IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 12 November 2017

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Australia
Inscribed in: 1994
Criteria:
(v) (vi) (vii) (viii)

Site description:

This park, formerly called Uluru (Ayers Rock – Mount Olga) National Park, features spectacular geological formations that dominate the vast red sandy plain of central Australia. Uluru, an immense monolith, and Kata Tjuta, the rock domes located west of Uluru, form part of the traditional belief system of one of the oldest human societies in the world. The traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta are the Anangu Aboriginal people. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good

The site’s World Heritage values are in good condition, likely to be maintained and indicators are that the protection and conservation of the site are highly effective. The site is very well managed through a combination of traditional and scientific knowledge under a Board of Management comprising a majority Traditional Owners, the Director of National Parks and two experts. Park Management programs are all guided by Tjukurpa (Traditional Law). The key threats to the site: wildfire, feral animals (camels, fox and rabbits), weeds and invasive exotic species (especially buffel grass) are a threat to the sites’ biodiversity values rather than a threat to its World Heritage Values. These threats are all well recognized and prioritised in the Plan of Management.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Good
Trend: Stable

The site receives high levels of very appropriate and respectful care that is not only ensuring protection of the sites natural and cultural World Heritage values but significantly increasing the respect of the wider Australian and global community to better appreciate the site and its complex values. The maintenance of cultural landscapes and living traditions is underpinned by joint management governance arrangements ensuring that traditional owners are key decision makers in all aspects of park management including environmental management programs and tourism planning. The site’s natural values – spectacular natural phenomenon of exceptional aesthetic and spiritual importance, as well as ongoing geological process – remain well preserved.

Overall THREATS

Low Threat

Threats to the World Heritage values of the site associated with criteria (vii) and (viii) are low. Erosion is a particular concern in some areas of the site but is well recognized in the Plan of Management and strategies have been implemented. Most of the impacts on the site (wildfire, ferals, weeds and climate change) affect the biodiversity values of the site and are prioritized in the current Management Plan.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Highly Effective

Anangu and Parks Australia share decision-making for the management of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The Management Plan 2010 – 2020 for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park meets all the statutory requirements for a management plan under the Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) through traditional practices. This association is led through the Board of Management, planning of programs jointly between traditional owners and park staff, the Plan of Management, and other Park related plans, and plays an important/crucial role in the maintenance and protection of the World Heritage values.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

▶ **Ongoing geological processes**
Criterion:(viii)

Uluru is affected by erosional processes including sheeting of rock parallel to the surface and granular disintegration known as cavernous weathering. Uluru and Kata Tjuta are exceptional examples of tectonic, geochemical and geomorphic processes which result in the different composition of these two relatively close outcroppings including their different extent of block tilting and types of erosion, the spalling of the arkose sediments of Uluru and massive 'offloading' of conglomerate at Kata Tjuta (DoE, 2013; DNP, 2010).

▶ **Natural phenomena of exceptional aesthetic and spiritual importance**
Criterion:(vii)

The relative simplicity of the monolith of Uluru and its contrasts with the many domes of Kata Tjuta create a landscape of outstanding beauty. They are part of an important cultural landscape and have profound significance to Anangu, as well as many Australians (DoE, 2013; DNP, 2010).

▶ **Spectacular desert landscape**
Criterion:(vii)

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, covers 1,325 km2 of arid ecosystems and is located close to the centre of Australia in the Western Desert, the traditional lands of Anangu, typically Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara language speakers. Uluru and Kata Tjua are exceptional examples of tectonic,

geochemical and geomorphic processes. (DoE, 2013). The park is a living cultural landscape, where Anangu continue to use the methods they have used over tens of thousands of years to manage culture and country. At the heart of the park is Tjukurpa, Anangu law, which informs all decisions. (DNP, 2010).

