

Paper 9: **ROLE OF THE SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR NORTHERN TERRITORY SITUATION**

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Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory

1. Organisational Structure

Procedures for the control, co-ordination and support response in the event of an oil spill in the marine environment of the Northern Territory are set out in:

- National Plan : Operations and Procedures Manual,
Department of Transport and Communications (**DoTC**);
- National Plan : Operations and Procedures Manual,
~~NT Supplement, DoTC; and~~
- Special Counter Disaster Plan : Pollution of the Sea by Oil, Northern Territory Emergency Services.

Implementation of the procedures is the responsibility of the Northern Territory Oil Pollution Prevention Committee, chaired by an **officer** of the Marine Branch, Department of Transport and Works. The committee operates pursuant to section 15 (e) of the NT **Disasters Act**, and comprises representatives of:

- Commonwealth Department of Transport and Communications.
 - Darwin Port Authority.
 - Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works, Marine Branch.
 - Australian Institute of **Petroleum** Conservation Executive (AIPCE).
 - Northern Territory **Emergency** Service.
 - Royal Australian Navy.
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Consideration is being given to increasing **membership** to include representatives from the Work Health Authority and **the** Conservation Commission (to provide, "scientific" representation).

The NT Supplement to the National Plan lists **three** scientific support **organisations** : Work Health Authority (**Hazardous** Goods), Primary Industry and Fisheries (Fisheries Research), and Conservation Commission (Environment Protection). The SSC for the particular oil spill event would most likely be chosen from one of these organisations, depending on the circumstances of the spill, including location, and degree of oil spill response training of potential **SSC's**, etc.

Other scientific bodies likely to be called upon to **provide** advice include:

- Department of Mines and Energy
- Water Directorate, Power and **Water** Authority
- Museum and Art Galleries
- **CSIRO**
- Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service

2. SSC- Responsibilities

The role of the Scientific Support Co-ordinator (SSC) is to co-ordinate the provision of all scientific and environmental advice to the On Scene Co-ordinator (OSC) to assist in the development of an appropriate response to the spill.

The SSC will provide the On Scene Co-ordinator and deputies with a balanced assessment of environmental priorities within **the** area **threatened** by the spill, and act as a focal point for the provision of scientific and technical advice to the OSC. The SSC will also give environmental advice on site selection for disposal of **contaminated** debris.

Response planning activities so far **undertaken** in **the** NT **have included**:

- identification (in 1983) of **sensitive** coastal **areas** **where** dispersant should not be used, and regular amendments to **reference** maps to **reflect** increased knowledge of the coastal environment (appendix 1).
- Coastal **Resources** Atlas, prepared by **the** Conservation Commission (appendix 2) showing detailed **resource** information critical to decision-making in **relation** to coastal development and oil spill **response**.
- on-scene spill model (OSSM), run on CSIRONET and held **locally** by the Work Health Authority.

The role of **the** SSC during the response period and post-incident phase has not yet been fully addressed by the NT Committee; however, the nature and size of the administrative structure in the NT, including a relatively small professional/technical staff, has meant that a close working relationship exists between the various people who would be involved in oil spill response.

3. Costs and Resources

Costs associated with response planning, such as development and upgrading of databases are borne by individual authorities and are covered by financial resources obtained through normal budget arrangements.

Costs of the clean-up of an oil spill would normally be recoverable from the polluter with interim funding being made available through the National Plan.

4. NT Experiences

To date the Northern Territory has had no **experience** in dealing with a major oil spill, although there have been several incidents producing small localised spills around the coast line:

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- March 1984 : loss of diesel during fishing trawler **refuelling** within waters of Cobourge Peninsula Marine Park.
 - September 1984 : report of oil slick on **beaches** of **Bathurst** Island. Investigation revealed reef spawn.
 - May 1985 : trawler **fire** and beaching led to **controlled** release of 30,000 **litres** of diesel, after ~~modelling exercise using OSSM.~~
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(The above events included participation by Scientific Advisors • **several** other incidents in Darwin Harbour (e.g. bilge pump-outs) have involved only DTW Marine Branch personnel).

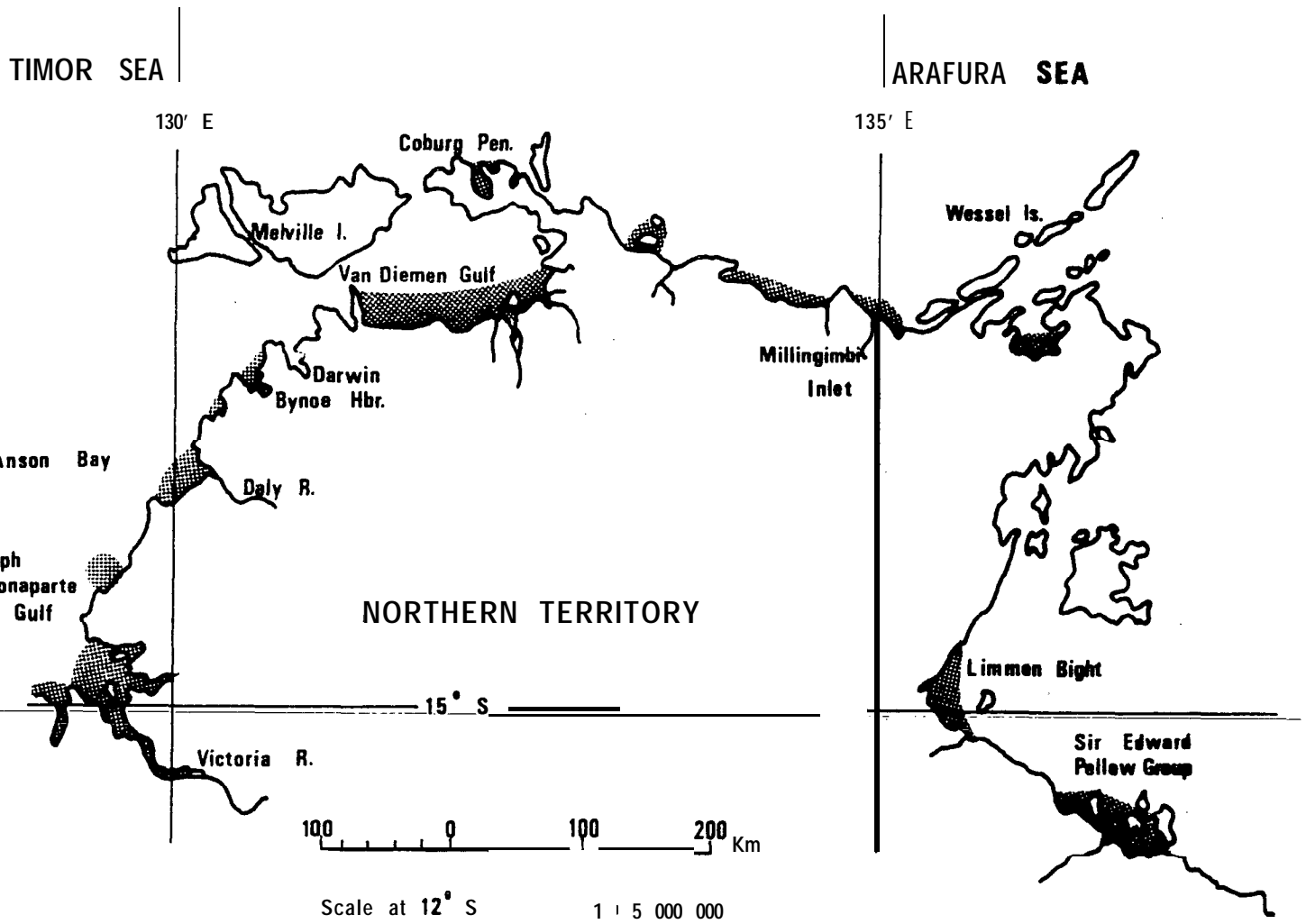
Problems

- no cost **reimbursement** for **false** alarms;
 - isolated nature of NT coast makes fast **response** practically impossible and successful contaminant/clean-up improbable.
-

