



Understanding the cultural values and uses of Worimi Sea Country

MAPPING ARTWORKS



Introduction

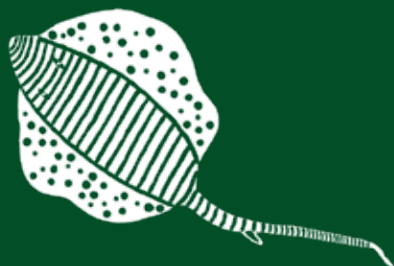


Worimi people have maintained a close connection with Land and Sea Country for many generations. When Aboriginal people use the English word 'country' it is meant in a special way. For Aboriginal people, culture, nature and land are all linked. Country takes in everything within the landscape; landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. This diverse area has sustained Worimi people for thousands of years and is deeply interconnected in our cultural makeup. Customs, beliefs and the ongoing cultural practices of Aboriginal people are shaped by this connection.

This interconnected relationship between people and country is maintained by continued practices and ongoing cultural education of our youth. Respect for country, and the cultural connections with country, has ensured personal and communal needs for generations while not disrupting the ecological balance of the environment or its resources.

Aboriginal people's continued use of country and its resources have been maintained through traditionally structured lores that guide activities, dictate cultural principles for species, and govern the interactions, collection and use of natural resources. These cultural management strategies provide protection for the environment, while promoting the continued and sustainable use of its resources.

There are many tangible and non-tangible cultural systems that guide traditional Aboriginal people's management of country and its resources. The following outlines a few of these elements and shows how Worimi people incorporate these into the management of Land and Sea Country of the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park and Hunter Marine Park areas.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Melissa Lilley

Melissa Lilley is a proud Yankunytjatjara woman from Central Australia, who is married into the Worimi people of Port Stephens. Melissa has been producing artworks for 30 years and has been influenced by Elders and Aboriginal artists from various Communities. Taught to share her culture through interpretive art, Melissa has been able to respectfully create artworks that tell story through design. Melissa's artistic designs portray a vision of respecting and protecting the environment and identify the cultural values and connections that Worimi People have with Sea Country. She enjoys sharing her knowledge and that of other Aboriginal Communities with the wider world, and insists it is the reason she continues her artworks. Melissa uses a mixture of traditional and contemporary artwork methods while preserving cultural principles of each Community she works with.



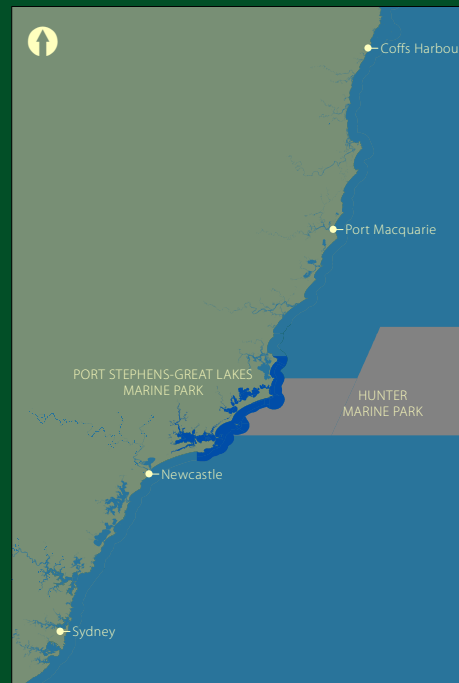
Aunty Debbie Dates

Aunty Debbie Dates is a proud Aboriginal woman and a recognised traditional Elder from Worimi Country. She has been producing cultural artworks for many years and is passionate about preserving our traditional stories and culture through Aboriginal design. Aunty Debbie interprets and converts our traditional Worimi stories into artworks which in turn is used to teach cultural connections and values to our youth. Her artistic designs illustrate the connections between animals, people and place and show the importance of culturally significant species in a cultural landscape. Aunty Debbie enjoys sharing her cultural knowledge through artwork and believes it is essential in illustrating Worimi people's values of Sea Country.

Song-lines



The song-line painting above depicts species of cultural significance and illustrates the interconnectivity between people and place. Song-lines extend from far inland mountain (balgarr) areas out into deep ocean (garuwa). To Worimi people, song-lines are navigation routes that link significant sites across country including land, sea and sky. The song-lines have been passed on from elder to elder for many thousands of years and can be seen in the song, dance, artworks and movement of Aboriginal people across landscapes. Song-lines explain the lores by which Aboriginal people have lived, provide guidance of seasonal movement and resource use and create links between country and its species.



