



Australian Government

National Indigenous
Australians Agency



Stories from Country 2015 - 2017

How Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas are strengthening connections to Country, culture and community.

Stories from Country ... 2015-17

How Indigenous rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas are strengthening connections to Country, culture and community

© Commonwealth of Australia 2019

ISBN 978-1-925364-16-3 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-925364-16-3 (HTML)

Copyright Notice

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International licence (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) (update) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). (update)



Third party copyright

Wherever a third party holds copyright in this material, the copyright remains with that party. Their permission may be required to use the material. Please contact them directly.

Attribution

This publication should be attributed as follows: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Stories from Country ... 2015-17: How Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas are strengthening connections to country, culture and community.

Most of the photos in this report are from the 2016 Photo Competition, where permission was given for their use in promoting the Indigenous environment programs. All other photos have acknowledged the individual owner.

Front cover: “You can eat the seeds in the pods. Sometimes we roast the pirrkarla green pods and eat the seeds that way - in the pods. They (the seeds) have a bright orange cap (aril) when the seed is hard. We also make beads from the seeds.” Nyangumarta Traditional Owner.

Photo © Dr José Kalpers Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation
Nyangumarta Warrarn IPA

Please note that this report may contain images and names of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.



Stories from Country...

Foreword

The stories and case studies in this report showcase some of the many proud achievements of the Indigenous Ranger and Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) programmes from 2015 to 2017.

There is growing recognition in Australia and around the world of the success of these long-running programmes and the important role they play in combining Indigenous Knowledge with western science to look after Country, including managing almost half of Australia's National Reserve System. Together, the programmes were awarded a Bronze Future Policy Award for Combatting Desertification by the World Future Council (WFC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2017.

This report contains stories about 'caring for Country' and 'keeping culture strong' that are important for Indigenous communities, their partners, and all Australians to hear. There are stories about the social and economic benefits of these programmes and how they are helping to strengthen communities and 'close the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage, especially for remote Indigenous communities.

Some of the stories in this report are about ranger groups building their capacity to manage Country and to secure fee-for-service contracts, building partnerships with organisations to increase employment opportunities, about working with disengaged youth, and ranger groups embracing new technologies. At the end of the report we highlight some government initiatives opening up more opportunities for Indigenous rangers and IPAs.

We hope this report will be shared among rangers, community members, and other business partners to show how far we have come together and how important these programmes are for all Australians.

The Australian Government is proud of these programmes and remains committed to supporting and promoting the achievements of Indigenous rangers and IPAs.

New Indigenous ranger groups and IPAs ‘caring for Country’

New Indigenous Ranger Groups	Area of Operation	State	Year
Goldfields Land and Sea Rangers	Kalgoorlie Region	WA	16/17
Nyangumarta Rangers	Nyangumarta Warrarn Indigenous Protected Area	WA	16/17
Asyrikarrak Kirim Rangers	Daly River Region	NT	16/17
Mutitjulu Rangers	Katiti Peterman Indigenous Protected Area	NT	16/17

Table 1. Indigenous ranger groups established between July 2015 and June 2017

New Indigenous Protected Areas	State	Dedication Date	Hectares
Ganalanga-Mindiberrina	NT	30/10/2015	1,093,286
Katiti Petermann	NT	01/10/2015	5,043,753
Marthakal	NT	04/07/2016	323,048
South-East Arnhem Land	NT	13/09/2016	1,819,908
Wardang Island	SA	14/10/2015	3,930
Yawuru	WA	30/01/2017	127,925
Total area			8,411,850

Table 2. Indigenous Protected Areas dedicated between July 2015 and June 2017

Indigenous rangers and IPAs play a vital role in protecting Australia’s natural and cultural assets on behalf of all Australians. Traditional Owners, along with their partner organisations work hard to protect cultural heritage sites, control feral animals and weeds, reduce wildfires, restore traditional burning, and help save threatened species.

