Uluru and surrounds

Location and Description
Located about 350 km south-west of Alice Springs, Uluru (Ayer’s Rock) and Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) are distinctive and globally renowned sedimentary rock formations that rise steeply from the surrounding plains. This Site is rich in vertebrate fauna and provides significant habitat for many threatened species. The dominant vegetation community within the Site is spinifex grassland with low and scattered mulga and desert oak.

Tenure and Land Use
The Site is almost entirely Aboriginal freehold land held by three Aboriginal land trusts (Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Petermann and Katiti). Approximately 50% of the Site is managed for conservation (Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park); and tourism and Indigenous use are also major land uses within the Site.

Significance Rating
International Significance

Ecological Values
Nine threatened species are recorded from this Site, including one plant (quandong) and eight vertebrate species. Significant populations of the threatened Great Desert Skink, Brush-tailed Mulgara and Southern Marsupial Mole are known to occur in this Site, but other threatened species, the Black-footed Rock Wallaby and Common Brushtail Possum, are now considered locally extinct. This Site supports a rich reptile fauna and many plant species that have a restricted range within the Northern Territory.

Management Issues
Buffel grass is widespread within the Site, and has a significant impact on conservation values. Feral animals, especially camel, and fire management are ongoing management issues.

Condition
Apart from areas affected by buffel grass and feral animals, the Site is in good condition.

Current Conservation Initiatives
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is managed through a management plan developed in 2000. Buffel grass is the focus of a large-scale removal project in the park, patch burning strategies are pursued to help conserve fire sensitive vegetation, and threatened species are the focus of a number of research projects within the Site.

The area of the Site that lies outside the national park is within the proposed Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area.
### Location

**SOCS Number**: 61 (NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan Map Number 102)

**Latitude/Longitude**: 25° 15’ South, 130° 49’ East (at centre)

**Bioregion**: Great Sandy Desert

**Description**: This site includes Uluru and Kata Tjuta, and intervening sanddune and sandplain country. The boundary of the site is delineated based on consideration of threatened species records and primary habitat for threatened species, land systems mapping, and areas of botanical significance identified by White et al. (2000). It encompasses an area of 1181 km².

Major vegetation communities within the site include: hard spinifex _Triodia basedowii_ hummock grassland with mulga _Acacia aneura_ tall sparse-overstorey; porcupine grass _T. irritans_ open-hummock grassland; and _T. basedowii_ hummock grassland with desert oak _Allocasuarina decaisneana_ open-woodland overstorey between dunes (White et al. 2000).

Lakes Amadeus and Neale, 14 km north of the site, are also identified as a site of high conservation significance in the NT.

### Threatened Species

**Significance Rating**: International Significance

**Threatened plants and animals**

*Note: Listings at National/NT level CR - Critically Endangered, EN - Endangered, VU - Vulnerable, NT - Near Threatened, LC - Least Concern, DD - Data Deficient.*

- **Plants**: Quandong _Santalum acuminatum_ (-/VU)
- **Vertebrates**:
  - Great Desert Skink _Egernia kintorei_ (VU/VU)
  - Australian Bustard _Ardeotis australis_ (-/VU)
  - Emu _Dromaius novaehollandiae_ (-/VU)
  - Princess Parrot _Polytelis alexandrae_ (VU/VU)
  - Brush-tailed Mulgara _Dasycercus blythi_ (VU/VU)
  - Fawn Hopping-mouse _Notomys cervinus_ (VU/EN)
  - Mala _Lagorchestes hirsutus_
  - Southern Marsupial Mole _Notoryctes typhlops_ (EN/VU)

Mala were reintroduced into a predator-proof enclosure in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in September 2005. Five threatened species have not been recorded in the site since 1970 and are presumed to now be locally extinct (Central Rock-rat _Zyzomys pedunculatus_, Golden Bandicoot _Isoodon auratus_, Red-tailed Phascogale _Phascogale calura_, Western Quoll _Dasyurus geoffroii_, Shark Bay Mouse _Pseudomys fieldii_).

Three threatened species that have been recorded in the site since 1970 may no longer be present (Black-footed Rock-wallaby _Petrogale lateralis_, Common Brushtail Possum _Trichosurus vulpecula_, and Sandhill Dunnart _Sminthopsis psammophilae_).

Reid et al. (1993) identify three priority areas within Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park that support populations of threatened species. These include: sandplain country north of the Uluru sunset viewing area through to the Yulara borefields area; Kata Tjuta; and the alluvial plains at the base of Uluru. The transitional sandplains of the borefield area are especially significant; they support buried drainage lines and are likely to receive more moisture and nutrients from adjacent elevated areas than surrounding dunefield Spinifex landscapes (Reid et al. 1993).

### Endemic Species

**Significance Rating**: Not Significant

**Notes**: Endemic to the NT: Two plant species recorded from the site are considered to be NT endemics - based on misidentifications in other states (_Eriachne scleranthoides_ and _Acacia olgana_).

**Other**: Four plant species recorded from the site are only found in the Great Sandy Desert bioregion within the NT but also occur in other states (_Acacia prainii_, _Lobelia gibbosa_ var. _gibbosa_, _Ptilotus exaltatus_ var. _palidus_ and _Wurmbea centralis_ subsp. _centralis_).

### Wildlife Aggregations

**Significance Rating**: Not Significant

**Marine turtles**: Not applicable

**Seabirds**: None known

**Waterbirds**: Large aggregations of waterbirds are not known from this site but 25 waterbird species are recorded.

**Shorebirds**: Six shorebird species are known from this site.

**Other aggregations**: Caves and overhangs at Uluru and Kata Tjuta support large concentrations of cave roosting bats including maternity sites (Coles 1993).
### Uluru and Surrounds - Site of Conservation Significance

#### Management Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance Rating</th>
<th>Regional Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramsar criteria met</td>
<td>Not assessed</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIWA criteria met</td>
<td>Not assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Mutujulu waterhole, at the base of Uluru, is the most reliable natural source of surface water for 100 km. It is a small waterhole but is believed to be frequently recharged and supports wetland vegetation (Duguid 2005).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>No information located</td>
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</table>

#### Flora

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance Rating</th>
<th>Regional Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Restricted range species: Five plant species recorded from the site have restricted ranges within the NT (Eragrostis sterilis, Eucalyptus gongylocarpa, Senna artemisioides subs. glaucifolia, Sida sp. Golden Calyces, Sida sp. Watarrka). Relictual species: Lobelia gibbosa var. gibbosa, Chenopodium pumilio, Eragrostis sterilis and Juncus continuus are relictual plant species recorded at the site.</td>
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#### Wetlands

| Notes               | Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has UNESCO World Heritage listing for outstanding cultural and natural universal values (UNESCO). The area of the site outside the national park lies within the proposed Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area. Uluru-Kata National Park supports a rich reptile fauna (83 species) and is considered of high conservation significance for this reason (Reid et al. 1993). Uluru and Kata Tjuta are identified as Sites of Botanical Significance in White et al. (2000). Eleven migratory species recorded from this site are listed under international conventions or bilateral agreements protecting migratory animals. Mala have been reintroduced into a predator-proof enclosure in Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park and park management is considering reintroducing more regionally extinct species such as Burrowing Bettong, Black-footed Rock-wallaby and Ghost Bat. |

#### Other Environmental Values

| Notes               | Fire: In the period 1997-2005, most parts of the site (99%) were burnt fewer than two times and no parts of the site were burnt more than four times. In 1976, wildfires burnt about 75% of the national park and large uncontrolled wildfires such as this are a significant threat to the conservation values of the site. Feral animals: Camel, red fox, feral cat, European Rabbit, House Mouse and Rock Dove are recorded from the site. Camels are reported to be damaging vegetation within the national park (Uluru Kata Tjuta Board of Management 2000). Weiss and invasive exotic plants: Four category B weeds (khaki weed Alternanthera pungens, Mexican poppy Argemone ochroleuca subsp. ochroleuca, Mossman River grass Cenchrus echinatus, catnip Tribulus terrestris) are recorded from the site. Buffel grass Cenchrus ciliaris is widespread within the site, and couch grass Cynodon dactylon is likely to be spreading in the site. Other: Some impacts associated with Yulara Village may be negatively affecting important faunal habitat in the Yulara borefields area. |

#### NRM groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected areas</th>
<th>Traditional Owners.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (594 km²/ 50% of site). The remainder of the site falls within the proposed Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area.</td>
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</table>

#### Current management plans


#### Monitoring programs and research projects

| Monitoring of Great Desert Skink Egernia kintorei at Uluru (Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, Parks Australia) and Yulara borefields (Voyages Resorts) (C. Pavey, NRETAS, pers.comm.). Monitoring of the Brush-tailed Mulgara at Uluru (Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, Parks Australia) and Yulara borefields (Voyages Resorts) (C. Pavey, NRETAS, pers.comm.). Mala reintroduction project in Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park (Parks Australia) http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/uluru/management/programs/mala-reintroduction.html The Park management plan suggests monitoring of other species such as Striated Grasswren (Environment Australia 2000). Across the NT, fire is mapped continuously under the North Australia Fire Information Project http://www.firenorth.org.au/nafi/app/init.jsp |

#### Management recommendations

| Expand management programs for fire, feral animals and weeds and invasive plants (particularly buffel grass). Encourage the reintroduction of threatened species to the site. | Expand management programs for fire, feral animals and weeds and invasive plants (particularly buffel grass). Encourage the reintroduction of threatened species to the site. |
ULURU AND SURROUNDS - SITE OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE

KEY REFERENCES


| Contributors | Chris Pavey, Biodiversity Conservation, NRETAS, Alice Springs. |

Kata Tjuta (Photo: Chris Pavey)

Southern marsupial mole, a threatened species in much of the Arid NT sand country (Photo: NRETAS)