

Newspaws

December 1987

For, of and by Q.NPWS staff

Summer issue

Mad Hatter's tea party



Plenty of mad hats but fancy, not a cup of tea was in sight at the Q.NPWS Social Club's Christmas Dinner hat party at the Boulevard, Indooroopilly, early this month.

Readers should not have to ask the names of most participants in this montage of pictures prepared from a fine record of the fun night by Andrea Dobbyn.

Peter Starkey put his name in black and white as one of the night's organizers.

Matter of hours

By now you should have completed and returned the duties and hours questionnaire issued as part of the Service resources survey.

It was due to be lodged by 10 December but circumstances like holidays and fieldwork may have interfered.

Dick Grimes and Des Boyland are keen to analyse the data and hope to be able to report to staff via a special Newspaws in January.

From the Director

For me, 1987 will have to go down as the most momentous year of my life.

The fight against cancer has occupied two-thirds of the year with my absence from the Director's chair totalling seven months (including recreation leave).

Consequently, I am deeply indebted to my deputy Herb Bonney and the Executive Management Group for the additional burdens of management responsibility they shouldered so well.

I include Ruth, Gayle and Tracy in this group, and also for Hugh Lavery for the restoration of the Raine Island beacon during my absence.

The Service has now grown into a

large bureaucracy with over 500 staff.

It is no longer possible to know each of you personally.

Nevertheless I want each one of you to accept my personal thanks and gratitude for your hard work, loyalty and dedication.

Like those years before, 1987 will go down as a year of great achievement.

I wish you and your families safe travelling, health and happiness in 1988 and a joyous Christmas season.

Graham Saunders
Graham Saunders
DIRECTOR

Changes to ranger jobs rather slow

The ranger review is ticking over slowly. It is not a forgotten undertaking of the past as some staff have suggested.

It's true that since the EMG ratified its findings no dramatic changes have been introduced but changes have been ongoing in places.

To refresh memories, the major findings can be summarized as follows:

- The most appropriate person for the position will be appointed.

- Entrance requirements to the ranger ranks will continue but as soon as an appropriate external study course is located it is anticipated the internal examination will be phased out.

- Format of ranger promotional examinations is expected to change with papers being reduced to two plus a practical exercise.

Candidates will be expected to have a general knowledge of all programs with a working knowledge of at least two programs.

- Manpower planning models are to be developed and a training schedule for participating staff devised.

- A comprehensive performance assessment package is to be developed.

- Interchange of rangers and overseers between programs is supported.

- The current progression scheme will continue but the Service will be seeking the creation of a

number of classified positions — I-4, I-5 — to replace the 'District Ranger' so districts will be graded on workload and responsibility.

- The designation of rangers is to be reviewed.

Staff would be aware the interchange of rangers between programs has commenced.

Considerable work has been undertaken in the area of examinations and the outcome will be advised shortly.

Introduction and implementation of many of the findings is the responsibility of the Management Services group which, like many of us, already has overloaded work programs comprising high priority tasks.

This, coupled with uncertainty resulting from the Savage Report and the ultimate demise of the Department of the Public Service Board, resulted in there being little purpose in forwarding findings to Lester Harth's group for implementation.

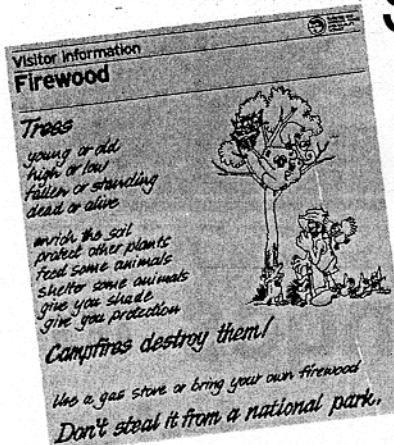
Naturally, Management Services had access to the findings and were aware of any areas on which the findings may impinge.

Circumstances have now changed and the findings are now with Lester and the ranger review implementation will be scheduled into the works programs.



Regional Director (Far Northern) Peter Stanton planting an Atherton oak with the help of Nigel Tucker to commemorate the opening of the Lake Eacham nursery recently.

