

Trip Report -
A brief stint in Northeast Queensland
May 2026



Sunset in the Gillies Range on my first night in the Wet Tropics

4 nights and 28 mammals

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This year I've been really keen to finally surpass 100 mammals on my life list, a goal I've slowly been building towards since I first became interested in mammals as a young teen more than a decade ago now. Starting the year with a total of 86 mammals, a three-week trip to Tasmania in January provided me with 7 additional lifers, whilst an encounter with a pod of common dolphins on the ferry to Kangaroo Island brought my life list to a total of 94 species. However, for that final push to 100 mammals, there had always been one obvious destination – the rainforests and tropical woodlands of north-eastern Queensland.

My last visit to north Queensland was with family in 2017, back when I was only 14 years old, and as a result of my inexperience I only managed to see a tiny fraction of the mammals the region has to offer – just the platypus, musky rat-kangaroo, agile wallaby, Mareeba rock-wallaby and spectacled flying-fox. As such, any future trip to the area, even if only for a few nights, was sure to be a massive boost for my life list, more than enough to get me over the 100 species goal. A return to northeast Queensland became an even more obvious prospect after my sister moved up to Cairns for a job placement at the beginning of this year,

removing the need for a hire car and giving me someone to spend time with whilst spotlighting in the rainforest.

And so, on the 28th of May this year, I was on a plane up to Cairns for a four night long Queensland trip, the maximum amount of time both my sister and I could get off work. With three nights based in the tablelands (staying in Yungaburra) and one in Cairns, we managed to see a total of 28 mammal species, over half of them lifers, as well as a range of other interesting and iconic animals. This trip report covers each day of the trip in detail, focusing on mammals (like the trip itself) but also including observations of other animals I found particularly notable or interesting, particularly herptiles.

Day 1 (May 28th) – Arrival and first night in the Tablelands

After my arrival soon after 4 pm, we departed directly from the Cairns Airport and began making our way from Cairns to Yungaburra along the Gillies Highway. I was filled with anticipation for the night ahead, knowing that it was very possible I could even reach 100 mammal species on this first night if everything went well, but it turned out that the first exciting encounter of the trip would happen even earlier than I expected. It was little more than an hour after I first stepped foot in Queensland when, as we began to approach the end of the windy mountainous section of the Gillies Highway, the vehicles ahead of us began slowing down after spotting an obstruction on the road ahead. Craning my neck to try and see what it was, I saw a flash of blue pass from behind a truck and into the dense rainforest understory that lined the road, and almost immediately I knew what it was – a **southern cassowary**! One of my absolute favourite birds, this was the biggest non-mammal target of the trip, and I couldn't believe we had happened across one so quickly! I asked my sister to slow down as we passed where the cassowary had entered the rainforest, but the pressure from the cars behind us meant she could only slow just enough for me to get this one shot of a blur of blue in the dark understory with my phone before we had to move on. Despite the brevity of the encounter, it had me feeling good about the luck I would have on the trip ahead.



Cryptid-tier cassowary photo (cropped version right)



Dusk in Yungaburra

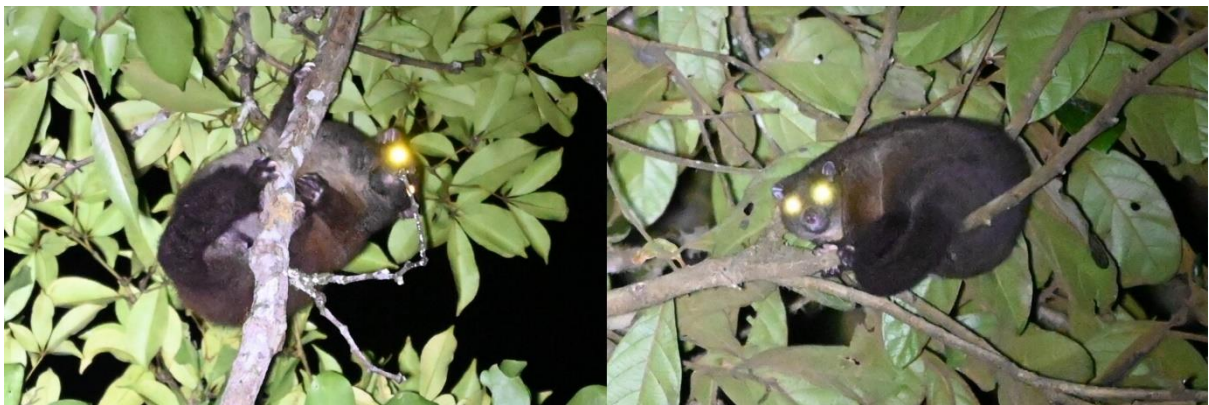
We arrived in Yungaburra soon after sunset, and once settled into our accommodation we were quickly back on the road again to head for the first spotlighting site of the night. I decided to start things strong with a visit to Mount Hypipamee, one of the most well-regarded spots to see many of the Atherton Tableland's endemic possum species, which would be great to tick off as early as possible. It actually seemed a bit quiet upon our arrival, with nothing around the car park and only one **coppery brushtail possum**, the first mammal and first lifer of the trip, seen high in the canopy on the Crater Walk, but things quickly picked up once we made it to Mount Hypipamee Crater itself. Spotlighting across the crater (which looked particularly deep and eerie at night) produced not only another pair of coppery brushtails but also three **Herbert River ringtail possums**, a spectacular-looking possum we unfortunately wouldn't manage to get any better views of on this trip. From then on things were a lot more active, with the walk back to the car park as well as a stroll down the entrance road producing additional coppery brushtail possums, a **common brushtail possum**, three **green ringtail possums** and four **Lemuroid ringtail possums**. Whilst nothing besides possums were seen on the mammal front, our spotlights also picked up several **northern leaf-tailed geckos** and **green-eyed tree frogs** – I was particularly surprised at the size of the former, they were much bigger than I had expected!



