

Short Commentary

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Ngoolyark and Gnow in the Neighbourhood

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Received: November 10, 2025; **Accepted:** November 13, 2025; **Published:** November 24, 2025

Caring for Country on Goreng Noongar Boodja

Badgebup is situated on Goreng Noongar boodja (country) in Western Australia's Central Great Southern region. This landscape—characterized by low-lying, salt-affected land, which has been cared for by the Goreng people for over 60,000 years.

Despite the impacts of colonisation—including the suppression of language, culture, and lore, and the forced removal of their children—the Noongar people have shown extraordinary resilience, by continuing to hand down their traditional knowledge to future generations through environmental projects such as Ngoolyark and Gnow in the Neighbourhood.

The Badgebup, Kwobrup and Moornaming reserves are excellent breeding sites for the Carnaby cockatoos, comprising old growth Wandoo and several food sources. Guided by Elders and the six Noongar seasons, they hand down their traditional knowledge to the future generations through activities on-country.

For the Badgebup family, the Ngoolyark (Carnaby's Black Cockatoo) is a powerful totem representing family, resilience, and cultural continuity. Caring for the cockatoos is a community responsibility, with Elders, community members and graduates all involved in monitoring activities.

Badgebup and nearby Katanning lie at the crossroads of several Noongar songlines—Dreaming trails that connect the past, present, and future. Through consultation with Noongar Elders, the Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) is actively connecting community to culture and language through Aboriginal Place Names and cultural immersion programs.

Restoring Biodiversity and Habitat

Today, Goreng country is largely used for agriculture, resulting in fragmented landscapes, salt-affected soils, and significant loss of native vegetation. Even remaining bushland often lacks understory due to livestock grazing, leading to reduced biodiversity. Conservation reserves now serve as vital refuges for species like the Ngoolyark, the Gnow (Malleefowl), and the Red-tailed Phascogale.

BAC is now working to restore biodiversity through inclusive conservation efforts that blend Indigenous knowledge with ecological science. In partnership with Southwest Natural Resource Management (SWNRM), BirdLife Australia, and the National Malleefowl Recovery Group (NMRG), BAC is leading the “Ngoolyark and Gnow in the Neighbourhood” project.

Since 2019, BAC has planted more than 600,000 trees across Badgebup, Dumblebung, Pingrup, Nyabing and Kojonup—on Goreng, Wilman, and Kaneang country. Initially aimed at supporting the Red-tailed Phascogale and improving soil and fodder conditions, these plantings now also benefit Ngoolyark and Gnow populations.

Protecting the Gnow (Malleefowl)

Surveys for Malleefowl habitat have been conducted in several areas in Goreng country, including Merilup, Dongalocking and Cowcher reserves. The Rangers, trained by NMRG and SWNRM, use grid-based searches and LiDAR technology to locate active nests.



The Badgebup Rangers and BirdLife Australia have conducted several nesting surveys using pole-mounted cameras to inspect hollows in century-old trees. These surveys have identified many natural nesting sites, and some artificial nesting boxes to support breeding. BAC and SWNRM are also collaborating with landholders to fence and revegetate areas, enhancing foraging habitat in line with the Carnaby's Cockatoo Recovery Plan.



To further support Malleefowl habitat, corridors are being created around Cowcher Reserve using hundreds of thousands of tube stock seedlings. These corridors serve dual purposes: carbon sequestration and protective cover from predators like foxes and cats. Pest control remains critical to sustaining Malleefowl populations, which have declined by 50% in size and lost over a third of their breeding range since the 1940s.



Blending Knowledge Systems for Conservation

This collaborative project demonstrates the power of integrating traditional ecological knowledge with scientific methods. Through shared decision-making, trust and capacity have grown with our partners. The outcomes show that ethical, inclusive conservation can deliver tangible benefits for biodiversity, cultural heritage, and community empowerment.

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