

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Assessment for the Yering Billabongs Project

Summary Report



Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung
Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation



Wominjeka yearmann koondee biik Wurundjeri balluk

Welcome to Country

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Foreword

Warning: This document may contain images of deceased persons.

This overview document presents the results of a Cultural Values Assessment for the Yering Billabongs Project, produced by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for the Yarra Ranges Council.

This overview summarises a comprehensive assessment to document and identify the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values of the Yering stretch of the Yarra River.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are the Traditional Owners of Yering. During 2022, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation) environmental management team, the Narrap Unit, were engaged by the Yarra Ranges Council to document a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Assessment of the Yarra Ranges Council's Yering Billabongs Project area.

The assessment demonstrated that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung occupation, cultural practice and resource exploitation was extensive and sustained over time at Yering.

Features of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's connection to their Country are found at Yering. The landscape contains archaeological places, ecological diversity, records of cultural practice and a historical narrative of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and colonial settler interactions.

The results of the assessment provided the basis to assert Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung recommendations to appropriately protect, manage and embed the cultural values of this landscape into the Yering Billabongs Project.

“Undertaking a cultural values assessment at Yering opened a window into the past and provided a meaningful and tangible connection to the cultural history of the site. The project team pays our respect to a resilient and determined people, and offers our gratitude to this generous sharing of knowledge that has so enriched the project. We look forward to working with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to honour the enclosed recommendations.”

— Yarra Ranges Council.

Yering Billabongs Project

The Yering Billabongs Project proposes to restore 100 hectares of the Yarra River floodplain at Yering to connect the sites of Spadonis Nature Conservation Reserve and Murrup Brarn Yarra Flats billabongs.



Image: View of Yering beyond Spadonis Reserve.

Objectives

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation Outcomes

Improve water quality of stormwater entering Yarra River from the Olinda, Stringybark and Muddy Creeks.	YRC and Narrap Unit collaborative decision making.
Restore wetlands, riparian condition and floodplain connectivity of the lower Olinda, Stringybark and Muddy Creeks.	<p>Restore habitat for creation ancestor and other culturally significant species: birds, bats, gliders; restore appropriate ecological diversity.</p> <p>On-Country knowledge and practice: enabling the Narrap Unit Rangers to apply meaningful land management.</p> <p>Cultural burning as an effective land management tool.</p>
Secure an extension to the Murrup Brarn (Yarra Streamside Reserve) billabongs at the gateway to Yarra Glen, including the flow path connecting the billabongs to the Yarra.	<p>Provide habitat and food for creation ancestor and other culturally significant species: birds, bats, gliders; restore appropriate ecological diversity.</p> <p>On-Country knowledge and practice: enabling the Narrap Unit Rangers to apply meaningful land management.</p> <p>Cultural burning as an effective land management tool.</p>
Create two iconic billabong reserves – steppingstones for habitat, recreation and cultural heritage – in the lower rural reach of the Yarra.	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung interpretation.</p> <p>Woiwurrung naming of Spadonis Reserve / new wetlands area.</p>

Table: Yering Billabongs Project Objectives and Outcomes.

“ It gives me a huge sense of pride being a Narrap Ranger knowing the work we do on Country makes a difference. My spiritual connection to Country as a Wurundjeri man only gets stronger knowing that healing mother earth, in turn, makes for a brighter future for my kids and future generations to come. ”

— Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation Narrap Ranger.

Traditional Owner Significance

The Yering Billabongs Project area is situated within the extent of traditional Country held by the Wurundjeri willam clan of the Woiwurrung speaking people. Possibly three generations of senior Wurundjeri men, Billibellary's father, Billibellary and Simon Wonga were all associated with the Yering stretch of the Yarra River.

The Yering Billabongs study area is dominated by the Yarra River, its adjacent wetlands of Spadonis Reserve and a parcel of Crown land leased for agriculture and grazing. Prior to post-colonial land clearing and farming practices, the broader Yarra Valley region was interspersed with grasslands, forested areas, and within the further limits of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country on the Upper Yarra, temperate rainforest.

The ecological diversity found in these areas supported resources necessary for subsistence and production of material cultural. From the Yering billabongs and wetlands, Wurundjeri people harvested aquatic food plants and resources, likely installed various forms of fish, eel and bird traps and extracted potable water.

