

Sustaining the natural and cultural integrity of K'gari together February 2026

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K'gari has featured in the news a lot already this year. Following the tragic death of Piper James on K'gari, the Queensland Government intervened and ordered that 10 potentially implicated (the Coroner is yet to rule on Piper's death) wongari (dingo) would be euthanised. Meanwhile, Resources Minister, Dale Last, officially rejected calls to a dual-naming approach for the island, upholding the 2023 decision to make K'gari the sole official name. With the *K'gari Management Plan* under development, 2026 is not going to be a year to forget for this World Heritage area.

The Editor

Will killing dingoes on K'gari make visitors safer? We think it's unlikely.



After the tragic death of Canadian backpacker Piper James on K'gari (Fraser Island) on January 19, a coroner found the 19-year-old had been bitten by dingoes while she was still alive, but the most likely cause of death was drowning. Days later, the Queensland government announced it would cull the entire pack of ten dingoes seen near where Piper's body was found. Most of those animals have now been killed.

Authorities justified the targeted cull on "public safety" grounds, while also signalling a strong desire to keep tourism moving. Queensland Tourism Minister Andrew Powell reassured tourism operators "the island is open" and urged people to continue to visit.

The cull took place without the knowledge or approval of the Butchulla people, the Traditional Owners of K'gari. James' parents also publicly opposed a cull, saying it was "the last thing" their nature-loving daughter would have wanted. There has been backlash from scientific experts, as well as the public.

So, does killing dingoes make K'gari safer for people?

The perfect storm

K'gari's dingoes (called Wongari by the Butchulla) are a population of high conservation and cultural value on this World Heritage-listed sand island. Estimates put their numbers at between 70 and 200.

Real science from real scientists.

Huge visitor numbers to the roughly 1,600 square kilometre island means dingoes and humans share the same beaches and come into contact in ways they generally don't on the mainland. Most encounters are harmless, even enjoyable. Less than 1% of visitors experience a negative interaction and many tourists visit the island specifically to see the dingoes.

Of course, risk increases when dingoes and people are in proximity. Dingoes are often deliberately or carelessly rewarded with food scraps or find rubbish, which encourages loitering.

Most injuries caused by dingoes are minor, such as nips, bites and scratches. Serious attacks by dingoes are rare on K'gari and the mainland. Children are most vulnerable given their smaller size.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has consistently worked to reduce incidents. Their "Be dingo safe" campaign includes education, signs, fenced areas and even "dingo sticks" to deter the animals from approaching. But too often these safety warnings are not heeded. People feed dingoes or leave food in their tents or bags, come too close to dingoes and let kids roam unsupervised.

For an apex predator, dingoes are relatively small and dog-like. To many visitors, they don't look especially dangerous, and people forget dingoes are wild predators.

Decades of lethal control

Authorities have long relied on lethal control of dingoes on K'gari. Between 2001 and 2013, 110 dingoes were killed. In 2001, after the death of nine-year-old Clinton Gage, 28 were immediately killed. In a typical year, one to two are killed.

Removing up to ten dingoes carries serious costs for a small island population. Genetically, the K'gari population has low diversity and an effective population size of about 25 (meaning only about 25 animals are effectively passing genes on, even though more dingoes exist). Studies have found inbreeding, genetic isolation and declining genetic variation in K'gari dingoes over the past two decades.



A "dingo-safe" storage cage for visitors to secure food and belongings on K'gari. Bradley Smith, CC BY-ND

High levels of inbreeding may lead to physical deformities, reduced breeding success and an increased risk of local extinction. On an island, there is limited scope for "new" dingoes and their genes to arrive, so every avoidable death is important.

That is why our 2025 population viability analysis was sobering. We found if the number of dingo deaths stays close to natural levels, the population could remain stable. But extra deaths due to mass culls or disease outbreaks expose the animals to higher extinction risk. This makes it more likely the island's dingoes could die out. In the highest-risk scenarios we modelled (that includes several mass culling events), the risk of extinction becomes substantial in about 50 years. Survival can fall close to zero by 100 years.

Culling rarely solves safety problems

Records of dingo incidents on K'gari offer little evidence killing dingoes delivers lasting safety. Our analysis of the "highest severity" incidents reported found the island had an average of 10.7 reports a year from 2001

to 2015. There was no clear downward trend in incidents, even though more than 110 dingoes were destroyed in that period.



A dingo becomes a photo opportunity for tourists on K'gari's shoreline. Bradley Smith, CC BY-ND

What we did find was a predictable seasonal pattern. About 40% of serious incidents took place during breeding season (March to May) and 30% during whelping (June to August). These are periods when dingoes are more active and social dynamics intensify. During breeding, dingoes (especially younger males) may range more widely and test boundaries. During whelping, adults can become more vigilant and take greater foraging risks to meet the demands of pups.

The chance of serious incidents rose and fell with dingo life history and behaviour, as well as what people did around them. Incidents are not explained by visitor numbers alone.

When a dingo approaches people or loiters near them, they can be labelled as “problematic” and are more likely to be culled. But these behaviours aren't abnormal in a wildlife tourism setting. They are predictable responses to people, food and opportunity. Younger males are often the most persistent around people, but become less exploratory as they mature or disperse.

