

Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan 2012-2022

One mob together for country

Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan

Warning: This plan may contain images, names and references to deceased Aboriginal people.

The Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan was prepared for Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation by:

Balanggarra Traditional Owners,
Frank Weisenberger (KLC),
Dr Tom Vigilante (KLC),
Dr Kim Doohan (Consultant Anthropologist).

The information presented in all the maps and figures herein reflects Traditional Owner views.

Design, layout and Seasonal Calendar: Jane Lodge (KLC)

Drawings in Seasonal Calendar: Lois Haywood, ECI Insitu Pty Ltd.

Mapping: Kim Lukehurst

Citation: Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation / Kimberley Land Council (2011): Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan.

©All traditional and cultural knowledge in this plan is the cultural and intellectual property of Balanggarra Traditional Owners and is published with the consent of the Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation. Written consent from Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation must be obtained for use of any material. Any unauthorised dealing is a serious breach of the customary Balanggarra law and may also breach the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth).

Cover painting by Betty Bundamurra: "Gathering Food".

BALANGGARRA

Story of the plan..... 2

Location 3

Balanggarra People..... 4

Vision 6

Balanggarra targets 7

 Target 1: Balanggarra law and culture..... 8

 Target 2: Our gra.....10

 Target 3: Cultural sites12

 Target 4: Native animals14

 Target 5: Accessible bush tucker / medicine plants16

 Target 6: Right way fire.....18

 Target 7: Freshwater.....20

 Target 8: Saltwater fish and seafood.....22

 Target 9: Migratory saltwater species24

Health of our targets.....26

The main threats.....28

 Lack of TO consultation.....30

 Lack of infrastructure to access country31

 Climate change.....32

 Weeds.....33

 Cane toads.....34

 Lack of land and sea management capacity.....35

 Unmanaged wildfires.....36

 Large introduced animals37

 Uncontrolled visitor access38

Enhancing viability – mitigating threats.....39

 Objectives.....40

 Strategies.....41

 Adaptive Management42

References & Abbreviations 44

Appendix 1: Glossary Belaa words 45

Appendix 2: Nested Targets: Matters
of National Significance..... 47

Acknowledgements 48

Maps

Map 1: Location of Balanggarra Country.....3

Map 2: Statutory land tenure5

Map 3: Important cultural and heritage Sites 13

Map 4: Native animal habitat distribution..... 15

Map 5: Fire frequency 19

Map 6: Priority catchments and culturally important
freshwater sites 21

Map 7: Occurrence of migratory saltwater animals 25

Figures

Figure 1: Balanggarra seasonal calendar..... 17

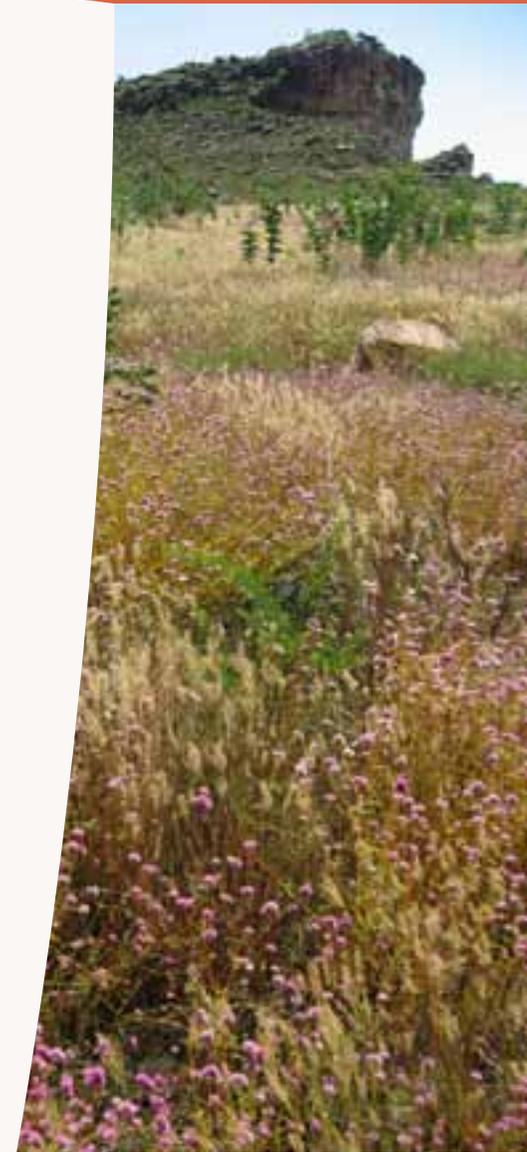
Tables

Table 1: The health of Balanggarra targets 27

Table 2: The main threats to Balanggarra Country 29

Table 3: Strategies for healthy country 40

Table 4: Monitoring of our objectives..... 42



Wildflowers in Balanggarra country
Photo: KLC

BALANGGARRA



Reporting back after breakout sessions at Home Valley
Photo: KLC



Balanggarra TOs voting on targets
Photo: KLC

We, the Balanggarra people, lodged our Native Title Claim in 1999 to get our rights and interests recognized by the Australian Government and the Australian people. These rights and interests in our land come from our traditional Balanggarra laws and customs. During all these years we voiced in many projects (North Kimberley Traditional Owner's Land and Sea Management Project 2000, Saltwater Country Project 2004 to now) how we want to look after our country.

During the Saltwater Country Project we heard about Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) and decided we wanted to do community consultations and talk about declaring an IPA. To make sure that we get the plan right from the beginning we used the Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process to make this Plan of Management. The CAP process has been used all over the world in conservation management. We amended the CAP process to include the cultural dimension, so that the Planning Tool works for Traditional Owners. It helps us to ask the right questions and in making the right connections. Using the CAP tool, we had Full Claim Group Meetings to give main directions for the plan and smaller IPA Working Group Meeting with representatives from all Balanggarra families to talk about all the other parts of a good plan.

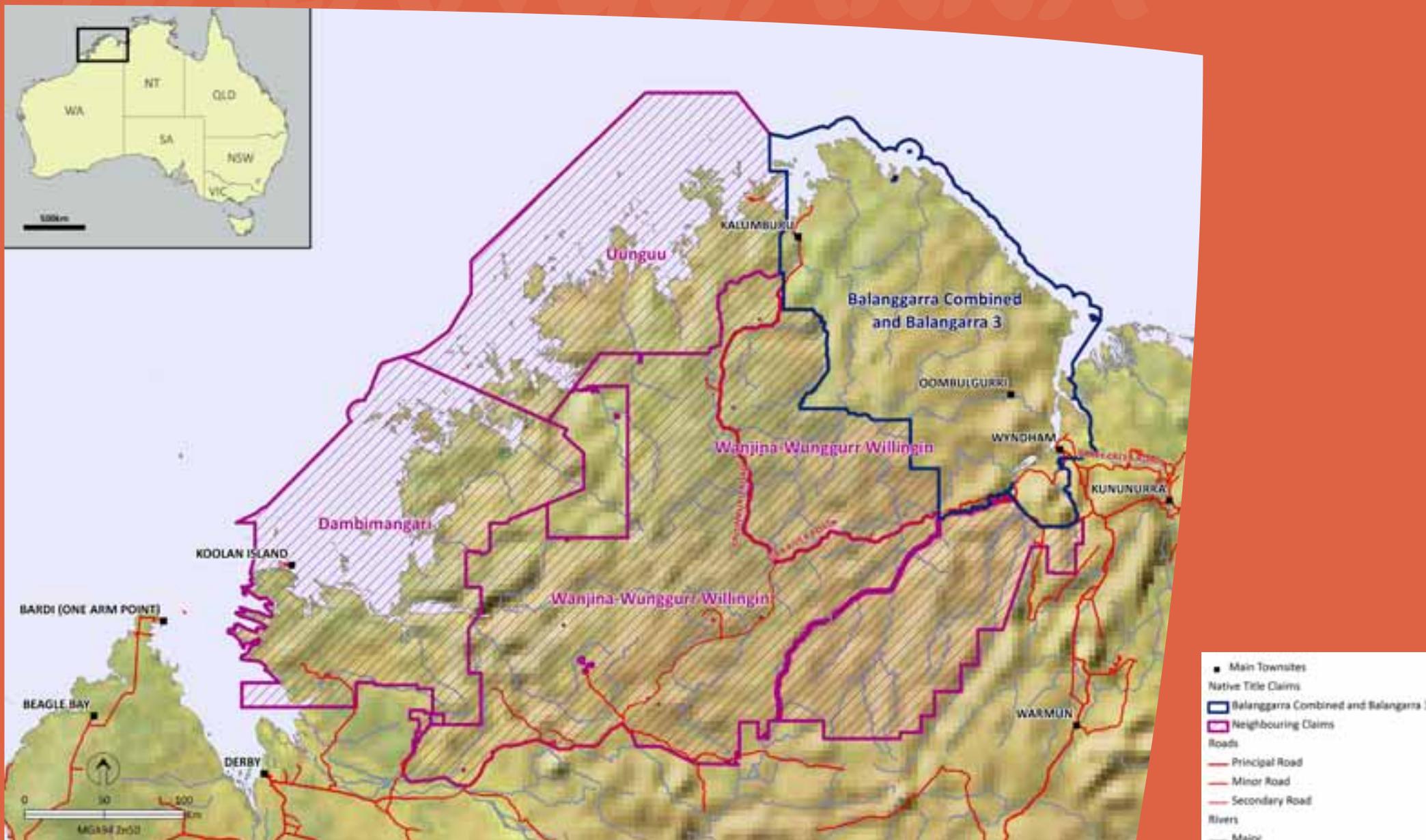
This plan explains how Balanggarra people want to look after their country. We want to bring together all the recommendations made in the past so that our country stays healthy and our values are passed on to our future generations.

Our plan is set out in several different parts. Page 3 to 5 gives an introduction to our country and our people; From page 6 to 27 we explain our vision for Balanggarra Country and the most important things we want to look after in our country; the following part (page 28 to 38) of the plan talks about all the threats that can make our country and the important things in our country unhealthy. In the last part (page 39 to 43) we present our objectives and strategies on how we want to keep Balanggarra Country healthy and deal with the threats to our country.



CAP workshop in Kalumburu
Photo: KLC

Map 1: Location of Balangarra Country



BALANGGARRA



Balanggarra means “one mob together for country.” Our old people gave this name to our claim for our gra, our country. Our gra, our land and sea country, covers about 2.6 million hectares in the north Kimberley region of northern Australia (Map 1 and Map 2).

This Country has been our home for many thousands of years. Our old people did not just talk one language, or call themselves by one name; there different names that tell us where our old people came from and what language they talked in that country. Gwini is a main name we use, it really means ‘east’ and is the name we use today for all the people from Kalumburu right down to Oombulgurri but there are other names for the people and country too like Argna, Arawari, Barang-ngala, Yura and Gular.

Some of our country has ‘blue water’, all that country from roughly north of the Forrest River drainage system west to Kalumburu including: Cape Londonderry, the lower Drysdale River as well as the Lyne, Berkeley and King George Rivers plus all the saltwater, the reef, and offshore islands, including Sir Graham Moore and Governor Islands. The rest of our country we call ‘brown water’ which is in the southern part of our claim and takes in all the land drained by the Forrest River system, and the muddy waters and some offshore islands of the Cambridge Gulf, like Adolphus and Lacrosse Islands. No matter that some of us got brown water and some blue water we are all still one mob because this is all our country, our homeland. Anthropologists always looked for one name for us all but we never worked like that.

Strangers to our country are called gamalii – they have different rules to us and they belong to a different mob and different country. We have the brolga and turkey for our symbols of the two moieties or skins that can marry each other but we do not have the same kind of skins like our neighbours the Miriwoong. We follow our Dreamings like the Snake and Wolara the Creator and have our own paintings in our country but they belong to our gra. We do not follow the Wanjina like our neighbours to the west. Our old people used to follow the wunan or sharing system with these neighbours to the east and the west and we still know about that sharing law today.

Today we live a different life to our Ancestors but we still remember where we come from and how we have to look after our gra. Most of us live in communities in our own country like Kalumburu or Oombulgurri or in the town of Wyndham. Some of us live in Kununurra.

