

Bladensburg National Park

Management Statement

2013



Queensland
Government

Prepared by: **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment and Science**

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The Bladensburg National Park Management Statement 2013 has been extended in 2023, in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the plan's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	84,900ha
Bioregion:	Mitchell Grass Downs Channel country
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Winton Shire
State electorate:	Mt Isa

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	National recovery plan for the Julia Creek dunnart <i>Sminthopsis douglasi</i> 2009
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

✓	Fire management strategy
✓	Diamantina Catchment Pest Management Plan

Vision

Bladensburg National Park is managed to conserve significant areas of Mitchell grass downs and channel country communities and their associated natural and cultural values (which includes the Julia Creek dunnart *Sminthopsis douglasi*).

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

Conservation purpose

Bladensburg National Park conserves 84,900ha of Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country, including unique birdlife, plants and animals. Impressive flat-topped plateaus and residual sandstone ranges provide a scenic backdrop to vast grassland plains and river flats, river red gums and rocky scarp.

Scientific and cultural research and school based educational programs are encouraged. Community relationships are fostered and maintained.

Bladensburg National Park provides regionally significant opportunities for nature and heritage-based recreation and tourism, including day-use recreation, camping, cycling and nature studies.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Bladensburg National Park is 17km south-west of Winton. An area known as the poison country parcel was gazetted in 1984, while the adjacent grazing property was gazetted in 1994. Bladensburg National Park is in the Central Downs subregion of the Mitchell Grass Downs Bioregion and the Goneaway Tablelands subregion of the Channel Country Bioregion.

Neighbouring lands include the Winton Town Common, cattle and sheep grazing properties, and a Department of Transport and Main Roads gravel reserve.

Bladensburg National Park is a mosaic of rolling grassed downs bisected by wooded river channels (covering the northern third of the park) and mesas, jump-ups, breakaways and silcrete duricrust areas (occupying the remainder of Bladensburg). Exceptional geological features include readily accessible rock holes, gorges and expansive downs country created by Cretaceous sediments. Evidence of Australia's prehistory occurs on park in the form of dinosaur and plant fossils.

The landscape is marked by a network of old and broken-down fences reflecting the grazing heritage.

Regional ecosystems

Thirty-two regional ecosystems have been mapped for the Bladensburg National Park. These range from open grass downs to wooded areas on silcrete duricrust. Harsh terrain and arid climate create varied and unusual habitats. Fourteen are within the Mitchell Grass Downs Bioregion and 18 in the Channel Country Bioregion. Twenty regional ecosystems have low representation in other protected estate. There are two of concern regional ecosystems (Table 1).

Native plants and animals

The park has a valuable, representative mosaic of vegetation. At least one plant—*Ptilotus pseudohelipteroides*—is listed as near threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA) (Table 2).

Nine animal species of conservation concern are listed under the NCA (Table 2). The park provides critical habitat for the Julia Creek dunnart, which is listed as endangered under both the NCA and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC). Research is continuing into size and genetic structure of the park's dunnart population. Three bird species are listed in international agreements (Table 3). There are historical records of rare and threatened species such as the greater bilby and the purple-necked wallaby.

Aboriginal culture

Bladensburg National Park is believed to have been a major component of the pituri trade network. There are numerous examples of Aboriginal cultural heritage, including artefact scatters, hearths, stone arrangements and sites of cultural significance. Some culturally sensitive areas have been identified, but are not within designated visitor areas.

The Koa (Goa) people have been identified as the parks Traditional Owners.

Shared-history culture

Historical pastoral operations are represented by the homestead complex; outrider stations, shearing shed, graves, racetrack, windmills and an orchard. Part of this history has been documented (Ogilvie 2001). An orchard was maintained, by the Winton community, as a functional symbol of past land uses, but was badly damaged by a wildfire in 2009. The local community has an association and ownership of this resource and may want to re-establish it in the future.

A conservation plan and interpretation strategy were developed for Bladensburg National Park homestead complex by Winton Shire Council (Blake and Marquis-Kyle 2003).

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Queensland's outback is part of the fabric of the state's heritage, with its diverse Aboriginal, European and pioneering history and its friendly towns and heroes of the bush. National parks play a vital role in conserving the outback's natural and cultural heritage, enabling visitors to experience its rich flora and fauna and changing landscapes.

Bladensburg National Park's proximity to Winton and the Landsborough Highway offers the public an important opportunity to experience the park's environments and heritage. There is a sealed bitumen road near the western boundary. Roads within the park are formed dirt roads more suited to four-wheel-drive vehicles.

