

Expedition National Park Management Statement 2016

(The Expedition National Park Management Statement incorporates – Expedition (Limited Depth) National Park and Expedition National Park and will be referred to collectively as Expedition National Park throughout this document.)



Aggregation size:	129,175ha
(Limited Depth) National Park	109,945ha
National Park	19,230ha
Bioregion:	Brigalow Belt South
QPWS region:	South West
Local government estate/area:	Banana Shire Central Highlands Maranoa Regional
State electorate:	Callide and Warrego

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

a	Convention on Migratory Species
a	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	National multi-species recovery plan for cycads
a	National recovery plan for the northern quoll <i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>
a	Recovery plan for the collared legless lizard <i>Delma torquata</i>
a	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

a	Level 2 fire management strategy
a	Level 2 pest management strategy

Vision

The park will be managed to conserve significant regional ecosystems associated with the Brigalow Belt South bioregion along with the panoramic sandstone escarpment and natural springs. There will be opportunity for low-key sustainable nature-based recreational activities at managed locations.

Conservation purpose

Robinson Gorge was originally gazetted as a national park in September 1953 and eventually incorporated into Expedition National Park—104,000ha—which was gazetted in 1991 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975*. In December 2005, the park was renamed to be Expedition (Limited Depth) National Park, increasing the park area to 109,945ha. The last gazettal action took place under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* in November 2015, with the addition of the Bedourie property, gazetted as Expedition National Park. Refer to Map 1 for current estate. The park is the second largest protected area in the Central Sandstone Belt, and was extensively used for cattle grazing prior to declaration as national park.

Expedition National Park conserves vegetation communities and diverse habitats including sandstone heaths, bloodwood/budgeroo open forests, open grassy woodlands, softwood scrubs and riparian areas. The park contains significant Aboriginal cultural heritage values along with evidence of grazing history and settlement patterns.

Management of the park will allow for recreational activities that have minimal impact on the outstanding scenic beauty, rugged landforms, habitats, erosive soils and significant cultural heritage values.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Expedition National Park protects the headwaters of Robinson, Midnight, Hungry, Blackfellow, Bridge and Precipice creeks, which form part of the Fitzroy Basin and lies east of the Arcadia Valley. Belington section also protects the Dawson River Gorge which has permanent waterholes on Midnight and Hungry creeks. Seven Tree Creek preserves permanent waterholes of Seven Tree and Bridge creeks. The sandstone and associated sedimentary deposits form part of the eastern boundary of the recharge zone for the Great Artesian Basin. Sedimentary layers such as the Moolayember shale assist with the formation of natural springs located on the park. Preservation of the scenic gorge of Robinson Creek is a priority for protection of landscape values.

A significant landscape value of the park is the sandstone cliff lines which traverse the park, generally in a north-south direction. Expedition National Park's rugged sandstone cliff lines and narrow gorges provide a display of colour and texture/shape variation in the sandstone and most have sheer cliff faces. The verdant riparian vegetation in the gorges provides a contrast to the vegetation on the dry plateau. This diverse and extensive terrain allows park visitors to experience a sense of remoteness.

In a landscape of open woodland, the structure and composition of the shady softwood communities is different from the eucalypt communities. The park provides a diverse range of wildflower species flowering at different times throughout the year; and the small springs in Spring, Surprise and Andy's creeks are vividly green.

This scenic natural landscape provides a stark contrast to the surrounding landscape, which has been significantly modified for grazing in the Arcadia Valley. Belington Hut State Forest adjoins the eastern boundary and complements the conservation values of the park. Several protected areas and State forests are located near the park.

Connectivity between wildlife corridors generally occurs along the eastern and northern boundary, forming important wildlife corridors. The gazettal of Expedition National Park in 2015 has helped create a large uninterrupted corridor of remnant vegetation between the Expedition (Limited Depth) National Park in the south to State forests in the north, and then to Blackdown Tableland. The adjoining landscape, especially to the west and south, is subject to significant gas exploration and extraction activities. Coal seam gas activity is continuing to expand in the area.

The adjacent State forests are commercial forests with a mixture of cypress and hardwood species available for harvest. Expedition Resources Reserve adjoins the southern boundary.