The soils in the region were manually turned to grow murnong (*Microseris scapigera* s.l. - *yam daisy*) and other carbohydrate tuber or root-based vegetables. The tree canopies of eucalypts, she oaks, and acacia species provided the bark, resins and wood required for canoes, willams (dwellings), tarnuks (containers), axe handles, digging sticks and other tools, utensils and weapons.

The nearby Yarra Ranges were a hunting ground for lyrebirds and marsupials. A plethora of other plant and animal species were sourced for fibre for jewellery, baskets and nets, pelts and sinews for clothing. Food and manufactured items were also gifted, traded and exchanged with neighbouring and distant peoples.

Healthy Country also contained habitats for creation ancestor and other culturally related species.



"Wurundjeri people understand Caring for Country as a cultural and spiritual responsibility passed down in law from our Creator Spirit, Bunjil, the Wedgetail Eagle. Bunjil's first Law is to care for Country as you care for your mother, and this law is the foundation of Country management principles for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people."

— Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation Narrap Ranger.

As described in Thomson (2021), Yering and the broader Upper Yarra Region was likely subject to effective land and water management practices that proved highly sustainable over millennia. Regenerative methods of plant cultivation served to condition and aerate the soil, ensuring it remained fertile for a reoccurring and seasonal supply of staple food resources. Cool burning in late summer to early autumn was applied to the landscape to maintain soil health, living areas and flush out game animals from dense scrub. The employment of these techniques were consistent and purposeful, underpinned by culturally prescribed responsibilities to care for, protect and manage Country.

Wurundjeri people do not perceive their Country, vegetation and wildlife or historical narrative within a landscape as isolated elements. The aesthetic of a landscape is viewed holistically through the ecological biodiversity required for healthy Country.

Managing the environmental and topographic features through correct land management practise is understood as Caring for Country or otherwise described as Bunjil's law.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, as represented by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation, hold the traditionally conferred generational responsibilities in caring for the Yering landscape to ensure the seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, habitats for their totemic and creation ancestors, and revitalisation of their ancestral homelands. These activities are reflective of the reproduction of cultural practices over time as Wurundjeri people renew their connection and interpretation of places, customs or landscapes, that were historically denied to their forebears. Places which were involuntarily unutilised by Wurundjeri people after their loss of sovereignty can become reimbued with new meaning as community reconnect with their ancestral Country and land management responsibilities are carried out in the present-day.

Image Left: Paperbark at Spadonis Reserve.

Method Choices

During all project activities, the rights of First Nations People as the owners of their knowledge, ecological and customary practice was respected.

A Cultural Values Assessment is a mechanism to detail the place-based tangible and intangible Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values which in-turn informed decision making for land management into the future. Over 12 weeks between September 2022 and February 2023 a series of activities, including desktop research, field visits and workshops, were carried out to identify the cultural values of the Yering Billabongs Project area.

The method choices for this CVA involved three components: background desktop research to catalogue the archival, documentary and database records; Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge recording; and consideration of the significance of the cultural values and development of recommendations to protect and manage those values in response to the Yering Billabongs Project.

Desktop research involved data gathered from the archival and documentary record (ethnohistorical) and a review of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (archaeological) to reconstruct the traditional context of social-spatial relations.

These records included the records of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, published materials and manuscript collections of colonial settlers held at the State Library of Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Albeit fragmented, these records proved useful in understanding some colonial settler and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung relations during the contact-era, as well as indications of traditional hunter - harvesting land uses and cultural practices.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge recording took place during on-Country activities and workshops with participation by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Narrap Rangers and Yarra Rangers Council.



Image: Spadonis Reserve.

" As a Narrap Ranger I'm working hard with a great team of strong, deadly, Aboriginal and multicultural men and women towards these goals in Healing Country, so that future generations may one day live in a healthier ecosystem and continue the practise of caring for Country. "

— Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation Narrap Ranger.



Image: Crown Land leased.



Image: University of Melbourne scientists and Narrap Rangers undertaking palaeoecological investigation.

Policy Context

The Victorian government legislated for future protection and improvement of the Birrarung (Yarra River) through the *Yarra River Protection (Willip gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017*. The Act recognises the Yarra River as one living, integrated natural entity and the Traditional Owners of the Yarra River as its custodian.

The Victorian Government released a Yarra River Action Plan (2017) which contains 30 actions to ensure the long term protection of the Yarra River and its parklands. Action 26 of the Yarra River Action Plan commits the Victorian Government to work with the Traditional Owners to map tangible and intangible cultural values along the Yarra River.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Water Program advocates for active participation in the water industry at all levels; from policy and planning at a decision making level, to on ground waterway management and Caring for Country projects. This is enshrined in a Water Policy that also includes an objective to implement a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung managed and controlled cultural knowledge and mapping program for the cultural and heritage values of the Yarra River.

The Yarra Ranges Council - Yering Billabongs Project is a listed priority project identified in the Yarra Strategic Plan (2022). These priority projects recognise Traditional Owner cultural values of the Birrarung and deliver stormwater and environmental water benefits for the Yarra River, including its billabongs. This represents a shift toward collaborative management of the Yarra River corridor between authorities and partnership with the Traditional Owners (Yarra Strategic Plan, 2022: 45).

This report is considered an Action 26 Yarra River cultural values mapping report in conjunction with the Bulleen Banyule Burrung Dalga Bik Ngarrgu Yiaga Bulleen Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study (Freedman, 2020); the wurruwurt yaluk Brushy Creek Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Study (forthcoming, in draft by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation) and the Healesville Forestry Research Project, Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study: Ethnohistorical Report (Thomson, 2021).

Findings

Utilisation of the Landscape

The Upper Yarra Valley served as a rich highland landscape offering suitable food and water resources and a temperate climate. The study area contained considerable ecological diversity with eucalypt woodlands, open forests, amphibious and aquatic herbs and sedges, and a ground cover of herbs, lilies, grasses and sedges.

Of the plant species typical of the study area, over half have known traditional uses. These plant and animal resources were harvested for food, medicine, clothing and adornments, tools, implements, weapons, willams and canoes.



Images top to bottom.

Swamp Paperbark - *Malaleuca ericifolia*. Lay, Geoff. VicFlora (2023). Flora of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Black Sheoak - *Allocasuarina littoralis*. Elliot, Gwen & Rodger. VicFlora (2023). Flora of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Slender Rice-flower - *Pimelea linifolia*. Walsh, Neville. VicFlora (2023). Flora of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Buxton Gum - *Eucalyptus crenulata*. Messina, Andre. VicFlora (2023). Flora of Victoria, Royal Botanic

Historical environmental conditions of the Yering region:

- Densely forested mountain ranges.
- Waterways flanked by reeds, rushes, orchids, clematis, sarsaparilla, wattles, ferns and Christmas bush.
- Well-watered gullies and floodplains vegetated by tall native grasses, murnong and wattle.
- High rainfalls, availability of water and associated natural resources supported occupation.
- Ample game species of kangaroo, wallaby, possum, wombat, small marsupials, aquatic life and bird life.

Examples of plant use include:

- The wood of *Melaleuca ericifolia* (**swamp paperbark**) was sought for manufacturing women's kannan (digging sticks) and the bark for baby wraps.
- The wood of Black sheoak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), as well as many eucalypt varieties, was sought for manufacturing boomerangs, shields, spear thrower, clubs and throwing sticks.
- The Slender rice flower (*Pimelea linifolia*) was sought for netting fiber.

Also present within the study area is the endangered Buxton Gum (*Eucalyptus crenulata*). Natural occurrences of this tree in Victoria are only found at Yering and at Buxton, approximately 60 kms north-east of Yering in Taungurung Country.

Eel fishing from spring to early autumn has become synonymous with the Yarra River billabongs and inter-clan gatherings that took place during eel harvesting events.

During February 1841, Assistant Protector William Thomas wrote of travelling with a large group of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and other East Kulin, including Billibellary and his son Simon Wonga, at which time they stopped and camped at Yering on the station held by the colonial settler William Ryrie. Thomas noted how revived the group were to be in this part of the Country (Stephens, 2014a: 262). From Yering, some travelled to the nearby mountains to hunt wallabies, others to fish for eels in the nearby billabongs and wetlands.

Eels were caught at a location referred to as Brigery lagoon, the location described as half a mile west from Ryrie's and on the south bank on the Yarra River (Stephens, 2014: 263-264). For eel fishing, a spear was used barbed with emu talons, kangaroo teeth or iron nails. The eels were thrown onto the riverbank to waiting children who would pile the eels for dividing among the families. The reeds over the billabongs were burned the day prior to aid in fishing (Stephens, 2014: 263-264).

Eel fishing was also described by Hubert De Castella within the Yering region:

"On a fine sunny day beneath the whitish grey summer sky of hot countries... standing in the water half-way up their legs or to their waists, they hold a spear in either hand and poke the bottom, swinging back and forth and keeping all their movements in perfect time with one of their jerky songs. When they have pierced an eel with one of their spears (which they can tell from the movements it makes struggling) they transfix it with the other one in another spot and, holding the two points apart, they throw it on land to one of their number who puts them in a pile. They catch really amazing numbers this way... they put their game or fish on coals covered with a few ashes and eat it when it is cooked." (De Castella, H, 1861 in Thornton-Smith, 1987: 74).

Eel fishing was a sustained practice in the Upper Yarra Region into the twentieth century, as described by senior Wurundjeri woman Martha Nevin in 1969:

"We'd go around to the dry lagoons and we'd do this, of course, when our mothers and fathers were away. We'd ask the ones that were looking after us we'd like to go to it and we'd have these old eel spears. We'd be rolling back the moss, you know, just like a big carpet and all of a sudden you'd uncover a log that had been there for years and years and all of a sudden a little bubble would come up. We'd call out to the boys and the boys would come and dig a hole. Then all of a sudden somebody would see an eel slither through, and as usual – I suppose we were no different to any other girls, we were always inquisitive wanting to see where it was – with the result I've got a mark on my foot, on my left foot, where an eel spear went right through... Then we'd come back and we'd get the eel out." (Alan West Interview with Martha Nevin 12 March 1969 in Thomson, 2021).

A correspondent who had a station near Yering is published in Smyth (1878) and who described the generational conferral of willam construction, as well as other crafts, among Indigenous women he encountered:

"On one occasion he [a correspondent who had a station near Yering] saw an old woman attended by a great number of girls, who appeared to be under her care, and engaged in useful employments. The old woman gathered materials with her own hands and built for herself a miam, and then with great care, and with many words of instruction,

caused each girl to build a small miam after the pattern of the large one. She showed the girls where and how to collect gum, and where to put it; she caused them to gather rushes, and, with the proper form of rounded stone in their hands, instructed them in the art of weaving the rushes into baskets; she made them pull the right kind of grasses for making other kinds of baskets and rough nets, and she showed them how the fibres were prepared, and how nets and twine were made; she took from her bag the woolly hair of an opossum, and taught them how, by twisting it under the hand over the inner smooth part of the thigh, it could be made into a kind of yarn or thread; and in many ways and on many subjects she imparted instruction." (Smyth, 1878: 50).

It is sufficiently clear from the ethnographic data that remains, in concert with more recent developments in understanding and interpreting traditional land management in south-eastern Australia, that land management practices such as harvesting (through the gathering of food products and digging up roots and tubers) and intermittent cool burning were purposefully applied by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people within the Upper Yarra Valley region. These practices were employed to ensure the fertility of soil, the regeneration and abundance of important plants species and their favourable distribution, and the availability of game, all of which contributed to the continued overall health of Country. Cool burning held multiple applications: the residue ash returns nutrients to the soil; removal of ground litter; to clear areas for the germination and growth of staple plants such as murnong; and to flush out game for ease of capture. (Thomson, 2021).

Image Right: View of floodplain in good condition.





Image: Drone view of Spadonis Reserve.

“ As a team we are focused on healing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Healing Country calls on all of us to continue to strive for greater protection of our lands, our waterways, our ancestors sacred sites, and our cultural heritage from exploitation, desecration, and destruction. Healing country also means healing our people - through healing country and finally resolving many of the outstanding injustices which impact on the lives of our people. ”

— Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation Narrap Ranger.

The Archaeological Record

Inscriptions of traditional Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung lifeways are found within the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places registered at Yering. These places reflect longstanding occupation until colonisation and the movement of Wurundjeri people onto the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve in 1863.

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register holds all registrations of Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Place, including descriptions of the extent, nature and significance of those places. The project region contains previously registered Artefact Scatters, Scarred Trees and Low Density Artefact Distributions.

The lithic artefacts associated with artefact scatters were manufactured from silcrete, quartz, greenstone and chert. The assemblage included scaping tools and an axe head, likely utilised for the bark removal and resulting scarred trees of the region. The remaining artefacts are flakes (sharp-edged slivers of stone). The scrapers and flakes were likely used to work animal hides, wood, plant processing and ochre grinding.

Four scarred red gum trees (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) have been registered in the study region, resulting from bark removal for shields and a willam or canoe. One tree has toe holds which are cuts made into the tree for climbing when hunting in tree hollows.

Colonial Settlement

Whilst not without its limitations, the documentary record illustrated that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people persisted and maintained their traditional custodial relationship with the Yering landscape.

The pastoral and agricultural potential of the Upper Yarra Region had been realised by the early explorers and overlanders, John Gardiner and the brothers of William, James and Donald Ryrie. As a result, the region was soon given over to grazing, viticulture and agriculture after colonial settlement took place from 1837.

The advent of colonial settler occupation and the expansion of pastoralism at Yering resulted in significant changes to the environment. Forests were cleared for timber, wetlands were drained and once freely accessible Country to the Traditional Owners became enclosed. Traditional land management practices including the use of fire were actively discouraged by the colonial settlers, and the ground cover of shrubs, orchids and native grasslands were eaten down and trampled by livestock.

After a failed attempt to persuade the Port Phillip Protectorate to establish a reserve of land for their use at Bolin Bolin Billabong in the present-day location of Bulleen, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people travelled with Assistant Protector William Thomas and Chief Protector

George Augustus Robinson northward along the Yarra River to past Yering. On the day of August 30, 1840 Robinson wrote of arriving at the Ryrie's:

“Ryree [sic] is situated on a knoll or point of elevated land fronting the Yarra. 7 a.m. a dense fog covered the low land on the banks of the Yarra fronting Ryree's [sic]... Ryree [sic] first found this country, saw several china fowls, they thrive well but are strangely formed to our own. Several kangaroos domesticated was here [sic]. After breakfast took leave of Mr Ryree [sic] and set off with the intention to return to native camp, but soon after struck off by a road with the view to visit Howe's station 14 miles up the Yarra above Ryree [sic], where it is said a suitable site for a homestead for the natives might be found. (Robinson in Clarke, 2014: 206-207).

Ultimately, in negotiation with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and other East Kulin, the reserve was established as Nerre Nerre Warren Reserve at Endeavor Hills, operated by William Thomas.

During December 1847, Assistant Protector William Thomas returned to Yering and found that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were employed in service on the stations of Gardiner and Ryrie, which continued in Thomas's records until 1851.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people developed a hybrid economy with the colonial settlers in the manner of labour exchange such as reaping wheat, displays of ceremonial performance, the production of food (e.g. hunted game, ducks, eels, fish) and cultural materials which could be sold or traded. This supplemented traditional subsistence practice and rations.

The colonial settler occupation of the Yering region from 1837 coincided with the initial frontier expansion and the violence that came with colonisation of the Port Phillip District. The region saw documented small-scale conflict, instigated by complaints from colonial settlers. Frontier conflict at Yering is within the context of regionally broader frontier conflict as colonial settlers sought to dispossess Indigenous Victorians and perceived them as a continual obstacle to their pastoral interests, and without equality of rights counterpart to the British and European settlers.

One incident at Yering has become well-known as the Battle of Yering, resulting from the harvesting of potatoes from a settler named James Anderson at Warrandyte during January 1840. After confrontation with Anderson, the group of Wurundjeri travelled to Ryrie's station where they were ambushed by troopers. A Wurundjeri man was captured but ultimately escaped. In 2007 two plaques were erected at Yarra Glen to memorialise this Battle of Yering.



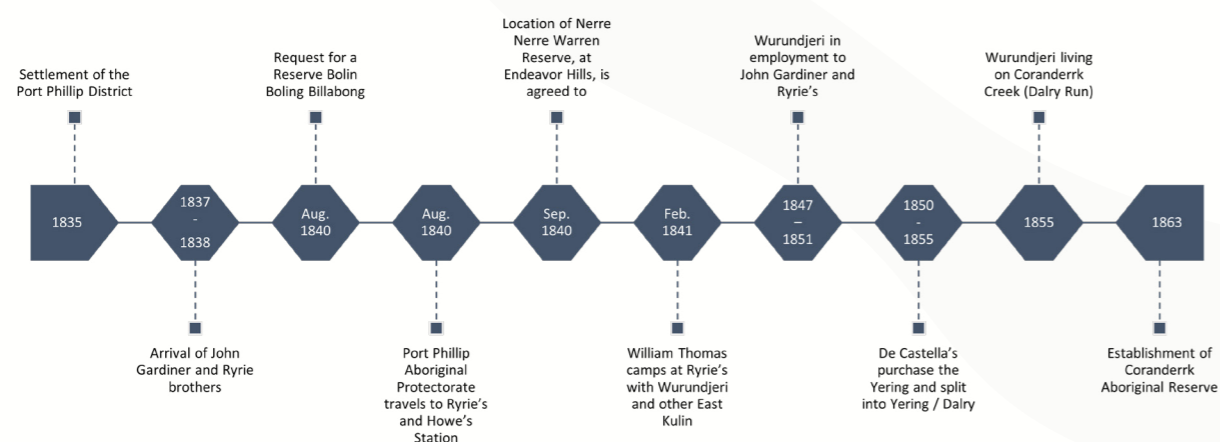
Image: Drone view of Olinda Creek, Yarra River, Spadonis floodplain.

During May 1840, on the lower Yarra River near present-day Eaglemont, four brothers named Lemuel, John, Armyne, and Sandford Bolden camped on their station (Cannon, 1983: 732; Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register, Banyule Camp. Historical Reference Report ID 4.1-22). Under similar circumstances to the Battle of Yering, this group were tracked by troopers 40 miles upstream of the Yarra River where they hid in dense scrub. They were ambushed and three of the group were wounded, forcing them to retreat (Cannon, 1983: 732).

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung families remained on the upper Yarra at Yering, employed locally but

also aided by rations received from Assistant Protector William Thomas. Responsibility of this group transitioned to John Green. Green was a Scottish Presbyterian lay preacher and Inspector for the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines. In 1860 he began to hold services for Traditional Owners at Yering on the de Castella property (Clark and Cahir, 2014: 130-131).

Green was later appointed manager of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve at Healesville. Following the establishment of the reserve in 1863, all Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were encouraged to move onto the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve.



Graphic: Timeline of key events following colonial settlement at Yering.

Palaeoecological Investigation

Dr Michael-Shawn Fletcher, physical geographer at the University of Melbourne, collaborated with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation to co-construct palaeoecological research into the environmental variability of the Yarra River billabongs. This was initially undertaken during 2019 at Bolin Billabong in the lower Yarra River.

In 2022, core samples for palaeoecological analysis were extracted from Spadonis Billabong by Wurundjeri Narrap Rangers and investigators from the University of Melbourne. Sediment was extracted using a floating platform and a piston coring device.

Analyses of the sediment trapped inside the billabong over time can determine past fire regimes (cultural or naturally occurring), pollen types, aquatic organisms, and soil processes; and what these results may reveal about Traditional Owner land management within the Yering region.

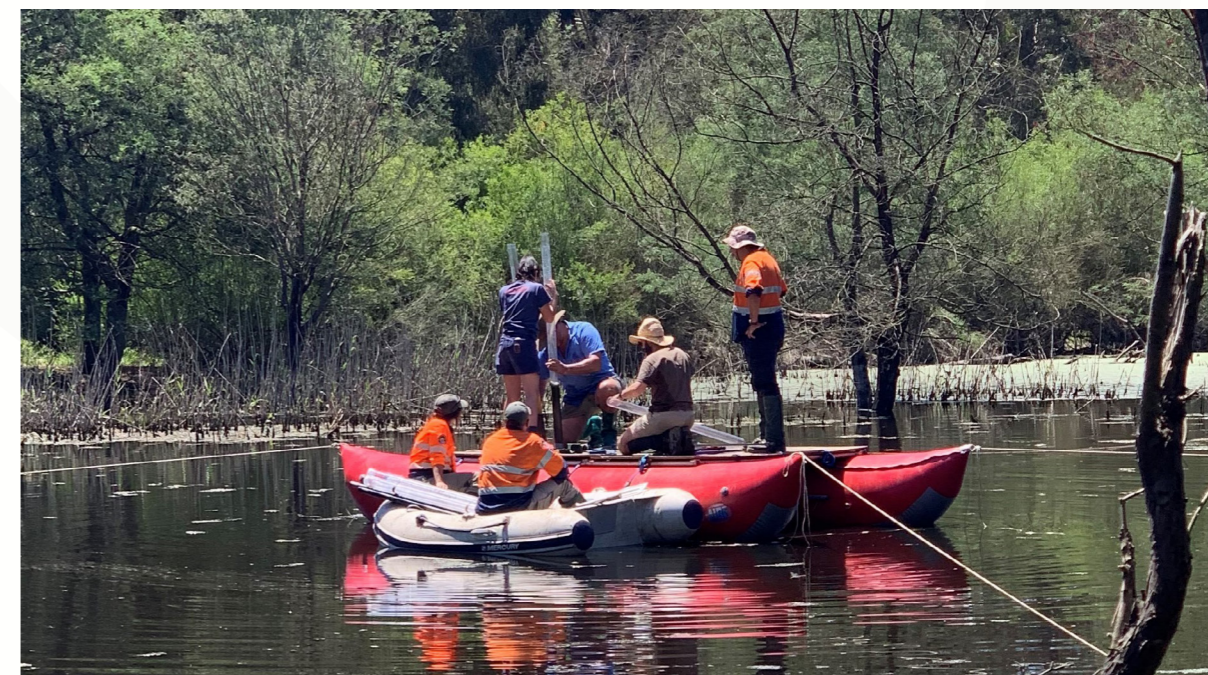


Image Above and Left: University of Melbourne scientists and Narrap Rangers extracting core samples.

“ It was an amazing experience to learn about core extraction at Yering, which has so many cultural values. To know that the core samples can tell us what was there in the past and how we can restore Yering’s health will help restore the health of Wurundjeri people. ”

— Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation Narrap Ranger.



Recommendations

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have been the Traditional Owners and custodians of the Yering landscape for millennia. The Cultural Values Assessment documented the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's use and occupancy of the Yering Billabongs Project area and described the cultural significance of this landscape. The Narrap Unit has developed recommendations to appropriately protect and manage the cultural values within the Yering Billabongs Project.



Image: View of the Birrarung.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community be supported in Caring for Country

Purpose:

Enable the Narrap Unit to apply meaningful land management and on-Country practice; respecting Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung responsibilities in caring for Country; and supporting the capacity and diversity of Narrap Ranger service delivery

- a) Action:** the Narrap Unit be given consideration to lead land, water, and natural resource management activities and remediation works within the Yering Billabongs Project area, including the application of cultural burning (cool burning).
- b) Action:** through Yarra Ranges Council contractor engagement, the Narrap Rangers be supported to build organisational capacity in the use of technical skills in wetland construction through participation in the required earthworks, construction of frog bogs, installation of large woody debris, revegetation, fencing and site maintenance.

Protect the Aesthetic and Natural Attributes

Purpose:

Yarra Ranges Council and Narrap Unit collaborative decision making. The Yering Billabongs Project provides an opportunity to restore/improve habitat for creation ancestor, totemic species and other Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culturally significant species.

- a) Action:** the species palette selection, density and distribution for the revegetation of the Yering project area should consider the pre-colonial environmental observations as described in this assessment and in Thomson (2021).
- b) Action:** the species palette selection, density and distribution for the revegetation of the Yering Billabongs Project area should incorporate the learnings from the University of Melbourne palaeoecological investigation (forthcoming). Land management techniques may also be adjusted in response to this investigation.
- c) Action:** the draft Landscape Plan be presented to the Narrap Unit to ensure that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Traditional Owner perspectives are imbedded into the plan.
- d) Action:** In development of a Landscape Plan, planning measures (i.e. Yarra River Protection Planning Controls) are consistent with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung aspirations for conserving the natural landscape values in relation to infrastructure or construction.

Interpretation

Purpose:

Enhance public knowledge and inform visitors to Spadonis Reserve of the cultural importance and significance of the Yering landscape to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

- a) Action:** Woiwurrung renaming of Spadonis Reserve/Billabong
- b) Action:** Yarra Ranges Council/contractor collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Research Unit and Cultural Consultations Unit in the development of consistent interpretative elements within the Yering project area. Through collaboration, themes for interpretation may be considered to reflect Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung history and cultural practice at Yering: past, present and future.
- c) Action:** Through implementation with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation Education Unit, tours and other educational activities led by a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung guide may be an effective way of sharing the Yering story whilst allowing access to certain areas and protecting values by providing supervision.

References

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Image: Zoos Victoria koala habitat.



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Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Assessment for the Yering Billabongs Project.
Summary Report

