Department of Environment, Science and Innovation

Rungulla National Park

Incorporates: Rungulla Resources Reserve

Resource Information

2024

Queensland Government

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Front cover photo: Gilbert River © DESI

Contents

1. Introduction

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) management planning process aligns with the Values-Based Management Framework (VBMF), an adaptive management cycle that incorporates planning, prioritising, doing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting into all areas of our business (Figure 1). Management plans and statements set the strategic management direction, guiding the next tier of planning and the development of thematic strategies, which in turn inform and prioritise our on-ground operations.

Resource information is a compendium of park information and a supporting document for management plans and management statements. It contains background information about a park's purpose, values, resources, and legal and administrative framework.

Information about QPWS's VBMF is available on the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) website at www.desi.qld.gov.au.

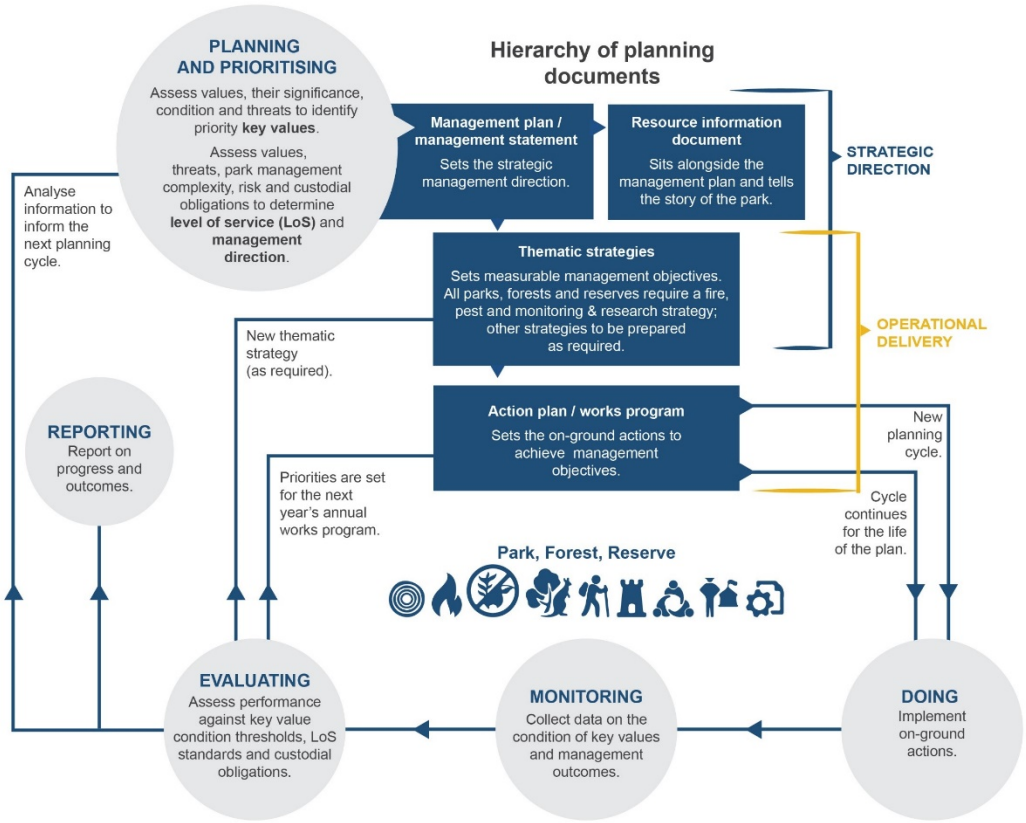

Figure 1. VBMF process for planning and the hierarchy of planning documents

2. Rungulla National Park

Rungulla National Park is situated in north-western Queensland, approximately 75 kilometres south-west of Forsayth. The park contains spectacular rugged sandstone country. It is dissected by the Gilbert River, a major Gulf Plains watercourse, and straddles two bioregions. (See **Figure 2** for the location of Rungulla.)

Rungulla National Park and Rungulla Resources Reserve were gazetted due to their notable natural, cultural and environmental values, which are significant both regionally and nationally.

The park forms an extensive part of a continuum of relatively undisturbed spectacular country. The riparian and catchment systems within the region have resulted in springs, spring-fed watercourses, freshwater plateau lagoons and refugia habitats. Rungulla National Park is a component of the Great Artesian Basin Rim statewide corridor.

The Rungulla estate protects a range of ecosystems that are poorly represented within Queensland. Eight regional ecosystems are only present within the protected area. This is due particularly to Rungulla's sediment, and its geological past, which has enabled the growth of various species on folded and scarp sandstone formations.

The location of Rungulla supports the biodiversity within the protected area.. Rungulla possesses a diversity of wetlands of state significance, including springs, perched sedge swamps on plateaus, and riverine areas.

Its role as a transitionary landscape between the Gulf Plains and Einasleigh Uplands bioregions reinforces the importance of this park. Rungulla has significant natural values, and its low level of disturbance, altitudinal variation and local refugia provide resilience to climate change and disturbance.

The history of Rungulla, particularly its low agricultural presence, as well as its dual bioregion status and significant natural values support the purpose of this national park, and make Rungulla a spectacular area with great tourism potential.

Aboriginal cultural sites are a significant value of the park. Rungulla lies within the lands of the Ewamian People, who have an ongoing connection to Country. They hold a native title determination (QUD6018/2001) that includes the north-eastern component of Rungulla. There is a registered Aboriginal cultural site within the management area.

The legislative framework for managing the park, designations over the park and management obligations are outlined further in **Appendix 1**.

Bioregion	Gulf Plains/Einasleigh Uplands		
Area	118,500 ha Note: Lot 1&5 on SP275179 and Lot 315 on VR840983, County of Victor		
Local government area	Etheridge Shire	**State electorate**	Traeger
Management obligations	QCD2013/007 Ewamian People #3 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA)		

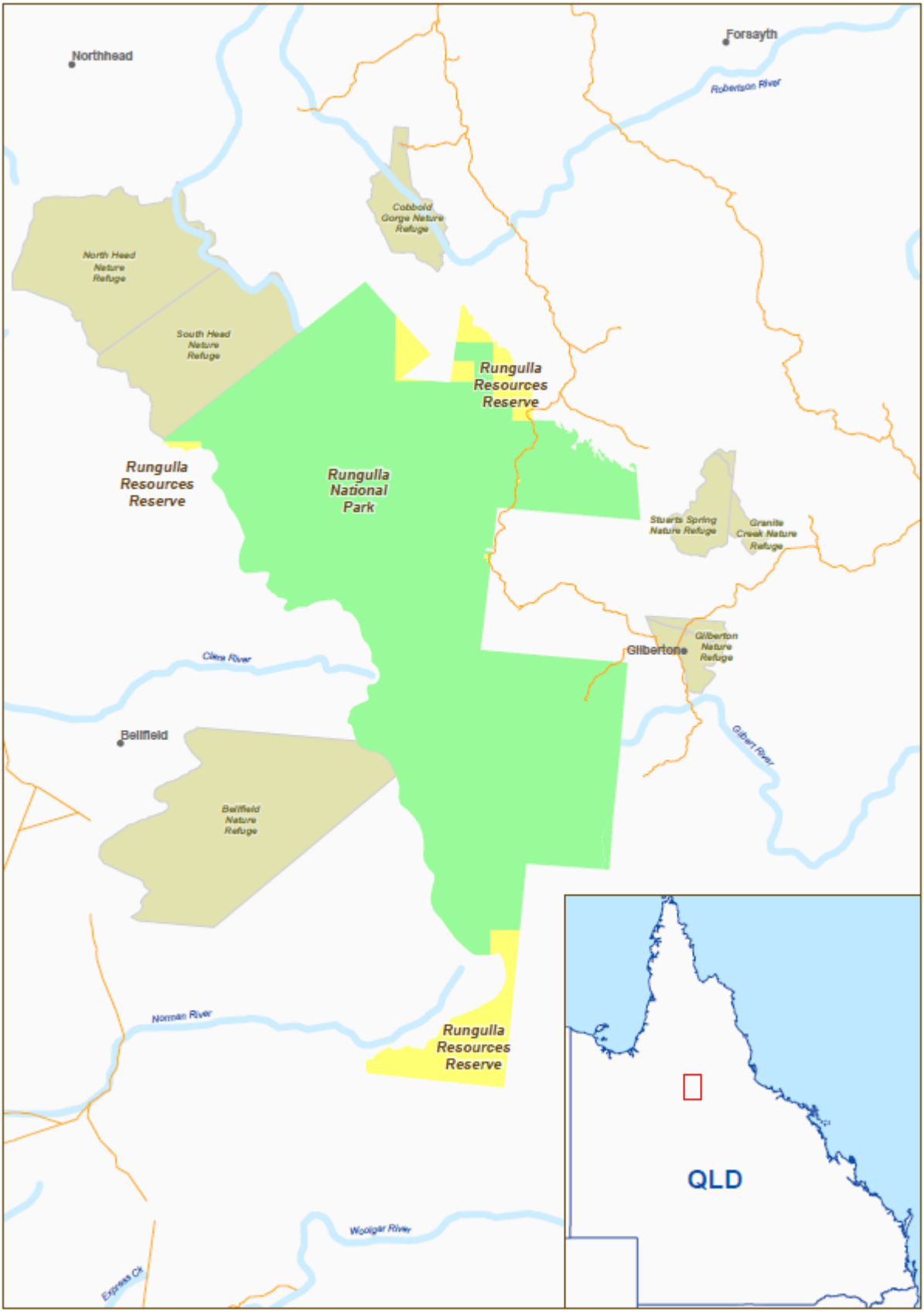

Figure 2. Rungulla National Park location map

2.1 Ewamian People

The Ewamian People have a strong affiliation with Rungulla National Park and the areas nearby. Rungulla National Park is affiliated with a native title determination (QUD6018/2001) by the Ewamian People Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC. This native title determination covers approximately 26,000 square kilometres, including all protected area north of the Gilbert River.

The native title determination also includes management obligations for the RNTBC on the following nearby protected areas: Mount Rosey Resources Reserve, Undara Volcanic National Park and Blackbraes National Park.

Rungulla National Park has Aboriginal cultural heritage significance for the Ewamian People. A registered Aboriginal cultural site exists on Gilbert River-Rungulla Station, and Aboriginal hand stencils, particularly those of children, and grooves containing grindstones for grinding ochre are present in several rock shelters.

Middle Camp Station is owned by the Woolgar Valley Aboriginal Corporation and is located directly to the south of Rungulla.

2.2 Regional ecosystems

Rungulla National Park and Rungulla Resources Reserve (the Rungulla area) contains 27 regional ecosystems (REs). Of these, nine have an 'of concern' biodiversity status and one has an 'endangered' biodiversity status (refer **Appendix 2**). The rugged sandstone landscape and lack of infrastructure in park have limited the extent and intensity of grazing on the property.

The Rungulla area protects 11 REs not represented in any other protected areas:

- RE 2.3.38 Seasonal swamps. Mixed grasslands and sedgelands in closed depressions with *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* fringes on plateau surfaces
- RE 2.5.20 *Eucalyptus similis* and/or *E. chartaboma* +/- *Erythrophleum chlorostachys*, *Corymbia* spp. woodland on undulating Tertiary sand sheets, moderately high in the landscape
- RE 2.5.25 *Eucalyptus similis* and *E. crebra* +/- *Corymbia brachycarpa* woodland on sand sheets on Mesozoic sandstone plateaus
- RE 2.10.4 *Eucalyptus microneura* low woodland and *Triodia pungens* hummock grassland on scarps and stony ledges
- RE 2.10.6 *Melaleuca* spp. low open woodland on ledges on skeletal soils
- RE 2.10.9 Rock pavements and outcrops with patches of *Acacia* spp., *Corymbia* spp. and *Eucalyptus* spp. in dissected Mesozoic sandstone ranges
- RE 2.10.11 *Triodia* spp. grassland on slopes or crests of Mesozoic sandstone ranges
- RE 2.10.13 *Eucalyptus crebra* or *E. whitei* low open woodland on slopes of sandstone ranges
- RE 2.11.1 Eucalypt woodland and deciduous woodland on stony hills on folded sediments
- RE 9.11.28 *Acacia shirleyi* +/- *Eucalyptus microneura* +/- *E. crebra* woodland on metamorphic hills and outcrops
- RE 9.12.11 *Eucalyptus crebra* and/or *E. whitei* +/- *Corymbia erythrophloia* open woodland on steep to rolling hills on igneous rocks

