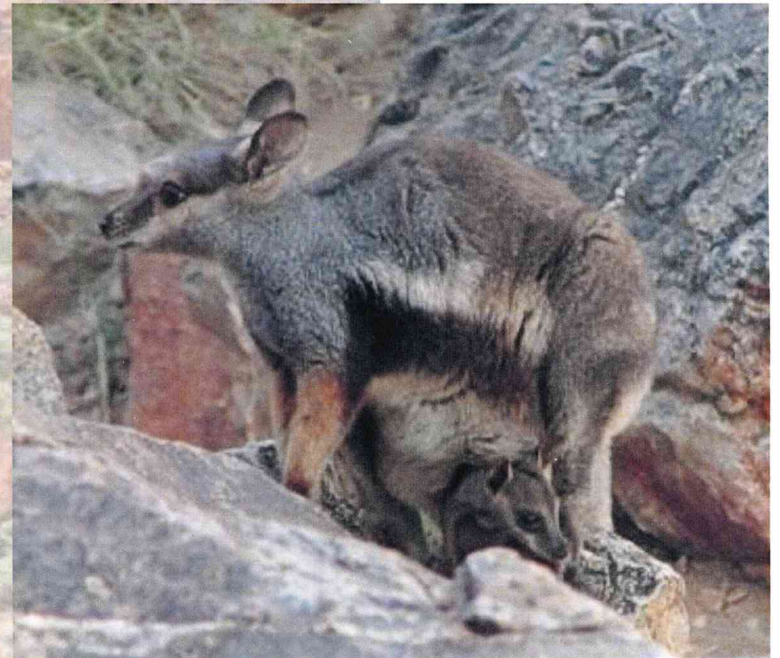


Rock Wallaby Project

Kuru-kanti
(Calvert Ranges)

and Jilakuru
(Durba Hills)

Little Sandy Desert
Pilbara Region, WA



A report to Martu people on project work
2002 - 2008



**kanyirninpa
jukurrpa**

Martu History & Archive Project
Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation



**Department of
Environment and
Conservation**

Our environment. our future


Rangelands NRM
Western Australia

Produced in March 2009.

Compiled by Alison McGilvray and Peter Kendrick (PK).

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Jigalong,
Parnngurr, and
Punmu communities.

This is a community publication reporting on the initial six years of a DEC Pilbara Region program of rock wallaby and predator management in Kuru-kanti, the Calvert Ranges.

Photos by Peter Kendrick except where otherwise acknowledged.

Cover photos: Rocky cliffs at Kuru-kanti, Peter Kendrick.
Warru, black-flanked rock wallaby, Louise Williams.



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jukurrpa**

Martu History & Archive Project
Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation



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The Warru (black-flanked rock wallaby) was once widespread in the Western Desert, Pilbara and central Wheatbelt areas of Western Australia. Desert rock wallabies are different from the ones found near Nyaparu Town. Desert wallabies have now disappeared from most of WA. The Warru on Martu lands are the only ones left in the Western Desert.

Warru are killed by foxes, cats and dingoes, and their habitat has been changed by camels and rabbits, fires and weeds.

In 1985, biologists from CALM (now the Department of Environment and Conservation, DEC) found that Warru were still at Kaalpi, but they didn't know of any other Warru populations in the Great Sandy and Little Sandy deserts.

By 1992, the Warru numbers had dropped so much that CALM started baiting foxes with 1080 baits. Regular baiting was done from 1994 to 1996. The baits killed foxes and dingoes, but not the cats, which were still plentiful. The number of Warru had increased a bit, but not enough to ensure they wouldn't die out around Kuru-kanti.

In 2002, the Pilbara region of CALM, together with the Martu people, took over the fox and cat control, and started to monitor how Warru, fox, cat and dingo numbers were changing. This booklet reports on baiting and monitoring since 2002, carried out with people from Jigalong, Parnngurr and Punmu communities.

What are we trying to do?

1. Protect and increase the populations of Warru in the Western Desert together with Martu people.
2. Control the foxes and cats that are reducing the number of Warru.
3. Continue to check on the numbers of Warru, foxes and cats to see how they change after baiting.

Who's come out to Kuru-kanti?

