

## Bulhuwanguli (cold time) News | 2024

### Nyinggulu seasons - Thanardinyunggujarri

"**Bulhuwanhuli** (cold time) is almost here, the air has a chill. Country has had a down pour of **warnan** (rain), it's green the flies are more friendly, we notice march flies are about and there are many bush foods available.

For now, we still rely on the **thanardi** (ocean), marine life is abundant, fish are fat, shellfish are plump. Marine food is now important to us, we now stock up. In a few months, land animals will become fat. We then turn to the **ngarrari** (land) and stock up on food before **biyardi** (drytime).

For us mob we always know what the different seasons are. We do this by observing the changes in the weather, this is important. We must understand Country it's our guide to life." Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner sharing knowledge on Country.



**Above:** Marine life is abundant. *Photo - Samille Mitchell/DBCA*

### Humpback whale aerial studies

Did you know that multiple subpopulations of humpback whales are found in all ocean basins across the world? In Western Australia, the population migrating annually from Antarctic feeding grounds to breeding and calving grounds from Ningaloo to the Kimberley is recognised as International Whaling Convention (IWC) Breeding Stock D (BSD).

During the north and south migration of humpback whales through the Ningaloo Marine Park (NMP), boat-based in-water interactions with humpback whales are offered by 15 licenced tour operators. These tour operations are licenced by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to position their vessels closer to the whales than whale watching vessels, to provide, close-up, in-water encounter experience to their customers.

To minimise and manage potential pressures on humpback whales at Ningaloo and the Pilbara, understanding the distribution of humpback whale critical habitats and the impact of potential pressures from tourism is essential. DBCA is undertaking a three-year aerial survey project to investigate humpback whale migration through the NMP and to mitigate the potential impacts, particularly on mothers and calves. The aerial survey project commenced in 2022 from July-September and was repeated in 2023. The final aerial survey will be conducted later in 2024.

Information gathered from these surveys will inform management decisions for future commercial operations.

**Above:** Humpback whale mother, calf and escort.  
*Photo- Julian Tyne/DBCA*



## Documenting the cultural heritage at Nynggulu

Recently the Nynggulu joint management team, Traditional Owners, and archaeological consultants Big Island Research carried out cultural heritage surveys along sections of the Nynggulu Coastal Reserve - **Wurrura** (Warroora).

Over 20 archaeological sites were found across the surveyed section with over 1500 different artefacts recorded. The survey team observed artefacts scatters and middens, camping sites and gaylulu thungarathu (fresh water).

"The survey team walked transects and found evidence of our history. Places where our ancestors sat, ate, and camped in the yardandi (breakwind) looking over thanardi (the ocean). Wurrura (Warroora) is very special to both me and my sister Gwen. It's the place for our dear old Dad who was born 1912. The knowledge we both have today, was passed down by our father, our teacher, he taught us the Baiyungu knowledge we carry today.

It's important that in joint management we undertake research and document the heritage. It is part of the journey to pass down our information to future Baiyungu generations and to help DBCA manage this country together." Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner shares.

The Traditional Owners and archaeological consultants will share their reports of the findings with the Nynggulu Joint Management Body to work together to preserve and protect cultural values of this area into the future.



**Above:** Baiyungu Ranger holding a grinding stone.  
Photo - DBCA

***When on Country please look but do not take.***

***Respect Country and look after it. Country will respect and look after you.***

***Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner***

## Working together to protect natural and cultural values

Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions and Baiyungu Traditional Owners have been working collaboratively with Warroora Station to construct an additional 6.3 kilometer stock exclusion fence along sections of the Nynggulu Coastal Reserve and Warroora Station boundary.

The fence aims to protect natural and cultural values of the reserve by mitigating the impacts from stock animals.

**Right:** 6.3kilomter stock exclusion fence. Photo - DBCA





## Feral animal control extends along the Ningaloo Coast

Introduced species such as feral cats, foxes and goats pose a significant threat to native wildlife along the Ningaloo Coast. The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, Exmouth District have expanded their efforts to reduce the number of these species along the coast.

Over the past 12 months trapping for feral cats extended down the coast to Nynggulu Coastal Reserves. The extension of the project has seen 13 feral cats trapped and removed from the reserves.

Additionally, goats have been trapped and removed from Nynggulu Coastal Reserve (Cardabia Coast). The removal of goats from this section of the coast is a vital step in protecting natural and cultural values of the reserves. Goats have been identified as a significant threat as they are responsible for a variety of impacts on native flora and fauna, including competing with native fauna for food, water and shelter, and threatening the survival of native flora through their feeding habits.



**Right:** Feral goats removed from Nynggulu Coastal Reserve (Cardabia Coast). *Photo - DBCA*

## BEN Sign Program rolls out at Ningaloo

Earlier this year the Shire of Exmouth, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) teamed up to roll out the Beach Emergency Numbers (BEN) Sign Program along the North West Cape.

Together, 33 BEN signs were installed in locations from the Bay of Rest in Exmouth Gulf around the Cape to South Lefroy in Nynggulara National Park.

The BEN sign program is designed to improve emergency response times along the Western Australian coast. Each BEN sign displays a unique code that is specific to that location which is vital piece of information that is passed on to emergency service.

DBCA are currently working with the Shire of Carnarvon and DPIRD to continue the implementation of BEN signs further along the Ningaloo Coast.

**Right:** BEN sign installed at Winderabandi Point, Nynggulara National Park *Photo - DBCA*





## Celebrating NAIDOC week

The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, Exmouth District, together with Baiyungu Traditional Owners and their families, celebrated the longstanding and continuous cultural heritage of the Nynggulu Coast in a recent NAIDOC celebration.

Starting the day together at sunrise, Baiyungu Traditional Owner Hazel Walgar shared stories passed down through generations about Nynggulu always being a special place, a place where people from all over gathered.

Celebrations and culture sharing continued, with everyone gathering for a feast of traditional foods and a performance by the Coral Spawn dancers. The day brought everyone together to share and learn the cultural heritage of the First Nations People of the Nynggulu Coast.

**Right:** Parks and Wildlife Service Exmouth District staff and Baiyungu Traditional Owners enjoying stories through dance by the Coral Spawn dancers. *Photo - Blue Media Exmouth*



## Expedition reveals marine diversity in the Exmouth Gulf

Fifteen species of sharks and rays, including three that are globally Critically Endangered, were recorded during an eight-day scientific expedition across the remote northeastern Exmouth Gulf recently.

The expedition was a collaboration between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Murdoch University, University of Western Australia and Minderoo Foundation. A team of 18 researchers and volunteers surveyed over 21 locations, from Urala Creek South in the north, to Hope Island in the south.

The team used netting methods, eDNA water sampling and drones to conduct the surveys and were beyond thrilled to sight and implant acoustic tracking tags in both the Critically Endangered green sawfish and bottlenose wedgefish to learn more about their movements and behaviour.

All data gathered from the expedition will be used to inform and guide management and protection of these species within the proposed Exmouth Gulf Marine Park.

**Top right:** The research team check the net for sharks and rays.

**Right:** Murdoch University Researcher Karissa Lear works up a captured Green Sawfish with DBCA Baiyungu Rangers Delilah Moncreiff and Tray Kelly in Urala Creek, northern Exmouth Gulf. *Photos - Jake Parker*



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