A people problem, not a dingo problem

K'gari's dingoes are doing what wild predators do, just as sharks and crocodiles do in Australia's oceans and rivers.

Our safety depends on how we behave in wild places. To reduce risky encounters with wildlife, secure your food and waste, keep your kids close, don't venture out alone, respect park guidelines and stop giving rewards such as food. Killing dingoes won't make K'gari safer. Changing human behaviour and attitudes will.



A dingo rests beside a K'gari rubbish bin. These bins have now been fenced. Bradley Smith, CC BY-ND

Article by Dr Bradley Smith, Senior Lecturer in Psychology CQUniversity Australia and Kylie Cairns, Research Fellow in Canid and Wildlife Genomics, UNSW Sydney

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BAC Welcome Butchulla K'gari Djaa Rangers

The Butchulla first lore is 'What is good for the land must come first.' K'gari's and the Butchulla People's health are deeply connected. When K'gari is unwell, then her people are unwell too. Our Country is sick. K'gari is at risk from climate change with impacts to her lands and waters including increased incidence of drought, bushfire and flooding rains that that are also increasing biosecurity risk.



The BAC's recently commenced Butchulla K'gari Djaa Ranger Team (Photo: BAC)

Through the Australian Government's NIAA Indigenous Rangers Program Expansion Round 1, the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (BAC) has employed a new ranger team. The Butchulla K'gari Djaa (K'gari Country) is employing 3 FTE staff (fulltime, part time and casual) which must be more than 50% female. The ranger program will work to meet K'gari's cultural and management needs and provide economic and career opportunities for Butchulla people.

The K'gari Djaa Rangers will focus on restoring Butchulla management to our newly acquired Aboriginal Freehold Lands, also taking responsibility for cultural burns - restoring and demonstrating cultural burns as a management system, biosecurity - reducing risk through prevention, monitoring and management, and cultural heritage - monitoring lakes, streams, and wetlands across K'gari. Healing country and our people.

Submitted by Tessa Waia, Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation

K'gari Conference 2025

The University of the Sunshine Coast's 2025 conference celebrated the theme Voices of K'gari: Research, Respect and Responsibility, bringing together K'gari's Traditional Owners, the Butchulla people, leading researchers, conservationists and artists who together explored the cultural, ecological and geological stories of K'gari and the surrounding Great Sandy region.

The 2026 conference theme followed previous events held on Butchulla Country including:

- 2018 – K'gari–Fraser Island Research Symposium: Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Understanding
- 2021 – K'gari Towards 2050
- 2023 – K'gari Land and Sea Country: djaa-ngarawinj Conference

A defining feature of all these conferences is strong community involvement. We are supported by: Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC), Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC from 2023), Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO), FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari (FINIA), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), K'gari World Heritage Advisory Committee (KWHAC) and various community associations.



Uncle Glen Miller and Tom Dooley talk about Strengths-Based Approaches to Heritage: Conversations from Butchulla Country. Photo: Sue Sargent

Over the last seven years, much has changed. K'gari is no longer Fraser Island—her name rightfully restored thanks to the efforts of the BAC and supporters.

The conference also provided an opportunity to remember Dr John Sinclair AO, whose legacy in advocating for World Heritage listing for K'gari and the need for a biennial K'gari conference lives on. UniSC honoured him with an Honorary Doctorate in 2017, also honouring Aunty Joy Bonner in 2024 for her work in restoring Butchulla language.



Prof Patrick Moss, QUT talks about sediment transport and implications of mercury contamination from the Mary River. Photo: Sue Sargent

The event was a celebration of the dedication of many also attracting international guests including Prof Jamie Shulmeister (New Zealand), Prof Allen Gontz (USA) and Prof Peter Blaze Corcoran (USA), also an Adjunct Professor at UniSC.

The University was pleased to announce the establishment of UniSC Milbi Centre: Sea Turtle Research and Rehabilitation in Hervey Bay. Once operational, this facility will support vital research into the ecology and sustainability of sea turtles, rehabilitate sick and injured animals and deepen our understanding of the threats these species face. We are grateful for State Government funding and proud to collaborate with the Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, Turtles in Trouble Rescue, Australia Zoo, Fraser Coast Regional Council, and other key stakeholders on this important initiative.

A newly formed K'gari Research Cluster aims to integrate research focused on K'gari's World Heritage value, biosphere status and enduring Butchulla cultural heritage. Working together will lead to better research outcomes and better sharing of knowledge. The cluster includes researchers from UniSC and other universities, the Butchulla Aboriginal community, citizen scientists, FINIA, FIDO, and more.

Highlights of our 2025 event included:

- **Cultural Collaboration:** Projects grounded in Butchulla knowledge and values, emphasising co-authorship with Country, citizen science, and respectful engagement. This was the first of the series of conferences that truly reflected Butchulla knowledge and Butchulla partnerships.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Research tackling invasive species, plastic pollution, and climate change, alongside innovative conservation, and restoration efforts.
- **Ecological Richness:** Insights into rare peat swamps, seagrass meadows, apex predators, and freshwater habitats that define the region's biodiversity.