Spotlighting across Mount Hypipamee Crater with The Beam



Coppery brushtail possum and Herbert River ringtail possum from across the crater



Lemuroid ringtail possums



Green ringtail possum



Green-eyed tree frog and northern leaf-tailed gecko

With four awesome lifer possums ticked off my list, I was keen to continue searching at Hypipamee for another hour or so in case anything else turned up, but suddenly my headlamp stopped working – I was still armed with my big spotlighting torch (aka The Beam), so illuminating animals wouldn't have been an issue, but the light from my headlamp is better for both picking up eyeshine and taking pictures of wildlife that isn't too far away, so the possibility it may have broken right at the start of the trip was frustrating. We decided to start making our way back towards the accommodation to see if we could fix it, but before we got to Yungaburra we made a short stop at Curtain Fig Tree. Supposedly a great spot for species like giant white-tailed rat, northern long-nosed bandicoot and Lumholtz's tree kangaroo, we did two circuits of the tree but did not manage to lay eyes on a single mammal, although there was a great deal of rustling coming from up in the canopy. A

common brushtail possum and **red-legged pademelon** were seen out on the road on the return drive.

Back in Yungaburra, I managed to revive my headlamp by taking the battery in and out (this was something I'd also tried in the field, but it didn't work then for some reason), and thankfully it wouldn't give us any issues for the rest of the trip. With that fixed, made the short walk from our accommodation to Peterson Creek to see what species were lurking just beyond the town. Several **agile wallabies** and **bush stone-curlews** were seen on the walk down to the creek, whilst the entry to the walk provided us with the fifth lifer for the night, a **northern long-nosed bandicoot** that dodged any chance of a decent picture. This was the 99th species for my life list, which meant whatever new species I got next would be the much-coveted mammal 100!



Northern long-nosed bandicoot seeking shelter around an old shed

It was less than half an hour later, walking up the Peterson Creek Trail, that it finally happened. We heard a big rustle coming from the undergrowth up ahead and then a huge shape, the size of a koala, leapt up from the ground and began scaling a tree. My excitement was almost indescribable – a **Lumholtz's tree kangaroo**! The tree roo stopped about ten metres above the ground and just sat there staring, giving us excellent views, and with it content on staying put I had to actively drag myself away once it felt like we'd been disturbing it for long enough. What a phenomenal species for my 100th mammal!



Lumholtz's tree kangaroo, a thrilling milestone mammal

Whilst the tree roo was the obvious highlight, it wasn't the only mammal seen along Peterson Creek that night, with other sightings including two **red-legged pademelons**, a **coppery brushtail possum**, two **common brushtail possums**, a **green ringtail possum** and additional **agile wallabies**. Frogs were also out and about, predominantly **rainforest stony-creek frogs** but with the first **cane toads** of the trip also presenting themselves. All in all, it was a great end to a fantastic first night!



Red-legged pademelon and green ringtail possum



A young common brushtail possum



A native rainforest stony-creek frog and invasive cane toad

Day 1 Mammal Summary

- Coppery Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus johnstonii*) ✓ x6 - Mount Hypipamee, Yungaburra
- Herbert River Ringtail Possum (*Pseudochirulus herbertensis*) ✓ x3 - Mount Hypipamee
- Lemuroid Ringtail Possum (*Hemibelideus lemuroides*) ✓ x4 - Mount Hypipamee
- Green Ringtail Possum (*Pseudochirops archeri*) ✓ x4 - Mount Hypipamee, Yungaburra
- Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) x4 - Mount Hypipamee, Kennedy Highway, Yungaburra
- Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*) x3 - Madi Forest, Yungaburra
- Agile Wallaby (*Notamacropus agilis*) x12 - Yungaburra
- Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles pallescens*) ✓ x1 - Yungaburra
- Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo (*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*) ✓ x1 - Yungaburra

