

BURLEIGH – WHERE RAINFOREST MEETS THE SEA

Key values

Burleigh Head National Park protects one of the last remaining natural rocky headlands on the Gold Coast, supporting a diverse mix of lowland rainforest, open forest and coastal vegetation in a highly urbanised landscape. These habitats, now rare across the region, provide refuge for threatened plants and animals and support important ecological processes.

The headland (Jellurgal) is also a place of deep cultural significance to the Kombumerri people, with important cultural sites and ongoing connections to Country. Highly accessible and scenic, the park attracts large numbers of visitors. Together, its ecological, cultural and recreational values make Burleigh Head a small but critical stronghold for biodiversity on the Gold Coast.



Special species

Burleigh's endangered coastal rainforest shelters a rich diversity of threatened plants largely restricted to less disturbed hinterland sites, along with the beautiful Richmond birdwing butterfly and its host vine. The woodlands provide critical habitat for koalas. Key species include:



- Koala
- Richmond birdwing
- Arrow-head vine
- Macadamia nut
- Native guava
- Rusty rose walnut
- Spiny gardenia
- Stinking laurel

Key threats

The unique habitats and wildlife of Burleigh are under increasing pressure from dense infestations of invasive plants. Species like umbrella tree, Easter cassia, ochna, coral berry, and corky and white passion flower are outcompeting natives, smothering rainforest understorey and degrading koala habitat. The Friends of Burleigh Head can help protect the natural environment of the park by:

- Improving the condition of rainforest communities by removing key woody weeds and vines
- Protecting and improving koala habitat by controlling ochna, umbrella trees, Easter cassia and exotic vines

Top 3 ecological priorities

☐ Restore lowland rainforest structure and diversity

Focus weed control in Zones 1, 4 and 6 to reduce infestations of umbrella tree, ochna, Easter cassia and invasive vines. This will allow native ground and shrub layers to recover, supporting threatened flora and overall habitat condition.

☐ Improve and reconnect koala habitat

Target woody weeds such as ochna, Easter cassia and umbrella tree along the western boundary (Zones 3 and 6) to enhance habitat quality and support koala movement through the landscape.

☐ Support and strengthen on-ground restoration efforts

Complement contractor works by targeting smaller infestations and scattered weeds. Ongoing volunteer effort will help prevent reinfestation and maintain long-term improvements across the park.



Why these priorities matter

Lowland rainforest is a critically endangered ecosystem, with less than 10% remaining across southern Qld and northern NSW. The rainforest at Burleigh Head supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna that would otherwise be lost from the area, while the woodlands form part of a habitat corridor for a declining coastal koala population.

Every weed removed helps restore these forests, improving habitat for rare and threatened species and protecting one of the Gold Coast lowland's last remaining natural strongholds.

Not a priority (yet)

To keep volunteer effort focused, some activities are not a priority at this stage:

- Broad-scale weed control across the entire park
- Intensive groundcover weed spraying
- Work in headland areas due to rockfall risk



12-month impacts

Within a year, the group can create real, visible change on the ground by restoring the structure of lowland rainforest, improving habitat for threatened animals and plants, and protecting one of the Gold Coast's last coastal natural areas. In one year we can achieve:

- ✓ Significantly reduce weed densities in priority rainforest areas, restoring native ground and shrub layers
- ✓ Keep walking tracks and edges largely weed-free, preventing spread and protecting the park's most sensitive habitats
- ✓ Expand restoration into new areas and build momentum for long-term recovery across the whole park

