

## Martuwarra Fitzroy River – lifeblood of the Kimberley – a step closer to protection



Back in 1996, the Martuwarra inspired a small group of concerned people to found EK. The plans to dam and control the wild river were a step too far. Thanks to the campaign by Traditional Owners, environment groups and people from across the country, it never happened. As well as protecting the river, we saved the government and agribusiness hundreds of millions of dollars. Any dams would have been washed away in the 2023 floods.



### Martin Pritchard

Not long after we had won that campaign, Colin Barnett came along and unilaterally suggested building a pipeline to Perth; that killed off his 2005 election hopes. The plans for exploiting the river kept coming, and in 2015 the original dam proponent was back — but not for long. We pushed back hard and he was gone. Then came plans from one of the biggest agribusinesses in Australia — Gina Rinehart's Hancock Agriculture — and the big cotton-and-cattle-farming Harris family from New South Wales.

We've held them back, but it hasn't been easy. In submissions to the W.A. Government, 43,000 people called for the full protection of the river. In October this year the Minister for Water Resources, Simone McGurk,

announced 10 historic policy principles for the future of the river. They include no dams, no new surface water allocations — which means no Murray–Darling style pumps, dams, and crops like cotton. It has taken an impressive alliance to get here — the Kimberley Land Council, Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, the Aboriginal groups along the river and the Kimberley Like Nowhere Else alliance of conservation groups, which have stood together and spoken with one voice.

Next year, the government will release a water plan for public comment. Make sure you keep in touch so that you can have your say and help protect the Kimberley's globally significant Martuwarra Fitzroy River forever.



Banjay Sir John Gorge. Photo: Adam Monk



# Report from the Chair

## Carmel Leahy

**When I was a child, my Uncle Pat would make us a big plum pudding. This was the real deal, drenched in liquor, hung for months in a muslin cloth. My mother would do the unforgiveable and put the pudding away for a special occasion. And Christmas isn't a special occasion? More of that pudding later...**

Like a good Christmas pudding, my life with Environs Kimberley is maturing into a rich rewarding experience. I started out as a member back in 1996; fifteen years ago, I joined the Board and now I'm delighted to be the Chairperson. For those of you who may say, "OMG, what are they thinking? Carmel! Chairperson!" Fear not. Check out the Board biographies in the Annual Report. It's a formidable team.

I would like to thank Kate Golson and Craig Phillips, who each filled the role of Chair for a period this year, when the Fitzroy Floods forced Natalie Davey to step down. They ensured solid governance as Andrew Batt took on the new role of Chief Executive Officer, and both still sit on the Board, offering their wisdom and guidance. I have an able deputy in Kat Taylor. Also on our Board we have competent, fresh faces helping EK to move with the times.

There is more to the festive season than Christmas puddings. Rather too much more for some of us. Fortunately, many people are starting to push back against the consumerism and greed that can mar this time of year.

Research suggests that volunteering is associated with a lower risk of dying. Allen Luks coined the term 'the helper's high', the sense of euphoria that a person can experience soon after helping someone else.

Luks defined two phases—the first characterised by that uplifted, euphoric mood, the second by a longer-lasting sense of calm. Volunteering provides social connection, a sense of purpose and increased physical exercise. A marvellous gift for a loved one might be to sign them up for a volunteer activity. EK has a range of fun, active volunteer opportunities.

And Uncle Pat's pudding? After the usual vociferous protests, my mother carried it off to the far reaches of our 'cool room'. Well, the house burnt down, didn't it? Standing on the flat, looking at the charred remains of the family home, we could only cry, "See, Mum, you shouldn't have put that pudding away!" Uncle Pat's puddings never again made it to any sort of storage.

Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season.

Carmel

## New Kimberley Books

The indefatigable Kim Akerman, an eminent anthropologist who lived in Broome for many years, has been spending his retirement producing valuable records of Kimberley Aboriginal history and art. Hesperian Press has just released two splendid new titles. The first, *The Forgotten Art of 'Flash Jack' Barrymore* by Akerman with Bruno Jordanoff, shows the work of a colourful Derby character and artist, who, during the years of WWII and after, produced outstanding paintings on paper, pearl shells and boab nuts. Well-known and respected in his day, Jack has since been forgotten, and Akerman has done us a service by bringing him and his evocative work back to our notice in a beautifully produced permanent record.

*The Scales of the Serpent* is Akerman's second and expanded book about the history, use and dissemination of pearl shell in the Kimberley. Limitations of space dictates that I leave an account of this one to our next edition. Both books are very much worth acquiring.

Pat Lowe

## STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

**Kimberley Mineral Sands now has approval to run 60-metre, 4-trailer road-trains between Thunderbird Mine and Broome Port.**

**D-DAY IS JANUARY 2024 — the trucks start coming NEXT MONTH!**

### Staff

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### 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 nature of the Kimberley







# CEO's Report

Andrew Batt

**This edition of the Newsletter, our 100th, is all about celebrating our successes protecting the Kimberley in 2023.**

It has been an incredible year, from the recent Martuwarra Fitzroy River announcement by the State Government, putting an end to surface water extraction, to the success of the Wattleseed Collective harvest, and our collaboration with Greenpeace, whose visit with the Rainbow Warrior brought attention to the threats posed by gas projects and fracking.

We commissioned the SEN Clean Energy Study, showing that 80% renewables for Broome is achievable, developed our Conservation Economy framework to provide alternatives to extractivism as the only source of development, and were shocked by the Nature Sustainability study that showed there is real risk that parts of the Kimberley will become unliveable by the end of this century. Along with our partners at the KLC and the Martuwarra Fitzroy Council, we also delivered a petition with 27,000 signatures to the Minister for the Environment to show that we continue to campaign to protect the globally significant river system.

We enjoyed various events, such as the Frack Free Kimberley Concert, the Yajilarra Festival, Between the Tides, and our own annual art auction, all of which were

celebrations of this magnificent place, a highlight being the release of Pat Lowe's book, *Life in the Pindan*, which provides valuable insight into the natural environment and wildlife of the west Kimberley.

With all of the seemingly increasing threats, our brilliant Kimberley Nature Project team continues to quietly carry out the on-country work alongside several Aboriginal ranger groups. They do plant and animal surveys, seagrass monitoring, weed removal, bush regeneration, seed collection, and numerous other necessary projects that benefit the natural environment

My personal highlight was the opportunity to engage with communities across the Kimberley and learn from the people's rich cultures, deep knowledge and profound connection with country, which has helped preserve the ecological richness of this place. It really is 'too precious to plunder'. Sharing the film *Fighting Giants* with the crew of the Rainbow Warrior was an emotional experience, one that moved everyone on board and inspires me to this day to keep up the fight. Lastly, a huge congrats and thanks to Martin for a comprehensive handover, and for his 15 years with EK, stewarding the organisation.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the support of our dedicated team, volunteers, and supporters. So the biggest celebration is reserved for you! Bring on 2024!



## The community says YES to protecting Entrance Point Reef

Eliza Arnold

**People gathered at Entrance Point Reef Broome early November to celebrate the reef and demonstrate to the government that our coral is too precious to drill.**

Powerful words were spoken by Ngaire Pigram, Yawuru & Wajarri storyteller from Broome, who shared love of and connection to Country, imploring the community to stand together to protect this culturally and spiritually important place. Ngaire said, *"I want my grandchildren and my great grannies to be able to play on these reefs, which will feed them and nurture them, the way they have done for us over thousands of years."*

Dr Steve Salisbury shared insights about the many wonderfully preserved dinosaur tracks along the coastline, and the importance of the National Heritage listing bestowed on the Broome sandstone and intertidal zone in 2011.

The strength of community helped put a stop to investigative drilling in

late November, and we are hopeful that, if we stand together, we can continue to ensure this reef remains protected. We will have more community actions and events next year. Anyone can send an email to the WA Minister for Ports, no matter where you live.

***Please stand with the Broome community to protect Entrance Point Reef. Sign a letter [here](#).***



The community says YES to protecting Entrance Point Reef. Photo: Damian Kelly



# Protecting the Kimberley: A Year in Review

Martin Pritchard

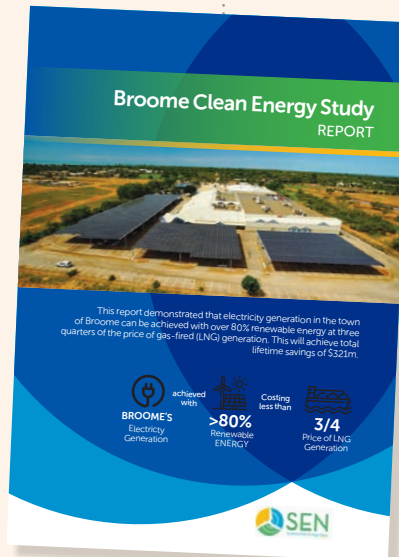
**In the face of escalating climate change, our commitment to safeguard the Kimberley region from environmental threats has never been more crucial. The devastating floods in Fitzroy Crossing earlier this year served as a shocking reminder of the urgent need to stop new carbon emissions, particularly from mega-polluters like the oil and gas industry, above all, fracking companies.**

The alarming projection that Fitzroy Crossing could experience 225 days over 40 degrees Celsius by 2090 underscores the imperative for action. Our relentless efforts to combat fracking and advocate for the shutdown of the oil and gas industry gain significance with each passing day.

This year marked a milestone as we forged a powerful alliance with SEED, Australia's first Indigenous Youth Climate Network. Together, we strive to defend the Kimberley from the pervasive threat of oil and gas fracking. Our support for the Traditional Owners in resisting the encroachment of oil and gas on their land culminated in a huge concert at Cable Beach, calling on Premier Cook for a Frack Free Kimberley.

The symbolic arrival of Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior in May helped spotlight the fracking menace in the Kimberley. Sailing to Walmadany James Price Point, we raised banners to draw attention to the environmental risks, a decade after Woodside's departure.

Our commitment to protect the Martuwarra Fitzroy River remains unwavering. We presented a petition with 27,000 signatures to the WA Parliament, and our collaboration with the Kimberley Land Council, Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, and The Kimberley-Like Nowhere Else alliance has been powerful.



The Kimberley has one of the most intact coastlines in the world. Our marine conservation work through the Kimberley Like Nowhere Else alliance, backing up Traditional Owners' aspirations, has seen the Kimberley coast evolve from zero protection in 2008 to 3.1 million hectares in marine parks this year. The addition of Bardi Jawi Gaarra, Mayala, and Maiyalam marine parks is a testament to our collaborative work with Traditional Owners, the WA Government, and local communities.

The pursuit of World Heritage listing for the Kimberley is an exciting step forward. With the Albanese Government's commitment, the journey begins to showcase and safeguard the region's rich cultural and environmental values.

Our Renewable Energy Campaign gains momentum. The Broome Clean Energy Report, launched in collaboration with Sustainable Energy Now and Lock the Gate, demonstrates the viability of transitioning to 80% renewable energy at a fraction of the cost of LNG, offering a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel projects.

The Kimberley Mineral Sands Thunderbird Mine is the most environmentally damaging development in the west Kimberley's history. We've raised concerns about habitat destruction and increased shipping posing threats to marine ecosystems, and made numerous objections and appeals. Despite our strong objections, the company is about to begin exporting through the Port of Broome.

As we approach the implementation of the twenty actions from the Scientific Inquiry into Fracking, our stance against the industry in the Kimberley remains resolute. Reports of fracking's adverse effects on health, water and climate heighten the urgency to ban this industry. The recent win on the water trigger would have been proud of, with his passion for protecting water. We persist in our efforts to

keep oil and gas in the ground, ensuring the Kimberley remains frack-free forever.

In the face of mounting challenges, your support remains pivotal. Together, we stand as guardians of the Kimberley, defending its ecosystems and cultural landscapes against the relentless march of destructive industries. We thank you for the support in 2023 and we call on you to join us in this critical endeavour in 2024.



In light of recent announcement of water trigger laws, EK celebrates the late Micklo Corpus for his dedication to defending water against fracking. Photo: Damian Kelly



Mangala Martu Traditional Owners and community making a stang against fracking at threatened Edgar Ranges, August 2023





# Wattleseed Collective – harvesting, cleaning and celebrating

Louise Beames and Tessa Mossop

This was our second year attempting a multi-group, commercial-scale harvest of wattleseed throughout the Kimberley as part of the development of the Wattleseed Collective social enterprise, and it was a big one! In 2023, the Sustainable Communities team had been busy with the Social Enterprise Project: consulting and co-designing the development and setup of the business, financial and technical aspects of the Wattleseed Collective, and then, as we drew closer to the harvesting season, reviewing the logistics, making sure everyone was properly equipped. We had people collecting the ripening of wattleseed over more than 530km.

Together, over five weeks, and with more than 80 people, Environs Kimberley, the Nyangumarta Rangers, Karajarri Rangers, Yawuru Country Managers, students from Nyamba Buru Yawuru and North Regional TAFE's sustainable employment program, Bardi Jawi Rangers and Yiriman Women Bush Enterprises and the Society for Kimberley Plants and Animals, as well as a range of individuals and families from across the Kimberley, combined their efforts to collect over 130 kilos of wattleseed for the Wattleseed Collective.

This was a huge effort by all involved, producing more than four times the amount we collected in 2022! Skills were learnt, knowledge was shared, and fun was had across the generations as people came together on Country to be part of a sustainable and meaningful economic opportunity, which will help make healthy native foods accessible in communities, and support people to be on, and look after Country.

Post-harvest, collectors met for a two-day workshop of wattleseed cleaning and processing in Broome. Together we developed skills in machine-cleaning seed to food-grade standard, and experimented with roasting, grinding and packaging techniques to create the Wattleseed Collective's first product. The packages will be presented to members and supporters who generously donated to the Environs Kimberley's crowd-funding campaign to get people out on Country and participate in this year's harvest.