Lifers (✓): 6 species

Mammal Life List: 100 species

Day 2 (May 29th) – Lake Eacham, ETTY Bay and the southern tablelands



The picturesque waters of Lake Eacham

The first full day of the trip started with a morning visit to Lake Eacham, the main goal being to see musky rat-kangaroos – although this was one of the few north Queensland endemics I had seen previously, it'd been a long time, and I was keen to get more views of them. Turns out it wouldn't take long, as only a few minutes after we started the Lake Eacham Circuit Track, a **musky rat-kangaroo** burst out of the undergrowth less than a metre away from us, bounded across the path and sprinted into the forest beyond. Over the course of the walk we'd end up seeing another two, as well as a **yellow-footed antechinus**, which was foraging in the leaf litter on the side of the track. Perhaps the most unexpected mammal sighting however was a **rakali**, which emerged from the tangled roots of a huge tree to walk along the water's edge, leaping into the water and disappearing below the surface a few seconds after we had taken notice of it. Always good to see a rakali, and I really wasn't expecting one here! In addition to the mammals, other notable sightings from Lake Eacham that morning include an **eastern saw-shelled turtle**, a group of **southern red-throated rainbow skinks** and two species of pigeon that were new to me, the **white-headed pigeon** and beautiful **wompoo fruit-dove**.



Yellow-footed antechinus and musky rat-kangaroo



The location of the morning's rakali sighting



A male southern red-throated rainbow skink and a roosting wompoo fruit dove

After finishing up at Lake Eacham our next stop was Etty Bay Beach, about an hour and a half to the southeast. Of course, the bay is most famous for being one of the absolute best places in Australia to see cassowaries in the wild, and although I had already seen one the day before I was keen to get a better look than a brief roadside glimpse. I first visited Etty Bay back in 2017 and failed to see a cassowary, but with how regular they are reputed to be there, I attributed that dip mainly to the fact we had only popped in there for about 20 minutes. This time we stayed at bay, sitting on the beach and checking around the café and caravan park, for more than two hours, but once again no cassowary revealed itself. Wildlife activity in general was pretty quiet, with the most notable sightings being a **white-bellied sea eagle**, a **coastal snake-eyed skink** and an introduced **mourning gecko**.



Coastal snake-eyed skink amongst the intertidal rocks



This sign lies

It was only when we finally left the beach and began driving out that our luck finally changed, with a **southern cassowary** father and his chick walking casually along the roadside. We pulled up ahead and then watched them as they walked onto the property of a local resident, sipping water from a dripping air conditioning unit before making their way across the front yard. Etty Bay had provided me with cassowaries at last!



Male southern cassowary



Cassowary father and chick making their way along the roadside

With my cassowary cravings finally satiated, we drove another hour and a half west to Herberton, which, as well as being a good spot to launch from for the night's target mammals, is sometimes home to colonies of little red flying-foxes that camp along the river. Unfortunately, at least along the stretches that I checked, none of the trees seemed to be currently occupied by bats, and the first mammal lifers of the day would have to wait until after dark.

The first area for spotlighting was Silver Valley Road, an unsealed (but seemingly well maintained) road through the grassy eucalypt woodland southwest of Herberton. The main target here was the northern greater glider – I didn't know many exact locations for this species, but had seen a number of records along the road on ALA and thought it was worth a shot. After scouting out the area around sunset, we parked the car in an out-of-the-way spot and began walking down the road to see if any gliders would present themselves. In less than half an hour we saw our first **northern greater glider**, which had just emerged from its hollow a fair way off but was easily seen thanks to its incredibly bright eyeshine. Another greater glider would be seen on the walk back to the car, as well as an **Australian owl-nightjar** and a number of **cane toads**. I was really happy the spot worked out!



Greater glider habitat at dusk



Northern greater gliders



Australian owlet-nightjar and cane toad

My other big target for this southern part of the tablelands was rufous bettong, and for them I had noticed there were a number of iNaturalist records around the rural locality of Wondecla. We began slowly cruising for them along quiet roads, originally seeing nothing but **European rabbits** (also seen earlier that night while passing through Herberton), **agile wallabies** and **red-legged pademelons**, but soon came across a group of around five **rufous bettongs** towards the end of Zingelmann Road. The bettongs let me get surprisingly close, and when they finally decided to move away they did so in a most amusing way, bounding far and high with their limbs all tucked close to their body. They certainly are endearing little animals! An additional bettong was seen on the drive out of Wondecla.



Rufous bettong



Very round rufous bettongs and a watchful agile wallaby

Thrilled to have gotten both of my targets in the Herberton area, we began driving back up the Kennedy Highway to visit a couple other sites closer to our accommodation. About halfway through our journey my sister narrowly dodged a snake in the middle of the road, which I ran back to find was a **rough-scaled snake**, looking quite agitated. I was very happy to see a snake, and especially that my sister hadn't hit it, but my happiness quickly turned to panic when I saw the lights of two huge trucks roaring up the highway and realised I had absolutely no way of moving the snake off the road. I didn't have a snake stick, nor the experience with freehandling to grab a highly venomous animal safely, and so was forced to abandon the snake to its fate. Miraculously it managed to survive both trucks going over it, but ended up being clipped at the end of the tail. Finally making its way to safety on the other side of the road, the snake was otherwise moving normally and should be fine in the long run, but it was a very lucky escape and an important reminder to myself that I should really be carrying a snake stick with me for this kind of situation.



