



DEPARTMENT OF LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

# SALTWATER CROCODILE (*Crocodylus porosus*) MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:

## 2014-2015 Monitoring Report

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## Summary

The Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia, 2014 – 2015, requires annual reporting on the implementation of the Management Program. This monitoring report reviews the performance in 2014/2015 (financial year). Data for 2014/2015 and the preceding four years are included throughout the report.

Northern Territory Department of Land Resource Management (DLRM) conducted spotlight surveys in 2 out of 8 monitoring rivers (3 scheduled) in 2014. One river could not be surveyed due to water levels being too low to allow access. The results showed that the population of non-hatchling *C. porosus* in most rivers continued to increase or remain stable. The Adelaide River continues to show stable population abundance with increasing biomass; indicating a stable mature population. The remaining monitored rivers all show either stable abundance with increasing biomass (Mary) or increasing abundance and biomass (Daly, Liverpool, Tomkinson, Blyth, Cadel and Glyde Rivers). The apparent trend of very slight decline in the Cadell River is no longer evident with the inclusion of the latest monitoring data. Given that the harvest intensity of eggs in the catchment is low and the river was not heavily hunted for crocodiles before protection, it is not likely that the previously observed decline was caused by the harvest. These rivers, particularly the Adelaide River which is both intensively harvested and the closest river to the Greater Darwin Problem Crocodile Management Zone, will be monitored more intensely if monitoring indicates any harvest impact.

Parks Australia North surveyed 2 of 4 monitoring rivers in Kakadu National Park in November 2014; the South Alligator and East Alligator Rivers. The South Alligator, West Alligator and Wildman Rivers showed possible declines in the years up to 2008; however the recent survey of the South Alligator River supports a stable population, rather than declining, and increasing biomass. The East Alligator River showed both increasing abundance and biomass.

Survey results also indicated that the size of individual animals (estimated from size structure and biomass) has been increasing in most rivers, reflecting the continued maturity of the population still recovering from the unregulated hunting in the period 1945 to 1971.

A total of 279 problem crocodiles were removed in 2014/2015 by Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) staff for public safety and to protect stock in pastoral areas, of which 81% were males and 71% were caught in the Darwin Harbour.

PWC continues to promote community awareness for safety and participation through CROCWISE campaign programs using a variety of media. PWC delivered local schools with educational programs.

Under the ceiling of 70,000 live eggs, 68,000 eggs were allocated to harvest, but only 50,022 live eggs were collected in 2014/2015.

Under the ceilings of 500 hatchlings, 400 juveniles and 500 adults provided in the Management Program, 0 hatchlings, 0 juveniles and 61 adults were harvested in 2014/2015. The adults harvested were strongly biased to male (85.6%). The average body size of the harvested animals was about 2.2 metres for females and 3.7 metres for males. The total number of crocodiles harvested (61) is known to be an underestimate due to a number of harvest permits being multiyear permits that have not yet expired; consequently complete final return/harvest data is not yet available.

Eight crocodile farms operated in 2014/2015 in the Northern Territory. Farm production data for the period 1 February 2014 to 31 January 2015 is reported here. Farm production reporting is limited to stock held, acquisitions and disposals. Most of the live crocodiles exported from the Northern Territory went to Queensland.

Permit compliance and animal welfare was closely monitored and inspected by DLRM, PWC and the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF). A few minor non-compliance cases were identified and dealt with through warning letters, caution notices or infringement notices as appropriate.

## INTRODUCTION

The Northern Territory Department of Land Resource Management (DLRM), Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) and the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF) review compliance to, and the operation of, the Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile in the Northern Territory of Australia, 2014 – 2015 (Saalfeld *et al.* 2014). The annual revision is reported to the Australian Government Department of Environment (DoE). This is the first Monitoring Report of the Management Program, reviewing the implementation and performance in 2013/2014.

The Management Program was approved by the Administrator for the Northern Territory as an approved management program under section 34(2) of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* on 22 August 2009 and by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts as an Approved Wildlife Trade Management Plan under Subsection 303FO(3) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999 on 1 July 2014.

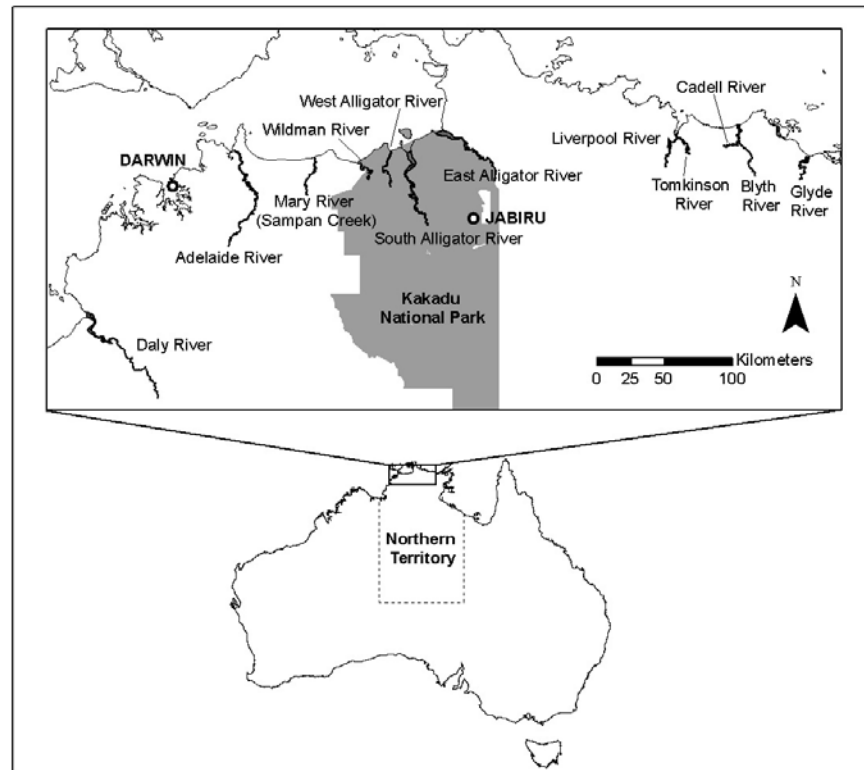
The Management Program has four objectives:

1. To facilitate the sustainable use of Saltwater Crocodiles;
2. To promote community awareness and public safety;
3. To ensure the humane treatment of Saltwater Crocodiles; and
4. To monitor and report on the impact of the harvest of Saltwater Crocodiles.

The reporting requirements are outlined in Section 4.9 under Objective 4. The status of each milestone as defined as performance indicators in the Management Program is summarised in Appendix 1. The results of the population surveys and farm stock reporting are provided in Appendix 2 and 3, respectively.

## POPULATION MONITORING

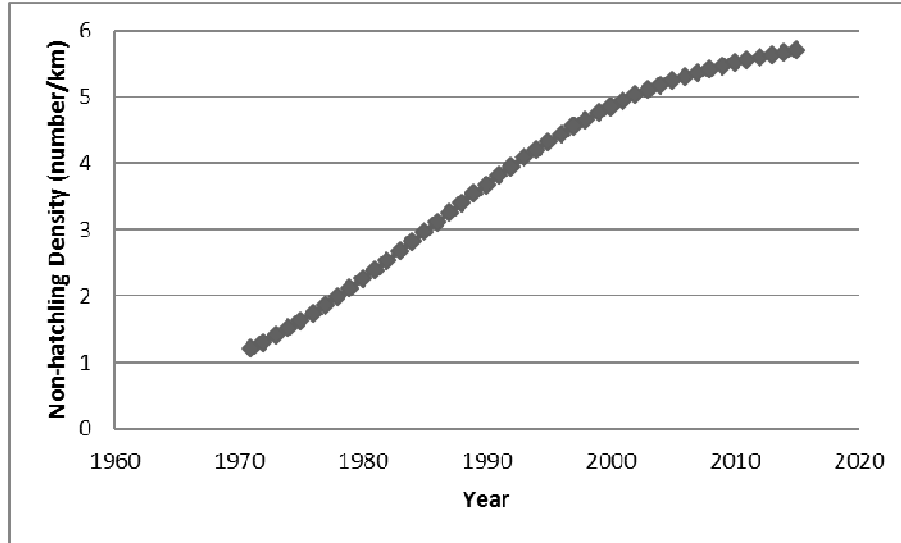
Populations of *C. porosus* have been monitored in the Northern Territory since the species was declared protected in 1971 through a range of varied monitoring projects undertaken by the University of Sydney, Parks Australia North (Kakadu National Park), Wildlife Management International (WMI), DLRM and individual PWC parks. The standardised spotlight surveys started in 1975 and have continued since then in the Adelaide River, Blyth River, Cadell River, Daly River, Glyde River, Liverpool River, Mary River and Tomkinson River on a biennial basis (Figure 1, Appendix 2). In addition four rivers (Wildman River, West Alligator River, South Alligator River and East Alligator River) in Kakadu National Park are surveyed annually by Parks Australia North. Data from the Kakadu rivers up to 2007 and 2014 only are available to DLRM at this time. Surveys have been carried out in these rivers post 2007, however processing and analysis constraints by Kakadu National Park Service have resulted in this data for the period 2008 to 2014 being unavailable for this report. Kakadu National Park Service have indicated that the data will be available for future reporting.

**Figure 1** Rivers surveyed to monitor *C. porosus* populations in the Northern Territory.

## General trends

Results from the monitoring programs show that the number of non-hatchlings (>2 ft or >0.6 m) of *C. porosus* has largely increased since protection in 1971 and the introduction of farming in 1980 (Figure 2). Analyses of surveys continue to suggest that the rate of increase of crocodile populations in a majority of rivers is slowing or approaching an asymptote in recent years. Most of the monitored rivers show large increases since protection and some have stabilised at an asymptote in recent years. Analysis of each individual river is provided in Appendix 2. There is no evidence that the harvesting program has had a detrimental impact on crocodile population in the NT.

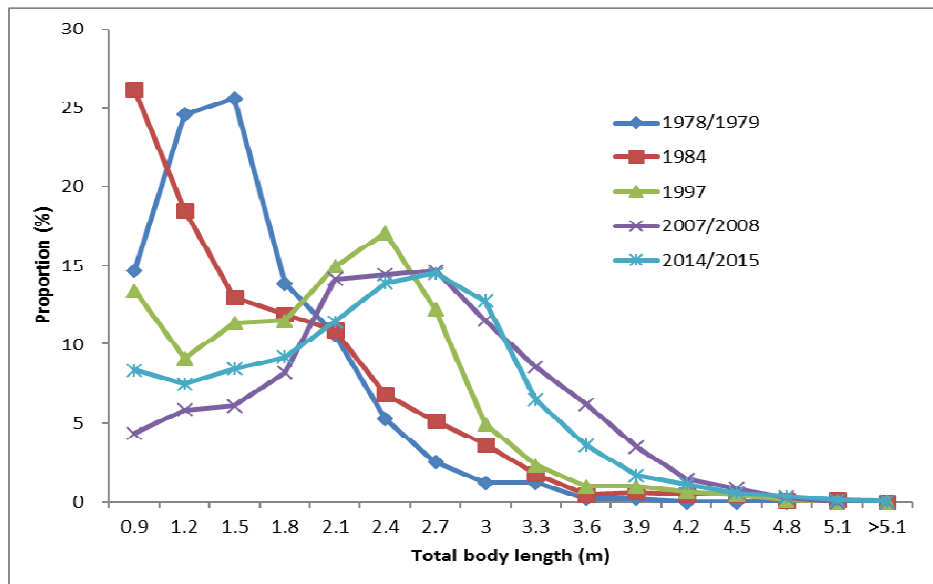
**Figure 2** Modelled abundance density of non-hatchling (>0.6 m, including eyes-only) of *C. porosus* calculated from standardised spotlight surveys in 12 (to 2007 then 8) tidal rivers since 1975.



### Size Structure

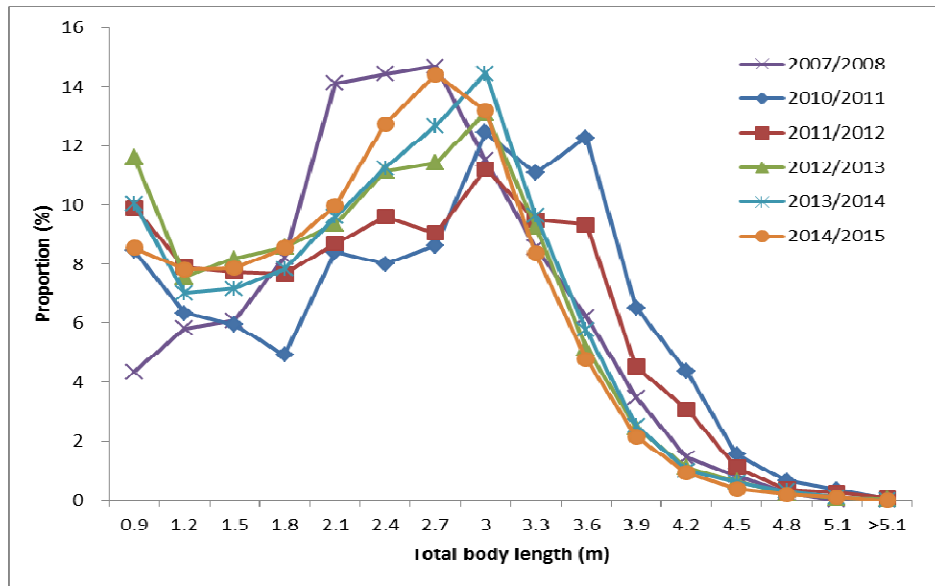
Results indicate that the size structure of the crocodile population appears to be shifting from smaller crocodiles to a higher proportion of larger crocodiles (Figure 3) with an associated large increase in biomass in recent years (Appendix 2). This is consistent with the ongoing maturing of a population of a large, slow growing species recovering from substantial unregulated harvest. Analysis of each individual river is provided in Appendix 2.

**Figure 3** Changes in proportion (%) of saltwater crocodiles at each size class from 0.3 - >5.1 m (1 - >17 ft) in 12 monitored rivers combined in the Northern Territory, Australia in 1978/79 (10 rivers in 1978 and 1 river in 1979; no data available for Mary River), 1984, 1997, 2007/08 (6 rivers in 2007 and 6 rivers in 2008) and 6 monitored rivers combined in 2014/15 (5 rivers in 2014 and 2 rivers in 2015).



Monitoring data for the last five years indicates that while there has been a shift in the size structure of the crocodile population from smaller to larger crocodiles compared with immediately post-protection and through the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, there does appear to be a decline in the proportion of crocodiles in the 3 to 4 metre size range in the population in recent years (Figure 4). This apparent decline is not thought to be detrimental at the population level; it is primarily in the size classes representing young males and may be a result of changes in size structure associated with a population approaching carrying capacity. Corresponding to this decline is an increase in the proportion of crocodiles in the 2 to 3 metre size range. The monitored rivers represent prime nesting habitat and as the population reaches carrying capacity it would be expected that these areas would be dominated by breeding females (2 to 3 metre) and dominant breeding males (> 4 metre). This will be subject to ongoing monitoring and if the decline continues management intervention may be warranted.

