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MALU K'IAI RANGERS RETRIEVE GHOST NET

The Malu K'iai Rangers from Boigu Island have retrieved another ghost net from prime dugong habitat just 10 kilometres west of Boigu on Red Sand Bank. This is the third ghost net to be found in that region in the past 12 months.

The net was spotted by Boigu community members and reported to the Malu K'iai Rangers asking if they could remove it as it posed a danger to turtles and dugongs.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said Red Sand Bank is a large sand environment with strong tides and which dries at low tide, and also is very rough in windy conditions which makes it hard to spot and retrieve ghost nets.

“Red Sand Bank is only just inside Australian waters, therefore it’s in a strategic position to find ghost nets entering our territory,” Mr Elu said

“The net was lodged on loose rocks on the sand bank and was slowly drifting west back towards International waters and had moved one kilometre since being spotted over the weekend.

“The ghost net doesn't look like much on the water but it was over one kilometre in length and measured 13 metres from the float line on the surface to the bottom rope line. The net was caught on rocks underneath the surface.”

According to the TSRA Rangers ghost nets that find their way to Red Sand Bank only stay in that location for a few weeks between full moon high tides.

The past two nets have disappeared off the sand bank in the past before they could be picked up.

Mr Elu said once the net was secured to the Rangers boat, it took approximately 3.5 hours to tow the ghost net 14 kilometres back to the Boigu boat ramp.

“The net was inspected for any fish or animals tangled however it was reasonably clean considering that it most likely would have been at sea for months,” Mr Elu said.

Ghostnets Australia coordinator, Riki Gunn, said that this type of net is mostly used by illegal international fishers.

“Indonesia has recently cracked down on illegal fishing, even sinking boats, so this net was probably cut off so they wouldn't get caught,” Ms Gunn said.

“These nets are mostly found closer to Darwin as they usually work in the Timor Sea where there is more pelagic fish such as mackerels.”

Mr Elu said the Torres Strait Island Regional Council on Boigu assisted the clean-up effort with their backhoe to remove the net to the Boigu landfill site.

“The community will remove the floats and ropes off the net and use these for fishing gear,” Mr Elu said.

“It was a very good outcome as the Malu K’iai PBC and the community are very happy with the result of removing such a large net from their important dugong habitat and fishing area.”

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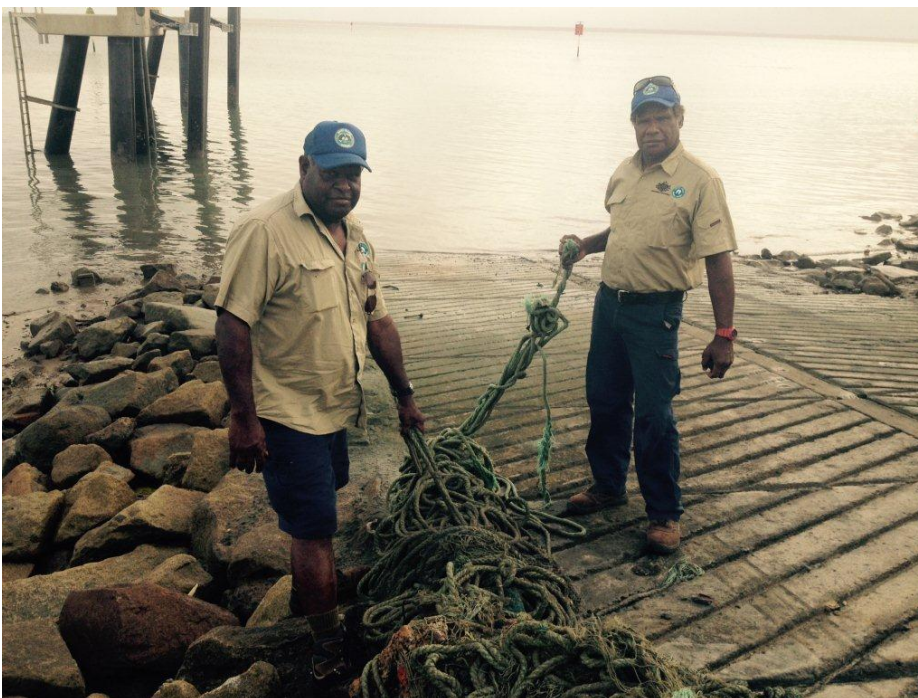
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Caption: Boigu (Malu K’iai) Senior Ranger Nelson Gibuma, Malu Kiai Rangers Ishmael Gibuma and Dimas Toby with TSRA Ranger Supervisor Chicka Turner standing with the ghost net retrieved from Red Sand Bank. (Image: TSRA)



Caption: The ghost net was deceiving to the eye when spotted floating at sea. (Image: TSRA)



Caption; Malu Kiai Ranger Ishmael Gibuma (left) and Senior Ranger Nelson Gibuma with the ropes salvaged from the ghost net for the community.