protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

PROTECTING NATIONAL PARKS PROTECTS YOUR WELLBEING

PLUS

Invasive Plant and Animal Research

ALSO FEATURED

Bushwalking Pilgrimage

Preserving Paradise: The Vital Importance of Queensland's National Parks

NPAQ Events

Eastern Bearded Dragon

Issue 39
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The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) NPAQ advocates for the protection, expansion, effective management and presentation of national parks.

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

Images

Cover Photo: Orange fungus - Samantha Smith

Back Cover Photo: *Chamelaucium uncinatum* (Pink wax flower) - Peripitus

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Editor Samantha Smith

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Photo: Jose Antonio Lopez Vieiera

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Photo: supplied

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Photo: Samantha Smith

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susanne Cooper

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Protected. Reflections and looking back can be thought-provoking and instructive.

Reading past editions recently of the Australian Ranger Bulletin (a journal for State conservation managers across Australia) from 30-40 years ago, I was struck by the frequent references to eco-tourism and its management challenges in our national parks. Ecotourism is currently a major issue and opportunity for our National Parks, and will continue to increase in the build to 2032, plus the post Olympics and Paralympics legacy.

So – what's changed in the past 40 years?

40 years ago (1980's):
Interestingly, an article by CSIRO research scientist G.Yapp flagged the need for additional areas separate to National Parks to be acquired and managed as State recreation areas, as a measure to accommodate increasing recreation demand. The trend was also mentioned of increasing resources going into managing recreation with little left for research and conservation.

The article also recommended land acquired for National Parks should include areas suitable for cabins, camping and picnic grounds, car parks and visitor centres to avoid locating these facilities in sensitive areas unsuitable for intensive visitor use.

30 years ago (1990's):
Debate was spreading about the various definitions of eco-tourism, and the 'fuzzy' use and loose application of the term. Even then, the emphasis was increasingly on first hand experiences that enhance an ecotourist's knowledge and appreciation of the natural area, resulting in them taking home messages about the importance of nature conservation.

In 1994, the first National Ecotourism Strategy was developed by the Federal Government, in response to the rapid growth of this sector.

One area that has experienced major change is the recognition and involvement of First Nations people in managing National Parks. Even in 1996, it was requested that climbing Uluru "is part of our cultural identity, ...but this must change. An appropriate alternative is to circumnavigate the rock by walking around the base. This protects not only the environmental values, but importantly the cultural ones as well – a point that is often overlooked by those in ecotourism who focus solely on natural environmental values". The shift since then has been permanent and substantive.

So what's changed since then – and what does this indicate for us now? Many of the issues we are facing today have been flagged for the past 30-40 years, with little progress. Responding to the growing demand for outdoor and nature-based recreation activities, the need for increased ranger resources to manage for nature conservation and not just recreation or visitor impacts are still priorities that need to be addressed. Also improved interpretation to ecotourism visitors so they gain a deep and meaningful understanding of the unique values and significance of the area they are experiencing.

Although many of these challenges were flagged 30-40 years ago, we still have a way to go.

Susanne Cooper

President, NPAQ

Photo Banner: Pleated Inkcap mushroom *(arasola plicatilis)* - Samantha Smith

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

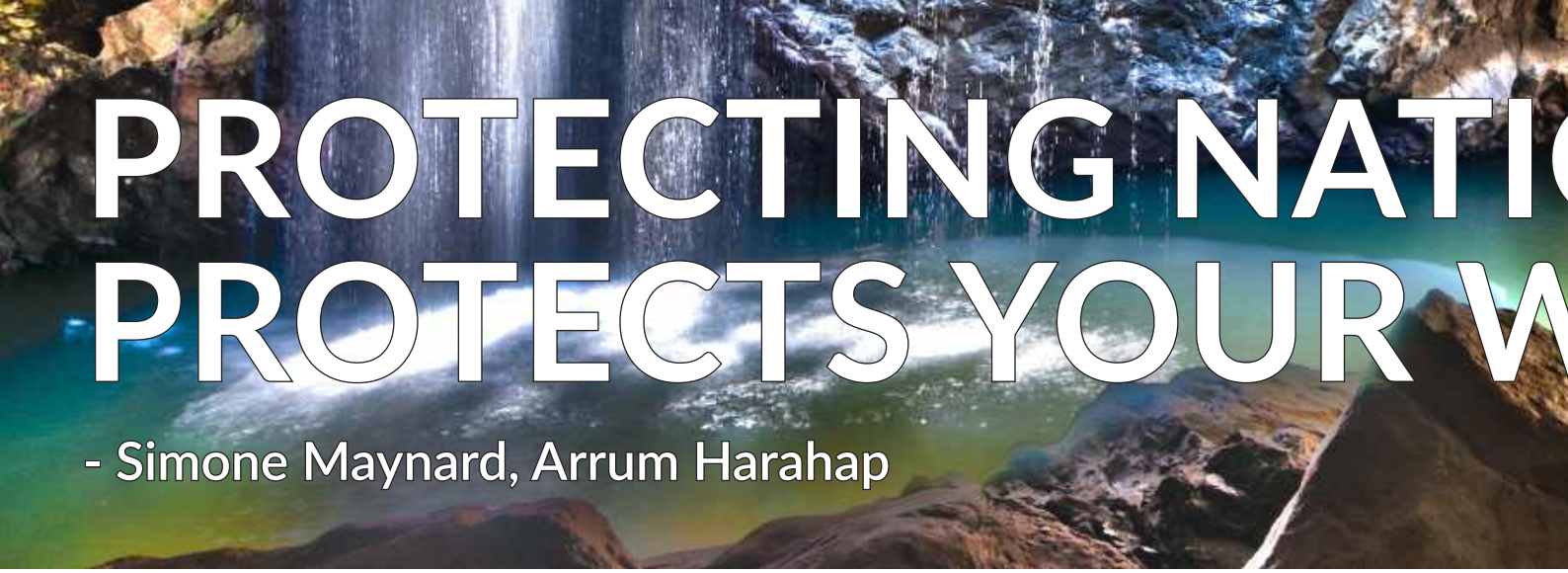
Do you have photos from a visit to a national park or protected area? Send them to admin@npaq.org.au or connect with us on Instagram @nationalparksassocqld for your chance to feature in the next edition of NPAQ's PROTECTED Magazine! The best photos will also be featured on NPAQ social media channels and go in the draw to win some awesome NPAQ prizes*.

Hedleyella falconeri (Rainbow Bee-eater)
(@noosanative - instagram)

Banksia landscape
(@mrbenblanche - Instagram)

Lamington National Park
(@yolohiking - instagram)

Chelonia mydas (Green Sea Turtle)
Photo: Samantha Smith



PROTECTING NATI
PROTECTS YOUR W

- Simone Maynard, Arrum Harahap

Did you know National Parks contribute to your well-being, even if you never visit one? Whether you live in a city or rural area, whether you live locally or internationally, Queensland's National Parks are supporting your well-being and quality of life.

Ecosystem services can be viewed as a proactive approach to conserving nature and your well-being.

Ecosystem services (ES) is the technical term that ecologists and economists give to the contributions of nature to human well-being. It emerged in the 1970s, and the approach has since been applied at local, regional, national, and global scales. Both internationally and in Australia, ES approaches are applied in protected area management, local government planning schemes, nature conservation strategies, statutory regional plans, conservation payment schemes and business sustainability strategies. The Queensland Department of Environment and Science, for example, apply an ES approach to wetland management through their Whole-of-System Value-Based Framework (DES 2022).

To date, the most famous and influential application of ES is the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) released in 2005 by the United Nations. With over 1300 experts involved, they conducted a multi-scale assessment of the status and trends of ES provision.

Unfortunately, the MA assessment revealed that around 60%, or 15 out of the 24 ES assessed, are in decline due to human induced pressures (e.g. land clearing). This is undoubtedly a serious concern for us all, as a decline in the quality and availability of ES now, will likely become worse with a growing population.

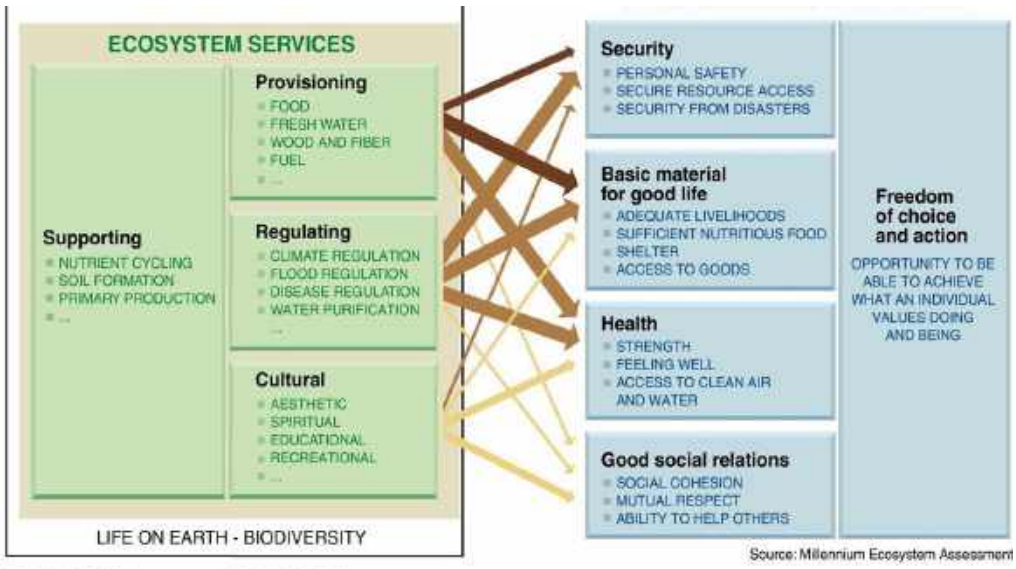


Figure (above): Linkages between ecosystem services and human well-being (MA 2005).

How are ES derived?
Ecosystem services are derived from ecosystems – this includes the genes, species, ecological processes occurring within and across ecosystems, and mosaic landscapes. Different types of ecosystems (e.g. rainforests, grasslands, wetlands) produce different sets of ES and in different magnitudes. This is because they are structurally different, composed of different species and with different processes occurring within them. The importance of conserving biodiversity cannot be understated, and this is shown in the MA's diagram by the box encompassing all ES. Often infrastructure (e.g. paths or roads), tools, or human labour are required to access ES and receive a benefit from them. The location of an ecosystem is important, particularly an ecosystem's proximity to people and human-made infrastructure, as without people (beneficiaries of nature's contributions to well-being) there are no ES.

What are the different types of ES?
As shown in the MA's simplified diagram there are generally three types of ES. Provisioning services are tangible products derived from ecosystems such as food, water, and raw materials. Regulating services are intangible processes, such as air and water quality, maintaining our climate, and pest control. Cultural services are also non-material but are more subjective and context dependant, such as recreational opportunities, aesthetic values, iconic species, and cultural heritage. The supporting services are often referred to as ecological processes. They can include soil formation, nitrogen cycling, and pollination.

How does an ES approach differ from a nature conservation approach?
Traditional approaches to nature conservation, such as we use in protected area management, generally focus on conserving rare, endangered, threatened or representative species. This approach is vital to conserving nature for its own sake. In traditional approaches the metrics we use

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to prioritise areas for protection or investment, or to evaluate and monitor the health of ecosystems, are dominated by ecological measures. Some of these measures include canopy structure, species abundance or diversity, nitrogen levels, leaf litter density, or the number of hollow logs.

An ES approach differs to traditional approaches because it is anthropocentric. Without people, there are no actual ES being received, but the potential still exists. Someone who receives a contribution to their well-being from an ES, hence a benefit, is referred to as a beneficiary. Beneficiaries can be individuals, communities, businesses, and industry. In ES approaches the metrics used to prioritise areas for protection or investment, or to evaluate and monitor the health of ecosystems, are dominated by not just ecological measures, but social and economic also. Some of these measures include number of jobs created, number of people visiting a national park, or health benefits gained.

How do ES contribute to my well-being, even if I never visit a national park?

Queensland's protected areas system covers a wide range of ecosystems – rainforests, wetlands, eucalypt forests, grasslands. Conserving and protecting these areas is fundamental to the survival of fauna and flora, and the ecological processes that will self-sustain ecosystems into the future. But just as protecting these areas is paramount to nature conservation, they are also critical to conserving the well-being of people now, and for future generations. The MA's conceptual diagram emphasises how ES positively influence different constituents of our well-being.

People receive benefits from ES in different ways and at different times. It is important we recognise that because people receive and perceive ES and hence benefit differently from them, they also value them differently. Some of these values can be determined in monetary terms, such as 'food' derived from ecosystems (e.g. bunya nut). For some people, food is a provisioning service, and they simply receive sustenance from it and physical health is a benefit associated with this. For others, such as for Indigenous people, food can be a cultural service. The growing, harvesting or eating of food can be strongly tied to their cultural identity, customs, and a means of subsistence, providing benefits of social or family cohesion. When ES are valued culturally, it can be extremely difficult or even unethical to put a monetary value on them.

In the year ending in March 2018, Queensland's national parks attracted 2.6 million day-trip visitors, making recreational use and tourism an important economic driver for the state. It is the ES that attracted them to our parks - the distinctive landscapes, aesthetic values, iconic species (e.g. koalas, cassowary), cultural history, and recreational opportunities that they hold. The direct and indirect beneficiaries of these services include tourism operators, café owners, transportation services, as well the visitors themselves. But the economic contributions of ES derived from national parks is more than just to tourism, they provide pollination and pest reduction services important to agriculture, and fish stocks for fisherman. National parks also provide education, research and innovation opportunities.

The ES derived from Queensland's national parks extend beyond their boundaries, and whilst they provide benefits to local people, they also do to those in surrounding areas and even globally. National parks provide local people with a sense of place, inspiration and recreational opportunities. But they also sequester and store carbon to mitigate global climate change, provide pharmaceutical and medical resources, and act as natural regional buffers by regulating water flow, preventing soil erosion, reducing flood risk, and maintaining water quality downstream. In addition, national parks also provide habitat and refugia for species that migrate, so their protection contributes to biodiversity and ES conservation beyond park boundaries.

Given the critical role that ES play in supporting human well-being, Queenslanders must proactively maintain and conserve for ES. Threats such as over-utilisation, habitat destruction/ deforestation, climate change, and pollution make ES vulnerable to decline and loss. A loss of ES will have negative implications for humanity, including impacts on food security, water accessibility, health, and livelihoods. You can support the conservation of ES by participating in community conservation programs, joining environmental conservation groups, and volunteering for habitat restoration projects. When visiting national parks and other natural places in Queensland, follow ethical and sustainable tourism practices, respect local traditions, abide by park regulations, and minimise your environmental impact. But most importantly, enjoy those ES that are being provided to you!

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TECHNICAL HIGHLIGH AND ANIMAL RESEARC

- Tony Pople

Introduction
This document summarises the 2021–22 program of the Invasive Plants and Animals Research group in Biosecurity Queensland.

Our applied research program aims to better manage Queensland's worst weeds and pest animals, reducing their impacts on agriculture, the environment and the community.

Our work is undertaken at four centres across the state:
- Ecosciences Precinct, Dutton Park
- Pest Animal Research Centre, Toowoomba
- Tropical Weeds Research Centre, Charters Towers
- Tropical Weeds Research Centre, South Johnstone.

We also collaborate with numerous Queensland, interstate and overseas organisations.

Higher degree students are supported to work on several research projects in weed and pest animal management.

The research projects summarised in this document cover the development of effective control strategies and methods (e.g. biological control and herbicides), as well as improved knowledge of pest species' biology and assessment of pest impact.

