The Joondalup region is part of Mooro country and is an important place for indigenous people. The following stories and the other information in this brochure have been included, with the elders’ permission, to enable the wider community to gain an appreciation of the indigenous connection to our land. The story of the spirit woman, Charnok Woman, is particularly important to Joondalup.

Charnok Woman

Back in the dreamtime there was a tall spirit man and a tall spirit woman, Charnok Woman. The spirit woman had long white hair and the spirit man had long black hair. He had a tall body and she was short. This child so she placed it in her long white hair and the child held on to her hair down to her back. In the darkness of the dreamtime, the spirit man’s body turned white and the spirit woman’s body turned black.

During this season anything that was underground was eaten. Foods such as bush potatoes, bush onions and other tubers and root vegetables were also eaten. These months were spent up in the hills protected from the south-west winds. Larger animals such as kangaroos and possums were hunted down the coastline. When he got to Derbal-Yarragan (the entrance of the ocean), Waugal, the Rainbow Serpent, said he could not go in and told him to turn himself into a munter. The whale would take the spirit on a journey for up to eighty or ninety days. Whenever a whale beaching themselves, the Nyoongar people know that they beach themselves to return the spirit being carried by the whale back into the land the people would be satisfied that the spirit had been returned. It is said that whenever a whale beaching themselves, the Nyoongar people come to the beach to see if the whale has brought any spirits back to the land. When the whales beach themselves, the Nyoongar people dance around the whale and offer them food and drink so the spirits will be satisfied and return to the land. The whale will take the spirit on a journey for up to eighty or ninety days. The people travelled down to the river, burning the land they had just come from to ensure food was plentiful the next time they were here.

The Legend of the Crocodile or Giant Goanna

From there Waugal watched Crocodile until he got back to Two Rocks where all the animals were gathered together. Waugal told Crocodile that he needed a pet. Crocodile made himself a pet. Bibyur then gave Crocodile his feathered cloak to keep him warm on his journey. Bibyur was very pleased with how Crocodile turned out. Crocodile’s pet was a girl and she was called Karda. Waugal taught Crocodile how to catch his food. Bibyur gave him his pet. Crocodile grew. This was to be Crocodile’s food. Bibyur then gave Crocodile his feathered cloak to keep him warm on his journey.

Why the Whales beach themselves (Mamang)

When the sea level rose around 10,000 years ago it trapped many of these spirits under the sea. The only way these spirits can return to the land is through the whales. It is said that whenever a whale beaching themselves, the Nyoongar people know that they beach themselves to return the spirit being carried by the whale back into the land the people would be satisfied that the spirit had been returned.
The ZAMIA PALM (Djiri) is a cycad which grows locally. They have large seed pods full of red seeds (bayou) which were collected, but not eaten straight away due to fear in the plant. To leach the poison out of the seeds a reed bag was made. The kernels from the seeds were peeled in these reed bags and put under running water for three to four weeks. Once the kernels were pitted the kernels were ground into a paste like dough and cooked under the hot ashes of the fire. A small grove of Zanpia Palm still exists on the western shore of Lake Joondalup.

HUNTING USING BOOMERANGS. The people would hide in the reeds (yanjet) by the lake’s edge. Ducks would be swimming around in the lake. The returning boomerang would be thrown over the top of all the ducks. The ducks would see the shadow of the boomerang and think it was a hawk or eagle and all lift up off the water and group together in the air. As the ducks circled the lake, whenever they passed the people hiding in the reeds they would be attacked with the larger hunting boomerangs. If large numbers of ducks were required there would be more groups of people hiding in various locations around the lake.

Food Sources

Coastal Areas

Abalones were collected in large numbers off the reefs at Marjorie, Mullaloo, Ocean Reef and Burns Beach. Pointed stone tools were used to lever the shells off the reefs.

Fish were speared in the shallows, often by children who were learning how to catch fish.

Crayfish were gathered from the reef in the late afternoons.

Shellfish were gathered in large numbers and cooked on the beach at Mullaloo. Some of the shell middens still remain along the coast buried under the sand dunes at Mullaloo.

The elderly aboriginal men used to sit by the ocean and chart with their tapping sticks. Hearing the loud noise made by the tapping sticks, the dolphins (keela) would come rushing toward the beach. The mullal (quella) would shower out onto the beach sand to get out of the way.

Lakesides areas – Joondalup and Goolalal

Ducks, swans and swamp hens were hunted by various methods in large numbers. People would hide in the reeds besides the lake and throw boomerangs at the passing ducks.

The freshwater turtles (yarrang) were also gathered in large numbers. The tortoise eggs were dug up and eaten.

Bird eggs were gathered from nesting sites and eaten.

Freshwater crayfish (marro) were collected from Lake Joondalup and Goolalal and cooked whole on the hot coals.

Many of the reeds (yanjet) that grow along the lakes and waterways were pulled out and eaten. The reeds had a white shoot on the end which was eaten and tasted a bit like a coconut.

Kangaroos were speared and eaten. The skins were tanned with sodum resin and used as blankets. The bones from the legs of the kangaroos were used for making the skins and together making kangaroo skin bags.

The sinew from the kangaroo leg and tail were together and making Kangaroo skin bags. The bones from the legs of Kangaroos were speared and eaten. The coconut end which was eaten and tasted a bit like a coconut.

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The lakes were full of fish such as mullaloo, quella and Burns Beach. Pointed stone tools were used to lever the shells off the reefs. Abalones were collected in great numbers off the reefs. Abalone and other shellfish were gathered in large numbers off the nearby reefs.

The ZAMIA PALM (Djiri) is a cycad which grows locally. They have large seed pods full of red seeds (bayou) which were collected, but not eaten straight away due to fear in the plant. To leach the poison out of the seeds a reed bag was made. The kernels from the seeds were peeled in these reed bags and put under running water for three to four weeks. Once the kernels were pitted the kernels were ground into a paste like dough and cooked under the hot ashes of the fire. A small grove of Zanpia Palm still exists on the western shore of Lake Joondalup.

THE GRASS TREE (Balga) were chopped down and the pods removed and eaten in large amounts as a medicine for people that had upset stomachs, or when no other food source was available. Resin was also collected to make a glue to make stone tools.

The grass consisted of 50% resin, 25% charcoal and 25% dried kangaroo droppings.

The three ingredients were crushed into a powder and melted onto the handle of the tool.
The Legend of the Crocodile or Giant Goanna

Crocodile and Shark would sometimes meet with Whale when he travelled to the warmer waters in the North. The three would then catch fish together. One day as they were swimming to the cooler waters of the south, Shark told Crocodile that he was getting more than his share of the fish. Crocodile said that it wasn’t true. This made Shark very angry. The two began to have a big fight out in the Wardandi (a part of the ocean). Yonga (kangaroo) and Bibyur (scrub turkey) were there to see the fight. Yonga and Bibyur are the two rocks at Two Rocks.

They watched Shark tear skin off Crocodile. The skin is the waves that flap over the rocks when the sea is high. Shark then began to tear bits of flesh from Crocodile. The chunks of flesh are the rocks at Two Rocks.

In the end Shark was so angry that he tore Crocodile’s tail right off in two big chunks. These chunks are Rottnest Island and Garden Island.

Without his tail, Crocodile could not swim. So he started walking down the coastline. When he got to Derbal-Yarragan (the entrance of the Swan River at Fremantle), he tried to go up the river to rest. But Waugal, the Rainbow Serpent, said he could not go in and told him to get going back up the coast.

Charnok Woman

Charnok Woman was a spirit woman belonging to the Charnok People. The Charnok Woman had long white hair down to her back. In the darkness of the dreamtime, the spirit woman called Charnok People. The Charnok Woman had long white hair down to her back. In the darkness of the dreamtime, the spirit woman called Charnok People. The Charnok Woman had long white hair down to her back.

The Joondalup region is part of Mooro country and is of special healing powers and Nyoongar people with bone problems would visit Lake Nowergup to drink from the lake and be cured. The animals said he should go so he changed into Emu. He ate the berries that he was told to eat. The berry seeds passed through him and made new berry plants. He was happy because he was useful to the people. When emus eat this berry, the acid in their stomachs eats through the skin of the berry and the seed is made into a little being. It was a spirit child. She did not want to part with this little being. It was a spirit child. She did not want to part with this little being.

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Six Seasons

Birak (December to January)
Most of the time was spent by the coast as the weather was warm. Seafood was mainly eaten during these months.

Bunurru (February to March)
Everyone gathered around the lakes and food was plentiful. Frogs, reptiles and the shoots from the yanjet reed were eaten. This is the season when the people would have gathered in the Joondalup region.

Djerin (April to May)
The people travelled down to the river, burning the land they had just come from to ensure food was plentiful the next time they were there. Great rafts of mullet (qualla) and zamia seeds took place on the banks of the Swan. The omega three oil ensured everyone was fattened up to last the winter.

Makaru (June to July)
These months were spent up in the hills protected from the south-west winds. Larger animals such as kangaroos and possums were hunted during these months.

Djilba (August to September)
During this season anything that was underground was eaten. Foods such as bush potatoes, bush onions and other tubers and root systems were eaten during these months.

Kambarang (October to November)
This was the season for birds such as ducks, swans and turkeys which lived around the swamp plains.

Moore

Mooro are a group of Nyoongar people who lived between Fremantle and Moore River.

Mooro Boodjar

The Joondalup Mooro Boodjar is an important place for indigenous people. The following stories and the other information in this brochure have been compiled by the wider community to gain an appreciation of the rich culture and environment of the Joondalup Mooro Boodjar.

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Word Meanings

Mamang

Why the Whales beach themselves (Mamang)

Back in the dreamtime many spirits were placed around the land. After the dreamtime many of these spirits still remain in the land.

When the sea level rose around 15,000 years ago it trapped many of these spirits under the sea. The only way these spirits can return to the land is through the whales. It is said that whenever a whale calf is born one of these spirits attaches themselves to the whale calf. The whale will take the spirit on a journey for up to eighty or ninety years around the ocean before returning to the Western Australian coast. The whale will naturally want to beach itself. The scientific explanation is that the sonar from submarines and ships disrupt their travel. Before these technologies were around the whales were beaching themselves. The Nyoongar people know that they beach themselves to return the spirit being carried by the whale back into the land where it belongs.

The Nyoongar men knew when the whales were coming in and would prepare a ceremonial knife called a daap. When the whale washed up on the shore the daap was used to cut the whale open and when the blood from the whale ran into the land the people would be satisfied that the spirit had been returned.

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