

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

Legacy: National Parks Association of Queensland's 90th Anniversary

PLUS

Volunteer conservation groups
Let's talk ecotourism - part II

ALSO FEATURED

Wetland rewind
Ranger profile



Issue 27
Autumn 2020



Contents

From the President	3	The Value of Volunteer Conservation Groups	10
Legacy: NPAQ's 90th Anniversary ...	4	Wetland Rewind	12
90 years of achievements	6	Ranger of the Month	14
Let's Talk Ecotourism - Part II	8	What's On	15

Editor

Marika Strand.

Advertising enquiries

Please email admin@npaq.org.au or phone (07) 3367 0878.

Contributor guidelines

NPAQ invites contributions to *Protected* articles. Please email admin@npaq.org.au for a schedule of future editions.

Contributors, please include contact details and brief personal summary. Articles can be submitted via email or hard copy. Digital photos should be minimum 300dpi.

Advertising policy

Advertisements are required to align with relevant NPAQ policies. NPAQ reserves the right to refuse any advertisement at any time. Advertisement in *Protected* does not imply NPAQ's endorsement of products or services.

Cover image

Historic national park signage. Photo: NPAQ archives.

Copyright and disclaimer

NPAQ retains copyright of *Protected*. Articles may be quoted provided that appropriate acknowledgement occurs in the reproduction and use of material.

Articles in *Protected* do not necessarily reflect NPAQ's opinion or position.

About NPAQ

Our Purpose

The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) promotes the preservation, expansion, good management and presentation of National Parks, and supports nature conservation in Queensland.



Council

President	Graeme Bartrim
Vice President	Yvonne Parsons
Hon Treasurer	Neil Williams
Hon Secretary	Jacqueline Rose'Meyer
Asst Hon Secretary	Debra Marwedel
Councillors	David Ball
	Suzanne Cooper
	Julie Hainsworth
	Colleen Thornton

Staff

Conservation Principal	Laura Hahn
Operations Manager	Marika Strand

Contact details

Office Post	Unit 9/36 Finchley St, Milton QLD PO Box 1040, Milton QLD 4064
Phone	(07) 3367 0878
Web	www.npaq.org.au
Email	admin@npaq.org.au
ABN	60 206 792 095

Want to get involved with NPAQ?

NPAQ welcomes people from all walks of life and offers a variety of ways to be involved:

- Have fun in the bush – come along on a bush walk or other activity
- Get your hands dirty – participate in on-ground conservation efforts
- Join us – become a member
- Step up – become a National Parks Conservation member or a National Parks Protector
- Donate – support our work
- Volunteer on exciting projects
- Subscribe to *Protected* and *Neck of the Woods* via email
- Connect with us – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Stay in touch – read regular updates on our website
- Share a bush adventure with children – download NPAQ's *Kids in National Parks* guide



Connect and Protect

SUPPORT NPAQ AND HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE
BECOME A MEMBER, DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

www.npaq.org.au/get-involved

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Graeme Bartrim
President, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Protected.

We live in challenging times and I wish you and your families well during the coronavirus pandemic. Like so many, we have had to make major adjustments in response to the consequences of the virus and community precautions. Unfortunately our 90th birthday celebrations and parks campaign, for which much work had been done, have been cancelled. The contributions of all is much appreciated.

In this edition you can read about the Association over the past 90 years, the importance of volunteer conservation groups, ecotourism debate, wetlands research and more.

It is a privilege to be part of a not for profit that has been continuously active for nine decades. This has been achieved by people of passion and goodwill who have given generously to a simple cause: aiming for Queensland to have representative and well managed national parks.

Common association themes over the 90 years have been the recognition of the value of nature in its own right and its value to us human beings. It is gratifying to see the present Council enthusiastic about the Association being active and successful for the next 90 years.

Much has changed in the last 90 years and it is accepted that the rate of future change is likely to be faster. There are a few obvious differences for an Association born in last century's depression compared to now:

- For some decades (except for some of World War II) NPAQ was one

of the few advocacy groups in the "environmental" arena - this made it easier to broadcast messages. Now there are a plethora of groups consisting of well-meaning people all competing for funding and advocating for specific and often similar causes.

- Queensland was a large state with much unallocated land. Now the state is occupied by tenures and rights often overlapping which makes land use change administratively difficult and sometimes expensive and contentious. In 1938 Queensland's population was around 1 million, now it is over 5 million.

- Over the 90 years a large number of the State's plants and animals have become threatened because of clearing and the spread of feral animals and weeds.

- There was very little legislation specific to parks and biodiversity conservation. Now there is a mountain of related legislation, regulations and policies that an athletic lawyer may have trouble jumping over. It almost seems that as the number of pages of legislation grow, it is inversely proportional to the quality of our environment. In this year of a review of the *EPBC Act* it is worth considering - does our legislation prioritise the environment or enable continued development whilst considering the environment?

- We are awash with information and opinions. Compared to the occasional telegraph or phone call, books and direct conversation, we now have instant access to great volumes of information and views. Opinions can override facts and unfortunately social

discourse can become nasty. Tom Nichols in his book "The Death of Expertise" examines this phenomenon.

- The scientific knowledge on our plants and animals and how best to ensure their ongoing presence is well developed (compared to decades ago) and land management techniques are well established.

- The community recognises the value of national parks (in the past it was a few visionaries) and it is generally accepted that it wants more. There are many voluntary hours spent rehabilitating land, removing weeds and caring for wildlife. There is good reason to be optimistic about a growing interest in care for our natural world.

The Association's work is far from done, yet to be successful going forward it needs to adapt to change and be constantly asking how we use our resources to best effect.

References

Nichols, Tom. *The Death of Expertise*. Oxford University Press, 2017.



Above: Lamington National Park. **Banner:** Early NPAQ trip to Hinchinbrook Island. Photos: NPAQ archives.

LEGACY: NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND 90TH ANNIVERSARY

Graeme Bartrim, President, and Laura Hahn, Conservation Principal, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) has been active in increasing Queensland's National Park Estate and seeking management of threats for 90 years.

Romeo Lahey looms large in the establishment and early years of the Association. Lahey recognised that "no body of public opinion was organised to combat the influences which were operating against the best interests of national parks". Discussions with like-minded people led to the official formation of NPAQ at the (just constructed) Brisbane City Hall on the 15th of April 1930.

It was a powerful group, with Governor Sir John Goodwin as patron, Romeo Lahey as President, Archbishop James Duhig and Professor E. J. Goddard as Vice Presidents, Arthur Groom as

Secretary and George H. Barker as Treasurer. From the outset, all positions were honorary.

The Association's objects throughout time can be summarised as: to advocate the preservation of existing parks and the reservation of all other suitable areas, educate public opinion, form a link between the public and the parks administration, co-operate with other organisations with similar objects and assist in enforcing national park protective regulations.

To enable the public to visit and learn from nature, Romeo Lahey and Arthur Groom established Binna Burra Lodge in 1932. The connection between the Lodge and the Association remained strong and is destined to continue into the future as the Lodge undergoes reconstruction after devastating bushfires late last year.

It is of sombre note the Association recessed during World War II, with many officers and members joining the armed forces.

Before and during the war, NPAQ opposed attempts to cut timber in national parks. In the late 1940s the Government decreed that no timber would be cut in Queensland national parks. NPAQ was also instrumental in preventing damage to Lamington National Park and Fairfax Island National Park (now part of the Capricornia Cays National Park) as a result of military training exercises.

In 1948, the Association called a meeting attended by some 700 people, from many clubs and associations, to protest a proposal for a hotel and road near Mt Wanungara. The proposal did not proceed. It

is prescient that in NPAQ's 1948 Annual Report it is stated that "... national parks... must be available to the people and means for their accommodation must be provided, but the right place for this is on their outskirts ...". This NPAQ position continues to be communicated to government.

The first NPA News was produced in December 1953 and continues today in two forms, *Neck of the Woods* email bulletin and *Protected Magazine*. The magazine provides educational and information articles about issues related to national parks and provides enjoyment to NPAQ members and supporters, as well as being highly regarded by government and rangers.

The Association has a long history of campaigning for declaration of new areas and protection of existing national parks. Even at the age of 70, in 1957, Lahey commenced a campaign resulting in the (now) Daintree National Park. Typically, NPAQ campaigns are quiet, behind the scenes, with NPAQ working in collaboration with the government, wherever possible. Unfortunately, not all NPAQ campaigns have succeeded. Despite wide-spread public opposition, Hayman Island was removed from the National Park Estate allowing a major airline and tourist company (now defunct) full possession in 1961.

The Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service¹ was formed out of the Forestry Department in 1975, the same year an interpretive centre was established at Girraween following NPAQ's suggestion. In 1986, the Association successfully



Above: NPAQ founders Romeo Lahey (left) and Arthur Groom. **Banner:** Early NPAQ trip to Hinchinbrook Island. Photos: NPAQ archives.

PARKS QUEENSLAND'S

campaign against the revocation of parts of Lindeman Island National Park; however, was unsuccessful in preventing the lease over national park land for a golf course. The recent 2017 campaign to avoid further revocations was successful.

The Association's 60th year was launched in 1990 by the Hon. Pat Comben who provided great political leadership in extending the park estate. The anniversary was also marked by NPAQ adopting the Boombana Revegetation project starting in earnest under the stewardship of Ruth Read and Ken Sandercoe. It has continued steadily ever since, now under the leadership of Angus McElnea, expanding to Jolly's Lookout and hopefully beyond, into the future.

Throughout NPAQ's nine decades, the Association has looked out for the well-being of Queensland's National Park Estate and the public's interests. Leon Misfeld, writing on the occasion of the 70th anniversary, said "the price of conservation is eternal vigilance."

Achievements come in varying sizes and from many people. To name but a few, Undara Volcanic National Park was declared in 1992 in no small part thanks to the tireless work over many years of Norm Traves, who was NPAQ president at the time. Sarabah National Park, Queensland's smallest park at a modest 1.416 ha, was gifted to the State by an NPAQ member, Agnes Curtis. In contrast, the largest increase to the Estate came in 1967 when Munga-Thirri National Park (then the Simpson Desert National Park) was declared raising the area from under 1 million to over 2 million acres.

The August 1980 the NPA News

50th anniversary 1930-1980 edition stated that 2.3 of the 2.6 million acres (about 1 million hectares) of national parks secured were in recommended areas submitted by NPAQ which was almost 90% of the first million hectares declared. Early parks proposed by NPAQ include:

- Springbrook NP
- Girringun NP
- Glass House Mountains NP
- Obi Obi NP
- Wooroonooran NP
- Main Range NP²
- Tully Falls NP
- Chillagoe-Mungana Caves NP
- Eungella NP
- Hinchinbrook Island NP
- Girraween NP
- Cooloolo NP
- Great Sandy NP³
- Munga-Thirri NP⁴

It is good to note that from the beginning NPAQ has urged use of Indigenous naming rather than any person's name for national parks in Queensland.

NPAQ's recent 2019 Yabba National Park Links Proposal has, we believe, strong government support. We now eagerly await the Queensland Protected Area Strategy but are concerned it will not be adequate to address the Queensland government's 2015 commitment to establish a 'world-class protected area network'.

