

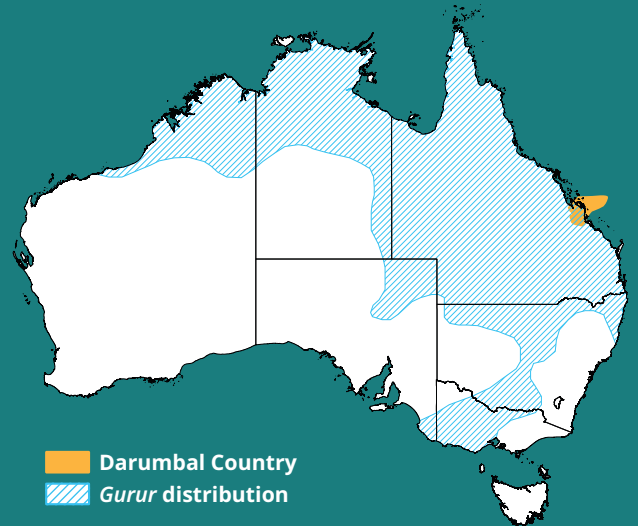
Gurur (Brolga) on Darumbal Country

© Malcolm Mann, Darumbal

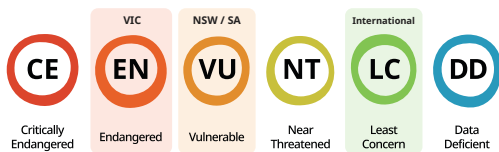
Common name: Brolga, Native companion, Australian crane

Scientific name: *Grus rubicunda*

Language name: *Gurur*



Status



Description

Gurur are large wetland birds with a red band on their head, grey feathers and black wing tips. They usually mate for life and are well known for their courtship dance which involves throwing grass in the air with their beaks, jumping, calling, bowing and bobbing. They are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders and are often seen tearing up the ground with their powerful beaks as they search for bulbs and roots.



Gurur. Photo: [slowmotiongli/stock.adobe.com](https://www.adobe.com/stock/slowmotiongli)

Distribution

Gurur are widespread and often abundant in northern Australia, especially north-east Queensland, and are found as far south as Victoria. They are also found in southern New Guinea and New Zealand. *Gurur* movements in Australia are poorly understood, though seasonal flocks are observed in eastern Queensland in non-breeding areas regularly.

Habitat

Gurur are commonly found in freshwater meadows, open wetlands, grassy plains, and sometimes coastal mudflats. During the breeding season, they often inhabit shallow marshes where they build nests using grasses, sticks and mud.

Threats

Major threats to the *Gurur* include:

- Predation of eggs and chicks, by feral predators
- Climate change, including extreme temperatures and more frequent drought events
- Mining and farming practices leading to the loss and degradation of habitat
- Hunting and poisoning by landowners
- Weed encroachment leading to habitat degradation
- Altered fire regimes leading to habitat degradation
- Water impoundments, water diversions, irrigated agriculture and conversion of wetlands
- Collision with utility lines (and possibly wind turbines).

Cultural Connections

Gurur hold strong cultural connections.

"Gurur embodies a Lore story (not to be told here) and is connected to all things on the ground, in the water, in the air and under the ground. Her behaviours connect with the whole environment and tells us of changing environments. For example, she has had to adapt from our submerged landscapes of our current sea country to the present resident lands, same as ourselves."

Malcolm Mann, Darumbal





Cultural Values

Country

There are intricate relationship values that **Gurur** play on Country that serve as important indicators and reflectors of the health of Country, including the presence of direct or indirect threats.

“She is a live monitoring entity that always communicates stories of the health and condition of Country and maintains namu nimu (Lore - the traditions and responsibilities of our ancient past).”

Malcolm Mann, Darumbal



Courtship dance. Photo: Uwe Bergwitz / stock.adobe.com

Knowledge

Gurur are one of many Culturally Significant Entities (CSE) from Darumbal Country that are remnant to an almost forgotten knowledge system.