2.3 Species

2.3.1 Native animals

There are no threatened animal species within the Rungulla area. Eighteen reptiles, one fish and two amphibians have been recorded on the national park.

Rungulla National Park is home to 46 recorded bird species. Of these, 27 are not endemic to Australia, with the remaining 19 species being endemic to Australia.

The bumpy rocketfrog *Litoria inermis* has been recorded in the Resources Reserve.

2.3.2 Native plants

There are 172 different plant species recorded at Rungulla National Park, six of which are of conservation significance—*Pluchea punctata*, *Labichea brassii*, *Leptospermum pallidum*, *Drummondita calida, Kardomia squarrulosa* and *Solanum carduiforme* (refer **Appendix 3**).

Pluchea punctata is significant because of its endemicity to Queensland, and its very limited distribution throughout the region (Bean 2011). It has been recorded on the lower slope of a steep hill among *Triodia* sp., in an exposed area with scattered trees of *Eucalyptus microneura* (Bean 2011). Flowers and fruits of these species have been recorded in August and October. *Pluchea punctata* currently retains an 'endangered' listing according to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Of the remaining four species of conservation significance, two are 'near threatened' (*Labichea brassii* and *Leptospermum pallidum*), and two are 'vulnerable' (*Drummondita calida*, *Solanum carduiforme*).

25 common plant species have been recorded in the Resources Reserve.

2.4 Geophysical features

Areas of Rungulla display spectacular sandstone geology, which is unusual in a national context and often contrasted with the nearby, but different, sandstone of Cobbold Gorge. This landscape contains sculptured caves, pagoda-like formations and folded sediments. These features contain and protect numerous examples of Aboriginal material culture in the form of rock art, etching and grinding grooves. It is anticipated that one of the most accessible visitor experiences on Rungulla will be the viewing of the sandstone features while traversing park areas.

Figure 3. Pagoda weathering in sandstone © Queensland Government

2.5 Recreational opportunities

Located approximately 75 kilometres south-west of Forsayth, Rungulla is briefly intersected by the Agate Creek-Gilberton Road, which forms part of the Savannah Way tourist route. Robin Hood Station, with its Agate Creek Fossicking Area and impressive Cobbold Gorge (now Cobbold Gorge Nature Refuge), both popular tourist destinations, lies 10 kilometres to the north-east of Rungulla.

The largely undeveloped protected area has most value in terms of existing Aboriginal cultural, aesthetic, wilderness and refuge values associated with its natural landscape, sandstone rock formations, springs and rock art. Other potential values include river-based recreation along the Gilbert River.

2.6 Post-contact cultural heritage

Rungulla National Park is a part of the amalgamation of former properties within the region. Remnants of the pastoral properties and past mineral exploration are visible on the estate.

The Gilbert River was the location of goldmining between 1869 and 1874 (Brown 1974). The Gilberton region's demise as a goldmining centre has been attributed to a variety of reasons, including the harsh conditions of northern central Queensland.

In 2010, a demountable building, shed and agricultural machinery were recorded on site. These can be attributed to the pastoral history of Rungulla and the region.

