

## Rupert Russell

Rupert has made a remarkable contribution to wildlife conservation in North Queensland for over 40 years, ranging from the protests over the road building in the Daintree to his present involvement in the yellow-bellied glider project. He has been a constant campaigner for the preservation of habitat crucial to this animal and also to the endangered tropical bettong. Rupert has succeeded in having forest areas freed from logging and actually achieved the creation of a new national park – Hasties Swamp National Park (near Atherton). He is the author of several publications and is considered an expert on the wet tropics, leading to him being frequently consulted for his knowledge on this subject.



Upon learning of his successful nomination, Rupert replied:

Thoughts on receiving the award: Initial response is surprise, then pleasure. Next, come memories of Dr Serventy's lifelong opposition to the degradation of this land and the oceans. I feel shy to learn that I am added to the company of people recognised for their love of our land and its animals: Margaret Thorsborne, protector of pigeons, Hinchinbrook and Cardwell, Jenny Maclean, protector and healer of bats, John Weigel, snake wrangler and devil protector, the outspoken Bob Irwin and many more worthies. And now, somehow, me. People who love and work for the bush and its native animals never think of retiring from the core of their reason for living, but the Serventy Conservation Award, symbolic of being included in grand company, offers the strength of mateship.

### **Main conservation efforts**

Always a naturalist, but my life was changed by an ABC Radio National Science Show circa 1980 describing opposition to logging in Terania Creek by people like Hugh and Nan Nicholson. This led me to question Forestry in North Queensland rainforests which resulted in my political and physical opposition to logging in native forests. These efforts proved to be a step along the way to gaining World Heritage listing for much of North Queensland's rainforests, mainly through the calm, tireless, highest calibre work of Dr Aila Keto. Opposition to logging led me into the Tall Eucalypt Forests of Windsor Tableland where one night I caught a Northern Bettong. The beautiful little animal was transferred to National Parks, serving to prove the occurrence of these rare Bettongs at Windsor. This led to gazettal of a very large Scientific Area for the benefit of the Bettong and a good population of Yellow-bellied Gliders, accomplished with the help of Sam Dansie, a well-respected forester. Discovering Yellow-bellied Gliders in a patch of country near Herberton where logging was imminent brought about a small Scientific Area and began my study of these best-of-all gliding possums. Arrested once at Windsor for stopping logging trucks, twice at the Daintree blockades and arrested but not charged for distracting duck shooters in Victoria are satisfying memories but sadly, duck shooting hasn't yet stopped.