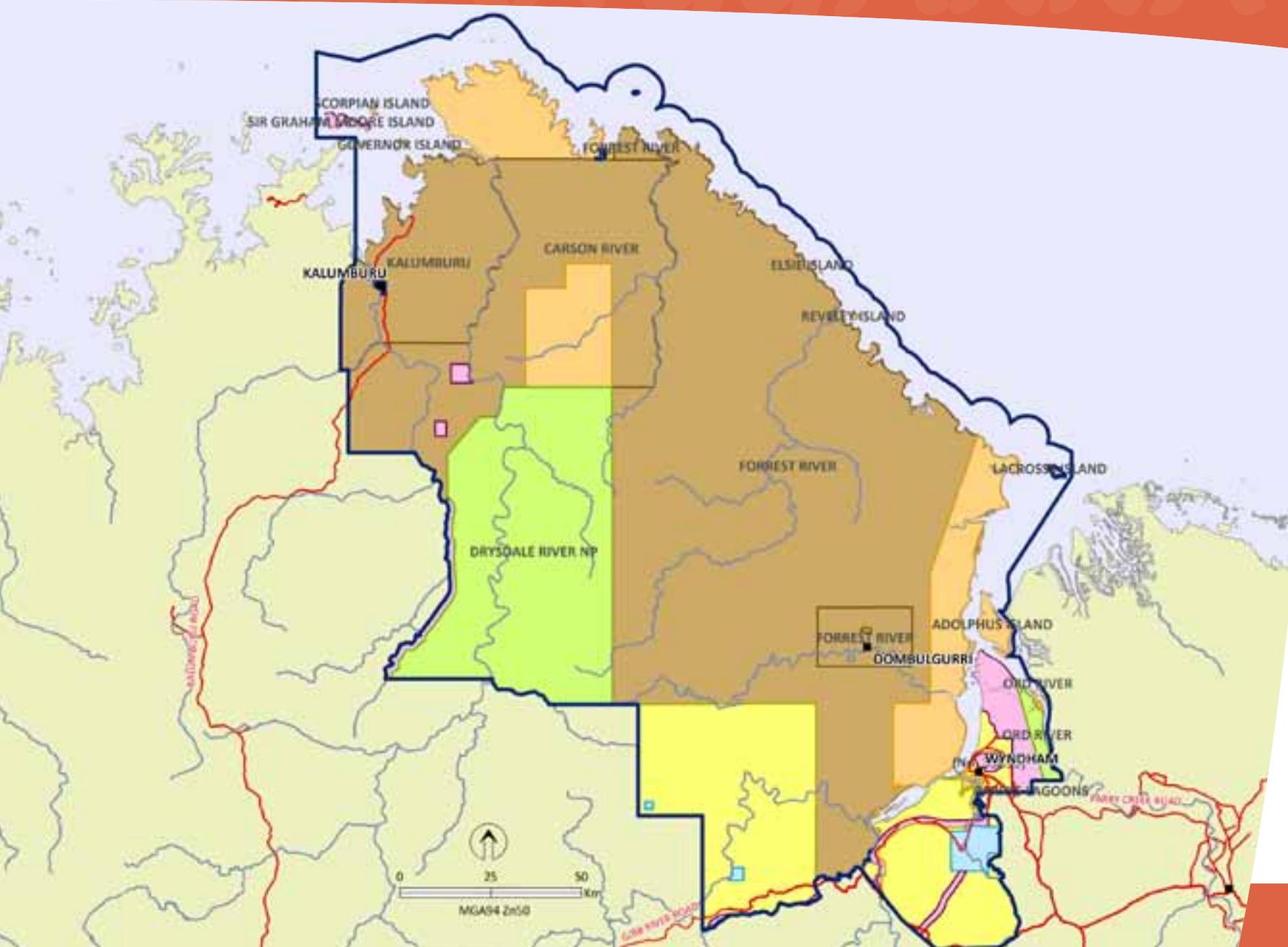


Blue water at King George Falls
Photo: KLC

Brown water at Cambridge Gulf
Photo: KLC

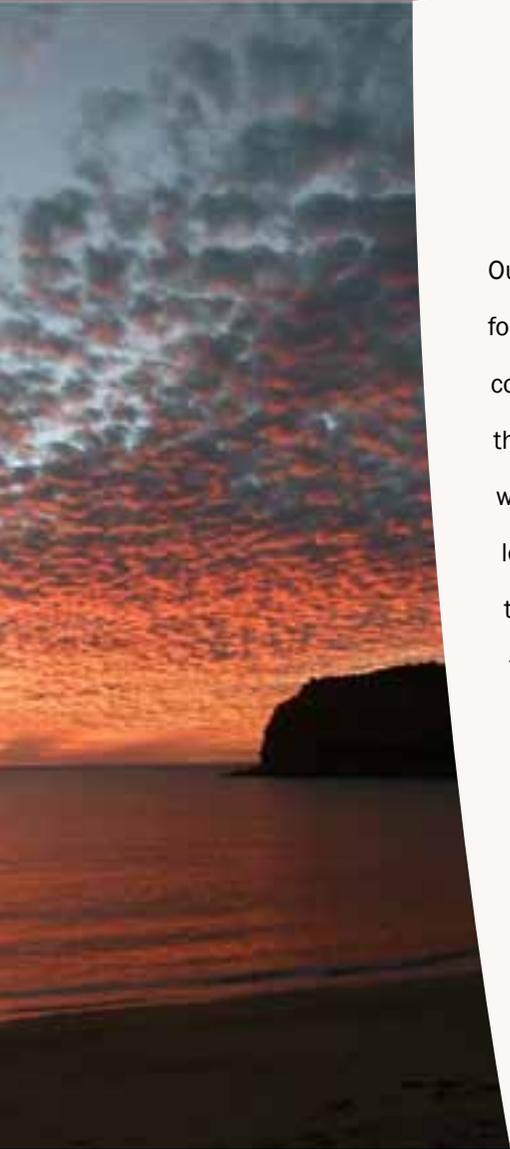
BALANGGARRA

Map 2: Statutory land tenure



Forrest River
Photo: KLC

- Balangarra Combined and Balangarra 3 Native Title Claims Area
- Land Tenure**
- Aboriginal Reserve
- Nature Conservation Reserve
- Other Crown Land
- Private Land
- Reserved Crown Land
- Vacant Crown Land
- Water Reserve



Our Balanggarra law and culture gives us the rules and responsibilities for looking after Balanggarra culture, plants, animals, people and country. Today we are living in two worlds—the traditional world and the western world. Writing this plan, we use the CAP process as a western way of putting all our knowledge together. But we are also looking after our country in the way that our old people did for many thousands of years. With this plan we want to bring together our traditional ways of looking after country with the western ways. This plan tells the story of how we want to look after our country in two ways—our vision gives us the direction of where we want to go.

Balanggarra Vision

On our land — everyone on their country

It is our vision that:

- we will manage our own country by our own rules and others engage properly with Balanggarra Traditional Owners.
- we want to keep our culture, language and law alive, protected and recognised.
- we want to look after the native animals and plants on land and in the sea of Balanggarra Country by our own traditional Balanggarra knowledge and western scientific research.
- we want to speak for our country, decide for our country and control access to our country.
- Balanggarra Traditional Owners will give permission for and decide on access to our country.
- we want to bring our young people back to country to give them a future on country and to teach and educate our future generations about Balanggarra Law and Culture.
- we want to give our young people education, training and employment for business opportunities on country to protect and control country

At our first meeting at Home Valley Station many things were said of what is important to us, what we want to look after. When we started the Conservation Action Planning process we focused on the eight most important things (we call them here “target”). But that does not mean that we are forgetting about the many other things said. Some things we could lump together for planning. For example, we put all the different culturally important land animals together under the topic “native animals”. Other things we might not have put in the targets but we can still do while looking after the most important targets. It’s like when we go out to look after a freshwater place, we can visit a rock art site as well and see if it still in good condition or we might collect some bush fruits on our way.

The same applies to things that are very important for other Australians. We have plants on Balanggarra country, that grow nearly nowhere else and animals live on our country and in our waters that are threatened elsewhere in the world. While we are looking after our eight most important targets, we are looking after these threatened species as well. The CAP process calls this “nested targets” and you can find a list of nested targets in Appendix 2

Our nine most important things are:

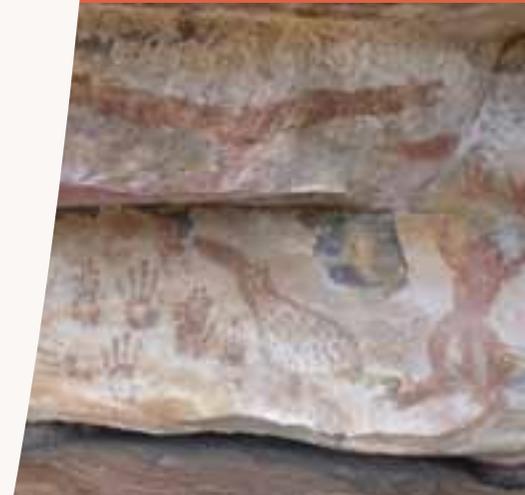
- Balanggarra law and culture
- Our Gra
- Cultural sites (rock art sites, burial sites, heritage places)
- Right way fire
- Native Animals
- Bush Tucker and Medicine Plants
- Freshwater (places and freshwater fish)
- Saltwater Fish
- Migratory Saltwater Animals (turtle, dugong, whales, dolphins)



Marrdargi (emu apple)
Photo: KLC



Bottlenose dolphin
Photo: Deb Glasgow



Important sites
Photo: KLC

Balanggarra targets

Target 1: Balanggarra law and culture

Our old people told us about our finding in country; that is the place where we were as *jilmi* (spirits), looking for our mother and father. Some people call that a totem. As Vernon Gerrard explained there are places in the country that have stories that reveal the child spirit's presence.

“We have to keep those places safe. Like Tookoolmayi, where the saltwater hits the rock, this is near the mouth of the King George. It makes that sound ‘took took’. The spirit from this place came to one old man looking for a father and he gave this spirit to his Aboriginal brother. This spirit was my best mate, he has passed away now but we know that story and that place and have to look after it.” Vernon Gerrard

We have to look after our country and our old people and important places in our country. Some of us are the “blue water mob” and some of us are the “brown water mob” but we come together as one mob, ‘Balanggarra’ for all our country because we all follow the same rules, our rules for country and for family.

“We learned from granny and now we teach our kids. We take the kids one day a month for learning cultural things, our kids welcome tourists, they know their kinship and about right marriage and our country.” Shirley Williams

Our rules are not written down on paper; we have to learn from our old people and we have to teach our

kids and grandkids. Our old people taught us that we have to share our food with our families. Even though our lives are changing we still have to keep the people and the country safe. We need to be in our country to practice and remember our rules and to teach our kids. This is what our old people always told us ‘don’t forget your culture and your country it makes you strong’.

“When I find them I will have to share with my aunty. I have to give her some; that is our rule for tucker. I can’t keep it all myself (...) we can’t take all the eggs, we have to leave some of the nests behind so that they can grow for us and lay more eggs again.” Les French when searching for turtle eggs.



Welcome to country ceremony
Photo: KLC



Grinding stone
Photo: KLC



Betty Bundamurra: "Hunter's return"

When people speak of the Gwion they often say that these figures are an important part of Law in the region; telling people how to live, to share food properly and look after each other. They are often depicted alongside the Wandjina in their contemporary art practice, and indication of the strong influence of cave painting on Kalumburu artists.

Balanggarra targets

Target 2: Our Gra

BALANGGARRA



Gra, or country is all the land, sea, rivers, islands and all that they contain and sustain. Gra is our word for our country from Kalumburu to Oombulgurri but gra is more than just the land and the sea. Gra means home, it is our homeland. Our gra is the place we use for camping all the time; it's our history, where our family comes from. Our gra reminds us of our old people. We say gra when we talk about specific areas like Oomari or Pago. Gra can be used as well to describe bigger country such as Manarra (coastal Berkeley region) or Wirngir (Lyne River area).

“They say “I want to go back to Urrarro, home” [Urrarro is the hill next to Kalumburu]. Dry weather time I go to Pago and Matilda Rock and Langgananda Point and take the kids in the school holidays. It's a good camping area. [matilda rock and langgananda are fishing places near Pago].”
Gertrude — gra means home.

Falls are the male and female Snakes who travelled from the far western reaches of our country at Sir Graham Moore Island. They travelled over land and in the sea. The islands are evidence of the creator Snake itself. The saltwater was created by Wolara as he 'poled his canoe' in the coastal regions. Some of the islands are where his pole touched the seabed. Rinjiibarda'bindingei (to the north of Cape Londonderry) is a reef where the Dreaming Star 'fell down' to become the very

shiny and highly prized, ritually and socially important pearl shell.

“You need to smoke people and talk to the land when people visit gra.”
Gregory Johnstone

All of us are connected to and responsible for our gra in a number of ways. We are connected to the very local gra of our conception or finding — our *wulu* site; we have connections to the more regional gra of our mothers, fathers and grandparents. Us Balanggarra people have to care for our gra and we have to assist our husband or wife to care for their gra as well.

Gra is a living space; Dreaming Beings created and continue to inhabit the country. There is evidence of the presence of these creator beings in the land and seascapes. For us King George



Brolgas at Pago
Photo: KLC

Quarry site
Photo: David Guilfoyle

BALANGGARRA

Balanggarra targets

Target 2: Our Gra



Mary Taylor “Camera Pool”

This work is associated with the artist's country of Camera Pool just north of Oombulgurri (Forrest River). Traditional artefacts such as boomerangs can be seen alongside roundels representing stone country and rockholes. In the outer edge of the work are rock hills that surround the site.

Balanggarra targets

Target 3: Cultural sites



When we say “cultural sites” we are talking about rock art sites, burial sites, carving sites and heritage places like the old mission place at Pago or the Massacre Site near Oombulgurri. It is important to remember that all of our country is a cultural place for us that has rules and requirements for how we look after it. The “cultural sites” are some of the particular places of importance to us, in a wider landscape of cultural significance.

Our rock art is made up of different images of plants, animals and Girri-girro or Errurru paintings, which our old people painted in caves and shelters in our hill country. These paintings are like human images that show the old people with their head-dresses and tassels when they are hunting or dancing and living their lives. Our rock art is like a guide to the country, paintings tell us about how to live, where we can find Bush Tucker plants or where there is good hunting. We believe that these images were produced by our ancestors as a history for future generations telling them about their ancient everyday and ritual life, for us now to learn and to look after them. Our country has recently been added to the National Heritage List of Australia as part of the cultural landscape of the west Kimberley because of the significance to the nation of the Girri-girro.

When someone died in the old days their bones would be taken to visit all their family and then they would be wrapped in paper bark and taken back to their wulu country and put in a shelter or cave there. We need to make sure that these

“*That’s wrong to climb up there, the waterfall. You mustn’t take people on top and you mustn’t go on top yourselves. If anything happens who’s to blame? They might fall down themselves from the big stones, did you see these stones are loose everyone, it’s dangerous.*”

D Cheinmora

resting places are not disturbed.

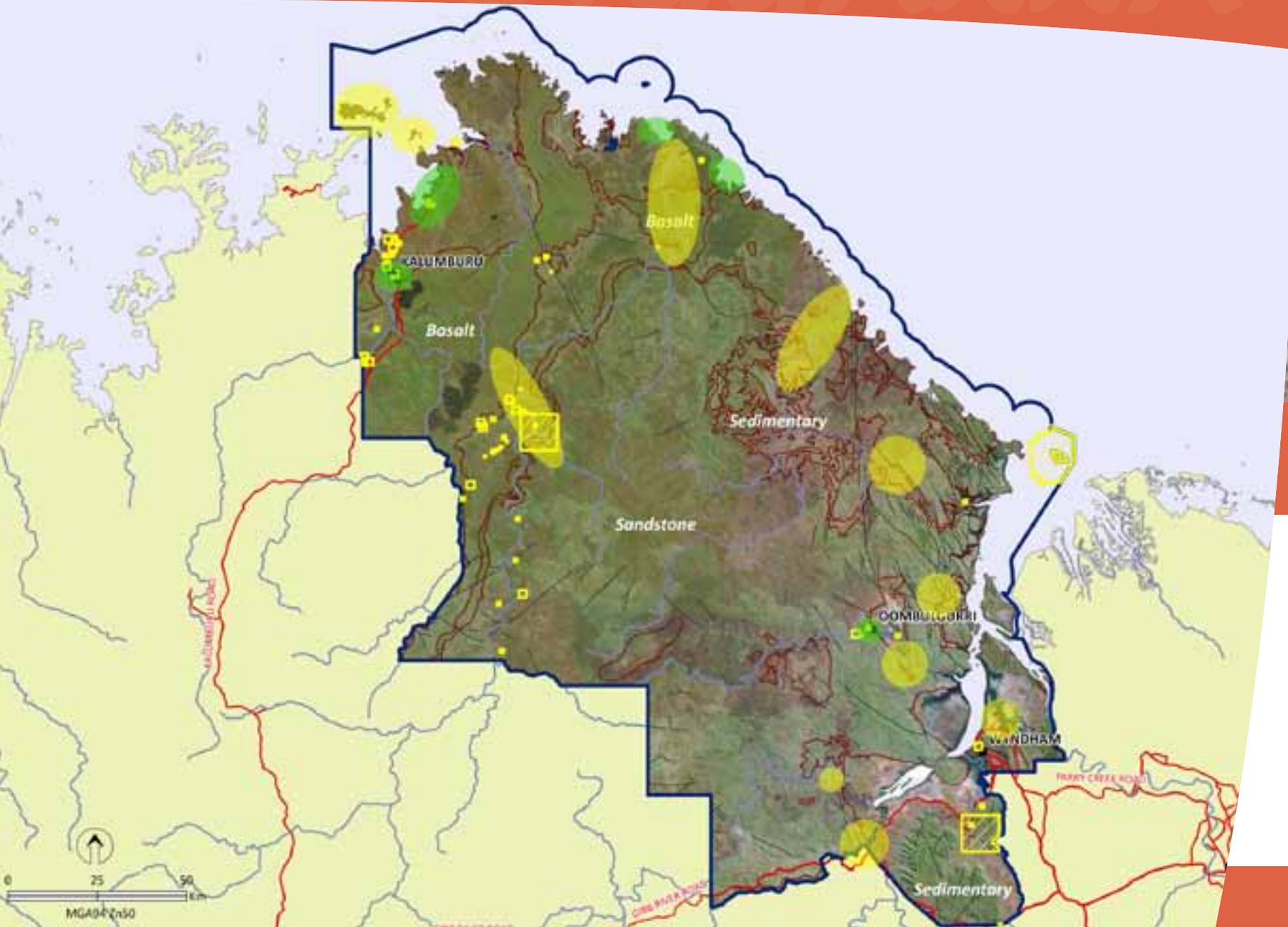
Since the arrival of the Europeans many different kinds of things happened on Balanggarra country. These things are now part of the history of our people. They remind us of our life in the mission or when

Balanggarra people helped Europeans who got in trouble on our country: like the group of ship-wrecked people from the MV Koolama. Aboriginal runners from the missions came to their help and walked them out of their misery to the safety of the mission.

We need to visit all these important places regularly to check that they haven’t been disturbed and are still healthy. Sometimes introduced animals damage the sites or a wildfire comes through; sometimes visitors come through and go there without asking for permission first. Balanggarra country is rich with culture and ‘cultural sites’. We will be using Australian laws to help us meet that obligation through this IPA management. There are too many cultural sites on Balanggarra country to look after them all. We want to make our own register and record all the sites and this way determine what are the most important sites and most threatened sites to look after and which ones tourists might try to go to. Map 3 shows these priority cultural and heritage sites on our country in sandstone country and near rocky outcrops. There are many more places our Rangers and Traditional Owners have to visit to map all our sites on other parts of our vast claim.

“*When you take visitors there, you have to call out to the old people and when they answer you, then you can take people there.*”

Jeanie



Oomari
Photo: David Guilfoyle

- Balanggarra Combined and Balanggarra 3 Native Title Claims Area
- Aboriginal Sites
 - Paintings
 - Important Sites
 - Heritage Sites
- Geology
 - Geological Units
 - Linear Structures

Balanggarra targets

Target 4: Native animals



Wallamba (Antilopine kangaroo)
Photo: Sally Vigilante



Wirrirri (Gouldian finch)
Photo: Phil Palmer

When we talk about Native Animals in this Plan, we are talking about animals Balanggarra people were hunting traditionally in the past and animals that have cultural significance for Balanggarra. While looking after these animals we are looking after all the threatened and endemic species important for all Australians (a list of culturally important animals and threatened/endemic species can be found in Appendix 2 of this plan) as well. Map 4 shows the different kind of bush (habitat distribution) on our country, were certain animals can be found.

Our old people were hunting for *Agra* (kangaroos), *Jebarra* (emu), *Barnarr* (turkey), *Mankarr* (sand goanna), *Jadingu* (red flying fox) and *Jurrku* (echidna) amongst many others. We have many traditional stories about these animals. Some families can't hunt certain animals because they are totemic to them. Our traditional knowledge is about hunting, burning country and cooking the animals the right way. To pass on our knowledge to future generations Balanggarra is working on a plants and animals list in which all names and knowledge are put together in a book (a glossary of Kwini and Forrest River words for plants and animals can be found in Appendix 1 of this plan).

We are only hunting for our traditionally important animals when it is the right season. When the south-easterlies are blowing during *Yirma*, *Agra* (kangaroos) are fat and good

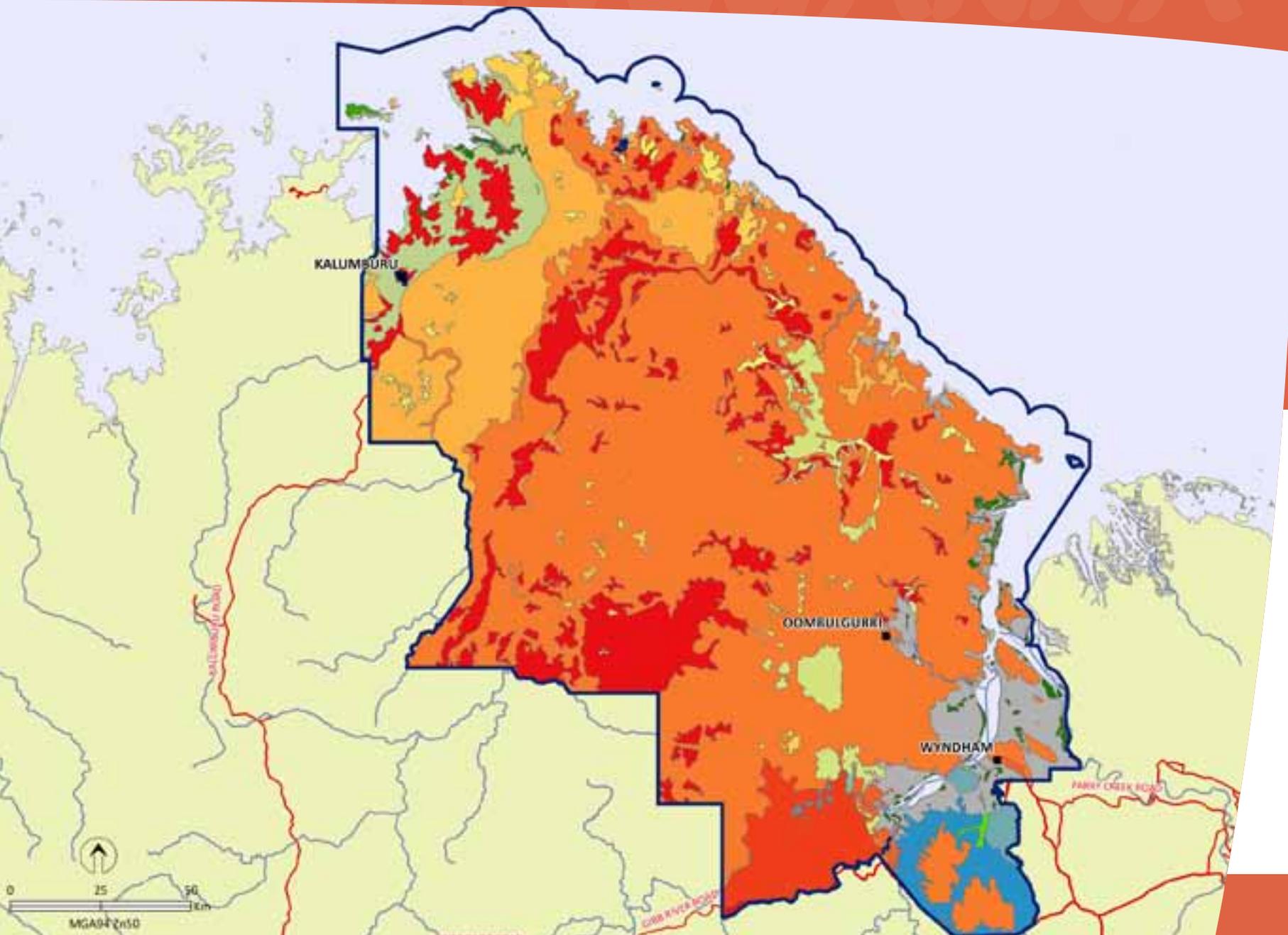
“*You see a hollow tree, look for scratches, cut a little hole at the bottom and put smoke into the tree and smoke them out. Sometimes you put a wild cat in the hole and bring out the possum, the one with the white tail.*”
Mary Pandilow on brushtail possum

to eat. When the *Wuluwurr* (Woolleybutt) is in flower *Monongei* (brushtailed possum) come out of their hollow trees and they are easier to get.

Burning the right way is an important looking-after-country activity for the target Native Animals in Savannah woodland. Not just anyone can start the fires; the right people for country have to say that it is OK to burn. In the

old days the 'bosses' for country and our traditional hunters used fire to herd animals into an area where they could be speared. Fire is also important to make plants get green shoots for some of the animals to eat. If wrong way fire wipes out a lot of our country at one time, many of these animals don't survive or have a place to live in. That's why we need to do patch burning so fire stops and doesn't burn through all our country at once. Weeds can impact negatively on native animals and other targets by out-competing native plants and causing more hot fires as exotic plants might dry out later in the year.

Cane Toads will impact heavily on small animals and we need to make sure to record them before Cane Toads come through Balanggarra Country. But it is very difficult for us to come to all parts of our country because there are only a few tracks and the country is very rugged and you need a good motor car to get through.



Manbarr (Agile wallaby)
Photo: Frank Weisenberger

- Balanggarra Common and Balanggarra 2
- Balanggarra 1
- Balanggarra 3
- Balanggarra 4
- Balanggarra 5
- Balanggarra 6
- Balanggarra 7
- Balanggarra 8
- Balanggarra 9
- Balanggarra 10
- Balanggarra 11
- Balanggarra 12
- Balanggarra 13
- Balanggarra 14
- Balanggarra 15
- Balanggarra 16
- Balanggarra 17
- Balanggarra 18
- Balanggarra 19
- Balanggarra 20
- Balanggarra 21
- Balanggarra 22
- Balanggarra 23
- Balanggarra 24
- Balanggarra 25
- Balanggarra 26
- Balanggarra 27
- Balanggarra 28
- Balanggarra 29
- Balanggarra 30
- Balanggarra 31
- Balanggarra 32
- Balanggarra 33
- Balanggarra 34
- Balanggarra 35
- Balanggarra 36
- Balanggarra 37
- Balanggarra 38
- Balanggarra 39
- Balanggarra 40
- Balanggarra 41
- Balanggarra 42
- Balanggarra 43
- Balanggarra 44
- Balanggarra 45
- Balanggarra 46
- Balanggarra 47
- Balanggarra 48
- Balanggarra 49
- Balanggarra 50
- Balanggarra 51
- Balanggarra 52
- Balanggarra 53
- Balanggarra 54
- Balanggarra 55
- Balanggarra 56
- Balanggarra 57
- Balanggarra 58
- Balanggarra 59
- Balanggarra 60
- Balanggarra 61
- Balanggarra 62
- Balanggarra 63
- Balanggarra 64
- Balanggarra 65
- Balanggarra 66
- Balanggarra 67
- Balanggarra 68
- Balanggarra 69
- Balanggarra 70
- Balanggarra 71
- Balanggarra 72
- Balanggarra 73
- Balanggarra 74
- Balanggarra 75
- Balanggarra 76
- Balanggarra 77
- Balanggarra 78
- Balanggarra 79
- Balanggarra 80
- Balanggarra 81
- Balanggarra 82
- Balanggarra 83
- Balanggarra 84
- Balanggarra 85
- Balanggarra 86
- Balanggarra 87
- Balanggarra 88
- Balanggarra 89
- Balanggarra 90
- Balanggarra 91
- Balanggarra 92
- Balanggarra 93
- Balanggarra 94
- Balanggarra 95
- Balanggarra 96
- Balanggarra 97
- Balanggarra 98
- Balanggarra 99
- Balanggarra 100

Balanggarra targets

Target 5: Accessible bush tucker/medicine plants



Küley (green plum)
Photo: KLC



Barnkiya Ninya (cocky apple)
Photo: Tom Vigilante

Bushtucker and medicine plants are important for Balanggarra people. We use the plants growing on our Country for Bush Tucker, medicine, tools, weapons arts and craft. With our traditional knowledge we can read our country like a book. Some of our plants we can use as indicators in our seasonal calendar. When the *liija* (turkey bush) flowers, it's the best time to pick oysters. *Mangkuru* (sea-turtles) are mating and laying their eggs when the *Wuluwurr* (Woollybutt) is in flower. When the first south-easterly winds are blowing most of the root crops and tubers are ready to be picked.