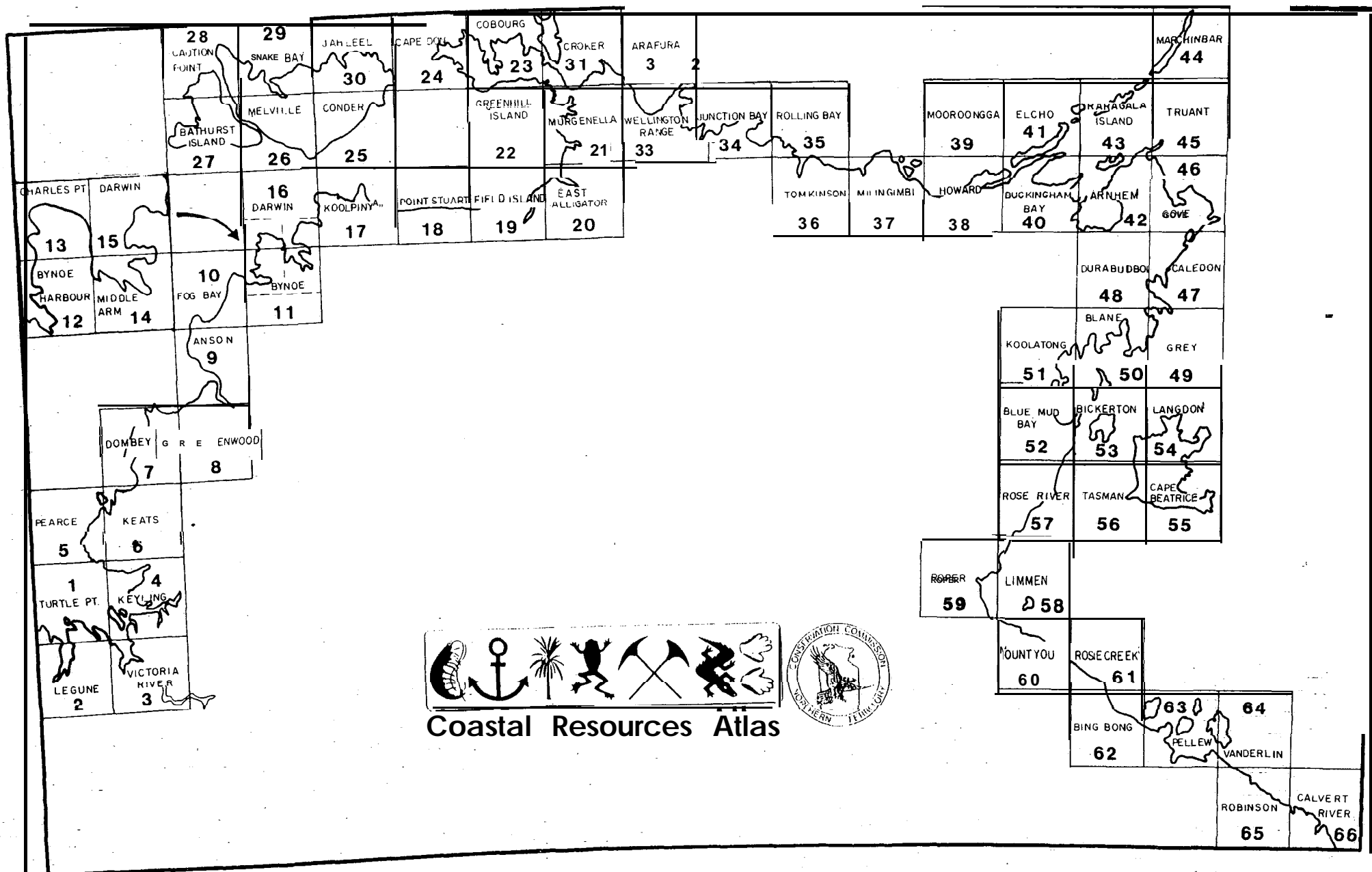
5. Future Directions

Priority actions include:

- expanding membership of Northern Territory Committee to include “scientific” advisors
- developing and refining procedures to cover **role** of SSC in the planning, response and clean-up phases of a spill
- upgrading of the coastal resources atlas to include a guide to appropriate response measures for each section of the NT Coastline
- improving ability to respond to spills in isolated areas’ of coastline (communications, infrastructure, training)
- improving public awareness about all aspects of marine oil pollution (e.g. spill notification procedure, spill avoidance by individuals, awareness of environmental effects).
- establishing an information exchange/liaison network amongst interstate scientific support Co-ordinators.



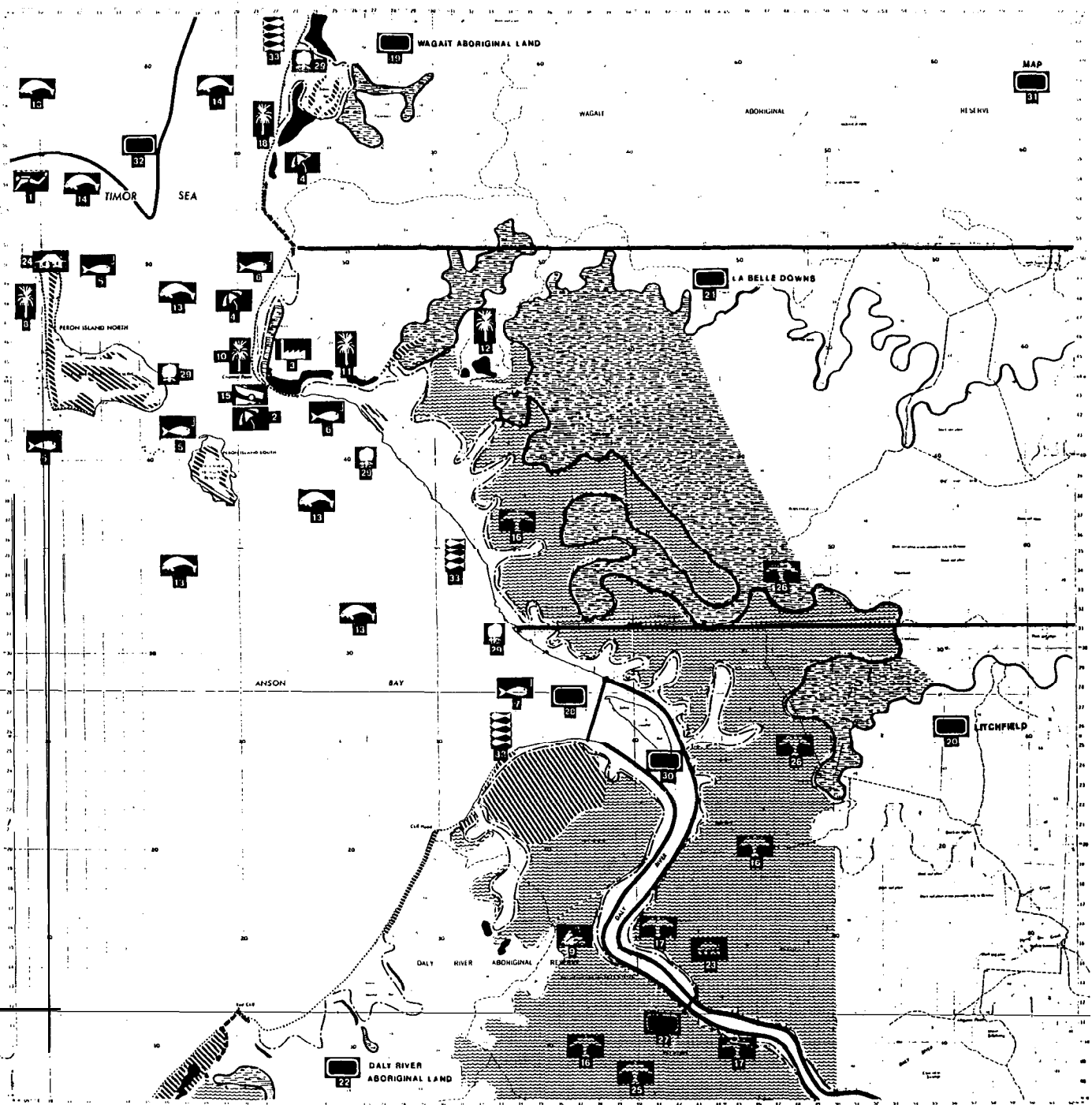
(a) ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS
DISPERSANT RESTRICTED



