

CONCLUSIONS

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The consideration of the future function of the Park leads to the recognition of several activities which require special consideration. These are the preservation of the environment, in particular the native vegetation and several rare and endemic plant species, and the provision of tourist facilities, including recreation facilities and access tracks or roads.

These two main activities may at times conflict. In such instances management for environment preservation should receive preference.

Preservation of Native Plant Communities and Rare Species

The provision of a Primitive Area within the Park would appear to be a desirable objective. It may be possible to include some areas which are not at present a part of the Park. An early decision as to the area to be so managed is essential so that the planning of other developmental activities in the Park may proceed without jeopardising the Primitive Area.

A number of plant species found in the Park are of special interest because they are rare or endemic to the Park. Some of these have been discussed earlier. The distributions of these species within the Park should be mapped and management should aim at their preservation.

Changes in vegetation form, and possibly in species composition appear to have been brought about in the past by fires and grazing. The elimination of grazing by domestic stock has removed one of these damaging agencies.

The effects of the present policy of total fire prevention are as uncertain as are those of frequent burning. Whilst it is probable that fires have always occurred in these areas, there is no certainty as to their frequency and severity. It is conceivable that a rare severe fire may be the norm for these ecosystems. It therefore appears to be desirable that the policy with respect to the use of fire be conservative until more is known of its effects, particularly the effects of fuel-reduction burning.

As well as being of value as retardants of run-off, the bogs are highly specialised plant communities with considerable scientific interest. The protection afforded by a National Park should provide the necessary conditions for the development of healthy examples of these communities. If, as has been inferred, the paucity of sound bog vegetation is the result of stream entrenchment and lowering of the water-table in the valleys, reversal of this process will be necessary for the re-establishment of this vegetation. The possibility of raising the water-table should be examined, for example by placing low rock barriers at intervals along the streams.

Constant vigilance must be maintained to destroy noxious weeds and other undesirable alien plant species which may become established in the Park.

Extensive use has been made of exotic species in the re-vegetation of bare soil on roadsides and other areas. This has been partly because of the ready availability of seed of these species and partly because of successes with them in similar environments elsewhere. As one of the aims of management of the Park is the preservation of the natural environment, the deliberate introduction of exotic species, and their encouragement by applications of nitrogenous and phosphatic fertilizers and lime, may be questioned. It has been suggested (Clothier and Condon 1968) that once a vegetative cover has been established, the native species can compete successfully against the exotics and will ultimately exclude them.

A more appropriate technique which may be expected to hasten the re-establishment of the native species is that described by Costin and Wimbush (1963a) which utilizes local, naturally-occurring vegetative mulch which contains a high proportion of the seed of native species.

Fauna

It appears that little is known of the fauna of the Park. A survey of the fauna should be made and the place of the respective species in the ecosystem should be determined.

Control of introduced pests, notably rabbits will probably be a continuing problem.

Tourist Facilities

The construction and subsequent use of access tracks of all types has caused erosion in the past. This aspect of the development of the Park requires careful planning.

The environment of many parts of the Park, such as the high-valley plains and the shelving rock slopes, pose special problems in stabilisation following disturbance, and road construction in such areas can lead to irreversible changes, such as the loss of soil from the rock slopes. With the greater mobility and increased leisure time available to the community, population pressure on National Parks will increase and the use of tracks in the Park will increase. New tracks will probably be necessary for fire protection and possibly to develop scenic areas, and old tracks will require improvement, widening, stabilisation, draining, creek crossings etc.

The continued use of horses for transport in the Park must be critically examined. They cause much damage to tracks and may be expected to always do so. Although they provide a convenient means of transport to remote parts of the Park no areas are so far from roads that walking is out of the question. They may at present help to keep open some of the less-used tracks, but as the use of these by walkers increases, this will become less important.

There seems to be no real justification for the development of facilities for sports or recreations for which ample facilities already exist elsewhere, and which are out of character with the prime function of the Park as preservation of the environment in a natural condition. The full enjoyment of the environment, including its scenic attractions, should be the sole objective of the development of tourist facilities. Because the plateau is snow covered for several months of the winter, skiing can be considered a natural recreation in keeping with the nature and purpose of the Park, as long as the clearing of wooded slopes is kept to a minimum.

As there is only one road off the plateau and out of the Park, some means of ensuring the safety of people who may be trapped on the plateau by bush fire must be devised.

General Conclusions

The natural environment of the Park is its greatest asset. Every effort should be made to ensure that it is preserved for future generations, and that commercial inroads are not allowed to despoil it. Only those developments which enhance the public's enjoyment of these natural assets without jeopardising them should be permitted