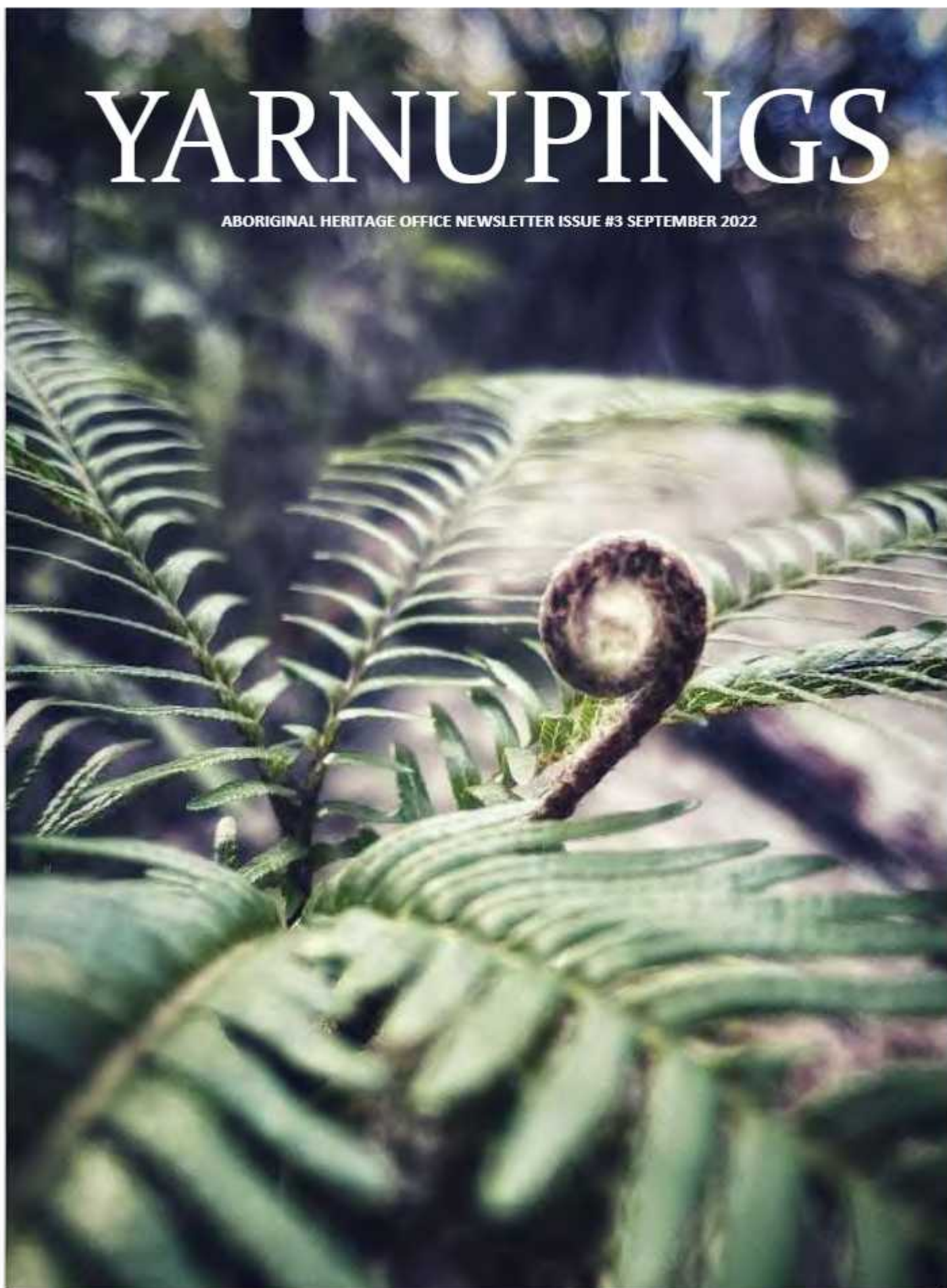


YARNUPINGS

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE NEWSLETTER ISSUE #3 SEPTEMBER 2022



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council





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ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the third issue of Yarnupings for 2022

This issue we look at the career of Aboriginal Heritage Office founder, David Watts. 'How do you measure a ripple?' looks at the positive flow on effects of the work of the AHO throughout the years.

We delve into the urban threats to the Powerful Owl and how we can play an active role in their protection.

