

# protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

## BARRIERS

*Reef restoration*

*20 years of Great Barrier Reef*

*Marine Park zoning*

**PLUS**

*Phil & Ned's ride for nature*

*Cycling from Tassie to the Top End*

*A barrier becomes a wall*

*Making sense of Bialoweiza's  
green border*

## ALSO FEATURED

NPAQ moments in time

Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo

Cania Gorge NP

Ranger spotlight



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# ABOUT NPAQ



## OUR PURPOSE

The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) advocates for the protection, expansion, effective management and presentation of national parks and other protected areas in Queensland.

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### IMAGES

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We welcome those from all walks of life. Get involved today.

- Celebrate our bush – come on a bushwalk or other activity.
- Get your hands dirty – participate in conservation efforts.
- Join us – become a member.
- Step up – volunteer on exciting projects.
- Donate – support our work.
- Subscribe to *Protected* and *Connected* via email.
- Connect with us – follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram or TikTok.
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- Share a bush adventure with children – download NPAQ's Kids in National Parks guide.

SUPPORT NPAQ AND HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
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Photo: Marek Piwnicki/Unsplash



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Photo: Phil Wise



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Photo: Aquanaut4/Dreamstime



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susanne Cooper*

## WELCOME TO A GLORIOUS SPRING SEASON.

As you're aware, Queensland is welcoming a newly elected government. Regardless of who is in office, the Minister for the Environment always has work to do to protect and manage our natural environment.

Environmental policies and initiatives continue to evolve on the international scene. A recent initiative that captured my attention was the proposal put forward by Pacific nations (currently Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa) for ecocide to become

a crime in the International Criminal Court, adding to the existing crimes of genocide and war crimes. So, what is ecocide? It is a crime against humanity defined as an act of unlawful or wanton environmental destruction committed in the knowledge of likely severe, widespread or long-term effects.

Of course, there is a long way to go before this is adopted – if ever. However, it indicates a growing awareness of the state of nature and how central it is to our overall health and prosperity. For me, it also triggers memories of how small acts result in ongoing progress. Queensland was the first State to complete a State of the Environment Report (SoE) in 1990. These reports are now released every three years and are considered an essential tool in assessing the condition of our natural environmental assets, the pressures affecting them, and the actions taken in response. Similarly, the 5-yearly Outlook Report for the Great Barrier Reef continues to be an important tool for documenting the persistent threats marine ecosystems face.

Often, the lack of relevant, accurate information has been a barrier to more

effective environmental management. Although the availability of information doesn't, by itself, solve the problem, it can clarify the issues, identify priorities (and thus the urgency for action), and drive community and political support for change.

This is just one example of substantive progress over the past few decades. NPAQ has adapted to many changes over nine decades and continues to do so. A current example of shifting focus is the growth of Private Protected Areas (Nature Refuges, Special Wildlife Reserves and land purchased by philanthropic organisations). All sides of politics are interested in supporting the growth of such protected areas, so NPAQ is looking at the issues and opportunities this may present for us. Interestingly, more than half a million hectares were added to PPAs in the past year – a substantial increase.

How protected areas are set aside and managed is likely to experience major change and progress over the next decade, and while there are plenty of barriers yet to be conquered, NPAQ is, as ever, ready to respond.

All the best,  
*Susanne Cooper*



ABOVE: Foreseeable, wanton acts of environmental damage may one day be considered ecocide under international law. Doberman84/Dreamstime.

# SHARE YOUR PHOTOS



## WANT TO SHARE YOUR PHOTOS OF A NATIONAL PARK OR PROTECTED AREA?

We're always looking for great snaps. Send them to [marketing@npa.org.au](mailto:marketing@npa.org.au) or connect with us on Facebook (@NPAQld) or on Instagram (@nationalparksassocld) for your chance to feature in the next edition of NPAQ's *Protected Magazine!*

To feature in our Member Reflections section, please email [marketing@npa.org.au](mailto:marketing@npa.org.au).



Above: The Great Dividing Range, photographed from Mt Mee, is a geographic barrier splitting the east coast from the inland. *Tatiana Gerus/Tatters on Flickr*



ABOVE: Glasshouse Mountains from Maleny Botanic Gardens. *Karin Cox*



ABOVE: Clouds wispy over the stark beauty of the granite country in Girraween NP. *@msmoodley on Instagram.*

# A BARRIER BECOMES A WALL

Making sense of Bialowieza's green border

*Simon Cavendish*

**I WAS DRAWN TO BIALOWIEZA IN NORTH-EASTERN POLAND IN PART FOR ITS NATURAL BEAUTY AND IN PART TO EXPLORE ITS HUMAN TURMOIL.**

Bialowieza includes Bialowieski Park Narodowy (BPN), which, at 10,518ha, preserves one of the last tracts of dense lowland coniferous forest and swamplands that once stretched across Europe. The park draws many Poles and about 10,000 visitors from neighbouring countries annually. However, this dynamic World-Heritage-listed national park is split by a testy border between Poland and Belarus. Unfortunately, the park is now embroiled in a hybrid war between nations.

In military strategy, hybrid warfare refers to a meld of

conventional, political, cyber and propaganda warfare.

Conflict in hybrid war zones is unpredictable and often flies under the radar of tourists and outsiders. While the older story of Bialowieski Park Narodowy is about the protection and management of primeval European forests over many decades, its more recent story examines how human and wildlife migration is affected by barriers. I was there to explore both stories.

## **THE 'RESERVE'**

I was first introduced to Bialowieza's challenges in late 2023. As Poland's oldest national park, it dates back, in a different form known as the 'Reserve', to 1921. It was made a national park in 1932, renamed Bialowieski Park Narodowy in

1947, and World-Heritage-listed in 1979, with listing extended into Belarus in 1992.

Against the backdrop of human displacement across Europe during much of the 20th century, this tract of lowland forest between Belarus and Poland became subject to increasing dispute between democratic Poland's membership of the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and Belarus's support for authoritarian Russia.

Since 2018, Belarus has trafficked illegal immigrants across the border into Poland. A barrier, which has changed considerably over time and now sports a military presence, was established as a wall to deter entry, but it also results in environmental issues.





SIMON CAVENDISH is a retired environmental practitioner who has been a Councillor for NPAQ since 2020. He now volunteers worldwide in many capacities, exploring how countries and regions protect nature and assisting community groups in managing nature – tasks that align with NPAQ’s advocacy for protected areas in Queensland and ongoing changes in land use.

LEFT: Fallen trees in Bialowieza Forest. Aleksander Bolbot/*Dreamstime*.  
 BELOW: Barriers can prevent Eurasian lynx and other wildlife from moving or dispersing. Andy Holmes/*Unsplash*.  
 RIGHT: Pieces of the Berlin Wall displayed in a USA museum. Michelle Loftus/*Dreamstime*.



## A GREEN BORDER

The confronting 2023 Polish movie *Zielona Granica* (or *Green Border*), directed by Agnieszka Holland, is set in Bialowieski NP, although not filmed there. *Green Border* was awarded the 2024 Best Film in Poland and is due for release in Australia on 28 November 2024. While politically sensitive in Poland, the film seems an accurate portrayal of the contentious issues of illegal migration, humanitarian aid, human trafficking, human rights, and, to some extent, social and climate change in Europe. From reading articles and listening to the BBC podcast ‘Poland’s Forest Frontier’, I learnt that this barrier hinders not only migrants but also fauna, creating environmental impacts.



*When I visited Germany in the 1970s, I witnessed on multiple occasions the corrosive effects of the Berlin Wall ... It made me wonder how Bialowieza was managing its volatile green border with such a barrier in place.*

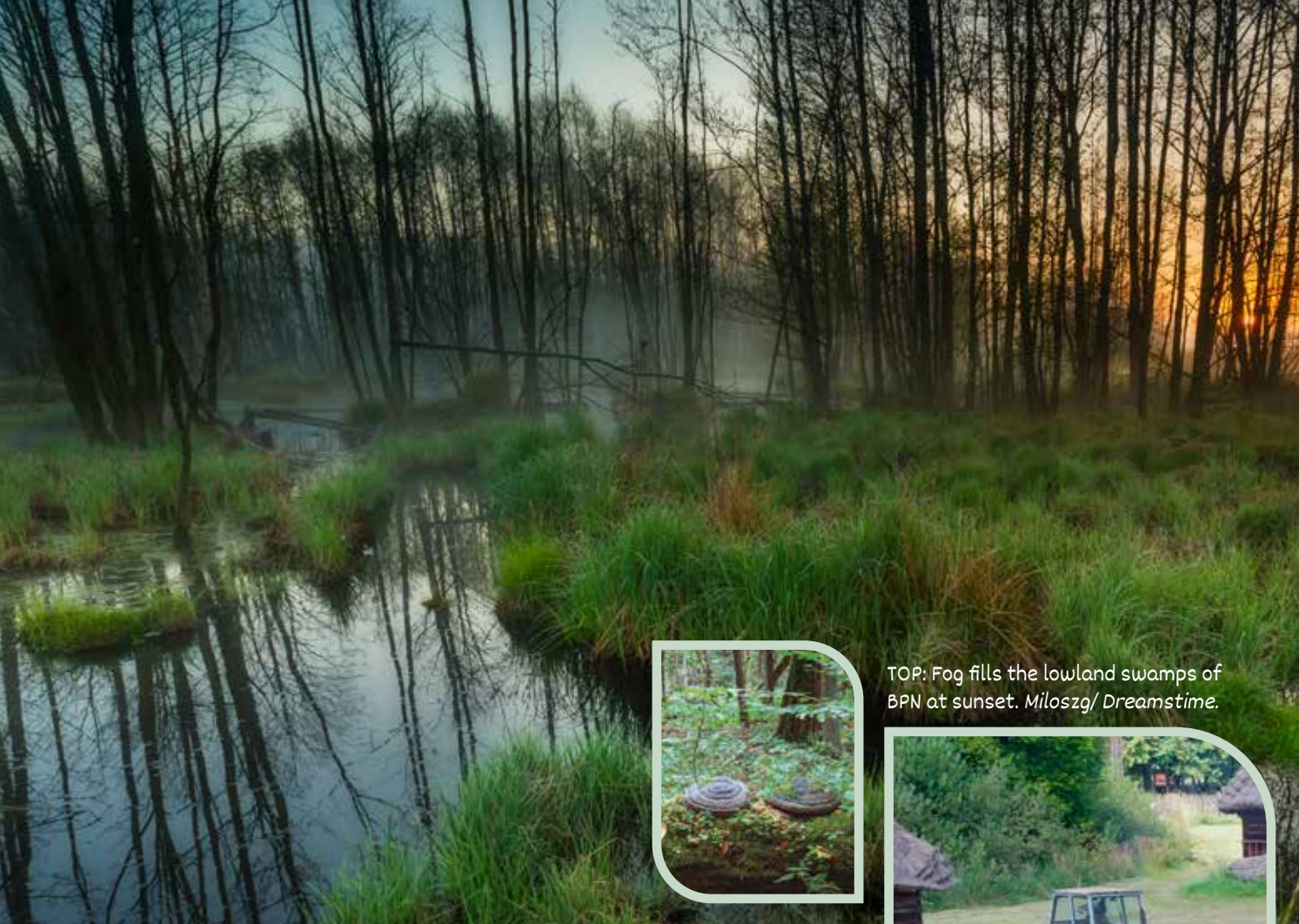
## BOTH SIDES OF THE WALL

Before I set out, I had contacted BPN staff, guides, and researchers about exploring both sides of the story during my four-day visit. But right before I arrived in Bialowieza in July 2024, political tensions escalated when a Polish soldier was killed. Some park areas around the buffer zone were closed to prevent Belarus and Russia from pursuing a strategy of destabilising the EU and profiting from refugees. Thankfully, rangers from BPN still agreed to meet and guide me.

En route, I stopped at Berlin for the first time in 45 years. When I visited Germany in the 1970s, I witnessed on multiple occasions the corrosive effects of the Berlin Wall. Now, Berlin was a united, vibrant, colourful, multicultural, and relatively green city. It made me wonder how Bialowieza was managing its volatile green border with such a barrier in place.



LEFT: A young red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) encounters the impenetrable barrier created by the razor-wire topped border wall between Belarus and Poland at Bialowieza. Marcin Mierzejewski/*Dreamstime*.



TOP: Fog fills the lowland swamps of BPN at sunset. *Milosz/ Dreamstime.*



ABOVE, Ltr: Bracket fungi. *Ben Krut/ Getty for CanvaNFP.* European white storks peck for insects near the village. *Simon Cavendish.*

## IN THE ZONE

Over my time at Bialowieza, I met with BPN staff and spoke informally with Polish forestry, Polish soldiers and tourists. Although I did not directly visit the border – nor enter Belarus and its adjacent, larger park areas – I hiked and cycled through Bialowieza’s four land-use protection zones to tour the park’s natural and cultural heritage values.

Along the way, we saw 24 tree assemblages, the effects of flood/water damage, European bison (*Bison bonasus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Eurasian three-toed woodpeckers (*Picoides tridactylus*), European white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), European common frogs (*Rana temporaria*), and dead man’s fingers fungi (*Xylaria polymorpha*). We also saw species of bracket fungi,

many butterflies, wetlands and meadows. In the largely people-free Zone 1, we discussed the hidden world of mycorrhiza, fire and invasive species management, soil microbiology and geomorphology.

Although I asked for BPN’s management plans, only a draft was available. Management by BPN appeared limited to research, education and tourism. The park’s Zone 2, with very high conservation values, was transferred from the state forest to BPN and showed evidence of past logging/ disturbance. In Poland, such transfers were stated to be unusual, private acquisition was unheard of, and no one knew of any restorative work. Zone 3 had high conservation values, and Zone 4 seemed

little disturbed. Tourism infrastructure in those zones was partially maintained.

Logging was halted in all zones while the forestry department awaited a strategic plan. Its activities were limited to securing safety from falling timber and community education. Interestingly, for trees that posed a high risk to tourists, I noted that forestry chain-sawed while BPN staff pulled over and broke trees close to the ground. →



LEFT: The European bison is a symbol of Bialowieza Forest, and the Polish part of the park provides refuge for approximately 700 of these huge bovines within a 274ha reserve set aside for bison breeding. The Bison Breeding Center is the hub for restitution for this species, which is one of just two remaining bison species on Earth. Dr Jugen Tenckhoff/Getty for CanvaNFP.

## MIGRATORY PRESSURE

As can be expected, the hybrid war has had a significant impact on the park's environmental values. In March 2024, UNESCO met with BPN staff to determine how seriously environmental and cultural values had been affected. Earlier data from 2018 had revealed that migratory pressure had increased over time and was concentrated in the most biodiverse 'wild' Zone 1. In Zone 1, migrants had left waste and litter and introduced weeds. Soldiers and border guards had also introduced weeds and had felled trees for winter fuel and shelter. The quality of the water flowing westward in the Hwozna River from Belarus had clearly deteriorated. →



ABOVE: Breaking off trees, rather than sawing them down, allows the stumps to provide shelter for creatures. Simon Cavendish.

RIGHT: Fragmentation is a threat for the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), which is hunted for Russia's skin and pelt industry. Abhishek Singh/Unsplash.

## NO ROOM TO ROAM

In some Zones, adding to migrant injuries and fatalities were the vehicle-strike deaths of European bison (above) – Europe's largest land mammal, which breeds in the park. Research revealed that migration for the grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) and European bison was now limited mainly to within Poland. This wall presented a particular problem for the Eurasian lynx (right), disrupting the big cat's ability to move across the border.



## NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

After the UNESCO visit, environmental impacts were reported to be better managed as soldiers and border guards were trained in reducing environmental incidents. The substantial first barrier, now a wall, was trialled in places with a second razor-wire-topped fence, which stopped soldiers harvesting protected timber. While I was there, a soldier estimated that 500–600 migrants attempted to cross each day. It was not clear how many migrants were

being processed following the wall's construction.

Military and border guard presence in Bialowieza village – as noted in the only supermarket when I was shopping and during military truck movements – seemed to exceed visitor numbers.

Nevertheless, the village and Skansen Heritage Museum were attractive and well-maintained. One night during my stay, the village showcased 35 folk dance and music troupes from local regions, including Belarusian groups.

## SHARING RESOURCES

My visit was a reminder that all plants and animals, humans included, must share natural resources equitably, even when complexities arise between multiple stakeholders and multiple species.

Ultimately, physical, social, climate, economic, political and geographical barriers affect us all. Perhaps the best wall is no wall at all, as in Berlin. For the European bison, grey wolf, red deer and Eurasian lynx, let us hope that one day Bialowieza might be similarly unfettered. ■



# MEMBER REFLECTIONS

## WENDY BELL, HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

MY 70 YEARS OF ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP OF NPAQ began when Romeo Lahey was NPAQ president, thus enabling me to appreciate the commitment of every president since (including my husband, Clif), and of councillors and members who have worked tirelessly for NPAQ. Field Outings and weekend camping adventures involved exploring and researching areas considered valuable additions to Queensland's national parks. Submissions to Government were usually accompanied by sketch maps, which I was often asked to produce (being a cartographer helped!). At one time, all new NPs gazetted were the result of NPAQ's proposals. Needing our own premises created enthusiastic fundraising in the 1980s and 1990s. The Social Committee, which I convened for almost 20 years, organised many well-supported events. A generous bequest enabled the purchase of the current office in 1993. Now with a professional management team, Australia-wide connections and widespread recognition of national parks' importance, I hope NPAQ will always be at the forefront of national park issues.



Above: Wendy Bell reflecting on the scenery of a national park.



Above: Laurelle Lowry is actively involved in helping NPAQ archive and preserve magazines and records.

## LAURELLE LOWRY, MEMBER

MY ASSOCIATION WITH NPAQ began when I attended the 1992 National Parks Day Weekend as a representative of Friends of Tamborine National Park, an affiliate of NPAQ. These weekend camps, attended by environmental associations, were held each March to commemorate the gazettement of Queensland's first national park. I attended all of these weekends until they were discontinued. My husband, Len, and I took out NPAQ household membership in 2000. Since joining, I have assisted the Association with 'behind the scenes' roles such as Social Committee member, caterer for functions, coordinator of the NPA News/*Protected* mailouts, librarian, publications archivist, activities leader, treasurer and record-keeper. Although I enjoy all natural areas, my most visited park is Tamborine NP, having been a QPWS volunteer there for 36 years. Many trips to Central Western Queensland to assist with Threatened Species (fauna) projects have also been rewarding. My future hopes are to see more responsible national park users, as well as more expenditure available for protected areas, national park management and biological conservation.

# CYCLING FOR A CAUSE

## Phil & Ned's ride for nature

The majestic backdrop of the Flinders Ranges, South Australia. Image: Eric DeSmit.

*Phil Wise*

### WORLD RANGER DAY IS AN ANNUAL DAY FOR CELEBRATING AND RECOGNISING THE WORK OF PARK RANGERS AND OTHERS WHO CONSERVE PROTECTED AREAS AROUND THE GLOBE.

This year, it was a particularly special day for father and son team Phil and Ned Wise, as it represented the final day of an epic 5232km pushbike ride from Hobart to Darwin, a fundraising adventure first dreamed up in a snowy cabin on Tasmania's Cradle Mountain in October 2023.

On 10 May 2024, the duo left their house, 20km south of Hobart, at 5:30am in the dark and rain, intending to arrive in Darwin on World Ranger Day, 31 July. To achieve this, they'd need to travel an average of 60km a day - more if they wanted rest days!

Multiple factors inspired the ride, including the incredible bonding experience of a fifty-year-old dad and his fourteen-year-old son undertaking such an adventure together, and the desire to make a tangible difference through raising funds for organisations close to their hearts. The ride supported the Thin Green Line Foundation, which supports park rangers and their families worldwide (Phil was an original director alongside founder Sean Willmore); the

Tasmanian Land Conservancy, which focuses on protecting habitat and species on private land (Phil's current employer); and Ride 4 A Woman - a social enterprise on the edge of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest NP, Uganda - that supports women to rise above poverty and domestic violence through the creation of opportunities for sustainable income, in part derived from Gorilla-trekking related tourism.

### INITIAL HURDLES

Numerous barriers had to be overcome even before the two set out; foremost was that Ned and Phil lacked the appropriate bikes and equipment to start the journey, nor had they any bike-touring experience. Thankfully,

the amazing Tasmanian community came to the rescue, with sponsors like Pennicott Wilderness Journeys, Tailored Tasmania, Wilderness Bling and author Jane Rawson offering prizes for raffles. With initial funds raised, combined with sponsorship for cost-price service and equipment from My Ride Hobart, Ned was able to purchase a bike and other accessories to make the trip a reality. Phil's bike was borrowed from a mate who happened to be moving to the Northern Territory anyway, effectively allowing personal delivery of the bike to his new home. Panniers and a small bike trailer were funded by friends from the community, and sponsors including Sea to Summit, Patagonia,



*Numerous barriers had to be overcome even before the two set out; foremost was that Ned and Phil lacked the appropriate bikes and equipment to start the journey.*

RIGHT: First day feels as Phil and Ned set out from Tassie. ABOVE: Aurora australis and vivid sunsets were a daily inspiration to persist with their ambitious nature biking trip.





PHIL WISE is an ex-Northern Territory Ranger who now works for the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. His 14-year-old son NED hopes to make this journey part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. They undertook this trip to make a practical difference to the world's biodiversity and climate issues. Follow them on @RideforNature24.

LEFT: Their second leg, in Victoria, took in the grandeur of the Twelve Apostles in Port Campbell NP along the Great Ocean Rd. BELOW: Eric DeSmit provided welcome vehicle support along the rugged Oodnadatta Track, SA, and even used his time to clean up litter.



LEFT: The Oodnadatta Track abounded with opportunities for bush camping and stops along the Old Ghan Railway.

Wilderness Equipment and Ledlenser Australia jumped on board to equip the pair with every piece of lightweight kit needed to give them a realistic chance of completion. As for the issue of no experience, well ... there's no better solution for that than just doing it!

## FROM TASSIE TO THE TOP END

Their selected route to Darwin meant traversing the Tasmanian Highlands, past Great Lake and into Devonport to catch the ferry to the mainland. This first leg of the trip turned on the most formidable weather – sideways rain, bitter winds and thick fog during the descent off the plateau had them wondering what they had gotten themselves into shortly after they set out.

Once on the mainland, their tender legs welcomed a slight diversion to Peninsula Hot Springs on the Mornington Peninsula, at the invitation of the owner. From there, their route took in the scenic Great Ocean Road, Grampians (Gariwerd) NP, and Little Desert NP before a dash across to South Australia, where the pair picked up various trails recommended by South Australian Rangers, including the Lavender Federation Trail, the Rattler Trail, the Riesling Trail and the



Mawson Trail – showcasing the eastern Adelaide Hills and wine regions of the Clare and Barossa Valleys. One of Phil's highlights was the exhilarating descent into the Barossa Valley from Menglers Hill.

## INTO THE ARID ZONE

Heading north, Ikara-Flinders Ranges NP presented an incredible view, particularly the section through Brachina Gorge, where ancient red cliffs towered above the riders as they bumped and bounced over the riverbed rocks that formed the track. Soon after, they fluked arriving on open day of the recently declared Nilpena Ediacara NP, which was set aside to protect fossil evidence of some of the earliest life on Earth. Thanks to South Australian Parks, they were invited to join Traditional Owners for a

tour in an area proposed for UNESCO World Heritage status.

By now bone weary, Phil and Ned were met by SA Forestry Ranger Eric DeSmit, who kindly gave up ten days of his time to provide much-needed vehicle support along the rugged and unsealed Oodnadatta Track.

While Phil and Ned cursed the corrugations and tackled crippling headwinds, Eric spent his days cleaning up cans and bottles along the roadside, filling four bins he'd brought along on a trailer. On his return to Adelaide, Eric recycled the bottles and donated \$120 to the ride's chosen charities – what a win-win for nature!

The Oodnadatta Track abounded with opportunities for bush camping, and the intrepid cyclists enjoyed many interesting stops along the path of the Old Ghan Railway line. Notable were William Creek Hotel, the delectable Farina Restoration Bakery – resurrected by an army of volunteers to be an oasis of much-appreciated food, drinks and snacks for the riders – and the iconic Pink Roadhouse at Oodnadatta, the gateway to the Simpson Desert.

## HIGHWAYS & HEADWINDS

On their arrival at the end of the line in Marla, in northern South Australia, the ride took on a vastly different phase. This was the first point where the riders met the →



busy Stuart Highway, and the first in ten days where all the panniers would go on the bikes, which towed a trailer of extra water and food.

You'd imagine that after days of bumping over corrugated rocky or sandy roads, the 1949km stretch of sealed road ahead might seem welcome, but it came with its own challenges – namely juggernaut road trains with 3–4 trailers, and an endless stream of caravans, camper trailers and everything in between. For safety, Phil and Ned decided to get off when road trains approached, and vigilance was also required when vehicles tried to overtake. Thankfully, most travellers took a wide berth wherever possible, and Phil and Ned often received toots of encouragement.



Severe headwinds made the first day riding the Stuart Highway tough, with just sixty hard-won kilometres pedalled. The exhausted riders set up camp where the new Ghan Railway intersects with a road bridge under the highway.

Adding to the extreme fright of a train passing overhead in the middle of the night were the spine-chilling howls of at least four dingoes prowling just outside Ned's tent. Although Ned slept through the experience, Phil described it as one of the few times he felt (slightly) vulnerable on the trip! From that night on, the Southeast Trade Winds were the feature of the ride and tailwinds became the norm. For several days, more than 100km of pedalling were achieved, allowing Phil and Ned to reach the Northern Territory border early in July and, unexpectedly for the Territory during the Dry, in the pouring rain. Despite being soaked for several days, the riders spirits were lifted with beautiful skies and sunsets, mild temperatures, and those welcome, ongoing tail winds.

### TERRITORY TIME

Arriving at Alice Springs early allowed for a couple of rest days. Accommodation was provided thanks to the Northern Territory Ranger Association, and the pair



On the trip, Ned formed a positive belief in his own abilities, ensuring he could see the ride through with a tenacity he will now apply to other areas of his life. TOP LEFT: Grampians (Gariwerd) NP, Victoria. Above: Litchfield NP, NT. BOTTOM: Cycling the Stuart Highway, SA.

performed the much-needed washing of clothes and restocking of goods while the bikes were serviced. Two well-attended talks were given in the evenings, raising even more funds and enabling catch-ups with friends. After a 'must-do' visit to the fantastic Alice Springs Desert Park, the riders were back on the road.

From Alice, they cycled north, staying at roadhouses and meeting up with drivers who had passed them by day. Each evening was a chance to explain their motivation for the ride, with many people kindly donating to their cause.

### THE END, OR THE BEGINNING?

Arriving in Darwin was bittersweet. Sweet, because Phil and Ned were reunited with their family and enjoyed a warm welcome set up by the Northern Territory Ranger Association. Many of their biggest supporters even pedalled the last few

kilometres in with them. But also bitter, because it represented the end of a life-changing journey for the father-son duo, who now felt as if they could go on forever!

## A LEGACY RIDE

Reflecting on the transformational ride, both agreed it delivered more than they could have hoped for. Their relationship grew even stronger, and their belief that the ride would be completed never wavered. So many glorious national parks and protected areas were visited, too many to focus on in detail in a single article, and Phil is sure the mental health and fitness benefits added ten years to his life.

Best of all, so many random acts of kindness from strangers along the way buoyed their spirits and their faith in humanity, including gifts of chocolate, cold drinks and fresh food delivered to the roadside, meals bought for them, free camping provided, endless encouraging beeps and waves from passing motorists and, of course, generous donations.

On finishing the trip, Phil and Ned had raised just over \$50,000 for their chosen conservation charities, but they hope to double that and reach

RIGHT & BELOW: Thanks to tailwinds, Phil and Ned put in long days in the arid zone, giving them the opportunity to slow down a couple of weeks later and spend time at Nitmiluk NP, NT; swimming at Bitter Springs and Mataranka Thermal Pool in Elsey NP near Katherine; and at Edith Falls in Litchfield NP. Ned listed these swimming trips as his highlights, which were hard-earned after long days of riding. *Image at right: Andrea Tschirner.*



Their ride demonstrates both the power of perseverance for a cause and how nature cycling and the incorporation of rail trails can be an excellent, sustainable add-on to ecotourism in Australia's protected areas. But for now, it's back to work and school for this determined pair, who successfully cycled for their cause through some of the nation's toughest and most awe-inspiring landscapes.

their target of \$100,000 raised through presentations about the ride and other means.

"I hope we've left a real legacy for conservation through the promotion of the trip and funds raised for our causes," enthuses Phil. "And who knows, maybe next time we'll take a trip to experience the beauty of Queensland's protected areas, too!"

*To contribute to Phil and Ned's chosen charities or invite them to give a presentation, visit Phil and Ned's Ride for Nature or email [nargiewise29@gmail.com](mailto:nargiewise29@gmail.com). You can also follow @RideforNature24 on Instagram to view various reels from the trip.*



# PARK IN FOCUS

## Cania Gorge NP

*The Editor*

**VISIT DRAGON CAVE, DRIPPING ROCK OR GIANT'S CHAIR, WONDER AT A CULTURAL HISTORY DATING TO THE PLEISTOCENE ERA, AND EVEN CAST AN EYE OVER BIG FOOT (KIND OF) AT CANIA GORGE NP.**

If you love being connected to nothing but nature, largely 'wifi-free' Cania Gorge NP, first gazetted in 1977, will captivate your senses. Here, 225km west of Bundaberg, sandstone cliffs tower over pockets of dry rainforest and create shaded nooks for sheath-tail and bent-wing bats.

More than 150 Brigalow Belt plant communities exist within or around this park, including brigalow forest, eucalypt woodland, grasslands and cypress pine woodland. With eight walking tracks to explore

- ranging from 300m, Grade 2 walks to a 22km, Grade 4 bun-buster up Castle Mountain - keen walkers will appreciate a range of sights.

Cania Gorge is a treasure trove for birdwatchers. At least 90 avian species have been recorded, including majestic wedge-tailed eagles (*Aquila audax*), peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), and Australian king-parrots (*Alisterus scapularis*).

It's hard to believe that 200 million years ago this place was a low plain on which sands, washed from eroded northern mountains, were deposited to form the sky-scraping precipice sandstone landscapes seen today. Riven by the persistent flow of Three Moon Creek over aeons, the sandstone became a gorge. At Dripping Rock, slow down to nature's time



Above: Cania Gorge towers over Brigalow Belt country inland from Bundaberg. *Michelle Jackson/CanvaNFP*. Inset: Peregrine falcons - the world's fastest birds - nest in the rocky crags. *Harry Collins/CanvaNFP*

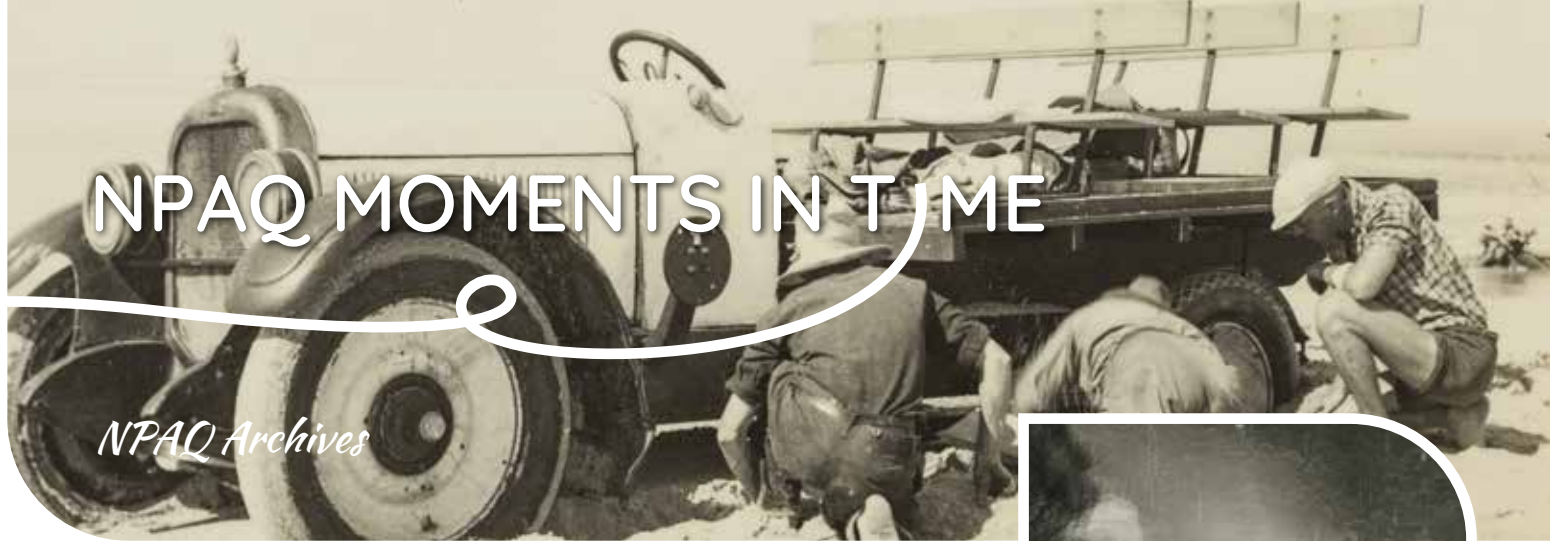
and listen for the steady drip of water: a reminder of how this gorge was formed.

Nine recorded First Nations people's art sites evince 19,000+ years of their history in this region. Although not publicly accessible - the sites' freehand artworks are rare and fragile - visitors can view an impressive giant four-toed foot, known as 'Big Foot', from the Big Foot Walk track (Grade 3 and 1km return). Combat the heat by taking plenty of water and walking in early morning or late afternoon, when whiptail wallabies (*Notamacropus parryi*) and Herbert's rock-wallabies (*Petrogale herberti*) may be active.

Camping is not permitted, but campsites can be booked in nearby Kalpowar, Bulburin and Kroombit Tops NPs.

Left & inset: Impressive ancient overhangs and caverns, many with fantastical names like Dragon Cave, provide shelter for bats. *VekAustralia/Dreamstime*.





# NPAQ MOMENTS IN TIME

*NPAQ Archives*

**OLD PHOTOGRAPHS ALWAYS INSPIRE NOSTALGIA, BUT NPAQ'S COLLECTION ISN'T JUST LIMITED TO CONSERVATION.**

For this issue, I spent an evening exploring the broad collection of NPAQ images and documents digitised at the State Library of Queensland, which now form the Ruth Read Historical Collection.

Not only do these images capture some of our State's most stunning landscapes in all their former glory (in many cases documenting the change over the nine decades since the NPAQ's inception) but they also form an important socio-cultural collection that reminds us how different – and yet how similar – today's fashions, lifestyles and interests are.

Of course, some things never change, as demonstrated by the image (top) of young men bogging their ute on North Stradbroke Island's soft sands. In September 2024, the internet was awash with condemnation of young French travellers who'd misjudged the tide at Rainbow Beach, resulting in calamity. While the vehicles are much more modern, the need for care when driving on sand islands and beaches remains.

The images also show the progression of photography from black-and-white film and dark-room processing to today's crisp, high-definition, saturated images. Even those of us born after the days when monochrome ruled, can see the gravitas it lends to this collection, which can be viewed online at <https://collections.slq.qld.gov.au/viewer/IE3371781>



TOP: Bagpipes were a must-have accessory for a climb up Mt Coonowrin in 1934, perhaps akin to today's teens, who take a bluetooth speaker bushwalking for music on-the-go. BOTTOM: Bushwalking in a sundress is not for the faint of heart. *Helen Fraser's Album.*



FAR LEFT: The collection includes many digitised images from Romeo Lahey's private albums. Several of his images present a compelling glimpse of life in 1910, when dwellings in the upper reaches of Canungra Creek were a little less luxe than they are today. LEFT: The obvious wonder NPAQ's founder had for the landscapes he photographed is evident in the frequency and scope of his shoots, and in the subjects themselves. *Romeo Lahey Collection.*

# REEF REGENERATION

## 20 years of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning

*Karin Cox*

SPECKLING A 2300KM LENGTH OF QUEENSLAND'S NORTH-EASTERN COAST, FROM LADY ELLIOT ISLAND OFF BUNDABERG TO THE TIP OF CAPE YORK, IS THE WORLD'S MOST EXTENSIVE REEF SYSTEM.

Evolved over millennia, this vast submarine wonderland comprises 3000 smaller reefs and teems with more than 400 coral species, 1500+ fish species, 4000+ species of mollusc, and countless marine invertebrates, as well as six of the world's seven species of endangered marine turtles and, seasonally in parts, migrating humpback whales.

The Great Barrier Reef's more than 900 cays and islands – around half of which

are national parks – provide shelter and roosting sites for 240 avian species, many of them seabirds or migratory shorebirds. Seen from above, this sheer diversity creates a mosaic of gradient blues and greens, a marine seascape of fringing reefs punctuated with postcard-perfect cays. From below, it is an unparalleled pastiche of colour, movement, flow and evolutionary processes.

So incredible is this marine wonder that in June 1975 the Australian Government passed the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and set aside the 344,400km<sup>2</sup> Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP), an area roughly the size of Japan. In 1981, almost all of that area was incorporated

into a 348,000km<sup>2</sup> property inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – protected forever as a globally significant entity. One of the largest natural ecosystems on Earth, of all UNESCO properties, the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the world's most biodiverse. Of course, that also makes it one of the most complex, and, sadly, among the most vulnerable.

### WEATHERING THE STORM

Over 15,000 years, the reef has weathered at least four glacial and interglacial cycles that at times exposed or flooded it, but since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its resilience has taken a battering. Rising temperatures due to climate change have led to mass

*From below, it is an unparalleled pastiche of colour, movement, flow and evolutionary processes.*





ABOVE: Symbiotic relationships abound. Here, a clown anemonefish enjoys the protection of its host anemone on the GBR. *Benmm / Dreamstime*



*Despite covering just 1% of the planet's ocean floor, coral reefs provide habitat for 25% of the world's marine species. The GBR makes up 10% of the world's coral reefs.*

coral-bleaching events. In 2021, Queensland's Great Barrier Reef was teetering on the brink of UNESCO placing it on the list of World Heritage in Danger, although, to borrow from Oscar Wilde "Reports of [its] death have been greatly exaggerated" and the Reef Authority asserted that "placing the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger would not address or improve outcomes for the Reef".

A UNESCO-IUCN joint mission visited the Great Barrier Reef in 2022, and urgent new measures for protection are being implemented, including improving water quality by 2025 through the reduction of pollutants and runoff; the banning of all gill-net fishing by 2027; restoring native flora and fauna in the Reef's drainage basins; and setting more ambitious federal CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction targets.

LEFT: Snorkelling or scuba diving on the GBR is a popular 'bucket list' item for nature-lovers worldwide. *Rafael Ben Ari / Dreamstime.*



LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Six of the world's seven endangered sea turtle species can be found within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. *Sean Scott / Getty for CanvaNFP.* Spawning *Acropora* coral on the GBR. The success of 'coral nurseries', which use IVF technology to increase the number of corals released, is helping regenerate sections of reef. *Joan Li / Unsplash.*

### A TOURISM DRAWCARD

Not only does the GBR protect a multitude of smaller ecosystems, it is also an economic powerhouse. The Reef attracts millions of visitors to Queensland annually, generates tens of thousands of jobs and adds millions to the economy, but such popularity often brings problems. To manage conflicts and protect environmental values, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan, which defined the spatial boundaries of conflicting use, was first introduced in 1981 for the Capricornia section. It was later expanded, in what has become known as one of the most ambitious but effective zoning efforts anywhere in the world. Two decades on,

we reflect on what the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 (which took effect in 2004) achieved and what is yet to be done.

By 1998, an expanded National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas was proposed. Commonwealth, State and Territory governments were on board, with a deadline of 2012. NPAQ has also been a keen supporter of gazetted marine parks nationally, vocally contributing to the process. To kickstart the required zoning, scientists, natural resource managers, community groups and industry bodies joined forces to form the Reef Authority's Representative Areas Program (RAP). Under the auspices of →



ABOVE: Effective zoning on the GBR allows ecotourism activities to coexist alongside higher protection zones. Victoria Ballesteros/Unsplash. RIGHT: John Brewer Reef, GBRMP. Joan Li/Unsplash

the RAP, new ‘no-take’ zones would protect representative examples of the Reef’s 70 different bioregions under an expanded, more-effective zoning plan. The Reef Authority also established an independent Scientific-Steering Committee (SSC) to guide the selection of no-take zones, and a Social, Economic and Cultural Steering Committee (SECSC) to mitigate any impact on other beneficiaries of the Reef’s resources.

It didn’t take long for the SSC to determine that the “existing network of Green Zones (no-take areas) in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park [was] insufficient to maintain the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the Great Barrier Reef into the future.” The SSC quickly established that increasing the no-take zones to a minimum of 20% of each of the 70 identified bioregions was required.

### GOING GREEN

The zoning plan’s considerations didn’t end with conservation, although they certainly prioritised it.

The reforms set a new standard, protecting 33% of the Great Barrier Reef in non-extractive green zones. They also established new protocols for the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements, enabled one-step accreditation for scientific and educational institutions (reducing red tape for scientific endeavours), enabled legislative protection for at-risk species under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, and paved the way for the declaration of Special Management Areas to periodically or permanently bolster protection for vulnerable areas.

Later, these representative areas would be amalgamated into the plan widely lauded

in a 2006 review for being “unprecedented in scale, scope and process”.

The review also identified the need for a five-yearly Outlook Report to identify new management actions. Today, the (Commonwealth) Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 and the (Queensland) Marine Parks (Great Barrier Reef Coast) Zoning Plan 2004 are the regulatory and management instruments tasked with protecting the GBR.

As a requirement of section 54 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, every five years the Reef Authority still publishes an Outlook Report as a benchmark for the Great Barrier Reef’s health. The most recent Outlook Report, released in August 2024, was criticised by some for its optimistic outlook. Based on data from January 2019 to December 2023, which showed some



*The most recent Outlook Report, released in August 2024, was criticised by some for its optimistic outlook.*

LEFT: No-take zones on the Great Barrier Reef help support fish stocks in surrounding mixed-use areas. Although only around 8% of the world's oceans are currently protected within marine parks, there are plans to expand the number of marine parks to protect 30% of global marine environments. *Aquanaut4/Dreamstime.*

recovery from mass coral bleaching events in 2000 and 2022, it nevertheless stressed that climate change presented the Reef's greatest threat and that ongoing global warming would further compromise reefs worldwide. Weeks after it was released,

temperatures increased and coral bleaching events rocked the world's reefs once more, putting further stress on marine ecosystems globally. A Reef Health Update is also released monthly, giving a short-term prognosis that monitors the Reef's vital signs.

## ONGOING DECLINE

Despite being one of the best-managed and most studied coral reefs in the world and having experienced brief windows of reef regeneration, increasing water temperatures and coral bleaching events make the long-term outlook →

## ENGAGEMENT HELPS

In 2024, Dr Yolanda Waters, from the University of Queensland's School of the Environment, and colleagues, surveyed 656 reef visitors about their experiences and behaviours during boat trips to the Reef and found that 80% of participants wanted more information about climate change and how they could help.

"There's this lingering idea that providing information on climate change might appear divisive or 'ruin' tourist's day, particularly in places that are vulnerable to degradation," Dr Waters said. "But our work shows there's an opportunity for tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences while simultaneously advancing climate action."

The research findings, published in *People and Nature* in September 2024, found that "visitors on trips where climate information was provided were more likely to report that the reef experience exceeded their expectations".



ABOVE: Swimming with a reef resident. *Dr Yolanda Waters.*



for the Great Barrier Reef one of ongoing deterioration. However, the ability of the Reef Authority to act swiftly to curb the many issues threatening the GBR is based in large part on the strong foundation created by two decades of carefully considered zoning and unprecedented investment in ecosystem management.

### MILESTONES

Next year, the GBRMP will celebrate 50 years of adaptive resource management. There can be no doubt that expanding the green zones to at least 30% of the 70 bioregions (40 of which are surrounding terrestrial habitats) will present another buffer

against the Reef's decline. Research has shown that green zones recover 20% faster from bleaching events, coral disease, stochastic weather events, and invasive crown-of-thorn starfish outbreaks. Moreover, the 'spillover effect', in which larger breeding fish move out of green no-take zones into blue zones, has demonstrably improved fish stocks across multiple zones.

In 2008, Ruckelshaus et al. stated, "The Great Barrier Reef ... boasts a system-wide spatial management approach that is arguably the world's most sophisticated and extensively implemented example of marine zoning..." Even so, the world's largest Reef remains under siege.

TOP: A split shot of a cowtail stingray off Heron Island, GBR. *Kristian Lane / Dreamstime*. ABOVE: Coral bleaching. *Kristian Lane / Dreamstime*.

### ROADMAPS AND BLUEPRINTS

In 2015, the first Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan), was published. Adding to it, as a framework for forward-looking protection and management, is the Reef Authority's recent roadmap to navigating climate change, the Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Climate Resilience and Adaptation (Reef Blueprint 2030).



*The 'spillover effect', in which larger breeding fish move out of green no-take zones into blue zones, has demonstrably improved fish stocks across multiple zones.*

LEFT: The Reef Trust Partnership funds the Australian Institute of Marine Studies (AIMS) and collaborators from University of the Sunshine Coast and TropWATER at James Cook University to monitor reef fish populations. *Aquanaut4/Dreamstime*

The Reef Authority's commitment to conservation has nurtured ongoing associations, such as the Pacific Coral Reef Collective, harnessing the brainpower of reef managers and conservation partners from 14 Pacific countries to find solutions to the challenges coral reefs face.

Under the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP), a funding partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, esteemed marine scientists from around the globe continue to trial and test solutions to conserve existing reefs and grow their resilience in the face of climate change. The success of coral →

## REEF RIGHTS

In September 2024, the president of the International Coral Reef Society (ICRS), Christian Voolstra, from the University of Konstanz, Germany, suggested a novel intervention to ensure coral reefs are protected: tying the protection of coral reef ecosystems to human rights. Voolstra and colleagues argue the world may lose more than 90% of its corals by the end of the century unless we take greater action. "Millions, especially in coastal regions, depend on coral reefs for their food, livelihoods and cultural wealth," Voolstra said in an article for *Campus.Kn* (the magazine for the University of Konstanz), "protection of coral reefs as a human right would provide a legal, actionable framework to facilitate lawsuit filing as well as implementation and monitoring of legal consequences." The team's detailed recommendations were published in *Global Change Biology* in September 2024.



ABOVE: Bleaching events threaten the existence of reefs globally. *Aquanaut4/Dreamstime.*

nurseries and reef restoration activities, along with a recent study published in *Nature: Communications Earth and Environment* by Southern Cross University’s Melissa Naugle and colleagues, which found that variation in heat tolerance among *Acropora* corals may be higher than expected, provide hope for continued coral resilience.

Planning for an uncertain future is never easy. “Perhaps the best we can do is ensure that authorities are committed to taking the time to plan inclusive, well-considered, evidence-based instruments designed to counter known threats,” suggests NPAQ CEO Chris Thomas, who was just one of the many contributors to the 2003 zoning plan in his former role as the Reef Authority’s Director of Tourism and Recreation. As The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan – 20 Years On report states on p. 25: “The Reef Authority has always taken, and will continue to take, an adaptive, ecosystem-based partnership approach to assess the risks and design and refine Reef protection and conservation actions to protect the Reef for future generations.” ■

KARIN COX is NPAQ’s Marketing and Communications Manager. She is a former editor of *Wildlife Australia* magazine and the lead author of more than 52 titles on Australian natural or social history, including works for Steve Parish Publishing, *New Holland Australia*, *Indelible Ink Press*, and, most recently, *Escape to Nature: Visit 75 of Australia’s Best National Parks for Australian Geographic / Hardie Grant*.



ABOVE: Varying degrees of bleaching seen in *Acropora hyacinthus* corals near Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef. Naugle et al. (2024) found the heat tolerance thresholds for this foundational coral species varied from north of Cooktown to south of the Whitsundays. Studies of 569 individual corals revealed that under heat stress the amount of pigment retained varied from 3% to 95%, meaning that some corals bleached while others seemed barely affected. Melissa Naugle, National Marine Science Centre, Southern Cross University.

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# FOSTERING A CONNECTION & recruiting tomorrow's rangers

*CEO Chris Thomas*

Bailey Mahon / Unsplash

## NPAQ IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE SEVERAL NEW PROGRAMS.

The State of Queensland, acting through the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, recently granted NPAQ \$200,000 to pilot a new Queensland Parks Connect Program over the next 12 months in South East Queensland. This program will consist of the following five, complementary sub-programs:

- » JUNIOR RANGER: a development program for Queenslanders (aged 7-12 years) interested in learning about conservation and park management.
- » CADET RANGER: a development program for Queenslanders (typically aged

13-18 years) interested in learning about conservation and park management.

- » PARK OF THE MONTH: an opportunity for Queenslanders to experience and learn more about their local parks through a series of organised park activities and events (different park each month).
- » VOLUNTEER RANGER: an opportunity for adult Queenslanders with relevant skills and experience to get involved in activities that support the effective day-to-day management of parks, including engaging with visitors.
- » CAMPGROUND HOST – an opportunity for adult Queenslanders

with relevant skills and experience to get involved in activities that support the effective day-to-day management of park campgrounds, including engaging with campers.

The Queensland Parks Connect Program has been designed with the following purposes in mind:

- to assist the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) deliver against the 'Connect' theme in Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030;
- to build the capacity of NPAQ to be a valued partner to the QPWS, the Queensland Ranger Association and Friends of Parks Queensland; and
- to build a pipeline of potential/future park rangers, park volunteers and park supporters.

Importantly, the Queensland Parks Connect Program is intended to build on and complement existing community engagement activities and volunteering opportunities offered by the QPWS. We expect that NPAQ's Kids in Parks program will continue to act as a valuable feed-in to these higher age-level programs.



*Getting children and families out into nature remains a key focus of the new programs.*

# CROWDS, WATER GUNS & PROTESTS

Could 'slow tourism' be the answer to an overtourism backlash?

*Amy Errmann, Auckland University of Technology*



**WITH OVERTOURISM IN THE SPOTLIGHT AS THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO REBOUND AFTER THE PANDEMIC, POPULAR DESTINATIONS AROUND THE WORLD ARE FEELING THE STRAIN.**

Bali is overwhelmed by waste and traffic, Australia's sacred sites have suffered environmental damage, New York is facing rising rents due to short-term rentals, and Singapore's scenic spots are becoming clogged with crowds.

Frustrated locals are pushing back – from spraying water at tourists in Barcelona to organising protests in Venice. As the northern hemisphere high season ends, Aotearoa New Zealand is preparing for an influx of visitors ahead of its summer tourism season.

And much like those other tourist hotspots, the New Zealand government is looking at how to manage the negative effects of tourism on local communities and the environment. This includes tripling the international tourist tax from NZ\$35 to \$100.

The aim of the increase is to attract tourists who are more mindful of their impact and willing to contribute to its mitigation, while also reducing visitor numbers to protect the country's unique landscapes and cultures.

But are there other ways the tourism industry can evolve to ensure benefits for both travellers and the communities they are visiting? So-called slow travel could be the answer.

## HUNTING THE PERFECT PHOTO

Overtourism isn't just about too many people in one place. It's also about *how* people travel.

Instagram-famous landmarks draw massive crowds, disrupting local life and sometimes even leading to closures.

Travellers often pack their itineraries with as many sights as possible, racing from one place to another in a frenzy to capture the perfect photo. This hurried approach not only creates congestion but also limits meaningful engagement with the destination.

And it's not just a numbers game. How tourists behave also plays a critical role.

A 2019 report from the United Nations raised concerns about trash from tourists in developing small island states, including the Pacific Islands. According to the report, a tourist visiting these communities produced about 7kg of waste a day, compared to about 2.5kg produced by a local.



*By concentrating on a single aspect of a visit, it becomes special and memorable.*

TOP: Taking the time to be present in nature has recorded well-being benefits. *Fahroni/ CanvaNFP*. LEFT: Slow travel is about having meaningful experiences, rather than rushing to shoot an Instagram beauty spot. *Bobbi Lockyer/ CanvaNFP*.



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LEFT TO RIGHT: Snapping a memory at Milford Sound, New Zealand. *Kamchatka/ CanvaNFP*. Forest bathing in Japan. *Kenraku/Getty for CanvaNFP*.

The issue is not necessarily about travelling less, but about travelling more responsibly. The tourism industry needs to be encouraging travel habits that allow both visitors and locals to enjoy tourism without compromising the integrity of the destination.

## THE RISE OF SLOW TRAVEL

Mindfulness – being fully present in the moment – has gained popularity since the 1970s. The concept has influenced a number of sectors, including slow food, slow fashion, and now slow travel.

It's about experiencing destinations at a relaxed pace, focusing on deeper connections with local cultures and sustainability. This often means staying longer in fewer places and choosing eco-friendly transport.

Understanding slow travel and mindfulness is important because they create richer, more memorable experiences. Fast, hectic travel often leaves little positive impact. Slow immersive travel, on the other hand, fosters lasting memories and reduces overtourism, pollution and cultural damage.

Research shows when we consciously immerse ourselves in our surroundings we can have

more meaningful experiences. Surprisingly, even luxury travel – often dismissed as wasteful – can encourage respect and mindfulness for those who invest financially and mentally in their journey, unlike cheaper, mainstream tourism.

Activities such as 'forest bathing', hiking or engaging with local cultures boost wellbeing and meaning, going beyond just 'taking a photo for likes'.

This mindful approach can change our behaviour on a personal level. By focusing attention on fewer experiences, travellers can heighten their sense of awe and appreciation, making the travel more memorable.

This idea is evident in "peak experiences". Disney, for example, creates emotionally-charged moments that stick in visitors' minds. Other experiences, such as "digital detoxes" or pilgrimages can leave a contemplative impression.

By concentrating on a single aspect of a visit, it becomes special and memorable. Even in busy places like Disneyland, focusing on one unique element can make the experience feel slower and more meaningful.

## THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM

In the Faroe Islands, slow travel helps protect local traditions and landscapes by encouraging thoughtful visitor behaviour, such as using local guides to minimise environmental impact.

New Zealand can leverage its natural beauty to offer similar immersive experiences. Tramping (hiking), for example, can promote a mindful connection with the environment.

But even here, there needs to be a focus on balancing tourism with preservation. Popular spots, such as the Department of Conservation huts and the Te Araroa Trail, are already becoming crowded. It is essential to educate visitors on responsible practices – such as cleaning equipment – to ensure they understand their role in protecting nature.

Travel that fosters a deeper appreciation for local cultures and environments benefits both visitors and the destinations they explore. The challenge is finding the right balance – encouraging meaningful travel experiences while still ensuring accessibility for all. ■

# WILDLIFE FEATURE

## Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo

*The Editor*

### SCIENTIFIC NAME:

*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*

### DISCOVERY:

Described in 1884, this tree-kangaroo gets its species name from naturalist Carl Lumholtz.

It is also known as the Boongary, derived from the Warrgamay language of the Herbert River, or Mabi by the Ngadjon-Jii people.

### STATUS:

Near Threatened  
SIZE: 52–65cm tall; 66–74cm long tail. Weighs 6 to 10kg.

**HABITAT:** Prefers rainforest canopies at high altitudes in the Wet Tropics and Atherton Tablelands between Kirrama NP and Mount Spurgeon.

**DIET:** Leaves, fruit, roots, and ferns.

Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo is Australia's smallest tree-kangaroo species. European explorers and museum collectors had difficulty believing such a creature existed at first, despite hearing about them from First Australians. These tactile, nocturnal treehuggers are often well-camouflaged in black bean, Moreton Bay chestnut, candlenut or milky pine trees, with only the crash and thud of their treetop movements giving them away.

Both of Australia's tree-kangaroo species are well-adapted for an arboreal existence. Tree-kangaroos are the only macropods that can walk backwards, have thick pads on their hindfeet to grip onto bark, and have long tails (as much as 15% longer

Top: A young Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo.

