

First Nation knowhow to help save our landscapes

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The deep knowledge of First Nation (Aboriginal) people is being called on as part of a nationwide effort to stem the tide of extinction and decline that is engulfing the Australian landscape and its wildlife.

At a major scientific meeting in Canberra today, a new website will be unveiled which brings together thousands of records documenting Aboriginal traditional knowledge about Australian native landscapes, plants and animals.

The knowledge is presented in the form of a world-first map, which records publically-available Australian Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge (IBK) that is place-based. The detailed content of the identified documents is only made available with the express permission of the Aboriginal communities which own it.

Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous scientists and managers are currently working together on hundreds of projects across Australia to understand and better manage country using a combination of indigenous bio-cultural knowledge and ecological science.

The map draws together, for the first time worldwide, the wealth of projects, documents, reports, research and management plans where Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge is being used and Aboriginal people are adding value to today's understanding of Australian ecology and [land management practices](#).

This website maps the places where projects have been or are being carried out, documents results and provides examples of current leading practice, useful information and case studies of "living knowledge" and its practical application.

These include cases of Aboriginal-led landscape restoration, fire management, knowledge about native plants and animals and knowledge about

wetlands and other important ecosystems.

"This is the first time that Aboriginal knowledge about landscape and Australian [ecological science](#) have been brought together across the whole continent in a single resource," says ACEAS director Associate Professor Alison Specht

"It also represents a major contribution to documenting and preserving [traditional knowledge](#) for future generations of Aboriginal people – and for all Australians."

The project is part of a worldwide trend to bring the knowledge held by First Nation peoples together with science and conservation policy, and makes Australia one of the global leaders in this field, she says.

"We have shown that all of Australia's conservation priorities could be greatly informed by Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge - although the existing opportunities far outweigh the advances made to date," says the team behind the project, in a soon to be published discussion paper. The ACEAS IBK Working Group is led by Dr Emilie Ens and includes twenty Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and land managers from around Australia.

"Threats to global environments are increasing, so it is timely to rethink our ecological knowledge base and develop more holistic and inclusive research, management and funding options for the future.

"Enhanced cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary engagement has great potential to strengthen global capacity to build socio-ecological resilience for ... inclusive and sustainable environmental management strategies."

Provided by Australian Centre for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis

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