

protected



Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

state of the park 2016

why advocacy matters
bunya mountains national park
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lamington spiny crayfish
the national park experience

Welcome to the February/ March edition of **Protected**

Michelle Prior, NPAQ President

As this edition of Protected goes to press, NPAQ is eagerly awaiting the outcome of the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which if passed, will reinstate the nature as the sole goal of the NC Act (which governs the creation and management of national parks in Queensland), and undo some retrograde amendments made during the Newman term of government.

Another important issue currently in the pipeline is the opportunity to phase out sand mining on North Stradbroke Island by 2019, supported by an economic transition package. The Bill which proposes this end date also serves to respect the rights of the native title holders of North Stradbroke Island. The government has a responsibility to protect and preserve what remains of the island's remarkable natural environment and stem the tide of irreversible damage. The public debate and discussion about mining, Indigenous land rights and the environment on North Stradbroke Island has lasted many, many years. It is now time to finalise once and for all.

This edition of Protected includes the second article in our annual series of the State of the Park in Queensland. Hopefully, the changes beginning to occur will ensure positive outcomes for protected areas.

NPAQ welcomes Kirsty Leckie, our new Conservation Principal. Kirsty brings extensive experience and excellent qualifications and skills. Commencing in February, Kirsty has already become a valuable member of team of staff and volunteers.



Connect and Protect

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Images

Cover - Walking track in Bunya Mountains National Park (Yvonne Parsons).

Strip pg2 - Mountain White gum bark (*Eucalyptus dalrympleana* subsp. *heptantha*). (Paul Donatiu).

STATE OF THE PARK 2016

Michelle Prior, NPAQ President
Don Marshall, NPAQ Member

National parks protect our natural heritage – a magnificent spectrum of spectacular landscapes and unique wildlife, whilst also contributing significantly to our personal health and well-being. National parks are universally recognised as a key strategy in nature conservation and for their importance in conserving biodiversity. Queensland's national parks protect areas that are critical in preventing extinctions of some of the world's threatened mammals, birds and amphibians.

Despite this important role, in recent years national parks in Queensland came under siege from numerous quarters. However, this past year has seen several improvements in the protected area arena.

This is the second article of an annual series which explores the state of national parks in Queensland.

One Minister, Two Departments

Although national park acquisitions and national park management remain separated in different departments, the joint ministerial portfolio of the environment, national parks and the Great Barrier Reef has caused a significant reunification.

Minister Miles MP - the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef - has also

reinstated active communication with the community, including conservation organisations, underscored by a policy commitment to consultation. This improved communication and consultation has extended through to departmental staff and is a welcome relief after three years in the wilderness. As NPAQ had successfully worked with all major political parties in its 85 year history, the previous banishment was difficult to understand.

Reinstating the Primacy of the Conservation of Nature

In October 2015, amendments to the Nature Conservation Act - which governs the creation and management of national parks in Queensland - were introduced into Parliament by Minister Miles MP. The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 represents progress in the direction of restoring the primacy of nature conservation in Queensland's protected areas. The effect of the previous changes had led not only to the downgrading of nature conservation in protected areas, but to confusion of the very purpose of Queensland's national parks.

Specifically, the Bill proposes to:

1. Reinstatement of the conservation of nature as the Act's sole object.
2. Reinstatement of National Park (Scientific) and associated management principles, and Conservation Park categories.
3. Removal of the hardship grazing

provision over national parks.

4. Reinstatement of public consultation in the development of management plans for protected areas.
5. Removal of Rolling Leases for grazing in national parks from the Land Act.

Whilst the Bill has taken a very positive direction, and there remains the promise of further amendments to come, several key items are yet to be addressed:

1. The full restoration of the Cardinal Principle in the Act - "to provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent perseverance of the area's natural condition and the protection of the areas' cultural resources and values" – and hence the appropriate management of Queensland's national park estate.
2. The removal of the Special Management Area (controlled action) from the Act. The current situation allows the manipulation of national park tenure and not just detracts from the cardinal principle, but sends mixed messages, as this section can easily be interpreted as allowing development or inappropriate activities on national parks.
3. The removal of the ability to establish tourist facilities in national parks. The concept of tourism facilities (eco or otherwise) has not been fully reviewed, and the potential impacts thoroughly



investigated. Tourism facilities are incompatible with the cardinal principle of national park management. NPAQ is of the opinion that encouraging the continuation of developing tourism facilities on private land adjacent to national parks would be more cost effective and of considerably lower impact.

4. The reinstatement of several abolished protected area categories.

The Minister's speech in Parliament about the amendments to the Nature Conservation Act may provide an indication of what we may expect for the rest of this term of office.

