

Yourka Reserve

Scorecard 2013 - 2021

 Bush Heritage Australia

Our vision

The biodiversity and cultural values of Yourka Reserve are protected, resilient to climate change, and enhanced through informed and non-invasive management.

Yourka, on Jirrbal and Warrungu Country, sits on the north-eastern boundary of the Einasleigh Uplands priority landscape. The region is a biodiversity hotspot, containing many threatened ecological communities and species, and threatened by climate change, land clearing, unmanaged fire, and unsustainable grazing. As of 2021, only 6.5% was protected in the National Reserve System. Yourka protects important climate refugia and habitat for a range of plants and animals, including high-altitude woodlands and wet eucalypt forests. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area runs along Yourka's eastern boundary. Of 39 regional ecosystems represented, 26 are listed as endangered or 'of concern' under the Queensland *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.



Yourka

Reserve size: 43,500 hectares

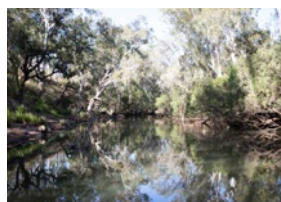
Acquisition year: 2007

Traditional Owners:

Jirrbal and Warrungu peoples

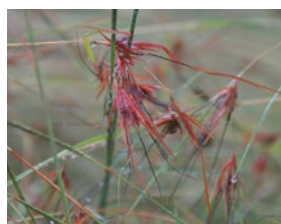
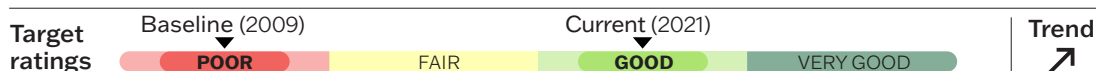
Our conservation targets

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.



Riparian areas, billabongs, creeks

Wetlands, springs, and creek lines are productive focal points. Healthy stands of blue gums and paperbark woodlands line the banks of the Herbert River and Sunday Creek, acting as movement corridors and drought refugia.



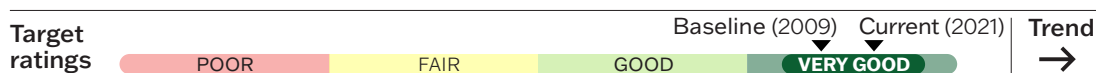
Tropical savanna woodlands

Dry forests and woodlands are near to their original extent, comprising 49% of Yourka. Fire management has promoted an open understorey of dense native grasses, especially Cockatoo Grass, Kangaroo Grass, and Black Speargrass which are foraging resources for seed-eating fauna.



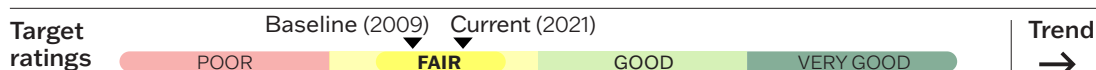
Tall open forest

Wetter bands of high-altitude open eucalypt forests support arboreal mammals and birds. Vegetation surveys show that fire management has improved sapling recruitment (5-200 stems/ha) from 2009 to 2018.



Species of conservation significance

Small to medium-sized mammals detected include Rufous Bettong, Northern Brown Bandicoot, and Mareeba Rock-wallaby. An expanded motion-sensor camera network and deployment of acoustic monitors will provide stronger evidence for the presence of hard-to-detect species.



Managing threats

Threat	Recent rating	Trend	Resource investment	What are we doing?
Inappropriate fire (large-scale wildfire)	VERY HIGH	↘	👤👤👤 \$\$\$	Significant focus has gone into early dry-season and storm burns, using aerial and ground burning to prevent large-scale wildfires and woody thickening, contributing to a mosaic of fuel ages across the reserve. Creating strategic breaks has reduced wildfire risk under hot, dry, windy conditions.
Siam Weed	HIGH	↓	👤👤 \$\$	Yearly abundance measurements indicate a major decline of Siam Weed within riparian areas where it is most abundant. From 2012 to 2018, control has limited spread and resulted in a clear reduction (-75%) in weed density (16,000 stands in 2012 to <1700 in 2018).
Feral pigs	MEDIUM	↘	👤👤 \$\$	Pig control is ongoing through targeted trapping, baiting, and shooting and has been effective at reducing damage to billabongs and riparian areas.
Feral cats	MEDIUM		👤👤 \$\$	Cats are removed annually with support from Conservation and Wildlife Management Qld volunteers. We will roll out outcome monitoring in coming years to better understand feral predator activity.
Erosion	MEDIUM	↘	👤👤 \$\$	Erosion mitigation works and track management have improved soil stability and slowed water flows. Gully erosion is an ongoing challenge and requires additional investment.
Stray stock	LOW	↘	Maintain vigilance	Following destocking in 2007, ongoing management has removed 150-200 stray cattle annually. Decommissioning of dams and boundary fencing maintenance after the annual wet season keeps this threat low.
Mining	MEDIUM	→	Maintain vigilance	Mining and associated vegetation clearing presents an ongoing threat. We will continue to pursue mechanisms to ensure perpetual protection.

Strategy highlight:

Billabong restoration

A major billabong restoration project commenced in 2016. Electric fences were installed at 6 sites to exclude cattle and pigs from the most impacted billabongs. Erosion control materials were installed to slow overland water flow and encourage vegetation establishment.

The billabongs are on their way to full recovery with a clear improvement in the quality and coverage of emergent and riparian vegetation. Ongoing restoration activities are focused on further enhancement of in-stream and vegetation cover and aquatic values to move the health of wetlands towards state-based benchmarks.



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.