

Issue 49 Winter/Spring 2026

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

COLLABORATION

*Discover Queensland's
Special Wildlife Reserves*

PLUS

CHASING WATERFALLS

*Improving water safety
in National Parks*

FROM RESEARCH TO REEF

*Citizen science in action
with CoralWatch*

ALSO FEATURED

NPAQ moments in time
Wildlife focus: Kowari
Bunya Mountains NP
Ranger spotlight



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ABOUT NPAQ



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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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- | | | |
|--|--|--|
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BECOME A MEMBER, DONATE OR VOLUNTEER!**

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Photo: © Bee Stephens



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Photo: © Tatiana Gerus/Flickr



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KOWARI

Photo: © Kathy Walter/iNaturalist



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susanne Cooper

IT'S BEEN A BUSY FEW MONTHS, WITH A RECENT MEMBERS' MEETING, Council Meeting, Park of the Month events and, as always, many other issues, activities and opportunities for NPAQ.

The July Members' Meeting was very productive, resulting in numerous ideas and suggestions that we're keen to implement. One is to release an annual calendar of events so people can see what's coming and plan ahead. It will need some organising, but we're starting to think ahead for 2027.

I've recently returned from a 7-day walk in Karijini National Park, Western

Australia, which was memorable. The landscapes, geology and biodiversity were spectacular, and it was terrific to be immersed in it for a while.

Reflecting on this issue of *Protected* and its theme of "Collaboration" triggered some thoughts. NPAQ is a small organisation, but we continue to punch well above our weight. One of the ways we achieve this is through collaboration, working with like-minded organisations, teams and individuals on a project, task or opportunity. The goal of collaborating is to pool our skills, ideas and information with others, working together to build stronger connections among the teams, which usually results in a more effective impact.

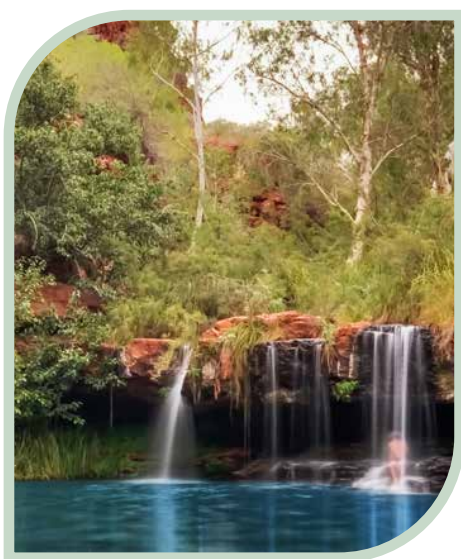
The environment sector includes so many organisations with linked interests and issues—ecology and biodiversity, conservation, tourism, economics, water supply, agriculture, and so on. NPAQ has a unique identity and a focus on National Parks, but much of our advocacy work involves one or more of these issues. While NPAQ's core mission is based on protected areas, collaboration remains an effective way for

us to increase our impact. We recognise that everything in nature is connected in some way, so collaboration is just another facet of linking up.

We've seen this collaboration in NPAQ's many alliances and coalitions, including Protect Beautiful Queensland, Respect Springbrook Mountain, the Dingo 2030 Network and, of course, the Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance (QTCA) where we engage with the Queensland Conservation Council, Pew Charitable Trusts, Queensland First Nations Tourism Council, Outdoors Queensland, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, and Ecotourism Australia. The shared goal of the QTCA is for ecotourism to be thoughtfully designed, better managed and ecologically sustainable in natural areas, especially in National Parks. The alliance also aims to avoid greenwashing in ecotourism, ensuring that participants build an understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural environment, which remains central to ecotourism activities.

Continue to enjoy experiencing nature, especially exciting now that Spring is on our doorstep.

Susanne Cooper



TOP: Teewah Beach, Great Sandy National Park. ©Charlie Ryan/Unsplash
ABOVE: Karijini National Park, Western Australia. ©Nick Dunn/Unsplash

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

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

We're always looking for great snaps, and we also encourage you to let your photos inform conservation management on iNaturalist by joining in our monthly Parks Connect BioBlitzes. Email your pics to marketing@npa.org.au or connect on Facebook (@NPAQld) or Instagram (@nationalparksassocqld) for the chance to have your photos featured in the next edition of NPAQ's *Protected*.



One of the most eye-catching weevils seen in macro, this species is exclusive to the east coast of Australia.

ABOVE: *Enteles vigorsii* photographed by Nicholas John Fisher at Tamborine NP during April 2026. © Nicholas John Fisher/iNaturalist



ABOVE: This fantastic image of a great barred frog (*Mixophyes fasciolatus*) was taken at Tamborine NP during the April BioBlitz. © prissm /iNaturalist



ABOVE: A varied dusky blue (*Candalides hyacinthinus*), depicted beautifully during the March BioBlitz by © Martin Rady.

FROM RESEARCH TO REEF

Citizen science in action with CoralWatch

Anusha Vidovic

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO THE OCEAN. SOME OF MY FAVOURITE HOBBIES TAKE PLACE IN IT, THE CREATURES THAT CALL IT HOME FASCINATE ME, AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO OUR PLANET IS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF WHAT IS AT STAKE. BUT THIS FEATURE ISN'T ANOTHER STORY ABOUT OCEAN DECLINE; IT'S ABOUT THE POWER OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE DIFFERENCE YOU CAN MAKE THROUGH CITIZEN SCIENCE.

WHY DOES THE GREAT BARRIER REEF NEED CITIZEN SCIENCE?

Citizen science is the active involvement of the public in scientific research, most commonly through data collection. In conservation, it is invaluable, offering benefits like large-scale datasets, local knowledge, awareness raising, and shared responsibility. The Great Barrier Reef is a perfect example of why these matter. As the world's largest coral reef system, it stretches 2300 km along Australia's north-east coast and covers an area larger than Italy. Its size and geographic remoteness make citizen science essential to its conservation.

