

RECORDING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Our Country... Our Stories... Our People...
Ngalak Ngank nitja Budjar, ngalak waankaniny nitja katajin, ngalak moort nitja djurapiny...

Biodiversity



fire



water



land



BY MURDOCH PROJECT TEAM: Author & Principal Researcher **Sandra Harben BA**
Cultural Consultant **Leonard Collard MA**
Production Coordinator **Glen Stasiuk BBUS & BA HONS**
Research Assistant **Doreen Nelson**

Proudly supported by:



This project is fully funded by the Avon Catchment Council supported by the Australian Government and the Government of Western Australia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FOR

**AVON BASIN NOONGAR HERITAGE AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

BY MURDOCH PROJECT TEAM

**Principal Researcher Sandra Harben BA
Cultural Consultant Leonard Collard MA**

**Kura, Yeye, Benang, Kalykool
Past, Present, Tomorrow, Forever**

**Ngulla Budjar
Our country**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Murdoch University through its Centre for Social & Community Research (CSCR) and Kulbardi Productions was commissioned by the Avon Catchment Council to record traditional knowledge of Noongar budjar and sites of significance within the Avon River Basin.

The research was undertaken by an experienced team of Noongar researchers from within the Australian Indigenous Studies Program, Kulbardi Centre, Research Assistants - Braden Hill, Ingrid Collard, Lesley Nelson and Doreen Nelson), the Centre for Social and Community Research at Murdoch University and Moodjar Consultancy (Leonard Collard Cultural Consultant and Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies. The team worked closely with Noongar individuals, families and communities in the Avon River Basin. A partial list of key culturally significant sites related to the natural resources of the area was compiled through a comprehensive literature review, search of the Registry of sites (DIA) and through interviews with key Noongar participants. Eleven key Noongar participants were interviewed to collect oral histories for the research report and for the documentary film. A website developer was engaged to build the essential components for a future interactive website for the Recording Traditional Knowledge project.

The project was framed by four primary themes: fire, water, land and biodiversity. Specifically this project focused on cultural values expressed through the recording of traditional knowledge; historical associations and knowledge of sites of significance; spiritual and cultural values; and rights and responsibilities were explored.

The cultural knowledge shared by the participants assisted the research team to build a Noongar perspective of those sites. Of the sites studied, three were selected to be linked to projects listed to the Avon Investment. They are Badjaling (Shire of Quairading), Kokerbin Rock (Shire of Bruce Rock) and Burlong Pool (Shire of Northam).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to support the ‘Recording Traditional Knowledge for Natural Resource Management in the Avon River Basin’ by providing a rudimentary analysis of literature about traditional Noongar land use and management, including attachment, cultural, physical and spiritual aspects, within the Avon River Basin. The project is a result of the joint efforts of the Ballardong Natural Resource Management Working Group (Ballardong NRM Working Group) and the Avon Catchment Council. The common vision held by these two key groups is to bring to fruition the desire of all people in the Avon River Basin Region “to have healthy Budjar that could be enjoyed by all”. The project intends “to represent the perspectives and the period of time that Noongar people have been occupying and caring for their Budjar”.

The place and places Noongar call “budjar”. In our language we say ‘ngalak ngaank nitja budjar – this land, our mother’.
(Ballardong NRM Working Group)

The literature about traditional Noongar land use and the recording of traditional Noongar knowledge in natural resource management within the Avon River Basin is pivotal to this project. The gathering together of this disparate literature will hopefully lead to an increase in the awareness of the value of culturally significant sites within the region and will ensure these sites are managed not only for NRM outcomes but for spiritual reasons as well. It is hoped the project will strengthen the social connections that communities have with their natural environment and enhance community interactions through working towards a common goal. There are twelve Noongar language groups. The Avon district incorporates the following Noongar language groups. (i) Ballardong: York district and eastwards; at Beverley and along the Avon River, north to the Wongan hills. (ii) Yuat: At Gingin, Moora, New Norcia, Moore River and Cape Leschenault; north to about Hill River; inland to Wubin. (iii) Wiilman: At Wagin and Narrogin; on Collie, Hotham and Williams Rivers west to Collie; Wuraming north to Gnowing, Pingelly; east to Wickepin; south to Nampup, Katanning, Woodanilling. (iv) Whadjuck: Swan River inland to beyond Wongan Hills; at Northam, Newcastle, Toodyay, York, Perth; south along the coast to Pinjarra. The Avon River Basin extends east into Yilgarn and Lockhart catchments, which encompasses other Indigenous language groups including, Kaneang, Goreng, Nyaki-Nyaki and Kalamaia

Gubbrun (*Refer to Map on page 19*). (This information is reproduced from N.B Tindale's Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, 1974)

The focus for the Avon Catchment Council relates to Indigenous knowledge for the themes of Water, Fire, Biodiversity and Land.

‘will you walk with us, respect us, and listen to us’? If you will, together we may make the progress so many people have been seeking for so long’. (Ballardong Natural Resource Management Working Group)

(*Note: there are several ways of spelling the word Noongar. This version has been adopted by the Ballardong Natural Resource Management Working Group.)

A number of different language variations occur amongst the Balardong, Juat, Kaneang, Koreng, Minang, Njakinjaki, Pibelman, Pindjarup, Wardandi, Whadjuck, Wiilman and Wudjari in the southwest of Western Australia (Tindale 1974; Douglas 1976). There are even variations in the spelling of the word which include Nyungar, Noongar, Nyoongar, Nyoongah, Wargle, Waakle, Warrgul or Woggal (the Noongar Rainbow Snake).

This variation reflects both regional dialect differences as well as an attempt by groups in these areas to retain, in a modern Australian society, a sense of independence and difference within. Therefore, the authors acknowledge that writing Nyungar language has been somewhat difficult because of the different ways the words have been spelt over the course of time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NOONGAR PARTICIPANTS IN THIS
PROJECT



BALLARDONG ELDER IRENE JETTA



BALLARDONG ELDER JANET COLLARD



BALLARDONG ELDER BASIL WINMAR



BALLARDONG ELDER LEISHA (DOOLAN) EATTS



BALLARDONG ELDER EUGENE GARLETT



BALLARDONG ELDER IRIS SLATER



BALLARDONG ELDER OSWALD HUMPHRIES



BALLARDONG ELDER CAROL HUMPHRIES



KALAMAIA GUBBRUN ELDER LINDA CHAMPION



BALLARDONG ELDER NORMAN DICK



BALLARDONG ELDER VERONICA MCGUIRE

BACKGROUND

A literature review was conducted as a requirement of the ‘Recording Traditional Knowledge for Natural Resource Management in the Avon River Basin’ project, and this informed the research process. The findings from this literature review are discussed below.

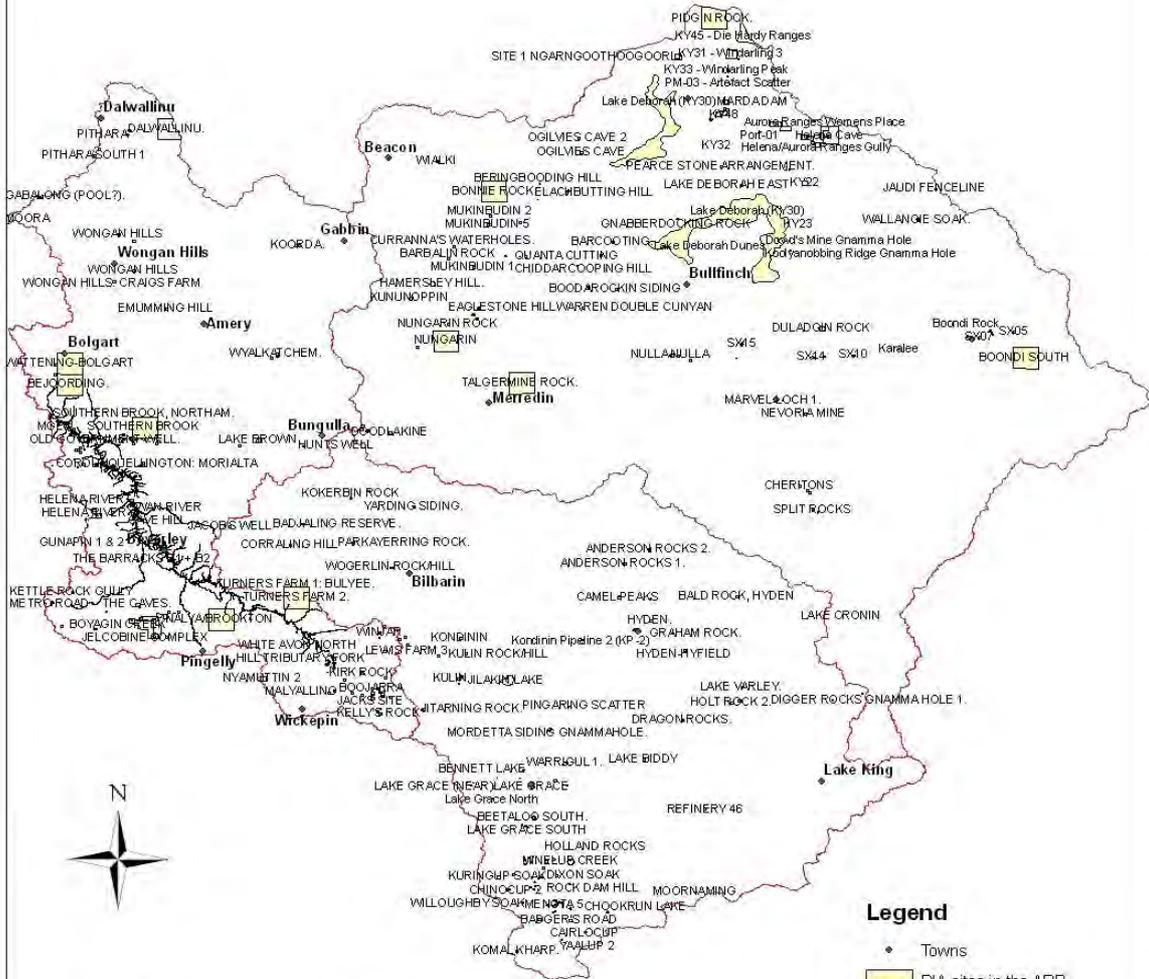
To conduct the search, a review of existing available literature was carried out using the electronic database and web pages of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, Department of Environment and Heritage, Avon Catchment Council as well as Google Scholar. To narrow the literature search, the following search criteria were applied: [Noongar]; [recording of traditional storytelling]; [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous]; [Natural resource management, stories and practices]. Transcripts of existing oral recordings taken from Noongar elders over the past 20 years were also sourced, along with the existing collection of resources in the local Kulbardi Aboriginal Studies Unit at Murdoch University.

The primary aim of the researchers was to focus on literature pertaining to Noongar cultural sites of significance in relation to Natural Diversity (Ecoscapes, Healthy Ecosystem), Fire, Land Management (Salinity) and Water themes (Avon River Pools & Rivers and Wetlands).

A heritage site is any place of importance and significance to Aboriginal people, such as a place where Aboriginal people have left any object; or a sacred, ritual or ceremonial site. (State of Western Australia, 1972).

“Sacred sites are places that bear the marks of the creative ancestral spirits, which continue to have a presence in land formations. These ancestral spirits followed pathways and sites, and form a connection for people from various and diverse language groups into a wider community of Aboriginal people with the land. They are geographical features which mark episodes in the stories of the ancestral spirits’ journeys throughout Australia. Sacred sites are the settings of their custodians’ most important knowledge and activities. They are fundamental to the sense of self.” (CALM, 2002).

Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) Registered Cultural Heritage Sites in the Avon River Basin (ARB)



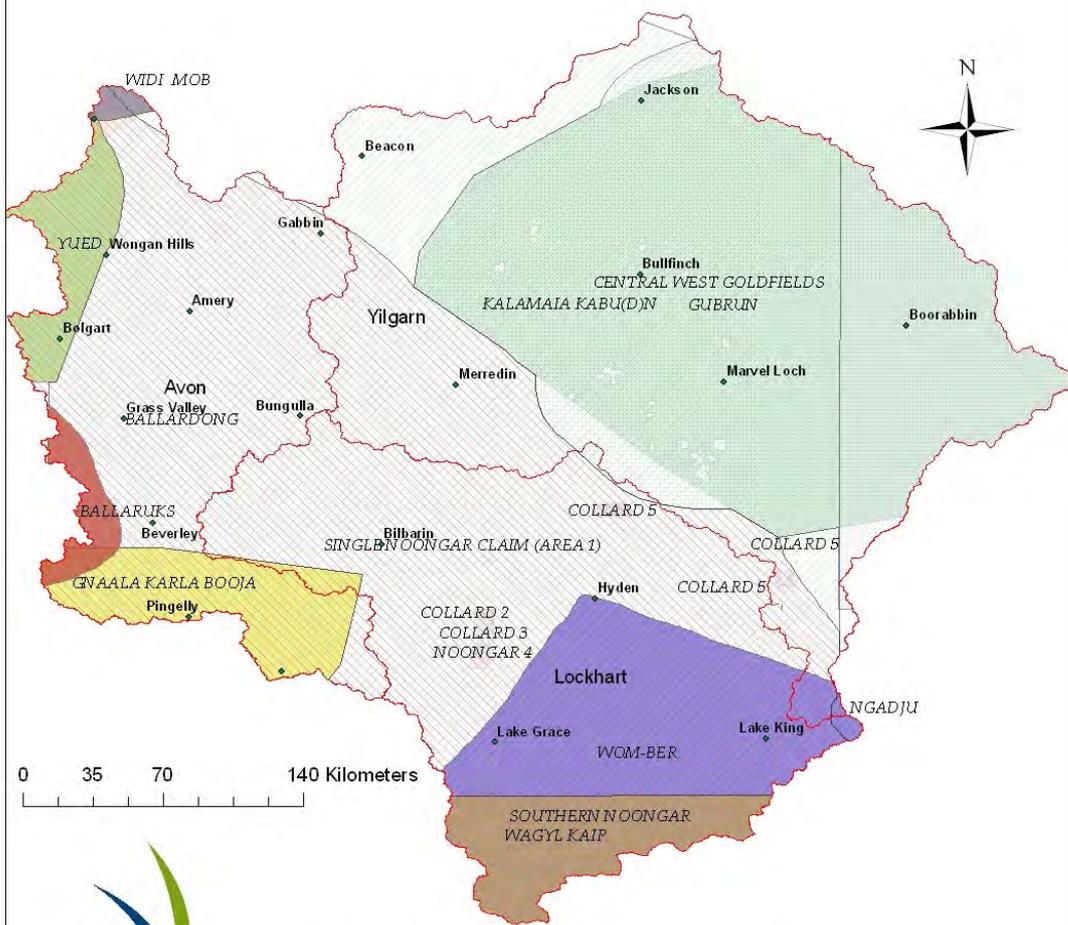
0 35 70 140 Kilometers

This map has been produced by Dan Ferguson for the Avon Catchment Council project Recording Traditional Knowledge for Natural resource Management in the Avon River Basin Project. Data has been derived from the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Agriculture & Food, WA. The Avon Catchment Council accepts no responsibility for actions taken as a result of using this information.

November 28, 2007



Native Title Federal Court Claims in the Avon River Basin (ARB)



0 35 70 140 Kilometers



This map has been produced by Dan Ferguson for the Avon Catchment Council project Recording Traditional Knowledge for Natural resource Management in the Avon River Basin Project. Data has been derived from the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Agriculture & Food, WA. The Avon Catchment Council accepts no responsibility for actions taken as a result of using this information.

November 28, 2007

Legend

- ◆ Towns
- ▭ ARB catchment boundaries
- Federal Court Claims**
- CLAIM**
- ▨ CENTRAL WEST GOLDFIELDS
- ▨ BALLARDONG
- ▨ BALLARUKS
- ▨ COLLARD 8
- ▨ COLLARD 2
- ▨ COLLARD 3
- ▨ COLLARD 5
- ▨ GNAALAKARLA BOOJA
- ▨ GUBRUN
- ▨ KALAMAIA KABU(D)N
- ▨ NGADJU
- ▨ NOONGAR 4
- ▨ SINGLE NOONGAR CLAIM (AREA 1)
- ▨ SOUTHERN NOONGAR
- ▨ THE ESPERANCE NYUNGARS
- ▨ WAGYL KAIP
- ▨ WDI MOB
- ▨ WDI BINYARDI
- ▨ WOM-BER
- ▨ YUED

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used during the study was comprised of the following:

1.1 Desktop Study

A desktop study was carried out drawing on available literature, documentary sources and the Department for Indigenous Affairs website files. The desktop study provided background information relating to the cultural and historical association to budjar - country by Noongar within the Avon River Basin.

1.2 Literature and Documentary Sources

The literature review took into account published and unpublished material relating primarily to Noongar associations with and use of Noongar budjar. The review provided background information from published material such as Hallam's *Fire and Hearth*, the published work of Daisy Bates, *Aboriginal Perth and Bibbulmun Biographies and Legends*, Dale, R *Descriptive Accounts of the Panoramic View, & c. of King George's Sound and the Adjacent Country, Conservation and Land Management*, Rose, D *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, Kickett, E *The Trails of the Rainbow Serpent* and Tilbrook, *The First South Westerners: Aborigines of Western Australia*.

The literature review also included selected nineteenth-century explorers' journals such as those compiled by Grey (19983/84 [1841]) and George Fletcher Moore in secondary form. Finally the review incorporated some of the oral histories of Noongar participants and oral histories from other Noongar language groups relating to Noongar budjar.

PRESENT STATE OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The present condition of Australia's natural resources is the result of both ongoing natural processes and human habitation.

Australia's natural systems have evolved over 45 million years in isolation from other continents on a very stable geological base.

- Human habitation of the continent has a history of around **60,000+** years, most of which has been with Indigenous people.
- The burning and hunting practices of Indigenous people modified plant and animal populations.
- The population was small in relation to the size of the continent and scattered over the country.
- Indigenous cultures were based on self sufficiency, meeting needs through harvesting from the natural systems and communal governance of natural resources through tribes. Non-Indigenous habitation, initially from European cultures has a history of just over **200** years.
- These cultures applied economic and governance systems which have had a major impact on the environment over large areas of the country.
- Food needs were met through introduced plants and animal species and associated farming systems.
- This included the cultivation of pasture for cattle and sheep over large areas that required the clearing of native vegetation.
- Economic systems were based on production beyond self sufficiency and trade to meet economic and social wants. Other industries such as forestry, mining and manufacturing which used natural resources were established and had major impacts on the environment, although in more concentrated areas of farming.

- In comparison with Indigenous peoples, the European population was much higher and communities were highly urbanised which meant environmental impacts were more intense in urban locations.
- European systems of governance were based on private property rights over land that had been granted by the Crown (state) or purchased, with the vesting of unclaimed land, water and forests in the Crown controlled by colonies and later states. The system that emerged is a system of public and private ownership with the management powers vested in the states.
- Systems of local governments were given limited powers and resources in comparison with the tribal and communal governance of Indigenous people. (Flugge 2003)

ABORIGINAL HISTORY IN THE AVON RIVER BASIN

Noongar People

(*Note: there are several ways of spelling the word Noongar. This version refers to the people of the Ballardong Noongar Region of southwest WA.

Budjar

Noongar budjar (country or land) lies in the south-western corner of Western Australia. It extends eastward of Esperance (Wudjari) moving in an arc to the north-west close to the small wheat-belt town of Nyoongah (Njakinjaki), and west-north-west towards Coorooow (Juat), and south of Geraldton across to the west coast of Western Australia. These are the general boundaries of the budjar or country where all Noongar moort have budjar or geographical land and moort or family regional affiliations. Noongar, or the people, encompass twelve different dialect groups here and the budjar is divided into corresponding territories as previously mentioned (Tindale 1974). The language groups are Ballardong, Goreng, Wiilman, Wudjari, Wardandi, Kaniyang, Bibbulmun, Wajuk and Nyaki-Nyaki, Yuat, Pinjarup and Minang.

Each Noongar language group had access to different ecological habitats in accordance with a long tradition of territorial occupation. (CALM, 2000).

Within the Avon River Basin Noongar budjar share boundaries with Wongi, which is the generic name of the Aboriginal people from the Eastern Goldfields region of Western Australia, and Yamatji, which is the generic name of the Aboriginal people in the Murchison and Gascoyne areas of the mid-west of this state, (Collard 1996; van den Berg 1994; Brewster et al. 2000).

MAP SHOWING NOONGAR LANGUAGE GROUPS



Tindale (1974) Aboriginal Tribes of Australia.

PRE-EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Moort, Dartj and Merenj in our Budjar (Family and food)

Before pre-European settlement Noongar lived in harmony with the land. They recognised six seasons in their year, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba, Kambarang and Birak, and managed the budjar accordingly. Each Noongar moort or family had their own land for hunting and gathering purposes and regarded the incursion of others onto it as trespass, although resources were shared freely with neighbours (Tilbrook 1983, pp.105, 556).

There were between thirty and forty distinct roots, nuts and vegetables eaten by Noongar and which were gathered nearly all year round. The flowers of three or four trees and shrubs afforded them honey, either by suction or steeping in water. There was hardly any shortage of food throughout the six-season cycle, katitjin or knowledge was given to the Noongar by the Waakal to manage our land according to the seasons and Noongar harvested only the food for their immediate use (Swan River Trust 1998). The Noongar or people of the south west of Western Australia had a veritable supermarket of food from which to choose, depending on the food chain. As Whadjuck/Ballardong Fred Collard (2002) states, “They used to. . . move around with the seasons in the early days [and] the season was all about where the food line was”. And according to Noongar historian, Dr Rosemary van den Berg:

... they hunted kangaroo (yongka), emu, (waitj), possums (coomarl), snakes, (land snakes, not water snakes), lizards (caarda, and yoorna), turtles and their eggs, honey, birds like rosellas, bronze-wing pigeons and ducks and their eggs and the bardi grubs, which could be eaten raw or cooked in the coals. Their vegetable and fruit intake included edible tubers, quandong, berries and nuts and a type of grain which could be crushed and made into a damper. The boyoo or toxic zamia palm had special treatment before it could be eaten (van den Berg 2001, p.96).

The late Ballardong Noongar Tom Bennell (1978b) says “*one Noongar would have said to his moort when they were around their karla, do you want to dartcha koorliny? That means do you want to go hunting for meat or merinj koorl buranginy – go looking for vegetables.*”

THE DREAMING



[Wargle]

Courtesy of Shane Pickett (Ballardong Noongar Artist)

The Aboriginal “Dreaming” is commonly used to describe the Aboriginal creative epoch (Edwards, 1998). Dreaming stories explain how ancestral beings emerged at the beginning of time to create the earth and all things within it. These stories created complex relationships between the people, the land and the creatures/animals. Through these relationships the sacred past is drawn into the present, where it continues to transform itself (Noongar, 2003; Citizens and Civics Unit et al, 2004). The Dreaming provides a ‘blue print for respect and utilization of resources in a sustainable way’. (Noongar, 2003)

Although Noongar occupy their own budjar, cultural ideologies, language and social mores are based on the same tenets since kura, a long time ago (Bennell 1993). Many stories or mythologies are told and while the content of those stories changed with the narrator, the basic theory always depicted the Waakal or Noongar Rainbow Serpent as fundamental to Noongar Cosmology.

WARGLE

Noongar believe that the Wargle or Noongar Rainbow Serpent created the waterways and is keeper of the fresh water sources.

There are two different sorts of carpet snake. If anybody ever see them, the old bush carpet, he got white marks on him. The old water carpet snake, he is purple and oh, he is pretty. He is purple. I saw them myself. I saw them, oh, up to fourteen or fifteen feet long, very pretty. But the old forest carpet snake, he is only just an ordinary old carpet snake. But the real water snake oh, he is pretty, that carpet snake. I don't think too many people have seen him. They wouldn't know he was a carpet snake, but he is a carpet snake all right, but the Noongar call him Waakal (Bennell 1978 b).

WHADJUCK/BALLARDONG ELDER THE LATE TOM BENNELL SHARES HIS KATITJIN (KNOWLEDGE) ABOUT THE WAAKLE:

The Waakal - that's a carpet snake and there is a dry carpet and a wet carpet snake. The old Waakal that lives in the water, they never let them touch them. Never let the children play with those. They reckon that is Noongar koorlongka warra wirrinitj warbaniny, the Waakal, you're not to play with that carpet snake, that is bad. ... Nitcha barlup Waakal marbukal nyininy - that means he is a harmless carpet snake. He lives in the bush throughout Noongar budjar. But the old water snakes; they never let them touch 'em. ... the real water snake oh, he is pretty, that carpet snake. ... the Noongar call him Waakal kierp wirrinitj. That means that carpet snake, he belongs to the water. You mustn't touch that snake; that's no good. If you kill that carpet snake noonook barminyiny that Waakal ngulla kierp uart, that means our water dries up - none. That is their history stories and very true too.

WHADJUCK/BALLARDONG LEN COLLARD TELLS OF HOW "THE WAAKAL CAME OUT OF THE EARTH".

Sometimes it went kardup budjar (under the earth) and sometimes it went yira budjar (over the earth) and it made bilya (river/s), the kaart (hill/s) and ngamar (the waterhole/s)". Noongar theorised it created the Derbal Yiragan, (now known as the Swan River) which

means, “where the estuary is filled up to by the winding river” (Kickett 1995, p.4). It also made all the other waterways in Noongar budjar. The late Ballardong/Whadjuck Ralph Winmar, reinforces the Waakal theme in his story when he says, “At York, you can see where the Warkal [sic] (water snake) left a track when he came over the hill. The Warkal [sic] is the giver of life, he made the rivers, swamps, lakes and waterholes, he maintains the fresh water sources.” (Winmar 1996, p.21). Author and poet the late Dr Jack Davis, a northwest Aboriginal man who spent most of his life in Noongar budjar, wrote the play Kullark (1982). The audience could hear Dr Davis’s version of the local Whadjuck boordier Yagan’s ceremonial chant which could be heard loud and strong as he pays tribute to the Warrgul [sic] for creating the Noongar universe. (Snell 1988, p.16).

BALLARDONG ELDER RALPH WINMAR (DEC) TELLS US IN HIS BOOK WALWALINJ – THE HILL THAT CRIES:

At York you can see where the Warkarl (water snake) left a track when he came over the hill. The Warkarl made the rivers, swamps, lakes and waterholes. He came over the hills at York, and his tracks can still be seen. He came down the Avon river to the nanuk (neck) of the river at Guildford, where there is a bend. When he finished he went to a great underground cave in the river. He did not go on because the water further on was salty. The Warkarl is very important to us Noongar because we believe in the Dreaming.



“Avon River”

[Photo Courtesy Len Collard]

There are other Noongar language groups that sit outside of the Avon region but their stories also acknowledge the Wargle - Noongar Rainbow Serpent.

“The Noongar people believe the Wargle, or Rainbow Serpent, dominated the earth and the sky creating waterways and people. It is a central figure in Noongar culture. Noongar people believe the Waagle gave life and sustenance to people who in return became custodians of the land”. <http://noongarcountry.mysouthwest.com.au/>



“Wargle in the Sky”

[Photo Courtesy Glen Stasiuk]

In Wilman Noongar budjar he is called the “hairy faced snake” or Ngunnunguddy Gnuditj. He created the hills and rivers. (Northover 2000)

Long time ago the hairy faced snake came from the north to Collie coming down through Collie creating the hills and rivers. He came down through here to Bunbury and Australind. He went to Australind pushing his big body forming the estuary. Turning he came back up the Collie river to a place called Minninup Pool where he turned his body pushing out the people, the Noongar. To them he gave the Laws and Language. He spoke to them for a while and when he finished the Noongar all said goodbye by dancing and singing to him. Now the Hairy Faced snake or Wargle rests at Minninup Pool. When the moon is high at night you can see his spirit resting in the River. But before he lay he gave them one law, when they came to the river to fish they must grab sand and rub their armpit because everyone has their own smell, and they grab sand after wiping their armpit and throw the sand into the water so that the Hairy Face Snake can smell their ngarl (body odour), welcome them and know that they are his people. He now rests at Minninup Pool.

The Rainbow Serpent can also be a destructive force if it is not properly respected. Noongar people believe that if you harm resting place of the rainbow serpent or his earthly beings at the place of water then the country would dry up and die. (Jack Williams, Noongar Elder).

BALLARDONG EVERETT KICKETT (DEC) TELLS US IN HIS BOOK THE TRAILS OF THE RAINBOW SERPENT:

...there was a great explosion as the earth was being formed. Boyagin Rock erupted and out of the ground came the wangles: the giant rainbow serpents. Their bodies, as thick as tree trunks, glistened and shimmered a silvery green. Each serpent had a mane of hair and large, luminous eyes; and as they slithered their way out of the rocky hill their haunting cries to the night sky were like the drone of a thousand frogs. ... on that hill, called Mount Matilda, you see the trails of the rainbow serpents. There are one, two, three and four. You can count them as they come over the hill there. ... all the rocks have been pushed out to the edge of the roadways. ... They formed what we now see as the Avon River, going past Northam and Toodyay. And they rested many, many times. All the old Noongar people know their resting places – I know their resting places. And they went along here. This river is called the Ballardong River. The Noongar people know it as the Ballardong River, not the Avon River ... The dreamtime spirits came and saw them all

resting at the bottom of the hill. And so they made the place into a swamp where these creatures could rest unseen... slithering over the hill and down into the swamp you can see at the bottom of Mount Matilda.



A Wargle Trail – near Mandiakan Pool in the Shire of Beverley

[Photo courtesy of Len Collard]

According to many written and oral sources, the phenomenon known as the Waakal created the shape of the budjar and Noongar and gave foundation to the meaning of life, “thas a Noongar story many years ago”. (Bennell 1993, p.3) When the great Waakal created the budjar, he ensured that there was wirrin or spirits to look after the land and all that it encompassed. Some places such as waterholes or rocks, rivers, trees or plants were created as sacred sites and hold wirrin, both warra (bad) and quop (good). Noongar are the holders and keepers of the knowledge’s or katitjin of these places.

WHADJUCK/BALLARDONG ELDER THE LATE TOM BENNELL:

The old Waakal that lives in the water, they never let them touch them. Never let the children play with those. They reckon that is Noongar koorlongka warra wirrinitj warbaniny, the Waakal, you’re not to play with that carpet snake, that is bad. ... Nitcha barlup Waakal marbukal nyininy - that means he is a harmless carpet snake. He lives in the bush throughout Noongar budjar. But the old water snakes; they never let them touch ‘em. ... the real water snake oh, he is pretty, that carpet snake. ... the Noongar call him Waakal kierp wirrinitj. That means that carpet snake, he belongs to the water. You mustn’t touch that snake; that’s no good. If you

kill that carpet snake noonook barminyiny that Waakal ngulla kierp uart, that means our water dries up - none. That is their history stories and very true too. If they come down here to Mindjarliny, the old Noongar call that Minjarliny, noonook Minjarliny koorl nyininy, Noongar wam, Waakal carrunyiny - that means that carpet snake is going to get savage. Mulgariny Waakal koorliny noonar mar yirawal billariny see - they reckon that carpet snake could make a storm come. Make it rain for them. Mandiakan, that's a spring pool down west of Beverley.

They call that Mandiakan, that is a wirrinitj kierp for djinangany noonook barlung. It is fresh water, just like rainwater. (Bennell 1978 a)...



Locality of Mandiakin waterhole [Photo courtesy of Len Collard]



Locality of Mandiakin waterhole [Photo courtesy of Len Collard]

These stories are but just a few told by Noongar maaman (men) and yorga (women). Noongar firmly believe that the Waakal is the giver of life because of its role in maintaining fresh water sources. Belief in the Waakal and its control over the fresh water is as relevant today as

it has been for millennia. In Noongar Cosmology, the Waakal is the Creator, the keeper of the fresh water sources.

There is a plethora of literature about the Wargle from sources other than Noongar oral histories. Moore (2004) says that 'In the south west of Western Australia the woggal or wawgal/rainbow serpent was revered as the guardian of sacred landscapes. It was sometimes regarded as a healer, but it could also cause sickness and mete out punishment for broken laws. The powerful snake spirit was invariably described as feathered, finned, maned and or horny, Daisy Bates wrote in 1925, and was considered an arbitrator of life and death and "omniscient and omnipotent amongst the Bibbulmun" (tribe). According to Aboriginal lore the deity responsible for the balance of water in a region is its local snake spirit. The term 'rainbow serpent' can refer to both the water elemental being that is a major culture hero who formed landscapes in 'the Dreamtime', and also to its lesser regional manifestations. Australian rain making rites and rainbow serpents / snake spirits have been integrally linked since time immemorial. (Moore 2004).

Residing in certain springs, pools, hills, caves, gorges and trees the woggal could also be an unfriendly and fearsome guardian spirit. The woggal's stations were 'winnaitch' taboo, and any game seeking refuge in them was left unmolested. When passing near its home fresh rushes were sometimes strewn by people, or a piece of cooked meat would be placed at the foot of a sacred rock or on the edge of Woggal's pool, to propitiate it. (Moore 2004).

Elkin in 1938 provides an insight into the power of the Rainbow Serpents connection to man through ritual he claims that ... man exert power. Coming with showers and storms, which fall from above on a thirsty land, the Rainbow Serpent is credited with a causative role in rain and depends on it (Elkin 1938). The Perth Gazette 1836:

the "waugal" is an aquatic monster ... (which) inhabits most deep waters, salt or fresh, and almost every lake or pool is haunted by one or more such monsters... ". (Perth Gazette).

Daisy Bates wrote, after being informed by Noongar, that if an ordinary person was to ask ... about the 'woggal' (mythical snake), who lived in a particular tree or cave in his or her Noongar budjar, the Noongar would more than likely tell him, "Oh, that woggal big fellow;

he make beela (rivers), kata (hills), boorna (trees) everywhere; Noongar said its place of abode was to be avoided otherwise he would create vengeance upon anyone who disturbed him. (Bridge 1992).

Furthermore, she recorded the Noongar belief:

“Woggal lives in the sea, in the hills and rocks; but his favourite camping ground is the deep waterholes. He is able to carry swamps and bulrushes (for his bedding) on his back, for he has enormous strength. No djaaja must be cut near a woggal winnaitch place, or the woggal will smell the daaja (meat) and will come up and eat daaja and yoongar (Noongar). (Bridge 1992).

Wilson (1972) used the knowledge about the Waugal in Lord John Forrest’s book *Explorations of Australia* in her more recent book ‘A Bushman Born’. She recounts the story about Tommy Wildish a Njakinjaki Noongar who had informed Forrest about Mount Stirling and Mount Caroline making up a part of a group of four rock-crowned hills known by the Noongar as the Moullean. ... The Noongar made known that this site was the place of Moulack. The elevated granitic domes of the area were said to be the “coils of this giant serpent. Not to have been wholly mythological, for Noongar told the early pioneers of a snake, different from the carpet snake, which lived at every permanent waterhole and must not be killed or the water would dry up”. (Wilson 1981) Lovell (1963) Hallam (1975) further relates stories of the serpent legends. She points to the location of Stanton Springs, which is a water source just south of York. An early colonial wrote that the Noongar were very superstitious about the Spring. The older Noongar said that the Woggle (snake) lived there and that they were afraid to go there because they weren’t allowed to go there. They would not go anywhere near the Spring, “they flatly refuse to get into it and clean it out and are definitely frightened when anyone else does so”. Another reference by Hallam refers to the:

“great snake Moulack, and of sacred snakes who lived in every lifelong waterhole, from the budjar eastward from York towards Kellerberrin”.

Further to this, Radcliffe-Brown recounted stories of the Serpent who resides in the water that he had been able to track the stories about the rainbow-serpent living in deep permanent waterholes... “from the extreme southwest at least as far north as the Ninety Mile Beach”. (Hallam 1975) Erickson (1964) refers to the Royal WA Historical Society (Inc) 1927 Journal and Proceedings “Bolgart is situated at the head of the Toodyay Valley. Up until the late 1800’s the name was pronounced ‘Bullgert’ meaning magic and the suffix ‘ert’ refers to one

or two place names where there are boggy springs of water. The native legend of the Toodyay Valley is told by descendants of the earlier settlers about the huge magic snake which the Noongar believe live underground.

During the winter it lived at Bullgert. As the summer came on and the brooks dried up, it made its way to the deep Burlong Pool on the Avon near Northam and the signs of its passing were in the springs which break out in the dry bed of the Toodyay Brook late in every summer. The magic snake's return to the Bullgert Springs was heralded by the autumn thunderstorms which the Noongar with much shouting and noisy fear waved and directed towards Bullgert again. ...(as Moore noted in his Journal) "too Boolgart, a tract of several acres of rich ground covered with active springs, the grass rich and green" ... it was on this never-failing supply of water and green grass that Bolgart's fame was to rest until modern times.



Burlong Pool [Photo courtesy of Len Collard]

(Note: The pool today can no longer be referred to as a *deep pool of water*)



Burlong Pool [Photo courtesy of Di Lovell]

All of the Rainbow Serpents or Snakes are powerful entities and hold control over life and death and whom reside in deep rivers or water sources and protocols must be followed when anyone visits the abodes of the Rainbow Snake. Today, Noongar people still continue their Law relationships with their Rainbow Snakes. These stories are clear examples of how the Noongar people are bonded with land or budjar in a cosmological and spiritual way.

SACRED SITES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

“Sacred sites are places that bear the marks of the creative ancestral spirits, which continue to have a presence in land formations. These ancestral spirits followed pathways and sites, and form a connection for people from various and diverse language groups into a wider community of Aboriginal people with the land. They are geographical features which mark episodes in the stories of the ancestral spirits’ journeys throughout Australia. Sacred sites are the settings of their custodians’ most important knowledge and activities. They are fundamental to the sense of self.” (CALM, 2002).

A heritage site is any place of importance and significance to Aboriginal people, such as a place where Aboriginal people have left any object; or a sacred, ritual or ceremonial site. (State of Western Australia, 1972).

A LIST OF SELECTED SITES OF SIGNIFICANCE IN NOONGAR BUDJAR

The sites of significance listed below are by no means comprehensive. A more detailed list of sites can be accessed on the Department for Indigenous Affairs website. (Refer to page 39 of this report).

1. Sharks Mouth – Shire of Kellerberrin
2. Boyagin Rock – Shire of Brookton
3. Mulka’s Cave – Shire of Hyden
4. Wave Rock – Shire of Hyden
5. Frieze Cave – Shire of York
6. Jilakin Rock – Shire of Kulin
7. Badjaling – Shire of Quairading
8. Burlong Pool – Shire of Northam
9. Kokerbin Rock – Shire of Bruce Rock
10. Mount Matilda, Mount Bakewell, Mount Stirling and Mount Caroline (Trails of the Wargle)



Sharks Mouth – Kellerberrin. A man's site (2008)

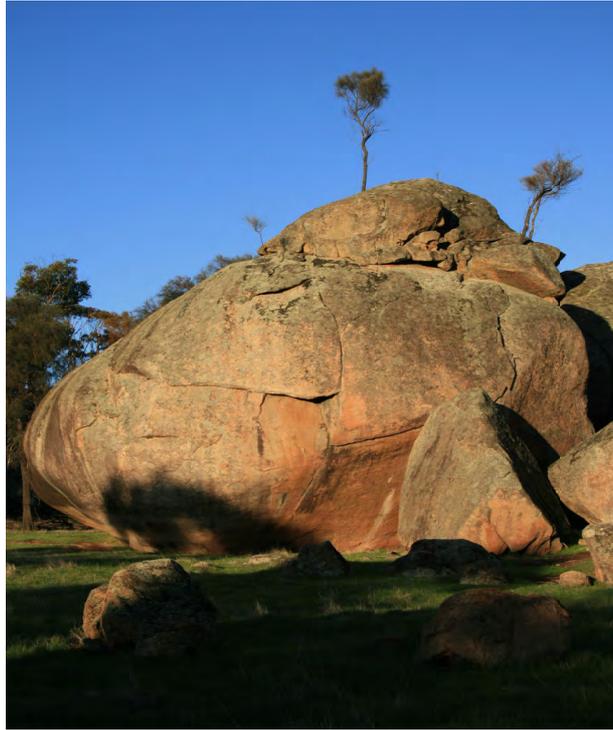
[Photo courtesy of Sandra Harben]



Sharks Mouth – Kellerberrin. Face of the Wargle

[Photo courtesy of Sandra Harben]

Boyagin rock or Boyagin Nature Reserve is an important remnant both because of its large size (almost 5000 hectares) and its shape. Boyagin Rock holds the Island Sanctuary for an army of plants and animals. For example, Noongar people have cultural and spiritual links with the gungurru plant; Noongar ancestral knowledge indicates that this plant originated from Boyagin Rock. A wonderful diversity of eucalypts, Wandoo and powderbark wandoo are also found in the reserve. Traditional Noongar people chewed the bark from some trees to make soft rope. (Department of Education and Training)



Entrance to Boyagin Rock (near Brookton)

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

Ballardong Janet Collard (2002) recalls this story about the Waakal:

My husband (Andy Collard) said that in that rock (Boyagin Rock) there is a big Waargle, water snake and when it wound itself round and round it looked like a big tyre. So he's there and I think it's sacred, it means water to us. Old Waargle is sacred to us and you must never kill it or harm it in any way.

There a number of caves in Noongar budjar. Some of these are the homes of mythological beings, ceremonial sites, sites rock art, paintings or artifacts. In Lovell (1999) there is reference to Mulka's Cave - Mulka was a mythological giant believed to have been 10ft tall. He was mor worag (a bad person), it is more likely the language was misunderstand and should read as moort worra (bad relation). The Njakinjaki Noongar believes this is where Mulka lived. However, Grover in Bignell (1981) says it was his resting place whilst he fled from the Njakinjaki people, for breaking cultural law. Wedjella call it Bates Cave near Wave Rock in Hyden.



Mulka's Cave near Wave Rock in Hyden [Photo courtesy of Len Collard]



Wave rock [Photo courtesy of Len Collard]

Katter Kich otherwise known as Wave Rock near Hyden is a well known tourist destination. Wave Rock, a granite cliff, is 15 metres high and 110 metres long. Its rounded shape has been caused by weathering and water erosion which has undercut the base and left a rounded overhang. This happened about 60,000,000 years ago when it was exposed. Water from the springs running down the rock during wetter months dissolve minerals adding to the colouring of the wave. In 1960, some crystals from Wave Rock were dated as being 2700 million years old, amongst the oldest in Australia.

While the Noongar [Aborigines] were the first to inhabit the area, it is believed that they gave the district a wide berth during the past century and a half for fear of the spirit of Mulka.

Many stones used by the Noongar [Aborigines] have been found on their campsites throughout the area. Painted hand marks can still be seen on rocks at the Humps and Wave Rock. Both of these rocks have water catchments to serve the local community and tourist trade. (Department of Education and Training)

Hallam (1975) Frieze Cave is a sacred ceremonial place for boyl-yadas (magic bosses), containing small tools for ritual function five miles south of York. Another reference is made to this Cave by Berndt and Berndt (1979) “a cave at York had a circular figure cut into the rock face, with hand stencils: this was said to have been 'visited' by the Moon”.



“Meeka the Moon” [Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

Twenty four kilometers East of Kulin is Jilakin Rock - the legend is that two groups of Aboriginals (Noongar) met at this site. As a sign of friendship, the group from the south-west placed their spears on the ground. From these spears as legend has it, grew the outcrop of jarrah trees which are considered foreign to that particular region of W.A

Kokerbin Rock as described by the Shire of Bruce Rock:

Known as Kokerbin Hill, it is the third largest monolith in Australia and is recognized as an interesting unspoilt spot for flora and fauna study. It covers 9 hectares and is 122m high with interesting formations, caves and a deep well on the western side. Situated approximately 40km north-west of Bruce Rock, the picnic and barbecue facilities that are available make to an ideal location for a pleasant outing with family and friends.

Recently, vehicle access to the top of the rock is now denied due to degradation.