We also recount how the AHO team was privileged to be involved in the excavation of Aboriginal ancestral remains at Little Manly Beach.

It's wildflower season, so this issue is full of pretty pictures from around the Partner Council LGAs and our very own Bush Tucker Garden. We even created our own delicious recipe from our garden for you to try.

Please enjoy the third edition of Yarnupings for 2022.

The AHO Team— Phil, Karen and Susan

In this issue...

• We pay our respects	2
• Picture of serenity	3
• AHO in Action	4
• How do you measure a ripple?	5
• Wildflowers	10
• Ancestral Remains	11
• Muogamarra Nature Reserve	13
• Powerful Owl.....	15
• Volunteer News	17
• Book Review	18
• Bush Tucker Garden.....	19
• Bush Tucker Recipe.....	20





Uncle Jack Charles



Archie Roach

WE PAY OUR RESPECTS

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/jul/30/archie-roach-obituary>

<https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/7900523/indigenous-actor-jack-charles-dies-aged-79/>



Do you have
a photo you
would like to
share?

Breathe and relax

This photo was taken at the spectacular Muogamarra Nature Reserve.

Scientific studies show that simply looking upon a lovely serene image of nature will help to lower stress. So, in these strange Covid times, where you may not feel like you are able to get outside as much as you may like, take a moment or two to breathe deeply and enjoy the image. It's good for you.

Full image for you to enjoy on the next page.

We would love to share your amazing photos of the incredible place where we live. There are so many beautiful locations across the Northern Beaches, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Willoughby, Ku-ring-gai and Strathfield.

You never know, you just might inspire someone to take a walk in their local neighbourhood, go adventuring to a new area or to simply remember the great Aboriginal land upon which we live. Email your photos to: susan.whitby@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au.



The AHO in Action

Sites Awareness Training for Council Staff

The AHO was pleased to return to the standard Field Training for staff across the six Partner Councils. Training is offered to a number of different areas and is run in two parts, online theory and field training.

Dave and Susan met Council staff at North Sydney to experience a number of different Aboriginal sites: engravings, middens and overhangs.

Learning about Aboriginal sites and the landscape within which they sit is important for Council staff, as it is great responsibility to protect the urban Aboriginal sites that lie within Council boundaries. Many of these Council staff are involved in decision making that could directly affect Aboriginal sites.

It was also great to see many Council staff realise that Aboriginal sites can be difficult to see, but that doesn't mean they aren't there.

We also discussed conservation measures and options for how Aboriginal sites could be protected and conserved.

The Aboriginal Heritage Office's partner Councils are: Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Strathfield and Willoughby.



HOW DO YOU MEASURE A RIPPLE?

A ripple is a type of wave. A wave is something that is created when there is a disturbance in an equilibrium and that energy is moved from one place to another through a substance. We are interested in waves as they are key to coastal erosion and the loss of Aboriginal heritage on the foreshore. With waves, it is the energy that is transferred, not the matter. For example, if you drop a rock into a pool, small waves oscillate outward. The water molecules that splash at the edge of the pool are not those that were struck by the rock.

You could use a ripple tank to help you demonstrate different types of wave properties in a liquid. There are also various methods for examining waves and ripples in other mechanical and electromagnetic fields. You probably know that this is not the point of this article. And it isn't about how waves in Sydney waterways are eroding the shorelines and damaging Aboriginal sites.

What about a ripple of ideas? How can you measure that?

In the social media age you could count the number of tweets or shares of someone's post. Or the clicks on a website page. In the days of paper it is said politicians would measure a letter as representing the views of a hundred constituents.

David Watts has retired. This naturally has us in a process of reflection and reassessment. He was at the helm for 23 years. Over two decades. That is quite a contribution to one organisation. Even more significant

when you think there was no such organisation nor plan for one when he started. The 'AHO' partnership was simply a single heritage officer position shared between four Councils. The AHO name didn't come until 2005 when there was a bit more consistency in additional staff and funding.



Above: DW with SBS 'Message Stick', 2006 at Balls Head.
Below: DW c.2000.



How do you measure a ripple?

Over the years we have been a bit flippant about the AHO's various anniversaries (eg pointing out that the 20th anniversary meant the AHO had been in existence for 16.8% of Australia's history since Federation [Yarnupings 1 2020](#)). Sometimes something more notable has to take place to provoke deeper thought and Dave's retirement is a good trigger.