Figure 4 Changes in proportion (%) of saltwater crocodiles at each size class from 0.3 - >5.1 m (1 - >17 ft) in 12 monitored rivers combined in the Northern Territory, Australia between 2007/08 and 2014/15.



## PROBLEM CROCODILES

Problem crocodiles are defined broadly as those individuals that occur within settled areas or areas of recreational use, where public safety is a prime consideration; and those that attack stock in pastoral areas. In some areas, such as around Darwin, the Katherine River near Katherine and designated swimming areas in National Parks, any *C. porosus*, regardless of size, is classed as a problem animal. These areas are intensively managed through an active trapping and surveillance program by PWC staff to maintain a very low crocodile density. PWC also responds to reports of problem crocodiles on a case by case basis. Darwin Harbour and Katherine River have detailed management strategies with defined zones and specific management actions to remove crocodiles.

## Removal of Problem Crocodiles

Removed problem crocodiles are sold to crocodile farms to be consumed for skin and meat production or captured and used as stock in crocodile farms. Problem crocodiles are not relocated because



relocated crocodiles rapidly return to the site of initial capture (Walsh and Whitehead 1993, Read *et al.* 2007).

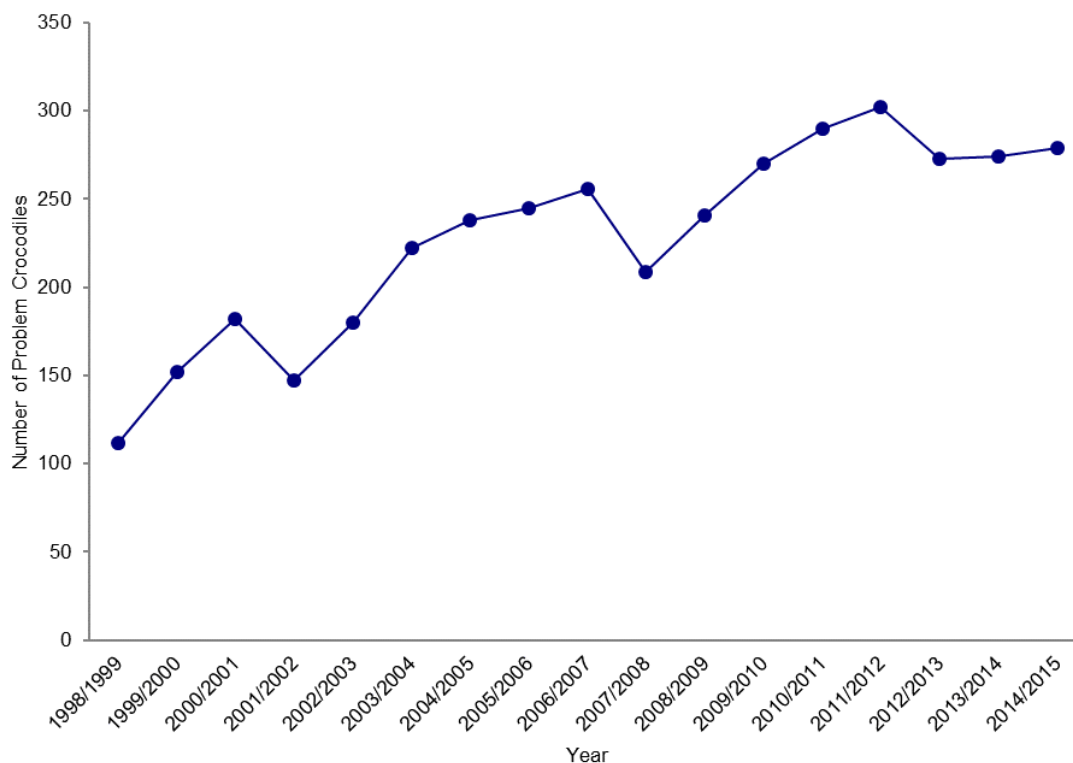
A total of 279 problem crocodiles were removed between July 2014 and June 2015 (Table 1, Figure 4). Whilst the vast majority of these animals were removed from Darwin Harbour, a number have been removed from the greater Darwin area and a few animals from the Katherine area and other communities.

Problem crocodiles removed by PWC staff are made available to Northern Territory crocodile farms through a tender process.

**Table 1** Total number of *C. porosus* removed by PWC staff as problem crocodiles, sex ratio as proportion of males, the proportion of problem crocodiles caught in the Darwin Harbour in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 & 2014/15.

Year	Problem crocodiles	Males	Darwin Harbour
2010/11	290	78%	64%
2011/12	302	79%	68%
2012/13	273	80%	71%
2013/14	274	81%	74%
2014/15	279	81%	71%

**Figure 4** Changes in the numbers of problem *C. porosus* removed by PWC staff in 1998/1999 – 2014/2015.



## Community Awareness and Participation

The Northern Territory Government promotes crocodile awareness among residents and visitors by disseminating educational information through a CROCWISE plan. Public awareness campaign continues to be conducted regularly to minimise harmful interactions between people and crocodiles. The campaign uses a variety of the media including TV, DVD, papers and radio to ensure messages about safe behaviour are effectively conveyed to both locals and visitors. Local events such as the show circuit, tour guides, park visitor centres, and park ranger talks are avenues to further disseminate messages in a face to face setting. PWC staff also visits local schools to deliver the educational program to teachers and children. Signs at popular water entry points are placed to reduce risks with crocodiles. The Northern Territory Government also promote relevant legislation, policy and guidelines to the commercial crocodile industry and wider community via promotion of this management program, relevant fact sheets, and through the Northern Territory Government permit system.

## HARVESTS FROM THE WILD

### Eggs

Under the 2014-2015 Management Program, the quota was 70,000 live eggs in 2014/2015. The definition of “live” and “total eggs” follows those in the Management Program 2014-2015 (Saalfeld *et al.* 2014). The quota was increased biannually in accordance with the Management Program and based on the reported lack of measurable detrimental impact of harvest on the population.

The number of eggs harvested was below the harvest ceiling in all years (Table 2). As in previous years, the harvest in 2014/2015 was lower than the number of eggs permitted due to a combination of factors, including the loss of nests due to flooding and infrastructure limitations on farms. Egg collection permits in 2014/2015 were in the main the first of new five year permits covering 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 and issued for the current harvest allocation quantities each year for the next 5 years. The individual allocation can be amended to higher quantity where requested by landholders/harvesters. Single year permits were issued for areas not covered by 4 year permits.

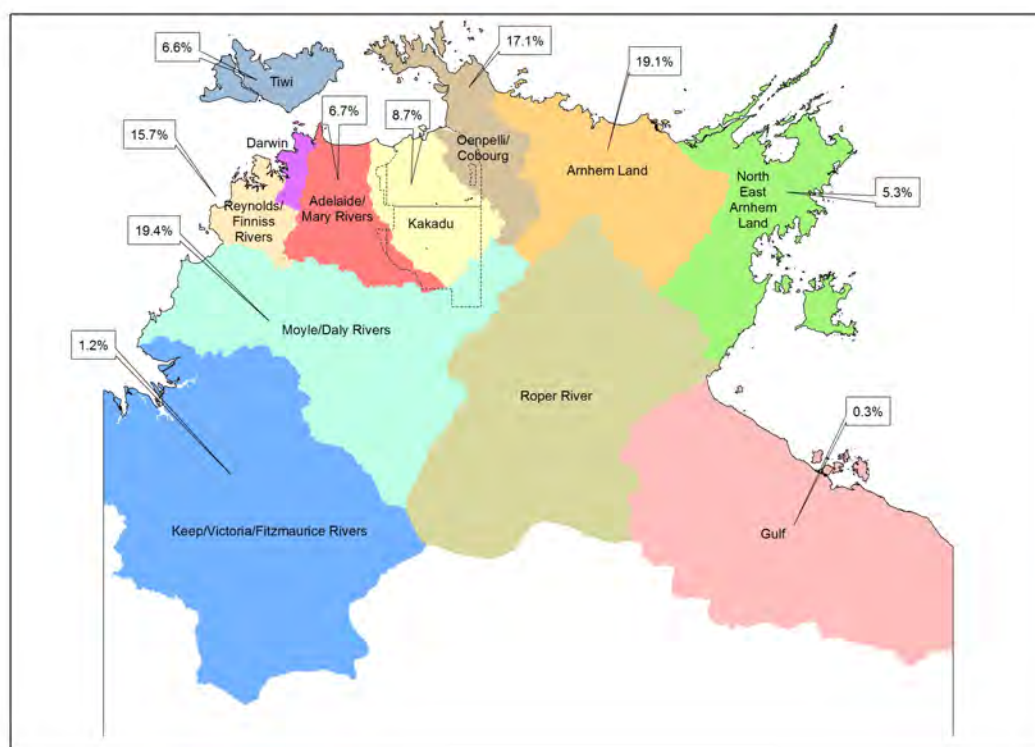
The number of eggs permitted and collected varies between the different regional catchments (Figure 5), depending on a number of factors as outlined in Section 4.1 of the Management Program. The base allocation across catchments will remain at the 2013/2014 distribution for the next five years, but may be varied depending upon monitoring results and landholder/harvester requests for amendment of allocated harvest quantities.

The returns of permit holders were closely monitored to ensure that the stock taken under each permit complies with the conditions of the permit (see Permits & Compliance below).

**Table 2** The number of eggs of *C. porosus* harvested for commercial use in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Season	Harvest Ceiling	Eggs permitted	Eggs harvested
2010/11	50,000	50,000	36,796
2011/12	60,000	52,500	42,171
2012/13	60,000	58,500	47,610
2013/14	70,000	60,750	51,238
2014/15	70,000	68,000	50,022

**Figure 5** Average proportion of *C. porosus* egg harvest in the regional catchments in 2013/2014 through 2018/2019, relative to the total NT allocation. Note that the boundary of Kakadu regional catchment is different from Kakadu National Park (KNP) and no eggs are harvested in KNP.



## Hatchlings, juveniles and adults

The Management Program allows up to 500 hatchlings (total body length <0.6 m), 400 juveniles (total body length 0.6 - 2.1m) and 500 adult (total body length >2.1m) *C. porosus* can be directly harvested from the wild each year. These quotas do not include any problem crocodiles removed by PWC staff (reported separately in Table 1 above).

A small number juvenile and adult *C. porosus* were harvested from the wild in 2014/2015 (Table 3). Variation in the sex ratio of harvested adults is influenced by the harvest purpose; skin and meat harvest or female breeding stock for farms. In 2014/2015 the sex ration was strongly biased to males (Table 4), and when coupled with the large average size of harvested males (3.22 m (Table 5)),

indicates that animals were being harvested either for breeding stock or were problem animals. Crocodiles were harvested from pastoral properties and aboriginal land. It is not known how many of these animals were harvested as true “problem” crocodiles by private operators because it is often difficult to determine whether the primary aim of the harvest is for public safety and livestock protection or commercial gain for farming. The trend of increasing average size of males and static average size of females most likely reflects both increasing proportion of larger males in the population and harvest being focused on problem animals or large wild skins.

The number of crocodiles harvested in 2014/2015 as presented in Table 3 is known to be an underestimate of the actual harvest in the 12 month period reported. Harvest data is incomplete at this time due to a number of harvest permits being multiyear permits that have not yet expired; consequently final return/harvest data is not yet available for these permits.

**Table 3** The number of hatchlings, juveniles and adults of *C. porosus* harvested for commercial use in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Year	Hatchlings	Juveniles	Adults
2010/11	0	11	105
2011/12	0	18	72
2012/13	0	16	59
2013/14	0	29	119
2014/15	0	0	61

**Table 4** Proportion of male *C. porosus* harvested for commercial use in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Year	Male
2010/11	28.6%
2011/12	65.2%
2012/13	65.5%
2013/14	73.5%
2014/15	85.6%

**Table 5** Average body size of *C. porosus* (juveniles and adults combined) for each sex harvested for commercial use in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15. Small juveniles whose sex was unknown are not included in the figures.

Year	Female	Male
2010/11	2.53 m	2.77 m
2011/12	2.15 m	2.83 m
2012/13	2.13 m	3.11 m
2013/14	2.12 m	3.22 m
2014/15	2.16 m	3.70 m

## Harvest review

The management program requires that harvest ceilings be reviewed every 2 years. This review was due in 2010/2011, 2012/2013 and 2014/2015 in the management program.

The 2014/2015 harvest review indicates that the existing crocodile egg harvest ceiling and actual egg harvest level is having no measurable impact on the population level. This result supports the

crocodile population and harvest model (Fukuda *et. al.*, submitted), which clearly indicates that the impact of crocodile egg harvest is of little or no significance compared to the impact of non-hatchling (> 0.6 m) harvest. The modelling indicates that a crocodile egg harvest of between nil up to 120,000 eggs per year would have limited impact on the population level over a 30 year period. The model shows that the population level would continue to increase in the absence of non-hatchling harvest. With non-hatchling harvest introduced into the model, crocodile egg harvest has little influence until the adult harvest reaches about 1,200 non-hatchling animals per year, at which point population growth ceases.

Based on monitoring results and the harvest model, increasing the egg harvest ceiling from 60,000 to 70,000 live eggs in 2013/2014 did not have any immediate detectable impact. Consequently the egg harvest ceiling was maintained at 70,000 live eggs in 2014/2015. The current non-hatchling harvest ceiling of 400 juvenile and 500 adult animals per year is less than the 1,200 non-hatchling animals in the model and will be maintained as proposed in the management program.

## FARM PRODUCTION

Eight crocodile farms operated in the Northern Territory in 2013/2014 (Table 6). Due to change in farm reporting to annual reports on calendar year, commencing with the 2013/2014 monitoring report, farm production data for the period 1 February 2013 to 31 January 2014 is reported here.

In line with discussion at the annual Crocodile Managers Forum, farm production reporting is limited to stock held, acquisitions and disposals. Breakdown of farm production by component is no longer required as a condition of permit.

The number of *C. porosus* (eggs, hatchlings, and juveniles/adults) exported to other States is provided (Table 7). Queensland had the highest number of live crocodiles exported from the Northern Territory. These animals were incubated and raised on Northern Territory farms and then exported to the other States.

Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries undertakes audits of the hatchlings in farms every year to validate farm returns, as required in the Management Program. Farms have the option of full or 10% of stock audit. Details of the stock held on each farm for the period 1 February 2013 to 31 January 2014 are provided in Appendix 3.

**Table 6** The number of crocodile farms operating in the Northern Territory, *C. Porosus* stock held (2013/14 and 2014/15), eggs (2010/11 to 2012/13)/hatchlings (2013/14 and 2014/15) produced from on farm breeding, total acquired (2013/14 and 2014/15), processed on these farms (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15) and total lost (2013/14 and 2014/15) as processed, sold, exported, escaped and mortality.

