

KEEPING TRaCK

Consortium News



Welcome to edition 8

EDITION 8
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This issue comes to you from Alice Springs. I'm here with a number of TRaCK researchers, four of the Traditional owners TRaCK has been working with and a big cross section of the freshwater research community at the Australian Society for Limnology congress.

Highlights will follow in the next newsletter. Thanks again to all who contributed.

Ruth O'Connor

TRaCK Knowledge and Adoption coordinator

Sustainable use economy in Arnhem Land

Project update from Nanni Concu, ANU

The TRaCK project 6.3 research team visited the Dhimurru and Djelk Rangers that manage the 2 project sites. We spent around 3 weeks visiting several areas within the Dhimurru and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs).

These visits provided information on Indigenous Rangers' activities and collaboration with Government Agencies and other Ranger groups. We also had the opportunity to witness the profound connection between cultural and environmental management of land and sea.

The call arrived in the early morning. Fisheries had received information about a commercial fisherman selling large amounts of crabs in Darwin. "Need to check how many crab pots he is using. He's probably over the licensed number". An hour later the Djelk Rangers are searching every inlet and estuary west of Maningrida up to Junction Bay.

The Rangers know the fisherman. Even though they are on friendly terms with him, they are determined to check that he is doing "the right thing". We searched all morning. No sign of the fisherman, but the Rangers took

pictures of the spectacular sand dunes and rocky shores, and kept their Cybertracker on to report the search area to base. Later the same day the Rangers located the fisherman, counted the pots -57, 3 less than the licensed number- and reported to Fisheries. Djelk Rangers regularly patrol the coast of the Djelk IPA, working with Fisheries and Customs to prevent illegal fishing. They are proud of their work, and see these partnerships as helping them to care for their country and to protect biodiversity for everyone's benefit.

A few days earlier I had been in Nhulunbuy visiting the Dhimurru Rangers. My visit there started with a welcoming ceremony for 2 Weipa Rangers from Qld. The ceremony was held at Nhulun, a registered sacred site where Yolngu people made their stand against mining development nearly four decades ago. Mandaka Marika, Dhimurru Managing Director, explained the cultural and historical significance of the site. This combination of cultural activities and environmental management is what distinguish Indigenous Ranger groups. The resilient links between culture and environment ensure the conservation of habitats, species and bioregions of national and international significance.

CERForum

CERF, who are one of TRaCK's main funders has an intranet site that TRaCK researchers are encouraged to access. It is on the Federal GovDex site "CERForum", accessible from this link:

<https://www.govdex.gov.au/confluence/display/CERF/Home>

The objective is to improve direct electronic communication amongst CERF researchers, and between CERF researchers and DEWHA.

The site also contains a discussion forum. There is a new topic produced by DEWHA's Biodiversity Taskforce. It's task is to review and recommend changes to the way biodiversity policy issues are addressed. They welcome some direct enduser engagement, so take a look and have your say!

If you are not already a member of CERForum just email katie.francis@environment.gov.au



Djelk Rangers Lawrence and Colin search the water in the Djelk IPA



Dhimurru Rangers perform a welcoming ceremony at Nhulun, in Dhimurru

New intranet site

Our new intranet is based on a package called Sakai. To access & generate your password go to <https://sakai.arcs.org.au/> and click on Reset Password. Enter your email address and you will be sent an email with the login information. The email will come

from noreply@sakai.arcs.org.au.

If you have any queries contact **Kathy Carter** who is currently copying across all files from the old site. And rejoice: it has unlimited storage, is free and you manage your own passwords. Yippeee..

Kimberley update

From Kate Golson

In July, after much planning with project staff from the Kimberley Land Council Land and Sea Management Unit (KLC LSMU), **Ben Cook** and his team (5.8) spent a fortnight with ranger groups and KLC LSMU project officers visiting sites across the north Kimberley. They collected samples of fish, shrimp and snail for genetic analysis from places on the May, Robinson, Mitchell, Carson, Drysdale, King and Pentecost rivers.

Marcus Finn, Pippa Featherston and Emma Woodward from the Indigenous values project continue their intensive research program in the catchment. While the economic survey of household catches is progressing, the team is embarking on work with 2 river communities to develop a trial river health monitoring program, which uses Aboriginal indicators of healthy country.

Between July-September, **Paul Close** and

Rebecca Dobbs (4.6) undertook fieldwork across the Catchment, collecting samples at an extensive range of sites along the Fitzroy and other rivers. They have been working particularly closely with **Bunuba** and **Gooniyandi Traditional Owners**, and are now in consultations with **Jaru** and **Kija** people in Halls Creek and surrounds about sampling in the east of the catchment later in the year.

Hmalan Hunter-Xenie from the Power Tools project has been engaged in planning with the **Fitzroy Catchment Aboriginal Reference Group** (1.2), with the intention that research begin in October - November.

The contract between TRaCK and the Yiriman Project, a local youth organisation, for the River Change story work to be undertaken is close to being finalised.

In August, TRaCK provided the first 6-monthly progress report on its research in the Catchment to the Kimberley Land Council.

NT update

From Hannah Brodie-Hall

The **FARWH trial** reached new heights recently as the team were air lifted, with the assistance of the **Jawoyn Association's** chopper, into hard-to-reach stone country in the Katherine region. This was part of the team's intense round of dry-season field work.

In an experiment to examine the effects of fish, shrimp and increased nutrients on the growth of algae, **Erica Garcia, Simon Townsend, Peter Novak** and **Andrew Raith** deployed large fish-exclusion cages and nutrient-diffusing substrates in the Edith River over the dry. This field work is soon to be wrapped up.

Danielle Warfe, Peter Kyne, Mark Kennard and **Courtenay Mills** sampled fish at permanent monitoring sites in the Daly, Katherine and Fergusson Rivers. This sampling is contributing to a long-term data set on fish assemblages, and will also increase our understanding of the hydraulic and hydrological needs of fish in the Daly. The team was joined by **Wagiman elders** and rangers whose input was invaluable, especially for the Wagiman fish-names poster.

Emma Woodward has been coordinating Darwin staff in a project working with **Naiyu community** members at Daly River. As part of this community art project, community members hope to create artworks that depict the difference between wet and dry river systems and engage everyone involved in two-way learning and expression.

Poh-Ling Tan and the Collaborative water planning team will be holding events in Darwin over the 12-13th October. These workshops and community meetings will report findings and aim to receive input on collaborative water planning processes and goals from interested stakeholders.

Hannah Brodie-Hall represented TRaCK at the Darwin **North Australian Land & Water Taskforce** workshop. This led to TRaCK writing a submission to the Taskforce addressing their terms of reference.

Hannah also attended the recent **Landcare Forum** in Darwin. It was also encouraging to see the range of work being done by people on the ground and how TRaCK research is and can be used by these groups. One of TRaCK's project partners – **Wangamaty Landcare** – was also the recipient of the Landcare Indigenous Award.



Andrew Raith setting up a flow tracker, Edith R.



Water quality sampling, Edith R



Mike Steenhauer installs a time lapse camera at Red Lilly Lagoon, Kowanyama



Transects will be used to evaluate riparian condition (soil compaction, vegetation, canopy cover)



TRaCK contacts

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Qld update

Mitchell update from Bill Sokolich

Andrew Brooks and **Jeff Shellberg** visited in July with delegates from the **7th International Conference on Geomorphology** on a post-Conference field trip.

Marceil Lawrence has been appointed interim Mitchell catchment NAILSMA **Indigenous Water Facilitator** for a 3 month period to allow time for a permanent person to be appointed. TRaCK, NAILSMA and the MRWGM plan to work on project coordination and alignment.

MRWGM held a general meeting at Chillagoe on 3 September. **Ruth O'Connor** attended and assisted with a water planning workshop. The workshop discussed opportunities, benefits and constraints to water resource development. The results of the workshop were collated and sent to CSIRO for inclusion in their report to the **Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce – Mitchell River Case Study**.

Bill met with **Marc LeBlanc** and **David Gilleson**

from **JCU Cairns** who expressed an interest in TRaCK findings and invited researchers to call into JCU when an opportunity arises, contact Bill to set up a meeting.

Waterholes Project update—Tim Jardine

The 5.2 team, in collaboration with **Kowanyama Aboriginal Lands and Natural Resource Management Office**, initiated a trial study in August. This study will examine the influence of feral pigs and stock on water quality, aquatic plant biomass and riparian condition. Nine waterholes were surveyed and time lapse cameras mounted to trees to take images of animal activity. These sites will be revisited in October with the expectation that effects will intensify towards the end of the dry season as water sources become scarce. One of the sites has been fenced from cattle and horses, with pig fencing to follow at two of the sites. We hope to continue this project through the 2010 dry season to determine if fencing can protect the integrity of these waterholes.

Meetings & conferences

Neil Collier presented at the 18th World **IMACS / MODSIM Congress**, Cairns, Australia 13-17 July 2009 and had a paper accepted.

Michael Douglas gave a TRaCK overview at the annual **CERF conference** in Canberra. A poster was also produced.

A number of TRaCK researchers gave presentations at September's **Riversymposium** conference in Brisbane. Details of presentations will be available on the TRaCK website

shortly.

A swag of TRaCK researchers and 4 of our TO collaborators are currently in Alice Springs at the **Australian Society for Limnology congress**. Details in the next issue and on the website.

Following from our recent milestone reporting the **Program Management Committee** will meet on October 9 to review reports and discuss new arrangements given the demise of LWA.

Publications

TRaCK 2.2 has produced a **12-page newsletter** to update stakeholders on the progress of their project '**Indigenous socio-economic values and river flows**'.

Preliminary analysis suggests different habitats are targeted for harvesting at different times of the year. Knowledge of the main habitats being used may help identify flows that will ensure Indigenous access to these habitats is maintained.

For more research results, including the quantities of plants and animals most com-

monly collected by the sampled Aboriginal households in the Daly and Fitzroy catchments, view the full newsletter at: <http://www.track.gov.au/publications/registry/714>

Paul Rustomji has completed a report from Project 4.2 "**Flood frequency and bankfull discharge analysis for the Daly River catchment, Northern Territory, Australia.**" This will be on the website soon and a Mitchell report will follow.

Got something to say?

Keeping TRaCK is our regular newsletter to help researchers keep informed about activity across the consortium. Contributions and suggestions for improvements are most wel-

come and should be **posted on the TRaCK intranet site under "documents/ Keeping TRaCK newsletter"** or forwarded to Ruth at r.oconnor@griffith.edu.au