

***ROCKS, LANDSCAPES
& RESOURCES
OF THE
WET TROPICS***

By

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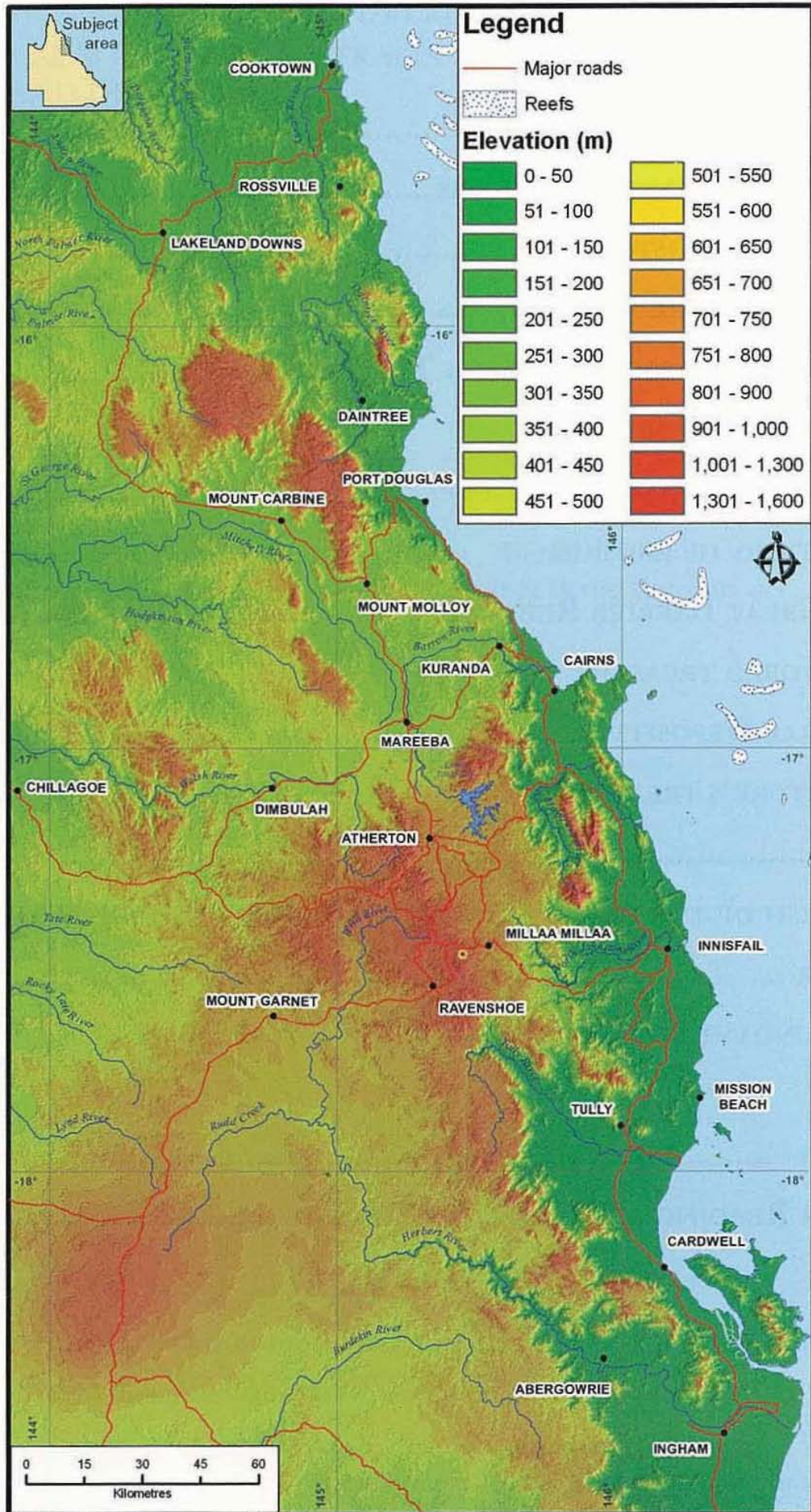
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Cover Photo: *The Barron Falls continue to cut back into the coastal escarpment behind Cairns to leave a narrow gorge below.* Adella Edwards

Background to Title Page: *Milla Milla Falls plunge over two basalt lava flows.* Warwick Willmott

Back Cover Photo: *Rocks of the Hodgkinson Province in the Barron Gorge below the falls.*
Bernd Lottermoser



Topography of the Wet Tropics and surrounds.

PREFACE – THIS BOOK

The Wet Tropics of far north Queensland are spectacular.

The magnificently sculptured landscape is the result of nature working at its best. From the culmination of natural events stretching over millions of years, nature has created a landscape to rival none other.

The region is renowned for its Great Barrier Reef, World Heritage rainforest, the Atherton Tableland, and its outback. It has active hot springs, some of the youngest volcanoes in Australia, ancient sea-beds, world-class mineral deposits, some of the most fertile and least fertile soils in Australia, vast savanna ecosystems, stunning waterfalls, gorges, limestone caves, wetlands, coastal reefs, beaches, mangrove swamps and rainforests.

The region supports a remarkable abundance and variety of plants and animals, many of them rare or not found anywhere else. It sustains diverse human cultures and activities, and produces a great diversity of agricultural crops and delicacies. Not surprisingly, it attracts around two million tourists every year. In contrast, the region is also plagued by devastating cyclones and floods, as well as pests introduced by humans.

This book is a non-technical guide to the rocks, landscapes and resources of the Wet Tropics, stretching from north of Cooktown to south of Ingham and from Cairns to Chillagoe. It is the story of a region as complex and fascinating as no other. The book gives details of the region's rocks, landforms, minerals, soils and waters, explained by earth scientists.

Scientific research uses field and laboratory evidence to understand the processes and events that have shaped and continue to shape the region. Our understanding of the landscape has to rely on many incomplete facts and figures. Nature is cruel – only some of the clues are there for us to see; others are and still remain cleverly concealed. It is as if we are trying to draw a picture from a jigsaw puzzle in which many pieces are missing. However, we believe that the picture we present is largely accurate. There is no doubt that this portrait of the Wet Tropics will be modified as more information becomes available and new scientific concepts are applied. Our knowledge of the region will grow as nature reveals itself.

We hope that you enjoy the natural wonders of the Wet Tropics.

Bernd Lottermoser

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Other photos are from the authors of the chapters except where noted.

THE AUTHORS

Bernd Lottermoser*, Peter Whitehead**, Paul Nelson**, and Robin Beaman** from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, James Cook University, and Warwick Willmott⁺, author of other Rocks and Landscapes books, have come together to share their knowledge of far north Queensland. The authors are distinguished in their respective fields, and provide authoritative and engaging insights into the natural wonders of the region.

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