

Diamantina National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	507,000ha
Bioregion:	Mitchell Grass Downs Channel Country
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Diamantina
State electorate:	Mt Isa



Diamantina National Park. Photo: NPRSR.

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
✓	<i>Stock Act 1915</i>

Plans and agreements

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Plains-wanderer <i>Pedionomus torquatus</i> Recovery Plan
✓	Recovery Plan for the Greater Bilby <i>Macrotis lagotis</i> 2006–2011
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

The unique mix and diversity of ecosystems represented on Diamantina National Park will be managed to ensure the ongoing natural integrity of the systems and species of the Channel Country.

The Aboriginal and shared-cultural values of the park will be maintained and interpreted as appropriate.

Promote sustainable visitor use of an iconic outback destination.

Community relations will be maintained and improved through ongoing discussion with neighbours

Outdoor recreation activities and commercial tourism opportunities that are in keeping with the area's natural values will be encouraged.

Conservation purpose

Diamantina National Park conserves a representation of Mitchell grass downs, dune, gibber fields and channel country. It conserves a significant population of the greater bilby *Macrotis lagotis* and protects the kowari *Dasyuroides byrnei*, plains-wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus*, night parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis* and other species of conservation concern. Hunters Gorge and Lake Constance are listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia and as part of the East Asia–Australasian Flyway network.

Diamantina National Park is listed on the Register of National Estate as an indicative place. The nomination statement of significance states, 'Populations and/or associated habitats of rare species of plants and animal, species listed in international conservation agreements and regional ecosystems of concern occur within this area identified as significant for landsystem biodiversity. The area is of biogeographical significance as several plant communities and or species approach extremes of their geographical ranges or display disjunct distributions. The Diamantina Gates formation is of national geomorphological significance.'

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Diamantina National Park is approximately 186km by road from Boulia, 235km from Bedourie, 306km from Winton and 360km from Windorah. The Diamantina Shire and adjacent Winton Shire are sparsely populated and dominated by pastoral activities. Five pastoral properties surround and five gazetted stock routes pass through the protected area. Diamantina National Park is an important attraction in the region with more than 1,400 camper nights during 2013. Access is primarily via unsealed roads with rain readily preventing access. A dirt airstrip is maintained for management use, emergencies and periods when road access is cut.

The Mitchell Grass (23 per cent of the park) and Channel Country (77 per cent of the park) bioregions are represented in Diamantina National Park. The Southwestern Downs sub-region of the Mitchell Grass Downs cover 123,000ha in the north-western section of the park. This sub-region is also represented in Astrebla Downs National Park. Two sub-regions of the Channel Country are represented, the Diamantina Plains (172,000ha) and the Goneaway Tablelands (235,000ha). Diamantina National Park has the only representation of the Diamantina Plains within protected areas, while Goneaway Tablelands are also represented in Bladensburg and Goneaway National Parks and Lark Quarry Conservation Park. The combination of these systems provides Diamantina National Park with a unique and complex combination of interactions and interconnections. These interactions must be considered before any management actions are implemented.

The mesas (jump-ups) and low ranges formed by the weathered capping of the Cretaceous sandstone typical of the edge of the Goneaway Tableland sub-region, and Toolebuc limestone formations, provide a dramatic backdrop to an otherwise almost flat vista. These features combined with the Diamantina River, its channels and floodplains as well as Mitchell grass plains, dune and gibber fields provide a sense of vastness not readily experienced elsewhere in Queensland. The three main drainage features of the area are the Diamantina River which dissects the park and the Mayne River which forms the parks north-eastern boundary and Spring Creek. Spring Creek enters the park at Warracoota waterhole and disperses through the sand dune system that dominates that area of the park before exiting the park at Parapitcheri waterhole. This system provides major habitat for some the Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) listed species.

The Geological Society of Australia lists the Diamantina Gates as a site of national significance. The 'Gates' consists of a 50m deep gorge and waterholes which cut through the Goyder and Hamilton ranges (both Toolebuc Limestone formations). The gorge acts as a 'gate' to the Diamantina River, which is a wide array of channels to the north, that bottleneck through the gorge and then flows over wide-open plains to the south.

The landscape is largely undisturbed however some areas in proximity to waterholes are degraded by past land use, principally grazing. The degradation is indicated by the loss of the vegetation understorey in the riparian zones and scalded areas (bare earth) directly adjacent to the floodplains.

