



National Environmental Science Programme

The Cultural Seascape of Wadandi Boodja: The Cultural Values of Australia's South-west Marine Parks

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This project was a collaboration between the Undalup Association, Wadandi Knowledge Custodians, The University of Western Australia and the Director of National Parks. All cultural data was provided following [CARE principles](#) (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility and ethics), proposed by the [Indigenous Data Network](#), and protected by an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property agreement. Undalup Association Incorporated provide permission for The University of Western Australia (UWA), the University of Tasmania (UTas), and the Director of National Parks (DNP).

This project acknowledges all the families whose country is represented by this report and map. This project was designed to map a broad overview of the cultural values associated with Australia's South-west Marine Parks. The results do not fully represent the cultural knowledge of the region, instead these results can be used to help communicate cultural connections to the broader community, guide management decisions and develop future research projects.

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SYNOPSIS

This report is designed to provide cultural guidance for the understanding and management of the Australian Marine Parks on Wadandi Watturu Boodja - Saltwater Country Land and Sea. It is designed to inform managers, researchers and the general public.

Partnership with Wadandi Traditional Owners and Custodians for this region provided guidance through cultural maps and knowledge to inform the discovery of remarkable biodiversity across submerged ancient coastline features, that document the dynamic history of the region. A short film will complement this report and document how cultural information has guide researchers to understand the marine biodiversity of the region.

The cultural knowledge provided through partnership with Wadandi Traditional Owners and Custodians not only guided the discovery of remarkable biodiversity across submerged ancient coastline features but provided future guidance for managing the cultural and natural values of the marine parks that will be documented in future research through the National Environmental Science Programs Marine and Coastal Hub.

CULTURAL SEASCAPE OF WADANDI BOODJA

The Wadandi people are saltwater people. *Wadan* is the name of the ocean spirit and this is where Wadandi people get their name. Far offshore, where the sun meets the ocean is where the spirits of our ancestors go to rest until the spirit gets called back onto Boodja (Country).

There is no line between land and sea. Many processes that happen on land or in freshwater systems impact the saltwater systems so it is important to manage and care for Wadandi Boodja as one continuous cultural seascape. Wadandi people have cultural connections to Sea Country from places far inland. The *Wejt Kwala* (Emu Songline) starts inland at Lake Dumbleyung and, like the *Wejt Goorbil* (Emu's belly/intestine), it winds its way over 250 km south-west towards *Taalinup* (Augusta), marking the line where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet and continuing far out to sea where the old coastline used to be (Fig. 1).

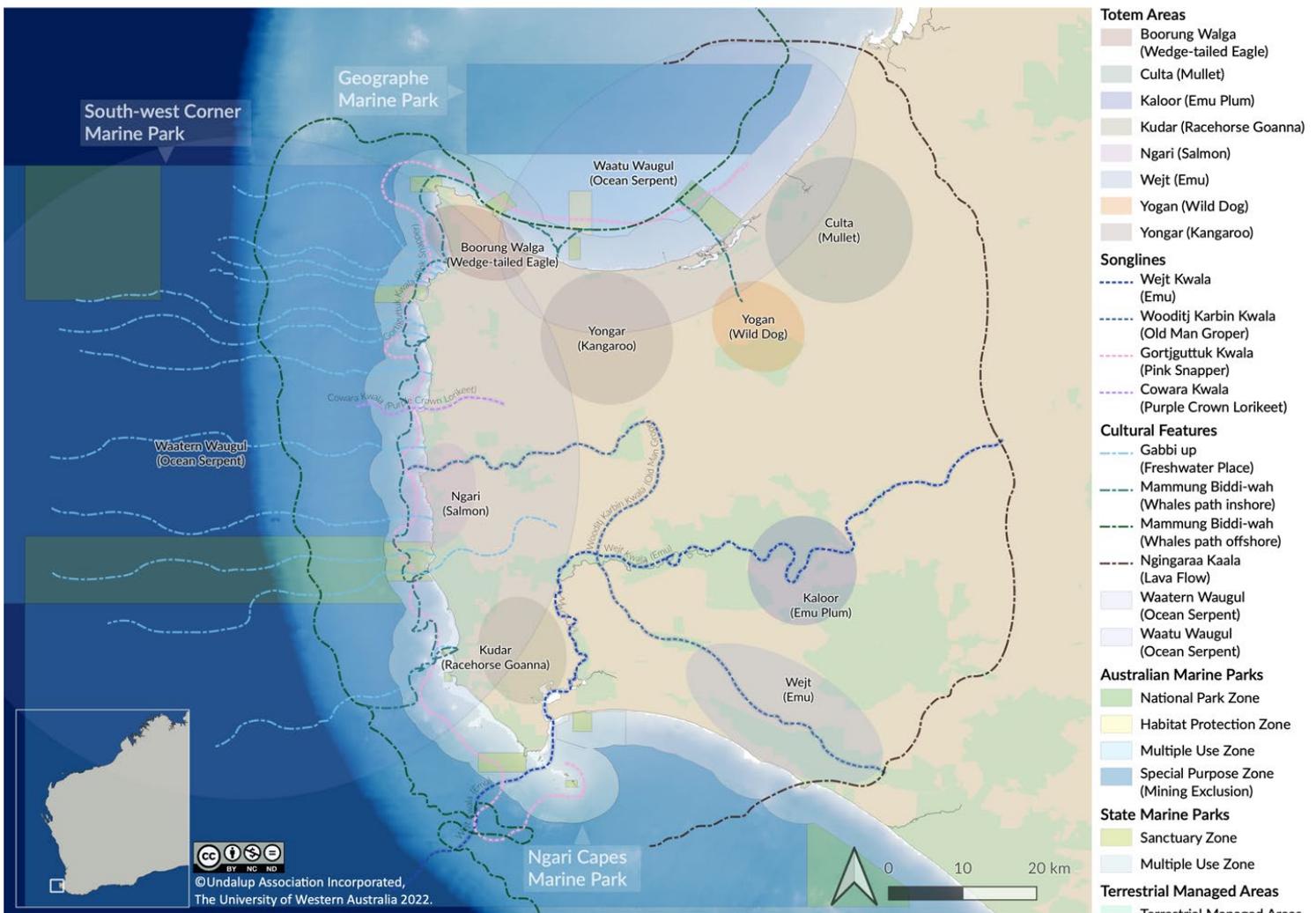


Figure 1 Map of the Wadandi Cultural Seascape in Southwestern Australia.

Cowara Kwala (Purple Crown Lorikeet Songline)

The Cowara comes from inland where he breeds and comes to the coast following the gabbi kwala (freshwater songlines) during the summer for feeding. The arrival of the Cowara signals the arrival of Ngaralaang (Herring) in the ocean.

Gortjguttuk Kwala

The *Gortjguttuk Kwala* (Pink Snapper Songline) starts in the *Waatu Waugal* water (Geographe Bay). They come out in the Bay in Makuru time (June/July) when it is cold and wet. They come out in the *Waarten Waugul* water (West Coast) in *Birak* time (Dec/Jan) when it is hot and dry. The *Gortjguttuk* follow the scallop line in the Bay and when they get around Cape Naturaliste they start head-butting the shellfish, this is why they have bigger foreheads in *Waarten Waugul* water.

Ngingaraa Kaala

The *Ngingaraa Kaala* (Lava flow) shows us the path the lava took back when the Country shook. When the Country shook, the old people left their camp at *Yoondaddup* (Lake Jasper) and went down to *Bolghinup* (Black Rock) and fell asleep. When they went back the whole place had changed. All the hills had pushed out of the ground. This is when people left that area and spread out across Country and sung the songs of their creation.