Natural springs may need to be fenced to stop degradation from feral animals such as pigs *Sus scrofa*, cattle *Bos* spp. and feral horses *Equus caballus*. The implementation of the pest management strategy will reduce the impact of these animals on these important natural features.

Intense rainfall events can have localised impact on roads and firebreaks causing them to wash out and cause erosion and siltation.

Regional ecosystems

Expedition National Park conserves 11 regional ecosystems including two endangered and three of concern (Table 1). The endangered regional ecosystems are softwood vine scrubs (11.9.4) and brigalow communities (11.9.5). Regional ecosystems of concern are generally located on alluvial soils. These endangered and of concern regional ecosystems have all undergone severe reductions from their original extent throughout the bioregion. This is due to extensive clearing and other practices associated with grazing.

Appropriate fire management is required to maintain the health and extent of these communities. Fire sensitive communities, such as softwood scrubs and brigalow, need protection from high intensity fires. Overgrazing by cattle, including feral stock, also has a significant impact on the health of the park's regional ecosystems.

The woodlands of *Eucalyptus decorticans* and *Corymbia* spp. on the crests and scarps can be subjected to high intensity fires. To reduce the impact of these fires, mosaic planned burning across the park will need to be considered and implemented.

In 2006 an extensive vegetation mapping report was prepared by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). This detailed mapping provides baseline data to compare changes in the distribution of various ecosystems across the park over time.

Only about 200ha of the park was cleared in the late 1800s. Over the last 50 years, the vegetation has thickened in the Amphitheatre area compared to early accounts.

Native plants and animals

The park's species of conservation significance are listed in Table 2. Surveying and monitoring of these species should be encouraged with any data entered into Agency databases. Research that improves the management knowledge base of these species should be encouraged.

Expedition National Park contains a mix of eastern and western sandstone plants and large areas of softwood scrub, which contains many species of conservation significance.

Mixed eucalypt woodlands and open forests, with either a predominantly heathy or grassy understorey, are the dominant vegetation structural types of the park. Brigalow and softwood scrubs and lancewood communities are also found throughout the area.

Over 545 plant species have been recorded from the park—one endangered species, eight near threatened species and one vulnerable species. While this list is relatively comprehensive, further surveys could reveal other new plant records. Most of the significant plant species occur on the sandstone cliff lines. The park also supports populations of other species with a restricted distribution, and at least 15 species that are disjunct and/or at the limit of their known distribution.

Inappropriate fire can have serious impact on the health of vegetation communities. This could include a lack of burning or high intensity fires. Burning within the parameters for the fire vegetation groups as outlined in the planned burning guidelines for the Brigalow Belt, provide the best guidance to assist with the long-term survival of these plants. Continued mosaic burning of the park will be encouraged.

The Carnarvon fan palm *Livistona nitida* is found along many of the creeks on the park. The 2010 floods had a limited impact on the population. Flooding is important for the recruitment of this species.

There is a lack of recorded detail in relation to invertebrate native animals on the park. Migratory birds of international significance recorded from the park are listed in Table 3.

Some of the park's significant species are listed below:

- *Allocasuarina* spp. are an important food source for glossy black cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus lathami* (vulnerable). Lower intensity mosaic burns help retain populations of casuarinas to support the population of these birds.
- Golden-tailed gecko *Strophurus taenicauda* (near threatened), is associated with the brigalow and softwood scrubs.
- The brigalow scaly-foot, *Paradelma orientalis* (vulnerable), and collared delma *Delma torquata* (vulnerable), are known to be present. Mosaic burning has assisted in maintaining their preferred habitat.
- Squatter pigeon *Geophaps scripta scripta* (vulnerable), is seen regularly across the park.
- Eastern long-eared bat *Nyctophilus corbeni* (vulnerable), and the large-eared pied bat *Chalinolobus dwyeri* (vulnerable), have been recorded on the park.

- Powerful owl *Ninox strenua* (vulnerable), square-tailed kite *Lophoictinia isura* (near threatened), and black-chinned honeyeater *Melithreptus gularis* (near threatened) are believed to have healthy populations on the park.
- The vulnerable Dunmall's snake *Furina dunmalli*, occurs in the Taroom area. Further surveying of the park is required to confirm the presence and health of these populations.

