

Hull River National Park

Management Statement

2013



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

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The Hull River 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:	3,695 ha
Bioregion:	Wet Tropics
QPWS region:	Northern
Local government estate/area:	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
State electorate:	Hinchinbrook

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>
✓	Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan and Management Program 2007-2017
✓	<i>Native Title (Indigenous Land Use Agreement) Regulation 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i>

Plans and agreements

✓	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement 2005
✓	National recovery plan for the southern cassowary <i>Casuarus casuarus johnsonii</i> 2007
✓	Recovery plan for the mahogany glider <i>Petaurus gracilis</i> 2007
✓	National recovery plan for the spectacled flying fox <i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Draft Level 2 Pest Management Strategy
✓	Siam and Four Tropical Weeds Management Plan 2010

Vision

Hull River National Park remains a significant reserve for the protection of Wet Tropics World Heritage biodiversity in the Mission Beach area. The park preserves high value regional ecosystems such as an outstanding remnant of complex wet tropical coastal lowland vegetation, including significant wetlands. Species of conservation significance such as southern cassowary, estuarine crocodile and migratory birds continue to be conserved within the park. Visitors enjoy vessel-based tourism opportunities.

Conservation purpose

Hull River National Park was gazetted a national park in December 1994, however, its history as a protected area extends at least as far back as the 1970's.

The park, with connectivity onto Djiru and Mount Mackay national parks, contributes significantly to the biodiversity values of the Mission Beach area. It represents a large-scale coast to highlands rainforest corridor within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Hull River National Park protects an important coastal lowland estuarine and palustrine wetland system. It is one of the single largest intact and connecting networks of lowland wetlands represented within the Wet Tropics bioregion.

Kennedy Reserve is on the Register of the National Estate as an historic area, being the landing site of the Edmund Kennedy expedition on 24 May 1848.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

The park has moderate scenic amenity as a lowland wetland on the coastal plain, rising to an elevation of just 104 metres (m) at Mount Coom. A number of road reserves, including part of the South Mission Beach Road, provide visitor access and access to neighbouring properties. The surrounding landscape and connectivity includes other protected areas such as Girramay, Mount Mackay and Djiru national parks as well as immediate interfaces with agricultural and residential areas. The surrounding land is predominantly cultivated for sugar cane and bananas with drainage channels having a profound historical impact of a lowered water table and shorter inundation period on paperbark wetlands of the Hull Heads locality.

Hull River National Park is located within the Tully River catchment and includes a myriad of estuarine creeks. While the Hull and North Hull rivers are not part of the park, the creeks and tributaries that run into them are within the park. The park contains important palustrine wetlands, such as billabongs, swamps, soaks and bogs. Salt-marsh, saline wetlands and marine plains feature as one of the key landscape elements of the park.

Edmund Kennedy and Licuala Palm Forest wetlands are listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia and are located outside the park, to the south and north respectively.

Regional ecosystems

Thirty-five regional ecosystems are represented in the park. The endangered and of concern ecosystems cover about 53% of the park. They are listed on Table 1.

The biodiversity values of the park's regional ecosystems include simple to complex mesophyll to notophyll vine forest associated with coastal wetlands containing *Licuala* palm swamps, *Melaleuca* forests, sedgelands and grasslands, riparian vegetation and mangrove forests. This includes small, scattered examples of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* critically endangered coastal littoral rainforest pockets.

The dominant regional ecosystem is mangrove forest (7.1.1) which covers about 38% of the park and has not of concern status. The second most dominant regional ecosystems is an endangered *Melaleuca* forest to shrubland on alluvial plains (7.3.5) which covers about 21% of the park.

Very little dissecting disturbance such as easements or trails occur across Hull River National Park.

Large areas of estuarine and palustrine regional ecosystems found within the park, represent one of the two largest single intact examples of this marine plain (7.3.1) habitat within the Wet Tropics. Mangrove ecosystems also feature as an important attribute of the lower estuary systems of the Hull and Tully rivers.

Native plants and animals

Approximately 119 native plants and animals have been recorded from the park. The park conserves at least 11 species of conservation significance (Table 2).