Wooditj Kaarbin Kwala

Wooditj Kaarbin Kwala (Old Man Groper Songline). *Wooditj* was a powerful medicine man and could do almost anything with his magic wand. He fell in love with *Milyan*, a beautiful young woman who was betrothed to somebody else. The love-struck couple ran away together but *Milyan's* father *Ngungargoot* chased them. *Wooditj* used his magic wand to create a powerful river (The Margaret River) between the lovers and *Ngungargoot*. The old man couldn't cross the river but he continued to follow the runaways on the opposite bank. When they got to the mouth of the river the young couple were hungry and decided to spear some *Kaarbin* (Groper) that were plentiful on the reefs there. After a while, the rushing river slowed down and *Ngungargoot* could reach the couple, he almost seized *Milyan* but *Wooditj* struck him with his wand and turned him into a *Kaarbin* which disappeared onto the reef which is now known as *Ngungargoot* (Cow rock). *Milyan* was very sad at the loss of her father and *Wooditj* wished the old man would return to them, immediately he was restored as a man and accepted the marriage of *Milyan* and *Wooditj*.

Ngari Up (Place of the Salmon)

Ngari Up is the place of the Ngari (Salmon). The beginning of Bunuru time (Feb/Mar) is marked by the Ngoolaak (white tailed cockatoo) who sing in the Ngari. The cockatoos sing in a certain song and move in a certain direction to show us when to fish for Ngari.

Gabbi Up (Freshwater Place)

There are many important freshwater places along the Wadandi coast. In some places you can drink freshwater that comes up in the saltwater. These freshwater places show us where the water might flow out to the ancient coastline, these places would have been very important for our ancestors. The freshwater flows are important for the fish and animals that live in the saltwater. The Gabbi Waugul (Freshwater Serpent) drives the flow of freshwater into the sea. The Gabbi Waugul is in a constant battle with the Waatern Waugul and Waatu Waugul (Saltwater Serpents). When the saltwater serpent wins, it pushes seas up into the rivers and when the freshwater serpent wins the freshwater flows out to sea. This endless battle shows us the patterns of change in Wadandi Country, both daily with the tide and over long periods of time. For a long time, the saltwater serpent has been winning, which has caused the sea levels to rise.

Mammung biddi-wah (Whales' path)

Wadandi Boodja is an important place for *Mammung* (whales). When *Gullyung* (*Acacia Cyclops* or *Wattle*) flowers, the *mammung* are starting their migration. The *Gullyung* grows a bean at the time that calves are being born up in Bardi Country in the Kimberley and the seed opens up as the *mammung* come down past Wadandi Country, this seed represents the great eye of the whale. The *mammung biddi-wah* (whale path) is sometimes far offshore but they often follow a path close to shore. They come to the *Gabbi-up* places where the freshwater seeps out into the saltwater and when they beach themselves they are offering themselves back to the land where they come from.

Before they entered the water, the *mammung* were more like hippos and liked to live in the shallow marshland in *Yoganup* at the foothills of *yalyal* (Whitcher Escarpment) behind what is now known as *Undalup* (Busselton). The *Yogan* (Thylacine/ wild dog) would scare the *mammung* into the sea. The *mammung* would come back in from *Waatu* (Geographe Bay) to land with seagrass in his mouth. Eventually the *mammung* decided the saltwater was a better place to live and so he stayed. The *Kwillan* (Dolphin) felt left behind, he saw the *mammung* in the sea and decided to follow him.

Environmental cues from Country

When the white flowers of the *Balga* (grass trees) start to bloom, this marks the time when we can start to go fishing for *Kaarbin* (Groper). We can only hunt *Kaarbin* (Groper) and *Djubitj* (Dhufish) in *Birak* (Jan/Feb) and *Bunuru* (Feb/March) seasons. The beginning of *Bunuru* season is marked by the whitetail cockatoo who will sing in the Ngari (Salmon). The cockatoos sing in a certain song and move in a certain direction to show us when. The *Kaarak* (red tailed cockatoo) tells us when it is the right time to do cultural burning as the seasons change from *Bunuru* to *Djeran*.

Djubitj (Dhufish) and *Kaarbin* (Groper) come in close and hide out in caves during *Birak*. *Djanga koriei* (Ghostcrabs) are the best bait and this is the time when *Djanga koriei* all dig holes. You can find *Djanga koriei* on all the long beaches. Along the coast there are

flickholes/toe holes that you flick crushed *Kaanging* (Abalone)/ crab burley into which will bring out the Djiljit (fish).



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The NESP Marine Biodiversity Hub is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program. Our goal is to assist decision-makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia's environment by funding world-class biodiversity science.

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