2025 NORTHERN TERRITORY NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AWARDS

19 November, Darwin waterfront

Territory Natural Resource Management

www.territorynrm.org.au

Sustainable Enterprise & Producer Award

Award finalist!

Fergal O'Gara, Northern Tropical Agriculture

Fergal promotes sustainable agriculture across the Northern Territory and northern Western Australia, focusing on soil health as the key to productivity and resilience. Through his independent agronomy work, he encourages farmers to use legumes in cropping and grazing systems, adopt no- or low-till seeding, maintain ground cover, and carry out regular soil testing. These practices improve soil structure and organic matter, reduce erosion, cut reliance on chemicals, and boost long-term productivity and sustainability.

In 2025, Fergal organised the Legumes Field Day at Gorrie Station to promote legumes and improved cropping on the Sturt Plateau. As part of the University of Queensland's Climate Smart Agriculture trial, he also provided land for research and shared findings on improving sandy soils.

Fergal supports peer learning through the Regen Inspiration WhatsApp group, where he shares practical, experience-based advice with producers and extension staff. He often provides independent, unpaid guidance and hosts field events on his property. His long-term dedication shows a genuine commitment to protecting the NT's landscapes and promoting sustainable land management.

Sustainable Enterprise & Producer Award

Award finalist!

Gorrie Station

Gorrie Station, managed by Jake and Kate Nelder, has adopted an innovative and sustainable grazing system that combines legumes, rotational grazing, and no-till practices. Making the most of the Northern Territory's strong wet season rainfall, they grow multi-species fodder crops, including legumes, which improve soil nitrogen, fodder quality, and cattle nutrition year-round. This system reduces soil disturbance, maintains mulch cover, and strengthens soil structure, supporting long-term productivity and environmental resilience.

The approach offers wide benefits. Environmentally, it improves moisture retention, reduces erosion, and enhances soil fertility, lowering the need for chemical fertilisers. For businesses, it provides access to higher-quality forage that supports better livestock growth and productivity. Across the industry, Gorrie Station shows that productivity can increase without large capital costs, offering a practical model for smaller pastoral operators.

To share their success, Gorrie Station hosted a field day with agronomist Fergal O'Gara, showcasing the benefits of integrating legumes, zero-tillage, and rotational grazing. Their adaptive, low-cost system demonstrates how local knowledge and practical agronomy can sustain productivity while protecting natural resources.

Sustainable Enterprise & Producer Award

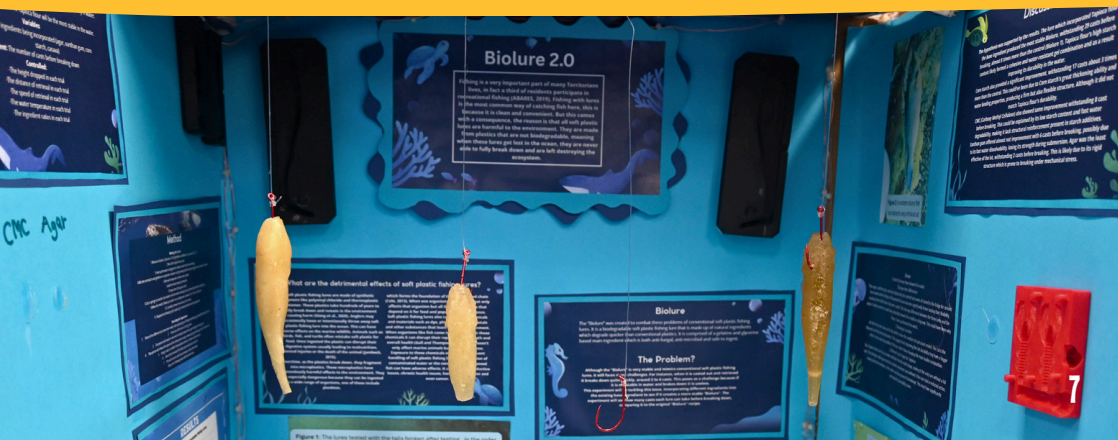
Award finalist!

Khadim Noor Costino, Tye Beer, Kian Guerreiro and Arsenii Maksimov - Students of Dripstone Middle School

Fishing is a cherished tradition and pastime in the Northern Territory, but the widespread use of plastic lures has become a serious environmental concern. Lost or discarded lures made from non-biodegradable materials like PVC can persist in waterways for centuries and are often eaten by fish, turtles, and seabirds, causing injury or death.

To tackle this issue, a group of Year 9 students created Biolure - a biodegradable fishing lure designed to protect aquatic ecosystems and support sustainable fishing. Made from five natural ingredients, with a gelatin and glycerine base, Biolure is antifungal, antimicrobial, and breaks down quickly, preventing long-term harm to marine life. Their first design, Biolure 1.0, won the ASTA i³ National Award in the Young Scientist Competition but lacked durability. The students improved it with the more stable and sustainable Biolure 2.0. Showcased at the 2025 Dripstone Science Fair, Biolure 2.0 attracted strong community and industry interest, sparking widespread enthusiasm among students, anglers, and local residents to adopt innovative and sustainable fishing solutions.

By addressing a real environmental challenge through creativity and science, Biolure 2.0 reduces plastic waste while encouraging local innovation and small business opportunities. It shows how science-driven ideas can protect natural resources, support sustainable fishing practices and promote a more sustainable fishing culture across the Northern Territory.



Best Collaboration in Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)

NAILSMA leads the Protecting Country Against Invasive Species (PCAIS) Program, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The program empowers Indigenous ranger groups across northern Australia including twelve in the Northern Territory, to manage invasive species through training, monitoring, and knowledge sharing. PCAIS provides on-ground support through regional coordinators, ensuring rangers have the skills, governance frameworks, and safety knowledge needed for effective pest and weed control. Collaboration between NAILSMA and ranger groups has fostered strong partnerships and improved landscape-wide coordination.

To strengthen coordination in feral pig control work, Indigenous ranger groups were supported to attend the National Feral Pig Conference and participate in an Indigenous Feral Pig Workshop hosted by NAILSMA which promoted Indigenous leadership and networking in invasive species management.

Over the past 18 months, the program supported ranger exchanges, formal and informal training, invasive species consultations, and control activities involving 594 Indigenous Rangers and Traditional Owners.

By building ranger capacity and supporting collaboration networks, the initiative is laying a strong foundation for Indigenous-led environmental stewardship and ongoing invasive species control programs.

Best Collaboration in Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Territory Native Plants in collaboration with Landcare NT

The Top End Native Eco-Fair (Eco-Fair) is an annual community event designed to increase public understanding of Top End ecosystems and inspire action to protect local biodiversity. Organised by Territory Native Plants and Landcare NT, the event brings together over 25 collaborators, who combine their expertise to deliver a program of interactive education, cultural demonstrations, native plant giveaways, and activities focused on environmental stewardship. An emphasis is placed on engaging children and young people to foster the next generation of environmental champions.

The Eco-Fair's strength lies in collaboration. Local organisations, experts, and educators share their skills and knowledge across a range of topics, including plants, mammals, reptiles, birds, insects, soils, water and Larrakia cultural knowledge, demonstrating practical ways the community can contribute to maintaining healthy ecosystems.

The 2025 event attracted more than 2,500 attendees and was a great success. Visitors gained valuable knowledge about creating thriving native gardens to support local wildlife, conserving water, monitoring weeds, and more. Supported by strong partnerships and community enthusiasm, the Eco-Fair is set to continue growing as an event that strengthens collaboration and fosters environmental stewardship.

Research for Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers in collaboration with CDU - North Australia Centre for Autonomous Systems

This research addressed the growing problem of ghost nets and marine pollution along northern Australia's remote coastlines, which threaten biodiversity, cultural values, and marine life. It formed part of the Australian Government's Ghost Net Innovative Solutions Program.

Traditional helicopter surveys were costly, seasonal, and risky, limiting how often coastlines could be monitored. To address this, the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers (ALSR) partnered with Charles Darwin University's North Australia Centre for Autonomous Systems to trial drones as a safer, more cost-effective, and scalable monitoring tool within the Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area. Using high-resolution drone imagery and AI analysis, the team quickly identified ghost nets for targeted retrieval. Between 2024 and 2025, 223 kilometres of coastline were mapped and 265 ghost nets detected, with 54 removed by the ALSR using vehicles and the vessel Jarrangwa.

The project delivered lasting benefits through on-Country training, with Rangers and Anindilyakwa Land Council members gaining drone qualifications and licenses. This investment built local capacity for ongoing monitoring and set a strong example for technology-driven marine debris management across northern Australia.

Research for Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods - CDU in collaboration with Malak Malak Rangers

This research examined the impacts of climate change and water extraction on wetlands in Northern Australia, addressing a major knowledge gap in the Daly River Catchment. A key innovation was the partnership between CDU scientists and the Malak Malak Rangers, combining remote sensing and machine learning with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).

Rangers co-designed the mapping approach, collected field samples, validated maps, and began water quality monitoring. Integrating TEK improved map accuracy and ensured culturally important wetlands were included. The study produced the first detailed maps of wetland types and seasonal changes in the region, creating a model that can be applied to other tropical areas.

Findings showed that Daly Catchment wetlands are highly dynamic, shifting with wet-season rainfall. The collaboration strengthened knowledge sharing and built local capacity, with rangers trained in long-term wetland monitoring and management. Results were shared through conferences, publications, and media, ensuring the research is both scientifically valuable and practical for managers, policymakers, rangers, and communities.

By combining advanced remote sensing with Indigenous knowledge, the research has contributed to stronger collective capacity for natural resource management across the NT.

Research for Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods - CDU in collaboration with Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Water Resources Division - NTG

The Adelaide River Aquatic Ecosystem Mapping and Classification Project was a collaboration between Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Northern Territory Government's Department of Lands, Planning and Environment – Water Resources Division. It addressed a key knowledge gap: the lack of reliable data on wetland distribution, condition, and water quality in the Adelaide River Catchment. These data are vital for the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan and for managing aquatic ecosystems sustainably.

The project combined remote sensing with field surveys and installed 10 high-frequency water quality sensors along the Adelaide River, an area known for threatened species. It produced the first detailed wetland maps of the catchment and the first long-term (1987–2024) wetland maps in the NT. Two wetland condition indices and a new floodplain mapping method were also developed.

Findings revealed major trends in wetland extent and hydrological changes, helping identify ecological risks under different extraction scenarios. Results are now informing water allocation and conservation priorities. The project built strong collaboration and capacity, sharing outcomes through reports, conferences, and an online mapping tool that makes wetland data openly accessible.

NextGen in Natural Resource Management Award

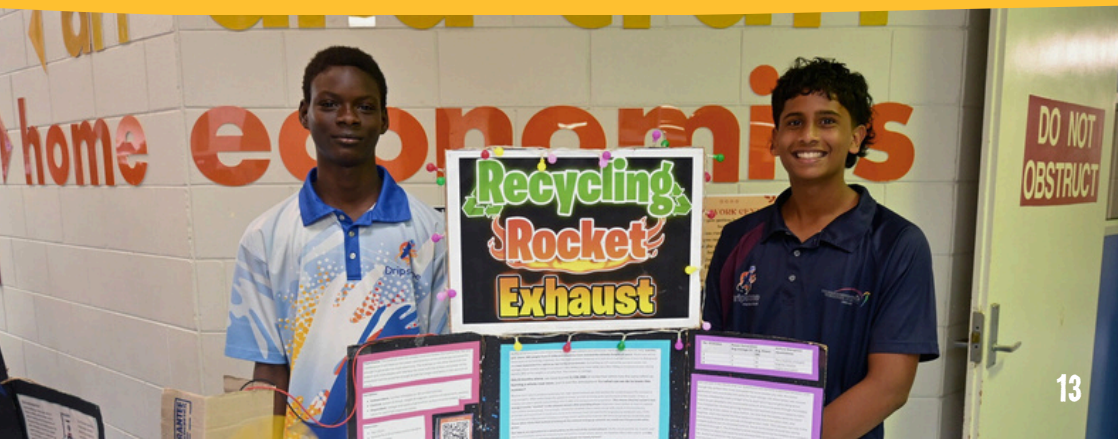
Award finalist!

Dripstone Middle School

The 2025 Dripstone Science Fair, themed "Unveiling the Mysteries of the Earth and Beyond," engaged 640 students across 170 projects combining creativity, investigation, and critical thinking. Students explored topics such as energy generation, biodiversity, sustainable food production, urban agriculture, and eco-friendly practices—showing how science can address global challenges.

Year 9 students demonstrated water electrolysis to produce hydrogen and oxygen, while Year 8 students built bee hotels, hive models, and interactive pollination displays linking science, sustainability, and Indigenous knowledge. Others grew plants in vertical systems to address urban food security and created natural products such as lip balms, dyes, hand sanitisers, and soaps using native plants.

Over 4–5 weeks, students worked in groups to research, experiment, and refine their ideas with teachers as facilitators. The fair drew parents, community members, and partners, who voted for their favourite projects via QR code. The event highlighted students' ability to problem-solve and present meaningful outcomes, fostering curiosity, creativity, and confidence in science.



NextGen in Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Numbulwar School

Senior students at Numbulwar School developed a bush tucker garden to grow traditional food plants in their natural environment as a hands-on, ongoing project. The initiative combines practical skills with traditional knowledge, helping students understand bush tucker species and their uses.

Students took part in every stage, from planting and using seaweed as fertiliser to learning about mulching, water conservation, and long-term care. Guided by their teacher's initial planning, they designed the garden, researched local species, planned the layout, and continue to maintain it. Their efforts have built pride, achievement, and excitement for future harvests. Using lemongrass from the garden in a soap-making activity further demonstrated the practical value of their work.

The project strengthens cultural connections by teaching sustainable and respectful use of natural resources. Future lessons with local rangers will explore bush tucker on Country and transplant native species into the garden. The community is invited to visit and help care for the garden during school breaks. The project also supports language preservation through learning traditional plant names.

Ranger of the Year Award

Award finalist!

Bernie Lewis, Bulgul Rangers - Northern Land Council

Bernie is a senior ranger from the Bulgul Community, known for his integrity, reliability, and dedication to caring for land and sea Country. He actively develops his skills in cultural heritage, ecological restoration, and sustainable land practices. Over the past year, Bernie trained as a Fisheries Inspector Class 1, improving his understanding of marine ecosystems, compliance, and sustainable fishing. This has strengthened local fisheries monitoring, raised community awareness of marine conservation, and built partnerships with Traditional Owners and government agencies, helping protect culturally significant marine areas.

Bernie demonstrates outstanding leadership and teamwork, collaborating with colleagues, community members, and partner organisations. He leads by example, listening, guiding, and motivating others, which strengthens team cohesion and improves outcomes in joint projects such as feral animal control, weed management, land care, and compliance patrols.

His mentorship inspires younger generations to reconnect with Country and pursue careers in the ranger program, ensuring traditional knowledge and environmental stewardship continue. Bernie's passion for Country, culture, and guiding others makes him a respected ranger whose leadership benefits both his community and the broader environment.

Ranger of the Year Award

Award finalist!

David Barrett, Marranbala Rangers

David grew up on the Limmen River and spent 16 years as a ranger with li-Anthawirriyarra, where he established the remote Marra outpost and helped lay the foundations for Namultja and Marranbala Rangers. Building on this work, he founded the Namultja Aboriginal Corporation, where he is Chairperson, and supported the Marranbala Healthy Country Plan.

Through an IRP bid in 2024–2025, he successfully established the Marranbala Ranger group and is now working to secure tenure of Wamungu Outstation as their operational base.

David's leadership and advocacy have strengthened partnerships with universities and researchers on projects about archaeology, mangroves, benthic habitats, seagrass, turtle tracking, and fish diversity. His efforts also contributed to the government's commitment to extend the Limmen Bight Marine Park. He continues to seek opportunities to improve communication, training, and economic initiatives for Marra people.

Dedicated to cultural identity and environmental care, David promotes the work of Marra and Namultja Rangers and has shared their achievements at several conferences. His mantra, "together we are stronger," reflects his vision for a sustainable and empowered Marra future.

Ranger of the Year Award

Award finalist!

Manbiyarra (Grant) Nayinggul, Njanjma Rangers - Northern Land Council

Manbiyarra (Grant) has been instrumental in re-establishing the Njanjma Rangers as an active and effective team. Over the past year, he has led surveys for the Arnhem Rock Skink and White-throated Grasswren around Gunbalanya and directed Mission Grass control at Injalak Hill, Beeswax Gorge, and the Red Lily area, protecting cultural rock art sites and maintaining the health of Country. His dedication has strengthened the Njanjma Rangers' capacity for land management.

As a Traditional Owner of the Manilakarr clan estate, Manbiyarra collaborates closely with his community and partners, including Injalak Arts, Kakadu National Park, and Warddeken Land Management. His strong communication skills make him a respected spokesperson, featuring in public outreach such as the NLC's social media campaign on East Alligator River permit requirements.

Manbiyarra continues to develop skills in weed management, fauna surveys, and fire management, sharing knowledge with fellow rangers to enhance team expertise. His leadership, cultural knowledge, and commitment to both Country and community have guided the Njanjma Rangers back on track, establishing him as an outstanding and influential Senior Ranger.

Indigenous Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Bulgul Land and Sea Rangers - Northern Land Council

The Bulgul Land and Sea Rangers have run a successful feral pig management program since 2014, protecting biodiversity, threatened species, and culturally important landscapes across 57,710 hectares of Country. Their work also helps protect the wider Finniss Reynolds catchment.

Feral pigs are a major threat to wetlands, floodplains, and woodlands, but their numbers have dropped from 909 in 2021 to 280 in 2025 under the Rangers' 2023–2028 Feral Pig Management Plan. The program combines Indigenous knowledge with science, using camera traps, ground trapping, and aerial culling in partnership with WildScience.

The project has improved habitat health, reduced erosion, and supported the recovery of native plants and threatened species such as the northern brushtail possum and northern quoll. The Rangers were early leaders in using biocontrol to manage invasive plants like mimosa and continue to share their expertise through regional networks. Guided by cultural priorities, Elders and Rangers work together to heal Country and pass on knowledge, strengthening cultural identity and long-term environmental stewardship.

Indigenous Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Larrakia Rangers

The Darwin Harbour Clean-Up is an annual event led by the Larrakia Rangers to reduce marine and coastal pollution by removing rubbish from the water and shoreline. It helps protect marine life, improve ecosystem health, and restore natural beauty. Combining traditional knowledge with conservation, the project achieves lasting results.

Since it began, more than 565 volunteers have collected many tonnes of waste across 314 kilometres of coastline. The clean-up benefits the environment, supports community wellbeing, and strengthens cultural connections to Country. It keeps culture strong, encourages knowledge-sharing between generations, and builds pride in being Larrakia.

The event also raises awareness about littering, promoting the message: "Bin it or take it with you." Volunteers include local residents, schools, community groups, government agencies, and Indigenous organisations.

By bringing people together, especially young people, the event creates opportunities to share stories and culture. For the Larrakia Rangers, the clean-up is both an environmental and cultural duty, protecting Country and inspiring others to care for land and sea.

Indigenous Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Ltyentye Apurte Rangers - Central Land Council

A collaboration between CSIRO, the Northern Territory Government, and the Ltyentye Apurte Rangers is restoring and protecting sacred springs within the Santa Teresa Aboriginal Land Trust. These springs are culturally significant to Traditional Owners but have been affected by feral animals, poor water quality, weeds, erosion, and past pastoral activity. Building on earlier work, the project shows how community involvement creates lasting results.

The team has improved spring health and water quality, restored native habitats, and managed feral animals and invasive weeds. Activities include clean-ups, water testing, and monitoring threatened species with camera traps.

Beyond environmental benefits, the project strengthens cultural knowledge, wellbeing, and intergenerational learning. Traditional Owners help design and lead restoration work, ensuring cultural practices guide management. Educational trips for children pass on traditional knowledge and deepen connection to Country.

A management guide is being developed to help other ranger groups care for arid zone springs. By combining traditional knowledge and science, the project protects sacred sites and fosters pride, connection, and responsibility for Country's long-term health.

Indigenous Natural Resource Management Award

Award finalist!

Tiwi Resources / Tiwi Rangers

The Tiwi Ranger Program has achieved the world's largest successful eradication of the Tropical Fire Ant (TFA, Solenopsis geminata) on the Tiwi Islands, covering 1,535 hectares over 22 years. Recognised as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species, TFA posed serious risks to human health, wildlife, and ecosystems. This success was made possible through collaboration between Tiwi Rangers, Tiwi communities, Myrmex Pty Ltd, the Tiwi Land Council, Tiwi Plantations Corporation, Tiwi Islands Regional Council, CSIRO, and many volunteers.

The eradication has protected habitats for threatened and endemic species, including 19 plant and 33 animal species. By combining Indigenous knowledge with best-practice, sustainable methods, the project has protected the Tiwi Islands' biodiversity and culturally important landscapes, while helping Tiwi people stay healthy on their Country. It also led to the discovery of 30 previously unknown ant species.

This internationally recognised achievement shows the power of long-term Indigenous-led conservation and how collaboration and cultural knowledge can deliver global success in protecting biodiversity and culture.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Award finalist!

Darryl Hill, Save Soil

Darryl Hill has dedicated over 50 years to natural resource management in the Northern Territory, working in roles from on-ground operations to regional facilitation and training. He began in 1973 as head stockman at Humbert River Station, later managing Mooloolloo outstation and serving as Officer in Charge at Victoria River Research Station. From 1988, he focused on soil conservation with the NT Conservation Commission, leading erosion control efforts and earning recognition as Territorian of the Year in 1994 for organising the first Aboriginal rodeo in Timber Creek.

Darryl returned to Humbert River in 1996 as caretaker-manager and conservation officer before relocating to Katherine to support land managers and communities across the region. He has delivered over 250 soil erosion and land rehabilitation workshops, teaching landholders, Indigenous rangers, machinery operators, and community groups how their actions affect water flow, soil stability, and landscape health.

Known for his approachable teaching style and deep field knowledge, Darryl has shared expertise through booklets, videos, and best-practice guides. His lifelong commitment to practical action and mentorship has strengthened communities' capacity to care for their land, leaving a lasting legacy of sustainable land management across northern Australia.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Award finalist!

Julie Roy,
Yugul Mangi Rangers - Northern Land Council

Julie Roy was born in Ngukurr and spent much of her childhood on an outstation learning from her elders. She joined the Yugul Mangi Rangers in 2001 and is now Assistant Ranger Coordinator. One of only two Indigenous Class I Fisheries Inspectors in South East Arnhem Land, Julie has shown a daily commitment to caring for Country for 24 years.

She inspires young people through the Learning on Country Program, on-country camps, rock art surveys, and language projects. Julie collaborated with Macquarie University and the Ngukurr Language Centre to document flora and fauna in the South East Arnhem Land IPA and translate them into Indigenous languages. Her knowledge of Country has been crucial in tackling environmental threats and supporting neighbouring groups with Healthy Country Planning.

Julie is a valued member of the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network, serves on the Roper River Governance Team and sits on the ALFA board. She champions women's leadership in ranger programs, showing their vital role in conservation and decision-making. Her lifelong dedication, leadership, and mentorship continue to inspire future generations to care for Country with pride and purpose.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Award finalist!

Oliver Scheibe,
Parks Australia - Kakadu National Park

Oliver Scheibe has dedicated 40 years to protecting and managing Kakadu National Park. He began as a ranger with Parks Australia and has held various roles, most recently Chief Ranger in the Headquarters District. His work spans fire management, crocodile surveys, feral animal control, biodiversity monitoring, visitor safety, and protecting cultural sites, always guided by respect for Bininj Mungguy and Kakadu's cultural and environmental values.

Oliver has mentored and trained generations of Indigenous rangers, fostering cross-cultural cooperation and strong relationships between Parks Australia and Traditional Owners. His leadership has ensured visitor safety through numerous search-and-rescue missions and emergency responses, often at personal risk. Known for his calm, humble, and respectful approach, he inspires colleagues and community members through resilience, professionalism, and dedication.

His long-time commitment has strengthened community empowerment, cultural understanding, and environmental stewardship, leaving a legacy of practical knowledge, leadership, and trusted relationships. Oliver's decades of service set the highest standards for natural resource management in the Northern Territory and will continue to shape Kakadu for generations.

People's Choice Award

Award finalists!

All finalists are eligible to win the People's Choice Award. True to it's name, the award is decided by YOU!

Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers
in collaboration with
Charles Darwin University -
North Australia Centre for Autonomous Systems

Bernie Lewis, Bulgul Rangers -
Northern Land Council

Bulgul Land and Sea Rangers -
Northern Land Council

Darryl Hill, Save Soil

David Barrett, Marranbala Rangers

Dripstone Middle School

Fergal O'Gara, Northern Tropical Agriculture

Gorrie Station

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Khadim Noor Costino, Tye Beer, Kian Guerreiro and Arsenii Maksimov -
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Larrakia Rangers

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Manbiyarra (Grant) Nayinggul, Njanjma Rangers -
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North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)

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Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods -
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Northern Territory Government

Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods -
Charles Darwin University in collaboration with
Malak Malak Rangers

Territory Native Plants in collaboration with Landcare NT

Tiwi Resources / Tiwi Rangers

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