Blackdown Tableland National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	47,950ha
Bioregion:	Brigalow Belt South
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Central Highlands Regional
State electorate:	Gregory

Planet Creek. Photo: NPRSR

Legislative framework

a	*Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*
a	*Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth)
a	*Forestry Act 1959*
a	*Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*
a	*Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth)
a	*Nature Conservation Act 1992*
a	*Queensland Heritage Act 1992*

Plans and agreements

a	Bonn Convention
a	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

a	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
a	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

The natural ecosystems, flora and fauna populations within the area are conserved.

The area is managed to conserve the biological values and to provide safe sustainable, nature-based recreation and commercial tourism opportunities.

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

Partnerships are established with the local community, neighbours, lessees, research institutes, conservation groups, emergency services and councils that contribute to the area's ongoing management.

Particular emphasis is placed on involving Traditional Owners and respecting their long-standing spiritual and cultural connections to the area.

Conservation purpose

Blackdown Tableland National Park has a diversity of vegetation communities and associated wildlife that has adapted to this particular landscape. Significant emphasis is placed on the conservation management of these ecosystems and the several endemic, significant and rare and threatened species found therein. There are 13 mapped regional ecosystems representing part of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion. The park is managed in cooperation with the Traditional Owners to maintain the integrity of the important cultural values including art sites, story places and the dreamtime site of the rainbow serpent. The integrity of both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous cultural heritage values of the park is conserved.

Research opportunities and educational use of the park, where relevant to park values, are encouraged.

Relationships with the community, neighbouring property owners and the Aboriginal people are fostered and maintained.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Blackdown Tableland National Park is located 185km west of Rockhampton, 60km south-east of Blackwater and 20km south of the Capricorn Highway. The park's property description is Lot 49 on Plan NPW733 in the parishes of Eastbrook, Mimosa, Shotover and Wattle, in the counties of Humbolt and Wooroona.

Rising abruptly above the surrounding dry plains, Blackdown Tableland protects spectacular sandstone scenery with gorges and waterfalls. It lies at the north-east edge of the Central Queensland sandstone belt, in the Woorabinda Province of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion. The inherent high level of biodiversity and endemism establishes the park as one of the most important conservation reserves managed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). The park is surrounded by 15 landholders, seven of which are state forest lessees.

The park is at the junction of the Shotover, Expedition and Dawson ranges. The predominate landscape values of Blackdown Tableland National Park includes an undulating plateau of precipice and clematis sandstone with large trees, gorges and escarpment providing a visual contrast to the surrounding landscape. The park is an excellent example of the effect and progress of long periods of erosion and deposition of the tertiary mantle of sedimentary deposits.

The sediments with greatest resistance to erosion are now prominent as the cliff tops of the dissected plateau. Sheer sandstone cliffs line the northern and western boundaries of the park. The eastern side of the cliff line is broken by a deeply cut gorge system, forming drainage lines that are part of the catchment area for the Fitzroy basin. The park provides important protection of these catchment areas.

The highest point on the park is about 900m above sea level with an average altitude of 800m. Due to this elevation above the surrounding lowlands, Blackdown Tableland National Park has an isolated and unique microclimate, resulting in distinctive animal and plant communities. Natural springs are found throughout and provide sustenance for wildlife in dry periods. Annual rainfall exceeds 1,000mm.

The park has three water harvesting licenses (Two Mile and North Mimosa Creek) that are registered with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

Regional ecosystems

Thirteen regional ecosystems, characteristic of the Brigalow Belt Bioregion, are conserved in Blackdown Tableland National Park. Of these, regional ecosystem 11.9.1 is endangered. It is described as *Acacia harpophylla-Eucalyptus cambageana* open forest to woodland on fine-grained sedimentary rocks as is the springs associated with sandstone regional ecosystem (11.10.14). There are five regional ecosystems that are of concern (Table 1).

Native plants and animals

The uniqueness of the tablelands' plants is due to physical variables of the landscape, topographical gradients and isolation. This suggests that further evolution has occurred here. The parks' plants are relics of previously more widespread communities now confined to refuges throughout Central Queensland with a high proportion of near threatened (16), vulnerable (six) and endangered (three) plant species found in the park (Table 2).

Areas of the Blackdown Tableland National Park are open forest with mid-height understorey, hosting a rich variety of arboreal mammals such as greater gliders *Petauroides volans*, yellow-bellied gliders *Petaurus australis australis*, sugar gliders *Petaurus breviceps*, feathertail gliders *Acrobates pygmaeus* and squirrel gliders *Petaurus norfolcensis.* The abundance of arboreal mammals attracts large birds of prey including the nocturnal powerful owl *Ninox strenua.* Small colonies of koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* survive in the area of Gympie messmate *Eucalyptus cloeziana*.

