



# Respecting culture and country

*Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia: The first 15 years*



**Cover and art images:** *Ngura Wirura Kanyini*  
(Caring for Country) © Eunice Nungarayi Woods

Eunice is a talented artist, who painted this story at the Walkatjara Art Centre in Mutitjulu. Up to four generations of women sit down to paint together while traditional stories are shared. Eunice has a large extended family from both Pitjantjatjara and Warlpiri speaking country.

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Please be aware this book may contain images and names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.

Every effort was made by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to obtain consent from individuals, parents/carers and Indigenous organisation representatives for the photographs used.

**Design:** Kate Duigan Design



# Respecting culture and country

*Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia:  
The first 15 years*

*Dedicated to traditional owners and Indigenous rangers  
past or present who are working hard to care for  
culture and country*





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*Please note: The IPA name pronunciations used in the book are rough approximations to assist non-Indigenous speakers.*

# Foreword

Traditional owners of South Australia's Adnyamathanha lands dedicated Australia's very first Indigenous Protected Area in 1998. Today there are 55 Indigenous Protected Areas across Australia covering more than 43 million hectares.

The program has only existed for 15 years, so this is a tremendous achievement and testament to the very hard work and dedication of Australia's Indigenous communities to manage their land and sea. This book is a tribute to them.

For Indigenous Australians, the phrase 'caring for country' means a deep spiritual connection and belonging to country. Our ancestral beings who created the laws to be maintained through ceremony and practices continue to give us the responsibility, duty of care and obligation to look after country.

In many ways Indigenous Protected Areas work because they have this philosophy at the core. The process is driven by Elders who are the holders of the law and their input to each plan of management is crucial.

It is traditional owners who choose when, where and how they will manage their country, not governments. This is then written into a management plan for the Indigenous Protected Area, successfully weaving traditional knowledge with western scientific methods, in line with the best international standards. It is a best-practice approach to conservation and one that is forming a model for many other people around the world.

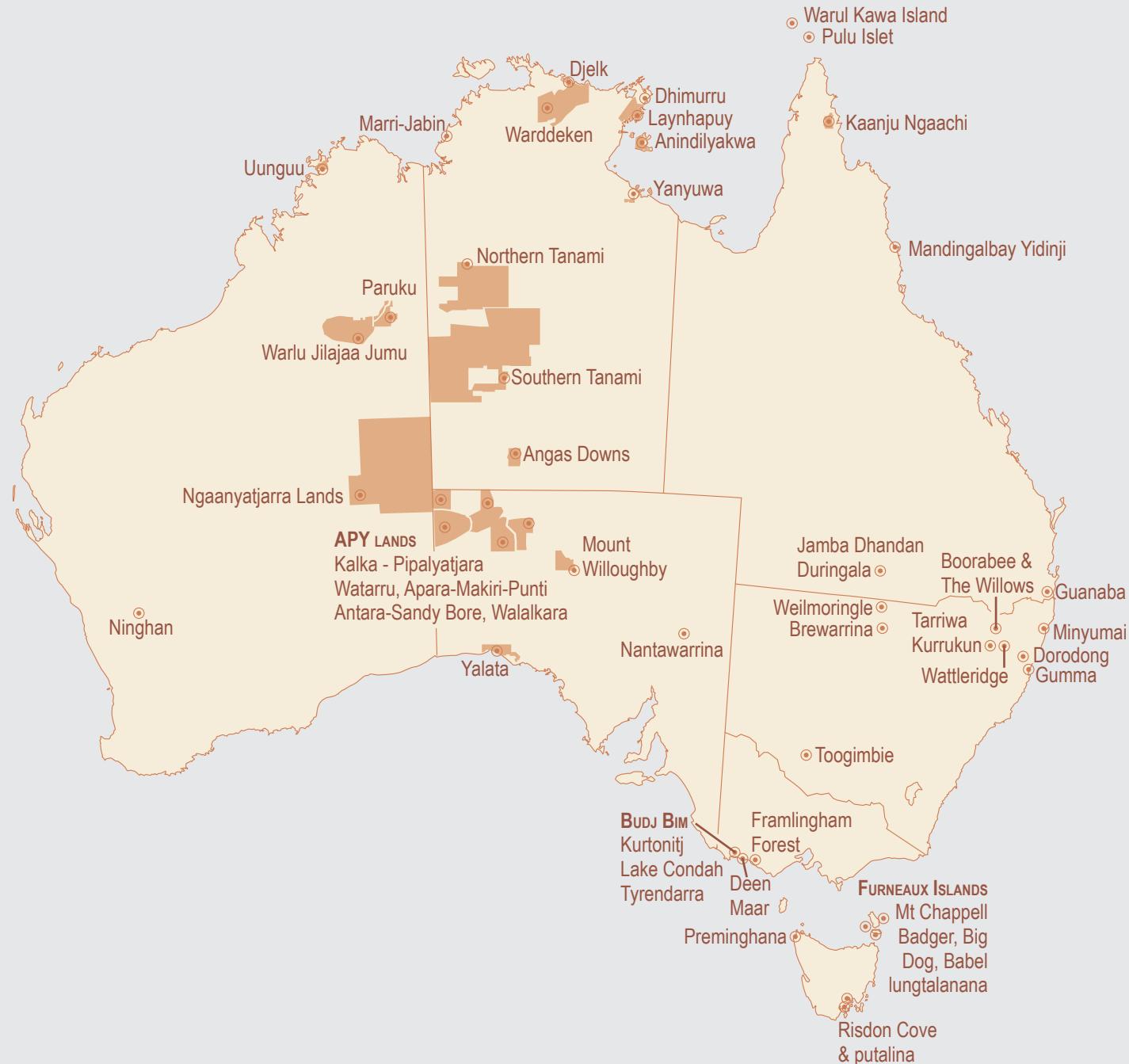
On a day-to-day basis Indigenous land managers and rangers carry out important conservation activities such as weed and feral animal control, fire management, revegetation and wildlife protection monitoring. This has helped protect threatened or endangered plants and animals across the country.

But Indigenous Protected Areas deliver more than important environmental benefits. The program builds community capacity to develop strong and enduring partnerships with other organisations. Managing Indigenous Protected Areas helps communities protect their significant cultural values for future generations and receive improved health, education, economic and social benefits.

Many Indigenous Protected Areas are in regions of high unemployment, so they provide a key source of jobs and training. The rangers' own employment helps provide further financial stability in communities. Indigenous Protected Areas rangers act as a positive role model to young people including junior ranger groups in schools. These programs have helped in reinforcing cultural stability for the whole community.

In the end Indigenous Protected Areas benefit all Australians because they are helping conserve our ecosystems that sustain life. They are part of conserving our cultural heritage and contribute to helping transfer the knowledge of our older generations to our younger generations so that it will never be lost to us.

This is why the Australian Government supports Indigenous Protected Areas. The Indigenous Protected Area sub-committee is part of the Indigenous Advisory Committee advising Australia's Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. We are proud of the work Indigenous Protected Areas and are happy to present this book outlining their achievements. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Indigenous Protected Area Section in administering the program. Indigenous Protected Areas are one of Australia's true conservation success stories and we hope to see them continue to develop for many years to come.





# Introduction

*“We want a future for our children on our country...  
our blackfella national park (IPA) makes us proud...  
respects our country, our Wanjina culture and knowledge...  
so that our children give a future for their children in our ancestors’ country.”*

Basil Djanghara, senior Wunambal traditional owner, Unguu Indigenous Protected Area

Indigenous Protected Areas are one of Australia’s conservation success stories – protecting culture and country, while providing a pathway to meaningful jobs and positive health, education and social benefits. Today there are 55 Indigenous Protected Areas protecting more than 43 million hectares across Australia.

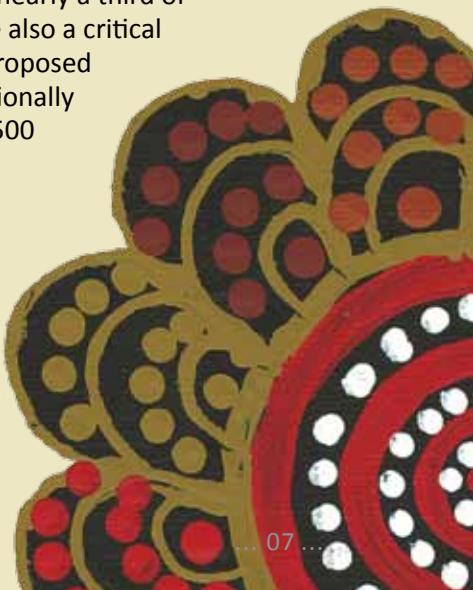
Back in the 1990s, the Australian Government, in cooperation with the states and territories, had started building a National Reserve System – Australia’s nationwide network of parks, reserves and protected areas. At the same time there was a growing Indigenous land management movement, communities were establishing ranger programs and engaging with governments on conservation issues.

The Indigenous Protected Area program, established in 1997, built on these developments by providing a framework for Indigenous communities to voluntarily manage their land as part of the National Reserve System. The traditional owners of Nantawarrina in South Australia declared their land as the nation’s first Indigenous Protected Area in 1998.

Managed for conservation by Indigenous organisations on behalf of their traditional owners, Indigenous Protected Areas are an important innovation in protected area management. They also provide a solid foundation for developing partnerships with the Australian Government’s Indigenous Protected Areas and Working on Country programs, not-for-profit funding agencies and government protected areas.

Helping to protect threatened species, under-represented bioregions and link conservation areas together, Indigenous Protected Areas comprise nearly a third of the National Reserve System. They are also a critical part of wildlife corridors such as the proposed Trans-Australian Eco-link – an internationally significant initiative that will stretch 3500 kilometres across the continent.

This book presents a snapshot of the Indigenous Protected Area program on its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and highlights the important contributions Indigenous Protected Areas make to the environment and culture of the nation.





# What is an IPA?

*“The IPA is helping create good jobs, like rangers to take care of country. It is giving young people opportunities day by day. Young people really enjoy working on the IPA, and old people enjoy going out with them. Women really enjoy taking children out for stories.”*

Billy Bunter, Gurindji man, Northern Tanami IPA

An Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) is an area of Indigenous-managed land or sea voluntarily dedicated by its traditional owners to be managed to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation.

