

Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park

Resource Information

2026



Queensland
Government

This document is a compendium of park information and a supporting document for the associated management instrument (management plan or management statement). Management instruments are prepared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and include management direction for tenure which QPWS has management responsibility.

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1. Introduction

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), within the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), applies a contemporary management process that is based on international best practice and targets management towards the most important features of each park: their key values.

The Values-Based Management Framework (VBMF) is an adaptive management cycle that incorporates planning, prioritising, doing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting into all areas of our business. This enables the agency to be more flexible and proactive and to improve management effectiveness over time.

This document is a compendium of park information and a supporting document for key values and level of service assessment reports or management plans and management statements. It contains background information about a park's purpose, values, resources and legal and administrative framework.

2. Park overview

The following figure and table (Figure 1, Table 1) provide an overview of information related to the park included in this resource information document, including their locality, legislative framework and applicable plans/agreements.



Figure 1. Locality of Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park

Table 1. Overview of Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park

Park size	Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park	46.7 ha
Bioregion	Cape York Peninsula	
QPWS region	Northern	
Local government area	Cook Shire Council	
State electorate	Cook	
Relevant legislation	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>	
	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth) (EPBC)</i>	
	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>	
	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NCA)</i>	
	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>	
	<i>Land Act 1962</i>	
Plans and agreements	<i>Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)</i>	
	<i>National Multi-species Recovery Plan for the cycads</i>	
	<i>China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement</i>	
	<i>Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement</i>	
	<i>Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement</i>	

3. Resource information

3.1 Guugu Yimidhirr People

Mulbabidgee is a special place for the Waymbuurr clan of the Guugu Yimidhirr People, who have used this area for thousands of years, collecting a variety of animals and plants for food, medicines and raw materials.

Many of the plants in this area have traditional uses. The information below is provided by the Gungarde Aboriginal Corporation.

The hard timber from Cooktown ironwood *Erythrophleum chlorostachys* is used to make shields and spear tips. The roots also produce a tar like substance that can be used as an adhesive.

The bark from paperbark trees *Melaleuca* spp. is used to make watertight carrying baskets or 'coolamons'.

The semi-parasitic native cherry *Exocarpos latifolius* produces small, tasty orange-coloured fruit. The wood and leaves are used as a mosquito repellent and the wood is made into yam sticks.

Small nutritious seeds from inside the kernels of the screw pandanus *Pandanus spiralis* are eaten when ripe, and the leaves are used for weaving baskets.

The leaves of the soap tree *Alphitonia excelsa* are used for treating sores, aches and pains, and along with the fruit, are crushed to make a fish poison.

Stems of the whip vine *Flagellaria indica* can be used to make canoes, baskets and fish traps. An infusion, produced through crushing the inner stems and growing tips, is also a treatment for sore teeth, eyes and throats.

Yams *Dioscorea* spp. were important staple foods of the Waymbuurr People. The yam plant is actually a vine with an underground tuber that grows during the wet season. In the dry season, the vine dies off, a signal that the tuber is mature and ready to dig.

Weaver ants *Oecophylla* sp. construct nests by gluing together green leaves, using a secretion squeezed from the bodies of their pupae. A 'medicine' drink is made by squeezing and mixing handfuls of ants and their eggs with water.

3.2 Key value information

Based on an evaluation, the values on Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park do not reach the thresholds required to be considered a key value. The park, however, continues to contribute to the state's comprehensive and representative reserve system, providing protection for biodiversity, ecosystem services and connectivity within the landscape.

3.3 Other values

3.3.1 Natural ecosystem values

BVG 22ab *Melaleuca* in seasonally inundated coastal areas and seasonal swamps

RE 3.3.50j: *Melaleuca leucadendra* open forest +/- *Lophostemon suaveolens* +/- *Calycopeplus casuarinoides* — the sparse subcanopy contains canopy species +/- *Asteromyrtus symphyocarpa* +/- *Barringtonia acutangula*. The very sparse to mid-dense ground layer frequently contains *Pseudoraphis spinescens* or *Chrysopogon elongatus*. Occurs in swamps on floodplains. Palustrine. (BVG1M: 22b).

Vegetation community remnant statistics — 2.89% within this protected area; 87.63% unprotected; protected area rank 2/4.

BVG 34c Freshwater swamps on coastal floodplains

EVC 3.3.63: *Eleocharis* spp. open sedgeland swamps — *Eleocharis* spp. open sedgeland to sedgeland +/- *Fimbristylis* spp. Occurs on floodplain and non-floodplain landforms. Palustrine. (BVG1M: 34c). Important wetland habitat. Of concern. 0.05% on this protected area, 3.09% on other protected areas, 96.85% unprotected. Protected area rank 6 of 6. This RE is completely surrounded by RE 3.3.50j.

Keatings Lagoon — with the onset of the dry season, nearby wetlands dry out completely and this lagoon shrinks into a series of permanent waterholes that teem with life. At this time, Keatings Lagoon becomes an oasis for many species of waterbirds. They migrate here for the rich aquatic food source of the permanent waterholes.

3.3.2 Recreational opportunities – wildlife viewing

Wawu Balgal Bubu Walk on Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park provides a 1.4 kilometre walking trail along the lagoon edge, with a wheelchair-accessible bird hide for wildlife viewing. A high number of species occur, especially during the dry season.

One of the only wetlands that is publicly accessible, particularly all year round. Popular for birdwatchers as a freshwater lagoon, close to town. The absence of pigs makes the wetland attractive for birdwatching and wildlife spotting. Possibly used by tour operators.

There is a day-use area, including a picnic area.

3.4 Ecosystems and biodiversity

The park contains 13 regional ecosystems, of which 8 have special values for species habitat.

3.5 Species

The WildNet Database contains 114 recorded species within the park.

3.5.1 Native animals

The park is a dry season refuge for water birds. Two species (*Calidris ferruginea* and *Tringa nebularia*) are listed as critically endangered and endangered respectively under the NCA and EPBC. The common sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* is listed as special least concern under NCA. WildNet records four species of amphibian, 83 species of birds, one species of mammal and three species of reptile.

The last species records of conservation significant species within the park (WildNet) were in 1993.

3.5.2 Native plants

23 plants of the class Equisetopsida are listed on WildNet. Of these, three are identified as special least concern for their suitability as aquarium plants (*Blyxa aubertii*, *Nymphaea immutabilis* and *Ceratopteris thalictroides*).

3.6 Geophysical features

The lagoon is formed by a basin adjacent to Meldrum Creek. Wet season rainfall is trapped in the basin, supporting a large variety of wildlife throughout the year. During high rainfall years, parts of the surrounding woodland are temporarily inundated. The area is a popular feeding and breeding ground during the summer months. As the surrounding landscape dries over the winter, the lagoon contracts to a series of permanent waterholes, concentrating resources in the lagoon. In some years, the waterholes dry out altogether, and few birds appear.

3.7 Recreational opportunities

3.7.1 Camping

There are no camping facilities.

3.7.2 Day-use areas

A car park is located at the entrance to the park and there is a picnic shelter provided 700 metres along the walking track at the end of the Wawu Balgal Bubu Walk.

The bird hide is located about 500 metres along the walking track from the car park. The bird hide is designed to be wheelchair accessible.

3.8 Ecotourism

3.8.1 Tourism and visitor opportunities

The location is informally utilised by some organised tour groups, but there are no formal arrangements between QPWS and any tour operators.

3.9 Fire

There were wildfires in 2009 that threatened the park. As a result, increased effort has been put into establishing protection and prevention measures, including fuel reduction burning in adjacent properties and establishment and maintenance of fire breaks.

3.10 Pests

3.10.1 Pest plants

Hymenachne is present in isolated patches within the park. This is introduced from upstream locations and washes in with wet season influxes. It is the most significant weed threat to the park values.

Other weeds within the park or at the margins include Gamba grass, lantana, Siam weed, Guinea grass and grader grass. High biomass grasses generally are a threat to the park values. All weeds have potential to be introduced through wet season flooding events.

3.10.2 Pest animals

Pigs are the most significant pest animal threat to the park. The park has exclusion fencing, which works well to prevent significant impacts from pigs. They occasionally still get into the park; a trapping program is in place. The exclusion and control of pigs contributes significantly to the habitat values and birdwatching value of the park.

Other pest animals include cane toads.

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5. Appendices

Appendix A. Policy and management commitments

Gazettal details

Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park was gazetted as an environmental park in 1999.

Management obligations

- *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

Appendix B. Regional ecosystems of significance

Regional ecosystem	Description	Regional ecosystem class*	Biodiversity status**
3.11.6	<i>Eucalyptus platyphylla</i> +/- <i>E. leptophleba</i> +/- <i>Corymbia nesophila</i> open forest to woodland on hill slopes	Of concern	Of concern
3.3.63	<i>Eleocharis</i> spp. open sedgeland swamps	Least concern	Of concern
3.3.66	Lakes and lagoons dominated by a variety of aquatic plants, frequently with fringing woodlands or sedgelands	Least concern	Of concern
3.5.25	<i>Eucalyptus leptophleba</i> woodland on plains	Of concern	Of concern
3.5.26	<i>Eucalyptus platyphylla</i> +/- <i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i> woodland to open forest on flat wet plains	Of concern	Of concern
7.11.51	<i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i> and/or <i>Eucalyptus drepanophylla</i> open forest to woodland on metamorphics	Least concern	Of concern

* Vegetation Management Regional Ecosystem Description Database (VM REDD)

** Queensland Herbarium, Regional Ecosystem Description Database (REDD)

Appendix C. Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	NC Act status	EPBC Act status
Plants			
<i>Blyxa aubertii</i>		Special least concern	
<i>Nymphaea immutabilis</i>		Special least concern	
<i>Ceratopteris thalictroides</i>		Special least concern	
Animals			
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	curlew sandpiper	Critically endangered	Critically endangered
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	common greenshank	Endangered	Endangered
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	marsh sandpiper	Special least concern	

Appendix D. Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	CMS	JAMBA	ROKAMBA	CAMBA
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	curlew sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes:

This list includes local and migratory birds that regularly use the park for feeding, nesting and/or breeding. Species that may visit intermittently have not been included in this 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 E. Pests

Scientific name	Common name	Biosecurity Act 2014 status	Notes
Plants			
<i>Xanthium occidentale</i>	Noogoora burr	Restricted invasive	Riparian zones, springs and lakes infested. Impacts: • Outcompetes native species • Reduces park's natural values • Reduces visitors' appreciation of amenities Biocontrol (rust) has been introduced.
<i>Polypogon monspeliensis</i>	annual beard-grass		Unconfirmed record from Tunca Springs. • Significant threat to spring wetlands
Animals			
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	feral pig		Park-wide impacts: • Degrades artesian spring wetlands, resulting in reduced water quality, wetland extent and the abundance of endemic species • Pig rooting in the lake catchment contributes to the sedimentation of the lake systems • Direct predation of ground-nesting birds
<i>Capra hircus</i>	Feral goat		Park-wide impacts: • Overgrazing of artesian springs wetlands, resulting in the abundance of spring endemic species • Consumption of water can reduce the extent of artesian spring wetlands • Grazing of significant plants such as <i>M. densispicata</i> • Spreading weeds