



# INDIGENOUS WOMEN RANGERS TALKING

Sharing ideas and information  
about women rangers' work





# Contributing authors and acknowledgements

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Photos were contributed by the Ranger groups and CAEPR staff who are co-authors of this book and retain copyright.

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## Why we wanted to make this book

More and more Indigenous women around Australia are becoming rangers. They can be on full-time, part-time, casual wages or CDEP (Community Development and Employment Program).

Women rangers do all different types of work to look after country such as burning, as well as other associated tasks like working on the computers and working with the school. There is no rule book or guide to women's ranger work, so we wanted to make a book that shows what women rangers are doing, what they want to do and how they can make their jobs better. We wanted to do this to show young women rangers coming up and other people about what being a woman ranger means and present ideas on how we can make women ranger's work better in the future.

We want to share our stories, lessons and strategies to make strong Indigenous women rangers who are good role models in the community and who are proud to look after country and culture. We want to show people that women rangers are doing good things for their country and community so we can get more women ranger jobs. This book also talks about what we need to make strong ranger groups and strong women rangers.

This book was made by women rangers working in remote parts of The Top End of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. However, women rangers around Australia tell similar stories and have some similar and some different issues. We have been to many Indigenous Ranger conferences and have heard these stories. Now we want to start writing them down for others to read and learn from.

### **Cherry Daniels, founder of Yugul Mangi Women Rangers, 2002**

*We work as a team, we work for our country, we love our country. We are the Australians, and we have balanda [non-Indigenous] Australians who want to work with us - that is the way it should be. We have been the rangers for 40,000 years. That is a fact. Every ranger knows how to work on our land, but there are new things that balanda call silent invaders, they come to our land – animals that are not ours, not native ones, so we gotta fight really hard to put our country back the right way.*

*When I worked with my ranger girls I wrote on a piece of paper in red the word commitment. We gotta commit ourselves to our country and our country will commit itself to us. We like our country, we gotta be committed – our jobs, our people and our fellow Australians.*



Cherry Daniels looking for bush tucker, 2009.



## How we made this book



First workshop participants (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): Emilie Ens, Kirsten Dooley, Jenny Nadjamerrek, Lisa Miller, Carol Pamkal, Priscilla Dixon, Julie Roy, Fiona Shaw, Gurrundul Marika, Tara Rostron, Felina Campion, Annette Godden, Jodie Kelly, Dorita Djolom, Cherry-Anne Daniels, Selma Campion, Edna Nelson, Bungamana Gunambarr, Katherine May, Cherry Daniels, Wangawuy (Grace) Mununggirrtj, Bawali (Wendy) Marika.

In June 2010, 20 women rangers and coordinators from 5 ranger groups in the Top End came to Darwin for a 3 day workshop to discuss ideas about a women ranger's information book. The ranger groups involved were Dhimurru, Djelk, Manwurrk, Yirralka and Yugul Mangi. The workshop was organised by Emilie Ens and Katherine May from the *People on Country* project at CAEPR who have been working with the rangers for four years. A representative from the Australian Government's Working on Country team, Annette Godden, also joined us. Cherry Daniels, retired Yugul Mangi Ranger and teacher, was employed to help run the workshop which was held at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and The Australian National University's (ANU) Northern Australia Research Unit (NARU).



We decided to make the book after we all talked about women ranger issues and discussed how we could make it better. We wanted to tell stories about what it means to be a woman ranger, why it is important for us, what work we do, what work we want to do, what challenges we face and how we can overcome these challenges to make strong women rangers.

In the workshop we worked in groups and wrote down our stories. Several of the rangers also filmed the workshop and we have made DVD to go with this book from that footage and other film rangers have taken on country.







Second workshop participants: (BACK ROW FROM LEFT) Astra McKellow, Annick Thomassin, Gemma Aldred, Emilie Ens, (MIDDLE ROW FROM LEFT) Selma Campion, Lisa Miller, Gurrundul Marika, Gurrundul Marawili, Dindirrk Munungurr, Tara Rostron, Priscilla Dixon, Edna Nelson (FRONT ROW FROM LEFT) Sharna Turner, Janelle Simms, Sarah Biliss, Helena Mungurr, Jodie Kelly, Felina Campion and Vietta Bangarr. Absent: Maimie Butler and Anawarie Mitchell.

In April 2012, we met up again at the Australian National University in Canberra to finalise the book together through an informal document design workshop and produce an accompanying film using images and film brought by the. Rangers from four *People on Country* partner ranger groups attended the second workshop and we invited a new women ranger's group from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Western Australia, to join us and learn from the more experienced rangers at the workshop.

During the workshop we worked with other CAEPR staff who are experts in adult learning, multimedia and graphic design (Annick Thomassin, Inge Kral and Gillian Cosgrove). A different government representative, Tina Bain, also came along for a while. At this workshop we learnt how to produce reports and films. Each ranger at the workshop had access to a laptop and worked on parts of the book and film. Then we joined up all the stories and made this book and DVD.





# Women rangers work

Women rangers do lots of different jobs. Many groups do similar work, like burning and cultural site maintenance, but some groups do work that others don't do. For example, the Djelk Women and Yugul Mangi Rangers do coastal patrols and the Manwurrk women rangers do ranger timesheets. Sometimes the rangers also work at night and on weekends. Some women rangers work in larger towns, like Darwin or Maningrida and some work in outstations or homeland communities like Kabulwarnamyo, Garrthalala or Yilpara.

In the wet season, working from outstations can be hard as roads are flooded and people need to rely on charter flights and helicopters to get around and to bring in food and work equipment.

Women rangers are proud of their work to look after culture and country and they enjoy being rangers. However there are also a number of challenges to being a woman ranger. These things are discussed at the end of the book.



Seraine Namundja, Manwurrk Ranger, using helicopter to work in western Arnhem Land.



Kabulwarnamyo outstation, Warddeken IPA.



Garrthalala homeland, Laynhapuy IPA.



Yirralka Rangers at Yilpara Homeland, Laynhapuy IPA.



Maningrida community, Djelk IPA.



View to Yugul Mangi Rangers shed, SE Arnhem Land.

# Fire management

One of the main jobs that women and men rangers do is fire management. Fire is a very important part of Indigenous culture and is central to Indigenous use and management of country. Indigenous people have used fire in Australia for over 40,000 years and these actions have shaped the way the Australian bush is today. Recently, Indigenous Rangers in western Arnhem Land have been managing fire to reduce atmospheric carbon emissions. This pioneering project has been funded by a carbon-offset arrangement with an international gas company and was one of the first carbon trading agreements in Australia. Rangers do different types of fire work including:

- \* Making fire breaks – with rakes, shovels, tractors and sometimes with a leaf blower

- \* Burning off – to reduce intense late season fires and reduce carbon emissions
- \* On-ground burning with matches, drip torches, launchers and vehicles
- \* Aerial burning using helicopters and incendiaries
- \* Fire fighting – to stop late dry season fires damaging country and emitting lots of carbon
- \* Using CyberTracker to record and map where we are doing fire management work



Yugul Mangi Rangers preparing for aerial burning.



Priscilla Dixon, Yugul Mangi Ranger, control burning using quad bike.



Yugul Mangi Rangers using launcher for roadside control burning.



Priscilla Dixon, Yugul Mangi Ranger, using drip torch for control burning.





Callas Tapau, Yugul Mangi Ranger, preparing fire launcher for control burning.



Manwurrk Rangers scraping a fire break.



Burning spinifex country, Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA.



Djelk Ranger using a leaf blower to control fire.

**W**hat we like about burning – we go out on country and take old people camping, listening to old people tell stories how to use fire break for hunting kangaroo, emu, goanna and bush turkey.

First we plan for the camping trip, then we organise our camping gear and also foods and fuel and then drive off between Korlobidahdah and Budkorol. We start in the morning about 8.30am. We use drip torches, matches and also fly with chopper and use rain dance machine to burn around the area that we want to burn. We also use CyberTracker to track where we do burning and when we are finished we take the CyberTracker back to the office and download onto the computer.

**DJELK WOMEN RANGERS**

# What is CyberTracker?

Many ranger groups are now using computer technology to collect information about their work, their country and culture. CyberTracker is a computer program (software) that was designed in South Africa for the San Bushmen to collect information about animal tracks. The CyberTracker software is used with hand held computers (see photos below) and some new types of mobile phones.

CyberTracker is being used by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous ranger groups and scientists to collect data (information) on different types of work such as fire, weed and feral animal management, fauna (animals) and flora (plants) surveys and general work activity like hours worked and places worked. CyberTracker data collection is now also supported by the Federal Government through their Indigenous Ranger CyberTracker Program.



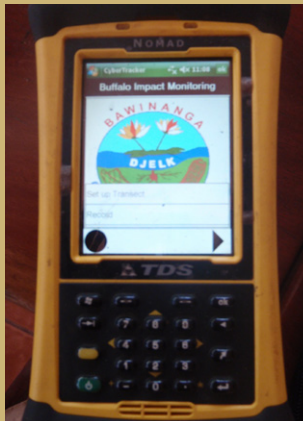
Ngaanyatjarra Ladies recording fauna tracks.



Priscilla Dixon, Emilie Ens and Edna Nelson setting up a CyberTracker database.



Edna Nelson recording water quality data.



Djelk Rangers CyberTracker unit.



Sandra Richards and Felina Campion monitoring billabong health.



Manwurrk Rangers learning how to set up their own CyberTracker sequence.



