

Recognizing the Importance of Freshwater Turtles in the NT

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The northern-long necked turtle

- Key traditional food
- Habitat: lowland waterways, billabongs, and seasonal wetlands on coastal floodplains



Traditional harvest

- During the dry season
- Found buried in the drying floodplains estivating



The place:

Munjirr Munjirr tjapatj wuda taddi
(Home Hill Little Jungle Billabong)

Rak Mak Marranunguu language



The turtle: Munjirr



The problem:

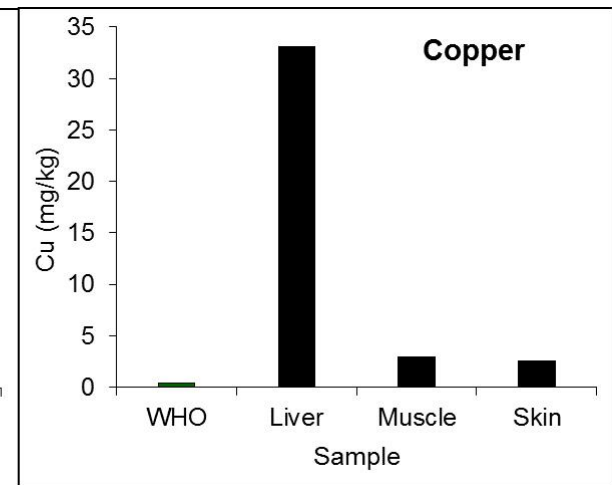
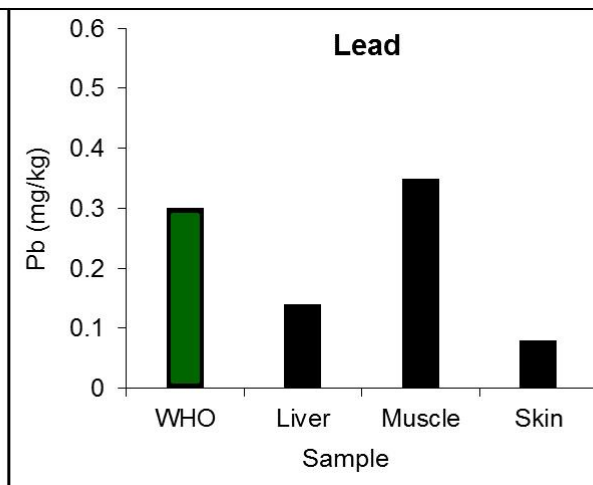
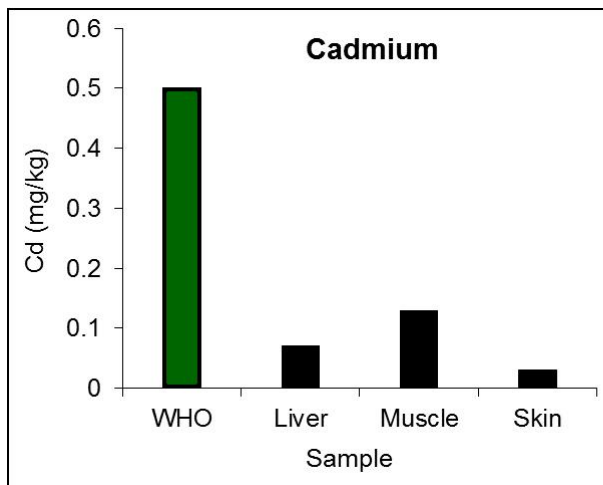
- Decline in health of harvested turtles

- Frequent sightings of dead turtles



Heavy metal contamination?

- Downstream of Rum Jungle Mine
 - Some animals = Copper and Lead over the maximum recommended for fish consumption (WHO)
- But in overall - Good news!
 - Consumption turtles kilograms per week = 3 kg

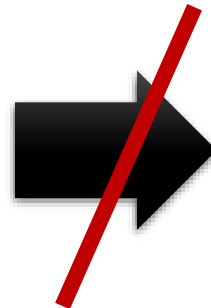


More monitoring is needed for freshwater turtles in potential contaminated areas

- Long-necked turtles = Carnivorous
- Higher in the food web = higher concentrations of heavy metals



