



The Wongari (Dingoes) of K'gari (Fraser Island)

Be dingo-safe!

- Always stay within arm's reach of children, even small teenagers.
- Walk in groups and carry a stick.
- Do not run or jog.

Never feed dingoes.

It is an offence to feed or make food available to a dingo or intentionally attract or disturb a dingo anywhere on K'gari (Fraser Island), whether on public or private land. Penalties apply.



unesco

K'gari (Fraser Island)
World Heritage Area since 1992



Wongari — wild dingo

“ Before European settlers came to K’gari, two types of dingoes were known to the Butchulla. One was Wat’dha (the camp dingo) and the other was Wongari (the wild dingo). Wat’dha were our companions—always part of us. They helped us hunt and track, and protected us from bad spirits and the Wongari. Wongari have been and always should be wild. They are a natural and important part of the ecosystems on K’gari. Wongari are omnivores; they have an abundance of food here including rodents, reptiles, berries and other flora, and the remains of marine animals washed up on the beach.

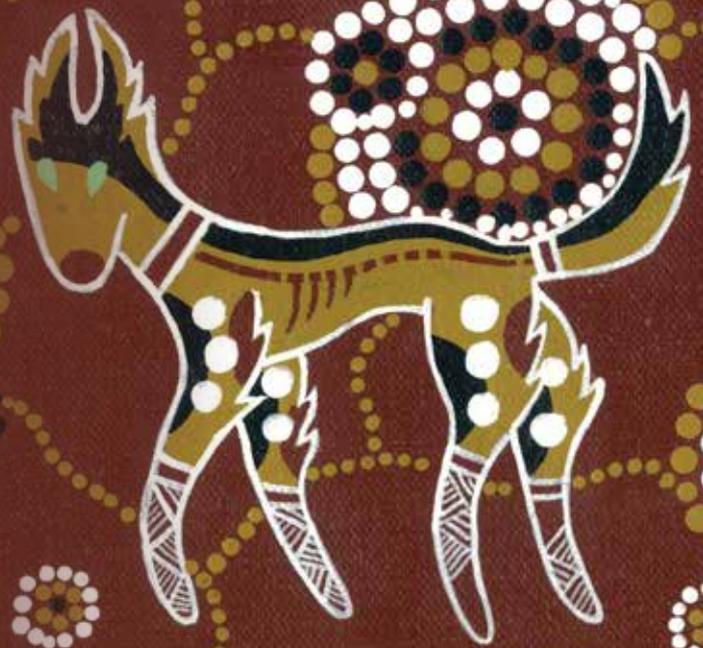
Butchulla Rangers perform smoking ceremonies for Wongari that die by fault of humans, including vehicle strikes. This sends them home to Sky Country where Biral (Supreme White Spirit) is waiting with a message through the smoke, to ensure their spirit doesn’t walk in limbo without an understanding of what happened to them. If they have been killed by another dingo or pack we do not interfere.

When the last of our people were taken off the island, all of the dingoes became wild, but we, the Butchulla, are still all strongly connected in our hearts, minds and spirits.

Respect Butchulla lore “*What’s good for the country comes first*”. K’gari is Wongari Djaa (Country), and provides everything they need. They are curious, but need you to keep your distance. So please, don’t feed Wongari. ”

Nyanga Buranga (look, listen-know).

Conway Burns, Butchulla man



Living well and wild on K’gari

Seeing wongari on K’gari is special because you can see them in their natural state. You may even see a pack going about their everyday lives.

Living wild means all of the island’s wildlife populations can regulate themselves based on the availability of food, water and territory—a principle underpinning wildlife management here and throughout the world. The island provides a varied wongari diet, including fish, crabs, reptiles, echidnas, bush rats, swamp wallabies and bandicoots. They eat insects and berries, and feed on dead marine life or sea birds that have washed up on the beach.

A wongari pup greets the alpha female when she returns from hunting.

Photo: © Jenna Tapply

Be dingo-safe!

