Queensland University ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions Director Professor Hugh Possingham warns that Australia’s many of native endangered fauna will be extinct before the nation has the chance to save them, with world first Australian research showing it is possible to estimate how many species it is possible to save based on how much is spent protecting them.

**Interviewees:** Prof Hugh Possingham, Director, Queensland University ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions

**Duration:** 0.55

**Summary ID:** M00048894438

This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 68 station(s):-

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- 2WAY (Wauchope)
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Professor Hugh Possingham, University of Queensland and Leading Australian Ecologist believes new research shows it could be up to the public to decide which endangered species are saved. The findings show it is now possible to estimate now how many species can be saved based on funds spend on them and their habitats.

Interviewees: Professor Hugh Possingham, University of Queensland and Leading Australian Ecologist

Duration: 0.45

Summary ID: W00048870162

This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 19 station(s):- 2AY (Albury), 2BS (Bathurst), 2GN (Goulburn), 2QN (Deniliquin), 2RG (Griffith), 2WEB (Bourke), 2WG ( Wagga Wagga), 3NE ( Wangaratta), 3SH ( Swan Hill), 3SR FM ( Shepparton), 3WM ( Horsham), 3YB ( Warrnambool), 4BU ( Bundaberg), 4DDB ( Toowoomba), 4LG ( Longreach), 4VL ( Charleville), 4ZR ( Roma), 5MU ( Murray Bridge), 5SE ( Mt Gambier)

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Brown talks to Professor Hugh Possingham, an Ecologist from the University of Queensland and the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions about the idea of national parks being sold off to protect the species living in them. Brown asks why the current system is not working, and Possingham says that they are doing the best they can but that they lack resources. He notes that the rate of extinction across Australia is 100 to 1,000 times what it was before European settlement. Brown asks what the biggest enemies of species in national parks are, and Possingham responds that they are inappropriate fire regimes, weeds and feral animals. He says that NSW has a large park system, and that NT and Qld are expanding their park systems. He suggests that some expansions should put parks under the management of local land owners. Brown says that pest and weed management is a laborious job, but that few people care enough to do it. She asks how to create a new movement of habitat protection. Possingham says that people do things when they are empowered, and that most Australians tend to think that looking after national parks is the responsibility of local, state and Federal Governments. He notes that a lot of conservation work in North America and Europe is handled by land owners and communities. Brown says that ecological campaigners claim that Australia spends more on desalination plants than on the country which generates a lot more water, and says that the media needs to give more space to messages like these. Possingham says that State and Federal Governments spend a relatively small amount on land management, and notes that when he left SA they were managing national park areas twice the size of Belgium with 100 park rangers, compared to the billions of dollars spent on road improvements. Brown talks about the sighting of a tiger quoll in the Otway Ranges in Vic, noting that it is a critically endangered species. Possingham says that fox management is probably they key to protecting the species, but that this requires a lot of resources. [cont]
ABC Illawarra (Wollongong)
Statewide Afternoons - 7/05/2012 3:56 PM
Bonita Brown

[cont] SMS: John says that PM Julia Gillard would 'struggle to make breakfast for herself, let alone look after national parks and endangered animals'. [cont]

Interviewees: Prof Hugh Possingham, Ecologist, University of Queensland
Duration: 0.11
Summary ID: W00048577369
This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 7 station(s): ABC Central West NSW (Orange), ABC Coffs Coast (Coffs Harbour), ABC New England North West (Tamworth), ABC North Coast NSW (Lismore), ABC Riverina (Wagga Wagga), ABC South East NSW (Bega), ABC Western Plains NSW (Dubbo)
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ABC Illawarra (Wollongong)
Statewide Afternoons - 7/05/2012 3:56 PM
Bonita Brown

[cont] Brown says that the challenge is in getting this message out to a broader audience. Possingham suggests testing this idea in a few places for a while to see how well it works.

Interviewees: Prof Hugh Possingham, Ecologist, University of Queensland
Duration: 0.56
Summary ID: W00048577384
This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 7 station(s): ABC Central West NSW (Orange), ABC Coffs Coast (Coffs Harbour), ABC New England North West (Tamworth), ABC North Coast NSW (Lismore), ABC Riverina (Wagga Wagga), ABC South East NSW (Bega), ABC Western Plains NSW (Dubbo)
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Courier Mail

At-risk native birds in revival
Courier Mail, 03/05/12, General News, Page 18
By: Brian Williams

Article Information
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National parks fail to protect natural wonders
Courier Mail, 10/05/12, General News, Page 24
By: Brian Williams
A Qld ecologist, Prof Hugh Possingham, wants a rethink of conservation strategy in Australia. It may include selling some national parks. He argues the funds could then be used for urgent ecological projects. Many national parks in Australia protect fauna but said Australia is losing species quickly. He said some parts are 'too far gone' and their loss should be accepted. The Australian Conservation Foundation's Dr Paul Sinclair continue to advocate for more govt funding for the environment. Pest and weed management is labour-intensive and currently done by only a few rangers. Possingham said wildlife groups could have a more hands-on involvement.

