

# Cressbrook Conservation Park

**Management Plan**

1999

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The Cressbrook Conservation Park Management Plan 1999 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 or direction.

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## Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Cressbrook Conservation Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in July 1999, in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s 120G of the Act. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment and Science at [ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au).

This management plan was prepared by Department of Environment and Science staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

# 1. Management directions and purpose

## 1.1 Management directions

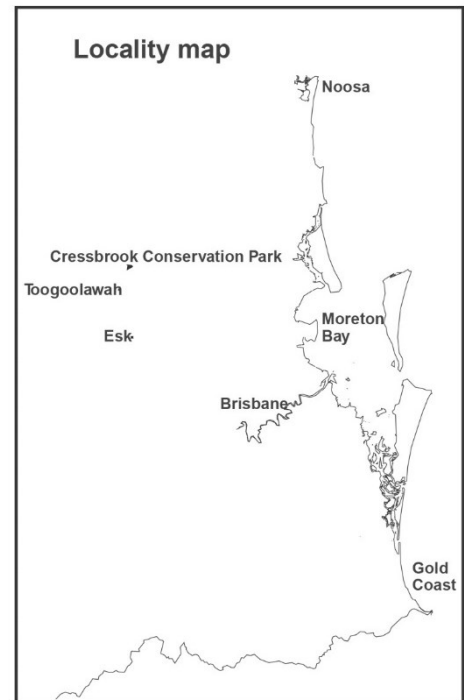
Cressbrook Conservation Park covers 298.25 hectares and is situated in the Somerset Region north of Toogoolawah and on the upper reaches of the Brisbane River. The park shows good representation of native vegetation communities such as ironbark forest and dry rainforest. Major pressures on the park include the uncontrolled roaming and grazing of stock, weed infestation and fire risk.

The conservation park will be managed to protect important vegetation communities and significant plants and animals. This will be achieved primarily by fencing the park to exclude stock, implementing weed control and developing a fire management plan which considers the ecological requirements of native plants and animals.

## 1.2 Purpose

The major purpose of management will be to ensure that:

- significant species or community types such as those that are rare or threatened are protected.
- Fire and weed management plans are developed and implemented to maintain the park's conservation values.
- Opportunities are available for scientific research which will assist in appropriate park management.
- The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Good Neighbour Policy is implemented.
- Impacts from cattle and deer are minimized.
- Recreation on the park is low-key. Self-reliant and day use only.



Map 1. Location map of Cressbrook Conservation Park

## 2. Basis for management

### 2.1 Regional and management context

Cressbrook Conservation Park is dedicated under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and must be managed under s 20 of the Act to: -

- conserve and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values
- provide for the permanent conservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and
- ensure that any commercial use of the area's natural resources, including fishing and grazing is ecologically sustainable.

The requirements of other relevant legislation will be met where necessary.

Cressbrook Conservation Park is one of Queensland's oldest protected areas having been declared a Reserve for Public Purposes and Preservation of Deer and Native Birds in 1898 by the Department of Primary Industries. The reserve was originally 12 200 acres (4,880 ha) but as pressures for grazing land increased, the size of the reserve gradually decreased to its current area. The local community has maintained a strong interest in the protection of the area since its declaration over 100 years ago. Situated in the Somerset Regional Council area, access to the park is via a private road. No visitor facilities are available.

Cressbrook Conservation Park is inhabited by rare and vulnerable animals, such as grey goshawks and glossy black cockatoos. It is of high scientific and educational value as it conserves important plant

communities including subtropical and dry rainforest with hoop pine emergents and very tall ironbark woodland. The surrounding area has been cleared for farming.

## 2.2 Values of Cressbrook Conservation Park

### 2.2.1 Plants and animals

Two major regional ecosystem types are represented on the park. Both occur on igneous geology and associated lithosols and texture contrast soils of low fertility.

**Microphyll and microphyll/notophyll rainforest:** This vegetation type is commonly referred to as dry rainforest with hoop pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* emergents and dry subtropical rainforest. Characteristic species in these community types include crow's ash *Flindersia australis*, and scrub bottle tree *Brachychiton discolor* in the dry rainforest sections and *Argyrodendron* species in the subtropical rainforest. The rare, small epiphytic orchid *Sarcochilus dilatatus* occurs here too.

**Very tall woodland:** Very tall woodland to open forest of narrow-leaved ironbark *Eucalyptus crebra* with pink bloodwood *Corymbia intermedia*, Moreton Bay ash *Corymbia tessellaris* and brushbox *Lophostemon confertus*. Hickory wattle *Acacia aulacocarpa* is present in the lower strata. Narrow-leaved ironbark communities have been extensively cleared for pasture and remaining areas in south-east Queensland may be subject to further clearing. They are poorly represented in the reserve system.

These areas of natural habitat provide an important refuge for a variety of native fauna. Animals recorded on the park include the pademelon *Thylogale stigmatica*, yellow-faced whipsnake *Demansia psammophis*, carpet python *Morelia spilota variegata* and interesting bird species including the rainbow bee-eater *Merops ornatus* (listed under the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement, JAMBA), the forest kingfisher *Halcyon macleayii* and the spangled drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*. The park protects suitable habitat for a variety of rare or vulnerable native birds recorded in the area. Examples listed under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994* include:

- Vulnerable: *Turnix melanogaster*, black breasted button quail (recorded on park)
- Vulnerable: *Calyptorhynchus lathami*, glossy black cockatoo (recorded near park)
- Rare: *Accipiter novaehollandiae*, grey goshawk (recorded near park)

### 2.2.2 Cultural heritage

There is a strong history of Aboriginal use of the general area around the park and a native title claim covering Cressbrook Conservation Park has been lodged with the National Native Title Tribunal on behalf of the Jinibara people.

### 2.2.3 Scenic and aesthetic

Aerial photographs show the park as an island of natural vegetation surrounded by cleared farmland. Slopes dominated by ironbark communities and dry rainforest with majestic hoop pine emergents are an attractive reminder of the surrounding landscape prior to clearing for grazing and agriculture.

### 2.2.4 Scientific and educational

Cressbrook Conservation Park contains ecosystems that are poorly represented in protected areas, therefore examples of such ecosystems on public land provide opportunities for education and scientific research. The park is already used by conservation groups for these purposes.

## 3. Management strategies

### 3.1 Native plants

#### Current situation

A comprehensive plant list was compiled by the Queensland Herbarium in 1992. The conservation park was also included in an assessment of vegetation and nature conservation values of Somerset Region. This report and accompanying vegetation maps at 1:100 000 scale with 1:50 000 scale were produced in 1998.

#### Desired outcomes

- The biological diversity and integrity of the natural ecosystems are conserved in the long term.
- Species of special significance including any rare or threatened plants are preserved in situ.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Develop a fire management plan that considers the ecological requirements of the different vegetation community types and includes a fire monitoring component.
- Prepare and implement a weed control program that targets invasive species.
- Encourage scientific research that increases knowledge of the ecological requirements of different plant and animal species and vegetation communities.
- Map the locations of noteworthy species and collate and store data at the park and District Office.
- Encourage local community groups and educational institutions to become involved in research and rehabilitation projects.

### 3.2 Native animals

#### Current situation

Incidental fauna surveys have been undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). A bird list, which includes sightings in the area around the park, has also been prepared.

NatureSearch/WildNet records for the Somerset Region are also available. A comprehensive fauna survey of the park has not been undertaken.

#### Desired outcomes

- Knowledge of the fauna using the park and surrounding habitat is improved.
- Native fauna including any species of special significance are protected.
- Habitat necessary for native fauna is protected.

#### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Conduct a fauna survey.
- Collate existing information on animal species occurring on the park and surrounding area.
- Develop procedures for accessing and collating research results on wildlife including incidental fauna sightings.
- Liaise with local landholders and authorities about the importance of maintaining wildlife corridors and areas of natural vegetation around and near the park.
- Encourage local community groups and educational institutions to become involved in fauna surveys and other research projects.

### 3.3 Introduced plants and animals

#### Current situation

Exotic plants consisting of lantana *Lantana camara*, cats claw creeper *Macfadyena unguis-cati*, coral berry *Rivina humilis* and Brazilian nightshade *Solanum seafortianum* are invading the natural vegetation. Dry rainforest is vulnerable to weed invasion and cats claw creeper is particularly invasive in areas of closed forest.

A severe lantana infestation present in the understory of the ironbark woodland is preventing regeneration of native species. It is also affecting natural fire regimes by possibly increasing the risk of hot fires in very dry conditions and restricting fire in moister periods.

Cattle are damaging natural vegetation and causing erosion. Red deer are also present having been introduced on a station near Toogoolawah in 1873. They later spread into nearby ranges. Other introduced animals such as hares, foxes, wild dogs and cats may also occur on the park.

#### **Desired outcomes**

- Decrease the threatening impacts of introduced plants and animals on the natural biodiversity of the park.

#### **Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Survey the park boundary.
- Initiate a fencing program with park neighbours aimed at excluding stock from the park.
- Develop a long term weed action plan for the park to include:
  - liaison with local landholders, authorities and community groups
  - the mapping of weeds and recommendation of priorities for control and appropriate control methods
  - control methods that minimise erosion, reinfestation and enable natural regeneration
  - use of environmental work programs such as Green Corps, and Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers for assistance in weed control
  - identification and control of any new weed species and outbreaks
  - use of prescribed burning where appropriate for weed control; and
  - reference to the South East Queensland Environmental Weeds Strategy being developed by the Rural Lands Protection Board.

## **3.4 Fire management**

#### **Current situation**

Vegetation communities occurring within the park have different fire management requirements. Although ironbark and acacia communities need fire to survive, both the dry and subtropical rainforests are threatened by fire. Fire must be well planned and consider the ecological requirements of the various vegetation communities. Fuel load monitoring is being conducted to increase understanding of fire ecology. This assists in determining appropriate fire regimes for vegetation communities.

#### **Desired outcomes**

- The biological diversity and integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained by appropriate fire management.
- Human life and neighbouring properties are protected as far as possible from fire originating from within the park.

#### **Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Develop a fire management plan for the park that will include:
  - maintenance of the biological diversity and integrity of native plant and animal communities through appropriate fire management
  - identification of appropriate fire regimes for each vegetation community type, including a monitoring component
  - the undertaking of prescribed burning to maintain the natural vegetation communities and to assist in controlling weed infestation
  - the location of adequate fire access points around the park boundary
  - maintenance of fire access trails
  - implementation of the QPWS Good Neighbour Policy and liaising with park neighbours to improve understanding of fire management needs; and
  - the detailing of emergency response procedures and methods of early fire detection including liaison with park neighbours, the local fire brigade and other relevant authorities.

## 3.5 Landscape, soil and catchment protection

### Current situation

The vegetated steep slopes of the conservation park protect the hillsides from erosion and provide catchment protection for the upper reaches of the Brisbane River.

### Desired outcomes

- Prevent erosion on the park.
- Provide catchment protection.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Time prescribed burning to prevent vegetation loss and erosion from the steep rocky slopes above the Brisbane River.
- Survey and fence the park boundary to prevent damage caused by straying stock.
- Encourage surrounding landholders to adopt land use practices that help protect the catchment and prevent further land degradation.

## 3.6 Cultural heritage

### Current situation

Although no cultural sites are currently identified on the park there is a strong history of Aboriginal use of the general area. Aboriginal sites are automatically protected under the provision of the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (Qld). A native title claim covering Cressbrook Conservation Park has been lodged with the National Native Title Tribunal on behalf of the Jinibara people.

### Desired outcomes

- Cultural heritage sites are identified and protected.
- Any native title rights are not compromised by management actions.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Assess the cultural heritage values of the park and survey for archaeological material in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (Qld) and with the Jinibara people who have traditional links to the area.
- Manage any Aboriginal cultural sites in association with Aboriginal people affiliated with the area.
- Liaise with Aboriginal groups and other interested parties regarding any cultural heritage management issues.

## 3.7 Recreation and tourism

### Current situation

Natural history groups study rainforest communities on the park. As access is gained via private property these groups and individuals advise District staff and neighbours before entering the park.

No visitor facilities are available.

### Desired outcomes

- Recreational opportunities on the park are limited to local naturalists and conservation groups.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Recreational and educational opportunities are maintained at current levels with a focus on low-key, self-reliant day-use.
- Visitors seek permission from QPWS District staff and private landholders for permission to cross private property to enter the park.
- Establish links with visiting naturalists in order to share information.



## 3.8 Complementary management of adjoining areas

### Current situation

A sand and gravel extraction industry on the Brisbane River adjoins the conservation park. It is important that these processes do not have degrading impacts on the conservation values of the park.

Cattle from neighbouring properties stray onto the park.

### Desired outcomes

- Surrounding land use is compatible with the management aims of the conservation park.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Survey and fence the park boundary in consultation with park neighbours to exclude domestic stock.
- Liaise with landholders to encourage surrounding land use which does not compromise park values.
- Implement the QPWS Good Neighbour Policy.

## 3.9 Plan implementation and monitoring

The park is to be managed primarily for nature conservation. The management plan will be implemented by District staff based at Moggill and Brisbane Forest Park headquarters at The Gap, with assistance from QPWS Regional staff.

### Desired outcomes

- The management plan is successfully implemented, and desired outcomes achieved.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Develop an implementation schedule for the plan that will consider available staff and resources and prioritise management actions. This will be linked to annual budget allocations.
- Priorities for management will include:
  - surveying the park boundary and fencing to exclude stock
  - developing a fire management plan for the park
  - preparing and implementing a weed control program; and
  - liaising with surrounding landholders, educational institutions, council and conservation groups regarding management of the park.
- Set timeframes to enable monitoring of plan implementation and effectiveness of management strategies.

## 4. Reference

Johnson, D. Sullivan, S. & Lawson, P. (1998) *Assessment of vegetation and nature conservation values of Esk Shire*, Conservation technical report No.13, Department of Environment and Heritage, Queensland.

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