Song-lines travel along the whole (and overlapping parts) of the NSW coast, and create connections between language groups and different tribal areas. Some of our most highly prized animals (resources) live across wide areas of Sea Country and require inter-tribal management of species to ensure sustainability of stocks for future generations. An example of this is the mullet, which has provided a staple food source and sustained our people (up and down the coast) for many generations. As the mullet migrate north to spawn, they pass through many different Aboriginal tribes/language groups, requiring co-management of this species to ensure other tribes have access to this resource. Many tribes sharing and managing one resource.



Barayalbu - The 'Big Song' © Melissa Lilley (Mombie), 2020



Designated or listed Aboriginal Places:

- A** Soldiers Point
- B** Birubi Point
- C** Dark Point
- D** Buladeleh Mountain

Identified towns and their Gathang place names:

- 1** Baara - Old Bar
- 2** Bakanbakat - Gloucester
- 3** Bangwaal - Bungwahl
- 4** Bindayima - Pindimar Bay
- 5** Birubi - Birubi Point/Beach
- 6** Buti buti - Booti Booti
- 7** Daalii - Tahlee
- 8** Daan.gaari - Tuncurry
- 9** Danilbaa - Tanilba
- 10** Djarii - Taree
- 11** Garuwa - Karuah
- 12** Gayagaruwa - South Brother Mountain
- 13** Ginduwi - Upper Myall River
- 14** Girriwa - Gearywah (Black head)
- 15** Gulanggulak - Coolongolook
- 16** Gupanuk - Coopersnook
- 17** Malabula - Mallabula
- 18** Nabiyak - Nabiac
- 19** Wabigung - Wobbegong Bay
- 20** Walanggayith - Wallingat
- 21** Wambuynbaa - Forster
- 22** Yahuu - Yahoo Island (Wallis Lake)

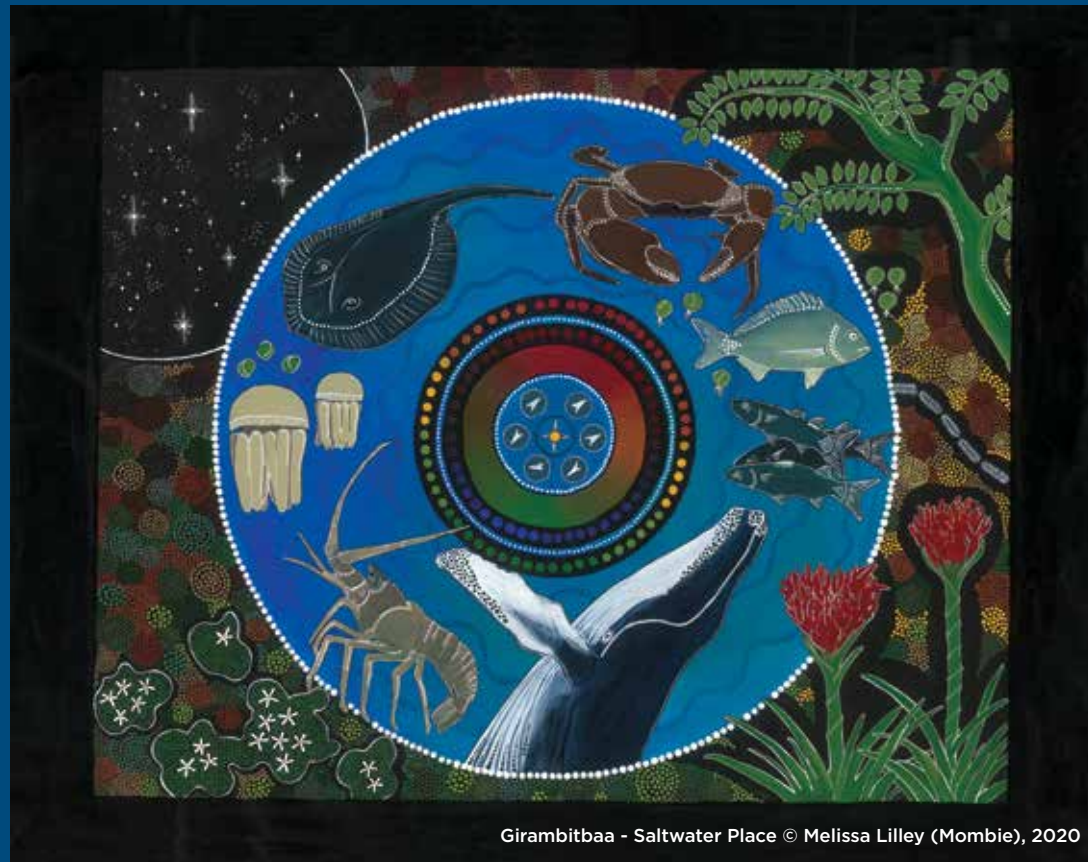


Worimi Seasonal Cultural Calendar

The Sea Country painting illustrates Worimi people's cultural calendar and shows the relationship between species of significance and elements that coincide with resource presence or availability. Wind, sea temperature, land and air temperature, native plant or animal lifecycle and even cycles or the moon and stars were used to inform of resource availability and associated cultural activities.

For example:

- the flowering of the Gymea Lily indicated the migration of whales along the East Coast at the start of winter;
- the blossoming of the white flower indicated the presence of lobsters in the water;
- when the hairy grubs come down from the trees and walk in line on the ground was indication that the mullet were schooling and preparing for their annual migration north; and
- when the Southern Cross was at its lowest point in the sky various tribes and clans travelled to the east coast to meet and share resources.

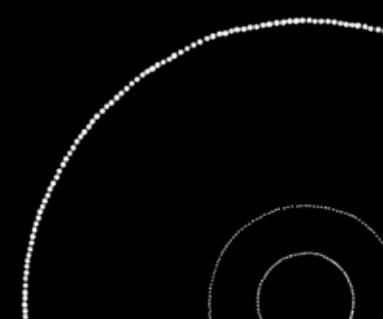


Girambitbaa - Saltwater Place © Melissa Lilley (Mombie), 2020



The table shows the wind direction, water temperature and air temperature cycles as depicted in the circles.

Date	Dominant Wind	Water Temperature	Air Temperature
January	E/NE	23°C	27°C
February	E/NE	23°C	26.5°C
March	E/NE/NW	23°C	25.5°C
April	E/NE/NW	22°C	23°C
May	W/SW/NW	21°C	20°C
June	W/SW/NW	20°C	18°C
July	W SW	19°C	17°C
August	W SW	18°C	18°C
September	SW NW	18°C	20°C
October	SW NW	19°C	22°C
November	NE/SE	20°C	24°C
December	NW/SE	21-25°C	26°C



Totems



The artwork below illustrates Sea Country animals of cultural significance or those identified as totems. It is interesting to note the diversity of totems and the ongoing assignment of responsibilities for Aboriginal individuals (and communities/families) to look after a particular animal or species. This shows a cultural form of environmental management which ensured that species were utilised by some and protected by others. Also note the pips in the background of the painting. This is another resource that is highly culturally significant to Aboriginal people.



Buna Wambul - Sea Beach © Deborah Dates, 2020

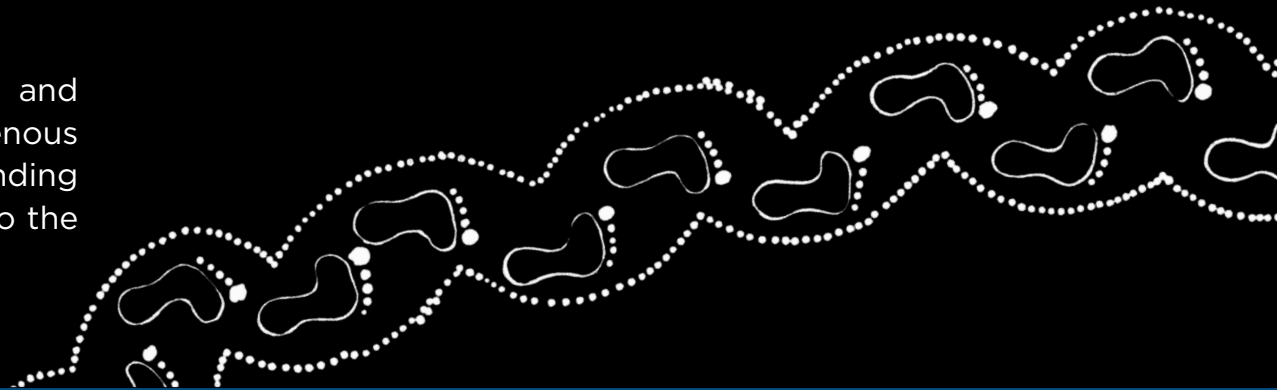
In Worimi communities there are ceremonies and cultural practices that create links between Aboriginal people and the environment. One of the main cultural systems that influences connection to country is the assigning of totems for individuals, communities and Aboriginal Nations. Totems create a form of kinship connection between the environment and an Aboriginal person and promote the protection and management of special species. Knowing and understanding a person's totem provides insight into their connection to a language group, other people, country and the environment. It is the responsibility of Worimi individuals to care for their totems which act as a protective mechanism for the preservation of species. Some Worimi people may have several totems which may come from landscape features, plants, animals or even weather. Some examples of these Worimi totems include the grey shark (guyiwan), red kangaroo (waparr barrang) and dolphin (guparr). The Worimi also had gender totems which symbolised the solidarity of the sexes. The men's totem was the tiny bat (kulangulang) and the women's was the treecreeper (dilmun).

The Sea Country painting below illustrates the interconnectivity of species and the environment. Land and Sea Country work as one, and species utilise features of both depending on their specific needs. Whether is be feeding sites in open waters, or breeding sites on nearby Islands, species utilise benefits where it can be found.



Garuwa - Sea Country © Deborah Dates, 2020

The NSW Government and Parks Australia recognises and respects the ongoing cultural responsibilities of Indigenous people to care for Sea Country and the deep understanding and experience that Indigenous people can contribute to the management of Australian marine parks.



Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park

Port Stephens–Great Lakes Marine Park extends from Cape Hawke near Forster south to Birubi Beach at the northern end of Stockton Beach. The marine park is approximately 980km² and includes:

- offshore waters to the three nautical mile limit of NSW waters;
- all of Port Stephens, the Karuah River, the Myall River, Myall and Smiths Lakes, and their creeks and tributaries to the tidal limit.

The marine park contains a diverse range of habitats, including beaches, seagrass beds, mangroves, saltmarsh and open waters, which all support distinct groups of plants and animals. Its diverse marine life includes many dolphin, turtle, fish, invertebrate, seabird and seaweed species, and threatened species such as the Gould’s Petrel, Little Tern, Grey nurse Shark, Black Rockcod and Green Turtle.

The marine park offers quality recreational fishing and productive commercial fishing grounds, aquaculture, many popular scuba diving sites, and regionally significant tourism activities such as whale and dolphin watching.

The Department recognises that the Aboriginal people of NSW have a continuing custodial relationship with the land, sea and their resources. This extends to maintaining spiritual links to and caring for Country. Cultural use of fisheries resources is an integral part of the Aboriginal relationship with Country.

The Worimi People have long standing spiritual and cultural interests and traditions in the land and waters of the marine park. A number of significant Aboriginal cultural and spiritual sites have been located within and adjacent to the marine park. These include middens, burials, scarred trees, ceremonial bora rings and various open camping sites for cultural and family gatherings.

Hunter Marine Park

The Hunter Marine Park extends from the New South Wales state water boundary to approximately 100 kilometres offshore. The marine park covers 6257km², with depths ranging from 15 metres to 6000 metres, from shallow shelf rocky reefs out to the deep ocean.

Part of a migratory pathway, tuna, albatross and humpback whales feast here on their travels, benefitting from upwellings of nutrient-rich waters where ocean currents meet the canyons. The area provides habitat for the Indo Pacific Spotted Bottlenose Dolphin and seabirds such as the Wedge Tailed Shearwater and Southern Giant Petrel.

The park is one of the few places the threatened Grey nurse Shark calls home and has been regularly sighted on the Outer Gibber Reef. Over 50 of the fish species that live in this area are endemic; they aren’t found anywhere else.

Fishing is a significant activity in the region, and includes commercial fishing, recreational and charter fishing and game fishing tournaments.

Parks Australia acknowledges that Indigenous people have been sustainably using and managing their Sea Country, including areas now in marine parks, for thousands of years and is committed to building partnerships with traditional owners and Indigenous people with responsibilities for Sea Country.

Mandaygang Biiwa: Big Mob Mullet



Mandaygang Biiwa: Big Mob Mullet
© Melissa Lilley (Mombie), 2019



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For more information please visit:

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