protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

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Issue 6 December 2015 - January 2016

Welcome to the December/ January edition of ***Protected***

Michelle Prior, NPAQ President

Coming to the end of the year has been very hectic at NPAQ and for protected area matters.

In October, 11 new nature refuges were declared, bringing the total of nature refuges to more than 4 million hectares, almost half the size of the national park estate in Queensland.

This was followed by the very welcome introduction of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which proposes to reinstate the conservation of nature as the sole goal of the NC Act, and undo some retrograde amendments made during the Newman term of government.

NPAQ has developed the ultimate parent's guide to providing children with a wonderful experience within our National Parks and helping them connect to the natural world. Visit our website to download your copy of "Getting Kids into National Parks" or phone the office on how to obtain a printed edition. If you live in or visit South East Queensland, choose from 84 walks identified for children in our first regional series "Getting Kids into National Parks – South East Queensland".

NPAQ has farewelled Paul Donatiu, our Principal Advocate, after 7½ years with the Association. Paul's achievements with NPAQ include successfully negotiating for positive national park outcomes in Queensland, budget allocations for protected areas, national park acquisitions, and the Friends of Park program.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish members, supporters, staff, volunteer, partners and colleagues a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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Mission Statement

The National Parks Association promotes the preservation, expansion, good management and presentation of National Parks in Queensland.

Contact Details

Unit 10/36 Finchley Street, Milton
PO Box 1040, Milton QLD 4064
ABN: 60 206 792 095
Phone: (07) 3367 0878
Web: www.npaq.org.au
Email: admin@npaq.org.au

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Advertising enquiries

admin@npaq.org.au

Images

Cover - Upper Bald Rock Creek in Girraween National Park. Strip pg2 - Mountain White gum bark (*Eucalyptus dalrympleana* subsp. *heptantha*). Both by Paul Donatiu.

HORSE RIDING

SHOULD IT OCCUR IN NATIONAL PARKS?

Neil Douglas
NPAQ Member

Under the Bligh government many state forests in south-east Queensland, and some in other areas, were converted to national parks. Although this move was widely applauded by conservationists, one user group that did not react so favourably was the horse riding fraternity. This was because they were consequently excluded from many trails in the state forest areas that they had traditionally used for their recreation.

This article examines the effects of horse riding in natural areas and whether the activity can be compatible with national park values in certain circumstances.

Background

Once it became clear that the Bligh government was going to engage in large-scale conversion of state forests into national parks, and having regard to the fact that the government considered horse riding to be incompatible with national parks, equestrian interests began lobbying to have traditional riding trails retained. They were partly successful in that, when some park areas were gazetted, narrow strips on either side of some trails were retained as state forest tenure. These formed part of the South East Queensland Horse Trail Network.

The subsequent Newman government had a less rigorous approach to national parks and, among other things, placed a greater emphasis on recreation. They instigated consultations between user groups and the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) regarding the re-opening of horse trails that had been closed. Partly to facilitate this, in 2013 the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) formed the Queensland Horse Trails Working Group which included representatives of all the major horse riding associations. Meanwhile, the QPWS commissioned a study whose interim findings were that horse riding had little adverse effect on the environment if confined to marked tracks and forestry roads.

In 2014, the QPWS issued a Strategy document which defined under what circumstances horse riding would be allowed on previously used routes in national parks. (The mechanism would be by regulatory notice under the Nature Conservation Act.) It would be subject to 5 principles: that natural and cultural values would not be compromised; that there was a genuine demand for it; that riding would be confined to existing formed QPWS roads; that potential conflict with other users would be minimised; and that the trails would be suitable and safe for riding. The integrity of native vegetation and ecosystems would need to be maintained, pest plants controlled, and trails selected to minimise erosion. The document said the QPWS wanted partnerships with horse riding stakeholders, including commercial outfitters. It was noted that Group Activity Permits would be required for all organised horse riding events.

Is this strategy reasonable in the light of studies on the effects of horse riding in natural areas?

Australian studies

Ngugi et al.[1] studied the occurrence of weed species adjacent to trails used by horses in south-east Queensland, noting that the main concern was that weed seeds could germinate in horse dung. Overall, they found that twice as many weed plants occurred within 5 m of horse trails as further away, but they were unable to say whether the weeds were necessarily spread by horses as vehicles also used the trails in question. They were aware of 156 species naturalised in Australia that could germinate in horse dung, but found only 2 (large plantain and common sowthistle) adjacent to the studied trails. Neither of these were considered to be serious

environmental threats in Australia. The authors were of the view that successful weed colonisation was occurring and advocated weed control measures within 5 m of horse trails. However, they did not recommend exclusion of horses.

Landsberg et al.[2] reviewed other Australian studies on the subject as a means of informing policies on horse riding in reserves around Canberra. A recurring theme was that impacts were lower on constructed and maintained trails than on narrow, informal ones. Weed seeds in dung were more likely to germinate and survive in disturbed, damp locations than on hardened trails; on non-hardened trails an increase in weed-favouring nutrients could be caused by breakdown of organic matter in disturbed soil as well as by horse dung. One study showed that weeds were restricted to trail margins where horses were constrained to the trail, but could occur more than 20 m from a trail where animals were not controlled in that way. Other studies concluded that horse impacts were lower than those of vehicles but higher than small trail bikes, and that fast riding such as in cross-country or endurance events was more damaging than more sedate recreational riding.

