

Cultural approaches to WISE USE OF WETLANDS – past, present and future

المناهج الثقافية للاستخدام الحكيم للأراضي الرطبة - الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل

Approches culturelles de l'UTILISATION RATIONNELLE DES ZONES HUMIDES - passées, présentes et futures

Enfoque cultural al USO RACIONAL DE LOS HUMEDALES- pasado, presente y futuro

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BUDJ BIM CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Gunditjmara Country, Australia

THE WORLD'S OLDEST AQUACULTURE SYSTEM: AN INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPE

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is located in the traditional Country of the Gunditjmara in south-eastern Australia. It contains one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems. Over a period of at least 6,600 years the Gunditjmara created, manipulated and modified local hydrological regimes and ecological systems. They utilised the abundant local volcanic rock to construct channels, weirs and dams and manage water flows in order to systematically trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eel – *Anguilla australis*) and support enhancement of other food resources



Top: Lake-wide view of Tai Rak (Lake Condah)
Below: Tyson Lovett-Murray holding a large kooyang (eel)

GUNDITJMARA VALUES

"Gunditjmara Country has many stories stretching back more than 30,000 years. Over time, Gunditjmara Elders and people have told stories of Ancestral Creation Beings revealing themselves in the landscape; erupting volcanoes; tsunamis; mountains forming; sea Country creeping up onto the land; rivers changing; the relationship between people, animals and plants; abundant natural resources; settlement and aquaculture; the arrival of other people to Gunditjmara Country; and of our ongoing spirituality and well being."
(Damein Bell, 2009)

• Image: Brolgas nesting on Tae Rak (Lake Condah)



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A 'TWO-WAY' MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: Credible traditional and scientific knowledge and practices

All of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is Aboriginal-owned and/or managed and is managed to respect the customary and legal rights and obligations of the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners. The landscape is protected and managed through an adaptive and participatory management framework of overlapping and integrated customary, governance, legislative and policy approaches.

The Gunditjmara Traditional Owners apply customary knowledge and scientific approaches through two management regimes: a co-operative arrangement with the Government of the State of Victoria; and Indigenous ownership of large and significant areas of their traditional lands and waters. The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape management system is established through the 2015 *Ngootyoong Gunditj, Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan*. A team of Budj Bim Rangers, funded through the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy program, manage, conserve and protect the heritage values of the wetland landscape in accordance with property management plans.

Image: 'Drone-view' of a kooyang (eel) holding pond (centre-right), and modified water channel with stone weirs.



ORGANISATION INFORMATION

The Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was established in 2005 and – following the 2007 native title determination, holds and manages the native title rights of the Gunditjmara. The corporation is a Registered Native Title Body Corporate under the Australian *Native Title Act 1993*. *Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation*, established in 1991, provides services to the local Aboriginal communities in and around the far south-west of Victoria. Together, these representative community groups are responsible for the care and safeguarding of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.



Images: Budj Bim Rangers working on Country