



COMMUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Water Resources



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Finalised Priority Assessment list for threatened species, ecological communities & key threatening processes

As outlined in the previous issue of the Communities for Communities newsletter, amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) in February 2007 established a new process for listing threatened species, ecological communities and key threatening processes. 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.

Nominations

The first call for nominations closed on May 10 2007, at which time all eligible nominations were forwarded to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (the Committee). A proposed priority assessment list of nominations was then prepared for the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources' (the Minister's) consideration.

The proposed priority assessment list has now been considered by the Minister and finalised. The final list is provided overleaf and is also publicly available on the Department's website at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/priority-assessment-list.html

Assessment cycle

The assessment period for nominations on the priority assessment list starts on October 1 2007. The Department will then assess whether the nomination meets the criteria for listing as a threatened ecological community. Research, expert technical workshops, public consultation and direct consultation with key stakeholders will be used to form advice for the Committee. Please note that public comment and stakeholder engagement will only be sought for those nominations that have not already been through these processes. Keep an eye on the Department's website for calls for public comment.

During 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.

Call for nominations for 2008

Nominations which did not make the 2007 finalised priority assessment list will be reconsidered for inclusion in the 2008 assessment list along with any new nominations provided to the Department.

There will be a public call for new nominations released in late 2007, in preparation for the 2008 assessment cycle. More information on this will be provided in the newsletter's next addition.

Ruth Crabb, Ecological Communities Section, DEW

Thank you to Professor Gordon Grigg



The Department notes the retirement of Professor Gordon Grigg from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, of which he was an original member. Gordon made considerable and enduring contributions to the establishment of the Committee's approaches and processes. The strength and independence of his advice via the Committee pays credit to his contribution to biodiversity conservation in Australia, both through his role as a member of the Committee and in other ways. We express our gratitude to Gordon and wish him the very best for the future.

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Finalised Priority Assessment List for the Assessment Period Commencing 1 October 2007

Item Assessment	Completion Time
Species	
<i>Caladenia</i> sp. Brentwood (R.J.Bates 53510) SA Herbarium (an orchid)	30 September 2008
<i>Cassinia tegulata</i> (a shrub)	30 September 2008
<i>Conilurus penicillatus</i> (Brush-tailed Rabbit-rat)	30 September 2008
<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> (Leatherback Turtle)	30 September 2008
<i>Elseya irwini</i> (Irwin's Turtle)	30 September 2008
<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i> (School Shark)	30 September 2008
<i>Hibbertia</i> sp. Bankstown (R.T.Miller & C.P.Gibson s.n. 18/10/06) NSW Herbarium	30 September 2008
<i>Hoplogonus bornemisszai</i> (Bornemissza's Stag Beetle)	30 September 2008
<i>Notelaea ipsviciensis</i> (Cooneana Olive)	30 September 2008
<i>Phebalium distans</i> (a small tree)	30 September 2008
<i>Pristis zijsron</i> (Green Sawfish)	30 September 2008
<i>Pteropus melanotus natalis</i> (Christmas Island Flying-fox)	30 September 2008
<i>Reedia spathacea</i> (a sedge)	30 September 2008
<i>Rexea solandri</i> (eastern population) (Gemfish (eastern population))	30 September 2008
<i>Stipiturus mallee</i> (Mallee Emu-wren)	30 September 2008
<i>Thelymitra cyanapicata</i> (Blue-topped (Dark-tipped) Sun-orchid)	30 September 2008
<i>Thelymitra</i> sp. Kangaloon (D.L.Jones 18108) Vic. Herbarium (Kangaloon Sun Orchid)	30 September 2008
<i>Thunnus maccoyii</i> (Southern Bluefin Tuna)	30 September 2009
Four Norfolk Island Snails: <i>Advena cambelli</i> , <i>Mathewsoconcha suteri</i> , <i>Mathewsoconcha phillipii</i> , <i>Quintalia stoddartii</i>	30 September 2008
Three Lord Howe Island Snails: <i>Mystivagor mastersi</i> , <i>Pseudocharopa lidgbirdi</i> , <i>Pseudocharopa whiteleggei</i>	30 September 2008
Any other species nominated by the Committee	30 September 2008
Key Threatening Process	
Damage to marine ecosystems by trawling in the area of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery	30 September 2009
Ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and species decline due to invasion of Northern Australia by introduced Gamba Grass (<i>Andropogon gayanus</i>) and other introduced grasses	30 September 2009
Loss and degradation of native plants and animal habitats by invasion of escaped garden plants	30 September 2009
The introduction of live native or non-native fish into Australian watercourses that are outside their natural geographic distribution	30 September 2009
Any other Key Threatening Process nominated by the Committee	30 September 2009
Ecological Community	
Alpine <i>Sphagnum</i> Bogs and Associated Fens	30 September 2008
Arnhem Plateau Sandstone Heath	30 September 2010
Central Gippsland Plain Grassland of the South East Coastal Plain Bioregion	30 September 2008
Inland Grey Box Woodlands	30 September 2009
Littoral Rainforest and Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia	30 September 2008
Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania	31 March 2009
Native Grassland on Basalt and Alluvium of the Brigalow Belt North Bioregion and the Claude River Downs	30 September 2008
Native Grassland on Basalt and Alluvium of the Brigalow Belt South, Nandewar, New England Tablelands and Northern Sydney Basin Bioregions	30 September 2008
Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain	31 March 2008
Victorian Western (Basalt) Plain Grassy Woodland	30 September 2008
Weeping Myall Woodlands	30 September 2008
Any other ecological community nominated by the Committee	30 September 2008

NEWLY LISTED!!! Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland of South Australia and Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland of South Australia

The Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) Grassy Woodland of South Australia ecological community extends from the southern Flinders Ranges to Lake Alexandrina. It is mostly found in the Flinders-Lofty Block Bioregion, but patches also extend into the Murray-Darling Depression, Kanmantoo, Eyre-Yorke Block and Gawler Bioregions. Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) is the dominant species of the tree canopy. The woodland tree form (a single main trunk at the base with low branches) of Peppermint Box characterises this ecological community.

Other tree species that may be present in the canopy but are not as abundant as Peppermint Box include: Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*); South Australian Blue Gum (*E. leucoxylon*); Sugar Gum (*E. cladocalyx*); Mallee Box (*E. porosa*); Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*); White Cypress-pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*); and Southern Cypress-pine (*C. preissii*).



Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) Grassy Woodland of South Australia (photo by P Komidar)

The Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland of South Australia ecological community occurs primarily within the Flinders-Lofty Block Bioregion. The main extant patches lie in the area between Clare and Peterborough. However, patches extend into the Kanmantoo, Eyre-Yorke Block and Murray-Darling Depression Bioregions. The structure of the vegetation is that of a tussock grassland. Trees and tall shrubs are absent to sparse (cover less than 10 per cent) and tussock-forming perennial grasses and Iron-grasses dominate the ground layer. A range of herbaceous plant species occurs in the inter-tussock spaces. Iron-grasses (*Lomandra multiflora* ssp.

Dura and *Lomandra effusa*) are the dominant and most characteristic feature of the vegetation.



Garland lillies (*Calostemma purpurea*) Irongrass Natural Temperate Grassland of South Australia (photo by R Purdie)

These ecological communities were listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act because of a severe decline in distribution and ongoing loss of integrity. The decision by the Minister to list the communities followed careful consideration of advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee—an independent scientific body that advises the Minister on the conservation status of native species and ecological communities.

National listing of these ecological communities recognises that their long-term survival is under threat. The listing aims to prevent their further decline, and assist community and landholder efforts toward the recovery of these ecological communities.

Both of these ecological communities have been heavily cleared and face similar threats across their range. In most of the areas that remain, grazing and pasture-improvement have effectively removed the characteristic native, perennial tussock grasses, herbs and shrubs, leaving many areas dominated by exotic weeds. Grazing has also prevented the regeneration of the over-storey species in the Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland of South Australia, to the extent that large areas of healthy, regenerating trees are rare.

Priority conservation actions that can assist in the recovery of the Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) Grassy Woodland of South Australia are:

- protection of remnants of the listed ecological community through the development of conservation agreements and covenants;
- control of existing weeds in remnants, particularly Squirrel Tail and Rats Tail Fescue (*Vulpia* spp.), Bearded Oats (*Avena barbata*) and Salvation Jane/ Paterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*);
- exclusion of continuous grazing from remnants;

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- use of strategic grazing (incorporating rest at appropriate times) in areas with larger numbers of native species;
- protection of remnants from new weeds by preventing soil disturbance in and around remnants, and the speedy eradication of any new invasions; and
- expansion and connection of existing remnants.

Priority conservation actions that can assist in the recovery of the Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland of South Australia are:

- protection of remnants of the listed ecological community through the development of conservation agreements and covenants;
- exclusion of continuous grazing from remnants, coupled with weed management and control and use of strategic grazing (incorporating rest at appropriate times);
- protection of remnants from weeds by preventing soil disturbance in and around remnants, and the speedy eradication of any new invasions; and
- expansion and connection of existing remnants.

A policy statement and further information on the listing can be found at the Department's web site at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/peppermint-box-iron-grass-policy.html>

Collette Barton, Ecological Communities Section, DEW.



Mature Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) (photo by Brooker & Kleinig, Australian National Botanic Gardens)

National Threatened Species Day 2007 – September 7

Announcement of Threatened Species Network Community Grants



The Southern Brown Bandicoot, Swift Parrot and Cassowary will all sleep a little safer with the announcement that they and other threatened animals and plants will benefit from Threatened Species Network Community Grants funded by the Australian Government.

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, joined with the Threatened Species Network Program Manager, Ms Katherine Miller, to announce more than \$550,000 in additional funding. The grants form part of the Threatened Species Network, a community-based programme of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia. Over the past nine years, the Government has provided more than \$4.5 million to community groups for over 300 environmental projects across the country.

“The successful grants represent an impressive community contribution – local groups will undertake management actions across approximately 230,000 hectares of habitat, including revegetation, weeding and fire management,” Mr Turnbull said.

“The grants will allow community groups to undertake 35 on-ground projects to better the survival chances of 64 threatened species and ecological communities,” Ms Miller said.

This year, the theme for National Threatened Species Day (7 September) was: ‘protecting places, protecting species’, in recognition of the role that conserving habitat plays in the ongoing survival of Australia’s iconic threatened species.

For a full list of funded projects or more information, please visit www.wwf.org.au/tsn

*Katherine Miller, Threatened Species Network,
WWF-Australia*

National NRM monitoring and evaluation framework

The Australian Government is making a substantial investment in biodiversity conservation through the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. Activities are funded under these initiatives in order to:

- improve knowledge of the current state of biodiversity
- enable better monitoring and understanding of biodiversity trends over time, and
- resource practical action in improving the condition of biodiversity.

The need for monitoring of significant species and ecological communities is explicitly set out in the National NRM Monitoring and Evaluation Framework established by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in 2002 (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/frameworks/me-framework.html>), with principles and requirements outlined in the National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/frameworks/standards-targets-framework.html>).

The frameworks establish the requirements to assess:

- the state of natural resources over time,
- the performance of governmental policies, programs and strategies, and
- the effectiveness of investment in improving the condition of the environment.

The National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) is coordinating across a number of national committees that are developing indicators and protocols and, in some instances, collating information for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on key NRM themes.

The National Biodiversity Assessment

A second Australian terrestrial biodiversity assessment is now underway to deliver a national picture of terrestrial biodiversity in May 2008. The assessment is being coordinated by the NLWRA with participation of other Australian Government agencies as well as states and territories. The aims for this assessment include presenting a current snapshot of the state of biodiversity, and forming a baseline for future reporting on biodiversity. The Biodiversity Assessment also aims to align with State of the Environment reporting requirements.

Developing a draft protocol

A number of the tasks of the Biodiversity Assessment relate directly to species and ecological communities. In particular, a draft protocol for monitoring *significant species and ecological communities* under the NRM M&E framework is to be developed further as part of the Biodiversity Assessment. A key part of this task will be to provide guidance on the term 'significance' which is critical to determining which species and communities should be considered in regional NRM planning and investment.

It is recognised that 'significance' has different meanings according to the level at which it applied and how species and communities are valued. At the national level, significance would be informed by defined matters of National Environmental Significance, like nationally threatened species and ecological communities with legislative protection under the EPBC Act 1999. At the state/territory level, species and communities that are listed under legislation may also be considered significant. Other species and communities may not be formally recognised as 'significant' under legislation but may be regionally significant or commercially significant.

The protocol is due to be completed early next year.

Emma Warren, Biodiversity Trends Section, DEW

Upcoming events

- Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) Sydney Gala Ball *Celebrating 20 years as the peak professional body for environmental practitioners in Australasia*, October 17 2007, Sydney. (www.eianz.org for more details)
- The Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC) *Identifying plants of grassy ecosystems of the ACT region – a field-based workshop*, November 22-23 2007, Canberra. Registrations close November 12 2007. (www.anpc.asn.au/canberra20071122.html)
- Ecological Society of Australia (ESA) Annual Conference *Adapting to Change*, November 25-30 2007, Perth Convention Centre (www.ecolsoc.org.au/ESA2007Conference.htm)
- The Australian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network (AELERT) 4th Annual Conference, November 26-28 2007, Adelaide (www.aelert.com.au for more details)
- Australasian Ornithological Conference, December 3-5 2007, University of Western Australia (www.birdswa.com.au/aoc2007 for more details)
- 7th National Conference of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC) *Our Declining Flora – Tackling the Threats*, April 21-24 2008, Mulgoa NSW (preliminary details available November 2007)