



BARKINDJI RANGER PROJECTS



THE BARKINDJI MARAURA ELDERS ENVIRONMENT TEAM (BMEET) ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE FISH HABITAT IN WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MURRAY-DARLING FRESHWATER RESEARCH CENTRE (MDFRC), THE TEAM IS INVOLVED IN VARIOUS PROJECTS THAT ARE BRINGING TOGETHER SCIENCE AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Colin Andrews, Dennis King and Ernest Mitchell preparing a fish hotel for installation and recording GPS location in Thegoa Lagoon. Photo Danielle Linklater.

The BMEET River Rangers are becoming experts at building hotels for fish! As part of a long term project to re-install fish habitats into rivers and wetlands on traditional Barkindji country, several different designs are being built, with each being monitored to see which fish species are using the new 'real estate'. The larger structures that have been placed in the lower Darling River are designed for Murray cod and Golden perch, and smaller ones in Thegoa Lagoon (near Wentworth) will hopefully provide good habitat for small-bodied species. This project was partly funded by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust in 2015 with the Trust providing further funding in 2016 for the Rangers to install 20 more larger fish hotels in the lower Darling River.

Dr Wayne Robinson from Charles Sturt University is working with the Rangers to make sure the research and monitoring being used at Thegoa Lagoon and Fletchers Lake (north-east of Wentworth) is robust. This is important in ensuring that managers and other scientists can have confidence in results from the project.

The collaborative team are also trialling a new monitoring method to see if live scar trees respond to environmental water in the same way that non-scar trees do. Trees were initially surveyed at Thegoa Lagoon and Fletchers Lake Reserve in May 2015 with regular surveys due to start after that. There are many scar trees that were used for canoes, coolamons, shields and other culturally important reasons such as boundary markers. MDFRC staff have learnt a lot by doing these surveys with BMEET. This project combines cultural knowledge with Western techniques for monitoring tree health.

Another cultural science research project the Rangers and MDFRC are working on is called 'Earth Fire Water' which is based at Fletchers Creek (an ephemeral creek that, when flowing, empties into Fletchers Lake). This project looks at the impact of traditional burning and environmental water on the vegetation community along the creek line, with particular interest in the response of bush tucker plants. Small experimental trials, including seed bank studies and monitoring of environmental water at Fletchers Creek, have allowed the Rangers to understand a number of Western monitoring techniques.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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