

Barron Gorge National Park

Management Statement

2013

The Department of Environment, Science and Innovation acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019.

This management statement does not intend to affect, diminish, or extinguish native title or associated rights.

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All due diligence and care has been taken in the preparation of this document based on the information in the 2013 management statement. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties.

The Barron Gorge 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 plan's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	2,820ha
Bioregion:	Wet Tropics
QPWS region:	Northern
Local government estate/area:	Tablelands Regional Council Cairns Regional Council
State electorate:	Barron River

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Queensland Heritage Act 1992</i>
✓	<i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan 2007 and Management Program 2007–2017

Plans and agreements

✓	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement 2005
✓	Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998
✓	Protection through Partnerships
✓	Wet Tropics Walking Strategy 2001
✓	Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy 2004
✓	Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2000
✓	Water Resource (Barron) Plan 2002
✓	Barron River Management Action Plan 2000
✓	Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Strategy 2004
✓	Bonn Agreement
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Recovery plan for the stream-dwelling rainforest frogs of the Wet Tropics biogeography region of north-east Queensland 2000–2004
✓	Recovery plan for the southern cassowary <i>Casuarius casuarius johnsonii</i>
✓	National recovery plan for the spectacled flying-fox <i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>
✓	National recovery plan for the northern quoll <i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Strategy

Vision

Barron Gorge National Park continues to be managed as a premier nature-based tourism and visitor attraction. Visitors to the park enjoy recreation opportunities, including bushwalking, swimming, canoeing and mountain bike riding.

Barron Gorge National Park will continue to be managed as an outstanding example of natural beauty and aesthetic importance as part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Conservation purpose

Barron Gorge National Park helps protect Australia's most extensive remaining area of World Heritage-listed wet tropical rainforests.

The park's features, such as the imposing Barron River, falls and gorge, represent a major stage in Earth's history and geological processes. Rugged mountains, gorges, tumbling waterfalls, magnificent rainforest, rich and varied wildlife, extensive walking trails and a fascinating history are key presentation features within Barron Gorge National Park.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Scenic amenity

Barron Gorge National Park has very high scenic appeal with its rugged mountain scenery and the Barron River which dominates the park. Outstanding natural features of the park include the spectacular Barron and Stoney creek falls and the associated deeply incised gorges.

Historical mining and logging activities, infrastructure and fire scars have impacted on the scenic values of the park.

Geology

The landscape of Barron Gorge National Park began to form about 400 million years ago under the sea, when Australia was still part of the great super-continent, Gondwana. Ancient rivers carried sediments to the coast, which was then more than 100km west of its present position.

Earth movements at the edge of the continent uplifted and compressed the sandwich of sediments and volcanic rocks, forming the metamorphics of low-grade slates, greywackes and siltstone. Subsequently, the Barron River eroded areas of weakness and a deep gorge was formed. Where the underlying rock was more resistant, the river water tumbled over the sharp edge to form a broken waterfall more than 250m high.

Water resources and catchment

The park contains several freshwater rivers and creeks including the Barron River. The Barron River catchment area is an important source of water for Tinaroo and Lake Morris dams, which supply water to local urban and rural settlements and primary industries.

Kuranda Weir, just upstream of Barron Falls, is used for hydro-electric power generation. An historic weir and intake pump are located in Stoney Creek Gorge upstream of the Kamerunga residential estate. They are not operational, but they may be required in the future to meet increasing demands for water supply.

Regional ecosystems

There are 33 regional ecosystems in the park. Of these, 18 have endangered or of concern biodiversity status (Table 1).

Plants and animals

The Barron Gorge National Park encompasses a rich diversity of plant communities stretching from the coastal lowlands to the valleys and mountains on the Atherton Tableland. The park is renowned for its tropical rainforests which depend upon seasonal rain and mist. Other plant communities in the park include open woodlands, with groves of she-oaks found on the foothills and upland slopes. Grassland patches grow on the coastal foothills and adjacent to the railway line. Patches of upland heath are restricted to the plateau and peaks. Over 150 species of plants have been recorded in Barron Gorge National Park, including two species of conservation significance under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Table 2).

