Alinytjara Wilurara
Landscape Board

Summer 2023

Palya!

STRONG PEOPLE HEALTHY COUNTRY and WATER

Anangu Kunpu, Ngura Kunpu munu Kapi

More than meets the eye
Subterranean secrets of the Nullarbor

Collars off at Kulitjara
One year on, translocated warru are settling in

Nganggi Kanyini
APY rangers lead the search for a new frog species

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA
ALINYTJARA WILURARA

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From the General Manager

The warmer weather always seems to bring the promise of longer, relaxed days to spend time with family and friends. As 2023 draws to a close it also seems the right time to reflect on the many challenges and successes we have each shared in over the past 12 months.

With the majority of members only starting in February this year, the reinvigorated Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board has already proven itself motivated, determined and influential. Their individual and collective cultural knowledge, and understanding of their communities, remain invaluable in developing strategies that not only benefit the Country but also the people who live there. Their cultural insight and advice is sought, and respected widely.

The 2023 financial year marked the end of the five-year National Landcare Program (NLP2). With the board achieving, and in some cases exceeding, all its NLP2 targets, we are now negotiating with the Australian Government for the next five-year funding period. With a range of projects waiting in the pipeline, 2024 will be an exciting year.

The AWLB's 2023 Grassroots Grant, awarded to the Nganngi Kanyini project, will fund research into what may be a new species of frog found in a remote spring in the western APY Lands. (See *Nganngi Kanyini*, page 16). Naturally we're all eager to see what is found.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our hardworking and dedicated staff who consistently forge on through personal as well as work challenges to ensure the board achieves its goals. Your commitment to 'getting the job done' is truly appreciated.

Sadly, I am also aware of the heart-breaking loss of a number of unique and talented individuals from across the AW region's communities at this time. We all stand by you in your sorrow.

To all our board members, partners and friends, I extend my sincere wishes for an enjoyable holiday season and hope that 2024 brings you and your families, ongoing good health and happiness.

Enjoy this issue of Palya, and make sure to follow us on social media and check our website as we always have plenty of exciting tales to tell!

Kim Krebs
General Manager
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Where we are and what we do

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape region covers the northwest quarter of South Australia.

In Pitjantjatjara, *alinytjara* means north and *wilurara* means west.

The region spans over a quarter of a million square kilometres, and has a population of approximately 3000 people, many of whom identify with the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Kokatha, Mirning or Wirangu peoples.

As the only all-Aboriginal board in Australia responsible for managing a Natural Resource Management region, the AW Landscape Board's aim is the protection of the land for the mutual benefit of the country and its people.

Contents

Correction

In our last issue of Palya, we wrote about board member Peter Miller's family day out with his grandchildren. We missed a generation – the kids are actually Peter's GREAT-grandchildren. The lady cooking the kangaroo tail for the children is their grandmother Christina, not Peter's wife Rhonda. We apologise for the error.

From the Chair

Welcome to the Summer 2023 issue of Palya.

As we're all aware, the past six months has been a particularly difficult time for Aboriginal people across the nation. As an all-Anangu board we share in the deep emotions felt by our people in the struggle for greater recognition, representation and understanding of how best to move forward.

The board recently reviewed our projects funded over the past five years through the National Landcare Program (NLP2). Working together with Anangu from across our region, we successfully delivered on all target outcomes, and exceeded expectations in many. This defines us, and the people of our region, as strong, capable, and committed to the health of the region's people and Country.

With buffel grass recognised as a serious ecological threat, we are proud to be leading a multi-agency, statewide strategic approach to its management, bringing focus and resources together from four landscape regions: Alinytjara Wilurara, Eyre Peninsula, SA Arid Lands and Northern and Yorke. This will maximise operational efforts across landscape regional borders and extend support from stakeholder groups.

Our board members represent the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape region on various other boards and advisory committees, ensuring that the voices of the people in our region are heard, and that issues affecting our Country are taken into account when decisions are made.

With the arrival of summer signalling the close of another year, we look forward with optimism to what will achieve in 2024 through continued commitment and determination.

On behalf of the board, I would like to extend our best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season and a healthy happy new year.

Mick Haynes
Presiding Member
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Cover image: Buffel Grass State Coordinator Troy Bowman is dwarfed by the expanse of the Nullarbor Plain

Back L-R: Kim Krebs, Julieanne Campbell, Julie O'Toole, Wanda Milller, Debbie Hansen, Peter Miller, Tapaya Edwards, Duane Edwards, Peter Burgoyne, Jeremy Lebois. Front L-R: Yasmin Wolf, Aude Loisier, Leah Kyriacou, Tatia Currie, Olivia O'Leary-Fletcher, Troy Bowman.

Ceduna meeting boosts local engagement

Federal funding, wicked weeds and community communications part of a packed agenda

With five members living in the Far West Coast region, the board's two-day September meeting was held in Ceduna.

It had originally been planned to hold this meeting on Country at Maralinga Village, to provide an opportunity to talk with Oak Valley and Maralinga Tjarutja Councils and to meet their rangers and learn more about the work they do. As it turned out, both councils had their Annual General Meetings around the same time, so new dates to meet on Country have been set for 2024.

June 2023 marked the end of the board's National Landcare Program (NLP2) five-year funding period. From December 2022, the board's staff worked tirelessly to develop a range of program funding applications in line with the priorities stated in our region's Healthy Country Plans. These were submitted to the Australian Government in March 2023.

During the September meeting, the board reviewed a comprehensive report on the outcomes of NLP2. This showed that all milestones and targets were met, with some exceeding expectations.

All communications produced by the board respectfully consider cultural protocols and therefore, public communications are firstly authorised by the relevant people and/or community before being released. A new Community Communications Protocol was approved by the board to help streamline community management of communications.

Another outcome from the communications-related discussion was that we adopt the Pitjantjatjara word 'Anangu' when referring to the people of the AW region (as opposed to First Nations, Indigenous or Aboriginal).

At the request of the Deputy Premier, the Board discussed advice they could offer her in progressing her election commitment to establish a Ministerial Aboriginal Advisory Group as part of her environment portfolio.

Constructive advice regarding the make-up of the group and other considerations was recorded and forwarded.

After assessing a number of Grassroots Grant applications, the board endorsed funding the bid put forward by Anangu rangers in the western APY Lands to lead a project to learn more about what may be Australia's newest frog species, using a combination of new technology and traditional knowledge (see *Nganngi Kanyini*, page 16).

As statewide leaders in managing the SA declared weed, buffel grass, the board sent a letter to Hon Kate Worden, Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water Security (NT) urging that she declare buffel grass under the NT *Weeds Management Act 2001*. "This is a critical, ongoing issue which the board will continue to pursue" said board Chair Mick Haynes.

Peter Burgoyne and Kim Krebs discuss the agenda

Debbie Hansen and Julie O'Toole at the meeting

Board at the beach

The board met at Glenelg for the final meeting of 2023

The last board meeting of the year was surrounded by the usual pre-break work flurry and preparation for the arrival of the summer heat that puts a halt to work on the lands for several months. An important focus of the meeting, held in Adelaide in early December, was how best to manage its resources to meet the challenges of keeping Country healthy in 2024.

With the spread of buffel grass remaining a constant threat to multiple endangered and vulnerable species, as well as to the many remote communities across the region, the board employed three project officers in November who will join the Operations team based in Ceduna.

The Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) is an important partner linking the board to ranger groups across Australia's deserts. The board is very pleased to announce that AW Landscape Board member, Wanda Miller, was nominated as the southeast female director on the IDA Board. Wanda will be attending their next meeting in Perth in mid-February.

At the invitation of the Australian Government, the AW Landscape Board will develop an Emergency Preparedness Plan that will take into consideration actions to reduce the likelihood and impact of emergency situations, what is needed to best manage emergencies in progress such as floods or fires, and what will be required to support the environment and people in the region following an emergency.

The board also congratulates board member Debbie Hansen, whose ancestral lands, Upurli Upurli Nguratja Country, was officially handed back to the Spinifex people at a sitting of the Federal Court at Cundeelee in WA (see *Native title claim succeeds*, p15).

Tim Hall, Regional Manager, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) presented on works being undertaken or planned across parks within the Alinytjara Wilurara region. Jason Caire (NPWS), spoke to the board about support offered through the Department for Environment and Water to help in repatriation of ancestral remains.

Back L-R: Kim Krebs, Mick Haynes, Tapaya Edwards, Duane Edwards, Peter Burgoyne. Front L-R: Debbie Hansen, Helen Donald, Wanda Miller, Julie O'Toole.

A summary of employment data relating to Anangu employed to deliver on projects associated with the regional landscape plan was provided to the board by Acting Program Manager Tatia Currie. It clearly showed 2022-23 had the highest number of casual/contractual employment hours of Anangu since 2012-13.

With many of the key documents that underpin the AW Landscape Board's Regional Landscape Plan in the process of being, or planned to be, reviewed over 2024, the board will also revise and update its plan to ensure it remains true to the priorities stated in the region's Healthy Country Plans and in line with state and federal legislation.

Peter Burgoyne and Tapaya Edwards

Mick Haynes and Helen Donald

Digging in the dirt

Soil testing on the Nullarbor in the battle against buffel

Ashlee Benc and Troy Bowman

Digging in around a buffel tussock

Testing soil pH

Lucy Porter and Geoff Kew bagging samples

Ricky Lennon entertains the crew with a story

Back L-R: Ricky Lennon, Charlie Coleman, Troy Bowman, Les Mundy, Brett Backhouse, Paula Modra, Alex Fraser, Geoff Kew, Lucy Porter, Noel Probert. Front L-R: Matilda Backhouse, Ashlee Benc, Tiah Pepe.

A convoy of vehicles converged on the Nullarbor in August for a buffel grass surveillance mission with a difference.

In a first for the buffel control program, the multi-agency group were there to take soil samples from beneath previously sprayed buffel plants, to gather data on the effectiveness of the spraying program. The Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) buffel team were joined by rangers from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation (FWCAC) and Lucy Porter from the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SA Drought Hub), along with soil specialist Geoff Kew.

"Our priority was testing for flupropanate," says Geoff, Senior Soil Officer for the Northern and Yorke, South Australian Arid Lands and AW Landscape Boards. "We sampled around plants that had been sprayed six to 12 months prior, to measure how much of the chemical remains and where it sits in the soil."

Flupropanate is an ingredient of the 'triple whammy' herbicide mix used to control buffel grass, along with glyphosate and pine oil. While pine oil and glyphosate quickly break down, flupropanate is intended to remain in the soil for longer, significantly reducing new germinations and the amount of follow-up control required.

Geoff says the nature of different soil types may affect the effectiveness of the chemical, so the team took samples from the calcium carbonate-rich soils of the Nullarbor and continued into the red sand of the Great Victoria Desert to the east. "Calcium carbonate may tie up the flupropanate, it may or may not make it unavailable," he says. "It is expensive, so if it isn't doing its job we may need to reconsider its use."

Beginning near Cook, about 440km north-east of Ceduna, the team took regular core samples along their route, at first using a hand auger in the hard calcrete of the Nullarbor, then deploying a trailer-mounted core sampler as the soil became sandier further east. The samples were bagged and labelled according to their depth below the surface, so the concentration of flupropanate can be measured at different depths.

The soil analysis will also look at the acidity, salinity, organic carbon levels, and nutrients found in the soil.

As the samples were processed, Geoff also conducted in-field soil acidity test (pH test) and a soil carbonate test using a dilute acid. As well, he conducted field hand textures, a test that provides insights into the proportions of clay, silt and sand in the soil.

Along with carrying out the soil testing, Geoff provided training to the AW and FWCAC staff about soil testing, with a keen audience present for each sample site.

Digging around the plants provided a strong visual example of how far their root systems extend beneath the plants. Digging in the sandy soil under one small tussock, about the size of a coffee mug, revealed a cone-shaped mass of roots 50cm deep and more than 60cm across. The living root mass dwarfed the dead-looking plant above, one reason that controlling this weed is such a difficult task.

The opportunity to develop a soil extension project was provided by the SA Drought Hub's Lucy Porter, and kicked off when she met with AW's Buffel Grass Coordinator Paula Modra.

A few brainstorming sessions later, Lucy submitted a proposal to the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, which also funds Lucy's position at the SA Drought Hub as a Regional Soil Coordinator.

Lucy explains that the project is an example of taking soil knowledge and extension tools commonly used in agriculture, and teaching them to a new audience of land managers who focus on conservation.

"Land managers in this district are having mixed success treating buffel grass with the current recommended chemical mix," Lucy says. "We are trying to understand whether soil type may be playing a role in why the treatment is working better in some areas and not others."

According to Lucy, this variation could be due to many factors, including resistant populations.

"Looking at the soil is a great place to ask what's causing the differences, and if there's a better way to do things," she says.

The soil testing trip was also an introductory field trip for AW's newly recruited Buffel Grass State Coordinator, Troy Bowman.

"It was an exciting opportunity for AW to work with some of our partners in the fight against buffel," Troy says. "We had staff from AW and the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, rangers from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, and the SA Drought Hub, all collaborating on a new element in our efforts to control the spread of this ecological transformer weed."

Click or scan the QR code to watch a short video of the Nullarbor soil testing trip.

Liz Reed in a cave beneath the Nullarbor

Ancient seashells revealed by a quarry

Mummified animals on a cave floor

Owl pellets create piles of bones that span centuries. Photos: Steve Bourne

What lies beneath

The Nullarbor Plain is often thought of as a vast, featureless landscape. But beneath the surface is a rich and layered record of a history teeming with an astonishing variety of life.

During AW's recent soil testing trip on the Nullarbor (see *Digging in the dirt*, page 4), the team were intrigued to find marine fossils in limestone exposed by excavation in an old quarry. These fossilised shells date back 15 million years or more, to a time when the area was the sea floor.

From an ancient seabed to an abundant forest, to the desert we know today, the Nullarbor has undergone a series of dramatic changes, on a geological timescale and in human terms.

Understanding the past can give us insights into the present, and importantly, the future.

Dr Liz Reed is a palaeontologist, senior lecturer at the University of Adelaide and researcher at the South Australian Museum, who has spent many years examining fossils found in caves. After more than two decades studying vertebrate fossils in the Naracoorte Caves, she first visited the Nullarbor with a group of cavers in 2016.

Beneath the surface of the Nullarbor is a vast system of caves – the largest limestone karst system in the world, spanning 200,000km². Karst is a landform caused by water dissolving carbonate rocks such as limestone.

"The cavers warned me," Liz says. "They said I'd go out there and fall in love with the place, and I did. It's amazing."

The caves provide a window to the past that spans 30 million years, from the ancient marine fossils to pre- and post-colonial times.

"It's like a biodiversity library," Liz says. "The fossil records there are as good as anything you'd find on the planet, they really are that special."

As the limestone eroded and the caves formed, the fossils embedded in the rock were joined by much more recent animal remains. Some are from creatures that fell into the caves and couldn't escape, their bodies mummified in the dry cave air. Others were deposited by owls, which still roost in the caves today. Owls eat their prey whole, and regurgitate the bones in pellets. The variety of species found in these remains is remarkable.

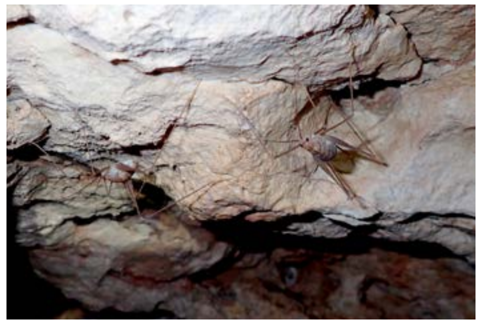
"You start off thinking it's a pile of rocks," Liz says of the owl pellet deposits. "Then you realise it's a mound of bones and there are stick-nest rats and Nullarbor barred bandicoots, which are totally extinct. There are mulgaras and bilbies, so many bones that these things must have been absolutely prolific across the landscape. And they're gone now."

Extinct species found in the caves include the *Thylacoleo carnifex*, a marsupial predator with one of the strongest bites of any mammal species, a giant flightless cuckoo, and even tree kangaroos, which suggest a much more diverse, wooded landscape.

"The key thing that these records show us is the scale of loss, which is shocking and important in our understanding of what drives extinctions now," Liz says. "With new technologies and advances in using DNA, and also techniques to date specimens with great precision, we can really start to model not only the past distributions and the past ecosystem functions within a community which has been lost, we can also start to use these data for rewilding and a lot of conservation initiatives. Who knows, in the future I'd love to see stick-nest rats back out in the Nullarbor."

The caves are not only a record of the history of the region's ecology, they're home to creatures found nowhere else, such as several species of *Troglodiplura*. These large, blind cave spiders are only found on the Nullarbor, and most species of them are known to exist only in individual caves.

"It just seems like one of the greatest threats to that area is lack of exposure or interest, and people thinking there's nothing out there," Liz says. "I can't stress enough how globally significant the Nullarbor is. It has so many values that are unique – that's a word that I don't like to use very often, but it's true for the Nullarbor. Whatever we do on the surface affects the caves underneath, and I would hate to think that things are dying out before we even have a chance to describe them. In the future I would love to see a conservation strategy for karst landscapes that is completely integrated from the surface, caves and right down to the groundwater."



Cave-dwelling creatures often have long legs, as seen on these crickets. Photo: Liz Reed

Buffel grass workshop

By Paula Modra

Wintry weather was no deterrent as the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board (AW) hosted a buffel grass workshop in September. Representatives from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Yalata, Maralinga Tjarutja, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, the SA Drought Hub, Nature Foundation, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Iluka were joined by local contractors at the workshop, which was organised for anybody with an interest in buffel grass management.

The vision of the Buffel Free GVD project is to manage buffel grass towards eradication south of the APY Lands and to create an effective model for remote buffel grass management that can continue strongly beyond the life of the project. This can only be achieved by collaboration and teamwork. So it was exciting to see so many people at our workshop, all sharing the same vision, working towards the same end goal and building a strong network.

As a group, we don't very often get together, so this was great opportunity to share thoughts and ideas, our successes and failures, hopes and ambitions.

The group of people who attended brought a wealth of knowledge. Along with experienced operators in the field, we had engaging presentations on new technology, soil testing, chemical mixes and data collection, as well as practical sessions.

Each region gave a brief update on buffel grass management within their region at an operational level. The valuable session provided an open forum for group discussion and was very well supported by all who attended. It was great to see representatives speaking confidently and knowledgably about buffel grass in their region.

AW's Buffel Grass State Coordinator, Troy Bowman, delivered an informative session on our current chemical mix and chemical trials he has been involved with. His presentation involved lots of group discussion, with many questions asked and answered.

Soil expert Geoff Kew and Lucy Porter from the SA Drought Hub gave a presentation on our recent soil analysis

trip (see *Digging in the dirt*, page 4), with a practical demonstration of soil texturing and pH testing.

AW's Ecologist Brett Backhouse facilitated a session on drone mapping, with input from a number of groups using new drone and camera technology in their buffel management programs.

A break in the wet weather gave an opportunity for a practical session on spray technique and equipment maintenance, led by Troy and AW's Buffel Grass Officer Ashlee Benc.

Adam Wood, AW's Coordinator, Data and Information Management, presented on the importance of accurate data collection, which prompted a productive discussion on sharing infestation location information, the value of having a central database, the types and relevance of data collected, and using data as tool for prediction.

"It was great to see a wide variety of attendees sharing and learning from each other's experiences to tackle this devastating weed," says Troy Bowman. "The workshop was an invaluable experience to network with the workers on ground and provide an update on the coordinated strategic direction of buffel grass management in SA. The level of participation is a testament to AW's collaborative model and a shared recognition of the significant threat to culture, safety and threatened plant and animal communities throughout the state."

Above all else, the workshop highlighted the fact that as a group, we are resilient. There are many challenges and obstacles that we have to face. It's hard work, with early mornings and late evenings to get the best spraying conditions, often lots of driving in very remote sites, and lots of hot days. Working together gives us confidence and optimism for the future."

Invasive aliens

AW leads the fight as international report highlights biodiversity threat

A landmark report released in September by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) recognises the destructive potential of the ecological transformer weed buffel grass. *The Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control* was welcomed by the South Australian Government and the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board (AW) which has led the fight against buffel grass in remote South Australia for over a decade.

"The South Australian Government recognises the threat posed by buffel grass in the rangelands, both to the unique desert ecosystems and the Indigenous communities who have such a deep connection to Country," says Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Susan Close. "This report highlights the need for action on invasive species and supports our efforts to manage their threat. We are both supporting and being led by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, which has demonstrated a long-term commitment to understanding and managing buffel grass in the state."

The IPBES is the global science-policy body tasked with providing the best available evidence to decision-makers about biodiversity. With invasive alien species identified as a major driver of biodiversity loss, this new report examines the impact and drivers of invasive animal and plant species and offers policy options for effective management.

Developed over more than four years, the report was prepared by 86 international experts from 49 countries, drawing on more than 13,000 scientific articles, government reports, and Indigenous and local knowledge. The report also includes a significant discussion on the impact of invasive alien species on Indigenous peoples and local communities.

"This report offers a broad and inclusive view of the issues related to invasive species," says Dr Ellen Ryan-Colton, a South Australian buffel grass researcher who contributed to the IPBES report. "It covers the whole gamut of what the problem is and what to do about it."

Dr Ryan-Colton says that the work of Aboriginal communities was fundamental to understanding the impacts of invasive alien species. "IPBES are at the forefront of including Indigenous knowledge in their reporting and recognising the impacts on human communities. The world's First Nations peoples have long been documenting these issues through stories, songs, videos, statements and reports," she says. "Thanks to their efforts, we were able to draw on this knowledge at a global level and show that First Nations people around the world are experiencing the detrimental effects of alien species."

Although buffel is a declared weed in South Australia, it is still sown as pasture in other states. Left unmanaged, buffel grass poses a threat to grazing and cropping systems, as it spreads quickly under the hotter and stormier weather that climate change is bringing.

"Invasive alien species are one of the key threats to our imperilled species and ecosystems," says Dr Fiona Fraser, Australia's Threatened Species Commissioner. "The Australian Government recognises buffel grass as a threat to our desert plants and animals such as the waddy-wood, tjakura, and greater bilby. It is only through the dedicated work of partnerships like the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, Indigenous Ranger groups, National Parks and others in northern South Australia that we can effectively tackle a widespread invader like buffel grass."

Buffel burns hotter than native grasses

By pooling State Government's Landscape Priorities Fund and AW's funds, more than $2.2M will be spent on a multi-agency buffel grass program, led by the AW Landscape Board, working with Anangu ranger groups, neighbouring landscape boards, National Parks and Wildlife Service and other stakeholders to address the significant issue through strategy, action and advocacy.

"Although we've devoted significant effort and resources to fighting its spread, it will remain a 'David and Goliath' battle without broader recognition and response," says AW Chair Mick Haynes. "The IPBES report is encouraging. Of particular note is the mention of the impact such invasive species have on wellbeing and quality of life of human populations. As an all-Anangu board, we recognise that culture and Country are inextricably linked, so the fight is an existential one for Indigenous communities."

AW's Buffel Grass State Coordinator, Troy Bowman, is optimistic that this report will stimulate a more vigorous and coordinated national approach to the threats posed by buffel grass. "Buffel grass is a wicked problem in the arid rangelands of Australia but for many people it's been flying under the radar," he says.

"It transforms entire ecosystems, pushing already-threatened species closer to extinction and putting remote communities at severe risk.

"This includes a marked increase in fire danger as recently seen around Alice Springs and even in Hawaii. With the report having been approved by more than 130 member countries of the IPBES, it underlines the need and urgency for greater understanding of the threat of invasive species and how to best manage them."

An expanse of buffel grass in the APY Lands

Soil testing in APY Lands

Extending soil knowledge was the focus in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in October, as the Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) buffel grass team joined forces once more with Lucy Porter from the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SA Drought Hub).

Following on from the first soil testing trip on the Nullarbor in August (See *Digging in the dirt*, p4) the four-day trip in the APY Lands looked at controlling buffel through sustainable pastoral methods as well as the impact of the weed on the Warru Recovery Project.

AW's Buffel Grass Coordinator Paula Modra and Buffel Grass Officer Ashlee Benc spent time with APY Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch, and APY Land Management Ecologist Dr Caro Galindez-Silva, investigating various soils within the pastoral zone.

Paula and Ashlee were interested to see first-hand the marked difference in buffel density in the areas bordering the Northern Territory, where grazing is undertaken and in South Australia, where there is no current livestock grazing.

Michael Clinch informed them of the potential to trial a system of increasing the buffel grass palatability and digestibility for livestock, with the aim of promoting a system of even grazing as a management tool for buffel grass.

Michael was very proud to show the group one of the permanent Landscape, Livestock, Management, Centres (LLMC), built in partnership with AW, a symbol of what can be achieved when working together. The LLMCs are used to muster cattle and to manage large feral herbivores.

The AW team also spent time with warru ranger teams around the *Pintji*, the large fenced exclosure that protects a growing warru population from feral predators (see *Working for warru*, p10).

Soil specialist Geoff Kew, who led the soil sampling on the Nullarbor trip, was unable to travel to the APY Lands as planned, with Covid still causing a level of disruption to fieldwork. However, in his absence, Lucy Porter led practical demonstrations on soil classifications and descriptions.

Throughout the week, there were many discussions centred around buffel grass control options including prioritising areas, treating at optimal times, and chemical use with consideration of soil type and water quality.

Other topics of interest were improved data sharing between organisations, on-ground support and training in community buffel surveillance, and mapping techniques.

"It was very disheartening to see so much buffel," Paula says. "However, it provided a great motivational tool, highlighting what would likely happen in the southern AW region if the handbrake was pulled on all the hard work that we've done, and continue to do, managing buffel with our partners in this region."

Working for warru

Three major field operations for the Warru Recovery Team in the APY Lands

Above: Brett talks to the Nyangumarta Warrarn rangers about warru habitat
Below: Nyangumarta Warrarn Rangers set out for a day of warru trapping

Collars off at Kulitjara

The Warru Recovery Team gathered in July at Kulitjara, where 40 warru were reintroduced to the Everard Ranges in 2022, after a 60-year absence.

It was all hands on deck as AW's Ecologist Brett Backhouse joined the Mimili Antara Sandy Bore Rangers, Warru West and Warru East Rangers, staff from APY Land Management, Zoos SA, the Indigenous Desert Alliance, and independent ecologists. A journalist also joined the group, writing an article for National Geographic in Germany.

In all, around 30 people were in place for an important task: removing the radio tracking collars that had been fitted to the warru the previous year. The collars had allowed the Mimili Rangers to monitor the movements of the warru around their new home in their first year, and would be needed for a second translocation planned for later in the year.

Across a wintry week, the team emerged from frosty swags to check traps each morning, with afternoons spent assessing, moving and resetting traps on the red rock outcrops of the Everards. With the team split into three groups, radio trackers were used to locate the animals and choose suitable trap sites, each group walking around three hours each day.

Out of 24 collared warru, 20 were caught and had their collars removed. A follow-up trip in August successfully removed the final four collars. In an encouraging sign, two warru were caught that had been born at Kulitjara in the year since the translocation. The team were also happy when warru number 7, which had been presumed dead in December when its collar was found, was captured alive and well.

About 75% of the female warru trapped had pouch young, another positive sign for the pioneering population.

It wasn't all good news, however, with one collar signalling mortality – a signal sent when a collar doesn't move for a set period. Brett set out to locate it and found signs of a struggle around the empty collar, the unfortunate warru apparently a victim of a fox or cat.

During the week, the Warru Recovery Team held their AGM, which included much discussion on buffel grass.

Trapping at New Well

In August, the Warru Recovery Team gathered again, this time further north at New Well, home to the main, long-standing population of wild warru. This time the aim was to carry out a survey, trapping warru to gauge the size and strength of the population.

Brett attended with AW's Acting Program Manager Tatia Currie, joining the Warru East Rangers, APY Land Management and ex-DEW Principal Ecologist Peter Copley. The team were also joined by rangers from the Nyangumarta Warrarn Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in Western Australia. They had recently discovered their own population of black-flanked rock-wallabies and they were keen to learn from the long-running APY Warru Recovery Team. A group of students from the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) at Ernabella also came along to learn about the warru project.

The team set traps at several sites around New Well, along with nearby locations Kaanka Maanka and Alalka. A short drive from New Well, warru at these sites are included in the area's population.

In contrast to the chilly conditions at Kulitjara the previous month, temperatures at New Well were in the 30s early in the week. A cool change brought the temperature down but it also came with howling southerly winds. Strong winds aren't ideal for trapping, as it can cause traps to blow shut and warru can limit their movements in blustery conditions.

Weather issues aside, the trapping went well, with around 60 warru observed in the area. Most of the females had pouch young and the animals were all healthy, with very little sign of tick stress, which can affect the species.

"It's a great sign that the animals are faring so well in this area," Brett says. "This area is unfenced and these warru make up the major wild population. Given that 30 individuals have been sourced from here since 2017 for translocation to Wamitjara and Kulitjara, we're pretty happy with what we saw this week."

The Nyangumarta Warrarn Rangers enjoyed their visit, with most seeing or holding warru during the week. With their recent discovery of black-flanked rock-wallabies in their IPA, they came to the APY Lands to learn about what to look for and how to monitor their population. One of the rangers filmed Brett as he showed examples of good trap sites, how to identify shrubs that the warru have been eating, and how to monitor scat (droppings) to get an understanding of population size.

Although their wallabies are similar, their landscape is very different. Their rocky outcrops are small piles of granite around 30m high and 100m across. The outcrops occur in groups of six or seven within a few hundred metres of each other, surrounded by spinifex and small trees. The groups are spread out up to

five kilometres apart. It's a very different geography to the large hills of the APY Lands.

Buffel grass is also a concern for the Nyangumarta Warrarn Rangers. So far they have only seen small outbreaks, so they were keen to learn and understand the management methods employed in the AW region.

Brett and Tatia took the opportunity to visit the *Pintji* (the one square kilometre fenced area that protects a key breeding population of warru), and see the expanded firebreak around it cleared by the Warru Rangers.

The rangers had also burned buffel grass around another warru population at Wamitjara, and with the weed sending out green shoots a contractor from Alice Springs had been brought in to spray it.

At week's end the Nyangumarta Warrarn Rangers began their 2500km drive home, and the Warru Recovery Team turned their minds to the third major warru action of 2023.

Continued next page...

Carrying trapped warru down the hill

More warru on the move

The *Pintji* is a one square kilometre fenced area that is a fundamental resource for the Warru Recovery Team. Allowing the warru to breed without the threat of predators, it is both a safe haven and a source of warru for translocation to other populations in the APY Lands.

With a hot, dry summer forecast, and a growing population in the *Pintji*, there was a risk it would become overstocked, so the WRT gathered in October to trap warru and translocate them to the newly established population at Kulitjara.

AW's Brett Backhouse and Ashlee Benc joined Warru East and Mimili Rangers, along with staff from Zoos SA, for a week of trapping and translocating.

The week got off to a hot start, with 37°C on the first day making the climb up the hill to set the traps a tough task, but the temperature dropped for the rest of the week, creating ideal trapping conditions.

The trapping went well, with the first couple of nights yielding more males than females. But as the week went on, more females were caught, a relief for the team as gender balance is important when translocating a population.

By week's end, 45 adult warru had been moved south to Kulitjara – 22 males and 23 females, plus 15 pouch young.

"In theory, this means in combination with July's trapping numbers we can estimate that there are currently almost 80 adult warru on Kulitjara, which is a great foundation population," Brett says.

"It's also good to see the *Pintji* becoming a great source population, as it was designed to be. Hopefully this will continue so it can assist Wamitjara, Kulitjara and west warru populations into the future."

This project is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Each warru is weighed and measured

Bagging a warru

Warru rangers processing a captured animal

Checking an ear tag to identify the warru

Warru Rangers on global stage

Delegates from around the world watched a presentation in Pitjantjatjara language at the 3rd International Conservation Translocations Conference in Fremantle in November.

Warru Rangers Adrian Dodd and Greg Edwards delivered the presentation about the Warru Recovery Project, joined on stage by Warru Project Coordinator Oska Mills, who translated the talk into English and provided some extra commentary around numbers and other details.

The trio travelled from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands to attend the conference, which had the theme "Learning from the past, adapting to the future".

The focus of their presentation, which was well received by the attendees, was the importance of engaging with Anangu from the beginning to improve the likelihood of success. Using the August 2022 translocation of warru to Kulitjara as an example, they showed how the project was codesigned with Traditional Owners, driven by a steering committee, and underpinned by a strong desire from the community to see warru back in the area.

The APY delegates enjoyed many of the other presentations, especially when they recognised rangers from Martu Country in a presentation by Dr Rebecca West, who previously worked on the Warru Recovery Program.

They were also amused by a presentation from a Scottish delegate working with beavers and Scottish wildcats, which began with the acknowledgement that cats are the enemy for most people in the room.

It turns out that feral cats are a problem for the Scots as well, as they interbreed with the wildcat population.

"There was a lot to take in from all over the world," Oska says. "One area we will be looking at is the idea of rewilding, going beyond individual species to re-establish past ecosystem functions. In deserts, many important ecosystem services are carried out by burrowing species such as bettongs. Their digging creates shelter for other animals, as well as trapping nutrients and moisture."

Just as the APY group came home with some new ideas to ponder, they hoped the other attendees would return to their home countries, and within Australia, with a stronger appreciation of the value and importance of grassroots engagement with First Nations peoples.

Warru a hit at film festival

AW's short film about the 2022 warru translocation was a hit at the AdaptFest Film Festival in July.

AdaptFest was part of the Climate Adaptation 2023 conference, held in Adelaide and attended by delegates from around Australia.

The film festival featured short films with the theme of climate adaptation.

Introduced by AW's General Manager Kim Krebs, the film, which documents the efforts of the Anangu-led Warru Recovery Team, was deemed to be the best video submitted to the festival and screened last, giving the audience a much-needed message of hope.

Click or scan to watch the video

Yuldea

Truth-telling comes to life through dance

Early in 2023, members of one of Australia's leading performing arts companies travelled to Ceduna and Yalata, to spend time on Country and learn from cultural consultants and community.

The Bangarra Dance Theatre dancers, creatives and production team members connected with young people through school workshops, and learned about culture, and how it is woven into the fabric of life, both historically and in the present, through the stories shared with them by community Elders.

Bangarra Dance Theatre is a company of professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers who create inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences that promote awareness and understanding of their cultures and share it with communities and audiences across Australia and the world.

The group worked closely with cultural consultants, respected Anangu with links to the area. In sharing their knowledge of Country, and the deep impact of the history that shaped their vibrant, dynamic communities, they entrusted Bangarra to honour their stories, language, songs and dances on stage.

The creative result was Yuldea, an outstanding production that has now been performed for audiences across Australia, reflecting truth-telling of the Indigenous experience in Australia and reminding us that there are two stories to the making of this country.

Yuldea tells the story of the Anangu of the Great Victoria Desert and the Nunga of the Far West region of South Australia, who experienced every chapter of colonial incursions since British settlement, their traditional life colliding with the ambition of western capitalism and the Age of Imperialism.

Yooldil Kapi (now also known as Ooldea) is the traditional name for the permanent clay pan waterhole surrounded by sand dunes situated on the traditional lands of the Kokatha people. Historically, it was the epicentre of cultural life, a dynamic centre of trade, ceremony, lore and kinship as well as an important refuge for sustenance and survival.

Tribes gathered there following the trade, water and spiritual routes that intersected and webbed their way across the western desert, extending south into the Nullarbor Plain.

Ooldea is the name and the spelling most commonly used to refer to the site of the famous soak. Aboriginal people referred to it as Youldul, Yuldeh, or Yultulyngya. Ernest Giles, a British born explorer who was guided to the soak in 1875 by two Aboriginal men, wrote the name as Youldeh, but the following year the Surveyor-General in Adelaide decided to change it to Ooldea.

Ooldea is recognised as one of the most important Aboriginal sites in Australia. With the federation of our nation, Yuldea, and cultural life would forever be changed. The precious permanent water source became highly sought after by the explorers and settlers, and then used for the creation of the Trans-Australian railway line. The early 1900s brought the great metal serpent to the Nullarbor, draining the desert soak water source that had sustained life for thousands of years.

For many Anangu, it was a site of first contact and a dramatic change to their traditional existence. People were displaced and forced to leave their ancestral home.

Soon after, atomic testing began at Maralinga, just north of Ooldea, further restricting people from their traditional lands, creating distress and having lasting impacts on people's health and wellbeing.

Thank you, Bangarra, and thank you to the cultural consultants and communities who supported them to understand the truth so they could create and share this important story with others through their beautiful and engaging performance.

Echoes of Ooldea

Board members' stories show history resonates through the present day.

Native title claim succeeds

Debbie Hansen

Board member Debbie Hansen was born on Country at Cundeelee, a community that became home to many Anangu displaced from Ooldea by the successive intrusions of the transcontinental railway in the early 1900s and the Maralinga atomic tests in the 1950s.

In November, the Federal Court sat at Cundeelee, east of Kalgoorlie, and recognised a native title claim that Debbie and her fellow claimants lodged three years ago. The Upurli Upurli Nguratja native title claim returns 27,000 square kilometres of land to Anangu ownership.

"I feel happy today," Debbie said. "I was a bit nervous, standing there with the judge, but we are so proud that we got our land back. We waited for so long, and now finally we got it."

Some people arrived in the Cundeelee area after the completion of the transcontinental railway line.

The Ooldea soak, a vital water source and cultural site for millennia, became instead a source of water for the steam trains plying the line.

The Anangu were forced to leave, with many heading west to Cundeelee Mission.

Further displacement occurred in the 1950s, when the British government conducted atomic testing at Maralinga, north of Ooldea.

Others at Cundeelee are descendants of the last family to "come in from the desert", who made contact with Europeans in 1986.

Click or scan the QR code to hear Debbie's ABC interview

Podcast tells a story of ongoing connections

Board member Jeremy Lebois talks about the history of Ooldea from a very personal perspective in a podcast series from the ABC.

The sands of Ooldea is a four-part series made in 2020, which delves deeply into the story of Ooldea.

Beginning with its ancient and ongoing significance as a water source and cultural site for the people of the central deserts, the series looks at how the arrival of the railway irrevocably changed the lives of Anangu, a displacement that was further magnified by the atomic testing at Maralinga in the 1950s.

Where once the Anangu could rely on water from the soak even in times of drought, the trains drained 10,000 gallons (45,500 litres) a day, and the Anangu were barred from using it.

Instead, they were allowed to get water from a tap at the railway siding.

In the 1950s, Anangu were forced off the land and relocated at the Yalata Mission to make way for atomic testing at nearby Maralinga and Emu Field, and the rocket testing facility at Woomera.

The Ooldea soak was handed back to Anangu in 1991.

Click or scan the QR code to listen to the podcast

Nganngi Kanyini

Anangu rangers lead the search for a new species of frog in the APY Lands

In the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the far north-west of South Australia, a small spring provides precious water in an arid landscape. Around this spring, an area of around one square metre is the known habitat of possibly Australia's newest frog species – so new it has not yet been formally named.

Anangu rangers in the western APY Lands are leading a project to learn more about this tiny and elusive amphibian using a combination of new technology and traditional knowledge, funded by a Grassroots Grant from the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board.

The project has been named *Nganngi Kanyini*. *Nganngi* is Pitjantjatjara for frog, while *kanyini* is a word that encompasses the ideals of interconnectedness, caring, nurturing and support.

The frog, a toadlet from the genus *Pseudophryne*, was first identified at the site by ecologist John Read in 2012.

In 2020, Claire Hartvigsen-Power, with Zoos SA at the time, began leading a research project and developed a management plan for the species.

Dr Caro Galindez-Silva, ecologist with APY Land Management, worked with other ecologists to find out more. They took DNA samples from the tails of tadpoles that were swimming in the spring water, and testing confirmed that the species was likely to be undescribed in the scientific literature.