Another species of special significance to the park is the eEastern Pebble-mound Mouse *Pseudomys patrius* (has an extremely patchy - although broad - distribution) No surveys have been conducted to accurately determine population numbers, although the decrease in cattle grazing has benefitted the species.

The northern quoll, *Dasyurus hallucatus*, is at the southern end of its distribution in the park. Its population status is currently unknown.

There are recovery plans for the endangered *Macrozamia platyrhachis*, the vulnerable collared delma and the northern quoll.

Aboriginal culture

Expedition National Park has many significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites located throughout the park. At present, QPWS has a limited amount of knowledge about these sites. Any proposed development or presentation of sites will be undertaken in collaboration with relevant Traditional Owners.

Stencil rock art is scattered in the gorge country. Some of these sites may have been affected by cattle using the shelter of the caves, creating dust and licking the sandstone. Mud wasps building nests and, to a lesser extent, macropods using the areas for shelter are also a threat. Some sites have faded significantly. Many of the stencils are of hunting and fighting implements such as boomerangs. Little is recorded on QPWS databases of Aboriginal stories and history in relation to the park.

Burial sites have been observed during incidental cultural surveys, but exact locations have not been recorded.

Aboriginal cultural sites and shared-history sites on the park are subject to natural weathering processes. In most cases the natural process will continue. Some pest species have impacted cultural sites within the park and reduced the condition of the cultural asset.

Opportunities exist for Aboriginal peoples to run cultural tours. Traditional Owner groups should be encouraged to be involved in park management.

Currently there is one native title determination and one native title claim over the park.

Shared-history culture

Expedition National Park has significant evidence of early grazing from the late 1800s. Explorers such as Leichhardt and Roper passed through the general area on their 1844 Port Essington trip. All of the area was used for pastoral purposes, originally part of Glen Haughton Holding which employed 52 shepherds to herd 1400 sheep between 1850 and 1900.

Recorded history of this period of time is very limited.

Relics of the park's previous pastoral history in the form of various old fences, yards, artificial waters, some of which have windmills, and one dry turkey's nest (a small earth dam) which has an internal retaining wall, remain on the park. This infrastructure is in various state of repair.

Opportunity exists to record further the chronological sequence of shared-history with current and past park staff and local historians, before such knowledge is lost.

Threats to built structures and cultural places include unplanned fire events and pest species seeking food, water and shelter.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Expedition National Park's rugged cliff lines, major gorges, narrow side gorges and mesas (Amphitheatre) provide opportunity for self-reliant nature-based recreational opportunities primarily based around remote bushwalking and four-wheel drive vehicle-based camping.

Opportunities exist for visitors to view sandstone gorges and cliff lines in a remote environment that is generally undisturbed with limited infrastructure and minimal contact with other people. Vehicle access is by four-wheel drive only due to the rugged nature of the terrain. Across the park there are many micro-changes of habitat to interest people while visiting.

Facilities provided include walking tracks, vehicle-based driving opportunities and camping facilities in a natural setting.

The focus of visitor use is in the Robinson Gorge area of the park. Starkvale camping area provides a remote bush camping experience with limited facilities. There are three constructed walking tracks which start at the Starkvale camping area. These tracks require people to have a reasonable degree of fitness.

Infrastructure currently on the park is not visible from the gorge floors or lookouts. This undisturbed vista adds to the remote visitor experience.

The park is 128km or about two hours travel north-west of Taroom. Visitors need to be self-sufficient and able to navigate in remote areas with minimal directional help. A four-wheel-drive vehicle with good ground clearance is required. Wet weather often makes the roads in and around the park impassable.

The area is quite remote and outside standard mobile telephone communication coverage area. The nearest medical facilities are located at Taroom.

Education and science

The natural landscape provides many opportunities for education and research. There is limited knowledge about the ecology and best management practices of some species of significance within these communities. From time to time taxonomic studies have been undertaken on specific species.

The natural springs of the park support their own unique collection of native plants and animals. Limited work has been undertaken to understand the requirements of these habitats.

Limited research has been undertaken on the park's cultural assets. Some recording of cultural heritage places and shared-history has been undertaken to limit the loss of knowledge. Efforts are made to ensure records of Aboriginal cultural heritage values and places are undertaken in a culturally sensitive manner and in accordance with cultural protocols.

Partnerships

Local rangers have worked with neighbouring landholders and stakeholders to manage fire and pests, and vehicle access.

QPWS works cooperatively with lessees, park neighbours and other stakeholders including Banana Shire Council, Queensland Rural Fire Service, Biosecurity Queensland and the local branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. These cooperative relationships are especially important in the area of pest and fire management.

QPWS and Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland are in contact regarding the retention and collection of cultural values for the area. QPWS and Banana Shire Council are in continuous contact regarding the Amphitheatre and the potential for tourism.

Establishing partnerships with Traditional Owners is important for the management of the park.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Management of pest plants and animals on the park is guided by a current Level 2 pest management strategy.

A number of pest plants have been identified on the park. Buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* is present in scattered populations across the park and is of greatest concern given its potential to alter fire regimes.

Parthenium hysterophorus has been recorded along the northern boundary of the park and is located on surrounding properties. It is a weed of concern, and QPWS is spraying and monitoring known infestations.

Feral pigs *Sus scrofa*, feral horses *Equus caballus* and feral cattle *Bos* spp. are regarded as the priority pests on the park. Feral pigs are a particular concern in soakage areas. Cattle occur through the area in varying numbers, and impact water sources with most damage being obvious during times of drought. In the Belington section, feral horses chew and ringbark spotted gums.

Fire management

The Level 2 fire management strategy directs the overall fire management for the park. This document is reviewed on a regular basis to take into account new information being made available for fire management. The annual

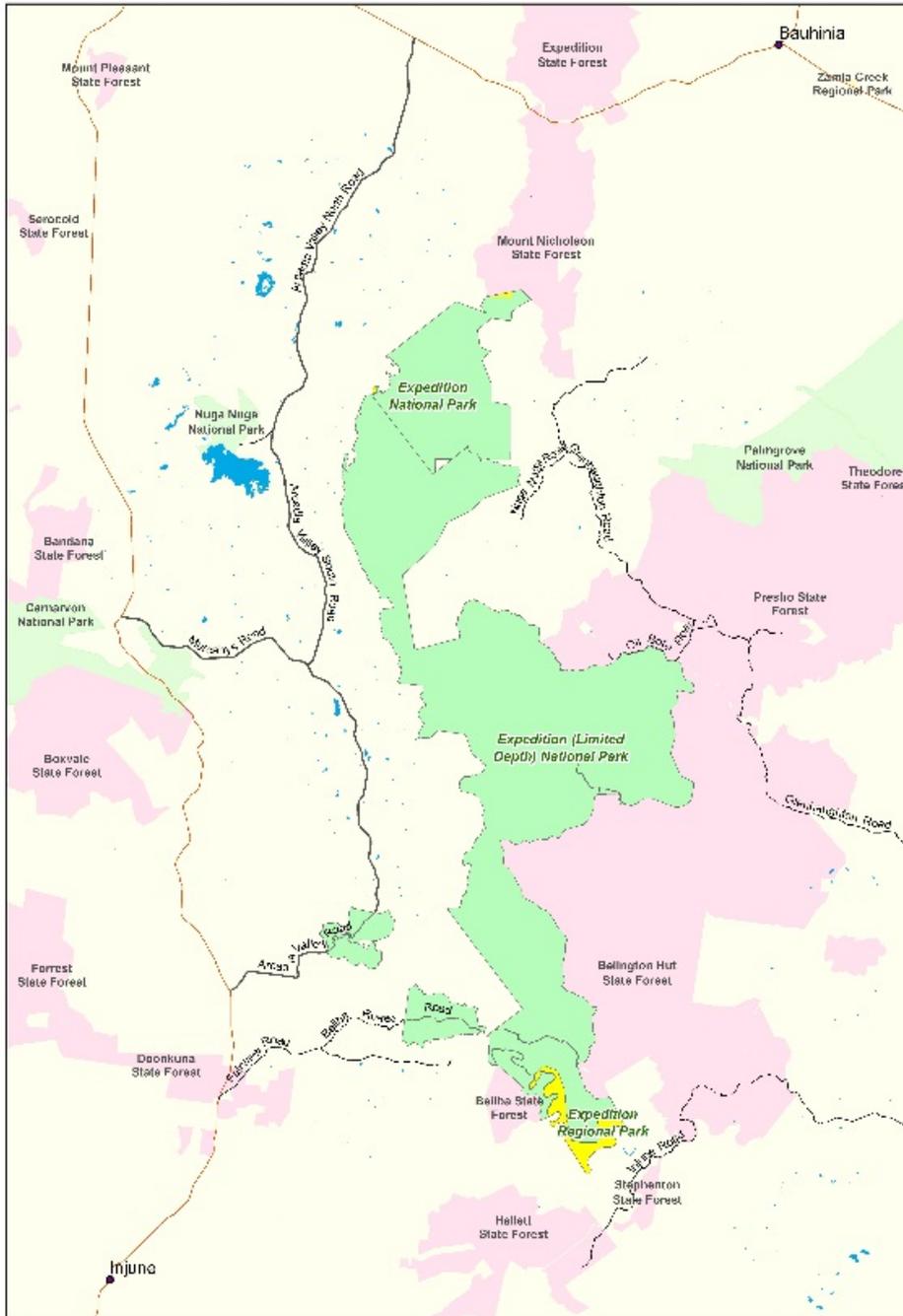
planned burning program is developed from the direction in this strategy.