Back to our question, how do you measure a ripple? Thinking of the rock dropped into a pool, the energy of the rock moved across the pool yet the actual molecules just moved back and forth. Perhaps like people passing on a new story or idea? What David Watts and the forward-looking Councils did back then must have made some waves. But where's the evidence?

Much of the AHO's output is in day-to-day conversations, presentations, walks, talks, reports and emails. It is difficult to measure and compare what is being shared across different partner Councils, different user groups and in terms of any measurable effect. Occasionally we get feedback from someone regarding a particular event or issue which confirms the AHO input was welcomed and helpful, but even that is not something you can put a tape measure around, or drop in a ripple tank to see its wider effects. You may think or feel you are having a positive effect, but can you

demonstrate it to a third party who might require a higher level of evidence? This is the quandary that has been faced by many institutions and societies over the centuries.

"It's about trying not to hear the ripples and the words of the system and instead trying to follow the words and ripples of our heart, of our people".

Jane Lester¹

When David started working with the Councils, he was following the same passionate methods he'd developed while working for Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and then as a heritage consultant in the 1990s. It was the era of Prime Minister John Howard who had admonished Indigenous people and others for taking a 'black arm band' view of history². While many people sought to 'fix' Indigenous Australia by trying to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, David took the opposite approach. He knew that by helping non-Indigenous people become aware of their local Aboriginal heritage and history it could help undermine the ignorance that leads to so many unjust views and the policies that come from them. Even before the AHO came about, sometimes when he'd drag me out to help him give a walk or talk he would say to the group, "we're trying to do ourselves out of a job". He explained that by



A Yarnup at Manly Town Hall



Taking NSW Judges for a walk

How do you measure a ripple?

making more people aware of Aboriginal heritage, there wouldn't be as much need for us. Well, that hasn't quite worked out! There is more demand than ever for people like Dave to share their knowledge and expertise to an ever increasing and more knowledgeable audience. So while we respect his decision to retire, we do hope we can still coax him out to help!

The state government agency responsible for Aboriginal heritage has been restructured and renamed at least six times since Dave took his laptop from North Sydney Council in 2000 and set up a space in his own garage in Ryde (the offered work station did not provide appropriate space or confidentiality for the job at hand). It is a rare thing to nurture a new entity from one era to another with such continuity.

So how do you measure the ripple effect from a presentation to local residents, a guided walk with school students, a conference speech at an Aboriginal local government network meeting, a stall among the state's councillors and senior bureaucrats, a walk and talk with judges from the NSW Judicial Commission, a training day with staff from any number of councils and organisations, an interview, a question answered over the phone, a to-the-point email reply, a welcome to the museum, a report on a completed project, the implementation of protection to a site, a new sign, a renamed park, some information on the website, a chat over a BBQ at a volunteer event?

On one guided walk in the late 1990s two Councillors from two different Councils were motivated to do more. Kate Lamb (Willoughby) and Genia McCaffery (North Sydney) approached David afterwards and asked how their Councils could help. This was the catalyst for the creation



2013 building the overhead camera boom 'OB1'



2009 a presentation with Kim & Athena



With Dr Val Attenbrow 2008

How do you measure a ripple?

of an Aboriginal heritage position with North Sydney for 12 months and the partnership of Councils in 2000 that became what we now know as the AHO. The effects of this one walk are still rippling out.

The ideas generated and shared by the AHO, and through programs like the Guringai Festival developed by Susan Moylan-Coombs, and the reconciliation groups with many local Aboriginal residents taking part, and the women's circles, and artists collectives, the LALC sites and education officers, all of these have sent ripples out. Perhaps it will require the backward looking telescope of those in the future to better attempt a ripple tank analysis of this era of Aboriginal heritage engagement. I for one am sure that Dave's influence over this period has been profound. From the lad who used to dive for coins thrown by passengers at Manly Wharf he's been quietly involved in the moving molecules of the AHO region all of his life. He doesn't like being called Uncle or Elder, and isn't considered a traditional owner here, but the successes that he has achieved were no accident and could not have been accomplished without great wisdom and care. Not so much a series of ripples but perhaps more like a tide.

We don't have to go anywhere to be part of a wave happening around us. Just feel the oncoming flow of energy, the moving molecules, open the heart and mind and pass on the energy.