There have been 147 animal species recorded in the park, including 21 species of conservation significance under the Nature Conservation Act and seven species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Table 2).

Aboriginal culture

The Djabuganydji Bama are the Traditional Owners of the area known as Djirri Nyundu Nyrrumba, which includes Barron Gorge National Park.

On 17 December 2004 the Federal Court of Australia handed down the Djabugay people's native title determination over Barron Gorge National Park. This was the first park in Queensland to have a native title determination. The determination recognises the interests and rights under customary law and tradition.

Shared-history culture

Gold rushes in the 1870s drew thousands of prospectors from all over the world to the region. Cairns was founded as a port and the Douglas and Smiths tracks were established through Barron Gorge as the first links between the goldfields and the port. Miners fossicked in the Barron Gorge itself and remains of mining shafts and diggings can still be found.

Valuable red cedar, known as 'red gold', was logged in the Barron Gorge in the 1880s. The Barron Valley was selected as the site for a rail link to the Atherton Tableland. The construction of the track was a formidable task undertaken between 1886 and 1891 using 1,500 men in steep, rocky terrain, dense forest and seasonal wet weather conditions.

A small hydro-electric station, the first underground power station in Australia, was built in 1935 to harness the immense force of water surging over Barron Falls. It was replaced by the Barron Gorge Hydro-Power Station further down the gorge in 1963 after the construction of the Tinaroo Dam upstream on the Barron River.

From the late 1800s the network of walking pads was adopted by gold miners, cattle drovers, timber haulers and railway workers to cater for drays and pack-horses. Evidence of these past uses can be seen along the tracks including Aboriginal nut cracking stones, miners bottle dumps and the remains of shanties and rail workers camps.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Barron Gorge National Park is one of Queensland's most popular national parks. It is strongly promoted domestically, interstate and overseas. The park offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy diverse nature-based activities including bushwalking, swimming and canoeing. There are also highly developed visitor sites that receive high levels of use, especially by large groups. The park is important for residents of Cairns and the Tableland areas who visit and enjoy the park for family outings and low-key recreation.

The park conserves a fascinating network of historic trails which now form sections of an extensive nature-based walking track network.

Commercial activities concentrate around Barron Gorge and Barron Falls, with the majority of visitors arriving at the park via commercial tours on the Cairns to Kuranda Scenic Railway, Skyrail Rainforest Cableway or through rafting tours.

Education and science

The provision of relevant educational information about Barron Gorge is important in promoting an understanding and appreciation the park's natural and cultural values, visitor opportunities, appropriate behaviour and potential hazards. Off the park information is available via the department's website and brochures from relevant accredited tourism information centres.

Barron Gorge provides valuable opportunities for scientific research. Park management can be improved by an increased knowledge of the park's natural and cultural values and their ability to recover from natural and artificial impacts.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

In Barron Gorge National Park, the major declared pest plants include laurel clockvine *Thunbergia laurifolia*, miconia *Miconia calvescens*, hymenachne *Hymenachne amplexicaulis*, Singapore daisy *Sphagneticola trilobata*, lantana *Lantana camara* and African tulip *Spathodea campanulata*. Non-declared pest plants in the park include guinea grass *Megathyrsus maximus*, which is prevalent around the McDonalds and Smiths walking tracks. There are also stands of bamboo *Arundo donax* and mango trees *Mangifera indica* at the old mining and railway camps that have some cultural heritage value.

Pest animals found in the park include feral pigs *Sus scrofa*, wild dogs *Canis familiaris*, feral cats *Felis catus*, cane toads *Rhinella marina* and black rats *Rattus rattus*. Feral pigs are particularly widespread throughout the wet tropics region and are managed in accordance with departmental management strategies.

Increasing urbanisation of neighbouring lands poses potential threats from encroaching domestic animals and garden plants.

Fire management

The park's vegetation communities include fire-dependent and fire-sensitive types. Inappropriate fire regimes have prevented regrowth of native vegetation in the areas above the railway line and could threaten cultural places.

References

Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Association 2007, *Barron River Integrated Management Strategy*, BRICMA, Australia, Cairns.

Natural Resource Assessments Environmental Consultants 2000, *Barron River Action Plan*, Natural Resource Assessments, Australia, Cairns.

North Queensland Joint Board 1997, *Barron River Catchment Rehabilitation Plan*, North Queensland Joint Board, Australia, Cairns.

Wet Tropics Management Authority 2001, *Wet Tropics Walking Strategy*, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Australia, Cairns.

Wet Tropics Management Authority 2001, *Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy*, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Australia, Cairns.

Wet Tropics Management Authority 2004, *Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy*, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Australia, Cairns.

Wet Tropics Management Authority 2005, *Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Regional Agreement*, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Australia, Cairns.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>The scenic landscape values of the park are protected and areas of natural vegetation are maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p>Manage the park and associated visitor infrastructure consistent with the management characteristics of the park to ensure that it does not impact upon scenic values.</p> <p>Minimise the scale and visual impact of public utilities on the landscape.</p>
<p>Plants and animals</p> <p>Subject to natural variation, the diversity and values of native plants and animals (particularly significant species) are well represented, and where possible enhanced, in perpetuity.</p>	<p>Identify key park attributes affecting species biodiversity and abundance, and establish a priority list of representative plant species and communities requiring special management.</p> <p>Maintain native plant and animal abundance, diversity and resilience by methods of least intervention in preference to active habitat management.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Places of Aboriginal cultural significance are identified, preserved and protected from natural degradation, visitor impacts and management actions in accordance with the wishes and advice from Traditional Owners.</p>	<p>For all Aboriginal places of cultural significance, consultation should occur with Traditional Owners who have custodial responsibility for the place to help determine appropriate management provisions, prior to the start of any operations near these sites.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>Sites and materials of cultural significance are identified, preserved and, where appropriate, conserved.</p>	<p>Identify and record shared-history cultural heritage values and places of the park.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>The park offers a range of experiences for visitors.</p> <p>Commercial opportunities are available for the Traditional Owners of the park.</p>	<p>Explore opportunities for walking track and/or linking boardwalks to Jumrum Conservation Park, Barron Falls lookout and Wrights lookout.</p> <p>Investigate the potential for mountain bike use on the section of track between the Douglas trailhead at Stoney Creek and the junction of McDonalds track and links with other mountain bike tracks.</p> <p>Encourage Indigenous tourism opportunities across the park where appropriate.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>The integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained through strategic, sustained pest management.</p>	<p>Manage pest plants and animals in accordance with the Level 2 Pest Management Strategy.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Fire is managed to help protect life and property, conserve natural and cultural values and minimise associated impacts.</p>	<p>Manage fire in accordance with the Level 2 Fire Strategy for the park.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
7.3.26	<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i> woodland to open forest on alluvium fringing streams	Endangered
7.3.28	Rivers and streams including riparian herbfield and shrubland on river and stream bed alluvium, and rock within stream beds	Endangered
7.3.49	Notophyll vine forest on rubble terraces of streams	Of concern
7.11.3	Semi-deciduous mesophyll vine forest on metamorphics, of the moist and dry foothills and lowlands	Of concern
7.11.6	<i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> ± <i>Eucalyptus pellita</i> open forest of metamorphics, on deep soils	Endangered
7.11.10	<i>Acacia celsa</i> open to closed forest on metamorphics	Of concern
7.11.13	<i>Corymbia torelliana</i> open forest usually with a vine forest element, on metamorphics	Endangered
7.11.16	<i>Eucalyptus portuensis</i> and <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> open forest to woodland, on wet and moist metamorphics of foothills and uplands	Endangered
7.11.18	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i> and/or <i>C. tessellaris</i> ± <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> medium to tall open forest to woodland (or vine forest with these species as emergents), on coastal metamorphic headlands and near-coastal foothills	Of concern
7.11.19	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i> and/or <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest to woodland of uplands, on metamorphics	Of concern
7.11.26	Rock pavements with <i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i> and <i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> open to closed shrublands or <i>Bombax ceiba</i> and <i>Cochlospermum gillivraei</i> open woodland, or <i>Acacia spp.</i> shrubland, on metamorphics	Endangered
7.11.27	Simple microphyll vine-fern forest or microphyll vine-sedge forest of wet metamorphic uplands and highlands	Of concern
7.11.28	Wind-sheared notophyll vine forest of exposed metamorphic ridge crests and steep slopes. Distinguished from 7.11.1 and other similar ecosystems by its low, wind-sheared nature. Notable for the occurrence of mountain dwelling species at relatively low altitudes	Of concern
7.11.30	Simple notophyll vine forest of <i>Blepharocarya involucrigera</i> on metamorphics	Of concern
7.11.32	<i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> and/or <i>Allocasuarina spp.</i> ± heathy understorey, medium to tall woodland to open forest (or vine forest with these species as emergents), of steep rocky metamorphic slopes with shallow soils	Of concern
7.11.38	<i>Lophostemon confertus</i> low woodland to low closed forest ± <i>Acacia celsa</i> , <i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> and <i>Allocasuarina spp.</i> on steep metamorphic slopes	Of concern
7.11.44	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> open forest to woodland of coastal metamorphic foothills	Of concern
7.12.21	<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i> open forest to woodland, or <i>Corymbia</i>	Endangered

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
	<i>intermedia</i> , <i>E. pellita</i> , and <i>E. grandis</i> , open forest to woodland (or vine forest with these species as emergents), on granites and rhyolites	

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>Wetria australiensis</i>	–	Vulnerable		Medium
<i>Alpinia hylandii</i>	–	Near threatened		Low
Animals				
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	grey goshawk	Near threatened		Low
<i>Aerodramus terraereginae</i>	Australian swiftlet	Near threatened		Low
<i>Casuaris casuaris johnsonii</i> (southern population)	southern cassowary (southern population)	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	estuarine crocodile	Vulnerable		Low
<i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma macleayana</i>	Macleay's fig-parrot	Vulnerable		Low
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	square-tailed kite	Near threatened		Low
<i>Ninox rufa queenslandica</i>	rufous owl (southern subspecies)	Vulnerable		Low
<i>Litoria nannotis</i>	waterfall frog	Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Litoria nyakalensis</i>	mountain mistfrog	Endangered	Critically endangered	Low
<i>Litoria rheocola</i>	common mistfrog	Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Litoria serrata</i>	tapping green eyed frog	Near threatened		Low
<i>Nyctimystes dayi</i>	Australian lacelid	Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>	northern quoll	Least concern	Endangered	Medium
<i>Dendrolagus lumholtzi</i>	Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo	Near threatened		Low
<i>Hemibelideus lemuroides</i>	lemuroid ringtail possum	Near threatened		Low
<i>Pseudochirops archeri</i>	green ringtail possum	Near threatened		Low
<i>Pseudochirulus herbertensis</i>	Herbert River ringtail possum	Near threatened		Low
<i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>	spectacled flying-fox	Least concern	Vulnerable	High
<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>	diademed leaf-nosed bat	Near threatened		Low
<i>Murina florium</i>	tube-nosed insectivorous bat	Vulnerable		High
<i>Kerivoula papuensis</i>	golden-tipped bat	Near threatened		Medium

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle	-	-	-	✓
<i>Apus pacificus</i>	fork-tailed swift	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓	-	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	✓	-	-
<i>Symposiarchus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>	satin flycatcher	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement