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SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON THE DIAMANTINA RIVER CHANNEL COUNTRY

Eleven Wangkangurru/Yarluyandi Traditional Owners joined a varied team of ecologists, scientists, historians and botanists in September to follow the path of the Swan Dreaming creation story which takes in part of the Diamantina River.

The field trip was mounted to share information about the human influences on the Diamantina catchment as part of a four-year project that is focussing on both the natural features and human influences on key refuge waterholes and wetlands along the Diamantina River, Warburton and Kallakoopah Creeks in the Marree-Innamincka district of the SA Arid Lands region. The team travelled with the Traditional Owners from Birdsville to Mungerannie taking in several major waterholes including Koonchera, Goyder Lagoon, Tepamimi, Yammakira, Yelpawaralinna and Lake Kalamurra and many other sites that were significant to the Wangkangurru/ Yarluyandi custodians.

Continued on Page 03...

CONNECTED TO COUNTRY | 01

Australian Government





Welcome to the first edition of Connected to Country – Aboriginal NRM news from the SA Arid Lands region.

The SA Arid Lands region covers over half of South Australia. There are a number of Aboriginal groups whose traditional lands are in this region, with some of our communities living and working here on country, and others located elsewhere but maintaining strong connections to the land.

Through Connected to Country, the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board aims to share stories and information that reflect the breadth of the many natural resources management activities occurring on traditional lands across the region. The role of the Board is to champion the sustainable use of our natural resources – to find a way to provide for the needs of our industries without compromising our community values.

The Boards *Regional NRM Plan* provides clear guidance, supporting and encouraging all of us who live and work in the region to make a contribution to sustainable natural resources management. The Board's investment is guided by the priorities identified in the Plan, with funding allocated to a wide variety of projects which are delivered across the landscape on private and public land.

We also welcome contributions from other government and non-government agencies, native title holders and individuals so that we can collectively present ideas, stories and knowledge to raise awareness of natural resources matters in the region. The Board's work with the Aboriginal stakeholders in our region is also guided by our *Aboriginal Partnerships*

Strategy, which has goals associated with increasing levels of Aboriginal community participation in NRM activity, and supports strong Aboriginal representation on our Board and our six NRM Groups across the region.



In 2014, the Board decided to rewrite its *Regional NRM Plan*, to improve community input into the plan, to account for the anticipated impacts of climate change on our region, and to incorporate new science and knowledge now available.

We encourage you to share your ideas with us and we sincerely welcome your input.

By working together we can achieve the cultural, social, economic and environmental results for all of us and for our children.

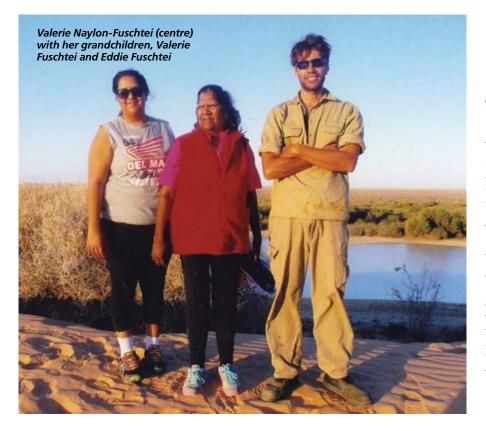
I hope you enjoy the read.

Janet Brook

Presiding Member SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board

SHARING KNOWLEDGE





...from Page 01

The group exchanged knowledge, ideas, and stories and learned from each other while visiting important cultural sites, including various stone arrangements in gibber country.

The Koonchera and Tepamimi Waterholes were notable cultural and historical sites where a number of stone artefacts were identified and the group was able to share knowledge about the Swan Dreaming creation story and the importance of the swan eggs along the journey.

Jimmy Crombie, Don Rowlands, Jean Barr and Valerie Fuschtei were the senior Wangkangurru Yarluyandi participants who have had a long connection on country, and for Valerie it was particularly meaningful to share the knowledge and experience with the younger members of the group. Luise Hercus, the much respected linguist, joined the trip to contribute the consolidated learnings of more than 40 years of dedicated work with not only the Wangkangurru and Yarluyandi peoples but custodians from the Simpson Desert, around the Birdsville and Strzelecki Tracks and Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre.

Historian Dick Kimber also contributed his deep and thoughtful knowledge bringing with him more than 40 years experience in central Australia.

