Precipice National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	10,400ha
Bioregion:	Brigalow Belt South
QPWS region:	South West
Local government estate/area:	Banana Shire
State electorate:	Callide

Range country from Shankeen Nature Refuge.
Photo: Richard Johnson.

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

a	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

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

Vision

Precipice National Park will continue to conserve the natural and cultural values contained within the sandstone formations of gorges and stony mountains that are characteristic of this park. Significant species and ecosystems of the Brigalow Belt South bioregion will also be conserved.

Conservation purpose

Precipice National Park was originally gazetted on 25 November 1989 to conserve a representative example of the Central Highland's sandstone formation including the park's ecosystems and species. This elevated and heavily dissected sandstone formation is part of an important wildlife corridor in the Taroom area.

Along with the national park the adjoining nature refuges to the west form an important vegetation and wildlife corridor from Isla Gorge National Park to the Dawson River.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Precipice National Park is located in the Central Highlands Sandstone Belt within the Brigalow Belt bioregion. The park is bounded on the eastern side by the Dawson River. Flowing into this major drainage system are numerous creeks which have carved rugged gorges and are characterised by impressive cliff lines and ragged rock formations. The main creeks flowing out of the park include Precipice and Cables creeks. Much of the visible rocky terrain comprises precipice sandstone and alluvium soils associated with the Dawson River. The geology and characteristically steep slopes in the park render the area highly susceptible to erosion.

Isla Gorge National Park is located 12 kilometres (km) to the north-west of the park and is connected to Precipice National Park by three Nature Refuges—Shankeen Nature Refuge, Wondekai Nature Refuge and Woodine Nature Refuge. Waterton State Forest to the west is separated by 7km of cleared country. To the east of the Dawson River is a significant area of uncleared country.

Most of the surrounding land use in the south-west and north-east is agricultural and cattle grazing. While cliffs form most of the park boundary between the farms and the park, cattle occasionally stray into the park via creek lines or when fence lines are damaged.

Regional ecosystems

Eleven regional ecosystems are conserved on the park. Two are endangered, five are of concern and four are not of concern at present (Table 1). The endangered regional ecosystems are generally in the north-east section of the park with of concern communities found along the major drainage systems of the park.

Within the park there are some natural water springs along Cable, Spring and Precipice creeks. Even through the drought years these springs provided significant wildlife refugia.

Wildfire in particular has had a significant impact on the brigalow/belah communities particularly in 2002. Invasion of buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* into these vegetation communities also adds to the decline of their health by increasing the severity of fire events.

Native plants and animals

Precipice National Park provides a refuge for native plants and animals in a significantly altered surrounding landscape. Vegetation communities on the park are very diverse with open eucalypt forests, brigalow and softwood scrubs, spinifex and patches of dry rainforest with distinctive bottle trees. While few surveys for native plants and animals have been undertaken, 145 species have been recorded with most of these being plants.

Ten recorded vulnerable, endangered or near threatened species occur on Precipice National Park (Table 2). The vulnerable Brigalow scaly-foot *Paradelma orientalis* and near threatened golden-tailed gecko *Strophurus taenicauda* can be found in the national park.

Other species of note recorded on the park include *Acacia argentina* and *Calytrix islensis*.

The park is likely to have a very similar array of plants and animals to those that have been recorded at nearby Isla Gorge National Park and Shankeen Nature Refuge.

Aboriginal culture

The park is subject to a current native title claim for the Wulli Wulli people (QC00/007-QUD6006/00).

Little is known by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) about the Aboriginal values of the park and no cultural places have been identified. Surveys for Aboriginal cultural places should be encouraged to identify places to aid in their protection and management. Recording of stories and history should be encouraged where culturally appropriate.

The development of partnerships with Traditional Owners of the area will provide improved knowledge and management of the park's cultural heritage.

Shared-history culture

Little is known about the shared-history cultural values of the park and no sites have been identified. There maybe some local cultural sites associated with the adjoining grazing enterprises.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Access to the park is restricted to a gravel track leading to the boundary of the park through Jarwood pastoral holding. There are no constructed vehicle tracks or visitor facilities on the park. Access across the park is limited due to the highly dissected terrain. Some access may be possible by water craft along the Dawson River.

Precipice National Park provides opportunities for self-reliant people seeking a remote experience to enjoy the solitude of the national park. Visitors also require a high level of fitness and bush skills to explore this park due to the rugged terrain.

The nearby Isla Gorge National Park is a popular park for visitors to the area. It provides easy access and camping and day visitor facilities are provided there.

Education and science

Precipice National Park offers educational and scientific opportunities in the areas of landscape, cultural heritage (both Aboriginal and shared-history) and natural history. Limited research has been conducted on Precipice National Park. This work is not exhaustive and only provides an indication of the diversity of the area.

Partnerships

Opportunities exist to continue to build relationships with neighbours to compliment management activities, in particular fire and pest management, with the aim to work cooperatively across various tenures.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Buffel grass and green panic *Megathyrsus maximus* var. *pubiglumis* appear to be restricted to the lower creek terraces, mainly along Precipice Creek and Dawson River where suitable soil conditions exist. Mexican poppy *Argemone ochroleuca* subsp. *ochroleuca* and cobbler's pegs *Bidens pilosa* are scattered along sandy creek beds, along the full length of Gorge Creek. There is potential for other high impact weeds like parthenium *Parthenium hysterophorus* to occur on the park especially on the north-eastern boundary.

The extent of feral animal impacts on the park is unknown. Feral pigs are suspected to frequent most of the creek lines throughout the park given favourable soil conditions. They root up dysentery bush *Grewia retusifolia* and the creek edges/bed. Cattle grazing has not been a significant issue on the park, occasionally animals venture onto the park. Feral horses *Equus caballus* have been recorded on the park.

The pest management strategy for the park provides direction for the control of pest species by outlining priority pest species and control options.

Fire management

Precipice National Park is located in a fire prone area. Given the dissected terrain managing fire is difficult. Cooperation with surrounding land holders is required to undertake planned burning activities and minimise wildfire.

Fire is an important management tool for the protection of life and property and for managing the health of ecosystems across the park. Too frequent fires or very long intervals between fire events can change habitats and have an impact on the flora and fauna of the park.

The park has significant stands of softwood scrub and brigalow that are vulnerable to intense fires. However, there are large areas of eucalyptus woodland and spinifex that require fire for regeneration and management.

The fire management strategy for the park provides direction for the protection of human life and property, and to maintain healthy ecological communities.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
Landscape A natural landscape that protects the water catchment area for the Dawson River is maintained. Development does not impact on the visual amenity of sandstone escarpments. Complementary conservation corridors of vegetation on adjoining lands are considered.	A1. Construct and maintain roads and tracks to minimise erosion and visual impact. A2. Consider opportunities to add areas of conservation value to the park with highest priority given to areas linking with other protected areas or nature refuges.
Regional ecosystems The health and extent of brigalow and soft wood scrubs are maintained at current extent as mapped in 2009. Regional ecosystems are protected and maintained.	A3. Monitor endangered ecosystems for their health and distribution to inform management. A4. Maintain and protected regional ecosystems through implementing pest and fire management strategies.
Native plants and animals Flora and fauna communities are conserved and habitat diversity maintained. Knowledge of native species is increased and used for future management decisions.	A5. Survey plants and animals across the park and record these in department systems for consideration when making management decisions. A6. Investigate fencing of natural springs to protect this habitat and associated species from pest animals.
Aboriginal culture Cultural heritage values are identified and protected. Awareness of the importance of Aboriginal culture is developed.	A7. Encourage cultural heritage surveys with the support of Traditional Owners and manage these places with Traditional Owner involvement. A8. Provide educational material concerning cultural heritage places, where appropriate, and with the involvement of Traditional Owners.
Shared-history culture Shared-history cultural heritage places are identified through survey and protected. Education material for the public is produced sharing the history of the park.	A9. Survey and assess the parks' shared-history and record this onto QPWS databases. A10. Develop and implement conservation and presentation plans for historical sites, where appropriate. Otherwise the non-promotion of sites will also aid in their protection. A11. Record stories from people that have had an association with the park when opportunity arises.
Tourism and visitor opportunities Opportunity will exist for people to experience remote bushwalking, with some shorter walks. Information is provided to the visitor to improve knowledge of the park's natural and cultural resources.	A12. Manage the development and maintenance of visitor infrastructure within the parks landscape setting and in a manner that will not be visible from the gorge floor or lookouts. A13. Visitors will have opportunity for nature-based recreation including remote bush walking to experience the natural values. A14. Maintain access tracks for four-wheel drives only. A15. Provide information to increase visitor awareness of the park's geological, biological and cultural heritage processes and specific park management practices.

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
Education and science Research of the park is used when making management decisions.	A16. Encourage research that contributes to improved management outcomes including management data for improved management of the park's plants, animals and regional ecosystems.

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem	Description	Biodiversity status
11.3.3	*Eucalyptus coolabah* 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
11.9.4	Semi-evergreen vine thicket or *Acacia harpophylla* with a semi-evergreen vine thicket understorey on fine grained sedimentary rocks	Endangered
11.9.5	*Acacia harpophylla* and/or *Casuarina cristata* open-forest on fine-grained sedimentary rocks	Endangered
11.9.7	*Eucalyptus populnea*, *Eremophila mitchellii* shrubby woodland on fine-grained sedimentary rocks	Of concern
11.10.2	Tall open-forest in sheltered gorges on coarse-grained sedimentary rocks	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				
Acacia argentina	-	Vulnerable	-	Low
Acacia islana	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Calytrix islensis	-	Vulnerable	-	Low
Leucopogon grandiflorus	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Livistona nitida	Carnarvon fan palm	Near threatened	-	Low
Notelaea pungens	mock-olive	Near threatened	-	Low
Sannantha brachypoda	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Wahlenbergia islensis	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Animals				
Paradelma orientalis	Brigalow scaly-foot	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
Strophurus taenicauda	golden-tailed gecko	Near threatened	-	Medium

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
Coracina tenuirostris	cicadabird	-	-	ü	-
Merops ornatus	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	ü	-

JAMBA: Japan—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA: Republic of Korea—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

CAMBA: China—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Bonn: Bonn Convention