



## Fiery discussions - Nightcap National Park

*Celebrating the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Big Scrub Rainforest Day*

### PANEL 1

*What were the impacts of the major bushfire of event 2019/2020 on our rainforests in Nightcap National Park and nearby areas?  
What lessons can we learn?*

#### Facilitator:

Kerry O'Brien



Kerry O'Brien lives locally in the Northern Rivers and is a supporter of Big Scrub Landcare. Kerry is one of Australia's most distinguished and respected journalists with six Walkley Awards for excellence in journalism including the Gold Walkley, and the Walkley for Outstanding Leadership. Other industry awards include a Logie for public affairs coverage.

He has been a journalist for 49 years covering print, television and wire service, as a reporter, feature writer, columnist and foreign correspondent. He has specialised in national politics for the ABC, as well as the Ten and Seven networks, and was press secretary to Labor leader Gough Whitlam.

For ABC-TV he was the editor, presenter and interviewer for the 7.30 Report over 15 years, the presenter and interviewer at Four Corners for five years and at Lateline for six years. He has interviewed many world leaders including Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, as well as many influential figures in the arts, science and business. For 20 years he was also the face of the ABC's election night coverage.

Kerry's acclaimed four-part interview series with former Prime Minister Paul Keating was broadcast on the ABC in 2013, and his book expanding on those conversations was published in 2015.

## Panellists:

Dr. Robert M. Kooyman

Hon. Research Fellow, Macquarie University

Rainforest Botanist-Ecologist



Robert Kooyman (MSc, PhD) is a botanist and ecologist with a focus on evolutionary ecology, paleobotany, and community ecology. He has published more than 40 peer-reviewed scientific articles in high impact journals in these fields (e.g. Nature, Science, Annual Reviews etc.), has contributed substantially to improving our understanding of the origins and assembly of the Australian flora, and has undertaken research in rainforests around the world. His current research projects are focused on the origins, biogeography, and assembly of rainforests and Gondwanan lineages in Australia and Southeast Asia, targeted research with NSW NPWS on threatened plant species distributions and fire responses, and research (including genetic research with Big Scrub Landcare and Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney) on the dynamics of vegetation responses to climate variables, land-use, and associated disturbances. For more than 40 years he has lived, worked, and conducted research in the forests and rainforests of the Nightcap-Border Ranges region, and more broadly in Australia. He is currently a Research Fellow at Macquarie University, a Research Associate with Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, and a Research Associate with Missouri Botanic Garden, USA.

Matt Wiseman

Team Leader Rangers (Richmond River Area) NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service



Matt Wiseman has worked with the QLD and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as a Ranger, Senior Field Supervisor and as a Team Leader. In this time, Matt has worked extensively in fire management from burn planning, planned burn implementation, reserve fire management strategy development and wildfire suppression in a range of roles as incident controller, operations officer, divisional commander and Air Observer from central Queensland to Tasmania. Matt has also been involved in fire operations in all World Heritage Areas on both sides of the QLD and NSW Border which is an extremely biodiverse area known as the McPherson- Macleay overlap and implemented planned burns in a range of ecosystems to promote suitable habitat for threatened fauna and flora. Fire and biodiversity is a key focus of his work, currently coordinating the 3 year planned burn program for the Richmond River Area, the 2019/20 post fire assessments and coordinating the Gondwana threatened species and fire project that looks into the role of fire in supporting habitat for threatened macropods, two plant species and the eastern bristlebird over 10 years.

## Andy Baker

Researcher and Lecturer, Forest Research Centre, Southern Cross University



Andy Baker is a researcher and lecturer in Fire Ecology and Management at Southern Cross University, where he is currently completing a PhD exploring the impacts of rainforest invasion into the open forests of eastern Australia in the absence of fire.

Andy founded, and has been the Director of Wildsite Ecological Services for nearly 25 years, providing advice on ecosystem conservation, management and restoration to all levels of government to become a leading authority on ecological fire management in the Northern River's region.

Andy is currently involved in a suite of studies looking at the impacts of the 2019 fire in Nightcap National Park, including rainforest plant response, fauna habitat change and the regeneration of old-growth Eucalypts.

Working at the interface between rainforest and fire-dependent open-forest since the age of 16, Andy's driving passion is the restoration of the right fire regimes across the landscape to ensure that the plants and animals on both sides of the fire-divide survive into the future.

## Dave Kelly

Conservation and Wildlife Bushfire Recovery Coordination Team

Environment, Energy and Science Group, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment



Dave Kelly has been seconded to a Senior Team Leader role within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to coordinate conservation bushfire recovery activities at a state level following the 2019-20 bushfires. Dave brings to this role, previous experience working as the Manager, Planning of the Fire and Incident Management Branch, of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Hub coordinator for the Saving our Species Program, with responsibilities for threatened species coordination across northern NSW (covering 64% of the state north from Broken Hill to Port Macquarie). Dave has extensive experience and qualifications in incident management, planning and control with over 1,500 hours experience as an incident controller, deputy incident controller and state operations liaison officer for class 1 and 3 fires, and further competence and experience in multiple firefighting roles. During November 2019, Dave acted in the role of Deputy Incident Controller for the Northern Rivers section 44 fires, which included responsibilities for the Mt Nardi fire. Dave also has extensive

experience in reserve fire management planning, prescribed burn planning and implementation and bushfire recovery programs. He has a Masters of Natural Resources in botany and fire ecology, and has active and sustained involvement in ecological and cultural fire management across New South Wales. Dave has previously represented the Department at a state and national level as an appointee on the NSW Bushfire Coordinating Committee and AFAC prescribed burning working group. Dave has a strong interest in fire research and continues to be involved with the Bushfire Risk Research Hub.

## PANEL 2

*To minimise the impacts of future bushfires on our rainforests and threatened species in Nightcap National Park and nearby areas: what strategies and on-ground actions should be pursued how should bushfire management be improved?*

### Facilitator:

Mick O'Regan



Mick O'Regan is a Bangalow resident who has lived on the north coast for twenty years (so a new-chum!). After a couple of decades with ABC Radio National and Channel Seven, he is now a freelance journalist and a public speaker/MC. Mick has been involved in Big Scrub Landcare's Big Scrub Rainforest Day for a few years as a chairperson, doing sessions on everything from soil health to scientific developments in rainforest recovery. Like so many who have moved to the region, Mick has a growing interest in rainforest regeneration, and has been part of local efforts to plant thousands of trees on his community-title property near Bangalow. Mick has also been married for over thirty years to a soil scientist, though he still needs help telling a cracking clay from a red podzolic. This year his focus will be on the impact of the bushfires in the Nightcap National Park, and what can be done to enhance rainforest regeneration. Big Scrub Landcare is one of his favourite organisations.

## Panellists:

Oliver Costello

CEO, Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation



A proud Bundjalung man from Northern NSW, Oli co-founded the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation in 2018. He has a broad range of experience from community, private and public sectors in Indigenous Cultural fire practice, Aboriginal Joint Management partnerships, Indigenous Natural Cultural Resource management and Indigenous governance. Oliver directs several organisations and projects in this space. He is passionate about caring for Country, Indigenous leadership, empowerment, partnerships and recognition of cultural knowledge and practice through community led mentorship on Country.

Oliver is currently the CEO of Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation, founder of Jagun Alliance, Vice President of Northern Rivers Fire and Biodiversity Consortium, Deputy Chair of Indigenous Reference Group, Threatened Species Recovery Hub, National Environmental Science Programme and an Honorary Visiting Research Fellow at Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research at University of Technology, Sydney.

Dr. Robert M. Kooyman

Hon. Research Fellow, Macquarie University

Rainforest Botanist-Ecologist



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## David Milledge

Wildlife and field ecologist



David Milledge is a field ecologist engaged in vertebrate research and wildlife surveys in northern NSW. He has worked in this capacity throughout eastern Australia for over 50 years for state and local government authorities, NGOs and as a private consultant.

David specialises in forest ecology and threatened species, particularly the large forest owls and their role as indicators, together with critical weight range mammals and microchiropteran bats. His other research interests include Tasmanian birds, rainforest bird communities and the faunas of islands.

David has had a long involvement in developing methods for surveying forest birds and assessing impacts of forestry operations on vertebrate fauna.

He is currently working on monitoring threated species populations including the large forest owls and on post-fire response projects in the forests and woodlands of the NSW north coast.