

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

World Heritage

The most highly protected areas
in Australia

PLUS

Abuse it...and lose it
Reflections on 60 years of
National Park experiences

ALSO FEATURED

Main Range National Park
Hastings River mouse



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Connect and Protect

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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

Wet sclerophyll forest - Mt Barney National Park

Photo: NPAQ Image library

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



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

At university a few years ago one of the text books was *The Theory of Island Biogeography* published in 1967 and written by Robert MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson. The book discusses the number of species in an isolated environment being determined by rates of extinction and immigration. It also recognises that different evolutionary paths can be taken. This book influenced the design of conservation areas. As a young student this was of interest and enough was learned to ensure exams were passed. There were of course other interests and priorities that a student with no responsibilities needed to pursue.

E.O. Wilson continued his distinguished, and on occasion, controversial career. As Professor Emeritus at Harvard, Foreign Policy, in 2005 he was named one of the world's one hundred leading intellectuals. His words have often been challenging, including in his recent 2016 book *Half Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*. In this book, or in commentary around, it Wilson states:

- “The principal cause of extinction is habitat loss. With reduced area the number of species that can be sustained, declines.”
- “When people are encouraged to take a close look at the remnants of nature, in its complexity, beauty and majesty and when they understand that the natural environment is the home of their deep history, many become the most ardent supporters of reserves.”
- “We are still too greedy, short-sighted and divided into warring tribes

to make long term decisions.”

- “It's time for the conservation movement to get a big goal instead of aiming for incremental progress.”
- “Our goal should be to preserve half of the planet to protect around 80% of the world's species.”

It is of great interest to place this goal in context. In 2005, scientists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison estimated that 40% of land, globally, was used for farming (75% of this devoted to growing feed for livestock) with an additional 3% occupied by urban development.

As of 2014 it was estimated that 15.4% of global terrestrial land was protected.

In October 2010, the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, proposed that 17% of land and 10% of the world's oceans be protected and that peoples be aware of the values of biodiversity by 2020. Australia is a participant in this. In 2014 the Australian Government Department of Environment, whilst reporting that clearing and fragmentation remain key threats to biodiversity, was able to report much progress in achieving nationally protected areas of 16.25% land and 36.2% waters. However, in 2016 the Biodiversity working group, whilst providing examples of progress, also stated that the nation's biodiversity conservation strategy had “not effectively influenced conservation activities”.

In Queensland (where national parks occupying 17% is a stated target) acquisition of new national parks has slowed and government budgets are restrained. The seemingly logical view

that any new national parks are to be declared only if sufficient management budget is allocated may have perverse outcomes. There are many initiatives to conserve or restore biodiversity, however it is questionable that long term conservation outcomes will be achieved. For example, companies, as required, spend large sums of money on biodiversity offsets, often where the science is poorly understood, and outcomes may not be in perpetuity. Legally protected areas remain the best mechanism to conserve biodiversity values.

Questions abound: do we as a community emulate my student days, i.e. finding issues and potential solutions of some interest, but focusing greater attention on the immediate, and at times pleasurable, distractions? Can we genuinely come to grips with the long term needs of biodiversity conservation? Can we utilize the considered thinking of great minds such as E.O. Wilson?

Wishing you a happy and peaceful Christmas and looking forward to creating and seizing opportunities in the coming year.

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Photo: Fungus at Mossman Gorge, Daintree National Park

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WORLD HERITAGE - AN INTRODUCTION

Peter Ogilvie

Former NPAQ councillor, former QPWS Manager of World Heritage and former member of the Australian Negotiating Team for the Convention on Biological Diversity

World Heritage status brings a particular location as close as possible to being unique in the true sense of that word. To achieve that status, the site has been assessed on a global scale against a number of criteria and found to have outstanding universal value.

Even a limited knowledge of the properties located wholly or partly in Queensland will readily reinforce the reference to outstanding attributes. Those World Heritage Areas (WHA) are: Fraser Island WHA, Great Barrier Reef WHA (in part), Australian Fossil Mammal Sites WHA (in part), Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA, and Gondwana Rainforests of Australia WHA (in part).

In order to better appreciate how this status is achieved, the amount of assessment that is undertaken along the way and the on-going monitoring after the status is conferred, it is worth taking a quick look at the Convention and the process that has derived from its clauses.



The World Heritage Convention

The extraordinary action to dismantle, relocate and reassemble important Nubian monuments along the Nile River as a result of the Aswan High Dam construction (completed in 1970) was a crucial stimulus to developing a global protocol designed to protect items of outstanding cultural heritage.

Under the auspices of UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization), the framework for a convention was developed with the assistance of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites).

Interestingly, the original intention was to develop a protocol for protecting only cultural heritage. However, as a result of representation by a few influential people within IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), the draft convention was expanded to include natural heritage.

This resulted in a marriage of two, until then, totally separate movements – the conservation of nature and the preservation of cultural sites – as represented by the two key international organisations IUCN and ICOMOS.

The establishment of an international convention is not a simple or rapid one. Led by UNESCO, a group of experts developed a draft text. This text was then subjected to negotiation at a number of meetings by teams from a wide range of nations with an interest in the outcome and which were likely to become signatories to the final product.

After a long negotiating process, a single text was finally agreed to by all parties. On 16 November 1972, the **Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage** (commonly known as the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO.

It contains 38 Articles, many of which are of an administrative nature. It is important to appreciate that the success or otherwise of a multilateral treaty relies heavily on how it is administered.

After agreement, a formal ratification process must be undertaken by each country (known as a State Party) in order to assert its intention to be bound by the provisions.

In August 1974, Australia was one of the first countries to ratify the World Heritage Convention. It came into force on 17 December 1975, three months after ratification by 20 countries, as required by Article 33

of the Convention.

To date, 193 countries have ratified the Convention. This is quite extraordinary, considering that there are 196 countries (approximately) in the world.

Administering the World Heritage Convention

The Convention requires on-going expert assessment of nominations, decisions related to inscription on the World Heritage List, regular monitoring of the management of listed sites and appraisal of the threats to their continued existence.

The supreme decision-making body for the Convention is the General Assembly of States Parties (comprising all signatories to the Convention).

However, operational matters, including nominations, are handled by the World Heritage Committee established under Article 8. It consists of representatives from 21 signatory nations, a percentage of which are elected every two years for a four-year term. Australia has a seat from 2017 to 2021. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris services the Committee and acts as its Secretariat.

Three international organisations – IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) – are referred to in three Articles (8, 13 and 14). They undertake assessments for new property nominations and oversee the procedures that monitor management issues and threats associated with each property.

IUCN handles natural heritage, and the other two deal with cultural heritage. All organisations are involved if it is a mixed nomination (both natural and cultural).

The interpretation of any convention tends to be refined over time and the World Heritage Convention is no exception. Rarely, if ever, is a convention modified or renegotiated - It is simply reinterpreted.

As a result, there have been regular changes over time to the key document, “*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*”. It outlines procedures for nominating, managing, monitoring and reporting on World Heritage properties.

Nomination

The latest version of the Operational Guidelines, dated 2016, provides ten criteria, at least one of which must be met in order for a nomination to be accepted, and for the property to be assessed and, perhaps, inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The first six criteria relate to cultural heritage while the remaining four relate to natural heritage. They derive from Articles 1 and 2 in the Convention which establish what “shall be considered as cultural heritage” and what “shall be considered as natural heritage” respectively.

Being so crucial to the nomination process and subsequent management, the four natural heritage criteria are quoted here:

(vii) to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional

natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

(viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth’s history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

(ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

(x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species and outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

The Convention requires that any nomination must be able to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for the property in question. The significance of a nomination must be global, and not simply local, or even national. The Great Barrier Reef, for example, must stand out amongst all barrier coral reefs in the world.

The Guidelines define OUV as follows: “...cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection

Images: Banner: Gondwana Rainforests of Australia WHA (Tatters via Flickr); left: Fraser Island WHA (Eloise Robertson).



of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.”

The nomination must also argue the area’s integrity (or, in the case of cultural heritage, authenticity). Integrity looks at such matters as size, boundaries, and adjoining threats. It is “a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural heritage and its attributes”.

Finally, the nomination must explain how the area will be protected and managed. This includes appropriate “long-term legislative, regulatory, institutional and/or traditional protection”.

Though the nomination of a World Heritage property is a matter for the national government, in Australia the States invariably prepare a large part of the nomination material and are generally responsible for day-to-day management of most of the properties.

Nevertheless, the primary legislation protecting such properties is the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, which ensures the World Heritage Convention is adhered to. Under the Australian Constitution, the Commonwealth can override State legislation on matters involving an international treaty.

More recently, a stipulation has been introduced requiring a State Party to place a potential site on a tentative list at least one year before a formal nomination is presented.

This allows UNESCO to carry out a preliminary assessment and perhaps advise whether there is

little prospect of a future nomination succeeding. Australia currently has three sites on the tentative list, two of which are in Queensland (extensions to both Fraser Island and Gondwana Rainforests).

Assessing a nomination

The formal nomination is submitted by the national government of a country to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, which then passes it on to IUCN (natural) or ICOMOS (cultural) or both (mixed).

Following detailed inspections and assessments, their recommendations are made to the World Heritage Committee which decides to (a) reject the nomination, (b) send it back for further particulars, or (c) accept the nomination and inscribe the property on the World Heritage List.

Globally, at the time of writing, there are 1073 World Heritage properties –206 natural sites, 832 cultural sites, and 35 mixed sites – inscribed on the World Heritage List. 54 of these have



been designated as World Heritage in Danger, a status that recognises potential threats that need to be addressed.

Australia has 19 world Heritage properties listed between 1981 and 2011 – 12 natural, 4 mixed, and 3 cultural. Three are serial properties, involving separate locations that are not physically connected.

Monitoring World Heritage

The architects of the Convention realised that on-going monitoring and accountability processes were essential to ensure that countries undertook their obligations under the Convention. It is considered to be one of the most comprehensive reporting systems for any multilateral convention.

Every six years each State Party is required to produce a periodic report for each of its properties, providing advice on a range of matters. These include (a) application of the Convention, (b) any change in the state of conservation, (c) whether the

values of the property are being maintained, and (d) identifying any threats and how they are being addressed.

There is also a process for reactive monitoring in the case of a property where specific threats have been identified, or which may be a candidate for listing as World Heritage in Danger, or where some form of development may be contemplated that could affect the values. A State Party may be invited to inform the World Heritage Committee of any actions that may impact on OUV. This process has been invoked in relation to the Great Barrier Reef WHA.

Three years ago a further monitoring and reporting exercise, called the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, was developed for natural heritage sites. It provides an independent assessment of the state of conservation for all 206 natural heritage sites across the world.

The second report was released in November 2017 and allocated all properties to one of four categories: (i) good (20%), (ii) good with some concerns (44%), (iii) significant concern (29%) and (iv) critical (7%). Three Australian properties fell into the significant concern category (Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park, and Wet Tropics of Queensland). The report is available at www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Conclusion

This article aims to provide an understanding of how the nomination, selection and monitoring processes of World Heritage Areas operate. It is

also designed to reinforce the importance of these areas locally, nationally and globally. While they are managed by the country in which they are located (and there are some properties which cross national boundaries), the Convention gives them a status that transcends national boundaries.

Article 4 explains the duty of each State Party “...of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage ...” Contemplate each of those responsibilities and it is abundantly clear this is no small task.

In Australia, a large component of all the 16 natural heritage sites are declared national parks or marine parks. That status under State or Commonwealth legislation, combined with World Heritage listing (international law), makes them the most highly protected areas in Australia. They are areas to cherish, fight for, and share with the rest of the world.

Images: Banner: Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA (Marika Strand); left Great Barrier Reef WHA (Steinchen); Below: Riversleigh, Australian Fossil Mammal Sites WHA (James Fitzgerald via Creative Commons)



List of the 19 Australian World Heritage Areas:

Natural:

- Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte) (1994)
- Fraser Island (1992)
- Gondwana Rainforests of Australia (1986,1994)
- Great Barrier Reef (1981)
- Greater Blue Mountains Area (2000)
- Heard and McDonald Islands (1997)
- Lord Howe Island Group (1982)
- Macquarie Island (1997)
- Ningaloo Coast (2011)
- Purnululu National Park (2003)
- Shark Bay, Western Australia (1991)
- Wet Tropics of Queensland (1988)

Cultural:

- Australian Convict Sites (2010)
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens (2004)
- Sydney Opera House (2007)

Mixed:

- Kakadu National Park (1981,1987,1992)
- Tasmanian Wilderness (1982,1989)
- Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (1987,1994)
- Willandra Lakes Region (1981)

ABUSE IT....AND LOSE IT

Reflections on 60 years of national park experiences

Don Vollmerhause
Teacher and avid bushwalker

John Muir, an ardent American conservationist, influenced President Theodore Roosevelt to lobby for preservation of America's natural beauty to the extent that "The Yellowstone Act" was passed to protect America's natural wonderlands.

This act, which was signed by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1872, laid the basis for the principles of the National Park service; Yellowstone was to be *"reserved and withdrawn from settlement...and dedicated and set apart as a public park... for the benefit and enjoyment of the people...preservation from injury or spoilation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within the said park, and the retention in their natural condition."*¹ This act and other subsequent acts were necessary after the mass harvesting of ancient sequoias in California and the desecration of the Pueblo villages in the Mesa Verde.

Funding was a problem to operate Yellowstone. Additional investment was required, and this came from various railroad companies and private wealthy investors who were able to obtain long-term leases.

These private concerns have mushroomed enormously and their wealth also. Once private commercial ventures or leases are given, it is difficult to have the leases cancelled. The basic argument by the leaseholders is that they are providing employment to locals and some income to the parks.

The parks have proved popular – far

too popular in some areas – with the result being overuse and abuse. The reader may find it interesting to research Yellowstone National Park. Recent figures from 2016 show a record number of 4.25 million visitors and 12,778 buses entered the park – an increase of 99.8% in the 50 years since 1966.²

The major problem is our constantly increasing population. People need to escape from the cities to the national and state parks. Millions of people flock to these areas, and there is no escaping the impact that these hordes have brought over the decades.

My wife and I have been very fortunate to visit most of the national parks in Canada and western U.S.A.; our first jaunt was in 1965, and we have been constant visitors since. Those 52 years have brought tremendous changes; some have been beneficial, others detrimental.



Movement in the parks has been restricted; visitors can use only certain roads. To explore various other regions, shuttle buses are used. Freedom of movement is restricted, queuing is essential – one has to be up early to secure a seat. These necessary procedures diminish visitor experiences. Provision is made for the adventurous and hardy backcountry hikers as they are dropped off at various trailheads. Hikers must reserve their hikes and campsites. The parks have had to limit the numbers in the wilderness areas, otherwise the fragile environment could be damaged.

"The fragile environment could be damaged". We have seen this vividly at Lake O'Hara, in Yoho National Park in British Columbia, Canada. Lake O'Hara is beautiful. Once, one could drive in, now access is by shuttle if one is lucky to secure a seat. There

is a lodge with deluxe cabins along the lake shore which only the wealthy can afford. This has been a favourite with so many for so long, but it had become shopworn and decrepit. It is a fragile alpine area; it experiences a heavy snow pack and rain so the trails through the meadows become muddy and boggy. The trail had been worn down to about a foot in depth. Hikers avoided the water so another trail beside was made. The result was a myriad of braided trails eroding the meadows even more. In these earlier days, horseback trail riding was popular, and no doubt steel-shod horses also contributed to the damage. A solution was found. A volunteer group, Friends of Lake O'Hara, obtained funding and elicited donations from supporters and started to restore the area. Once again, after years of restoration, there is one dedicated trail made from flat rocks – a remarkable achievement.

In Yoho Park, near the village of Field, old rustic cabins at \$50 per night were a big part of our family's national park experience for many years. These were demolished and luxurious log cabins built. Accommodation is \$500 plus a night; no self-catering, meals are available at the on-site expensive restaurant. It, too, is a beautiful area looking over the Kickinghorse River and across to Cathedral Mountain.

Moraine Lake, in Banff National Park, is a real gem. It is situated in The Valley of the Ten Peaks, all over 10,000 ft high – truly awe-inspiring and beautiful. In 1965, there was a small walk-in camp site. We were

by ourselves as most campers were discouraged by the carry-in. It was a wonderful experience, but one that can never be repeated here. The little campground is no more -luxurious condominiums stretch along the shoreline. These, to me, are scars on the landscape thanks to private developers who saw they could make millions. As an aside, a parallel perhaps, the Lindeman Island Group comes to mind.

Australia is a relatively young country, but over the short period of settlement, devastating changes have been wrought upon our "sunburnt country". We have virtually raped the land in the pursuit of short-term wealth. Our leaders now must have great foresight and not plan for 20 or 30 years ahead; they must plan for hundreds of years ahead so our descendants will be able to enjoy the unspoiled natural beauty of our parks. It is obvious that the parks will have to provide for all kinds of people, from the grey nomad "glampers", to the hardy young



adventurers who wish to explore the more remote areas. Our modern "toys" are not necessary in the parks. It is also not necessary to have commercial ventures inside the park boundaries; people can still have access to modern conveniences on the fringes, outside the parks.

Let us learn from the North American experience. Let us keep what we have for future generations.

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1. "National Parks of the West", p.15 by the Editors of Sunset Books and Sunset Magazine. Published 1965 by Lane Magazine Book Company,
2. National Park Service, US Dept of Interior <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park>

Banner: Trout Lake, Yellowstone National Park, USA (Always Shooting, via Flickr);

Left: Lake O'Hara, Yoho National Park, Canada (Zeljko Kozomara, via Creative Commons);

Below: Moraine Lake, Banff National Park, Canada (Gorgo, via Wikimedia Commons).

PARK IN FOCUS

Main Range National Park

John and Lyn Daly

Sourced from their book: *Take a Walk in Queensland's National Parks, Southern Zone*

HISTORY

The 18,400ha Main Range National Park has been formed by the amalgamation of several parks. This World Heritage listed park now stretches from Mt Mistake in the north, along the western part of the scenic rim to Cunningham's Gap, through the Mt Roberts section to Wilson's Peak on the Queensland-New South Wales border, and west to Queen Mary Falls.

The Scenic Rim was once an impassible barrier between the coast and the Darling Downs. In 1827, the explorer Alan Cunningham sighted a gap in the mountains from the west. Some historians believe that the gap originally seen by Cunningham was in fact Spicer's Gap, 2.5kms to the south. He located Cunningham's Gap in August 1828, and named the two sentinel peaks Mt Mitchell and Mt Cordeaux, after the Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell and his assistant, William Cordeaux.

Local Aborigines called Mt Mitchell Cooyinnirra. Mt Cordeaux was known as Niamboyoo and the gap was called Cappaong.

Henry Alphen, a stockmen working on Canning Downs, the first property established on the Darling Downs, was the first European to discover Spicer's Gap, in April 1847. A road was then constructed through Spicer's Gap providing the first access route between Moreton Bay and the Darling Downs.

There is now a self-guiding walk along the old road showing the different construction methods of that era. Bullock drays were used to carry supplies and wool to and from the Darling Downs. An inn was built across from the current camping ground and was a welcome sight for many thirsty

travellers. Use of the road declined in 1871 following the construction of the railway linking Warwick to Moreton Bay, via Toowoomba.

At least 13 early pioneers are buried in a small cemetery, a short walk from the Spicer's Gap picnic ground. Words on the epitaph have been inscribed by hammering nails into the concrete.

Moss's Well, just south of the camping area at Spicer's Gap is believed to take its name from Edward Moss, the first road contractor. The well provided the only water for travellers making their way over the range. The water is now unsuitable for drinking.

The Rocky Creek Falls area, just east of Warwick was surveyed and gazetted as a Reserve for Recreation Purposes as early as 1892. This small 64ha area was given national park status in 1945.

Much of the area now contained within Main Range National Park was heavily logged during the early 1900s. Timber getters soon felled almost all the red cedar and then began harvesting hoop pine, carabeen, tulip oak, purple laurel and pigeon berry. Logging was carried out in the open forest and rainforest of Mt Mistake

until the 1960s. The remains of an old timber jinker, a winch and old logging chutes lie in the state forest, just outside the national park boundary.

In the early 1930s, Jack and Boyd Walton sold their assets to fund a search for gold after being deceived with samples of 'fools gold'. They spent several years digging fruitlessly near the top of Mt Cordeaux before the fraud was exposed and the mine was abandoned.

Cunningham's Gap was declared a national park in 1909. A dirt road through the Gap was completed in 1927, giving better access between Brisbane and the areas west of the Dividing Range. This road was sealed in the 1940s and is now part of the Cunningham Highway. The walking tracks were constructed between the late 1930s and the 1950s.

Mt Superbus, in the southern section of the park, was the site of a tragic air crash in 1955. A Lincoln bomber, flying from Townsville to Brisbane with a sick baby on board, strayed off course in bad weather and crashed 50m below the summit, killing all on board. Remnants of the plane remain on and around the mountain.



Early settlers to the Queen Mary Falls area, on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, came in search of cedar. Much of this section of the Condamine Valley has since been cleared for cattle, but the forest is still intact along many of the high ridges. A 78ha park was originally proclaimed to protect the falls, the gorge below the falls and sections of Spring Creek above and below the falls. An area known as Blackfellow Falls, 5kms north of Queen Mary Falls, is also protected under the umbrella of Main Range National Park.

Main Range National Park, which was declared part of the Central Eastern Australian Rainforest Reserves of Australia in December 1994, now known as the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, is a very popular bushwalking destination.

FEATURES

Main Range consists of an almost unbroken line of peaks, ridges and escarpments following the edge of the Scenic Rim in a north-south direction. Many of the peaks are over 1,000m, with Mt Superbus, the highest in South Queensland at 1,375m. A spur leading to the 940m Mt Mistake, leaves the Great Dividing Range north-west of the northern end of the Ramparts. Early explorers mistakenly thought this area was part of the Great Dividing Range, hence the name, Mt Mistake.

The eastern escarpment of Main Range National Park is extremely steep. There are a succession of ridges and valleys leading to the crest, from the west.

Water erosion formed many of the deep gorges in the Queen Mary and Blackfellow Falls areas of the Park. Water has eroded layers of basalt and trachyte from the Main Range, leaving

deep gorges, steep escarpments and long waterfalls.

At Queen Mary Falls, the headwaters of Spring Creek tumble 40m over a gorge before flowing west to join the Condamine River. The Condamine becomes the Balonne, eventually flowing into the Darling and Murray, before reaching the sea near Adelaide, a distance of over 3,000kms. This is Australia's most extensive river system.

North of Queen Mary Falls, Blackfellow Creek tumbles 45m and then 60m into a gorge to form Blackfellow Falls.

Rocky Creek, a tributary of Emu Creek drops 120m and then 16m to form another twin drop waterfall in the area that was originally Rocky Creek National Park. Hoop pine rainforest grows on the steep gullies and in the gorges of Rocky Creek.

Vegetation types in the eastern section of Main Range National Park include rainforest in moist, sheltered areas, with open eucalypt forest on the exposed drier slopes. Mountain heath vegetation grows along the cliff-lines and rocky outcrops and brush box trees line the creeks. The giant spear lily, a restricted plant species can be seen in the park, especially on the Mt Cordeaux walk. The lily produces vivid scarlet blooms on spikes up to 4m tall. The peak time to enjoy the flowering spear lily is mid-September to mid-October.

Lantana and wild raspberry have encroached upon many of the old logging tracks. At Queen Mary Falls, mist creates an ideal atmosphere for tree ferns, bracken ferns and vines, with staghorns and orchids flourishing on the trees and rocky areas of the gorge. Forest red gums, Sydney blue gums, silky oaks and hoop pines

are also prevalent. As you leave the rainforest areas near the falls, open eucalypt forest is predominant. The canopy consists of forest red gums, brush box, stringybarks, wattles and kurrajongs, finally giving way to shrubby undergrowth.

The area around Mt Mistake is the most northerly habitat of the rarely seen Albert's lyrebird - listen for its mimicking call. Also difficult to spot are red-tailed black cockatoos, eastern bristlebirds and black-breasted button-quails that live around Cunningham's Gap. Yellow-tailed black cockatoos and glossy black cockatoos, along with bellbirds, satin bowerbirds and crimson rosellas are much easier to spot around Cunningham's Gap.

A small population of koalas inhabit the Mt Matheson region. Brush-tailed rock wallabies can be encountered during the day, but are hard to spot, taking cover in the tall grasses of the Mt Cordeaux area. Nocturnal greater gliders and brushtail possums are best seen with a spotlight as they feed at night. Large goannas are commonly seen around Spicer's Gap camp ground.

Platypus live in the area below Queen Mary Falls and may occasionally be spotted with a torch after dark. Other animals likely to be seen include ringtail and brushtail possums, gliders, quolls, wallabies, pademelons, bandicoots, native rats and marsupial mice. Red spiny crayfish also inhabit the creek below the falls. It would be quite hard to spot the brush-tailed rock wallaby, even though it does live around the steep gorges, as this shy creature sleeps throughout the day and is one of the rarer animals of the park.

Banner: Upon Mt Mitchell. **Inset:** Grass trees on Mt Mitchell. **PHOTOS:** ANN INGHAM

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Hastings River mouse (*Pseudomys oralis*)

Jeannie Rice
National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) staff



The Hastings River mouse is listed as endangered in NSW (*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*), vulnerable in Queensland (*Nature Conservation Act 1992*), and endangered nationally (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

It is a native rat-sized rodent, that could easily be confused with a native bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) that also occurs in the same habitat. An adult Hastings River mouse has a body length of 12-16cm, and weighs 80-120g. They have long soft grey-brown fur, with lighter grey-white fur underneath. The tail is similarly coloured, and is almost the same length as their body.

Distinguishing features are dark protruding eyes, with black ring circling the eye, and a rounded nose. The female Hastings River mouse has only four teats in the groin area, whereas *Rattus* species have eight or more across the chest and belly. The Hastings River mouse also lacks the strong musky smell of *Rattus* species.

Populations of the mouse have been found from Muswellbrook NSW, to Cunningham's Gap in Queensland. The majority of habitat sites are in NSW, however, the largest known populations are in Queensland, within Lamington and Main Range National Parks in particular.

The habitat of the Hastings River mouse ranges from wet or dry open forest, woodland, or rainforest margins with a dense understory of grass, heath and ferns, at elevations between 300-1250m. Being nocturnal, they shelter during the day in hollow logs, tree hollows, soil holes or rock cavities.

Their diet varies depending on the

season. It can include seeds and leaves of native grasses, insects, pollen, flowers, ferns and fungi.

Breeding is generally August to March, with individuals reaching sexual maturity at one year. Females can have up to three litters per year, with 2-3 young per litter. It is believed that the females live up to three years. Males are believed to visit several nesting sites, with a home range of around 2ha, while females tend to remain in the same area, with a smaller home range of about 1ha.

Genetic sampling has shown there are seven genetically isolated and distinct sub-populations of the Hastings River mouse. However, they are not separate sub-species.

It is estimated that there are less than 10,000 individual Hastings River mice in the wild. Each sub-population is estimated to have less than 1,000 mature individuals.

The Hastings River mouse is threatened by habitat fragmentation, degradation and destruction, predation, weed invasion, and altered fire regimes. Having isolated sub-populations, there is also a risk of inbreeding.

The *Recovery Plan for the Hastings River Mouse* (April 2005) makes recommendations to reduce threats and support the recovery of the species.

Some of the recommendations for management of known Hastings River mouse habitat include:

- Maintaining buffers with no vegetation clearing, or removal of tree hollows, hollow logs, etc.;
- Control of feral animals such as foxes, feral pigs and cats, and

control of weeds;

- Excluding grazing;
- Careful management of fire regimes, with no prescribed burns during breeding season, an interval of five to ten years or more between burns, and ensuring no more than one third of the area is burnt at any one time.

Of current concern is the proposal for cabins to be constructed in Main Range National Park, in an area surrounded by Hastings River mouse habitat. In addition, a proposed service trail will bisect Hastings River mouse habitat, potentially fragmenting the population.

Given the frailty of the Hastings River mouse population, is this a wise decision?

References

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Gainsdale Pty Ltd and Environment Assessment Branch, EPBC Referral No 2016/7847 Gainsdale Scenic Rim Trail.

Banner: Fern understory at Mt Barney (NPAQ Image library);

Inset: Hastings River mouse (Photo by Ian Gynther © The State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Heritage Protection)).

THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

Personal reflection on why our parks must be valued

Davida Allen
National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) member

In May 2017 my husband Michael Shera and I began our journey at Crosby Park in the Lockyer Valley and ended at O'Reilly's Guest House in the Lamington plateau.

We began by accessing the Little Liverpool Range, heading south to the Great Dividing Range, following this south to Wilsons Peak, turning east along the McPherson Range to finish at the Lamington plateau.

This amazing adventure consisted of walking eight to ten hours a day, and conquering some 34 peaks. It took 24 nights. It was deliberately the slowest time on modern record.

We prized beautiful and sometimes spectacular campsites: Mt Castle summit, The Ramparts north, The Ramparts south, Mt Mitchell summit, Spicer's Peak, Mt Huntley summit, Steamer Saddle, Mt Superbus summit, the campsite north of Wilsons Peak rabbit fence (on Michael's 67th birthday), north of Mt Clunie just before the rabbit fence leaves the McPherson Range south of Mt Ballow, Mt Ballow summit, two campsites



between Mt Ballow and Collins Gap, the rabbit fence east of Mt Lindsay and half way to Richmond Gap, the rabbit fence at Richmond Gap, the end of the abandoned rabbit fence just before Nungulba Peak (with all its wait-a-while *Calamus australis*), Tweed Trig, Point Lookout on the Lamington Plateau and the 'Rat-a-tat' hut region.

In deference to our predecessors we wondered how this journey could be done without GPS navigation and 1/25,000 topographic maps. We felt privileged to have ultra-light gear including two of the new generation air mattresses and gloves. We had done short walks in the earlier weeks to leave food at seven strategic locations.

After the main walk we returned to each of these sites to collect the packs we had left. We are proud to say that we left these areas in a better condition to how we found them by collecting and removing the paper, plastic and metallic litter we found along the way.

For our 24 night adventure, which featured superlative vistas, individual challenges and wonderful flora, we paid the princely sum of \$304.80 to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

The journey was unforgettable, and I am left spellbound by this stunning asset we have in south-east Queensland. As a national park with the Gondwana World Heritage Area, this land is for the community and all generations to cherish.

The Scenic Rim is our backyard: everyone's backyard, our land, your land, our property, your property. We have grown to love it, and this love



invokes a territorial instinct for us to protect it. It is this instinct that is the reason for the spectacular evolution of national parks over the past century. It is the same instinct that people fight and die for. It evokes in its host an unreasonable, irrational and selfish attitude. It is why we who love, have tried to protect our national parks from degradation or exploitation from whatever source.

It is my opinion that politicians from both major parties in Queensland were clearly devoid of this love and instinct when legislation was passed to allow financial exploitation under the guise of 'eco-tourism'. The change from protection to profit in this region will inevitably result in the erosion of the wilderness that makes the region so spectacular.

Against these odds Michael and I will continue to install our territorial instincts in our children and our eight grandchildren.

Clockwise from top: Ramparts, Main Range National Park; lily on Mt Mitchell; tree on Mt Cordeaux.

PHOTOS: DAVIDA ALLEN (TOP); ANN INGHAM (ABOVE); DAVID BALL (LEFT)

RANGER OF THE MONTH

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

Kelvin Quinn
Ranger in Charge, Bunya Mountains National Park, Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Kelvin Quinn is Ranger in Charge at Bunya Mountains National Park. His love and fascination for the environment at an early age led to a dream of one day being part of a team that looked after our special places.

How long have you worked in national parks?

I proudly started work with QPWS 31 years ago. Being a Park Ranger was (and still is) a highly-sought-after job! It took lots of determination to complete my 3-year degree and then take on various jobs, including park volunteering, before I gained a position with QPWS.

Which parks have you worked in?

I've volunteered in Lamington, Mount Barney and D'Aguilar in the south-east; and at Magnetic Island and Mount Spec (Paluma Range) in the north. As a Park Ranger, I've worked in Carnarvon Gorge, Townsville Town Common and Cape Pallarenda, Bowling Green Bay, and now Bunya Mountains. In between, I've also done short stints at Mount Moffat, Salvator Rosa, Girraween, Helidon Hills, Cania Gorge, Expedition, Barakula, Dunmore, Townsville, Ingham, Charters Towers areas and even some Victorian parks. You could say I've been around!

What has been your most memorable moment?

There are so many special moments it's hard to name just one! A peaceful sunset; climbing a mountain in the moonlight; camping with the kids and seeing fireflies; exploring deserts and rainforests; experiencing floods; being



QPWS ranger Kelvin Quinn holding a bunya cone (above).

PHOTOS: QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT (ABOVE) & YVONNE PARSONS (BANNER)

truly appreciated by visitors; sleeping under the stars; speaking with the Elders; or simply working with a team that cares and has fun along the way.

Can you describe your favourite national parks experience?

My favourite experiences are about spending time with family and friends in parks. When backpacking with my wife and (at the time) five-year-old daughter at Carnarvon Gorge, we camped at Big Bend and watched the area come alive with the changing sunlight on the cliff faces and reflections in the creek. As a family of four, we camped across the Simpson Desert with the endless night sky above. And I've had some special walks on the Barker Creek Circuit at Bunya Mountains with my son when

he was young and full of questions and wonderment.

What is the best part about working in a national park?

The beauty is all around—it's ever-changing. Sometimes quick and obvious, such as when a bunya cone comes thumping down to the ground from a great height. Sometimes the changes are slow and subtle, like the young tree that starts its long climb into the canopy to reach the sun. I enjoy sharing my knowledge with visitors to help them have their own great experiences in parks.

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

Take time to enjoy the whole journey. Don't just come for a quick look at the forest—stay to appreciate the intricate parts of it. Watch tiny spiders or insects carefully finding their way in the leaf litter; notice fungi emerging to recycle nutrients from dead timber; listen for birds or frogs calling to their mates; and breathe in the scents of damp soil or flowering plants.

What is your top tip for campers?

Have the correct equipment! Whether you enjoy roughing it, or "glamping" make sure you have a good waterproof tent or tarp (or van) and raincoat. Have suitable poles and ropes to self-support the shelter and bring chairs, a good book or wet weather games for the kids.

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

WHAT'S 25N

NPAQ activities

New Year Twilight Celebration Jindalee Boat Ramp Park

This is a pleasant park with modern facilities, in amongst shady trees and overlooking the Brisbane River.

The walk is through bushland beside the river, and the park has some features from Brisbane's early history.

The walk will be followed by nibbles, bubbly/ juice and a hearty snack. (If you have dietary requests, please contact the leaders).

For catering purposes **nominations will definitely close on Wednesday 3 January 2018.**

If you do not wish to do the walk, you are most welcome to join the group staying at the park for a chat.

Date: Sunday, 7 January 2018

Meet: 4pm at Jindalee Boat Ramp Park, near the corner of Mount Ommaney Drive and Curragundi Road, Jindalee.

Grade: Easy

Cost: \$12 per person (includes \$5 per person NPAQ fee) payable to the NPAQ office

Bring: Folding chair, water bottle, sun screen, hat, walk shoes and walking pole

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

Birding at Toorbul

Our first bird outing for 2018 will be to Toorbul.

Due to a high tide near midday, we will first meet up on Donnybrook Road. We will walk an old road off Meldale Road, view birds on Bishop's Marsh, then walk some backroads near the Toorbul roost.

We should see wader birds from late mid-morning as they are pushed up with the rising tide.

Date: Sunday, 21 January 2018

Meet: 7:30am on Donnybrook Road, Toorbul (as per directions).

Grade: Easy

Cost: \$5 per person NPAQ fee

Leader: Ian Peacock (07 3359 0318,

For more information on Activities, visit our website:
www.npaq.org.au/events

ianpeacock@hotmail.com)

Directions: Travel north on the Bruce Hwy, exit left after Caboolture. Follow the signs to Pumiceston Rd, Toorbul, Donnybrook.

After exit, turn right onto Pumicestone Rd and follow for 6.7km. Turn left into Donnybrook Rd. Travel for 260m, and park in the parking bays on right.

Bring: Binoculars, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, water, chair, morning tea and lunch (optional).

Coomera River Circuit

A picturesque on-track walk passing through rainforest and giant brush box forest. A lookout platform provides magnificent views of the 160m gorge and the Coomera Falls.

The track follows the river upstream through the rainforest, crossing the river several times allowing views of waterfalls and hopefully, lamington crays, before rejoining the Border track for the trek back to Binna Burra.

Some rock-hopping is necessary at the river crossings.

Date: Sunday, 4 February 2018

Meet: 8:15am at Binna Burra top carpark

Grade: Intermediate

(17.4km track including some rock-hopping at river crossings, will require a moderate level of fitness)

Cost: \$5 per person NPAQ fee

Leader: Frank Freeman (07 3824 3954, 0427 655 514, frank_fr@bigpond.net.au)

Directions: From Brisbane, travel down the M1 to Nerang. From Nerang follow the signs to Binna Burra. Allow 1.75 to 2 hours driving time. Carpooling is encouraged.

Bring: Hat, light jacket, rain gear (just in case), torch, whistle, 2+ litres of water, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea.

NPAQ events

NPAQ Member's Meeting

The first NPAQ member's meeting for 2018 will be held:

Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Time: 7.15pm for 7.30pm start

Venue: NPAQ Office, 10/36 Finchley St, Milton

Bequest

NPAQ was honoured to recently receive a bequest from the estate of Flora Jessamine Mary Elliott.

We thank Ms Elliott for remembering NPAQ in her will and are grateful for her contribution.

Ms Elliott's bequest will be used to further the aims and mission of the Association.

Vale

NPAQ is saddened by the recent passing of life members, Robert Kay, Marjorie Semple and Lorraine Gunn.

Our sincere condolences to their families and friends.

Robert joined NPAQ in 1964 and became a life member in 1975. After retirement to Bribie Island, he led several activities on the island.

Marjorie joined NPAQ in 1966 and became a life member in 1975. Marjorie served as an NPAQ Councillor for a number of years and significantly contributed to the Association. She was an avid botanist, and was involved with the Queensland Herbarium. She shared her considerable botanical knowledge with members on many extended and weekend camping trips.

Lorraine Gunn and her husband Alan joined NPAQ and became life members in 1967.



Office Closure

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

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

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

NPAQ advises that our office will be closed from Friday 22nd December 2017 to Monday 8th of January 2018.

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www.npaq.org.au

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