



# Ridgeline – ARC Protected Area Management Research Report June 2007

## Preamble

This newsletter is the second of what has become a regular communication mechanism for the partner organisations involved in the ARC project titled “*Building capacity for adaptive management in protected areas through improved systems for monitoring and evaluation*”.

The ARC project partners, two of whom have new parent organisations, include:

- Parks Victoria
- NSW Department of Environment and Conservation Climate Change
- Director of National Parks
- Department of Environment and Heritage Water Resources (Parks Australia)

The aim of the project is to improve State of the Parks (SoP) assessment and reporting and the application of findings from monitoring and evaluation to improve protected area management. Four key objectives guide the research:

1. Examine the factors that affect management effectiveness (*Josie Kelman (PhD candidate) and Grant Wardell-Johnson*).
2. Assess the reliability of the SoP evaluation instrument and recommend improvements to it (*Carly Cook, PhD candidate*).
3. Develop and test procedures for integrating SoP information in to decision making at multiple organisational scales (*Chris Jacobson, Marc Hockings and Bill Carter*).

4. Share findings and incorporate others’ examples of best practice in protected areas evaluation (*Marc Hockings, Chris Jacobson and Bill Carter*).

Our research approach is inherently collaborative. The purpose of this newsletter is to contribute to continued open communication with our project partners and other interested stakeholders.

## 6-month brief

After preliminary meetings with partner agencies at the close of 2006, each objective has progressed through more detailed planning stages, and the real work (i.e., data collection) has begun.

### **Objective 1: Factors affecting management effectiveness (Josie)**

Data, data everywhere! My research uses an exploratory data analysis approach to identify key areas of interest which can then be followed up with further research. I am currently continuing work on an analysis of the NSW SoP (2005) data as well as compiling the Victoria SoP (2005) data into a format which is workable for the statistical package being used.

I recently visited NSW to present the finding from my analysis of the 2005 data set. A suite of influences were identified as affecting management effectiveness. These can be broadly grouped into four main areas:

1. the influence of financial and staffing resources;
2. the social and geographical context of parks;
3. the level of planning available for management of individual parks and;
4. threats to ecological integrity such as habitat isolation, weeds and pests.

I will be running a similar analysis for the Parks Victoria data before finalising areas for further research. Further research may possibly encompass an economic efficiency analysis and an associated inquiry into the influence and links of park context on management efficiency.

Thanks to all of you who have provided input and assistance. I am looking forward to continuing to discuss this research as it moves forward.

#### **Lewin's Honeyeater**



#### ***Objective 2: State of the Parks reliability (Carly)***

The first half of 2007 has seen some milestones achieved for my project. In April, I underwent the confirmation process, which is a requirement of the doctoral degree at the University of Queensland. As part of this process, I produced a comprehensive literature review and methods document and gave a seminar about how I intend to answer my research questions. My confirmation committee endorsed my approach and since

then I have moved ahead with the data collection phase of my project.

I completed an analysis of the data sources used by park managers to support their State of the Parks (SoP) assessments. This showed some interesting differences between the data sources reported by park managers in Victoria versus NSW. Some of these differences may be explored further through other research questions.

In April, I commenced a desktop validation exercise with Parks Victoria data aimed at examining whether park managers with quantitative data make reliable State of the Parks assessments. In May, a questionnaire about how park managers define sufficient information was commenced with NSW park managers and will also commence shortly with park managers from Parks Victoria.

The second half of 2007 looks to be busy as I commence field work in late July (just prior to the 2007 SoP survey in NSW) to ground-truth a sample of SoP assessments. I will also be conducting a series of short interviews with park managers once this survey has been completed.

#### **Cunningham's Skink**



### ***Objective 3: Integrating SoP into decision making***

Chris and co. have had a busy six months since the last newsletter!

In March, Chris visited each partner agency to discuss some preliminary work plans. Later that month, Bill and Chris were joined by NSW staff for a workshop that involved identifying goals associated with the use of SoP information and the extent to which actual uses of the information matched those goals.

This highlighted that the weight of activity has thus far been on rationalising reporting requirements. We then planned some targeted case studies that address utilisation of SoP at the branch and region level, where the weight of activity has thus far been the least. To address this, we will explore the fit of SoP (both the process of undertaking evaluation and the information fed back to manager) with other influences on decision making (e.g., corporate and political influences, decision support systems and management tradition). By working with managers in their every day situation, we hope to un-cover some novel ways to support managers in utilising SoP information.

On April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Marc Bill and Chris held a joint meeting with NSW and Victoria in Melbourne. The agency staff shared their experiences with SoP by means of identifying key lessons. Some of the key lessons included:

- Being clear about what you are trying to achieve from the assessment
- The need to provide strong leadership by involving agency executives from an early stage
- The need to have managers onsite so they understand the relevance of the assessment
- Auditing information to avoid unnecessary errors in information (such as presence of a species outside its range)
- Being proactive in disseminating information in order to keep managers

Produced by University of Queensland ARC Linkage project on Adaptive Management of Protected Areas.

engaged and facilitate use of the information

The UQ team stayed on in Victoria to identify expected uses of SoP information and develop more in-depth plans with them, including potential case studies for later in the year.

