



How National Were the First National Parks?

Comparative Perspectives from the British Settler Societies

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The original concept of the national park – a large tract of land left in what was regarded as its ‘natural’ state, protected and managed for both conservation and recreation – was invented in the late nineteenth century, a gift of the ‘new world’ to the old.¹ The first wave of national parks appeared in British settler societies: in the United States (Yellowstone, 1872), Australia (Sydney, 1879), Canada (Banff, 1885) and New Zealand (Tongariro, 1887). Although South Africa, the other major British settler society, also began conserving large game reserves in the late nineteenth century (with direct reference to Yellowstone), they were not called ‘national’ until the Kruger National Park was created in 1926, partly because of white South Africans’ ambivalence about their national status.² In each of the other four countries, additional national parks were proclaimed before the concept was adopted elsewhere – next in Sweden in 1909, not in Britain until 1951.

Unsurprisingly, scholars seeking to explain the phenomenal spread of the national park have been tempted to look for the answer in what these particular communities had in common.³ Without diminishing these similarities, the overlaps or the extent to which they were independently reinventing the wheel, this chapter focuses on differences in the origins of these four parks, the national meanings they represented and the relative importance of transnational exchanges of ideas and personnel. While the Canadians and New Zealanders consciously adopted some features of Yellowstone, there were significant variations, and Yellowstone had no significance in the Australian case. However, as the Australian parks evolved into a system and required an articulate rationale, which a group of more professional, progressivist conservationists developed from the mid-twentieth century, there was a greater degree of borrowing from the United States.⁴ In other words these parks were not simply reproductions of Yellowstone – least of all in Australia. That is not to say Yellowstone was

not actively recruited, even in Australia, as a means by which the advocates of a conservationist philosophy of park management came to dominate by the 1960s.

Following the American Precedent

At first glance there seems to be a common thread in the national understandings promoted by the English-speaking settler societies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. They regarded themselves as self-consciously modern, advanced and wealthy, and they defined themselves as nations in similar ways, against a common relationship to Europe as the 'Old World'. Their nation making looked to nature rather than culture or history, the vastness of geographical space rather than an immensity of historical time. Their control of abundant natural resources – all awkwardly and often violently appropriated from indigenous populations – gave them a confidence about their place in the world. While they were conscious of a relative 'lack' of history compared to Europe (they were careful to forget the original inhabitants), they brought to their nation making a boundless enthusiasm for the future. Moreover, these communities often self-consciously modelled themselves on the United States. The Australian colonies, for example, were seen as 'another America' throughout the nineteenth century.⁵ There were racial, gender and ecological dimensions to this transnational bond at the moment national parks were being established.⁶ They shared a sense of 'whiteness' and of masculine endeavour, and assumed the obligation to settle and develop 'white men's countries' in the interests of civilization and modern global race politics. The establishment of national parks assumed a dichotomy between civilization and nature.

Indeed, there were striking similarities in the way nature was reserved for nations imagined as white and masculine. Each of these parks involved government action, and government at a 'national' rather than local level; each covered a large area; each was dedicated for use by the 'people', defined in national terms; and each involved some notion of 'wilderness' or untrammelled nature. All governments recognized the economic value of an emerging tourism industry, but also the way uncontrolled entrepreneurial tourism could destroy the aesthetic values it was based on. These governments were used to setting aside tracts of land for future use, as initially precarious settlement spread into a potentially threatening wilderness. The parks were created at the point where the balance swung, when wilderness was more threatened by settlement than settlement was by wilderness. Each had a racial dimension as indigenous lands were made over to the use of the 'nation', largely defined by its whiteness. Tracey Banivanua-Mar has gone further to suggest that the designation of national parks was a logical end-point to the dispossession of indigenous owners

and the triumph of private property: a final insistence that even 'waste' land, which they could see no prospect of 'improving', had some meaning for the invaders, and hence justified their ownership.⁷ These British settler national parks were marked by a particular, if contradictory, 'blending of romanticism and utilitarianism', as Michael Hall and John Shultis put it. They also argue economic similarities, particularly the extent to which tourism and railway expansion stimulated park making, were more important than conservation values or environmental concern.⁸

Perhaps the most important point of similarity lies simply in the fact that they were all named 'national', and these similarities suggested to many commentators that the parks established in the wake of Yellowstone were necessarily imitations 'following the American precedent'.⁹ But this, as Thomas Dunlap puts it, is 'hindsight and bad history'¹⁰ and elsewhere he makes the point that only the 'culturally tone-deaf would mistake an Australian discussion of wilderness for one in the United States, or believe that New Zealanders meant the same as Americans by the term "national park"'.¹¹ On closer examination, there were significant differences in the national parks themselves and the 'national' meanings that underpinned them. How were the separate proclamations of these original national parks conceived as 'national' events?

Departing from the American Precedent

It is possible to align the different 'nationalisms' inherent in these four national parks with glib characterizations of distinct national myths. Yellowstone conforms to an American myth of transcendent nature as proof of God's providence and manifest destiny; Australia's with an egalitarian democratic tradition; Canada's with Canadian developmentalism and a harking back to a European aristocratic spa tradition; New Zealand's with an image of nation as the mutually beneficial melding of Maori and *pakeha* (white settler) communities. This is not to advocate essentialist national characters, but rather to note that different nation-states make their national myths in distinct ways. Even so, such a characterization is too neat. It ignores not only the transnational connections and similarities mentioned above but also the accidental elements in the labelling of these parks as 'national'. The term could simply refer to the government entity responsible; it could have more pragmatic or localized meanings; and finally the significant differences between the parks were not necessarily, if at all, national ones.