Landsberg did not advocate exclusion of horses from the Canberra reserves, but considered that there was a stronger case for limiting numbers of horses than walkers. He considered that some expenditure on track rehabilitation, fencing, signage and enforcement was necessary and noted that this imposed a cost on park management.

Ansong and Pickering[3] reviewed studies of the viability of noxious weed seeds in horse dung. A finding was that, of 429 noxious species in Australia, 16 had viable seeds in dung; 700 viable seeds could be passed by a single horse per day. The species were similar to ones dispersed by vehicles. Ansong raised the possibility of giving horses seed-free feed for 42 hours prior to taking them into natural areas.

Overseas studies

Two USA studies were also reviewed. Campbell and Gibson[4] found that of 23 species of exotic weed species present in horse dung that germinated in a greenhouse, only one was found along horse trails studied. More generally, a greater number of exotic species was found along horse trails than others not used by horses, but numbers of plants were low.

Stroh and Struckhoff[5] studied intensively used horse trails (where commercial groups could comprise several hundred riders, and trails were generally narrow) in Missouri. 14 exotic species were examined. Exotic species occurred in 70% of horse trail sample plots but only 26% of non-trail plots. Every exotic species occurred at least once along horse trails.

Neither Campbell nor Stroh recommended banning riding in the areas studied, but Campbell advocated care in balancing the needs of the riding community against the possibility of establishment of invasive species. Stroh advised management measures such as controlling weed infestations in the highest quality natural areas, monitoring horse trails for new infestations, and the use of horse riders to report new weed occurrences.

Where to from here?

In 2012, the National Parks Association of New South Wales (NPA NSW) made a submission to the NSW Government in which it strongly opposed future horse riding in national parks in that State. Reasons cited included concerns about the introduction of noxious weeds in dung; physical damage to trails, soil and vegetation; an increased management burden on the NPWS by way of weed control,

remediation of damage and rider monitoring; and that there were plenty of horse riding opportunities in non-national park areas. The submission said that the precautionary principle should be applied.

It is felt that to some extent the situations addressed in the Queensland strategy document are different to those referred to in the NPA NSW submission in that the large-scale conversion of state forest to national parks in south-east Queensland has caused a substantial reduction in opportunities to engage in horse riding in more natural settings. The reintroduction of the activity where it had once existed could therefore be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to strict conditions generally along the lines of the strategy document. A key requirement for minimisation of environmental impact seems to be restricting horses to wide management roads or fire trails that are also used by vehicles, as this greatly reduces the likelihood of weeds successfully establishing from horse dung and eliminates the possibility of damage to vegetation. The prior existence of weeds in an area, as determined by a plant survey, would strengthen the case for allowing horses once more. However, given the limited size of park management budgets, horse riding should not be allowed to place too much of a burden on staff resources. A degree of responsible self-regulation encouraged by partnering between park staff and equestrian organisations seems a desirable way to proceed.

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Images

Pg3 - Horse riders and bushwalkers D'Aguilar NP, South section (Sue Walsh)

Pg4-5 banner - Woondum NP trail (Paul Donatiu)

Pg 4 - Horse riders (NPAQ Image Library)

Pg 5 - Horse riders at Ewan Maddock Dam (Sue Walsh)

WILDERNESS AND WHY

Brendan Mackey, Griffith University
Nicole Rogers, Southern Cross University

Earlier this year, the Tasmanian government released a draft of the revised management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which proposed rezoning certain areas from "wilderness zones" to "remote recreation zones". The changes are to enable greater private tourism investment in the World Heritage Area and allow for logging of specialty timbers.

At the centre of the debate was how we define wilderness – and what people can use it for.

For wildlife or people?

"Wilderness quality" is a measure of the extent to which a landscape (or seascape) is remote from, and undisturbed by, modern technological society. High wilderness quality means a landscape is relative remote from settlement and infrastructure and largely ecologically intact. Wilderness areas are those that meet particular thresholds for these criteria.

The words largest wilderness areas include Amazonia, the Congo forests, the Northern Australian tropical savannas, the Llanos wetlands of Venezuela, the Patagonian Steppe, Australian deserts and the Arctic Tundra.

Globally, there are 24 large intact landscapes of at least 10,000 square kilometres (1,000,000 hectares). Wilderness as a scientific concept was developed for land areas, but is also increasingly being applied to the sea.

Legal definitions of wilderness usually include these remote and intact criteria – but the goals range from human-centred to protecting the intrinsic value of wilderness. Intrinsic value recognises that things have value regardless of their worth or utility to human beings, and is recognised in the Convention on Biological Diversity to which Australia is a signatory.

In the NSW Wilderness Act 1987, for instance, one of the three objects of the Act is cast in terms of benefits to the human community: "to promote the education of the public in the appreciation, protection and management of wilderness". The Act also states that wilderness shall be managed so as "to permit opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation." Examples of formally declared wilderness areas in New South Wales are the Lost World Wilderness Area and Wollemi National Park.

Intrinsic value is evident in the South Australia Wilderness Protection Act 1992 which sets out to, among other things, preserve wildlife and ecosystems, and protect the land and its ecosystems from the effects of modern technology – and restoring land to its condition prior to European settlement. South Australia wilderness areas include the Yellabinna Wilderness Protected Area.

Indigenous custodians

Our understanding of wilderness and its usefulness has changed over the last century as science has revealed its significance for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. We have also accepted the ecological and legal realities of Indigenous land stewardship.

The world's rapidly shrinking areas of high wilderness quality, including formally declared wilderness areas, are largely the customary land of Indigenous peoples, whether or not this is legally recognised.

