

OBITUARY

Paul Robert Foulkes

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Broome and the Kimberley lost one of its most passionate advocates for the environment with the death of Paul Foulkes, on Sunday 7 June 1998, aged 52, after a short illness. During his life Paul had been an artist, builder, beekeeper, naturalist, discoverer of dinosaur footprints, and bush walk guide. These accomplishments are even more remarkable given that Paul was dyslexic and had difficulty reading and writing.

Paul was born on 5 August 1945 in Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, England. For much of his childhood he lived in a caravan at Shirlet Forest, near Much Wenlock, Shropshire, where his grandfather was the gamekeeper. As a child he had a bad speech impediment (he stuttered) and attended speech therapy classes. As a result his education suffered and he was very shy. He developed an abiding interest in natural history and began to sketch birds and flowers. The forest workers encouraged his talents and taught him about wild fruits and medicinal plants.

On leaving school Paul was apprenticed as a plasterer. In 1966 he met Joyce Hull and in 1968 they married. The first of their three sons, Keven, was born in 1968. In 1970, under the Federal Government's migrant assistant scheme, they arrived in Melbourne aboard the "Fairstar". They stayed in Melbourne for three years before travelling north to Cairns where their second son Ian was

born. It was during this time in Cairns that Paul developed an interest in shell collecting.

In 1974 the family drove from Cairns to Broome via Melbourne and Perth. Paul had decided that Broome offered the family a new future. The harshness and the raw beauty of Broome appealed to him. For the first time in his life he felt at home. The early 1970s had attracted to Broome a number of people seeking alternative lifestyles. Paul connected with these people and the local Aboriginal people. In his words "he invested in the environment".

On arrival in Broome the family were accommodated at the Bali Hai Caravan Park in a tent. After their third son, Troy, was born Joyce insisted that a caravan be purchased to accommodate the growing needs of the family. During these early days in Broome, Paul did building work for Dr Peter Reid and Kim Male of Pearls Proprietary Limited. Later he established his own building business.

In 1976 Paul began keeping bees and collecting the honey. He was fascinated by the number of plants his bees were visiting and wanted to find out their scientific names. Paul made contact with Tim Willing, the then Broome Shire gardener, and they began collecting plant specimens. These were sent to me at the Western Australian Herbarium for identification and thus began a long-term collaboration

between the three of us, culminating in many-shared plant collecting expeditions. There are 428 P.R. Foulkes specimens lodged in the WA Herbarium. Over many years, Paul assisted many interstate botanists when they visited Broome on plant collecting expeditions.

The 1980s in Broome was an era of unprecedented development, to a large extent initiated by Lord Alistair McAlpine. As a response to this, in 1982, the Broome Botanical Society was formed. The objectives of the Society were published in the "Broome News" of March 1988. Paul was an inaugural member and later, after 1984, served as the society's president. Paul was also a founding member of the Kimberley Field Naturalists' club and an active member of the Kimberley Conservation Group.

The Botanical Society undertook a series of projects in and around Broome to raise community awareness of the importance of local vegetation communities. One of these was the protection of the deciduous vine thickets and gubinge (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*) groves behind Cable Beach. This was achieved by the Society in 1992, when a vine thicket nature trail, funded through a grant from the National Rainforest Conservation Program, was opened at Gubinge Road near Cable Beach.

As part of raising community awareness Paul began a series of detailed drawings of local plants and these first appeared in the June 1986 edition of the "Broome News" and continued through to February 1989 (see Table 1 for species illustrated). Botanical Society members Tim Willing and John Martin assisted Paul with the text preparation.

A major project of the Botanical Society was to prepare a publication on the plants of the Broome area and seek

Table 1. Plant illustrations by Paul Foulkes published in the "Broome News".

Date	Species
June 1986	<i>Hakea macrocarpa</i>
July 1986	<i>Acacia tumida</i>
August 1986	<i>Lysiphyllum cunninghamii</i>
September 1986	<i>Persoonia falcata</i>
October 1986	<i>Ptilotus exaltatus</i>
November 1986	<i>Capparis lasiantha</i>
March 1987	<i>Terminalia ferdinandiana</i>
April 1987	<i>Terminalia petiolaris</i>
May 1987	<i>Hypoestes floribunda</i>
May/June 1987	<i>Acacia bivenosa</i>
June 1987	<i>Exocarpus latifolius</i>
July 1987	<i>Myoporum acuminatum</i>
August 1987	<i>Trichodesma zeylanicum</i>
September 1987	<i>Acacia holosericea</i>
October 1987	<i>Velleia panduriformis</i>
November 1987	<i>Mallotis nesophilus</i>
December 1987	<i>Ehretia saligna</i>
January 1988	<i>Pouteria sericea</i>
February/ March 1988	<i>Gyrocarpus americanus</i>
March 1988	<i>Grewia breviflora</i>
April 1988	<i>Terminalia petiolaris</i> x <i>ferdinandiana</i>
June 1988	<i>Hybanthus aurantiacus</i>
July 1988	<i>Caesalpinia major</i>
August 1988	<i>Acacia monticola</i>
September 1988	<i>Atalaya hemiglauca</i>
October 1988	<i>Ventilago viminalis</i>
February 1989	<i>Flueggia virosa</i>

funding for its production from the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation and the Lotteries Commission. Paul was President of the Society and a contributor to the book. This project took ten years to complete and culminated in the publishing of "Broome and Beyond – Plants and people of the Dampier Peninsula" (Kenneally *et al.*, 1996).