Year	No. of farms	Stock held 1 February	Farm-bred eggs/hatchlings	Total acquired	Crocodiles processed	Total lost	Stock held 31 January
2010/11	7	NA	10,563/-	NA	21,582	NA	NA
2011/12	8	NA	12,000*-/	NA	25,435	NA	NA
2012/13	8	NA	NA	NA	8,667**	NA	NA
2013/14	8	114,550	7,497	50,665	17,689	46,572	118,656
2014/15***	8	118,656	6,877	61,347	14,061	49,632	122,915

\* estimate only base don reported number of farm nests

\*\* data for 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012 only

\*\*\* data for 76 of 8 farms only, data for 1 farm still under audit

**Table 7** *C. porosus* (live eggs (E), hatchlings (H), and Juveniles/Adults (J/A)) exported to other States in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

State	2010/11			2011/12			2012/13			2013/14			2014/15		
	E	H	J/A	E	H	J/A	E	H	J/A	E	H	J/A	E	H	J/A
QLD	600	0	10,927	1,460	750	10,198	1,550	953	10,191	2,941	2,900	10,228	3,000	2,580	9,688
WA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
VIC	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	19	0		7			2	
SA	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0						
NSW	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1		2			4	

## PERMITS & COMPLIANCE

The following is a summary of permits and compliance for the 2014/2015 egg harvest season:

- A total of 14 individual permits to collect crocodile eggs were in operation.
- For 2014/2015 crocodile egg harvesters were required to submit final returns only for egg collection. DLRM has standardised the format of final returns of egg collection to collect the minimum amount of data as specified in the Management Program. The forms were provided both electronically and in hardcopy with each permit as permit conditions.
- There were no audits of either farm incubators or field audits of collected nests during the 2014/2015 egg collection season. Past audit compliance has been extremely high and it was determined that audits would be undertaken on a random basis or as required on information received in the future. This approach was agreed by participants at the Crocodile Managers Forum held in Darwin in late 2014.
- There were nil reported substantive compliance issues for the 2013/2014 egg collection season.
- Crocodile egg collection permit holders were required to submit final returns for the 2014/2015 crocodile egg collection season (December - May) by 31 July 2015. Submission of final returns was broadly compliant. In three instances final returns were submitted either late or only after direct intervention by DLRM. Non-compliance in submission of returns was

dealt with through direct contact and reminder notice only. No warning letters or infringement notices were issued as all returns were received after reminder.

- For the 2013/2014 crocodile egg collection season, collectors were required as a condition of permit, to provide 48 hours prior notification of date and location of collection activity via a dedicated email address or a dedicated phone number and message bank. Compliance for this system was of a high standard. Non-compliance was primarily in the form of late notification (either immediately prior or after actual collection) and in a number of instances was due to requirement for harvesters to respond immediately to changed weather conditions. Warning letters were issued where permit holders could not provide reasonable cause for non-compliance and there were no cases of multiple non-compliance.
- DLRM provided information to the Department of the Environment, Wildlife Trade Regulation Branch, relating to crocodile products (skin and skull) taken under NT permit and presented for export out of Australia.
- PWCNT investigated 11 matters involving saltwater crocodiles. Seven matters involved reports of saltwater crocodile carcasses discovered in the wild. Two matters under ongoing investigation, five were resolved as insufficient information to proceed.
- Two significant reports involving the illegal (safari) take of crocodiles were reported. One matter was resolved as take in accordance with a valid harvest permit and compliant with permit conditions. Investigation of the second matter is continuing.
- DLRM and PWCNT investigated two reports of crocodiles being fed in the wild without Permit to Interfere with Protected Wildlife. One report was substantiated and a warning letter issued. The second report was resolved as insufficient information to proceed.
- There was regular interaction with all permit, crocodile egg and live crocodile harvest and crocodile farming, holders to discuss issues related to permitting, compliance and enforcement.
- There was regular interaction with all other relevant jurisdictions.

## WELFARE

The Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles was endorsed by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council on 21 May 2009. This Code outlines an achievable minimum standard of humane conduct in regard to the treatment of wild and farmed crocodiles. This Code is recognised as a standard by the Northern Territory *Animal Welfare Act*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries is responsible for farm management and provided data on farm stock. Parks Australia North provided data on the East Alligator, South Alligator, West Alligator and Wildman Rivers. The traditional owners of the Indigenous lands assisted Department of Land Resource Management with the surveys, giving permission to survey on their land.

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## APPENDIX 1. ANNUAL MILESTONE MATRIX FOR 2014-2015 PROGRAM

Milestone	Program Reference	2014/15	Status for 2014/15 Monitoring report
<b>Objective 1 - To facilitate the sustainable use of Saltwater Crocodiles</b>			
Ensure all harvest permits minimise the possible negative impact on or conflict with tourism, social or cultural interests.	4.1 Restrictions on live animal harvesting.	Ongoing	Done. Compliant. Standard part of permit assessment process.
Develop and implement a GIS database to assist with both allocation of eggs and monitoring harvest effort and compliance.	4.1 Harvest ceilings.		Crocodile harvest spatial database completed and in use. Egg allocation spatial model developed and basis of allocation.
Investigate and take appropriate action on all suspected local impacts on the population.	4.1 Harvest ceilings.	Ongoing, review	Population reaching stable status. No data to indicate any impact on population from harvest regime.
Instigate adaptive management actions should there be any increased threats to the Saltwater Crocodile and their habitat.	4.1 Harvest ceilings.	Ongoing, review	No actions required as no perceived threats.
Ensure the harvest ceiling is set in accordance with the provisions of this management program.	4.1 Harvest ceilings.	July – September	The 2014/15 harvest ceiling was set at 70,000 live eggs as per management program. No data to indicate harvest ceiling should not remain at 70,000. Permits were issued to harvest a total of 68,000 live eggs.
Assess all permit applications and ensure egg allocation is distributed across harvest regions in accordance with the provisions of this management program.	4.1 Harvest ceilings	September – October	All permits applications were assessed. Eggs were allocated across the harvest regions as per the management program and publicly available criteria published on the internet.
Ensure that the annual commercial harvest of Saltwater Crocodiles does not exceed the approved ceiling for each category.	4.2 Permits and compliance.	July – September	2014/15 – compliant all categories.
Assess applications and issue permits under the <i>TPWC Act</i> .	4.2 Permits and compliance	Ongoing	2014/15 - compliant. Standardised assessment process.
Monitor and audit harvest applications, approvals and returns and investigate and resolve any discrepancies.	4.2 Permits and compliance	Ongoing, review	Compliant; this is a standard part of the permitting system and processes.
Ensure all permit applications have correct landholder approval.	4.2 Permits and compliance	Ongoing, review	Compliant.
Ensure monthly farm stock returns comply with permit conditions and are reported half yearly to farms and DLRM.	4.2 Permits and compliance	Ongoing, review	Compliant for 2013/2014 season and returns are being finalised for 2014/2015.
Audit farm hatchlings annually.	4.2 Permits and compliance	annually	Annual hatchling audits undertaken for 2014/2015.
Ensure compliance with the issue of skin tags and permits.	4.2 Permits and compliance		Compliant for skin tag and permits.

DEPARTMENT OF LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Milestone	Program Reference	2014/15	Status for 2014/15 Monitoring report
Conduct random checks on farm stock numbers.	4.2 Permits and compliance	Ongoing	.Nil checks in 2014/2015 due to high standard of prior compliance. Random checks in future based on information received.
Review permit conditions annually and amend where necessary.	4.2 Permits and compliance	July - September	
Ensure compliance with permit conditions is at or near 100% and addressing permit breaches through warning letters, caution notices, infringement notices or prosecution is at or near 100%.	4.2 Permits and compliance	annually	Known compliance with permit conditions is very high. Since 2008 investigation of non-compliance has increased and has been at or near 100%. Non-compliance has been dealt with through warning letters, caution notices or infringement notices as appropriate.
Review and analyse available data to describe changes to Saltwater Crocodile populations and their distribution and publish the outcomes as appropriate.	4.3 Management-focused research.		in the Northern Territory under revision post reviewer comments. Papers on standardised survey methodology, nesting habitat, size estimation, hatchling abundance and rainfall and crocodile attack published (see references).
Develop population/harvest simulation models to provide an additional decision support tool to assess harvest options and possible harvest impacts at different spatial scales.	4.3 Management-focused research.		Completed and implemented, subject to ongoing refinement.
<b>Objective 2 - To promote community awareness and public safety</b>			
Analyse the risk of areas where human interaction with crocodiles may occur and prepare options for the appropriate level of management actions.	Risk Assessment		Completed and implemented, subject to ongoing refinement.
Analyse problem crocodile capture data to assess trends and identify areas of increasing risk to humans.	Risk Assessment		Completed and implemented, subject to ongoing refinement..
Develop and implement a 'CROCWISE' plan to educate and heighten the awareness of the dangers of crocodiles in the Northern Territory's waterways.	Risk Assessment		Completed and implemented, subject to ongoing refinement..
Issue permits to remove problem crocodiles as necessary and appropriate.	4.4 Removal of problem crocodiles.	Ongoing, as needs	Ongoing.
Maintain the program to remove all crocodiles in designated 'Intensively Managed' zones.	4.4 Removal of problem crocodiles.	Ongoing	Ongoing.
PWC responds to reports of problem crocodiles and implements appropriate management measures.	4.4 Removal of problem crocodiles.	Ongoing as needs	Ongoing.
Re-define the Darwin Harbour 'Intensively Managed' zone to include high risk areas of the entire catchment and include the waterways of the Darwin rural area.	4.4 Removal of problem crocodiles.		Completed; revised problem crocodile management options implemented.
Continue to conduct public awareness, safety and educational message campaigns through Northern Territory Government staff, effective use of the media and on the Northern Territory Government website.	4.5 Community awareness and participation.	Ongoing, as needs	Implemented.

DEPARTMENT OF LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Milestone	Program Reference	2014/15	Status for 2014/15 Monitoring report
Conduct market research to assess the best communication methods for targeting and informing all sectors of the community about living safely with crocodiles.	4.5 Community awareness and participation	Ongoing, as needs	Implemented.
Develop and implement a public safety communication plan.	4.5 Community awareness and participation	Ongoing, as needs	Implemented.
<b>Objective 3 - To ensure humane treatment of Saltwater Crocodiles</b>			
Ensure the requirements of the Code of Practice are a condition on all permits and that a copy of the Code is distributed to all new permit holders	4.6 Animal welfare	Ongoing	Compliant.
Ensure all successful permit applicants are competent to comply with the relevant animal welfare standards.	4.6 Animal welfare	July - September	Increased and ongoing presence on Farms and with other permit holders.
Ensure all crocodile farms meet animal welfare standards.	4.6 Animal welfare	Ongoing	Ongoing audits and on an as-needs basis. Welfare conditions are audited when NTG staff are on Farms or visiting other permit holders
Inspect farms regularly to ensure animal welfare standards are met.	4.6 Animal welfare	Ongoing	Ongoing audits and on an as-needs basis.
Investigate and take appropriate action on any suspected breaches of the <i>Animal Welfare Act</i> or the Code of Practice.	4.6 Animal welfare	Ongoing as needs	No incidents under investigation for 2014/15.
<b>Objective 4 - To monitor and report on the impact of the harvest of Saltwater Crocodiles</b>			
Continue the population survey program for Saltwater Crocodiles as stipulated in this program.	4.7 Monitoring	Commence June-September	Compliant.
Analyse and assess the results of the survey program and implement any resulting management recommendations.	4.7 Monitoring	July - September	All rivers show either stable population levels or increasing population.
Annually audit the progress of the Management Program against each of the performance indicators and adjust management practices as necessary.	4.8 Reporting	March	As recorded in this report.
Submit annual reports to the Australian Government and provide a summary on the Northern Territory Government website.	4.8 Reporting	October	As recorded in this report.
Review and update the Management program by 2014.	4.8 Reporting		Not applicable.

## APPENDIX 2. MONITORING METHODS & RESULTS - SPOTLIGHT SURVEYS

Since 1975 spotlight surveys have followed the standardised procedures described by Messel *et al.* (1981), Bayliss (1987) and Fukuda *et al.* (2013a). Surveys are mostly conducted during the dry season, between June and October, when water levels are low. Specific sections of river, including both the mainstream and accessible sidecreeks are traversed at night by boat. Surveys are restricted to either side of low tide, when mudbanks are exposed and crocodiles are mostly at the water's edge and not hidden amongst fringing vegetation. The water surface, banks and fringing vegetation are scanned with a spotlight and crocodiles are located by their distinctive reflective eye shine. They are approached as close as possible to estimate their TL in 1-foot (0.3 m) intervals and to confirm species (some freshwater crocodiles, *C. johnstoni*, extend down into the tidal parts of some rivers). If no size estimate is possible they are recorded as "eyes only". Given that "eyes only" animals tend to be large animals (Webb and Messel 1979, Webb *et al.* 1989), they are all regarded as non-hatchlings.

Distances surveyed were measured along the mid-line of streams in kilometers to the nearest 0.1 km, originally using survey maps (Messel *et al.* 1982) but in later years standardised to more accurate distances measured with a Geographic Information System. Most of the available surveys had the same or similar start and finish points, such that mean densities are considered directly comparable from year to year.

DLRM monitors 8 rivers and each river is surveyed biennially except for the Adelaide River (which is monitored annually) (Table 8). Parks Australia North surveys 4 rivers in KNP annually.

Data for the Wildman, West Alligator, South Alligator and East Alligator Rivers collected by Parks Australia North in Kakadu National Park has not been available to DLRM since 2008. In 2014 DLRM assisted KNP with surveying the South Alligator and East Alligator Rivers and subsequently analysed and reported the survey results for these rivers. Results for these rivers are included in this report.

For the 2014/2015 monitoring surveys, the Daly Rivers in was not surveyed due to extremely low river levels restricting access to less than two thirds of the survey length during the standard survey period (June-October). Reports from residents confirmed that the river was at its lowest level in more than twenty years and this accorded with anecdotal reports that for the 2014/2015 wet season, rainfall was well below average and the floodplains of the Daly River catchment dried back before the end of the wet season.

**Table 8** Monitoring rivers for *C. Porosus* surveyed by DLRM and Parks Australia North in 2011-2015.

Agent	Region	River	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
NRETAS	Darwin	Adelaide	Done	Done	Done	Done	Done
		Daly	Done	-	Done	-	-
		Mary	Done	-	Done	-	Done
	Arnhem Land	Blyth	-	Done	-	Done	-
		Cadell	-	Done	-	Done	-
		Glyde	-	Done	-	-	-
		Liverpool	-	Done	-	-	-
Tomkinson	-	Done	-	-	-		
Parks Australia North	Kakadu	East Alligator	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Done
		South Alligator	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Done
		West Alligator	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	-
		Wildman	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	-

## Analysis of non-hatchling density in individual rivers

For this analysis only survey data from the mainstems of the rivers (rather than sidecreeks) were used, because visibility biases increase with narrowing stream width (Webb *et al.* 1989). Some surveys in some years were excluded from analysis because they did not follow the standardised survey procedures and were surveyed during unfavourable conditions (eg wet seasons, high tides) or included only a small proportion of the standardised mainstream survey section. Following Messel *et al.* (1981), hatchlings (<0.6m) were excluded due to high variance in both annual nest abundance and hatching success.

No corrections for visibility bias (Webb *et al.* 1984, 1989; Bayliss *et al.* 1986; Bayliss 1987) were applied, and so abundance is expressed as relative rather than absolute density: the number of non-hatchling *C. porosus* sighted, rather than the number present, divided by the midstream length of river surveyed (km). Observer bias in the number of crocodiles sighted within a spotlight survey appears slight (Webb *et al.* 1989), but observer bias in the estimated size of crocodiles sighted is more variable despite mean values being reasonably accurate (Choquenot and Webb 1987, Webb *et al.* 1989). Neither sources of error are considered further here.

Estimated density is plotted for all years since the standardised monitoring program began in each river. Three candidate regression models (linear, exponential and logistic) were then fitted to both the abundance and biomass to approximate the population growth pattern in each river (Tables 9 and 10), with the line of best fit plotted for each river (Figures 6 and 7). The fit of each model was assessed using Information theoretic procedures (see Burnham and Anderson (2002) for detailed discussion on model selection).

## Results: Non-hatchling density

Most of the monitoring rivers showed increasing (linear or exponential) or stable (logistic) populations (Figure 6, Table 9). The Adelaide, Mary and South Alligator Rivers showed signs of reaching or having reached an asymptote. The Blyth and East Alligator Rivers seem to be still increasing strongly. This is interpreted as indication that the crocodile population is approaching a stable state at levels thought to be close to those from the pre-unrestricted hunting era (1945-1971).

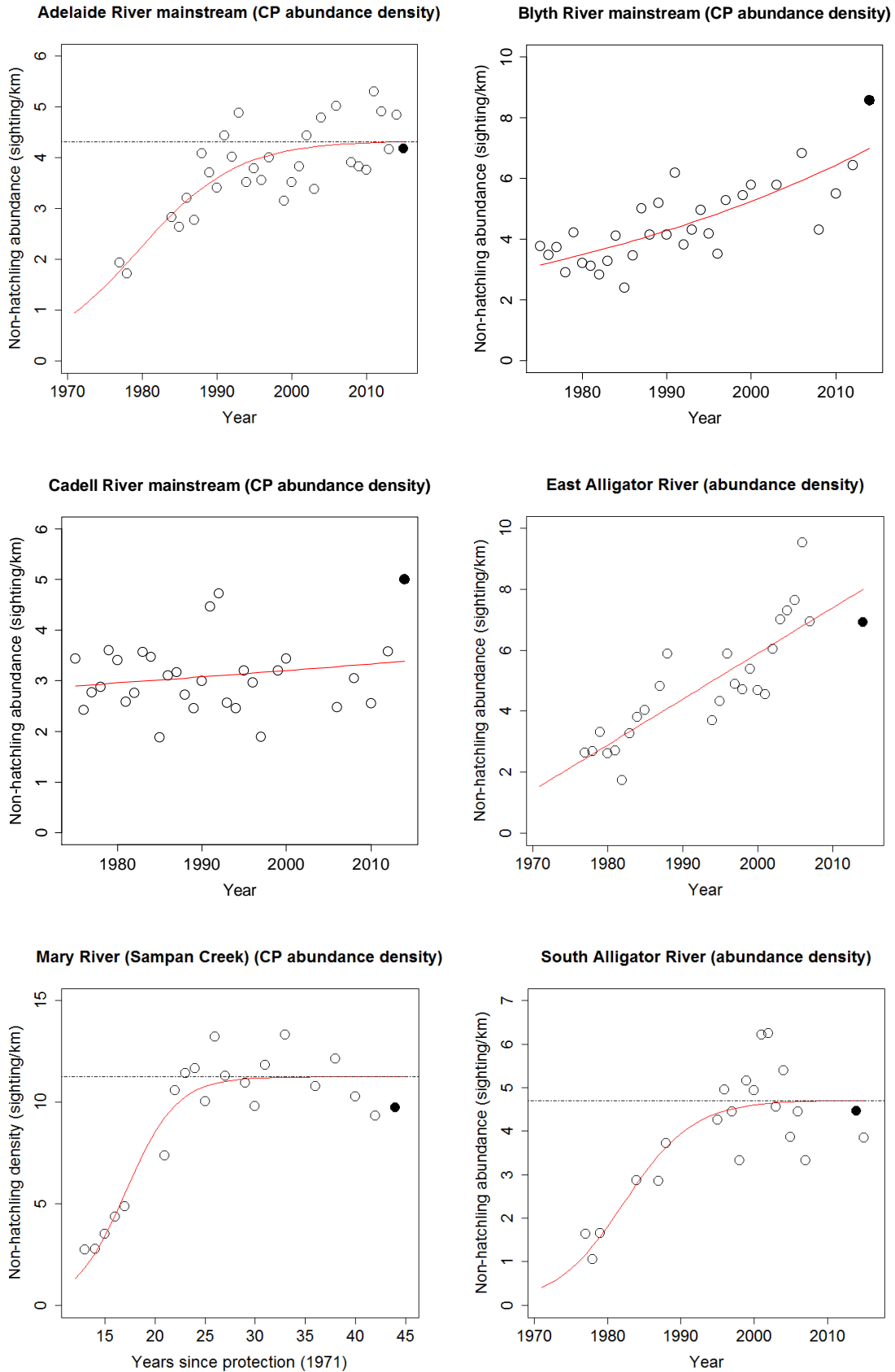
The Cadell River shows stable or very slightly increasing population levels since protection. Given that this river was not harvested heavily before protection for crocodile skins and the current harvest intensity for eggs is still low (DLRM unpublished

data 2013), it may be showing the natural size of the population rather than recovery from the skin harvest. The population is likely to stay stable rather than decrease dramatically.

The Adelaide River, which showed possible slight decrease in the recent years after having reached an asymptote, is now thought to have reached a stable population level. The observed slight decline in population abundance is no longer apparent when the last four years of survey data is included in the analysis. The reported decline is thought to be a survey data artefact rather than an actual decline. This artefact is most likely a combination of environmental variability and survey error (precision). Concurrent with the stable population density in the Adelaide River is an ongoing shift in the size distribution of the population showing a proportional shift to larger animals, particularly in the two to three metre size range. In considering this population shift to larger animals the stable population abundance, rather than indicating a harvest impact is more reasonably interpreted as indicating a stabilising mature population. The Adelaide River is the only river that DLRM surveys annually and the stable (asymptote) population state was confirmed by the 2015 monitoring results.

Results for the South Alligator River also supported a stable population state, with both abundance (density) and biomass approaching the logistic model asymptote. The East Alligator still appears to be increasing strongly (based on the best fit model), however the most recent monitoring abundance and biomass estimates are less than recent prior results and this river could also be approaching a stable population state. Additional monitoring data is required and DLRM has committed to assisting KNP on future surveys and providing data analysis.

**Figure 6** Abundance density (sighting/km) of non-hatchling *C. porosus*. Data are for 2012 for Arnhem Land Rivers and 2013 for Adelaide, Daly and Mary Rivers.





