

Nongra Lake

Location and Description

Nongra Lake is located about 500 km south-west of Katherine and 40 km north-east of the Birrindudu wetlands. The lake is within the broader Sturt Creek catchment, but is the endpoint of a small internal drainage system. Inundation is intermittent but the lake may retain water for substantial periods of time. The lake is dominated by open acacia woodland and is the largest acacia-wooded swamp in the Northern Territory. Coolibah trees are also scattered throughout the Site, which has an understorey of native grasses.

Tenure and Land Use

Nongra Lake is pastoral leasehold land and lies across the boundary of two pastoral properties (Birrindudu and Inverway). The main land use within the Site is pastoral operations.

Significance Rating

National Significance

Ecological Values

Nongra Lake periodically supports many hundreds, if not thousands, of waterbirds and some waterbird breeding activity. The lake is an important wetland within the network of large ephemeral wetlands in the sub-humid tropics.

Management Issues

There has been very little systematic biological survey within this area, and there is very limited knowledge of the ecological values or condition of the lake. The weed *Parkinsonia aculeata* has been recorded at low numbers within the Site and proliferation of this species could degrade ecological values. Heavy continuous grazing within the lake could limit regeneration of tree and shrub species and degrade understorey vegetation.

Condition

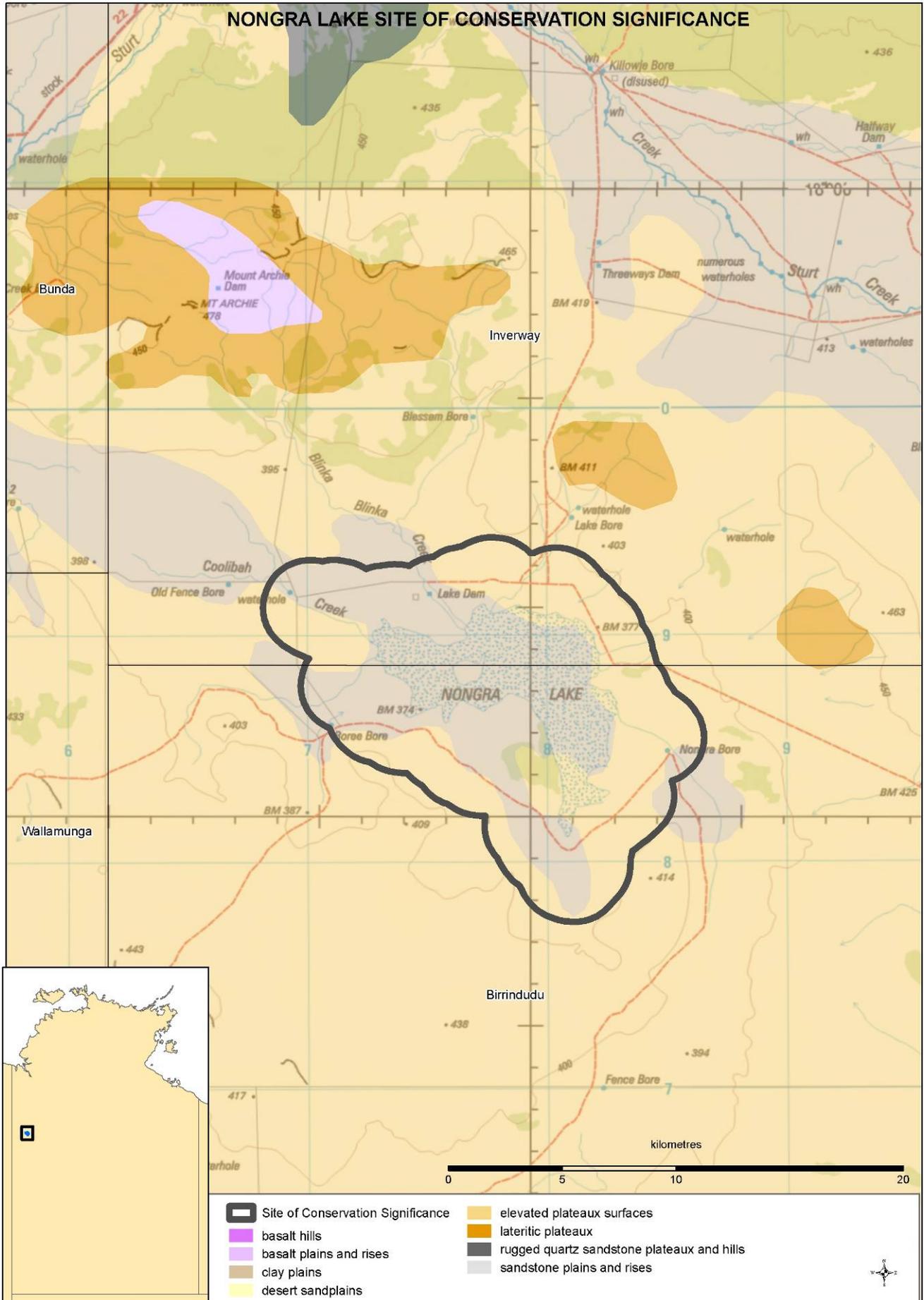
No information located.

Current Conservation Initiatives

Surveys of waterbirds are conducted opportunistically by Wetlands International after major flood events.



NONGRA LAKE - SITE OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE



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LOCATION	SOCS Number	38 (NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan Map Number 124)
	Latitude/Longitude	18° 12' South, 129° 44' East (at centre)
	Bioregion	Ord Victoria Plain
	Description	<p>Nongra Lake occurs on extensive reddish-grey clay plains and forms an internal drainage basin surrounded by elevated surfaces. The boundary of this site is based on the maximum flooded area of the lake (~60 km²) with a 2 km buffer, and encompasses an area of 187 km². Inundation of the lake is variable but major flooding occurs perhaps once every 5-10 years (1993, 2001 and 2006) with moderate flooding more frequently.</p> <p>The Birrindudu wetlands, 40 km south-west of Nongra Lake, are also recognised as a site of high conservation significance in the NT.</p>
THREATENED SPECIES	Significance Rating	Not Significant
	Threatened plants and animals (Listings at National/NT level CR - Critically Endangered, EN - Endangered, VU - Vulnerable, NT - Near Threatened, LC - Least Concern, DD - Data Deficient)	No threatened species are reported from this site, although there is very little biological data from the area.
ENDEMIC SPECIES	Significance Rating	Not Significant
	Notes	There have been few ecological surveys of this site and information on it is limited.
WILDLIFE AGGREGATIONS	Significance Rating	Regional Significance (possible National)
	Marine turtles	Not applicable
	Seabirds	No major aggregations recorded
	Waterbirds	<p>The highest counts of waterbirds from partial surveys of Nongra Lake include 1476 birds in 1993, dominated by 1200 Plumed Whistling-Duck (Jaensch 1994), and 596 in 2006 (Wetlands International unpubl.). A range of species use the lake including coots, herons, ibis and egrets, and counts in 2006 included 191 Brolga, 80 Black-winged Stilt and 54 Black Swan (Wetlands International unpubl.).</p> <p>Six species are recorded breeding at the lake including herons, spoonbills, ducks and coots, and this list is likely to be expanded with further survey work (Jaensch 1994a).</p>
	Shorebirds	Jaensch (1994a) reported small numbers of Marsh Sandpipers and other unidentified small and medium-sized shorebird species during surveys in 1993.
	Other aggregations	None known
WETLANDS	Significance Rating	National Significance
	Ramsar criteria met	Not assessed
	DIWA criteria met	Nongra Lake is listed as a wetland of national significance in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA: NT016). The site meets criteria 1, 2, 3, 6 and includes DIWA wetland types: B6, B14.
	Notes	<p>This site has been nominated as part of a national High Conservation Value Aquatic Ecosystem (the finalised list of HCVAE will replace the DIWA list).</p> <p>Water inflow to the lake is from eight mapped creeks, notably Blinka Blinka Creek and Coolibah Creek. This site is an outstanding example of an Acacia-wooded swamp and one of the few large examples in the NT. It complements other regional wetlands to provide 'options' for waterbirds during erratic cycles of wetting and drying (DIWA).</p>
	Rivers	No information located
FLORA	Significance Rating	Not Significant
	Notes	There have been few ecological surveys of this site and information on it is limited.

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OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES		<p>Nongra Lake is listed on the Register of the National Estate for its natural values (Australian Heritage Council).</p> <p>At least three species recorded from this site are listed under international conventions or bilateral agreements protecting migratory species (DIWA).</p> <p>Sub-humid wetlands like Nongra Lane are likely to become increasingly important in the coming decades if global climate change drives rises in sea level, and saltwater inundation occurs on the vast floodplain wetlands of coastal northern Australia.</p>
MANAGEMENT ISSUES		<p>Fire: In the period 1993-2004, 41% of the site was burnt in fewer than three years, and 9% was burnt in more than six years. Pastoral management generally seeks to suppress fire.</p> <p>Feral animals: The site is within the relatively intensively managed pastoral estate, and numbers of feral grazers are probably low.</p> <p>Weeds: Several plants of <i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i> (a Weed of National Significance) have been noted along creek lines in the shallow north-west of the lake (Jaensch 1994a) but the current distribution of the weed is unknown. One other significant introduced plant species is recorded from this site (<i>Sida cordifolia</i>).</p> <p>Other: Heavy or continuous grazing by livestock is likely to limit regeneration of tree and shrub species and cause pugging and soil compaction on wet soil.</p> <p>There have been few ecological surveys of the area and information for the site is limited. Lack of awareness of the conservation values and significance of this site may hinder appropriate management planning and achievement of conservation outcomes.</p>
MANAGEMENT INFORMATION	NRM groups	Victoria River District Conservation Association.
	Protected areas	The site is outside the formal network of protected areas in the NT.
	Current management plans	<p>Site-specific plans: None known.</p> <p>Other management plans: Australian Weeds Strategy (NRMCC 2007).</p>
	Monitoring programs and research projects	<p>Aerial and ground surveys of waterbirds are conducted by Wetlands International opportunistically after major flood events (R. Jaensch, Wetlands International, pers. comm.).</p> <p>There are two Tier 1 rangeland monitoring points within this site (Karfs and Bastin 2001).</p> <p>Fire in the tropical savannas is mapped continuously under the North Australia Fire Information Project http://www.firenorth.org.au/nafi/app/init.jsp</p>
	Management recommendations	<p>Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the threats to the site and develop a formal management plan to address significant threats, including weed control and management of grazing pressure.</p> <p>The management plan may also investigate opportunities for stock exclusion areas and appropriate management of the site to maintain conservation values.</p> <p>Continue to support the landholders to implement conservation management programs (NRETA 2005).</p> <p>Investigate the options for establishing a conservation agreement in cooperation with the landholder (NRETA 2005).</p> <p>Control priority weeds in the site.</p> <p>Conduct detailed surveys and ongoing monitoring of waterbird populations, vegetation condition and weeds within the site.</p>
KEY REFERENCES	Papers and reports	<p>DIWA (A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia). <i>Australian Wetlands Database</i>. Department of Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts, Canberra ACT (accessed March 2008).</p> <p>Jaensch, R.P. (1994a). <i>An inventory of wetlands in the sub-humid tropics of the Northern Territory</i>. Report to the Australian Nature Conservation Agency. Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, Darwin.</p>
	Contributors	<p>Roger Jaensch, Wetlands International - Oceania, Brisbane</p> <p>Alaric Fisher, Biodiversity Conservation, NRETAS, Darwin</p>