From Yellowstone to Australia and New Zealand: National Parks 2.0

Warwick Frost, Jennifer Laing

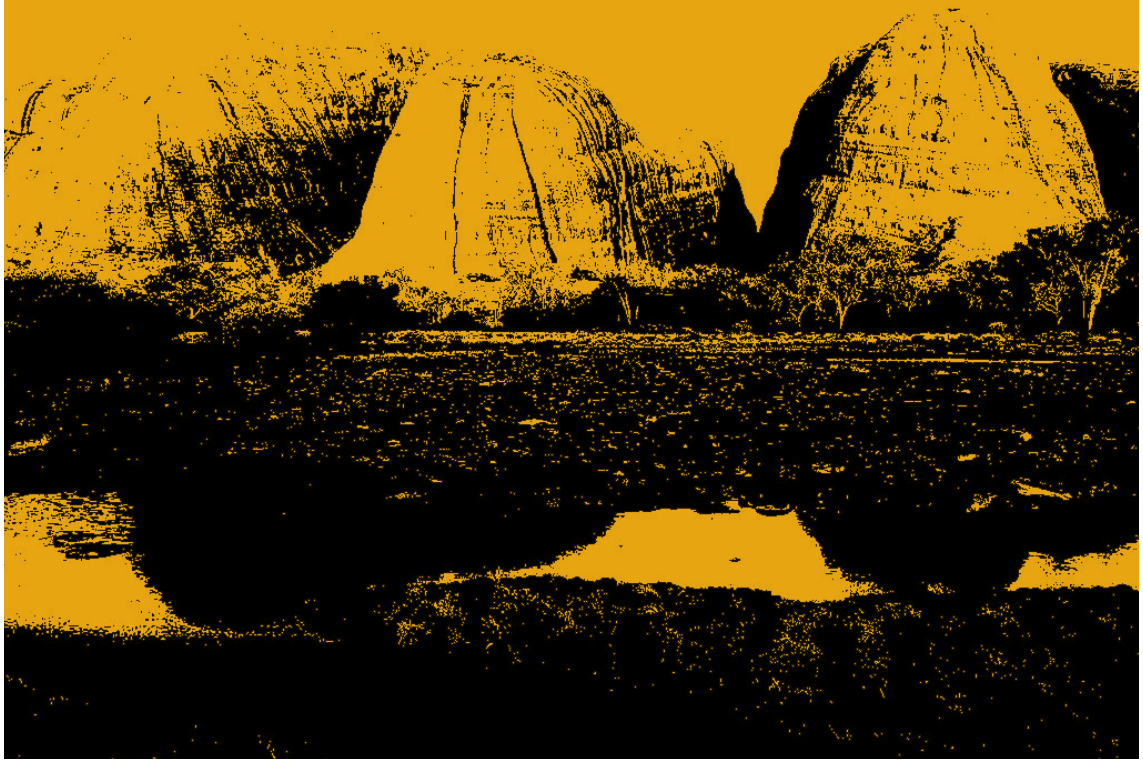
Global Environment 12 (2013): 62–79

Following the establishment of the world's first national park at Yellowstone (USA) in 1872, the concept was rapidly transferred to Australia, New Zealand and Canada. This article examines this second wave of adoption – and adaption – focussing on five case studies from Australia and New Zealand. While Yellowstone provided the inspiration for further national parks and protected areas, what was developed was often very different from the American template. Some of these national parks were quite small and some primarily orientated towards recreation. The New Zealand examples were profoundly shaped by interactions with the indigenous peoples, whereas the Australian ones were not. By early in the twentieth century, this second wave was beginning to focus on protecting specific ecosystems and wildlife, developments well in advance of the USA at that time. In taking the Yellowstone model and greatly adapting it for a variety of different social, political and physical environments, this second wave laid the foundations for the internationalisation of the national parks concept.

From Yellowstone to Australia and New Zealand: National Parks 2.0

Warwick Frost, Jennifer Laing

The establishment of the world's first national park at Yellowstone in 1872 created a concept that spread around the world. However, it was not a case of simple duplication. While some features of Yellowstone became standard, in other aspects, there was a rapid variation as different countries adapted the concept to their own particular political, social and environmental circumstances.



In the American literature, Yellowstone is a beacon of both US *innovation* and *exceptionalism*. Writing a reflective article to mark the centenary of the campaign to preserve Yellowstone, Roderick Nash labelled national parks the "American Invention". Nash argued that "the concept of a national park reflects some of the central values and experiences in American culture" and its origins were in the US's "*unique* experience with nature in general and wilderness in particular" [emphasis added], combined with American attributes of democracy, affluence and sizeable amounts of frontier land. Having conceived of national parks, America promoted and exported the idea around the world.[1] Echoing Nash, Alfred Runte proclaimed "the United States, recognized for its Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, has also bequeathed to the world its most stunning example of landscape democracy – the national park idea" and Richard Sellars utilised the metaphor of the idea being like a pine cone near a campfire, which had "heated and expanded and dropped its seeds to spread around the planet".[2] It was also notable that when historical documentary-maker Ken Burns turned his attention to national parks in 2009, his television series was titled *National Parks: America's Best Idea*.

However, such a view is increasingly being questioned. If national parks were such an American phenomenon, how and why were they adopted by other countries? A number of writers have argued that the national parks concept had to mutate and evolve if it was to spread. According to Thomas Dunlap, the global history of national park establishment demonstrated that "everywhere local culture was as important as foreign example" and Warwick Frost and Michael Hall queried "if national parks arose from uniquely American factors, how could the concept spread to other countries where these conditions were not present and, in some cases, arguably even antithetical?".[3]

[1] R. Nash, "The American Invention of National Parks", in *American Quarterly*, 22, 3, 1970, p. 726.

[2] A. Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks*, Northland, Flagstaff 1984, p. 5. R.W. Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1997, p. 8.

[3] T.R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, Cambridge University

For Frost and Hall, the internationalisation of the national parks concept was aided through US encouragement combined with the absence of any controls or limitations on its usage.[4] Even today, the establishment and management of national parks is entirely a matter of the sovereignty of individual nations.[5]

This article aims to extend this discussion, by examining the second wave of national park establishments. Within twenty years of the creation of Yellowstone, the national park concept had spread to Australia, Canada and New Zealand – all, like the USA, examples of the English Settler Diaspora. The spread to Canada was understandable, they share a long common border and the Rocky Mountain National Park at Banff had strong similarities with Yellowstone. Our interest is in Australia and New Zealand. Not only were these a significant distance from the USA, but what they developed were very different versions of national parks. Our argument is that it is this second wave that provides the template for the ideas that national parks could be duplicated outside the USA and have very different forms and functions. As a third wave of national parks came in the early twentieth century (including Sweden, Spain, South Africa, Japan and India), the notion of large degrees of variation being acceptable was already entrenched. Every nation could have their own national parks, shaped by their particular conditions and reflecting national identities and aspirations.

In this article we examine how the idea of a national park spread across the Pacific Ocean and how it changed as it made that journey. Like many other concepts and institutions, this was an ex-

Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 119. W. Frost, C.M. Hall, "American Invention to International Concept: The Spread and Evolution of National Parks", in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change,* Id. (eds), Routledge, London/New York 2009, p. 30.

[4] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[5] This is subject to widespread misunderstanding, with ideas of some sort of United Nations control being commonplace. While the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has a protected area management classification, it only has a persuasive influence. In essence, any country can create a national park wherever and whenever it likes.

ample of international transference, adaptation and innovation. In environmental history, it is important to understand that ideas and attitudes towards the environment are ever-changing, subject to social and economic forces. To demonstrate how the idea of national parks took hold in Australia and New Zealand, we utilise five examples from the period 1870-1920. We are not attempting to provide an encyclopaedic coverage of national parks establishment across that period, but rather we are providing these as key case studies illustrating the variability and adaptability of the national parks concept. In examining Australia and New Zealand through the lens of the US national parks experience, we are consciously taking a comparative approach. National parks, we argue, are a global phenomenon; yet typically studies of their history are country-based (and in Australia, mainly state-based).[6] To fully understand why the idea of environmental preservation took hold in a range of countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we need an international approach.

