



Cable Beach Ghost Gum

Gunurru
A Broome Local



Characteristics

Minyirr Park is a good place to see Cable Beach Ghost Gum (CBGG), behind the coastal dunes and on the edge of pindan woodland. Many of the gums can also be seen along the highway before the Cape Leveque turnoff.

Ghost gums are known by Yawuru people as Gunurru. Flower-buds form during Larja (build-up) season and spectacular flower clusters are produced during early Man-gala (rainy season), usually in December.

Flowering of Gunurru is a seasonal indicator that tells Yawuru people that birndany (stingray) and jurrawayi (sliteye shark) are fat and good for eating.

The profuse blossoms provide food for honeyeaters, lorikeets, nimanburr (fruit-bats), biyarrimbin (native bees) and beetles. The narrow, flute-shaped buds are arranged in clusters on thin stalks and have cream-coloured caps.

Other ghost gums have wide or cup-shaped buds. The Weeping Ghost Gum *Corymbia bella* occurs north of Broome and the Wrinkle-leafed Ghost Gum *C. flavescens* to the south and east.



Corymbia paractia



Corymbia flavescens



Corymbia bella



The Habitat Tree

CBGG provides shade for many animals including barrjarniny (agile wallabies). Garlgururru (kookaburras) and other birds use the branches as roosting sites. Skinks and geckos live on the trunks, and liyirr (cicadas) sing in the treetops. Liyirr emerge onto the trunks of Gunurru during Man-gala season and discard their cases.

The characteristic peeling bark of Gunurru exposes smooth white bark underneath. The wood can be used to make coolamons, and burlgara (ash from burnt bark) is mixed with chewing tobacco.

Mature CBGG act as nursery trees, offering sheltered germination sites for plants including some from nearby Endangered Monsoon Vine Thickets.

Tree hollows provide refuge for jalangardi (goannas), gulamana (frillneck lizards) and langkurr (possums), and nesting sites for birds including owls. Hollows only develop in mature trees.

The Project

Environs Kimberley, with funding from Eucalypt Australia, has worked with Society for Kimberley Indigenous Plants and Animals, Nyamba Buru Yawuru and Broome Botanical Society to map populations of CBGG.

During field work we mapped 2095 individual trees in 2013–14 and 798 in 2016.

Reports detailing our findings are available at:

www.environskimberley.org.au

> Projects > Cable Beach Ghost Gum mapping

Threats

The greatest threat to CBGG is land-clearing as the town of Broome expands. There are proposals to clear areas near Broome that would result in the loss of many mature habitat trees and severely harm the plant community.

Invasive weeds, particularly Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) trees, are spreading into and degrading CBGG habitat. Weeds compete with native plants for light and nutrients. Frequent wildfires burn seedlings and eventually kill mature ghost gums.

Remnant trees on verges and suburban blocks provide important habitat and are at risk of being cleared. Gunurru was once much more common in the Broome township, occurring near Town Beach, Barker Street and behind the old hospital off Dora Street.

“Gunurru trees were right through that back hospital area; the best ash was from those trees.”

Jimmy Edgar, Yawuru elder





The estimated original distribution of the Cable Beach Ghost Gum

The Cable Beach Ghost Gum *Corymbia paractia* occurs in and around the Broome Peninsula and *nowhere else*. Other local gums are widespread across the Kimberley, occupying thousands of square kilometres.

Cable Beach Ghost Gum (CBGG) is listed as WA Priority One Ecological Community (PEC) — ‘*Corymbia paractia* dominated community on dunes’.

The former distribution of Cable Beach Ghost Gum was around 10 000 hectares. More than 1500 hectares (16.5%) are estimated to have been lost since the township was developed.

About 40% of the remaining trees are protected in parks and reserves. Many of the rest are exposed to development pressure.



Get involved – help protect the Cable Beach Ghost Gum

- Protect remnant CBGG and its habitat – advocate for environmentally responsible development.
- Plant more CBGG in the Broome region. SKIPA and Broome Shire are growing seedlings for planting in streets, parks and gardens. Collect a tree and plant it today.
- Assist SKIPA to grow and plant native species and help remove weeds from natural areas.
- Join SKIPA and Broome Botanical Society and learn about our local environment.

Contact

Environs Kimberley (EK) is the main conservation organisation protecting the natural values of the Kimberley region. Help support our efforts.

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