

Mapleton Falls National Park

Management Statement

2013



Prepared by: **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment, Science and Innovation**

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All due diligence and care has been taken in the preparation of this document based on the information in the 2013 management statement. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties.

The Mapleton Falls National Park Management Statement 2013 has been extended in 2024 in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the statement's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	25.9ha
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	Sunshine and Fraser Coast
Local government estate/area:	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
State electorate:	Nicklin

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

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Recovery Plan for stream frogs of south-east Queensland 2001-2005

Thematic strategies

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

Vision

Mapleton Falls National Park continues to protect outstanding scenic views and provide opportunities for nature-based recreation. The park, alongside other protected areas on the Blackall Range, provides essential wildlife habitat and protects the remnant forests and associated plants.

Conservation purpose

Mapleton Falls was originally declared a recreation reserve in 1935 for its natural beauty and was subsequently gazetted national park tenure in 1973.

Mapleton Falls National Park conserves a small area of remnant warm subtropical rainforest and associated layered tall open forest which once covered much of the Blackall Range area. These forest communities protect narrowly restricted and vulnerable species of plants, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Plant and animal diversity is high in this area, but habitat clearing and loss of vegetation along the range has threatened some species. Natural corridors of vegetation linking larger reserves are essential to minimise isolation of species and to maximise the genetic breeding pool—helping to avoid local extinction.

Some species that occur only in this local area are recognised as threatened under State and Commonwealth legislation. Research and recovery plans are in place to give these species a chance to recover to healthy population levels.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Mapleton Falls National Park protects an area with significant landscape values and has been visited for its natural scenery and recreational value since the early 1900s.

The scenic Blackall Range is a landscape created by volcanoes and sculpted by water over millions of years, and sits in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. Rich basalt soils, a result of volcanic activity around 30 million years ago, support warm subtropical rainforest. Tall open forests grow on poorer quality rhyolitic soils derived from a violent volcanic period that began 235 million years ago.

Permanent waterfalls occur at many places along the edge of the Blackall escarpment. Mapleton Falls is one of the major Blackall cascades, formed by Pencil Creek as it plunges 120 metres (m) into the valley below. Pencil Creek flows into the Obi Obi Creek, a major tributary of the upper Mary River, and a significant contributor to the health of the Mary River catchment.

The park's eastern boundary is adjacent to development for urban, rural and tourist purposes. However significant areas of forested lands are conserved further north with Mapleton National Park (10,144ha) and to the south with Kondalilla National Park (1,591ha). Combined with forested freehold land, Mapleton Falls National Park forms a substantial vegetation corridor between the two larger national parks.

The Sunshine Coast is a major regional centre and the region has undergone much urban and residential expansion over the past three decades.

Regional ecosystems

Two regional ecosystems dominate the park: 12.8.8—*Eucalyptus saligna* or *E. grandis* tall open forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks (of concern in Table 1); and 12.8.3—Complex notophyll vine forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks with an altitude <600m (not of concern at present).

Native plants and animals

The Blackall Range supports a high level of native animal biodiversity, including at least 107 species of birds. They include the Australian peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*, which often soars and roosts near Mapleton Falls, the vulnerable glossy black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* and the endangered Coxen's fig-parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni*. Recorded species of significance for the park are outlined in Table 2. When walking in the rainforest, the distinctive calls of the wompoo fruit-dove *Ptilinopus magnificus* can be heard from the tree-tops.

At least 70 species of reptiles and 32 species of frogs occur in the Blackall and nearby Conondale Ranges. At Mapleton Falls, recorded frog species include the endangered southern day frog *Taudactylus diurnus*, endangered giant barred frog *Mixophyes iterates*, vulnerable cascade tree frog *Litoria pearsoniana*, and the near threatened pouched frog *Assa darlingtoni* and green thighed frog *Litoria brevipalmata* (Table 2).

Many native animals rely on Pencil Creek for food, shelter and a breeding environment. The creek system is currently under a lot of pressure from agricultural, urban and tourist development along the Blackall Range. Some

of the impacts from development include chemical pollution, leaching of salts, siltation from construction activity and infestation of pest plants.