*If it was me, I would stand up for my land
If it was me, I would stand next to that man,
I would, I would do the same
Black Rock Band*



Manly Dam walk, 2012



Yarnup at Dee Why 2018



Staff Sites Awareness Training 2007



Guided walk, Berry Island 2006



Interview and a ...smile? 2013



Climber chalk at rock art site



Local Government Aboriginal Network Conference
Coffs Harbour 2007



Opening of GadyanTrack 2000



Stall at LGSA Conference Broken Hill 2008

Jane Lester, talking about reconnecting to land and extended family; in David Denborough, 2020, *Unsettling Australian Histories: Letters to Ancestry from a Great-Great-Grandson*, Dulwich Centre Foundation, p.27

John Howard 1996 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture. <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-10171>; or https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9798/98RP05#BLACK
<https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/Yarnuping-9-Saltwater-Women.pdf>



Aboriginal Ancestral Remains Little Manly Reserve, Manly

Aboriginal ancestral remains were found at two locations during earthworks at Little Manly Reserve, Manly, on Monday, 25th July (Burial 1) and Wednesday, 3rd August 2022 (Burial 2). The NSW Police attended. On confirmation that the remains were traditional Aboriginal burials, they were recovered by the Aboriginal Heritage Office (a partnership of six councils – Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Strathfield and Willoughby Councils) and Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council as authorised by Heritage NSW.

Traditional Aboriginal burials have many differences to other funeral practices since 1788 and they also vary from region to region across NSW and Australia.

The two burials were both flexed (knees up and hands near the face), on their left sides and the alignment was roughly east-west with the top of the heads towards the west. There were fish and shellfish with the bodies and some stone artefacts.

Most Aboriginal sites in today's immediate coastal environment are likely to be associated with rising sea levels and fluctuations between 7000-3000 years ago. The oldest burial in the region is 'Narrabeen Man' dated to around 4000 years ago.

All Aboriginal heritage sites, including ancestral remains, are protected under the *National Parks*



Panorama showing burial location

Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, Little Manly Reserve, Manly

and Wildlife Act which is administered by Heritage NSW.

Burials are most often found after erosion events or during earthworks. It is rare to find them through preliminary archaeological excavation even when sampling extremely large areas.

If the remains cannot be kept on-site safely and respectfully, they are removed with the aim of repatriating (reburying) them to a safe place. If MLALC and Heritage NSW support further analysis before repatriation, the remains are generally taken to the University of Sydney's Shellshear Museum. Radio carbon dating is carried out if possible.

It is important to remember that Aboriginal burials and ancestral remains have been disrespected by non-Indigenous peoples from the earliest days. For example, on a survey of Middle Harbour between 21 and 24 April 1788 Governor Phillip found the grave of a cre-

mated Aboriginal person. He ordered that it be exhumed to determine the method for farewellling the dead.

"On a point where we landed, found the earth thrown up in the manner of a Grave, which we turned up & found the ashes of some deceased person & by the burnt wood laying near it we suppose it to have been consumed on that spot, the ashes appear'd to be heap'd together on the surface of the ground & cover'd with earth, some pieces of bones were found not quite consumed but too much so to know what part of the body they belonged to: from a greater quantity of the ashes at one end than at the other, I suppose the body to have been laid at length before the fire is applied to the Pile & conclude that they dispose of the dead in the same manner."

Those involved in the recovery and repatriation of ancestral remains must try to balance different imperatives. The first is being conscious of the theft and mistreatment of human remains over a long period. Secondly, to treat the remains as respectfully as possible knowing the removal of the remains would be upsetting for the families of the individual, no matter how long ago, and to the community today. Additionally, people are conscious that if the remains are on private property or on a building site, it can be distressing for the current landowners and workers.



AHO, MLALC and NSW Police recovering a burial

MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE

With just three of us at the AHO, we took a moment to regroup as a smaller team and headed out to the bush, which is everyone's favourite place. We took a day to explore Muogamarra Nature Reserve near the Hawkesbury River. What a visual feast!

Muogamarra Nature Reserve is a special area of land. 22.74km². This patch of magnificent sandstone landscape was bought by John Duncan Tipper who was concerned about losing the Aboriginal sites and beautiful environment to farming and settlement. The area was declared a nature reserve in 1934. The reserve is only opened for six weekends per year, throughout spring. There are guided or self-guided tours across a number of different tracks. All visits must be booked through National Parks so make sure you book in for the 2023 season. It's fabulous!