Interviewees: Dr Paul Sinclair, Australian Conservation Foundation ; Prof Hugh Possingham, Uni of Qld

Duration: 4.00

Summary ID: S00048574345

This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 59 station(s):-
ABC 612 Brisbane (Brisbane), ABC 666 Canberra (Canberra), ABC 702 Sydney (Sydney), ABC 720 Perth (Perth), ABC 774 Melbourne (Melbourne), ABC 891 Adelaide (Adelaide), ABC 936 Hobart (Hobart), ABC Ballarat (Ballarat), ABC Broken Hill (Broken Hill), ABC Capricornia (Rockhampton), ABC Central Australia (Alice Springs), ABC Central Coast (Erina), ABC Central Victoria (Bendigo), ABC Central West NSW (Orange), ABC Coffs Coast (Coffs Harbour), ABC Darwin (Darwin), ABC Far North (Cairns), ABC Gippsland (Sale), ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast), ABC Goldfields WA (Perth), ABC Goldfields/Esperance (Esperance), ABC Goulburn Murray (Wodonga), ABC Great Southern WA (Wagin), ABC Illawarra (Wollongong), ABC Kimberley (Broome), ABC Midwest Wheatbelt (Geraldton), ABC Mildura Swan Hill (Mildura), ABC New England North West (Tamworth), ABC Newcastle (Newcastle), ABC North and West SA (Port Pirie), ABC North Coast NSW (Lismore), ABC North Queensland (Townsville), ABC North West Qld (Mt Isa), ABC North West WA (Karratha), ABC Northern Tasmania (Launceston), ABC Riverina (Wagga Wagga), ABC Riverland SA (Renmark), ABC Shepparton (Shepparton), ABC South Coast WA (Albany), ABC South East NSW (Bega), ABC South East SA (Mt Gambier), ABC South West WA (Bunbury), ABC South Western Victoria (Warrnambool), ABC Southern Queensland (Toowoomba), ABC Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts (Sunshine Coast), ABC Tropical North (Mackay), ABC Upper Hunter (Muswellbrook), ABC West Coast SA (Port Lincoln), ABC Western Plains NSW (Dubbo), ABC Western Queensland (Longreach), ABC Western Victoria (Horsham), ABC Wide Bay (Bundaberg), Radio National (Hobart), Radio National (Perth), Radio National (Brisbane), Radio National (Sydney), Radio National (Melbourne), Radio National (Adelaide), Radio National (Darwin)
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Interview with Prof. Hugh Possingham, Director, Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions, University of Queensland, and Kevin Evans, CEO, National Parks Association of NSW. Possingham and Evans discuss the issue of selling off National Parks. Possingham argues that Australia is not doing a very good job of looking after its biodiversity, with a lack of funding to blame. He says it is time to think outside the box, as there are large areas that are impossible to manage currently, and he suggests that they are sold off and managed by the private sector. He is not advocating selling them off for mining or other uses. He argues that it is harder to control pests and weeds in larger parks due to a lack of rangers and funds. Evans discusses the amount of money that is put into managing National Parks. He says they are facing a challenge from numerous sides, but finds the idea of selling National parks abhorrent. He says there should be a sharing of costs in managing parks, citing the Great Eastern Ranges initiative in NSW, which is a Private Public Partnership. Possingham is open to this idea, but points out that whatever is being done now is not enough. He mentions that he does not want to tell people of governments what to do, but hopes they take their research into account and put best business practices into place. Evans says Possingham's argument has not won him over, as politicians will use the report from an economic rationalist viewpoint, not taking into account the conservation value of National Parks.

**Interviewees:** Kevin Evans, CEO, National Parks Association of NSW; Prof. Hugh Possingham, Director, Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions, University of Queensland

**Duration:** 18.41

**Summary ID:** M00048666977

This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 8 station(s):- Radio National (Newcastle), Radio National (Sydney), Radio National (Melbourne), Radio National (Brisbane), Radio National (Perth), Radio National (Hobart), Radio National (Adelaide), Radio National (Darwin)

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Anderson says on Monday there was a discussion about an idea to sell off some of our so-called less viable national parks Letter: Verina says she can not believe Hugh Possingham, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions at The University of Queensland could hold the views expressed. She says leave our heritage alone and forget whether something is economically viable. She says do not put a money value on our national heritage.

**Duration:** 1.03

**Summary ID:** M00048733068

This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 8 station(s):- Radio National (Newcastle), Radio National (Sydney), Radio National (Melbourne), Radio National (Brisbane), Radio National (Perth), Radio National (Hobart), Radio National (Adelaide), Radio National (Darwin)

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Anderson says the National Parks Australia Council responded to the story of selling off less viable national parks Letter- The claim made by Hugh Possingham, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions at The University of Queensland that many of our national parks would be better managed if they were sold into private hands is deeply flawed. Possingham presented no information to support his claims. Privatisation would expose parks to mining and grazing while denying public access.

Duration: 1.24
Summary ID: M00048733129
This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 8 station(s):
- Radio National (Newcastle)
- Radio National (Sydney)
- Radio National (Melbourne)
- Radio National (Brisbane)
- Radio National (Perth)
- Radio National (Hobart)
- Radio National (Adelaide)
- Radio National (Darwin)

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Western Cape Bulletin

Sell our National Parks How much of Australia can we afford to save?
Western Cape Bulletin, 09/05/12, General News, Page 1
By: None
At-risk native birds in revival

Brian Williams
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Scientists have found a long list of at-risk native birds are prospering in newly replanted and regrowth timber on farms.

The finding turns on its head long-held theories about forests versus new growth.

It has implications for Queensland where farm group Agforce proposes to lobby Agriculture Minister Andrew Cripps on changes to the Vegetation Management Act, particularly in relation to regrowth.

David Lindenmayer, of the Federal Government National Environmental Research Program and Australian National University, said threatened birds clocked up remarkable recovery rates in regrowth and plantings.

He monitored 193 sites on 46 NSW farms over 10 years.

“We’ve seen a big increase in numbers of rare and endangered birds … despite the drought,” Professor Lindenmayer said.

“It’s a true credit to all the farmers who have worked so hard to protect and restore native vegetation.”

It suggested policies that allowed regrowth to be cleared or thinned needed to be re-examined.

The findings are likely to be good news for farmers into carbon farming – being paid to keep trees – but could be bad news for those who wish to clear regrowth.

Agforce president Brent Finlay said the research proved that many farmers did good work preserving biodiversity, but the downside was that whenever graziers were prevented from clearing regrowth, it inevitably meant productive areas were locked up.

“You often get places where regrowth quickly becomes a monoculture. You can’t find any birds or animals in it,” Mr Finlay said. “Species like pine and mulga get that thick that you can’t even get into it. There has to be a balance.”

Graziers have long been irritated about regrowth clearing restrictions. It occurs when timber reshoots, blotting out valuable pasture. Aboriginal burning also produced substantial areas of open country. Since this ceased, large areas have become heavily timbered, which farmers also term regrowth.

Hugh Possingham, of the University of Queensland, said the findings could be extrapolated to Queensland, although more studies were needed.

Queensland birds that could benefit included hooed robins, red-capped robins, painted honeyeaters and brown treecreepers.
RARE WONDERS:
The red-capped robin (above); the brown treecreeper (right); and red-capped robin chicks (left).
National parks fail to protect natural wonders

Brian Williams
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

AUSTRALIA may need to sell some national parks if it is to afford to conserve its most important landscapes and species.

University of Queensland’s Hugh Possingham, one of the nation’s most eminent ecologists, said in terms of protecting and preserving flora and fauna, it was time national park performance was measured against properties outside reserved areas.

Scarcity of conservation funds could be better spent in stewardship agreements with farmers under which they would be paid to reduce grazing pressure and change fire regimes.

It might turn out that lightly-grazed properties held under Land for Wildlife or nature reserve schemes could preserve species as well or better than parks.

Central Queensland’s Bimblebox Nature Reserve was an example.

Professor Possingham said it was obvious that some sort of tenure change would be needed for places such as Bimblebox which was proposed to be mined.

Last week, James Cook University’s Stephen Williams said the situation for north Queensland rainforest species was bleak because of climate change. Although they were in national parks, they were not protected from change.

Species at threat even included the Herbert River ringtail possum, the National Parks and Wildlife Service symbol.

Professor Possingham said species and ecosystems were still being lost nationwide.