- **Historical & Geological Perspectives:** Explorations of fossil forests, dune systems, and the egalitarian legacy of early settlers.
- **Scientific Innovation:** Satellite tracking of sea turtles, methane studies in wetlands, and habitat restoration strategies highlight cutting-edge approaches.

Presentations from the conference will be made available shortly on a SharePoint site for sharing with conference participants.

Article contributed by Dr Kim Walker, University of the Sunshine Coast

Sea Cucumber Research Update

As we wrote in the last newsletter, PhD student Alison Hammond from the University of the Sunshine Coast is currently undertaking a research project on the sea cucumber (bêche-de-mer) fishery in Hervey Bay, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Bay in the 1980s and 1990s. Project results will be used to map the historical and current distribution of sea cucumbers.

In late 2025, the project received Human Research Ethics approvals, so Alison has been able to interview some local retired commercial fishers and long-term residents/naturalists about the history of the sea cucumber/beche-de-mer industry in Great Sandy.

“A million thanks to those who have generously given their time for an interview. These insights are absolutely invaluable to reconstructing some semblance of a pre-fishing baseline, especially in the absence of any catch monitoring prior to 1995,” said Alison.

Permits are now in place for the in-water survey and eDNA component, so the team can begin searching in earnest for sandfish in the Great Sandy Marine Park. In-water surveys in Moreton Bay Marine Park are planned for February to assess the current status of sandfish stocks there for comparison with the 2018 and 2001 surveys.

Finally, Alison was excited to announce that they recently found a small, lone sandfish at Tinnanbar.



Researcher Alison Hammond carefully handles a lone sea cucumber found at Tinnanbar



*Contribute to research. Please keep your eyes open for this sandfish, *Holothuria scabra*. Photo: Alison Hammond.*

“Not quite the hundreds of thousands that once roamed the seagrass beds, but at least one is a start! The finder called me, and I was able to race down and grab a skin sample from it for genetic testing.”

Alison is specifically seeking sightings of the sandfish *Holothuria scabra* (see photo) anywhere within the Great Sandy Marine Park. If anyone finds one, it would be great if they could take a photo and, if possible, a GPS location (or a screenshot of their location on Google Maps would be good), and text it to Alison on 0419 740 994 or email alison.hammond@research.usc.edu.au.

Article contributed by Alison Hammond, University of the Sunshine Coast

Building Stewardship for K’gari through Citizen Science

The Australian Citizen Science Association defines citizen science as ‘public participation and collaboration in scientific research with the aim to increase scientific knowledge.’ Although citizen science is a comparatively new term, first appearing in scientific literature around 1995, the collection of data or observations by community members, that was shared with scientists (or others) to increase knowledge, has been practised by Indigenous Australians for many thousands of years resulting in tools like seasonal calendars.

Is citizen science a good thing?

Citizen science increases knowledge: through monitoring or answering a research question and provides opportunities for education and engagement by involving your local community and sharing it with others.

Citizen science can provide evidence to create community stewardship (protecting or conserving a particular place, habitat, or species), and support changes to management and policy change.

Finally, citizen science is also good for you. It promotes physical activity and connection to nature, improves mental well-being by reducing stress and isolation, and provides a sense of purpose and community.

So, can it be done on K'gari?

Yes, there are many examples of citizen science projects that have been, or continue to be, conducted on K'gari by our community. These include:

- Beach to Birrabeen, K'gari BioBlitz 2016 (FIDO)
- Biodiversity and biosecurity records through apps such as Atlas of Living Australia and iNaturalist.
- Bird species (Birddata by Bird Life Australia) and shorebird counts (Queensland Wader Study Group)
- Reports of negative interactions with dingo descriptions to Dingo Ranger (QPWS)
- Find a Frog in February (MRCCC)
- Keen Angler Program using fish frames and otoliths from recreational fishers to assess the health of fish stocks (DPI/BAC and fishers)
- Litter and marine debris (Tangaroa Blue in conjunction with the 4WD Queensland K'gari Clean Up)
- Photo-Point Monitoring of Boorangoora/Lake McKenzie (FIDO)
- Weather monitoring stations– passive weather monitoring at Eurong, Kingfisher, Happy Valley, Cathedrals and Orchid Beach (FIDO).



From left to right – QPWS Rangers invite K'gari visitors to report dangerous dingo interactions to their Dingo Ranger, scientists install a weather station at Lake Garawongera, fish frames and ear bones (otoliths) contribute to the Keen Angler program and 4WD QLD community members join Tangaroa Blue to analyse the litter collected in their Annual K'gari Clean-up.

The need to monitor K'gari's OUV

Monitoring is an important component of management. However, there is currently no dedicated program for K'gari to monitor 'World Heritage' i.e., the features that make up the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property. Some sites and features are monitored by QPWS as part of their Great Sandy Region Management Plan, but further monitoring may be limited by resourcing.

In October 2025, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released its Conservation Outlook Report for K'gari. The report identified that while overall protection and management of the World Heritage property continued to be *mostly effective* that monitoring and research had declined to a level of *some concern*. So, additional monitoring data may be useful for land managers working to protect and conserve K'gari.

What next?

A dedicated K'gari Citizen Science Program would need broad buy in from Government agencies, traditional owners, Council, research institutions, special interest groups, and the community (including tourists).

