

Protection for National Parks in Oz

In recent months, many of Australia's National Parks seem to have been under siege, with proposals to allow hunting in some, while others had cattle released into their pristine habitats under the guise of "scientific research". Birds Australia (BirdLife Partner) saw it as good news that recently the Federal Environment Minister, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, has announced a plan to give greater protection to areas with high biodiversity, such as Australia's National Parks, as Matters of National Environmental Significance. The proposed regulation would mean that any new proposals to introduce grazing, logging, mining or inappropriate clearing would "trigger" the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act), the Commonwealth's primary piece of environmental legislation. "We applaud this as a great first step, and we hope it will be part of a broader package of reforms" said Samantha Vine, Birds Australia Conservation Manager and convener of a conservation working group pushing for reform of the EPBC Act. "Recognising ecosystems of national importance, such as the National Reserve System, as Matters of National Environmental Significance is just one of the many recommendations outlined by Dr Hawke in his independent review of the reforms necessary to protect our natural environment," she said. It is generally assumed that once an area is declared a National Park or highly protected area of some kind, it is safe for wildlife forever, but recent developments have shown that this is not necessarily the case. This announcement by Mr Burke will hopefully lead the way towards making it the case, so that in the future, our National Parks will never again be subjected to such pressures which compromise the areas' special values. By doing this, Australia will be stepping up its conservation effort so that we will be able to meet our commitments under international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. For more information, visit the [Birds Australia website](#). [Click here to subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter.](#)