



# COMMUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment and Water Resources**



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## Issue 7: March 2007

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## Changes to the EPBC Act – listing threatened species, ecological communities and key threatening processes

Amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) have established a new process for listing threatened species, ecological communities and key threatening processes.

The amendments commenced on 19 February 2007.

The new process is designed to improve the effectiveness of listing with a more strategic approach focussing on those species and ecological communities in greatest need of protection. The key changes to the listing process are:

- the option for the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water Resources to establish a conservation theme; *and*
- the establishment of an assessment cycle.

### Conservation theme

The Minister may determine a conservation theme, and invite nominations for species, ecological communities and key threatening processes that reflect this theme. Themes could include, for instance, particular species or groups of species, or geographic regions, which would benefit from particular attention. The Minister may consider advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (the Committee) in determining the theme.

The establishment of a conservation theme is optional. The Minister has decided there will be no conservation theme for the first assessment cycle.

### Nomination and assessment cycle

The establishment of an assessment cycle will allow priorities and work programmes to focus on those species and ecological communities that are in greatest need of protection.

The process will commence with a public call for nominations that can be made over a period of at least 40 business days. Nominations for the first assessment cycle can be submitted between 10 March 2007 and 10 May 2007. The advertisement calling for nominations has been published in newspapers across the nation and is included below. Nominations will then be forwarded to the Committee, who will prepare a proposed priority assessment list of

### Changes to the EPBC Act - what you need to know

- The amendments commenced on 19 February 2007
- A nomination assessment cycle has been established by the amendments
- There will be no conservation theme for first assessment cycle nominations
- Nominations for the first assessment cycle can be submitted between 10 March 2007 and 10 May 2007
- To make a nomination, please use the revised nomination forms and guidelines which are available at:  
[www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations)

# Communities for Communities

nominations. Inclusion of nominations on this list will take into account the conservation theme (if one is established) and the Committee's views about which nominations are of high conservation priority, as well as the Committee's capacity to undertake assessments.

The Minister will consider the proposed priority assessment list developed by the Committee and may make changes to the list. The final priority assessment list will be made publicly available. Nominations on the priority assessment list will be assessed within the final assessment period suggested by the Committee and agreed by the Minister. The Committee will invite public and expert comment on the nominations during the assessment period. At the end of the assessment period, the Committee's advice will be provided to the Minister, who will make a decision regarding whether a species, ecological community or key threatening process is eligible for listing under the EPBC Act.

Flowchart of the listing process for threatened species, ecological communities and key threatening processes nominations



Further information about the EPBC Act is available from the Department of the Environment and Water Resources web site [www.environment.gov.au/epbc](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc), or by contacting the Department's Community Information Unit, email [ciu@environment.gov.au](mailto:ciu@environment.gov.au), or freecall 1800 803 772.



**Australian Government**  
**Department of the Environment and Water Resources**

## Opportunity to nominate species and ecological communities for listing as threatened

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources is seeking nominations for consideration under the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act* (1999) in the following categories:

- species
- ecological communities
- key threatening processes

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation and promotes biodiversity conservation by providing strong protection for listed threatened species and ecological communities. New nominations for species, ecological communities and key threatening processes will be considered by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (the Committee) for inclusion in a Priority Assessment List. Nominations on the Finalised Priority Assessment List will be considered by the Committee for their eligibility for listing, based on the requirements of the EPBC Act and Regulations.

Further information, including details of the nomination process, nomination guidelines and nomination forms, is available online at: [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations)

Nominations close **5pm on Thursday, 10 May 2007**, and can be submitted in electronic (preferred) or hard copy format (an accompanying CD with an electronic version of the submission would be helpful).

Email: [epbc.nominations@environment.gov.au](mailto:epbc.nominations@environment.gov.au) or  
 Mail: The Director, Species Listing, Recovery and Policy Section  
 Department of the Environment and Water Resources  
 GPO Box 787  
 CANBERRA ACT 2601

For further information, contact the Director, Species Listing, Recovery and Policy Section, email: [epbc.nominations@environment.gov.au](mailto:epbc.nominations@environment.gov.au) or telephone: 02 6274 2238.