Mount Moran Battery (QHR ID 601921) is listed on the Queensland Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place. QPWS is trustee of the site which is located along the eastern perimeter of Rungulla. The site satisfies criteria (a), 'the place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history' (s35(1), *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*). This site dates to the 1919–1930s interwar period, and was first entered on the Register in September 2000. It is of importance due to its role in demonstrating the evolution of Queensland's mining history, in particular the Etheridge Gold and Mineral Field.

The Mount Moran Battery contains the remains of a five head stamp battery including mortar box, stamper rods and belt wheel. The battery frame has been removed. A colonial boiler, the remains of a steam engine with fly wheel and several berdan pans are located alongside the stamp battery. A collapsed corrugated iron camp is located across a gully to the west of the battery. A small steam pump is located near a well on a watercourse east of the battery. The place includes several early open workings.

Figure 4. Mount Moran Battery 2009, Heritage Branch staff © Queensland Government

2.7 Partnerships

QPWS aims to maintain partnerships with neighbouring landholders, as well as the Etheridge Shire Council, which is the local government for the area. Maintaining the partnership with the shire council enables best practice implementation, and ensures that the council is aware of occurrences within its boundaries. Etheridge Shire Council is also involved with five other protected areas aside from Rungulla—Littleton National Park, Blackbraes National Park, Undara Volcanic National Park, Bulleringa National Park and Canyon Resources Reserve.

Aside from liaising with the local council, QPWS aims to ensure management of the protected area is compatible with neighbouring properties.

2.8 Scientific research

National parks are areas of high environmental value. Rungulla is home to a range of unique ecological ecosystems that may play an important role in the future of the park, and in scientific research and education programs on park. Currently, Rungulla National Park has had scientific research in fields such as geology and ecology (Bean 2011).

2.9 Fire

Large expanses of rock outcrop and the Gilbert River help to reduce the impact of wildfires and maintain a mosaic of burnt and unburnt areas.

2.10 Pests

The Rungulla area hosts at least 40 pest plant species. These introduced species have been primarily concentrated on the Gilbert River terraces. These pest plants include rubber vine *Cryptostegia grandiflora* in localised areas along the river, Noogoora burr *Xanthium pungens*, and calotrope *Calotropis procera* along the river and large tributaries in localised areas of disturbance. Hyptis *Hyptis suaveolens* and flannel weed *Sida cordifolia* are localised in areas of disturbance, including stockyards, tracks and camps (of which there are few).

Undeveloped and largely inaccessible, the impact of weeds, feral animals and unmanaged grazing on the property is largely confined to the riparian and frontage areas along the Gilbert River.

Five pest animals have been noted in the national park – feral pigs *Sus scrofa*, wild cattle *Bos* spp., horses *Equus caballus*, cane toads *Rhinella marina* and European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

Refer to **Appendix 6** for a list of pest plants and animals that have been found in the Rungulla area.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Legal, policy and management commitments

Gazettal details

Rungulla National Park was gazetted in November 2015 and Rungulla Resources Reserve was gazetted in July 2016.

Applicable Acts and statutory powers

- *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Qld)
- *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwth)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth)
- *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Qld)
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (Qld)
- *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* (Qld)
- *Mineral Resources Act 1989* (Qld)
- *Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999* (Qld)
- *Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Act 2014* (Qld)

Management obligations

- Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation

Other management commitments

- CMS – Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Appendix 2. Regional ecosystems of significance

Regional ecosystem	Description	Biodiversity status
2.3.21	*Eucalyptus leptophleba*, *C. polycarpa*, *C. confertiflora*, *C. bella* woodland on active levees and terraces associated with major watercourses in the east	Of concern
2.3.26	*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* +/- *Melaleuca* spp. woodland fringing sandy, seasonal channels	Of concern
2.3.38	Seasonal swamps. Mixed grasslands and sedgelands in closed depressions with *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* fringes on plateau surfaces	Endangered
2.3.50	Waterholes, bare sand and rock in the channels of major watercourses	Of concern
2.10.6	*Melaleuca* spp. low open woodland on ledges on skeletal soils	Of concern
2.10.9	Rock pavements and outcrops with patches of *Acacia* spp., *Corymbia* spp. and *Eucalyptus* spp. in dissected Mesozoic sandstone ranges	Of concern
2.10.11	*Triodia* spp. grassland on slopes or crests of Mesozoic sandstone ranges	Of concern
9.3.12	River beds and associated waterholes on major rivers and channels	Of concern
9.3.13	*Melaleuca* spp., *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana* fringing open forest on streams and channels	Of concern
9.3.26	Mixed grassland to open grassland including *Eragrostis* sp., *Aristida* sp., *Enneapogon* sp., *Iseilema* sp., *Chloris* sp., or *Dichanthium* sp., on non-basalt derived alluvial deposits	Of concern

Appendix 3. Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	NC Act status	EPBC Act status
Plants			
Pluchea punctata	-	Endangered	-
Labichea brassii	-	Near threatened	-
Leptospermum pallidum	-	Near threatened	-
Drummondita calida	-	Vulnerable	-
Kardomia squarrulosa	-	Vulnerable	-
Solanum carduiforme	-	Vulnerable	-

Appendix 4. Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	CMS	JAMBA	ROKAMBA	CAMBA
Anas gracilis	grey teal	✓	-	-	-
Merops ornatus	rainbow bee-eater	-	✓	-	-

Notes:

This list includes local and migratory birds that regularly use the park for feeding, nesting or breeding. Species that visit from time to time but are not regular users have not been included in the table.

CMS – Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Appendix 5. Places of heritage value

Site name	Description
Mount Moran Battery	State heritage listed Old mining stamper battery

Appendix 6. Pests

Scientific name	Common name	*Biosecurity Act 2014* status	Historic notes
Plants			
Citrullus colocynthis	colocynth	-	
Cucumis anguria var. anguria	West Indian gherkin	-	
Euphorbia hirta	-	-	
Aeschynomene villosa	-	-	
Crotalaria juncea	sunhemp	-	
Sida cordifolia	-	-	• Stockyards, tracks and camps (of which there are few)
Vachellia farnesiana	-	-	• Scattered individual plants along the Gilbert River and its terraces • Aim to use fire to restrict this species to the river • Infestations outside the riparian zone to be treated with herbicide
Phyllanthus amarus	-	-	
Ziziphus mauritiana	Indian jujube	Restricted matter – invasive biosecurity matter – category 3	
Triumfetta rhomboidea	Chinese burr	-	
Calotropis procera	-	-	• Located along the river and large tributaries in localised areas of disturbance • Ongoing reinfestation of the Gilbert River riparian zone • Focus control effort at art sites and springs
Ipomoea nil	-	-	
Argemone ochroleuca subsp. ochroleuca	Mexican poppy	-	
Datura ferox	fierce thornapple	-	
Bothriochloa pertusa	-	-	
Digitaria ciliaris	summer grass	-	
Eragrostis cilianensis	-	-	
Themeda quadrivalvis	grader grass	-	
Urochloa mosambicensis	sabi grass	-	
Urochloa subquadripara	-	-	
Animals			
Rhinella marina	cane toad	Prohibited matter – invasive biosecurity matter – invasive animals	
Bos taurus	European cattle	Prohibited matter – invasive biosecurity matter – invasive animals	• Occur across the park but are focused along the river terrace areas of the Gilbert River
Equus caballus	horse	Prohibited matter – invasive biosecurity matter – invasive animals	

Scientific name	Common name	*Biosecurity Act 2014* status	Historic notes
Oryctolagus cuniculus	rabbit	Restricted matter – invasive animals – categories 3, 4, 5, 6	
Sus scrofa	pig	Invasive biosecurity matter	Wetlands

References

Bean, A R (2011) Two new species of *Pluchea* Cass. (Asteraceae: *Plucheinae*) from Queensland, Australia, *Austrobaileya* (Vol 8, No 3) pp 340–346.

Brown, R B (1974) A history of the Gilbert River Goldfield, 1869–1874, BA Hons Thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland.

Queensland Government (2019) Wildlife Online Extract, at: www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/species-list (accessed 16 May 2019).