

Report on a page

In this audit we assessed the progress made by the Department of Environment and Science in implementing the 7 recommendations from our *Conserving threatened species* (Report 7: 2018–19). The department has made progress implementing the recommendations, but much more remains to be done, and the improvements to populations of threatened animals and plants are not yet realised.

Threatened native animals and plants

Queensland is home to 85 per cent of Australia's native mammals, 72 per cent of native birds, and just over 50 per cent of native reptiles and frogs. Queensland has 1,034 threatened species listed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (the Act). This is comparable to New South Wales (1,024) but fewer than Victoria (1,998). Of our 1,034 threatened animals and plants, 713 are unique to Queensland.

Figure A

Threatened animals and plants unique to Queensland



Source: *The Department of Environment and Science, WildNet database.*

More animals and plants are classified as threatened

Since the 2018 report, the department has been more active in nominating animals and plants to assess and list as threatened. As a result, 79 more threatened species have been identified and listed. Amending the Act has significantly reduced the time taken to list threatened species, from an average of 506 business days in 2018 to only 56 in 2022.

To ensure state and national classifications are consistent, the department still needs to reassess 366 animals and plants. The reassessments can increase the department's understanding of the risks species face and allow governments to better target resources to animals and plants of greatest concern. The department prioritised reassessments based on status, distribution, and existing conservation protections.

The department has not set time frames or agreed on the factors that would trigger a reassessment of its classifications. It has proposed an approach to the federal government, other states and territories for a common process for reassessments. Timely and up-to-date information on classifications is important to inform a range of decisions to support inter-jurisdictional cooperation on threatened species.

The biodiversity conservation strategy needs to be implemented

The government released the biodiversity conservation strategy on 7 October 2022. The strategy does not include measures or targets. The department is developing a monitoring framework for the strategy to identify ways to measure conservation of biodiversity across the state. The current lack of measures reduces its ability to monitor outcomes for biodiversity, and demonstrate whether the strategy is achieving the results expected from the resources provided.

The department does not yet have a comprehensive framework to prioritise animals and plants based on risk. It is developing a framework that will consider multiple factors when determining priority species. It has population status and trends available for 10.3 per cent of listed animals and plants. It can evaluate individual recovery programs, but it does not have data on whether overall threatened populations of all 1,034 threatened species are stable, increasing, or declining. It is not feasible for the department to collect data on all 1,034 threatened animals and plants. An approved framework is needed to allow the department to prioritise which data to consistently collect itself or encourage its partners to collect.