

Newsletter

MILAYTHINA NAYRI

Healthy Country

March
2025



Community visit to Pilri/Cape Grim during Preminghana camp

Growing the Healthy Country Unit

Going from strength to strength!

We are growing our team and capacity to care for our Country. We have welcomed 8 new Pakana Rangers and 4 new members to the Junior Rangers program. With new projects underway and additional funding, we will be employing more rangers in the coming months. Watch this space!

Read more

In this issue, meet the new members of our Healthy Country Unit and learn about our work caring for our returned lands and Sea Country. See how we engage our children through the *muylatina milaythina*/Junior Rangers program. Dive in to see the hard work we're doing and the new ways we're caring for our culture, community, and Country!

Project Updates





Growing our Healthy Country Crew

Meet the team!

Tananger Peet – Sea Country Ranger

ya, mina Tananger, I am a Pakana woman that comes from the West family, I have just started with the Sea Country Rangers. I've grown up in the North/North-East of Lutruwita with my family, I love practicing Culture on Country with my family, playing guitar, creating art, and having a cuppa!

I have spent the last three years in land care as a Working on Country Ranger & I'm so happy to be continuing to care for our milaythina with Community, especially other strong Salt-Water Women. On Country is where I feel at home, most connected, and I feel grateful to be working to protect our precious Land, Culture, Connection, Stories, Dance, Song and peoples. I can't wait to further my knowledge with the team and add my passion and energy wherever I can.

Jesse Cruse – Ranger Supervisor

My name is Jesse Cruse (Mansell) and I have lived in Pataway my whole life. I am 34 years old and have two daughters aged four and six, and a partner Hayley that holds the fort while I am on Country. Over my working career I have worked in a few different jobs, retail assistant, real estate and recently completing my Certificate III in Landscape and Construction. I enjoy playing lots of sports, and you'll never see me miss a game of Collingwood during footy season.

Having the opportunity to work on country as a Pakana Ranger is exciting because I enjoy learning about my culture and working to protect Country. The more knowledge I can have and pass onto my kids then the stronger our culture will live.

Jesse Williams – Cultural Fire Coordinator

ya, I'm Jesse. I grew up in northern Lutruwita and still call the north home. I've been lucky enough to join the TAC as the Cultural Fire Coordinator, after previously working with the Firesticks Alliance for the past two years as a Mentor and Regional Coordinator.

I'm focused on continuing the revisitation of fire on Country, understanding community and Country's needs, and supporting the ongoing work of 'right fire' practices that have been going on for more than a decade. I've been in land management for a decade myself, with a particular interest in fire.

I have experience in both western fire and cultural fire practice. My passion is on-Country learning and sharing. I'm always keen to yarn, connect with community, and engage with Country. There's always something new to learn, and who better to do that with than community on Country!



Tananger Peet



Jesse Cruse



Jesse Williams



Micheal Kavanagh

Micheal Kavanagh – Ranger

My name is Micheal Kavanagh, and I am the third eldest grandson of Diane Burgess. I have just started my position as a Healthy Country Ranger and I'm loving it! I was formally a baker at Banjo's, and a fisherman, so I have definitely learnt to be an early bird!

I have enjoyed my experience with mutton birding back in March 2024. Although I don't know much about my culture yet, I look forward to learning more about our Country and culture. I am a proud Aboriginal Palawa man, just like my Uncle Rex Burgess was.

Monique Maclaine – Healthy Country Project Officer

ya, mina Monique Maclaine (Sainty) and I'm excited to have joined the Healthy Country Unit in a partnership role between the TAC and NRM South. I'm also a student at UTAS, graduating this year with a Bachelor of science in microbiology, with minors in botany, ecology, and geography. I'm passionate about merging western science with traditional ecological knowledge to preserve and heal Country, and am dedicated to protecting land and sea Country across Lutruwita.

Over the past few years, I've been involved in the Firesticks Mentoring Program, coming together with Community to learn and practice cultural fire across Lutruwita and Tayaritja is an experience I'm incredibly grateful for.

In my free time, I love being out on Country, traveling, playing guitar and piano, reading, hiking, and camping. I also volunteer with the State Emergency Service (SES) in the Derwent Valley & General Response Units.

I'm looking forward to learning and growing in my position, contributing to both organisations' goals, and positively impacting to the health of our Country and people.

Ashton Peet – Ranger

My name is Ashton Peet (West) I'm from Launceston and a proud Pakana man. Working on country to me means having a sense of purpose in my life. I also want to share the knowledge I gain with my daughter. I've recently become a father to a baby girl and sharing knowledge with her as she grows up is a big priority for me.

Prior to joining the Pakana Rangers I spent 3 years tour guiding and cooking for the Wukalina Walk. I then studied horticulture with the West Tamar Council.

When I am not working, I enjoy bush walking, spending time with my family and fishing.



Monique Maclaine



Ashton Peet

Nick Hammersley - Ranger

I'm Nick 'Beeton' for the community that doesn't know me. I am a new member of the land management ranger group. My work area is on the islands and what a beautiful place it is over here! In my first month of working with the Pakana Rangers I have learnt so much on Country and the best part is there is so much more to learn.

So far, I have helped with the Putalina Festival, working with the mob down there for a week, then travelled to Preminghana to remove weeds and clear walking tracks, helping to get it ready for the Preminghana Camp that is coming up in March this year.

I've also been over on Big Dog Island and have been lucky enough to be a part of the yula tracking project that is underway. Every day we were out trying to short burrows with baby yula while the parents were out hunting food for the young ones. Once we found a burrow that's just right, and not empty, we would go back at night when one of the parents were home to put a GPS tracker on the adults. Working alongside scientists and our birders, who carry the knowledge of our old people and understand the birds like no one else was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I'm one proud and lucky Pakana!

Angus Baillie - Ranger

Howdy, I'm Angus (Brown), born and raised in Nipaluna, and it's truly a dream to be working on country with the land management crew here in Nipaluna. In just a month, I've already gained so much knowledge about culture and country. Before this role, I worked in different fields like flooring, glazing, demolition, asbestos removal and cabinetry, but nothing compares to the satisfaction I get as a Pakana Ranger.

It's a great honour to care for the land just like our elders did before us. Growing up, I didn't have much exposure to my culture after my aunties and uncles moved away, so this opportunity means a lot to me as I dive into learning more about the culture and history of Lutruwita.

Outside of work I enjoy being outdoors and doing things such as surfing, playing Australian rules and gridiron, attending music festivals, creating music, and being outdoors doing the usual camping, fishing, and diving.

Krystelle Jordan

ya, I am Krystelle Jordan, Project Officer for the muylatina milaythina (Aboriginal Learning on Country) program, based on the Northwest coast.

I am a proud Palawa woman who loves the ocean and bushwalking. I was born and raised on the Northwest coast of Lutruwita/Tasmania and live on the Wuwinililii/Forth River with my three sons, our little sausage dog Lulu and our goat and horses. Country is my favourite teacher, and I am excited to share my love of Country and offer opportunities for Palawa students to learn on Country.



Nick Hammersley



Angus Baillie



Krystelle Jordan



Scott Phillip

Scott Phillip

Ya, my name is Scott Phillip, Project Officer with the muylatina milaythina (Aboriginal learning on Country) program and your primary contact in Nipaluna. I'm a Eurasian man, Scottish on my dad's side and Macanese on my mum's side. I grew up in Sydney and now call Lutruwita home. I have worked with young people for over 15 years, many of them in Indigenous Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) Education.

I love spending time with my family, sharing time outdoors, walking, star gazing and swimming. I also love cooking and going on epic adventures. I've represented Australia at three World Championships in Underwater Rugby, and captained the last two - but that's another story! I live in Nipaluna with my partner and step-daughter, who are both Palawa, and have enjoyed connecting with the Community at festivals, events and gatherings over the past five years. I'm excited to be a part of the team and program. I'm looking forward to working together with the curious and courageous on country, building confidence and strengthening connections.



Jazmin Wheatley

Jazmin Wheatley

ya, I am Jazmin Wheatley, Project Officer for the muylatina milaythina (Aboriginal Learning on Country) program, based on Flinders Island. I am experienced in working with children in education and care settings, and I worked as an educator at the childcare centre here on Flinders Island. I am passionate about delivering education, support and care to the community and providing experiences to support children in their learning and their connection to culture.

I have lived on Flinders Island since I was young, and I enjoy being on Country, learning and involving myself in culture. I am excited to join this team and support children and the community in connecting to milaythina (Country) and milaythina muka (Sea Country).

Warena Burgess

ya, I am Warena Burgess, Project Officer for the muylatina milaythina (Aboriginal Learning on Country) program, based on Truwana (Cape Barren Island).

Spending my childhood and adult life on Truwana, I have a strong connection to my community, lands and seas and the rich history of our Tayaritja/Bass Strait Islands.

My role is to support the delivery of the muylatina milaythina Program and to support our families and young people in how to be involved.

I am excited to be part of the team and eager to see our young people learning on Country. Together we will nurture cultural and community connections and excel in our future endeavours to protect our ancestral lands and seas.



Warena Burgess

Marine Heatwave Impacts

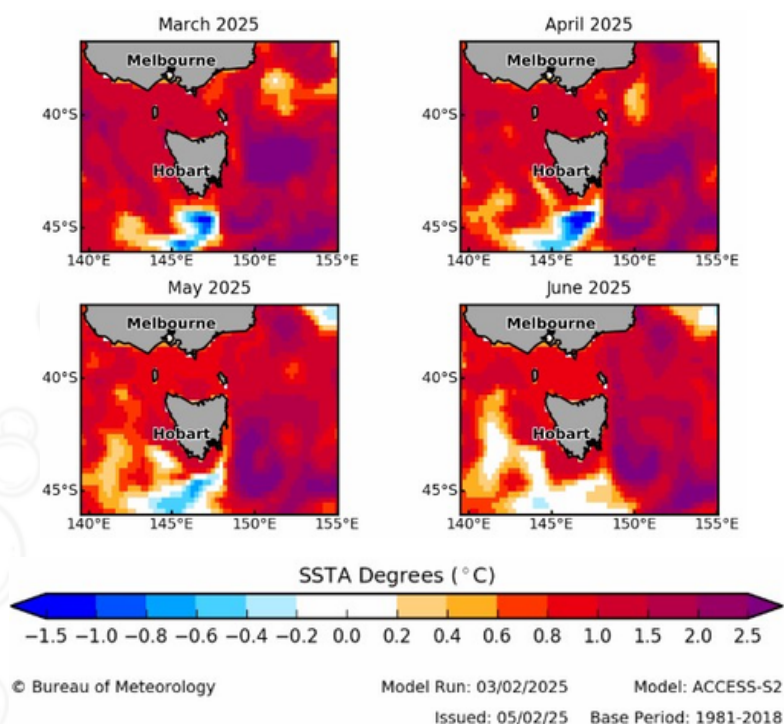
We are in another marine heatwave with waters around Lutruwita warmer than normal. While this can make getting in for a swim easier, it is not good for our Sea Country. Many marine plants and animals are stressed by higher water temperatures, which can prevent marine animals from reproducing, decrease their growth rates, and in the worst-case scenario, can cause fish kill events. Kelp can also bleach and die.

Our oceans to the north, east, and south of Lutruwita are already at above-average water temperatures and are located in a global warming hotspot, warming four times faster than the global average. This marine heatwave is expected to persist throughout summer, autumn and into winter. This is the second marine heatwave to have affected Sea Country around Lutruwita in the last two years.

Sea surface temperatures have increased by 1.2°C since 1950, with another 1.2°C increase expected by 2040. Marine heatwaves have become more frequent and intense, potentially occurring for more than 300 days a year in Lutruwita by 2040.

These changes ocean temperatures are driven by climate change, which warms and acidifies our seas. Acidification has increased by 26–30% in our waters, with another 30% increase projected by 2040. This poses a very high risk to marine food webs and our shellfish, which have sustained our people for millennia. Oxygen levels, which are closely linked with water temperature, have already declined by 2% and may decrease by another 5% by 2040.

Collectively, these changes are impacting our Sea Country, and we face a very uncertain future. By working with the community to understand and monitor the changes we are seeing, we are working on how we can respond to care for our Sea Country into the future.



Key Points

Current Situation: Waters around Lutruwita are warmer than normal, stressing marine life.

Global Warming Hotspot: Oceans around Lutruwita are warming four times faster than the global average.

Duration: The marine heatwave is expected to persist through summer, autumn, and into winter.

Historical Data: Sea surface temperatures have increased by 1.2°C since 1950.

Future Projections: An additional 1.2°C increase is expected by 2040.

Frequency: Marine heatwaves may occur for more than 300 days a year by 2040.

Ocean Acidification: Increased by 26–30% and projected to increase by another 30% by 2040.

Oxygen Levels: Declined by 2% and may decrease by another 5% by 2040.

Community Response: Working with the community to monitor changes and respond to care for Sea Country.

Monitoring shells

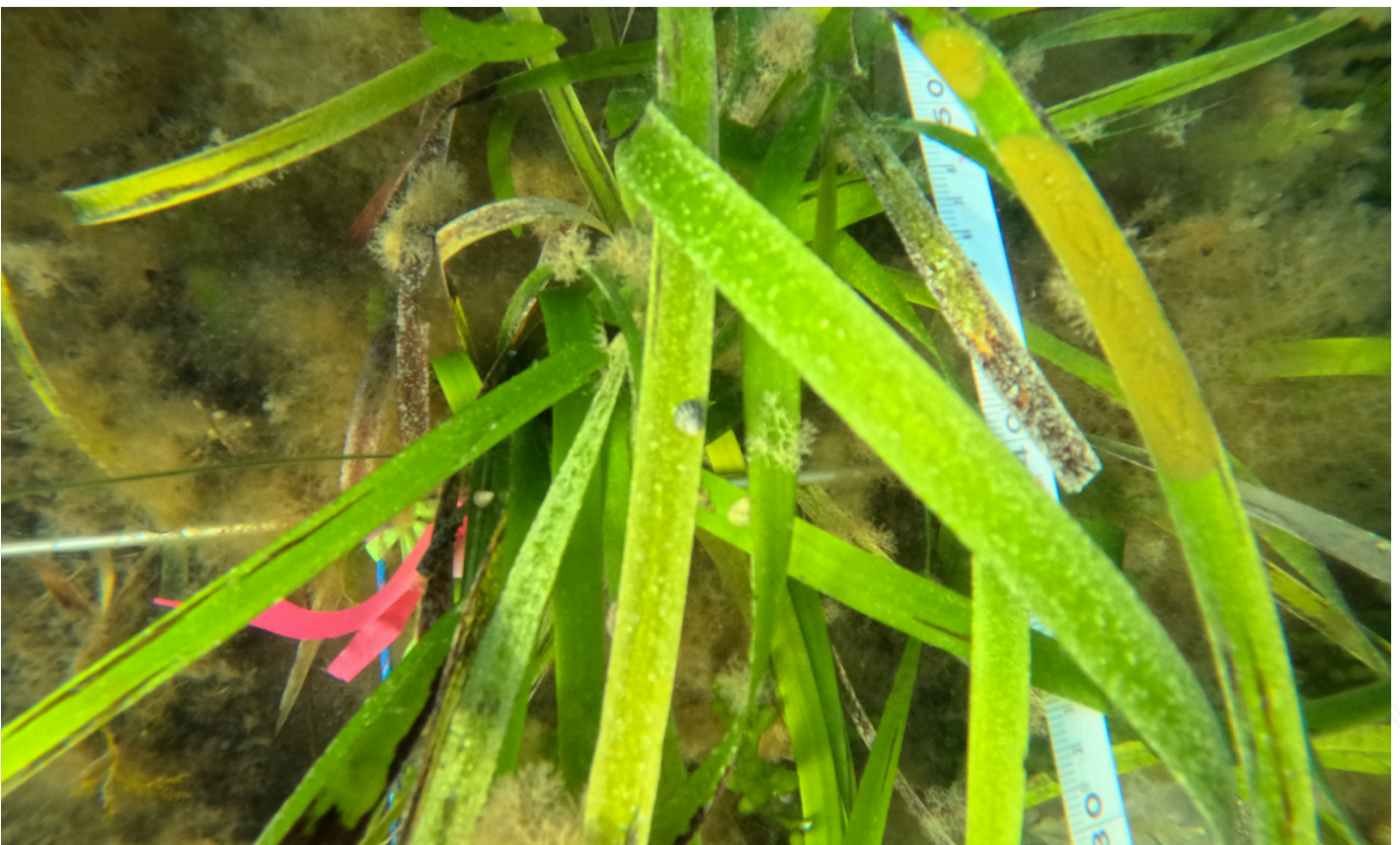
Pakana Rangers working with kanalaritja (shellstringers)

Pakana Women's Sea Country Rangers are working to establish monitoring sites and methods for shells used in the cultural practice of shellstringing.

Many kanalaritja are reporting that they are noticing changes in the condition of shells, and scientists we are collaborating with have also raised with us questions about the condition of shells.

