# Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust Annual Report

## 2019-2020

A report of the outputs, expenditure
and governance of the Trust

August 2020

# Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Management Panel of the Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust, I am pleased to present the seventh Annual Report on our activities. This report is a public documentation of the Trust's activities for the 2019-20 financial year, ensuring our accountability to the organisations that fund the Trust, to the key stakeholders in the Great Victoria Desert (GVD), and to the broader WA public.

The budget figures show that the whilst the Trust's spending on projects this financial year is below previous years, the major effort of the Trust this year has been planning for the implementation of two major projects to commence in the 2020-21 financial year, in particular, an integrated landscape scale management initiative focusing on fire management with the possible extension to feral management. The aim of this work is to provide landscape scale improvements to the existing desert habitats, in particular, those of the Malleefowl and Sandhill Dunnart.

I would like to personally thank the members of the Management Panel for their continued commitment to the Trust's objectives and the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) for their high level and invaluable technical advice, all of whom have provided their time without being remunerated. A special thanks Kathryn Sinclair our Operations Manager, and to Dr Dorian Morro who stepped into Kathryn's position whilst she was on maternity leave - their support of the Trust's activities has been highly professional and were there driving forces behind the Trust.

A special acknowledgement to Dr Stephen van Leeuwen who has been on the Management Panel since its inception as a Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) representative, but left in 2020 to follow an academic career. Stephen's scientific and technical understanding off the ecology of the GVD has been an extremely valuable input into the Trust's activities, and, thankfully, Stephen has agreed to stay on as a member of the TAP. We welcomed Mark Cowan, Stephen's replacement, to the Management Panel and I look forward to working with him this year and beyond.

Finally, I would like to formally acknowledge the strong and effective working relationship the Trust has with AngloGold Ashanti Australia, the DBCA, and with the WA Public Trustees who manage the funds for the Trust.

Dr Garry Middle

# Executive Summary

In the 2019-2020 Financial Year the Trust completed three major projects, with an additional two commenced. Each project establishes new information for understanding the landscapes or species within the Great Victoria Desert.

Firstly, an update to the Sandhill Dunnart survey and monitoring guidelines (first produced in 2016) now includes new records and new information as a standard operating procedure that can now be useful for surveys to detect this cryptic species. Secondly, the Trust engaged the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to spatially map the fire scar history of the Shield and Central subregions of the Great Victoria Desert which can now be accessed online by practitioners to assist with their ground operations when planning prescribed burns. This information offers a higher resolution accuracy to previously available (courser resolution) NAFI data and can be used to produce a variety of fire attribute statistics. Finally, a fire and introduced predator management plan was developed to support a wider Landscape Conservation Initiative the Trust has commenced. This Plan sets the context and parameters to undertake prescribed patch burns in a managed area as a way of returning cultural burn practices back to the GVD landscape. In time, there is also a plan that describes a feral cat control program.

Two projects were commenced. Potential Malleefowl mounds detected from the LiDAR survey in the 2018-2019 Financial Year will be ground-truthed to verify whether these are mounds or other topographical features. Locating additional mounds across the vast area of the Great Victoria Desert will be useful to understand extend of Malleefowl mound activity, and to establish potential future monitoring sites. A second project – the Landscape Conservation Initiative – aims to understand the benefits of prescribed burns a feral cat control on the fauna (including Sandhill Dunnarts and Malleefowl) of the Great Victoria Desert. This is a large scale project involving prescribed burning and the monitoring of fauna, vegetation and spatial parameters over time to gauge whether patch burns are creating suitable habitat for these and other small fauna species.

The annual contribution from the Tropicana Joint Venture to the Trust in 2019-20 FY was $371,962 based on an annual fee of $100,000 plus $80 per hectare of cleared footprint for the Tropicana mine. The Trust also received $25,934.44 interest from the funds held on its behalf by the Public Trustee. A total of $136,005 was spent directly on projects in the 2019-20 financial year.

The Management Panel and Chair continue to provide oversight and direction on Trust matters, working with the Trust's Operations Manager, including during four Management Panel meetings, and four out-of-session decisions including advice. The Technical Advisory Panel met three times during the financial year, and have played an important role in shaping the projects of the Trust and helping to ensure projects are consistently building knowledge on threatened species and shaping future projects.

The Trust continues to work with a large number of partners and organisations to ensure there are two-way learning opportunities which strengthen all the projects funded by the Trust.

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# 1. Introduction

The Trust represents a unique model for an environmental offset in Western Australia, and Australia in general. It was established by the Tropicana Joint Venture (AngloGold Ashanti Australia (AGAA) Ltd (manager and 70% owner) and Independence Group NL (30% owner) as the central part of an offset package for the Tropicana Gold Mine (TGM) in Western Australia under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*.

The Trust's main purpose is to deliver conservation benefits to nationally-listed threatened species, at a landscape-scale, and facilitate indigenous involvement in land management and conservation activities in the region. The projects supported in the 2019-20 financial year have focused on planning towards a large-scale land management trial to understand the benefits or otherwise of patch burning to threatened species in the region.

The Trust's purposes, region of focus ('Trust Area') and governance structure are outlined in more detail below for context.

## 1.1 Trust Purposes

The purpose of the Trust is to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop a Bioregional Management Plan (also referred to as a 'Biodiversity Conservation Plan') for the Western Great Victoria Desert bioregions 1 and 2 (i.e. the 'Trust Area');
2. Facilitate and/or undertake priority research in the Bioregional Management Plan at the landscape level and into species considered to be of Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, including the Sandhill Dunnart and Malleefowl;
3. Fund on-ground environmental and conservation management at the landscape level, with emphasis on net conservation benefits to threatened species, including those considered MNES;
4. Facilitate indigenous involvement in land management and conservation activities in support of the above objectives.

These objectives reflect those specified in Condition 6 of the *EPBC Act* approval 2008/4270 for the Tropicana Gold Mine.

## 1.2 Trust Area

The Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) classifies Australia's landscapes into 89 large geographically distinct bioregions. These are based on common climate, geology, landform, native vegetation and species information (DoE, 2015). The 89 bioregions are further refined to form 419 subregions. These are more localised and homogenous geomorphological units in each bioregion.

The GVD is one of the 89 IBRA bioregions. It is comprised of 6 subregions which extend from approximately 200km east of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia to cover large areas of South Australia. The entire GVD IBRA region covers 42,375,084 ha.

The Trust's area of focus ('Trust Area') is comprised of the two most western subregions of the GVD, known as Shield and Central, which are entirely located within Western Australia (Figure 1). These two sub-regions cover an area of 17,332,721 ha.

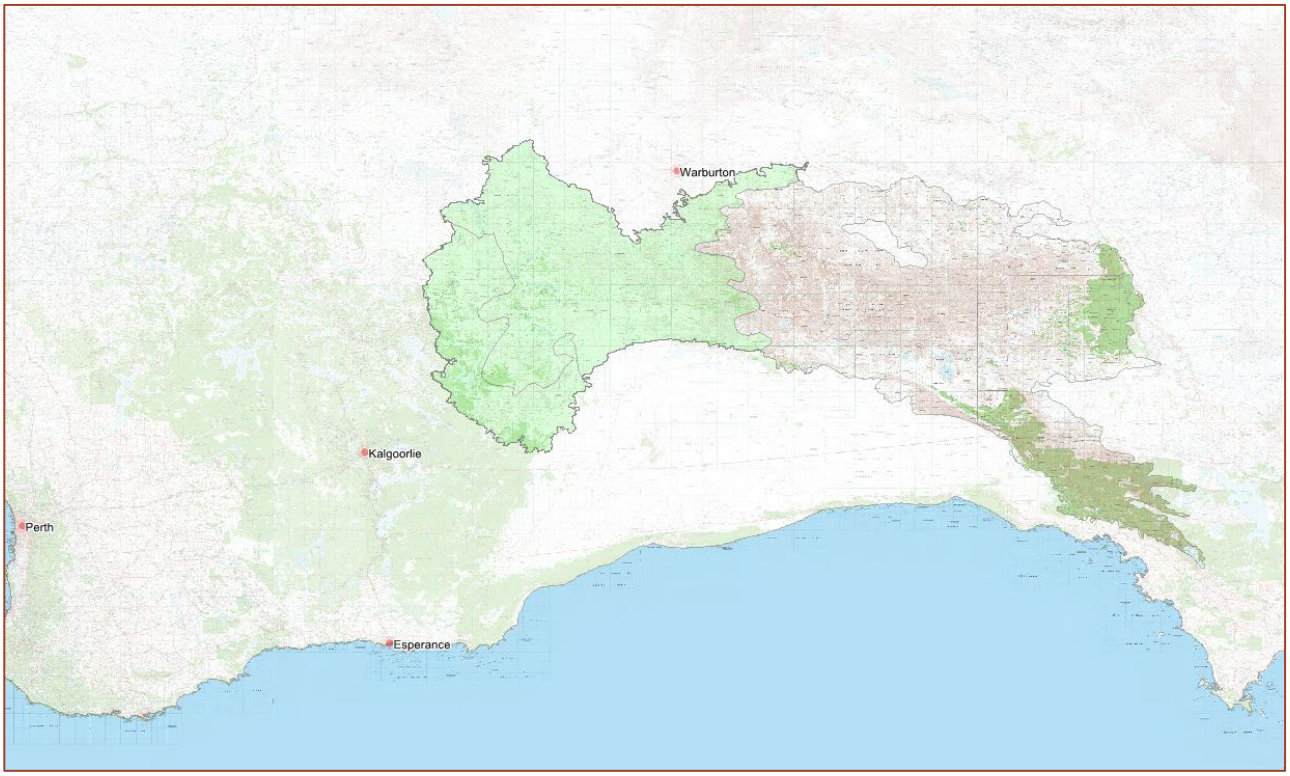


Figure 1. The location and extent of the GVD (outlined) and the Trust Area (bright green)

Whilst the Trust's activities are predominantly focussed on research and on-ground activities within the Shield and Central subregions of the GVD, they can occur outside this region if they meet the Trust's overall objectives. That is, they must be relevant and beneficial to species and biodiversity within the Trust Area, especially species and communities that are MNES as listed by the *EPBC Act*.

## 2. Governance

The governance structure of the Trust is a key component of ensuring stakeholder support and the delivery of activities that align with the Project Plan approved by the former DoE as part of the TGM *EPBC Act* approval (2008/4270). The governance structure of the Trust is outlined in Figure 2.

The activities and expenditure of the Trust are the overall responsibility of the Trust's Management Panel, which consists of representatives from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and AngloGold Ashanti Australia (AGAA), as well as an independent Chair.

The day-to-day management and operation of the Trust is the responsibility of the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager reports to the Trust's Management Panel via the Chair. The Operations Manager is supported through the provision of technical advice from the Trust's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). The TAP consists of five independent members with experience and technical expertise of the GVD and its landscape.

The Public Trustee of Western Australia maintains the financial accountability of the Trust, ensuring that all the spending of the Trust account aligns with the Trust Deed. The Public Trustee maintains a role on the Management Panel, having a standing invitation to attend meetings.

The Trust's funds, held by the Public Trustee, are allocated to various organisations and individuals according to anticipated benefit, value for money, and alignment with the Trust's objectives and

priorities. The recipients may include Traditional Owner groups, researchers, not-for-profit environmental groups and expert consultants.

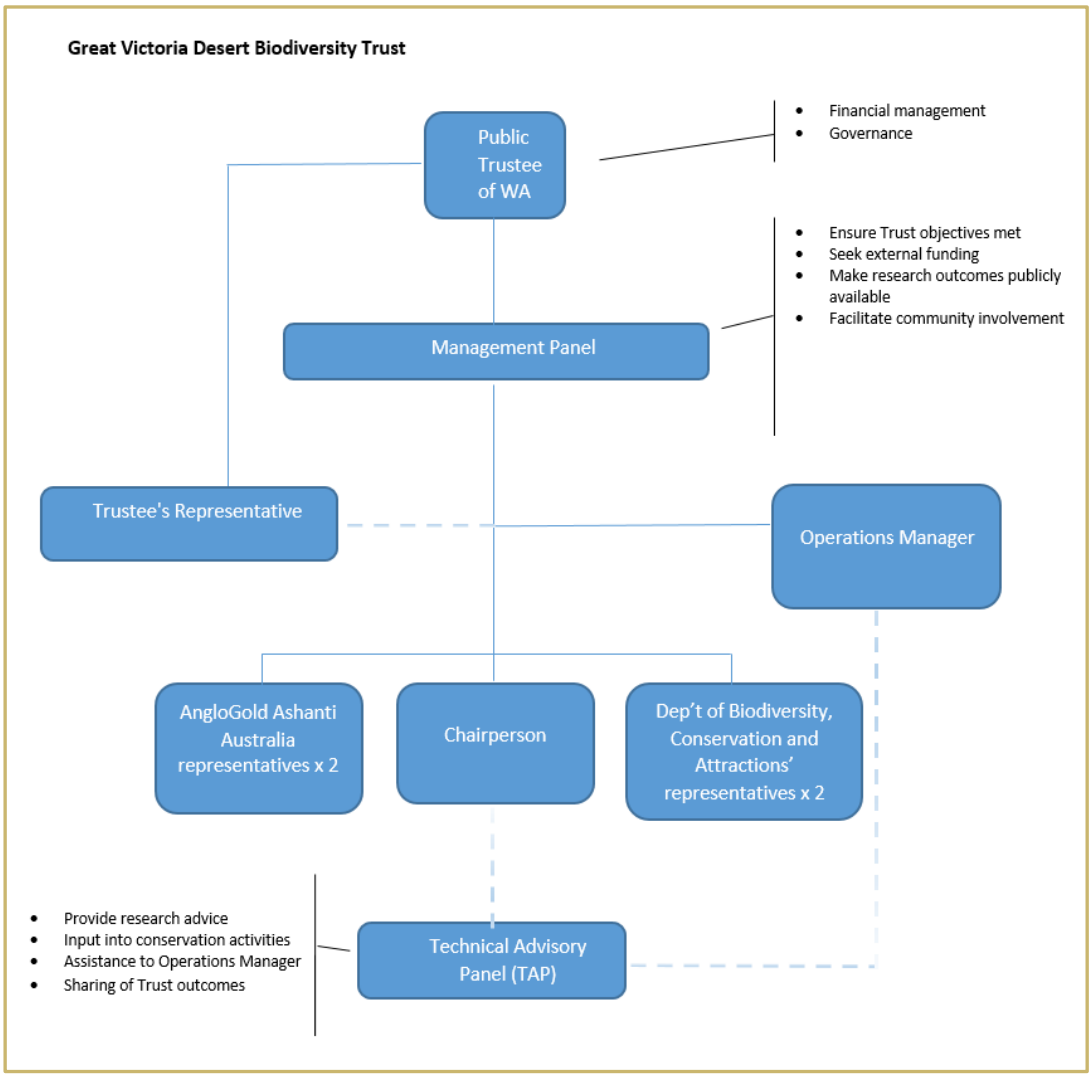


**Figure 2. The Structure of the Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust**

The Trust, and all of its activities and expenditure, is governed by an overarching Trust Deed. This document details the relationship between:

- The Trust's Management Panel;
- AngloGold Ashanti Australia, as the founder; and
- The Public Trustee of Western Australia, as the financial manager.

The Trust Deed also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Management Panel, Chair, Trustee, Operations Manager and the TAP, and the purposes and scope of the Trust. Additional background information is located at www.gvdbiodiversitytrust.org.au/about-us and in the Trust Deed (http://www.gvdbiodiversitytrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GVDBT-Trust-Deed.pdf).

## 2.1 The Management Panel

The Management Panel met four times during the 2019-20 financial year (Table 1) to ensure progress was maintained on key priorities. One member (Stephen van Leeuwen) left DBCA and a new representative for DBCA (Mark Cowan) was accepted as a member of the Management Panel.

**Table 1: Management Panel Meetings and Attendance 2019-20**

| Attendee | Meeting 1 10/10/19 | Meeting 2 3/02/20 | Meeting 3 20/04/20 | Meeting 4 11/05/20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Garry Middle (Chair)** | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Norm Galli (AGAA)** | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Nerilee Rockman (AGAA)** | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Stephen van Leeuwen (DBCA)** | √ Stepped Down (left DBCA) | | | |
| **Mark Cowan (DBCA)** | | √ | √ | √ |
| **Nigel Wessels (DBCA)** | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Dorian Moro (OM)** | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Sue Wormald (Public Trustee)** | Apologies | Apologies | Apologies | Apologies |

To expedite the timely turnover of project decisions, the Management Panel also had four out-of-session meetings (Table 2) which were conducted via email and utilised consensus-based agreement regarding project decisions and variations to projects.

**Table 2. Out of session meeting proposals (email consensus)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Business Case | Goldfields Environment Management Group conference 2020 |
| Date | 18 February 2020 |
| Email sent to | All MP members, Chair, Operations Manager |

| | |
|---|---|
| Business Case | Fire scar mapping 2019 |
| Date | 18 February 2020 |
| Email sent to | All MP members, Chair, Operations Manager |

| | |
|---|---|
| Business Case | Trust Partnerships with TOs-site visit |
| Date | 16 March 2020 |
| Email sent to | All MP members, Chair, Operations Manager |

| | |
|---|---|
| Business Case | GVD Landscape Conservation Initiative : Prescribed burning scope for 2020 |
| Date | 2 June 2020 |
| Email sent to | All MP members, Chair, Operations Manager |

## 2.2 The Operations Manager

The Trust's operations Manager Kathryn Sinclair went on maternity leave from August 2019 and Dr Dorian Moro was employed as Acting Operations Manager full-time during the remaining time.

The Operations Manager maintained communication and meeting with the Chair of the Trust, the Technical Advisory Panel, and Management Panel, throughout the year to ensure the Trust maintained steady progress on key activities and maintained a strategic vision of the objectives of the Trust.

## 2.3 The Public Trustee

The Public Trustee's representative provided assistance with financial documents to the Trust and project invoice payments. The Trustee has provided quarterly, and annual (Section 4.1), financial statements which are tabled at Management Panel meetings.

As in previous years, the Public Trustee's representative worked closely with Ernst and Young, the nominated financial auditors, to ensure that all of the Trust's spending, accounting and financial reporting had been conducted appropriately. The Trustee continues to give strong oversight and guidance (as required) to the Trust to ensure it meets both financial and legal obligations.

## 2.4 The Technical Advisory Panel

The Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) was established in April 2015 to provide expert advice and support to the Trust, such as providing feedback on the scope of research proposals, on-ground environmental or conservation activities, and research reports. The membership of the TAP has remained unchanged since establishment, retaining its five original biodiversity experts. Mark Cowan joined the TAP in early 2020 as a representative from the Management Panel.

The TAP formally met three times during the 2019-20 financial year (Table 3) to discuss issues including:

- Updating the scope requirements for the Sandhill Dunnart survey and monitoring guidelines;
- Scoping the requirements to ground-truth LiDAR targets (collected early in 2019) to assess whether these represent Malleefowl mounds;
- Identify appropriate options for progressing an on-ground project trial and within the context of the Trust Deed objectives, and the draft Integrated Management Project Plan;
- Recognising the importance of managing fire and feral cats within the context of the GVD.
- Discuss an appropriate fauna and vegetation baseline and monitoring program as part of the Landscape Conservation Initiative;
- Review and assess Expression of Interests related to Trust contracts;

In addition, members on the TAP were individually approached to guide development of Trust project work scopes related to their areas of expertise.

**Table 3: Technical Advisory Panel Meetings and Attendance 2019-20**

| Attendee | Meeting 1: 7/08/2019 | Meeting 2: 19/09/19 | Meeting 3: 28/02/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Belinda Bastow | √ | √ | √ |
| Ryan Ellis | Apology | √ | Apology |
| Katherine Moseby | √ | √ | √ |
| Blair Parsons | √ | √ | √ |
| Stephen van Leeuwen | √ | √ | √ |
| Kathryn Sinclair | √ | Maternity leave | Maternity leave |
| Dorian Moro | √ | √ | √ |
| Garry Middle (Trust Chair) | | | √ |
| Mark Cowan (MP member) | | | √ |

# 3. Trust Activities

## 3.1 Projects and Activities

In the 2019-20 Financial Year (FY) the Trust completed four major projects, summarised briefly below. Full reports have been made available to the public on the Trust website (http://gvdbiodiversitytrust.org.au/).

### 3.1.1 Sandhill Dunnart survey and monitoring [updated] guidelines (revised by GHD).

*Context*: Since the 2016 guidelines were developed, there has been considerable research and surveys into the Sandhill Dunnart in the GVD resulting in a substantial increase in records for the species, and knowledge of the species' ecology and detection approaches.

*Purpose*: To update the 2016 guidelines using recent information acquired.

*Key findings*: These guidelines include additional research and operational methods for targeted surveys and monitoring of Sandhill Dunnarts, including new information related to trail cameras used to survey for this cryptic species, species records, and spatial distribution information. A flow chart summarises decision making on what technique is required under different circumstances. Further detail can be found in the report (Figure 3).

*Management implications*: The guidelines offer a useful standard operating procedure for targeted surveys for Sandhill Dunnarts.

*Reference*: GHD (2020) Survey and Monitoring Guidelines for the Sandhill Dunnart in Western Australia. Prepared for Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust. Editor Glen Gaikhorst, January 2020.

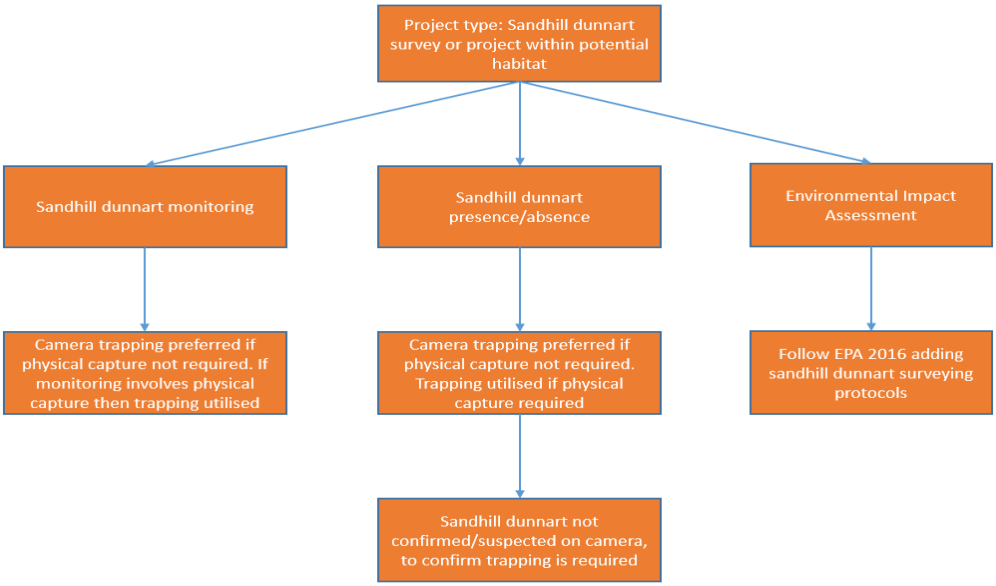


Figure 3 Flow chart summarising decision making on what technique is required for different circumstances to search for Sandhill Dunnarts

### 3.1.2 Ground-truthing LiDAR targets to assess if these represent Malleefowl mounds (conducted by the National Malleefowl Recovery Team).

*Context*: In 2018, the Trust commissioned remote sensing (LiDAR) to be undertaken along some aerial transects in the GVD with the intent to identify Malleefowl mounds across the GVD. Anditi organised the LiDAR scans, analysed the LiDAR data and provided point data (targets) of likely Malleefowl mounds within the designated areas. 124 Category 1 and 2 matches were defined as likely targets representing Malleefowl mounds. Several hundred were less defined and judged to be less likely to represent mounds (Category 3 and 4). The next steps were to ground truth these targets to verify if they represent Malleefowl mounds, and if so what percentage are active mounds.

*Purpose*: Ground-truth targets detected by LiDAR in the GVD to confirm if these represent Malleefowl mounds, the habitat these occur within, and their level of activity.

*Key findings*: Ground-truthing commenced in June 2020. The field work was delayed due to site access restrictions related to Covid-19 regional shut-downs, and was not been completed during the FY, but was scheduled to commence from July 2020.

*Management implications*: Data will confirm which targets represent Malleefowl mounds, their current level of use, the habitat they occur within, and will allow the Trust the future opportunity to monitor the activity of Malleefowl over different seasons.

### 3.1.3 Fire and Introduced Predator Management Plan (conducted by Neil Burrows)

*Context*: With the cessation of smaller cultural 'patch burn' practices, the GVD has experienced larger-scale, more intense, summer fires that have burnt vast areas at any one time. Coupled with the impacts from introduced predators (feral cats, foxes and wild dogs) throughout the arid zone, these threats are expected to be having large, negative impacts on the local biodiversity in the GVD, including threatened species. Feral cats are the most abundant and most difficult to control so represent the greatest threat to arid zone fauna, including Malleefowl and Sandhill Dunnarts, in the GVD. The GVD Trust therefore plans to investigate the benefits of reintroducing patch burns - and where funding permits, implementing feral predator control – on a landscape and to assess the benefits of these management actions on the biodiversity in the region. As a precursor there is a need to plan for how prescribed burns and feral predators (primarily feral cats) should be managed and monitored over time.

*Purpose*: Develop a fire management plan for the landscape area which clearly defines-

a. A goal of what the area should look like after 10 years of fire management (fire age distribution and mosaic scale)

b. A target of what percentage of the study area should be burnt each year, within the 10-year time frame

c. The optimum mean size of the patch burns each year and the maximum burn size

d. Detailed guidelines/methodology and an indicative annual schedule of how burns should be conducted, and the spatial arrangement of the patches, in order to achieve annual targets and reach the 10-year goal. The best available information will be used to increase the likelihood of scattered arrangement of patches

e. Detailed recommendations on how to maintain long unburnt areas as part of the mosaic, and how to protect culturally sensitive sites during prescribed burning or from bushfires.

Develop an introduced predator (feral cat) baiting and monitoring plan for the landscape area which includes -

a. An optimal baiting regime for the treatment area.

b. Detailed methodology on pre-burn / pre-baiting (baseline) monitoring and analyses that should be conducted for introduced predators, in consultation with suitable scientists.

c. Detailed methodology on what post-fire / post-baiting monitoring should be conducted for introduced predators.

*Key findings*:

Fire Plan. The fire management plan aims to mitigate adverse impacts of bushfire by significantly reducing their size and intensity, and to create a fine-scale mosaic of seral stages / fuel ages ranging from recently burnt to long unburnt. This will be achieved by an annual program of patch-burning under cool weather conditions in autumn - winter, supported by on-ground (hand) burning of roadside buffers. The annual burning program – what areas and how much to burn – is guided by the current areal proportion of seral stages / fuel ages with the aim being to maintain about 44% of the area as non-flammable early seral stage (≤6 years old), 42% as intermediate seral stage (>6≤18 years old) and 14% as late seral stage >18 years old). Influenced by lightning pattern and 'natural' and burnt firebreaks, the distribution of seral stages will be scattered rather than clumped.

Introduced Predator (Feral Cat) Plan. Annual broadscale aerial baiting in winter with Eradicat®, and in accordance with Western Shield protocols and procedures, is the recommended primary control strategy. Follow-up trapping using leg-hold traps may be necessary should baiting be ineffective. In order to interpret and measure management effectiveness, it will be necessary to monitor the density of introduced predators before and after baiting. This should be done using two proven techniques - i) counting tracks (footprints) along roads and tracks according to published protocols, and ii) using a carefully designed array of trail cameras to provide information about occupancy and abundance.

*Management implications*: The Plans can be used as guidance to plan operational management activities by the Trust and other land managers in the GVD with a remit to undertake prescribed burns and feral cat control actions. Furthermore, the Trust plans to implement a landscape scale project to understand the effects of prescribed burns (and feral cat control pending funding) on local biodiversity, including threatened malleefowl and sandhill dunnarts.

*Reference*: Burrows, N (2020) Fire and introduced predator management plans for the Great Victoria Desert fauna management area. Report prepared for the Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust, Perth.

### 3.1.4 Fire history of the GVD (conducted by DBCA-Remote Sensing Team)

*Context*: Currently, the only fire scar data available over the Western Australian area of the GVD are from the Northern Australian Fire Information (NAFI) remote sensing service. NAFI generates fire scars with MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) derived data, which has been shown to have relatively high levels of errors (not recording some fire scars in the region). These errors are likely to have a significant impact on the validity of operational burn planning, and identifying long unburnt habitat mapping for conservation significant species by land managers. An opportunity therefore exists to re-analyse the fire history of this vast region using imagery with a higher resolution (Landsat, 30 cm) but where there is a balance between time (and implicitly cost) of spatial mapping, and accuracy.

*Purpose*: To produce fire scar spatial mapping of the Western Australian part of the GVD for the years 1995 to 2019.

*Key findings*: Fire mapping was carried out using a methodology developed by DBCA using the eCognition software program. Fire scar maps derived from the Landsat data allow a number of statistics to be calculated. For example:

- Average burnt patch size for each IBRA region.
- Years since last burn for each IBRA region.
- Proportion of vegetation age classes according to years since last burn.
- Frequency distribution of fire size classes.
- Proportion of studied area burnt in different fire size classes.
- Mean, median, minimum and maximum fire areas.

- Fire frequency for each IBRA region.
- Fire interval for each IBRA region (Figures 4a, 4b).

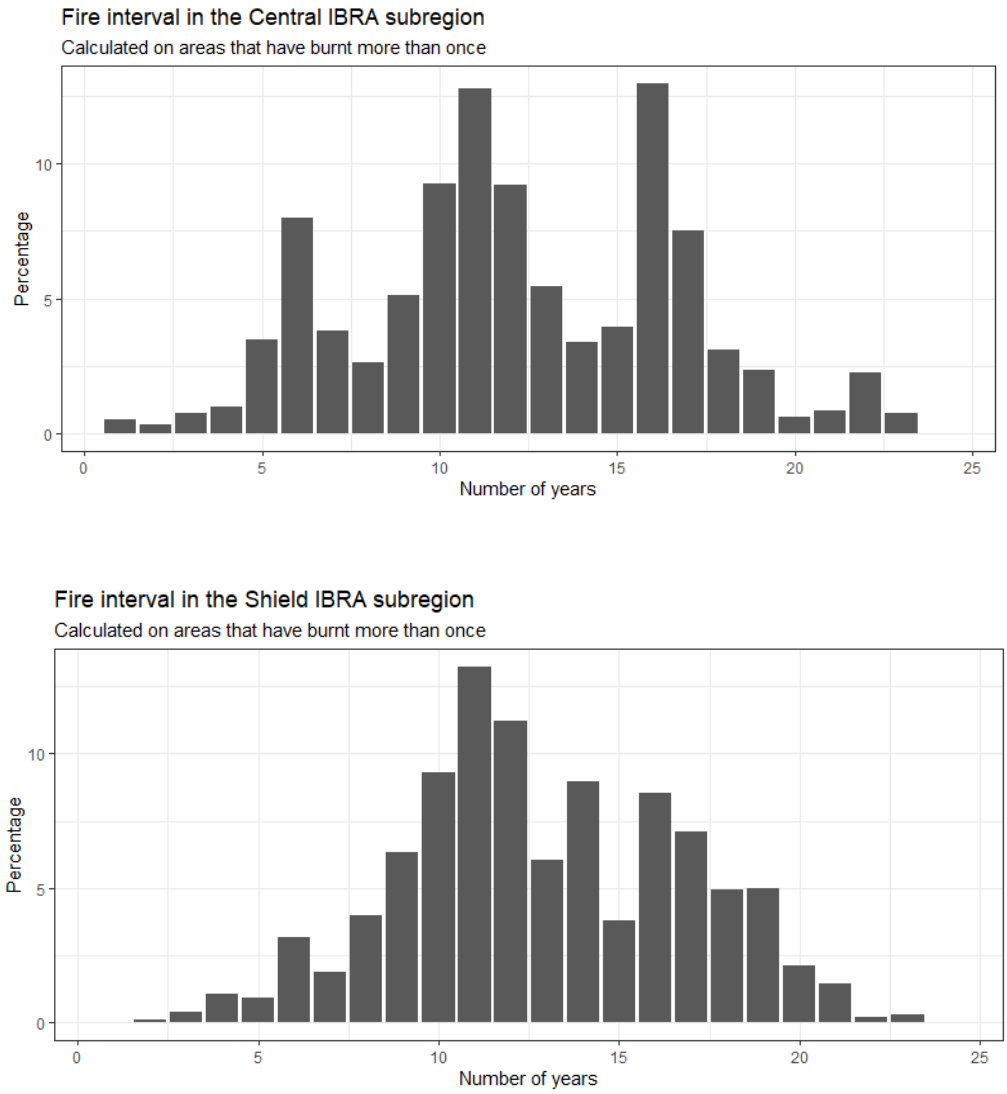


**Figure 4: Fire interval for (a) the Central and (b) the Shield IBRA region.**

*Management implications*: Spatial imagery and files are now available for land managers to view on a GIS and to assist with their operational work when planning prescribed burns in the GVD. These maps provide fine scale land imagery required for surveys and other land management practices in the region. This will allow patchy fire scars to be detected, and areas of remnant or long unburnt vegetation to be detected within larger fire scars.

*Reference*: van Dongen R., Ruscalleda-Alvarez J., Zdunic K. and Chapman J., 2020: Great Victoria Desert Fire Scar Mapping Report: Final Report, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Perth.

### 3.1.5 Other activities

#### 3.1.5.1 Collection of camera traps in eastern GVD.

*Context*: Sandhill dunnarts are a cryptic species at low abundance across the GVD. Past survey effort shows that the majority are detected using trail cameras left in the field over an extended period of time. Thirteen trail cameras were intentionally left in the field (western GVD) following the Sandhill Dunnart survey by Greening Australia in 2018 to detect Sandhill Dunnart presence in the area.

*Purpose*: Retrieve field cameras for further processing of data.

*Key findings*: All cameras, together with those from the eastern survey previously retrieved, have been collected, and the data await analysis. Preliminary screening has identified at least one photo that is likely to be a Sandhill Dunnart.

*Management implications*: Confirmation of Sandhill Dunnarts at this site will add to the recent records for the species in the GVD.

#### 3.1.5.2 Data storage and management

*Context*: The Trust has generated large volumes of data, which is diverse in file type and size, and includes geospatial and camera [image] survey data. To support storing information acquired as part of the requirements of the Trust Deed, the Management Panel of the Trust requested better approaches for the storage, backup, and distribution of these datasets for perpetuity, and to manage public enquiries.

*Purpose*: The aim of this project was to provide a preferred option for the storage solution for data that the Trust generates, which endures the life of the Trust, and enables the Trust to share information to the public upon request.

*Key findings*: The Trust engaged with the Business Solutions Team in AGAA to identify alternative options for hosting, storing, and backing up Trust information to provide longer-term security of Trust data whilst allowing data to be backed up, and also easily accessed to support information sharing. Based on the options select, the business Solutions Team determined that the MS Azure option (with data backup) is the preferred option to host and backup the Trust information and data. Future planning will transfer Trust data across to the MS Azure platform.

*Management implications*: Trust data will now be securely stored on a cloud-based system. Sharing of information will be managed via the website portal through a ‘Request for information’ form.

### 3.1.6 Trust Promotion

3.1.6.1 Attendance at, and support for, the IDA 2019 conference.

The Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) hosts an annual forum, and attendance is by invitation only. In 2019 the IDA invited the Trust to attend its conference in the Northern Territory (Uluru). The Operations Manager represented the Trust. In addition, the Trust supported the IDA by sponsoring a session on Threatened Species in deserts. This opportunity allowed the Trust to increase its visibility, and networking options, with the GVD community whilst learning about the primary interests of Indigenous Ranger groups and their coordinators.

3.1.6.2 Attendance at the Southern Ranger Desert Forum 2019

The Chair represented the Trust at the 2019 Southern Desert Ranger Forum, including the training programs provided at this Forum. The training included: Fire management, buffel grass management, remote first aid, mechanic workshop, and CSIRO 2-way science program. Trust sponsorship for the Forum was consistent with the Trust's objectives to support capacity building by Indigenous groups to attend the Forum.

3.1.6.3 Website upgrade

The Trust's website has been transferred onto a refreshed platform, with new content and pages included to improve how the Trust can share its information with the community.

3.1.6.4 Minerals Council of Australia

The Trust's has been showcased through the communication channels of the Minerals Council of Australia as an exemplar 'Partnerships in Action' organisation that increases knowledge and conservation outcomes for biodiversity in the GVD as part of the Tropicana Joint Venture environmental offset strategy.

# 4. Finances, Administration and Allocation of Funds

## 4.1 Finances

The annual contribution from the Tropicana Joint Venture (TJV) to the Trust in 2019-20 FY was $371,962 based on an annual fee of $100,000 plus $80 per hectare of cleared footprint for the TGM. The Trust also received $25,934.44 interest from the funds held on its behalf by the Public Trustee (Table 3).

A total of $135,005 was spent directly on projects in the 2019-20 financial year. This figure does not include the time spent by the Operations Manager managing these projects, or costs associated with asset management fees, or administration-related expenses (detailed in Table 3).

AGAA maintains an oversight of the Trust's day-to-day expenditure as part of its administrative support function, and all Trust expenditure is presented to the Management Panel in quarterly and annual statements provided by the Public Trustee.

The Public Trustee has continued to provide strong support and guidance in 2019-20 to the Trust to ensure it meets its financial and legal obligations. Financial statements are provided to the Trust by the Public Trustee on a quarterly and annual basis (Appendix 1), which are subsequently tabled at Management Panel meetings.

Ernst and Young audited the Trust in October 2019 and in January 2020 confirmed that the Trust's spending, accounting and financial reporting have been conducted appropriately.

**Table 2: Summary of income and expenditure for the Trust during the 2019-20 financial year**

| Item | Income | Expenditure |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | |
| **Annual contribution (AGAA)** | $371,962 | |
| **Interest** | $25,934.44 | |
| **Expenditure: management and administration** | | |
| Salary (Operations Manager - project management and administration*) | | $155,941.22 |
| Memberships, asset management/transaction fees, general office expenses | | $12,948.91 |
| Financial audit fees (Ernst and Young) | | $6,234.80 |
| Out of pocket expenses (Chair) | | $1,301.19 |
| Data standards document (K Payne) | | $640 |
| Trust newsletter (K Payne) | | $3840 |
| **Expenditure: Projects** | | |
| Sandhill Dunnart Guidelines update (GHD) - *refer to section 3.1.1* | | $18,473.40 |
| Malleefowl Mound – Ground truthing LiDAR results (National Malleefowl Recovery Team) - *refer to section 3.1.2* | | $2,000 |
| Fire and Predator Plan (N Burrows) - refer to *section 3.1.3* | | $20,625 |
| Fire scar mapping (DBCA) - *refer to section 3.1.4* | | $94,906.9 |
| Collection of field trail cameras (Kingfisher) | | $660 |
| Sandhill dunnart advise and report (Kingfisher) | | $660 |
| Malleefowl monitoring guidelines (J Benshemesh) | | $9,900 |
| Malleefowl LiDAR Survey management (K Payne) | | $5,120 |
| **Refund** | | |
| Refund of GST on expenditure | $44,503 | |
| TOTAL | $442,399.44 | $333,251.42 |

Key: * = approximately 80% of time spent on project and contract management and 20% on Trust operations and administration. Includes a 2-week handover period for maternity leave cover.

## 4.2 Administration

AGAA continues to provide essential administrative support to the Operations Manager and Trust, including:

- Human resource services, such as payroll management, employment contract;
- General office administration and equipment, such as IT, mobile phone, office/meeting space;
- Flights, accommodation and access to vehicles at TGM, as appropriate; and
- Legal services for contracts.

This substantial in-kind support represents a considerable reduction in the administration expenses that would otherwise be incurred by the Trust and ensures that the Trust maintains its administration cost below the 20% maximum outlined in the Trust Deed.

## 4.3 Funding

The TGM continues to be the Trust's sole financial contributor.

# 5. Future Direction

## 5.1 Planned projects for 2020-2021 FY

### 5.1.1 GVD Landscape Conservation Initiative

The Management Panel has approved the Trust to trial an integrated landscape management project in the south-west of the GVD (Figure 5) focusing on prescribed 'right-way' burns and (contingent on available funding) introduced predator control. In addition, the Trust will monitor the effectiveness of management by investigating the response of biodiversity communities (small mammals, including Sandhill Dunnarts, reptiles, Malleefowl activity), and introduced predators including other feral species observed, before and after land management activities (fire/baiting) over an initial 10-year period. Monitoring will be compared between paired landscapes (one managed and one unmanaged/reference) in the GVD.

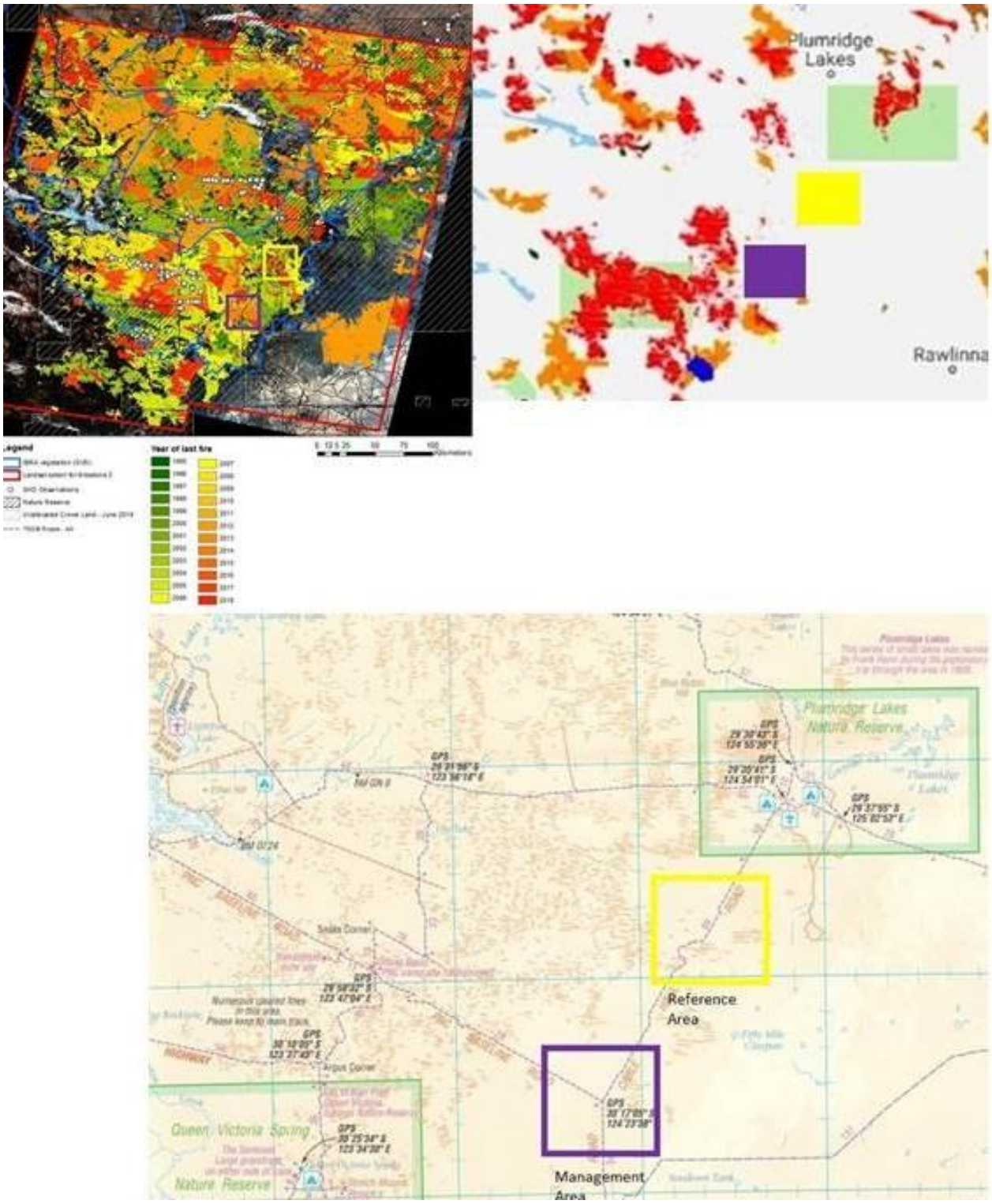


Figure 5. Approximate location of the management (purple square) and reference (yellow square) areas comprising the GVD Landscape Conservation Initiative. Maps also show generic fire scar histories representing ‘year since last burn’.

By implementing land management primarily using prescribed burning, and collecting monitoring information, this trial will provide an evidence-based approach to understand and quantify the benefits of small-scale burning – later combined with introduced predator control - on biodiversity with a view to translate positive management benefits to biodiversity elsewhere in the GVD.
The project has been termed the GVD Landscape Conservation Initiative (LCI). The objective of the LCI is to reduce the extent and intensity of wildfires, and the impacts of invasive animals on threatened species, by monitoring the effectiveness of managed fire. This project is expected to commence in July 2020 and reviewed annually.

Key questions:

1) How effective is patch burning for protecting species with fire sensitive habitats from regular damaging, large, 'hot' bushfires over the short-term (e.g. 5 years)?
2) How effective is patch burning coupled with introduced predator control at benefiting the biodiversity over the short-term (e.g. 5 years)?
3) What will be the response of introduced predators to an annual control program?

The project has two key components in its start-up phase (Year 1):

1) Collect baseline data in the managed and unmanaged areas for:
    a) spatial fire history attributes and spatial vegetation cover, including updates to the fire scar maps to include 2020 data
    b) fauna (small mammals including Sandhill Dunnarts, reptiles, Malleefowl)
    c) vegetation
2) Commence prescribed burns of targeted vegetation age aligned to the Fire Plan.

### 5.1.2 Ground-truthing Malleefowl mounds

With the LiDAR survey detecting a reasonable number of 'targets' which may represent Malleefowl mounds, and with eased Covid-19 regional restrictions lifted, the Trust has scheduled to ground truth Category 1 and 2 mound targets detected through the LiDAR. The Trust will also verify several Category 3 and 4 targets that are en-route to Category 1 and 2 mound targets.

This project is expected to be completed by August 2020.

### 5.1.3 Attendance at the Southern Deserts Ranger Forum

The Trust aims to continue to network with the community and present its objectives and findings among stakeholders. One opportunity is the Indigenous Desert Alliance's Southern Desert Ranger Forum. This next Forum is expected to be an online Forum and an opportunity for the Trust to attend as a stakeholder in the region and to learn about the activities that are currently being undertaken as priorities for Indigenous Ranger groups.

## 5.2 Stakeholder Engagement

### 5.2.1 Ten Deserts – Buffel Free GVD

The Trust has continued to participate in meetings with the Buffel Free GVD working group. The Trust continues to work with this project to develop future Buffel grass management projects including Ranger education packages.

# Appendix 1: Statement of Transactions 2019-2020 FY

## Statement of Transactions

MR . GREAT VICTORIA DESERT BIODIVERSITY TRUST FUND

Client Reference: 33111845 Contact: TM39

Public Trustee Activity TRST / 1

Statement of Transactions Number 10

Statement Period from 30/06/19 to 30/06/20

| Date | Transaction Details | Payments | Receipts |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Opening Balance as per Statement of Account Dated 30/06/2019** | | **1697738.17** |
| | **OTHER PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS** | | |
| 04-JUL-19 | TRUST EXPENSES JUNE - ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI | 6209.06 | |
| 19-JUL-19 | LIDAR AERIAL SURVEY - KYLIE PAYNE | 5120.00 | |
| 19-JUL-19 | FINAL DATA STANDARDS DOC - KYLIE PAYNE | 640.00 | |
| 06-AUG-19 | TRUST EXPENSES JULY - ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI | 6175.17 | |
| 14-AUG-19 | GVDBT NEWLETTER - KYLIE PAYNE | 3840.00 | |
| 28-AUG-19 | TRUST EXPENSES AUGUST - ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI | 13561.26 | |
| 02-SEP-19 | CHAIR OUT OF POCKET EXP. - VISION ENVIRONMENT | 1301.19 | |
| 26-SEP-19 | FIRE SCAR MAPPING M/S 2 - DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS | 18351.30 | |
| 27-SEP-19 | FIRE SCAR MAPPING M/S 1 - DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS | 18351.30 | |
| 30-SEP-19 | CR INTEREST 30/09/2019 | | 15796.93 |
| 01-OCT-19 | TRUST EXPENSES SEPTEMBER - ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI | 16363.02 | |
| 01-OCT-19 | SHD DOCUMEN UPDATE M/S 1 - GHD PTY LTD | 3694.68 | |
| 27-NOV-19 | COLLECTION OF CAMERAS - TURPIN TRADING TRUST - JEFF TURPIN | 660.00 | |
| 11-DEC-19 | SANDHILL DUNNART ADVICE - KINGFISHER ENVIROMENTAL | 660.00 | |
| 16-JAN-20 | INTEGRATED FIRE & PREDATO - NEIL BURROWS | 20625.00 | |
| 22-JAN-20 | TRUST AUDIT 2019 - ERNST & YOUNG | 6234.80 | |
| 30-JAN-20 | SUPPLY FINAL GUIDELINES - GHD PTY LTD | 14778.72 | |
| 05-FEB-20 | FIRE SCAR MAPPING M/S 3 - DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS | 18351.30 | |
| 03-MAR-20 | MALLEEFOWL MILESTONE 1 - NATIONAL MALLEEFOWL RECOVERY GROUP INC | 2000.00 | |
| 03-MAR-20 | RANGELANDS NRM MEMBERSHIP - RANGELANDS NRM WA | 55.00 | |
| 17-MAR-20 | FIRE SCAR MAPPING M/S 4 - DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS | 18351.30 | |
| 23-MAR-20 | AGA ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION | | 371962.00 |
| 31-MAR-20 | CR INTEREST 31/03/2020 | | 10137.51 |
| 04-MAY-20 | DEVELOP MALLEFOWL MONITOR - JOSEPH S BENSHEMESH | 9900.00 | |
| 18-MAY-20 | GST REFUND | | 44503.00 |
| 27-MAY-20 | FIRE SCAR MAPPING M/S 5 - DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS | 21501.70 | |
| 16-JUN-20 | IINET HOSTING EMAIL - IINET LIMITED (BILLER CODE 93880) | 17.50 | |
| 30-JUN-20 | TRUST EXPENSES - ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI | 113632.71 | |
| 30-JUN-20 | ASSET MANAGEMENT FEE | 10385.41 | |
| 30-JUN-20 | TRANSACTIONAL FEE | 2491.00 | |

MR . GREAT VICTORIA DESERT BIODIVERSITY TRUST FUND

Client Reference: 33111845 Contact: TM39 | Statement of Transactions Number 10

Public Trustee Activity TRST / 1 | Statement Period from 30/06/19 to 30/06/20

| Date | Transaction Details | Payments | Receipts |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Closing Balance | | 1806886.19 |

| Opening Balance | Total Payments | Total Receipts | Closing Balance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1697738.17 | 333251.42 | 442399.44 | 1806886.19 |