Our Sustainable Communities team has also been busy increasing our own skills and expertise to better assist others in developing social enterprises. Louise Beames received an Australian Scholarship Foundation scholarship and started a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA), Tahnee Carter is undertaking business mindset coaching and developing Microps as a social enterprise model, and Tessa Mossop received a scholarship from the Institute of Community Directors Australia, and is completing a Diploma in Governance. This will be most useful as we move, in 2024/25, to establish Wattleseed Collective as its own incorporated group, with a predominantly First Nations board comprised of collectors.

We extend a huge thank-you to everyone who participated in and supported this year's harvest and contributed to the development of the Wattleseed Collective over the past two years. A special thanks to EK intern Azie Dungey, who joined us for the harvest season and invested a huge amount of personal time, energy, and skill into helping with wattleseed collection and making a short, instructional film so that more people can join in next time.



Yiriman Women Bush Enterprises' Jacko Shoveller, Wattleseed Collective Intern Azie Dungey and Yiriman Women Bush Enterprises' Mandy Shoveller facilitating wattleseed collection with Karajarri and Nyangumarta Rangers around Bidyadanga. Photo: Tessa Mossop



Jacqueline Shoveller, Lynette Wilridge, Carlene Wilridge, Nita Kitty, Mandy Shoveller and Roxanne Possum. Photo: Tessa Mossop



Roberta Hunter from Nyangumarta grinding wattleseed. Photo: Tessa Mossop



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development





# Birds on Country Symposium

Sam Younis

In late November, Russell Chestnut (Gooniyandi Ranger Coordinator), Daniel Carrington (Gooniyandi Head Ranger), Marlee Hutton (KLC Ecologist), and I attended the Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC). The rangers were invited to share their ongoing work on the undescribed Gooniyandi Grasswren.

This AOC stood out as the largest one to date, evident from the variety of talks presented. Discussions covered topics ranging from the global importance of decaying woody matter for birds to the significance of honouring traditional ecological knowledge. Climate change mitigation efforts were also explored.

The third day featured the Birds on Country symposium, a special event celebrating the work being done across Australia and Papua New Guinea. Attendees found the talks refreshing, noting a positive and action-oriented atmosphere. The symposium highlighted the diverse ways communities are connected to birds, the role of traditional ecological knowledge in understanding birds, how collecting stories can inform better conservation management, the varied and important work that Aboriginal ranger groups are doing to protect Country and how education is key to sustained and effective protection of our environment.

The Gooniyandi Rangers' presentation showcasing their noteworthy work on the Gooniyandi Grasswren found resonance with a broad audience at the AOC. This presentation is expected to foster new networks to support Environs Kimberley, the KLC, and the Gooniyandi Rangers in their continued efforts to protect and understand birds on Country. It's a step forward in the commitment of attendees to collaborate on conservation efforts.

This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program.



## RAFFLE WINNER



The winner of our raffle drawn on Thursday 16 December was Richard Barnes with ticket number 29.

We hope you love your new piece, Nyarlgoo, by Claude Carter.



Birds on Country. Created by Amanda Lilleyman



Marlee Hutton (KLC Ecologist), Russell Chestnut (Gooniyandi Ranger Coordinator), Daniel (Gooniyandi Head Ranger) and Samuel Younis (EK) at the 2023 Australian Ornithological Conference. Photo: Amanda Lilleyman







Danielle Bain and Hamsini Bijlani

## AI Megadetector

We are working with the Karajarri, Nyangumarta, Ngurrara and Ngururpa Rangers in the Great Sandy Desert to monitor the response of reptiles and small mammals to different fire patterns on their Country.

These data are being used directly to inform the rangers' fire management work to reduce the impact of widespread, destructive wildfires in the desert. We are using a variety of survey methods, including large-scale sensor camera surveys conducted independently or combined with trapping arrays. These surveys generate thousands of sensor-camera images, which we have to go through individually to identify and record the animals on them. As you can imagine, this is very time consuming.

Sensor cameras are an effective tool, which detect anything that moves; we can capture everything, from goannas to desert mice. But they can also be triggered when it's windy, when the sun shines too brightly, or when people walk past; therefore, we may get large image sets which don't have any animals in them!

This is where Artificial Intelligence (AI) comes in, and it's a game changer. Rather than scrolling through and scanning thousands of 'empty' images, we can rely on the AI technology to do this work for us. We still need to double-check the AI model's accuracy, but the time spent looking through the images and identifying what is in them has been significantly reduced since we started using this technology.

In this image, a monitor lizard has been detected by the Microsoft AI model called the 'Megadetector'. At this stage, the Megadetector doesn't identify the animal, it only detects that there is an animal; we still must identify it.



Sand goanna (*Varanus gouldii*) captured by AI Megadetector



Spinifex hopping mouse (*Notomys alexis*) captured by megadetector

**Project:** Sandy Deserts Fire and Biodiversity Project

**Partners:** Karajarri, Nyangumarta, Ngurrara, Ngururpa, Indigenous Desert Alliance

This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program and Lotterywest



Kylie Weatherall

## Nurturing Conservation through Indigenous Ecological Wisdom

Over the past few years, the Kimberley Nature Project (KNP) has been working with the Bardi Jawi and Nyul Nyul Ranger groups on the Dampier Peninsula to develop cultural knowledge products.

With the Bardi Jawi Rangers, we facilitated the production of a 'Bardi Jawi Aarli (fish)' poster, which documents language names for over 85 marine animals. We assisted with workshops and on-country cultural activities, recording traditional knowledge around plants with rangers, elders and young people, which will contribute to a second edition Bardi Jawi plant knowledge book. Lastly, we have worked to develop a Bardi Jawi seasonal calendar, to be used as a poster and within other publications such as a plant booklet. With the Nyul Nyul Rangers, we have been producing a cultural plant knowledge booklet and a Nyul Nyul seasonal calendar.

While it is a step away from direct ecological work, the integration of cultural knowledge and language into the work of conservation has many benefits, especially by improving the results of our conservation efforts. The work has built the capacity of communities to document, share and use this knowledge in their healthy country activities, as well as fulfill aspirations within the rangers' Healthy Country plans.

As always, it has been a great privilege to work with the ranger groups and their elders, documenting traditional knowledge and producing educational tools for use in their communities. We look forward to seeing these 'two-way science' products in the field, helping maintain cultural practice and language. We also thank the philanthropic and government organisations (State NRM and Coastwest) whose funding has enabled us to undertake this work.



Bardi Jawi Ranger Coordinator Bibido McCarthy with the Bardi Jawi Aarli Poster. Image: Kylie Weatherall







# Tributes to Martin on his 15 years with EK

By some of those who have known him longest.

*I remember sprawling on Laurel's floor in 2008 checking Martin's job application and we agreed that he seemed to be the one we needed; very happy to have had that choice confirmed many times over in the fifteen years since. Despite having had to do his performance reviews on many occasions I am glad he counts me as a friend as well as a colleague, and Judy and I love that he is now part of her family as well. Made a magnificent contribution to our common cause, the nature of the Kimberley.*

**Peter Mitchell**

*When Martin applied for the Director's job he attached a photo, and I remarked in an email to Maria Mann, who held the role at the time, that he was 'quite a dish'. But don't get the idea that that influenced any of us: his application was outstanding, and we knew he had the job even before we interviewed him. No regrets. He has exceeded our expectations, and over a longer time than we ever imagined. He is a great campaigner — when Martin speaks, politicians tremble.*

**Pat Lowe**

*It was December, and Martin's first week as Director of EK; Doc was chair. We decided the best thing the new Director could do was to get out and experience the Kimberley. A cyclone was forming over Darwin. We trekked out to March Fly Glen, to be bitten by a million mosquitos and drenched in rain. Huddled under canvas, we learned more about this quiet, tolerant and passionate man, who would lead EK for the next 15 years. People love Martin; he leads from within the community and values the contribution of others. He is cheeky, but always polite, and steadfast in his resolve to Protect the Kimberley.*

**Louise Beames**

*The fight for Walmadany James Price Point is known across the country as an improbable win against some of the world's largest and most powerful oil and gas companies and a stubborn WA Government. Martin brought to the Kimberley the tenacity to stand against these giants, whilst also supporting the community, creating strong relationships with Aboriginal people, who wanted to see Country protected. It was upon Martin's appointment that the connection between the groups and EK solidified into an unbreakable alliance. He has gone on to defend the nature of Kimberley with a depth of commitment seen in very few people.*

**Shaun Clark**

*I had the pleasure of being landperson to Martin and his family when they first came to Broome. I discovered him to be an unassuming, passionate environmentalist with some unconventional habits. Martin has inspired by example as much as words. He pitches in at events, takes a turn dragging the trailer to the markets, then the next night fronts the stage with John Butler to lead a No Fracking Campaign. After fifteen years, Martin remains grounded and appreciative of the community, keeping us pumped with his enthusiasm and dedication.*

**Carmel Leahy**

*When Martin came to work in the Kimberley, our community was engaged in a fierce battle to prevent the industrialisation of the Kimberley coast. He was EK's first seasoned campaigner, and brought to the region invaluable experience, skills and established environmental networks, along with a gentle but determined approach, idealism and a lyrical Welsh accent. Under his directorship, EK has become firmly established as the region's environmental protector, in partnership with communities and well-supported by donors, philanthropists and many others.*

**Kate Golson**

*Jael recently reminded me of her and Martin's first night in Broome. I met them outside Som Thai Restaurant at around 7pm, and they followed me to their new home in Puertollano Place. We were disappointed to find the power had been disconnected, but being no-fuss environmentalists, they said, 'No worries, we'll pitch our tent in the back yard.' Not only did they 'camp out' on a typical Broome December night — minimum temp 30 degrees, humidity 80% — but, as it was a Friday, they were also treated to an all-nighter of country music and rock 'n' roll by their friendly new neighbours.*

**Laurel Sutcliffe**



*What a ride it has been, working alongside you, Martin, for the past 15 years. The highs and lows. I often wondered how you were able to stay steady and focused under pressure, knowing what's at stake. I marvelled at your juggling skills, not only working on several campaigns at once, but also knowing how to engage a vast number of people to help with an action. All towards the greater goal: to Save the Nature of the Kimberley. Thanks, Martin, for your inspiration and tenacity. The Kimberley today would be a different place without you.*

**Christine Elsasser**

*When Martin joined EK, we were enjoying a slight relief in pressure after stopping the damming of the Fitzroy River, and Martin presented a new style of leadership. None of us knew what he was getting into, but EK went from strength to strength as it began a new anti-gas campaign (remember James Price Point?). Martin and Jael quickly developed an important connection with the Broome community. The rest of the story is well documented. Thank you, Martin, it has been a very successful and amazing journey.*

**Craig Phillips**



*Martin has been the steadfast dependable captain of EK, democratically guiding and holding together the team of strong, independent, creative personalities. Even under pressure and drowning in a mountain of paperwork, books and reports, Martin appears so calm, like a duck gliding serenely over a pond, while paddling furiously. After 15 years we know him so well. We have seen his fierce Welsh warrior within rise to battle corporate greed and environmental destruction. With his humour and passion, along with bucket-loads of charm, Martin has been a blessing to the EK staff, Board and wider EK community. Love your work. Thanks Martin.*

**Kylie Weatherall**



# Living Green

– PAINLESSLY

## More tips to improve the sustainability of our daily lives without too much effort.

Attentive readers will have followed our tips for Christmas over several Yuletide editions: simplifying food, giving thrifty gifts, responding to disasters, turning down invitations, making Christmases memorable, avoiding the whole catastrophe. Recently I asked someone the usual inane question about her end-of-year plans. She told me that her family has a large annual gathering for Christmas dinner at her in-laws' house, where her mother-in-law does most of the cooking, everyone gets on with everyone else, and my interlocutor looks forward to it. Well, each to her own. And I'd rather like to know what the mother-in-law feels about it. Apparently 'she loves it'. If so, she deserves to be sainted. Someone, please notify the Pope.

Being 'beatified' and then 'sainted', or canonised, if you prefer, often brings with it a portfolio — some saints become Patron Saints of something or other. St Antony, for instance, is the patron saint of lost things. If you pray to him, he helps you to find them. Some people swear by him, but I think he's been AWOL lately. St Christopher is popular as the patron saint of travellers, and many people carry St Chris's image in some form on their person as an insurance. St Rita of Cascia has quite a full portfolio, being the patron saint of difficult marriages (her cruel husband died and then Rita became a nun, which was one way of avoiding the risk of another difficult marriage) and, along with the better-known St Jude and a couple of others, one of the patron saints of impossible cases. Maybe we should start venerating the pair of them and get them to help us save the world from war, capitalism and fracking. Which brings us to the well-loved Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, more recently promoted to patron saint of ecologists. I think Saint Francis might be persuaded to take an interest in the work of Environs Kimberley.

Santa Claus, as most people brought up in the West know, was Saint Nicholas, the details of whose life in the third century AD (I like the Latin) are clouded by myth. Living in what is now Turkey, St Nick is reputed to have given away his wealth to work with the poor and sick, becoming famous for his kindness and generosity. He got the name Klaas from Holland, and was venerated as the protector of children and sailors. Klaas became Claus in the rest of Europe. Once the myth of Santa Claus came to America, commercialisation kicked in, and Father Christmas was born and proliferated, descending every chimney and haunting every department store in Christendom. I'm not sure how he gets in now there are no chimneys on most houses.

Have a good one; if all else fails, have a picnic.



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## Ruminating with MAD COW



### CARING FOR HOUSEHOLD WILDLIFE

**My house is home, not just to me, but to a variety of other animals. Most obvious are the Green Tree Frogs, many of whom spend their days in the toilet cistern, experiencing periodic flushing, to emerge at night to explore the house in search of food.**

There are plenty of other residents for them to feed on: cockroaches, moths, mosquitoes in season, maybe others. They seem to be doing all right, all this season's crop are of a healthy weight — even the one-eyed frog, for whom I have a soft spot. I've hosted a series of frogs with one eye over the years, and wonder if losing one of their prominent eyes is an occupational risk for frogs, or if one-eyedness is caused by a recessive gene, which manifests itself every few generations. I am unlikely to find out. The greatest pleasure of living with frogs is hearing their joyful carolling around the time of the first rain. They are like a flash mob, joining in harmony from every corner of the house.

Spiders are other residents of note — the cobweb-making Daddy Longlegs (which I'm told is not a true spider, lacking venom glands) inhabit corners of the ceiling, catching mozzies, while the dear little jumping spiders prefer the bathroom and sometimes risk being washed down the basin plughole. I did inadvertently wash one away like that. In panic, I found a length of string, lowered it into the water below and was surprised and gratified when the offended spider climbed up it and stepped onto dry land.

Then there are the beetles, who also have a penchant for near-drowning. They often find themselves in the kitchen sink, or in a dog's water bowl, from which they have to be fished out and released outside. Some beetles, like cockroaches, end up on the floor on their backs, struggling ineffectively to right themselves. You'd think that, after all their eons of evolution, they'd have found a way of turning themselves over. I suppose in Nature there are not many completely flat surfaces, so beetles can always find something to give them purchase. That's what I think when I drop them back in the garden in the dark, and can't see how they land; there are enough sticks and leaves for them to grab hold of.

Geckos abound, and when first rains bring out the flying termites, they grow fat around the verandah light bulbs. But oh dear, they do sometimes get themselves into trouble by concealing themselves in open door jams. You feel some resistance to closing the door, and your first instinct is to pull harder. You may then notice a protruding, fluttering tail. Sickened, you open the door again, to find a crushed and dying gecko. It doesn't understand your apologies and dies anyway. Always inspect the door jamb before closing a door. And never waste a dead gecko: your neighbour's chickens will love it.

# Five Questions for new EK Intern, Azie Dungey



## What were you doing before you joined EK?

I am a television writer in the United States and the Writers Guild went on strike for almost five months. I came to Australia during that time and decided I should make myself useful.

## What is your role at EK?

I interned with the Wattleseed Collective, helping to collect and process seeds. I also took photos and did some filming of their methods.

## What excites you about this role?

Wattleseed grows all over the Kimberley, which means I get to go out and travel to different areas. I enjoyed spending time in community, learning, and helping the rangers. I also think it's incredible that it's a sustainable food source that has been a staple for Aboriginal people here for thousands of years, and the Collective is continuing this on-Country activity as well as contributing economically.

## What three things are most important to you?

Well, that's a big question. I'd say liberation and self-actualization for Black and Indigenous communities, conservation and revitalisation of the land, her resources and inhabitants, and trying my best to give love and joy to everyone I'm lucky enough to have in my life, especially my sisters and my dog.

## What is your favourite place in the Kimberley?

I got to spend time in Kununurra and see the waterfalls in that area. My favorite of them was **Galjiba (Molly Springs)**. Whenever I'm feeling low or overly anxious, I imagine myself there again. I also love **Marlgu Billabong**, it's so peaceful and the lotuses are gorgeous. I'd like to spend more time watching the birds there.

## Current Intern

### Shilpa Adhikari, Kimberley Nature Project

Shilpa grew up in Nepal, where she completed a Bachelor's degree in Forest Science. In Nepal, Shilpa worked in disaster recovery and human-wildlife conflict, and studied the long-snouted crocodile at Chitwan National Park. In 2019, Shilpa moved to Australia to complete a Master's degree in Disaster Resilience and Sustainable Development at the University of Newcastle. She is currently assisting with project activities, including wattleseed collection and fire-scar mapping.



## Vale Jessica Bangu

Since the beginnings of Environs Kimberley, staff and Board alike have had the privilege of working with many generous and welcoming Kimberley people. In late July 2023, we were deeply saddened by the sudden passing of a Karajarri Ranger close to our hearts, Jessica Bangu.

JB welcomed and guided EK staff on cultural protocols in our work with the Karajarri Rangers, forming strong professional and personal bonds on the way, and helping us deliver many successful projects. A truly generous educator of whitefellas, JB was always willing to share her cultural knowledge and country.

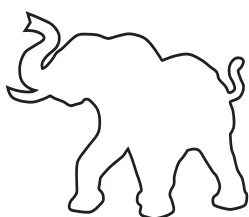
Though small in stature, she was a giant in spirit, who stepped between cultures with ease, humour and great patience. JB was a very special person. We miss her greatly and our thoughts go out to all who knew and loved her.

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# Environs Kimberley Board



## Carmel Leahy, Chairperson

Born in central western NSW, Carmel is a teacher, linguist and literacy specialist who has worked at various schools and institutions, including Yakanarra Community School in the 1990s, Broome Senior High School, Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga language

centre, Nyikina Mangala and Yiyili Aboriginal Community Schools. Carmel has had experience in community development and is an active member of the Society for Kimberley Indigenous Plants and Animals (SKIPA). She has a Bachelor of Education in Multicultural Education from Edith Cowan University, a Master of Applied Linguistics from Charles Darwin University and Cert III in Conservation and Land Management. Carmel is currently pursuing studies in Governance.



## Kat Taylor, Vice-Chairperson

Kat arrived in the Kimberley in 2010. She is a researcher at the Water Justice Hub, based at the Australian National University (ANU), and is an adjunct with the Nulungu Research Institute at Notre Dame University. Kat completed a PhD in water policy at ANU in

2020 and holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Environmental Science (Hons) and a BSc in Conservation Biology from Murdoch University.



## Laurel Sutcliffe, Treasurer

From Victoria, Laurel taught in schools in Victoria and Papua New Guinea before moving to the Kimberley in 1986 to work in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal community development. Commencing in 1989 she and her partner, Pampila Hanson

Boxer, helped establish Yakanarra Community near Fitzroy Crossing. During the ensuing 17 years Laurel worked as Community Administrator and school Principal, while she and Pampila also raised their two children. In 2006, the family moved to Broome, where Laurel has taught at Broome Senior High School ever since. Laurel has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Diploma in Education from the University of Melbourne.



## Bethany Moore, Secretary

Bethany grew up in Naarm Melbourne and moved to Rubibi Broome in 2022. She works as a lawyer at the Kimberley Land Council and teaches yoga casually. She was previously a class actions lawyer at Maurice Blackburn, and an Associate to a Judge

of the Federal Court of Australia. She is passionate about using the law as a tool to support social and environmental movements. She has a BA (Hons) in Linguistics and Australian Indigenous Studies, and a Diploma of Languages in French from the University of Melbourne. She also has a Master of Laws – Juris Doctor (Hons) from the University of New South Wales.



## Kate Golson, Board Member

Born in Canberra, Kate first arrived in the Kimberley in 1992. She has worked with many community organisations as well as universities and government in fields ranging from community development and sustainable development through to native

title, heritage protection and cultural and natural resource management. Kate has extensive experience in social research, community engagement, communications, and monitoring and evaluation. She holds a BA and Master of Arts in Anthropology from Sydney University.

## Alexis Harper, Board Member

Lexi is passionate about health in a holistic sense and values local environments, food systems and communities and the roles they each play in individual wellbeing. Her academic background includes a BA in Naturopathy and a Master of Public Health. She has been a resident of northern Australia for over 10 years, having lived in Darwin for several years before moving to Fitzroy Crossing in 2016. Now based in Broome, Lexi is interested in creating local, sustainable food systems as well as ensuring the wild spaces of the Kimberley are preserved for future generations.



## Finn Pedersen, Board Member

Finn is a Director of Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects, a Perth and Melbourne-based studio with a diverse body of work throughout Australia. Finn has an interest in culture, social justice, landscape, and how architecture can affect and enhance the relationship between people and place. He has worked with many Aboriginal communities throughout Western Australia and is particularly interested in the way that architecture and design can provide innovative solutions that are deeply respectful of Aboriginal cultural practices. Finn is a board member of the Wyemando and Jimmy Pike Trusts and a member of the Australian Institute of Architecture's First Nation Advisory Committee; he was a Founder of Environs Kimberley with Pat Lowe and Natasha Palich.



## Craig Phillips, Board Member

Craig moved his young family from Perth to the Kimberley in 1994 and started his own IT business. His previous roles include Victorian sales manager of Columbus Mufflers, and West Australian sales manager of Lukey Mufflers. In Broome, Craig runs an IT consulting company.

He is currently on the Committee for the Community Resource Centre and has served on the boards of the Broome Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Centre West Kimberley. Craig has been an EK member since 1996 and joined the EK Management Committee (as it then was) in 1999.



## Sally Wilkinson, Board Member

Sally comes from Melbourne and in 2012 moved to Broome, where she has worked on native title matters as the future acts and heritage manager at Nyamba Buru Yawuru, and as a writer and consultant for several local organisations. She has also worked in climate change policy and as a policy manager on the Victorian treaty process. Sally holds a BA (Hons) in German, a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) from the University of Melbourne, and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from ANU.



## Karl Williamson, Board Member

Karl is a Wiradjuri Koori from Western NSW, who relocated with his young family to Broome in 2021. Karl shares his time between his role as Senior Policy Officer with Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service and his other role as a stay-at-home dad. Karl has extensive experience in Social Services, predominantly in child and family, and social and emotional wellbeing, having completed a Bachelor of Community and Social Development and a Master of Social Work. Karl is extremely passionate about Aboriginal land management and a keen gardener.



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