

Tallaringa Conservation Park

Management Plan 2018

Tallaringa Conservation Park and its cultural places are important. We will protect those places. We will look after the plants, animals and water sites so that they are healthy.



Minister's Foreword



Tallaringa Conservation Park is one of South Australia's largest parks. It is also the Country of the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people, who are forever connected to this land and its places of cultural significance. The park also helps to protect arid vegetation communities and numerous wildlife species.

This plan sets out objectives and strategies for the park's conservation. It focuses on protecting cultural places, ensuring that the environment is healthy, welcoming visitors, and supporting the aspirations of the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people for their Country.

This is the first management plan for the park. Its development is a wonderful achievement for the Tallaringa Conservation Park Advisory Committee and illustrates the success of the co-management partnership between the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people, the South Australian Government, and the District Council of Coober Pedy.

I also acknowledge the efforts of all who have contributed to the development of this plan and those that continue to assist in the conservation of this important park.

It is with much pleasure that I now formally adopt the Tallaringa Conservation Park Management Plan under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Speirs', with a horizontal line underneath.

The Hon. David Speirs, MP
Minister for Environment and Water

Cultural Sensitivity Warning

Aboriginal people are advised that this plan contains culturally sensitive material.





Developing this plan

This plan was developed using an approach called Manta palya (healthy Country) planning. This approach is based on a traditional conservation action planning process that has been expanded to encompass Aboriginal social and cultural values.

This plan was developed with advice from the Tallaringa Conservation Park Advisory Committee – a partnership between the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara traditional owners and the South Australian Government. The Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC) and the District Council of Coober Pedy also provided valuable input and support.

A draft plan was released for public consultation in April 2017 for a period of three months. Six submissions were received. Each of these provided constructive feedback that has assisted in the development of this final plan.

This plan will now guide management at a strategic level. It is not intended to address all issues facing the park. Rather, it outlines the park's most significant values, threats to those values and the most important strategies that will be used to manage threats.

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Directions for management

Tallaringa Conservation Park is the Country of the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal people. They have maintained a connection to their Country for over 30,000 years and have many creation stories that travel through this landscape. Their connection to Country, culture, language and Tjukurpa (traditional lore) is strong. Their stories have been passed down through many generations, and will continue to be passed on.

The park was constituted as a Conservation Park in December 1991 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* to protect and conserve wildlife and the natural features of the land. Proclamation was made subject to section 43. This enables rights of entry, prospecting, exploration or mining to be acquired under the *Mining Act 1971* and *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000* subject to Ministerial approval.

Directions for the management of the park are consistent with the objectives of the Tallaringa Conservation Park Indigenous Land Use Agreement, the *South Australian Alinytjara Wilurara Regional Natural Resources Management Plan 2011* (AW NRM Board 2011) and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal traditional owners advise on park management through the Tallaringa Conservation Park Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee provides a formal partnership between the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people and the South Australian Government. This partnership seeks to progress the cultural, economic and environmental aspirations of the traditional owners.

The Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal traditional owners have always been close to Country. This deep connection was formally recognised in 2011 with the granting of native title over an area including Tallaringa Conservation Park. In the next chapter, as a driver of co-management, traditional owners are becoming actively involved in the management of Country. Traditional owners are also teaching the younger generations about the landscape and sharing the stories that flow through it. Re-establishing and strengthening connection to Country is happening.

The management of the park will continue to be guided by the Advisory Committee using traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge and contemporary park management practices. The park will be managed to restore cultural sites and kapi (water) sites, protect important plants and animals, and minimise the impact of pest plants and animals. It will also be managed to support Aboriginal employment, regional tourism, and to enable visitors to learn about Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara culture and their connection to Country.







Park significance and purpose

Tallaringa Conservation Park (1,268,859 ha) is situated in north-west South Australia, approximately 90 km west of Coober Pedy (Figure 1). The park protects a large, undeveloped natural area of the state that links with other protected areas across the Great Victoria Desert.

