



Core units: Exemplars – Year 8

Illustration 1: Landscape and landforms of Wilsons Promontory

## Landscapes and landforms – Indigenous perspectives

### Resource 1: Spirit of the ancestors

... The next morning I wake before dawn and begin my two-hour journey south to Lake Condah, another important indigenous site, in darkness. Driving through the inky ranges, the mountains huddle together like whispering elders; above them, I pick out a solitary star.

Arriving at the rural town of Heywood, I am met by Ben Church, who is taking me on a tour of his ancestral Gunditjmara homelands. About 40 kilometres north of Portland on the south-west Victorian coast, it is an area his people call Budj Bim, after their own Bunjil-like creation spirit.

It was the violent eruptions of Budj Bim volcano – or Mount Eccles as it is now known – beginning 27,000 years ago and spewing out gigantic waves of lava, that shaped this landscape. By the last eruption 20 millenniums later, abundant wetlands, fed by rising spring waters, had emerged amid the cooled lava flows. Among them was a place the Gunditjmara called Tae Rak and colonists renamed Lake Condah, a corruption of the indigenous word Koon Doom, meaning water.

What happened here, beginning at least 6700 years ago but only scientifically established in the past 15 years, has prompted a re-evaluation of common perceptions of Australian Aborigines as purely a nomadic, hunter-gathering people. According to archaeologist Heather Builth, who did much to uncover the evidence, Lake Condah was once the centre of a "sophisticated eel aquaculture industry" around which grew "large communities ... perhaps 6000 or 10,000 strong ... living in villages of permanent stone huts".

In 2004, this discovery led to the landscape being registered on the National Heritage List and may soon help Budj Bim achieve World Heritage status.

"I spent eight years away, but I was drawn back here," Gunditjmara guide Church says as we begin our tour by driving to the Tyrendarra lava flow, 50 kilometres south of the volcano.

"I am part of this country," he adds, "and this country is part of me."

Accompanying us in the vehicle is Church's "aunty", Budj Bim ranger Debbie Malseed, who nods knowingly.

At first, the terrain they call home appears unpromising, a rubbly mess of volcanic rock and long grass.

"During the 19th century white settlers drained the wetland," Malseed says, "so they could run sheep and cattle."

At Tyrendarra, an indigenous protected area, we follow a walkway past reconstructed stone huts and wooden traps.

"The lake was like a giant pantry," Church tells me, "and the eels were traded right across southern Australia."

Using core samples, Builth was able to verify the great age of the aquaculture system. She went on to prove that the C- and U-shaped formations of basalt rocks discovered all around the former wetlands were the foundations of stone huts rather than random collections of rocks, as was previously supposed. The homes were interconnected in village-like clusters.

When European squatters arrived in the area in the 1830s, they laid claim to large parcels of land and began excluding any interlopers, black or white. It was the beginning of the end for Australia's oldest settlement ...

Source: Scott, D. (27th October 2012), Spirit of the ancestors. *The Age* (Travel section), pp. 10–11.

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## Activities

1. Use several highlighter pens of different colours to analyse the above article.
  - Use one colour to highlight all of the location information – in other words, where are these landscapes and landforms located in Australia?
  - Use one colour to highlight all of the words and phrases that are describing landscapes and landforms.
  - Use one colour to highlight the details of the geological age of the landscapes and landforms.
  - Use one colour to highlight the details of the ways in which the Aboriginal people of this region changed and used the landscapes, and the landforms which made up the landscapes.
  - Use one colour to highlight the details of the ways in which the first Europeans who arrived in this region changed and used the landscapes, and the landforms which made up the landscapes.
2. What have you learnt about the landscapes and landforms of this region by deconstructing the article using the coloured highlighter pens?
3. In what ways are the Aboriginal people of the region interacting with the present day landscapes and landforms?

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## Resource 2: Songlines

... We make our way across diverse country. Lurujarri means coastal dunes and we walk many. We move through wetlands with reeds shoulder height, lunch in Garnboor (paperbark) forests with butterflies dancing between trees, pass vivid red Yanniyarri (red pindan cliffs), navigate tufted grasslands and wade knee deep in freshwater creeks, with the ocean ever present from where the spirit beings come. The sand is white, black, red and yellow. Richard Hunter, senior law man and grandson of Paddy Roe, is our storyteller. Frans Hoogland, Dutch-born initiate into Aboriginal law, keeps us on track. The connection between the men is clear. Just out of Broome we gather among the dunes, looking over the country, to hear Richard talk of the spirit beings of Bugarregarre, the Dreamtime. He shares with us ceremonial and camping grounds, pointing out spear tips and shells devoured of their contents.

We learn hunting and survival tips, and discover food forests. I begin to understand how this country has sustained life for millennia.

On rest days Richard teaches us to hunt for bush food. We listen to the tree trunk for sounds of bees to find bush honey, dig Yarrinyarri (bush onion) and forage black Gungkara (conkerberry) fruits, all of which we would usually pass-by, oblivious to their sustaining qualities. We collect wood and carve tapping sticks and boomerangs. Some brave the knee-deep mud of mangrove estuaries in search of crabs.

As the sun starts its inevitable descent the colours of the country light up, transforming the muted greens, reds, yellows and lilacs into a vibrant palette. The evening avian opera begins.

A number of small fires are lit and bush TV works its magic, drawing people together to share in the day's experiences and general banter. The kids are camp children and everyone looks out for them. Laughter, guitar and song float in the air.

At our final camp we are in for a cinematic treat. Warmed by campfire, the surrounding bush providing our soundtrack, we watch two films connected to this living country. The first film is about Frans and his extraordinary path to joining the Goolarabooloo. The other is about Butcher Joe Nangan, an artist, who in the seventies set about recording the traditional law and stories to stem the effect of disruption from settlement. The film features Butcher Joe's 'Mayarda' (pelican dance). The pelican is the symbol of the Goolarabooloo.

The following evening my friend and I find ourselves trailing Phillip Roe, grandson of Paddy Roe and senior law man, singing 'Mayarda' as he leads our way down to a fire by the river. It was a clear expression of Le-an, connection of living culture and country, the unity of past, present and future. We gathered around the fire for corroboree sharing dance, music, song, laughter and sadness for the challenges faced by the Goolarabooloo people and others caring for country.

I lie with my back warmed by the yellow earth gazing up at the stars.

How different from our first night on trail. We walked along Cable Beach, guided by moonlight to camp at Ngunungurukun (Coconut Wells). I was still plugged in; my mobile had a signal, I was aware of the 24-hour time clock and we talked loudly and with intent about our busy 'normal' lives as we strode across the beach. A beach fire led us to camp and we slowly unplugged from our daily lives.

We camped one night at Walmadan (James Price Point), the proposed site for Australia's largest gas hub. Camped among the dunes, the bright lights of Woodside's drilling rigs lighting our horizon and filling the air with industrial noises. It was stark contrast to earlier camps and though little was said it was felt acutely.

We camp at Ngunungurukun (Coconut Wells), Nuwirrar (Barred Creek), Kardilakan (Quandong Point), Walmadan (James Price Point) and Bindingankun (Yellow River). The mother tongue of our country rolls awkwardly across mine. I am more likely to understand an international dialect and I hope to make this change.

My fingertips rest in warm sand, the footsteps of thousands of years of walking this country imprinted in the grains of our ancient land. Stars wink above me. Each intake of breath is the air of all living things that have gone before me and are part of each of us now. I can hear the song cycle of this living country; my beautiful home.

Source: Rutter, A. (October 2012), Songlines. *Habitat*, 40(4), pp. 8–9.

The complete article is available at: <http://www.acfonline.org.au/sites/default/files/resources/ACF-habitat-40-4.pdf>

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## Activities

1. Use several highlighter pens of different colours to analyse the above article.
  - Use one colour to highlight all of the location information – in other words, Where are these landscapes and landforms located in Australia?
  - Use one colour to highlight all of the words and phrases that are describing landscapes and landforms.
  - Use one colour to highlight the details of the ways in which the Aboriginal people of this region used the landscapes, and the physical environment which made up the landscapes.
  - Use one colour to highlight the details of the new industries that have arrived in this region.
2. What have you learnt about the landscapes and landforms of this region by deconstructing the article using the coloured highlighter pens?
3. In what ways are the Aboriginal people of the region interacting with the present day landscapes and landforms?
4. In what ways are tourists who are visiting the region interacting with the present day landscapes and landforms?
5. Describe in your own words the reasons why the new industries in the region would be in conflict with the many of the traditional Aboriginal laws and stories associated with the landscapes and landforms