Other important biodiversity values

► Rare and endangered species

Across the park's ecological zones 619 plant species have been recorded, among them seven rare or endangered species, which are generally restricted to the moist areas at the bases of Uluru and the domes of Kata Tjuta. These include five relict species – Stylidium inaequipealum, Parietaria debilis, Ophioglossum lusitanicum subsp. coriaceum, Isoetes muelleri and Triglochin calcitrapum. In addition, the main occurrence of the sandhill wattle Acacia ammobia is just east of Uluru. The park's flora represents a large portion of plants found in Central Australia (DNP, 2010), many with a restricted range and therefore considered to have high conservation value. It is identified as a Site of Botanical Significance (White et al 2000). The great desert skink (Egernia kintorei) occurs in sand plains that are transitional between the mulga outwash around Uluru and Kata Tjuta and thedune fields beyond. An unusually diverse fauna assemblage occurs in an area extending north from Uluru, to the west of Yulara town-site and west to the Sedimentaries (DNP, 2010). Significant populations of great desert skink Egernia kintorei, occur on the site. Australian bustard Ardeotis australis, emu Dromaius novaehollandiaei, princess parrot Polytelis alexandrae, fawn hopping-mouse Notomys cervinus, Mala Lagorchestes hirsutus are also vulnerable or endangered species found on and surrounding the site (NRETAS, 2013). However, Mala population is a captive bred population held within a feral animal free enclosure. Five threatened species have not been recorded in the site since 1970. Three other threatened species, the black-footed rock wallaby Petrogale lateralis, the common brushtail possum Trichosurus vulpecula and sandhill dunnart Sminthopsis psammophila, had been recorded since 1970 but are now considered locally extinct (NRETAS, 2013). The site supports a rich reptile fauna (74 species). These include species of 5 legless lizard, 11 geckoes, 8 dragons, 6 goannas, 29 skinks, 3

blind snakes, 2 pythons and 8 elapid snakes. This is richer than that recorded for any other area of comparable size in the semi-arid zone (DoNP, 2010). The park supports populations of a number of relict and endemic species associated withthe unique landforms and habitats of the monoliths. An undescribed and apparently relictual earthworm is known from the southern margin of Uluru. The camaenid land-snail Basedowena olgana is known only from Kata Tjuta and Mt Conner nearby. Relict species found in the park include the scorpion Cercophonius squama.

► **An arid ecosystem**

The landscape is dominated by spinifex and low shrubs, hummock grassland with large desert oaks dotted on the sand dunes and plains. Sizeable areas of mulga woodland and other low shrubs also occur on dunes and swales. The alluvial flow areas at the base of the major rock formations support large bloodwoods, acacias and native grasses. Water holes and soaks provide restricted habitats for a number of rare and unique plant species. Larger stands of mulga and other acacias dominate the harder, wide, sand plain surrounding Uluru and Kata Tjuta. The vegetation is modified by substrate stability, climate and fire arranged concentrically around the monolith formations (DoE, 2013). The Uluru-Kata Tjuta landscape is a representative cross-section of Central Australian arid ecosystems. Anangu and non-Aboriginal scientists distinguish the various landscapes in similar ways. Anangu recognise the main habitats of the park as puli (rocky country), puti (shrub lands, particularly the mulga flats between sandhills), karu (creek lines and run-off plains), tali (sand dunes), pila (spinifex plains, low areas between dunes); karu - creek beds and nyaru (recently burnt country) (DNP, 2010).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

The key threats to the site: fire, feral animals, weeds and invasive exotic species are a threat to the sites' biodiversity values rather than a threat to its listed World Heritage Values. As noted, nine threatened species (1 plant and 8 vertebrate species) are recorded on the site. This includes significant populations of three of these threatened species. A further five threatened species have not been recorded in the site since 1970. This is suggestive of the impacts of invasive and feral animal and weed species, together with the impacts of wildfire. However, the current threats to the site's World Heritage values are low. Erosion is a major risk but is well recognized in the plan of management.

► Fire/ Fire Suppression

Low Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

Destructive wildfires burnt much of the park in 2002. The current plan of management acknowledges Traditional management practices carried out by Anangu as an integral part of 'caring for country'. Anangu use fire (patch burning) and other methods to manage their country; its habitats, plants and animals. Joint management of the park by traditional owners and Parks Australia, brings together cultural and scientific knowledge and experience (DoNP, 2010). Wildfires remain a key threat to the values of the site. The ecosystems are characterised by boom/bust cycles where infrequent but large rainfall events drive periods of short lived but extremely profuse vegetation growth. Following the rainfall, the vegetation dies leaving large amounts of fuel and an ecosystem extremely prone to massive wildfire. Appropriate prescribed burn programs that reduce fuel loads and promote a mosaic of fire age classes are undertaken annually to reduce this risk. Joint fire planning is undertaken with other agencies such as the NT Government, the Central Land Council and the Bushfires Council (IUCN Consultation, 2017). Heavy rainfall during 2016 and 2017 has resulted in heavy vegetation fuel loads, which could pose a high wildfire threat to biodiversity and cultural values, unless fuel loads are reduced in coming years. However, a major burning program is being implemented which will reduce the risk of large

wildfires.

► Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

Low Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

Buffel grass is an invasive weed species which is now widespread and has significant impact on conservation values. It forms monocultures that out-compete native grasses and other flora.. It provides further fuel for wildfires. Other weeds include khaki weed Alternanthera pungens; Mexican poppy Argemone ochroleuca; Mossman River grass Cenchrus echinatus; and caltrop Tribulus terrestris. Couch grass Cynodon dactylon is likely to be spreading in the site (DoE, 2013; Freidel etal 2006; NRETAS, 2013). Invasive animal species, particularly cats, foxes, rabbits, camels, also pose a threat to aspects of the park's biodiversity. Cats and foxes predate on many culturally important species including the blue tongue lizard, sand goanna and willie wagtail. Camels damage scarce desert waterholes essential to the continuity of the creation songlines that are the essence of cultural law.
Uluru has ongoing management programs for these species including trapping for foxes and cats, aerial and ground culling of camels in partnership with the surrounding Indigenous Protected Area and herbicide trials to investigate the most appropriate control programs for buffel grass (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Dams/ Water Management or Use

Low Threat
Inside site

Water is being extracted from within the park ('the borefields') to supply the adjacent tourism resort and its associated infrastructure. Studies have suggested that the extraction rate is sustainable.

► Household Sewage/ Urban Waste Water

Low Threat
Inside site

The Aboriginal community of Mutitjulu is entirely contained in the site and is adjacent to the Uluru monolith. The community has a population ranging

from 150-300 people, sometimes more. The associated infrastructure within the park that enables this community to function includes a power station (diesel generators); a sewage treatment area; and a rubbish tip which might cause some pollution.

► Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Low Threat
Inside site, localised(<5%)

The climb to the top of Uluru will be closed from 26 October 2019, in line with Anangu wishes.
The number of visitors climbing Uluru has steadily declined in recent years and now less than 20 percent (approximately 16 per cent) of visitors climb Uluru. The inappropriateness of the climb has been formally acknowledged since at least 1991. The current Plan of Management lists the closure of the climb as an objective, subject to the meeting of one or more of three criteria. On 1 November 2017, being satisfied that this criteria has been met, the Uluru- Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management decided to close the Uluru climb, effective from October 26 2019, the 34 anniversary of the Handback of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park to its traditional Aboriginal owners.

► Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems

High Threat
Inside site, throughout(>50%)
Outside site

Due to a range of factors associated with the settlement of Australia and socio-economic issues, the loss of traditional cultural and ecological knowledge is considered one of the greatest threats to World Heritage values. In particular, senior traditional owners have expressed concern that younger generations are not learning traditions and knowledge associated with Tjukurpa, traditional Aboriginal law that is associated with and defines the living cultural landscape of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (IUCN Consultation, 2017).
The threat however is widely acknowledged with specific programs designed to increase opportunities for intergenerational transfer of knowledge, flexible employment options and on-country engagement.

Potential Threats

Data Deficient

Impacts associated with visitor accommodation and staff quarters at Yulara village may be negatively affecting important faunal habitat in the Yulara borefields area. Because of the significance of this area to the supply of moisture and nutrients to the various significant species, this should be investigated as a potential threat.

► Housing/ Urban Areas

Data Deficient
Inside site

Some impacts associated with the Yulara village (main township and visitor accommodation) may be negatively affecting important faunal habitat in the Yulara borefields area (NRETAS, 2013).

► Erosion and Siltation/ Deposition

Low Threat
Inside site

Major surface features of the Uluru monolith include sheet erosion with layers 1 – 3 m thick, parallel to the existing surface, breaking away. A number of caves, inlets and overhangs at the base are formed by chemical degradation and sand blast erosion (DoE, 2013). Erosion is a particular concern in some of these areas. Vehicle use by early visitors around the base of Uluru resulted in severe gully erosion. In addition, the Uluru Ring Road was built above the natural ground level in places, which has significantly altered the sheet flow and caused significant erosion. Soil susceptibility to erosion is a major risk and must be carefully considered in planning, designing and maintaining park infrastructure. Soils of the Gillen land system based around Uluru and Kata Tjuta are the most susceptible to erosion in the park where tourism pressures are greatest (DoNP, 2010).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Highly Effective

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is a living cultural landscape tens of thousands of years old. It is 100 per cent Aboriginal land which traditional owners have leased to the Director of National Parks to be jointly managed (IUCN Consultation, 2017). Joint management is being practiced through the implementation of lease provisions and through a Board of Management which contains a majority of traditional owners. Traditional Owners and boards of management are increasingly satisfied with park management. (DNP, 2010). The strength of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park's management is the direction and guidance of traditional owners in all aspects of park work through joint management arrangements and consultation procedures as well as active involvement in on ground management programs (IUCN Consultation, 2017). However, concerns have also been expressed that internal influences such as Public Service employment standards and WH&S conditions, and a range of socio-economic factors like literacy and numeracy, poor housing, health issues continue to limit Anangu aspirations (IUCN Consultation, 2017(2)).