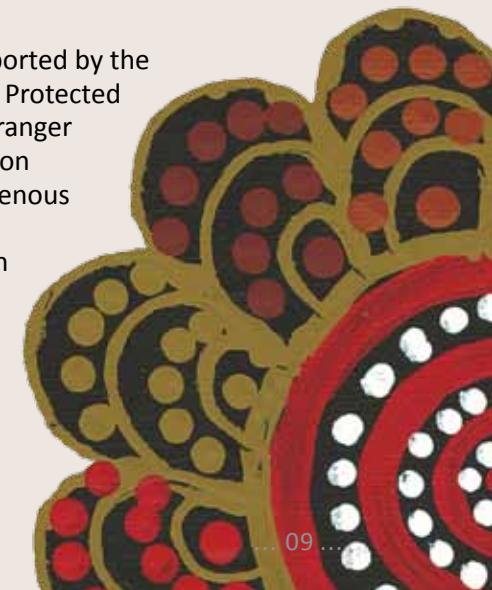
Indigenous Protected Areas make up about one third of Australia’s National Reserve System - protecting our diverse range of plants and animals for future generations.

What sets Indigenous Protected Areas apart from other protected areas such as national parks is their Indigenous governance. Each area is administered by an Indigenous organisation and actively managed by traditional owners.

The Indigenous community prepares a management plan, in consultation with the Australian Government and other stakeholders. It defines the Indigenous Protected Area’s boundaries and how its natural and cultural resources will be managed in line with the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s guidelines. The majority are managed under categories V, to protect land and seascape values and VI, to protect natural resources through sustainable use.

Today some Indigenous Protected Areas can act as an overlay on existing government or local council managed protected areas. The Indigenous Protected Area doesn’t change the legal basis of these existing reserves, but through co-management agreements, formally recognises the contribution Indigenous people make to their management. The program is supporting traditional owners to explore how they can add sea country to Indigenous Protected Areas.

Indigenous Protected Areas are supported by the Australian Government’s Indigenous Protected Area program and around half have ranger groups funded by a related Working on Country program. A number of Indigenous Protected areas have also developed mutually beneficial partnerships with other conservation organisations and local community groups.





## Looking after land and sea

### Anindilyakwa (Anin-dily-ak-wah)

Groote Eylandt Archipelago, Northern Territory, 300,000 hectares | Declared 2006

The Anindilyakwa community has expanded their land and sea ranger program to include a women's ranger group, apprentice mechanics and road crew, all of which helps provide better natural and cultural management.

The ranger program was established by the Anindilyakwa Land Council to look after country on behalf of traditional owners, the Warnindilyakwa people also referred to by their language name as Anindilyakwa. They came to Groote Eylandt on a series of song lines that created the land, rivers, animals and people.

Anindilyakwa is the largest area in Australia without introduced grazing animals, so the Indigenous Protected Area is an important refuge for threatened species.

*"This island is virtually pest free aside from cats; we've got no buffalo, no cane toads, no pigs. But it only takes someone to bring something onto the island for big problems to start."*

Elma Yantarrnga, women's ranger

The women rangers help keep cane toads off the islands by using Aussie, a trained sniffer dog, to assist them search freight brought in by barge. Over the past two years they have also trapped over a hundred feral cats and supported the local vet to control cats and dogs in three communities.

To help manage threatened species, rangers work with environmental researchers and management agencies.

Rangers are currently working with The Queensland University and Queensland University of Technology to monitor the northern quoll. It is critically endangered on the mainland, due in part, to the spread of cane toads. To date, one hundred and eighty quolls have been captured, weighed, DNA sampled and micro chipped creating the largest data set for this species.

Rangers are also working with Charles Darwin University on the critically endangered hawksbill turtle. Over eighty per cent of the local nesting population have been tagged and some have had satellite transmitters attached allowing a comprehensive range of data to be collected.

The road crew maintains unfunded outstation and recreational roads. It has been equipped by local Aboriginal communities who have contributed their mining royalties to buy a grader, dozer, tip truck and an excavator.

In the past when one road was badly eroded, people would make another one. Now the old roads are regenerated, leaving one good road for rangers and traditional owners to get onto county to patch burn and visit cultural sites.

Building a workshop and employing apprentice mechanics has helped keep vehicles reliable.

*"We want to look after our country - look after land and sea. We fix the car and boat for the ranger group, take old fellows out, record song lines and ceremonies. It's not about money, it's all about country."*

Eddie Lalara, apprentice mechanic

The large workshop where the mechanics work also houses a research and education centre. Rangers, researchers and university students use the laboratory facilities to process results. They also engage with the community's youth by inviting local school students to join interesting activities such as fisheries research or northern quoll trapping.

## Nantawarrina (Nan-tar-war-rin-ah)

Flinders Ranges and Gammon Ranges, South Australia, 58,000 hectares | Declared 1998

On Adnyamathanha lands, Australia's first Indigenous Protected Area, Nantawarrina, lies in rugged terrain between the Flinders and Vulkathuna-Gammon Ranges National Parks.

Nantawarrina includes stunning limestone hills, siltstone flats, springs and waterholes and is home to the vulnerable yellow-footed rock wallaby.

At Nantawarrina, elders tell the story of *Arkuru*, the rainbow serpent, who travelled into the gorge, forming the mountains and rockholes.

Previously a pastoral property, Nantawarrina is managed by the Nepabunna Community. Aboriginal rangers have removed goats and other feral animals and are controlling weeds. The local community is also involved in giving cultural tours.



## Aṅangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands

Central Australia, South Australia, 4.3 million hectares | Declared 2000, 2010 and 2011



In the remote north-west corner of South Australia are five Indigenous Protected Areas, Walalkara, Watarru, Kalka-Pipalyatjara, Antara-Sandy Bore and Aparā-Makiri-Punti. Together these create a vast wildlife corridor of 4.3 million hectares.

The corridor includes the Tomkinson, Mann, Everard and Musgrave Ranges and part of the Great Victorian Desert. They are home to Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra speaking peoples - who collectively call themselves Aṅangu.

The Aṅangu rangers are supported by the Aṅangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara organisation and undertake management activities such as patch burning. Some rangers are also involved with the *warru*, black-footed rock wallaby, program controlling feral animal predators and monitoring wallaby populations.

## Southern Tanami (Tan-ah-my)

Tanami Desert, Northern Territory, 10.16 million hectares | Declared 2012

In the heartland of Warlpiri country, traditional owners have dedicated Australia's largest Indigenous Protected Area, the Southern Tanami.

It is a critical part of the proposed Trans-Australian Eco-link, an internationally significant wildlife corridor which when completed, will stretch more than 3,500 kilometres from Arnhem Land to the Great Australian Bight.

Hidden beneath the desert sands are threatened animals such as the iconic bilby, colourful great desert skink and brush-tailed mulgara, a small marsupial hunter.

The Warlpiri rangers are supported by the Central Land Council with supplementary funding provided by The Nature Conservancy, an international philanthropic organisation. A major task is patch burning to rejuvenate country, provide wildlife habitat and reduce wildfires.

*“Without the country our spirit will die, we got nothing left, we lose everything. Every part of land is important because Jukurrpa (Dreaming) is still there in the country today.”*

Eddie Jampijinpa Robertson





## Ninghan (Ning-han)

Yalgoo, Western Australia,  
48,000 hectares | Declared 2006

*“When we came to Ninghan, the land was degraded. My uncle used to say that we were put here to look after the land and everything on it. I think it’s good that I learn about the IPA now so that when it is my calling to run the station I will have the knowledge to carry on the responsibilities.”*

Drew Bell, traditional owner

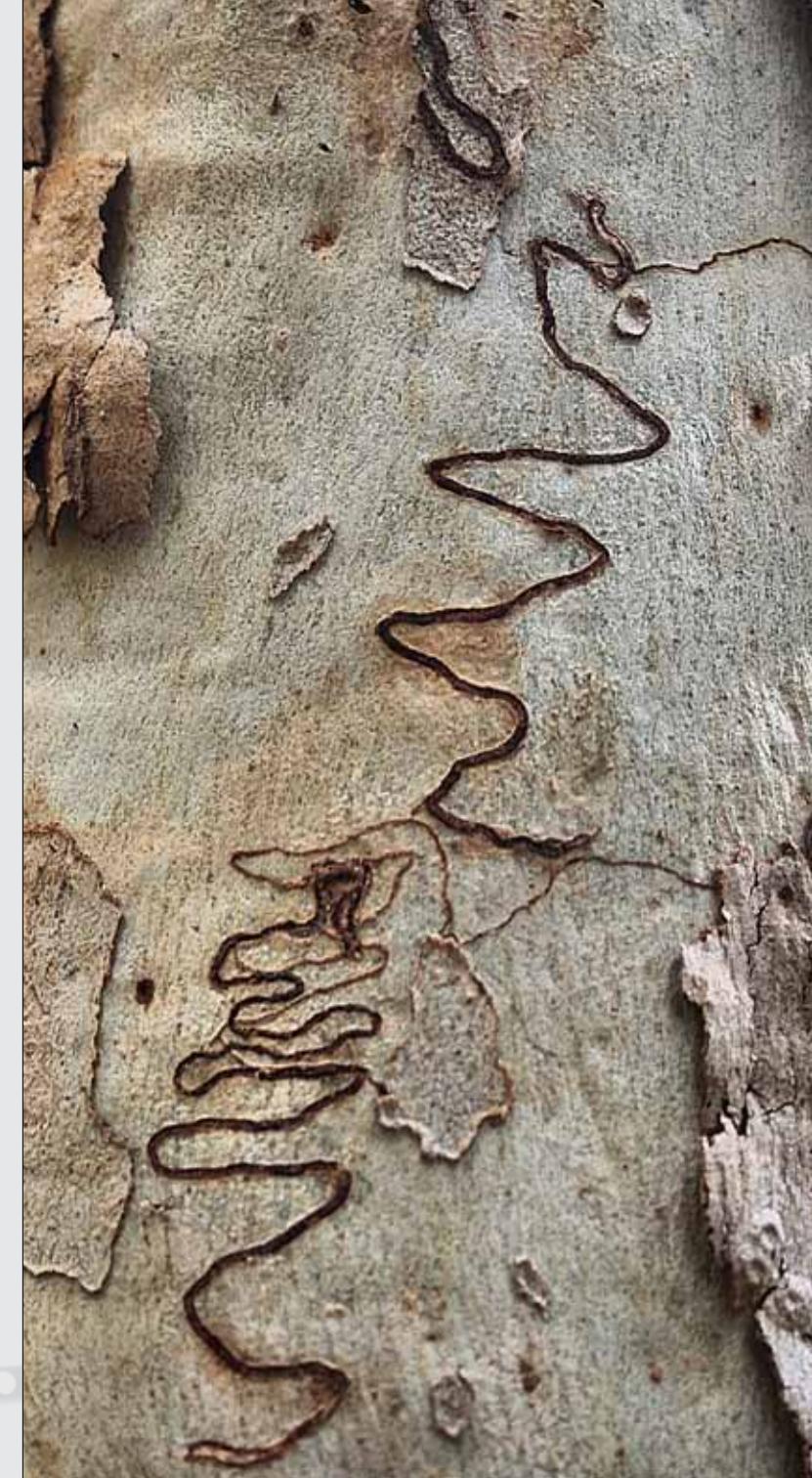
Rising from the surrounding plains, the gently sloping form of Mount Singleton, *nyingarn*, echidna, lends its name and character to Ninghan Indigenous Protected Area.