The first important distinction to be made is the varying relationship of these parks to cities. Most of the parks were 'peripheral', but not all. Whereas Yellowstone and Banff were on the very frontiers of white settlement, and Tongariro was a significant distance from New Zealand's two main cities, Sydney's

first and second national parks (and South Australia's first and Victoria's second) derived their very rationale from their proximity to the city. One result was that although all the early parks were dedicated to 'the people', their imagined users were significantly different: Yellowstone and Banff were accessible for a wealthy, urban elite only, whereas the Australian parks enabled far more democratic use. This vital difference was recognized by an American journalist in Sydney with the *Great White Fleet* in 1908:

We, by whom I mean the Americans now in Sydney, are delighted to learn that you have vast national parks within Australia close to your principal cities ... Our national parks are too far away from our great centres of population. The Yellowstone is almost inaccessible to the man of moderate means unless he lives near; Yosemite has been inaccessible until recently to all who have not the means to enable them to travel on mere sight-seeing errands.¹²

Second and closely associated with this first point, parks had different gender implications. Whereas America's more remote parks were imagined as spaces for masculine adventure, at least until more luxurious accommodation was provided, the early Australian parks were always understood as heterosexual spaces for gentler activities such as picnicking, boating and walking. The absence of large carnivorous animals in the Australian (and New Zealand) parks also helped. Third, all four parks occupied land that had economic and spiritual value to local indigenous populations. But whereas the original owners were physically removed from Yellowstone, and assumed to have disappeared from the Sydney parks, Maori ownership of Tongariro was effectively incorporated into the process of establishment.¹³ As will be shown later, the indigenous connections to the parks would have significant implications for their national meaning. Finally, the landscapes differed: Yellowstone, Banff and Tongariro contained hot springs, dramatic scenery and natural 'wonders' and curiosities. They fitted the hackneyed notion of the sublime, which, despite its clichéd quality by the late nineteenth century, still carried something of Edmund Burke's sense of awe and the infinite. Such grandeur suited their national aspirations. Sydney-siders on the other hand admired their first national parks for their less celebrated, more intimate beauty. They had already found the sublime close by in the Blue Mountains, but they did not call it national.

When we come to the question of how their 'nationalness' was imagined, it is important to recognize the different national jurisdictions. That Yellowstone happened to be a 'national' park was, significantly, largely an accident of lines on maps and timing: it straddled three territories, not yet full-fledged states.¹⁴ Yosemite was already recognized as nationally significant for its sublime beauty, but because it was within and under the jurisdiction of the state of

California, it was not initially described as a national park. At least the United States' post-Civil War national sovereignty was unambiguous. The other three 'nations' were in or approaching that strange twilight zone of 'dominion status' that distinguished British settler societies from the rest of the British Empire. They still had residual ties to British imperial authority but were effectively self-governing: crucially for the establishment of national parks, they had constitutional power over land management. Yet another jurisdictional confusion was that, while Washington, Ottawa and Wellington were the seats of national governments, it was only in 1901 that the Australian 'nation' came into being and a national parliament was established. The jurisdictions that created Australia's first national parks were the self-governing colonies of New South Wales (NSW), South Australia and Victoria, which nevertheless often imagined themselves as 'nations'. Post-federation, the states of Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia would follow suit.

But nationality was never simply a matter of political jurisdiction. In each case the word 'national' carried more meanings, meanings that were being further elaborated internationally in the late nineteenth century. The variation in those meanings is instructive in understanding the extent to which these national parks were part of a coordinated, transnational development.

Yellowstone

Yellowstone's national status has to be understood within the reshaping of the American national myth following the Civil War, characterised by Judith Meyer as 'a combination of religion, patriotism, and the idea of nature as sublime'.¹⁵ Americans were conscious of their limitations in the 'cultural stakes' compared to the Old World, but God-given nature could produce grand spectacles to match anything Europe had to offer.¹⁶ Cornelius Hedges's much-quoted 1870 article, putting the first case for Yellowstone to be protected, made this plain: 'This great wilderness does not belong to us. It belongs to the nation. Let us make a public park of it and set it aside ... never to be changed but to be kept sacred always.'¹⁷ The park was inserted into the national ethos through the myth woven around its moment of creation, appropriately beside a campfire.¹⁸ The readiness to see these 'curiosities, or wonders' as 'sacred', in trust to the nation, drew on that peculiarly American Transcendentalist tradition. It also drew on a rhetoric of democracy, one that defined democracy as prioritizing public access over the interests of industry or scientific elites. While it is important not to discount other less idealistic motives, especially the role of railway promotion, it was the Transcendental rhetoric that gave the park its national meaning. An emerging group of white, bourgeois conservationists, usually professional men, effectively presented the natural spectacles in the

park as embodying something quintessentially American. On that basis they could argue that they deserved the protection of the nation – and the label ‘national’.

Banff

No other case quite managed that mix of an awe-inspiring, sacred nature embodying national ideals. Canada’s national ideal was more pragmatically concerned with development. Even in the foundation myth woven around the Banff Hot Springs, which continues to be told in video reenactment at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site, profit rather than idealism was the guiding principle. It suggests that an ethos of development loomed larger in the Canadian national myth than the American one. The three railway workers who stumbled across the cave containing hot springs on Sulphur Mountain in 1883 only saw profit in them, and disputes over their control were also about money. When the government annexed the springs to develop a national park with its 1885 Order-in-Council, it was still to be ‘a source of general profit’: that profit would be ‘vested in the Crown’.¹⁹ In Sid Marty’s words, ‘There is a kind of typically Canadian embarrassment exemplified here, the inability to admire great landscapes without somehow attaching a dollar value’ – according to William Cornelius Van Horne, general manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), a ‘million dollar’ value.²⁰ Even the proposal to exterminate predatory animals in the park, it was suggested, ‘could be utilized in a satisfactory manner’ with the natural history museum built in Banff in 1903.²¹

The 1887 act itself – for a ‘national park and sanitorium’ – borrowed from the Yellowstone legislation almost verbatim, dedicating ‘a public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the people of Canada’.²² But while clearly conscious of the Yellowstone example, it was also clear that a different notion of development was at work. The national benefit rested on, in Prime Minister John MacDonald’s words, the ‘importance that all this section of country should be brought at once into usefulness’ – that is, through the development of tourism.²³ The government and the CPR moved quickly (much quicker than Yellowstone) to initiate ‘improvements’ to ‘make of the reserve a credible National Park’.²⁴ They envisaged an imitation of Switzerland to attract the wealthy from the United States and Europe, and even imported Swiss tour guides to lead visitors up the mountains: ‘the doubtful class of people’ were discouraged, but villa lots were ‘leased out to people of wealth, who will erect handsome buildings upon them’.²⁵ The CPR built large, luxurious hotels at Banff and Lake Louise, with elaborate spas, fine restaurants and golf courses. There was no waffle about sacred values and little about preservation: the MacDonald government was determined to develop natural

resources for the benefit of the national economy, and the reservation, 'admirably adapted for a National Park', promised profit.²⁶

However while the nationalness of Banff was caught up in its role in furthering national development and making the Rockies useful, this is not to say it did not also embody a protoconservationist ethic. The recognition of the sublime grandeur of the scenery was of course what made it potentially useful through tourism, and the government's determination to control its development was to ensure the greatest possible profit, by maintaining it as 'high-class' scenery and excluding tacky commercial development. Canadians more generally were developing an appreciation of first the moral value and then the beauty of their landscapes and, as a cult of Canadianism emerged, the Rockies joined the frozen north and the prairies as the quintessential Canada.²⁷

Tongariro

Tongariro had yet another claim to being 'national': it was a 'gift' from the Maori people to the nation. Yellowstone and Banff both had sacred meaning for their indigenous populations, but their spiritual claims were ignored in the nonindigenous claims to national significance. The remarkable thing about Tongariro was the way the indigenous sacred was incorporated into the nation that the park supposedly exemplified. As sheep farmers pressed further into Maori lands, a sitting of the Native Land Court in 1886 sought to determine disputed rights to the three spectacular volcanoes (Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu). They held particular spiritual meaning for Tuwharetoa paramount chief Te Heuheu Tukino, who had authority over the land. The Tongariro National Park Board's account in 1927 gives the initiative to Lawrence Grace, a member of parliament and Te Heuheu's adviser and son-in-law, who acted as a go-between. He suggested the chief offer the volcanoes to the nation: 'Make them a tapu place of the Crown, a sacred place under the mana of the Queen. The only possible way in which to preserve them for ever as places out of which no person shall make money ... to be the property of all the people of New Zealand, in memory of the Heuheu and his tribe.'²⁸ Te Heuheu's letter to the minister the following year confirmed 'the gift of that land as a National Park ... for the use of both Maoris and the Europeans.'²⁹ Undeniably, this was a gift made under duress, and in 2005 the question of Maori ownership was taken to the Waitangi Tribunal. Yet in 1887 it demonstrated a sense of indigenous participation in the political process not apparent elsewhere: the Maori population was effectively incorporated into the New Zealand state, and the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi served as the founding document of the nation.

The possibility of national parks in New Zealand had been raised earlier, with direct reference to the Yellowstone precedent. One-time premier William

Fox was concerned about the burgeoning tourism around the famous Pink and White Terraces of Lake Rotomahana in 1874. While he saw the profitable possibilities of the 'sanitary' use of the thermal springs around Rotorua, he thought their commercial exploitation bordered on profanity:

The idea that these majestic scenes may one day be desecrated by all the constituents of a common watering-place ... that they should be surrounded with pretentious hotels and scarcely less offensive tea-gardens; that they should be strewn with orange-peel, with walnut shells, and the capsules of bitter beer bottles ... is a consummation from the very idea of which the soul of every lover of nature must recoil.³⁰

Fox commended the Americans for protecting Yellowstone from 'men to whom a few dollars may present more charms than all the finest works of creation', and he commended the Maori for protecting the Terraces from the 'sacrilegious' acts of 'European barbarians' by making strategic gifts of lands as reserves 'for the benefit of the people of the world'.³¹ However, less than two decades into their history as New Zealand's premier tourist attraction, it was natural rather than human agency that wrecked them: the terraces were destroyed by the volcanic eruption of 1886. At the same time attention was shifting to Tongariro, with Dr Alfred Newman arguing in parliament that 'it should be preserved from the hands of the spoiler in the same way as Yellowstone and other "lions" of American scenery'.³² In those earlier discussions, New Zealanders demonstrated not just an interest in protecting generic 'wonders', but added a sense of the distinctiveness of their nation's nature, and a 'hope to preserve its character and its intrinsic value'.³³ Taken together, it suggests New Zealand's national parks – Mount Egmont was declared in 1900 – readily incorporated traditional Maori custodianship into an understanding of their 'nationalness'.

However, over time, the incorporation of Maori into the creation myth of 'the gift' operated to marginalise practical Maori involvement by encapsulating it in a historical moment. Maoris were represented on the park's management board but had little influence. The understanding of Tongariro as a Maori cultural landscape was erased. Once the Department of Tourism and Health Resorts, the world's first national tourism authority, took over the parks in 1914, a tourism perspective prevailed, with proposals to transform the park into a game-hunting ground, introducing grouse, deer, heath and even Scotch thistle.³⁴ In 1929 a 'Château' was built on a spur below Mount Ruapehu, a luxurious hotel modelled on Banff, with 90 rooms and 45 bathrooms (an extravagance for the day), a cinema, a gym, a dance-floor, a nine-hole golf course and a lounge framing the spectacular scenery. The Château struggled, but the aim of park development was clearly to attract wealthy tourists from the northern

hemisphere. Other park users – ‘trampers’ – felt alienated, albeit conscious of their own superior moral and aesthetic sensibilities.³⁵

Sydney

Banff and Tongariro differed from the American model, but both consciously referred to Yellowstone, and in both cases their ‘national’ significance depended on their natural features. The more distinct origin was the earlier Australian one.

Australia’s first park has no creation story to match Yellowstone’s campfire, Banff’s cave or Tongariro’s gift. Whereas Americans understood a spectacular natural feature to have national significance, and therefore deserved preservation for ‘the people’, in Australia the need of ‘the people’ provided both the initial impetus and the national meaning. As early as 1866, the New South Wales government had given protected status to a spectacular natural feature, the Jenolan Caves. Waterfalls were also protected, but these were isolated scenic wonders, not national parks.³⁶ The specific origins of Australia’s first national park are murky, but they have been further muddled by later readings that seek to demonstrate how inadequately they measured up against the Yellowstone precedent or later standards of national park management. J. M. Powell has emphasized the context of forestry preservation in providing a precedent; Hutton and Connors the lobbying of the acclimatization movement; Mulligan and Hill the influence of British models of green urban spaces.³⁷ None provide a lot of direct evidence for their particular interpretation, and all miss the extent to which a recreational impetus shaped the National Park and the way recreation led to a conservation ideal.

The *Official Guide to the National Park of New South Wales* published by the National Park Trust in 1902 gave the most detailed contemporary account of the park’s rationale: ‘Several public men argued for the government to provide public parks, pleasure grounds and places of recreation adjacent to all thickly populated centres in NSW ... to ensure sound health and vigour of the community.’ The wealthy radical, Sir John Robertson, as acting premier, conceived the idea of bequeathing to the people ‘a national domain for rest and recreation.’ One of the colony’s elder statesmen, Robertson had made his name in 1860 with his land acts opening up the land to small farmers (selectors) rather than large pastoralists (squatters). His exact motivation cannot be established, but in 1879, the ‘immense people’s reserve’ (18,000 acres, doubled the following year to 36,300 acres) was dedicated to ‘the use of the public forever’ in the hope that the ‘air of these uplands is pure and invigorating to the jaded citizen of Sydney or her suburbs.’³⁸

Interestingly, the 'public men' – mostly politicians – behind the park emphasized not what the park contained, but what, in their view, the people needed in the way of healthy recreation. In some sense, any large undeveloped tract of land would have done. In that regard, Yellowstone was *not* the model, but parks on the outskirts of London – Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest – and even New York's Central Park. However, while the National Park's 147 square kilometres was no match for Yellowstone's 8,987 square kilometres, it was quite a different order from Hampstead Heath's 220 acres (less than one square kilometre) protected in 1871, and the 22 square kilometres protected under the Epping Forest Act of 1878. South Australia's 'National Park', established in 1891 was more like the English examples with a mere 2,000 acres (8 square kilometres). But neither this 'national park' nor Ku-ring-gai Chase, Sydney's second park gazetted in 1894, can be seen as simply copies of either American or English models. Perhaps the closest comparison were those established to cater for the urban populations of Stockholm in 1909 and Mexico City in the 1930s.³⁹

While recreation provided the impulse for Sydney's national parks, it should not be assumed that conservation found no place. However, it was conservation based upon the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The natural bushland was a fundamental premise of the parks' existence, and drew on a growing appreciation of the natural landscape and a desire to preserve its 'primitive' character. Of course, the national parks were also 'improved', usually around a central base for visitors.⁴⁰ But whereas in the more formal parks of Sydney (Hyde Park, the Domain and Centennial) decorous tree plantings, ornamental flower gardens and elegant statuary attracted visitors, the drawcard for recreation in the national parks was and remained the bush setting. Sydney's national parks did not feature any 'spectacular' scenery or natural formations. The language used to describe them was not the sublime but the picturesque: 'The scenery, though not on a scale of grandeur, charms with its quiet but varied beauty.'⁴¹ Rather than a landscape of tall poppies, this was one of Sydney angophoras, Christmas bush, Gynea lilies, tree ferns, bush orchids, 'a wealth of picturesque and quiet beauty' not to be admired as a set piece from a distance, but one to enter and surround oneself with.⁴²

Far from being neglected by an alienated English aesthetic that could not appreciate the beauty of the Australian bush, this sort of landscape had to be protected from its admirers. The threat came from walkers, flower pickers, hunters and fern stealers, and also from the spread of the villa. By 1901 Sydney was a rapidly spreading city of almost half a million, and picturesque landscapes, particularly those with water views and 'natural' bush settings, were being favoured as housing sites.⁴³ Determined to preserve the flora and fauna committed to their care, the trustees of the National Park declared it a penal offence to discharge firearms; interfere with birds and animals; remove, cut

or deface any trees, shrubs, plants, rocks, fences and gates. They had two pet aversions: 'the guns and dogs of so-called sportsmen' and commercial activity. They were determined to 'prevent the modern abomination of advertising ... so prevalent almost everywhere else; so that here at least Nature's beauties can be enjoyed without notifications concerning So-and-so's soap, or Somebody's Embrocation, or Otherman's Pills vulgarising everything.' By-laws explicitly prohibited advertising to keep the parks 'safe from the machinations of ambitious schemers, and secured to the people of this country'.⁴⁴ This was even more pronounced in Ku-ring-gai Chase, where the trustees sent out raiding parties to ambush flower gatherers and inserted what must be one of the earliest regulations concerning cultural heritage:

The defacing or removing of any aboriginal drawings or chippings on rocks is especially prohibited under this Regulation, as also the digging up or removal of any banks of shells and refuse, presumedly Aboriginal Kitchen-middens, in search of skulls, bones or other Aboriginal remains.⁴⁵

Unlike their international colleagues, the Ku-ring-gai trustees could assume there were no indigenous occupants left to worry about, so the regulations and indeed the naming of the park served as a convenient elegy to a dying race.

Certainly, the appreciation of the aesthetic value of the park does not add up to a conservationist rationale based upon the scientific knowledge of the day. A flurry of recent scholarship on conservation movements has agreed that Australian national parks failed to show much concern about protecting environmental values, and they only receive passing mentions in histories of environmentalism.⁴⁶ Indeed, the Australian scientific community showed little interest in the parks initially and was more intent on zoos and botanic gardens and in investigating the economic value of Australian flora and fauna. There was nothing in Australia that compared to the articulate conservation movement in the United States, as represented by George Perkins Marsh and John Muir. Despite the variety of organisations springing up – scientific and amateur naturalists, bird-watchers and acclimatizers – their progressivism was ineffectual compared to activists in other areas of public life and other parts of the world.

However, the desire of recent scholars to identify the origins of environmental consciousness leads to something of a Whig interpretation that seeks to find the pioneers of present-day perspectives in the past. Such an approach misses the point that the Australian recreational tradition behind the early national parks was not antagonistic to philosophies of conservation. It is exactly in this recreational tradition that the *national* significance of Australia's original national parks can be found. Other national parks embraced recreation, and other governments established parks primarily for recreational purposes.

But it was in Australia that recreation was a sufficient justification for calling them 'national', and this rationale emerged independently from the Yellowstone precedent. Australians knew about Yellowstone, but the first reference that directly related Yellowstone to Australian national parks appears to have been a 1900 newspaper article comparing Ku-ring-gai's potential for saving threatened species.⁴⁷

Recreation and Nation in Australia's National Parks

Recreation produced no more coherent a philosophy than conservation in Australia. However, the recreational impulse justified calling the early parks 'national' in three ways. First, they were national in the sense of benefiting 'the people'. The colony of Victoria established a 'National Museum' in 1854 and a 'National' Gallery in 1863. Sydney followed suit with a 'National Art Gallery' in 1876, just three years before the 'National Park'. These institutions were national not for the art they contained but 'for the people' they served. Similarly the national parks were national not because nature embodied the nation (as it did in North America and New Zealand) but because the people who would use them did. Park makers believed people to have a deficiency not in material but in spiritual life, a lack that nature as well as art could fill. They were 'destitute' of the 'breathing spaces favoured by Nature'.⁴⁸ Whereas recreation in Yellowstone, Banff and later Tongariro tended to be structured around elite tourism, the proximity of the Australian national park to the urban metropole provided nature as a mass experience.⁴⁹

Second, many believed that the enjoyment of leisure was a national characteristic. Among the first to win the eight-hour day, Australians were a holidaying people with more access to leisure and a climate conducive to outdoor pursuits. In this they could be contrasted not only to Britons, but Americans. In 1891, the English visitor, Edward Kinglake, was mildly disapproving: 'There is no nation in the world which treats itself to so many holidays.'⁵⁰ Mark Twain, on his 1895 lecture tour, was pleased to be 'in restful Australia, where nobody wants to work and it is always holiday'.⁵¹ Even the conservative *Sydney Morning Herald* could wax lyrical:

We are the children of the sunny south, and we borrow from the clear skies above us, and from the general clime, much of that lightness of heart and of that vivacity, which so eminently distinguish us as holiday making people ... The free winds of heaven kissing the face of man, the mysterious and many voiced murmurs of the ocean, the hum of insect life, the rustling of the lofty trees, the flight of birds, the invigorating atmosphere, all and each of these touch the heart, inform the mind and educate the soul.⁵²

Empty leisure was dangerous, leading to gambling and drinking, but 'innocent' pleasure in uplifting natural settings could be looked on with a benign eye.

Third, directing people's leisure to nature instead of the bar was closely associated with a growing racial consciousness. National parks could beget national fitness. Social Darwinism was only just beginning to demand that a nation's citizens be physically fit for the 'struggle for life', but the dangers of the city were already conceived in social Darwinist and eugenicist terms. This social engineering should not be overstated, however: a national park was still a gift to the people rather than an outdoor gymnasium.

Still, there is an element here of what has been called 'colonial socialism'. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Australian colonies were seen as social laboratories where the state played a major role in the economy, running railways, regulating industrial conditions and establishing banks and butcher shops. The aim in part was to protect working people from the more brutal aspects of capitalism. It attracted notice around the world, the French social theorist Albert Mélin labelling it 'socialisme sans doctrines'.⁵³ These policies derived from accumulated pragmatic interventions rather than a coherent philosophical position. Similarly, when it came to establishing national parks, there was no underlying philosophy. One result was that when a rationale was needed, the vacuum was filled by the more coherent, protoenvironmentalist philosophy being articulated in the United States.

The Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century national parks spread throughout the world under the umbrella of international scientific, environmental and political organisations. New national parks were also established throughout Australia, but their creation had little to do with international debate until the middle of the century. In Queensland the wealthy pastoralist and parliamentarian Robert Collins led the argument for preservation of the Macpherson Ranges as health resorts: although he knew of Yellowstone and had visited Yosemite, the suggestion that they were a significant influence on his thinking was probably a later gloss.⁵⁴ Victoria developed a national park system with more support from scientists, amateur and professional.⁵⁵ Tasmania's boosters succeeded in having scenic and increasingly iconic landscapes declared as national parks to promote tourism.⁵⁶ Bushwalkers lobbied for new national parks in New South Wales;⁵⁷ among the most prominent was Myles Dunphy, an architect who promoted himself as the founder of bushwalking in New South Wales and developed a coherent philosophy of conservation in the style of John Muir. Though he never left Australia, he was keenly aware of international developments in conservation and admired the size of the American parks and their categori-

zation into 'primitive' and 'tourist' areas. He also publicized the resolutions of the 1933 London conference in his manifesto for a great national park for the Blue Mountains (it eventually came to fruition with a national park in 1959 and World Heritage Listing in 2000). Yet his philosophy drew more on his own experience as a bushwalker, campaigning most vigorously for places he most enjoyed walking and camping in. Thus he remained within the recreational tradition of NSW national parks: it was just that the form of recreation he preferred demanded rugged country, bush skills and isolation.⁵⁸

Unlike in other countries, scientists played a minor role in park establishment until the mid-twentieth century. Part of the reason is that while science was increasingly organized on a national and international level, Australia's 1901 federal constitution left the states dominant – and they jealously guarded their control of land. This is often seen as anomalous given the 1969 IUCN expectation that national parks be administered by 'the highest competent authority of the country'. But Australia's first national parks were formed when no Australian nation-state existed and individual colonies aspired to 'national' status. Even after federation the states were theoretically the higher authority when it came to disposing land. Thus it is too simplistic to regard the proliferation of national parks in Australia as merely misnamed 'state parks'.⁵⁹ The exception that proves the rule is the case of the Kosciuszko State Park, proclaimed in 1944 (becoming Kosciuszko National Park in 1967). While Dunphy and others had been lobbying for its protection earlier, the stimulus was the development of the massive Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, which was a major *federal* government initiative. In the competing and ongoing negotiations between the claims of grazing, hydroelectricity, skiing, tourism, bushwalking and conservation, and between state and federal authorities, scientists formed an active lobby group. The Royal Zoological Society and others argued for a Strict Natural Reserve as defined by the 1933 London conference. Dunphy opposed them on the grounds that responsible recreational bushwalkers should always have access to such areas.⁶⁰ Bushwalkers split over recreation versus scientific conservation, signalling a serious challenge to the recreational tradition. The victory of the conservationists would be sealed in 1967, when all the individual national parks in New South Wales, each managed by a separate trust, were brought under the authority of a National Parks and Wildlife Service modelled directly on the American system.⁶¹ While both bushwalkers and scientists had argued for this, stereotyping the old regime as bumbling amateurs, the next twenty years represented the high point of a strict conservationist ethos guiding national park management.

When the Australian federal government moved somewhat belatedly to establish national parks on land it did control – the Northern Territory – it proved far more responsive to international developments. Kakadu was developed from 1979 with explicit reference to and help from the IUCN. Indeed

in negotiating indigenous majority management in Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu national parks and the hand-over of Uluru to indigenous owners in 1985, Australia was in the forefront of the international shift to recognize indigenous rights in national parks. When the states followed suit – for example, the Mutawintji National Park in New South Wales was handed back in 1998, following an Aboriginal blockade in 1983 – they rarely went as far in providing for traditional cultural uses of the land.⁶²

Conclusion

When Australians belatedly acknowledged both U.S. and international developments in the concept of a national park, they tended to regard their early parks as an imperfect application of the Yellowstone precedent. We have argued that Yellowstone's influence has been exaggerated. While it was significant for Banff and Tongariro, neither can be understood as simply following its precedent. Yellowstone had little or no influence on Sydney's 'National Park', where recreation took precedence. Recreation nevertheless required a large area of natural bushland to flourish and, ironically, more stringent protection – in regard to hunting, hotels and commercial activity, for example – than existed in other parks at the same time. The result was a park that conformed to later IUCN definitions, was justified in being called 'national' and established an understanding of national parks largely independent of a transnational discourse.

Notes

1. We would like to thank Jane Taylor for her research assistance on this chapter.
2. Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg, 1995), 47–48.
3. The best example of this approach is C. Michael Hall and John Shultis, 'Railways, Tourism and Worthless Lands: The Establishment of National Parks in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States', *Australian-Canadian Studies* 8, no. 2 (1991): 57–74. Jane Carruthers argues for an imperial tradition in British colonies (including South Africa) distinct from the Yellowstone model: 'Nationhood and National Parks: Comparative Examples from Post-imperial Experience' in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, ed. Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (Melbourne, 1997), 125. Thomas R. Dunlap notes significant differences, but the thrust of his comparative work is to emphasize similarities in settler societies' approaches to nature: *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Cambridge, 1999). See also Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, eds, *National Parks and Tourism: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change* (London, 2009); John Sheail, *Nature's Spectacle: The World's First National Parks and Protected Places*, (London, 2010).

4. Between the two world wars particular academic disciplines in Australia – e.g., education, political science – looked to the United States (prompted by funding opportunities) while others continued to look to British intellectual traditions. Conservationists arguably drew on American progressivist sources. Cf. Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne, 1978), ch. 4.
5. Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity* (Sydney, 1981), ch. 4.
6. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne, 2008); Griffiths and Robin, *Ecology and Empire*.
7. Tracey Banivanua-Mar, 'Carving Wilderness: Queensland's National Parks and the Unsettling of Emptied Lands, 1890–1910', in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. Penny Edmonds and Tracey Banivanua-Mar (London, 2009), 73–94.
8. Hall and Shultis, 'Railways', 57, 61.
9. *Ibid.*, 57, 65.
10. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, p. 118.
11. Thomas R. Dunlap, 'Ecology and Environmentalism in the Anglo Settler Colonies', in Griffiths and Robin, *Ecology and Empire*, 85.
12. Franklin Matthews, 'An American View, Australia as Seen by Brother Jonathan', unsourced newspaper clipping, Vernon Family Papers MLMSS 6571, Mitchell Library. Thanks to Justine Greenwood for this reference.
13. Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley, 2001), 87; cf. Mark Spence, 'Dispossessing the Wilderness: Yosemite Indians and the National Park Ideal, 1864–1930', *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 1 (1996): 27f.; for Tongariro, see below.
14. Montana, Idaho and Wyoming; populations around 20,000, 15,000 and 10,000 respectively. Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson, 1985), 2.
15. Judith L. Meyer, *The Spirit of Yellowstone* (Lanham, 2003 [1996]), 16. On Yellowstone and its origins, see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 2001); Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln, 1979).
16. Bartlett, *Yellowstone*, 3f.; John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1989).
17. Cited in Sid Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion: The First Century of Canada's Parks* (Toronto, 1984), 64; cf. Esther Anderson, *Victoria's National Parks: A Centenary History* (Melbourne, 2000), 2.
18. Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* (Lincoln, 2003).
19. Marty, *Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 32 (citing Sir Sandford Fleming, engineer-in-chief of CPR).
20. *Ibid.*, 44, 42, 48.
21. *Ibid.*, 58.
22. *Ibid.*, 62.
23. Joanna Kafarowski, 'How Attitudes and Values Shape Access to National Parks', *George Wright Forum* 20, no. 4 (2003): 57.
24. Marty, *Grand and Fabulous Notion*, 48.
25. *Ibid.*, 61.

26. Kevin McNamee, 'From Wild Places to Endangered Spaces: A History of Canada's National Parks', in *Parks and Protected Areas in Canada: Planning and Management*, ed. Philip Dearden and Rick Rollins (Toronto, 1993), 20.
27. Dunlap, *Nature*, 103f.
28. James Cowan, *The Tongariro National Park, New Zealand: Its Topography, Geology, Alpine and Volcanic Features, History and Maori Folk-lore* (Wellington, 1927), 30f; also David Thom, *Heritage: The Parks of the People* (Auckland, 1987), 97.
29. Thom, *Heritage*, xxii; Cowan, *Tongariro*, 31.
30. Thom, *Heritage*, 1–4, 80f.
31. *Ibid.*, 81–86.
32. Jillian Louise Walliss, 'The Nature of Design: Influences of Landscape and Environmental Discourse on the Formation on the Australian and New Zealand National Park and Museum', PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2009, 69.
33. Julius Vogel, speaking on the New Zealand Forests Bill 1874, cited in Thom, *Heritage*, 79; see also 31, 105.
34. Walliss, 'Nature of Design', 71f., 79f.
35. Kirstie Ross, *Going Bush: New Zealanders and Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland, 2008), 67.
36. Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape Was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed* (Melbourne, 2005).
37. J. M. Powell, *Environmental Management in Australia, 1788–1914, Guardians, Improvers and Profit: An Introductory Survey* (Melbourne, 1976); Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement* (Melbourne, 1999); Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action* (New York, 2001).
38. New South Wales National Park Trust, *Official Guide to the National Park of New South Wales* (Sydney, 1902), 7–10. Sir John Robertson (1816–91) was a pastoralist and four-time premier of NSW (1860–61; 1875–77; 1877; 1885–86): for more on his role see Kim Allen Scott, 'Robertson's Echo: The Conservation Ethic in the Establishment of Yellowstone and Royal National Parks', *Yellowstone Science* 19, no. 3 (2011): 6–11.
39. See the contribution of Emily Wakild to this volume.
40. *Official Guide* (1902), 94f.
41. 'In Kuring-gai Chase', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Sept 1902, 5.
42. *Official Guide* (1902), 10.
43. See Caroline Ford, 'The First Wave: The Making of a Beach Culture in Sydney, 1810–1920', PhD dissertation, Department of History, University of Sydney, 2008; Jane Taylor '“An Incubus upon the District”: Progress, Private Property and the Field of Mars Common', *History Australia* 7, no. 1 (2010).
44. *Official Guide* (1902), 20, 95, 97.
45. Joan Webb, *Eccleston du Faur: Man of Vision* (Sydney, 2004), 41.
46. Beginning with Powell, *Environmental Management*; more recently Hutton and Connors, *History*; Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*; William J. Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage* (St Lucia, 2006); see also Wendy Goldstein, *Australia's 100 Years of National Parks* (Sydney, 1979); Derek Whitelock, *Conquest to Conservation: History of Human Impact on the South Australian Environment* (Adelaide, 1985).

47. E. D. Hoben, 'A National Pleasure Ground: The Kuring-gai Chase', *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 April 1900, 12.
48. *Official Guide* (1902), 7.
49. Grand government accommodation was built elsewhere in Australia: Mount Buffalo (1910), Mount Kosciuszko (1930), Jenolan Caves (1898) and Yallingup (1905).
50. Edward Kinglake [Edward R. Garnsey], *The Australian at Home: Notes and Anecdotes of Life at the Antipodes* (London, 1891), 69.
51. Lecture in Glenelg, *Adelaide Advertiser*, cited in Thomas Harry and V. L. Solomon, *Australia at Play: Suggested by 'America at Work'* (Adelaide, 1908), 51.
52. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1859, cited in Richard White, *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (Melbourne, 2005), 56, 59.
53. Albert Métin, *Le socialisme sans doctrines: Australie et Nouvelle Zélande* (Paris, 1910).
54. Warwick Frost, 'Tourism, Rainforests and Worthless Lands: The Origins of National Parks in Queensland', *Tourism Geographies* 6, no. 4 (2004): 497f.
55. Sarah Mirams, "'For Their Moral Health': James Barrett, Urban Progressive Ideas and National Park Reservation in Victoria", *Australian Historical Studies* 33 (2002): 249–66; Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne, 1996).
56. Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History* (Sydney, 2008), 180–84; Melissa Harper, 'Saving the Franklin River: The Environment Takes Centre Stage' in *Turning Points in Australian History*, ed. Martin Crotty and David Roberts (Sydney, 2009), 211–23.
57. Melissa Harper, *The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia* (Sydney, 2007).
58. Melissa Harper, 'Nature by Design: Myles Dunphy and the National Park Ideal in Australia', unpublished paper, Australian Historical Association Conference, University of Melbourne, July 2008.
59. Frost, *Tourism*, 504f.
60. Geoff Mosley, *Battle for the Bush* (Sydney, 1999), 48ff.
61. Including American razzmatazz and an American director: Peter Prineas and Henry Gold, *Wild Places: Wilderness in Eastern New South Wales* (Sydney, 1997), 250; see also Goldstein, *100 Years*, 72–95.
62. Terry De Lacy and Bruce Lawson, 'The Uluru-Kakadu Model: Joint Management of Aboriginal-Owned National Parks in Australia', in *Conservation through Cultural Survival: Indigenous People and Protected Areas*, ed. Stan Stevens (Washington, DC, 1997), 155–88; Penelope Figgis, *Australia's National Parks and Protected Areas: Future Directions, A Discussion Paper* (Sydney, 1999); Jenny Savigny, Peter Thompson and Daniel Bourke, 'Land Rights, National Parks and Plans of Management', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (1990): 7–9.