



YIRRALKA - YAWURU RANGER EXCHANGE

JULY 2023



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Background

In November 2022 the WWF team from the Broome office Leigh-Ann Woolley, Nick Weigner and Pius Gregory attended the ESA conference at Wollongong. At the conference the team went to a presentation by the Yirralka Rangers on their base-line data in the Laynhapuy IPA, Northeast Arnhem Land, they had captured a spectacled hare-wallaby (SHW) at one of the sites near Gäṅgaṅ homeland. Pius then asked if they knew how to look for signs of SHW, they replied that they have no idea, so got yarning about the possibility of a ranger exchange with Yawuru Country Managers. At the end of the conference Yirralka Rangers and WWF were announced joint winners of the “Right-way Science” category, with the prize money WWF then set about organising the exchange to Arnhem Land.

Fieldwork Summary

Sunday 16th July 2023

Arrived at Yirralka where we were met by Shaina Russell and Gabby Brennan from Macquarie University, who were there to do base line data of animals in the Laynhapuy homelands. The homeland that we were going to was Gäṅgaṅ where the SHW was caught on camera in the 2022 survey.

Monday 17th July 2023

We were invited to the Yirralka Ranger Base to go over what was going to happen whilst out at Gäṅgaṅ. Introduced to Yirralka Rangers, Bec Condon Laynhapuy IPA facilitator and another ranger group from the southern part of Northern Territory. The group were there to help Yirralka Rangers with some fire work out near Gäṅgaṅ as well as another homeland nearby. Went over the plan for the week and then went to do shopping at Nhulunbuy.

Tuesday 18th July 2023

Packed vehicles, went to the airport, met Yawuru Country Managers who were Monica Edgar, Gaydar Lawford, Romania Hunter and Ronald Wade. Collected hire car then started out to Gäṅgaṅ which was at least 4 hours away. On our arrival to Gäṅgaṅ the group were welcomed to Country by Yinimala Gumana, an elder of the area and Ranger Co-Coordinator for Yirralka Rangers.

Wednesday 19th July 2023

It was decided to go to the site where the SHW was caught on camera the previous year. Organized the group to line up across the road and walked in approx. 250 meters. Looking for signs of SHW either shelters or scats, on our search of the area we found a shelter as well as scats. The scats were shown to everyone, so they now have a idea of the size and shape of the scat as well as what a SHW shelter looks like. Yawuru CMs helped with identifying the SHW scats. No cameras were left at that site, now it was time to set out cameras for these base line data that Macquarie University are doing with the Yirralka Rangers.



Pius showing Yirralka Rangers Yinimala and Ganawa what a SHW scat looks like.



GPS marking of SHW scats.



Helping with setting up camera traps.



Streamside lunch spot near one of the camera sites.

Thursday 20th July 2023

It was back to setting up cameras, we split into two groups to set cameras. The last set of cameras was set near the seaside. After putting out cameras, we were invited to collect seafood. Mussels and crabs were caught which the rangers offered to us. The sun was going down, so it was time to go back to Gāngan, once back at camp

Yinimala said goodbye as he was leaving early the next day. There was trading of gifts from both Yawuru and Yirralka.



Chameleon dragon spotted by eagle eyes Ganawa.



Yirralka Miyalk Gawumala, Gumana and child, as well as Harry, Bec Condon's son.



Mud crabs that Yirralka Rangers collected for the visitors.



Waiting for the crabs and mussels to cook.

Friday 21st July 2023

Got up early, packed vehicles and said goodbye to the Gän̄gan̄ old ladies who were with us from day 1.

In the following weeks the Yirralka rangers continued to place cameras in different fire histories along the Gän̄gan̄ road at different distances from the original sighting.

Summary

The trip was a wonderful experience to see the different vegetation that the SHW inhabits in Arnhem Land. We (WWF and Yawuru CMs) showed their rangers what SHW are using for shelter as well as the scat, its size and shape so at least the rangers now have an idea on what to look for. Since this trip to Arnhem Land, Yirralka Rangers are considering doing a ranger exchange to Broome. Yawuru can show the rangers how to look for signs of SHW on Yawuru Country as well as do some flat-back turtle monitoring down at Eco Beach which is south of Broome. I really hope that the exchange goes ahead. Will just add that the Yirralka Rangers were down a few rangers due to sorry business, so we did them a big favour by helping to setting out cameras for their base line data.



For more information

Pius Gregory
Cultural Advisor & Project Officer
PGregory@wwf.org.au

Nick Weigner
Conservation Field Officer
NWeigner@wwf.org.au

Leigh-Ann Woolley
Species Conservation Manager
LWoolley@wwf.org.au



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together possible. wwf.org.au

WWF-Australia National Office
Suite 3.01, Level 3, 45 Clarence Street,
Sydney, NSW 2000
PO Box 528

Tel:+61 2 8000 0303 | enquiries@wwf.org.au | wwf.org.au