The DNA matched a sample at the South Australian Museum that was collected in the early 1990s from a site some 30km away across the border in Western Australia. The older sample was not of good quality, and more DNA testing is needed to confirm that the toadlet is a new species. Confirming a new species would potentially mean the frog would be protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

"These frogs are precious historical remnants," says Dr Steve Donnellan, Honorary Researcher at the South Australian Museum. "They've been isolated from their cousins in wetter environments for two million years. They're hanging on by their toenails. No other species can replace them if they are lost because of their geographic isolation."

Gathering more information about the species is a challenge. Its tiny known range is incredibly remote, and the toadlet is seldom seen, so elusive that most of the people working on the project have never seen it.

"The western APY Lands is dry and hot," says APY Ranger Coordinator Kieran Jairath. "There's not a lot of water around, much less than you would find further east. This frog has only been located in this one spring, in an area about one metre by one metre. The aquifer that feeds the spring may provide more habitat, as the frog can burrow into the moist soil that continues underground. There are other rockholes around that could be habitat for the species, so this project is an opportunity to expand our knowledge of where a frog like this might persist."

The spring is remote and difficult to reach

To find out more about the frog and how widespread it might be, the project will deploy audio monitoring devices called Audiomoths. These small, low-cost acoustic monitors can be placed in the field to record the calls of any creatures nearby. They will be placed at locations suggested by Anangu as possible *nganngi* habitat.

But recording is the easy part – with multiple Audiomoths in place for days or weeks at a time, the amount of data generated is enormous. Listening to potentially thousands of hours of sound recording in the hope of picking out a short frog call that might only occur once or twice a day is not feasible, so the APY rangers recruited Dr Kyle Armstrong from the University of Adelaide.

Dr Armstrong will work with the APY team to develop machine learning software and hardware that can analyse recordings and can identify the specific call of the new *nganngi*.

The semi-automated technology will be able to quickly analyse large quantities of audio data extending over thousands of hours. A custom-made device created by Dr Armstrong and his team will be installed at the spring, providing the capability of real-time monitoring and tracking of frog activity.

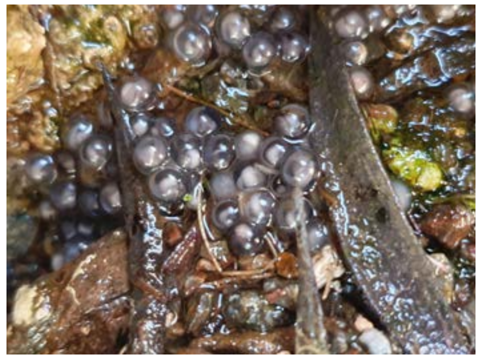
Technology is helping out, but the core of the project is the Anangu ranger team and the local community. The rangers will be doing the work on-Country, monitoring the spring and managing the audio monitoring. The project will also embrace multiple generations of Anangu, with school students incorporating the project into their science curriculum and Elders imparting their cultural and traditional ecological knowledge.

An important focus for the Anangu will be deciding on a name for the species. Species are named using a convention known as binomial nomenclature. The binomial name of a species, often referred to as its scientific name, comprises two parts: a generic name that defines the genus, and a specific epithet that distinguishes the species. Well known examples include *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Homo sapiens* (humans). The newly discovered frog species currently only has a generic name, *Pseudophryne*. The specific epithet will be determined through discussions among members of the Anangu community.

Beyond the generations of Anangu in the APY, this tiny frog is also making other vital connections, with a two-way ranger exchange program planned with the Wiradjuri and Walgalu rangers from NSW, who are working on their own frog project. The distinctive and endangered corroboree frogs are also from the *Pseudophryne* genus and are related to the new *nganngi* species.

Rangers from the APY Lands will visit south-eastern New South Wales in March to see how the corroboree frogs are being protected. Wiradjuri and Walgalu rangers will then travel to the APY Lands in return.

An Anangu-led project featuring a new species, new technology, and cultural exchanges spanning half a continent – *Nganngi Kanyini* is an exciting story for the people of the APY Lands, amphibian enthusiasts and for anyone who is curious about the incredible creatures that live in Australia's deserts.



Nganngi *spawn in the spring*

Achievements in the AW region 2022-23

The 2022-23 Achievements in the Alinytjara Wilurara Ladscape Region book was published in October, highlighting the important work the board does across the region.

Featuring AW projects including malleefowl, warru and buffel grass, the book also highlights the partnerships that are vital to our work.

Here are some of the highlights:

40 warru translocated

888,571ha of fire management

24,602ha pest predator management

8 flora surveys completed

347 Anangu community members participated in project delivery

30,689ha surveyed for weeds, 2,138ha controlled

12 training events to build community capacity in natural resource management

You can download the book from our website: www.landscape.sa.gov.au/aw

Healthy culture and language on Country

Above: Learning language and making art. Below: Looking for animals using their Yankuytjatjara names

Language and culture connected near Coober Pedy, with a new generation learning Yankunytjatjara language skills on Country.

The group of *kungka* (women), *wati* (men) and *tjitji tjuta* (children) visited various locations around Mount Willoughby and Copper Hills, stopping along the way to learn about plants and animals.

Karina Lester from the University of Adelaide's Mobile Language Unit facilitated a Yankunytjatjara language lesson in a shady creek bed, learning how to pronounce important words. The children learned some traditional dances, and how to hunt goanna, then went on an animal hunt using Yankunytjatjara words.

A water fight cooled everyone down in the heat of the day, and the children made some artworks based on Yankunytjatjara language.

The older generation passed on knowledge and language to the new generation, helping keep the culture and language strong. A book was produced with words in Yankunytjatjara and English, and photos of the day spent together.

The language and culture day was a project that came out of the Antakirinja

Matu-Yankunytjatjara Healthy Country Planning workshop held in Coober Pedy last year.

This project was supported by the Alinytjara Wilur̲ara Landscape Board with funds from Indigenous Desert Alliance's 10 Deserts project. The Healthy Country Plan is being undertaken in partnership with Conservation Management, AW Landscape Board and District Council Coober Pedy.

Schoolkids learn to care for Country

Alex (left) and Georgia (right) with a load of weeds removed from the dunes by the students

Middle school students from the Crossways Lutheran School in Ceduna took some time away from the classroom this year to learn about the importance of caring for Country with the Alinytjara Wilur̲ara and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Boards.

Project Officer Alex Fraser, working for both boards, coordinated a program of discovery for the students, who were doing a Caring for Country elective.

The children from Years 5-10, with teacher Georgia Lambeff, took part in a range of activities every Friday for five weeks. They learned about the different roles staff play and the projects they are involved in, and did their own weed management fieldwork.

Alex, assisted by AW staff Ashlee Benc and Tiah Pepe, showed the kids the 4WD vehicles and some of the equipment used in the field and then everyone spent some time studying maps of the region. There was a lot of interest in photos and videos of fieldwork, especially in the animals collected during fauna surveys, and plenty of questions were asked.

Then it was time to head outdoors for their own fieldwork. First up was a trip to Shelly Beach, where the students looked at different aspects of the local environment. Alex explained how to use the scope to view seabirds and presented the class with a book so they could identify the various species in the area.

Checking out seashells on the beach

The next trip was a bit more strenuous, with everyone pitching in to pull up weeds, having first been taught how to tell the difference between weeds and native flora. What seemed like a big job at first was soon finished as everyone worked as a team and ended up with a trailer load of weeds, a healthier local landscape and some smiling faces.

The final trip was a walk through the sandhills, with expert commentary from Alex, Ashlee and Tiah informing the group about the ecology of the area. The week finished with a shared barbecue in celebration of a week of learning and teamwork.

"The students all enjoyed the variety of the program," Georgia says. "They loved all the animals in the dunnart trapping video and connecting to places they have been as they looked through the photos. They particularly enjoyed seeing photos of nesting birds and enjoyed getting out in the field."

Tiah (left) and Ash (right) show maps of the region

Everyone enjoyed spotting seabirds with the scope

Two-way map for Yalata

The Yalata community has a new map that shows the work being done on Country by the Yalata Land Management team, thanks to a collaborative effort involving art, science and traditional knowledge.

Artist Kim Mahood joined AW staff and members of the Yalata community to create the map, which combines satellite mapping data, traditional knowledge, painting and storytelling skills. Kim has worked with many Aboriginal communities around Australia on two-way mapping projects, including the Far West Coast and Oak Valley communities.

The Yalata Land Management team talked about what they would like the painted map to be used for, where it could end up, what could be shown on the map and what area would be represented.

The decision was made that the map would be to help planning for the Yalata Land Management Program, and also as a way to show the community and other people the work the team is doing.

After planning discussions and the initial set-up of the blank canvas, AW's Adam Wood provided Geographic Information System (GIS) support, projecting an accurate map showing major geographical features onto the canvas as a starting point.

The rangers then led some trips out to look at some important sites in the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). These included coastal places managed regularly by the rangers, important cultural sites and campsites from the history of Yalata, as well as important habitat and water sites.

Kim then worked with the Yalata rangers to paint significant sites onto the map, including water points, sites where plants and animals can be found, and the different types of country in the IPA, from beaches in the south to mallee and western myall country in the north.

After two weeks of planning discussions, field trips and painting, the map was completed, and was unveiled to the Yalata community at their Whale of a Day celebrations at the Head of Bight.

The team are proud of their map, which will be used to plan Yalata's land management program into the future.

This project was funded through a Grassroots Grant from the Alinytjara Wilur̲ara Landscape Board.

Projecting the map onto the canvas

AW staff hellos and goodbyes

Welcome Troy Bowman

AW is happy to welcome Troy Bowman to the team and excited to see what he will achieve as our Buffel Grass State Coordinator.

Hailing from the Riverland, Troy has an extensive background in environmental management and has demonstrated his commitment to the important task of weed management over many years.

He earnt his bachelor's degree in environmental management at Flinders University, then went on to work as a weed control contractor, and as an environmental consultant dealing with pest plants and animals.

Having taken on various roles at PIRSA in the Biosecurity SA team, his focus on buffel grass grew through strategic research.

A key objective for his role will be to foster ongoing collaboration, ownership, and investment by the broad range of stakeholders responsible for managing the impacts of buffel on the environment, culture, and safety of Anangu communities.

Troy will work to bring passion, innovation, and a coordinated strategic approach to buffel grass management across the state.

Good to have you with us, Troy.

Farewell Ollanta Lipcer

Sad for us, but nontheless great to see, Ollanta (Olly) Lipcer followed her heart and took up a new position working with one of AW's close partners, the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA). We're sure she will be invaluable to them and know she will get a lot out of supporting and working closely with ranger teams across south-west South Australia.

Olly has been an integral part of the AW team for more than a decade. After taking a few years off to be a mum, we were delighted when she returned to the team, including for some months as Acting Operations Manager.

She is widely respected among her peers in the neighbouring Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with whom she worked closely.

Our close knit-team is going to miss her infectious positivity and cheerfulness in the office, her constant snacking during team meetings, and her inability to say no to anyone. Most especially, we will miss seeing our dear friend's smiling face every day. Olly has a unique and special ability to engage with anybody and everybody she encounters, which has made her an indispensable member of our AW team.

IDA, and more importantly the rangers across our region, are extremely lucky to have her supporting them to ensure the best and most appropriate outcomes for remote Anangu communities and ranger teams across the region.

We have no doubt that the ranger teams are in extremely good hands and will flourish with her support.

Good luck in the new role Olly!

Olly (right) with National Parks ranger Tamahina Cox

Farewell Helen Donald (Mumsie)

It is with both joy and sadness that we bid farewell to our Senior Communications Advisor, Helen Donald. After nearly 12 years of dedicated service, she leaves behind a legacy of excellence and laughter.

Helen's time with the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board has been defined by her exceptional talent, unwavering dedication, and commitment to portraying the beauty and wonder of the AW region, and the dedication and commitment of those who live and work to keep it strong.

For more than a decade, Helen was the guiding force behind AW's communications strategy, turning words into powerful narratives and transforming ideas into compelling stories.

The impact of her work extends far beyond the briefings, presentations and well-crafted press releases.

She has been the architect of our brand voice, with the unerring ability to craft a message with precision, infusing it with authenticity, humour, and a touch of brilliance that made every communication uniquely memorable.

It was clear to all that Helen put her heart and soul into her work. Every written piece, every publication and strategy were meticulously thought through to offer the most benefit to AW and its communities.

Every one of Helen's colleagues is grateful for the impact she has had, both professionally and personally.

She leaves AW with a strong legacy, through the vast volume of work she has created, the skills imparted to others, the friendships she has fostered and the laughter she has sparked and shared.

We wish Helen a happy and fulfilling retirement, and know that many people across the AW region share that wish.

Enjoying a visit to Old Parliament House

Helen with board member Tapaya Edwards

Peter Miller, Helen Donald, Parry Agius, Amanda Bowne

Helen at the wheel in the sand dunes

Mick Haynes
Presiding Member

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Serving the

PEOPLE, COUNTRY, WATER

of the Alinytjara Wilurara region

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Far West Coast

Debbie Hansen
Maralinga Tjarutja

Peter Miller
Far West Coast

Tapaya Edwards
APY Lands

Peter Burgoyne
Far West Coast

Duane Edwards
Yalata

Julie O'Toole
Tallaringa

Julieanne Campbell
APY Lands

Jeremy Lebois
Maralinga Tjarutja

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