The faculty loaded up the vans while we helped and wondered how it would all fit. With plenty of time and certainly no worries, we piled into the vans and headed out of Cairns bound for Warrawee which means “you are welcome here.”

On the way, we stopped at a swimming spot. The river was cool and a welcome refresher after our long flights. We all went in with very little hesitation. Arriving at the Center, exhausted and now slightly damp from our swim, we began to settle in. We ate lunch, toured the property and dropped our bags off at our cabins. We were all beginning to understand the community that we would call home for the next few months.

Around Warrawee there are four cabins which means that each of us will have seven bunkmates. Two people have kitchen duty each day to help meals run

smoothly and wash dishes. One student gives announcements and acts as information officer. We eat, sleep, work, and play together. We depend on each other for nearly everything. The interns help with most meals that Peter, the cook, provides. The faculty provide not only lecture and field trip opportunities but good table conversation. Danny, our student affairs manager, facilitates our growth as a community and makes sure we are all healthy and happy. The trust that we are building is a fragile balance between risk and comfort. For some of us this comes easy, for others it will be the most challenging aspect of their time here. Each day we learn something about each other and this place and become more and more a part of our rainforest community.



**Kristen Haley**  
**Colby College**  
**Platypus Watching**

On our first morning we woke up at 5:30 a.m. Half of us went with John, our professor to experience the Dawn chorus. The other group went to the Eacham Shire platypus watching platform. It was still dark when we left. Early morning is the best time to see them. We tried to be really quiet because platypuses are known to be very shy. After a few minutes we heard a rustling in the grass by the water. But Just Kidding! It was only a cow looking for breakfast. Finally we saw ripples in the water from behind a bend in the creek and a dark creature not more than a foot long skimming the surface. We could barely make out its duck bill before it dove under the water to eat insects and algae off the bottom. We saw a few more later, but

none of them stayed around for very long. We were all so excited to see them! Some people even got pictures. On the way back to the van I saw my first bamboo tree! Not bad for the first day, and it all happened before breakfast!



**Jeremy Clark**  
**Penn State U.**  
**First Impression**

As our airplane neared its final destination, we could see rainforest-covered mountains right next to the beautiful blue ocean and the Great Barrier Reef. The views from the airplane were amazing and everyone became excited about finally arriving and living in the rainforest. The drive from the airport began in a moderately-sized city and quickly diminished into rural country. We started into the mountains on a long winding road that took us up and up the forested hillside. Suddenly we were in the rainforest. It was sunny that day and had not rained in awhile so the forest did not look wet. But all of the plants looked very different than the ones we had just seen down the road.

Walking through the rainforest, birds seemed to be the most prominent wildlife. The most colorful bird I have seen so far is the King Parrot. The male has a bright red head and chest, and light green wings.

It started raining a couple of days ago, so now it seems much more like a rainforest with the sounds of water drops dripping on the large leaves. The rain also brought out some frogs that hop across the forest floor. The rain seems to make the forest come alive and become rejuvenated!



# Q&A

## Q. Why did you choose to study the rainforest in Australia?

*Emily McGaughy, Boston, MA*

**A:** I chose to come to the Australian rainforest because I wanted to study in a place other than my college for a semester. Another reason I chose to study in Australia is because I am studying environmental science and wanted a program that would go with my major. I found out about this program in Australia and thought it sounded pretty cool. I had always wanted to travel to Australia, and this program gave me the opportunity to spend three months in this amazing country.

I love spending time outdoors, seeing new things and being in a different climate than Massachusetts (my home state). I will be able to see hundreds of new species of plants and animals. A rainforest is so diverse and there is a different insect or bird every time you turn around. Now that I'm here I realize that this really is a beautiful place. We've heard so many types of birds and



and seen many types of trees. It's amazing to see things that you've never seen before. And being on the other side of the world you see different stars and constellations at night. It's definitely a great place to be.



*Beth Fenstermacher*

## Q. How did you get to Australia? Was it an easy trip?

*Angela Lynch, Ft. Worth, TX*

**A:** My trip to Australia began when I boarded a plane on the east coast of America on August ninth to fly to Sydney, Australia. The plane ride was about fourteen hours long. During the plane flight we crossed the international date-line, so by the time we arrived in Australia the time was 14 hours ahead of the time on the east coast of the United States.

When my plane flight was finally over, we landed in Sydney, which is in south east Australia.

Sydney is famous for its Opera House on the Harbor. My favorite place in Sydney was the Botanical Gardens.

Luckily, I was able to spend three days there

before getting on a bus that would take me to the northern part of the country. As I headed up the east coast I stopped in Bighorn Bay. This bay has lots of beaches and is well known because it is the most easterly point of mainland Australia. My next stop was Harvey Bay. Harvey Bay is a



place that many people visit because it is close to Fraiser Island. Fraiser Island is the largest sand island in the world. While I was visiting the island I saw dingos, sharks, dolphins and sting rays. There are fresh water creeks and lakes on Fraiser Island that are so clean, you can drink the water you are swimming in. My next stop was in Airlie Beach. Airlie Beach is a town that I stayed in for one night before going to Cook Island which is very different from Fraiser Island. Cook Island had rocky shores and more hills than Fraiser Island.

After Cook Island I finished up my trip by heading to Cairns, where I met the other SFS students and faculty. The trip from Sydney to Cairns took me about 58 hours by bus.

After many days, I finally arrived at Warawee (the name for the Center for Rainforest Studies). Warawee is located about 30 miles southeast of Cairns in the World Heritage Wet Tropics Rainforest, and this is where I will be staying for the next three months!

*Sarah R. Good*

Have a question you would like students at the Center for Rainforest Studies to answer?

Email us at:

**[rain@sitalive.com](mailto:rain@sitalive.com)**



**Pedro Marques**  
**Amherst College**  
**Sept. 14, 1997**  
**The Dawn Chorus**

On our first morning here at the center we got up at 5:00 a.m., surprisingly awake and motivated. We met our professor John behind one of the cabins and sat in total silence waiting for the rainforest birds to start their morning chorus. It started with a single pale yellow robin's tweet tweet tweet. Pretty soon a Dusky Honeyeater joined in with his laughing chirps. Then the meow of a catbird, each bird building on the sound of the last in a chirping symphony.

John would identify the birds as they chirped and after half an hour I could recognize five or six of them. The sounds of the rainforest began to make sense as I became familiar with the different types of birds. It was awesome! We ended our morning adventure when the star wars laser-like chirps of the chowchilla's totally and completely drowned out the sounds of the other birds in the forest.

## Home Connection: Categorizing Plants

Organizing plants into categories that we can understand is sometimes a hard task to accomplish. Take a look around your home and take note of the types of plants you see. Be sure to look inside and out! Do any of the plants look alike? Do they look different? One way to organize plants is by categorizing them into several types which might include non-flowering plants, flowering plants, annuals, perennials, deciduous and evergreens. Investigate these types of plants and try to find examples of each type. Which types of plants do you have in and around your home? Which type do you think is the easiest to recognize?

## Glossary

**canopy:** the strata of trees in the rainforest that are 60 to 90 feet tall

**diversity:** the number of different species or types of animals or plants

**habitat:** the place where a plant or animal lives

**platypus:** a small aquatic egg laying mammal found in Australia. It has web feet and a fleshy bill similar to that of a duck



1. What does Warrawee, the name for the Center for Rainforest Studies mean?
2. What does the male King Parrot look like?
3. How can you prevent leeches from attaching to your skin?
4. Why would you like to spend a semester studying at the Center for Rainforest Studies in Queensland, Australia?

## Site's Log

9/18/97

**TIME:** 10:30 a.m. AEST  
 (Australian Eastern Standard Time)

**AIR TEMP:** 22° C

**RAINFALL:** 0 mm

**WX:** sunny with a slight breeze

### KEY:

°C=degrees Celsius  
 mm=millimeter

- Answers to Quiz**
1. You are Welcome Here!
  2. Bright red head and chest and light green wings.
  3. Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts.
  4. Answers may vary.



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### Send us your questions!

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