

# KOWANYAMA LAND OFFICE NEWS

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**YOUR  
FREE  
COPY**



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By Kowanyama Aboriginal Land and  
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Chellikee Street and Chapman Road  
Post Box 32, Kowanyama  
Queensland. 4871

Editorial  
Viv Sinnamon  
[viv@klco.org.au](mailto:viv@klco.org.au)  
Telephone 07 40605187  
Facsimile 07 40605250  
Photos, graphics and stories welcome



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Opposite: Maxwell Luke cutting and boxing  
sugar bag at Gooseberry Creek

Cover: Young sea eagles at Thakuluw

**A COMMUNITY MAGAZINE  
PRODUCED FOR THE  
KOWANYAMA COMMUNITY  
AND FRIENDS**

The opinions and views  
expressed in this magazine  
do not necessarily  
represent the views of  
the Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council

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## From the editor



Sitting at the computer preparing a tribute to a past member of Land Office staff has given me time to think. Walter's final gift to me was the time to reflect. Walter had been one of our founding Rangers alongside John Clarke. It was 1989 and we were hosting our first Native American visitor, Lummi tribal member, Jewell James. In this issue two pages have been dedicated to the memory of Elders who were all an important part in establishing our land Office in 1990. Next issue will continue with a dedication to Elder women.

Readers have the opportunity to use these images to tell their children and grandchildren about those and other Elders passed.



For Kowanyama those early days of the Land Office and Council were busy times. At times up to 120 letters a day left the office lobbying against gold and mineral sand exploration across our beautiful delta coast and the South Mitchell was closed to commercial fishing. All this happened in the days before telephones, faxes and emails.

In 1990 Kowanyama Aboriginal Council, fiercely proud of being an Aboriginal Council which followed the 1987 DOGIT handover and the change of administration twelve months later, hosted two major meetings.

Senior government, Cape and Northern Territory representatives and other organisations joined Kowanyama to discuss issues that Kowanyama believed were important at the time. The 1989 Northern Aboriginal Fisheries Conference brought interstate reps from the NT and SA to talk about Aboriginal fisheries issues. In 1990 the Land Office was established with a staff of three, and the Mitchell River Watershed Conference was opened by our Squaxin Indian visitor, Prof David Whitener. The meeting was a resounding success with letters of support from seven QLD Government ministers and the formation of Queensland's first community driven Catchment Management Group. Kowanyama attended endless meetings in those days singing up the idea of Aboriginal governance and management of Aboriginal Lands.



In the years that followed networks of friends across the country and indeed the world grew and Kowanyama established its reputation for doing things differently. Kowanyama liked doing things "its own way".

Now times have changed but the issues for indigenous peoples haven't. Native Title claims have been lodged and won recognising what everyone knew anyway. The Kowanyama People had known all along that this was Aboriginal Land and that there were people who lived their lives and died on it for thousands of generations before the coming of convicts and "settlers" from England in 1788.



Kowanyama has the opportunity to take up the passion, wisdom and foresight of our Elder leaders as current and future leaders in developing a strong and happy community.

This issue continues to tell positive stories of achievements of our Land Office and Kowanyama people. This is important for everyone in these recent times when we have lost more than a fair share of our community members.

Please read and enjoy our ninth edition. Remember and celebrate the lives and times of those family and friends past and present.

Viv Sinnamon



## ACTS OF FOOLISHNESS

### *Humans and crocodiles*

**Locals and visitors are warned to be more aware of crocodiles when they are near rivers and creeks hunting and fishing. If thinking of a quick swim, don't, unless you are absolutely certain there are no salt water crocs in the water.**

Past experience has shown that some people do not take the issue seriously.

The group photographed some years ago at Topsy were willing to risk their lives for some fish bait. They were dragging a net along the mud bank opposite *Thakuluw* where salties are regularly seen and photographed.

Some locals might say that tiger sharks also come into the river chasing food. Visitors are urged to understand that humans are just another part of the shark and croc food chain.

The last fatal croc attack on the Mitchell was back in the early 1930's when a crocodile took a man crossing to *Kokomnjen* Island at *Kowulh yal'alh*, present day bottom landing. Cecil Horace (Rocky) and Willie Mitchell (Mukaby)

were holding their fathers shirt as he crossed to the other side.

He was taken from right in front of them and his body was never found. Big spear fights happened at the Crossing and Five Mile over the death.

Last year a crocodile popped up on the other side of a drag net at *Marrpaw* on the north side of Topsy Creek mouth. It was a reminder to everyone that day of the need for care.

Large crocs have been seen on the beach between the South Mitchell and Topsy Creek mouths in recent years as populations of saltwater crocodiles have increased across the region.

Kowanyama residents are also reminded that a twelve foot animal lives in the Magnificent Creek just downstream of the flying fox camp opposite the workshops. It has been known to travel as far upstream as Belboro car crossing.

**Parents should remind their children of the danger swimming in the creek. Crocs move around trying to find food during the wet when creek levels are high.**



## KOWANYAMA SEA TURTLE PROGRAM

*An exciting new development*

Kowanyama Land Office staff have returned recently from a training visit to *Mon Repos Marine Turtle Research Centre* near Bundaberg.

The Land Office had become aware of the *Mon Repos Turtle Centre* in the 1990's when *Dhimurru* Rangers escorted by senior ceremony man, *Joe Yunupingu* from Yirkkala were hosted by Land Office staff at Kowanyama on their way back to Arnhem Land by road.

The visitors enjoyed kubmurri wallaby at the Crossing while *Nanakiya Yunupingu* told us about their trip to Bundaberg to witness that loggerhead turtles tagged at Yirkkala actually nested thousands of kilometres away at *Mon Repos*. Something they had never known. Both members of the *Yunupingu* family are now deceased.

This follows the recent monitoring of turtle nests on the Topsy to South Mitchell beach has shown that as much as 85% of turtle eggs in nests hatch and leave nests.

In most Northern Australian regions pigs have been eating most of the eggs in nests. Mitchell River delta nests have not been significantly affected by pig predation although it is known from a survey in 1989 that there appeared to be almost 100% of nests dug up by pigs between the Coleman and Nassau Rivers. Pig behaviour changed on the coast at Kowanyama and they stopped eating eggs.

Kowanyama has not been involved in past turtle and dugong management programs because pig predation had not been an issue. Other northern management agencies have in very recent times reduced the loss of turtle nests through aerial pig shooting programs along the coast.

**Mitchell River Delta coast does not have a large population of sea turtles but is an important place for turtles to breed if the success of hatching nests is as high as 2014 monitoring shows.**

Staff of the Kowanyama Land Office had visited the Turtle Camp at Mapoon some years ago but it was clear further training was needed to develop a

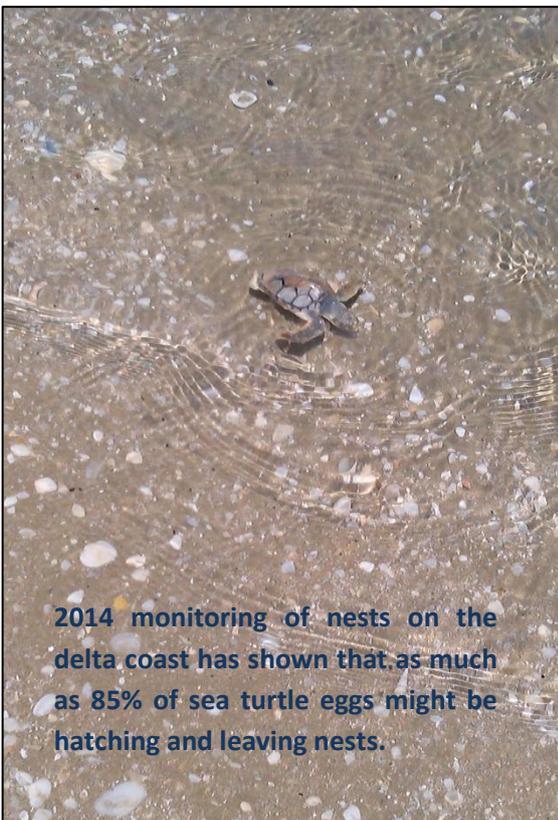


Rangers at Mon Repos doing night work

good Turtle monitoring program at Kowanyama.

Gavin Enever the previous Land Office Manager who had spent time on a number of Arnhem Land communities commenced a trial turtle nest monitoring program with Ranger staff in 2014. The program has been maintained since Chris Hannocks became the new Manager. Chris also has experience in Turtle Monitoring Programs on Cape York Peninsula.

While at Mon Repos Kowanyama Lands Office staff met *Gidarjil* Rangers who work as an important part of the Traditional Owner management of the Bundaberg/Port Curtis coastal region.



2014 monitoring of nests on the delta coast has shown that as much as 85% of sea turtle eggs might be hatching and leaving nests.



Kowanyama coastal survey work



Rosie Savoka and Belinda Norris from *QLD Environment and Heritage Protection Agency* have helped the Land Office in training activities at Kowanyama and Bundaberg where Dr Col Limpus was their host at the Mon Repos Turtle Research and information facility.

Initial training at Kowanyama introduced Rangers to nest location, inspection and mapping, and data collection which included how many eggs were hatching and where. At Mon Repos Col Limpus introduced Kowanyama Rangers to both day and night works with the identification of nesting turtles and tourist.

management. He complimented the visitors on their data recording skills.

Our rangers noticed that Flat back and Olive Ridley turtles nested on the Mitchell Delta coast and that loggerhead and green turtles migrated long distances to nest at Mon Repos.

***The Nest to Ocean Grants Program and EHP staff Rosie and Belinda and Col Limpus are thanked for their support. Special thanks to Rosie for her photographs.***



Thanks to Rowan Foley and colleagues from *Aboriginal Carbon* of Alice Springs for getting Kowanyama over the line with the first payment for our 2012-13 & 2013-14 historical carbon.

## POTENTIAL CARBON MARKET

### ***A bonus for Oriners Forest Fire Management Program***

Early planning for *Kowanyama's Oriners Fire Management Program* began in 2011 to establish control over the very late hot fires of the region. Large areas of neighbouring Cape properties and almost all of Oriners and Sefton were burnt out yearly. The program provided opportunities for Traditional Owners to be out on country managing country.

It has been a successful program that has brought neighbouring indigenous and nonindigenous groups together for a common purpose.....Looking after country.

In 2012 Kowanyama commissioned a feasibility Study funded by the Federal Government to investigate the potential for Kowanyama to get benefits from their fire management program.

Kowanyama delta lands were already believed to be one of the better examples of mosaic burning practices in Australia so was not eligible for the carbon market. Oriners and Sefton forest country is known to have had years of very late and hot wildfires that impacted most of the Cape.

A Feasibility Study was informed by NAILSMA field works establishing early understanding of carbon values of tea tree grasslands of forest country.

Rowan Foley and colleagues of Aboriginal Carbon Fund from Alice Springs have been engaged to work with Kowanyama parties to progress the proposal to enter the Carbon Market. This will provide some benefits which would go towards the operations of the *Oriners Forest Fire Management Program* and the general operational costs of Oriners.

An information package is being developed by the Office for presentation to Fire Management Program supporters and potential carbon buyers.

Buyers are interested in partnering with Kowanyama due to the long standing and demonstrated success of Aboriginal land management at Kowanyama, but more particularly in the early success of the Forest Fire Management Program.

