



Nyul Nyul Ranger Brendon Smith and Louise Beames Environs Kimberley measure litter depth within monsoonal vine thickets. Picture: Environs Kimberley

Rangers share vine knowledge far afield

Flip Prior

ENVIRONS Kimberley and Bardi Jawi and Nyul Nyul Aboriginal rangers from Dampier Peninsula have teamed up to campaign for the Federal Government to declare threatened monsoon vine thicket as nationally endangered.

The rare remnant rainforest, found in 79 known patches on the Dampier Peninsula, contains almost a quarter of all peninsula plant species and is critical habitat for native fauna.

The Federal Government is considering whether the thickets should be protected as an "endangered ecological community".

Nyul Nyul Rangers Ninjana Walsham and Keith Shadforth spoke in favour of the move at the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia Conference in Perth in November, with EK'S Kylie Weatherall.

Chris Sampi and Damon Pyke

from the Bardi Jawi Rangers then presented with scientist Malcolm Lindsay at the Ecological Society of Australia Conference in Melbourne, in early December.

Their talks explained the cultural significance of monsoon vine thickets in traditional food, medicines, water sources, tools, materials, language, law and culture.

They argued any loss or dysfunction in the ecosystem was likely to have profound cultural and ecological impacts and it must be protected.

EK projects co-ordinator Louise Beames said if the thickets were declared "endangered", the Government would have a responsibility to support the community to protect them.

In partnership, the groups have been studying the incidence of fire and vegetation cover change in the patches for the period between 1989 and 2010. Mr Sampi said Dampier Peninsula

Aboriginal people had traditionally kept fire away from the thickets to protect fruit, water and cultural resources.

However, uncontrolled fires were increasing in frequency, intensity and scale and therefore presented a growing threat.

Almost three-quarters of thickets were burnt every three years.

Ms Beames said the findings were frightening, given the slow regrowth rate of the thickets.

"This sustained damage has alarming consequences for the ecological function and viability of the entire Dampier Peninsula MVT ecosystem network," she said.

"This collaboration between indigenous rangers, ecologists and partners has enabled us to identify the most vulnerable thickets ... to adjust management and better protect their significant eco-cultural values."

Mr Shadforth said rangers were proud to present work.

Lake to get b

BABY barramundi destined to be released into Lake Kununurra next year are now being raised in Broome.

As part of the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy, a recreational fishery is being created in a 55km waterway between Lake Argus and the Kununurra diversion dam, funded by Department of Fisheries.

Some 560,000 barramundi fingerlings about 50mm long will be released into the lake over four years.

With the first release scheduled to occur in January, the first instalment of baby fish are being raised at the Kimberley Training Institute on the Broome campus.

KTI portfolio manager Jeff Cooch said the fingerlings were the

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