The park comprises gently undulating plains with dunes generally orientated in an east-west fashion, with intermittent gibber rises. In the north of the park, the dunes are higher and the swales are narrower. There are occasional 'breakaways' of silcrete and quartzite hills in the region. Red deep siliceous sands or red duplex dominate, sometimes bearing a crust of ironstone pebbles.

Mulga open woodlands (tall open woodlands, with a mixed shrubby understory over perennial grasses and forbs) is the dominant vegetation community in the park. The diversity of mulga in the park is not often seen elsewhere.

The landscapes of Tallaringa Conservation Park are connected to a diverse network of creation story associations. These creation stories are interconnected with the land's physical features and waters, creating a complex tapestry of meanings and values. These lands and waters are central to the lives of the Aboriginal community; at birth, death, for ceremony, during hunting and gathering, camping, and travelling. The number and significance of archaeological and cultural sites was the major reason for the establishment of Tallaringa Conservation Park.

The park also supports a diverse range of flora and fauna, including several species of Wanari (Mulga) and the Nationally threatened Nganamarra (Malleefowl). Kapi (watersoaks; palaeo-channels) are also a distinctive feature of the park.

The park protects these special values and provides opportunities for people to enjoy this unique landscape and culture. The park also provides an opportunity to maintain and strengthen the connections between Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people and their Country for generations to come.

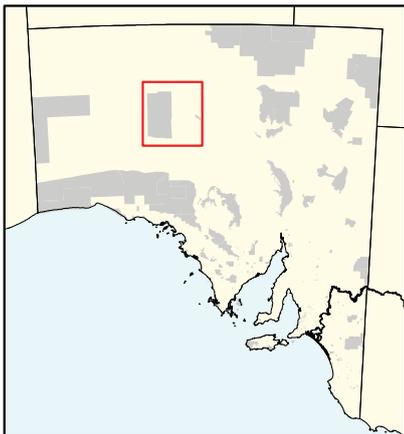
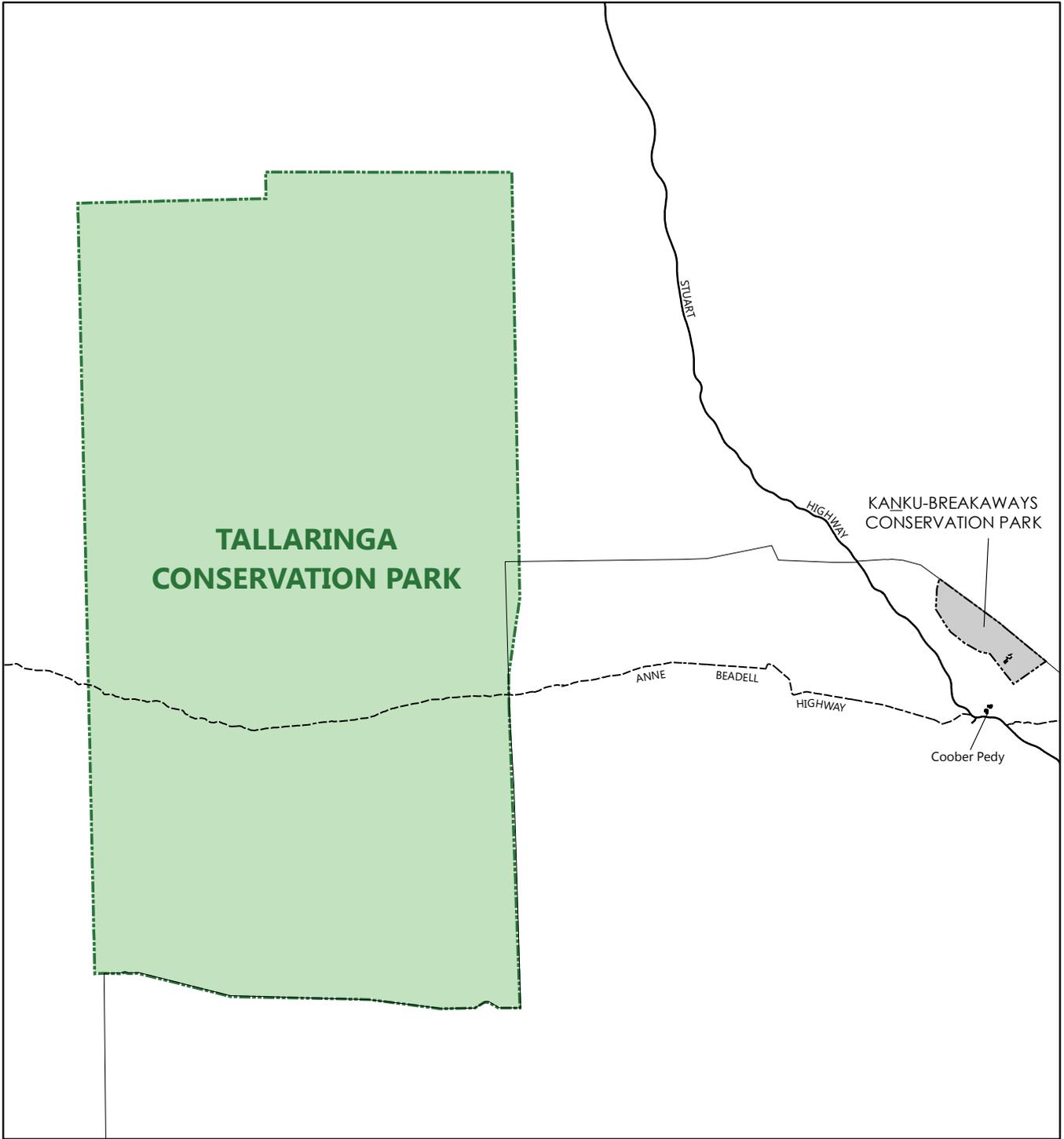


Figure 1

Tallaringa Conservation Park

LEGEND

-  Park boundary
-  Other protected area
-  Sealed road
-  Public access track (4WD)
-  Dog fence





What are we looking after?

To Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people, all of their Country is important. Many things about Country are valued – the animals and plants, the landscape, the water, and the connection to culture. In particular, Tallaringa Conservation Park protects:

- A large and intact protected area that enables ecological processes to function on a broad scale.
- Five bird species listed as vulnerable or rare under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (Appendix 1).
- Five plant species listed as vulnerable or rare under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (Appendix 2).
- Gathered bush tucker including mangata (quandong) (*Santalum acuminatum*), kumparata (bush tomato) (*Solanum centrale*), utalaya (bush banana) (*Marsdenia australis*), Maku (witchetty grub) (*Endoxyla leucomochla*), and Milpali (Gould's goanna/sand monitor) (*Varanus gouldii*).
- Gibber rises and vegetated dunes. 'gibber' comes from the Aboriginal word for 'stone'. Over time, weathering causes the smaller fragments and dust to disperse leaving the larger rocks and pebbles behind, creating gibber plains.
- The landscape of Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara stories and culture, including Tjukuritja (significant area).
- Kapi (water) sites that are both ecologically and culturally important.
- Sites of archaeological significance including seed grinding sites, camping sites, traditional burials and arrangements of stone. These sites link Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people to their ancestors and are a physical manifestation of their ancient and ongoing connection to Country.
- Bush medicine plants such as Western myall (*Acacia papyrocarpa*), wanari (Mulga) (*Acacia aneura*), river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), umbrella bush (*Acacia ligulata*) and spinifex grasses (*Triodia sp.*)
- A great diversity of culturally significant species such as;
 - Papa (dingo) (*Canis lupus dingo*);
 - Wilururu (wedge-tailed eagle) (*Aquila audax*);
 - Kuka tjuta (the many species that were traditionally hunted) including kalaya (emu) (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*), malu (red kangaroo) (*Macropus rufus*), tjilya (echidna) (*Tachyglossus aculeata*) and ngintaka (perentie) (*Varanus giganteus*).
- An untouched area of natural beauty providing visitors with a place to explore, reflect, and learn.



What are the challenges and opportunities?

