

'Establishing priorities for
wetland conservation in
the Kimberley Region.'

Project Synopsis

Project commencement: April 2005

Project completion: October 2006

Project Aim

Wetlands in the Kimberley are poorly recorded, especially in terms of biodiversity and cultural values, and are subject to increasing pressure from human activities. This puts them at risk as protection needs are not fully understood or adequately implemented. In order to address this omission WWF developed a proposal and secured NHT funding for the project 'Establishing priorities for wetland conservation and management in the Kimberley' with the aim to collate knowledge of the values, threats and management priorities of wetlands across the Kimberley, establishing a baseline of essential information to improve management planning and protection of conservation values.



The Challenge

Key challenges for the project include:

- Management of fieldwork and community consultation.
- On country visits with Traditional Owners, Indigenous Rangers and liaising with pastoral landholders / managers.
- Managing continuity in the team in remote regions.



Benefits to the Rangelands regions

The Kimberley wetlands are a blend of river systems and coastal wetlands comprising mound springs, swamps, claypans, lagoons and many other biologically and culturally rich water bodies. They are valued not only for their aesthetic splendour but also for providing habitat for animals and birds, harbouring important plant species and holding unique significance to Aboriginal custodians of the region. This project was beneficial in understanding the region further and providing a basis for asset identification and the establishment of resource condition targets under the Rangelands NRM Plan.

Key Outcomes

The report summarises management actions, further research and monitoring suggestions, but more importantly, it provides a basis for asset identification and the establishment of resource condition targets under the Rangelands NRM plan. Some of the major values and threats facing the Kimberley wetlands were identified during the course of the project and include:

Values

- Wetlands and water systems hold significance for Aboriginal culture, such as hunting, fishing, cultural stories or heritage sites
- Wetlands of high biodiversity such as Ramsar site or rainforest springs
- Riparian vegetation that provide habitat for threatened species
- Wetlands that provide a refuge for species in the dry season, such as permanent pools in rivers, floodplain wetlands and permanent lakes
- Social values of wetlands such as fishing, bird watching and tourism

Threats

- Cattle and feral stock pressures such as grazing, trampling and weed dispersal at sensitive wetlands
- Groundwater extraction e.g. for agriculture or from localised mining
- Changed river flows e.g. irrigation infrastructure or causeway / road construction
- Unmanaged or unsustainable tourism impacts on localised areas
- Changed fire regimes impacting on riverine vegetation or rainforest springs.

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