

Protected areas alone won't save all threatened species

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Northern Quoll. Credit: Nicolas Pakotopare

Protected areas alone are not enough to save Australia's threatened species, according to research from the Threatened Species Recovery Hub.

The research team, led by University of Queensland Ph.D. candidate Stephen Kearney, investigated major threats facing threatened [species](#) and considered how protected areas could alleviate such threats.

"The key finding is that simply reserving land will remove all threats to

very few species – only three per cent in fact," Mr Kearney said.

"It is not enough to just place land in a protected area and then walk away."

Australia is one of the first countries in the world to reach an international target of having 17 per cent of its land covered by protected areas such as national parks, as a strategy to halt biodiversity declines.

The researchers considered data for more than 1,500 species, including threatened plant, mammal, bird, fish, frog, reptile and insect species.

"We did discover that well managed protected areas would address all major threats facing almost half of our [threatened species](#), and address at least one major threat for all threatened species," Mr Kearney said.

"But half of our threatened species present a serious need to look beyond protected areas to effectively deal with some of the major problems threatening their survival, such as the facial tumour disease facing Endangered Tasmanian Devils."



Green and golden bell frog. Credit: Adam Parsons

UQ's Professor James Watson said the only way to avoid future extinctions was to conduct broader conservation efforts, such as managing pest species and weeds and stopping land clearing.

"There is increasing evidence that Indigenous ranger programs and farm stewardship programs can play a vital role in managing habitat and threats to biodiversity outside [protected areas](#).

"Governments should magnify these efforts."

The research is published in *Oryx*.

More information: Stephen G. Kearney et al. Estimating the benefit of well-managed protected areas for threatened species conservation, *Oryx* (2018). [DOI: 10.1017/S0030605317001739](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605317001739)

Provided by University of Queensland

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