On 14–16 June 2011, a Women Rangers’ Workshop was held at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and ANU’s North Australia Research Unit (NARU) in Darwin. Facilitated by Katherine May and Emilie Ens (CAEPR) and Cherry Daniels (retired Yugul Mangi Ranger), the workshop brought together nineteen women rangers belonging to five of the seven POC partner groups: Manwurrk Rangers, Djelk Rangers, Yirralka Rangers, Dhimurru Rangers and Yugul Mangi Rangers. The workshop was also attended by Annette Godden from the Working on Country program (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC)).

The three-day workshop was designed to be flexible in order to allow for input from the participants with regards to structure, content and outputs. The workshop enabled the women from different communities to come together and discuss what it means to be a female Ranger, the issues that are important to them and how challenges can be overcome.

The five Indigenous land and sea management organisations represented at the workshop operate in diverse areas across Arnhem Land. These different settings bring with them different work priorities, with diverse social and environmental factors affecting their country as well as different challenges to be overcome.

Each group had the chance to talk about working with their respective organisations. This included, amongst others, fire management, collecting insect and weed samples for AQIS, propagating plants in nurseries, weed and feral animal management, recording ecological and cultural knowledge, marine debris management and biodiversity monitoring. This workshop allowed the Rangers to pass on knowledge and learn from each other’s experiences.

Whilst there were similarities, interesting differences also emerged which led the Rangers to talking about what they would like to do in the future. Some of these discussions also centred on wanting to do activities that are only currently carried out by male rangers, such as boat and tractor driving. So strategies were discussed for developing skills in these activities. Bush medicine and bush product enterprises were also something that a number of the groups wanted to establish.

The discussions and stories written, recorded and filmed at the workshop will be developed in collaboration with the workshop participants into a DVD and written toolkit for these Ranger groups and others to use.

For more information contact Emilie Ens <emilie.ens@anu.edu.au>
Integrated Natural Resource Management and Regional Policy and Planning Workshop

In May, Séan Kerins participated in a two-day workshop focused on ‘Integrated Natural Resource Management and Regional Policy and Planning’. The workshop was facilitated by the HC Coombs Policy Forum and the Fenner School of Environment and Society, both within the ANU, on behalf of the Australian Government Departments of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) and Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), as part of the Australian Government’s wider Caring for our Country review.

Despite Indigenous Australians owning 23 per cent of the Australian land mass, which includes some of the most biologically diverse and intact ecosystems in Australia, there was no Indigenous participation within the workshop.

Drawing on PoC research, Séan made the argument that Indigenous participation in NRM policy development is enormously important when you consider the vast amount of land that Indigenous Australians hold under land rights and native title laws, its high biodiversity values, and Indigenous aspirations to be involved in its management through their involvement in Caring for Country projects operating across much of Australia.

Alternate Development for Difference: International Collaboration

Jon Altman was a distinguished visitor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland, New Zealand in March and the Hallsworth Visiting Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Manchester, UK in May and June.

While overseas Jon made presentations based on his People on Country research around the theme ‘Alternate development for difference: Refiguring Aboriginal/state relations on the Indigenous estate in Australia’. He gave a public lecture on that theme at the University of Auckland and a seminar at the University of Manchester. In France, he presented this lecture to the multi-country project ‘Scales of Governance: Indigenous Peoples, the UN and the State’ at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris and the Centre for Research and Documentation on Oceania (CREDO) at the Maison Asie-Pacifique, University of Provence. Jon also gave a seminar on Land Rights and Native Title at James Henare Centre in Auckland.

CAEPR Visiting Indigenous Fellowship: Victor Garlingarr and Barbara Gurwalwal (Warddeken Land Management Ltd.)

In January, CAEPR and the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research (CSIRO) hosted Victor Garlingarr and Barbara Gurwalwal from Warddeken Land Management Limited, Arnhem Land, NT. Victor and Barbara came to participate in the existing Botanical Internship program run by CSIRO, The National Herbarium and the Australian National Botanic Gardens with the aim of developing an Indigenous-specific internship program at the National Herbarium and Botanic Gardens.

The objective of this program is to facilitate two-way exchange of knowledge and skills and find the best practice methods of including Indigenous names and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge of plants into the national databases. Their participation in the existing internship allowed the internship organisers to gauge the relevance of current units and discuss what other activities could be added on.

While in Canberra, Victor and Barbara have co-written a paper with Dr Emilie Ens, Sam Bentley-Toon and Gill Towler for the Australasian Plant Conservation special issue (March–May 2011), ‘Plant Conservation on Aboriginal Lands’. The paper title is ‘Victor Garlingarr and Barbara Gurwalwal: Caring for Country in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area, Arnhem Land’.

Victor and Barbara also met with AIATSIS staff to copy material relating to their families and country. Their visit was also an occasion for Jon Altman to speak to Barbara who resided in Momeka when he did his PhD fieldwork in the 1980s. They spoke about what has changed and her movements since then.

Victor and Barbara said they had a great time down south. Victor expressed interest in coming back to Canberra again to work on some other projects.

Contributed by Emilie Ens <emilie.ens@anu.edu.au>
In late December 2010, the traditional owners of the Waanyi/Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust heard that their Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) application to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities’ (SEWPaC) Caring for our Country program had been successful. This means funding has been secured to undertake stage one consultations with traditional owners over the next two years to develop a Plan of Management for the land trust.

The IPA application builds on the successful fire abatement project that has been occurring on both the Garawa and Waanyi/Garawa Aboriginal Land Trusts in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria since 2006. It provides a significant opportunity for traditional owners to advance their aspirations for managing and living on their ancestral lands.

Since the beginning of 2011, traditional owners have held three meetings scoping out a strategy to develop a Plan of Management, as well as a plan of attack to mitigate the effects of feral animals—predominantly horses, buffalo, bullocky and pigs— which are causing increasing damage to wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas across the entire 10,000 km² land trust. “It’s good to have people with more experience to come out here and help us and to get more funding to keep everything up and running so we can look after the country ourselves”, said Mr Jack Green the senior Garawa and Waanyi/Garawa Ranger Cultural Advisor to the meeting.

At the most recent meeting at Branch Creek in July 2011 traditional owners worked with Nic Gambold (IPA Consultant), Seán Kerins (ANU) and Steve Eldridge (Desert Wildlife Services) to identify on a map where they see evidence of feral animal damage on the land trust and then to develop methods for benchmarking feral animal numbers. A fourth meeting is scheduled for September to coincide with a scientific experiment to measure greenhouse gas emissions on the land trust being undertaken in a joint project between Bushfires NT and traditional owners.

Contributed by Seán Kerins <sean.kerins@anu.edu.au>
Dhimurru and Yirralka Annual Reports 2010–2011

As a part of its action research with partner members of the People on Country project, PoC has collaborated in the production and design of annual reports. In May 2011, Katherine May worked closely with the Dhimurru and Yirralka Rangers to assist them produce their inaugural annual reports for 2010–2011, with Gillian Cosgrove providing expert design assistance.

It is our hope that once partners have an annual report template, production of annual reports will be a lasting legacy of our collaborations in information dissemination and public education.

Dhimurru’s Annual Report 2010–2011 can be found at:

Yirralka’s Annual Report is coming soon.