

# Plants and animals we care about on the Tiwi Islands

Project 6.2.2

## Important plants, animals and places

Some of the plants and animals that scientists think are important are different to the ones that are important for Tiwi people.

The plants and animals that scientists think are most important are usually endangered species. These are things like dunnarts, brush-tailed rabbit rats, red goshawk and some rainforest plants.

The Tiwi Islands are important areas for these plants and animals.

But we want scientists to also understand the things that Tiwi people think are important on their country. This might be other plants or animals important to culture, like buffalo, minta (cycad) or carpet snake, or it might be an important place that needs to be looked after better.



A frilled neck lizard on the Tiwi Islands.  
Photo: Tom Duncan

## KEY MESSAGES

- Scientists think it is important to look after endangered plants and animals on the Tiwi Islands
- But Tiwi landowners might think it is more important to look after other plants, animals or places
- Understanding these differences means Tiwi and scientists can work together better to look after plants, animals, country and culture on the Tiwi Islands



A beach near Jessie River. Photo: Tom Duncan



## What is this project about?

My name is Tom Duncan and I am from Charles Darwin University. I am talking to Tiwi people to find out about what is important to look after on their country. That way we can think about how Tiwi and scientists can work together better in the future to look after all the things that are important for Tiwi and for scientists.

I went to Milikapiti, Wurrumiyanga and Pirlangimpi to talk to Tiwi people about looking after the plants and animals on their country.

Some of the things we talked about were:

- which plants and animals are important for them,
- if they are worried that any of these plants and animals need looking after, and
- how other changes on country like climate change or weeds might affect these plants and animals.

I have talked to scientists about what they think about these things, to see if they say different things to what Tiwi people say. Then I will write a report about the best ways to work together in the future.

## Who is involved?

The Tiwi Land Rangers helped me to find the right people to talk to and explain what the research is about and what we will do with it. They also helped me understand what people were saying if they wanted to talk in Tiwi. The Tiwi Land Council supported the project and helped me to work out how to do the research with respect for the people we talked to and for Tiwi culture. This research is part of my PhD research project with Charles Darwin University, and CSIRO also support the project.

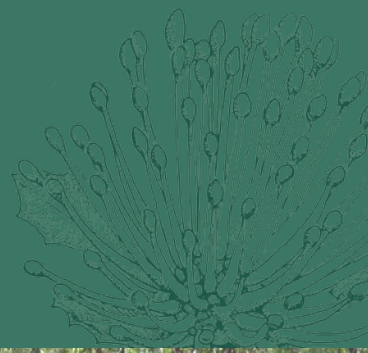
## Where is the work happening?

The work happened in all the communities of the Tiwi Islands. We tried to talk to people from all landowner groups to make sure lots of people had a chance to say something.



LEFT: Conservation scientist Tom Duncan (left) and Tiwi landowner Connell Tipiloura (right) talking about the plants and animals of the Tiwi Islands. Photo: Willie Roberts





## Why is this important to Tiwi?

There is a lot of funding available for scientists researching and managing endangered plants and animals like dunnarts, and there are a lot of endangered plants and animals on the Tiwi Islands.

But sometimes funding is hard to get for other land management problems that might be more important to Tiwi people. So, it is important to think about how research and management of endangered plants and animals can also help Tiwi landowners look after the things they think are most important.

One way to do this might be to work with scientists to manage those plants and animals that are important to Tiwi, but are also endangered species, like turtles.

Another way to do this might be to include ways to look after culture and language in projects that look after endangered species. For example, a research project might include both a scientist researching a plant like minta and a Tiwi landowner passing on knowledge to younger generations about minta.

*RIGHT: Tiwi Land Ranger Colin Kerinaia looking for yams.  
Photo: Tom Duncan*



## Benefits for Tiwi

We hope that this research will help scientists to think about what is important for Tiwi when planning and designing research projects. This will help us make sure the things Tiwi want to look after have funding and are included in research agreements from the start.

We hope that this research will help Tiwi people and scientists

work together to help Tiwi manage country and culture so they remain healthy for future Tiwi generations.

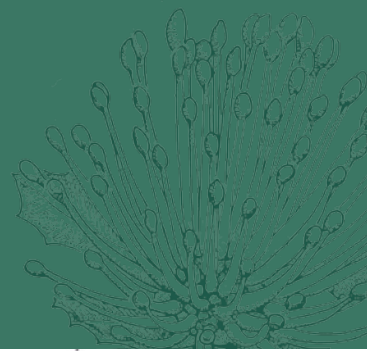
I will write a report for the Tiwi Land Council describing what people talked about and ways to work together better in the future. I will also write reports for the university and for scientists.

## When is the work happening?

The research started in 2016, and I will finish writing the reports for the project in 2019.







*A billabong on Melville Island. Photo: Tom Duncan*

## More information

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

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