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/muogamarra-nature-reserve>





Powerful Owl

Words by Karen Smith



I attended a talk organised by the *Friends of Ivanhoe Park* who organised Holly Parsons, from Bird Life Australia, to come and give a talk on Powerful Owls.

I have always believed this owl to be my Totem as they appear when I am at a crossroads in life.

Powerful owls are Australia's largest owl. They can stand about 65cm tall and can have a wing - span of 1.3 metres.

They are found on the east coast of NSW and Victoria with a few breeding pairs over the border in southern South Australia

Many of these owls are now living in our urban habitat and are found throughout the outer suburbs of the Greater Sydney metropolitan area on the edge of bushland and reserves. There are breeding pairs living at Centennial Park, the Botanic Gardens and, also on the Northern Beaches.

They eat medium to large arboreal mammals, mainly Common Ringtail Possums, Brushtail possums and Greater Gliders. They also eat roosting birds, small rodents, marsupials and the occasional beetle. Hunting mostly at night and swooping down on prey from trees with their powerful feet and taloned claws.

To nest they need a large tree hollow, which they find in old growth trees. They like Angophoras but also use other trees. These trees are in continuing short supply, with more disappearing every day. They also need a forest canopy of dense leafy growth of trees

Holly Parsons from Bird Life Australia pictured with a Barn Owl

Holly was a wonderful charismatic speaker and is a passionate advocate for Powerful Owls.



and shrubs to spend their days and to rear their chicks in. Deforestation and habitat fragmentation continues in urban and rural areas in Australia, with only 16% of Australia now forested.

The soon to be parents, meet and court in the canopy of the forest. They spend time getting to know each other finally moving closer and feeding each other. Powerful Owls breed in Winter and the mother will lay 2 eggs. She will not leave the nest for 2 months while her mate brings food and feeds her. When the chicks hatch, they are two thirds the size of the mother. No wonder they need that big tree hollow. The chicks fledge in September / October and must spend time in the canopy before they manage good flight. They are white balls of fluff and during this time they gradually put on feather colour.

Populations of Powerful, Barn, Barking, Masked and Grass Owls have dramatically declined as the use of pesticides to protect homes and crops from rodents has increased. Owls and other creatures can be killed by ingesting poisoned rodents.

The current poisons used does not kill the rat immediately but builds up in a rat which is still moving around freely and an owl can take the rat that is moving.

Brodifacoum, the SGAR most frequently detected in the powerful owls, is the active ingredient in most retail rat poisons available throughout Australia. Although rodenticides are primarily used to control rodents, non-target possums, nightjars, owls, plovers may also consume this bait.

The anticoagulant poisons have been restricted from general sale in the US, Canada and European Union but can be bought freely in supermarkets and

hardware shops in Australia.

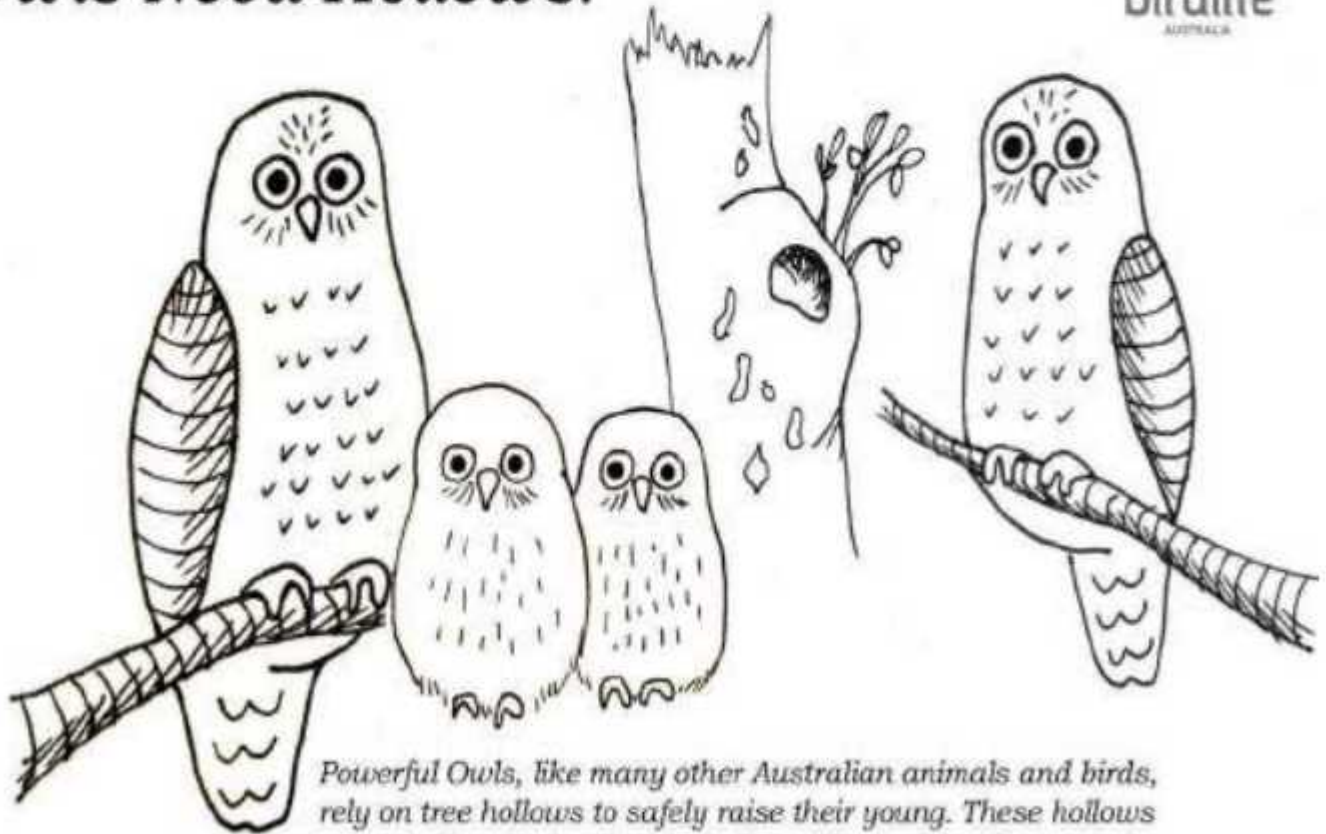
If you see Powerful owls do not come closer than 30 metres to their nests. You may get swooped. Do not use flash photography as this can cause them to abandon the nest.



www.birdlife.org.au

A picture for you to colour in:

Owls Need Hollows!



Powerful Owls, like many other Australian animals and birds, rely on tree hollows to safely raise their young. These hollows can take hundreds of years to form. We need to take care of our parks and woodlands so there will be plenty of these vital homes for future generations of birds and animals.

Volunteer News



With so many volunteers being inducted via Zoom over the past two years, it was really lovely to finally meet up with Site Monitoring Volunteer, Todd Halliday. Todd had some queries about site monitoring processes, so we headed out to Cromer Heights and had a look. While we were chatting I asked Todd about why he became a volunteer.

Why did you start volunteering at the AHO?

A few reasons. I admire the connection to country Aboriginal People have, and the inherent knowledge that exists. Secondly, much of the Aboriginal culture has been unappreciated since colonisation and I feel it is important that we preserve and record their rich heritage for future generations to appreciate. Finally, I enjoy wandering around the local bush and gain a new sense of appreciation for each site each time I visit, and how the country evolves through the seasons.

Meet Todd Halliday

What would you say to encourage others to volunteer, whether in the same role or elsewhere?

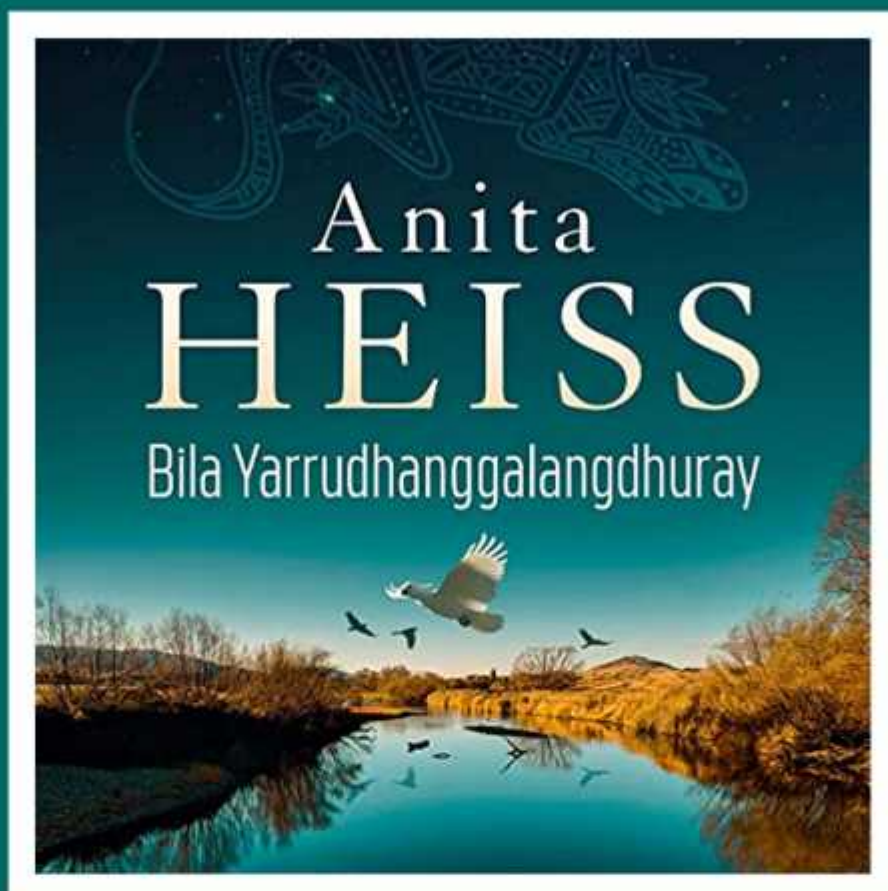
Being an Aboriginal Site Monitoring Volunteer provides a lot of flexibility, interest and purpose. It's fun exploring and discovering a new site and becoming connected with the land and sites over time.

If you'd like to become a Volunteer Site Monitor please contact the AHO. We'd love to hear from you! If you're already an Volunteer Site Monitor and would like to refresh your skills or have any questions about the sites you monitor, please get in touch. We are always happy to help.

Susan.whitby@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au



Book Review



This is a great read and worthwhile including in the Yarnupings Newsletter.

It won the 2022 NSW Premier's Indigenous Writers Prize:

"In *Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray*, Anita Heiss leads her readers to empathise with the human condition in a landscape brutalised by draconian ways and disaster. She brings human dimension to nineteenth-century history through the romantic tenderness between Wagadhaany and Yindymarra. Caring for each other and being as one with Country form the ethical bedrock of this novel, and Heiss' own love for her Wiradyuri people and Country shines through.

The language and tone of *Bila* is not complex, but the author weaves the narration and dialogue together so that worlds of bilingual communication perfectly illustrate the complexity of the challenges that members of the Wiradyuri Nation overcome.

So many nations and languages have disappeared. Heiss has carefully maintained an already-fragile hourglass in telling this story. Could we easily measure ourselves today in such circumstances? "

For more information see www.anitaheiss.com

Review by John Oliver



BUSH TUCKER GARDEN



NATIVE MINT SALT BUSH MACADAMIA CRUMB

The AHO Bush Tucker garden has been flourishing lately , with the native mint and salt bush looking especially fabulous. We gathered a handful of each, tied them together and let them hang upside down for a week or so to dry. We then pulled the leaves off and popped them in a blender. To the blender, we added macadamia nuts, good quality salt, freshly ground pepper, sesame seeds and a touch of chilli.

This crumb is delicious with fish, chicken, sprinkled over your veggies or simply with olive oil and bread.

If you've not tried native mint or salt bush, pop into the AHO Museum on Wednesdays. —9.30am to 3.30pm. We would be happy to gift you a sprig or two to add to your meals this spring.

There's no hard and fast recipe for this crumb, but here is a list of ingredients we used.

- Native mint—dried
- Salt bush—dried
- Macadamia nuts
- Salt
- Pepper
- Sesame Seeds
- Chilli (optional)



If you are able, head out to the many natural spaces that are spread throughout the Northern Beaches, North Sydney, Willoughby, Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai and Strathfield LGAs and experience the beauty on display.