An association's strength is closely linked to the continued efforts of active volunteers and donors. NPAQ's

volunteers have made the Association thrive and affect change over nine decades. Every volunteer brings unique experience, skills, perspective and energy and offers countless hours.

Our current office bearers and the many who came before them have guided NPAQ's outstanding legacy.

Volunteers give their time generously to guide activities, organise outings, regenerate bushland, survey potential park areas, prepare proposals, serve on committees, host stalls, raise funds, review management plans, make submissions (on policy and legislation), provide evidence (at official enquiries), supply photos, write articles, post on social media, help with mail outs, support events, donate and make bequests. Many members say NPAQ has been central to their lives. And we are grateful to each and every one and hope they get as much out of NPAQ as they put in.

Footnotes

¹ Now Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

² Then Cunningham's Gap National Park.

³ Then Fraser Island National Park.

⁴ Then Simpson Desert National Park.

Consider making a 90th Anniversary donation to ensure the Association stays strong and influential well into the future.

You can donate at www.npaq.org.au/donate or by calling (07) 3367 0878.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NATIONAL PARKS OVER NPAQ'S 90 YEARS

A timeline of achievements, happenings, and anecdotes

1870-1929 (PRE-NPAQ)

- 1872 Yellowstone National Park – World's first National Park
- 1879 The National Park declared under *The Land Act 1897* (now Royal National Park), Australia's first National Park
- 1900 Barron Falls earliest Queensland reserve (*The Land Act 1897*)
- 1906 *The State Forest & National Parks Act 1906* (Qld) – first Australian legislation (and possibly world) for legislation for declaration/management of national parks
- 1908 First Queensland national park declared under *The State Forests and National Parks Act 1906* (Qld) - Witches Falls NP (Tamborine Mountain)
- 1915 Lamington NP declared (Romeo Lahey instrumental in park declaration and pioneering standards for walking track system)
- 1920s (late) Rucksacks came into common use

1930s

- 15 April 1930 NPAQ established; Qld Governor NPAQ patron
- 1930 NPAQ proposed a NP to include Glasshouse Mountain Peaks
- 1930 Qld NPs area just over 161,000 acres (~65,000ha)
- 1932 Romeo Lahey and Arthur Groom established Binna Burra Lodge to connect people with nature
- 1937 First financial allocation for NPs in government budget

- June 1939 NPAQ members 295; NPAQ account balance £ 7/6/0

1940s

- NPAQ recessed during WWII
- Jan 1948 multi club protest meeting over hotel and road near Mt Wanungara
- 1947 Mt Barney NP, Mt Lindesay NP gazetted
- 1949 Noosa NP officially opened
- Late 1940s Government formally decreed there would be no logging in Qld national parks

1950s

- 1950 NPAQ membership 500
- 1951 NPAQ Extended outing to North Qld
- 1952 Mt Aberdeen NP
- 1952 First NPA calendar
- 1953 First NPA News
- 1954 Magnetic Island NP, Glasshouse Mountains NP, Cunningham's Gap Extension (now Main Range NP)
- 1957 Mt Edwards (now Moogerah NP)
- 1957 At age of 70, Romeo Lahey commenced campaign which resulted in the declaration of the Daintree NP
- 1958 Queensland's National Park Estate ~ 340,000 ha (0.2% of state)
- 1959 *Forestry Act 1959* (Qld) – included the cardinal principle

1960s

- 1961 Hayman Island - unsuccessful campaign against revocation of entire island for airline (now defunct) and tourism

company

- 1962 Queensland's National Park Estate ~375,000 ha
- 1963 Wallaman Falls; Mossman Gorge
- 1966 Simpson Desert NP (now Munga-Thirri) 1,248,000 acres (505,000 Ha)
- NPAQ membership 838

1970s

- 1971 First NPAQ overseas extended outing – 36 members, 3 weeks in New Zealand
- 1972 NP Estate Area > 2.5 million acres (1 million ha)
- 1974 NPAQ membership 1000
- 1975 *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975* (Qld) proclaimed

PRESIDENTS OF NPAQ

- 1930 - 1961 Romeo Lahey
- 1961 - 1967 Edgar Kemp
- 1967 - 1970 Lionel Simpson
- 1970 - 1977 Clif Bell
- 1977 - 1980 G. Horwood Cossins
- 1980 - 1983 Brian Egan
- 1983 - 1986 George Haddock
- 1986 - 1990 Brian Egan
- 1990 - 1996 Norm Traves
- 1996 - 2001 John de Home
- 2001 - 2005 Rob Hitchcock
- 2005 - 2008 John Bristow
- 2008 - 2013 Tony O'Brien
- 2013 - 2017 Michelle Prior
- 2017 - Graeme Bartrim



- 1975 National Parks Australia Council established (NPAQ a member)
- 1975 Cooloolo NP gazetted 23,030 ha, 16 years after NPAQ recommendation
- 1975 NPAQ Special projects funds
- 1975 QPWS established (then QNPWS); Queensland's National Park Estate ~ 1,128,000 ha
- 1977 Regular day walks began – 96 people to Mt Glorious
- 1978 First Interpretive Centre in NP (suggested by NPAQ in 1972)
- 1979 NPAQ began commenting on park management plans

1980s

- 1980 50th Anniversary Celebration at Cunningham's Gap; Supported large increase in NSW Bald Rock NP
- 1981 NPAQ colour slide library established
- 1981 NPAQ membership peaked at 1344
- 1986 NPAQ incorporated
- 1986 Lindeman Island National Park – successfully fought revocation but unsuccessful in preventing golf course lease
- 1988 North Qld Wet Tropics

MAJOR BEQUESTS

- 1992 Caroline Pender
- 1993 Marianne Florence Murray
- 2009 Frederic Kemp
- 2009 James Cuthbertson
- 2016 Susan Mary (Molly) Blake
- 2018 Norman Traves

rainforest listed as World Heritage area; Queensland's National Park Estate ~3.5 million ha (~2% of state).

1990s

- 1990 60th Anniversary Year launched by Hon Pat Comben at Jolly's Lookout; Boombana Revegetation Project; NPAQ membership 1110; *History of Lamington National Park* by J Keith Jarrot published by NPAQ
- 1991 Purchased office at Milton with bequest, donations and fundraising
- 1992 *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Qld) passed by parliament; Qld National Park Estate 5 million ha; Fraser Island (Great Sandy National Park) inscribed on World Heritage List
- 1998 NPAQ Bird Group established

2000s

- NPAQ membership 1058
- Part time Executive Coordinator appointed
- Increasing number of park management plans and discussion papers
- 2007 Queensland's Protected Area Estate ~ 8 million ha (4.6% of state)

2010s

- 2013 grazing/tourism resorts in national parks – cardinal principle overridden by provision for recreational/tourism uses, removed mandatory management planning and downgraded consultation
- 2013 NPAQ successful

campaign preventing extension of stock grazing in NPs; NPAQ's first female president

- 2014 Tracking of wider NPAQ member and supporter base 2,061; Qld NP Estate 8.75 million ha (over 5% of the State)
- 2016 Helped restore the cardinal principle, mandatory management planning and consultation
- 2017 NPAQ member and supporter base 5,380
- 2017-2018 *Kids in National Parks* booklets for SEQ and Tropical North Qld
- 2018 NPAQ successful campaign against revocation of part of Lindeman NP; Protected Area Alliance - 23 eNGOs; Cuthbertson Grant established
- 2019 Yabba Links National Park Proposal

2020s

- Seeking recovery resourcing for post-fire weed and pest management
- Seeking adequate funding for urgently needed Queensland Protected Area Strategy
- Seeking declaration of Yabba Links National Park by 2021 ~20,000 ha
- Seeking transition of native state forests - 2000 South East Queensland Forestry Agreement
- Seeking national parks to be listed as a Matter of National Environmental Significance
- April 2020 – NPAQ 90th Anniversary
- 2020 NPAQ member and supporter reach over 8,000

LET'S TALK ECOTOURISM

In October last year, NPAQ organised a seminar in Brisbane to discuss an important issue: the pros and cons of ecotourism in national parks.

In the last edition we caught up with two of the speakers and now we present the views of the other two speakers to get their perspectives in more detail.

David Edwards is the Projects Chief Executive at the Queensland Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development

What is your view on ecotourism infrastructure in national parks?

I'm very supportive of ecotourism infrastructure and adventure and nature-based tourism experiences in national parks as long as it's delivered responsibly and sustainably. I've travelled around New Zealand and Tasmania to look at best-practice and there are great examples of government, the private sector and local communities working together to create and showcase unique ecotourism experiences.

This is the approach we're taking with the Queensland Ecotourism Trails program which focuses on three key pillars: protecting culture, preserving and presenting natural assets and future-proofing regional communities. For a proposal to be considered however, it must be delivered and operated in accordance with strict environmental legislation, regulations and frameworks. Any facilities in parks must be located, designed and managed sensitively and sustainably to ensure compatibility with the area's natural and cultural values.

Do you see ecotourism ventures as likely to benefit the ecological values of national parks?

Of course. By better presenting, protecting and promoting the ecological values of national parks, we'll be able to better support the conservation of these areas. Using a collaborative model with Governments, Traditional Owners, local communities and the private sector, we'll create genuine ecotourism experiences and unlock new income streams for the preservation and management of parks.

As always, a balanced approach between sustainable development and conservation is essential. Ecotourism operations in parks will

only be permitted where there is a clear understanding of how the park functions as an ecosystem, and where it can be shown that the sites' cultural and heritage values can be conserved.

It's been fantastic to see Traditional Owners on country offering knowledge and skills to help with the parks' protection. Through the collaborative approach we have established, we are all gaining a far better understanding of Traditional Owners' special cultural places and the strong linkages there are between cultural heritage and biodiversity.



Above: Lamington National Park. Photo: Chris Fuller. **Banner:** NPAQ Ecotourism Seminar, October 2019. Photo: Kalam McTaggart.

SM - PART II



Ralf Buckley is the International Chair in Ecotourism Research (Emeritus) at Griffith University. Here is what he had to say.

Queensland escaped the 2019/20 summer bushfire season comparatively unscathed. NSW did not. Immediately following the fires in NSW national parks, tourism enterprises throughout much of regional NSW reported 60% loss of business. The roads were open, the tourism facilities intact, but the attractions – views, vegetation and wildlife – were less attractive.

Effectively, the fires created a giant natural experiment, showing that parks support tourism outside their boundaries. This is not new: “benefits beyond boundaries” is a long-established concept in parks economics. It was a very practical demonstration for the regional tourism industry, however, just how much their routine customer base is connected to park visitation.

To reiterate: the tourism industry makes much more money from large numbers of people traveling to visit public national parks cheaply or free, than from exclusive private tourism operations inside the parks themselves. Much more. And via businesses that already exist. If governments want to boost tourism, they should increase parks agency budgets directly.

Private tourism businesses inside parks sell exclusivity. This discourages public visitation to those areas. That reduces total visitor numbers, which reduces client numbers for tourism businesses outside the parks. Private tourism developments inside parks thus decrease the total economic contribution of parks to the tourism

sector.

The Queensland Ecotourism Trails (QET) strategy adopts approaches attempted in the 1990s, when tourism lobbyists pushed the language of “partnership”, to persuade parks agencies to grant them preferential development rights. This is why QET is driven by QDITID, not QDES.

Over the past 30 years, parks agencies worldwide have tested a wide variety of arrangements with private tourism entrepreneurs, summarized at the NPAQ seminar. This global practical experience shows that with few exceptions, these approaches have created environmental impacts, social inequities, and economic costs, for taxpayer-funded national parks.

There are a few private tourism companies worldwide, that do contribute to conservation. They do so, however, under very different arrangements from those proposed under the QET. QET could adopt the most successful features of each. But it does not: rather the reverse.

It is now 2020. The world has recognized that people need nature not only for ecosystem services, but to maintain individual mental health. Human societies are increasingly busy and urbanized, with less exposure to nature, and higher costs of poor mental health. For immediate human health as well as long-term biodiversity conservation, we need more parks, better protected, and more accessible.

Low-impact tracks and trails, lookouts and toilets, signs and campsites all contribute to this goal; but only if they are equally and cheaply available to all park visitors. Privately owned and preferentially

accessible tourist facilities and infrastructure inside parks, as proposed in the QET, detract from this goal.

Currently, track maintenance in national parks in Queensland focuses heavily on sections immediately adjacent to car parks, because of concerns over potential liability for poorly prepared and inexperienced tourists. There are many older tracks and trails that are completely abandoned. They are no longer shown on parks maps, and only bushwalking clubs and local residents know that they exist.

Lamington National Park, an internationally famous World Heritage area close to Queensland’s largest population centres, provides a prime example. There are many abandoned trails, well constructed 80 years ago, with stone steps and supporting walls that still survive in places. Even thirty years ago, these tracks were still in reasonable condition, and used regularly by international tourists as well as locals. Now, however, they are tumbledown and overgrown, hard to find and slow to traverse.

If Queensland is serious about an economic boost to tourism through trails in parks, then restoring existing trails should be the top priority. More trails means more visitors, and more visitors bring more tourist expenditure along access roads and gateway towns. That means a substantial boost in the Queensland Parks budget, for trail maintenance and repair specifically.

But perhaps the real issue was well stated many years ago by cartoonist Patrick Cook, in regard to government funding of railway tracks: “Both ends must be in marginal electorates.”

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER CONSERVATION GROUPS

Len Lowry

Coordinator, Friends of Tamborine National Park, & Member, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

We are fortunate in Australia to have some of the oldest and largest subtropical rainforest left on the planet. This has been achieved by the foresight of some of our pioneers who recognised the value of these special places that were, in some cases, being exploited for their timber, minerals and agricultural resources. The reservation and preservation of these areas goes back to the formation of the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ).

On Brisbane's doorstep we are fortunate to have some iconic national parks in Lamington, Main Range, D'Aguilar, Fraser Island and Tamborine National Parks. While I have visited many national parks in Australia and overseas, I have a close affinity with Tamborine National Park.

This Park occupies part of the Tamborine Mountain Plateau which is part of the northern spur of the McPherson Range. Tamborine has rich volcanic soils and basalt rock outcrops which are a legacy of being on the outer rim of the Mount Warning shield volcano.

European settlement of the Tamborine Mountain Plateau started in 1875 when some of the plateau was cleared for dairying and fruit and vegetable farming. Fortunately some of these early pioneering families donated land to be included in the national park.

For me, Tamborine Mountain was a place to escape the city and take up bushwalking. Later it was a natural wonderland to take a young family to find strange insects and, if we were quiet, creep up on a land mullet or a sleepy carpet python.

Tamborine National Park has an area of 11.6 square kilometres and is made up of 14 parcels of land that are not contiguous. This is somewhat of a disadvantage as our native animals do not have the corridors to move from one parcel to another to feed and breed. In some cases the Scenic Rim Regional Council reserves and private land has stands of subtropical rainforest which adjoins the national parkland and provides these corridors.

In March 1988 a meeting was convened at the local information

centre to gauge interest in starting a volunteer group to support the local national park rangers. The activities being proposed were eradicating weed species, track maintenance, plant propagation, revegetation of degraded areas and general maintenance such as painting. It was from this meeting that the Friends of Tamborine National Park (FoTNP) was formed.

My involvement started when my elder daughter showed an interest in becoming a park ranger. A parent's involvement has led to a 32 year commitment to improving the national park and giving others the opportunity to get a hands-on experience in what could be their future career.

The FoTNP was one of the first national park volunteer groups to be formed in Queensland. There are over 60 other volunteer groups working in Queensland's national parks and these can be found at <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/park-volunteers/>

The FoTNP has 12 plots in the National Park where we work. After weed species have been removed,



Above: Volunteers involved in revegetation work on Tamborine National Park. **Banner:** Some of the many volunteers of the Friends of Tamborine National Park. Photos: Len Lowry.

TEER PS



subtropical rainforest species from the group's propagation nursery are planted.

An example one of the plots is in a 3.7 hectare parcel of land which was donated by Kath Dobbie and added to Tamborine National Park in 1978 and is known as Pirralilla Section. Part of the parcel had remnant rainforest and a plant survey found it to contain a high concentration of Marbled baloghia (*Baloghia marmorata*) which is vulnerable and confined to isolated areas from Lismore to Gympie and on Tamborine Mountain.

The Pirralilla Section was originally used as a flower farm and at the time it was gifted to the National Park, was partly covered in kikuyu grass and lantana along with all the usual abandoned farm equipment.

In 1995 some of the lantana was cleared by machine but most of the work has been done by hand by the FoTNP volunteers. A broad selection of subtropical rainforest plant species endemic to Tamborine Mountain were planted over a 12 year period.

This area is now completely covered in a well-established rainforest and is a wonderful example of what a committed volunteer group can achieve. Eastern whipbirds, green catbirds and the Australian brush-

turkey have given the regenerated plot their stamp of approval.

A project to attract the Richmond birdwing butterfly (*Ornithoptera richmondia*) to the Pirralilla Section commenced with the planting of Richmond birdwing vines (*Parastolochia praevenosa*), the food source for the larvae of this butterfly species. Due to clearing of rainforest areas in south east Queensland and the migratory habits of this beautiful butterfly, the natural breeding cycle had been severely affected. Planting of the Richmond birdwing vines around the perimeter of the revegetated area was undertaken. After several years' growth, the mature vines in Pirralilla Section now attract this butterfly and the breeding cycle begins.

Nature does require a helping hand, and although the rich volcanic soils promote the growth of the planted trees, the perching birds bring in seed species such as privet, wild tobacco, ochna, climbing asparagus, Chinese celtis - to name a few. Ongoing maintenance is required in the planted areas and in the mature rainforest to keep the weed species at bay.

All this work requires volunteers, and a steady stream of new recruits join the FoTNP group for varying reasons.

Some young people join because they are interested in or are studying for conservation, land management or horticulture certificates or degrees at local universities or undertaking study by correspondence. Some courses require students to undertake practical work in this field. Others join for the camaraderie and social networking the group provides and to contribute to a cause that is dear to their heart. A volunteer soon learns it is easier to protect an existing stand of rainforest than to create one from planting tube stock.

Reporting to the local base of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is an important part of the responsibilities for the group in order to advise of fallen trees and work that needs to be undertaken on the tracks by the ranger crews. QPWS provides all training, equipment and materials that the group requires for its operations.

The question that is often asked: Why do we do it? There is a certain amount of satisfaction in seeing a degraded area being replaced with a natural environment where animals can breed and survive. Isn't that what our pioneers wanted when they gifted areas of their land to be protected in its natural state?



Above: (L of R): Volunteers involved in revegetation work on Tamborine National Park; Richmond birdwing butterfly in the Pirralilla section; propagation nursery plants. Photos: Len Lowry.

WETLAND REWIND:

Learning from the Past at Sanamere Lagoon, Cape York Peninsula

Emma Rehn and Maria Rivera Araya

PhD candidates, ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage, James Cook University

Studying past environments (palaeoenvironments) gives us a better understanding of how currently protected areas have (or haven't) changed over thousands of years. Natural archives, such as lakes, capture this environmental information; sediments incorporating microfossils such as pollen, charcoal and other plant matter blown or washed into the water slowly build up and are preserved in layers at the bottom of the lake. Palaeoenvironmental sciences provide insights into interactions between fire, climate, humans and vegetation over timescales beyond the observational record, which in Australia covers approximately the last century.

Sanamere Lagoon located alongside the Jardine River National Park is one such natural archive, recording over 32 thousand years of environmental conditions. The site is within the Jardine River wetlands, part of the lands of the Angkamuthi people (AIATSIS 2020). Sanamere Lagoon today is a large, shallow lake fringed by sedges that also extend in shallow bands across the lagoon. The water

and sedges are surrounded by dwarf heathland, a vegetation type containing numerous endemic plants (e.g. *Nepenthes* pitcher plants, *Grevillea*, and *Banksia*) and threatened by inappropriate fire regimes (Keith et al. 2014, p.288). Appropriate use of fire for biodiversity conservation is a key management issue for this environment (Department of the Environment & Energy 2017).

Wetland Rewind

Sanamere Lagoon formed approximately 32 thousand years ago. At this time, Papua New Guinea and Tasmania were still connected to the Australian mainland (Reeves et al. 2013) creating one large land mass. Our team, led by Professor Michael Bird of James Cook University and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (<https://epicaustralia.org.au>), sampled this natural archive and reconstructed its environmental history.

Sanamere Lagoon has been permanently wet since it formed. None of the sediments in the two metres collected from the centre of the site show drying or erosion damage. An increase in rainfall occurred at the site around 14 thousand years ago, suggesting the activation of modern monsoon conditions consistent with the findings of other studies in northern and western Australia (see Reeves et al. 2013, p.102, 105).

The dwarf heathland vegetation around the lagoon today became more dominant around eight thousand years ago. Before this period, sedges were the main vegetation type around the site. Sanamere Lagoon itself likely expanded and deepened at this time, with less sediment reaching the middle of the lake. This occurred at

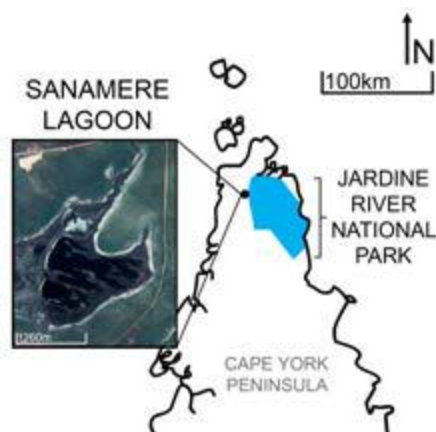


Above: Sampling a sediment core on site. **Banner:** Dwarf heathland vegetation surrounding Sanamere Lagoon. Photos: Emma Rehn and Maria Rivera Araya.

lakes across Cape York Peninsula as conditions became increasingly wet throughout the region (Luly et al. 2006). The land bridge between Cape York Peninsula and Papua New Guinea was also flooded by rising sea levels around this time (Reeves et al. 2013).

Charcoal throughout the record shows the persistent presence of fire in the dwarf heathland ecosystem, often at high intensities. Burned sedges also appear throughout the record, demonstrating that conditions were periodically dry enough for these usually waterlogged plant types to burn. Very fine particles of burned grass also hint at fires in the grassy open woodland beyond the heathland, burning at different times to fires within the heathland around the lake. The ignition source of these fires is difficult to determine, but may reflect both human- and climate-driven fires, and likely includes some degree of Indigenous fire management.

Approximately four thousand years ago of sediments are missing from the most recent part of the record, with a sudden jump in the archive to around 170 years ago. These lost sediments were probably pushed to the edges of the lagoon or swept into



Above: Location map of Sanamere Lagoon and Jardine River National Park (inset after Google Earth 2020).



the nearby Jardine River by one or more severe storm events, such as tropical cyclones. The last of these storm events to affect Sanamere Lagoon occurred over 170 years ago, as sediments have resumed accumulating since that time.

Learning from the Past

The water permanency of Sanamere Lagoon and persistence of heathland vegetation over thousands of years indicates stability of the site and associated ecosystems. This includes during previous phases of both higher and lower rainfall, and overall long



Above: Collecting sediment cores. Photos: C. Rowe.

term monsoonal climate transitions. However, careful management is required to maintain stability, to conserve wetlands and heathlands into the future and to protect these environments from threats caused directly and indirectly by humans. These threats include land clearance, changing fire regimes, invasive plants and climate change (Keith et al. 2014, p.298-304).

The long term occurrence of high intensity fires in the Sanamere Lagoon heathland tells us that hot fires are a key component of this environmental system; this is supported by modern studies demonstrating that heathland plants require infrequent, hot fires for regeneration (Crowley 1995, p.18; Keith et al. 2014, p.299). Fire also plays an important role in nutrient cycling in these characteristically low nutrient environments (Crowley 1995, p.8; Keith et al. 2014). Maintaining a regime of hot fires at intermediate to long intervals is critical to conserving the heathlands of Cape

References

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS] 2020, *AUSTRALANG - Y7: Angkamuthi*, viewed 5 February 2020, <<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/y7>>.

Crowley, GM 1995, *Fire on Cape York Peninsula*, Cape York Peninsula Land Use Strategy Program, Office of the Coordinator General of Queensland, Brisbane, and Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories, Canberra.

Department of the Environment and Energy 2017, *NVIS Fact Sheet MVG 18 - Heathlands*, Commonwealth of Australia, viewed 5 February 2020, <<https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/2edcda80-d9b7-49d4-9e97-36236b91e9f9/files/mvg18-nvis-heathlands.pdf>>.

Google Earth 2020, *Sanamere Lagoon, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, 11°07'19"S,*

York Peninsula, and more research is required in heathland environments to determine ideal fire return intervals and patchiness to achieve the best biodiversity outcomes (Keith et al. 2014, p.305).

Sanamere Lagoon stores 32 thousand years of environmental history of the wetlands and unique heathlands of Cape York Peninsula. Deliberate management, including of fire regimes, is required to avoid the disappearance of heathlands, as these landscapes can be susceptible to invasion by exotic weeds and degradation by other demands of land use (see Keith et al. 2014, p.298-304).

Sanamere Lagoon gives us a glimpse into the extensive environmental history of our important wetlands. To understand and conserve these environments long-term we need to expand our awareness to include a deep time perspective, learning from the past to create a stronger future.

142°21'32"E elevation 16m, viewed 10 February 2020, <<https://www.google.com/earth/index.html>>.

Keith, D et al. 2014, 'Heathlands', in D. Lindenmayer et al. (eds), *Biodiversity and Environmental Change: Monitoring, Challenges and Direction*, CSIRO Publishing, Victoria.

Luly, JG, Grindrod, JF & Penny, D 2006, 'Holocene palaeoenvironments and change at Three-Quarter Mile Lake, Silver Plains Station, Cape York Peninsula, Australia', *The Holocene*, vol. 16, no. 8, pp. 1085-1094.

Pearson, S et al. 2015, 'Increasing the understanding and use of natural archives of ecosystem services, resilience and thresholds to improve policy, science and practice', *The Holocene*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 366-378.

Reeves, JM et al. 2013, 'Palaeoenvironmental change in tropical Australasia over the last 30,000 years - A synthesis by the OZ-INTIMATE group', *Quaternary Science Reviews*, vol. 74, pp. 97-114.

RANGER SPOTLIGHT

Insights into the diverse backgrounds and day-to-day activities of Queensland's park rangers

Rob Miller
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Rob Miller is Ranger-in-Charge based in Mareeba on the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland. Initially his goal was to become a Forest Ranger so he attended Gatton Agricultural College and obtained an Associate Diploma in Forestry. Rob worked in forest management for Queensland Forestry from 1994 until 2002. Then a restructure saw many of the state forests and forests reserves that Rob was managing move across to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Rob, along with many other forestry staff, also made the move. It was not an easy transition but one he realized was necessary and, in retrospect, very much welcomed.

Why did you decide to become a Ranger?

I decided to become a Ranger for the reason most of us do and that is to work outside, make a positive impact on the natural world, and learn and do some cool stuff.

How long have you worked in national parks?

From 2002 to the present.

Which parks have you worked in?

I have worked mainly around the Atherton Tableland and Wet Tropics districts in North Queensland, on parks and forests including Davies Creek, Dinden, Danbulla, Kuranda, and Hann Tableland. I've also worked on other parks in the Wet Tropics such as Mount Windsor, Mount Lewis and Wooroonooran. Over the last five years we've seen some new acquisitions come to the Dry Tropics such as Wairuna, Littleton and Rungulla. I've spent some time at these parks and enjoyed the varied



Above: QPWS Ranger Rob Miller in Dinden National Park. **Banner:** View from Kahpahlim Rock, Dinden National Park. Photos: Queensland Government.

and interesting work they have to offer.

What is your most memorable moment?

There are so many and varied memorable moments, from aerial burning in eastern Cape York Peninsula and seeing the hoop pine emergents of the rainforests of the McIlwraith Range (Kulla NP) from the air, to coming across an illegal mobile methamphetamine (ice) lab in production on a road in Dinden NP. Both experiences have left vivid memories, which I'll never forget!

Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?

As a Park Ranger the thing I get the most consistent pleasure from is walking cross-country in parks and forests that are managed well for fire and pests, where not too much is out of place. These parks and forests are such a pleasure to walk and work in! As a citizen, my favourite experience is getting out on trails and tracks that I've not seen or been on for a long time, and discovering new little

treasures such as huge trees or out-of-the-way waterfalls.

What is the best part about working in a National Park?

The best thing is the opportunity to be inquisitive about the natural environment—learning about, and from, nature, while presenting the park or forest to the community who enjoy the area you help manage.

What is your top tip for visitors to parks for bushwalking?

Do some homework on where you're walking, such as distance, topography and vegetation type. Phone the rangers or local bushwalking club to ask about highlights before going and always have spare clothes, a jumper and leech repellent in the car!

What is your top tip for campers?

Don't over-think it! 'Less is more' but make sure you have plenty of the basics, such as food, water and time.

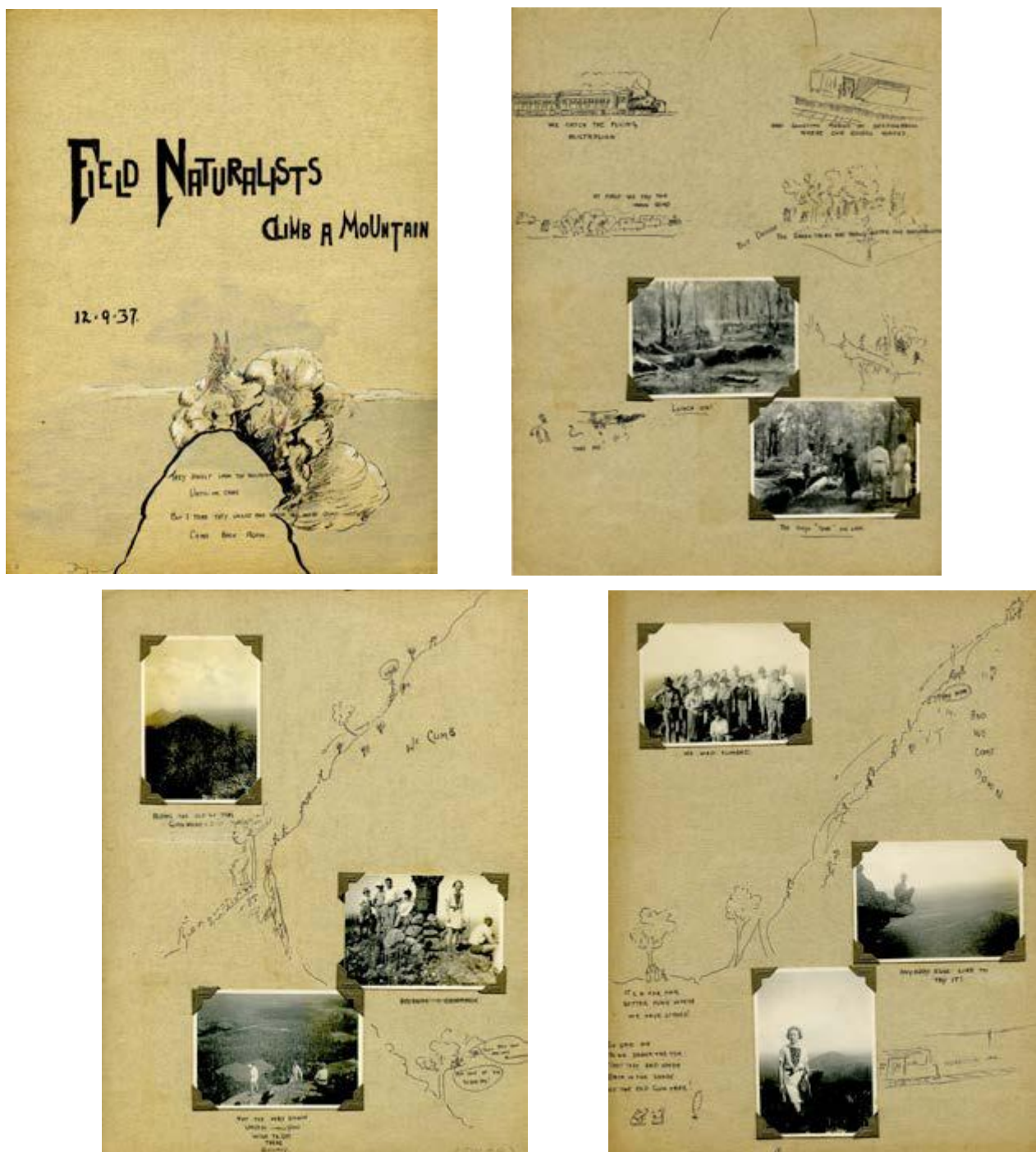
NPAQ thanks Rob for taking time to answer our questions. We appreciate the work all QPWS rangers undertake in protecting Queensland's national parks.

NPAQ Activities & Events

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, most of our events and activities have been cancelled. This includes NPAQ's 90th Anniversary Celebrations, the Easter Camp, all walks, and the May Members Meeting. These cancellations were done with the interest of safety in mind and to comply with government regulations in this unprecedented and evolving situation.

For the most up to date information on what activities and events are upcoming, please visit our website:

www.npaq.org.au/activities-events



Above: Pages from Hattie Clarke's 1937 journal of an NPAQ trip to the Glasshouse Mountains.

Celebrating 90 years.

