How have traditional Aboriginal resource management, hunting and fishing methods changed since colonial times and what are some of the causes?

Annotated Bibliography


The Australian Legal Information Institute is a non-government organisation which is funded not only by government departments but by reputable legal bodies as well as prominent educational institutions. The ALII website offers legal discussions and definitions on aspects of traditional and modern natural resource management, with a section detailing Aboriginal fishing and hunting methods and practices with an added concern for the welfare of animals. Numerous documents are available discussing legal decisions relating to natural resource management by Aboriginal people, as well as narratives by those involved in the legal process, policy formation and legislative modification. There are links to other sites including the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation which outlines information pertinent to the research question and its associated issues. Overall, this site is a comprehensive resource for reference material, with information which is easy to access and displayed in a clear format.

The five authors of this publication are from a range of reputable Australian academic institutions giving sufficient credence to the report to follow. Designed as a review of Indigenous wildlife management, it begins with some excellent definitions of all the topics one would expect to encounter when researching a question of this nature. Basing their report on sustainable development, Davies et al. discuss in a concise manner the cultural attitudes to wildlife, indigenous wildlife management methods, co-management of National Parks and the impacts upon the environment, people and wildlife (including ocean wildlife) concerned. Some case studies and information from traditional owners aid in portraying changes in wildlife management practices over time and the influencing factors involved. The publication concludes with several recommendations which are perhaps too brief and contain a more political edge but the preceding conclusions contain sufficient detail to gain an overall picture of future directions. This book is handy, well-organised and relevant to the research topic.


This electronic book is contained within the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’s (CSIRO) website. The CSIRO is the principal commonwealth research organisation in Australia and the authors of this publication are scientists employed there. There are many aspects to environmental change outlined in the book, but of interest is the section on Aboriginal techniques of resource management. It discusses in an easy conversational style the use of fire by Aboriginal people and some common misconceptions, and the perhaps controversial
issue of the use of firearms to hunt animals. References are often made to satellite images which depict environmental changes which support the author's arguments. The book provides a good overview of Aboriginal resource management practices and supports the research topic with some interesting arguments and useful information.


Whilst Kirk's book outlines comprehensively the various aspects of change on the Australian continent, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal people and their adaptive abilities, the main interest for this project lies in chapter 4 on hunting and gathering. A good description is given of the various types of vegetable, meat, fish and shellfish eaten and the different collection, preparation, hunting and fishing methods employed. The chapter also covers the seasonal availability of the types of food the Aboriginal people sought which aids in observing changes to their methods due to later climatic and environmental fluctuations. Also contained in the book is a description of some of the more primitive implements utilised by Aboriginal people in environmental exploitation, and how the technology surrounded these has changed over time. The book is regarded as a good quality resource with detailed information without unnecessary jargon or superfluous terminology.

This journal article provides a historical look at the land management practices which were common amongst Aboriginal people both prior to colonisation, and through to contemporary times. The authors have amongst them academics, researchers as well as local Aboriginal elders who acted as advisers for the investigation. It describes the types of food collected in the Arnhem Land region and the cyclical and controlled burning of vegetation in order to manage the resources in that area. A detailed description is given of the landscape and the environmental changes which gave rise to the modification in management practices, and suggestions are made as to modern variances and effects on hunting and gathering methods. The article provides a more solid empirical base to supplement other references and contentions for this research topic.