



FOSTERING
INNOVATION



TOURISM
EXCELLENCE

Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve

The Wildlife Conservancy of

Tropical Queensland, in conjunction with the community of Mareeba.

info@mareebawetlands.com



The Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve is an innovative community conservation project that combines valuable conservation work with environmental education and nature based tourism.

It was conceived in 1994 to use water leftover after passing through the channel system of the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area. Environmental constraints had ruled out the land for sugar cane farming. The not-for-profit organization, the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland, proposed a series of gravity-fed wetlands, which would create a 5,000 acre reserve of high bio-diversity to protect much of tropical Australia's savanna and wetland flora and fauna.

With Commonwealth funding, the project progressed in stages to its opening in November 1998. In just two years the Conservancy was reporting a major increase in wetland wildlife, including becoming one of the most important Brolga roosts in TNQ. Among the Conservancy's current initiatives are a landmark program to reintroduce the Gouldian Finch, as well as Freshwater Crocodiles.

The series of 12 inter-connected lagoons, creeks and channels has also created a major new regional tourist attraction, which allow visitors to experience a tropical eco system quite different to the reef, coastal and rainforest environments.

The project's tourism potential was soon revealed, especially in an area suffering economic downturn following the restructure of the Australian tobacco-growing industry. Subsequent funding from the Commonwealth and contributions from the local community saw the establishment in 1999 of walking trails and the Clancy's Lagoon Visitors Centre.

The visitor centre is a blend of modern and vernacular North Queensland architecture using the traditional materials of tin and timber, with sweeping views across the lagoon to the Hann Tableland National Park. It offers the ideal cool retreat in which to learn about the Australian tropical savannas and wetlands and the work of the Conservancy, or just to enjoy a cold drink or snack on the wide viewing gallery overlooking the lagoon and the surrounding wildlife.

From the centre, visitors may follow self-guided interpretive walks around the sanctuary, hire hand crafted timber canoes to paddle amongst the birds and lilies, float through the lilies on the electric boat Buralga, or join the famous Sunset Reserve Safari in the company of a Wetlands Guide to see more of the abundant wildlife, experience billy tea in the bush, to enjoy cheese and wine and an out-back sunset.

Unique safari-style tents of the Jabiru Safari Camp blend into the open savanna woodland, providing comfortable overnight accommodation.



FOSTERING
INNOVATION



TOURISM
EXCELLENCE

They are comfortably furnished with high quality private en-suite facilities, insect screens, a fridge and a fan. Each tent has a private timber verandah with a BBQ and tables & chairs - perfect for bird watching, reading or enjoying the sun setting over Clancy's Lagoon. Prices are inclusive of tropical breakfast and Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland membership.



The Reserve is of general interest to most visitors. However, it is of particular significance to bird watching people. Located in FNQ's 'golden triangle' of birding and on the East Asian / Australasian 'flyway', the reserve provides a sanctuary for almost all of Australia's tropical water birds, including such rarities as Black-throated Finches and Buff-breasted Button-quail.

The management committee of the Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve is upbeat about their future:

"The Conservancy has made a magnificent and unique contribution to the Tropical North Queensland tourism product mix. In time, the Reserve will come to define the Mareeba region in the same way as Kakadu identifies the Northern Territory, completing a trio of natural attractions which will be defined as the 'hat-trick' of Australian nature – the Reef....the Rainforest...the Outback".

Volunteers do everything on the Reserve, from planting reed beds and bird surveys to dealing with the general public. All income generated from sustainable tourism is reinvested into managing the wetlands as well as valuable wetlands and savanna research work, education and conservation programs.

www.mareebawetlands.com



Key findings:

Tourism activity used to fund the conservation and enhancement of an ecologically significant natural heritage area.

It presents a range of activities that highlight the importance of ecology and the work of the Conservancy, but are also enjoyable as tourism activities in their own right.

It harnesses the philosophy of a not-for-profit organization and the energies of a local community to create a regionally significant eco-tourism project.