

## Caring for Our Country Projects

Rangelands NRM WA received funding through the Caring for Our Country (CfoC) initiative for projects within the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne/ Murchison areas.

These projects have been grouped into two main areas for ease of project management and reporting: the Pilbara Project Group and the Kimberley Project Group.

The Pilbara Project Group not only consists of projects from the Pilbara Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) region, it also includes the Western Desert and Lake McLeod projects.

The Kimberley Project Group consists of the following projects which will be delivered over the next two years:

- \* Dampier Peninsular Fire Project
- \* EcoFire
- \* Roebuck Bay Community Engagement & Protection of RAMSAR Values
- \* West Kimberley Nature Project



Working on CfoC Projects

The Pilbara Project Group have five projects currently underway:

- \* Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management (ESRM) in the Fortescue Catchment
- \* ESRM in Lake McLeod
- \* Ngurrawaana NRM Rangers
- \* Pilbara Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) in Priority Wetlands
- \* Managing Biodiversity on Martu Lands in the Western Desert

An overview of each project will be published in this and subsequent newsletters.

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### Special points of interest:

- \* Rangelands NRM WA is the regional NRM organisation for 85% of the WA land mass and almost 75% of its coastline
- \* Natural Resource Management (NRM) is about striking a balance between caring for our environment and paying heed to the needs of those who make a living from these resources or use them for cultural pursuits, leisure and recreation.

# Kimberley Project Group



## West Kimberley Nature Project

The West Kimberley Nature Project will work to sustainably manage wildfires and weeds threatening Dampier Peninsula Monsoon Vine Thickets (TEC) and wetlands (Provisional TEC). The project will boost coastal Community engagement; protect native vegetation, enhance habitat and manage WONS.

Dampier peninsula Monsoon Vine Thickets (MVT) are listed as a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) by the State. Monsoon vine thickets are an older and dryer rainforest-type ecosystem found in small and scattered patches behind coastal dunes, often in areas close to ground water. The many and diverse plants found within MVT's provide important habitat for keystone frugivores such as the Agile Wallaby, Rose Crowned Fruit Dove, Flying Foxes and Great Bowerbirds; international migratory species; Channel-billed cuckoo and endemic species Dampierland burrowing snake and Gariling. MVT's are also a significant cultural and ecological resource for Indigenous people, containing many traditional food sources, valuable and reliable sources of nutritious bush tucker and medicine, water and culturally significant sites.

MVT's work as a network ecosystem; this means that together the scattered patches operate as a system. One way of describing this system is to look at how the ripening of fruits and seeds in the patches across the Dampier Peninsula happens at different times of the year for different patches. The movement of key frugivores (bats, birds and mammals) is a response



**Monsoonal Vine Thicket**



**Collection of vine thicket fruits including Joongoon, Marul, Mangarr and Goolyi.**

Photo taken by Phil Docherty



**Taran Cox, Louise Beames, Jason Roe**



**Joongoon (*Mimupsops elengii*)**

Photo taken by Phil Docherty

to this, helping to spread the seeds between the patches and maintaining the health of the system, plant diversity and genetic viability. MVT's are also very sensitive to fire. If one patch is lost to fire or significantly degraded, other patches become further isolated and vulnerable.

The project has been structured in stages with the first year targeting the protection of key patches according to conservation and cultural priorities and working collaboratively with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups. Three MVT sites have been identified for Stage 1 of the project— Millagoon, Kooljamon and Chile Creek (within Bardi Country), and one WoNS site, Glunjardiny (within Karajarri Country).

Central to the project are the three ranger groups of Karajarri, Bardi Jawi and Nyul Nyul which are facilitated by the Kimberley Land Council's Working on Country and Kimberley Ranger initiative.

This project is being managed by Environs Kimberley which is an independent organisation dedicated to protecting the nature and culture of the Kimberley region. The Project Manager is Louise Beames who is supported by two part time Indigenous trainees - Taran Cox and Jason Roe.

