Vegetation Management in the Northern Territory

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is an abbreviation for "biological diversity".

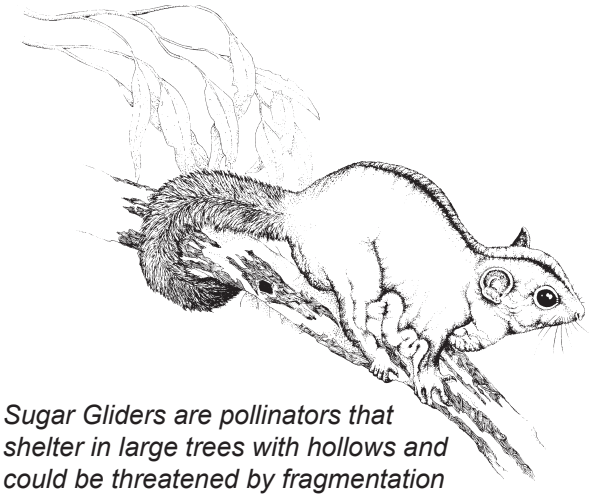
Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms including plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

It is part of our natural heritage.

The Northern Territory features a variety of landscapes, including the sandstone country, open forests, grassy savanna woodland, river systems, monsoon rainforest, vast floodplains, diverse mangroves, sandsheet heath, arid zone ranges and sandy desert. The largely intact nature of these environments supports a diverse and unique range of flora and fauna. Conserving biodiversity in these landscapes requires strategic vegetation retention and management.

Benefits of biodiversity

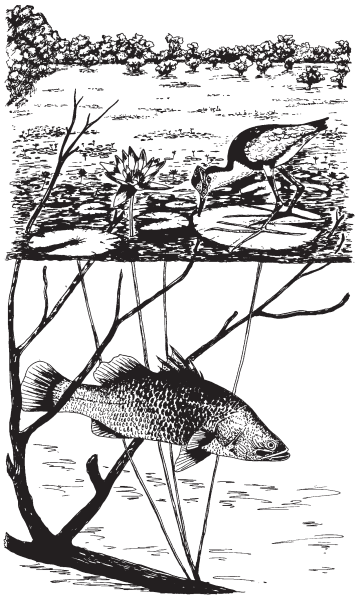
Biodiversity has many benefits, including maintaining ecosystem function and maintenance of soil structure that provides a basis for agricultural and pastoral production. Biodiversity also provides the building blocks for the development of many medicines and industrial products.



Sugar Gliders are pollinators that shelter in large trees with hollows and could be threatened by fragmentation

We rely on biodiversity in every part of our lives:

- native birds, bats and insects pollinate our crops, gardens and native plants;
- food and medicines come from biodiversity;
- we breathe the oxygen produced by plants;
- plants take up carbon dioxide produced from burning fossil fuels;
- termites and other small organisms help to recycle nutrients and maintain soil structure;
- crops are protected from pests by foraging birds and insects;
- plants provide shade and protection from wind and water erosion;
- plants keep salt water well below ground level;
- Freshwater drainage systems filter water and provide fish habitat; and
- Marine organisms clean up pollutants in the ocean.



Wetlands. Vital wildlife habitat and water purifying functions.

Threats to biodiversity

The major current and long-term threats identified are:

- habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation;
- invasive species;
- unsustainable use of natural resources;
- changes to the aquatic environment and water flows;
- changing fire regimes; and
- climate change.

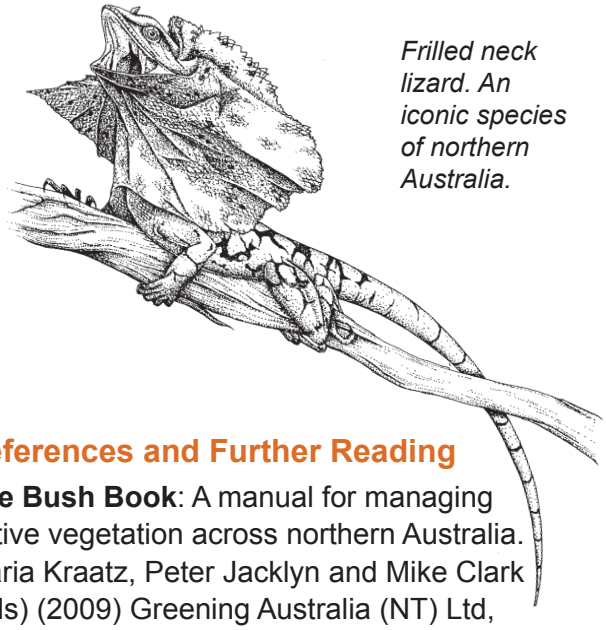
For more information visit www.denr.nt.gov.au

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

What can we do to maintain biodiversity?

Traditional conservation measures usually involve proclaiming national parks and protected areas, but these are for limited areas and alone are not enough to sustain and preserve our biodiversity. Integrating biodiversity conservation into natural resource management on private land is essential to conserving biodiversity and protecting ecosystem functions such as pollination, water and nutrient cycling.

Lessons learnt in other parts of Australia and overseas demonstrate that it is expensive and often unachievable to rehabilitate degraded environments. In order to avoid these costly mistakes we need to plan and maintain developments to minimise impacts to biodiversity.



Frilled neck lizard. An iconic species of northern Australia.

Babblers. Sociable, insect eating woodland birds can be affected by fragmentation

References and Further Reading

The Bush Book: A manual for managing native vegetation across northern Australia. Maria Kraatz, Peter Jacklyn and Mike Clark (eds) (2009) Greening Australia (NT) Ltd, Darwin

Cattle and land management best practices in the Katherine region 09 (2009), Northern Territory Government

NT Sustainable Land Use Guidelines (2008), Northern Territory Horticultural Association

Land Clearing Guidelines
nt.gov.au/property/land-clearing/apply-to-clear-freehold-land

Other Fact Sheets in this series

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation
Native Vegetation Buffers and Corridors
Regrowth Management
Selective Clearing

Sensitive Vegetation Fact Sheets

Mangrove Forest
Sandsheet Heath
Old-Growth Forest
Monsoon Rainforest
Riparian Vegetation

Further Information

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Rangelands Division
Ph. 08 8999 3631
nt.gov.au/environment/soil-land-vegetation/native-vegetation

Flora and Fauna Division
Ph: 08 8995 5000
denr.nt.gov.au/about/flora-and-fauna-division