

# WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY

## Article 2 – Present Concepts of Urban National Parks



(Photo Dandenong Ranges Wikimedia Commons)

**Neil McCarthy**  
**Deputy Chair World Urban Parks**  
**Chair Advocacy Portfolio**

**Advocacy Occasional Paper Series**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION: ..... 1**

**WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY – PRESENT CONCEPTS OF URBAN NATIONAL PARKS ..... 2**

Existing Urban National Parks..... 2

    Sweden: 26,000 ha ..... 2

    Finland: ..... 2

    Rouge National Urban Park – 7,900ha..... 3

    1987 -The Dandenong Ranges National Park (Melbourne Australia) – 3,500ha..... 3

    1998 - Table Mountain National Park - 22,000ha ..... 4

Defining a city..... 5

So, what is a City?..... 6

**CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS: ..... 7**

Next Article: What defines a National Park City - What Constitutes the attributes that define a National Urban Park .... 7

## INTRODUCTION:

Over the next 5 World Urban Parks Newsletters, a series of articles will explore the concept of what a “National Park City”. These articles have been inspired by the leadership from the Greater London National Park City group. The aim of these articles is to explore what parks are in an urban centric world and what developments have occurred since the concept of “national parks” were created.

The articles are aimed to generate debate and to enable World Urban Parks to develop a policy and position on this emerging concept.

In exploring “What defines a National Park City” the series of articles will explore –

- *The meaning of a National Park*
- *Present Concepts of Urban National Parks*
- *What Constitutes the attributes that define a National Urban Park*
- *UK’s Best idea for Parks – The National Park City Concept*
- *Where to next – World Urban Parks Leadership*

Published Articles in this Series:

Article 1 – What defines a National Park City - The meaning of a National Park

# WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY – PRESENT CONCEPTS OF URBAN NATIONAL PARKS

In the previous article, The Meaning of a National Park, I started to explore the idea of the meaning of National Parks and it was interesting to understand that the modern definition of a National Park is different from the original intent.

Before I explore what constitutes the attributes that defines a National Park (in a modern sense), it is worthwhile exploring the present concepts of established “Urban National Parks”.

## EXISTING URBAN NATIONAL PARKS

The Scandinavian countries have made definable progress in establishing “National Urban Parks” and there has been some (but limited) attempts to define what constitutes a “National Urban Park”.

### Sweden: 26,000 ha

*The Royal National City Park (**Swedish: Kungliga nationalstadsparken**) is (apparently – authors note) the world's first national **city park**, established in 1995 in the municipalities of **Stockholm, Solna and Lidingö** in **Sweden**.*

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_National\\_City\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_National_City_Park)

### Finland:

The [Pori](#) National Urban Park was established in May 2002

## WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pori\\_National\\_Urban\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pori_National_Urban_Park)

And more recently in Canada with:

### **Rouge National Urban Park – 7,900ha**

*Parks Canada is excited to work towards the establishment of Canada's first national urban park – Rouge National Urban Park – in the Greater Toronto Area.*

*Once fully established, Rouge National Urban Park will be one of the largest and best protected urban parks of its kind in the world, spanning 79.1 square kilometres (7900ha – authors comment) in the heart of Canada's largest and most diverse metropolitan area, overlapping the cities of Toronto, Markham and Pickering. Indeed, Rouge National Urban Park will be 22 times larger than Central Park in New York.*

Source: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/on/rouge/about/apropos-about.aspx>

It would seem that there have been a history of National Parks being created within the metropolitan boundaries of cities, even before the first Sweden Urban National Park. Examples are:

### **1987 -The Dandenong Ranges National Park (Melbourne Australia) – 3,500ha**

*The Dandenong Ranges National Park is a [national park](#) located in the [Greater Melbourne](#) region of [Victoria, Australia](#). The 35,400-hectare (87,000-acre) national park is situated from 31 kilometres (19 mi) at its western most points at [Ferntree Gully](#) and [Boronia](#) to 45 kilometres (28 mi) at its easternmost point at [Silvan](#), east of the [Melbourne city centre](#).*

*The park was proclaimed on 13 December 1987, amalgamating the Ferntree Gully National Park, [Sherbrooke Forest](#) and Doongalla Estate. In 1997 the Olinda State Forest, Mt. Evelyn and Montrose Reserve were formally added to the national park.<sup>[1]</sup>*

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandenong\\_Ranges\\_National\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandenong_Ranges_National_Park)

### 1998 - Table Mountain National Park - 22,000ha

***Table Mountain National Park, previously known as the Cape Peninsula National Park, is a [national park in Cape Town, South Africa](#), proclaimed on 29 May 1998, for the purpose of protecting the natural environment of the [Table Mountain Chain](#), and in particular the rare [fynbos](#) vegetation. The park is managed by [South African National Parks](#). The property is included as part of the UNESCO [Cape Floral Region World Heritage Site](#).***

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table\\_Mountain\\_National\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table_Mountain_National_Park)

These two examples both meet the IUCN criteria Category II – National Parks and probably can be deemed to be also National Urban Parks as well depending on having a definition that is internationally recognised.

There are also many other concepts and constructs around significant urban parks. I have spoken at length about the urban park legacies created by “Capability” Brown (think Hampton Court Palace – London), Olmsted (think Central Park - NY) and Brian O’Neill (Think Golden Gate - San Francisco). Many of these have shaped the thinking around what defines a large urban park and thus what would be a National Park in a City or a National Urban Park. The World Urban Parks (link) has also been exploring the concept of large urban parks and the role they play in cities.

***It was recognised that large urban parks can have unique socio-cultural environmental and economic roles and issues. A World Urban Parks-hosted web conference of large urban parks leaders in November 2015 endorsed a terms of reference, and proposed a Large Urban Parks executive committee and initial activities to facilitate a Large Urban Parks Network.***

## WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY

Source: <http://www.worldurbanparks.org/en/programs/large-urban-parks-committee>

So apart from who holds the title of the first true national park in a city and I will leave that to others to debate, explore and determine. And all of that will depend on the definition and characteristics you may agree on. It seems that the first attribute of a National Urban Park is that it needs to be in a city but what defines a city and its boundaries?

### DEFINING A CITY

**City Definition** from Wikipedia:

***A city is a large and permanent human settlement.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Although there is no agreement on how a city is distinguished from a town in general English language meanings, many cities have a particular administrative, legal, or historical status based on local law. Cities generally have complex systems for sanitation, utilities, land usage, housing, and transportation. The concentration of development greatly facilitates interaction between people and businesses, sometimes benefiting both parties in the process, but it also presents challenges to managing urban growth.<sup>[3]</sup>***

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City>

City Definition from OCED:

***Until recently, there was no harmonised definition of 'a city' for European and other countries member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This undermined the comparability, and thus also the credibility, of cross-country analysis of cities. To resolve this problem, the OECD and the European Commission developed a new definition of a city and its commuting zone in 2011. ....cities with an urban centre of at least 50000 inhabitants***

Source: CITIES IN EUROPE - Lewis Dijkstra and Hugo Poelman  
2012

Source:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/focus/2012\\_01\\_city.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/focus/2012_01_city.pdf)

So does that provide any clarity?

The OECD report of 2012 even gets more complex in defining a City based on commuter arrangements:

***"if 15% of employed persons living in one city work in another city, these cities are treated as a single city." And then there is the issue of "To better capture the entire urban centre, a 'greater city' level can be created. This is a fairly common approach and several greater cities already exist: Greater Manchester, Greater Nottingham etc." OECD 2012***

***report -***

***[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/focus/2012\\_01\\_city.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/focus/2012_01_city.pdf)***

## **SO, WHAT IS A CITY?**

Well the City of London is a City and technically has a population of 8000 people and an area of 290 ha.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City\\_of\\_London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_London)

But we generally think of Greater London and a population of close to 12 million as the City. So the first attribute probably needs to be around the OECD definition of greater cities. However this doesn't necessarily define the physical boundary, unless you just assume the edges of a great city are defined by either a regulated planning boundary (Think - The Melbourne Metropolitan growth boundary) or existing local authority boundaries.

If you use the Melbourne definition, you tend to exclude the key service infrastructure such as the water catchments that enable a City to exist or the significant green belts that make Melbourne such a liveable City. And given that the modern world is focused on Liveability as the world urbanises, we probably need to take an even broader interpretation of what defines a City. Will this first

## WHAT DEFINES A NATIONAL PARK CITY

attribute (the definition of a city) of defining a National Urban Park matter? NO?

Probably YES, as world institutions have a need to compartmentalise and define most things, so we can clear define a park as a "National Urban Park". In the next article I will explore the attributes of what internationally defines a National Park and related concepts such as World Heritage and Biospheres to set a scene to actually explore a newer concept (than National Urban Parks) the National Park City paradigm.

## CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS:

Email: [ncmccarthy@me.com](mailto:ncmccarthy@me.com)

Twitter: [Neil@parksforlife](https://twitter.com/Neil@parksforlife) OR [World Urban Parks](https://twitter.com/WorldUrbanParks)

Wordpress: [parks4life.wordpress.com](http://parks4life.wordpress.com)

**Next Article: What defines a National Park City - What Constitutes the attributes that define a National Urban Park**

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