



# Save Steve's Place

## The Springs

A series of eight “**Perched Bauxite Springs**” have been located on the edge the bauxite plateau. These were previously unknown to science and have now been found to be of very high conservation significance.

It is possible to walk fifty metres in one spring, and count **six threatened plant species**, a fact that highlights the uniqueness of these areas.

A notable example is the “endangered” **Pitcher Plant**, which catches insects in its “pitchers” to provide it with the additional nutrients needed because of the very poor soil.

The “Giant Spring Lily” *Hanguana malayanna* is a very primitive plant known from only a few locations in Australia but common in South East Asia.



*Ling Creek Springs*



*Pitcher Plant*



*The Palm Cockatoo*

The handsome and iconic **Palm Cockatoo** (Rare) is found in Australia only on northern Cape York. It needs both rainforest and woodland for food and nesting habitat to survive. “Palmies” nest and feed in (at least) five of the springs and also across the tall Stringybark Forest of the Bauxite Plateau and linked Wenlock River.

The “Endangered” Red Goshawk (of which only 350 pairs are thought to exist across Australia) also lives and hunts across the Springs and adjacent Stringybark woodlands of the bauxite plateau.

The rainforest that grows at one spring is a new and unique type. It is found only at that location, and features a nationally threatened tree as a canopy species, which is highly significant.

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The Springs provide important hydrological flow and ecological corridor into the perennial Wenlock River. They also provide a **crucial water source and shade** for both woodland and rainforest wildlife species during the long, hot, tropical dry season.

The **water that flows from the head of the springs is highly acidic** with a PH level of 3.9 – 4.4. This has aroused the interests of scientists from University of Queensland to as far away as the USA as such a level of acidity is normally too high for most fauna and flora species.

It is believed that the **semi porous bauxite layer acts a huge sponge**, absorbing heavy monsoonal rain, and filtering it down into the aquifer which then slowly feeds the springs throughout the year.

Removal of the bauxite sponge by mining will affect the recharging of the aquifer, and the springs that have survived for untold millennia, will become extinct as their permanent water supply dries up.

*Please Note: Wildlife and Plants identified as "rare or threatened" are listed as such under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act.*

*Additional photos courtesy of Peter Taylor.*

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The Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve (SIWR), the conservation property funded by the National Reserve System Programme as a tribute to Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin, is being threatened by strip mining.

The 135,000 ha property, in Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, is home to a set of five important spring fed wetlands which provide a critical water source to threatened habitat, provide permanent flow of water to the Wenlock River, and is home to rare and vulnerable plants and wildlife.

Terri Irwin has vowed to protect the property: "this wetland conservation property is a tribute to Steve. I will do whatever I can to protect it," she said.

For more information about the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and the fight to Save Steve's Place, contact:

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