An unfortunate rough-scaled snake after a perilous crossing

After dipping the previous night I was really keen to see a giant white-tailed rat, and so, hoping for better luck, we made another visit to Curtain Fig Tree. This time ended up being even more quiet somehow – once again there were no mammals, and even the noises up in the canopy seemed to have died down. I'm sure it's a great spot, but it seems the mammals of Curtain Fig had decided they just weren't going to reveal themselves to me on this trip.

Nonetheless, I still wanted the rat, and so we returned to Lake Eacham to see what it offered after dark. Spotlighting slowly along the circuit track and straining at every rustle in the undergrowth, we encountered many **northern long-nosed bandicoots** and a number of (very flighty) **bush rats**, but after more than an hour we were still lacking any sightings of a white-tailed rat. I was beginning to get worried if I might even miss the species entirely when, after coming around a large tree, we finally came across an impressive **giant white-tailed rat** foraging on the ground at close quarters. It didn't seem to take much mind of us and slowly made its way across the forest floor with its nose to the ground, before eventually vanishing into an area of denser vegetation. We'd end up seeing another two white-tailed rats before the night ended, one along the track and another on the drive out. Lake Eacham also proved to be decent for herptiles after dark, with not only additional appearances of **northern leaf-tailed geckos**, **green-eyed tree frogs** and **rainforest stony-creek frogs**, but also my first sighting of a **white-lipped tree frog**, Australia's largest native amphibian.



Giant white-tailed rat



Additional views of the giant white-tailed rat



White-lipped tree frog in the canopy



Glimpses of northern long-nosed bandicoot and bush rat in the Eacham undergrowth



Northern leaf-tailed gecko

Day 2 Mammal Summary

- Musky Rat-kangaroo (*Hypsiprymnodon moschatus*) x3 - Lake Eacham
- Yellow-footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) x1 - Lake Eacham
- Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) x1 - Lake Eacham
- Northern Greater Glider (*Petauroides minor*) ✓ x2 - Silver Valley Road
- European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) x9 - Herberton, Wondecla
- Agile Wallaby (*Notamacropus agilis*) x21 - Wondecla
- Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*) x3 - Wondecla, Madi Forest
- Rufous Bettong (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*) ✓ x6 - Wondecla
- Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles pallescens*) x6 - Lake Eacham
- Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) x4 - Lake Eacham
- Giant White-tailed Rat (*Uromys caudimaculatus*) ✓ x3 - Lake Eacham

Lifers (✓): 3 species

Mammal Life List: 103 species

Day 3 (May 30th) – Daintree to Davies Creek

We had a slower start on this second morning, departing from Yungaburra soon after 9 pm for the two hour drive up to the Daintree. The main reason for the visit was to see saltwater crocodiles – the last time we had seen crocs in the wild was almost a decade ago, and so seeing both species again was another aim of this trip – and for that we had booked a midday session with Daintree Crocodile Tours (daintreecrocodiletours.com), run by Nick Bohm. An **agile wallaby** as well as a mob of five **eastern grey kangaroos** were seen whilst driving up the Mulligan Highway. Arriving at Daintree Village early, we had a bit of time to explore around, and one of the first things that caught my eye (and ears) was the sizeable colony of **spectacled flying-foxes** in the trees near the beginning of Stewart Creek Road. I was surprised it had taken me this long to encounter any flying-foxes up here, so it was nice to see them.



Spectacled flying-foxes in Daintree Village

Our hour-long tour of the Daintree River was great, Nick was a knowledgeable and entertaining host who not only told us a lot about crocodiles and crocodile conservation but also about the way the river itself had been impacted by human impacts like land clearing and climate change. We saw a total of seven different **saltwater crocodiles**, most resting partially submerged on the riverbank – these ranged in size from a pair of small juveniles to “Barron”, the large dominant male of a particular stretch of river. It was also impressive to see the amount of tidal change in the Daintree River just in the time we were there, with some of the crocs we’d seen on the way down already being noticeably higher out of the water on the return trip. Notable birds seen on the tour included **little heron**, **little egret**, **rainbow bee-eater** and **forest kingfisher**.



Cruising down the Daintree River



Saltwater crocodile



Large male "Barron" and a far smaller juvenile crocodile



Rainbow bee-eater and little heron

It'd have been great to spend more time up in the Daintree, but with our time being as limited as it was, it was best to start slowly making our way back south. Rather than shooting straight back down to Mareeba, we took the longer route through Port Douglas and Kuranda, which was both to mix up the scenery and allow a visit to the known roosting spot for coastal sheathail bats at Wangetti Beach. After parking and walking up to the north end of the beach, we found a large fissure in the rocky headland, and within, sure enough, were a number of **coastal sheathail bats**. Several of the bats took off and flew deeper into the cave the moment we entered and so we stopped where we were, took a few pictures of the bats that remained and then left to avoid disturbing their daytime rest any further.



Coastal sheathail bat

I was originally hoping we might make it down to Mareeba for a visit to Granite Gorge Nature Park in the late afternoon before it closed, but with how late it was getting I decided it'd be best to move plans for the gorge to the next morning instead rather than rush it now.