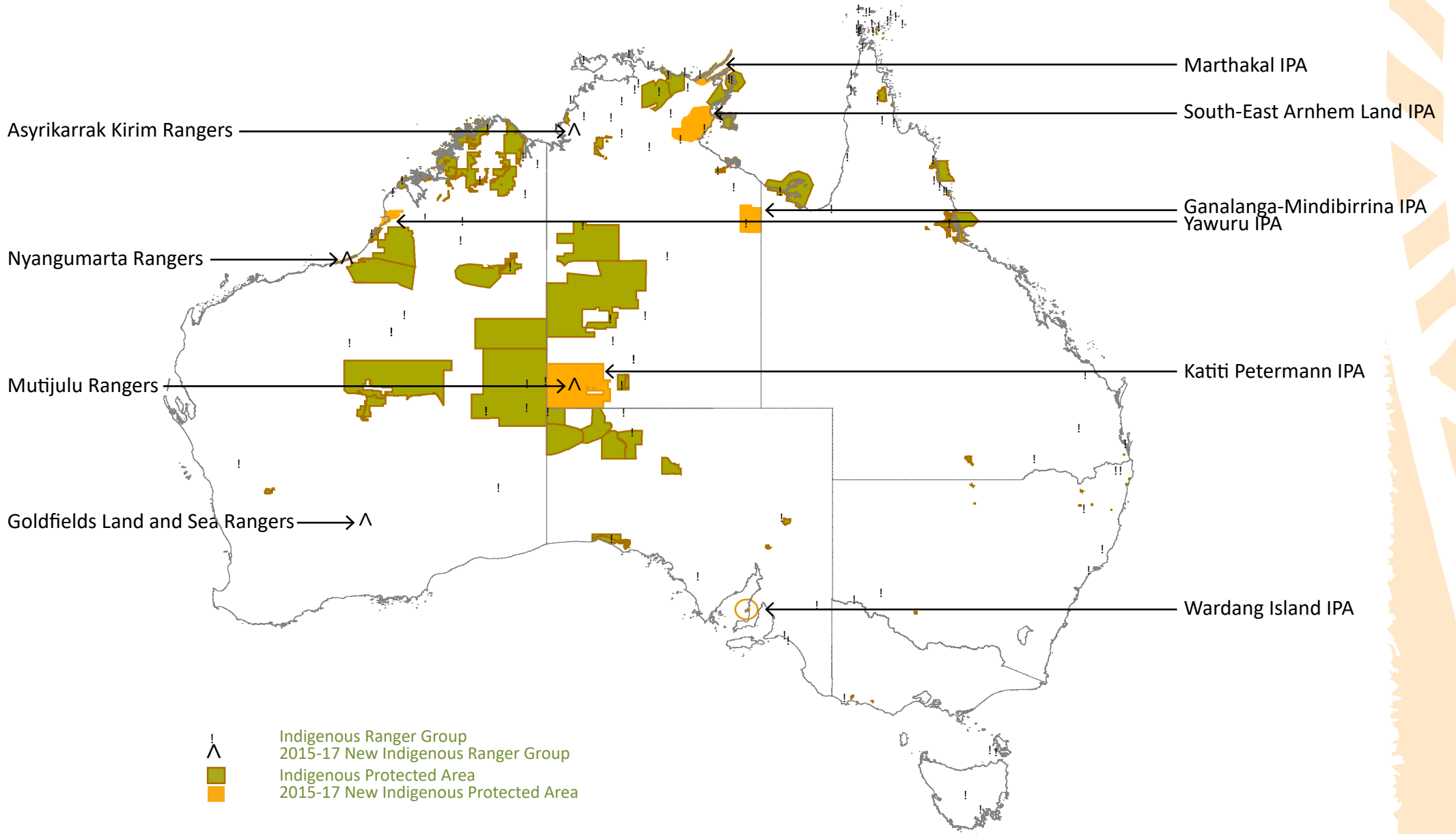
From July 2015 to June 2017 four additional Indigenous ranger groups (Table 1) and six additional IPAs (Table 2) were established and funded by the Australian Government.

As at 30 June 2017, the total number of people working on Indigenous Rangers and IPA projects was 3166 (638 full-time, 526 part-time, 2002 casual). 95 per cent of individuals employed identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, and 36 per cent identify as female.

IPAs now constitute almost half of the National Reserve System (NRS), thanks to the 8.4 million hectares dedicated from July 2015 to June 2017. There are a number of IPA projects in the consultation stage; once dedicated these will further expand the NRS.

The new ranger groups create ranger jobs and role models within Indigenous communities, and two of these groups support existing IPAs to implement their plans of management.

IPA and Indigenous ranger groups June 2017





Crocodile Islands Ranger Gerard gives a demonstration and explanation in the local Yolngu Matha language of how chainsaws work to the junior rangers in 2016. The Crocodile Islands "Junior Rangers" Programme runs sessions weekly for all secondary students at Milingimbi School. Photo © Chloe Rings, Milingimbi Outstations Progress Resource Association

Multiple benefits of Indigenous Rangers and IPAs

In 2016, the Australian Government asked Social Ventures Australia (SVA) to conduct an independent review to measure the social, cultural, environmental, and economic outcomes generated by the Indigenous Rangers and IPA programmes.

Five IPAs across Australia were reviewed - including Warddeken (NT), Girringun (QLD), Birriliburu and Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara (WA), and Minyumai (NSW).

In the SVA reviews, rangers reported having increased confidence and skills through training and experience, and increased health and wellbeing compared to before beginning work in the programmes. They also reported increased pride and sense of self worth, due to closer connections within and between families, and to culture.

These groups also reported a range of additional community benefits, including safer communities, strengthened culture and language, availability of meaningful employment, increased respect for women, and strong role models for young people.

Overall, the economic benefit was a return on investment of up to \$3.40 for every dollar spent by the Australian Government across the five IPA programmes assessed.

“We did some revegetation work on my Dad’s Country. Once we had done it we took him out to show him. He had tears in his eyes. It was an incredible feeling – I had goose bumps, I was so excited. It heals their bodies by being out there and seeing that. I want to do that for more old people.” A quote by Daniel Beeron, from the SVA Social Return on Investment report on the Girringun IPA.



Girringun Rangers assisting Marine Parks with fire management on Hinchinbrook Island. Photo © Sean Walsh, Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

The SVA review shows these programmes are delivering a range of important social and economic benefits to Indigenous communities, while delivering ongoing environmental benefits for all Australians.

Maintaining cultural connections to Country

Many IPA and Indigenous ranger projects enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to maintain or renew their cultural connections to Country. Examples include:

- **Cultural burning** - Under the guidance of Traditional Owners, Budj Bim Rangers undertook cultural burns at Kurtonitj and Allambie. They used mosaic burning to regenerate areas of vegetation. (VIC)
- **Culture camps** - The Warddeken IPA held a culture camp at Milerreleer on Djordi Estate during the 2017 dry season. Activities included sharing freshwater knowledge, visiting significant rock art sites, and attempts to capture images of the elusive badbong (short-eared rock wallaby) on motion sensor camera traps. A large kunborrk (ceremonial dance) was held on the last night and senior men and women taught the younger generation how to perform dances and song cycles of the stone country. (NT)
- **Recording rock art** - Rangers from the Ballangarra IPA have been managing significant rock art on their Country and assisted rock art scientists from the University of Western Australia during their research trips. In 2016, they documented three new rock art sites. (WA)
- **Maintaining soakages** - The Kiwirrkurra IPA has many soakages that are culturally significant and important features in the landscape. Rangers regularly visit these areas to make sure they are maintained for both people and native wildlife. (WA)



Budj Bim Rangers cultural burning on the National Heritage listed Budj Bim Lava Flow. Photo © Greg Shelton, Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation

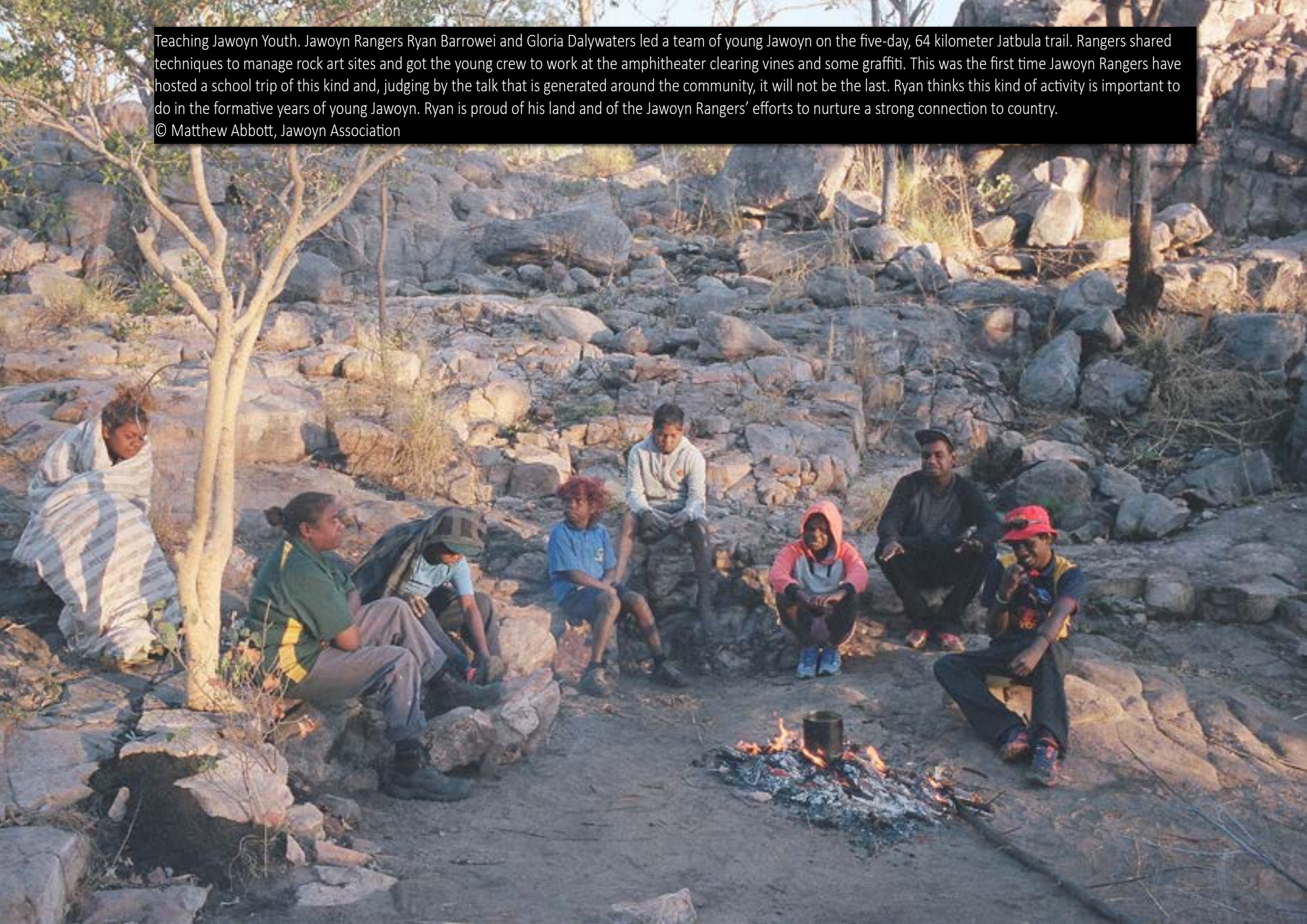


Jeremiah, Walimpirri and William digging out a soakage in the Kiwirrkurra IPA. Photo ©Kate Crossing, Central Desert Native Title Services



Sharing Traditional Knowledge on Country with Djelk Women Rangers, elders, and young people. Leila Nimbadja (second from the left) is a Traditional Owner and a powerful advocate for strengthening horticulture and land conservation knowledge in her community. Leila was instrumental in establishing Maningrida's first native nursery in 1989 and in 2002 become Djelk's first woman ranger. Working closely with Leila, the Djelk Women Rangers have established a program to develop the skills and knowledge required to identify, collect, and propagate native plants for use in future land regeneration work and commercial enterprises. This initiative aims to give women in the Maningrida region an opportunity to share and capture traditional knowledge for future generations. Plants collected (left to right) include Pandanus spiralis, Australian paper daisy, banyanvines, livistona palm, Pogonolobus reticulatus (yellow dye), Dracaena angustifolia plant, and yellow seeds. Photo © Tina Yeganeh, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Djelk Rangers.

Teaching Jawoyn Youth. Jawoyn Rangers Ryan Barrowei and Gloria Dalywaters led a team of young Jawoyn on the five-day, 64 kilometer Jatbula trail. Rangers shared techniques to manage rock art sites and got the young crew to work at the amphitheater clearing vines and some graffiti. This was the first time Jawoyn Rangers have hosted a school trip of this kind and, judging by the talk that is generated around the community, it will not be the last. Ryan thinks this kind of activity is important to do in the formative years of young Jawoyn. Ryan is proud of his land and of the Jawoyn Rangers' efforts to nurture a strong connection to country.
© Matthew Abbott, Jawoyn Association



Strengthening Indigenous communities

IPA and Indigenous ranger projects actively work with their local communities to build support and strengthen their community. Examples include:

- **“Makarrata”** - Museum Victoria collated information about key collections of Milingimbi cultural material held in institutions around the world. A highlight of this project was “Makarrata”, which brought together representatives from major collections around the world and the community of Milingimbi. The Crocodile Island Rangers led the preparation and delivery of the Makarrata in August 2016. They helped the Junior Rangers build traditional shelters, and provided a bush tucker meal for the whole community. (NT)
- **Learning on Country** - The Djelk Rangers helped transfer Indigenous Knowledge through their Learning on Country (LOC) Programme, together with Maningrida College. LOC combines school-based learning and on-country learning, with a strong emphasis on intergenerational and two-way learning which combines both Traditional Knowledge and western science. (NT)
- **Indigenous Fire Workshop** - The Bunya Mountains Murri Rangers hosted the first Indigenous fire workshop in the region in 2017. Attendees participated in a cultural burn in Russell Park, and discussed how to progress an Indigenous-led cultural fire practice revival throughout the region. (QLD)
- **Junior Rangers** - The Lama Lama Rangers actively engaged with young people through their Junior Ranger Programme. The Junior Rangers helped with weed surveys, beach clean-ups, and cultural site visits. The junior rangers used their iPads to make movies about their experiences. (QLD)



This photo was taken on the Djelk Rangers - Maningrida College Learning on Country biodiversity camp. Djelk Rangers are instructing and supervising students to record data for a habitat survey. Photo © Shane Bailey, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation Djelk Rangers



A Muru-warinyi Ankkul Ranger strengthens traditional connection to Country by sharing knowledge with his son. Photo © Dominique Lane, Central Land Council

Thamarrurr Women Rangers turning rubbish into cash for the community

The women's ranger team of the Thamarrurr Development Corporation have made an outstanding contribution to cleaning up their Country through an innovative recycling project.

Wadeye is a remote community located 400 kilometres south-west of Darwin in the Northern Territory. While the area features breathtaking land and sea country, the community was facing a large rubbish problem.

Over time a large amount of packaging and drink containers had spread around the community, and the surrounding land and sea country. As well as being unsightly, rubbish can directly affect the health of people and wildlife. We have all seen the devastating effect that ghost nets have on marine wildlife (see page 13).

In 2016 the Thamarrurr rangers became a collection point for Container Deposit Scheme materials. Each Friday community members brought recyclables in exchange for cash. Over the year 200,000 items were recycled with over \$20,000 in refunds going directly to the Community. This was all thanks to the good work of the women rangers.



Thamarrurr women rangers cleaning up Country by turning rubbish into cash. From left to right Maureen Simon, Francis Mardinga, Marie Manby, Margaret Mary Melpi.

“The rangers are aware that there is still much to be done to address the rubbish problem at Wadeye, but a seed has been firmly planted regarding a change in attitude towards litter and recycling,” - Melissa Bentivoglio from Thamarrurr Development Corporation.

Lost or abandoned nets from fishing vessels, or 'ghost nets', are killing countless fish, birds, crabs, turtles, and other marine life. Northern Australia has some of the highest densities of ghost nets in the world. The Crocodile Island Rangers are one of many Indigenous Ranger groups who are working to remove these nets from the environment. Photo © John Skuja, Milingimbi and Outstations Progress Resource Association





Wet season water monitoring © David Chuguna, Kimberley Land Council Nurrara Women Rangers



Kiwirrkurra Rangers are monitoring bilby populations using a traditional tracking skills and cutting-edge DNA analysis techniques. Yukultji, Payu and others identified at least five individual bilbies at this site from their tracks and scats: two females, a male, another male with an injured leg, and a juvenile. Photo © Kate Crossing Central Desert Native Title Services Kiwirrkurra IPA



Crocodile Island Rangers conducting a shorebird survey at Rocky Point, on Milingimbi Island, Arnhem Land NT. Photo © Solodi Buthungguliwuy, Milingimbi and Outstations Progress Resource Association

Monitoring native plants and animals

Monitoring and managing wildlife is a central task of many IPA and Indigenous ranger groups. Many projects target threatened species of plants and animals at risk of extinction in the wild. Examples include:

- **Ninu Festival 2016** - the Kiwirrkurra IPA hosted the inaugural Ninu Festival, a three day event designed to highlight the importance of bilbies (ninu is the Pintupi word for bilby). The Ninu Festival brought together more than 120 Indigenous rangers from 20 different ranger groups, scientists, conservation organisations, and government representatives to share knowledge and ideas about looking after ninu. Over 80 per cent of the land ninu are still found on is Aboriginal owned and/or managed and ranger groups know that they play a a critical role in saving ninu. (WA)

“We have been showing rangers from other communities how we look after ninu; setting up cameras at burrows, hunting cats, and making little fires so when it rains, lots of grass seeds grow up for ninu,”
Sally Napurula Butler.