Improving heavily impacted or eroded **Gurur** Country results in increased productivity and restoration of multiple CSE. This has the flow-on effects of improving the health and wellbeing of our Darumbal community and reinvigorating the Lores of **yadaba** (respecting) Darumbal Country. The organic flow of knowledge transfer is key to healing Country, culture and community. This transfer is vital for linking our past and giving it relevance today and into the future.

“Some knowledge restores some habitat, and some habitat restores some knowledge.”

Malcolm Mann, Darumbal

Kin

Gurur are viewed not as a separate entity from us as humans but as siblings. Darumbal should not be forgotten as they are part of the physical ecosystem of **Gurur** Country, a family of siblings that possess a connection interwoven with First Science beyond Western timelines and understandings.

“Gurur is my family and namu nimu comes into effect where I have responsibility, I have knowledge, and I must look after place - yadaba Darumbal nunthi.”

Malcolm Mann, Darumbal

Old knowledge sits with some of the Elders (requiring permission) who have cultural authority for their areas. Access to these areas is often prohibited because of Western colonised tenure boundaries.



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Results of Poor Management

Habitat destruction

Darumbal have seen large tracts of Country change for mass agriculture or pastoral production and other purposes like defence training areas or urban and industrial sprawl. This process wipes out entire communities of CSE, such as *Gurur*. There is concern that direct and indirect human interferences are leading to changes in land and waterscapes (above and subsurface) that are meant to support *Gurur*.

Unbalanced ecosystem

Darumbal see breakdowns in the connections across Country that threaten the health and balance that have sustained our Country, culture and community for thousands of years. In turn Darumbal have witnessed reduced species abundance and extinctions, affecting our economic and social wellbeing, health and way of life.

Western value systems

The lack of investment in Darumbal through custodianship of Country, government programs and other initiatives that encourage and support relationship building contributes to poor management. Darumbal often express their challenges and articulate their barriers 'on repeat' to government because current policies, standards and legislation are geared towards supporting the Western-dominant value system.

Darumbal Vision

Transfer of power

For Darumbal, the first thing needed is a transfer of power. A paradigm shift for looking at Country needs to occur that begins with restoring rights of ownership of Country and sets in place collaborative management arrangements between parties that describes a funded agreement of works. Formal interdependent Relationships Benefits Agreements (describing monetary and non-monetary benefits) with all local, state and commonwealth bodies is required. Secondly, for real reconciliation and acknowledgement of Country to occur, all monies made on Country (programs, projects, permitted activities, commercial enterprises) should include a percentage that is committed to Darumbal.

This action is a means of healing the impacts and injustices of the past which moves beyond the mere superficial process of reconciliation action plans, limited native title process/benefits and acknowledgements of Country, etc.

Improved conservation strategies

The cultural importance that *Gurur* plays on Country should be considered in the development of conservation strategies. The Western approach of seeing importance through a threatened species framing is not sufficient as kinship and our deep intricacies of relationship values continue to be invisible despite their presence within the biodiversity fabric of our Country. We need policy-makers and practitioners who design biodiversity conservation strategies to view CSE with the same attention as threatened species. As *Gurur* are CSE across many Indigenous groups, we call for a national approach for recognising the significance of *Gurur* combined with Traditional Custodian long-held knowledge of *Gurur* that have both co-existed to produce a rich and abundant environment.

Cultural responsibilities

It is important that Darumbal uphold cultural protocols to Traditional knowledge that links closely to our governance structures. *Namu nimu* is underpinned by access to Country and resources. These things are also significantly linked to restoring a process to heal, as the impact of colonisation continues to affect the expression of cultural responsibility and our autonomy to all things Country, culture and community.

Instead of being unrecognised as part of the fabric of our CSE, Darumbal need to lead management via our own value system so that we are not a 'backseat passenger' in the management of what is important to our culture and Country.



National Environmental Science Program



This project is supported with funding from the Australian Government under the National Environmental Science Program.