For more information, please contact Louise Beames on:

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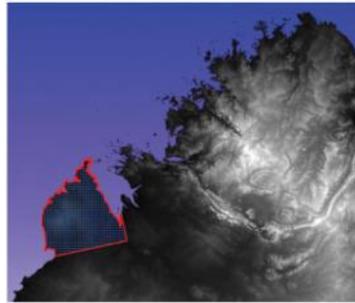
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# Kimberley Project Group



## Collaborative Fire Management of the Dampier Peninsular

The Dampier Peninsula is an area which is located north of Broome and west of Derby in the Kimberley, Western Australia. The Peninsula falls within the Pindanland sub-region of the Dampierland bioregion. The sub-region is the coastal, semi-arid, northwest margin of the Canning Basin.



**Dampier Project Area**

The Dampier Peninsula Fire Project will work with the land holders on the Peninsula to facilitate planning and implementation of a coordinated early dry season prescribed burning program in conjunction with strategic fire breaks. The project area covers approximately 700,000ha; with 350,000 being the Beagle Bay Aboriginal Reserve. The rest of the area is currently made up of pastoral stations, Coulomb Point Nature Reserve, Aboriginal Lands and Unallocated Crown Land (UCL).

In a recent report prepared for the project it was noted that the Dampier Peninsula has a high fire frequency, with 42% of the area burnt 3-5 times in 5 years. Due to the frequency and intensity of the late season wild fires,

much of the old growth vegetation is being replaced by colonising species (wattles and weeds) which further increases the risk of fire.

To date there has been very little aerial burn-

ing in this area and little co-ordination of activities between landholders across tenures.

Through the implementation of this project, Rangelands hopes to raise collaboration, awareness and knowledge of fire management issues and NRM concerns more broadly. Landholders will have the opportunity to work with neighbours and connect with other projects in the region, such as the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC) and Fire Emergency Services Authority's (FESA) aerial burn pro-

grams, the West Kimberley Nature Project (Environs Kimberley), Indigenous Rangers (KLC), the Beagle Bay Aboriginal Reserve and UCL in collaboration with

Traditional Owners.

The advisory committee for this project includes pastoralists, FESA, Shire of Broome and Derby/West Kimberley, Department Indigenous Affairs (DIA) and DEC.

The project will be internally managed by Rangelands Program Manager, John Silver.

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**John Silver discussing project**

### OUR BOARD:

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#### **Vision:**

**To be the leading natural resource management organisation empowering rangelands users to sustainably manage the unique resources of the region.**

## Pilbara Project Group



### Rangelands' Western Desert Project creates a new model for Indigenous engagement in NRM

Rangelands' Western Desert Project is providing a new model for engaging Indigenous communities in contemporary NRM.

The project is funded under Caring for Our Country and is a partnership between Rangelands WA, Kanyininpa Jukurrpa representing the Martu native title claimants, Central Desert Native Title Services representing the Birriliburu native title holders, two regional offices of DEC and the CSIRO.

The project area is about 20 million hectares in size - almost the size of Victoria. Stretching from the Percival Lakes in the north to the stunning Katjarra (Carnarvon Ranges) in the south, the project area is characterised by longitudinal red sand dunes and break aways. Near its centre is Lake Disappointment and Kaalpi (the Calvert Range), the latter having one of the last colonies of rock wallabies in the region. It includes two paleo river systems - Karlamilyi (Rudall River) and Savory Creek – both of which drain into large salt lakes.

With the 2010 field season underway, the traditional owners of the Western Desert are returning to country to implement a comprehensive monitoring

program for threatened species and assessing the general health of this arid zone region. While in country doing this work, the teams also do on-ground activities such as burning, cleaning out waterholes and hunting of feral animals such as feral cats.

Since the commencement of the 2010 field season in April, there has already been over 50 traditional owners involved and 60 plots surveyed or monitored. In addition 21 school students have been out country learning how to track and monitor threatened species.

Getting out on country also promotes discussion about how to look after country and to deal with the new threats that it faces.



Pummu School kids out tracking

It also provides the foundation for the development of a management plan that will integrate traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary NRM practices.