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## Saving the Tasmanian Devil

### Additional \$1million for Tasmanian Devil



Tasmanian Devils - Dave Watts

"The Tasmanian Devil is an icon to all Australians, and is an internationally recognised symbol of our nation. This additional funding brings Australian Government investment in a cure for the (facial tumour) disease to \$3 million," Mr Turnbull said. "The funding will be used to fund breeding programmes and research into the genetic causes of the disease." Scientists are hoping that further research into the genetic origins of the facial tumour disease may lead to the creation of diagnostic tools and, possibly, development of a vaccine. For more information, go to: <http://www.tassiedevil.com.au/disease.html> <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr20feb207.pdf>

## National NRM monitoring and evaluation framework

### Improving Monitoring & Evaluation

The Natural Resource Management (NRM) Ministerial Council established the NRM Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in May 2002. A key purpose of the framework is to enable assessment of national progress towards improved natural resource condition as expressed in the health of our land, water, vegetation and biological resources.

The framework identified ten "Matters for Target" for uptake in regional NRM plans. National coordination arrangements have been established through the National Land and Water Resources Audit to facilitate the establishment of nationally consistent methodologies for assessment in relation to the matters for target. Under these arrangements, the Department of the Environment and Water Resources sponsors the development of indicators and associated assessment protocols for the following five matters for target:

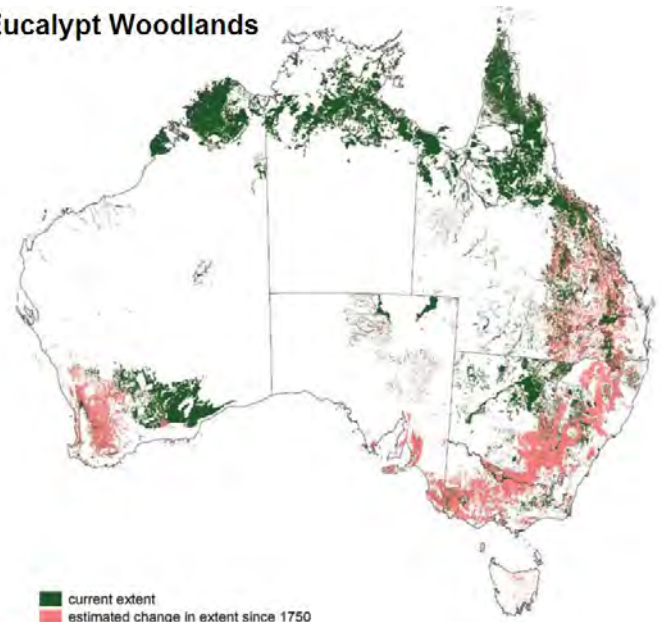
1. Native vegetation communities' integrity
2. Inland aquatic ecosystem integrity
3. Estuarine, coastal and marine habitat integrity
4. Significant native species and ecological communities
5. Ecological invasive species

The Department is actively encouraging progress towards nationally agreed indicators and the establishment of information systems to underpin assessment and reporting. Representatives from across the Department of Environment and Water Resources, the State of Environment reporting area and the Environmental Resources Information Network (ERIN) meet regularly to progress the development of agreed indicators.

The capacity to monitor and evaluate these matters for target is variable. Some are supported by agreed protocols and established information bases, while others are in earlier stages of development.

For example, the native vegetation communities' integrity matter for target is relatively well supported by long running vegetation mapping and database programs in all states and territories. Data from such programs is collated into the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS). Drawing on the NVIS, national level products such as the map below of Eucalypt Woodlands, provide important insights into the integrity of our native vegetation.

### Eucalypt Woodlands



Eucalypt Woodland - the current extent and the estimated change in extent since 1750

Reference: *Australia's Native Vegetation – A Summary of Australia's Major Vegetation Groups, 2007*. Australian Government. The Department of the Environment and Heritage 2007.



## Defeating weeds

### More money for weeds research

Australia's war against weeds is escalating. The Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull MP, and the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Eric Abetz, announced funding of over \$1.7 million for projects under the *Defeating the Weed Menace* programme, demonstrating the commitment of the Australian Government to ongoing weeds research and on-ground works. <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr08feb07.pdf>

The Ministers have encouraged researchers and community groups to develop project proposals under the latest round of funding. "The Government works closely with the research community to make sure the latest and best science is available for the fight against weeds. Research and development is an important component of the Australian Government's \$44.4 million *Defeating the Weed Menace* programme and \$5.4 million of that is directly allocated to R&D." More information can be found at: [http://www.lwa.gov.au/Apply\\_for\\_Funding/index.aspx](http://www.lwa.gov.au/Apply_for_Funding/index.aspx) <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr13feb07.pdf>

## Conservation management in Booderee National Park

### Bandicoots at Booderee

Visitors to Booderee may be lucky enough to see small, rabbit-sized animals scampering around the campground after dark, looking for scraps and occasionally making a strange honk, like a party blow-tickler. These animals are long-nosed bandicoots. Because of work done at Booderee these animals are now a much more common sight in the Park than they were a few years ago. Before explaining how this great result was achieved, a bit of background information about bandicoots.

Despite their aboriginal sounding name, bandicoots were named by early European settlers because of a passing resemblance to a large species of Indian rat called bandicoots. Bandicoots and bilbies form a family of marsupial mammals known as Peramelids. Peramelids are (or were) found throughout Australia and New Guinea and as far west as the Indonesian island of Ceram. At the time Europeans arrived there were eleven species found in most habitats throughout Australia. Of these species, three have become extinct and most of the rest have

declined in range and abundance. Over the last twenty years evidence has been accumulating that the major reason for these declines is predation by introduced European red foxes and feral cats. Long-nosed bandicoots have fared better than most of their fellow Peramelids and are still found throughout most of their range from north Queensland to eastern Victoria, but a number of populations have disappeared in recent years.



Long-nosed Bandicoot – Booderee National Park

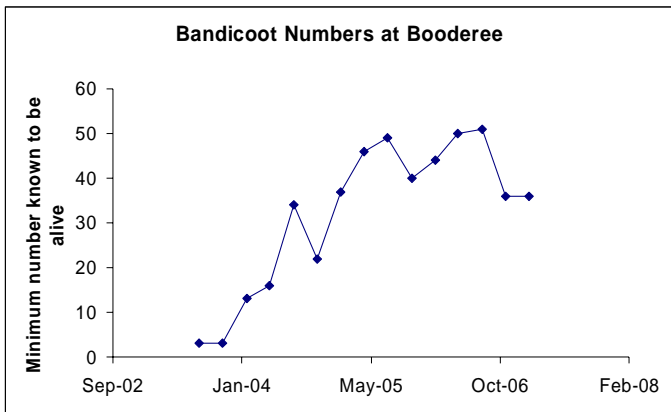
Since the 1980s a number of threatened populations of bandicoots and other terrestrial Australian mammals such as bettongs, numbats, and quolls have responded very well to foxes being controlled. Foxes are generally controlled by poisoning with baits laced with sodium monofluoroacetate, better known as 1080. 1080 is particularly lethal to foxes. It has a further advantage in that it is not a cumulative toxin, so it doesn't accumulate in the environment like pesticides such as DDT. It is, however, toxic to humans and has no known antidote, so it must be handled with care. In eastern Australia, 1080 baits must be buried, neighbouring landholders notified of any baits, and the general public warned.

Long-nosed bandicoots were known from Booderee but were generally considered scarce before bi-annual baiting for foxes commenced in 1999. Since then, numbers of bandicoots have increased modestly. In August 2003 we started baiting foxes every month and monitoring bandicoot numbers every three months.

Baits for foxes are buried at individual bait stations located at 1 km intervals throughout the Park's network of trails. A bait station consists of an area of cleared earth where baits can be buried and the identity of any animal visiting the station determined from tracks in the freshly raked earth. If a bait has not been taken by a fox within two weeks, it is removed, by which time it will have lost much of its potency. Bandicoots are monitored using cage traps baited with peanut butter and rolled oats. Any bandicoots caught are weighed, and the females checked for young in the pouch. They are also injected with a microchip to uniquely identify individual animals.

# Communities for Communities

Since August 2003, fox numbers have crashed and bandicoot numbers have increased 10-fold. Figure 1 shows the spectacular increase in abundance from 2003 to 2004 and the subsequent annual rise and fall in numbers as new animals enter the population during summer, autumn, and winter and the fall in numbers in spring. Other patterns have emerged from our research, including a strongly biased sex ratio with almost twice as many males caught as females but with females tending to survive longer. Another pattern is that smaller individuals with fewer young tend to be caught in heath, which is a poorer quality habitat than forest or woodland.



Booderee National Park – Bandicoot Numbers

It appears that controlling foxes has benefited not only the bandicoots but also a range of other fauna at Booderee, including the endangered eastern bristlebird, pied oystercatchers, and hooded plovers. However, an unexpected possible side effect is an explosion in the numbers of wallabies, whose heavy browsing may have an impact on the long-term vegetation structure of the park. Because of our successful fox control program it may be possible to reintroduce some of the smaller mammals such as southern brown bandicoots and long-nosed potoroos, that occurred in the Park but have been driven to extinction because of predation.

## International day for biological diversity 2007: May 22



## The new great threat to biodiversity

The 2007 International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD), 22 May, will focus on Biodiversity and Climate Change.

Climate change is already forcing biodiversity to adapt either through shifting habitat, changing life cycles, or the development of new physical traits. Impacts already observed include:

- Coral bleaching, caused by increased sea temperatures, is causing die-offs amongst coral reef communities from Australia to the Caribbean.
- The Common Murre has advanced breeding by 24 days per decade over the past 50 years in response to higher temperatures
- The Baltimore oriole is shifting northward and may soon disappear entirely from the Baltimore area.
- Polar bear populations are coming under threat as food becomes harder to hunt.

Other species will face more unusual challenges. The sex of sea turtle hatchlings, for example, is temperature dependent, with warmer temperatures increasing the number of female sea turtles at the expense of males.

Those species that are unable to adapt are facing extinction. In fact, predictions estimate that up to 1 million species may become extinct as a result of climate change including Boyd's forest dragon and the Brazilian tree *Virola sebifera*.

The recently extinct Golden Toad and Gastric Brooding Frog have already been labelled as the first victims of climate change.

## The biodiversity safety net

The links between biodiversity and climate change run both ways: biodiversity is threatened by human-induced climate change but, biodiversity resources can reduce the impacts of climate change on people and production:

- the conservation of habitats can reduce the amount of CO2 released into the atmosphere. Currently deforestation is estimated to be responsible for 20% of human-induced CO2 emissions,
- conserving certain species such as mangroves and drought resistant crops can reduce the disastrous impacts of climate change effects such as flooding and famine, and
- the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can strengthen ecosystem resilience, improving the ability of ecosystems to provide critical services in the face of increasing climatic pressures.

## Responding actions

Given the importance of climate change -biodiversity links, it is important to:

- conserve biodiversity that is especially sensitive to climate change,
- preserve habitats so as to facilitate the long-term adaptation of biodiversity,
- improve our understanding of climate change – biodiversity linkages, and
- fully integrate biodiversity considerations into mitigation and adaptation plans.

## Australian Government envirofund

### Round 9 now open

The Australian Government Envirofund is the local action component of the Australian Government's \$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust. It helps communities undertake local projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable resource use.

Community groups and individuals can apply for grants of up to \$50,000 (GST inclusive) to carry out on-ground and other actions to target local problems.

Round 9 will cover the normal range of activities funded by the Envirofund, with a total of \$20 million in funding available for projects across Australia.

The Round 9 Guide and Application Form are now available: <http://www.nht.gov.au/envirofund/index.html>

Applications for Round 9 close at 5pm on Friday 27 April 2007. Your signed original application must be received at the Envirofund office in Canberra on or before that date.

## News from around Australia

### VicTrack native grasslands grants

The Grassroots program run by Landcare Australia and VicTrack is in the process of awarding a second year of grants to Landcare groups and landowners across Victoria that are working towards protecting and enhancing our native grasslands. This year, VicTrack is seeking to fund projects that help conserve, extend or publicise grasslands. Support will also be provided to landowners who are enhancing native grasslands through grazing management trials. Projects are being considered for funding anywhere within Victoria and are not limited to VicTrack or other public land. For information contact:

[rob.youl@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:rob.youl@landcareaustralia.com.au) or via Landcare Australia's website [www.landcareonline.com](http://www.landcareonline.com)

## Upcoming events

- Our Place, Our Planet: 9<sup>th</sup> WA State Environment Festival, 24-25 March 2007, Naragebup Rockingham Regional Environment Centre.
- First National Forum of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation: *What lies beneath? The role of soil biota in the health and rehabilitation of native vegetation* (17-19 April 2007 Canberra)
- Biodiversity: Balancing Conservation and Production Case Studies from the Real World (26-28th June 2007 University of Tasmania, Launceston)
- The Biodiversity Extinction Crisis, a Pacific and Australasian response: the Australasian section of the Society for Conservation Biology inaugural regional meeting of conservation scientists and practitioners. (10-13 July 2007, UNSW, Sydney)
- International Association for Ecology (INTECOL) The 10th International Congress of Ecology (August 2009, Brisbane) (Hosted by [The Ecological Society of Australia](#) in partnership with [The New Zealand Ecological Society](#))