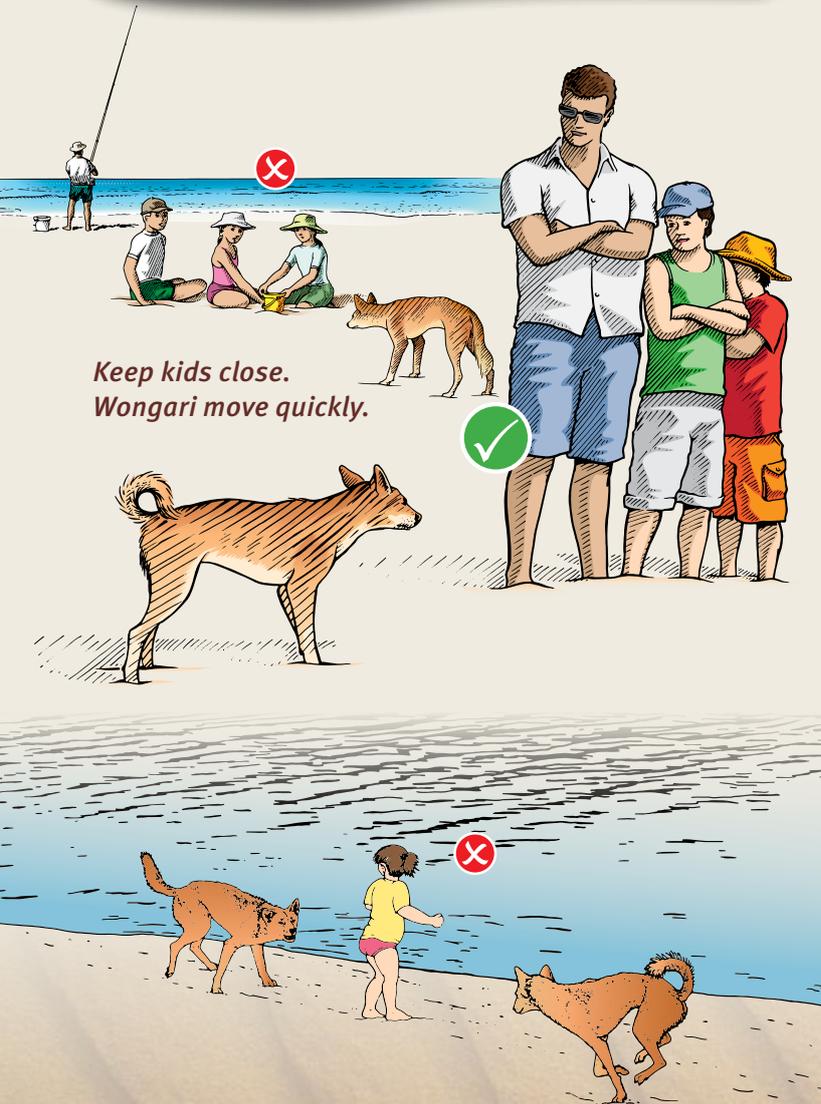
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Rangers make all attempts to protect people and conserve wongari. All of us—visitors, workers and residents on K’gari—can make a big contribution to keeping the wongari living wild, which is the best thing we can do for wongari conservation.

Always stay within arm’s reach of children, including small teenagers

Take safety seriously! Never let children sleep in a tent or camper trailer without adults or wander away on tracks, lakes and beaches. Keep house doors and low windows secure. Screen doors may need to be locked, as some wongari have learnt how to open simple door latches.

Did you know?

- Wongari can appear as if from nowhere and they move quickly.
- You can’t rely on children knowing what to do when they’re scared.
- Wongari have bitten and mauled people—even strong men!—and in 2001, a small pack killed a nine-year-old child.



Staying overnight with children?

Choose a fenced accommodation option when you have children (including small teenagers) with you.

Did you know?

- QPWS has provided wongari deterrent fences around major campgrounds, some beach camping areas, resorts and townships.
- Fenced areas are marked on the K’gari Discovery Guide.



Do not go for a run or jog outside the fenced areas



Did you know?

- You may not notice wongari sitting in the sand dunes.
- Jogging and running stimulates wongari’s chasing instincts and once one starts to chase you, others may follow.

Do not run if wongari come close

Stay calm, stand to your full height and face wongari if they come close. If you are with others, stand back to back. Maintain eye contact and confidently and loudly call for help. Calmly move away from the wongari to a safe area, preferably a vehicle or fenced area. Do not run or wave your arms or feet at them.

Did you know?