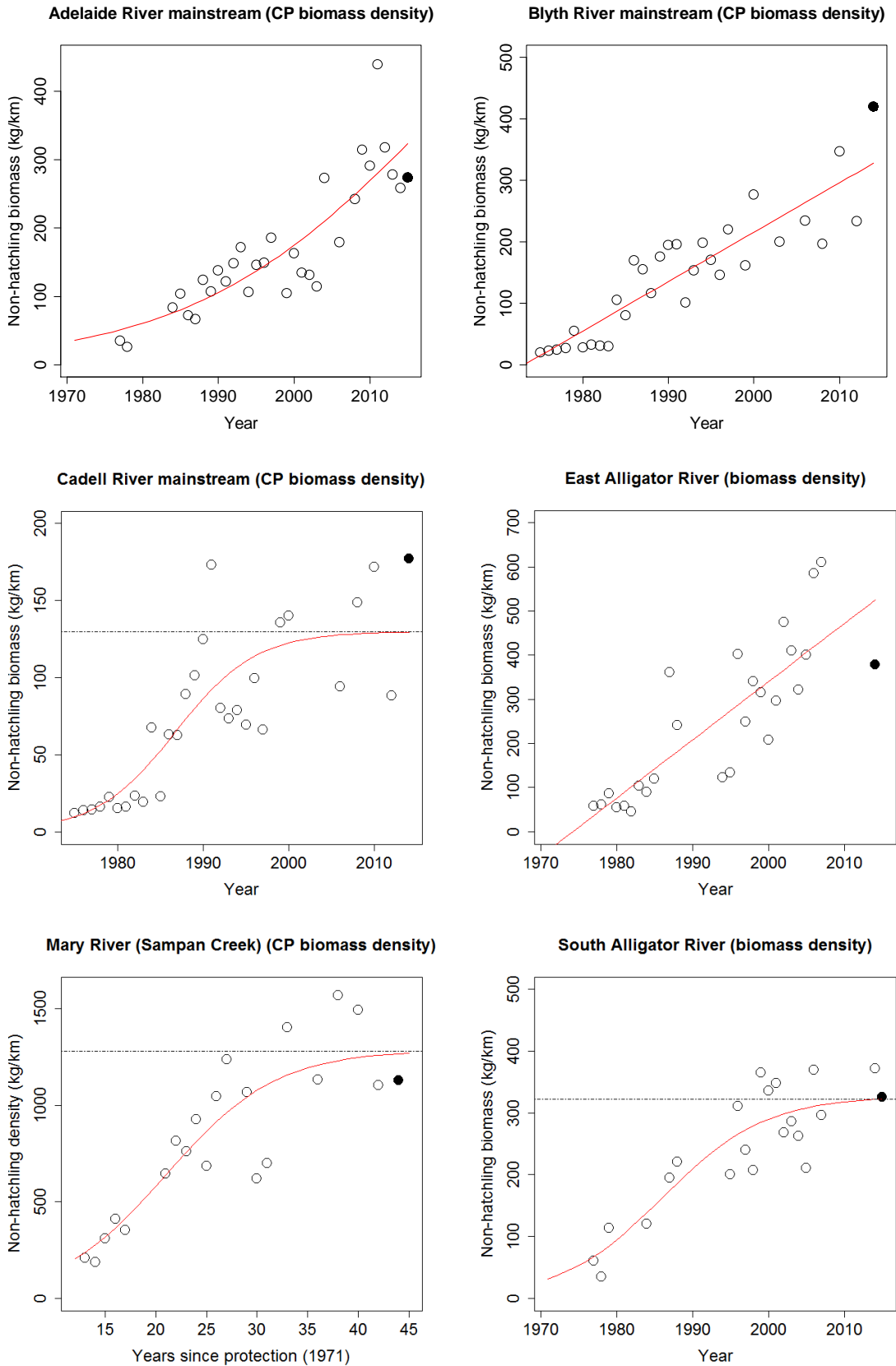
**Table 9** Results of model selection fitted to the abundance density of non-hatchling *C. porosus*. N = number of years surveyed, AICc = Akaike information criterion corrected for a small sample size,  $\Delta_i$  = difference in AICc,  $w_i$  = Akaike weight (-- not converged).

River	Year (N)	Model	AICc	$\Delta_i$	$w_i$
Adelaide River	1977-2015 (31)	Logistic	54.91	0	0.87
		Exponential	61.30	6.39	0.04
		Linear	59.35	4.44	0.09
Blyth River	1975-2014 (32)	Logistic	--	--	--
		Exponential	74.31	0	0.67
		Linear	75.69	1.38	0.33
Cadell River	1975-2014 (32)	Logistic	--	--	--
		Exponential	61.61	0	0.51
		Linear	61.66	0.05	0.49
East Alligator River	1977-2014 (24)	Logistic	79.86	2.29	0.17
		Exponential	78.68	1.11	0.30
		Linear	77.57	0	0.53
Mary River (Sampan Creek)	1984-2015 (21)	Logistic	73.41	0.00	1
		Exponential	105.48	32.07	0
		Linear	102.37	28.96	0
South Alligator River	1977-2014 (20)	Logistic	55.01	0	0.99
		Exponential	67.23	12.22	0
		Linear	64.18	9.17	0.01

**Results: Non-hatchling biomass**

Unlike the abundance density, the biomass density continued to increase without reaching asymptote in most rivers (Figure 7, Table 10). This indicates that individual animals are still getting larger even in rivers where the number of crocodiles has reached a ceiling. This is consistent with the ongoing maturing of a population of a large, slow growing species recovering from substantial unregulated harvest.

**Figure 7** Biomass density (kg/km) of non-hatchling *C. porosus*. Data are for 2012 for Arnhem Land Rivers and 2013 for Adelaide, Daly and Mary Rivers.



**Table 10** Results of model selection fitted to the biomass density of non-hatchling *C. porosus*. N = number of years surveyed, AICc = Akaike information criterion corrected for a small sample size,  $\Delta_i$  = difference in AICc,  $w_i$  = Akaike weight (-- not converged).

River	Year (N)	Model	AICc	$\Delta_i$	$w_i$
Adelaide River	1977-2015 (31)	Logistic	333.78	272.48	0
		Exponential	61.30	0	1
		Linear	333.33	272.03	0
Blyth River	1975-2012 (32)	Logistic	323.90	6.05	0.05
		Exponential	334.41	7.56	0.02
		Linear	326.86	0	0.93
Cadell River	1975-2012 (32)	Logistic	29411	0	0.53
		Exponential	301.37	7.26	0.01
		Linear	294.42	0.31	0.46
East Alligator River	1977-2014 (24)	Logistic	315.50	236.82	0
		Exponential	78.68	0	1
		Linear	313.70	235.02	0
Mary River (Sampan Creek)	1984-2013 (21)	Logistic	289.16	0	0.69
		Exponential	296.45	7.29	0.02
		Linear	290.92	1.76	0.29
South Alligator River	1977-2014 (20)	Logistic	228.76	0	0.61
		Exponential	235.41	6.64	0.02
		Linear	229.80	1.04	0.37

### APPENDIX 3. Production statistics from crocodile farms (2014-2015).

*C. Porosus* stock and production on farms in the Northern Territory for 2013/2014 are summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12 C.** *Porosus* held on farms in the Northern Territory in 2013/14 and 2014/15. Data for preceding 4 years is not presented due to changed format for annual returns as required under permit. Total acquired includes farm bred hatchlings, ranched hatchlings and purchases/imports from other farms. Total lost includes crocodiles processed, sales/exports to other farms, escapes and mortality. Data for 2014/15 for 7 of 8 farms only; return data for 1 farms still under final audit and not available till at this time.

Farm	Stock held 1/02/2013	Farm-bred hatchlings	Total acquired	Crocodiles processed	Total lost	Stock held 31/01/2014
A	23,120	0	7,840	6,245	8,058	22,902
B	4,256	0	3,406	0	2,529	5,133
C	15,790	547	11,965	0	12,656	15,099
D	3,243	0	7,795	0	6,122	4,916
E	188	0	632	0	225	595
F	59,145	6,541	15,933	9,678	12,555	62,523
G	0	0	34	0	2	32
H	8,808	409	3060	1,766	4,412	7,456
<b>Totals</b>	114,550	7,497	50,665	17,689	46,559	118,656
Farm	Stock held 1/02/2014	Farm-bred hatchlings	Total acquired	Crocodiles processed	Total lost	Stock held 31/01/2015
A	22,902	0	12,445	5,271	15,497	19,850
B	5,133	0	3,269	0	2,631	5,771
C	15,099	888	18,642	43	10,566	23,175
D	4,916	70	8,172	50	8,094	4,994
E	595	0	1662	7	1175	1,082
F	62,523	5919	17128	8690	11663	67,988
G	32	0	29	0	6	55
H	7,456					
<b>Totals</b>	118,656	6,877	61,347	14,061	49,632	122,915