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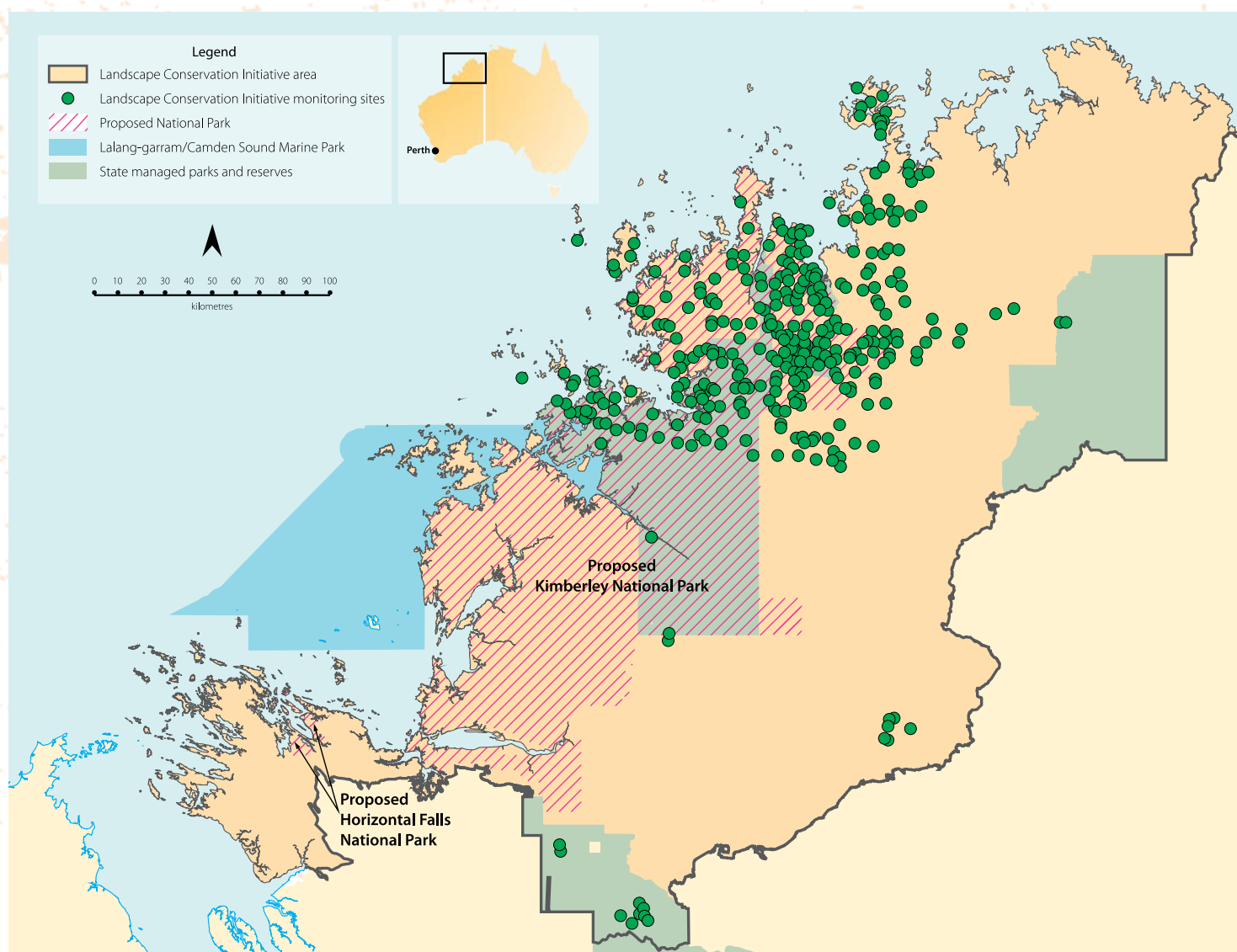
Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy

Key achievements of the Landscape Conservation Initiative



Western Australia's biggest conservation project

The Landscape Conservation Initiative—the largest conservation project ever undertaken in Western Australia—was established in 2011 as part of the State Government's \$81.5 million Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy, to retain and enhance the high biodiversity and landscape values in the north Kimberley. This visionary project is being implemented by the Department of Parks and Wildlife in collaboration with native title holders and Indigenous ranger groups, government agencies, non-government organisations and pastoralists to protect biodiversity values across property boundaries in the north and central Kimberley. Together, these partners are managing fire; the impacts of feral animals; and the impacts of invasive plants across an area of more than 65,000 square kilometres (6.5 million hectares) that includes pastoral properties, Aboriginal Lands Trust Reserves, private conservation areas and parks and reserves managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife.



\$3.5 million dollars is allocated to the Landscape Conservation Initiative annually for threat management and monitoring and evaluation.



Protecting the nature of the Kimberley with actions based on science

Fire

- Parks and Wildlife works closely with up to 90 traditional owners and Indigenous rangers from four Native Title claim groups, the Kimberley Land Council and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) to undertake prescribed early dry season burning across the north Kimberley.
- Each year since 2011 an average of 24,000km has been flown over the north Kimberley, involving 273 hours in fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, to drop 60,000 incendiaries, creating mosaics of burnt and unburnt vegetation to mimic fire practices employed by Indigenous land managers for millennia.
- The expanded early dry season prescribed burning programs improved habitat for wildlife and greatly reduced destructive late season fires across more than 6.5 million hectares of the Kimberley.



Feral animals

- Since 2011, more than 16,000 feral cattle have been removed from areas with high biodiversity values in the north Kimberley in a collaboration between Parks and Wildlife and surrounding pastoralists. Feral pigs, cats and horses have also been removed opportunistically as part of this program.
- Cattle damage monitoring plots have been established in high-priority areas to measure the effects of cattle removal on habitat.
- 861 donkeys were removed in 2010–2013 from the north Kimberley as part of the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia's Judas animal program. This program has successfully maintained feral donkeys at very low numbers across the north Kimberley.
- A cane toad quarantine strategy for Kimberley islands is being prepared by Parks and Wildlife with Native Title holders, to help prevent establishment of cane toads on any Kimberley islands.

Weeds

- Since 2012, Parks and Wildlife has engaged Uunguu Rangers and Wunambal Gaambera Traditional Owners on a fee for service arrangement to map and treat weed infestations in the Mitchell River area. This has included the use of CyberTracker technology to map nearly 430 separate infestations.

- More than 13ha of isolated patches of grader grass (*Themeda quadrivalvis*)—a Weed of National Significance—were treated before it set seed.
- El Questro Station, the Wungurr Rangers and Parks and Wildlife are working together to eradicate a 100ha infestation of gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*), a Weed of National Significance with the potential to transform landscapes into monocultures and fundamentally alter fire patterns.
- Parks and Wildlife also engaged the Bunuba Rangers on a fee for service arrangement to implement a weed control program in Geikie Gorge National Park and King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park.

Measuring success

Parks and Wildlife and its partners are monitoring the implementation of the Landscape Conservation Initiative.

Since 2011, nearly 600 monitoring sites have been established across the north Kimberley to evaluate and improve land management programs. To date this has included:

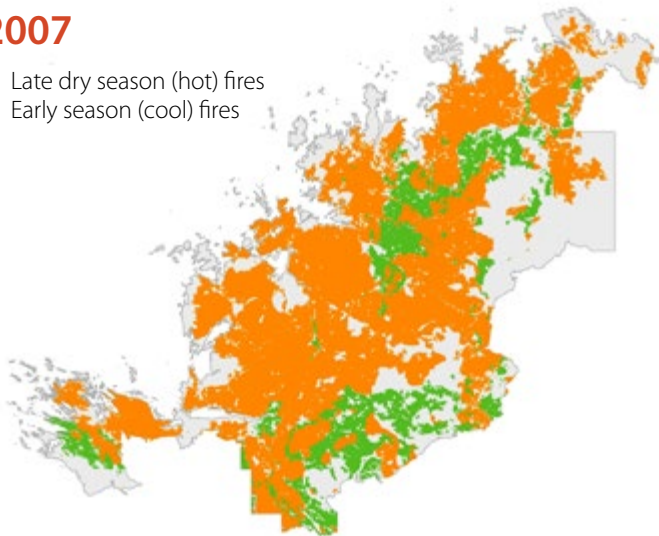
- mapping nearly 100 rainforest patches that provide vital habitat for threatened wildlife
- setting more than 15,000 traps across 66 sites with Indigenous rangers and traditional owners to monitor small to medium sized mammals, and
- quantifying vegetation condition at almost 400 sites.



Measurable conservation improvements

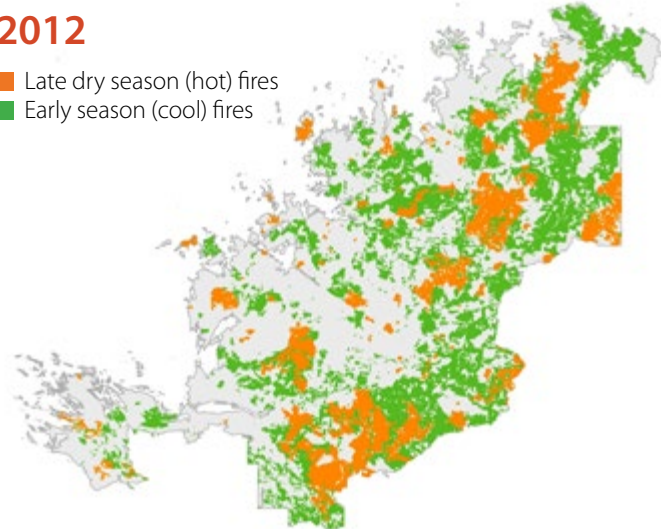
2007

- Orange Late dry season (hot) fires
- Green Early season (cool) fires



2012

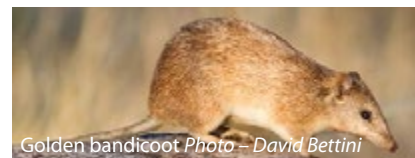
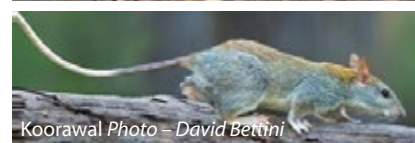
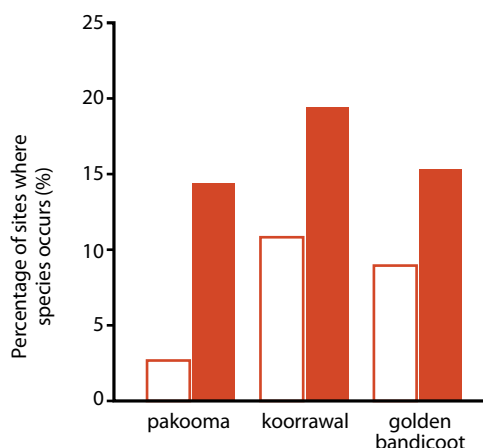
- Orange Late dry season (hot) fires
- Green Early season (cool) fires



Fire seasonality before and after increasing management of fire in the Landscape Conservation Initiative project area, shows a dramatic reduction in damaging late season fires.

- Better management of fire has:
 - halved the amount of country burnt by destructive late dry season fires from 36 percent to 17 percent.
 - improved habitat for wildlife, such as threatened small mammals and finches, that are susceptible to the catastrophic effects of late dry season fires.
- More than 16,000 feral cattle have been removed, reducing cattle numbers by up to 44 per cent in areas of high biodiversity value, and improving habitat condition. Feral donkeys, horses and pigs have been kept at very low numbers in the north Kimberley.
- The Landscape Conservation Initiative has already been successful in increasing the number and distribution of key threatened mammals to parts of the Mitchell Plateau, including golden bandicoots, golden-backed tree-rats (koorawal) and brush-tailed rabbit rats (pakooma).

Before After



- Weed control programs have reduced infestations of serious and damaging weed species in the high biodiversity Mitchell Plateau.

How do we compare?

Mammal abundance in the north Kimberley is higher than in other protected areas in northern Australia.



Aboriginal partnerships and employment

More than 200 traditional owners from groups including Dambimangari, Wunambal Gaambera, Wilinggin, Bunuba and Balangarra have been engaged in activities with Parks and Wildlife to help protect country and manage threats such as fire and weeds.

Under the Landscape Conservation Initiative there have been 46 fee-for-service contracts for feral animal and weed control programs between 2011–2013, involving the Dambimangari, Unguu, Wilinggin and Balangarra Native Title claim groups.

The Kalumburu Aboriginal Corporation has entered into an agreement with Parks and Wildlife that will provide conservation, tourism and cultural management outcomes and employment opportunities for traditional owners on Carson River Station, a 313,155ha pastoral property.

The Landscape Conservation Initiative supports partners in meeting targets set in their Healthy Country plans by developing more capacity and providing resources for traditional owners to look after country.