



**Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management**

# **Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park**

**Draft plan of management**



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# Be heard

We want to hear what you think about this draft plan. Please send your written feedback via:



the online submission form at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-us/get-involved/have-your-say](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-us/get-involved/have-your-say)



email to [npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au)



post to Manager, Planning and Assessment Unit, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124.

## Written submissions must be received by 18 July 2025.

All written submissions (received at an address listed above) will be considered before a final plan of management is prepared. If you send a submission to a different address, your feedback may not be received or considered.

Information that identifies you is gathered when you use our website or email us. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water complies with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. This means we are legally required to protect your identity, your feedback won't be used for any other purpose, and we will not provide your personal information to third parties without your permission. By making a submission, you are consenting to your feedback and personal information being provided to our advisory bodies (see below).

## What happens to your feedback?

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* sets out the process for the preparation of each plan of management. Your feedback will be considered by the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management, the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. A final plan will then be prepared and provided to the Minister for the Environment together with a summary of feedback received on the draft plan, the advice of the regional advisory committee and the advice of the board of management. The Minister may then consider adoption of the final plan.

# Acknowledgements

Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park is part of Gumbaynggirr Country, the traditional lands of Gumbaynggirr people. Gumbaynggirr people's rights, obligations and aspirations for Country are acknowledged and respected.

The Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management is responsible for honouring Gumbaynggirr lore, cultural values, obligations and aspirations of Gumbaynggirr people. The board of management is also responsible for the care, control and management of the park.

The board of management wholeheartedly acknowledges Gumbaynggirr Elders and knowledge-holders, past and present. By their teachings, Gumbaynggirr people respect the earth and each other so that Gumbaynggirr Country and all its inhabitants survive and thrive. The board of management also acknowledges the Elders' vision to establish the park and that by the efforts of the Elders, native title now exists on the park.

The Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative is a shining example of how Gumbaynggirr language revival strengthens community connection to Country, culture and heritage. The board of management gratefully acknowledges the tremendous contribution Muurrbay makes to Aboriginal communities of the Gumbaynggirr Nation and beyond.

This draft plan of management has been informed by *Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Cultural Values and Community Aspirations Project Draft Final Report* – an unpublished report to the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management, prepared by Cox Inall Ridgeway PL.

**Warning: Aboriginal people are advised this plan includes quotes from deceased people who are referred to by name.**

## Cultural and intellectual property

Aboriginal people own Aboriginal knowledge. This draft plan of management features cultural knowledge carried by Gumbaynggirr people and Aboriginal people from neighbouring nations. Traditional Gumbaynggirr stories from the publication *Gumbaynggirr Yuludarla Jandaygam: Gumbaynggirr Dreaming Story Collection* appear courtesy of Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative.

Contemporary Gumbaynggirr stories (from living memory) are presented with the consent of the custodians.

Use of any part of the plan (stories or images) for purposes that the custodians have not authorised is a breach of customary lore and may also breach the *Copyright Act 1968*.

To ask how cultural knowledge in this plan may be used or reproduced, please contact the Coffs Coast Area of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

## Native title

Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park overlaps with a native title determination for the Gumbaynggirr people: *Phyball on behalf of the Gumbaynggirr People v Attorney-General of New South Wales* [2014] FCA 851. The registered native title body corporate for the determination is the Wanggaan (Southern) Gumbaynggirr Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

This plan of management seeks to facilitate the exercise of native title rights and interests. It is adopted subject to native title.

If this plan of management proposes any works, activities, or actions which would affect native title, the board of management will not carry out works or implement these actions or activities unless and until they are validated under the future acts regime in the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

If the plan of management describes restrictions or prohibitions which would affect native title, the restrictions or prohibitions do not apply to native title holders, unless and until they are validated under the future acts regime in the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

## Contact us

For more information about this draft plan of management or Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park, please contact the NPWS Coffs Coast Area at [npws.coffscost@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.coffscost@environment.nsw.gov.au) or by telephone on 02 6652 0900.

# 1. At a glance

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management to prepare a plan of management for the national park.

This draft plan of management establishes a shared vision for the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. It also sets out the pathways, partnerships and priority actions and strategies to achieve that vision. Nurturing respect for Gumbaynggirr lore is critical to the park experience. This plan of management recognises that traditional Gumbaynggirr lore, ecological knowledge and cultural practices must be used to care for Country.

Once adopted, the plan of management will apply to land declared as Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park (see Figure 2) and any additional lands acquired by the board of management that are reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act (including Bald Hill). The plan will also apply to areas vested in the Minister responsible for the National Parks and Wildlife Act that are not reserved as park (known as Part 11 land). All park operations need to be in accordance with the plan of management.

This draft plan of management was prepared by the board of management with assistance from staff of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Its preparation was guided by the 'Living principles for developing the plan' adopted by the Board of Management and Aboriginal owners (see Appendix A) and the 2018 Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Cultural Values and Community Aspirations Project – a partnership between the board of management and Gumbaynggirr communities of the Nambucca Valley.

The draft plan was prepared after consultation with Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils, the Wanggaan (Southern) Gumbaynggirr Nation Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate, Gumbaynggirr field staff of NPWS, non-Aboriginal staff of NPWS, Scotts Head community, the Nambucca Valley Council and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries).

The following matters were considered when developing this draft plan of management:

- matters listed in the Gaagal Wanggaan National Park, Nambucca Heads Local Aboriginal Land Council and Unkya Local Aboriginal Land Council Lease to the Minister for Environment (the lease agreement)
- the native title determination applicable to the park (NCD2014/001)
- the objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (Appendix B)
- the management principles for national parks listed under section 30E of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (Appendix C)
- the matters listed under section 72AA of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Section 72AB of the National Parks and Wildlife Act requires each plan of management to include the objectives of the plan of management and the operations that are proposed to be carried out on the land. Objectives are presented as pathways in section 5. Permitted operations are presented in Table 2 (section 6). Priority actions and strategies are presented in section 7. The permitted operations listed in Table 2 and priority actions and strategies listed in section 7 are the main ways the vision for Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park will be achieved. Plans such as feral animal and weed strategies, master plans, fire management, and climate change adaptation plans may be developed to guide actions at an operational level.



## 2. Gumbaynggirr custodianship of Country

Gumbaynggirr Country has special cultural significance to Gumbaynggirr people, who have lived on Gumbaynggirr Country for thousands of years.

People talk about Country in the same way that they would talk about a person; they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, feel sorry for Country and long for Country. People say that Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy ... Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow with a consciousness, a will toward life. Because of this richness, Country is home and peace: nourishment for body, mind and spirit (Rose 1996).

Gumbaynggirr people have spiritual and cultural connection to Gumbaynggirr Country, including Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park.

The cultural significance of Gaagal Wanggaan comes from songlines, Dreaming, and living memories – the ongoing connections between Country and Gumbaynggirr people.

South Beach is very important to us, apart from the spiritual significance, it was a gathering place to teach young people about the seaside, the sea, the fish, plants and animals as well. Now that it is in Aboriginal hands, it gives us a feeling of security. We continue to carry out our cultural practices (Williams 2017).

Gumbaynggirr Elder, Aunty Jessie Williams

Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park is jointly managed by the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management and NPWS.

### 2.1 Jagun (homelands)

The Gumbaynggirr homelands (Jagun) are the spiritual and cultural home of the Gumbaynggirr people, who have lived on Gumbaynggirr Country for many thousands of years. Jagun (homelands) are of deep significance and are an important part of Gumbaynggirr identity.

The creation of Gumbaynggirr Country involves several hero-ancestors, including Yuludarla (the father who came from across the sea), Gawnggan (Yuludarla's wife), their fierce warrior son Birrugan, the Two Sisters, the Koala Brothers and Brother Quoll. The hero-ancestors created the landscape, leaving traces of their journeys, creating landmarks, and giving certain places unique attributes.



### Creation story

This story tells how a stranger, the hero-ancestor Yuludarla came to this Country and made the rivers and languages.

The first man, Yuludarla, came from the east where the sun rises. Yuludarla went over the mountains and found a woman who would become his wife (Gawnggan). Their children populated the land.

A man climbed a hill and saw a stranger approaching. The man wondered what was going on and who that stranger was. He'd never seen such a man before. The stranger came closer and began to shine like the sun. The man returned to camp to tell everyone of this handsome stranger who had become like the sun.

The men at camp decided to follow the stranger. They almost caught him but the stranger said, 'Turn to water' and made a river. The stranger cut a canoe and crossed the river. Some men swam after him, but the stranger said, 'Let their tongues be silenced straight away. Let these here talk in Bundjalung'.

The stranger went ahead and still he was followed. He made another river, another canoe. He said to the men who swam across, 'You will be Yaygirr'.

The men continued to chase the stranger to Nambucca. Yuludarla put down another river and cut another canoe to cross it. The men kept following, so he named them.

'All you there will speak Gumbaynggirr!'

'Dhungutti!'

'Ngambaa, you people of Yarrahapinni!'

And so the stranger, Yuludarla, left them then.

Gumbaynggirr Country is bound by the Pacific Ocean and the surrounding Countries of the Dhungutti, Bundjalung, Yaegel and Anaiwan peoples. Figure 1 illustrates the occupancy of Country by Gumbaynggirr people over many thousands of years.

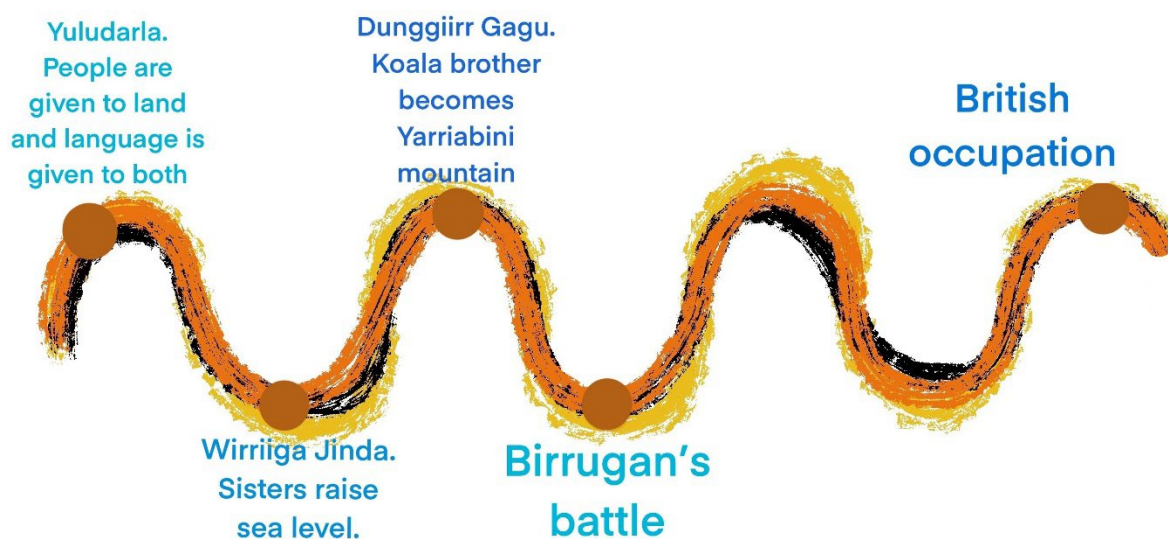


Figure 1 Gumbaynggirr occupancy of Country by Ricky Buchanan, Gumbaynggirr member of the board of management

## 2.2 Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park

This plan of management applies to all land declared as Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. The park is located on the north coast of New South Wales between Scotts Head, Nambucca Heads and Macksville (Figure 2). The park is commonly referred to as Gaagal Wanggaan (meaning 'beach, south' in Gumbaynggirr language). The beach adjacent to the park runs along the 10-kilometre peninsula between Scotts Head and Nambucca Heads. The peninsula is bound by Warrell Creek, the mouth of the Nambucca River estuary and the Pacific Ocean. The beach, dunes, riverbed and riverbanks in this area are ecologically diverse and constantly changing in response to the wind, tides and flow of the creek and river.

The national park was established to protect the area's outstanding cultural and natural values. Parts of the park were reserved under different parts of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Reservation information is summarised in the table below.

**Table 1 Park reservation information**

Year	Area (ha)	Description	Reservation type
2010	441	The peninsula and beach above the mean high-water mark	National park (Part 4A)
2010	194	The bed of Warrell Creek	National park (Part 4)
2016	28	A small area near Scotts Head	National park (Part 4A)

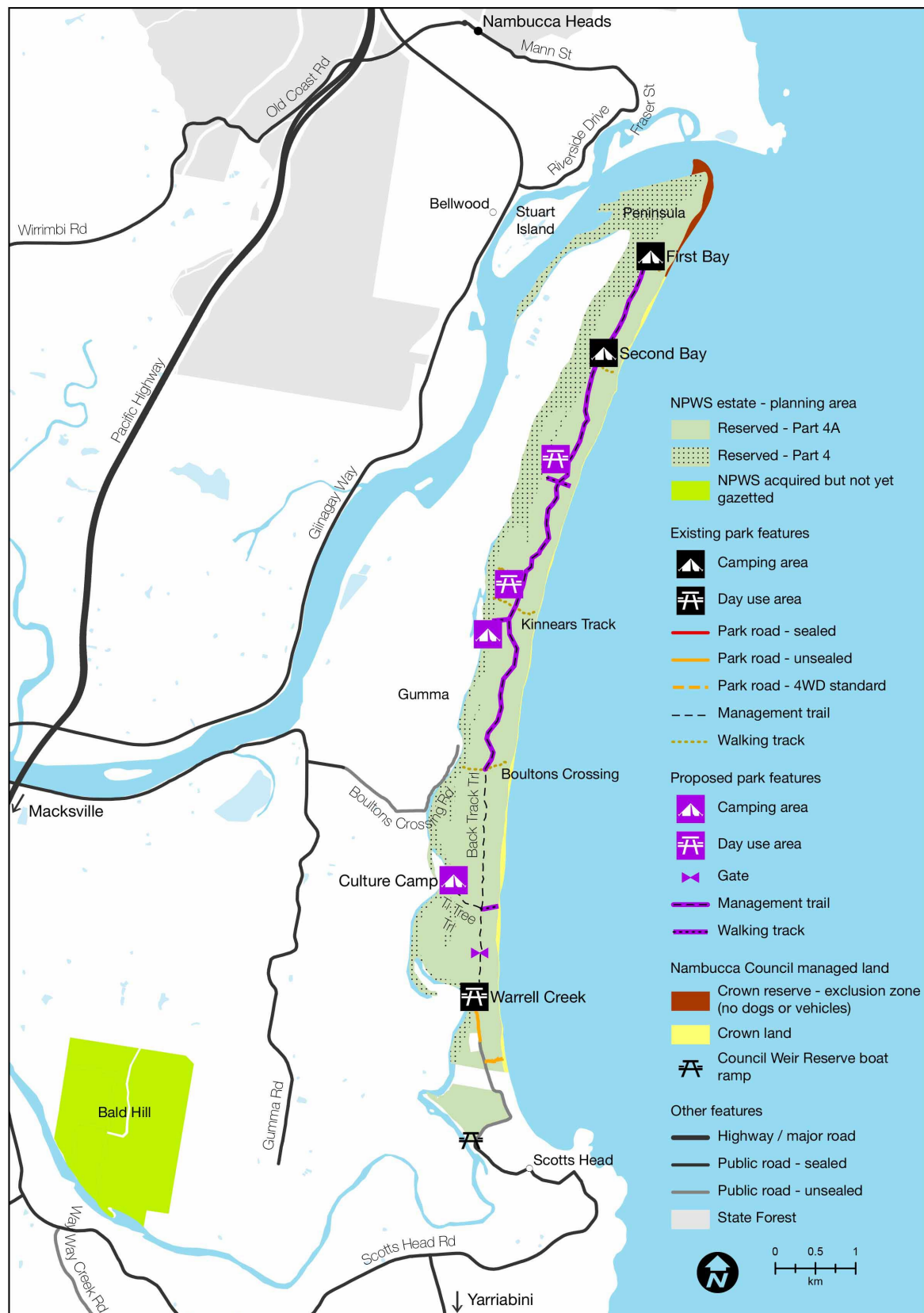
The intertidal zone along the beach (below the mean high-water mark) is currently a Crown reserve managed by Nambucca Valley Council. The national park does not include the ocean or water in Warrell Creek.

The property known as Bald Hill (lots 126 and 139, DP 755539) was acquired by the board of management in 2022 to protect culturally significant places and is an important corridor of remnant native vegetation. Bald Hill is approximately 214 hectares, located on Warrell Creek between Scotts Head and Yarriabini. Bald Hill will be reserved as national park. At the time of publication, the formal process of reservation is progressing but yet to be finalised.

The board of management may acquire land for addition to the national park (see 5.1.5 'Land acquisition'). These lands may be freehold, leasehold or Crown lands.

Future additions to the park may be reserved under Part 4, Part 4A and/or Part 11 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and will be subject to the lease agreement. Additional lands may also be subject to a native title claim, native title determination or an Indigenous land use agreement.

# Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Draft Plan of Management



**Figure 2 Map of Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park**

## 2.3 Gumbaynggirr lore and culture

Aboriginal people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual and material relationship to land, water, sea and heavens. This relationship recognises that everything is interacting. Everything is connected in one network, where life does not exist independently of the non-living. People, stars, the sea, animals, plants, stones, rivers, weather, mountains, the living and non-living are extended family. All are kin. Country is not seen as a resource to be exploited for profit but rather more like kin for whom there is respect and a relationship of interdependency. Lore concerns how kinship is lived. Culture is learning, understanding and living kinship and lore.

Aboriginal culture is living law. All cultures are living law – we just don't often look at it that way in modern times (Harrison 2009).

Aboriginal cultures are many autonomous cultures that may have similar but distinctive Dreaming and lore that is Country specific. For at least 65,000 years, Aboriginal people have been living by traditional lore. Lore is based on Dreaming, coded in traditions and handed down from generation to generation. From a young age, children learn what is allowed, what is forbidden and how punishment is decided. Customary lore includes rights and obligations based on kinship or totem, the right to seek retribution for victims (payback) and asking permission to pass through Country. Some offences against customary lore include making the sacred publicly known, sharing cultural knowledge inappropriately and insulting Elders. While Elders are instrumental in resolving disputes between individuals and groups, everyone has a role in the kinship network. Everyone has responsibilities to live within the lore.

In Gumbaynggirr lore, there is no division between people, Country and culture. Lore concerns how people interact with each other, the land, the water and the sky in a holistic manner. Country is vital to the survival of Gumbaynggirr people and culture. In Gumbaynggirr lore, Country is not owned, and everyone must respect, protect and maintain Country.

Sustainability is at the heart of Gumbaynggirr lore. Lore provides the traditional ecological knowledge used by Gumbaynggirr people to ensure the land and waters are cared for, protected and thriving. Looking after Country in traditional ways is of the utmost importance. This means using Gumbaynggirr lore, language, customs, spiritual and cultural practices to care for Country.

Gumbaynggirr people follow a strict totemic system and have a strong spiritual and cultural connection to the ocean (Gaagal). In Gumbaynggirr lore, the ocean is the Gumbaynggirr nation's totem. Gumbaynggirr people are saltwater mob. Individual family groups also have specific totems. Family groups have ongoing responsibilities to protect these totems. Cultural practices and traditional knowledge of ecology, the seasons and the moon and tides are used to look after the ocean and all family totems. It is against the lore to kill or eat family totems.

Sacred and spiritual sites are of enormous importance. The value of these sites comes from relationships – the connections between the sites and people, lore, songlines and Dreaming. It is against the lore to make knowledge of sacred and spiritual sites publicly known.



## 2.4 Survival and sovereignty

Australian law has applied to this Country for a relatively short period. Aboriginal Australians live under 2 systems of law: Aboriginal lore and Australian common law. The Aboriginal experience of colonisation is characterised by violence, dispossession of land and resources, cultural suppression, institutionalised surveillance, stolen generations and breaches of trust. The experience of living under 2 systems of law has not been a happy one for all Aboriginal people.

Despite tensions between Aboriginal lore and Australian law, Aboriginal peoples and cultures have demonstrated great resilience. In the 1930s, extensive initiation ceremonies were held in the Nambucca Valley (Department of Planning 1989). In 1951, a big corroboree was attended by the many Elders living on Stuart Island (NPWS 2003). Traditional lore and cultural knowledge continue to be carried by Elders and Aboriginal knowledge-holders of the Nambucca Valley and those living off Country. There has been a great deal of loss but also remarkable survival and recovery. Gumbaynggirr people survived, and Gumbaynggirr Dreaming, lore and culture continue.

In the courts of Australia, Dreaming and lore are gaining respect, particularly through native title cases. The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) is an Australian law that recognises Aboriginal people's rights to land and waters. The Gumbaynggirr people's connection to the land and the continued practice of Gumbaynggirr lore and customs was recognised in the 2014 native title determination. Although native title recognises Aboriginal people's rights to land and water, Australian law does not recognise Aboriginal sovereignty.

Gumbaynggirr people have never ceded sovereignty. Lore was never abandoned, Country was never disowned, and cultural practices were never voluntarily relinquished.

This plan of management seeks to recognise traditional Gumbaynggirr lore and enable Gumbaynggirr culture to be lived, passed on and shared with the broader community.



Photo 1 Sunrise over Baalijin (Gumbaynggirr Country). Andrew Hutchings/DCCEEW

## 2.5 Aboriginal ownership and native title

The concept of land ownership which has been applied in Australia since colonisation is vastly different to the Aboriginal concepts of kinship, Country and custodianship. Nevertheless, ownership of the park by Aboriginal people is recognised in law and the park is now leased back to the NSW Government.

Gumbaynggirr people come from the land and the water. We do not own these but rather it is our responsibility to care for and protect the land and waters of our Gumbaynggirr homelands.

Michael Donovan, founding Gumbaynggirr member of the board of management

### 2.5.1 Aboriginal ownership

Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils hold title over Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park on behalf of Aboriginal owners. Aboriginal ownership and leaseback agreements are established by the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*. Under this agreement, land title is transferred to the local Aboriginal land council, which holds that title on behalf of Aboriginal owners. The land is then leased back to the NSW Government. Lease payments are spent on the care and management of the park. A board of management with a majority of Aboriginal owner family representatives decides how the park is managed. The Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act maintains the register of Aboriginal owners and supports Aboriginal people to register as Aboriginal owners.

On behalf of Gumbaynggirr people, the Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils lodged land claims over Gumma Peninsula, Gaagal Wanggaan and 3 islands in the Nambucca River. These claims were made under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act between 1984 and 1996. The NSW Government refused the claims in 1996, as Gaagal Wanggaan was needed for nature conservation. The local Aboriginal land councils appealed to the NSW Land and Environment Court. In 2002, the NSW Government and local Aboriginal land councils committed to resolving the land claims. Using section 36A of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and Part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, a new Aboriginal-owned park was established and a lease agreement negotiated. The lease was negotiated between NPWS, Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils, and an Aboriginal negotiating panel representing Aboriginal owners.

In 2010, the Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils and the NSW Government entered the current lease agreement. In 2011, the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) Board of Management was appointed. The lease agreement:

- applies to parts of the national park reserved under Part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (Part 4A lands)
- commits NPWS to managing lands reserved under Part 4 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act in a way that is consistent with management direction set by the board of management in relation to the Part 4A lands.

Joint management of the park supports Gumbaynggirr people's land use, management and aspirations, and the NSW Government's goals for nature conservation. For further information on joint management or to contact the board of management, please see the contact details provided at the front of this plan.





**Photo 2** Littoral rainforest. John Turbill/DCCEEW

### **2.5.2 Native title**

Native title recognises Aboriginal people's connection to land and the continued practice of traditional laws and customs. Native title rights are traditional rights and interests in relation to land and water arising out of traditional laws and customs. The Native Title Act provides for the recognition and protection of native title. The registered native title body corporate holds native title rights and interests in trust on behalf of native title holders.

The Gumbaynggirr people have had 4 native title determinations finding that native title exists on land and waters within their traditional country. The 2014 determination overlaps with the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. This native title determination recognises that Gumbaynggirr people have native title over Gaagal Wanggaan peninsula (land reserved under Part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act). Gumbaynggirr people's native title rights and interests under the 2014 determination are held in trust by the Wanggaan (Southern) Gumbaynggirr Nation Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate. The court agreement for the native title consent determination made under section 87 of the Native Title Act and the lease agreement refer to the future negotiation of an Indigenous land use agreement (ILUA). In the future, the native title holders may seek to establish an ILUA with the NSW Government.

An ILUA is a legally binding agreement. Such an agreement would be able to formalise:

- how the native title holders will exercise native title rights over the park
- processes for undertaking park management activities validly under the Native Title Act
- processes for engagement with native title holders on park management activities.

This plan of management respects and honours the native title determination and enables exercise of native title rights and interests. Nothing in this plan of management is intended to extend, diminish, extinguish, suspend, or otherwise alternative title rights and interests, nor does it prevent any exercise of native title rights and interests. Should an ILUA be negotiated



in the future, those rights and interests would be exercised in accordance with the ILUA. This plan of management is adopted subject to native title. If this plan of management proposes any actions or restrictions that would affect native title, the board of management will not implement these actions or impose the restrictions in relation to native title holders unless the activities can be validated under the future acts regime in the Native Title Act.

Should the board of management acquire additional lands that are subject to other native title claims, determinations or agreements, provisions of this plan of management apply (unless otherwise stated in the relevant native title determination or ILUA).

Further information about native title (and native title determination NCD2014/001) is available online (see 'More information' at the back of this plan).



Photo 3 Looking south from Nambucca Heads. John Lugg/DCCEWW

## 2.6 Songlines and Dreaming

Songlines may be understood to connect knowledge, people and place, mapping the routes and activities of totemic beings and special sites throughout Australia. Songlines may be considered timeless as they describe the nature of creation alongside ritual and daily life. In some communities, songlines are the trails of ancestral beings as they moved through the landscape. In other cases, they are the walking trails people followed when they travelled back and forth through Country. Regional songlines are often connected to longer continental narratives. An example is the Gumbaynggirr story of the Two Sisters (Jinda) Who Made the Sea, which links to the Seven Sisters' songlines from Australia's central and western desert regions.

Ancestral knowledge of Country is carried by its people according to kin and ancestral relations. Aboriginal people are the custodians of stories that connect knowledge, people and place (Mahood 2017). Songlines may be lost or fragmented because of people's extended absence from Country. While 'broken songs' can be reactivated through song,

story or ceremony, without ongoing connection, some believe the land and its people suffer and even die (Neale 2017). If a songline through Country becomes weakened from disuse, it can be reignited when language, story, people and place are reconnected.

Unlike roads, songlines cannot be washed away as long as the keepers are alive and singing them. Unlike roads, songlines do not stand separate from the traveller. Aboriginal people travelling the songlines or Dreaming tracks carry the path – the knowledge – within them as song (Neale 2017).

Ken Walker described songlines as ‘a combination of a lot of stories that flow from one to the other. That’s generally how our Gumbaynggirr stories work’ (Somerville and Perkins 2010).

Stories from Elders who are no longer with us, experiences shared in living memory, and the stories yet to come, are part of continuous Dreaming. The concept of the Dreaming is eternal. The stories do not belong to a mythic past; they actively inform the present.

In Gumbaynggirr Dreaming, battles are fought and enemies are slain. Clever men shapeshift and sisters unite. Families are broken up and put back together. Communities learn to collaborate rather than fight over precious resources. Rivers are laid down and mountains rise. New tribes and languages are sung into existence. The sea and all its creatures are brought to life. Gumbaynggirr people understand there is no separation between the heavens, land, water and sea of Gumbaynggirr Country.

The Gumbaynggirr hero-creation stories connect knowledge to the land and influence how people live, think and dream today.

Aboriginal people have ongoing obligations to care for Country and cultural knowledge. How a community carries and shares knowledge and who has custodianship over stories are issues faced by many Aboriginal communities.

Dreaming stories are Country specific and may be told only by people of that Country. It is not appropriate for Gumbaynggirr and non-Aboriginal people to share the Dreaming stories of other nations or promote them as traditional Gumbaynggirr stories.

In some regions of Australia, the rights to a story are limited to certain custodians. Rights to a story may depend on family, gender, kinship status and relationship to Country. For example, the Anangu people of Central Australia are connected to sites through kinship to ancestral characters in specific creation stories. In other regions, many individuals are responsible for sharing the same story. Among the Gumbaynggirr people, the more important totems (and the miirlarl – special places – that went with them) belonged to groups rather than individuals (Morelli et al. 2016).

How much of a story is shared (with whom, how and when) can depend on the nature of the knowledge being shared. Not everyone within a family knows all the information. More senior Elders may know more secret or sacred aspects of a story. Layers of knowledge within a story may be revealed over time. Stories may differ depending on gender, family lineage, language group or nation. Responsibilities to care for places and to share knowledge and stories may change over time. Stories by nature change, evolve and may have numerous variations and interpretations. This does not make one version correct and another incorrect; such diversity is an intrinsic aspect of complex cultures.





**Photo 4** Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

## **2.7 Traditional stories**

In a culture that relies on oral tradition, stories transfer cultural knowledge from generation to generation. Creation stories explain how the landscape and its features, the people, their languages, and all living creatures were brought into existence. These stories provide cultural and moral lessons and highlight occupancy, cultural practices and cultural values.

Stories are a way of holding and passing on knowledge, including values and beliefs, protocols of behaviour, and information for survival. Stories contain knowledge of plants, animals, people, locations, events and lore. They contain information about the environment, the seasons, resources and water, the use of fire, native plants regularly collected for bush tucker and bush medicine and the animals seen, hunted or fished.

By embedding information in a story and performing that story in dance and song, the land is mapped by and for its people. These stories often reference features in the land and link back to the journeys of the ancestors.

In the late 1950s, Gumbaynggirr knowledge-holders Clarrie Skinner and Harry (Tiger) Buchanan shared traditional stories with non-Aboriginal linguists and anthropologists. Tiger Buchanan was passionate about recording language and cultural stories and believed the knowledge was to be shared. His recorded songs are kept in the University of New England archive. His words are at the Garlambirla walk in the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden at Coffs Harbour:

- Gala guuray wuuban (the bloodwood flowers rain down)
- Guuray wuuban barri (the bloodwood flowers rain down)
- Yaarri ganga ya Gabaagu juluumgu wuuban.gu (later it's off up here to the mountain to the bloodwoods)
- Wurruunda nunguugundi (here to the wing house of the kangaroos)
- Ya wuuban.gu wuuban barri (the blood woods/the blood flower rains down)

According to initiated men like Tiger Buchanan, creation stories were an integral part of life, offering moral instruction and cultural nourishment, providing information on food sources and inspiring ceremonies and rites of passage.

Some places have particular attributes because of the hero-ancestors' impact on their environment. Yuludarla is linked to the Gunjuuga miirlarl (honeysuckle special place) on the Orara River, while Birrugan created eel special place near the Grafton racecourse.

The tale of Birrugan and his mother Gawnggan at Valla gives insight into where ochre could be found for ceremony. Other stories linked to sacred places are only for men or only for women. Scotts Head is one of several birthing caves, and Clarrie Skinner described how men's ceremonies were done in the mountains at Clouds Creek.

Traditional stories reveal other values of importance to Gumbaynggirr people, such as the importance of family. This was also noted in the historical writings of English surveyor Clement Hodgkinson. He comments how astonished he is by 'the fondness that the Australian natives display for the tribes to which they belong, and the localities in which they are accustomed to roam; they cannot bear even a short separation from their fellows and their usual haunts, without feeling a strong desire to return to them' (Hodgkinson 1848). The importance of family is emphasised in the traditional stories of Wijiirr-jagi and Gawnggan's love for Birrugan.





**Photo 5** Banksia along the Back Track management trail. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

A number of Gumbaynggirr creation stories relate to Gaagal Wanggaan. Gaagal Wanggaan is one important landscape that is part of a much larger and complex cultural landscape across the nation.

Michael Donovan

The Gumbaynggirr story of the Two Sisters tells of the creation of the Pacific Ocean, the coastline, winds and all sea creatures.

### **The Two Jinda who made the sea**

This story takes place at Scotts Head. To escape Birrugan's unwelcome advances, the sisters use their yam sticks to make the sea and all the sea creatures. Each time the sisters stab the ground with their sticks, saltwater gushes forth.

In one version, Birrugan, on his way to his last battle, meets the two sisters who are looking for pipis. He wants to marry both sisters, but they resist him and flee. They ascend to the heavens. He follows them, and the two sisters become his wives. The 3 of them now form part of the Southern Cross, with the 2 pointer stars symbolising the two sisters.

In another version, one sister goes north and the other south, and they meet again at Moonee Beach, the place of the mother. Together, the sisters create the coastline of Australia, the ocean, waves and wind. At the end of their journey, they ascend into the sky at Split Solitary Island and become part of the Seven Sisters.

In southern Gumbaynggirr Country, the Two Sisters story is linked to the story of the Koala Brothers. This story includes the creation of Mount Yarrahappini, to the south of Gaagal Wanggaan.

### **Koala Brothers and Brother Quoll**

The Koala Brothers are both clever men with supernatural powers. They make a bridge to the land with their intestines to rescue the rest of the clan, who are stranded when the seas rise. In one version, the Koala Brothers are turned to stone at Mount Yarrahappini (yarriabini meaning 'koalas rolling down'). They can still be seen today as the 2 humps at the top of Mount Yarrahappini and from the claw marks of one of the koalas as he tumbled down the mountain.

In another version, Brother Quoll, also a clever man, has an argument with the Koala Brothers. In a display of his supernatural power, Brother Quoll creates the tides and all the sea creatures, including dolphins, sharks and whales. When the Koala Brothers see how savage the sea is becoming, they try to stop Brother Quoll, who shapeshifts into a rock to escape (the 'Quoll at Scotts Head').

As Uncle Larry Kelly said, whenever he passes Yarrahapinni Mountain on the highway 'I get permission to go past and then thank the Koala Brothers on the way back for safe passage and bringing me back safely ... The feeling is still there because of what our ancestors put there can never be taken out, even if they develop the land, it will always be part of Gumbaynggirr people' (Kelly 2017).

In the following story, Wijiirr-jagi (meaning flesh or meat addict, cannibal woman or witch) lives on a stretch of beach, often thought to be Gaagal Wanggaan. As a Dreaming ancestor, the Wijiirr-jagi has more than one life.

### **Wijiirr-jagi**

Three brothers set off together from Stuarts Point (or Scotts Head, depending on the version), leaving their parents at home. In one version, these are the 3 Koala Brothers who are going to the Golden Hole. In another, there are 12 Brothers.

When the youngest brother gets homesick, he sets off on his own to return home. On the way, he meets the cannibal woman who offers him a gulung, a bowl cut from a knot on a tree with drugged honey water in it. He gets drowsy, and the cannibal witch jumps out and kills him with her yam stick.

The next brother tries to kill her with his boomerang, but despite slicing her in half, she stitches herself up again and succeeds in killing him.

The eldest brother receives a warning, either from his inner knowing or from a willy wagtail. He outwits the cannibal witch by pretending to drink the poison she offers. Then they have a big fight, and he kills her. As the eldest brother is left-handed (considered more clever and powerful), he destroys her completely and throws her body into the ocean so no bad spirit remains on the land.

Once she is gone, he lays out the bones of his family that she has murdered. He puts them together and breathes life back into each of his family members. They all come back to life, and the family embraces again.

Birrugan stars as the hero of many Gumbaynggirr stories and fought many battles against neighbouring tribes such as the Dhungutti. Birrugan's name is also the name for the Southern Cross and the diamond symbols on the carved trees that mark the special places in Gumbaynggirr Country. The Birrugan songline makes connections in many directions, linking earth, heavens, and sea and connecting people, stories, languages and places (Somerville and Perkins 2010). The story of Birrugan's Run is a Gumbaynggirr creation story of special significance.

### **Birrugan's run**

Birrugan hurries to fight another battle, taking a shortcut towards Gumma (from gamang or 'red clay'), east of Macksville. Birrugan's Crossing (or Birrugan's Knee) is where the warrior crosses the Nambucca River, spear in one hand, boomerang in the other. Across the Nambucca River he goes, and then across Warrell Creek. From there, he crosses the Macleay and runs along the Smoky Cape Range. He runs and runs along that range until he reaches Arakoon. This is where Birrugan will die.

In the tradition of the hero's journey and battles between good and evil, Birrugan confronts his enemy at the story's climax. His life hangs in the balance. For a while, it seems he will be victorious, but then brown hawk (Bugajagi or 'rottenness-lover') swoops down from the sky. This harbinger of death heralds the warrior's end at Arakoon.

The following Gumbaynggirr Dreaming story features Birrugan and his mother (Gawnggan) and has many embedded teachings. In particular, this story emphasises the importance of family, where to find ochre, the location of sacred sites and the connection of hero-ancestors to Country and their creations.

### **A mother's love for her son: Gawnggan and Birrugan**

Before Birrugan leaves his mother's home in Valla, he tells her that if red ochre clay should fall from the roof of her hut, it means something has happened to him. During the fierce battle, red clay falls, warning his mother he has been struck down.

Gawnggan immediately fears the worst. She smears her legs with red ochre and, using a yam stick, digs black and white colours. Then she paints herself all over. She rushes to the scene, running from Valla along the coastline. She runs along the beach to reach her son but arrives too late. She raises her yam stick and curses her enemies, turning them into ti trees.

In one version, when Gawnggan sees the grave of Birrugan, she turns herself into a brolga. The ability to shapeshift in moments of crisis is common in mythical stories from around the world. When a brolga appears at the sacred site known as Marrgaan (meaning 'brush-tailed wallaby' – now part of the golf course at South West Rocks), it is understood that hero-ancestors are still part of the landscape.

Sharing traditional and contemporary stories keeps culture strong. Traditional stories specific to Gumbaynggirr Country continue to be shared by Gumbaynggirr Elders and knowledge-holders. Contemporary stories (from living memory) are as culturally relevant and significant to Gumbaynggirr people as the traditional creation stories that have been passed on for millennia.





Photo 6 Warrell Creek from Gumma peninsula. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

## 2.8 Gumbaynggirr stories from living memory

These stories provide ways to understand Gumbaynggirr people's connection to land, culture and identity and illustrate that Gumbaynggirr culture is not static but continuously evolving.

Contemporary Gumbaynggirr stories of the Nambucca Valley were recorded and mapped in the 2018 *Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Cultural Values and Community Aspirations Project* (Cox et al. unpublished). These stories reflect Gumbaynggirr community knowledge of Gumbaynggirr customs and manners, habits of thought and memory, intentions and way of life, and what is common between people. Great importance is placed on land and spirituality, family, Elders, identity and belonging, relationships, caring and sharing. Stories also show where to find bush tucker, medicines and materials on Country, how to care for Country, and cultural practices (harvesting plants and animals, fishing, crabbing, cultural burning). Many stories relate to special places on Country, ceremonial places, areas of sacred significance, totems, miirlarl, and the individuals and families connected to these places.

The telling and re-telling of a story builds a collective identity. Stories of survival and resilience are a source of strength. All the Gumbaynggirr stories – past, present, and future – underpin Gumbaynggirr people's world view and identity. The following stories highlight several Gumbaynggirr cultural values.

From recent Gumbaynggirr stories, we know that only a handful of families resided permanently at Gaagal Wanggaan in the first half of the 20th century.

### **Living on Country**

Anne Francine Edwards' grandmother was born on Warrell Creek, and her grandmother's sister also lived there. Francine lived in a shack with her father, Uncle Oakey Marshall, and his brother, Uncle Pompy Marshall. The Davis family lived nearby, and the families who came from Stuarts Point camped at Grassy Head beach.

An Aboriginal reserve from 1883, Stuart Island was home to several families (NPWS 2003). Aunty Biyin Buchanan lived in a shack on Stuart Island and collected sea worms to sell as bait. The island was leased as a golf club in 1955, and Aboriginal residents were moved onto the Bellwood Reserve (now behind the shopping mall).

Several stories from living memory refer to ceremonial places on Country and who was connected to these places.

### **Ceremonial places**

Cinnamon Jarrett describes being told a story about the last corroboree held on Stuart Island when she was a young girl. 'My grandmother Aunty Eileen Marshall and Uncle Pomp Marshall saw ... one of the last corroborees. They were told not to look but Uncle Pomp and Aunty Eileen peeked. It was one of the scariest things she's ever seen. They seen the old fellas dancing' (Jarrett 2017).

Elva (Ma) Davis said that her mother recounted how the young girls would have to sit with their heads bowed when the boys went for initiation (Davis M 2017).

Stories often refer to Gaagal Wanggaan as a place of wellbeing and healing, where sacred and special places, ceremonies, stories, and culture provide for people's wellbeing.

### **A place of wellbeing and healing**

Jennie Rosser recounts when she and her daughter, Danica, spent a day at Gaagal Wanggaan. At 8 months pregnant, doctors had told the Rosser family that Danica would have a difficult birth and that the boy may not survive. During their day out, Danica lay face down and buried her stomach in the sand and fell into a deep sleep. When the family returned to Nambucca, all felt revived by their time on Gaagal Wanggaan. Despite the difficult birth and the fact that Jennie's grandson was born with his stomach outside of his body, Jennie says, 'Gaagal is what kept my grandson, Keda, alive. During the surgery we sent the ancestors to be with him' (Rosser 2017).

Stories about the journey to Gaagal Wanggaan are connected to the importance of family and sharing the abundance of bush tucker. Community members started their journey from different locations, many from Bellwood Reserve. Groups travelled to Stuart Island and then to Gaagal Wanggaan by boat, swimming or walking at low tide. This was a collective experience the whole community took part in.

### **The journey to Gaagal Wanggaan**

Jennie Rosser recounts how the old lady, 'Stella Foley used to stand up top of the hill with her hand and stick raised to give safe passage to the mob going there and back at the end of the day. She was calling on the ancestors to help her. To keep the waters calm for a safe crossing. Why is this important? Because it's our traditional way, our culture practices at its very best ... about where we can and can't go, and the respect we have for each other and our families' (Rosser 2017).

Senior women, such as Aunty Phoebe Mumbler and Aunty Vilma Moylan, frequently took family groups to Gaagal Wanggaan, in a big old rowboat belonging to the Wilsons. Many in the community remember as children they rowed the Elders across, learning to swim by being dropped in the water close to shore.

In the 1960s and 1970s, families visited Gaagal Wanggaan year-round but more so in summer. Some went for day trips; others camped for a few nights in lean-tos or on the beach. Rob Bryant said, 'The whole mission couldn't wait to go' (Bryant 2017). Only the essentials would be taken over – salt, onion, curry, flour and potatoes. In general, families lived off the land. They practised burlying (sweeping back and forth for sea worms), catching fish and shellfish, cooking on the open fire, and making damper in the sand. Hunting, fishing and crabbing was done with a spear and hand torch or with dough on a hand line. There was such an abundance of pipis that they covered the beaches from South West Rocks up to Urunga. The Elders taught the children the pattern of the tides and how to get from sand spit to sand spit, swimming or walking.

Once on the beach, the activities were communal. The area is well known locally for its variety of fish and shellfish: mullet, whiting, bream, trevally, pipis and oysters. Fish were caught and pipis were collected. Cinnamon Jarret said, 'The mullet was that black and thick, it was like a black cloud coming up South Beach' (Jarrett 2017).

After a day of swimming, fishing and playing, families came together and lit a fire to cook the fish and made damper in a camp oven. A whistle at dusk alerted all the children to stop playing or swimming and return to camp before dark. It was known that certain parts of the beach were off limits. It was a sign to leave if you got a strange feeling or your hair stood on end. Once bellies were full, yarns were told.

Contemporary stories frequently mention how the ancestors give warning signs (through the sound of clapsticks, talking in lingo, or the whirr of a bullroarer) either when darkness falls or when it is time to leave. These anecdotes highlight the spiritual worldview of the Gumbaynggirr people, which endures in a modern, digital age. In Aunty Pauline Hooler's words, 'It reinforces to me that spirits of the land exist. This is traditional history' (Hooler 2017).

The following stories illustrate the Gumbaynggirr spiritual world view.

### **Spiritual encounters with animals**

Numerous contemporary stories refer to spiritual encounters with animals. In one example, a dolphin was described as the ancestor, highlighting the connection between people and the environment. As told by Aunty Rhonda Donovan, 'The dolphin singing story is a peace offering story. Dolphins are part of our Dreaming. They tell us stories, they give us strength and feed us. They let us know about fish and bring in the fish for us. We throw back the fish for them too' (Donovan 2017).

### **Biddy and Biddy's Farm**

Many contemporary stories refer to Biddy at Biddy's Farm. Accounts about Biddy differ according to the storyteller. Aunty Jessie Williams identified Aunty Biddy as the mother of Bina Whaddy. Jessie Williams was the only person to give a first-hand experience of meeting Biddy because she is related to Biddy through her mother's line. 'Everyone was frightened of Biddy, but Mum took me there. We went by boat. I said, "We are going there? Biddy's Farm?" Mum said, "It's alright"' (Williams 2017).

Troy Robinson said 'Gumma is my great-grandmother's Country (4 generations back). That's Biddy's Country' (Robinson 2017).

Since Biddy passed away, the area where she lived has become a women's place, and today, young men are taught not to go there.

### **Gumburr**

Many local people describe sightings of Biddy. Uncle Larry Kelly suggested that Biddy scared people, 'whether for their own safety or for recognition if she knew them. Either way, people would leave if Biddy showed herself.'

Cyril Davis recounted the story of how the gumburr (ghost or spirit) of Biddy showed herself. 'A white man went fishing at night. Biddy got in the boat, she was the ghost woman, he saw her and fainted. When he woke up, he was 5 kilometres out at sea. The white fella rowed back, sold the boat and left town' (Davis C 2017).

In other accounts, Biddy is not feared, but it is understood that to respect her means keeping one's distance. Children are warned not to go near where Biddy lived. This emphasises the Gumbaynggirr value of respecting Elders and knowing when to trust one's instinct. The Biddy stories ensured children came back to the camp before dark and that family groups packed up and left before the tide came in. Cultural stories continue to serve as instructive tools.

Uncle Larry Kelly recounts when he and Uncle Barry Phylball were at Scotts Head. 'We put our axe on the surfboard and swam, walked up an inlet. We were up to our necks in water, using one hand to eat the cobra we'd collected and the other hand to fish. Then suddenly I saw an old fella sitting there with a spear looking at me and Uncle Barry. I said, "Look, gumburr." We talked in lingo. I waved at him and told him we weren't taking anything. He frightened the living daylights out of me. Then he started to fade away. He made sure I passed on through' (Kelly 2017).

Gumbaynggirr people widely regard Gaagal Wanggaan as a bush supermarket and pharmacy, providing an abundance of bush tucker and medicines. The following stories reflect this theme.



### **The bush supermarket and pharmacy**

Aunty Rose Davis Quinlin Boston described in detail the variety of bush foods and medicine she regularly collected at Gaagal Wanggaan. These included cobra (or jiddie), a type of marine woodborer found in trees and logs submerged in water. She says jiddie is also a medicine that could cure a hangover, and raw jiddie is an aphrodisiac.

Uncle Larry Kelly and Uncle Martin Ballangarry described plentiful amounts of cobra in the waterways towards Scotts Head. Clement Hodgkinson also witnessed a group of Gumbaynggirr people harvesting cobra, as recounted in his 1840s journal.

Aunty Rose recalled collecting lilly pilly, prickly saltwort (known locally as roly poly), wild strawberries, guavas and mistletoe (known as snotty gobbles). She also described cooking up bush lemons and the leaves of dye berries and sarsaparilla (once prolific at Warrell Creek) to purify the whole body. The dye berries, which are from a range of plants, are traditionally used to dye lomandra for weaving baskets.

Other native foods once harvested and now rare include black wattle (which could be split to get witchetty grubs from the roots), wild orange, bush yam (known as little carrot top), bush lemons and bush tomatoes. Stories from living memory frequently refer to the declining abundance of fisheries (such as pipis, blue swimmer crabs and oysters) and edible or medicinal plants (such as the pink fruits of pig face).



**Photo 7    Pigface. Elinor Sheargold/DCCEEW**

Several stories feature shared experiences of grief and loss. For example, cultural practices, such as fishing, which were done in the past, are not possible in the same way today. Harvesting and eating native foods is not only about the health benefits but also about family structures and obligations, transferring knowledge between the older and younger generations, and reviving culture.

### **Grief and loss**

In the words of Rhonda Donovan, 'It's really hard to teach our kids if the vegetation isn't there. A lot of bush medicine that we need to help address mental health isn't there. I hope we can get this into the plan before I leave this world' (Donovan 2017).

Fishing is considered integral to Aboriginal people's relationship with Country and how cultural values are maintained within the family. When local Gumbaynggirr people cannot get a feed for the whole family, there is a sense that family and tribal obligations are not being fulfilled.

Aunty Rhonda describes how 'We used to do the pipi dance, but we can't do that anymore. People came with tractors and took the sand and our food source away' (Donovan 2017).

The Nambucca River has changed and is becoming too shallow to row to Gaagal Wanggaan. Aunty Jessie Williams said, 'The river is closing in now. I've been so disappointed seeing the sand build up. I now get very sad looking out at it' (Williams 2017).

Elders have raised concerns about losing native foods and medicines from the region. Pigface was often mentioned as being prolific on the sand dunes, especially on the ocean side of the Gaagal Wanggaan peninsula. Pigface is both bush medicine and a delicious bush tucker. As Aunty Pauline Hooler said, 'As children we ate barridamam, (pigface), enough to get sick on. They also had medicinal properties and were used to moisturise and protect the skin after being exposed to salt air' (Hooler 2017).

Songlines, Dreaming and stories connect Gumbaynggirr people, knowledge and places. These stories illustrate that the land, waterways, ocean, and heavens are all part of a cultural landscape (the Gumbaynggirr Nation). They also illustrate why Gumbaynggirr people must share in the decision-making and cultural management of Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park.

### 3. Values and threats

Gaagal Wanggaan has an amazing diversity of habitats, plants and animals. Conserving diverse habitats is critical for supporting continued cultural practice and maintaining biodiversity at Gaagal Wanggaan.

Gaagal Wanggaan and the Bald Hill block are part of a cultural landscape and feature numerous culturally significant places. These special places relate to creation, sacred cultural business and family history.

Gaagal Wanggaan is also a beautiful place to visit, to relax and enjoy outdoor recreation. Enabling access to the park and providing visitor facilities is discussed in section 5.3 of this plan.

#### 3.1 Values

##### 3.1.1 The peninsula

The peninsula part of the park protects intact remnant vegetation and habitat for native plants and animals, which includes:

- populations of 93 recorded native animals (59 birds, 22 mammals, 8 reptiles and 4 frogs)
- populations of 15 recorded threatened animal species, such as the loggerhead turtle, pied oystercatcher, glossy black-cockatoo and black grass-dart butterfly
- over 200 recorded plant species, including the endangered Floyd's grass and native guava
- 9 plant communities listed as threatened under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (5 listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

See appendices D and E for lists of threatened species and threatened ecological communities recorded in the national park.

The collection of bush tucker, medicines and materials are long-held cultural practices that are integral to Aboriginal people's relationship with Gaagal Wanggaan. Native plants and animals have many traditional uses – as food, medicine, materials for shelter, tools, for ceremony and ritual. The benefits of cultural harvest include the transfer of knowledge and performing traditional totemic rights. Gumbaynggirr people have rights to harvest bush tucker, medicines and materials from the national park.

Threatened shorebirds are known to breed at the northern tip of the peninsula (the little tern, pied oystercatcher, beach stone-curlew, sooty oystercatcher, hooded plover and red-capped plover). Actions to mitigate key threats to threatened shorebirds are a high priority for park management (see section 5.2).

##### 3.1.2 Bald Hill

The value of the Bald Hill property for conservation was assessed in 2014 (Owner 2014). The assessment concluded that Bald Hill block protects:

- an important corridor of remnant native vegetation between Gumma, Gaagal Wanggaan and Yarriabini



- habitat for threatened animals (black grass-dart butterfly and glossy black-cockatoo), migratory birds (rufous fantail and cattle egret) and threatened plants (slender marsdenia, Floyd's grass and rusty plum)
- small patches of 3 plant communities listed as threatened under the Biodiversity Conservation Act:
  - Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion
  - Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion
  - Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion.

### 3.1.3 Warrell Creek

Warrell Creek is highly prized by Gumbaynggirr people for plentiful bush tucker and miirlarl (special places of abundance). Gumbaynggirr people harvest materials, bush tucker and bush medicines from Warrell Creek (particularly blue swimmer crabs, oysters and cobra). Cobra (a native saltwater shipworm) was once abundant in submerged vegetation along Warrell Creek. Riverbank habitats also support threatened ecological communities and numerous native species of cultural importance to Gumbaynggirr people. Gumbaynggirr people also have cultural obligations to access and tend to miirlarl.

The bed of Warrell Creek is part of the national park and supports habitat for many fisheries. The Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) is responsible for the regulation of commercial and recreational fishing in Warrell Creek.



Photo 8 Nesting little tern. John Turbill/DCCEEW

### 3.1.4 Culturally important species

The park protects small but important areas of remnant vegetation of the north coast in a densely populated region where the landscape has been significantly modified by residential development, forestry and agricultural industries. Conserving culturally significant species is of the utmost importance for continued cultural practices and exercise of native title rights and interests. Some of the highly regarded species are listed below. However, the list is not definitive.

#### Plants

- Lomandra
- Native guava
- Sarsaparilla
- Mistletoe (snotty gobble)
- Bush lemon
- Dye berry
- Wild strawberry
- Black wattle
- Foam bark
- Geebung
- Bush tomato
- Pig face
- Wild orange bush yam
- Sandpaper fig
- Pepperberry/jackwood
- Prickly saltwort (roly poly)
- *Acronychia littoralis*

#### Animals

##### Birds

- Osprey
- Pelican
- Black-cockatoo
- Kookaburra
- Willy wagtail
- Sea eagle
- Little tern
- Beach stone-curlew
- Hawk

##### Mammals

- Humpback whale
- Dog
- Echidna

- Bull rat (white-tailed water rat)

#### *Insects and larvae*

- Witchetty grub
- Bee

#### *Fish<sup>+</sup>*

- Sea worm
- Pipi
- Cobra/jiddie
- Brim
- Whitehead
- Bull shark
- Stingray
- Flathead
- Garfish
- Trevally
- Blue jellyfish
- Blue swimmer crab
- Blackfish
- Mullet
- Oyster

#### *Reptiles*

- Goanna
- Carpet snake

<sup>+</sup> Refers to a variety of marine, estuarine and freshwater organisms

## **3.2 Threats**

Numerous factors pose threats to the values of Gaagal Wanggaan. Some threats arise from policies and decisions over which the board of management and NPWS have limited direct control or influence. In these instances, the board of management will seek to work in partnership with community, industry, agencies and local government to address key threats to park values.

### **3.2.1 Climate change**

Over the long term, climate change poses the highest risk to the park and its values. Sea level rise and increased temperature, rainfall and storm events will have significant consequences for the park, including beach erosion, estuarine inundation, salinisation of the water table, and changes in the composition and function of marine, terrestrial and estuarine ecological communities.

The board of management and NPWS need a high degree of flexibility to respond to future events and uncertainty. The board of management may develop a climate change adaptation strategy to guide action in response to future events and climate change impacts.

To future-proof Gaagal Wanggaan against climate change impacts and rising sea levels, high conservation value lands adjacent to or near Gaagal Wanggaan may be acquired as part of the board of management's land acquisition strategy.

### **3.2.2 Lack of fire management**

There has been little active fire management within the park since 2010. Some plant communities need fire to regenerate. High-intensity bushfires may impact sensitive vegetation, cultural heritage values and infrastructure in the park and nearby. There is also an increased likelihood of inappropriate fire as a result of climate change.

Bushfire planning will establish an appropriate fire regime that protects life and property while prioritising protection of natural and cultural assets, promoting diversity in fire dependent species and protecting other values that are sensitive to fire. Bushfire planning will incorporate Gumbaynggirr traditional ecological knowledge, cultural knowledge and practices to ensure ecologically and culturally sound fire management in the landscape. As an ongoing priority, NPWS will participate in the relevant bush fire management committee and maintain cooperative arrangements with the Rural Fire Service, its brigades and other relevant agencies.

### **3.2.3 Weeds and pathogens**

High-priority weeds for management at Gaagal Wanggaan include bitou bush, lantana and groundsel bush. These weed species impact habitat values, plant communities, including threatened ecological communities, and the availability of culturally valuable resources. Managing weeds in the park is core business.

Weed management is guided by the reserve weed management strategy and the annual pest operations plan, and is delivered through the Gaagal Wanggaan Bush Regeneration program.

Myrtle rust occurs in the southern part of Gaagal Wanggaan and affects native guava, a culturally significant and critically endangered species. Myrtle rust may spread to endangered ecological communities (for example, coastal rainforest and paperbark communities) and impact the availability of bush tucker, medicines and materials.

The risk of introducing and spreading pathogens (for example, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, myrtle rust and chytrid fungus) will be reduced by applying hygiene procedures in operations. Management of weeds and pathogens in the park will be informed by current and emerging best practice and strategies as recommended by NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Biosecurity and other peak agencies.

### **3.2.4 Domestic dogs, foxes and feral animals**

The highest priority for feral animal management at Gaagal Wanggaan is the red fox. Fox predation seriously threatens beach-nesting birds, particularly the endangered little tern and critically endangered beach stone-curlew. Managing feral animals in the park is core business, guided by the annual pest operations plan.

Under the NPWS *Pets in parks policy*, dog walking is not permitted in national parks (see Table 2).

Adjacent to the national park, the beach intertidal zone (below the mean high-water mark) is currently a Crown reserve managed by Nambucca Valley Council. The Nambucca Valley Council permits dog walking in much of the intertidal zone and in other designated areas (such as the dogs-off-leads area near Scotts Head).

Dog predation is a key threat to shorebird breeding success at the northern end of the peninsula. For this reason, Nambucca Valley Council has established an exclusion zone (see Figure 2). The exclusion zone prohibits dog walking at the northern most end of the intertidal zone (Crown reserve) adjacent to the national park.

Fox baiting occurs in the park north of Boultons Crossing. If domestic dogs roam along the beach and into the park north of Boultons Crossing, there is high risk of domestic dogs ingesting fox baits. Continued community education, signage and restricted access will minimise the risk of pet dogs ingesting fox baits. These measures will also limit opportunity for domestic dogs to prey on threatened species. Exclusion fencing, enforcement and signage may also be used to discourage dog walking at or near threatened species nesting sites.

### **3.2.5 Erosion**

At Gaagal Wanggaan, erosion is primarily caused by storm events and floods. Erosion changes sedimentation loads and hydrology, leading to a decline in the condition of habitat and plant communities that may support culturally valuable resources. For example, sedimentation of seagrass beds alters fish habitat, and dune disturbance reduces pigface cover. Erosion may also threaten special cultural places in the park. Dune erosion is also caused by unauthorised vehicle access from the beach into the park. The board of management and NPWS may use erosion control structures and restrict vehicle access as needed.

The wake of speeding boats and jet skis in Warrell Creek directly contributes to riverbank erosion. Transport for NSW regulates boating and has established boat speed limits for Warrell Creek.

The board of management is committed to working in partnership with Transport for NSW and Nambucca Valley Council to minimise the risk of riverbank erosion on Warrell Creek. This may include community education, signage, or a joint communication and compliance campaign targeting boat speeds in the creek.

### **3.2.6 Inappropriate visitor behaviour**

Visitors may impact special places of cultural and environmental value. Visitors at the wrong place at the wrong time can pose a significant threat to nesting shorebirds.

Dog walking or allowing dogs to roam and 4-wheel driving on the beach and dunes can be detrimental to the environment, bush tucker supplies and the breeding success of shorebirds and other threatened species.

Wave action from boating and jet skiing on Warrell Creek contributes to riverbank erosion.

There is also a risk that deliberate anti-social behaviour may cause harm to special places of cultural or environmental value. Although managing compliance in the park is core business, educating visitors and nurturing respect are priorities. Community education may be delivered to raise awareness of park values and the policies and regulations in place to protect them.

### **3.2.7 Boat noise and inappropriate boat docking**

Noise from speeding boats and jet skis in Warrell Creek compromises the peace and quiet of the park, and inappropriate boat docking on the riverbanks in the park may cause harm to special places of cultural and ecological value. Transport for NSW regulates boating in Warrell Creek.



The board of management is committed to working with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries), Transport for NSW and Nambucca Valley Council to reduce noise along Warrell Creek and ensure access to the park from Warrell Creek is appropriate, avoiding culturally and ecologically sensitive areas. This may include community education on appropriate boat docking and park access to minimise adverse impacts of increased recreational boating in Warrell Creek.

### **3.2.8 Four-wheel driving in unauthorised areas**

Adjacent to the national park, the beach intertidal zone (below the mean high-water mark) is currently a Crown reserve managed by Nambucca Valley Council. Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey Shire and Nambucca Valley councils issue permits for vehicle access to the Crown reserve.

Four-wheel driving at the northern tip of the peninsula directly and adversely impacts the nesting habitat and breeding success of threatened shorebirds. For this reason, Nambucca Valley Council has established an exclusion zone at the northern end of the peninsula (see Figure 2). The exclusion zone prohibits 4-wheel-driving in the intertidal zone (Crown reserve) adjacent to the national park.

Four-wheel driving in the dunes also degrades vegetation, impacts the availability of bush tucker and impairs Gumbaynggirr people's ability to participate in cultural harvest.

The board of management is committed to working in partnership with Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries), Transport for NSW, Crown Lands and Nambucca Valley Council to:

- promote appropriate and sustainable 4-wheel drive access to and from the park
- raise community awareness of park values and regulations
- establish signage to discourage unauthorised 4-wheel driving in the park, at or near threatened species nesting sites
- enforce beach driving rules.

### **3.2.9 Commercial and recreational fishing**

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) issues licences for commercial and recreational fishing, and sets bag limits for fish, crabs and shellfish. Unless carefully managed, commercial and recreational fishing can impact the availability of bush tucker and Gumbaynggirr people's ability to participate in cultural fishing, crabbing and harvesting. Elders have expressed concern that use of nets in Warrell Creek degrades the riverbed.

The board of management is committed to working with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) and Nambucca Valley Council to protect and conserve fisheries, bush tucker and threatened species, and minimise any adverse impacts of commercial and recreational fishing on culturally valuable species.

## 4. Our vision for a living culture

Gaagal Wanggaan is a place where Gumbaynggirr lore and culture are lived, passed on and shared with the broader community.

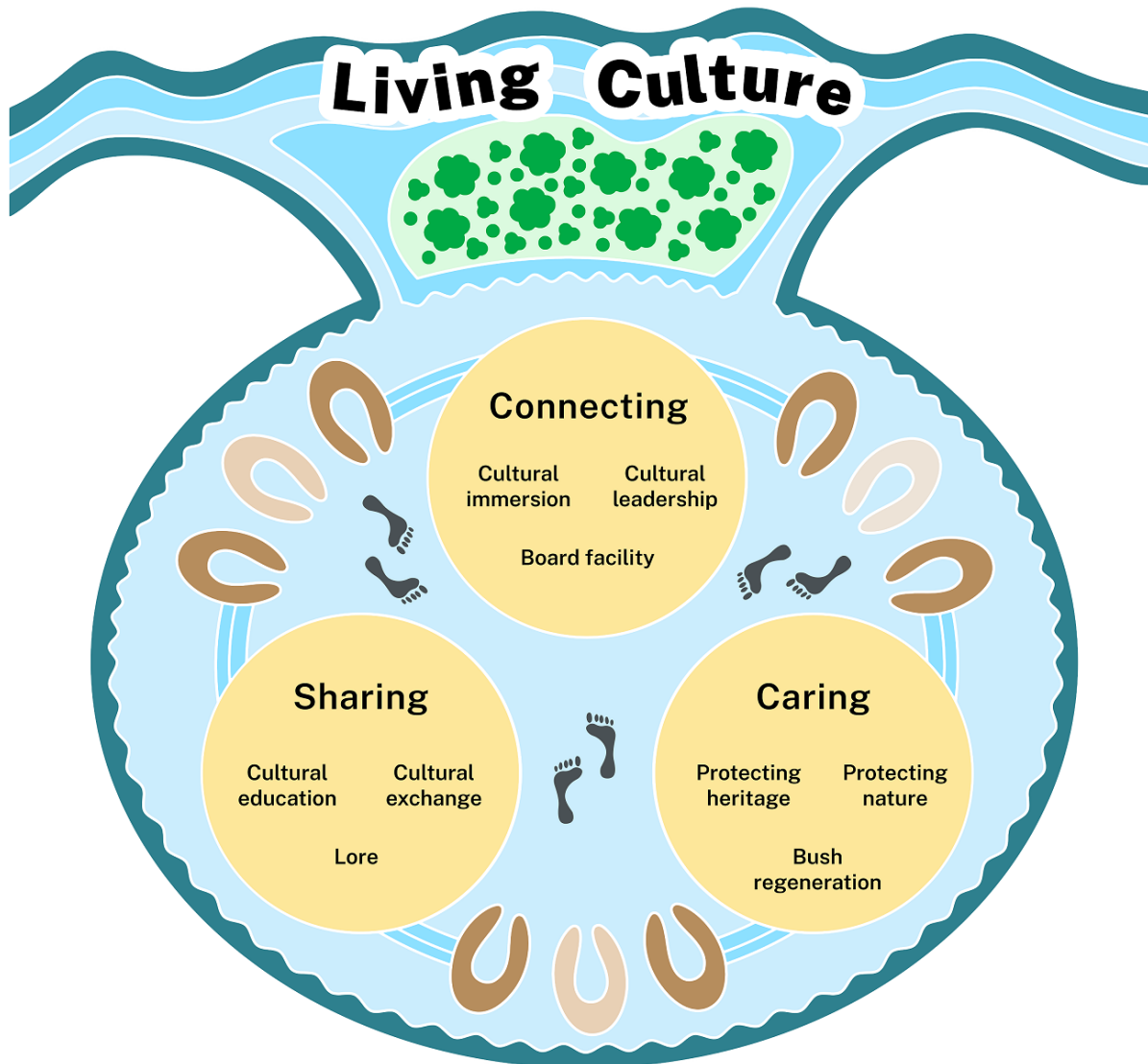


Figure 3 Our vision and pathways by Kelly Coleman/PeeKdesigns



## 5. Our pathways to achieve the vision

The board of management has identified 3 pathways to achieve this vision and to give life to the aspirations of the Gumbaynggirr people. The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires each plan of management to include the objectives of the plan of management. The objectives of this plan of management are the pathways to achieve the vision:

- connecting Gumbaynggirr people to Country and culture
- caring for Gumbaynggirr Country and culture
- sharing Gumbaynggirr lore and culture on Country.

These interdependent pathways are depicted in Figure 3.

Achieving this plan's vision will require the board to leverage investment for infrastructure and operational management and to develop infrastructure over the next 10 years. It will also require the board to work in partnership with the community and a range of policymakers, government and industry bodies and stakeholders to mitigate critical threats and to realise the aspirations of the Gumbaynggirr people.

Priority will be given to partnerships that:

- immerse Gumbaynggirr people in culture on Country (cultural immersion)
- develop tomorrow's Gumbaynggirr leaders (cultural leadership)
- use Gumbaynggirr knowledge and cultural practices to care for Country (cultural land management)
- share culture between Aboriginal nations (cultural exchange)
- share Gumbaynggirr lore and culture with visitors (cultural education).



**Photo 9** Warrell Creek. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

## **5.1 Connecting Gumbaynggirr people to Country and culture**

By returning to Country and learning from Elders, Gumbaynggirr people are following in the ancestors' footsteps. This plan seeks to provide opportunities for Gumbaynggirr people to:

- share cultural knowledge and lore
- fulfil cultural obligations and responsibilities
- care for Country and cultural heritage
- benefit from employment in park management, business partnerships, tourism and related activities.

### **5.1.1 Cultural immersion**

A Gumbaynggirr cultural campground will be established for Gumbaynggirr people at Ti Tree or another suitable site. Camping with Elders and family on Country is a time for meaningful connection and an important way to share traditional stories and stories from living memory. Experiencing the journey to Gaagal Wanggaan, gathering pipis, oysters, crabs, fish and pig face, and listening to everyone's stories, is a way of preserving memories. These experiences are a way of teaching and learning cultural practices and language.

Immersive activities like culture camps, education camps, river tours, and 'kids on Country' events are shared experiences that give a strong sense of connection to Country, culture, and identity. Activities like these are an essential part of cultural learning. This plan supports use of the park for immersive cultural activities like these.

To provide authentic Gumbaynggirr cultural tourism experiences, cultural tours at Gaagal Wanggaan must continue to be provided by Gumbaynggirr people. There is potential cultural harm and possible loss of economic opportunity for Gumbaynggirr enterprises when cultural heritage interpretation is delivered inappropriately. As a bush university, Gaagal Wanggaan is a place to learn culture and build confidence and credentials. Developing Gumbaynggirr cultural tourism and promoting Gumbaynggirr commercial tours at the park are high priorities for park management.

### **5.1.2 Cultural leadership**

Gumbaynggirr community is best placed to protect and interpret Gumbaynggirr cultural heritage. To connect Gumbaynggirr people to Country and for cultural safety, it is important that roles dedicated to looking after the park continue to be filled by Gumbaynggirr people.

To prepare future generations of Gumbaynggirr people for leadership roles in the community, opportunities for leadership skills development will be provided by the board of management and may be hosted at the park.

Cultural leadership activities may include board succession planning, mentoring, traineeships for field roles (such as Young Rangers), or opportunities for youth to shadow Gumbaynggirr leaders at work.

To support Gumbaynggirr people and businesses to care for Country, it will be essential to establish partnerships between the board of management, LALC boards, Wanggaan (Southern) Gumbaynggirr Nation Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate, NPWS, Aboriginal organisations and state agencies. The objective of partnerships will be to enhance the leadership skills, cultural tourism and cultural land management experience of Gumbaynggirr people at the park.

Practical experience in cultural land management; contemporary conservation; bush regeneration, revegetation and restoration; and weed and feral animal control at the park will help Gumbaynggirr people gain employment with NPWS or other businesses contracted to deliver these services at Gaagal Wanggaan. This experience can then be used in related businesses across Gumbaynggirr Country.

### **5.1.3 Community development**

Community development programs seek to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage by ways and means determined by community. The board of management is working with Gumbaynggirr community to build a community development program that directly aligns with the vision, pathways and proposed park management actions described in this plan.

The national park is of pivotal importance to the program's delivery, and this plan supports park use for community development program activities now and in the future. This includes establishing a board facility near the park (or on land acquired for this purpose).

### **5.1.4 Establishing a board facility**

The purpose of establishing a board facility is so the board can attend to its functions, in particular the care, control and management of the national park and the community development program. A board facility will support park management operations, community and tourist access to the park. The board facility may include:

- a meeting place with office space
- a depot for plant and equipment
- a seed bank and nursery to support bush regeneration, revegetation and restoration in the park
- information to educate visitors about Gumbaynggirr lore, culture and cultural land management at the park
- visitor accommodation (such as glamping, camping platforms or other hard-roofed accommodation)
- a Gumbaynggirr gallery and related retail.

These facilities are needed to help visitors connect, care and share on Country. A board facility may also provide a hub for commercial tour operators guiding visitors in the park. As no site at the park is suitable for the proposed facility, the board of management may consider acquiring land in the Nambucca Valley for this purpose. If land is acquired for a board facility (or any of its components listed above), master planning will be done in consultation with Aboriginal owners and will seek to complement Gumbaynggirr keeping places in the Nambucca Valley.

Alternatively, the board of management may pursue commercial partnership to establish a board facility elsewhere within Gumbaynggirr Country.

A board facility (or any of its components) may be developed and operated under a lease with conditions (see Table 2). To enable future lease of land to develop or operate visitor facilities, an amendment to this plan of management will be required to identify the general location of any new building or structure developed.

### **5.1.5 Land acquisition**

The board of management has developed a land acquisition strategy. The strategy will guide the board of management's land purchases to:

- protect and conserve Gumbaynggirr cultural values, places and heritage in the cultural landscape
- improve connectivity of remnant vegetation and habitats in the landscape
- increase lands under the care, control and management of Gumbaynggirr people
- future-proof Gaagal Wanggaan against climate change and rising sea levels.

The plan of management and NPWS policies will apply to any additions to the park. Additional lands will be:

- reserved as part of Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park
- vested in Nambucca Heads and Unkya local Aboriginal land councils
- cared for, controlled and managed by the board of management
- subject to the lease agreement.

Priority actions for any future additions to the park include:

- improving knowledge of cultural sites and values and managing those lands for the protection and conservation of all values
- undertaking fire planning and establishing the fire access and fire trail network
- reviewing vehicle access, including permits and regulations, and securing legal vehicle access to the park for operational management and public access
- reviewing visitor activities, access, permits and regulations
- establishing facilities to support operational management and appropriate public access and use.

### **5.1.6 Park access**

Existing vehicle access to the park is via public road, park road, the Back Track management trail and by boat from Warrell Creek.

Road access to the peninsula is via South Pacific Drive from Scotts Head. The Warrell Creek day-use area is accessed via the Back Track management trail. A locked gate currently restricts public vehicle access to the Back Track management trail beyond the Warrell Creek day-use area. This gate may be relocated to allow for park operations and visitor access to facilities. The Back Track management trail may be extended to the north if required to support park operations, cultural activities, exercise of native title rights and interests, or to provide and manage visitor facilities.

Trails in the park are maintained to 4-wheel drive dry weather standard only. Public vehicle access to management trails is subject to consent and controlled by locked gates and signage. Any gates in the park may be relocated to allow for visitor access and park operations. Keys may be provided to Aboriginal owners and native title holders, subject to agreement between Wanggaan (Southern) Gumbaynggirr Nation Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate and the board of management. All other public vehicle access along management trails requires consent. Consent may be provided when use of management trails is directly related to achieving the vision, pathways, priority actions and permitted operations described in this plan.

There are currently 2 camping areas accessible by boat from Warrell Creek (First Bay and Second Bay).



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The reserve access strategy identifies public and management access routes to the park and identifies priorities for improving access. Improvements may include:

- establishing appropriate, safe and practical access to the park from Warrell Creek
- establishing appropriate, legal and practical means of vehicle access to future additions to the park (or associated Part 11 lands).

The Board of Management and NPWS will be guided by the reserve access strategy when improving vehicle access to the park and future additions.

Parts of the park may be closed to public access where there is a risk to public safety (for example, during extreme weather events or high-risk park management operations). Some sections may remain closed to public access to protect cultural and natural values. Access to newly acquired lands may be 'closed' to the public or managed via a consent.

Nambucca Valley Council shares a common beach driving permit system with Port Macquarie-Hastings and Kempsey Shire councils. This regulates vehicle access on designated beaches. One of those designated beaches is Forster Beach along the eastern shore of the park (except for the exclusion zone shown in Figure 2). Vehicle access to the intertidal zone is via the park.



**Photo 10** Warrell Creek from the Ti Tree site at Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

## 5.2 Caring for Gumbaynggirr Country and culture

Gumbaynggirr people want to keep Gaagal Wanggaan naturally abundant for future generations.

In Gumbaynggirr custom, there is no distinction between nature, culture and heritage. Gumbaynggirr cultural heritage and individual cultural values in the park are looked after by caring for all of Gaagal Wanggaan and all of nature. This pathway is about:

- recognising the cultural significance and the cultural values of the park
- looking after Gumbaynggirr Country, lore and cultural heritage at Gaagal Wanggaan for future generations
- caring for diverse habitats that provide cultural resources and support cultural practices
- caring for diverse habitats that support native species, threatened species and threatened ecological communities
- maintaining the tranquil, natural and undeveloped environment.

In keeping with Gumbaynggirr tradition and cultural purpose of place, Gaagal Wanggaan is a bush university, supermarket, pharmacy and place of wellbeing and healing. A combination of cultural land management, contemporary conservation, bush regeneration and cultural practices will be used to care for Country.

### 5.2.1 Cultural fishing

Fishing is a fundamental part of caring for Country and kin. Fisheries also appear in numerous Gumbaynggirr creation stories. Cultural fishing practices are extremely important to Gumbaynggirr family groups. Generations of Gumbaynggirr families have enjoyed the abundance of good bush tucker from the beach and Warrell Creek. Collecting pipis, oysters and crabs, and fishing for mullet, whiting, bream and trevally are long-held cultural practices.

The lease agreement recognises Gumbaynggirr people's rights to enter and use the Part 4A lands for fishing and harvesting of bush tucker. In relation to the Gaagal Wanggaan peninsula, the native title consent determination agreement and orders (NCD2014/001) recognise Gumbaynggirr people's rights to harvest bush tucker and fish in the consent determination area. Protecting and preserving fisheries is critical for ongoing cultural harvest.

### 5.2.2 Cultural places and objects

Gaagal Wanggaan features numerous culturally significant places for which Gumbaynggirr people have cultural responsibilities and obligations. Some cultural objects at Gaagal Wanggaan are recorded in the NSW Government Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS). To protect these objects, Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment and Aboriginal community consultation must precede any activities involving ground disturbance.

Proper management of special cultural places is of the utmost importance. Elders and cultural knowledge-holders play a crucial role in guiding management. The Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Cultural Values and Community Aspirations Project is a practical example of how the board of management is committed to working with Gumbaynggirr Elders and community to ensure the park's cultural values are acknowledged, respected and protected in the right ways. The project brought Gumbaynggirr people together in Macksville, Nambucca and Bowraville to share stories of Gaagal Wanggaan, the Nambucca Valley and Gumbaynggirr Country. During these exchanges, land-use practices were explored and cultural values in the landscape were mapped. To gain a deeper understanding of Gumbaynggirr cultural values and the project, readers are welcome to contact the NPWS office (see 'Contact us' at the front of the plan).

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The board of management is dedicated to continual consultation with the Gumbaynggirr community to ensure appropriate management of cultural values in the park. Secret or sacred places will have a high level of protection. As a very important management priority, harm to special places can be prevented or avoided by:

- restricting access
- reducing the likelihood of inappropriate access (for example, locating infrastructure to avoid places such as mirrlarl)
- creating a visual barrier (for example, screening through revegetation)
- restricting access to knowledge (for example, how places are recorded in AHIMS)
- prohibiting activities that have negative impacts on many special places
- prohibiting activities in particular areas to protect individual places
- authorising select commercial tour operators to provide cultural interpretation in the park and establishing appropriate licence conditions.

Raising awareness and understanding of culturally significant places may also contribute to their protection and conservation (where it is safe and appropriate to do so). Everybody is welcome to learn about the cultural values at Gaagal Wanggaan by participating in cultural land-management activities, cultural tourism and education events. Sharing lore and culture on Country will showcase Gumbaynggirr cultural land management and help build respect for Gumbaynggirr lore, Country and the special places at Gaagal Wanggaan.



**Photo 11 Humpback whale. Jonas Liebschner/DCCEEW**



### **5.2.3 Cultural land management**

Learning from experience, each generation of Aboriginal people hands down knowledge and understanding of Country through stories. Central to cultural land management at Gaagal Wanggaan are the cultural traditions that have supported responsible land stewardship over millennia.

Cultural land management includes practices that sustain supplies of bush tucker, medicines and materials, and foster a deep respect for lore, Country, culture and heritage. These practices are not relics but reflect continuously evolving culture and adaptation to change. Traditional and contemporary cultural land management practices include ceremony and ritual, cultural burning and harvesting of culturally valuable species (for example, pipis, oysters, crabs, fish and pig face).

Gumbaynggirr people view the land, waters and sky as one entity (an integrated cultural landscape). A holistic management approach recognises the connections between the health of Country and the cultural landscape, the health of culture and people. This plan of management recognises the connections between lore, kinship, Country and culture in the vision and pathways of this plan.

Traditional ecological knowledge is Aboriginal people's understanding of the environment based on generations of experience. Gumbaynggirr people have an intimate and extensive knowledge of the different seasons, the wind, river and ocean tides, the moon, astronomy and how these natural phenomena affect the migration of animals, the availability and quality of bush tucker, medicines and materials.

This plan of management recognises that traditional lore, ecological knowledge and cultural practices must be used to care for Country and sustain culturally valuable resources in the park. Use of contemporary conservation and land-management practices may address land degradation and environmental issues arising from recent land use and resource management.

### **5.2.4 Bush regeneration, revegetation, restoration and conservation programs**

A Gaagal Wanggaan Bush Regeneration program proposes to use Gumbaynggirr cultural knowledge and practices to look after all of nature. This includes practices that conserve or reintroduce culturally important species (see 3.1.4 Culturally important species).

Occasionally, Gaagal Wanggaan becomes the last resting place for whales and other marine mammals. The board of management will work with Elders and the Gumbaynggirr community to:

- develop clear protocols for marine animal burials at the park
- identify designated locations for future burials.

The current availability of bush tucker, medicines and materials at Gaagal Wanggaan does not necessarily reflect what was available 150 years ago. It is important to understand which culturally valuable resources were previously available at Gaagal Wanggaan, the drivers of habitat and species loss, and which species can be brought back. Partnerships between the board of management, NPWS and other agencies will address these knowledge gaps.

Under the Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Biodiversity Conservation Program establishes priorities and strategies to conserve threatened species and threatened ecological communities in New South Wales.

The NPWS Zero Extinctions Threatened Species Framework is the primary framework for threatened species conservation in the park. The board of management's priorities for conservation activities align with the aims of these programs, and include:



- conserving threatened species, threatened ecological communities, and habitats for culturally valued species
- maintaining the extent and condition of threatened ecological communities and remnant native vegetation
- maintaining populations of native and threatened species
- improving the condition of in-stream habitat, the creek bed and banks, and the water quality of Warrell Creek.

NPWS will deliver recovery actions and threat mitigation activities for threatened species and communities across the nature reserve through the Biodiversity Conservation Program and associated Saving Our Species program.

An example of a practical partnership is the NSW Saving Our Species program, which targets plants and animals at Gaagal Wanggaan for special protection and recovery measures (EES 2021). The national park is critical for conserving lowland rainforest and several threatened species (listed in Appendix F). These include:

- beach-nesting bird species (little tern, pied oystercatcher, beach stone-curlew, sooty oystercatcher, hooded plover and red-capped plover)
- Floyd's grass (*Alexfloydia repens*), the sole food source for larvae of the black grass-dart butterfly (*Ocybadistes knightorum*). Both species are endangered.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act also provides for the declaration of lands in the national park estate as an environmental or cultural asset of intergenerational significance (AIS). An AIS is an area that has exceptional environmental or cultural values that warrant special protection.

The declaration of environmental AIS is part of the NPWS Zero Extinctions Threatened Species Framework (DPIE 2021) that aims to secure and restore those threatened species and ecological communities in the national park estate that are at most risk of being lost to the reserve network.

NPWS is legally obliged to prepare and implement a conservation action plan for declared AIS. Conservation action plans outline the conservation activities required to control, abate or mitigate the key risks to an AIS and to maintain, restore and remediate the values of the land.

At the time of writing this plan, no land in the national park was declared as an AIS, however, AIS declarations may occur during the life of this plan.

## 5.3 Sharing Gumbaynggirr lore and culture on Country

Sharing Gumbaynggirr lore, cultural knowledge, and cultural experiences at Gaagal Wanggaan is a very important management priority. There are great opportunities to improve awareness, understanding, appreciation and respect for Gumbaynggirr lore and cultural values at the park.

As Gumbaynggirr education, lore and culture are a way of life, visitors are invited to experience Aboriginal songlines, Gumbaynggirr language, customs, and lore at Gaagal Wanggaan. As Gumbaynggirr Elders play a vital role in passing on lore and cultural knowledge, ongoing consultation with Elders is especially important when making decisions about sharing lore and cultural knowledge on Country.

The park is close to major residential centres and is a popular destination for seasonal visitors in Scotts Head and Nambucca Heads. Visitation to the park is low (approximately 3,000 visits per year).

Current day-use and camping areas in the park are lacking basic visitor facilities. Population growth and increasing demand for outdoor recreation and cultural experiences are likely to drive increased visitation to the park. To meet increased demand, new or improved visitor facilities are needed.

This pathway is about:

- putting Gumbaynggirr lore and cultural values at the front and centre of the Gaagal Wanggaan visitor experience
- enabling access to the park and providing visitor facilities to support cultural practices, recreation, research, monitoring and education.



Photo 12 Gaagal Wanggaan from Scotts Head. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

### 5.3.1 Visitor activities

By custom, Gaagal Wanggaan is a place of wellbeing and healing – a safe, calm and welcoming place to bring friends and family. Visiting Gaagal Wanggaan is a time to relax and be present. Visitors are welcome to enjoy the beauty of Country and culture. The following visitor activities are compatible with wellbeing, healing and relaxation:

- **Cultural practices and activities.** Cultural practices and activities include (but are not limited to) exercising native title rights, learning about Gumbaynggirr culture and land management, language and storytelling workshops, bushcraft camps and tours, culture camps, healing camps and day events, cultural awareness training, cultural tours and education, teaching about bush tucker and medicines, worming, fishing and harvesting cultural resources.
- **Low-impact outdoor recreation.** Low-impact outdoor recreational activities include (but are not limited to) outdoor fitness, yoga, mountain biking or cycling, swimming, triathlons, fishing and fishing competitions, camping, boating, walking, orienteering, bird watching, running, kayaking and surfing.

- **Research, monitoring and education.** Research, monitoring and education activities include (but are not limited to) ecological and cultural research and monitoring activities, citizen science projects, school and university field trips and community bush regeneration, revegetation and restoration projects.

Activities that may be permitted in the park are listed in Table 2 (permitted operations), however, this is not intended to be a definitive list.

### 5.3.2 Cultural exchange

Cultural exchange is about supporting cultural business between Aboriginal nations and sharing cultures on Country. Cultural exchange is a way for Gumbaynggirr people to share cultural practices, land management successes, traditions and customs, language, stories and ceremony with other Aboriginal nations. Conversely, cultural exchange enables Gumbaynggirr people to learn from other groups. A cultural exchange program will be developed to enable sharing of lore and culture between Aboriginal nations at Gaagal Wanggaan.

### 5.3.3 Cultural education

Focused on visitors to the park, cultural education will aim to:

- teach visitors about Gumbaynggirr cultural values and showcase Gumbaynggirr cultural land management
- encourage visitors to observe Gumbaynggirr lore
- promote culturally appropriate behaviours (for example, visitors to Gaagal Wanggaan may be invited to show care and respect for Country, self and community)
- discourage disrespectful or culturally inappropriate behaviours.

Cultural, educational and interpretive signage will be installed in the park to showcase and celebrate the unique cultural heritage of the Gumbaynggirr people. The park will host cultural events, tours and activities that involve the Gumbaynggirr community (such as day trips and camps with Elders). Renaming places and reintroducing Gumbaynggirr language and traditions connects people deeply to Country, Dreaming and heritage. The Gumbaynggirr cultural experience will be further promoted by naming visitor facilities after Gumbaynggirr hero-ancestors. Examples include Birrugan's Run Walking Trail, Gawngaan's Rest Camping Area or Two Sisters Camping Area.

Technology may also be used to teach visitors about park values and enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of culture and heritage. There are locations in the park that are linked to Gumbaynggirr stories and cultural values. Where appropriate, recordings of these stories and information about cultural values may be shared with park visitors via a storytelling app (mobile phone application) or other technology.

Scotts Head residents are passionate about their town and ask visitors to respect the town, its residents, Gumbaynggirr culture and knowledge, and the natural environment. The Board of Management and NPWS welcome the opportunity to foster a culture of respect for Scotts Head and the national park in partnership with residents of Scotts Head.





Photo 13 Warrell Creek day-use area. Carina Johnson/DCCEEW

### 5.3.4 Visitor facilities

Day-use and camping areas in the park lack basic facilities. There are no toilets in the park, which is inconvenient for visitors and results in waste management issues. The number of vehicles at the Warrell Creek day-use area often exceeds capacity, causing overcrowding and making vehicle movement difficult. Both First Bay and Second Bay camping areas, and the Warrell Creek day-use area, are threatened by riverbank erosion and may need to be reconfigured or relocated.

New visitor facilities at Gaagal Wanggaan need to be:

- low key (simple, appropriate, efficient and small scale)
- designed to improve access (particularly for Elders and people with disability)
- designed for low maintenance (for example, facilities that are temporary, mobile or easily serviced by boat or 4-wheel drive)
- safe (for people's physical safety, environmental protection and cultural safety)
- sustainable (culturally, ecologically, socially and financially).

Improvements to visitor facilities and access will be identified in master plans prepared in consultation with Aboriginal owners. Figure 2 provides indicative locations of proposed visitor facilities; however, a range of possible locations will be assessed to confirm which sites are most suitable. All infrastructure development and works are subject to environmental assessments, approvals and if they will affect native title, will not be carried out unless and until they are validated under the Native Title Act. Recommendations from the NSW Government Soil Conservation Service will inform environmental assessments and master plans. Riverbank erosion control structures and rehabilitation measures may be used where necessary. For flexibility, this plan of management provides for more visitor facilities than may be feasible.



To improve visitor experience and access, this plan provides for:

- reconfiguring or relocating First Bay and Second Bay camping areas and establishing a third boat accessible camping area on Warrell Creek
- formalising the Mangrove Board Walk (north of Kinnears Track)
- extending, reconfiguring or relocating the current Warrell Creek day-use area and providing basic facilities
- establishing day-use areas with basic facilities
- establishing Gumbaynggirr culture-camp areas with basic facilities
- establishing day-use, camping and Gumbaynggirr culture-camp areas with basic facilities on additional lands acquired by the board of management, which may include Bald Hill
- providing hard-roofed accommodation on suitable lands acquired by the board of management for this purpose.

Basic facilities may include car parking, tables, barbecues, shelters, fire pits, toilets, walking tracks, moorings and deck fittings.

It may be necessary to close visitor facilities on a seasonal (or rotational) basis to:

- manage visitor numbers and impacts
- allow for operational management activities, to respond to natural events or manage impacts on cultural places and the environment
- enable the exercise of native title and Aboriginal owner rights.

### **5.3.5 Partnerships**

In addition to new or improved visitor facilities, partnerships will help establish Gaagal Wanggaan as a choice destination for Gumbaynggirr cultural experience and cultural heritage interpretation. The board of management is dedicated to pursuing partnerships with Nambucca Valley Council and tourism agencies to market the Gumbaynggirr cultural experience at Gaagal Wanggaan. The aim of partnerships will be to:

- improve awareness, understanding, appreciation and respect for Gumbaynggirr lore and cultural values at the park
- provide opportunity for visitors to experience Aboriginal songlines, Gumbaynggirr language, customs and lore
- raise awareness of park values and the policies and regulations in place to protect them
- build community advocacy for park management, cultural land management and protection of park values.

Cultural tours and guided activities are a great way for people to experience Gaagal Wanggaan and learn about its cultural significance. A licence is required for commercial operators to bring visitors into all parks in New South Wales. The board of management is required to review and approve licence applications. Licences may include conditions to ensure activities occur in a manner that minimises unintended impacts to natural and cultural values.

Approval to use supporting equipment, such as marquees, amplified sound or drones, will be determined on a case-by-case basis subject to an assessment of potential impacts on park values and other park users. Use of any supporting equipment will be subject to consent conditions.

## 6. Park rules

The implementation of this plan is subject to the objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and other relevant State and Commonwealth legislation. Any activities that may impact Aboriginal cultural heritage and the environment will require environmental impact assessments and approvals. Any activities that may impact the exercise of native title, called 'future acts', can only be undertaken after ensuring the act is valid under the Native Title Act.

Park operations must comply with the lease, any ILUA applicable to this landscape, the National Parks and Wildlife Act and this plan of management.

### 6.1 Environmental impact assessment

The term 'environmental impact assessment' includes assessment of impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Any new infrastructure at Gaagal Wanggaan will be subject to:

- consultation with Aboriginal owners and native title holders
- the board of management's decision-making framework (weighting cultural considerations)
- environmental impact assessment processes according to NPWS policy, which requires assessment of potential impacts for exempt development as well as for 'activities' under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* via a review of environmental factors.

Environmental factors that must be considered in an environmental impact assessment for works in the park include:

- native title rights and interests, and validation of future acts under the Native Title Act, including under any ILUA that may apply to the park in the future
- projected climate change impacts (for example, increased frequency of flooding, bushfires, storm surges and coastal erosion hazards)
- any likely impacts on the park's cultural, natural or social values arising from the proposed development.

### 6.2 Permitted operations

Section 72AB of the National Parks and Wildlife Act requires each plan of management to include the operations that are proposed to be carried out on the land. Table 2 provides a summary of these operations and conditions.

All activities undertaken by NPWS, contractors, licensed businesses, visitors and other organisations within parks are considered to be operations. The Act specifies that operations may not be undertaken in a park with a plan of management unless those operations are in accordance with that plan.

The National Parks and Wildlife Regulation, together with this plan specify the operations that are not permitted in the Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park. This plan also specifies the operations that may be permitted in the park and the conditions that may apply.

NPWS undertakes a broad range of routine park management operations. These include but are not limited to visitor safety works, cultural heritage protection and conservation works,

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education, feral animal control, weed control, asset maintenance and refurbishment, fence construction, fire management and suppression, species translocation and reintroduction, revegetation and asset removal. All routine park management operations necessary to manage the park and achieve the objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act are permitted.

Table 2 below outlines which operations are permitted and the conditions that apply, and operations that are not permitted. Additional conditions may be set at any time if necessary to facilitate the effective management of the park or to help achieve the objects of the Act.

All activities that occur in the park are subject to relevant policies and legislation. Activities not shown in Table 2 may also be regulated by signage within the park or by consent, permit or licence. Information regarding activities that require consent and obtaining consent is available from the relevant NPWS office. Contact details are provided at the front of this plan (see 'Contact us'). Consultation with the board of management is required to obtain consent.

This management plan allows for the exercise of native title rights and interests recognised in the native title determination. Should an ILUA be negotiated in the future, those rights and interests would be exercised in accordance with the ILUA. The permitted operations in Table 2 are applicable unless otherwise stated in the native title determination or any future ILUA.

**Table 2 Summary of permitted operations at Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park**

Operations	Conditions
<b>Cultural practices</b>	
Exercise of native title rights and interests	Native title rights and interests recognised in the native title determination may be exercised in the park, and should an ILUA be negotiated in future, those rights and interests would be exercised in accordance with the ILUA.
Harvest of culturally important plants and animals	Cultural harvest of non-threatened plants and animals for domestic (non-commercial) purposes may be allowed by consent from the board of management. Conditions may apply (subject to native title).
Cultural burning	Cultural burning will be implemented consistent with the NPWS <i>Cultural fire management policy</i> , the NPWS <i>Fire management manual</i> and any other fire management policy in effect.
<b>Visitor activities and facilities</b>	
Public access	<p>The park is generally open to the public, with access focused on the beach and visitor facilities.</p> <p>Parts of the park may be closed to public access where there is a risk to public safety (for example, during extreme weather events or high-risk park-management operations).</p> <p>Bald Hill is currently declared 'closed', with any public access requiring consent.</p> <p>Newly acquired lands and Part 11 lands may be 'closed' to the public. Public access to newly acquired lands and Part 11 lands may require consent.</p> <p>Closures may be removed to parts of the park. Some sections may remain closed to public access to protect cultural and natural values.</p>

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Operations	Conditions
Vehicle access	<p>Public vehicle access to management trails will continue to be subject to consent. The park will remain gated, and gates will remain locked. When consent is granted, vehicle use is generally not permitted off-trail or on designated walking tracks. Trails may be temporarily closed to prevent damage, such as in wet weather, or to support management activities.</p> <p>The legal status of all existing vehicle access routes to the park will be established and, where necessary, the Board of Management and NPWS will seek to secure legal access for public and management purposes. Any new vehicle accesses for management or the public may be approved after appropriate assessments.</p> <p>The Board of Management and NPWS will endeavour to identify and rectify boundary errors, including any adjustments proposed under section 188c of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.</p>
Motorbikes and quad bikes	Motorbikes and quad bikes are not permitted in the park or on management trails unless for management purposes.
Barbecues	The use of portable gas and liquid stoves is allowed.
Wood fires	<p>Wood fires are prohibited during total and park fire bans.</p> <p>Wood fires are allowed in designated fireplaces at camping and day-use areas.</p>
Drones and model aeroplanes	<p>Drones may be used for park management and emergency or law enforcement purposes. The use of drones for activities that support park management objectives (e.g. education) may be authorised through a consent (conditions, exclusion areas and civil aviation regulations apply). Recreational use of drones and model aeroplanes is not permitted.</p> <p>The use of model aeroplanes or drones may be authorised as part of a commercial filming consent.</p>
Horse riding	Not allowed.
Dog walking and visiting with pets	Visitors to national parks in NSW cannot be accompanied by pets. A person may be accompanied by their trained assistance animal provided they meet the requirements of proof and other conditions set out in the NPWS Pets in Parks Policy. This includes keeping the animal under effective control at all times with a leash or harness.
Cycling	<p>Cycling is allowed on park roads and permitted on management trails.</p> <p>Cycling is not allowed on designated walking tracks or off-trail.</p>
Fossicking	Not allowed.
Non-commercial events, functions, and group gatherings	<p>Consent is required for groups of more than 40 people, under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019.</p> <p>Public events such as public ceremonies, club and sporting events may be allowed under a consent.</p>
Walking / hiking	Walking or hiking is allowed on management trails and walking tracks.
Camping	Camping may require booking and may be permitted at designated sites.
Camping areas	<p>The following may be approved after appropriate assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reconfiguring or relocating existing camping areas</li> <li>establishing new camping areas (including Gumbaynggirr culture-camp areas)</li> </ul>



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Operations	Conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishing basic facilities at camping areas (e.g. car parking, tables, barbecues, shelters, fire pits, toilets, walking tracks, moorings and deck fittings).</li> </ul> <p>Gumbaynggirr language will be used in the naming of visitor facilities.</p>
Day-use facilities	<p>The following may be approved after appropriate assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reconfiguring or relocating existing day-use areas</li> <li>formalising the Mangrove Board Walk</li> <li>establishing basic facilities at day-use areas (e.g. car parking, tables, barbecues, shelters, fire pits, toilets, walking tracks, moorings and deck fittings).</li> </ul> <p>Gumbaynggirr language will be used in the naming of visitor facilities.</p>
Visitor accommodation	<p>Visitor accommodation (such as glamping, camping platforms or other hard-roofed accommodation) may be approved after appropriate assessments. Gumbaynggirr language will be used in the naming of visitor facilities.</p>
Commercial activities	
Filming and photography	<p>Commercial filming and photography may be allowed subject to the NPWS <i>Filming and photography policy</i> and with written approval from the board of management.</p>
Commercial tours, events and functions	<p>Commercial tours, events and functions may be allowed under a consent, licence or lease.</p>
Visitor facility development and operation	<p>The development and operation of visitor facilities may be authorised to achieve the vision of this plan and objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, on land acquired for this purpose. Development and operation under a lease with conditions may be considered.</p> <p>This includes developing a board facility or any of the following component facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a meeting place with office space</li> <li>a depot for plant and equipment</li> <li>a seed bank and nursery to support bush regeneration, revegetation and restoration in the park</li> <li>information to educate visitors about Gumbaynggirr lore, culture and cultural land management at the park</li> <li>visitor accommodation (such as glamping, camping platforms or other hard-roofed accommodation)</li> <li>a Gumbaynggirr gallery and related retail.</li> </ul>
Research	
Research	<p>Research of relevance to the management of the park and its values may be allowed with consent, subject to licensing and ethics approvals required under relevant legislation.</p>
Utilities and access	
Easements	<p>There are several easements attached to the park. These easements were gazetted in 1985 for public works (a sewer pipeline, water supply and third-party access to infrastructure). This land is managed as part of the park in keeping with the terms and conditions of the easement.</p>
Third-party infrastructure	<p>Authorisation for new non-park infrastructure will be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>if no off-park locations are feasible</li> </ul>

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Operations	Conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>when criteria for lease, licence or easement under the National Parks and Wildlife Act are met.</li> </ul> <p>New non-park infrastructure may be approved after relevant environmental impact assessments.</p> <p>Where necessary and appropriate, non-NPWS infrastructure in the park will be authorised and managed by leases, licences and easements. These instruments define the terms and conditions of management and may include minimum requirements for protecting park values. Access to non-park infrastructure and maintenance will be managed in accordance with the relevant instrument.</p>
Park infrastructure and assets	
General purpose park management infrastructure	<p>The development and operation of park infrastructure (including management trails) for general management purposes may be approved after appropriate assessments. This may include a depot for plant and equipment, signage or facilities needed to achieve the vision of this plan and objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Gumbaynggirr language will be used in naming of park infrastructure (including management trails).</p>
Fire access and fire trails	<p>Fire access and fire trail infrastructure and assets may be established or modified to enable bushfire preparedness and response activities in accordance with the relevant fire trail plan established under the <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> (for example, a fire access and fire trails plan). Other management trails will be maintained where directly related to achieving the vision, pathways, priority actions and authorised activities described in this plan.</p> <p>Other management trails will be maintained where directly related to achieving the vision, pathways, priority actions and permitted operations described in this plan. Management trails may be extended or reconfigured as required to support park operations, cultural activities or to provide and manage visitor facilities. Any trails not required will be closed and revegetated.</p>
Communications infrastructure	<p>New infrastructure for emergency and operational communications may be established and will be limited to what is essential for the state's public safety radio network.</p>
Earth moving and rehabilitation works	
Marine animals	<p>Burial of marine animals at the park may be approved after appropriate assessments.</p>
Erosion control	<p>Use of erosion control structures and rehabilitation measures may be approved after appropriate assessments.</p>
Warrell Creek habitat restoration	<p>Actions to improve the condition of in-stream habitat, the creek bed and banks, and the water quality of Warrell Creek may be approved after appropriate assessments.</p>

## 7. Priority actions and strategies

Section 72AB of the National Parks and Wildlife Act requires each plan of management to include the objectives of the plan of management. The board of management has identified 3 interdependent pathways to give life to the aspirations of the Gumbaynggirr people and achieve the vision of this plan. These 3 pathways are the objectives of the plan of management.

The priority actions and strategies below will be implemented to achieve the pathways (objectives) of the plan of management. More actions may be needed to respond to future events. Any additional strategies or actions will need to be in keeping with the vision of this plan, the objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, Table 2 (permitted operations), relevant board of management or NPWS policies, and the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019.

### Priority actions and strategies

#### 1. Connecting Gumbaynggirr people to Country and culture

- 1.1 Establish dedicated culture-camp areas for Gumbaynggirr people and guests.
- 1.2 Support use of the park for cultural immersion activities that may include culture camps, education camps, river tours and 'kids on Country' events.
- 1.3 Establish a partnership program to develop Gumbaynggirr cultural tourism and promote Gumbaynggirr commercial tours at the park.
- 1.4 Provide opportunities for leadership skills development and ongoing operational and governance roles for Gumbaynggirr people in the management of the park.
- 1.5 Provide opportunities for Gumbaynggirr people to develop cultural land management skills at the park and support Gumbaynggirr businesses to care for Country.
- 1.6 Establish a board facility when appropriate land is acquired and a master plan is developed in consultation with Aboriginal owners.
- 1.7 Implement the board of management's land acquisition strategy. For new additions to the park, management priorities will be:
  - improving knowledge of cultural sites and values and managing those lands for the protection and conservation of all values
  - fire planning and establishing the fire access and fire trail network
  - reviewing vehicle access, including permits and regulations, and securing legal vehicle access to the park for operational management and public access
  - reviewing visitor activities, access, permits and regulations
  - establishing facilities to support operational management and appropriate public access and use.
- 1.8 Extend the Back Track management trail as required to support park operations, cultural activities or to provide and manage visitor facilities. Provide access to the Back Track management trail for exercise of Aboriginal owner and native title rights.
- 1.9 Ensure any reserve access strategy developed for the park identifies access points needed for management and public access and is updated to reflect additions to the park or as needed.

- 1.10 Establish practical means of vehicle access to the park and associated Part 11 lands, in keeping with the reserve access strategy.

## **2. Caring for Gumbaynggirr Country and culture**

- 2.1 Protect and conserve culturally significant places and cultural heritage objects in the park through:
- Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment
  - continued consultation with Elders and community
  - raising awareness and understanding of culturally significant places (where it is safe and appropriate to do so).
- 2.2 Avoid or prevent harm to special places. This may include:
- restricting access
  - locating infrastructure to avoid inappropriate access
  - creating a visual barrier
  - restricting access to knowledge of the place
  - prohibiting activities at individual site or park scale.
- 2.3 Develop and implement the bush regeneration program using Gumbaynggirr cultural knowledge and practices that:
- reintroduce or increase the abundance of bush tucker and medicine species
  - conserve threatened species, threatened ecological communities and habitats for culturally valued species
  - maintain the extent and condition of threatened ecological communities and remnant native vegetation
  - maintain populations of native and threatened species
  - improve the condition of in-stream habitat, the creek bed and banks, and water quality of Warrell Creek.
- 2.4 Design and implement projects through the Zero Extinctions Threatened Species Framework and NSW Biodiversity Conservation Program that prioritise the conservation of culturally significant species, threatened species, and threatened ecological communities.
- 2.5 Develop clear protocols for marine animal burials at the park and identify designated locations for future burials. Complete all environmental impact assessment and obtain necessary planning approval.
- 2.6 A climate change adaptation strategy may be developed to guide actions that minimise risks to the cultural and ecological values of the park or enable response to future events and climate change impacts.
- 2.7 Implement culturally and ecologically sound fire management through fire management strategies and bushfire risk management plan treatments consistent with strategic management planning and relevant legislation. Review and adapt the relevant strategies in response to changing fire history or knowledge. Participate in the relevant bush fire management committee and maintain cooperative arrangements with the Rural Fire Service, its brigades and other relevant agencies.
- 2.8 Implement culturally and ecologically sound weed management through the Gaagal Wanggaan Bush Regeneration program, guided by the park weed management strategy and the annual pest operations plan.



- 2.9 Implement culturally and ecologically sound feral predator and feral animal management, guided by the annual pest operations plan.
- 2.10 Use erosion control structures and rehabilitation measures where necessary. Restrict vehicle access as needed to prevent erosion.
- 2.11 Pursue partnership with Transport for NSW and Nambucca Valley Council to minimise the risk of riverbank erosion on Warrell Creek. This may include community education, signage or a joint communication and compliance campaign targeting boat speeds in the creek.
- 2.12 Deliver community education to raise awareness of park values and the policies and regulations in place to protect them.
- 2.13 Pursue partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries), Transport for NSW and Nambucca Valley Council to reducing noise along Warrell Creek and ensure access to the park from Warrell Creek is appropriate, avoiding culturally and ecologically sensitive areas.
- This may include community education on appropriate boat docking and park access to minimise adverse impacts of increased recreational boating in Warrell Creek.
- 2.14 Pursue partnership with Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries), Transport for NSW, Crown Lands and Nambucca Valley Council to:
- promote appropriate and sustainable 4-wheel drive access to and from the park
  - raise community awareness of park values and regulations
  - establish signage to discourage unauthorised 4-wheel driving in the park, at or near threatened species nesting sites
  - enforce beach driving rules.
- 2.15 Pursue partnership with Nambucca Valley Council and community to:
- minimise risk of domestic dogs ingesting fox baits
  - minimise risk of domestic dog predation of threatened shorebirds.
- This will include advocating for continuation of existing access restrictions and encouraging Nambucca Valley Council to consider community education, additional signage and review four-wheel drive access and dog walking on the beach outside the national park.
- 2.16 Use exclusion fencing, enforcement and signage to discourage dog walking at or near threatened species nesting sites.
- 2.17 Pursue partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) and Nambucca Valley Council to:
- protect and conserve fisheries, bush tucker and threatened species
  - minimise adverse impacts of commercial and recreational fishing on culturally valuable species.
- This may include seeking review of fishing licences, conditions, bag limits, vehicle access to the creek and beach, community education, compliance campaigns and cultural fishing projects.

### **3. Sharing Gumbaynggirr lore and culture on Country**

- 3.1 Develop a cultural exchange program to share cultural practices, land management successes, traditions and customs, language, stories and ceremony between Aboriginal peoples of different nations.
- 3.2 Design and establish interpretive signage to educate visitors about Gumbaynggirr culture and cultural values.
- 3.3 Name visitor facilities to reflect aspects of Gumbaynggirr creation stories and hero-ancestors, for example, Birrugan's Run Walking Trail, Gawngaan's Rest Camping Area, and Two Sisters Camping Area.
- 3.4 Share Gumbaynggirr stories and information about cultural values with park visitors via a storytelling app (mobile phone application) or other technology.
- 3.5 Improve existing visitor facilities and provide new camping and day-use areas at the park. Figure 2 provides indicative locations for proposed visitor facilities. The exact location of facilities will be subject to assessment of environmental and cultural impacts.
- 3.6 Pursue partnerships with Nambucca Valley Council and tourism agencies to:
  - improve awareness, understanding, appreciation and respect for Gumbaynggirr lore and cultural values at the park
  - provide opportunity for visitors to experience Aboriginal songlines, Gumbaynggirr language, customs and lore
  - raise awareness of park values and the policies and regulations in place to protect them
  - build community advocacy for park management, cultural land management and protection of park values.
- 3.7 Support and enable ecological research, monitoring and education activities, including citizen science projects, to showcase cultural land management and bush regeneration, revegetation and restoration.

## 8. References

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## Legislation

### NSW legislation

- [Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983](#)
- [Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016](#)
- [Biosecurity Act 2015](#)
- [Fisheries Management Act 1994](#)
- [Mining Act 1992](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974](#) and [National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019](#)
- [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)

### Commonwealth legislation and policy

- [Copyright Act 1968](#)
- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#)
- [Native Title Act 1993](#)

## More information

- [Fire management planning](#) – NPWS webpage including a link to the latest *Fire management manual*
- [Parks Eco Pass program for commercial tour operators](#) – NPWS webpage, including links to the operator handbook and other resources
- [Host an event](#) – NPWS webpage
- [Park management policies](#)
- [Native Title Vision](#) – National Native Title Tribunal online mapping tool
- [National Native Title Tribunal](#) – website to access information on the Gumbaynggirr People's native title determination



## 9. Appendices

### Appendix A: Living principles for developing the plan

The Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management and Aboriginal owners adopted the following guiding principles for plan development:

- Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park is an integral part of the Gumbaynggirr cultural landscape and Gumbaynggirr peoples' Country – Gaagal is a significant component of Gumbaynggirr Dreamtime creation and hero-ancestor stories.
- The Gumbaynggirr voice is at the centre. The plan will be written from a Gumbaynggirr perspective using a Gumbaynggirr narrative.
- Gumbaynggirr stories, cultural values, knowledge and practices will guide planning.
- Gumbaynggirr narrative, lore and culture are the basis of the plan of management.
- Land management principles will incorporate holistic cultural landscape management and Gumbaynggirr traditional ecological knowledge.
- The plan will acknowledge the powers and authority of the board of management, according to the lease and legislation.
- The plan will acknowledge Unkya and Nambucca Heads local Aboriginal land councils as owners in common of Part 4A lands on behalf of Aboriginal owners, according to the lease and legislation.
- The plan will acknowledge the native title rights and interests that exist over the majority of the park, according to the lease and the Native Title Act.

## **Appendix B: Objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974***

The objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, set out in section 2A of the Act are:

- (a) The conservation of nature, including, but not limited to, the conservation of:
  - (i) habitat, ecosystems and ecosystem processes, and
  - (ii) biological diversity at the community, species and genetic levels, and
  - (iii) landforms of significance, including geological features and processes, and
  - (iv) landscapes and natural features of significance including wilderness and wild rivers,
- (b) the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape, including, but not limited to:
  - (i) places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people, and
  - (ii) places of social value to the people of New South Wales, and
  - (iii) places of historic, architectural or scientific significance,
- (c) fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation,
- (d) providing for the management of land reserved under this Act in accordance with the management principles applicable for each type of reservation.

## Appendix C: Management principles for national parks

The purpose of reserving land as national park and the management principles for national parks are set out in section 30E of the National Parks and Wildlife Act as follows:

- 1) The purpose of reserving land as a national park is to identify, protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation and sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment so as to enable those areas to be managed in accordance with subsection (2).
- 2) A national park is to be managed in accordance with the following principles –
  - a) the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes,
  - b) the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value,
  - c) the protection of the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations,
  - d) the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values,
  - e) provision for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
  - f) provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
  - fa) provision for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act 1991*) in the national park that is permitted under section 185A having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
  - g) provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

## Appendix D: Threatened animals, insects and migratory birds recorded in the national park

**Table 3 Threatened animals and insects recorded in the national park**

Common name	Scientific name	EPBC Act status	BC Act status
Loggerhead turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	E	E
Black-necked stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	–	E
White-bellied sea-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	–	V
Square-tailed kite	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	–	V
Eastern osprey	<i>Pandion cristatus</i>	–	V
Pied oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	–	E
Glossy black-cockatoo	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	V	V
Barred cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina lineata</i>	–	V
Brush-tailed phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	–	V
Koala	<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	E	E
Squirrel glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	–	V
Grey-headed flying-fox	<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	V	V
Common blossom-bat	<i>Syconycteris australis</i>	–	V
Little bent-winged bat	<i>Miniopterus australis</i>	–	V
Black grass-dart butterfly	<i>Ocybadistes knightorum</i>	–	E

Sources: NSW BioNet database, accessed 23 July 2024

EPBC Act = Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

BC Act = Biodiversity Conservation Act

Legal status: V = vulnerable, E = endangered

**Table 4 Migratory birds recorded in the national park**

Common name	Scientific name	IMBA
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	C,J,K

Source: NSW BioNet database, accessed 23 July 2024

IMBA = international migratory bird agreements

C = listed on China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

J = listed on Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

K = listed on Republic of Korea Australia Migratory Bird Agreement



## Appendix E: Threatened plants and threatened ecological communities recorded in the national park

**Table 5 Threatened plants recorded in the national park**

Common name	Scientific name	EPBC Act Status	BC Act status
Scrub turpentine	<i>Rhodamnia rubescens</i>	CE	E
Native guava	<i>Rhodomyrtus psidioides</i>	CE	E
Floyd's grass	<i>Alexfloydia repens</i>	–	E

Sources: NSW BioNet database, accessed 23 July 2024

EPBC Act = Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

BC Act = Biodiversity Conservation Act

Legal status: E = endangered, CE = critically endangered

**Table 6 Threatened ecological communities recorded in the national park**

Name	EPBC Act status	BC Act status
Coastal Saltmarsh in the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E
Coastal Swamp Oak ( <i>Casuarina glauca</i> ) Forest of New South Wales and South East Queensland ecological community	E	–
Coastal Swamp Sclerophyll Forest of New South Wales and South East Queensland	E	–
Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E
Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia	CE	–
Littoral Rainforest in the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E
Lowland Rainforest in the NSW North Coast and Sydney Basin Bioregions	–	E
Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion	–	E
Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh	V	–
Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion	–	E
Subtropical eucalypt floodplain forest and woodland of the New South Wales North Coast and South East Queensland bioregions	E	–
Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E
Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E
Themeda grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions	–	E

Sources: NSW BioNet database, accessed 23 July 2024

EPBC Act = Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

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BC Act = Biodiversity Conservation Act

Legal status: V = Vulnerable, E = endangered, CE = critically endangered

## Appendix F: Saving our Species list

As part of the Saving our Species program, the park is critical for conserving the following threatened species and threatened ecological community:

- Golden-tipped bat (*Phoniscus papuensis*)
- Beach stone-curlew (*Eaacus magnirostris*)
- Pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*)
- Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*)
- Eastern hooded dotterel (*Thinornis cucullatus cucullatus*)
- Black grass-dart butterfly (*Ocybadistes knightorum*)
- Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*)
- Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
- Floyd's grass (*Alexfloydia repens*)
- Spider orchid (*Dendrobium melaleucaphilum*)
- Maundia (*Maundia triglochinoides*)
- Native guava (*Rhodomyrtus psidioides*)
- Scrub turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*)
- Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the New South Wales North Coast Bioregion.

Source: DPE (no date).

## Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Draft Plan of Management

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