The field trip contributed significant information to the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's Diamantina Channel Country project and to the participants who shared the journey.

"I was glad to bring the young ones, to find out the history. I'm happy to find the artefacts and I'm glad the kids came along, as we are getting older and are handing down our responsibilities to them."

Valerie Naylon-Fuschtei

Work will continue to engage with Traditional Owners, pastoralists, mining and tourism industries as well as the broader community to exchange knowledge about the Diamantina catchment.

To Traditional Owners, Jimmy Crombie, Don Rowlands, Jean Barr, Valerie Naylon Fuschtei, Eddie Fuschtei, Valerie Fuschtei, Terry Crombie, Nerissa Parsons, Geraldine Monaghan, Jarrod Coulthard and George Reid, our thanks for your contribution to the project.

Thanks to the land managers from Clifton Hills, Cowarie and Kalamurina Stations for their co-operation. Thanks also to Luise Hercus, Dick Kimber, Margaret Friedel, Jake Gillen, Joc Schmiechen, Lynette Rowlands and Rob Nugent.

SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Australian Government

Participants sharing knowledge at Koonchera Waterhole, Diamantina River

> FURTHER Contact He Project Offi SA Arid La

FURTHER INFORMATION Contact Henry Mancini, Water Project Officer, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, 8648 5300



LIZARDS

Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer

Dedicated searching and hundreds of volunteer hours has paid off in the hunt for the elusive Bronzeback Legless Lizard with the species now likely to be more widespread than previously thought.



Volunteers searching through leaf litter for the Bronzeback Legless Lizard

When the SA Arid Lands NRM Board initiated work on this poorly understood reptile in 2007 it was known from just a few sites in northern South Australia, there were only about 50 individuals recorded, and the species was listed as vulnerable to extinction.

Today, 30 new records of the species have been added to the national database – along with new information on its habitat and distribution – helping to build a clearer picture of the reptile.

The project employed a range of initiatives to search for Bronzebacks, including searching by Antakarintja volunteers in areas of promising habitat on their country, thousands of trap nights using buckets suspended in opal prospecting shafts near Coober Pedy, and the use of pieces of old carpet substituted as artificial habitats in which to detect the reptiles.

Key to the success of the work has been the long-term efforts of volunteers such as Tim Webb and Brian and Judy

> Underwood who checked the traps set in the Coober Pedy mine shafts over five years. Through this work a handful of Bronzebacks plus a host of other interesting reptiles and small mammals were captured.

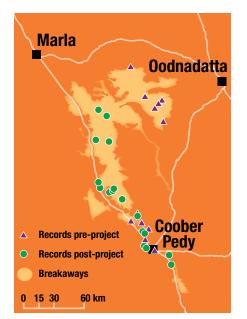




Shontelle Lennon also facilitated the involvement of fellow Antakarintja traditional custodians during multiple survey trips over three years, putting lots more dots on the map to fill in the gaps in their known distribution.

In combination with recent surveys over the border in the Northern Territory, it is now clear that this secretive critter inhabits the creeklines and hill slopes in an arc of scenic 'breakaway' country between Coober Pedy and Oodnadatta with a second population along the South Australian-Northern Territory border.

This new information suggests Bronzebacks are more widespread than previously thought, despite being exceptionally hard to find!



The work has also shown that the species may be susceptible to disturbance caused by mining, as well as trampling of their leaf litter 'mat' habitat by cattle, feral donkeys and kangaroos.

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A big thanks to the many volunteers and landholders who participated in this work and who showed that volunteer effort, combined with a multi-pronged research method, can go a long way in uncovering the secretive lives of outback critters!

A peer-reviewed journal article on the species biology was published in the scientific journal *Wildlife Research* in October this year.

SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Australian Government The distinctive Bronzeback Legless Lizard (Ophidiocephalus taeniatus) spends its life beneath the thick leaf litter 'mats' which accumulate under slow-growing arid zone trees such as Northern Myall (Acacia calcicola), Western Myall, (A. papyrocarpa), Gidgee (A. cambagei) and Mulga (A. aneura).

Here they feed on tiny insects in the decaying leaves and are renowned amongst biologists as painfully hard to find, with days of searching through leaf litter mats in appropriate habitat typically yielding few, if any, captures.

Many of the trees which provide the best leaf litter habitat in these landscapes grow in creeklines and gullies.