► Legal framework

Highly Effective

The Management Plan 2010 – 2020 for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has been prepared under provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (DNP, 2010). Management is underpinned by Tjukurpa (pronounced 'chook-orr-pa', meaning life, law and traditional culture) which is central to the 10 year management plan in place to guide operations on the park. The management plan (2010-2020 - current version) is created by the park's Anangu-led board of management and is a legally binding document under Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Enforcement

Mostly Effective

Enforcement of the relevant laws and regulations is mostly effective and is based on an education and compliance focus rather than enforcement. However, there are no compliance issues that significantly threaten park values.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Highly Effective

The Park is managed in accord to prescriptions contained in the Management Plan and in accord with State and Federal legislative obligations including those specific to World Heritage sites, Parks Australia policy and planning and legislative, systems. The Park makes a significant contribution to the National Reserve System, which aims to contain samples of all regional ecosystems across Australia, their constituent biota and associated conservation values, in accordance with the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia. The park also contributes to the objectives of the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia’s Biological Diversity by conserving biological diversity in situ, integrating biological diversity conservation and natural resource management, managing threatening processes, improving knowledge of biological diversity and involving the community in biodiversity conservation. Numerous migratory species that occur in Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park are protected under international agreements such as the Bonn Convention for conserving migratory species, and Australia’s migratory bird protection agreements with China (CAMBA), Japan (JAMBA) and Korea (ROKAMBA) (DNP, 2010). The recent declaration of the Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) surrounding the park further strengthens protection of the site. The IPA surrounds the national park and enables cooperative land management over a large area (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Management system

Highly Effective

Joint management between the Traditional Owners, Nguraritja/ Anangu and Parks Australia brings together cultural and scientific knowledge and

experience, as well as providing opportunities for formal western style education, employment and community development (DNP, 2010).

► Management effectiveness

Highly Effective

The values of the site have been well preserved. Populations of EPBC Act listed threatened species and their habitats have been conserved (DNP, 2010).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Highly Effective

No recent Committee Decisions.

► Boundaries

Highly Effective

The management plan identifies zoning that provides for biodiversity conservation in the reserve, the landscape and the needs of the Anangu community, the Central Land Council and Uluru–Kata Tjuta Land Trust in accordance with the Lease Agreement (DoE, 2013; DNP, 2010).

► Sustainable finance

Highly Effective

Planning and financial decision-making are based on best available information, good practice and Government requirements. High levels of staff expertise and performance are maintained (DNP, 2010). Attempts are being made to increase levels of employment of Anangu in Park Management roles as well as private enterprises to ensure the Anangu community has a sustainable and healthy future. Given the very remote location costs for effective park management are very high. Visitation is an important source of income.

► Staff training and development

Some Concern

Growing capacity and increasing participation of Traditional owners in park management is a key goal of the Board of Management, especially for

younger generations of traditional owners.

▶ Sustainable use

Highly Effective

In accordance with the Plan of Management stakeholders, neighbours, state agencies and park user groups – visitors and tourism operators - are involved in, and contribute to park management activities.

▶ Education and interpretation programs

Highly Effective

The Cultural Centre is the primary opportunity for increasing visitor awareness of living cultural traditions and the natural and cultural values of the Park. It is also the base for several Anangu enterprises to service visitor needs for tours, arts and craft and refreshments. A ‘Knowledge for Tour Guides’ program has been introduced, to improve tour guides’ knowledge of Anangu culture, and natural heritage of the park. Public awareness and appreciation of the values of Park has been enhanced. Commercial operators provide a high quality service to park visitors. Plans are in place to upgrade the Cultural Centre and the affiliated enterprises (DNP, 2010b).

▶ Tourism and visitation management

Mostly Effective

Anangu and non-Aboriginal people perceive Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in very different ways. Around 350 000 people visit the park every year to experience the spectacular scenery and learn about Anangu culture. Many people regard the Uluru monolith as one of the natural wonders of the world. For non-Aboriginal Australians, Uluru is the symbolic heart of the nation and is socially important for its recreational and aesthetic qualities. Visitor impacts (on reserve management, values, the environment and other visitors) are within acceptable levels. Although already actively involved and encouraged/supported by the Park to do as much as possible, Anangu people would like to be more involved in tourism businesses and interpretation delivery. They have been involved in the decision by the Board of Management to prevent visitors climbing Uluru (as it’s both a disrespectful and unsafe activity) which will take effect on 26 October 2017. Policies and regulations in relation to visitor management have been developed in such a

way as to emphasise Anangu perceptions of appropriate visitor behaviour. Of particular importance are policies and guidelines developed by the Board of Management for commercial filming and photography and the closing off of certain areas around the base of Uluru, to ensure visitors do not inadvertently contravene Tjukurpa restrictions. The Cultural Centre has greatly increased opportunities for visitors to learn about Tjukurpa, Anangu culture and the park. Within the bounds of appropriate access, Tjukurpa provides a basis for most of the interpretation of the park to visitors. Anangu want visitors to understand how they interpret this landscape. Tjukurpa contains information about the landscape features, the ecology, the plants and animals, and appropriate use of areas of the park. Tjukurpa has been passed down through the generations and can be shared with visitors. In addition, Anangu believe that visitors' understanding of the park can be enhanced by providing information about how Anangu use the park's resources and the history of their use of these resources (DNP, 2010).

► Monitoring

Highly Effective

Effective research and monitoring provides essential information to assist the Director and the Board, and the Australian Government, to make sound decisions about management of the park. This work may be carried out by park staff or consultants engaged by the Director. It may also be carried out in collaboration with other government agencies, organisations and individuals, including researchers and tourism businesses using/on the site. Although monitoring programs are not extensive, results of monitoring and surveys in the park provide valuable information about natural and cultural resources and visitors' use of the park. Regular monitoring reveals whether and how conditions have changed in relation to the baseline information and helps in assessing the effectiveness of management programs and making better management decisions. Flora and fauna monitoring in the park provides useful information for regional conservation programs, local Aboriginal enterprises, and the tourism industry. The episodic fluctuations in the abundance and distribution of priority animals and their habitats mean that long-term monitoring programs are essential to identify trends (DNP, 2010).

► Research

Highly Effective

Research is sometimes undertaken by Anangu, Park staff and other research partners (such as University researchers) leading to a better understanding of the park's biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage values, and the pressures these are under from a variety of sources; a better understanding of visitors: who they are, their expectations and awareness of the park, levels of satisfaction, and preferences and use of the park. The Board and Park management continuously seek to more effectively involve Anangu and traditional skills and knowledge to contribute to effective management of the park and the region and protect park values (DoNP, 2010; McAlpin 2006).

Overall assessment of protection and management

Highly Effective

Anangu and Parks Australia share decision-making for the management of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The Management Plan 2010 – 2020 for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park meets all the statutory requirements for a management plan under the Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) through traditional practices. This association is led through the Board of Management, planning of programs jointly between traditional owners and park staff, the Plan of Management, and other Park related plans, and plays an important/crucial role in the maintenance and protection of the World Heritage values.

► Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Mostly Effective

The current focus of management remains on expanding programs for the effective management of fire, feral animals, weeds and invasive plants, in particular buffel grass, the impacts of climate change and visitor management issues. In addition to the site specific Plan of Management, there are numerous programmes and national recovery plans relevant to particular threatened species and other management issues such as the Australian Weeds Strategy, Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral

Cats, Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by European Red Fox, Threat Abatement Plan for Competition by Feral Rabbits. Across the Northern Territory fire is mapped continuously under the North Australia Fire Information Project. Data from all these programs are integrated into site management, research and monitoring programs (NRETAS, 2013).

► Best practice examples

Anangu have lived in and maintained the landscape and Tjukurpa (Traditional law) at Uluru and Kata Tjuta for many thousands of years. Uluru-Kata Tjuta was first declared a national park under Commonwealth law on 24 May 1977, the Australian Government handed the deeds to the park back to its Anangu traditional owners on 26 October 1985. Anangu then leased the Park to the Director of Parks Australia, to be jointly managed under a board made up of a majority of traditional owners. Joint management combines traditional and scientific knowledge, different governance processes, and interweaves two law systems - Piranpa (European) law and Tjukurpa. Working together means learning from each other, respecting each other's cultures and finding innovative ways to bring together different ways of seeing and interpreting the landscape and its people. Anangu's traditional ecological knowledge is critical to the ongoing scientific management of the species found in these habitats. Traditional management practices carried out by Anangu are an integral part of ‘caring for country’. Anangu learned how to patch burn the country from Tjukurpa of lungkata, the blue tongued lizard. Now, in conjunction with modern methods, the cool season practice of lighting small fires close together leaves burnt and unburnt areas in a pattern like a mosaic. This traditional knowledge has been retained despite European colonists’ discouraging deliberate burning. Non-Aboriginal people now recognise that traditional Aboriginal burning is important to the ecology of habitats, with recently burnt areas being favoured by nomadic birds, small mammals and reptiles. Patch burning helps to maintain a mosaic of habitats at different stages of succession that are suitable for a range of plant and animal species. Burning in the park is carried out in accordance with traditional practices. This traditional knowledge is adopted as an ecological management tool in the park. However, senior traditional owners are concerned that these on-going traditions are being lost and not being passed onto younger generations, due to a range of social factors. Mitigation programs are being developed and implemented which include on-country

trips and work and a range of on-country employment.).

The mala (rufous-hare wallaby Lagorchestes hirsutus) is a small and critically endangered wallaby, no longer found in the wild. It is a significant Tjukurpa species and has recently been re-introduced (DoE, 2013). This small wallaby was once one of the most abundant and widespread macropods in the Northern Territory, inhabiting the spinifex country throughout Central Australia. Today mala are classified by the Northern Territory Government as extinct in the wild, wiped out by European settlement which changed the environment in many ways, including farming practices, clearing, fire regimes and the introduction of feral predators such as cats and foxes. The species survives in a few feral-proof enclosures scattered around different parts of the continent and some islands off the West Australian coast. The mala enclosure at Uluru-Kata Tjuta covers 170 hectares and is surrounded by a cat and fox proof fence. Inside, the mala live a fairly natural life apart from the provision of supplementary food that they can use in the drier times. The mala enclosure was constructed in 2005, introducing 25 animals. Today there are more than 220 mala. The original mala were reared in Watarrka National Park. (Gillen et al 2000) Park management is now considering reintroducing more regionally extinct species such as the burrowing bettong, black-footed rock wallaby and ghost bat (NRETAS, 2013).

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

► Ongoing geological processes

Low Concern
Trend:Improving

Uluru is affected by erosional processes including sheeting of rock parallel to the surface and granular disintegration known as cavernous weathering. The monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta are exceptional examples of tectonic, geochemical and geomorphic processes. Therefore changes over time continue to occur. The improvements to site and visitor management in

particular closing the climbing of Uluru has improved the integrity and safety of the site. Erosion is a particular concern in some areas but is well recognized in the Plan of Management and improvements have been implemented. Vehicle use by early visitors around the base of Uluru resulted in severe gully erosion. Soils of the Gillen land system based around Uluru and Kata Tjuta are the most susceptible to erosion in the park where tourism pressures are greatest. Soil susceptibility to erosion is a major risk and is carefully considered in planning, designing and maintaining park infrastructure (DoE, 2013; DNP, 2010).

► Natural phenomena of exceptional aesthetic and spiritual importance

Good
Trend:Stable

Anangu are now working together with park rangers to look after the natural heritage according to traditional law, and Piranpa (non-Anangu) rangers are receiving training in traditional land management. The values of the site are far more respected by visitors than previously.
In 2011 the Indigenous Land Corporation purchased Ayers Rock Resort, located at Yulara inside the Park, paving the way for significant increases in Indigenous business interests in the nearby communities. However, the potential of the Resort to employ local traditional owners has not been realised. Doing so will enhance the visitor experience and appreciation of the site as a profoundly significant Indigenous place, while providing employment opportunities for traditional owners linked to knowledge of their country (DoE, 2013; DoNP, 2010; Periodic Report, 2002). Site's values remain in good condition and stable (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Spectacular desert landscape

Good
Trend:Stable

Anangu have lived in and maintained the landscape and Tjukurpa at Uluru and Kata Tjuta for many thousands of years. For the Indigenous community it has profound cultural significance. Many people regard Uluru as one of the natural wonders of the world. For non-Aboriginal Australians, Uluru is the symbolic heart of the nation and is socially important for its recreational and aesthetic values. The work of the Traditional Owners together with Parks Australia is improving the sites values by addressing previous negative

behaviours introduced by Europeans which were damaging the ecological and cultural integrity of the site. This included climbing on the surface of Uluru, driving around its base and swimming in water holes (DoE, 2013; DNP, 2010; Periodic Report, 2002). Site's values remain in good condition and stable (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Good

Trend: Stable

The site receives high levels of very appropriate and respectful care that is not only ensuring protection of the sites natural and cultural World Heritage values but significantly increasing the respect of the wider Australian and global community to better appreciate the site and its complex values. The maintenance of cultural landscapes and living traditions is underpinned by joint management governance arrangements ensuring that traditional owners are key decision makers in all aspects of park management including environmental management programs and tourism planning. The site’s natural values – spectacular natural phenomenon of exceptional aesthetic and spiritual importance, as well as ongoing geological process – remain well preserved.

► Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values

Low Concern

Trend: Stable

The key issues for the site: wildfire, feral animals, weeds and invasive exotic species and climate change are a threat to the sites’ ‘Other Important Biodiversity Values’ rather than a threat to its World Heritage Values. As noted, nine threatened species are recorded on the site. This includes significant populations of three of these threatened species. A further five threatened species have not been recorded in the site since 1970. This is suggestive of the impacts of invasive and feral animals and weed species, together with the impacts of wildfire. These threats are all interrelated and

together with climate change impact significantly on available ground water, which is a key determinant to the survival of the threatened species. The site supports an exceptional reptile fauna (74 species), many plant species with a restricted range and eleven migratory species. It is therefore considered to have high conservation value and botanical significance. These threats are all well recognized and prioritised in the Plan of Management.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ **Sacred natural sites or landscapes**

Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park is on the traditional lands of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal people (known locally as Anangu). It is part of an extensive Aboriginal cultural landscape that stretches across the Australian continent. The site represents the combined works of ancestral elders and nature over millennia. The landscape has been continuously and sustainably managed using traditional Anangu methods governed by Tjukurpa (Traditional Law). The Anangu have obligations to maintain Tjukurpa and want to ensure that these obligations and cultural traditions continue to be recognized (DNP, 2010).

▶ **Importance for research, Contribution to education**

Anangu’s knowledge of sustainable land use derives from a detailed body of ecological knowledge which includes a classification of ecological zones. This knowledge continues to contribute significantly to ecological research and management of the park. Anangu landscape management followed a traditional regime of fire management, and temporary water resources were husbanded by cleaning and protecting soaks and rockholes; Anangu landscape management methods are now integral to management of the park. The site is very well managed through a combination and sharing of

traditional and scientific knowledge under a Board of Management comprising a majority Traditional Owners, the Director of National Parks and two experts. All park management is guided by Tjukurpa. The Anangu welcome visitors in order to enhance visitors' knowledge and appreciation of what constitutes culturally appropriate behaviour as part of the experience of visiting a jointly managed national park. (DNP, 2010).

► Wilderness and iconic features

Within Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park the monolith Uluru is arguably the most distinctive and iconic landscape symbol of Australia, nationally and internationally. It conveys a powerful sense of the very long time during which the landscape of the Australian continent has evolved.

► Outdoor recreation and tourism

The Park receives some 350,000 visitors a year. The Uluru–Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre provides opportunities for visitors to learn about Tjukurpa, Anangu culture and the park. Within the bounds of appropriate access, Tjukurpa provides a basis for most of the interpretation of the park to visitors. Anangu want visitors to understand how they interpret this landscape. Tjukurpa contains information about the landscape features, the ecology, the plants and animals, and appropriate use of areas of the park. Tjukurpa has been passed down through the generations and can be shared with visitors.

► Tourism-related income

Central Australia supports a number of tour operators and others who derive a significant proportion of their income from visitors to the park. Tourism is central to the regional economy, particularly in terms of employment. The standard of visitor facilities that Parks Australia develops and maintains in the park greatly influences the quality of tourists' experience of the region and hence sustainability of the tourism industry. Tourism is a major export industry in Australia and is actively promoted by governments at all levels. Along with other World Heritage sites of significant natural beauty in Australia such as Kakadu National Park and the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru has become a major tourism attraction for overseas visitors.

▶ **Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality)**

Uluru and Kata Tjuta monoliths provide runoff water which finds its way into moist gorges and drainage lines where isolated populations persist in an environment otherwise characterised by infertile and dry dunefields within a massive desert region. The waterhole at the base of Uluru is also an important water source for the Anangu living at Mutitjulu inside the park.

▶ **Provision of jobs**

Uluru provides local employment and other economic opportunities to communities in the area.

▶ **Legal subsistence hunting of wild game, Collection of wild plants and mushrooms**

Local harvesting of animals and plants is an important food source for Aboriginal people.

▶ **Cultural identity and sense of belonging**

The creation stories associated with the park are a component of unbroken cultural law in the western desert.

Summary of benefits

Located in the remote Western Desert in Central Australia, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is part of a sacred landscape and traditional lands of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal people, who have worked with nature caring for country in a sustainable manner for many thousands of years. Over the past 200 years Europeans have introduced many feral and invasive species and behaviours and land uses causing significant damage to ecological and intangible heritage values of the site. Since its declaration as a national park in 1977 and later its return to the Traditional Owners who subsequently leased the park to the Director of National Parks, habitat on the site has been restored. It provides a range of significant ecological, cultural, social and economic services and benefits at the local, national and international level. All park management is guided by Tjukurpa (Traditional Law) Anangu work with

Parks Australia in joint management of the site using a combination of traditional and scientific methods. This provides important two way learning about heritage management for site managers and for visitors. The land has always provided for the economic well-being of Anangu. Traditionally, harvesting and using the site's resources have provided the basis for their economy. Anangu want to continue their tradition of harvesting and using resources but they also want to ensure its protection and conservation. Anangu expect to benefit from their land being managed as a national park through direct employment in the park and through contract services being provided by Anangu enterprises or jointly owned ventures. They seek greater benefit from the use of their land for tourism including the potential for some activities to be delivered solely by Anangu enterprises (DNP, 2010). Visitors to the Park seek opportunities to meet Aboriginal people which is an important element in national reconciliation.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Parks Australia, Anangu, and relevant Northern Territory government departments	From: 2017 To: 2017	Baseline surveys and ongoing monitoring of the distribution and abundance of listed species and communities including EPBC Act and Northern Territory listed species. Data on EPBC Act and Northern Territory listed plant and animal species and others of conservation or cultural significance will be maintained, and management programs and activities ensure protection from inappropriate disturbance.

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
2	Parks Australia working closely with Anangu, the Central Land Council	From: 2017 To: 2017	Understanding the status of native wildlife populations and their interactions with fire and other environmental and climatic factors, including the use of established long-term flora and fauna monitoring sites.
3	Parks Australia working closely with Anangu, the Central Land Council	From: 2017 To: 2017	Controlling buffel grass to reduce fire intensity. Current management consists of removing buffel grass by hand, a resource-intensive process. In 2012 Park rangers began trialling other methods of control, including different burning and herbicide combinations. At the same time, mapping plant species of particular management importance, such as those that are rare, at the edge of their range, under pressure from pest animals and weeds, culturally significant or fire sensitive.
4	Parks Australia working closely with Anangu, the Central Land Council	From: 2017 To: 2017	Improving knowledge about the impacts of fire regimes on flora and fauna through monitoring and research activities. Protecting fire sensitive species from inappropriate fire regimes and the impact of fire on habitats and native species, including the effects of weeds on fire and of fire on weed distribution, and the effectiveness of seasonal burning as a habitat management tool. Supporting intergenerational transfer of Anangu knowledge and skills in fire management so that fire work can continue to be done in the culturally appropriate way.

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
5	Parks Australia working closely with Anangu, the Central Land Council and other landholders	From: 2017 To: 2017	Study of the impacts of feral animals and weeds on park values, and improved survey and control methods. Foxes and cats are controlled to the fullest possible extent, including a baiting program. Rabbits are controlled at priority sites including around Uluru and Kata Tjuta and in reintroduction enclosures, and in other areas as agreed where they are having a significant impact on park values. Camels will be managed to ensure park values are not impacted. Priority sites for protection from camels include key visitor sites, waterholes, cultural sites, significant plant communities, the Mutitjulu Community and park infrastructure. In the longer term, options for controlling camel numbers will be identified in conjunction with adjacent landowners and other regional partners, and will include consideration of economic opportunities for Anangu.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	N.A.	Reintroduction of some previously existing species is of significant cultural importance to strengthen Tjukurpa, to ensure younger Anangu learn about these culturally significant species, and for the health of country.	From: 2017 To: 2017
2	N.A.	There is considerable scope to improve current scientific understanding of native plants and animals with increased opportunities for Anangu involvement in such programs as surveying, tracking and monitoring.	From: 2017 To: 2017
3	N.A.	Water research on quality of water in water holes and aquifers; likely impacts of climate change and increasing usage through tourism.	From: 2017 To: 2017

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