

RANGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

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Award Finalists

Steve Dwyer, Park Ranger at Parks and Wildlife Commission NT

Steve Dwyer has spent the past seven years working tirelessly on gamba grass management at Mary River National Park to protect the savanna woodlands from this high impact invasive species, and has championed an evidence-based management approach to reduce the impacts of gamba grass fires. Steve and his team trialled a new management approach, which focuses on reducing the impact of gamba fires on savanna trees. They halted the annual burning of gamba, instead excluded fire from areas with gamba where possible, and used fine scale application of herbicide. Monitoring from National Environmental Science Program (NESP) collaborators demonstrated increases in tree cover of up to 110% at previously gamba dominated sites, and the regeneration of important savanna tree species. This is the first documented case in northern Australia where tree decline in gamba invaded sites has been halted, and instead there has been an increase in tree cover in previously gamba dominated sites. This is an outstanding contribution to one of the biggest challenges for biodiversity conservation across the north.

