

Montague Island: excellence in protected area management

IUCN Green List of Protected Areas

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Green List of Protected Areas (Green List) recognises excellence in protected area management.

Protected areas considered for the Green List meet internationally agreed standards for protected area management and demonstrate successful outcomes as a result of sound planning, equitable governance and effective management.

Montague Island

Montague Island is located 350 kilometres south of Sydney and 9 kilometres east of Narooma, NSW. The island is 1.5 kilometres long and 500 metres wide and is designated as a nature reserve (IUCN Category IV). It is a critical seabird breeding site with more than 25,000 pairs from 12 species recorded. Around 2000 fur seals visit the island during the breeding season.

Montague Island has great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, who call it Barunguba - the elder son of Gulaga (Mt Dromedary).

The restored lighthouse and keepers cottages date back to 1881 and are now used as tourist accommodation.

Sound planning

Strategic documents that guide management include the Montague Island Plan of Management, Regional Pest Management Strategy and Integrated Business Management Plan. These identify the values, threats, and management strategies that provide long-term protection and opportunities for sustainable tourism, education and scientific research.



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Equitable governance

Montague Island Nature Reserve is managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. This Act provides for public consultation in designating, reviewing and managing the reserve.

Stakeholders, Aboriginal groups and the public also contribute to managing the reserve through regular meetings of the Regional Advisory Committee.

Effective management

Key threats including pests, weeds and risk of unplanned fires have been strategically managed, resulting in vertebrate pest-free status being declared in 2009, rehabilitation of seabird nesting habitats, and protection of the island from bushfires.

By strictly controlling visitation, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has protected natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage values and developed an award-winning ecotourism business that offers a unique wildlife experience and contributes to the costs of running the reserve.

Successful outcomes

Montague Island Nature Reserve is an exceptional example of protected area management. Natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage values of national and international significance have been conserved and restored with the help and support of visitors and local communities. These values form the basis of the reserve's thriving tourism industry.



Seabird Habitat Restoration Project

The value of Montague Island as a critical nesting site for thousands of shearwaters, penguins and terns was severely affected by the proliferation of introduced rabbits, mice and weeds. Kikuyu grass smothered large areas of native vegetation and trapped hundreds of penguins each year.

In 2004, managers embarked on an ambitious pest and weed removal strategy based on scientific studies by Charles Sturt University.

A program of baiting for rabbits and mice resulted in Montague Island being declared vertebrate pest-free in 2009.

By 2014, the area of kikuyu grass had been halved through a combination of burning and spraying with herbicide. Over 60,000 native seedlings have been planted to reduce any risk of reinfestation and provide suitable seabird nesting habitat. As a result, the resilience of breeding seabirds to climate change impacts has also increased.

Thousands of dedicated volunteers have contributed to the success of this project.

As an indication of the project's success, the highly endangered Gould's petrel bred on the island for the first time in 2013.



More information

To find out more, email npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au or search for 'Montague' on nationalparks.nsw.gov.au or www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/

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