



Threatened Species

NEFA BACKGROUND PAPER

Threatened Species

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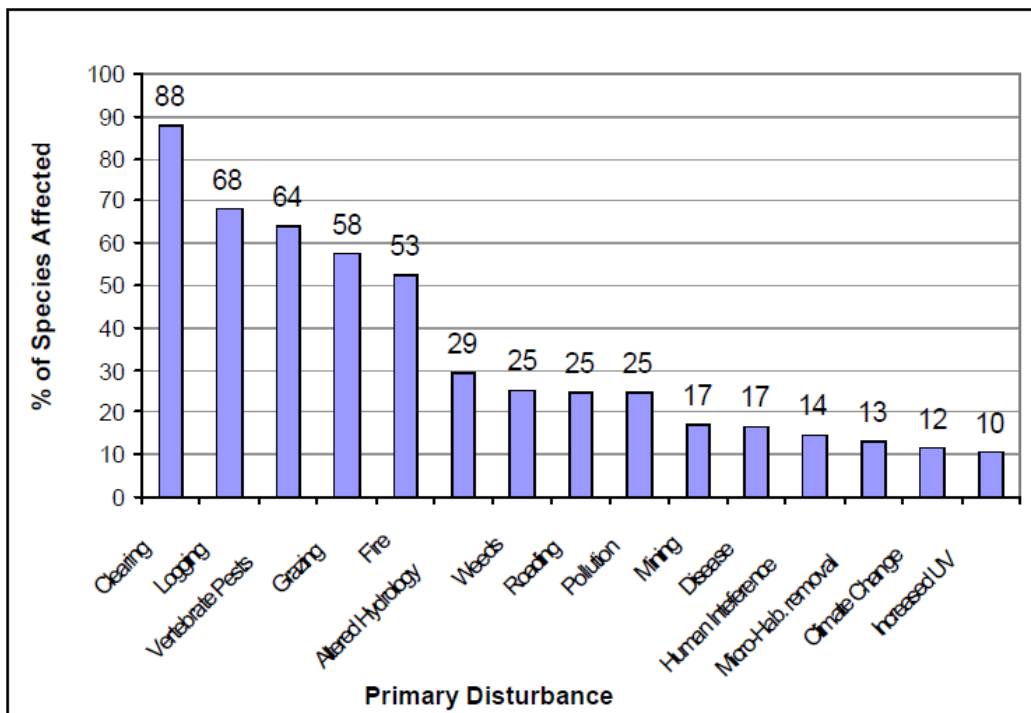
North-east NSW, along with south-east Queensland, is one of Australia's 3 centres of biodiversity. It is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot of State and national significance, because of the exceptional number of endemic species found here, and the high proportion of habitat that has been cleared. The region is also important as a refuge for species that have declined elsewhere in Australia and provides essential seasonal resources for some wide ranging species

The high diversity of species, combined with the extensive clearing and habitat degradation, has given this region the most species threatened with extinction in NSW and amongst the most threatened plants in Australia.

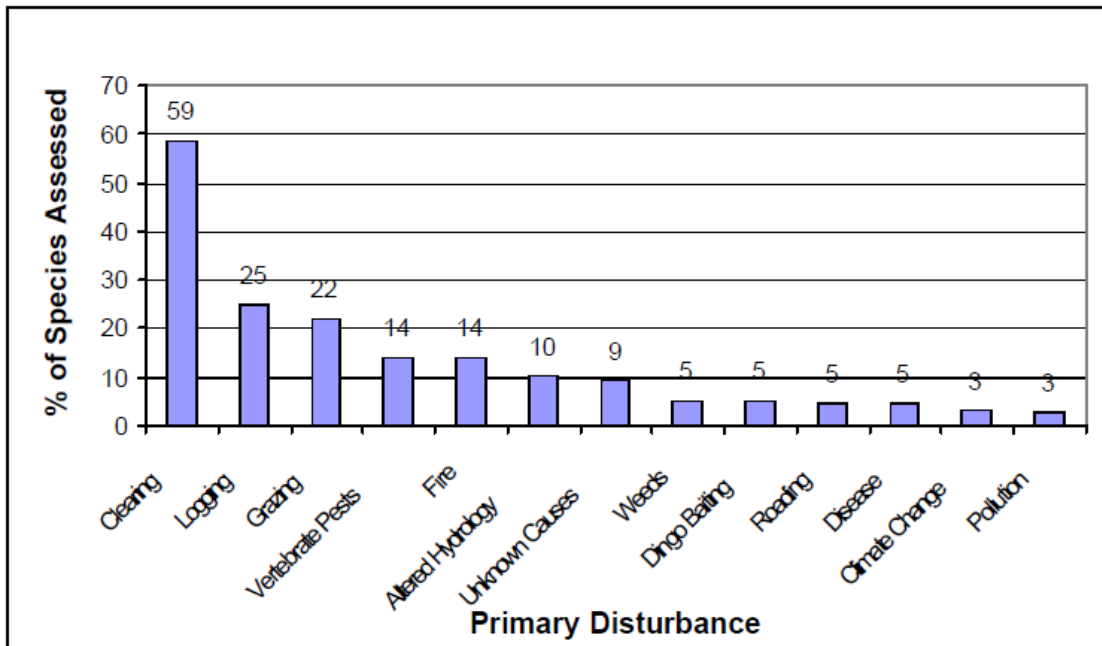
During expert workshops conducted as part of the CRA process for North East NSW information describing the disturbances that affect the priority species was collected (Environment Australia 1999). This involved experts listing all the disturbances affecting a species and then ranking them in terms of their impact on the regional population. Those disturbances that had the most detrimental affect were ranked one and so on. Many species have multiple threats.

For 175 priority fauna species in north-east NSW the expert panels assessed threats are detailed in Environment Australia (1999). In summary the experts (including FCNSW and NPWS) identified:

- clearing is a serious threat to 88% of species, and a primary threat to 59% of species;
- logging is a serious threat to 68% of species, and a primary threat to 25% of species;
- grazing is a serious threat to 58% of species, and a primary threat to 22% of species;
- vertebrate pests are a serious threat to 64% of species, and a primary threat to 14% of species;
- fire is a serious threat to 53% of species, and a primary threat to 14% of species;
- altered hydrology is as a serious threat to 29% of species and a primary threat to 10% of species; and,
- weeds are a serious threat to 25% of species, and a primary threat to 5% of species.



The percentage of all fauna species assessed that have the listed disturbances nominated as having an adverse impact. From Environment Australia (1999).



The percentage of all fauna species assessed that have the listed disturbance ranked number one. From Environment Australia (1999).

The IFOA and its Threatened Species (TSL), Environment Protection (EPL) and Fisheries (FL) licences are the mechanisms under the North East NSW Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for providing needed protection for *Environment and Heritage Values*. The intent was to use this as the mechanism for protecting oldgrowth forest, rainforest, poorly reserved ecosystems, and key habitats from logging, while regulating all threatening activities on public lands, not just logging. Similarly the agreement was that the IFOA is the mechanism for protecting sites of cultural and heritage significance.

The poor reserve outcomes for plants and animals highlight the failure of the RFA process in north east NSW to satisfy national reserve criteria and deliver on the promise of an adequate reserve system sufficient to maintain the ecological viability and integrity of flora and fauna populations (see **CAR Reserves**). The extremely poor reservation status of many threatened flora and fauna species in north-east NSW, and their identified vulnerability to forestry activities, emphasises the need for substantial and effective off-reserve protection for threatened species.

The Threatened Species Licence (TSL) is required to regulate activities so as to protect State and national threatened species of terrestrial animals and plants. Within State Forests logging is excluded by the TSL from a variety of important habitats – mapped rainforest, “high conservation value” oldgrowth forest, riparian habitat along mapped streams, wetlands, heathland, rock outcrops, caves, ridge and headwater habitat (wildlife corridors), rare non-commercial forest types, Endangered Ecological Communities, excessively steep and erodible areas, and a variety of additional areas around records of threatened fauna and flora. Such areas are counted by the TSL as providing adequate protection for most threatened species. They are also counted by the Regional Forest Agreement as contributions towards the national reserve system to improve the poor achievement of reserve targets in the formal reserve system. (see **Protecting Exclusion Areas**)

The TSL assumes that most threatened animals are adequately catered for by these exclusions, though “*for those species that have been assessed as not being adequately protected by the general conditions*” the need for additional measures is identified, most particularly those species inhabiting eucalypt forests that are known to be vulnerable to forestry activities or are poorly known. To help cater for these species on a landscape level the TSL specifies the retention of important trees scattered across the forest, this includes 10 hollow-bearing trees (and a mature recruit), along with 10 eucalypt feed trees, per 2 hectares (see **Protecting Habitat Trees**). This is supplemented by the IFOA’s intended limitations on logging intensity, allowing only Single Tree Selection (limiting logging to less than 40% of the basal area) and Australian Group Selection (medium) (limiting the size of cleared patches to 0.25 hectares, and their extent within a compartment to 90% in a staged process over a 28 year time frame).

For those species still considered to be inadequately protected the TSL includes a variety of species specific prescriptions that are triggered by records or the presence of suitable habitat. Records of some animals and most plants trigger the creation of exclusion areas around them, for some (such as Powerful Owl, Masked Owl, Barking Owl, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider) this requires the protection of minimum sized patches of suitable habitat within a catchment, for others (such as most frogs, Hastings River Mouse, Koala High Use Areas, Golden-tipped Bat, Marbled Frogmouth, Albert’s Lyrebird, and most plants) a record triggers the protection of an area of suitable habitat around the record (see **Protecting Exclusion Areas**). Records of a few species (Yellow-bellied Glider, Koala records) trigger requirements for retention of additional feed trees in their vicinity.

These prescriptions are supplemented by requirements to protect identifiable feed trees (Yellow-bellied Glider and Squirrel Glider sap-feed trees, Glossy Black Cockatoo feeding trees) and the roost, den and nest trees/sites of most threatened species, if found.

The Forestry Corporation have proven time after time that they will not willingly provide the needed protection for threatened species and ecosystems. More rigorous prescriptions and independent regulation are required, not less. The requirements for surveys and the identification of core habitats for threatened species and ecosystems need to be undertaken independently of the Forestry Corporation.

Protecting Exclusion Areas

Protecting Threatened Fish

Doing Surveys

Protecting Habitat Trees

CAR Reserves

REFERENCES

Environment Australia. 1999a. *Response to disturbance of forest species in CRA regions in NSW – Upper North East and Lower North East regions*. Unpublished report undertaken for the NSW CRA/RFA Steering Committee.