Sitting at the junction of several habitats including remnant woodlands, mulga plains, rolling hills, sand plains and salt lakes, Ninghan has one of the highest recorded levels of biodiversity in Western Australia.

The Ninghan area served as a traditional meeting place for the Badimaya, Nyoongar, Yamatji and Wongai peoples, with the locals trading balga gum for spearheads and ochre from outlying country.

Three generations of the local Bell family care for Ninghan. To promote the regeneration of native plants and minimise erosion, they have reduced sheep numbers and trapped several thousand feral goats.

Top left: Desert daisy. Ivan Haskovec. Bottom left: Nyingarn, echidna. Drew Bandy



## Minyumai (Min-yoo-my)

North Coast, New South Wales,  
2,100 hectares | Declared 2011

Part of the traditional lands of the Bandjalang clan, Minyumai Indigenous Protected Area includes paperbark groves and scribbly gum, swamp mahogany and bloodwood forests - as well as rare patches of lush rainforest.

Minyumai helps form part of a 20,000 hectare wildlife corridor, linking Tabbimobile Swamp Nature Reserve with Bundjalung National Park. It is home to many rare animals including the wallum froglet, yellow-bellied glider and powerful owl.

Minyumai is managed by the Minyumai Land Holding Aboriginal Corporation according to *Geeng*, which means respect of country, ancestors, elders and young people who one day will be the elders. Ranger activities include pest animal and plant control, monitoring and restoring native habitats and the construction of a visitor boardwalk.

Left: Scribbly gum, the marks are made by the tiny scribbly moth larvae. Brian Yap ... 17 ...

# Indigenous country

*“All the land is Yirritja and Dhuwa (two halves of a whole world).  
Our songs, our law, our sacred art, our stories are embedded  
in the land, which is the foundation of our knowledge.  
That’s how we see the land; that is what our Land Rights Act says.”*

Roy Dadaynga Marika, Yolngu elder, MBE

Australia’s Indigenous people are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. These diverse cultures are made up of several hundred language groups each with their own traditional lands, beliefs and customs.

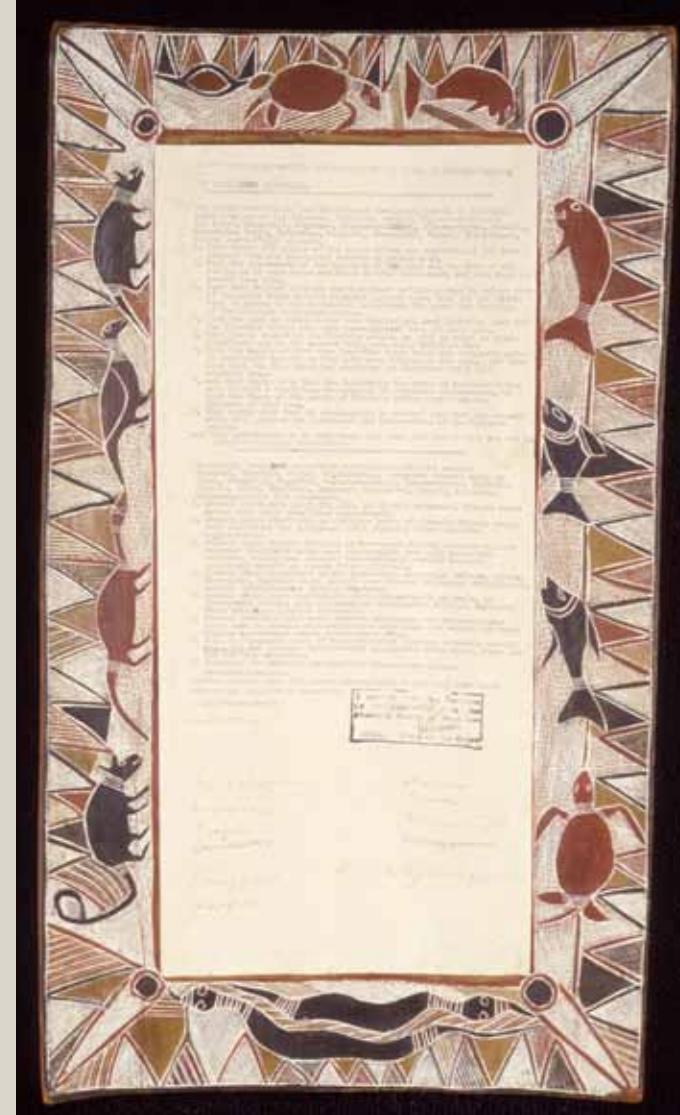
The tracks of spirit ancestors form a network across the continent and are the basis of a land tenure system for most Indigenous Australians. Based on complex traditional laws, Indigenous people have looked after their country, both land and sea, in a sustainable way for tens of thousands of years.

Following European colonisation, Indigenous people’s lands were often forcibly taken. In 1968 the first land rights case was mounted by Yolngu elders opposed to mining on their traditional land. Although unsuccessful, it led to a Royal Commission and the recognition of Aboriginal Land rights in the Northern Territory.

In 1992 legal action by Murray Islanders from Torres Strait, brought about a landmark High Court decision that finally

over turned *terra nullius*, the doctrine of a land belonging to no one, and recognised native title. This paved the way for a number of Indigenous communities to regain control of traditional lands through successful land right claims, the purchase of pastoral properties, often with assistance from the Indigenous Land Corporation and joint management arrangements on government protected areas.

The Indigenous Protected Areas program, developed in 1997 after two years of consultation with traditional owners and Indigenous organisations, supports Indigenous Australians to voluntarily dedicate and manage their land for conservation. Although primarily a land based program, a number of coastal Indigenous communities already manage sea country and have aspirations to include it as part of their Indigenous Protected Area future.





## Piecing country together

### Mandingalbay Yidinji (Man-din-gal-bay Yi-din-ji)

Cairns, Queensland, 10,000 hectares | Dedicated 2011

In spectacular, tropical north Queensland, just east of Cairns is Mandingalbay Yidinji country. Mandingalbay Yidinji people used the Indigenous Protected Area program to put their country, divided into government protected areas over the years, back together.

Most Indigenous Protected Areas are declared in Aboriginal freehold land. Mandingalbay Yidinji traditional owner Vince Mundraby says this is the very first time in Australia an Indigenous Protected Area has included government protected areas.

In the past, successive governments established Malbon Thompson Forest Reserve, Grey Peaks National Park, Giangurra Reserve and the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park on Mandingalbay Yidinji country. Many of these areas lie within zones that have another level of protection – the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas.

In 1999, Mandingalbay Yidinji people lodged a native title claim over some of their country. As part of their determination, Mandingalbay Yidinji people developed Indigenous Land Use Agreements with State Government conservation agencies, Cairns Regional City Council, Telstra and Ergon Energy, allowing these organisations to access their land to maintain public services.

*Left:* Ranger Victor Bulmer giving a guided walk. Djunbunji Land and Sea Program

*“For the first time we have a meaningful framework to actually assist in the implementation of real management in a collaborative fashion with government agencies, stakeholders and traditional owners at the one table.”*

Vince Mundraby

With Native Title rights recognised in 2006, a strategic plan was developed and now guides the management of the Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area.

Djunbunji Ltd. Chairperson Dale Mundraby says the Indigenous Protected Area initiative is not about ownership, but about traditional owner management. “It’s about how we manage land through the cultural skills and knowledge handed down from the elders.”

The Australian Government’s Working on Country program funds the Djunbunji Land and Sea Ranger program. A team of Aboriginal rangers patrol waterways, control pigs and other feral animals, manage fire, remove exotic weeds such as yellow guava and Singapore daisy and grow seedlings for revegetation work. They are also developing a cultural heritage program that will collect and store Mandingalbay Yidinji cultural information for future generations.

Djunbunji rangers also work closely with Queensland Parks and Wildlife rangers and other partners such as the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Cairns Regional Council in managing the Indigenous Protected Area.

*Right:* David Mundraby and the Yidi Dancers with Jimmy Edgar. Djunbunji Land and Sea Program



## Dhimurru (Dim-oo-roo)

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, around 101,000 hectares | Declared 2000

*“The land will exist forever.  
It must be protected so that it will remain the same,  
so that it can be seen in the same way  
that the elders saw it in the past.  
Our vision and hope is that Yolngu will continue  
to use the land for all the generations to come.”*

Roy Dadaynga Marika, Yolngu elder, MBE

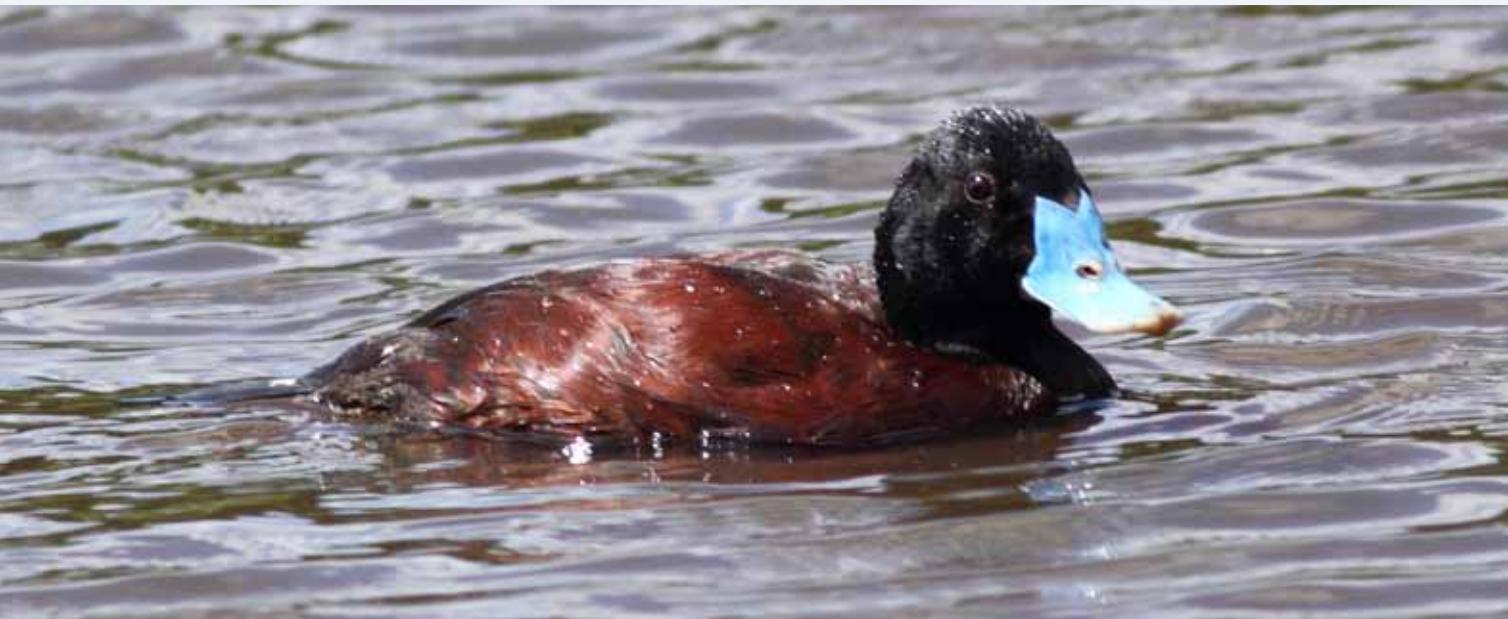
On the north east coast of Arnhem Land, Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area lies on the traditional country of the Yolngu people.

Traditional owners established the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation to manage recreational areas used by Nhulunbuy residents and visitors. They now also manage around 9,000 hectares of marine estate. Visitors are welcomed but asked to respect Yolngu country and values.

Dhimurru rangers help people understand the cultural meanings of their country. They provide cultural activities for school groups and tourists, install information signs and contribute to the Dhimurru website.

To meet its expanded conservation role, Dhimurru has developed collaborative partnerships with the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory and other environmental agencies. It also nurtures cultural activities such as cultural landscape mapping, researching traditional burning practices, protecting cultural sites and transferring knowledge to the next generation.





## Brewarrina Ngemba (Bre-war-rina Na-gem-bah) Billabong

Murray-Darling Basin, New South Wales, 261 hectares | Declared 2010

Located on the Barwon River, the Brewarrina Ngemba Billabong Indigenous Protected Area's wetlands provide a refuge to wildlife, particularly in times of drought.

Part of the Murray-Darling Basin, four endangered birds are seen here - the brolga, blue-billed duck, freckled duck and red-tailed black cockatoo.

Brewarrina was an important tribal meeting place and old camp sites, scar trees and fish traps are still visible. More recently, the Ngemba Billabong was the site of the Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission, established for local Aboriginal people whose land was taken for grazing. In recognition of its past, the property is listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register.

## Pulu (Pool-oo)

Torres Strait, Queensland, around 15 hectares | Declared 2009

Part of the Torres Strait Islands, Pulu Islet is of immense cultural significance to the Goemulgal, the people of Mabuyag (Mabuiag Island). The *Kod* is a revered ceremonial area, and *Awgadhalkula*, a totemic skull cave associated with Kuyam, a legendary Mabuyag warrior and culture hero.

Archaeological excavations on Pulu have uncovered pottery dating back from 1,700 to possibly 2,500 years ago.

Made from western Torres Strait clays, it is Indigenous Australia's first known pottery tradition.

Pulu is managed by traditional owners, including Indigenous land and sea rangers employed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority. Ranger activities include protecting cultural sites, recording traditional ecological knowledge, participating in research activities and removing marine debris.



## Yanyuwa (Yan-u-wah)

Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory, 130,000 hectares | Declared 2011

Located in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria, Yanyuwa Indigenous Protected Area includes the Sir Edward Pellew archipelago and adjacent mainland areas.

Yanyuwa traditional owners identify strongly as *li-Anthawirriyarra*, 'people of the sea'.

The li-Anthawirriyarra sea rangers work in cooperation with Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association to look after country. Their work is informed by Yanyuwa elders who refer to the *Yijan*, creation period and *Kujika*, songlines that embody their traditional laws.

Elders also ask that people don't spoil the country - *Barni-Wardimantha Awara*.

Animals of cultural and conservation significance include several sea turtle species, dugong, snubfin dolphin, northern quoll and Carpentaria antechinus.

Rangers work with a number of partner organisations to monitor wildlife and manage environmental threats such as feral cats and pigs and discarded ghost nets. They also help manage tourists, commercial and recreational fishers and other visitors to their country.



## Risdon Cove and putalina (poot-a-lean-ah)

South-east Tasmania, 109 hectares, 32 hectares | Declared 1999

Lying on either side of Hobart are Risdon Cove and putalina Indigenous Protected Areas, important cultural and spiritual sites for the local community.

Risdon Cove, lying on the Derwent River, was the first place in Tasmania to be impacted by European colonisation. putalina (Oyster Cove) is where many Tasmanian Aboriginal people incarcerated in the mid 1800s died of disease and despair.

Managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, both protected areas emphasise cultural protection and environmental rehabilitation.

Every year the Tasmanian Aboriginal community converges on putalina for a vibrant music festival celebrating Aboriginal culture and resilience.



# Together, nature and culture

*We don't separate the cultural and the natural in the same way that many white fellas try to, and our management should reflect that.*

Risdon Cove Management Plan

Biodiversity is the variety of life and underpins human existence – it provides the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat.

Australia is one of the most biologically rich countries in the world, home to between 600,000 and 700,000 species – almost 10 per cent of all species known. In addition, over 80 per cent of our plants, mammals and reptiles are unique to Australia.

Our country has been managed by Indigenous people in a sustainable way for tens of thousands of years and its ecosystems have been shaped by this interaction, particularly the use of fire.

Since European settlement, more than 50 animals and 60 plants have become extinct.

Indigenous Protected Areas include bioregions that are under-represented in national parks and protect many of Australia's threatened species. They also contribute to management of environmental threats such as wild fires, weeds and feral animals.

Managed by Indigenous organisations, Indigenous Protected Areas provide a solid foundation to develop

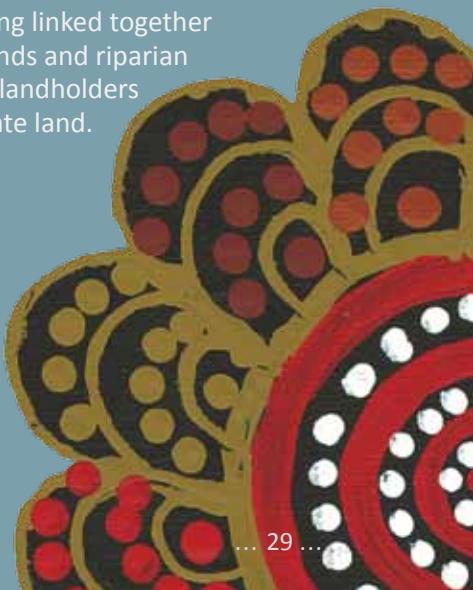
collaborative partnerships with training, environmental and funding organisations to meet conservation obligations.

Indigenous rangers receive on-the-job training in areas such as conservation, tourism, law enforcement, business administration and Indigenous leadership. They also work closely with community elders and environmental research partners to manage their land in a holistic way.

Indigenous Protected Areas are part of the National Reserve System, Australia's network of protected areas.

Many isolated protected areas are being linked together in wildlife corridors that include wetlands and riparian zones and voluntary agreements with landholders who have high-quality habitat on private land.

This collaborative whole-of-landscape approach to conserving biodiversity is also designed to help strengthen the resilience of our native landscapes against climate change.





## Planning for healthy country

### Uunguu (Oon-goo)

Kimberley, Western Australia, 343,500 hectares | Declared 2011

*“With this healthy country plan, our rangers and traditional owners are on the land more, and we are seeing more changes in our country.”*

Catherine Goonack, chair, Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation

On the spectacular Kimberley coast, Wunambal Gaambera people and partner agencies have developed a healthy country plan to look after their traditional lands.

Wunambal Gaambera country has high cultural and conservation values. There are numerous art sites and over 165 plants and animals found nowhere else on earth.

Uunguu ranger Jason Adams says Uunguu means ‘living home’ and the Wunambal Gaambera people with the support of Kimberley Land Council, built partnerships with Bush Heritage Australia and the Australian Government’s Indigenous Protected Area and Working on Country programs to develop their healthy country plan.

The planning process took two years. It was a way for traditional owners to focus their ideas and articulate their aspirations as managers of country. Wildlife surveys and land management work by Uunguu rangers helped inform the process and family groups got together for ‘on country’ workshops to discuss management targets, threats and strategies.

“The main thing we had to put in there was the law and culture and basically try and get people back out on country,” Jason said. Traditional law became an important target as well as more tangible things like rock art, ‘right way fire’, bush plants, waterholes and seafoods.

Once Wunambal Gaambera people identified the targets, or important things to look after, they rated their health. From a conservation perspective they were fair to good, but from a cultural perspective they were generally poor because people have got to be on country to know and look after it.

A monitoring and evaluation committee made up of traditional owners, rangers and scientists verifies conservation outcomes. A mix of cultural and scientific measures are used to monitor the plan’s targets, for example, the amount of country burnt, the taste of food animals and wildlife abundance and distribution.

Traditional owners are also exploring economic opportunities consistent with international conservation guidelines. A proposed permit system will control visitors, generate fees and help Wunambal Gaambera people work with industry to build an authentic and high quality cultural tourism product. Fire abatement consistent with traditional burning may also be used to generate an income.

Secure and sustainable funding is a key strategy to provide jobs and enable Wunambal Gaambera families to live on country and keep it healthy into the future.

## Laynhapuy (Lah-nah-poy)

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, 450,000 hectares | Declared 2006

Located in tropical north-east Arnhem Land and home to Yolngu people, Laynhapuy Indigenous Protected Area includes 480 kilometres of coastline.

Laynhapuy protects internationally significant wetlands and coastal landforms, and its sea country is home to dugong and turtles.

*Yirralka* describes the attachment relationship, and associated responsibilities, between a Yolngu person and their country.

The Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation established the Yirralka rangers to carry out land and sea management on behalf of Laynhapuy's traditional owners, about 1,200 people living on many homelands.

Laynhapuy together with neighbouring Indigenous Protected Areas Anindilyakwa and Dhimurru, protect an important part of the Arnhem Coast Bioregion.

*We want to protect our country and pass it on to our children in good shape but we also want to be able to*



## Northern Tanami (Tan-ah-my)

Tanami Desert, Northern Territory, 4 million hectares | Declared 2007

In central Australia on the traditional lands of the Warlpiri and Gurindji people is the Northern Tanami, a vast Indigenous Protected Area embracing desert and sub-tropical savannah.

Living here are vulnerable animals like the bilby and great desert skink and the endangered Gouldian finch. Following monsoonal rains, its wetlands explode into life, providing good breeding conditions for migratory birds.

Together with other Indigenous Protected Areas, it is an important part of the proposed Trans-Australian Eco-link – a wildlife corridor stretching coast to coast from South Australia to the Northern Territory.

Wulain rangers with assistance from the Central Land Council, carry out the Northern Tanami's day-to-day land management work.



Left: Yirralka rangers removing nets as part of the GhostNets Australia project. Laynhapuy IPA  
Above: Margaret Nungarrayi Martin, Rosie Naparrula Tasman, Molly Naparrula Tasman and Agnes Donnelly out with rangers at the Duck Ponds. Central Land Council



## Guanaba (Gwun-ar-bar)

The Gold Coast, Queensland,  
100 hectares | Declared 2000

At the foot of Mount Tamborine, Guanaba Indigenous Protected Area's rainforests, eucalypt woodlands and picturesque creeks are part of the Kombumerri people's traditional lands.

The greater Mount Tamborine escarpment is rich in plant life with around 945 different species and a stronghold for several nationally threatened animals such as Albert's lyrebirds, grey-headed flying-foxes and Richmond birdwing butterflies.

Managed by the Ngarang-Wal Gold Coast Aboriginal Association, traditional owners work with the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service to focus on conserving Guanaba's high level of biodiversity. They are controlling erosion on steep slopes, removing weeds and developing strategies to control wild dogs and cane toads.



*Top left:* Rainforest palms. Bruce Rose. *Bottom left:* Richmond birdwing butterfly. Bob Decker

## Dorodong (Dor-o-dong)

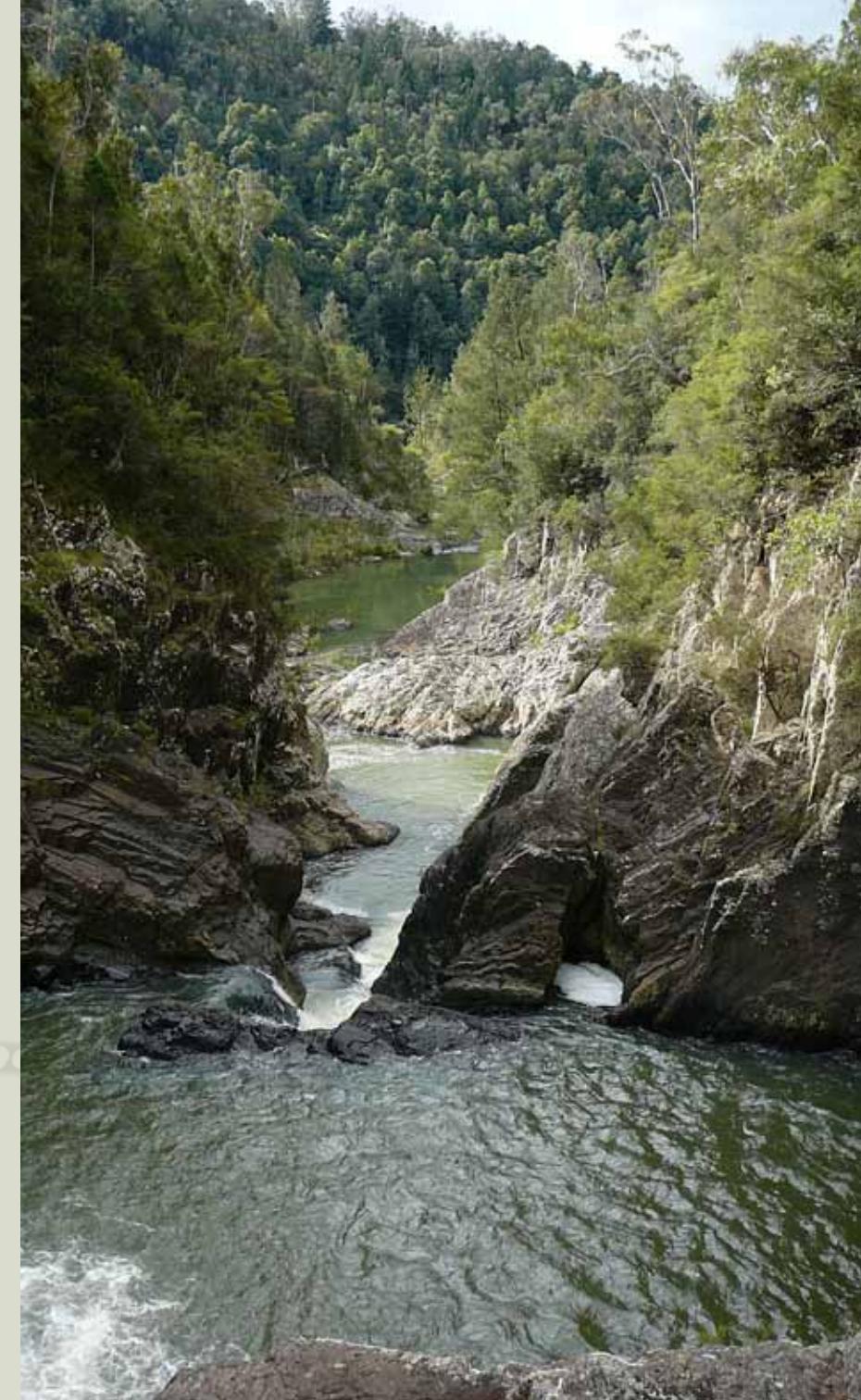
Northern Tablelands, New South Wales,  
85 hectares | Declared 2011

Protecting several waterways, a spectacular waterfall and rainforests is Dorodong Indigenous Protected Area, part of the Gumbaingirr traditional lands.

On the Dorrigo Plateau, over one hundred types of animals have been recorded. Living in its woodlands are koalas, endangered glossy black-cockatoos and spotted-tailed quolls.

Antarctic beech forests are home to tiny pouched frogs that breed without water. Laying their eggs in the leaf litter, the hatched tadpoles are then carried in hip pouches by the males until they emerge as small froglets.

Dorodong is managed by the Dorodong Association. Conservation activities include ecological monitoring and fencing of rare frog habitat.



*Right:* The Bielsdale River that runs through Dorodong. Brian Hawkins

## Mount Willoughby

Stony Plains, South Australia, 386,500 hectares | Declared 2002



Located on the Stuart Highway about 150 kilometres north of Coober Pedy is the striking arid landscape of Mount Willoughby Indigenous Protected Area.

The former pastoral property supports a remarkable collection of habitats, ranging from swamps and grassland to cracking clay pans, spectacular breakaway ranges and vivid red dune country.

Mount Willoughby is home to numerous plants and animals, including Australia's largest lizard, the perentie and the desert daisy *Erigeron sessilifolius* that was rediscovered during a recent biological survey.

Sharing a border with the state-managed Tallaringa Conservation Park, the Tjyriila Aboriginal Corporation undertakes conservation and land management that complements park practices.



## Gumma (Gum-mar)

North Coast, New South Wales, 111 hectares | Declared 2011

On the traditional lands of the Gumbaynggirr people just south of Nambucca Heads is Gumma Indigenous Protected Area, an idyllic coastal haven.

Sand flats provide food for birds protected under migratory bird agreements while the forest shelters animals such as the yellow-bellied glider, microbats and the long-nosed potoroo.

The Nambucca Heads Local Aboriginal Land Council manages Gumma on behalf of its traditional owners in cooperation with New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service.

Gumma's traditional owners have also developed partnerships with the National Marine Science Centre, Southern Cross University, Dolphin Research Australia, the Conservation Biology Institute and Birdlife Australia that provide cultural and environmental learning opportunities.



# Australia - a living country

Australia is a rich cultural landscape, crisscrossed with the tracks of spirit ancestors who walked, slithered, swam or flew, creating landforms and life as they travelled. These tracks are associated with a highly complex set of belief systems that interconnect the land, spirituality, law, social life and environment. They are passed on through stories, ceremonies, totems, dance, song, and art.

European colonisation brought rapid changes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Most people were separated from their land, making it difficult to continue their traditional life. Missions provided refuge but generally discouraged people from using their own language and carrying out cultural practices.

However although physically separated, many people maintained a strong cultural connection to their country.

Today a number of Indigenous communities are piecing missing parts of their culture together by talking to elders, researching early images and writings, examining artefacts and mapping cultural heritage sites. This cultural renewal is an important way of maintaining cultural identity.

A concept still held by most Indigenous Australians, is that 'country' is a living entity, alive with ancestral spirits, and must be respected. People relate to country the same way they would a person and say, if you look after country; country will look after you.

