

**The Rainforest Habitat
Wildlife Sanctuary**

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- Australia's leading wildlife experience
- Wetlands, Rainforest, and Grasslands Environments
- Breakfast with the Birds
- Lunch with the Lorikeets

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE LUMHOLTZ'S TREE KANGAROO

The Rainforest Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary has always been committed to displaying the unique wildlife of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, to give visitors the opportunity to see, and therefore hopefully appreciate, the wildlife of the region they are visiting, instead of seeing the same old species at their local zoo at home.

In May 1994, Tree Kangaroos were chosen as a target species for The Rainforest Habitat to attempt to acquire. Australia has two species of Tree Kangaroo, one of which is the Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, named after its Norwegian discoverer, Carl Lumholtz, in the 1880s. This species occurs in suitable mountain rainforests between Ingham and the Daintree River.

At this time, the only Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos in captivity were a colony of approximately 14 at a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service research facility in Townsville, with one or two individuals in the care of wildlife rescue volunteers. The Rainforest Habitat began lobbying the Federal and State Government Agencies for the release of some of these animals. At all times, The Rainforest Habitat's mantra was that people need to see these animals to appreciate them, and that we could enhance the public's awareness of these unique animals by placing them on display.

Tree Kangaroos are so charismatic that there are many scientists, wildlife carers and individuals in zoos from all over the world who are quite obsessed with them after working with the animals. Over the next five years, The Rainforest Habitat's Curator liaised with these people, also attending field trips where both Australia species were studied in the wild – not an easy task for such a cryptic species.

By 1999, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service were about to wrap up their Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo research program. The persistent lobbying had paid off, and the remaining 8 animals were placed on the availability roster and expressions of interest were tendered in mid-2000.

The Rainforest Habitat's expression of interest complied, as it demonstrated its long term commitment to the species. The Rainforest Habitat was then informed it would get the breeding colony for Far North Queensland, one of only two places in the world where this species would be on public display.



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After several months of planning and construction, the \$300 000 Tree Kangaroo Breeding Facility was completed in early 2001. Soon after, two captive bred Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos arrived, then during the drought of 2001 and 2002, four more came into care as sick and injured wildlife.

Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos are solitary animals in the wild. Jake, an almost completely blind, young mature male, and Genie, a young mature female with a broken tail base, were introduced in 2004, and slowly but surely became compatible. Male Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos tend to be boisterous and aggressive animals, but because of Jake's blindness, Genie was able to call the shots. These animals lived in different enclosures and only came together a few hours a week.

Over the following two years, copulation was a common occurrence, but the problem was making sure it took place during oestrous. This was proving to be complicated, until finally in 2nd November 2006, a small baby was noticed in Genie's pouch.

The emotion of the Wildlife Keeping Team was ecstatic, on level with The Rainforest Habitat's world-first breeding of the Black-necked Storks. By June 2007, the beautiful baby girl was coming out of the pouch regularly, although still small, frail and uncoordinated. Now in mid-August she is an energetic bouncing "joey" who is more and more confident by the day.

Although we genuinely believe The Rainforest Habitat Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo program has already generated more awareness about this unique species, this birth has given us a "vehicle" by which we can bring to people's attention the importance of protecting wildlife and wild places. The Tropical North's community has gone from being disbelievers when told about kangaroos living in trees, to being proud of their region's other iconic wildlife.

Our next goal is to build the number of animals up to a level where we can achieve a self-sustaining captive colony. The goodwill generated amongst the Tree Kangaroo Community has been fantastic, as no one ever thought we could breed from these permanently disabled animals.

The Rainforest Habitat Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo Keeping Team have done an unbelievably fabulous job and the animals themselves give us all hope for the future.

