

Chapter 11

Commitment to our country

*Cherry Daniels, Edna Nelson, Julie Roy and Priscilla
Dixon with Emilie Ens and Gillian Towler*

This chapter is based on recorded conversations about the history of the Yugul Mangi Rangers between female Yugul Mangi rangers – Cherry Daniels (retired), Edna Nelson, Julie Roy and Priscilla Dixon – and non-Indigenous scientists from the Australian National University – Emilie Ens and Gill Towler. The majority of the conversations were held in English and sometimes the women discussed things with each other in Kriol, the lingua franca (main spoken language) of the region. Cherry, as the most senior woman, did most of the talking and therefore, parts of the chapter are written with Cherry as the first person using direct quotes from the recording. The other women clarified or verified things she said and sometimes spoke about other events or stories. The conversations were held in the Ngukurr Language Centre and at different places along the bank of the Roper River in October 2011. We sought further documented information and recollections from other people to substantiate some of the dates and details of which the women were unsure. Emilie has worked with the Yugul Mangi Rangers since September 2008 and was ‘adopted’ and given a skin name by Cherry Daniels as her granddaughter, her *abuji*. Gill’s skin name is *Burlanjan*, which according to Indigenous kinship systems, makes her Cherry’s sister, her *baba*.

The Yugul Mangi Rangers are based in Ngukurr and work on behalf of the Yugul Mangi traditional owners – the Marra, Ngandi, Alawa, Nunggubuyu, Ritharrngu, Wandarrang and Ngalakgan people of the lower Roper River and Gulf of Carpentaria region of south-eastern Arnhem Land (Figure 11.1). Yugul Mangi is said to mean ‘together as one’. Their management area covers approximately 20,000 square kilometres of land and sea country.

A bit about Ngukurr

Ngukurr is situated on the northern bank of the Roper River, 120 kilometres upstream from Port Roper, the mouth of the Roper River in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

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