In May, we visited Parks Australia in Canberra to feed back key lessons provided by NSW and Victoria, and to discuss a range of possible options for undertaking management effectiveness evaluation at Booderee National Park. **Thanks to everyone for their time and valuable input!**

### **Albert's Lyrebird**



### ***Objective 4: Sharing our experiences***

Our NSW and Victoria partners have advanced systems for evaluating management effectiveness. However, we recognise that not all agencies have equivalent resources to do so. In June, as part of our commitment to progressing management effectiveness with the NRS, Chris will be visiting each State and Territory agency to get a better understanding about emerging forms of management assessment.

This will allow us to consider the broader application of project findings. At the same time, she will ask about agency-level reporting



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

indicators, in the hope that commonalities can be found that can inform national level indicators.

In addition to this, we are preparing our project website for launch later this month ([Http://www.uq.edu.au/alpa](http://www.uq.edu.au/alpa)).

#### Nobby Dragon



#### Where in the world is Carmen Sandiego?

Ok, so this may be a bit retro for those of you who weren't using computers in the 80s, but you may be wondering what Marc has been up to. Marc's international profile as IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Vice-Chair of Science, knowledge and Management and his international leadership in Protected Area Management Effectiveness Evaluation have led to invitations to speak at many conferences. He's also involved in a global assessment of management effectiveness and is working with none other than Geoff Vincent (Parks Victoria) to evaluate Management Effectiveness of Korea's park system.

Bill Cater is also on the move...albeit locally! Bill heads to the University of the Sunshine Coast, 1hr north of Brisbane at Mooloolaba in June. He'll remain involved in the project (bless him) and his new contact details are included below.

Produced by University of Queensland ARC Linkage project on Adaptive Management of Protected Areas.

In April, Chris was in Albury to develop a book proposal with George Stankey (of Pacific Northwest Forest Plan fame), Catherine Allen and others best practice for adaptive management at different scales (i.e., policy, regional and local).

#### Key achievements and our partner agenda for the rest of the year

##### Past six months:

- Carly successfully defended her research proposal and is now a confirmed PhD candidate (this is a gruelling process which she handled with ease!)
- Initiation of Carly's data collection
- Josie has completed a full data analysis of 2004 & 2005 NSW SoP data analysis
- Workshops to identify key lessons from SoP in NSW and Victoria.
- Indicators for the successful integration of SoP information at NSW and Victoria.

##### Up-coming:

- Project website launch (June/July)
- Josie's confirmation (July)
- State & Territory visits - Chris (June-July)
- Victoria State of the Parks release (June)
- NSW 2007 State of the Parks Survey (September)
- NSW and Victoria case studies on the integration of SoP with current decision making frameworks and systems (September – March)
- Booderee management effectiveness plan development (July-)

#### Next partner meeting

Partners please keep December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> free for our annual 2-day get together – plans for **Fraser Island** are underway, with details to follow in August.

## Our contact details

Maro Hockings (Project Leader)

[m.hockings@uq.edu.au](mailto:m.hockings@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 5460 1140

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Gatton Qld 4343

Australia

Chris Jacobson (Primary Contact)

[c.jacobson@uq.edu.au](mailto:c.jacobson@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 5460 1608

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Gatton Qld 4343

Australia

Bill Carter

[r.carter@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.carter@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 5460 1023

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Gatton Qld 4343

Australia

Carly Cook

[cook@uq.edu.au](mailto:cook@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 3365 4723

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Brisbane Qld 4072

Australia

Josie Kelman

[j.kelman@uq.edu.au](mailto:j.kelman@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 5460 1690

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Gatton Qld 4343

Australia

Grant Wardell-Johnson

[g.wardelljohnson@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.wardelljohnson@uq.edu.au)

Phone: (07) 5460 1645

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

The University of Queensland

Gatton Qld 4343

Australia

## Great Sandy NP, en-route to Fraser Island



## Our partner agency key contacts

**NSW Parks and Wildlife Division:**

Peter Stathis, Andrew Growcock and Lyn Nelson

[andrew.growcock@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:andrew.growcock@environment.nsw.gov.au)

[peter.stathis@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:peter.stathis@environment.nsw.gov.au)

[lyn.nelson@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lyn.nelson@environment.nsw.gov.au)

43 Bridge Street, Hurstville NSW

Phone: (02) 9585 6585

**Parks Australia:**

Martin Fortescue, Scott Suridge, Peter Taylor, David

Phillips, Rachel Dempsey and Peter Cochrane

[david.phillips@environment.gov.au](mailto:david.phillips@environment.gov.au)

[martin.fortescue@environment.gov.au](mailto:martin.fortescue@environment.gov.au)

[scott.suridge@environment.gov.au](mailto:scott.suridge@environment.gov.au)

[rachel.dempsey@environment.gov.au](mailto:rachel.dempsey@environment.gov.au)

[peter.taylor@environment.gov.au](mailto:peter.taylor@environment.gov.au)

[peter.cochrane@environment.gov.au](mailto:peter.cochrane@environment.gov.au)

Minter Ellison Building, 25 National Circuit, ACT

Phone: (02) 62742354 Canberra; (02) 44422213

Booderee

**Parks Victoria:**

Tony Varcoe and Julie Richmond

[tvarcoe@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:tvarcoe@parks.vic.gov.au)

[jrichmond@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:jrichmond@parks.vic.gov.au)

535 Bourke st, Melbourne, Vic

Phone: (03) 8627 4857

*We look forward to seeing you all soon!*