

Feather Palm Forest

Alexandra Palm

Classified as Mesophyll vine forest with Feather Palms, this vegetation ecosystem has a conservation status as 'of concern'. While diversity in this section is high, the dominant and most obvious plant in this protected vegetation type is the Alexandra Palm (*Archontophoenix alexandrae*). This familiar palm grows throughout the north-east coast of Australia and can reach up to 30 metres in height.

White-lipped Treefrog

Australia's largest and most spectacular green treefrog is a common resident of Cattana Wetlands. White-lipped Treefrogs grow up to 14 cm and are usually bright lime green above with a white belly and a distinct white stripe along their lower lip. The large discs on the ends of their fingers and toes make them excellent climbers. The best time to see them is during the wetter, warmer months when males call – a repeated, deep 'workk' – to attract a mate. During mating females will lay a few hundred eggs in the inundated temporary or permanent pools in the forest.

Orange-footed Scrubfowl

While on the boardwalk you might spot a peculiar grey-brown bird wandering around on the forest floor. The Orange-footed Scrubfowl is about the size of a chicken and has distinctive orange legs and feet and a short crest. Their day is typically spent scratching the ground eating berries, seeds, grubs and insects. They produce weird cries and screams during the day and night. During the wet season a mating pair construct a large incubation mound of vegetation and soil and lay up to 12 eggs. These mounds are the largest nest of any living bird.

Torres Strait Pigeon

Alexandra Palms flower and fruit regularly throughout the year and this provides a ready supply of food for a whole range of wildlife. The small red fruits are especially relished by fruit-eating birds such as Torres Strait Pigeons, Yellow Orioles and Figbirds.

Torres Strait Pigeons are large, plump, tree-dwelling white pigeons with black tips to their wings and tail. Their deep, booming 'coo-hoo' call echoes throughout the forest during the wet season when they migrate to northern Australia from New Guinea to breed before returning by March.



Illustration: Tim Parker

Wild About the Tropics