

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

NGALIYA MAGUYDAN (OUR STORY) - NAREE BUDJONG DJARA (MY MOTHER EARTH) NATIONAL PARK

PLUS

Expansion of the Protected Area Estate on the Granite Belt

ALSO FEATURED

Tumbledown Nature Refuge

Nerang National Park

Ruth Frances Crosson

Glossy-Black Cockatoo

Ranger spotlight



Issue 32

Winter 2021



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Contributor guidelines

NPAQ invites contributions to *Protected* articles. Please email admin@npaq.org.au for a schedule of future editions.

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

Cover image

Naree Budjong Djara National Park. Photo: Paul Donatiu

Banner (left): *Ficus rubiginosa* Photo: Jayn Hay

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Susanne Cooper
President, National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)

Image - Joshua Smith/DPIE

Welcome to the Winter edition of Protected. There has been a constant trickle of disappointing and negative news regarding nature and our national parks in the news of late, particularly the continual loss of species, ongoing challenge of managing weeds and feral pests and inadequate funding to address these issues.

However, I'd like to focus on a more positive message through highlighting a number of developments in other States over the past few months. The strategic investment in new parks and protected areas is encouraging and sends a strong message that even in challenging times where there are many worthwhile initiatives competing for funding, enabling the protection of nature is a fundamental investment in our future.

As a summary – the WA government is committed to substantially expand the protected area estate by around 5 million hectares over the next five years – an increase of 20%. New parks are located along the coastline as well as inland areas, and cover the latitudinal range of the state – from The Kimberley to south of Perth. They will protect significant (but currently under-protected) habitat of wetlands, marine areas including fringing reefs and inter-



PLAN FOR OUR PARKS
SECURING 5 MILLION HECTARES OVER 5 YEARS

tidal areas, inlets and mountainous and river systems. Co-management with Traditional Owners is fundamental to this plan.

A 660,000 hectare marine park has been proposed for the Buccaneer Archipelago and Dampier Peninsula, along WA's northern coast. This park is internationally significant given its scale and intact, diverse ecosystems.

NSW is also clocking up some worthwhile achievements. A large inland cattle station of 154,000 hectares has just become the largest block of private land bought for a national park in the state's history. With nearby Sturt National Park, Narriearra will create a conservation area of close to half a million hectares, or twice the size of the Australian Capital Territory. The Bulloo River creates an expansive floodplain and wetlands that attract tens of thousands of water birds during inland flooding. The property is also home to Indigenous artefacts, tools and stone arrangements. Explorers Burke and Wills traversed it in 1860, with an engraved post marking one of the ill-fated expedition's two camp sites.

June also saw the purchase of two further cattle stations in the far west of NSW totalling 60,000 hectares. They represent significant ecosystems and biodiversity in the outback, and provide further reasons for people to venture out and explore the natural wonders of this area.

In all of the above, the substantial opportunities for Indigenous employment, and dollars from ecotourism flowing to regional communities is a significant flow-on

benefit.

On a related but different note, NSW has just announced their National Parks and Wildlife Service has funded 160 temporary new jobs across the State's 900 national parks. The jobs are temporary – but it's a first step toward better maintenance and management of protected areas.

When will we be able to acknowledge similar, substantive additions to our national parks and their improved management in QLD? Other states are undertaking serious investment - I look forward with anticipation to commending such achievements in Queensland.



Banner & Above: Joshua Smith/DPIE

NGALIYA MAGUYDAN (COUNTRY) BUDJONG DJARA (MY MOTHER EARTH) NATIONAL PARK

Cameron Costello

former CEO of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC, Deputy Chair of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, and member of the Queensland Koala Advisory Council.

Nunagal, Goenbal and Ngugi People have always protected our Quandamookadjarra (Quandamooka Country) and managed the health of the ecosystems to allow all species to flourish. QYAC and QPWS aim to provide best practice joint management of Naree Budjong Djara, to ensure lands and culture stay healthy for our children and for the benefit of all the people of Queensland. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging for their wisdom and knowledge of the land and sea on which we work, live and walk. (Naree Budjong Djara Management Plan) <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/naree-budjong-djara/about/naree-budjong-djara-management-plan>

July 4th 2021 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Federal Court's Native Title Determination on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) for my people, the Quandamooka People. It will also mark 10 years of joint management by the Queensland Government and Quandamooka People of the Naree Budjong Djara (My Mother Earth) National Park.

In 2019, another Native Title Determination occurred over Mulgumpin (Moreton Island) and the Queensland Parliament recently passed legislation recognising ownership and expanding joint management of the renamed Gheebulum Coonungai (Moreton Island) National Park on that island also. Given these milestones, it is worthwhile to look at 10 years of joint management, analyse the outcomes and celebrate its achievements.

Aboriginal Ownership and Control of Islands

Naree Budjong Djara National Park was declared by the Queensland Government on 25 March 2011. Through a joint process of protected area expansion, the national park

now covers approximately 50% of Minjerribah and it is expected that the total area of Minjerribah gazetted as a joint-managed protected area will reach approximately 80% of the island in the future.

Joint Management of the National Park has been a journey.