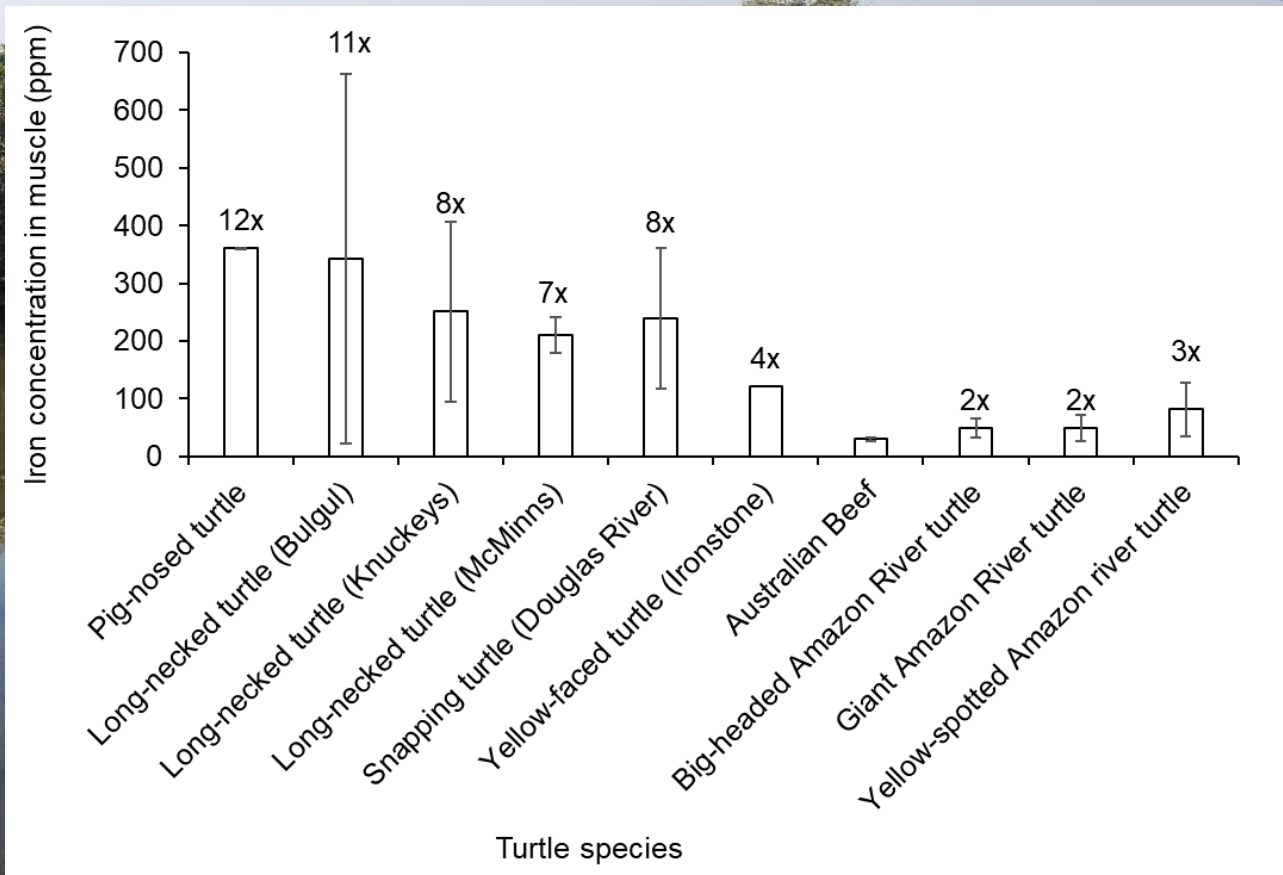
Heavy metal
contamination



Turtle
availability

Anaemia in remote communities

- Serious issue in the Northern Territory
 - 15% of pregnant women
 - Up to 25% of the children (0 to 5 years)



Freshwater Turtles in the NT

- If anemia and overharvest is to be halted in remote and indigenous communities, there is an urgent need to better understand:
 - The role of turtles as a source of micronutrients
 - How pollutants could endanger turtle populations and those harvesting them.



Thank you!

- Twin Hill Aboriginal Corporation
 - Finniss River Floodplain Traditional Owners
 - Labelle Station
 - Bulgul Rangers
 - TNRM
 - NLC
 - ANU
 - MAGNT
 - Finniss-Reynolds stakeholder group
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