

# protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

## **Recovery:** Threatened species recovery Nature-based recovery

**PLUS**

October state election  
Think outside

**ALSO FEATURED**

Cling gobies  
Ranger spotlight



Issue 29  
Spring 2020



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## About NPAQ

### Our Purpose

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



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- Donate – support our work
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- Share a bush adventure with children – download NPAQ's *Kids in National Parks* guide



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT



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

Welcome to the Spring edition of Protected and wishing you all safety and good health in these uncertain times.

In this edition you will find articles about the upcoming election, threatened species recovery, nature-based recovery, a ranger spotlight, and more. The article about the election prepared by Larissa Cordner is timely given the State will be going to the polls in two months. We are concerned that the promised Protected Area Strategy with funding is still not released, let alone being implemented.

Advocacy is an important function of the Association and there is constant consideration around how to be most effective. Recently we sought member views on a policy regarding ecotourism and national parks. Although the proposed policy was generally supported, a wide range of views was expressed. We have formed the view that it is better to be a contributor to the ongoing debate around ecotourism in parks rather than be on the sidelines. The main goal is to grow the park estate and ensure its proper management for the long term.

It is generally true that the approval process for new development proposals consumes much money, time and energy and often generates more heat than light. It is also generally true that such processes conclude with the public being assured that all is well as the development will proceed but with a myriad of stringent conditions. A common weakness is that during construction and operation there is inadequate policing of compliance and insufficient refinement

of conditions to ensure key risks are being managed well. For ecotourism in parks to be accepted in the long term, assurance and responsiveness of operators must be of the highest standard. The failure of Queensland coastal national park island resorts is a salient reminder.

It is often said that the conservation movement is weakened because it is disunited, yet it is a reality that groups do have a range of views - this is evidenced both by the number of groups and by the effort required to prepare any kind of joint statement. Typically, one end of the spectrum is of the view that an action should not proceed and the other end that it should be well managed. It seems that the radical and revolutionary ideas are as valuable as the pragmatist who works on making the best of the present situation. One sets the longer-term goal while the other optimizes in a much shorter time frame. Both can generally agree on a high level objective, however, divergence can occur when considering action, responses and priorities in real time. The recognition of smoking being bad for human health was news in the

1960s, yet it has taken decades and large sums of government educational funding to significantly reduce the number of smokers in Australia. Self-interest was clearly at stake in that case. Our declining biodiversity does not have such an obvious link to our self-interest, however, many studies now show the links between national parks and human mental and physical health. Continuing to do little now and into the future will be consequential for us and for biodiversity. Science keeps reminding us of this.

As this is my last note as President, I wish to thank all Councillors, staff and volunteers for their work and goodwill over the past three years. Deb Marwedel, Neil Williams and Yvonne Parsons who are also stepping down from Council are recognised in particular for their wisdom and generosity. People giving of their time united in knowing the importance of conserving our biodiversity for its own sake and for community and visitor enjoyment is vital to the Association. I wish every success to the Association as a robust protected area estate becomes a reality for the state.



# QUEENSLAND'S NATIONAL PARKS THE OCTOBER ELECTION

Larissa Cordner, Member and Marketing, Communications and Engagement Committee member,  
National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

**It is said that opportunity presents itself not often, and opportunity did indeed seem to present itself for Queensland's protected areas at the 2017 state election.**

During the February 2017 election campaign, then Deputy Premier Jackie Trad said:

*"A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will release and implement a Queensland Protected Area Strategy that will establish a world leading protected area system that effectively conserves the State's unique natural assets for the benefit of all Queenslanders.*

*The strategy will set the direction for the management and growth of Queensland's protected area estate for the next ten years, better connecting the community with their protected areas as well as sustainably growing and managing our existing protected area estate."*

As the time lagged between that election and the upcoming October election this year, it has become apparent that the opportunity was not made the most of – three years and waiting for the Queensland Protected Area Strategy, not yet released and far from being implemented.

At present, Queensland's land-based protected areas cover just over 8 per cent of the state. Of this 8 per cent, about 70% are State lands such as national parks (owned, managed or jointly managed Indigenous land), while about 30% are protected areas on private land (Nature Refuges and Special Wildlife Reserves), which are owned and managed by private individuals, businesses and not-for-profit organisations.<sup>1</sup>

As a paradox to the opening quote

on opportunity, there is also a saying that 'opportunities are like buses, there is always another one coming'. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown open the door of opportunity to Queenslanders to reconnect with nature close to home. Many sought reprieve in protected areas, to find solace and inspiration to survive a very real human need that was, and still is, necessarily deprived of us through social distancing. 'The natural places fill up our bucket' my 6-year-old son says, or as I like to say 'quenches that part of us that has an evolutionary need to connect with nature'.

We have seen a revived Queensland government focus much of the COVID-19 economic recovery on domestic travel to our national parks. Beautiful pictures of Queensland's natural assets are plastered on billboards and buses looping the CBD and outskirts, showing off our splendid national park assets and begging of us to visit. As the economic recovery continues and we grapple with the possibility of a

second wave, it has not been lost on the Queensland Government that national parks are a key economic asset for the state, offering regional employment and sustained income through domestic tourism.

As the focus in society at the minute is on economic recovery, we should not lose sight of the role protected areas play in restoring endangered wildlife populations. In a number of instances, protected areas such as national parks have provided the last refuges for threatened species. For example, the northern hairy-nosed wombat is found only in Epping Forest National Park, north-west of Rockhampton. The last wombat census at Epping Forest National Park estimated a population of about one hundred and sixty-three northern hairy-nosed wombats.

This was the remaining population following the demise of the species in its original range. It is unclear why the wombats were able to survive at Epping Forest National Park, but it is likely that the positive and deliberate management by the Dennis family



Above: The author's family enjoying Mount Barney National Park. Photo: Supplied.

# NATIONAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION

(who managed the land before it was gazetted as a national park) was a contributing factor. Without national park protection, the northern hairy-nosed wombat could already be extinct today.

New national parks will support Queensland's rich and diverse wildlife; further invest in Queensland's tourism industry and progress state and national protected area promises. In the *Lost Opportunities*<sup>2</sup> report released in February 2020, five Queensland conservation groups including NPAQ, identified 175 properties with very high biodiversity value that could have been bought and protected since 2015, but were not. An inadequate acquisition budget for the Department of Environment and Science, and now exacerbated by a delayed Protected Area Strategy, is leaving our state behind.

In fact, over these last three years, funding for the purchase of land for new national parks has been dramatically cut, from nearly \$20 million per year over the period 2012-15, to less than \$6 million per year subsequently.

In the lead up to the 2020 election in October, the campaign to increase the protected area estate in Queensland is in full swing. The NPAQ is focused on bipartisan outcomes for national parks, and the alliance of environment groups working on the issue in Queensland is ever growing. NPAQ recommends an ambitious strategic expansion of the Queensland national park system to save our unique wildlife, while also boosting the state's nature tourism economy.

It is reasonable to expect the allocation of an acquisition budget to



**Above:** Wet sclerophyll forest, Mount Windsor National Park.

**Banner:** South Johnstone River, Tully Gorge National Park. Photos: Kerry Trapnell.

allow the purchase of land for national park protection, to secure high priority properties needed to save ecosystems and species threatened by habitat loss and degradation. Parks management budgets must also be substantially boosted to ensure parks are resourced and managed to save nature as best they can in the face of the escalating climate crisis. Additional investment is critical to protect habitat through active land management, including tackling destructive fire, noxious

weeds and feral animals.

Opportunities will present themselves once again in the lead up to the election, and then the question that needs to be asked: to what extent is the government prepared to support nature outcomes in a time of unparalleled societal upheaval?

<sup>1</sup> <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/79998>

<sup>2</sup> <https://npaq.org.au/current-issues/lost-opportunities-for-new-national-parks-in-queensland/>

### **National Parks Association of Queensland's election asks for the upcoming October state election:**

- Premier and Treasury support of the State's National Park Estate for their inherent biological importance, value to the community and fundamental importance to the tourist industry and regional employment.
- Release and implement a fully funded Queensland Protected Area Strategy to provide a clear pathway to achieving strategic protection of 17% of the State (a long standing commitment); include sufficient management funding to ensure the integrity of the National Park Estate and to build threatened species and climate change resilience.
- Prioritise a nature based regional economic stimulus for Black Summer Bushfire ecosystem and COVID-19 recovery in national parks.

# QPWS BUSHFIRE RECOVERY THREATENED SPECIES

Dr Tracey Churchill

Bushfire Recovery Program Coordinator, Threatened Species Operations, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service & Partnerships, Department of Environment and Science

## An unexpected change of scenery

The Australian bushfire season of 2019/20 was unprecedented in terms of its scale and intensity. In Queensland, over 7 million hectares was burnt, including important habitats for more than 600 threatened plant and animal species. According to the Bureau of Meteorology, 2019 was Australia's hottest and driest year on record. In southern Queensland, the preceding extensive drought exacerbated the impact of these bushfires on our native biota, which was already experiencing limited water availability, habitat cover and food resources.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) rangers had to close many parks, clear fallen burnt trees, and ensure safe access for the on-ground post-fire assessments. Control of specific weeds and pest animals was initiated to help protect key biodiversity values. QPWS and other staff from across the Department of Environment and Science established a process to map fire extent and severity within protected areas. By comparing satellite imagery before and after a fire, an area was allocated to one of five severity classes (unburnt to extreme) which was field checked to ensure accuracy. The level of fire scorch or consumption of the canopy (e.g. trees in a forest; shrubs in a heathland) was a key part of the assessment. The spatial patterns of fire severity were then overlaid with regional ecosystems, as well as the locality records and predicted habitats for native species, to assess ecological impacts and provide recommendations for QPWS park management. The lessons learnt, and the assessment methodology created,

will facilitate a faster approach to post-fire evaluation in the future.