# Weed management

Weed survey and control is another big ranger job in the Top End. We have lots of different weeds coming into our country including Weeds of National Significance that have been declared by the government including – mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*), parky (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) and salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*). We also have big problems with weedy grasses like gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*) and mission grasses (*Pennisetum pedicellatum* and *P. polystachion*). In the desert, rangers have problems with buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*).

The types of weed work we do include:

- \* Weed control
- \* Spraying, burning and pulling out weeds
- \* Weed mapping
- \* Community education about weeds
- \* Using CyberTracker to map weeds and record weed control work



Priscilla Dixon spraying Parkinsonia.



Yirralka Ranger spraying weeds.



Yolngu weed awareness sign.



Julie Roy filling up chemical sprayer for weed control.



Yugul Mangi Rangers putting up weed awareness sign.



Ngaanyatjarra Ranger digging up buffel grass



Priscilla Dixon recording GPS location of weeds.



Djelk Rangers burning mimosa on the floodplain.



# Feral animal management

Feral animals are causing a lot of damage to country and other animals in the Top End. They are becoming a big problem. Some people don't want us to kill feral animals as some are totems and are part of Aboriginal culture, some are used for meat and we can get money for animals like buffalo and horses. However most rangers see more and more feral animals on country and want to manage them better.



Priscilla Dixon doing target practice.



Delilah Yirrindili, Djelk Ranger, filming buffalo at Djinmili billabong.



Ngannyatjarra mob harvesting camel meat.

The types of feral animal work we do are:

- \* Controlling buffalo, pigs, cats and camels in the desert
- \* Monitoring feral animal damage using CyberTracker and photos
- \* Fencing off areas like sacred sites and other culturally significant places
- \* Cat patrols at night with spotlight
- \* Post mortem to see if pigs and buffalo are carrying disease



Yugul Mangi Rangers conducting post mortem disease checks.



Yugul Mangi Rangers doing buffalo disease check post mortem.



Gill Towler, Julie Roy and Priscilla Dixon fixing feral animal exclusion fence.



# Cultural heritage maintenance, recording and protection

Indigenous rangers not only manage natural resources but also cultural resources that are linked to country and Indigenous history, like rock art sites, burial sites, Dreaming places and old camping grounds.

Caring for and looking out for change to cultural sites is a big part of being an Indigenous Ranger and is a cultural responsibility for all Indigenous people. Because some Indigenous people can't get out onto their country, the rangers can help them protect their cultural sites. It is important for both men and women to care for cultural sites as some are restricted to men and some for women. Important cultural activities for rangers are:

- \* Recording Indigenous knowledge for future generations
- \* Mapping culturally significant sites
- \* Going on long bushwalks with old and young people to exchange stories and knowledge
- \* Fencing sacred and culturally significant sites to protect them from feral animal damage and some people
- \* Restoring and protecting sacred sites
- \* Raising community awareness about cultural sites and knowledge
- \* Working with old and young people to maintain knowledge exchange
- \* Collecting bush tucker for the old people to keep them healthy



Wesley and Leni Campion recording culturally significant sites in Djelk IPA.



Sylvia Ragurk and Libby Mungurr, Manwurrk Rangers, weaving at Manmoyi



Felina Campion and Jodie Kelly at rock art site in Djelk IPA.



Mary Kolkiwarra showing Emilie Ens and Seraine Namundja how to prepare manbulkung (traditional staple food) for eating.

# Land patrols

It is important for rangers to get out on country so they can observe and monitor change and care for country using both Indigenous ways and non-Indigenous ways. Indigenous ways of caring for country include:

- \* Talking to the old people and spirits to inform them of people's presence and planned actions, ask for guidance and approval
- \* Observing change and telling others about what is happening on country
- \* Harvesting bush tucker to keep it healthy
- \* Performing cultural activities such as maintaining cultural sites through

physical, verbal or spiritual ways

Non-Indigenous ways of caring for country include:

- \* Checking permits of non-Indigenous visitors
- \* Putting up signs
- \* Maintaining infrastructure like bollards, tables, fences and bores



Selma Campion recording fire event on CyberTracker while doing land patrols.



Edna Nelson doing patrols on quad bike.



Ngaanyatjarra mob assessing bores and buffel grass.



Manwurrk Rangers and their families on 2010 Stone Country walk.



Cherry Daniels observing country from the Toyota.



## Coastal patrols

Ranger groups that also look after Saltwater Country, such as Djelk, Dhimurru, Yirralka and Yugul Mangi also do coastal patrols in boats and by walking along beaches and the coastline. Coastal patrol activities include:

- \* Fisheries patrols – checking boats, licenses and catches
- \* Marine debris clean-up on beaches
- \* Removing ghost nets
- \* Monitoring turtle and dugong populations and health

Ranger groups work with Customs, Water Police, the government fisheries department, Ghostnets Australia, NAILSMA and AQIS to keep up to date with coastal patrol training and for support. For example NAILSMA have been working with ranger groups to record marine animal sightings and ghostnets using CyberTracker and GPS. Ranger groups have also been instrumental in catching some illegal fishermen.



Cherry Daniels, Julie Roy and Grace Daniels patrolling Roper River.



Family helping Yugul Mangi Rangers clean beach at Wiyagiba.



Djelk Rangers recording ghost nets along north Arnhem coast.



Edna Nelson patrolling the Roper River mouth.



Yirralka Rangers cleaning up ghost nets in along western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria

# AQIS work

(AQIS – AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE AND INSPECTION SERVICE)

AQIS have been working with many ranger groups in the Top End for about 10 years. They have worked with rangers in the following ways:

- \* Mosquito collecting to check for disease that they might be carrying
- \* Taking blood samples from birds, pigs and buffalo to check for diseases
- \* Weed collecting to check for new weeds coming in to Australia
- \* Collecting ants to look for invasive ants like the Crazy Ant

The activities are very important to protect Australia from silent invaders that could threaten our native wildlife and bring disease.



Julie Roy recording mosquito data for AQIS.



Priscilla Dixon looking for birds for bird flu inspections.



Djelk Rangers mosquito collection tyre for AQIS.



Julie Roy conducting pig post mortem disease inspection.



Djelk Rangers Fruit fly trap.

**D** *jama* (work) we do for AQIS is *manymak* (good) and good fun but it is important *djama* to get rid of the *Anopheles gracilepis* or the mosquito because it brings disease to *gatapan* (buffalo), *bulliki* (cattle) and other feral *wayin* (animals).

The *galkal djama* or Crazy ants is *manymak* too and important. We have to get rid of this *bawamirr galkal* because it is taking over the area where the native ants live. It is not hard work and we do it in the shade. We rake and then look for nests and vacuum. Its funny, but its important. We get paid for this job by AQIS. We fly helicopter with Ben Hoffmann from CSIRO to lay poison for the ants.

For the mosquitoes, we hang tyres on trees. We put feed tablet in the tyre to attract mosquitoes. Put water in to the trap the mosquitoes. In 2 weeks we come back and check it. We use a pipette to collect mosquito samples and put them in vinegar in a test jar to send to AQIS. We like being together doing this work and we laugh a lot.

**BAWALI MARIKA**



## Nursery and landscaping work

Some ranger groups have very well established nurseries like the Djelk rangers in Maningrida and Yirralka Rangers in Yirrkalala who work with knowledgeable older women in the community and school groups. Other ranger groups have had nurseries in the past; however, they have been abandoned. Other ranger groups talk about wanting to start nurseries or get old nurseries back up and running. Types of nursery and landscaping work some women rangers do are:

- \* Growing local and garden plants for the community and for sale
- \* Growing food plants, including bush tucker
- \* Growing plants to show school children
- \* Planting around communities
- \* Planting bush medicine near clinics for local use
- \* Landscaping like making gardens and whipper snipping
- \* Learning how to grow different types of plants from seed and cuttings
- \* Seed collecting
- \* Collecting bush tucker for ourselves and the community



Cherry Daniels watering newly planted shade plants in 2005.



Leila Nimbadja – the driving force behind the successful Bawinanga nursery, Maningrida.

What we would like to do is nursery. Get some little plants from the bush, like some fruit trees and bush potatoes and also we would like some plant from nursery in town for shade. We like to get plants and grow them in a nursery and we need equipment for plants because at the moment we got no hoses, tanks and sprinklers for the nursery. We would like to go to Maningrida to look how they grow plants and also we would like to ask them to share some skills out there with the Djelk Ranger girls. Then when we go back to Kabulwarnamyo we can do it ourselves.

MANWURK RANGERS



Yilpara nursery shadehouse.



Julie Roy re-establishing the Yugul Mangi nursery.



Yugul Mangi Rangers digging holes to plant shade trees around Ngukurr.

## Bush products

Most women rangers want to collect, sell and raise awareness about more bush products, especially with older people, young people and non-Indigenous people. Projects being conducted already by some groups include:

- \* Making products that use bush knowledge such as soaps, lip gloss and oils with medicinal plants
- \* Collecting honey and making honey boxes
- \* Taking old people out to get bush products like Pandanus for weaving, colour (dyes) and food like sugarbag (bush honey)
- \* Collecting Billy Goat Plums for sale

These things are important for maintaining culture, connection to country and passing on knowledge between generations. We also want to teach non-Indigenous people about our culture and why these things are important to Aboriginal people.

**W**e like doing plant work because it is interesting, keeps culture and language strong and want to pass information on to new generations. It makes the IPA and homelands look manymak and healthy.

We learn about different plants, collect seeds, bush plants and bush foods (and eat them!). We also learn how to plant, propagate, pot up and make good potting mix. We use the landcare nursery for practice and teach new miyalk rangers how to propagate plants. We also want to record details about all flowering plants, create a herbarium and teach young ones about plants with Yolngu yaku. We have been planting bush medicine plants around clinics in the homelands and learnt about landscaping. We want to take tourists around to see our bush plants and how we use them.

**YIRRALKA MIYALK RANGERS**



Djelk Rangers billy goat plum harvest.



Inside a sugarbag bee hive box.



Yugul Mangi Rangers bush medicine products.



Yirralka Miyalk Rangers selling bush products at Garma Festival.



Priscilla Dixon making sugarbag bee hive box.



# Biodiversity surveys

Some ranger groups work with scientists and others to record what species are on their country. This is a growing part of ranger work that usually involves collaboration with external stakeholders such as the government or universities. Some ranger groups are lucky enough to have scientists working with them all the time to record plant and animal species. This type of work is of great interest to women rangers. Biodiversity survey work includes:

- \* Surveying plants, animals and sometimes insects to see what species occur in the area
- \* Setting up traps for animals
- \* Set up camera traps to get photos of any animals like possum, bandicoot or small mice
- \* Looking for animal tracks
- \* Collect different types of plants and put them in our herbarium
- \* Create real and virtual herbaria
- \* Crab and fish surveys
- \* Turtle and dugong surveys
- \* Using Indigenous and non-Indigenous names, knowledge and methods
- \* Using computers and CyberTracker
- \* Checking in books and with other experts to find out Indigenous and non-Indigenous names
- \* Visiting other places to see how the biodiversity is different and similar
- \* Teaching young people and tourists about plants, animals and insects



Georgia Vallance and Seraine Namundja doing frog survey at night.



Gabriella Maralngurra preparing a cage trap.

I like working on frog survey.

At night we got out and torch all different frogs. Then when I find a frog I get the frog and put it in a container and take it back to the office. In the morning we get a sample of its toes and we cut it and put them in a small container with water. Afterwards we find the names of that frog from language and English and then we write it in a book. I like this job because it is good for us.

**CAROL PAMKAL**



Jodie Kelly and Tara Rostron setting up fauna traps in Djelk IPA.



Wynita Naborlhborlh conducting a freshwater algae survey in the Warddeken IPA.



Yugul Mangi Rangers fauna survey at Maria Island.



Gill Towler and Julie Roy pressing plant specimens.



# Ecological monitoring

As well as monitoring by observing or looking, some ranger groups are also monitoring change to country using film, CyberTracker and photos. Monitoring or recording change can be important to show people how the country is changing in response to things like feral animals, weeds or fire. It can show whether ranger work is making country healthier or whether ranger work could be done in a better way to care for country.



Felina Campion measuring the circumference of *kunkod* (paperbark tree).



Edna Nelson and Julie Roy measuring tree height for carbon accounting project.



Rhonda Nadjamerrek, Carol Pamkal, Jenny Nadjamerrek, Tamika and Jayfat Miller testing water quality in the Warddeken IPA.

Types of ecological monitoring already being done by rangers in the Top End include:

- \* Going back to the same places time after time and recording what species are there and the health of the country, like whether there was fire, how good the water is or if there is soil erosion
- \* Monitoring tree health when we notice some are dying
- \* Using computers and CyberTracker to record, store and map information
- \* Looking at aerial photography
- \* Mapping wetlands and other vegetation types



Jodie Kelly and Tara Rostron collecting water samples.



Gill Towler, Selma Campion and Felina Campion monitoring feral animal impacts in the Djelk IPA.



# Working with external stakeholders

All ranger groups in the Top End work in partnerships with external stakeholders such as:

- \* Government staff
- \* Non-government agency staff
- \* University researchers
- \* Scientists
- \* Local schools
- \* Local clinic
- \* Local communities
- \* Tourists

The partnerships are important for cross-cultural awareness, to support ranger groups, provide technical assistance and assist and train rangers in new non-Indigenous ways of managing country and ranger work. Importantly, rangers also teach non-Indigenous people about Indigenous culture and ways of caring for country that have been trialled and used for thousands of years.



Alys Stevens, NT Government ecologist, working with the Djelk Rangers and their families to study the fauna and flora of the Djelk IPA.

Some ranger groups have official partnerships with external organisations, such as Dhimurru and CSIRO. Other partnerships are more opportunistic – where people come and go with no formal arrangement. It is preferred by many ranger groups that agreements are made with non-Indigenous people about what work they will do, where they will go, who will be involved and what the rangers will get back from the partnership, including money or jobs. This is an increasing concern for ranger groups as more and more people want to work with them.



Gill Towler from the NSW Herbarium, working with Seraine Namundja, Manwurrk Ranger, to conduct plant surveys.



Yugul Mangi Rangers working with Bushfires NT to measure fire fuel loads for carbon accounting.



Yirralka rangers working with NT Herbarium botanist Ben Stuckey to study their plants.



Yirralka Rangers working with Honorlea Massarella from Aboriginal Bush Traders to make bush medicine products.



# Junior Ranger program

All ranger groups in the Top End have expressed interest in establishing strong and sustainable junior ranger or *Learning Through Country* programs. Some ranger groups have had junior rangers in the past, however problems have come up and this has stopped or effected junior ranger programs. Passing on knowledge to young people about traditional and new ways of caring for country is important for Indigenous rangers and communities. It is also important to support young people in fun and meaningful activities to keep them busy and out of trouble.

Several ranger groups in the Top End (Djelk, Yirralka, Marrthakal and Dhimurru) will be a part of the new *Learning through Country* program being trialled by the NT Government this year.

Although official junior ranger programs are still being worked out in many places, all ranger groups take young people out on country and wok with them when they can, especially family.



Jai, Reagan, Corey and RJ helping with Manwurrk Rangers frog survey.



Yugul Mangi Rangers working with school kids.



Djelk Rangers Junior Ranger program – Felina Campion showing the kids how to use CyberTracker.



Penelope Yibarbuk and friend helping with Warddeken freshwater algae survey.



## Working in the office

Many women rangers do paper and computer work in the office and play a key role in the communication with external stakeholders and the community. Depending on numeracy and literacy skills, some women rangers are:

- \* Doing timesheets
- \* Doing book keeping
- \* Sorting out mail
- \* Answering the phone
- \* Putting information like photos and data into the computer
- \* Writing reports
- \* Cleaning the office

This work is sometimes good for women rangers who need to be close to their children and families when at work. However women generally become ranger so they can go out on country too.



Selma Campion working in the Djelk office.



Manwurrk rangers in their bush office at Manmoyi.



Cherry Daniels and Edna Nelson working on a conference presentation.



Djelk Rangers identifying weedy locations in the IPA.

# Community awareness, conferences and working with other ranger groups

An important part of the development of Indigenous ranger groups in Australia, has been participation in conferences and workshops where rangers have had opportunities to share information and learn from each other and other stakeholders like government or land councils. Some ranger groups, like the Yugul Mangi Rangers, try and go to conferences every year. They say that this is very important for them to meet other people and see what they are doing.

As the ranger groups grow, its also important that the rangers communicate to the community what they are doing. Most ranger groups have information tables at local festivals and open days where they show the community what they are doing and give people a chance to talk to them about their plans and any concerns they might have. Sharing information makes stronger ranger groups, makes the rangers proud of their work and helps create good role models in the community.



Manwurrk Ranger ladies (Seraine Namundja, Carol Pamkal, Jenny Nadjamerrek and Barbara Gurwalwal) at Women Rangers conference, Ross River, 2010.



Yirralka Rangers showing school students from Melbourne around their homelands in the Laynhapuy IPA.



Warddeken IPA staff and friends raising awareness about their work at the 2011 Stone Country festival in Kunbarllanjnja.



Edna Nelson and Priscilla Dixon raising awareness about the Yugul Mangi rangers work at the Ngukurr open day.



Participants of the 2010 NT women rangers conference at Ross River.



# Training

Training is a very important part of being a ranger. Training keeps rangers up to date with the best ways to manage country and ranger business. It can also help create a stronger more independent future where rangers will not need to rely so much on non-Indigenous people and external stakeholders.

The types of training women rangers in the Top End are doing include:

- \* Conservation and land management Certificates
- \* Driving licenses for cars, tractors, trucks and boats
- \* Using equipment like quad bikes, chainsaws, fire arms, video cameras
- \* Fire fighting
- \* Weed control
- \* Scientific research
- \* Seafood Industry Certificates
- \* CyberTracker
- \* Office work
- \* Computers
- \* Business management
- \* First aid



Yugul Mangi women training for their Coxswains license.



Djelk Rangers first aid training.



Yirralka Miyalk Rangers training with Batchelor Institute.



Seraine Namundja showing the other Manwurrk Ranger ladies how to set up a CyberTracker sequence in the 2010 NT Women Rangers conference CyberTracker training workshop.



Yugul Mangi Rangers Conservation and Land Management Certificate graduation ceremony.



## Small enterprise development

Many ranger groups have also started to develop small business enterprises including:

- \* Selling crocodile eggs
- \* Making bush medicine and cosmetic products like shampoo and lip gloss
- \* Collecting and selling native bee honey
- \* Growing native, food and horticultural plants for sale
- \* Collecting bush foods and plants for sale
- \* Tourism
- \* Culling feral animals for pet meat

However none of these initiatives have brought substantial income or profit to date and many are only short term projects. One project that does seem to be delivering some success to date is the Yirralka Miyalk Rangers bush medicine products ranger including oils, creams, shampoo and lip gloss. The rangers have been producing and selling these products at local markets with assistance from Aboriginal Bush Traders, a not-for-profit initiative of the Darwin Regional Indigenous Advancement and CDEP Inc.



Yirralka Rangers making bush medicine products for sale.



Yugal Mangi Rangers collecting saltwater crocodile eggs for sale.



Djelk Ranger billy goat plum harvest.



Yirralka Rangers selling bush medicine products at the market.



Edna Nelson and Priscilla Dixon making subabag boxes with Julian Gorman (CDU).



Leila Nimbadja and Natalie Sabato, Djelk Rangers, collecting cycads for sale.



## **Good things about being a woman ranger**

- \* Looking after land and sea country
- \* Being out on country
- \* Working with other Indigenous mobs
- \* Earning your own money
- \* Creating a better future for our children
- \* Learning how to manage tourism business
- \* Training, especially driving license
- \* Gives us something to do
- \* Working with non-Indigenous people
- \* Teaching language and bush tucker knowledge to children
- \* Working with the old people



High flood waters limit access to neighbouring communities, although not for this keen family!



Yugul Mangi Rangers bogged in early wet season.



Cherry Daniels and Edna Nelson with bush turkey that Edna shot in one.



Djelk Rangers doing beach clean up.

## **Hard things about being a woman ranger**

- \* Humbug
- \* Jealousy and criticising from community members and family
- \* Not getting enough sleep at home because of drunk people
- \* Working with poison cousins
- \* Cultural law such as not being allowed to tell men what to do
- \* Getting around the IPA – long distances to travel and sometimes not enough resources like vehicles or money for camping
- \* Getting kids to school every day and then getting to work
- \* Lifting heavy things

## Work other people want us to do that we don't like doing

Below is a list of all the responses that the ladies gave to this question. Note that not everyone felt the same way about all of these things, for example, some ladies like to do 'men's work' and get up early whereas others don't.

- \* Men and women training together
- \* 'Mens work' eg bollards, lifting heavy things, fire management
- \* Getting up early
- \* Driving every day, especially on slippery roads in the wet season
- \* Doing work on our own, because we are scared of buffalo
- \* Being bossed around by supervisors
- \* Picking up rubbish and cleaning

### Bush medicine preparations

We need funding, a bush medicine vehicle and travelling commercial kitchen. We need to decide what plants we would like to test and what bush products Yirralka rangers want to make. We can then work with scientists to test plant properties. We can get training from Aboriginal Bush Traders for all *miyalk*. We can ask TOs, Laynhapuy board and Yirralka watangli committee if we are allowed to sell the products. We then need to decide on a logo and packaging. We are going to trial some products at Garma. We also need everyone to get motivated, excited, participating and helping.

YIRRALKA MIYALK RANGERS

We want to learn for Coxswains, tractor and fire management *djama* because the *miyalk* rangers at Dhimurru don't do this, only the men. Also, the road that we go on to patrol our IPA areas is eroded so we need funding to fix our erosion.

DHIMURRU MIYALK RANGERS

## Work we want to do that we are not already doing

- \* Training
  - Quad bikes
  - Tractor driving
  - Coxswains ticket (boat license)
- \* Recording and practicing cultural knowledge
  - Collecting bush tucker and hunting
  - Flora and fauna
  - Burning country
  - Learning more from elders (need cultural advisors)
- \* Fire management
- \* Bush products
- \* Nursery
  - Grow food plants – bush tucker and other foods
  - Grow plants for shade in town
- \* Freshwater turtle surveys



# Some of the challenges we face and ways we can overcome them

	CHALLENGES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Colleagues and family	Noisy communities making it hard to rest	Move somewhere else or go to homelands
	Disagreements	Forgive one another and apologise
	People complaining	Ignore or try and solve issues
Cultural responsibilities	Attendance at funerals and ceremonies	Flexible working hours, rangers from different clans or families
	Cultural seniority issues – can't tell men what to do	Put ideas to male friends and family and ask them to talk to decision makers
	Poison cousins	Good communication amongst group and with supervisors
	Different cultural ways to non-Indigenous staff	Cross cultural education. Choosing the right non-Indigenous people to work with
Working conditions	Driving on slippery and damaged roads	Better vehicles and awareness of conditions; regular 4WD training
	Working on their own	Work with men or in groups. Always take Satellite phone
	Getting up early	Get an alarm and go to bed earlier
	Distances needed to travel to work	More ranger stations, better roads and vehicles.
	Need a cultural advisor	Talk with Ranger board, supervisors and government staff
	Lack of equipment, especially good vehicles for women	Funding and 'women use only policy'
	School far away	School of the air; pay local women as teachers; develop junior ranger program
	Lack of childcare makes it hard for women with kids to work full time	Funding for local childcare
	Food access, freshness and security	Work with local shop and bank to pool part of wages and make 'food club' to get cheap fresh food every fortnight
	Remoteness	Good food and essential resources supply, communication, reliable vehicles and staff
Training	Hard to access	Arrange trainer to come to you
	Expensive	Government support, ask others for advice on cheaper courses
	Needing 100 points of ID for licenses	Better services in towns
	Language differences	Bi-lingual courses and trainers

A good way of solving problems is to talk to facilitators, directors or cultural advisors. You can also write a letter to the board of directors or become a board member.

