Water is a key element in sustaining life on Cape York. Cape York NRM is working with graziers, scientists, farmers, community groups, Traditional Owners, Councils, conservationists, individuals and rangers on a wide variety of projects aimed at keeping Cape York’s water healthy and abundant for generations to come. These projects include erosion control trials on grazing properties, working with farmers in the Lakeland district to develop a water strategy framework, supporting emerging groups such as the Wenlock River Catchment Group to evolve, and promoting the collaboration of work for remote beach clean-ups. Cape York NRM will also soon be working with east coast landholders and organisations on development of a Reef Water Quality Plan. This edition highlights some of the great work taking place to keep our water resources healthy.

Nominate to be a Cape York NRM Director

Cape York NRM’s Annual General Meeting is coming up in early November. In line with our constitution, three positions will be declared vacant, and we are now seeking nominations for those positions. The sectors are:

- Indigenous Sector Zone 1
- Indigenous Sector Zone 3
- Indigenous Sector Zone 4

Where there is more than one eligible nominations for a Sector Zone, members of that Zone will be invited to vote by secret ballot. An Independent Returning Officer will be appointed to oversee nominations and voting.

**Nominations must be received by 8 September 2014.**

For more information and an information package detailing Sector Director selection criteria, please contact us on 1300 132 262 or email admin@capeyorknrm.com.au
Two recent visits to Dawnvale Station and the Bloomfield River have excited local fish researchers Brendan Ebner (Ebb) and James Donaldson from CSIRO and TropWATER at James Cook University. **James Donaldson** tells the tale.

Ebb and I recently made two visits to the Bloomfield River on Dawnvale Station. Desmond Tayley (Traditional Owner, and Cape York NRM Engagement Officer) had set us straight with directions to the homestead and tips on river access. Dr Chris Fulton from the Australian National University accompanied us on the first trip in Ebb’s little Suzuki, affectionately termed ‘the Pilchard’, but that is a tale for another time.

As a first visit to the area for us, the Bloomfield did not disappoint. The objective of the first trip was to perform a brief survey of the river above Bloomfield Falls and also to catch specimens of the elusive and unique Bloomfield river night perch (*Guyu wujalwujalensis*), traditionally known as ‘Boyee’ (main picture). The discovery of this fish by scientists around 15 years ago was probably one of the most significant discoveries in terms of Australian freshwater fish. We were keen to get some photos and collect some information on how abundant the species is.

Boyee are actually a small species with the biggest we observed at about 15cm. This species is a member of the same family of fishes that includes the Murray Cod and Golden perch of southern Australia. This little perch is only found in the 11 km stretch of river between Bloomfield and Roaring Meg falls – and nowhere else in the world! As well as the Boyee we also caught rainbowfish, purple-spotted gudgeons, eels (Gubat) and catfish (Jolagi) and found the system to be in a very healthy state, although a little quite of fish traffic during the day, making it a little spooky for snorkelling!

The purpose of the second trip was to attend the Dawnvale planning workshop and meet some local Traditional Owners. On our way we visited a small creek just south of Gap Creek and the swamp near Weary Beach where we were impressed by the fish that we observed including some gigantic rainbowfish. We also gave a small off-the-cuff presentation at the Bloomfield Hall where we received interesting questions and information about the biology of the river. We hope to get back to that beautiful country again soon and would appreciate the chance to present some images of the different species that exist underwater in this diverse range of habitats.

Thanks to Des for planting the dream in our mind of visiting Dawnvale Station. Des, it was joyous to be on Country, to witness some unique fish and share in knowledge of the species that call the river home. Thanks also to Frankie, Redman, Djuan, Eddie and others that gave us a better understanding of the area by telling us stories from their country.

Images: Brendan Ebner
Rainfall from Cyclone Ita in April 2014 caused major flooding in the Normanby & Laura Rivers. Water heights reached 10-20 metres and inundated Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park for over a week.

This one-in-20 year flood provided an opportunity to find out how such an extreme event affects water quality in the rivers, and how much sediment and nutrients are flushed out to Princess Charlotte Bay and the Great Barrier Reef. While the cyclone was still passing Lakeland on the morning on April 12th, Christina Howley (Griffith University), Sue Marsh (South Cape York Catchments) and other volunteers were out collecting water samples while the rivers rose rapidly. When the muddy rivers in the upper catchment began to drop, they followed the floodwaters to the lower catchment and Princess Charlotte Bay.

After many last minute emails and phone calls, the Great Barrier Reef Authority’s Marine Monitoring Programme (via James Cook University), the Australian Government’s Reef Rescue Programme (via Balkanu), South Cape York Catchments and the South Endeavour Trust came through with the funds for a helicopter. On the 16th April, Christina collected samples as the floodwaters reached Battle Camp Crossing and Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park. On the 18th, as the visible flood plume reached 20 km out into Princess Charlotte Bay, Christina and Sue flew out to sample the water in the Bay.

This was the third year that local scientists and rangers have sampled flood waters in the Normanby...
Rangering at Rindoparr

Last month four young blokes from Cairns and Yarrabah had their minds blown with their first trip ever in a r44. For those of you who aren’t ‘in the know’ – that’s a helicopter.

The young fellas were at the end of a three week stint at Rindoparr (Marina Plains), where they fenced Luba Swamp off to cattle, and undertook various other work on the country. The chopper flight took them over land their families have had connection to for thousands of years. Yet they were the first in their direct families to return for decades, since Aboriginal people were removed from their homelands.

In recent times Rindoparr has been in the care of the Lama Lama Rangers who have been working to improve land condition and water quality through fencing of waterholes, controlling weeds and managing visitors to the area, both holidayers and pig-hunters. The ranger group have attracted funds from various projects - the Luba Swamp Fencing project was funded by Caring for Country, while Biodiversity Funds helped with planning for Marina Plains.

An important part of the project involved bringing Traditional Owners who lived in Cairns and Yarrabah back to reconnect with their Country. And for these young blokes, that’s exactly what they did.

Ralph Barlow, Neville Kingsburra, Andrew Cedric and Travis Barlow were unanimous in saying they loved being at Rindoparr. Ralph, affectionately known as the foreman, said it was great to be coming back to his roots “seeing the land and sea, taking off from where the old people left off, knowing what the future generations will have after we go – I love being here” he said.

Andrew agreed. “It’s so different from where we grew up. We talk more out here, there’s no tv. It’s hard work, but it’s fun” he said.

No-one wants to go home.

“There’s a beautiful feeling about being back to your roots, and back to where your great grandfather was.

It’s a privilege to be here – we feel good emotionally, physically. Every step we take – feels good just being here” said Travis.

For young men, they have big plans for their country. “We need to know about the land, and then get tourists in” said Neville. “Luba Swamp will be great for bird watching.”

“I’d love to be a tour guide” said Travis.

Lama Lama Rangers Executive Officer, Cheryl Prestipino, said this group were one of three crews from Yarrabah and Cairns, who have rotated on three weekly shifts since the start of the dry season. She said the first crew spent their time cleaning up.

“Over Easter this year pig-hunters came in to our camp. They cut the fence, damaged our signs, broke the lights, did burnouts in the shack, and left heaps of rubbish. The first group had to spend time cleaning all that up before they could start even get started on the fencing” she said.

And according to Ralph since they’ve been there, things have improved. “We’ve been telling people they can’t dump rubbish, so the word is passing on and the rubbish has reduced” he said.

Visitor management is a major issue for Cape York, and the biggest challenge for the Lama Lama rangers, according to Cheryl. “We need to make things secure here at Marina Plains” she said. “People come and think they can do whatever they like.

“While the boys have been working here, they have also contributed to a maintenance fund for the shack and that helps to keep things running” she said.

Work at Marina Plains will continue through the dry season, with weed control, visitor management, and researchers coming in to undertake baseline studies of Luba Swamp, for ongoing biodiversity monitoring.
Over 130 people from across Australia attended the 2014 Indigenous Fire Workshop, held on Taepithiggi Country at Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in July. Event organiser, Victor Steffensen, said this was the sixth workshop held on Cape York, and that it had grown every time with new communities coming along every year and past participants coming back.

This year people came to the workshop from across Cape York, Yarrabah and Tullaroo Springs in far north Queensland, but also from Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.

Cape York NRM’s Peta-Marie Standley said workshops like this provide an opportunity to learn how to use fire properly and safely, and learn what to do when you put it in into the bush.

Participants learnt traditional fire burning techniques, fire methodologies, botanical information and filming techniques. They shared their cultures and stories, and formed lasting friendships.

Cape York NRM wish to acknowledge the Taepithiggi Traditional Owners for sharing their country, Barry and Shelley Lyon and Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve for sharing their home, Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers for sharing their knowledge and a special mention to Mapoon Cultural Heritage Rangers - Dianne Nicholls and Ronnie Guivarra for their hard work over the length of the workshop.

A special edition newsletter celebrating the event will come out soon.

Above: Fire workshop participants walk with the fire. Right: Mapoon’s Stanley Budby and Victor Steffensen show the right way to light fires. Below: Participants were privileged that Doctor Tommy George was able to attend the workshop, here with Peta-Marie Standley.
About an hour before the sun casts its first rays on Yarraden, Jay Willman is up and on the go. There is always plenty to do and at the moment mustering is on the agenda, which is music to Jay’s ears.

It is what Jay lives and breathes – the smell of horses and a good dog. However this year’s musters are more important than ever. Parents Sue and Paul have retired from the property, selling to neighbour Darcy Byrnes. That’s good news for Jay as he has retained his share of the property. So, this year’s musters are the start of the rest of Jay’s Cape York life, and he’s really pleased about that.