*Frank Fichtmueller/Dreamstime.*

Above: This is a culturally significant species to the Djirrbal and Ngadjon-jii peoples of the Atherton Tablelands.

*Stephen Tafra/Unsplash.*

than the body) to aid balance. When they do venture to the ground, they grip a tree-trunk with their forepaws, slide down tail first, flip off about 2m from the ground to right themselves, and then move with a cumbersome hop.

Although largely solitary, family groups of up to four may be seen together, especially during breeding season. Females have the longest known gestation period of any marsupial, (42–48 days), after which they birth a single, underdeveloped joey that is suckled in a pouch.

Lumholtz's tree-kangaroos are most at risk from habitat fragmentation. When dispersing from the maternal range, juveniles risk vehicle strikes or attacks from domestic dogs. A male's home range usually overlaps those of several females, but dispersing males may struggle to find space in places where roads, farms or houses bisect the rainforest and present barriers to free movement.



A family group seen interacting in the treetops. *Frank Fichtmueller/Dreamstime.*

# RANGER SPOTLIGHT

*Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service*

RANGER CALLUM LOVES HIS JOB, AND WHEN HIS OFFICE IS THE WHOLE NORTHERN SECTION OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF WORLD HERITAGE AREA - THE NATIONAL PARK ISLANDS, MARINE PARKS AND ALL THE INCREDIBLE SPOTS IN BETWEEN - WHO CAN BLAME HIM?

“Being part of conserving one of the most iconic places on Earth - that’s pretty cool!” says Callum. “And the amazing partners and different agencies we work with are great, including our strong partnerships with First Nations peoples and the Reef Authority through the Reef Joint Field Management Program.”

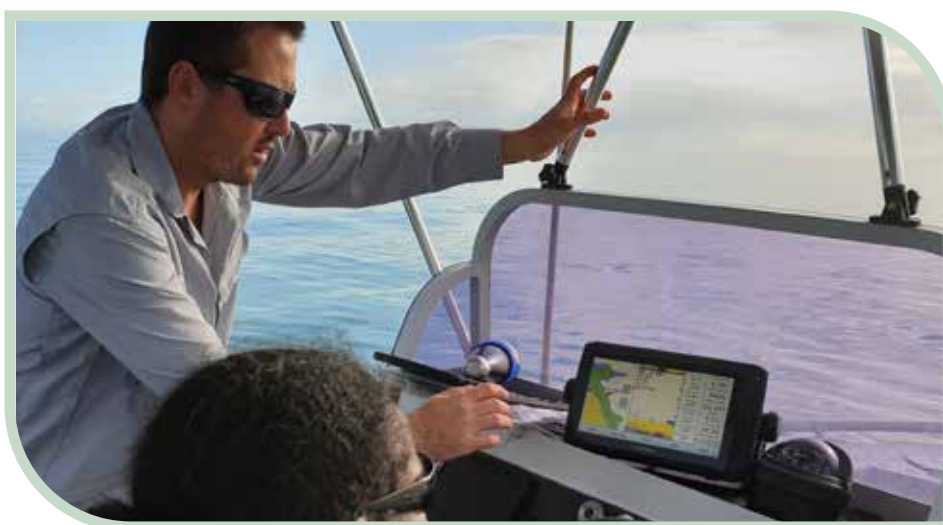
Callum has been a Senior Ranger in compliance for the last four years and says that most visitors to the reef have the right intent.

“Everyone’s out there to enjoy and conserve the area, which is great.

“My top tip would be to familiarise yourself with the rules before you go. So few of the people we speak to for noncompliance are out there being intentionally nefarious. A lot of it is just ignorance,” he says.

“Two apps I recommend to all reef visitors are the

TOP: A split shot of Queensland's incredible Great Barrier Reef. *Victor Huertas/Qld Government.* RIGHT: Ranger Callum kitted up for a day on the water. BELOW: Ranger Callum out on the job.



Eye on the Reef app, for all you need to know about zoning, and the QLD Fishing 2.0 app for fishing rules at your fingertips.

“Before you visit an island, check the park’s page on our website and do your research so you can have the most enjoyable time when you’re there.”

Our Rangers are passionate about protection, wanting everyone to enjoy our natural spaces as much as they do, and Ranger Callum is no exception.

“I’m really proud to wear the Herbie badge. People on the water see you rocking up in your Ranger shirt, they see Herbie, and even if we’re handing out a

fine because they’re doing the wrong thing, they’re generally so respectful and receptive. I think that’s because of the relationship we have with our visitors. It’s something to be proud of. You don’t get many regulatory agencies that have that rapport with the people they’re engaging with.”

“We’ve got such a legacy of being in it not just for the conservation of the protected area, but also for the enjoyment for our visitors. We’re managing protected areas for conservation, but we’re also ensuring that they’re there for people’s enjoyment, both now and in the future.”

## MAJOR EVENTS

### December Members Meeting and Christmas Party

DATE: 13 Dec 2024

VENUE: Newstead Brewing Co.,  
67 Castlemaine St, Milton

TIME: 5pm start

ORGANISER: Donna McCosker

## WHAT'S ON?

### NPAQ ACTIVITIES

Our Activities Committee organises low-cost outdoors activities for members and non-members. To get involved, contact the relevant activity leader or register at [npaq.org.au](http://npaq.org.au)

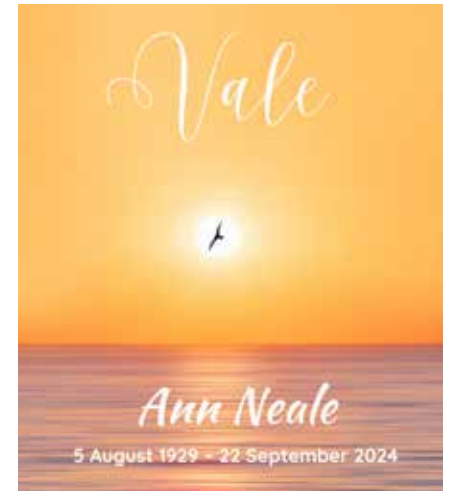
### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

DATE: 23 November 2024  
MEET: 9am, Jollys Lookout Lower Carpark, D'Aguiar NP  
COST: Free  
LEADER: Angus McElnea (0429 854 446)

### BIRDWATCHING - SANDY CAMP WETLANDS RESERVE

DATE: 24 November 2024  
MEET: 7:30am, entrance gate, northside of Sandy Camp Road, Lytton  
COST: \$5 (bring a plate to share for morning tea)  
LEADER: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280)

RIGHT: NPAQ was sad to hear of the passing of Ann Neale - Romeo Lahey's youngest daughter - in late September. Although Ann was not actively engaged with NPAQ in her later years, many members have fond memories of Ann and her siblings.



### WE'VE BEEN SOWING THE SEEDS OF OUR IDEAS...

All year we've been working on soon-to-be released reports on:

- mountain biking in national parks
- user contributions to national parks
- ecosystem services in national parks.

This Christmas

We need your help to make them **GROW**

To encourage our ideas to spread and thrive, we need donations. Your generosity will help us publish, publicise and present these reports to decision-makers and conservation stakeholders throughout Queensland and elsewhere. With your support, we can develop the skills of our staff and enable them to attend conferences and symposia to present these findings, so we can continue to influence policies at the highest levels.

PLEASE, GIVE GENEROUSLY TODAY!



[npaq.org.au/donate](http://npaq.org.au/donate)

# BECOME A MEMBER AND SUBSCRIBE

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

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

Register at [npaq.org.au/support-us](http://npaq.org.au/support-us) or return the form below.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## MEMBERSHIP TYPE

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

Membership expires on 31 August each year.

### PAYMENT TYPE

MASTERCARD  VISA  CHEQUE  CASH

### NAME ON CARD

\_\_\_\_\_

### CARD NUMBER

EXP / CVV/CVC

Please post to: Operations Manager, NPAQ, 9/36 Finchley St, Milton QLD 4064.



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

WINTER 2024

AUTUMN 2024



## DONATE & SAVE

Complimentary individual membership with \$200 donation. Complimentary household membership with donation of \$300 or more. **Donate online at [npaq.org.au/donate](http://npaq.org.au/donate)**

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