Those involved in the long term promotion of indigenous land and natural resources management are anxious to maintain the original vision of well managed country that protects the cultural and environmental values which is not lost in the very real search for economic benefit.

The Forest Fire Management Program combines indigenous and non-indigenous ideas and ways of managing fire in a remote area of Cape York. The Carbon Market is a very complicated one which is the reason Kowanyama has taken a cautious approach.

The past message is that fire management is a management tool and any potential financial benefit is regarded as a very welcome bonus.

**OTHER VALUES IN  
FIRE MANAGEMENT,  
CARBON MARKETS  
AND OTHER  
COMMUNITY BASED  
INITIATIVES**



Philip Yam yarning with Tom Shepherd from Artemis at Oriners during parrot survey.

The *Oriners Forest Fire Management Program* has brought together neighbours that include Balurga, Southwell, Harkness and Crosby, QLD Parks and Wildlife Service. Western and Eastern Olkola groups have restrengthened traditional ties of mobs with traditional country in the region. They are developing their own management plans as they enter the *Carbon Market*.

Kowanyama’s placement of basic infrastructure at Oriners and the demonstrated ongoing commitment of a group of people led by Traditional Owner, Philip Yam with the support of the Land Office paved the way for the success of the Forest Fire Management Program as a part of Kowanyama’s broader vision of Aboriginal Land Management. Kowanyama has developed a positive reputation for its management activities over the last decade. Companies interested in trading for Oriners carbon are interested in supporting good Aboriginal land management of which fire management is a part.

There are a number of good things that come out of this for traditional landholders and managers.

- Gets people out on country
- Access to bush tucker and other resources
- Gets families and clans together
- Helps in the maintenance of traditional knowledge
- Strengthens people’s connection with country
- Provides for better management of country
- Provides a healthy lifestyle environment

To support the planned development and management of Oriners country Marcus Barber of *CSIRO*, Darwin was commissioned to conduct a knowledge recovery project with Traditional Owners, past stock workers, managers and past owners of Oriners . The report was published<sup>1</sup> in 2012 and in 2014 a paper followed in *The Rangelands Journal*.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Barber M, Jackson S, Shellberg J, Sinnamon V, 2012, *Working Knowledge: local ecological and hydrological knowledge about the flooded forest country of Oriners Station, Cape York*, National Research Flagships, Water for Healthy Country, CSIRO, 232pp.

<sup>2</sup> Barber M, Jackson S, Shellberg J, Sinnamon V, Working Knowledge: characterising collective indigenous, scientific, and local knowledge about the ecology, hydrology and geomorphology of Oriners Station, CYP, Australia, In *The Rangelands Journal*, 2014, 36, 53-66.

## Bringing people together in the bush

In the remote areas of Northern Australia, places like Cape York Peninsula, Arnhem Land and the Kimberley getting together for a yarn is more than just a “yarn”. In the remoter areas where distances from the neighbours and dealing with the day to day realities of life as a grazier, fisherman or member of an Aboriginal Community is a major issue in just “getting together”.



Olkola Rangers from Kowanyama and Laura meet with Tom and Sue Shepherd of neighbouring Artemis Station at Horse Shoe Lagoon, Oriners to talk about Golden Shoulder Parrots in the area.

Competing demands on people’s time to meet and do other things makes it hard for those who take part in community affairs and programs that affect them. The word “community” can have a very different meaning in places like the Cape.

Amongst it all people have made an effort in the north to get involved in what they see as important to them. The “Northern Community” (QLD, NT, WA), both indigenous and non-indigenous, welcome members of “service agencies” from the east and south if they are happy to come get some cow shit or ash on their

shiny RM’s. Knowing how to talk to the mob in the bush is also a plus.

The Cape is blessed with some supporting agencies whose members are willing to brave the flies and the distance to help.

In Kowanyama’s experience this includes members of *Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Rural Fire Service* and *Northern Aboriginal and Islander Land and Sea Management Alliance* who have helped in the development and on-ground logistics of the Forest Fire Management Plan.

Thanks go to them for helping make the program work.

At the end of the day it is the people on the ground working with each other who will make the Fire Management Programs work in the north.

Fire management in forest country of the Cape’s Coleman to the Alice Mitchell is bringing pastoralists together with indigenous land managers on a topic dear to everyone’s heart.

Traditional Owners urge State and Federal Government to recognise the difference in the Northern attitude to fire and country to southern regions where fire events have been catastrophic over the last ten years.

***“We would hope that difference is recognised in the policy and support that Government can offer Northern Australian communities and their agencies for a more progressive approach to proactive fire management. One that recognises the value of local and traditional knowledge and practices, and development of supporting agencies in addressing northern fire management”,*** said one Kowanyama resident.

## ABM ELGORING AMBUNG HOLDS PBC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Kowanyama’s Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) convened its Annual general meeting at the Community Multipurpose Centre this month. Land Council governance support staff assisted in conduct of the meeting and a training session for the PBC directors was held following and into the evening after the AGM. During the meeting Chairman Teddy Bernard noted the need to plan the careful transition of the Land Office operations across as capacity of the PBC developed to the level it needed to maintain the level of operations of the Land Office as one of Australia’s leading indigenous management agencies.

## REPORT ON GROPER DEATHS PUBLISHED

A recent study of grouper and other finfish has been published<sup>3</sup> on investigations into an unexplained illness leading to death in grouper. 96 dead grouper had been reported dead between 2007 and 2012 in Queensland, most occurring in urban coastal regions of Cairns, Port Douglas and Townsville.

Scientists were funded by a *Fisheries Research and Development Corporation* grant to investigate the problem given the public concern over seafood safety. Rachel Bowater, Senior Veterinary Officer for *Biosecurity Queensland* was the principal researcher for the project.

The project “showed that *Streptococcus agalactiae* is highly pathogenic to young grouper and can be spread by infected water, infected food, by injection or by infected fish infecting uninfected fish”.

“Infection was found in stingrays, grunter, mullet and catfish during the study which was similar to the infection found in Tilapia from Africa (Nile River), Indonesia, China, Brazil and Israel. The infection can be seen in these fish as a sore on the body of the fish”.

The project supported the need for improvement in current State policy regarding translocation and health testing of wild caught Australian and imported marine fish, since *S. agalactiae* causes large scale disease epizootics in aquaculture farms in numerous overseas countries. *S. agalactiae* affects a broad range of marine and freshwater fish, stingrays, saltwater crocodiles and dolphins

The study provides information that will be used for future surveillance and studies of the problem and among its recommendations urges the

<sup>3</sup> Bowater, Rachel O, 2015, *Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram: Investigation of an emerging bacterial disease in wild Queensland grouper, marine fish and stingrays with production of diagnostic tools to reduce the spread of disease to other states of Australia*, Final report February 2015, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, ISBN 978-0-7345-0446-3



development of disease management plans, the need for an understanding of how Strep impacts barramundi populations, and greater care where fish are moved from fish farms that might threaten wild fish populations.

Kowanyama Land Office was thanked for its assistance in the studies “providing information and reports on wild fish kills, sightings of dead and dying Queensland grouper, and of skulls washed up on beaches in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Northern Gulf region”.

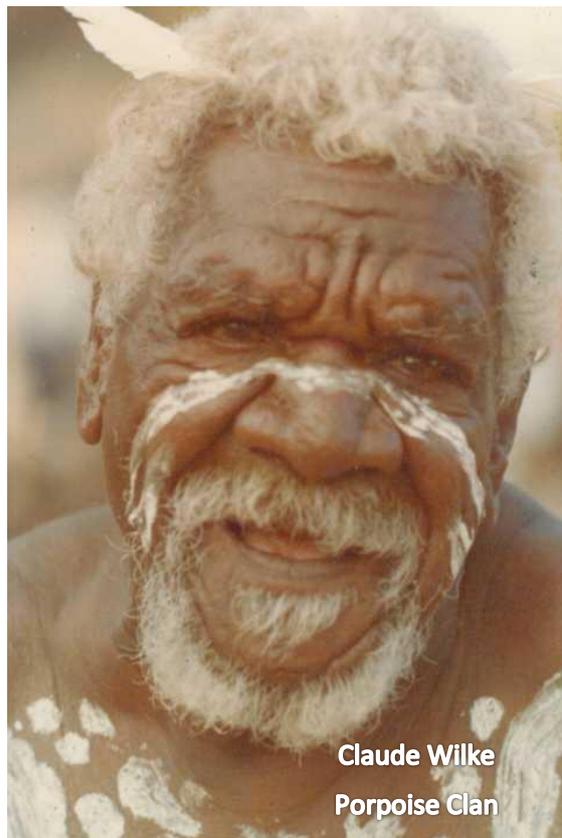
Land Office staff sighted two large grouper on Topsy beach and Kokomnjen Island during helicopter surveillance works, a skull near the mouth of Topsy Creek and provided an eye sample from a large dead grouper found at Topsy Creek mouth which tested positive for *Streptococcus a.*

No other fish with skin sores were reported by local or visiting fishing parties during the studies. Anyone who sees sick fish with sores, dead grouper, or grouper skulls should advise the Land Office as soon as possible after the sighting. If possible the fish or skull should be bagged and delivered to the Land Office.