Significant bio-cultural values, such as Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity (recognised in Australia's federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act), are dependent on these traditional relationships between people and country.

In many cases around the world, wilderness areas only remain intact because they are under Indigenous stewardship. In Australia, these facts were regrettably ignored in the past and were the source of much loss and harm to Traditional Owners when protected areas were declared without their consent.

Lessons have been learnt, some progress is being made, and the essential role of local and Indigenous communities in the conservation of wilderness areas is now being recognised and reflected in Australian

IT MATTERS

national and state conservation and heritage policy and law. For example, in 2003 the Northern Territory government agreed to joint management with the Traditional Owners of the Territory's national parks.

What is wilderness good for?

By definition, wilderness areas exclude modern industrial land uses and intrusive infrastructure. Commercial logging and mining are typically not compatible because they have negative environmental impacts on wilderness quality, reducing an area's remoteness and ecological intactness.

Nature and culture-based tourism and education can be broadly compatible with wilderness. This, however, depends on what type of supporting infrastructure they need which can range from simple walking trails through to the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway in the Wet Tropics of Queensland's World Heritage Area.

Encouraging more people to visit a wilderness area – even for the best of reasons – can ultimately detract from its wilderness quality as this can lead to, among other things, increased demand for roads, accommodation and other facilities.

Consequently there is some tension between the competing management objectives of presentation and protection and conservation of World Heritage areas, as required under Article 5 of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, when such areas have high wilderness quality.

Why do we need wilderness?

Wilderness areas support important biological, cultural, scientific and recreational values.

Biologically, wilderness areas provide refuge for species and ecosystems from many threatening processes including habitat degradation and the spread of disease and weeds. Large, intact landscapes provide the best chance for species and ecosystems to persist in the face of rapid climate change.

Ideally, protected areas should be large enough to absorb the impacts of large scale disturbances, including fire and the changes to fire regimes resulting from global warming.

Large, intact areas have greater resilience to external stressors, provide more options for species in space and time, sustain critical ecological processes such as long-distance biological movement, and maximise the adaptive capacity of species.

Wilderness areas are also important for climate change mitigation as, for example, protecting the dense carbon stored in primary forest ecosystems avoids significant carbon dioxide emissions.

The human population, now at 6 billion, is projected to rise this century to over 9 billion, and with it ongoing industrialisation to meet growing demand for food, water, fibre, energy and habitation. Given this reality, we can be sure that large, intact landscapes and seascapes of high wilderness quality will become an increasingly scarce asset.

Whether we conceive of wilderness protection in terms of its intrinsic value or, within the framework of inter-generational equity, in terms of its value for future generations, there is a strong imperative for today's generation to protect wilderness areas from incompatible activities.

THE CONVERSATION

Reprinted from The Conversation (29th January 2015).

http://theconversation.com/explainer-wilderness-and-why-it-matters-36591

Images

Eucalypt woodland in Glasshouse Mountains National Park (above) and Mt Ngungun summit on a quiet day (Paul Donatiu).

PARK IN FOCUS

Girraween National Park

Denis McMullen, NPAQ Member

After the teeming vitality of the Scenic Rim, Girraween - with its open forest and seasonal banks of wildflowers - seems to present an austere grandeur. Towering trees and prolific green growth are replaced by granite as pavements, domes and sculptured tors. We have moved from botany to geology, and there is a fascinating story to tell.

It is hard to visit or think about Girraween National Park without becoming curious about why it is so strikingly different to those other Parks in the Scenic Rim.

The story of Girraween has been written by enormous temperatures and forces, and by the passing of time, measured in millions of years. Rain, wind, ice, plants and running water have all contributed to Nature's art gallery through the production of shapes ranging from the sublime to the intriguing. These include balancing rocks, carved by these natural forces into near perfect globes, seemingly waiting for the slightest shove to send them bouncing down. Generations of young, and not so young, visitors have tried, unsuccessfully, to budge them, but their massive weight has anchored them for thousands of years and, if they are going anywhere, it won't be soon: that time will be measured in eons.

As we walk along the well-constructed and maintained paths, we are constantly surprised to come across more and more huge boulders and, indeed, even more huge masses of stone. Some of these qualify by their size and eminence for their own names and attract the attention of visitors in their hundreds. These include the vast mass of Castle Rock and the Pyramids which are accessible through well-developed walking tracks. Other notable rocks are masked by screens of trees, and often carved into curiously pleasing shapes and patterns. At "the Junction," where Bald Rock Creek is joined by other waterways, the sides of the massive rock basin are stained by lines of seepage to suggest rock art of huge figures posturing and gesturing.

Other intriguing features are creeks bubbling through sculptured courses and the "Underground River" where the creek has eroded the shelving rock until it towered above the water like a breaking wave frozen for eternity. Except that after unimaginable time, the wave did break, dropping shattered remains across the creek so that it appears that the water has run underground.

A special feature of this Park is the amazing seasonal wildflower display. This year, a bushfire damaged some central areas of the Park, but a walk out to "The Junction" will reveal masses of plant forms and colours, even late in the spring season.

Girraween sits on Stanthorpe Granite, a great mass of rock from which the Granite Belt takes its name. It is part of the much larger New England Batholith stretching 250kms from Warwick to Armidale. This formed c.240 million years ago from a huge mass of magna, forced up through older rocks, traces of which can still be seen as 'xenoliths', sections of harder or softer rock trapped in granite and eroding at a different rates creating holes in the rock or upthrusts of harder material. The magma cooled whilst deep under the earth, solidifying slowly, resulting in the growth of crystals so large that they can be clearly seen on the surface of the rock. Granite is an aggregate of silicate minerals, here mainly feldspars, quartz, mica and hornblende, giving the rock crystals a mixture of colours including, white, light brown, glassy mica and shiny black.

Geologically, it appears that the upwelling that has formed the Granite Belt existed for eons under pre-existing forms of meta-sedimentary rock which eroded away revealing the igneous rock underneath. It seems that the overlay rock could have been between 1–2 kilometres high, placing great stresses on the underlying rock. As the erosion revealed the granite, it displayed stress cracks from the impact of that great weight, and these vertical and horizontal cracks were left open to weathering, leading to stands of vertical rock, up to 4 or 5 metres tall in places, often with pleasingly rounded shapes, boulders or other sculptured forms. These features include Granite Arch, Turtle Rock and the Sphinx. Other natural monuments

include the vast granite slopes of Mt Norman, the towering iconic Pyramids which rise 200m above Bald Rock Creek, and neighbouring Bald Rock, located just over the border in its own National Park in NSW, the second largest monolith in the country.

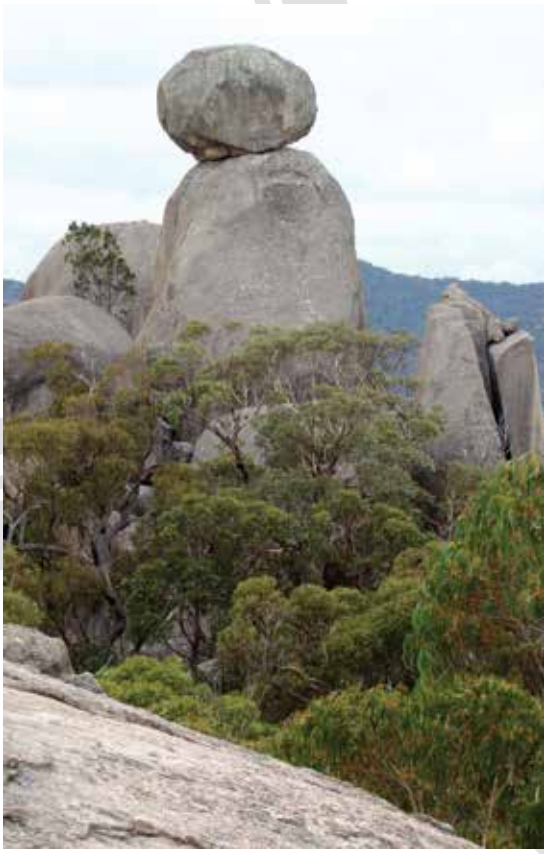
Despite this stony dominance, the name “Girraween” is taken from an Indigenous language and means “Place of Flowers”, celebrating the magnificent displays of wildflowers at the Park from June to December. However, it seems that whilst the Girraween area was used by a number of traditional custodians, the word “Girraween” does not come from their languages. The Kambuwal, Jukambal, Kwianbal, Ngarabal, Bundjalung and Gidabal people are all known to have been in the area, probably coming together for trade, gift exchanges, marriages and ceremonial gatherings such as feasts and corroborees.

A resident sometimes seen in the Park is the Superb Lyrebird. This is a mid-size (80cm+) brown bird with a magnificent lyre-like tail. The male builds a series of mounds and moves from one to another dancing and singing, extending his tail feathers forward across his body as he slowly rotates. Unlike the scrub turkey, the mounds, produced by kicking dirt and debris together, are not developed for use as a nest. The female leaves him posturing in demonstration and looks after herself, building a conventional nest. The Superb Lyrebird has a remarkable capacity for mimicry and will mimic other birds, and even sounds generated by humans. Other birds which may be seen in the Park include the Brown Goshawk, Yellow Faced Honeyeater and the Scarlet Robin. Kangaroos and wallabies are often seen. Other residents of interest include the common wombat, platypus and the turquoise parrot. Our personal indelible memory is of swimming in Bald Rock Creek and noticing a disturbance a little further upstream which, after some careful reconnaissance, turned out to be a platypus busily going about its business of hunting yabbies.

A significant figure in the history of Girraween was Dr Spencer Roberts, a medical practitioner in Stanthorpe. He was a self-professed guardian of local populations of the superb lyrebird and the wombat. Convinced that protecting the habitat of these two animals was vital for their long-term survival, he made a number of submissions to the Government for the declaration of a national park. Bald Rock Creek National Park was declared in 1930 with Castle Rock National Park declared in 1932. Totalling 1600 ha, they were known collectively as Wyberba National Park. In 1966, Mr Napier Gunn offered the government his block of 52.4 ha, and the two national parks were amalgamated to create Girraween National Park. From 1977 to 1979 further acquisitions enlarged the park to 11,300 ha. The last block acquired in 1980 enlarged Girraween to its present 11,800 ha.

There are 17km of walking tracks within Girraween. These allow visitors to access many of the park’s outstanding granite features and traverse a range of vegetation types. The walking tracks range from a 1.4 km return walk to Granite Arch, to a 10.4km return walk to Mount Norman. They are predominantly flat, allowing easy access to a wide range of visitors. Those in search of something more demanding might attempt the route to the top of the Pyramid.

Images - Dingo Swamp (Paul Donatiu) and The Sphinx (John Rice).



FEATURED WALK

Hinchinbrook Island

Len Lowry, NPAQ Member

Hinchinbrook Island is one of Australia's largest island national parks and has no settlements except for an abandoned resort at its northern end at Cape Richards. Access to the Island is by water taxi from Cardwell in the north and Dungeness in the south. Cardwell is a two hour drive (167 kilometres) from Townsville, with Cairns being a two hour 15 minute drive to the north.

Driving along the Bruce Highway, "Hinchinbrook" appears as a rugged outstanding feature off the Queensland coast. Its appeal is the fragile heath vegetation on cloud covered mountains, with patches of coastal rainforest and extensive eucalypt forests. The eastern coastline has rocky headlands sheltering long sandy beaches, with the west coast fringed by extensive mangrove communities. The island was gazetted a National Park in 1932 and is now part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (Central Section).

Hinchinbrook Island, being surrounded by a marine park, has fringing reefs on the seaward side with seagrass beds and shallow mud banks in the Hinchinbrook Channel. This area supports a wealth of tropical fish, green turtles and dugong. While the fauna lists note 13 mammals, 27 birds and 18 reptile species, the most noticeable are the Beach Stone-curlews, Giant White-tailed Rat, Fawn-footed Melomys and the Eastern Water Dragon.

The island was inhabited by the Bandyin Aboriginal people and remains of their campsites can be found along the western coastline, with shell middens and fish traps as evidence of their activities. While Captain James Cook sailed some distance off the island in 1770, it was not until 19 May 1819 when Lieutenant Phillip Parker King, exploring the coastline around Australia, mapped Hinchinbrook Island in the process. The name originates from an English title held by George Montague Dunk (1716-1771) First Lord of the Admiralty 1762.

The main European activities on Hinchinbrook Island have been fishing, farming, mining and commercial crocodile hunting.

The island's claim to fame is the 32 kilometre through-walk which is known as the Thorsborne Trail which traverses the east coast from Ramsey Bay in the north to Georges Point in the south. The trail was named after Arthur Thorsborne who had a lifelong interest in nature conservation which included monitoring the Torresian Imperial Pigeons which migrate to nest in mangrove areas on tropical off-shore islands.

Preparation is the key to undertaking the Trail, as supplies are not available on the island, although fresh water is readily available from mountain streams. Designated campsites with toilet facilities should be used and a no-trace camping policy is essential to maintain this pristine environment. Camping permits are required and can be obtained from ParksQ Online booking website.

Walkers must prearrange transport to and off the island at the end of the walk. Be prepared for biting insects like sandflies, march flies and mosquitoes. Swimming comes with hazards such as the Box Jellyfish and Estuarine Crocodiles. Walking is best done in the cooler months and avoiding the months of December and January is recommended. The Trail may be closed at any time due to extreme dry or wet conditions, when cyclones are threatening or when prescribed burning is in progress

After disembarking from the water taxi from Cardwell, the Trail from the north of the Island commences with a boardwalk through the mangrove

communities and out onto Ramsay Bay.

After a short walk on the beach and up over a saddle below Nina Peak, a detour from the Trail will allow a climb up the Peak to provide views of the off-shore islands, Ramsay Bay and Mount Bowen. While some walkers take two days to sprint to the finish, it is best enjoyed in a seven day experience. The campsite at Nina Bay is a good first night camp.

Beach walking, rock hopping around headlands, walking through mangrove forests and eucalypt forests are a feature of the walk. After negotiating Boulder Bay, follow the orange markers to Little Ramsay Bay. Mount Bowen (over 1100 metres) can be seen from Little Ramsay Bay. Special permission is required to climb this mountain and should only be undertaken by experienced climbers.

The easy walk to the Banksia Bay campsite gives opportunities for a stroll on the beach and some beachcombing. Metal boxes are provided at most campsite to store foodstuff to prevent pillaging by the Giant White-tailed Rats.

The Trail to Zoe Bay passes through rainforest and palm forest with several creek crossings to get your feet wet. South Zoe Bay is a popular campsite and it is easy to spend two nights here with a swim at Zoe Falls a must. At low tide, armies of Blue Soldier Crabs invade the sand flats near South Zoe Creek mouth. The forest campsite could be the safest option at South Zoe Bay, as estuarine crocodiles may visit the beach campsite.

Leaving Zoe Bay, a climb up a granite slab with the aid of a rope to the top of Zoe Falls is a memorable moment for spectacular views of Zoe Bay. The walk passes the highest point on the trail at 260 metres and enters the heath communities of blue banksia and Native Lasiandra. Coral Ferns can be found along the creeks before climbing through Coastal She-oak and Grass Trees. A side trip to Sunken Reef Bay provides opportunities for a beach sculpture with the flotsam collected from the high tide mark.

From Sunken Reef Bay to Mulligan Falls camp is only a short walk of one and a half hours. Mulligan Falls campsite is popular and precautions need to be taken as native rats can eat into tents and packs. Do not have food wrappers, sweets and toothpaste in tents and string packs from branches with a metal cable.

The final leg of the walk to Georges Point is only 7.5 kilometres but timing the crossing of Mulligan Creek at low tide is recommended. The prearranged water taxi will take walkers from Georges Point to Dungeness where a mini bus will return walkers to Cardwell.

The feeling of achievement cannot be explained to someone who has not “travelled the journey” and it can be said that this walk should be a must on every able bodied person’s “bucket list”.

As this walk was undertaken in June 2004, update information should be obtained from Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing website at http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks/hinchinbrook/

Images

Banner - Hinchinbrook sunset (Ann Ingram)

Centre and Right - Banksia Bay & food storage box (Len Lowry)

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Black-clubbed Spider Orchid

Michelle Shaul, Contributor

The black-clubbed spider orchid (Caladenia atroclavia also Arachnorchis atroclavia) is the kind of flowering plant you would find growing among the open graves of beloved members of the Addams family.

Not only does its name bring terrifying images to the mind of any arachnophobe, its prominent lip, which has the colour of dried blood, is covered with ominous black-tipped claw-like calli. Its ghoulish pale green-cream petals with pink central strips do nothing to put the arachnophobic at ease; each of the thin, angular petals are tipped with thickened dark black-purple clubs, which at a glance give an uncanny resemblance to a spider patiently waiting for its next prey. Petals and sepals are similar in size and appearance, although sepals have prominent, long, dark scent-producing glands, which distinguish C. atroclavia from similar species such as C. fitzgeraldii and C. reticulata.

It's charmingly macabre appearance aside, it is the black-clubbed spider orchid's scent that makes it so deserving of a place in the home garden of anyone who, like the Addams, delights in those things that others would turn their nose at. As it flowers in October it fills air with an intoxicating fragrance that has been described as resembling an overheated electrical motor. Flowers of the black-clubbed spider orchid are generally solitary, growing to 25-35cm tall on a fleshy stem that is covered with long coarse hairs. At the stem's base grow basal leaves blotched irregularly with red-purple. As a terrestrial herb, it prefers well-drained soil comprised of granite-based sand and silt.

You are, however, very unlikely to see this orchid in any garden as it is extremely rare and illegal to collect from the wild. There are only four known populations of the black-clubbed spider orchid, three of which are in Girraween National Park and the other in the Wyberba area in the Darling Downs. It is listed as endangered in Australia and Queensland. There are a number of potential and identified threats to C. atroclavia, which (aside from illegal collection) generally relate to habitat disruption and are not dissimilar to other threatened native species; these include inappropriate fire regimes and weed invasion. Yet the main identified threat to the black-clubbed spider orchid is trampling from the feral pigs that share the shrubby open forests of southern Queensland, even in reserve areas.

Images/References

Banner - Girraween NP wet heath (Paul Donatiu)

Orchid image (Paul Donatiu)

Image at right - View over Girraween NP (John Rice)

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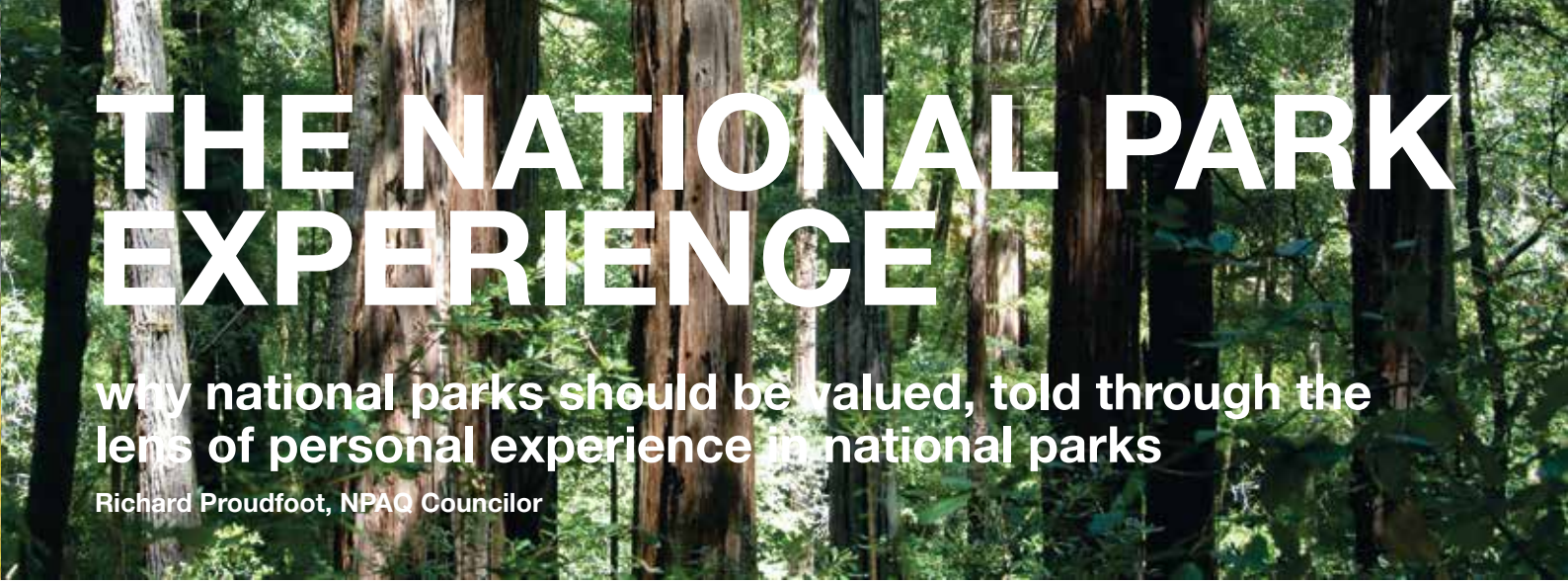


THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

why national parks should be valued, told through the lens of personal experience in national parks

Richard Proudfoot, NPAQ Councilor

Fiona and I have 75 BIGS. Or more precisely, we have in our collection 75 photos of BIGS that we have visited throughout Australia. BIGS were conceived to lure the tourist and over the past 50 years or so they have become part of Australian tourism folklore. The most successful BIGS have a story behind them and they boast a certain degree of kitsch. It's difficult to quantify, but these iconic structures, many built with chicken wire frames covered in colourful paper mâché have probably been responsible for attracting tens of thousands of people to the businesses that they represent. It's all very Australian.