There are four near threatened, nine vulnerable and one endangered (red goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus*) under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Table 2). A specimen of the common rock rat *Zyzomys argurus* was collected in December 1984 making this its southern-most known location. There are a variety of endemic species including the Christmas beetle *Astraeus blackdownensis,* Blackdown monster *Anoplognathus blackdownensis,* trapdoor spider *Xamiatus ilara* and sandstone ochre butterfly *Trapezites taori.*

Aboriginal culture

Blackdown Tableland National Park has many culturally significant places and associated objects that tell the story of how the land was used, the histories and the relationship between traditional owners and the environment. Vivid reminders of their special culture include thousands of years of rock art. It also includes tangible (physical) and intangible (non-physical) cultural heritage such as values, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions. Blackdown Tableland is registered on the National Heritage Database as a place that has Aboriginal values of National Estate significance. There are three native title claims on Blackdown Tableland National Park by the Gaangalu nation (QC2012/009), Kanolu people # 2 (QC2012/012) and the Wadja people (QC2012/010).

Blackdown Tableland is the traditional home of the Ghungalu people. In 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ghungalu people and QPWS was signed to foster a coordinated and cooperative approach to the use by Ghungalu people, and their involvement in the management of the park. Since the signing of the agreement, QPWS has gazetted 70ha of the forest reserve as a conservation park for Ghungalu's cultural use. In conjunction with the Ghungalu people, the parks' features and sites of cultural significance have been interpreted and allocated traditional names for public education and presentation.

Shared-history culture

Blackdown Tableland National Park was settled as a grazing homestead and perpetual lease property in 1869 by William Yaldwin, who gave the tableland its name—after the family home, Blackdown House, in Sussex, England. After many years, Blackdown Tableland was gazetted as a State forest and timber extraction was initiated to harvest valuable hardwood timbers.

There are 17 sites on the park that are recorded on the cultural heritage information management system. These items range from Aboriginal paintings, radio infrastructure and sites to former land use sites such as logging tracks, cattle yards, camps and roads. The old boundary at the park's northern end followed the early settlers' access road from Rockhampton to Springsure via Wafers Gap. This road (the Old Coach Road) was mainly used to transport wool on wagons linking with the rail line as it progressed west of Rockhampton. This route was used until the railway line was joined west to Blackwater in 1877. There are remnants of an old hotel along this road, but the hotel and some of the structure of the stone-pitched areas on the road have succumbed to regeneration.

Most of the pastoral artefacts are being allowed to decay naturally into the landscape. Wildfires have caused damage to the cattle yards and fences at Mimosa Creek campground.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Blackdown Tableland National Park's landscape, localised animal and plant communities and climatic advantages of elevation combine to make the park a popular area for recreation. Recreational activities include camping, bushwalking, bird watching, picnicking, four-wheel driving, mountain bike riding, abseiling and swimming. Current commercial activities include guided tours, ecotourism and tag-along tours. Commercial activities complement park use by free and independent travellers. There is a desire by the local Aboriginal group to pursue commercial visitor opportunities in the park.

Central Highlands Regional Council regards Blackdown Tableland as its major tourism drawcard. Generally, overnight visitors are from the Central Queensland region. Seasonally, large components of visitors are from interstate and overseas.

The tableland has only been accessible by vehicle since the road was constructed in 1971 and remains one of the few extensive, accessible, natural areas in the rapidly developing Bowen Basin coalfields area. The road is now sealed from the Capricorn Highway to Yaddamen Dhina (Horseshoe) car park.

There are four vehicle tracks open to the public which are managed as four-wheel-drive access. These are the park boundary to Yaddamen Drive car park, Yaddamen Drive to Munall campground, Munall to Gudda Gumoo car park and the four-wheel-drive loop road. These tracks can also be utilised by cyclists.

Education and science

The isolation of the tableland, with its unusual topography and associated physical variables, presents evidence of ecological evolution, from community down to individual species level. Because of this, the park provides an ideal location for environmental education projects for schools and for general scientific study opportunities. There have been short-term and incidental animal surveys, with some focus on invertebrate work.

Rangers perform interpretation activities during peak periods such as school holidays. The park is a popular destination for primary and high school excursions. Various universities (national and international), TAFE colleges and associations access the park.

