

The art of conservation

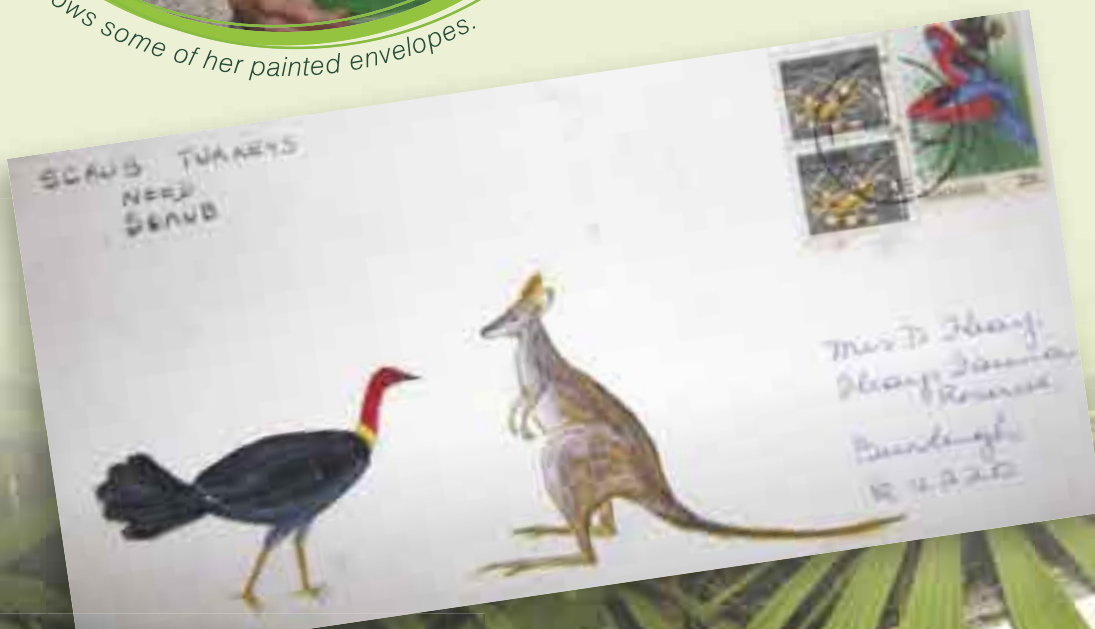


Margaret shows some of her painted envelopes.

Margaret Thorsborne lives in a charming little cottage nestled in rainforest near Meunga Creek. Artist and environmental activist, Margaret's deep spiritual love of nature drives her enthusiasm. Her passion for conservation is infectious. Visitors are quickly immersed in a world where it is not unusual for humans to live harmoniously with nature. Margaret shares her life and her house with a variety of birds, reptiles and insects – although the mozzies are not always popular. It is always a special occasion for Margaret when passing cassowaries and their chicks pause to cool off in the plastic wading pool Margaret has provided for them.

After getting married in 1963 Margaret and her husband, Arthur, travelled north to the Wet Tropics from the Gold Coast and started visiting Hinchinbrook Island in 1964. They settled at Meunga Creek in 1972 and called their property Galmara – an Aboriginal word meaning poet or singer of songs. Their property, consisting of coastal wetlands and rainforests, has now been handed over to the State Government to extend the Edmund Kennedy National Park. Margaret has special permission to live in the park for the rest of her life.

Their cottage was also their sanctum and from here Margaret and Arthur championed a range of conservation causes, mainly in the Cardwell/Hinchinbrook region. Over 40 years ago she and Arthur initiated the annual counts of pied imperial pigeons breeding on North Brook Island and ensured their ongoing protection. Although protected by law since 1877, the birds were still being shot. From countless thousands at the time of white settlement, numbers had dropped to only 1,500. They are now back up to about 30,000.



Brush turkey and agile wallaby

Wren Cottage, Margaret's guestroom at Galmara.



Victor Trumper



She and Arthur also championed the conservation of Hinchinbrook Island and showcased its special features in a book: Hinchinbrook Island – the land time forgot. Margaret and Arthur also collected more than 200 botanical specimens from the area and have had two mosses, a vine, a crab and a spider named after them. Since Arthur's death in 1991, Margaret has continued to promote the conservation of local threatened animals such as cassowaries, mahogany gliders, beach stone curlews and dugongs. She is still busy writing letters and submissions to governments and taking part in legal actions to conserve her local environment.

Margaret's artistic talents have mainly been devoted to creating cards and envelopes for her friends, politicians and government agencies. She estimates that she has painted over 2,500 envelopes in her time, often with conservation messages, and matching stamps. Most of her artworks now reside with grateful friends, but she does have some that have been returned to her, carefully stored in an album to protect them from the ravages of wet season mould and insects.



