

**SAVING OUR SPECIES**

# **Framework for partnership species**



## Photography

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### **Published by:**

Environment, Energy and Science  
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ISBN 978 1 922317 74 2

EES 2019/0662 November 2019







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The *Saving our Species* (SoS) program is the NSW Government's innovative approach to managing threatened plants and animals. The program sets a clear framework for prioritising resources for managing entities listed as threatened under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act).

The aim of the program is to develop targeted strategies for managing threatened species, threatened ecological communities and key threatening processes (KTPs) using the best available information.

*Saving our Species* uses principles of cost-effectiveness, scientific rigour, transparency and accountability to guide investment by government and non-government stakeholders.

All strategies developed under SoS are unified by the overarching objective of the program:

**'to maximise the number of threatened species that are secure in the wild in NSW for 100 years'.**







## The *Saving our Species* partnership-species management stream

Partnership species are animals and plants listed as threatened in New South Wales (NSW) that have less than 10% of their distribution (i.e. the area in which the species is found) in this state.

Examples of characteristics of these species are:

- being migratory
- being highly mobile
- having large distributions that cover multiple states
- being at the edge of their geographic limit in NSW (e.g. a plant that mostly occurs in Queensland but has a small part of its southern range in NSW).

There are 170 partnership species (as of 15 January 2019). *Saving our Species* aims to invest conservation resources where they are needed most, so the program prioritises the management of partnership species that:

- have high-conservation value within NSW
- are listed as threatened elsewhere in Australia.

Partnership species that are common outside of NSW, with relatively few threats, are a low priority for investment (see further detail under 'Investment prioritisation').

As partnership species occur across state or territory borders, the best way to conserve them is through 'partnerships' with other jurisdictions. *Saving our Species* encourages projects that engage partners to conserve a species across its range.

This framework outlines how the SoS program manages species in the partnership management stream.

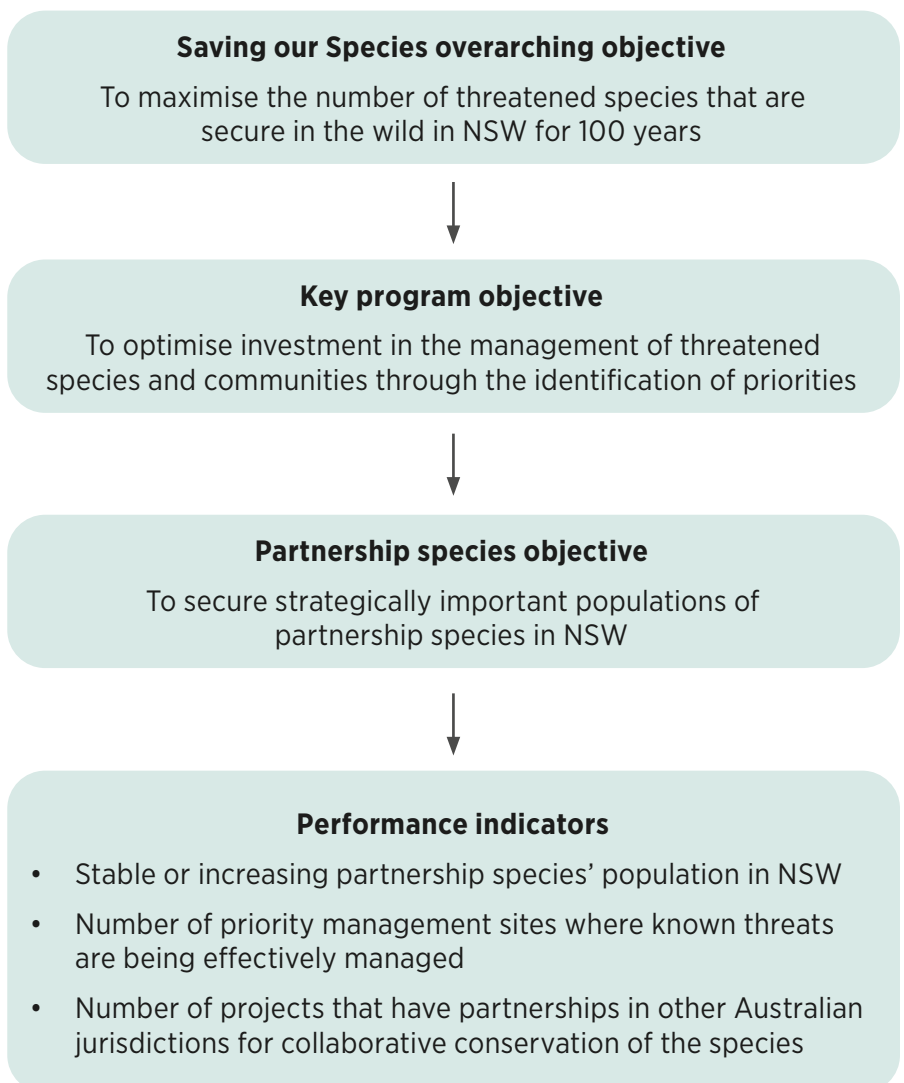


## The objective for partnership species

The objective for this management stream is **to secure strategically important populations of partnership species in NSW**. Strategically important populations are those with high conservation value (Figure 1). This includes species that:

