

Endeavour River National Park and Endeavour River Resources Reserve

Management Statement

2013



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

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The Endeavour River National Park and Endeavour River Resources Reserve 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:	2199 ha (national park) 40 ha (resources reserve)
Bioregion:	Cape York
QPWS region:	Northern
Local government estate/area:	Cook Shire
State electorate:	Cook

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i>
✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Fisheries Act 1994</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
✓	Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan 2007 and Management Program 2007-2017
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Bonn Convention

Thematic strategies

✓	Annan Endeavour Strategic Plan (author: South Cape York Catchments Inc)
✓	Statement of Interpretive Intent

Vision

Endeavour River National Park is managed, as far as possible, to protect and assure the future survival of populations and habitats of significant plant and animal species such as the estuarine crocodile and various orchid species.

Visitors enjoy the park's vessel-based recreation activities with minimal impact on the health and vitality of Fish Habitat Area.

The historic significance of various sites in the park is promoted.

Conservation purpose

In 1975, the initial section of Endeavour River National Park was gazetted to conserve one of the last remaining intact sites in the world where Solander and Banks had collected the holotypes for many plants (i.e. the original specimens the species were described upon). This included the State's floral emblem, the Cooktown orchid *Dendrobium biggibum*.

Additions were made to the national park in 1995, and again in 2009.

The Endeavour River Resources Reserve was gazetted in 1995. It forms a protective buffer between the national park and the northern and southern boundaries of the Cooktown airport.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Endeavour River National Park and Endeavour River Resources Reserve (the park) conserves the lower reaches of the Endeavour River and its adjacent coastal lowlands. The park's vegetation is comprised of mangroves, mixed heath and woodland on quaternary sands, and paperbark and eucalypt woodland on stony rises. Almost half of the park is mangrove forest (Hines and McDonald 2007).

The Endeavour River winds through the park and is subject to tidal influence.

Residents of Cooktown enjoy scenic views across the Endeavour River inlet to the north shore. Foredunes on the north shore rise to approximately seven metres above sea level. They are generally well vegetated and appear to be stable.

The park is bounded by Hopevale Shire Aboriginal Council, rural residential land and the Cooktown airport. Cattle grazing occurs on adjacent properties.

Regional ecosystems

The park conserves 29 regional ecosystems (RE). Twelve of these are of concern communities (Table 1). The remaining 17 are not of concern at present.

Hines and McDonald (2007) describe the park's seasonally inundated paperbark swamps (RE 3.3.12) as the most intact of their type remaining in the Endeavour River catchment.

General threats to the regional ecosystems include acid sulphate soils, pest plant and animal species and inappropriate fire regimes.

Native plants and animals

The estuarine crocodile and 32 birds recorded from Endeavour River National Park are listed in international agreements (Table 3). Ten species of conservation significance are currently known to occur on the park (Table 2).

Specific management actions for the black-necked stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, beach stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris*, little tern *Sternula albifrons*, Latham's snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* and azure kingfisher *Ceyx azureus* are identified in the national Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000. The black-necked stork, beach stone-curlew and little tern are susceptible to disturbance from human activities such as boating, fishing and beach driving. Latham's snipe and azure kingfisher are wetland indicator species.

The brush-tailed phascogale *Phascogale tapoatafa* is considered a priority taxon for the Brigalow Belt and Einasleigh Uplands bioregions. Endeavour River National Park is the only protected area in the Cape York bioregion with a record for this species.

The Cooktown orchid *Dendrobium biggibum* has not been documented or collected from the park since Banks and Solander's collection in 1770.

The Endeavour River is declared as a Fish Habitat Area under the *Fisheries Act 1994* because it provides important breeding habitat for many species of fish, including barramundi. The riparian environment provides suitable habitat for crocodile breeding and is an important foraging and roosting site for many migratory birds. Flying foxes use the mangroves to roost.

Aboriginal culture

A partial Native Title Claim (QC96/015 – Hopevale) has been granted for over an area adjoining the northern boundary of Endeavour River National Park. Native title application QP0/6001 – Walmbarra Aboriginal Corporation remains active over a similar area.

Currently no formalised management arrangements have been established with the relevant Traditional Owners for the park. Subject to successful negotiation with Traditional Owners, the park is identified for future transfer to Aboriginal ownership under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*. A joint management regime will be established under the framework provided by the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* for the Cape York Peninsula Region.

No sites of Aboriginal material culture are currently known from Endeavour River National Park.

Shared-history culture

The name Endeavour River was bestowed by Lieutenant James Cook when his ship, the Endeavour, was being repaired on the banks of the river after it had struck a reef off Cooktown on 11 June 1770. Botanists Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander collected and recorded many plants at this time, and the Endeavour River National Park forms the type locality for many of these plants.

After running aground, Lieutenant James Cook and his crew made their first recordings of Aboriginal language in the area. Their adaptations of the Guugu Yimmathirr language names *gangurru* and *dhigul* have become the general English terms for kangaroo and quoll.

The sites of an old leprosy colony and quarantine station exist on the north shore. The original location for the quarantine station was proposed to be south of Mount Cook, at Quarantine Bay, but there was concern that it was too close to the town, hence its establishment on the north shore.

An old United States World War Two army base is located on the park to the north of the airport. Remnants of the site include bunkers, gun placements and tarred roads. Potential exists for some items in the old field dumps (e.g. drums of oil) to contaminate the site.

Sections of the old Cooktown to Laura railway line, locally known as the 4 Mile railway line, are located on a gazetted road reserve that runs through the southern side of the park. The railway line is not actively used and a road has been constructed over the railway on both sides of the park.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Due to its extensive waterways and wetlands, most of the park is only accessible by vessel. Water-based activities such as fishing and jet skiing are popular recreational pursuits. The park's waterways are also used for sheltered anchorage during cyclones.

Endeavour River National Park receives an estimated 1,000 visitors per annum. Visitation is concentrated on the stone wall at the southern end of the park, with the most popular activity being fishing. Local residents regularly fish from the stone wall after work, on weekends and during school holidays periods. As the wet season is not good for fishing, visitation occurs primarily during the dry season.

Vehicle access can be gained to the southern side of the Endeavour River. Increased vessel use in the area, vehicle use and development upstream of the site is, however, significantly accelerating erosion of the stone wall and adjacent creek bank. Stabilisation of the site is needed to retain the integrity of the railway line and to maintain vehicle-based access into the park.

Dumping of rubbish such as garden waste, tin cans, billies and mattresses also poses a minor management issue for park staff at the stone wall.

Camping facilities are not provided on the park and visitors are encouraged to seek accommodation in Cooktown.

Numerous commercial activity permits have been issued for Endeavour River National Park. Commercial activities are generally focussed on crabbing, fishing, birdwatching, scenic flights, general boating and general sight-seeing.

Education and science

Knowledge gained from research and monitoring programs is an integral part of adaptive park management. The collation of existing information and ongoing monitoring and survey work improves staff knowledge and guides

future park management and should be a priority for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

Partnerships

Staff maintain good working relationships with Maritime Safety Queensland, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Cook Shire Council to ensure access to the park does not degrade park values or visitor enjoyment.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Pest plants

Major pest plants on the park are sicklepod *Senna obtusifolia* and hymenachne *Hymenachne amplexicaulis*. Both species are currently known to occur in areas adjacent to the right branch of the Endeavour River.

Sicklepod has formed a monoculture in the area to the south-east of the airport. Potential exists for this species to spread further down the catchment and throughout the park by pigs *Sus scrofa* and cattle *Bos* sp.

Hymenachne is found in the freshwater lagoons to the eastern side of the southern portion of the resources reserve. Where it occurs it has formed monocultures and almost entirely suffocated the lagoons. Small patches of hymenachne also occur along the edge of the river downstream from the park.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority maintain safe approach angles for landing aircraft by annually cutting down trees adjacent to the Cooktown airport. This area is heavily infested with sicklepod infestations and hymenachne.

Pest plant control programs for the park are effectively containing infestations around the wetlands to the north of the airport. Despite control efforts, the infested area to the south-east of the airport is progressively increasing in size and density.

Bauhinia *Bauhinia monandra* and gamba grass *Andropogon gayanus* do not currently occur on the park, but may potentially spread into the park if not adequately controlled in upstream areas.

Pest animals

Pigs occur primarily in the north-western sections of the park, along the beachfront, in the drainage lines associated with Leprosy Creek and in the vicinity of the stone wall. Acid sulphate soils are evident in some wetland areas in the park. When these soils are exposed through pig activity, they threaten plants and animals, and water quality.

Broadscale control programs coordinated with local catchment and landcare groups will help reduce pig numbers in the Endeavour River catchment.

Occasional incursions from stock occur on the park, primarily in the area surrounding the resources reserve and along the north shore.

Fire management

Firebreaks adjacent to the Cooktown airport and residential areas are regularly maintained to reduce risks to life and property. Planned burns are conducted on the park to reduce hazards and to maintain the plant diversity and structure of the park's vegetation communities.

Fire regimes play a critical role in maintaining the floristic and structural composition of shrublands and woodlands, and animal communities, found in the park (Hines and McDonald 2007).

It is suspected that a lack of fire in the north shore area has reduced the seeding events of certain species. However, no formal fire monitoring is currently undertaken on the park to confirm this.

Other management issues

A number of developments in adjacent areas (i.e. rubbish dump, quarry, sawmill and the Cooktown airport) have the potential to impact upon the natural integrity of the park's natural environments, including a reduction in water quality, pest plant spread and noise pollution.

The rubbish dump will soon be converted to a refuse transfer station, thereby reducing the likelihood of impact on the park.

Formalised monitoring would help determine the extent and severity of impacts.

References

Hines HB and McDonald KR 2007, A survey of the terrestrial vertebrates of the Endeavour River National Park and Resources Reserve, North Queensland, In: *Queensland Naturalist*, Vol. 45 (4–6), pp. 32–51

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape Landscape values and water quality remain high.</p>	<p>Work cooperatively with State and local governments and other relevant authorities (e.g. Maritime Safety Queensland, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Cook Shire Council) to achieve the vision for the park.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals The diversity and distribution of natural plant and animal species, communities and their associated habitats is maintained.</p>	<p>Manage pest plant and animal species to minimise ecological impacts, with a focus on areas within the vicinity of the Cooktown airport and the right branch of the Endeavour River.</p> <p>Where possible, implement broadscale control programs to reduce pest populations within the greater Endeavour River catchment.</p> <p>Commence the formal monitoring of water quality and the response of natural (and pest) plant species to different fire regimes.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture Traditional Owners are involved in park management.</p>	<p>Establish and implement a formal joint management regime with Traditional Owners under the statutory framework provided by the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> and the <i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i> for the Cape York Peninsula Region.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture Sites of cultural and historical value have been identified and documented and are appropriately managed.</p>	<p>Establish relationships with the Cooktown Historical Society and relevant Traditional Owner groups to record known cultural sites on the park where appropriate.</p> <p>Decide how to appropriately manage and present historic sites of interest on the park, including the old US World War Two army base.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities Visitors are able to learn about, enjoy and safely access the park.</p>	<p>Encourage the Cook Shire Council to stabilise erosion near the stone wall.</p> <p>Work cooperatively with the Cook Shire Council to ensure future use of the stone wall is sustainable and does not compromise the structure.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
3.1.2	<i>Avicennia marina</i> +/- <i>Ceriops tagal</i> low open forest landward side of mangroves	Of concern
3.2.8	<i>Corymbia nesophila</i> ± <i>C. novoguineensis</i> woodland on old stabilised dunes	Of concern
3.2.17a	<i>Leucopogon yorkensis</i> ± <i>Asteromyrtus angustifolia</i> closed scrub on dunefields	Of concern
3.2.24	Closed herbland of mixed graminoids and forbs. Occurs on exposed foredunes	Of concern
3.2.33	<i>Gahnia sieberiana</i> open to closed heath. Drainage swamps in east coast dunefields	Of concern
3.3.2a	Semi-deciduous mesophyll/notophyll vine forest. Occurs on alluvia	Of concern
3.3.12	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> open forest. Associated with scattered coastal swamps	Of concern
3.3.13	<i>Melaleuca saligna</i> ± <i>Hakea pedunculata</i> open forest. Occurs on edges of salt pans	Of concern
3.5.23	<i>Corymbia nesophila</i> ± <i>Eucalyptus crebra</i> ± <i>E. brassiana</i> woodland on plains	Of concern
3.5.31	<i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i> , <i>Erythrophleum chlorostachys</i> woodland on coastal plains south-east Cape York Peninsula	Of concern
3.10.1	Evergreen mesophyll/notophyll vine forest. Restricted to sandstone gullies	Of concern
3.11.6	<i>Eucalyptus platyphylla</i> , <i>E. leptophleba</i> open forest to woodland on hill slopes	Of concern

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
Animals				
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	estuarine crocodile	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	black-necked stork	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	beach stone-curlew	Vulnerable	-	High
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	eastern curlew	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	little tern	Endangered	-	High
<i>Tadorna radjah</i>	radjah shelduck	Near threatened	-	Low
Plants				
<i>Acacia solenota</i>	-	Vulnerable	as of 23/5/2013 it is no longer Vulnerable	Low
<i>Dendrobium johannis</i>	brown antelope orchid	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Low
<i>Livistona concinna</i>	-	Near threatened	-	High
<i>Myrmecodia beccarii</i>	ant plant	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High
<i>Acacia solenota</i>	-	Vulnerable	as of 23/5/2013 it is no longer Vulnerable	Low

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	common sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Anous stolidus</i>	common noddy	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Calidris alba</i>	sanderling	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	curlew sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	red-necked stint	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	estuarine crocodile	✓	-	-	-
<i>Egretta sacra</i>	eastern reef egret	-	✓	-	-
<i>Fregata ariel</i>	lesser frigatebird	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Fregata minor</i>	great frigatebird	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's snipe	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle	-	✓	-	-
<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	broad-billed sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	bar-tailed godwit	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	eastern curlew	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Numenius minutus</i>	little curlew	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	whimbrel	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	bridled tern	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific golden plover	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	grey plover	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	arctic jaeger	-	-	✓	✓
<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	pomarine jaeger	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	roseate tern	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	common tern	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	little tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Sula sula</i>	red-footed booby	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Symposiarchus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	lesser crested tern	-	✓	-	-
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	common greenshank	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	marsh sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	terek sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓

Bonn: Bonn Convention

CAMBA: China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA: Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA: Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement