

Dularcha National Park

Management Statement

2013



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

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The Dularcha National Park Management Statement 2013 has been extended in 2024 in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the statement's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	464 ha
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	Sunshine and Fraser Coast
Local government estate/area:	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
State electorate:	Caloundra

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

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

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

Dularcha National Park continues to protect the high values associated with being a regionally significant vegetation corridor, including the rich diversity of plant and animal species. Water quality in the headwaters of the Mooloolah River and Ewen Maddock Dam is protected and the very significant Aboriginal and shared-history cultural values are conserved and presented where appropriate. Recreation opportunities which focus on park values and are ecologically sustainable will be provided.

Conservation purpose

Dularcha National Park was formerly a long narrow area of 138ha originally gazetted in 1921 as one of a number of scenic reserves along the North Coast Railway line which stretches between Brisbane and Cairns. In 2010 the majority of the adjacent Mooloolah Forest Reserve (formerly state forest and transferred to forest reserve under the South East Queensland Forests Agreement) was transferred to national park tenure to increase the protected area to 464ha. Seven hectares of forest reserve remain as narrow easements to accommodate horse riding and other recreation opportunities.

The vegetation communities found in the park are poorly represented in other protected areas, making this area regionally significant. The park is also significant in terms of catchment management as it forms the headwaters for the Mooloolah River and contributes to the catchment of the Ewen Maddock Dam. The park is a local visitor attraction and provides opportunities for nature-based activities. Dularcha National Park provides opportunities for research, including recreation, biological, geological and cultural heritage values.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

The park forms part of a regionally significant vegetation corridor linking sub-coastal estate on the Blackall Range down to Mooloolah River National Park. The vegetated ridges of the park also provide significant scenic and aesthetic values, contrasting with the surrounding rural and urban countryside which has been largely cleared of native vegetation.

The park provides significant contribution to maintaining water quality in the headwaters of the Mooloolah River and Ewen Maddock Dam and as such will need to be managed to minimise any negative impacts on the quality of water. Impacts include pest plants and track disturbance.

The dominant soils on the park are highly eroding, shallow sandy earths and hard setting sandy loams. The steep slopes also contribute to the erosive nature of the earth. The creek crossings are especially erosion prone.

Regional ecosystems

Around 30 per cent of the park is covered by regional ecosystems of conservation significance (Table 1). Significant areas of two endangered vine forest communities 12.9–10.16 and 12.3.1 are conserved. The of concern *Eucalyptus grandis* tall open forest on alluvium (12.3.2) is also protected. The park contains a good representation of *Eucalyptus pilularis* tall open forest on sedimentary rocks (12.9–10.14) which has otherwise been extensively cleared for horticulture, pine plantations and urban development in the Sunshine Coast region.

While not mapped, there are also several areas of melaleuca swamps found where the water often pools to form semi-permanent waterholes. The majority of these areas are found in association with the blackbutt communities in the flatter, southern section of the park. Melaleuca swamps are considered to be of conservation significance, due to wide scale alteration or destruction of this vegetation type in Queensland and other states. It is also the primary habitat for the wallum froglet *Crinia tinnula*. As such, this habitat requires sensitive fire and visitor management to ensure its survival.

The vegetation communities are dissected by internal tracks left over from past logging, utility infrastructure and rail development. These tracks are being impacted from erosion and inappropriate use. Additionally, the wet sclerophyll forest communities are prone to rainforest colonisation and appropriate fire regimes are needed to manage this incursion.

Native plants and animals

The park contains a rich diversity of plant species (351 currently recorded) and six species are of conservation significance (Table 2) which all occur in the endangered vine forest communities.

Native animal surveys in the year 2000 recorded over 150 species of which eight are of conservation significance (Table 2). The park contains forest oaks *Allocasuarina torulosa*, which are an important food source and roosting site for the yellow tailed black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*, and the vulnerable glossy black cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus lathami. Many bird species recorded for the park are listed under International agreements (Table 3).

Three floral species recorded on the park have local conservation significance: *Brunoniella spiciflora*, *Medicosma* sp. (Mt Mellum P.I.Forster+ PIF25572) and giant climbing orchid *Pseudovanilla foliata*.

The presence of maternity cave sites in the railway tunnel complex is of regional significance for three microbats: the large-footed myotis *Myotis macropus*, eastern horseshoe-bat *Rhinolophus megaphyllus* and the little bent-wing bat *Miniopterus australis*. These maternity sites should be protected from disturbance.

Many native plant and animal species rely on the rainforest or wet sclerophyll ecotone for survival. Therefore, management needs to address the issue of rainforest succession to maintain the balance between these communities. An appropriate fire regime is the primary method of controlling this process and maintaining the existing balance of vegetation communities.

Aboriginal culture

The name Dularcha is an Aboriginal word representing blackbutt. The land in and around the Dularcha area has significant Aboriginal cultural heritage places and values including artefact scatters, scarred trees, axe grinding grooves and bora rings.

It has been confirmed that the landscape of the Dularcha area has been used by Aboriginal people in the region as a traditional pathway probably for at least 6,000 years (M. Strong pers. comm.).

Aboriginal people travelled between the coastal plains and the Blackall Ranges as part of their trade route. The density of stone artefacts found in some areas suggests that the high ridgelines through the park were ancestral human pathways connecting the Landsborough catchment and Glass House Mountains with the Mooloolah River catchment.

The native title claim by the Jinibara people (QUD6128/98) was determined in November 2012. The outcome confirmed that native title exists in parts of the determination area. Many of the identified cultural heritage values are associated with or adjacent to the existing track network.

Opportunities exist to improve relationships with local Traditional Owner groups and involve them in park management.

Shared-history culture

The national park contains significant remnants of transport and communication corridors and evidence of resource development and extraction. The original 100m long rail tunnel, built in 1889–90, still stands today and is listed on the Heritage Register under the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*. The tunnel became disused when the railway line was re-routed to the east of the tunnel. There is still an active railway line that runs through part of the eastern section of the national park.

Other evidence of shared-history includes ceramic insulators, galvanised iron fittings and timber poles from the original telegraph line. There are also a number of fences and dams remaining from previous grazing in the Mooloolah Forest Reserve and numerous survey marks carved into trees.

Many of the identified cultural heritage values of the Dularcha area are associated with or adjacent to the existing track network.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

The park caters for day-use recreation opportunities only, due to the small size of the park. Two car parks are provided, including limited parking for horse floats in the northern section. A walking track links the southern car park to the historic railway track. An orientation sign is located at the entrance to the track.

Other complementary local recreation opportunities are provided off park. The vegetated ridges of the park present natural vistas protected from the surrounding cleared rural or suburban countryside which provides a sense of isolation which caters for nature-based bushwalking and bird watching experiences.

There is an opportunity for the development of a heritage trail to include the Dularcha Rail Tunnel, telegraph poles, fence posts and springboard trees that date from the early 1900s and are evidence of an important part of Queensland's history.

Horse riding is catered for on the forest reserve trails which provide a linear multi-use trail network that runs through the national park. Horse riding is an important part of the Landsborough and Mooloolah district's identity. Management of these horse riding trails will not be covered under this management statement as they are covered under the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011. The Tunnel track, which

currently forms part of the horse trail network and runs between the townships of Landsborough and Mooloolah, is currently under national park tenure not forest reserve tenure. This anomaly will need to be addressed following Nature Conservation Act revisions.

There is some limited mountain bike riding occurring on the fire trails and forest reserve trails.

Unauthorised four-wheel driving and trail bike riding occur throughout the park.

Recreation access and level of use is complex in this park and is beyond the scope of this management statement and should be dealt with separately.

Education and science

Significant cultural heritage and diverse natural values in a relatively small area provide opportunities for research into recreation, biological, geological and cultural heritage values.

Partnerships

QPWS have partnerships with police, neighbours, local government, rural fire brigades, Queensland Rail, Powerlink, catchment committees, local tourism organisations and volunteer organisations in the Dularcha area.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Dularcha National Park has a large boundary to area ratio which makes it very susceptible to external threatening processes such as pest plants, feral animals and wildfires.

Pest plants of management concern for this park include the declared species groundsel *Baccharis halimifolia*, giant rats tail grass *Sporobolus pyramidalis* and mistflower *Ageratina riparia*. Environmental pest plants that occur along the tracks and roadsides include lantana *Lantana camara*, morning glory *Ipomoea purpurea* and silver-leaf desmodium *Desmodium uncinatum*.

The track network offers easy access for feral and domestic animals. Pest animals include foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, cats *Felis catus* and dogs *Canis lupus familiaris* but the extent of their impact is unclear. Dog and cat tracks and scats have been found along the track network. The small size of the area and high urban population adjacent suggests that cats and dogs could be a natural resource management problem in the future.

Because of the small size of the estate, animal baiting is not permitted; however trapping may be considered as an option for vertebrate pest management. The park is managed under a Level 2 pest management strategy.

Fire management

A number of factors contribute to the park being exposed to inappropriate fire regimes including the high rural/residential interface, arson/carelessness with fire, poor fire management from adjacent neighbours, inappropriate timing of fires, and the absence of fire access tracks in the west of the park. The fire history of the park shows that there have been some unplanned fires in the eastern section in the past. Co-operative burning with neighbours is essential to control wildfires in this area, however the topography sometimes makes this difficult.

Fire management for the park is guided by a Level 2 fire management strategy.

Other management issues

The park contains transport infrastructure and communication facilities which require ongoing access by particular companies. The train line, Mooloolah to Landsborough sewage line and high voltage powerlines require regular vehicle access for maintenance. The Telstra optic fibre cable requires only periodic access.

There are a number of apiary sites in the park. The *Nature Conservation Act 1992* provides for authorised beekeeping activities on protected areas under specific circumstances. There is a history of beekeeping in this area. Permits to enable this activity are currently in place until 2024. The forest types of interest to apiarists include those that contain brush box *Lophostemon confertus* and grey ironbark *Eucalyptus siderophloia*.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscapes</p> <p>The integrity of the regional ecosystems, plant and animal populations and creek systems are protected and maintained.</p> <p>Fire will be managed in cooperation with surrounding community to protect life and property and enhance the integrity of the park.</p>	<p>Continue to review and implement the fire management strategy with particular focus on preventing rainforest incursion of the wet sclerophyll communities.</p> <p>Undertake on ground health assessments for the conservation significant regional ecosystems and species and establish monitoring objectives for key species, including bat populations and impacts.</p> <p>Undertake management of creek crossings to prevent siltation and erosion.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Provide a range of nature focused opportunities which highlight the park values and are ecologically sustainable.</p>	<p>Develop a recreation plan for the park which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying types and levels of access • a maintenance program on tracks and creek crossings • minimising potential conflicts between user groups • preventing illegal use of the park including four-wheel vehicle driving and trail bike riding • Safety/liability biological and heritage aspects of tunnel access.
<p>Pest management</p> <p>Pest management on the park reduces or eliminates pest species.</p>	<p>Continue to update and implement the pest management strategy with a focus on declared weeds, spreading pest plants and emerging new threats.</p> <p>Encourage local community involvement in park programs including pest plant days.</p> <p>Liaise at a regional level with land managers including Energex and Queensland Rail, who have joint responsibilities for managing impacts on park boundaries, such as fire and pest management.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage management</p> <p>Cultural heritage values in general and at specific sites where identified, are preserved and interpreted where appropriate.</p>	<p>Encourage Traditional Owners to identify and document values, sites, artefacts and places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance so that management strategies and decisions relating to fire regimes, access and track maintenance minimise potential threats to these values.</p> <p>Continue to develop awareness and understanding of the cultural heritage significance with the local community and user groups through education and interpretation programs.</p> <p>Limit access to tracks with significant cultural heritage values and monitor them to provide information on the impacts of activities.</p> <p>Manage the cultural heritage values of the tunnel in line with heritage listing requirements.</p>
<p>Infrastructure management</p> <p>Environmental impacts will be minimal and no further fragmentation of the vegetation will occur as a result of infrastructure development.</p>	<p>Adopt minimal environmental impact work practices for vehicle access.</p> <p>Liaise with Utility managers before any major work is undertaken, to examine possibilities to minimise impacts on the vegetation communities or native animals.</p> <p>Convert adjacent and internal gazetted roads to an appropriate protected area tenure.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
12.3.1	Gallery rainforest (notophyll vine forest) on alluvial plains	Endangered
12.3.2	<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i> tall open forest on alluvial plains	Of concern
12.9–10.16	Araucarian microphyll to notophyll vine forest on sedimentary rocks	Endangered

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> status	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> status	Back on Track status
Plants				
<i>Gossia inophloia</i>	thready-barked myrtle	Near threatened	-	low
<i>Macadamia ternifolia</i>	bopple nut	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	low
<i>Papillilabium beckleri</i>	-	Near threatened	-	low
<i>Pararistolochia praevenosa</i>	Richmond birdwing vine	Near threatened	-	high
<i>Ricinocarpos speciosus</i>	-	Vulnerable	-	medium
<i>Romnalda strobilacea</i>	-	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	medium
Animals				
<i>Adelotus brevis</i>	tusked frog	Vulnerable	-	medium
<i>Crinia tinnula</i>	wallum froglet	Vulnerable	-	high
<i>Erotoscincus graciloides</i>	-	Near threatened	-	medium
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	powerful owl	Vulnerable	-	medium
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> (southeast Queensland bioregion)	koala (southeast Queensland bioregion)	Vulnerable	-	
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	grey-headed flying-fox	Least concern	Vulnerable	critical
<i>Tyto tenebricosa tenebricosa</i>	sooty owl	Near threatened	-	low

Table 3: Bird species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	cicadabird	-	-	✓	-
<i>Cuculus optatus</i>	oriental cuckoo	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-
<i>Symposiachrus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓	-	-	-

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement