

Ugar Land and Sea Profile



OVERVIEW

Traditional island name	Ugar
Western name	Stephen
Eastern Islands Cluster	Kemer Kemer Meriam Nation
Local government	TSIRC & TSC
Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC)	Ugar Ged Kem Le Zeuber Er Kep (TSI) Corporation RNTBC
Land type	Volcanic Island
Air distance from Thursday Island (km)	189
Area (ha)	37
Indicative max length (km)	1
Indicative max breadth (km)	0.8
Max elevation (m)	30
Coastline length (km)	2
Population (2011 ABS Census)	50
Area of island zoned development (ha)	11
Area of disturbed / undisturbed vegetation (ha/%)	24 (64.9%) / 13 (35.1%)

RANGER GROUP



Rangers
2015



MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

LAND



- Feral animals
- Weeds
- Coastal management (beach patrol)
- Native plants and animals

SEA



- Crocodiles
- Marine debris
- Turtle and dugong

PEOPLE



- Traditional and sacred cultural sites
- Traditional ecological knowledge
- Community involvement

KEY VALUES



Healthy sea ecosystems



Marine water quality



Coral reefs



Seagrass meadows



Dugong



Marine turtles



Subsistence fishing



Healthy land ecosystems



Sustainable human settlements



Coasts and beaches



Mangroves and wetlands



Coastal birds

CLIMATE CHANGE RISK

Vulnerability to sea level rise (+1.0m) **Low**

Sea level rise response options **Very High**



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

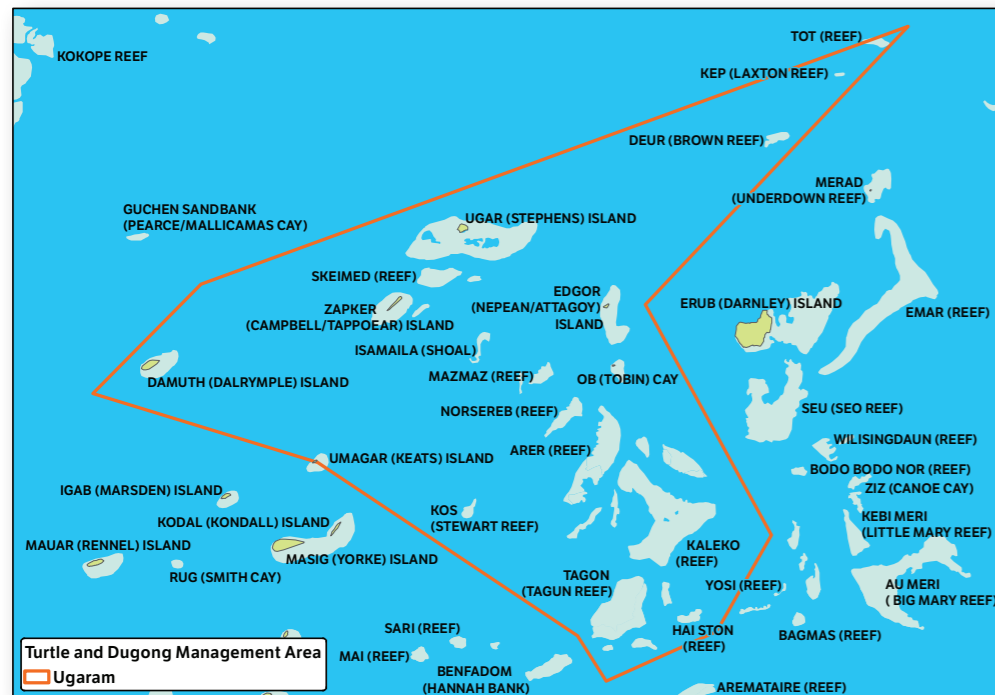
Ugar is a very small (37ha) volcanic island in the Eastern Islands Cluster of the Torres Strait about 189km north east of Thursday Island. Ugar (population 50) is a basaltic island in the far north of the Great Barrier Reef and is surrounded by numerous culturally significant stone fish traps. The community occupies an elevated position on the eastern end of the round island.

The topography of Ugar includes gentle slopes rising to the middle of the island (highest point 30m). The fertile basalt derived soils support a simple but unique vine forest association, with some clearings for banana, cassava, taro and sweet potato gardens. About 35% of the island is covered in undisturbed vegetation, with vine forests mostly on the sheltered slopes and escarpments and mangroves on the coastal margins.

Native title is recognised over Ugar land and sea country and is held in trust by the Ugar Ged Kem Le Zeuber Er Kep (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation RNTBC.

LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT AREA

The Ugaram Le land and sea management area includes a number of uninhabited islands, reefs and marine areas (see map) covering about 149,976 ha.



This map is based on existing dugong and turtle management areas and shows the general areas of operation for community-based land and sea Rangers. Best available information (including traditional place names) has been used at the time of publication. This map is indicative only and not intended for native title purposes.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Recent land and sea management achievements include:

- Community-based dugong and turtle management plan in place
- Ranger group established and Rangers implementing activities under Working on Country plans
- Ranger participation in mangrove and shoreline monitoring and surveys
- Community participation in the Sustainable Horticulture Project, including the establishment of a nursery for a community garden and community fruit tree planting

MAIN THREATENING PROCESSES

The main threatening processes affecting the Ugaram Le land and sea management area relate to climate change (inundation from sea level rise and coastal erosion), the spread of pest plants and animals, and declining water quality (including marine debris and increasing sedimentation).

LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

Ten management priorities under the themes of Land, Sea, and People are identified in the Ugaram Working on Country Ranger Plan. There are 2 Ranger positions (as at 2015). The Ugaram Rangers will continue to work closely with the community on priority projects including dugong and turtle management, protecting significant cultural sites, preserving Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and managing pests.

DUGONG AND TURTLE MANAGEMENT

The Ugar community is actively implementing the Ugar Dugong and Turtle Management Plan 2011-2016, that is built on the Ugar vision:

“Ugar wishes to conserve dugong and turtle for future generations, through the implementation of culturally appropriate practices.”

CLIMATE CHANGE PROFILE

Climate change in the Torres Strait will involve a warming of air and sea temperatures, rising sea levels, more severe weather events, ocean acidification and some changes to rainfall patterns, evaporation, wind and ocean currents. These changes are predicted to have long-term impacts on all of the region's key values across the Land, Sea and People themes. Ugar has a 'low' vulnerability rating to sea level rise and a 'very high' response options rating (there are good options to move to a safer site on the island). A rise of 160 cm will need to occur before regular inundation becomes an issue. For more information on climate change, please see the Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy 2014-2018.

TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

The Ugar community are working to protect Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for future generations. The TEK system enables communities to access information for their own cultural maintenance; support sustainable community based environmental management approaches; and allows Indigenous Rangers' planning and on-ground cultural and natural resource management activities to be informed by *Ailan Kastom* (Island Custom).

COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE

Ugar has an active food producing community garden in place to preserve traditional gardening skills and support greater community self-sufficiency in food production. Ugaram Rangers have played a role in supporting the school nursery.

FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Ugar is highly reliant on air transport, diesel powered electricity generation and barge transport of supplies and materials to and from Ugar. Renewable energy options will be explored to reduce carbon emissions and work towards energy independence.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Ugaram Rangers engage with the community through frequent community notices and Ranger talks, community participation in ranger activities, and an annual community celebration and report back. This ensures land and sea management activities remain relevant to community priorities.

SOME OF UGAR'S IMPORTANT ANIMALS & PLANTS



Little Tern
Photo: JJ Harrison, Wikimedia Commons



Grassland Melomys
Photo: Ian Gynther



Elephant Yam
Photo: David Fell



Cycas scratchyleana
Photo: David Fell

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, visit the TSRA website at <http://www.tsra.gov.au> and the Torres Strait eAtlas <http://ts.eatlas.org.au/ts>