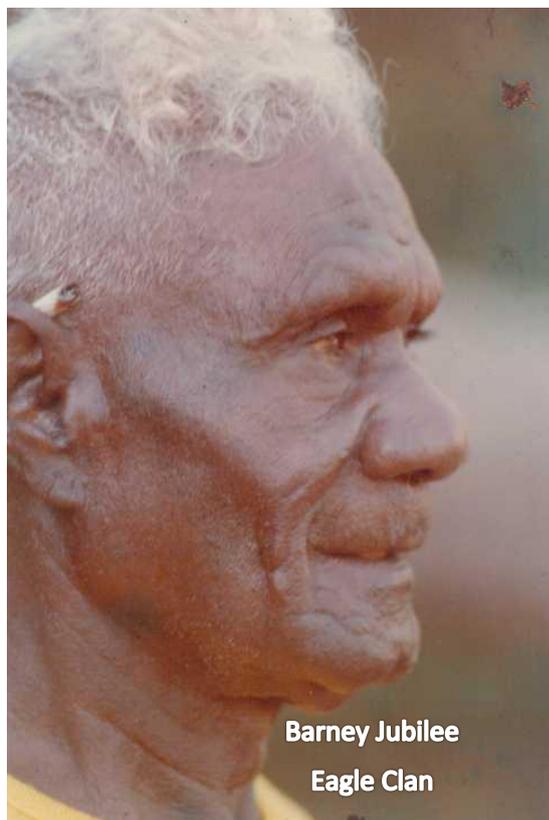
## HONOURING OUR ELDERS



Geoffrey Phillip  
Grass & Fire Clan



Claude Wilke  
Porpoise Clan

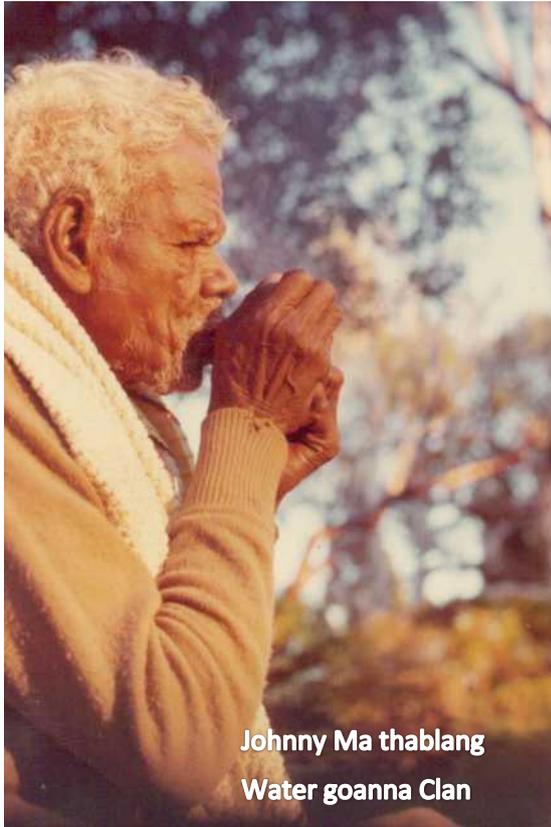


Barney Jubilee  
Eagle Clan

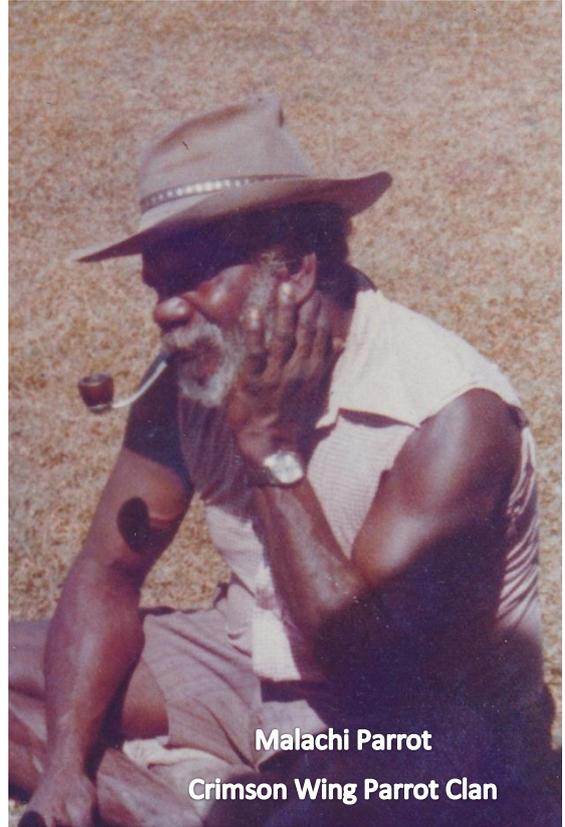


Jack Bruno  
Corpse Clan

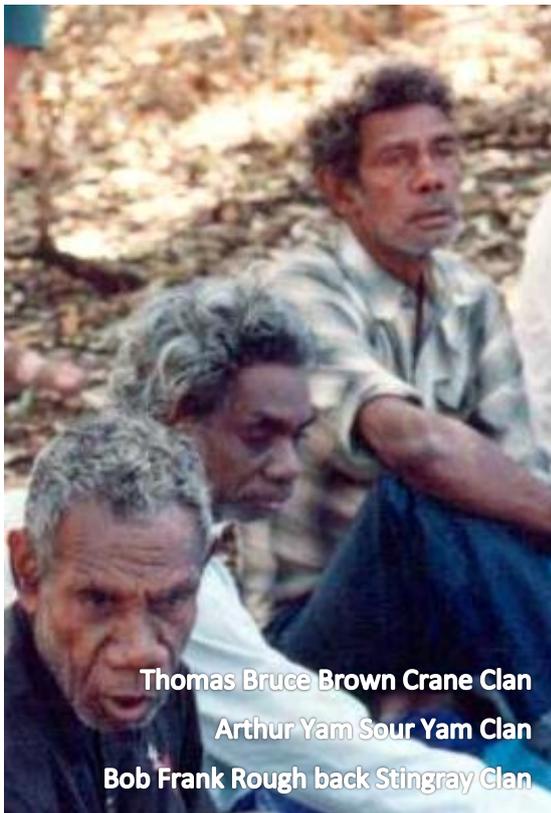
# BRINGING OUR PAST INTO THE PRESENT



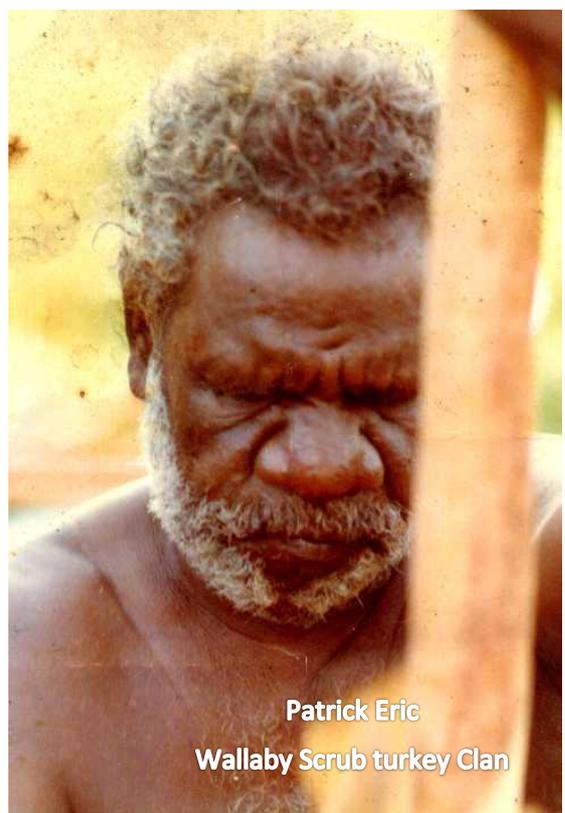
**Johnny Ma thablang**  
Water goanna Clan



**Malachi Parrot**  
Crimson Wing Parrot Clan



**Thomas Bruce Brown Crane Clan**  
**Arthur Yam Sour Yam Clan**  
**Bob Frank Rough back Stingray Clan**



**Patrick Eric**  
Wallaby Scrub turkey Clan

## MUSEUM COLLECTIONS SHIFT COMPLETE

Kowanyama Collections Curator, Viv Sinnamon has been working with the Land Office to relocate museum items stored in cabinets at the Land Office.