Service seems split on wood



The Service seems split into a hundred chips over a firm policy on the supply and use of firewood on national parks.

Southern Region's Dianne MacLean sought contributions on the topic. This summary of responses is interesting.

What is the position in other regions? Is there an urgent need to tackle the problem head on? The visitor information sheet at left has been produced for use at Moreton Island (see report page 3).

The terms 'destroy' and 'steal' are used deliberately. Send your views before the 15 February deadline of the next Newspaps.

Cunningham's Gap — Supplied in split large rounds from trees pushed during development. Visitors expected to split into smaller pieces. Further supply likely from neighbouring properties.

Main Range — Bushwalkers have used all wood within a few hundred metres of campsites. Situation worsening. Fuel or gas stoves encouraged.

Binna Burra — Picnic facilities supplied from Kallangur sawmill. Very labour intensive job. Private campsite provides gas barbecues and some wood but campers also go into park.

Springbrook — Cut firewood supplied for all barbecues. Small axe to split desirable. Rounds need splitting at camping area.

Natural Arch — Two electric coin-operated barbecues to replace wood barbecues by Christmas.

Northern Downs — Supplied to all parks. Offcuts \$6 a tonne at Ravensbourne mill, \$20 a tonne at Jandowae cut and delivered to Bunya Mountains. Wood dumps phasing out barbecue distribution.

Noosa, Kondalilla, Mapleton Falls — Supply to these high-visitation day-use areas takes many man hours. Lions Club donated electric barbecue may be a viable alternative.

Southern Cooloola — Supplied to Fig Tree and Noosa River. Non-supply along Upper Noosa River results in ecologically important dead timber being burnt.

Northern Cooloola — Not supplied by Service. Offered for sale in weatherproof bags by private supplier.

Fraser Island — Supplied at Dundubara, Waddy Point. Dead and fallen timber along inland tracks and roads may be collected. This helps keep the island tidy and lessen the fire danger.

Woodgate — Minimum quantity supplied now after much was found to be wasted. Campers encouraged to bring their own or fuel stoves.

Training benefits 'wet' staff

Running field operations of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park presents some unique challenges for the Service.

No one has done our job before. Our task is a new initiative on a large scale.

Our approaches to people and resource management have to be innovative and cost-effective.

Operations in the marine environment impose special skill requirements in addition to those of similar operations on land. Diving and vessel operation are two.

Marine parks uses training in these ways:

- To teach and maintain a standard of competency in essential technical areas.

- To provide specialized instruction in areas related to specific projects such as public contact, and underwater and island vegetation surveys.

- To help reef tour operators provide a satisfying, memorable experience for passengers. In this role, marine parks staff are the trainers.

Training has benefited our organization by providing us with a team of dedicated multiskilled staff.

Staff feel comfortable with the tasks asked of them and their ability to complete them.

As a new operation, there are training requirements which still require attention.

However the need to place priority on training to support staff and organization development is recognized.

Our program for 1987-88 commits us to spending 5 per cent of all staff time on training.

John Hicks



Service staffers enjoying a well-earned barbecue steak lunch at Harry's, Cooloola, during a two-day seminar for Noosa River tour operators.

Interleaves

The Market Facts study on key national parks in southern Queensland questioned whether national parks visitors want interpretive services.

Field staff in Southern Region want to spend more time on interpretive activities.

The study consultants made a most unfortunate assumption that because the public is not clamouring for bird walks and campfire sessions, the Service should not provide them.

The consultants showed a lack of understanding of the value of interpretation as a park management tool, and a lack of sensitivity when they criticised well-intentioned staff for self-indulgence in wanting to be more involved in interpretation.

Interpretation on (and off) our parks is not a luxury — it's a necessity. We have to communicate our goals for nature conservation and enlist public support for our park and wildlife management if we want to succeed as effective park and wildlife managers.

The Service is justifiably proud of its track record in public education — our brochures, displays and public presentations are good quality and the product of quality people.

We still have a way to go. Staff training is one means of enabling the Service to upgrade its educational services.

Thirty-two field staff from Central, Northern, and Far Northern Regions recently attended (and hopefully enjoyed) a third communication skills course at Mt Spec near Townsville.

A further course for Southern Region is planned before Easter. These courses will be followed by more intensive interpretive training next financial year.

Training tour operator staff is another area where the Service can achieve its goals through interpretation.

Recent initiatives have included the Noosa River (Cooloola) tour operator seminar, and another tour guide accreditation course for St Helena Island National Park.

A further reef interpretation course is planned by marine parks staff in Cairns early in the new year. A course is being organized on Heron Island for resort and research station staff.

A spinoff of the new Capricornia public contact plan is development of guidelines for public contact (including interpretation) in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, being developed by the Authority and the Service.

New productions this financial year have been a bit slow. Noteworthy ones include brushtail possum, South Molle Island sign, Lark Quarry interpretive signs, Goldfields track brochure, temporary whale display for Heron Island interpretive centre, Geoffrey Bay sign, rural nature conservation information sheet and Baldwin Wetlands visitor information.

A recent wildlife seminar at Moggill helped park staff become more knowledgeable about wildlife management issues.

Best wishes to all staff involved in holiday interpretive programs.

Pamela Harmon-Price

Psssssst . . .

Staff changes since the last Newspaps:

Appointments — Heather Zeppel, temporary ranger, Townsville, Leanne Anderson, administrative assistant, Townsville, Jennifer Hawes, computer systems officer, Head Office, Denise James, administrative assistant, Cairns, Kristi Minehan, administrative assistant, Cairns, Wendy Dent and Karen Hampson, research officers, Brisbane, Peter McFarlane, senior clerk maritime, Townsville, and Grant Lea, clerk, Head Office.

Resignations — Cathy Nance and Kay Elton (both Head Office).

Transfer — John Hows, accountant, to Treasury Department.

Appointment approved — Colin Nicolson, accountant, Head Office, from 4 January.

Who was Central Region's naughty boy caught doodling at the communications workshop? It would appear he was not happy about returning to kindergarten.

His teacher was less impressed by written remarks left on the desk!

At the same course, who was the facilitator with the fetish for leaves and branches?

Dr Joe Roggenbuck returning to the US but leaving a lasting impression on many Southern Region staff for his enthusiasm and interpretive and management skills.

Pending resignation will remove the Service's most experienced officer in national parks management.

Vessel operations plan will cover base locations, vessels, crews and infrastructure for future operations of surface surveillance.

Staff will be approached by marine consultant David Swales to complete a questionnaire.

Best wishes to Elizabeth Tunstall, married this month. Also to Eleanor Ryan and Jim McDonnell who announced their engagement at the Social Club's Christmas party. See them on page 1.

Wildlife staff still chuckling over this recent request — I bought a pair of finches and would like to breed with them and sell the babies. Would you please inform me of the necessary procedure to do so?

Rainbow Beach staff rightly proud of introducing many people to national parks in the last year — 20 410 permits for Fraser Island and 4733 permits covering 28 598 people for Northern Cooloola.

Who was the daydreaming, amateur helmsman from Wildlife who tipped a senior research ranger into the croc-infested Leichhardt River trying to avoid a snag he had seen belatedly despite spotlight attention?

Research ranger stood in waist-deep water holding engine out of the water bemoaning loss of data while overseer bailed with his hands.

Cardwell Information Centre's part-timer Catherine Hunt finished work before announcing it was time to go to Ingham to have a daughter.

Imagine the reaction to her alternate plan, a sign 'Closed. Back soon. Gone to have a baby'.

Many Service professional officers now have the chance to become members of the Australian Institute of Biology.

Write to AIB, 35-43 Clarence Street, Sydney.

Regional Director (Southern) Noel Dawson and Regional Superintendent (Northern) Mark Weaver returned to their desks recently after an exchange visit to United States national parks. Here are some of Noel's reflections:

US visits generate park ideas

Before outlining some of my recommendations and comment on my recent visit, it is interesting to compare the two organizations.

The US National Parks Service operates 837 parks covering 29 million hectares with approximately 281 million visitors a year and with a budget of \$1340 million.

Q.NPWS manages 450 parks covering 3.4 million hectares with approximately 6-12 million visitors a year (depending on whose figures you use) and a budget of \$17.7 million.

In terms of staffing and resources per management unit, the US and Canadian Services look two to three times better off than our Service.

However, I believe the commitment of our staff reduces some of this shortfall and in many areas we provide better management of our areas and a better service.

Our procedural systems are fairly simple and we should keep these this way, that is avoid detailed manuals, keep our policy statements simple, allow our staff to use their initiative, and ensure central planning groups stay small and maintain close relations with the field.

Co-operating associations in the US (equivalent of NHAs) are extremely supportive of the Service and provide staffing for information centres.

They also provide significant funds. A park the size of Cooloolooloo could expect \$50,000 each year from the CA as well as providing two staff in the information centre.

The training program in the US is exceptional being at three major centres. I believe we should concentrate more on achieving internal training of staff.

Concessionaires have caused high problems in the US but the Service is addressing this.

The messages for us are: Plan these into the management plan and proceed only where there is a need and a suitable location; ensure they are economically and environmentally viable; only consider proposals which are state of the art technology for pollution control and design, energy systems and transport and spell out constraints in the agreement.

I have completed my report and it shall be available in a few weeks. It covers many other significant issues such as fees and visitor management, the highly effective interpretive program (concentrating on management issues), wilderness management, management planning and so on.

I have a mass of material which I would be prepared to circulate also.

I certainly appreciated the opportunity and I am sure the state of Queensland will benefit from the visits by Mark and I.

What a pretty sight at Carnarvon!



No, Paul Lawless-Pine was not posing for the 'camera' of Michael O'Connor (right) at Carnarvon Gorge recently. He was merely taking a break from the demands of a site planning course conducted by the Service. Participant Alan Don took the pictures. Alan has now moved from Rockhampton to take up the new Rural Nature Conservation position at Head Office, Brisbane.

Dog problem beaten at Moreton

When 89 per cent of Moreton Island was gazetted national park in March 1986, we faced three major use problems that had become entrenched with years of uncontrolled visitation.

They were:

- Domestic animals, mainly dogs in large numbers, with campers.
- Indiscriminate use of timber from the island.
- Uneducated use off off-road vehicles — driving on dunes, general bush bashing and even washing them in the freshwater lakes!

The damaging use of off-road vehicles was curtailed with increased patrols on our part and with the support of police during school holiday periods. It is now unusual to find vehicles used to the detriment of the island.

Of the remaining problems, dogs became our first priority.

Heard of the old saying 'Plan your work and work your plan'? It applies to almost everything where you want to achieve an objective in a certain time.

Firstly we passed a verbal warning to all visitors with dogs it should be the

animals' last visit. Then in November 1986 we began to issue a letter from the Ranger with all permits explaining the change and notifying visitors dogs were no longer permitted.

If they came camping with a dog, they would be asked to move to a strip of mining lease where they could have the animal legally.

Letters were also given to barge operators and shopkeepers on the island for distribution. In December 1986 we began enforcement.

From the beginning, regular staff meetings decided on methods of approach, words to be used, and standards to be met. This ensured that although rosters might change staff, our approach to the public was consistent.

We established these guidelines:

- When addressing the problem be sympathetic, be pleasant, but above all be firm. Even if they were only camping overnight they had to pack up and move to the designated area. If this were not done we would have left it open for

weekend abuse of the rule — arriving Saturday and promising to move in the morning when they were leaving on the Sunday barge anyway.

- No exceptions. Pretty hard when you come across a little old lady with a chihuahua that any self-respecting bandicoot would flatten in a brawl.
- Offer alternatives. These were moving to a designated area, sending animals back on the next barge to family, friends or kennels, or taking it themselves and choosing a holiday designation which accepted dogs.

- In the case of a friendly animal, address the dog. Example: Ranger (patting dog), 'G'day, mate. What are you doing here? Don't you know this is a national park? You're going to have to move to the mining lease.'