Partnerships

The park has considerable value to groups, agencies and individuals that have interest in the management of the area. Agreements for management, communication, land use, training and orientation, and fire management have been developed to ensure all groups, government departments and individuals play an active role in the management of the park and have a sense of custodianship of the area.

Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Capricorn Helicopter Rescue, Blackwater State Emergency Service and Mines Rescue attend regular orientation programs and exercises on the park to increase familiarity with the area and to improve training.

Road from the highway to park boundary has been sealed and is maintained by the Central Highlands Regional Council.

Other key issues and responses

Fire management

The Blackdown Tableland National Park is subject to regular wildfires, generally occurring in spring and summer months, that threaten life, property and biodiversity values. Planned burns are conducted to prevent the movement of significant broad area wildfires in the drier months and for property protection.

The long term aim of park management is to conserve the existing natural and cultural values of the park by developing suitable fire regimes for each vegetation community and cultural resource. Planned burning has been undertaken as an integral part of maintaining and enhancing the ongoing sustainability and biodiversity of the various plant and animal communities represented on the park.

A draft fire management strategy covering the contiguous parcels of QPWS estates (Blackdown Tableland National Park, Ghungalu Conservation Park, Arthurs Bluff State Forest, Shotover State Forest, Dawson Range State Forest and Expedition State Forest) is being developed. Liaison occurs between Traditional Owners, park neighbours, local rural fire brigades and lessees regarding planned burns. A helipad is available for emergency response situations and management requirements.

Pest management

A pest strategy has been developed for the Brigalow Belt Bioregion and the Desert Uplands Bioregion. Pest plants are commonly established in disturbed areas where infrastructure exists, around communication towers, buildings and recreational areas. Infestations of declared class 1, 2 and 3 pest plants and non-declared pest plants such as Harissa cactus *Harrisia* sp, rubber vine *Cryptostegia grandiflora*, Parramatta grass *Sporobolus africanus*, mother of millions *Bryophyllum delagoense* and lantana *Lantana camara* have been recorded in the lowland areas and on the tableland. Declared species are to help control the spread of pest plants in the region. QPWS encourages visitors to adopt sound vehicle hygiene protocols and clean their vehicles at designated wash-down bays especially if they have been travelling through known declared pest plant areas.

Small populations of Class 2 and 3 pest animal species such as rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus,* cane toads *Rhinella marina*, feral cattle *Bos* sp. and cats *Felis catus* have also been recorded on the park. While it is generally accepted that small populations of feral dogs *Canis lupus familiaris* are occurring in lowland areas in the park, there is little evidence of interactions with native animals. Blackdown Tableland National Park has no baiting program as dingo populations may be assisting the management of feral dogs in the area.

Dingo populations on the park are moderate. As there is little interaction between dingos and park users, the dingo population has not posed any threat to the public. It is perceived that the dingo populations in the park are minimising the introduction or establishment of introduced predatory species on the tableland. Broad-scale, feral dog control campaigns are conducted on neighbouring properties through local government initiatives. Pigs *Sus scrofa* are active around natural springs in the park. Stock is known to graze in some areas of the park due to unfenced boundaries adjacent to State forest leases. During periods of drought, feral cattle populations cause significant disturbances around waterways and springs on the park.

Liaison with neighbours and lessees is ongoing regarding pest control programs.

Permits, licences and agreements

There are currently 33 agreements/lessees on the adjoining State forests. There are eight communication towers in the park that are individually maintained and leased by Telstra OP01/001, Duaringa Shire Council (Central Highlands Regional Council) OP03/006, Beaneys Communication OP03/007, Department of Main Roads OP05/003, Queensland Police Service OP05/004, Ergon Energy OP06/001, Powerlink Queensland OP06/002 and Queensland Ambulance Service OP06/003.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
Landscape Landscape and visual integrity is retained. Natural erosion processes are maintained while minimising erosion from management and visitor activities.	A1. Allow natural landscape processes to continue. Where these processes impact on infrastructure, action may be taken to manage these facilities to a suitable standard. A2. Rationalise fire lines and tracks to reduce fragmentation and maintain landscape integrity.
Regional ecosystems Regional ecosystems are maintained and where necessary rehabilitated.	A3. Maintain the diversity of regional ecosystems and improve the health of degraded areas through appropriate pest and fire management.
Native plants and animals There is comprehensive knowledge of native plant and animal species, associated communities and their ecological requirements. The geographical extent and integrity of native plant communities is maintained. The swamp orchid population is protected and conserved.	A4. Undertake plant and animal surveys to provide information to improve decisions on species management. A5. Monitor habitat and significant species populations to ensure long-term survival. A6. Manage impacts to sensitive vegetation communities (e.g. heath communities on shallow sands above bedrock, wet soaks and springs, and rock pavements). A7. Develop a stock control strategy for the park.
Aboriginal culture Traditional Owners are involved in decision making, natural resource management and the conservation, protection and appropriate interpretation of their cultural heritage. A cultural heritage management plan exists. Traditional Owner recognition through cooperation and partnerships. The integrity of the Ghungalu culture is preserved and respected. The park is given a name that is relevant to the area and endorsed by the Traditional Owners.	A8. Implement the Memorandum of Understanding. A9. Encourage participation of the Ghungalu people in management activities that may affect their interests. A10. Interpret Aboriginal values to park visitors that are culturally appropriate. A11. Encourage Traditional Owners to obtain funding sources and manage cultural sites. A12. Encourage Ghungalu Welcome-to-Country introductions, for new staff to provide insight into their culture, protocols and management of cultural sites. A13. Encourage participation and employment of Ghungalu people to ensure the protection and conservation of natural and cultural values. A14. Consider renaming the park with an Aboriginal name that is relevant to the area and agreed to by QPWS and the Traditional Owners.
Shared-history culture Sites and places of shared history culture heritage significance are conserved, protected and presented where appropriate.	A15. Identify and record shared-history culture heritage areas, themes and sites appropriate for interpretation in consultation with interested community representatives.

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
Tourism and visitor opportunities The park provides a range of recreational and tourism activities which highlight its special character and complements other local and regional opportunities. Public vehicle use is restricted to the formal public road and track network. Recreation and tourist access and facilities on the national park complement the natural setting and do not compromise natural and cultural values. Campfires continue to contribute to a positive camping experience and do not cause adverse impacts on the natural environment. Commercial opportunities are available for the Traditional Owners of the park.	A16. Ensure visitor information is made available through appropriate signs, visitor information and web-based mediums, to enable all visitors to be prepared when visiting the area. A17. Manage and maintain the diversity of public two-wheel and four-wheel drive access. A18. Maintain the four identified public vehicle tracks as four-wheel-drive access. A19. Close and rehabilitate tracks which are not identified for public or management purposes. A20. Continue to investigate sustainable road maintenance options including gravel sources and bituminization, to reduce long term resource extraction from Blackdown Tableland National Park. A21. Investigate closing outer loop road (Munall campground) in periods of minimal visitor use to enable recovery of the camp ground following high use periods. A22. Investigate options for group campsites on Blackdown Tableland National Park A23. Encourage park users to source clean firewood from off park. A24. Monitor water quality and implement necessary actions where quality is being reduced. A25. Investigate and provide designated mountain-bike riding tracks on QPWS managed tracks. A26. Encourage Aboriginal tourism opportunities across the park.
Education and science Education opportunities continue to be provided during peak periods. The park is utilised as a valuable scientific area by relevant industries and organisations. Knowledge of natural systems is comprehensive.	A27. Continue to encourage education activities that support the presentation of the park values. A28. Encourage research that will benefit park management. A29. Encourage Traditional Owner involvement in fauna surveys and/or scientific activities.
Partnerships The effectiveness of future management is strengthened through cooperative partnerships Emergency Services are provided with appropriate opportunities to allow them to maintain knowledge and skills.	A30. Maintain communication with community partners to enable appropriate and efficient emergency responses in QPWS managed estates. A31. Continue to build relationships with the local community, visitors and interest groups to improve knowledge of the management area, and to highlight its significance to the region
Fire management Fire is managed to protect life and property, maintain biodiversity and to protect cultural values. Cooperative and integrated fire management techniques are practiced. Vegetation biodiversity on park is maintained.	A32. Continue to develop, implement and review fire management regimes in accordance with QPWS procedures. A33. Continue to protect cultural resources (historic yards, slab well site and art shelters) from fire damage. A34. Develop a cooperative approach to fire management in consultation with Traditional Owners, park neighbours and state forest lessees adjoining the park to extend good fire management practices across the landscape. A35. Maintain planned burning in all fire-adapted communities represented in the park and adjacent forest areas to provide suitable habitat for plant communities and animal species.

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
	A36. Continue to monitor the impacts of planned burns and wildfires on significant vegetation communities.
Pest management Pest plants and animals have minimal impact on the natural and cultural values of the park. Existing pest populations are managed to levels that have limited impacts on the parks natural and cultural values. Cooperative and integrated pest management techniques are practiced.	A37. Implement and review the Blackdown Tableland National Park pest strategy. A38. Unfenced boundaries to be resolved to prevent domestic stock intrusions. A39. Develop and implement a stock management plan. Develop a cooperative approach to pest management in consultation with park neighbours and state forest lessees adjoining the park to extend good pest management practices across the landscape.

Tables– Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
11.3.2	*Eucalyptus populnea* woodland on alluvial plains.	Of concern
11.3.4	*Eucalyptus tereticornis* and/or *Eucalyptus* spp. tall woodland on alluvial plains.	Of concern
11.3.25	Eucalyptus tereticornis or E. camaldulensis woodland fringing drainage lines.	Of concern
11.7.1	*Acacia harpophylla* and/or *Casuarina cristata* and *Eucalyptus thozetiana* or *E. microcarpa* woodland on lower scarp slopes on Cainozoic lateritic duricrust.	Of concern
11.9.1	*Acacia harpophylla-Eucalyptus cambageana* open forest to woodland on fine-grained sedimentary rocks.	Endangered
11.10.2	Tall open forest in sheltered gorges on coarse-grained sedimentary rocks.	Of concern
11.10.14	Springs associated with sandstone.	Endangered

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				
Acacia pubicosta	-	near threatened	-	low
Acacia storyi	-	near threatened	-	low
Baeckea trapeza	-	vulnerable	-	low
Bertya opponens	-	least concern	vulnerable	-
Bertya pedicellata	-	near threatened	-	low
Blechnum ambiguum	-	near threatened	-	low
Commersonia pearnii	-	endangered	-	high
Daviesia discolor	-	vulnerable	vulnerable	low
Daviesia quoquoversus	-	vulnerable	-	low
Gastrodia crebriflora	-	vulnerable	-	data deficient
Genoplesium pedersonii	-	near threatened	-	data deficient
Genoplesium validum	-	near threatened	-	data deficient
Homoranthus decasetus	-	near threatened	-	low
Homoranthus decumbens	-	vulnerable	endangered	high
Livistona fulva	-	near threatened	-	low
Lobelia membranacea	-	near threatened	-	-
Logania diffusa	-	vulnerable	vulnerable	high
Lysiana filifolia	-	near threatened	-	low
Macrozamia platyrhachis	-	endangered	endangered	critical
Melaleuca groveana	-	near threatened	-	medium
Melaleuca pearsonii	-	near threatened	-	low
Phaius australis	swamp orchid	endangered	endangered	critical
Plectranthus blakei	-	near threatened	-	low
Pseudanthus pauciflorus subsp. arenicola	-	near threatened	-	low
Pterostylis woollsii	long-tailed greenhood	near threatened	-	low
Rutidosis glandulosa	-	near threatened	-	low

Scientific name	Common name	*Nature Conservation Act 1992* status	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* status	Back on Track status
Animals				
Acanthophis antarcticus	common death adder	near threatened	-	medium
Accipiter novaehollandiae	grey goshawk	near threatened	-	low
Adelotus brevis	tusked frog	vulnerable	-	medium
Calyptorhynchus lathami	glossy black-cockatoo	vulnerable	-	-
Chalinolobus dwyeri	large-eared pied bat	vulnerable	vulnerable	medium
Chalinolobus picatus	little pied bat	near threatened	-	medium
Delma torquata	collared delma	vulnerable	vulnerable	high
Erythrotriorchis radiatus	red goshawk	endangered	vulnerable	high
Geophaps scripta scripta	squatter pigeon (southern subspecies)	vulnerable	vulnerable	medium
Grantiella picta	painted honeyeater	vulnerable	-	high
Ninox strenua	powerful owl	vulnerable	-	medium
Paradelma orientalis	brigalow scaly-foot	vulnerable	-	medium
Phascolarctos cinereus	koala	vulnerable	-	low
Strophurus taenicauda	golden-tailed gecko	near threatened	-	medium

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
Apus pacificus	fork-tailed swift	-	ü	ü	ü
Danaus plexippus plexippus	monarch	ü	-	-	-
Hirundapus caudacutus	white-throated needletail	-	ü	ü	ü
Merops ornatus	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	ü	-
Monarcha melanopsis	black-faced monarch	ü	-	-	-
Myiagra cyanoleuca	satin flycatcher	ü	-	-	-
Rhipidura rufifrons	rufous fantail	ü	-	-	-

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement