

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

Management Planning

Hinchinbrook Island: A New Approach to
Management Plans

Management Planning for Protected Areas

Eungella National Park

Paluma Dam to Paradise Water Hole

Blue Banksia

the national park experience



Issue 12 December 2016 - January 2017

Connect and Protect



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Images

Cover & Back Page - Hinchinbrook Island
(Jennifer McCallan).

Strip p2 - Strangler Fig (*Kerstin Daff*).

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Michelle Prior, NPAQ President

Welcome to the December/January edition of ***Protected.***

A map of our country shows divisions of land highlighted as lines. But nature does not recognise these lines in the landscape, and in fact transcends these artificial borders. Similarly, a paradox exists in Australia's national parks. Aside from two decades of national leadership (from 1992 to 2012), protected areas remain the preserve of state and territories, generally lacking impetus at the federal level.

In 1972, under the World Heritage Convention, Australia made an important commitment to protect representative examples of all major ecosystem types. Twenty years later, in 1992, Australia's ratification of the international Convention of Biological Diversity, initiated the establishment of the National Reserve System.

Last week, the Queensland Government announced the addition of 366,000 hectares to the protected area estate. This increase included three new, and two expanded national parks, and helped protect some of Australia's rare and threatened plants and animals, such as the Northern Quoll, Gouldian Finch, Glossy Black-cockatoo, and Collared Delma; and



such places as the headwaters of the Burdekin River.

This increase was the direct result of federal funding under the now defunct National Reserve System.

We commend the Queensland Government for expanding the protected area estate and committing funds for the first four years of management. However, we call on all federal and state/territory governments to reinvigorate the strategic growth and management of our National parks.

National Parks are a national achievement and a cornerstone of a modern, enlightened society. Not only are Australia's parks famous worldwide and form part of our national identity, they provide an abundance of benefits. Reclaimed from the past as a legacy for the future, they are a fundamental aspect of life today.

National parks protect our natural heritage - a magnificent spectrum of spectacular landscapes and unique wildlife, whilst also contributing significantly to our personal health and well-being. They are a major drawcard in the annual \$23 billion nature-based tourism industry, and also provide valuable ecosystem services - protecting our water catchments and moderating our climate.

National parks have the most generous form of land tenure available, being publicly available to all. They attract millions of people each year. A simple walk in a protected forest has been shown to lower blood pressure and improve the immune system.

National parks connect us to our country, our land. They contribute to bridging the gap between the traditional peoples and those who have come after. They provide a place of

refuge from our fast-paced and often stressful lives; and are invaluable in counter-balancing the urban life.

National parks are the last bastion for conservation, and are critical to conserving our unique biodiversity and saving threatened species in decline. They protect the irreplaceable.

National parks protect nature's beauty and diversity. They can be places of pilgrimage, places of resounding silence or indescribable brilliance, places where we can feel an integral part of the natural world.

However, despite all these benefits, our national parks struggle to attract appropriate levels of funding. The nationally agreed vision of a National Reserve System cannot continue to languish.

Images

Northern Quoll - By Wildlife Explorer (Picasa Web Albums)

Gouldian Finch - Martin Pot (Martybugs at en.wikipedia)



HINCHINBROOK ISLAND A NEW APPROACH TO M

Neil Douglas, NPAQ Member, Contributor

Hinchinbrook Island National Park

Hinchinbrook Island, situated just off the coast between Ingham and Cardwell, is one of the world's largest island national parks. Having outstanding natural and scenic values, the park is part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The only development, is an abandoned resort at Cape Richards on the northern tip. The island is a magnet for tourists, bushwalkers and sea kayakers, particularly in the cooler, drier months. The 32 km Thorsborne Trail, along the southern part of the east coast of the island, is regarded by many bushwalkers as being the best multi-day bushwalks in North Queensland. Demand to walk the trail is heavily regulated. The rugged mountains of the island's interior form a spectacular backdrop for the beautiful coastal scenery.

A new approach to management planning

The current management plan for the island dates from 1999. A new management plan has recently been drafted and was available for public comment during November. A subordinate Draft Hinchinbrook Island National Park Visitor Strategy was also open for comment. After being removed by the previous Newman LNP Government, community consultation for national park management plan has recently been reinstated by the Palaszczuk Labor Government.

A significant aspect of the draft management plan is that it is the first of a new style being implemented by the department. Rather than a detailed, prescriptive document in the style of existing management

plans is, the plan it contains broad value statements and strategic management directions for protecting and managing "key values". A new concept is "Level of Service", which refers to the resources devoted to a particular management direction.

Detailed, prescriptive matters are dealt with in accompanying subordinate documents, such as the draft Visitor Strategy.

