



## The National Reserve System

September 2011

# Fish River Station, Northern Territory

Fish River Station, a stunning 178,116 hectare property on the mighty Daly River, is breaking new ground in nature conservation in remote Australia.

The owner of this huge station was keen to see his lightly grazed property with its enormous biodiversity values conserved. Fish River Station will now be protected forever as part of the National Reserve System — Australia's most secure way of protecting native habitat — and is creating new conservation jobs for Indigenous people in Australia's remote Top End.

A new partnership between government, conservation organisations and the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) created this landmark conservation model. The \$13 million dollar property was purchased with \$8.6 million from Caring for our Country, \$1.4 million from the Indigenous Land Corporation and \$3 million from the conservation groups, The Nature Conservancy and Pew Environment Group.

Fish River Station will eventually be handed back to an organisation representing its traditional owners, who will manage its magnificent biodiversity for future generations. In the meantime the ILC — an organisation that helps Indigenous Australians acquire and manage property — holds the land in a trust arrangement with Greening Australia and is managing the property with Indigenous rangers and support from The Nature Conservancy.



### A conservation jewel

Fish River Station protects long stretches of the spectacular Daly River, with fresh and saltwater crocodiles, billabongs fringed by savanna woodland and pockets of rainforest rising to spectacular ranges.

The Daly River is a stronghold for the pig-nosed turtle, an important cultural icon and food source for Indigenous people. A huge diversity of fish, from barramundi to the threatened freshwater sawfish and freshwater whipray also make their home in the Daly. The property's rivers and nationally significant wetlands are home for another seven freshwater turtle species.

The property protects an astounding array of wildlife. Some 255 animal species have been recorded here, including such threatened species as the northern quoll and Gouldian finch, the northern masked owl, and the partridge pigeon.

Scattered throughout Fish River Station are small patches of fragile, fire-sensitive monsoon rainforest,



home to unique birds such as the rainbow pitta, orange-footed scrubfowl, emerald dove, rose-crowned fruit-dove and the pied imperial pigeon.

Located about 150 kilometres south of Darwin, the property increases protection of the under-conserved Daly Basin bioregion from 2.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent making it a significant addition to the National Reserve System.

### Reconnecting with country

Indigenous clans cared for this country for tens of thousands of years until European settlement disrupted their environmental stewardship. They are now able to reconnect with their country.

Already seven Indigenous rangers have jobs on the station controlling weeds and feral animals, caring for threatened species and managing fire. An Indigenous business is employed to remove feral animals such as scrub cattle, donkeys and buffalo while the Indigenous-run Gunbalunya abattoir is processing the buffalo for sale to local communities, the Sydney market and restaurants at the Indigenous-owned Ayers Rock Resort.



A host of other jobs will be created in fencing, protecting cultural sites, surveying plants and animals and rehabilitating habitat. It is an exciting step forward in Closing the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage through conservation work that benefits all Australians.

An Indigenous Advisory Group established by the Northern Land Council will represent the interests of the Wagiman, Labarganyan, Malak Malak and Kamu clans who have strong ties to Fish River. Meanwhile the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority is working with traditional owners to identify sacred sites.

### A landmark project

Fish River is the result of a great alliance with new thinking about how to build long-term conservation in some of our most remote country. It is an exciting new model for Australia's National Reserve System, conserving outstanding biodiversity, providing sustainable livelihoods to Indigenous Australians and handing land back to the traditional owners.

For more information on the National Reserve System, visit: [environment.gov.au/parks/nrs](http://environment.gov.au/parks/nrs)

#### Photo credits

Front – clockwise from top left: tributary on Fish River Station – Ted Wood; northern quoll – Australian Wildlife Conservancy; river pool – Parks Australia; pig-nosed turtle – Derek Ramsey; Daly River – Ted Wood.

Rear – clockwise from top left: water lily – Parks Australia; Fish River gorge – Parks Australia; early dry season savanna burning – Ted Wood; Gouldian finch – Australian Wildlife Conservancy.