Although dry conditions are the norm in these areas, rare catastrophes occasionally strike when water flows along them, sweeping away the leaf litter and any Bronzebacks within!

It seems that Bronzebacks overcome this by hanging on in minor creeks and gullies at the tops of the catchment, gradually colonising lowland sites between these infrequent flood events.

FURTHER INFORMATION Contact Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, 8648 5300



COMMUNITIES TRAIN IN CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL

Mark Walsh, Aboriginal Partnerships Co-ordinator

Then people are better equipped to carry out safe weed control in the region after participating in one of two, two-day chemical accreditation courses held in Coober Pedy and Port Augusta in May and June 2014.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Registered training providers Smith and Georg kicked off the small group sessions by asking participants about what duties they currently carry out using chemicals and what they may be doing in the future.

This enabled each session to be finely tuned for each group to ensure the training was delivering relevant and accurate information for individuals.

The course focused on personal safety through safely handling, mixing and storing chemicals, and reading and understanding labels.

Several members from the training session in Port Augusta commented that learning to read labels correctly was a particularly useful part of the training to not only take back to their workplace, but also their homes. Theoretical training was delivered with practical demonstrations as well as opportunities for the participants to practice activities including measuring quantities of chemicals and spraying techniques.

This was the second time the course has been run in Coober Pedy with the course building on previous training and capacity building within the Umoona community.

SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Australian Government





ADNYAMATHANHA CULTURAL DAY A BIG HIT

Over 400 people were treated to tours, workshops, and a traditional cookout when they attended the highly successful Adnyamathanha Culture Day held at Wilpena in June 2014.

The day, which was organised by the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA), brought together Adnyamathanha people to celebrate their culture and keep it alive while also sharing cultural knowledge with the wider community and tourists visiting the Flinders Ranges National Park.

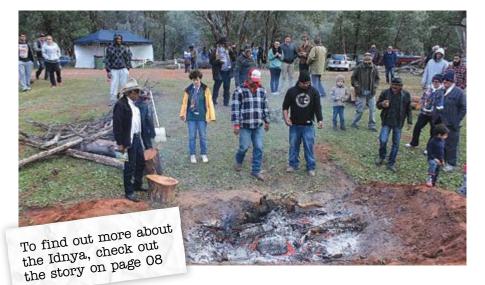
'It was a brilliant day, and it was great to have our Elders here as well as some of our young people taking leadership roles,' said ATLA Chairperson Vince Coulthard.

'This is what these events are about, to ensure our culture is in safe hands going forward and it was heart warming to hear one of our young ones say the day had been good for her soul.'

People from all over Australia as well as international visitors from seven different countries enjoyed the day with about 60% of those in attendance Adnyamathanha people from across the state. Activities included plant use tours, contact history tours, bush tucker tastings, art displays, language workshops, and genealogy workshops.

A highlight for many was the traditional cookout where Adnyamathanha elders prepared kangaroo and emu in the traditional manner. The cookout was accompanied by singing and yarns around the fire that went well into the evening. A Natural Resources SA Arid Lands stall was also a big hit with a stuffed Idnya (or Western Quoll) drawing in passers-by and information offered on various programs running in the region including *Bounceback*.

The locally extinct Idnya is a culturally significant species for the Adnyamathanha people and the subject of a translocation project in the Flinders Ranges National Park.



Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board meeting on country

CO-MANAGING PARKS

CO-MANAGING PARKS WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS

All of South Australia's 12 Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees met together for the first time in Adelaide in November 2014. More than 40 representatives gathered at the two day workshop that included presentations from all groups sharing the journey and experiences of how Co-management is working across the State and what could be improved.

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) staff and Traditional Owners held small group discussions both collectively and separately to discuss the challenges of co-management. The workshops gave the Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees the chance to gauge where they were on the scale of co-management and discussed future aspirations and commitments.

DEWNR shares responsibility for the management of seven national parks, three conservation parks and one regional reserve with relevant Aboriginal groups in the SA Arid Lands region, through the creation of either a Co-management Board or a Comanagement Advisory Committee.

Co-management of parks plays an important role in advancing the reconciliation process and resolving issues relating to traditional land ownership. The active involvement of Aboriginal people in the control and management of their traditional lands contributes to improved cultural site protection, maintenance of traditional practices that may have otherwise been excluded and improved management of country through the combination of traditional knowledge and contemporary park management.

Co-management Boards are in place for the Flinders Ranges National Park (native title group – Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association), Witjira National Park (native title group – Irrwanyere Aboriginal Corporation), Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park (native title group – Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association), Breakaways Conservation Park (native title group – Antakirinja Matu-Yankuntjatjara Aboriginal Corporation) and Lake Gairdner National Park (native title group – Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation).

Co-management Advisory Committees are in place for Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park, Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park and Elliott Price Conservation Park (native title group – Arabana Aboriginal Corporation),



Arthur Ah Chee (Witjira Co-management Board), Justine Smith (DEWNR), Robert Singleton, Theresa Bottrell and Joshua Haynes (Yandruwandha Yawarrawarka Co-management Advisory Committee) and Wendy Webb (Natural Resources SA Arid Lands) at the Adelaide Co-management workshop

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park and Innamincka Regional Reserve (native title group – Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Traditional Land Owners Aboriginal Corporation), Gawler Ranges National Park (native title group – Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation).

Co-management Boards meet four times a year and Advisory Committees meet twice a year to develop Park Management Plans and then to measure activities and success against those plans.

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

FURTHER INFORMATION To find out more about Co-management and park management plans, visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing natural-resources/Park_management



One of the seven juvenile Idnya rescued after their mother was killed by a feral cat

BRINGING THEIDNYA HONK



In April 2014, 41 Idnya (Western Quolls) – 20 males and 21 females – were re-introduced to the Flinders Ranges after the species was lost to the traditional owners, the Adnyamathanha peoples and the landscape, for more than two generations.



Vince Coulthard explains the Creation story of the Idnya at the release event captured by ABC TV's 'Landline'

The Idnya is a significant totem animal for the Adnyamathanha people and features in the Creation (Dreaming). At the blessing ceremony during the release event, Vince Coulthard, Adnyamathanha senior person and past Chair of the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA), described the kinship law that spiritual ancestors tell via the creation story of the Idnya (quoll) and Vardna (goanna) who fell in love and ran away. Their love was not allowed and so they were pursued and punished.

Vince finishes this story, by saying, "And if you look at the quoll, the quoll's got spots on it. That's where the spears went in and to teach them a lesson, they can't run away from their family groups and that [it] is wrong for them to fall in love."

This ambitious project is also expected to bring ecological and tourism benefits to the Flinders Ranges.

Since their release, the Idnyas' survival rates and well-being have been actively monitored by radio tracking individuals and several trapping exercises have been undertaken to assess their condition and breeding status.



Up to 60 juvenile Idnya were reported in June and July when the reintroduction team found that 12 females had an average of six pouch young each.

The team continued to track the female ldnya as they went on to deposit their pouch young in dens, where they were weaned at between five and six months of age.

The reintroduction team hope that the population will grow faster than the number which are lost through predation and accidents.

Feral cats have been the main cause of mortalities to date with intensive monitoring throughout the trial showing that one quarter of the Idnya have been taken by cats since their release in April.

Indeed, seven juvenile Idnya were rescued from their nest hollow in September after their mother was killed by a feral cat.

The seven orphans were hand-reared with the help of the Adelaide Zoo and were released back into the wild in December.

ABOUT THE IDNYA

The Idnya is a small reddish-grey coloured carnivorous marsupial with white spots on its body and legs. The male has an average weight of 1300 grams and the female weighs around 900 grams. They make their homes in hollow logs, cracks and tunnels under rocks, tree hollows and other animal burrows.

They are mostly nocturnal, becoming quite active at dusk and before dawn although occasionally they may be seen during the day in forest environments or when climbing trees to forage or escape predators.

Their diet is varied but mainly consists of invertebrates, small mammals up to rabbit size, lizards and frogs.

The Idnya's place at the top of the native food chain may have a positive impact on reducing populations of small pest animals (mice, rats and young rabbits) if their re-introduction is successful.

Their survival will be an indicator of environmental quality as they will only endure in a healthy environment that can support a viable food chain during dry conditions.

The female Idnya breeds in its first year, with very few older animals breeding again, and they can raise up to six joeys in their pouch.

THE PARTNERS...

The trial release of 41 Idnya to the Flinders Ranges is made possible through South Australia's first public/private environmental partnership. The Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered species (FAME) is leading the drive to raise approximately \$1.7 million over a five year period to support the recovery of the species.

Through the 21-year Bounceback program, South Australia's Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources and collaborators have been controlling foxes and goats protecting the habitat in the Flinders Ranges that is needed for the Idnyas' long term survival. Thanks to the many

volunteers, contractors, donors, land managers and partners of *Bounceback* and FAME for their support for this project.



WE need your help to continue this vitally important project and make it the success it deserves to be. Donations to the Western Quoll project can be made by visiting fame.org.au/projects/ western-quoll or contact fame@fame.org.au for more information.

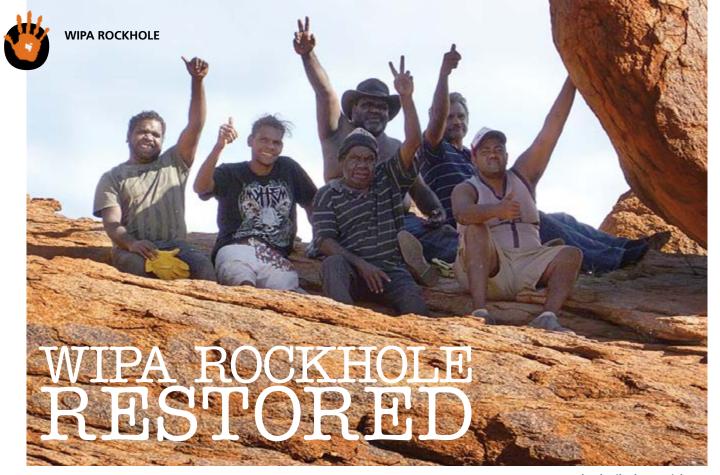
Young Idnya's are weaned in around five and a half months and their life span in the wild is mostly less than three years.

The Idnya is threatened mainly by habitat degradation and foxes and they occupy home ranges of around 1500 hectares for males and 400 hectares for females. Although adult females home ranges do not overlap some mothers and daughters may overlap in their home ranges.

IF YOU SEE AN IDNYA...

The release area for the initial population of the Idnya was confined to the Wilpena area and it is highly unlikely that they will be visible during daylight hours.

However, if you do see one in the wild please give it some space and watch from a distance so that it does not become stressed.



At Tieyon Station in the far north of the SA Arid Lands region, the native title holders, the Tjayiwara Unmuru people, undertook the restoration of the Wipa rockhole, a culturally and ecologically significant water body that had over time become considerably degraded.

R ockholes are culturally significant to the Tjayiwara Unmuru people because they are associated with traditional mythology and law, and historically shaped migration patterns as groups of people moved across the landscape. Caring for the rockholes continues to be an important part of contemporary life, to maintain cultural values and connection to country.

Traditional custodian practice of caring for rockholes in the area had been interrupted and as a result the Wipa rockhole had silted up with sediment and debris and no longer held the amount of water which it would have at the time of traditional subsistence living. Seven members of the Tjayiwara Unmuru community and others worked together over three days, largely by hand, to remove approximately 28 cubic metres of sediment from the rockhole.

Whilst a bobcat was also employed in the work, the sediment was largely shoveled by hand into the bucket, rather than the bobcat doing the heavy lifting so as to prevent damage to the rock-face.

Mary Tjaruwa Anderson, Chairperson of the Tjayiwara Unmuru Aboriginal Corporation (TUAC), said "We have wanted to do this work for a long time, these rockholes are very special and to have now completed the work, we can all feel proud of what we have done to look after country."

Caring for the rockholes continues to be an important part of contemporary life, to maintain cultural values and connection to country.

Left to right: Ray Lennon, Kevin James and Donald Grant shifting silt largely by hand Lloyd Wilyuka, Daniel Stewart, Kevin James, Geoffrey Stuart, Kevin Doolan and Ray Lennon celebrate the end of the hard work

This project was identified as an extension activity of the Kapi Palya Kanyintjaku – Protecting significant water places in our Country project in 2011-2012. In addition to the now completed works at the Wipa rockhole, ongoing engagement with representatives of TUAC may continue to develop other rockhole protection work in the future.