Regional ecosystems

There are 48 mapped regional ecosystems, 17 in the Mitchell Grass Downs Bioregion and 31 in the Channel Country Bioregion. Of these there are four of concern regional ecosystems (4.3.3, 5.3.20, 5.3.20a, 5.5.1) whilst 27 have low representation in other protected estate. The grassland regional ecosystem 4.9.20 (3,500ha) is the only representation within the protected area system.

In all, grasslands are represented by 12 mapped regional ecosystems covering in excess of 40 per cent of the park.

Six regional ecosystems contribute more than 50 per cent of the area. The three main Mitchell grass systems (5.9.3, 5.9.4, 4.9.5) cover a combined area in excess of 146,000ha while the alluvial systems dominated by short grasses forbs, saltbushes *Atriplex* spp. and burrs *Sclerolaena* spp. cover more than 100,000ha.

The inland dune systems of the park are mapped as covering about 32,000ha. However these are often interspersed with the regional ecosystems 6.3.21 and 6.3.22 with all systems covering in excess of 75,000ha.

The main regional ecosystem, that dominates the Goneaway Tableland sub-region of the park consists of *Eucalyptus normantonensis* tall shrubland with *Triodia* spp. and covers approximately 31,000ha.

Native plants and animals

Places of high conservation value include the bases of the limestone hills which support the vulnerable shrub *Eremophila tetraptera* and areas of stony red soils which support the plants of conservation concern including the near threatened *Goodenia angustifolia* (Table 2). Several plant species such as myall gidgee *Acacia calcicola* found on top of the limestone hills, mountain yapunyah *Eucalyptus thozetiana* and Normanton box *E. normantonensis* are of biogeographical significance being on the western edge of their range.

Diamantina National Park provides habitat for many of the region's threatened animal species. Seventeen animals of conservation significance under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* have been listed for the park and of these seven are also listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Table 2). While greater bilbies *Macrotis lagotis* are a main focus of management at Astrebla National Park, the range of bilbies has extended onto Diamantina National Park since the park was declared. The population range of kowaries *Dasyuroides byrnie* has also been extended, populations of kultarr's *Dasyuroides byrnie* hopping mice *Notomys* spp appear to have also increased. The native long-haired rat *Rattus villasisamus* is an example of the "boom and bust" cycle typical of semi-arid areas. After above average rainfall events, this species breeds rapidly, leading to an increase in predator numbers including raptor species, western taipans *Oxyuranus microlepidotus* and pest species such as the feral cat.

The population of dingoes *Canis lupus dingo* present on Diamantina National Park are one of the few populations in mainland Queensland that have sufficient area to play an active role in the ecosystem without control programs impacting on them. This results in the number of macropods being reduced with a resultant lowering of total grazing pressure on the grassland systems.

Over 200 bird species have been recorded on the park including 17 species that are listed under international agreements (Table 3). The most notable record is the night parrot. This species was thought to be extinct until the early 1990s and the discovery of a carcass of this species on the park was only the second specimen collected since the 1930s. Since the discovery of this bird, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has conducted a number of intensive surveys with no further sighting. A number of general surveys have been undertaken by QPWS and volunteer groups such as Birds Queensland. These surveys are continuing to add to the knowledge base in regards to the plants and animals of Diamantina National Park.

Aboriginal culture

There is much known about Aboriginal cultural heritage. The Traditional Owners are the custodians of this knowledge. Diamantina National Park represents an area significant to the Maiawali and Karuwali people and contains material evidence of past occupation including fish traps, rock art, burial sites, rock scatters, hearths, rock shelters and scarred trees. The Traditional Owners possess stories associated with different features and aspects of the area. The Maiawali people have a registered native title claim (QC2011/009) which covers all of Diamantina National Park.

Threats to Indigenous heritage include the loss of knowledge and a high risk from damage by pest animals and domestic stock that have entered the park, especially around permanent waterholes.

Hunters Gorge, Lake Constance and Warracoota Waterhole are areas of significance that are visited by tourists and careful visitor management will be required to minimise any potential impacts.

Shared-history culture

Diamantina National Park contains numerous examples of past non-Indigenous occupation including the Warracoota ruins, the Diamantina Lakes Homestead complex and graveyard, numerous cattle yards, internal fences, an old airstrip and a stone arrangement that identifies the property. Historical buildings vary in condition from ruins to buildings suitable for continued use. Threats include natural weathering, extreme weather events, fire and termites. Some old buildings/yards are not maintained and may be unsafe areas.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Diamantina National Park provides opportunities for visitors to enjoy low-impact nature based recreational activities in a remote setting where visitors are responsible for their own safety. Abundant birdlife and spectacular vistas attract birdwatchers, people interested in nature appreciation and people with an interest in cultural history.

