



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 17 June 2019

INDIGENOUS RANGERS JOURNEY TO THE DESERT TO SAVE THREATENED SPECIES

Indigenous rangers from across Australia will gather on the edge of the ancient Lake Paruku (Lake Gregory) this week as they lead the charge saving some of Australia's most endangered wildlife and landscapes.

The rangers are part of a 200-strong contingent of Indigenous land managers, scientists and conservationists who will make their way along the Tanami track to the remote Species of the Desert Festival in WA's Kimberley region.

Located between the Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts, the three-day Festival is part of a new push to protect the Australian desert, one of the few great natural places remaining on Earth and home to many Australian endangered species.

Held on the country of the Paruku Rangers and the Tjurabalan native title holders, the Paruku Rangers are the Indigenous ranger group responsible for recording not one, but two images of the endangered Night Parrot.

The Festival will be the first time that many people are shown known Night Parrot habitat as efforts ramp up to identify and protect the elusive bird, as well as other iconic Australian endangered species, such as the Greater Bilby and the Black-flanked Rock Wallaby.

Paruku Ranger Coordinator Jamie Brown has looked after the land as a Traditional Owner and Indigenous ranger for many years.

"We are happy to have so many of our countrymen come here to talk and share knowledge about looking after the land," Jamie said.

"We know our country and how to look after it, so it's good to have all the scientists and conservation people here to learn from us, so we can all look after this country and endangered species together."

Australia's desert area represents the world's largest connected network of protected areas. The area spans over 35 per cent of Australia (2.7 million square km, and is of immense cultural value to its Traditional Owners who have a history of occupation spanning more than 50,000 years.

Kimberley Land Council Deputy CEO Tyronne Garstone said the Festival is a celebration of Indigenous land management throughout the ages.

"Our people have been looking after country for tens of thousands of years, all the way back to the dreamtime," Mr Garstone said.

"Indigenous people's connection to and knowledge of the land, combined with today's science and technology, is the best chance Australia has of looking after these vast and special landscapes.

“Continued investment in Indigenous rangers, Indigenous Protected Areas and collaborations like the Indigenous Desert Alliance is vital, so these places can be protected well into the future.”

Indigenous Desert Alliance Executive Officer Lindsey Langford said the Festival will be an incredible week of sharing, learning and securing the future of our desert landscapes and wildlife.

"This event is one of the largest 'on country' gatherings of Indigenous rangers in recent times," he said.

"It highlights the connectedness of desert people to each other and to their country across this vast landscape. These connections are the framework for keeping the desert resilient and its species thriving."

Indigenous Desert Alliance, the Kimberley Land Council and the Paruku and Kumirrk Rangers would like to acknowledge the multiple partners and importantly the Tjurabalan elders, the families of Mulan, and the Tjurabalan Native Title Lands Aboriginal Corporation for their support of this event.

The Species of the Desert Festival is organised and supported by the following partners:



Indigenous Desert Alliance is an organisation committed to securing the future health of the desert and its people by strengthening the existing connections between desert people, empowering desert people to look after their country and connecting the desert story with the story of our country.



The Kimberley Land Council is the native title representative body for the Kimberley region and plays a key role supporting Indigenous land and sea management through facilitation of the Kimberley Ranger Network and the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous Ranger program.



The Paruku and Kumirrk Rangers protect and manage the rich cultural and environmental assets of this remote area through conducting feral animal management, fire management, on-country trips, traditional knowledge transfers, educating young people, biodiversity surveys and cultural site management. Paruku is of immense cultural significance to the Tjurabalan people and lies in the heart of the Paruku Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). Paruku IPA has a visitor permit system for people wishing to visit or camp at Lake Gregory, Lake Stretch or Sturt Creek. For more information visit <http://www.parukuipa.org.au>