## Planning the journey

To prioritise recovery efforts for flora and fauna classified as threatened under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*, QPWS considered the overlap of their known and potential distribution with fire extent. Scientific experts then reviewed the maps and identified important on-ground actions that could ensure their persistence in the landscape and support their recovery. The outcomes were checked against a broader scale analysis undertaken by the Australian Government for species listed as threatened under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. QPWS then established a program dedicated to the recovery of fire impacted threatened species with funding from the Australian Government's

Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery program, guided by their Expert Panel. Researchers, non-government organisations and community groups also received Commonwealth funding for threatened species recovery on both public and private lands across southern Queensland.

The QPWS-led Bushfire Recovery Program has projects focussed on the recovery of 52 priority threatened plant and animal species across four locations: Gondwana World Heritage Area; Great Sandy and Noosa National Parks; Oakview and Nangur National Parks, and; Bulburin National Park. In addition, experts at the Queensland Museum considered which invertebrate species had restricted distributions and other attributes that made them vulnerable to the impacts of severe fires across these areas. A total of 47 spider, insect and crayfish species were identified for initial



**Above:** Silver headed Antechinus *Antechinus argentus* at Bulburin National Park; Photo: Harry Hines. **Banner:** Burnt habitat in the Cooloola section of Great Sandy Park; Photo: Tracey Churchill.

# PROGRAM FOR

survey, with other groups, like snails, yet to be assessed. They include moss dependant bugs, rainforest dwelling king crickets, wetland reliant dragonflies and leaf-litter dependant spiders. The tiny pelican spiders (genus *Austarchaea*) are especially of conservation concern, being an ancient lineage with multiple short-range species endemic to different localities across the Gondwana World Heritage Area and which are little changed from their fossilised relatives of 150 million years ago.

## Sharing the challenge

In collaboration with the Queensland Herbarium, each QPWS Bushfire Recovery project is being led by a highly qualified scientist to plan and deliver priority recovery actions. These include: protecting any critical unburnt refugia from fire in the short term; undertaking surveys to establish the state of priority threatened species' populations; targeting weed and pest animal control to protect habitat and reduce predation, and; supporting programs to augment populations

that are in significant decline or genetically isolated. The QPWS fire severity mapping has steered project efforts to fire sensitive communities that were burnt, as well as to more fire-tolerant vegetation types that were subject to very extensive or severe fires. The 2019/20 fires burnt significant areas of fire-sensitive ecosystems, such as remnant semi-evergreen vine thickets at Oakview National Park, and rainforests - including the high-altitude temperate rainforests (over 1300 metres above sea level) of Mount Superbus in Main Range National Park.

The conservation status of the priority species in the QPWS projects vary from '*Near Threatened*' in Queensland (such as the Albert's lyrebird) to '*Critically Endangered*' at the national level (the Nangur skink). The Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage Area contains the most biota for post-fire evaluation with 22 threatened plant species, and 13 vertebrate species including: the eastern bristlebird, rufous scrub-bird, Coxen's fig-parrot,

Fleay's barred frog, spotted-tailed quoll, brush-tailed rock-wallaby, Hastings River mouse, New Holland mouse and long-nosed potoroo. By working closely with QPWS, other Commonwealth grant recipients are delivering complimentary activities to those underway on national parks to contribute to a more effective landscape-wide approach to wildlife recovery. For example, the natural resource management group Healthy Land and Water have been undertaking urgent weed control projects in Lamington National Park and adjoining areas to help QPWS manage this immediate threat to the regeneration of native plant species.

In the coastal wallum and heath of Noosa National Park and the Cooloola section of the Great Sandy National Park, the recovery needs of species such as the wallum sedge frog, southern emu-wren and oxleyan pygmy perch are being assessed. At Bulburin National Park, the nationally endangered Bulburin nut is being surveyed in collaboration with university students and to ensure the conservation of genetic variability for this species, the Macadamia Conservation Trust is establishing populations of Bulburin nut outside of the park. QPWS will continue to collaborate with organisations that can help the recovery of threatened species and protect them from the risk of future bushfires. The proactive management of fire hazards or complimentary pest control programs on properties adjoining protected areas, such as by private landholders and First Nations people will be an essential part of ongoing efforts to protect our unique biodiversity, especially those most at risk from the impacts of a changing climate.



**Above:** Ringed thin-tailed gecko *Phyllurus caudiannulatus* at Bulburin National Park; Photo: Harry Hines.

# A NATURE-BASED RECOVERY FOR QUEENSLAND?

Russell Watkinson

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a huge impact on Queensland, Australia and the rest of the world. How we emerge from the devastating impacts on our economy, environment, social cohesion and personal health will set the direction in Queensland for decades.

