

Issue 44: Winter 2024

# protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

## ISLANDS

*Sustainable visitation:*  
Giving Bribie a break

**PLUS**

Is bigger always better?  
Creating 'islands' of protection  
in a sea of fragmentation

### ALSO FEATURED

NPAQ moments in time  
Scawfell Island leaf-tailed gecko  
Capricornia Cays NP  
Ranger spotlight



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BRIBIE ISLAND NP

Photo: Martin Valigursky/Dreamstime



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NORTH WEST ISLAND

Photo: Esme Helit/Dreamstime



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SCAWFELL ISLAND LEAF-TAILED GECKO

Photo: Conrad Hoskin/Wikimedia Commons

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Australia is an island continent with 8222 smaller islands within its maritime territory. Queensland alone has 1955 – the largest being K'gari and Mornington Island – so, of course, islands make up a crucial part of the state's Protected Area Estate. Isolation brings distinct pros and cons. Species may evolve differently, with large-bodied ones downsizing and small-bodied species scaling up. Limited space reduces genetic diversity and increases resource competition, while niche environments may generate novel speciation over time. Remoteness can be a blessing or a curse, as invasives and human habitation often present clear threats to island taxa. Conserving islands means addressing all these factors and more, making 'Islands' a worthy theme for this issue of *Protected*.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susanne Cooper*

## HELLO FROM WINTERY BRISBANE (MY FAVOURITE TIME OF YEAR!).

Recent announcements have promoted funds allocated to Queensland's stunning islands that are also national parks – K'gari, Mulgumpin (Moreton Is), Minjerribah (Nth Stradbroke Is), Hinchinbrook, and Whitsunday Island – mainly due to rapidly increasing visitation and inadequate resourcing to manage the impacts. Our feature article in this issue highlights the challenges many face.

I feel a strong personal connection to these places, having camped in and walked there on many occasions. There is also a wider context. Brisbane and South East Queensland are unique in having such large and growing population centres so close to so many captivating, ecologically significant islands. Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart all have appealing small islands, many with high ecological significance (such as Rottneest or Bruny islands), but none are composed entirely of sand or corals, as many of Queensland's islands are, or are as accessible and as widely promoted to international tourists. Interestingly, we are also the only state that permits 4WDing

for extended distances on island beaches. These beaches are managed as roads and often provide the main routes around the islands. Other states disallow off-road vehicles on island beaches or restrict beach driving to smaller sections.

Islands offer a special ambience and experience – a sense of serenity and disconnection from the hustle and bustle of our busy, noisy daily routines. Their exceptional landscapes and biodiversity are often a result of their insularity. Illustrating the significance of these islands, K'gari, Mulgumpin and Minjerribah are the three largest sand islands in the world. K'gari is the only sand island on Earth that supports tropical rainforest, and Mulgumpin hosts 50,000 migratory wading birds each year on their way from Siberia to breed in parts of Moreton Bay. It also has the highest stabilised sand dune in the world (Mt Tempest). All these islands are national parks, most are RAMSAR listed, and a few have World Heritage status.

The outstanding natural and cultural features of these islands is extensive; this snippet serving only to highlight their significance and explain their growing

popularity. Focusing budget allocation on capital works for visitor and recreation facilities is appropriate, but resources are also needed to reduce the negative impact visitation and high-impact recreation activities are having.

The Queensland Minister for Tourism and Sport recently called Queensland “a destination with world-class nature and wildlife experiences.” The islands are a key element in this.

Let's conserve the natural environment and preserve the experience these islands offer. It's time to invest in changing how visitation is being promoted and managed.

All the best,  
*Susanne Cooper*



Whitsunday Island NP,  
Guillaume Marques/Unsplash.

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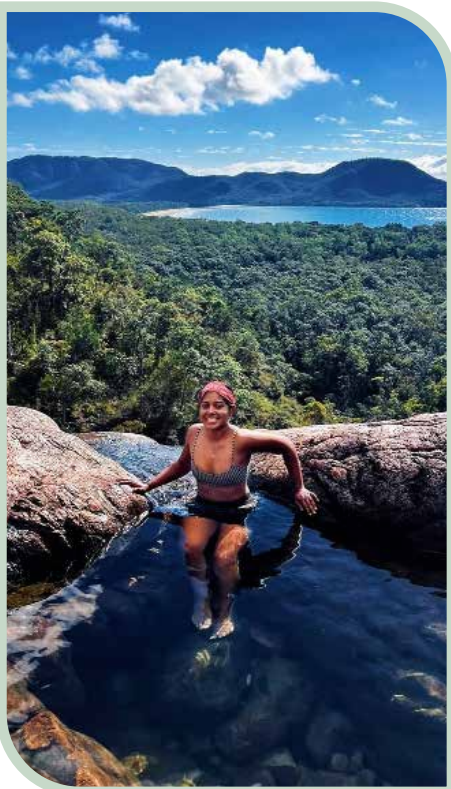
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Above: Magnetic Island by Geoff Wols.



Zoe Falls Infinity Pool, Hinchinbrook NP, @msmoodley on Instagram

## MEMBER REFLECTIONS

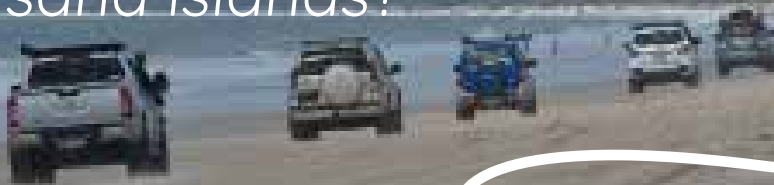
PATRICIA LAWTON, LIFE MEMBER

I JOINED NPAQ IN THE EARLY 1960S, very much aware of the importance of national parks and what they stood for. In those early years, I was involved in bushwalking, but I never lost interest in what NPAQ was doing or in keeping up-to-date with environmental issues. Over the years, I have walked in many NPs and have been pleased that their environment and native inhabitants are protected, which may not have been the case otherwise. Over the past 60 years, I have seen parks grow in size and many new areas included – a big achievement for NPAQ. I feel very connected to the areas I bushwalk in within South East Queensland – Mt Barney, Moogerah Peaks, K'gari (Fraser Island), D'Aguiar – in fact, all areas. In the future, I'd like to see more areas protected and more work done maintaining tracks and signage, although I know the funding is often not available. I would like NPAQ to push for more government funding for national parks.

# GIVING BRIBIE A BREAK

*Is it time to put limits on nighttime beach driving on sand islands?*

*Karin Cox*



**BEFORE 9AM ON A SUNNY** public holiday in Queensland, a line of 4WDs crawls through a well-known bottleneck on North Street, Woorim, all queuing to access the 24km stretch of Ocean Beach on tiny, 34km-long by 8km-wide Bribie Island.

Tyres carve up soft sand as the drivers hang bare, reddening arms out their windows, ignoring the acrid scent of diesel and sunscreen. They're all prepared to battle time, distance, and tides to experience a beach breeze in their hair, a surf rod arcing into waves, and wet sand between their toes in a protected flora and fauna sanctuary.

The smallest of the three sand islands set in the northern Moreton Bay Marine Park, 'Bribie' as it is affectionately known, melds sleepy retirement living at its south-western suburban edge with a strip of eastern beaches spearing north to a narrow spit. In 2022, waves cut a new coastal bar 2km from the northern end of the

Bribie Island Recreation Area (BIRA), dividing the national park into two sections. Only shallow Pumicestone Passage, on the western side, separates the island from the mainland and the looming Glasshouse Mountains beyond.

On its eastern stretch, the dunes and beaches of Bribie Island NP are protected, both by legislation that gazetted one-third of the island in 1994, and from the worst of the wind, in the lee of larger Moreton Island. Dotted Bribie's shores are shallow lagoons that entice families, and tidal Ramsar-protected wetlands and calm waters within Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Bribie should be a haven for migratory shorebirds, eastern grey kangaroos, endangered dugongs and nesting sea turtles, except that it is readily accessible by the heavily congested Bribie Bridge. Beloved as Bribie may be, on school or public holidays its proximity to Brisbane traps this

island paradise in an unhealthy relationship with an excessive number of day-trippers.

With government responses to the 'Bribie Island NP and Recreation Area: Sustainable Visitor Capacity Management (SVCM) Study' published, and a Draft Management Plan in the works, calls to 'Give Bribie a Break' are being heard, but are they enough?

The Miles Government's July 2024 pre-election commitment of \$700 million for a new bridge to Bribie looks set to exacerbate overcrowding issues without commensurate expenditure to solve unsustainable visitation or ensure the protection of natural and cultural values.

## **TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT**

In May 2024, the Government released the results and recommendations from SVCM studies into two of Queensland's most visited protected areas - Great Sandy NP and Bribie Island NP and Recreational Area.

In 2021, NPAQ flagged some of Bribie's crowding issues during its 'Loving Them to Death' panel seminar, which touched on unsustainable visitation, excessive and irresponsible four-wheel-driving, littering, and bush toileting on sand island ecosystems.

A 2021 petition tabled to parliament garnered 28,500





Left: Beach driving on Bribie – Annett22/Dreamstime. Below: Signage at Noosa Northshore within Great Sandy NP – Wirestock Creators/Dreamstime. Bottom left: Bribie Bridge at night – mouskie/Dreamstime.

*Although a vehicle access permit (VAP) is required to drive on Bribie’s beaches, QPWS figures suggest a non-compliance rate of 30% – meaning one-third of drivers are regularly flaunting the rules.*

signatures and called for a prohibition on beach driving from 6pm to 6am, beach driving only on hard-sand areas below high tide, and no 4WD access in places where it would impact the habitat of rare or endangered species

### NOT A LOCKDOWN

Day visits to Queensland national parks grew by 67% from 2015 to 2019.

The Covid era undoubtedly presented a brief respite for high-traffic wild places like Bribie, but once Covid-19 lockdowns lifted, visitation resumed at even higher numbers. Closing national parks in Queensland during the pandemic was divisive, so, perhaps unsurprisingly, capacity studies now raise suspicions of future lockouts. However, the SVCM recommendations stopped short of drastic measures. Instead, solutions were proposed for mitigating environmental damage, improving public health (like reducing bush toileting) and preserving visitor experience during peak periods and public holidays when the Woorim pinch-point is a parking lot.

Bribie’s expanding population is a challenge in itself, growing by 12% between 2012 and 2020. Forecasts for population growth don’t stop there. The Moreton Bay



Local Government Area also experienced a growth spurt, increasing by 20.92%. And by 2040, South East Queensland is predicted to grow by 54%, adding 1.9 million people to this already congested corner.

### COUNTERING THE SWELL

During the period of the SVCM study, visitation swelled to as many as 1200 vehicles per day at peak times – twice what stakeholders considered acceptable. Some residents have called for QR-code-reliant barriers or Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Systems tied to Vehicle Access Permits (VAPs) at Woorim, but the system for issuing permits first needs simplifying. With daily, weekly, and annual VAPs (the latter not excluding school or public holidays), forecasting visitor numbers is difficult. Automatic Number Plate Recognition Systems have started to allow for better policing of infringing vehicles,

but separate VAPs for day visitors, anglers, and campers could reveal who is accessing the island and at what times.

The study recommended a pilot program with a set carrying capacity for BIRA during peak periods (600 vehicles a day) as a short-term measure. Longer-term infrastructure proposals included reviewing options for a second access point to Ocean Beach or ferrying visitors to the island in shuttle buses, neither of which the government endorsed.

### NO MORE MAKING TRACKS

Bribie’s crowding and vehicle access issues are also evident on Queensland’s other sand islands, from North Stradbroke to Moreton Island to the eastern beaches of K’gari (formerly Fraser Island).

The tranche of SVCM studies determined that K’gari, Cooloola and Bribie islands combined attract up to 23,714 vehicles and 592,809 camper nights per year. In summer, beachgoers or campers at Teewah, within the Cooloola Section of Great Sandy NP, also run the gauntlet of an unpoliced sand highway without the regulatory deterrents of the much-maligned Bruce Hwy inland, like double demerit points for speeding on public holidays or impoundment for hooning. Drivers rushing to make the tides – and the confluence



of youth, speed, and alcohol consumption – only increase the threat to public safety. And if this island traffic is dangerous for humans, imagine how deadly it is for turtle hatchlings.

Four-wheel driving on beaches exacerbates existing environmental issues. It can damage fragile dune and nesting habitats, compact sand in intertidal zones, increase littering (even unintentionally, as unsecured items blow from vehicles), damage the nests of shorebirds and reptiles, and result in vehicle strikes on people and wildlife.

As the waves occasionally win the race between the inlets, stranded or submerged vehicles also add polluting oils and plastics to the marine park's waters.

For marine turtles – all six Australian species of which are endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1992* – 4WD strikes, entanglement in fishing line and crab pots, and deep tyre tracks present a real threat.

Sea turtle hatchling survival already has long odds. The loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is particularly susceptible to decline, having experienced population decreases of 50%–80% across its range. It can take a female 30 to 50 years to breed, and she may do so only once every 2 to 8 years. The eggs are vulnerable to predation during their eight-week incubation but also to temperature-based sexual selection, which means a

warming climate will alter nest temperatures and plunge this already endangered species into further strife.

Resident Diane Oxenford, from Bribie Island Turtle Trackers Association Inc, has been involved with turtle nesting and marine stranding studies since 2008.

“Queensland is the only state to allow beach driving in Ramsar-protected wetland areas,” Oxenford says. “Worse, on Bribie, four-wheel drives are allowed to treat Ocean Beach like a highway, off-leash dogs destroy shorebird nests in the dunes, and jet-skis, boat propellers and discarded fishing tackle injure endangered turtles in what is a designated marine park that should receive the highest levels of protection.”



#### TURTLES AND TYRES DON'T MIX

Marine turtles have a 150-million-year-old history that stretches to dinosaur days. Yet, despite their evolutionary longevity, they're vulnerable to breeding interference. Fidelity has much to do with their decline. While not monogamous, these behemoth mothers use the Earth's magnetic field to migrate to the beach of their own birth and lay their eggs. If that beach is now an impromptu racetrack for 4WDs, even if eggs manage to hatch, the hatchlings face navigating metres of 10-cm-deep tyre ruts to reach the water. After two months, these tiny turtles must somehow break the shell, dig to the surface, and clumsily flipper their way to the waves. Studies show that most of them can't manage it. Only one in 1000 will survive, so the additional burden of traversing tyre tracks presents a real threat. If their birth beach is also compromised by city lights or coastal developments like rock walls, boardwalks or jet-ski parking, before long, there may be no turtles left to return to it.





Opposite top: Sandy inlets of Cooloola, Great Sandy NP, Timothee Duran/Unsplash. Left: A sea turtle drowned by an abandoned crab pot – Bribie Island Turtle Trackers Inc. Below left: Beach stone-curlews and



other shore-nesting birds are at risk from nighttime driving – Imogen Warren/Vecteezy. Bottom left: Loggerhead hatchlings struggle to traverse tyre ruts – Benjamin Albiach Gallan/Dreamstime.

*In conjunction with the Kabi Kabi People, co-drafting of the Bribie Island Recreation Area Draft Management Plan has commenced, with public consultation expected in the second half of 2024.*

## MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

Part of the issue is optics. Advertisements promoting Queensland’s large sand islands reveal tranquil perched lakes, sand blows, fringing eucalypt forests, and, almost always, images of a lone 4WD cruising a secluded beach. The sense of freedom it suggests is why, when the Bribie Island SVCM study asked visitors “What are your main reasons for visiting Bribie Island NP and Recreation Area?”, the popularity of 4WD driving (80.82%) and scenic driving (69.57%) reigned supreme.

“Beaches are a huge part of Aussie culture, but it is time to change up the narrative on beach driving and replace images of 4WDs leaving tyre tracks on sand with the shallower, natural depressions left by nesting loggerheads. We ask people to leave no trace, so messaging should reflect low-impact visitation,” says NPAQ CEO Chris Thomas.

Diane Oxenford agrees. “Tourism operators should promote low-impact recreational activities, such as sailing, paddleboarding, or kayaking, not driving on beaches.” However, the government’s response to the SVCM study for Bribie stopped short of banning nighttime beach driving, stating that “seasonal/night driving limits are not supported at this time,

based on an evaluation of the potential threats balanced with the need to maintain essential tidal access to the gazetted road for residents, fishers, campers and emergency services.” So, what does the government propose to do to protect Bribie’s vulnerable turtle and shorebird species?

## ROLL UP, ROLE UP!

As tourists and day visitors continue to roll up to Bribie, so the island’s ranger service must ‘role up’, too. Firstly, the government has recognised the need to “enhance visitor education and communication materials to discourage non-essential nighttime driving during seasonal nesting cycles,” and the need for better compliance and policing.

Another recommendation was increasing the capacity of rangers to communicate and enforce compliance. Funds have been earmarked for two full-time ranger positions on Bribie in the 2024–2025 financial year, for extended hours for the existing ranger team for weekend or overtime hours, and for a Regional Principal Ranger Visitor Management and Compliance position and a Regional Compliance Optimisation Manager. To address bush toileting, \$890,000 will go to upgrading amenities at Poverty Creek Camping Area, with

additional ablutions blocks in high-traffic places like Ocean Lagoon considered, and portaloo mandates (like the one now in place at Inskip Point, Cooloola) for campers who book at sites lacking amenities.

Aligning the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006* with the penalties under the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995* to deter unsafe driving on beaches is underway. Reducing speed limits in places, doubling demerit points on holidays, imposing restrictions relative to driver experience or nighttime conditions, bans on repeat offenders, and even potential vehicle impoundments will be assessed as part of the Final Management Plan.

A new camping and vehicle access booking system has been endorsed to regulate visitation for the 20 busiest days of the year – subject to consultation during the Draft Management Plan process. Vehicle exclusion zones or time limits at crowded sites may also be considered as the plan progresses.

For now, it looks like it’s business as usual for sand islands after dark. But as the region’s growth accelerates, ‘Giving Bribie a Break’ may mean putting the brakes on nighttime beach driving on fragile sand islands.

# IS BIGGER ALWAYS BETTER?

## Creating 'islands' of protection in a sea of fragmentation

*Adapted from Dudley et al.*

**THE ARGUMENT THAT LARGE PROTECTED AREAS ARE SUPERIOR** – based on island biogeography theory, economies of scale, and the need to sustain viable populations of apex predators and large-ranging or dispersive species – has persisted despite the decades-long 'Single Large or Several Small' (SLOSS) debate. Yet, for many species, strategically placed small reserves are vital, especially in areas highly altered by humans.

### MEETING 30x30

With governments worldwide committed to the Global Biodiversity Framework's target of 30% of the planet protected by 2030, there is concern some might seek to prioritise *quantity* of protected areas (PAs) over *quality*, gazetting large sites that may not be strategically placed for effective conservation outcomes.

In their March 2024 paper, Dudley et al. reveal that carefully designed networks of smaller, correctly located and well-managed protected areas may address this and offer seven identified benefits:

- (1) conserving critical habitat of range-limited or relic species;
- (2) conserving sensitive or threatened habitat in altered ecosystems;
- (3) conserving habitat for

sensitive, time-limited lifecycle stages, such as nesting sites and spawning grounds;

(4) enabling connectivity by providing habitat 'stepping stones' through inhospitable ecosystems;

(5) providing increased protection for critical habitat within Category V protected areas to boost conservation potential;

(6) conservation opportunities at cultural sites, sacred natural sites, and other faith-based sites in transformed landscapes; and,

(7) integrating various management and governance approaches across connected small reserves to multiply conservation impacts.

### THE ISLAND DILEMMA

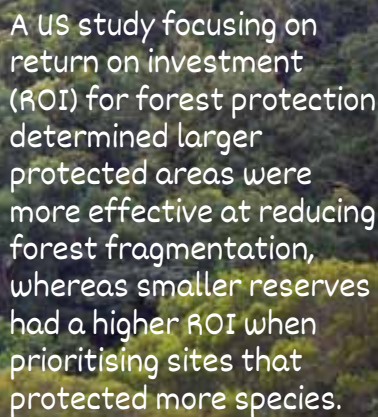
In 1975, Jared Diamond's *The Island Dilemma* used tenets from the theory of island biogeography (smaller islands have smaller populations at higher risk of extinction due to stochastic effects like genetic drift or catastrophic events) to suggest that a single large reserve was probably more useful than several smaller ones, even when the total area of the latter was greater.

Smaller protected areas are often fragmented, increase 'edge effects', tend to harbour more exotic species and have increased risk of extinction debt, but researchers have still challenged the assumption that only large reserves are useful for successful site-based



The 113-ha Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve is a small but internationally significant wetland in Hong Kong. This shallow estuary supports over 55,000 migratory birds such as Saunders's gull (*Chroicocephalus saundersi*), one-quarter of the world's black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*, pictured) population, and significant numbers of spoon-billed sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*).





A US study focusing on return on investment (ROI) for forest protection determined larger protected areas were more effective at reducing forest fragmentation, whereas smaller reserves had a higher ROI when prioritising sites that protected more species.

Based on an Open Access article in Diversity 'Effectively Incorporating Small Reserves into National Systems of Protected and Conserved Areas', 31 March 2024, by Nigel Dudley, Hannah L Timmins, Sue Stolton and James E.M. Watson. <https://www.mdpi.com/1424-2818/16/4/216>

Left: Andrew Johnston Big Scrub Nature Reserve, NSW - Peter Woodard. Below: White booyong - Lucas Christofides/iNaturalist. Below left: Mai Po Nature Reserve - WinsomeMan/Getty Images CanvaNFP. Inset: Black-faced spoonbill - Travelnshot/Getty Images CanvaNFP.

*Over half of the global protected area inventory is composed of protected areas of less than 100 ha.*

conservation, and most protected area system managers now recognise that a mix of large and small protected areas are required.

Recent syntheses (Fahrig, 2019; Riva & Fahrig, 2022) of multiple studies also concluded that, for plants, invertebrates, reef fish, amphibians, lizards, small mammals, and birds, a patchwork of smaller, well-managed protected areas could conserve more biodiversity than a single large PA of the same size. Sets of small patches harboured more species – even when considering only species of conservation concern and even if those patches were very small. This was especially true when surrounding conditions were not too inhospitable to native biodiversity, or in highly altered landscapes suffering ecosystem fragmentation.

## WHERE IT'S WORKING

Small reserves are already successfully conserving critical habitats of range-limited species, particularly plants and invertebrates. For example, around three hundred 2–20ha micro-reserves to protect rare plant species have been established in otherwise heavily managed areas of Valencia, Spain, some within larger national parks but most outside of protected areas.



Micro-reserves have also been set up to protect wild crop relatives in Eastern Europe and central Asia, and small marine reserves (0.5–0.8km<sup>2</sup>) on Fiji's main island had greater species richness, density, and fish biomass and maintained healthier coral ecosystems, increasing reef resilience.

Small reserves can also secure relict habitat containing a good proportion of the expected species (particularly plants and smaller animals) when the rest of the landscape has been transformed with little possibility of restoration. A good example is Andrew Johnston Big Scrub Nature Reserve, in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. The 21ha reserve is the largest, most important remnant of the Big Scrub, the largest area of lowland subtropical rainforest in eastern Australia, which was intensively cleared

for agricultural use in the 19th century. Less than 1% of the Big Scrub remains.

While very small, the reserve is a stronghold for endangered White Booyong (*Heritiera trifoliolata*, left) and Australian Red Cedar (*Toona ciliata*).

## STEPPING STONES

Small reserves strategically located within an ecosystem are an important connectivity component, ensuring maximum coverage of widely dispersed species and providing stepping stones between larger habitat patches. Connectivity is increasingly recognised as a dynamic process, particularly given climate change, and methods for assessing the temporal dynamics of connectivity are emerging. Stepping stones appear and disappear over time, whether due to seasonal flooding or clearing and regeneration of vegetation patches, raising the possibility of temporary protected areas to facilitate species adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

Chereninup Creek Reserve, a small (897ha) Bush Heritage Australia reserve located in Western Australia, is critical to restoring connectivity between the larger Fitzgerald River and Stirling Ranges national parks – a global biological hotspot for flora. Chereninup Creek Reserve is providing core connectivity



for endangered macropods like black-gloved (*Notamacropus irma*) and Tammar (*N. eugenii*) wallabies, which is extremely important for enabling them to move to suitable climates or undergo genetic change or phenotypic plasticity. It also protects honey possums (*Tarsipes rostratus*) and stands of York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), a species near-eliminated from the Western Australian wheatbelt.

Specialised or threatened species may need protected areas where management can be focused on particular conservation outcomes. The effectiveness of Category V protected areas has been less thoroughly studied than more strict protection categories. But, examples exist globally, including the conservation of black stork (*Ciconia nigra*)



in Lonske Polje Nature Park, Croatia; the endemic, dune-dwelling tree *Icuvia dunensis* in Matibane Forest Reserve, Mozambique; and clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) and Blyth's tragopan (*Tragopan blythii*) in Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, India.

### CULTURAL CONSERVATION

Prioritising cultural values can also result in biodiversity benefits. An example is ancient temperate forest fragments that now survive only in Orthodox churchyards over large areas of Ethiopia.

Integrating various management approaches and governance types within connected small reserves can multiply their overall conservation impact and allow them to grow incrementally

Over time, a collection of small reserves may develop into what is effectively a much larger protected area. Given these benefits, the IUCN protected area management Category IV Habitat/Species Management Area has evolved to have a particular focus on smaller reserves that protect certain at-risk species or habitats.

Further work is needed to quantify the optimal sizes of protected areas, but small reserves are ideally suited

Top: Blyth's tragopan, India - Mihir Joshi/Dreamstime. Above: Tammar wallaby - Tom Brakefield/Photo Images. Bottom left: Honey possum or noolbenger - Phototrip/Getty Images CanvaNFP.

for the privately protected area model and are subject to fast purchase to conserve critically endangered species or habitat types.

*Given concerns about species loss and the island biogeography effect, long-term monitoring is needed to evaluate the impacts of small reserves over time.*

Conserving areas of intact habitat is a fundamental step towards abating the biodiversity crisis, but societal demands and the shrinking natural habitat left on Earth means securing small protected areas will play an increasingly important role in reaching the Global Biodiversity Framework's target of 30% of the landmass by 2030.

# FLOW ON EFFECTS

## *A legacy of conservation*

### AS NPAQ APPROACHES ITS 95TH YEAR, WE OFTEN REFLECT ON THE ORGANISATION'S LEGACY.

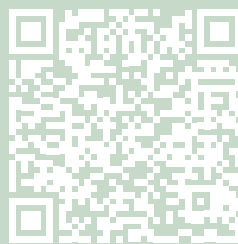
Of course, we're immensely proud of successfully conserving huge tracts of native habitat, protecting it for all time in much-loved parks such as Lamington, Girraween, Chillagoe-Mungana Caves and Hinchinbrook Island national parks, but the legacy these places generate for our wildlife, native flora, and for our children and our children's children is about more than that. It's a shared legacy of commitment created through the hard work, volunteering, donations and bequests of NPAQ members – something we certainly could not have achieved without your help.

Over nine decades, many generous NPAQ members have kindly made bequests to our organisation. Such legacy giving has a long-term effect, flowing on long after those members may have passed.

Property and dividends from bequests continue to provide us with office space and cash flow that acts as a bulwark against the everyday costs of operations, advocacy,

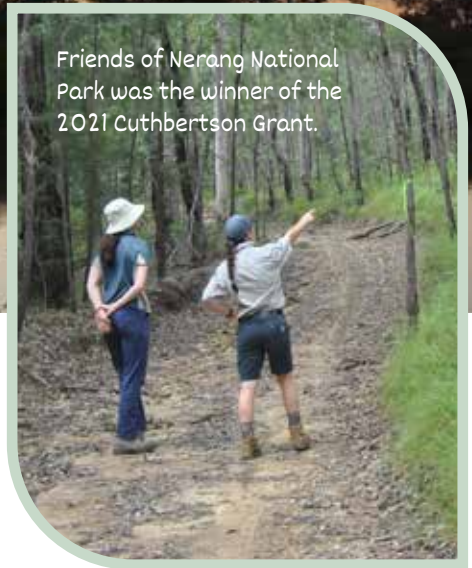
hosting events, and attracting and managing members. They also reward luminaries in the conservation space through the establishment of grants, such as the Jim Cuthbertson Grant, which is awarded every two years to help fund a project that improves the conservation value or resilience of one or a number of parks; strengthens the science and evidence base of a park/parks; or advances community knowledge of, or connection to, Queensland's national parks.

Without the generosity of legacy donors such as Caroline Pender, James Cuthbertson, Ruth Read and more, at times, the organisation would have had to severely scale back what was achievable.



Scan to create your Will for FREE with Gathered Here.

Friends of Nerang National Park was the winner of the 2021 Cuthbertson Grant.



Gifts in wills now constitute some 25% of all charity revenue giving. Having said that, just as a river grows over time, a bequest does not have to be a large amount. Amounts bequeathed can be any percentage of your estate. Financial gifts of any size make a significant difference to our work. Since 2021, online will provider Gathered Here has seen more than 30,000 wills written via its platform, and an estimated \$35-million pledged to charitable causes all across the nation.

NPAQ is excited to partner with Gathered Here to make legacy giving as easy as possible. Now, you can easily write your will for FREE by scanning the QR code at left and gifting whatever percentage you choose. You can also email us at [admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au) for our bequests brochure.

If you decide to leave a gift to NPAQ in your will, please let us know so we can thank you and share how your gift will make a difference, now and in the future.

# PARK IN FOCUS

## Capricornia Cays NP

*The Editor*

### SOAK UP THE NORTH QUEENSLAND SUN ON A SECLUDED CORAL CAY LAPPED BY AZURE WATERS TEEMING WITH TURTLES.

Situated within the southern Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, Capricornia Cays NP protects eight low-lying coral cays – North West, Mast Head, Lady Musgrave, Broomfield, Erskine, Wilson and Tryon islands, as well as the southern part of Heron Island.

These cays rise just metres from the Pacific Ocean and most are accessible only by boat. All were formed from coral and silica swept up by the tides and knitted together over time by guano (bird excrement) and hardy vegetation that can withstand the saline environment. The dominant trees are grand devil's-claws

(*Pisonia grandis*), which form dense thickets where seabirds roost. She-oak, octopus bush, sandpaper figs, native elms, and lantern bushes add cover.

Birdlife Australia lists Capricornia Cays NP as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, with populations of black noddy (*Anous minutus*), brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*), and wedge-tailed shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*) making up more than 1% of the globe's total breeding populations of these birds. More than 220 molluscs have also been recorded, and North West Island is a study site for tagging and drone surveys to monitor shark prevalence.

The calmer, protected waters of Lady Musgrave Island are a submarine wonderland for snorkellers and scuba divers. Daily

Left: Sea turtles find a sanctuary in the waters off Lady Musgrave Is. - Charlie Blacker/Dreamstime. Below: Brown boobies nest on these cays, Rinus Baak/Dreamstime. Below left: Lady Musgrave Is. - Maximilliane Wagner/Dreamstime.



charters from Gladstone, Bundaberg or the Town of 1770 ply its patch reefs and bommies, some with glass bottoms to showcase the vibrant corals and fish.

On less-frequented North West island, a 1.7km walk passes the grave of the infant of a guano ship captain. In the 1850s, mining guano, phosphatic sandstone, and coral interrupted these island ecosystems. From 1924 to 1928, a cannery on North West Island also churned out 250,000 cans of turtle soup. Its ruins remain, but, thankfully, the turtles are now protected. From November to February, these cays now host the largest breeding populations of endangered loggerhead turtles anywhere in the South Pacific.

Campsites on North West, Mast Head, and Lady Musgrave islands must be booked months ahead at [parks.desi.qld.gov.au/camping/bookings](http://parks.desi.qld.gov.au/camping/bookings), subject to conditions. Fully self-sufficient campers can expect lurid sunrises, marine life aplenty, and whorls of stars illuminating dark skies – the closest you'll get to a private reef paradise.

A 1.1 km track on Lady Musgrave island winds through shaded *Pisonia* forest to pristine white-sand beaches.



# NPAQ MOMENTS IN TIME

NPAQ Archives

“THE PROPER DEFINITION OF A MAN IS AN ANIMAL THAT WRITES LETTERS,” BRITISH AUTHOR LEWIS CARROL ONCE QUIPPED.

Over NPAQ’s 94 years, methods of communication have changed a lot, but the power of a strongly worded letter, no matter the sender, remains.

Many accomplished letter writers – whether NPAQ’s founders, presidents or members – have put pen to paper over the decades to explain NPAQ’s views and to advocate for greater protection. Even before founding NPAQ, Romeo

Lahey was a prolific writer, regularly responding to articles, opinion pieces or letters in the newspapers of the day. His efforts outline the ramifications of uncontrolled timber-getting and degradation of landscapes, as well as often reminding readers of relevant legislation.

Letters to the Editor may be falling out of fashion today, as social media provides a platform for the discussion and dissection of almost any topic, and electronic petitions and surveys plumb populist sentiments, but letter writing is an art form worth preserving.

We urge members and supporters to continue this long tradition, putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to voice their concerns in print, even if you’re just writing to the editor of *Protected*.



Top: Lamington NP – Karin Cox. Above: Lahey's letter to the *Bulletin* in April 1920 states, "By the gazettal of the National Park in question, an area has been set aside where people in the years to come can see the 'forest primeval' and realise the beauty and size of the commercial timbers that in very few years will be otherwise extinct." – Image provided by Steve Noakes, Binna Burra Lodge.

## TO ALL BUT VANDALS

In reply to so-called "Nature Lover's" astonishing letter (C.M., 7/4/45) every National Park in Queensland is wide open to anyone of good intent to walk through or camp in.

As for the Forestry Department keeping it "closed," they are justly congratulated by all fair men on not only the great amount of "opening up" they have done, but the almost unique consideration for the beauties of the area that they have shown in constructing these facilities.

Any person can drive to the same point from which the "favoured few" start on their walks from Binna Burra and O'Stedly's, and to many other points of entry to the National Park.

The proof of the forestry officials' statement on vandalism following roadmaking is seen at every mountain resort around Brisbane. If "Nature Lover" were an authority on America, he would have heard of the nation-wide protest that resulted from building a road there through similar country, thereby largely destroying its beauty, mainly in the interests of lazy people and money-makers.

My association would much prefer to leave the opening up of the National Parks of Queensland to the Forestry Department through its sympathetic Minister than to amateurs carried away by understandable enthusiasm.—R. W. Lahey, President, National Parks Association of Queensland.



Above: Lahey's response to a letter to the *Courier Mail* in April 1945 reveals that the debate about the extent to which national parks are open to the public has deep roots.



Left: Romeo Lahey's letter to the *Brisbane Courier* in October 1929 states, "Only those connected with the timber industry know how urgent is the need of a progressive forest policy, and how vital to the future of the industry is the immediate embarkation on a State-wide programme of replanting to replace our valuable softwood timbers which have become so sadly depleted."

# WILDLIFE FEATURE

## Scawfell Island leaf-tailed gecko

*The Editor*

### SCIENTIFIC NAME:

*Phyllurus fimbriatus*

DISCOVERY: Found in 2021;

first described in 2023

STATUS: Least concern

SIZE: Up to 15 cm long including the tail. Females are larger than males.

HABITAT: Dwells in layered, deeply piled granite boulder formations under rainforest canopy. Likely slinks into crevices by day and hunts by camouflaging on the rocks at night.

RANGE: Scawfell Island within South Cumberland Islands NP.

In 2021, a reptile survey of Scawfell Island – 60km off Mackay, Queensland – revealed an entirely new species of leaf-tailed gecko.

Ranger in Charge Brett, from the Whitsundays region, attended the trip where the Scawfell Island leaf-tailed gecko was discovered in 2023.

“It was an exciting discovery, and an important one, because we base our management of these islands on their biodiversity values. Knowing which species occur where, and finding species restricted to single islands, informs our management of fire, invasive species and other threats,” Ranger Brett said.

The hilly, horseshoe-shaped island that is this gecko’s only known home rises to 397m and was first named ‘L Island’ in 1802 by Matthew Flinders. It was later renamed Scawfell Island following the *SS Llewellyn* exploration of the Whitsundays in 1879.



Top: Habitat on Scawfell Island. Above: The Scawfell Island leaf-tailed gecko's biggest risks are invasive Asian house geckos and poachers.

Like most of Queensland’s leaf-tailed gecko species, the Scawfell Island leaf-tailed gecko does its best to resemble foliage, with a pointed head, a slender, well-camouflaged body covered in small spines, and a leaf-like tail that can be tricky to distinguish from its head at a glance. Its colour varies from tan to grey on the back, with darker brown splotches all over the body and limbs. Distinguishing features are its very long, spindly toes and six V-shaped white bands on its tail; however, these may be absent if the gecko has dropped and regrown its tail – a survival technique known as ‘tail autonomy’, which many geckos and lizards deploy.

**Note:** A licence is required for permission to remove wildlife from its natural environment. Members of the public are urged to report suspected illegal wildlife-related activities by contacting Wildlife Hotline on 1300 130 372.





# RANGER SPOTLIGHT

*Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service*

AMID THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR OF THE GOLD COAST IS A TEAM OF DEDICATED RANGERS CARING FOR ITS PROTECTED AREAS. AT THE HELM OF THIS AMAZING TEAM IS SENIOR RANGER JESS.

Ranger Jess and her two teams totalling 13 Rangers – from the Gold Coast North and Gold Coast South management units – spend their working days ensuring these protected areas, embedded in a largely urban landscape, continue to be conserved and protected for all our futures.

“All up, our team manages around 4000 hectares, which doesn’t seem like much in comparison to some other protected areas in the State, but when you look at the number of visitors we’re getting to these national parks, it’s very significant.

“Burleigh Head National Park alone gets around 1.1 million visitors a year, and it’s only 27 hectares!”

Ranger Jess’s passion for her patch is clear, and she wants everyone to enjoy the area just as much as she does.

“We want to get that balance right, of people having that important time in nature for their well-being while still protecting the

Top: Eucalypts filter the sunlight in Nerang NP. Right: Wildflowers bloom in Nerang NP. Below: Ranger Jess helps relocate turtle eggs on the beaches of the Gold Coast. All images supplied by QPWS.



wildlife and plants that are there. These little green patches of national parks sprinkled amongst the Gold Coast are such important refuges.”

In another month or so, it will be 18 years of working for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service for Ranger Jess. She started off her QPWS career as an education Ranger at David Fleay Wildlife Park, and still has a passion for educating our community

on the importance of Queensland’s protected areas.

“There’s a great sense of pride wearing the Herbie badge and Ranger uniform. By wearing that, we are in charge of protecting those areas, and the responsibility that comes with that we don’t take lightly. We’re ensuring these areas are protected for future generations.

“No tree, no me. It’s pretty simple. Without trees, there’s no way to breathe.”

## MAJOR EVENTS

### SEMINAR – Ecotourism & Protected Areas: Are we on the right track?

DATE: Tuesday 30 July

TIME: 1pm to 2:30pm

VENUE: Community Meeting Room, Brisbane Square Library, 266 George St, Brisbane

ORGANISER: Samantha Dickson

BOOK: [npaq.org.au/ecotourism-seminar/](http://npaq.org.au/ecotourism-seminar/)



Scan to register!

### NPAQ AGM

DATE: 19 October TBC

TIME: TBC

VENUE: TBC

ORGANISER: Samantha Dickson

BOOK: TBC

## 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/upcoming-events-page/](http://npaq.org.au/upcoming-events-page/)

#### BIRDWATCHING EAGLEBY WETLANDS

DATE: 21 July 2024

MEET: 7:30am, Logan St, Eagleby

COST: \$5

LEADER: Geradline Buchanan (07 3349 1109)

#### BVRT – LOWOOD TO FERNVALE

DATE: 27 July 2024

MEET: 9am, Clock Park (Cnr Peace & Main Sts), Lowood

COST: Free

LEADER: Frank Freeman (0427 655 514)

#### BVRT – HARLIN TO YIMBIN TUNNEL

DATE: 17 August 2024

MEET: 9am, Tom St, Harlin

COST: \$5

LEADER: Frank Freeman (0427 655 514)

#### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

DATE: 24 August 2024

MEET: 9am, Jollys Lookout Lower Carpark, D'Aguiar NP

COST: Free

LEADER: Angus McElnea (0429 854 446)

#### GRANITE BELT IN SPRING CAMP

DATE: 30 Aug to 4 Sept

MEET: 2pm, 63 Sommerville Rd, Stanthorpe

COST: \$10

LEADER: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280)

#### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

DATE: 21 Sept 2024

MEET: 9am, Jollys Lookout Lower Carpark, D'Aguiar NP

COST: Free

LEADER: Angus McElnea (0429 854 446)



## MEMBER REFLECTIONS

DON MARSHALL, LIFE MEMBER

I JOINED NPAQ AFTER a two-week hike across Lamington on a Senior Scout venture in 1955. NPAQ was then pressing the Queensland government to declare many areas as national parks. In 1963, my Central Australia holiday snap won a New York World's Fair Kodak bronze award, and I worked writing news items and articles for the *Courier-Mail/Sunday Mail*. After a series of articles on national parks, I was appointed QNPWS senior information officer in 1982. I co-edited Keith Jarrott's *History of Lamington National Park* in 1990, and co-ordinated NPAQ's centenary booklet. I have been most connected with Lamington NP, recently compiling a book of more than 70 maps recording its history. I hope to see the state's national parks reduced to 10 to 15 when Queensland adopts the IUCN's world standard reserve category definitions. I also hope future generations will consider conservation biodiversity in the full light of the effects of climate change on our landscapes and species.

# BECOME A MEMBER AND SUBSCRIBE

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

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

Register at [npaq.org.au/protectedmagazine/](http://npaq.org.au/protectedmagazine/) or fill out and return the form below.

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

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

DOB (DD/MM/YEAR): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

## MEMBERSHIP TYPE

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

Membership renews on 1 September 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.



## MISSED AN ISSUE?

Email [admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au) to have a back issue posted to you.

NEW MEMBER? Please send these back issues with my first issue.

- SPRING 2023
- SUMMER 2024
- AUTUMN 2024



## 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)**

**protected**

Register now!

Ecotourism  
& Protected Areas  
Are we on the right track?



### NPAQ Free Seminar

Tues 30 July 2024, 1:00–2:30pm  
Brisbane Square Library  
Community Meeting Room



Speakers (Left to Right):  
Susanne Cooper, Nadine  
Schramm, Peter Shooter  
& Kristie Gray (not pictured)

Scan to book!



## WE'RE HIRING!

**OPERATIONS  
MANAGER**  
22.8hr/week  
Contract to Feb 2025



Please scan the QR code for the  
position description and email  
[admin@npaq.org.au](mailto:admin@npaq.org.au) to apply.  
Applications close Mon 29 July 2024.