

# protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

## Protected Area Strategy

PLUS

Economic Importance of Parks  
Special Wildlife Reserves

ALSO FEATURED

St Helena Island National Park  
Ranger spotlight



Issue 30  
Summer 2020



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Pullen Pullen Special Wildlife Reserve. Photo: Dell Murphy-Brice.

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Susanne Cooper**  
President, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

Welcome to the Summer edition of Protected, and my first as President. Let me introduce myself: I have been an NPAQ Councillor for the past three years, and an active member of the Advocacy Committee during that time. My professional experience has been with natural resources and environmental planning at the site and regional scale, including catchments, rivers, wetlands, national and conservation parks and World Heritage areas. The last decade I was focused on designing sustainability into infrastructure projects and organisations.

I grew up feeling very connected with nature with a family who were always immersed in the outdoors. This early passion plus my work experience developed a deep commitment for protecting our natural environment and the unique biodiversity it supports. I believe that healthy, resilient ecosystems are fundamental to our continued life on the planet - if they deteriorate and die then so do we.

This edition features a review of the new Protected Area Strategy, research on the economic importance of national parks, an article about Queensland's First Special Wildlife reserve, St Helena Island National Park (a great day trip during school holidays) and more.

An area of interest over the COVID experience of the past nine months has been the role of national parks in people's health and sense of well-being, and of dispelling the blues brought on by the constraints of coronavirus on 'normal' life. The need to connect with nature and the outdoors has resulted in

unprecedented numbers of visitors travelling to national parks - both within close proximity to major urban centres, and those in more remote regional settings.

A few figures give a more informed picture:

- In NSW, NPWS reports overnight stays at campgrounds across the state were up by more than a third in July compared to the same month last year.
- Among sites near Sydney, visitor numbers also recorded a similar jump. West Head, at the Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park, and Barrenjoey notched up gains of almost 60 per cent for the June quarter.
- In Queensland, figures show a spike in the number of people visiting parks since June. Camping and vehicle permits rose by 40 per cent to 194,818 across the four months between June and September, compared with the same months last year.
- The number of individual campers rose 23 per cent from 216,591 in June-September 2019 to 266,547 in June-September 2020.

One positive interpretation from these trends reinforces the fundamental role nature and national parks play in our health and sense of well-being, and 'restoring our soul'. Interestingly, during the lock down period when visits to parks were not permitted, rangers across Australia and internationally described how this respite from visitors and human disturbance resulted in the return of wildlife in and around quiet, empty camp sites. On Fraser Island, rangers noted the absence of dingoes around the coastal campgrounds that are usually busy with campers and day visitors. Lack of visitors meant no food scraps, so the dingoes withdrew to the more hilly areas they traditionally occupied.

In the iconic Yosemite National Park USA, deer, bobcats, coyotes and black bears have congregated around the deserted buildings, along roadways and other parts of the park that were previously teeming with the annual four million visitors.

On this interesting note, I hope these positive trends continue, and you are able to enjoy some wonderful experiences our national parks offer over the summer period.



# QUEENSLAND'S NEW STRATEGY

**Russell Watkinson**

**Member and Advocacy Committee member, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)**

After much lobbying by the National Parks Association of Queensland and others, the Queensland Protected Area Strategy was finally released by the Government a few days before caretaker mode came into effect prior to the recent State election. The release of the Strategy has been one of the major requests of NPAQ as it will guide the State in moving towards the agreed upon IUCN target of 17% of Queensland land as protected area. Currently only some 8.26% of Queensland is designated as protected area, so there is a long way to go.

But, will the strategy be effective?

## Overview

The Strategy is a comprehensive document that says all the right things and promises a better future for the State's declining biodiversity, setting the strategic direction for the next 10 years. It acknowledges that there is an urgent need to halt global biodiversity decline. It identifies six reasons why protected areas are important:

- Climate Change - mitigating effects and enhancing resilience
- Threatened Species - refuges to prevent extinction
- Ecosystem Services - nutrient recycling, soil retention, pollination, water supply, natural buffers
- Connection to Country - spiritual and physical connection, cultural significance
- Health and well-being - physical and mental health from connecting with nature
- Economy - underpinning of ecotourism industry and supporting regional economies

It sets a mission *"to enhance and maintain a system of world-class protected areas, guided by First Nations' knowledge and expertise, global best practice and community needs, which ensures Queensland's exceptional nature and culture are actively supported to thrive for future generations to experience and enjoy."*

It is worth keeping this Mission Statement in mind as we review the contents of the strategy.

Six objectives are set in the strategy:

- Improve conservation of biodiversity
- Create Regional jobs
- Increase resilience to climate change
- Support connection to country for First Nations people
- Secure innovative funding streams
- Deliver social, health, economic and cultural benefits

Three strategic priorities are established for the strategy, underpinned by six guiding principles. The strategic priorities are:

- Grow - expand the protected areas
- Care - manage in partnership with First Nations peoples, landholders and other land managers
- Connect - increase community engagement with national parks

Ten actions are then set for each strategic priority. A total of nine progress measures are identified, three for each strategic priority.