Scientific monitoring methods, such as sonar surveys and remotely operated vehicles, are often costly and logistically complex. Rather than replacing these approaches, citizen science complements them by expanding monitoring, informing management, and connecting communities with environmental protection.

This was the focus of my Master's thesis at Queensland University of Technology. Through interviews with marine scientists and surveys of citizen scientists, I examined citizen science benefits, challenges, how to improve it and how digital platforms can help maximise its impact in Great Barrier Reef Marine Park conservation.

ABOVE: A green turtle off Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. © Anusha Vidovic

DOES MY CONTRIBUTION ACTUALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

One concern among citizen scientists is the real-world relevance of their contributions. Questions like 'Where does my data go?' and 'How does the data I collect contribute to policy change?' emerged early in my research. Seeing their contributions lead to tangible conservation outcomes was the strongest motivator for continued participation for 30% of citizen scientists.

Marine scientists, however, emphasised the clear scientific and practical value of citizen science. They noted that it →

Citizen science projects like CoralWatch and Project Manta, provide valuable data about the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. © Kristian Lane/Dreamstime.





TOP: Anusha monitoring coral within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. RIGHT: Using the Coral Health Chart off Moreton Island, Queensland. The strongest colour indicates healthy coral; white indicates bleaching. Both images © Anusha Vidovic



generates powerful datasets, reveals trends, and answers key biological questions. The data is also used in scientific publications that directly inform NGOs and policy.

One example is Project Manta, a citizen science program studying manta rays through photos submitted by divers and snorkellers. By matching individual mantas' unique belly markings, researchers uncovered a record-breaking movement.

Two manta rays photographed at the SS *Yongala* wreck were traced to earlier sightings off North Stradbroke Island, 1150 km away—the largest point-to-point distance ever recorded for a reef manta ray.

IS REEF MONITORING AS EASY AS COLOUR MATCHING?

CoralWatch is a 24-year-old citizen science initiative based at the University of Queensland. It combines hands-on reef monitoring with education and outreach, including workshops, professional development, community events, and engaging learning resources.

At the heart of it all is the Coral Health Chart, an easy-to-use tool that quantifies changes in coral colour linked to coral health, particularly bleaching. Available in more than 10 languages and requiring little prior training, it makes reef monitoring accessible to anyone.

'After completing my research and gaining a wealth of new knowledge, I felt inspired to get even more involved in citizen science. In January 2026, I applied to become a CoralWatch Ambassador ... and was ecstatic to be accepted!'

HOW DO YOU TURN COMPLEX SCIENCE INTO A SIMPLE CHART?

Despite its ease of use, the Coral Health Chart is grounded in rigorous, peer-reviewed science. In 2002, scientists on Heron Island responded to a real bleaching event there with a two-stage study (Siebeck et al., 2006).

First, they simulated bleaching in a controlled laboratory setting, exposing coral fragments to rising water temperatures to track changes in coral colour. As heat stress increased, the density of symbiotic algae (dinoflagellates) declined, causing the colour to fade. Second, they conducted field surveys of 200 corals to identify the most common colours across healthy and bleached states. Together, this produced a 6-point brightness scale across four hues, where colour change tracks coral health.

To validate the chart, independent observers tested it across multiple conditions and trials, finding it both accurate and low in variability. In fact, precision improves as the number of users increases. ➡



Corals and fish off Heron Island, Qld. © Christopher Bellette/Dreamstime.

CoralWatch began in Australia and is now a globally recognised program, active in 80+ countries.



ABOVE: CoralWatch Ambassadors after completing the workshop and receiving certificates on Heron Island. © Anusha Vidovic.

WHERE DOES THE DATA GO?

Possibly the best part of CoralWatch is seeing where your data goes right away. Once submitted, it feeds into the CoralWatch database, powered by the Atlas of Living Australia and is fully open source. Anyone can explore the interactive map, filter results, and download datasets ranging from coral type to colour distribution.

Researchers and managers rely on this data, too. Because the technique is fast, low-cost, and needs minimal training, it enables early detection of trends, such as bleaching events, and timely responses.

However, this only works with enough people contributing. So, grab your Coral Health Chart and go and explore the reefs!

WANT TO GO ON A DEEPER DIVE?

Become a CoralWatch Ambassador and join an inspiring community of like-minded people driven to protect the reefs.

Each year, a new group of Ambassadors is welcomed, and this year, I was lucky enough to be one of them. As an Ambassador, I get to spread my love for the ocean and talk about how cool and crucial coral reefs are. I'm also working on my "passion project", a personal initiative each Ambassador proposes to support CoralWatch in any creative way possible.

The experience started with an unforgettable five-day workshop at the Heron Island Research Station. We learned about coral biology, science communication, and

MONITORING TIPS

1. **Measure 3 cm from the tip** of branching corals as the tips are white because they're still growing.
2. **Do not record blue or purple corals** as their colour comes from natural pigmentation, not symbiont algae.
3. **Get close, but don't touch.**
4. **Use a torch in deeper water** for accurate colour assessment.

reef monitoring, and then put that knowledge into practice through quizzes, role plays, and presentations. When we weren't learning on land, we were underwater, exploring the stunning marine life and collecting coral data. One highlight? Seeing a bommie once completely bleached, now healthy and recovered.

Since then, we have stayed involved through public engagement, monthly catch-ups, and our passion projects. I represented CoralWatch at the 2026 World Science Festival and helped deliver an AMSA Queensland South x CoralWatch workshop on Moreton Island.

FOLLOW CORALWATCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY IN THE LOOP FOR AMBASSADOR INTAKES.

Anusha Vidovic is a CoralWatch Ambassador and Digital Communications Officer for Wildlife Queensland. Her research is being prepared for publication. For information, email anushavidovic@wildlife.org.au

LEFT: Anusha (left) and volunteer Neve representing CoralWatch at the World Science Festival Brisbane. © Anusha Vidovic.



UNIQUELY QUEENSLAND

How Special Wildlife Reserves boost Queensland's biodiversity

Karin Cox

IN APRIL, QUEENSLAND'S PROTECTED AREA ESTATE RECEIVED A 229,000-HA EXPANSION WITH THE DECLARATION OF A THIRD SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVE—PILUNGAH SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVE IN WESTERN QUEENSLAND, NEAR MT ISA.

It follows the earlier gazettal of Edgbaston Special Wildlife Reserve in 2020, and Pullen Pullen Special Wildlife Reserve in 2024, both also owned by Bush Heritage Australia. A fourth Special Wildlife Reserve has also been proposed, revoking the 213,985-ha Ethabuka Nature Refuge, 640 km south of Mt Isa, to create Ethabuka Special Wildlife Reserve. These special wild places are now protected under a tenure unique to Queensland. Together, they shine a light on arid-recovery conservation in bioregions often overshadowed by more romanticised eastern or northern locales.

WHY DO WE NEED SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVES?

Queensland's Special Wildlife Reserves are among the highest class of private protected area under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, providing perpetual

National Park-like protection. They've been lauded as one of the 'most progressive conservation reforms in Australia'. As Queensland's Minister for the Environment and Tourism, Andrew Powell, explained, 'Queenslanders want to see important landscapes protected, but they also want to know the land is being properly managed. ... Special Wildlife Reserves allow us to partner with conservation organisations and landholders to protect significant landscapes while ensuring active land management continues.'

NATIONAL PARK LEVELS OF PROTECTION

Australia has long been a world leader in dedicating private land to conservation, and Queensland has more private protected areas than any state. More than 30% of Queensland's Protected Area Estate is composed of privately protected landscapes, including a network of 4.47 million hectares of nature refuges. Yet, despite its more than 1000 protected areas, Queensland still protects a lower percentage of its land area than the other states.

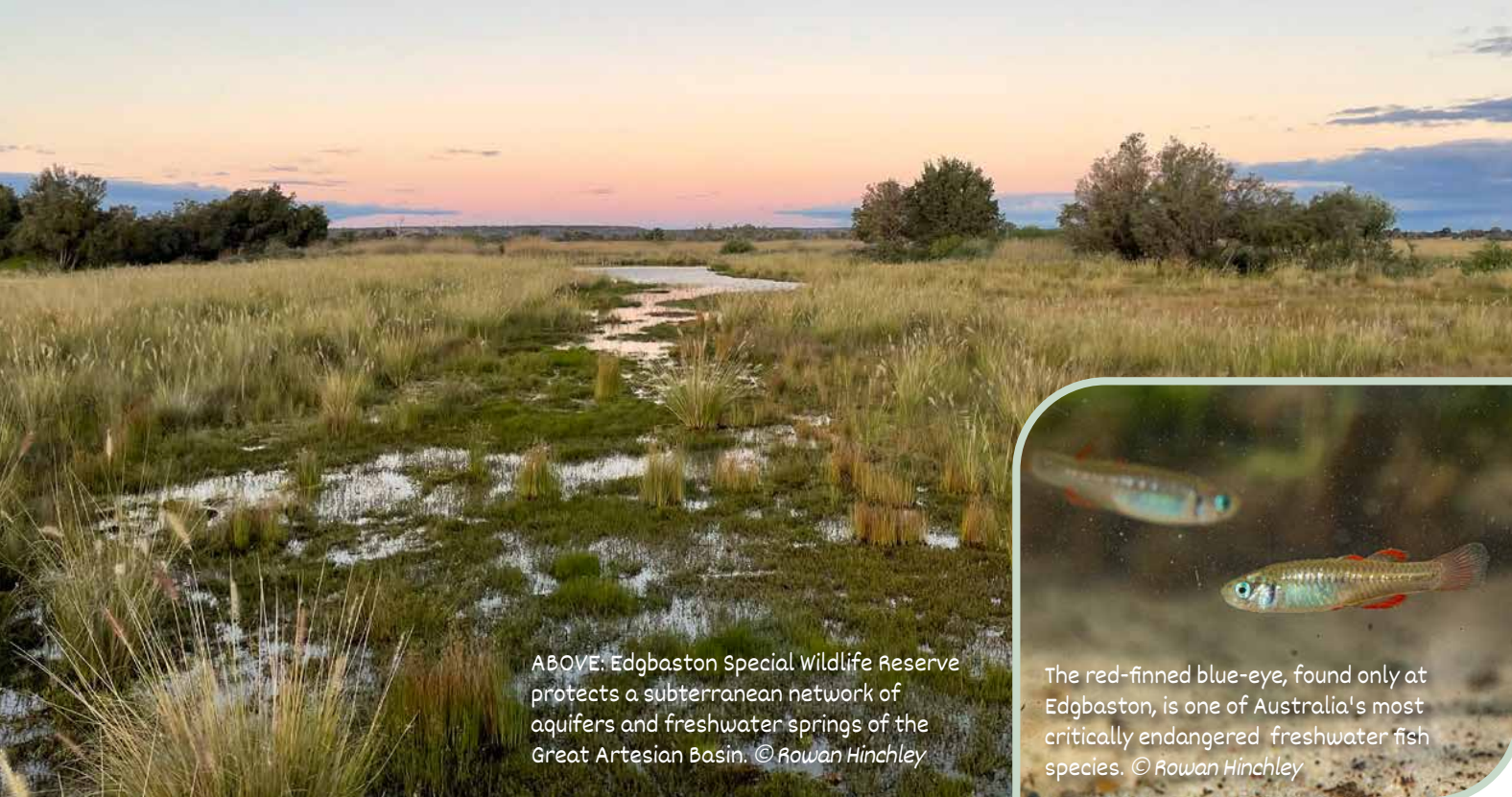
Special Wildlife Reserves are part of the solution. The tenure bestows a high level of



TOP: The sun sets over sand dunes and vegetation channels of Pilungah Special Wildlife Reserve. © Ingo Schomacker.
ABOVE: The dusky hopping-mouse is just one of several small mammals found at Ethabuka Nature Refuge. © David Hancock.

protection to privately owned land, prevents exploitative land uses like mining, grazing or logging, and limits human interference in places of high conservation value for threatened species recovery.