- Wongari are curious, they do not always want to attack you.
- Running away excites them and they may try to catch you.
- This can lead to bites, especially to the back of your legs.



Be dingo-safe! Never feed wongari

One of the most important things we can do for the conservation of wongari on K'gari is to never feed them. The island provides enough wild food for them.

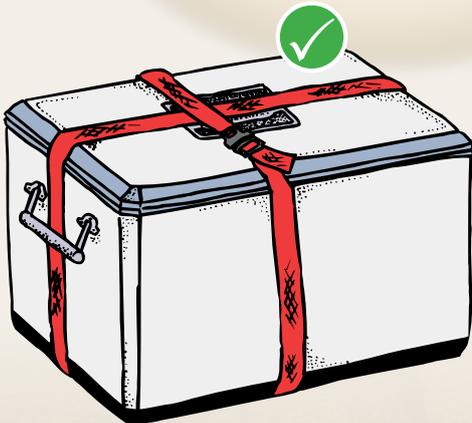
Did you know?

- Some leaner wongari—often juveniles or animals rejected from the pack—need to make their own way in life, and not rely on hand-outs from people. This is all part of living wild.
- Every natural meal a wongari eats builds its strength and increases its survival ability.
- Every hunt increases its fitness and skill to live wild.



Keep food (and rubbish) containers firmly strapped

Wongari are always on the prowl for food and will chew through or tear into anything—unsecured iceboxes, tents, thin plastic boxes, plastic bags—when following the scent of food. Secure storage and iceboxes with heavy-duty straps or pack them away in a vehicle.

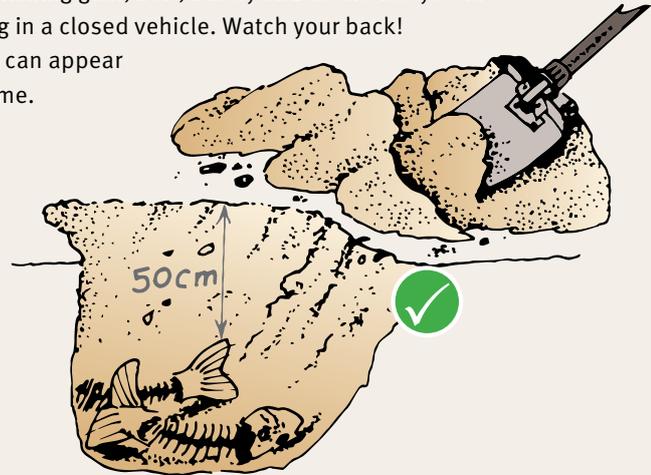


Did you know?

- A wongari's nose is 14 times larger and its sense of smell is thousands of times more acute than ours.
- Even tiny morsels of food left lying around the barbecue can attract them from quite a distance.
- They're enticed by anything with a food scent—dish cloths, wine casks, toothpaste, even unopened canned food and drinks.

Tips for fishers

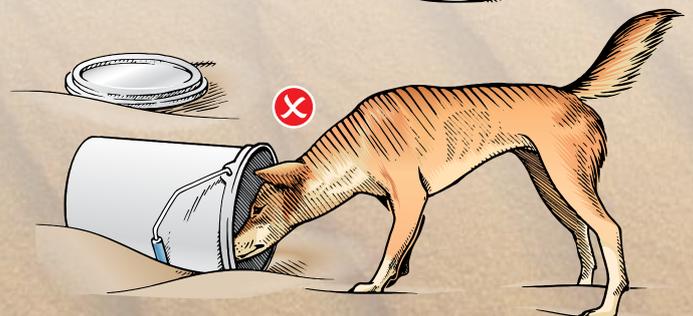
Keep all fishing gear, bait, berley and catch that you're not using in a closed vehicle. Watch your back! Wongari can appear at any time.



Did you know?

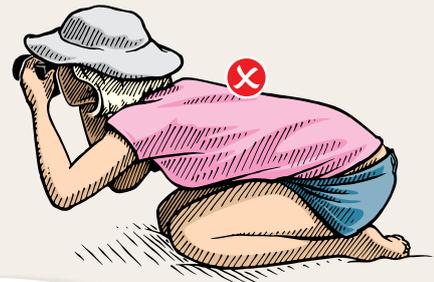
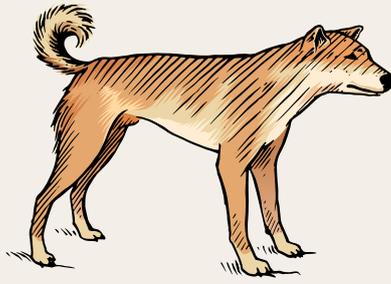
- It is better to bury your fish scraps in a deep hole (just below the high tide mark), so there's at least 50cm of sand above the top of the scrap pile to the lip of the hole.
- It's best to do this when wongari aren't around so they don't associate people with food.
- If they find the scrap hole on their own, it's a more natural discovery—just as if dead marine animals are washed up and covered over with sand by the last tide.
- Cleaning fish in camp sites is not permitted.
- **It is an offence to:**
 - › hang bait or berley bags on the outside of vehicles, in trees or have these lying around.
 - › throw any fish or fish remains and bait to wongari or other wildlife.

Keep bait and catch containers firmly sealed. Bury and cover fish remains in a deep hole.



Keep your distance

Photograph wongari from afar or stay in your car.
Never try to attract wongari to come close.



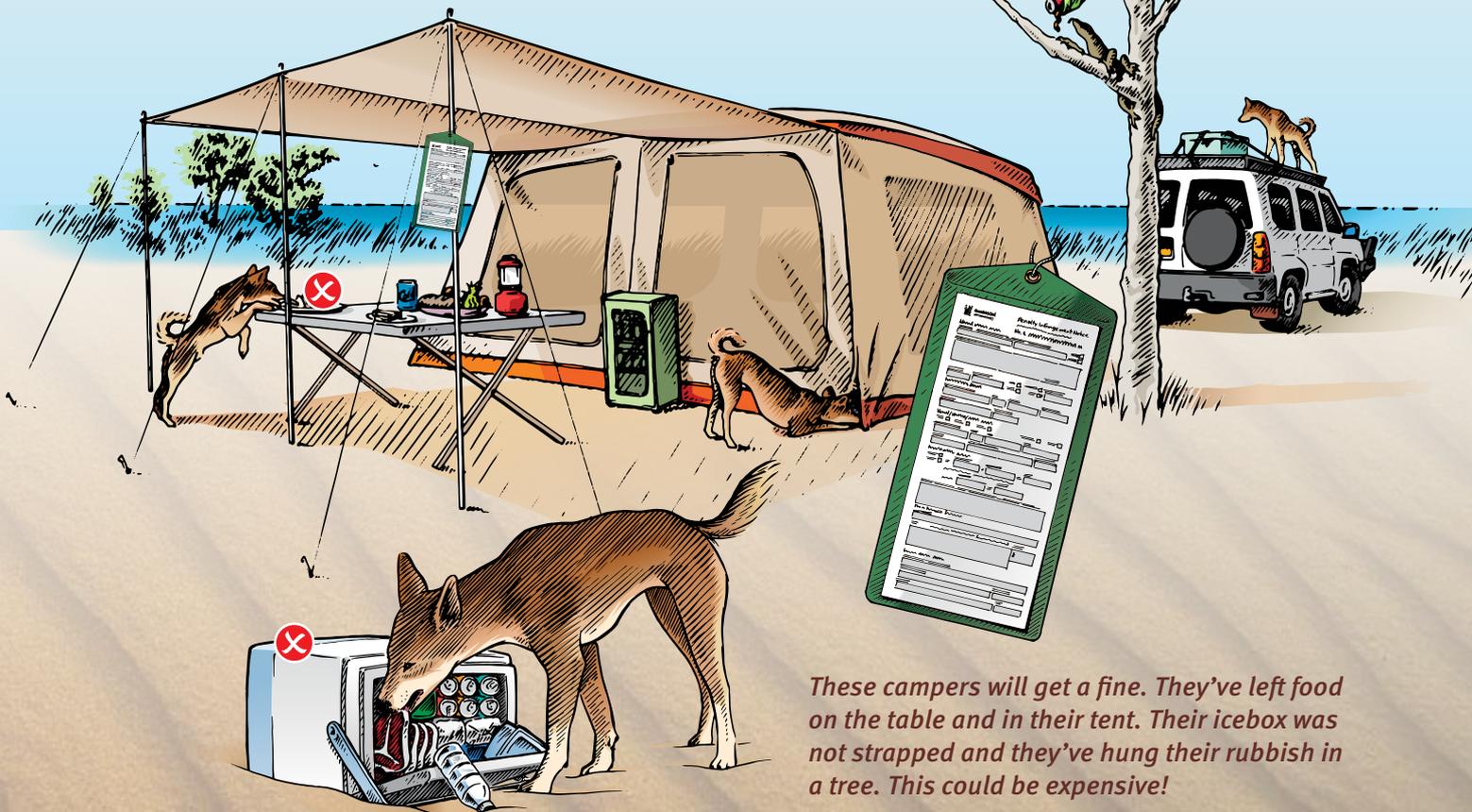
Did you know?

- Lockable metal or very thick plastic boxes are good storage containers on K'gari.
- Tent walls are no protection from wongari if they are following a food scent. You should never eat or store food goods in tents.
- Wongari are also attracted to cooking gear, soaps, shampoos and clothing or pillows.
- You can wash your dirty dishes at the designated locations in the main camping areas. Anyone is allowed to wash up here, whether staying in the camping area or not.
- If you're washing up outside a fenced area, you should pour your dirty washing-up water in a hole (50cm deep) and cover it over immediately.

Make camp sites boring for wongari

It is an offence to leave food or rubbish available for wongari or any wildlife. Penalties apply.

Keeping camp sites tidy helps to conserve the wildness of wongari on K'gari. If they don't find food at your camp site they'll probably move on and engage in natural hunting. So please tidy up, store everything in secure containers and wipe down tables and barbecues, before you head off for the day. Before you go to bed, put all snacks, drinks and empty containers away securely.



These campers will get a fine. They've left food on the table and in their tent. Their icebox was not strapped and they've hung their rubbish in a tree. This could be expensive!

Be dingo-safe! When...



Did you know?

- They may not be able to hear your vehicle over the sound of wind and surf.
- They often use inland roads and tracks as pathways.
- They can suddenly appear from camping areas, between vehicles or over dunes.

When you're on the move, steer clear of wongari

Wongari are protected and roam freely on K'gari. Their movements are unpredictable. Stay alert, slow down and, if safe, stop to let them get out of your way. Unfortunately, some people have accidentally or deliberately hit wongari with their vehicles. Report vehicle strikes and people who try to drive wongari down. If possible get their vehicle registration number, take a photo, record their vehicle colour, the location and time of day. If the wongari is injured, do not attempt to touch it as it could bite you in fear. Report the incident to QPWS Rangers on (07) 4127 9150.

When you walk, walk in groups

Walk together, stay alert and carry a stick or umbrella for extra protection.



Did you know?

- People walking or sitting alone have been threatened by wongari.



When visiting lakes, take no food

No food or drinks (except water) to lake shores.

Did you know?

- Wongari visit lakes too and patrol the beach as part of their regular territorial patrols.
- Sitting down to a picnic on the shore of a lake or the beach puts you and food at 'wongari level'.
- Wongari have bullied people, especially children or small teenagers, to get at food—a bad habit they can repeat, sometimes more aggressively—as new visitors come, placing them in greater danger.



When it's time to take the rubbish out, be tidy

QPWS provides bulk bins for campers' rubbish. These are in fenced waste transfer stations along the eastern beach. Please keep them tidy. Loose rubbish can fly about and end up in the ocean, as well as attracting wongari and other wildlife.

- Put your rubbish in the bin not alongside them.
- If a bin is full, use another.
- Ensure the lids and gates are all closed before you leave.



When nature calls, never go alone



Toilets are provided across K'gari. Try to use them and avoid bush toileting unless absolutely necessary.

If you need to go to the toilet in the bush, never go alone; especially at night! Have someone, standing a little way off keeping a look out for wongari. To bush toilet, dig a hole away from water courses at least 50cm deep and when finished, cover your waste and the used paper immediately afterwards.

Did you know?

- Wongari have dug up shallow bush toileting sites.
- It is a lot safer and more hygienic to bring and use a portable toilet if camping away from facilities.



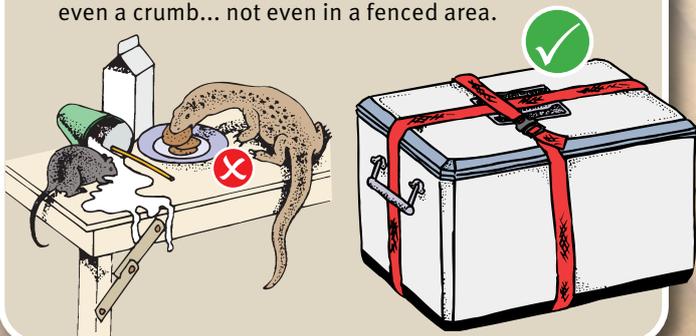
- QPWS provides five disposal points just for portable toilet waste. Look for this symbol on your K'gari Discovery Guide map.

When you're inside the fence, it's still an offence

Get into good camping habits everywhere on K'gari. It is an offence to feed or make or leave food available for wildlife, regardless of being inside or outside a fenced area.

Did you know?

- Wildlife lives best on wild foods.
- Kookaburras, currawongs, goannas and butcher birds are the usual species that pester people for handouts.
- You should never feed wildlife... not even once... not even a crumb... not even in a fenced area.



When staying in houses, secure doors and windows

Ensure house doors and low windows cannot be pushed open. Store rubbish in lockable containers and bin everything as soon as possible. Lock rubbish bin lids or store bins inside a closed garage, laundry or secure outdoor bin enclosure. Clean up any barbecues, food spills and containers as soon as possible.

Did you know?

- Wongari wander all over the island, including backyards.
- Some wongari have nosed screen doors open and entered houses.



Photo: © Maris Tan

When you're leaving a fenced area, close the gate

Think safety! Use the pedestrian gates and never walk over the car grids. Ensure gates are closed after you leave and never prop gates open. Please report any faulty gates to QPWS Rangers.

Did you know?

- Fences were installed by QPWS to protect people, but also to protect wongari.
- Fences can break the habituation sequence, which can lead to a wongari having to be humanely euthanised as it has become a risk to people, sadly because of the carelessness of some people.
- Negative wongari incidents have been greatly reduced since the wongari deterrent fences went up.

Walkers stay out of traffic lanes. Use the gates not the grids.



About wongari

Wongari (Dingoes) are not domestic pets

They live wild and don't obey commands from people.

Once a wongari starts to lose its wariness of people, its behaviour can quickly lead to trouble for people and the wongari.



**Territorial disputes
escalate quickly.
Keep your distance
and keep kids close.**



Did you know?

- The sequence of events from feeding wongari to serious wongari aggression or an attack doesn't take very long; sometimes only a matter of days.

Attraction

People leave food out. Wongari are attracted to and become familiar with food, food smells, drinks, rubbish and odd things like sweets, cooking oil, tea towels, dish cloths and toiletries.

Habituation

Wongari that lose their natural fear of humans will ignore threats and come close to people. Habituated wongari expect food from everyone. Pups of habituated wongari may not be taught to hunt properly.

Interaction

Negative interactions

People try to encourage wongari to come closer or feed them. Wongari try to dominate or steal food by aggression.

Positive interactions

People leave wongari alone. Wongari shy away from people, cars or buses.

Neutral interactions

People keep a good distance from wongari. Wongari may display habituated behaviour, but keep their distance or walk away.

Aggression

People get involved with wongari that are feeding, roaming or being aggressive. Wongari—individuals or as a small pack—are displaying aggression when they actively stalk or circle people, lunge at them, nip or bite savagely. **Wongari are capable of killing people.**



Wongari may be seen searching for food around camp sites and high visitation areas. Keep food secure and let them live wild.



Aggression can quickly turn to an attack. Please report any instances of aggressive wongari to QPWS Rangers as soon as possible.



Wongari bites are serious. This person may have been a victim of someone else's careless or deliberate actions, causing the wongari to become aggressive.

Wongari language

What to watch for in wongari language

Wongari have been known to chase joggers and interact with children playing. What appears as playful dog behaviour to us, can be serious dominance testing by the wongari, which can lead to aggression.

An aggressive wongari ready to attack, is in a high state of aggression, standing tall in the hind legs, tail up and curled and often ears folded back or down. This wongari was in the middle of a territorial fight with an intruder.



Just padding along, showing no signs of threat.

Wongari staring determinedly, bared teeth and snarling are signs of low-intensity threats, but can become serious in an instant.



Scent marking is done with urine or faeces, often while displaying dominant stance and staring at the intruder.



Watch out! This wongari is approaching in a dominant stance—head down but staring determinedly, ears forward and alert and tail curled up.



Howling is sophisticated wongari language. It's not only about communicating with their own pack, but can be a warning to others.

Photo: © Marcus Toyne



Packs have rules

A wongari pack has a natural hierarchy, with alpha animals being the fittest and strongest. The social structure of wongari packs can mean some individual wongari are denied food by the alphas, sometimes regardless of how much is available. These are pack rules and the younger or weaker pack members can appear particularly lean for a while. Some manage to find food themselves and soon put on weight, but as nature dictates, some don't survive.



A pack on the go. Wongari live very active lives, running or trotting up to 40 kilometres a day, patrolling their territories, hunting and sometimes having family disputes.

Wongari identikit

Help conserve wongari; report interactions and sightings

Wongari don't all look the same. They have different markings—socks, tail tips, scars—which help rangers identify the animal. If you're safe, take a photo or short video of the wongari's behaviour. Here's a few things to look for.



Tags help identify a wongari and could save its life

Some wongari become so aggressive towards people, that they must be euthanised as they pose an unacceptable safety risk. Sometimes this can be avoided as wongari can be steered away from this end result, if QPWS Rangers are alerted to any problems early enough.

Rangers can recognise some wongari on the island, but tagging them ensures they identify individual animals and, in the long term, this helps to conserve them by guiding wongari management. Rangers monitor their movements, their pack membership, feeding and breeding patterns. Often, the wongari are filmed on motion-activated cameras and tagged wongari are more easily recognised. Rangers are interested in any interactions, positive, neutral or negative, you have with wongari, and information and photos or videos can be sent to dingo.ranger@des.qld.gov.au

Did you know?

- Ear tagging wongari is just one of many monitoring tools.
- Rangers capture the wongari, sedate and tag them, and record their size, weight and distinguishing features.
- Not every wongari is ear-tagged, and those that are, are of reasonable body condition and exhibit, or are anticipated to exhibit, problematic behaviour.



Tagged wongari are identified with their own individual tag attached to the left ear for males and right ear for females. The colour and number on the tag is what QPWS Rangers are looking for.

Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt

Wongari calendar

Wongari's natural behaviour changes throughout the year. They are more aggressive in autumn and summer, when they are vying for dominance over other wongari in the pack and competing for food.

Autumn (March–May)

Mating is a time for testing dominance, protecting territories and expelling intruders from other packs. Females will find dens, have pups and keep them hidden. Wongari only have one litter per year, so this is a pack's one chance to grow another generation of wild wongari.



Winter (June–August)

The female wongari needs to find food for herself and her pups. Although the whole pack pitches in to help, you might see an alpha male on 'pup duty', while the others are hunting. They are naturally protective of pups and potentially aggressive. Never get between adults and pups!



Photo: Jim Kellaway © Qld Govt

Spring (September–November)

Pups are growing up and venturing further away from their dens. They stay close to their parents, but sometimes are left in a safe place while the adults hunt for food. They haven't been abandoned, they're just too small yet to keep up with the pack. This is a vulnerable time for them, as they need to learn how to be wild wongari that can fend for themselves.



Summer (December–February)

Pups learn pack rules quickly and practise through play. Little growls, howls and dominance-testing, roll-overs and push-overs are all life lessons for these juveniles. The more dominant sibling often fends off the weaker ones for food and lets them know its status in the pack. So what looks like a game to us, is earnest 'dingo lingo'. Never engage with wongari. We don't understand how to speak their language and could end up in trouble if we give them the wrong impression.



Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt

About wongari management

Dingoes in Queensland are protected wildlife

Dingoes are protected across Queensland's national parks, conservation parks, recreation areas and lands in marine parks. These dingoes are defined under the various Acts as 'wildlife' or 'native wildlife' and should be left to live wild. They should never be confused with or treated as domestic dogs. In fact, dingoes cannot be kept as pets in Queensland at all.



Photo: Matt Lowry © Queensland Government

Wongari on K'gari are important

Wongari on K'gari have rarely interbred with domestic or feral dogs and, in time, may become one of the purest strains of wild dingo on the eastern Australian seaboard, possibly Australia-wide. Their conservation is of national significance. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's whole-island management helps to maintain K'gari's wild wongari as a viable healthy population and to play their part as apex predators. That means leaving them free to roam, hunt and live as wild wongari, not semi-domesticated, pet-like animals relying on hand-outs.



Wongari are natural hunters and opportunistic scavengers.
Photos: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt



No feeding; it's the law

On K'gari, it is an offence to feed or make food available to a dingo or intentionally attract or disturb a dingo, whether on public or private land. Large fines and possible jail sentences can apply. Please obey this law and contribute to the conservation of the wongari on K'gari, so that their future is assured and they can live wild and well.

Why wongari don't need your food

Wongari are a necessary component of K'gari's natural ecosystems and feeding them interrupts a natural balance. In the past, many of the island's wongari lost their 'wildness' and became reliant on food thrown to them by people or scrounged for in dumps, around houses or camping areas. Some were injured by carelessly disposed-of rubbish and became ill from the poor diet. Their pack hierarchy broke down, leaving some as loners, which in lean times resulted in them becoming aggressive towards people.

QPWS management is about minimising risk

The Fraser Island Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy (FIDCRMS) guides management for a sustainable wild dingo population while minimising risk to people and dingoes.

The strategy and associated implementation plan focuses on:

- effectively building and disseminating knowledge
- adopting the highest standards of animal welfare practices
- engaging local communities and tour operators to support and incorporate best practice in their businesses and day-to-day lives
- fostering safe wildlife experiences for all.

Adapting to change

Wongari are remarkable hunters and scavengers, and have adapted readily to changes in island management, including intensive visitor education, fencing and limiting their access to people's food and rubbish. This reduces scavenging around camping and day-use areas, and rubbish tips, which decreases health risks to wongari. Studies indicate that wongari on K'gari are, on average, healthier than mainland wongari. These days, the majority of wongari are active around their usual dawn and dusk periods, hunting and scavenging for natural prey within their territories all over the island and its beaches.



When wongari come close

If you or someone else has been injured by a wongari...
Call Triple Zero (000) and get immediate medical help.

Non-urgent medical: 13 12 33

Reporting an injured or dead dingo: (07) 4127 9150

Reporting negative incidents (including people doing the wrong thing): (07) 4127 9150 or email: dingo.ranger@des.qld.gov.au

- Tearing tents
- Stealing property
- Circling, lunging or chasing people
- Bailing up or 'herding' people into the ocean.
- Nipping or biting people
- Savagely attacking

Further information

 qld.gov.au/NationalParks

 qld.gov.au/Camping

 qld.gov.au/ParkAlerts
(access, closures and conditions)

 To report any dingo incidents:
(07) 4127 9150;
email: dingo.ranger@des.qld.gov.au

 [qldnationalparks](https://www.facebook.com/qldnationalparks)

 [@QldParks](https://www.instagram.com/QldParks); [#QldParks](https://www.instagram.com/QldParks)

This brochure is also available online at
qld.gov.au/ParkBrochures



Scan to check
park alerts



For more on dingo
safety please
visit [qld.gov.au/
BeDingoSafe](http://qld.gov.au/BeDingoSafe)

When on K'gari

Be dingo-safe!

- ✓ Never feed dingoes.
- ✓ Always stay within arm's reach of children, even small teenagers.
- ✓ Walk in groups and carry a stick.
- ✓ Do not run. Running or jogging can trigger a negative interaction.
- ✓ Camp in fenced areas when possible.
- ✓ Secure all food, rubbish, fish and bait (even on a boat moored close to shore).
- ✓ Never store food or food containers in tents.
- ✓ No food to lakeshores.



If you feel threatened by a wongari

- Stay calm.
- Stand up to your full height.
- Face the wongari.
- Keep your arms close to your body, and keep facing the wongari.
- Calmly back away to a safe area, preferably a vehicle or fenced area.
- If in pairs or a group, stand back to back.
- Confidently call for help.
- Do not run or wave your arms.