Collections of objects have been sorted, cleaned and bagged against insect attack and stored at the Cultural Centre on Chapman Road.

The challenge has been to make sure the silver fish living at the Land Office do not get into the museum basket and fibres collection. In the past some baskets and nets were damaged by silverfish and cockroaches.

Objects will be bagged and put into the large freezer at the Cultural Centre bought to kill insects and their eggs in artefacts.



Challenges for the Kowanyama Collections security will be getting the museum storage environment right with the improvement of the air conditioning and humidity controls.

Storage space is also an issue at the interim storage facilities of Phase One of the Kowanyama Culture and Research Centre.

4

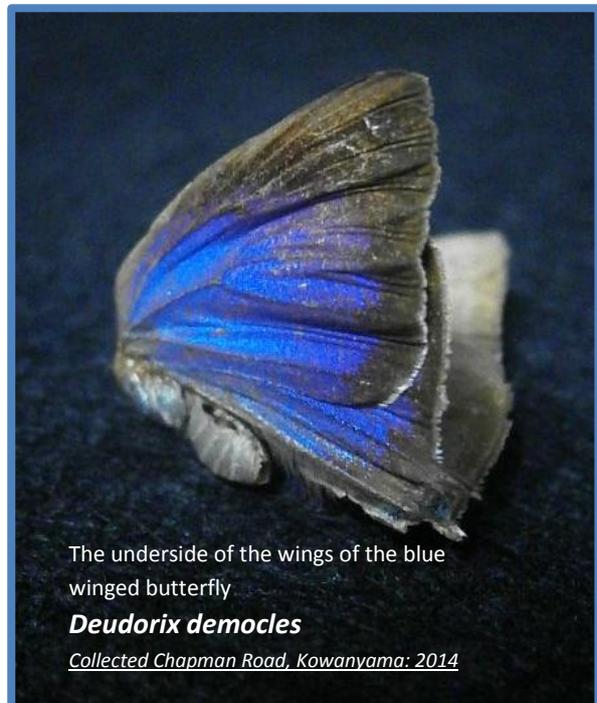
## THE LITTLE BUTTERFLY THAT LIVES IN KVLAYUW TREE FRUIT

*Deudorix democles*

A lot of people do not know that the pretty little blue winged butterfly that can be seen flying around the red flowers of the local “butterfly plant”, *Leea rubra* (In *Yir Yoront*, *yo pirrp*), lays its eggs in the poisonous strychnine tree (locally known in *Kokoberra* as the *kvlayuw* tree).

**The grub of the little butterfly lives on the inside of the poisonous strychnine tree until hatching out as the beautiful little blue winged butterfly we all see at Kowanyama.**

Until 2010 scientists did not know that the butterfly lived here until a visitor, Mark Hopkinson of Redlynch, wrote a paper on the butterfly having been shown *kvlayuw* while looking at the Cultural Centre site.



The underside of the wings of the blue winged butterfly

***Deudorix democles***

Collected Chapman Road, Kowanyama: 2014

<sup>4</sup> Hopkinson, M, 2010, **New distribution records for several butterfly species including *Deudorix democles* (Miskin) Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from Western Cape York Peninsula, Australian Entomologist.**



## UNTHINKING PIG HUNTERS

This photo was passed on from some of the Oriners mob who were upset that travelling hunters would take the time to do a trophy shot right near Jewfish Waterhole.

The place is a popular fishing location where people often visit as a dinner camp. Might have looked good in a magazine somewhere but thanks for the stink and all the flies fellas!!

## BOXING GOOSEBERRY CREEK SUGARBAG

Ranger staff and Job Find participants joined to help cut a native bee's nest at Gooseberry Creek in February. The brood and bees of the nest were transferred to a bee box made by High School students participating in Cultural Studies activities.

A number of nests have been transferred to boxes and placed in the Cultural Centre where there are now four boxed nests and two in logs from the clearing of roadside trees and the branches of trees blown down during high winds.



### TAIPAN ALERT

Two taipans have been killed within residential and business areas of town in March  
Please be aware

## Kowanyama Women's Group has meeting

In early March more than thirty women met at the Church to talk about ways to strengthen Kowanyama Women's Group. This followed talks amongst Kowanyama women and recent successful meetings of the Men's Group. Establishment of the group came from the *Shadow Box Project* in 2013. Kowanyama women explored their own life experiences through art an idea developed by Cherbourg women with an exhibition of their works at the Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum.

The meeting included members of *Apunipima*, Hospital, Police, Council, School, Justice Group and Child Safety. Deacon Val Connolly hosted a successful and enjoyable evening of talks and supper.

The group has taken the Kokoberra name of *Pakcharluw therrngamelm* which refers to the idea of "strong women". Talks at the meeting concentrated on ways that women could support each other.

## MIDDLE CREEK GRADER GRASS TREATMENT



*Errk Oyakangand* National Park lands are isolated from Kowanyama during the wet monsoon season. Kowanyama Rangers and staff, Fitzroy Lawrence, Maxwell Luke and Daniel Maddelena flew into *Errk Oyakangand* country by helicopter in March. They went with Chillagoe *Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services* staff, Mick Cockburn and Edward Thomas to treat a grader grass outbreak.

**The introduced pasture weed, Grader Grass has established in a small area at Middle Creek and has been managed over the last three years with late wet season visits.**

This wet season has resulted in very little rainfall making access possible in March to treat the grass with herbicide. Grass had not seeded due to the low rainfall in 2015. The Middle Creek area is inundated during periods when the Mitchell and Alice Rivers break their banks flooding the lower parts of *Errk Oyakangand*. The weed has advanced over the last two seasons because floods did not cover the area. Flooding of the landscape can kill seed which grader grass needs to grow because it does not grow from its roots like many native plants.

The treatment program is an attempt to keep the grass contained to the southern banks of the Mitchell. Recent outbreaks have been successfully treated at Oriners house to the northeast over the last five years. Outbreaks have been irrigated and the seedlings manually removed, chemically treated and burned.



The country north of the Mitchell River is predominantly native fine grasses. Kowanyama's Oriners *Forest Fire Management Program* is ensuring a low energy fire mosaic. This breaks up country into burnt and unburnt areas. In the last few years hot late season fires burning out the region including neighbours have been successfully controlled.



Errk Oyakangand early season low heat burning

Grader grass that has invaded Kowanyama delta lands increases the heat and damage of grass fires. The plan is to keep it out of *Errk Oyakangand* and Oriners and Sefton forest country.



Kowanyama grader grass fire at Crayfish Hole

**As part of the 2009 *Errk Oyakangand Co-management Agreement* Traditional Owners work with Chillagoe State Parks staff to ensure early cooler burning fires using both aerial and on ground burns as an important part of the *Errk Oyakangand Fire Management Program*.**



At home on the Magnificent



Bundaberg with the Birchleys



At a Darwin Conference

### RANGER LEAVES LAND OFFICE

Darren Birchley has resigned from his position as Ranger at the Land Office to be with family after spending 10 years with the office working on *Errk Oygangand* National Park and other Ranger works on Kowanyama Aboriginal Lands.

Darren's grandfather, George Murray (Deceased), and Darren's uncle, Robert Murray now in Normanton are *Traditional Owner* claimants of *Errk Oygangand*.

Darren travelled to Darwin with other members of staff representing the Office and Kowanyama at conferences. He spent time more recently at *Mon Repos Sea Turtle Research Centre* where Rangers were trained in turtle monitoring methods. While he was in Bundaberg he caught up with family members, Terry and Glen Birchley of Bundaberg.

He will be missed by his work colleagues who all wish him well. Thanks for sharing the time with us Darren.

## Feral cat troubles in the bush

**MORE than 4000 feral cats have been shot in outback Queensland in the past two years after scientists warned they were wiping out endangered native birds and bilbies.**

Some cats are so large they are "miniature tigers", bringing down endangered wallabies, bandicoots and numbats, said Minister for National Parks Steve Dickson.

He said some cats culled recently in Astrebla Downs National Park, near Bedourie in western Queensland, were 15kg monsters - up to four times the size of domestic cats.

Rangers reported cats attacking endangered bridled nail tailed wallaby populations in Idalia National Park near Blackall, and Taunton National Park west of Rockhampton





THE BEAUTY OF  
OUR DELTA  
WETLANDS



**DELTA WETLANDS BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY**  
*Christensen Fund Support*

TCF Focus is “Building indigenous organisations to create the context and support systems for Traditional Owners to care for their country, live well on their lands and seascapes and transmit their cultural values”.

Kowanyama began to develop a *wetlands management program* following a Darwin meeting of Australian delegates with *Worldwide Fund for Nature* to discuss potential financial support from *WWF Netherlands* for Australian indigenous resources management.

*Worldwide Fund for Nature*, Sydney office funded the initial development of the program of planning and activities.

Almost ten years ago The Christensen Fund generously provided ongoing support for the further development of *Kowanyama Wetlands Management Program* which has continued into 2015-2016.

Recent years the focus has been on the assessment of the biological and cultural

values of the coastal wetlands region between *Marrpaw* at Topsy Creek mouth to *Yengkr* at the South Mitchell River mouth.

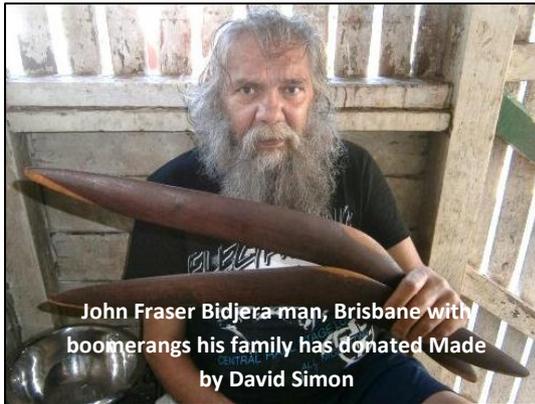
Gary Drewien from Willunga in SA and former Manager of the Land Office has conducted a series of country based surveys based at *Thakuluw* with Senior *Kokoberra* Traditional Owners, Peter Paul and Ross Gilbert. Viv Sinnamon and Dr Barry Alpher of Washington DC have conducted field survey and library research works documenting cultural values.

Dr Jeff Shellberg, a geomorphologist previously a member of the four year *Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge Study Program* and a member of staff of the Makah Tribe Department of Fisheries, Washington State has been commissioned to develop an organised computer information base as a part of Kowanyama’s own Land Information System.

He will also compile the final report for the completed project with TCF in 2016.

Jeff will work with other members of the team and TO’s to ensure the best possible outcome.





John Fraser Bidjera man, Brisbane with boomerangs his family has donated Made by David Simon

## A CALL TO POTENTIAL DONORS FOR THE KOWANYAMA MUSEUM

A collection with the purpose of maintenance of the heritage of ancestors and our children using new media

Current Curator of the Kowanyama Collection housed at the Kowanyama Culture and Research Centre, Viv Sinnamon is calling for donations of cultural objects originating from Kowanyama and the immediate region.

*“Anyone who has visited Kowanyama that has old cultural items coming from Kowanyama and the lower Mitchell River region should not underestimate their value to the community here. We have a museum collection that has a formal Statement of National Significance. The Kowanyama Collection is rapidly growing in strength as a cultural and historic record of images, documents and objects. It is already a valuable record and educational tool for the transmission of cultural heritage by people here in Kowanyama. The school now uses it as a resource for school cultural studies,”* he said.

The Museum is particularly interested in objects that have some story to them, ie when it was collected, by who, who made it and where. It is important to give meaning to the objects in a way that connects people, place, time and culture. In very recent times donated returned objects have included archaeological and contemporary items like ironwood flat clubs, ochred shields, fighting boomerangs, pounding mallets and a significant photographic collection documenting the rebuild of Mitchell River Mission following Cyclone Dora in 1965-67. Other objects span a period between the late 1800’s to 1990’s. A recent purchase of seven woomeras and some shell necklets from the *John Atherton Collection* (late 1800’s to 1930’s) have given added richness to the *Kowanyama Collection*. The foresight and generosity of those returning items and others providing financial donations for the purchase of objects is appreciated. Thank you.

## High School class meets with master weavers

Girls from the upper High School class visited master weavers, Hazel Barr and Doreen Michael at the Aged Care Centre with teacher Olivia who has been organising cultural studies for the class.

Doreen showed them examples of older baskets and talked about the different kinds of traditional works and raw fibre materials with the students.

The previous week the class visited the *Cultural Centre* to see some of the older examples of bags and baskets of the museum collection



TRANSMITTING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE USING NEW MEDIA



## School Cultural Studies News

School students worked with teacher Aaron Davey, Fitzy Raymond and Viv from the Cultural Centre for two study periods digging ironwood roots along the Landing road and making gum at the school.

Students also talked about the other uses of ironwood and other bush plants growing where the roots were being dug. Back at the school they also looked at the kinds of bone tools that were used for making spear shafts. Sandpaper fig leaves were used by



the boys to prepare spear rods ready for making wire spears.

The bone tools were part of a collection of hands on cultural material for students to handle and use during their school studies

Teacher Olivia lead her students in basketry studies that include viewing and discussions on basketry at the Cultural Centre and a visit with master weaver Doreen Michael at the Aged Care Centre.

Elder weavers gave a demonstration of weaving and to talk about the different kinds of traditional baskets and bags made at Kowanyama from cabbage palm fibre.





### WEDGE TAIL EAGLE RESCUED

Rangers were out on a snake call recently and found what looked like a wounded young wedge tail eagle.

The bird was seen the day before being chased and pecked by crows and hawks when it tried to fly across the trees at the top drain. Maxwell Luke snapped photos as the rangers captured it and transferred the eagle to the cage in the back of the Animal Health Officer’s Toyota.

The eagle was placed in care and immediately began to eat meat it was given. It does not have any injuries that can be seen so will be kept until it is strong enough to fly away.

#### WEDGE TAIL EAGLE

Kokoberra  
Kunjen  
Yir Yoront

*Aquila audax*  
*Minh kunthel*  
*Inh odfolg*  
*Minh wangrr*

### KEEP KOWANYAMA TIDY

We like it clean ‘n green

Set an example for our kids



# What happened to our wet!!

Nobody in their right minds really wants the devastation and heart break of a cyclone but hey a bit of rain this year would have been nice. Am I right or am I right Kowanyama. Cyclone Nathan kicked up a storm. The Arnhem Land coast can tell us all about that. Cooktown just missed by the skin of its teeth and our Fijian friends to the east well nobody needed what they got from Pam...Kowanyama got hit badly in Cyclone Dora in 1965 without any fatalities. Fiji is mourning their losses.

A search of the weather bureau site gives an idea of Kowanyama’s wet season to date.

We are beginning to see later wet seasons over time and the days of the big thunder head build ups like the ones seen in documentaries on Arnhem Land are a thing of the past here, although we have been getting some unpredictable heavy thunder and lightning lately.

The big water bird rookeries will not have had enough water to carry nesting this year on the delta. Our magpie geese have had a hard time finding enough water and grass to build nests with only a few eggs being gathered this wet season.

<b>KOWANYAMA RAINFALL FOR 2014-2015 WET</b>		
<i>From Bureau of Meteorology web site</i>		
<i>26<sup>th</sup> March 2015</i>		
<b>December 2014</b>	266.4 mm	15 days
1912-2014 average	175.5 mm	10.9 days
Wettest year <b>1926</b>	December with 539.0 mm	
Driest year <b>1966</b>	December with 17.5 mm	
<b>January 2015</b>	277.4 mm	24 days
1913-2015 average	346.0 mm	17 days
Wettest year <b>1930</b>	January with 814.8 mm	
Driest year <b>1947</b>	January with 77.9 mm	
<b>February 2015</b>	93.0 mm	4 days
1913-2015 average	374.7 mm	17 days
Wettest year <b>2014</b>	February with 1470.6 mm	
Driest year <b>1952</b>	February with 41.2 mm	
<b>March 2015 as (of 26<sup>th</sup>)</b>	169.2 mm	11 days
1913-2014	240.5 mm	13.5 days
Wettest year <b>1924</b>	March with 185.4 mm	
Driest year <b>1942</b>	March with no rain	



Galiwinku NT damage



Cooktown QLD damage



Evacuations Galiwinku

## CYCLONE NATHAN March 2014



HELP US KEEP MITCHELL RIVER  
DELTA A PLACE FOR OUR  
CHILDREN TO BE PROUD OF