A series of four-wheel-drive roads and tracks provide self-drive tourist routes through the park. By accessing the Warracoota Drive and the three gazetted roads many of the values of the park can be seen and appreciated.

Rainfall can trap visitors and staff on park for several weeks or longer, particularly during the summer months. Most visitor use occurs during the winter months. Although no formal surveys have been undertaken it seems the area has a high proportion of repeat visitors. Special interest groups (e.g. birdwatching clubs) regularly visit.

The existing visitor day-use and camping areas at Hunters Gorge (Diamantina Gates) and Gum Hole are in the process of being re-developed (2013–2014) to cater with increased visitor use.

Education and science

Research and education opportunities vary greatly. Past studies include investigations into the bilby, the impacts of pest animals, wind erosion events and Aboriginal culture. Diamantina National Park is recognised as an exemplary arid lands site with adequate facilities to support a wide range of research opportunities

Educational and interpretation values of Diamantina National Park focus on natural and cultural resources and include written material on district-wide information, park specific information, the Warracoota Drive brochure and species lists. This information is distributed by QPWS offices and visitor information centres. The on-site interpretive facilities that have been developed at the homestead complex emphasise the connection of the Maiawali people to Diamantina National Park. The facilities have been well received by visitors with some viewing the material for considerable periods.

A field day jointly convened by researchers and the Channel Country Landcare group has been held in the past to provide information to neighbours and other community members about research and local management outcomes.

Partnerships

Diamantina National Park has considerable value to the local community as a benchmark example of environmental management and increased economic benefit through increased tourism. An opportunity exists for improved cooperative management with Traditional Owners of the area, pending native title determination.

Due to the expanse of the park, successful management outcomes can only be achieved through cooperative arrangements with neighbours in regards to fence management, stock issues and visitor management.

Other key issues and responses

Fire management

Fuel loads are generally low due to regularly dry conditions. However, due to the extensive nature of the natural grasslands, increased fuel loads during wet periods will increase fire risk as vegetation matures and seeds. A Level 2 fire management strategy has been developed and should be reviewed regularly considering the risks associated with the extensive grassland systems and new knowledge concerning the fire requirements for the continued integrity of Mitchell grass and spinifex systems.

Pest management

The main pest plant species of concern within the park are parkinsonia *Parkinsonia aculeate* and buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris*. Major parkinsonia control programs have been conducted in the past with ongoing monitoring to detect new pest plant incursions.

Four main pest animals threaten the native wildlife and ecosystems of the park. Pigs *Sus scrofa* undergo great seasonal variations in numbers and distribution. They are mainly restricted to the Diamantina channels but do occur in the wetland areas associated with the sand-dune systems. Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* occupy areas of sand dune and plains habitats mainly on the eastern side of the Diamantina River. Cats *Felis catus* are common and widespread with population numbers varying across seasons. The camel *Camelus dromedarius* is less common and localised mainly occurring in areas of ironstone jump-ups (Landzone 7) on the eastern side of the park.

Incursions by domestic cattle are a common occurrence. This is due to the extended nature of the boundary and drought conditions often resulting in cattle seeking grass and water on the park. The cattle incursions result in damage to riparian areas, especially to the waterholes associated with the sand dune systems.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>The natural integrity of the grassland systems, floodplains, waterholes and wetlands associated with the dune systems are maintained.</p> <p>Landscapes disturbed by previous land-uses are restored to their natural condition to the greatest possible extent.</p>	<p>A1. Assist the ongoing natural rehabilitation around wetlands and waterholes by ensuring minimal cattle incursions.</p> <p>A2. Assess landscapes using remote sensing (ground cover index) combined with on-ground vegetation sites to monitor natural condition. Sites on-park should have 10 per cent greater ground-cover than off-park areas.</p> <p>A3. Manage new infrastructure to be sensitive to the landscape in its design and placement.</p> <p>A4. Audit and review all internal fencing and tracks for management requirements. Where feasible remove fence wire but retain standing fence posts as cultural relics. Maintain those fences required for management. All required tracks and fences to be entered onto the strategic asset management system and ParkInfo.</p>
<p>Regional ecosystems</p> <p>The variety and integrity of grassland, wetland, riparian and sand dune systems will be maintained.</p>	<p>A5. Maintain the diversity of regional ecosystems through cattle removal, pest control and fire management. Review pest and fire strategies twelve monthly focusing on grassland and wetland systems. There should be minimal evidence of cattle and pig activity. Infestations of parkinsonia will be controlled. Buffel grass will be controlled in the homestead area.</p> <p>A6. Monitoring programs will be established in Mitchell grass and wetland sites.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>The integrity of limestone communities is maintained.</p> <p>Populations of bilbies, kowaries, kultarr's and hopping mice expand.</p> <p>Increased knowledge of the night parrot.</p>	<p>A7. Plant and animal species lists will be reviewed and appropriately updated though WildNet every 12 months.</p> <p>A8. A herbaria for office and field use and to assist staff inductions will be developed in conjunction with updating Wildnet.</p> <p>A9. Contribute knowledge and support to the national night parrot network as required.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>The guidelines in the cultural heritage management plan are implemented.</p> <p>The stories of the Maiawali people are maintained and interpreted as appropriate to help public education.</p>	<p>A10. Maintain the integrity of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous cultural heritage values by minimising cattle incursions.</p> <p>A11. Assist Kirrendirri Aboriginal Corporation in the development of the cultural heritage management plan by 2015.</p> <p>A12. Conserve places of Aboriginal cultural significance by involving Traditional Owners in park management.</p> <p>A13. Follow guidelines for the management of significant cultural places in conjunction with Traditional Owners.</p> <p>A14. Identify and map Aboriginal cultural resources at a scale of 1:100,000 by 2016.</p> <p>A15. Using Traditional names for park features and facilities (e.g. roads and waterhole names where known) internally and registered as appropriate with the relevant authorities.</p> <p>A16. Ensure the appropriate Maiawali stories are incorporated into park interpretive materials.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>Known cultural heritage resources are maintained and/or documented where possible especially in relation to the homestead and Warracoota ruin areas.</p>	<p>A17. Document 70 per cent historical features and assess for safety by 2015.</p> <p>A18. Determine the heritage value and prepare management options for the resources by 2015.</p> <p>A19. Enter heritage related structures on the strategic asset management system and ParkInfo within six months of first records.</p>

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>The park provides a range of recreational and tourism activities which highlight its special outback character and complement other local and regional opportunities.</p> <p>Recreation and tourist access and facilities on the national park complement the natural setting and do not compromise natural and cultural values. Visitor safety remains an important management consideration.</p> <p>Recreational users are aware of the natural and cultural park values and broader conservation messages.</p> <p>Diamantina Gates remains a spectacular feature and is able to be appreciated in a landscape with minimal infrastructure.</p>	<p>A20. Develop cooperative liaison with user groups to ensure that the park is promoted in a manner appropriate with the level of services and facilities provided.</p> <p>A21. Actively engage with visitors through making contact with them at campgrounds as part of normal patrol programs.</p> <p>A22. Upgrade campgrounds to ensure minimal impact on the local environment (including visual amenity).</p> <p>A23. Identify potential additional areas for camping/commercial operations environmental impacts, aesthetics, site hardness and visitor needs.</p> <p>A24. Cooperate with Tourism and Events Queensland and local providers to develop sustainable nature based tourism opportunities and encourage specialist natural history related groups.</p> <p>A25. Establish a visitor impact monitoring program focussing initially on high use areas.</p>
<p>Education and science</p> <p>Greater knowledge is gained on park values to assist management.</p> <p>The park is recognised as providing valuable education experiences to university groups.</p> <p>Interpretive and educational material is accessible and accurate.</p>	<p>A26. Encourage research proposals with minimum impact and maximum usefulness to park management.</p> <p>A27. Integrate management related information into park information systems.</p> <p>A28. Support educational activities and opportunities for on-ground education and visual documentation.</p> <p>A29. Maintain up-to-date interpretive information and ensure its availability. Annually assess interpretative requirements.</p>
<p>Partnerships</p> <p>Successful cooperative management with Traditional Owners.</p> <p>Relationships with neighbours are positive and cooperative.</p> <p>The park is appreciated by the community for its role in catchment, greater bilby and biodiversity protection.</p>	<p>A30. Involve Traditional Owners in the management of natural and cultural heritage resources.</p> <p>A31. Consult and/or liaise with park neighbours to address cross boundary management concerns including livestock, pest animal and plant control, maintenance of boundary fences and wildfire management.</p> <p>A32. Monitor the effects of de-stocking by working cooperatively with neighbours on monitoring sites, on and off park.</p> <p>A33. Promote pest plant and animal management on an ecosystem scale.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Fire regime is appropriate to maintain natural values.</p>	<p>A34. Review and implement the fire management strategy with regards to new information relating to the ecological requirements particularly of grasslands and riparian areas.</p> <p>A35. Integrate the fire management strategy with the Astrebla Downs National Park and Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park strategies by 2014.</p>

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Pest management</p> <p>Known populations of pest plants are contained and controlled.</p> <p>Pest animals are controlled or eliminated and do not affect park values.</p> <p>Pest animals are unable to access artificial surface waters.</p> <p>Stock are excluded.</p>	<p>A36. Control parkinsonia in the Spring Creek area focusing on Green tank and Euradippadippa areas within six months of major rainfall events</p> <p>A37. Monitor for pest plant outbreaks on all park patrols and include control programs in reviewed pest management strategies.</p> <p>A38. Create and implement a pest plant management plan focusing on parkinsonia, pigs and cats.</p> <p>A39. Minimise the spread of buffel grass in the homestead area.</p> <p>A40. Integrate the pest plant management plan with Astrebla Downs National Park and Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park pest strategies by 2014.</p> <p>A41. Check all fences six monthly with floodgates checked quarterly. Conduct six monthly whole of park musters, conjunction with neighbours.</p> <p>A42. Manage artificial waters to assist in stray stock management. Report stray stock to neighbours within one week of observation.</p>
<p>Stock routes</p> <p>Ensure the use of stock routes have minimal impact on the values of the national park.</p>	<p>A43. Map and mark out the gazetted stock route.</p> <p>A44. Assist relevant bodies in the enforcement of the <i>Stock Act 1915</i>.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
4.3.3	<i>Eucalyptus coolabah</i> , <i>E. camaldulensis</i> +/- <i>Lysiphillum gilvum</i> open woodland on drainage lines.	of concern
5.3.20	<i>Eucalyptus coolabah</i> +/- <i>E. camaldulensis</i> open woodland fringing billabongs and permanent waterholes.	of concern
5.3.20a	Riverine wetland or fringing riverine wetland. <i>Eucalyptus coolabah</i> +/- <i>E. camaldulensis</i> open-woodland. Occurs on waterholes in rivers and braided channel systems. Soils very deep, brown or grey clays with sand and silt bands common in profile.	of concern
5.5.1	<i>Acacia aneura</i> low woodland on Quaternary deposits.	of concern

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
Plants				
<i>Austrobryonia argillicola</i>	-	endangered	endangered	low
<i>Eremophila tetraptera</i>	-	vulnerable	-	low
<i>Goodenia angustifolia</i>	-	near threatened	-	low
Animals				
<i>Ctenotus schevilli</i>	-	near threatened	-	medium
<i>Ctenotus septenarius</i>	-	near threatened	-	low
<i>Ctenotus serotinus</i>	-	near threatened	-	data deficient
<i>Dasyuroides byrnei</i>	kowari	vulnerable	vulnerable	high
<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	black-necked stork	near threatened	-	low
<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	grey falcon	near threatened	-	data deficient
<i>Grantiella picta</i>	painted honeyeater	vulnerable		high
<i>Lophochroa leadbeateri</i>	Major Mitchell's cockatoo	vulnerable	-	high
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	square-tailed kite	near threatened	-	low
<i>Macrotis lagotis</i>	greater bilby	endangered	vulnerable	critical
<i>Notomys fuscus</i>	dusky hopping-mouse	endangered	vulnerable	low
<i>Oxyuranus microlepidotus</i>	western taipan	near threatened	-	low
<i>Pedionomus torquatus</i>	plains-wanderer	vulnerable	vulnerable	data deficient
<i>Pezoporus occidentalis</i>	night parrot	endangered	endangered	data deficient
<i>Pyrrholaemus brunneus</i>	redthroat	near threatened	-	low
<i>Rostratula australis</i>	Australian painted snipe	vulnerable	endangered	medium
<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	freckled duck	near threatened	-	low

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>	Australian reed-warbler	✓	-	-	-
<i>Apus pacificus</i>	fork-tailed swift	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	sharp-tailed sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Charadrius veredus</i>	oriental plover	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	white-winged black tern	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Egretta alba</i>	great egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's snipe	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Pezoporus occidentalis</i>	night parrot	-	-	✓	-
<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	glossy ibis	✓	✓	-	-
<i>Rostratula australis</i>	Australian painted snipe	-	✓	-	-
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian tern	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	wood sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	common greenshank	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	marsh sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

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ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement