

IDENTIFYING CULTURALLY MODIFIED TREES IN THE PILBARA

INTRODUCTION

Culturally Modified Trees (CMT) help inform the narrative of human occupation in the Pilbara, but a standardised method of identification and recording has not been established. A review of the available literature shows a gap in North-Western Australian studies. A desktop study was undertaken with plans to conduct fieldwork to test a Pilbara specific identification checklist in the coming year.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify CMTs/non-cultural with more certainty
- Create consistency in recording

METHODS

- Literature review of published work
- Desktop research of CMTs



Are these culturally modified?



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Standardised attributes & checklist for Pilbara CMTs (Field guide to CMTs)
- Potential to compare objects (e.g. yandi dishes) held in museum with scars from trees
- Consultants to start using consistent attributes when recording CMTs

References

Long, A. 2005, *Aboriginal scarred trees in New South Wales: a field manual*, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation.
Byrne, D. 1997, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Standards and Guidelines Kit*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.
Morrison, M., & Shephard, E. 2013, The archaeology of culturally modified trees: Indigenous economic diversification within colonial intercultural settings in Cape York Peninsula, northeastern Australia, *Journal of Field Archaeology*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 143-160.

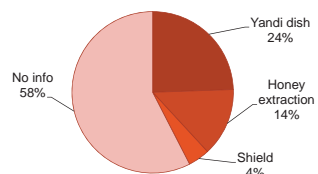
Further information

Contact Rachel Bulloch – Rachel.Bulloch@bhpbilliton.com



Use of coolamon dish

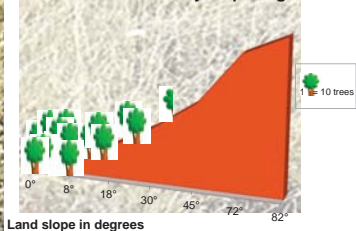
Consultant recorded use of scar



DESKTOP RESULTS

- No published work for the Pilbara on CMTs, overuse of Eastern States literature and criteria.
- Limited understanding what trees are used for
- Consultants record varying attributes
- CMTs found more often on lower slope degree

Number of CMTs by slope degrees



Land slope in degrees

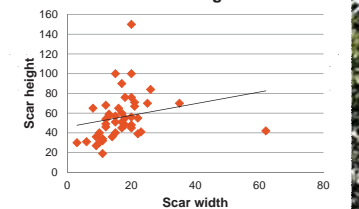


Separation of minerals using a yandi



Sleeping in a wooden dish

Yandi dishes scar height vs width



ATTRIBUTES TO RECORD

SCAR:

- Scar dimension - Height, width, thickness (inside scar)
- Orientation
- Height above ground level
- Shape of scar
- Amount of regrowth - Thickness and width
- Any evidence of implements used
- Proposed use

TREE:

- Height of tree
- Girth of tree at 1.5 metres
- Tree species
- Estimated age of tree
- Other features (e.g. other bark removal, fallen branches)
- Number and location of branches on tree
- Evidence of disease or other factors
- Evidence of insects
- Evidence of fire

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT:

- Slope class
- Surrounding vegetation
- Water in the vicinity
- Other trees of same species in area
- Any artefacts in general area



Hollowing out a wooden dish with a stone adze (c.1940s)

Thankyou to the Banjima and Nyiyaparti people for use of tree photos.

Historical photos: National Library Australia <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn6107154> & <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn4926887> & <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn4900623>. Shield photo: State Library of NSW, item no: BCP 04748. Yandying photo: Don McLeod, *How the West Was Lost*, self published, Port Hedland, 1984. Modern coolamon photo: <http://www.wangkamaya.org.au/pilbara-history-and-culture>