

Small Central Lofty Parks

Draft Management Plan 2025

Mark Oliphant Conservation Park

Mount George Conservation Park

Mylor Conservation Park

The Knoll Conservation Park



**SOUTH
AUSTRALIA**



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country. The department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.



Your views are important

The Small Central Lofty Parks Draft Management Plan outlines the objectives and strategies that will set the strategic direction for the management of the parks identified in this plan.

It is released for public comment to provide members of the community an opportunity to express their views on the future management of the parks.

Feedback received will be considered before the development of a final plan. Once developed, the final plan will be submitted to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for adoption under Section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

I encourage all interested people to assist in shaping the long-term management of these parks by making a submission on this draft plan. Guidance for the preparation of a submission can be found on page 21.



Mike Williams
Director of National Parks and Wildlife

Developing this draft plan

This draft management plan incorporates Mark Oliphant Conservation Park, Mount George Conservation Park, Mylor Conservation Park and The Knoll Conservation Park. These parks are in proximity and have similar ecological and geographical features. They are subject to the same range of issues. Establishing one management plan supports a consistent approach to biodiversity conservation and public visitation across these parks.

This draft plan has been developed by the Department for Environment and Water with input from key stakeholders, park managers and technical experts. The strategic management, objectives, and strategies outlined in this plan are designed to enable adaptive management of the parks.

Once complete, this plan will be the first adopted management plan for Mylor and The Knoll conservation parks and will replace the existing management plans for Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks.

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Directions for management

The Small Central Lofty Parks (Figure 1) are situated in the Mount Lofty Ranges in the Adelaide Hills between the townships of Hahndorf, Cherry Gardens and Summertown. These parks form important habitat links between Belair and Cleland national parks, and Scott Creek and Kenneth Stirling conservation parks. They preserve remnant stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri* and *Eucalyptus obliqua*) and candlebark gum (*Eucalyptus dalrympleana* ssp. *dalrympleana*) woodland communities and wetland habitats that are crucial for threatened wildlife, along with landform features including rocky outcrops, creeks and waterways in a peri-urban landscape. These parks contain many areas of outstanding natural beauty. The parks are also culturally important and are located within the Kurna Native Title determination area. The neighbouring Peramangk people also have connections to these parks.

Mark Oliphant, Mount George, Mylor and The Knoll conservation parks are proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act). The objectives of the NPW Act ensures that parks are managed primarily for conservation, while supporting public use, enjoyment and education about the parks' purpose and significance.

The parks in this plan have been proclaimed primarily to conserve large and intact areas of remnant vegetation that are critical for the conservation of biodiversity in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Historically, Mark Oliphant and Mylor conservation parks were highly valued as recreational spaces, and while remnants of the associated facilities remain today, most have been removed, leaving minimal visitor facilities in all parks. The stringybark woodlands and candlebark gum open forest communities are considered a high priority for conservation in the Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges, along with the dense shrubby understory vegetation providing crucial habitat for the southern brown bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus obesulus*) in Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks. A large number of national and state listed threatened flora and fauna species are protected in these parks, some of which are endemic to the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Strategic management of these parks will focus on maintaining and enhancing ecosystem health and protecting threatened species by focusing on the management of threats including total grazing pressure, inappropriate fire regimes, phytophthora, pest plants and animals, altered hydrology and the impacts of climate change. All areas are managed primarily for conservation and visitor facilities are

restricted to low impact uses such as picnic areas, walking trails, and ancillary features such as car parking, trail heads and trail signage. Upgrades to existing facilities, or the development of new basic facilities may be considered in the future if the level of demand shows a need and where ecological impacts can be managed sustainably. Any future development, tourism and recreation opportunities must ensure impacts to conservation values are minimised.

Existing management tracks and trails provide walk-in access in these parks and will be managed as per operational requirements. Tracks primarily for fire management access are managed in accordance with relevant fire management plans.

The community and volunteer groups have been active in some of these parks for decades. Volunteers have made a significant impact on protecting park conservation values, particularly through pest plant removal and management, advocacy of biodiversity protection, and threatened species monitoring. Maintaining and building relationships with volunteers, researchers, local and state government agencies, non-government agencies and adjacent landholders will support their continued involvement in park management opportunities and help to achieve effective outcomes.

The strategic management, objectives and strategies outlined in this plan are designed to enable adaptive management of the parks. The specific actions required to manage these parks in accordance with the plan will be developed and monitored at a park operations level and in accordance with relevant threatened species recovery plans and fire management plans. This approach provides the flexibility necessary to address future management challenges and opportunities.

Small Central Lofty Parks

The protected areas covered by this plan are (refer to Figure 1):

Mark Oliphant Conservation Park (190 ha)

Mount George Conservation Park (84 ha)

Mylor Conservation Park (45 ha)

The Knoll Conservation Park (2 ha)

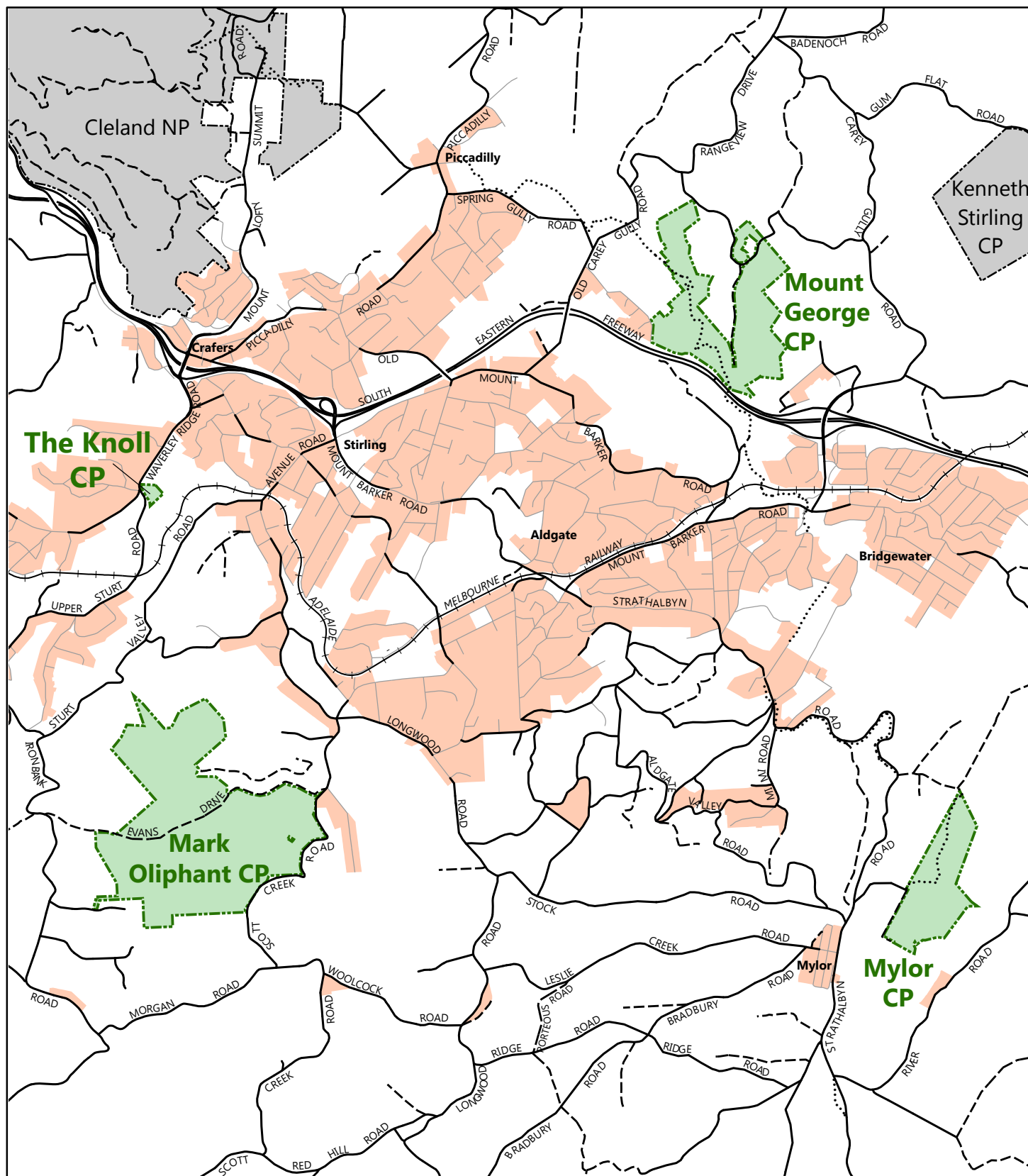
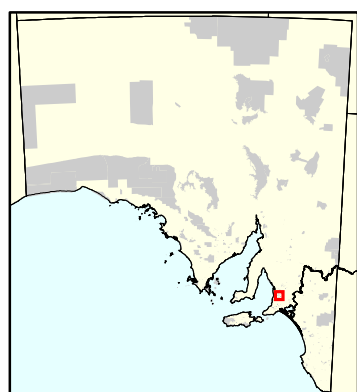


Figure 1

Small Central Lofty Parks



LEGEND

- Sealed road
- - - Unsealed road
- - - Vehicular track
- Heysen Trail
- + + + Railway
- Parks of focus
- Other parks
- Built Up Area



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Significance and Purpose

The parks in this plan are part of the traditional lands of the Kurna and Peramangk peoples for whom the land, water, plants and animals are central to their spirituality and identity. All nations maintain a strong connection to the area bound by heritage, birth rites, dreaming and creation stories. Sites and features across the Mount Lofty Ranges landscape have cultural importance and are connected to stories that have been passed down over generations. Management of the parks provides an opportunity to partner with Kurna and Peramangk and collaborate to protect and promote their culture and heritage, and support their ongoing connection to Country.

The parks are significant for containing relatively large and intact areas of woodland and forest vegetation and associated ecological communities and are strongly valued by the local community as areas to experience and appreciate nature. However, the fragmented nature of these parks has management implications for rare and threatened flora and fauna species which rely on these natural areas for refuge and dispersal corridors. Maintaining and improving the interconnecting habitat between these parks is recognised as crucial in supporting viable populations long-term, particularly for woodland bird communities and threatened species such as the nationally endangered southern brown bandicoot. This species has been recorded in the heathy open forest habitat

of Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks, which form important southern brown bandicoot habitat links with other protected areas such as Belair National Park and Scott Creek Conservation Park, along with several private land parcels, some of which are protected under Heritage Agreements.

The high altitude cool stringybark forests of the central Mount Lofty Ranges are important habitat for the pygmy copperhead (*Austrelaps labialis*) which is South Australia's only endemic snake and considered under threat in Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges. The snake has been recorded in Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks and is likely to be found in Mylor and The Knoll conservation parks. Other state-threatened species found in these parks include the common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) and yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*), along with a number of threatened and declining woodland bird species.

Remnant vegetation protected by these parks is fragmented across a modified landscape, with adjacent land being used for residential housing, grazing, hobby farms, cropping and mining. Historic and current collaborative projects with adjacent landholders, volunteers, local councils, educational institutions, and other government agencies demonstrate that a coordinated management approach provides effective

outcomes for pest plant and animal management, habitat restoration and maintaining biodiversity viability long-term.

Together these parks protect an integral part of the Onkaparinga River Catchment system which makes an important contribution to Adelaide's water security and the health of the Mount Lofty Ranges aquatic ecosystems. Mountain galaxias (*Galaxias olidus*) are considered under threat in the Mount Lofty Ranges and have been recorded in the Mount George Conservation Park water system. Seven frog species have also been recorded across the parks, including the state-rare brown toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*), in Mark Oliphant Conservation Park.

While visitors can enjoy these parks, there are minimal facilities provided. Trails and management tracks in several of the parks provide opportunities for low impact recreation such as bushwalking, birdwatching, and spending time in nature. The parks also conserve sites associated with the region's early European mining and farming history.

Mark Oliphant Conservation Park

Mark Oliphant Conservation Park was first proclaimed as Loftia National Park and valued predominantly for its recreational and nature education opportunities. Throughout its history the park has included tennis courts, a cricket oval, swimming pool, and accommodation facilities along with an assortment of other infrastructure. As community needs and sentiments changed, the focus turned to managing and protecting the parks high conservation values and has since been renamed in honour of former state Governor Sir Mark Oliphant's contribution to conservation. The old buildings, infrastructure and associated roads have been removed, and with significant restoration efforts by the Friends of Mark Oliphant and other dedicated volunteers, a more natural environment is now persisting in these areas.

The park protects high quality sclerophyll forest dominated by messmate stringybark and scattered pink gum, with a diverse understory and a dense, diverse ground cover which contains many lilies and orchids including the state-threatened large duck-orchid (*Caleana major*), Behr's cowslip orchid (*Diuris behrii*) and great sun-orchid (*Thelymitra grandiflora*). This dense ground cover is crucial habitat for the southern brown bandicoot, which is listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation*

Act 1999 (EPBC Act), and the large eucalyptus species provide important nesting sites for the state-vulnerable yellow-tailed black cockatoo (*Zanda funerea whiteae*). Rare candlebark gum stands are found predominantly along the creek lines in the southern valley, and a significant stand of Oyster Bay pines (*Callitris rhomboidea*) occur in the north-east corner of the park.

There are 11 plant and 10 animal species listed as rare or vulnerable in South Australia under schedules 8 and 9 of the NPW Act. Of these, there are 2 species listed as endangered under the EPBC Act, the Bassian thrush (*Zoothera lunulate halmaturina*) and southern brown bandicoot. The endangered chestnutrumped heathwren (*Mount Lofty Ranges*) (*Hylacola pyrrhopygia parkeri*) has been historically recorded in the park but is unlikely to occur today.

A formal car park provides access to the 4 walking trails. The Candlebark Trail leads walkers to a picnic table and shelter.

Part of the park is jointly proclaimed under Section 43 of the NPW Act which enables appropriate resource exploration and development under the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal (Energy Resources) Act 2023*.

Mount George Conservation Park

Mount George Conservation Park was proclaimed to protect significant remnant forest associations surrounded by developed land. A number of small creeks run through the park, with some areas experiencing localised freshwater bogs and soaks. State-rare candlebark gum open forests occur in the damper areas, particularly near the gully running through the centre, which transition into manna gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis* ssp. *viminalis*) woodlands along the creeklines. The dominant vegetation associations occurring on the steeper slopes are messmate stringybark and brown stringybark open forests with a diverse understory. The park preserves stands of beaked hakea (*Hakea rostrata*) and silver banksia (*Banksia marginata*), both of which are important food plants for the yellow-tailed black cockatoo.

There are 18 plant and 7 animal species listed as rare, endangered or vulnerable in South Australia under schedules 7, 8 and 9 of the NPW Act. Of these, clover glycine (*Glycine latrobeana*) is listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act and the southern brown bandicoot is listed as endangered.

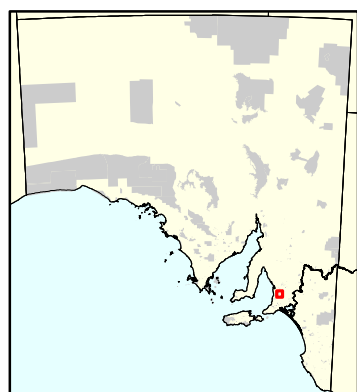
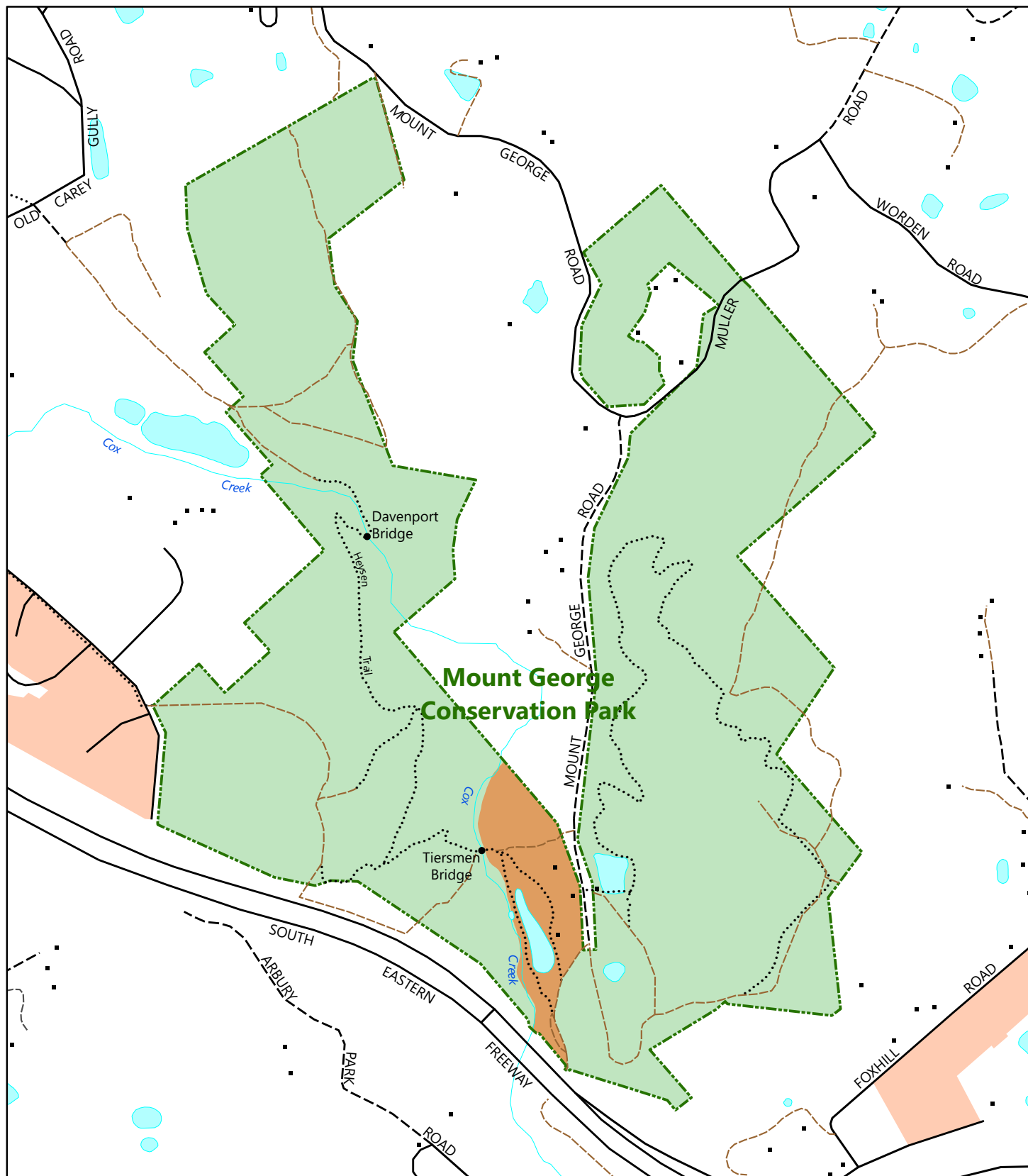
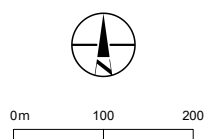


Figure 2
Mount George Conservation Park
Management Zones



- LEGEND**
- Building
 - Sealed road
 - - - Unsealed road
 - - - Vehicular track
 - Recreation Trail
 - Waterbody
 - Mount George Conservation Park
 - Conservation Zone A
 - Conservation Zone B
 - Built Up Area



Cox Creek and other smaller creeklines flowing through the park support regionally significant riparian habitat, the condition of which has been largely improved due to ongoing rehabilitation works by the Friends of Mount George and collaborating partner groups. The quartzite ridge rocky outcrops and prominent geological features provide for great views, particularly from the summit of Mount George, which at 520m is the park's most dominant topographical feature.

Two management zones (Figure 2) have been identified in Mount George Conservation Park to ensure public use and conservation management actions are compatible with protecting park values. Conservation Zone A protects an area of high conservation value, preserving significant natural environments and ecosystems with a lower proportion of weeds. Conservation Zone B protects an area of conservation value that has been heavily modified by historical land clearing and pest plant invasions, with a significant amount of work done over decades to remove or control pest plants. Walking dogs on a lead is permitted in Conservation Zone B.

There are 4 walking trails in the park, including the Heysen Trail and Pioneer Womens Trail which run through the western side of the park. The Ridge Trail leads walkers on a steep hike up to Mount George summit, providing spectacular views over Bridgewater to Mount Lofty. A formal car park provides entry into the park and access to the picnic area.

Mylor Conservation Park

Mylor Conservation Park was proclaimed to protect an isolated patch of mostly pristine, remnant vegetation and an important geological structure surrounded by land predominantly developed for agriculture and residential purposes. Vegetation is predominantly messmate stringybark and brown stringybark open forests over a diverse, flowering heathy understory of sedges, hakeas, and native pea species. The park is

popular with botanists and orchid-enthusiasts, with a high diversity of wildflowers and over 25 orchid species recorded in the park, including the state-rare pigmy caladenia (*Caladenia pusilla*) and great sun-orchid. Part of the park was previously home to a recreational facility called the Mylor Recreation Centre. This facility has now been removed and ongoing restoration is occurring at the site.

The park protects 10 plant and 5 animal species listed as rare or vulnerable in South Australia under schedules 8 and 9 of the NPW Act, including the EPBC listed Bassian thrush. The park contains habitat suitable for the pygmy copperhead, which is considered threatened in the AMLR region.

The Heysen Trail enters the park through the formal car park on the west side, making its way up through the centre and out through the north-west corner. Smaller walking trails branch off from the Heysen Trail to access other areas of the park.

The park is jointly proclaimed under Section 43 of the NPW Act which enables appropriate resource exploration and development under the *Mining Act 1971*.

The Knoll Conservation Park

The Knoll Conservation Park was proclaimed to protect an area of messmate stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) open forest and houses a telecommunications facility. The park contains habitat suitable for the pygmy copperhead and the EPBC listed southern brown bandicoot. Significant plant species recorded in the park include the state rare pink gum (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*) and manna gum. The reserve is the smallest conservation park on the South Australian mainland and has no formal walking trails or visitor facilities.

A small area of the park is currently held under lease (Figure 3) where a telecommunications tower is located.



What are we looking after?

- Landscape features and sites that are of cultural and spiritual significance to First Nations peoples and important for their culture.
- 27 plant species that are listed as threatened under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. This includes the clover glycine which is also listed as vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- 12 animal species that are listed as threatened under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, including the southern brown bandicoot and Bassian thrush which are also listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- Diverse habitats including heathlands, open forests, woodlands and riparian areas, some of which are poorly represented in South Australia's protected area system, and a high diversity of native flora and fauna, particularly threatened and endemic species.
- Significant areas of remnant native vegetation within a fragmented landscape, including rare candlebark gum stands and declining stringybark forests that provide important ecosystem services and habitat for declining woodland bird species.
- Areas of dense understory and groundcover vegetation which provides high quality habitat for the nationally endangered southern brown bandicoot and forms important habitat linkages with bandicoot habitat across the Mount Lofty Ranges.
- Catchments that are critical to Adelaide's water supply and water-dependent vegetation communities, natural aquatic habitats and native fish and turtle species.
- Scenic natural landscapes including bushland, creeks, gorges and escarpments, and other unique geological features.
- Opportunities to participate in a range of nature based recreational activities, enjoy natural environments, learn about nature and develop an appreciation for the parks.

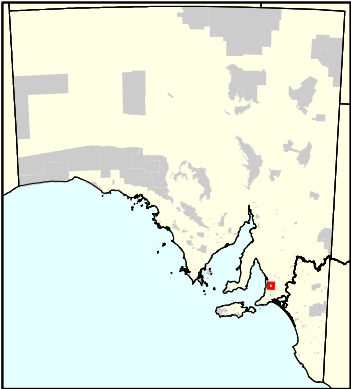
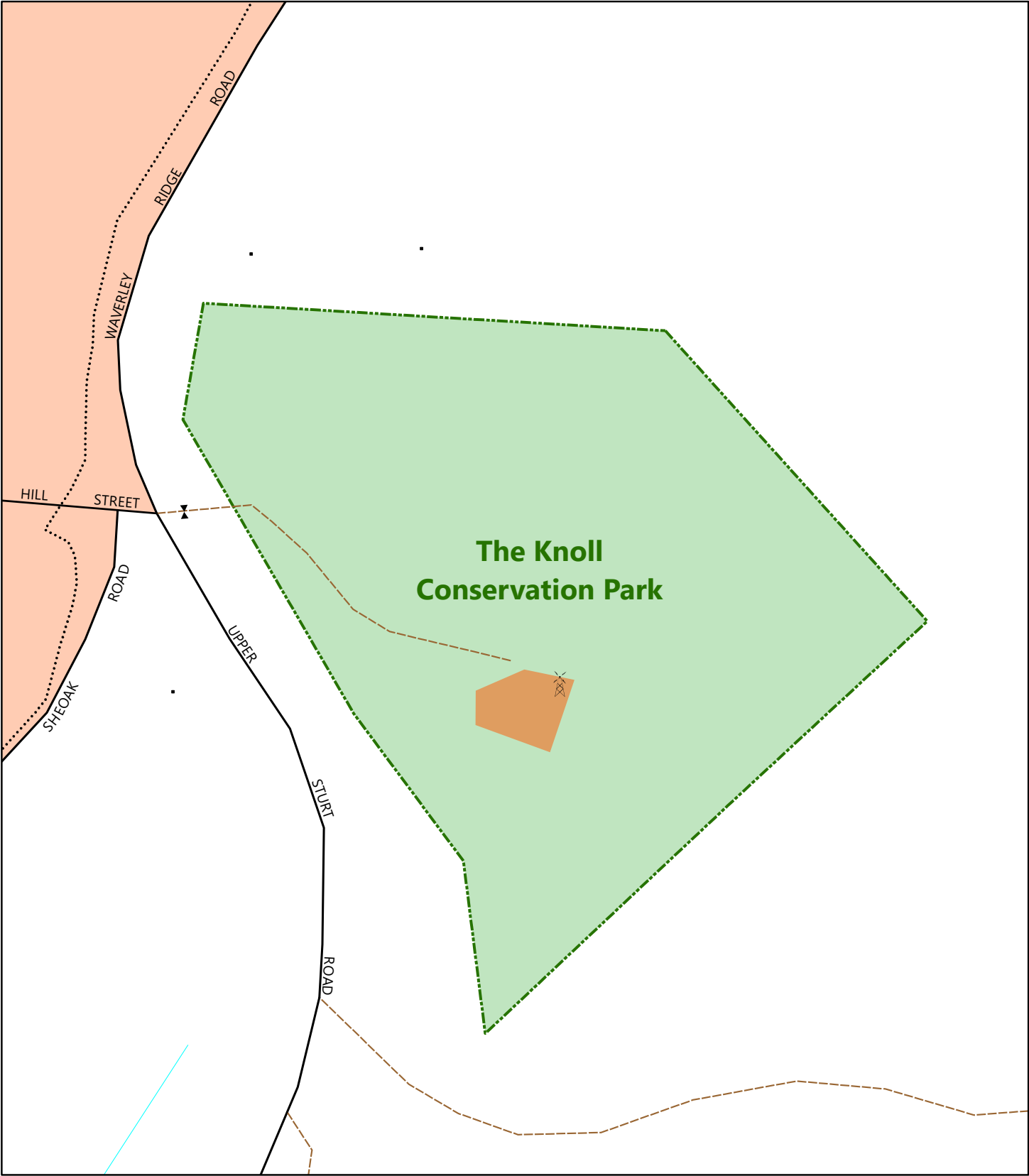
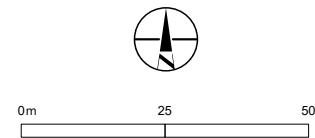


Figure 3

The Knoll Conservation Park
Lease Zone



- LEGEND**
- Building
 - ◄ Gate
 - ⚡ Tower
 - Sealed road
 - - - Vehicle track
 - Trail
 - Lease Zone
 - ▭ The Knoll Conservation Park
 - Built up area



Challenges and opportunities

Key challenges and opportunities in the protection and management of these parks are:

- Maintaining healthy ecosystems within a modified landscape to ensure that they continue to provide habitat for native species.
- Managing the impacts of pest plant and animals, phytophthora and total grazing pressure to protect threatened species and ecosystem health.
- Collaborating with First Nations peoples and stakeholders including neighbours, researchers, volunteers and environmental groups to understand, monitor and manage threats for effective conservation and cultural outcomes.
- Enabling First Nations peoples to undertake cultural practices in the parks.
- Partnering with First Nations to protect cultural and heritage sites, increase cultural awareness and promote employment and training for First Nations people.
- Working with adjacent landholders to support activities that complement objectives for biodiversity and conservation within the parks.
- Continuing to improve understanding of fire ecology and potential threats following fires (both bushfire and prescribed burns), to improve ecological outcomes.
- Managing the increasing risk of bushfires to ensure community safety and ecological health.
- Understanding the impacts of climate change and the strategies required to support ecosystem resilience to decreasing rainfall, increased temperatures, and increased risk of extreme fires.
- Providing opportunities for people to undertake low-impact recreation such as bushwalking, bird watching and experiencing time in nature, while minimising impacts to park values.
- Restoring and revegetating cleared areas and maintaining remnant vegetation to enhance vegetation connectivity across the landscape and increase southern brown bandicoot and other threatened species population viability.
- Ensuring that management decisions are based on an understanding of ecosystem health, as well as the best available knowledge and information.



THEME 1:

Protecting biodiversity in a fragmented landscape

The small central Lofty parks protect remnant native vegetation typical of the higher rainfall areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges. This habitat provides an important refuge to native plants and wildlife in a well-developed peri-urban landscape, recognising that land surrounding these parks contributes significantly to biodiversity and the protection of conservation values in the area. These habitat patches improve habitat connectivity to larger protected natural areas such as Mount Bold reservoir in the south and Cleland National Park in the north, providing important corridors for wildlife. Maintaining the ecological health of these areas is critical for the provision of habitat that supports the persistence of native, threatened and endemic species in the region. Opportunities to expand the parks through the acquisition of adjacent land parcels should be considered, taking into account natural values, conservation potential and access. Management of threats including total grazing pressure, large-scale fires, pest plants and animals, and the risk of phytophthora are priorities.

The cool heath and stringybark forests, and the associated dense understory and groundcover vegetation in these parks support a high native species diversity compared to other vegetation communities in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Threatened species such as the pygmy copperhead, southern brown bandicoot and Bassian thrush all rely on a dense understory to persist in the landscape. Forested areas with damp gullies and a thick understorey are favoured areas for the nationally threatened Bassian thrush, and the high altitude stringybark forest with dense heath or bracken understorey is the preferred habitat for the pygmy copperhead. Other woodland bird species identified as a priority for protection are recorded in these parks, including the hooded robin (*Melanodryas cucullata cucullata*), scarlet robin (*Petroica boodang boodang*) and jacky winter (*Microeca fascinans*).

The stringybark forest with thick shrubby understorey vegetation in Mark Oliphant Conservation Park has been identified as habitat crucial for the long-term persistence of nationally endangered southern brown bandicoots in the Mount Lofty Ranges. The dense understory and ground cover layer is particularly important for protection against predators, and where native habitat has been disturbed or cleared, they may use dense weedy blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) patches as a substitute. The Mark Oliphant bandicoot population is the one of the strongest and most significant in the Mount Lofty Ranges and where they are seen regularly. Recovery efforts to improve quality and expand existing habitat to increase habitat linkages are a priority for bandicoot population viability, and for park management in the region. Other threatened species expected to benefit from increased bandicoot habitat include the yellow-tailed black cockatoo and Bassian thrush, and recovery actions can have a positive impact on many important plant species and connected vegetation communities.

Candlebark gum open forest ecological communities have been identified as a high priority for conservation in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Candlebark gums are listed as rare in South Australia, occurring only in the higher rainfall areas of the Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges and Fleurieu Peninsula with populations restricted to valleys and riparian systems. Significant stands occurring in Mount George and Mark Oliphant conservation parks, along with a small population in Mylor Conservation Park are some of the few populations protected in the reserve system. This species is under threat from weed invasion and changes in water management and use. Cleared areas adjacent to existing candlebark gum stands are suitable for revegetation and other habitat restoration actions.

The rocky outcrops and other geological features of Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks provide spectacular views and support unique ecosystems. These ecosystems, and the threatened plant and animal species they support, are particularly vulnerable to impacts associated with development, visitation and changes in environmental flows such as trampling and soil erosion. Management activities should seek to minimise soil disturbance where possible and where disturbance is unavoidable measures should be put in place to minimise erosion.

The Mount Lofty Ranges water catchment system

supports a variety of ecosystems and high biological diversity. Environmental flows through the catchment system have been severely impacted by drainage for agriculture, mining, water diversion, vegetation clearance, incursions of pest plants and agricultural activities such as grazing. These parks protect important water-dependent ecosystems within the Onkaparinga River Catchment system, with Mount George and Mark Oliphant conservation parks containing hydrological systems that are integral to the ecological network. Maintaining connections between associated habitats will assist in protecting water course hydrology, and support threatened water-dependent species such as the brown toadlet and mountain galaxias. Cox Creek runs through Mount George Conservation Park and along with the associated smaller creeks, swamps, springs and soaks supports a diversity of macroinvertebrates and aquatic plants. An artificial wetland and two constructed dams in the park support native wetland species and provide biodiversity conservation benefits. Candlebark gum woodlands are sensitive to changes in water flows as they require high rainfall and well-drained soil. A population in Mark Oliphant Conservation Park displayed increased regeneration as water flows improved following infrastructure works, and efforts to increase the health of this population will continue. Significant work has gone into rehabilitating riparian habitats in Mark Oliphant and Mount George conservation parks through weed removal, revegetation and infrastructure works to improve hydrological function. Maintaining riparian habitat quality and improving water quality will continue to be a priority for park management.

Encouraging natural regeneration, supported by strategic revegetation, will increase habitat for threatened flora and fauna. Areas recovering from previous land-use activities, particularly partially cleared areas adjoining remnant vegetation and areas between stands of vegetation are suited to the restoration of habitat. Revegetating degraded riparian habitats with suitable species is a priority for park management where it can be used to improve environmental flows and support biodiversity. For threatened species such as the southern brown bandicoot, restoring habitat structure and increasing connectivity will be managed with careful weed control to ensure existing habitat functionality is retained.

Introduced pests including cats (*Felis catus*), foxes



(*Vulpes vulpes*), rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), hare species, and deer species are present across the Mount Lofty Ranges and are known to occur in the parks. Even in low numbers introduced species can have significant impacts on biodiversity and will require management to limit their effects on biodiversity such as predation of native fauna, grazing and trampling of native vegetation and spreading of phytophthora. Control measures for pests that are a significant contributor to the decline of native species and where programs are likely to be effective in supporting the recovery of threatened species will be a priority. The impact of deer in the region is an increasing issue and one that will be addressed in partnership at a landscape-scale with other land owners and managers. The prioritisation of pest plant and animal management within the parks will align with state and regional priorities determined by relevant bodies.

Total grazing pressure in the reserves including by western grey kangaroos (*Macropus fuliginosus*) and introduced herbivores is having a negative impact on habitat quality and food availability for important and threatened species. Overgrazing and trampling by herbivores in remnant vegetation is reducing the availability of food and suitable vegetation cover for native species that rely on dense understory for protection such as the southern brown bandicoot and Bassian thrush. Grazing by herbivores after bushfires and prescribed burning can have a detrimental impact on regenerating vegetation post-fire. Where left unmanaged this is leading to changes in vegetation composition and structure and inhibiting restoration efforts in bushfire-affected areas. The success of ecological burns designed to improve habitat values for threatened species is reduced when grazing pressure is unmanaged.

Evidence of total grazing pressure will be used where required to determine impacts to habitat quality by native and introduced herbivores. While managing the

impacts of herbivores will primarily focus on the control of introduced herbivores, where evidence indicates that western grey kangaroo populations are a large contributing factor to total grazing pressure resulting in unsustainable impacts to the conservation values of the parks, strategic management will be considered. Where non-lethal methods are considered ineffective or not feasible, culling will be implemented as it remains the only practicable method of management. Kangaroo control may include commercial harvest options. Any culling will follow strict procedures for the humane destruction of animals.

Pest plants threaten habitat integrity by competing with native plants and impeding their growth. They can also alter vegetation structures. Historic clearance and disturbance of land surrounding the reserves has led to the spread of pest plants including introduced broom species (*Genista monspessulana* and *Cytisus scoparius*), boneseed (*Osteospermum moniliferum*) and blackberry which have been targeted for control in biodiversity conservation programs. Garden plants that have escaped from neighbouring properties such as watsonia (*Watsonia meriana* var. *bulbillifera*) and Erica (*Erica arborea*) are an ongoing risk to biodiversity. Control will be implemented to protect areas of high conservation value and where pest plants threaten the survival of threatened flora populations. Control methods will be applied in a manner which minimises impacts to the native species they are intended to benefit. Volunteers make a significant contribution to pest plant management in these parks, and contribute to maintaining the health of high conservation value habitat. Support for these activities will continue.

Mount George Conservation Park has two defined management zones (Figure 2) to best guide conservation outcomes for a park with high conservation values and an identified area that has high visitor use and has been heavily modified.



Conservation Zone A of Mount George Conservation Park protects an area of high conservation value, preserving significant natural environments and ecosystems containing threatened species that are of high biodiversity value, with a lower proportion of weeds. This zone will be managed primarily for the purpose of nature conservation. Unstructured recreation activities that utilise existing trails and other infrastructure, and have low impacts such as walking, photography and bird watching, are encouraged within Conservation Zone A. Maintenance and other minor works may occur if deemed necessary for management purposes.

Conservation Zone B of Mount George Conservation Park has been heavily modified by historical land clearing and pest plant invasions, with a significant amount of work done over decades to remove or control pest plants. A constructed wetland in the centre of the zone that has been revegetated with native plants around the perimeter. Key priorities for this zone include managing the impacts of recreational use on conservation values and public enjoyment, and controlling key weeds where they impact on native species and preventing weed spread into Conservation Zone A. Dogs on a lead are permitted and unstructured recreation activities such as walking, photography, picnicking and bird watching are encouraged within Conservation Zone B.

Phytophthora (*Phytophthora cinnamoni*) is an introduced soil-borne pathogen that attacks and destroys plant root systems resulting in the destruction of habitat through vegetation dieback. It can be easily spread by humans on the treads of shoes, on bike and vehicle tyres, and with the movement of soil. Phytophthora infestations are widespread across the Mount Lofty Ranges and vegetation in these parks are at a high risk of infection, with banksia and messmate stringybark populations being particularly vulnerable to this disease. There is no cure for phytophthora and although difficult, it is important to minimise its spread from an infected area.

Management will focus on monitoring and containing infestations and minimising the risk of spread through controlling access, application of hygiene practices, educating visitors and timing of operational activities.

Fire has been a part of the Australian landscape for thousands of years. As an ecological process fire has shaped the flora and fauna and continues to contribute to a healthy ecosystem. Landscape modification, active fire suppression, and climate change have resulted in changes in fire regimes across the landscape. The subsequent impacts in these parks can be severe for at-risk native species, due to the fragmented nature of their remaining habitat. For example, suitable habitat for the southern brown bandicoot and bassian thrush is already limited within the management area. A reduction of habitat quality and availability from inappropriate fire regimes may prevent these species from persisting, potentially causing localised extinctions.

The southern brown bandicoot is recognised as a fire-dependent species, requiring early to mid-successional heathlands that regenerate post-fire and habitat suitability declines with inappropriate fire management. For species that depend on the cool and moist habitats found in these parks such as the brown toadlet, fire regimes that minimise erosion and sedimentation of watercourses are required. Hollow-dependent species such as the yellow-tailed black cockatoos are at risk if fire burns out hollow trees over large areas, as hollowed habitats can take more than 200 years to form.

Fire management plans have been developed for these parks to guide management activities aimed at reducing bushfire risk and managing conservation values. Fire management activities, including prescribed burning is implemented across strategic areas of the parks to reduce the risk, intensity and spread of bushfires, and make suppression more achievable and safer.



Prescribed burning is also used as an ecological tool to maintain and improve the health of habitats, with pest plant control and grazing pressure management included into integrated management programs.

Climate change projections for the region indicate decreasing rainfall, increasing temperatures, and more heightened fire danger days. It is likely to exasperate threatening processes such as impacts from pest plants and animals, changes in water flows and more frequent and higher intensity bushfires. Widespread tree decline across the region is becoming more evident, but not well understood or documented. While climate change is likely to be a risk for all ecological communities in the area, stringybark and candlebark woodlands are dependent on high rainfall, and along with the biodiversity they support, are particularly vulnerable to changes in water flows. The nationally threatened Bassian thrush requires damp areas along creeklines for foraging, and the southern brown bandicoot breeding season is influenced by environmental factors such as rainfall and temperature. Understanding the impacts of a changing climate on key species and how to support ecosystems to be resilient, will be crucial in successful long-term biodiversity management. Research and monitoring will be vital in developing an understanding and implementing subsequent programs to mitigate the impacts.

Working in collaboration with First Nations peoples, and organisations including Friends of Parks and Nature volunteers, Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, research organisations, non-government organisations and local government will be important for successful conservation activities and supporting community participation in park management. Management programs will focus on activities that achieve conservation outcomes across the landscape. Volunteers have made a considerable contribution to habitat restoration, along with survey and monitoring of flora and fauna, and they continue to demonstrate community stewardship of the parks. Support for volunteers and the conservation outcomes that they achieve will continue.

Objective and strategies

Manage ecosystem health by gaining a better understanding of species distribution and ecology to guide biodiversity protection programs and effective threat management.

- Monitor populations of threatened species and support further surveys to better understand the health and extent of populations, and to inform operational requirements for their protection in a fragmented landscape.
- Refer to actions identified in recovery plans and conservation advice statements for species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to prevent further decline or extinction and to support their recovery.
- Develop vegetation management plans for each park to guide protection of species and high conservation value habitat, habitat restoration, threat abatement activities and species recovery.
- Collaborate with government agencies, researchers, and volunteers to continue threatened species recovery work such as efforts to increase and protect habitat for the southern brown bandicoot, and increase knowledge of population distribution, abundance and ecology.
- Control pest animals to limit their impact on biodiversity and where their control can support the recovery of threatened species. Work in partnership with neighbours and stakeholders and contribute to landscape-scale control programs for effective outcomes.
- Implement western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fulinosus*) management programs where total grazing pressure indicates adverse impacts to ecological values. Consider commercial management options in consultation with the kangaroo industry.
- Implement pest plant control programs to improve habitat and reduce impacts in areas of high conservation value where impacts are significant. Focus on new and emerging weeds that are likely to spread and impact native habitats, weeds that are impacting threatened species, and weeds that are having a significant impact on habitat structure and function.
- Implement fire management plans for the parks to guide activities to minimise the likelihood and impact of bushfires and to maintain and enhance ecological values.
- Continue to rehabilitate riparian habitats and restore hydrological regimes to improve ecosystem health and environmental flows.
- Ensure visitor use impacts, maintenance works and infrastructure development are managed to mitigate soil erosion and prevent damage to geological features and associated habitats.
- Rehabilitate cleared areas through revegetation and encouraging natural regeneration to increase the area and connectivity of available habitat and threatened plant communities, support plant diversity and improve ecological function.
- Work with adjoining landholders and the Hills and Fleurieu Board to improve natural flow regimes to water-dependent ecosystems, particularly riparian areas that support threatened and poorly represented vegetation communities.
- Work with First Nations to support access to undertake cultural practices and explore opportunities to incorporate traditional knowledge in park management programs.
- Support monitoring and research to understand how the climate is changing and to inform adaptation strategies for threatened species and ecological health.
- Encourage research that improves understanding of biodiversity within and adjacent to the parks and underpins the refinement of management strategies for the development of ecosystem resilience.
- Support existing partnerships and encourage collaboration with First Nations peoples, SA Water, environmental groups, volunteers, local councils, Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, and neighbouring landholders to achieve ecological outcomes and foster community stewardship of the parks.
- Seek opportunities to expand the parks through the acquisition of adjoining land parcels and investigate the closure of the road reserve in Mylor Conservation Park and Evans Drive in Mark Oliphant Conservation Park for addition into the parks.



THEME 2:

Connecting community with nature

The small central Lofty parks are outstanding natural places with damp, shady forests, flowering shrublands, and stunning views of the Mount Lofty Ranges. These parks support diverse flora and fauna communities and provide opportunities for people to experience and appreciate nature through low-impact activities. The peri-urban location makes the parks' popular with visitors to the Adelaide area and the broader local community, and dedicated and highly active volunteers undertake biodiversity protection and promote park values to the public.

Aboriginal people occupied the land across the Mount Lofty Ranges for tens of thousands of years. The features across the landscape are linked and profoundly important to their cultural and spiritual connection to their traditional lands. Several anthropological stories including the Tjilbruke Dreaming Story and the Yurebilla Dreaming are

associated with the region, and the Mount Lofty Ranges more broadly. The Kurna and Peramangk peoples maintain a deep relationship with Country and have done so for tens of thousands of years through their customs, stories and lore. No large-scale cultural heritage surveys have been undertaken in these parks, however it is highly likely that they contain Aboriginal archaeological sites, objects or burials. Ensuring sites are protected from impacts associated with public visitation, conservation programs, development or park maintenance activities will be achieved in consultation with First Nations people, particularly Kurna and Peramangk.

All Aboriginal sites, objects and remains are protected from damage, disturbance or interference by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, regardless of whether they are known in the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects.

Encouraging appropriate public use and enjoyment of the reserves is a priority for park management and provides an opportunity to promote the importance of biodiversity and how people can take a proactive role in conservation. Formal walking trails in Mark Oliphant, Mount George and Mylor conservation parks support low-impact recreation, such as bushwalking and bird-watching, with a variety of trails suitable for people with a range of bushwalking abilities. The Heysen Trail runs through Mylor Conservation Park to Mount George Conservation Park, and beyond to Cleland National Park. The Mylor Conservation Park section provides a connection to the nearby Aldgate township, and there are many other opportunities for bushwalkers to explore longer hikes through this area of the Adelaide Hills. The historic Pioneer Women's Trail provides a tranquil passage for walkers through the western side of Mount George Conservation Park alongside the Heysen Trail, crossing over Cox Creek twice via the Davenport and Tiersmen bridges which highlight the park's riverine habitat features.

Mylor Conservation Park provides a tranquil and wild place to appreciate nature, with visitors enjoying forest bathing and a peaceful setting to increase their botanical knowledge. Birdwatching is a popular activity in all of the parks as the forest and woodland vegetation communities provide habitat for many native bird species, some of which are threatened or declining in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Winter and spring are ideal for spotting wildflowers and native orchids. Over 40 different orchid species have been recorded across the parks, including the state-rare and endemic plump sun-orchid (*Thelymitra batesii*) and great sun-orchid.

These parks protect ecosystems and small pockets of remnant vegetation communities which are vulnerable to threats associated with human activity such as weed invasion, phytophthora spread and habitat disturbance. Due to the high conservation values of these parks and limited or no facilities, large events are not generally supported. To best protect biodiversity and to maintain natural values, cycling and horses are not permitted

in these parks. Dogs on a lead are permitted in Conservation Zone B in Mount George Conservation Park, they are not permitted in any other areas or parks. Park signage, community education and information will clarify which activities are permitted to provide an enjoyable visitor experience, and to minimise impacts to conservation values.

Providing sustainable recreational access to the parks is a key consideration for current and future park use and impacts to conservation values and park user safety will be monitored. Inappropriate recreational activities can increase erosion, spread pest plants and diseases and permanently damage Aboriginal cultural sites. Any future development in the parks of trails or other visitor facilities such as toilets and shelters would be subject to detailed planning and assessment of the environmental and visitor risks, impacts to cultural sites and restoration programs, and site suitability with regard to topography and access requirements. New walking trails may be considered in the future to expand bushwalking opportunities, or to redirect people for ecological reasons. Trails may be modified or closed if impacts to conservation values become unsustainable or if the risk to users is unmanageable.

Dedicated efforts by Friends of Parks and Nature groups and other volunteers has resulted in significant rehabilitation of natural areas across the parks and has contributed to the expansion of Mount George and Mark Oliphant conservation parks, and the proclamation of Mylor Conservation Park. Maintaining and fostering relationships with the community and First Nations peoples will provide opportunities to support cross cultural learning, ensure cultural sites are protected, achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes and provide opportunities for volunteer involvement in park management. Continuing to support volunteer groups in these parks is a priority.



Objective and strategies

Provide appropriate low-impact opportunities for recreation and experiences in nature where risks to ecological values can be minimised, and cultural sites and values are protected.

- Manage existing infrastructure including car parks, signage and tracks and shared use trails, to support low-impacts activities such as bushwalking and nature appreciation. Take appropriate action where impacts on ecological or cultural values are unsustainable, this may include closing or re-routing trails.
- Monitor community sentiment and visitation to the parks to assess the demand for further facilities. Consider upgrades to car parking facilities and day visitor areas, including facilities such as shelters and toilets, if the level of demand shows a need and where ecological impacts can be managed sustainably.
- Ensure park visitors, private contractors and parks staff are aware of and adhere to phytophthora hygiene strategies to prevent its spread.
- Work with First Nations to support their access and connection to Country, and to ensure cultural sites are protected from impacts associated with activities that occur in the parks.
- Incorporate First Nations design elements and perspective in the design of any new visitor facilities and interpretive material and explore opportunities to incorporate traditional knowledge in park management programs.
- Support and encourage partnerships between schools, community and special interest groups and local government for the use of parks for education, and to undertake research and monitoring.
- Develop visitor management strategies for the parks to guide sustainable visitor use, seek opportunities to increase accessibility, connect people to parks and support conservation values.

Invitation to contribute

The Small Central Lofty Parks Draft Management Plan has been released for public consultation to facilitate community input into the management of this park.

You are invited to contribute by making a written submission. Please consider the points below when drafting your submission to help ensure that it is effective:

- Make your submission concise and clear.
- Reference any specific comments to a page or section within the draft plan.
- Identify aspects of the draft plan that you support, or do not support. Explain your reasons for disagreeing with the content of the draft plan and suggest alternatives.
- Highlight any information that may be inaccurate and provide a reference to assist with further editing.

Please note that your submission will become part of the public record and will be available to anyone who requests a copy unless you specifically request otherwise.

After all submissions received have been carefully considered, a final park management plan will be prepared and forwarded to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for consideration together with a detailed analysis of submissions received.

You can submit your comments via post, email or online using the details provided.

Submissions close at 5pm 1 November 2025

Written submissions:

National Parks and Protected Area Program
Department for Environment and Water
GPO Box 1047 ADELAIDE SA 5001

E-mail submissions:

DEWProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au

Please use email subject heading:

Small Central Lofty Parks Plan

Online submissions: YourSAy.sa.gov.au

References

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For further information please contact:

Department for Environment and Water.
Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910, or see
SA White Pages for your local Department for
Environment and Water office.

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