



Fact Sheet

HILTABA NATURE RESERVE

Hiltaba Nature Reserve is a 780km² Private Protected Area managed for nature conservation as a part of Australia's National Reserve System. Purchased by Nature Foundation SA in 2012 this former pastoral property is located in the Gawler Ranges on the Eyre Peninsula (refer [Attachment 1](#)).

Hiltaba conserves important native habitat, plants and animals for the benefit of all Australians. The Hiltaba Nature Reserve Management Plan embraces the vision that Hiltaba will continue to maintain high conservation value for future generations by providing protected habitats for the long-term conservation of native plants and animals.

Hiltaba is a biodiversity 'hotspot' at an ecosystem crossroads with a rare collection of flora and fauna from three converging ecosystems – the rocky Gawler Ranges, arid country to the north and mallee to the south.

Conservation Objectives

The core objective of Hiltaba is conservation into the future at a landscape scale, utilizing the connectivity of landscapes. Hiltaba will be preserving important populations so that they can evolve into the future recognizing that the earth is a dynamic place, not static, and we need to keep an eye on the future including the prospect of climate change.

In the Gawler Ranges there are populations that are different and unique from other arid areas in South Australia, such as the Flinders Ranges, we need to act now to protect species that otherwise could become extinct. The really sad phenomena is that a dozen species have become extinct in Hiltaba, forever lost and never to return, casualties of vegetation clearance and the devastating impact of cats and foxes.

The conservation goals for Hiltaba are backed by high quality conservation science to inform and design the on-ground conservation works and scientific research. The Nature Foundation SA Conservation Action Plan prioritises on-ground actions in relation to conservation, monitoring and threat abatement with a clear set of objectives and measures.

Location

Hiltaba is in the western Gawler Ranges on the Eyre Peninsula, approximately 700 kilometres north-west of Adelaide by road. The property lies at the intersection of the Kingoonya to Wirrulla road and Iron Knob to Hiltaba roads and is approximately 70 kilometres north of Poochera.

Surrounding properties are mostly pastoral lease land utilized for extensive grazing with the Gawler Ranges National Park adjoining to the southeast. The latitude and longitude at the Hiltaba homestead are: Lat -32° 09' 26.60" and Lon 135° 04' 20.32".

Biodiversity Value

Hiltaba has very high biodiversity value. The creation of the Hiltaba Nature Reserve is providing protection to nine species of national conservation significance and 40 species of state conservation significance in addition to 7 species that only occur in the Gawler Ranges:

- *Pterostylis ovata* - Gawler Ranges Greenhood
- *Grevillea parrallelinervis* - Gawler Ranges Grevillea
- *Dodonea intricata* - Gawler Ranges Hopbush
- *Acacia toondulya*- Toondulya Wattle
- *Protanthera florifera* – Gawler Ranges Mint Bush
- *Eucalyptus lansdowneana* - Crimson Mallee
- *Amytornis merrotsyi* ssp. *pedleri* - Short-tailed Grass-wren



Gawler Ranges Grevillea

What activities happen on Hiltaba?

Nature Foundation SA has removed all of the stock (sheep) and has an ongoing management plan to remove feral goats. Over 6300 goats have been removed over the last 12 months. This is significant as reducing grazing pressure on the plants will give the vegetation a change to recover and provide better habitat for the native fauna.

We are also controlling introduced predators (cats and foxes); with particular focus on areas which are an important location for the Yellow Footed Rock-wallaby which have suffered enormously from predation from foxes in the past.

Significantly, fox numbers have gone from 18 per hundred kilometres of road driven to less than 2 in the 12 months since NFSA have owned Hiltaba.

Nature Foundation SA has set up over 50 monitoring sites on the property so that we will be able to measure any response in the vegetation and the fauna through the removal of goats, stock and feral predators.

Biological surveys

Two biological surveys have been held on Hiltaba. Bushblitz was held in November 2012 which helped to create an inventory of plants and animals on the property. A Scientific Expedition Group (SEG) fauna survey was held in April 2013 to set up monitoring and another survey will be held in August focussing on vegetation (flora) so that we can tell whether the plant and animals populations have changed from now and into the future.

What are the threats to the property?

Major threats are; total grazing pressure which has resulted in vegetation clearance and habitat destruction; and predation by introduced feral predators. Total grazing pressure means just how much of the vegetation is being eaten by all of the herbivores (animals that eat plants) introduced rabbits, goats, sheep, as well as native animals such as kangaroos and wombats. We have reduced grazing pressure by removing the sheep, have an ongoing regime for removal of goats, and in the future we will be controlling rabbits as well.

NatureLinks Corridor - Conservation Connectivity

Nature Foundation SA is managing the property at a landscape level to ensure a strong link to surrounding habitats and conservation programs in the region. Hiltaba is an important component of the East Meets West NatureLinks Corridor, a 750km biodiversity corridor linking public and private lands to create healthy and diverse habitat on the Eyre Peninsula. The property abuts the Gawler Ranges National Park and facilitates good connectivity (environmental linkages) along the line of hills in the Ranges in a north-west direction.

Measuring success

For some species success will be obvious fairly soon, for example within a year we hope to see increases in the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. This is based on the experience in the Flinders Ranges where there was a 300% increase in the population over 5 years when predation from foxes was reduced.

In other cases for some species we will have to wait decades if not centuries. The extraordinary Myall Tree which lives up to 300 years is found on Hiltaba, however the constant grazing from sheep has led to virtually no recruitment (no young seedlings) among the Myall trees. If the conservation actions are successful we would hope to see young Myall in the next 30-40 years and the best case scenario would be for those seedlings to survive over the next 200 years and have a self-sustaining population.

Benchmarking data has been established and there is ongoing monitoring of the plants and animals in the environment at Hiltaba to gauge changes to populations, measuring the success at different time scales for different species.



How can you help?

You are invited to join the annual Hiltaba Working Bee which provides a practical conservation volunteer contribution to the operations of Hiltaba and offers insights into the conservation value of the property. Contact the Nature Foundation SA office for more information.

How can you support the work of Nature Foundation SA?

NFSA is a not-for-profit environmental charity dependent upon the generosity of individuals and businesses for much of our work.

[Businesses](#) can become a corporate member or partner with us by providing sponsorship for any one of our programs, from on-the-ground projects, events, research grants, scholarships to community programs.

[Individuals, Couples and Families](#) can support the Foundation through a variety of options including: becoming a member, making a donation, monthly giving, donation of land or volunteering your time and expertise.

You may also want to consider making a gift to assist the work of the foundation through a bequest ensuring a legacy beyond your lifetime. We would like to acknowledge the bequests in the 2012-13 year from Miss Marion Ligertwood and Mrs Gillian Briggs whose generosity will help us to continue our conservation work.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Nature Foundation SA Damien Pearce Memorial Fund. The fund was established by the family of the late Damien Pearce who had contributed significantly to conservation in South Australia and, through his work as Project Manager of Operation Bounceback, to the conservation of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby found on Hiltaba.

Donation options www.naturefoundation.org.au/help-nature/donate/
Membership information www.naturefoundation.org.au/membership/.

How do people get more information?

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Weblinks

Nature Foundation SA	www.naturefoundation.org.au/
Hiltaba Nature Reserve	www.naturefoundation.org.au/our-work/hiltaba/
Hiltaba YouTube Video	www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHkJLtPquEU
Bushblitz	www.bushblitz.org.au
Australian Government – Caring for our Country	www.nrm.gov.au/
Australian Government – Biodiversity Assessment	www.anra.gov.au/topics/vegetation/assessment/sa/ibra-gawler.html
East meets West NatureLinks	www.environment.sa.gov.au/naturelinks/Corridors/East_meets_West

Attachment 1 – Hiltaba Nature Reserve Location