“We need... to decide what we can afford to save because the current system plainly isn’t working,” he said.

Ironically, Queensland was in a better position to address the problem than other states because with just 5 per cent reserved—it was still putting together a national parks system.

If compared poorly with SA, which had 20 per cent in parks, and Victoria, with 15 per cent.

“When we acquire new parks, we need to think about them relative to other land management options... which may be a lot cheaper,” he said.

Former premier Anna Bligh had proposed a similar system, with various land tenures being used to boost reserved areas and the current Government has proposed to lift management and access.

Professor Possingham said some parks were not working because there were too few rangers and not enough funding to manage feral pests, weeds and fire regimes.

“Australian native species are still disappearing at a rate 100 to 1000 times faster than normal,” he said. “Over the last 200 years, 22 mammal species have become extinct, over 100 are now on the threatened and endangered species list and six more bird taxa were recently declared extinct.

“Fourteen species of frogs are on their last legs.”

He said Australians should be encouraged to care for, rather than clear, privately-owned land.
AUSTRALIA may need to consider selling off some of its National Parks if it is to be able to afford to conserve its most important landscapes and species for future generations.

This challenging suggestion comes from Professor Hugh Possingham, director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions (CEED) at The University of Queensland.

“Basically, Australia is facing some very tough decisions,” Professor Possingham said. “For all our present nationwide investment in conservation, we are still losing both species and ecosystem integrity.

“We clearly need better ways to decide what we can afford to save, because the current system plainly isn’t working as well as we’d hoped.

“The evidence indicates that Australian native species are still disappearing at a rate 100 to 1000 times faster than normal.

“Over the past 200 years, 22 mammal species have become extinct, over 100 are now on the threatened and endangered species list, and 6 more bird taxa were recently declared extinct.

>> continued page 3
How much of Australia can we afford to save?

“Fourteen species of frogs are on their last legs.”

With limited funds, both government and private, for conservation the nation may have to look at a new system for allocating those funds where both the need and the prospects of success are greatest, Professor Possingham said.

This implied that public funds may have to be withdrawn from some areas and reinvested in others.

“You could liken it to triage in a World War II military hospital: tough decisions may need to be taken about which patients have the best chance of survival and the resources allocated accordingly.

“Otherwise you spread your effort too thinly and achieve too little.

“This is not a popular point of view – but it is grounded in reality.

“While 12 per cent of the continent is enclosed in National Parks, few have sufficient resources to manage their biota intensively.

In the absence of major new sources of funds, we need to consider where the prospects of success are greatest and, indeed, what success in conservation actually consists of.”

In the past, Australian conservation tended to be driven by a wish to restore parts of the continent to a pre-European state – but this had proved impractical.

“It can’t be done in a dynamic world, where human influences and changing climates are constantly altering the rules for survival,” Professor Possingham said.

Across the whole of Australia, current conservation investment was probably about a tenth of what would be needed to protect most species and ecosystems and reduce rates of extinction, he estimated.

“As funding at this level is unlikely to become available in the short run, we should look at putting resources into those National Parks and species where we have the best chance of achieving something - and that may mean selling off smaller parks that are not viable,” he said.

However, selling national parks need not mean their loss in a conservation sense – many well-off Australians now had a strong desire to look after native bushland and its species on a private basis, while many farmers were revegetating cleared land with native trees, leading to recovery in native species.

“All there are enough covenants and restrictions in force now to ensure conservation of the landscape even when it is managed privately,” he said.

“If we have to refocus public investment on the National Parks where we can achieve the best conservation results, then maybe we should also find ways to encourage more Australians to take care of their own landscapes and endangered species privately.”

For effective decisions to be taken about which aspects of Australian biodiversity we can afford to manage well, there are two requirements, he said: better quantification of the actual costs of conservation – and better mathematical models for predicting the probable outcomes of various conservation actions.

Both were now becoming available.

“This thinking is exactly the way business operates – where can we invest to get the best return on our investment.

“The logic is equally compelling when applied to conservation.

“In short we have a basis for taking much better decisions about our environment which can ensure quintessential landscapes and key species are better protected.

“But those decisions will not happen without some losses and public controversy.

“It’s a case of deciding which battles we can win with the resources available – and fighting those.”

CEED is an Australian Research Council funded Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions and is part of the Commonwealth’s National Environmental Research Program (NERP). CEED’s research tackles key gaps in environmental decision-making, monitoring and adaptive management.
“It’s a case of deciding which battles we can win with the resources available – and fighting those.” – Professor Possingham