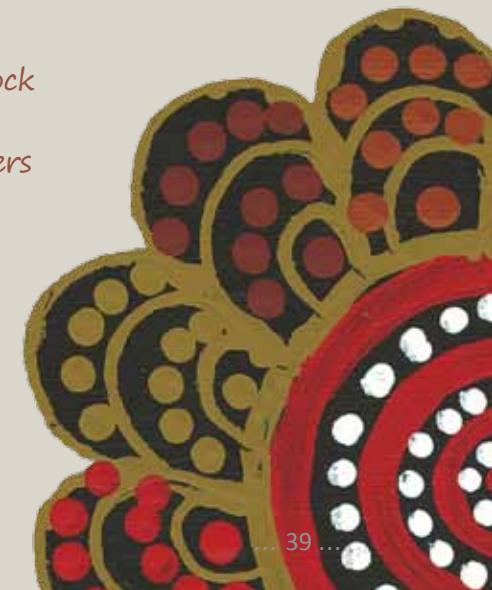
The recognition of cultural landscapes by the World Heritage Convention reflects a growing trend towards taking a more holistic view of the environment. The Indigenous Protected Area program supports traditional owners to conserve and renew their cultural landscapes.

*“One of our elders who has passed on now, John Naylor, he told us of a story about a rock that’s shaped like a face and a head [on left].*

*And the story goes that this warrior was supposed to protect this area from the white settlers and he’d left his post and they’d come in and killed off part of the Banbai clan.*

*So punishment for him was his spirit was to stay there and look over the land until it was handed back to Aboriginal people and the moment it was handed back to us, this head had fallen over and it was a sign to us, that this land really belongs to us.”*

John Patterson, Wattlebridge traditional owner





## Revitalising culture

### Boorabee (Boor-ar-bee) and The Willows

Northern New South Wales, 2,900 hectares | Declared 2010

*“The land is the way we can regain some of our culture. Boorabee and The Willows will give our young people knowledge of their own land; give them ownership again.”*

Trevor Potter, Ngoorabul traditional owner

Ngoorabul elders are using Boorabee and The Willows properties to get Aboriginal kids back on country and provide employment opportunities.

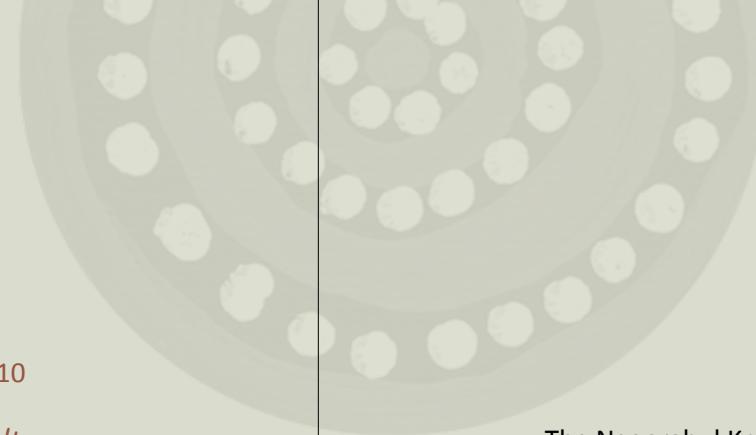
Ngoorabul elders were concerned that their kids and grand kids were not learning about their culture. Indigenous Protected Area’s manager Karen Potter said they decided to use the koala, the Ngoorabul’s totem to bring kids and elders together.

“The koala survey led to community spotlight tours, mentoring and culture camps, which we did in conjunction with the Glen Innes High School,” Karen said.

“Girls and boys are taken out separately as they would have done in the old days, to do leadership activities, cultural activities, explore and learn bush skills.”

The Willow’s most prominent feature is the Severn River gorge. Students hear the story of Biamme a powerful magic man, who upon giving chase and punishing a greedy giant cod fish named Goodoo, created the gorge and the cod fish that live in the river today.

*Left: Ranger Aaron Livemore above the Severn River gorge. Marjorie Gant*



The Ngoorabul Knowledge Centre developed with input from elders is nearing completion and will focus on cultural education for community members and visitors. “We also want to develop cultural activity areas where we’ve got a heap of lomandra grass growing, we can collect it and do some basket weaving. In another area we might have bush foods to eat and in another area some scar trees with links to the past. So we’re using the landscape to bring that cultural aspect back to life,” Karen said.

The community manage the properties as a protected area but Aboriginal families can fish and collect traditional foods like ‘porcupine’ (echidna), witchetty grubs and mookrum berries.

The Indigenous Protected Area program has been a solid base from which to create jobs.

“Three Indigenous rangers are currently doing land management work and we recently acquired Caring for Our Country funding for an additional five positions. We’ve already got young people putting up their hands to work in these positions,” Karen said.

Rangers receive training in conservation and land management. They are also working with elders to restore appropriate fire management and to map cultural heritage and Dreaming stories, helping to revitalise culture and keep it alive.

*Right: An owl spotted on a community spotlight tour. Karen Potter*





## Preminghana (Prem-in-garn-ah)

North-west Tasmania,  
Over 500 hectares | Declared 1999

Protecting historic Aboriginal rock engravings in Tasmania's north-west is Preminghana Indigenous Protected Area. It is of cultural significance to Tasmanian Aboriginal people who were forcibly removed from this area in the 1800s.

Today, Preminghana is a magnet for tourists and surfers attracted by its cultural heritage, beautiful wetlands, coastal grasslands, heathlands, woodlands and beaches. The region is also home to the attractive Tasmanian skipper butterfly and the Preminghana billy button plant, both found nowhere else in the world.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council manages the area. Cultural heritage tasks include the conservation and monitoring of sites such as engravings and middens and visitor education.

## Kaanju Ngaachi (Karn-joo Nar-chi) Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers

Cape York, Queensland, nearly 200,000 hectares | Declared 2008

*"The deterioration of the land is felt by Pianamu (Rainbow Serpent), and if proper land management is not carried out Pianamu will not allow the land to be sustainable."*

David Claudie, Kaanju traditional owner

Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area includes many significant Dreaming places, as well as sacred ceremonial grounds, totemic sites and rock carvings and paintings.

It's also home to endangered southern cassowaries, little known Cape York rock wallabies, several

types of rare bats and magnificent riflebirds. Its wet tropical forests are among the most diverse and unspoiled in the world.

Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation employs a team of Indigenous rangers to carry out land management work. In 2010 they hosted a traditional fire workshop and plan more workshops in the future.



Left: A rocky beach. Marjorie Gant. Right: Paperbark lined river. IPA program



## Wattleridge and Tarriva Kurrukun (Tar-ree-wah Koor-roo-kun)

New England, New South Wales,  
Around 1,500 hectares | Declared 2001, 2009

Part of the Banbai people's traditional lands, Wattleridge and Tarriva Kurrukun Indigenous Protected Areas are home to an amazing diversity of plants and animals.

Wattleridge and Tarriva Kurrukun both contain important cultural sites including traditional camping areas, Aboriginal rock art, scarred trees, tool making sites and axe-grinding grooves.

Birds living on the protected areas include glossy black and red-tailed black cockatoos, swift and regent parrots. The endangered spotted-tailed quoll and vulnerable brush-tailed phascogale and eastern pygmy possum are also found.

Banbai Business Enterprises and Aboriginal rangers assist the Banbai people to manage their land. Tasks include wildlife surveys, fire management and controlling feral animals. Their native nursery provides endemic plants for revegetation projects.

Left: Tarriva Kurrukun. IPA program

## Weilmoringle (Weel-mor-in-gal)

Central New South Wales,  
Around 3,500 hectares | Declared 2011

*Murrawarri cultural and traditional values before settlement were looking after each other and looking after country by singing the country, dancing, walking the country, keeping the country lore pure, burning the country and living on the land... Our spiritual values play a significant part in the lives of all Murrawarri people.*

Weilmoringle Plan of Management

Scarred, grey eucalypts dot the Weilmoringle landscape. The traditional lands of the Murrawarri people are home to vulnerable birds like Major Mitchell cockatoos that feed on saltbush and wattle seeds and brolgas that feed in the dry grasslands and shallow marshes.

The Murrawarri people's relationship to the land remains strong. Dreaming stories are still told and there are a number of traditional campsites, artefacts and scar trees whose bark was used to make coolamons (carrying dishes), humpies (shelters) and canoes.

The Weilmoringle Holding Company manages the protected area on behalf of community elders and family representatives who are also keen to establish a Murrawarri cultural learning centre.

Above right: Major Mitchell cockatoo displaying crest. Ashraf Saleh. Right: Major Mitchell cockatoo. David Cook





## Jamba Dhandan Duringala (Jam-bar Darn-darn Dur-ing-arl-ar)

Outback Queensland, 38,000 hectares | Declared 2010

On the traditional lands of the Kooma people, Jamba Dhandan Duringala means the place of happy frogs and the Indigenous Protected Area includes claypan lakes within a nationally listed wetland.

After rains, the calls of frogs and toads resonate. Migratory birds and rare animals such as the yakka skink, freckled duck and Major Mitchell cockatoo are also found here.

Cultural heritage includes scar trees, fish traps and, from more recent times, people's ties to the Bendee Downs and Murra Murra pastoral properties.

The Kooma Traditional Owners Association manages the properties and has removed stock from within the Indigenous Protected Area. They plan to foster cultural renewal by recording traditional knowledge, restoring fish traps and conducting regular cultural camps.

Left: Florence with a traditional grinding hollow. Marjorie Gant

## Toogimbie (Too-gim-bee)

The Riverina, New South Wales, 4,600 hectares | Declared 2004

Situated on the traditional lands of the Nari Nari people the wetlands of Toogimbie Indigenous Protected Area are home to waterbirds and one of Australia's smallest mammals, the Gile's planigale.

Formerly three pastoral properties, Toogimbie is now owned and managed by the Nari Nari Tribal Council. Land management activities focus

on improving wetland inundation, replanting vegetation, controlling weeds and removing feral animals like foxes, rabbits and pigs.

The Council have also constructed bird hides in the wetlands and a community bush tucker garden, helping to reconnect people to their land.



Above: Toogimbie seasonal wetland. IPA program ... 47 ...



# Sustainable use

*Mixing Anangu customary knowledge – the Tjukurpa (law) with Piranypa (non-Anangu) scientific knowledge to improve wildlife habitat, enhance landscapes and harvest species on a sustainable basis.*

Angas Downs Plan of Management

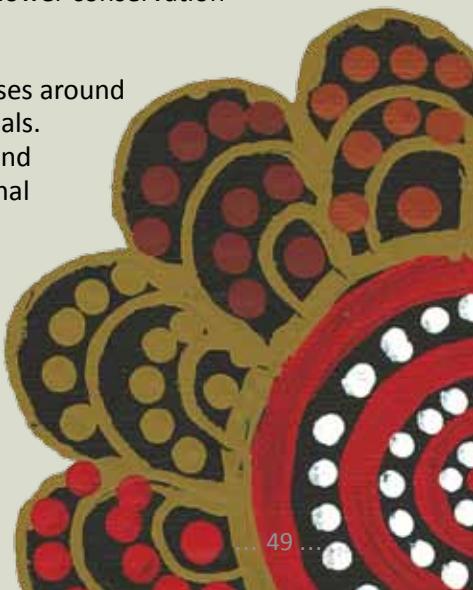
At the time of European settlement, Indigenous Australians were primarily hunter gatherers, clan groups moved around their traditional lands, harvesting food according to the seasons. Stone weirs and fish traps were also used in a number of coastal areas and some Torres Strait Islanders farmed yams and other crops. At times neighbouring clans gathered for ceremonies and to trade. Goods traded included food, ochres, shells and tools and trading occurred across Australia and with Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

In parts of Australia, Indigenous people retain a close or totemic relationship with plants and animals and a cultural responsibility to look after them. A number of cultural laws and protocols determine how wildlife is looked after and harvested. For example, many animals can only be hunted seasonally, by certain people and have to be shared in particular ways.

The management of most Indigenous Protected Areas allows the hunting of traditional foods including some animals of conservation significance such as marine turtles. A number of communities are re-establishing cultural protocols to ensure traditional hunting is humane and sustainable.

Hunting feral animals also provides meat and can reduce environmental damage. Some Indigenous communities, particularly those with a pastoral history, keep small herds of sheep or cattle for meat in areas of lower conservation value.

Other communities have built businesses around the sustainable use of plants and animals. These include producing bush tucker and game meat products, creating traditional arts and crafts and collecting crocodile eggs for crocodile farms.





## Birding in Bass Strait

### Furneaux Islands - Badger, Chappell, lungtalanana, Babel and Big Dog

Bass Strait, Tasmania | Declared 2007, 2009

In late March, members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community head off to Big Dog and Babel islands for the mutton bird season, continuing an important cultural practice.

Each year, over 18 million mutton birds (short-tailed shearwaters) fly from the Arctic Circle to breed in Tasmanian rookeries. Babel Island is the world's largest mutton bird rookery with around three million burrows.

The Tasmania Aboriginal Centre's project *milaythina pakana*, Tasmanian Aboriginal Land, manages five Furneaux island Indigenous Protected Areas. A team of Aboriginal land management workers, funded through the Australian Government's Working on Country program,

conduct wildlife surveys, control weeds such as boxthorn and laurel, revegetate eroded areas and are reintroducing fire management. They also monitor the mutton bird rookeries and control feral cats, rats and mice.

Mutton birding is hard and dirty work, but the birds have a rich, oily flavour and are good tucker.

Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania chairman Clyde Mansell says the harvest is sustainable. "We take less than one per cent of newly hatched birds off the islands."

"Mutton birding was a traditional hunting and gathering activity carried out by Aborigines for thousands of years," Clyde says. It was introduced to the Furneaux Group in

the early 1800s when sealers and Aboriginal women they acquired by trade or kidnapping, settled on outer islands.

Many of these Aboriginal women were from *tbtebrakunna*, Cape Portland and *wukalina*, Mount William in north eastern Tasmania and initially gathered mutton bird eggs and chicks for eating.

Long after the seals were gone, the mutton button bird industry flourished. Products such as feathers, oil and meat were sold and in 1851, appeared at The Great Exhibition in London.

Until the 1960s, a number of Aboriginal-operated processing sheds were located on several islands. "They used to time the school holidays around the mutton bird season," Clyde recalls.

Families would pack up, board a trading vessel and spend about six to eight weeks on the islands. Sundays were a day off, a day to dress up and socialise.

Although commercial birding has declined in recent years, birds have been harvested for over two centuries.

The commercial harvest is restricted to Aboriginal operators and highly regulated. "In recent years the health authorities have wanted these new 'you beaut' meat factories," Clyde says.

"This has changed the rough and ready atmosphere of the processing shed, it's now sanitised and people have to wear a hair net and apron.

"Thankfully they haven't tried to enforce standards on us in terms of accommodation, so were keeping the old mutton birding hut sort of existence there."

Mutton birding is a time for people to get back to their cultural roots. "It brings that close connection of community and family. It's still there and that will never change," Clyde says.

*"To see Tasmanian Aboriginal people on a mutton bird island during mutton birding is to see Aboriginal people really immersed in their cultural presence."*

Clyde Mansell, chairman  
Aboriginal Land Council  
of Tasmania



## Ngaanyatjarra (Naar-na-da-ra) Lands

Central Ranges, Western Australia, 9.8 million hectares | Declared 2002

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands span parts of the Gibson, Great Victoria and Great Sandy deserts are home to the Yarnangu (Ngaanyatjarra people) from a number of communities.

The right people to speak for the right country is governed by Tjukurrpa, the law held in Dreaming tracks left by creator beings.

The Indigenous Protected Area is managed by the Ngaanyatjarra Council and Aboriginal rangers in consultation with traditional owners. Environmental work

includes patch burning and maintaining water points for wildlife and people, allowing safe travel across these vast lands.

Another focus is reducing the number of feral camels to minimise damage to the environment and infrastructure. The Ngaanyatjarra Camel Company was formed this year and plans to muster and sell camels; the goal is to use the camels themselves to pay for a reduction of the camel population. The Ngaanyatjarra Working on Country rangers have been trained to shoot and butcher camels. They now control problem animals and provide meat for their families.



... 52 ... Above: Feral camels at Tjukurla on Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Gordon Sanders

## Angas Downs

Central Australia, Northern Territory, 320,000 hectares | Declared 2009

In Australia's Red Centre, the hot, arid sand plains and nationally important wetlands of Angas Downs Indigenous Protected Area reveal a surprising variety of plants and animals.

Previously a pastoral property, it is now owned by the Imanpa Indigenous community whose Anangu members include Matutjara, Yankunytjara and Pitjantjatjara people, many of whom were born, raised and worked on the property.

Angas Downs protects waterholes, bush fruits, thorny devils, kangaroos, rock engravings and ceremonial grounds, all important to Anangu traditional owners.

One sustainable use project run by Indigenous rangers involves raising and releasing emu which will provide the community with meat and help disperse the seeds of bush tucker plants such as the quandong, a small tree which produces a red fruit, high in vitamin C.



Right: Ranger David Wongway tending emu chicks. George Wilson



## Marri-Jabin (Mar-ree Jar-bin)

West Coast, Northern Territory,  
71,200 hectares | Declared 2010

Lying along the tropical coast several hours drive from Wadeye, Marri-Jabin is the first stage of the Thamarrurr Indigenous Protected Area.

Animals of conservation significance include vulnerable red goshawks and water mice. The region's wetlands are recognised as nationally important and seasonally support up to 500,000 magpie geese.

The Thamarrurr Indigenous land and sea rangers program is now one of the largest Indigenous employers in the Wadeye community. Land management activities conducted on the protected area and traditional lands include fire management and the control of weeds and feral pigs.

In addition to land management, Thamarrurr rangers and traditional owners of the Thamarrurr region are pursuing sustainable small scale commercial activities such as harvesting Kakadu plums, collecting and incubating crocodile eggs, producing native honey and developing ecotourism.

## Warul Kawa (War-ul Kar-wah)

Torres Strait, Queensland, 3,500 hectares | Declared 2001

Warul Kawa is the most north-westerly island in Torres Strait and the most northerly Indigenous Protected Area in Australia. It includes the 43 hectare tropical island and its surrounding reef.

Warul Kawa's name means island of turtles and it is recognised as an internationally important marine turtle rookery, especially for flatback turtles. It also has tall stands of lettuce tree, *Pisonia grandis*, a forest type not found anywhere else in the region.

Traditional owners, including Indigenous land and sea rangers employed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority, manage Warul Kawa which has spiritual significance to five Torres Strait Island communities: Boigu, Dauan, Saibai, Mabuyag and Badu.

The island, reef platform and surrounding waters are also important hunting and fishing grounds for these traditional owners, particularly the Boigu Island community.



## Warlu Jilajaa Jumu (Wah-loo Jila-ja Joo-moo)

Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia, 1.6 million hectares | Declared 2007

*Being sustainable on country means making decisions locally that do not harm country, now or in the future.*

*It means providing future generations with the rights and the abilities to enjoy their responsibilities to country.*

Ngurrara traditional owners

For thousands of years Ngurrara people of the Great Sandy Desert have used their knowledge of seasonal cycles to ensure sustainable livelihoods and cultural wellbeing. Using their traditional knowledge of country, the Ngurrara people have been working to develop land management tools to understand the effects of climate change.

That's why the rangers started the Ngurrara seasonal calendar project. Over 12 months Ngurrara rangers have been actively documenting traditional knowledge of weather, plants and animals while working with scientists to set up scientific equipment to measure changes on their country. The information is then downloaded into a database to create a seasonal calendar model that the rangers are using to identify work that needs to be done on country.

"The rangers through combining traditional knowledge and modern science are developing a monitoring tool to assess the impacts of climate change on our country," says Ngurrara ranger co-ordinator Peter Murray.

"It's allowing our people to understand scientific predictions about climate change on our own terms using traditional knowledge."





# Economic development

Today many Indigenous Protected Areas are building on Australian Government support by developing businesses that operate alongside conservation.

Tourism provides additional income and jobs for areas that are a destination in their own right or lie on an established tourist route. A number of ranger groups are currently operating tourist campgrounds and providing cultural and natural tours. The Anindilyakwa community has also developed an eco resort providing a range of hospitality training and jobs.

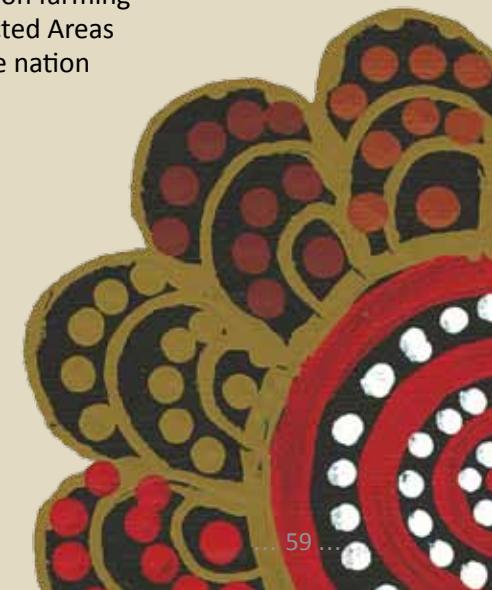
Cultural education can also generate income. Several communities have built cultural centres and provide cultural activities to visiting groups. A number of Indigenous rangers also run school activities and deliver cross-cultural courses to industry and government workers.

