

Background Information

Extensive natural landscapes characterise the Northern Territory. All parts of the landscape contribute to the Territory's outstanding conservation value but some components are particularly special, because they support species not found anywhere else, provide key habitat for threatened species, and/or support unusually large numbers of animals (e.g. nesting colonies of waterbirds).

In the Natural Heritage Trust project ***Recognising Sites of Conservation Significance in the Northern Territory*** we attempt to describe these particularly important sites, in relation to specific criteria. These sites are defined based on information held by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that this information is available to landholders and others to help them plan for and manage their lands.

Project aims

1. Identify sites of outstanding conservation significance in the Northern Territory.
2. Collate data and information on sites of international and national significance.
3. With interested landholders, prioritise sites for potential future off-reserve collaborative management initiatives.

Methods

Sites of conservation significance in the Northern Territory were outlined in the draft NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan (NRETA, 2005). Many of these sites are considered of international or national significance because of their values, including:

- a concentration of threatened species;
- a concentration of endemic species;
- large aggregations of wildlife;
- wetland value; and/or
- botanical values.

From this project, detailed information papers were prepared to describe these values, management issues and current conservation initiatives. These papers justify the significance rating assigned to each site.



Groote Eylandt: a site with significant conservation value

Outputs and outcomes

The recognition of sites in this project does not provide any new regulatory or legislative protection above what is already present. For example, known locations of threatened species may already have legislative protection.

The major outputs of this project include 67 information papers and a centralised database that contains all key information.

The project also highlights where high conservation values are located in the Northern Territory, which will enable a strategic approach to off-reserve conservation in the future. In partnership with landholders, there are potential opportunities to trial off-reserve conservation initiatives. This collaborative approach will build the capacity of local groups and landholders to manage and conserve sites of conservation significance.