

3. Definitions and data sources

Detailed information on the specific criteria used to assess the conservation significance of sites is documented in the accompanying report "*Recognising Sites of Conservation Significance for biodiversity values in the Northern Territory*" (Ward and Harrison 2009). The definitions and data sources listed here provide clarification on other information presented in the site information papers.

Ecological Description (Page 1)

The ecological description of each site is based on referenced information and data provided in the accompanying table, and where there is no supporting information or data available (such as for "Condition" and "Current Conservation Initiatives"), these sections are based on other information located by the authors and on the contributions of experts and others familiar with the site.

Location and description: Distance from the nearest major centre to the site has been calculated using the distance from the major centre to the centre point of the site.

Tenure and land use: Tenure types referred to include pastoral leasehold, crown, freehold (Aboriginal freehold land and other freehold title are listed separately) and land in reserves. Where applicable, a main land use for the site has been identified along with additional land uses. Land uses referred to in the report include pastoral operations, conservation, recreation, tourism, Indigenous, horticulture, aquaculture, residential and rural-residential.

Where the population of nearest town or community is identified, this is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 <http://www.abs.gov.au/>

Map (Page 2)

The map for a site includes data and from a range of sources, including topographic and landscape mapping, through to point locations of flora and fauna observations. A summary of the sources and how they were used is given in Table 1.

Table of key site data and information (Pages 3-end)

The table of site information is compiled from existing sources, such as flora and fauna databases curated by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport, and reports or scientific papers where available. The source of the information is cited, or where the source of the information is not cited, the source is the contributor(s) identified in the Key References section of the table.

Management Issues - Fire: Fires in the NT are mapped from satellite data by the Bushfires NT under the North Australia Fire Information Project

<http://www.firenorth.org.au/nafi/app/init.jsp>

These data were used to produce maps of the number of fires across each site and to calculate a fire frequency (number of fire/year). The average proportion burnt in a site was calculated from the number of pixels in each site burnt each year.

Management Information - NRM groups: This includes groups working on natural resource management issues such as Indigenous ranger groups, community Landcare groups and conservation associations. Other government and non-government groups (such as Parks and Wildlife rangers and pastoralists) also manage a range of natural resource issues in many sites but this section aims to capture other specific groups working on off-reserve conservation initiatives.

Management Information - Protected areas: The protected area data are compiled from the NT Cadastre / Parks records and includes all categories of parks and reserves including private, state and national parks, and Indigenous Protected Areas.

Table 1. Sources of data used in the preparation of maps for each site of conservation significance in the NT.

Data layer	Source	Comments
Topographic background map (250k raster)	Geoscience Australia	This is a consistent quality NT wide backdrop appropriate to the scale of most sites.
Landscape classes	Aggregated from the NRTEAS land system mapping	The ecological values of a site are often associated with one or more specific habitat types (or landscape classes). Landscape classes are shown on each map to provide a surrogate for basic habitat information in the absence of consistent and detailed vegetation mapping across the NT.
Parks and conservation reserves	Assembled from NT Cadastre / Parks records	This layer includes all categories of parks and reserves including private, state and national parks, and Indigenous Protected Areas.
Rainforest	Russell-Smith 1991	When necessary (eg for some riparian fringes) these have been graphically widened to make them visible at the map scale.
Threatened flora	NRETAS flora database	For some sites where there have been intensive surveys, large numbers of records of some threatened species impair readability at the map scale. In these cases, some records were thinned to make maps more user-friendly.
Threatened fauna	NRETAS fauna database	For some sites where there have been intensive surveys, large numbers of records of some threatened species impair readability at the map scale. In these cases, some records were thinned to make maps more user-friendly.
Marine turtle nesting	Chatto and Baker 2008	Significant turtle nesting areas identified on maps may include small areas of unsuitable nesting habitat due to the mapping scale used.
Seabird colonies	Chatto 2001	
Waterbird colonies	Chatto 2000	Only confirmed colonies are illustrated.
Important waterbird records	Chatto 2006 and Chatto unpublished data	Includes records of waterbirds considered significant by Ray Chatto and may include records that meet international or national population thresholds but are mostly records that are considered of regional or Territory importance. One record may represent multiple records of different species.
Important shorebirds records	Chatto 2003 and Chatto unpublished data	Includes records of waterbirds considered significant by Ray Chatto and may include records that meet international or national population thresholds but are mostly records that are considered of regional or Territory importance. One record may represent multiple records of different species.
Site of conservation significance boundary	Ward and Harrison 2009	Methodology is described in Ward and Harrison 2009.

Note: In some cases, individual species records shown on maps may have been moved slightly to reduce overlap of records and improve visibility and readability.

4. References

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5. Contributors

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, THE ARTS & SPORT

Dave Albrecht, Alice Springs Herbarium, Alice Springs
Bryan Baker, Senior Policy Unit, Darwin
Jason Barnetson, Rangelands Management, Alice Springs
Michael Braby, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Kym Brennan, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Chris Brock, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Chris Brown, Weeds Management, Alice Springs
Ray Chatto, Marine Biodiversity, Darwin
Jeff Cole, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Ian Cowie, NT Herbarium, Darwin
Robyn Delaney, Wildlife Management, Darwin
Peter Dostine, Darwin
Angus Duguid, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Karen Edyvane, Marine Biodiversity, Darwin
Alaric Fisher, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Tony Griffiths, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Graeme Horne, Parks and Wildlife Service NT, Alice Springs
Helen Larson, Museum and Art Gallery of the NT, Darwin
Dave Liddle, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Catherine Nano, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Theresa (Ada) Nano, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Carol Palmer, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin
Chris Pavey, Biodiversity Conservation, Alice Springs
Scott Whiting, Marine Biodiversity, Darwin
David Williams, Coastal and Marine Hydrology, Darwin
John Woinarski, Biodiversity Conservation, Darwin

CONSULTANTS & NATURALISTS

Matt Bolam, MB Consulting, Darwin
Kristin Metcalfe, Consultant Environmental Scientist, Darwin
Ian Morris, Naturalist, Noonamah
Arthur and Sheryl Keates, Naturalists, Darwin
Victor Kessner, Malacologist, Adelaide River
Peter Latz, Botanist, Alice Springs
Rachel Paltridge, Desert Wildlife Services, Alice Springs

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Peter Barker, Greening Australia NT, Alice Springs
Brydie Hill, Threatened Species Network, WWF, Darwin
Roger Jaensch, Wetlands International Oceania, Brisbane

NORTHERN & CENTRAL LAND COUNCILS

Ritchie Brittingham, CLC, Alice Springs
Will Dobbie, CLC, Alice Springs
Peter Donohoe, CLC, Alice Springs
James Young, CLC, Alice Springs
Kim Webeck, CLC, Alice Springs

CSIRO

Melanie Bradley, CSIRO Tropical Ecosystems Research Centre, Darwin
Richard Pillans, CSIRO Marine Research, Queensland

OTHER

Kerrie Bennison, Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, Parks Australia
Jane Dermer, Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Nhulunbuy
Mike Letnic, University of Sydney, Sydney
Karen May, NRM Board (NT), Alice Springs
Danae Moore and Josef Schofield, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary
Ben Phillips, University of Sydney, Darwin
Natalie Turner, Centralian Land Management Association, Alice Springs
George Wilson, Australian Museum, Sydney

6. Abbreviations and glossary

Biodiversity – The number and variety of plants and animals (and other organisms) found in a region.

Bioregion, Biogeographic region – The Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA 6.1) divides the Australian continent into 85 bioregions, 24 of which occur in the NT. These are areas of similar landforms and climate.

Colonial seabirds – Seabirds include gulls, terns, cormorants and petrels, and spend much of their time at sea. They typically form breeding colonies, often on off-shore islands. Note, however, that many seabirds also spend considerable time around wetlands (e.g. some terns and cormorants).

Criterion, criteria – A standard, rule, or test on which a judgment or decision can be based. Often combined with thresholds.

Critically Endangered (CR) – A classification level for threatened species: facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

Delineation – Placing boundaries around something. In this case it involves placing lines on maps to define the boundaries of the sites.

DEWHA – Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; the Australian government department that administers the EPBC Act, oversees DIWA, the Australian Ramsar estate, National and World Heritage lists, and administers the National Heritage Trust (now replaced by Caring for our Country).

DIPE – Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment; former name of the NT Government Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS).

Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA) – (now online as the Australian Wetlands Database) – A listing of important wetlands in Australia, maintained by the Australian Government's Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, using data supplied by State and Territory agencies. The directory is likely to be replaced in the near future by a list of

nationally significant High Conservation Value Aquatic Ecosystems.

East Asian-Australasian flyway / shorebird network – Many species of shorebirds migrate each year between the northern and southern hemispheres. The East Asian-Australasian shorebird network aims to protect important sites for migrating shorebirds along the flyway and there is a series of criteria for identifying and listing those important sites (see Appendix 2).

Ecological communities – These are groups of species that live and interact with one-another within a habitat. Every place has an ecological community, which is shaped by the nature of that place; typical temperatures, rainfall, geology, history, etc. Ecological communities typically have more ecological importance than the simple list of species that they contain.

Endangered (EN) – A classification level for threatened species: facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

Endemic species – Those that occur only within a restricted area. They may, or may not, be listed as threatened. Species endemic to the NT are those that are not found naturally outside of the NT.

EPBC Act – The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*; the Australian Government's major piece of conservation legislation. Included within the EPBC Act is a listing of nationally threatened species.

Exotic species – Plants and animals that are not native to an area. This includes weeds and feral animals, and also includes Australian native species that don't naturally occur in an area. Contrasts with indigenous species.

Extinct (EX) – A species (or other taxon) for which there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died.

Family (of plants or animals) – The level of biological classification two up from species. Species are grouped into genera and genera are grouped into families. Families are grouped into Orders. Most kangaroo-like animals are in a single family, as are all grasses. There are four families of Australian frogs.

Fish spawning or nursery areas – Baby fish often live in habitats very different to those used by adults. As a consequence, adult fish often move to different areas to lay eggs (spawn) and these areas typically provide more protection for small growing fish. Mangroves and other areas of submerged vegetation are often good fish spawning or nursery areas.

Floodout – Where a river or stream in the arid zone flows out into a plain and no longer continues as a channel.

Genus (pl., genera) – The level of biological classification above *species*. Species are grouped into genera and genera are grouped into families. *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia* and *Litoria* (tree frogs) are genera containing many species.

Habitat – The type of environment in which an organism or group normally lives or occurs.

Hydrology – The scientific study of the properties, distribution, and effects of water on the earth's surface, in the soil and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere.

Important Bird Areas (IBA) – An international initiative by BirdLife International to identify those areas around the world of international importance to the conservation of birds. BirdLife International has defined a series of criteria and thresholds for the identification of IBAs (see Appendix 2), and Birds Australia is using these criteria to identify IBAs in Australia.

Indigenous species – Plants and animals that are native to an area. Contrasts with exotic species.

International conservation significance – Having conservation values that make it important in a global or world context (see also National conservation significance).

IUCN Red List – The International Union for the Conservation of Species' (IUCN) list of globally threatened species. Also see threatened species and EPBC Act.

Karst – Limestone cave systems, often associated with underground streams and springs. Often have a distinct and poorly known set of plants and animals.

LCNT – The Landcare Council of the NT, a non-governmental body that administered the National Heritage Trust (NHT)-2 process in the NT. This included the development of the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for the NT (LCNT 2005a) and the subsequent Regional Investment Strategy 2005-2007 (LCNT 2005b). This project was funded under this investment strategy.

Life-history stages – Stages in a life cycle. For example, as a mammal grows it passes through embryonic, infant,

juvenile, subadult and adult life-history stages.

Migratory – Move long distances in a seasonal and predictable manner.

National conservation significance – Having conservation values that make it important in the Australian context (see also International conservation significance).

NRETAS – The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport is part of the NT Government. Formerly Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts (NRETA) and Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment (DIPE) – now the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

NRM – Natural Resource Management. Natural resources are in essence soil, water, plants and animals. The management of these resources involves a balance between caring for our environment and meeting the needs of those who make a living from these resources or use them for leisure and recreation.

NRM groups – Groups (associated with government or non-government organisations) which are working on natural resource management issues. These can include Indigenous ranger groups, community Landcare groups and conservation associations.

Objective – Not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; based on facts; unbiased.

Rainforests – Two broad categories of rainforest are found in the NT; those associated with springs or other permanent streams or rivers; and those that are in seasonally dry, typically freely draining places such as coastal dunes, floodplain margins or rocky outcrops. All are patchily distributed in the environment but provide important refuges for many species. They typically have high biodiversity values.

Ramsar – Shorthand for the Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. This is an international treaty, signed by Australia, which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Ramsar Convention has a series of criteria and thresholds for identifying wetlands of international importance. Three such wetlands have been identified and listed in the NT (Cobourg, Kakadu I and Kakadu II), but other sites in the NT also exceed some of the criteria and thresholds.

Refuge, refugium (pl. refugia) – A place where animals or plants shelter during periods of harsh environmental conditions. In some cases this may be on an annual cycle, or a longer-term seasonal cycle, but the term may also refer to cycles

involving species over hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of years.

Register of the National Estate – A list of places of outstanding natural, Indigenous and historic heritage throughout Australia, kept by the Australian Government. Many come under the protection of the EPBC Act.

Relictual species – Typically species that persist only in small patches of suitable habitat but had a broader distribution in the region in the past, when climate was different.

Shorebirds – Also called waders, are the group of birds that includes species like plovers, sandpipers and curlews. They are often migratory, so may only be present in large numbers at particular times of year. Because many migrate to breed in the northern hemisphere, they pass through many countries and are the focus of much international conservation effort (see also East Asian-Australasian flyway network).

Species – The basic category of biological classification, composed of related individuals that resemble one another and are able to breed among themselves. Subspecies are groups within species that have distinct characteristics (e.g. colour patterns), but can still breed with members of other subspecies. Species are grouped in genera, and a species' name has two components: *Genus species*. A subspecies name may be tagged on the end, e.g. the Tiwi masked owl is *Tyto novaehollandiae melvillensis*. (See also Family)

Stakeholder – A person or group that has interests, other than financial, in the operation of an enterprise or activity. In the NRM world of the NT, these are often Traditional Owners, community groups, non-government conservation organisations, etc.

Sustainable populations – Populations of plants and animals that can persist and continue to evolve in the long term, without management intervention. Small populations or populations facing serious threatening processes are often considered not sustainable.

Taxon, (pl. taxa) – A unit or group within a biological classification. May be a subspecies, species, genus, family, etc.

Threatened species – Those plant or animal species that we fear may go extinct in the foreseeable future. The IUCN has set criteria and thresholds for three levels of threatened species; Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered. These criteria and thresholds are used within Australia to assess the conservation status of Australian species at both the national level (under the EPBC Act), and within the NT (see www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/animals/threatened/).

Threshold - The level above which a criterion is considered to be met. Generally, thresholds for National significance are lower than those for International significance.

Tier 1 Monitoring points – The Tier 1 Monitoring System (or Photopoint System) is an on-ground monitoring program run by NRETAS that aims to help pastoralists with management decisions by recording changes at specific pasture sites over time.

VRDCA – Victoria River District Conservation Association.

Vulnerable (VU) – A classification level for threatened species: facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

Waterbirds – The group of birds that includes ducks, herons, jacanas and storks. They are typically dependent on wetlands, but some may also be found feeding in coastal areas. When the term 'waterbirds' is used in Ramsar Criteria for wetlands of international significance it refers more broadly to a combination of waterbirds, shorebirds and seabirds, all of which may feed and or breed in wetlands.

Weeds of National Significance (WONS) – In 1998, Australian governments endorsed a framework to identify which weed species could be considered WONS within agricultural, forestry or environmental contexts. Twenty weeds have been listed (see <http://www.weeds.gov.au/weeds/lists/wons.html>). Other important environmental weeds in the NT are not on this National list.

Wetlands – Areas containing plant and animal communities that are adapted to being permanently or periodically covered by water. In some cases the periodicity of flooding may be very infrequent, especially in the arid areas of the NT, and for much of the time the 'wetland' is dry. However, wetland communities flourish there after flooding.

Wildlife aggregations – Concentrations of wildlife (often birds or nesting turtles). These are often not permanent, but are taken to indicate that the place is important to that wildlife species (or group of species) for at least some part of its life-cycle.

7. Photo index

Photo title	Page no.
Andado sand dune	21
Stand of <i>Acacia peuce</i> at Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve, Andado	21
<i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i> swamp is widespread throughout the Arafura Swamp	35
Beddome Range area	40
Egret breeding colony, Birrindudu	45
Australian rice, Birrindudu Marshes	45
West coast of Isle Woodah, Blue Mud Bay	50
Yilpra floodplain, Blue Mud Bay	50
Olive Ridley hatchlings	67
Migratory shorebirds	67
Magpie geese feeding	68
Crested tern colony, Seagull Island, Tiwi Islands	68
Cape Don, Cobourg Peninsula	81
Clear waters and high vegetated banks typical of the middle reaches of the Daly River	90
The threatened Merten's Water Monitor <i>Varanus mertensi</i> , which is found at the site	90
A spring-fed waterhole in the Dulcie Ranges	104
The restricted range fern <i>Imperata cylindrica</i> is found in the Dulcie Ranges	104
Kings Creek in the George Gill Range	133
Ormiston Gorge in the Western MacDonnell Ranges	146
Angarbulumardja Island, Groote Eylandt	151
The Howard River Toadlet <i>Uperoleia daviesae</i> is known only from the Howard and Elizabeth River catchments	156
Melaleuca woodland, Moyle River floodplain	161
Egret colony, Top End coastal site	161
Karinga Creek system from Mount Connor Outlook	166
Keep River National Park	171
The braided channels of the Lander River	188

Photo title	Page no.
Lake Surprise after an inundation event	188
Big Hole Pelican Colony, Lake Sylvester system	194
Ibis Colony, Lake Sylvester system	194
Lake Woods	200
Eva Downs Swamp	200
Coastline north of Limmen River	209
Saline flats in the McArthur River area	227
Mt Leibig	228
The Peterman Ranges	228
Stoney deserts of the Rodinga Range	228
The threatened Brush-tailed Mulgara <i>Dasyercus blythii</i> is found at the Newhaven Lakes site	245
The threatened Great Desert Skink <i>Egernia kintorei</i> is found at the Newhaven Lakes site	245
Flock of migratory shorebirds on tidal flats, Shoal Bay	262
Coastal rocks and hillside, Centre Is., Sir Edward Pellew Island group	267
Spinifex country, Sangster's Bore, South-west Tanami Desert	272
Wooded swamp, Tarrabool Lake	277
Melville Island wetland, Tiwi Islands	283
Kata Tjuta	288
Southern marsupial mole, a threatened species in much of the Arid NT sand country	288
Jensen Bay east coast, Wessel and English Company Island Group	302
Jensen Bay Lake, Wessel and English Company Island Group	302
Northern outliers of the Western Arnhem Plateau	321
Five Ways, Jabiru, Western Arnhem Plateau	321
Camel Creek, Woollogorang and China Wall sandstone ranges	321