

## **CALM IN THE KIMBERLEY**

On 2 December 1998, Kevin Kenneally, our President, opened the meeting with 60 people present. He welcomed members Norma and Jim Anderson, who have retired south from Liveringa, and extended a special welcome to Pat Barblett, the Chairperson of the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism (FACET).

Kevin apologised for the absence of Dr Syd Shea, the Executive Director of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) who was due to talk to the Society on the topic, "CALM in the Kimberley". He was ill and couldn't attend, so Kevin had been asked to step in and give the address for him, with the able assistance of Genelle Pennington who had put the 'Power-point' presentation together for us. Kevin hopes that he can get Dr Shea to a later meeting with a view to hearing answers to some of the questions that arose after the talk.

Tourism has increased tremendously over the years and nature-based tourism is the more popular. "Certain products emerging today will dominate the market tomorrow, such as nature and ecotourism products, cruises, water sports and tourism in the polar regions, the deserts and the great tropical forests," says the Secretary General, Francesco Frangialli, World Tourism Organisation, 1998.

We need ecological, sustainable development using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes on which life depends are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased (Ecologically Sustainable Development Steering Committee, 1992).

We are perfectly poised to capitalise on our natural advantage. CALM manages a land area 51% the size of Japan, as shown on a diagram. We have the world's oldest culture embedded in the world's oldest landscape. Integration is the key word:

- Integrating the needs of all of the community now and in the future.
- Integrating different sustainable land uses with sustainable conservation.
- Integrating conservation with wealth generation and employment creation.
- Integrating management and scientific skills to achieve these objectives.

Why conservation needs nature-based tourism:

- Nature-based tourism educates the community about what is worthwhile conserving.
- Nature-based tourism causes our landscapes, plants and animals to have a tangible value.

- Nature-based tourism increases the number of constituencies who depend on, and hence support, conservation.
- Nature-based tourism generates funds for research and management.
- Nature-based tourism gives impetus to private conservation efforts.

Why nature-based tourism needs conservation:

- If we destroy the natural asset, there is no product.
- Conservation can create unique natural products.
- Conservation can add value to the nature-based tourism experience.
- Marketing.

Management is the answer. The management challenge – To manage and protect lands, waters and wildlife while at the same time ensuring that visitors have the opportunity to see, understand and appreciate those values.

The Ibis Aerial Highway links 14 beauty spots in the Kimberley, using light planes for tourists who have limited time and a desire for comfort. Thus CALM is enhancing the product by providing knowledge and the opportunity to participate, as with its Landscape Expeditions, Web and E-mail publications, and the publication of books such as *Broome & Beyond*, which used much community involvement, and the Bush Books Series, five of which relate to the Kimberley. The *Flora of the Kimberley* was the first flora for tropical Western Australia. It is a starting point. We need a flora of the whole northern region, including the Northern Territory and Queensland.

Western Everlasting has just been launched to promote and protect all threatened flora in the State. These are listed in regions, but more research is needed. The Edgar Range *Pandanus* was threatened by cattle and has been cultivated in Broome for people to see and to protect it from extinction.

We must recognise the nature-based products we have, such as the Mermaid Boab in Careening Bay, which is a permanent national monument to Phillip Parker King and Alan Cunningham, the botanist and explorer. (All these places mentioned were illustrated with superb photographic slides.)

*Acacia tumida*, a common Kimberley wattle, is used to make flour by grinding the seeds, and, in Africa, is used for stabilisation and firewood as well, so it has tremendous potential. *Cycas pruinosa*, a cycad, has potential as a medicine. Boabs are dominant in the landform and the boab is also the logo for this Society. Pat Lowe has just produced a fascinating book on this ancient and mysterious tree (reviewed in *Boab Bulletin*, December 1998, p. 5).

Cape Domett, north of Wyndham at the east entrance to Cambridge Gulf, is very scenic and has great potential as a stop-off point for boat cruises, the mighty King George Falls, the bottom of Cambridge Gulf are all in proposed Reserve Systems. Purnululu (the Bungle Bungle Range) of ancient Devonian sandstones formed into strange beehive shapes is part of a National Park. Wolfe Creek Crater, the second largest such in the world, 850 m diameter, is safe in a small National Park on the western edge of the Tanami Desert.

Nearby large freshwater Lake Willson and nearby flood plain in NW Tanami is home to thousands of water birds. The Gardner Range is home to a species of Pebblemound building mouse recently discovered, so needs protection. The Ningbing Range north of Wyndham, another part of the Devonian Reef system, is home to a host of endemic land snails which need protecting.

The Bougainville Peninsula, the northernmost part of the Kimberley Coast, has many large patches of rainforest and these were only discovered in the 1960s. A large survey in the 1980s identified and surveyed over 100 patches of rainforest.

And what is happening to Mitchell Plateau? The triple falls here are superb – you can walk or take a helicopter to view them. Only here do the endemic fan palms, *Livistona eastonii* grow and there are many rare epiphytic and terrestrial orchids to be found.

Naturalist Island in Prince Frederick Harbour near the mouth of the Hunter River is a popular stopping off spot for boat cruises. It has a patch of vine thicket rambling up the hill behind the protected beach. The Hunter River itself has extensive mangroves lining the banks and is home to the world's largest numbers of bird species. The mangal also provides corridors along which overseas birds migrate into the Kimberley and southwards from south-east Asia.

The incredibly straight and scenic Prince Regent River is already part of a Nature Reserve which could be updated to a National Park. It includes the famous King Cascade emptying into an extensive salt water pool, home to resident estuarine crocodiles. Mounts Trafalgar and Waterloo, massive blocks of sandstone, dominate St George Basin. Crocodile Creek in Yampi Peninsula is an anchorage for visiting ketches and camping area for sea-weary sailors, but here quarantine is a problem which needs careful management.

All through the Kimberley, feral animals pose another management nightmare. Donkeys, cattle and cats are the main offenders—needing eradication because of the damage they cause to country and its indigenous inhabitants.

The Carson Escarpment forms the edge of a vast plateau in the Drysdale River National Park. This area is land-locked and has no road access. You either canoe or walk. It is home to the best examples of the famous delicate Bradshaw art figures (known as Goyon or Djennaggi paintings by some Aboriginal people).

There were slides of the Funnel into Secure Bay and whirlpools in Walcott Inlet, showing the force of tidal movements in a range of up to 11m. Montgomery Island and Reef is left high and dry when the tidal water rushes off in cascades to join the sea.

The Cockburn Range, with its extensive sandstone ramparts, needs to be incorporated within a National Park or Nature Reserve, as do the coastal vine thickets north of Broome. Windjana and Geikie Gorges are now in National Parks, as is Bell Creek and Falls, now that CALM administers Mt Hart Station.

The Edgar Ranges, on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, form an important interzone area which needs protecting, especially from feral donkeys and cattle. Fire control is also very important in all areas and we need to understand how and why this can be accomplished.

The final slides covered Aboriginal artefacts, rock art, fish traps, middens and didgeridoos, including appropriate background music for dancing. This stressed the untapped potential of indigenous cultural tourism and the need for preservation. Dialogue and input from both sides is required.

This concluded the presentation. Kevin then welcomed questions. Some he answered and those directed to Dr Shea should be written down and sent to him with a view to having the answers published in the *Boab Bulletin* subsequently.

The President wished all 300 members of the Society compliments of the Season and thanked the Council members for their efforts during the year. The meeting closed at 9.00 pm and the members and friends present partook of a special Christmas supper.

*Daphne Choules Edinger*