- are threatened elsewhere in their range in Australia
- have important populations in NSW
- are likely to benefit from investment in NSW (see ‘Investment prioritisation’ for further detail).

The SoS program will achieve this by investing in managing critical threats to species at priority sites or management areas.



**Figure 1** Partnership species objective within the context of the SoS program



## Legislative framework

Under Part 4 Division 6 of the BC Act, the program must develop a strategy for each threatened species within two years of being listed. The aim of the conservation strategy is to achieve the objectives of the program in relation to each species. The BC Act also requires that SoS has a framework to guide priorities for implementing the strategies, which is the purpose of this document.







# The partnership species approach

*Saving our Species* has assessed the species in the partnership management stream as having less than 10% of their distribution in NSW. The 10% threshold is used to delineate species that mainly occur outside NSW from other management streams. To determine the percentage of the species distribution that occurs in NSW, SoS uses a combination of total species abundance, area of occupancy, and extent of occurrence (IUCN 2010), depending on which data are available for the species and most relevant to its ecology. Migratory species with over 10% of their Australian population breeding in NSW, even if only for a season, are **not** considered partnership species (e.g. some migratory seabirds that breed on Lord Howe Island) as they exceed the 10% threshold for that period. These species are best managed through a site-managed species approach.

## Investment prioritisation

An important principle for SoS is to invest the limited resources for threatened-species management where they are most likely to achieve the long-term security of species populations. To achieve this, SoS prioritises strategy development and funding for partnership species based on:

- strategic importance of NSW to the viability of the species
- threatened species status
- partnerships beyond NSW
- benefit to the species
- likelihood of success
- cost-effectiveness.

These criteria are described in detail in sections 1 to 4 below.

### 1. Strategic importance of NSW to the viability of the species

As most of the distribution of partnership species is outside of NSW, investing in conservation actions in NSW is only likely to improve the species' viability if the populations or management sites/areas are of strategic importance to the species. New South Wales may be of strategic importance to a species if it includes a significant population or important habitat.

Examples of significant populations are those that are:

- a source population
- a rare or genetically distinct population
- a population that provides a vital ecological function
- a species close to extinction in NSW
- a relict population
- an important population for climate change management.





Examples of important habitats are those that have:

- climate change or other refugia
- corridors or migratory pathways
- breeding or foraging sites.

## 2. Threatened species status

*Saving our Species* will prioritise funding for partnership species that are listed as threatened in other Australian jurisdictions. These includes species that are nationally listed (including species recognised under the common assessment methodology<sup>1</sup> (CAM) currently being implemented by the Australian Government) and species that are listed in other states or territories. Species listed elsewhere in Australia account for approximately 30% of all species in the partnership management stream. Species that are only listed within NSW need to show strong evidence that the population is of strategic importance to the species (as above) to be prioritised for investment. Species that are abundant outside of NSW are a low investment priority. The SoS program may consider prioritising species that have not been considered for listing in other jurisdictions, but would likely meet the criteria for threatened species status, if the population is also of strategic importance.

## 3. Partnerships beyond NSW

As partnership species cross state and territory borders, securing the long-term viability of a species is best achieved if strategies are developed in consultation with other jurisdictions where the species occurs. Therefore, SoS encourages strategies that build on effective management actions that are in place to protect a species across the greater part of its distribution (i.e. those that can meet SoS objectives). For example, where there are effective conservation plans for a species in other jurisdictions, strategies may align with those plans to build on the actions and monitoring already being conducted (where they meet SoS criteria for cost-effectiveness and likelihood of success).

*Saving our Species* also encourages projects that secure commitment from partners. Commitments may include (but are not limited to):

- memorandums of understanding (MoU)
- joint conservation plans
- matched investment
- collaborative projects with other jurisdictions.

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<sup>1</sup>The Australian Government and all states and territories in Australia have agreed to establish a common assessment method (CAM) for the assessment and listing of threatened species. The CAM provides a consistent approach using the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria, categories, and thresholds. Under the CAM, species that occur across more than one jurisdiction will be assessed at a national scale by the Australian Government (under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*). The national status will then be adopted by relevant jurisdictions. Over time this will remove the need to compare the status of partnership species across national, state, and territory government lists, as the lists will align and some species that are abundant outside of NSW will be de-listed. Species that are not nationally threatened but are of state significance may continue to be listed in NSW, but will not be included on the national list.



Where a commitment is not feasible (e.g. due to limited resources in a state or a lack of alignment with SoS priorities), but NSW is considered strategically important to the species, SoS may still prioritise the species. However, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) should consult with relevant jurisdictions to gain in-principle support.

#### 4. Project priority score

For conservation projects that are proposed for funding under the SoS program, SoS will prioritise partnership species projects that demonstrate a benefit to the species (prioritised by threat status, i.e. critically endangered species are the highest priority), likelihood of success, and cost-effectiveness. These criteria help to ensure funding decisions are objective and transparent. The prioritisation process is based on the project prioritisation protocol (PPP) (Joseph et al. 2009) where projects are ranked using a simple scoring or weighting system. The PPP is described in detail in Section 3 of the [Saving our Species Technical Report](#) (OEH 2013).

### Strategy development

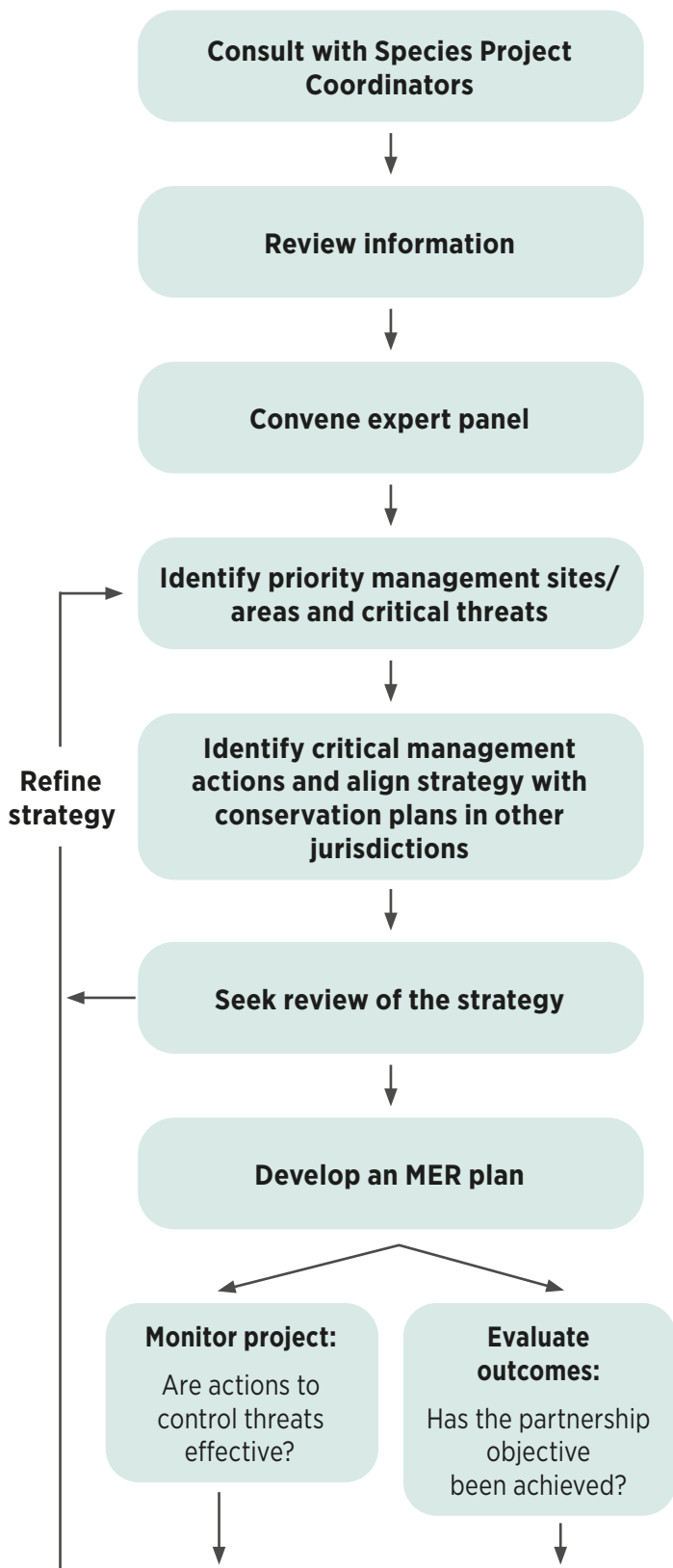
Based on criteria 1 and 2 under 'Investment prioritisation' above and from consultation with Species Project Coordinators (SPCs), SoS will prioritise partnership species for strategy development using expert panels. For species that do not meet these criteria, SoS will develop simple strategies as investing in conservation actions for these species in NSW is not likely to deliver outcomes for their long-term security in the wild. The SoS program may develop full strategies for those species in the future if there is new information that shows a need for on-ground conservation of the species in NSW. The process for developing strategies for priority partnership species is similar to the SoS approach for threatened ecological communities (OEH 2017a).

As species in the partnership management stream have a broad range of ecologies and distributions, SoS allocates them to either a 'range-restricted' or 'widespread' category for strategy development based on their distribution in NSW. Allocation to these categories may change as more information becomes available. Range-restricted species are approached in the same way as site-managed species (OEH 2013). With this approach, management of critical threats at discrete sites can secure the species in the long term. For these species, experts will know which sites are important to the species viability in NSW.

Widespread species are approached in the same way as landscape managed species (OEH 2015). For these species, it is challenging to identify specific sites for targeted management due to their distribution or ecology; for example, species that have broad habitat areas or are highly dispersed and mobile (e.g. marine mammals). To develop widespread species strategies, SoS will develop an action toolbox that lists critical threats and management actions to address the threats at a relevant scale, such as a priority management area.

Additionally, SoS will develop strategies to manage key threatening processes (KTPs) under the KTP management stream (OEH 2017b)





**Figure 2** Partnership species conservation strategy development process

that may reduce impacts of those threats on partnership species where management sites align with partnership species distributions.

For each strategy, the Department staff will follow development process described below and in Figure 2:

**Consult with NSW SPCs** to prioritise species for strategy development based on the significance of the NSW population to the species viability (see criteria 1 and 2 under investment prioritisation). For low priority species, SoS will develop strategies as described above.

**Review available information** on the species and its management and determine whether the species is range restricted or widespread. Examples include Scientific Committee determinations, peer-reviewed scientific literature, recovery plans, reports, existing SoS actions, regional pest management plans, BioNet Atlas of NSW Wildlife, Atlas of Living Australia, and the NicheFinder tool for plant adaptive capacity to climate change.

**Convene an expert panel** for priority species with the SPC and representation from experts who have knowledge on the ecology, distribution, threats or management of the species across its range, including from other jurisdictions where the species occurs. Examples include government and non-government species experts, scientists, and consultants.

**Identify priority management sites/areas and critical threats acting at those sites/areas** in NSW considering the population size, habitat condition, extent and severity of threats, and feasibility of management.

**Identify critical management actions** to address and monitor threats using either a site-based (for range-restricted species) or action-toolbox approach (for widespread species). Ensure the actions complement conservation plans or projects in other jurisdictions where appropriate.

**Seek a review of the strategy** by relevant land managers and operational stakeholders to ensure implementation at nominated sites/areas is appropriate and feasible. The strategy should be reviewed before it is finalised for public exhibition.

**Develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) plan** for the species that evaluates the strategy objectives and incorporates adaptive management principles (see Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting for detail).



## Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Each conservation project for a partnership species will have an MER plan. The MER plan should regularly measure trends in threats and the species abundance (or a validated proxy) at each management site or area. The MER plan should also aim to determine if actions are effective and if the objectives are being achieved (that is, whether conservation of the population is contributing to securing the species in the wild). The objectives of the MER plan for the project are specific to the characteristics of the partnership species and its threats at each management site or area. *Saving our Species* will refine the project over time based on the species' response to its management. A framework for undertaking monitoring for site-based conservation projects is provided in [Saving our Species monitoring, evaluation and reporting: Guidelines for conservation projects](#) (OEH 2018).

Monitoring, evaluating and reporting for partnership species is based on the assumption that adequate investment and knowledge can lead to an effective decrease in threats to the species and its increased security in the wild. The conservation project is considered 'on-track' to securing the population or site in NSW if the performance indicators are being met (Figure 1), as this demonstrates that the population is responding positively to management. For partnership species, where possible and relevant, the project should align monitoring with other jurisdictions where the species occurs. For example, projects may seek to develop monitoring standards and data sharing agreements with partners to:

- better understand the contribution of the NSW population to the species viability
- monitor trends in the species' recovery across its distribution.

All SoS conservation projects are designed and implemented under an adaptive management framework. Conservation projects are regularly reviewed and updated according to the results of threat and species monitoring to maximise the effectiveness of management actions.





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