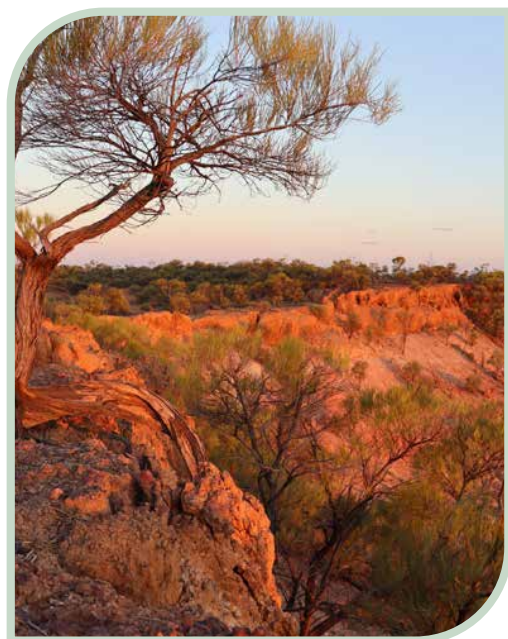
As the name implies, they're designed to operate as refugia for threatened species in off-the-beaten-track landscapes or at-risk ecosystems, which typically have poor coverage within the existing National Reserve System. Many arid-adapted small mammals, reptiles, bats and insects in Queensland's arid western bioregions receive scarce conservation attention.



ABOVE: Edgbaston Special Wildlife Reserve protects a subterranean network of aquifers and freshwater springs of the Great Artesian Basin. © Rowan Hinchley



The red-finned blue-eye, found only at Edgbaston, is one of Australia's most critically endangered freshwater fish species. © Rowan Hinchley



Protecting private land that threatened or range-restricted species are known to inhabit ensures they are managed to reduce threats, without sizable government investment in land purchases. The tenure also reduces the risk of future destruction. In 2023, prior to its Special Wildlife Reserve listing, Pilungah faced active exploration permits for lithium, copper and petroleum.

CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS

While owned and managed by Bush Heritage Australia, Queensland's Special Wildlife Reserves also work in partnership with Traditional Owners (Maiawali for Pullen Pullen, Bidjara for Edgbaston and Wangkamahdla for Pilungah) and protect cultural heritage, including rock art, petroglyphs, cultural artefacts and fossils.

'There are a number of sites on Wangkamahdla Country, including at Pilungah Reserve, that contain the largest concentration and variety of Aboriginal petroglyphs

in Queensland,' said Wangkamahdla Traditional Custodian Avelina Tarrago. 'It's very significant for us that we're able to achieve this Special Wildlife status to protect the integrity of these sites and stories and ensure they are preserved into the future.'

Bush Heritage Australia CEO Rachel Lowry agrees, saying, 'Special Wildlife Reserve legislation is a powerful tool enabling us to work hand in hand with Traditional Custodians and the Government to achieve this together, on behalf of all Australians'.

HOW ARE SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVES CHOSEN?

While voluntary, the establishment of a Special Wildlife Reserve is a binding perpetual agreement between the private landholder and the Queensland Government, and a consistently high benchmark is applied for assessing proposals. Special



TOP: Pullen Pullen Special Wildlife Reserve. © Dell Murphy-Rice.
BOTTOM: Critically endangered plains wanderers inhabit Pullen Pullen Special Wildlife Reserve. © Patrick KF9/
WikimediaCommons CCBy2.0.

QUEENSLAND'S SPECIAL WILDLIFE RESERVES (as at August 2026)

PULLEN PULLEN	EDGBASTON	PILUNGAH	ETHABUKA (PROPOSED)
Channel Country bioregion	Mitchell Grass Downs & Desert Uplands bioregion	Channel Country bioregion	Channel Country bioregion
56,000 ha west of Longreach	8000 ha northeast of Longreach; safeguards a key Lake Eyre Basin area	229,000 ha southwest of Mount Isa; formerly Cravens Peak Nature Refuge.	213,985 ha 640 km south of Mt Isa; formerly Ethabuka Nature Refuge
Maiawali People	Bidjara People	Wangkamahdla People	Wangkamahdla People
10 threatened species, including the critically endangered night parrot and the plains wanderer	35 endemic/threatened species, including critically endangered red-finned blue-eye	24 range restricted species, including the fat-tailed pseudantechinus and vulnerable crest-tailed mulgara	wetland system of national significance; close to Pilungah Special Wildlife Reserve
22 regional ecosystems	31 regional ecosystems	27 regional ecosystems	7 vegetation communities



TOP: Queensland's only known population of the fat-tailed pseudantechinus is found at Pilungah Reserve. BOTTOM: Lizards, like the lined firetail skink, bask on the red soil plains and claypans. Both images © Isaac Clarey (CC BY-NC)

Wildlife Reserves must demonstrate 'exceptional natural and cultural resources and values', and landowners must show financial security, conservation expertise, appropriate governance and the ability to manage the land in perpetuity to:

- » permanently protect exceptional natural and cultural resources and values
- » protect exceptional scientific values
- » present the cultural and natural resources and values
- » ensure the only use of the area is nature-based and ecologically sustainable.