Inventing Yellowstone

Yellowstone, befitting the first of its kind, comes with a seductive and inspirational *creation myth* characterised by immense foresight and altruism.[7] It started in 1870 with a group of excited adventurers around a campfire. They were a group of businessmen, local officials and journalists from Helena in Montana. They had come south to Yellowstone to follow up vague reports of its natural wonders. Partly tourists, partly explorers, partly economic opportunists; nowadays they would be characterised as *explorer travellers*. The previous day they had discovered the Upper Geyser Basin, with nearly 100 gey-

[6] Examples include: A. Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1979, and later editions, E. Anderson, *Victoria's National Parks: A Centenary History*, Parks Victoria, Melbourne 2000.

[7] W. Frost, C.M. Hall, "Reinterpreting the Creation Myth: Yellowstone National Park", in *Tourism and National Parks* cit., p. 17. Sellars, *Preserving Nature* cit., p. 8.

sers. As their animated discussion proceeded: "the proposition was made by some member that we utilize the result of our exploration by taking up a quarter section of land at the most prominent points of interest, and a general discussion followed". One suggested buying land near the falls would, "eventually become a source of great profit to the owners"; another suggested the geysers as they "could be more easily reached by tourists". Finally, Cornelius Hedges, a young Yale-educated lawyer, spoke up. He argued, "that he did not approve of any of these plans – that there ought to be no private ownership of any portion of that region, but that the whole of it ought to be set apart as a great National Park, and that each one of us ought to make an effort to have this accomplished". The others enthusiastically agreed and joined in a lobbying campaign that was successful in the declaration of the national park eighteen months later.[8]

There has been much debate as to the accuracy of this account, particularly whether or not Hedges coined the term national park at that time. Indeed, in 1964 the National Parks Service was so concerned with its authenticity that it cancelled the annual commemorative re-enactment of the campfire discussion.[9] Furthermore, the altruism of those at the campfire – so essential to the myth – has been questioned. Nathaniel Langford, who wrote the account of the expedition, was employed by Jay Cooke of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Cooke, it has been argued, was keen for tourism attractions along his line and wanted to work with the government rather than multiple individual speculators. Throwing his resources and influence behind the campaign ensured its success.[10]

Despite these quibbles, the preservation of Yellowstone created a template that could be applied elsewhere. The essential elements

[8] N.P. Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone Park: Journal of the Washburn Expedition*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1905, 1972 reprint, pp. 117-118.

[9] Frost, Hall, *Reinterpreting the Creation Myth* cit. P. Schullery, L. Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 2003.

[10] M.J. Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux and the Panic of 1873*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 2006. Runte, *National Parks* cit. Sellars, *Preserving Nature* cit.

of what might be termed the *Yellowstone Model*, included[11]:

1. The name national park
2. Natural monumentalism is the justification for preservation
3. Visitors will be attracted and must be catered for
4. National park status is conferred by the national government
5. It is a permanently protected area.

Interestingly, what was missing from this original template was wildlife. One of the key features of Yellowstone today is that it is a haven for fauna – something celebrated through numerous nature documentaries and the visibility of iconic species such as the American Bison. However, when it was established there was little concern for this aspect, probably as wild animals were still numerous and widespread across the American West. Nor was the concept of wilderness prominent. Yellowstone was distinguished by monumental scenery accessible to visitors and it was this feature that would be the most influential over at least the next fifty years.

Across the Pacific

Before Yellowstone could be duplicated anywhere else in the USA, the idea had taken flight across the Pacific. In 1879, the Australian colony of New South Wales established a national park just south of Sydney. Originally titled The National Park, it was renamed in 1955 as the Royal National Park. The other British colonies in Australasia followed suit. New Zealand established Tongariro National Park in 1887, intriguingly before the US embarked on a second wave of national parks with the Californian additions of Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant in 1890. South Australia created a national park in 1891 and Victoria followed in 1892. Between Federation in 1901 and World War One, the other states in Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland established national parks.[12]

[11] Frost, Hall, *Reinterpreting the Creation Myth* cit., p. 28.

[12] Ibid. Id., *American Invention* cit. W. Goldstein, "National Parks", in *Parks and Wildlife*, 2, 3-4, 1979, pp. 93-148.

How did these ideas – seemingly so American – get across the Pacific so rapidly? The answer is that these *settler societies* were well-connected, with regular exchanges of capital, trade, migration and knowledge. The latter was encouraged by a common language, culture and high levels of literacy.[13]

At the centre of one influential knowledge network was Ferdinand Müller, Victorian Government Botanist. While he never visited the USA, he was a passionate exponent of acclimatisation, providing Eucalyptus seeds to California in exchange for a range of pine trees. Others physically crossed the ocean, including colonial politicians Alfred Deakin (later Prime Minister of Australia) and John Dow. Returning to Australia, they successfully advocated agricultural reform in developing irrigation colonies based on Californian models.[14] Nineteenth century New Zealand Prime Ministers William Fox and Julius Vogel were both born in England, yet also looked to the USA for models of political and economic development, engaging in extensive visits there. In addition, Vogel initially migrated to the Australian goldfields. Like tens of thousands of others, he crossed the Tasman only when an economic depression in Australia co-incided with the discovery of gold in Otago, New Zealand. Venturing the other way, influential national park advocate John Muir visited Australia and New Zealand in 1903-4. It is important that we understand just how mobile, outward-looking and inter-connected these settler societies were.[15]

Australians and New Zealanders were great newspaper consumers and they were interested in reading of developments in a similar environment to their own. The result was that they knew about national parks in the USA, albeit that knowledge was heavily mediated, even distorted. A good example of such literary knowledge transfer was the account by Rudyard Kipling of his visit to Yellowstone in 1889. Ini-

[13] J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009. I. Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1999.

[14] Tyrell, *True Gardens* cit.

[15] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth* cit. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora* cit.

tially this was published as a series of magazine articles, before being compiled into book form in 1899. With a knowing eye for an imperial market, Kipling juxtaposed the scenic wonders of Yellowstone with lampooning his fellow American tourists. Famously he wrote, "to-day I am in the Yellowstone Park and I wish I were dead". Riding in a tourist coach above a gorge, "even at the risk of my own life, I did urgently desire an accident and massacre". Despite such jokes, he was an ardent admirer of Yellowstone as a special place worthy of preservation. Indeed, in his writings he was very sympathetic towards the US soldiers who at the time were managing Yellowstone.[16]

Visiting the USA gave some advocates authority, as with the cases of New Zealand politicians William Fox and Julius Vogel. Furthermore, Fox was an enthusiastic watercolour painter, producing landscapes of both New Zealand and the USA. Queensland parliamentarian Robert Collins was a major advocate of national parks and it added weight to his arguments that he had actually visited Yosemite in 1878.[17] However, these were notable exceptions. Most decision-makers had only read about such places. Furthermore, the alliterative similarities of foreign names caused confusion between Yosemite and Yellowstone. For example, in 1906 Andrew Barlow, Minister for Public Instruction, introduced a bill to establish national parks into the Queensland Parliament. "We all know what the great National Park of the United States is", he proclaimed, "where the gigantic trees are".[18] A number of accounts of Robert Collins explicitly state that he visited Yellowstone in 1878 and that this was his inspiration.[19] However, while Collins

[16] R. Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel*, MacMillan, London 1899, 1922 reprint, pp. 72-74.

[17] H.C. Perry, *Pioneering: The Life of the Hon. R.M. Collins MLC*, Watson & Ferguson, Brisbane 1923, pp. 206-215.

[18] Queensland, *Official Records of the Debates of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly*, XCVIII, 1906, p. 1930.

[19] For example see O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, "Lamington National Park History", www.oreillys.com.au/lamington-national-park/history (accessed 19 September 2013). It is intriguing to speculate on how and why this myth persists. Certainly there is abundant literature which refutes it. Perhaps the temptation is to smooth out the wrinkles in the story by directly linking Collins with the first national park.

visited Yosemite, he did not proceed to Yellowstone. This raises an interesting question. In this early period, had any of the advocates of national parks in New Zealand and Australia actually been to Yellowstone? At this stage, there is no evidence that any had.

The influence of Yellowstone was not confined to Australia and New Zealand. The third wave of national park establishment – particularly between the two World Wars – saw Yellowstone as an ideal model called upon repeatedly. In 1919, King Albert of Belgium visited Yellowstone as a guest of the Boone and Crockett Club (a conservation organisation established by Theodore Roosevelt). There they recreated the campfire discussion, turning it towards how Belgium might establish a national park. This ultimately led to the 1925 creation of the Albert National Park in the Belgian Congo (now Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). In 1928, Belgium would combine with France and the Netherlands to set up the International Bureau on Nature Conservation (ultimately, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature).[20]