There are a number of attractions that encourage visitation to the region:

- exploring the restored homestead and its original complex, including staff quarters and store at this historical outback station
- spotting a variety of wildlife including the largest known population of endangered Julia Creek dunnarts in a national park, wallaroos *Macropus robustus*, red kangaroos *Macropus rufus* and birdlife including emus *Dromaius novaehollandiae*, Australian bustards *Ardeotis australis*, Hall's babbler *Pomatostomus halli*, spotted bowerbirds *Ptilonorhynchus maculatus* and Horsfield's bushlarks *Mirafra javanica*
- camping at Bough Shed Hole—an open camping area suitable for tents and camper trailers, beside Surprise Creek where birdlife is prolific
- taking a scenic drive (for high clearance vehicles) through grasslands and channels, climbing the jump-up to Scrammy Gorge for spectacular views, and skirting the scenic waterholes of Surprise Creek, vast claypans and sites of significance to the Koa people
- driving the Route of the River Gum and gaining an insight into the area's darker past at Skull Hole (includes 15 places of interest in Winton Shire and through the national park)
- visiting the dinosaur fossil discoveries near Winton at Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum and Lark Quarry Conservation Park—home to one of Australia's most important dinosaur trackways
- visiting Winton and its museum, the Matilda Centre, the proud home of Australian bush poetry and the iconic ballad by Banjo Paterson, 'Waltzing Matilda'.

Education and science

Bladensburg National Park has significant fossil deposits which have only been partially explored. Students from the University of Queensland assist Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) with a program to monitor the size and health of the Julia Creek dunnart population.

Bladensburg is a valuable resource for local schools for natural, cultural and shared history of the Winton area.

Interpretation on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history is provided at the ranger base.

Partnerships

Bladensburg 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.

QPWS, with the Winton Shire Council, is co-manager of the Route of the River Gums—a self-drive tour from Winton that traverses part of the park.

Other key issues and responses

Fire management

Planned burning is primarily aimed at providing a mixed age within the grassland communities, in particular the spinifex communities to reduce the risk of broad-scale fire events. Fire is used to maintain the extent of the grassland communities by removing woody thickening. Fire is also used to control pest plants such as parkinsonia.

Wildfires occasionally occur in the spinifex communities as a result of lightning strikes across the landscape. Fires tends to be less frequent in the tussock grass communities as fuel loads are generally lower due to typically dry conditions and extensive grazing by macropods.

Pest management

The open grasslands, downs country, is currently under threat of invasion by native and exotic shrubs, and buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris*. The main pest species on the park include parkinsonia *Parkinsonia aculeate*, prickly acacia *Vachellia nilotica*, mesquite *Prosopis pallida*, noogoora burr *Xanthium occidentale* and star burr *Acanthospermum hispidum*.

Pest plant control works are underway with ongoing monitoring to detect new pest plant incursions. The variability in wet and dry conditions drive the pest plant control effort and effectiveness.

Pest animals threaten native wildlife through predation and competition. Pest animals found on park include pig *Sus scrofa*, goat *Capra hircus*, red fox *Vulpes vulpes*, dog *Canis lupus familiaris* and cat *Felis catus*.

Pest animal control programs are ongoing with one highlight being the local eradication of goats from the park. Predator monitoring sand plots have been created and are monitored quarterly.

A program to reduce stock access to artificial waters has been undertaken and is maintained. Boundary fencing is also regularly maintained to minimise stock from neighbouring properties impacting on the vegetation.

References

Anon 2009, National recovery plan for the Julia Creek dunnart *Sminthopsis douglasi*, Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland.

Blake TB and Marquis-Kyle P 2003, Bladensburg National Park Conservation Plan and Interpretation Strategy, Winton Shire Council, Queensland.

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 1996, The Action Plan for Australian Marsupials and Monotremes, Environment Australia.

Ogilvie K 2001, Bladensburg National Park Historical Overview and Statements of Significance, University of Queensland report for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Landscape integrity (including visual amenity) is retained in undisturbed areas.</p> <p>Disturbed landscapes are restored to their natural condition.</p> <p>Landscape is not negatively impacted (visual amenity, erosion) by management infrastructure (e.g. tracks).</p>	<p>Identify and map disturbed landscapes, particularly around visitor nodes and restore where practicable.</p> <p>All new infrastructure to be sensitive to the landscape in its design and placement.</p>
<p>Regional ecosystems</p> <p>Regional ecosystems are maintained and where necessary rehabilitated.</p>	<p>Maintain the diversity of regional ecosystems and improve the health of degraded areas through appropriate pest and fire management.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>The geographical extent and integrity of native plant communities is maintained.</p> <p>There is a comprehensive knowledge of plant and animal species, associated communities, and their ecological requirements.</p> <p>Populations of species of conservation concern are maintained or enhanced through appropriate management regimes.</p>	<p>Maintain currency of plant lists and vegetation mapping.</p> <p>Maintain herbaria for office and field use.</p> <p>New staff induction to include local vegetation identification.</p> <p>Encourage staff to record and report incidental wildlife sightings and enter records into WildNet.</p> <p>Support Julia Creek dunnart recovery actions.</p> <p>Encourage staff to become familiar with key species including CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA and Bonn Convention birds and to record and report sightings.</p> <p>Survey for purple-necked wallabies in north-east corner of the park (jump-ups).</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Cultural heritage values are identified and protected.</p> <p>The importance of Aboriginal culture is developed where appropriate.</p>	<p>Encourage cultural heritage surveys with the support of the Traditional Owners.</p> <p>Maintain heritage places to conserve these areas with traditional Owner involvement.</p> <p>Maintain the integrity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage values by minimising cattle incursions.</p> <p>Identify and map Aboriginal cultural resources where appropriate to management.</p> <p>Where appropriate and with the involvement of Traditional Owners provide educational material concerning cultural sites</p> <p>Consider using traditional names for park features and facilities (e.g. roads and waterhole names).</p>
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>Places and items of cultural heritage significance are documented, protected and/or maintained where possible</p> <p>Internal fences on park are only those required for management and are maintained to a functional standard.</p>	<p>Implement protective management of shared cultural sites with particular emphasis on allowing and encouraging continued community use of the orchard.</p> <p>Enter all heritage related structures on agency databases.</p> <p>Audit all internal fencing and schedule the removal of fencing not required for management. Remove fence wire but retain standing fence posts as cultural relics.</p>

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>The park provides a range of recreational and tourism opportunities which highlight the areas special outback character and complements 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.</p> <p>Visitor vehicle use is limited to the formal public road and track network.</p> <p>The park remains rubbish free.</p>	<p>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>Maintain the current campground, opportunities and standards.</p> <p>Assess twice yearly all park features for safety and prepare plans for risk minimisation.</p> <p>Establish a visitor impact monitoring program.</p> <p>Promote and continue the 'take your rubbish with you' management approach.</p> <p>Identify and sign all management only tracks and designated visitor routes.</p>
<p>Education and science</p> <p>Research contributes to the knowledge base for improved management.</p> <p>Research is sustainable and does not have a negative impact on plant and animal populations</p>	<p>Encourage research that contributes to improved management outcomes.</p> <p>Encourage tertiary institutions and special interest groups to undertake surveys and scientific studies of the area.</p>
<p>Partnerships</p> <p>The effectiveness of future management is strengthened through cooperative partnerships.</p> <p>The role of QPWS in the management of wild dogs is recognised and understood by the community.</p>	<p>Continue to work with the Winton Regional Council to manage the Route of the River Gums.</p> <p>Continue to contribute to the 'Bluebush' baiting syndicate and ensuring that baiting focuses on boundary areas. Promote dog monitoring methods and results. Use the results of monitoring to determine the success of baiting and to strategically target areas.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Fire regime is appropriate to maintain natural values.</p>	<p>Prepare and implement a fire management strategy with a particular focus on developing fire regimes to maintain and promote the grasslands.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>Pest control programs are developed and implemented and are reducing impacts to manageable levels.</p>	<p>Continue to implement the pest management program with priority actions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control prickly acacia and buffel grass on the downs areas • control/exclusion of stock through a regular fence maintenance program. <p>Use fire to remove the woody thickening of the grassland.</p> <p>Continue to contribute to the 'Bluebush' baiting syndicate.</p>
<p>Artificial waters</p> <p>Artificial watering points are progressively decommissioned to promote healthy ecological processes</p>	<p>Implement a program to decommission all remaining artificial waters, where removal is not possible the waters may be fenced to prevent access by stock.</p>
<p>Waste management</p> <p>Waste sites pose no environmental hazard.</p>	<p>Asbestos containing materials and regulated waste located at old dumps is addressed in a planned manner.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
4.4.3	<i>Eucalyptus coolabah</i> , <i>E. camaldulensis</i> +/- <i>Lysiphillum gilvum</i> open woodland on drainage lines.	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>Ptilotus pseudohelipteroides</i>	-	near threatened	-	low
Animals				
<i>Amytornis striatus</i>	striated grasswren	near threatened	-	medium
<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>Heteromunia pectoralis</i>	pictorella mannikin	near threatened	-	low
<i>Melithreptus gularis</i>	black-chinned honeyeater	near threatened	-	low
<i>Melithreptus gularis laetior</i>	golden-backed honeyeater	near threatened	-	low
<i>Pyrrholaemus brunneus</i>	redthroat	near threatened	-	low
<i>Sminthopsis douglasi</i>	Julia Creek dunnart	endangered	endangered	critical

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>	Australian reed-warbler	✓	-	-	-
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	marsh sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement