

AUSTRALIA

Australian Fossil Mammals Sites Riversleigh and Naracoorte



II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1994

Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Environment Australia
- Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service
Townsville, Queensland 4810
- Wildlife South Australia
Naracoorte, South Australia 5271
Australia

II.2 Statement of Significance

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Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:
Riversleigh is one of the world's richest Oligo-Miocene mammal records, 15-25 million years old. Placental mammals at Riversleigh are represented by more than 35 bat species. The fossil bat record is also the richest in the world.
The fossils in the Naracoorte Caves illustrate faunal change, highlighting the impacts of both climatic change & humankind on Australia's mammals from at least 350,000 years before the present.
There are almost 99 vertebrate species, ranging in size from very small frogs to buffalo-sized marsupials.
Riversleigh & Naracoorte provide evidence separately of key stages in the evolution of the fauna of the world's most isolated continent.

Status of Site Boundaries

- In 2000, an extension to the Riversleigh WH area boundary (Queensland) was proposed, but the Lawn Hill Riversleigh Pastoral Holding Company did not consent to the sale of their property.
- The Naracoorte Caves National Park boundary (South Australia) was extended to include a small cave known as 'Wombat Cave'. The WH value of this needs to be assessed for the possible extension of the boundary.

II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- The WH value has been maintained.

II.4 Management

Administrative and Management Arrangements

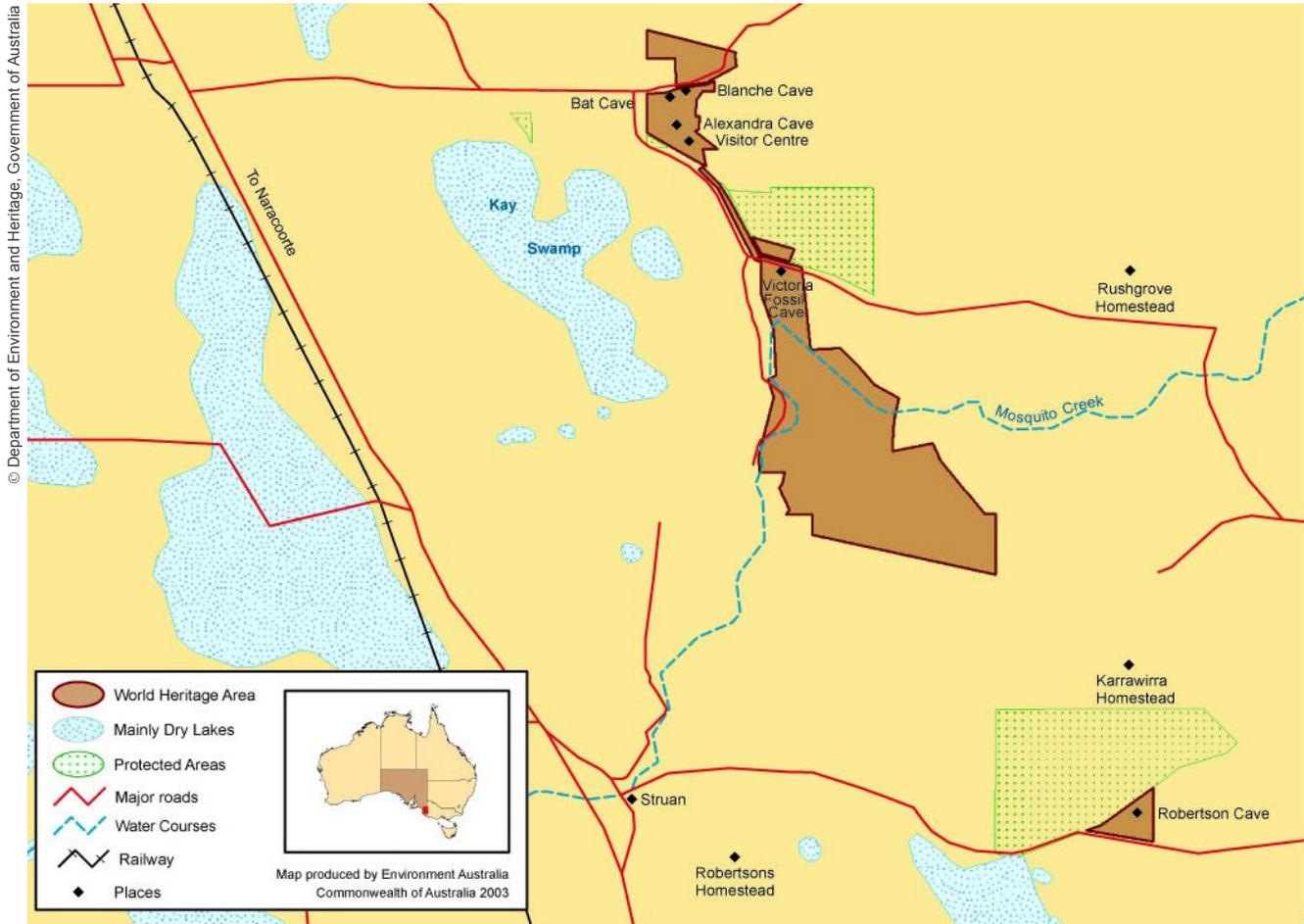
- The property is protected by the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999).
- Other legislation includes: (i) 'Australian Heritage Commission Act' (1975); (ii) 'Native Title Act' (1993); (iii) 'Aboriginal Land Act' (1991); (iv) 'Cultural Record Act' (1987); (v) 'The Nature Conservation Act' (1992); and (vi) 'National Parks & Wildlife Act' (1972).
- The Riversleigh WH area is managed by QPWS. A Management Strategy was developed in 2002.
- The Naracoorte Caves are administered by the Dept. for Environment & Heritage (SA).
- The management Plan for the Naracoorte Caves National Park was formally adopted in February 2001.
- Claims have been made for determination of Native Title over lands.

Present State of Conservation

- The conservation status is considered adequate.
- Media reports (2001 & 2002) claimed that Queensland and the Australian Governments allowed vandalism and illegal removal of fossil material to occur at Riversleigh due to "neglect" & a lack of site security. Funding and management strategies have been provided to address this issue.
- Although mining exploration permits are issued, no exploration is allowed in the WH area.

Staffing and Training Needs

- Riversleigh unit consists of 7 operational staff of which one full time equivalent allocated for WH Area work.
- A full time Ranger-in-Charge for Riversleigh has been recruited for day-to-day management.



Map of Naracoorte caves National Park showing WH Area (in brown) and Protected Area (in green)

- QPWS has nominated two seasonal Cultural Rangers and a Project Officer to the Riversleigh management unit. In addition to this, a Senior Ranger, District Manager and other regional support staff devote a percentage of their time
- Training is required for all staff involved in the direct management of Riversleigh.
- Training of staff involved in cave & fossil presentations is undertaken internally.
- There is a need of a staff member with a Palaeontological background for the training of staff & development of programmes.
- There are 3.5 full time staff, 10 casual & 5 full time equivalent positions at Naracoorte Caves.
- A Palaeontologist is paid for by the Australian Government.

Financial Situation

- The Australian Government has over time provided funding assistance to the States of Queensland & South Australia for a range of measures including staffing, maintenance, protection and presentation of Riversleigh & Naracoote.
- * International Assistance from WHF: none.

Access to IT

- IT arrangements are considered adequate.

Visitor Management

- Approx. 10,000 people visit 'D-site' at Riversleigh each year, with numbers projected to increase with an improved profile, access & walking tracks.
- Accommodation is provided at camping grounds situated 45 km from Riversleigh.
- Naracoorte has over the years had an increased annual visitation from around 40,000 to 80,000.

II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

Threats and Risks

- Increased visitor pressure & small scale disturbance,
- Exotic plant invasions,
- Feral pigs,
- Domestic & wild cattle,
- Fire hazards,
- Fluctuations in temperature & humidity caused by visitors to the Victoria Fossil Cave,
- Extraction of fossiliferous material for research may exert pressure on the site.

Counteractive Plans

- QPWS Resource Rangers are reviewing the weed status & developing a fire control system.
- Rangers control pig activity.
- Commonwealth & Queensland governments are establishing a management strategy for Riversleigh.
- Commonwealth & State funds have been directed towards activities to mitigate risks to the property.

II.6 Monitoring

Monitoring Arrangements

- From April to October, management includes daily randomly timed patrols to all accessible areas.
- Exploration sites have been mapped & surveyed for volumes of material removed.
- Photographic monitoring procedures & survey of the specific sites.
- A 10 km long fence-line project is underway to secure certain areas at Riversleigh.
- Bat populations & associated guanophyllic faunas are being monitored in a collaborative project.

Monitoring Indicators

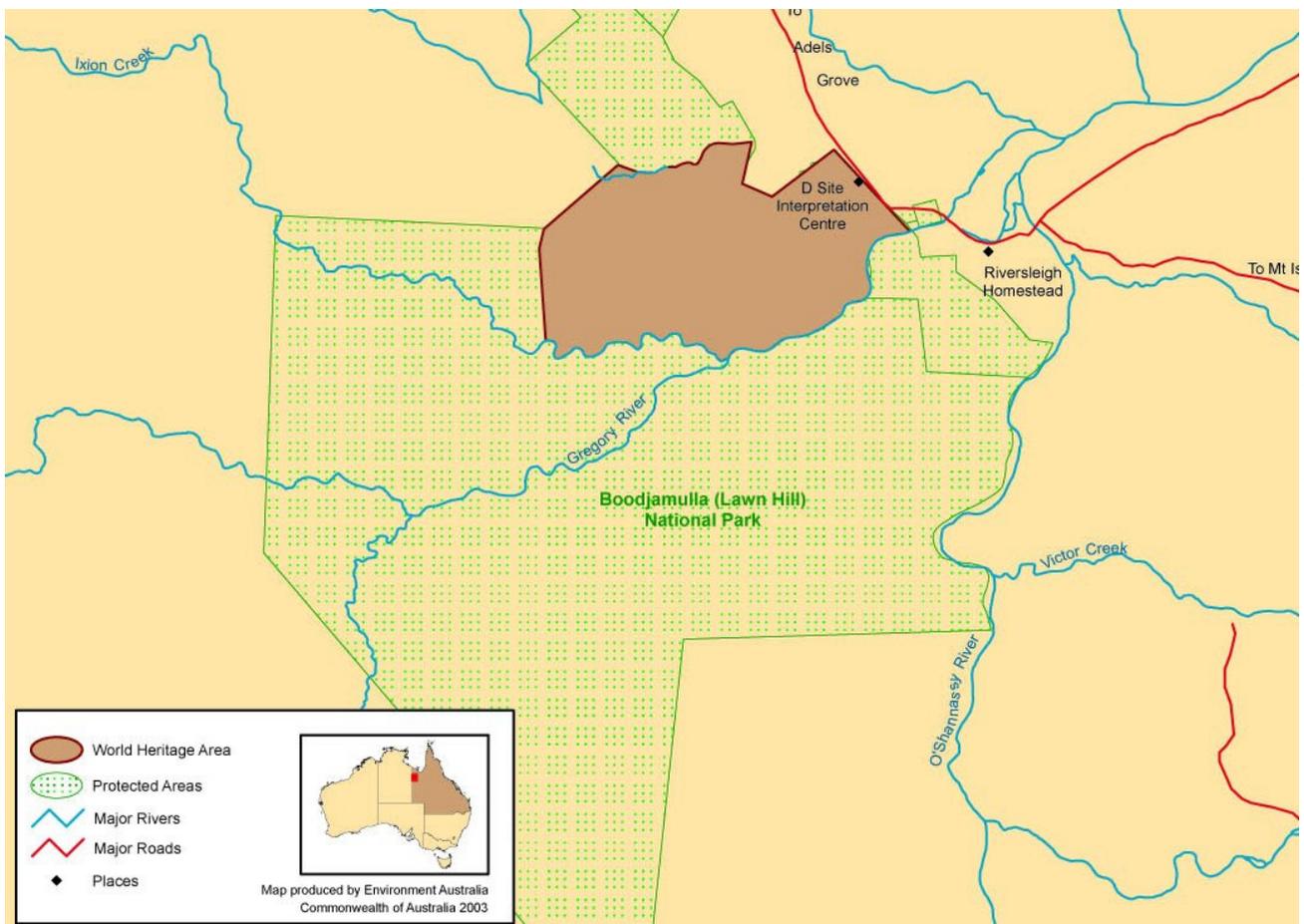
- The monitoring indicators identified are mapping, surveys and research studies.

II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- The main management challenges, for Riversleigh, are to implement improved strategies for protection of a remote World Heritage site by patrols, clear public information and securing public areas.
- The current management challenges, for Naracoorte, are to mitigate the increasing effects of visitation and party size tours through specific caves and redevelop presentation facilities.
- It is recommended that on-going monitoring system for fossil displacement and removal and regular communication are required to assist managers and researchers for a better presentation and transmission of the fossil resource.

* No State of Conservation Reports



Map of Riversleigh showing WH Area (in brown) and Protected Areas (in green)