

**Fortieth Anniversary for Conondale Range Conservation**

We've had some wonderful celebrations over the years in the Conondales. We've marked the expanded National Park, the South-east Queensland Forest Agreement and of course, our twenty-fifth, all with campouts in the Overflow Area just upstream of Charlie Moreland. To mark our fortieth, and with the Overflow Area no longer in use, we were delighted to be have the use of the Sunday Creek Field Study Centre for the weekend.

It was a great get-together. On Saturday we slotted in a visit and working bee at the now very well revegetated Agricola Mine. What a transformation from the "lunar landscape" left by Agricola resources when they declared bankrupt and walked off into the sunset more than twenty years ago. It was an "out of the way" site that, like over a thousand abandoned mines throughout the state, would've just been left as a toxic legacy but for the persistent nagging and lobbying of the Conondale Range Committee and the subsequent committed work of Mines Department Environment Office Rob Savory.

Saturday evening saw a splendid curry spread, something that has been a hallmark of the CRC for many years and widely hypothesised as a key



40th cake ceremony

ingredient of our longevity as an enduring, functioning conservation group.

A re-run of the video from the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary brought back many memories as we remembered those no longer with us. The indefatigable Mark Ricketts, for example, who breathed life into the embers of the CRC at a really low time and who rode us through (and indeed shaped) many of the subsequent successes, Heather Harford (previously Heather Petersen) whose name spelling, not to mention a good deal of pluck, put her in contact with Joh Bjelke-Petersen to sow the seeds of what became the Paired Catchment Study which proved the saviour of the magnificent Bundaroo Creek, Eric Glassop long-time Forest Ranger at Kenilworth whose freely-shared knowledge would be the basis for the Conondale Great Walk and who, despite initial differences, became a great friend, and of course Ross Scott, the Kenilworth scoutmaster who first petitioned the government for a national park in the Conondales a decade before the CRC came into being.

We were fortunate to have with us Richard Giles who'd been the first paid project office of an

environment group in Queensland and whose great writing had drawn many of us to the cause, all that way back.

It was a great venue to reminisce over past actions and particularly changed community attitudes to the magnificent forests of the Conondales. We are a small group but one with a great support base across the coast. Our determination to "hang in there" has notched up some impressive and certainly satisfying conservation outcomes over the years and we've no plans to pull up stumps yet. Thanks to all involved , and roll on the fiftieth!



# Presidential Ponderings

# Book Review

For the past few years we've had our information stall at Kenilworth's Food and Wine Festival on Easter Saturday. We display maps and photos of the Conondales and invariably meet some interesting people.

That's how I met Ian Stehbens. Ian grew up in Imbil, which has given him a great local knowledge but one which he's augmented by further studies in geography and geology. Ian is a fascinating man.

He rang a year or so back to arrange a time to conduct me to the magnificent Yabba Falls somewhere I'd only heard tell of.

First we pored over maps so I could be familiarised with an area of which I had little knowledge. Yabba Creek rises on the western slopes of the Conondale's highest mountains and flows northwards through Jimna (and Peach Trees camp ground) before turning eastwards and dropping spectacularly into Baimbora Gorge. Every creek up in the Conondales eventually takes a dramatic plunge to the country below but nothing prepared me for what I found when Ian bundled me into his car for a quick drive and walk to the head of the falls.

The width of the creek and the size of the boulders in it suggested a creek carrying large volumes of water in flood times. "Booulumba on steroids" was my first thought.

Ian is a sprightly walker, one who'd just celebrated his seventieth birthday but who was showing no signs of slowing down. His photography of Yabba Falls is simply brilliant and, fortunately, is up on the internet for all to see.

Yabba Falls is at the centre of a smattering of land tenures as a result of Campbell Newman's axing of the ongoing rollover of areas of state forest into national park as articulated in the South east Queensland Agreement (read more detail elsewhere in this newsletter).

Ian's vision is to see the falls and Gorge adequately protected in a national park. We see how such a move could enhance connectivity between Conondale and Wratten's National Parks. Such connectivity already exists, of course, for the creatures for whom land tenures present no boundaries, but we've learnt important lessons from the reverses of the previous government and want to see a more secure future for the northern part of the Conondales.

What a wonderful opportunity!



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## Agricola Mine-site rehabilitation



Filling in pit two, the open cut pit or “blue lagoon” contaminated with heavy metals including a high percentage of copper. The water was treated and the pit filled and capped. Major earthworks were carried out and the site seeded and planted.

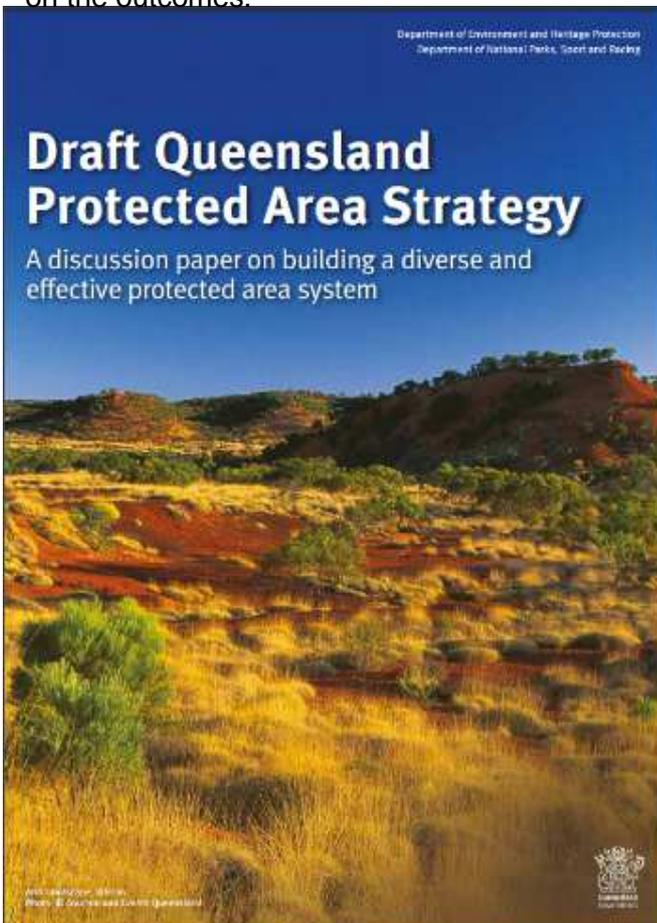


This site twenty five years later, after the pit was capped, during our Agricola site visit on Saturday of the 40th Celebration weekend July 30/31 2016. Wyn Boon from QPWS giving us a briefing on the progress of the rehabilitation. This was followed by a working bee to remove some of the Casuarina species that are not native to the Conondales.

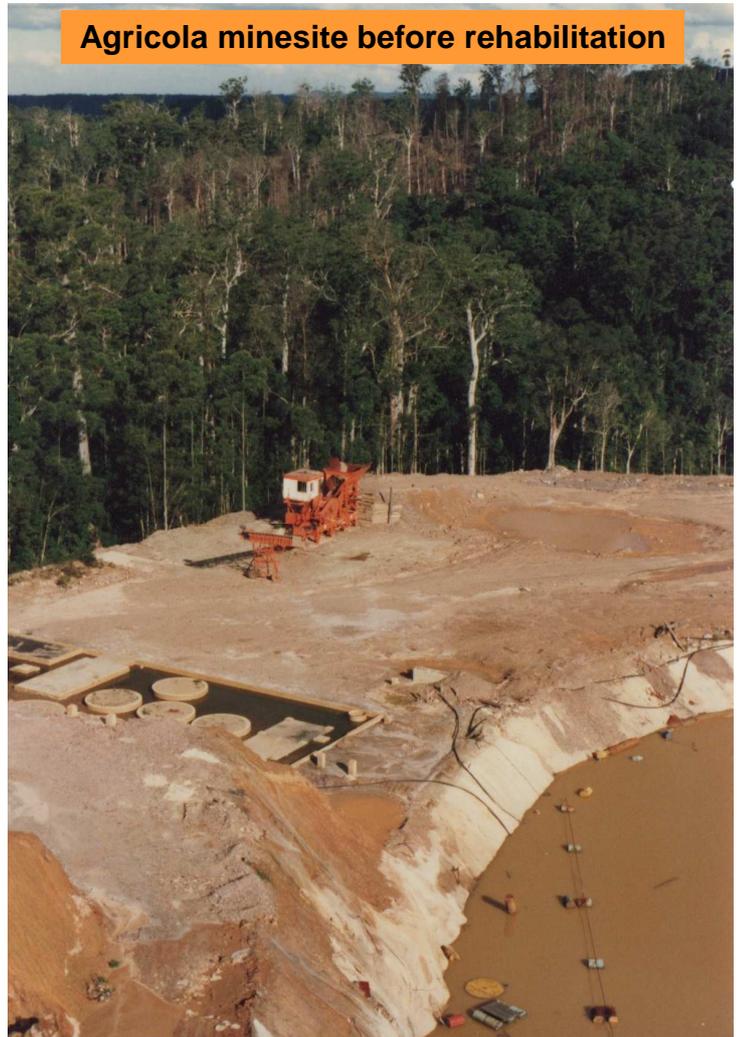
**Agricola mine site 25 years after the rehabilitation process began**



The Draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy closed for public comment on Friday 24 February. Will keep you informed on the outcomes.



**Agricola minesite before rehabilitation**



## **A WONDERFUL NATIONAL PARK OPPORTUNITY**

The Conondale Range Committee has long pushed for a substantial national park in the Conondales. We were involved in the historic Southeast Queensland Forest Agreement which was to have seen significant areas of state forest progressively go over to national park by 2024.