Our country is like a big supermarket and women can collect a range of bush foods in the right season. *Karnmangku minya* (long yam) is important for Kwini people and you can find them in many rock-paintings. After we dig up the yam, we replant the top so it gives us food in the next season. In the wet season the fruit of *guleyi* (Green plum) is ripe and everyone wants to eat them. Sometimes *guleyi* grow together in big mobs and our old people looked after those places with fire to make sure they got lots of fruit. We collect and eat the fruit of *Barnkiya minya* (cocky apple), *Dingarla minya* (White beach apple) or *Langanda winya* (Bush almond). You can find the names and use of many more plant foods in the Belaa Plants and Animal list. We are compiling this book so coming generations can read up on all the uses of the plants growing on our country.

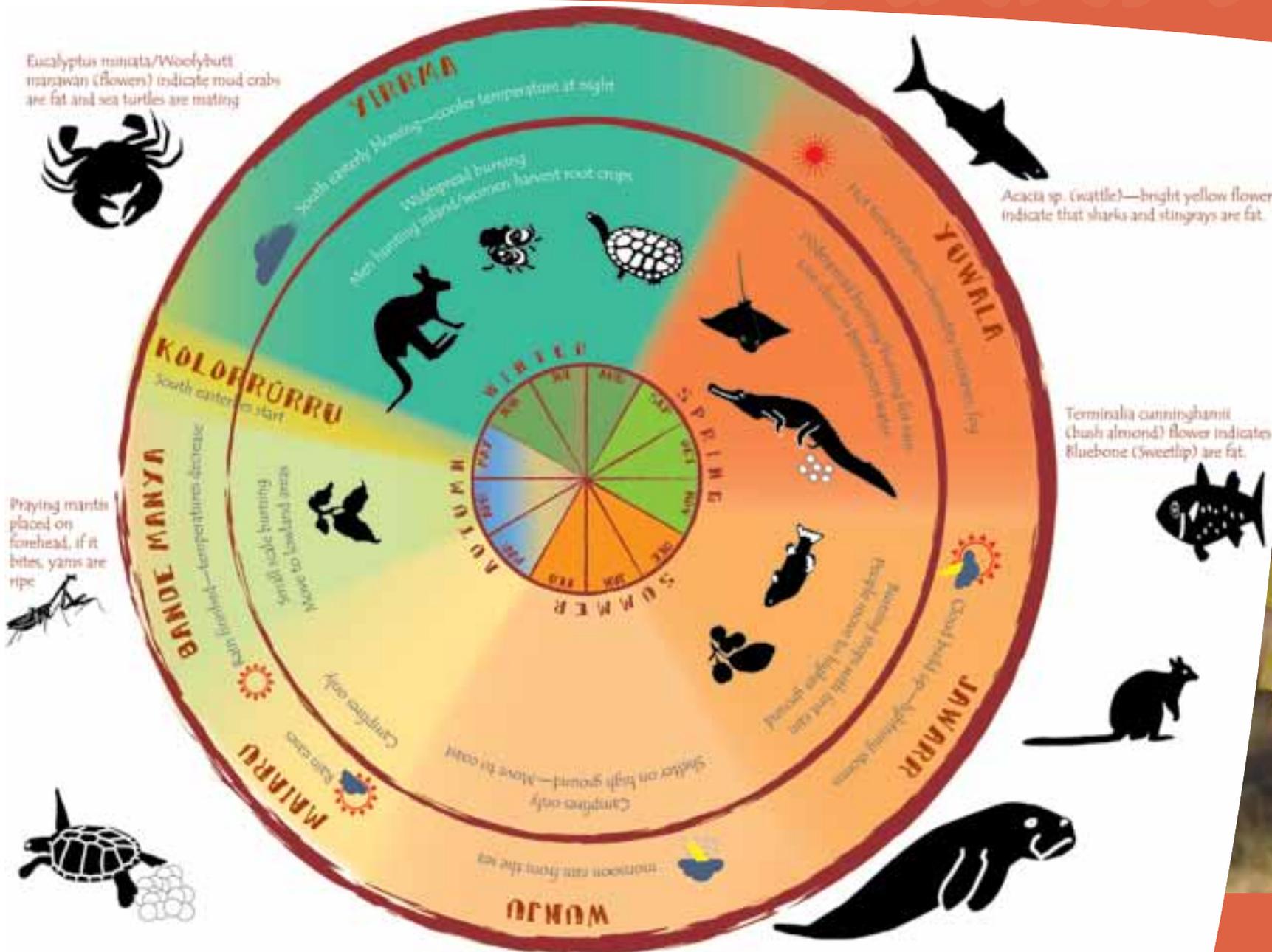
We still use bush medicine today if we don't have tablets. For us the bush is like a dispensary. We call the sap of *Burunkurr* (Bloodwood) *kuriny winya* and use it to treat ulcers and boils. We eat the fruit of *Mardarrgi* (Quinine Tree) to treat toothaches.

We use the leaves and fruits of *Bawaja* (Soap Tree) or the roots of *Danba minya* (Freshwater Mangrove) when they are smashed up as a fish poison. We spread the crushed roots in the billabong or river, the water goes soapy and the fish float to the surface and can be collected by hand.

The old stems of *Bimarr ninya* (Banksia) were used to carry fire. They smolder along their whole length and you can light another one from the remaining butt.

The large straight stem of *Wundala minya* (Red Kapok Tree) can be used to make rafts, dug-out canoes and coolamons and the wood is good for carving boomerang. *Figure 1* shows the seasonal calendar we developed when we were working on the "Belaa Plants and Animals list." You can see how our traditional seasons relate to the weather, what Balanggarra people were doing in that season and which animals were hunted.

Figure 1 : Balanggarra seasonal calendar



Marrdargi (Emu apple)
Photo: KLC



Marlinjarr Minya (Cotton tree)
Photo: KLC

Balanggarra targets

Target 6: Right way fire

BALANGGARRA



Fire training at Home Valley Station
Photo: Gary Lienert



Prescribed burning Warri Park
Photo: KLC

Fire is one of the most important things Balanggarra people use to keep country, animals and plants healthy. When fire goes through country in the right season it helps trees to produce bush fruits and bush medicine and green shoots of grasses come up for our native animals to eat. Traditionally we start burning in *Kolorrirru* after the rain eased and the ground starts drying out, but most of our burning happens during *Yirrama* when the south-easterlies blow steadily and the grasses cure. We try to avoid hot burns as the fires destroy our big trees and some animals cannot escape widespread hot fires. *Miyawarr/Kuru minya* (cypress pine) is very sensitive to fire. Big fires kill the adult trees and they have to come back from seed. We use *Miyawarr/Kuru minya* as mosquito repellent, when we smoulder the wood in the fire. Map 5 shows the fire frequency on our country: it tells that some parts of our country get burned too often while other parts of country need more fire-management.

Some threatened species like the Gouldian Finch nests in hollow trees that can be damaged by hot fire. A bad fire around Wyndham destroyed much of their native habitat a few years ago.

“In this King George area, a lot of people used to walk around here before, on the side of this beach, in this country. So when strangers come here ... they got to get smoked by smoke-fire ... so they don't get sick walking around in the bush, you know. That's why we put everyone through the smoke so no one can't dream about the old time, the olden day spirit make them silly in the head.”

Neil Taylor

“Cold season is the time to burn — makes all the grass green and kangaroo healthy.”

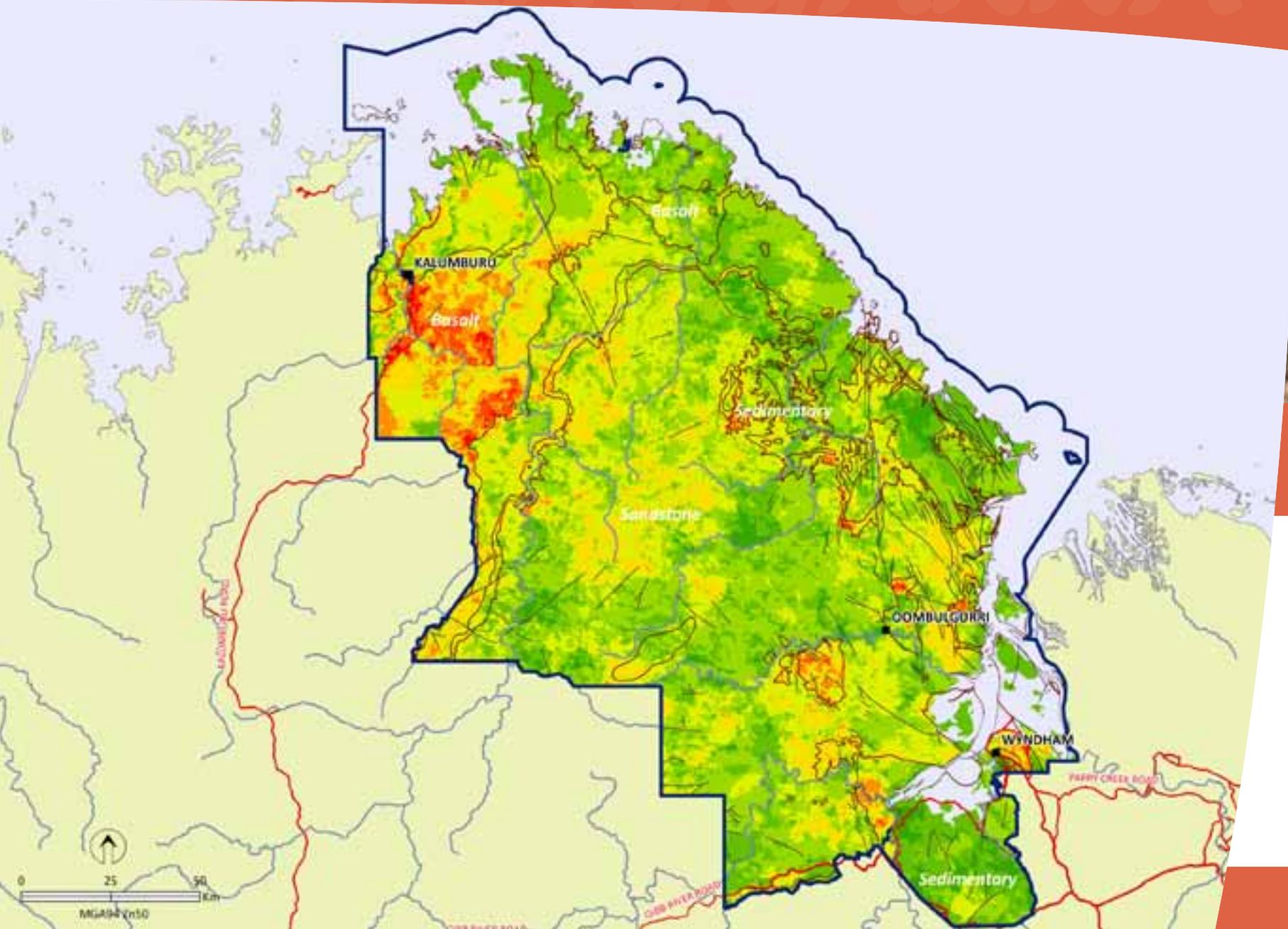
Matthew Waina

Fire is an important part of Balanggarra culture. When visitors come on country we smoke them with smoke-fire so that they can be safe in our country, we introduce them to the spirits with the smoke.

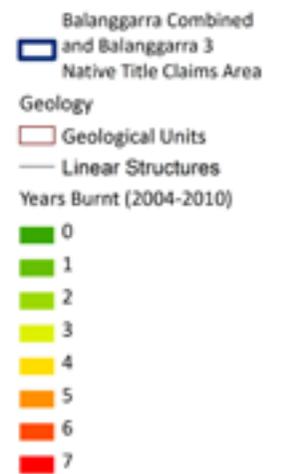


Prescribed burning at Home Valley Station
Photo: Gary Lienert

BALANGGARRA



Fire training Home Valley Station
Photo: Gary Lienert



Balanggarra targets

Target 7: Freshwater



Bonei manya (freshwater turtle)
Photo: KLC



Freshwater monitoring Oomari
Photo: David Guilfoyle

BALANGGARRA

Most of our country is made up of dry savannah. Freshwater is very important to us. When we say 'freshwater' we mean all the rivers, creeks, billabongs, waterfalls, floodwaters and swamps. The mostly permanent store of freshwater, abundance of native animals in the water and surrounding bush and the presence of Bush Tucker and bush medicine plants makes these places important to us. Our old people used to camp during *Yuwala* close to permanent freshwater and Balanggarra men and women visited these places to collect Bush Tucker. We are looking out for the stems and seed heads of *Myeeni* (waterlily) to eat and to cure cold sickness. We eat most large *Kaawii* (Freshwater Fish) like *Amalarr Manya* (Bream), *Jalanjii* (Perch) and *Yilarra* (Barramundi) and use smaller fish as bait. Traditionally we used the *karr karr* (fish spear) to catch fish. In the late dry season when rivers begin to dry up, we used fish-poison made of the crushed up bark, leaves or roots of different plants. Once mixed with sand and put in the water, the fish float to the surface and can be caught by hand. We hunt as well for *Bonei Manya* (freshwater turtles), *Koya* (freshwater crocodile), *Yawarr* (water goanna), *Kurranda* (Brolga), *Kurrurl* (Jabiru), *Juli* (Ducks and Geese) and collect *Laaru* (freshwater mussels).

In some pools spirit children live; they are waiting to be found by their fathers. At other places the Rainbow Serpent *Wungkurr* lives and people should not go swimming there. The King George Falls are two *Wungkurr*, the western one is female and the eastern one is male. But the Serpents get disturbed by tourists climbing the falls not following the law and *Wungkurr*

“Camera pool is the main drinking hole for Oombulgurri, and old lady has a dreaming of a snake there.”
Gregory Johnstone

does not make water and the falls run dry.

Most of our freshwater places are in pristine or near pristine condition. That means that our freshwater places are undisturbed or with only

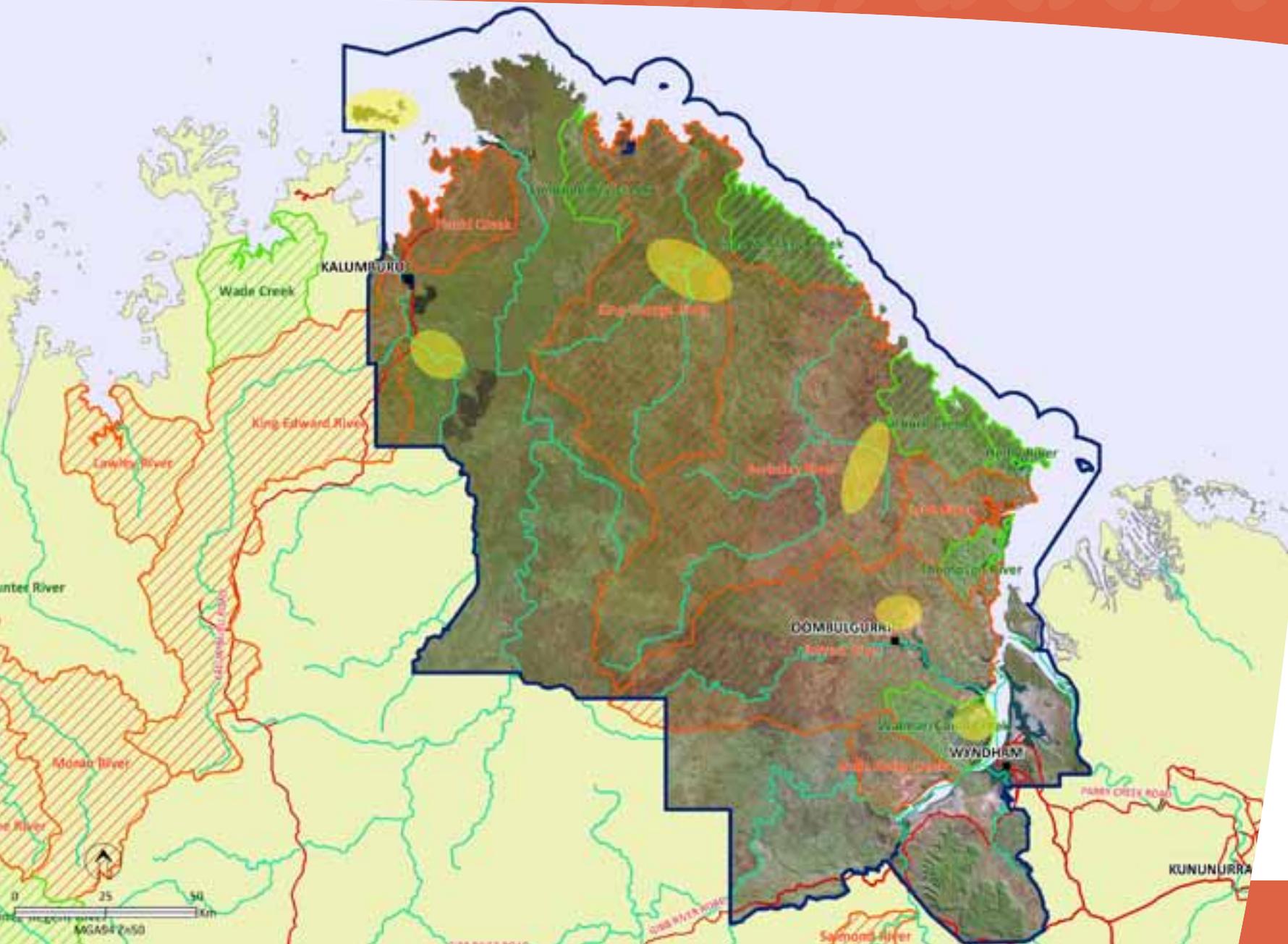
minor impacts of modern life like agriculture, dams or road crossings. Map 6 shows the areas that are important for *kartyia* and the areas important to us. Researchers from Murdoch University found that our rivers on Balanggarra Country have got the highest variety of *Kaawii* in Western Australia. Many threatened species like the Gouldian Finch or Purple Crowned Fairy Wrens live close to our water places.

To keep our freshwater places and the animals in the freshwater healthy we need to carefully manage these places. Cane toads are close to the borders of Balanggarra Country and they can kill *Yawarr*, *Koya* and many more small animals. Wild cattle and pigs digging up the banks of our rivers and waterholes disturb the vegetation and dirty the water if they fall in it and die. In the future some dangerous weeds could come into our freshwater places and we are worried about that. Already rubber-bush is spreading through our Berkeley River and changing the plants along the river banks. If the temperature keeps on increasing through climate change, the rising sea levels can bring saltwater into our freshwater places close to the coast.

Our Balanggarra Rangers did training with the Department of Water in freshwater monitoring so our Rangers are able to look after the freshwater places.

“The big swamp on the island is the freshwater source. Waterlilies in the big swamp are important food source.”
Ambrose about Sir Graham Moore Island

Map 6: Priority catchments and culturally important freshwater sites



Myeeni manya (waterlily)
Photo: Tom Vigilante

- Balanggarra Combined and Balanggarra 3 Native Title Claims Area
- Major Rivers
- DoW Priority Catchments**
- P1
- P2
- Culturally Important Freshwater places

Balanggarra targets

Target 8: Saltwater fish and seafood



Fishing at Koolama Bay
Photo: KLC



Lunji manya (Spanish flag)
Photo: KLC

Fishing is a very important part of our traditional life as Saltwater People. We have strong traditions to collect and harvest saltwater fish and other sea-foods from *Darkurr* (open sea) and our *Warrirr* (reefs). In the past we were spearing *Lubana* (mullet), *Mangkûra* (silver bream), coral trout and *Bayalu* (stingrays) along rocky coast or shallow water with our *karr karr* (fish spear) or we used a fish poison made from *Ngun ngari* (Milky Mangrove) in shallow reef pools and collect the fish from the surface. Other seafoods we have are shells like *Marlinji* (oysters), *Numbarru* (cockle shells), *Yaga manya* (Baler shells).

We are seasonal hunters and our traditional knowledge tells us when it is the right season to fish. The flowers of the wattles indicate when *Yaluwalu* (sharks) and *Bayalu* (stingrays) are fat. When *Langanda* (Bush almond) is in flower, it is the right season to look for *Wurnbarlo* (large blue bone) or *Kardei* (sweet lip). Our traditional knowledge does not only tell us when to fish, but also how to prepare fish and other seafoods.

Saltwater fish and seafood is healthy when the ocean is not polluted and when we can go out and catch enough fish for our families. Because fish is so important for us Saltwater People, we have a cultural obligation to look after our resources today and for future generations.

“They used to poison the fish — you can do it in a big river if you want to.”
Vernon Gerrard

“Some people just fishing for sport and now we can't catch enough food.”
Josephine Thompson

Balanggarra people are very worried about over-harvesting. Over-fishing can happen by commercial fishermen, tourists but local people as well. The oyster stocks around Kalumburu are depleting because it is hard to access much of our country and many people come to the same spot picking oysters. In the past trawlers came through Napier Broome Bay and we could not catch any fish for a long time. But also fishing in the *Darkurr* far off the coastline impacts what fish we can get on our coastline.

Apart from Commercial fishing, tourists are a worry sometimes. We have many visitors that come from Kununurra and Wyndham looking for fish in Cambridge Gulf and Berkeley River. Because our country is so remote we don't know whether the government can monitor how much fish is taken and we know some tourists fill their ice-boxes to the top before leaving our country. But it is not only how much fish is taken, but as well the risk of pollution: bilge water or rubbish from tourist-boats or exotic diseases from commercial ships that can come to our country with Wyndham port growing bigger and bigger and illegal foreign fishing vessels coming to our reefs. Balanggarra people have to work closer with Fisheries WA to play a role in the management of Saltwater Fish. With our local and traditional knowledge we can help to look after our Saltwater Country.

Our Rangers work together with AQIS to monitor for any exotic rubbish or animals that hitched a ride from overseas like ants.

Balangarra targets

Target 8: Saltwater fish and seafood



Dinner
Photo: KLC

Mary Punchi Clement : "Fish from the sea, that's what we eat"

Balanggarra targets

Target 9: Migratory saltwater animals



Juluwarru (turtle)
Photo: Gary Lienert



Abil (dugong)
Photo: Gary Lienert

Balanggarra People are Saltwater People and *Mangkuru manya* (marine turtles), *abil* (dugong), *yinga* (dolphin) and *wirriyal* (saltwater crocodiles) are important for us to look after on our own because these animals move around along our coastline and into our neighbours country. We need to work closely with our neighbours to make sure nothing is threatening them over their country and that they can move freely around for feeding, mating and nesting.

We have many traditional stories for *Abil* and *Mangkuru manya* and their cultural use is interwoven with our traditional lifestyle. We can find sometimes five different species of *mangkuru manya* in our sea country, but we catch mainly *Juluwarru* (Green Turtle) for its meat. When it's the right season for *Juluwarru* they have a lot of meat on them and we share the meat according to our culture and let nothing go to waste. Traditionally we hunted *mangkuru manya* with a *jawuul* (spear) made out of *Barurru winya* (Stringy bark) from a boat.

Amiya manya (turtle eggs) because they are an important food resource for us. When we can see *mungkunu* (fast running clouds) *amiya manya* are ready to be dug up. We follow the tracks of *mangkuru manya* on the beach until we find their nest and use our *jawuul* to poke in the sand to find the eggs and boil them before eating. Eggs of all sea turtles are eaten, but *Mardumarl manya* (Flatback turtle) eggs are most common as they nest on the mainland and it is easier to get to their nesting areas.

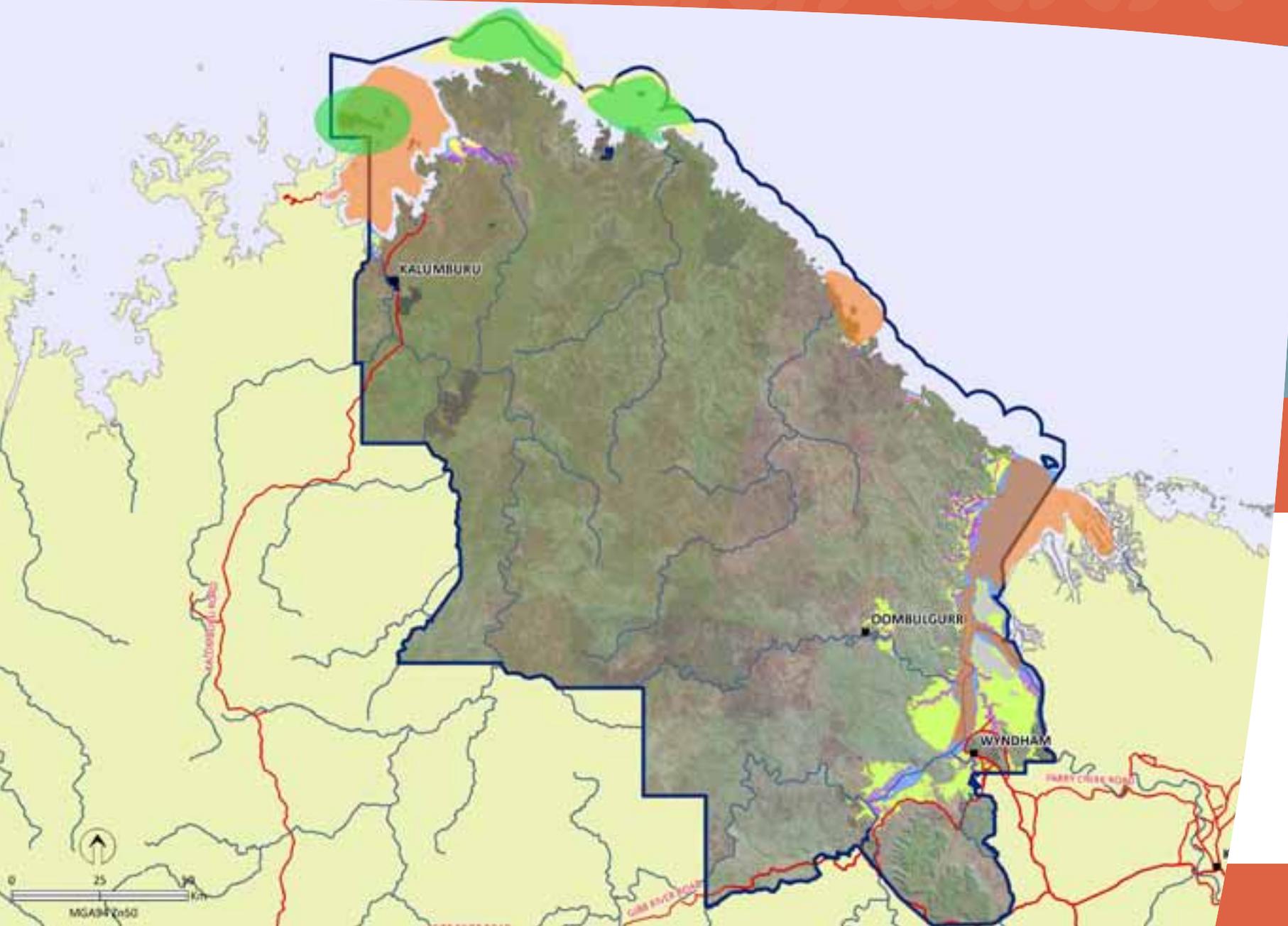
Abil and *Mangkuru manya* feed mainly on sea grass and big meadows of seagrass and many animals can be found around Cape Londonderry. Near Lewis Island is a poisonous sea-grass the *Manganerra* (Hawksbill turtle) feeds on. We

have traditional stories of old people getting sick eating the meat of *Manganerra*.

Healthy saltwater country is important to *abiil* and *Mangkuru manya*. Rubbish in the water can be bad for them: *Mangkuru manya* might mistake a plastic bag for a jelly fish and feed on it and get sick. Pollution from boats or oil rigs can be dangerous for all animals in the sea and we learned from the oil spill at the Montana rig in 2010 that we need to be careful and be prepared for the future. If temperatures increase with climate change and the sea level rises, there are less sandy beaches for turtle to nest and it can affect *amiya* changing how many male and female *Mangkuru manya* hatch.

Our Rangers worked with researchers looking for *yuliji* (whale) and *yinga* in particular for the Snubfin dolphin, which likes the murky water along parts of our coastline. All the migratory marine mammals are important for other Australians because they are threatened species and need careful management. Map 7 shows the distribution of migratory marine mammals based on our traditional knowledge and the surveys of our Rangers.

We need to find out more about *Mangkuru manya*, *abiil*, *yuliji* and *yinga*: we need to survey our saltwater country for seagrass beds and find out how healthy the habitat is for all marine mammals. Our Rangers participate in the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) Saltwater People Network so we can work together with Traditional Owners of Saltwater Country along the whole of North Australia to share our knowledge and make sure that marine animals are well looked after and still there for our next generation.



Snubfin dolphin
Photo: Deb Thiele

- Balanggarra Combined and Balanggarra 3 Native Title Claims Area
- Geomorphic Habitat**
- Channel
- Flood- and Ebb-tide Delta
- Intertidal Flats
- Mangrove
- Rocky Reef
- Saltmarsh/Saltflat
- Tidal Sand Banks
- Unassigned
- Snubfin Dolphin
- Marine Turtle
- Dugong



Opposite table shows how healthy our targets (most important things) are on Balanggarra country. With the CAP process we look at the health for each target in four different ways. We pick a key attribute in a context of landscape health, biophysical condition, health of size and cultural health. Landscape health means we look at the ecological processes around our targets and their connectivity in the landscape with a bigger scale in our mind. We understand biophysical condition as the composition or structure of our targets. The attribute for size describes whether there are enough plants or animals for reproduction. We amended the CAP process to allow for us to measure the cultural health of a target. By introducing cultural health we want to show that all natural things have a cultural component as well – for example our knowledge of how to prepare a plant, when to find an animal and the stories connected to our sites.

Our rating for the health of each target is based on our knowledge, the knowledge of our partners and some surveys from scientists. So far only small parts of our country have been properly surveyed and we need to make sure that we do research jointly with scientists to get a better understanding of the health of our country.

The overall health of Balanggarra Country shows up as “fair”. However most of our biophysical indicators show that our targets are in “good” health. That some of our targets got only a “fair” rating in a landscape concept comes from “wrong way fire” and shows that we need to do more fire-management

on our country. That the cultural health of our targets is only “fair” has much to do with the problems of accessing country and looking after country the way we should do it from our Balanggarra law and culture. This shows us that we have to focus work on being out on country, passing the stories and knowledge on to the younger generation while our old people are still alive.

Over time when we do our monitoring we want to see that the ratings of this table improve from “poor” to “fair” to “good” to “very good”. That will show us that our strategies are successful.



Wirriyal (saltwater crocodile)
Photo: Deb Glasgow

Table 1: The health of Balanggarra targets

Conservation Targets		Culture	Landscape Context	Condition	Size	Viability Rank
Current Rating						
1	Balanggarra law and culture	Poor	-	-	-	Poor
2	Cultural sites	Fair	Fair	Good	-	Fair
3	Kira / Gra	Fair	Fair	-	Fair	Fair
4	Accessible Bushtucker / Medicine Plants	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Good
5	Right way fire	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair
6	Native Animals	Fair	Fair	Very Good	Good	Good
7	Freshwater	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good
8	Saltwater Fish and Seafood	Fair	Very Good	Good	Good	Good
9	Turtle, Dugong, Dolphins, Saltwater Crocodile	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good
Project Biodiversity Health Rank						Fair



Cattle tracks on the mud flats
Photo: KLC

Each of our targets has its problems and some of these problems can become bigger in the future. We call each of these problems a threat. When we were deciding on the threats we thought long, so we find the sources of the problems. Often, what we see as a change in country is only a stress. If we spend our time working on the stresses, things might not change overall as the sources of the stress are still the same.

The main threats on Balanggarra Country are:

- Traditional Owner not being consulted with
- Lack of infrastructure to access to country
- Climate Change
- Weeds
- Cane Toads
- Lack of Land and Sea Management capacity
- Unmanaged wildfires
- Large introduced animals
- Uncontrolled visitor access

Some of these threats apply to all targets, but some threats apply to only one target. The threat rank in the right column consists of ratings on how difficult it is to make things healthy again, how much a threat contributes to one or more targets, how severe the threat is and whether it is a local or a wide spread threat. You can see on the table the overall rank of a threat and how much a target is affected by threats. Some threats make other threats worse. If a hot fire goes through our country it can burn out many bush fruit trees and destroy a big part

of the country some animals are living in. And then once the fire goes through weeds can grow easier because the native vegetation is gone. On the next pages we only focus on main threats ranked “high” and “medium”. This does not mean that we will forget about the threats ranked “low”. We will monitor those threats closely, but the main effort of Ranger work will concentrate around the higher ranked threats

Some threats are easier to fix up, like wrong way fire, but others like climate change are impossible to fix up only on Balanggarra country.



Prickly acacia
Photo: DAFWA

Table 2: The main threats to Balangarra Country

Threats Across Targets		Balangarra law and culture	Cultural sites	Kira / Gra	Accessible Bush Tucker / Medicine Plants	Right way fire	Native Animals	Freshwater	Saltwater Fish and Seafood	Turtle, Dugong, Dolphins, Saltwater Crocodile	Overall Threat Rank
Project-specific threats		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	TO's not consulted	Medium	High	Medium		High		Low	Low	Low	High
2	Lack of infrastructure for access to country	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	High
3	Climate Change		Low		Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium
4	Weeds				Low	Medium	Low	Low		High	Medium
5	Cane Toads						High	Medium		Low	Medium
6	Lack of land and sea management capacity		Low		Low	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
7	Unmanaged wildfires		Low		Medium	Medium	Medium	Low			Medium
8	Large introduced animals		Low		Low	Medium	Medium	Low		Low	Medium
9	Uncontrolled Visitor Access		Medium			Medium		Low	Low	Low	Medium
10	Bilge Water discharge							Low	Low	Medium	Low
11	Exotic diseases/animals						Medium	Low	Low		Low
12	Commercial Fisheries								Medium	Low	Low
13	Offshore Gas/Oil development								Low	Medium	Low
14	Cats						Medium				Low
15	Marine Debris / Ghostnets									Medium	Low
16	Mining / Industrial development (terrestrial)		Low		Low		Low	Low			Low
Threat Status for Targets and Project		Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	High

Threats

Lack of Traditional Owner consultation

BALANGGARRA



Saltwater country steering committee and stakeholder workshop 2011
Photo: KLC

We have often been treated as just another stakeholder on a long list of interest groups, which include industry, local and state government, conservation and recreational groups. In the past this meant that our voices have not always been heard and our interests made invisible by competing interests. Yet we have rights and interests in our country that place us in a unique position compared to all other groups.

“They told us we can’t stop the prawn trawlers coming into our areas... reefs are still being damaged... we went to Fremantle for that meeting.”
Clement Maraldatj

It is important that Balanggarra people participate in forums that deal with our country and that the wider public knows about how we want to look after our country. We used the “Conservation Action Planning” Process and the IPA consultation project to make a plan that everyone can understand. It is important that our priorities for Healthy Country management are acknowledged, incorporated and implemented by stakeholders who come to our country.



Balanggarra IPA working group and stakeholders
Photo: KLC

We hope governmental and non-governmental agencies use our plan and come to us and talk with Balanggarra people about how we can look after our country together.

We have to talk with each other, our neighbors and the wider public. Many problems on our country don’t necessarily come from our country, but happen on someone else’s country. For example a pastoral company can light a fire during mustering and the fire gets out of hand and wipes through our country. That’s why we do fire-planning together, so we make sure that fire-breaks are in place and country is burned bit by bit, so the fire doesn’t get that far.



Fishing trawler
Photo: Deb Thiele

In the past Balangarra people were taken off their land and brought into the newly established missions. However we have strong custodial responsibilities to look after our country and therefore need to be out on country.

Our country is rugged and hard to get to and most of our country is only accessible via the coastline. There are very few tracks on our country and some of them are in poor condition because it is expensive to maintain them. You need a good motor car or a boat to come to most parts of our country. And many families do not have the opportunity to just jump in a car or a boat.

We need to be out on our country to look after our important places, do right way fire management, monitor our native animals and plant resources, look after fresh-water resources and make sure that our Saltwater Country is in good health.

It is important that our kids go out on Country with our elders so they learn their stories and learn about all our knowledge on plants and animals. In our culture you don't sit in a class room and study everything from a book. It is difficult for elders to pass on our traditional knowledge to our younger generation if they are away from their country. We need to go out on country to see country with our own eyes. That can happen during school with projects or during the holidays, so families got a chance to visit their country.

When our Rangers and Traditional Owners are doing the work we write about in this Healthy Country Plan they have a chance to look after many things at the same time. When we go out on a trip with our young ones, we can teach them about country. But at the same time we can look after our cultural places or collect some bushtucker.



On the road to Berkley River
Photo: KLC



Road to Berkley River
Photo: KLC



Geebung airstrip
Photo: KLC

Threats

Climate change

BALANGGARRA



Climate change can affect how many male and female turtles hatch
Photo: KLC



Rising sea levels and more cyclones can threaten mangal
Photo: KLC

When Western scientists talk about Climate Change, they mean significant long-term changes in the average weather; these changes can include changes in temperature, rain-fall and how the winds blow. Scientist are trying to predict how Climate Change will affect us – for Balanggarra the most important changes can be:

- The temperature in the East-Kimberley can rise up to 1.8 Degree until 2050
- Rainfall is said to increase by 2 %
- With the rising sea-levels low-lying parts along the Cambridge Gulf and the Coastline can get flooded and with it important Mangrove forests
- More cyclones and storms can damage sea-grass beds where turtle and dugong feed
- Rising sea-levels and storms can destroy sandy nesting beaches for turtles
- Rising sea-levels can push Saltwater in our Freshwater and wetlands can become unhealthy
- With an increase in temperature more female turtles will be born than male turtles
- The health of our reefs can be threatened by coral bleaching
- Changes to the amount and types of fish we can catch

There are two ways Balanggarra people can address climate change: to look after the most important and vulnerable parts of our country to keep them healthy (this is called “Adaption”); or by trying to reduce the amount of gases and smoke in the air – for example through right-way fire management (this is called “Mitigation”).



Rising sea levels can push saltwater into important freshwater places
Photo: KLC

BALANGGARRA

A weed is a plant growing where it is not wanted. Generally, weeds are plants that are introduced from other countries or from other parts of Australia. Because they are new, many of the native plants, animals and other things like fungi, insects and disease do not know these foreign plants and they can grow and spread quickly, often dominating areas and changing the country. Weeds can impact on the health of Balanggarra country.

Our country is not heavily impacted by weeds like in many other parts of Australia, but things like increased tourism, mining and agriculture, cattle, fire and climate change mean that it is likely more weeds will grow on Balanggarra country with a greater impact.

Some examples of harmful weeds already on Balanggarra Country are: Prickly Acacia, Rubber Bush and Grader Grass. Prickly Acacia has infested the area around Nulla Nulla, Rubber-Bush is spreading along the beaches and waterways between the mouth of Prince Berkeley and the King George Falls and Grader Grass and other weeds are spreading along the Kalumburu Road.

Weeds easily spread across country. The seeds can be spread in rivers and water bodies, in wind, on graders, in muddy tyres and as prickles on swags. They can even travel in the hair and guts of animals like cows and kangaroos. It is important that we keep talking with our neighbours and other landholders to find out what weeds are moving in and which ones have the potential to get into and cause damage in Balanggarra Country. Weeds can damage our country in many ways:

- Taking over areas where native plants normally grow, pushing out important food and medicine plants.

- **Vine weeds** can grow over trees and shrubs, strangling them and shading out the sun. When they dry out they can create for a much hotter fire, which often kills the bush plants.
- **Grass weeds** often grow much taller and thicker than the native plants. They dry out quicker too, resulting in a much hotter fire.
- Some weeds put natural chemicals in the soil that stop other plants from growing.
- Weeds can change the natural area, for example the rubber bush is growing on the dunes where there are normally only grasses and native vines and might affect how many good places there are for turtles to make nests.
- Other weeds can mess up lakes and rivers by growing all over the surface and stopping the water from flowing the way it normally does.
- Changes to bush areas by weeds can mean that some animals lose their right nesting or feeding places and have to move on or struggle to survive.
- **Prickly weeds** and **poisonous weeds** can make it harder to travel through country and collect food and medicine plants, go hunting and fishing.



Rubberbush near Bertram Cove
Photo: KLC



Grader grass on the Kalumburu road
Photo: Environs Kimberley

Threats

Cane toads

BALANGGARRA



Cane toads at night
Photo: Kimberley Toad Busters



Cane toads in the east Kimberley
Photo: Kimberley Toad Busters

Cane Toads could become the next big issue when they start moving through Balanggarra Country. They are already close by and are coming each wet season more closer to our country. Cane Toads have been introduced in Queensland to try to stop beetle damage in sugar cane crops and they now pose a big threat to our small animals. They have glands on each shoulder where they release poison when they are threatened. A lot of animals like goanna, northern quoll or snakes die from their poison when they try and catch one of these toads

Balanggarra Rangers have been participating in the annual toad-busting events in Kununurra with Ranger Groups from all over the Kimberley in the past years. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) surveyed islands of the Kimberley for their native mammals. Some of the islands on Balanggarra country can serve as a refuge to endangered animals on the mainland.

We need to make everybody in our communities aware of the risk from Cane Toads and work closely with other agencies together to find a way on how to deal with these dangerous invaders. Our Rangers have to do surveys for animals affected from Cane Toads so we know how many animals were on our country before the Cane Toad came through. This helps us to determine how much our culturally important animals are affected and how well they recover afterwards.



Cane toad
Photo: Kimberley Toad Busters

BALANGGARRA



Balanggarra Ranger's coastal calotropis control crew
Photo: KLC

Balanggarra country is a big country and most of our country is very hard to reach. What hindered us from looking after our country as we wanted to in recent years was a lack of resources and the right training.

Our Rangers have to look after country both ways. The traditional way as our grand-parents told us and the western way. Our Rangers need our traditional knowledge to know when to look for certain animals in country and to find their way around country. The Rangers need the western knowledge when they do fire management, surveys for animals, when they are eradicating weeds or when they are going to forums, meetings and conferences.

This threat is all about training, resources and money. Our Rangers need the right equipment and other resources so they can do the work on this plan. They need to get trained in their certificates so they can legally do some of the work of this plan. Our Rangers already did some training in weed management, fire management and all are working towards their certificate in conservation and land management with support from State and Commonwealth agencies. But we need to do much more training so enough Balanggarra people are skilled up and have the opportunity to make a living from looking after their country.

It is important for us to have security when looking into the future. Funding for Healthy Country management needs to be recurrent so that we know we can continue to fulfil our cultural responsibilities.



Balanggarra Rangers learning about water health with Department of Water.
Photo: KLC



AQIS training for Balanggarra Rangers
Photo: KLC

Threats

Unmanaged wildfires

BALANGGARRA



Prescribed burning at Warrii Park
Photo: KLC



Fire going through the
King George River area
Photo: KLC

Wildfires are fires that start by accident or burn out of control. Wildfires can start in lots of different ways, from controlled burns that get out of control, campfires, machinery or lightning. Wildfires are worse at certain times of the year and under certain weather conditions. The late dry season is particularly bad when grasses have dried out, strong winds blow from the southeast or north and hot weather lets fires burn through the night. Fires in the late dry season can burn for several weeks or even months. These hot fires can change our native vegetation so that there is less food for *agra*, *jebarra* and other animals to eat. Fire that destroy trees, impacts on some animals that rely on hollows in trees for nesting like the Gouldian Finch or the *Monongei*. Animals that cannot move quickly enough to find a safe place can get burned and killed. And our important cultural sites or outstations can get destroyed by wrong way fire. Wrong way fire does harm on a bigger scale as well. Hot fires release many more gases than colder burns. These gases have the potential to make climate change much worse.

Late dry season fires can be reduced by burning the country in the early dry season. That way the wildfires cannot spread too far and burn the whole country. It's also important to make sure that grass does not build up over too many years without fire, otherwise the wildfires will be more severe.



Unmanaged fire burning through the Bastion
Photo: KLC

Large introduced animals are what kartyia call “feral animals”. Animals which have been introduced to an area where they do not occur naturally and which have become wild. These animals can cause a lot of damage to Balanggarra Country.

The main introduced animal on our country is *buluman* (cattle). Many of our elders worked in the cattle industry when they were young, so some of these animals have some importance. Some *buluman* are alright on country to feed our families, but too much *buluman* can be bad for country. *Dongki* (donkeys) are roaming around as well and mucking up country between Cape Londonderry and Oombulgurri.

Pikipiki (pigs) can become a problem in many ways. They make our freshwater places unhealthy and they are eating *amiya manya* as well. *Bijibiji* (feral cats) eat many more native animals than only *amiya manya* and have been on our country for quite a while. *Yowarra manya* (horses) around Oombulgurri have been a problem in the past as they are disturbing the vegetation around freshwater places and polluting the water.

Because we have such a long coastline and Wyndham port gets bigger and bigger we need to look out for what comes from outside our country to our coastline. Small animals can come on boats and ships from overseas like the yellow crazy ants or *barnarba manya* (barnacles) and mess up our country and coastline. Our Rangers are working together with AQIS (Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service) to make sure we know about any exotic species coming to Balanggarra Country.

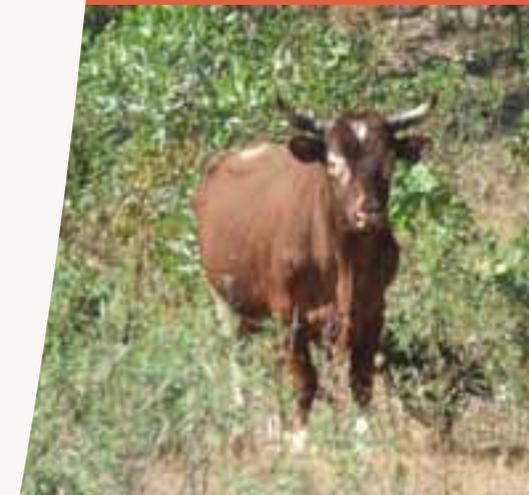
Feral animals can cause some of the stresses on Balanggarra country:

- Polluting and muddying waterholes with droppings or when they are dying
- Spreading weeds on their hooves or with droppings
- Spreading parasites that can cause native animals to get sick
- Damaging rock art by rubbing against the painting
- Trampling our bush-tucker plants (in particular near waterholes)
- Damaging our rain forest pockets by trampling and open the ground for weeds
- Disturbing cultural sites

“*Dinkun Paddock (mission cattle paddock) — cattle are affecting the river and making it wider — Jindi (creek entering Kalumburu Pool) has few trees and lots of erosion.*”
Clement Maraltadji



Cattle crossing mudflats
Photo: KLC



Cattle near Berkely River
Photo: KLC

Threats

Uncontrolled visitor access

Balanggarra country sees many visitors every year. A visitor is anyone who is not a Balanggarra Traditional Owner. These can be tourists, locals fishing along the coastline, mining people, government workers and other Indigenous People. Balanggarra Traditional Owners normally don't know them and the country does not know them either.

We are responsible for the safety of visitors and bear the consequences of accidents or if our cultural sites are disturbed. When visitors come we talk to country to introduce them and smoke them to keep bad spirits away.

Balanggarra people did not go to other people's country without permission and without being introduced to their gra the right way. Visitors nowadays should respect law and culture of the Traditional Owners, just like they would expect the same of a visitor to their country.

In times past, this permission was sought by sending messages carved on pearl shell or message sticks. In this way the right to access other people's country has always had a clear protocol and an economic cost.

Balanggarra needs to establish access protocols and a permit system so the right Traditional Owners know who is coming and access to sensitive cultural sites is managed.

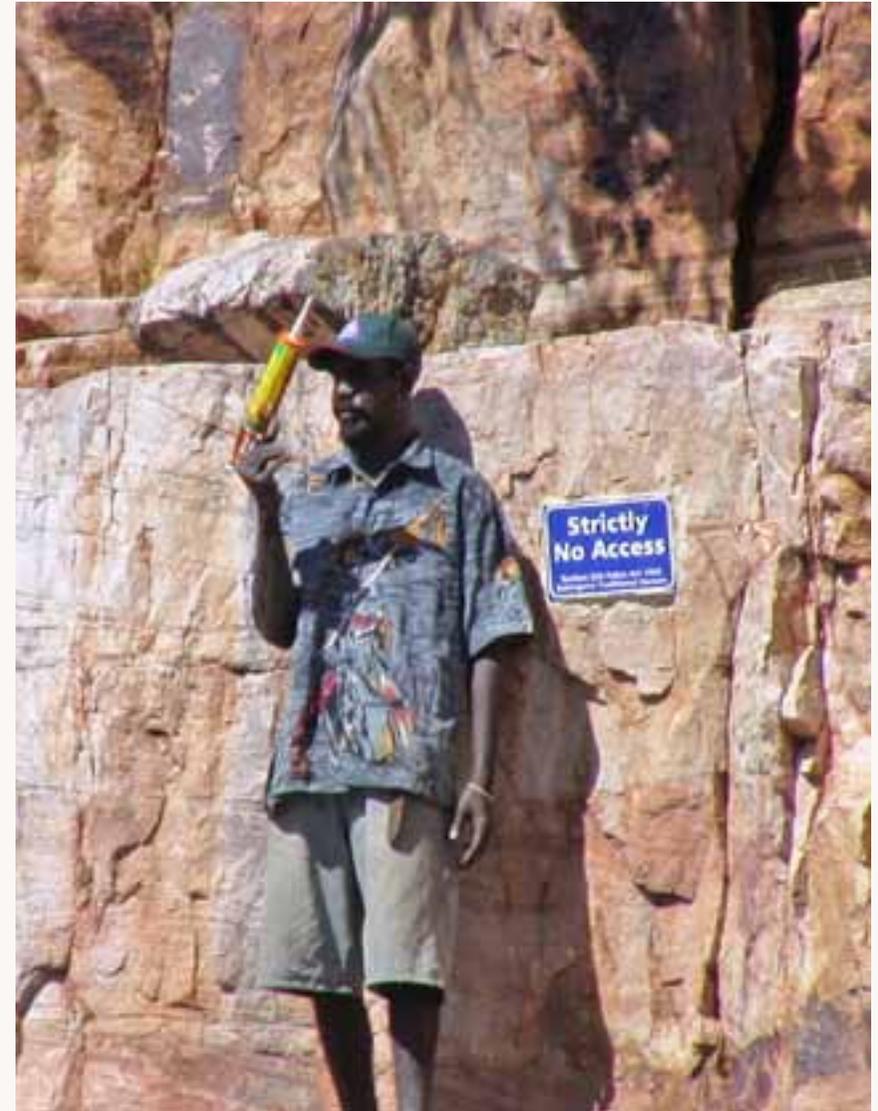
We are happy for visitors to come to Balanggarra country if it is done the right way.



Cruise ship on Balanggarra coastline
Photo: KLC



Unauthorised stone cairns at King George Falls
Photo: Pascal Scherrer



Signage at waterfalls near Berkley River
Photo: KLC

Our Vision explains where Balanggarra people want to be in 10 years time. In the past sections we explained our most important things on country (targets) and the main threats to these targets. To reach our vision we need to keep our targets healthy and fix the biggest threats. Our objectives are our bigger topics that help us keep on track with Healthy Country Management. Each objective either addresses one or more targets or threats. The more targets or threats an objective addresses the better it is and we focus on these objectives and strategies first. Our main objective of the plan is to at least increase the health of our targets on the viability table from “red” (poor) and “yellow” (fair) to “green” (good).

To find the right objectives we have looked at the health of the targets, the threat rank and how many threats affect a target. We thought long about what the causes of a threat were, so we knew that our objectives change the root of the problem and not only the stress.

Objectives

- By 2014 fire on Balanggarra country is directed by Balanggarra Traditional Owners to look after natural and cultural values and mitigate wildfires.
- By 2015 Balanggarra Traditional Owners can access the cultural and ecological knowledge on plants, animals, country and culture held by senior Balanggarra people.
- By 2015 Balanggarra Traditional Owners priorities for healthy country management are acknowledged, incorporated and implemented by stakeholders for all dealings on Balanggarra Country.
- By 2015 visitors to Balanggarra country will be managed accordingly to Balanggarra law and culture to foster cultural appropriate visitation.
- Each year an increasing number of Balanggarra Traditional Owners can visit and work on country to keep Balanggarra culture strong and country healthy.
- By 2016 ten full-time Balanggarra Rangers will have the capacity to manage Balanggarra country using traditional and western scientific knowledge.
- By 2017 an ongoing cultural education and awareness program is in place to keep Balanggarra Law and Culture strong.
- By 2017 invasive plants will not functionally degrade habitat of cultural important species.
- By 2018 introduced animals to Balanggarra country will not make country unhealthy (e.g. culturally important plants, animals, places).



Work on the Belaa plants and animals list
Photo: KLC

Each objective has multiple strategies. A strategy outlines what we have to do to keep targets healthy or threats low. Some strategies help to achieve more than one objective and we call these strategies **high impact strategies**. We have grouped the different strategies into three categories.

Healthy Country Management Strategies	Objectives								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
By 2012 map the current extent of invasive plants on Balanggarra country								✓	
By 2012 develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation program to measure effectiveness of strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
By 2012 Balanggarra Rangers work with appropriate stakeholders on the management of Cane Toads									✓
By 2013 develop fire knowledge into fire operations to protect cultural sites, cultural important species, threatened species and ecological communities	✓					✓			
By 2013 cultural, environmental and economic impacts caused by wrong way visitation will be addressed through a visitor pass model			✓	✓			✓		
By 2013 establish an on-going operative work plan for weed-management to target invasive plants degrading the habitat of cultural important species								✓	
By 2013 establish a Savannah Burning project under the carbon farming initiative or similar scheme to provide sustainable income for fire management	✓		✓						
By 2013 identify and understand introduced species impacts on Balanggarra country and priority sites for management.									✓
By 2014 complete a staged IPA declaration for Balanggarra country	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
By 2016 a seasonal ranger base is established that allows Balanggarra Rangers and their families to live on and look after country					✓			✓	✓
By 2016 effective control measures for large introduced animals are in place on all priority sites.									✓
By 2012 develop an engagement strategy for stakeholders to incorporate and implement Balanggarra Healthy Country aspirations			✓	✓					✓
Ongoing – engage with outside stakeholders, participate in meetings and/or develop submissions in regards to activities related to Balanggarra country			✓						

Table 3: Strategies for healthy country

Operational Capacity Strategies	Objectives								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
By 2012 identify funds to maintain most significant tracks for access on country					✓		✓		
By 2013 Balanggarra Traditional Owners / Rangers have operational capacity to manage all fire operations including aerial control burning, protection of assets, cultural sites and threatened species	✓					✓		✓	
By 2013 incorporate traditional fire knowledge into fire operations to protect cultural sites, cultural important species, threatened species and ecological communities.	✓								
By 2013 undertake Stepping Stones for Tourism program to establish tourism opportunities on Balanggarra country				✓			✓		
By 2013 adopt and implement a policy to support Balanggarra families who have means to visit and/or live in a sustainable way on their country					✓				
By 2013 identify sustainable recurrent funding streams for Healthy Country management and develop a Healthy Country business plan	✓				✓	✓			
By 2014 establish appropriate administration facilities to adequately manage healthy country project associated with Balanggarra.			✓			✓			
By 2014 develop a training program for Balanggarra Rangers to Cert.III in CaLM						✓		✓	✓
By 2014 develop in partnership with community schools a Junior Ranger Program						✓	✓	✓	
Law & culture strategies									
By 2012 identify funds to maintain most significant tracks for access on country					✓				
By 2012 develop cultural awareness package for tourists and workers/service providers visiting and working on Balanggarra country			✓	✓			✓		
By 2012 develop a Balanggarra tourism project for Warriyu Park				✓					
By 2013 have a data-management system for Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in place that allows for access of information by Balanggarra Traditional Owners		✓		✓		✓	✓		
By 2013 (and ongoing) record TEK of senior Balanggarra Traditional Owners on plants, animals, country and culture		✓				✓	✓		
By 2013 complete work on Belaa Plants and Animals – Flora and fauna knowledge of the Kwini people of the north-east Kimberley, Australia		✓				✓	✓		
By 2013 engage with local schools to deliver cultural classes in school and develop in partnership with local schools ex-curriculum activities					✓		✓		
By 2013 undertake each year at least two back-to-country trips with Balanggarra families to facilitate the transmission of TEK					✓		✓		
By 2014 develop a cultural education program for Balanggarra Traditional Owners based on recorded information to keep Balanggarra law and culture strong		✓			✓	✓	✓		
By 2015 complete cultural site recordings for most significant sites on Balanggarra Country				✓			✓		
By 2015 the ten most significant sites will be protected from degradation by feral animals and wrong way visitation through fencing and signage				✓					✓
Ongoing—The walk trail at Koolama Bay is maintained and promoted as a Balanggarra tourism product				✓					
Ongoing—seek actively the repatriation of artifacts and remains to keep Balanggarra law and culture strong							✓		



Removing ghost nets from the beaches
Photo: KLC

Enhancing viability

Mitigating threats—Adaptive management



Wirrirri (Gouldian Finch)
Photo: Phil Palmer



Weeds training with TAFE
Photo: KLC

When we developed this plan we followed a consultation process according to the CAP tool. After finishing getting the information for this plan together our Rangers will do the work outlined in the plan. From then onwards we have to check regularly that all our strategies are on track and help us achieve our vision and our objectives. But our Rangers need to check as well, whether the threats to our targets are changing over time. For example new invasive plants or exotic animals could come to our country or climate change could kick in more. That means over the next ten years some of the threats might get bigger than they are now. We call this checking “Monitoring and Evaluation”. When we talked about the health of our most important things we decided on indicators that measure their health. When we check these indicators regularly we can make sure we see whether our strategies are working towards our goals or whether we need to adjust. Our Rangers use the Cybertracker/I-Tracker for most of their data-collection. The Australian Government’s Caring for Country Initiative and NAILSMA are supporting Ranger-Groups in using the Cybertracker in the field.

When we developed this plan, we worked on indicators to measure if our objectives are on track. One of our activities in the plan is to develop a monitoring plan to see if our strategies are effective and achieve what they are meant to achieve. Below you can see our indicators for our objectives:

Objective 1: Traditional Owner Fire Management

- Number of Balanggarra families represented in Fire Planning and Operations
- Percentage of controlled burns on Balanggarra Country directed by Balanggarra TO’s
- Percentage of total area of Balanggarra lands burned each year in early dry season by active fire management

Objective 2: Access to Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Level of satisfaction of Cultural Advisors

Objective 3: Implementation and incorporation Balanggarra Healthy Country priorities by Stakeholders

- Number of formal agreements incorporating Balanggarra Healthy Country priorities
- Percentage of controlled burns on Balanggarra Country directed by Balanggarra TO’s
- Ratio of visitor permits to total number of visitors to Balanggarra Country

Objective 4: Visitor Management

Ratio of visitor permits to total number of visitors to Balanggarra Country

Objective 5: Capacity of Balanggarra Rangers to manage their country

- Number of full time Rangers employed
- Number of Rangers with Cert. III or above qualifications
- Level of satisfaction of Cultural Advisors

Objective 6: Ongoing cultural education program

- Number of person/days Balanggarra TO's spend on country
- Level of satisfaction of Cultural Advisors
- Percentage of culturally important sites mapped and stories recorded

Objective 7: Invasive plants

Percentage of areas on beaches affected by Rubberbush

Objective 8: Large introduced Animals

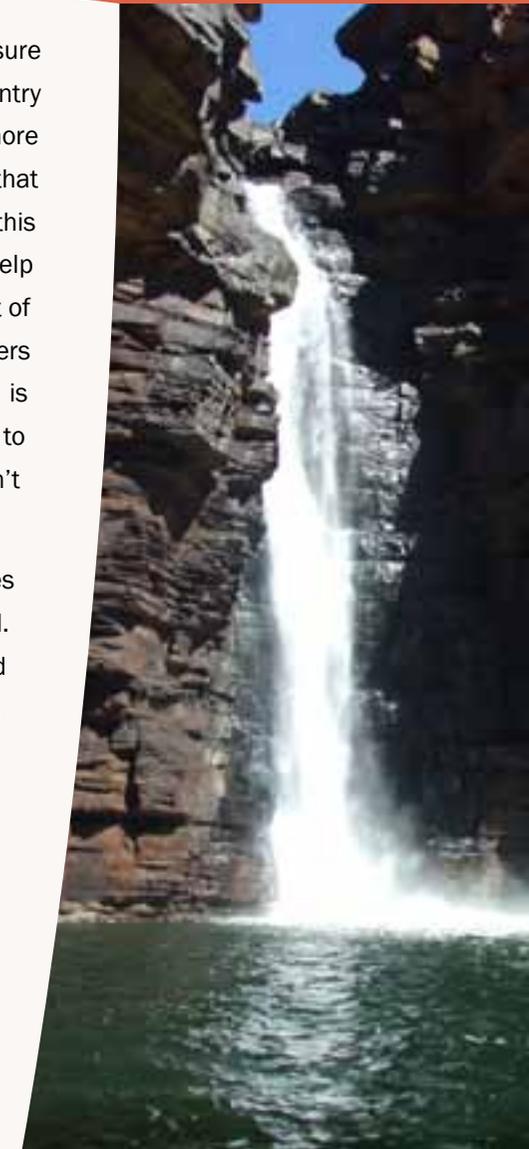
Disturbance of riparian vegetation (rank)

Objective 9: Balanggarra TO's can visit and work on Balanggarra Country

- Number of family groups living or having the opportunity to live on country
- Number of person/days Balanggarra TO's spend on country.

For some targets we need to talk more to scientists to make sure we got things right in the coming years. Many parts of our country haven't been researched in great detail, so sometimes we rely more on our own knowledge. In the future we need to make sure that research on our country will help us achieve all the things in this plan. Our Rangers are already working with some agencies that help us monitor the health of our country. In the past the Department of Water looked at the health of our waterways and taught the Rangers all the ways to make sure our water is healthy and tasty. AQIS is training and funding the Rangers to monitor our coastline and to make sure that no new animals come to our country that don't belong there.

Once we know how things are tracking we can keep our strategies or modify them if we find out that they are not achieving that well. And after ten years we need to look again at the whole plan and make a newer version that reflects Balanggarra country then. Some of our targets will then be in "good" health and we can focus on other things and extend our work. This approach of making a plan, doing the work, checking that the work is on track and then looking at the plan again is called "adaptive management".



Minor falls near King George estuary
Photo: KLC

KLC / Tropical Savannas CRC (2000): *North Kimberley Traditional Owners Land and Sea Management Project*. Final Report.

Kimberley Language Resource Centre (2006): *The Forrest River Language. A book about the Aboriginal Language of the Forrest River region*.

KLC / Saltwater Country Steering Committee (2010): *Saltwater Country Plan for Balangarra, Uunguu, Dambimangari and Mayala Saltwater Country*.

Wightman, G / Sefton, M / Vigilante T / Saunders T (unpublished draft): *Belaa Plants and Animals. Flora and fauna knowledge of the Kwini people of the north east Kimberley, Australia*.



Beeman manya (frill-necked lizard)
Photo: Frank Weisenberger

Abbreviations

AQIS	Australian Quarantine Inspection Services
CAP	Conservation Action Planning
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food
DEC	Department of Environment & Conservation
DOW	Department of Water
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
NAILSMA	North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Kwini word	Forrest River Language	English
Abil	jilawarru	Dugong
Agra	aamba	Kangaroo
Amalarr		Black Bream
amiya manya		Turtle eggs
Bardowu	banganji	Golden Bandicoot
Bawaja		Soap Tree
Bayalu		Black blotched Stingray
Barnarr	banarr	Turkey
Barnarba manya		Barnacle
Barnkiya ninya		Cocky Apple
Barurru winya		Stringybark Tree
Beeman manya		Frill-necked lizard
Bijibiji		Feral Cat
Bimarr ninya		Banksia
Bonei manya	bonu	Freshwater Turtle
Buluman	Buluma	Cattle/Bullock
bŭrra-jarri-mŭra-ngei	wunbalagu	Stingray
Burunkurr	bunda	Bloodwood
Danba minya		Freshwater Mangrove
Darkurr		Open Sea
Dingarla minya		White Beach Apple
Dongki		Donkey
Jadingu	miniwarra	Red Flying Fox
Jalanjii		Perch
Jawuul		Turtle / Dugong Spear
Jebarra	wiri/wiyari	Emu
Juli		Ducks & Geese
Juluwarru		Green Turtle
Jurrku manya	gunanji/gurnanji	Echidna
Kaawi	jarrangan	Freshwater Fish
Karmangku		Long Yam
Kardei		Sweet Lip
Karr karr	maalmurr	Fish Spear
Koya	jewa	Freshwater Crocodile



Wuluwurr (Woolybutt)
Photo: KLC

References

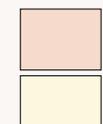
Appendix 1: Glossary Belaa words cont...

BALANGGARRA

Kwini word	Forrest River Language	English
Kuriny winya		Sap of Bloodwood
Kurranda	g'irronda / g'irronnggula	Brolga
Laaru	larru	Freshwater Mussel
Langanda winya		Bush Almond
Lija		Turkeybush
Lubana		Mullet
Manbarr manya		Agile Wallaby
Mankarr manya		Sand Goanna
Mangkûra manya		Silver Bream
Manganerra		Hawksbill Turtle
Mangkuru	mangguru	Sea Turtle
Mardumarl manya		Flatback Turtle
Marlinjarr minya		Cotton Tree
Marlinji manya		Oyster
Marrdargi		Quinnine Tree
Monongei	guman	Brush-tailed Possum
Myeeni manya	gurral/gurrarl	Water-Lily
Ngun.ngari		Milky Mangrove
Numbarru manya		Cockle Shells
Pikipiki		Feral Pig
Unbalu		Bluebone
Waruirr		Reef
Wirriyal	wurriyal	Saltwater Crocodile
wirrirri	nyinyi	finches
Wuluwurr	boja	Woolybutt
Wundala minya		Red Kappok tree
Wurnbarlo manya		Large Bluebone
Yaga manya		Baler Shell
Yawarr	yawarr	Freshwater Goanna
Yowarra manya	Yawurda	Horse

Target	Matters of National environmental significance			
Native Animals	Brush-tailed Tree Rat <i>Conilurus penicillatus</i>	Northern Quoll <i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>	Butlers Dunnart <i>Sminthopsis butleri</i>	Australian Painted Snipe <i>Rostratula australis</i>
	Red Goshawk <i>Erythrotriorchis radiates</i>	Gouldian Finch <i>Erythrura gouldiae</i>	Northern Shrike Tit <i>Falcunculus frontatus whitei</i>	Partridge Pigeon <i>Geophaps smithii blaauwi</i>
	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Rainbow Bee-Eater <i>Merops ornatus</i>	Western Partridge Pigeon <i>Petrophassa smithii blaauwi</i>	Derby White-browed Robin <i>Poecilodryas spercillosa cerviniventris</i>
	Rufous Fantail <i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	Melville Cycadbird <i>Coracina tenuirostris melvillensis</i>	Painted Snipe <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Oriental Plover <i>Charadrius veredus</i>
	Oriental Pratincole <i>Glareola maldivarum</i>			
Bushtucker / Medicine plants	Seppelt Range Gum <i>Eucalyptus ceracea</i>			
Freshwater	Dwarf Sawfish <i>Pristis clavata</i>	Freshwater Sawfish <i>Pristis microdon</i>	Green Sawfish <i>Pristis zusron</i>	Watermouse <i>Xeromys myoides</i>
	Purple Crowned Fairy Wren <i>Malurus coronatus coronatus</i>			
Saltwater Fish and Seafood	Common Noddy <i>Anous stolidus</i>	Fork-tailed Swift <i>Apus pacificus</i>	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	Cattle Egret <i>Ardea ibis</i>
	Streaked Shearwater <i>Calonectris leucomelas</i>	Streaked Shearwater <i>Puffinus leucomelas</i>	Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>
	White-bellied Sea-Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>			
Migratory Saltwater Animals	Blue Whale <i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Humpback Whale <i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Killerwhale <i>Orcinus Orca</i>	Bryde's Whale <i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>
	Dugong <i>Dugon dugon</i>	Iriwaddy Dolphin <i>Orcaella brevirostris</i>	Indo-pacific Humpback dolphin <i>Souse chinesis</i>	Spotted Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops aduncus</i>
	Whale Shark <i>Rhincodon typus</i>	Loggerhead Turtle <i>Caretta caretta</i>	Green Turtle <i>Chelonis mydas</i>	Leatherback Turtle <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
	Hawksbill Turtle <i>Eretmochelys imbricate</i>	Olive Ridley Turtle <i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	Flatback Turtle <i>Natator depressus</i>	Saltwater Crocodile <i>Crocodylus porosus</i>

KEY



Endangered

Vulnerable

BALANGGARRA

We thank our valued partners for their financial assistance, expertise and support in helping us prepare the Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan.



Kimberley Land Council



Australian Government
Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities

Indigenous Protected Area Program of the
Australian Government's Department of Sustainability,
Environment, Water, Population and Communities



PEW Environment Group

For more information on the Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan contact:

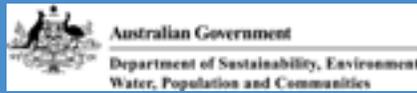
Kimberley Land Council

PO Box 2145

Broome WA 6725

Ph: 08 9194 0100 Fax: 08 9193 6279

www.klc.org.au



Kimberley Land Council