

Issue 46 Autumn 2025

# protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

## GROWTH

A NEW COMMUNITY VISION  
for Toondah Harbour

### PLUS

WANDER WISELY ON  
the Scenic Rim

LEARNING OUTDOORS  
Bardon's forest school

### ALSO FEATURED

NPAQ moments in time  
Platypus  
Eurimbula NP  
Ranger spotlight





## CONTACT DETAILS

### Office

Unit 9/36 Finchley St,  
Milton QLD

### Post

9/36 Finchley St,  
Milton QLD 4064

### Phone

(07) 3367 0878

### Web

[www.npaq.org.au](http://www.npaq.org.au)

### Email

[admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au)

### ABN

60 206 792 095



@NPAQld



@nationalparksassocqld



[linkedin.com/company/npaql/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/npaql/)



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#### IMAGES

Front and back cover: Fungi flourishes in autumn in D'Aguilar NP following rain. *Karin Cox*. All other images as captioned throughout.

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- Step up – volunteer on exciting projects.
- Donate – support our work.
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- Connect with us – follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram or TikTok.
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- Share a bush adventure with children – download NPAQ's Kids in National Parks guide.

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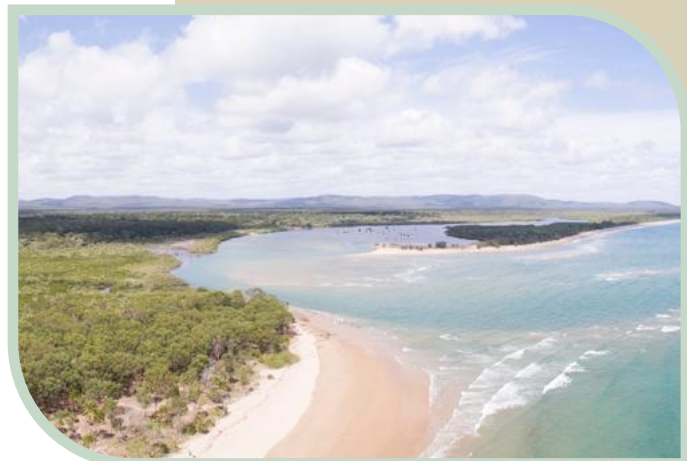
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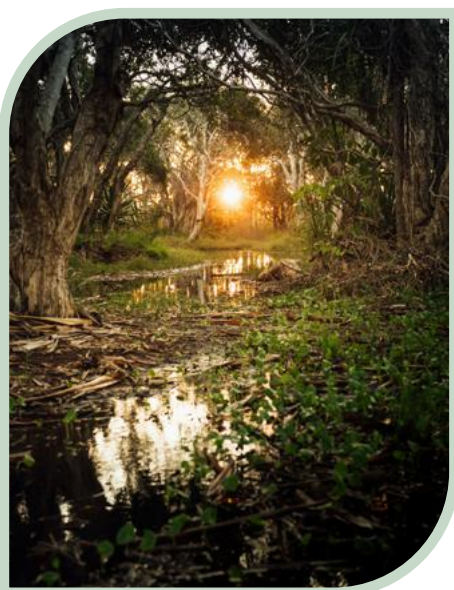


# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susanne Cooper*

**EVERYTHING IS GROWING LIKE TOPSY AT THE MOMENT – NOT UNUSUAL FOR A SUMMER WITH SUBSTANTIAL RAIN.**

What is also growing is our population. Queensland's population is expected to reach more than 7 million by 2046, which means an increase of 1.6 million people over 20 years. Most of these come from immigration, and most will be settling in South East Queensland. Growing around them will be Queensland's flourishing ecotourism industry, which is not unexpected given the increasing global interest in nature-based experiences. Growth can be positive, although it very much depends on how it is managed.



ABOVE: Is the peace of places like Noosa Everglades in Cooloola section of Great Sandy NP about to be shattered? Tim Foster/Unsplash.

So, it is timely and appropriate that our theme for this issue of *Protected* is "Growth", a topic that has widespread implications for our State's protected areas.

The new government recently undertook extensive consultation on the proposed tourism plan for the next 20 years: Destination 2045; Queensland's Tourism Future. Interestingly, in the plan, our unique natural environment clearly comes across as the essential foundation on which the proposed priorities for government (and private) investment are based. It underpins almost all of what we can offer domestic and international visitors.

I attended a session with the Minister to give feedback on this initiative. An interesting reflection from the discussion was how much our natural landscapes and biodiversity are assumed to be available, accessible, and in good condition for increasing tourism use. It is taken as a given, with no real challenges or issues to be addressed. Many of our already-popular national parks are likely to experience a substantial increase in visitation. How we plan to manage this influx is of ongoing importance and must be part of the State's tourism strategy, especially as many protected areas

are under-resourced, poorly managed, and preserve fragile ecosystems. Just building more infrastructure for ecotourists will not resolve these issues.

The Toondah Harbour story in this edition is an inspiring example of how communities committed to environmental values and intent on conserving the ecological value of internationally recognised coastal wetlands can put forward concepts for development that meet the needs of increasing populations. Such alternative designs and solutions are often feasible, once basic assumptions are challenged and reviewed. Initiated by the community, and developed by experts pro bono, the new plan for Toondah is well worth considering as a model for community-led development.

In April, NPAQ's 23rd Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture was a compelling speech by Professor David Lindenmayer from ANU, who presented on the myths about logging native forests and the subsequent impacts—a timely topic with implications for our protected areas as well as for state forestry submissions. We look forward to continuing to grow our events and our influence.

All the best,  
*Susanne Cooper*



# SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

## WANT TO SHARE YOUR PHOTOS OF A NATIONAL PARK OR PROTECTED AREA?

We're always looking for great snaps. Send them to [marketing@npaqa.org.au](mailto:marketing@npaqa.org.au) or connect with us on Facebook (@NPAQld) or on Instagram (@nationalparksassocld) for your chance to feature in the next edition of NPAQ's *Protected Magazine*!

To feature in our Member Reflections section, please email [marketing@npaqa.org.au](mailto:marketing@npaqa.org.au).



Above: D'Aguilar National Park, photographed from Dundas Nature Reserve.  
© Andrew Taylor.



ABOVE: Stony creek frogs  
photographed at Mount Barney Lodge.  
© Mt Barney Lodge on Facebook.



ABOVE: A resplendent wompoo fruit-dove. © Jun Jose on Facebook.



# A NEW COMMUNITY VISION for Toondah Harbour

Karin Cox

IN A SHOW OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND INGENUITY, THE TOONDAH ALLIANCE HAS DEVELOPED A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CONCEPT PLAN FOR THE MUCH-MALIGNED CLEVELAND TOONDAH HARBOUR SITE.

Following the Federal Government's rejection of the previous Walker Group development due to unacceptable environmental impacts, this new vision comes endorsed by local conservation groups and Redlands residents. It focuses on creating a functional, "green" harbour that protects the coastal environment.

## REGENERATION

Cleveland's dated harbour badly needs transformation. There's no question that the

sprawling eyesore of crowded carparks spewing into overflow parking requires a serious face-lift. What locals and state governments, and even the federal government, became bogged down in wasn't the *why*, it was the *how*. And it's a question that has plagued conservation groups and Redland City Council for just over a decade.

Walker Group's controversial Toondah Harbour Priority Development Area scheme created a vast rift between the developers and conservation organisations, with eNGOs forming Toondah Alliance to fight the impractical plan.

Koala Action Group, Birdlife Southern Queensland, ACF Community Bayside, Queensland Wader Study Group, Redlands2030, and Stradbroke (Terangeri)

Environmental and Cultural Protection Association, along with a smattering of fringe groups, naturalists, and activists, came together to wage the "Battle for Toondah" until the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was submitted to Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek on 27 November 2023. In April 2024, Minister Plibersek finally rejected the Walker Group's plan, acting on advice that the development would have unacceptable impacts on matters of national environmental significance.

The sticking point was that the Walker Group scheme required the restriction or destruction of parts of Ramsar-listed wetlands at the Moreton Bay site. Such wanton actions would have altered prime habitat for migratory







TOONDAH ALLIANCE is a collective of conservation and community organisations chaired by Chris Walker from Wild Redlands. To find out more about the Community Vision for Toondah Harbour, visit <https://koalagroup.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Toondah-Harbour-Concept-Plan-booklet-2024.pdf>.

LEFT: Toondah Harbour, Cleveland. Christy Gallois/Flickr. RIGHT: Migratory shorebirds like the bar-tailed godwit rely on Moreton Bay's tidal mudflats. Chris Walker/Wild Redlands. BELOW: Koalas reside in the eucalypts of GJ Walter Park, which abuts the harbour. Meg Forbes/Dreamstime.



shorebirds such as the critically endangered far eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), which quickly became the avian face of the conservation campaign.

## INTO THE BREACH

The original plan—a clear breach of Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands—was eventually scuppered because Ministers have a duty to uphold treaties and conventions they've signed up to. In an April 2024 radio interview with 4BC, Minister Plibersek admitted that the Walker Group's proposal 'would have had impacts on dugongs and dolphins and a whole range of other species, loggerhead turtles, for example, which are threatened'. She suggested that the then Newman government should never have agreed to move ahead with the proposal in the first place, calling it, 'an area that it should have been clear from the beginning was not an area suitable to develop'.

LEFT: The Toondah Alliance, along with other local conservation groups, campaigned for five years to protect the wetlands off Toondah Harbour. Chris Walker/Wild Redlands.



*In an April 2024 radio interview, Minister Plibersek admitted that it wasn't only koalas that the Walker Group's proposal would have affected but that it also 'would have had impacts on dugongs and dolphins and a whole range of other species, loggerhead turtles for example ...'*

After the rejection, the Walker Group promptly withdrew its application, requesting time to propose an alternative. Seeing another war looming on the horizon, like the lone tree that punctuates the harbour's view, the Toondah Alliance sprang back into action.

## A BETTER WAY

In October 2024, Toondah Alliance released their Community Vision for Toondah Harbour, prepared with the assistance of John Mongard Landscape Architects and other planning experts. This Community Vision proposes retaining the publicly owned land as spaces for community and wildlife, aiding the protection of the shorebirds and koalas that frequent fringing GJ Walter Park.

In stark contrast to the earlier plan, this vision prioritises nature rather than minimising it, transforming the precinct into a sustainable gateway to the southern Bay Islands and Straddie (Minjerribah).

To rectify the parking issues, the plan suggests two multi-storey carparks, creating 1500 spaces, with subsidised rates for residents. Upgraded amenities in the passenger and ferry terminals would be complemented by a new interpretive centre, a network of nature trails and a continuous path from Oyster Point to Cleveland along the Toondah Harbour Story Trail, celebrating the birdlife and the region's resistance to reckless development.

Residential housing would be Green Star accredited and confined to the precinct's →

## Making a working harbour

### Harbour improvements include:

- A** Integrated harbour terminal, bus interchange and expanded Water Taxi Area.
- B** Limited ongoing dredging and maintenance.
- C** Provision for up to four vehicular ferry berths and improved waiting area.
- D** Improved harbour edge works with minimal reclamation.
- E** Multi-storey public carpark which could have subsidies for local residents.
- F** Create a scenic harbour park and reduce hardstand areas.
- G** Community facilities.
- H** Create a slow speed shared zone on 'Toondah Avenue' and provide improved shaded walkways and pedestrian crossings.



north-west, enhancing flood resilience and preserving the parklands and koala trees.

### CONSERVING THE KOALA COAST

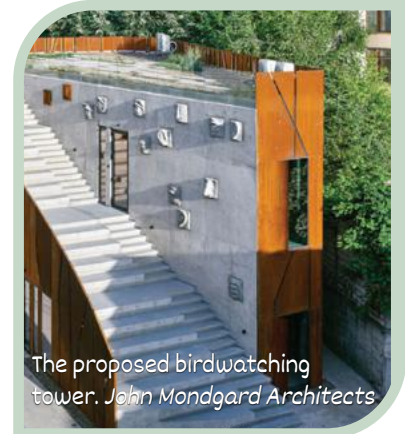
To further safeguard the endangered marsupial whose furry visage graces the local Council's logo, the plan also connects known koala habitat trees with patches of revegetated bushland and infill planting, and ensures koalas have safe, signposted crossing routes.

The off-leash dog park would also be fenced and include a fully enclosed beach area (similar to north Queensland's stinger or shark-netted enclosures) to prevent canines chasing endangered wading birds. And to promote the increasingly popular ecotourism activity of birdwatching, a landmark tower is proposed for the end of Middle Street, giving

"twitchers" an elevated vantage point right on the water's edge from which to glimpse the long-haul fliers that feast on Toondah's mudflats each spring.

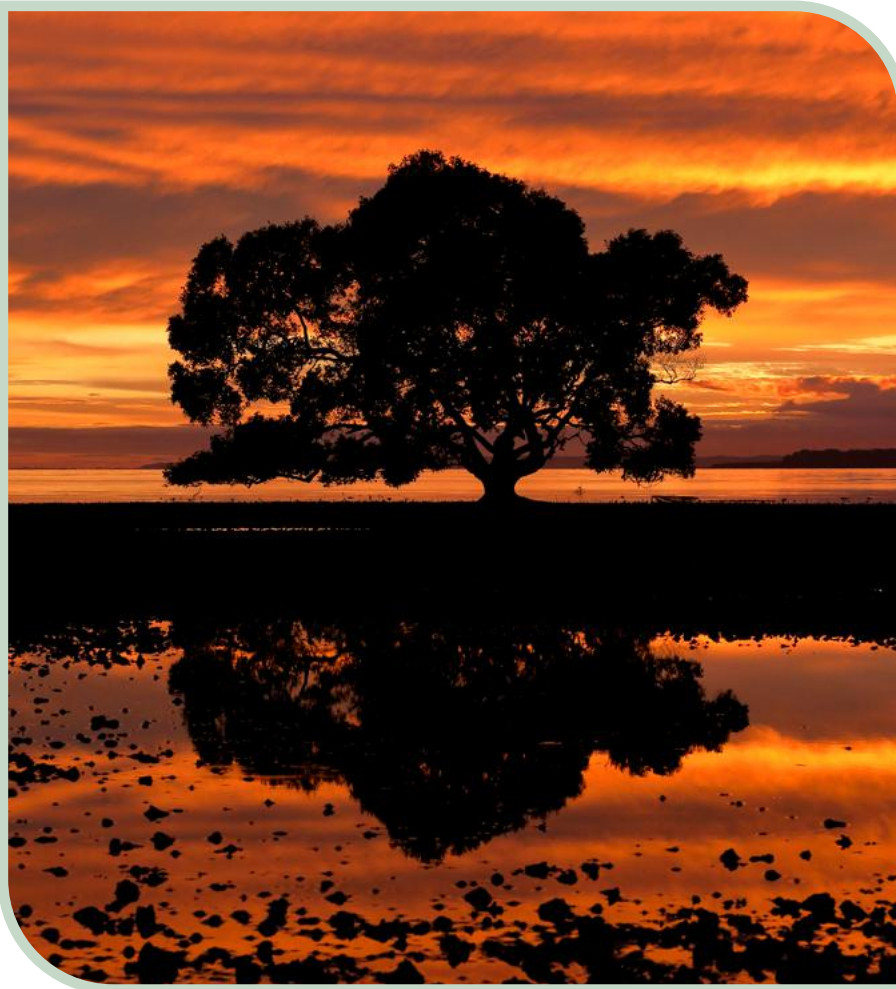
### GROWING WITH THE REGION

Of course, transport infrastructure upgrades must meet the ever-increasing population growth of this region, too, so the new vision asks the state government to fund the retrofit of the terminals and harbour facilities, leasing the new terminals, complete with mod-cons and all-abilities access, back to proven operators on long-term contracts to encourage their ongoing investment. The concept also puts forward an innovative, saw-tooth harbour edge upgrade that would allow four vehicular ferries to dock and depart efficiently. Nearby,



four purpose-built pontoons would accommodate water taxis for faster, more luxe crossings, and would link to the vehicular terminal and wetland interpretative centre by a waterside timber boardwalk. A commitment to climate-proofing suggests the new buildings be fitted with green walls, roofs and perimeter gardens. They would also be raised up to withstand storm surges like those South East Queensland recently experienced during Cyclone Alfred. →





## WILL IT BE ENOUGH?

‘A green gateway, a working harbour,’ the New Vision for Toondah promises; from the packed-out community information sessions Toondah Alliance has hosted around southern Moreton Bay, it’s clear they have the support of locals. But will that be enough to stave off another big ticket, big footprint proposal?

In February 2025, Redland City Council attended a confidential briefing on a new draft concept plan prepared by Walker Corporation. The Council maintains it was simply a feedback-seeking exercise, since Walker Corporation is still the preferred developer with the Council as a stakeholder. According to the Council’s online news bulletin, *Redlands Coast Today*, their goals for Toondah remain unchanged: ‘... to create an exciting new

destination showcasing the natural attractions of Moreton Bay and islands and provide a world class gateway to Moreton Bay and North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah)’. That may be so, but the community concept for Toondah also aligns with that vision and with the Council-approved Development Plan drafted in the mid-1990s. It calls on all three levels of government to collaborate, fund and implement these improvements. If the Toondah Harbour fiasco reveals anything, it’s that proposals can easily get stuck in the rich Redland’s mud if local, state and federal governments choose to ignore community sentiment. Collectively, governments failed to recognise Toondah’s environmental and cultural worth, focusing only on its economic potential. The community vision for Toondah Harbour makes one thing clear: bringing these three strands of government together with the community, and marrying these three important aspects of Moreton Bay, will be the best chance Toondah Harbour has for a bright and sustainable future. ■

ABOVE: A lone mangrove stands defiant offshore in Toondah Harbour. *Chris Walker/Wild Redlands.*

BELOW RIGHT: The Battle for Toondah was hard-fought; now a new whitewater facility at Birkdale has opened up a new front in the Redlands. *Chris Walker/Wild Redlands.*

## A WHITEWATER WASTELAND

Redlanders, currently paying the most expensive council rates in SEQ, are understandably sceptical of white elephants on the Koala Coast and the Olympic whitewater-rafting facility at Birkdale has given local conservationists a new reason to dust off the placards. Despite a July 2024 community survey revealing that 79% of residents opposed it, in March 2025, Redland City community groups were rocked by the Crisafulli Government’s decision to approve the \$100 million Olympic precinct. ‘This decision comes despite overwhelming evidence that the people of the Redlands do not want a Whitewater Centre, and never have,’ said Lavinia Wood, the spokesperson for an alliance of environmental and community organisations.





# A NORTHERN ADVENTURE

## Protecting beautiful Qld's sandstone wilderness

*Vaughan Kippers*

Blackdown Tablelands NP,  
*Vaughan Kippers*

IN JULY 2024, TO PROMOTE THE PROTECT BEAUTIFUL QUEENSLAND ALLIANCE, VAUGHAN AND FRIENDS TOOK A 2-WEEK TRIP TO 'QUEENSLAND'S SANDSTONE WILDERNESS PARKS', FOLLOWING THE ITINERARY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION'S 28-PAGE GUIDE.

Eight conservation organisations, including NPAQ, formed the Protect Beautiful Queensland alliance in March 2024, aiming to double Queensland's protected areas by 2030 in well-managed parks, private protected areas and Indigenous protected areas, all with inclusive, collaborative and well-funded management arrangements.

### DAY 1

To Linville via the Brisbane Valley and D'Aguilar Hwys, Vaughan's group took a scenic route via Mt Stanley to the Burnett Hwy, camping on the oval of the Reginald Murray Williams Australian Bush Learning Centre in Eidsvold.

### DAY 2

At beautiful Blackdown Tableland NP, Vaughan admired the spectacular cliffs and views at Horseshoe Lookout (Yaddamen Dhina)

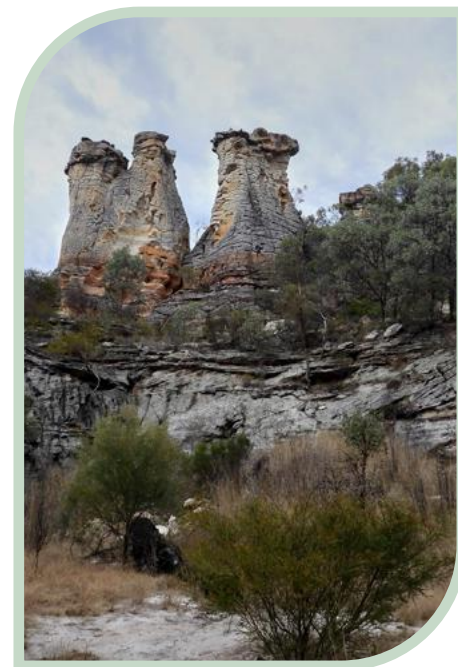
before setting up in Munall Campground.

### DAY 3

They drove 8 km on 4WD tracks to Gudda Gumoo. From the lookout, they took the 2-km Rainbow Waters walk to the gorge and waterfall. After lunch, the 2.4-km-return Mook Mook walk led to another spectacular vista, and the 2.5-km 'Cultural Circuit' walk (Goon Goon Dina) featured pastoral artifacts and Aboriginal rock art.

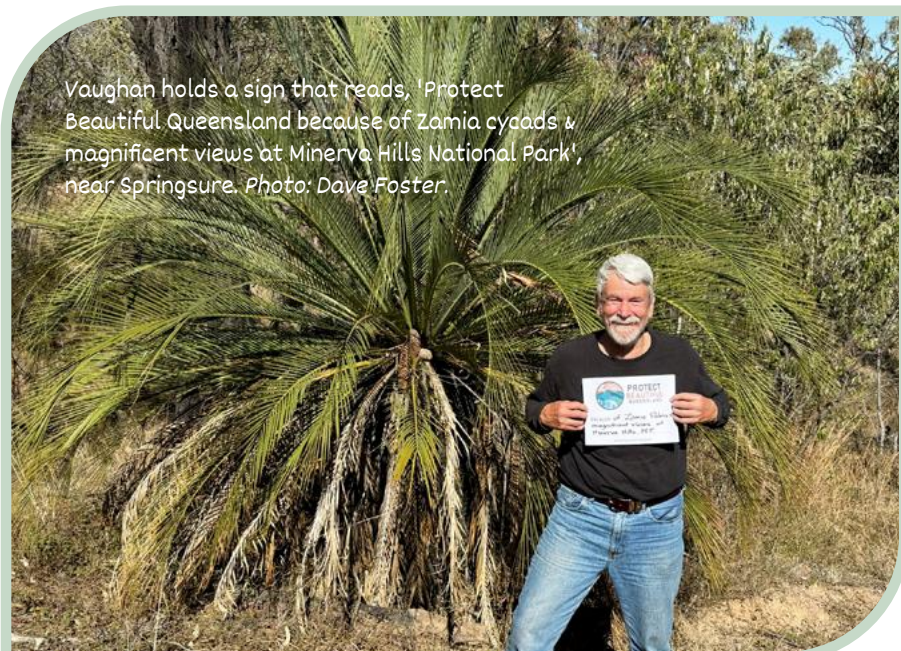
### DAY 4

Leaving via the one-way 4WD Loop Road, Vaughan was in awe of the gorgeous views from Charlevue Lookout (Mitha Boongulla). After lunch in Blackwater, they set up in a Springsure caravan park.



ABOVE: The Chimneys, seen from Maranoa River circuit walk in the Mount Moffatt Section of Carnarvon NP. These impressive, pitted pillars take on red and yellow hues due to iron oxides within the sandstone. *Vaughan Kippers*

Vaughan holds a sign that reads, 'Protect Beautiful Queensland because of *Zamia cycads* & magnificent views at Minerva Hills National Park', near Springsure. Photo: Dave Foster.

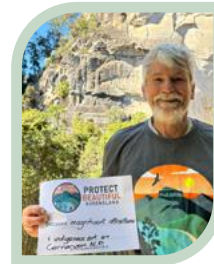






VAUGHAN KIPPERS is an honorary Senior Fellow in the School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Queensland. Now retired, he enjoys travelling to Queensland's protected areas. This article first ran in the CDEA newsletter.

LEFT: The Mahogany Forest on the High Country Drive in Carnarvon NP. A 4WD is needed for much of this trip. Vaughan Kippers. BELOW: Marlong Arch, a geological wonder erosion has carved from precipice sandstone, can be seen on the Mount Moffatt Circuit Drive. Dave Foster



LEFT: Vaughan in Carnarvon NP, pledging to 'Protect Beautiful Queensland's magnificent attractions & Indigenous art'. Dave Foster

## DAY 5

At isolated Minerva Hills NP (formerly Mt Zamia Environmental Park), Vaughan took the Skyline Lookout walk to enjoy views of Virgin Rock, later inspecting the gravesites of the Cullin-la-ringo massacre—a 163-year-old tragedy—before the drive to the Ka Ka Mundi Section of Carnarvon NP. With no one else camped at isolated Bunbuncundoo Springs, tranquillity was assured.

## DAY 6

The intrepid travellers sojourned on to the Salvator Rosa section of Carnarvon NP, where they set up tents/swag at the Nogoia River Camp Site. Of particular note were Major Mitchell Springs, at the end of the 4WD track, and imposing Spyglass Peak, which was navigated on foot.

## DAY 7

Mostly a travel day, they left via Wilderness Way for lunch in Tambo, before heading on to Morven for the night.

## DAYS 8-10

A drive to the Mount Moffatt Section of Carnarvon NP via Ooline Forest Rest Area and Mitchell. The team spent a peaceful three nights camped at West Branch Camp – and



were again the only occupants. The site is close to the 87-km Carnarvon Great Walk, which was accessed by a suspension bridge. On their first full day in this place of 'wild and dramatic landscapes', Vaughan and friends took the 32-km 4WD Mt Moffatt Circuit Drive, stopping for several walks and venturing out on the 6-km circuit walk from Sandstone Day Use Area to the Chimneys and the Tombs Rock Art Site, where First Nations peoples sheltered some 9400 years ago. The second day here was devoted to the High Country and Kenniff Drives, and the tall stately timbers of the Mahogany Forest, where they saw emus, kangaroos and, sadly, damage caused by feral pigs.

## DAY 11

They ventured on via Injune (which is sleepy on Sundays) to Carnarvon Gorge to camp at BIG4 Breeze Holiday Park–Carnarvon (formerly Takarraka). A highlight was seeing a platypus at dawn and dusk as it fossicked in Carnarvon Creek, about 20 m from the tent site.

## DAY 12

A busy day on the 21-km return Carnarvon Gorge Walk, crossing Carnarvon Creek over 17 times before reaching stunning Big Bend.

## DAY 13

The allure of short side quests off the main track the day before meant they had to set out again on another 10.1-km trip to the Amphitheatre and famed Moss Garden. A minimum of 48 hours is needed to explore this fantastic gorge, so allow at least four days if driving up from Brisbane.

## DAY 14

With the Sandstone Wilderness Trek complete, after inspecting relics at the Dakota C-47 Air Crash Memorial site, they set off on the 705-km drive home. Ultimately, Vaughan hopes his grandchildren will one day visit these national parks, and that more parks will be protected to preserve Queensland's incredible biodiversity. ■



# PARK IN FOCUS

## Eurimbula NP

*The Editor*

EURIMBULA NP, 112 KM NW OF BUNDABERG NEAR THE SMALL COASTAL TOWN OF AGNES WATER, PROTECTS LANDSCAPES THAT WERE AMONG THE FIRST PLACES LT JAMES COOK MADE LANDFALL IN QUEENSLAND.

In 1770, HMB *Endeavour* anchored in the sheltered inlet now called Bustard Bay, where Cook and his crew shot an Australian bustard – the first Queensland species to be formally described, by Daniel Solander. Botanist Joseph Banks also recorded some of Queensland's floral species in this place.

Gazetted in 1986, Eurimbula National Park is on the Country of the Gooreng Gooreng Peoples and safeguards habitat for endangered koalas, greater gliders, yellow-bellied gliders,

and the little-seen water mouse. Threatened shorebirds, including the beach stone-curlew, sooty oystercatcher and the critically endangered great knot and far eastern curlew, find essential habitat on the intertidal mudflats and sandbanks, which are fringed onshore with mangrove forests and paperbark swamps. Endangered glossy black-cockatoos prefer the lowland coastal areas, where they feed exclusively on the cones of *Allocasuarina* species.

The extent of the park's coastal heathlands and dunes can best be appreciated from Ganoonga Noonga lookout, where a 30-min walk reveals expansive views over this coastal wonderland. In 2024, the purchase of adjacent Turkey Station added 6091 ha to Eurimbula NP, bringing it to



TOP: Overlooking Turkey Station, Eurimbula NP and Rodds Bay. Pew/Kerry Trapnell. ABOVE: From mid-November to February, Eurimbula NP is a nesting site for loggerhead, flatback and green turtles. Harry Collins/CanvaNFP

more than 23,000 ha in total. Coastal vine thickets and littoral rainforest resplendent with huge figs and hoop pines now complement the park's diverse coastal vegetation.

Most of Eurimbula National Park is accessible only by high-clearance 4WD, but its remoteness makes the camp sites no less popular. In the peak season, keen campers, kayakers and anglers throng to Middle Creek and Eurimbula Creek sites (book online at [qld.gov.au/camping](http://qld.gov.au/camping)). Those with boats can access more private bush camps on Rodds Peninsula or at a scenic Bustard Head, but must be self-sufficient. Kayakers can try the Eurimbula Sea Trail, an 80.5-km paddle along the park's coastline from the Town of 1770 to Bustard Head camp site. The park's coastal areas fall within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, so visitors are reminded to check zoning requirements on the Eye on the Reef app before they set off. ■

Turkey Station, formerly a private agricultural property, is now a beautiful addition to Eurimbula National Park. Pew/Kerry Trapnell



Fig tree in Eurimbula NP



# NPAQ MOMENTS IN TIME

*NPAQ Archives*

**WE'RE SKIPPING BACK IN TIME TO SEPTEMBER 1992, WHEN NORM TRAVES WAS PRESIDENT AND UNDARA VOLCANIC NP WAS NEWLY GAZETTED.**

Volume 62, No. 6 of *N.P.A News* contained an extensive annual report supplement about the Association's doings. It was also the year that NPAQ's offices at what was then Black St, Milton (now Finchley St, Milton) were officially opened by the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Pat Comben.

Mr Comben has recently agreed to be the guest speaker at NPAQ's Annual Dinner, scheduled for Friday 20 June 2025, so we thought it fitting that we publish this photo of Mr Traves and Mr Comben together in 1992.

The office space was purchased following a substantial bequest from Caroline Pender, coupled with donations from many generous members. Upon the opening of the office, *N.P.A News* reported Mr Comben as saying, '... the National Parks Association is the oldest and the strongest conservation body because it consistently has the largest attendance at meetings and outings. Its early influence with government became so pervasive that until recent times every National Park in the State bore the imprint of the Association which had put forward the initial recommendation.'

Save the date for our 2025 Annual Dinner and let's show Mr Comben that NPAQ is indeed still an organisation that values attendance.



TOP: Undara National Park. *Marika Strand/NPAQ*. ABOVE (TOP): In the September 1992 issue, President Norm Traves noted that 'the gazettal of the Undara Lava Tubes as National Park finally came to fruition on 9 August 1992'. The event had been a long time coming. NPAQ made the recommendation to set aside Undara 25 years earlier, on 13 February 1967. *N.P.A News*, September 1992.

ABOVE (BOTTOM): Undara seen from the air. *Brian Dearth/Flickr*

LEFT: To show how far things have come, p. 3 of the September 1992 edition says of Mr Comben, 'In attaining office his party had promised to double the 2% of the state already reserved as National Parks.' In 2025, 8.6% of Queensland currently falls within national parks.

*NPAQ Collection.*



*The Hon. Pat Comben, Minister for the Environment, talking with President Norm Traves, after the opening of our premises at 45 Black St. Milton.*



# WANDER WISELY ON THE SCENIC RIM

*Kath Rose & Karin Cox*

## A SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND HOLIDAY HOTSPOT JOINS THE WORLD'S BEST GLOBAL ECO-DESTINATIONS.

In early 2025, Queensland's Scenic Rim, a 1–2 hr drive south-west of Brisbane, joined some of the globe's most attractive tourism destinations and became only the twelfth place in Australia to earn recognition as a Global Eco Destination.

Shaped by tumultuous volcanic activity in its deep past, the region takes its name from the natural, forested rim of encircling mountains, adding spectacular panoramas to its many charms. Parts of the Scenic Rim fall within the UNESCO Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area, which

showcases some of the world's most ancient and biodiverse rainforests, formed before the Australian continent sheared off from the supercontinent Gondwana. With such environmental pedigree and visual splendour on offer, it's little wonder the Scenic Rim is revealing itself to be one of Queensland's most flourishing ecotourism hotspots.

Eco Destination Certification is an internationally recognised accreditation system for destinations that demonstrate a strong commitment to mindful visitation, conservation, and responsible visitor management. Managed by Ecotourism Australia, the certification aligns with the Green Destinations standards,

a global framework for sustainable tourism.

A quick escape from Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the Scenic Rim also boasts some of South East Queensland's most biodiverse and rewarding national parks. Bushwalking tracks snake through these verdant spaces, leading to windswept peaks, plummeting waterfalls or waterbodies such as Lakes Moogerah or Maroon.

Surrounding the national parks is a patchwork of reserves, pastoral landscapes and agriculture, adding award-winning produce, locally grown wine and country hospitality to the region's appeal.

As an ecotourism destination, the Scenic Rim has dozens of Ecotourism Certified businesses, including Araucaria Ecotours, Binna Burra Lodge, Mt Barney Lodge, Park Tours, Leisure Solutions, O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, Horizon Guides, Southern Cross Tours, Spicers Scenic Rim Trail, Tamborine Mountain Glow Worm Caves, Tamborine Mountain Glades, Tamborine Mountain Distillery, Thunderbird Park and the TreeTop Challenge.

LEFT: The Scenic Rim was shaped by tectonic volatility, an absorbing history that ecotour guides can help explain. AW/Park Tours.



*Park Tours leads visitors on guided eco-trips to places of breathtaking natural beauty.*



*Sustainable travel is more than simply choosing a destination or activities to do while you're there – it's about how you travel and taking the time to slow down and fully immerse yourself in the place you're visiting to appreciate its natural wonders.*



TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Watching sunset from the terrace at Binna Burra, Lamington NP. *Binna Burra Lodge.* To infinity and beyond! Views of Lamington from O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. *TEQ*

BELOW, TOP TO BOTTOM: Exploring Lamington National Park from the Binna Burra section. *Luke Marsden;* Queen Mary Falls in the Goomburra Section of Main Range NP. *Maythee Voranisarakul/Dreamstime.*

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE SCENIC RIM

For nature enthusiasts and adventurers, this region is a special kind of nirvana, but you don't have to have a VIP Card at Anaconda to experience the Scenic Rim's natural wonders. Ecotourism-certified providers are happy to educate guests about these precious ecosystems and can help you access tours or day-trips that delve into Indigenous culture and history as well as the geological and biological wonders of this special place.

Explore the ancient rainforests with Southern Cross Tours, whose guides elaborate on the fascinating past of these natural environments. Both Leisure Solutions and Araucaria Ecotours offer informative interpretative tours to introduce visitors to the region's wildlife, which includes koalas, glossy black-cockatoos, brush-tailed rock-wallabies, spotted-tailed quolls, rare rainforest birds, echidnas and platypuses, among others.

## GET A GLOW-UP

A one-of-a-kind experience is seeing the nocturnal magic of glow worms, with a visit to Tamborine Mountain's Glow Worm Caves. ➡



## LAMINGTON NP

On Yugambeh and Jagera Country, the park is split into the Binna Burra and Green Mountains sections. Its subtropical rainforests are resplendent with mossy Antarctic beech, red and white cedar, hoop pines and even towering mountain ash in the upper climes. Waterfalls and cascades include Elabana Falls, Coomera Falls and Morans Falls. Take in the view from Best of All Lookout and choose from approximately 130 km of walking tracks, including the 21.4-km one-way Border Track that connects the Binna Burra Trailhead to the Green Mountains Trailhead at O'Reilly's. Some of the trails also form part of the longer Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk.

Observant walkers may be lucky enough to be treated to a concerto by Albert's lyrebird, or catch fleeting glimpses of red-necked pademelons, mountain brushtail possums (bobucks), Richmond birdwing butterflies, or lazy land mullets – the world's largest-known skinks.

## MAIN RANGE NP

Gaze out over a far-stretching blue horizon interrupted by rugged peaks in this dramatic park, which includes mountainous Spicers Gap, Cunninghams Gap, and Goomburra sections. Enjoy luxury accommodations in the Spicers Gap section and shady, remote camp sites at Goomburra, as well as challenging hikes to Bare Rock, Mount Cordeaux, and Mount Mitchell. More than 204 bird, 54 reptile, 31 frog and 59 mammal species are found in the park, including endangered greater gliders and spotted-tailed quolls.







ABOVE: Yarriba means "walking", and walking lightly together on the Earth is a fantastic way to appreciate traditional ways of living and to connect with nature at Mt Barney Lodge. Image by Kath Rose.

Glow worms, *Arachnocampa flava*, are not actually worms but are the larvae of flies. Lighting up in the dark with their bioluminescent glow, they attract and prey on other tiny insects and play an important role in these subtropical forest ecosystems.

If you're seeking outdoor fun with minimal environmental impact, Thunderbird Park has embedded sustainable practices throughout its operations. It is also now home to the TreeTop Challenge, a knee-trembling high ropes course and Australia's longest zipline, providing hours of entertainment on 112 ha at Tamborine Mountain.

## EXTENDED TOURS

If your happy place is shaking off the cares of the world by trekking deep into the wilderness, lace up your boots with local legends Park Tours or Horizon Guides and join a guided, extended bushwalk through these refreshing Gondwanan rainforests.

Seeking expansive views? Challenge yourself to scale some cliffs in Mount Barney National Park with the help of the ecotourism-certified

climbing guides at Mt Barney Lodge. Here, you can also join Ugarapul custodians on the 3-day Yarriba Dreaming First Nations immersion experience to learn about traditional methods of caring for Country.

Travelling sustainably also means supporting local economies, and the Scenic Rim is brimming with places to tame a rumbling tummy or slake a thirst. Charming roadside stalls, farm gates and cellar doors are complemented by eco-certified Tamborine Mountain Distillery, which offers internationally-awarded liqueurs and spirits.



ABOVE: Cheers to being eco-friendly at Tamborine Mountain Distillery.

## STAY AND PLAY

With more than a dozen tourism businesses with Ecotourism Australia certification in the region, there's no shortage of places to sleep soundly, knowing your stay is contributing to conservation. One of NPAQ's favourites, of course, is Binna Burra Lodge, with its gorgeous Sky Lodge apartments, cosy Tiny Wild Homes and family-friendly Glamping Tents. At 800 m above sea level, Binna Burra's accommodations overlook the picture-perfect subtropical rainforest of adjacent Lamington National Park, where an extensive selection of walking tracks caters to various fitness levels. Observant walkers can hope to spot land mullets, leaf-tailed geckos, red-necked pademelons, giant panda snails, noisy pittas and even satin bowerbirds and lyrebirds, along with a proliferation of fungi. Afterwards, stop in at the teahouse and enjoy lunch or dinner with a view.

A second eco-icon near the Green Mountains Section of Lamington National Park is O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat,



a mountaintop haven that has welcomed guests for nearly a century. Australia's highest-rated Birds of Prey show and a hands-on wildlife encounter enrapture kids, and whether you're pitching a tent, relaxing in a modern spa villa overlooking the valley, or booking an eco-cabin at Pat's Farm, you'll find comfortable accommodation and a soul-soothing respite.

If you're keen on getting out there but still want to spoil yourself, Spicers has luxury accommodation and a Scenic Rim Trail with multi-night adventures through dense rainforests along the Great Dividing Range, ending each night with a gourmet meal and a peaceful, private eco-cabin.

## ECO-ADRENALIN

Further west, in Mount Barney NP, Mt Barney Lodge draws adrenalin junkies as well as nature-lovers. With rock climbing, abseiling, bushwalking, mountain expeditions, and navigation courses for both kids and adults, there's plenty to return for time and time again.



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Heightened adventure at TreeTop Challenge. Jaqui Faulkner; TreeTop Challenge Canyon Flyer. TreeTop Challenge.

Tamborine Mountain Glades, formerly Cedar Creek Lodges, offer Hillside Rooms, Self-Contained Lodges, Woodlands Glamping Tents and Vista Suites for stunning views and a touch of style. Soak under the stars, surrounded by the symphony of nature in your own private outdoor spa, or get sky high with a balloon ride.

For a secluded, deluxe experience, Wander leaves no trace with its B-Corp certified off-grid eco-pod accommodation overlooking Lake Wyaralong and the vineyards of The Overflow Estate 1895. Proving that less is usually more, WanderPods use solar energy, rainwater

harvesting, and zero-waste practices. What's more, they support the work of Bush Heritage Australia and the Scenic Rim's Million Trees program to protect and regenerate nearby bushland.