While beneficial in delivering information in a cost-effective way, citizen science would still need enablers. These include leadership to design and manage the program using the data, along with dedicated funding to support project coordination, training to ensure data quality, tools like apps, data management, analysis, synthesis and communication.

K'gari Conference Citizen Science Roundtable

A group of interested participants discussed options for a K'gari Citizen Science program at the K'gari Conference in November, identifying three actions needed to progress this concept further:

1. Further discussion (ideally through a workshop) with key stakeholders and citizen science providers to identify potential champions and program leader(s).
2. Discussion on ethical science and citizen science on K'gari and the development of a **K'gari Charter** i.e., obeying the three Butchulla lores, do no damage, seek to reduce threats to K'gari, authenticity (genuine scientific outcomes) and reciprocity.
3. Increase our understanding of what K'gari visitors want to know or learn about e.g., is it more information about fish, heritage, K'gari's unique mix of plants and animals or rainforest environments? Understanding motivation will allow us to develop or refine relevant activities.

If you are interested in being part of a K'gari Citizen Science Network, please contact Sue at contactFINIA@gmail.com.

Article contributed by Sue Sargent, FINIA

Combatting cane toads on K'gari

Cane toads (*Rhinella marina*) were first reported on K'gari in the early 2000's with their appearance coinciding with a dramatic reduction in the island's snake populations, particularly death adders. Although there were some early attempts to trap and remove adult toads by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and FIDO, the adaptable pest soon spread across the island – moving from wetland to wetland.



Cane toads are one of the most successful and destructive invasive species in the world. In Australia they are listed as a "key threatening process". Photo: Queensland Museum

Anecdotally, some lakes and wetland areas appear to have avoided the pest with the suggestion that the acidity of some lakes may prevent successful breeding, but this has not been researched.

In 2015, FINIA brought Research Assistant, Charlene Bezzina, from the University of Sydney's Shine Laboratory to K'gari. The research team, led by Professor Rick Shine, had been looking at a new method of cane toad control focussing on the toad's own bufotoxin, a potent highly toxic poison (containing chemicals like bufagins and bufotenine). The toad releases this milky-white, substance as a defence mechanism when it feels threatened, is handled, bitten, or mouthed by a predator.

Research had shown that cannibalistic cane toad tadpoles were attracted to bufotoxin using the toxin as a chemical cue to locate and consume younger individuals of their own species (including eggs).

Although the research was still in its early stages at the time, FINIA members were taught how to build a rudimentary trap and carefully collect bufotoxin from dead cane toads to be used as a lure. After deploying the trap in an area known to contain cane toad tadpoles (ideally in Spring-Summer), hundreds to thousands of tadpoles could be collected from the water body.



BAC Rangers sample cane toad tadpoles during recent WETCAT assessments on K'gari (Photo: BAC).

Initial concerns about the potential for inadvertent bycatch were allayed by research ([Crossland et al. 2012](#)) which demonstrated that cane toad toxins are detected and avoided by native tadpoles and fishes; and traps baited with these chemicals repel rather than attract the tadpoles of native frogs.

Research and development then led to a stabilised lure designed by the University of Queensland and licensed to not-for-profit environmental organisation Watergum, which made the product commercially available in late 2021.

Although it is unlikely that cane toads can ever be eradicated on K'gari, we can help control them by reducing tadpole numbers in K'gari's most ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.

In late 2025, QPWS rangers committed to working with FINIA partners to develop a QPWS K'gari collaborative Cane Toad Management Program, highlighting target areas for cane toad management on K'gari and their expectations of any participants operating within the K'gari National Park such as permits, labelling, monitoring traps, collecting data and the ethical euthanasia of pest animals.

What can you do to help?

1. Although it was thought that the first cane toads may have arrived on K'gari after being carried across from the Mary River during the 1999 floods, cane toads may also have been introduced inadvertently by vehicle or in camping equipment. Please check your vehicle and any equipment carefully for any pest hitchhikers before coming onto K'gari.
2. If you find cane toads or their tadpoles on K'gari, please report the date/location and provide an ID photo (if possible) to Linda Behrendorff via email linda.behrendorff@detsi.qld.gov.au. This will help with the Cane Toad Management Plan's development and ultimately in prioritising where land managers and FINIA partners can best focus their efforts.

Article contributed by Sue Sargent, FINIA

Reference: Crossland, M.R., Haramura, T., Salim, A.A., Capon, R.J., Shine, R. 2012. *Exploiting intraspecific competitive mechanisms to control invasive cane toads (Rhinella marina)*. Proc Biol Sci. 2012 Sep 7;279(1742):3436-42. doi: 10.1098/rspb.2012.0821. Epub 2012 Jun 13. PMID: 22696528; PMCID: PMC3396911.

Celebrating 20 Years of FINIA

Following the K'gari Conference in November, members paused to mark the 20th anniversary of FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari with a celebratory dinner. The relaxed evening was filled with memories of FINIA's legends and founding members and the alliance's early days with K'gari Weed Management Officer, Jason Hervey (now living with his family in NSW).



FINIA partners celebrated twenty years of the alliance with dinner at the Hervey Bay Boat Club in November 2025 (Photo: FINIA).

FINIA owes its strength to its collaborative model, with members sharing knowledge and skills and giving what they could when they could, and all partners (whether land managers, universities, special interest and community groups) treated as equals.

In February, members will be planting a commemorative tree, a K'gari apple (*Acronychia imperforata*) at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Fraser Coast Campus with another tree to be planted at K'gari Research Station in May.

Members have also been asked to add a 'FINIA celebrating 20 years of collaboration' logo to their email signatures to raise awareness of the partnership.

Sue Sargent, Chair would like to acknowledge all FINIA's partners for their support and contributions to K'gari's natural and cultural integrity over the last 20 years. Together, we have been able to achieve so much more than any of our partners could have achieved alone.

Article contributed by Sue Sargent, FINIA

Keeping Dad's Knowledge Alive: How AI Helped Preserve 50 Years of K'gari Expertise

Many of you knew my father, John Sinclair, and the decades he gave to K'gari. When he passed in 2019, one of my quieter worries was about everything he knew, not just the facts, but the connections between them. How tourism pressure relates to dingo behaviour. How coastal erosion patterns link to management decisions made years earlier. How one policy fight informed the next.

That knowledge lived in FIDO newsletters, research papers, submissions, and articles, an extraordinary archive, but not one anyone could easily sit down and learn from. I suspect many of you face the same

challenge. Your organisations hold years of reports, survey data, submissions, and hard-won observations. It's all there, but finding what you need when you need it can feel impossible.

I want to share something that surprised me, because it might help.

What I did

Late last year, I used a free tool called Google NotebookLM. It's an AI tool, and I know that phrases like this can feel loaded, visions of complexity, expense, or something only tech people use. But this was genuinely straightforward.

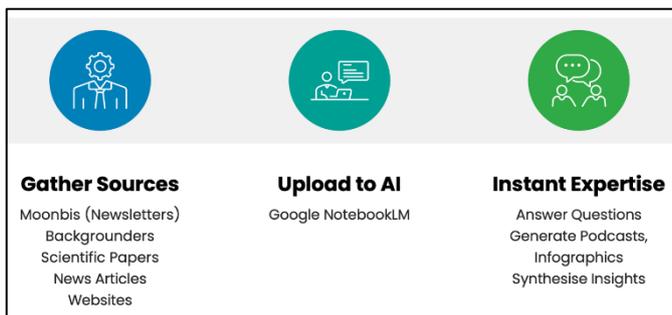
I gathered publicly available documents from fido.org.au and associated organisations, the newsletters, research briefs, scientific papers, news articles, and uploaded them. I linked to the FINIA, BAC and BNTAC websites. The whole process took less than an hour. The most technical step was combining some PDFs, so they'd fit within the tool's limits.

Once the documents were uploaded, I could ask questions in plain English and get thoughtful, sourced answers back.

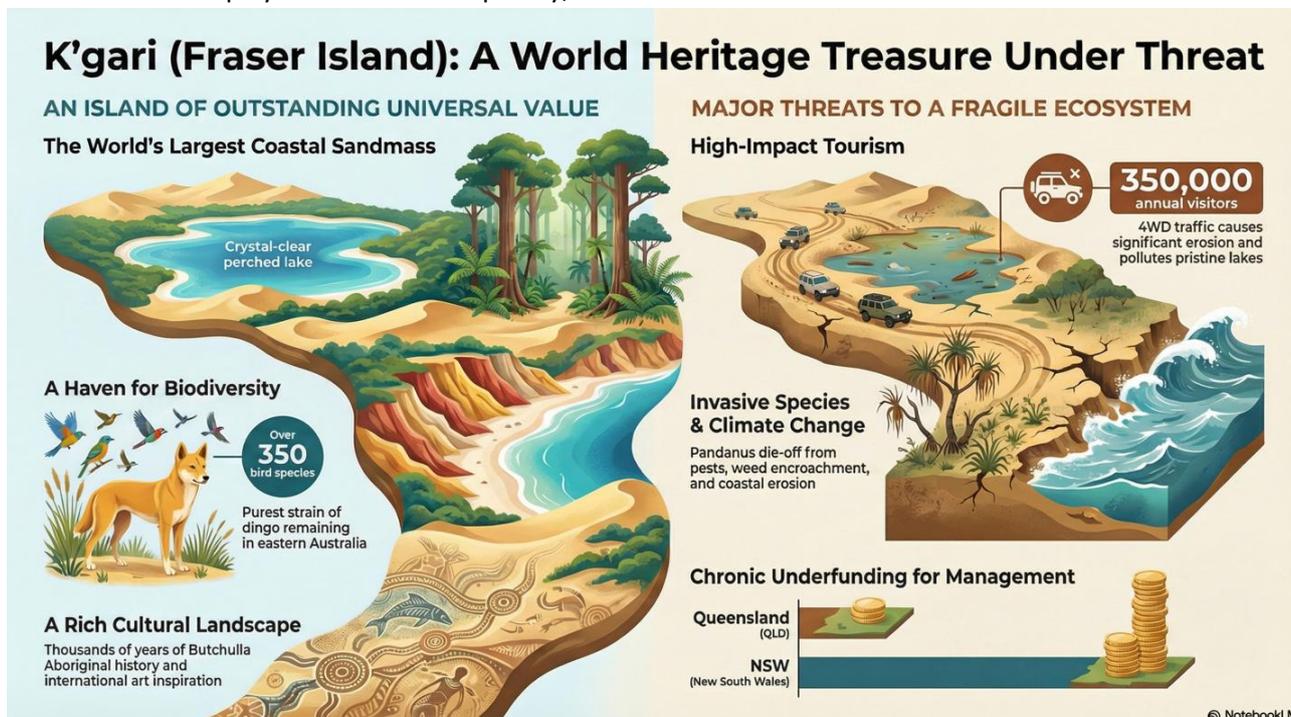
What surprised me

I asked about tourism impacts on K'gari. Instead of returning a keyword match from a single document, it drew together observations from across decades, erosion from vehicles, wildlife disturbance, pollution — and cited the specific sources. It understood how issues connected.

I asked about the dingo situation. It didn't oversimplify. It explained that K'gari's Wongari represent the purest dingo strain in eastern Australia, acknowledged the real safety concerns, and recognised the role human behaviour plays. It held the complexity, much as Dad would have.



It's a simple process to bring together trusted information sources to generate synthesised data and insights (Image: Keith Sinclair).



The tool can be used to generate summaries, images and audio summaries on the topic of your choice. (Image: Notebook LM, Keith Sinclair)

It also generated a conversational audio summary, essentially a podcast about K'gari's conservation history, without any scripting or prompting from me. That podcast is now available on fido.org.au: Introduction to K'gari – Audio Conversation Summarising K'gari.

Why I'm sharing this with you

We all know what it feels like to lose institutional knowledge. A long-serving member steps back, records sit in boxes or old email accounts or the people who remember why things were done a certain way aren't always around to ask anymore.

This tool won't replace that lived experience. But it can make the written record genuinely useful again, searchable not just by keywords, but by meaning. It can help new volunteers get up to speed, support advocacy with well-sourced answers, and keep decades of careful observation accessible rather than buried.

If you'd like to try it

You don't need technical skills or a budget. If your organisation has reports, newsletters, or research documents in PDF form, you have what you need to start. Google NotebookLM is free, and the process is no more complicated than uploading files and asking questions.

If this feels like something your group could use but you're not sure where to begin, I'm happy to help. We've spent years building the knowledge that underpins our conservation work, it would be a shame to let it stay hidden in filing cabinets and old hard drives when there's now a simple way to bring it back to life.

Article shared by Keith Sinclair, keith@sinclair.org.au

FIDO's Continuing Relevance to K'gari

Now in my third term as President of FIDO, I constantly ponder the role of FIDO for K'gari in the light of changing circumstances. Members and supporters of FIDO ask questions about its future role. Longstanding FIDO President and environmentalist, Dr John Sinclair AO was pondering this question as early as 1992. His reasoning still applies today.

K'gari was inscribed in on the World Heritage list at Santa Fe in December 1992. After years campaigning for that outcome some might consider that FIDO should have drawn a line under its activities. But FIDO had good reasons to continue and live up to its motto as the watchdog of K'gari. John in *Saving K'gari* (p.218) stated, "I knew that despite legal protection many great natural areas deteriorate overtime without continual monitoring. My experience in conservation has taught me that no environmental battle can never be permanently won. But they can be permanently lost."



Although FIDO's founder, Dr John Sinclair AO, left us in February 2019, his work continues through FIDO (Photo: FIDO)

These arguments have not gone away, yet the same accusations keep coming up. After a confronting talk with a former FIDO volunteer in 2024, I wrote in my diary:



FIDO continues their essential work on K'gari including this observation of diseased piccabeen palms in early 2025 (Photo: FIDO)

"Since becoming president of FIDO, I've been told by several people that the organisation is no longer required and another of these conversations occurred today. I was told that FIDO did good work back in the 1970s - bringing about the end of sand mining and being instrumental in ending the logging of the forests in the 1990s but is no longer needed. Now that World Heritage status has been granted and over 90% of the island is managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Butchulla have Consent Determination, what can FIDO possibly need to do?"

John responded to a similar dilemma after one of his last trips to K'gari. He visited some of the spots that had been treasured in his memory and was distressed by their regraded condition. He wrote,

"I was astonished to realise the extent of the degradation that has occurred despite the extra layer of protection World Heritage was supposed to have delivered. It was convincing proof of the necessity for a vigilant watchdog continually monitoring and critically reviewing the situation," (*Saving K'gari* p. 219).

The need for this role of constant monitoring was proved in 2025 when a FIDO weeding team leader noticed a stand of piccabeen palms in the Yidney scrub looking distressed. This is a highly scenic rainforest area and the FIDO observer reported it to both the QPWS and Biosecurity Queensland. A team of BAC, CSIRO and DPI staff members took samples of the soil around the affected trees. The samples were analysed and found to be a variety of *Phytophthora* which had not been recorded on K'gari before.

On a subsequent visit, the same person noted a similar-looking stand of ailing piccabeen palms to the north of Lake Garawongera. Once again, the matter has been reported and a soil sample is being tested. This team leader is a highly experienced person with a sharp eye for how a healthy forest should look, based on many visits walks with John Sinclair, scientists and Butchulla rangers. If a new organism is invading the rainforests, this could easily be related to the very high visitation rates and inadequate biosecurity measures employed on vehicles tyres and boots of visitors. It is extremely important to raise the alarm early rather than wait until significant areas have been devastated.

Looking back, FIDO has persisted in unflagging guardianship and this will be elaborated in future articles. Meanwhile, multiple answers to the question, "What can FIDO possibly do now?" include weeding the USL, running lectures and contributing to symposia, participating in FINIA, supporting Bioblitzes, the new cane toad reduction program, working with Butchulla custodians, and above all keeping a skilled and responsible eye on the health and well-being of K'gari.

Article contributed by Zela Bissett President, FIDO

Gympie Regional Council leads the way in fire ant preparedness

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program is working with Gympie Regional Council to stop fire ants before they arrive. With detections just 14 km away, council staff have been trained to spot high-risk materials and report suspect ants or nests immediately.



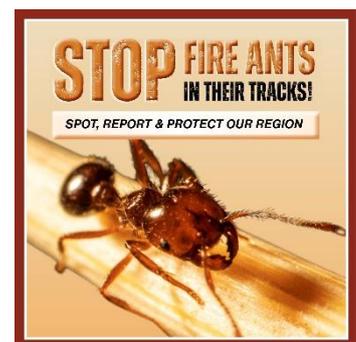
Sam, Ben, James and Sally from the Gympie Regional Council biosecurity team (Photo: NFAEP)

'We are a small team with a big job. Preparation and preparedness deliver better outcomes. When it comes to fire ants, we have taken a proactive approach—providing leadership and driving a clear strategy across council,' said James, Biosecurity Officer, Gympie Regional Council.

In 2023, the council prioritised building internal capability by developing a fire ant training for its workforce. The training was approved in January 2024 and rolled out in March 2025.

Key outcomes include:

- More than 650 council staff enrolled, with an 85% completion rate.
- Mandatory training for contractors working in high-risk sectors.
- Active participation in the Gympie Natural Resource Management Forum, attracting forty participants from multiple councils.
- Regular presentations by biosecurity officers to environmental groups to promote free online fire ant training.



Council ran a community awareness campaign including newspapers, social media and a billboard (Photo: NFAEP)

This workforce-wide initiative ensures staff—from office-based roles to field crews—are equipped to identify, report, and respond quickly to potential fire ant sightings.

Local contractors and businesses handling soil, turf and machinery have attended practical workshops, giving them the tools to act fast. Community awareness campaigns are also helping tens of thousands of residents recognise and report fire ants, boosting Gympie and Queensland's defence.

Learn more about the council's response to fire ants by [visiting the national program's website](#).

Article adapted from Biosecurity News newsletter, Department of Primary Industries

Dates for the Diary

What: FINIA Commemorative Tree Planting and Meeting

Where: University of the Sunshine Coast Fraser Coast Campus

When: Wednesday 25 February from 10am to 2pm

For: FINIA's partner organisations meet quarterly to provide updates and collaborate on projects. Three meetings are held on the mainland with an annual field trip to K'gari each year. Future meetings for 2026 are scheduled for Monday/Tuesday 18/19 May – K'gari Field Trip, and Tuesday 4 August and Tuesday 17 November from 10am to 2pm, Maryborough Town Hall

Cost: Free

More info: To register for the meeting, please email Sue Sargent at contactFINIA@gmail.com.

What: Meet the Weeders and Join the Team!

Where: Pialba Bowls Club, 56 Taylor St, Hervey Bay

When: Sunday 8 March from 6pm

For: Meet dedicated long-term FIDO weeding volunteers who have been working on K'gari for two decades. FIDO is currently seeking volunteers to join this team at the impending retirement of Eurong team leader, Su Dawson in May. Su will be present for the evening along with fellow weeder Ross and you'll be able to talk with them and ask them questions. There will also be some film clips from previous adventures and finger food available.

Cost: Free

More info: To register, please contact Zela Bissett on mobile 0400366195 or at my email suzeela39@gmail.com by 7 March.

What: Bush Regeneration and Monitoring

Where: Eurong, K'gari

When: 2-8 March, 20-26 April and 18-25 May

For: Sue Dawson from FIDO has been conducting weeklong weeding–bush regeneration programs in Eurong since 2005. These have progressively transformed Eurong and dramatically reduced the weed threats there. Based at Tallinga, the former Sinclair family home in Eurong Village, work will focus on weeding, bush regeneration, building the Eurong nursery's capacity, and continuing FIDO's ongoing environmental monitoring programs. The program is supported by Eurong Resort, providing dinner for the volunteers each night.

Cost: \$300 (\$200 for concessions) to subsidise costs.

More info: Please send any questions to weeding@fido.org.au.

What: K'gari Clean Up Great Walk

When: 23 March to 5 April 2026

For: Volunteers can sign up to join the team on their great walk from Sandy Cape to Hook Point over the 13-day program. You will be equipped with collection bags, PPE, accommodation, meals, and sunscreen. Drop Bear Adventures is providing all transport over to the island and accommodation at their Eco Retreat! Volunteers can expect to walk approximately 20km over 3 days (5-10km per day).

