

Ethabuka Reserve

Scorecard 2009 - 2021



Our vision

We are working with Wangkamadla Traditional Owners, neighbours, and partners to protect this unique desert landscape and ensure cultural and ecological values are healthy for future generations and protected in perpetuity. The dune fields, ranges, wetlands, and springs of the Mulligan River landscape will provide significant refugia, resilience, and healthy functioning arid ecosystems for the perpetual conservation of the endemic and threatened species of the region.

In 2021, the Wangkamadla people's continuous connection to country was recognised and their Native Title rights were declared over 2.9 million hectares.

Ethabuka is part of an extraordinary cultural landscape for the Wangkamadla people. The Mulligan River region includes some of the most extensive intact arid and desert ecosystems in Queensland. Extensive spinifex-covered dunes and Gidgee-covered swales provide habitat for diverse small-mammal and reptile populations, linking to neighbouring Munga-Thirri National Park. The Mulligan River associated floodplains and wetlands represent a small but highly productive area that has been impacted significantly by grazing.



Reserve size: 214,000 hectares

Acquisition year: 2004

Traditional Owners:
Wangkamadla people

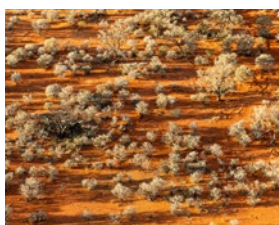
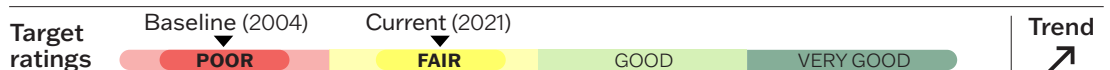
Our conservation targets

This section summarises the long-term health rating of each target and trend since acquisition. Ratings are based on ecological monitoring data and expert knowledge.



Mulligan River, Floodplains, Springs, and Wetlands

The Mulligan River, artesian springs, and wetlands act as a refuge for many species of native fauna including migratory and wetland birds. Fencing around key springs has reduced invasive herbivore impacts. Springs were damaged and modified by previous owners, and we are investigating remediation options.



Gidgee Woodlands

Acacia georginae woodlands occur patchily in the landscape, providing habitat for diverse birds and small mammals. By controlling weed encroachment, we ensure that the woodlands are maintained as habitat for terrestrial fauna and act as natural firebreaks.



Spinifex Grasslands

Hummock grasslands are a key feature of Ethabuka. Old-growth spinifex supports a rich assemblage of small mammals, birds, and reptiles including Brush-tailed Mulgara, Spinifex Hopping Mouse, Desert Mouse, and Eeryian Grasswren.



Managing threats

Threat	Recent rating	Trend	Resource investment	What are we doing?
Climate change	HIGH	↗	👤👤👤💰	Temperatures are expected to increase with more frequent drought and extreme rainfall events, requiring increased investment in on-ground management of fire, weeds, and feral predators to support resilience in a changing climate.
Feral predators (foxes and feral cats)	HIGH		👤👤👤💰	Effective feral predator control at such a large scale is challenging and ongoing work is needed. Opportunistic control has been conducted and targeted management trialled along burnt areas.
Weeds	LOW	→	👤👤👤\$	Buffel Grass control has been conducted to reduce fire risk and minimise further spread. Management has successfully reduced Noogoora Burr density in riparian areas and at Pulchera waterhole – ongoing control is required to keep this threat 'low'.
Feral herbivores (camels, cattle, pigs)	LOW	→	👤👤💰	Completion of fencing of boundaries with pastoral neighbours and around permanent water, regular mustering of herbivores, and opportunistic pig control help to reduce impacts.
Wildfire	MEDIUM	→	👤👤\$\$\$	Annual prescribed burns (aerial and ground) to protect long-unburnt spinifex and infrastructure, plus annual grading of firebreaks and a fire plan review underway. Ongoing investment in fire management is needed in a changing climate to manage fuel loads and reduce the risk of large-scale wildfire.

Strategy highlight:

Fire management

Fire management is a high priority after recent major rainfall events associated with La Niña. We are reviewing the Ethabuka Fire Management Plan and working to implement strategic breaks to reduce fuel loads and maintain optimal fire frequency, intervals, and patchiness. Maintenance of the reserve track network helps to improve access for fire response.



4

Threatened fauna species



1

Threatened flora species



142

Bird species



2

Bat species



21

Native mammal species



62

Reptile species



4

Amphibian species



10,771

Volunteer hours (since 2017)

Bush Heritage acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the places in which we live, work, and play. We recognise the enduring relationships they have with their lands and waters, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We are deeply grateful to our partners and supporters who are a core part of our conservation work.