

NELLY BAY HABITAT RESERVE

*a Townsville City Council
Coastal Nature Conservation Project*

MANAGEMENT INTENT

To protect and manage the remnant native vegetation communities, and the native pigeon and stone curlew's which inhabit the area.

The Habitat Reserve consists of beach scrub either side of the main Nelly Bay Road, and includes a creek section of Nelly Bay Creek, a freshwater pool, mangrove and coastal dune. The adjacent helipad is outside the Habitat Reserve area and will continue to be managed for emergency response use and authorised commercial operation. The habitat areas will be managed for wildlife and passive recreation, including dog walking (on lead) and interpretative trails.

The Habitat

The upper canopy of the lowland woodlands & remnant littoral scrub support Pied Imperial Pigeons, *Ducula bicolor*, (formerly Torres Strait Pigeons) which nest in the paperbarks and feed on the fruits of several species such as the figs, Canariums, Carallias and Native Olives (*Chionanthus ramiflora*). This area secures a corridor connecting the lowlands with the uplands so that these pigeons and other fruit eaters such as Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves, *Ptilinopus regina*, Superb Fruit-Doves and Topknots, *Lopholaimus antarcticus*, can have a more reliable food supply.

At ground level the Lowland Woodlands provide shaded grassy areas for the Bush Stone Curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*. Despite threats from dogs, cats and cars the Bush Stone Curlew can happily live with humans as long as provisions are made for their needs and it is recognised that, by taking care of our Curlews now, we will avoid losing them as other Australian states have done.

One of the other interesting features of the reserve is the ephemeral creek, associated freshwater pool and mangrove of which there are few on the island.

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

- Maintain and enhance Pied Imperial Pigeon and Bush Stone Curlew habitat in the habitat reserve.
- Maintain a vegetation corridor through the Habitat areas to retain the connection between the uplands and lowlands.
- Provide bird watching, interpretative trails, and picnic facilities in the habitat area.
- Raise awareness about Pied Imperial Pigeons and Bush Stone Curlews
- Provide for drainage of surrounding properties and maintain the riparian ecology of the creek and pool.
- Foster community involvement in the implementation and on-going maintenance of the reserve.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- Allow for continued recreational use of the Habitat Reserve, whilst minimising impact on native pigeons and stone curlews.
- Regeneration of native plants, particularly in the creek, is being inhibited by the introduced Guinea Grass, *Panicum maximum*, and woody weed species (leceauna, tobacco bush).
- Current mowing practices destroys young regenerating native plants in some areas as well as reducing habitat for Stone Curlews.
- Guinea Grass creates a wildfire hazard, and uncontrolled wildfire can destroy the dune forests.
- Dog and cat management will be required to create a safe space for wildlife, especially Curlews.
- There is no information available for park visitors about the local native plants and the associated wildlife.
- There is strong community support for the management of the area as a Habitat Reserve.

OBJECTIVES and ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE: MANAGE THE HABITAT AREA FOR PIED IMPERIAL PIGEON AND BUSH STONE CURLEW HABITAT.

ACTIONS

1. Support community monitoring and woodland/scrub regeneration programs, especially tree planting of scrubs and creeks and guinea grass control.
2. Manage weeds in the existing littoral scrubs (dry coastal rainforest), both sides of the Nelly Bay Road, and plant up some parts of the surrounding open areas with food, roosting and nesting trees.
3. Maintain the existing open character of areas both sides of Sooning Street/Nelly Bay Road. Continue to mow designated areas on both sides of Nelly Bay Road, plant up some of these areas with a few replacement woodland seedlings, and leave small areas unmown for curlews especially near the littoral scrub on the beach side of Nelly Bay Road.
4. In the coastal part of the habitat reserve leave some areas unmown for Curlew refuge and re-instate native grasses where possible to facilitate habitat requirements. Not on Sooning Street side of road.
5. Remove introduced woody weeds that are a threat to the system, and retain introduced or exotic plants consistent with the existing amenity (eg. Frangipani, Mango, Figs and Coconuts).
6. Provide on site nature conservation and recreation information and viewing facilities for park visitors.
7. Consistent with existing Council policy, dogs may be exercised but must remain on a lead at all times.

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE CREEK ECOLOGY WHILE MAINTAINING DRAINAGE FUNCTIONS

ACTIONS

1. Control Guinea Grass using appropriate methods such as the Bradley method, mowing, mulching, revegetation and spraying. Explore new methods of control, eg, use of shade and appropriate fire management.
2. Infill existing native vegetation with food and nesting tree species, both by facilitating natural regeneration and planting tubestock from locally collected seed.
3. Protect the mangroves and freshwater lagoon.
4. Protect the creeklines while maintaining flood mitigation functions (creek bed to be clear of trees and obstructions).
5. Direct seed where ever possible with appropriate riparian grasses and other ground covers.
6. Involve surrounding land owners for a coordinated approach to creek management.

OBJECTIVE: RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT PIED IMPERIAL PIGEONS & BUSH STONE CURLEWS and THE REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION COMMUNITY HABITATS

ACTIONS

1. Label accessible trees with their names and functions and provide information on the remnant native vegetation communities which provide habitat for pigeons and stone curlews (dune scrub, mangrove, open woodland/grassland, littoral scrubs, and melaleuca creeks) .
2. Support volunteer programs which promote community interest in the birds.
3. Provide facilities for bird watching, (picnic tables in appropriate locations for viewing, information panels that tell people what to look for, etc).

OBJECTIVE: PROTECT THE COASTLINE OF THE *HABITAT RESERVE* FROM EROSION AND DEGRADATION

ACTIONS

1. Provide walkways to the beach to protect coastal vegetation between the Habitat Reserve and the beach.

2. Ensure that the natural dune vegetation is maintained in the Habitat Reserve area, and plant up the beach fronts with coastal tree and shrub species, eg, Coastal Sheoak, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Terminalia catappa*, and *Scaveola*.

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN PUBLIC RECREATIONAL ACCESS

ACTIONS

1. Maintain public pedestrian access in the habitat reserve and to beach areas
2. Educate the community on fauna sensitive activity and nature based recreation within the Habitat Reserve
3. Dogs will continue to be allowed to be exercised in the reserve but must remain on a lead at all times (as per local law).

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN THE HELICOPTER PAD FACILITIES

ACTIONS

1. The helicopter pad is outside the Habitat Reserve and will continue to be managed to facilitate emergency response and authorised commercial uses on Magnetic Island.
2. Wherever possible the surrounding vegetation will be protected and managed to maintain and enhance habitat. Where necessary species will be pruned to suit clearance criteria. Emergency response agencies will be consulted to achieve this objective.

OBJECTIVE: INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY IN THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RESERVE.

ACTIONS

1. Involve the community in the implementation, and on-going maintenance of the Habitat Reserve project with Environmental Planning.
2. Foster community efforts to undertake ecological restoration, monitoring and community awareness programs in the Habitat Reserve, including work with the Magnetic Island Nature Care (MINC), Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV), student projects from James Cook University, and all other interested community groups.
3. Maintain linkages with other government agencies and community interest groups to co-ordinate resources and management strategies.