Aboriginal culture

The extent of occupation and the degree of the park's cultural significance to Traditional Owners remains largely unknown. The Blackall Range area still holds high importance to Aboriginal people and there are many sites of Aboriginal cultural importance across the region. Site records in the surrounding region include Aboriginal burials, middens and canoe trees but none have been recorded for the park.

Opportunities exist to improve relationships with local Traditional Owner groups and involve them in park management.

The Jinibara Language Group are registered Native Title Claimants over Mapleton Falls National Park. The claim, Federal court QUD6128/1998, was determined in November 2012 and found native title exists in parts of the determination area. The Blackall Range is particularly significant as the site for the Bonyee (Bunya Nut) Festival.

Shared-history culture

From 1842 until 1860, the Blackall Range was part of a large reserve declared by Governor Gipps to protect the bunya pine food source for local Aboriginal groups. It was illegal to settle or clear land where bunya pines occurred.

When reserve status was rescinded in 1860, there was an influx of pastoralists and timber-getters. In the 1880s the forests around Kondalilla and Mapleton were logged heavily. Widespread clearing of the tableland forests ensued as settlement proceeded. However, some small areas were set aside for recreation, including the area that is now Mapleton Falls National Park.

From the early 1900s, people began visiting this area for its natural scenery, waterfalls and spectacular views. Mapleton Falls was designated National Park in 1973, after being a reserve for recreational and scenic purposes for 38 years.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Over 100,000 annual visitors to Mapleton Falls National Park experience outstanding scenic views from two lookouts positioned either side of the falls. A cantilevered, wheelchair-accessible lookout platform is provided close to the car park. The main lookout provides spectacular views of the waterfall, escarpment, the deep rainforest gorge and beyond to the Obi Obi Valley and the Conondale Ranges. Australian peregrine falcons can be seen soaring and roosting near Mapleton Falls cliff edges during August and September.

The Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk stretches for 58 kilometres (km) through the Blackall Range. A short section of the walk traverses the Mapleton Falls National Park to link the Mapleton National Park and Kondalilla National Park.

A short 1.3km walk, called the Wompoo Circuit, gives access to a second lookout (Peregrine Lookout), affording visitors a different angle to view the falls and more southern views of the Conondales. The Wompoo Circuit winds through complex notophyll vine and flooded gum forests, displaying the transition between the plant communities. Wayside interpretive signs provide information about features along the track.

Picnic areas and toilets, including a wheelchair accessible toilet, are provided beside the car park. A short walk from the car park leads to an open, grassy picnic area with picnic tables and a sheltered picnic shed.

Education and science

The focus of research interest and efforts at Mapleton Falls National Park involves the rare, threatened and geographically restricted species inhabiting the subtropical rainforest and tall open forests, particularly the frog species. Several frog monitoring sites are located across the Blackall Range as part of planned research and recovery efforts for vulnerable, near threatened and endangered species.

Schools, universities and other research bodies will be supported and encouraged to carry out research and educate others on the natural resource values of the park. These include opportunities to understand more about the vegetation communities, threatened species, catchment systems, geological processes and the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history and values.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

The most significant threat to the park's integrity is the extensive infestations of mistweed *Eupatorium riparium*

along the watercourses especially at the base of the waterfall. These infestations are severe. Isolated patches of lantana *Lantana camara* occur but do not represent a severe threat. Silver-leaf desmodium *Desmodium uncinatum* is present but not extensive throughout the picnic/car park area. There are minor pest plant infestations along the perimeter of the park. Both the tall open forest and the riparian zone have a low extent of pest plant infestation. However extreme weather events can be expected to promote the spread of pest plants and change the structure of native vegetation.

Mapleton Falls National Park is managed under the draft Level 2 pest management strategy for the Mapleton Aggregation.

Fire management

The park is managed under the Level 2 fire management strategy for the Mapleton Aggregation.

The complex notophyll vine forest (12.8.3) in the park should not be burnt deliberately and may require active protection during wildfire season. Fire mitigation may be achieved by an appropriate fire regime in surrounding areas. Any prescribed burns adjacent to the vine forest should not be allowed to run into the ecosystem.

The adjacent flooded gum *Eucalyptus grandis* forest (12.8.8) may be burnt in a low-intensity mosaic burning regime to maintain understory floristic diversity, but requires a moderate to high intensity fire every 20+ years for stand regeneration of flooded gum. Flooded gum forest is difficult to burn outside of fire season and, conversely, burns extremely well in a dry, hot summer. This presents potential threats to property in the rural/residential zones in the Mapleton area during severe fire seasons.

Partnerships

Regular liaison is maintained with neighbours and organisations with shared interests in park management.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape Catchment protection services are maintained.</p> <p>The park's value as an integral vegetated corridor is maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p>Monitor changes in vegetation structure to identify potential erosion issues and mitigate impacts.</p> <p>Maintain walking tracks, roads and timber bridge crossings in good condition.</p> <p>Monitor adjacent, upstream land practises to identify catchment protection measures which may be required.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to improve cross tenure management practises with other land holders and land management agencies.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to acquire more land to improve linkages between Blackall protected area estate.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals Information on plant, animal and ecosystems is comprehensive and current.</p>	<p>Review currency of species records and conduct surveys where needed to inform management decisions.</p> <p>Review mapping of regional ecosystems and facilitate improvements to mapping refinements where needed.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities Visitor use complements the park's natural setting and its natural and cultural values.</p>	<p>Manage visitor use with the following intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confine pedestrian traffic to formed tracks • maintain infrastructure in keeping with the retention of the landscape setting of the park.
<p>Aboriginal culture Traditional Owners have meaningful involvement with park management planning and direction.</p>	<p>Encourage Traditional Owners to identify and document values, sites, artefacts and places of cultural heritage significance so that management strategies and decisions relating to fire regimes, access and track maintenance minimise potential threats to these values.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture Shared-history cultural values are identified and protected.</p>	<p>Encourage and support an assessment of the shared-history cultural values of the park.</p>
<p>Fire management Conduct appropriate fire management practices.</p>	<p>Complete and implement a Level 2 fire management strategy for the Mapleton Aggregation, including Mapleton Falls National Park.</p> <p>Actively protect the complex notophyll vine forest in fire events.</p>
<p>Pest management Impacts from pest plants and animals on the park are managed effectively.</p>	<p>Monitor the impacts from pest plants and changes to vegetation structure and feed updated information into the pest management strategy.</p> <p>Complete and implement a Level 2 pest management strategy for the Mapleton Aggregation, including Mapleton Falls National Park.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
12.8.8	<i>Eucalyptus saligna</i> or <i>E.grandis</i> tall open forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
Plants				
<i>Bosistoa transversa</i>	three-leaved bosistoa	Least concern	Vulnerable	-
<i>Gossia inophloia</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Macadamia ternifolia</i>	bauple nut	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Low
<i>Marsdenia hemiptera</i>	rusty vine	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Nothoalsomitra suberosa</i>	corky cucumber	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Romnalda strobilacea</i>	-	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
Animals				
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	grey goshawk	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	glossy black cockatoo	Vulnerable	-	High
<i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni</i>	Coxen's fig-parrot	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Kerivoula papuensis</i>	golden tipped bat	Near threatened	-	Medium
<i>Litoria brevipalmata</i>	green thighed frog	Near threatened	-	Medium
<i>Mixophyes iteratus</i>	giant barred frog	Endangered	Endangered	Medium
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> (Southeast Queensland bioregion)	koala (Southeast Queensland bioregion)	Vulnerable	-	-
<i>Podargus ocellatus plumiferus</i>	plumed frogmouth	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Taudactylus diurnus</i>	southern dayfrog	Endangered	Extinct	Low

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	cicadabird	-	-	✓	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-
<i>Symposiarchus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓	-	-	-

BONN (CMS) – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement