

Palmerston Rocks National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	9.521ha
Bioregion:	Wet Tropics
QPWS region:	Northern
Local government estate/area:	Cassowary Coast Regional
State electorate:	Hinchinbrook



Fisher Creek, Palmerston Rocks National Park.
Photo: NPRSR.

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>

Plans and agreements

✓	Recovery plan for the stream-dwelling rainforest frogs of the Wet Tropics biogeography region of north-east Queensland 2000–2004
✓	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement 2005

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

Palmerston Rocks National Park is managed to protect the remnant mesophyll vine forest fringing Fisher Creek.

The park provides for nature-based day-use activities in an undeveloped natural setting.

Identified cultural values are protected in cooperation with the Mamu people.

Conservation purpose

Previously a scenic reserve, Palmerston Rocks National Park was gazetted in 1977 for its historical values associated with the early explorer, Christie Palmerston.

The park also protects a small patch of remnant rainforest on fertile basalt soils—an ecosystem that has been extensively cleared for agriculture in the region and is poorly represented on protected areas elsewhere in the region.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Palmerston Rocks National Park is situated about 19km west of Innisfail, adjacent to the Palmerston Highway, which is a major tourist route linking the Atherton Tablelands to the coast. After traversing a largely cleared agricultural landscape, the park provides the first impression of rainforest en route to the Atherton Tablelands from Innisfail.

The park is bisected by Fisher Creek, a boulder-strewn perennial tributary of the North Johnstone River.

Surrounding land uses include agricultural land, the Palmerston Highway and rural residential communities.

Regional ecosystems

The park contains nearly 10ha of remnant mesophyll vine forest that has not been aligned to a regional ecosystem in Queensland Herbarium mapping. It is likely that the park contains the endangered regional ecosystems 7.3.17 and 7.8.1a (Table 1). These communities are characteristic of the area, and a very large proportion of their pre-existing extent has been cleared for agriculture elsewhere in the landscape.

Native plants and animals

Palmerston Rocks National Park protects plant and animal species of conservation significance (Table 2).

Species typical of mesophyll vine forest communities of the lowlands occur on the park, and species of conservation significance are likely to occur on the park.

The endangered Australian lacelid *Nyctimystes dayi* has been recorded along Fisher Creek. Its current distribution within the park is unknown. Both the endangered common mistfrog *Litoria rheocola* and the near threatened tapping green-eyed frog *Litoria serrata* have been collected from the park; however there are no recent records and it is unknown whether these species still occur in the park.

The Johnstone River snapping turtle *Elseya irwini* (Johnstone) is a distinctive form of *E. irwini* that occurs in sections of Johnstone River and its tributaries. This species has a very restricted range and patchy distribution within its range. In Palmerston Rocks National Park, it occurs in relatively high densities (A Freeman 2012, pers. comm., 18 April.).

Aboriginal culture

The Mamu people have traditional links to the area which includes Palmerston Rocks National Park. No Aboriginal cultural heritage places or values have been recorded in the park. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the area may be associated with a significant and sensitive cultural site.

The Mamu people have lodged a native title claim over the park and surrounding areas (QC01/15).

Shared-history culture

Christie Palmerston, an early explorer, may have had a depot located on Fishers Creek in the park. Details of the depot location and Palmerston's association with the area require further investigation.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Palmerston Rocks National Park is easily accessed by conventional vehicles, and is only 15 minutes from Innisfail. The park has a low-level of recreational use by local residents and tourists. Swimming appears to be a popular activity with park users.

No visitor facilities are currently provided, and the park's small size makes it unsuitable for camping, picnic areas or large groups. A small trail leads from the car park to the swimming hole.

Education and science

The small size of park limits the potential sample area and scope of studies.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Siam weed *Chromolaena odorata*, a class 1 pest plant, occurs on the banks of Fisher Creek in the park. Lantana *Lantana camara*, a class 3 pest plant, and Guinea grass *Megathyrsus maximus* are found in disturbed areas and along the roadside.

Little evidence of introduced animals is visible. Cane toads *Rhinella marina* and feral pigs *Sus scrofa* are presumed to be present in the park.

Fire management

The park consists of mesophyll vine forest vegetation which does not readily burn.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Composition and extent of vegetation remains the same, subject to natural change.</p>	A1. Regional ecosystem mapping is amended to show areas of remnant vegetation.
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>The park continues to host frogs of conservation significance, such as <i>Litoria rheocola</i> and <i>L. serrata</i>, <i>Nyctimystes dayi</i>.</p>	A2. Endangered frogs will be made a priority of any fauna monitoring programs that may occur in the park.
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>The park continues to have significant cultural value to local Traditional Owners.</p>	A3. Aboriginal cultural heritage values will be identified and appropriately managed in consultation with the Mamu people.
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>The historical significance of the park is known and shared.</p>	A4. Further investigate the link between Christie Palmerston and the park.
<p>Pest and fire management</p> <p>The health and diversity of plant and animal communities on the park is maintained.</p>	A5. Siam weed is appropriately managed within the park.
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>The park will offer opportunities for nature-based day use in a natural setting with minimal facilities.</p>	A6. Maintain the car park and short walking trail to the creek for day use visitors.

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems (indicative only)

Regional ecosystem	Description	Biodiversity status
7.3.17	Complex mesophyll vine forest on well drained alluvium of high fertility	Endangered
7.8.1a	Complex mesophyll vine forest on well drained basalt lowlands and foothills	Endangered

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> status	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> status	Back on Track status
<i>Litoria rheocola</i>	common mist frog	Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Litoria serrata</i>	tapping green eyed frog	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Nyctimystes dayi</i>	Australian laceid	Endangered	Endangered	Low