May sound crazy but you get the owner's attention and you're not such a bad guy after all. Take time to explain the reasons why. We said we were trying to rebuild the little wildlife we had. This was difficult even when the scent . . . That's offering a positive instead of a negative such as 'Dogs kill/eat/maim/savage bandicoots and birds'.

Technique refined

We continued our staff meetings to discuss reaction and how to manage the more difficult situations, refining our technique as we went along.

That is a proven technique of the better sales teams and, believe me, we were trying to do a helluva sales job on the people we had to move which in the early part of January this year was 10 to 15 camps a day.

Remember, we usually called in just after Dad had selected their ideal holiday spot, unpacked the truck, erected the tent, and popped the first stubbie. He was not going to be happy about being asked to pack it all up again and move.

Yet, if we were to achieve our objective of better management of a beautiful sand island to preserve it for the future then we

needed the public's co-operation, their understanding of why the changes had taken place, their acceptance of why it was important to the island and, above all, their support.

After moving more than 100 camps during the Christmas-New Year period, having planned our strategy and practised our lines, we found we did not attract one Ministerial!

We changed a traditional use to the point where today, less than a year later, it is unusual to find a dog on the park.

We are now about to change the practice of using timber from the island for firewood. Any bets on one year?

Ken Whitlock



Orchid Beach Bush Fire Brigade first officer John Isaacs and Fraser management area overseer Brian Cifuentes discussing the results of a fuel reduction burn on private land adjacent to the national park at Orchid Beach recently. The new brigade's 4WD truck with 2000 litre tank and pump works well and would be invaluable for containing fires in the small community as well as helping Q.NPWS in controlled burning operations.



Recent introduction of cane toads to Lizard Island National Park in landscaping material highlights the need for vigilance when taking building and other materials to island national parks.

Cane toad alert

Island ecosystems are not as complex as mainland areas. Introduction (deliberate or accidental) of ungulates, cane toads, cats, rats, kangaroos and rabbits can be devastating.

Cane toad introduction, distribution and its effects on native fauna in Australia was reviewed by Dr Bill Freeland of CCNT in Technical Report No.9 (1984).

A female cane toad can lay between 8000 and 50 000 eggs. Certain native species — goannas and carnivorous marsupials — are highly susceptible to poisons in the skin and parotid glands and die after mouthing or eating the toads.

Service staff should examine material during loading and unloading. Islands with resorts should be monitored carefully.

Cane toads are found on Whitsunday resort islands and three uninhabited islands. Other islands do not have toads at this time.

The Service is surveying all islands along the reef for toads and recording where possible dates of introduction.

James Cook University staff are researching toad and tadpole population biology and searching for a possible controlling pathogen.

Please send any data about cane toads on islands to Keith McDonald at Pallarenda or Dennis Devine, Cairns.

Key sites data

Far Northern Region marine parks staff are collecting natural resource and park user activity data for key island and reef sites within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Cairns and Far Northern Sections.

A key site is an island and/or reef of biological/conservation significance and/or recreation importance. Cairns Section key sites include Green Island, Michaelmas Cay, Norman Reef and Cape Tribulation fringing reefs.

Information being collected includes seabird and Torresian imperial pigeon counts, mapping and distribution of vegetation, coral reef lifeforms, island topography and geology.

User data includes the levels and types of use, and locations such as anchorages, dive sites, reef walking areas and popular fishing spots.

Data is compiled into desired formats — data bases, inventories, or thematic maps. This is then available for quick reference when management-related issues such as permit assessment, zoning plan review, acquisition or visitor infrastructure developments arise.

Initial key site data collection between Dunk and Thursday Islands is planned for the next five years with records updated as key sites are revisited and resurveyed.

Seabirds for counting on one of the key sites, Michaelmas Cay National Park, off Cairns.



Frazer Muir

EIAs for parks backed

I fully support Keith McDonald's proposal for environmental impact assessment for proposed developments on national parks (September Newspaws).

As park managers, our obligations of safeguarding the natural environment are clear under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

We consider picking flowers, taking home a windfallen staghorn fern or bringing a pet onto a park as serious offences.

Yet as managers we have no qualms about bulldozing hectares of vegetation for roads, picnic and campgrounds. Our benevolent deeds often cause more detrimental effects on the area we are trying to protect than would have occurred if no action were taken.

This is not to say the Service should not provide recreational developments. On the contrary, thorough pre-planning and careful consideration of all biophysical determinants must come into play to retain the natural integrity (aesthetic and ecological) of a selected site.

Much data collection and collation should occur during the park proposal stage and a broad resource evaluation made to identify all potential development sites.

On a global scale, conservation areas work only if they are zoned and managed in parallel with areas of sustainable development.

This was a major and fundamental theme that emerged from the 4th World Wilderness Congress in Denver, Colorado, in September.

Director of Central Services Dr Ross Hynes who represented the Service stated: 'It is becoming ever increasingly clear internationally that absolutist approaches to conservation in the land use planning and management process generally fail.

'The Brundtland Report — Our Common Heritage, published this year by the World Commission on Environment and Development, clearly emphasises conservation reserves can survive successfully internationally only if they function in parallel with zones of sustainable development.'

The management of natural resources cannot be viewed independently of the range of social purposes possible for their use. The logical starting point for proper land use categories is delineation of rationally defined planning zones based on detailed integrated scientific and technical data bases.

This can be achieved only by a strategic and systematic approach to resource assessment and economic development where conservation works in parallel with sustainable development.

Two concepts are fundamentally tied to the process of sustainable management of the earth's resources:

Each potential site must be analysed and scored according to all biophysical and aesthetic determinants. This is where a standard EIA proforma should be used to eliminate any personal or regional bias and to act as a checklist to ensure all aspects are considered.

A point score system would provide only the most suitable site be developed.

This should not be seen merely as a process as, if no site scores high enough, no development should take place.

The same concept developed further may be useful on providing data in field management areas. (see pictures above)

Environmental degradation problems have not received due attention because they have been viewed as isolated ravings of a radical or purist, and there are always more pressing office problems.

The EIA will identify and legitimize these problem areas in an objective manner free from personalities. Let's look seriously at resource management!

Michael Provic

Picture above left shows natural saltwater couch grassland. The picture above right shows the same community type within Eurimbula National Park in Central Region after 50 years of grazing pressure.

Continuous grassland has been reduced by grazing and trampling to individual hummocks with more than 30 cm of topsoil eroded between the hummocks. The grazing lease in Eurimbula runs for another 40 years.

The picture below shows a different impact on the environment — the effect of access tracks placed in seasonally saturated melaleuca woodlands.



This potential cornucopia, if not squandered, could provide needed income for developing countries as well as new products.

In 1985, world-wide there were about 3000 protected areas covering 400 million hectares. This needs to be tripled to constitute representative samples of all ecosystems.

Linking conservation and development through application of national conservation strategies is a good place to start. This way, tropical countries will be able to better manage conservation schemes while maintaining development objectives.

Governments could embrace the 'parks for development' concept based on growing data showing national parks can underpin development in many cases by protecting watersheds and thus soil and water regimes needed for agriculture.

But it is important parks benefit local inhabitants.

In this setting, Queensland has an important opportunity to show other parts of the tropical world how a balanced multiple land use system can function successfully in harmony with an appropriately buffered conservation system of national parks and other protected areas with full representation of animal and plant species, and habitat and vegetation types.

This is a realistic approach to the future of society in our tropical regions and could set an example to the rest of the tropical world.

Our common future?

- Basic needs of humanity for food, clothing, shelter, and jobs must be met.
- Limits to development are not absolute but are imposed by present technology and social organization and by impacts on environmental resources and on the biosphere's ability to absorb effects of human activities.

Estimates of the total number of species inhabiting the earth vary between five and 30 million. To date, only 1.7 million have been studied and identified.

Most unidentified flora and fauna are thought to reside in tropical moist forests which cover only six per cent of the earth's land surface but harbour half the world's species.

The tropics also host most developing nations. Here is the nub of the problem. People pressure is one of the most serious threats to conservation efforts in many countries.

Loss of habitats and species have grave economic consequences. There are signs the 'green revolution' will be superseded by a 'gene revolution', relying on wild genetic material found mostly in the tropics.