## The Global Scene

A recent article in the IUCN Parks journal<sup>1</sup> examines the impact of the pandemic on protected and conserved areas across the world through direct and indirect impacts. Where will conservation feature in the policy responses to rebuild economic growth and human wellbeing? The paper outlines three scenarios on how protected and conserved areas could fair in global recovery:

1. A return to normal i.e pre-pandemic situation,
2. A global economic depression and decline in conservation and environmental protection,
3. A new and transformative relationship with nature.

The last scenario envisages a new nature- and climate-friendly future for our planet based upon humanity's relationship to nature. Is this just a "green dream"? Could a nature-based recovery scenario have potential for Queensland?

## Applying a Global Perspective to Queensland

The paper specifies three principles to guide a pandemic recovery in line with a nature-based recovery together with three phases of actions. How could this apply to Queensland?

**Principle 1: COVID-19 is a symptom of the wider environmental crisis** - i.e. unsustainable development leading to environmental degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems.

In Queensland, Cubbie Station has water licences for 460 gigalitres<sup>2</sup>; new coal development in the Galilee basin is estimated to impact 6285 kms of streams<sup>3</sup>; and koala habitat destruction increased by 7% to over 17,000 hectares between 2012 and 2018<sup>4</sup>. These examples suggest we may not have the balance right.

**Principle 2: We must commit to and act to achieve a healthy sustainable planet** - i.e. COVID-19 shows us that human-animal-ecosystem health is intricately linked. An integrated approach could generate significant jobs and better rebuild the economy incorporating custodianship of nature as a core component.

**Principle 3: Protected and conserved areas provide broad benefits to society, subject to enormous stress due to societal response to COVID-19** - i.e. better recognise how conservation areas help our response to climate change, supply clean air and water, mental and physical health, and provide livelihoods via tourism and rural businesses. Queensland needs to better account for these benefits to the economy and allocate budgets for protected areas management accordingly. For example, national parks visitor associated spending in Queensland is estimated at \$4.4 billion, a nine-fold return on investment<sup>5</sup>; the economic value of all pollinators contribution to crops

in Queensland is estimated at \$5.6 billion<sup>6</sup>. Rather than simply a cost, protected area expenditure should be regarded as an investment in a range of benefits that provide a healthy return on the dollar.

## The Way Forward

Three phases of action are proposed to address the pandemic and recent bushfires: Rescue, Recover and Rebuild.

**Rescue:** In Queensland, parks have benefitted from COVID-19 restrictions and closures allowing rangers time to assess bushfire impacts and plan immediate remedial measures needed to aid recovery. The Commonwealth has allocated \$200 million for Wildlife and Habitat recovery with \$1.95 million allocated to Queensland for immediate rescue works<sup>7</sup>. The Queensland Government has allocated \$8.9 million for a Jobs Boost from upgrading existing park infrastructure<sup>8</sup>. This is very modest given the overall value of these natural assets.

**Recover:** With the Government emphasis on rebuilding the economy, reducing "red/green tape" and "jobs-jobs-jobs" we must ensure that the role of protected areas in supporting mental and physical health, regional employment through visitation and tourism, and environmental services such as pollination of crops and clean water are fully recognised, and not threatened by relaxing regulations. NPAQ has proposals to help people reconnect with nature through grass-roots activities in parks. We, and others such as the Pew Foundation, also are formulating proposals to Govern-



ment and business to fund protected area programs that will provide local employment opportunities, including First Nations employment, through protecting our biodiversity and developing better visitor facilities.

NPAQ consider that our national parks system has been underfunded for decades and now is the time to re-invest in our protected area system to advance the Governments' commitment to bring the protected area estate up to 17% from the current 8%, alongside adequate long term funding to ensure better management. Queensland's National Parks budget for the entire State, excluding capital funds, is currently \$319 million, less than half the cost of an 11 km upgrade of the Bruce Highway<sup>9</sup>. This appears a low commitment to re-sourcing one of our most important State assets.

**Rebuild:** 'Never waste a crisis'. The pandemic provides an opportunity to re-think Government priorities and to put national parks and private protected areas onto a firm financial footing whilst providing new job opportunities, particularly in regional areas.

### A Nature-based Recovery

A comprehensive Protected Areas Strategy is still outstanding despite this being an election commitment made in 2015 and re-stated in 2018. Whilst the delay has been disappointing, perhaps the response to the pandemic could now include the expansion of the Protected Areas Strategy into a more integrated Government Policy document that brings together health, tourism, business, and agricul-

ture considerations centred on revitalising Queensland's parks and protected areas estate (see Figure below). Approximately \$4.4 billion is delivered into Queensland's economy from expenditure associated with national park visitors supporting 4,400 full-time jobs<sup>5</sup>. Mental and physical health benefits derived from Australia's national parks are estimated at around \$29 billion<sup>10</sup>. Bringing all these sectors together into an integrated Protected Areas Strategy could be a powerful driver for enhancing Queensland's economy and environmental wellbeing with associated job opportunities.



Looking after the environment and rebuilding our economy should go hand in hand and we must take this opportunity to argue for a better integrated approach. "There is no wellbeing without nature's wellbeing"<sup>11</sup>. So, let's base our recovery from the pandemic on re-connecting with nature and building on Queensland's strategic advantage of spectacular national parks, World Heritage areas and private conservation areas which underpin a large segment of our economy and general wellbeing. Let's

invest in finishing the acquisition of our protected area estate and properly re-sourcing management, so we deliver improved opportunities for ecotourism and regional businesses, better health outcomes and secure increased jobs for the long term.

The time is upon us to advance a transformative relationship with nature.

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# THINK OUTSIDE

and discover Queensland National Parks!

## Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Following months of park closures and restrictions across the state, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) is inviting Queenslanders of all ages and fitness levels to get back outdoors and explore their 'own backyard' of national park treasures. In June, a new phase of the *Think outside* campaign was launched, promoting day and overnight visitation to Queensland National Parks and joining efforts to bring back visitation to different regions across the state. The campaign is jam-packed with new information focusing on active experiences, such as walking, hiking, kayaking, and much more, to help Queenslanders embrace nature during the milder months by participating in 'green exercise'. To get started, visitors can find inspiration on the *Think outside* campaign website, sign up to the new Queensland National Parks e-newsletter and follow the Queensland National Parks Facebook and Instagram pages for latest news and campaign updates.

Continuing from its first instalment in 2019, the campaign still has a strong focus on camping and provides a range of helpful tips and tools to make planning a camping trip easy—whether you're a family of novice campers looking for an easy getaway,

a group of experienced mates looking to go off the grid, or a couple looking for a quiet nature escape. Queensland National Parks want to inspire all Queenslanders to 'Think outside', get out and active, and create memories to last a lifetime in the magnificent protected areas in our state. While the primary focus of the campaign is on families, there's lots of tailored information that will appeal to other audiences.

### Finding your next 'green exercise'

With spring just around the corner, it's the perfect time to put on the hiking boots and embrace Queensland's natural treasures. Spending time in nature is not only a great way to connect with family and friends and explore new destinations; stepping outside and connecting with the natural world is one of the best ways to look after our mental and physical well-being. What's more, a walk in nature is also a great way to reach 10,000 steps a day! With more than 13 million hectares of protected areas across the state, including over 1000 national parks, state forests and conservation parks, more than 400,000km<sup>2</sup> of marine parks, and five World Heritage Areas, Queensland National Parks provide countless opportunities to get your daily nature

dose while keeping a safe social distance.

Around 150 inspirational blogs on the *Think outside* website have been carefully crafted to take the think-work out of planning your next Queensland National Parks trip, with plenty of itineraries, recommended activities and information to help Queenslanders find their next outdoor experience.

Visitors can pick from short walks and multi-day hikes to kayaking along our stunning pristine coastlines and waterways, or exploring the history and biodiversity of parks and forests across the state. There are plenty of activities to keep the whole family entertained with day-trips to one of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)-managed attractions across the state. Join Park Rangers for wildlife shows and presentations at David Fleay Wildlife Park at West Burleigh or Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre at The Gap, in south-east Queensland, explore underground lava tubes and caves in the Outback, or experience natural encounters on a Ranger-led wildlife tour at Mon Repos or Mount Etna. There are plenty of activities to keep the whole family entertained while also learning more about the conservation and preservation of Queensland's unique



**Above:** (L to R): *Bribie Island National Park*; *Hiking with mates*. Photos: Queensland Government. *Google Trekker in Main Range National Park*. Photo: Cameron Jones © Queensland Government. **Banner:** *Tewantin National Park*. Photo: Greg Cartwright © Queensland Government.



wildlife and protected areas. The site also has a new series of walking and hiking content with all the tools, tips and tricks to get Queenslanders prepared for their next (or first) hike in Queensland's parks and forests. With so many different activities and locations to choose from, spending more time in nature should be on every Queenslanders' 2020 bucket list.

Before embarking on your next outdoor adventure, always remember to check Park Alerts, read up on any changed conditions due to COVID-19, pack enough food and water, and be sun safe all year round.

### **Camping to connect with family and friends**

Queensland National Parks are places of exceptional beauty, incredible biodiversity and natural and cultural significance. From World Heritage rainforests to pristine islands and coastlines, rugged outback oases and ancient mountain ranges, camping in one of Queensland's parks and forests is a special experience - sometimes right on your doorstep!

With around 500 camping areas, Queensland National Parks serve up an impressive menu of camping locations for all experience levels. The *Think outside* website offers useful tips and helpful advice when it comes to finding and booking the right camp site, packing the camping essentials, and heading off to experience the natural magnificence of Queensland's parks and forests. With the school holidays just around the corner, there's plenty of time to get the family organised for a Queensland National Parks camping trip, and find a holiday spot closer to home this season. Information on the campaign website

allows campers to identify their ideal camping experience within a few hours' drive from key centres across the state, covering all tourism regions.

All that's left to do is gather friends and family, get a camping permit, pack up the tent, camper trailer or caravan and head off to create memories to last a lifetime - after all, camping is a 1000-star experience!

### **Experiencing parks virtually**

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is continually looking at new ways to educate and build advocacy and awareness for protected areas through digital channels. A brand-new Queensland National Parks 'Naturally Queensland' e-newsletter was launched in June, promoting park visitation, QPWS attractions and educational pieces. The e-newsletter also features QPWS Ranger profiles to highlight the diverse roles of our Park Rangers across the state. Sign up to hear more Queensland National Parks stories.

The MyRanger app is another innovative approach to enhancing the visitor experience through new technologies. The pilot app is designed to act as a 'Ranger in your pocket', offering Ranger-guided virtual tours, interactive maps, augmented reality, species information and gamification elements. Visitors can explore two parks - Springbrook National Park and David Fleay Wildlife Park - learning about ancient Gondwana rainforest, the local wildlife and threatened species, all from the Park Ranger's perspective. At David Fleay Wildlife Park, visitors can also follow a cultural tour narrated by the local Indigenous Ranger and learn about traditional land use and cultural practices. The MyRanger app is free

to download on iOS and Android.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has also teamed up with Google to bring the outdoors inside! Thanks to the Google Trekker technology, virtual travellers from anywhere in the world can explore some of Queensland's most-loved national parks - right from the comfort of their own homes.

With a 22kg Google Street View Trekker backpack strapped to their back, QPWS staff hiked up mountains, through valleys, into forests and around heritage sites, capturing 360 degree vision as they went. They also captured footage from a vehicle driving along national park roads. Thanks to their efforts, virtual travellers can now explore World Heritage rainforest, historic forts and heritage sites and even limestone caves deep underground! The sites include walking tracks and boardwalks, cycling trails and scenic lookouts in national parks around the state. Visit the website for all the links to Google Maps for the park locations captured.

### **Think outside!**

With so many different tools to choose from, finding inspiration for your next outdoor adventure is easy! So head to the *Think outside* campaign website and start exploring!

### **Resources**

*Think outside* website: [www.lifesbestmoments.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.lifesbestmoments.des.qld.gov.au)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/qldnationalparks](https://www.facebook.com/qldnationalparks)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/qldparks](https://www.instagram.com/qldparks)

e-newsletter: [parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/newsletter](https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/newsletter)

MyRanger app: [parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/virtual-tours/myranger-app](https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/virtual-tours/myranger-app)

Google Trekker: [parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/virtual-tours/google-street-view-trekker](https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/things-to-do/virtual-tours/google-street-view-trekker)

# WILDLIFE FEATURE

## Cling Gobies

Brendan Ebner  
TropWATER, James Cook University

Among the most stunning of fish in the streams of tropical Queensland are the cling gobies. The males of these species are brightly coloured for weeks to months each year. These high-end dress standards are most notable in male versus male contests and serve to attract mates during the breeding season. About ten species have now been recorded in Australian waters.

The smallest of these species is Birdsong's cling goby which rarely attains 4 cm in total length. Indeed, most of the cling gobies reach only 4 to 6 cm in length. Of the larger species, the most common is the rabbit-head cling goby which achieves a whopping 11 cm in length as a male and 13 cm or so as a female. The rabbit-head cling goby can be observed with the aid of a snorkel mask, in fast, flowing water and especially through the wall of bubbles underneath toppling cascades. The rabbit-head and indeed many of the cling gobies specialise in grazing thin biofilm surfaces on rocks. If you are keen to see them in the wild, the rabbit-head can sometimes be seen on the upstream of the main swimming hole at the 'Boulders' in Bunna Binda



**Above:** Typical cling goby habitat, a stream at Cape Tribulation, north of the Daintree River.

**Banner:** Male rabbit-head cling goby. Photos: Supplied.

Country in Wooroonooran National Park (near Babinda) or in Jabalbina Country in Emmagen Creek within the Daintree National Park just north of Cape Tribulation.

These fish occupy stream habitats and are usually found in steep coastal streams in high rainfall areas. The Wet Tropics is the stronghold for cling gobies in an Australia context but this is just a small subset of the distribution of the cling gobies which are widespread in tropical island streams in the tropical Pacific region including Indonesia, the Solomon Islands and

Fiji.

All cling gobies are no-take species in Queensland under the Fisheries Act and three species (including Birdsong's cling goby) are vulnerable species under the Nature Conservation Act. The Opal cling goby is listed as critically endangered nationally under the EPBC Act. This species has recently been recorded breeding in a stream in Yirrganydji Country just north of Cairns. Ladies will be happy to know that it is the female who initiates the ritual followed by the male wasting no time in performing a high energy courtship. He jumps from the top of rock to rock and uses the high points to capture valuable light that has crept through the rainforest canopy. This facilitates a display of blue iridescence angled toward the female (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omjuck8DiLM>). And then off to a cave where the male will spend a couple of days tending the eggs before hatch. The larvae drift down on the fast flow and out to sea to grow before returning to a coastal stream to commence juvenile and adult life.



**Above:** Iridescent blue in the lead up to courtship, a male cling goby at 4 cm total length.

# THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

## Personal reflection on why our parks must be valued

**Suellen Hopkins**  
Member, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

Congratulations to the National Parks Association of Queensland on celebrating its 90th anniversary!

I was essentially born into NPAQ just short of 50 years ago. Day walks, regular weekend camping trips and yearly extended outings were the only holidays I had ever known growing up. There were many early morning starts where my sister and I were woken in the dark for toast and vegemite eaten in the kitchen before piling into the van to head to a weekend campsite and far too many tent setups and pull downs to remember precisely. Memories of extended outings, bouncing across the crystal-clear creeks of Salvator Rosa National Park in the back of a short wheelbase Landcruiser, rain in the Grampians, celebrating my 10th birthday in the Stirling Ranges of Western Australia until travelling the Canning Stock Route and standing atop a red dune covered in flowering Thryptomene in my mid 20's. Of course, there was also the annual pre-Christmas picnic and the associated transportation of the canoe to and from that upper reach of the Brisbane River. It was the canoe's yearly outing and involved a

multitude of ropes and pulleys as it was lowered and then hoisted back into its usual resting position high in the garage.

Very few long weekends were spent at home. I remember an Easter spent in glorious sunshine, paddling about Woody Island on a surf ski with my skin covered with a salt crust and I remember another, attempting to shelter under canvas at Mount Spirabo in torrential rain that necessitated an emergency departure from the campsite before the creek rose and we would have been isolated for days. It was the trip when things did not go to plan that was reminisced of the most. There were so many tales told of the early days. I am unable to recall exact details but most involved trains and cattle trucks, flooded creeks, boggy tracks, fires and food and fuel drops.

Whilst I recall some spectacular scenery and the beauty of the native flora and fauna, it really is the people and the many characters that also come to mind. I feel fortunate to have been influenced by many of them growing up. The exceedingly

generous Johnny Walker and his first trip to Moreton Island, the extraordinarily wise Norm Traves and his dislike of packing a wet tent (it was to be avoided always!) and through NPAQ the embattled and thoroughly determined John Sinclair. Sadly, all have passed away in recent years, but their legacies continue like so many NPAQ member's stories and achievements. It was mentioned at John Sinclair's memorial service that John, together with my father George Haddock as the NPAQ representative to the Fraser Island Advisory Committee, made a formidable force when it came to the preservation and protection of K'gari. When George died so unexpectedly 12 years ago now, a vast knowledge of Queensland's National Parks was lost, but fortunately the opportunity for our family to spend time together in those National Parks was not. I would have wished for him to be with us and showing us the way but at least these places were preserved for all to appreciate. Whilst we have not managed to participate in NPAQ outings with many excuses including a young family, a dog and weekend sport, our family have been able to explore some of these special places together. At age 4, George's grandson happily walked the 10km around the base of Uluru and at age 6, walked the 25km route through the Carnarvon Gorge to Big Bend and back. The spirit of NPAQ certainly lives on in those legs!

In these increasingly unpredictable times, the preservation of our National Park Estate is as important as ever and the Associations work is still far from done. Maybe after our time in isolation these areas will be appreciated even more...



Photos: Supplied by the author.

# RANGER SPOTLIGHT

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

**Rene Burgess**  
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Rene Burgess is Acting Ranger in Charge of Marine Operations in the Great Barrier Reef and Marine Parks Region, based on the Sunshine and Fraser Coast.

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

There was no decision-making involved, it was just inevitable. A deep-seated fascination (bordering on obsession, I am told) about the natural world's form and function, and how each living thing is dependent on the next, has piqued my curiosity and innate desire to protect it since my earliest childhood memory.

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

Not very long in comparison to the footsteps of most Rangers I humbly follow—only since 2006.

### **Which parks have you worked in?**

I've worked in North and South Cooloola Recreation Area, in the Great Sandy National Park; and I'm now working in the Great Sandy Marine Park.

### **What is your most memorable moment?**

The call offering me a position as a ranger!!

### **Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?**

It's impossible to single out just one experience! As is the case with every Park Ranger, I consider myself blessed by a plethora of opportunities and experiences, all of which have left lasting impressions. I am grateful for every single day that I wear Herbie on my shoulder.

Most of all, I relish the quiet, solitary places where I can reconnect and reset - the Simpson Desert (Munga-Thirri National Park); Bladensburg National Park; lighthouses (Woody, Double Island Point and Sandy Cape on K'Gari); and the variety of landscapes encountered along the Cooloola Great Walk.