NOT SO ISOLATED

While these reserves may be isolated, they're essential elements in a broader conservation strategy to create bioregional corridors

that protect 1.5 million ha of western ecosystems, from the edge of Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert NP to the Great Dividing Range. These special wildlife reserves will link with Astrebla Downs and Diamantina NPs, as well as Goneaway National Park (set to be renamed Goneaway Tablelands National Park), Mount Windsor Nature Refuge, and other large land acquisitions, such as 300,000-ha Vergemont Station. Combined with the \$54 million over two years earmarked in the 2025-26 State budget for land acquisitions, it's a much-needed boost to the State's biodiversity goals and to the westward expansion of Queensland's protected areas. ■

BUSH HERITAGE AUSTRALIA is a leading conservation not-for-profit protecting ecosystems and wildlife in landscapes across the continent. [Learn more at bushheritage.org.au](https://bushheritage.org.au)



Ranger Spotlight

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service

SEARCHING FOR KOALAS EVERY MORNING IN NOOSA NATIONAL PARK AS A VOLUNTEER, RECORDING THEIR LOCATION DAILY ON THE BOARD FOR “KOALA SPOTTERS”, AND EDUCATING PARK VISITORS ABOUT THESE MAGNIFICENT MARSUPIALS SOUNDS LIKE A DREAM (IF UNPAID) JOB! But for Emma Barraclough, Principal Ranger, Visitor Management, those experiences set her on a very rewarding professional journey for the next 25 years—and counting—in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

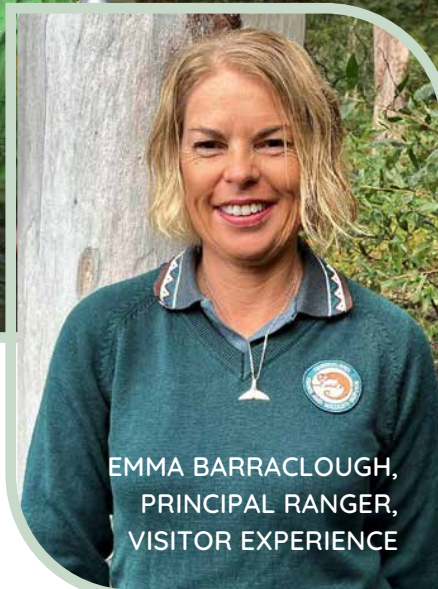
Emma’s love for the outdoors—whether travelling, hiking or surfing—complements her career in protected area park and visitor management. She currently manages a team responsible for communication, permits and compliance for QPWS’s Coastal and Islands Region. This area covers some of the most beloved and heavily visited protected areas, including Recreation Areas on K’gari (Fraser Island) in the north to Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) in the south.

International, domestic and local visitors are drawn to the beauty of Queensland’s amazing natural places and their unique wildlife, including globally significant

World Heritage Areas, islands and coastal parks. However, with that love comes challenges—undesirable visitor behaviour, the need for greater compliance, and overcrowding.

FINDING THE BALANCE

In the hectic world we live in, National Parks and protected areas are more important than ever, both for conserving ecosystems for the future and providing recreational opportunities that help us appreciate the importance of conservation and boost our physical and mental wellbeing. Emma gets to appreciate both sides of the coin: tourism and conservation.



EMMA BARRACLOUGH,
PRINCIPAL RANGER,
VISITOR EXPERIENCE

ABOVE: Last year, Emma was awarded a Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) Excellence Award for Individuals for driving change, embracing new ways of working, and demonstrating a commitment to diversity, respect and inclusion. © Queensland Government.

BELOW: When Emma first joined parks in the early 2000s, it was predominantly a male workforce. These days, there are more female Rangers, making up about one-third of the Ranger workforce. © Queensland Government.





'I'm really proud to be part of teams that are dedicated to contributing to Queensland's conservation stories so future generations can also enjoy these special places.'

Prior to her parks career, Emma had a background in business and tourism. After studying tourism at Gatton College, Emma loved the natural systems component so much she went back to study Applied Science (Wilderness Reserves and Wildlife).

Emma has enjoyed some amazing experiences working for QPWS—travelling on a helicopter for weeding on Mudjimba Island, working on marine park vessels for commercial whale-watching monitoring, and exploring remote sections of Queensland's National Parks on monitoring exercises.

USING TECH TO STAY ON TRACK

Fast forward to an “average week” in Emma's world and it's largely around integrating innovation and policies for sustainable protected area management. In one example, with thousands of vehicle permits issued in the Coastal and Island's Region every year—the highest across the State—QPWS is the first agency to use Automatic Number Plate Recognition Technology (ANPRS) in protected areas across Australia, and possibly the world. This innovative project is now a key visitor management system in

protected area management and provides essential data on visitation patterns. In addition, to address camping visitation pressures around bush toileting at Teewah Beach (in the Cooloola Recreation Area of Great Sandy NP), the mandatory requirement that park visitors bring a portable toilet has successfully reduced conservation impacts.

LAUNCHING NEW INITIATIVES

This year, Emma and the team will be delivering an exciting new interactive digital experience at Fort Lytton National Park, enhancing the visitor experience of the site's built history.

A mobile interpretative trailer will also be rolled out to educate visitors to K'gari, Great Sandy National Park (Fraser Island), on dingo safety, encouraging them to “Be Dingo Safe”.

KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S KEEN TO JOIN QPWS?

Ranger roles are diverse and can include operations, wildlife management, compliance, or assets management. Check out the handy resources on the QPWS website, learn more about Parks Connect Volunteer Rangers, and follow QPWS socials for recruitment options. ■

EMMA'S TOP TIPS FOR CAMPING ON PARK

1. **Plan your visit**—QPWS has extensive information maps, tide times, beach and track conditions, and guides for all locations online. Check Park Alerts for the latest information on access, closures and conditions.
2. **No ghost camping**—cancel your camping booking if you're unable to attend; this courtesy allows someone else to visit our National Parks if you can't.
3. **Stay low impact**—Queensland National Parks have the most affordable camping in Australia, making sites accessible to all. Enjoy and explore what's on your doorstep and beyond...

QPWS is an awesome agency to work for, with like-minded people sharing conservation values. Every day, it works with agencies, organisations, Traditional Owners, groups and communities throughout the State on Protected Area Estate management.

PARK IN FOCUS

Bunya Mountains NP

Bunya Mountains NP is the State's second-oldest National Park.
© Carol Hanson/
Flickr



200 km north-west of Brisbane

by steep, winding roads in parts. Note: No fuel is available on the mountain.



Snap the horizon from Mount Kiangarow

in golden hour or twilight, with grass-trees and bunya pines standing tall in the foreground.



Camp at Dandabah, Westcott or Burtons Well.

Ensure you bring your own firewood (for use in firepits only), water and warm clothes/bedding.



Short and long walks, some with wheelchair access.



