Invasive Species: Feral Water Buffalo (Bubalus Bubalis)

In general, most water buffalos are found in the northern most areas of the Northern Territory. Map

Description automatically generated

**Timeline of Events regarding the Water Buffalo:**

1825 to 1843 – The water buffalo is slowly introduced to Melville island and the Cobourg Peninsula as a source of meat.

Mid 1900s – Settlements with water buffalos are abandoned, and these water buffalo are allowed to spread into swamps and springs

1960s to 1970s – The water buffalo reaches its peak in population size.

1979 to 1997 – Culling of the water buffalo occurs, as a part of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign

The water buffalo poses a severe threat to the fragile ecosystems of the Northern Territories. The animal regularly defecates and tramples as an element of its lifestyle, which greatly affects soil erosion, channelling of flood waters, increase in salt-water levels, etc.

As a result of this change of water purity in the ecosystem, countless native flora and fauna failed to thrive. Many species, such as crocodiles and freshwater turtles lost their habitat due to the increase in water buffalo. Water buffalo also consume a large proportion of grasses and plants, causing other herbivores to encounter a lack of abundant food.

There have been numerous attempts to stop the rapid growth of water buffalo, most prominently the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign. The reason as to why Brucellosis and Tuberculosis were involved with water buffalo is that water buffalo are deadly carriers of the diseases. To prevent the spread of these diseases in rural areas, water buffalo would be culled by expert shooters flying in helicopters. This method allows populations to drop drastically, from 20,000 in Kakadu National Park to under 250 in 1996.

[https://www.awe.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/invasive-species/publications/factsheet-feral-w`ater-buffalo-bubalus-bubalis](https://www.awe.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/invasive-species/publications/factsheet-feral-w%60ater-buffalo-bubalus-bubalis)

<https://www.awe.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/buffalo.pdf>

<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/62640/IPA-Water-Buffalo-Risk-Assessment.pdf>

<https://www.huntshack.net/water-buffalo-bubalus-bubalis/>