Martu people:

Timmy Patterson
 Arthur Samson
 Butler Landy
 Mark Jeffries
 Djakayu Biljabu
 Manapi Sammy
 Nyamaru Bidu
 Ricky Charles
 Roderick Samson
 Kerry Kelly
 Ralph
 Melvin Farmer
 Nyeri Morgan
 Anthony Gibbs

Mr Gibbs (Yunkura)
 Gladys Bidu
 Gumbaya Girgaba
 Medbourne Attwood
 Rodney Wumi
 Brian Arnott
 Renette Biljabu
 Sara
 Dada Samson
 Gabriel
 Charmaine Gibbs
 Ashwyn Biljabu
 Cliffy Brooks
 J Jeffries

From DEC:

PK
 David Pearson
 Hardy Derschow
 Cath Rummery
 Alison McGilvray

Michael Hughes
 Geoff Kregor
 Troy Shaw
 Brett Lewis

From Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation:

Sue Davenport Peter Johnson

From elsewhere:

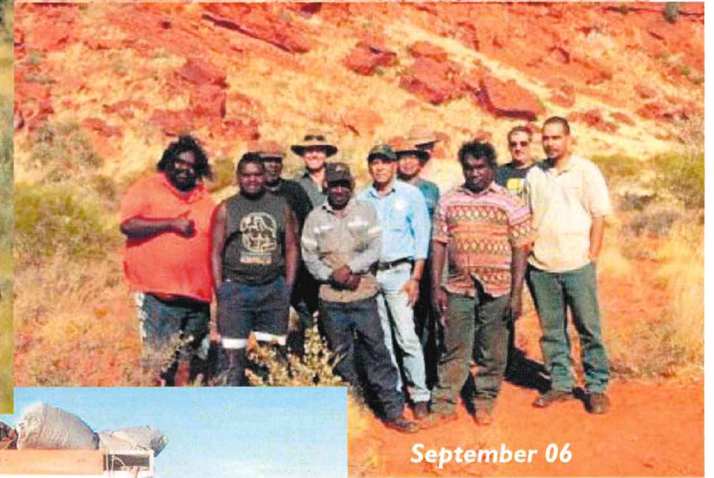
Kevin Walley (Indigenous Land Management Facilitator, South Hedland)



Big trip, September 07



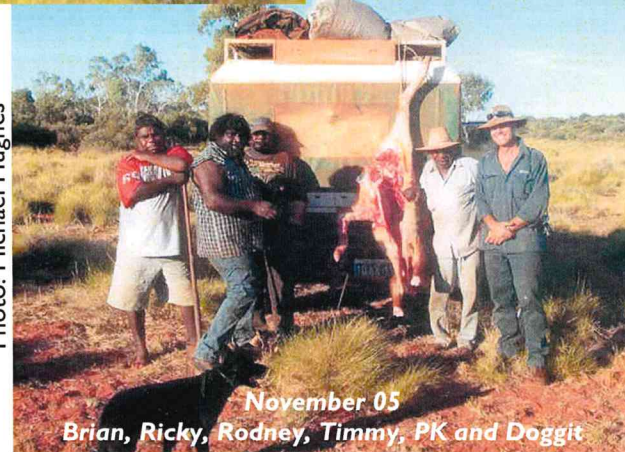
September 07



September 06

Photo: Hardy Derschow

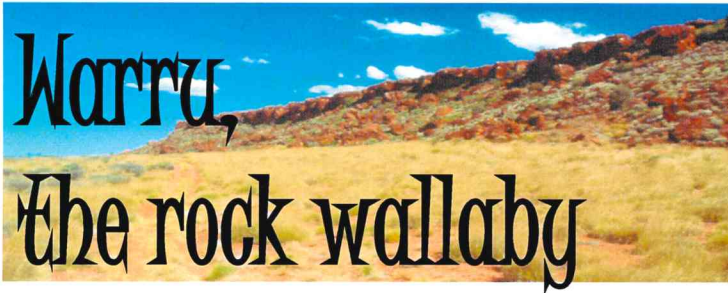
Photo: Michael Hughes



November 05

Brian, Ricky, Rodney, Timmy, PK and Doggit

Warru, the rock wallaby



About Warru

Warru (also called black-flanked rock wallaby or *Petrogale lateralis*) live in groups of 10 to 100 animals. They shelter in rocky outcrops and steep rocky slopes.