In 2011, Justice Dowsett of the Federal Court of Australia made an historic declaration awarding recognition of native title rights to the Quandamooka People over 54,000 hectares of land and sea Country in Quandamooka (Moreton Bay). Primarily over Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), the determination included Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) with the Queensland Government and Redland City Council.

The Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (QYAC) was appointed by the Federal Court as the registered native title body for the Quandamooka People. QYAC manages the native title rights and interests on behalf of the Quandamooka People.

In 10 years QYAC has grown from a small office of 5 people, to a national leader in native title, with around 100 employees and over 900 members. Through the hard work of its volunteer board, elected by each of the twelve families, supported by Elders and its strong membership, it continues to drive forward its agenda. A foundation principle is that Quandamooka Country is a cultural and wildlife sanctuary.

The result - Healthy Country, Healthy Culture, Healthier People.

Benefits of Joint Management

One clear benefit of joint management is ensuring that the custodians of the land and waters for millennia are empowered in decision making, their traditional knowledge is valued and they are active in the operations of the park. As the Naree Budjong Djara Management Plan states:

'Joint management provides an equal role for Quandamooka People in park operational decision-making and the management planning process.'

Joint management has also seen a recalibration to incorporate Quandamooka Priorities in management of the park – cultural heritage, ecological surveys, traditional knowledge, and economic development opportunities.

Cultural Heritage Protection

Initially, it was a battle for the Quandamooka People to get a focus on cultural heritage protection in Naree Budjong Djara. However, the protection of cultural heritage through surveys and management plans has rightly become a routine foundation principle for management of the park.

Quandamooka Ranger Program

Quandamooka People have previously been employed as Rangers and have played important roles over many years including the Moreton Island oil spill incident. Building on the foundation of the earlier significant work of the Quandamooka Land and Sea Management Agency (QLASMA), joint management has enhanced employment of Quandamooka People in caring for Country. The current QYAC Ranger Program now has over 20 rangers empowered in the day-to-day planning, coordination and management of Country.

Fire Management

The Quandamooka People now lead fire management on Minjerribah.

OUR STORY) - NAREE (MOTHER EARTH)

The national park has new firebreaks and is incorporating traditional knowledge into a burn regime with modern science. In addition, after being a key proponent in its development, the Queensland Government has contracted QYAC to deliver the Minjerribah Township Fire Management Strategy.



The role of Joint Management in Reconciliation

Joint management has meant genuine conversations around truth telling. It has seen a sharing of knowledge and culture, development of interpretive signage, storytelling, language reclamation, and capacity building. Part of that has been confronting institutionalised racism, changes to long held processes and where necessary, the uncomfortable weeding out of processes and people not committed to joint management. There have been leaders on both sides that have worked together to make joint management a success. Both Quandamooka People and the Queensland Government should be congratulated for the hard work and commitment to making joint management a success now, 10 years on.

Tourism Operations

The role of the Quandamooka People in the management of its national parks has seen a shift in the type of tourism operations occurring in Naree Budjong Djara. This shift is to more appropriate eco cultural tourism practices on Quandamooka Country. This ensures that cultural and ecological values are protected for our future generations to enjoy.

Restricted Access Areas

Restricted Access Areas (RAAs) in Protected Areas are not a new concept. There are areas in National Parks that for cultural purposes have been restricted access or are not accessible. Both QYAC and QPWS know that this is a good thing. This transition has generally been well received and understood. Protecting an area that has sacred spiritual and ceremonial meaning and purpose is a priority for Quandamooka People.

Lessons Learnt: Better Education and Communication

Native Title is a disruptor. Given the concept (a legislative response to the Mabo decision) overturned the long held view of *terra nullius* we should not be surprised that it was going to cause angst for those who continue to uphold the settler colonial mindset which sadly supports the concept of *terra nullius*. Unfortunately this mindset is also still upheld by not only some land owners, but some industry and other stakeholders when Aboriginal peoples started asserting their ownership rights to manage their country how they believed it should be, and importantly, how they had prior to colonisation..

Better communication with existing stakeholders and tourism operators is necessary. Better education of the broader public on native title is vital and crucial to address the settler colonial mindset and *terra nullius* assumption particularly some 29 years since the famous 'Mabo' or Native Title decision handed down by the High Court.

In my view it is the primary role of Federal, State and Local governments to educate their citizens. It is unfair to expect Aboriginal organisations to take the lead on educating non-Aboriginal citizens. It is also crucial that all levels of government ensure that their workers and elected representatives are familiar with not

only Native Title but the concept of *terra nullius*, particularly since it was recognised firstly in the High Court in 1992 and followed by the Quandamooka Native Title decision in the Federal Court of Australia in 2011.

The Queensland Government and Local Government also, whilst not undermining strict commercial in confidence negotiations, must do better to keep their citizens who are impacted by native title outcomes, informed of the progress of the process, facilitate relationships, and provide information on the truths about native title.

The Future

The 10 years of joint management on Minjerribah has been a wonderful success that has been built on joint commitment, problem solving, and very hard work. It is now getting into a rhythm of success breeding more success. In the future, joint management is the minimum benchmark that we should all aspire to in our national parks. Beyond that there are clearly areas in national parks that require sole management by Traditional Owners. This should occur too. Wherever possible, cultural heritage surveys and management plans should be undertaken on protected area estates.

