

Quolls are cruising on the Island Ark



Indigenous rangers and Northern Territory Government scientists have just returned from an annual survey of northern quolls seeking refuge from cane toads on two remote islands off the Territory coast.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) scientists in partnership with Gurmurr Marthakal Rangers from Elcho Island recently spent 12 days on Astell and Pobassoo Islands, located off North East Arnhem Land, capturing and marking the endangered marsupials.

NRETAS Biodiversity North senior scientist Tony Griffiths said preliminary population estimates show more than 2500 adult females on Astell Island and more than 450 adult females on Pobassoo Island.

"This is remarkable considering just 65 northern quolls were translocated in 2003, and after a population boom in the

last couple of years, this survey indicates populations appear to have since stabilised," Mr Griffiths said.

"A total of 404 quolls were captured and marked, and the health and condition of all the animals was excellent.

"Other fauna, including skinks, on both islands are healthy despite the large numbers of quolls now residing there, which indicates that the relocation program is not affecting the delicate ecosystems on the islands.

"The Gurmurr Marthakal Rangers also took this survey trip as an opportunity to conduct ghost net and weed surveys on Astell, Pobassoo and surrounding islands."

Left: Marthakal Ranger Wayne Dummarangi with northern quoll

Families looking after country: NRM capacity building projects

More than 50 traditional owners in Central Australia have been involved in pilot projects under a new program funded by the Natural Heritage Trust Regional Investment Strategy designed to build skills and interest in Aboriginal people in remote areas.

Staff from the CLC and the NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts (DN-RETA) helped out with training at Tennant Creek, Harts Range and Santa Teresa.

At Tennant Creek, traditional owners and Muru-warinyi Ankkul Rangers completed training and a survey for small mammals and reptiles with Kanttaji Aboriginal Land Trusts and Parra Freehold Lease. Twenty one species of mammals and reptiles were recorded in the areas surveyed.

At Santa Teresa and Harts Range, traditional owners completed on-the-job training to repair fencing to keep out cattle from culturally important waterholes on Santa Teresa Aboriginal Land Trust and Mount Riddock Pastoral Lease.

This work included weed iden-

tification, fencing and concreting, power tool use, occupational health and safety and environmental awareness.

Those involved were happy with the opportunity to visit and take care of their traditional country and looked forward to being involved again next time.

In the words of one senior traditional owner "...this is one of the best things to happen for us you know....all the families who are looking after country, all the blokes and men who are working on this....this is one of the best things to happen.

"We didn't have a chance to go...we didn't have any equipment for working and cleaning out.

"Now that we've got land council to help, probably it would



Top: the group at Santa Teresa, above left: Brendon, Marie-Louise, Brian, Dwayne from the Muru-warinyi Ankkul Rangers on a fauna survey; above right: I-r Lachlan Webb, Max Hayes, Ronnie Webb, Michael Rieff, Kevin Webb, David Dolman, Sylvester Webb and Robert Rieff

have taken a long time if we were just doing it ourselves, now there's a job for youngfella mob and that's

really good how they're working together...that's really good, the best thing."