A number of detailed actions are listed for each of the ten main

actions. Implementation of the strategy is proposed as a staged approach. Implementation is to be evaluated systematically in line with the nine progress measures and in accordance with Queensland Government Program Evaluation Guidelines. This is to be detailed in an Evaluation Plan - not provided with the strategy. Progress will be reported and published on a "regular" basis. A report card will detail progress against the strategy's objectives annually.

## Assessment

The strategy does well in setting a vision, mission, strategic direction, objectives and actions. It has a strong emphasis on working in partnership with First Nations people. It is supportive of growing ecotourism opportunities, particularly through ecotourism trails, and places emphasis on finding "innovative funding streams" to support Government budgets. This would have more credibility if examples were given of where this has worked successfully elsewhere. It is difficult to get private investors to fund/co-fund core Government functions.

The obvious omission in the strategy is the lack of measurable targets that can drive the stated actions and support budget bids to ensure that such targets are met. Without targets, it will be difficult to hold the Government accountable for successful implementation of the strategy.

There is no indication in the strategy of time frames for the listed actions. The nine Progress Measures are high level and mostly do not seem to be related to key actions. For example, one action under the strategic priority of "Care" is to prioritise protection

# PROTECTED AREA

and recovery of threatened species in national parks, but there is no stated measure about improving the status of threatened species.

The lack of targets is the biggest weakness of the strategy. Under the strategic priority of “Grow” there are progress measures of “proportion of Queensland’s land area secured in protected areas” and “extent of lands managed as private protected areas”. These progress measures are not quantified. Would a 1% increase in protected areas over ten years be a success? Without accountable targets, annual budget allocations will drive implementation rather than Government endorsed targets.

## Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030

Protecting our world-class natural and cultural values



Above: Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030.  
Banner: Wet sclerophyll, Mt Windsor. Photo: Kerry Trapnell.

The strategy proposes an annual report card to detail progress against meeting the objectives. Again, without targets this is likely to be a rather general exercise, especially as there does not seem to be a Report Card on the status of much of the protected area estate as it exists today. How do you report on progress without a clear starting point?

### Can the Strategy succeed?

To have any confidence that the strategy will be successful in achieving the stated mission and progressing Queensland towards its stated target of 17% of land as protected area, an Implementation Plan will be required driven by an inter-agency Steering Committee to ensure whole of Government commitment.

The Implementation Plan would complement the Evaluation Plan and should detail a timetable and targets for at least the ten actions set under the three strategic priorities. This would then show what actions are proposed over what period of time to achieve the targets. Ideally, the Implementation Plan should also show an indicative costing over each year

of the ten-year time span which would underpin annual budget bids. In line with the strategic priority of “Connect” and “increasing community engagement with National Parks” a Community Reference Group should be considered to support the Steering Committee in implementing the strategy.

### Next Steps

To date, the Government has announced a \$60 million “down payment” over four years with \$28m allocated for expansion of National Park and other public protected area, \$8m for nature reserves/refuges and \$5.2m for revitalising national parks. This is a long way from what is needed, so further public and innovative funding will be required to make meaningful progress.

We acknowledge that the Protected Areas Strategy does set a clear direction for the next ten years. With the election over, NPAQ will seek meetings with the minister and senior bureaucrats to press for early action through the development of an Implementation Plan with clear targets, timelines, indicative budget and accountabilities driven by a Steering Committee and supported by a Community Reference Group. The forthcoming budget will be a strong indication of the level of Government’s commitment. Achieving the stated Mission will not be possible without budget allocations that reflect the value of protected areas to Queensland’s economy.

# QUEENSLAND'S NATIONAL PARKS AN ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT ASSET

Sally Driml, Richard Brown, and Claudia Moreno Silva  
University of Queensland Business School and School of Economics

National parks are important environmental resources, giving protection to the flora, fauna and ecosystems that underpin a healthy environment for us all to live in and pass on to future generations. National parks not only play a vital role in the environment but also contribute social, cultural and economic value to our society.

The University of Queensland and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science undertook research into the economic value provided by national parks to the Queensland economy in 2018. This research focused on understanding the economic value of Queensland's national parks as a tourism and recreation asset in terms of benefits to the Queensland economy.

## National parks - a snapshot

Queensland is home to 312 national parks<sup>1</sup> and 234 conservation parks<sup>1</sup> with national park visitation in Queensland continuing to grow.

## How many people visit national parks?

In the year ending March 2018, 2.4 million domestic (Australian) overnight visitors and 2.6 million daytrip visitors visited a national or state park while in Queensland.

This is up from 1.3 million domestic overnight visitors and 1.1 million daytrip visitors in 2009.

While data are not available on exactly how many international visitors visit a national park while in Queensland, for Australia as a whole 45% of international visitors in the year ending March 2018 visited a national or state park, and 1.4 million of these visitors made a stopover in Queensland<sup>2</sup>.

## How important are national parks in attracting visitors?

To understand the influence of national parks in relation to visitation, visitors to national parks were asked how important national parks were to their decision to visit the national parks and adjacent regions.

Data collection from visitors to national parks was concentrated in four locations representative of four types of park category:

- 'Urban' (represented by Noosa National Park)
- 'Iconic'<sup>3</sup> (represented by Daintree National Park and nearby rainforest national parks)
- 'Remote' (represented by Carnarvon National Park)
- 'Outback' (represented by several outback national parks).