Kokerbin Rock (2008)

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

ACCESSING INFORMATION IN THE SITES REGISTER

The Western Australian Government, through the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), holds information on Aboriginal heritage and sites on its Aboriginal Sites Register. The Register contains data on about 17,000 Aboriginal sites across the State. The Register is held under Section 38 of the State's Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. This register contains a brief description of the site, the site type, the site informants and a map showing the site boundaries and location. Where the informants have requested the site information be kept confidential, the location of the site is censored by placing one or more 2km square boxes over the extent of the site (DIA 2002).

Many people visit the Department of Indigenous Affairs Head Office each year to view site material. Policies and procedures are in place governing access to the material, and people intending to view (either electronically or physically) should familiarise themselves with the policies first by accessing the Department's website: www.aad.wa.gov.au/

The online version of the Sites Register is an index to the Aboriginal Site Register. An appointment is required to view all related material held by DIA. A review of sites in the area of this study found that over 100 Noongar sites had been recorded by the Department (see map on page 13 of this report). These sites include camping, burial, artefacts, scar trees and so on, This information coincides with the oral stories shared with us by the Noongar involved in this study.

BEFORE THIS WHITEMAN COME OUR PEOPLE:

Before this whiteman come our people
Kwodjungutnidja Wadjalla koorlngalar Noongar balaba
Kaaree wangkiny, Maalukal iddiny balaba waangk – ngyne yung Spirit talk. In
the wild forest walking they talk – give me

Yongka daartj ka ngyne yung noona walbrinniny, Ngulukkididjiny Grey kangaroo meat or
give me your healing. We understanding

Ngala moorital-kaarny koor-iddiny yukkininy, nidja yongka ka Our family’s spirit returning
(and) driving this grey kangaroo or,

Ngalar demangar kaarny walbrinniny ngalakut, Yay balaba Wadjalla Our grandparents spirit
healing us. Now they (the) whiteman

Maarlukal barminy – beean dukaniny ka, kalunginy. Windjarl ngalar (the) wild forest knocks
down - destroys – breaks or burns, Where (does) our Kaarnykoorlyay? Kenyak!! Moen
Noongar kudidjiny jidja waangk spirit go now? Finished!! Few people understand this talk

Ka kaaree wangkiny. Balaba Wadjalla ngalar koolunga borl Barunginy or spirit talking. They
(the) whiteman our children stole (and) grab

yay balaba borl barunginy ngalar kaarny. Boordoo nidja ngalar now they steal grab our spirit.
Later this our

nookert djinninginy kudidjiny ngalar deman, kenyak balaba sleep seeing – understanding our
grannies finished – they barminy ngalar maarluk ngalar kaarny koorl minditj.

Knock down our wild forest our spirit goes sick. (Noongar Land, Noongar Spirit)



Noongar “SPIRIT TREES” – Gingin Brook

Photo Courtesy Glen Stasiuk

Knowledge of Noongar budjar has been told to Noongar koorlangka or children by Noongar custodians and is well supported by other forms of documented evidence collected by wedjela since their earliest visits to the area.

WHADJUCK/BALLARDONG ELDER THE LATE TOM BENNELL:

Budjar, that is the dirt. Budjar wam, that is somebody come from another country. Barl yaarl koorliny ngulla budjar nyininy. That means he come and sit on our (Noongar) ground ... nothing budjar, Uart, budjar, uart, yeye ngulla. None, land, none today, wedjela wort dombariny. (Bennell 1978 b).

Noongar might say of these accounts:

Nidja Noongar budjar nguny wangkiny or this is our Noongar land and stories. (Collard, Harben, Van den Berg, 2003)

EUROPEAN CONTACT AND SETTLEMENT

All the Noongar language groups identify as Noongar and are interrelated. Trails criss-crossed Noongar territory as family matters and other social, cultural or trade businesses were carried out. Messengers were sent ahead to inform the particular groups that family or business matters were at hand and preparations would then be made to accommodate the visitors. Noongar lived as one with their land and pre-European Noongar culture was thriving in their isolation. Noongar practised specific cultural, social and religious customs and laws were made to protect the collective, not the singular. Elders made the laws and if people did not abide by these laws, they were punished, either by spearing or death. They lived in harmony with their environment and knowledge of their land was fundamental to their survival. (van den Berg 2002).

Noongar knew every landmark, fresh water source, flora and fauna found in their country and it was because of this knowledge that the early explorers wanted to make contact with the Aboriginal people (Collard & Palmer, 1984: 4-5).

Intensive contact with white settlement began in Western Australia in 1826. In May 1829, on behalf of the British crown, Captain Fremantle formally, but illegally, annexed the Swan River Colony. (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990, p.xiv). By June 1829, sixty-nine colonists arrived aboard the *Parmelia* under Captain James Stirling (later to become Governor of the small colony) and by December of the same year, there were 652 British settlers recorded in the colony (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990, p.xiv). As the wedjela colony grew:

More Noongar groups were displaced, their access to accustomed food resources was hindered and staple crops were spoilt by the activities of these newcomers. (Collard, Harben, van den Berg, 2003)

As white settlers moved into the interior regions, disease and land dispossession led to a dramatic decline in the Noongar population. Traditional hunting grounds were taken over for agricultural and pastoral uses. There was no recognition of Aboriginal ownership. Land was taken under the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. (Citizens and Civics Unit et al, 2004). Together with this was the rejection of Noongar culture, customs, spirituality, economy, organisation and way of life, which had disastrous consequences for the maintenance of spiritual life and social systems, and led to the forcible removal of Noongar people from their land (Noongar, 2003).

IMPACTS OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

The consequence of European settlement had been that land use and management practices have not been in harmony with natural systems. When European settlers arrived they had no insight or understanding into the special characteristics of Australia's environments and how they could be used in a sustainable way. The farming systems that were adopted did not take into account the long term impact on the soils which are generally shallow, weathered, contain little vegetative matter and store substantial salt deposits, or store highly variable water resources. Nor was there an understanding of the relationship between vegetative cover and the quality of soil and water resources so that extensive clearing became the norm. (Flugge, 2003)

RURAL VISIONS

There is much to be done. The huge jarrah and red gum trees, aided and abetted by the less significant blackboys, with gum and paper-bark trees bar the way to agriculture and these must be cleared. (War Cry, Salvation Army newspaper, 1900)

More than 18 million ha of woodlands and forest, an area the size of England and Scotland, have been cleared for farms in Western Australia.

Most of this land is in the Wheatbelt, a vast farming region that stretches from Geraldton to Esperance. http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/exhibitions/online/walap_start/6_Wheatbelt.html

The following images show the impact of colonization on Noongar budjar. Some of the effects include salinity, destruction of natural vegetation which has meant the habitats of native animals and other wildlife have been destroyed. Natural waterways are now saline or have dried up.



View of salt affected areas near Badjaling 2008

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]



View of salt affected areas near Badjaling 2008

[Photo courtesy of Sandra Harben]



View of salt affected areas near Badjaling 2008

[Photo courtesy of Sandra Harben]



View of salt affected areas near Badjaling 2008

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]



Pictures show cleared land for grazing stock

York (2008)

Photos courtesy of Glen Stasiuk



NOONGAR SEASONS

The Noongar recognised six seasons in their year, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba, Kambarang and Birak, and managed our budjar accordingly. Noongar, or the people, of the south-west of Western Australia lived in a veritable Eden. The climate of their country ranged from mild to temperate and was divided into six seasons, that is,

Bunuru, with hot easterly and north winds (February to March)

Djeran, becoming cooler with winds from the south-west (April to May)

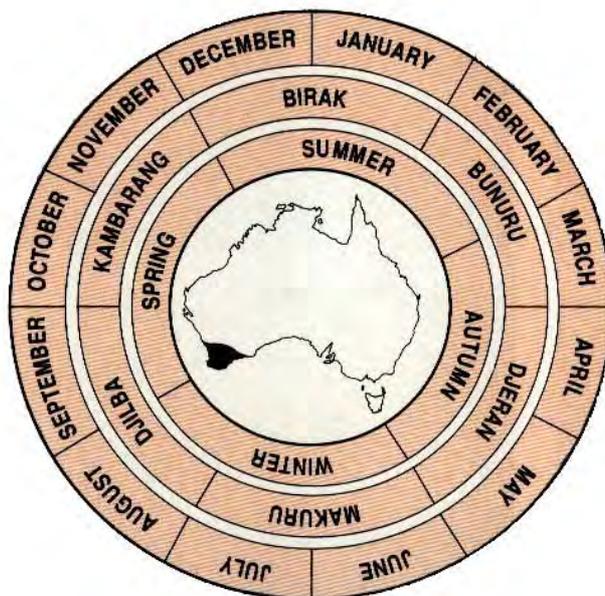
Makuru, cold and wet with westerly gales (June to July)

Djilba, becoming warmer (August to September)

Kambarang, rain decreasing (October to November)

Birak, hot and dry with easterly winds during the day and south-west sea breezes in the late afternoon (December to January)

(Swan River Trust, 2002)



<http://www.spectaclestours.com.au/images/about/six-season-cycle.jpg>

During these six seasons, land management practices and hunting and gathering patterns were guided by these seasons. There is particular evidence of movement between the coastal areas and the interior, with the coastal areas inhabited in the warmer months and the interior during the cooler (Meagher, 1974). Notably, movement was not only dictated by seasonal and economic considerations, but also by cultural and social obligations (Le Souef 1993).

(*Note: Following quotes taken from Meagher, 1974. Several names for the Noongar seasons are presented).

Birak - December-January (Nind, 1831)

At this time fires were lit to clear the understorey, flush game out and promote growth in later seasons.

‘About Christmas they commence firing the country for game, and the families, through winter have been dispersed over the country, reassemble.’ (Nind)

Bunuru - February-March (Nind, 1831)

People moved towards coastal areas as inland water supplies became scarce.

Fishing in coastal areas and estuaries dominated this season, with large assemblies gathering. The fruits of the zamia (*Macrozamia riedlei*) were collected and treated for toxins by a process of burying, soaking and roasting. Red fruit, nut, called baio, ripe in March, is considered a delicacy by the natives.’ (Stokes on the zamia palm)

Djeran - April-May (Nind 1831)

Fishing continued and bulbs and seeds were collected for food.

Makuru - June-July (Nind 1831)

In this season swans moulted, making them easier to catch. Tubers and native potatoes were dug. Noongars travelled with a smouldering branch of bull banksia for warmth and other uses.

Djilba - August-September (Nind 1831)

As Mukuru progressed into Djilba, kangaroo, quenda, emus and possums were hunted.

‘They begin to return to the coast about September or October, and at this season they chiefly subsist on roots. In calm weather, however, they procure a few fish.’

Kambarang - October-November (Nind 1831)

The blossoming of the Christmas Tree signalled the time to return to the coast. Berries and fruits were able to be collected along the coast at this time. Yams were dug up and ‘the shoots and tips of yams thrown back into holes from which they had been dug to preserve the species.’ (Sharing the Dreaming p.29).

At this time there was a natural increase in game. Hunting focused on swamps and wetlands for turtles, fresh water crustaceans and frogs, and birds and eggs.

‘During the winter and early spring they are very much scattered, but as summer advances they assemble in greater numbers. It is at that season that they procure the greatest abundance of game. It is done by setting fire to the underwood and grass, which, being dry, is rapidly burnt...As soon as the fire has passed over the ground, they walk over the ashes in search of lizards and snakes, which are thus destroyed (p29) in great numbers, and those which have escaped in their holes are easily discovered.’ (Nind 1831)

Each Noongar moort or family had their own land for hunting and gathering purposes and regarded the incursion of others onto it as trespass, although resources were shared freely with neighbours (Tilbrook 1983, pp.105, 556).

Bush food – the schilling which is a type of nut collected from around
Quairading by Noongar Elder Janet Collard and Winnie McHenry (2008)
Photo courtesy of Sandra Harben



Noongar followed the seasonal food chain and lived a healthy and leisurely lifestyle, much like those who lived in the Ballardong region did and in other parts of Noongar budjar in the south-west.

Very seldom were there obese Noongar. Their diet and hunting, gathering and foraging practices ensured health and physical wellbeing. It is quite apparent that these oral histories of food, diet and health contrast with much of the information penned by

European colonists. Most of these writers were men and in the early part of the colonial period in the south-west of Australia, historical accounts mentioning Noongar from the period 1829-1850 are dominated by the writings of Captain T. T. Ellis, Superintendent of Native Tribes (1832-1834); Francis F. Armstrong, Native Interpreter (1835-1839) and Chief Interpreter, Schoolmaster and Moral Superintendent to Natives (1840-1872); G. F. Moore, Advocate General (1829-1841); and Robert Menli Lyon, bachelor farmer (1830-1834) (Tilbrook 1983, p.99).

Consequently, a significant portion of the material now available to scholars reflects the preconceptions of these British colonists. One consequence of this is the relative dearth of official narratives concerning Noongar yorga or women and their role as budjar owners, boodier and persons of influence. In relation to this, Catherine Berndt remarks:

European observers imposed their own models on what they saw or heard, highlighting some aspects at the expense of others. In these models, the status of Aboriginal women was distorted, and their positive role was barely recognised (Berndt 1973, pp.7-8).

When the former began arriving in the southwest, Noongar men actively discouraged contact between Europeans and yorga (Green 1981, p.75). A similar point is made by Tilbrook (1986, pp.99-100) who suggests that information regarding female Noongar boodier at the time of colonisation was comparatively scant because of the tendency for the yorga or women and koorlangka, the children, to maintain their distance from wam or strangers.

NOONGAR WOMEN (YOK/YORGA) AND CHILDREN (KURRLONGGUR)

Noongar yorga took substantial responsibility for Noongar day-to-day life. Through the harvesting of vegetables and roots, as well as hunting small animals, Noongar yorga contributed greatly to the dietary variety of their families, thereby sustaining the overall health of the community. They constructed their mia mia (shelter), made their booka (kangaroo skin cloaks) and bags from the yongka pelts (kangaroo) and were the primary caregivers for the koolangka (children) (Moore 1842, pp.110-111, 590). Noongar yok/yorga were also important to the relations between Noongar groups from different areas. They played a pivotal part in many ceremonies, including welcoming individuals to their family's lands (Tilbrook 1986, pp.100-101, 556), and in death rites of individuals (Ellis 1833, p.568). Yorga/yok were also central to the procreation of kurrllonggur by forging new moort alliances with other wam Noongar. Throughout these seasons Noongar found ample food, such as kangaroo, emu, possum, snake, goanna, fish and other marine life, and edible vegetation to sustain their people and maintain their cultural, religious and social customs (van den Berg, 2001:96).

Flora and Fauna

There are a number of sources which holds a vast collection of information about traditional Noongar food resources and Noongar species names. This information can be found in Meagher (1974) and Abbott (1983). Noongar people utilised flora and fauna according to their laws and customs. These resources were not only eaten as part of their diet, but Noongar used these for clothing. Traditional clothing consisted of bookas - cloaks and bags – chootas made from kangaroo skins and fastened with bone. The ceremonial headdresses were adorned with emu or cockatoo feathers, and fur items from animals such as the possum. Ochre was used for decorating the body for ceremonial or other occasions.

“The dress of the native consists of the kangaroo cloak, fastened at the right shoulder by a bone or rush, a head-dress of emu feathers, or the brush of the wild dog, and a fur band round the waist, head and arm....A bone stuck through the septum... a throwing stick and spears in his right hand, and a torch in his left...in addition to the Kangaroo cloak of the men, [the women] carry two bags, one for roots or a stray delicacy, the other for an infant.” (Dale, 1834).

Noongar managed the land according to the seasons and they harvested only the food for their immediate use (Collard, Harben, van den Berg, 2000). The Noongar utilised the six seasons of the year for food and sustenance and never damaged or killed their sources unnecessarily. (van den Berg 2002).

To the Noongar culture, Budjar, or land is important. Each tribal group had their own kaleep, or favoured camping locality, which held a special significance for them. The culture has a complex relationship to the land and pays respect to the seasons and the bountiful supply of food. <http://noongarcountry.mysouthwest.com.au/>.

Tilbrook reinforces the importance of budjar and says “... resources were shared freely with neighbours (Tilbrook 1983, pp.105, 556).

Shelters were constructed out of various plant resources including the balga and melaleucas. Some resources, such as the balga, were particularly valuable in the Noongar economy. Black Boy or *Xanthorrhoea preissii* is a well known and used plant by Noongar.



Balga Grass

York (2008)

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

Donna Rioli is a Whadjuck/Ballardong Noongar and gives an insight to the value of this resource and says “the balga bush is something I like to paint because it is an important plant that the Noongar people use”.



ARTWORK BY DONNA RIOLI

“In the past Noongar used the long green parts of the bush for their mia mia (huts) to shelter them from the weather. Noongar also laid them on the ground in their mia mia to rest or sleep on. Inside the trunk part of the balga bush you can find its sticky sap which is a resin like substance. The resin could be combined with yonga (kangaroo) droppings and other substances and heated over the fire to make a type of glue. This glue was used when it was still fairly warm to fix a sharpened stone to a piece of boorn (stick or wood) to make a koitj (axe), or the resin was attached to a piece of boorn and used for lighting fires. Another use for the resin was for tanning yonga skins to make a booka (clothing garment). Noongar also used the balga bush for merenj (food), they used to dig down to the white shoots which can be found at the bottom of the grass. Even today the balga bush is important to Noongar for lighting fires whether it is in their homes or when they go out to the bush for nourishment, katitjin (knowledge) and spiritual rebirth or to simply participate in cultural activities. As you can see the balga bush provides many uses for the Noongar people and this is why I like to paint them”. (Rioli, 2007)

My name is Doolan (Leisha May Garlett) Eatts and I was born at Badjalling in 1934:

My name means “strong hands” – when my grandfather died my grandmother Doolan was left a widow – three boys and three girls – and there was no benefits then and they lived on a farm in Quairading (Scotts farm). They were told they could stay and hunt and gather all their food from the farm ... my grandmother when she went hunting she had big kangaroo dogs ... they would chase and hold the kangaroos down and then grandmother would come with a koorndie (rock) and knock it in the head – now she would skin it – cut the stomach open and throw it away in the bush and she would carry the yonga back on her shoulder that is how strong she was. She would hang it on a tree and skin the yonga and cut the yonga meat up to feed the children. She would take the kids walkabout in the bush picking their berries and their quardiny, their jam off the jam trees, wild potato and the like. The quardiny is like a wild carrot they dig it up and they took it home and they would cook and eat it. It was very good in vitamins it gave them good health.

I remember I use to go out with my grandmother and aunty and we used to walk for miles and they used to sit down at the rabbit warren and dig out a rabbit and they would put their hand in, they would get a stick and check and if fur was on the end of the stick they would put their hand in and pull the rabbit out. They would skin it and kill it and pull the stomach out and make a little fire and cook it if we were hungry. If we saw the bardi trees we would dig around the roots and get the bardi and cook them too. If we saw a karda, my Aunty Florrie used to chase the karda around and hit it on the head, they would climb trees and she would chase after them and hit it on the head then we would put it on the fire and cook it and eat it.

We also bought a lot of bush food home too like yonga, the bardies, we used to dig for the carrot and wild potato. The wild potato was a funny looking thing, it had a vine sticking up out of the ground and we would follow the vine and if we broke the vine we would never find the potato. We would go right down into the ground and dig them out. We never went without the bush food. I remember always going out with my grandma and aunty Florrie even when we moved to Tammin we still went out and got our bush food. When we saw bees we used to follow them to the beehive and then we would get the honey well, we knew where the honey was and we would go home and tell mum and dad and they would come back and get the honey. We only took some of the honey not all of it. It was left for the bees to rebuild.

Things have gone wrong now because the land was cleared up. It was cleared by our people, they needed to work the land for income because the land was being taken by the European farmers. Back in the olden days my dad said the

police and the welfare used to come around and told them [the old Noongar] they weren't allowed to go on this land or they wasn't allowed to go on that land. The farmers would put up fences and then later they would ask the Noongar to come and chop them all down and then a year or two later ask them to clear it all up again. When they was doing this we used to go and get the bardies, the wild carrot, jam gums or whatever we could get and that. What has gone wrong is they cleared all the land, what they haven't cleared they have sprayed all over the land, killing the bugs for the fruit tress but they killed the land for all our fruit and vegetables that we used to get off the land.

The cattle and sheep was bought in and wheat was sown on the land, they fenced the yonga (kangaroo) and weitch (emu) out.

In my growing up days we used to go out as kids with mum and dad hunting when we wanted yonga and dartj. We went to Kokerbin Rock, it was a significant place for us. We used to go and sit on the rock and have something to eat. Dad would tell us then that he was going out to shoot a yonga. We had to shout, sing songs so we would be driving the kangaroo towards him. If we didn't have anything to eat we had to go hungry but we would chase a kangaroo and then dad would shoot it. He would let us know where he was and then he would get the kangaroo and bring it back to Kokerbin Rock.



View eastward to Kellerberrin from the top of Kokerbin Rock. Mount Stirling can be seen from this point.

Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk (2008)

We even did this at Mount Stirling. We would make a fire, skin the kangaroo and cook it in the coals. Put the tail in the ashes and cook it. We used to get a lot of quandong nuts and pick them and take them home and cook it for jam and we would make jam tarts with it as well. Out in the bush we used to eat it like that and we would play marbles with the seed. The karda, we used to cook a karda too at Kokerine Rock and when it was fat it was beautiful it was so lovely. We would have a feed in the bush and when we got home we didn't need a feed.

Collection of photos courtesy of Sandra Harben (2008). Ballardong Noongar women continue to collect and pass on knowledge of the bush foods and bush medicines used by Noongar.



A type of nut called a schilling collected just out of Quairading (2008)



Ballardong Noongar Elder Janet Collard and Iris Slater collecting the bulbs containing the bush medicine from Badjaling (2008)



Noongar bush medicine



The contribution of Noongar yok/yorga (women or females) continues to be diverse and substantial. They play a primary role in nurturing and upholding the social, economic and political well-being of Noongar families. Noongar yok/yorga are, along with the Noongar maam or men, cultural and economic boodier or leaders in Noongar society. There is a symbolic affiliation between creation sites and knowledge and the role of yok or women. Noongar yorga contributed much to their economic life by taking responsibility for a huge proportion of Noongar work. They hunted and collected much of the food, they built the family mia mia and they spun fur and hair for rope used for a variety of purposes. They took responsibility for most of the care and katitjin or knowledge of the kurlonggur or children. When necessary, yok would carry tools for the maam or men. The women usually had two

choota or bags; one to carry the koolangka or child or baby, and the other for food and items collected during the day's work (Moore 1884, pp.55-56).

Some of the food collected by yok included kooya or frog, gilgee and yargan or turtles. Frogs or kooya were cooked on a slow fire of coals and ashes and yok would hold them in one hand by the hind legs and with an adept pinch of a finger and thumb, remove the lower part of the frog's intestines. It was then eaten bit by bit from the head to the toes (Hallam 1980, p.46; Collard, Mountford, and Palmer 2000). The Yorga also caught and prepared the various tasty, fatty and nutty grubs found in the balga xanthorrhoea or grass tree, wattle and other trees (Grey cited in Hallam 1987, p.29). The yok possessed the expertise necessary for finding and catching freshwater yargan or turtles available in the dried-up swamps, pools and other waterways. Boola Yorga, or lots of women, waded through the water using their toes to detect the breathing holes where turtles were and gilgee, or freshwater crayfish, were also caught. George Grey (1841) describes the activities of Noongar yok who worked the dry waterways:

The season of the year in which the natives catch the greatest quantity of frogs and freshwater shellfish is when the swamps are nearly dried up; these animals then bury themselves in holes in the mud, and the native women, with their long sticks and their long thin arms which they plunge up to the shoulder in the slime, manage to drag them out. At all seasons, however, they catch some of these animals, but in summer a whole troop of native women may be seen paddling about in a swamp, slapping themselves to kill the mosquitoes and sandflies, and every now and then plunging their arms down into the mud and dragging forth their prey. I have often seen them with ten or twelve pound weight of frogs in their bags (Grey 1841, p.276).

It was considered women's business to find such food.

TRADE

Trade was a very important part of Noongar lifestyle. It was essential for maintaining the economical, cultural and social aspects of Noongar culture and to ensure this the chief means of communicating with other groups of Noongar was by the sending of the message stick or letter stick. Usually a message stick would be sent to various Noongar areas to announce events such as death, invite neighbours to an approaching cultural event and to organise the distribution of Noongar across various areas in order to ensure the conservation of food supplies (Collard & Palmer 1996). Pinjarup budjar (country) sites of significance demonstrate that key areas within Noongar budjar have been important centres for Noongar cultural exchange and history, family meetings and economic development. For instance, the Barragup fish site complex has long been recognised by local Noongars as amongst the most important traditional meeting places for Noongar from the Swan, Peel and Darling Ranges areas. (Collard & Palmer 1996).

Much of the trade that took place between the different Noongar groups was very dependent on the six Noongar seasons. One of the most well known Noongar trade fairs or meeting place was in Pinjarup Noongar budjar. It was known as the Mandura (Mandurah derives its name from this activity) which was a type of fair or meeting place where goods or presents were exchanged amongst the Noongar in the south-west during the Bunuru or summer season. Noongar from different areas brought their goods here for exchange. (Collard L, Harben S, van den Berg R, 2005)

Pinjarup Noongars would trade the following items at the meet:

- Burdun: a light giddee, highly prized for the elasticity of the timber.
- Durda-dyer: a skin of a dingo tail, worn on the upper part of the forehead as an ornament.
- Ngow-er: a small tuft of feathers tied to a stick and worn in the hair for ornamentation.
- Niggara: a human hair girdle worn around the waist.

- Nulbarn: a rope-like girdle made from possum hair, wound around the waist and used to carry the kylie (boomerang), tabba (knife), kodja (axe or axe heads) and the dowak (throwing stick) This rope was also used to tie up wounds.
- Tabba: a knife made of sharp pieces of quartz connected to a short wooden stick, as thick as a thumb, by kodja or blackboy tree gum.
- Wilgi: ochre used dry or mixed with grease for protection from the elements such as the sun and flies or mosquitoes. Also used during ceremonies.

Pibelmun Noongars would trade local goods such as:

- Booka/Boka/Bwoka: yonga (kangaroo) skin garment made from several skins of the female kangaroo and used for warmth and protection from the rain in winter.
- Burdun: a light, straight spear made from the mungurn (swamp wattle) collected from the local swamps.
- Choota: A possum or kangaroo skin bag used by the women to carry children or food collected while travelling between campsites.
- Gidgee-borryl: the dreaded quartz edged spear which in post-settlement times was glass tipped. It was up to ten feet long and about one inch in diameter and made from the mungurn (swamp wattle). This spear was made in the Ellensbrook and Wonnerup areas.
- Miro: the name of the south-west spear thrower used by Noongars to propel the aim of the gidjee.
- Weja: emu feathers used as ornamentation at ceremonies.
- Wonna: the women`s digging stick was about six feet long and as thick as a broom handle. It was made from peppermint shafts. The wonna was fired for hardness and was used for digging, killing animals and fighting with other women. The wonna was always traded by women at the Mandura.

Juat Noongars would bring for trade the following items, among others:

- Borryl: quartz used for the sharp edges on the gidgee and tabba.
- Dowak: a short heavy stick used for hunting animals and birds.
- D-yuna: a fighting stick used during wars and in friendly contests.
- Gidgee: a spear about two and a half metres in length.

- Kylie: a flat, curved piece of wood (boomerang) used for hunting animals and birds.
- Miro: a throwing board used by Noongar people to propel the gidgee.
- Wirba: a heavy club traded from the northern areas.

Whadjuck Noongars would bring these items for trade:

- Boka: a kangaroo skin garment used for keeping warm and dry.
- Bo-ye: a rock for kodja, tabba or grinding stones.
- Bu-ruro: a possum hair neck band worn as an ornament.
- Bu-yi: a nut from the zamia plant that once treated, was fit to roast and eat.
- Dardark: a lime white clay used to paint the body at festivals.
- Kodja: a hammer or axe, broad and blunt at one end and sharpened at the other. Made by connecting a short strong wooden handle as round as a thumb, by kadjo or blackboy tree gum to the top of the handle.
- Wilgi – the highly demanded red ochre

Dr Richard Walley, a Pinjarup Noongar said that Noongar has always been engaged in trade, right back well before settlement. Trade took place before the settlers actually came to this country. The trade between our people and people from other nations is well documented. Our people, the Noongar, went as far as Uluru and the centre of Australia and those people, the Aboriginal people from there, came back here to Noongar country as well. Travelling was a big part of ceremony and a big part of trade in those days as well. The Aboriginal people going to ceremony would be going on business but when it wasn't ceremony time those people would still go and visit other areas and then when they would come for a visit they would bring with them gifts and exchange of goods. The different groups would bring stones and ochres and all sorts of different things from their country that didn't exist in Noongar country and that is a form of "paying their way" when they visited Noongar country. So trade in Noongar country is very very old, thousands of years old. (Walley, Dr. pers.comm. 2004)

*Unless we have **relationship** with the land, with country, with budjar, it is very hard to love it and protect it.* **Incorporating Indigenous Wisdom: The Elders Council Report Grahame Collier, Michael Hill, Charles Hopkins, Pierre Horwitz, Dorothy Sisk, Len Wallam, Melba Wallam, Jo Vallentine (Chair) and Sandra Woollorton (Reporter)** Elders Council: National Conference of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (Bunbury)

Ballardong Elders:

Janet (Mourarch) Collard:

Caring for country means not to knock the trees down, always keep the budjar nice. Noongar always looked after mother earth because mother earth is good to us so we have to look after it.