AUSTRALIA 1:100 000
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

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SHEET 4971-4 DUTKA
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Coastal Resources Commission of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia.

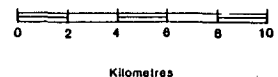
This map has been prepared by the Northern Territory Government and has been reproduced by permission of the
Director of National Mapping, Department of Administrative Services, Canberra, Australia.

This map last UPDATED: Aug 1987

Suggested amendments for next UPDATE:

To retrieve Atlas information for a specific area

1. Note all the site location symbols in the area of interest, and for a radius of approximately 15 km surrounding. Note also the MAP boundary site for that map in the top right hand corner.
2. To relate these symbols to the Atlas Site Records, determine an 8 character SITE NUMBER for each site. The SITE NUMBER comprises a 2 digit map code, a 2 letter category code and a 4 digit site code.
For example:  on Map No. 9 -----> SITE NUMBER: 09DU0004
3. Find the Atlas Site Record for each SITE NUMBER. N.B. Each Site Record contains specific site location details in the SITE DESCRIPTION and an Australian Map Grid designation for the site location symbol in AMG.



Coastal Resources Atlas








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












Map No.
9

Atlas produced by Tim Wood and Bridget Bannum

Site Categories

BY Boundary		NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	
RECREATIONAL		BD Birds	
AN Anchorage		CR Crocodiles	
BR Boat Ramps		DU Dugong	
DV Diving		FA Fauna	
RE Recreation		GE Geomorphic	
RF Rec Fishing		MN Mangroves	
		SE Saagress	
COMMERCIAL		TU Turtles	
AQ Aquaculture		VE Vegetation	
DE Development		CULTURAL	
FS Fishery		HS Historic	
MG Mining		MA Macassan	
PR Prawn		SS Sacred Site	
		SW Shipwrecks	

Landform Categories

ROCKYFORESHORES		SANDY FORESHORES	
High Cliffs ($\geq 20m$)		Sandy beach	
Low Cliffs ($\leq 20m$)		Beech ridges and low parallel dunes	
Degraded Cliffs		Transgressive dunes and sand sheets	
Rock platforms		Sand or mud flats	
COASTAL FLATS		VEGETATION COMMUNITIES	
Littoral Areas		Rainforest	
Wetland		Mangrove	
Seasonally flooded plains			

COASTAL RESOURCES ATLAS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

AMG: 526410008516000

CATEGORY: BIRDS

SITE NUMBER: 09BD0017

SITE DESCRIPTION:

Magpie geese (*Anseranas semipalmata*) - strip 2 km wide along the Daly River from approx 10 km from the mouth upstream to the extent of the map

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

(1) The range of magpie geese has been drastically reduced since the settlement of Australia. They are locally abundant in their present range. (2) Significant concentrations of geese are found here during the Dry season.

SOURCE:

F Bayliss, Qld. NFWS

REFERENCES :

CRVR SITE F08001, 00038, 00039, 00040, 00031, 00024

OTHER COMMENTS:

Refer F Whithead, CCNT. Magpie geese breeding requirements are specific and nesting is in concentrations. This exposes entire breeding populations to the risk of cyclones, abrupt habitat decline, human disturbance etc.. A present threat is habitat destruction, caused by the spread of Mimosa pigra.

~~This record last UPDATED: Aug 1987~~

Suggested amendments for next UPDATE:

Name:

Telephone:

Date: