Martu Country, Australia’s Western Desert
a fire dependent culture

Photo: Robert Tonkinson 1963

Study Area

Dialect-named sets of estate groups

MARTU COMMUNITY
● OTHER COMMUNITY
● Station

Primary road
Maintained track
Unmaintained track

Martu Native Title Lands
Karlamily National Park
Salt playa
Desert watercourse

0  50  100  150  200 km

Study Area
Fire regime shifts: before, during, and after Martu hiatus from their homelands.

Without cultural burning

Winter 2002

Winter 2011

Winter 2017

9 ha
With cultural burning.

Winter 2017

Summer 2009

Winter 2007

Winter 2016

Winter 2012

Winter 2001

Winter 2017

9 ha
Many native species favored by cultural burning

Loss of cultural burning in Australia precipitated the spread of invasive species and the highest rate of mammal extinction in the world.

30 native mammals have become extinct since European settlement, with the loss of over 1/2 of all native mammals species in the Western Desert.

Ongoing unraveling of a continental fauna: Decline and extinction of Australian mammals since European settlement

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The highly distinctive and mostly endemic Australian land mammal fauna has suffered an extraordinary rate of extinction (>10%) than previously recognized and that many surviving Australian native mammal species are in rapid decline, notwithstanding the...
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