One of the key threats of concern to the Martu is the



Cat hunting

impact of visitors – the majority of whom traverse the Canning Stock Route on its 1900km journey from Bililuna to Wiluna. Now estimated to be in excess of 2,000 vehicles per annum, visitors are having a heavy impact on the condition of the stock route and the trees surrounding campsites. Visitors are also responsible for the ever increasing number of tracks that are appearing – often to important cultural heritage sites that are located near the stock route.

Another major threat is the abundance of feral camels. After a series of workshops and discussions with traditional owners and stakeholders last year, the Martu decided upon a feral camel and donkey management strategy. This strategy includes the aerial culling of camels in country that is far away and difficult to access by land. Some 5,000 camels and 1,000 donkeys were subsequently culled late last year in and around Martu country. Consultations are planned as a part of this project with the Birriliburu native title holders to determine a strategy

*Continued .....*

## Rangelands' Western Desert Project creates a new model for Indigenous engagement in NRM cont'd.....



for their country following an appraisal of the extent of the issue this year.

Culling and other management strategies for feral camels will be coordinated with the Department of Agriculture and the National Camel Project out of Alice Springs.

For more information, please contact Peter See on:

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Beth Jeffries clearing out a rock-hole

## Ngurawaana Ranger Project

The Ngurawaana Ranger Project aims to facilitate the development of an Indigenous Ranger program to protect the values and reduce the threats to High Conservation Value Aquatic Ecosystem of the Lower Fortescue River catchment.

The Ngurawaana community is situated in the heart of Yindjibarndi country providing a central location for the continuing activities associated with the cultural, spiritual and religious maintenance of the significant sites and locations within Yindjibarndi territory.

The Ngurawaana community is located in the Pilbara approximately 115km south of Roebourne near the Millstream / Chichester National park and the Fortescue River. There are currently about 30 people living permanently in the twelve houses at Ngurawaana. Ten (10) mem-



Ricky Smith with Parkinsonia

The Yindjibarndi word "Ngurawaana" means 'Coming back (wana) to a place (ngurra)'.

bers have signed up as Ngurawaana Rangers.

The Ngurawaana Rangers will initially participate in the implementation of the Parkinsonia Aculeate Management Strategy in partnership with the Department of Water. They aim to eventually conduct additional on-ground activities such as the regulation of the flow of tourists in the risk areas and the cultural and environmental protection of the area. One of the key long term objectives for the Ngurawaana community, for which this project can assist, is that Ngurawaana will demonstrate that they have the capacity to manage and maintain the Ngurawaana lease area including the riparian zone of the Fortescue River.

This project is being managed on behalf of the Ngurawaana Community Group Aboriginal Corporation by the Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation (JAC). JAC is an Indigenous organization located in Roebourne, dedicated to the recording, preservation and maintenance of Yindjibarndi language and culture. It is the organization that provides a link and meeting location for the agencies that are assisting in the implementation of the project.

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Bevan Gray with Community Leaders Ricky Smith and Rosemary Woodley

## Introducing the Carnarvon Office



Rangelands NRM WA Head Office is at the Corner of Research Road and South River Road, Carnarvon. There are five (5) staff based within this office.

### Dr Brian Warren , General Manager:

I started my working life on the family farm between Bathurst and Orange in NSW. After 10 years, I left to work on a coconut plantation in PNG for 12 months which was my first overseas experience. I liked it that much I decided to try and get the skills to do more development work and went to the University of New England, in Armidale NSW. Since then I have worked in development agriculture in Indonesia, China, Pakistan and northern Iraq; as well as Australia at Longerenong College in Victoria, with DAFWA at Katanning and Albany, and most recently for Rangelands NRM!

In Australia I was generally involved in R&D in sheep production from pastures and shrubs. My international experience has mostly been in very poor areas working in community development and community capacity building, generally based around improving agricultural production and better management of natural resources with the aim of reducing land degradation.

I like work and the challenges it brings, particularly in difficult environments and I like learning. I am looking forward to taking Rangelands into new fields with a much stronger business development focus. However, fishing and other recreational activities are also becoming attractive!

### John Silver, Program Manager:

I've been the Program Manager at Rangelands for 4 years, and was previously involved with NRM doing Landcare in the Wheatbelt (Dowerin) and Pilbara/Kimberley Coastcare (Karratha).

I've spent most of my life in regional WA, growing up in the Kimberley with stints in Perth, Pilbara, Wheatbelt and the Gascoyne. We moved the family to Carnarvon 2 years ago 'for something

different' and while Derby will always be home, the next move is Broome later this year.

I completed a Science degree as a mature aged student and have also worked in regional development. I'm committed to ensuring my kids access quality education without having to go away for schooling and passionate about reducing the extent and frequency of late dry season wildfires in the Kimberley by prescribed 'early season' patchwork burning. I'm into keeping NRM real—the potential to create meaningful employment opportunities by integrating good science with traditional ecological knowledge presents a great opportunity for those aspiring to break an intergenerational cycle of poverty.



**Carnarvon Office**

### Kriss Hand, Office Manager:

In this varied role, I coordinate the administrative functions of the office including all travel arrangements and conference bookings when required, as well as the general day to day office responsibilities. Basically keeping the cogs of the wheel turning! I coordinate the quarterly Board

meetings and all tasks associated with this. The Project Management component of my position encompasses project contracts, maintaining a register that monitors the ongoing activities of each project and keeping the administration tasks on track.

I have been married for 35 years, have two children Sarah & Adam who both live in Perth. Phoebe my Weimaraner keeps me sane and I love John Farnham!

### Bevan Gray, Indigenous Facilitator:

I am the father of 6 children (soon to be 7) aged between 18 and 7 years old. My down time is spent enjoying the outdoors with family and friends, as well as camping, fishing and exploring. I also support Fremantle FC with a devout passion and enjoy doing puzzles such as Sudoku.

I have been employed as the Indigenous Facilitator since May 2008 and work out of our Carnarvon office, servicing the Gascoyne/Murchison and Pilbara regions.

My past employment was in the legal fraternity

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Rangelands WA is a non-government organisation which represents community needs and encourages the sustainable use of land, flora and fauna, fresh water and coastal marine environments.

Rangelands is responsible for the establishment, management, evaluation and communication of many natural resource management activities and projects.

Our purpose is to lead, inspire and foster partnerships to sustainably manage our region's natural heritage.

*We are a dynamic organisation who are committed to making a real difference in natural heritage management in Western Australia.*

## The Carnarvon Office cont'd....

spending up to 8 years as a Court Officer, Magistrates Clerk and Assistant Clerk of Courts, and then another 8 years with the Aboriginal Legal Service as an Advocate (Court Officer). This allowed for me to develop an extensive network of contacts throughout the Gascoyne/Murchison and beyond. The last 12 to 18 months has seen me work exclusively in the Pilbara region facilitating the establishment of the Ngurawaana NRM Rangers project.

Rangelands WA has enabled me to complete many training courses that not only compliment my position but have increased my personal development.

### Leslie Abreu, Finance Officer:

I have been employed by Rangelands part time since February 2008 as the Finance Officer. I coordinate and ensure the processing and maintenance of all administrative requirements, financial and cost centre management systems and assist with budget preparation.

I have lived in Carnarvon for 25 years after moving from South Australia. I have been married to my husband John for 9 ½ years and we have two beautiful girls Rena and Hayley. I enjoy working for Rangelands and meeting new people and seeing new places.

## For Your Information .....

The Hamersley Ranges are particularly sensitive to fires, containing vegetation easily destroyed in fires, short-range endemic species and Declared Rare flora and fauna species. The area is considered a Biodiversity Hot-spot. The project was required to strengthen communication between corporate, private and government landholders for improved fire management of the Hamersley Range.



This Pilbara Sea Country Plan was developed from the realisation among Pilbara Traditional Owners that challenges affecting Indigenous rights and interests in the coastal and marine Pilbara region require a united and integrated Indigenous response.



The plan will provide a solid local basis for active engagement of Pilbara Traditional Owners in the stewardship of their coastal and marine rights and interests.

**More information on both of these reports can be found on Rangelands' website.**