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2 **Current and future threats from non-indigenous animal species in northern Australia:**
3 **a spotlight on World Heritage Area Kakadu National Park**

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18 *Abstract.* Non-indigenous animal species threaten biodiversity and ecosystem stability by damaging or
19 transforming habitats, killing or out-competing native species and spreading disease. We use World
20 Heritage Area Kakadu National Park, northern Australia, as a focal region to illustrate the current and
21 potential threats non-indigenous animal species pose to internationally and nationally recognised natural
22 and cultural values. Available evidence suggests that large feral herbivores such as Asian swamp buffalo,
23 pigs and horses are the most ecologically threatening species in this region. This may reflect the inherent
24 research bias, because these organisms are highly visible and impact primary production; consequently,
25 their control has attracted the strongest research and management efforts. Burgeoning threats, such as the
26 already established cane toad and crazy ant, and potentially non-indigenous freshwater fish, marine
27 invertebrates and pathogens, may cause severe problems for native biodiversity. To counter these threats,
28 management agencies must apply an ongoing, planned and practical approach using scientifically based
29 and well-funded control measures; however, many stakeholders require direct evidence of the damage
30 caused by non-indigenous species before agreeing to implement control. To demonstrate the increasing
31 priority of non-indigenous species research in Australia and to quantify taxonomic and habitat biases in
32 research focus, we compiled an extensive bibliography of peer-reviewed articles published between 1950
33 and 2005. Approximately 1000 scientific papers have been published on the impact and control of exotic
34 animals in Australia, with a strong bias towards terrestrial systems and mammals. Despite the sheer
35 quantity of research on non-indigenous species and their effects, management responses remain largely
36 *ad hoc* and poorly evaluated, especially in northern Australia and in high-value areas such as Kakadu
37 National Park. We argue that improved management in relatively isolated and susceptible tropical regions
38 requires (1) robust quantification of density-damage relationships, and (2) the delivery of research
39 findings that stimulate land managers to develop cost-effective control and monitoring programmes.

**List of the 1000 peer-reviewed papers identified that relate to invasive species
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