Instead, upon arriving in the Mareeba area, we went and scouted out what would be our main focus for mammal-watching that night, Davies Creek Road. The three big targets were what I had dubbed the “3 northerns” – northern brown bandicoot, northern quoll and northern bettong, with this spot being renowned for the latter two in particular. Cape York bandicoot and black-footed tree rat would also have been extremely welcome, although I knew my chances of them were far more slim. After checking out exactly how far we could go up the road before it starts getting too rough for my sister’s little 2WD, we drove back out towards Mareeba to grab some quick dinner in town. Along the way we dodged another snake, but this time it made it off the road and into the long grass before I had a chance to get another look at it – impressions whilst we were driving past were of a slender, dark, mid-sized elapid, possibly a black whipsnake.



Golden hour at the Lower Davies Creek camping area

Upon our return to Davies Creek we checked out the lower camping area a bit, taking in the scenery whilst waiting for the sun to set. We’d moved up to the Davies Creek Falls by the time darkness set in, and, whilst taking in the spectacular views from the lookout at last light, I noticed the eyeshine of many small eyes staring back at me from the waterfall itself. Taking pictures for a better look, they turned out, of course, to be **waterfall frogs**, and the speed and force of the water they were casually sitting in was quite impressive. Walking along the water behind the waterfall, we saw another waterfall frog as well as a **white-lipped tree frog** before making our way up the car to begin road cruising.

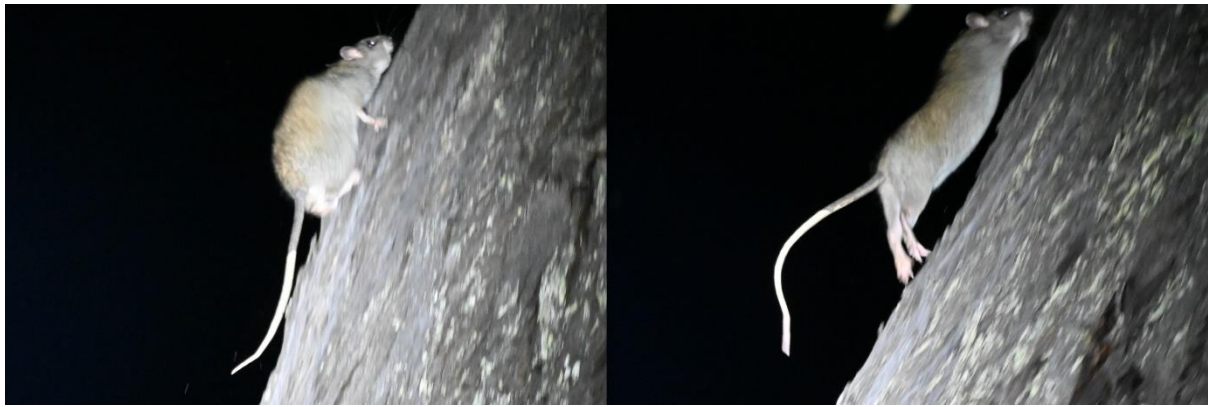


Last light from the lookout at Davies Creek Falls



Waterfall frogs

The first mammal sighting of the night occurred whilst stopping at the toilet block back at the lower campground. I was spotlighting nearby when the blur of a grey shape, the size of a large rodent, leapt down into long grass from behind a tree next to me. My mind raced with possibilities – was it a quoll, or could it even be a tree rat? I went into the grass to try and find where it could have went, but ended up scaring it back up the same tree, at which point it became obvious that it was actually a **giant white-tailed rat**, racing back towards its hollow. Whilst not a new species after last night, it was nonetheless cool to see one in drier habitat like this.



Giant white-tailed rat at speed

From then on the real road cruising began, driving back and forth from a few kilometres upwards of the falls down to the highway whilst watching intently for anything on the road ahead. For the first hour we saw little but a few **agile wallabies**, until finally, a small animal was spotted, in more ways than one, on the road ahead – **northern quoll**! This was the last of the four Australian quoll species I needed to see in the wild, and with quolls being among my all-time favourite animals, I was thrilled to have completed the set. It sat ahead of us for around ten seconds before finally losing its nerve and running up the slope on the southern side of the road, sitting just barely visible in the grass for a bit before vanishing deeper in.



Northern quoll

Super happy we'd at least gotten the quoll, a couple minutes later I took out my phone and began updating my notes for the day. As I was doing so, my sister slowed the car to a stop and a shape, which my mind barely registered, flicked across the road at the top of my

peripheral vision. Looking up, I absent-mindedly asked why we'd stopped, when my sister let out a surprised "what do you mean why?? Bettong!" Immediately perking up, I saw the rear end of a **northern bettong** as it hopped from where it had stopped on the side of the road to just out of sight below. Racing out of the car, I walked over to see its head and upper body sticking up over the side of the road staring at me, and got my camera in focus just in time to capture one blurry shot of it ducking down as it turned and hopped away into the long grass, out of sight. We spent the rest of the night joking about how I had almost missed one of north Queensland's most special mammals because I was too busy looking at my phone!



