

Alton National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	558ha
Bioregion:	Brigalow Belt South
QPWS region:	South West
Local government estate/area:	Balonne Shire
State electorate:	Warrego



Brigalow woodland. Photo: NPRSR.

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

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

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 1 fire management strategy
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Vision

Alton National Park will continue to conserve the quality and integrity of the park's natural values, including species of conservation significance and the diverse plant communities of the Southern Brigalow Belt Bioregion.

Conservation purpose

Alton National Park was dedicated in December 1973 due to its scenically attractive vegetation of limited occurrence, interesting plant species, attractive wildflowers, appreciable faunal value and tourist potential.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Extensive tree clearing on neighbouring properties has resulted in Alton National Park becoming an important island of vegetation, linking with the riparian vegetation communities of the Moonie River.

The park comprises a mosaic of intact spinifex and woodland communities. It provides a contrast between the surrounding properties where similar vegetation communities have been cleared, exposed to unsuitable fire regimes and grazed.

There are cattle and sheep grazing properties surrounding the park, with some cropping areas close by. There are occasional intrusions by sheep, and some cattle, into the park. Some landholders walk their sheep through the park. Impacts are minor as stock are usually only in the park for a short time and the vegetation is not particularly palatable, and water is not available.

Vegetation on the camping and water reserve and stock route which adjoin the park complement the park values.

Oil exploration and extraction (Fairymount oil fields) occurs adjacent to the park. Other than the access road south from the Moonie Highway, and the associated vehicle use, the oil fields do not appear to be having any impact on the park. Old seismic lines criss-cross the park, but most are naturally regenerating.

The Moonie Highway divides the park into northern and southern sections.

Regional ecosystems

Four regional ecosystems are conserved on the park. Two are of concern and one is endangered (Table 1).

A lot of the vegetation has been cleared to the south, east and west of the park. Regrowth in these areas is treated on an as-needs basis by landholders. The riparian forest of the Moonie River to the north of the park creates a local wildlife corridor.

Native plants and animals

A total of eight species of conservation significance have been recorded for the park (Table 2). Five are near threatened and two are vulnerable under the Nature Conservation Act, and one is listed as vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Alton National Park is locally significant for fauna reliant on spinifex-dominated communities including the skink *Ctenotus pantherinus*. A mosaic of long-unburnt spinifex stands and regenerating stands is essential to the survival of these species.

Several species are at or close to their western distributional limits, such as the spotted pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*, white-eared honeyeater *Nesoptilotis leucotis*, yellow-faced honeyeater *Caligavis chrysops*, bar-shouldered dove *Geopelia humeralis*, black-striped wallaby *Macropus dorsalis*, cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*, white-throated nightjar *Eurostopodus mystacalis*, silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*, scarlet-sided pobblebonk *Limnodynastes terraereginae* and *Menetia timlowi*. The most easterly known population of *Ctenotus pantherinus* in southwest Queensland occurs on the park.

Black striped wallabies occur as an isolated, and significant, population. They appear to only occur in the dense strip of cypress along the southern boundary.

The near threatened woma *Aspidites ramsayi* has been recorded on adjoining properties in close proximity to the park. The crowned gecko *Lucasium stenodactylum* which has an isolated population in the area is likely to occur on the park.

Many plant species are at or near their distributional limits in the area, for example, buck spinifex *Triodia mitchellii*, sandplain red gum *Eucalyptus ammophila*, *E. panda*, *Lechenaultia divaricata* (isolated, eastern population), *Diuris tricolor* and *Allocasuarina inophloia*. *Diuris tricolor* is classified as vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Four populations of *Eucalyptus panda* (in rusty gum *Angophora leiocarpa* communities) are known to occur on Alton National Park. This species is locally uncommon. Other locally uncommon vegetation types occur includes a stand of the baker's mallee *Eucalyptus bakeri* with a *Melaleuca pallescens* understorey and a thicket of *Melaleuca uncinata*.

Belah *Casuarina cristata*, bull oak *Allocasuarina luehmannii* and *A. inophloia* provide food resources for the vulnerable listed glossy black-cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus lathami*.

Cypress pine is expanding into the spinifex/grass tree communities due to the changed fire regime. Without intervention, the area occupied by grass trees and spinifex communities may decline. However, a wildfire in 2002 reduced the extent of this expansion.

Aboriginal culture

The park area is of intrinsic value to Traditional Owners and some cultural places are known to occur on the park; however their locations have not been recorded on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) databases and they are not actively managed by QPWS.

A native title claim for the Bigambul people is currently active over the park; Federal Court No: QUD101/09, Tribunal No: QC09/002.

Shared-history culture

Prior to gazettal, the park was grazed. The type of livestock is unknown but it is likely to be sheep and horses.

Limited documentation has been collected in relation to the old Alton Township. However, park staff are aware of the town's location.

The park is located within the Moonie oil fields. The Fairymount oil fields are to the south of the park. Old oil and gas seismic lines which criss-cross the park were constructed during the 1960s. They occurred in fairly dense concentrations. Some are not obvious today, as they have revegetated.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Visitors can enjoy nature-based activities including walking, bird watching and nature appreciation. People wishing to visit the park must be self-reliant.

Partnerships

Managing pests and fire is significantly enhanced with the cooperation of park neighbours specifically in pest animal baiting programs.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Pest plants on the park include common pest pear *Opuntia stricta*, velvety tree pear *Opuntia tomentosa*, Cape weed *Arctotheca calendula*, soft khakiweed *Gomphrena celosioides*, Mayne's pest *Verbena aristigera* and buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris*.

Roadsides are the major point of entry for pest plants into the park—this has implications for park boundary management (e.g. earthworks should not be commenced from the existing road edge).

The major pest animal species found on the park include wild dogs *Canis lupus familiaris*, pigs *Sus scrofa*, cats *Felis catus*, foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

Fox sightings and tracks are commonly observed across the park. Cat tracks are observed randomly across the park and rabbit numbers fluctuate with seasons.

Occasional evidence of pig activity occurs throughout the park with impacts being locally extensive. Park staff participate in cooperative ground baiting programs with neighbours for dogs and pigs. Since baiting, there have been fewer sightings of animals and tracks.

Fire management

Inappropriate fire regimes pose the largest threat to vegetation communities on the park and may result in vegetation thickening and species loss. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there had not been a fire in the park for 30 years before the 2002 wildfire. The wildfire thinned cypress pine stands.

Alton National Park has a Level 1 fire management strategy. A main focus area for fire management in the park is to promote species recruitment and diversity in eucalypt woodlands such as the nationally significant *Angophora* spp. / *Xanthorrhoea* spp. over *Triodia* spp. association and significant communities such as the *Eucalyptus bakeri* / *Melaleuca pallescens* association.

Fire will be used to maintain current desirable extent of white cypress pine *Callitris glaucophylla* through thinning of stands and reducing encroachment into grassy systems. Fire on the park is important in reducing introduced plants.

Cooperative fire management with adjacent properties, Traditional Owners and rural fire brigades is of importance.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Populations of plant and animal species and ecosystems of conservation significance are conserved, and habitat diversity is protected and maintained.</p>	<p>A1. Develop management objectives for species and ecosystems of conservation significance, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spinifex-dominated communities which provide habitat for the locally important skink <i>Ctenotus pantherinus</i> • the endangered regional ecosystem—<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> with <i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cristata</i> open-forest to woodland on Cainozoic clay plains (RE11.4.7).
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Cultural heritage values are identified and protected.</p> <p>Awareness of the importance of Aboriginal culture is developed.</p>	<p>A2. Encourage surveys of the park for cultural heritage places and maintain a secure register with the endorsement of Traditional Owners.</p> <p>A3. Manage heritage places to conserve these areas with Traditional Owner involvement.</p> <p>A4. Provide where appropriate, with the involvement of Traditional Owners, interpretive material concerning cultural heritage places.</p>
<p>Shared-history culture</p> <p>Shared-history cultural heritage places are identified and protected.</p> <p>Education material for the public is produced sharing the history of the park.</p>	<p>A5. Survey and assess the park for heritage places and record this onto QPWS databases.</p> <p>A6. Develop conservation and implement and presentation plans for heritage sites where appropriate. Otherwise the non-promotion of sites will aid in their protection.</p> <p>A7. Record stories from people that have had an association with the park, when opportunity arises.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Remote bushwalking opportunities are provided for.</p> <p>Visitor knowledge of the park's natural and cultural values is increased.</p>	<p>A8. Provide nature-based recreational opportunities primarily based around remote bushwalking and camping, but also including the provision of defined walking tracks, vehicle-based driving opportunities and camping facilities in a natural setting.</p> <p>A9. Maintain access tracks to a four wheel drive standard.</p> <p>A10. Provide nature-based recreational opportunities primarily based around remote bushwalking and camping, but also including the provision of defined walking tracks, vehicle-based driving opportunities and camping facilities in a natural setting</p> <p>A11. Increase visitor awareness of the park's grazing history and settlement patterns, geological and biological processes and specific park management practices.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>An effective pest control program is developed and implemented to contain and reduce impacts to manageable levels.</p>	<p>A12. Prepare and implement a pest management strategy for the management of pest plants and animals including objectives for the management of buffel grass infestations, the control of pigs to protect <i>Diuris tricolor</i> population and wild dog management.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Fire is managed to protect life, property, commercial assets and to protect the natural and biodiversity values of the management area.</p>	<p>A13. Implement and regularly review the fire management strategy.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
11.3.2	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> woodland on alluvial plains	Of concern
11.4.7	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> with <i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cristata</i> open-forest to woodland on Cainozoic clay plains	Endangered
11.5.13	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> +/- <i>Acacia aneura</i> +/- <i>E. melanophloia</i> woodland on Cainozoic sandplains/remnant surfaces	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>Diuris tricolor</i>	-	-	Vulnerable	Not assessed
Animals				
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathamii</i>	glossy black-cockatoo	Vulnerable	-	Not assessed
<i>Chalinolobus picatus</i>	little pied bat	Near threatened	-	Medium
<i>Cyclorana verrucosa</i>	rough collared frog	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Egernia rugosa</i>	yakka skink	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	square-tailed kite	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Nyctophilus corbeni</i>	eastern long-eared bat	Near threatened	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Strophurus taenicauda</i>	golden-tailed gecko	Near threatened	-	Medium

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Apus pacificus</i>	fork-tailed swift	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	cicadabird	-	-	✓	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-

Bonn – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement