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## **OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

### **John Morris, Port Bajool Pty Ltd and related parties**

John Morris has been in Tropical North Queensland (based in the Cairns, Tablelands and Port Douglas areas) since 1974. During that time he and his family and related companies have been involved in a range of industry sectors including agriculture, tourism and property development.

Follows is a brief summary of the key projects and relevant environmental perspectives.

#### **Agriculture**

1974 - 2003	First sugar cane farm purchased on Cook Highway near Craiglie. Further farms were also operated over then next 20 years including in the Mowbray area, and near Mt Molloy on the Atherton Tablelands. Properties for cattle grazing included historic Wetherby Station which was also opened for tourism.
2004 - 14	Oaky Creek property on Atherton Tablelands – a previously failed tea tree plantation – was purchased for cattle grazing and rural subdivision.
2012 -14	Purchased Crystalbrook Station (near Chillagoe) for cattle grazing. This is one of the first properties to use the newly developed genetic strain of “Ultra Black Angus” bull – developed for the tropics and allowing low density grazing with excellent meat via British breed infusion. The policy has always been to underutilize the carrying capacity of the property. Currently have a Qld permit to conduct dry land farming and have informed and are working with Dept of Environment on any relevant environmental issues prior to activating any land clearing.

#### **Tourism**

1982	Purchased Vacation Village in Port Douglas
1986	Wendy Morris (Marine Biologist) developed the first company to offer marine biologist guided snorkeling at the outer reef and also contracted monitoring of reef locations with GBRMPA and JCU Townsville.

1988 – 2002	Developed award winning Rainforest Habitat in Port Douglas on a previous sugar cane farm – the first walk through rainforest display featuring birds and other wildlife. A breeding program for Lumholtz Tree Kangaroos was one of the most successful in north Queensland.
1997	Built Treetops Resort in Port Douglas – heavily planted with carefully chosen local tree species (Peter Radke of Yuruga Nursery was consultant)
1996	Awarded Marie Watson Blake Award for greatest individual contribution to Queensland Tourism.
2013	Crystalbrook Lodge (5 rooms) developed on Crystalbrook Station with landscaping and plant species designed by Peter Radke of Yuruga Nursery.

### Other Developments

1985-2000	Various subdivisions that have ensured a high level of native tree planting where possible including The Gorge Estate (Mossman); Highland Park (Julatten), Reef Park and Port Gardens (Port Douglas). All subdivisions had covenants to ensure a good level of landscaping (quite often with each lot being given an allowance for native plants again working closely with Yuruga Nurseries)
2004-2014	Rural development allowing for small farms at Oaky Creek again developed with native trees lining the roadways and each lot also given an allowance for native species to be included in landscaping.
2009-2014	Purchased approx. 7000 acres of plateau adjacent to Oaky Creek development. Although the land was originally part of Springmount Station, the land was not suited to any form of farming including cattle grazing. It was apparent that it was an exceptional site for a wind farm as the north/south 275kva transmission line ran through the centre of the property. We subsequently developed a relationship that saw Port Bajool join with Transfield Services and become 50% partners of Mt Emerald Wind Farm. At a later point Transfield Services sold 80% of their shareholding to RATCH Australia who are now the project managers for the development with Port Bajool remaining as a 50% partner and continuing to own the land.

### Board Director Positions held

- John Morris- Australian Tourism Commission, Quicksilver Connections
- Wendy Morris – Tourism Queensland, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (Chair), Advance Cairns (Deputy Chair)



## **A ZOO OF THE FUTURE**

The Rainforest Habitat is a wildlife park of the future and world leader in mixed immersion exhibits. It is situated on eight acres of land that has been recreated to provide a window into our natural environment.

The park's mission is to enable visitors to appreciate and understand with a little more detail the intricate interdependence of rainforest fauna and flora by experiencing many of these at close range, and, through creating appreciation and understanding, engender in visitors the desire to support conservation of our unique Australian wildlife heritage.

Guests can wander through four different and unique environments that depict over 180 species of the surrounding rainforest, wetlands, woodlands and grasslands.

Constructed in 1988 on previously low yield agricultural land, the Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary covers over two hectares. With two of the four environments covered by specially designed cyclone proof shade cloth and two open-air exhibits, guests become an insignificant observer amidst the intricate performance of wildlife. Boardwalks intertwine through the canopy and rainforest floor of these environments, providing an exhilarating and educating journey for all.

Today the Rainforest Habitat is Australia's leading environmental wildlife park, and boasting over 1600 animals, contains the largest collection in immersion exhibits. Informative guided tours, experiential displays and immersion exhibits provide an experience found nowhere else.

The Rainforest Habitat holds Advanced Ecotourism Accreditation and has won many major Tourism Awards in both Tropical North Queensland and Queensland.

**The Rainforest Habitat is an educational experience where guests are able to observe animals behaving naturally.**

All animals are displayed, treated and represented in a humane and natural manner. Our trained wildlife keepers present animals such as pythons, crocodiles and koalas to guests in a format that allows people to talk informally with the wildlife presenter, learn more about the animals and touch the animal in a controlled manner. The wildlife presenters find it particularly satisfying when they help visitors unknowingly conquer their fears of certain species (e.g. pythons) simply through close interaction and information.

From an animal welfare and eco tourism perspective, we strongly uphold our commitment to prevent any unnecessary stress to the animals. *The park does not conduct any "shows" or allow sensitive animals such as koalas to be held by visitors.* With the exception of Queensland, all Australian states and territories have banned consumers from holding or "cuddling" koalas. We find that our visitors are able to enjoy a quality experience during our koala photo sessions, as the animal is placed in comfortable surroundings whilst interacting with the guest. Guests may stand adjacent to the koala, take photos and feed it some fresh gum without any undue stress of constant handling.

Currently, Rainforest Habitat plays a role in conservation by active involvement with a number of associations:

**Cassowary Advisory Group (CAG)**– Curator sits on the board of CAG.

**Rainforest Foundation** – The Rainforest Habitat is a founding member of the Rainforest Foundation.

**Wet Tropics Management Authority** – The Rainforest Habitat has recently signed a further six year partnership agreement with the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA). Our accredited Wet Tropics Information Centre provides information and advice to visitors about the activities of the area and the importance of the Wet Tropics region. WTMA also supplies signage that imparts information about the biodiversity of The Wet Tropics, its rare and threatened species and the importance of maintaining their habitat.

**Wildlife Rescue**

- Each year the park receives and rehabilitates free of charge over 300 sick, orphaned or injured animals
- The park offers a free snake removal service to the local community
- Wildlife keepers work in conjunction with Wildlife Rescue in the rehabilitation of injured Tree Kangaroos



November 6th 2003  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **The Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary WINS AGAIN!**

The Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary in Port Douglas has gained success by being announced as a tourism winner at Saturday night's prestigious Tropical North Queensland Tourism Awards, held at the Cairns Convention Centre.

Rainforest Habitat followed up its 2001 and 2002 win of Significant Regional Attraction by winning:

### **2003 Significant Tourist Attraction!**

This award adds to the Rainforest Habitats' thirteenth significant result at both State and Regional Tourism Awards and means that the park will be inducted in the Hall of Fame in 2004.

The park also won the award for the Most Outstanding Submission, which was written by park staff.

Rainforest Habitat General Manager, Doug Ryan said "These awards are a result of the dedication of the Habitat staff and the support of our industry colleagues. We have a great team of people working in the park who are a credit to the tourism industry."

The Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary is an Advanced Eco-accredited environmental wildlife experience and is currently recognised as the leading environmental immersion exhibit display in Australia.

Recently the park has undergone major improvements, some of which include a new park entrance, an air-conditioned Gift Shop, group meeting area, new guest amenities plus a new breakfast buffet and kitchen.

The previous Gift Shop has been redesigned into an Interpretive Centre including an Artist in Residence program, reptile displays and Wet Tropics signage.

Due to the park's commitment to Wildlife Rescue, a new animal care facility, treatment rooms and food preparation areas have been constructed. These extensive upgrades have enabled the park to continue its leadership in wildlife exhibition in the Tropical North.

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## History of the Wildlife Habitat

**The Wildlife Habitat (previously The Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary) has evolved substantially from its humble beginnings as a sugar cane field to a thriving industry leader.** From a mere concept to a plan for the future, the original Rainforest Habitat was developed by John Morris and Michael Turner. Today, The Wildlife Habitat depicts four different and unique environments – Savannah, Wetlands, Rainforest and Grasslands.

Construction began on an area of agricultural land (sugar cane fields) in 1988, and opened to the public as a bird and butterfly sanctuary in June 1989.

Butterflies were replaced with a multitude of bird species, and one more mini ecosystem was built to include pademelons, cassowaries, koalas and wading birds (now known as The Wetlands). Direction was found in 1994 when park management became aware of the growing concern and need to **conserve** our flora and fauna. A plan was put into place to display and interpret the wildlife and fauna of Tropical North Queensland, in particular the Wet Tropics region. This dynamic and ever evolving plan was designed to take the Wildlife Habitat Sanctuary into the new millennium catering for the developing eco-conscious market.

The Wildlife Habitat covers eight acres of land, of which two thirds are covered by specifically designed cyclone proof shade cloth, originally the largest in the southern hemisphere.

The original concept of Breakfast with the Birds was established in 1990, allowing guests to dine in an open area with wildlife interaction. In 1994 park management became aware of the growing concern and the need to preserve our flora and fauna. A plan was put in place to display and interpret the wildlife and flora of Tropical North Queensland, in particular the Wet Tropics region. This dynamic and ever evolving plan was designed to take The Rainforest Habitat into the new millennium, catering for the developing environmentally conscious market. The Habitat achieved Australia's first Advanced Eco Accreditation in 1998 and has maintained that Advanced Eco Accreditation to this day.

The Wildlife Habitat is a partner with the Wet Tropics Management Authority in the goal of rainforest conservation and education. Signage supplied by The Wet Tropics Management Authority imparts information about the biodiversity of The Wet Tropics, its rare and threatened species and the importance of maintaining their habitat. Regular guided tours are an essential part of the park's focus on biological conservation, as are guest's interaction with wildlife within the sanctuary.

Improvements and developments that the park has seen since the year 2000 include our Koala enclosure, Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo enclosure and breeding facility, Crocodile enclosure, Restaurant Buffet, new Gift Shop and Office building, and the introduction of digital photography.

In 2003, The Wildlife Habitat achieved a world first with the birth of a Black-necked Stork chick (commonly known as Jabirus). These wetland birds had never before bred within any zoo or wildlife sanctuary, which meant that there was very little information available. The pair has continued to breed each year since then and we have gathered vast amounts of information regarding their husbandry and behaviour. James & Jabby have together raised 13 chicks.

The Wildlife Habitat has been a multiple finalist and winner of TTNQ and Queensland Tourism Awards. We also achieved TTNQ Hall of Fame status in 2004 in the Environmental and Significant Tourist Attraction categories at the TTNQ and QLD Tourism Awards.

The Wildlife Habitat was purchased by Charles and Pip Woodward on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 and has joined the CaPTA family group of companies including Rainforestation, Tropic Wings Coach Tours, Cairns Wildlife Dome & ZOOM, Australian Butterfly Sanctuary and Jungle Tours.

Breakfast with the Birds and Lunch with the Lorikeets (introduced in June 2006) are daily buffet meals that can be enjoyed within the Wetlands environment, with animals roaming freely around! The Wildlife Habitat is also a great venue for functions for small or large groups, where guests can enjoy delicious foods and beverages from The Wetlands Café.

One of only two wildlife parks in the world to display Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos, the Habitat achieved breeding success with this species in November 2006. The Habitat also houses the most diverse range of macropod species (kangaroos & their relatives) in Queensland.

Free guided tours and animal presentations run regularly every day, as well as interaction with pythons, freshwater crocodiles and koalas. Souvenir photographs with Reptiles and Koalas were introduced in April 2008.

In October 2012, the fourth habitat, the Savannah was opened, displaying local endangered finches. The Habitat has had great success with breeding the Gouldian finch.

Now we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the opening of the Cassowary Walk, a contribution to raise awareness of the pivotal role the cassowary plays in the ongoing preservation of the rainforest.

### **The Wildlife Habitat Motto**

Through Observation...Appreciation  
Through Appreciation...Conservation