In 1926, South Africa opened the Kruger National Park. Throughout the long campaign to establish it, advocates made direct comparisons with Yellowstone; arguing that here was an opportunity for the nascent state to occupy the world stage as part of an international conservation effort. Similarly, the French also were influenced by Yellowstone and the international ethos as they established national parks in their African and Asian colonies (though not in France until 1949). Most intriguingly, a number of totalitarian regimes looked to the US for leadership. During the 1920s, Japan sent study groups to Yellowstone as a preliminary to setting up its national parks system. For them the similarities in monumental scenery and thermal features were pivotal to adapting the concept to Japan. Similarly, Mussolini was an enthusiastic adopter. In contrast, while Herman Goering was a great enthusiast for national parks in Nazi Germany, he encountered opposition, partly due to fears that the lack of monumental scenery might put the regime in a negative light. In Russia in the early twentieth century there was much interest in national parks, but by the 1930s this diminished. Na-

[20] Frost, Hall, *American Invention* cit., pp. 38-9.

ture reserves were established, but they were not designated as national parks until *Perestroika* in the 1980s.[21] That Yellowstone was recognised worldwide as a strong and influential exemplar was testament to how the Australian and New Zealand experiments had so readily incorporated it into the image and mythology of national parks.

The National Park, 1879

A large area of coastal bushland south of Sydney, the world's second national park was very different to Yellowstone. Resulting from concerns about the health of growing urban populations, it was intended to provide a recreational venue. It was not monumental and there were no special natural features. The opportunity arose as the land had been reserved from sale as a government railway was being built along the coast. When the railway was completed in 1886 it provided direct access from the city.[22] Accordingly, proximity and availability were the key attributes of this national park. The crown grant to its trustees specifically stated it was for recreation and authorised it to "establish ornamental plantations, lawns, gardens, zoological gardens, a racecourse, facilities for cricket and other lawful games, a rifle and artillery range, other amusements and accommodation houses".[23] To modern eyes, this looks nothing like a national park, these are feature we associate with recreation rather than wilderness or wildlife protection. Really, this is better understood as a variation of New York's Central Park or the urban parks of Britain. However, in the early years of national park development, such distinctions were blurred. Yosemite,

[21] Ibid., pp. 37-44. J. Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg 1995. M.A. Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic and the Science of French Colonialism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1994. F. Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. D.R. Weiner, *Models of Nature: Ecology, Conservation and Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1988.

[22] G. Mosley, *The First National Park: A Natural for World Heritage*, Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, Sydney 2012, pp. 24-29.

[23] Goldstein, *National Parks* cit., p. 94.

for example, contained a zoo from 1918 to 1932.[24]

In this first duplication of the national park concept, Yellowstone provided a name rather than a model. The Australian colonies were highly urbanised and growing rapidly. Politicians were seeking reserves close to the cities and which were accessible by public transport. Other colonies followed NSW's lead. In 1881, Victoria reserved a small area at Ferntree Gully, in the Dandenong Ranges to the east of Melbourne. Popularly it was known as a national park, though it was not officially designated as such until 1928. In South Australia, an old government farm, now superfluous, was renamed as a national park in 1891. Like its Sydney counterpart, it was developed with a combination of formal recreational and picnic facilities and some bush walking tracks. The model was repeated in 1895 in Western Australia. Even as late as 1906, politicians advocating national parks legislation in Queensland saw it as an opportunity for a large urban park for Brisbane.[25] In a curious example of branding, NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania all called their original reserves "The National Park", only changing names later as more national parks were established.[26]

Rotorua Thermal Springs, 1881

Rotorua is generally treated as a footnote, no more than a novel precursor to the formality of Tongariro.[27] However, there is value in more deeply examining what happened at Rotorua, for it exemplifies many themes found elsewhere. Certainly, it was an early example

[24] A. Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1990, p. 133.

[25] Goldstein, *National Parks* cit. Queensland, *Official Records* cit.

[26] C.M. Hall, J. Shultis, "Railways, Tourism and Worthless Lands: The Establishment of National Parks in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States", in *Australian Canadian Studies*, 8, 2, 1991, p. 62.

