

# Greater Holtze Area Plan submission

This brief submission primarily relates to the areas north of Holtze and Howard Springs (Part Four) that have yet to be looked at in detail.

The submission identifies a need to develop a Darwin regional biodiversity plan to identify critical habitat and set out wildlife corridors in order to maintain Darwin's biodiversity.

## Introduction

Strategic land use plans need to address the orderly development of land and includes the conservation of native flora and fauna.

Conserving native wildlife means allowing wildlife to move across a region. Wildlife corridors promote genetic diversity in animal populations and can be critical for small-medium mammals because it allows them to move safely between areas of shelter, food and water.

Planning for wildlife corridors to support wildlife populations can involve large areas. Based on research (Rankmore 2006) in Darwin's rural area; the guideline (paraphrased here) for woodland clearing so that the vast majority of small-medium mammals can survive is: – *a minimum woodland area of 20 sq km in a 50 sq km area (40%) needs to be kept. While this can be made up a series of patches (preferably larger than 10ha), the patches should be connected by a minimum of two corridors at least 100m wide and preferably have habitat the mammal can live in.*

Green corridors contained in Area Plans generally allow for the movement of people and some wildlife ie. birdlife. Wildlife corridors should allow the passage of all wildlife where possible and are best planned at a regional level before Area Plans are developed.

## Regional Land Use Plans

Wildlife corridors are not included in the 2022 Holtze to Elizabeth Subregional Area Plan or the 2015 Darwin Regional Land Use Plan. However, “Sites of Conservation Significance” (refer to page 57) are included in the 2015 Darwin Regional Land Use Plan), an excerpt is shown in Fig 1 below.

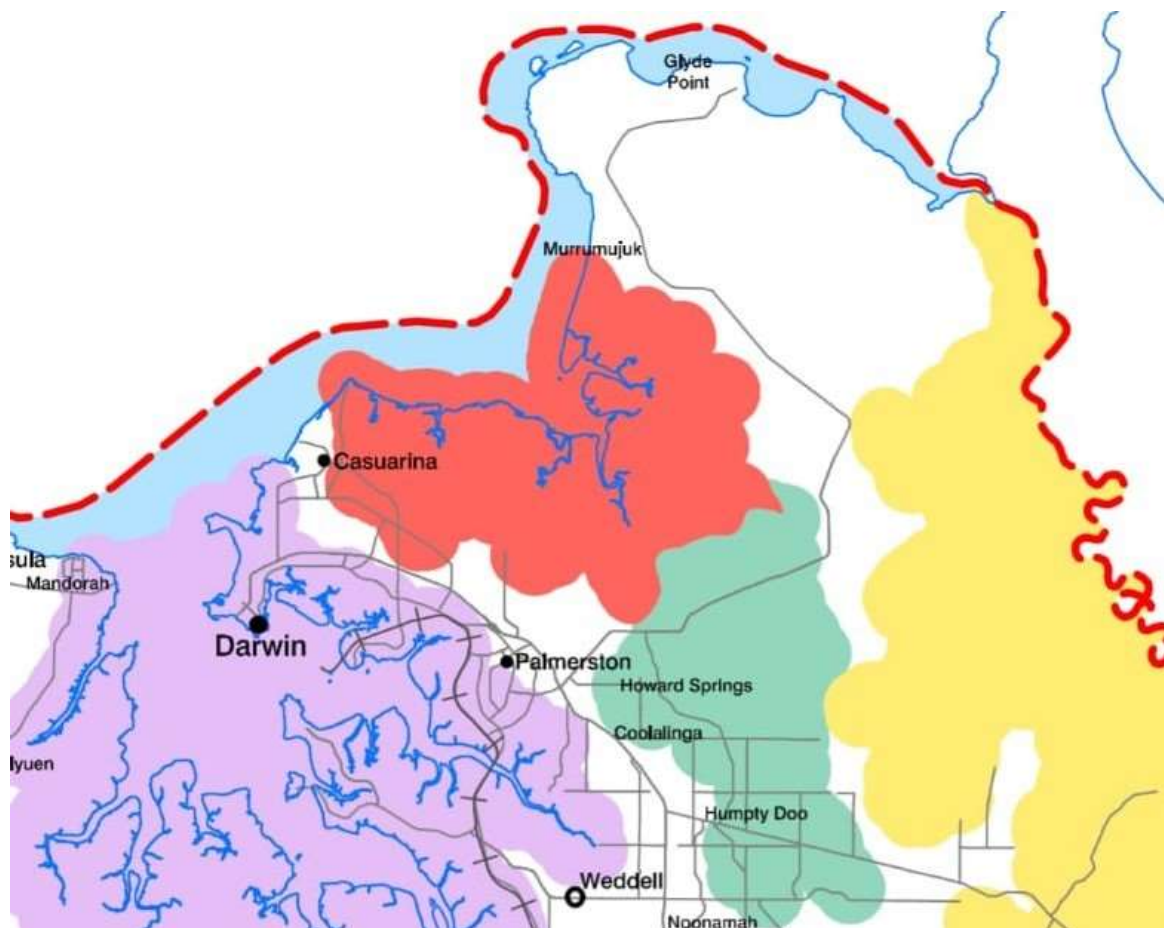


Fig 1. Excerpt from Sites of Conservation Significance Sites map. Red refers to Shoal Bay, green to Howard Springs Sand Plains and purple to Darwin harbour.

The map above indicates that much of the Darwin – Palmerston area has conservation significance. Clearly development has taken a different course (see map below).



Fig 2 Shows development, Greater Holtze area and a possible wildlife corridor (in green)

Originally the (27km) wildlife corridor described in Fig 2 would have been a continuous savanna woodland stretching from Casuarina Coastal Reserve to Shoal Bay Reserve. Today development/mining has encroached on some parts of the corridor and four minor sealed roads cross it. These minor roads have little or no traffic at night and much of the corridor is relatively intact making it important habitat for nocturnal mammals such as the endangered Black-footed tree-rat and Northern brushtail possum.

## Wildlife and Darwin

Maintaining an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture is important for the wellbeing of First Nations people and the broader community. In addition to this a significant number of Darwin businesses rely on tourism which in turn markets itself on wildlife/biodiversity and Larrakia culture - all of which is connected to land.

A significant proportion of our native wildlife start their lives in large savanna woodland trees (tree hollows), also called old growth trees. The number of old

growth trees have declined dramatically with the development of Darwin because these trees grow in the same area where housing is located, that is 14 m above mean sea level.

At the current rate of clearing Darwin will run out of unprotected woodland (not in reserves or buffers) by early 2040. Protecting suitably sized critical habitat is important if Darwin is to retain its biodiversity.

## Summary

Maintaining Darwin's biodiversity means protecting and connecting critical areas of habitat. To achieve this, a Darwin regional biodiversity plan needs to be developed to identify critical habitat and set out wildlife corridors.

The land use principles for Holtze North and Howard Springs North should recognise and accommodate a wildlife corridor to the north of these areas.

**Note** - Further information on statements made here can be found in this document available on-line: Lee Point: protecting critical habitat and Darwin's last wildlife corridor

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