

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge in the care of threatened species at Arakwal National Park

Project 6.2.1

KEY MESSAGES

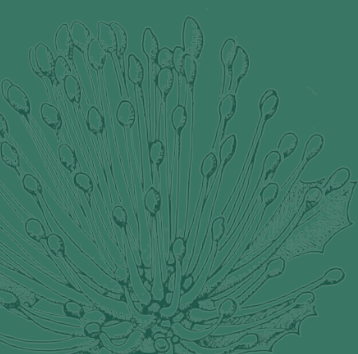
- Scientists, Traditional Owners and Park staff are working together to manage the Byron Bay Orchid (*Diuris byronensis*) and its clay heath habitat in Arakwal National Park.
- We have held planning and evaluation workshops to develop knowledge-sharing protocols, priority actions and measures of success to care for these important areas.
- Over the past year, this project has supported a back-to-country workshop for local Indigenous families, cultural burning on the clay heath habitat and community engagement activities.



Indigenous burning of clay heath was recently carried out for the first time in 30 years.
Photo: Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation.

What is the problem being tackled?

The endangered Byron Bay Orchid (*Diuris byronensis*) is unique to Arakwal National Park. The orchid and its endangered clay heath habitat, which is an endangered ecological community, have important conservation and cultural values. Yet these values are threatened by wild fires, weeds, feral animals and the impact of thousands of tourists who visit this region throughout the year. Joint managers at Arakwal need to work together to ensure effective joint management of these important species and areas.



Who is involved?

This project is a collaboration between Bundjalung people of Byron Bay (Arakwal), Arakwal joint Park Managers, a research team from CSIRO, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The project is receiving funding from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

Why is this important to the Bundjalung of Byron Bay People (Arakwal)?

Local Traditional Owners are interested in the decisions and outcomes achieved in this protected area. It is important to think about how research and management of endangered plants and animals can also help

the Bundjalung of Byron Bay People (Arakwal) to look after the things they think are most important. This includes working together to guide and assess efforts to care for important species in the area.



Green List workshop participants. Photo: CSIRO

The IUCN Green List

Arakwal was the first protected area in the world to be IUCN Green Listed. Achieving Green List certification means the protected area has good governance, sound design and planning and effective management. Together these factors support successful conservation outcomes.

This year, Arakwal Traditional Owners are working with the research team to renew their Green Listing. This will include

showcasing local efforts to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into achieving successful outcomes for country, Traditional Owners and joint managers.

This project is incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the IUCN Green List evaluation framework to identify ways to improve the joint management of this important Indigenous and protected area.



*Burning heathland in the National Park.
Photo: Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation*

What activities are happening?

The research team are working with Arakwal joint managers to develop cross-cultural planning and evaluation guidelines for the Byron Bay orchid and its clay heath habitat.

Bundjalung of Byron Bay Aboriginal Corporation (Arakwal) have helped the science team to work with appropriate Traditional Owners to talk to and explain what the research is about and what we will do with it. Knowledge-sharing protocols have been developed to guide the collaboration.

IUCN and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are helping partners to use the Green List framework to plan and assess activities to care for the orchid, clay heath and the broader protected area. The framework will help partners to demonstrate successful activities, partnerships and outcomes.

The CSIRO research team has facilitated a number of workshops with joint managers of Arakwal National Park to decide on the most important activities that are needed to care for the Byron Bay orchid and its clay heath habitat.

Agreed actions have been incorporated into the Arakwal joint management operations plan over the past year. Some of the new actions include supporting return-to-country days for Indigenous families, the first clay heath burning activity for over 30 years, mammal surveys and collaborative engagement with local neighbours so that joint management activities are supported by the broader community.

The research team have supported these efforts and used the IUCN Green List as a framework to enable Arakwal and park managers to judge the success of their efforts.

Expected benefits for Arakwal and other joint managers across the world

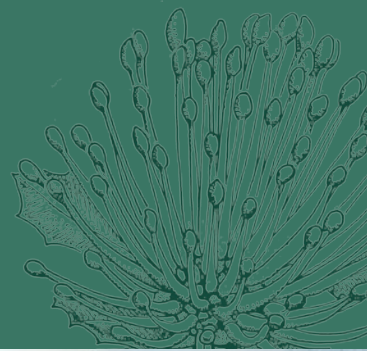
This research will help joint managers at Arakwal to think about and incorporate things that are important for Indigenous Traditional Owners when planning and evaluating management of the Byron Bay orchid, the clay heath habitat and Arakwal National Park.

The project is also supporting activities that promote knowledge-sharing within Indigenous families and between Indigenous groups, between Arakwal joint managers and with useful western science.

We are also sharing key lessons from our collaborative efforts with the IUCN Green List team so other Indigenous groups around the world can learn and share their experiences.



A project workshop. Photo: Cathy Robinson



Burning vegetation within the park is important to Arakwal people and environmental values. Photo: Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation

When is the work happening?

The research started in 2017 and will be completed by 2020.

More information

If you want to talk about this project you can contact:

Cathy Robinson

Principal Research Scientist
CSIRO

0437 170 024

catherine.robinson@csiro.au

Sue Walker

Manager, Tweed Byron Area
North Coast Branch
NSW National Parks and
Wildlife Service

sue.walker@environment.nsw.gov.au



National Environmental Science Programme

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