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RANGERS AND SCIENTISTS WORKING TOGETHER ON MOA

Scientists now have an increased understanding of local wildlife after working on a project with Rangers from the Torres Strait Regional Authority Land and Sea Management Unit documenting the flora and fauna on Moa.

Mualgal Traditional Owners and Rangers have always known about *makas* and *kyuk*. But for scientists, their latest visit to the island was the first time they learnt that the species were present in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairman, Joseph Elu, said the work highlights the value of Indigenous people's knowledge of their environment, and the relevance of co-operative research between Torres Strait Islanders and scientists.

"Their recent discovery is a fine example of the benefit of collaboration and I commend both the Rangers and the scientists for their work," he said.

The *makas* (bandicoots) and *kyuk* (echidnas) on Moa are the only known medium-sized, native mammals in the Torres Strait region.

The Rangers told the scientists that *makas* and *kyuk* were hunted for food in the past. Today, they are under threat from dogs, cats, pigs and vehicles.

The *makas* specimen that was collected for examination was road kill. The sample was analysed and confirmed to be the Northern Brown Bandicoot.

The species was previously thought to live on Cape York and Papua New Guinea but this was the first time a specimen had been collected from Torres Strait.

Kyuk is known locally as 'Porcupine' but was formally identified as Short Beaked Echidna.

The visit to Moa was part of a project to develop a plan for managing the biodiversity and cultural values on the island.

Mr Elu thanked TSRA Senior Ranger John Wigness, Ranger Guyai Uidaldam and acknowledged the collaboration of scientists from consulting company, 3D Environmental.

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Northern Brown Bandicoot (Image: D. Lewis)



Echidna (Image: G. Hitchcock)