



Report Card 2014

About the park

Judbarra / Gregory National Park is a timeless and striking landscape that includes tablelands, escarpments, mesas and gorges. People come for the good fishing, adventurous four-wheel driving, accessible picnic and camping areas and to explore the park's rich Aboriginal culture, European exploration and pastoral history.

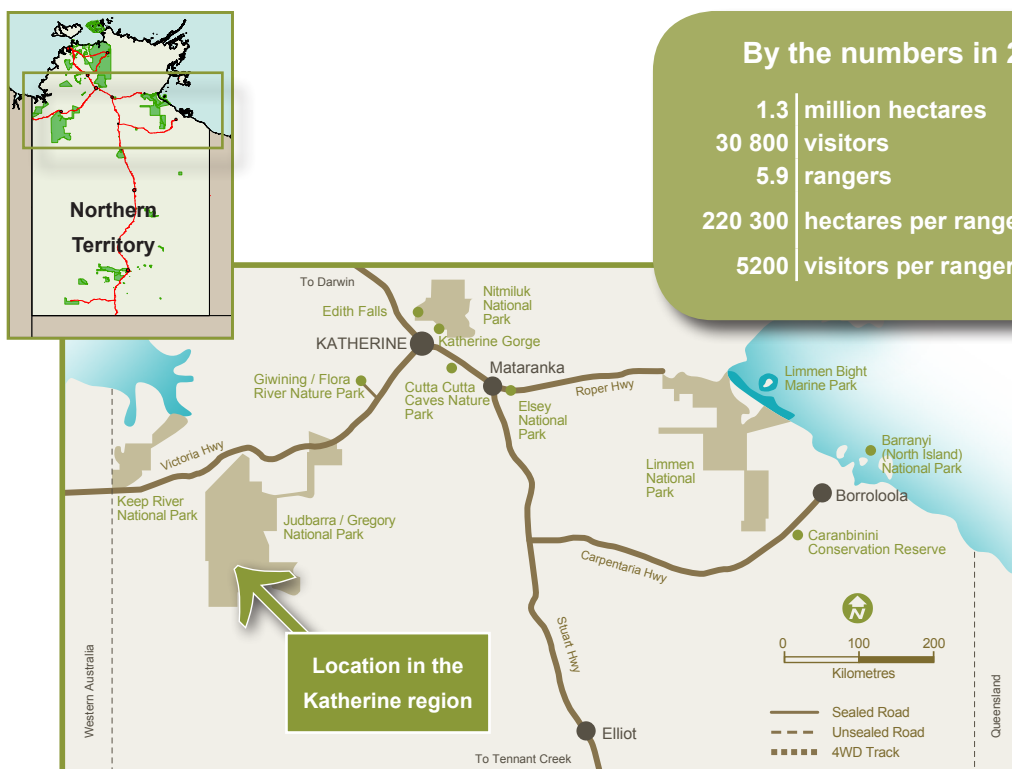
The 1.3 million hectare park is accessed via the Victoria Highway from Katherine or Kununurra, or along the unsealed Buntine and Buchanan highways.

Home to a diverse and vibrant Aboriginal culture, the park lies within the traditional lands of 9 language groups. Traditional Owners maintain strong cultural traditions and have an important connection to

their country. The park is jointly managed by the Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Commission. Decision-making is shared through the Judbarra Joint Management Committee.

Located in the tropical and semi-arid transition zone, this vast park protects internationally significant conservation values, including threatened species, valuable aquatic habitat and a karst field and cave system considered rare on a world scale.

NT parks and reserves have been assessed and classified for their visitor and biodiversity values. Judbarra / Gregory National Park is rated as one of the Territory's most valuable for biodiversity, and is classified a Class 1 Biodiversity park and a Class 2 Visitor park.



By the numbers in 2014

1.3	million hectares
30 800	visitors
5.9	rangers
220 300	hectares per ranger
5200	visitors per ranger

Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

The most significant changes in the past 2 years

- An additional toilet block improved amenity for visitors at Big Horse Creek Campground.
- The Broadarrow 4WD Track was reopened following many years of closure.
- The purchase of a front-deck mower to maintain all visitor sites has increased ranger efficiency and improved park presentation.
- Concluded a 5-year externally funded purple-crowned fairy-wren (vulnerable) habitat protection project. The Victoria River Bridge development offset funding ended in June 2013.
- Received a draft cultural sites and areas map from the Traditional Owners and Northern Land Council. An incredibly useful tool, this map will be used when planning annual management programs and for staff training.
- Strengthened our joint management partnership. More park staff attended Joint Management Committee meetings and country camps, learning from Traditional Owners and ensuring joint management is a fundamental part of park management processes.
- Installed infrastructure at Paperbark Yard and East Gregory through Aboriginal Benefits Account funding to accommodate joint management country camps. The addition of toilets at Paperbark will also benefit visitors travelling the Gibbie 4WD track.

The most important actions in the next 2 years

- Reinstate 4WD access to the Limestone Gorge Picnic Area. A section of track becomes heavily flooded each Wet season and cannot be opened to Dry season traffic without major realignment.
- Investigate potential new visitor facilities at Stone Yard day use area, Jasper Gorge Campground, Matt Wilson Lookout, Ryan Creek Walk and Limestone Walk.
- Improve knowledge of park visitor activities by calibrating traffic counters, including counters in previously unmonitored areas.
- Complete the integrated conservation strategy for the park.
- Develop a cultural heritage management plan in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and land councils.

How to interpret our tables

Situation	
	Great with no need to improve
	Acceptable with room to improve
	Unacceptable with improvement needed
	Critical with improvement urgent

Trend	
↑	Improving
↔	Stable / No change
↓	Declining
N/A	Not rated / Not applicable
✓	Occurred / In place
✗	Did not occur / Not in place
?	Unknown



Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014



Planning for the park

The Joint Management Plan for Judbarra / Gregory National Park guides long-term management of the park and has been operational since 2011.

The Judbarra Joint Management Committee is the park's decision-making body. The Joint Management Committee met once in 2013–14. Guidelines have been put in place to help ensure timely decisions and help committee members work together effectively.

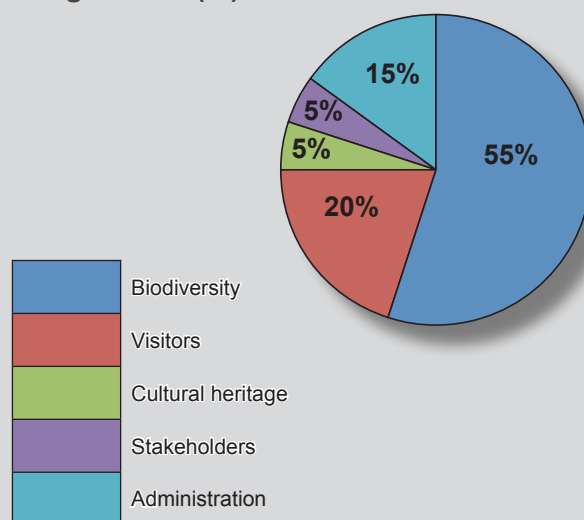
A draft integrated conservation strategy has been developed. The strategy will set clear goals and actions to reduce threat levels over 5 years through refined annual action planning. It will set out a systematic approach to monitoring the results of efforts to reduce the impact of fire, feral animals and weeds, and in turn the impact on the health of the park's flora and fauna. The strategy will be the basis of future report cards.

Rangers use annual operational action plans to assist them to manage fire, weeds and feral animals and to support visitor enjoyment of the park.

How is ranger time invested in park programs?

The rangers are responsible for the park's ongoing management, protecting the park's biodiversity and cultural values, and overseeing visitor facilities, activities and administrative functions. There is also a commitment to engaging with stakeholders and working with the interests of the broader community.

Ranger Time (%)



Joint management and planning at a glance

Governance, planning and decision-making processes are established	✓
Effectiveness of the joint management processes	↑



Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

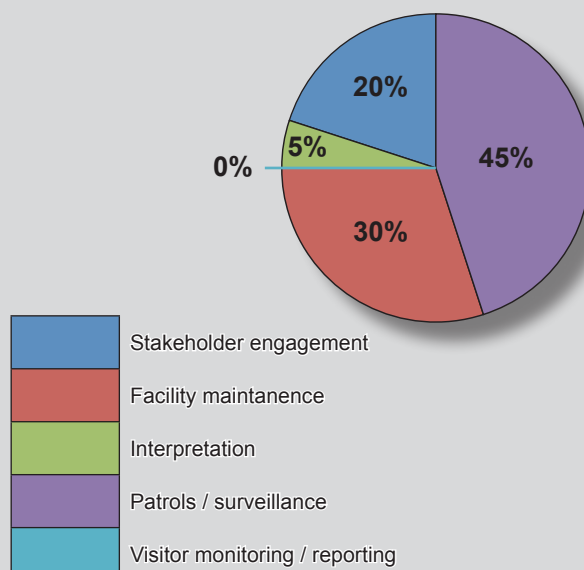
Managing for visitor safety and enjoyment

Judbarra / Gregory National Park offers visitors an exceptional remote outback experience. Over the past 2 years the average number of annual visitors has been 31 000. Many of those visitors transit in the park's north when driving between Katherine and Kununurra.

Knowledge of visitor numbers has improved. Two walking track counters were installed in 2012, giving some indication of numbers for the first time. In addition, traffic counters were installed along 2 of the more remote four-wheel drive tracks in 2013. As a Class 2 Visitor park, knowledge of visitor profiles, behaviours and satisfaction is strong.

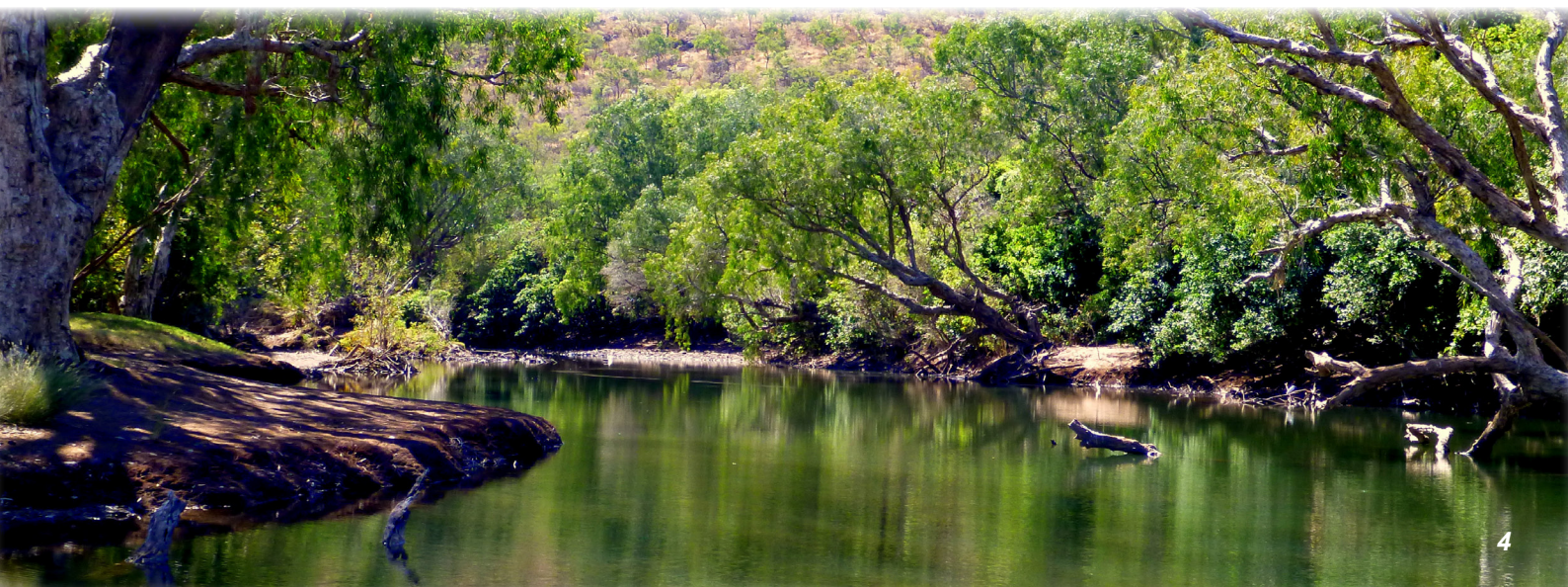
Capacity of the ranger team to manage visitor safety and enjoyment is acceptable and is a high priority for the park.

Ranger Time - Visitor Programs (%)



Visitor management at a glance

The park has an annual action plan to support visitor safety and enjoyment	✓
The achievement of high priority actions stated in the annual visitor action plan (%)	>90%
The capacity of the park's ranger team to manage visitor programs effectively	↔
Knowledge of visitor numbers, profiles, behaviours, expectations and satisfaction levels	↑
Visitor satisfaction with access, facilities and services (estimated)	↑



Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

Knowledge of the park's flora and fauna

The park supports internationally significant habitats and a diversity of plants and animals, including threatened species such as the critically endangered Fitzroy land snail and the vulnerable purple-crowned fairy-wren. The park protects tablelands and escarpments, monsoon rainforest, healthy waterways, karst fields, mesas and gorges.

Scientific research has taken place over many years. This includes periodic monitoring of the impact of fire on the landscape, improving knowledge and directing management programs. Recently, the Department of Land Resource Management has led annual fauna surveys with assistance from rangers and Traditional Owners. External research organisations have also conducted a number of scientific studies. Surveys of the purple-crowned fairy-wren, the freshwater sawfish and the grey falcon as well as a Solanum flowering plant have all contributed to knowledge of the park. There have been small improvements in knowledge in recent years; however, there is a great deal more to learn from such a vast landscape.

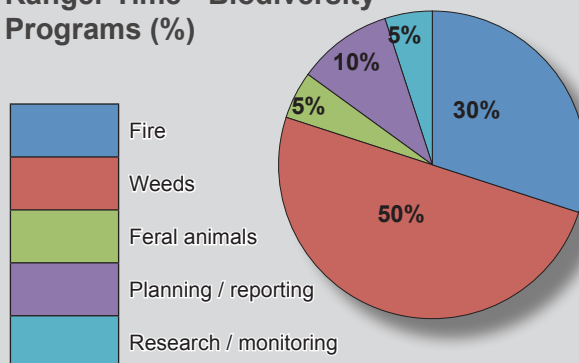


Biodiversity management at a glance

Knowledge of the park's species and communities



Ranger Time - Biodiversity Programs (%)



Managing feral animals

Feral animals pose a significant threat to the park, trampling vegetation, polluting water and spreading weeds. Donkeys, horses and escaped stock cause the most extensive damage while buffalo, pigs and camel are damaging but not so widespread. The park lies within the Victoria River District Pest Declaration Area, requiring landholders to control donkeys at 1 animal per 10 square kilometres. Knowledge of feral animal numbers and distribution is incomplete as no formal aerial surveying has been conducted since 2006. Rangers believe threat levels have reduced. Fewer signs of feral animals were noted, especially in the Victoria River sector where stock musters and control programs have resulted in over 1000 animals being removed in the past 2 years. Opportunistic control of feral animals is ongoing.

New fences have been installed. The Willeroo and Delamere boundaries were fenced by station owners in 2013 with materials supplied by the Parks and Wildlife Commission through the Victoria River Bridge Development project. The next fencing project is the Fitzroy/Bullita fence-line.

The ranger team has capacity to conduct the current feral animal program, including opportunistic control and liaising with stakeholders. All other feral animal control is conducted by external groups. This includes fencing projects, strategic on-ground control and aerial control programs. The ranger's capacity has improved in the past 2 years: most members of the team now hold a firearms licence and are capable of controlling feral animals safely and opportunistically when required.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission is exploring opportunities to collaborate with the various shooting associations to further reduce feral animal numbers.

Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

Feral animal management at a glance

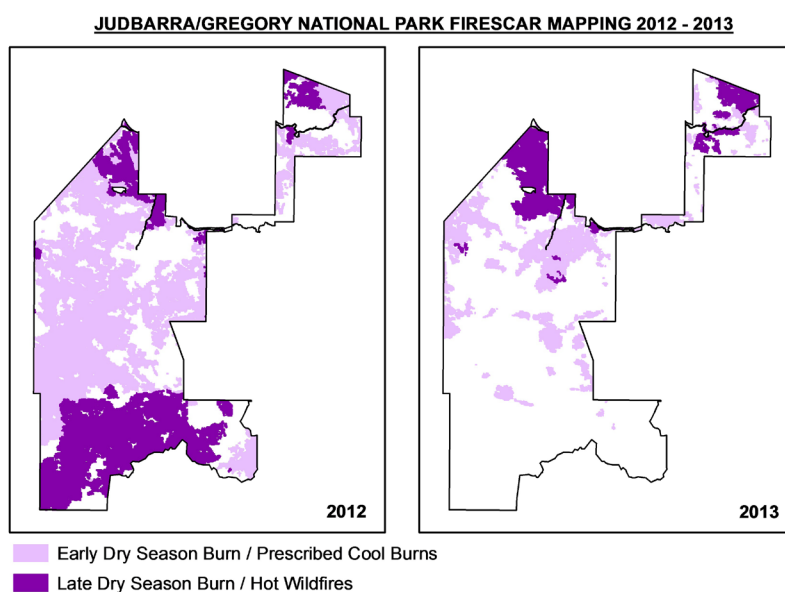
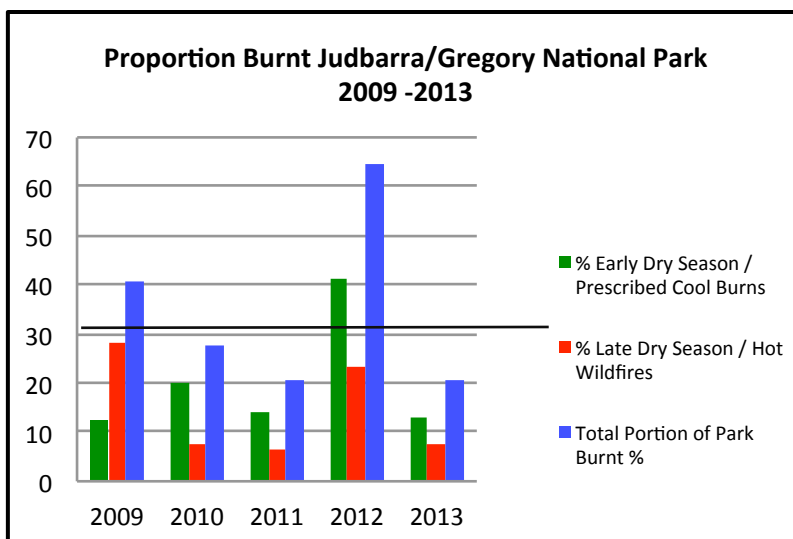
The park has an annual action plan for feral animal management that effectively directs action	✓
The achievement of high priority actions stated in the feral animal action plan (%)	> 90%
Capacity of the park's ranger team to manage feral animal programs effectively	↑
Change in team capacity to manage feral animal programs over the past 2 years	↑
The level of threat to the park's biodiversity values presented by feral animals this year / now	↑
The trend in level of threat to the park's biodiversity values presented by feral animals in recent years	↑

Managing fire

Changed fire regimes since European settlement have resulted in higher fuel loads and more extensive late Dry season wildfires. Rangers conduct strategic boundary and internal burns during the late Wet and early Dry season to break up the fuel loadings and prevent wildfire from sweeping across the park. Despite best efforts there are regular wildfires in the park, the worst in 2012 when a wildfire raced through the south. An extensive landscape to manage mean the rangers experience some difficulty in minimising the effects of large fires.

The majority of planned aerial and on-ground early burns have been completed for 2014. The threat of wildfire this coming fire season is believed to be moderate. There are a few gaps in strategic boundary burns, however, all assets and visitor areas are well protected from fire.

The rangers carry out a wide range of management programs, including a fire program, and welcome additional hands to complete work to a high standard. Some staff require further training and development to improve capacity and knowledge.



Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

Fire management at a glance

The park has an annual action plan for fire management that directs annual fire action	✓
The achievement of high priority actions in the annual fire action plan (%)	<90%
The level of threat to the park's biodiversity values presented by wildfire this year / now	↑

Managing weeds

Rangers have worked hard for many years to reduce the threat caused by weeds and subsequently, weeds are not currently a major concern for the park. Most species are confined to river corridors and spread by Wet season floodwaters. Mission grass, devil's claw and parkinsonia are high priority species. Mission grass grows in the Victoria River sector and is a threat to biodiversity values. The highly flammable grass dramatically fuels wildfires, drying out late in the year and creating fuel loads that burn with such massive intensity that it can alter vegetation structures. Due to an externally funded and staffed weed control program, mission grass has decreased in the Victoria River sector in recent years. External funds ceased in June 2013 and rangers have been working to maintain the good results since then.

The sharp spined seeds of devil's claw attach to livestock and native animals, causing injury and discomfort. The weed grows in pockets along the East Baines River, Humbert River and Gibbie Creek. Since 1990 an ongoing control program has seen rangers, Indigenous recruits and volunteers working to eradicate the species through twice yearly hand-pulling programs. The weed has been reduced from 20 000 plants in 1990 to a few hundred plants in recent years.

Parkinsonia is a weed of national significance. It can form dense, impenetrable thickets, sometimes several kilometres across. These thickets displace native plants and animals, alter stream flows and harbour feral pigs. The weed grows in Gregory Valley and along Gibbie Creek. Numbers are quite low and rangers control the species as part of their other duties. Other weeds of national significance are a potential future threat to the park with several species growing on neighbouring properties. These include gamba grass, mesquite and prickly acacia.

The ranger team has reasonable capacity to manage the weeds program. Existing staff have good knowledge of weed species and control techniques and there is solid leadership. In addition, weeds are currently in relatively low and manageable numbers.

Weed management at a glance

The park has an annual action plan for weed management that effectively directs action	✓
The achievement of high priority actions stated in the annual weed action plan (%)	70-90%
Capacity of the park's ranger team to manage weed programs effectively	↑
The level of threat to the park's biodiversity values presented by weeds this year / now	↑
The trend in level of threat to the park's biodiversity values presented by weeds in recent years	↑

Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

Engaging with the community

The park's main stakeholders are neighbours and the local community. Rangers are in regular contact with neighbours and local pastoral land management group, the Victoria River District Conservation Association (VRDCA). Before each fire season rangers and neighbours meet or phone to discuss boundary fire breaks and other strategic burns. There is also communication when a burning program is about to commence and when wildfire is about. Regular discussion on escaped stock and strategic boundary fencing also takes place. The relationship between rangers and neighbours has been particularly positive in recent years. VRDCA conducts conservation management work on neighbouring pastoral and Indigenous landholdings. Rangers stay in contact on weed and feral animal programs, and from time to time there is overlap with VRDCA projects.

A variety of user groups enjoy the park and it is important for the rangers to maintain a connection with them. Information on happenings in the park can regularly be viewed on PWCNT's Facebook page. Community activities include:

- Rangers attending Timber Creek Festival to represent and promote the park to the community
- Rangers attending school talks to talk about crocodile safety and the park (in 2014 there have been 5 school talks)
- A weekly slideshow presentation during the visitor season at Big Horse Creek Campground and Bullita Campground as part of the Territory Parks Alive annual interpretation program (in 2013 there were 32 talks delivered to 1048 visitors)
- Regular contact with local communities including Bullo, Yarralin, Gilwi and Myatt.

Permits are required for special access and activities such as functions and commercial activity. Two filming permits have been approved in the past year, including one for the caravan and camping show What's Up Down Under. Members of the Australian Speleological Federation have a keen interest in exploring and surveying the Bullita cave system and each year continue mapping the caves. The Big Horse Creek Barra Classic fishing competition is held from the Victoria River Boat Ramp each year and owner operators of the Victoria River Cruise use Big Horse Creek as the starting point for their cruise.

Community and stakeholder engagement at a glance	
Level of engagement and support from the community / stakeholders	↑
Change in the level of engagement and support from the community / stakeholders in the last two years	↑



Judbarra / Gregory National Park

Report Card 2014

Managing cultural values

Judbarra / Gregory National Park is a rich and complex living cultural landscape that includes numerous registered and recorded sacred sites as well as many archaeological sites. The park also has historical values focused on contact between Indigenous people and colonialists, early European expeditions and pastoral development. Anthropologists and others have gathered a wealth of cultural information and data over many years. In 2014 Traditional Owners provided a cultural sites and areas map to the rangers. This map will be instrumental in annual management program planning and is a positive step for joint management of the park.

There is no cultural heritage management plan to direct management of cultural assets. The Joint Management Committee has established a cultural working group to create a management plan. On-country camps will be the ideal setting in which to meet and discuss cultural management planning.

Cultural values at a glance	
The park has an annual action plan for cultural management that effectively directs action	✘
Capacity of the park's ranger team to manage cultural heritage programs effectively	↑
Knowledge of the park's cultural values	↔
Change in the level of knowledge of the park's cultural values over the past 2 years	↑

