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If you have a story or photos to share, or would like to provide feedback, contact: media@capeyorknrm.com.au Design and content by Cape York NRM Communications Manager Andree Stephens

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PIP SCHROOR

Welcome to our latest edition of LandsCAPE.

It has been an incredible seven months and the amount of projects and new opportunities arising are reflected in the many stor

new opportunities arising are reflected in the many stories we present to you.

This year has seen a number of major funding programs draw to an end, and with them, the finishing up of highly successful projects across the Cape in the biodiversity, land management and agriculture sectors.

Which means we are now refocusing as new programs are announced, and tailoring projects to the needs of all of our stakeholders on the Cape. We are listening, planning and energised for the coming years.

Already, we have designed and begun implementing projects under the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance during this turtle nesting season, we are planning actions around the woody thickening of areas in the Cape which can affect ecosystems, and we are implementing new projects to build the resilience of land owners as our climate shifts.

We are also boosting our team with new staff, including myself, and a renewed commitment to engage, be seen, and work with the community to care for the region into the future. Enjoy.

WOODY THICKENING A BURNING ISSUE

A new project to monitor and develop a guide on the management of woody thickening through fire regimes on Cape York Peninsula will begin next month.

The project is being coordinated by Cape York NRM through funding from the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Recovery Program (NRRP) with the overall aim of improving the ability to respond to natural disasters and climate change.

"The main objective of the project is to develop clear guidance on how to use fire regimes to manage the four land use Cs — Carbon, Culture, Cattle and Conservation - in the context of increasing woody thickening," Cape York NRM Biodiversity & Fire Programs Manager Toby Eastoe said. "There is growing evidence of marked changes in woody structure across the region, and this can affect pastoral production as well as the biodiversity of the country."

Woody thickening is when the density of trees and woody shrubs is increasing in the landscape.

"Photographic evidence and data research on the Cape stretching back 50 years or more shows vast areas of grassland have been overtaken by woody stemmed trees and saplings," Toby continued.

"This can impact threatened species that rely on these open spaces, such as the Golden-shouldered parrot,

and on grazing or carbon credit potential of properties.

"It's a global phenomenon and in Australia, there is more and more interest in how best to manage it."

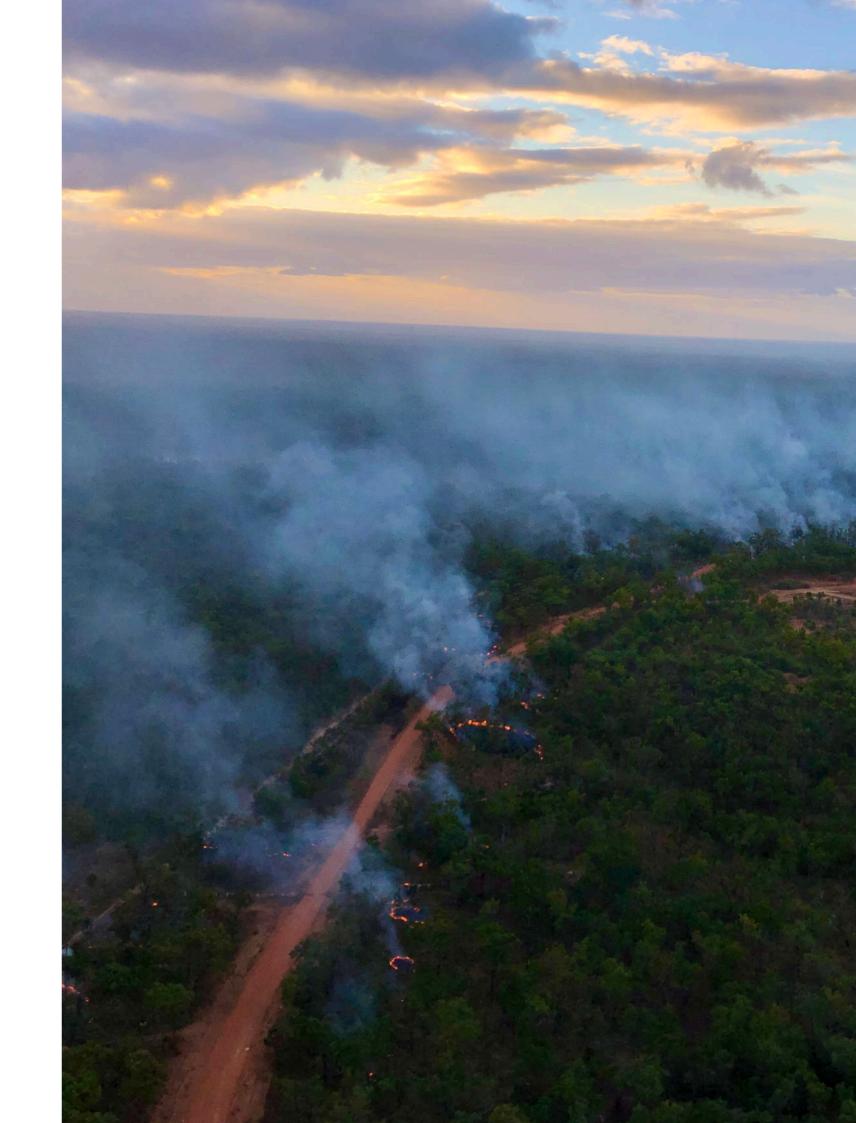
The Project — Supporting Cape York Peninsula Landholders to Improve Vegetation Condition through Management of Woody Thickening using Integrated Fire Regimes (Woody Thickening Project), will continue until the end of June 2024.

The Cape York NRM team will consult with a number of eligible properties wanting to take part; collect specific details on how they are managing woody thickening with fire; review the vegetation condition before burns; examine previous burning regimes; and assess the potential impacts on carbon farming methodologies.

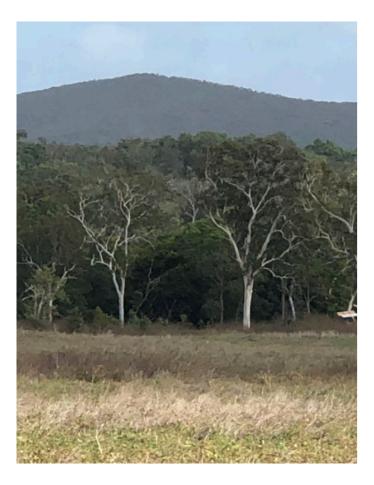
Ultimately, the project will produce a guide on the practical use of fire to control woody thickening, including stakeholder engagement, burn planning, grazing management, burn preparation and the safe ways to deliver those burns.

It will also establish a monitoring regime to measure the long-term impact of burning on woody thickening.

The Woody Thickening Project is being delivered by Cape York NRM with support from the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Regional Recovery









CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

"If you flog a paddock in the wet, it ruins the paddock for the whole year."

Such is the reasoning of Richard Price from Southwell Station who has begun his new fencing work under the Landscape Resilience Project: Building climate change resilience across Cape York Peninsula.

Richard is one of six land managers to benefit under the scheme, being coordinated by Cape York NRM, which is providing resources for introducing improved infrastructure to counter future climate change impacts. Richard has put the funding assistance to quick work, having already had the fence lines cleared.

He was joined by Cape York NRM Project Officers Kathrina Southwell and Daniel Lock who are visiting each of the six properties to begin condition mapping and monitoring of areas undergoing work.

Richard is fencing off a large area which is in a flood zone and explained that the cattle "love to get into that area to eat the grass after the rains". He will put his breeders into the spelled paddock at a later date for a good feed.

"Part of the new fence line follows the Holroyd River, and will also assist in erosion prevention along the banks." Kathrina said.

"Other new fences will protect riparian vegetation along the Edward River where we will conduct Vegetation Condition Assessments, recording threats to condition and function of native vegetation that has been managed."

The Landscape Resilience Project encourages property managers to aim to reduce threats to native vegetation, or improve pasture condition through activities such as weed control; protection of riparian vegetation from cattle or pigs through fencing of creeks and rivers; paddock fencing to increase spelling; and adding off-

stream watering points to spread grazing pressure and improve opportunities for spelling.

Over at Mount Ray Station George Adams met with the team to explain his plans to have more control on where his cattle goes to prevent erosion and spreading of weeds.

"The fence line will follow the natural contours to guide the cattle away from some of their tracks that are contributing to erosion in the gullies," he said.

Like Richard, he considers the wet season a time to contain the cattle with new fencing to minimise the damage to paddocks. He has already seen grass areas improving where he has begun rotating cattle.

A total of \$180,000 has been made available for onground activities spread across the six properties, for practical solutions in the region.

As a measure of the popularity of the scheme, some 27 applicants sought assistance in the first round of funding.

Sustainable Agriculture and Water Quality Manager Michael Goddard said it was important that unsuccessful applicants know there may be an extension of the project once this round is complete at the end of 2024.

"Landholders up here face a number of challenges particular to the region, including poor soils and harsh weather events, with less return than the smaller southern Queensland properties," he said.

"These projects will add to property infrastructure and help to make Cape properties less vulnerable to year-toyear changes in climate and markets."

The Landscape Resilience Project: Building Climate Change Resilience Across Cape York Peninsula is funded by the Queensland Government's Natural

COVER STORY

A SHOW-STOPPING, **HEART-STEALING** PALM COCKATOO

They are the rock stars of the bird world. Not only are they the largest cockatoo in Australia, they are the only creature to make drumsticks to beat on trees to communicate. And it has to be said, they have big, big hair.

The glorious palm cockatoo (Probosciger aterrimus) is only found in Australia on Cape York Peninsula. And they're in trouble. Listed as endangered by the State Government in 2021, they are also losing their ancient and very specific nesting tree hollows.

We spoke to a remarkable 'groupie', Dr Christina Zdenek, who has dedicated the past 14 years to observing and collecting data on the cockatoos. She is also a woman with

> drumsticks. Using their massive beaks, which, unlike the pointy beaks of other parrots, have a wide, almost shovellike lower bill, they can crack open hard-shell nuts and, ves, fashion drumsticks.

> > understatement.

"They actually make the drumstick; they don't just pick it up from the ground, they actually have that forethought — "In short, it's their looks and behaviour," the University 'I want to drum so I'm going to make a drumstick'. Once they create it, from either a dead or living tree branch, they "Being Australia's largest parrot, they're known for their beat it on a tree to make a rhythmic sound as part of pair-

Another unique feature is the way they use sticks to make

bonding or for territorial displays," Christina said.

"They are the only parrot in the world that bring sticks to their nest hollow to make a nest platform," she said.

This scaffolding is necessary given their hollows are up to three or four metres deep. To say palm cockatoos are picky about where they nest, and when, is an

As Christina explained, to be big enough hollows, the trees need to have gone through a very long process of transformation.

"These trees are old-growth trees, so we're talking over three hundred years old is the best estimate," she said.

"Unpublished data has found the palm cockatoo, on average, nests in hollows that are about 26cm in diameter. It's a huge hollow. It is so huge in fact it literally needs the top of a tree broken off in a cyclone, or dead, and through fungal and bacterial infection and termite work, a whole hollow has to be created through the entire trunk.

"This is a mega-long process, decades and decades. And that process happens after the tree is big enough to support such a big bird, you know, of 65cm long."

The distinct requirements for nesting, coupled with low birthing rates — the second lowest known in the world for any parrot species - are impacting their survival in Queensland.

The palm cockatoo only breeds after it has matured to about five years old. It's a long time for a juvenile to survive. A study of one population in Cape York also revealed they lay only one egg per clutch, and only nest once every two years.

In November 2021, the Queensland Government's Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) upgraded the palm cockatoo's status from vulnerable to endangered thanks to the submission and supporting research done by Christina and colleagues. Roughly 2,000 are believed to be living in the wild in Australia, due to habitat destruction and poor reproductive rates. (They are also found in Papua New Guinea's forests, but are not known to be endangered there.)

The birds live in about five populations spread out across Cape York from Bamaga near the tip, to as far south as Pormpuraaw in the west and Princess Charlotte Bay in the



a quirky idea to get them back on the big stage.

"Once they grab hold of you they don't let go. They steal your heart. They're magnificent."

Dr Christina Zdenek adores palm cockatoos. They were responsible for her seque from specialising in snakes and venoms to studying the "palmy" since the mid-2000s.

of Queensland researcher said.

distinctive appearance. They've got these large erect black crests on their heads and this striking featherless cheek patch that they can expose when they want to, and even blush with, when the right emotions are flowing.

"I think people can relate to palm cockatoos because of their many behaviours and the real complex social system in which they live."

A window into that complexity is the palmy's use of



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continued from page 7

macgillivrayi) have adapted to nest in good quality woodlands dominated by Darwin stringybark (Eucalyptus tetrodonta) or Bloodwood (Corymbia clarksoniana). But rainforest has to be close by — no more than 500m or so, according to Christina, for them to access the nuts and fruits they need. Another important reason for close rainforest access is that is where the fledgling palmys are reared in the early stages of their lives, Christina added.

The problem, however, isa the loss of these irreplaceable old trees, whether through increasing hot wildfires, or through land clearing for road quarries and mining.

Christina has found in her on-ground research that 45 per cent (17/38) of the palmy nest trees in her study area had burnt down in 2022 in extremely hot fires. The other problem, of land clearing, is the lack of education about these trees.



"We really need to look out for these old hollows in preclear surveys," she said.

"I published a paper last year with colleagues, hopefully to train people on the gold standard in locating and confirming these hard-to-find nests.

"The key is the birds don't have to be there for this confirmation, so the whole day can be used by staff for sight nest searches through the landscape.

"The hollows face directly up, they're zenith facing, so it can be difficult to spot from the ground. So I have a lot of tips and tricks in that article... to find and help protect these irreplaceable trees.

"This knowledge would also help in revegetation planting. Looking for the older trees, protecting them, so we aren't trying to plant the species all over again and having to wait for 300 years for them to become suitable."

Christina is keen to do follow up research about how the birds use the country.

"We almost have no information on how they use the landscape across time and place, their daily movements, long distance movements, important food trees, etc. So we need to catch some and attach transmitters to them because this would hugely inform mining clearing and rehab plans and all sorts of things.

"I would also love to make chainsaw hollows for them to vastly increase the life-span of suitable nests. This would involve climbing the tree with a chainsaw in hand to shape natural material already there. This has worked really well with birds and bats down south."

"And we need to get their name out there," she said.

"A lot of people in Australia don't even know the palm cockatoo exists and it's one of the most remarkable birds in the world."

The more the public and governments know about the birds, the better hope of attracting funding for projects into research and active protection of them.

Which is why Christina has created a facebook page Palmymascot which has images, information, updates and a campaign video of the palm cockatoo, to support a call for it to be a mascot for the Brisbane Olympic Games. The more people who look at the site and share it, the more registered votes are gathered.

"Even if it doesn't succeed as being the mascot, more people will know about palm cockatoos, so that's a win-win for me." she said.

Getting the palm cockatoo into the public psyche has broader pragmatism — the benefit flows on to many creatures.

"When I was researching snakes in 2009, my supervisor made a very good comment, that If you want to save important places like Cape York it's going to be hard to convince the public to do so via, say, a snake, so maybe choose a charismatic species that can work as an umbrella species for the region," she said.

"If you do save these birds' key ecological structures in the ecosystem, you are enhancing the habitat for myriad species.

"We have between 300 to 400 species in Australia, across a range of taxa that require hollows for survival so bats will roost in them; insects will make homes in them; snakes survive heat waves and predators by hiding in them; and the masked owl (*Tyto novaehollandiae galei*) is another endangered subspecies that uses the hollows on Cape York."

In an ideal funding world, how would she see the way forward for palm cockatoos?

"To quote the former Queensland Chief Scientist Professor Hugh Possingham, 'we don't have time to spare'," she said. "To arrest the decline of our endangered species and with what money we do have, we need to be more bold."

Boldness requires "boots on the ground", Christina said. This includes chopping down saplings around nests to prevent predators from access to the birds; providing more Indigenous ranger support to monitor the landscape; using tracking devices to research the birds habits; examining innovative ways to bore out suitable younger trees to speed up the hollowing process for nesting; having more informed fire regimes; educating and advising on industry land clearing; and the labour intensive, but effective, clearing of the base of these old trees so fire cannot take hold.

The last is a process that Christina and the palm cockatoo team she has worked with have carried out at sites on the Cape.

It's satisfying, hands-dirty work, which, with the backing of the public, could be a game changer for this extraordinary cockatoo.

To read the paper on Field Methods to Identify Palm



Cockatoo Nest Hollows go to: https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/ UQ:0bdf76b

About Biologist Christina Zdenek

Works with Queensland University managing the Venom Evolution Lab as a post-doctoral researcher. Has a PHD in the effect of Australian snake venoms on human blood and the efficacy of antivenoms. Has worked with macaws in the Peruvian Amazon, little penguins in Victoria, palm cockatoos on Cape York Peninsula, and death adders on Magnetic Island.

Some current projects she runs: #PalmCockatooProject (palmy conservation) #CockyCognition Bird vocalisations, bird cognition

My ultimate purpose is to use science to promote a better world for humans and for wildlife.

THE JUUNJUWARRA STORY

A MAJOR MAKEOVER

Juunjuwarra Traditional Owners have completed a cleanup program on their land surrounding the Starcke boat ramp following surveys conducted with Cape York NRM on the condition of Country.

After years of visitor use, weed infestation and damage from feral cattle, rangers have carried out rubbish removal, cleared illegal camp sites, set up amenities and new camping areas, and fenced off sensitive ecological areas.

The work was mapped out after training in Littoral Rainforest Surveying, conducted by Cape York NRM's Biodiversity Project Officer Dr James Dobson with the Juunjuwarra Rangers late last year.

They then conducted surveys to establish the health of the coastal vegetation and results found some former littoral rainforest stands were no longer classifiable and the area was overrun with rubbish, weeds and feral animal damage.

"Littoral rainforests are an important part of beach sustainability," James said.

"They provide a buffer between the ocean and the land. They help prevent coastal erosion and wind damage, and provide habitat for more than 70 threatened plants and animals."

The littoral rainforest and coastal vine thickets of eastern Australia are listed as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

"If we want to maintain beach and coastal areas into the future, we have to take some steps to prevent further deterioration." James said.

The Juunjuwarra Rangers also conducted additional cultural surveys and found areas of significance had been subject to vehicle damage.

Juunjuwarra Aboriginal Corporation Chairman Neil Jacko said he had been saddened by what they were faced with. "We found 50 illegal campsites and 71 km of illegal roads on the beach front amongst the literal rainforests," he said. "There was damage to medicine trees, fruit trees and 10 middens were damaged by vehicles."

In May, two ranger teams went back out on Country to spray woody weeds (mostly sicklepod and hyptis) around the littoral rainforest patch, boat ramp and roadsides. Suitable camping sites were also identified to alleviate pressures on the coastal vegetation.

"This is a popular area, but it has been free reign for many years, so there are a lot of tracks and litter throughout the area," James said.

"This country needs to be protected for the benefit of the Traditional Owners and for future generations."

Approximately 2km of fencing was installed to protect the littoral rainforests fronting the beach to prevent vehicle and cattle access. Signage has also been installed to educate visitors on the works, and how they can assist in preventing further damage.





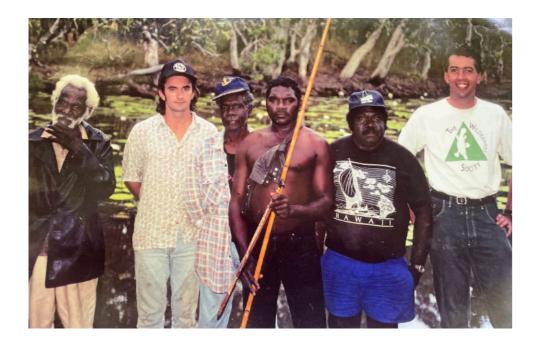






THE JUUNJUWARRA STORY

A BUS RIDE, CUPCAKES AND A TENACIOUS MOB



Left: Mike Winer with Juunjuwarra Elders Goombara Jiammy, Terry Jacko and Hans McGreen, Circa 1992

Opposite page: Juunjuwarra Rangers today, headed by Neil Jacko

They were the last Traditional Owners to be removed from Country in the Starcke region and they were the first to get their land returned through state land dealing. Now the Juunjuwarra people are close to achieving real self-determination on the diverse, rich Starcke River catchment.

But it has been a bumpy road back to Country.

The land was returned to Juunjuwarra following a colourful grassroots campaign by the Traditional Owners and friends that changed the face of Native Title tenure on the Cape forever.

One man who has come full circle and is considered a mentor by Juunjuwarra is Mike Winer, a behind-the-scenes all-rounder who is assisting the leadership team with their governance, environmental planning and future economic sustainability.

His links go back to 1992, as a young Wilderness Society member setting up a new branch in Cairns. He became aware of an advertisement put in the Wall Street Journal for the sale of the Starcke pastoral

lease.

"It was pushed as a bit of a rootin', tootin', shootin' ranch opportunity, with game hunting and stuff like that," Mike said. "It was in the time of the dying days of the Bjelke-Peterson era, where significant areas of freehold land were being sold off..."

Mike contacted the Cape York Land Council, newly developed by Noel Pearson and Marcia Langton, who put him in touch with Juunjuwarra people.

"I went to the Hope Vale rodeo and met with some of the families and we agreed to develop a campaign to get the land back and stop the sale on the international market.

"With basically no money we borrowed a bus and a bus driver and we had enough fuel to get to Brisbane, so a group of Wilderness Society activists and Juunjuwarra Elders and Leaders did an east coast campaign.

"We stopped at all the major towns and cities along the way and literally shook a bucket at each event, mostly



at local town halls. By the time we hit Sydney we were getting bigger media conferences than the prime minister," he added with a laugh.

"Then there was a real turning point at the Sydney Town Hall meeting. A bunch of young people from private schools came, kids and teachers, and they started setting up cake stalls to raise money so Juunjuwarra could buy the land back.

"By the time we got to Canberra there were something like 200 schools selling cakes. There was also a group of Bendigo priests who started a roller-skate-athon and it just went totally off publicly."

"It was a very short, sharp campaign, with no one knowing what Starcke was to, six weeks later, a government creating the Starcke acquisition bill which was the first compulsory acquisition of a pastoral lease ever in Australia."

But the deed was not completed before a "roller-



Protests at Rustys Markets

THE JUUNJUWARRA STORY



coaster" negotiation period at a time when the conservation system on Cape York was failing.

"It was at the height of the foxtail palm smuggling; there were a lot of birds and animals being smuggled out of both Starcke and McIlwraith Ranges; there was a big push for mining; there was a big push for wood chipping; and all sorts of things. Feral pigs and weeds were just getting worse and worse.

"What Juunjuwarra did was really groundbreaking at the time. It set some really powerful precedents that are still in action today, and resulted in some of the biggest returns of land to Indigenous people in Australia."

So a strategic deal of 50-50 was reached, Mike continued, where half of Country went to National Park and the other to Aboriginal freehold land, forming the model of state land dealing which acquired much of Cape York and returned it to the Traditional Owners.

Thirty years on, the Juunjuwarra tenacity is just as evident.

"Juunjuwarra has tried and failed and tried again to get

ranger programs up and to get back on Country permanently. But now some younger leaders, led by Chairman of the Juunjuwarra Aboriginal Corporation, Neil Jacko, have rallied in support and have really pulled it together over the past 18 months," Mike said.

These efforts have been supported by South Cape York Catchments, who assisted in administrative support and fire management; and funding from the Great Barrier Reef Foundation which enabled the group to develop a Starcke River Catchment Plan and a leadership program for board members and young leaders.

"What the latter funding has done is help establish what I consider are three fundamentals: good governance, good leadership and a strong work team," Mike said.

"It has also triggered project partnerships, with NRMs, such as the recent Cape York NRM littoral rainforest project, water catchment groups and scientific groups, that have helped develop a work program which, at the end of last year and for the first half of this dry season,



Neil Jacko, above. Right, The Cairns Post front page, Tuesday, September 7, 1993.

has provided really consistent work and allowed our team to really develop its skills and reliability."

This team has grown from six to a core team of 10 — with another 10 receiving regular work on Country and more than 45 people registered for work.

It has also paved the way for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cook Shire Council to enable the Juunjuwarra Aboriginal Corporation to establish joint management of the Starcke Boat Ramp area. As Neil explained in a recent statement, "The Starcke Landing has been a cause of distress and worry for the Juunjuwarra for many decades. We have dreamed of the day we could take control of the site and improve its management, stop the illegal camping and introduce a comprehensive turtle and dugong management strategy."

The important next step, according to Mike, is to have a permanent presence near the landing.

"We're building a really good team of pro bono, volunteers and mentors, we've got a wonderful lawyer that's come on board, a marketing guy, we've got



people from the tourism sector to help us develop opportunities in the future. $\,$

"We believe it is very rich country both environmentally and assets wise, there is no shortage of opportunities both in conservation and commercial sustainability, such as with the HipCamp which offers a nice alternative to the illegal campsites.

Juunjuwarra Country is stunning, from the rainforest highland, the grass and herb escarpments, down to the coastal plain, into the wetland, into the salt pan, into the biggest mangroves on the east coast and into the biggest sea grass beds on the east coast — which host one of the largest populations of the threatened dugong population in the world.

"We know closing off the whole area — that type of management — has failed, and I think what's exciting about what we're trying to do is find the magic matrix that will allow the scale of management and enterprise to be part of that cultural and conservation solution."

Juunju meaning Country and Warra meaning People.

"Juunjuwarra is not Juunjuwarra unless Juunju and Warra are together. One cannot be without the other."

– Juunjuwarra Elder Nana Norma Jacko.
(GBR Foundation website)



GRAZING FORUM 2023

MEET, GREET, LISTEN AND LEARN

From feral pig trapping, crush-side cattle technology and erosion repair, to woody thickening, genome technology or dealing with rogue cattle in national parks, this year's Cape York NRM Grazing Forum was a lively review of the latest information on all things grazing.

Up to 50 people attended the event, held on May 16 and 17, including a large contingent of presenters and experts across private, government and land management groups. "These gatherings are always informative, but I think this turned into a real networking and social event as well," Cape York NRM Sustainable Industries and Water Quality Manager and MC, Michael Goddard said. "We were also careful not to overload everyone with too many, or too lengthy presentations, and I think we hit the spot."

This year also had a late change of venue to Crocodile Station following the closure of the kitchen at the Laura Rodeo Grounds, where it is usually held.

"Roy and Karlene Shephard were fantastic, they hosted in true Cape style and also found the time to present a great demonstration on how they measure and track their cattle using Gallagher technology at their yards," Michael said.

"The wonderful Laura Rodeo ladies brought the kitchen to Crocodile, so everyone went home a little rounder. We had beautiful music from Jasmin Inderbitzin during the evening dinner and the feedback overall was excellent."

Among the topics covered, feral pigs featured with a demonstration on site from husband and wife team at GPS Tracking, Graham Schoorl and Pattie Jeffers, of the US-developed Boar Busters trap which can safely cage more than 30 animals at a time.

Biosecurity and Local Laws Manager from the Cook Shire Council Darryn Higgins, provided a presentation on his 15 years experience of trapping feral animals, with particular focus on the amount of 1080 poison to use to ensure native animals are not harmed.

Dr Heather Channon, Coordinator of the National Feral Pig Action Plan, told the forum about new methods for ground baiting and a new management plan template drafted to provide consistency in data capture.

Looking at the bigger picture, AgForce CEO Mike Gurien told the forum that landholders were "on the cusp of some

of the biggest opportunities we've had in years", with the Federal Government putting climate change, landscapes and biodiversity top of the list.

"The Federal and State governments are [mostly] of the same colour, so we have a better chance of fundamental reforms in the industry."

He said for the first time in a long time, AgForce, which represents 6000 members in the agricultural industry, "had been invited to the table" to discuss the Nature Repair Bill, the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

The forum also heard the latest news on:

- Australia and Rangelands Fire Information (NAFI) service from Peter Jacklyn;
- Emerging diseases in nearby countries, such as Lumpy Skin disease and African Swine Flu, from Biosecurity FNQ's Dr Tom Couston:
- How to tackle erosion control on a small scale from Soil Conservation Officer with the Dept of Agriculture and Fisheries Simon Hunt;
- Genome technology in cattle selection from the Qld Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation's (QAAFI) Harrison Lamb and James Copley;
- Technology to improve livestock performance from Gulf Savannah NRM's Rangelands Project Officer Keerah Steele;
- Vegetation management laws and how it relates to grazing infrastructure from Management Officer at the Qld Dept of Resources Bernadette Nicotra;
- Environment protection, training options and the use of traditional ecological knowledge, from Rural Fire Service's Chris Wegger;
- The ins and outs of ground cover assessment from Dept of Environment and Services' Deanna Vandenburg and her monitoring team; and
- Financial assistance available to help improve agricultural business from Financial Manager Lynette McGuffie.

Cape York NRM's Coastal Ecosystems Coordinator David Preece and Michael Goddard also delivered information on the latest fire management and woody thickening issues.

"It is gratifying to have so many organisations willing to travel and meet with landholders, offer assistance and to touch base with people who live remotely in our region," Michael said.

The 2023 Grazing Forum was delivered by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, with support from the Australian Government's Reef Trust, Meat and Livestock Australia and AgForce.

GRAZING FORUM 2023



CRUSH-SIDE SAVVY

At Crocodile Station a group of people huddle around the cattle yards, crush-side. Shaded by mature trees, and with age-old views to the mountains on the horizon, it is quiet in the morning light, apart from an occasional low conversation among the cattle in the yard.

A small orange box sits on a table next to the crush, juxtaposed with the jigsaw of metal bars and shutes that have been shunting cattle though their passageways for decades.

Roy and Karlene Shephard face the Cape York NRM Grazing Forum gathering, demonstrating how technology has simplified their business.

In 2011 they invested in a Gallagher data collection and management system, which monitors each animal as it moves into the crush — a stall that holds a beast in a confined space to prevent it from moving while it is being counted, checked or receiving treatment.

A flat pad is fixed to one side of the crush and it transmits data to that small box on the table.

"It's a pretty amazing tool," Karlene sums up. "It gets us out of trouble, gets us into trouble." She adds drolly: "Me and Roy nearly got divorced..."

Yes, there was a bit to learn, and they are always finding new elements in the system to use, but at its simplest it can improve the speed and efficiency of weighing and identifying animals, keep accurate and easily-accessible records, and it has an in-built National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for monitoring.

The Shephards out-layed "about \$6000" for their model,

having upgraded once over the years as it developed more features.

Karlene said they can easily monitor annual weight changes, age, condition, treatment history and pregnancy status, which can then indicate whether or not a cow is regularly producing or has lost a calf in the year. All of this is instant, as the cow enters the crush, and decisions can be made on whether an animal should go to sale, or remain in the herd.

"You can add notes to the cow, whether it has bottle ticks, or even dingo bites, (something they monitored on behalf of the Cook Shire Council to assess the prevalence of dingo attacks one year). There is a fair bit you can do," Karlene said laconically.

Biosecurity records are easily captured, with the major bonus of eliminating paperwork, as are cattle sales records

"We can record what we use and when, in animal treatments, we don't have to keep a bloody book on it, it's all there," Karlene said.

"If we get a sales alert we can check who sold our cows and when. If it wasn't us, if there's a mix up at the yards, it can be traced and fixed with a quick look at data, rather than having to physically re-sort.

"And it doesn't double count. If a beast goes through twice, it's pretty smart.

"I think Roy invented it," she finishes with a sidelong look and laugh with her husband.

ROGUE CATTLE IN PARKS' SIGHTS

It was not quite 'like lambs to the slaughter' (or cows), but it took a bit of nerve to stand before a group of long-term Cape York graziers and admit to a bit of poor form.

It's been a touchy subject for years - accusations of cattle duffing, cattle culling, blame-shifting and slack administration underlying a problem of disappearing animals in the vast region.

But credit to the three men who faced the audience at the Cape York NRM Grazing Forum held at Crocodile Station in May and promised to change their ways when it came to keeping cattle out of national parks.

"Yes, we dropped the ball," Matt Brien, from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships said at the outset.

"We've identified cattle, in particular, as an area we need to put more resources into."

Matt is the Regional Director for Northern Queensland which covers Ingham to Cape York. This new position is part of a resources overhaul, in which fresh staff are dedicated to on-ground services, joint management on Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land (CYPAL) and new technical services to address shortfalls.

"We are establishing networks with locals across the region - that's where we're headed," Matt said.

Improving the way cattle in national parks is handled is top of the list. Two dedicated officers — Assistant Principal Ranger NRM and Technical Support, Steve Coulson, and Senior Ranger Cattle and Technical Support, Cameron Jackson (a former Cloncurry stock



Matt Brien



inspector and buffalo farmer), were also present to speak with graziers. They have been working in the Northern Parks and Forests division since March.

Their message was clear: more communication with landholders and Traditional Owners, more support for keeping cattle out, and more opportunities and timely approvals to muster cattle from the parks before rangers take any culling measures.

Less than half of muster permit applications were assessed last year, which just "wasn't good enough", Steve said. "We want to streamline the system, get preapplications in, help with preparing those applications, and for the tech-savvy, we have a new portal to speed things up." he said.

"We want to get cattle back to their rightful owners, and protect our national parks from the damage they can cause."

The audience was impressed, with questions of fencing assistance, tagging identification and general enquiry opportunities all welcomed by the officers.

Long-term Cape York grazier Tom Shephard summed it up with typical understatement: "I like the way this is

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GRAZING FORUM 2023

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT - IT'S COMPLICATED

One small bird is changing the way some areas of Cape York Peninsula are being managed. It is raising questions about what vegetation is protected from clearing, what and when fires should be lit to control seasonal storm fires, and how much grazing pressure we allow.

This bird's nemesis is woody thickening - a process where woody vegetation such as tea tree, melaleuca and to a smaller extent, quinine and grevillea, are sprouting up and dominating the landscape, choking out grasses and crowding what were once huge native pastures.

The little bird is the golden-shouldered parrot, a rare creature that has bird watchers from around the country and the world, visiting the remaining sites where it can be found. But its numbers are steadily declining. Classified as an endangered species, its quirky natural home in tall, conical ant mounds found on Cape York Peninsula are now an easy target for predators.

At Artemis Station, property owners Tom and Sue Shephard have seen the numbers drop over the years and are supporting land management trials by the Artemis Nature Fund, in the hope of arresting the decline.

Patrick Webster works on the station for the fund, alongside Steve Murphy, Gay Crowley and Stephen Garnett, who have devoted decades to studying the bird and its habitat.

"We have to find ways to save the parrot and combat woody thickening," Patrick told the Cape York NRM Grazing Forum.

"If you go back 100 years these ant beds would have been sitting out in nice open country and [the birds] could see the predators coming a mile away and it was pretty safe, but now they're sitting in thick scrub and predators, such as butcher birds, cats and others, can smash the parrots, they can come right up close."



Patrick Webster

How do we know woody thickening is the culprit?

"We're very fortunate in Queensland that all of our vegetation has been mapped, and they give it a three digit code, based on the bio-region. Up here it is the Cape York bio-region, split into land form and vegetation types. So all of the grasslands have a particular code, and all the tea tree flats are another code and then all the sand ridges are another code.

"Vegetation surveys done in the 1990s informed the changes in the landscape, and even back in the 1950s, there's a whole lot of aerial photographs taken and we can see the way this big expanse of grassland that was there 60-70 years ago is now covered in all these tea trees."

On Artemis, predation surveys were also done about 30 years ago, and the woody thickening effects were clear.



But tackling the problem? It's complicated.

"The mechanisms of woody thickening are not entirely understood," Patrick said.

"A lot of theories are centred around interaction between grazing pressure — not just cattle but the agile wallaby, fire timing and intensity, and the plant species."

Put simply, there are two groups in the pasture, the grasses and the woody thickening plants, the latter having long tap roots that can access moisture at lower depths.

When a late season storm burn occurs, it is followed by wet season rains, giving the grass roots moisture to regrow.

"In those circumstances the grasses will always outdo the woody plants in competing for nutrients, water and sun," Patrick explained.

But early season burns, which have become more popular due to carbon credit schemes and land managers hoping to avoid the damaging wildfires triggered by monsoonal electrical storms, inhibit grass coverage.

The early burns remove all ground cover, but because it's the dry season, there is no soil moisture for the grasses to respond.

"The woody vegetation plants that have deep tap root systems can access water well below the soil surface and ... they can get above the grass level before the grass has the opportunity to grow.

"By the next wet season, the woody plants have taken hold. Once these saplings get to a certain age and height, fire has less and less of an impact, they get thicker and thicker." Patrick said another train of thought on increased woody thickening is that it's due to the higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which enables the plant species to grow much more effectively.

"We don't understand completely the driver, but we do understand the connectivity with grazing, fire and water... and we know what is happening with those parrots."

"We know that we have to thin that country out and give them a chance to survive."

But again, it's complicated.

Most methods of thinning are expensive, and property owners cannot be expected to foot the bill.

Then there are the legal requirements.

"Even though we've got all this data that says 50 years ago this was a grassland with no trees and it's now covered in trees, it's still native vegetation, which triggers the Qld Vegetation Management Act."

The Act was designed to protect native vegetation from excessive clearing, but there is not a section dealing with woody thickening management.

The Artemis Nature Fund found a novel way to seek legal approval.

"We did it by making a voluntary declaration that on the property we have significant natural values - that being the parrot, and we want to protect that parrot. In order to do so we need open country and woody thickening is a problem," Patrick said.

"The approval we were given was regional ecosystem (RE)-based under the mapping system.

"So we've gone through all that and got our approval,

GRAZING FORUM 2023

continued from previous page

and we know what stem density [number of woody plants per hectare] we want to arrive at and we've trialled a bunch of methods to see what's most effective," Patrick continued.

This, too, has been a complicated process.

The team has been testing techniques to see what are the most practical, and would enable regular monitoring access.

So far they have employed the very labour-intensive cut stump clearing using chainsaws and brush cutters "which are like your home garden whipper-snippers but on steroids". In a heavily treed area the ratio is to reduce 1200 stems to 300, which equates to about half a hectare per person per day.

"This had an immediate effect and has been used in high priority areas and has a low impact on pastures and soils." Patrick said.

"The major drawback is leaving the debris on the ground including stumps, which we need to get to ground level to prevent accidents when we drive back in to check the area after wet season.

"It's tricky with re-growth, we must go back the next wet season. Even a two-year gap and the trees are back to head height."

They have also trialled herbicides on stumps using the axe cut and poison method, where the poison is syringed into the trunk; they have used a front-end loader to clear tracks for easier access to check for regrowth; and they have employed some strategic heavy machinery clearing in larger areas.

"By far the most effective technique we've found is the use of grassland herbicide in granular form. You can scatter the pellets on country and when rain falls it activates the chemical, which leaches into the soil. The plants take it up and it kills essentially all the trees. It's extremely hard to apply, we use a backpack blower, walk through the landscape and make it snow."

"It does 6.2 hectares per hour so it's a lot quicker. And it does kill the trees over two to three years."

It can only be used in large grasslands, and is not a thinning tool, and the dosage must be very precise to avoid killing ant beds.

"So there are a lot of methods out there and we will continue to closely monitor results," Patrick said.

At the very least, woody thickening is now being recognised as a major impact on a precious species. At most, the golden-shouldered parrot may have a longer and brighter future.





IN PICTURES



This page: simple steps for gully erosion; **Grazier Tom** Shephard; **Chris Wegger** and Matt Brien sporting new Cape York NRM hats: Checking out the **Boar Buster** demonstration. Left page: cows at Crocodile Station; **Darryn Higgins** from Cook Shire Council.

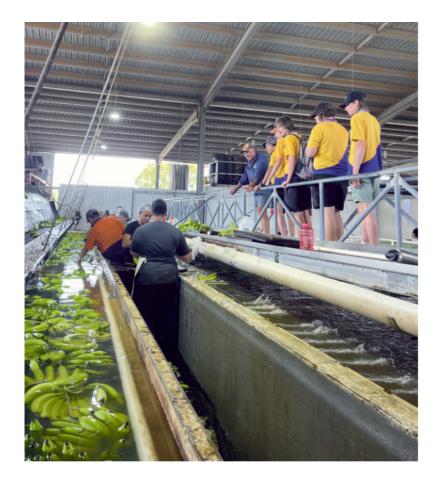












AG STUDENTS SEE THE SITES

Year 11 and 12 students from Cooktown State High School were given a first-hand look at the agricultural industry during a three-day Ag Inspirations event held in the Cooktown/Lakeland region.

Held in partnership with the AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP), the TNQ Drought Hub, and Cape York NRM in April, 15 students visited six farming properties to learn about innovations in agri-business, the many career pathways and industry roles available, and possible work experience opportunities in the agricultural sector.

"It was a terrific three days, and the students were impressed with the variety of roles, jobs and innovation within the sector," Cape York NRM junior project officer Sienna Thomason said.

"They looked at the theory and practicality of jobs, and were given an Ag Force handbook to work through and guide them."

At the family-owned Lily Creek farm, students learned about the six different fruit crops being harvested, including dragonfruit, rambutans, jackfruit and passionfruit. The farm has been solar powered for the past 15 years and electric vehicles are used in production.

"This is a great example of innovation in agriculture," Tanya Nagle, AgForce General Manager – Media and Community Engagement, said. "The students learned about the growing and harvesting techniques and even got to taste test this delicious produce.

"It was the same at Ninda Creek Cattle property, where the owners have actually designed and created a lot of the equipment to use on and off the property."

The field trip also took in the 3000 ha Mt McLean Cattle Station, Swiss Farms Banana Farm, and M&M Cropping which grows maize, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, lablab stylos and butterfly peas.



Students were given a behind-the-scenes look at the Lakeland Mushroom Farm which grows six different types of exotic mushrooms.

"This was an incredible example of the extent of technology used in agriculture these days and was a real eye-opener for the students," Tanya said.

The Ag Inspirations tour focuses on the student and their talents, potential and aspirations; provides a look behind the scenes at the business side of an operation; and gives an employer-led discussion about how careers unfold.

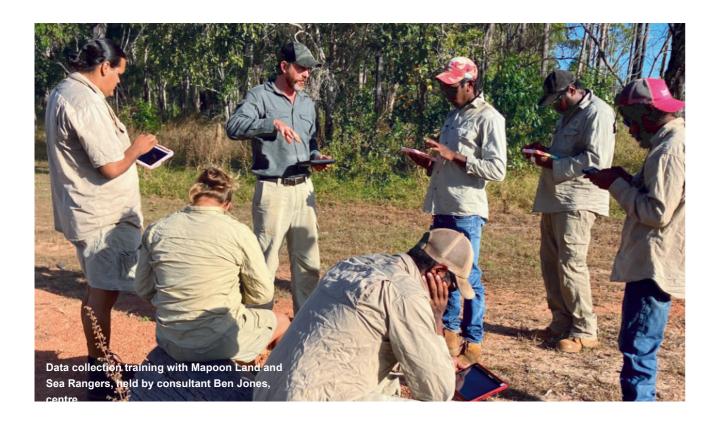
"From an industry perspective, it also exposes young people to the range and diversity of careers within the agriculture supply chain, lifts the image of the industry and sparks more interest in, and demand for, ag-related traineeships," Tanya said.

This event was supported by Cape York NRM, AgForce and the TNQ Drought Hub through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund



WHAT'S NEW WITH WCTTAA

TURTLE NESTING, TURTLE TRAINING



Training is underway for new monitoring technology to be used in the collection of data during the turtle nesting season on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. Newly appointed West Coast Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) Coordinator for Cape York NRM, Dr Manuela Fischer, joined Ecologistics consultant and ecologist Ben Jones in delivering new iPads and providing training on the NESTOR app.

So far they have introduced the technology to Land and Sea Rangers at Mapoon, Napranum, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama, and it will be rolled out to the remaining Alliance members.

The training has been a combination of presentations and on site application at the ranger bases and beaches. "Overall it has been going really well," Manuela said. "We've had a lot of additional rangers coming out to the beach to see the Nestor app in action, where we review

a nest and enter the relevant data.

"At Hersey Creek we found a dug-up nest that had been caged the day before, and we monitored the pig tracks along the beach where other non-caged nests were also affected. All of this information is vital in tracking the predator threats to turtles."

The Nestor app is a purpose-designed marine turtle nesting data collection tool that provides live GPS tracking with an inbuilt map and live locations of current nests. It enables fast recording of new tracks and nests and includes offline images and identification guides of each turtle species and their track and nest characteristics. "It's very accurate for nest location, with a GPS accuracy to 30cm," Ben said.

"It has a one-page data sheet interface, and it has the ability to record multiple monitoring events against the original data record, including predation and hatching



success. It can also record when mesh cages are used to protect a nest."

The new app will replace the older cybertracker system, which caused some "glitches" in the field, an example being the loss of data at some of the ranger camps last year.

"Fortunately, they have a paper backup system which meant a lot of information was retained," Manuela added.

"Our job is to ensure tracking the work being carried out by the Alliance members is made easier, so accurate and comparable data is consistent along the western Cape for years to come."

Each year, the WCTTAA member groups carry out turtle nesting camps for the nesting season for a period of up to four weeks at selected beaches. The rangers find the nests, record their time and location and whether they have been predated, mark the area with signage, check for any predator tracks, and cage undisturbed nests to protect them from feral animals, and in some cases, heavy vehicle traffic on the beaches.

They monitor day and night for new nests and check

the status of marked nests. At the end of the season hatchling success rates are monitored.

The WCTTAA was formally established in May 2013

and its members include land and sea owners and managers from Apudthama Land Trust and the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC), Napranum, Mapoon, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Councils and Aak Puul Ngantam (APN).

The training is being delivered by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's Queensland Feral Pest Initiative Round 7

WHAT'S NEW WITH WCTTAA

TAKING THE HEAT FOR OLIVE RIDLEYS

If it's not turtle egg predation or choking ocean debris, threatened turtle species nesting on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula now have to contend with warming temperatures — which are affecting the sex ratio of hatchlings.

To tackle the problem, WCTTAA has been asked to trial ways to shade nests, lower sand temperatures and reverse the phenomena as part of their annual protection work.

The Federal Government announced funding in June to Cape York NRM to support WCTTAA in modifying turtle nests as part of a nationwide \$4.5 million investment in community projects to better protect oceans and the precious species that call them home.

"This is a great addition to the protection of threatened turtle species and will move seamlessly into the ongoing WCTTAA program and hopefully bring the nest temperatures down." Cape York NRM Biodiversity & Fire Programs Manager, Toby Eastoe said.

"The nesting season has begun so we will be able to trial shading at some of the sites WCTTAA protects."

WCTTAA is an alliance of six Indigenous land and sea managers which has been operating for more than 10 years with support from Cape York NRM.

Its annual turtle nest protection program covers Olive Ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea), Flatback (Natator depressus), some Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata) and Green turtle (Chelonia mydas) nests along the coastline of Western Cape York.

"We will be trying to influence the sex ratios of Olive ridley hatchlings to maintain a balance," Cape York NRM's WCTTAA Coordinator, Dr Manuela Fischer, said. "Warming temperatures are producing more female hatchlings which jeopardises the Olive ridley population."

Alarm bells about rising nest temperatures were first raised after studies conducted in 2016 and 2017 by Dr Col Limpus, together with WCTTAA's Mapoon Rangers on Flinders Beach and Back Beach near Mapoon.

They found that nest temperatures were greater than the predicted pivotal temperature of 29°C (except in areas on the high dune shaded by casuarinas) which can skew sex ratios, with most hatchlings expected to be female. (A pivotal temperature is that which gives approximately equal numbers of males and females.)

"We believe that by lowering the temperature in the nest, we will increase the number of male hatchlings and therefore support turtle populations in the long term," Manuela said.

Rangers will install additional shade material over nest cages that surround Olive Ridley nests as well as loggers to record sand temperatures during the nesting season. Data loggers will also be installed on a control site to compare results.

The effects of the new project won't be realised until hatchlings reach breeding age in 15-30 years' time and return to their nesting beaches.

"Protection is long-term," Manuela said. "The communities along western Cape York are committed and work tirelessly each year to keep these endangered species safe.

"This project will provide valuable insights into the protection mechanisms available to bring nest temperatures closer to the pivotal temperature. We will also trial other ways to effectively shade the nests as we go forward."

The seven key beaches protected by WCTTAA for the entire nesting season are:

Crab Island (7 kilometres), NPARC/ Apudthama Rangers



Jardine River Beach (10 kilometres), NPARC/ Apudthama Rangers

Skardon River to Namaleta Creek (28 kilometres), Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers

Flinders Beach (24 kilometres), Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers

Pennefather Beach (40 kilometres), Napranum/ Nanum Wungthim Rangers

Hersey Creek to Christmas Creek (8 kilometres), Pormpuraaw Land and Sea Management Rangers Christmas Creek to Balurga Creek (22 kilometres), Pormpuraaw Land and Sea Rangers.

The Project is funded by the Australian Government's Marine Turtle Climate Change Resilience and Nest



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WHAT'S NEW WITH WCTTAA

NATIONAL FERAL PIG



From wallabies, possums, orangutans, cheetahs and 80-odd mammals in between, to the turtles of Cape York Peninsula, Dr Manuela Fischer brings research knowhow, a love of creatures, and a preference for the outdoors to her new role as Cape York NRM's coordinator of the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA).

Already, in the month since she began, Manuela has taken to the road to meet with Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers and help train them in new data capture management (see story page 28) and sketch out plans for the coming years.

"I have ideas, yes," she said. "But I think at the moment it is getting to know everyone, meeting the rangers, and getting them up to speed with the new training app.

"They are well established and know what they are doing, but I would like to spend a longer time with the groups, then I can also pick up on things where they might need help, whether financial, or with equipment, and to really understand the program."

It has been a world well-travelled that finally brought Manuela to the remotest parts of Cape York.

Born and raised in the picturesque, mountainous Black Forest in Germany, Manuela studied environmental science at university, but took a year off in the middle to travel and think more about her career.

"I wanted to kind of get hands-on experience and a bit of a better idea of where I wanted to go," she said. "I went to Costa Rica first and helped a PHD student with his research on poison dart frogs (*Dendrobatidae*)."

She then travelled to Australia, (where she had spent time earlier as a back packer).

"I did a placement with the University of Western Australia working in a lab and in the field."

After six months she volunteered to work in Namibia for the Cheetah Research Project, collaring and tracking the movements of cheetahs in farm lands, and mapping

NEW COORDINATOR BRINGS WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

hot-spots, so farmers could move their herds accordingly - both preventing cattle being harmed, and cheetahs being shot (farmers can legally shoot them).

"It was a very successful, very cool project," Manuela said. "I ended up being there for five months."

She returned to Germany, finished her Masters, and worked as a research assistant, doing mapping and GIS work on data collected on orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and 81 other mammals in Borneo.

By 2014, Manuela was back in Australia, to do her PHD on the study of swamp wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*) on Phillip Island with the University of Melbourne.

She agreed it's a long way to come to complete her studies but "I've always loved Australia, and when I was looking for PHDs I was looking at either Africa or Australia".

She lived on the island for two years, before moving to Melbourne finish the work, then again went bush as a consultant researching Leadbeater possums (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*) in the timber harvest areas of the central highlands of Victoria.

Leading research projects on protection of northern quolls (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) and the northern bettong (*Bettongia tropica*) brought her to Cairns in 2019 with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. She was also the lead ecologist for the Brooklyn Wildlife Sanctuary.

Now she turns her mind to turtles.

"There are some exciting projects coming up," she said. "As well as the new data app, we are also getting data loggers for heat control research - that will be really interesting. There's lots we can do with that," she said. Does she miss Germany? Yes, sometimes it's hard not seeing family. However:

"In terms of my work environment, I like being in a country where there is still so much to do, and so much nature to explore... is warmer!"

FOCUS ON FERAL PIG IMPACTS

Assessing the management steps to combat the impacts of feral pigs on the environment was at the centre of Australia's first dedicated feral pig conference in Cairns on 20 and 21 June.

A total of 150 delegates from all states and territories attended the National Feral Pig Conference which brought together a diverse audience from agricultural industries, Indigenous organisations, community groups, natural resource management bodies, research agencies, as well as primary producers, private land managers, vertebrate pest contractors, and hunters and shooters.

With the conference theme of "Effective feral pig management: adaptive and collaborative action", a wide breadth of topics were covered by 13 invited and 27 short presentations.

Common messages were:

- We can't manage what we don't measure more data is needed to inform feral pig management strategies and their outcomes.
- Stakeholders from multiple tenures, industries and backgrounds need to work collectively in coordinated ways as feral pigs don't understand property or jurisdictional boundaries.
- Longer term feral pig programs are needed to reduce feral pig populations and maintain onground management pressure.
- Having a local coordinator helps to keep feral pig programs on track and keep stakeholders engaged and motivated
- Combinations of the different control methods need to be used in strategic ways at the right time.

With many land managers being impacted by feral pigs despite extensive control efforts, more focus on how land managers can be encouraged to work in coordinated ways together is needed. The damage



caused by feral pigs to businesses, the environment and cultural assets, as well as their impacts on people, are very real.

Presentations included:

- Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) (Colby Gill, Nanum Wungthim Ranger, and Toby Eastoe, Cape York NRM).
- · Feraliser (Vince Harrigan and Justin Perry).
- Capacity building of Indigenous Land and Environmental Rangers (Des Armstrong, Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation).
- Feral animal methodology for carbon abatement in coastal wetlands (Valerie Hagger, University of Queensland).
- Piccaninny Plains feral pig control program (Sally Gray and Graeme Woods, Australian Wildlife Conservancy).

All about the data

The Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance is a partnership of six Indigenous Ranger Groups (Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw, Aak Puul Ngantum, Napranum, Mapoon and Northern Peninsula Area) on Western Cape York, which is supported by Cape York NRM. It has been operating since 2013.

NATIONAL FERAL PIG



This program is focused on reducing the predation of threatened and endangered turtle nests by feral pigs primarily by aerial culling. With the program supported by the consistent collection of field data, and on-ground nest monitoring and protection, it sits apart from many other feral pig management programs and was recognised as one of six demonstration sites to support the implementation of the National Feral Pig Action Plan in December 2021.

Colby and Toby explained that the information gathered by rangers enables WCTTAA's predator management strategies to be reviewed and adapted for continuous improvement. WCTTAA are now undertaking training to adopt a new data collection system.

Innovation

Two of Feraliser's Directors, Vince Harrigan and Justin Perry, outlined how Feraliser is an innovative First Nations-led business aiming to create careers, boost local economies and strengthen remote First Nations communities on Country by profitably converting feral pigs into a sustainable, high quality fertiliser. The nutritive quality of this organic plant bio-stimulant is comparable to that of other established products, Seasol and Charlie Carp Organics.

Capacity building

The importance of Indigenous rangers having a well-rounded capacity to deliver work independently on Country is a key objective of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC).

Over an 18-month period, rangers are selected according to a rigorous evaluation process then trained

in one or more of the following: 1080 baiting, firearms training, fixed-wing aerial surveys, monitoring and evaluation, and aerial management. This tiered program of capacity building minimises the need to outsource. Skilled rangers are then integrated into the delivery of the training program, and project and data management.

Carbon copy

The National Environmental Science Program's Coastal and Marine Hub is funding a project with the University of Queensland, led by Professor Catherine Lovelock, to characterise carbon abatement and biodiversity enhancements following the removal of feral hoofed animals, including feral pigs and buffalo, from coastal and freshwater wetlands. Right now, Australia's carbon accounting does not include carbon emissions produced by feral animals.

This work is being done in collaboration with Traditional Owners. The information could underpin the development of an Emission Reduction Fund method, using carbon credits to support self sustainable onground feral pig management programs.

Aerial shooting success

Sally Gray, former co-manager at Piccaninny Plains Wildlife Sanctuary and Chair of Cape York NRM, summarised the high intensity feral pig management program which has been conducted by Graeme Woods and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in northern Cape York since 2014. This work protects more than 70 wetlands and lagoons of national significance and flora and fauna species across 174,000 ha from feral pig

impacts.

Aerial shooting is the preferred and most appropriate control method used on Piccaninny Plains, enabling whole mobs of feral pigs to be removed.

More than 9,700 pigs have been removed from Piccaninny Plains since 2013, at a cost of \$35,000 per year (inclusive of helicopter, fuel, ammunition and Graeme's involvement as the on-staff marksman). Ten aerial feral pig control operations are conducted between March and December each year, covering 170,000 ha. The percentage of wetlands at Piccaninny Plains rated by AWC as being in 'very poor' condition has reduced to 3% in 2019 from 24% in 2013.

Call for Action

The conference concluded with a draft call for action to seek sustained, long-term funding to deliver a strategic, multi-stakeholder, scientifically and culturally-robust integrated feral pig management program to protect targeted assets from feral pigs. This coordinated program must have clear, measurable objectives, informed by monitoring and surveillance activities. It aligns with the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031 (NFPAP). Independent Chair of NFPAP's Implementation Committee, officially launched Prospectus at the Conference to support the call for action. To read the prospectus and learn more about the conference, please visit www.feralpigs.com.au.

Thanks are extended to the conference sponsors:

Silver — Queensland Government and Australian
Trapping Systems, Bronze — Animal Control
Technologies Australia and Wildlife Health Australia,
and Exhibitors, PigBaitta and Gallagher.

Contact Heather Channon on 0423 056045 or heather.



Sally Gray, Cape York NRM Chair



Des Armstrong, Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation



Colby Hill (Napranum) and Toby Eastoe (Cape York NRM)



Vince Harrigan and Dr Justin Perry, Feraliser



GAMBA GRASS TASKFORCE: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Gamba Grass Task Force worked the Cook Shire in April in an all-out, cooperative campaign, to help eliminate the invasive weed from the region.

"Thanks to the hard working crews it was a great success," Cape York NRM's Coastal Ecosystems Coordinator Dave Preece said.

More than 20 workers targeted the gamba grass spraying the invasive weed throughout the Annan/ Endeavour catchment, and adjoining sections of the Jeannie and Normanby catchments.

The convoy of utes tackled properties, roadsides and reserves driven by representatives from local councils from as far south as Hinchinbrook, as well as other agencies that support the task force.

"We had a lucky break in the weather in late April," Dave said

"There was a lot of rain in the days before the task force arrived, then there was this perfect window of opportunity for the actual days we worked. It was just unbelievable, it even rained in the night, but then got fine through the days."

This year's work builds on the first task force collaboration which was held last May. Groups involved come from the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) which includes members from the Hinchinbrook, Cook, Mareeba, Douglas and the Tableland shires. In addition, crews from Biodiversity Queensland, Queensland Department of Resources, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Jabalbina Rangers, Waarnthuurr-iin Rangers and Balnggarrawarra Rangers also joined the team.

Gamba grass is a fast-growing, invasive plant species with the potential to transform local ecosystems and fuel fires with intensities well above that posed by other exotic grasses.

Despite its status as a restricted invasive plant under the Biosecurity Act 2014, annual roadside treatment and previous education campaigns, gamba grass is still commonly found within the Annan/Endeavour catchments.

"Our intention was to expand on last year's momentum by increasing awareness and reducing the distribution of gamba grass across the catchment," Darryn Higgins, the Biosecurity and Local Laws Manager at the Cook Shire Council, said.

"With the help of Cape York NRM, we can continue to host these events and bring in like-minded agencies, pool resources and ensure a cost-effective response." The crews also collected GIS data to increase the existing knowledge of the distribution of gamba grass which is critical to future program planning, Dave said. "We know what this weed can do, as we've seen in the Northern Territory, it has the potential to spread and fuel fires which impact infrastructure and threaten lives. "We don't want a repeat of that here."

The Coordinated Gamba Grass Management Project is supported by the Australian Government's Reef Trust

PEOPLE AND PLACE



After nine years and umpteen-thousands of kilometres trekking around the Cape, Michael Goddard, our Sustainable Agriculture and Water Quality Manager, is leaving natural resource management and getting all arty on us.

The outgoing, and somewhat cheeky, Cape York NRM stalwart thinks he can slow down a bit, but his energy will be greatly missed

"I am looking to wind down a little, in a role working with communities on arts-based activities," he said. "It will allow me to spend more time with my aging mother and support my niece through senior school. Moving to the arts sector in a new region will certainly give me different challenges."

What will you miss?

The people the most. People of Cape York are an amazingly resilient bunch and can be extremely funny. I will cherish the stories I have heard. The Shephards, the Raymonds and the Harrigans, to name a few, are some of the best people I have had the pleasure of knowing and I'll be at the Laura Rodeo as a volunteer long into the future so I can maintain those connections. My new role will also allow me to maintain some Cape contact, working with the Harrigan brothers in the arts.

I will also miss my co-workers. I have seen a lot of them come and go. They are a dedicated group of people who love the Cape and work hard to achieve quality outcomes through whichever project they are on. Also the administration staff working in the background supporting field staff are the backbone of any organisation and without them everything would fall on its face.

What are some memorable moments out in the field?

There are many moments but the stand-out for me was when I started in the Sustainable Industries role and first encountered Bill Reddie. I was talking to his partner Laura about funding opportunities and a very hot and surly Bill came in from mustering. He gave me quite a serve , muttering about do-gooders, which took me by surprise. Bill took off back outside and went chasing cows again on the quad bike and Laura and I kept chatting.

The next time I saw Bill was at the local servo and he asked when I would be visiting again. To say I was a little perplexed was an understatement. But I visited Bill that afternoon and we spent hours driving in his buggy. From that point on Bill and I had a very firm working relationship and Bill and Laura delivered some fantastic projects for us over the years. This experience taught me a lot about engagement and building relationships with people. He was a great man and I always enjoyed spending time with him.

What do you love most about the Cape?

Again, the people. Cape York people honest and real, hard working, go out of their way to help you.

They live interesting lives and when you get to know them, they always have time for a yarn. I will miss getting caught at the Lakeland Servo for an hour talking to people as they roll through. And the country. I have always loved watching the changing seasons as I drive from the green hills of the Tablelands over the range at Carbine, north into the Cape. The colours are beautiful and seeing the creeks go from dry rocky beds to flowing with crystal clear water is always a wonder. But, again, without the people, it would just be a place you drive through and look at.

What have you learned?

So much - from community engagement through to operating machinery and how to manage staff. After leaving school at the end of grade 10, I found work making ceramic figurines and porcelain dolls. (There's that art thing again). I would never have expected to be in a middle management role working at the level Cape York NRM entrusted me with.

What big changes do you see for the Cape's future?

While some things have moved slowly in my nine years here, there have been some quite rapid changes. Carbon farming is one example, with corporates purchasing grazing leases for this purpose. While there is benefit to this change, I worry about the impacts on grazing. We stand to see a decrease in the capacity of the grazing sector, and a long-term local social impact through reduced employment and a smaller network on Cape York.

What are you most proud of?

The positive relationships, the mentoring of staff and the project outcomes that support landholders. At the end of the day, though, it is my work with people I am most proud of. Yarning with landholders and working with the likes of (former staff members) Harry and Nat James. Those two changed my attitude about how hard-working and reliable young people can be. I hope they



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WUTHATHI CLEAN-UP PULLS

A team of 25 people including volunteers, Elders and Custodians were flown by helicopter to a remote beach on Wuthathi Country in early June where they removed a staggering 10.8 tonnes of marine debris.

The unique clean-up, which targeted almost three kilometres of coastline along Wuthathi Ngaachi (Country) and Karakara (Sea Country), was a partnership between Wuthathi and the Tangaroa Blue Foundation (TBF) with financial support from Cape York NRM and assistance from other agencies and partners. For Moira Macumboy, a member of the Wuthathi Tribal Elders Council, the clean-up is addressing a growing problem.

"In our days, our old people have been living on our country and on our beaches, they camp, and no rubbish was on our beach, but now today it is the modern world and there's a lot of boats, fishing boats and big ships

from overseas, they chuck all that mass of rubbish in the water and it all washes up on our beaches, that's really sad." she said.

Tangaroa Blue CEO, Heidi Tait, said helicopter surveys carried out over the past four years had revealed marine debris piling up along the Cape York coastline between Cooktown and Horn Island.

"Our usual boats and four-wheel drives were no match for this remote location, which has become a debris drain for plastic waste from around the world," she said. "But with the help of Heartland Helicopters we were able to reach, remove and record the waste in the Australian Marine Debris Initiative Database."

Wuthathi Custodian Coordinator Clayton Enoch said: "The Wuthathi ranger base and associated equipment which supported the clean-up on Country was completed in November 2021 as part of Wuthathi



RECORD RESULTS

peoples' fight for self-determination and return to Country to movement."

Wuthathi IPA Coordinator Sophie Holt said the project was a good example of the great environmental and cultural outcomes that can be achieved when First Nations Corporations and Indigenous Land and Sea programs are better supported and resourced.

The clean-up has helped implement the Wuthathi Healthy Country Plan, where marine debris is listed as a major threat to Marine Totems, Islands, Coastal Ngaachi and Reefs and Seagrass beds.

Cape York NRM's Coastal Ecosystems Coordinator David Preece said the team effort led by Wuthathi and Tangaroa Blue was a great environmental learning opportunity.

"Marine debris smothers seagrass beds and coral reefs, marine creatures get entangled in or swallow plastics, the coastline becomes degraded, and cultural sites are damaged."

"The Wuthathi Custodians, Elders and the Tangaroa Blue team, and all involved are to be congratulated in delivering this record-breaking 10 tonne clean-up."

Fast facts

- A record 10.8 tonnes of marine debris removed from a remote beach in Cape York
- Fishing litter dominated the debris including 1.3 tonnes of net and rope, 345 plastic floats and six ghost nets
- 25 volunteers, Wuthathi Elders and Wuthathi Custodians were flown in by helicopter for the week long clean-up
- 10.8 tonnes is the most amount of debris removed from a clean-up in a single event
- This is the first clean-up where debris was slung out via helicopter.

The Cape York Clean-up was made possible through the support of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, Reef Trust, The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tangaroa Blue Foundation, Border Force, Cape York Natural Resource Management, Ocean Conservancy, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), BASF / TrinamiX and

University of NSW.

Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation: The Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (WAC) holds land and sea interests in trust in northeastern Cape York Peninsula on behalf of Wuthathi people approximately 800km north of Cairns. This includes 1,182 km2 of Australia's mainland, coastal and offshore islands, and 8,072 km2 of marine waters within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Coral Sea. The vision of WAC is: "To control our destiny as our elders before us; in caring for Wuthathi country, culture and community."

Tangaroa Blue Foundation: TBF is a marine conservation charity committed to preserving and protecting marine ecosystems. Through collaborative efforts, research, and community engagement, it aims to create a sustainable future for our oceans and coastal regions through the removal and prevention of marine debris and plastic pollution.



WEED CONTROL A HIT WITH FARMERS



Farmers were given some expert tips on how to control, and even take advantage of, invasive weeds during a two-day Weeds Roadshow held on the southern Cape York Peninsula in early May.

Coordinated by Cape York NRM, the road show featured Wayne Vogler, a weeds and grasses expert from The Tropical Weeds Research Centre in Charters Towers, and was held at Broken Dam Station Lakeland on May 2, then Fairview station near the Laura region on May 3.

"There was a lot of interest and the talks were well received," Cape York NRM's Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator (RALF) Katrina Shaw said.

"We had 25 people at the Fairview meeting so that was a great result."

The Weeds Roadshow is designed to provide property owners/managers and any other local parties with the latest information on how to manage and control the more invasive weeds and grasses of North Queensland. Those weeds targeted at the meeting included: grader grass (which has a seed life of four years); rats tail (eight to 10 years); sickle pod (12+ years); calatrop (six months); leucaena (10 years); rubbervine (three years); aleman grass (no viable seed, only nodes on the stem) and lantana (five-eight years).

"By understanding seed life we can plan the management of these weeds and understand the importance of follow-up control," Trina said.

"Wayne has 25 years experience in weed management and gave a lot of helpful information to property owners on how to not only control the invasive grass species, but utilise them to some advantage."

She said two interesting examples were to heavily graze those areas prone to bigger grasses to help prevent hotter fires from occurring in the dry, and thus suppressing seed production and preventing further spread; and using some legumes, such as wynn cassia, to dominate or consume larger, more invasive, species."

The Weeds Roadshow is part of the Healthy Farming Futures program (HFF), delivered by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



MEET

YASMIN WILSON

What's your background, where do you hail from?

I am a proud Wuthathi, Warrangu, Uthalganu woman on my mother's side and a proud Torres Strait Islander woman on my father's side. I currently reside in Umagico.

How did you come to work with Cape York NRM?

My name was given to Cape York NRM by few people that I've previously worked closely with. And with my big move back home from Melbourne, I was sent the position description by a good friend who nominated me for the role. I then reached out to one of the staff at Cape York NRM seeking more information on how I could apply and I went through the interview process and was appointed the new Engagement Officer for the Cape York area.

What are some of the key jobs you carry out?

I provide support and guidance to Traditional Owners and non-indigenous organisations to start an engagement process between the two to ensure we have an open relationship when it comes to working with each other. One of the objectives is to identify issues and come up with solutions, and also assist with letters

or even general HR requirements.

What's your favourite job?

To sit and have a yarn with some of the Traditional Owners and get to know their mob, their culture, their Country and how they want to move into the future with caring for their Country. Given the history of First Nations people of Australia, I find it very motivating to hear the stories of Elders that are still with us, and their families. These are stories and knowledge that would be passed on from generation to generation and I feel I am one of the lucky ones that gets to hear them.

What is it that you love about the Cape?

There are many reasons why I love the Cape, and one of the main ones is in today's society, the Cape is now a mixture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descendants. Our people have combined cultural knowledge, but have different ways of dance and custom and we still learn from two of the longest existing cultures of Australia. There is a lot to love about the land and the sea as it provides food and scenery to die for in some seasons of the year.

Any pet hates?

I am not a big fan of snakes, they are my worst enemy. I have tried my best throughout the years to learn to like or love them. They are not my go-to animals.

How is the Cape and its communities going for the future?

There needs to be a lot of change happening within the Cape area but I guess with the changes in the Local Council office there is a striving for positive change. One of the main issues is the youth but I know there are some planned solutions around this to ensure the community gets back to how it used to be.

What will you be doing in 10 years' time?

I have always been known as the type who loves to take up a challenge and, in all honesty, there is nothing more I would rather do than to work with mob. Even if it's in the Queensland region or not, my biggest goal is to make sure I always leave a footprint behind to be remembered by.

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LAND AND SEA RANGERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Pennefather Beach is breathtaking in its dimensions - the 50 or so kilometres of white sand and seashell-heavy tidelines: the clear blue water studded with exposed, red rocks; and the scrub, wetlands, rainforest and sand dunes behind that makes access to this western Cape York Peninsula coastline all the more wondrous.

But look again and see the deeply-cut tyre tracks from 4WDs and dune buggies, like the ridges and gutters of a ploughed vegetable plot; and the rubbish, miles and miles of it collecting at the high tide marks - ropes, bottles, buoys, ghost nests, tanker floats, rusted machinery, plastic, plastic and more plastic.

Then there's the turtle nests. Flipper tracks are evidence of the painstaking journey of the females trying to overcome the man-made grooves. Some make a number of diversions on their route to find the right spot, before digging their chambers deep in the sand, then covering them over to leave a tell-tale circle, often festooned with the unavoidable debris. Some have tyre tracks running right over them, the vehicles crushing the nests or emitting vibrations that can affect the sensitive eggs

enough to abort the promise of baby turtles.

But on this beach of such split personality, you will also see the makeshift driftwood posts placed around a nest by a concerned visitor trying to warn any oncoming traffic. You will meet newcomers respectfully looking to find the right authorities to seek permits to stay in this remote

You will see the occasional old camp of locals set back from the beach, with children playing or fishing, adults reading, bird watching or just looking at the horizon and always at the ready to help dig a fellow traveller out of the

And you will see the Nanum Wungthim Land and Sea Rangers, who work for the Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council, through its land and sea management centre.

It's a small, but ambitious team of five, led by powerhouse Marietta Matasia, and they are determined to build the ranger presence on Pennefather and protect its environment and creatures.

The list of to-dos is daunting, but as the turtle nesting season gets underway, the rangers begin the renewal.



The Nanum Wungthim Land and Sea Rangers:from left to right: Marietta Matasia, Shalika Wapaua, Colby Gill and Frank Sigai.



Camp begins

After several hours of loading up equipment and food and hitching a trailer, they leave the Ranger Base in the community of Napranum, near Weipa, in a convoy of 4WD trucks, and head north some 40kms to Pennefather Beach on red dirt service roads maintained by the nearby mining giant of Rio Tinto. Turning on to the track leading to the coast, they stop to lower tyre pressure and head along deep sand tracks that crisscross through the dunes before arriving at the old ranger camp base.

It's been years since the buildings were set up for permanent stays, and despite the rusting roofs, and broken or missing windows and doors, the structures are still solid and hinting at a former glory.

The compound was originally set up as a retreat for troubled young people, but when the program ended, it was given to the rangers as a base for monitoring the beach. Over time a lack of ranger numbers and funding meant staying out on Country was uneconomical and the camp was abandoned. But now, the signs of fresh beginnings are clear.

Contractors are finishing up work on an impressive steel-mesh fence with security gates that marks out the area's importance. Within it, old established trees provide shade between the buildings and concrete pathways are, while a little frayed around the edges, still

A sweep of the dirt grounds, small fires prepared in strategic places, tents, beds, folding chairs, tables and generators set up, portable toilets and showers installed and a no-nonsense camp kitchen organised, and the place looks welcoming. For good reason.

Sitting in the shade are the rangers' special visitors, three Elders, Grace John, and Richard and Vincent Barkley, who have not been out at the camp for many years. As Traditional Owners they are here to mark this return and to welcome more visitors later in the

"I want this to be special," Marietta says. "I want them to feel they are home."

Without stopping for a break, Marietta orders two of her rangers - second in command, Colby Gill, and Frank Sigai - to return to town to pick up their other guests. The Elders,, Marietta, ranger Shalika Wapau and Julie-Ann Wheeler (an old school friend invited by Marietta to help care for the Elders at the camp), join Cape York NRM's Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) coordinator Dr Manuela Fischer and turtle consultant Ben Jones, in a training session on a new data collection app, Nestor, which monitors turtle nests as they appear throughout the season.

The new equipment is being provided to all WCTTAA members this turtle season. WCTTAA is made up of six Indigenous ranger groups along the western coast of Cape York who are united, and successful, in bringing down the predation of turtle nests and thereby improving the population rates of these endangered species. The Napranum rangers were among the founding Alliance members when it was established over 10 years ago through funding from the Australian Government and support from Cape York NRM.

Marietta leads the two-vehicle convoy along the waterfront to check for nests. It's early in the season, but



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it isn't too far before turtle tracks lead them to a nest, where location data and nest status is recorded on a new iPad. At another sighting, they trace the tracks of a turtle coming up from the ocean towards the dunes, before they turn sharply right. Beside her tracks is another more ominous one, the curled groove of a crocodile tail as the animal stalks its prey, before a distinct sand pattern indicates its success. We do not look for a nest.

By mid-afternoon, they return to camp. Richard performs a traditional welcome to the newcomers and Nana Grace quietly speaks of her history in the area. The daughter of the late Mrs Jessie Wheeler (nee Barkley), she fondly recalls many camping trips to Pennefather (Con River as it was known by Traditional Owners) from their camp at "Rumu" (located some kilometres south of Old Mapoon) on horseback, as they did not have a dinghy in those days and had to wait for the tides to be really low to cross over to the other side of the river. She remembers leaving her Country when she was 13 years old to go to Mapoon Mission.

It was subsequently closed in 1963 due, she says with a scoff, to a so-called hook-worm epidemic and a lack of suitable water. "It was because they had no money to keep it running.

"People went all over," she explains. "My family went to Weipa, a lot of people went to new Mapoon, or to TI or away from the area ... that was terrible."

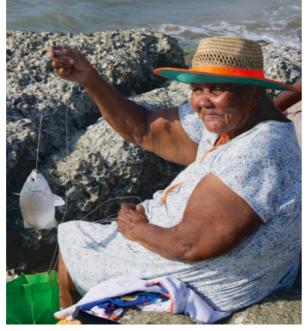
Grace now has her own outstation, "Prunung" at Red Beach and over the years has become a storyteller, Indigenous cultural advisor and mentor to the Napranum people. Her joy at being on Pennefather is evident.

Reverie interrupted, a line of vehicles pull into camp and 17 teenagers and six adults fill the grounds between the buildings; grinning, excited, dropping backpacks and fishing lines as they are welcomed for their four-day adventure.

When South Coast meets North West Coast

When Marietta became the coordinator of the Nanum Wungthim Rangers back in January of this year she had a clear vision: build the ranger team, restore the ranger camp, increase community engagement. Working closely with the Napranum Council, she has already set a remarkable course in her first eight months.

Improved equipment, two new ranger recruits, a swag of skills training and a program of upgrades are already underway — including the camp fencing, and a carpenter scheduled to restore the buildings. She is also



Nana Grace John

working towards reviving a permit system and signage for beach visitation. Not to mention the debut of what are hoped to be regular school visits both locally and further afield.

And why start small? Why not have a 17-strong school group fill the camp after travelling all the way from Nowra State High School on the south east coast of NSW? Marietta does not do things by half.

At this time of year their region would be cold, with big surf, rocky headlands and brooding winter skies. To the students, Pennefather surely is some parallel universe. Yet they are a wonderful blend of relaxed, curious and respectful teens who eagerly meet the Elders, and learn the ways of the camp.

But first, some fishing at the Pennefather River mouth further along the beach. Richard takes a few students under his wing and shows them the mysteries of casting and spear fishing. Others throw their lines out from conventional rods, or sun themselves on the river bank. The ease with which cultures and generations meet is uplifting.

For Richard, wiry and softly spoken, the place has great history. Earlier he had walked the beach pointing out landmarks. Most people believe the area was first discovered in the 1800s, but it went much further back, he says. In the 1600s Dutch explorer Willem Janszoon, saw the coast.

"They thought it was New Guinea," Richard says. When they walked on to the sands of Pennefather, ("it should



be Pennefeather", Richard adds), they knew they were being watched. They found thick stalks of pandanus worked into a soft pulp, and placed on tree branches. "It is sweet tasting Beautiful... they left it for them men."

It wasn't until the 1800s that another explorer, Matthew Flinders, noted the red cliffs near Weipa that would ultimately bring white settlement to the region, remove Traditional Owners from their lands, and by the 1950s, after geologist Harry Evans confirmed the 'reddish cliffs' were virtually pure bauxite, see the mining town of Weipa evolve.

On the river, Nana Grace is sitting on a rock outcrop, her

hand-line cast; knowing, patient. Ranger Shalika bashes oysters beside her with a rock in her hand until, giggling, she watches the matriarch deftly pull in a bream. "Dinner," Nana says with nonchalance.

She is the only one to land a catch on this day.

By evening the camp is pumping. Students are organised into cooking teams and a group of boys serve up a tasty noodle dish that sets a friendly challenge out to the rest.

The Elders perform have performed a welcome, a moving ritual for each of the visitors to make them safe and accepted on their land, then provide an evening of storytelling.





Uncle Richard Barkley



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But late night is for the young. They are treated to a beach drive with the rangers to look for turtle nests and spotlight the red eyes of crocs in the waters beyond.