QPWS will continue to work cooperatively with neighbours and stakeholders to achieve outcomes such as the protection of life and property and positive environmental outcomes for the park.

Other management issues

Artificial waters (dams) occur on the park. They provide a source of water for fire management purposes, and may be useful for the management of feral animals.

Map 1: Expedition National Park estate boundaries.



Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>The natural landscape that protects the water catchment area for the Dawson River is maintained.</p> <p>Development does not impact on the visual amenity of sandstone escarpments.</p> <p>Complementary conservation corridors of vegetation on adjoining lands are protected.</p>	<p>A1. Maintain the current landscape settings for the park by ensuring any new infrastructure developed has minimal visual impact.</p> <p>A2. Construct and maintain roads and tracks to reduce erosion and minimise visual impact on the landscape.</p> <p>A3. Monitor grazing impacts and implement management procedures if overgrazing is occurring to reduce the potential for soil erosion.</p>
<p>Regional ecosystems</p> <p>The health and extent of regional ecosystems are maintained as per the extent mapped in 2009, in particular for brigalow and soft wood scrubs.</p>	<p>A4. Focus management on ecosystems and communities that have a limited distribution and are currently threatened by fire or pests.</p> <p>A5. Monitor conservation significant ecosystems for their health and distribution to inform management.</p> <p>A6. Provide training for staff to identify and monitor ecosystem health and identify plant and animals species.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Habitat is protected and the health of native plants and animals improved.</p> <p>Information on the park's natural species is increased.</p>	<p>A7. Undertake surveys for species across the park.</p> <p>A8. Encourage research from tertiary institutions and other organisations to provide management data for improved management of the park's ecosystems, plants and animals.</p> <p>A9. Focus management on species that have a limited distribution and are currently threatened by human impacts, fire or pests.</p> <p>A10. Consider fencing natural springs to protect species and landscapes from pest animals.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Aboriginal cultural heritage values are identified and protected.</p> <p>Awareness of the importance of Aboriginal culture is developed, where appropriate.</p>	<p>A11. Provide training for staff in cultural awareness, place identification and management practices.</p> <p>A12. Encourage surveys of the park for cultural heritage sites with the endorsement of Traditional Owners, and protect these sites.</p> <p>A13. Support the recording of cultural values in a form agreeable with the Traditional Owners.</p> <p>A14. Encourage the involvement of Traditional Owners in the management of the park, including the providing opportunities for cultural interpretation of the park where appropriate.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>Shared-history cultural heritage places are identified and protected.</p> <p>Education material for the public is produced sharing the history of the park.</p> <p>Historical stories of the park are recorded.</p>	<p>A15. Assess and protect sites for their cultural significance, including relics of the areas grazing history and settlement.</p> <p>A16. Consider the adaptive re-use of the sites or the non-promotion of sites to aid in their protection.</p> <p>A17. Document stories from people that have had an association with the park and potentially interpret the chronological sequence of agricultural influence on the land through various mediums.</p>

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Nature-based recreational opportunities based primarily around remote bushwalking, camping and vehicle-based driving opportunities are provided.</p> <p>Visitor are aware of the park's grazing history and settlement patterns, Aboriginal cultural heritage significance, geological and biological processes and specific park management practices.</p> <p>Walking tracks and other recreational facilities are maintained and appropriate to the recreation setting.</p>	<p>A18. Develop a visitor management strategy outlining the location and standard of facilities to be provided.</p> <p>A19. Manage the development and maintenance of infrastructure so it does not interfere with undeveloped vistas across the park and is not visible from the gorge floor or lookouts.</p> <p>A20. Construct lookouts with minimal built infrastructure using local natural material where appropriate, and use signs and other publications to highlight any safety information.</p> <p>A21. Provide and maintain bushwalk opportunities in a remote natural setting.</p> <p>A22. Continue to provide four-wheel-drive vehicle based camping at Starkvale and Spotted Gum camping areas.</p> <p>A23. Maintain access tracks for four-wheel drive only.</p> <p>A24. Provide information that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · increases visitor awareness of the park's grazing history and settlement patterns, geological and biological processes and specific park management practices.
<p>Partnerships</p> <p>The park is managed in cooperation with adjoining land holders and interested parties to improve natural, cultural and visitor management.</p> <p>Research and monitoring programs increase understanding of park values and provide information to improve management decisions.</p>	<p>A25. Implement pest and fire strategies in cooperation with lessees, neighbours and the Queensland Rural Fire Service and other interested parties.</p> <p>A26. Develop and maintain partnerships with Traditional Owners.</p> <p>A27. Identify information gaps and natural and cultural research opportunities for the park, and support research activities where demonstrated benefits to the management of the park exist.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>The integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained by coordinating pest management across the landscape.</p>	<p>A28. Implement and review the pest management strategy for the control of pest species on the park.</p> <p>A29. Focus vertebrate pest control activities on essential habitat areas including riparian corridors and natural springs, with particular emphasis on feral pigs, horses and cattle.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>The integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained through strategic, sustained fire management.</p> <p>Life and property are protected from the impacts of fire.</p>	<p>A30. Review and implement the fire strategy as new information becomes available.</p> <p>A31. Use low intensity perimeter burns to protect margins of brigalow and softwood scrub communities and other fire-sensitive communities.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
11.3.2	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> woodland on alluvial plains.	Of concern
11.3.25	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> or <i>E. camaldulensis</i> woodland fringing drainage lines.	Of concern
11.4.2	<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp and/or <i>Corymbia</i> spp. grassy or shrubby woodland on Cainozoic clay plains.	Of concern
11.9.4	Semi-evergreen vine thicket on fine-grained sedimentary rocks.	Endangered
11.9.5	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cristata</i> open forest on fine-grained sedimentary rocks.	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				
<i>Apatophyllum teretifolium</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Calytrix islensis</i>	-	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Eucalyptus curtisii</i>	Plunkett mallee	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Homoranthus decasetus</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Leucopogon grandiflorus</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Livistona nitida</i>	Carnarvon fan palm	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Macrozamia platyrhachis</i>	-	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Pseudanthus pauciflorus</i> subsp. <i>arenicola</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Senna acclinis</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Wahlenbergia islensis</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Animals				
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	glossy black-cockatoo	Vulnerable	-	Not assessed
<i>Chalinolobus dwyeri</i>	large-eared pied bat	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>	northern quoll	Least concern	Endangered	Medium

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
<i>Delma torquata</i>	collared delma	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High
<i>Egernia rugosa</i>	yakka skink	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Furina dunmalli</i>	Dunmall's snake	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Geophaps scripta scripta</i>	squatter pigeon (southern subspecies)	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	square-tailed kite	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Melithreptus gularis</i>	black-chinned honeyeater	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	powerful owl	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Nyctophilus corbeni</i>	eastern long-eared bat	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Paradelma orientalis</i>	brigalow scaly-foot	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Strophurus taenicauda</i>	golden-tailed gecko	Near threatened	-	Medium

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	CMS	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	ü	ü	-
<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	cicadabird	-	-	ü	-
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's snipe	-	ü	ü	ü
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	ü	-
<i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>	satin flycatcher	ü	-	-	-

CMS (BONN) – Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn Convention)

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement