

Ngaanyatjarra Lands

Central Ranges, Western Australia



Things change, but the idea can remain the same. The yakirri we wear is made of wool. It used to be made of possum skin or hair, but now it's made of wool, and white fellas make the wool. But it's still a yakirri, and it still represents the law. These IPAs could be like this—a white fella way [of doing the job we used to do].

Ngaanyatjarra Elder

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands are increasingly being recognised for their strong cultural and natural values. Ngaanyatjarra people, Yarnangu, have cared for their country for thousands of years, and these social and cultural activities continue unbroken to the present day.

The high levels of biological diversity that exist on the Lands are a direct result of traditional land management practices. The declaration

of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) articulates this relationship between culture and land, and Ngaanyatjarra people's desire to strengthen and maintain Traditional Law and practice.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands cover a total area of 250,000 square kilometres - of which 98,000 square kilometres forms the IPA. Close to the size of Tasmania, the IPA encompasses the entire West Australian section of the Central Ranges Bioregion, which until declaration was unprotected by any other reserve system. The IPA also covers parts of the Gibson, Great Victoria and Great Sandy deserts.

There are approximately 2,000 Yarnangu living on the Lands in 11 autonomous incorporated communities. Ngaanyatjarra Council represents them all, and coordinates IPA activities across the Lands. IPA funding supports Traditional Owners to apply traditional ecological knowledge to land

management, and to pass this knowledge and associated responsibilities on to future generations.

Fire is used to rejuvenate the land, the water supply is protected by maintaining rockholes, bores and windmills, and young people learn about bush foods and their medicinal uses. Training in contemporary ways of managing the land is underway, so the land benefits from the best that both traditions have to offer.

Ngaanyatjarra Lands are home to over 650 species of plants, typified by grasses, daisies, legumes, saltbushes, acacias and eucalypts. The Central Ranges, interspersed with red sand plains dotted with spinifex, mulga woodlands and groves of desert sheoak, characterise the region. Several rockholes, lakes and creek systems are listed as Wetlands of National Significance for their ecological, historical and cultural importance.

At least nine nationally threatened species are known to live on the Lands, including itjaritjari or marsupial mole, ninu or greater bilby, ngaanamarra or malleefowl, warru or black-footed rock wallaby, and tjakura or the great desert skink.

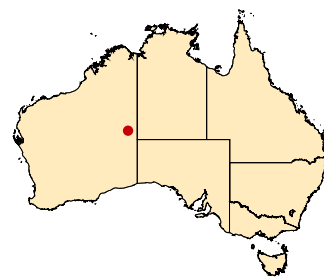
IPA funding helps to monitor threatened species, and manage the weeds and feral animals which are taking over their habitats. Warru numbers are increasing as a result of fox-baiting work by Warburton community members in cooperation with the South Australian Department of Environment and Conservation.

The declaration of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands IPA in August 2002 was made under World Conservation Union (IUCN) *Category VI – Managed Resource Protected Area: Protected Area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems*. Several smaller zones within the IPA are managed under *Category III – Natural Monument: Protected Area managed for the conservation of specific natural features* and *Category IV – Habitat/Species Management Area: Protected Area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention*.



Ngaanyatjarra IPA is part of Australia's National Reserve System, a nation-wide network of reserves especially set up to protect examples of Australia's unique landscapes, flora and fauna for current and future generations.

For more information about Indigenous Protected Areas visit www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa or contact the Department of the Environment and Water Resources Community Information Unit. Email: ciu@environment.gov.au Freecall: 1800 803 772



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Photo Credits: All photos from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Front – The Two Sisters. Back – (Left) Young Terrell helps with seed collecting. (Right) Ngarrkalya or Sandhill Wattle seeds (*Acacia dictyopleba*). (Bottom) Yarnangu Traditional Owners. **Art Credit:** Taken from original artwork ©Eunice Nungarayi Woods.