Invasive plant research
- Our weed biological control program has been supported by external funding bodies that are detailed at the end on this report. AgriFutures and the Australian Government have funded overseas surveys and host testing for biological control agents for prickly acacia, Navua sedge, giant rat's tail grass and clidemia since 2020. This work is drawing to a close in early 2023. Approval to release some agents (e.g. prickly acacia) is expected and imminent, but others will need further assessment. That further work was always required but can be undertaken optimistically following the initial work funded by AgriFutures. The next stage for these projects will be supported by Biosecurity Queensland, the Land Protection Fund, the Australian Government and hopefully others.

- Other weeds with current biological control projects include cat's claw creeper, lantana, parthenium, bellyache bush, chinee apple, sicklepod, Solanum orvum, Urena lobata, Singapore daisy, African tulip tree, harrisia and opuntioid cacti.

- Weed biological control involves laboratory trials, overseas exploration and overseas testing which are collectively time consuming and expensive. We continue to work with collaborators to most efficiently use available resources to find and test biological control agents for weeds. To that end, a draft 20-year national weed biological control pipeline strategy has been released by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS). This outlines a process for prioritising weed biological control targets and a framework for investment.

- We are mass-rearing and releasing approved biological control agents for Siam weed, parkinsonia and Cylindropuntia cacti. We are monitoring the releases of previously released biological control agents (e.g. cat's claw creeper, parthenium) to determine their establishment, spread and impact. This will help decide when releases can cease, the need for other agents or control methods, and to evaluate the benefit of biological control.

- For giant rat's tail grass, we are testing the pathogenicity and host-specificity of native and introduced pathogens. These could be used as classical biological control and mycoherbicides. We are also optimising the use of wick wipers to selectively apply herbicides. Projects are gathering data on the use of flupropanate, fertiliser and fire to manage giant rat's tail grass in a range of situations.

- Projects continue to support state and national eradication programs for numerous weeds, including red witchweed, miconia, mikania, limnocharis and white ball acacia. We carry out ecological studies to determine seed bank persistence and age to maturity, developing control methods and techniques to monitor eradication progress. A combination of a false host crop of soybean and ethylene fumigation has the potential to eradicate red witchweed (an obligate parasite of sugarcane, corn and other grasses) in 4–5 years.

- Herbicide trials are being conducted for several weeds including Siam weed, sicklepod, gamba grass, Aleman grass, bogmoss and weedy shrubs and trees. Extensive trials have found that flumioxazin (under the product name Clipper®) provides excellent control of many aquatic weeds including cabomba and Amazon frogbit, with low risk to

TS: INVASIVE PLANT CH 2021–22

aquatic fauna. Another herbicide, Procellacor, is also showing promise for other aquatic weeds.

• We are studying the ecology of several weeds to assist management. Information gained, such as seed longevity and age at maturity, helps to determine the timing and duration of treatment at a site. For Siam weed, results from collaborative research with the Northern Territory on the weed's ecology and control with herbicide and fire will be incorporated into a best practice management manual.

• We are reviewing a list of over 200 emerging weed species in Queensland to determine their priority for management. Ideally, limited resources should be

re 2 Elephant ear vine (*Argyreia nervosa*)

directed now before the weeds are widespread and abundant. Problematic weeds have common traits and are likely to be predictable.

Pest animal research.

• The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions has supported several pest animal projects through both funding and collaboration. These projects have been completed with reports available on the CISS website (https://invasives.com.au/our-publications).

• We are hoping that CISS will be funded beyond 2022 to support a new portfolio of projects that we have helped develop. This new portfolio includes projects to improve weed management.

• We had hoped to monitor the movement and feeding behaviour of wild dogs on north Queensland cattle properties. Logistical problems have delayed this work. It should provide quantification of wild dog impacts on cattle production, complementing previous assessments. Other projects have led to more effective baiting rates for wild dogs in southern Queensland, a guide to best practice management of peri-urban wild dogs and an evaluation of the impacts of cluster fencing on livestock production and wildlife, and the cost-effectiveness of the technique.

• Surveillance methods have been developed for two high-risk pest animals, red-eared slider turtles and Asian black-spined toads. Environmental DNA, call lures and traps can detect incursions. However, sampling using these tools needs to be sufficient to detect incursions with an acceptable probability.

• Best practice guidelines for deer management are being completed and will be available on the Pestsmart website (https://pestsmart.org.au/). Management guidelines are also being documented for peri-urban deer and wild dogs. Workshops for best practice management of wild deer were delivered to pest managers in southern and central Queensland in 2022.

• Our collaboration with NSW Department of Primary Industries has resulted in several publications on aspects of cost-effective management of deer in peri-urban, agricultural and conservation settings. A special issue of Wildlife Research will be dedicated to the ecology, impacts and management of wild deer in Australasia, with publication expected in early 2023.

• Rabbit management relies heavily on biological control, but disease impacts wax and wane in the short to medium term. In the longer term, population immunity increases while virulence declines in the biological control (at least with myxomatosis). Removing productive rabbit breeding sites (warrens, log piles) can compensate for dwindling biological control effectiveness and keep populations low following declines through drought or disease. This strategy is being evaluated in southern Queensland.

• There is renewed interest in feral pig management, particularly given the current threat of exotic livestock diseases that can be spread by pigs. Our projects cover optimal use of baits and associated permits, and broad-scale management strategies. This work has required field studies using radio telemetry, assessment of control programs, habitat modelling and development of survey techniques.