QPWS has found that existing management plans are too prescriptive and inflexible, and have restricted the adoption of innovative approaches and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Whilst the rationale behind the new format can be appreciated, the range of broad statements of strategic directions and desired outcomes, presents a challenge for the public to assess or comment on the adequacy of the management plan, and to ascertain if the natural and cultural values will be fully protected.

Although the benefits of flexibility and adaptive management can readily be seen, some stakeholders are of the opinion that the new format of management planning reduces the level of public scrutiny and input. A key consideration is that management plans must be made available for public comment and are approved at Cabinet level; whereas, subordinate strategies do not have to be published for stakeholder input and are approved at Departmental level only. The public is sympathetic to the need for more flexibility, but would be happier if the subordinate strategies were routinely available for public input as well.

Desired outcomes for key values

Several key values are identified:

- Wetlands, estuaries and creeks
- Heathland, shrubland cypress communities
- Eucalypt forest and woodland communities
- Rainforest communities
- Traditional owner connection to country
- 'Remote and wild' nature experience
- Scenic and aesthetic value

The crisp and clear document provides a value statement, identifies the threats and states the desired outcome. Additionally, the condition (current and desired) and trend are highlighted. However, whilst understanding the intent behind 'Values-Based' planning, it is not so easy to be convinced that a focus on 'Key Values' will provide sufficient protection for the park as a whole.

Summary of Management Plan

The Plan describes the environmental and scenic values of the island. Biologically the park is very diverse, with 54 regional ecosystems identified, four of which are not found elsewhere in Queensland.



D: MANAGEMENT PLANS

There is heath on the higher peaks, while open eucalypt forest dominates most of the slopes, and extensive and luxuriant stands of mangroves abound on the coast. About 10% of the island is rainforest, of which there are several different types, some being unique to the island.

Some of the key features of the Management Plan are summarised below:

- Improving staff knowledge of optimal fire regimes and traditional aboriginal burning practices for purposes such as reducing dry season wildfire threats, promoting species diversity and preventing rainforest spreading from current areas.
- Improving knowledge and capacity to manage natural values.
- Increased involvement with traditional owners by way of formal and informal agreements, increased collaboration in decision making, employment of indigenous rangers and joint operational projects. Staff are to be given more training in aboriginal cultural heritage management, to protect the island's significant Aboriginal history. Traditional owners are to be supported in exploring new opportunities to improve economic well-being, including by providing commercial services.
- Emphasis on visitor experience.

Visitor management proposals

NPAQ welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft Visitor Strategy in conjunction with the draft Management Plan.

However, there is a general wariness that both the draft management Plan and Visitor Strategy will place the management of the visitor experience at a higher priority than, and potentially at the expense of, protecting the natural values of the environment.

Of concern is the proposal to increase visitor numbers, coupled with the absence of addressing visitor/human impacts on the natural values of the park (only in terms of the 'remote and wild nature experience').

There is a strong emphasis on commercial activities, particularly the Thorsborne Trail. As the plan refers to commercial activities declining on Hinchinbrook Island, and visitor numbers not reaching expected targets, NPAQ is concerned that inducements may be provided to commercial operators, such as the allowance of infrastructure development – which would greatly impact on the 'remote and wild nature experience' and natural values of the park.

It is difficult to assess whether increased commercial use of the Trail will impact on self-reliant visitors. Although taking into consideration the length of time and changes in



recreation and tourism, in 1999 the Management Plan stated that commercial bushwalking tours were considered inappropriate due to the limited number of spaces on the trail, and the high level of bookings in the cooler months. Several websites currently recommend booking the trail several months in advance. NPAQ is concerned that pre-booking by commercial operators may eliminate/reduce self-reliant visitors from walking the trail, particularly in peak periods – which is known to have occurred in several popular locations nationally and internationally. Any commercial use should not occur at the expense of self-reliant visitors. This issue has not been identified and addressed in the draft Visitor Strategy.

The Strategy encourages reopening the closed Cape Richards resort and, if necessary, upgrading the walking tracks in the vicinity to cater for increased numbers of visitors. It is proposed that the Thorsborne Trail itself will remain as a rough "Class 5" track with minimal maintenance apart from some vegetation clearing and possible local re-routing to respond to erosion. However, there will be an investigation into extending the Trail at the northern end to Cape Richards.

In conclusion, the draft Hinchinbrook plan shows how important it is for stakeholders to exercise their right to comment on such documents and to stand up for the continued ability to do so.

Images

Zowie Bay, Creek off Thornesbourne Trail
(Jennifer & Ian McCallan)

Mt Bowen (Ann Ingham)

from Hinchinbrook Island

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING PROTECTED AREAS

Extracts from the IUCN Best Practice Guidelines Series No. 10

Lee Thomas & Julie Middleton
Adrian Phillips, Series Editor

Frequently much time and effort is put into management planning for protected areas but the plans are not used – or are unusable.