Six different types are recognised in Australia. The wallabies found in the Western Desert are like those at Cape Range, near Exmouth. They are different from the ones at Nyaparau Town.



Warru joey

The desert wallaby has a sandy-white cheek stripe, a white side stripe, and sandy forearms on the outward side. Males are a bit heavier and bigger than females. Their tail is longer than their head and body.



Rocky outcrops where wallabies shelter



The rocky Calvert Ranges are good wallaby country

Diet

Warru mostly eat native grasses, and sometimes fruit, leaves, and herbs.

They sometimes drink water but can go without it for long periods. They don't need much because they shelter under boulders during the day where the air is more humid and cool.

They come out in the late afternoon or early evening to feed.

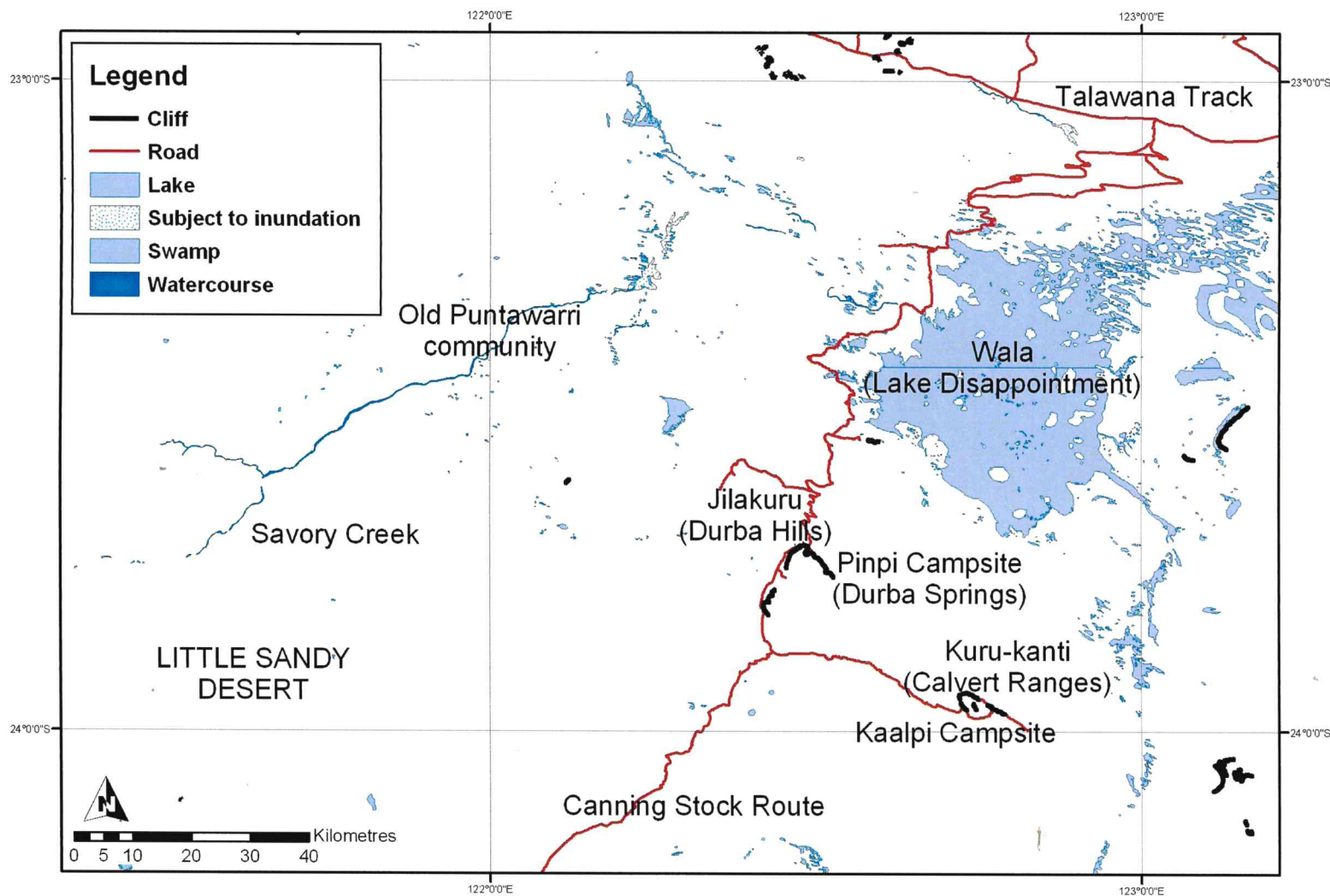
Breeding cycle

Warru can breed year round, depending on rainfall, temperature and the amount of food available.