At 5am they are out again, looking for fresh nests and learning about the WCTTA turtle nest program, before planning the rest of the day's activities. The Cape York NRM contingent farewells this happy chaos as the students head to their spear making, weaving, rubbish collection (their idea) and cultural learning.

Another round

It is three weeks later. An invitation from Marietta to join the rangers to experience their ongoing work schedule and training exercises is a privilege.

The camp is neat, the discipline apparent - stacked turtle nest protection cages, nest warning signs, fuel supplies and kitchen equipment. The old camp bathroom now offers a hot shower.

Subtle, delightful reminders of the previous visitors are dotted about the camp. A woven rope frame displays individual art works, messages and a crafted sign 'Nowra School 2023'; decorative traditional hanging paper chains, made from pandanus leaves, are attached to a fishing net near the kitchen; a collection of spiralling, pristine-white sea shells and a dried bit of vegetation that looks like an ancient bonsai tree, adorn a window sill.

"I loved them," Shalika says of the students. "They were

so nice, and so great with the Elders, you know, they weren't shy, they were really interested. The way they would just go off with Richard, or Vincent, or gather around Nana.

"I even went to the airport to wave them off with my daughter, so they could meet her. I'm facebook friends with them now."

Shalika joined the ranger team in April, and it's become far more than a job to her. Involved in an almost-tragic accident a month after she joined, she has nursed her injuries yet still manages to continue her training.

"I'm living the dream," she says. "As someone who almost died, well, who did die twice before they got me back, this team, coming out here, clears my head, takes my mind away from what happened."

For Shalika, being a ranger also means getting out on Country, learning many new skills and bringing Traditional Owners out to Country.

"Listening to their stories, they're amazing. Then I get to take that home and share it with my family. It just gives me goosebumps."

She is young, ridiculously strong and a little frustrated that she can't yet drive the vehicles on the beach. She will get the all-clear from doctors in a matter of weeks. But it does not stop her carrying out her duties, including turtle nest assessment.

Tentatively she pushes a thin wire into a new nest they find on an early morning check. The wire is resistant to





Shalika

the beach until it reaches a hollow chamber deep in the sand. Carefully, so as not to pierce the eggs, she removes the wire and data is recorded. A stake with the date and nest number is placed next to the nest, and they continue along the beach.

It is slow, sometimes painstaking, work as the team spot more and more nests in such a short span of beach. Nesting is now in full swing. The rangers will later return to the markers to install cages at the more vulnerable nests; there are not nearly enough cages this season. Digging deep holes around the area and pegging the purpose-built rust proof cages over the nest is heavy going. The cages are protection from predators: mostly feral pigs, as well as dogs, crocs or goannas looking for a feed of eggs. The gaps in the mesh are just big enough for the hatchlings to crawl through and make their way to the ocean.

They approach a temporary orange construction fence which leads from the dunes to the sea. Colby and Frank installed it a week ago to block off a long stretch of beach heading south. The fencing was trialled the previous year with approval from the Council, following too many instances of nests being crushed by campers driving along the sand.

They detour through the dunes then continue carefully along the beach for another 20kms. Subtle shifts in the foreshore are occurring. Red rock shelves are lit up by early morning sun. Seashells washed together on the shore are dense, sometimes covering most of the sand. And the turtle tracks and nests are everywhere.

A final nest check is recorded. This time they note a tiny baby turtle, perfectly preserved, lying near the site. How it is there, with no signs of other hatchlings, or indeed predation, is a mystery. A suggestion that the turtle be taken back to camp as a specimen is instinctively shot down by Shalika, who digs a small grave and solemnly covers the creature.

They are not stopping now as they head further south to begin their cultural training, but as they drive Shalika

count the nests. More than 300. Some tracks indicate Olive Ridley turtles, their precious cargo, of about 50 eggs per nest, are closer to the shoreline. Flatbacks are nearer the dunes and produce up to 100 eggs. They are particularly important as they only nest in Australia and are listed as vulnerable species under Commonwealth and State legislation. Green and Hawksbill turtles are also known to occasionally nest in the area but in smaller numbers.

A detour off the beach again and they follow an inland track, moving past scrub and wetlands, to stop at a surreal space – an American World War II plane crash site. There are two places that tell the story. The first is the main crash landing where the plane lies twisted and broken. A little further south is the plane wing and other debris which shows where the pilot clipped a tree as he desperately tried to land. It is eerie and sad. Marietta and the team are discussing ways to mark and protect the historic area and memorialise the tragedy.

They are joined by trainer Shaun Seymour from Seymour Out Bush, who has been working on the Cape for almost 20 years, and conducts conservation training, capacity building and feral animal control with colleague Mark Lane, managing director of RAPT (Remote Area Projects and Training).

Returning to the beach, they head to the stunning Duyfken Point, where the rangers learn about the significant cultural sites, including a place of women's business in the rainforest behind cliffs that are under threat from tidal erosion. Again, protection and preservation plans are discussed.

Afternoon at the camp is for quiet duties out of the heat of the day. Shalika and Frank are completing a written session on vehicle training with Sean and Mark. Colby, ever moving, ever busy, is checking vehicles, collecting wood, preparing the evening fires.

As second ranger-in-charge, his steady demeanour belies his 21 years of age. He is reliable and smart, able to deliver presentations at national conferences or mix it

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with school students on camp. A young leader.

He has grown up in Weipa but has family, some from the stolen generation, spread through NSW and Mackay. From a young age, he wanted to follow in the footsteps of one of his grandfathers, also a ranger. Graduating from Weipa College he had a frustrating gap during COVID, before he joined the team.

What is his drive?

"I travel, meet other rangers, work with great people," he says. "And I'm always learning. I love learning about bush foods, medicines. I want to bring all the nanas out here," referring to the visit by Grace John and the Elders. "And young kids. I want to teach them what I'm learning."

"I love Naps country — Pennefather, Billy's, Red Beach, all of it. The wetlands at the back, the amazing middens everywhere - it all needs protecting."

When he is not working, Colby is still out here, camping and fishing with mates. He reveals a photo of his little brother who he took with him recently and who landed his first catch.

"It's good to show him this, get him out of town."

The work has also given him a great sense of belonging. "I have learnt about the different clans, I know all of them now on the Cape, and people know me. They meet me and say, 'oh you're Colby'."

Mention Marietta, his new boss, and Colby smiles. "She's awesome. I had no doubts when she joined, never doubted her. I'll be here for years."

Which is as well, given Marietta's hopes for the ranger program. As well as upgrading the Ranger Camp, Marietta is constantly introducing training and education programs which include in this visit, the cultural heritage teachings and written exams. Coming up are weed spraying, 4WD recovery training, side-by-side training and biosecurity training.

The rangers will also be continuing nest surveillance, fencing repairs at Billy's and Pennefather, documenting marine debris and ghost net locations, and small machines training. The courses all go towards their Cert III training requirements in Conservation & Eco-System Management.

More broadly, Marietta wants to expand the schools program. The success of the Nowra visit is likely to be repeated next year, and closer to home, she wants a junior ranger program re-established and more local school camps.

"We went to the schools' expo earlier this year and there was a lot of interest from students," she says.

She also wants to re-introduce a shorebird monitoring program to capture the breeding rates and health of the

beloved oyster birds and terns that scatter the shoreline. She plans to have her rangers more hands-on in fire and feral animal management.

She and Colby are also completing the local law and compliance training to be authorised rangers. There is a purpose-built office next to the ranger camp compound which, when tidied up, will serve as the permit headquarters.

Marietta looks about the camp with satisfaction. It is the first major roll-out of her projects and it will hopefully "open the doors to new programs."

Her self-discipline, planning and organisation come from years of experience — firstly administrative work in extreme care disability services, then working in the mines for seven years as a plant operator, and spending eleven years in the army (she re-joined in 2021 with her son, and they were in the same recruit force together). What drew her to Nanum Wungthim Rangers?

"This region has been home to me all my life. I grew up here. My mum went home to TI to have me then returned. Dad was in the mine industry.

"This beach is my home away from home. The camping, beach driving, this is something I've done growing up with uncle Richard and his other brother Teddy. Here and Mapoon. My dad had a short-wheel base so I got to see all of this."

Marietta also worked in administration for the rangers a decade ago and did support work with them on Country. "Seeing all the challenges they faced out here, first hand, with the limited number of workers, the lack of resources, lack of facilities, it makes our job so much harder."

When the Coordinator position came up she jumped at the chance

"This work is not just about coming out and camping."
She grins. "I'm also organising a beach clean-up here in the next school holidays."

Already she has put the feelers out for assistance from other groups and agencies.

"I want this clean-up to be a memorable one. It's been a long time coming, and it will be a great boost for the community to see the beach transformed."

"I also want to build strong networks, meet new people and other ranger groups, build relationships both within the community and at a professional level, and most of all do what we all love to do, care for this beautiful Country."

Work for the day done, Marietta has another skill appreciated by her team. Cooking. Spicy chicken and rice, accompanied by local seafood gathered earlier by Frank, Colby and Shalika — huge pot of fresh crab marinated and grilled and fresh oysters still attached to the rock, quickly smoked in the fire embers and eaten

out of the shells.

Another surprise dish is delivered by Frank. With help from Shalika, he prepares fresh, young stingray, a tricky process deftly handled by a man who reveals his hidden cooking talents. A combination of spices and the fish is fried gently in a pan and savoured by all.

The night is cool and quiet. The camp has a homely feeling. I don't want to leave.

I love the traditions and the tight-knit friendship of the ranger team, I love meeting the Elders, I love that the turtles are in good hands, and I love that this magical place is being protected and preserved for future generations.

PENNEFATHER BEACH CLEAN -







Marietta, above, and Colby, below.





Cape York
NRM's Toby
Eastoe, left,
Cairns Turtle
Rehabilitation
Centre
Administrator
Jennie Gilbert,
and Cape York
NRM's David
Preece.

THREATENED SPECIES SYMPOSIUM

With growing concerns about the number of threatened species in our region - from cassowaries, goldenshouldered parrots and sawfish, to Mabi rainforest and ant plants – it's no surprise that the North Queensland Threatened Species Symposium was a sell-out.

Held in Cairns over two days in March, the event brought together conservationists, scientists, Traditional Owners, natural resource management organisations and government representatives to share everything from project news and the latest research to cultural knowledge, monitoring methods, and recovery team achievements.

The focus was also on funding needs, funding opportunities and, most importantly, collaborative actions.

Cape York NRM Board Chair Sally Gray said the organisation recognised the changing social, cultural and environmental landscape of Cape York Peninsula.

"We welcome government putting First Nations at the centre of northern Australian environmental management and sustainability." she said. "As the NRM organisation for the region we will continue to build strong partnerships with First Nations and the broader community in Cape York to protect and improve threatened species habitat and ecological communities. We are very proud to be part of the symposium and the positive initiatives it brings to the region.

The North Queensland Threatened Species Symposium was hosted by the NQ NRM Alliance (Terrain NRM,

Cape York NRM and Gulf Savannah NRM) in partnership with the Australian and Queensland governments. It was supported through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Queensland Government, as well as sponsors: the Wet Tropics Management Authority, The Nature Conservancy, Bush Heritage, the World Wildlife Fund, Centre for Tropical and Environmental Sustainability Science, Queensland Water and Land Conservation, Biosphere Environmental Consultants, the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Up North and Skyrail Foundation.

Some of the good news included:

New 'Priority Place' listing: The 'Eastern Forests of Far North Queensland' are of 20 priority places for threatened species recovery under the Threatened Species Action Plan.

Mabi Forest: A new 'Reforest' initiative will revegetate a logged area near Wongabel State Forest.

Cassowaries: Wet Tropics & Cape York - A Cassowary Recovery Plan, currently out for public comment.

Indigenous ranger program: will continue to expand, building capacity in First Nation organisations.

A new Queensland Threatened Plant Network is being established open to community and non-government, local government and other government agencies.

National Environmental Science Program funding: fouryear projects as part of the Resilient Landscape Hub, to start in 2024, for recovery teams and recovery efforts.



HEALTH CHECK FOR COOKTOWN COASTAL RESERVES

A survey of coastal reserves surrounding Cooktown at Quarantine Bay, Finch Bay and Cherry Tree Bay will provide important records for national data on the ecological health of the region.

The surveys, conducted in April by plant ecologist Dr James Hill and Cooktown Botanic Garden's Curator Peter Symes, were developed by Cape York NRM with consultation with the Council.

"The Cook Shire Council Area Reserves Littoral Rainforest Surveys Project targeted places that see a lot of visitors, and in the case of Quarantine Bay, is near a residential area, so we wanted to assess the risk of weed infestation, litter and firewood harvesting, as well as indications of sea level rise," Cape York NRM Project Officer Dr James Dobson said.

"We also know Atlas of Living Australia and Qld herbarium records are poor for these areas, so we surveyed the vegetation community at the three sites for previously unrecorded species, collected voucher specimens of native plants and weeds for the herbarium, ground-truthed the regional ecosystem mapping, recorded threatened species, and recorded potential threats to the ecological community."

Littoral Rainforests are closed forest ecological

communities identified by their close proximity to the ocean (generally less than 2km) and closed canopy (70% of the sky obscured by tree leaves and limbs). Vegetation structure can range from low thickets in wind exposed environments to tall forest in more protected sites.

They act as an important buffer for inland landscapes. James said preliminary data showed the reserves were in reasonably good health with some weed infestation, particularly at Finch Bay,

"We also have concerns about coastal erosion at Quarantine Bay," James said. "It's clear with every spring/king tide each year more beach is being taken away with exposed tree roots and some recent trees falling evident."

Peter said that these surveys were most appreciated by Cook Shire Council to better safeguard remnant vegetation.

"They provide an important window in time to assess the current ecological health of these unique plant communities," he said.

"We look forward to developing strong collaboration between stakeholders to safeguard the unparalleled natural landscapes of Cook Shire and the Cape York Peninsula."

CAPE CRITTERS

Getting out to help with projects is one of the best parts of the Cape York NRM job.

Meeting the people, working with land managers to protect and improve properties, seeing the country, and capturing special moments on camera.

We share a few of the beautiful creatures we find on the Cape. Photographs from staff and contributors.

















She was camping in the wilderness before she was a one-year-old, and more recently, has just come back from a four-week family trip in the jungles of Borneo.

If ever Cape York Peninsula needed someone to have its back, Pip Schroor has the goods.

For the new CEO of Cape York NRM there was never any doubt she would work in the conservation, environment, resource management arena. But she also picked up a few other passions along the way when she found herself working in the region some 17 years ago.

"People, environment and culture are the three things that drive me. Living and working in Cape York, it gets in your blood, and I don't think I could work anywhere else. This is why I'm thrilled to be working with the organisation to continue to work with the people of Cape York to protect the region's natural assets while promoting the sustainable use of natural resources in the region."

After a year working in the Northern Territory in ranger

work, she completed a Natural Resource Management degree at Southern Cross University and then volunteered in Borneo with the Orangutan Foundation. "I was working with the rangers, building infrastructure in the national park to counter illegal logging."

She added with a smile: "And then I met my husband, who was also a ranger, so I stayed and did an internship with the Nature Conservancy doing orangutan surveys and training the rangers."

The couple returned to Australia where Pip took up a position with Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPWS) as a resource ranger based in Cairns. The rest is history.

"As a resource ranger in Cape York I did some amazing work including flora and fauna surveys, catching crocodiles, doing fire management and planning, cultural surveys, and falling in love with the place and working with great people."

After three years, she applied for the role as Ranger-in-Charge at Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) National Park (CYPAL). Pip became the first female Ranger-in-Charge



on Cape York Peninsula.

"This is something I'm very proud of and throughout my career have mentored and encouraged more women to take up leadership roles in conservation, especially female rangers," she said. "As the Ranger in Charge I worked closely with the community. My husband was also a ranger and we worked alongside the local land and sea rangers. We had a great relationship with the community, and still do. We made lifelong friends."

Pip and her husband returned to Cairns when they had a family. Pip continued to work with QPWS in the new land tenure legislation arrangements - Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land (CYPAL) - which returns ownership and management of lands on Cape York Peninsula to the First Nations People. This is the work Pip found most fulfilling and rewarding working with the Aboriginal Land Trusts and Corporation's rangers, enhancing their capacity to lead and manage Country. About three years ago, Pip resigned from QPWS after a 15 year career and took up a new role with the Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA) working as

the Regional Resilience Coordinator. TCICA is a regional organisation of councils representing 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Torres Strait, Cape York, and Gulf region.

"I began a new chapter," she said. "What was really great was I had only been in protected area management in Cape York; this new role exposed me to local government and I travelled to new parts of the Cape, in particular, western Cape York, the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) and Torres Strait. It was such a privilege.

"TCICA is an alliance of all the mayors in the region and I heard the leaders speak about what they wanted for their community — empowerment, and about the issues they faced.

"When you hear stories like that you can't *not* be moved and be motivated."

Pip collaborated with Indigenous LGAs on projects aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience, as well as advocating on the impact climate change was having on communities.

"One project I really enjoyed was developing the Cape York and Torres Strait Drought Resilience Plan. When you think of Cape York you don't really think about drought, but with a changing climate and demand for water, what will happen to communities if we have prolonged dry seasons? This project triggered a new conversation about water security in the region."

Pip's passion for Cape York has now led her to Cape York NRM as the new CEO, and again, the first time a woman has been at the helm for the organisation.

"I have been travelling on the Peninsula Development Road for the past 15 years, and I have witnessed first-hand the changing environment and climate," she said. "I also understand that working in Cape York can be challenging due to the unique complexities associated with the region's environment, culture and land tenure arrangements.

"I think the Cape is being loved to death — sensitive ecosystems are being damaged by unregulated camping, social media has opened up, or revealed, areas that were once undisturbed, and there needs to be more support for communities to manage visitors and the country.

"I also think there are not enough resources to support

"There's a lack of facilities, toilets, garbage collection — that is a HUGE cost for councils.

"However, I have always relished challenges and I want to continue making meaningful contributions to protect and manage the area, most importantly, for the benefit of the people living here."

But she accepts Cape York is a remarkable place and people will continue to explore the region.

"All of the beauty... the landscapes, the water... I've described the ocean to people that it's like bubbling hot water. It is all the dugongs surfacing, it's the crocodiles, it's the crabs, it's the barramundi - the water is alive." Pip believes there can be a balance.

"We can preserve this unique country and also allow for a sustainable economy, livelihoods and better living standards for years to come."





OUR BOARD



This third edition of LandsCAPE marks yet another milestone period for Cape York NRM and brings to a close a busy time for our organisation working across the Cape York Peninsula region.

Firstly, on behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to congratulate and welcome Pip Schroor as our new CEO. Pip brings 15 years experience working in the Cape York Peninsula to the role, plus a network of deep relationships throughout communities and with stakeholders in the region. Most recently she has worked with the Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance and has served as a Director on the Cape York NRM Board. I am very excited for the future of Cape York NRM with Pip at the helm.

The Board has also been busy, meeting during March in Weipa

to coincide with the Western Cape Futures Symposium that was also attended by Directors and Cape York NRM Managers. Several Directors presented on their areas of expertise and time was also made for community consultation with Directors. The Board met again in June in Cooktown, hosting a meet and greet and sunset drinks with the community and stakeholders. Between Board meetings, our Finance Risk and Audit Committee and Organisational Performance and Improvement Committee have been convened.

It has been a pleasure to work with our new Board during the past six months. All have brought their experience and passion to their Directorships, working together to create a great future for Cape York Peninsula and showing their commitment to Cape York NRM to serve our region's community.

HURRIYET BABACAN VICE CHAIR



Hurryiet is a passionate advocate for service to planet, people and environment. She has held senior roles as an academic, public servant, trainer and researcher, and is currently professor of economic and policy development at the University of Queensland with a focus on regional/rural economic development. Hurriyet has been recognised for her work through a number of awards including the Order of Australia (AM) in 2014; the Bi-Centenary Medal awarded by the Prime Minister; Telstra Business Women's Award; and the Multicultural Services Award presented by the Premier of Queensland. She is listed in the Australian Women's Archives in recognition of her contribution to Australia.

MARILYN MORRIS DIRECTOR



Marilyn Morris was born and raised outside Cooktown near Hope Vale where the family property was a pilot site for tropical pasture development in the early 1960s. It later turned to cattle breeding and fattening. Marilyn spent 25 years in remote Western Australia and regional Northern Territory working in aged care and local government community recreation before returning to Cooktown in 2016. She has two adult daughters and a grandson. In 2020, Marilyn began her first term as a local government councilor for Cook Shire.



CLIFF HARRIGAN DIRECTOR

Cliff is a Balnggarrawarra Ranger with South Cape York Catchment. He lives at Normanby Station and is a Director of Normanby Aboriginal Corporation. He has previously been the Mayor for Wujal Wujal Shire Council and a Director of Jabalbina Aboriginal Corporation. Cliff began his career as a health worker taking positions in Wujal Wujal, Kowanyama and Cooktown. He has worked also as Senior Ranger at Talaroo Station, Mt Surprise.

He attained his Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies in Music from the University of



PAULINE SMITH DIRECTOR (CASUAL)

Pauline Smith is a Director for Old Mapoon Aboriginal Corporation and helped establish it. She has managed OMAC Indigenous Carbon Farming Initiative with the Mapoon Land and Sea. Pauline works for Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council in the areas of playgroup assistance and community justice.

She is also a Director of the Mokwiri Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate.



JIM TURNOUR DIRECTOR

Jim Turnour has a passion for the sustainable management and protection of Cape York Peninsula working in the region for almost 30 years.

As a Queensland Department of Primary Industries Landcare and Property Management Planning Extension Officer he worked to develop a sustainable grazing industry in the 1990s. In the 2000s he worked as a policy and media advisor and then represented the region in the Australian Parliament as the Member for Leichhardt between 2007 and 2010.

For the past decade he has been working with First Nations peoples and is currently the General Manager of the Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation.



Become a Member

Join us to make a difference

Do you want to help shape the future of Cape York Peninsula's incredible wildlife, landscape and waterways?

Become a member of the Cape York Natural Resource

Management not-for-profit organisation and join us in working
with all communities to protect and preserve this amazing
region

Membership is free, and you receive monthly news bulletins about our projects, a sample bag of Cape York NRM merchandise, and a copy of our bi-annual LandsCAPE magazine.



NRM WORLD

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS



CHRIS NORMAN, CEO, NRM REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

Queensland, along with the rest of Australia, is facing an unprecedented environmental crisis. Climate change and the extreme weather that it brings is already impacting regional communities, livelihoods and health. Biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, soil erosion, deforestation, water scarcity, invasive species and coastal erosion are all having an impact. Addressing these environmental challenges requires collaborative effort, innovative solutions, and sustained commitment from all stakeholders. And this is exactly where regional NRM organisations come in. With 20+ years' experience bringing the community together, we are an important conduit between government programs and policy and the people that are impacted on the ground.

Our diverse state-wide team is 320-strong across 12 regional NRM organisations. That includes scientists, GIS experts, engineers, community engagement professionals, business managers, ecologists and agronomists. Together these teams play a critical role in supporting agriculture, conservation, education and tourism sectors as well as their local communities. The value of this economic contribution is around \$183 million every year with 635 jobs supported in rural and regional communities.

Every day across the state, our NRM teams are on the ground, working with primary producers to help them better manage their land and water resources. We're working to help people better understand the need for resilience – both at a landscape and a farm scale. And we're quick to respond when our communities need us the most.

We're also leading on-ground work to address the decline of our threatened species and to restore ecosystems and landscapes impacted by natural disasters, climate change and poor land management practices. You can read more about some of this work across the state here: https://bit.ly/threatenedspeciesNRM.

All of our work is guided by Regional NRM Plans developed by each of the state's regional NRM organisations and driven by robust community consultation processes. We know what our communities want and we know how to deliver outcomes. We take those aspirations and work with government and other investors to ensure funding goes where it is needed most. We know that strong leaders in NRM think strategically, build productive relationships, achieve results, display personal drive and integrity, and communicate with influence. That's one of the reasons why we're trusted from the paddock to parliament. We want to ensure that we continue to lead at all levels and so recently have invested in a sector-wide leadership framework for Queensland which involves the upskilling, mentoring and networking of staff employed by regional NRM organisations.

For more information visit: www.nrmrq.org.au.

COMING UP ON THE CAPE



Cape York NRM Soils Workshop 20 September 2023

Soil Solutions workshop for the Endeavour Productivity Network: Soil nutrients and crop production in relation to irrigation or fertigation.



Pennefather Beach Clean Up 18-25 September 2023

Join the Nanum Wungthim Land and Sea Rangers and friends for a community event and clean up of marine debris on the beautiful Pennefather Beach.

- See details on pg 49



Wallaby Creek Festival 22-24 September 2023

Head to this family-friendly celebration of music and arts at Rossville via Cooktown. For more info visit:



Wujal Wujal Rodeo 23 September 2023

Held at the Wujal Wujal Sports Oval, this annual event features food, stalls, kids activities and live entertainment from 7pm. Gates open at 4pm.



Changemaker workshop 26-27 September 2023

o-27 September 2023

Cape York NRM will be facilitating a two-day leadership development workshop at the Lions Hall in Cooktown for those who want a more active role in Cape York communities.



Cape York NRM AGM 21 October 2023

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in Cooktown, and all members are welcome. Come and have your say and meet our directors and staff.

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PLAYING THE FIELD

You can't say we don't enjoy our work. The proof is in the pictures.

Here are the latest from our team, new staff and old, as well as our Board Directors, out and about on the Cape.

We hope they give you a smile.



WCTTAA Coordinator Dr Manuela Fischer with Apudthama Land and Sea Rangers



Communications Manager Andree Stephens with the Nanum Wungthim Land and Sea Rangers Marietta Matasia, Shalika Wapaua, Colby Gill and Frank Sigai, in Napranum



A dawn start for the Cape York NRM team at Artemis Station



CEO Pip Schroor and Recovery Support Officer at NEMO, Libby Carney, at the Weipa Symposium



Biodiversity & Fire Programs Manager Toby Eastoe at a plant ID course in Cooktown



Coastal Ecosystems Coordinator, David Preece at Moreton Telegraph Station Fire Forum



 ${\bf Biodiversity\ Project\ Officer\ Dr\ James\ Dobson\ finds\ a\ rare\ green\ snake\ at\ Lockhardt}$





Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Katrina Shaw, left, and Sustainable Industries Officer Kathrina Southwell at the Grazing forum at Crocodile Station



At the Western Cape Futures Symposium in Weipa are, from left, Cape York NRM's Administration Officer Marnie Bashem, Board Vice Chair Hurriyet Babacan, Director Marilyn Morris, Chair Sally Gray, Sustainable Industries and Water Quality Manager Michael Goddard