Toilets and picnic tables are available.



ABOVE: Some of the bunya pines in the park may be up to 600 years old. First Nations people gathered to feast on the nuts, which are contained in cones weighing up to 10 kg. © Tatters/Flickr.

SIZE & NAME: 19,600 ha. Declared as a National Park in 1908, it protected the world's largest stand of ancient bunya pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*), for which the park is named.

GEOLOGY: These basalt mountains that loom over the State's arable Western Downs and South Burnett arose from shield volcano lava about 24 million years earlier. Their highest peaks, Mt Kiangarow and Mt Mowbullen, sit more than 1100 m above sea level.

HABITATS: Bunya Mountains NP supports diverse vegetation, ranging from nine types of rainforest to subtropical vine thickets dotted with bottle trees, and

even brigalow scrub. Eucalypt woodlands studded with bunya pines and grass-trees on the hillsides meet wide, grassy "balds", where vulnerable Bunya Mountains bluegrass grows, endemic Bunya sunshines bask, and fireflies flit at night in the warmer months.

CULTURE & HISTORY: The Bunya Mountains were one of the most significant gathering places for First Nations peoples in eastern Australia. Every 3–4 years, the Wakka Wakka, Jarowair and Barrungum peoples hosted great gatherings, with mobs travelling from coastal and inland regions to share food, songs, dances and social interactions.

FLORA, FAUNA & FUNGA: Bunya and hoop pines aren't true pines but are instead "living fossils"—conifers with an evolutionary origin dating back 200 million years. The world's largest surviving stands of these prehistoric trees are found in Bunya Mountains NP, but even after the park's gazettal, logging continued in the park until around 1917.

More than 120 avian species have been recorded here, including the endangered

powerful owl and vulnerable black-breasted button quail, as well as more conspicuous king parrots and crimson rosellas.

Wallabies graze at the picnic areas, and the largest breeding colony of chocolate wattled bats in Australia inhabits an outbuilding at Dandabah camping ground. In warmer months, fireflies and clear skies make for nights well spent in the mountains.

ACTIVITIES: With four picnic areas, 35-km of walking tracks (including some wheelchair accessible ones), and an information centre, this park is popular with locals and tourists. Short walks include the 130-m **Bunya Bunya loop**, the 2.3-km **Mt Kiangarow track**, the 4-km **Scenic circuit**, and the 10-km return **Barker Creek circuit**. Camping (fee and permit required) is available at Dandabah, historic Burtons Well and Westcott sites.

The recently refurbished Dandabah Day Use Area is an accessible space for visitors.
© Queensland Government.



Information is correct at time of printing, but check Park Alerts (parks.qld.gov.au/park-alerts) for updates before each visit.

NPAQ MOMENTS IN TIME

NPAQ Archives

MANY OF OUR MEMBERS WOULD BE AWARE THAT NPAQ ENJOYS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH BINNA BURRA LODGE, WITH WHOM WE SHARE A FOUNDING PARTNER.

This relationship frequently turns up tidbits passed between us as sister organisations, celebrating our shared history.

Last year, when the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) celebrated its 50th anniversary, one such gem was the first ever Annual Report for the newly established service.

At the time, the Lamington Natural History Association (LNHA) and Binna Burra Lodge, and indeed many

NPAQ members, took part in Volunteer Ranger training, Junior Ranger programs, and what was at the time one of the biggest nature interpretation programs in Australia! NPAQ is proud to continue this tradition with our Parks Connect programs.

Junior Rangers

With the co-operation of the Lamington Natural History Association the Service inaugurated the first Junior Ranger Program at Lamington National Park. It was an outreach activity of normal park interpretation, designed to introduce children between the ages of 6 and 12 to the natural environment by performing fun outdoor activities. Its aims were much the same as the adult programmes: to create interest in the natural environment. Specially-trained rangers assisted the Junior Rangers as they boiled the billy, made damper, gathered litter, watched birds, and participated in other activities.



ABOVE: NPAQ's December 2025/ January 2026 Park of the Month events at Lamington National Park were guided by the LNHA.
© NPAQ/Parks Connect.



ABOVE: Today's Parks Connect Junior Ranger, Cadet Ranger and Volunteer Ranger programs had forerunners in 1970s offerings within Lamington NP.
© NPAQ/Parks Connect.



NATIONAL PARKS
AND WILDLIFE
SERVICE

First Annual Report
1975-76



ABOVE: Honorary and Volunteer Park Rangers were enlisted, and the first Ranger School (above) for training was held at Lamington NP in 1975, along with a week-long training seminar on park management.

Interpretive Programs

In December 1975 the largest interpretive program ever offered in Australia was conducted at Lamington National Park. It was a joint venture of the Lamington Natural History Association and the Service. Naturalist led walks, talks, discussion groups demonstrations and slide evenings were important parts of the program. Many of these involved visitors as participants rather than as mere spectators in the interpretive activities. Innovative methods were particularly encouraged.

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Kowari

SCIENTIFIC NAME:

Dasyuroides byrnei

DISCOVERY:

Diyari, Ngameni, and Arrernte First Nations people knew of this carnivorous marsupial long before 1896, when a NT specimen was described by Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer and given a species epithet honouring collector and Charlotte Waters Telegraph Master Patrick Michael Byrne.

STATUS: Endangered (Qld & SA). Its range has contracted by 28% since colonisation, and it is now listed as extinct in the NT.

SIZE: ~13-18 cm long with an 11-14 cm brush-tipped tail. Weighs up to 175 g.

HABITAT: Remote living in the ironstone downs, claypans and gibber plains of NW South Australia and SW Queensland contributes to the kowari being little known, even to most Australians. Just 861 sightings have been recorded in Qld, most during studies within Diamantina and Astrebla Downs NPs, making it one of the state's rarest mammals. **DIET:** Fiercely carnivorous, the kowari is a micro-predator of invertebrates (especially grasshoppers) and desert rodents like baby long-haired rats. In its boom and bust environment, it also dines on carrion if necessary.

SCAN TO WATCH
A YOUTUBE VIDEO
ABOUT THE KOWARI
AND ONGOING
CONSERVATION
EFFORTS IN SA.



TOP: With only an estimated 1200 remaining in the wild, a collaborative Kowari Recovery Team has been established. © *Slowmotiongli/CanvaNFD*. **ABOVE:** Kowari shelter in burrows in dunes or crevices by day. © *Vakorejsek_c Tyrprsty/Wikimedia Commons*

REPRODUCTION: Kowari are largely solitary, occupying overlapping home ranges of 9-10 km with pairs coming together to mate from April/May to December. Females are polyoestrous and can produce two litters of 6-8 tiny, helpless joeys per year in a good season. Young suckle in a pouch for 4 weeks, and then cling to mum's teats or back for a further 3. Weaning (in a burrow or nest) lasts 3 months, until dispersal and sexual maturity at 7-10 months. A wild kowari may live just a year—few survive their first breeding season. **THREATS:** Invasive weeds, feral cats, and habitat loss due to grazing, trampling, and climate change. Its natural predators include owls, dingoes, snakes and monitor lizards. Visit teamkowari.com.au to see how you can help. ■



LEFT: Thermal imaging has aided in the detection of these small, nocturnal marsupials at Astrebla Downs NP, with one study detecting 5 times more individuals than when using spotlights alone. In South Australia, reintroductions to predator-controlled locations are already proving successful. © *Slowmotiongli/CanvaNFP*.

CHASING WATERFALLS

Improving water safety in Queensland's National Parks

IT'S NO SECRET THAT SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND "TRAVEL-SPO" POSTS CAN RAPIDLY INCREASE TOURISM IN BEAUTY SPOTS, BUT THEY SOMETIMES ALSO DEPICT RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOURS THAT RESULT IN INJURY OR DEATH.

Can National Park authorities use this same digital space to effectively counteract misinformation and increase compliance around "waterfall chasing" and water safety in a cheap, impactful way? A study on this topic by Samuel Cornell and colleagues at the University of New South Wales, Griffith University, and James Cook University in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) was published in *Health Promotion International* in late 2025.

Diving, rope-swinging, swimming on unpatrolled beaches, breaching safety barriers, falls, and other aquatic hazards—most of which aren't addressed in 30-second glossy "selfie gaze" social media posts—are among the most serious health risks to park users, particularly to tourists, who may be unfamiliar with Australian conditions. Yet, conventional compliance measures on park (signs, barriers or Ranger guidance) often lack the immediacy to counteract irresponsible

social media messaging or to prevent risk-taking behaviour in real time.

FOLLOWING THE FLOW

Phase 1 of Cornell et al.'s study first interviewed and surveyed 18 travel and adventure influencers and 509 social media users, as well as Park Rangers, and analysed patterns of visitor behaviour in Queensland's National Parks. In-person surveys of 50 visitors to Curtis Falls in Tamborine National Park found that 32% reported social media had influenced their decision to visit the site.

Phase 2, conducted from January to February 2024, disseminated both organic posts and 4 paid ad campaigns on Instagram, all crafted through a Theory of Planned Behaviour lens and collaboratively created by the QPWS and the UNSW Sydney Beach Safety Research Group. The posts funnelled users to specific QPWS website landing pages, with ads targeted by geolocation and highlighting site-specific risks for Curtis Falls, one of Queensland's most highly visited cascades and one where breaching safety barriers to take selfies can result in serious slips and falls.

Phase 3 of the study (analysis of the campaign) found that responses were varied and polarised. More than 4000 link clicks, 102 shares, and 254 post saves



TOP: Din Din Baron Falls in Baron Gorge NP. © Karin Cox. ABOVE: Curtis Falls, Tamborine National Park. © Robert Downer/CanvaNFP.

were recorded during the campaign. Meta's analysis indicated ~16,000 social media users saw the ads, and QPWS followers increased by 1000 during the research. Some 55 comments were also left on the posts by social media users.

The study found that the most compelling content framed water safety risks in direct, emotive, relatable or consequence-focused language. Messages with metaphorical or abstract wording failed to convert as successfully.

The most engaged-with messaging was 'Make sure time in nature doesn't come at a cost', 'Take our signs as a sign to stay safe', and 'Don't let your life slip away'. Overall, the two landing pages gained 3665 views, suggesting that carefully framed social media compliance campaigns can drive "travel-spo" seekers to more authoritative sites that help deter risk-taking and better inform decision-making within Qld's National Parks. ■

For more on this study, see <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daaf181>

MAJOR EVENTS

NPAQ AGM

DATE: SAT 10 Oct 2026

VENUE: Brisbane Square
Library, 266 George St,
Brisbane

TIME: 11 am

ORGANISER: Donna
McCosker

GET INVOLVED

We'd love your involvement in our Park of the Month program. Are you an expert, interpretative guide or just a committed enthusiast? Perhaps you're part of an ENGO or conservation organisation, looking to engage the public and explain your research, or maybe you're a wellbeing instructor or outdoor adventure specialist?

Apply to lead a small group at our Park of the Month events. Please express your interest by completing the form at <https://wkf.ms/4n6zCDq>

WHAT'S ON?

NPAQ EVENTS & 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

AUGUST PARK OF THE MONTH - SPRINGBROOK NP

DATE: 21 Aug 2026

WHERE: Settlement Day
Use Area, off Carricks Rd.

COST: Free

BOOK: bit.ly/Aug26POTMEB

SEPTEMBER PARK OF THE MONTH - BRIBIE IS. NP

DATE: 19 Sept 2026

WHERE: Banksia Beach,
Bribie Island

COST: Free

BOOK: From early Sept at
bit.ly/QldPOTM

OCTOBER PARK OF THE MONTH - BUNYA MTNS NP

SAVE the DATE: 31 Oct 2026

BOOK: From early Oct

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GROUP

DATE: 22 Aug 2026

MEET: 9 am, Jollys Lookout
Lower Carpark, D'Aguilar NP

COST: Free

LEADER: Angus McElnea
(0429 854 446)

BIRDWATCHING - FLINDERS-GOOLMAN

DATE: 20 Sept 2025

MEET: 7:30 am, Mt Flinders
Road, Peak Crossing.