Photo Banner: Wild red fox cub - pxfuel

Photo Inline (left): Report cover pge

Photo Inline (right): Elephant Ear Vine (*Argyreia nervosa*)

NPAQ PILGRIMAGE HISTORY

- NPAQ

Bushwalking Queensland is currently undertaking a project to collate historical material from Pilgrimages.

The material can include Pilgrimage flyers, walks programs, newsletter reports, and photos from the pre-digital era.

In September 1965 – the first Bushwalking Queensland Pilgrimage to Mt Barney was carried out – formerly associated with the use of the word 'Pilgrimage'.

In September 1970 – the Mt Barney Pilgrimage was well-attended with 40 of Bushwalking Queensland members climbing either Leaning, Logans, South East, South or Savages.

There were few members from other clubs in Federation and the trip had been abandoned by Federation in favour of a Federation Pilgrimage, which was held at Wyberba the same year.

(Acknowledgement: Ron Farmer, paper on 1960s Pilgrimage events, 2018)

In September 1971 YHA Bushwalkers Qld hosted the Pilgrimage at Wyberba:

The walks program reported "good attendance with trips going to Pyramids, River Cave, The Sphinx, and Aztec temple".

From 1971, bushwalking clubs have taken it in turn to host each year's annual gathering, on behalf of Queensland Federation of Bushwalking Clubs (now Bushwalking Qld). A list of pilgrimage events can be found at https://www.bushwalkingqueensland.org.au/pil_history.php

September 1975 hosted by NPAQ

The campsite location was Coulson's creek and on the Saturday, participants went for a bushwalk through Mt Greville.

On Saturday night, everyone enjoyed campfire songs and stories. Then on Sunday, the group climbed Bluff Rock and the Needles.

The earliest photo in the archive, from a Pilgrimage event, is of a YHA Bushie winning the 'Billy Boiling' at the 1976 Teviot Gap event, however the above have recently been discovered from the 1975 NPAQ run event.

For more information please contact:

Nancy Hodge,

nbhodge@bigpond.com
Ph 07 3349 1788

Photo Banner : supplied

Photo Inline: NPAQ 1975 trip notes - NPAQ archives

UPCOMING NPAQ EVENTS

- NPAQ

National Parks Association of Queensland Inc.

Save the dates for these exciting NPAQ events coming up over the next few months!

NPAQ Annual Dinner

The NPAQ Annual Dinner is a highly anticipated event that celebrates the accomplishments of the organization and its members in their conservation endeavours. To be held in Brisbane city, this event provides an evening of inspiration, connection, and entertainment.

The event features guest speaker Dr Sally Driml, who has experience in economics and environmental management and will be presenting on *"Revealing the invisible economic values of nature."*

The NPAQ Annual Dinner is not only a celebration but also an opportunity to raise funds to support ongoing conservation efforts.

The date has been set for June 17th at The Royal on the Park Hotel in Brisbane. Ticket sales will open mid May.

NPAQ Mountain Biking Seminar

Across Australia, the popularity of recreational mountain biking is growing, particularly in protected areas. This is not surprising given the aesthetic quality of protected areas and the health and wellbeing benefits that can be derived from spending time in nature.

Questions arise, however, as to whether there should be any limits on where mountain biking should take place in protected areas generally, and in national parks specifically.

Research to date has shown that there can be a range of environmental and social impacts associated with mountain biking in protected areas, depending on the type of mountain biking, the infrastructure provided and the sensitivity of the local environment.

This interactive seminar will explore the research, the level of demand and the suitability of mountain biking in protected areas, with a particular focus on national parks, to help inform future decision-making

The seminar is planned for mid June with a venue and date to be confirmed by mid May.

Through these upcoming gatherings, the NPAQ continues to inspire individuals to appreciate, protect, and responsibly engage with Queensland's national parks.

Whether attending the elegant Annual Dinner or immersing oneself in the mountain biking seminar, participants contribute to the preservation of these natural wonders while forging connections with fellow nature enthusiasts.

PRESERVING PARADISE IMPORTANCE OF QLD

- Samantha Smith

Nestled within the diverse landscapes of Queensland, Australia, lies a network of national parks that stand as guardians of natural beauty and biodiversity.

These protected areas play a pivotal role in preserving the state's unique ecosystems, ensuring the survival of countless plant and animal species.

Spanning vast areas of pristine wilderness, these protected areas serve as havens for biodiversity, opportunities for recreation, and vital contributors to the economy.

In this article, we delve into the significance of Queensland's national parks, highlighting their role in conservation, tourism, and the well-being of both the environment and local communities.

Guardians of Biodiversity

Queensland's national parks are essential guardians of biodiversity, harboring a remarkable range of plant and animal species.

These protected areas provide a safe haven for unique and endangered wildlife, enabling them to thrive and maintain balanced ecosystems.

From the lush rainforests of Daintree National Park to the vibrant coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, these parks represent critical habitat for countless species, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

By safeguarding critical habitats, the parks maintain the delicate balance of ecosystems, ensuring the survival of both iconic and lesser-known species.

The protection of Queensland's diverse flora and fauna within these national parks is essential for maintaining the health of the environment on a regional and global scale.

Ecotourism and Recreation

Beyond their ecological significance, Queensland's national parks play a pivotal role in outdoor recreation.

Visitors from around the world flock to these protected areas, seeking opportunities for hiking, wildlife observation, camping, and adventure sports.

The parks' diverse landscapes, including towering mountains, cascading waterfalls, and sprawling savannahs, offer an array of experiences for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike.

