"It was tipped to be the golden age of gas for the Top End; instead the Northern Territory is in the grip of a deep bust. The construction of Darwin's 37-billion-dollar Inpex gas plant has wound up, and thousands of fly-in fly-out workers have left. That's seen Darwin property prices in sharp decline in the only Australian city where the population is dropping," said the presenter of ABC's 'The Business' at the end of March this year (Northern Territory's Inpex hangover provides 'effects of the bust' without 'benefits of the boom').

Just two weeks later, 12th April, was the sixth anniversary of the James Price Point pull-out, when Woodside, BP, Shell, Japan Australia LNG (MIMI Browse) and PetroChina abandoned the $80-billion proposal to industrialise the Kimberley coast with one of the world's biggest gas factories.

While the NT Government and industry focussed on oil and gas, the tourism industry was neglected. 'Darwin used to be a massive tourist town — the Paul Hogan adverts, the Never Never, everyone used to love to come to the Territory — and it seems with expensive flights, expensive accommodation, now a lot of people aren't coming,' said Sam Weston, who was forced to shut one of his two Darwin cafés last month.

This experience matches the findings of a report by Curtin University's Sustainable Tourism Centre, Kimberley Whale Coast Tourism, commissioned by EK, Conservation Council and The Wilderness Society WA in 2010. "Large-scale industrial development would devalue the Kimberley brand and adversely affect tourism, a major component of the Broome and Kimberley economy. This impact would flow through to tourism operators, regional employment and business viability." Fortunately, the majority of people in Broome and many small businesses took heed and joined the fight against the gas. The NT Government is forking out $100 million over two years to try and lure tourists back.

The NT Government is now spending $4 million a day more than the revenue it collects. Worse than this is the chronic disadvantage experienced in remote Aboriginal communities, which is not improving. It can't be much clearer: the economic model the NT is based on, mega-scale industrial development, fails to provide enduring benefits. Despite this, the NT Government is looking to fracking, which we know is unlikely to bring significant numbers of jobs. The Australia Institute stated that if fracking went ahead, it was likely to provide all of 80 jobs in the NT. The profits would go to companies based down south and, given the high costs of fracking, there would be little revenue for governments.

Rather than basing our future on industries that fail communities and leave a trail of broken economies, why wouldn’t we focus on one of the world's most extensive and intact landscapes, and a resurgent Aboriginal culture with knowledge and information from deep time? Now is the time to protect our globally special places like the Dampier Peninsula, Fitzroy River, Buccaneer Archipelago, Great Sandy Desert, North Kimberley and the incredible coast. We can base an economy around them. The golden age of gas is gone, we’re now entering the golden age of nature, culture and community; but it's a hard slog and we need everyone on board.
Report From The Chair
While our Chairperson Kate is away, here’s a report from our Vice-Chair Shaun Clark.

Hello all,
Having been handed the privilege of writing the Chair’s report, I find one topic that’s hard to get away from is the heat we’re experiencing in Man-gala season.

As the temperature and humidity rise everything around us is affected: our buildings, roads, cars and, ultimately, our bodies. Anybody who works outdoors at this time of year understands this well — and the value of shade. The shade from trees is our greatest asset. Unlike steel roofs, which can radiate heat downwards, our friends the trees absorb heat and provide us with a wonderfully cooler environment beneath.

This subject will become increasingly important as our climate heads towards extremes unheard of by generations before us. Urban Heat Island (UHI) is when the urban temperature is significantly warmer than the surrounding rural areas, through the effects of human activities. There is an overnight effect where the human structures around us maintain heat. Statistics show that some Australian cities can be as much as five degrees hotter than the surrounding unbuilt areas.

So what can we do to lessen the UHI effect in the Kimberley? Our civic design can play a major role in this. Buildings in the Kimberley constructed from corrugated iron cool down quickly at night, whereas concrete and brick structures absorb heat and maintain it overnight. So we are doing reasonably well with our building design.