BAWALI MARIKA

Another good idea was to create a women's council to share problems and find solutions.

CHERRY DANIELS



Nursery meeting at Kabulwarnamyo.

### **There is no cultural advisor for Dhimurru**

**W**hat we can do is talk to the bosses and ask them if they support getting a cultural advisor. We can ask around the community if someone would like to become miyalk cultural advisor. We could also write a letter to the board asking for support. We can ask the facilitator to help get some funding. We can start out small – half day djama. We could tell her what we wanted her to teach us. Get ready for her, listen carefully to her and learn. We can then teach others about what we know.

**DHIMURRU MIYALK RANGERS**

### **Daluk (women) Warddeken troopy**

**W**e would like a troopy for the ladies for when we do our jobs at Kabulwarnamyo outstation. We travel lots of places with all the work gear. Sometimes we can't use the troopy because the men rangers want to use it. Also we would like to take all the old people for camping.

**MANWURRK RANGERS**

### **Some women rangers not working properly**

**S**o what we can do is call a meeting to talk to people about the problem, then to talk to the boss and cultural advisor. We can support them in their work and go out to the homelands, take equipment and ideas and be helpful and encourage them to make strong djama (work).

**YIRRALKA MIYALK RANGERS**

### **To solve the problems**

**A**sk the community to come and talk to us if they have any problems or complaints about us rangers and how we do our work. We talk about it and try to work it out find a way to fix the problem rather than them going to our employers with these problems and issues.

**CHERRY DANIELS**



## Final words from Cherry...

I know a lot of things have changed both ways, western, Indigenous. But we try and bring those together to make it look same, or make it feel same, so that respect will be there all the time for us. Not only for us Indigenous but also for non-Indigenous people. We are all Australian. We live in Australia. We come as one big group of Australian people. We teach each other how to look after our country Australia.

The importance of being a ranger and why we do these things is because of our country. We get things from the country not only food, but our ceremony comes from it. That's the connection there. That's why it's so important for us blackfella.

You gotta go out there and see what's happening, you know, whether your country is looking still the same or has changed. Something in a sacred site might be missing or must've fallen. That's why we've gotta check our country all the time make sure that sacred thing is still in the same place and hasn't been moved by someone who is an intruder. They can be both-ways intruders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. That's why we make sure our country stays the same - our paintings and our rock paintings, even significant places - we make sure that they're still there. Significant places, they are important even if they get washed away by the rain or by the floodwater we know where that thing has been so that spot is still significant to us. If we see something is missing or something has been changed then we get really upset inside. That's our identity that's going from there.



Cherry Daniels, 2010.

We must be committed to your work. It's like when you take hold of something [country] and you own it, you are committed to it. And vice versa, your country is committed to you. And your people, whatever race you are, you are committed to do those things for your people for your country. So vice versa the people commit themselves to you, your country commits itself to you.

And I drew another diagram, it was a triangular diagram, its got 1, 2 and 3 at the corners and theory in the middle. When you talk about things, looking ahead, programming and planning...how will you do it? How can you go about those things? You bring those things together, you start off with number 1, then you go to number 2, then number 3 then you connect those theories together. Is 2 or 1 better? Whichever number or option is better, you go along with that. See how far you go... there might be obstacles that you go through but those obstacles can be broken.

Then once you get through those obstacles you are motivated then! Your motivation will bring you along...you'll be the role model of everybody, every race, every tribe!

When you are a leader it's you who gotta do that thing and the people will follow you, then you get motivated by doing all those things. Then, you become the role model of those things, not only things what you do but with people. That's the one tell my ranger girls all the time. That's why they love me and I love them!





Katherine May and Tara Rostron at the first women's workshop, Darwin.



Manwurrk Rangers at Parliament House, second women's workshop, Canberra.



Bawali Marika, Cherry Daniels and Gurrundul Marika catching up. First women's workshop, Darwin.



Selma Campion, Carol Pamkal and Felina Campion at the first women's workshop, Darwin.



Women's workshop 2012, Australian National Botanic Gardens.



Tara Rostron, Emilie Ens and Dorita Djolom at the first women's workshop, Darwin.



Women's workshop 2012, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies.



Annick Thomassin, Libby Mungurr and Tara Rostron at the second women's workshop, Canberra.



Cycling around Lake Burley Griffin, second women's workshop, Canberra.