



Sustainable use of saltwater crocodiles

The harvesting of crocodiles and crocodile eggs in the Territory over the past 25 years has been managed to deliver the primary objectives of sustainable, viable crocodile populations.

In the last six years, on average, the Northern Territory has exported more than 6000 saltwater crocodile skins both interstate and internationally. The meat and other products of crocodiles such as teeth and skulls also generate an economic return.

Following close liaison with the crocodile harvesting industry, this management program proposes a ceiling of 50 000 live eggs (eggs initially harvested from the wild and placed into an incubator) that can be harvested from the wild. This harvest is permitted through the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act*. The increase to 50 000 live eggs will be applicable for the first two years of the management program and reviewed after the population surveys of this period have been completed and analysed. It is proposed to permit up to 500 adult crocodiles to be harvested from the wild.

Management focused research

This management program will be underpinned by enhanced new research and analysis of existing data on population dynamics and distribution of saltwater crocodiles. This will also incorporate a risk analysis for the Darwin rural area that will identify crocodile 'hotspots' that can be targeted for more frequent management and removal actions.

The development of harvest modelling will be undertaken which will assist in the assessment of harvest options and possible harvest impacts. The development of a GIS database to assist with allocation of eggs and assessment of harvest efforts and compliance will also be introduced. This will include the improved linkage of information between eggs being harvested from the wild and the resultant hatchlings on farms.

Further information

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Summary Paper Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile

Crocodylus porosus

in the Northern Territory 2009-2014

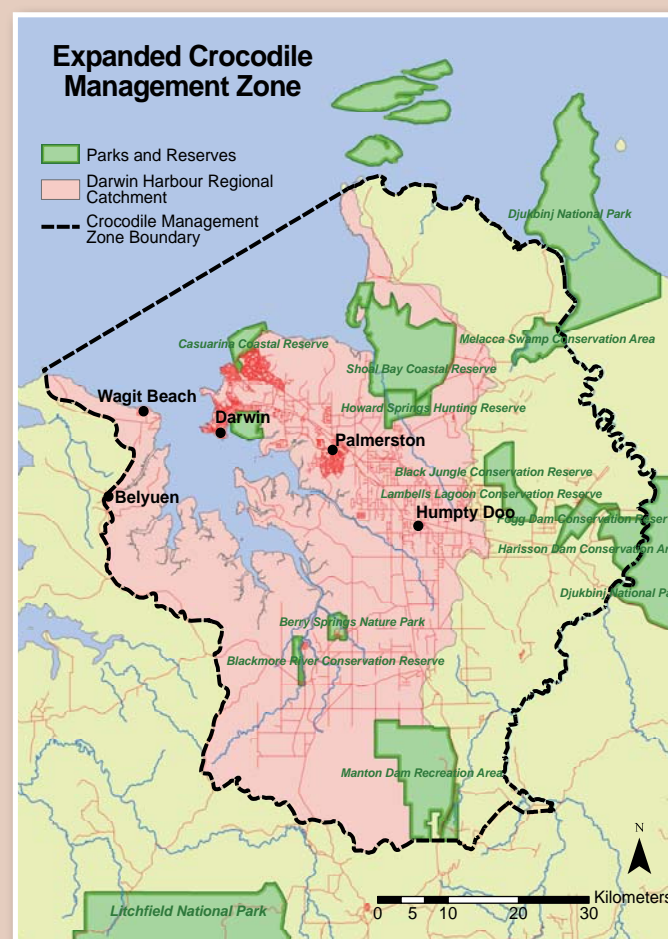
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Saltwater crocodiles are part of the Top End's natural environment. Following the cessation of uncontrolled hunting in 1971 which depressed population numbers to seriously low levels, saltwater crocodiles are now widespread and abundant in northern Australia. All available data shows that the Northern Territory population continues to increase and recolonise into formerly occupied areas. The aim of this management program is to ensure the long-term conservation of the saltwater crocodile and its habitats in the Northern Territory, while also maintaining public safety. Territory Government wildlife scientists have worked closely with the crocodile industry and have listened to the community in formulating the 2009-14 management program.

Public safety, awareness and education

The management program addresses the balance that is required between conservation goals and maintaining public safety. Saltwater crocodiles are top order predators. Significantly enhancing public safety and community awareness of saltwater crocodiles is a priority of this management program. This includes the development of 'CROCWISE' – The Northern Territory Government's Management Plan to Reduce the Risk of Crocodile Attack. This is an education and awareness strategy on the dangers of crocodiles in the Northern Territory's waterways. This strategy will incorporate education within schools and awareness to the broader community.



Nuisance saltwater crocodiles

The current Darwin Harbour Crocodile Management Area, where approximately 200 saltwater crocodiles are removed or culled each year, will be expanded. The expansion of the Darwin Harbour Crocodile Management Area will include identified high risk areas in the entire Darwin Harbour catchment and eastwards to the Adelaide River.

This newly defined zone will cover the Darwin rural area where problem crocodiles will be intensively managed. (See Expanded Crocodile Management Zone map at left)

This expanded management zone has been implemented in response to the increasing spread of development in the rural area south of Darwin.

Designated sections of the Katherine River will remain an 'intensively managed' zone as will other designated swimming areas in national parks such as Wangi Falls at Litchfield National Park and Berry Springs Nature Park, near Darwin. Other initiatives for reducing the risk of crocodile and human interaction in the Darwin rural area include:

- increased intensity of trapping;
- increased surveillance of receding water bodies as the Dry season approaches;
- increasing the monitoring on the Adelaide River to annual surveys; and
- developing a monitoring program for the Darwin rural freshwater areas.

Safari hunting

The Northern Territory Government remains in favour of a stringently controlled saltwater crocodile safari hunting program. The Territory Government envisages that during the life of this management program, the safari hunting of saltwater crocodiles will be trialled. Safari hunting would be required to conform to the highest possible standards of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and stewardship of the environment. Safari hunting would be limited to a Territory-wide quota of 50 animals and would be included within the 500 animal quota for wild harvesting of adult crocodiles. Safari hunting is not intended to be used as a means of controlling nuisance crocodiles.

The safari hunting method will be restricted to shooting and the take of animals must comply with the *Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Captive and Wild Australian Crocodiles*. A minimum size limit for saltwater crocodiles taken by safari hunters will be 3.5 metres in length. During the life of this management program a trial framework will be installed with an emphasis on the opportunities for Indigenous participation, employment and benefit as a result of safari hunting. The Northern Territory Government foresees safari hunting providing significant benefits to Indigenous landholders who currently host safari hunting of other animals such as pig, banteng and buffalo.

This benefit will be through payment of trophy fees and associated travel and accommodation expenses from the safari hunting experience. The financial gains safari hunting will provide to landholders would also provide an economic incentive for landholders to protect crocodiles and their habitats.