Even in these circumstances there is general agreement about the desirability of such plans; their preparation is supported by most conservation agencies and IUCN wishes to see plans in place for all protected areas (IUCN/Caracas Action Plan 1992). Management Plans bring many benefits to protected areas and to the organisations or individuals charged with their management – and, without them, serious problems can ensue:

“If there is no general Management Plan, preservation, development and use activities in a park will occur in a haphazard basis, often in response to political pressures with little consideration as to the implications for the future. The result is likely to be lost opportunities and irreversible damage to park resources and values” (Young and Young 1993).

The Benefits of Management Planning

Apart from meeting legislative requirements, the most compelling reason for producing Management Plans is to provide benefits to the protected area and those who rely upon its good management. A good management planning process which has the support of staff and local people, provides the following benefits:

Improved management of the protected area

The primary product of management planning should be more effective management of the protected area. Management planning encourages

more effective management by:

- ensuring that management decisions are based on a clear understanding of the protected area, its purpose, and the important resources and values associated with it.
- providing guidance for managers in the form of a framework for day-to-day operations and long-term management.
- providing continuity of management. Having an agreed Management Plan in place provides a useful briefing document for new staff and helps them to maintain the direction and momentum of management.
- If the management objectives within a Management Plan are well written, specific and can be measured, they can be used as a basis for determining whether management of the protected area is effective or whether changes in management (or indeed in the plan) are required.

Improved use of financial and staff resources

Management planning can help make sensible use of resources. For example:

- Management Plans identify, describe and prioritise the management actions required to achieve the objectives for the protected area. This list of tasks helps managers to allocate the staff, funding and materials required.
- Management Plans may also highlight where additional resources are required.

Increased accountability

Management planning can provide a mechanism for increasing the accountability of:

- the protected area manager(s). The manager should be mandated to work within the Management Plan, which can then be used to identify targets to reach and performance standards to attain.
- the managing organisations/agencies. A plan can act as a sort of public contract between the manager, local communities and visitors on how the protected area will be managed and protected in future. Thus, the Management Plan can provide a way by which the public can examine management decisions and monitor delivery against targets.

Improved communication

The management planning process can provide a useful link between the protected area manager and those with an interest in the area, its management and future. It does this by:

- identifying key audiences with whom the manager needs to communicate, and clarifying the messages to be communicated.
- providing a means of communication with the public, to explain policies and proposals. In particular, the Management Plan (and the planning process) can be used to gain the co-operation of the public and non-governmental organisations. This function should influence the style and presentation of the plan as it will need to be easily understood by non-specialists.

MANAGEMENT PLANNING OF

- promoting and publicising the protected area to a wide range of stakeholders. As summarised by the US National Park Service:

“Through public involvement [in the management planning process] the National Park Service will share information about the planning process, issues and proposed management actions; learn about the values placed by other people and groups on the same resources and visitor experiences; and build support among local publics, visitors, Congress and others for implementing the plan” (USNPS 1998).

The Problems with Management Planning

Relatively few protected area Management Plans can be considered successful:

“By far the most common situation is that [general management and development] plans tend to gather dust or at best receive minimal implementation, despite the tremendous national (and frequently international) technical co-operation efforts which go into their preparation” (Budowski and MacFarland 1982)

The problems encountered in management planning tend to be of two kinds:

- those faced when preparing a Management Plan; and
- those faced in its implementation.

Problems at the planning stage

Difficulties include:

- lack of qualified park staff to carry out the planning process;
- a lack of funds and equipment;
- insufficient technical support and insularity of planners;

- negative perceptions of the protected area by local communities;
- external economic pressures, such as pressures to exploit the resources or features of the protected area; and
- poorly developed communications with the public and other stakeholders.

Problems at the implementation stage

Problems encountered during the implementation of the plan may stem from weaknesses in the plan itself – in its content, style or remit, or by creating unreasonable expectations about what will be achieved. Frequently encountered problems include:

- insufficient attention is given to budgetary questions (financial information is either not included, or bears very little relation to the funds likely to be available);
- unrealistic assumptions are made about the management capacity of the organisation;
- poorly formulated objectives (these may be very generic, failing to bring out the particular features of the park – or they mix up ends and means);
- vital details (such as the scope of the problems to be addressed) are deferred for further study although this may be difficult to avoid;
- a failure to allocate responsibilities for implementing plans;
- vague and unspecific commitments that do not provide a basis for on-the-ground action;

- undue emphasis on certain aspects of management, such as tourism or recreation, which may divert resources away from other important aspects of the protected area;
- financial, managerial or even political instability;
- a failure to set out clear imperatives and priorities: many plans contain options or tentative ‘recommendations’ rather than firm decisions on what the organisation has decided to do, thus diminishing the authority of the plan; and
- Management Plans that are impractical: they cannot be used as a basis for action

How Such Problems can be Overcome

What needs to be done to ensure a successful Management Plan that is useful, practical and can be implemented?