For those working in this hot environment our thoughts are with you. Let’s all work together to make the Kimberley cooler.

Shaun

Letters To The Editor
Environs Kimberley welcomes letters to the Editor. We accept comment and criticism, and print all letters that are not obscene, offensive or libellous. If you have a bone to pick, pick it with us.

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Thanks for helping us to protect the Kimberley environment

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Shaun
A million dead fish on the Fitzroy – no dam way

The horror of the environmental catastrophe in the Murray Darling was brought home in mid-March when Uncle Badger Bates, Traditional Owner of the Barkandji people and Grant Rigney from the Ngarrindjeri Nation at the mouth of the Murray were invited to meet and share their stories with the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council. I was fortunate enough to meet them and their message was clear and strong: make sure we don’t allow the mistakes of the Murray Darling to be replicated on the Fitzroy.

The next day I attended the ‘Planning for the Fitzroy’ forum in Fitzroy Crossing as part of the consultation on the State Government election commitments to the River. The Ministerial Council on the Fitzroy, made up of Minister for Environment Stephen Dawson, Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Food Alannah MacTiernan, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Wyatt, and Minister for Water Dave Kelly, were there to update us a year on from the last forum in March 2018.

Minister MacTiernan opened by saying that there would not be a repeat of the Murray-Darling disaster for the Fitzroy and that GM cotton was not part of the future for the catchment – a very promising start – but she also said there would be some irrigation in the catchment.

The biggest breakthrough was when the Minister for Water, Dave Kelly, announced that a buffer zone, proposed by the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, would become part of the upcoming consultations on the future of the river. The buffer zone, where no irrigation, surface or groundwater harvesting, mining or fracking would be allowed, covers just 5% of the catchment but protects 90% of the floodplains, including the National Heritage-listed areas. This is the only way we can ensure the health of the Fitzroy for future generations.

We are facing a major struggle from NSW cotton farming millionaires, the Harris Family and Gina Rinehart’s Hancock Agriculture, who want to take vast quantities of water directly from the river. The only way that can be done is via huge pumps and/or canals. What we’re talking about is scale; while there is groundwater available outside the proposed buffer zone for small irrigation plots, it’s not enough for those wanting industrial-scale agriculture for cotton, the seed of which can be fed to cattle in huge feedlots, and other thirsty crops like maize and sorghum.

We’ve seen what happens when we go down that path, that’s why it’s so important that the government hears from you. Tell them there is an alternative development scenario possible for the Fitzroy River, based on the new economy, such as carbon management, Bush Products, cultural and eco-tourism, renewable energy, recreational fishing, arts, education, science and research.

Go to our Kimberley Like Nowhere Else Alliance website to send a message to the government that you want the Fitzroy River protected. https://www likenowhereelse.org.au/fitzroy_floods and please share on social media.
More tips to improve the sustainability of our daily lives without too much effort.

CONTAINERS
Some time ago (December 2017), Living Green announced a competition — a mystery prize for the best example of ‘repurposing’ from our many readers. If you have been wondering why the winner has never been announced, the reason is simple and rather sad: no one responded. There are several possible reasons for the absence of entrants: no one is interested in repurposing; no one wants to win a mystery prize they may not like (but could always repurpose as a gift to someone else); worst case: no one reads Living Green. Undeterred, we press on.

One good move by the WA Government, and not before time, is the container deposit scheme due to start in ‘early 2020’. The scheme will cover most cans, bottles and cardboard containers, but, oddly, not bottles for concentrated or undiluted fruit juice or cordials. All containers under 150 ml and over 3 litres are excluded, as are one-litre plain milk containers, which, I suppose, is to avoid adding to the up-front cost of milk. Glass wine and spirit bottles are excluded on the grounds that their contents are normally consumed at home (not so in my neighbourhood). Despite its limitations, the scheme can’t come fast enough for Living Green, who spends time most days cleaning up cans and bottles in our local park. If they are still piling up in ‘early 2020’, we can get paid for our efforts.

Oh, but will Kimberley towns have the necessary ‘collection points’ by then? I don’t know what our government has in mind, but I’ve seen examples of automated collection points in the UK, where one feeds the cans and bottles into a machine, which, I presume, spits out cash in return. Is it likely that all small towns will have such contraptions by next year?

Of course, as Ecclesiastes noted, there is nothing new under the sun, apart from methods (end phrase added by Living Green). Back in the days of dinosaurs, when Living Green was a child, there was a container deposit scheme. Bottles of cool drink and the like could be taken back to the shop for the penny or whatever-it-was refund. No need for an expensive automated system in those days. But then, there were fewer of us on the earth. More than two thirds fewer. Numbers of human beings have increased by about 350% since then, and counting. That’s a lot more cans and bottles.

The demise of insects
I have spent an (admittedly small) proportion of my life rescuing individual insects and arachnids from drowning in my sink or in the dog’s water bowl, and righting beetles that have fallen on their backs and are waving around their legs ineffectively, like upended turtles. On the other hand, I am less kind to cockroaches. Don’t misunderstand me — I admire cockroaches for their persistence and adaptability, and they do the world a great service as scavengers. I do rescue them from death by scalding or drowning in my sink; however, they are not welcome indoors in droves and I have been known to trap and feed them to my neighbours’ chickens, who administer a quick death and convert them into eggs. It’s called ‘value-adding’.

In view of recent reports about the demise of insects worldwide, my rescue efforts take on greater significance. But they pale by comparison with the efforts of Jains. The Jain sect in India has such a strong prohibition against destroying life that priests carry brooms to sweep insects from their paths, lest they tread on them. How quaint, one may think, but it turns out that the Jains have more of a clue than many in our society.

Anyone with ears and half a brain will have heard with concern the horrifying news that a third of the world’s insects are in danger of extinction. Nighttime drivers have reported the absence of insects spattering their windscreens — do you remember the days when you had to activate your windscreen squirt and wipers to smear the little bodies across the glass? Bogong moths, which used to envelop Canberra in Spring, invade Parliament House and interrupt business, are now rare and probably on the brink of extinction. While parliamentarians, not known for their understanding or appreciation of nature, may greet this news with some relief, the ramifications for the critically endangered Mountain Pygmy Possums are severe. Bogong moths are the Mountain Pygmy Possum’s main food, necessary to its survival during the winter months. The disappearance of the moths is likely to spell extinction for the possums.

This is the story with most insects and other invertebrates — besides living their own enigmatic lives, they provide food for many others. The numbat, also critically endangered, lives almost exclusively on termites, which, I am happy to report, are still doing well away from towns, perhaps because they spend most of their lives underground, out of reach of pesticides. They do suffer from urban expansion and landclearing for agriculture, but in the landscapes of Australia they have a better chance than most. What’s more, they create their own climate.

Besides feeding the world, insects of all varieties, not just bees, pollinate the world’s plant-life, on which we all ultimately depend. Even dedicated carnivores are eating reconstituted grass. Let’s hope children are still being taught the rudiments of plant reproduction and the exquisitely intricate food web, and not just how to make a buck. Money may not grow on trees, but food does.
They won’t get away with fracking in the Kimberley. We stopped James Price Point, we stopped them damming the Fitzroy River, and I’m damned if the Kimberley will get fracked."

I have lost count of how many times people have said that to me. It reflects their fierce determination to continue to protect the Kimberley environment.

Some commentators question the economic viability of Kimberley fracking. Stock analysts Taylor Collison have used the acronym D.E.A.D – Distant, Expensive, Abandoned by big companies, and Dry (with few critical-mass discoveries) – to describe fracking prospects. The cost of extraction makes fracked gas uncompetitive unless there is a ‘mass discovery’. In contrast, WA Premier Mark McGowan and Mines Minister Bill Johnston claim a gas crisis for next decade is looming. Offshore conventional gas producers have not been reserving 15% of supplies for domestic use, as required, creating a false shortage in this state. There is a similar one in Queensland, where exports were prioritised over domestic supply, pushing prices up 72%.

The fracking industry does not provide the proclaimed jobs and royalties; it is a financial drain. Economic analysis from the Northern Territory fracking inquiry (the WA inquiry did not undertake economic analysis) suggests that in WA about 80 jobs will be created across the whole state – including FIFO and Head Office – while only $30 million of royalties will be contributed to the state budget of $30 billion per annum. In WA, New Standard Energy, which was in a deal with ConocoPhilips to explore in the Great Sandy Desert, has collapsed, leaving taxpayers to pay rehabilitation costs. In the USA, since 2015 over 160 fracking companies have gone bankrupt, leaving debts in excess of $100 billion. Taxpayers and consumers will bear the cost.

Finder Shale, on Karajarri country, think they own the ‘mass discovery’. They claim to be sitting on enough oil and gas to ‘supply a quarter of Australia’s oil and half of WA’s gas for decades to come’. Meanwhile, research by the School of Engineering and Information Technology at Murdoch University reveals that exploiting just 28% of the Canning Basin would produce 115% of Australia’s 2014 emissions every year for at least 20 years. Fracked gas contributes to climate change and we desperately need to reduce emissions, not increase them.

The Kimberley Frack Free Community has been planning and preparing. Our multipronged strategy has three key features. One is to hold the government accountable to fully implement the concessions it made in response to pressure from traditional owners and the Kimberley public. The Premier said the Dampier Peninsula will be off limits to fracking and the community will be consulted about where the boundary is – we’ll need a massive push to make sure places like Roebuck Plains are protected.

The Premier said Special Prospecting Areas (areas previously open to exploration for fracking and conventional oil and gas) are now off-limits to fracking — we need to see this legislated. Veto rights for traditional owners and landowners must be extended to exploration as well as production. All these matters should be entrenched in legislation to make it more difficult for any future government to reverse them. The regulatory framework must be comprehensive and tight — we will be watching.

Our main aim is to have fracking banned across the Kimberley. We will broaden and strengthen our alliances with a range of interest groups. Council elections come up this year and State elections in 2021. We will assess and publicise candidates’ positions on fracking. We know this campaign will be won by community mobilisation and that Kimberley people are determined.

Third, there is an alternative to fossil fuel. The Kimberley Clean Energy Roadmap reports that the region is 94% powered by fossil fuel, yet over five years could transition to between 60 and 90% renewable energy. For an initial investment of $449m in renewable energy assets, the region could save almost $15 million per year over 25 years. 184 long-term jobs would be created across WA, of which 162 would be in the Kimberley. By adopting clean energy, the Kimberley would reduce its emissions of CO2 by at least 150,000 tonnes per annum – the equivalent of taking 25,000 petrol-powered cars off the roads. The Roadmap was commissioned by Environs Kimberley, The Wilderness Society and the Lock the Gate Alliance. You can read more about the Roadmap at https://www.kimberleycleanenergy.org/.

Photos by Damian Kelly
Recently the Nyul Nyul Rangers hosted a MVT Conservation Action Planning workshop at Beagle Bay. The three Traditional Owner Ranger groups came together with KNP staff for a day of sharing ideas and experiences. Thanks to our funding bodies, the Kimberley Nature Project (KNP) has continued working through 2018/19 with Traditional Owner Ranger groups (Yawuru, Nyul Nyul and Bardi Jawi) and Parks and Wildlife Services to protect and restore the special plant community known as Mayi Boordan in Bardi — ‘places of plenty bush foods’, described by scientists as the Monsoon Vine Thickets (MVTs) of the Dampier Peninsula.

Looking after the MVTs of the Dampier Peninsula

Kylie Weatherall

and to plan for the year ahead. Guests (staff from Rangelands NRM Broome office) provided the group with insight and advice on project funding.

KNP has been facilitating these meetings since 2017 to move the MVT project from Environs Kimberley to a regional working group, sharing knowledge and decision-making across ranger groups and organisations. The meetings have developed a regional strategic plan to spell out how the groups can work together to protect this Endangered ecosystem.

The groups determined that they would apply to be the official National Recovery Team for MVT (a recognised team of experts under the EPBC Act) as they are the key groups working on the ground to recover this ecosystem. Then it will become only the second Aboriginal-led National Recovery Team. The Dampier Peninsula MVT Recovery Team will continue to meet twice a year and refine the plans via feedback-data gathered from on-ground works (the weeding, burning, revegetation, etc). We look forward to putting our new working model to the test.

We need your help

We need a hand to protect the Kimberley again this year — can you help?

The EK market stall is starting up again at Easter and we are desperately looking for new volunteers!

Can you spare a couple of hours a month for a good cause? We need help on our stall at the Broome Courthouse Saturday markets, or driving the market trailer.

Volunteering on EK’s stall is a great way to get to know what’s happening in our region and help us inform the community.

Anyone can help and training is provided. And it’s fun.

If you can help out, please let Tess know: (08) 9192 1922 or admin@environskimberley.org.au
In Broome, KNP has been working closely with Nyamba Buru Yawuru Women Country Managers for about eight months. It’s been a busy time, seed collecting and processing, propagating MVT plants, weeding, surveying and revegetating. Two community events have been held in the last few months, one to pass on knowledge about plants of cultural importance and one to help restore the MVT in Minyirr Park.

Early one December morning (2018) a cultural planting event was held at Minyirr Park with families from the Broome Nature Playgroup. NBY’s Women Country Managers led a cultural botanical walk, talking about important plants along the way and gathering samples for plant activities. The children and their parents explored the world of MVT plants with the Country Managers, the Kimberley Community Seedbank and DBCA staff, finding and planting seeds, sampling bush food and using the gathered samples to create paintings.

The second community event made the most of a ground-soaking rain in March. KNP staff, the Yawuru Women Country Managers and SKIPA volunteers came together one afternoon to plant trees at the ‘Old Cable Beach Rd’ revegetation site. When moving a pile of mulch, a SKIPA volunteer both got a surprise and surprised an adult Western Brown snake *Pseudonaja mengdeni*, which had been resting quietly in a hollow under the straw. Western Browns are a very alert and fast-moving species. Most of the time we do not see them, as they leave the area before we get close. They are highly venomous and, like most snakes, they will avoid confrontation if possible, but defend themselves if provoked. Whilst it’s great to know that Minyirr Park MVT still has healthy snake populations, it was a timely warning to be observant when out and about in the bush (especially in the wet season) and if you surprise a snake, make sure to give it an escape route away from you.

**Projects funded by Rangelands NRM WA, the National Landcare Program and State NRM Program**

![Exposed by a volunteer moving mulch, this Western Brown snake was looking about for a quick escape route. Photo by Jon Hall.](image)

![The Nature Play Group kids exploring at Minyirr Park with NBY Country Managers, Environs Kimberley and the Kimberley Community Seedbank](image)

![Yawuru Women Country Managers filling up water trailer](image)
Weedy Wet-Season Teamwork

While this wet season has been relatively dry (compared to 2017/18) there has been enough rain to germinate lots of annual herbs — that’s the good news. The bad news is that many of those pesky invasive weed species are flourishing, some already having flowered and set seed.

This has been keeping SKIPA volunteers busy tackling many of Broome’s common weeds in their own backyards, on verges and drains, and with a special focus on Broome’s own Botanic Park in Waranyjarri Estate (Broome North). SKIPA has a long-term alliance with the Shire of Broome Parks and Gardens staff to manage the park, working to keep the weeds in check whilst continuing to develop and maintain the six Kimberley habitat areas in the park.

Kimberley Clontarf Academy Year 12 students joined us recently to become weed warriors for the afternoon. Bringing youthful energy, smiling faces and muscles, they proved the adage ‘Many hands make light work’, collectively removing many weeds and raising spirits. Their group effort was much appreciated.

Together we have been tackling weeds such as: Mint Bush, which is identified by its distinctive aromatic minty smell; the strangling vines Siratro (a vigorous grey-green vine with maroon flowers and long-lasting seed); Hairy Merremia (a bright green fleshy vine with stem ‘hairs’ that irritate the skin); and of course the Stinking Passionfruit (which many people think is a native); the clumping Birdwood and Buffel grasses (which inhibit the growth of other plants); the well-known Caltrop, a running prostrate herb with pretty yellow flowers and nasty giant prickles. And that’s just a few of the emerging wet-season weeds.

With all weeds, the best strategy is to try to get them before they flower and seed. Attack them after it rains when hand-pulling is an easy job, or grub the emergent seedlings out with a hoe. If you want to learn more about local weeds join a SKIPA activity soon, or buy a set of Kimberley Weed cards (available from Environ Kimberley).

Contact SKIPA skipas@environskimberley.org.au or phone EK for more info.

New Staff Members

GRACE DUNGEY
Media & Research Analyst

Grace is originally from Victoria, and holds a Bachelor of Arts (Global) and Diploma of Languages (Indonesian Studies) from Monash University. During her studies, Grace attended Universitas Gadjah Mada, located in Yogyakarta, Java, and studied Indonesian law. Prior to relocating to Broome, Grace was based in Chengdu, Western China, under the Victorian Government’s Hamer Scholarship Program.

She has worked extensively as an Indonesian Affairs research consultant for global NGO Human Rights Watch in both Indonesia and Australia, focusing primarily on land rights across the archipelago. She has also worked as a communications officer for the Melbourne-based Indigenous Education Foundation and at the Nulungu Research Institute in Broome. Her past writing on the environment and First Nations affairs has appeared in a range of national and international news outlets such as Al Jazeera, Asia Times, and The Jakarta Post.

NIGEL JACKETT
Project Officer, Kimberley Nature Project

Nigel grew up on the South Coast of NSW, and holds a Bachelor of Environmental Science (Hons.) from the University of Wollongong. Since 2006, he has worked on threatened species projects for government agencies in NSW and Canada, as an environmental consultant for resource and renewable energy projects throughout WA, and, most recently, managed the Broome Bird Observatory on the northern shores of Roebuck Bay.

Nigel specialises in providing technical advice and monitoring threatened fauna, with a particular focus on migratory shorebirds and the enigmatic Night Parrot.
Imagine you’re a superhero. Batman, Aquaman, Wonder Woman — take your pick. Now don your cape and fly up into the sky, out into space where the satellites circle — and look down at planet Earth. Imagine that, with your x-ray vision, you can see all the seagrass meadows on Earth, and with your telescopic vision you can also zoom in to see all the life that relies on seagrass – all the turtles, dugong, fish and invertebrates, and all the human families of the world who benefit from healthy oceans and a healthy climate.

Now – imagine you had another super power – the power of visual time-lapse. If you sped up your observation of earth, you would see our seagrass meadows shrinking before your eyes, taking with them the dugong food, the turtle food, the fish nurseries, the habitat that so many creatures rely on.

In this story, you – as a superhero – are witnessing the world losing one of its most precious and life-sustaining resources. It’s a serious situation.

What do you do?
Unfortunately, this story is not totally fiction. The world IS losing a seagrass meadow the size of a soccer field every half-hour, mainly because of human impacts, and it’s fast taking all the aforementioned benefits to our world with it.

But there’s hope!
Among us, there are everyday superheroes walking around – they look just like regular people. But several times per year, they transform into something awe-inspiring.

They gather at a predetermined location and a set time. They pull on not the red boots of Superman, or the gold boots of The Flash... they pull on mud boots. They arm themselves with their super equipment – mysterious square metal things called quadrats. And they set out to combat this trend of seagrass loss that is depleting our planet.

As they walk out over the mudflats they look pretty much like Marvel’s Avengers... just... you know... more ‘Broomie’?

This story is the story of you – our seagrass volunteers. You are the superheroes here. You’re not standing by while our world suffers; you are stepping up to protect this precious resource by monitoring the seagrass meadows that we are so lucky to have on our doorstep. What you do for our bay, our town and our world is extremely important.

Pat yourself on the back, send this article to your friends and family so they know what a superhero you are, and stay tuned for the announcement of the dates for our next monitoring event.

I look forward to seeing you out on the seagrass meadows – with your boots on!

The Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring Project is funded by Coastwest, Parks and Wildlife Service — Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Kimberley Ports Authority and Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, jointly managed by Environs Kimberley and Parks and Wildlife Service — Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and supported by project partners Nyamba Buru Yawuru and Seagrass Watch.
**What’s in a name, anyway?**

Jessica Miller

Taxonomy is the scientific discipline of naming things (or more accurately, classifying living things).

Taxonomists use a system that was launched in the 1700s by Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus. This system assigns a combination of two Latin words for each life form, written in italics: for example, Bauhinia cunninghamii. The Bauhinia is called Ngiyali by Bunuba people, while people in the west Kimberley, including Yawuru Country, call it Jigal.

Names save us time when we would otherwise have to describe something, e.g. 'That plant with curved pink flowers and large, long seed pods that grows on sandy soil.' It is important to have names for things — but how important is it that everyone agrees on that name? Yawuru people do not seem to have a problem with this. Yawuru Country Manager Johani Mamid tells me everyone is happy to refer to Jigal as Jigal — they don’t argue about it. However, people who work in taxonomy spend years rearranging plant categories, and adjusting names as new information comes to light.

New information often comes with changes in technology. When genetic testing became cheap and widely available, taxonomists started to re-name and re-classify many plants and animals. Prior to genetics, taxonomists used other information, such as the colour of the flower, the region it grows in, the shape of the leaves. These methods are now used in combination and continue to evolve.

The most interesting moments in taxonomy are when people disagree. Western science is littered with funny stories about naming disputes.

A Kimberley skink, *Ctenotus inornatus*, was recently lumped together with five other species and now has no scientific differentiation from a similar skink found in Victoria. Reptile scientists are refusing to accept what they think is a ridiculous change by taxonomists.

Can people just ignore such findings because they seem silly or inconvenient? Well, put simply, yes they can. There are often nostalgic, and sometimes practical reasons for wanting to keep some names. These things are decided at international conferences.

In the controversial case of the wattle family (*Acacias*), research showed that the group should be split into five groups, four requiring new names. Australia has most of the world’s wattles species (over 1000), but Africa was first in line to keep ‘Acacia’ because it had the earliest record of a plant with that name. However, taxonomists at a conference in Vienna decided that Australia could keep ‘Acacia’, that being the most practical solution overall. Debate is still raging about that decision and whether it should be overturned.

The simple explanation for these messy situations is that some taxonomists are 'lumpers' (they merge plants into big groups with one name) and some are 'splitters' (they split species into smaller groups, all requiring new names). The conflict between lumpers and splitters results in headaches for anyone working with scientific names.

So, if you are considering entering the exciting profession of taxonomy, beware. You will eventually be classified as a lumper or splitter, and both can get you into trouble.
This year's 16th annual EK Art Auction will again be exhibiting some of the best art works the Kimberley has to offer. Come along and enjoy a night of exquisite art, delicious food, a well-stocked bar, and great company.

Saturday 27th July 2019
3–5 pm - preview of the art
5–7 pm - drinks, food and live music
7–9 pm - live auction of art pieces

Potential bidders and art lovers will be able to preview the works on Friday 26th July, 12–5 pm. For more details, please contact Tess on (08) 9192 1922 or community@environskimberley.org.au

Artists we need you

As valued supporters of Environ Kimberley, you are invited to take part in this year’s event. To enter please fill in the Artist Entry Form and return by 28th June 2019. Forms are available on the EK website, or from the EK office at 44 Blackman Street, Broome.

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