

# Palya!

**STRONG PEOPLE HEALTHY COUNTRY and WATER**

*Anangu Kunpu, Ngura Kunpu munu Kapi*

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Government of South Australia  
Department for Environment  
and Water

**WAV LANDSCAPE**  
**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**  
**ALINYTJARA WILURARA**



## From the General Manager, Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board



Welcome to the 2021 Winter edition of Palya where we share stories and news from our region.

Glad to see the country is bouncing back with healthy rainfalls after the last couple of hot and dry years. This is a welcome respite! Unfortunately with a good season comes a boom in pests and weeds that demand vigilant attention particularly camel impacts and buffel grass invasion.

In this edition we look at the many achievements made in our project work supporting communities in the protection of threatened or culturally important species. This includes addressing pest plants and animals that negatively impact on our region's biodiversity, disrupting and in some cases destroying the important natural habitats of native species.

Each of these stories, including our support for sustainable management of the APY Lands commercial cattle industry, highlight the partnerships and relationships that make it all happen.

Earlier in the year the staff from our Ceduna office joined the Adelaide staff for a very productive planning day at Cleland Wildlife Park (below). We are a small but very dedicated team whose ability to work together to achieve our goals is outstanding. As the 'new boy on the block', I'm proud to be included in their number.

Sadly however two of our staff recently decided to take up new challenges. James Thiessen will be continuing his career supporting a healthier planet in the private sector and Karrena Veltman recently moved back to her home state of WA to take up a position as a ranger (more inside).

When staff leave our close-knit team we not only lose a friend and colleague but the relationships they have built up with the board and the region's communities.

As Parry (opposite page) mentions we have also lost two members of our board, Anton and Mima. The temporary impact of communities lacking representation on the board is currently being addressed.

The board holds the unique and effective role of supporting communities in caring for their country across the region. As such we encourage nominations that represent youth through to older community members, with a balanced male/female ratio underpinned by being culturally strong. We hope to bring you more detail on this in our next edition.

Palya!

Damian Miley  
General Manager  
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board



### INVITATION



The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board invite you to visit our



Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and our website to learn more.



[landscape.sa.gov.au/aw/home](http://landscape.sa.gov.au/aw/home)

### AW is always keen to do better

...so if you have any suggestions or would like to contribute to this publication please let us know at:  
[aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)

### Next AW Landscape Board meeting: 1-2 Sept. 2021

Far West Coast : Yalata / Head of Bight / Yumberra Conservation Park

## 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.







APY Lands' Buffel grass workshop participants learning chemical safe handling and plant identification

## 02 AW Board meets agreement



AW board meets in Ceduna - key plans approved

## 03 Thank you to retiring members

Farewell to two board members

## 04 Search for rare Grevillea survey



Fighting the weather for important data on rare flora

## 04 10 Deserts transition to IDA



From strength to strength with 10 Deserts to Indigenous Desert Alliance

## 04 Ticks causing dog disease

Beware of ticks carrying dog disease in SA's north



## 06 Oak Valley Rangers quick response



Partners mobilised to make the most of fleeting opportunity

## 07 Vegetation monitoring

Rangers monitor vegetation for camel and weather impacts



## 07 Oak Valley Rangers' innovation

Searching for most effective way to manage Buffel grass



Spectacular view from the top of the outcrop inside the warru predator-free enclosure - the APY Lands' Pintji

## 08 APY: threatened flora survey



Flora surveys across the Antara Sandy Bore (ASB) Everard Ranges

## 09 APY: Buffel grass mapping

Sites assessed and management options discussed with rangers

## 10 Warru population increasing



Warru going well inside the APY Lands "Pintji" enclosure

## 12 In search of Sandhill Dunnarts



Dunnart survey: monitoring habitat and recording native species

## 14 Yalata Women's project

Tjukurpa  
Irititja  
Wangkanytja



## 15 Working with the APY Lands



APY Lands pastoral work on track

## 16 Buffel Grass Workshop

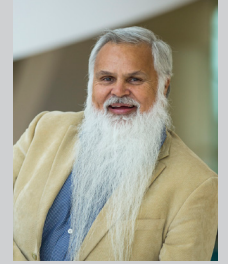
Rangers work together on best management for Buffel grass



## 17 Shorebirds survey

Off-season survey shows interesting results

## From the Chair



Welcome to the 2021 Winter edition of Palya.

Across the country we all hoped that the challenges we faced as a result of COVID-19 would settle down and allow us to get back to business as soon as possible.

What we now know is that this is going to be a long journey, one in which our top priority remains the safety and protection of our region's communities.

What this has reinforced to the board however is that the power of being flexible and adaptable in managing constantly changing circumstances is key to success.

Over the past six months we have continued to grow, adapt and seek fresh approaches to ensure that funding for, and delivery of, the important work we do with our communities continues.

With the Minister for Environment and Water's approval of the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Plan 2021-26 together with our clear, connected business plan, we have new foundations for seeing our vision for the region become reality. Both documents are available on our website.

I would also like to express my thanks to two of our retiring board members, Mima Smart from Yalata Community and Anton Baker from the APY Lands. Their valued contributions to the board and all they shared with us and our staff provides an enduring legacy.

With a view to the future of our board, we are developing succession plans to ensure strong, capable leaders are attracted and supported to take the care of our region into the future with commitment and pride.

As a board we remain open to growth and innovation and in partnership with our communities we look forward to continued success in caring for our region's country and its people.

Parry Agius  
Presiding Member  
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board





## Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board meet agreement in Ceduna

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board held their two-day board meeting at Ceduna on the Far West Coast of South Australia following their one-day Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 23 June 2021.

