

Snowchange Discussion Paper # 10

***Field Report from the Mandingalbay Yidinji and Djunbunji  
Indigenous Australian Visit, February 2016***

Tero Mustonen

## Abstract

*This photo essay describes a Snowchange visit to the Mandingalbay Yidinji and Djunbunji Land and Sea Indigenous Australian programmes in Queensland, Australia. The discussion paper presents some of the solutions the traditional owners are running to restore the East Trinity Reserve, a heavily damaged area close to Cairns. The ecological restoration and innovative solutions, including use of lime and solar-powered pH meters are world class in restoration of acidic soils. The lessons applied in East Trinity Reserve are a much-needed comparative view from the Wet Tropics to Jukajoki restoration activities in Finland that Snowchange coordinates – both sites suffer from the same acidic problems. Community-led ecological restoration that includes traditional knowledge of the local and Indigenous peoples is still emerging – thus a direct exchange between these sites is highly appreciated.*

Snowchange is very thankful for all support and coordination to all people in Yarrabah and the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme, especially Jon DeLaine and all rangers that made the visit possible. Victor Steffensen allowed the connection to happen and assisted in making the trip up North and to the Reserve possible – he deserves many thanks for that! All communities and hosts, including Peter and Marilyn Wallace, the Steffensen family, Wujal Wujal residents and the traditional owner, Elder Tommy George, as well as other people who helped – thank you!

## **1. Introduction: Connection with Queensland Indigenous Communities**

Since 2008 Snowchange has partnered with Mulong, a company that specializes in the traditional Indigenous knowledge work all over Australia, especially in Queensland. Victor Steffensen, an Indigenous Australian who specializes in community services, filmmaking and fire knowledge as well as educational initiatives in Australian communities, leads Mulong. This photo essay documents the exchange between Mulong, Snowchange and the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme.



*The visit in February focused on the Wet Tropics Indigenous outstations and communities close to Cairns, including Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah and others.*



*Willie's band from Kurranda played on a Saturday night in Davies Creek National Park.*



*The Coral Sea provides for the Wet Tropics Indigenous community fisheries and is a world-class biodiversity hotspot with the Great Barrier Reef just in close proximity.*



*Dr. Tommy George is an Indigenous knowledge holder and Elder, currently residing in Cooktown, QLD. He initiated, together with mr. Steffensen, many of the culture-reviving activities of the Mulong. It was a great honour to be able to visit Dr. Tommy George.*



*Snowchange has worked with Marilyn Wallace in the international context in the IPCC Workshop in 2012 in Cairns and in the Ecocultures 2012 held at the University of Essex in the UK. Pictured here with her husband Peter, and Tero Mustonen on a visit, they keep the culture and land-based activities in their country.*

## 2. Visit to East Trinity Reserve and the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme



*The coasts of Yarrabah.*



*East Trinity Reserve, close to Cairns, suffers from man-made problems. The previous drainage of lands for sugarcane production lowered water tables leading to an acidic soil problem once the earth interacted with the air. Now the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme is leading world-class restoration activities in the Reserve to nurture it back to health and manage the species and diversity of the area.*



*The reserve has developed into an important habitat for various waders, including these Black Winged Stilts. The development into a nationally relevant bird habitat is almost identical to the Linnunsuo wetland in the Jukajoki catchment area in North Karelia, Finland.*



*Tidal waters traverse across the Reserve depending on the time of the day.*



*The acidity is being monitored with these solar powered units that the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme Rangers visit daily. The data feed is then transmitted to a regional university and authorities for real-time monitoring of the pH levels. This is a first responder system to avoid any problems with a possible sudden drop in the pH levels.*



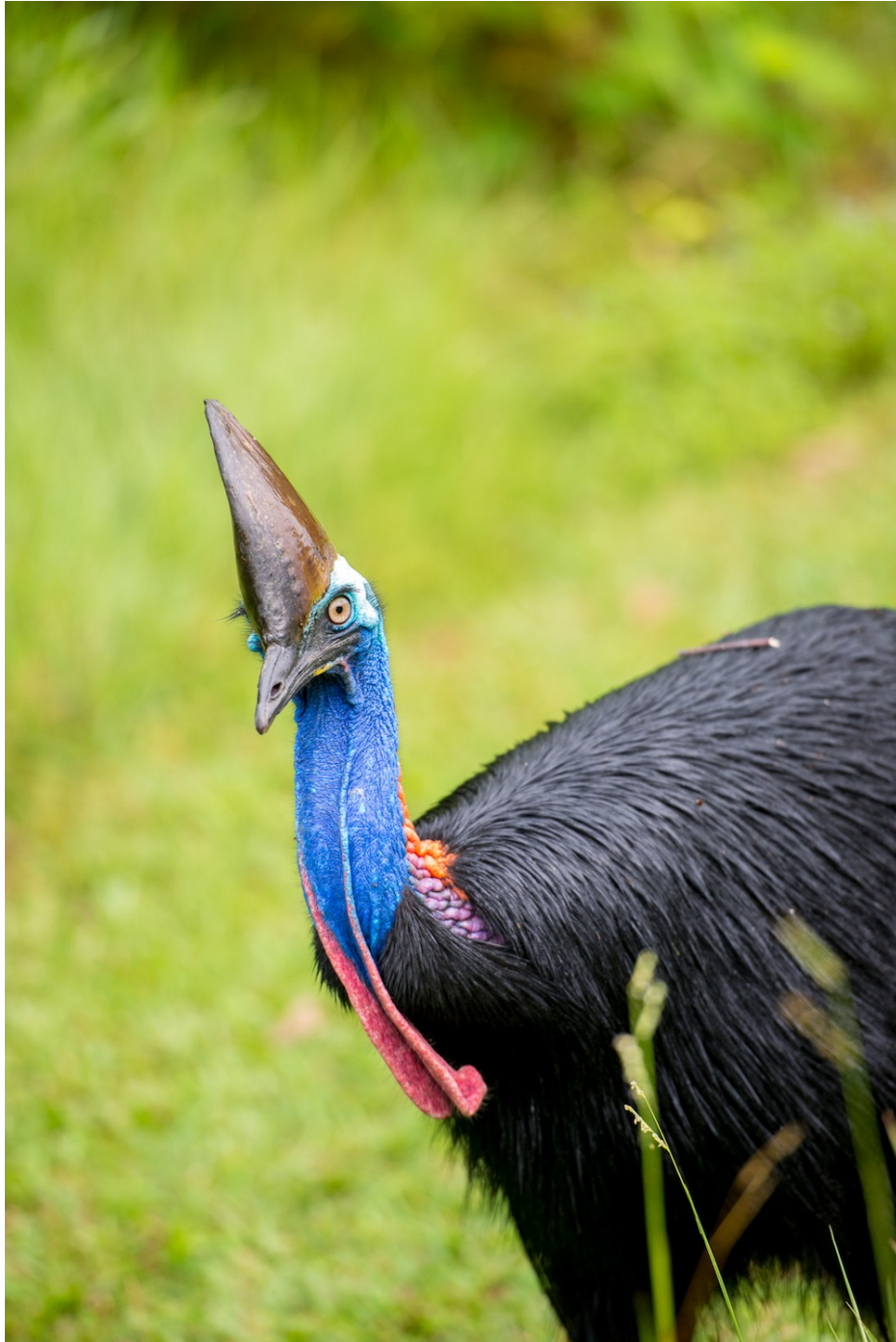
*Lime is used to control the acidity. Here, a mobile lime station dispenses the lime as needed and then the tidal waters wash the lime upstream to all parts of the reserve. In Jukajoki we have used lime stations in forest ditches that are more robust, but for the East Trinity Reserve this method of dispensing the lime works best and is very effective.*



*East Trinity Reserve has been declared as an Indigenous Protected Area.*



*Salt-water crocodiles, like this individual, are culturally very significant to the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme people. Great care needs to be taken when working in the Reserve, especially during nighttime. Photo: Jon DeLaine, Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme, 2016.*



*The Cassowary is the symbol of the Wet Tropics, with only 2000 birds left in the wild.  
Photo: Jon DeLaine, Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme, 2016.*

### 3. Conclusions



*The efforts of the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme Rangers in the area of East Trinity Reserve restoring and monitoring, as well as 3D modelling of traditional land uses have gained international recognition. It is a world-class programme and Snowchange and the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme have agreed on visits and exchanges of information on restoration of acidic soils and community-led monitoring programmes. While the Jukajoki restoration and East Trinity Reserve are on the opposite sides of the Earth, the issues are almost identical – and so are the solutions. Both sites have emerged as major bird habitats and watershed restoration solutions. Snowchange is very thankful for all the support and activities to the Djunbunji Land and Sea Programme Rangers and especially to Jon DeLaine and Victor Steffensen for organising a visit of a lifetime.*