

# BURLONG POOL ON THE GULGULGA BILYA



**wheatbelt**  
natural resource  
management



**Australian Government**

## BURLONG POOL

Located 5 kilometres west of the Northam Townsite, Burlong Pool is a semi-permanent body of water and a site of significance to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Northam.

Aboriginal spiritual beliefs are that Burlong is the “Summer home for the Wargal”

*‘...during the winter floods the snake lived deep in the flowing springs at Bolgart and haunted the rocky slopes of Boolegin nearby. On the approach of summer the brooks ceased to flow and the creek beds dried up. Then the giant snake slowly made his way underground, down the Toodyay Brook to the Avon, and upstream along that river to the deep pool at Burlong near Northam.’*

*Rica Erickson (1974, Unknown Publication).*

The site was also used as a training location in water crossings by the military and for recreational activities for the local Northam community in the 1940’s and 50’s.

Wheatbelt NRM (formally known as Avon Catchment Council) in association with its partners has installed 12 interpretive signs at Burlong Pool that are re-printed here in this booklet. The site has also undergone a major cleanup and development. This project was a joint initiative involving the local Aboriginal community, Shire of Northam, Avon Valley Environmental Society, Department of Water, Avon Valley Contractors, Green Corps and Wheatbelt NRM.



*(Back to front):*

*Picnic at Burlong Pool (Courtesy State Library of Western Australia)*

*Steve Egan Ballardong Elder (Permission granted by Betty Egan),  
Photo courtesy Merylyn Chester*

# WELCOME TO BURLONG POOL ON THE GULGULGA BILYA



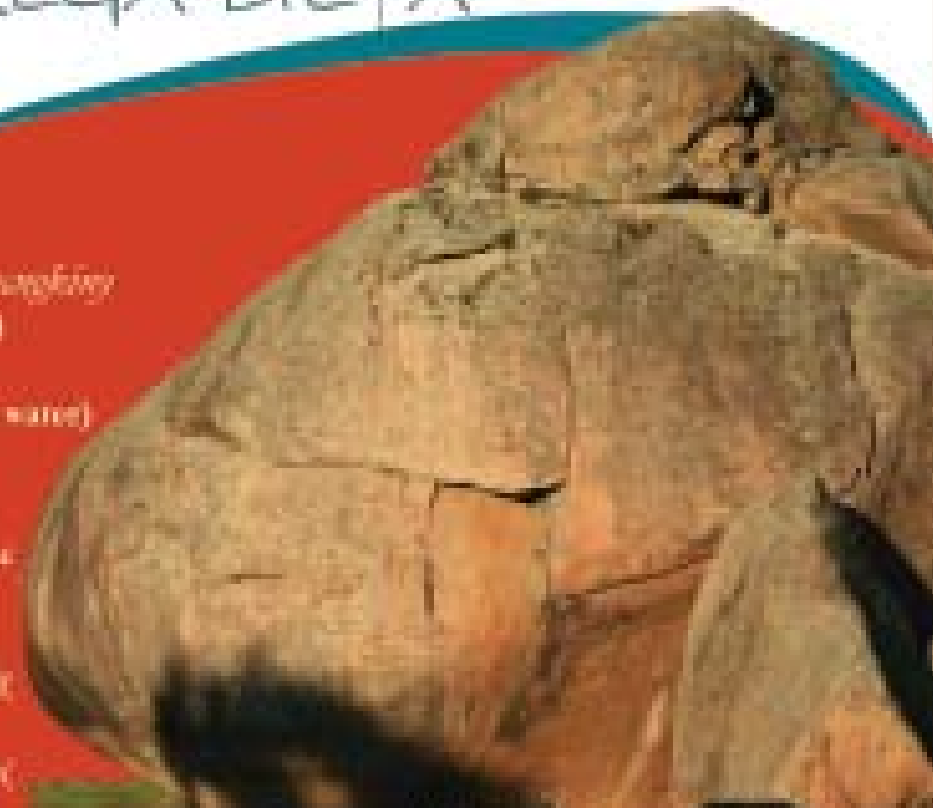
*Nyungar ngay-dhooj amoooh dhoojooj  
Hello, I am happy to see you*

*Nyung ngoojooj kooohooj ngoojooj  
Nyungar dhoojooj kooohooj ngoojooj kooohooj  
The land, Nyungar  
We are happy to have a beautiful country  
We are happy to have a beautiful country where we live*

*Kooohooj ngoojooj ngoojooj kooohooj ngoojooj  
Kooohooj ngoojooj ngoojooj kooohooj ngoojooj  
Kooohooj ngoojooj ngoojooj kooohooj ngoojooj  
Living long ago were and forever Nyungar people  
Looking after the land*

*Wooohooj ngoojooj ngoojooj*

*Nyungar Nyungar kooohooj ngoojooj kooohooj  
(this is Nyungar land and water)  
Wooohooj ngoojooj kooohooj  
(the water snake belongs to the water)*



*Reference to Wargal Rock (near Brookley)*

## Respect for the Wargal

Nyungar belief says that the Wargal can be a destructive force if not respected and if it's wrong placed in between the country could dry up.

For many thousands of years the water above ground for the Wargal has been known that you are there and do not touch any form.

When people have been known to walk through the water of the Wargal they would be back making a place of water in the water's edge or increased water to appear in.



*Stone thrown into Burlong pool to show respect for the Wargal*

## Dream Time Story

At the time of the Earth's formation there were huge explosions at York, the ground entered and out of it came the Wargal.

With it's huge body as thick as tree trunks, the Wargal created sacred sites.

These sites held arms (spirits to look after the land) and were both places of good (good) and more (bad).

The Wargal went kooohooj ngoojooj (under the earth) and sometimes ooohooj ngoojooj (over the earth) forming the hills (rivers), the hills (hills) and the ngoojooj (waterholes).

Three signs can be seen in the Earth today at places such as York, Spencers Brook and Brookley where the Wargal's march has been left in the hillside.

The Wargal travelled east through the water and gave life and sustenance to the Nyungar people who were the custodians of this region.

## Wargal Traces

Traces of the Wargal's march can be seen in the hillsides and waterholes of the region. The Wargal's march is believed to have been the cause of the waterholes and the hillsides.

When the Wargal's march was over the Wargal's body was broken up into three parts. One part was the hills, one part was the waterholes and one part was the hillsides.

## Wargal Real or Myth?

Nyungar people believe the Wargal is sacred and should never be harmed or killed. It created the waterways, and was the giver of life. In 1929 the Wargal was thought to have been seen in the water and the townspeople of Northam kept a vigil over the river and at Burlong Pool. Fossil records show that during the Pleistocene there was a medium to gigantic sized snake that lived in Australia and is known in scientific circles as the Wonambi.



This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Burlong Community, the James Valley Environmental Society, the State of Northern Territory, the Department of Water and Weather, Natural Resources Management. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Government's National Heritage Trust program.



# NYUNGAR PEOPLE - BURLONG POOL



Traditional Nyungar people lived sustainably off the land, they did not waste anything but moved through country, with regard to the seasons, which provided them with sustenance for daily life. Their living was made by hunting animals such as kangaroos, possum and wallabies and by fishing, collecting and gathering an extensive range of edible bushfoods. Nyungar people lived in a clan group, which is larger than a family group but based on blood and common ancestry.

## Nyungar Seasons

Wint (December to正月)	Dry and hot
Bumana (February to March)	Hottest part of the year
Qwan (April to May)	Cooler weather begins
Makara (June to July)	Usually the wettest part of the year
Djilba (August to September)	Often the coldest part of the year
Kamshaning (October to November)	Warming trend accompanied by longer dry periods

## Aboriginal Heritage Act (WA) 1971

This site is protected under the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. This allows for the preservation on behalf of the community places and objects of traditional value to the original inhabitants of Australia and their descendants. A registered site is a place of importance connected with the traditional or cultural life of the Aboriginal people. It may apply for the preservation of sites such as Burlong Pool including excavation, destruction, damage or removal of artefacts.



Nyungar tools



Fish-throwing stick

## Sites of significance

Burlong Pool was significant for the Nyungar people because it was the richest food source in the region. The pool was rich in fish and during the hottest part of the year the Nyungar people came to the site to catch and eat fish. It was also the place where the Nyungar people would find their traditional medicines.

## Nyungar tools and uses

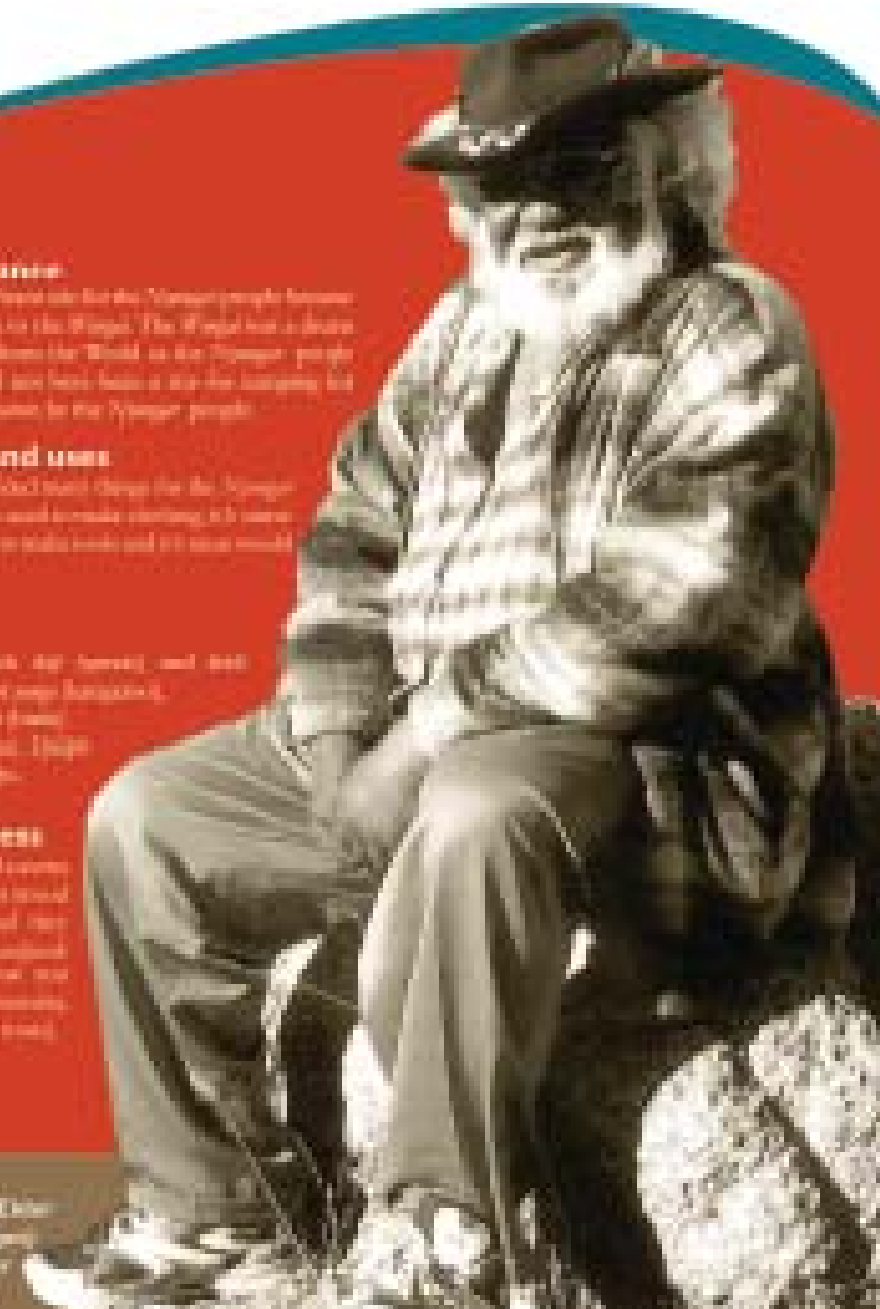
Nyungar traditional tools were made from the land. Nyungar people used spears and spear-throwers to hunt kangaroos and wallabies and to catch fish. They also used spears and spear-throwers to hunt kangaroos and wallabies and to catch fish.

## Men's Business

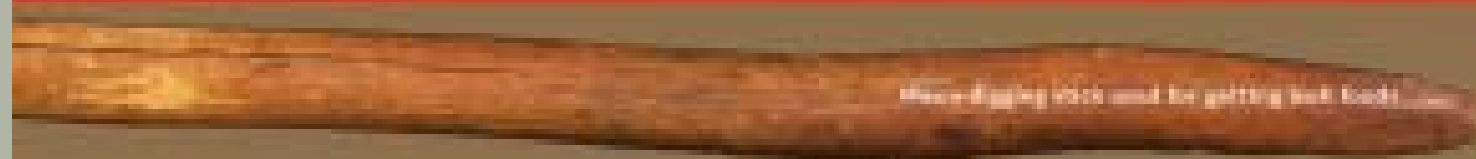
The men's business was the traditional and spiritual business of the Nyungar people. It was a time when the men would gather to discuss their business and to share their knowledge of the land.

## Women's Business

The women's business was the traditional and spiritual business of the Nyungar people. It was a time when the women would gather to discuss their business and to share their knowledge of the land.



Eighty-Six Eyes Reflecting Elder (Photograph provided by Eighty-Six Eyes Photo courtesy: Marilyn O'Shea)



Spear-throwing stick used for getting back booby

This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Rehabilitation Committee, the Innes Valley Environmental Society, the State of Western Australia, the Department of Water and Weather, the National Resource Management, Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.

# FLORA OF BURLONG POOL

The Ngunnawal region of the Great Dividing Range (Australia's main mountain range) is a rich and diverse landscape. The Great Dividing Range of New South Wales and adjacent mountain ranges and plateaus are an important aspect of Australia's natural heritage. It is the southern extension of the Great Dividing Range and is located in a world-class landscape.



**Bilston Paperbark**  
*Melaleuca papuana*

This plant is a small tree or shrub that grows in the Ngunnawal region of the Great Dividing Range. It is a member of the Myrtaceae family and is known for its distinctive paperbark. The plant is native to the region and is a common sight in the area. It is a hardy and resilient species that can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. The plant is also known for its medicinal properties and is used in traditional medicine.



**Flam/Sheelah**  
*Cassipouira alata*

This plant is a small tree or shrub that grows in the Ngunnawal region of the Great Dividing Range. It is a member of the Leguminosae family and is known for its distinctive flam. The plant is native to the region and is a common sight in the area. It is a hardy and resilient species that can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. The plant is also known for its medicinal properties and is used in traditional medicine.

