

Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station

ABOUT US: (version Dec 2014)

Cape Tribulation sits in Daintree National Park and is arguably part of the oldest rainforest on earth, located approximately 120 km. north of Cairns. This special forest is designated as part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, located between a mountain range raising over 1,000 meters and the coastal fringing reef, just in front of the Great Barrier Reef.

Austrop (Australian Tropical Research Foundation) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with over 26 years experience in research and conservation in the Daintree's lowland tropical ecosystem. **Austrop** fulfils four main functions: research, education, rainforest management, conservation and raising public awareness of environmental issues.

See

<https://www.facebook.com/austrop>

We try to keep this updated as frequently as possible – our website has serious access issues and has to be completely re-done (any offers??)

RESEARCH:

The Station is well equipped with two dehumidified labs containing: extensive field equipment, HPLC, GC, Gel Electrophoresis, microscopes, histological facilities, and so on.

Current research includes:

- * Developing GPS collars for flying foxes;
- * Developing GIS systems to go with this;
- * Hydrology of the Cape Tribulation basin;
- * Development of instrumentation for various projects (assistance from computer programmers and electronics engineers most welcome);

- * Analysing the toxins of stinging trees.
- * Recovery of littoral vegetation following removal of exotics;
- * Weed control; (a big issue) and rainforest regeneration)
- * Blossom bat feeding ecology
- * Energy use efficiency;
- * Great Barrier Reef work – particularly the fringing reef;
- * Tourism based projects - mostly surveys.

Please feel free to ask for further information regarding our scientific equipment and/or past and current research projects.

RAINFOREST CONSERVATION:

An important element of our work is creating new forest; restoring degraded forest and maintaining existing forests. This includes removing vines and poisoning invasive species present in disturbed forest where natural succession is being prevented, as well as replanting.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION:

The Station is also home to a small resident flying fox colony (unreleasable animals), whose inhabitants do “ambattadorial” (ambassadorial) duties at the **Bat House** visitor centre. In addition to greeting visitors, our bats serve as subjects for endless amusement, speculation, and the occasional psychological or behavioural study.

Bat House - currently closed – due to WPH&S issues with an increasingly crazy State and Commonwealth Government (as you probably have already heard!). **However we are planning to reopen soon** – and appreciate any assistance in getting displays and other stuff ready..

HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED:

RESEARCHERS

The Station provides research facilities and access to forest and coastal environments. We have a wide range of research equipment, appropriate to supporting a wide variety of research activities. The only limitations are the imagination and capabilities of the researcher.

Please contact our Director regarding the facilities and equipment you require. **Permits may be required** from Queensland Department of the Environment, especially when the research takes place off site, so please contact us as soon as possible.

Non-reusable and specialist items will either have to be supplied by the researchers or bought from the (very limited) Station supply.

As part of the conditions for working at the Station, researchers are required to lodge a copy of any research outcomes with the Station for inclusion in the Station library.

Researchers will be encouraged to assist with meal preparation and clean-up, and general Station maintenance/cleaning (especially laboratories) – the Station does not have paid staff.

PLEASE REMEMBER – what we are able to do is highly weather dependent . Our climate is very variable (frustratingly so!).

INTERNS and STUDENTS

Students spend the majority of their time on their research project while **Interns** will divide their time equally between research and volunteering. Both shall contribute to general housekeeping.

The Station does not have a **formal Intern** program schedule (after all we primarily exist to facilitate research and on-ground conservation). However, we encourage students and interns to become involved in research projects.

There is a minimum duration of one month to allow you time to get to grips with the local environment and subject material. If you can spend longer, then that's better!

We will work with you on identifying feasible projects and research designs at the time that you contact us with a proposal. **Flexibility is key as conditions here are very changeable.** It does help if you had an idea of a research area and the project relates to something we are doing at the time.

With luck, students will have something publishable as a note or as a short paper. Interns are required to produce a short report.

You **may** be working with visiting scientists or by yourself under the supervision of the Director.

VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers assist in research and Station activities: radio-tracking bats, counting figs, stomping grass for forest regeneration, constructing Station buildings, digging holes, and running the Bat House (Austrop's Visitor Centre), or **whatever else is necessary.** They are our lifeblood! The normal stay is 2-3 weeks but extensions are available at the discretion of the Director (and are rarely refused).

Be prepared to be the only volunteer for a week or so. Self-motivation and independence are essential, but

teamwork is also essential when working with others.

As a volunteer, you should NOT expect to be tagging around behind a learned scientist for the duration of your stay or have your own project - but it still will be a thoroughly worthwhile experience!

Student Groups

We can also accommodate student groups up to a maximum of 20.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Austrop practices low-impact living; consequently the lifestyle is basic.

Accommodation is in light and airy bunkhouse style buildings which can accommodate up to 20 people (double rooms are available for couples).

Water is from a solar pumped bore (the best water you are likely to drink). Showers have solar hot water (so hope the sun shines!) and laundry facilities are available.

Toilets are composting toilets so they use no water. We thank you for your nutrient contribution!

Power (mains-equivalent 240V ac) is produced primarily by solar – a 2.5 KW solar array with a back-up generator for grey weather. Please be power conscious – and TURN OFF lights! **NO Hair-driers!!**

Mobiles/cell phones are unusable here due to the lack of reception. We do have a landline which may be used with the agreement of the Director..

We strongly suggest you buy a phone card ("AUSSIE phone card" is a new one – replacing Global Gossip)

Food is plentiful and all meals are provided. Breakfast and lunch are self catered and dinner is communal with

everyone assisting with the preparation, cooking and cleaning up.

We are proud to boast a wide variety of cooking styles and menus; Student groups fondly refer to this place as "**Cape Tribulation Cooking Camp**" You are expected to help with the cooking!.

Email: the station has general e-mail access, which you can use about twice a week for free.

"Happy Mondays" are the Station days-off - where you are free to explore, rest or whatever.

Backpacker Issues:

While you are with us, realise that your stay is limited and we request that you try to put the urge for the urban existence behind you for the duration of your visit. You will have plenty of opportunity for that sort of activity when you return home or after you finish your time with us.

Cape Tribulation has become a "backpackers' mecca" for Far North Queensland. This creates a number of serious problems for an environmentally-oriented research station such as ours - the "bright lights" (and alcohol environment) are right next door, and exert a magnetic fascination on young urban volunteers and others. This can be very disruptive of the Station's activities and role.

To put it bluntly, we are trying to provide a model of "sustainable" environmental lifestyle, and the backpacker establishments near our station are facilitating a lifestyle that is totally contradictory to our philosophy in many respects..

So we would appreciate it if you could restrict your visits to 2 per week...

VACCINATIONS

Unfortunately due to Government driven paranoia about Aust. Bat Lyssa virus (a very rare form of rabies) – all volunteers, interns and researchers wishing to be involved with bats – including the Station pet bats! – MUST have a current rabies vaccination (and best get a yellow vaccination card as proof). If you intend to work with animals in the future or visit SE Asia or India, rabies vaccination is a wise move anyway.

ABOUT MONEY:

We are a not-for-profit organisation with no paid staff. **Consequently, costs of those assisting us need to be covered. You are being charged at basically our cost of providing food and services (and we are a long way from the city!).**

VOLUNTEERS pay \$A 40 per day for food (lots) and basic accommodation.

INTERNS pay \$A 50 per day - the difference is reflected in the fact that interns are also part-time volunteers, and are involved in specific research projects requiring input of staff time and equipment. This fee also includes limited laboratory access (bench fees).

STUDENTS pay \$ A 65 per day (they have a small volunteer component, the rest is research time). This includes laboratory access and materials (lucky you).

RESEARCHERS (Institution based researchers) pay \$A 90 per day, which includes accommodation and bench fees, in addition to accommodation and food).

OTHERS: Assistants and spouses accompanying researchers pay \$A 70 per day.

(Don't forget – a backpacker room is 35\$ (shared room) minimum – and no food .. (another \$25 IF you are lucky!!) – hotel rooms start at 100 dollars! – and no meals.. so relaaax !!)

In cases where you may have REAL difficulty in meeting these charges, they should be negotiated BEFORE arrival. Discounts may be able to be negotiated for longer stays where costs from lab use are minimal or non-existent.

Payment methods

We would far prefer that fees be paid "up front" upon (or before) arrival. **Unfortunately we are unable to accept non-Australian currency travellers' cheques**

You can pay by:

- * **Australian currency** traveller's checks,
- * Major credit and some debit, cards
 - Some foreign PAPER currencies - (Euros, US Dollars, Pounds) are acceptable but the banks do charge us for conversion) - no coins

* Electronic funds transfer from overseas, the details are:

Acct: **Australian Tropical Research Foundation**
National Australia Bank
Front Street
Mossman 4873 Queensland

Swift Code NATAAU 3303 M

Acct # 084 830:79523-4272

REFUNDS

If the reason for your leaving is mutually agreed on with the Director, then we can provide a refund. **However if you are asked to leave (by us) or go without giving a satisfactory reason, there will be no refunds.**

ABOUT APPLYING:

Read this document thoroughly and look at the website, especially the "What's New?" pages (assuming we've had a chance to update it!!)

<http://www.austrop.org.au>).

