

Speewah 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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May 2026

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Park overview	4
3. Resource information	6
3.1 First Nations people	6
3.2 World Heritage	6
3.3 Key value information	6
3.4 Other values	6
3.4.1 Vine forest	6
3.4.2 Visitor opportunities	6
3.5 Ecosystems and biodiversity	6
3.5.1 Regional ecosystems	7
3.6 Species	7
3.7 Recreational opportunities	7
3.7.1 Day-use area	7
3.7.2 Camping	7
3.7.3 Walking tracks	8
3.8 Post-contact cultural heritage	8
3.9 Fire	8
3.10 Pests	8
4. Bibliography	9
5. Appendices	10
Appendix A. Policy and management commitments	10
Appendix B. Species of conservation significance	10
Appendix C. Species listed in international agreements	10

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

Speewah Conservation Park is in the Cairns hinterland, seven kilometres south of the town of Kuranda and on the eastern side of the rural community of Speewah. The park is surrounded by freehold properties and road reserves. Stony Creek Road runs to the south of the park and connects with Smiths Track, which provides access into the park.

Barron Gorge National Park is adjacent to the park's eastern boundary, separated by an undeveloped road reserve. There are many other protected areas within a 15 kilometre radius of the park, including Kuranda and Dinden national parks; Jumrum Creek, Mount Whitfield, Smithfield and Kamerunga conservation parks; Dinden West and Kuranda West forest reserves, and Bilwon, Kuranda, Formartine and Dinden state forests. There are also several nature reserves in the surrounding landscape.

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

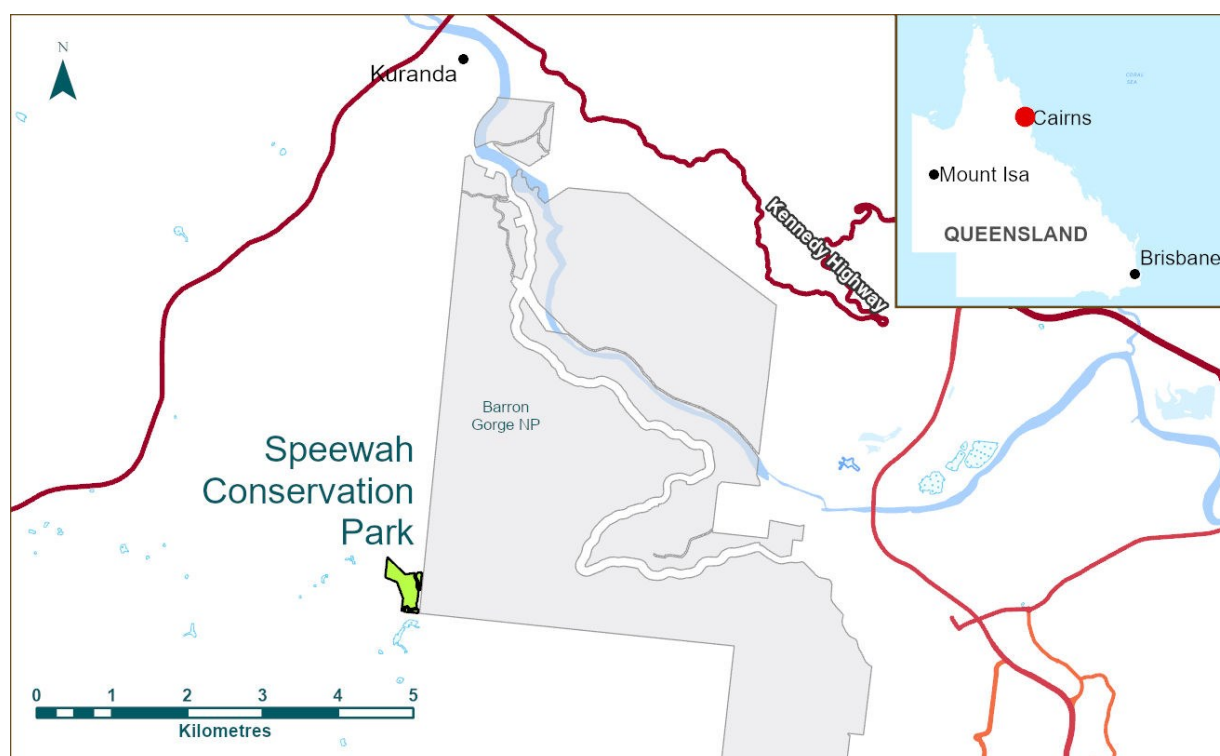


Figure 1. Locality of Speewah Conservation Park

Table 1. Overview of Speewah Conservation Park

Park size	Speewah Conservation Park	15.2 ha
Bioregion	Wet Tropics	
QPWS region	Northern	
Local government area	Mareeba Shire Council	
State electorate	Barron River	
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> (NCA)	
Plans and agreements	<i>National recovery plan for the southern cassowary <i>Casuarius casuarius johnsonii</i></i>	
	<i>Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals</i>	
	<i>China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement</i>	
	<i>Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement</i>	

3. Resource information

3.1 First Nations people

There is an active native title claim that includes the park. It was registered on 30 April 2024 on behalf of the Djabugay Nation (Tribunal Number QC2024/001, Federal Court number QUD692/2016). The claim covers an area of around 1306 square kilometres between Mossman in the north to Cairns in the south, and extending inland generally south-west to Mareeba.

3.2 World Heritage

The park adjoins the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, with a common boundary along the eastern side of the park. The Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage List (ID 486) on 9 December 1988 at the 12th session of the World Heritage Committee. It stretches around 450 kilometres along the north-east coast of Australia and covers 894,420 hectares, most of which is tropical rainforest. These rainforests are recognised for their ancient ancestry and contain relicts of the great Gondwanan forest that covered Australia and parts of Antarctica 50–100 million years ago. The Wet Tropics supports exceptionally high species diversity, including hundreds of endemic species found nowhere else in the world. The World Heritage Area is also recognised for its exceptional natural beauty, with extensive forests, wild rivers and waterfalls, rugged gorges and coastal scenery.

3.3 Key value information

Based on an evaluation, the park's values 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.

3.4 Other values

3.4.1 Vine forest

Simple to complex mesophyll to notophyll vine forest covers two thirds of the park and requires protection from fire. While this regional ecosystem (7.11.1) has no biodiversity concern at present, it provides habitat for the endangered southern cassowary, which has been recorded from the park. The park provides connectivity with other remnant vegetation in the landscape, is within a State Biodiversity Corridor and adjoins the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

3.4.2 Visitor opportunities

The park provides opportunities for locals and visitors to spend time in the day-use area, explore the walking tracks in adjacent Barron Gorge National Park and camp overnight. Facilities include picnic tables, barbecues, toilets and showers. Parking is available and information shelters provide guidance on where to access the walking tracks.

3.5 Ecosystems and biodiversity

The park is part of the Macalister subregion of the Wet Tropics Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) bioregion.

Surprise Creek runs through the park, which is located within the Barron River subcatchment of the Barron catchment.

The park is within a State Biodiversity Corridor. These corridors were identified to maintain and enhance ecological connectivity across the state.

3.5.1 Regional ecosystems

Given its proximity to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the park forms part of an expansive area of remnant vegetation in the landscape.

There is just one regional ecosystem within the park. Simple to complex mesophyll to notophyll vine forest on moderately to poorly drained metamorphics (excluding amphibolites) of moderate fertility of the moist and wet lowlands, foothills and uplands (7.11.1) has no concern at present biodiversity status and covers 10.13 hectares (66.79 per cent) of the park — this is less than 0.5 per cent of this regional ecosystem remaining in Queensland or within the protected area estate. While this regional ecosystem is known to provide potential habitat for many threatened plants species, no plant species of conservation significance have been recorded from the park. The Regional Ecosystem Description Database (REDD) fire guideline for this regional ecosystem is to not burn deliberately.

Non-remnant vegetation covers 5.03 hectares (33.21 per cent) of the park.

3.6 Species

There are 66 native animal species (3 frogs, 3 reptiles, 60 birds), one native plant species and 14 native fungi species recorded from the park.

There is one species of conservation significance recorded from the park (Appendix B), the endangered southern cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* (southern population). The southern cassowary is a large flightless bird and the largest native vertebrate in Australian rainforests. Adults grow to two metres tall. The species was once more widespread in north-east Queensland rainforests; however, there are now just three remaining populations, one in the Wet Tropics and two in Cape York. The southern cassowary is a significant species to First Nations peoples (Queensland Government 2025, Latch 2007).

Four of the 60 birds are migratory species listed on international agreements (Appendix C).

3.7 Recreational opportunities

The park is a popular destination for day visitors and overnight campers. There is a day-use area and a camping area.

Facilities include picnic tables, toilets, cold showers and barbecues. The toilets and shower facilities are wheelchair accessible. Parking areas are designated, and information shelters are provided. Some of the tables are located alongside the creek.

The entrance road to the park along Smiths Track is accessible by conventional vehicle, but it is not suitable for towing caravans.

3.7.1 Day-use area

The day-use area is popular with locals and visitors. The grassy area provides room for picnics and other outdoor activities, including birdwatching.

3.7.2 Camping

The park provides the nearest camping area to Barron Gorge National Park.

There is a large communal area for tent camping. Multiple groups can camp in this area, which can accommodate 45 people at any time. This is the only area where fires are allowed in the park, and they must be in the designated fire pit.

There are also three individual sites suitable for tents, camper trailers or campervans. Each site can accommodate up to 10 people at any time, and two cars with trailers or tents or two campervans.

3.7.3 Walking tracks

There are walking tracks in adjacent Barron Gorge National Park that can be accessed from the conservation park.

The 800 metre long Djina-Wu track starts in the conservation park and then enters the national park, where it connects with a variety of other tracks, including the 8.5 kilometre Smiths Track and the 8.5 kilometre Douglas Track (one-way distances). There are both short walk and longer day hike opportunities within the national park.

3.8 Post-contact cultural heritage

There are no known post-contact cultural heritage sites within the park.

Prior to gazettal, the area was used for cattle grazing. Revegetation was undertaken when the day-use and camping areas were constructed.

3.9 Fire

The one regional ecosystem within the park should not be deliberately burnt.

3.10 Pests

There are no pest records for the park in the department's WildNet Database, but pigs have been sighted in the park.

4. Bibliography

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5. Appendices

Appendix A. Policy and management commitments

Gazettal details

The park was originally gazetted as Speewah Conservation Park under the NCA on 17 December 2004 and again on 1 July 2016

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.

Recovery plans and guides

- National recovery plan for the southern cassowary *Casuarius casuarius johnsonii*

Appendix B. Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	NC Act status	EPBC Act status
<i>Casuarius casuarius</i> (southern population)	southern cassowary (southern population)	Endangered	Endangered

Appendix C. Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	CMS	JAMBA	ROKAMBA	CAMBA
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle				✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater		✓		
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓			
<i>Symposiachrus trivirgatus</i>	spectacled monarch	✓			

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