The park faces a number of challenges, but with these challenges are also opportunities. Challenges and opportunities in the management of the park include:

- Finding ways to promote greater public appreciation of the park's special environmental and cultural values and its significance to the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people.
- Using the park to maintain and enhance the connection of Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people, their families and future generations to their Country.
- Enabling Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara native title holders to take a greater role in managing the park.
- Increasing recognition and support for the protection and maintenance of cultural sites.
- Managing threats to cultural sites, vegetation and animals across a vast and geographically remote area.
- Managing threatened species and ecological communities to ensure their long-term conservation through the delivery of conservation priorities identified in relevant recovery plans.
- Developing an improved understanding of ecological values and the threats to these values – especially those values that are likely to be influenced by the region's extreme, highly variable seasonal conditions and a changing climate.
- Understanding and managing waru (fire).
- Minimising the impacts of any future mineral and petroleum exploration and production activities within an area of environmental and cultural significance.
- Conserving and restoring damaged kapi (water) sites that are facing further degradation due to a range of pressures.
- Engaging and supporting community members to be involved in park management, facilitating opportunities through volunteer organisations such as friends groups.



Management themes and priorities

This section of the management plan addresses the most important management issues for the park focussing on three key themes.

Theme 1: Protecting Aboriginal cultural values and enhancing connection to country

The Tallaringa Conservation Park and surrounding Country is important to Aboriginal people and has been for tens of thousands of years. There are many creation stories that travel through the landscape and senior people have lived and travelled with ceremonies through this Country.

Tallaringa Conservation Park is located on a major traditional trading route. As such, it is associated with many other Aboriginal nations. In the early 1960s, stone material was found that had been imported from other regions including Eucla, the Simpson Desert in Queensland and the north-west of South Australia. The discovery of imported stone material indicates that the area was part of an inter-regional trade route which once connected distant Aboriginal groups.

The main reason groups travelled through the area was for the supply of water – a precious resource in an otherwise largely waterless sand plain. Artefacts collected at kapi (water) sites - including stone tools, grinding implements and the remains of food - suggest that these sites were geographical and cultural focal points for ancestors. Kapi remain the focus of contemporary Aboriginal interest and must be protected and restored for both cultural and ecological purposes.

There are numerous significant archaeological and cultural sites in Tallaringa Conservation Park. Information relating to three Aboriginal sites within the park is currently held on the Central Archive, which contains the Register for Aboriginal Sites and

Objects, as established under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*. A further significant site was identified during a cultural survey undertaken in 2013 by Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara representatives and South Australia Native Title Services. There are many other sites and features of Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara creation stories that have not yet been identified or recorded. All Aboriginal sites, objects and remains are protected under the Act whether registered, recorded or unrecorded.

There is very little information or infrastructure in the park to ensure the protection of cultural sites. As a result, people visiting the park or conducting activities in the park could inadvertently damage sites. To ensure that this does not occur, some basic information for visitors is required and visitor use should be confined to the Anne Beadell Highway or designated tracks. In addition, consultation with the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara native title holders and further cultural survey work may be required to ensure that cultural sites are not affected by activities conducted in the park.

Throughout the park traditional owners are able to camp, erect temporary shelters, conduct meetings and cultural activities, and hold ceremonies including those relating to births and deaths. Traditional owners may also hunt (without the use of firearms), gather food, medicinal plants, wild tobacco, timber, resin, ochre and feathers, and cook within the park.



Objective and strategies

Objective

Ensure that cultural values are recognised, promoted and respected in all decision making and during the conduct of all activities within the park.

Strategies

- Ensure that the traditional owners have the opportunity to contribute their skills and knowledge to research, monitoring and management activities.
- Promote collaboration between traditional owners and commercial interests and increase awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage to ensure that commercial activities (including mineral and petroleum exploration and production) do not impact on Aboriginal cultural values.
- Ensure on-ground management actions include opportunities for Aboriginal employment and engagement, and that the park is managed in a way that allows traditional owners to express cultural values.
- Protect and maintain all Aboriginal cultural sites including those that have not yet been recorded.
- Encourage greater community respect and awareness of Aboriginal cultural values associated with the park.
- Facilitate and support the involvement of volunteer organisations such as the Stony Desert Friends Group.
- Record cultural stories, map sites, and develop specific actions for each cultural site as guided by traditional owners. This exercise will involve elders sharing their knowledge with younger generations – communication and storytelling between young and old.



Theme 2: Protecting and restoring the environment

Tallaringa Conservation Park's size and location have guarded it from a range of pressures, although the park is not altogether immune from threats. Pest animals such as camels and rabbits are established in this area, and pest plants such as buffel grass pose a significant threat. There is now a growing need to understand and manage these threats in order to restore the environment and increase ecological resilience.

There is no surface water in the park, and the annual rainfall is approximately 150 mm, making kapi (water) sites particularly important. Kapi are important both culturally and as a source of water for native plants and animals. Unfortunately, kapi sites are vulnerable to damage and pollution from camels, wild donkeys and other feral herbivores.

Nganamarra (malleefowl) once had a strong population across every mainland state of Australia except for Queensland. Now, however, the ground dwelling bird occurs only in small numbers across dry inland southern Australia. Whilst there are few recordings of nganamarra in Tallaringa Conservation Park, the park contains potentially suitable habitat for nganamarra. The recovery of nganamarra is guided by a national recovery plan (Benshemesh 2007).

Many native mice and other rodents have been recorded in the park, including the sandy inland mouse (*Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*), spinifex-hopping mouse (*Notomys alexis*) and desert mouse (*Pseudomys desertor*).

Although it is known that foxes and cats have a big impact on small mammals in the park, the extent of their populations is undetermined, and requires further investigation before control actions are implemented.

Working together to understand flora and fauna values

A 10-day biodiversity survey was conducted in the park during September 2015 by traditional owners, the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, and Desert Wildlife Services NT.

A total of 107 animal species and 278 plant species were recorded including 14 native animals and 70 native plants that were not previously known in Tallaringa Conservation Park. One of the birds observed was the rare chestnut-breasted whiteface (*Aphelocephala pectoralis*) which is seldom observed and is endemic to South Australia.

During the study, a daisy was collected that was a least 125 km north of its previously known range. There were also at least seven species of wanari (mulga) found co-existing in the park – such diversity in one area is very rare.

Rabbits have had the biggest impact of pest species seen in the park and have badly damaged some areas. They fluctuate in number depending on seasonal conditions and tend to have concentrated populations around the palaeo-drainage areas.

Waru (fire) is a natural element of the landscape, but bad waru, described as wildfire that burns on an inappropriate scale and intensity, can result in negative impacts on fauna and flora. Studies have found that wanari (mulga) is killed when the trunks are burnt or if the canopy is completely scorched. Carefully managed fire, or good waru, can assist in the recovery of ecological communities and help manage over-abundant species. Traditional owners are keen to use good waru to manage the landscape.

The park is included in the *Alinytjara Wilurara Fire Management Strategy* (DEWNR 2014). The strategy provides the framework for traditional owners to develop fire management plans and/or annual work programs for the Tallaringa landscape.

The park has potential for the development of hydrocarbon and mineral resources including nickel, copper, gold, uranium, and iron ore. Mineral activities are regulated under the *Mining Act 1971* and some mineral exploration was carried out in 1969, 1976, 1984 and 2015. The *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000* regulates petroleum and gas exploration and production activities. Any future mineral and petroleum exploration and production activities will require careful management to ensure that the cultural and environmental values of the park are considered.

Managing the buffel grass threat

Originating in eastern Africa and the Middle East, buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is thought to have arrived in Australia in the 1860s. Afghan camel drivers padded their saddles with buffel grass and as the seats wore through, seeds would be released and germinate.

In the early 1900s, pastoralists took an interest in the grass for its drought-hardy quality and it was soon planted to provide pasture for cattle and used as a management tool to control dust and erosion.

Buffel grass has spread at a great rate and now threatens native grasses and the broader ecological landscape. It burns at a greater intensity than native plants, creating hotter fires that impact on native plants and animals and destroy cultural sites.

Buffel grass also changes the landscape, impacting on seasonal activities, sites of cultural significance, and traveling routes for the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people.

South Australia declared buffel grass a weed in 2015 and land managers are working to control its spread.

