

## NEWSLETTER

# milaythina nayri

## Healthy Country



## GROWING THE HEALTHY COUNTRY UNIT

## ✈️ ✈️ ✈️ RANGER OPPORTUNITIES

We are excited to announce we've received funding to recruit more Pakana Rangers! The Australian Government has increased our IPA funding. We will be advertising these positions shortly - watch this space.

## READ MORE ✈️ ✈️ ✈️

We're talking about some of our key projects including supporting community connection to Wukalina, Sea Country work, and an exciting new pilot project to support children to be connected to community, culture and Country.

## PROJECT UPDATES

# NEW PROJECTS



## WINDSONG GORSE CONTROL

With support from NRM South the TAC Rangers are coordinating a gorse control project on Aboriginal Land at Little Swanport.

Windsong was returned to the Aboriginal community in 2019. The project will run for three years and aims to remove gorse from the property.

As part of this project a shelter and watertank will be erected that can be used as a camping area by the community.

## NEW HUTS AND CAMP KITCHEN

Rangers have been constructing a camp kitchen at Dianas Basin to provide for community use of the property.

We aim to have sleeping huts, toilets and the full camp kitchen ready for the summer.



*Hut building at Dianas Basin*



## WUKALINA PROJECT

Wukalina is special Country to our community.

We are running a project to get back on Country at Wukalina that will include a community camp from 8 to 11 November 2024 (to be advertised). We will work with Wukalina Walk and Firesticks to carry out cultural burning and ecological monitoring.

We will also create some film and develop interpretation to tell our story of this Country. Stay tuned for opportunities to get involved!



*Wukalina*



# JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM



## PROGRAM DETAILS

We are excited to launch a project to support our children to be connected to community, culture and Country. We successfully applied funding to design a community-led program, collaborating with the Tasmanian Department of Children, Education and Young People, participating schools and adult education providers.

The Palawa ningina tunapri milaythina-ta (Tasmanian Aboriginal Learning on Country) is a pilot project, and along with growing junior rangers, it will also aim to improve educational outcomes for our young people. The project will be immersive and delivered on Country. It will involve camps and excursions for Palawa students, mostly on lands returned to the Aboriginal community. These activities will be delivered in partnership with Pakana Rangers and Elders.

As a pilot project, it will be delivered across three regions (Flinders, Burnie and Glenorchy local government areas). We are in a set-up phase, establishing our team, and we hope to be actively delivering the program in all three of these areas in the coming months. We will involve service providers with the necessary skills to engage our young people in life-changing experiences in the Country, which will also increase learning and training opportunities.

Activities and lesson topics will include (but are not limited to), biodiversity, fire management, insects, pest animals and plants, marine studies including on seagrass, kelp reefs, seals, shellfish and seabirds, marine debris, tides, and traditional seasonal calendars.



## PROGRAM COORDINATOR

“I am very happy to introduce myself as the Palawa ningina tunapri milaythina-ta (Aboriginal Learning on Country) Coordinator. My name is Nindarra Wheatley; I am a saltwater woman who is strong in culture and grew up on Flinders Island. I have lived on Bruny Island, Maria Island and the East Coast of Tasmania, surrounding myself with water and immersed in culture my whole life.

I have worked in Aboriginal Education for most of my career, working with and for Palawa children across Lutruwita for over 30 years in supporting their learning and providing them with knowledge of their culture. I am passionate about preserving Country, our precious cultural materials and knowledge for generations to come.

I am looking forward to working further on the Palawa ningina tunapri milaythina-ta project to enhance learning for Palawa youth who look to a future of becoming a Pakana Ranger. A future that is supported through their schools and is run by Palawa people with the guidance of Elders and community members across Lutruwita.” *Nindarra Wheatley*



*Nindarra Wheatley*

# PROJECT UPDATES

## ✈️ ✈️ ✈️ SUPPORTING TRUWANA/CAPE BARREN ISLAND COMMUNITY

During the summer, the Community on Truwana/Cape Barren experienced a water crisis, with their dam at dangerously low levels. To help deliver drinking water in case water tanks ran dry, we put the Lucy Beeton on the job to transport bottled water to the island.

## ✈️ ✈️ ✈️ PALAWA KIPLI ON TRUWANA

Over the summer our Pakana women's rangers partnered with Kitana Mansell from Palawa Kipli to take kids on Truwana on Country to collect bushfoods and cook with Kitana.

The Rangers and Kitana shared their knowledge, helping the kids identify bird species and bush foods and appreciate the importance of protecting their Country.