Endangered mahogany gliders *Petaurus gracilis* may be present as a relic population from a much wider prior

distribution which has been heavily reduced and fragmented by clearing. The Mount Coom locality area represents the northern most extent for the mahogany glider, with the Hull Heads/Mission Beach area considered a highly fragmented isolated meta-population. Woodlands of swamp paper bark, broad-leaved tea-tree, red tea-tree and forest red gum within and surrounding the Djiru, Mount Mackay and the Hull River national parks are regarded as significant examples of habitat for the species. Almost half the park has been mapped as mahogany glider habitat. Most of this habitat is currently subject to inadequate and inappropriate fire intervals to maintain the open forest nature of these communities considered desirable for mahogany gliders.

Maintaining and improving the quality and integrity of these mahogany glider habitats is important and achievable. Long-term goal setting for Hull River National Park should include restoring fire intervals and enhancing wildlife connectivity corridors via replanting.

Eleven birds recorded for the park are listed in international agreements (Table 3).

The park contains suitable habitat for the vulnerable ant plant *Myrmecodia beccarii* and Apollo jewel butterfly *Hypochrysops apollo apollo*. A high level of endemism and rich biodiversity amongst invertebrates is likely in Hull River National Park, given its complex vegetation.

Mangrove communities on the park have remained relatively undisturbed by non-Indigenous settlement. The Hull River represents the northern extent of one of the largest mangrove system in the Wet Tropics, extending down to Missionary Bay of Girramay National Park and the Hinchinbrook Channel of Girringun and Hinchinbrook Island national parks. The continued protection of these mangrove habitats is important and is enhanced by the declared Hull River Fish Habitat Area. These mangrove areas have a range of fishery values including barramundi and mud crab habitat.

Aboriginal culture

Hull River National Park and the broader Mission Beach area are highly significant to the Djiru Aboriginal people who consider themselves and their neighbours to be part of a wider group of coastal rainforest people who shared a common lifestyle.

The Djiru Aboriginal people regularly return to country to practice traditional fishing and hunting and to fulfil their rights and responsibilities as custodians and land managers. They are actively engaged in passing on their culture to the younger generations, introducing them to country through fishing, camping and collecting materials for continuing traditional practices such as basket weaving and shield making.

Two registered native title claims overlap parts of the park; Djiru People #2 (QC03/003) and Djiru People #3 (QC03/006). Part of the park is within an area covered by the Djiru Cassowary Coast Regional Council Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The representative bodies are the North Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation.

Shared-history culture

The park has three entries on the Register of the National Estate—Kennedy Reserve, Hull River National Park (1978 boundary) and part of the larger Wet Tropical Forests of Queensland.

Kennedy Reserve was registered as an historic area on 1 November 1983 as being the landing site of the Edmund Kennedy expedition on 24 May 1848. It is recognised as one of the few remaining places in Australia where one can stand on the site where an explorer's expedition commenced and observe nothing in the surroundings to indicate the subsequent passage of time, settlement and development. It is located between the mouth of the Hull River and Tam O'Shanter Point.

Hull River National Park (1978 boundary) was registered as a natural area on 21 October 1980 for its representative lowland vegetation on granite soils of the coastal plain, rich bird habitat, and unique swamplands of the wet tropical lowlands.

The park is part of the much larger Wet Tropical Forests of North Queensland area—registered as a natural area for its diverse natural heritage on 26 April 1988.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

No visitor facilities are currently located within the park. Most visitor activity is boat-based, with people predominantly accessing the creeks from the Hull Heads boat ramp—which is not in the park. The boat ramp is listed as a site in the Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy (2000).

The Hull and North Hull rivers are the main rivers used by people. While these are not part of the national park, nor are they part of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park, people do venture into the national park via creeks which branch off these main rivers.

Fishing is not currently allowed within Hull River National Park.

There are at least four commercial operators with permits to conduct commercial activities in the park, one is for scenic flights. Most permits allow access to a range of protected areas.

Education and science

The park is of interest to people wanting to conduct research studies across a spectrum of fields.

Sensitivity towards cultural considerations for sampling collections has arisen in recent years. The cumulative impact of a series of permit collections and sampling over time warrants consideration for the long-term sustainability of certain taxa.

Partnerships

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is legislatively responsible for the day-to-day management of the national park and the Wet Tropics Management Authority regulates activity in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The goal of both agencies is to present the area's values while protecting its natural and cultural values.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Djiru Traditional Owners are valued partners in managing the area.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Five introduced species have been recorded from the park. Class 1 pests, *Miconia calvescens* and *Cecropia*, occur within the park. Five Weeds of National Significance, including two class 2 pest plant species—pond apple *Annona glabra* and hymenachne *Hymenachne amplexicaulis*—and one class 3 pest plant species—lantana *Lantana camara*—all are occur on the park.

Fire management

A Level 2 fire management strategy for the Hull River catchment was prepared in 2003, and was due for review in 2008. The statement includes a number of other protected areas such as Clump Mountain, Tam O'Shanter (now Djiru) and Mount Mackay as a collective set of connecting reserves with very similar fire management issues and operational response.

An inappropriate, infrequent fire interval is considered a threat to the structural integrity of coastal lowland open forests within Hull River National Park. Restoring the structure and improving the maintenance of the *Corymbia* open forests (7.11) and similar ecosystems such as 7.3.19 is dependent on achieving appropriate fire intervals and an active program over several years.

Inappropriate fire events, such as wildfire, may threaten the persistence of the peat layer in the swampy ecosystems (7.2.9) of Hull River National Park. Fire is considered to have an ecological role in the balance with peat layers and maintaining a natural inundation and drainage pattern. In turn, undesirable fire events can generate long smoke emission, affecting surrounding residential communities.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Habitat for species of conservation significance is conserved.</p>	<p>Progressively update species records for the park.</p> <p>Determine whether ant plants and Apollo jewel butterflies have been observed in the park.</p> <p>Maintain the park's significant biodiversity values, particularly coastal wetlands through pest and fire management and enhancing wildlife connectivity corridors via replanting.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Traditional Owners are involved in cooperative park management.</p>	<p>Support the involvement of the Traditional Owners in park management.</p>
<p>Shared-history</p> <p>The park's cultural history is conserved, protected and presented, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Protect and present the 1848 landing place of Edmund Kennedy.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Safe and sustainable visitor opportunities are provided and maintained.</p>	<p>Maintain existing boating opportunities in the park.</p> <p>Seek to add Hull River National Park to Schedule 6 of the <i>Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulations 2006</i>, thereby allowing for fishing and mud crabbing activities on the park (or part thereof).</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>The threats posed by pest plants and animals are managed.</p>	<p>Review the existing Level 2 pest management strategy and implement the new strategy in conjunction with the revised Siam and Four Tropical Weeds Management Plan.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Fire management protects species diversity, life, property and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Review the existing Statement of Fire Management Intent and prepare a Level 2 fire strategy which protects of concern <i>Corymbia</i> open-forests and swampy peat layers through appropriate fire management.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
7.1.2	<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i> grassland, samphire open forbland to sparse forbland, and bare salt pans, on plains adjacent to mangroves.	Of concern
7.1.3	<i>Schoenoplectus litoralis</i> and/or <i>Eleocharis dulcis</i> sparse sedgeland, or <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> shrubland to open forest, in swamps which fluctuate periodically between freshwater and estuarine.	Endangered
7.2.1	Mesophyll vine forest on beach ridges and sand plains of beach origin	Endangered
7.2.3	<i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> and/or <i>Acacia crassicarpa</i> and/or <i>C. intermedia</i> and/or <i>C. clarksoniana</i> closed forest to woodland, of beach ridges, predominantly of Holocene age.	Of concern
7.2.4	<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp. (often <i>E. pellita</i> or <i>Corymbia intermedia</i>) open forest and/or <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest on swampy sand plains of beach origin, and Pleistocene beach ridges.	Of Concern
7.2.7	<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> +/- <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> open forest +/- grooved vine forest shrublands of the beach strand and foredune.	Endangered
7.2.8	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i> open forest to woodland on sands of beach origin.	Endangered
7.2.9	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> shrubland to closed forest, or <i>Lepironia articulata</i> open to closed sedgeland on dune swales and swampy sand plains of beach origin	Endangered
7.3.1	<i>Hemarthria uncinata</i> and/or <i>Ischaemum australe</i> and/or <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> grassland, and/or ephemeral sedgelands, on seasonally inundated alluvial plains.	Endangered
7.3.3	Mesophyll vine forest with <i>Archontophoenix alexandrae</i> on poorly drained alluvial plains.	Endangered
7.3.4	Mesophyll vine forest with <i>Licuala ramsayi</i> on poorly drained alluvial plains and alluvial areas of uplands.	Endangered
7.3.5	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> and/or <i>Melaleuca cajaputi</i> closed forest to shrubland on poorly drained alluvial plains.	Endangered
7.3.7	<i>Eucalyptus pellita</i> and <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> open forest to woodland (or vine forest with emergent <i>E. pellita</i> and <i>C. intermedia</i>), on poorly drained alluvial plains.	Endangered
7.3.8	<i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus</i> spp. +/- <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest to open woodland on alluvial plains.	Endangered
7.3.10	Simple to complex mesophyll to notophyll vine forest on moderate to poorly drained alluvial plains of moderate fertility	Endangered
7.3.12	Mixed eucalypt open forest to woodland, dominated by <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> and <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> +/- <i>Melaleuca dealbata</i> , (or vine forest with these species as emergents), on alluvial plains of lowlands.	Endangered
7.3.17	Complex mesophyll vine forest on well drained alluvium of high fertility.	Endangered
7.3.28	Rivers and streams including riparian herbfield and shrubland on river and stream bed alluvium, and rock within stream beds.	Endangered
7.3.40	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> medium to tall open forest on well drained alluvial plains of lowlands.	Endangered
7.3.46	<i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest to woodland on alluvial plains.	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
7.11.24	Closed vineland of wind disturbed vine forest, on metamorphics.	Of concern
7.11.34	Complex of shrublands, low healthy or shrubby woodlands and low forests, with <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> and <i>C. intermedia</i> or <i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i> , <i>Allocasuarina</i> spp. and <i>Acacia</i> spp. on metamorphic coastal headlands and islands.	Of concern
7.12.4	<i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus pellita</i> open forest of granites and rhyolites, on deep soils.	Endangered

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
7.12.5	<i>Eucalyptus pellita</i> +/- <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> open forest, or <i>Acacia mangium</i> and <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest (or vine forest with these species as emergents), on granites and rhyolites.	Endangered
7.12.9	<i>Acacia celsa</i> open to closed forest on granites and rhyolites.	Of concern
7.3.19	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i> or <i>C. tessellaris</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> open forest (or vine forest with these species as emergents), on well drained alluvium.	Of concern
7.3.20	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i> and <i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> , or <i>C. intermedia</i> and <i>Eucalyptus pellita</i> , or <i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> and <i>Allocasuarina</i> spp., or <i>E. cloeziana</i> , or <i>C. torelliana</i> open forests (or vine forests with these species as emergents), on alluvial fans at the base of ranges.	Of concern
7.12.23	<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 granite and rhyolite headlands and near-coastal foothills.	Endangered
7.3.25	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i> +/- vine forest species, open to closed forest, on alluvium fringing streams.	Of concern
7.12.40	Closed vineland of wind disturbed vine forest, on granites and rhyolites.	Of concern

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
Plants				
<i>Costus potierae</i>	-	Endangered	-	Medium
<i>Hedyotis novoguineensis</i>	-	Endangered	-	Low
Animals				
<i>Aerodramus terraereginae</i>	Australian swiftlet	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Casuaris casuaris johnsonii</i> (southern population)	southern cassowary (southern population)	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma macleayana</i>	Macleay's fig-parrot	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	estuarine crocodile	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	beach stone-curlew	Vulnerable	-	High
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	eastern curlew *	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>	spectacled flying-fox	Least concern	Vulnerable	High
<i>Petaurus gracilis</i>	mahogany glider *	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	little tern	Endangered	-	High

* This species is not recorded on Wildnet for the park, it has been observed or is likely to be present.

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	JAMBA	ROKAMBA	CAMBA
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	common sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓-	-	✓
<i>Egretta sacra</i>	eastern reef egret	-	-	-	✓
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle	-	-	-	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	✓	-	-
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	eastern curlew *	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	whimbrel	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Pandion cristatus</i>	eastern osprey	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	little tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Symposiachrus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓	-	-	-

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BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement