DAINTREE CORE INCOME FUND (MANAGED FUND) (CODE: ECOR)

MONTHLY FACTSHEET: 31 March 2024

Fund Description

ECOR is an absolute return, cash plus, investment grade bond strategy. ECOR is not constrained by any traditional fixed income index, which provides us the flexibility to seek out the best risk adjusted returns available across regions, sectors and securities.

Fund Objective

The aim of ECOR is to provide a steady stream of income and capital stability over the medium term by investing in a diversified portfolio of fixed income securities and cash. ECOR seeks to produce a return (net of fees) that exceeds the RBA Cash Rate by 1.50-2.00% p.a. within a cycle.

Monthly Highlights

- High coupon receipts, narrowing of credit spreads and overlay strategies all drove returns for the month as credit markets continued their strong start to the year.
- The Fund selectively engaged in new issuance, with a focus on offshore financials as well as residential mortgage-backed securities and asset-backed securities.

Key Statistics

Modified Duration (Yrs)	0.29
Yield to Maturity (%)	6.71
Average Credit Quality	A-
Portfolio ESG score (MSCI)	AA

Note: Portfolio yield is the expected return over the next year, assuming no changes to either portfolio composition or market yields. Average credit quality excludes overlay positions. Portfolio yield reflects the net credit default swap exposures in the portfolio. The Portfolio ESG score is the weighted average portfolio ESG rating based on Daintree Capital's application of MSCI data.

Fund facts

Management costs	0.45% (incl of GST & RITC)
Inception date	22 November 2019

Platforms

The Daintree Core Income Fund (Managed Fund) is available on the following platforms:

- Netwealth
- PowerWrap
- Wealth02 / uXchange

Recommended
Lonsec Research

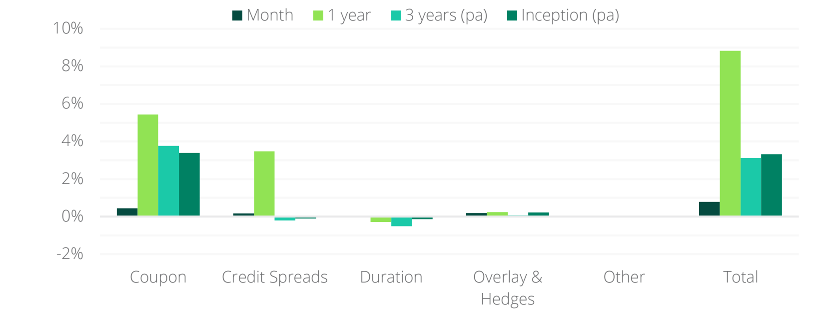
Zenith
RECOMMENDED

Performance & Analytics

	Month (%)	Quarter (%)	1 Year (%)	3 Years (% pa)	Inception (% pa)
Daintree Core Income Fund (ECOR)	0.59	2.15	8.01	2.51	2.35
Daintree Core Income Trust	0.75	2.33	8.28	2.59	2.79
RBA Cash Rate	0.37	1.09	4.22	2.12	1.58
Excess Return	0.22	1.06	3.79	0.39	0.77

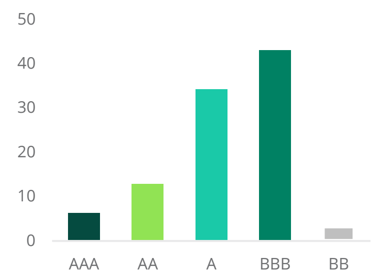
Note: Inception date for ECOR was 22 November 2019. Performance shown above is net of fees. The Fund has identical investments to Daintree Core Income Trust; however performance differences can be impacted by the timing of the distributions. Inception date for the underlying Daintree Core Income Trust was 1 July 2017, and this history is shown prior to the inception of ECOR to provide a longer-term view of Fund performance. Fund returns are calculated using net asset value per unit of the underlying fund at the start and end of the specified period and do not reflect the brokerage or the bid/ask spread that investors incur when buying and selling units on the exchange. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Performance Contribution

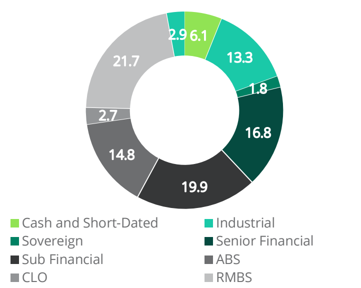


Source: Daintree Capital. As at 31 March 2024.
Month, 1 year, 3 year and inception performance figures reflect the performance of the Daintree Core Income Trust.

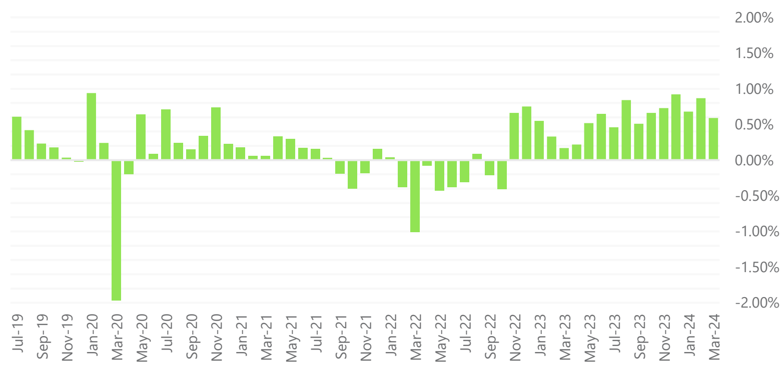
Rating Exposure (%)



Sector Exposure (%)



Monthly Performance



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Fund Review

ECOR returned 0.59% for the month net of fees. The Fund's performance was driven by coupon income with support from credit spreads, with all major sub-sectors contributing to the positive tone. Overlay positions made a noticeable positive contribution again in March after solid results in February.

There are strong technical and fundamental tailwinds for credit markets in the short term. Active issuers in the corporate bond market have been attracting strong bids, but deal activity moderated somewhat in March.

The Fund selectively engaged in new issuance, with a focus on financials offered by non-Australian domiciled issuers, as well as residential and asset-backed securities. Portfolio positioning and cash levels are reflective of an expectation that momentum in investment grade credit markets can be maintained into 2024.

Outlook

Recalibration of the expected trajectory for interest rates this year continued during March, driven by economic data that exceeded expectations. The vast majority of investors, analysts, commentators, pundits, and taxi drivers believe that interest rates will be cut at some stage in developed markets, but we hold fast to our view that they simply may not move from current levels this year. Because of generally high valuations across risk assets, there is concern that current multiples may be at risk of contraction without rate relief. We are less concerned in credit markets, however, where we view spreads as tight but fair.

Against this reasonably positive tone in markets, geopolitical uncertainty continues to rise. It is notoriously difficult to translate developments in this sphere into market impacts, but there can be no denying that the risks of unintended consequences are rising as the war in Gaza metastasises into a wider regional conflict. From an economic perspective, the challenges in the Middle East are translating into snarled supply chains given the inability of Western nations to secure the passage through the Suez Canal, and also on oil prices given the importance of the region in terms of both production and transport. A strongly rising oil price has the potential to interrupt disinflationary tailwinds on which the expected interest rate path is so heavily reliant.

The Bank of Japan took the momentous step of concluding its negative interest rate policy, along with a slate of measures aimed at slowly withdrawing accommodation that has been in place for close to two decades. The shift back to a zero percent cash rate from -0.1% was modest in gross terms, but the symbolism of the BoJ having sufficient confidence that inflation has rebounded to a desired level was meaningful. This confidence has been particularly evident in Japanese equities, where the Nikkei index has hit record highs in recent months. Coupled with a weak yen, Japanese exporters have been the biggest beneficiaries.

Australian data released last month included the Q4 GDP release, minutes of the latest RBA meeting and labour force estimates for March. The national accounts showed an economy losing momentum, particularly within the consumer and construction sectors. After a better January the consumer again struggled in nominal terms. On a more positive note, the labour market looks less alarming. After the February numbers, the key message is that the kick up in unemployment in the last few months reflected seasonal adjustment problems rather than a rapid deterioration in the labour market. That said, trend employment growth is currently running around 20k per month. To stabilise unemployment the required rate is nearer to 40k. Meanwhile, the market reaction to the RBA minutes suggested a belief that the committee has become less hawkish but maintained maximum flexibility by not ruling anything in or out regarding the future path of rates.

If the macro environment requires interest rates to hold steady for the foreseeable future, we think this bodes well for credit markets. Spreads have largely returned to average levels in Australia, but in some non-AUD markets they have tightened noticeably. This further highlights the attractiveness of local corporate bonds from both fundamental and valuation perspectives.

We have noted in recent months that credit markets seem to be looking through geopolitical tensions and short-term market noise, but 2024 will present a range of challenges including a growing refinancing wall, for which elevated interest rates pose a distinct risk. Should the availability of capital be constrained as this refinancing wave gathers pace, we cannot rule out some spread widening as the current economic cycle matures. Ironically, capital is plentiful for issuers right now, which may slow spread tightening as issuers take advantage of the conditions resulting in increased supply. Daintree retains the view that the investment grade segment of the credit market is well placed to navigate near-term challenges and strong coupon income will remain the foundation of the return profile over time.

Signatory of:

PRI Principles for Responsible Investment