

National Parks under threat

The Queensland Government wants National Parks to be used as shooting ranges, cow paddocks, firewood depots and playgrounds for riding biking and driving and to accommodate luxury resorts.

Public funds to acquire and manage parks are dwindling. The Federal Government has abandoned the grants program that has been a major driver for growth of the National Park Reserve System. The Government has embarked on an aggressive agenda to 'open up' parks to commerce and recreation. Qld with just 5% of land area

protected, ranks lowest for proportion, much lower than the national average. Leaving 80% of ecosystems and 72% of threatened wildlife without 'a minimum standard of protection'.



Cartoonist: GREG GAUL

In Queensland park management has been removed from the environment portfolio and placed in the department for recreation, sport and racing to echo the Premier's message that 'there needs to be a cultural change which says that national parks are for horse-riding, mountain bike riding, four wheel driving and enjoying camping experiences, fishing and that sort of thing'.



Damage to Hinterland Great Walk Track

This is the result on one horse, rider and dog on the Hinterland Great Walk walking track in relatively dry weather. Many horses are making large ruts in areas of the Conondale National Park. These holes are dangerous and its not safe for walkers and horses on walking tracks.



Kenilworth Poets Breakfast
Saturday September 28



Presidential Ponderings

At a few public occasions recently, I've mused on the changing face of our efforts to retain and improve our natural environment. You might think that early calls for national parks were the beginning of some form of conservation reserve system but really it goes back beyond that. Far-sighted foresters aghast at the rapacious land-clearing for farming feared for the future supply of timber, not a move that endeared them to their political masters but one that ensured that substantial areas of the state's native forests were spared.

The next wave was one that included this organisation and involved a change of title of generally state-held land into the more protective mantle of National Park. Queensland has a lower proportion of National Parks than do other states although the gap had been narrowing. Over the past twenty or so years, though, other alternatives to this approach have emerged and really come into their own.

Groups such as the Australian Wildlife Conservancy have harnessed the collective purchasing power of committed individuals, through tax-deductible donations, to buy strategic environmentally-significant properties across the nation. Focussing on properties that contain threatened species (did you know that one in four mammal species in Australia is threatened with extinction and that Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the

world?), AWC has an very active management program which typical includes fencing to keep out predators such as feral cats which are estimated to kill 75 million native animals across Australia every night. Another emerging and very successful approach has been the Land for Wildlife program where landholders manage their properties with a view to conservation. The Sunshine Coast Council has a very active program encouraging and enabling LfW as do most councils in southeast Queensland. A most recent local overlay to all this has been in the work of Susie Duncan at Barung Landcare with Hinterland Bush Links, prioritising conservation work along identified links, particularly between the Conondale and Blackall Ranges.

A recent addition to this has been the Connection Road Corridor Project which connects forest along the Mary River at Moy Pocket with the Sunshine Coast Council –owned conservation park atop the Kenilworth Bluff through a number of well-vegetated Land for Wildlife properties.

This organisation stands opposed to the altered approach to National Parks being voiced by the current state government. Calls to open National Parks to logging and grazing simply show a failure to appreciate the role of National Parks, and harkens back to the days as seeing land in National parks as being "locked-up" and "unproductive".

We have already been involved in meetings with National Parks Association of Queensland and will be part of a forum organised by Noosa Parks Association (see separate article and date claimer).

What is happening to our National Parks?

National Parks, the cornerstone of our conservation effort, are under threat.

Queensland has less than 5% National Parks, yet the State Government is reviewing protected areas including National Parks declared since 2002 with some revocations likely.

Further, the Queensland State government is stepping back from creating other National Parks, including from both State Forest other National Parks, including from both State Forest agreed to become National Park under the Western Hardwoods Forest Agreement, and land purchased with a majority of funding from the federal National Reserve System. The tourism industry will only suffer from these short-sighted proposals.

Noosa Parks Association is hosting a special forum on Saturday, July 13, from 2.30pm till 4 pm to discuss this important issue.

Keynote speaker will be Paul Donatiu, the Executive Coordinator for the National Parks Association of Queensland. Paul has worked for WWF-Australia, Griffith University and Greening Australia.



Paul will be ably supported by Narelle McCarthy, responsible for advocacy and liaison at the Sunshine Coast Environment Council.

Chairing the forum will be Ian Mackay, long time President of the Conondale Range Committee and currently Chair of the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee.

Join in this important discussion at the NPA Environment Centre, Wallace Drive, Noosaville.



Environment in decline

More than a million acres of forest earmarked for conservation will be returned to logging, grazing and mining former State Forests transferred by the previous Govt to national park will be degazetted and broadscale land clearing will resume.

National Parks to be degazetted

NPRSR is undertaking a review of all National Parks. Minister Dickson has said that they will be reviewing 12.5 million hectares across the State. That is more than the total Protected Area estate. According to the *The Courier-Mail* (19 July 2012), Minister Dickson said 875,000 hectares recently gazetted national parks were likely to be the first to be rescinded and opened to logging and grazing.

Whatever the review is covering it is certain to include all of the 450,000 hectares transferred from State Forest to National Park as a result of the South East Queensland Forests Agreement.

Ecotourism resorts in National Parks

The Queensland Government introduced a Bill to amend the Nature Conservation Act to allow ecotourism resorts in national parks. The Bill was considered by the Health and Community Services Committee of the parliament and public submissions were called for. Australian Rainforest Conservation Society provided a submission and ARCS President Dr Aila Keto was invited to address the Committee. Despite 85 per cent of submissions opposing the amendments, the Committee approved the Bill and it was subsequently passed by parliament.

Cattle Grazing in National Parks

Campbell Newman opens 444,000 hectares of parks and reserves for cattle grazing – a practice proven to pollute waterways, trample delicate wetlands, cause soil erosion and spread weeds.

This measure is described as ‘an emergency but temporary drought measure’. Drought has never been a temporary problem for Queensland, we can only hope that it is only temporary and not a long term solution allowing grazing in National Parks.

Land clearing resumes

Campbell Newman breaks promise on land clearing, giving discretion to the Natural resources Minister to allow for land clearing.

In 1999, the Qld Labor Government introduced controls on broadscale clearing for which Qld has been notorious. As a percentage of total vegetation the land clearing rate was equivalent to that of the Amazon. It has been claimed that stopping broadscale land clearing in Queensland remains the most significant Australian emissions abatement measure introduced by any government to date.

Under the proposed amendment to the Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013, landholders will now be able to clear land for high value agriculture and environmental works.

Including remove the requirement for a permit for clearing for certain purposes including fodder and thinning and replace it with a self-assessable clearing code, thus making prosecution of infringement more difficult.

Also remove the requirement for a permit to clear regrowth vegetation along watercourses.

The proposed amendments to the Bill will break a promise made by the Newman Government prior to the election, that the LNP would retain the current level of statutory vegetation protection.

Dr Martin Taylor, WWF, has produced a report on the potential consequences of the amendments - ‘Bushland at risk of renewed clearing in Queensland’ available at wwf.org.au.

Our national parks protect some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country, and provide critical habitat for our unique plants and wildlife, once they are destroyed they cannot be replaced. It is therefore essential that action is taken to protect them and that any decisions taken about future impacts are

kept at the national not state level.

National parks cover less than 10% of Australia and they are the only places where these landscapes and wildlife are truly safe. Less than 5% is protected

Young boat builder scoops the pool in this year’s Brownwater Classic

As rain drizzled its way through the recent Winter Solstice, organisers of this year’s Brownwater Classic were hoping that the clouds would obey the weather forecasters and part to reveal a fine Saturday.

And so it came to pass that this year’s Brownwater, the blackbean pod boat race for the coveted Numabulla Cup, was held in beautiful atmospheric conditions at Pickering Bridge, Moy Pocket. The rain of the previous day had caused a flush in the river which peaked at a height of 1.39 metres at the official Moy Pocket gauge, at the very time the race was being run.

Two floods since last year’s event and major earthworks involved in the construction of the new concrete Moy Pocket bridge meant considerable changes to the course for this year’s event.

And while the river was higher than last year, not to mention considerably faster, the vagaries of river currents were highlighted at the starting point as all boats headed upstream when launched, before eventually moving out into a fast downstream current. This carefully-planned beginning allowed the Commodore ample time to head downstream by kayak to be ready with his retrieval team at the finish line.

For the first time in the twenty-four year history of the race, first and second place were taken out by the same boat builder, young Keira Eckley while her sister Alia made it a family clean sweep in the Novice section by coming third. First in the Veteran section was Luke Kempny from Gympie with Melanie Weaver second.

Boat retrieval in the fast flow conditions provided more headaches than usual but the tight knit finish line team of Tanis Fulcher, Aliyah Royer and Lauris Dwyer totally immersed themselves in the task, plucking winning boats from the strong current, coming to understand a different meaning to the “numb” in Numabulla. Their ranks were swelled this year by an adult retriever back-up team of Shane Litherland and Des King, who collected boats by kayak in the deeper swifter water.

The Ross Freiberg Design award was initiated many years ago when its namesake, then a young lad, had suggested there should be a prize for the best design and, after many years’ absence; it was great to see Ross’ return this year with his young family. After much difficult deliberation, the award for the best design went to Silvi Eckley (mother of winner Keira) while Ross’ own boat, an exceptionally well-balanced construction was adjudged second. The best named boat went to “Olive Oil” by young Olive Freiberg while Martin Rhodes came second with “Endeavour”, a name that the judges felt could



Mt Allan Firetower closed

Public access to the Mt Allan firetower has been closed due to damage to one of the pole structures. During a routine inspection of the fire tower some decay was found in one of the supporting posts. The tower is unsafe to climb and will be closed until repaired. The walking track to the tower will remain open

Most of the damage appears to be confined to one pole over an area of 400mm. Some other minor rot has been noted. New technology these days allows for the rot to be removed, a fibreglass bandage wrapped around

the pole, and the cavity filled. QPWS are hopefully funding will be available this new financial year.

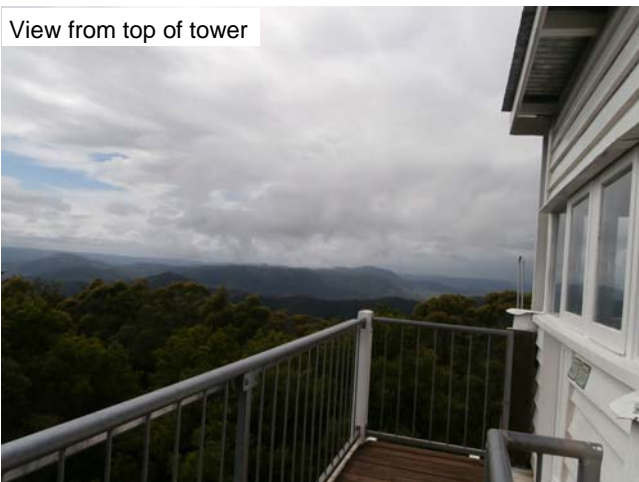
The Mt Allan fire tower was built in 1954 to monitor wildfire threats to the surrounding native forest and Hoop Pine plantations. In 2002 the Mt Allan tower was re-opened to the public after a period of closure following an \$80,000 refurbishment. External stairs and an observation deck were added for public use and as an observation point on the very popular walking track from Charlie Moreland and Booloumba Creek campgrounds. It is still being used as part of a communications center, and occasionally for fire detection. The views on a clear day are magnificent and include Mt Pinbarren, Mt Cooroora, the Kenilworth Bluff and Cooroy Mountain. It's mainly used these days by visitors wanting to enjoy the breathtaking 360 degree views over the surrounding Conondale Range and Great Walk.

The 9.6m tower on Mt Allan is a timber four-legged design and the oldest tower located in South East Queensland. The tower has a radio base and it was most likely Arthur Leis who swung onto the cabin roof to install the aerals.

Arthur built the Heritage listed Jimna fire tower which is the largest in Queensland at 42m. This unique three-legged tower is currently under real threat of demolition.

The Mt Allan tower needs some structural repairs and on-going maintenance. It is one of the highlights of the Conondale Range Great Walk as the 360 degree views are spectacular. Lets hope Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service re-open the tower soon and not send it down the same path as the Jimna tower.

View from top of tower



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Black Bean Boat Race

easily catch on for ships engaging in long sea voyages.

A special award, the Lopsided Award for Eccentric Design went to Tim Lang for a boat that included a sail carefully crafted from flood debris corrugated iron.

Immediately following the race, a large line-up contested the annual rock-skipping titles, with the field being thrown wide open by the absence of both reigning champion Alan Franks of Chinaman Creek and last years' hot young contender Caelen Dwyer of Witta.

In the 7years and under section, Tom Gicquel was successful, narrowly outskipping young Melika Wedlock from Pomona.

In the 7 to 14 year age group, Jordan Eckley was in fine form, just edging out first time entrant Django Ward of Kenilworth.

The women's section saw its usual spirited competition but eventually Lizette Morrison emerged victorious, narrowly outskipping Bronwyn McAdam.

The Open section, open to all ages and genders, had a huge field vying for the trophy and took many rounds and some impressive skips, before leaders began to emerge. Fortunes seesawed, especially in the final round where young Luke Kempny produced a brilliant skip to force early leader John Burns and Tuchekei's Simon McVerry to engage in a skip-off for second place in which John gained the upper hand.

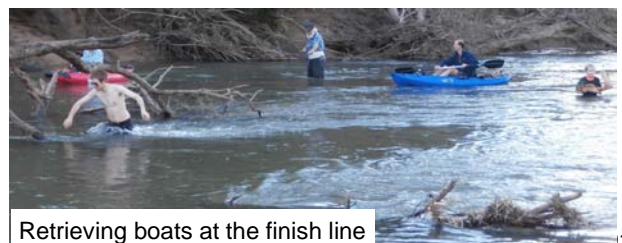
The Sid Loweke (Un)Lucky Dip Rock-Skip saw fifteen contestants endeavouring to skip rocks that were almost completely devoid of skipping potential. Despite the challenge, several did manage it and an additional skip-off was called for in order to decide a winner. Newcomer Gaelan Scott was impressive, just edging out John Burns for the trophy.

