

YARNUPINGS

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE NEWSLETTER ISSUE #4 DECEMBER 2020



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beaches
council





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ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE NEWSLETTER

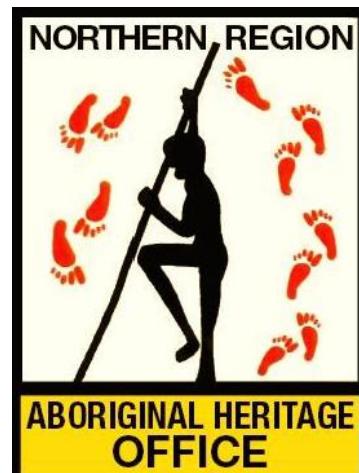
ISSUE #4 DECEMBER 2020

Welcome to the final issue of Yarnupings for 2020

We made it! Crikey, what a year! The AHO staff have been working from home since March. We will be heading back to the Freshwater office in January with a reopening of the Museum. We are very excited to be able to have you drop by and have a yarn. Special mention goes to all our amazing volunteers who continued monitoring sites throughout the entire year.

This issue provides thoughts and reflections of the AHO staff, highlights two of our fantastic volunteers and provides some ideas for your summer leisure time.

Please enjoy the fourth and final edition of Yarnupings for 2020.



The AHO Team— Dave, Karen, Phil, Susan, and Samaka.

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Strathfield Survey

The AHO has been busy updating the Aboriginal sites in the Strathfield LGA. This saw archaeologist, Susan Whitby and Samaka Isaacs head out to examine the old river terraces that are still visible next to the Cook's River. An open artefact scatter was found in 2018, and it was great to walk over the landscape and discuss the Aboriginal history of the Wangal people.

There is evidence of the Wangal clan living alongside the Cook's River for around 10,000 yrs. Known as "Wanne" the lands belonging to the Wangal clan extended from Darling Harbour to the Balmain Peninsula.

Bennelong is the most well known member of the Wangal clan.

Breathe and relax

This serene image was taken at sunrise at North Curl Curl rock pool.

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.



Do you have a photo you'd like to share?

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.



Museum News

During the Covid period the museum closed its doors due to safety concerns. However, our online services are still available through our website and via email.

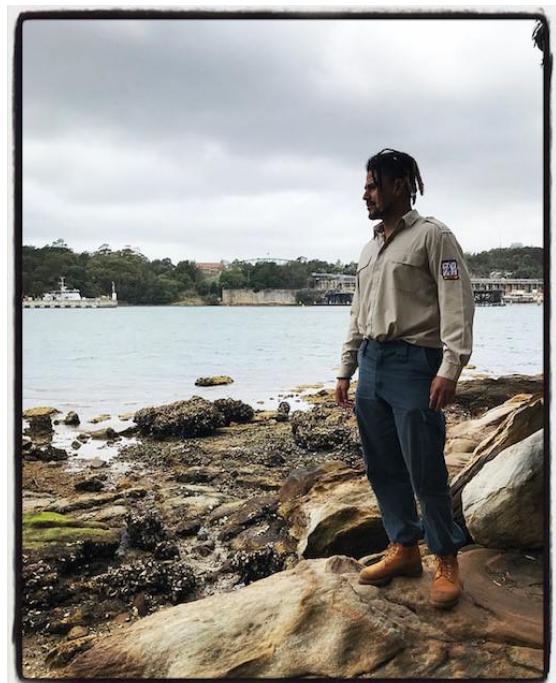
The AHO has participated in a television series highlighting the area of North Sydney's rich Indigenous culture before settlement. The series goes into the lifestyle of the Cammeraygal people who were harbour dwelling people. Karen and myself take a walk through the Berry Island track as well as Balls point to show significant sites and their possible meanings and relation to the local Indigenous lifestyle. You will be able to access this resource through ten play!

<https://10play.com.au/stuff-everyone-should-know-about-australia>

The Pandemic has also gave me time to go out into



By Samaka Isaacs



field with some of our resident archaeologists, learn about their work with sites, and site management. There are many challenges involved with this work including tough terrain, weather and lack of fitness on my behalf! Learning about these sites around Sydney helps to create a plan for making sure they survive for many years to come. The main way to save these sites is through education and awareness. With an already growing volunteer program, I urge you to come down for a yarn to explore the rich Indigenous culture in your own backyard!

Volunteer News

Meet Emily Fewster

Emily has been a Volunteer Site Monitor since 2015. She always submits quality reports which really contribute to the preservation and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage across the Northern Beaches, Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney, Willoughby and Strathfield Council areas. Below, Emily talks about her volunteering experience with the AHO.

I am a science teacher and in 2015 I was researching a science lesson for my students about ancient Aboriginal astronomy and became fascinated to learnt about an “Emu in the Sky” carving on the Northern Beaches. In the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park is an ancient Aboriginal rock engraving of an emu that is oriented in such a way so as to line up with the “Emu in the Sky” nebula where it appears in the Milky Way at the time when real-life emus are laying their eggs. The suggestion is that it was created as an ancient star map or astronomical calendar to mark significant seasonal events.

This really piqued my interest and led me to join up with the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) as a volunteer in order to get to know more about the amazing Aboriginal culture and history that surrounds the area I live in.

My volunteer role has been to monitor one of the many Aboriginal Heritage Sites on the Northern Beaches. This involves visiting a beautiful, 2.2 metre long kangaroo rock engraving at least twice a year and

record observations and photographs of its condition then log a brief report on the AHO website. Dawn and dusk (or after rain too) are the best times to visit engravings as the light is low and shadows cast allow the carving to be seen at their best.

It is a great way to volunteer as it gets me out on my mountain bike, followed by a short walk through the bush, visiting a very peaceful and special place. These sites are under threat every day from development, vandalism and natural erosion. The sites cannot be replaced and once they are destroyed, they are gone forever and that motivates me to keep visiting across the seasons to keep an eye on things.”



Volunteer News Continued...

Meet Bill Chandler



Bill Chandler, Volunteer Site monitor, Aboriginal heritage Office (AHO)

Tell us a little about your volunteer role.

My volunteer role is a site monitor—our job is to check up on the condition of Aboriginal heritage sites and look for graffiti, rubbish—that sort of thing. We report back on our allocated sites and monitor for any change.

It's a great way to learn about how Aboriginal people would have lived in this area. Not only that but it's a lot of fun. We're given our briefing pack and set off with a backpack full of food and water plus a compass so we can navigate our way to the site.

If you would like to become a Volunteer Site Monitor, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Whitby on 0435 643 205 or email

Susan.whitby
@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au

International Volunteer Day was Saturday 5 December 2020. Northern Beaches Council highlighted our very own Volunteer Site Monitor, Bill Chandler.

He talks about his volunteering experience and why he became a site monitor for the AHO.

Why did you start volunteering at the AHO?

My wife Jane and I have been volunteering at the AHO for the last five months. We love bushwalking and getting out into nature.

We both really respect Aboriginal culture and love learning more about it so we thought supporting the AHO through volunteering would be a great fit. Jane and I also love learning new skills while staying active and being out in the fresh air.

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

Go for it! You get so much out of it and feel a real sense of giving back.



A Year of Change

By Karen Smith

The AHO Education Program began working from home in late March, as all our personal universes changed. All AHO Education program walks and visits to schools were cancelled, as was NAIDOC Week, due to the vulnerability of the Aboriginal Community.

During this time, we all learnt different ways of communicating through online platforms. By mid-May, when some schools were reconvening, the AHO Education program began to reach classrooms with online presentations. The AHO gave Reconciliation Week online presentations before the theme changed. 60 Screens of large groups logged in.

Season of Change

How I love the changing weather of October & November, the moving of the wind around all the compass points, the showers and storms. The growing humidity. It was as if these winds were blowing the past seasons away and bringing new life and fresh water to Country and to us.

The Guwa (Wind) came and then the Guwara (High Wind)

Bayinmarri (Cool Very) or Badiyalang (South Wind) The wind went to the South

Gunyama (gunyamara – stink) (SW Wind)– the wind swung South West

Then the Walan (rain) came

Then the Marungal and Mungi came (thunder and lightning)

Then the Walan Yilaba (rain pouring)

Buruwan (North Wind) – the wind turned North

Dulugal (NW Wind) – the wind turned North West

Buruwi (East Wind) - the wind turned East

Language from 'The Sydney Language' Jakelin Troy

Bush walks revealed the heathland in full flower, a time of beauty, sweetness and nectar. The grass plants seeding up, Banksias bursting. Country recovering slowly from drought.

IN THIS TOGETHER – What Does it Mean

- Reconciliation is a journey for all Australians –

- as individuals
- families,
- communities,
- organisations
- and importantly as a nation



- At the heart of this journey are relationships between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Online Reconciliation Week



Biala Girls Mackellar High NAIDOC Week



First Walk after isolation.
Bush walks for 5 or 7 adults, began in September.

A Year of Change

Always Was, Always Will Be.

Always Was, Always Will Be. recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.

We are spiritually and culturally connected to this country.

This country was criss-crossed by generations of brilliant Nations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were Australia's first explorers, first navigators, first engineers, first farmers, first botanists, first scientists, first diplomats, first astronomers and first artists.

Australia has the world's oldest oral stories. The First Peoples engraved the world's first maps, made the earliest paintings of ceremony and invented unique technologies. We built and engineered structures - structures on Earth - predating well-known sites such as the Egyptian Pyramids and Stonehenge.

Our adaptation and intimate knowledge of Country enabled us to endure climate change, catastrophic droughts and rising sea levels.

Always Was, Always Will Be

Acknowledges that hundreds of Nations and our cultures covered this continent. All were managing the land - the biggest estate on earth - to sustainably provide for their future. Through ingenious land management systems like fire stick farming, we transformed the harshest habitable continent into a land of bounty.

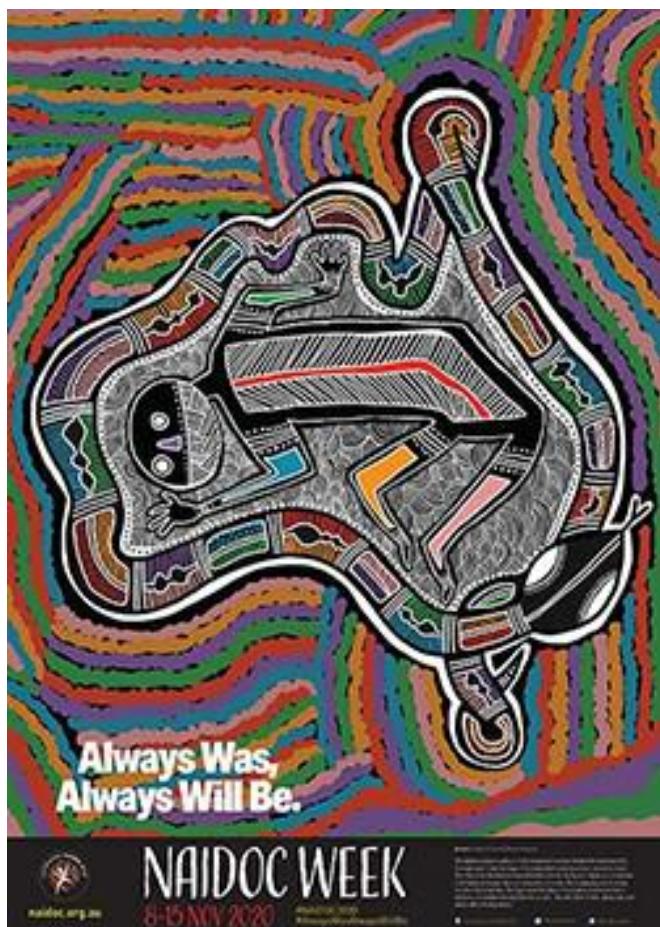
NAIDOC Week 2020 acknowledges and celebrates that our nation's story didn't begin with documented European contact whether in 1770 or 1606 - with the arrival of the Dutch on the western coast of the Cape York Peninsula.

The very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nations peoples. Our coastal Nations watched and interacted with at least 36 contacts made by Europeans prior to 1770. Many of them resulting in the charting of the northern, western and southern coastlines – of our lands and our waters.

For us, this nation's story began at the dawn of time.

NAIDOC 2020 invites all Australians to embrace the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations.

Reference: <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>





ENDANGERED
EASTERN BANKSIA
HABITAT



These species were badly burnt in the bushfire on North Head

Banksia Aemula

Banksia Ericafolia

Banksia Integrifolia

Banksia Marginata

Banksia Oblongifolia

Banksia Robur

Banksia Serrata

Banksia Spinulosa

Hakea teretifolia

Hakea dactyloides

Hakea gibbosa

A Year of Change—by Karen Smith

Celebrating NAIDOC at this time of flowering and food was a delight. The AHO was able to share the honey scent of the flowering *Kunzea ambigua* melaleucas, the ‘bush blueberry’, Dianella, the new leaves of the Sarsaparilla vine, the delight of the flannel flowers and many heathland species. I call it the ‘sweet time’.



Flannel Flower

*Grevillea seracia**Grevillea speciosa*

Fringed Iris

Support our local Artists and Crafts people this Christmas. North Head Sanctuary Foundation sells beautiful botanical cards from artist Julie Holcombe with a percentage for the sale of these cards going to the North Head Sanctuary Foundation, helping to protect our endemic bushland.

Perhaps seek out one or more of these beautiful endemic plants for your garden or for a fitting present.



My paintings focus on Australian native plants endemic to the Sydney region.

Whilst acknowledging the long scientific and aesthetic tradition of botanical art I hope that my work might, in some small way, help add to the growing awareness of the unique biodiversity that is right on our doorstep in Sydney and which is at risk of being lost forever.

Julie Holcombe

(formerly Julie Nettleton)

[HTTPS://JULIEHOLCOMBE.COM/](https://julieholcombe.com/)



Banksia ericifolia, Heath-leaved Banksia

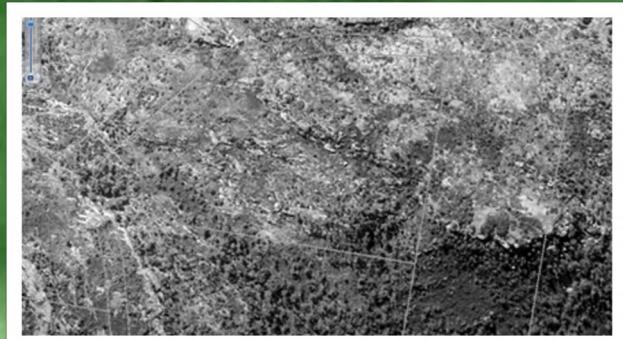
DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

This cheery phrase is used in environmental circles to explain why even small impacts can contribute to the demise of a functioning ecosystem. For Councils and National Parks with small remnant bushland areas, this is an ongoing concern. For bush regenerators who are working across different levels of disturbance and weed infestation, this is a daily consideration. How do you protect and restore the integrity of small areas, especially for animals and plants that need a minimum size area of functioning habitat to survive, when you are faced with ongoing pressures and impacts? And if Aboriginal sites are generally in better condition deep in larger reserves, what implications are there for managing sites in an urban context?

An important matter to assess when viewing new impacts is *edge effects*. This ecological term describes influences on animals and plants that result when one habitat is joined to another. In a normal natural system it looks at how species adapt, for example, plants that exploit sunnier areas at the border of forest and grassland. However, we are more interested here in human induced edge effects. This is a consideration of the perimeter to area ratio. Where the ratio changes, the distance of any part of the remaining area to the perimeter or edge is reduced. Another way of looking at it is as *fragmentation*.

The adjacent aerial photos show an area of the Northern Beaches. The AHO has been monitoring Aboriginal sites in the area for nearly 20 years and has noticed the increase in tracks and infrastructure. The 1943 image (a bit before our time!) shows complete bushland. In 2001 when we first attempted to revisit recorded sites a fire trail was already there. A few years later power lines were put through and a new access track. Narrow walking tracks have been around for ages. Then in 2018 the mountain bikers turned up at this location. They can be very industrious and within a very short time you can have hundreds of metres of illegal tracks that include serious earthworks.