California's Sequoia National Park is home to most of the remaining Californian Redwoods, or sequoias, giant trees belonging to the cypress family. It is estimated that up to 95% of all these trees have been felled since the Spanish first colonised these parts. These trees have been known to live up to 1,800 years or more and are claimed to be the tallest trees on Earth, some reaching 115 metres. The largest giant sequoia, known fondly as General Sherman, has a volume of 1,490 m3, making it the world's current largest known tree. The tourist cannot come away from a visit there without knowing this fact. It's all very American.

But Australians do not have to visit Big Pineapples, Big Bananas or Big Cassowaries or leave the country to see a famous BIG or a famous OLD or a famous TALL. They need to look no further than in the nation's national parks to experience ALL of these.

The famous sequoia may be 1,800 years old but if you visit a national park in Tasmania's Huon Valley, you will encounter the legendary Huon pine, described by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service as reaching ages often in excess of 2,000 years, putting it among the longest-lived organisms on Earth. While there, also experience the giant swamp gums, or Mountain Ash that are reputed to be the tallest flowering plant in the world. One such tree in southern Tasmania is known as the Centurion and is measured at 99.6 metres (Australian cricketer Donald Bradman has a batting average of 99.9 – hence the name).

Space limitations for this article preclude detailed descriptions of many similar wonders in our national parks, but here are a few to savour: Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island and the only place on Earth where tall rainforest grows in sand, can boast Lake McKenzie which has the cleanest (and clearest) water in the world. The national park at Undara is home to one of the longest lava tube cave systems in the world. The Daintree national park is home to the oldest rainforest on the planet. In the Lamington national park can be found the Antarctic Beech, magnificent trees of which some have root systems dated to be 5,000 years old.

Just by visiting Australia's national parks, one can stand alongside living things that were around, albeit as saplings in some cases, at the times of Bach, Shakespeare, Christ, Plato, Tutankhamun and beyond. Or marvel at the sight of some of the tallest plants on earth. Or in the case of the Great Barrier Reef, be immersed in the world's largest living structure. Or see plants and animals that exist nowhere else on the planet. Australia's national parks must surely contain a richness that is immeasurable, a history that is timeless and an experience that is peerless.

We who have already experienced these phenomena must do all we can to ensure that these priceless environments stay protected and uncompromised. Threats from powerful forces will only intensify and none of us ever want to see a future when businesses of the day erect a paper mâché BIG TREE in memory of what used to be.

Pool in Mossman Gorge, Daintree National Park. Banner - giant redwoods in Big Basin Redwoods State Park (both - Paul Donatiu).

WHAT'S ON 25

NPAQ Activities

West Canungra Creek Circuit

Saturday 12th December

Location: Green Mountains section of Lamington National Park

Grading: Medium 13.9 Km

Leader: Tony Parsons - ajpars@bigpond.net.au

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

Come and join in as we follow the West Canungra Creek Circuit from the Information Centre at Green Mountains, passing the iconic Blue Pool, West Canungra Creek, Elabana Falls and Picnic Rock. then back to the Information Centre.

Walk the Bicentennial National Trail - Blackbutt to Killarney section

Wednesday 30th December 2015 for 17 days, pending satisfactory progress

Location: Blackbutt

Grading: Easy - Green, 15 to 30 km / day

Leader: Athol Lester (0408 682 419)

Fee: $2/day - multi day, $5 (members) $10 (non-members) for Single Day

Section Six of the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) 362 km extends from Blackbutt to Killarney on the Qld NSW Border. The trail follows rural roads, station roads and some bush tracks. It was designed as a horse, bicycle and foot route.

As a BNT member Athol plans to walk this section during 17 days in January. Some sections are remote and with limited communication. Accommodation is a tent.

Participants may make arrangements to meet up and walk with Athol for sections.

Register your interest by nominating on the NPAQ website and you will be supplied detailed information.

Please go to Athol's website to obtain more detail www.lestersactivities.com

Champagne Twilight Walk

Sunday 10 January 2016

Location: Yeronga Corso

Grading: Easy

Leader: Jennifer Parker (0403 535 181)

Fee: $8.00 includes Social Happy Hour and NPAQ fee.

To celebrate the New Year in true NPAQ style we offer a riverfront walk including a Social Happy Hour at a timely spot en-route, to toast in the New Year.

Nominations: Close 4th January for catering purposes.

Beach Walk- Fingal Head to Kingscliff and return

Tuesday 26th January 2016

Location: Fingal Head NSW, to Kingscliff and return

Grading: Easy. Approx. 12kms round trip on firm sand

Leader: Dave Jones (0458 473 391)

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

Walk from Fingal Head to Kingscliff for lunch and a swim before retracing our steps back to the cars for the drive home.

Birding at Toorbul Esplanade

Sunday 31st January 2016

Location: The Esplanade, Toorbul

Grading: Easy, all flat walking

Leader: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280)

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

The morning will be spent observing the wader birds along the shoreline and the bird roost. We will be walking some back roads to view bush birds.

Black Canyon Day Walk

Saturday 6th February 2016

Location: Green Mountains, Lamington National Park

Grading: Hard Black Diamond - exploratory around 25km

Leader: Tony Parsons - ajpars@bigpond.net.au

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

We will follow the old track system from the edge of the escarpment to the Saddle camp ground.