In the absence of the Board's Presiding Member Parry Agius, Peter Miller chaired the meeting during which minor changes to the draft Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Plan 2021-26 and Business Plan 2021-22 were discussed and approved before forwarding to the Minister for Environment and Water.

The Board invited several guest speakers to provide them with information about relevant topics including:

Alison Sentance from the Aboriginal Biodiversity Conservation Foundation spoke about diversifying income streams, philanthropic donors and



Joanna Lee from Illuka Resources talked about rehabilitation works at Illuka Mine

sponsors. She provided some examples of projects the ABC Foundation were currently involved in and discussed how they were financed.

Joanne Lee, from Iluka Resources provided an update on the mining processes underway at the Jacinth Ambrosia mine including rehabilitation times and successes to date; how groundwater monitoring wells are used and; the reporting requirements around

development of new well areas. She also provided an update on how the Water Affecting Activity (WAA) permits were progressing.

Birrin Hooper, from the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, spoke to the board about the Australian Government's involvement in negotiating a Global Diversity Framework (GDF) with the United Nations. He asked the Board to advise him on the best ways to engage with Indigenous Australians to ensure their views are reflected in the GDF. Board members advised him to ensure they are talking to the right people, to be respectful and to explain and listen properly when consulting.

In the previous meeting the board raised the need to consider plans for succession of our board members. In this meeting the board expanded on this theme and discussed further the need to continue to grow and bring the next generation of community into the conversation.

"We need young Aboriginal leaders from the region to consider the role they might play as a member of the Board – what it offers them, their community and their country" said Acting Chair Peter Miller.

Left: Acting Chair Peter Miller, General Manager Damian Miley and Program Manager James Thiessen take a quick break before an incoming storm at the Ceduna boat harbour

Below: AW's Operations Manager Ollanta Lipcer joined Board members Kristy Richards and Debbie Hansen on their break





# Thank you to our retiring board members



The departure of two valued board members prior to the last AW Landscape Board meeting in June leaves the board with some big shoes to fill.

Respected elders in their communities and across the region Mima Smart represented the Yalata community and Anton Baker represented the APY Lands as a member of the APY Lands Executive.

Mima has intermittently been a member of the Board since 2008. Her extensive cultural knowledge and deep commitment to the health of her country and people were greatly valued by the board. She was particularly supportive of the importance of passing on cultural knowledge to future generations.

Above: Mima presented at the Indigenous Women's Conference in 2018 on the Mamungari women's trip

She was NAIDOC SA Person of the Year in 2012, awarded an Order of Australia for service to the Indigenous community in SA and in 2017 was recognised on the South Australian Women's Honour Roll.

She served her community as Chair of Yalata Community Council, a member of Maralinga Tjarutja Council and Board member with Aboriginal Family Support Services as well as a founding member of the Far West Coast Aboriginal Women's Council.

She was also an Aboriginal Education Worker at the Yalata Anangu School for 15 years and is now busy supporting them in important conversations with young girls from the community around consent and domestic violence.

Above: Mima with family and friends from Yalata Community at her AW Landscape Board farewell dinner  
Below: with board members, AW staff and friends

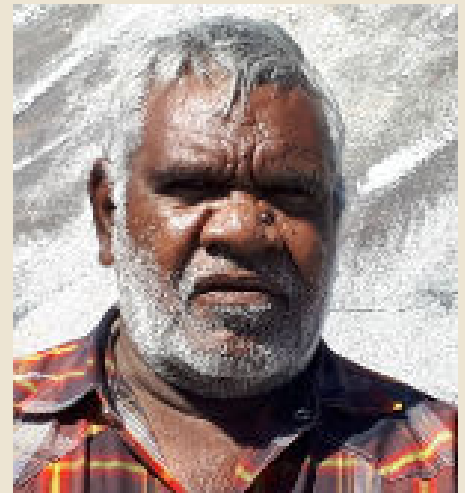


We are also sad to bid farewell to Anton Baker who joined the AW board in 2017 but was ultimately defeated by the combination of local obligations and the time demands of having to travel vast distances from his home in the remote north west corner of the APY Lands to attend meetings.

The board is grateful to Anton for his efforts and the contributions he made during his time as a member.

Mima's and Anton's enduring legacy will continue to positively influence and drive change for the betterment of South Australia's Aboriginal community on many levels, particularly for those living in remote communities.

Retiring Board member Anton Baker joined the board in 2017 representing the APY Lands







# Rare and Vulnerable Grevillea

## *Remote and rainy flora survey*

AW recently conducted surveys of a rare plant *Grevillea treueriana* to observe various impacts on their survival in the wild. *Grevillea treueriana* is endemic to Yellabinna Wilderness Area in South Australia within the AW region and is listed as Vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

This unique species had not been extensively surveyed prior to the AW Board's surveys. AW-led field trips have now completed two surveys in two years to conduct preliminary surveys on this vulnerable plant. The aim of the surveys has been to gain an understanding of its growth cycle and health status.

AW's newest Project Officer Alex Fraser led AW's most recent trip in June this year. He was accompanied by another of AW's Project Officers Amanda Bowne, and three Far West Coast (FWC) Rangers, Isacc Williams, Charlie Coleman and Scott Ware Jnr.

The team began the field trip by checking the status of a known Malleefowl Mound in Yellabinna Regional Reserve, near the Dog Fence. Unfortunately the mound did not show any signs of activity. After retrieving the remote motion sensor camera from the site they stopped near Googs Lake to camp for the night.

The next day the team arrived at the survey site. After unpacking and a short lunch, everyone refreshed their ID skills and reviewed the survey plan. The FWC Rangers were both confident and proficient at identifying the Grevillea plant and recognising the indicators of how healthy it was. These skills ensured the quality of data recorded was appropriate for flora survey standards.

During the survey over 100 plants were surveyed for size, health and if they were flowering. Unfortunately due to the threat of incoming rain, the survey was abandoned only a few hours after it began and no further plants were

recorded. The inclement weather conditions continued through the night and into the following day which dashed any hope of returning to the survey site. The team look forward to returning to Yellabinna Wilderness Area in the near future to complete further surveys on this unique plant.

The successful data collection on the first day was able to be used to do a small section of comparison. Unfortunately no flowering plants were found in the area surveyed.

On the first survey in 2020, at the beginning of winter, the survey site was covered with blooming Grevillea. That must have been a sight to see!

This survey was supported by the AW Landscape Board with funds from the Australian Government's National Landcare project Adaptive Malleefowl Management.





# 10 Deserts Project transitions to Indigenous Desert Alliance

As a 10 Deserts Project (10DP) partner the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board was represented by Program Manager James Thiessen at the June 2021 Steering Committee meeting at which the committee unanimously agreed to transition to the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA).

The transition of the project from the current implementing organisation (Desert Support Services) to the IDA was part of the original project design but time was needed to allow the IDA to become established.

The IDA is focused on enhancing connections between desert rangers. The agreement to transition acknowledges that the 10DP steering committee and project partners consider that the most appropriate vehicle longer term for the delivery of large multi-partner projects in the region is the IDA.

The Chair of the AW Landscape Board Parry Agius said “we look forward to continuing and building on this important relationship, connecting our region and rangers with significant developments across Australia’s deserts”.

The Chair of IDA Nyaparur Rose said that the transition of the 10DP into the IDA will bring our people together even closer. “At the end of the day, what matters most is that rangers and the people of the desert are supported through improved opportunities for collaboration and that better outcomes are achieved. We will have an even clearer and stronger united voice for the desert as we come together, making sure people know the desert is on the map. Thanks to the BHP Foundation for not only supporting us financially, but also for endorsing this opportunity to go forward and care for country as one.”

James Ensor, Executive Officer, BHP Foundation said “the IDA is a strong organisation, good at listening, and is a respected partner that the BHP Foundation supports as the right group to deliver the long-term and ambitious outcomes of the 10 Deserts Project. We (BHP) are proud to have walked this path beside you while the IDA has grown and we are excited about the journey we will continue together, with you in the lead”.



10DP and IDA teams, with project partners in Perth at the June 2021 Steering Committee meeting

## Ticks causing serious dog disease

The discovery of the bacteria *Ehrlichia canis* (E. canis) in ticks collected from dogs in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands has prompted a statewide alert for dog owners.



Ehrlichiosis is a disease of dogs that causes fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, abnormal bleeding, pain and weight loss. If not treated properly, it can result in death.

South Australian Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Mary Carr said that the far north regions of South Australia are where dogs are at highest risk, so if you live in, or travel in and out of these regions, take extra care.

“The best way to protect your dogs from this disease is by maintaining or starting a tick preventative program. This commonly involves regular treatments with a tablet, spot-on or tick collar. You should also inspect your dog regularly for ticks, and when travelling, try to avoid areas where ticks might be,” Dr Carr said.

Ehrlichiosis is a nationally notifiable disease - if you suspect your dog has the disease you must report it to your vet, and tell them where you’ve been and when to help stop the spread.

Dogs infected with the disease cannot transmit the disease to other dogs – **the only way transmission can occur is through infected ticks.**

At present, it is unlikely that dogs in the southern parts of SA will be infected, unless they have recently been where infected ticks occur.

Infected dogs do not transmit Ehrlichiosis to people, however in rare cases infected ticks may infect people.

More details about the disease is available at [pir.sa.gov.au/ehrlichiosis](http://pir.sa.gov.au/ehrlichiosis)





# Oak Valley Rangers...

## Quick response to protect threatened habitats

**For many years, Oak Valley (OV) Community have supported a scientific program monitoring the impact of camels on Quandong trees and other vegetation in the Maralinga Tjarutja (MT) Lands.**

Saddened by the survey results continuously revealing a decline in the health and numbers of the trees, important plants and places they felt powerless to do anything about it on a scale that would make any real difference.

The Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) Landscape team (formerly AW NRM Board) and Parks SA had previously conducted professional aerial camel culling in the MT Lands and western parks and reserves. This proved successful in reducing pressure

Storms coming in over the Nullarbor Plain



on the environment for a few years however the resurgence in camel numbers continues to threaten native flora and the habitat of native fauna.

Throughout 2020 the Oak Valley Rangers started mapping all camel sightings to keep a better watch on the numbers and movements over time. In October 2020, with heavy rain falling over a number of weeks in and around Oak Valley, the small groups of camels they had been recording while on patrol seemed to disappear.

With increased ground cover and water availability it was a matter of finding where roaming groups might congregate in the hope that AW and Parks SA would be in a position to support a professional aerial cull.

The OV Rangers continued patrolling the MT Lands undertaking a range of other land management activities while keeping an eye out for any signs of camels. After travelling back from working in the southern MT Lands (northern Nullarbor Plain) the rangers came across many small mobs of camels decimating the \*dongas of the northern Nullarbor Plain.

The rangers contacted their long time land management partners the AW Landscape team and Parks SA. They explained the situation and showed the mapping records as evidence

to prompt an aerial survey. The congregated camel numbers were found to be very high so it was determined that an aerial cull was the best management option. This prompted immediate organisation of appropriate licenses and logistics.

The OV Rangers and staff from AW Landscapes, Parks SA and Helifarm quickly mobilised and established a base camp on the northern Nullarbor from which to conduct a professional aerial camel cull. Although conditions were very hot and dusty 2,100 feral camels were humanely removed over a period of a week.