◀ Rainforest needs cassowaries

Pied imperial pigeon



Margaret says that she really doesn't think of herself as an artist. But that may be changing. Recently her small cassowary painting sold for \$400 at a fundraiser for the Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook. And her cassowary cards are a best seller at several visitor centres in the region and raise money for conservation.

Margaret was recently awarded the Queensland Natural History Award in 2006 for her contributions to helping understand our natural history and received a Wet Tropics Cassowary Award in 1999 for her efforts in community conservation.

Photos: Campbell Clarke



◀ Cassowaries need rainforest

Australian bustard



Help for injured wildlife a phone call away

There are dedicated wildlife carers throughout northern Queensland. Before you phone them, get a precise location of the animal. If you are in a remote area and have some wildlife handling experience, you may decide to pick up the animal and take it to the nearest wildlife carer.

Approach injured and distressed animals with caution. Normally shy wallabies have a nasty kick and bite

if they are in pain. Often the best thing to do is approach animals from behind and throw a towel over them. If the animal is cold and wet, the towel will soak up some moisture and trap their body heat. Many wildlife carers keep an emergency towel, pillowcase and cardboard box in their cars for this purpose. Keep the animal in a darkened, quiet environment (not the boot of the car) and keep children and family pets away from the animal.

Phone contacts for wildlife carers

- Townsville 0414 717374
- Cairns (07) 4053 4467
0409 517 101
- Tablelands (07) 4091 2683
- Daintree Coast (07) 4098 9079
0428 736 029
- Julatten (07) 4094 1177
- Cooktown (07) 4069 6229



Photo: Mike Trenery

RAINFOREST EXPLORER

Is Here!



How do leeches breathe?

What bush tucker do Rainforest Aboriginal people eat?

What are the oldest plants on earth?

Why did the Wet Tropics become a World Heritage Area?

Become a Rainforest Explorer and you will be able to answer all these questions and more! You can make your own bat wings or invite some animal friends to a tea party. You can watch videos about rainforests or download stacks of rainforest animal photos. With lots of cool activities to do, you'll become an expert on Wet Tropics rainforests and their plants and animals. Make learning about the rainforest FUN!

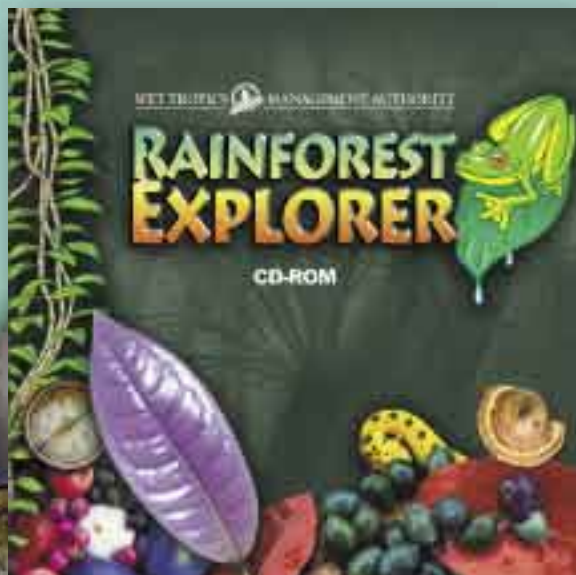
Get your teacher to have a look at the different activities designed for both teachers and students. Rainforest Explorer is divided into three sections for different age groups:

- Preparatory to Year 3
- Year 4 to Year 7
- Year 8 to Year 9.

Rainforest Explorer is available as a CD and on the Wet Tropics website - www.wettropics.gov.au.

If you want to find out more about Rainforest Explorer, you can contact us on 07 4052 0542.

So jump on your computer and start exploring!



3

Southern boobook



2

Amethystine python

1

Huntsman spider

Here's an example of just one of the activities in Rainforest Explorer.

You are holding a tea party. You have invited a brush turkey, a Boyd's forest dragon, a tube-nosed bat, a southern boobook, an amethystine python, a huntsman spider and a white lemuroid possum.

- *What different foods will you need to feed them all?*
- *Will you have to make sure that some animals do not eat each other? Which ones?*
- *What might the animals talk about at the tea party?*

Have your class draw some pictures of your tea party and send them into WTMA and your class might win some posters or stickers for your school. The address is WTMA PO Box 2050 Cairns 4870.

4
White lemuroid possum



5

Brush turkey



7

Boyd's forest dragon



6

Tube-nosed bat

