

Coolum Creek 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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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Park overview	4
3. Resource Information	6
3.1 First Nations people	6
3.2 Key value information	6
3.2.1 Wetland habitat	6
3.3 Other values	6
3.3.1 Vulnerable water mouse <i>Xeromys myoides</i>	6
3.4 Ecosystems and biodiversity	6
3.4.1 Regional ecosystems	6
3.4.2 Wetlands	7
3.5 Species	8
3.5.1 Native animals	8
3.5.2 Native plants	8
3.6 Recreational opportunities	8
3.7 Post-contact cultural heritage	8
3.8 Partnerships	8
3.9 Scientific research	9
3.10 Fire	9
3.11 Pests	9
4. Bibliography	10
5. Appendices	11
Appendix A. Policy and management commitments	11
Appendix B. Regional ecosystems of significance	11
Appendix C. Species of conservation significance	11
Appendix D. Species listed in international agreements	12
Appendix E. Pests	12

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

Coolum Creek Conservation Park is located on the Sunshine Coast. The beachside suburbs of Coolum Beach, Yaroomba and Mount Coolum are just five kilometres east of the park. Maroochydore is 10 kilometres to the southeast. Coolum Creek runs along much of the park's eastern boundary and Yandina Creek runs through the north of the park.

The surrounding landscape has been highly modified for agriculture (sugar cane, grazing), commercial use and residential living; there is a sewage treatment plant to the east. The park is surrounded by freehold properties and reserves. There are no existing roads that connect to the park. There is a road reserve along Coolum Creek in the southeast corner of the park, however, there is no constructed road. Yandina-Coolum Road runs to the west of the park and West Coolum Road leads to Coolum Creek on the eastern side.

There are several other protected areas within a 10 kilometre radius of the park including Maroochy Wetlands Conservation Park, Noosa Conservation Park, Eumundi Conservation Park, Mount Coolum National Park, and Noosa National Park. Coolum Creek Nature Reserve is just 600 metres south of the park on the other side of the Maroochy River.

Coolum Creek Environmental Reserve adjoins the southern boundary of the park. It is situated at the junction of Coolum Creek and the Maroochy River and is managed by Sunshine Coast Regional Council. The land within the reserve was purchased by Council in 2004 and 2009, with the more recent purchase undertaken in partnership with the Australian Government's National Reserve System Caring for our Country grants (Sunshine Coast Council 2013).