Basil Winmar:

Land is very important to Aboriginal people, and since the white man come, there has been a lot of clearing and a lot of bush has been destroyed. When we were young we used to go kangaroo hunting but now a lot of the bush has gone so it is not like in the old days.

Doolan (Leisha) Eatts:

The budjar makes me happy and it makes me sad. When I think back I think of my koort budjar - my heartland - and I love my heartland. I say my koort budjar and my mia budjar. My heartland and my homeland.

I think about the growing up days when we was free, we could walk free and pick our nuts and berries and chase the karda and rabbits. It has all gone it will never come again. Our children will never experience what we experienced. That is the saddest thing about it we can just tell them. The land is ruined and it will never be replaced. Some can be replaced but the bird has flown.

FIRE

THE NOONGAR LANGUAGE OF FIRE

kalla, fire, also a group's district or fire place
kallabudjor, property in land
kappi, ground ready for burning,
bokyt, the ground clothed with vegetation which has not yet been burned
kundyl, young grass springing after the country has been burned
narrik, land where the vegetation is abundant and dry and ready for burning
nappal, burned ground, ground over which fire has passed.

Fire in Noongar budjar was an intrinsic part of everyday life, it had a major influence on the biodiversity out game for hunting, stimulating plant growth and attracting animals to new regrowth (Gostin and Chong, 1998). Hallam (1975) Kelly (1999) and Burrows (1995) claim that the influence of fire on the landscape in Noongar budjar has long been one of great significance as Noongar used fire extensively to support their social and ecological activities. (Hallam 1975; Kelly 1999; Burrows et al 1995). In Green (1979) we find information from the Journals of Nind in 1831:

“every individual of the tribe, when travelling or going to a distance ... carries a fire-stick, for the purpose of kindling fires, and in winter they are scarcely ever without one under their cloaks, for the sake of heat. It is generally a cone of *Banksia grandis*, which has the property of keeping ignited for a considerable time. Rotten bark, or touchwood, is also used for the same purpose.”

THE CREATION OF NOONGAR KARLA

How fire came to be kura – a long time ago. In the Nyittingy – the cold times no-one had fire except Meeka the Moon. He kept the fire in his goomp – tail and would not share it with the Noongar. One night Meeka’s cousin Quaddar the pidgeon and his konk – uncle Kwalbarr the sparrow hawk decided to steal the fire and give it to the Noongar. Meeka woke up real cold and realised that Quaddar and Kwalbarr had stolen his fire. His moort – relations had put the fire in the Waljuk tree. All the other birds saw what they had done and cried out. The Noongar sang songs of praise to their moort and picked up their firesticks. Warlitj the eagle sang out and said “my heart is glad to see the smoke”. Meeka the Moon wanted the fire back and he called on Wardan – the sea to flood the place and put the fire out. Kwalbarr was too clever and he kept the fire up high in the stick of the Waljuk where the sea could not touch it. Then the Noongar had warmth and the karla to cook their meat.

In fact, fire played a major role in everyday life. Noongar lit a campfire for cooking, for keeping away the spirits, smoking ceremonies, small scale hunting by the women, hunting fires, protecting native fruit trees and berry patches, straightening spear shafts, melting gums, preparing medicines, medicinal smoke, ‘cleaning country’, protecting sites (including art), smoking out animals and so on.

Green (1979) sums up the importance of fire where he used this quote:

“I am not aware of any race [Noongar) so dependent on fire for their existence and comfort as that of this part of New Holland

Management applications: Traditional Noongar fire knowledge exists and should be utilised. Prior to European settlement, drier parts of the jarrah forest were burnt by low intensity fires every 3-4 years on average; riparian zones, treeless moist areas and thickets in broad valley floors burnt at longer (unknown) intervals, coastal grasslands burnt at shorter interval (2 years). Most fires occurred in summer and early autumn. High intensity fires occurred occasionally. (Australian Bushfire Conference, Albury, July 1999 (N.D. Burrows¹, B. Ward² and A.D Robinson²).

Historical indicators:

- Aborigines (Noongars) used fire extensively for thousands of years prior to European settlement (e.g., Hallam 1975; Kelly 1999).
- Pattern of season, frequency and size of fires varied in accordance with patterns of social and ecological activity (e.g., Hallam 1975; Kelly 1999).
- Most of the forest experienced frequent, low intensity ("cool") fires, with occasional "hot" fires to stimulate the growth of certain habitat types (Kelly 1999). This is supported by historical and dendrochronological evidence (Hallam 1975; Burrows et al. 1995; Ward and Sneeuwjagt 1999).
- Using balga trees (*Xanthorrhoea* spp) as fire event markers has shown that prior to European settlement, the average fire interval in the jarrah forest region was 3-4 years. This is constant across the range of jarrah forest, exceptions being along moist or sheltered habitats such as riparian zones and rock outcrops, and tree-less areas with low fuel levels, where the fire interval was longer (Ward 1997; Ward and Sneeuwjagt 1999).
- Historical evidence suggests that most fires occurred in summer and early autumn (Hallam 1975; Burrows et al. 1995).

Firestick burning

Noongar and other Aboriginal language groups have practiced what is also known as 'firestick farming' for thousands of years. This involves the practice of actively patch burning the countryside with regular low intensity fires. Paul Stevenson (in Bird Rose 1996) sums up firestick farming thus:

“The use of fire involves the manipulation of fire frequency, intensity and timing to generate a dynamic mosaic of ecosystems based on a spectrum of pyrophytic vegetation communities, each community requiring or being resistant to a limited range of fire frequencies, intensities and firing times.”

In Noongar budjar, firestick farming was determined by the seasons. Land management practices and hunting and gathering patterns were guided by these seasons. There is particular evidence of movement by Noongar with the coastal areas inhabited in the warmer months and the interior during the cooler seasons (Meagher, 1974). This movement was not only determined by seasonal and economic considerations, but also by cultural and social obligations (Le Souef 1993).

Aboriginal burning

It is now recognised that ‘Aboriginal people’s land management practices, especially their skilled and detailed use of fire, were responsible for the long-term productivity and biodiversity of this continent’ (Bird Rose, 1996). These practices included selective harvesting, organisation of sanctuaries and promotion of regeneration of plants and animals.



[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk] (2008)

According to Jack Williams, Noongar Elder: “Aboriginal people never used to harvest any animal unless they were at their peak. They didn’t go on killing for the sake of killing. They only killed for food. If they killed a fat yonga they would share it around and give certain

people the special parts....Noongars never used to eat anything out of season. It was a cycle, a chain.” (Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts. 2000)

It is important that Indigenous knowledge is recognised, valued and protected. Noongar people have an important and unique role in the restoration and management of the natural environment.

Michael Dodson suggests:

“... the need for integrating the views, approaches, and experiences of Indigenous peoples into national strategies for environmental and conservation management. What I am suggesting is a partnership...between Western knowledge and ‘scientific’ approaches to land and environmental management, and Indigenous knowledge and approaches. Such a partnership, I suggest, should provide the basis for sound, sustainable environmental management and protection.” (Langton, 1998).

Hunting Fires

Birak (December/January) is the very height of summer, it is the dry and hot season. It was the time when Noongar lit a fire to burn fairly large sections of the budjar to chase out the animals such as the kangaroo or emu into the open for easier hunting. Hallam describes an account of a Noongar kangaroo hunt 60 miles south of York in Western Australia: “I stood in the midst of a large plain which they had surrounded on three sides, multitudes of kangaroos – I believe I might say thousands, came rushing past me’. (Hallam 1975) Green (1979) points out that Noongar assembled in great numbers particularly as summer approaches, for this is when the Noongar procured the greatest number of game. They did this by lighting a fire to the underwood and grass, and because it was dry, it burnt quite rapidly. Noongar performed these burnings by setting fire to the dry leaves of the grass tree, and to the sides of the cover so that the animals could not escape.

The Noongar men would have been concealed by the smoke and as the animals passed by them they would get speared and during this burning a large number of animals were destroyed. Green further points out that the violence of the fire is usually very great and extends over many miles of country; but the fire was generally guarded against by the

Noongar burning the country in consecutive portions. (Green 1979). Roberts articulated the following message given at the Aboriginal Burning and Coexistence Conference in 1998:

There is an obvious understanding of curing and timing of fire in the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal fires seem to be relatively small in scale, in the order of hectares or tens of hectares rather than hundreds or thousands of hectares, unless there was a known end point such as a large river, the sea or heavy rain. The end result was usually a mosaic burn with some ability to break up the country and avoid large fire fronts. Burning large tracts of country reduces options as well as reducing the chancing of controlling it. In some cases it appears that fuel was saved for some time to make hot fires possible so fuel reduction burns were not always desirable. The term 'scrub rain' is used for dew and is recognised as a factor in burning. The crushing of grass in the palm of the hand is a good indicator of curing. An understanding of clouds patterns, wind direction and strength and day night temperatures all contribute to the decision making process. The implications of burning up hill or down hill and with or against the wind are also mentioned as factors influencing outcomes. The fundamentals are there in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous know how. Aboriginal knowledge, we believe, has a lot to offer in relation to the response of the landscape to fire, particularly in local scenarios. These indicators are also used by pastoralists and conservationists but perhaps with different results in mind. We can say with some degree of certainty that experience and local knowledge are critical for successful burning and that there are features that are unique to any particular area. It is important to tap that experience and attempt to accommodate the various aspirations of land owners and managers. In many cases the ability to follow traditional rules and protect values has changed for Aboriginal people but they retain an understanding of fire and pursue their rights to their country and enjoyment of their future. The immutable reality is that they always know their homeland and how they are responsible for it according to their law, regardless of anything else, including the new imposed law.

Lighting large fires for hunting would have had a twofold effect. For instance, Noongar would have lit fires to rejuvenate the grass growth that would have attracted the kangaroos and other small native animals. In 1975 Mr. Frank Thompson was interviewed about his memories of fire near the south coast, before the First World War. He said:

"You see, the Natives ...they used to burn the budjar every three or four years... when it was burnt the grass grew and it was nice and fresh and the possums had something to live on and the kangaroos had something to live on and the wallabies and the tamars and boodie rat ...It didn't burn very fast because it was only grass and a few leaves here and there and it would burn ahead and... sometimes there'd be a little isolated patch of other stuff that wasn't good

enough to burn the time before, but as it burnt along perhaps there might be some wallabies or tamars, those animals didn't run away from fire, they'd run up to it and you'd see them hopping along the edge of the fire until they saw a place where the fire wasn't burning very fierce..." (Marohasy. J)

In the 1840s, the early West Australian botanist James Drummond wrote "When I was a sojourner in England, I never remember to have seen Australian plants in a good state after the second or third years ... a great degree owing to their not being cut down close to the ground when they begin to get ragged; how for the pruning knife and a mixture of wood ashes in the soil would answer as a substitute to the triennial or quaternal burnings they undergo in their native land, I am unable to say, some of our plants never flower in perfection ..." (Marohasy. J)

There are other historical references to frequent, widespread burning by south-west Noongars. In 1837 Lt. Henry Bunbury mentioned "...the periodical extensive bush fires which, by destroying every two to three years the dead leaves, plants, sticks, fallen timber etc. prevent most effectually the accumulation of any decayed vegetable deposit... being the last month of summer... the Natives have burnt with fire much of the budjar..." (Marohasy. J)

Small Scale Fire Use

Burning fires was not always used on a large scale, the Noongar women always carried a firestick to kindle fires for cooking, hunting and gathering food. They lit the small fires to hunt out food such as bandicoot, snakes and lizards. (Hallam 1975) There is also historical evidence of Noongars doing early burning around berry patches, to protect them from later fires (Hammond 1933), and of Noongars beating out fires with green branches (Stokes 1846) to protect patches, possibly spear shaft thickets (Kelly 2000), which needed a decade or more to grow to a useful size. It is pointed out that the main method of fire fighting up to the 1920s was by means of wet bags, or green branches (Brockway 1923).

It is now recognised that 'Aboriginal people's land management practices, especially their skilled and detailed use of fire, were responsible for the long-term productivity and biodiversity of this continent' (Bird Rose, 1996). These practices included selective harvesting, organisation of sanctuaries and promotion of regeneration of plants and animals.

Ceremony – lore business

A recent film called Weewar introduces the scene of a campfire where Noongar Elders were conducting their lore business. Before the Noongar maamam sat down at campfire he threw some crushed “balga resin,” (assumably all did this) into the fire. The balga resin gives off a small explosion into the fire. This suggests a Noongar ritual involving fire. (Weewar Film 2007)

Guarding Against Warra Wirrin

Fire is also used by Noongar to keep the warra wirrin (bad spirits) away. Noongar keep these fires burning all night but during this time the kurloongar (kids) are not allowed to play with the fire by putting small sticks in and getting them alight and then playing with them. Noongar say this will act as a signal to the warra wirrin that Noongar are camping nearby and will bring the warra wirrin to the campsite. and will come and “get the kurloongar” who disobeyed this law. (Harben 2008) Other literature (Ackland 1965) refers to Noongar who “lit fires at sight off the party, to drive away evil spirits”.

Noongar viewpoint -Living on the Land

... they hunted ... possums (coomarl), snakes, (land snakes, not water snakes), lizards (caarda, and yoorna), turtles and their eggs, honey, birds like rosellas, bronze-wing pigeons and ducks and their eggs and the bardi grubs, which could be eaten raw or cooked in the coals. Their vegetable and fruit intake included edible tubers, quandong, berries and nuts and a type of grain which could be crushed and made into a damper. The boyoo or toxic zamia palm had special treatment before it could be eaten (van den Berg 2001, p.96).

Wedjella viewpoint - Living on the Land

Barbara York Main grew up in Tammin on her family's farm. As a young girl in the 1930s, she revelled in the natural bushland of the Tammin area, which was progressively cleared as farms expanded. Barbara remembers freshwater lakes and winter creeks, and the diverse animal and plant life. As a biologist researching trap-door spiders in the Wheatbelt, Barbara is concerned at rising salt levels. Most of Tammin's creeks and lakes have become saline, and low-lying country that was once productive land is also suffering. Salinity now threatens the agriculture and natural biodiversity of the area. Sheep and cattle grazing have left a legacy of environmental problems in the State's fragile rangelands. More than 25 percent of these areas are environmentally degraded because of over-stocking over many years. The loss of vegetation and the impact of hooved animals, horses, cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys, have in turn led to soil erosion. Grazing animals have damaged wetlands and left rivers and streams choked with silt. Perennial shrubs and grasses, once maintained through regular firing by Aboriginal people, have been lost in many areas.

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO UNDERTAKING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Incorporating Indigenous Wisdom: The Elders Council Report

Grahame Collier, Michael Hill, Charles Hopkins, Pierre Horwitz, Dorothy Sisk, Len Wallam, Melba Wallam, Jo Vallentine (Chair) and Sandra Wooltorton (Reporter)

Elders Council: National Conference of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (Bunbury)

Principles

*Unless we have **relationship** with the land, with country, with budjar, it is very hard to love it and protect it.*

We used the word 'budjar' because it is a Noongar word and this is Noongar country.

The word 'budjar' reflects a greater sense of connection between person and place than similar words in English. Unfortunately, at present our society is cutting off the building of those relationships between Noongar children and budjar and between all children and their budjar. It is seen by this council to be very important in our practice to facilitate the building of relationship with budjar by simply being in the land, or on the land. There are many ways of being in relationship with the land, for example:

- through walking, recreation, bush tucker learning
- through artistic beauty – paintings, photography,
- through hunting, fishing and gaining food,
- through activism.

Language is about relationship. If you know the language of the land, in the case of the South-West, Noongar language, you may be better able to understand the place. (Wooltorton, S. and Marinova, D. (Eds)

ABORIGINAL LANDOWNERS AND MANAGERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA SHARE MANY COMMON ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH INCLUDE

- The links between families/clans/language groups and specific areas of land and sea are still strong but the shift to towns and settlements makes it difficult to maintain those links.
- In many areas the passing of old people is resulting in the loss of traditional ecological knowledge at an alarming rate.
- Problems like changes in fire regime, spread of weeds, relative scarcity of food species due to commercial harvesting, and damage from feral animals threaten the health of people and country.
- There is often a lack of community awareness, skills and capacity to deal with these new and emerging problems.
- Much Aboriginal land and sea has suffered severe damage from development but there is growing pressure for development, and increased access.
- There is no commercial base to support natural resource management. Traditional owners and managers need money and other resources to deal with these problems.
- Aboriginal people and their organisations have limited resources to undertake natural resource management because their generally scarce resources are focussed on meeting more immediate and other local priorities (such as maintenance of community infrastructure, overcoming housing shortages, and environmental health). (Flugge 2003)

‘As community-based programs start to deal effectively with such imperative issues it is hoped that they broaden into more holistic programs that deal with other land and sea management issues as well as look for ways of earning income through enterprise development. It is envisaged that such development will be based on the sustainable utilisation of natural resources to help fund management activities. (Storrs,M, Cooke,P, & Josif, P. 2003. ‘Caring for Country Unit, Northern Land Council).

Cultural landscapes

The Aboriginal worldview is essentially holistic. It encompasses a wealth of knowledge of nature and humankind, seen as an inseparable whole, expressed through ritual and song cycles, oral traditions, ceremonies and practises. (Gostin and Chong, 1998).

For Noongar people, culture and nature cannot be separated.

“The land is very important to Noongars and all Aboriginal people. They have to let the land be part of them again before they can know their true identity. This is our heritage, this is our life, this is what we were taught from very young, and to me the land, the water, the sky is all the same, they are part of me” (Treasy Woods in Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts. 2000).

The Strategy for Aboriginal Managed Lands in South Australia (2000, p.8) states:

“Many Aboriginal landholders do not make any clear cut distinction between the cultural and natural values of environmental resources”.

The practical importance of the interweaving of nature and culture in Aboriginal worldview is that:

- many places and features of cultural importance to Aboriginal people also have significant natural heritage values
- equally, many place and features which have natural heritage values also have cultural importance to Aboriginal people.”

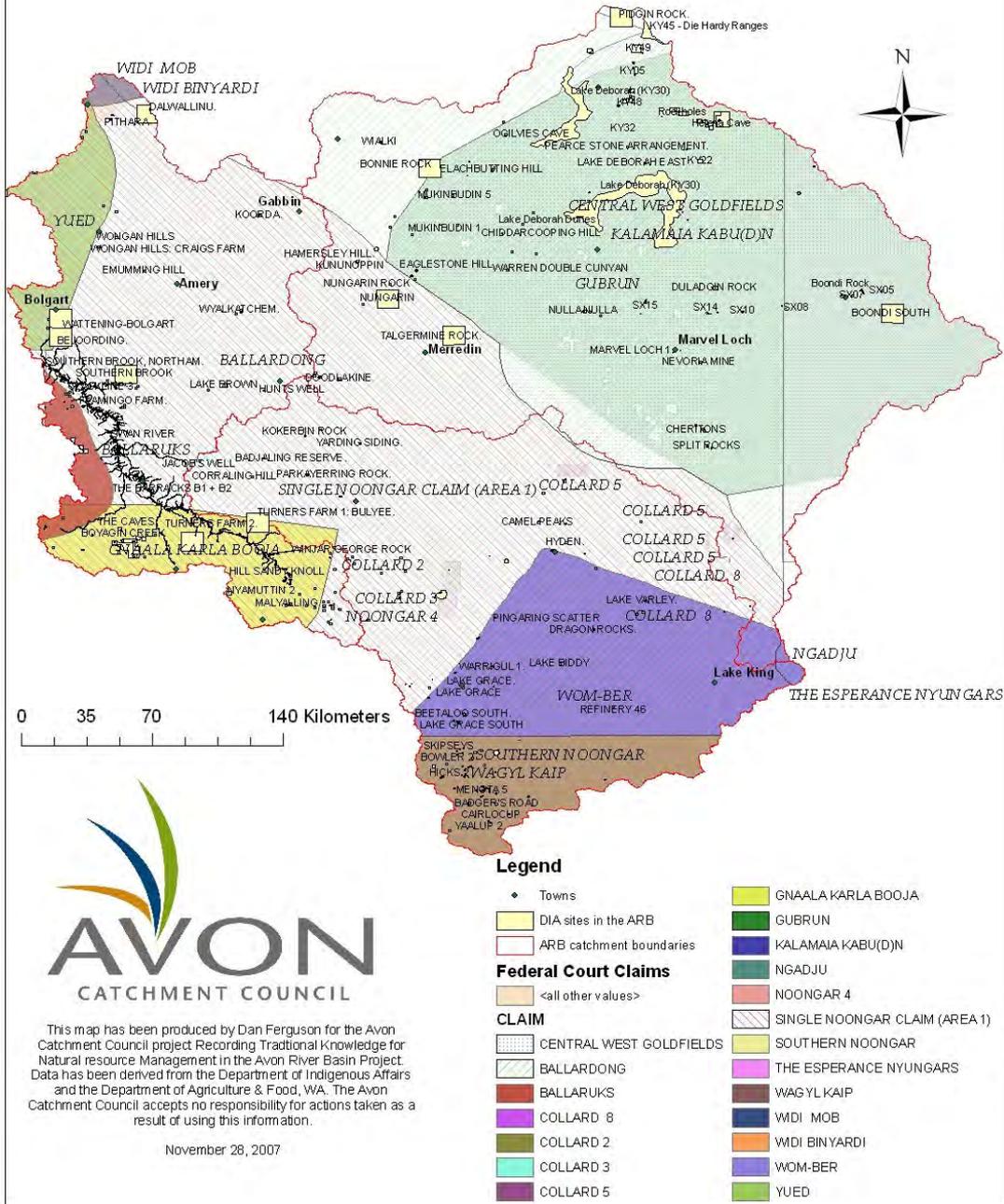
The protection of both cultural landscapes and traditional forms of land use maintain and enhance biological diversity and natural landscape values. There needs to be a greater understanding of the Noongar concept of landscape values, where spirituality can attach to landscapes (Noongar, 2003).

It is difficult within a non-Aboriginal framework to understand the holistic nature of the relationship of Aboriginal people to the land. However, in order for initiatives and programs to be successful they must work within the diverse framework of Aboriginal culture. (Flugge 2003)

Snapshot of the Ballardong perspective

Despite the fact that a lot of their traditional country has been taken over by farms and access to sites of significance diminished by the fencing off by property owners, Ballardong Noongars continue to maintain their culture and their links to their country. For example they camp, fish, hunt, collect bush tucker and look after their sites and they pass on the stories and knowledge to the younger generations.

Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) Registered Cultural Heritage Sites & Federal Court Claims in the Avon River Basin (ARB)



NATIVE TITLE ACT 1993

Native Title Act 1993

Noongar people lodge united native title claim in South West WA

10 September 2003

Western Australia's largest Indigenous group, the Noongar People of the south-west, have today lodged the 'Single Noongar Claim' in the Federal Court. Represented by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC), the Noongar People are seeking legal recognition of their native title rights over a 194,000 sq km area of land and waters in the south-west region.

The 'Single Noongar Claim' covers the area of six previous native title applications - Yued, Ballardong, GnaalaKarla Booja, Combined Metro Claim, South West Boojarah and Wagyl Kaip. The Noongar People decided to unite in their pursuit of native title recognition following months of discussions with SWALSC which consulted extensively with the region's Noongar communities on their approach to native title. National Native Title Tribunal Deputy President Mr Fred Chaney said the Noongar People's effort to reach a united position held out the prospect of a new set of relationships between the Noongar People, the State Government and others. 'To have got to the point of lodging a united claim is extremely significant in light of the Noongar People's long history of dispossession and dispersal,' he said. 'It provides an historic opportunity to deal with a wide range of issues through the native title process.'

'Native title' is the name given by the High Court to Indigenous property rights recognised by the court in the **Mabo** judgment (3 June 1992). The Mabo judgment overthrew the legal fiction of *terra nullus* – that the land of Australia had belonged to no one when the British arrived in 1788. The judgment found that a native title to land existed in 1788 and may continue to exist provided it has not been extinguished by subsequent acts of government and provided Indigenous groups continue to observe their traditional laws and customs. To give statutory recognition to Indigenous common law rights and resolve a number of land management issues, the Commonwealth legislated the *Native Title Act 1993* and amended it in 1998.

THE NATIVE TITLE ACT

- set up a National Native Title Tribunal to help mediate claims;
- provided for the establishment of a Indigenous Land Fund to assist those whose native title had already been extinguished; and
- set in place procedures to protect native title by requiring that native title holders be consulted in advance if governments plan to grant certain interests in their land to mining companies or other parties. This is called the Right to Negotiate.

Native Title Act 1993

The main objects of the NTA are:

- to provide for the recognition and protection of native title;
- to establish ways in which future dealings affecting native title may proceed and to set standards for those dealings;
- to establish a mechanism for determining claims to native title; and
- to provide for, or permit, the validation of past acts invalidated because of the existence of native title.

(This information was sourced from ATSIC www.atsic.gov.au)

'In this, the most closely settled part of Western Australia, native title has been extinguished over much of the area claimed by the Noongar People, including some national parks and all freehold land. However, there are various options that can be explored within and beyond the scope of the native title process to develop agreements that will benefit the Noongar People.'

'The application presents an opportunity for the Western Australian community to acknowledge the Noongar People as the first people of this part of Australia and a process that may provide for coexistence and a sustainable future. The Tribunal encourages the State Government and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, on behalf of the Noongar People, to look for practical and realistic outcomes through the mediation process.'

Before the Court are six native title cases. Each of them concerns land and waters in, or near to, the Perth metropolitan area.

The sixth case arises out of a native title application which has been called ‘the Single Noongar application’. It takes this title from the fact that it was brought to the Court by 80 Aboriginal persons who allege that, in 1829 (the date of European settlement in Western Australia), there was a single Aboriginal community throughout the whole of the south-west of Western Australia. The applicants call this the ‘Noongar community’ and claim the 1829 rules governing the occupation and use of land, throughout the south-west, were the laws and customs of that community. The applicants say the Noongar community continues to exist, and they are part of it; and that its members continue to observe some of the community’s traditional laws and customs (including in relation to land), although with changes flowing from the existence and actions of the white community.

On 11 October 2005, [Justice Wilcox] commenced a hearing relating to all issues arising out of Mr Bodney’s five applications and the issues raised by the separate question in the Single Noongar application. The Court took evidence over a period of 20 days. On eleven of those days, the Court sat ‘on-country’ at eight different locations: Jurien Bay, Albany, Toweringup Lake near Katanning, Dunsborough near Busselton, Kokerbin Rock and Djuring in the Kellerberrin district and, in Perth, at Swan Valley and in Kings Park. The Court heard evidence from 30 Aboriginal witnesses and five expert witnesses: two historians, two anthropologists and a linguistic expert. A considerable volume of written evidence was also received.

CARING FOR COUNTRY

A boriginal people of the Avon river Basin take their cultural responsibility to “Care for Country” seriously and would like to work with government and non Indigenous people to make sure that the land is managed in a careful and sustainable way. They also have a number of specific land management priorities that they want to pursue and are seeking more resources to help achieve these goals.

A number of sites of significance have been identified in this report. However, of these Badjaling, Kokerbin Rock and Burlong Pool have been identified as excellent sites for the Avon Catchment Council to invest in building a partnership with the local Aboriginal people. “Caring for Country” should utilize both Aboriginal and western knowledge in strategic planning to protect and restore the natural, cultural, social and spiritual values of the Avon River Basin.

ENTRANCE TO BADJALING ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY



Commemorative plaque listing Noongar families who lived in and around Badjaling budjar

BADJALING

Badjaling has very significant natural heritage values and is of historical importance to many Noongar families. A recent Noongar welcome was conducted by Ballardong Elder Janet Collard during the annual “Back to Badjaling” reunion was attended by the old Badjaling family members, the local community, visitors from other country towns along with government representatives:

*Kaya yaran wadjela burdiyas ngung noongar moort nidja noongar
Budjar ngung duripin djinung kura dat djinung moorts ngung nidja
Nidja gnulla koort Budjarh.*

*I would like to say hello to all the white people and our Noongar
people this is our land where we were born and reared up in, we
stayed here for many a year, this is our heart land and our heart is in
our land.*

Winnie McHenry and Basil Winmar are Ballardong Elders who live in Badjaling and Quairading respectively. Both hold a wealth of cultural knowledge about the bush foods, bush tucker and flora and fauna. Winnie teaches students about Noongar culture.

We used to go to grandmother’s place where she would have a big fire burning and we would all sit around there and talk, where stories were told about the old days. This is where you would hear all kinds of stories, because fire goes with storytelling, and that was the symbol for the spirits and other cultural things. (McHenry, W. Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts)

Excerpts from Winnie’s story in Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Budjar our *mother, this land*:

*I was born at Badjaling Mission, it was run by the old missionaries from the
Uniting Church. My family were living on the mission at the time because Mr
Neville, Chief Protector of Natives (1905 Act) could keep an eye on the
Noongar. I went to school but they didn’t teach us much about our culture at
school. My father used to take us kids hunting sometimes, where he taught us
to respect the land and the animals. He used to say, ‘don’t break a tree, that is
there to protect you. You can make a fire and camp from that tree but they are
also there to protect you. And with rocks, you don’t move rocks because they
are put there for a reason too’. When my father used to go out hunting, he*

used to come back with mallee hen eggs, found down the side of the lakes, but there is nothing around there at all now. No mallee hen, no swans, nothing. Like the white owl for instance, you don't see it much at all either.

I loved our bush tucker and loved it when we used to go and dig for wild potatoes. You put them in the ashes to cook them and they taste like sweet potato. You have to go further out in the bush now days to get them.

Now the land is cleared, you sometimes find them on the sides of the road. When my grandkids come to visit they say "Nanna, tell us a story. Nanna let's go to the bush and have a walk. What is this track? What is that track? It makes me feel very happy because they are truly taking an interest in the things that I'm trying to teach them about Noongar culture. I have a pet racehorse goanna out the back of my house ... my grannies was trying to catch it. I told him to leave it alone, as he wasn't hungry we so we don't touch him. There is a gnamma hole that was used around this area, it might be covered now because the white people did not believe in them. This happened to ngamma holes at a meeting place near Wave Rock. There is supposed to be one at Quairading.



Gnamma hole taken in the Avon region (2008)

[Photos courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

It is said that a lot of the Noongars from all over the place used to gather at Wave Rock. Noongars, Yamatjis, and Wongis as it was their meeting place. They would hold a lot of corroborees there.

I'm back living at Badjaling now. I lived in Perth for fourteen or fifteen years. Here at the mission site it's so peaceful. You can hear the birds in the morning and see the kangaroos in the evening. We have students come here and we show them the different bush tucker and teach them about bush life. I will stay at Badjaling until I die.

Excerpts from Basil Winmar in Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Budjar our *mother, this land*:

Land is very important to Aboriginal people, and since the white man come, there has been a lot of clearing and a lot of bush has been destroyed.

My birthplace is on the south side of the railway line, which ran right through the mission site. I know where the tree is but salt that has come in through the floodwaters might have destroyed it by now. A lot of people were born in the bush then, in the traditional way.

Another interview with Basil Winmar (Badjaling 2008)- conducted by Sandra Harben.

If you're in the bush and you had to find water what would you do?

I would check the gum leaves you know put a petal under my tongue it will keep your mouth moist and then also I'd look for the low spot, you know where the water, the runs off the hillside then I think that's where you might find... another thing you look for too is animal tracks, they'll find water the kangaroo and wildlife, they always do that because when I was up in Leonora we went way out in the bush and I see all these tracks going into the rocky country and I thinking I should follow them and that's where the kangaroo and the goat were getting all their water under the rock yeah out from Leonora and they were way out.

I wasn't taught that much, like my Dad never taught me that much because he was always shy and kept things to himself but he knew because out here where we used go hunting out in the bush the water used to run out of the rocks out in the bush where he used to go hunting and he knew the spot but he never showed us anything about it see.

So what about what sort of certain trees you might look at and say now that's where you'll find water?

Well I think that the greener the tree that you know that's where the most water you have because that's where the roots go down and find water see you look for the real the greener the tree I think that's where the water mostly are. That's what I'd be looking at anyway.

What about the paper bark tree? Where would you have found paper bark when they were around. If you were a wadjela walking around would you head over to where the paper bark trees were?

Well is all depends I don't know the paper bark, not many grows around here they are mostly down in other parts of the Avon area.

Now what are some of the Noongar names and what sort of bush foods did Noongar eat?

Well we had bardi's and also what they call it's like a yam but what they call a little ... a plant that grows up in the winter, you dig it down and it's like a potato but some get very tangy but in the white gum country and

where the ground is rocky they get more cleaner then and they more sweeter than the other one. Down where my uncle used to stop out on Cobine Road that's where, but it's all mostly cleared now you know it's hard but along the road we find them.

So that was sort of like a corn or potato and bardi grubs, what else would they go and look for to bush foods?

The round nut we used to call them the schilling the flat one you know, you know how you can crack them and they like a, what do you call it, they like a almond or a peanut you know the flat ones. There is another one like a white carrot but he's very bitter when you eat that.

Well we used to cook it in ashes but it was a bit rubbery but it took the bitterness sort of out still a bit bitter but it was still good.

And so that was what a quondong?

Yeah that was the quondong but wadjelas call it a cherry tree, Noongar call it quondong see.

And you find them out it the bush?

Yeah we found a lot of them because they come in every second year the tree.

So they don't fruit every year?

No, I think every second year or every third year.

What about the prickly pear?

That is the the wild pear tree, my dad used to burn underneath and when the flames go up and burn this tree they sort of scorch all these green ones on top and a few days later or maybe a week or so they fall down and they get very dry and we used to belt the tree and they used to fall down and we used to use them for firewood. Dad used to have an oven like a stove and we used to use that for the firewood.

Now what about the tree, if old Dad used to scorch it, what would happen to the tree?

It dies and then you cut it all but when the rain come the new shoots come again.

So then you would cut it down?

We'd cut it yeah and we used a big lot of branches for wood fire.

So you just cut all the branches down or lop it off.

Yeah, yeah cut it off, you'd cut it with an axe and then the new shoots, from the root shoots up and grows again and in a couple of years time you got a full tree again.

Is that what Noongars would have done in the old days?

Well I don't know but my Dad done it I don't know anyone else that done it but I think somebody did do it but I didn't take no notice of them see.

Now what about, you know when they used to have camp fires and they used to live in the bush, why did they have camp fires.

Well there was no stove in them days, some used to cook their damper in ashes, they'd cook in outside fires because no one had any stove them days.

Did the old Noongar, a long time ago, light fires like as a signal to let other Noongar know where they were?

Well he told me that they used to light a fire out on Corrigan Road, Aboriginals used to stop there and they used to light a big fire on top of the golf course and they used to you know go up there, when they see the camp fire, big fire, they could see it long way off.

And all the Noongars used to go there and meet?

Yeah, I think there was nearly 400 Aboriginals around that area.

And what happened to them?

Well... well we don't know what happened to them but we don't know if there any graves there or what we never been taught them things see. There are a lot of Aboriginals stayed around that area.

You know Kokerbin Rock?

Yeah, that's in Bruce Rock area and we didn't know much about that area. But we used to go hunting many years ago before the you know before they pegged it out as a nature reserve.

Right and what did you do there when you were a kid?

We used to shoot kangaroos down.

Did you ever camp there?

No, no we never camped there

Tell me something else about Kokerbin Rock.

That's the hill you can see to Kellerberrin. I know you can get up on the hill there and see Kellerberrin from that area on a clear day and you can

see a bit of the buildings, maybe a wheat bin or something, something like that.

What about you know Sharks mouth?

Yeah that's in Kellerberrin that's in the Kellerberrin area.

Tell me what do you know about Sharks Mouth?

I don't know, I don't much about that a, but when I went there once with them, and up inside the shark mouth there is a hand print, you ever went there? The farmers they won't let no one go there now.

You tell me what else you saw when you went there.

Well that's as I said we went there cause we used to pay a visit and there was another rock there it's shaped like a coffin they call it a Coffin Rock.

Yes, and why was it called a coffin rock?

It's shaped like a coffin! Yeah!

Is that because they used to lay the dead Noongar on there?

I don't know but, there was another rock my uncle, showed us, Uncle Bill Humphries and some other Noongars, I think they was messing around on a certain rock and they came home that night and they broke out in all sort of rash and my Uncle Cliff Humphries, said not that I was there, but somebody told me the story, don't know who now, I forget, I think Uncle Bill might have told me but he was messing around with this rock and Uncle Cliff told him, you boys been up there messing around at that rock there and sure enough they broke out in some sort of a rash. And it was a very sacred rock or something.

Well the Sharks Mouth, is that a man's...place?

I don't know see old Merv you see he the one that lived out here and he the one that told all these stories, but he passed on many years ago now.

So there's a hand print on the top of the Sharks Mouth?

Yeah up in the roof of the mouth of the rock, Shark Rock

Did you climb through there or go down?

No, no, no you can just walk down and look up at it

So any of your old uncles and that or old grandfather and that tell you any old wargyl stories?

No see my granddad that was dad's father he very shy and knew something but he like my dad they kept things to themselves.

Was he an old law man, he went through the law?

No, I don't think so but grandfather Fred Winmar that's dad's father's brother he told like you know behave yourself and all that you know and when he told us to go hunting, don't take too many it will go to waste he said take what you need and you can always go back and get what you need next time. A lot of people just shoot for sport that's no good that is.

Where you allowed to play with fire at night as a kid?

Oh no we would all go inside when it's dark.

Did they tell you why you shouldn't play with fire?

No they just said you know you got to go to bed when it's dark and we were always taught to sit down and eat never stand up and eat.

They never frightened you with any stories about the Mummari or the little woodachi man?

My dad used to, when that bird come around, what do you call them the dewi you call like the frog mouth like the tawny frog mouth he just like a stick on the tree you couldn't tell the difference. See they camouflage themselves.

What were they called?

Well the old noongar name was dewi but the wadjelas call them the tawny frog mouth. He gets in a dry tree and you couldn't tell the difference.

Why didn't old uncle like the birds?

My dad didn't like them because they brought bad news. This bird used to come down into dad's wireless, and my dad used to shoo them. He reckon they bring bad news.

True, any other stories you can tell us about?

Well they reckon that a certain spot I don't know where it is but there was a certain spot where you go for a drink of water, if the water was very cloudy you might get very crook. Or there's another spot too if you run on a certain spot on this ground you trip and fall you liable to go cripple, they reckon.

And that's what your old Dad used to tell you so if the water was murky, dirty did he say why?

They reckon something stirred it up, they reckon.

The Wargyl?

Probably we don't know

And he say like if it's dirty don't drink it but what about if it was clean?

Yeah that's good that would be good sign yeah but that's just what a lot of people told me these things but I don't know if it's true or false.

Well I better go see my boy now.

End of interview.

Interview with Ballardong Elder Iris Slate (Badjaling 2008) - conducted by Sandra Harben.

Now Aunty Iris when I was here at Badjaling last we stood over at the fence and we were talking about fire and you said gee I would love to walk over there and just get a match, chuck it out there, why did you want to do that?

Burn the dead stuff that's laying around out there and let all the new growth come through and flowers will come back, but there's nothing.

Is that why the Noongar used to burn the country?

They used to burn it, they knew when to burn it, they knew when to burn it so that new growth grow, new flowers come back. When they burnt that last time there was just beautiful flannel flowers, lovely, now nothing we never seen a flannel flower in fifty years I think.

What does a flannel flower look like?

It's a white flower, oh it's pretty, true, beautiful and when you burn they come up and they just all grow you know like Everlastings all in one big heap.



“Everlastings” taken in the Avon region (2008)

[Photo courtesy of Di Lovell]

And so burning the budjar, how did it help the trees and animals?

Well the animals run away from the fire as soon as they smell the smoke they gone. Some poor fellas might get burnt, but I suppose that had to happen didn't it.

And did it bring back the new grass, the new feed for the animals?

New feed, new grass, new plants of all kinds.

So why was it important to have all the new regrowth and to look after the animals on the land?

Because if they didn't do that all then old stuff would kill it all and it would all die and there'd be nothing all the animals would go so we'd have nothing.

No feed for them?

No feed yeah. Talk about the ground we're on. All the old fellas cleared this ground for us, we didn't know that they cleared it for today. They all got down and dug out the trees the bushes and shrubs, they played football here, marbles and all other games. Just up the track up there, there used to be old missionary house they used to have sports there, Easter carnival there, used to race with eggs in spoons and all sorts of them old games which was great. It was good to see all the old fellas it was great.

End of interview.



Badjaling community

Bush medicine tree – substance contained in the tree is likened to the western medicine *iodine*.

Ballardong Elders Janet Collard and Iris Slater picking the bush medicine from the tree found at the Badjaling community in the Avon region.





Badjaling is a small knit Noongar community. Four of the Noongar participants in this project live in or near the community and have had grave concerns for a number of years about the devastation of the budjar in and around the community. The following image with the land and the trees in the background showing the effects of salinity problems of the land by the changing of natural water courses of adjoining properties to Badjaling.

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]



Near Badjaling (2008)

[Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk]

The Elders ‘care for the country’ without resources to support their cultural responsibility for caring for their budjar.

BURLONG POOL

According to Aboriginal lore the deity responsible for the balance of water in a region is its local snake spirit. The term 'rainbow serpent' can refer to both the water elemental being that is a major culture hero who formed landscapes in 'the Dreamtime', and also to its lesser regional manifestations. Australian rain making rites and rainbow serpents / snake spirits have been integrally linked since time immemorial. (Moore 2004).

Noongar believe that the Waakal or Noongar Rainbow Serpent created the waterways and is keeper of the fresh water sources.



Burlong Pool [Photo courtesy of Di Lovell]

The Rainbow Serpent can also be a destructive force if it is not properly respected. Noongar people believe that if you harm resting place of the rainbow serpent or his earthly beings at the place of water then the country would dry up and die. (Jack Williams, Noongar Elder).

It is recommended that Burlong Pool be a priority for future investment into Aboriginal Natural Resource Management initiatives in the Avon River Basin due to its significant natural and cultural values to all of the community.

KOKERBIN ROCK

Kokerbin Rock is a place of special significance for Noongar people. Many a Noongar would have camped and hunted at the rock. More recently, a hearing for the Native Title claim called ‘the Single Noongar application’, sat ‘on-country’ at eight different locations including Kokerbin Rock.



Kokerbin Rock - Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk (2008)

It is also recommended that Kokerbin Rock be a priority for future investment into Aboriginal Natural Resource Management initiatives in the Avon River Basin due to its significant natural and cultural values to all of the community.

INVOLVEMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

According to Flugge (2003) priorities for Aboriginal land managers for sustainable resource management may include:

1. Preservation of cultural practises and culturally important places.
2. Restoration of degraded land and associated natural resources.
3. Preventing any further degradation of land and waters and loss of animals and plant biodiversity.
4. Protection and re-establishment of healthy population of plants and animals used for bush tucker, medicine, and in art and craft production.
5. Economic development and use of the land for self sufficiency.
6. Aiming for sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and pastoralism.
7. Management of public access.
8. Development and maintenance of ecotourism for economic return and to build understanding and respect for culture and country. (SAMLISA, 2000).
9. Joint management of nature reserves.
10. Bushland management.

SUCCESSFUL INDIGENOUS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The following list as suggested by Flugge (2003):

- Recognise and conserve Indigenous knowledge (IK).
- Acknowledge the intrinsic and potential future economic value of intact landscapes (eg for tourism or biodiversity conservation).
- Create opportunities for transfer of indigenous knowledge and development of leadership across generations.
- Recognise and assert indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights in relation to native plants, animals, genetic materials and marine biota.
- Attract and provide increased and secure longer-term funding arrangements for indigenous natural resource management activities (ie block funding).
- Provide employment opportunities and foster the development of indigenous owned and operated enterprises.
- Support networking and skill sharing between Indigenous owners and managers of land.
- Foster partnerships between Indigenous owners and managers and governments and other relevant organisations. (Storrs et al, 2003)



Workshop held at York (2008) with the Noongar participants of the project *Recording Traditional Knowledge* - Photo courtesy of Glen Stasiuk

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Department of Conservation and Land Management CALM Science Division, Australia 2 Drive, Crawley, WA 6009

Department of Conservation and Land Management.

CALM Science Division, Brain Street, Manjimup WA 6258

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