The northern bettong that almost got away

We continued cruising for another two hours after that, seeing another **northern quoll** as well as a **tawny frogmouth** and additional **agile wallabies**, before we decided to call it quits and start heading back to Yungaburra. I was surprised we hadn't seen any northern brown bandicoots after three hours cruising there and was beginning to become worried about whether I'd even see them (or striped possums, which I was also still missing) on this trip – we'd have to depend largely upon the Cairns Botanic Gardens to provide them now. Conditions became incredibly foggy on the drive back to our accommodation and would remain that way for the rest of the night, limiting the opportunities for mammal watching.

Nonetheless, this was my last night in the Atherton Tablelands, so I still wanted to go out and at least try to see if I could find anything else. Stepping out into the fog, I walked down to Peterson Creek as I had done on the first night, and through the mist I managed to spot a **northern long-nosed bandicoot**, a **green ringtail possum**, a few **red-legged pademelons**, **agile wallabies** and **bush stone-curlews** before I finished up for the night.



A foggy end to the night at Peterson Creek



Green ringtail possum and red-legged pademelon

Day 3 Mammal Summary

- Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) x5 - Bibbohra
- Agile Wallaby (*Notamacropus agilis*) x17 - Mulligan Highway, Cairns, Davies Creek, Mareeba, Yungaburra
- Spectacled Flying-fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*) ~500 - Daintree Village
- Coastal Sheath-tail Bat (*Taphozous australis*) ✓ x9 - Wangetti Beach
- Giant White-tailed Rat (*Uromys caudimaculatus*) x1 - Davies Creek
- Northern Quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) ✓ x2 - Davies Creek
- Northern Bettong (*Bettongia tropica*) ✓ x1 - Davies Creek
- European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) x2 - Tolga
- Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*) x5 - Yungaburra
- Green Ringtail Possum (*Pseudocheirus archeri*) x1 - Yungaburra
- Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles pallescens*) x1 - Yungaburra

Lifers (✓): 3 species

Mammal Life List: 106 species

Day 4 (May 31st) – Back towards Cairns

My final day in North Queensland began with another casual walk down to Peterson Creek, just to see what was around. A few **red-legged pademelons** darted away through the undergrowth, whilst in an open grassy paddock adjacent to the creek, a mob of around 12 **agile wallabies** were seen grazing. After leaving our accommodation in Yungaburra for the final time, we'd make one more stop at Peterson Creek, this time at the bridge where myotis are known to roost. Sure enough, after making our way below and looking closely at the grooves in the concrete under the bridge, we managed to spot around seven **southern myotis**, one sitting alone whilst the rest were all huddled together. A nice final lifer to get here in the tablelands as we started making our way back towards Cairns.



Agile wallabies at Peterson Creek



Southern myotis under the bridge

There was no rush however, so we had a few spots we wanted to visit on the way. First, after making our way back up towards Mareeba, we followed through with yesterday's plans and headed down to Granite Gorge Nature Park. A rather curious place, the main purpose of the visit was to see Mareeba rock-wallaby again, which are ridiculously tame and easy to see there thanks to being fed wallaby pellets by visitors. Sure enough, the moment we walked down from the visitor centre we had a **Mareeba rock-wallaby** bounding right up to us looking for food, and it was quickly followed by many other wallabies on and around the surrounding boulders. They're very endearing animals, though it'd probably be good to see them in a more "wild" setting eventually where they aren't so acclimatised to people.



The boulder fields of Granite Gorge



Restful Mareeba rock-wallabies



Up close with a rock-wallaby

Our next stop was at Kuranda, where the main target was the second of Australia's crocodile species, the freshie, which is regularly seen along the Barron River right next to the town. I actually photographed a **freshwater crocodile** right after we got to the river, sitting low in the water under a log, but because it was so far off on the other side of the river, I didn't notice it in the picture until I got back home! Instead, we spent the first 40 minutes walking along the river thinking we hadn't seen any crocodiles, though we were treated to sightings of some other cool species like **forest kingfisher** and **Macquarie turtle**. Finally, whilst chatting to a friendly local who was also out looking for crocodiles, we spotted a freshie slowly making its way down the river, until it hauled itself out onto a large rock and began sunning itself. Walking back down the river we noticed another crocodile out in the middle of the water, bringing the total for the walk to three crocs. Although the size of the Barron River meant that none of our sightings were particularly close up, it was really nice just to see them again!



Forest kingfisher and Macquarie turtle



The first of the two freshwater crocodiles we noticed in the field



A freshie cruising out in the middle of the Barron River

We arrived in Cairns soon before 3 pm, checking out the Cairns Botanic Gardens (the main focus of the night's spotlighting) before checking in at my accommodation and heading down to the Esplanade. I was feeling anxious about the night ahead, mostly because I really didn't want to be on my flight back to Adelaide the next day without having seen striped possum or northern brown bandicoot. Nonetheless, the evening along the Esplanade was enjoyable – **bush stone-curlews** were everywhere, which, despite their abundance here in the north, are still one of my absolute favourite birds. Other birds of interest included **varied honeyeaters**, **sacred kingfishers**, **eastern reef egrets** and **helmeted friarbirds**, as well as a great many **nankeen night-herons**. Finally, as the sun set, we hopped back in the car and headed back to the botanic gardens for the final few hours of spotlighting for the trip. For the striped possum and brown bandicoot, it was now or nothing.



Bush stone-curlews



Esplanade herons – juvenile nankeen night heron and an eastern reef egret

Fortunately, for one of the two target mammals of the night, it wouldn't take very long. After our first round down the Rainforest Boardwalk, the main habitat of striped possums in the gardens, we had a quick look around the grassy area along Saltwater Creek spotted a **northern brown bandicoot** foraging in the mangroves right alongside the creek. Upon noticing me it poked its head up curiously, before quickly bounding away deeper into the mangroves. Other animals we managed to spot in this area included my first **Papuan frogmouth**, a few **bush stone-curlews**, **cane toads** and **white-lipped tree frogs**, as well as a **black rat**. Satisfied with the bandicoot, we headed back and decided to focus our efforts on the Rainforest Boardwalk for the rest of the night.



Northern brown bandicoot



Papuan frogmouth and white-lipped tree frog

For nearly another hour we slowly walked up and down the rainforest boardwalk, carefully scanning the vegetation for any sign of a striped possum. Whilst the possums remained elusive, there was plenty of other wildlife to keep us company – rustling in the undergrowth would usually reveal **northern long-nosed bandicoots** foraging busily through the leaf litter, whilst the calls of many **spectacled flying-foxes** that had descended to feed upon the boardwalk's fruiting trees filled the canopy. We also managed to have brief encounters with both of Australia's largest rodents, first a **rakali** in the swampy pandanus forest followed by a **giant white-tailed rat** deeper in. Occasionally I'd see a small red point of light fly through the forest under the canopy in the beam of my spotlight, though at this point I hadn't quite realised what they were.



Spotlighting along the Rainforest Boardwalk



Northern long-nosed bandicoot



Spectacled flying-foxes feeding in the canopy

Just before 8 pm I was ecstatic to finally find my first **striped possum**, climbing high atop a palm tree before disappearing into denser foliage – they are actually a fair bit larger than I was expecting! It wasn't the best view, but the night was still young, and I was very happy just to have seen one in any case. Fortunately, it would indeed not be my only view, for another hour spotlighting provided us with sightings of another two striped possums, both low in the canopy and much more cooperative with pictures. During this time I also began to take more notice of the red eyeshine I'd been picking up flying underneath the canopy, and realised they must be **Queensland tube-nosed bats**, a species I'd really wanted to see! We even had a brief up-close encounter with one when it suddenly slammed into a small tree right next to us, righting itself within seconds before flying back off into the darkness. From then on our focus shifted from finding striped possums to seeing if we could spot any tube-nosed bats roosting under the palm fronds, an activity that provided us with little but sore necks by the end of the night. Still, it was wonderful to get them as a bonus lifer, and with both striped possum and northern brown bandicoot secured I left the Cairns Botanic Gardens that night a very happy mammal watcher.



The second of the night's three striped possums



Striped possums one and three

The night ended with some celebratory ice cream on the Cairns Esplanade, where the final mammal of the trip, a **spectacled flying-fox** making its way across the water, was seen. A great final day for a fantastic trip!

Day 4 Mammal Summary

- Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*) x3 - Yungaburra
- Agile Wallaby x12 (*Notamacropus agilis*) - Yungaburra
- Southern Myotis (*Myotis macropus*) ✓ x7 - Yungaburra
- Mareeba Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale mareeba*) x17 - Granite Gorge
- Spectacled Flying-fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*) x11 - Cairns Botanic Gardens, Cairns Esplanade
- Northern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon macrourus*) ✓ x1 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) x1 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) x1 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Giant White-tailed Rat (*Uromys caudimaculatus*) x1 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Queensland Tube-nosed Bat (*Nyctimene robinsoni*) ✓ x5 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles pallescens*) x5 - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Striped Possum (*Dactylopsila trivirgata*) ✓ x3 - Cairns Botanic Gardens

Lifers (✓): 4 species

Mammal Life List: 110 species

Final Mammal Summary

Agreodonts

- Northern Quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) ✓ - Davies Creek
- Yellow-footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) - Lake Eacham
- Northern Brown Bandicoot (*Isoodon macrourus*) ✓ - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles pallescens*) ✓ - Yungaburra, Lake Eacham, Cairns Botanic Gardens

Possums

- Striped Possum (*Dactylopsila trivirgata*) ✓ - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Northern Greater Glider (*Petauroides minor*) ✓ - Silver Valley Road
- Lemuroid Ringtail Possum (*Hemibelideus lemuroides*) ✓ - Mount Hypipamee
- Herbert River Ringtail Possum (*Pseudochirulus herbertensis*) ✓ - Mount Hypipamee
- Green Ringtail Possum (*Pseudochirops archeri*) ✓ - Mount Hypipamee, Yungaburra
- Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) - Mount Hypipamee, Kennedy Highway, Yungaburra
- Coppery Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus johnstonii*) ✓ - Mount Hypipamee, Yungaburra

Macropods

- Musky Rat-kangaroo (*Hypsiprymnodon moschatus*) - Lake Eacham
- Rufous Bettong (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*) ✓ - Wondecla
- Northern Bettong (*Bettongia tropica*) ✓ - Davies Creek
- Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*) - Madi Forest, Yungaburra, Wondecla
- Mareeba Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale mareeba*) - Granite Gorge
- Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo (*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*) ✓ - Yungaburra
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) - Mulligan Highway
- Agile Wallaby (*Notamacropus agilis*) - Yungaburra, Wondecla, Mulligan Highway, Cairns, Davies Creek, Mareeba

Glires

- European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) - Herberton, Wondecla, Tolga
- Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) - Lake Eacham, Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Giant White-tailed Rat (*Uromys caudimaculatus*) ✓ - Lake Eacham, Davies Creek, Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) - Lake Eacham

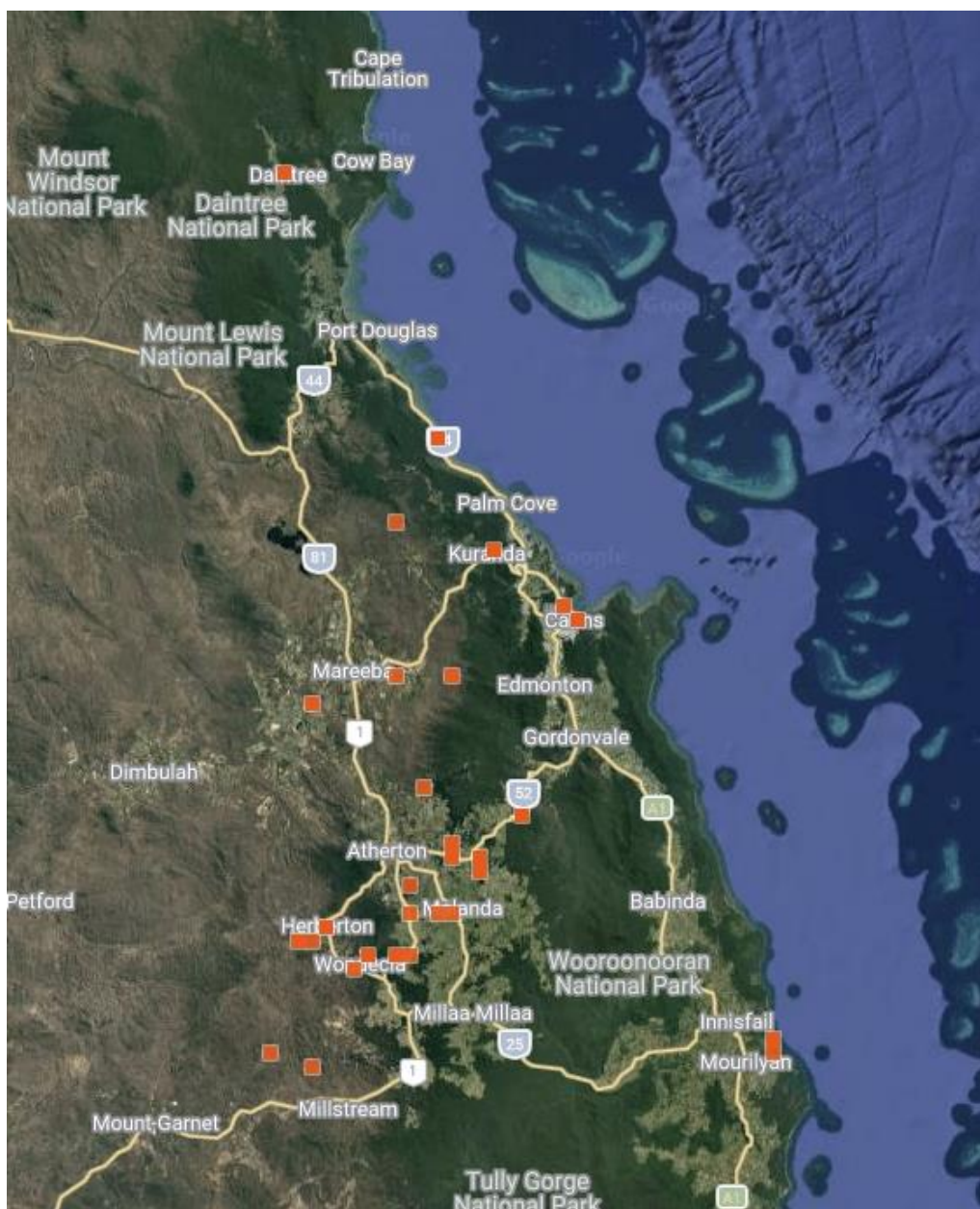
Bats

- Spectacled Flying-fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*) - Daintree Village, Cairns Botanic Gardens, Cairns Esplanade
- Queensland Tube-nosed Bat (*Nyctimene robinsoni*) ✓ - Cairns Botanic Gardens
- Coastal Sheath-tail Bat (*Taphozous australis*) ✓ - Wangetti Beach
- Southern Myotis (*Myotis macropus*) ✓ – Yungaburra

Trip total: 28 species

Lifers (✓): 16 species

Mammal Life List: 110 species



A map of iNaturalist observations showing many of the locations visited over the course of the trip