- **Shorebird surveys** - Migratory shorebirds are experiencing massive declines, with some species losing almost 50 per cent of their population in the last ten years. Scientists are trying to determine the cause of the decline, and rely on data on the numbers of shorebirds to keep track of the population. Indigenous ranger groups, like the Crocodile Island Rangers, are uniquely placed through their skills, Indigenous Knowledge, and access to Country to make a major contribution to the collective research knowledge about shorebirds, their status, and migration routes in Australia. (NT)

- **Warru** - Over the past decade, rangers in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands have been working hard to save one of the most critically endangered mammals in South Australia, the warru (black-footed rock wallaby). An exciting project milestone was achieved in May 2017 when 40 warru were reintroduced in the APY Lands. Rangers fitted VHF radio collars to all reintroduced warru and have been busy monitoring their movements after the release. Remote cameras have already captured evidence of breeding with pictures of young warru out of the pouch. (SA)
- **Marine Surveys** - The Girringun Rangers conduct regular dolphin, dugong, and turtle surveys with the assistance of James Cook University. All data is submitted to the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to help with population monitoring and management. (QLD)
- **Seed Collecting** - Budj Bim Rangers have been collecting black wattle seed on the National Heritage listed Budj Bim Lava Flow. The seed is taken to the Portland Seed Bank for cleaning, weighing and storage, and then taken to a local nursery for propagation. Rangers plant the seedlings back on the lava flow as part of their rehabilitation project. (VIC)



Girringun Rangers : Bruce Reese, Cindy-Lou Togo, Simon Smallwood & Dwayne Burton heading out to undertake dolphin and dugong surveys. Photo © Penelope Bong, Girringun Aboriginal Corporation



Warru Kanyintjaku Ranger with a young warru. Photo ©Kate Holmes, APY Land Management



Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area. Photo © Kate Crossing Central Desert Native Title Services Kiwirrkurra Rangers



Weeding the creek in the Guanaba Indigenous Protected Area (QLD) Photo ©Justine Dillon, Ngarang-Wal Gold Coast Aboriginal Association Inc

Controlling feral animals

Feral animals cause damage to natural ecosystems and wildlife across all states and territories. Controlling feral animals is a key activity for IPA and Indigenous ranger groups. Examples include:

- **Cane toads** - Managing the invasive cane toad has been a focus of the Crocodile Island Rangers. The rangers monitor Milingimbi Island during the dry season each year with help from the community. In 2016, 539 cane toads were removed during the three-day 'cane toad bust'. (NT)
- **Rabbits and foxes** - Framlingham Forest and Deer Maan IPA Rangers continued surveying and removing rabbit warrens, and baiting rabbits and foxes. (VIC)
- **Wetland fencing** - The Kowanyama Rangers fenced Red Lilly and Crayfish Hole to keep out stock with excellent results. (QLD)

Controlling weeds

Weeds are an ongoing problem, especially as they are often easily spread and difficult to control. A large proportion of IPA and Indigenous ranger groups undertake weed eradication and management projects. Examples include:

- **Weeds of national significance** - The Raukkan Ranger group attended a weed control workshop held by Coorong District Council and NRM Murray Bridge at Raukkan in 2017. The rangers adopted the control methods discussed in the workshop and have since treated 100ha of land infested with African Boxthorn, Bridal Creeper and Prickly Pear. (SA)
- **Controlling weeds and promoting cultural heritage** - The Dambimangari IPA rangers have found their weed program has provided the opportunity for rangers and senior Traditional Owners to get out on Country, do meaningful work, and visit some places of cultural significance to the Dambimangari people. For example, on a trip in early 2016, a Traditional Owner visited the old Kunmunya Mission site where he was born in the 1940s. (WA)



Cane toad fence. Photo © Crocodile Island Rangers



A Sea of Salvinia. In February 2015, Jabalbina Rangers discovered an infestation of Salvinia in two dams at on Kuku Nyungkal Country near the headwaters of the East Normanby River. Native to Brazil, Salvinia forms a dense mat on the surface of freshwater, eventually killing fish and other aquatic species by blocking out light and deoxygenating water. The Salvinia outbreak is a serious threat to 3,500 wetlands downstream, including Lakefield National Park. Jabalbina worked in partnership with South Cape York Catchments and Biosecurity Queensland, and placed a boom and wire fence across the lower dam outlet to prevent Salvinia being washed downstream. Initial hand removal was followed by regular chemical control and monitoring. After more than a year of control, the dams are almost free of floating Salvinia. A quote from Jabalbina ranger, Thomas Houghton, "It was good to finally get on top of the Salvinia after we trialled so many different methods. It's been great that different agencies and companies have worked with us. Hopefully the next generation will get an eye for it in case it turns up again on Country. We'll need continuous monitoring to make sure it doesn't get into wetlands down the river." (Courtesy: Newsletter of the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation and Land Trust, December 2016). Photo © Rowan Shee, Jalalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Kuku Yalanji IPA and Eastern Yalanji Rangers.



Elders help the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Martu Rangers keep Martu Country healthy by passing on traditional fire management techniques. ©Sarah Watson, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa

Using fire to manage Country

For thousands of years, Indigenous Australians used fires across the landscape to clear paths, hunt animals, and create new plant growth. More recently, fire has been used to reduce carbon emissions and generate revenue.

Examples of fire management projects include:

- **Patch burns** - Kiwirrkurra Traditional Owners continue to conduct extensive patch-burning on the Kiwirrkurra IPA. The burning promotes growth of a key food plant for the bilby, which has continued to survive at numerous sites within Kiwirrkurra. Firescar mapping has revealed the use of traditional burning in and around the IPA has resulted in fires being smaller than the fires on unmanaged country. (WA)
- **Manage natural and built assets** - Rangers at the Dorodong IPA took part in a five-day fire training program with the NSW Rural Fire Service in Arrawarra to improve their skills to manage natural and built assets during fires. (NSW)
- **Regenerate land** - Truwana Rangers have used cultural burning on Cape Barren Island in an attempt to regenerate the land. Previous fires have been destructive to the area due to vegetation being allowed to build up over time. Rangers are using the techniques of cool burning (a managed low-intensity method) to deter future bushfires and encourage regeneration. (TAS)
- **WALFA** - Mimal Rangers are delivering the internationally recognised West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement project (WALFA). This project generates income while reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions entering the atmosphere using a traditional fire management regime. (NT)



Nolia Napangati Ward conducting patch burning . Photo © Rachel Paltridge, Central Desert Native Title Services, Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area.



“We’re coming Willy!”. During survival sea training as part of their coxswains course, the rangers practice retrieval from a life raft. Photo © John Wilson, Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation

Training and Education

IPA and Indigenous ranger groups across the country undertake a range of training and skills development to help them manage their land and sea Country. Building the capacity of rangers has been a focus of the Government’s Indigenous Land and Water Management programmes.

- **Coxswains training** - In 2016, the Gumurr Marthakal Rangers undertook Coxswain Grade II training, resulting in the ranger group having four fully qualified coxswains. (NT)
- **Certificates and key competencies** - The Ngulingah Nimbin Rock Rangers have boosted their capacity to manage their Country by completing a range of training, including: Certificate II in Rural Operations, Fire Arms Training, Excavator, Loader and Skid Steer Operations, First Aid, Workplace Health and Safety Training, and Certificate III in Nursery Production. (NSW)

Innovation

Rangers are increasingly using innovative measures and cutting edge technology to help them with managing their Country.

- **Birdseye View** - The Yuku Baja Muliku Rangers are pioneering the use of drones to monitor their Country, with the assistance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This technology is allowing rangers a view of their Country they have never seen before. Three rangers have been trained to pilot the craft, along with mapping applications. This will significantly help the rangers in managing Country, which is a challenge due to difficult terrain, as well as monitoring offshore islands and reefs. (QLD)
- **Digital Storybook** - The Central Land Council has translated the Southern Tanami IPA management plan into an innovative digital storybook in which text is replaced with short videos, audio, and animation in Warlpiri. (NT)



iPad dreaming. Photo © Central Land Council, Southern Tanami IPA



The Gumurr Marthakal Rangers demonstrating the buddy system in action during fire fighting training. Photo © John Wilson, Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation

Indigenous rangers as qualified and authorised compliance officers

Between 2014 and 2016 the Australian Government invested \$2 million to strengthen compliance powers of Indigenous rangers in North Queensland through the Specialised Indigenous Ranger Programme (SIRP).

As part of the SIRP, 22 Indigenous rangers completed Certificate IV in Compliance. Three of the graduates have since taken up positions with Commonwealth and State regulatory agencies, and in March 2018, 17 of the remaining participants were formally delegated Marine Inspector powers under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The SIRP, delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), enabled the rangers to take on formal compliance roles as authorised marine park inspectors, in addition to their regular ranger duties.

As marine park inspectors, the rangers will have the confidence and tools to be the extra 'eyes and ears' for GBRMPA and deal with people committing environmental offences. This will bolster efforts to protect the Great Barrier Reef and help conserve endangered marine animals such as turtles and dugongs.



Indigenous rangers working with the Queensland Government protecting the reef and its inhabitants. Photo ©Matthew Dunn, Torres Strait Regional Authority

“...the pilot programme was a huge success...achieving results that exceeded expectations and demonstrated [the rangers'] professional aptitude for compliance roles” - Minister Scullion, November 2016



SIRP graduates from far north Queensland are better prepared, technically and legally, to look after their country. Photo courtesy of Yuku-Baja-Muliku Rangers.



Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area rangers working with New South Wales National Parks and La Trobe University in the field excavating a hearth on the Walls of China, Mungo National Park. Photo © Leanne Mitchell, Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area

Working with partners providing jobs in Indigenous communities

Conservation research groups, industry, governments and philanthropic groups are important partners contributing to IPA and Indigenous ranger projects.

- **Bush Blitz** - Bush Blitz provided their knowledge and experience to assist with biological surveys of a range of plant and animal species on the Kiwirrkurra IPA. A total of 664 species were recorded; 375 of these species had not been recorded previously in the IPA, including 42 species thought to be new to western science. (WA)
- **Southern Right Whale** - The Yalata Rangers worked closely with multiple research partners to monitor the Southern Right Whale population. Partners included the Great Australian Bight Marine Park, Curtin University (WA), and Murdoch University (WA). In 2016, Murdoch University used drones to measure the change in body conditions of the species over the season. (SA)
- **Cultural Heritage** - The Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area Rangers assisted research partnerships with Griffith University, La Trobe University, and Bolder University (USA) during their archaeological field season. Rangers helped with identifying and recording Aboriginal cultural heritage sites within the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area. (NSW)
- **Carbon credits** - The Jawoyn Rangers took full opportunity of the carbon economy by raising funds from carbon credits generated through traditional controlled burning on their Country. This income contributed to recruiting 30 casual ranger positions from different Jawoyn communities who are also helping look after Nitmiluk and Kakadu National Park. (NT) Kakadu National Park.
- **Biosecurity**- In 2015 the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources launched Our North, Our Future, to increase biosecurity surveillance, skills, participation and employment across Indigenous ranger groups in northern Australia. This has provided the opportunity for Indigenous Ranger Groups to undertake contracts for biosecurity work, increase fee-for-service levels of remuneration for Ranger Groups, and to employ additional rangers.



Sally Butler holding a pale knob-tailed gecko caught during the Bush Blitz survey in Kiwirrkurra IPA. Photo © Rachel Paltridge, Central Desert Native Title Services, Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area.



The Jawoyn Rangers fought late season wildfires on the Upper Fergusson River within Nitmiluk National Park to reduce the amount of carbon being released into the atmosphere. Photo © Lauren Bulumbara, Jawoyn Association

Looking to the future:

Exciting new developments for both Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas

In May 2017, Minister Scullion announced the \$30 million **Capacity Building for Indigenous Rangers Strategy** (the Strategy) to further develop the technical skills and capabilities of Indigenous rangers across Australia. The Strategy is a training, development and capability building initiative for Indigenous rangers and ranger organisations, focusing on compliance and leadership. Enhancing the skills and capability of Indigenous rangers and their organisations will help unlock economic opportunities arising from increased uptake of compliance and fee for service work. The Strategy is a four year investment to 30 June 2020.

Funding for the rapidly expanding **Indigenous Ranger programme has been extended through to 2021.**

The Federal Budget in 2017 included an **additional \$15 million for new IPAs** under the National Landcare Program, as well as ongoing funding for the IPA programme for a further five years to 2023.

An **additional 30 ranger groups** were undertaking fee for service biosecurity surveillance work by the end of 2017, thanks to a \$12 million boost from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources providing funding to 2019.



Martu Rangers birdwatching. Photo © Ben Deslandes, Kanyirrinpa Jukurrpa Martu Rangers

A handy friend found by Rangers in the Southern Tanami IPA.
Photo © Nick Ashburner, Central Land Council



Thanks...

These stories provide a snapshot of the important work Indigenous Land and Water management projects carry out in communities and in caring for our great country.

Many thanks to the Indigenous Protected Area and Rangers teams around Australia for your detailed reports, photos, and stories.