

i Rainforest road kill



NIGEL WESTON

- Road kill increasing problem for rainforest animals
- Animal habitats fragmented by roads
- Cassowary and Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo survival under threat
- Rainforest CRC developed new overpasses and underpasses on Atherton Tableland
- Rope bridges and rope tunnels built high above roads
- Underpasses connect habitats with "furniture" such as ropes and branches



MIRIAM GOOSEM

Awards shortlist for wild byways

Roz Pulley

TWO Cairns scientists have been shortlisted for Australia's top science awards after developing ways to help rare native animals cross roads safely.

Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre scientists Miriam Goosem and Nigel Weston are finalists in the inaugural People's Choice Award of the Australian Museum's 2005 Eureka Prizes.

And Far North Queenslanders have the chance to help them win by voting for their project — a series of bridges and tunnels aimed at saving native wildlife.

Dr Goosem and Mr Weston worked with the Main Roads Department, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and various conservation groups to design, build and test the apparatus which prevents the roadkill of rainforest animals.

The innovations have been incorporated into the upgraded East Evelyn road on the Atherton Tableland — home to many rare and threatened animals, including the cassowary, Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo and several rainforest possums.

CRC research showed the road and adjoining pasture was separating populations of rainforest rodents, restricting their movements and preventing interbreeding. It was also a hot spot for tree-kangaroo fatalities.

The entrepreneurial scientists came up with a series of underpasses "furnished" with rainforest vegetation, soil and leaf litter, together with rocks and logs to provide protection from predators. Canopy dwelling possums were given overpasses in the form of rope bridges or rope tunnels, connecting trees high above the road.

The Eureka Prizes are Australia's most comprehensive national science awards with 23 prizes worth almost \$250,000.

The new People's Choice Award invites the public, especially potential future scientists, to vote for their personal "science star".

Until August 7, school students can vote online for their favourite project from six short-listed entries, with the chance to win \$3000 worth of prizes and even to have their DNA sequenced by Australian Museum scientists.

■ To cast your vote for Dr Goosem and Mr Weston, visit the online voting page at http://www.amonline.net.au/eureka/peoples_choice/