Sustainable tourism practices within the parks ensure that recreational activities leave minimal impact on the environment, allowing visitors to appreciate the natural wonders while preserving them for future generations.

By engaging with these natural wonders, visitors develop a deeper appreciation for the environment, fostering a sense of stewardship.

Climate Change Resilience

As the impacts of climate change intensify, the conservation value of Queensland's national parks becomes even more evident.

These protected areas act as climate change refuges, providing a buffer against rising temperatures and habitat

E: THE VITAL NATIONAL PARKS

destruction.

Preserving intact ecosystems within national parks helps maintain natural processes such as carbon sequestration and water filtration, essential for mitigating climate change.

Moreover, the parks serve as living laboratories, allowing scientists to study and better understand the effects of climate change on different ecosystems, aiding in the development of adaptation strategies.

Cultural and Indigenous Heritage

Queensland's national parks are not just repositories of natural wonders but also bearers of cultural and Indigenous heritage.

These lands hold significant cultural value for Indigenous communities, carrying stories, traditions, and spiritual connections that have shaped their identities for millennia.

The parks provide a platform for cultural expression, sharing ancient knowledge, and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Recognizing and respecting the cultural importance of national parks strengthens the bond between people and nature, fostering a shared commitment to conservation.

Environmental Education and Research

Queensland's national parks serve as living classrooms, offering invaluable educational opportunities for visitors of all ages.

The parks provide a platform for learning about the region's unique ecosystems, geology, and cultural heritage.

Interpretive signage, guided tours, and educational programs facilitate a deeper understanding of the natural world, promoting environmental stewardship.

Moreover, these protected areas support vital scientific research, enabling scientists to study and monitor ecosystem dynamics, climate change impacts, and the effects of human activities.

The knowledge gained from these studies contributes to evidence-based conservation strategies and sustainable management practices.

Economic Benefits

The economic benefits derived from Queensland's national parks cannot be overlooked.

Tourism generated by these protected areas contributes significantly to the local and state economies.

Visitors spend on nearby accommodations, dining, transportation, and recreational activities, stimulating business growth and creating employment opportunities for local communities.

Conclusion

Queensland's national parks are a treasure trove of natural wonders, safeguarding biodiversity, promoting ecotourism, aiding in climate change resilience, and preserving cultural heritage. These protected areas serve as living showcases of the beauty and importance of our natural world.

PARK IN FOCUS

Naree Budjong Djara National Park

Nestled off the coast of souteast Queensland, the Naree Budjong Djara National Park stands as a testament to the country's diverse and awe-inspiring natural beauty. This remarkable national park, located on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), offers visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in a pristine and untouched environment.

Rich Cultural and Environmental Heritage

Naree Budjong Djara National Park holds significant cultural and environmental importance for the Quandamooka people, the Traditional Owners of the land. For thousands of years, the Quandamooka people have maintained a deep spiritual connection with the island, considering it a place of great cultural significance and a repository of their history and traditions.

The park is home to many sites of cultural and archaeological importance, including midden sites, scarred trees, and stone arrangements. Visitors to Naree Budjong Djara National Park can gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the Quandamooka culture by participating in guided tours and learning from the Traditional Owners themselves.

Flora and Fauna

The park is a sanctuary for a rich variety of flora and fauna. The coastal areas are home to numerous bird species, including the endangered eastern curlew. Exploring the park's rainforests reveals a vibrant tapestry of plant life, with towering eucalyptus trees, ancient cycads, and delicate ferns.

The park's waters teem with marine life, including dolphins, turtles, and manta rays, making it a popular destination for snorkeling and diving. During the annual whale migration, visitors may even catch a glimpse of humpback whales as they pass by the coast.

Activities and Attractions

Stretching across approximately 54,000 hectares, Naree Budjong Djara National Park boasts an astonishing variety of landscapes. The park's coastline has pristine white sandy beaches, crystal-clear turquoise waters, and rocky headlands. Cylinder Beach, Main Beach, and Frenchman's Beach are popular spots for swimming, surfing, and relaxing under the sun.

Venturing inland, visitors are greeted by lush rainforests, vibrant wetlands, and expansive sand dunes. The park offers several walking tracks and trails that cater to different fitness levels, allowing visitors to explore its diverse landscapes on foot. From the breathtaking views atop the Point Lookout Gorge Walk to the tranquility of Brown Lake, there is no shortage of natural wonders to discover in Naree Budjong Djara National Park.

Conservation Efforts

Naree Budjong Djara National Park is not only a place of beauty and natural wonder but also serves as a vital conservation area. The park plays a crucial role in protecting and preserving the delicate ecosystems found on North Stradbroke Island. Efforts are underway to rehabilitate and restore areas affected by sand mining, which was conducted on the island for many years.

To ensure the sustainability of the park's natural resources, visitors are encouraged to follow sustainable practices, such as sticking to designated tracks, refraining from littering, and respecting the cultural and environmental values of the park.

Naree Budjong Djara National Park is a unique and beautiful natural area that offers visitors a chance to reconnect with nature. From its rugged landscapes and diverse habitats, to its rich cultural heritage and important conservation efforts, the park has something to offer everyone who loves the outdoors.

Photo Banner: Naree Budjong Djara National Park - Paul Donatiu

Photo Inline (above): Naree Budjong Djara National Park - Paul Donatiu

Photo Inline (left): Naree Budjong Djara National Park - Unknown

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Eastern Bearded Dragon

The Eastern Bearded Dragon, scientifically known as *Pogona barbata*, is a popular reptile species native to Australia. These lizards are often kept as pets due to their unique appearance and docile nature.

They are a medium-sized lizard that is found in eastern and southeastern parts of Australia. They are commonly found in open woodland, savanna, and coastal heath habitats. These lizards have a stocky build, with a triangular-shaped head and spiny scales under their chin that resemble a beard.

Their color varies from brown to gray, with patches of lighter colors on their belly and sides. They also have distinct markings on their back, resembling a diamond or V-shape, which help them camouflage in their natural habitat.

Adult males can reach lengths of up to 60cm and females up to 50cm from nose to tail tip.

Eastern Bearded Dragons are omnivores and feed on a variety of insects, fruits, and vegetables. Their diet in the wild typically includes insects such as crickets, beetles, and grasshoppers, as well as fruits and vegetation such as berries, flowers, and leaves.

In their natural habitat, Eastern Bearded Dragons are known to bask in the sun to regulate their body temperature. When threatened, they will inflate their body and display their spiny beard, making them appear larger and more intimidating to predators.

This species is native to eastern and southeastern parts of Australia, including Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia. They are commonly found in open woodland, savanna, and coastal heath habitats.

These lizards reach sexual maturity at around 18 months of age. Females can lay up to 24 eggs per clutch, which hatch after an incubation period of 50 to 80 days. The hatchlings are typically around 10 cm in length and require a specialized diet and care to ensure healthy growth.

While the Eastern Bearded Dragon is not currently listed as endangered, their population has declined in some areas due to habitat loss and fragmentation.

Additionally, they are sometimes collected from the wild for the pet trade, which can put additional pressure on wild populations.

Photo Banner & Inline: Eastern bearded dragon (*Pogona barbata*) - *Samantha Smith*

NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

- Arrum Harahap

In this digital age, we spend much time indoors, staring at screens, detaching from the need for sunshine, fresh air, and greenery. I came to Brisbane in December 2022, leaving my rural life in Sumatra, Indonesia, for an Australian metropolitan city. I quickly became trapped in the fast-paced, metro lifestyle typical in the big city that I frequently forgot to make time for the natural world. However, spending time in nature by reaping the ecosystem services has been proven essential for maintaining physical, emotional, and mental health.

As a person born and raised in a mountainous area, I constantly seek nature to nourish myself, find balance, feel grounded, and feel connected to mother earth. The question is, where should I go to?

Tamborine National Park is an excellent place for me to enjoy the pleasures of nature in Southeast Queensland.

It is only an hour's drive from the city to Tamborine National Park, featuring stunning waterfalls, lush rainforests, and breathtaking views. As a result, it is a popular tourist attraction for visitors from around the world.

Many challenging track routes exist, from strolls to challenging hikes through breathtaking landscapes and views. I was amazed by the natural beauty of the rainforest surrounded by the sounds of native wildlife. A day in nature left me feeling refreshed and revitalized, thanks to the fresh air and natural surroundings. The adventure of traversing the forest left me with a sense of exhilaration and accomplishment. Here are some picks from me for discovering the natural spark and enjoying the ecosystem services from Tamborine National Park:

Tamborine Sky Walk

I began my journey to find some spark in Tamborine by walking along the Tamborine Rainforest Skywalk. The skywalk provided me with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to explore the lush rainforest canopy from a suspended bridge, with breathtaking views of the stunning landscape. Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to spot the elusive pademelon, a small marsupial native to the area. Hey, do not forget to take some photos and leave nothing than footprints.

Curtis Falls

Curtis Falls is a short, easy-to-follow trail; at least, that's what I experienced. To reach Curtis Falls, take a leisurely 1.1km hike through the lush rainforest. The track is well-kept and provides a pleasant walk for people of all ages and fitness levels.

Cedar Creek Falls

Cedar Creek Falls has well-maintained trails that are 1 and 3 km long and although this route is more challenging than Curtis's track, it is still accessible, to me. The trail winds through the lush rainforest, and it's essential to wear appropriate footwear and bring plenty of water because the course can be steep and rocky. Once I have arrived at Cedar Creek Falls, there's plenty to see and do in the surrounding area. Of course, I did not miss the opportunity to swim in the rocks pool.

*Here is my note before visiting this national park. It's worth noting that some areas may be sacred to local Aboriginal people. You must respect the area's cultural significance and avoid disturbing the natural environment. Littering is strictly forbidden, and you must remove all trash before leaving.

Plan your visit today and experience the enchantment of sparkling nature for yourself!

Photo Banner Tamborine National Park - *Samantha Smith*

Photo inline (left above) Tamborine Skywalk - Witches Cottages

Photo inline (left below) Curtis Falls - Paul Balfe

RANGER SPOTLIGHT

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

Senior Ranger Shane Hume
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Shane is a Senior Ranger based in Bladensburg National Park, near Winton in Central West Queensland. Having always had a love for working in remote and regional locations coupled with a personal interest in native fauna and flora, gravitating towards a career as a Ranger was inevitable.

How long have you worked in national parks?

Nearly 15 years, starting my career as a Ranger in 2008 at Lochern National Park, south of Longreach.

Which parks have you worked in?

I was a Ranger at Lochern National Park for a few years and then moved a little further south to Welford National Park, where I stayed for 10 years and took over the role of Ranger in Charge for the Cooper Catchment. I have had the pleasure of working at many amazing places in Central West Queensland including Munga Thirri, Diamantina, Astrebla and Idalia national park and quite a few more with fire and pest management work.

Where do you work now and what is special about your current park?

Recently my wife, Mary, and I moved to Bladensburg National Park and took on the roles of Ranger and Ranger in Charge. It's a little closer to town then the 270km that Welford was from Longreach which is a good bonus. There are so many cool things to see at Bladensburg National Park, too many to list. I do like walking through the old Homestead every morning which is now the Bladensburg visitors centre, and looking at the sauropod front leg bone on display. Not too many people can say they see one of those every day. Don't worry, it's in a case so it doesn't run away!

What is your most memorable moment as a ranger?

Not long ago I had a bit of a stand-off with a Kowari. A Kowari is a nocturnal carnivorous mammal about the size of a small rodent and looks a bit like a squirrel. It has a mouthful of sharp teeth like a wolf and its tail has a fluffy end like a lion. We came across it while driving one night out at Astrebla Downs National Park, conducting feral animal control, and it wouldn't move off the road. I got out of the car and walked up to it, but it raised its hackles and flared its fluffy tail and stared me down. The attitude and defiance of such a small creature was memorable. Quickly realising I was no match, I got back in the car and drove around it. My other best moment was receiving the Director General's Award for Individual Safety in 2018. It was unexpected and very humbling.

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

Over the years I have assisted with emergency natural disaster responses including cyclone Marcia in 2014 and numerous wildfires like Crows Nest in 2019. I hope in a small way my help in these natural disasters made a difference for those communities in their time of need.

I often have to remind myself that I'm being paid to do what I love, that probably makes it the best job in the world.

Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?

One of my favourite experiences was watching the sunset from the little red sand dune at Welford National Park. The setting sun casts an aura over the red sands while overlooking the green and golden spinifex blowing in the breeze. The contrast against the white bark of the Central Australian ghost gums just makes it so picture-perfect.

What is your top tip for visitors to your park?

When you come to Bladensburg National Park you can wander around the old homestead and take in the pastoral history. It's a great stop for many on their outback journey. I would encourage you to take Scrammy Drive to Scrammy Gorge and take in the history along the way. Then to finish it off, stop at Scrammy Lookout at the edge of the escarpment with a panoramic snapshot across the Mitchell Grass Downs and western Queensland.

Photo Banner: QPWS Senior Ranger Shane Hume Waiting for the sunset at Welford National Park, 2016.

Photo inline (above): Just new in 2008—NAIDOC Week at Scrammy Lookout, Bladensburg National Park, Shane and his wife Mary.

Photo inline (below): Shane receiving his award from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Deputy Director-General Ben Klaassen in 2018.

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

WHAT'S ON

NPAQ activities

Eagleby Wetlands Birdwatching
Date: 21 May 2023
Meet: 7:30am - Logan Street , Eagleby , Qld
Cost: $5
Leader: Geraldine Buchanan (0416 943 280)

Kureelpa Falls, Mapleton National Park
Date: 4 Jun 2023
Meet: 8:45am - Mapleton Forest Road , Mapleton , Queensland , 4560
Cost: $5
Leader: Frank Freeman (0427 655 514)

Samford Village Rail History and Walk
Date: 24 May 2023
Meet: 9:30am - 14 Station Street , Samford Village , Queensland , 4520
Cost: $5
Leader: Len Lwory (0428 335 572)

Archerfield Wetlands Birdwatching
Date: 25 Jun 2023
Meet: 7:30am - 438 Bowhill Rd , Durack , Qld , 4077
Cost: $5
Leader: Geraldine Buchanan (0416 943 280)

NPAQ Major events

NPAQ Mountain Biking Seminar
Date: early June 2023 *to be confirmed
Time: 9am - 11:30am
Venue: Square Library, Brisbane
Cost: Free, registrations essential

NPAQ Annual Dinner
Date: 17th June 2023
Time: 6:30pm - 10pm
Venue: The Royal on the Park Hotel
Cost: *to be confirmed

AN ILLUMINATING EXPERIENCE
- a poem by Bezza

Testing out his new camper, Kevin drove to a national park.
The area was full of beauty but the facilities were stark.

The showers had cold water and the lighting non existent,
But this did not deter our man; he really was persistent.

He filled a rubber shower bag and left it in the sun.
It would be warmed to perfection when the day was done.

At twilight all was growing dark and came the time to shower.
With ropes he hoisted up the bag. It didn't take much power.

Undressed and armed with soap and towel, he'd done all that he oughta.
He turned the spigot on the tap and down flowed the lovely water.

Now Kevin was a big man, white as snow and broad.
He washed his mass of grey hair first; joy was not the word!

But the sound of voices down the track soon caught his attention.
He muttered a few syllables I wouldn't dare to mention.

A group of torch-bearing youths going to a lecture
By the Park Ranger at 7.00 had now entered the picture.

A brilliant beam on sudsy buttocks, what an amazing sight!
Every torch followed, and the blaze was pretty bright.

"Turn off those bloody lights", came the monstrous roar,
But this just raised the interest and they wanted to see more.

The group marched on down the road in fits of boisterous laughter.
That's a story they would tell for quite some time thereafter.

You never know what you'll discover in a national park -
The strangest living creatures can be exposed after dark!

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