In February 1987 Paul discovered a series of large round dinosaur footprints forming a trackway in the Broome



Figure 1. Paul Foulkes at Gantheaume Point (July 1996).

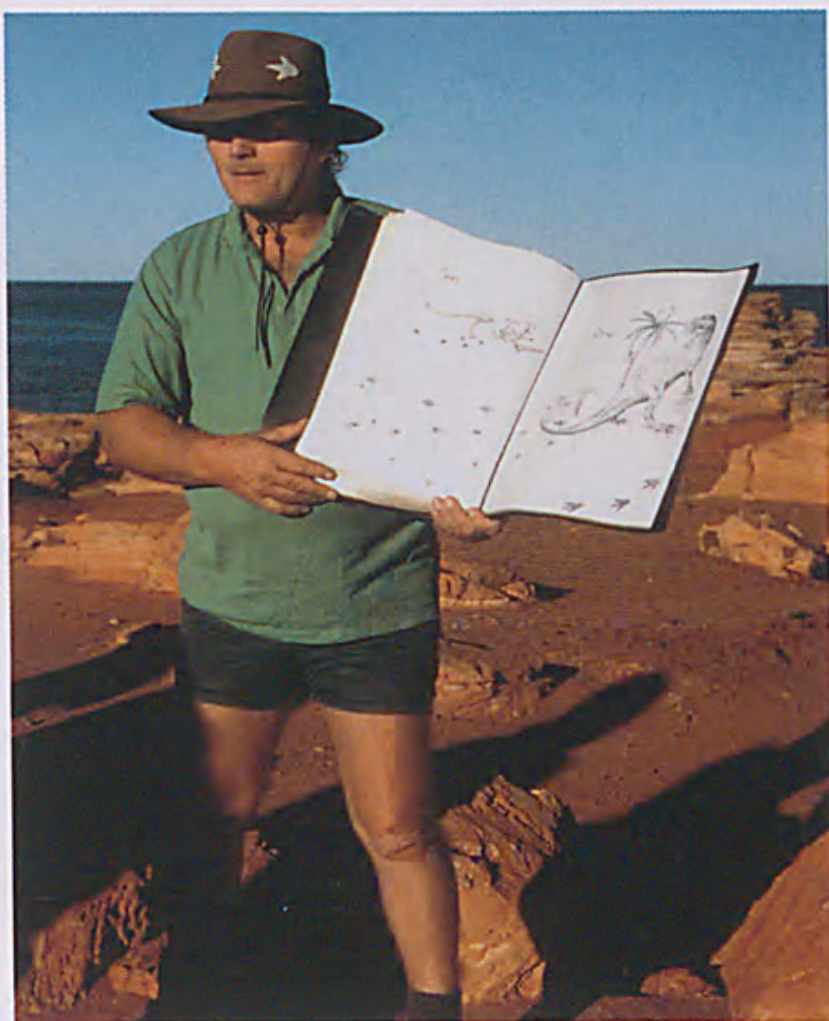


Figure 2. Paul Foulkes at Gantheaume Point with dinosaur sketches (July 1996).



Figure 3. Paul Foulkes (left) in Broome with Ian Brooker, botanist and eucalypt specialist, Australian National Herbarium, Canberra (June 1988).



Figure 4. Paul Foulkes with Helen Aston, botanist and aquatic plant specialist, National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne at Yarp Lakes, Dampier Peninsula (June 1988).



Figure 5. Paul Foulkes with well-known club member Kath Stewart in Broome during a WA Naturalists excursion to the Dampier Peninsula (June 1988).



Figure 6. Paul Foulkes (left), Kevin Kenneally and Daphne Edinger examining specimens of *Eucalyptus dampieri* (Broome 1988). Photo: K. Coate.

Sandstone near Gantheaume Point. This prompted him to initiate a major coastal search for further footprints. So successful was his search that the Broome coastline can now claim to have a rich dinosaurian ichnofauna, the most varied collection of dinosaur footprints known worldwide. In 1994 Paul's discoveries were authenticated in a paper on sauropod dinosaur tracks that he co-authored with scientists from the University of Queensland (Thulborn *et al.* 1994). The need to preserve these sites is now universally acknowledged.

In 1994 Paul began his Broome Bush Walks Tours using the Gubinge Road Nature Trail. He led numerous school groups through coastal rainforest patches and mangroves, as well as hundreds of tourists, teaching them the importance of the area to native wildlife. His knowledge astounded many of his audience and they left with a greater understanding of the traditional value of bush tucker to local Aboriginal people. Paul had a particular interest in the nutritional value of bushfood and had assisted Vic Cherikoff at the University of Sydney by sending frozen samples of magabala (*Marsdenia viridiflora*) and gubinge (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*) for chemical analysis. Cherikoff acknowledged his contribution to the research into the nutritional composition of Australian Aboriginal bushfoods in his book "The Bushfood Handbook" published in 1989. In November 1997 Paul was diagnosed with terminal cancer. His passion for life did not diminish and he never gave up the fight, retaining his dignity until the end. Paul died peacefully at home in his beloved Broome on 7 June 1998. A memorial service was held in the Broome Courthouse gardens where for many years he sold his honey at the weekend markets.

Paul's life was an inspiration to many people and he was an uncompromising advocate for the environment. He fought for what he loved and believed in and had no time for "those bloody developers" who destroyed the bush. He spoke out against mining companies whose activities threatened the coastal dunes and dinosaur footprints. His vision of a Coastal Park for Broome, for which he tirelessly lobbied politicians and Council, became a reality in his lifetime. He tried to make Broome a better place for everybody and in that he succeeded.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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