Cost: FREE

More info: Please email Hana, hana@kgarifraserisland.com.au

What: Nominate your volunteer or organisation for an award

When: Nominations for the 2026 Queensland Volunteering Awards are OPEN! The Awards will be celebrated during National Volunteer Week. Know an incredible volunteer, or organisation making a difference? This is their moment to shine. Nominate now and help us celebrate Queensland's volunteering heroes! Nominations close on 31 March and will be announced on 15 May.

More info: <https://awards.volunteeringqld.org.au/>

What: K'gari 4WD Cleanup 2026
Where: K'gari
When: 8-11 May 2025
For: 4WD Queensland's annual K'gari Clean Up has been running since 2001, this year celebrating their 25th anniversary. In 2025, the event attracted 826 volunteers from 24 affiliated 4WD clubs, supported by 30 sponsors and over 330 vehicles, who collectively removed 8,355 kg of waste across 114 km of K'gari's coastline. Participants must be a member of a 4WD Club for insurance purposes.
More info: www.4wdqld.com.au/kgari - please note, this event has sold out, so please email admin@kgaricleanup.au if you would like to be added to the waiting list.

What: Weed Management
Where: Happy Valley, K'gari
When: 13-18 May, 12-18 July and 1-7 November 2026
For: Peter Shooter leads these trips to help tackle the heavy weed infestation around Happy Valley. A group of up to eight people share *Kurrawa*, a comfortable holiday house in the Centre of Happy Valley. The group work to contain a particularly aggressive weed with poisonous seeds, *Abrus precatorius* Var. *Africanus*. This weed heavily impacts local vegetation but is not found elsewhere on K'gari. The team also focus on large woody weeds, Easter cassia and lantana. Note - fitness is needed to carry heavy chemical backpack sprays across steep terrain.
Cost: \$300 (\$200 for concessions) to subsidise costs.
More info: Please send any questions to weeding@fido.org.au.

Funding Opportunities

What: Biosecurity Boost Grant (Round 2)
For: Funding is available in two grant categories:
Innovation: 3 grants of \$30,000 each to support projects that explore or implement new technologies and methods to improve biosecurity practices in Queensland.
Education: 8 grants of \$15,000 each to fund projects that raise awareness, education and drive behaviour change for stronger biosecurity management. \$35,000.
When: Funding is open now and closes at midday on 16 February 2026.
Email: biosecurity.capability@dpi.qld.gov.au
Website: <https://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/enhancing-capability-capacity/grants-program>

What: Fraser Coast Council Community Grant (Final Round)
For: Community grants are available for projects that provide identified and measurable social, community or economic benefits to the Fraser Coast communities and align with Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2028. Organisations may apply for a maximum of two grants per year up to \$5,000 (including any in-kind support required from Council). Co-contribution is not a requirement of this program, although applications where the applicant is making a financial contribution will be highly regarded.
When: Applications opened on 12 January and close on 26 February 2026.
Website: <https://www.frasercoast.qld.gov.au/Community/Grants-and-Sponsorships>

What: Gambling Community Benefit Fund
For: Provide one-off grants for not-for-profit organisations to help provide community services or activities that benefit the Queensland community. Maximum grants for the next round are \$35,000.
When: Round 126 is now open and will close at midnight on 28 February 2026.
Email: cbf@justice.qld.gov.au
Phone: 1800 633 619
Website: <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/community-grants>

What: Wettenhall Environment Trust —Small Environmental Grant Scheme

For: Objectives of the Small Environmental Grants Scheme (up to \$15K) are flora and fauna conservation and threatened mammal conservation with one or more of the following: monitoring/recording data, community education, community capacity building (training), and research/science.

When: Next round opens on 9 March 2026 (for funding in May 2026)

Phone: (03) 5472 1316 or 0431 219 980 - Elizabeth (Beth) Mellick, Executive Officer

Email: beth@wettenhall.org.au

Website: <https://wettenhall.org.au/grants/small-environmental-grants/>

What: Purves Environmental Fund

For: Support 12-month proposals of up to \$50,000, that meet the Fund's current focus areas: degradation of wilderness, over exploitation of natural resources and pollution. Grant applications are through an EOI process.

When: Applications are open year-round.

Website: <https://www.purvesenvirofund.org.au/funding>

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari is a non-incorporated, not-for-profit umbrella organisation for its partners. As a non-incorporated organisation with no dedicated funding to support our meetings, administration, barge transfers, or accommodation, we rely on our partners to support activities on the K'gari World Heritage site. We acknowledge Fraser Coast Regional Council, Sealink – Kingfisher Bay Resort & K'gari Explorer Tours, the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and our outstanding contributors, volunteers and donors for their generous support.

Without this generosity, FINIA's activities would not be possible.

Thank you



Visitors to K'gari are reminded to 'Be dingo-safe!' at all times:

- Always stay close (within arm's reach) of any children and young teenagers.
- Always walk in groups and carry a stick.
- Camp in fenced areas where possible.
- Do not run. Running or jogging can trigger a negative dingo interaction.
- Never feed dingoes.
- Lock up food stores and iceboxes (even on a boat)
- Never store food or food containers in tents, and
- Secure all rubbish, fish, and bait.