Female rock wallabies can stop the its baby growing until the country is suitable, then the joey is born into the pouch.

Where is Kuru-kanti?

Kuru-kanti is on Martu land. It has year-round water, steep rocky slopes and gorges. There are plenty of camping places and important sacred places.



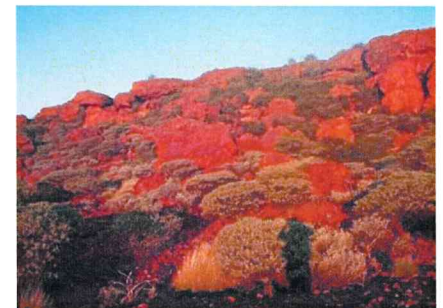
Jilakuru Gorge



Pinpi Campsite



Kaalpi Gorge



Kuru-kanti

How did we do the project?

1. Working together to protect Warru

DEC and Martu people from Jigalong, Parnngurr and Punmu have been working to protect and increase the number of Warru around Kuru-kanti.

2. Aerial baiting over Kuru-kanti in winter each year

Baits were laid in a 12km x 12km area over the ranges and on the tracks around them to kill cats. These baits were dropped from a helicopter in about July each year.

3. Ground baiting in winter and spring

Baits were also laid on the field trips to Kuru-kanti, in the areas where we knew Warru lived (the breakaway cliffs to the north and west), the track around the ranges and along the track to the Canning Stock Route.



Photo: Michael Hughes

Weighing up the wallaby

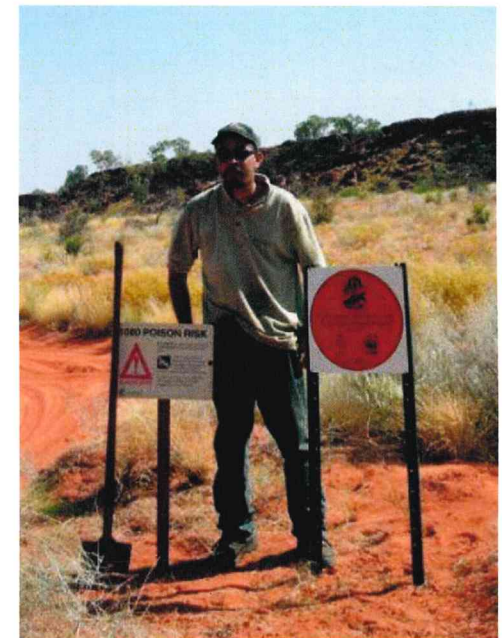
4. Tracking Warru, foxes, cats and dingo

During the field trips to Kuru-kanti in winter and spring, we searched during the day for tracks, droppings and other signs along the vehicle tracks around the ranges, along the cliff tops and in the gorges. At night we searched for Warru, foxes, cats and dingos using torches.

Sometimes we used traps to catch Warru and find out how many live around Kuru-kanti.



Equipment used to measure Warru



Troy putting up warning signs for 1080 baits



Field Trips 02-04

August 2003

PK, Timmy, Mark

- Looking for Warru tracks around Kaalpi Gorge camp
- Throwing out baits around the vehicle tracks
- Visiting Jilakuru to look for Warru and pull out date palm seedlings



The mob at Kaalpi: Melvin, Mark, AS, Timmy and Butler

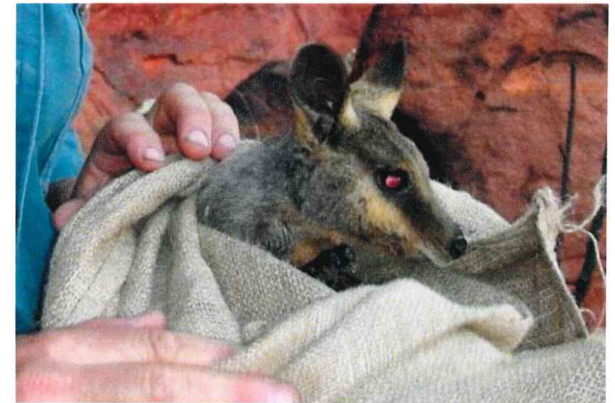
November 2002

PK, Michael

- Looking for Warru along the clifftops in the day and searching at night on the cliffs and at the bottom of the ranges
- Searching for fox, cat and dingo tracks by day and night
- Laying 100 baits over 20km of track
- Putting up five 1080 bait warning signs



AS at Kaalpi Gorge



Photos: Michael Hughes

May 2004

PK, Timmy, David P, Sue

- Trapping near Kuru-kanti for wallabies
- Spotlighting and tracking during the day for wallaby, fox, cat and dingo
- Head torching for reptiles in Kaalpi Gorge at night



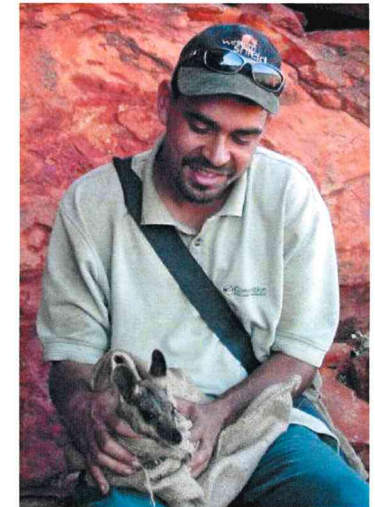
Letting him go

Field trips 05-06

April 05

PK, Michael, AS, Timmy, Butler, Mark, Melvin

- Spotighting at Kaalpi Gorge at night
- Surveying at Kuru-kanti during the day
- Track run around the ranges laying baits
- Deciding to remove date palms at Pinpi completely



Troy releasing Warru



Michael, Kevin, KK, Gabriel, AS, Troy, Ralph, Rod

Removing date palms from Pinpi



Hardy, Ralph, AS and Neville cleaning up



September 06

PK, Michael, Roderick, Gabriel, Kerry, Ralph, Geoff, Hardy, Troy, Kevin, AS, Neville

- Removing date palms from Pinpi
- Trapping for Warru at Kuru-kanti
- Checking for fox and cat tracks

November 05

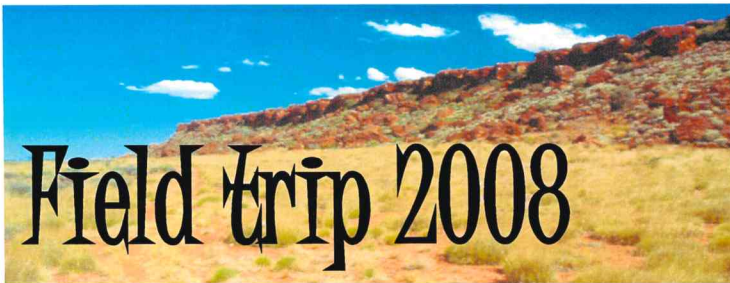
PK, Michael, Timmy, Rodney, Brian, Ricky

- Trapping for Warru at Kuru-kanti
- Searching for Warru, fox, cat and dingo tracks



Photo: Michael Hughes

Jigalong crew: Rodney, Ricky, Brian, Timmy 9

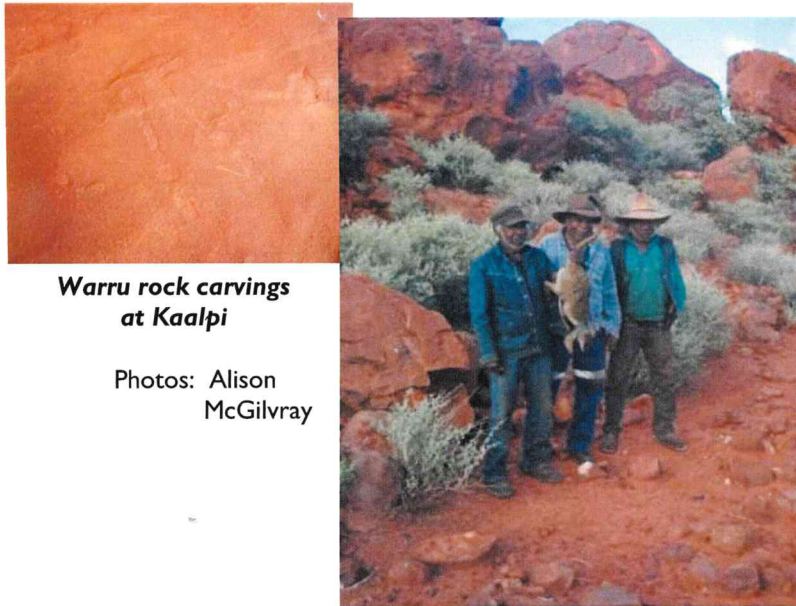


Field Trip 2008

June 2008

PK, Michael, MJ, Timmy, AS, Brett, Cath, Alison

- Digging out date palm seedlings at Jilakuru
- Trapping for Warru at Kuru-kanti
- Trapping small animals at Kaalpi Gorge campsite
- Spotlighting for Warru, cats, foxes and other animals from the car
- Surveying for Warru around Kuru-kanti



*Warru rock carvings
at Kaalpi*

Photos: Alison
McGilvray

AS, MJ and Timmy



Timmy and MJ tracking

We also looked for signs of many different animals at Jilakuru, Kuru-kanti, Sunday Well (Bullubulu), Savory Creek and Puntawarri. We especially looked for Marnkarr, Langamarlu, Kakarratul and Mulyamiji because they are disappearing from most other places in Australia.

The ladies helped with the surveys, looking for tracks, scats and burrows. The plots are small and we have a set time that we look in them for, recording as much as we see. Doing lots of plots over a very big area will tell us where and how well the animals are living and breeding, and how widespread the feral animals are, like camels, foxes, cats and rabbits.

At Jilakuru we met the big mob: Martu and the Birriliburu, Australian National University, Department of Indigenous Affairs, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts from Canberra, Landgate and Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa from WDLAC. The Birriliburu Native Title Determination had just been given. The group was looking at rock art and how to manage the visitors that come to the area.



Gumbaya, Daisy and Nyamaru with a big goanna

Photo: Alison McGilvray



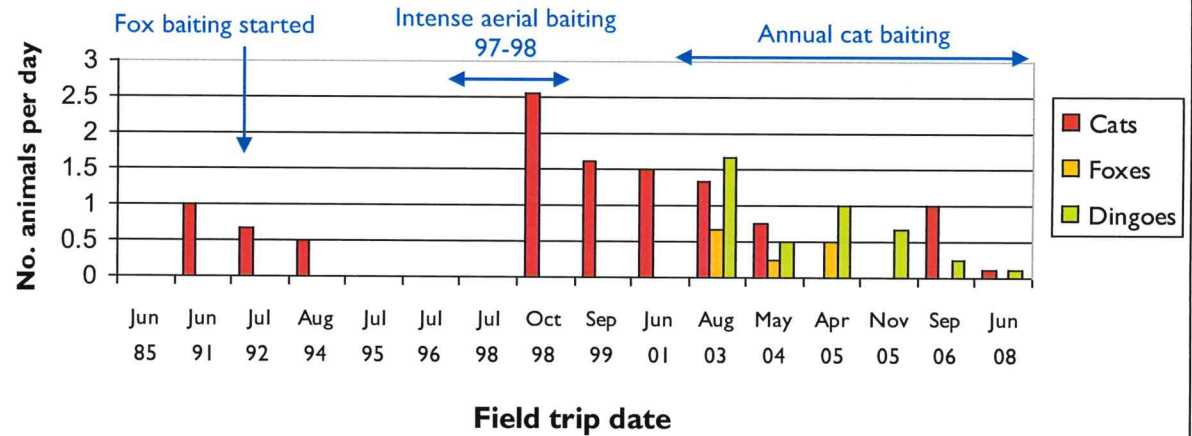
Photo: Marissa Speirs



Photo: DEC



Number of predators seen per day of monitoring



From our trapping results, we found Warru numbers stayed about the same until cat baiting started in 2002. Since then there have been lots more Warru. They were also seen over a bigger area around Kuru-kanti, so they seem to be spreading out.

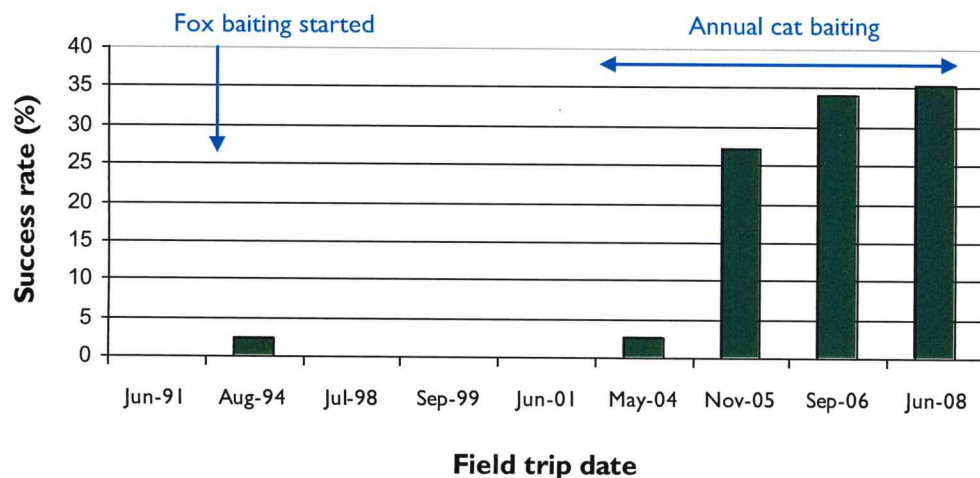
Importantly, we found:

Cat baits kill foxes

But fox baits do NOT kill cats

Cats were really common in 2002 when CALM Pilbara began the work. There weren't many foxes and dingoes because the aerial fox baits were killing them and their numbers have stayed about the same. Since CALM started using cat baits the number of cats has dropped off and we have seen more Warru.

Total individual Warru trapped per 100 traps



What does this mean?

What's changed since 2002?

- Cat numbers have dropped.
- Fox and dingo numbers have stayed about the same.
- There are lots more Warru around and more with babies in their pouches, so the animals have a better chance of surviving into the future.



Photo: Alison McGilvray

Good fire: burning small patches of spinifex

We've learnt that **cat baits protect Warru**.

Cats are harder to kill than foxes. Foxes pick up the bait more often than cats, because they don't mind eating dead meat. Cats like to play with live animals.

Cats are mostly to blame for the decline in Warru because they are smaller and can get into cracks and crevices amongst the rocks where Warru hide.



We need to protect Kuru-kanti from big fires, because they burn out too much of Warrus' habitat and make it easier for cats and foxes to hunt them.

We also need to keep monitoring the numbers of Warru, foxes and cats every year to make sure cat numbers don't rise again and there are still plenty of Warru.

Bringing Warru back to Jilakuru

What's the problem?

Warru used to live at Jilakuru but are now almost gone. DEC and Martu people haven't found any live wallabies in the last few years. But tracks, bones and scats have been seen which suggest that they are still there in very low numbers.

What can we do?

One way to make sure Warru survive in this area is to move some from Kuru-kanti to Jilakuru. But only if there are lots of Warru at Kuru-kanti, so there are still good numbers if some are moved.

To do this, Martu people would need to agree with:

- Moving Warru from Kuru-kanti
- Finding a good place to let them go at Jilakuru
- Baiting at Jilakuru to protect the Warru from cats and foxes
- Getting funding to provide a helicopter and community employment



Durba Springs



Kaalpi Gorge



Photo: Louise Williams

We all need to meet up to talk about this.



What we all need to do:

1. Continue to visit Kuru-kanti to check on the Warru.
2. Keep killing cats and foxes.
3. Do burning the traditional way.
4. Bring Warru back to other areas where they used to be, like Jilakuru.
5. Keep learning from new research.

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