Regrettably the Newman government took the chainsaw to this process and, as a result, we have a smattering of outlier national parks, state forests and forest reserves on land that had been earmarked for eventual conversion to national park. In a recent letter to Conondale Range Conservation, Environment Minister Steven Miles said his government was “very serious about its commitment of moving the protected area towards 17% of Queensland.”

We want to point out to the minister the wonderful opportunity that exists in the diverse forests west of Imbil, in the vicinity of the magnificent Yabba Falls and Borumba Dam.

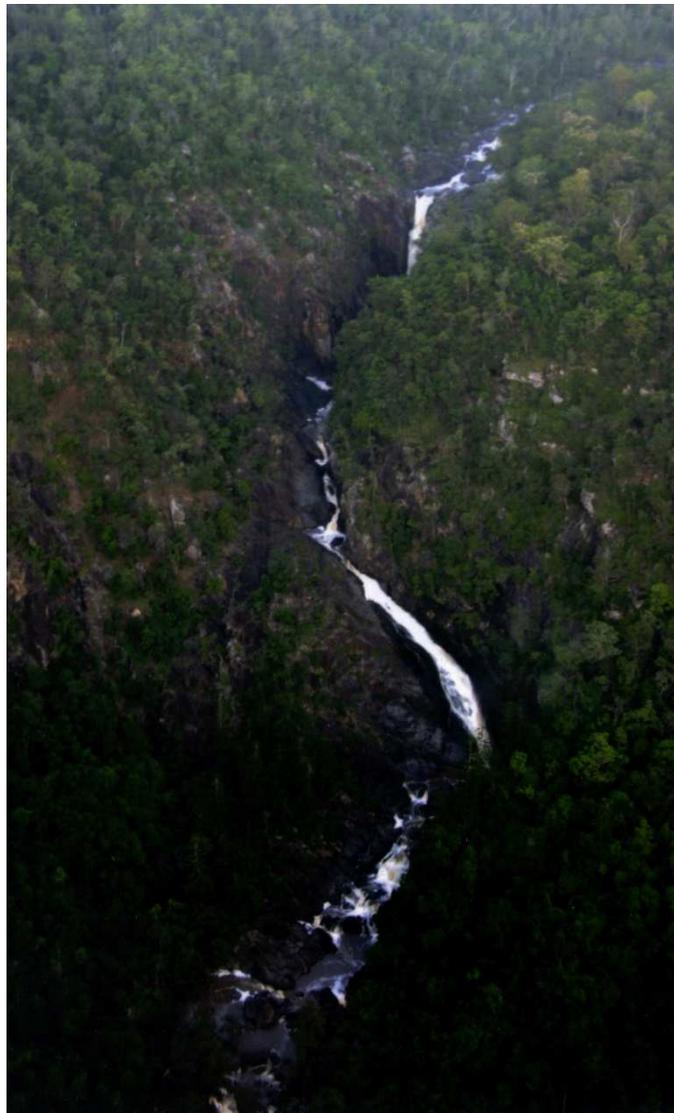
The area contains 3 outliers of Conondale National Park as well as 3 outliers of Wratten’s National Park. The bulk of Conondale National Park is to the south and that of Wratten’s to the north. This proposal would form an important link between the two. For that reason we have called it the Conondale /Wratten’s National Park Corridor.

Our proposal suggests including a scenic reserve at the top of the magnificent Yabba Falls, the highest waterfall in south-east Queensland as well as freehold land owned by the crown. This is in addition to substantial areas of state forest which had been either part A or part B under the SEQFA and which were destined to become national park.

The optimal result would be achieved with the acquisition of just one small freehold property, apart from that all the land is owned by the crown.

We seek the support of groups like SCEC, NPAQ, The Wilderness Society, WPSQ, QCC and others to bring this possibility into

reality. The area already represents a wonderful corridor and a very significant conservation parcel but we realised under the previous government that a more secure tenure needs to be accorded to the area.



### **Yabba Falls**

Yabba Falls is a spectacular waterfall on Yabba Creek, a major tributary of the Mary, which rises in some of the western area of the Conondales.

Yabba Falls is a set of 2 large drops and various cascades along the entire length of the impressive Baiambora Gorge. The total descent of the falls is 160 metres. Part of the gorge is in a Scenic Reserve and part in an outlier of Wrattens National Park.

To see more of Ian Stebben’s magnificent photography of Yabba Falls just google “images of Yabba Falls.”

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*A must for any visitor to the Conondales, this book includes history, a comprehensive bird list, description of walks, recreation and maps of the area. Plus lots of great photos.*



Kenilworth

Cheese  
Wine & Food  
Fest

CRC will have our display and information stall at the Food Fest in Kenilworth Easter Saturday with maps and photos of the Conondales.  
 A good day out with lots of interesting stalls.  
 Come along and say hello.