Ecotourism isn't just for tourists – it's a way for locals to tread more lightly, too. So, pack sparingly, adventure greatly, and leave with memories of the sun setting over these dramatic peaks – the perfect bookends to a wander within this wildly scenic region. ■

### TAMBORINE NP

Queensland's first national park to be declared under the *State Forests and National Parks Act 1906*, Tamborine has several distinct sections. The park protects 85% of faunal and 65% of floral species found in the greater Gold Coast region and sits on the most northerly remnants of flows from a volcano centred on Wollumbin (Mount Warning). Highlights include Witches Falls; the lush, mossy walk to Curtis Falls; and the famed glow worm caves. Watch for

yellow-footed antechinuses, red-necked pademelons and platypuses near Curtis Falls. Parts of Tamborine NP are also just a short walk from an eclectic mix of eateries, museums and botanic gardens for a spot of lunch or exploring the region's built history.

### MT BARNEY NP

Along with the 1359-m Mount Barney for which the park is named (one of the state's highest peaks), six mountains ring this park – the remains

of the ancient Focal Peak Shield Volcano that erupted 24 million years ago. Today, the park conserves more 340 faunal species, including the critically endangered Coxen's fig-parrot and the vulnerable plumed frogmouth. More than 700 species of flora thrive here, including the endangered Mt Maroon wattle (*Acacia saxicola*) and the vulnerable Mt Barney bush pea (*Pultenaea whiteana*). Remote camping and testing hikes make this park a favourite with experienced adventurers.



# LEARNING FROM THE LEAVES ...

## Leading the way in primary education as a Forest School

*Bardon State School*

**‘EVERY CHILD IS BORN A NATURALIST. HIS EYES ARE, BY NATURE, OPEN TO THE GLORIES OF THE STARS, THE BEAUTY OF THE FLOWERS, AND THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.’  
— R SEARCH, 1905.**

Despite that truism, most children now spend far more time staring at a screen, or within the confines of a classroom, than they do exploring and appreciating the natural world. Thankfully, that’s changing as more schools recognise and incorporate nature learning into tailored curricula. Passionate educators are now taking classes outside, where learning becomes an immersive, sensory experience with towering trees overhead, the gentle trickle of a creek nearby, and the crunch of leaves underfoot.

In October 2024, Brisbane’s Bardon State School became Australia’s first primary school to become an approved provider by the Australian Forest School Association.

Earlier Nature Play and bush kindy programs traditionally focused on encouraging kindergarten-aged kids to be better nature noticers and learn outdoors occasionally. In contrast, the Forest School initiative, inspired by the United Kingdom’s Forest School model, is an ongoing program that emphasises regular, long-term, child-led learning with sessions guided by trained Forest School practitioners who integrate elements of the Australian Curriculum.

Whether exploring the wild spaces of the school grounds (fondly known as ‘Base Town’) or adventuring along Ithaca Creek, Bardon State School students are encouraged to follow their interests, take risks, and discover the wonders around them.

Each session starts with an Acknowledgement of Country, and the school respectfully embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into classes, making connections to the land and the local First Nations People.

Participating in Forest School activities is known to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem, traits that continue into the classroom and into young adulthood, as children are equipped with the skills to embrace challenges, ➡



*Learning the secrets of the forest ...*

TOP: Storytelling and sharing circles provide opportunities for connection to Country and community. *Bardon State School.*

LEFT: Outdoors learning has been shown to have measurable effects on concentration and gross motor skills. *Bardon State School.*





To learn about the **Forest School Program** and guiding principles, visit [australianforestschoollassociation.org/membership/guiding-principles/](https://australianforestschoollassociation.org/membership/guiding-principles/)

For more about **Bardon State School**, visit [bardonss.eq.edu.au](https://bardonss.eq.edu.au)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Nature noticing teaches kids about the seasons and traditional uses for flora. *Bardon State School*. Nature is a fantastic problem-solver, and being out in it encourages kids to use both critical-thinking and creative skills. *Bardon State School*.

cooperate, collaborate, think critically and use creativity to solve problems.

The Bardon State School Forest School program began in 2023 for Prep students, but it soon blossomed into more. With the support of parents, students, and educators, the initiative was expanded in 2024 to include Years 1 and 2, ensuring more young minds had the opportunity to thrive.

Students come from diverse backgrounds, including those with disability, those who are gifted and talented, and those for whom English is a second language. Diversity and sustainability are at the core of this Forest School's program. The school is also involved with local, national, and international bushcare and conservation initiatives, such as SOWN, Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots, Clean Up Australia Day, and David Attenborough's Schools for Nature.

'Our immersive Forest School program for students in Prep to Year 2 deepens children's knowledge of the local environment, creates

tangible connections to special places and makes real-life links to the curriculum (learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities),' says Principal Jill Rutland. 'We're lucky to have beautiful grounds at Bardon and access to neighbouring Ithaca Creek. We make the most of these wonderful resources.' Appreciating the natural resources that sustain us all makes for not only better learners but for a better world. ■



RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Principal Jill Rutland. *Bardon State School*; Regular nature immersion benefits physical and mental well-being. *Bardon State School*.



# WILDLIFE FEATURE

## Platypus

*The Editor*

### SCIENTIFIC NAME:

*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*

**DISCOVERY:** First formally described in 1799 by British Museum creator George Shaw, the platypus's bizarre mix of webbed feet, duck-like bill, fur and egg-laying made naturalists think it was a hoax. It is actually one of just two living clades of monotreme.

**STATUS:** Special Least Concern (Qld); Near Threatened (IUCN)

**SIZE:** Females ~43 cm long and 900 g; males ~50 cm long and 1700 g.

**HABITAT:** Clean, unpolluted east coast freshwater waterways, including lakes and some artificial dams

from Tasmania up to Cooktown.

**DIET:** Forages at dawn and dusk for worms, crustaceans, molluscs, tadpoles, fish eggs and insect larvae (e.g. caddisflies, mayflies, and midges), detected on the creekbed or riverbed by the platypus's electro-receptive bill.

The platypus is a largely solitary, territorial species that occupies a home range of 2.5–15 ha and may move 1–7 km a day. Pairs come together only to breed in



TOP: The egg-laying platypus is the sole survivor in the genus *Ornithorhynchus*.

*Ramit Singal/iNaturalist. ABOVE: Eungella National Park is a stronghold for this species in Queensland. Ranger Craig Dunk © Queensland Government.*

August (in Qld), and females raise a single litter of 1–2 “puggles” each spring in a deep burrow dug in a riverbank, often concealed by overhanging tree roots or sitting just below the waterline. Platypuses lack nipples, so mums sweat milk to patches on the belly, which offspring suckle.

Platypuses are most at risk from pollution, drying-up, salinity or degradation of freshwater habitats, but these air-breathing aquatic mammals can also drown in opera house nets or become snared in circular rubbish like discarded cans, rubber bands or hair ties. Platypuses are all-terrain mammals that migrate over land if waterways dry up, but that puts them at increased risk of attack from cats, dogs or foxes. Nationally, populations have declined at least 22% over 30 years, and Wildlife Queensland's PlatypusWatch Network eDNA studies have revealed ongoing declines and localised extinctions in some waterways.



ABOVE: Platypuses are among the world's few venomous mammals. Spurs on each of a male's hindfeet can inject toxins, believed to be used to deter other males during breeding season. *Slowmotiongli/CanvaNFP.*

LEFT: Queensland's platypuses are believed to belong to three distinct evolutionary units. *Gary Dickson/iNaturalist.*





# RANGER SPOTLIGHT

## Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service

FROM AN EARLY AGE, RANGER KRISTEN KNEW SHE WANTED TO WORK OUT IN NATURE. BEING IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME (WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE) LED TO HER CURRENT ROLE AS EDUCATION RANGER AT WALKABOUT CREEK DISCOVERY CENTRE, ENOGGERA.

Ranger Kristen says it is the passion and knowledge of the incredible team of Rangers at Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre that makes the centre an amazing place to work at and visit.

‘The centre is filled with people who are passionate about protecting our Queensland wildlife and excited by their role in inspiring the next generation of conservation guardians. Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre is a well of knowledge and support,’ Ranger Kristen said.

Ranger Kristen’s top tip for any visitors to the centre: ‘Come with questions in hand.

‘Our Rangers absolutely love an opportunity to talk with visitors about the wildlife ambassadors we work with, and about Queensland’s protected areas that they call home, and are

TOP: Ranger Kristen leading the January Animal Carers session. NPAQ/Parks Connect. RIGHT: With Colossus the python. © Queensland Government. BELOW: Ranger Kristen feeds a Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo, one of the animal ambassadors. © Queensland Government



always looking for good opportunities to educate visitors on how to coexist safely with our wildlife.’

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service & Partnerships have recently teamed up with NPAQ to deliver Junior Ranger programs every school holidays. It’s another great opportunity to bring kids closer to nature. The partnership will also see some exciting new weekly programs kicking off.

‘The Parks Connect Junior Ranger programs are such a fantastic way to engage with the local community, and it is inspiring to see young people with such passion

and care towards our natural world. I’m often blown away by how much knowledge these kids have at such a young age, and it gives me a lot of hope for the future,’ said Ranger Kristen.

‘The biggest challenge when it comes to education and the environment is always wanting to know more. Things are constantly developing, changing and being discovered, and the pursuit to learn as much as possible will never end, but that’s part of the fun – so watch this space.’

Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre is open 7 days a week, so plan your next visit today! ■



## MAJOR EVENTS

### NPAQ Annual Dinner

**DATE:** Friday 20 June

**VENUE:** Royal on the Park

**TIME:** 6:30 pm

**ORGANISER:** Donna McCosker

## SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

NPAQ currently has volunteer opportunities that connect people with nature and support conservation efforts in Qld.

- » Junior Rangers – assist with fun, nature-based activities on school holidays & weekends.
- » Cadet Ranger Program – support hands-on programs for teens (from May 2025).
- » Park of the Month – lead/assist with community nature events in parks (starting July 2025).

Blue card required. To express interest, email [admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au)

## WHAT'S ON?

### NPAQ ACTIVITIES

Our Activities Committee organises low-cost outdoors activities for members and non-members. To get involved, contact the relevant activity leader or register at [npaq.org.au](http://npaq.org.au)

#### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

**DATE:** 26 April 2025

**MEET:** 9 am, Jollys Lookout Lower Carpark, D'Aguilar NP  
**COST:** Free

**LEADER:** Angus McElnea  
(0429 854 446)

#### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

**DATE:** 24 May 2025

**MEET:** 9 am, Jollys Lookout Lower Carpark, D'Aguilar NP  
**COST:** Free

**LEADER:** Angus McElnea  
(0429 854 446)

#### BIRDWATCHING – ENOGGERA RESERVOIR

**DATE:** 27 April 2025

**MEET:** 7:30 am, 60 Mt Nebo Rd, Enoggera  
**COST:** \$5 (bring enclosed shoes, hat, sunscreen, first aid kit, binoculars, camera, chair, insect repellent and morning tea.)

**LEADER:** Mary Anne Ryan  
(0416 943 280)

#### BIRDWATCHING – SAMSONVALE

**DATE:** 25 May 2025

**MEET:** 7:30 am, Bullocky Rest Reserve, Forgan Rd, Joyner  
**COST:** \$5 (bring enclosed shoes, hat, sunscreen, first aid kit, binoculars, camera, chair, repellent, morning tea & lunch).

**LEADER:** Mary Anne Ryan  
(0416 943 280)

## MEMBER REFLECTIONS

### MARY ANNE RYAN, MEMBER

NPAQ IN THE 90S had a vibrant group of members who enjoyed exploring national parks. I guess it was part of their succession planning to encourage new members to train as Walk Leaders. Ann Tracey saw this opportunity, and under her mentorship, I settled into and thrived in the role. I have continued to lead walks since that time. Later, I joined the Outings Committee, later renamed the Activities Committee. As a member of NPAQ's Activities Committee, in collaboration with another NPAQ member, Ron Owen, I gathered and collated the Committee's Meeting Agendas and Minutes as far back as was possible. This documentation was bound into a beautiful book that is available for perusal in the NPAQ Office. It remains an important historical record of our organisation's formal outings. My favourite national park is Lamington NP—I love being completely surrounded by rainforest, and yet, some kilometres on, another vegetation type evolves. I hope the Queensland Government respects its commitment to generously fund the expansion and sustainable management of Queensland's national parks.





# BECOME A MEMBER AND SUBSCRIBE

NPAQ members receive a suite of benefits, including copies of *Protected* magazine.

## YES, I WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER...

Register at [npaq.org.au/support-us](http://npaq.org.au/support-us) or return the form below.

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SURNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ SUBURB: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEMBERSHIP TYPE

☐ INDIVIDUAL (\$50) ☐ HOUSEHOLD (\$80)

Membership expires on 31 August each year.

### PAYMENT TYPE

☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ CHEQUE ☐ CASH

NAME ON CARD

CARD NUMBER

EXP / CVV/CVC

Please post to: Operations Manager, NPAQ, 9/36 Finchley St, Milton QLD 4064.

## Sponsor NPAQ

Help  
create  
change!



## SPONSORS NEEDED

Do you run or work for a business or organisation that could partner with NPAQ to help our protected areas thrive. We'd welcome your support. Email [admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au)



## DONATE & SAVE

Complimentary individual membership with \$200 donation. Complimentary household membership with donation of \$300 or more. Donate online at [npaq.org.au/donate](http://npaq.org.au/donate)

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**COULD YOU BE A VOLUNTEER  
JUNIOR RANGER ASSISTANT?**



HELP WITH FUN,  
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for more

(Blue Card required for ability to get one).

**PARKS CONNECT**

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED  
HELP GUIDE CADET RANGERS**



GOLD COAST,  
BRISBANE  
OR SOUTH EAST QLD  
NATIONAL PARKS

EMAIL

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for more

(Blue Card required for ability to get one).

**PARKS CONNECT**