He reckons he’d never been anywhere that seemed like home, until he got to Yarraden.

Yarraden currently supports 1200 head of Braham beef cattle on its 336 000 acres. The country on Yarraden is in great condition, and now that Jay knows he is here for the long haul, he will increase his stock numbers in the years to come.

But these days it seems no one on Cape York can survive off cattle alone. Like many other Cape York families the Willman’s also have an earthmoving business and contract to other properties and Cook Shire. And that’s what Paul and Sue will continue to do – retiring from Yarraden is far from fully fledged retirement. Sue has the caravan decked out so she can finally travel with Paul when he’s moving dirt across the Cape. And she’ll still do Yarraden’s books, because numbers (and family) are what she loves.

Cape York NRM went into partnership with Yarraden early in 2014 starting with Sicklepod trials. The trials are looking at the effectiveness of long term controls on Sicklepod. XX plots have been established, and Jay will be monitoring the sites over the next few years to learn more about the best control for the invasive weed.

Graziers see sicklepod as a major threat to their industry, as it takes over pastures and spreads readily around feed lots. Jay has been controlling sicklepod since he and his parents bought Yarraden 11 years ago, and he reckons he has had some real success.

However he says the greatest challenges to raising beef cattle on Cape York are the costs. “20 years ago you might have gotten $1000 for bullock, and today you might get the same price – except your costs are 3-4 times higher” he said. “The large size of the properties up here means much higher costs for diesel and fencing, and for workers. The country is poor which means more cattle supplements are needed for a high breeding rate.”

“But I love it, which is the reason I am here” he said.

There are plenty of benefits to having a family run property, as labour costs are significantly reduced, according to Jay. “It’s the little odd jobs and extra hours that family just do – whereas with workers, every second counts” he said. “We’ve been lucky though, Perry and Jamie are part of our family, and work just as hard as family do.

“And my Girls have always worked. Ever since they were able, they’ve helped.

“I can remember when Shae was five (she’s 12 now) and we were putting in a new fence-line, 40 kilometres around. Shae was running in front of me putting wire in the pickets ready for me to tie off. She was running ahead and keeping up. And I was running in between the pickets. After an hour, Shae finally stopped to ask if it would be alright if she had a drink. I tell you, I couldn’t get men to keep up and to work like that!

“And as for Nina – she’s seven years old now. The other day we had a mob of cattle with the dogs behind us, and when we hit the fence-line she says ‘Crikey Dad, isn’t a fence-line handy with cattle’. I laughed and said a fence-line is worth three blokes on a normal mob. Nina said ‘I reckon a hundred’! I tell you – you don’t realise how much you rub off on your kids!” Jay tells.

Cape York NRM and Yarraden are also partnering in erosion reduction trials, and will hold a field day for graziers to show the results next year.

Above: Shae (left) Jay (middle) help Nina Willman (right) get ready for the muster.
School Holidays: Cape York Style

Lama Lama’s Cheryl Prestipino enjoyed the company of her nephew Damon and niece Alison on the July school holidays (above), while Gavin Bassani had daughter Schascle and son Lachlan home for the holidays (below).

Above: Sue and Paul Willman. Below: Jay heads out mustering with daughters (from left) Nina and Shae and nephew Chris (right).

Jay records the progress on sicklepod trials (above). Below (from left): Nina and Shae Willman feed the calves with cousin Georgia.

Glen and Susan Shephard look forward to the holidays when Brandon (left) and Lance (right) come home from boarding school to join Carly (centre), bringing the family together. Carly (below) enjoys some time away from distance education. The Shephards are the farming family to feature in our next edition.
Johanna is the coordinator for Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance. She started in the role in February, and now the group is moving ahead at full steam.

Coordinated aerial pig control activities. By coordinating aerial shoots, the group was able to greatly reduce costs associated with contracting helicopters. Anecdotal evidence suggests that predation of turtle nests has been greatly reduced by this systematic and coordinated effort.

Using Cybertracker software, WCTTAA members have all contributed to the development of an electronic data collection application which allows them to systematically collect data for all aspects of their turtle protection work in a standardised format. This includes data regarding turtle nest monitoring, turtle tagging, pig control and ghost nets. The new application is currently being trialed in the field.

Professional relationships are strong between the coordinators of WCTTAA ranger groups allowing for a free flow of information, ideas and support. Earlier this year, many turtles were saved after WCTTAA rangers responded to an alert from one WCTTAA region, after net-trapped turtles were found on beaches after severe weather.
Farewell to Jane Blackwood

Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council have recently said goodbye to Land and Sea Coordinator, Jane Blackwood. Jane was with MASC for approximately four years, strengthening the Mapoon Land and Sea Ranger team. Jane was one of the driving forces behind establishment of WCTTAA and the Wenlock River Catchment Group. Cape York NRM wishes Jane well with her move, and look forward to continue working closely with MASC, the Rangers and new Land and Sea Coordinator, Louise Stone.

Date Claimer: Wednesday 15 October 2014 - Rural Women’s Day

Resourcing Women of the North: International Day of Rural Women

Rural women of the far north have a fantastic opportunity to meet in Mareeba to celebrate their strengths, and to gain and share knowledge and resources to pursue opportunities in sustainable agriculture in their region.

The Resourcing Women of the North – International Day of Rural Women will be held on 15 October 2014 at Brueys Boutique Winery. The event includes a Rural Women’s Day, showcasing the latest in sustainable agricultural innovation and giving women of the region the resources to develop their businesses through marketing opportunities. The evening commences with drinks on the deck, then Rural Womens Dinner featuring local produce. Stayed tuned, as the key-note speakers will be announced soon!

The event has been made possible thanks to support from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal, Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd and the Bendigo Bank - Mareeba Community Bank Branch and will be facilitated by Julia Telford from Engage and Create Consulting.

Contact Erica Blumson from Northern Gulf Resource Management Group to express your interest and get on the mailing list for regular updates: 07 4092 1088; 0488 499 266, education@northerngulf.com.au.
Big win for Salvinia Control at Lakeland

2008 to 2011

Story and photo: South Cape York Catchments

Since February 2008 the small farming community of Lakeland, South Cape York Catchments (SCYC) and the Laura Rangers have worked determinedly to eradicate Salvinia molesta from the waterways upstream of Lakefield National Park. This sinister aquatic plant introduced from South America as an ornamental, can double its size in four days.

Throughout the world Salvinia is recognised as an extremely invasive species, which can seriously impact waterway health and compromise agricultural productivity. In recognition of the largest Salvinia eradication project ever undertaken in Australia, SCYC received the Batianoff award during the 13th Qld Weed Symposium for “team excellence in weed management”.

The Salvinia Control Manual states there are very few situations where eradication is possible and these are normally restricted to enclosed water bodies less than one hectare in size. In 2008 Lakeland had over 340 ha of Salvinia infested waterways, including 2 Dams, 14 km of rivers and 13 swamps. Since completion of the project in 2011 no Salvinia has been found in the system. Initially booms were installed to partition the Honey Dam into less daunting portions. Bio-control weevils, bred in borrowed water troughs by the 17 students of Lakeland State School, were released on the unsuspecting infestation. Before the floating plants could regroup from the weevils, and despite a protective guard of duck lice, members of SCYC treated Salvinia with chemical control. Chemical control was followed by a forensic search as the last fragments were hunted down by the Laura Rangers and painstakingly removed by hand. A Caring for our Country grant funded control works from 2008-2011.

After the last piece was found, the project entered into a three year monitoring phase before Salvinia could be officially declared eradicated. It has now been three years now since the last piece of salvinia was found. SCYC are going to do one last survey before they declare eradication. Monitoring was funded thanks to Cape York NRM and the Queensland Government’s Land and Sea Ranger program at Laura.
Around the Cape . . .

Captain Billy’s Landing had its first Tangaroa Blue clean-up this year, thanks to a Friends of Parks grant. Heidi Taylor (above left) sits on the massive tug rope that Tangaroa Blue volunteers, Apudthama Rangers and Cape York NRM staff pulled out of the sand. Above left: Apudthama Senior Ranger (and Cape York NRM Indigenous Sector Zone One Director), Christopher Lifu shows the clean-up crew how to find yams.

Conservations Volunteers play an important role in Cape York’s annual beach clean-ups, providing a self-sufficient, capable workforce, pictured above at Captain Billy’s Landing. Above right: The annual Chilli Beach clean-up took place again this year, seeing less debris, and some excellent support from the Lockhart State School.

Above: Lyndal from Cape York NRM spent time at Silver Plains recently with Paddy Bassani recording stories for future newsletters, and she was later seen with Jess from South Cape York Catchments, Andrew from Landcare and Parks staff, Janie and Doug, at the Cooktown Careers Day (above right). Right: Johanna from Cape York NRM with Apudthama Rangers finding out how best to record data for turtles.
Calendar of Events

September
8   Cape York NRM Board nominations close
16   South Cape York Catchments AGM
     Western Cape Landcare AGM
26-28 Wallaby Creek Festival
30   Feral Photos Competition closes

October
15  Resourcing Women of the North
17  Hilltop Farm Permaculture Course

November
4   Cape York NRM AGM tbc
8   Cooktown Races

Want to contribute to this newsletter?
Send your articles to media@capeyorknrm.com.au
Next ‘special’ edition: Indigenous Fire Workshop

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