The factors that determine this come under four main headings:

1. The process used during plan preparation;
2. The presentation, style and content of the resulting plan;
3. The context within which the plan must operate; and
4. The resources, commitment and capacity to implement the plan.

Such factors will affect whether the benefits of Management Plans, as outlined are realized.

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PARK IN FOCUS

Eungella National Park

Emma Fitzsimmons, Project Officer

Approximately an hour's drive west of Mackay on the central Queensland coast, a sealed road travels through the picturesque Pioneer Valley, past a mosaic of sugar cane fields and rural townships, before ascending the steep winding Clarke Range. At the top of the range, the temperature most characteristic of central Queensland drops dramatically and the air becomes cool and fresh as dense rainforest suddenly comes into view.

Eungella National Park protects approximately 60,000 hectares of land and is situated within the mountainous Mackay Highlands, straddling the Clarke Range which forms the eastern edge of the Great Dividing Range. In the northern section of the park, the Clarke Range rises to a height of 1,270 metres at Mt Dalrymple and extends into the southern section of the park where its steep escarpments define the upper reaches of Finch Hatton Gorge.

Eungella comes from an Aboriginal word meaning 'land where cloud lies over the mountains' - an appropriate name for a national park that is regularly shrouded in cloud and fog. The Traditional Owners are the Wiri people who to this day retain a strong connection with Eungella National Park.

Broken River

Eungella National Park is arguably the best place in Australia to spot a platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and visitors from all over the world will travel to the park for the chance to spot this shy, semi-aquatic monotreme. Broken River, the most characteristic landscape feature in the national park, is critical habitat for the platypus and is home to an abundant

population. Viewing decks along Broken River provide visitors with the best vantage point to view platypus swimming and feeding in the large pools below.

Flora and fauna

At first glance, the rainforest of Eungella National Park may look the same as any other found in central and northern Queensland; towering trees, moss-covered trunks, sunlight seeping through a dense canopy – impressions of lushness. However, all rainforests are different and Eungella is particularly unique. In fact, Eungella lies on the boundary of tropical and subtropical rainforest and encompasses the longest stretch of subtropical rainforest in Australia. As a result, Eungella National Park supports plant species from both rainforest types.

Eungella's interesting mixture of tropical and subtropical plants is due to the fact that Eungella's rainforests have been isolated from similar rainforests for at least 30,000 years.



After the Gondwanan continent split and Australia drifted northward from Antarctica 40 million years ago, the resulting drier and cooler climate meant that rainforests could only survive in areas with warmer temperatures and high moisture levels. These 'refuges' that were formed occurred in deep gorges and on wet, mountainous highlands such as Eungella. Corridors of dry open forest, such as eucalypt forests, then occupied the remaining areas and isolated the areas of tropical rainforest. While rainforests were able to naturally expand as the climate became warmer and rainfall increased, evidence suggests that burning practices by Aboriginal people retained open grasslands and increased the spread of eucalypt forests. These practices reduced the expansion of rainforests and created a barrier to moisture-loving plants which could not cross, or survive in open forests.

As a result, Eungella National Park is now characterised by several unique vegetation communities. The cool upland rainforests of Eungella National Park are classified as subtropical and are dominated by prominent rainforest trees such as Silver Quandong (*Elaeocarpus kirtonii*), Piccabeen Palms (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*) and heavily buttressed Mackay Tulip Oaks (*Argyrodendron actinophyllum*) which are endemic to the park. The warmer lowland rainforests are considered more tropical in character and are dominated by Pink Toriga (*Calophyllum australianum*), Strangler Figs (*Ficus sp.*) and immense epiphytic ferns such as Silver Elkhorns (*Platynerium bifurcatum*). Whereas wet sclerophyll forests, comprised



of tall eucalypt trees, play a vital role as an ecotonal community on the boundary between rainforests and open woodland ecosystems found on the western section of the park.

Eungella's long isolation from similar rainforest areas has also made the animal community different. Animals which cannot live away from the particular foods and dense shelter of the rainforests, have long been separated from others of their kind. For example, the Eungella Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus hindwood*) is one bird species that is entirely unique to the national park. In fact, it was only discovered as a separate species in 1977 and has since become one of the five new bird species to have been discovered in Australia over the past 50 years. Other endemic species include the Eungella Shadestink (*Saproscincus eungellensis*), Eungella Tinkerfrog (*Taudactylus liemi*) and Eungella Dayfrog (*Taudactylus eungellensis*); all of which are not only rare but extremely threatened.



Interesting walks

Eungella National Park has over 25 km of walking tracks that range from 10 minute walks, to half day and full day walks. So whether visitors are seeking an easy stroll with children or something more adventurous as the 'Great Walk', Eungella caters to everyone's needs.

The Sky Window Circuit (250 m) is leisurely walk that passes two lookouts which deliver picturesque views overlooking the Pioneer Valley stretching east towards Mackay. Interpretative signs positioned along the track enable children to discover Eungella's rich Aboriginal history and learn how the surrounding rainforest has changed over time. The Rainforest Discovery Circuit (780 m) meanders past giant strangler figs adorned with epiphytic ferns and vines, providing visitors with a short, but comfortable way of experiencing some of Eungella's beautiful rainforest scenery.

The Crediton Creek Track (8km one way) is one of Eungella's most popular walks and follows Broken River through the gullies of the rainforest to the Wishing Pool intersection. Observation decks positioned along the track provide some of the best opportunities in the park to spot platypus and turtles.

Eungella National Park is also the starting point for the 56 km, 3 day, Great Walk through the Mackay Highlands that is perfect for the more avid adventurers. From Eungella National Park, the Great Walk passes through Crediton State Forest and Homevale National Park, incorporating dense rainforest gullies, open eucalypt woodlands and steep escarpments.

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Images

From Left: Platypus at Eungella (Pablo Lopez), Fern Canopy, Azure Kingfisher (Kerstin Daff).



FEATURED WALK

Paluma Dam to Paradise Water Hole, Paluma Range National Park

Jennifer & Ian McCallan, Environment & Health Committee, Cardwell

Whilst on a trip to the world famous Thorsborne Track on Hinchinbrook Island it is worthwhile to visit the Paluma Range area, just over an hour south from the drop-off to the island walk at Lucinda. There is a wide range of tracks within half an hour of Paluma to suit all levels of fitness: from a few hours walking on well-defined tracks to multi day wilderness walks. This is a very beautiful and worthwhile area to explore.

One mid-level walk with great historical background is Bullocky Toms Track. In the late 1800s, it was one of the most used 'service' tracks ON the coastal escarpment to the mines at Mt. Spec and Hidden Valley. It was named by Tom Andrews, whose property was at the junction of Big and Little Crystal Creeks. He butchered and packed fresh meat and supplies to the tin miners.

Over the last few years a great deal of restoration work has resulted in a fantastic rejuvenation of this track, thanks to enthusiastic Paluma resident Wilfred Karnoll with support from the Townsville Bushwalking Club.

The 'easy' way to traverse this 15 km one day walk is to start at Paluma Dam and walk through to the national park's picnic area at Big Crystal Creek near Mutarnee. This requires a car shuffle. The alternative more demanding walk is to overnight either at the top or bottom of the range at one of the national park's camp sites. However this requires negotiating the steep climb with an overnight pack! There are also opportunities for bush camping.

Starting from the parking area at Paluma Dam, walk through the camping area to the far end where the track commences into the rainforest,

on the left hand side. A heart pumping uphill walk warms you up at the start. The track is marked with flags on trees and prominent stakes at the main turn-offs showing arrows on a disc indicating the destinations and distances from that point.

Keep your eyes peeled and stop to admire the Tooth Billed Cat Bird Bower with its neatly placed leaves on a cleared space - hard to spot as most people are watching their feet rather than the surrounds. At the marked junction turn right to join the Crystal Falls Track and meander along through rainforest past another Tooth Billed Cat Bird Bower and a giant buttress mossy tree. The highest point of this walk of 1,001 metres is passed. Then comes the descent to the Crystal Creek Falls which is a great spot for morning tea and a refreshing swim – but be prepared for cool water.

'Heartbreak Hill' is a 100 metre climb out of Crystal Creek, with a further half an hour to the junction with the Bullocky Toms Track. Turning right, walk through lovely rainforest to cross Gold Creek where there is a rope in place to provide a safe crossing when the creek is up. Take care the rocks are particularly slippery in the rainforest and watch for the black mould, which is extremely slippery when wet. Climbing out onto the track and then along the narrow ridge, you arrive at a small turn-off to Gold Creek Falls. Here is a small lookout above the falls, with a substantial rope to help you clamber down the rock face to the deep pool. Take care, as the rope rock face is slimy and slippery. This is another good deep pool, where the water is very cool and refreshing with a good water flow,





provides a good spot for lunch.

Back up the “thank goodness it's there” rope, return to the main track and follow the mostly downhill narrow ridge (except for one short steep uphill climb). Take care with the loose leaf matter, wet or dry, it can be treacherous. After approximately 45 minutes, there is a small track on the right, leading to Cloudy Lookout. From here, the valley through to Mutarnee can be seen with glimpses of the ocean and across towards Paluma (clouds permitting), the steep climb of Cloudy Creek and Witts Lookout.

Return back to the main track, which continues to steeply descend through a transition from the rainforest to drier woodland and grass trees. Cairn Creek (there is a large boulder cairn so it's easy to identify) provides another welcome break with more cool clear drinking water. At this point, the track crosses the creek and makes a short ascent.

An alternative, is to go downstream for some rock hopping, watching carefully for the markings of pink tape which indicates the track recrossing the creek. Re-joining the track and on flatter ground, the track veers to the right, recrossing the creek again a short time later. The Track continues through grassland and scrub to Lanskeys Hut, previously a private leased property. The area around the hut needs a lot of weed eradication, with the condition of this area being in stark contrast to the rainforest you have just left.

From here, it's a short walk to the now wide Crystal Creek for the rock hop crossing. It can be a 'wet feet' crossing and certainly a walking stick or two can be useful, three or four legs being better than two. Although

now out of the rainforest the black rocks of the Wet Tropics should always be respected.

Straight ahead the paved road greets you for some easy walking. It is possible to continue down the creek to the Paradise Waterhole (depending on how your legs are feeling) avoiding the 1.3 km road hike. A left turn off the road leads to the Paradise Waterhole day use area. This is a great place for some proper swimming or a cool shower.

This hike also forms the combination of two walks from the book 'Walks, Tracks and Trails of Queensland's Tropics' by Derrick Stone published March 2016, CSIRO Publishing. Available at local books stores.

Further information is available from Wilfred Karnoll, email: wilfred.suzanne@bigpond.com, mobile: 0400 702 994

If a car shuffle is planned from the Paradise Waterhole area, travel up the range to Paluma, continue through Paluma, and turn right along a dirt road signposted to the Dam. This takes approximately one hour.

Walking Times:

Paluma Dam to Crystal Falls - 1.5 hrs.

Crystal Falls to Gold Creek Falls – 45 minutes

Gold Creek Falls to Cloudy lookout – 45 minutes

Cloudy lookout to Cairn Creek cairn – 45 minutes

Cairn Creek cairn to Paradise Waterhole – 2 hrs.

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

Images

Gold Creek Falls, & Crystal Creek (Ian McCallan)



WILDLIFE FEATURE

Blue Banksia

Dr. Mike Olsen - Director at Landscape Assessment, Management & Rehabilitation (LAMR)

Banksia plagiocarpa, commonly known as Dallachy's Banksia or the Blue Banksia, was first collected from the mainland opposite Hinchinbrook Island in 1867 by John Dallachy on Bishop's Peak, but it was not described formally until 1981. It is a remarkable banksia in that the flowers are a steely blue-grey (hence one of the common names). It can grow to a height of 5 m, but is more typically seen as specimens of lower stature.

This stunning plant can be found on the montane heaths of Mount Bowen and Nina Peak on Hinchinbrook Island and on the flanks of Bishop's Peak on the Cardwell Range, directly opposite those peaks on Hinchinbrook Island.

Habitat

The vegetation where the Blue Banksia is found ranges from shrubland to open heathland and grassland. The populations on Bishop's Peak on the mainland within Giringun National Park are low shrublands and heathlands close to a creek that flows towards Hinchinbrook channel.



The populations on Mount Bowen and Nina Peak on Hinchinbrook Island have taller vegetation associated with them except immediately after human induced fires when the vegetation initially reverts to open heath and low shrubland.

Blue Banksia has found its way into cultivation, and has been grown in temperate climates such as Canberra and Melbourne, far from its natural habitat in the wet tropics. It is understood it is one of the banksia species that has been cultivated for the cut flower trade, but to a lesser extent than many of its relatives.

In cultivation, it requires an open situation similar to that of its natural habitat and dislikes nutrients and "wet feet" as do many banksia species having evolved in a landscape that was nutrient poor and dry. The Blue Banksia evolved from the rainforest Proteaceae, which dried during the northerly drift of the ancient Gondwanic landmass.

These ancient rainforests are one of many values for which the Wet Tropics (including Hinchinbrook Island National Park) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1988.

New Growth

The new growth is a remarkable rusty red colour that feels like velvet to the touch as is the hairy coating of the seed cones when they first form. It can be seen in flower in late summer to early winter with the cones appearing soon thereafter.

Threats

The Blue Banksia is listed as Rare under the *Nature Conservation Act*. Whilst survival from human induced fires is a result of evolution

to drought and low nutrients, the fire management of these areas requires care. Altered Fire regimes and climate change provide new challenges to this remarkable Banksia's persistence in the landscapes of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area within Hinchinbrook Island and Giringun National Parks.

About Dr Olsen

Dr Mike Olsen is a Botanist that has more than forty years' experience in landscape assessment, particularly with regard to the native flora and fauna of Queensland.

www.lamr.com.au

Images

New Growth (Cygnis insignis <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22750521>)

Banksia plagiocarpa (tgerus, Flickr <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16263683>)



THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

why national parks should be valued, told through the lens of personal experience in national parks

David Ball, NPAQ Councillor

My late father was a lifelong member of NPAQ, and an early shareholder in Binna Burra Lodge. I inherited his shares in Binna Burra and his love for national parks, and especially Lamington National Park in the Gold Coast hinterland.

Having such a wonderful national park within an easy drive of Brisbane with its wide variety of walks at both Binna Burra and Green Mountains (O'Reilly's), is something which I don't take for granted.

Whenever my "batteries" are drained, or I need to refresh, I head to Lamington NP and reconnect with the bush there. Having completed most walks at least a couple of times, I find they always offer something different. The seasons, the weather, the subtle changes that Mother Nature weaves, all make it a new and different experience every time.

I must admit, deep down I have a soft spot for creeks, waterfalls, vistas from high vantage points, and rainforest trees. Perhaps it comes from 5 years working around Charleville surrounded by Mulga and Gidyea while in my late 20's (although Mulga country does hold its own special charm!)

When our sons were younger, we

would take them camping and bush walking, with our favourite's being Lamington NP and Blue Mountains NP in NSW. They grew up with an appreciation of the beauty and fragility of the bush, and that inner connection that is hard to describe, but easy to experience. Now they are in their 20's and have graduated from University, but I am pleased to say that they will both head to a national park when they need a break away from their busy lives.

National parks come in all shapes and sizes, and with a range of terrain and vegetation representing many different habitats. But spending time in any national park provides a connection with nature, and helps to put oneself into context - we are but one tiny organism in a thriving community of plants, animals, birds, fungi, scavengers...

It is wonderful that we can explore many national parks, but it is equally wonderful that many other national parks are left untouched for the benefit of their true inhabitants - the birds, animals, trees and plant life. Our national parks represent a wide variety of both landscapes and biodiversity, much of it unique and all of it irreplaceable.

And it is for this reason that I feel it is important to protect our national parks. They should be primarily for the protection of the species to which they have been home for many thousands of years.

I am often reminded of an Aboriginal proverb - "We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love... and then we return home."

We as humans have made our homes on the planet, but we will always be visitors. We must ensure that we maintain a healthy relationship with our neighbour, the natural environment, especially through national parks.

Images

Header image - Ruined Castle, Blue Mountains NP

Stairway & Larapinta Falls, Lamington NP

Photos provided by David Ball.



SPOTLIGHT

RANGER OF THE MONTH

JP Emery (QPWS)

Background

Spotlight is a series focusing on QPWS rangers for NPAQs bi-monthly magazine Protected. Questions have been designed to provide an insight into the diverse backgrounds and day-to-day activities of Queensland's park rangers.

JP Emery is a QPWS Ranger currently based in the Carnarvon Gorge Section of Carnarvon National Park.

How long have you worked in national parks?

I have worked in QPWS since early 2015. I had volunteered with QPWS for six months previously as part of my university degree.

Which parks have you worked in?

I have worked in two areas (Western and Eastern Highlands) with the Roma Remote team (six months), Taroom Management Unit (six months) and now the Carnarvon Gorge section of Carnarvon National Park.

What is your most memorable moment?

Already in my short time with QPWS I have had many enjoyable moments. My most enjoyable so far was a helicopter ride in the Amphitheatre in Expedition National Park. As part of our pest management plan we were doing aerial baiting, and I got the opportunity to go up in the helicopter as part of one of the baiting runs. The scenery from the air was spectacular.

Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?

My favourite national park experience is working and living in Carnarvon Gorge. Every day I get to wake up to look at the sandstone gorges, and

listen to the yellow belly gliders and boobook owls at night.

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

The best part about working in a national park for me is being able to talk to and educate the public about what it's like to manage a park and to experience the unique flora and fauna found there.

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

If you are there to experience nature in all its forms, take it slowly to absorb it all and get the whole experience.

What is your top tip for campers?

Allow yourself enough time to enjoy all the sights of the gorge, and stock up on the mosquito repellent.

NPAQ would like to thank JP for his time and effort in answering our questions.

Thank you also to QPWS for their ongoing support and assistance.

We hope you enjoyed finding out more about one of Queensland's park rangers.



WHAT'S 25 IN

NPAQ Activities

Champagne Twilight Walk - Shorncliffe

Sunday 8 January 2017

Location: Shorncliffe

Grading: Easy

Leaders: Len & Laurelle Lowry (0428 335 572, onthewallaby@live.com.au) & Margot Morley.

Fee: \$10 (NPA fee and snacks)
Nominations close 3 January to allow for catering

Meet: 4:15pm for a 4:30pm start.
Meeting place and parking options will be advised when registering for the walk.

Meet friends you haven't seen for a while! A picturesque short circuit walk of approximately 2km with the option of a faster, longer walk will be followed by a Social Happy Hour to welcome in the New Year.

Shorncliffe has undergone many changes over the past couple of years. The original Shorncliffe Pier c1867 has now been replaced; it is a lovely walk worthy of the extra 250 metres. An adventure playground is available for the young-at-heart.

Bird Watching - John Oxley Reserve

Sunday 22 January 2016

Grading: Easy

Leader: Jocelyn Dixon (3378 8486, Jocelyndixon@iprimus.com.au)

Fee: \$5.00 per person

Meet: Ogg Road, Murrumba Downs. UBD 99 F1

Join an enjoyable morning of bird watching at John Oxley Reserve on the banks of the Pine River.

We will then move a short distance to Black Duck Reserve waterholes, then to Osprey House Environmental Centre

For more information, or to register for an activity, please go to our website:

www.npaq.org.au/events

for lunch.

Osprey House is manned by volunteers where educational displays show nature at its best.

Hopefully we will view the Owlet nightjar, water birds, birds of prey and if lucky sleeping koalas.

Directions: Travelling north on the Gympie Arterial Rd or the Gateway Motorway take the first left exit into Dohles Rocks Rd after crossing the Pine River.

What to bring: Hat, binoculars, closed in shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen, water, chair, morning tea and lunch.

Vegetation Management Group

Saturday 18 February 2017

Location: Meet at Jolly's Lookout carpark, D'Aguiar National Park

Grading: various

Leader: Angus McEinea (0429 854 446, or gus_mcelnea@hotmail.com)

Come and spend a couple of hours to help with lantana control and revegetation work in the Boombana and Jollys Lookout sections of D'Aguiar National Park, west of Brisbane.



Social Walk - Daisy Hill

Wednesday 22 February 2016

Location: Daisy Hill Regional Park

Grading: Easy

Leaders: Len & Laurelle Lowry (0428 335 572, onthewallaby@live.com.au)

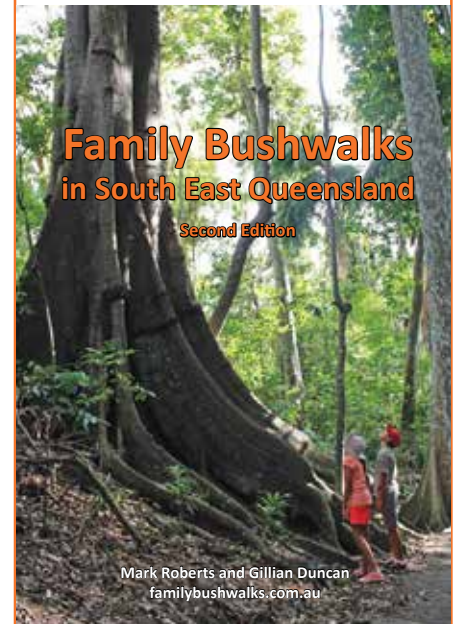
Fee: \$5.00 per person

Meet at 10:00am at the first parking area inside the gate of Daisy Hill Road, Daisy Hill

We will cater for all fitness levels with a 4 and a 6 kilometre walk and see if we can spot a koala along the way. We are guaranteed to see a koala after lunch when we have a look over the information centre.



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the Second Edition of the bestselling book **Family Bushwalks in South East Queensland** including a new Toowoomba chapter is now available online at www.familybushwalks.com.au and from retailers throughout SEQ see our website for a list



Office Closure

Wishing all our members and supporters, staff and volunteers, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

May your holidays be filled with fun, laughter and joy.

We hope that you all have some time relax and get out and connect with our National Parks.

NPAQ advises that our office will be closed from Friday 16th December 2016 to Tuesday the 3rd of January 2017.



JOIN, DONATE,
SUBSCRIBE, VOLUNTEER
www.npaq.org.au

**Please give generously to help us
protect our National Parks,
by supporting our
Annual Fundraising Drive!**

**Over the coming year, we must continue to advocate
for the protection of our parks in the face of continued
threats, including grazing and high impact tourism
developments.**

**The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)
has been advocating for over 85 years for the expansion,
protection and effective management of our National
Parks and reserves. Your support will help us to continue
this work.**

**Please donate to our annual fundraising drive to
help us ensure that conservation is at the heart of
Queensland's National Parks.**

Visit our Website to Donate Now!
<http://www.npaq.org.au/get-involved#donate>

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible

Ways to Donate:

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