Then, on the water, there are those perfect glass-out days on the ocean; a trip on our marine parks vessel, Reef Ranger, to Lady Musgrave and Lady Elliot islands, coming eye-to-eye with inquisitive marine wildlife like seabirds, manta rays, humpback and Southern right whales, leaping dolphins and dozy dugong. These experiences still take my breath away, every time!

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

The best part is the sheer variety of work and learning experiences! The many opportunities to watch and learn; and connect Mother Nature's intricate dots.

I also value the chance to network with other Rangers, as well as visitors and children, cross-pollinating knowledge and skills. And inspiring others to nurture and protect.

I also love the constant adjustment required to achieve the delicate balance of providing opportunities and places for people to connect with nature on the one hand; and the protection of that very same (sacred) thing on the other.

The best part is the opportunity to be inquisitive about the natural environment—learning about, and from nature— and presenting the park



Above: QPWS Ranger Rene Burgess, Great Sandy National Park. Top: Hervey Bay. Photos: Queensland Government.

or forest to the community who enjoy the area you help manage.

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

Do some 'legwork' before you leave home on where you're planning on walking - the distance, resources, terrain and vegetation type. Check the weather forecast and web pages (especially Park alerts) prior to departure for information that may impact your plans. Tell someone who cares about your bushwalk - communicate a contingency plan in case things don't exactly to plan.

### **What is your top tip for campers?**

Respect - the environment, self, others, public property and the effort required to maintain facilities for all to enjoy, for our future generations.

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

## NPAQ activities

### Social Walk - Gold Creek Reservoir

**Date:** Thursday 17 September 2020

**Meet:** 9:30am at the carpark at the end of Gold Creek Road, Brookfield

**Cost:** \$5

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

### Vegetation Management Group

**Date:** Saturday 19 September 2020

**Meet:** 9:00 am at Jolly's Lookout carpark at D'Aguilar National Park

**Leader:** Angus McElnea (0429 854 446 or [gus\\_mcelnea@hotmail.com](mailto:gus_mcelnea@hotmail.com))

### Day Walk - Echo Point, Lamington National Park

**Date:** Saturday 17 October 2020

**Meet:** 8:00 am at O'Reilly's Green Mountains Car Park

**Cost:** \$5

**Leader:** Ron Owen (0490 762 414 or [rowen@comcen.com.au](mailto:rowen@comcen.com.au))

### Vegetation Management Group

**Date:** Saturday 24 October 2020

**Meet:** 9:00 am at Jolly's Lookout carpark at D'Aguilar National Park

**Leader:** Angus McElnea (0429 854 446 or [gus\\_mcelnea@hotmail.com](mailto:gus_mcelnea@hotmail.com))

### Birdwatching - Moggill Conservation Park

**Date:** Sunday 25 October 2020

**Meet:** 7:30 am at Chalcot Road, Anstead

**Cost:** \$5

**Leader:** Lesley Joyce (0423 109 788 or [blwrgl@gmail.com](mailto:blwrgl@gmail.com))

### Vegetation Management Group

**Date:** Saturday 21 November 2020

**Meet:** 9:00 am at Jolly's Lookout carpark at D'Aguilar National Park

**Leader:** Angus McElnea (0429 854 446 or [gus\\_mcelnea@hotmail.com](mailto:gus_mcelnea@hotmail.com))

### Birdwatching - Sandy Camp Road

**Date:** Sunday 22 November 2020

**Meet:** 7:30 am at Sandy Camp Road, Wynnum West

**Cost:** \$5

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

## NPAQ Annual General Meeting 2020

**Date:** Wednesday 23 September 2020

**Time:** 7:00pm start

**Location:** Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens Auditorium or online (see details below)

NPAQ President Graeme Bartrim warmly invites all members to attend the AGM. A report of the past financial year's activities will be presented, and the Council elected for the coming year.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the meeting can also be attended online. Please email [admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au) to receive the link to the online meeting.

## NPAQ events

### NPAQ November Member's Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday 18 November 2020

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

**Venue:** To be confirmed

## Vale

NPAQ was very saddened by the passing of the following members:

Life member Lily Rees. Lily joined NPAQ in 1955 and became a life member in 1972.

Life member Len Fraser. Len joined NPAQ in 1965 and became a life member in 1973.

Member David Vial. David joined NPAQ in 2007 and was great support while his wife, Michelle Prior, was president of NPAQ.

Life member Val Sandercoe. Val and her husband Ken joined NPAQ in 1947 and became life members in 1954. Val enjoyed many NPAQ outings and meetings over her long membership with the association.

Life member Alison Johnman. Alison joined NPAQ in 1956.

Conservation Partner member Dr Michael Shera. Michael and his wife Davida joined NPAQ in 2017.

We send our sincere condolences to their friends and families.

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



Celebrating 90 years.