1. Email the Station with the approximate time and duration of your stay, whether you wish to be a volunteer, intern or student and some basic information about yourself and your interests. Please provide your CV copied into an email WITHOUT attachments.
2. **Obtain visa** (if overseas, this is your responsibility and not something we can assist with). Tourist visas are sufficient **but do not say that you are volunteering.**
3. Obtain **rabies vaccination** if you wish to work with our flying foxes or any bats. Concerns have been raised about the likelihood (exceedingly remote) of people contracting Australian Bat Lyssavirus (a form of rabies, and an **extremely** rare disease) from contact with them. As they are a long-captive colony, they are clean – but **we are now obliged to require anyone who wants to work on bats (any bats) or interact with them, to have current rabies vaccination.**

1. Insurance: We are covered by a extensive public liability insurance... but we'd far prefer you provided your own travel insurance while here. Most University based intern and student programs have their own travel insurance systems – do ensure that yours is up to date.

2. **MAINTAIN CONTACT** so we can keep you updated on what is happening, and please contact us at least 2 weeks in advance so we know when you are arriving.
3. Please do let us know your country of origin and **your gender** as it is not always apparent from emails. **AND your food issues, if any.**

****** REPEAT! The most important thing is to maintain contact before you arrive, so we can keep you updated on what is happening.**

An oft-repeated scene:- sweaty person arrives at Station with huge backpack. "I'm Jake".

"Oh!"

"I contacted you 6 months ago"

"I never heard back from you! Well we are presently full up - 25 Californian college students - guess you'll have to camp and come back in a week" "bye"
We can then confirm your acceptance.

We sometimes make requests that you get something for us that can't be obtained here in Australia —(this is voluntary but greatly appreciated).

If you don't hear from us, just ask again - e-mails do get lost (OFTEN!) AND computer hard disks crash - especially in the tropics.

ABOUT YOU (and us)

- Any age but more than 20 years old is preferred.
- Good command of the English language; capable of clear communication. The Director needs to be made aware of any problems that arise in order to ensure good group dynamics.
-
- You will need to be able to work closely with people (or alone).

You MUST have an open and flexible attitude and be willing to actively contribute, even to the most mundane activity. Remember that scientific research is NOT all about "lab coats and clipboards" - 99% is preparation!

-
- **Having pre-conceived notions of your role and of your experience here most often results in conflicts with this work.** Your tasks could (and will) range from the terminally boring, mundane and strenuous, to quite exciting. You should also be able to deal with a reasonable level of supervision as we don't expect people to have the relevant skills and knowledge when they arrive, please be patient with us too. Hey – and we might learn from you too!

We ask that you please leave your personal problems behind and refrain from being territorial at our research centre.

If you are a musician - do bring your instruments - especially if they are portable - the Station does have a guitar and a few other instruments (and, yes we have a piano!). Bongos???.....well, no - the neighbours tend to have a low tolerance!

ABOUT CONTACTING US

Email is the preferred mode of communication and is about the ONLY way you can be guaranteed an answer.

Hugh@austrop.org.au

BUT if that doesn't work or it bounces (PLEASE SAVE THE BOUNCE NOTICES! - they help us fix the problems) **hugh@ledanet.com.au**

We are a small outfit and it is easy for correspondence to get lost (we also have a terrible postal mail system). If you don't hear, contact us again.

Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station

PMB 5 Cape Tribulation

Queensland 4873 Australia

Phone (61 -this is the country code) 7 4098 0063.

PACKING: Bring as little as possible! Don't turn up with 3 suitcases and a backpack (it happens).

Recommended items include:

- rough clothes for working (both long pants and shorts)
- bathing suit
- footwear (sandals/TEVAS, boots if you fancy hiking or for heavy work)
- a wide-brimmed hat (not a baseball hat)
- insect repellent (although for a rainforest there are few mosquitoes and sandflies!!)
- sunscreen
- **flashlight (torch) !!!**
-

JUNE-AUGUST (our winter) you might wish to bring a **light** sleeping bag as an extra layer to the blankets provided.

TRANSPORT TO THE STATION

If you want cheap transport on your arrival, it is ***** ESSENTIAL***** that you contact us when you arrive in Cairns - the backpacker bus pickup is usually at about 7.30 am. You **MUST** phone us about 6pm on the night before, so we can expect you.

The Bus Company is **Cape Tribulation Connections,**

(07) 4032 0500 in Cairns - so you can organise with them directly-

Call after 9 pm (as you will be getting 'stand-by' rates) - but **you MUST say that you are a volunteer at the Bat House**, and tell them where you will be staying. You will be picked up outside your accommodation at sometime after 7 am. Usual cost \$40 one way. They'll tell you where and when to meet the bus.

NEVER BUY RETURN Bus or Ferry tickets - they are no cheaper, and prevent you from getting the cheaper return bus transfers (or a lift).

You get off at **PK's Village** (the nearby backpacker establishment) which is directly opposite the Bat House.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE PHONED US FIRST, SO WE EXPECT YOU AND CAN COLLECT YOU.

Cheers, Hugh Spencer