Green energy is another potential funding option. Wind turbines installed by a power company on the Deen Maar Indigenous Protected Area now generate an alternative income stream while helping to meet Victoria's energy demands. When technology improves, solar power stations may become a viable option for more remote areas.

A number of Indigenous ranger groups are also successfully providing paid environmental services to organisations such as mines, conservation agencies and research institutions. Services provided include land rehabilitation, fire management, weed and feral animal control and environmental monitoring.

In a landmark agreement, traditional owners including those from the Wardeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas, have entered a 17 year service arrangement with Conoco Phillips to offset some of their greenhouse gas emissions. By managing fire, the rangers reduce the size and frequency of wildfires that would otherwise release high levels of carbon into the atmosphere.

The Government is proposing a similar carbon offset scheme called the Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund. Currently in the research phase, carbon farming could be a way for Indigenous Protected Areas to generate income while helping the nation tackle climate change.



# Developing tourism

**Budj Bim – Tyrendarra 248 hectares, Kurtonitj 353 hectares, Lake Condah 1,700 hectares**

South-west Victoria | Declared 2003, 2009 and 2010

The declaration of three Indigenous Protected Areas in the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape has helped create an energetic tourism enterprise, providing planning support and improving visitor access and facilities.

Visitors are tantalised by Budj Bim’s fascinating history – from the creation of the landscape to present times. Gunditjmara elders tell of a volcanic past with fires that thundered from the ground day and night. The creation ancestor, Budj Bim’s head (Mt. Eccles) burst through leaving his many teeth (stones) scattered across the landscape.

Gunditjmara people used these stones to reshape the wetlands that formed, constructing an ingenious system of channels and weirs to trap fish and eels and circular huts to live in.

The three Indigenous Protected Areas, Tyrendarra, Kurtonitj and Lake Condah, have supported tourism projects such as walking tracks, information shelters, signs, toilets and an education centre.

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation’s chief executive officer Thomas Day says that Tyrendarra plays an important community education role.

“Primary and high school students participate in cultural tours or workshops on traditional dance or art,” Thomas says. “Many activities are about the story telling aspect of Aboriginal culture, the oral histories and the Dreamtime stories.”

A replica stone hut and eel trap have recently been constructed near the education centre. Indigenous staff show visiting kids basket weaving, weapons and tools and get them to taste local bush tucker from the Indigenous food and fibre garden. All this helps them imagine what life was like.

Sharing culture with school groups and tourists has revitalised some of the Gunditjmara language.

*“You could call our language a jigsaw puzzle. We’re putting the pieces back together. It’s been put through the secondary college here where they’ve taken out French and introduced Gunditjmara.”*

Thomas Day

The Gunditjmara tourism company *Budj Bim Tours*, has been operating for about 10 years now. Tours are organised on the web and over the last year, about 40 groups visited.

Giving tours has helped build the community’s capacity. Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation’s land management coordinator Matt Butt says “People have used the tour company; they get their grass root education... and get confidence in speaking publicly to people. Then they move into different fields in the community, to use that knowledge to implement other programs.”

The tour company is expanding slowly but Matt says there’s a lot of potential. To assist Indigenous Protected Areas to realise their tourism goals, the Australian Government’s Indigenous Protected Area program is currently funding ‘Tourism our Way’, a pilot program

looking at providing a tourism development pathway. This staged process for managers and communities builds capacity to manage tourism and develop Indigenous tourism opportunities.

Matt and Thomas believe the upcoming workshop will provide an opportunity to review old business plans and current operations. Indigenous Protected Areas coordinator Levi Lovett said that younger people are starting to put forward creative ideas to interpret country such as dance performances and night tours to tell the story of star constellations. All agree that it’s perfect timing to look at how the tours could operate in the future and deliver sustainable benefits for the local community.





## Paruku (Ba-roo-goo)

Lake Gregory, Western Australia,  
430,000 hectares | Declared 2001

Paruku Indigenous Protected Area includes spectacular wetlands bordering the Great Sandy and Tanami deserts which are an internationally renowned haven for thousands of birds.

Paruku is at the end of a long Dreaming track binding together groups of traditional owners, including Walmajarri, Jaru and Kukatja peoples.

*Paruku* is the Walmajarri language name for Lake Gregory, and at the end of the Canning Stock Route, it is a remote tourist destination and popular bird-watching spot. Colourful signs tell cultural stories about the area and its wildlife.

Managed by the Mulan community with the assistance of the Kimberley Land Council, tasks include regulating visitor access, managing lakeside camping and helping traditional owners care for country.



## Deen Maar (Deen Mar) and Framlingham Forest

South-west Victoria, 453 hectares, 1,130 hectares | Declared 1999, 2009

On the beautiful coast of Victoria, Deen Maar Indigenous Protected Area embraces rolling sand dunes, limestone ridges and wetlands.

Deen Maar protects a range of wildlife, including the endangered orange-bellied parrot, a small, migratory parrot that spends the winter there. Environmental work includes revegetating degraded areas and restoring wetlands.

Inland is Framlingham Forest Indigenous Protected Area, which includes one of the larger remaining native forests in south-west Victoria. The community are currently restoring traditional stone weir eel traps along the Hopkins River to catch *Kooyang*, eels, a culturally important food.

Both Indigenous Protected Areas have strong cultural connections to Deen Maar Island and are managed by Framlingham Aboriginal Trust.

Following an environmental assessment, wind turbines were installed on Deen Maar, generating a regular income to fund community development projects.

Tourism opportunities exist on both sites. Community members are conducting cultural tours, popular with school groups, which discuss aspects of the land and local culture and cover past issues and current practises.

These tours are a developing enterprise, providing a source of employment for local Aboriginal people.

Left: Harnessing coastal winds to generate power and an income. IPA program

## Yalata (Ya-la-ta)

Great Australian Bight, South Australia, 456,300 hectares | Declared 1999

Lying at the edge of the Great Victoria Desert and the vast Nullarbor Plain, Yalata Indigenous Protected Area embraces coastal dunes, limestone cliffs, sand plains and mallee shrub land.

Originally occupied by Wirangu and Mirning coastal people, Yalata's traditional owners also include western desert people who identify as southern Anangu.

On the edge of the Great Australian Bight Marine Park, around 20,000 people visit Yalata each year to fish, camp and watch the migration of southern right whales.

The Yalata Community and Anangu rangers manage the protected area and have introduced a visitor permit system and installed boardwalks to protect fragile dune areas. They also work closely with Fisheries and Parks SA who manage the surrounding national parks and reserves and Great Australian Bight Marine Park.



Above left: Viewing platform. Brian Yap. Above right: Southern right whale. Robdownunder ... 65 ...

## Djelk (Jelk)

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, 673,200 hectares | Declared 2009

Djelk Indigenous Protected Area stretches from the central Arnhem Land Plateau to the Arafura Sea. It includes islands, nationally significant wetlands and sandstone country with unique wildlife like the black wallaroo and white-throated grass wren.

Djelk is also rich in cultural heritage with over 100 Aboriginal clans, a dozen language groups and many spectacular rock art sites. More than 1,500 people

live in the community of Maningrida and a further 800 in surrounding outstations.

Djelk rangers are employed by the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation to assist traditional owners look after country. They are also contracted to provide environmental services such as monitoring fishing vessels for Northern Territory Fisheries and undertaking coastal patrols for the Australian Customs Service.



## Warddeken (Ward-de-ken)

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, 1.4 million hectares | Declared 2009

Adjoining Kakadu National Park, Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area embraces spectacular stone country on the western Arnhem Land Plateau.

The Arnhem Land Plateau is home to dozens of plants and animals found nowhere else such as the black wallaroo, Arnhem Land rock-rat and Oenpelli python. It also protects thousands of rock art sites with ancient paintings of creation ancestors and Aboriginal people and more recently, Europeans.

Traditional owners formed Warddeken Land Management and associated Warddeken ranger group to help care for their remote country.

With Djelk and three other Indigenous ranger groups they have successfully developed the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement project, an innovative carbon credit partnership with industry. They are currently engaging in collaborative scientific research in preparation to enter a future biodiversity credit scheme.



# Partners

Just some of the many partners working with Indigenous communities to manage their land for conservation.

## Land acquisition and governance

- Indigenous Land Corporation
- Indigenous management organisations
- Indigenous Protected Area program
- Working on Country program
- Kimberley Land Council
- Northern Land Council
- Central Land Council
- Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
- Ngaanyatjarra Council
- Torres Strait Regional Authority
- Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania
- Other regional Land Councils and organisations

## Conservation funding and support

- Bush Heritage Australia
- The Nature Conservancy
- Christensen Fund
- The Pew Environment Group
- World Wide Fund for Nature Australia
- Natural Heritage Trust (Envirofund)
- Aboriginal Benefits Account

## Environmental service contractors

- Australian Customs Service
- North Australia Quarantine Strategy
- Northern Territory Fisheries
- Conoco Phillips Darwin Liquefied Natural Gas
- Mining companies
- State and Territory agencies

## Land use agreements

- Government protected areas
- Town and city councils
- Mining companies
- Energy and communication providers

## Government protected area managers

- State and Territory fire services
- State and Territory fisheries agencies
- World Heritage Area management authorities
- Dept of Environment and Conservation (WA)
- Dept of Land Resource Management (NT)
- Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory
- Dept of Environment Water and Natural Resources (SA)
- Dept of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (QLD)
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania
- Parks Victoria

## Research or training

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- State and Territory universities and training institutions
- State and Territory environmental organisations
- State and Territory museums and art galleries
- North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
- Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation
- Australian Research Council
- CSIRO
- Bush Blitz
- National Environmental Research Program

## Conservation and volunteer groups

- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Indigenous Community Volunteers
- GhostsNets Australia
- Australian Koala Foundation

## Tourism

- National Heritage Trust
- State and Territory departments





**Australian Government**

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**Department of Sustainability, Environment,  
Water, Population and Communities**