As would be expected, responses varied across the different park categories. However, in each case, many of the visitors said that the importance of visiting the national park to their whole trip was 70% or more. Also, a notable number of visitors said that they would not have travelled in

Queensland at all if they could not visit the national parks.

## How much do national park visitors spend daily?

As entry to national parks in Queensland is free and visitors usually provide their own transport and accommodation arrangements, one way to understand the economic benefits of national parks is to calculate the spending that visitors make in the surrounding region, in association with their visits to national parks.

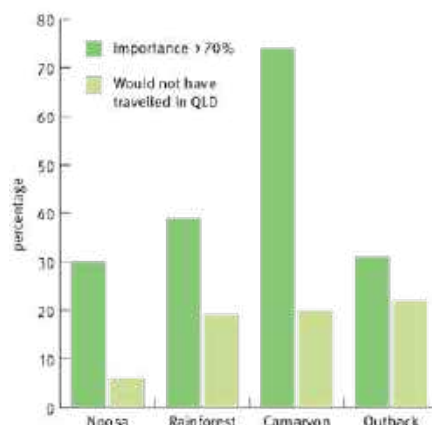
Visitors spend money in the vicinity of national parks on accommodation, transport, tours, food and beverage etc. in addition to any in-park costs such as for camping.

The highest spenders are domestic overnight visitors, who usually stay in the region surrounding the national parks. International visitors generally spend a little less per day, while daytrip visitors spend 25% to 40% of what overnight visitors spend.

## How much do all national park visitors spend in Queensland?

Two levels of visitor spending are reported here. National Park Associated Spending (NPAS) is spending in a region by all the people who visit a national park in that region. A subset of that is National Park

Indicators of importance of national parks as an attraction



## National Park Associated Spending (NPAS)

**\$3.71 billion**

## National Park Generated Spending (NPGS)

**\$2.64 billion**

# MARKS: ANT TOURISM RESOURCE

Generated Spending (NPGS) which is spending by visitors for whom national parks were 'very important' to their travel decisions<sup>4</sup>. In 2018, NPAS in Queensland was \$3.71 billion. Of this, NPGS was \$2.64 billion.

## What is the contribution of this spending to the Queensland economy?

The positive impact of this visitor spending for the Queensland economy is generation of Gross State Product (GSP) and employment. Contribution to Queensland Total GSP was \$2.74 billion for NPAS and \$1.98 billion for NPGS. Total employment supported by NPAS was 24,190 full-time equivalent jobs while NPGS supported 17,241 full-time equivalent jobs in Queensland.

## What's the additional 'non-market' value of national parks to visitors?

As national parks often have no or low access prices (no market), the value of benefit to visitors is always above what they have to pay (this non-market benefit is referred to as a 'consumer surplus').

The consumer surplus for four types of national parks was calculated using a well-regarded non-market valuation technique for Noosa, Rainforest, Carnarvon and Outback national parks. Per visitor-day, Rainforest national parks returned the highest value of \$150 per day, with Carnarvon

and Outback at around \$45 per day. The Noosa estimate of \$7.70 per day was very conservative as only day trips were included in the model.

For the year 2018, the total consumer surplus to visitors was estimated at \$659 million to all visitors from all origins, with subsets of \$365 million to all Australian visitors and \$238 million to Queensland resident visitors.

National parks conserve the environment over time so these benefits can be enjoyed for many years into the future. The discounted present value over 30 years, for all visitors, is \$16 billion.

## What is the return on investment in visitor management in Queensland's national parks?

A general or average return on investment in visitor management was estimated by comparing the benefits of Gross Value Added<sup>5</sup> due to visitor spending plus consumer surplus against the cost of visitor management<sup>6</sup>. Using the NPGS and consumer surplus to Queensland residents only, the ratio of benefits to costs was estimated at \$6.30 in benefits to every \$1 in cost<sup>7</sup>. This demonstrates a positive return on investment.

### More information

This information is from a report produced by researchers from The University of Queensland under a collaborative agreement with the Department of Environment and

Science.

For further information, please contact Dr Sally Driml, s.driml@uq.edu.au or Associate Professor Richard Brown, richard.brown@uq.edu.au. To read the full report, visit [www.uq.edu.au/economics/abstract/636.pdf](http://www.uq.edu.au/economics/abstract/636.pdf) or [www.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.des.qld.gov.au)

<sup>1</sup> This study includes national parks and conservation parks as defined under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Current as at July 2020.

<sup>2</sup> These visitor numbers are from Tourism and Events Queensland: <https://teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights/economics-and-specialised-reports/national-state-parks-visitation>

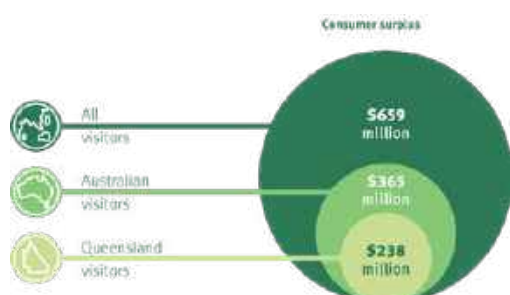
<sup>3</sup> Refers to high profile national parks where visitor numbers are high.

<sup>4</sup> This was defined as visitors who said the national park was their only or main destination, all those who nominated importance at over 70% and visitors who would not have travelled in Queensland if they could not visit the national parks.

<sup>5</sup> Gross Value Added is Gross State Product minus taxes.

<sup>6</sup> The average annual spending over the previous six years by the Queensland Government on national park visitor management (not including other conservation management) was \$100 million; information from the Department of Environment and Science.

<sup>7</sup> This is a general or average return and does not necessarily indicate the likely return for a particular project.



**NPAS Total GSP**  
**\$2.74 billion**

**NPAS Total Employment**  
**24,190 jobs**

**NPGS Total GSP**  
**\$1.98 billion**

**NPGS Total Employment**  
**17,241 jobs**

# QUEENSLAND'S FIRST SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVE DECLARED

**Rob Murphy**  
Executive Manager North Australia, Bush Heritage Australia

In 2014 I had the privilege of sitting on a rocky "jump-up" (or mesa) at the end of a long and hot day on what is now Pullen Pullen Reserve.

It's a remote and vast landscape in the Channel Country of central-west Queensland dominated by long unburnt spinifex, Mitchell grass downs and stony gibber plains. It's also home to the Night Parrot and other endangered and vulnerable birds such as the Plains-wanderer, Painted Honeyeater, and Grey Falcon plus small marsupials such as the Kowari and Dusky hopping-mouse.

To experience the sunset after a long day's work is a special time of day. Watching the colours of the sky deepen and change in sympathy for the setting sun, and the landscape around you reflecting its glow is awe inspiring.

The realisation that this landscape was one of the few remaining strongholds for our endangered wildlife, allowed me to fully comprehend just how fragile this landscape is. A landscape where just one rogue feral animal could tip the delicate balance in the wrong direction. While feral animals lurking in the shadows are a constant threat, there was another more sinister threat in plain sight. It was the very real threat from other authorised land uses, such as mining, that could have far greater impacts than any feral animal, and simply could not be ignored.

Up until last year, the highest level of protection within Queensland for a private conservation area was a

Nature Refuge Agreement (NRA). This is a voluntary agreement between the landholder and the Government. Unfortunately a NRA doesn't always offer the protections required of these critically important landscapes. They often remain threatened from incompatible land uses and threatening activities, such as mining and timber harvesting.

Many landholders and conservation organisations have advocated for many years about the importance of an increased level of protection for privately protected areas.

There was a collective cheer when the Queensland Government legislated a new class of protected area, Special Wildlife Reserves, in March 2019. This is an Australian first and something for all Queenslanders to be immensely proud of. No longer are National Parks the only highest level of protection for our important conservation areas. Special Wildlife Reserves are a new class of protected area that provides national park level protections to privately owned land.

Queensland remains the only state in Australia to provide this national park level protection for privately owned land.

Fast forward to this year and Bush Heritage Australia's Pullen Pullen Reserve in western Queensland was declared the first ever special wildlife reserve.

Pullen Pullen was purchased by Bush Heritage Australia to protect critical habitat of one of the world's most elusive and endangered birds - the night parrot. The added level of

protection that comes with the special wildlife reserve status will ensure all of Pullen Pullen's species are permanently protected from possible incompatible land uses such as mining, timber harvesting and grazing.

Pullen Pullen will continue to be managed by Bush Heritage Australia who work to conserve this important species and landscapes.

The declaration of this Special Wildlife Reserve is also of immense importance to the land's Traditional Owners, the Maiawali First Nations People, who have been working closely with Bush Heritage Australia to identify and protect the reserve's ecologically and culturally important values.

As a progressive society we cannot and should not sit back expecting our governments to be able to protect all of our critical landscapes, while also juggling the myriad of competing priorities. This is our collective responsibility. Private investment in conservation on both public and private lands is a key feature in many countries worldwide. Special Wildlife Reserves now provide philanthropists with certainty that their donations can be used on privately managed land that is legally protected from threatening processes in perpetuity.

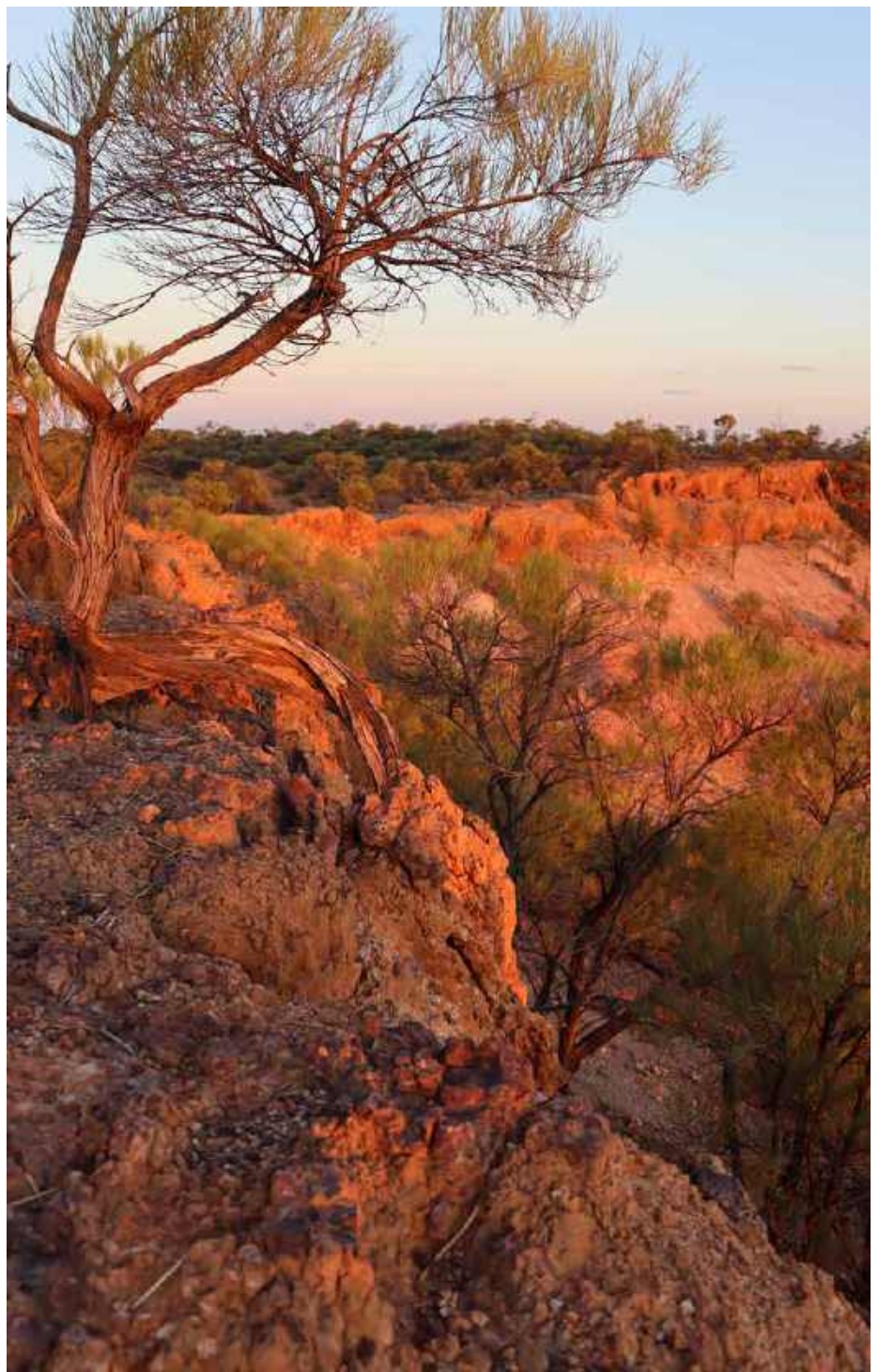
Many Governments and conservation organisations have long recognised that privately protected areas are an integral part of any protected area network. It's for this reason that privately owned lands remain a critical part of ensuring the conservation of Queensland's natural



and cultural values in perpetuity.

This new category of protected area is the most progressive conservation reform in Australia in recent times, and Bush Heritage Australia is proud to have been part of its inception. Bush Heritage Australia hopes that Pullen Pullen is the first of many Special Wildlife Reserves to be declared, and hope that NPAQ members will continue to embrace and support this new form of protected area.

Last month, I was once again at Pullen Pullen Reserve and was able to sit on the same jump-up as I had 6 years prior. It was here that I was able to reflect on this journey and what we have collectively been able to achieve. And while I fully recognise that there are still many other threats facing our important species and landscapes, I hope that like me, you can all celebrate the fact that the conservation community have been successful in eliminating threatening land uses from another critically important landscape. Bush Heritage Australia continues to work toward more of our critically important places achieving Special Wildlife Reserve status.



**Above and Banner:** Pullen Pullen Special Wildlife Reserve. Photos: Dell Murphy-Brice.

# PARK IN FOCUS

## St Helena Island National Park

John & Lyn Daly

from their book *Take a Walk in a National Park Port Macquarie to Brisbane* [www.takeawalk.com.au](http://www.takeawalk.com.au)

### History

First Nations people visited St Helena Island thousands of years prior to European habitation. They were attracted to the Island each year during the warmer months, when large colonies of fruit bats congregated. During the winter they hunted dugong in the surrounding waters. Huge middens of bone and shell, one being the oldest man-made relic on the Island, are evidence of their long-term use of the area. St Helena was originally described as one of the *Green Islands* by Matthew Flinders, in 1799. It was named St Helena in 1828, when an Indigenous man named Napoleon was exiled there from Dunwich penal settlement on North Stradbroke Island, after stealing an axe. Unlike his namesake, he later escaped in a self-made canoe.

During the mid-19th century, the Island was used as a base for dugong fishing. In 1866 it was

selected as the site for a quarantine station, and prison labour was used for construction. However, the isolation of the Island lent itself to the establishment of Queensland's most notorious penal colony in 1867. The harsh treatment dished out to inmates gained it a reputation as the '*Hell Hole of the South Pacific*'.

The prison settlement quickly became self-sufficient, and was soon heralded as one of the finest examples of self-sufficiency and profitability in the world. The first buildings were constructed of bricks and timber brought from the mainland. Timber growing in the Island's rainforests was considered unsuitable and was only used to construct fences. It wasn't long before the colony boasted two cell blocks, a hospital, lime kiln, boathouse, kitchen, Superintendent's cottage, bakehouse and housed carpentry, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, boot and shoe making, saddle

making, candle making, tailoring, book binding and sail making industries. Queensland's first tramway system was established on the Island. The surviving beach rock walls and causeway are recognized as notable engineering feats.

The original rainforest was cleared for pastures and crops. Introduced plants soon began to grow around the supervisor's cottages. The prison Superintendent encouraged visiting ship's captains to bring native trees from their homelands and many of these were planted around the Island. Olive groves produced fruit that won prizes for their oil quality in Italy, and Ayrshire dairy cattle raised on the Island were common amongst award winners at Brisbane RNA shows.

During 1891, Queensland shearers went on strike for better working conditions. Many of the ringleaders were subsequently charged, convicted and gaoled on St Helena Island. Shark feeding was actively encouraged to deter prisoners with thoughts of escaping by swimming to the mainland.

Changing attitudes to prison reform lead to the gaol being changed to prison farm status in 1921. It remained a prison farm until its closure in 1932.

Ownership was handed to the Lands Department in 1939 and areas were subsequently leased to graziers prior to the 75.1ha Island being declared Queensland's first Historic Site National Park in 1979. With limited funds, park rangers maintain the ruins, carry out some restoration work and do other ongoing maintenance, as well as conducting guided tours on the Island. School excursions to St Helena are encouraged to teach children about early prison history.



**Above:** Ruins on St Helena Island National Park. Photo: Patrick Otto. **Banner:** Butchery and bakery areas at St Helena Island National Park. Photo: merlin9911.



## Features

This small tadpole-shaped Island is surrounded by a relic coral reef. Basalt escarpments rise from the south-west corner and form steep ridges on the southern, northern and western sides of the Island. A thin band of forest and mangroves lining the eastern shore are all that is left of St Helena's original vegetation.

The fresh water on St Helena originally fell as rain on the Darling Downs, near Toowoomba. This water drains into the Great Artesian Basin, the largest artesian basin in the world, and flows underground across Moreton Bay to St Helena.

The ruins on St Helena are reminiscent of those found at Port Arthur and on Norfolk Island, yet they are easily visited on a day trip from Brisbane. The remaining relics are all built of beach rock (cay sandstone) quarried on the Island by prisoners. The surface beach rock initially used

proved much too soft for building materials. Harder rock was found following further excavation. The Rangers have positioned a large beach rock 'block' near the site of the old quarry for visitors to touch and feel how easily it erodes.

Large numbers of native birds including rainbow bee-eaters, honeyeaters, plovers, kingfishers and quails inhabit the Island, along with many migratory waders.

## Access

St Helena is located in Moreton Bay, 8km from the mouth of the Brisbane River, about 7km north-east of Manly. Tourist launches leave from Brisbane and Manly. Private boats can be anchored in the area adjacent to the causeway.

To preserve the fragile ruins, access to the restricted sections of the Island is only permitted with an accredited tour guide, or National Park Ranger. Rangers conduct some guided tours

- check for current details prior to your visit. Fees are levied for tours.

## St Helena Ruins Walk

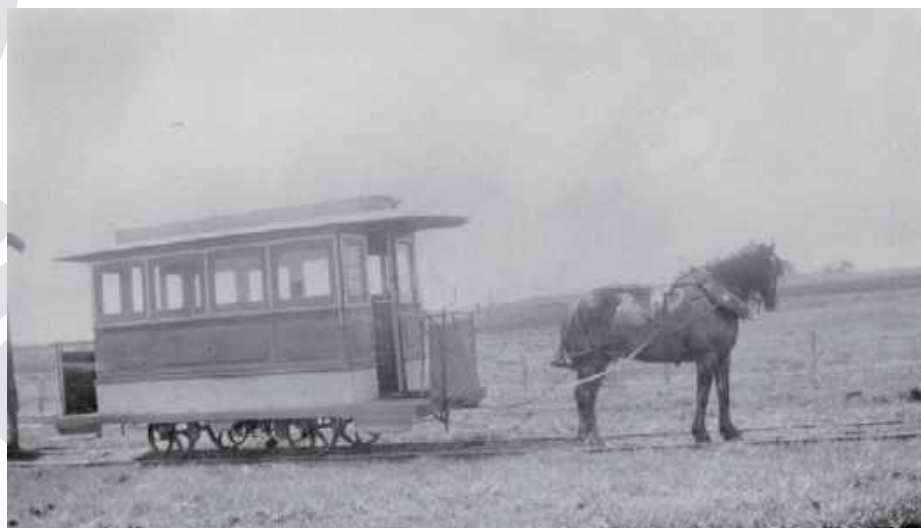
The guided walk takes in all the major historical sites on the Island, but the route varies, depending upon the number of groups on the Island at the time.

As you walk from the boat along the jetty, you pass the old jetty ruins, and one of the first things you notice is the remains of the swimming enclosure. The iron posts were designed to provide protection from sharks. Then, walk past numerous old water wells to the start of the main ruins. From here, your guide will explain history and construction of the remains of various buildings including the administration block, the blacksmith's shop, the prison cells, solitary confinement cells, kitchens, the Superintendent's garden and the dairy.

The Deputy Superintendent's House has been restored and converted to a museum, housing many interesting relics relating to the prison era. The tour then leads back down to the southern end of the Island to the silos and the sugar mill, past the prisoners' and warden's cemetery and the lime kiln, before ending at the old quarry and Aboriginal midden.

While waiting for your boat to leave for the mainland enjoy strolling or lazing around the cleared, grassy flats of the unrestricted zone that extends from the quarry and old tramway up to the southern boundary of the first grazing paddock.

***The author has endeavoured to ensure that the information presented here is as accurate as possible. However, they or NPAQ do not accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person guided by this article.***



**Above:** Horsedrawn tram on St. Helena Island, 1928. The horsedrawn tram was used to transport people from the causeway jetty to the prison buildings on the hill. The tram ran on 3'6" gauge tracks.. Photo: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

# NPAQ ASSOCIATION EXPERIENCE

**Debra Marwedel**  
Honorary Life Member, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

When asked to write an article about my experiences on Council for the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ), I was not expecting the flood of memories that this triggered and I'm delighted to share some of that with you here.

For those who do not know me, I retired at the 2020 Annual General Meeting after serving ten years on Council, six of those years as Honorary Secretary and member of the Executive, and one as Assistant Honorary Secretary.

As a Councillor and member of the Executive since 2010, I had the privilege of working with three Presidents - Tony O'Brien (2007-2012), Michelle Prior (2012-2017) and Graeme Bartrim (2017-2020).

These three Presidents generously used their individual leadership styles,

management skills, and personal networks/contacts for the benefit of the Association. Each were right for their time - influencing, responding, and adapting to changes in Government policy and the hearts and minds of Queensland communities - the latter being influenced by challenges including climate change and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am honoured and grateful for the opportunity to have worked closely with them as they reshaped and evolved the organisation.

Behind the scenes, a couple of important shared successes have been improvements in the Association's governance and its response to financial challenges.

A new and capable leadership team is in place and will continue to deliver

on the Association's purpose, and to develop its people, processes, and the performance of the Association.

2020 was a year of celebration for the Association, 2020 being its 90th year of advocacy for national parks and protected areas in Queensland. What has made my time with the Association rewarding has been the Councillors' energy and shared vision for national parks and protected area outcomes, and the leadership within the Association. The challenges being the ever-changing environment in which the Association operates and ensuring we respond appropriately.

Thank you to the organisation's members, supporters, donors, staff, and volunteers for their contribution to the successes of NPAQ. It is by working together that we have achieved much and will continue to do so.



**Banner:** Photo: Jonte J. **Above:** Photo: Joshua Willson.

# THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

Personal reflection on why our parks must be valued

**Clare Birnie**  
Treasurer, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

Weekend trips to a local National park such as Lamington National Park have always been a great way to get away locally to recharge from long busy periods at work. Being able to be completely disconnect from emails, take in the fresh air and enjoy the simplicity yet complexity of the sights and sounds on a bush walk is a total recharge of the body, mind and soul.

My partner Al and I love to travel and have been very fortunate to have some amazing experiences both locally and abroad.

One of our trips overseas included a visit to Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia where we saw first-hand how national parks can be big tourism.

This most enchanting place, which has waters flowing over the limestone and chalk have, over thousands of years, deposited travertine barriers, creating natural dams which in turn have created a series of beautiful lakes, caves and waterfalls.

As a consequence of its popularity and concerns over its UNESCO World Heritage, the park management last year decided to limit the number of visitors to 10,000 per day.

It's such an important issue that parks are available now and in the future in their natural state.

With this in mind I am comforted knowing that organisations such as NPAQ assist in promoting the appropriate management of national parks and other protected areas, especially those that are becoming increasingly popular or have proposals

for significant infrastructure.

This year my partner and I have welcomed our first baby, a little girl. I also made the decision to significantly reduce my hours and take an extended leave break from my career as a registered Liquidator and FCPA whilst our baby is young and this is where the opportunity to be involved with NPAQ evolved.

Neil Williams (prior Treasurer) got in contact with me to see if I would be interested in the role and we met via Zoom to discuss (such are the times in 2020). Then once meeting some of the team I have been so excited and motivated to be involved.

I am honoured to be elected as Treasurer and am looking forward to learning from the friendly, warm and

enthusiastic people I have met thus far via NPAQ who all have a thirst to advocate, protect and be involved with national parks.

2020 has been a very different year and everyone has had challenges. I believe that whilst 2021 is uncertain in many areas we can be confident that more than ever people will be seeking out to visit national parks. This makes 2021 a very exciting time to get NPAQ's profile recognised, get more members and promote respect when visiting national parks.

I'm looking forward to making a contribution and to getting some tips on national parks to take a toddler in 2021 to. Queensland has so many places to explore and I can hardly wait to get to them.



*Above: Clare and her partner at Mount Coolum. Photo: Supplied.*

# RANGER SPOTLIGHT

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

**Cathy Gatley**  
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Cathy Gatley is Ranger-in-Charge of Mon Repos Conservation Park, just east of Bundaberg. Working with plants and animals is in her DNA...

### Why did you decide to become a ranger?

My dad was a veterinarian who treated lots of native animals, so I was fortunate to grow up with koalas, gliders and birds around the house at various times. And my mum is very interested in native plants. So I think this is where my interest in working for the environment stemmed from. After working at the Queensland Museum in the visitor education section, and learning more about environmental management, I decided I wanted to become a Ranger.

### How long have you worked in national parks?

I have worked as a Ranger for QPWS for 27 years.

### Which parks have you worked in?

I have worked on the Atherton Tablelands, based at Crater Lakes National Park at Lake Eacham and working in surrounding parks. I've also worked in the Whitsunday Island National Parks and Woongarra Marine Park (now known as the Great Sandy Marine Park).

I am now based at Mon Repos Conservation Park. I've also been lucky to have worked in the field with marine turtles on Raine Island and Heron Island national parks and at Shoalwater Bay Conservation Park.

### What is special about your current park?

Mon Repos is all about marine turtles, especially the endangered loggerhead turtle! It is also a park of the people - the community fought to have it

declared as a park in the early days, and today many people work as volunteers, dedicating their time to help turtles and visitors.

Mon Repos is an excellent place to work because you get to work with an endangered species, doing hands-on conservation. In addition to this we also have the privilege of sharing our work with the thousands of people who visit the park each year. It is special to be able to help others connect with nature and make changes to help turtles survive.

(Mon Repos has a state-of-the-art Turtle Centre dedicated to marine turtle research, protection and education).

### What is your most memorable moment as a ranger?

When I started at Mon Repos in 1996, our Chief Scientist, Dr Col Limpus, briefed the team about checking nesting turtles as they come ashore for 'notches' in their carapaces. This was part of a tagging program undertaken in 1975, where hatchlings were 'tagged' with notches before they headed out to sea. The study was designed to find out how old turtles were when they came back to shore to nest for the first time. In the early 2000s, I remember being behind a loggerhead turtle on the beach as she came ashore. I could see the scalloped notches on each side of her carapace and was immediately excited and hopeful. When the turtle had settled into nesting and I could turn on my light more fully, I could see this was an important turtle. Dr Col was in Brisbane at the time and I rang him from the beach. This turtle was the first of the 1975 turtles to return, she was 29 years old and nesting for the first time in her life!



Above: QPWS Ranger Cathy Gatley. Photo: Justin Bruhn © Pure Underwater Imaging.  
Top: Mon Repos Turtle Tour. Photo: Rowan Bestmann © Tourism and Events Qld.

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

Being in natural and beautiful places for 'our office' is so fortunate. At Mon Repos during the turtle season we get to spend a lot of time on the beach at night. So not only are we working with the animals, but we also get to see star-filled skies, beautiful orange moon rises above the ocean, meteors and, more often than you think, get soaked in a sudden downpour.

I think having the opportunity in my role to help others make a difference is one of the best parts about working in a park. We are generating change to make our world a better place.

### What is your top tip for visitors to your park?

If coming for a Turtle Encounter tour, bring a crossword or a good book; turtles take their own time.

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

## NPAQ activities

### Lower Ballanji Falls Track & Caves Track, Lamington National Park

**Date:** Sunday 17 January 2021

**Meet:** 8:30am

**Cost:** \$5

**Leader:** Mary Anne Ryan (0436 393 999 or [maryaryan@bigpond.com](mailto:maryaryan@bigpond.com))

### Birdwatching - Bribie Island

**Date:** Sunday 31 January 2021

**Meet:** 7:30 am at the Bird Hide, Buckleys Hole Conservation Park

**Cost:** \$5

**Leader:** Ian Peacock (0416 943 280 or [ianpeacock@hotmail.com](mailto:ianpeacock@hotmail.com))

### 2021 Twilight Celebration

**Date:** Sunday 14 February 2021

**Meet:** 3:00pm - further details closer to the time and by contacting the Leaders.

This function will be held in a similar format to previous years - a walk for those inclined or sit and chat followed by drinks and nibbles, light dinner and dessert.

As this is also Valentine's Day you could treat yourself or a loved one to an evening out. **Cost:** \$16

**Leader:** Len and Laurelle Lowry (0428 335 572 or [onthewallaby@live.com.au](mailto:onthewallaby@live.com.au))

## NPAQ events

### NPAQ February Members' Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday 24 February 2021

**Time:** 7:15pm for 7:30pm start

**Venue:** To be confirmed

## Vale

NPAQ was saddened by the passing of member Heatherbell Mellor who joined NPAQ in 1992. Heatherbell volunteered with the NPAQ archives for a number of years.

NPAQ was also saddened to learn of the passing of long-term life member George Glystos who joined NPAQ in 1951.

We send our sincere condolences to their friends and families.

*Below: West Coast, K'gari (Fraser Island), Great Sandy National Park. Photo: Kerry Trapnell.*



Celebrating 90 years.