In response to these observed changes, we have collaborated with the Tasmanian Animal Health Lab to have shells tested for viruses. The results don't indicate that the shells have any known viruses. However, we remain concerned about the changes being observed.

Further discussions are underway with kanalaritja, scientists and the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment about what may be driving observed changes in the shells. It appears likely that environmental change, caused by warming waters are impacting the shells, but further work is needed to determine what is driving the changes we are seeing, and to understand the impact that it is having on culturally important shells.



Strengthening Collaboration

Pakana Rangers and NRM South

For over 20 years, NRM South and the TAC have worked together on a range of projects, continually striving to strengthen their collaboration. To build on this foundation, both organisations have entered into a formal agreement to enhance joint efforts in land and sea management, cultural awareness and safety, and advocacy.

A key outcome of this partnership was the development of a co-employment model that emphasises shared decision-making, governance, and resource allocation. This led to the creation of the Aboriginal NRM Project Officer/Healthy Country Project Officer position, now held by Monique Maclaine.

This collaboration represents a significant step towards strengthening relationships between TAC and NRM South, fostering genuine partnerships that uphold Palawa self-determination and cultural leadership, while ensuring the resilience and health of Country through Aboriginal-led land and sea management.

Key projects that the TAC and NRM South are engaged in, include:

Conservation Actions for Orange-Bellied Parrots

This project focuses on identifying and addressing threats to the critically endangered species, which has a single wild breeding population in southwest Lutruwita and migrates between Lutruwita, Victoria, and South Australia. The project investigates predator risks, improves food plant availability through burning trials, maps foraging habitat, and enhances key areas along their migration route. By developing population models, conducting flora surveys, and working with the TAC to manage invasive weeds at Primingkana/Preminghana, the project aims to support the long-term survival of the species.



Orange-Bellied Parrot
(Dejan Stojanovic)

Saving Swift Parrots

This project strengthens drought preparedness and social resilience by fostering cultural connections through community events led by the TAC, building on past events facilitated by Firesticks Alliance. By engaging communities in learning about cultural burning from Palawa people, the project promotes knowledge-sharing and supports Aboriginal-led land management. Through workshops, field demonstrations, and resource development, it provides practical skills and insights while creating stronger social networks. At its core, the project empowers the Palawa community to express and practice culture through land management and discussions about sustainable practices.

Igniting Communities

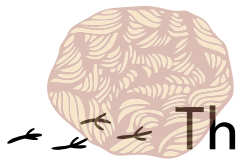
This project focuses on protecting and improving habitat for the critically endangered species, which migrates between mainland Australia and Lutruwita. The project works with partners to increase protected habitat on private land, manage weeds, and maintain nest boxes in key breeding areas. It also engages the TAC and Palawa community in conservation efforts and develops climate models to predict flowering patterns and potential climate refugia. By providing land managers with timely updates on breeding locations, the project supports more effective conservation and habitat management.

Important Wetlands

This project focuses on protecting Moulting Lagoon and Apsley Marshes, key wetland ecosystems on Tasmania's east coast that support waterbirds, fish nurseries, and aquaculture while also playing a vital role in agriculture and tourism. These Ramsar-listed sites face threats from weeds, livestock, vehicles, agricultural impacts, and climate change, leading to habitat degradation and altered water flow. In response, NRM South, alongside partners including the TAC, has implemented weed control, fencing, vegetation restoration, and hydrology improvements. The project also prioritises Traditional Owner involvement, supporting Aboriginal-led land management practices such as cultural burning and fauna monitoring.



Moulting Lagoon



The Landbridge Project

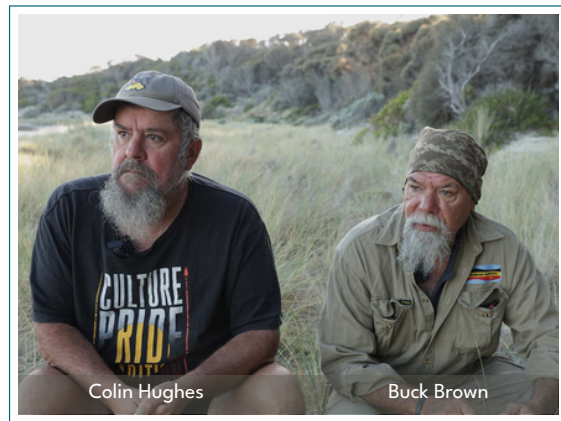
Over the course of 2023-24 the Pakana Sea Country Rangers provided advice for the Landbridge Project. The Land Bridge project tells the story of Bass Strait when it was a vast grassy plain, that connected Lutruwita to mainland Australia.

It features contributions from Palawa and other First Nations people on mainland Australia about the former land bridge area, plus experts in marine environments, geomorphology, paleoecology, archaeology, wildlife conservation and history.

There's a great documentary featuring our own Fiona Maher, Colin Hughes and Buck Brown, and to take a deeper dive, have a read of the articles on the website.



Scan me



Tayaritja Feral Cat Eradication Expanding Our Efforts

We're expanding our cat monitoring work to Mount Chappell/Hummocky Island and Badger Island.

There are cats on both islands, but we don't know how many or where they are. We will set up dozens of cameras across both islands in March this year to find out.

This monitoring is the first step toward eradicating the feral cats, to protect wildlife like yula/short-tailed shearwaters, sooty shearwaters, and tiger snakes.





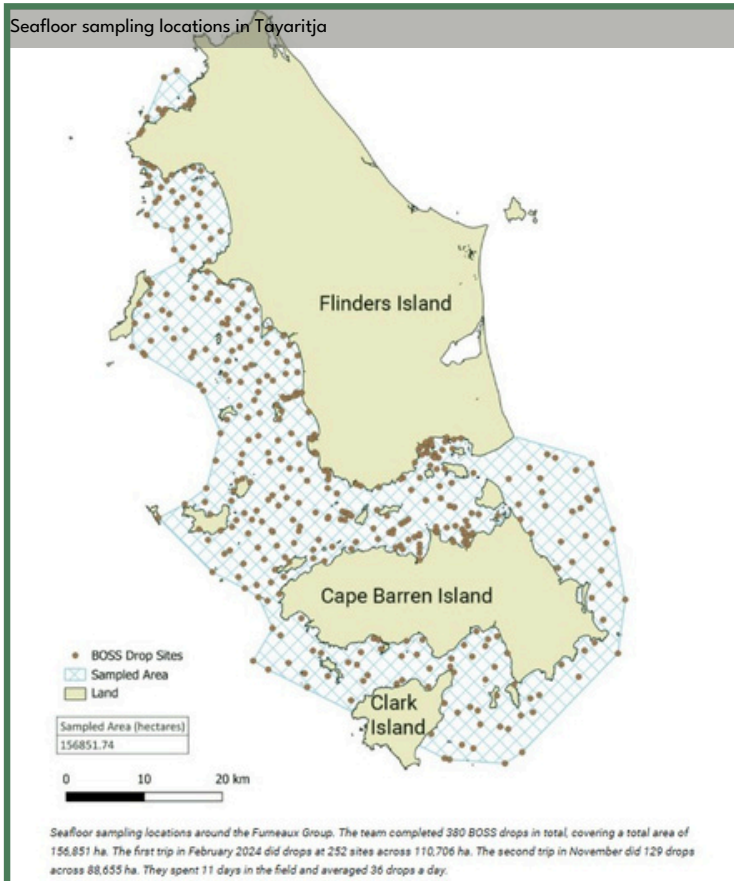
Seagrass Mapping Project

Pakana Rangers and IMAS in Tayaritja

During October 2024, Pakana Rangers and scientists from the Institute of Antarctic and Marine Studies (IMAS) have been in the field again mapping seagrass in our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). This work is supported by funding from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program Marine and Coastal Hub.

Seagrass beds around the islands are thought to be the most extensive seagrass beds in south-eastern Australia, growing to depths of at least 25 metres. These seagrass beds have not been mapped since the 1980s when limited areas were examined to understand fish breeding and nursery areas. This project will help us determine the extent of the seagrass beds in our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA.

Through this project we are using a BOSS camera system to establish the presence of seagrass around the islands. BOSS camera systems have eight cameras that take photos of the seafloor on the four points of the compass, enabling us to build a detailed picture of seagrass beds around the islands. The images being collected are used to validate the presence of seagrass beds observable in satellite remote sensing imagery. We are also looking at the role that epiphytes play in seagrass health. Epiphytes are algae that grow on seagrass. Too much epiphyte cover can be detrimental to seagrass health through shading and changes in seawater chemistry.



IMAS scientists are also helping us to establish a Pakana Ranger-led seagrass monitoring program, recognising the cultural and ecological significance of seagrass beds.

As part of developing this program, we are learning how to use a standard drop camera, which takes photos of the seafloor. This will allow us to improve our understanding of seafloor habitats throughout our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA.





Lungtalanana Healthy Country Project

Our community-led project on Lungtalanana has some big goals:

- Continue cultural burning
- Eradicate feral cats
- Repatriate missing animals

These efforts are all aimed at strengthening community connection to the island, building up Aboriginal knowledge and culture, and developing skills for Rangers and other community members.

Repatriating Prupilathina/Wombats

In consultation with the community, our Pakana Rangers have been working on a plan to repatriate prupilathina to Lungtalanana, this involves:

- Investigating the habitat and food availability on Lungtalanana
- Identifying the best source of animals (probably Wukaluwikiwayna/Maria Island)
- Assessing the benefits and risks of the translocation
- Planning the logistics of moving prupilathina to Lungtalanana
- Preparing their new home to make it safe and comfortable.

For example, we plan to dig starter burrows for any prupilathina returned to the island and use GPS trackers to monitor on their location and health. We're close to submitting the documentation to the state government for permits to commence this work.

Eyes on Country Program

We've joined WWF-Australia's Eyes on Country program, deploying 40 more wildlife cameras and training our rangers in species identification. Within a few hours of learning how to use the Wildlife Insights software, the Rangers had identified thousands of animals and even found a photo of a trimanya/echidna. This is the first trimanya seen on Lungtalanana in decades!

Bird Monitoring Program

We started a bird monitoring program in November and are developing an app for rangers and others to track populations over time. We've also set up four long-term acoustic monitors to record sounds 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This information will be analysed by Queensland University of Technology researchers so we know which animals can be heard while we're not there, for example ground parrots or Lewin's rails.

Get Involved

Contact Tristan Derham if you'd like to get involved in monitoring, training, or upcoming community events, or if you have any questions about our work on Lungtalanana.





New Funding Approaches Biodiversity Credits Partnership

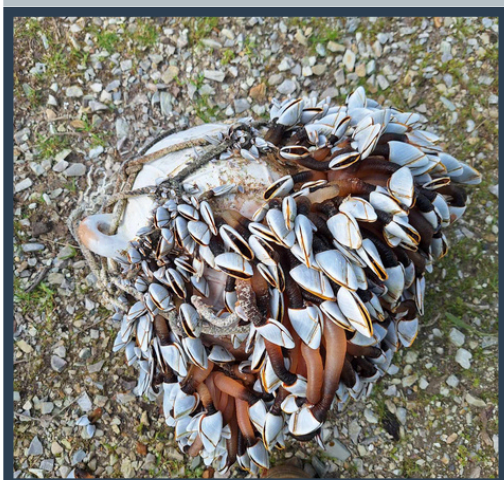
We are exploring a new approach to funding our work on Lungtalanana. The TAC has formed a partnership with environmental project development and market investment company, GreenCollar, to test the feasibility of generating biodiversity credits.

Biodiversity credits present a new opportunity for investment in our ranger program. They provide a new way for organisations to invest in community-led conservation. You may have heard of carbon credits before, which corporations buy to offset their carbon emissions. Many ranger groups in northern Australia receive funding through carbon credits for the cultural burning work that they do to reduce wildfires. Biodiversity credits are very similar but will enable corporations to purchase biodiversity credits so that they can make a contribution to environmental and social outcomes in a systematic, transparent way that matches their accounting and reporting methods.

The Aboriginal community can choose who buys any biodiversity credits, i.e., choosing only the right people to invest in our efforts to improve the health of Lungtalanana. That funding can then support employment, training, and more work to heal Country, and does not necessarily involve supporting corporations to damage the environment somewhere else and offset it by investing in biodiversity credits.

As we do more work on Lungtalanana, like feral cat eradication, cultural burning, and animal repatriation, the ecosystems are becoming healthier. As we reduce the number of cats and fulfil our plans to reintroduce prupilathina/wombats, payathanima/Bennett's wallabies, and other animals, we will measure ecosystem improvements using our network of more than 100 wildlife cameras. Once any environmental improvements are independently verified, we can then offer credits to investors, which will help us continue to improve the health of the island.





Cleaning up our Beaches Marshall Bay and Primingkana

In August 2024, Pakana Sea Country Rangers organised a Beach Clean-Up event at Marshall Bay on Flinders Island. We invited the Flinders Island community to join us, and we were happy to have the help of the people that came out to join us.

We thank all the community members on Flinders Island who came out to support us, as well as Clean Up Australia and Take 3 for their support.

Most of the rubbish collected was made up of small pieces of degraded hard plastics. These plastics impact our marine life, including our yula/mutton birds, who often mistake them for food.

As part of our Pakana Sea Country Rangers' work to establish the Tayaritja Milaythina Muka Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), we have developed a marine debris monitoring plan. Our plan focuses on:

- Monitoring marine plastic in the ocean
- Monitoring marine debris on selected beaches
- Monitoring plastic found in yula
- Engaging the community in beach clean-up events

We are also advocating for actions to reduce the amount of marine plastic finding its way into our seas.

To monitor marine debris on beaches, we have adopted the CSIRO marine debris survey method. We appreciate the training provided by CSIRO to our Pakana Sea Country Rangers and the tablets they supplied to help us collect data in the field.

At Primingkana/Preminghana, our Pakana Rangers conduct weekly beach clean-ups. During these clean-ups, they find rubbish from all over the world. Some weeks, they collect up to a ute load of rubbish. The amount of rubbish washing up at Primingkana is greater than what we see in Tayaritja/Bass Strait Islands. Additionally, we rarely find rubbish that is clearly from foreign lands in Tayaritja.

This year, we also had goose barnacles wash up at Primingkana on marine debris. What an interesting creature they are!



Yula Tracking Project Our Marine Park Grant

We've received a grant from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to deliver a yula/short-tailed shearwater tracking project.

We are delivering this project in partnership with the University of Tasmania, with support from the Marine Conservation Program in the Tasmanian Government Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Through this project we are fitting GPS trackers to 50 adult birds when they are feeding their chicks. We are doing this work to improve our understanding about where the birds forage around the islands and to better understand the role that the Australian Marine Parks play in protecting the birds. The project will run over two breeding seasons, starting on Big Dog Island in 2025 and finishing on Titima/Trefoil Island in 2026.

The project will also explore the cultural value of the birds, and will review research and monitoring priorities, to help us care for birds into the future.

In late January 2025, we deployed 25 GPS trackers on adult birds at Big Dog Island. We did this with the advice and support of birders and are particularly grateful to Aaron Maynard and Scott Stonehouse for their knowledges, and also for Tanya Maynard who allowed us to use her shed to help us accommodate everyone on the island.

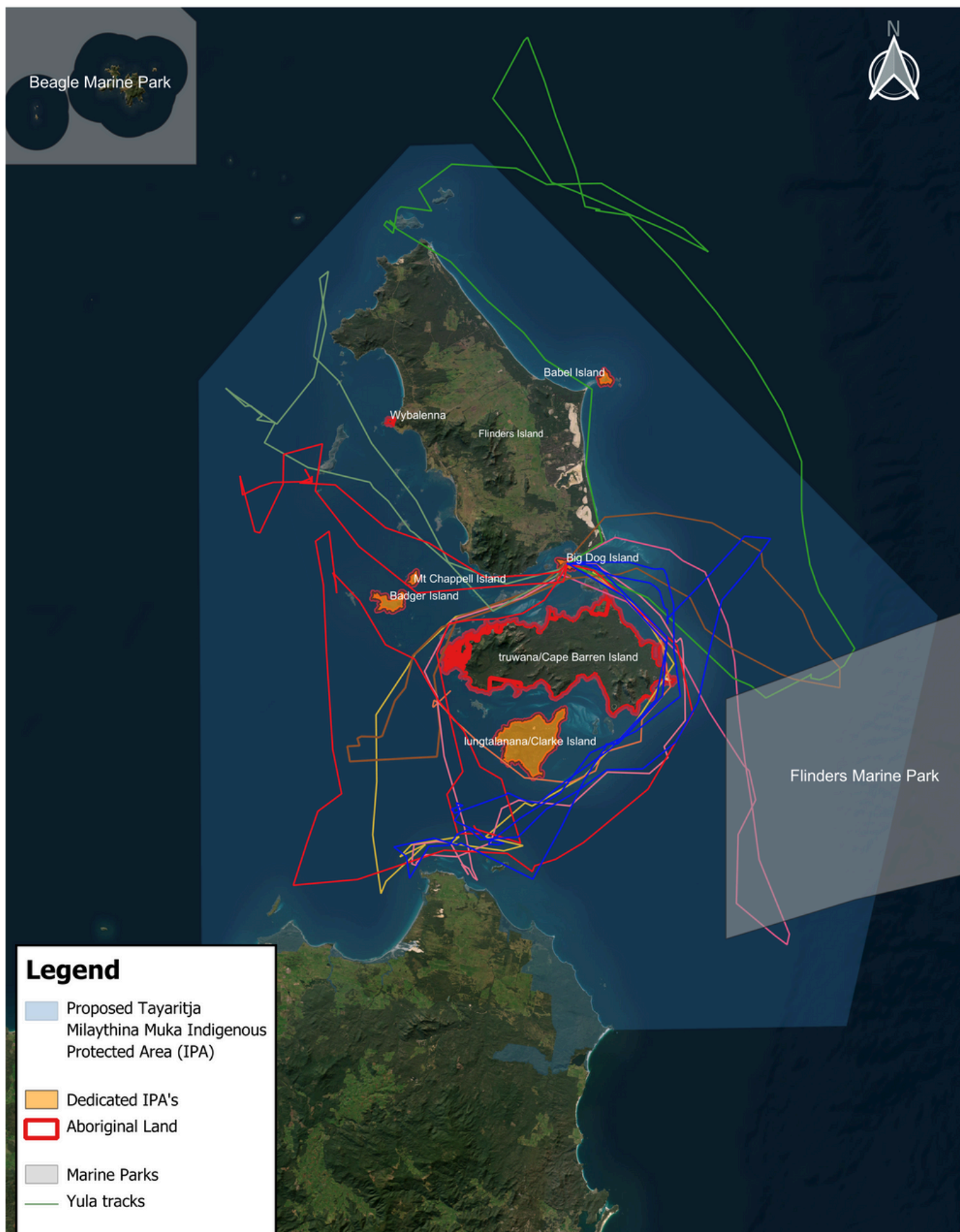
We were also delighted to have community members and children join us on Big Dog, thereby helping community to connect with the birds, and learn more about the cultural significance of the birds, and the work the Pakana Rangers are doing to care for the birds. The excitement of the community for this project has helped us Rangers feel energised about the work we are doing with the scientists to learn more about where yula feed when they are raising their chicks.

We are excited to share that we are receiving tracks from the birds, and they are foraging extensively in our proposed Tayaritja Milaythina Muka IPA and the tracks also show that the birds are foraging in the Flinders Marine Park which is located offshore of Truwana/Cape Barren Island. Stay tuned for further updates on this exciting project.





Short range yula/short-tailed shearwater foraging trips around Tayaritja (Bass Strait Islands in the Furneaux Group)





Preparing for the arrival of bird flu

What to watch out for?

Signs and symptoms in birds:

- Difficulty breathing, coughing or gasping.
- Difficulty moving or paralysis
- Disorientation or lethargy
- Diarrhea
- Swollen heads or eyes
- Unexplained bird deaths

If you suspect bird flu:

- Notify Pakana and Truwana Rangers and authorities by calling: Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888
- Avoid Contact: Do not handle sick or dead birds; use gloves if necessary and wash hands thoroughly.
- Practice Good Hygiene: Wash hands after contact with birds and disinfect tools.

Since 2021, a highly pathogenic bird flu called HPAI H5N1 has been spreading among wild birds and affecting poultry globally. It's reached Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and some sub-Antarctic islands, but Australia and New Zealand currently remain free of the virus. There is significant concern that the virus will spread to the Antarctic this summer.

Although Australia has not yet detected the bird flu strain that has been impacting wild birds, poultry and some mammals, the potential introduction via migratory birds has increased. It is possible that this bird flu strain could arrive in Australia on migratory birds in the next year.

To respond to this emerging threat to our birds we have been monitoring for the arrival of the virus, informing community about the risks and what can be done to minimise risks to the community once it arrives.

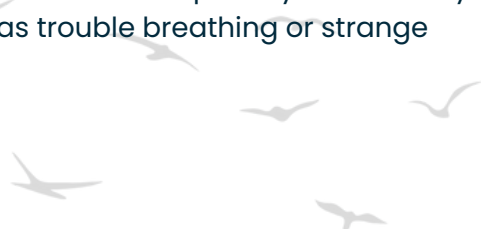
This virus has caused mass mortalities in various bird species globally and poses unprecedented risks to wildlife, including yula/muttonbirds. It also poses human health risks, for those that handle or process birds or other animals. For these reasons it's important to stay vigilant and avoid contact with sick or deceased birds and animals.

This strain of bird flu is highly contagious for birds and is primarily spread through contact between birds through droppings, breathing, and close contact. It can also spread to people if they handle sick or dead birds, and to other mammals that may prey on sick birds or eat dead birds.

Although the risk of human infection is very low, those handling birds should take precautions, as human infection can cause severe illness and possibly death. People who work with birds, like rangers, volunteers, researchers, and people who hunt on Country should be cautious.

The risk of transmission between humans is low. This means that if people catch the virus after handling sick birds or coming into contact with the virus that it is very unlikely that they will spread the virus to others.

However, with the upcoming birding season, it is critical that our community remain alert and informed and keep an eye out for any unusual behaviour in birds, such as trouble breathing or strange behaviour.



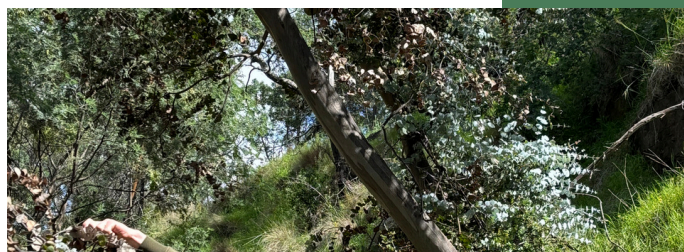
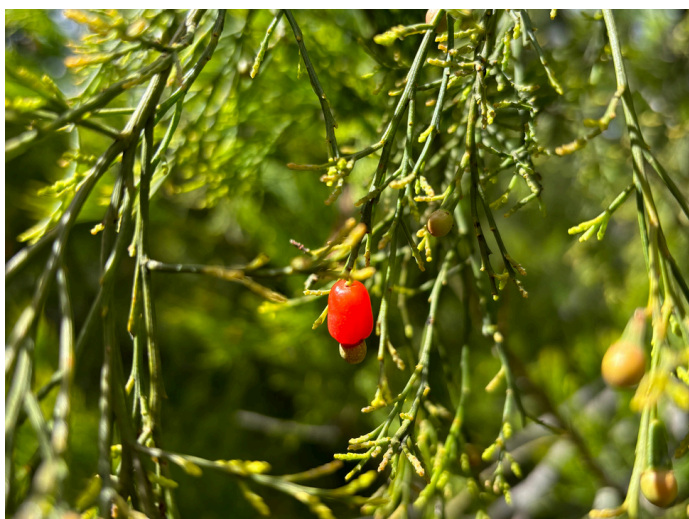


Pakana Rangers Forum

Strengthening Connections for Healthy Country

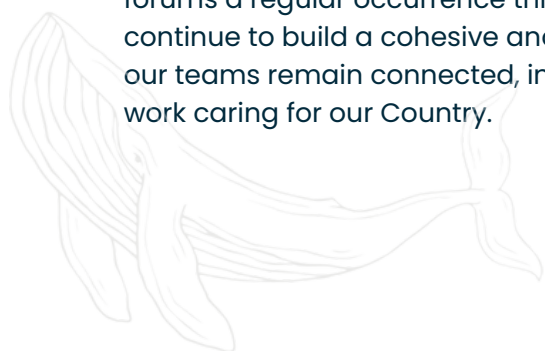
In mid-November 2024, Pakana Rangers from across Luruwita gathered in Nipaluna for a week-long workshop focused on strengthening connections, setting priorities, and undertaking essential training. With the Healthy Country Unit employing a significant number of people across the state, many of whom work in remote areas caring for our Country, this gathering provided a valuable opportunity to bring the teams together.

Throughout the week, we facilitated introductions between new and existing staff members, fostering relationships and strengthening collaboration across different regions. A key focus was professional development, with participants engaging in a range of critical training sessions, including Remote First Aid, CPR refreshers, Fulcrum data collection training, Accidental Counsellor training, and Risk Management plans. These sessions ensured that Pakana Rangers are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the challenges of working on Country safely and effectively.



Beyond training, the gathering was an important moment for knowledge sharing and team building. Rangers exchanged insights and experiences from their respective regions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the collective work being undertaken to protect and care for Country.

The week proved to be a great success, strengthening working relationships and reinforcing our shared commitment to creating and maintaining Healthy Country. Moving into 2025, we aim to make these forums a regular occurrence throughout the year. By doing so, we can continue to build a cohesive and strategic approach, one that ensures our teams remain connected, informed, and well-supported in their vital work caring for our Country.



Celebrating Country, culture and community

Wukalina Camp

In December 2024, Pakana Rangers and community members came together at Wukalina National Park for a special gathering focused on community connection and strengthening ties to Country. With the dedication and hard work of many employees across the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, this event provided a rare and meaningful opportunity for our people to come together in the serenity of our homelands.

A key moment of the gathering was the Sacred Ceremony, led by Elders, Community, and Rangers. This powerful ceremony allowed participants to honour our ancestors, deepen their spiritual and cultural connection to Country, and strengthen bonds within the community. Through song, dance, storytelling, and reflection, the ceremony provided a space for healing, learning, and passing down cultural knowledge to future generations.

Beyond ceremony, the gathering was a time for sharing knowledge, enjoying time on Country, and reinforcing the importance of caring for Country. Elders shared stories and wisdom, Rangers spoke about their work in land management, and community members engaged in cultural activities that strengthened identity and belonging.

The gathering at Wukalina was more than just an event, it was a reaffirmation of our resilience, unity, and commitment to keeping our culture strong. Moving forward, we continue to seek opportunities to bring our community together on Country, ensuring that cultural practices remain vibrant and that future generations inherit a deep and living connection to Country.



Putalina Festival

During January we mark the anniversary of the return of Putalina (Oyster Cove) and remember those that passed there, and those that fought for its return to the community.

The Pakana Rangers support the running of the festival, preparing the lands for the festival. This year Pakana Rangers and Junior Ranger (muylatina milaythina) staff also ran a stall to share information about our programs with community and also ran cultural activities. The making of spears and the spear throwing competition was a highlight. Well done to everyone that participated!d!



Primingkana/Preminghana Community Camp

On the March long weekend Pakana Rangers support the Palawa community camp at Preminghana. This year the camp involved trips to Pilri/Cape Grim and Kings Run. It was another successful camp this year with many activities for community, and one of our community members even managed to catch a nice size crayfish while swimming on one of the day trips.



Junior Ranger Program Update

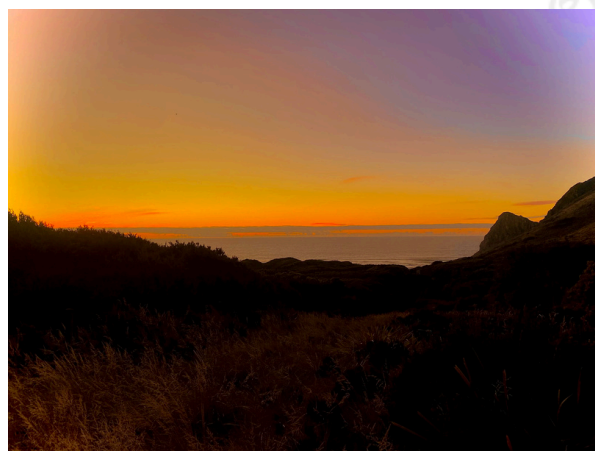
muylatina milaythina

In September 2024, we welcomed four regionally based project officers to our team! They dove into training, including remote first aid, accidental counsellor training, bronze medallion, medium ridged license, risk assessment and management processes, Fulcrum data management, mandatory reporting, and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations' 11 e-learning modules. There's even more training lined up for 2025 to ensure our Junior Rangers are safe, well-cared for, and learning as much as possible from our team.



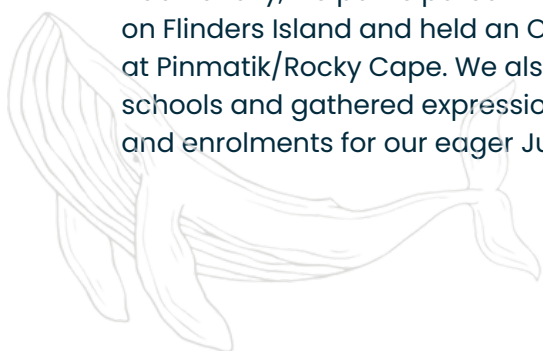
From June to December 2024, we actively engaged our Junior Rangers in various activities. These include a bird count on Big Dog Island, seagrass monitoring on Flinders Island, and marine debris monitoring on both Flinders Island and Truwana/Cape Barren Island. We attended Sea Country book launches alongside young people, *Aboriginal Education Services*, and *Department of Children and Young People* staff on Flinders Island and in Pataway.

Additionally, we participated in a clean-up day on Flinders Island and held an On Country Day at Pinmatik/Rocky Cape. We also visited schools and gathered expressions of interest and enrolments for our eager Junior Rangers.



Our program development hit some exciting milestones. We mapped out the 2025 program (with a few dates still to be confirmed), developed lesson plans with *Department for Education, Children and Young People* and *Aboriginal Education Services*, and wrapped up the expression of interest (EOI) process by mid-January. We also established an enrolment process and created a data-sharing agreement, which is currently under review. A community workshop helped us co-design the program, and our Junior Ranger Program staff attended numerous branch meetings.

With an incredible response from 42 young people, we've now closed the EOI process due to overwhelming demand. We're finalising enrolments to ensure everyone is ready for the upcoming activities. Our first major On Country camp at Primingkana/Preminghana in January/February 2025 was a huge success, which provided young people with immersive cultural and educational experiences. They enjoyed the hands-on learning, connection to Country, and engaged with knowledge holders. Check out the overview and highlights below for more details!





Primingkana/Preminghana muylatina milaythina Camp

The camp hosted 10 enthusiastic young Junior Rangers travelling from Nipaluna, Tayaritja and Northwest Lutruwita. Participants were eager to dive into hands-on activities and learn about Country. Their enthusiasm and participation showcased their growing interest and commitment to keeping Country healthy, learning to understand how to read Country, and connecting with it.

Community members played a key role, sharing their knowledge of the land, community, culture, and history. Their presence fostered a deeper connection to Country and instilled a sense of belonging and cultural pride among the participants. Our community members in attendance shared immeasurable knowledge. By understanding the history of place and our community's enduring and continuous commitment to Country, they set the context for how we came to be here on Country that day. We are living the dreams and aspirations of our people.

The Pakana Rangers were key facilitators during the camp, sharing their extensive knowledge and skills. Their expertise in land and sea management, conservation, and cultural knowledge provided invaluable learning experiences for the young participants.

One of the camp's memorable activities involved a participant teaching our Project Officers how to take photos of the stars. This unique hands-on learning opportunity allowed the young people to explore celestial navigation and develop their photography skills under the guidance of our team, blending traditional knowledge with modern techniques.

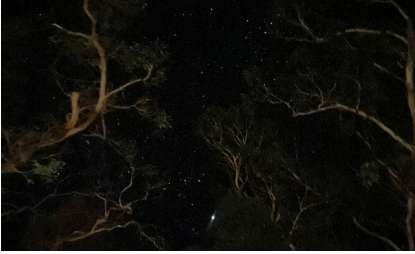
Throughout the camp, staff from Aboriginal Education Services supported the young people, sharing cultural insights and building relationships with the education sector. Their involvement enriched the program and reinforced the cultural context in which the young people were learning.

Trangia cooking was another highlight, where participants learned how to cook meals using portable cooking equipment—a great skill for camping and outdoor activities. The young people worked together, preparing meals that connected them and helped build teamwork and leadership skills.

During one of the day trips, young people were guided to recognise and read cultural landscapes. Later that day, they applied their knowledge with great success, identifying living sites, seal hides, hut depressions, stone tools, shells, animal bones, and food and medicine plants.

On the final day, one of the more senior participants commented that being away from town and out on Country made them feel “eternally at peace.”

Primingkana/Preminghana Junior Rangers Camp

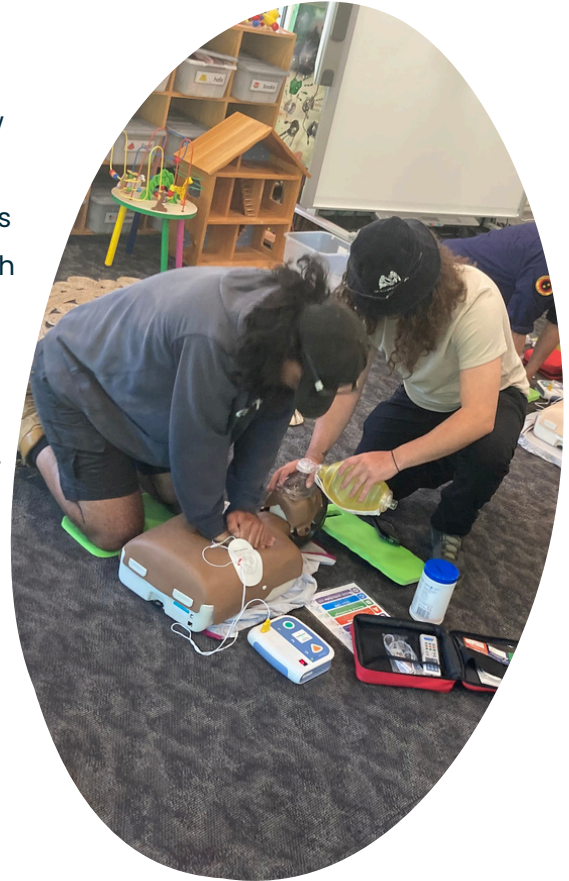




Training

The Healthy Country unit has undertaken training in many areas in recent months. Accidental Counsellor training was the first in a new package of learning through Lifeline Tasmania for the Healthy Country unit. It was a three-hour session that touched on the basics of mental first aid and how to keep minds healthy and how to watch out for signs of those around us in mental distress.

The Healthy Country team members that needed to complete their CPR refreshers were under the wonderful guidance of Tim from Johnson First Aid Training, Launceston. Others in the team were also lucky enough to have Tim deliver remote first aid training for them. All team members that were in attendance are equipped with newfound skills and confidence should there ever be the need to administer first aid.



New Huts

Through a funding opportunity from NIAA the healthy country unit has engaged a contractor to build three huts two at Dianas basin and one at preminghana, these huts will support community and pakana rangers visits on country.



Wybalenna Aloe Removal

During October last year the pakana rangers removed a large amount of aloe from Wybaleena. The aloe was taking over a large area of the property and was continuing to spread, so the rangers used a tractor to push it into heaps and took it off the property.



Maintenance

Maintenance is a continuous task for our rangers whether it be buildings out on our lands or roads to access our lands or even the vessels we use to get to our lands. Maintaining our vessels is also critical to keeping our rangers safe at work and our island and sea country management programs. This work involves regular upkeep, maintenance, repairs and servicing at regular intervals throughout the working year. We do these tasks to ensure the safety of our crew and community members and for the commercial use of our new barge, Lucy Beeton and our catamaran, the Andra Maynard.

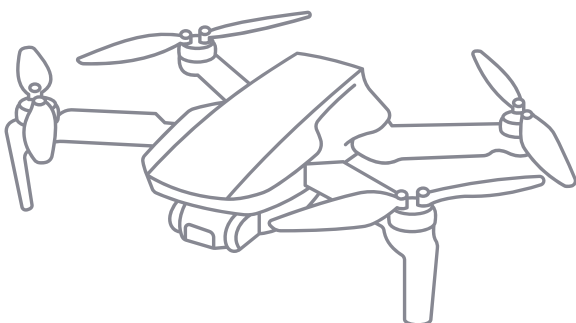
Since our much-needed purchase of the barge we have scheduled slipping of our 2 non trailered vessels including cleaning and painting of antifouling on both the Andra Maynard and Lucy Beeton's hull, servicing of all 4 outboards on the vessels, replacement of fuel filters, lines and non-return valves.





Learning to use Drones

Pakana rangers have been learning the basics of setting up, flying, and packing away drones. Some of the more advanced rangers with the most prior experience flying drones were taught how to set up pre automated flight missions which are used to fly section of land and capture a series of photos which can then be stitched together to create a larger image called an Ortho mosaic, these series of photos once stitched together can also be used to create digital elevation models, and 3D models. Drones are great tool used to capture Aerial images which can be used to observe environmental changes.

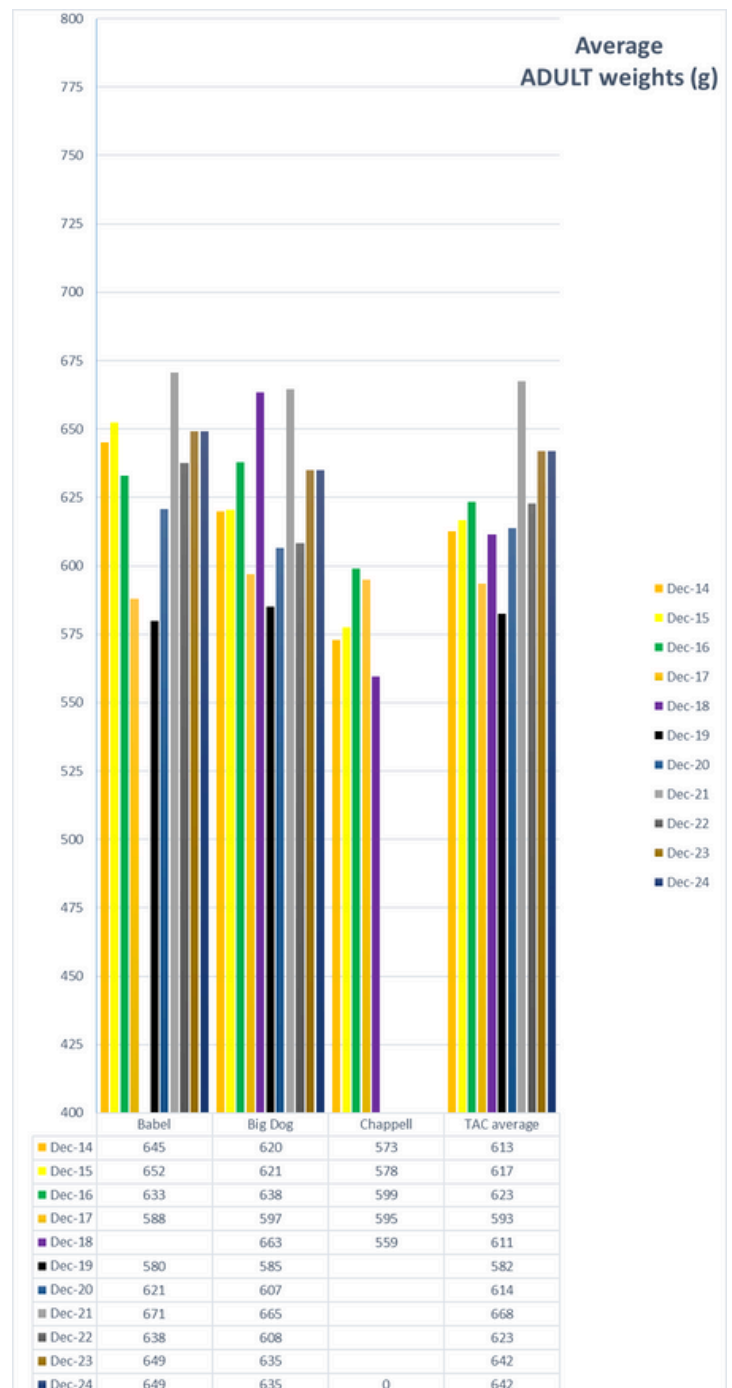
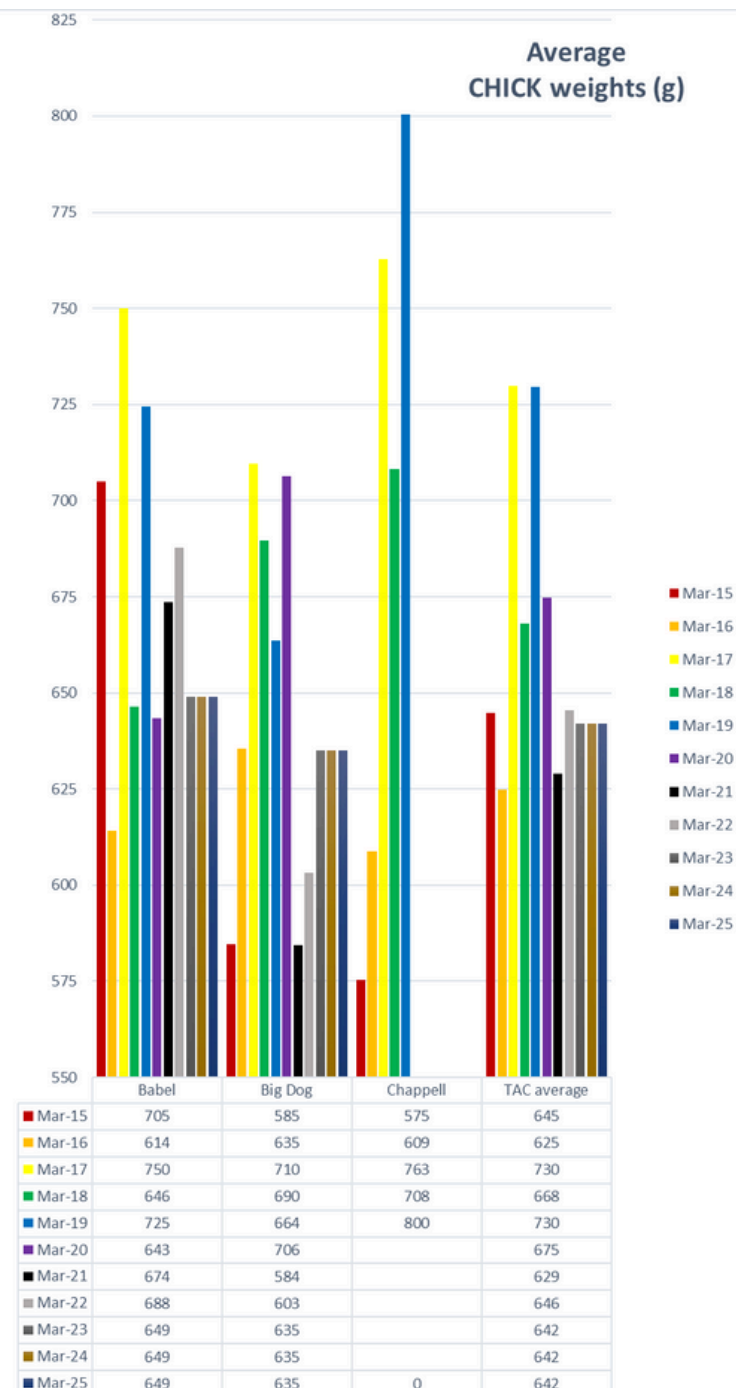




Yula Monitoring 2024/25

This year's yula counts in December (adults) 2024 and March (chicks) 2025 were conducted by community members from Truwana and mainland Lutruwita and rangers from across the state on Babel and Big Dog islands.

The data from this year's counts show a decrease in chick occupancy from the previous year of around 20% on both Babel and Big Dog, with the weights of the yula remaining much the same as the last few years.





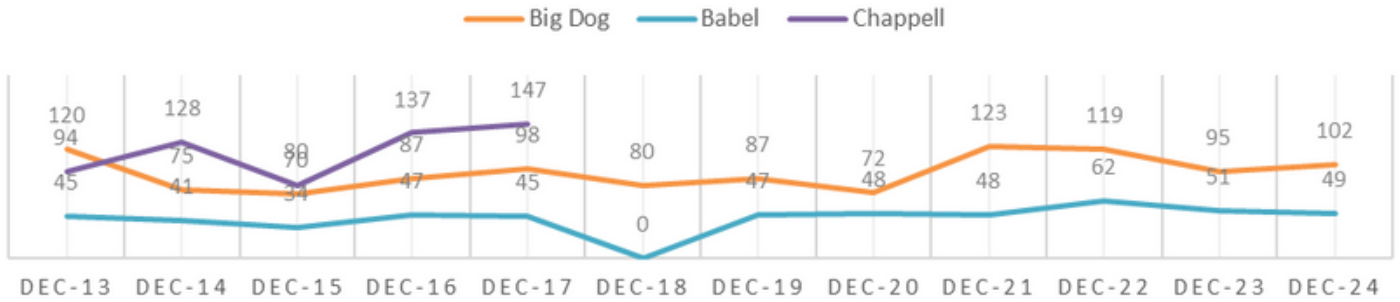
Yula Monitoring 2024/25



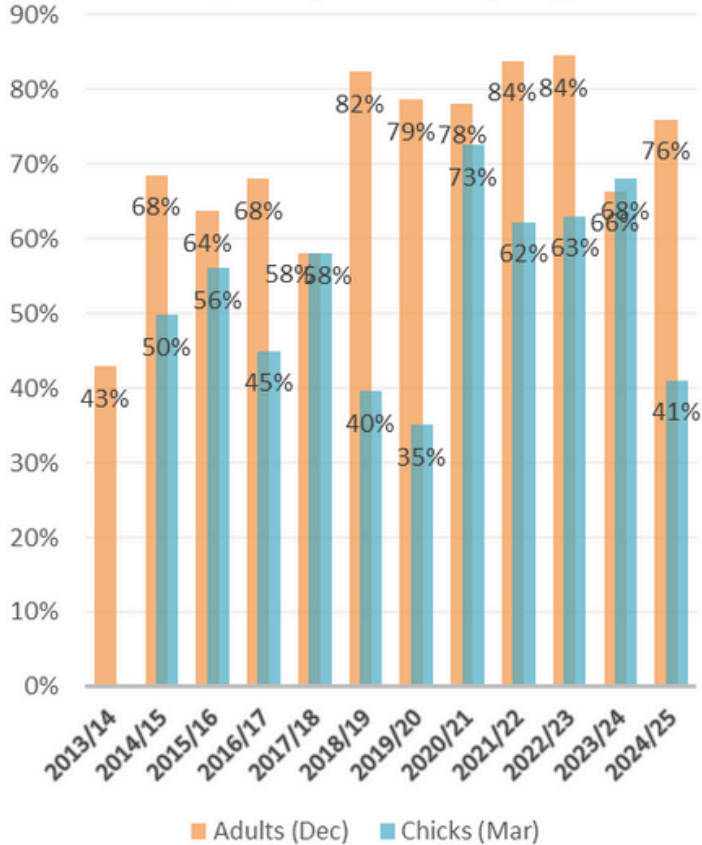


Yula Monitoring 2024/25

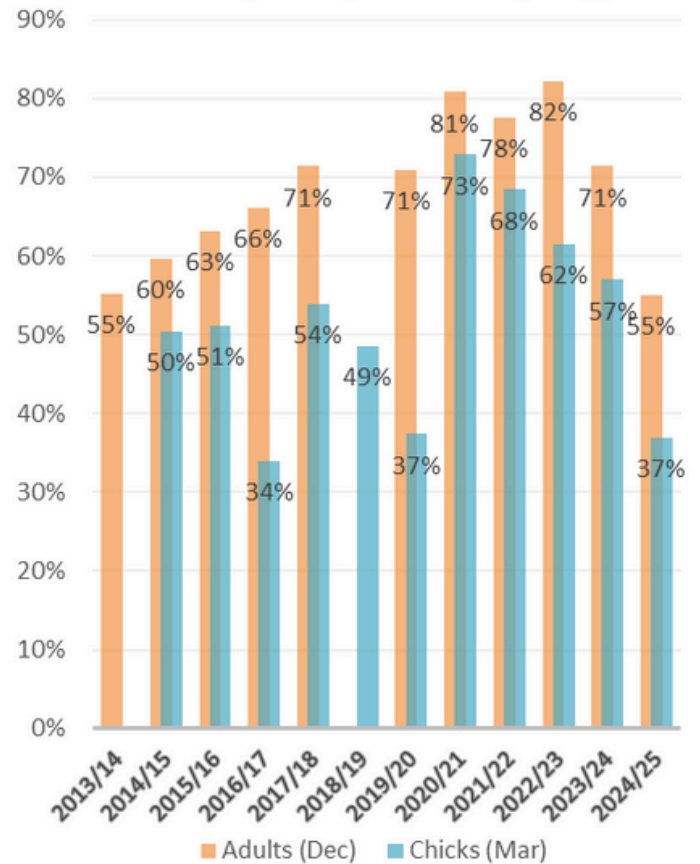
AVERAGE NO. OF BURROWS PER 100M TRANSECT



Big Dog Island Occupancy rates (adj)



Babel Island Occupancy rates (adj)



Windsong/Little Swanport Shelter

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 water tank was built to support community with camping and visiting the property.



Protecting Country

Fighting fire on Lungtanalana/Clarke Island

On 24 February we had a dry lightning storm start a wildfire on Lungtanalana/Clarke Island. Pakana and Truwana Rangers worked tirelessly to contain fire with support from the Tasmanian Fire Service and Parks and Wildlife Service. Water bombers worked from the air, while rangers fought the fire on the ground, enduring long, smoky days. Our quick response and efforts in collaboration with TFS and PWS allowed us to control the fire. Ultimately the fire burnt around 534 hectares but we were able to bring it under control in 4 days, which testifies to our quick response. While it didn't burn everything within the fireground, it burnt quite hot.





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