Oak Valley Regional Coordinator Sam Doudle said "we thank our partners for their faith in our background observations and mapping and for their rapid, professional and inclusive response.

"There were big rains again in that area after the cull was conducted so we look forward to seeing the landscape begin to recover from camel impacts. It's great that this important work was done totally tjungu - together!"

\*A shallow, closed depression, may be several meters deep and hundreds of meters across.



# Oak Valley Rangers

## Buffel grass management and innovation

Through ongoing and innovative management methods, the Oak Valley Rangers are successfully reducing the spread of Buffel grass in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands.

In addition to applying a range of management techniques, they also monitor treated areas to determine the best ways to avoid herbicide resistance.

This is a significant research and the results will inform the rangers about the effectiveness of the treatments in specific areas over time.

The team are trialling various methods including very hot and extended burns to kill mature plants and seeds and quick cool burns to reduce old biomass and encourage new growth that can then be sprayed with chemical.

This work is funded by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funds from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the 10 Deserts Project as well as through the National Indigenous Australians Agency's Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding.



Shane and Ethan spraying Buffel grass near the WA border in southern Mamungari Conservation Park



Above: Phillip burning buffel – setting 'very hot burns' at the most remote buffel outbreak in the MT Lands on the Anne Beadell Highway

Buffel hot burn – monitoring sites burnt several months previously using the 'very hot burn' method to kill the mature plant – Glenda, Cindy, Lance, Phillip, Ethan



## Technology used for vegetation monitoring

The Oak Valley Rangers were keen to undertake their vegetation monitoring survey in early June 2020 and test the \*Fulcrum app they had developed (along with Adam Wood, AW's Data and Information Management Coordinator) to match the data requirements of the survey.

As the transect is over four hours drive from Oak Valley community, the rangers stayed on country for five days to record camel browsing impacts of over the vast area.

The original survey team had used a 100m tape to measure the transect and GPS to mark trees.

For this survey the rangers used a laser range finder to accurately measure the transects placing star droppers at the start and finish of each transect for future reference.

Remarkably the rangers managed to work out the poorly marked transect, and record data to measure the long-term impacts of browsing on native vegetation by feral camels.

\*Fulcrum is a field data collection app

Above: Lance Ingomar measuring vegetation height  
Below: Rangers Hilary, Cindy and Lance on the move





# Threatened Flora surveys

## Apita, Mimili Orchid, Mangata

Dr Ellen Ryan-Colton

**From mid-May to early June 2021 Aṅangu rangers, Traditional Owners and non-Aṅangu support staff and contractors undertook flora surveys across the Antara Sandy Bore (ASB) Everard Ranges. The two surveys, undertaken consecutively, included main access roads and the proposed site for Warru translocation.**

Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) ranger teams and Traditional Owners have regularly monitored threatened plant species in this area due to their cultural significance as well as biodiversity value. These include Mangata (desert quandong), a traditional Aṅangu bush food and the threatened species Apita (Everard Garland Lily - *Calostemma abdicatum*).

The Antara Sandy Bore (ASB) Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), centred around the Everard Ranges in the APY Lands, northwest South Australia, has a high number of rare plants.

Signage at the start of Victory Well Gorge, asking people not to pull Apita out of the ground



This is due to the unique granite geology and isolation of the Everard Ranges, with a variety of habitats including gorges, rock slabs and high-altitude mountains in addition to other desert habitats.

Since 2015, some ranger work has also focussed on re-finding the Mimili orchid, an as yet un-described species of orchid (*Oligochaetochilus sp. Everard Range*)

The survey noted that the known area where Apita occurs has expanded by eight kilometres from previous records thanks to the rangers' knowledge of two new sites further west close to Kullitjara.

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) and Red Natal grass (*Melinis repens*) now cover the full extent of the Apita population in the main Victory Well Gorge. This means that more than 50% of global Apita individuals are under direct threat from weeds, as well as 30% of the area where they grow.

Despite searching in good seasonal conditions no Mimili Orchid was found.

Of the 19 Mangata trees re-monitored, 18 were dead. It appears these adult trees had died due to camel browse and drought conditions after 2016. The team searched for Mangata seedlings or saplings that had potentially germinated with the early rains in 2021, but no seedlings were found.

The report on the findings of this survey by Dr Ellen Ryan-Cotton will be used to inform land management strategies to protect these rare and culturally important plants. It recommended that weed control at Victory Well be a priority, followed by weed control at Mimili Oval and near the Kullitjara Apita sites.



Large Mangata tree that has died due to camel browse and drought



Fiona Dodd, Vanessa Coulthard and Ellen Ryan-Colton surveying the Apita and assessing the weeds in Victory Well Gorge

It was also recommended that any Mangata trees including juveniles found alive should be fenced to protect them from browsing.

The report will also inform strategies to reduce threats. This includes browsing by introduced herbivores (camels, rabbits), larger and more intense wildfires, and in the last 15 years by weed invasion of Buffel grass, and more recently by Red Natal grass.





Anangu  
Pitjantjatjara  
Yankunytjatjara

## Mapping Buffel grass

**As part of the Threatened Flora surveys in Antara Sandy Bore Indigenous Protected Area the Anangu rangers, Traditional Owners and non-Anangu support staff and contractors mapped Buffel grass.**

A declared weed in South Australia, it is rapidly invading large areas of the APY Lands and in doing so presents a major threat to biodiversity, people and culture.

Supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program numerous sites were assessed and management options discussed with rangers. The survey also supported further development of local skills in data collection, awareness of weeds and in weed management.



Melissa Dodd searching for birds amongst the Buffel grass

The locations of Buffel grass infestations were recorded using GPS and focussed on the Everard Ranges but included main access tracks, important cultural and biodiversity sites considered at risk of buffel invasion including sites frequently visited by vehicles.

The relevant Traditional Owners were consulted each day before work commenced about the location of the mapping, and were provided feedback each afternoon with photos and discussion of the day's work.

ASB IPA rangers and Traditional Owners conducted the mapping with the contractors Luke Ireland and Ellen Ryan-Cotton and the ASB IPA coordinator Laura Sullivan. Traditional ecological knowledge was also shared during the work days, which was included in Dr Ryan-Cotton's report.

In the 12 years from 2009 to 2021, Buffel grass has invaded 1km north along Victory Well Gorge. There has also been an increase in weed abundance that presents a greater fire risk for the Apita near Mimili Oval compared to 2009.

Dense Buffel grass infestations were recorded in three key areas: Victory Well creek, east of Antara Homeland and around Mimili community. Some main access roads have Buffel grass continuously spread along the roadside.

Although Buffel grass is scattered along the creek lines running off all sides of Victory Well, it does not appear to have invaded Mulga habitat around Mimili.

Other weeds noted included Ruby Dock (*Acetosa vesicaria*) around water holes and drainage lines, Paddy melons (*Citrullus colocynths*) common in disturbed areas and a new weed of concern Red Natal Grass (*Melinis repens*). This appears to be spreading more quickly than Buffel grass and will become a major challenge for weed management at Victory Well if not controlled.

Management techniques at key sites such as Victory Well and Kuiltjara were discussed with rangers and the coordinators while on country.

GPS data and maps were provided to APY Land Management and the AW Landscape Board, that will be fed into state databases.

Article based on Dr Ellen Ryan-Cotton's Report to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) and the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board



Shane Dodd and Laura Sullivan - no buffel at Carmeena



# Warru population on the rise in the APY Lands *Pintji*

Article by Amanda Bowne  
Photography courtesy: Amanda Bowne and Damian Miley

In April 2021, the APY Warru Recovery Team (WRT) and APY Lands' Land Management team undertook their annual Warru (Black-footed rock Wallaby) survey inside the 100ha predator-proof Pintji (fence). The team gathered important data about the general health, gender ratio of the population and number of juveniles present to inform ongoing project management strategies.

The landscape was also assessed to confirm there was sufficient feed to support the population. The survey proved extremely successful with 54 warru caught over the five-day survey, 36 of which were new recruits.

Encouragingly, all mature females had pouch young with many juveniles in and outside the pouch.

Alinytjara Wilurara's (AW) Ecologist Brett Backhouse and Project Officer Amanda Bowne, convoyed with staff from Zoos SA to the APY Lands to assist with the survey.

"Watching the Anangu rangers process the animals is incredible, they seem to have a remarkable calming effect on the animals that helps to minimise their distress when being handled" said Brett.

Anangu WRT ranger Matthew Miller, has been part of the recovery project since inception. During the trapping he and the other rangers provided insightful

advice that was greatly appreciated particularly by the new APY Rangers' coordinators.

Leaving camp at first light every morning, designated teams surveyed three separate sections within the Pintji. The AW team covered the medicine pen (yard) and some traps inside tight caves and cliff edges. Traps are placed to avoid direct sunlight so any captured animals don't get too hot in the early morning but stay warm at night.

AW staff were accompanied by East Ranger Coordinator Che Parker and Anangu Warru Ranger Quinten Lewis.

In order to undertake health assessments of trapped warru with pouch young, the pouch is secured so

AW staff joined Warru Recovery Team rangers, and Zoos SA staff during the warru survey







Native fig growing inside the pintji are a favourite food of the warru

that a distressed mother does not throw her joey out, a survival tactic used by many similar species.

At the request of the WRT team, AW checked the condition of a young male warru being held in the medicine pen. It had been found in one of the traps with a severe tick infection on its ears. AW's Ecologist removed as many as possible and treated the area before releasing him back into the pen. A condition report was then provided to the Warru Rangers.

On the second to last night of the survey, AW's General Manager Damian Miley, Program Manager James Thiessen and Data and Information Management Coordinator Adam Wood, who were doing other work in the APY Lands, came out to the Pintji and spent the night with the team. "Sharing stories with the APY's Land Management team, Warru

Ranger Coordinator Che Parker (left) and AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse check the health of warru in the medicine pen



Recovery Team and Zoos SA staff around a campfire under a clear desert night sky was a great privilege" said Damian.

For AW's Adelaide-based young Project Officer Amanda Bowne, joining the survey team presented a significant opportunity to learn about the people, country and unique wildlife of the APY Lands.

"Taking part in the Warru Recovery Project was a personal goal that I'd hoped to have the opportunity to achieve since starting with AW. Working with a team so committed to reviving the population of such an amazing little animal was even more inspirational than I expected. The rangers were dedicated, friendly and willingly shared their skills and knowledge with me. Learning everything I did while at the Pintji was an invaluable and rare experience and one that I remain extremely grateful for" said Amanda.

The population inside the Pintji has boomed again since late last year when APY Land Management, on the advice of the WRT, removed 70 adults to Wamitjara, a nearby re-wilding site.

Such success has been achieved through the committed efforts of the WRT rangers and the APY's Land Management team, and with the support of other groups

Warru waiting in trap to be checked and released during annual survey in the Pintji



Warru Recovery Team ranger Quinten Lewis with Ranger Coordinator Che Parker processing warru

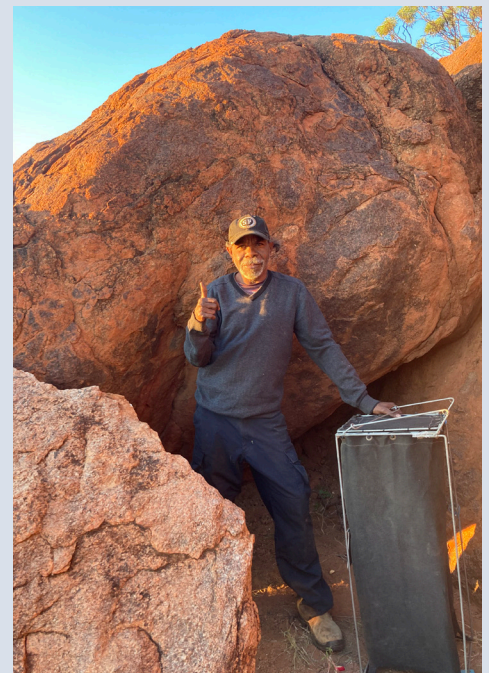
such as Zoos SA and the AW Landscape Board, contractors, and volunteers.

With the deep sense of culture and caring for their country, the local APY Community members and Warru Recovery Team are well on the way to seeing the dream of successfully repopulating the APY's historic warru wild sites.

The AW Landscape Board supports this project with funds from the Australian Government's National Landcare program.



Anangu Warru Recovery Team ranger Matthew Miller holding a warru trap







# Finding the elusive Sandhill Dunnart

The Sandhill dunnart (*Sminthopsis psammophila*) Latin for sand-loving mouse-like animal is a nationally endangered marsupial that lives in spinifex dune fields of the southern Great Victoria Desert and adjacent regions of South Australia and Western Australia.

In May, AW staff joined members of the Far West Coast Ranger team in conducting fauna surveys in search of Sandhill dunnarts in the Yumbarra Wilderness Area.

The five sites where temporary pitfall traps were set up were selected by locating spinifex populations consistent with the known habitats of dunnart populations.

As our target species Sandhill dunnart are nocturnal and most active at night, traps were set in the evenings to optimise likely success in their capture.

Survey participants were (top L-R) Amanda Bowne, Brett Backhouse, Alex Fraser, Karrena Veltman from Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, Scott Ware Jnr, Jayziah Weetra, and bottom (L-R) Charlie Coleman, Tye Betts, and Isaac Williams from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation. Photo courtesy of FWCAC.

These were checked at dusk and dawn throughout the four-day survey to ensure the safety of the animals, particularly given the cool night temperatures.

As each 'pit' (a 22.5cm diameter pipe inserted 60cm into the ground from ground level) was checked. All animals including many insect and reptile species were collected, their details recorded and then the animal was safely released.

Over the duration of the survey, only two Sandhill dunnarts were recorded at two individual sites, one male and one female, both in good condition.



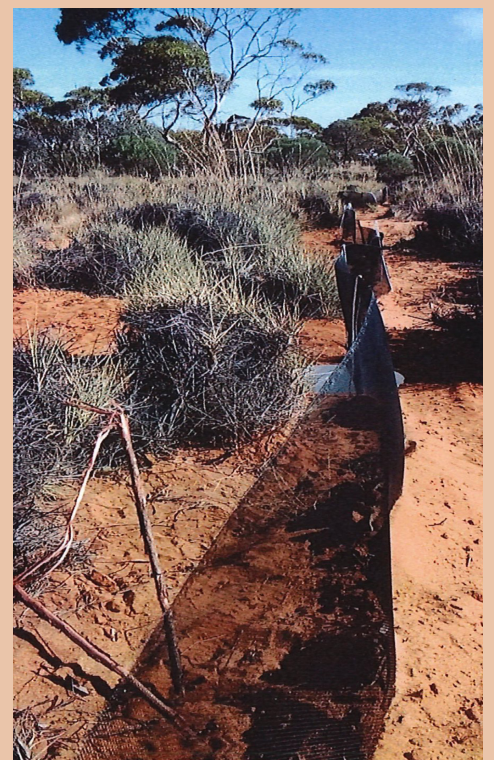
Above: The active Malleefowl mound being assessed by the FWC Ranger team was in the process of being prepared (predominantly by the male malleefowl) for eggs to be laid in September photo FWCAC

Left: FWC Ranger Isaac Williams carefully holding trapping bag with Sandhill dunnart inside before recording weight on Fulcrum's survey records. This female weighed a healthy weight of almost 30 grams. When released this sand loving mammal shot off and quickly disappear into the spinifex hummocks

Below: Late afternoon sun cast a prehistoric shadow from this tiny Thorny devil photo Amanda Bowne



Below: Following the netting "fence" small animals and reptiles topple into the circular traps from both sides







Above: Sandhill dunnart ready for release  
Photo: Karrena Veltman



Above: Burton's legless lizard being held for assessment prior to release  
Photo: Karrena Veltman

Below: AW's Ecologist Brett Backhouse processing Sandhill dunnart before release



Other animals caught included :

- Three Long-tailed dunnarts, (with tails longer than its body)
- Two sandy inland mice or 'false mouse' distinguishable from the introduced house mouse by the lack of musty smell, larger ears, and un-notched upper incisors.
- Others include, one Mitchells Hopping mouse, two Burton's legless lizard, one Beaded gecko, one Reticulated whipsnake, and a Thorny devil lizard.

As the preferred habitat of the Sandhill dunnart, the height and width of Spinifex plants were also measured at each site. This data will be linked to sites where Sandhill dunnarts were found to better understand the minimum size of spinifex plants required for their habitation.

The details of 240 Spinifex plants growing adjacent to each of the four pitfall traps site (60 plants at each) were recorded.

In addition to the Sandhill dunnart work, the survey the team visited remote camera grid sites to change the ScanDisk (memory) cards and batteries. The main function of these cameras is to capture the presence and activities of feral predators.

The AW team members were particularly glad to be working with the FWC team who shared their knowledge of special plants and their uses as well about animals encountered along the way.

Sandhill dunnart surveys have been undertaken in the region since 2007. In the past two years AW's survey teams have extended their known range by 30km after finding three new sites within Yellabinna Conservation Park.

The AW Landscape Board supports this project with funds from the Australian Government's National Landcare program.

Article courtesy of Amanda Bowne

## Celebrating NAIDOC



NAIDOC Week in Ceduna brought out some real talent amongst our ranks with Sustainable Communities Coordinator Karrena Veltman, helped by Project Officer Alex Fraser, creating this beautiful banner in recognition of this year's theme "Heal Country".

Healing Country resonates strongly with the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board and to celebrate it staff handed out soft toys of native fauna to children who attended the NAIDOC walk along the foreshore.

## Karrena heads back to WA



Sadly for AW but great for her in being closer to family, Karrena recently accepted a role with the Parks and Wildlife

Service in Narrogin, WA.

Karrena has been a much valued member of the AW team for three years. Her hard work, intelligence, considerate nature and strong connection to all country has seen her succeed in the many projects and responsibilities she took on.

The AW Landscape Board members extend their thanks to Karrena. They, and the AW staff wish her all the best in this next exciting chapter of her life.

Keep in touch Karrena!



Training young women from Oak Valley



# Yalata Women's project

## *Tjukurpa Irititja Wangkanytja*

Over the past six months Aboriginal women from Yalata community have come together and worked as a team to share special stories and traditional knowledge for the creation of the book *Tjukurpa Irititja Wangkanytja*.

The title of this book means "stories that have been told in the past". The community's elders who initiated development of this resource wanted to ensure that the generations of Yalata's women to follow will know these stories and keep them safe.

The opportunity to gain funding for a community project was brought to the attention of the community by AW's then Sustainable Communities Coordinator Karrena Veltman. The Yalata Community council decided

AW's Sustainable Communities Coordinator Karrena Veltman facilitated a two-day workshop at the Yalata Women's Centre to develop the book based on sharing women's cultural knowledge.



that it should be considered for a Women's project. This was a significant opportunity for the women in the community who determined that the passing on of traditional knowledge by creating a book would help build resilience and broaden the capabilities of upcoming generations.

The project began with months of planning before the group of women, led by board member Mima Smart and Yalata elder Rita Bryant ventured out on a four day on-country trip to share stories and traditional knowledge. This was recorded and artwork related to the contents was created to illustrate the book.



Left: Yalata Anangu Community members and other project participants provided artwork and photos for this book. Translations between Pitjantjatjara and English were provided by Glenda Ken, Mima Smart and Rita Bryant

The aim of the project was to encourage the sharing of *Tjukurpa* and the transfer of environmental and cultural knowledge. By visiting *kapi piti* (rockholes) and re-connecting to their traditional lands through storytelling the Yalata women empowered their commitment to land management.

Following the trip a number of workshops were held to ensure that the information included in the book suited the proposed outcome.

The workshops facilitated knowledge sharing, creating artwork and translating language to create a book that would be of value to Yalata's future generations of women.

Yalata Aboriginal Corporation and community members delivered the project supported by Yalata Women's Centre, Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board staff, Yalata Anangu School, students and many others.

This book was sponsored by Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board's Grassroots Grant 2020-2021.

Community elders shared knowledge and stories with younger generations while painting during the trip







## Carbon captures James

Much to the sorrow of the Alinytjara Wilurara team Program Manager James Thiessen will be leaving the AW Landscape Board at the end of August 2021 to continue his career in environmental management with a focus on carbon.

Carbon is a significant contributor to climate change and the opportunity to take a fresh approach to helping support biodiversity and build drought resilience was clearly a strong pull for James.

With a background in ecology, GIS and sustainable land management James' contribution to the AW region has been both diligent and effective. He built many strong and important relationships during his two years with the board that helped expand the board's capacity and imbed the board's values both with his team and with our partners.

James also undertook the role of A/General Manager for eight months during which time he very capably managed the team through a number of challenging times.

The board and team will greatly miss James' genuine, thoughtful approach to his work, his intelligent respected leadership and warm sense of humour.

All the best for the future James!



AW's General Manager Damian Miley and Program Manager James Thiessen met with APY Lands' Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch on-country where they visited the construction site of the fourth Landscape and Livestock Management Centre (LLMC).

They were impressed by the progress made across the APY Pastoral lands as part of the broader Sustainable Pastoral Development Project. This project is supported by the AW Landscape Board through funds from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

After visiting various sites across the APY Lands' pastoral areas, AW's General Manager and Program Manager met with the APY Lands Manager Stakeholder Engagement Tania King and Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch to review the progress of the Sustainable Pastoral Development Project.

Below: AW's General Manager checks out the site and equipment for the Landscape and Livestock Management Centre

"It was great to find that the update and review showed clearly that the project was on track and looked set to continue that way" said Damian.

The construction of the LLMCs and the range of other work being done through APY's Pastoral team is attracting a lot of interest by the APY's Traditional Owners who are keen to see their country cared for in a sustainable way.

Mapping new and existing infrastructure in the vast and remote APY Lands also took AW's Data and Information Coordinator Adam Wood on-country with Michael Clinch.

(photographed above)



APY Lands Manager Stakeholder Engagement Tania King, Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch and AW's Program Manager James Thiessen in Umuwa







## APY Lands' Buffel grass workshop

The challenge with Buffel in the APY Lands is almost overwhelming as it impacts on culture as well as the fragile ecosystems across the region.

A three-day on-ground Buffel grass workshop held in Umuwa (APY Lands) with accredited training by Batchelor Institute was attended by 20 rangers from the APY Lands and IPA groups in May 2021 to support how to best manage this devastating issue. Blackstone Rangers from Ngaanyatjarra Council plus a number of local elders also participated in the workshop.

Adam Wood, AW's Data and Information Management Coordinator presentation on the advantages and outcomes of mapping with Fulcrum app was well received.

Many participants shared stories from communities struggling to deal with Buffel grass invasion. Some of the key topics of discussion included:

- the pressing need to regularly and thoroughly clean vehicles to ensure grass seeds are not transported from infected areas to new locations



## 10 Deserts Steering Committee farewell

The 10 Deserts Steering Committee's March 2021 meeting was held in Broome WA. Although AW Landscape Board member and Steering Committee representative Mick Haynes was unable to attend personally he linked in via video. Present at the meeting were AW's General Manager Damian Miley and Program Manager James Thiessen.

Amongst the many discussions, James provided an update to the Committee about the Buffel free GVD project and ranger activities in our region.

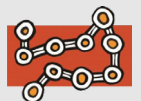
Peter See, 10 Deserts' previous Project Manager of Sustainability and General Manager, who had recently resigned was recognised for his many accomplishments at the meeting. The AW Board and team also acknowledges his incredible efforts and thank him for all he contributed.

Peter was instrumental in getting the 10 Deserts Project off the ground, creating a national network for Aboriginal land management across Australia.

Peter was presented with a beautiful artwork painted by Veronica Daniels

- being able to distinguish Buffel grass from native grasses
- looking at and comparing ant activity and populations in Buffel grass infested areas and native grass areas
- using Fulcrum to map Buffel grass presence and treatment areas

- undertaking risk assessments, preparing and mixing the chemicals safely, the use of personal protective equipment and importance of maintaining records.



Below: Participants at the three-day on-ground Buffel grass workshop held in Umuwa

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara





## Off-season survey looks promising for Shorebird species

Although AW's Shorebird surveys along the Yalata coast are usually undertaken annually in early December, due to interruptions caused by COVID, the survey could not be done until early February 2021. As expected the seasonal difference and associated weather impacted somewhat on the results.

AW's annual Shorebird survey along Yalata coastline has been supporting conservation of shorebirds species that live along, or migrate to, this stretch of the remote coast for over 10 years.

Since the first shorebird monitoring and beach maintenance projects began in 2009, a lot of work has been undertaken by Yalata Rangers and community to repair damage caused by the recreational activities of visitors to the coast and to minimise further impacts, particularly during periods of high visitation.

This year's AW on-ground survey team recorded rare shorebirds including the Hooded Plover, the Red-cap Plover, Sooty Oystercatcher, and the Pied Oystercatcher amongst many other local species.

With the very wet and blustery weather presenting the team with a few additional challenges they still managed to record over 20 bird species including a White-faced Heron, Osprey and peregrine falcon.

Although only three Hooded Plovers were spotted all species recorded appeared

to be going about their business undisturbed along the pristine coastline.

AW's newly appointed Project Officer Amanda Bowne gained a great introduction to field work with AW's Ecologist Brett Backhouse and Sustainable Communities Coordinator Karrena Veltman sharing their knowledge of data collection, bird identification and various incidentals related to remote field work (including how to safely change a 4x4 tyre). Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board's Andrew Sleep also shared his knowledge of shore winds, bird behaviours and photography.



Remember that when you visit the beach you are sharing it with many other unique and beautiful plants and animals so please take care to minimise your impact.

**Please note that permission is required to enter Yalata community and lands.**



## Welcome to the team Alex

Based in our Ceduna office for the past 18 months, Alex Fraser recently joined the AW team in a 50-50 split role with the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board.

This arrangement benefits both boards and supports a stronger working relationship with the Far West Coast Ranger team and the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation.

With a Degree in Environmental Management he also has two years' experience working with Indigenous Ranger groups in North Queensland on a range of projects including marine turtle/crocodile/migratory shorebird monitoring and management, work plan development and reporting for Ranger programs.

After leading a recent flora survey in Yellabinna, Alex said "It was really rewarding to work alongside the Far West Coast Rangers, helping to build their knowledge and skills for them to protect their Country and at the same time learning from them".

We are confident that Alex's fun-loving and hard-working temperament combined with his unreserved passion for the work he is doing on-country with Traditional Owners will make him a valuable member of both boards' teams and an important and committed conduit with the regions' Aboriginal community.

Alex working with Far West Coast rangers on the AW Sandhill dunnart survey





**Parry Agius**  
Presiding Member



## Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Serving the

**PEOPLE, COUNTRY, WATER**  
of the Alinytjara Wilurara Region

**Mick Haynes**  
Board Member, Far West Coast



**Debbie Hansen**  
Board Member, Tjuntjuntjara



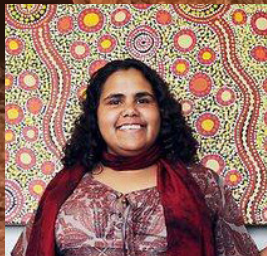
**Kristy Richards**  
Board Member, Far West Coast



**Julie O'Toole**  
Board Member, AMYAC



**Sally Scales**  
Board Member, APY Lands



**Peter Miller**  
Board Member, Far West Coast



### Adelaide Office

Level 9, 81-95 Waymouth St  
ADELAIDE, SA 5000

GPO Box 1047  
ADELAIDE 5001  
Tel: 8463 4860

### Ceduna Office

50B McKenzie Street  
CEDUNA, SA 5690

PO Box 569, CEDUNA 5690

[aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)

[landscape.sa.gov.au/aw/](http://landscape.sa.gov.au/aw/)