National Parks Exceed 5%

The long awaited magical five percent mark was achieved with the gazettal of three properties (Boorara, Werewilka and Oolamon) in South West Queensland as national park. This extension to Currawinya National Park, make the park one of the largest in Queensland at 344,000 ha.

The properties were purchased by the previous LNP Government, following some hard lobbying by NPAQ for a national park acquisition fund for the 2012-2015 term of state government. However, the declarations were the first national park declaration since the previous ALP government.

Currawinya contains a variety of threatened species and arguably, some of the most diverse wetlands in

inland Australia and several threatened species including Major Mitchell's cockatoo, painted snipe, painted honeyeater and grey falcon.

Additions were made to Blackbraes National Park (14,853 ha) and several regional parks, including the dedication of Mount Blandy (358 ha). Several forest reserves were transferred to state forest.

A 586 ha expansion of Lamington National Park took the rugged World Heritage listed park a total of more than 21,000 ha.

Eleven new nature refuges were declared, bringing the total to more than 4 million ha - almost half the size of the National Park Estate in Queensland.

Whilst these acquisitions are more than welcome, additional funding for management is required to maintain the national park estate to an appropriate standard; and ensure that national parks are not vulnerable to threats from competing land uses on the grounds of inadequate management on-park.

A Challenging Situation

On 5th June 2015, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) - currently now part of the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing - began its 41st year as principal manager of all classes of national park, regional parks and forest reserves.

However, protected area management

continues to be a complex task, particularly within the context of resource and financial constraints. This is exacerbated by the sheer area of land to be managed both on-park and state-wide; natural pressures such as damage from cyclonic activity and wildfires; and external circumstances such as fewer windows of opportunity for controlled burns to reduce fuel loads due to a changing climate.

Grazing

Cattle grazing is inconsistent with the management principles of a national park. The previous LNP Government introduced provisions for rolling term leases that allow leases for agriculture, grazing or pastoral purposes within nature conservation areas and specified national parks, to be extended beyond their expiry date. Many of the current leases and permits were issued before the land became national park and recognised grazing as a pre-existing interest.

None of these leases have been converted to rolling leases on national parks and several leases have been allowed to expire during the course of last year. This issue is somewhat complex, relating back to changes in land tenure (eg from state forest to national park) on property where termed leases (ie leases that were due to expire at a specified time) existed.

As mentioned previously, Parliament will be debating the proposed amendments to the Nature



Conservation Act, including the proposal to revert these rolling term leases back to term leases.

The imminent expiration of some large grazing leases over parts of what are now national park will test the current Queensland Government's resolve on this subject.

The Question Remains

Protected areas in several other jurisdictions, not just in Queensland, have all experienced the snowball effect of the unravelling of environmental protections in recent times. In particular, they have

increasingly come under threat from the governments that created them in the first place.

After the problems facing the environment were recognised several decades ago, the focus shifted to finding solutions. In the arena of nature conservation, national parks and other protected areas were regarded as key solutions to preserving our truly wonderful biodiversity and unique landscapes. Then recent events took over, reigniting the need for 'selling' the value of national parks all over again. Why was this so?

Reclaimed from the past as a legacy for the future, the present interposed with short-term requests. Whilst recognizing the diversity of opinions and values in society is essential, it is also essential to recognize that the true value of national parks, and to consider that once conservation values are lost, they rarely can be re-gained.

Images

Banner pg 3, forest trail (Ryan Pockran)

Banner pgs 4-5 - view across the valley (Ryan Pockran)

Image below - Bunya Mountains NP (Y Parsons)





WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS

Kirsty Leckie, Conservation Principal

In this issue of *Protected*, recent examples of NPAQ's advocacy efforts are presented including: seeking to restore the 2019 end-date for mining on North Stradbroke Island and highlighting environmental issues associated with constructing and maintaining barrier fences in Queensland.

North Stradbroke Island

Sand mining has occurred at North Stradbroke since 1949. After a series of legislative changes, the Queensland Government is committed to phasing out sand mining on North Stradbroke Island by 2019. As part of this process, the Queensland Government invited submissions from all interested parties on the issue.

NPAQ has been active in advocating for the government to substantively phase out sand mining on North Stradbroke Island (NSI) by 2019 through the *NSIPSOAA Bill 2015*. This Bill proposes to repeal the amendments to the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011* made by the *NSIPSAA Amendment Act 2013* that extended mining on NSI to 2035.

NPAQ asserts that the environs of the island and its rich natural assets should be protected and managed to conserve, rather than to exploit and damage. Sand mining, like most if not all forms of mining, is subject to hazardous outcomes. Below is

a summary of NPAQ's submission. The full text is available, along with other submission via the Finance and Administration Committee's website.

Environmental Rationale

North Stradbroke Island (NSI) is the second largest sand island in the world, consisting of massive deposits of sand overlying bedrock. The majority of rainfall passes quickly below the surface of sand, with groundwater percolating through the highly permeable sand and soil strata to form a massive freshwater mound or unconfined aquifer.

Unique geological processes formed an island of high ecological and mineral value. Whilst NSI's ecology is similar to the World Heritage Fraser Island, its landscape is still being dramatically altered by sand mining. Mined land cannot be restored to its natural state, partly because of the destruction of complex ancient sand dunes and the associated water flows or hydrology. NSI is the only sand island in South East Queensland where sand mining still occurs.

Cultural Rationale

The passage of this Bill (*NSIPSOAA*) will also serve to respect the rights of the Quandamooka people. Following the passing of the *NSIPSAA Amendment Act 2013*, which ignored native title agreements by extending mining to 2035, the traditional owners were forced to take action in the High Court to protect

their rights and interests.

Summary

NPAQ does not support the *NSIPS(RML)A Bill 2015* introduced by the Katter Party that seeks to extend sand mining on North Stradbroke Island to 2024, with the leases expiring on 2029.

In parallel, NPAQ welcomed the \$28 million economic package (which includes \$5 million for assisting workers affected by the transition) and acknowledged the State Government's willingness to involve the native title holders, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation.

NPAQ believes the Government has a responsibility to protect and preserve Stradbroke's remarkable natural environment before the damage becomes irreversible. This view was reflected in the submission presented and in NPAQ's participation in the recent Public Hearing.

Barrier fences

The management of wild dogs and rabbits in Queensland is a complex issue with economic and environmental repercussions.

NPAQ welcomed the recent inquiry (led by Queensland Parliament's Agriculture and Environment Committee) into barrier fences in Queensland. In particular, it was reassuring to see the inclusion of two issues: the consideration of unintended impacts on native species



and the effectiveness of barrier fences in managing introduced species.

In preparing a submission, NPAQ focussed on the following items from the Terms of Reference:

- The effectiveness of barrier fences at protecting stock and crops from wild dogs, rabbits and other introduced species
- The unintended impacts of barrier fences on native species
- Whether barrier fences should be expanded to other areas of the State to protect stock.

For the full details of NPAQ's submission, including discussion of these items please refer to the Queensland Parliament's Agriculture and Environment Committee's website. In the interest of brevity, this article focuses on the issue of effectiveness.

Effectiveness of barrier fences

Barrier fences can also serve to act as a barrier preventing the incursion of feral species into protected areas. In 2013, the Senate enquiry into the ***Effectiveness of Threatened Species and Ecological Communities Protection in Australia*** recognised that predator-proof sanctuaries can assist in the recovery of threatened species. The inquiry recommended to the Federal Government that further consideration be given to the 'greater use of exclusion fences' and other forms of 'mainland island sanctuaries' for

threatened species (Senate Enquiry, 2013).

From a conservation perspective, adequately maintained fences can provide secure habitat for native species on the proviso that all feral species (including foxes, rabbits, etc) have been removed. It should be noted that that in parallel, there may also be unintended adverse impacts on native species.

Fences should be designed to prevent in the ingress of feral species whilst not inhibiting the movement of native species. This may require additional research and monitoring in the design phase in order to ascertain native species present, and making accommodations accordingly.

Once constructed, fences require maintenance and monitoring. This can prove costly and time-consuming. Barrier fences are subjected to weathering and possible damage from native and introduced species. Animals may become entangled, burrow under or short out electrical fences. All of these incidents necessitate repair, incurring additional expense.

Exclusion fencing is used at part of the management program on Currawinya National Park in Queensland for the greater bilby. Maintenance of the fence (constructed in 2001) has proven difficult. Inadequate maintenance, flood damage (2011 and 2012) and pressure from feral species have

resulted in decimation of the bilby population in the area.

Barrier fences should not be considered in isolation of other control methods for feral species. Instead, barrier fences should be viewed as complementary to other control methods (shooting, trapping, etc). An integrated approach which considers all of the options available including barrier fencing is preferable.

In summary, if installed and maintained properly barrier fences can benefit native species and serve to improve the conservation outcomes of a target area. Fences are most effective when designed to prevent ingress by feral species, whilst not hindering the movement or foraging of native species. Other appropriate control methods should be utilised in conjunction with barrier fences to maximise the conservation outcomes.

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Image

Rainforest creek (Ryan Pockran).

PARK IN FOCUS

Bunya Mountains National Park

Denis McMullen, NPAQ Member

The Bunya Mountains National Park is an extremely beautiful piece of Queensland.

The drive from the plains takes you towards the top of the mountain and out onto a road weaving through the forest. The road leads to what is rapidly becoming the small town of Dandabar, seemingly popping up across the summit 'bald'. The 'balds' are areas which were kept clear of growth by a pattern of burns by the Indigenous owners. This practice has been continued by the QWPS staff. These areas are the preferred home of the red-necked wallabies, which gracefully adopt photogenic poses for tourist's cameras.

A journey to the interior of the park provides visitors with glimpses of the beauty and wonder of the forest. Large sections of the park have rainforest with hoop pines, with Bunya pines providing the emergent cover. Other lower areas of the park contain eucalypt woodland.

The Bunya Mountains, based on granite pushed up by ancient shield volcano, are a remnant from the Cretaceous period. Erosion of the granite has left the mountain with a deposit of dark fertile soil which supports a wealth of foliage.

Walking down to Paradise Falls takes visitors through a pale green forest into the gully. This is a most impressive and moving place – perhaps due to the age-old environment, or perhaps the colour and silence of the surrounding forest, with the creek flowing gently past your feet. Regardless, it may readily evoke an atavistic response. The Westcott to Cherry Plains track walk along the escarpment provides many lookout points with extensive views, though the condition of the track sometimes made for careful walking. Feral pigs have left their mark on some tracks with the surface disturbed. There is also significant evidence of prickly pear.

As you move into the rainforest, you

may encounter the 'crying baby' calls of the elusive green catbirds, the coordinated calls of the whip birds and tantalising glimpses of many other birds.

Whilst you may not see a Great Barred Frog when visiting the park, if you listen carefully you may hear one as you walk, or see their tadpoles in the streams. Spotlighting can provide an opportunity to see possums and gliders.

The Bunya Mountain National Park, of 9,112 hectares, was gazetted in 1908, making it the second National Park in Queensland after Witches Falls (now part of Tamborine National Park). However, the mountains have long been a gathering place and a welcoming refuge – offering cool mountain respite from the heat below and the bounty of the bunya nut harvest.

Indigenous tribes from as far away as the Clarence River and the Maranoa joined the traditional owners of this



land, the Wakka Wakka, Jarowair, Djaku-nde and Barrungam, every few years for the bunya harvest. People walked, apparently unhindered, through agreed pathways across tribal territories, from what is now Charleville, Dubbo, Bundaberg and Grafton to come together to feast on the bunya nuts, to conduct ceremonies, trade, resolve grievances, make alliances, arrange marriages and engage in competitions of skill. For the period of the bunya harvest, the wonders and delights of the mountains were thrown open to many.

These gatherings followed the cycle of the ripening of the bunya cones, which takes from two to three years in favourable seasons. When the time was right, messages of invitation were sent, by message stick or by smoke signals from Coyne's Lookout at the top of Mount Kiangarow, read and repeated over long distances by the intervening tribes.

Evidence from contemporary observers such as Ludwig Leichhardt, who wrote of his 1844 expedition to the Mountains, indicates that the timing of the festivals could vary between two and seven years, depending on the weather at the time of pollination, and drought or heavy rainfall conditions during the 18 months of cone development.

The Bunya is a relic of vegetation from 200 million years ago, in the Cretaceous period when araucarias were a major part of Australia's flora.

As the climate dried, the araucarias retreated to higher ground and now are found only on the ridges of the Bunyas, Blackall Ranges and a small enclave in the wet tropics of Northern Queensland.

Bunya trees are impressive, and unlike the hoop pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) which are also prolific in the area, they have dome shaped crowns, rather than the pointed peak of the hoop pines. The Bunya trunk is clear of branches for the lower 5-10 metres. There are scars on the lower area. The cause of these scars are subject to question; whether they are naturally occurring remnants of shed lower branches, or indications of climbing toe holds made by people climbing the tree to access the cones. There are photos of traditional owners climbing in this manner.

Bunya cones are massive, growing as big as a basketball and weighing up to 10 kilograms. Each cone could yield as many as 60 - 100 nuts, which could be eaten raw as soft, young nuts; more mature nuts could be roasted or crushed to a paste and baked in the hot coals into a nutritious cake. The nuts are very low in protein but contain 66% starches. The cones when ripe can fall from the trees, presenting a considerable hazard, given their weight. Many of the bunya trees can grow to as high as 30 to 45 metres.

The Bunya 'Bonyi', 'Bunyi', Bonye' 'Bunya Bunya' in different indigenous

languages, was called the 'Bunya Pine' by settlers. Whilst the trees bear cones, they are not from the Pinus family. The botanical name is *Araucaria bidwillii* named after the botanist who classified it. The bunyas were originally caught up in the forestry industry particularly after the building of the "Great Bunya Sawmill" in 1883, when the demise of the red cedar led to the bunya trees being harvested for timber. The spread of timber harvesting on the mountains led to a demand for protection. After 20 years of lobbying, the area was first proposed as national park in 1903.

Other notable vegetation includes the tallest branched grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea glauca*) which are up to several hundred years old and the narrow-leaved bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupistris*) which dominate drier forest on lower slopes. Orchids are also plentiful in the park.

The many natural assets and cultural heritage of the Bunya Mountains make it an important part of Queensland's park estate. QPWS management of the park has been successful in providing visitors a mixture of access to the original forests and the beauty and grandeur that can be found there.

Images

Bunya Mountains NP (Yvonne Parsons).

FEATURED WALK

Warrie Circuit Walk Springbrook National Park

David Vial and Tony Parsons NPAQ Leaders

The Warrie Circuit walk, within the Springbrook National Park, is one of the most popular day walks in South East Queensland.

Approximately 100 km south of Brisbane, the main access to the park is via the Springbrook – Gold Coast Road at the Mudgeeraba turnoff along the Pacific Motorway. The moderate grade 17 km walk features cliff faces, waterfalls, creeks and spectacular views nestled within a predominantly sub-tropical rainforest.

The circuit track is well graded and suitable for moderately fit walkers and family groups comprised of older children or teenagers. The length of the walk is probably not suitable for younger children unless you are prepared to carry them most of the way. If this is the case, the shorter

4km Twin Falls circuit may be worth considering.

Springbrook National Park's earliest human inhabitants were the Yugambeh people. They see the area as part of their sacred and spiritual link to country and as a place to be nurtured and respected; a place for ceremonies. The plateau's formidable terrain was surveyed in the 1860s with the help of the Yugambeh people, with many landmarks, trees and animals being named using Aboriginal words from the Yugambeh language.

The Warrie track is named with the Yugambeh word for 'rushing water'.

The arrival of Europeans changed the Yugambeh people's lifestyle forever. Yugambeh land was divided for settlement, restricting waterhole access and making hunting and food gathering difficult. Many Yugambeh people were moved to reserves. Some stayed, found occasional work and adapted slowly to a new lifestyle.

The park forms part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage area and represents a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history. It contains very important natural habitats for conserving biological diversity. The park is also a part of the Scenic Rim Important Bird Area acknowledged by Bird Life International, as it plays a crucial role in the protection of numerous types of endangered birds.

The Warrie Circuit is the longest and most interesting track on the plateau.

If you start at the Canyon Lookout and head south, you will follow the top of the cliff face, experiencing open eucalypt forest and heath with stunning views, and glimpses of waterfalls and the canyon rainforest area. The crescent of perpendicular cliffs extending from Springbrook to the Lamington plateau and the Tweed Range above the Mount Warning vent valley, is the largest and best example of its geological age in the world.

The landscape of the Springbrook plateau is a remnant of the northern side of a once huge shield volcano that dominated the region about 23 million years ago. The volcano was built up of highly mobile basalt lavas, and although centred on Mount Warning, was about 80km across. At about 2,000 m high, the volcano poured lava over 6,000 km² (north





to Tamborine, south past Lismore to Coraki and west to Kyogle).

Just past the top of Twin Falls, a break in the cliff face enables the track to descend into the warm temperate rainforest within the canyon, characterised by a closed canopy, vines, palms, epiphytes and large trees such as strangler figs. The pink-trunked brush box *Lophostemon confertus* and the mottled, lichen-encrusted coachwood *Ceratopetalum apetalum* characterise this area.

The slender Brown Cuckoo-Dove is often heard calling a plaintive 'oop oop' throughout the park. The elusive Albert's Lyrebird is another species that is more often heard than seen. The raucous and distinctively plumed Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo is often heard near the cliff tops within the area.

Smaller bush birds that may be seen along the tracks include the Eastern Yellow Robin, Rufous Fantail and the dainty Superb Fairy-wren. Three species of rosella are present in the park. The most striking is the descriptively named Crimson Rosella with its plumage of scarlet and royal blue. The black and gold Regent Bowerbird and the larger midnight-blue Satin Bowerbird represent the bowerbird family.

Springbrook's rainforests and rocky outcrops provide the ideal habitat for the vulnerable Spotted-tailed Quoll, mainland Australia's largest native marsupial carnivore.

The Warrie Circuit descends further into the canyon area crossing a number of streams until it reaches its lowest point, near the junction of a number of creeks, where it starts to ascend through a number of switch backs and eventually up a break in the cliff face to its starting point at Canyon Lookout.

For those who like to experience spectacular views, walk behind waterfalls, be in rainforest, see spectacular cliff faces and walk 17 km, this is a walk to put on your bucket list or enjoy time and time again.

Images

Banner (left) Purlingbrook falls (P Donatui), Banner (right) creek in Warrie Circuit (D Vial)

Other images: taken from the Warrie Circuit (David Vial)

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





WILDLIFE FEATURE

Lamington spiny crayfish

Daniel Kelly, Contributor

You are walking through a rain sodden Lamington National Park and suddenly you hear a perspicuous hiss. You reel back in fright, thinking you are about to step on a snake but are relieved to see our spiny blue friend has reared up in the middle of the path in a threat display, showing you how big her cheliped (claws) are.

Have no fear, although she may look highly weaponed with spines and claws, she isn't looking for trouble. As your initial feeling of fright passes, you notice the beautiful bright blue with which nature has painted this audacious invertebrate's carapace. Furthermore, you can't help but be enamoured by its adorable white 'hat' and 'gloves' covering the head, claws and walking legs. Bright red showing from between the gaps in her carapace along with the prominent spines ridging her cheliped, walking legs and abdomen, in addition to her other features, makes her a unique and beautiful animal.

Endemic to Australia, the Lamington Spiny Crayfish only occurs at altitudes above 300m in the mountainous rainforest and wet sclerophyll areas of south east Queensland and North East New South Wales. The population of the Lamington Spiny Crayfish ranges from Tambourine southwards to Springbrook National Park then westwards through Lamington National Park along the McPherson

range. Additionally, there are pocket populations along the Tweed, Richmond and Yabbra Ranges as well as on Mount Warning.

At 100-130 millimetres long, they are considered to be a large crayfish and are generally only active during the warmer parts of the year when there is more rain. Although the true biological reason for this is unknown, this could potentially be explained by higher temperatures that increase metabolic rate or more moisture outside of their river homes due to the increased rainfall in the warmer parts of the year. When they are active they fill the role of a forest detritivore, cleaning up and eating the leaf litter that falls into streams and onto the surrounding ground.

When it isn't raining, they largely reside in undisturbed, high-flow streams with the surrounding riparian vegetation intact, combining to provide a highly oxygenated and shaded environment. They will commonly be found within rock crevices or burrowed under logs on the stream banks.

Different areas of the Lamington Spiny Crayfish's range yield different colours and spine anatomy. A chance meeting with an individual in Northern New South Wales would have you describing a red and white animal. A similar scenario in the western areas of the McPherson Range would have you describing an animal that is green-brown with less white colour.

Although locally abundant the

population of Lamington Spiny Crayfish are quite fragmented due to its ecological requirements. Coupled with the extremely long time it takes for the species to reach sexual maturity (4-5 years for females), significant events such as bush fire, habitat destruction, fishing on private property or poor forest management practices could quite easily endanger this species further. Cane toads could also be a potential threat to the Lamington Spiny Crayfish as well as other introduced pest species that are known to predate on crayfish like cats, foxes, goats and pigs. Although there is no species specific protection for the Lamington Spiny Crayfish, its range is largely covered by National Parks, shielding the species from some adversity. The Lamington Spiny Crayfish fills a vital role in maintaining the health of our pristine rainforest riparian systems and it would be disastrous to lose such a magnificent species considering the potential consequences.

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Banner - Lamington spiny crayfish (Ryan Pockran)

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THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

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

Kirsty Leckie, NPAQ Conservation Principal

My experience of national parks began at a very young age. One of my earliest memories is coming face to face with an enormous red kangaroo when I was about four years old. I was in awe of this majestic creature, a towering pillar of muscle and strength. I don't remember being scared. On the contrary, I remember feeling excited and perhaps even reverent. Growing up in Far North Queensland meant my childhood was filled with these moments. Experiencing first-hand, the majesty of wild places and the creatures who lived there. These early experiences piqued my curiosity about the natural environment. Over time my curiosity grew to a deeper connection and ultimately influenced my choice of vocation. To this day, I remain curious about the environment and believe that natural places are the best spot to unplug, refresh and recharge.

Today, with the advent of smart phones, iPads, the internet and social media we are bombarded by information. The pressure to work, consume and interact with others can seem exhausting at times. We are surrounded by others striving to do the same, all the while searching for a sense of belonging. In 2010, psychologists from Washington University recommended 'unplugging' from technology for your wellbeing. According to their research, we need to take a break from this information overload to allow our creativity to thrive and to reconnect with the world around us.

Nowadays so much of what we do seems to sap our energy. It seems as though there is little we can do to recharge our energy and spirit. We are in such a rush to get everything done. For me, one of the quickest ways to recharge is to go for a walk in the bush. The wilder the place, the better. We are blessed in Queensland to have a litany of options right on our doorstep. From the rainforests of the far north to the beautiful beaches along our coastline. I feel at times that the hardest decision is choosing where to go!

Camping is a great way to take this idea even further. There was an interesting study undertaken by Harvard University a few years ago, looking at the impact of electronic devices on our sleep patterns. To overcome adverse effects all one had to do was go camping (and leave the iPad at home). Leave the electronic devices at home, and rise with the sun instead. No iPads or smartphones. Just trees, camp lights and time outdoors. Sounds simple doesn't it?

Another enormous benefit I gain from spending time in our wonderful national parks and wild places is perspective. Getting away from the everyday and visiting a natural place provides a greater sense of perspective on life. Problems fade and my thoughts become clearer as I spend time outdoors. I can breathe fresh air, walk through a tunnel of trees or maybe taking a swim under a waterfall. All these things are possible in our wonderful parks.

Now as I encourage my own children to connect with nature, I am finding new reasons to love our parks. National Parks provide our communities with so many benefits. Clean air, clean water, protecting our native species and heritage. All the while also providing a neat 'reset' button for our psyche and wellbeing. The next challenge is to ensure our national parks are protected for future generations. In parallel we need to encourage all children to explore, connect and ultimately value our national parks as national treasures.



WHAT'S 25 IN

NPAQ Activities

Vegetation Management Group

Saturday 19 March 2016

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

Grading: various

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

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

Birding - Wynnum North Boardwalk

Sunday 20 March 2016

Location: Wynnum North Boardwalk

Grading: Easy

Leader: Jocelyn Dixon (07 3378 8486)

Fee: \$5 (members) \$10 (non-members).

Join with us to view the water and bush birds of this area.

A track from Wynnum North Road leads to a bird hide for viewing a diverse mix of waders. From there we will take a short walk to the Mangrove Boardwalk.

Easter Camp

Friday 25th to Monday 28th March 2016

Private property adjacent to Girraween National Park

Grading: Easy to Hard

Leader: Ian Peacock

The campsite is on flat private property, with easy access for tents caravans and campers. Camping facilities will be basic. Non-potable creek water should be available and can be used for showering etc. Pit toilets will be provided. Evening Happy Hours are planned and a night time camp fire provided.

Bring all your camping requirements, including drinking water.

Arrive from noon Thursday 24th and depart before 10am Tuesday 29th.

More details will be supplied after nominating.

Upcoming Activities Vale

Birding - Raven Street Reserve

Sunday 17 April 2016

Raven Street Reserve, Chermside Hills

Lesley Joyce

Raven Street Reserve is home to the Downfall Creek Bushland Centre. There is a good network of tracks along Little Cabbage Tree Creek and Downfall Creek, as well as a connecting bridge to Milne Hill Reserve.

Please note - this is not our normal monthly birdwatching Sunday, due to the Anzac Day long weekend.

May Long Weekend Camp

Saturday 30th April to Monday 2nd May 2016

Border Ranges National Park

Tony Parsons

Join us for the long weekend in the iconic Border Ranges National Park, camping at Sheep Station Creek campground.

Spend the days exploring the national park, and evenings around the campfire.

We will have the chance to view Mt Warning from the Pinnacle at sunrise and sunset.

Bring your family and stay for the weekend or come down for a day. It will be enjoyable.

Extended Activity - Central West Qld National Parks

Saturday 27th August to Sunday 4th September 2016

Wendy Bell (ph 07 3300 2473)

Exciting opportunity to visit and explore at least six National Parks in the comfort of a 4WD coach and be accommodated, rather than camping.

Basic cost for the tour is \$3400 per person. Total cost includes all transport, all meals, and activity fees.

Nominations with \$200 per person deposit required now.

For any queries and a detailed itinerary, please contact Wendy Bell.

NPAQ Events

Special Evening with QPWS

Wednesday 20 April 2016

Location: Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens Auditorium at **7.30pm**



Our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the members below who have recently passed away:

Dorothy McNeill
Sid Curtis
Roland & Margaret Lavers
Phillip Mott
George Winter

Our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the well known Girraween conservation champion and NPAQ life member Bill Goebel, who passed away on 2nd December 2015 at age 93.

Many of our older members from the 1940's onwards will fondly recall their trips to Girraween were met and led by Bill, who enriched the experience with his extensive local knowledge. Even as recently as 2011 newer members may have encountered Bill when being involved with Wombat surveys, National Park Day celebrations or other Girraween projects.

As per his wishes, on Friday 11th December 2015, Bill returned home to the Girraween landscape forever in a private dedication ceremony.

NPAQ Annual Raffle

Buy a raffle ticket to have your chance to win some great prizes in this year's NPAQ Raffle.

There's nearly \$10,000 worth of prizes to be won in this year's Annual Raffle and tickets are just \$5 each, \$10 for 3, or \$30 for a book of 15.

1st Prize is a spectacular four day, all-inclusive, guided walk experience exploring stunning mountains, escarpments, forests and ancient volcanic plateaus of one of Australia's most remarkable regions. The Scenic Rim Trail package is valued at \$4,600.

There are 18 prizes in total to be won. Including magazine subscriptions, tickets to the zoo, accommodation, vouchers, camping and outdoor equipment.

NPAQ would like to thank all the sponsors of the Annual Raffle.
www.npaq.org.au/annualraffle

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

www.npaq.org.au/events

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Letters to the Editor

I refer to the article titled **"Horse Riding – Should It Occur In National Parks?"**, written by Neil Douglas and published in the December 2015-January 2016 edition of the NPAQ "Protected" magazine.

QORF welcomes the publication of Mr Douglas's article by NPAQ.

The recognition of differences between the situations in New South Wales and Queensland is an important point in the article. Of particular note is the recognition that the wide-scale conversion of state forest in south east Queensland to national parks has caused a significant reduction in opportunities to engage in horse riding in more natural settings, and that consideration of reintroduction of horse riding could be considered on a case by case basis, subject to conditions such as those in the QPWS strategy document.

The final sentence of the article signals a mature approach to this issue: **"A degree of responsible self-regulation encouraged by partnering between park staff and equestrian organisations seems a desirable way to proceed."** QORF concurs with this sentiment.

QORF strongly believes that recreation is not the antithesis of conservation. QORF's position is that appropriate nature-based recreation creates advocates for the continued protection of natural areas, while at the same time allowing people to obtain the wide array of benefits associated with connection to nature.

Outdoor recreation can be used to help our communities place a higher value on conservation of nature. QORF notes that NPAQ offers bushwalks, kayaking, camping trips and other recreational activities within protected areas. We applaud NPAQ for the development of your "Getting Kids in National Parks Guide" and your south east Queensland specific guide. QORF has been pleased to promote those resources through our channels and through our Nature Play QLD programme.

QORF looks forward to working with NPAQ in the future to facilitate both conservation and recreation outcomes in protected areas throughout Queensland. I would be pleased for NPAQ to publish this letter in the next issues of "Protected" as a response to Mr Douglas's article.

Yours sincerely,
Dom Courtney, QORF Executive Officer
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I write on behalf of the Queensland Horse Trails Working Group (QHTWG), in regard to the article titled **"Horse Riding – Should It Occur In National Parks?"**, written by Neil Douglas and published in your December 2015-January 2016 edition of the NPAQ "Protected"

magazine.

The QHTWG in principle support the publication of Mr Douglas's article by NPAQ.

The QHTWG was formed in September 2013 as a voluntary representative committee of horse riders, horse riding organisations, clubs and equestrian based tourism operators across Queensland who ride in protected areas and national parks for recreation, sport and tourism.

Since its formation the QHTWG has strived to work with state and local governments, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF), conservation groups, other outdoor recreation groups and the local community for science based best practice management of responsible horse riding in protected areas.

We appreciate Neil Douglas's recognition of our existence in his article and his references to the state government sponsored scientific study in to the impacts of horse-riding in SE Queensland which has now been going for more than 6 years of its proposed 20 year span. It is important to note that findings released after 5 years of the study indicated that when horse riding is conducted on marked trails and road surfaces that the impacts in protected areas are negligible.

We also appreciate Neil Douglas's acknowledgement that under previous state governments a large proportion of state forests were converted to national parks which suddenly, and in our view very unfairly, excluded horse riders from trails they had previously enjoyed riding without any appreciable negative impact for many decades. The QHTWG working together with QORF actively seeks collaboration with all stakeholders involved with conservation and recreation in protected areas and national parks so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of the nature-based experiences in an environmentally responsible way respecting the rights of others. With this approach we have seen some spectacularly successful outcomes working government and then with the QPWS and other community groups at a local level.

Neil Douglas hits it on the head when he concludes in his article that "A degree of responsible self-regulation encouraged by partnering between park staff and equestrian organisations seems a desirable way to proceed."

Together with QORF the QHTWG look forward to working with NPAQ in the future to ensure the best outcomes for all lovers and users of natural areas in Queensland. We would appreciate it greatly if NPAQ would publish this letter in your next issue of Protected Magazine.

Yours sincerely,
Alex Watson
Chairperson, Queensland Horse Trails Working Group



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National Parks Association of Queensland