COST: \$5 (bring enclosed
shoes, hat, sunscreen, first aid
kit, binoculars, camera, chair,
repellent, morning tea
& lunch).

LEADER: Mary Anne Ryan
(0436 393 999)

JOIN OUR BIOBLITZES



SCAN THE
QR CODE TO
CHECK OUT OUR
BIOBLITZES

**CALLING ALL CITIZEN SCIENTISTS, NATURE- LOVERS
AND KEEN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS! HELP US
COLLECT VALUABLE DATA.**

Anyone can participate in NPAQ's monthly BioBlitzes, which form part of our Park of the Month program.

Each month, we run a month-long BioBlitz in our chosen Parks Connect Park of the Month.

- » Simply visit our Park of the Month at any time over the course of the month and photograph the fauna, flora and fungi you see. You don't even need a camera—a smart phone will do the job.
- » Upload your images to iNaturalist (free to join) and add them to our Parks Connect BioBlitz project.
- » Add your photos to the project with a CC license (CCO, CC BY or CCNC) for your chance to have your image shared in *Protected* magazine.

LEFT: Parasol fungi. ©NPAQ/Parks Connect



BECOME A MEMBER AND SUBSCRIBE

LEFT: Male eclectus
parrot. © Karin Cox.
BELOW: Park of the
Month at Main Range CP.
© NPAQ/Parks Connect.

NPAQ members receive voting rights and other benefits,
including copies of *Protected* magazine.

YES, I WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER...

Register at 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.



SPONSORS NEEDED

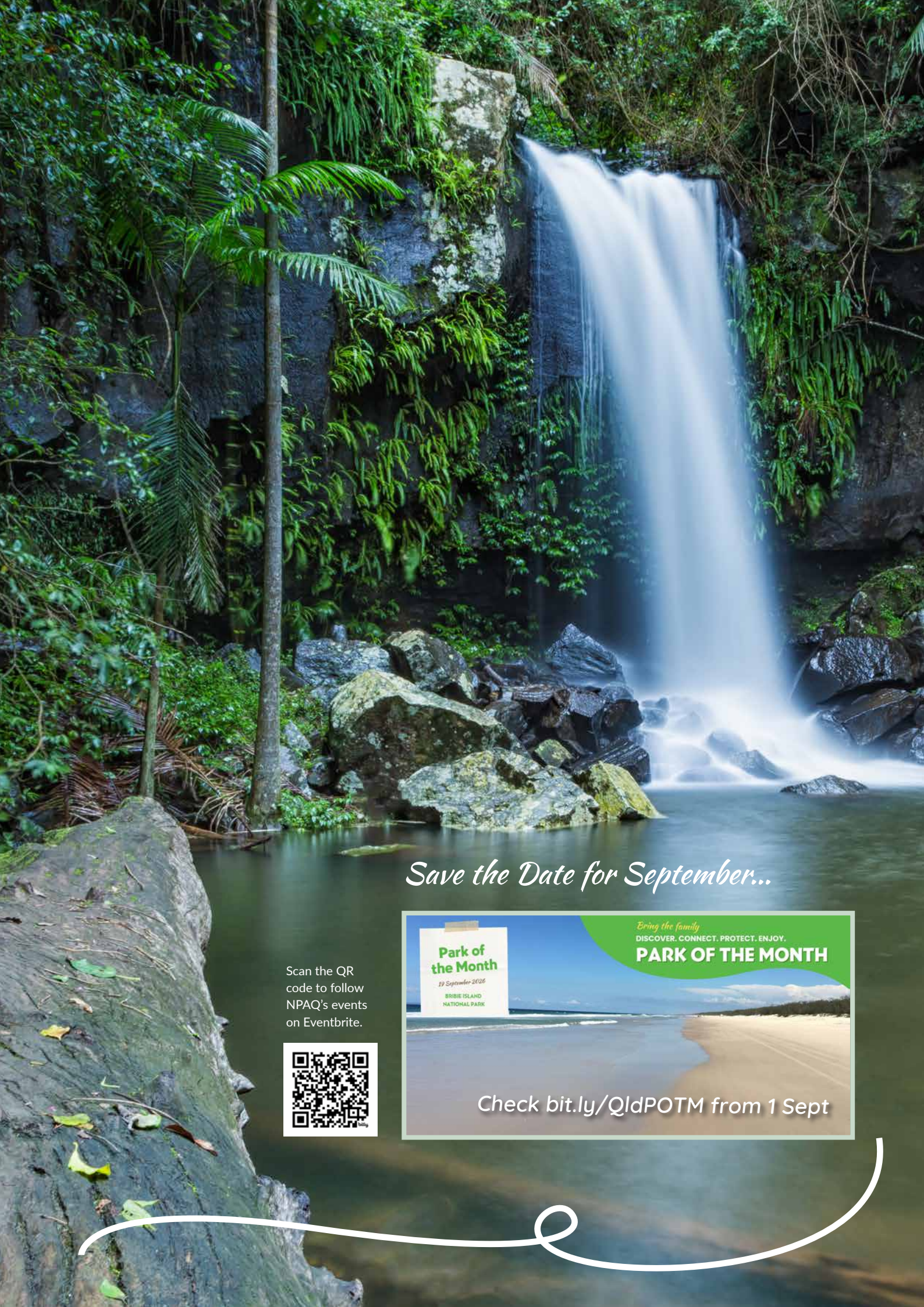
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NPAQ to help our protected
areas thrive. We'd welcome
your collaboration. Email
admin@npaq.org.au



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Save the Date for September...

Scan the QR
code to follow
NPAQ's events
on Eventbrite.



Bring the family
DISCOVER. CONNECT. PROTECT. ENJOY.
PARK OF THE MONTH

Park of the Month
19 September 2026
BRIBIE ISLAND
NATIONAL PARK

Check bit.ly/QldPOTM from 1 Sept