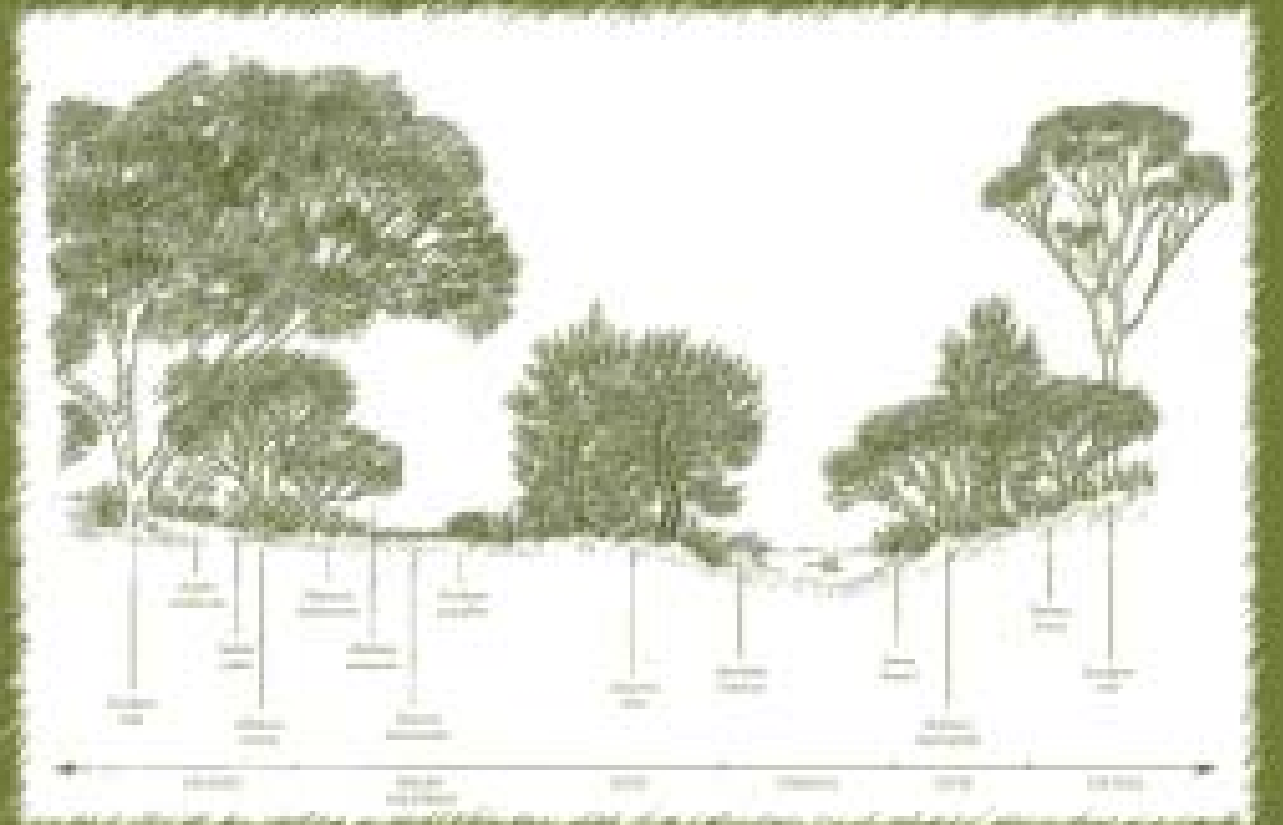


**Ngunnawal Flooded Gum**  
*Eucalyptus nungun*

This plant is a small tree or shrub that grows in the Ngunnawal region of the Great Dividing Range. It is a member of the Myrtaceae family and is known for its distinctive flooded gum. The plant is native to the region and is a common sight in the area. It is a hardy and resilient species that can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. The plant is also known for its medicinal properties and is used in traditional medicine.



Spotted Fairy Wren in Bilston tree at Burlong Pool



**Cross-section of the Gungahlin River (Burrumbidgee River)**

This diagram shows a cross-section of the Gungahlin River (Burrumbidgee River) and the various tree species that grow along its banks. The diagram is divided into sections, each representing a different tree species. The species shown include Bilston Paperbark, Flam/Sheelah, Ngunnawal Flooded Gum, and Spotted Fairy Wren. The diagram also shows the distribution of these species along the riverbank, with a scale bar at the bottom ranging from 0 to 1000 meters.

This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Ngunnawal Community, the Snowy Mountains Environmental Society, the State of New South Wales, the Department of Water and Environmental Heritage Management. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.



# BIRDS OF BURLONG POOL

At least 120 bird species have been observed along the breeding season (August to November) in the area. Most are highly mobile and mobile species and by monitoring population densities we can measure the degree of environmental change and quality of living conditions. Check them here to learn 20 species and their distribution in Burlong Pool. This includes general description and essential bird groups. This highlight has represented the main groups in our habitat.



**Kookaburra**  
**Plagie**  
*Cynochalca leucorhoa*

The bird is common in the grasslands and wetlands in the region.

The bird is highly mobile and can be found in a wide range of habitats.

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The bird is highly mobile and can be found in a wide range of habitats.

## Pigeons

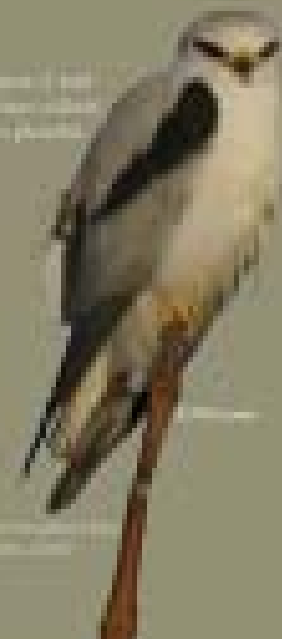
There are 12 species of pigeons in the area. The most common is the Rock Dove, which is highly mobile and can be found in a wide range of habitats.

## Minimids

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## Irruptive Birds

There are 12 species of irruptive birds in the area. The most common is the Rock Dove, which is highly mobile and can be found in a wide range of habitats.



**Kook**  
**Smokey Fantail**  
*Rhipidura fuscica*

The bird is highly mobile and can be found in a wide range of habitats.

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**Kook**  
**Sacred Kingfisher**  
*Alcedo sacrorum*

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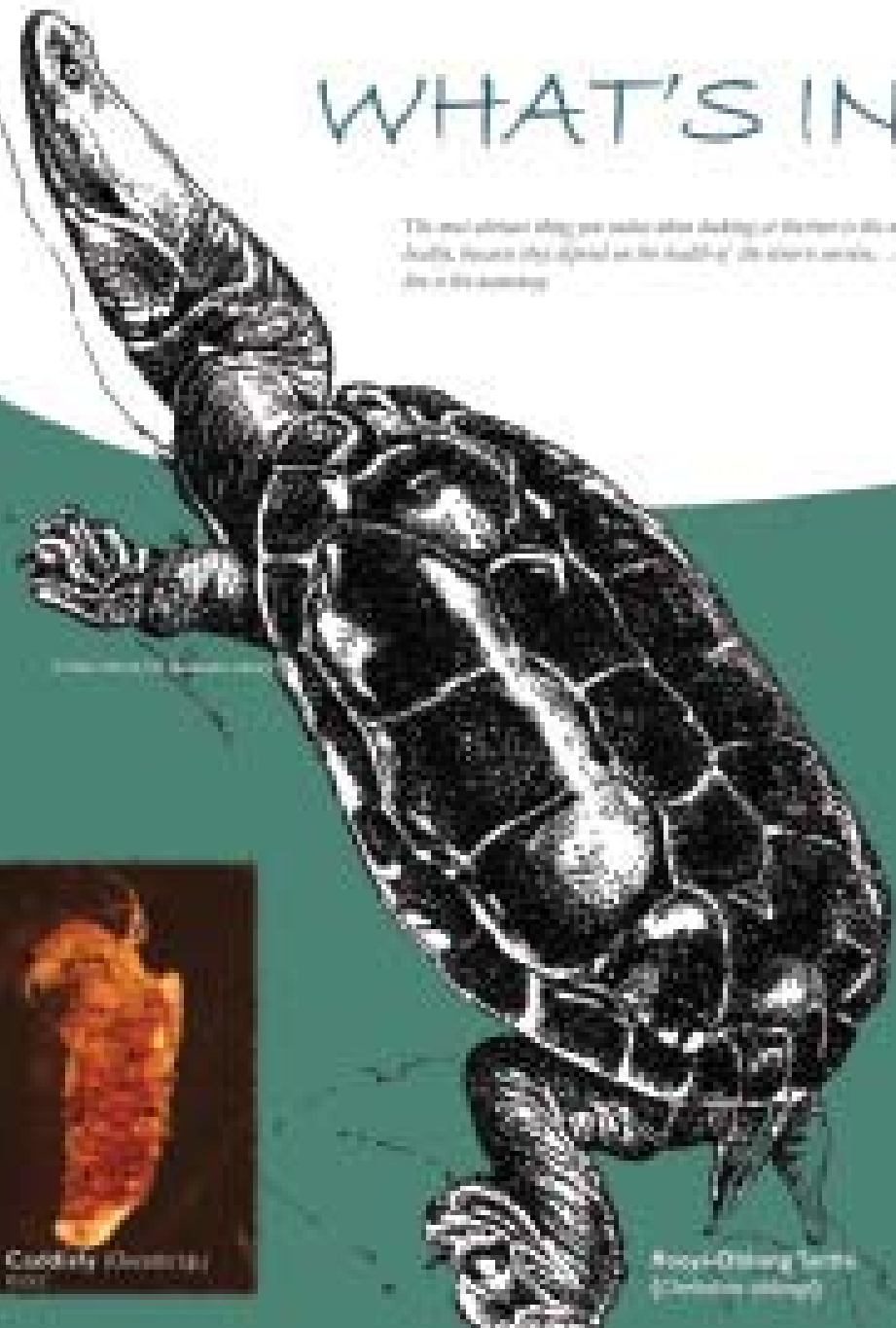
This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Burlong Community, the James Valley Environmental Society, the State of New South Wales, the Department of Water and Environmental Management, and the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.





# WHAT'S IN THE WATER?

The most obvious thing you notice when looking at the water is the number of fish. The presence of fish indicates the water is reasonably healthy, because they depend on the health of the stream system. A good indicator of what the water is like is the presence and number of the Great River crayfish.



## So what is in the water?

There are many plants and things (shells) that are found in streams. If you observe them regularly, you will see that they look like the ones that come back to the surface with a load of air bubbles.

Some of the birds that live in streams are the Kingfisher and the Blue Jay. The Kingfisher lives in the water and the Blue Jay lives on the bank.

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Many birds live in the streams. Some are Kingfishers and Blue Jays. Some are Kingfishers and Blue Jays. Some are Kingfishers and Blue Jays.



Great River crayfish

## Life in the water

The largest organism in the stream is the Great River crayfish. It lives in the water and on the bank. It has two large claws and many legs. It is a very important part of the stream ecosystem.

The next largest organism in the stream is the fish. There are many different kinds of fish in the stream. Some are very small and some are very large. They all live in the water and on the bank.

## Plankton in the water

There are many different kinds of plankton in the water. Some are very small and some are very large. They all live in the water and on the bank. Some are very important parts of the stream ecosystem.



Great River crayfish

This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Waterways Committee, the Snowy Mountains Environmental Society, the State of New South Wales, the Department of Water and Environmental Management, and the Snowy Mountains Water and Power Commission. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.

# RECREATION AT BURLONG

Learn the different purposes of the lake of Northern Baring Pool over different but connected time periods. From military use to water sports, boating, fishing, water recreation, and various activities of interest that exist at the lake. It was made by the people of the past.



## Military use

When the World War broke out the Northern Army Camp was situated above Baring Pool. The Australian Army used the pool to train soldiers to cross rivers. In this place you can see the soldiers crossing with a full pack and the

Mechanical units and the 19th Light Horse Regiment would also cross the river. On one occasion a tank went into the river. It is thought some of the soldiers' gear that was being carried across rotted at the bottom of the pool, although it would now be covered in sediment.

## Recreation

Over time a large Baring Pool was approximately 20 metres wide, one kilometre long and in some places six metres deep. Looking into the depths of the pool in certain spots you would have been able to see springs bubbling with fresh drinking water. At this time the water was clear and clean and you could drink it and not worry the least.

It was a favourite location for the servants of Northern. He used a horse. The servants would have had swimming holes

were put up and swimming clubs were formed. There were change rooms and bathing sheds – the ruins of which you can still see today, north of the pool.

There were cafes and some people in Northern can still remember a flying fox moving the fruit. One local Northern person recalls the noise of an old Buick car that was a death drive into the pool.

Baring Pool was known as the best playground for people, especially on the weekends when there were bands, concerts and other events (all) here with hundreds of people attending.

## In memory

Sadly, there have been people who have died here at Baring, either by accident or suicide.

This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Baringlong Community, the Innes Valley Environmental Society, the State of New South Wales, the Department of Water and Environment, Natural Resources Management. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.



# STEAM TRAINS AT BURLONG

This site was used by various groups leading to the gold fields in search of gold. It was the goldfield operations used to pull away their cars up the half a degree incline leading Darling Pool which they filled with water. If the steam train could not go up or Darling Pool the level of the pool could be used to drop it to 20m. This site was important because it was the only source of fresh water between Fred and Zuydam.



## Gold Rush

Gold was first discovered in Western Australia between Northam and York in 1892. A new mining province was proclaimed in the area.

In 1894 the idea of Northern Cross was to fill government and some private land with free farms.



View for the Goldfields pipeline

## To the Goldfields

In 1894 the Government of Western Australia decided to improve the railway to the goldfields. It was decided to build a new line from Northam to the goldfields. The line was built in 1895 and was the first of its kind in Western Australia. It was built to carry gold ore from the goldfields to the coast for export.

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Harbours Railway Station in 1902

## Speakers Break to Northern

The first of the break to Northern Cross was in 1894. The first of the break to Northern Cross was in 1894. The first of the break to Northern Cross was in 1894. The first of the break to Northern Cross was in 1894.

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Mariboo Railway Station in 1907

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# RIVER TRAINING SCHEME



Flooding of riverbank farms (Dorridge, York, Northam and Tinsbury) and of agricultural land along the river was the main concern that led to the River Training Scheme. This scheme involved the removal of channel vegetation, bank tree logs and debris to a width of 80 metres, rippling of the river bed to reduce erosion of a deeper watercourse and removal of silt and debris in the river.



## River Training Scheme

This Scheme was introduced under section 200 of the 1993 Local River Development Commission Act. Between the years 1997-1999 the donated bankside trees, willows and debris removed for safety 2000m to create the river to flow more freely and reduce the chance of flooding events. This removed between Tinsbury and Northam.

This scheme helped to increase the velocity and increased power of the river which helped to scour the river bed of the silt. There was the suggestion that an advantage of the River Training Scheme was the flood water would get through faster than before. People now know that the River Training Scheme did more harm than good. Millions of tonnes of sediment were mobilised as a result of this the river banks became sand traps and continue to fill with sediment. (1)



An eroded bank during the River Training Scheme

## Avon River Poets

Some of the most beautiful poetry about the Avon River have been filled with some sadness and many others are very joyful. The river is full of creative inspiration and beauty of the River Training Scheme. It's better than I thought, especially because it's so close to the water.

## Salinity

Salinity is a major problem for the Avon River. It is a major problem for the river because the water table is so high that the water and deposit more than 15kg of salt per hectare per year into the land. It is the salt that remains to be deposited in the landscape that has to be dealt with.

The salt would have been underground, but with the removal of deep sand permanent, ground water has been allowed to enter the surface bringing with it the salt that has been stored for a long time underground.

The water table on some islands is 100m below which is considered as 10,000,000 kilograms of salt per hectare. This is considered as 10,000,000 kilograms of salt per hectare and the total quantity is around 10,000 kilograms of salt per hectare.

Would you like to drink out of the river water?



This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Elders Group, the Avon Valley Environmental Society, the State of Western Australia, the Department of Water and Weather, Natural Resources Management. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.



# AVON RIVER CARE

This site is an integral part of the management of the Avon River Basin. Despite what you believe differently to the Avon River Basin for a number of years will commonly build the way. Being that it is an active environmental condition and the best being plan to restore and repair the river.

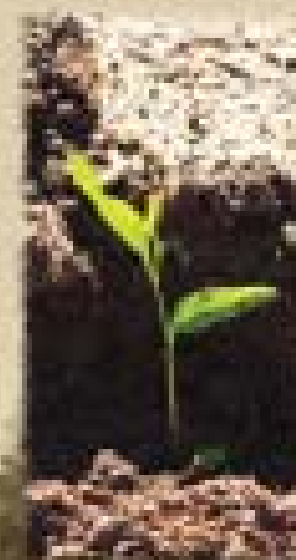
## Avon River Care

The Avon River Care Project started in 1993 as part of the Swan-Town Integrated Management Program with a survey of the state channel of the Avon River. From there it has developed into a comprehensive program focusing on improving both local and river management practices to enhance the riverine environment. Some of the issues that have been addressed are the protection of the riparian vegetation, revegetation of the banks and land next to the river and removal of sediment from the river banks. The project has also included preparing 22 River Recovery Plans for the whole length of the river. These plans contain recommendations for management of the river in the future.



## Revegetation

The planting of local native trees and shrubs on the river bank and areas next to the river help to improve the river environment. By 2009 over 1 million plants had been planted with the help of community, some 1000 plants were planted at Bunting in 2009.



## Sedimentation

Following the River Training, where the movement of sediment increased dramatically and most of the 28 river pools filled with sediment. The Avon River Care Project has focused on removing sediment from these pools to allow them to regain their role in providing a refuge for aquatic life during the long dry summer. Removal of sediment has taken place at Bunting over the last 20 years.

## Fencing

Following the channel survey in 1993 only 40% of the river channel was fenced to protect the river. In partnership with landholders this has now increased to 90% by 2009. The aim of the fencing is to protect the vegetation and keep livestock out of the river. Over the past 25 years over 650 kilometers of fencing has been supplied to landholders to assist in protecting their riparian areas.

Bunting pool rock spill

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# WALKING TRACK



The 10th King of the West of the King Country and 'Trapper for Walking Tracks' is a proposed 10km long 100m wide 10m deep and 10m high stone wall that would connect the 10th King to the 10th King. The 10th King would be built across the 10th King, 10th King, 10th King, 10th King and the 10th King. It is hoped that the 10th King will be able to walk up the 10th King. The track is a walk for people that is walking, riding, swimming and fishing.

Maple is a walk for people that is walking, riding, swimming and fishing.

## Dorotj Koorliny track

On the track you will be able to walk from the coast of Northam along the Eastern Bank to Burlong Pool. It is expected in the future that you will be able to walk along the Western Bank on the return trip to Northam.

Knowing the time of the water course would be like being able to follow a map. If you know it well you would know where there are good places to camp, where there are local food resources and what sites are taken and therefore not allowed to be used.

The Nungo people have many tracks throughout the region. Sometimes they are known as 'drinking tracks' or 'song lines'. The knowledge of these tracks has been handed down through the generations by stories and by walking. It is said that Nungo people from as far as Southern Cross would come via this site. Sometimes people would travel these vast distances to attend ceremonies. A ceremonial ground is within walking distance from where you now stand.

As you walk along this track be sure to look for the wagar (jar tree), woor (paperbark), and dumar (rock gum) trees as this is where some of the animals can be seen.

We hope that you enjoy your time walking along this 100m path.



## Burlong Pool Map



This site has been developed through a partnership between the local Aboriginal Burlong Community, the Inca Valley Environmental Society, the State of Western Australia, the Department of Water and Weather, Natural Resources Management. Funding was provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program.





*Splendid Fairy Wren*  
*Malurus splendens*

© Graeme Chapman

*Nidja Nyungar budjar nguny wangkiny*

(this is Nyungar land and stories)

*Wargal kierp wirrinitj*

(the water snake belongs to the water)



**wheatbelt**

natural resource  
management