Buffel grass is managed in the park in line with the *SA Buffel Grass Strategic Plan* (2012), which identifies this region as a priority area. Due to the scale of Tallaringa Conservation Park, control measures are primarily focused in those areas where the risk of spread is highest. Spot control of buffel grass is undertaken at Bon Bon Station in partnership with Bush Heritage Australia.

Objectives and strategies

Objective

Protect, enhance, and restore Tallaringa Conservation Park to ensure healthy Country that is ecologically balanced and well understood in terms of significant species and threatening processes.

Strategies

- Implement control programs for targeted exotic species within a regional context, focussing efforts at kapi (water) sites and other ecologically sensitive sites.
- Implement a program of active fire management, focussing efforts on important places and sites.
- Minimise and manage the impacts of any future mineral and petroleum exploration and production activities.
- Manage the park to protect and conserve rare and threatened plants and animals in alignment with priorities identified in relevant recovery plans.
- Continue to build knowledge of ecological values, assets and threats through surveys and monitoring programs.
- Map and prioritise sites for buffel grass control. Adaptively control the pest grass through initiatives such as educating park visitors on how they can help with management.



Theme 3: Providing a unique experience for visitors

Visitors usually access Tallaringa Conservation Park from Coober Pedy, traveling through Mabel Creek Station along a pastoral access route and then along the Anne Beadell Highway.

As one of the most remote locations in South Australia, it is visited by relatively small numbers of people traveling by four-wheel drive, generally passing through the park as part of a larger journey between South Australia and Western Australia.

The Anne Beadell Highway is often narrow and sandy, offering challenging four-wheel driving. Visitors can experience the outback landscape, various vegetation types, sand ridges and dune field as they travel through the park.

To prevent damage to cultural sites and the spread of weeds, vehicles are confined to designated tracks. Visitors can do their part in controlling the spread of buffel grass by traveling through the park on the designated tracks only and checking their shoes and equipment for the weed's seeds.

Camping is currently confined to a corridor of 100 metres either side of the Anne Beadell Highway. To prevent damage to cultural sites, it may be necessary in the future to confine camping to specific areas near the park boundary.

Gas fires and camp fires are allowed but are not permitted during the summer months or on days of total fire ban. Firewood must be brought in from outside the park, as the collection of firewood is not permitted within the park. Generators are allowed. These arrangements will be regularly reviewed and may be changed to ensure that visitors enjoy the park in a sustainable way.

There is not a need for any significant facilities in the park, however some signage is required to welcome people into the park, outline appropriate behaviour and promote respect and recognition of the Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara people as traditional owners.



Objective and strategies

Objective

Provide for the safe and minimal impact enjoyment of the park by self-sufficient visitors.

Strategies

- Provide information for visitors and the local community to promote awareness and respect for Aboriginal cultural heritage values and ensure their protection.
- Provide information about safety and minimal impact behaviours to visitors via the web and regional guides.
- Regularly review the impact of camping and vehicle use on areas adjacent to the Anne Beadell Highway. If necessary, designate tracks and areas for camping in consultation with traditional owners.
- Develop and install park entry signage that welcomes people to Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara Country.



Appendix 1

Fauna species of conservation significance

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		Australia	South Australia
<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Kipara (Australian bustard)		Vulnerable
<i>Leipoa ocellata</i>	Nganamarra (malleefowl)	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
<i>Neophema splendida</i>	Scarlet-chested parrot		Rare
<i>Pachycephala inornata</i>	Gilbert's whistler		Rare



Appendix 2

Flora species of conservation significance

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		Australia	South Australia
<i>Austrostipa nullanulla</i>	Club spear-grass		Vulnerable
<i>Plantago sp. A (A.C.Robinson 704)</i>	Pearson Island plantain		Rare
<i>Sclerolaena symoniana</i>	Symon's bindyi		Vulnerable
<i>Wurmbea deserticola</i>	Desert nancy		Rare
<i>Wurmbea stellata</i>	Star nancy		Rare



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For further information please contact

Department for Environment and Water phone information line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department for Environment and Water office.

Recognition of Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Australians have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Please contact the Tallaringa Conservation Park Advisory Committee to understand these rights in relation to the Tallaringa Conservation Park Management Plan 2018.

Photography

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