A radiant full moon campfire and some great music followed in the blackbean forest, with guitars, ukuleles and violin and even the odd poem.

The Commodore and Crew of the Moy Pocket Yacht Club would like to thank all this year's participants for the convivial competitiveness again shown. They especially thank Richo who has been the diligent caretaker of the blackbean clubhouse for many months and through several floods.

The Brownwater, winner of an inaugural Mary River Award for River Recreation in 2010, is held each year in late June or early July on what is often the coldest day of the year, when most of the blackbean pods have fallen.

A special feature of this year's event was the unveiling of the Connection Road Corridor Project which connects the reserve at the river to the extensive Conservation Park on the southern end of the Kenilworth Bluff, through a number of Land for Wildlife properties.



Retrieving boats at the finish line

World Environment Day 2013



Wet weather failed to deter a large crowd from taking part in this year's World Environment Day celebrations at the Sunshine Coast University on Sunday June 9. With a host of stalls from both community groups and eco-friendly products, WED is always an informative showcase as to what's happening environmentally across the region.

SCEC launched its Life Members project at a special morning tea, and past coordinators Elaine Ricketts and Karen Robinson reminisced about those who went before, in a time when it wasn't easy being green.

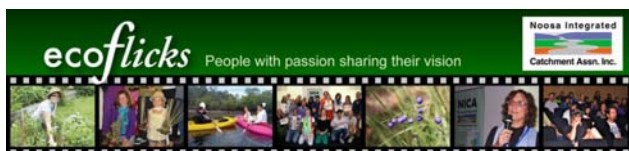
The annual EcoFlicks hosted by Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, held its screening and award ceremony, with judges impressed by the standard of this year's entries.

EcoFlicks Award

The story of what to do when you discover some five thousand truck and car tyres in a local gully and finding their way into the creek, featured in the most recent edition of ECO and also in the recent NICA-organised EcoFlicks competition. "Yabba's Sad Secret" told the story of local kayak operator Ian Harling and his efforts to have the tyres removed from a major tributary of the Mary before the wet season spread them far and wide. The film by CRC president Ian Mackay (now also Chair of the Mary River Catchment Committee) was recognised with the Year of Water Award at EcoFlicks.

There is a good news update on both the ECO story and the film, in that the next stage, removing the tyres from the steep gully, has now been completed. It was very difficult manual work undertaken by a local cleaning contractor and resulted in a further 1800 tyres being added to the retrieval heap placed high in a paddock well above flood water line, while negotiations continue with a recycler.

The film (along with other EcoFlicks entries) is on You Tube and can be accessed by either the NICA (Noosa Integrated Catchment Association) website or by searching "Yabba's Sad Secret" on You Tube.



Noosa Festival of Water 2013



It's been a rainy day for each of the last three Festivals of Water but that hasn't deterred the crowds from turning out. After all it's a festival about water and having a bit of precipitation in evidence just helps bring home the water cycle.

The annual festival held at "Lake" McDonald near Cooroy, in the Noosa Botanical Gardens, is a leisurely affair with a mass of musical entertainment, a wide range of excellent and informative stalls and demonstrations, not to mention a great array of food stalls.

Lyndon Davis and the Gubbi Gubbi dancers worked hard to hold the rain at bay and eventually the sun even peeked through. There was sailing and kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding and a catch and release bass fishing competition. There were trips across the "lake" to the fish hatchery and water treatment plant as well as demonstrations of permaculture gardening and reptile and wildlife awareness. Organized by the Lake McDonald Catchment Group and the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, the festival has a host of sponsors including the Sunshine Coast Council, SEQWater and the Burnett Mary Regional Group as well as local groups, generous businesses and myriad volunteers. It aims to celebrate and inform about water and waterways, and does a great job.



On Sunday 30 June about 24 people attended a very informative workshop at Eastern Mary River Road Cambroon. The weather was threatening but stayed fine for the property walk and talk.

The owners have been working hard to establish a habitat linkage between ridge-line vegetation and the Mary River. The property with great views of the Upper Mary Valley, illustrates the value of restoring connections between remnant bush and waterways. It's a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new like-minded people. It was also very pleasing to see Ann Moran who has been incapacitated for a long time but is now up and about and managed the property walk.

Mary-Jane and Dan, who are keen CRC members, have been 'working towards' Land for Wildlife status. Allan Wyn from LFW presented them with their official sign and they are now members of a growing group of landholders with similar aims.

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Launching a very wide variety of floating crafts at the 24th Annual Moy Pocket to Pacific Ocean Brown Water Classic in the Mary River



property visit Cambroon