If the lessons from Minjerribah show anything, it's that empowerment of Traditional Owners in national park management, and the benefits to country, culture and people, will transform our protected estates in Queensland into sustainable treasures to be enjoyed by our future generations.

Banner: Cover of Naree Budjong Djara Management Plan Photo: provided Cameron Costello

Inline (left & right): Photo: provided Cameron Costello

EXPANSION OF THE PROTECTED AREAS ON THE GRANITE BELT

Liz Bourne

The Granite Belt region of Southern Queensland is well known for its significant national parks and as a thriving ecotourism destination.

The region has a high degree of habitat diversity due to its elevation, topographic variation, outcropping rock and a pronounced east-west rainfall gradient. Vegetation includes tall open forest and woodland on rocky slopes, grassy open forests and woodlands on the deeper soils of lower slopes and alluvial plains and shrub lands on rock pavements. 45% remains as remnant vegetation and is a distinctive feature across the landscape.

Over 900 species of flowering plants occur in the region with 20 listed as threatened, including 5 recently classified as critically endangered. There is also a wonderful diversity of fauna species and the region is a stronghold of the spotted tailed quoll.

Girraween National Park and Sundown National Park together cover more than 24,450ha and protect many of the region's biodiversity values as well as its outstanding landscape features. They also are major tourism draw-cards for visitors to the region.

To complement these attractions,

increase the protected area estate and protect some of the unrepresented biodiversity values, a coalition of interests in Southern Queensland, led by the Granite Belt Sustainable Action Network, have recently combined with the NPAQ to lobby for an expanded parks system.

The groups have identified two existing State Forests and one major unprotected area where opportunities exist to provide for better protection and management which will not only ensure their biodiversity values are protected and enhanced, but will add to the region's ecotourism attractions and ease pressure on the existing national parks.

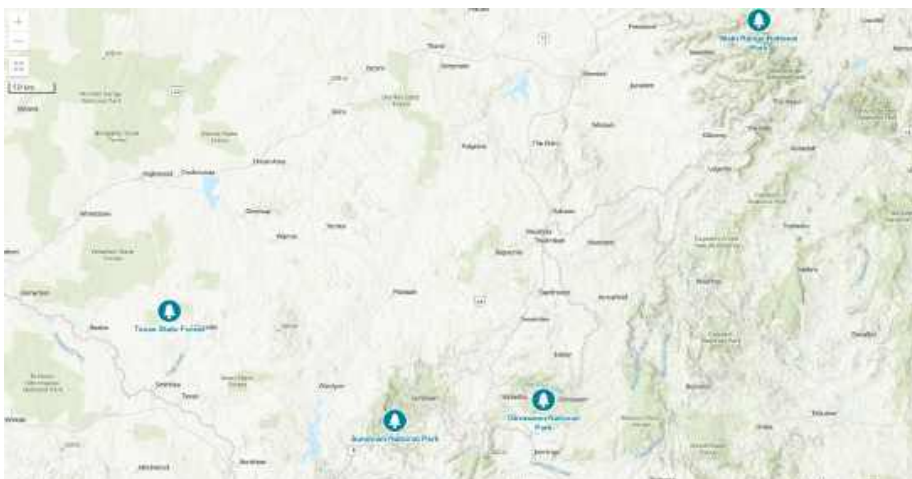
The 915 ha Broadwater State Forest, just west of Stanthorpe, has high conservation and scenic values and is also very accessible for a range of nature-based recreational activities. It contains four regional ecosystems, three of which are classified as "endangered," and is little affected by past human activity. This generally open eucalypt forest was heavily impacted by a major bushfire in September 2019 but is recovering well after good rainfall in the last couple of years. Of particular interest, it is likely to contain the best remaining populations of the

endangered *Boronia repanda* which fortunately appears to be resprouting after the bushfire as well as seeds germinating.

There appear to be no major impediments from competing uses to a conversion of this state forest to a higher level of conservation protection such as conservation and national park. Existing uses include bushwalking, mountain bike and horse riding, bouldering and orienteering and additional resources would need to be made available to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to ensure that its conservation values are protected and recreational uses adequately managed.

A further 15 km west, the extensive Passchendaele State Forest also contains areas of significant conservation value. Although the majority of this forest was cleared for soldier settlement farms after World War 1 and then planted to exotic pine plantation in the 1950s, it has retained some areas in a relatively pristine condition. The most southerly part of the forest at Amiens covers approximately 600 ha of eucalypt forest and heathlands amongst rock pavements and rugged granite boulders. This is an area of high conservation values and supports a range of threatened flora and fauna including the endangered *Boronia granitica*, *Bertya recurvata* and *Zieria graniticola* as well as spotted tailed quolls, glossy-black cockatoos, powerful owls, and border thick tailed geckoes.

Further survey work by Birdlife SQ is currently underway to better determine what fauna species may occur here and contribute to the business case for protecting these areas. Quite apart from its biodiversity significance, the elevated areas of this forest have great scenic value with views south-east to Girraween and south-



TECTED AREA ESTATE

west to Sundown. The area does not have an extensive track system and current recreational use is mainly for bushwalking, orienteering, bouldering and limited mountain bike riding. Conversion to national park status would have to be accompanied by additional resources to the QPWS to ensure appropriate management can occur.

The other potential area for conservation on the Granite Belt is the extensive Roberts Range which links Sundown National Park to Girraween. Travelling south from Stanthorpe on the New England Highway, this range is the major feature on the landscape west of the highway, providing a very scenic backdrop to the horticultural areas at Ballandean.

There has been a long-standing national park proposal for this range as it would provide a wonderful opportunity to link these two major national parks, securing a biodiversity corridor and the potential for a long-distance walking trail and other ecotourism possibilities.

The properties making up the Roberts Range are all in private ownership but its rugged and densely forested nature has meant it has little productive use for grazing or agriculture. It contains around 8,050 ha of remnant vegetation comprising

eight regional ecosystems, five of which are considered 'endangered'. The Biodiversity Planning Assessment for the New England Tablelands Bioregion which was undertaken by the former Environmental Protection Agency (now the Department of Environment and Science) in 2006 highlighted the significance of the Roberts Range as a corridor of state conservation significance.

Transitioning these areas to conservation protection such as national park (subject to landowner), special wildlife reserve (effectively a private national park), or nature refuge could allow for a regional approach to managing weeds, pests, fire and potentially open up ecotourism opportunities. Such transition would require funding for opt-in acquisition as well as resources to the QPWS/ the region for coordinating improved management. With an expanded parks system that is better managed, perhaps the Granite Belt could compete with Tasmania's Three Capes Walk and Blue Derby Mountain Bike Trails.

These conservation projects will take some time to achieve but there is broad support in the local community particularly from key players such as the Southern Downs Regional Council and the Granite Belt Wine and

Tourism so this will assist in achieving a positive outcome.



Banner: Photo: Sarah Quinn

Above: *Boronia granitica* Photo: Liz Bourne

Bottom of Page (left): map sourced from QLD Gov dept of Environment and Science

Bottom of Page (right): Photo: Liz Bourne

TUMBLEDOWN NATURE FOREST LIFE

Jayn Hay

This morning I woke to the sound of five kookaburras chuckling uproariously at the slow ascent of sunrise from one of their many precarious perches at the top of a large, old growth *Eucalyptus youmannii* (Youman's Stringybark).

Every morning it's the same. About 15 minutes after the first announcement they begin all over again, followed by the slightly lugubrious calls of white eared honeyeaters and thornbills, I imagine them saying "Whaaaaat, really, you mean there's a whole new day in front of me? Well, better get on with it, I sponse." And that's what we all do.



My name is Jayn. My home is Tumbledown Nature Refuge in the high country west of Stanthorpe, Queensland.

I live on and care for over 80 hectares of pristine granite heath and endangered woodland ecosystems on two adjacent nature refuge properties. I am dedicated to the preservation of all forest ecosystems and I am presently writing a book aimed at explaining as simply as possible, some of the approaches that we can take towards a 'return' to forest consciousness and practical activism, no matter where we live or work.

Income and many of the resources of my lifestyle come from the forest. I live by a code of resilient, less moneyed, reductive lifestyle and as close to the raw truth of low impact sustainability as I can. I am a forest keeper.

'Keeper' is appropriate since inferred in its meaning is the great responsibility of 'keeping order' or in other words, conservation of the forest resource in the sense that he/she, the keeper, is in service to the forest ecosystem and all of its inhabitants in a mutually beneficial relationship with forest. A forest keeper embodies all of the occupational skills of forest workers, biologists, rangers, gardeners and arborists, as well as in my case, a good deal of pragmatism. The forest keeper of old was an important part of a resilient forest economy with many responsibilities including policing poaching activity, seasonally managing harvesting of forest resources, managing teams of people who lived and worked in the forest, carrying out feral animal control and maintaining borders, roads and common lands. In a contemporary context, I also carry out similar daily tasks.

As a practitioner of the science of forest keeping, I carry out some important work and research in the complex, biodiverse heathy woodland ecosystem I call home. I utilise techniques of thinning, tree surgery, soil nurture, feral animal control and cultural burning, adjuncts to encompassing life methodologies practised for the good of the planet and all of its living creatures.

I've evolved into 'tree-ness' over a lifetime beginning in early childhood by drawing and identifying trees almost obsessively and growing from seed, and establishing, over 20 000 rainforest and sclerophyll trees on my first property which I purchased in my late teens.

Forest keeping is a vital part of 'living in the forest' and by that I mean, living in a way that means the forest and a person's lifestyle are inseparable and each entity is necessary for the other.

I have worked alongside traditional owners who are the fire, soil and water keepers of their cultures. I've also learned a lot from twenty years of wandering over thousands of hectares of almost pristine heathy woodland, bearing witness to its slow degradation and disintegration without the remedial and perpetuating influence of forest keeping techniques and traditional First Nations 'cultural burning'. I wonder often what it must have been like before white men altered the vistas forever by transplanting their European values into the oldest landscape on the planet, something we continue to do.

Tumbledown and the surrounding country encompass a wide range of ecosystem microcosms from flooding arid swampland, riparian zones, sedgeland, grasslands and heathy open woodland to the granite domes that support many rare and endangered species of orchids, heaths and fauna such as the Border Thick-tailed gecko, glossy black cockatoos and heathwrens.

As Nature refuge occupants, our joint vision for the future is to conserve these precious endangered heathy woodland ecosystems through a combination of methodologies encompassing tree thinning regimes, particularly endemic but invasive *Callitris endlicheri*, conservation and preservation of large diameter, old growth eucalyptus species, appropriate cool (cultural) burning methods in small compartment mosaics and involvement and education at community level with local First Nation traditional owners and other property stakeholders willing to trial such methodologies on their own places and on public lands.

Tumbledown has been undergoing a slow transformation over a period of about 10 years of ministering to the senescent and degrading status of the forest biome. The

REFUGE: A DAY OF

results of application of culturally appropriate fire and conservative thinning of vegetation are promising great benefits for comprehensive ecosystem health as well as fire load reduction and a lesser danger of hot, destructive wildfire. At community level, education programmes and demonstration of the techniques that we use in collaboration with local First Nation rangers, are inspiring many others on the land to follow suit.

Long term observation of changes at Tumbledown, points towards population diversity declines of native animals. Birds may be the harbingers of that horrible reality. Anecdotally, declines in insect populations and fruiting, seed and nectar bearing plants in marginal zones like Tumbledown may already be exposing this problem.

From the house, I have a great view of the bush garden surrounds and the pond, where live a multitude of dragonflies, wasps, visiting crimson rosellas, eastern spinebills and many other birds that frequent this tiny watery oasis in a normally arid environment. At night I leave apple and carrot scraps out for a little swamp wallaby that has an injured foot, perhaps healed now, but crippling it permanently. Here in its natural wilderness, the injured wallaby is relatively safe, has plenty to eat and it seems right to let it graze undisturbed.

I benefit from living with the wild creatures that hop, fly, flutter, slink, crawl, scuttle and volplane right past me as I walk along the many pathways and animal trails of this extraordinary 100 acres of 'wildergarden'. The forest is life, not only for the animals but as a source of some of my income, of food, entertainments and the renewable resources to make things that I use or that I sell. Blessedly, the forest brings a peaceful quiet rhythm to life on this nature refuge.

Each morning live catch traps I use to catch feral cats and foxes have to be checked. The feral animals are dispatched humanely. All the natives are released unharmed, usually full of whatever delicious treats I have set the traps with. Except for mice and rats that are used as bait, the dead are buried with respect beneath the lime and olive trees in the orchard. They are wild animals too.

A small chainsaw, full PPE and maintenance tools in a bucket and a sharp hand axe is all I need to do forest work. I start with a few hours of thinning of whipstick infestations of *Callitris endlicheri* (Black Cypress) and stunted eucalyptus saplings.

Thinning the forest before it can be burned, is physically demanding work, so I work in small, manageable compartments of about 100 - 300 sqm at a time. I carry out forest work with the principle of leaving no or only minimal trace of having been there. This approach also makes the cool burns much safer to carry out when conditions for burning are appropriate. The pathways are also firebreaks that follow natural watercourses and well worn animal trails. Animals always take the easiest path and the forest gently instructs us about where we can tread lightly, if we care to listen and observe.

Often there is a need to cut out up to 70% of tree stems, mostly whipstick and overcrowded callitris which will eventually dominate the forests of the Granite Belt. This will lead to hot fire and even more regrowth and less biodiversity.

I remove most of the trees surrounding an old growth eucalyptus tree, freeing its wide, tip sensitive canopy, and opening up the struggling understory of heath, native grasses and herbs to sunlight. Trees that were thinned around, near the homestead a decade ago, survived the drought with healthy canopies on this dry, bony ridge, while trees that had not had similar treatment died in droves in every other part of the forest.

Clearing up the mass of tree heads, firewood and cordwood sections is by far the most arduous and time consuming work, but is essential for cool burning later on during the winter months. The wild animals don't seem to object at all, evident in an increase in scats and footprints and advantageous wear on the tracks, as well as in the chewed new growth. The benefit goes both ways, you see.

Everywhere around us all, nature in all its incredible diversity and resilience can be observed. I walk for many kilometres over a fascinating wild landscape of thousands of hectares in the immediate environs and in the nearby Amiens State Forest. There are so many things happening to trees and in and under them as well. This forest is certainly alive. Life on a Nature Refuge never stands still. Well, not unless you are a granite monolith.



Banner : Flannel Flower Photo: Unknown

Above : Tumbledown National Park Photo: by Jayn Hay

Inline (left) : Jayn Hay - Forest Keeper Photo: supplied



PARK IN FOCUS

Nerang National Park

Jessica Lovegrove-Walsh - Friends of Nerang National Park



Nestled near the heart of the Gold Coast is one of Queensland's newer national parks. Covering over 1600 hectares of Kombumerri country, Nerang (Ngarang-Wal) National Park is a sizeable wildlife refuge in a sea of rapid development. Gazetted between 2007 and 2009, the park protects a mosaic of eucalypt forest and woodland along with a sliver of subtropical lowland rainforest. Nerang National Park is home to species which were once common across the broader Gold Coast region, but are now experiencing rapid population declines, including the powerful owl, greater glider, koala, and glossy black-cockatoo. Hidden in the centre of the park is a remnant of notophyll vine forest, listed as critically endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This section of the park forms part of the catchment for the Ramsar-listed Coombabah Wetlands, adding another dimension to its importance

for conservation. Nerang National Park is widely regarded as a recreation destination rather than a conservation destination, with transfers of legacy from its previous identity as a state forest.

Despite the park's proximity to a large human population, broad recreational user base, and national park status, surprisingly little ecological data has been collected since its gazettal. Previous ecological surveys and assessments have failed to identify a number of interesting and conservation-significant flora and fauna species which occur in the park. Recent volunteer efforts coordinated by Friends of Nerang National Park have identified over 70 previously unrecorded species since small scale surveys commenced in December 2020. These include the threatened vines, *Marsdenia coronata* and *Marsdenia longiloba*, which have been identified adjacent to unsanctioned and illegally constructed mountain bike trails.

In recent years and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, Nerang National Park has experienced a dramatic proliferation in illegal mountain bike trails, many of which occur in the most ecologically sensitive parts of the park. This has created a challenge for management, conservation, and those in the mountain bike community who are doing the right thing and restricting their activities to sanctioned trails. Trail networks result in a reduction in plant and fungal diversity, yet the impacts to fauna are much harder to quantify. Behavioural changes (avoidance) and death of fauna are the two most widely recognised consequences of trail usage. Without current knowledge of what species are in the park to begin with, it is difficult to understand and evaluate the impact of recreational activities on fauna.

Thanks to the National Parks Association of Queensland, we can commence a more comprehensive survey program including small mammal trapping, spotlighting, and frog surveys. This data will help inform future park management decisions regarding the conflicting conservation and recreational priorities in the park. Previous citizen science events and activities have raised the profile of the park amongst community members, who are enthusiastic about participating in the planned surveys. Nerang National Park is undergoing a rapid identity shift as it embraces its identity as a biodiverse conservation refuge that we are only now beginning to fully appreciate.

NPAQ gratefully received a generous bequest from Ruth Frances Crosson



Above (left): Kingfisher. Photo: Jessica Lovegrove-Walsh

Above (right): Greater Glider, Above (bottom): Stephens Banded Snake. Photos: Photographs Downunder <https://photographersdownunder.com/>

Banner: Buff Rumped Thornbill. Photo: Jessica Lovegrove-Walsh

WALK WITH NATURE - YOUR PATH IS PEACE

Gladstone Conservation Council - December 2019

this month. Ruth peacefully passed away in December 2019 after losing her fight with cancer at age 82.

Ruth was always accompanied by her two Pomeranian dogs and was well known as never being afraid to be herself. She was instrumental in establishing the Tondoon Botanic Gardens in Gladstone where both she and her husband now have trees planted in their memory in the gardens.

She had a passion for native plants and in the later time of her life, she produced a brochure on the relationships between native butterflies and native plants.

The following was posted on the Gladstone Conservation Council Facebook following her passing:

As many of you will be aware, Ruth Crosson sadly passed away a week ago, and Gladstone won't be the same without her.

I first met Ruth at my first EcoFest in June 2002 - as I recall I bought a bird's nest fern and joined the local

SGAP group. I grew up with the Society for Growing Australian Plants - I guess you could call me a second generation activist - so this seemed like a good way to get in contact with some like-minded people.

Ruth was a stalwart of the local SGAP group, and even when there were very few members her unfailing enthusiasm never wavered. I remember on one occasion wading over to Wild Cattle Island to look at plants (in retrospect we could have judged the tide times better!).

She and I worked on any number of projects together over the years, and just recently we were plotting how to get the money to get a guest speaker up from Brisbane.

I taught Ruth to send her first email - and they retained a unique style, occasionally difficult to interpret, but you had to give her points for having the courage to take on the new technology.

In her final years she had developed an enthusiasm for local butterflies -

and the unique plants which butterflies need for their life cycle. She has produced a small brochure and posters detailing our local plants and butterflies and had grand plans for the future.



Above (left & right): Ruth Frances Crosson. Photo: supplied - Gladstone Conservation Council

Inline: Journal of the Society for Growing Australian Plants QLD Region Inc March 2020 | Volume 58 #4

WILDLIFE FEATURE

A bird beloved – the story of the Glossy-Black Cockatoo

Dr Mark Nadir Runkovski - Natura Pacific

There's a bird out there that has brought people together for years. It's called the Glossy Black-cockatoo and it's the feature of a brand new episode in the Back from the Brink docu-series being run this year by Natura Pacific and the Glossy Black Conservancy.

The Glossy Black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) is the smallest of Australia's five endemic black cockatoos. The adults grow up to about 50cm in length and have, in contrast to their English name, dusky chocolate heads and ashey-black plumage. Like many birds, the adults are sexually dimorphic meaning that males and females look different to one another. Males typically have a clear dark plumage apart from the tail which is barred with bright scarlet-red, while females have a splattering of yellow across their head and throat and their tail barring is more sunset-orange.

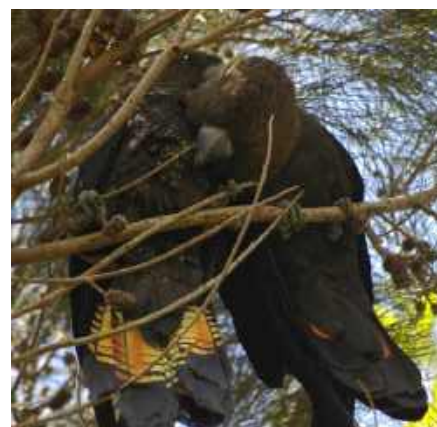


Banner: Glossy Black cockatoo feeding, **Inline (right):** Glossy pair Photo: Dr Mark Nadir Runkovski
Above: Glossy cockatoo pair. Photo: Jeanne Appleton

The birds have undergone extensive habitat loss since European colonisation and subsequent development. There are two essential elements of their life-cycle that constitute whether a patch of natural vegetation is suitable enough as habitat; these are the presence of their key preferred food-trees, she-oaks, and the presence of large hollow-bearing trees in which to nest.

Unfortunately, due to land-clearing prevailing for a multitude of priority development areas in our lowland coastal flats around southern Queensland, much of the former range of the cockatoos has experienced a decline in healthy, productive she-oak stands, as these dry forests are often easy-to-clear, prime real estate. The hollow-bearing trees have also suffered with a decline of up to 70% in some Queensland landscapes, and recent studies conducted by the Queensland Herbarium indicated that dead and living hollow-bearing trees are particularly sensitive to intense fires.

Thankfully this beautiful bird has a strong task-force behind it, the Glossy Black Conservancy (<https://glossyblack.org.au/>). This multi-disciplinary alliance of people from councils, government, academia and community have banded together for over 20 years to map, record, monitor and fuel change to try and restore and reconnect Glossy Black habitat. And you can help too! Perhaps one of the most attainable ways to help out the team, and the birds of course, is to get involved with their upcoming



Glossy Black-cockatoo Birding Day which is running on the weekend of the 11th and 12th September right across southern Queensland from the Tweed River all the way to Noosa.

To find out more and become part of this fantastic initiative, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1445896569085882/>

Additionally to the hard-work on the ground in spotting, recording and mapping the remaining cockatoos in the wild, the new Back from the Brink film dedicated to this remarkable bird, will aim to raise its profile even more within our community as a flagship species. The film and accompanying podcast will be produced in October and available across social media channels - Apple Podcast link (<https://apple.co/3nhCb5P>) and the YouTube link (<https://bit.ly/3gJf1VC>)

So if you're thinking, what can I do for nature this year in my small block of land, why look any further than making the Glossy Black-cockatoo your new favourite critter, and invest some of your free time into learning about, and doing more, for our amazing biodiversity!

To learn more about other threatened plants and animals in Queensland check out Natura Pacific's 'Back from the Brink' videos and podcasts www.natura-pacific.com/resources or search "Natura Pacific Back from the Brink" on Facebook, YouTube and Spotify.



I find it so interesting to think back on my life and look at the defining moments, forks in the road and path-setting decisions I made that have led me to where I am now. As a 30-year-old, I find myself spending more time reflecting on influential moments than I did when I was younger and it's funny the things you remember!

I remember being very young and moving from the inner suburbs of Sydney, to the tiny suburb of Sunshine Beach. My memories of this time in my life are more like still images that live on forever – faded and slightly distorted but they fill my heart with happiness when I think of them.

Next to Sunshine Beach, of course, is the beautiful Noosa National Park and little did I know the impact and influence that growing up next to this natural wonder would have on me.

For so many years the park has been my happy place and from a young age I always felt so at peace walking the winding tracks, looking for animals and gazing at our beautiful Australian fauna. The patchy mobile phone service always made family time with my parents and two sisters extra special, and I adored the wonderful isolation from the real world.

As I got older the park introduced me to two lifelong passions that have given me so much since then – surfing and running. There is nothing like surfing the Noosa National Park, it's just in a class of its own when it comes to quality of wave and the

natural beauty you're surrounded by as you sit in the lineup. The same goes for running along the rugged, winding tracks enclosed by canopies before opening up to ocean views that take your breath away every single time.

My passion for conservation of our beautiful parks was sparked when I was surfing my favourite spot, Alexandria Bay, as a young kid with my Dad. He told me 'A-Bay' was his favourite spot in the world because when you look back on the beach you can't see a single building or piece of man-made infrastructure at all. It's just you and nature and him saying this was thought provoking, making me realise the true value that parks like this have.

It's not just about the beauty, the fun times, the hikes or the memories. To

me it's about that peaceful glow that falls over you as you take in the whole experience. The sounds, the smells and the sand between your toes.

Being in the Noosa National Park is my meditation and I'm so thankful for its protection and conservation over the years.

I look back on my parents' decision to move from the big city to little Sunshine Beach, and I just feel lucky. Growing up I don't think I knew just how lucky I was, but I do now and this is why it's so important to me that future generations have the chance to experience what I have.



Banner & Above: Noosa National park Photo: Supplied.

RANGER SPOTLIGHT

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

Cat Shaw
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Cat Shaw is a Ranger in Technical Services in the Visitor Management team for the Coastal and Islands region, based in Manly. With a background in professional writing, in her early 30s, she decided she was tired of reading about other people's adventures and contributions to society. Cat packed up her life, and moved to Queensland to study conservation, with the intention of becoming a Ranger.

How long have you worked in national parks?

Nine years. I began as a work placement student through TAFE at Burleigh Heads in the Gold Coast Management Unit.

Which parks have you worked in?

I've worked in D'Aguilar NP and parks around the Gold Coast. I've also been a Community Engagement Ranger in North Cooloola, Great Sandy NP; and I have lived and worked on Mulgumpin (Moreton Island) for 18 months. Involvement in wildfires has also taken me to many other parks in south-east Queensland.

What is special about your current park?

As a Visitor Management Ranger, I look after an entire region. The Coastal and Islands region is just that—magnificent shorelines and iconic islands, like K'gari (Fraser Island)! Most of our areas fall under the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006, which means they are partly managed on a user-pays basis.

What is your most memorable moment as a ranger?

I've got two that really stand out. The first one, not just a memorable moment as a Ranger but a privileged experience as a human being, was my involvement with the Bummiera

(Brown Lake) women's only cultural burn on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) in 2020, led by the female Quandamooka Rangers. Not only was it incredible doing fire management on country with them; it was a great opportunity for building and developing friendships with like-minded women across multi-agencies.

My second 'moment' would be 3am, Christmas Day 2019, on the Kipper Creek wildfire, in the south D'Aguilar back country. It was my third 'graveyard shift' in a row; my crew member and I were exhausted and pretty deflated about missing Christmas with our families. We happened to look up and saw Elon Musk's Starlink satellites rotating through the night sky—an amazing moment!

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

Working in high visitation areas is not without its challenges, but it absolutely comes with rewards. I've been witness to so many park visitors creating some of their pivotal life memories. On park I've located lost bushwalkers in 'search and rescue' missions; and seen marriage proposals, family reunions, massive charity events, kids' first camping trips and solo campers, recently-widowed, seeking solace while they grieve ... As Rangers, we have a front row seat to many important and life-changing occasions for people, which is an honour.

Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?

The Cooloola coloured sands, just near Rainbow Beach, melts my face every time I go there. It's like a piece of artwork that is constantly being re-sculpted according to coastal



Above: QPWS Ranger Cat Shaw. Photo: © Queensland Government.

Top: Coloured Sands, Cooloola Recreation Area, Great Sandy National Park © Queensland Government

influences.

Saint Helena Island NP is also a top spot. It's an old penal colony on an island in Moreton Bay. Accessible only by boat, Saint Helena is one of our cultural heritage parks and it is an island brim-full of stories.

What is your top tip for visitors to your park?

Pre-plan your journey! When setting off on the longer more remote walks, be prepared and know the difficulty of the walk. Ensure you have adequate water and check Park Alerts on our website regularly. Sand environments are dynamic and it's vital to be across the most up-to-date information.

What is your top tip for campers?

Get your camping permits in advance, popular spots get booked out. Also, if there are no toilet facilities available, bring your own.

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

NPAQ activities

Bushwalk - Boombana to Jolly's Lookout, return

Date: 24 July 2021

Meet: 9am - Boombana Picnic Area

Cost: \$5

Leader: Len Lowry (0428 335 572 or onthewallaby@live.com.au)

Bird Watching - Bullocky Rest

Date: 5 July 2021

Meet: 7:30am - Lower car park

Cost: \$5

Leader: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280 or ianpeacock@hotmail.com)

Bushwalk - Mount Mathieson (Keith Jarrott Memorial Walk)

Date: 15 August 2021

Meet: 9am - Pioneer Graves Picnic Area

Cost: \$5

Leader: Len Lowry (0428 335 572 or onthewallaby@live.com.au)

2021 Vegetation Management Group

Meet: 9:00am - the lower car park of Jolly's Lookout of D'Aguiar National Park.

What to bring: Gloves, protective clothing, eye protection, insect repellent, sunscreen, water, morning tea, and lunch.

Dates: Saturday 24 July 2021, Saturday 21 August 2021, Saturday 18 September 2021

NPAQ events

NPAQ Seminar - Loving them to Death?

Date: 22 July 2021

Time: 6pm - 8:30pm

Venue: L2, The Precinct, 315 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley

Cost (NPAQ member): \$20

More information: <http://npaq.org.au/loving-them-to-death>

Fathers for the Forest

Date: 5th September 2021

Time: 12pm - 4pm

Venue: Binna Burra

For more information, contact admin@npaq.org.au

Vale

NPAQ is saddened by the passing of life member Beryl Askin. Beryl joined NPAQ in 1955 and became a life member in 1976. She was a much-loved wife, mum, grandma and friend. She passed away peacefully May 6, 2021. She was a long time NPA member and bushwalker. The family has noted that donations to Parkinson's QLD would be much appreciated.

We send our heartfelt condolences to her friends and family.



Above: Tumbledown National Park. Photo: Jayn Hay

Celebrating 90+ years.