By Phil Hunt



1943 SixMaps



October 2009 - old and new tracks (NearMap)



December 2020 - many new bike tracks (NearMap)

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS—PHIL HUNT

Edge effects from new tracks create multiple problems for resident species and the humans charged with their management. Tracks are vectors for weeds that prefer more open, compacted ground. Tracks can change the hydrology, not only causing erosion but also diverting water that would normally slowly seep in and recharge the soil. Tracks can increase access for predators (native and feral) and reduce refuge areas for prey species. There is a loss of overall habitat at the edges and new influences can extend quite far into the adjacent ecosystem. The more tracks, the greater the fragmentation and the more the perimeter to area ratio changes to the detriment of each remaining bushland area.

This is equally relevant for Aboriginal heritage. One of the main reasons why the policy to keep the locations of sites confidential is still in force is because we already know that the sites that receive more unmanaged visitation are in poorer condition. There is generally more graffiti (painted, drawn, scratched) and more rubbish. Campfires and damage to adjacent vegetation is more common. Informal tracks are more obvious and they become more pronounced after dry periods, encouraging even more visits.

The term *death by a thousand cuts* becomes truly tragic when an assessment of significance is called for. The many incremental impacts accumulate over time under-

mining the condition of a place. If a rock art site has graffiti, it is considered less significant than a similar shelter that is graffiti-free. If an engraving site is frequently visited, often has rubbish around it, is wearing away and the platform is damaged, it will be adversely compared to a pristine example. The more pristine sites are further from tracks, not signposted on the internet and rarely visited. They are, in effect, isolated. Not isolated from natural impacts, like sun and wind, wasps building nests, wallabies looking for shelter or brush turkeys digging for food. Isolated from us – the ones who've felt adversely isolated this year.

There is often an arm-wrestle over the issue of giving people access to new areas of reserves and parks. You will usually find that those responsible for the upkeep of them are the most reluctant to support any further opening up of bushland. They prefer a few areas that are well managed and where impacts are controlled. This is so that the most precious things we most want to protect for future generations remain safely cocooned amid the rest of the bushland and heritage that we also need to keep. Sometimes isolation is the only solution to the most difficult challenges.



Stone artefact at eroding track edge, Northern Beaches

Book Review

Tell Me Why - the story of my life and my music by Archie Roach

(Published 2019 by Simon & Schuster)

If you are looking for a great Christmas holiday read, I can highly recommend Archie Roach's recent autobiography "Tell Me Why – the story of my life and music".

In his typically honest and direct style, the ARIA hall of famer and national living treasure, tells his beautiful and often heart rending life story.

The story explores his theft as a small boy from his family and placement with a loving, well intentioned foster family, the Roaches, who provided him with a warm, loving suburban Melbourne upbringing. He talks lovingly of his hard working, working class foster parents who are immigrants from the UK with little understanding of the real story of what had happened to Aboriginal families and children in this country.

Then it moves to his discovery of his real, Aboriginal family and realization that he is a part of the stolen generation. He shares the confusion and struggle that caused him to leave his foster home as a teenager to find his parents and siblings

This leads to often difficult life on the streets in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, but also to the development of a deep empathy for the many Aboriginals forced onto the streets through circumstance, trauma and the impacts of colonization.

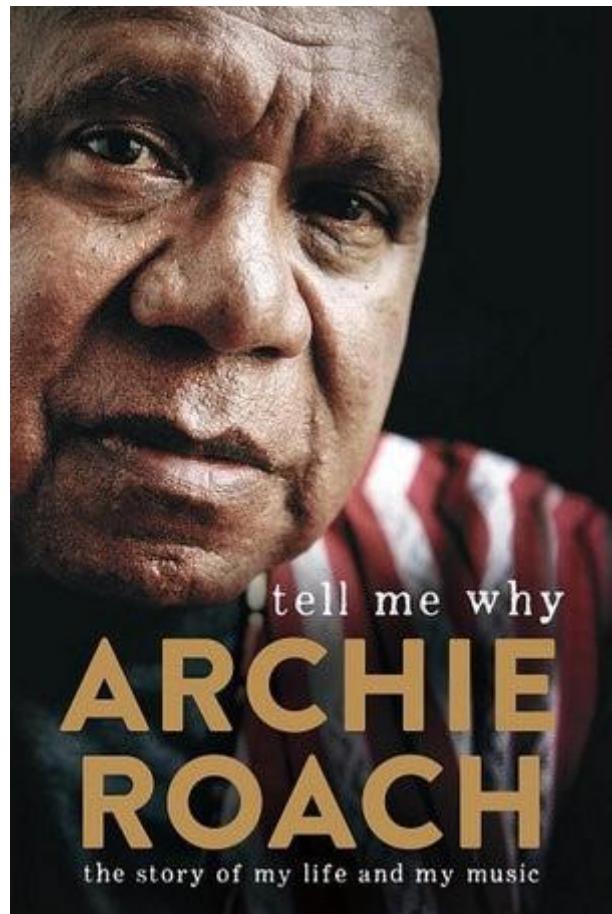
In this unlikely setting he finds the love of his life, who helps him to heal, discover his voice, his identity and ultimately his gift for music and storytelling. Family follows and Roach explores the challenges of parenting and partnering when you have been stolen from your own family.

Through this long journey, it is clear Roach finds identity, meaning and a strong connection to his people and his country, becoming a voice and a leader in the fight for justice.

Tell Me Why is the beautiful and deeply moving story of one of our country's greatest singer/songwriters and activists.

Take the time over the holidays to read, reflect and learn from the life wisdom of this wonderful man.

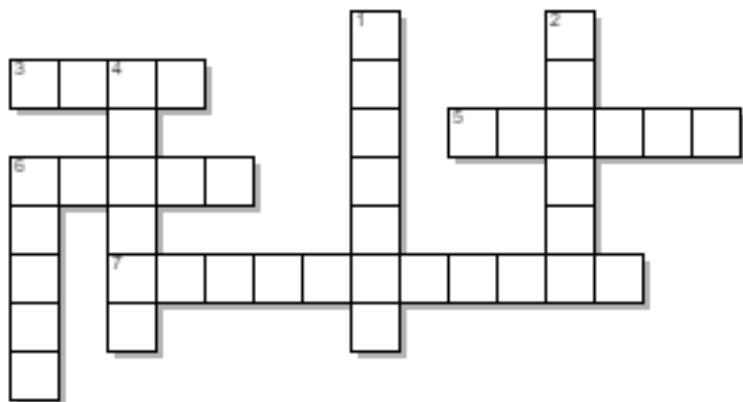
Paul Griffiths



Archie Roach was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame in November 2020. His incredible career began 30 years ago with his first album, *Charcoal Lane*. 10 albums, countless tours and awards have seen Archie Roach become an Australian musical icon. Make sure you enjoy his music over the Festive Season.



Crossword



ACROSS

- 3 The word for Wind in the Sydney Language
- 5 There are this many rock art regions in Australia.
- 6 The Wangal people's land was known as
- 7 The Aboriginal artist inducted in the ARIA Hall of Fame

DOWN

- 1 Eastern Suburbs _____ Scrub
- 2 The week that celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 4 The name of the people who lived in Strathfield
- 6 The word for rain in the Sydney Language





Quiz

1. Sydney Basin rock engravings are characterised by which style?

2. What was the title of Archie Roach's first album?

3. How many rock art regions are in Australia?

4. What's the name of an important rock art site in Wollemi National Park?

5. Swinton's Shelter is within which State Forest?

6. Name one critically endangered ecological community found across the Sydney Hawkesbury regions?

Merry



Christmas

ADD SOME BUSH TUCKER ELEMENTS TO YOUR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR. FROM NATIVE MINT IN YOUR PRAWN AND MANGO SALAD TO HIBISCUS FLOWERS DELICATELY DECORATING YOUR FESTIVE DRINK OR A FINGER LIME CURD ATOP A SLICE OF CRUSTY SOURDOUGH BREAD.

BUSH TUCKER



TUCKER

KU-RING-GAI WILDFLOWER GARDEN, ST IVES HAS A RANGE OF DELICIOUS BUSH TUCKER FOODS THAT WILL MAKE A GREAT PRESENT FOR LOVED ONES.