

ALA's Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Program

Connecting Traditional and Western science

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

The Atlas of Living Australia's (ALA) Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) program supports collaboration with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, promotes Indigenous ecological knowledge and languages, and links this knowledge to Western science.

Indigenous ecological knowledge is based on thousands of years of studying native plants, animals and the environment. It showcases Indigenous peoples' rich and nuanced understanding of local ecosystems and the impact that this has on environmental protection.

"Traditional Owners have been our scientists and land managers for more than 65,000 years and this knowledge is integral to how we manage Country into the future"

– Nat Raisbeck-Brown,
ALA IEK Program Lead.



⤴ The Mulga Snake (*Pseudechis australis*) is called "Bandiyan" in Kriol language, via iNaturalist. 📷 pratty90 CC BY NC



This knowledge has been passed down across thousands of years using narration, demonstration and life experience, and through language program initiatives, are now being widely captured and shared through books, websites, social media, apps and more.

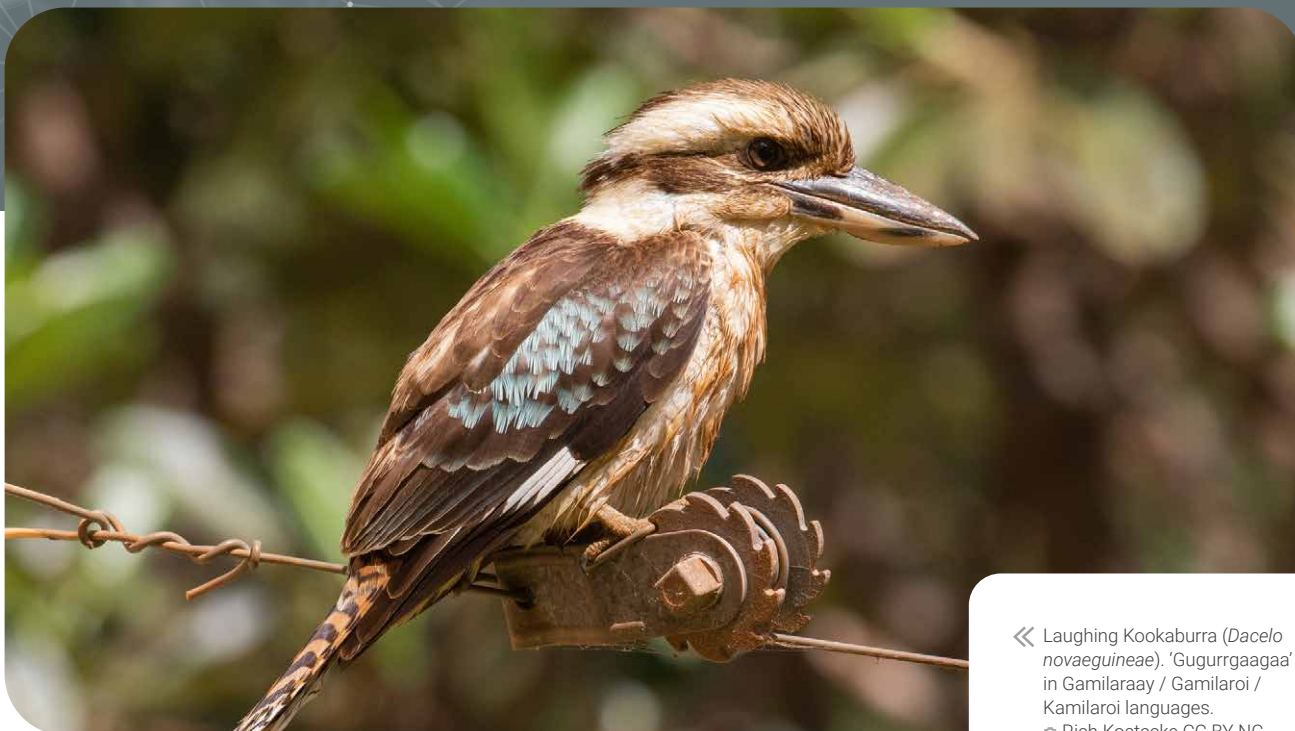
The ALA's IEK program is working to build greater awareness of Indigenous land management practices, species knowledge and the environment in an effort to acknowledge and share Indigenous peoples' long-held understanding of caring for Country.

The program provides thousands of names and information on hundreds of native Australian species. This information has been made

available through the ALA through the collaboration and translation of Indigenous languages with multiple Traditional Owner groups. We are proud to be able to help share some of this valuable knowledge and to make it accessible through the ALA.

By sharing the knowledge of Australia's first scientists' understanding of ecological practices, researchers, government industry and the general public have the opportunity to learn and integrate these practices with Western science to ultimately achieve stronger environmental outcomes for Australia.

Find out more at ala.org.au/indigenous-ecological-knowledge ▶



« Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*). 'Gugurrgaagaa' in Gamilaraay / Gamilaroi / Kamilaroi languages.
 © Rich Kostecke CC BY NC

Indigenous language names in the ALA

Names are the building blocks of the ALA with lists, hierarchies and taxonomy (classification) of species information underpinning the structure of the database.

As such, the ALA has been working with Indigenous knowledge holders to integrate traditional plant and animal names into the ALA to make this information widely discoverable and accessible.

Western biological science is built on a naming system that assigns a unique Latin name for each species. These Latin names are used throughout global scientific communities and are the basis of a common language in Western biological sciences. However, Indigenous names are

often built around their purpose and/or their relationship to other plants and animals. They form part of a greater story that carries traditional knowledge of the species - for example, what it is, what it's used for, when and who uses it.

The ALA has so far worked with knowledge holders from the Kamilaroi nation (north east NSW and south east QLD), Noongar-Wudjari (southern WA), and Ngukurr's Yugul Mangi (South East Arnhem Land).

The ALA's IEK program collaborator Denise Smith-Ali, of the Noongar Boodjar Language Centre, says this work helps keep local languages and knowledge alive.

"It's so important to keep Indigenous languages alive. By capturing the knowledge and teachings of our Elders and making this discoverable through avenues like the ALA, we're ensuring that traditional practices are preserved for generations to come,"

– Denise Smith-Ali of the Noongar Boodjar Language Centre.

Thanks to the generous support of Indigenous ecological knowledge holders and our partners, thousands of Indigenous language names and species data have been added to the ALA, making this information widely accessible and discoverable. We look forward to continue evolving this program into the future.

For more information visit: ala.org.au
 or contact support@ala.org.au.