[27] See for example P. Star, L. Lochhead, "Children of the Burnt Bush: New Zealanders and the Indigenous Remnant, 1880-1930", in *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, E. Pawson, T. Brooking (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2002, p. 123.

of the call to emulate Yellowstone, perhaps the first in Australia and New Zealand. In 1874, former Premier William Fox, on the verge of retiring permanently from politics, called for the thermal springs to be protected, specifically citing the Yellowstone legislation. In 1878, as the push for protection coalesced, the government obtained copies of the Yellowstone Act for guidance.[28] However, despite this, what occurred was neither on the scale nor format of Yellowstone and was not called a national park.

Like Yellowstone, Rotorua contained a variety of attractive thermal springs, terraces and geysers. Unlike Yellowstone, the indigenous people were legally regarded as the owners of the land. During the Land Wars of the mid nineteenth century, the local Arawa people were allied to the British and retained their ownership. By the 1870s, they were leasing parts of their land to tourism entrepreneurs. This provoked some dissatisfaction. Some wanted clear title rather than leasehold. Indeed, one 1877 offer was for exclusive rights for £25,000. Others were concerned with possible environmental degradation in such an unplanned environment.[29] The clear parallel was with Niagara Falls, which by this time attracted severe criticisms for its inappropriate development. Indeed, much of the push for government control of Yellowstone was to avoid another shoddy and tacky Niagara Falls.[30]

The solution at Rotorua was a reserve. More accurately, it was a creation of a reserve surrounded by a planned township. An agreement between the government and the Arawa opened the way. The thermal springs were transformed into government gardens featuring bathhouses. Township blocks were offered on 99 year leases, with rents providing a revenue stream for the Arawa. Development was slow, particularly after the Tarawera Eruption in 1886, but the basis for modern day tourism in Rotorua was established. Furthermore, in some ways Rotorua was the logical extension of the Royal National

[28] Hall, Shultis, *Railways, Tourism* cit., p. 65. D.M. Stafford, *The Founding Years in Rotorua: A History of Events to 1900*, Ray Richards, Auckland 1986, p. 97.

[29] Stafford, *The Founding Years* cit., pp. 96-97 and 155-157.

[30] R.G. Healy, "The Commons Problem and Canada's Niagara Falls", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33, 2, 2006. Frost, Hall, *Reinterpreting the Creation Myth* cit., p. 18.

Park. Established primarily for recreation, it needed facilities and access. In time what developed was nothing like our conventional image of a national park. Instead, a medium sized regional city grew around the thermal reserve. Inside the reserve were manicured gardens and faux heritage buildings to cater for bathers (specifically in Mock-Tudor and Spanish Mission styles, these are now heritage-listed).

Tongariro National Park, 1887

Tongariro was what we now see as a conventional national park – larger, dominated by mountain peaks and with areas of wilderness. However, for Australia and New Zealand it was a radical leap away from the emphasis on recreation and urban parkscapes that had come before. Most importantly, though it looked like Yellowstone, it was also a very radical departure from the American experience. Relationships between the indigenous Maori and the British settlers were very different to what occurred in the USA and Australia. The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) gave the British sovereignty, but also recognised Maori land rights and citizenship. In the USA and Australia, national parks were often established with no account for traditional owners, in New Zealand these were integral. At Rotorua, the thermal springs reserve was the centre of a township development leased from the local Arawa. Following on from that, Tongariro was a Maori initiative, which Hall and Shultis argue was "unique in that it was the first (and last) to reserve a national park in co-operation with its indigenous people".[31]

In 1887, Te Heuheu Tukino IV, a chief of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa gifted three sacred peaks to the government. The three peaks – Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu – are in close proximity and all still active. The catalyst for this gifting was the rapid spread of British settlement, fanning fears that development would start to impinge upon the sacred area. This pre-emptive action was to ensure that the peaks received the highest level of legal protection.[32]

Generally the case of Tongariro has been characterised as moti-

[31] Hall, Shultis, *Railways, Tourism* cit., p. 66.
[32] Ibid. Star, Lochhead, *Children of the Burnt Bush* cit., p. 124.

vated by political rather than environmental reasons. However, with changing notions of the linkages between cultural and natural heritage, it is now important to recognise that a more holistic view of protection was at play. Certainly the issue of understanding indigenous motivations and attitudes toward nature is a vexed one. In the past, it has tended to been written by Pakeha historians and this had led to simple interpretations; such as that Maori at Rotorua were motivated by commercial prospects and those at Tongariro by spiritual connections. What is needed in the future is a deeper examination of possible explanations taking into account Maori perspectives.

Lamington National Park, 1915

While we may think of rainforests as a modern cause, the Victorians were fascinated by them. Partly this was due to their exoticness (Europe has no rainforests) and partly as they were cool summer refuges in the days before air-conditioning. In grand country houses there was a passion for recreating rainforests in gardens, grottoes and glasshouses and this filtered downwards through society. In Australia in particular, settlers were keen to preserve rainforests in the hills around the cities of the east coast.[33]

The first rainforest national parks were little more than picnic grounds at waterfalls and gullies. Ferntree Gully (1881) was 557 acres, Tarra Valley (1909) 750 acres, Witch's Falls (1907) 324 acres and Bulga (1904) only 49 acres.[34] Funnelling visitors into such small areas led to environmental degradation, particularly at Ferntree Gully, which was only an hour by train from Melbourne.[35] Initial plans for the Lamington Plateau south of Brisbane were along the lines of a number of small national parks preserving waterfalls and gullies. These would be interspersed amongst dairy farms and connected by

[33] T. Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Miegunyah, Melbourne 2000. R. Ritchie, *Seeing the Rainforests in 19th Century Australia*, Rainforest Publishing, Sydney 1989. S. Whittingham, *Fern Fever: The Story of Pteridomania*, Frances Lincoln, London 2012.

[34] Frost, Hall, *American Invention* cit., p. 36.

[35] Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* cit.

a scenic tourist road.[36] However, the final result was a national park of 47,000 acres; the world's first large rainforested national park.

Unlike most of the other national parks considered here, Lamington involved a lengthy preservation battle stretching from 1896 to 1915.[37] The initial proposal by Member of Parliament Robert Collins seemed destined to succeed, especially once he gained the support of Governor Lord Lamington, who even agreed to allow the area to be named after himself. However, unfortunate timing derailed this push. In the far north of Queensland, the 1903 completion of a railway to the rainforests of the Atherton Tableland near Cairns sparked a major land-rush. This was repeated over the NSW border at Dorrigo in 1905. In both cases, the settlers cleared the rainforests and set up dairy farms. Carried along in the excitement, the Queensland Government opened the Lamington Plateau for settlement.

The first group of settlers were the O'Reilly family, who began clearing the rainforest.[38] Their actions galvanised a renewed movement for preservation as a national park. With this, some modern features of environmental campaigning were apparent for the first time. In the 1915 state elections, the national park became an issue. On the one hand the conservative government showed little interest, whereas the Labour opposition promised support for a national park if they won office. When the latter succeeded, the national park was finally established. The campaign was also notable for the increasingly sophisticated use of public relations and the media. The chief

[36] W. Frost, "Tourism, Rainforests and Worthless Lands: The Origins of National Parks in Queensland", in *Tourism Geographies*, 6, 4, 2004, pp. 498-499. Nearby Tamborine Mountain gained a proliferation of small national parks donated by various farmers, see E. Curtis, *The Turning Years: A Tamborine Mountain History*, Author, North Tamborine 1988, pp. 131-133.

[37] An interesting by-product of this drawn-out process was the large volume of primary sources – quite distinct to many other national parks where there is a dearth of material. For the arguments for and against Lamington, see Frost, *Tourism Rainforests* cit. A. Groom, *One Mountain After Another*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1949. J. Jarrott, *History of Lamington National Park*, National Parks Association of Queensland, Brisbane 1990.

[38] Their story was the subject of the feature film S*ons of Matthew* (1950).

advocate of protection was Romeo Lahey, who constructed an interesting and seductive persona. A young university student, he was also the son of a local sawmiller. One consequence of the fight to protect Lamington was that Lahey founded the National Parks Association of Queensland to be a permanent conservation lobby group.[39]

Wyperfeld National Park, 1909

Our last case is the little-known example of Wyperfeld in northern Victoria. It was an area settled from the 1860s onwards, particularly by farmers of German origin who had originally migrated to nearby South Australia (Wyperfeld meaning Wyper's Field). At the beginning of the twentieth century, local farmers and enthusiasts successfully agitated for a national park. This contained three key features: ancient sand-dunes, mallee vegetation (multi-stemmed low growing eucalypts) and the habitat of the malleefowl (*leipoa ocellata*), an indigenous bird known for its prodigious construction of mounds for hatching its eggs. With the acceleration of clearing for wheat-growing, these locals wanted to protect these distinctive natural features. Tourism was of little consequence, due to its remote location. Nor was there anything monumental about the flat landscape.

However, Wyperfeld represents three important firsts in the evolution of national parks. It was the first instance where a national park was established to protect a specific ecosystem. Generally, the Everglades National Park in the USA (1934), is credited as the first ecosystem national park[40], however, Wyperfeld predates this by a quarter of a century. Second, this was the first arid national park.[41] Third, perhaps most importantly, this is the first case in which a national park was established specifically to protect endangered wildlife.[42]

[39] Frost, *Tourism Rainforests* cit. Groom, *One Mountain After Another* cit. Jarrott, *History of Lamington National Park* cit.

[40] Runte, *National Parks* cit.

[41] The Grand Canyon in the USA was not declared a national park until 1919. In Australia, Uluru was not a national park until 1977.

[42] The Albert National Park in the Congo was not declared until 1925. It was primarily intended to protect mountain gorillas. Kruger National Park in South Africa was established in 1926.

Conclusion

A teleological approach to history constructs a pathway in which past developments lead to the present day situation. Our approach is different. In examining how national parks have evolved we are just as interested in those paths that led to other directions; in some cases, even dead ends. When Yellowstone was established in 1872, it was a single event. At the time, it was not intended to be an exemplar of further developments. That it did, might now seem foreseeable, but this is with the benefit of hindsight.

In the US context, Yellowstone and later national parks were seen as uniquely American inventions, products of the political, social and natural environment and evidence of that country's exceptionalism. Such a view has tended to divert attention away from how rapidly and easily the concept of national parks was enthusiastically adopted by other countries. It is not surprising that the second wave of adopters were also regions settled by the English diaspora, sharing language, migration flows, trade links and information networks. However, as this study demonstrates, differing political, social and natural contexts led to very different versions of national parks being created. In evolutionary terms, mutations were varied.

The development of national parks in Australia and New Zealand created different templates. As national parks gradually spread around the world, they drew inspiration from Yellowstone and the USA, but they also drew on the different experiences of other countries. National Parks 2.0 created a pathway to national parks as an international concept.

The experiences in Australia and New Zealand also highlight some important themes in how people saw their relationship with the environment 100 to 150 years ago. This, in turn, still has an influence today. Examining these early national parks, it is striking how anthropocentric they were. These were very much human constructs, intended for the pleasure and recreation of people. What later became the Royal National Park was born out of concerns about health and sanitation in rapidly-growing nineteenth century cities. The reserve at Rotorua was to provide bathing in thermal springs

and a townsite for tourists. Tongariro was to protect Maori cultural heritage. Lamington was conceived in terms of healthy mountain air and spectacular views, rather than its sub-tropical rainforest. Even Wyperfeld, the precursor of a modern national park model, was also about local pride and identity.

These early developments are valuable for informing the modern debate about the desirability or not of commercial facilities within national parks. Certainly, many of those facilities that exist today are from earlier periods in history.[43] In the cases examined here, advocates of national parks often thought in terms of railways and accommodation being important to gain support. They provide a clear link to some of the arguments used today, where national park advocacy and funding are seemingly tied to commercial interests. As that debate continues, it is important to understand its historical foundations.

Finally, it is intriguing to note how the modern world judges these early efforts. Here there is a useful perspective in considering UNESCO's World Heritage listings. Yellowstone, understandably, was listed in 1978. Lamington was included with a series of Gondwanaland rainforests in 1986. Tongariro was listed for a combination of cultural and natural heritage factors in 1990. Rotorua was identified on a tentative list for inclusion in 2006.[44] Currently, there is a campaign for the Royal National Park to be nominated.[45] In this case, it is for a combination of natural and cultural factors; the latter recognising its significance in the late nineteenth century movement for parks.

[43] R. Buckley, "Rights and Wrongs in National Park Tourism", in *Wildlife Australia*, 50, 1, 2013, p. 30.

[44] New Zealand Department of Conservation, *Our World Heritage: A Tentative List of New Zealand Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites*, Department of Conservation, Wellington 2006, pp. 50-54.

[45] Mosley, *The First National Park* cit.