SA Native Title Services, **SAAL NRM Board**, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Australian Government





Healthy country plans are a values-based planning method that are developed and owned by Traditional Owners undertaking the process. Healthy country planning enables Aboriginal people to articulate their values of healthy country in a modern, planning framework – to guide land practices over a 10 year time frame with an annual action plan and monthly schedule.

learly identifying the natural and Cultural assets that a community values in their own terms means that the plan can clearly record how to manage and look after these assets in ways that give the community a chance to live on, enjoy and manage the land as one country. The plans can also raise the community's capacity to meet their cultural responsibilities and manage country on their own terms.

The Arabana Aboriginal Corporation has developed two Healthy Country Plans for Finniss Springs Indigenous Protected Area and for the Arabana Native Title area which includes Kati Thanda-Lake Evre National Park and Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park.

Sam Stuart, member of the Arabana Aboriginal Corporation, was a part of the process for their healthy country plans and explains, "now it's in our heart".

It was a positive and motivating process for Sam, who said, "Who's going to do the jobs and how are we going to fund them to keep the plan alive, is our next challenge."

The healthy country plans are intended to help the community leverage funds from additional public and private sources in order to deliver on their action plan.

Healthy country planning has also been undertaken in the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area located between the Flinders Ranges and Gammon Ranges in the SA Arid Lands region.

Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR), Nature Conservancy, SAAL NRM Board

Thirrka (Blanche Cup) – Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park

FIND OUT MORE

Aboriginal land managers who are wondering if a healthy country plan is right for them, can talk to Sam Stuart, Arabana Aboriginal Corporation on 0488 176 808.



Katheryn Litherland, has returned home to live and work on country in her roles as a Park Ranger on the Innamincka Regional Reserve, a Yandruwandha woman and the daughter of the late Jack Guttie. Here, she shares her insights 12 months into her journey.

WALKING IN MY FATHER'S FOOTPRINTS

I am the first in my family to live on my father's country, the Cooper Creek area in the far north-east of South Australia and for me, what's meaningful, is being able to be a part of contributing to looking after and learning about country.

What hits home for me living on country is that we need more understanding of what's there that we need to preserve and protect from our cultural sites to other cultural aspects like the hunting and the knowledge shared over the campfires yarns. Also, we need to educate and share some of this with non-Aboriginal people.

I'd like to see more opportunities for our people to come back to country, to experience connecting with country, and to enhance and strengthen a sense of belonging and definitely to take on the role of ownership with country.

Having the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee (YYPAC), Yandruwandha people, Yawarrawarrka people and my own family come out on country in the past year has been a really big thing for me. It brings healing to my soul when my mob are on country and we are one, happy mob. I think it's important to ask ourselves, "How do we as Aboriginal people come up with ideas for creating employment on country for our mob?" and "what do we want to see out on country?" Going back to our communities and asking these questions I think will help determine how to bring more of our people back to country.

In my role as a Ranger, I contribute to managing the campgrounds, looking after the AIM (Australian Inland Mission) building, sharing some of my knowledge with visitors to the area as well as working on country with fencing, Buffel Grass control and installing interpretive signs. Education and training for Aboriginal people is one of the ways I think that we can bring skills back to country and contribute to its preservation. Training in Buffel Grass control as well as all the policies and procedures that go with it are an example of this.

We, as Aboriginal people have to adapt to training, come into the mainstream and work with them white fellas so that we can be educated and then we can take that back to the community. What's important for us as Aboriginal people, is that we are a voice, we are a voice in our community; we can speak up but we need to be able to work in with different departments and other people around us, people within the township, mining companies and other stakeholders. We need to be able to come to the table and work together as one mob. It's everyone's business when looking after country to preserve and to protect for future generation. And this is my vision.

We don't own country, country owns us and I am blessed to be able to walk in my father's footprints.

DO YOU HAVE A NRM PROJECT IN MIND?

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands' Aboriginal Partnerships team is located at the Railway Station, Port Augusta. You can contact Mark Walsh, Aboriginal Partnerships Co-ordinator (mark.walsh@sa.gov. au) or Camille Jenkinson, Aboriginal Partnerships Officer (Camille. jenkinson@sa.gov.au) on 8648 5300. Connected to Country is prepared and edited by the Communications team, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, a division of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

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WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR MAILING LIST?

Please contact the Natural Resources Centre SA Arid Lands on (08) 8648 5300 or email: SAAridlands@sa.gov.au Connected to Country reports on Aboriginal NBM activities in the region and we welcome

NRM activities in the region and we welcome contributions from other agencies and community.

CALL FOR CONTENT Content due by COB Friday 29 May