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

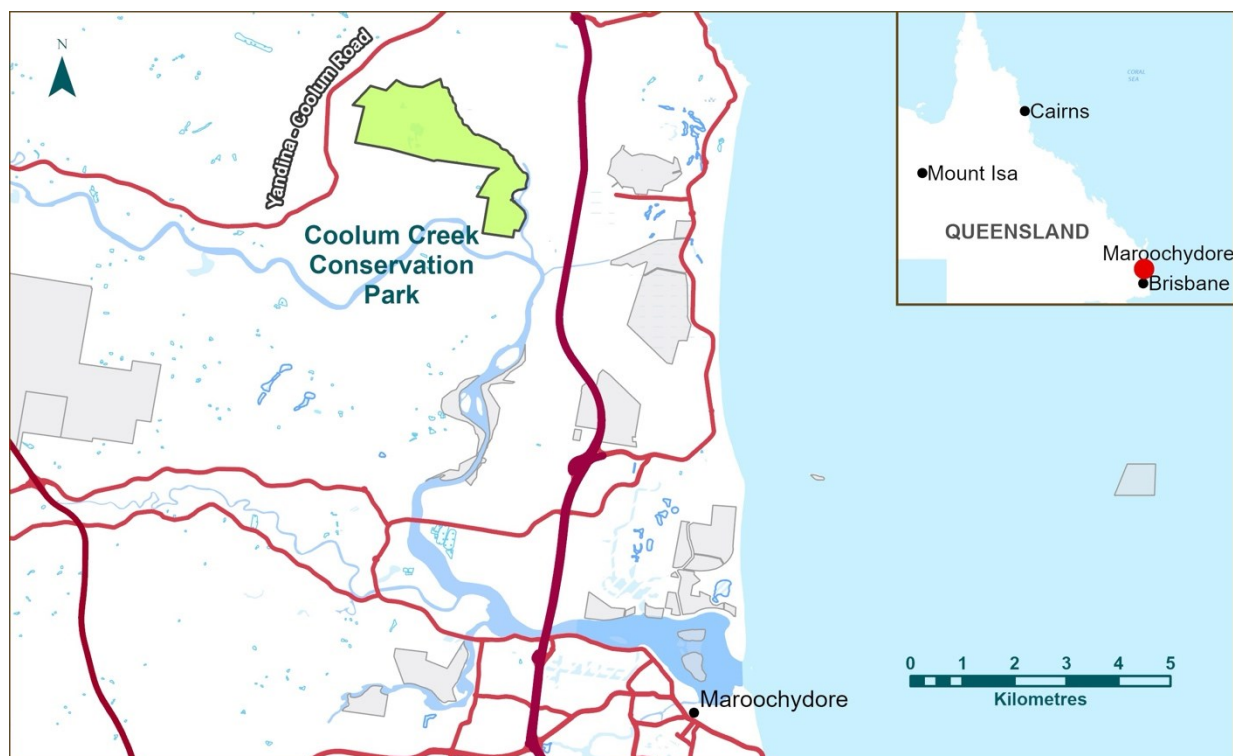


Figure 1. Locality of Coolum Creek Conservation Park

Table 1. Overview of Coolum Creek Conservation Park

Park size	Coolum Creek Conservation Park	342.4 ha
Bioregion	South Eastern Queensland	
QPWS region	South East Queensland	
Local government area	Sunshine Coast Regional	
State electorate	Ninderry	
Relevant legislation	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>	
	<i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i>	
	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cwlth)	
	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cwlth)	
	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>	
Plans and agreements	<i>A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia</i>	
	<i>The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012</i>	
	<i>National Recovery Plan for the Water Mouse (Xeromys myoides) 2022</i>	

3. Resource Information

3.1 First Nations people

There are no native title determinations or current applications for native title relating to the park.

A large native title claim that includes nearby land and waters including Coolum Creek was determined on 17 June 2024 (Tribunal Number QCD2024/002, Federal Court Number QUD20/2019), with native title held by the Kabi Kabi People.

3.2 Key value information

3.2.1 Wetland habitat

Wetland habitat extends across most of the park (95 per cent) and is contiguous with the Coolum Creek and Lower Maroochy River wetland system which is listed in *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*. The majority of the park's wetland (74.73 per cent) is swamp paperbark forest that is seasonally inundated. While this endangered regional ecosystem is found in 19 protected areas in Queensland, this park has the highest representation at 41.79 per cent of that protected. Within the swamp paperbark forest there are also freshwater swamp areas with sedges and grasses. Intertidal wetland covers 14.7 per cent of the park and includes mangrove forests and casuarina woodlands. The park's wetland provides habitat for vulnerable water mouse *Xeromys myoides*, two ferns with special least concern status and three migratory birds.

3.3 Other values

3.3.1 Vulnerable water mouse *Xeromys myoides*

The park contains habitat for the vulnerable water mouse. The water mouse lives in intertidal mangrove and saltmarsh habitats and in coastal and subcoastal freshwater and brackish wetlands, swamps and floodplains. It feeds primarily on crabs and other marine invertebrates in the damp intertidal zone. Surveys of the Maroochy River and tributaries estimated around 340-500 water mouse in a relatively small area, including along Coolum Creek.

3.4 Ecosystems and biodiversity

The park is part of the Sunshine Coast-Gold Coast Lowlands subregion of the South Eastern Queensland Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) bioregion.

A large part of the park is within a State Biodiversity Corridor, these corridors were identified to maintain and enhance ecological connectivity across the State.

The south eastern part of the park is within the Maroochy Fish Habitat Area.

3.4.1 Regional ecosystems

The park forms part of larger tract of remnant vegetation along Coolum Creek and the Maroochy River, providing important connectivity in the landscape.

The park has six regional ecosystems, one with endangered biodiversity status, two of concern (Appendix B) and three with no concern at present status. Most of the park (74.73 per cent) is comprised of just one endangered regional ecosystem (12.3.20). There is 7.29 hectares of non-remnant vegetation in the park (8.13 per cent).

Melaleuca quinquenervia, *Casuarina glauca* +/- *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *E. siderophloia*, *M. styphelioides* open forest on low coastal alluvial plains (12.3.20) has endangered biodiversity status

and covers 260.22 hectares (74.73 per cent) of the park — this is 7.59 per cent of the regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland and 41.79 per cent of that within the protected area estate. There are 19 parks within the protected area estate with this regional ecosystem, and this park contains the highest representation. While this regional ecosystem is known to provide potential habitat for *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA) listed species *Acacia attenuata*, *Allocasuarina emuina*, *Lenwebbia* sp. (Blackall Range P.R.Sharpe 5387), *Maundia triglochoides*, *Persicaria elatior*, *Phaius australis*, *P. bernaysii*, *Symplocos harroldii*, *Tecomanthe hillii*; and suitable habitat for koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* — none of these species have been recorded from the park. The Regional Ecosystem Description Database (REDD) fire management guideline for this regional ecosystem is late summer to mid-winter burns after rain and with a 25-70 per cent burn mosaic. The fire interval varies with the vegetation, 8-12 years for heath, 12-20 years for sedge and 6-20 years for mixed grass/shrub.

Casuarina glauca woodland on margins of marine clay plains (12.1.1) has of concern biodiversity status and covers 12.58 hectares (3.61 per cent) of the park — this is less than 0.5 per cent of the regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland and 1.17 per cent of that within the protected area estate. This regional ecosystem provides estuarine wetland habitat. The REDD fire management guideline for this regional ecosystem is early winter or storm burns of low to moderate intensity with a 6-7 year interval and retaining 25-50 per cent unburnt in any year.

Swamps with *Cyperus* spp., *Schoenoplectus* spp. and *Eleocharis* spp. (12.3.8) has of concern biodiversity status and covers 7.29 hectares (2.09 per cent) of the park — this is less than 0.5 per cent of the regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland and 4.89 per cent of that within the protected area estate. This regional ecosystem provides wetland habitat. The REDD fire management guideline for this regional ecosystem is that while not usually deliberately burnt, it may be burnt in association with surrounding vegetation when the swamp is wet.

The other three regional ecosystems (12.1.3, 12.3.5, 12.12.15) have no concern at present status and respectively comprise less than 0.5 per cent of that regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland or within the protected area estate.

Mangrove shrubland to low closed forest on marine clay plains and estuaries (12.1.3) covers 38.73 hectares (11.12 per cent) of the park. This regional ecosystem is known to provide potential habitat for threatened fauna species including the water mouse *Xeromys myoides* in the southern part of the bioregion — the vulnerable water mouse has been recorded from the park. The REDD fire management guideline for this regional ecosystem is not to burn.

Melaleuca quinquenervia open forest on coastal alluvium (12.3.5) covers a small 0.83 hectare area (0.24 per cent) of the park. While this regional ecosystem is known to provide suitable habitat for koalas *P. cinereus*; potential habitat for threatened plants including *P. australis* and *P. bernaysii*; and potential habitat for threatened animals including the wallum froglet *Crinia tinnula* — none of these species have been recorded from the park. The REDD fire management guideline for this regional ecosystem is the same as for regional ecosystem 12.3.20.

Mixed open forest including combinations of *Eucalyptus propinqua*, *E. siderophloia*, *Corymbia intermedia*, *E. microcorys*, *Lophostemon confertus* open forest on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks (12.12.15) covers a small 0.08 hectare area (0.02 per cent) of the park. While vegetation community 12.12.15b which is present within the park is known to provide suitable habitat for koalas *P. cinereus* — none have been recorded from the park. The REDD fire management guideline for this vegetation community is late summer to autumn burns of moderate to high intensity with a 20 year minimum fire interval and a 40-60 per cent mosaic burn.

3.4.2 Wetlands

Wetlands extend across most of the park (95 per cent) which is located within the Maroochy catchment. Palustrine (natural) wetland covers 272 hectares (78.1 per cent) and intertidal (saltmarsh, saltflats, mangroves) wetland natural covers 51 hectares (14.7 per cent).

The park's wetlands are contiguous with the Coolum Creek and Lower Maroochy River wetland system which is listed in *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* (QLD185). The Coolum Creek and

Lower Maroochy River wetland system covers 2140 hectares and is characterized by low coastal marshes, swamps, estuary and subcoastal tributaries.

3.5 Species

3.5.1 Native animals

There are 55 native animal species recorded from the park in the Department's Wildnet Database, they are all birds with least concern status. Three of them are migratory birds listed on international agreements (Appendix D).

The water mouse *Xeromys myoides* is known to inhabit the park. Surveys of the Maroochy River and its tributaries between 2011 and 2014 identified 169 active and 11 inactive water mouse nests, including nests along Coolum Creek. There are an estimated 340-500 water mouse in a relatively small area along the Maroochy River. The water mouse is listed as vulnerable under the NCA, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, *The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012* and the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. The water mouse is a terrestrial species that lives in intertidal mangrove and saltmarsh habitats and in coastal and subcoastal freshwater and brackish wetlands, swamps and floodplains. They build permanent mud nests where they shelter and breed, typically above the high water line and feed primarily on crabs and other marine invertebrates. (Kaluza *et al* 2016, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2023).

3.5.2 Native plants

There are 12 native plant species recorded from the park in the Department's Wildnet Database, two have conservation significance — special least concern fern *Telmatoblechnum indicum* and mangrove fern *Acrostichum speciosum* (Appendix C).

The fern *T. indicum* is often seen growing on sandy soils in swampy areas. Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander collected a specimen of it in 1770 from Botany Bay (Atlas of Living Australia).

The mangrove fern is usually seen in tidal flats, brackish swamps and mangroves.

3.6 Recreational opportunities

The park is accessible only by vessel. Visitors to the area are typically fishing, boating or paddling in Coolum Creek. There is a boat ramp opposite the park on the other side of Coolum Creek.

There are no visitor facilities within the park and camping is not permitted.

The Sunshine Coast Council's proposed Nambour to Coolum recreation trail connecting the hinterland to the coast is a planned network of up to 50km trails including a section through Coolum Creek Conservation Park.

3.7 Post-contact cultural heritage

There are remnants of past land use in the park, including parts of a sugar cane tram line and timber bridge.

3.8 Partnerships

The park is within the 'Blue Heart', an area of more than 5000 hectares in the Maroochy River catchment. This area also includes Council's Coolum Creek Environmental Reserve and Unitywater's Yandina Creek Wetland. The Blue Heart area provides flood storage for the Maroochy River Catchment and preservation is critical to ongoing flood management. The Blue Heart project is a partnership between Council, Kabi Kabi Peoples Aboriginal Corporation, Unitywater and the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation. Agricultural land within the Blue Heart that was formally

cleared, drained and used for sugar cane farming is transitioning into a mixture of wetland habits as old floodgates, bunds and weirs deteriorate and tidal flows return (DCCEEW 2021).

3.9 Scientific research

Permits have been issued for scientific research in the park, including wetland monitoring and species surveys.

3.10 Fire

Most of the park (78.60 per cent) contains regional ecosystems that need fire to be healthy, including the endangered melaleuca open forest.

3.11 Pests

There have been four pest species recorded from the park in the Department's Wildnet Database, they are all plants (Appendix E).

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5. Appendices

Appendix A. Policy and management commitments

Gazettal details

The park was gazetted as Coolum Creek Conservation Park under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA) on 29 November 2007.

There was a short period during 2014 to 2016 when certain classes of protected area under the NCA were removed, including conservation parks. During this time the park was a regional park under the NCA, until legislative amendments in 2016 removed the 'regional park' class of protected area and it was reinstated as a conservation park.

Appendix B. Regional ecosystems of significance

Regional ecosystem	Description	Regional ecosystem class*	Biodiversity status**
12.3.20	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> , <i>Casuarina glauca</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> , <i>E. siderophloia</i> , <i>M. styphelioides</i> open forest on low coastal alluvial plains	Endangered	Endangered
12.1.1	<i>Casuarina glauca</i> woodland on margins of marine clay plains	Of concern	Of concern
12.3.8	Swamps with <i>Cyperus</i> spp., <i>Schoenoplectus</i> spp. and <i>Eleocharis</i> spp.	Of 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>Acrostichum speciosum</i>	mangrove fern	Special Least Concern	
<i>Telmatoblechnum indicum</i>		Special Least Concern	
Animals			
<i>Xeromys myoides</i>	water mouse	Vulnerable	Vulnerable

Appendix D. Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	CMS	JAMBA	ROKAMBA	CAMBA
<i>Falco cenchroides</i>	nankeen kestrel	✓			
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle				✓
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓			

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>Baccharis halimifolia</i>	groundsel bush	Category 3	
<i>Hydrocotyle bonariensis</i>			
<i>Ipomoea cairica</i>			
<i>Urochloa mutica</i>			