

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

4 July 2018

### **NEW REPORT REVEALS 100% ERADICATION OF FERAL PREDATORS IN FIGHT TO SAVE ENDANGERED TURTLES**

A new report released today by the Gnaraloo Wilderness Foundation (GWF) has revealed the nesting habitat at Gnaraloo, which is critical to the survival of endangered loggerhead turtles, has been protected through the unprecedented eradication of all feral predators.

Celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Gnaraloo Turtle Conservation Program (GTCP) and its partner Animal Pest Management Services, used insights generated through the world's most advanced location-based data analytics software – Esri's Geographic Information System technology – to underpin the eradication program.

The program saved more than 300,000 loggerhead turtle eggs from feral animals over the past eight years.

In publicly releasing the GTCP's 10-year sea turtle nesting baseline report today, GWF's Vice-Chair and Principal Scientific Officer Karen Hattingh said GIS technology had been invaluable during the work to monitor turtles, European red foxes, feral cats and wild dogs.

"The GTCP has also satellite-tagged 12 Gnaraloo turtles to uncover, for the first time, their migratory routes and foraging grounds," said Ms Hattingh.

"Through mapping and analysing the data, we've discovered the turtles migrate north along the West Australian coastline, and at times, cross Northern Territory waters to Queensland waters.

"One of the report's valuable findings was determining that after nesting, female loggerheads from Gnaraloo migrate thousands of kilometres to their foraging grounds in relatively quick times – in one case, swimming 4,700 kilometres in just 4.5 months to the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland waters.

"This knowledge is crucial to the loggerhead's survival as the States and Territories could use these insights to collaborate on issues for their conservation."

Over the past decade, the not-for-profit GTCP has raised over A\$3.6 million towards sea turtle conservation and feral animal control and have directly engaged 20,000 people in its work.

Group Managing Director for Esri Australia and Esri South Asia, Brett Bundock, commended GTCP for their progressive use of GIS technology to better understand and manage the dangers turtle populations face not only from predators, but also human activity.

"GTCP's efforts are pioneering and represent inventive spatial thinking at its best," said Mr Bundock.

"Inventive spatial thinking is changing our world. Today, it's helping conservation of the loggerhead turtle. Tomorrow, it could be the black cockatoo, greater bilbies, spotted-tail quolls or the great Tasmanian devils.

“Conservation is only the tip of the iceberg – there’s no denying spatial technology is driving change globally.”

Hatchlings on the Ningaloo coast have less than an estimated 0.05% chance of surviving to sexual maturity due to feral and native predators. Upon reaching sexual maturity, which may take 30 years for loggerheads, they only return to nest every two to five years.

“While these remarkable conservation achievements and the key findings outlined in this landmark report are milestones worthy of celebration – it is also bittersweet as it marks the end of current funding for our work,” said Ms Hattingh.

“The survival rate of loggerhead eggs and hatchlings at Gnaraloo may fall back to pre-2008 levels if the conservation work ends.

“To ensure this doesn’t happen, today we are launching our ‘Be A Turtle Friend’ campaign, which gives everyone the opportunity to help protect the loggerhead turtle population in this region.

“This campaign and membership will provide a unique opportunity for the community and businesses to co-fund this ongoing, important conservation work.”

To learn more about the GWF’s Be A Turtle Friend campaign, or to download the GTCP’s 10-year baseline report, visit: [www.gnaraloo.org](http://www.gnaraloo.org)

To learn more about location-based analytics and GIS technology, visit: [www.esriaustralia.com.au](http://www.esriaustralia.com.au)

## **ENDS**

### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

**B-roll of video and downloadable images is available here: [insert link to google drive]**

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#### **About GTCP**

The GTCP and Gnaraloo Feral Animal Control Program were formed in 2008 to identify, monitor and protect turtle nesting rookeries at Gnaraloo. Vital information on loggerhead turtle reproductive biology in the southeast Indian Ocean regional management unit is lacking, including nesting census data from key rookeries, which makes the Gnaraloo data important.

The not-for-profit GWF was created in 2016 in order to protect all native fauna and flora at Gnaraloo and involve the public in the conservation efforts.

Gnaraloo is located in the Ningaloo world heritage area.

#### **About Esri Australia**

Esri Australia is the country’s leading GIS technology provider and location-based analytics specialist.