

Conserving threatened species

(Report 7: 2018–19).
Tabled 13 November 2018.

Slide 1: Welcome

This presentation summarises our performance audit report on Conserving threatened species. Please note that this is a summary. The full report can be read on our website.

Slide 2: Audit objective

In this audit, we assessed whether the Department of Environment and Science is effectively identifying, protecting and conserving Queensland's threatened species. We looked at how the department:

- identifies Queensland's threatened flora and fauna and lists them under legislation to protect
- implements strategies and plans to protect threatened species and their habitat
- monitors and reports on threatened species outcomes.

Slide 3: Context

Australia is home to between 600 000 and 700 000 native species, many of which are unique to Australia. Queensland alone is home to 85 per cent of Australia's native mammals, 72 per cent of native birds, just over 50 per cent of native reptiles and frogs, and more than 11 000 plant species.

But Australia's native flora and fauna are in decline.

The Department of Environment and Science has primary responsibility for managing and conserving threatened species in Queensland under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The department is also responsible for assessing nominations for listing threatened species.

The Act aims to protect native species by identifying and listing species as threatened. It restricts people from taking, keeping or using listed species. But not all threatened species are listed.

Slide 4: Our conclusions—strategic approach

We concluded that because the department does not have a strategic approach to conserving threatened species it is unlikely to effectively conserve and recover many of them. The population or status of some threatened species has improved over time, but it is limited.

Slide 5: Our conclusions—strategic approach

The department does not prioritise its activities to achieve the greatest conservation outcomes. Instead, its activities are largely ad hoc, focusing on a relatively few individual species. Of the 922 species listed as either endangered or vulnerable, the department only manages conservation, recovery or species project plans for 30 species.

Many conservation groups and individuals also undertake recovery actions for individual threatened species, but the department does not coordinate these activities.

The department's decisions about which species receive its greatest conservation efforts are often determined by iconic value, individual interests, departmental knowledge and advocacy, rather than by objective assessments of priorities.

The department is also not proactive in listing species as threatened or updating those already listed.

Slide 6: Our conclusions—coordinating recovery activity

Conserving threatened species is a difficult and complex task that needs commitment and effort across government and beyond. Despite having a lead role in coordinating this effort and harnessing the available enthusiasm, resources and knowledge, the department lacks cross program coordination. The need to support and coordinate multiple stakeholders further heightens the need for a strategy with clear objectives, actions, targets and measures.

Slide 7: What we recommend

We recommended the department:

- proactively nominates species for listing or reclassification in a timely manner and make the listing process more transparent
- develops an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for Queensland to meet the requirement of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, supported by an implementation and investment plan
- improves monitoring and reporting on the population and trends of threatened species.

Slide 8: For more information

For more information on the issues, opportunities and recommendations highlighted in this summary presentation, please see the full report on our website.

Thank you.