They collected bush foods, learning about cooking various edible plants and their uses. The highlight was a day spent cooking with the kids and community, preparing delicious meals using locally sourced seafood and vegetables. With the support of the Rangers, it was wonderful to see the kids and community all joining in on the activity.

The activities blended fun, education, and connection to Land and Sea Country, fostering a love for our lands in the younger generation. We look forward to more activities like this in the future, working together to support the community in utilising and connecting with the Country.







## MARINE HEATWAVE IMPACTS

Over the summer our Pakana Rangers identified a mass death of pipis - which are small saltwater clam. This was during the monitoring program for marine heatwave impacts within the proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka Indigenous Protected Area (IPA).

During marine heatwaves marine animals and kelps go through stress, which can make them more susceptible to disease and death.

We took samples of some surviving pipis and sent them to the Tasmanian Government's Animal Health Laboratory for further testing. The preliminary results indicate that the pipis may have died from a common bacteria found in shellfish, which can be more of a problem during marine heatwave events. Further testing is underway to confirm this; we expect the results to come through soon.

Due to the mass death event of these pipis, and preliminary results coming out of the lab, we recommended that over the summer:

- ❗ Community in Tayaritja/Furneaux be extra careful about eating wild caught shellfish during the marine heatwave, and only eat shellfish that are well cooked.
- ❗ The harvest and the consumption of pipis in the Tayaritja/Furneaux Islands be avoided.

We made these recommendations as we don't want anybody to get sick from eating pipis in the region and because we want our pipis to recover from this mass death event.







## MAPPING SEAGRASS

The Pakana Rangers have partnered with scientists from the University of Tasmania, the University of Queensland and Deakin University on a seagrass mapping project in our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka Indigenous Protected Area (IPA, Sea Country around the Furneaux Islands). This project was funded through the National Environmental Science Program and will help us confirm that the seagrass beds around the Furneaux Islands are the largest in southeastern Australia.

During the fieldwork, our experienced and capable Pakana Rangers were at the helm. A BOSS camera system was used to map seagrass presence, as well as species composition around Tayaritja/Bass Strait Islands. This information will also make satellite imagery more capable of mapping seagrasses from above.

Genetic samples were also taken to assess the connectivity of our seagrass beds, and coring was done to assess the amount of blue carbon stored in our seagrass beds. Carbon accumulates in seagrasses over time and is stored in the seabed. Seagrass beds, per hectare, can store up to twice as much carbon as forests on land.

Another part of the project is in the intertidal zone which involves collecting information on the species that are growing on and with the different seagrasses. This will tell us more about the ecological communities that rely on seagrasses, like shells and microbes. This work will also help answer questions about how seagrass habitat in the region is changing and how our community can look after it in the future.

We welcomed the ground support from the Truwana Rangers on Truwana/Cape Barren Island. Their help enabled the coring team to access a site, which wouldn't have been possible without their assistance.

This research project will help inform the establishment of our seagrass monitoring program for our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA. Seagrass beds are culturally and ecologically important habitats and are one of our Healthy Country plan targets for the proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA.

Later this year we will carry out more fieldwork and develop our ongoing monitoring program.





## SHARING KNOWLEDGE

In February, our women Pakana rangers attended a cultural women's exchange that brought together 35 strong and proud sovereign women from Lutruwita and Martuwarra (West Kimberley). Tunapri luna (women's knowledge) was held in Pilaywaytakinta-tu/Lowhead and on the banks of the kanamaluka/Tamar River in Launceston.

This gathering enabled us to share our freshwater and sea country connections and yarn about using our connections to understand and heal our waters.

The exchange was a powerful start to the week, which ended with an open symposium at the Tailrace Centre. This provided opportunities for discussion with various agencies and industries responsible for managing fresh water in Lutruwita/Tasmania.

Our Senior Pakana Women's Ranger, Fiona Maher and our Sea Country IPA Coordinator, Zoe Cozens, shared the critical work and research the team is doing for the proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA, and how we are working to care for Palawa Sea Country.

Aunty Lola Greeno and Professor Anne Poelina were generous with their knowledge and story for our keynote speech. This was followed by an energetic and powerful panel discussing Aboriginal water sovereignty with Aunty Anne and Darlene Mansell.

Discussions also included how to achieve cultural safety within organisations, climate change impacts on our waterways and Sea Country, and how we all will commit to listening and learning from each other with the best interests of our waterways at heart.



Zoe Cozens, June Brown, Fiona Maher and Nindarra Wheatley at tunapri luna.