We will spend the day looking at some of the largest Beech trees and the Fungi in the area, then make our way back to Green Mountains for a coffee and cake.

For more information, or to register for an activity, please go to our website - **www.npaq.org.au/events**

Upcoming Activities

Birding at Tinchi Tamba Wetland

Sunday 21st February 2016

Location: Tinchi Tamba Wetland Reserve, Bald Hills

Grading: Easy

Leader: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280)

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

Deepwater Bend is the recreation area of Tinchi Tamba Reserve which fronts the Pine River. There is walking tracks, bird hides and numerous water and bush birds can be sighted. Osprey House is on the north shore and Osprey sightings are common.

Social Walk at 7th Brigade Park, Chermside

Wednesday 24th February 2016

Location: 7th Brigade Park, Chermside

Grading: Easy

Leader: Len and Laurelle Lowry

(0428 335 572)

Fee: $5 (members) $10 (non-members)

This walk starts at Kids Space in 7th Brigade Park follows a level pathway beside Downfall Creek. There are two options for this walk, a 3 or 6 kilometre return walk. This area is part of the Mountains to Mangroves Trail and there are some ideal vantage points to spot wildlife. We will delve into the early history of the area as there are some very informative interpretive signs. If you are interested in Army history, we will inspect the displays in the old Sandgate Drill Hall!

Easter Camp

Friday 25th to Monday 28th March 2016

Private property adjacent to Girraween National Park

Grading: Easy to Hard

Leader: Ian Peacock

The campsite, with easy access for tents caravans and campers, is on flat private property. Camping facilities will be basic. Non-potable creek water should be available and can be used for showering etc. Pit toilets will be provided. Evening Happy Hours are planned and a night time camp fire provided.

Activities have been arranged for all members and to suit all fitness levels. These range from long to short walks, flat to hilly tracks, to off track walks. A self-drive tour will be provided for any non-walkers. Bring all your camping requirements, including drinking water.

Arrive from noon Thursday 24th and depart before 10am Tuesday 29th.

May Long Weekend Camp

Saturday 30th April to Monday 2nd May 2016

Border Ranges National Park

Tony Parsons

Come join us for the long weekend in the iconic Border Rangers National Park.

We will stay at Sheep Station Creek campground, and spend the days exploring different sections of the park, and evenings around the campfire socialising and catching up with friends.

We will have the chance to look at Mt Warning from the Pinnacle at sunrise and sunset.

Bring your family and stay for the weekend or come down for a day. It will be enjoyable.

Extended Activity – Central West Qld National Parks

Saturday 27th August to Sunday 4th September 2016

Wendy Bell

This is an opportunity to visit and explore at least six National Parks in the comfort of a 4WD coach and be accommodated, rather than camping. Opportunities for bushwalking, birding, and photography.

For a detailed itinerary, contact Wendy Bell (ph 07 3300 2473).

Basic cost for the tour is $3400 per person, but total depends on the route chosen for Brisbane-Longreach-Brisbane, air or rail, twin share accommodation, etc.

Nominations with $500 per person deposit will be required by 31st January 2016.

Total cost includes all transport, meals, and activity fees.

Calendar Dates

International Mountain Day

11 December

www.un.org/en/events/mountainday/

World Wetlands Day

2 February

www.environment.gov.au/water/wetlands/world-wetlands-day

NPAQ Events

NPAQ Quarterly Members Meeting

Wednesday 20 January 2016

Location: Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens Auditorium at **7.30pm**

Guest speaker Tony O'Brien will discuss the rise of private conservation reserves across Australia.

***Please note new start time of 7:30pm.**

Vale

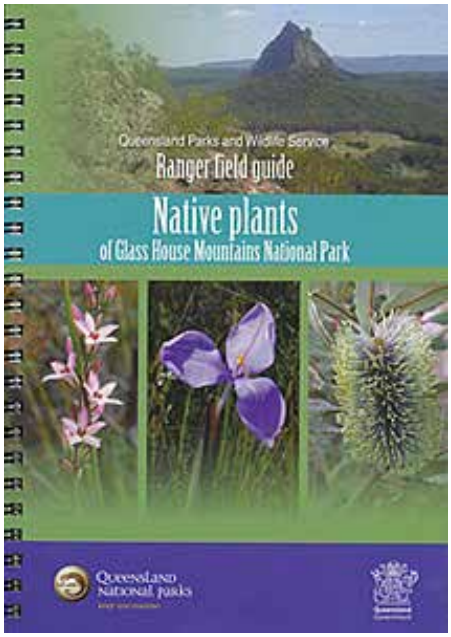
Our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the members below who have recently passed away:

David Phillips
Arend Johan Aarsse
Rodney McElhinney

Book Review

Ranger Field Guide: Native plants of Glass House Mountains National Park

by Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
$22 from QPWS and selected outlets



This Ranger Field Guide has been produced by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to provide rangers and visitors with field identification of plants within the Glass House Mountains National Park.

The guide covers a large sample of plant species that occur in the wetlands, eucalypt forests and montane plant communities of Glass House Mountains National Park. Some of the plants described in the guide occur only on Glass House Mountain peaks or in the forests that surround them, while many other plants are commonly found in the Sunshine Coast lowlands.

The guide is the work of Shelley Novello and Rowena Thomas, who have a combined 36 years' experience as field botanists with QPWS.

To find out where to get a copy, visit: http://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks/glasshouse-mountains/ranger-field-guidenative-plants.html

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Phone 07 3367 0878

Email admin@npaq.org.au

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