Professor Anne Poelina and Aunty Lola Greeno



## FREEDIVING

Through collaboration with our Strong in Country team, we supported a freediving course for Palawa community at Larapuna/Eddystone Point.

Everyone enjoyed learning how to dive like our Old People. The course was run by Kaeo and Nathan from Freedive Tasmania, who shared their love for diving with us. They taught us breathing techniques and built our confidence in diving to depths of over 10 m.

The freediving course was not just about the depths we reached but also about the connections we have with milaythina muka and each other.

We dived amongst kelp forests and saw octopus, rays and diverse fish. We also caught fish and gathered a feed of abalone and warreners, seafood that has sustained our community for millennia.

We look forward to offering this experience with more Palawa in the future. Connecting to milaythina muka through diving is good for our people, culture and Country.

Keep an eye out for community diving events over the summer. Also, if you haven't seen it already, check out the short reel we put together on the event.



## EAST COAST WILDLIFE MONITORING

Southern Rangers Kulai and Baden have been applying their skills in camera monitoring on the east coast.

A joint project with the Tas Land Conservancy NRM South and the TAC has them installing wildlife cameras at Devils Corner and Apslawn. This is a three-year project and will assist in understanding the health of Tasmania's wildlife populations.

This great photo Baden took shows two trimanya/echidna trying to hide from the crew!







## VESSEL MAINTENANCE

Anyone who owns a boat knows that maintaining them is labor intensive.

With three vessels, our Pakana Rangers are regularly carrying out maintenance duties.

We have helped repair our dinghy and trailer, antifouled the Andra Maynard and had our Lucy Beeton serviced after doing its first 100 hours.



## YULA SEASON

Over the birding season our Pakana Rangers supported the TAC birding shed operations. We assisted the shed with transport to Big Dog and transported birds to the cool rooms at Lady Barron.

By supporting the TAC birding shed we are supporting community to participate in birding, and we also are helping to provide birds for our people to enjoy at community events throughout the year.

This year we were also able to help birders from Truwana/Cape Barren Island return home at the end of the season, with their gear. We loaded up the Lucy Beeton (our barge), and ferried them home at the end of the season.

## MONITORING

It's been another insightful season monitoring the yula on the islands with rangers and community members.

Read some of our observations on the next page. Head over to our website to see the comparisons since 2013.

### The crew

Dec 2023: 8th (Babel), 7th (Big Dog). Brett Newall, David Lowery, Kulai Sculthorpe, Brenton Brown, Stuart Wheatley, Oliver Gledhill, Mathew Wheatley and Grahame Stonehouse.

March 2024: 4th (Babel), 5th (Big Dog). Brendan (Buck) Brown, June brown, Tim Maynard, Dion Brown, Shane Hughes, Phil Thomas, Jesse Williams, Dean Newall, Brett Newall, David Lowery, Ambrose McDonald, Grahame Stonehouse and Colin Hughes.



## Babel Island

### Occupancy rates

- ↓ Adults at 71% December 23  
Down from 82% December 22
- ↓ Chicks at 57% March 24  
Down from 62% March 23

### Average no. of burrows per 100m transect

- ↓ 51 December 23  
Down from 62 December 23

### Average weights

- Chicks - 663 March 24  
Holding steady
- ↑ Adults - 663 March 24  
Up from 638 March 24



## Big Dog Island

### Occupancy rates

- ↓ Adults at 66% December 23  
Down from 84%
- ↑ Chicks at 68% March 24  
Up from 63%

### Average no. of burrows per 100m transect

- ↓ 95 December 23  
Down from 119 December 22

### Average weights

- Chicks - 786 March 24  
Holding steady from last year
- ↑ Adults - 786 March 24  
Up from 603 last year





## PREMINGHANA CAMP

During the Preminghana Camp, the community set off on an exciting trip to Kings Run and piliri/Cape Grim. Many members spent time snorkelling and diving for shellfish, creating a wonderful experience of enjoying Sea Country together.

It was especially heartwarming to see a few of our women joining the men in the water, diving and collecting shellfish. They then sat together, working together with the catch, and teaching many how to clean the nitipa/abalone. The catch was brought back to camp, where the entire community enjoyed a delicious meal together. There was also a spear throwing competition at this year's camp where community could boast about who is better the north or the south.



## GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Rangers have completed training towards their Cert III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management over the past six months. This included Side-by-side training, Tractor training, 4WD training and Identifying Fauna in the Field.

Most of the training is completed in the field and is hands-on, making it relevant to the ranger's day-to-day work. The rangers have some optional units to select to tailor the course to their interests, leading to a multi-skilled ranger crew.

Alice, from the Sea Country team, also attended Fire ground training through Firesticks and obtained her Certificate II in Public Safety (firefighting operations).





## AT SEA WITH CSIRO

Alice, a Sea Country Ranger, spent May on the RV Investigator for the SEA-MES (Southeast Australian Marine Ecosystem Survey) project with four other First Nations participants.

This project revisited surveys from 25 years ago to document changes in the southeast continental shelf and establish a baseline for the continental slope. SEA-MES aims to understand changes in the sea country, the impact of human activity, and the prospect for the future.

Using various biological sampling techniques, the team studied ecosystem and food web structures, from phytoplankton to fish diets. They also sampled the water column for physical and chemical properties, used a video system to study the ocean bed, and explored new DNA-based methods to understand the ecosystem.

Techniques included a Deep Tow camera for benthic and fish habitat, a CTD machine for ocean properties, and demersal trawls and multinet for plankton samples. The CTD (conductivity, temperature, depth) instrument, mounted on a rosette, collected data on salinity, density, and sound velocity.

Alice helped set up the CTD machine and sorted trawl and multinet catches. She won the 'Mackrell Award' for measuring the most Jack Mackerel, totalling 771, compared to the second place's 251. Overall, Alice measured 5237 fish!

Through this project, Alice learned about various species of fish, sharks, rays, and plankton, developing a keen interest in zooplankton and their nightly migrations.

Alice spent time on a side project while at sea, analysing footage of seals and comparing it with previous data. Seals were crucial for our peoples survival post-colonisation, as sealers exploited Palawa women's seal-hunting skills. Many in our community trace their heritage back to these women who were forced into sealing.



## NEW RANGER BASE

We have a new Pakana Ranger base at Tomahawk. The base will support our efforts to care for our ancestral land and sea.

Our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA extends over coastal areas from Waterhouse Point to Larapuna and over Wukalina/Mount William National Park, so a ranger base in this area supports us to care for this Country into the future.







## PROPOSED TAYARITJA MILAYTHINA MUKA IPA UPDATE

In late June, our Healthy Country Planning Group met to discuss the draft management plan prepared for the proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA.

The group reviewed:

- the vision for the proposed IPA.
- targets for conservation and community culture and Country.
- the threats to targets.
- management goals and objectives.
- priority projects
- monitoring and evaluation processes.

Targets for the IPA include:

- Community connection to Tayaritja Milaythina Muka
- cultural places, resources and practices.
- seagrass beds (defined as ecosystem, including marine animals that rely on these habitats).
- rocky reefs (defined as ecosystem, including marine animals that rely on these habitats).
- foreshore, estuaries, and waterways.
- seabirds and shorebirds.
- marine mammals.
- land animals of conservation significance.

Threats of greatest concern are:

- climate and oceanic changes.
- on-going dispossession.
- disease.



Priority projects include:

- enhancing community capacity to care for Tayaritja milaythina muka.
- supporting community to connect with Tayaritja milaythina muka.
- safeguarding cultural places, resources and practices.
- establishing community-led management programs for seagrass, rocky reefs, birds, marine mammals, land animals of conservation significance and wetlands.
- improving community capacity to respond to wildfires and revitalise cultural burning.
- delivering weed and cat control programs.

The management plan is currently being finalised for consultation with community and relevant stakeholders. Over the coming months we will be consulting, so please get along to a meeting or reach out to us so you can have your say on the draft management plan.

Proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka (Sea Country around the Bass Strait Islands) Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)





## RETURNING WOMBATS TO LUNGTALANANA

Our Lungtalanana Cultural Restoration Project supports rangers and other community members to heal Lungtalanana/Clarke Island. We're now making regular trips for cultural burning, monitoring animals and plants, and planning for the next stages of the project: repatriating prupilathina/wombats.

Wombats are important for Country. They dig huge burrows, turning over thousands of tonnes of soil every year. They graze down grass tussocks and help to create marsupial lawns to feed themselves and other animals, like payathanima (wallabies and pademelons). Animals like lizards and snakes use wombat burrows to escape the heat, cold, or fires. Wombats lived on Lungtalanana and Truwana/Cape Barren Island until about 100 years ago.

In June, we headed to Lungtalanana with wombat experts Pippi Lawn (UTAS) and Androo Kelly (Truwana Wildlife Park) to look for good places for wombats to live. The rangers found several places with the right combination of grasses to eat, hillsides for burrows, and waterholes for drinking. We found other places that, with some cultural burning, can be made into good places for wombats. We'll soon be building boxes to transport wombats and heading back to the island to dig starter burrows.

### Did you know?

In 1798, Matthew Flinders collected a wombat from Lungtalanana; this wombat was sent to England and became the *type species*.

The term "type species" is both a concept and a practical system that is used in the classification and naming of animals.



prupilathina/wombat







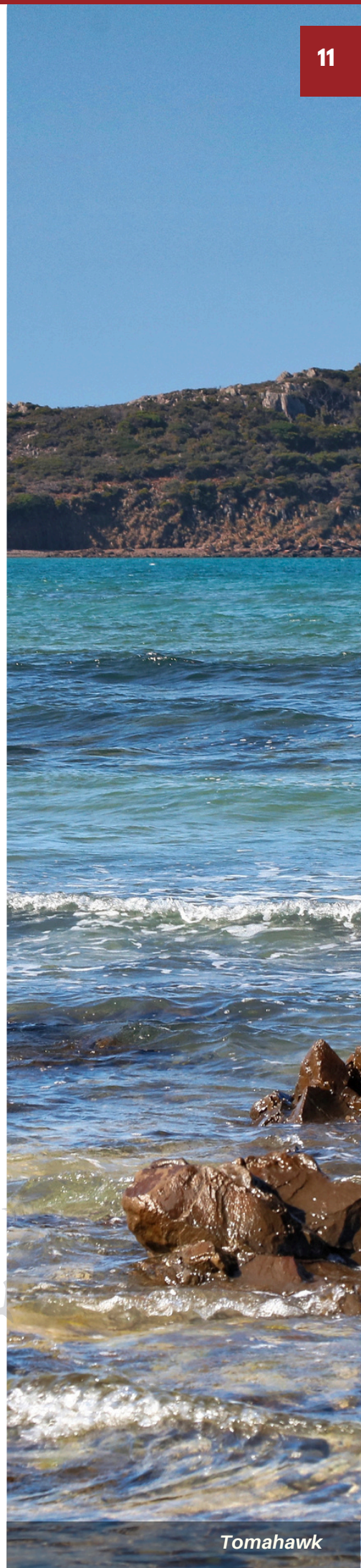
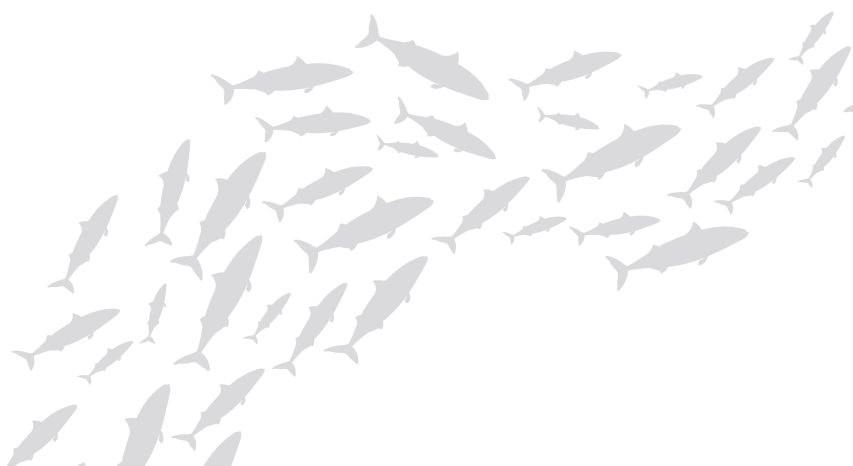
## ADVOCATING FOR COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND COUNTRY

Over the last six months, we have engaged in consultations on:

- the Tasmanian Threatened Species Strategy.
- the development of the Southeast Marine Park Network Management Plan.
- drought and climate resilience goals.
- red handfish recovery.
- the proposed Bass Strait Offshore Windfarm Area.
- the Tasmanian Government's Marine Heatwave Response.

Our input in all of these consultations has focused on:

- the rights of the community that need to be recognised to prevent ongoing acts of dispossession.
- the community's connection to Country and the critical role healthy Country plays in providing for the health and wellbeing of the community.
- the role that the community must play in decision-making and management.
- the need to improve cultural heritage protection.
- the need for greater action to address climate change and support restoration.
- making progress to deliver Closing the Gap priority reforms and on target 15 which aims to enable Aboriginal people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.







# CONTACT US

## DAVID LOWERY

Healthy Country Unit, North  
david.l@tacinc.com.au

## ANDRY SCULTHORPE

Health Country Unit, South  
andry.s@tacinc.com.au

## ZOE COZENS

Sea Country IPA Coordinator  
Healthy Country Unit  
zoe.c@tacinc.com.au

