

ORIGINAL NAMES

by
Ian Abbott

Permanent European settlement of Western Australia has spanned 154 years in comparison with the 40,000 year occupancy by Aborigines. If the time scale of human habitation of Western Australia were indicated by one hour on a clock, Aboriginal society would occupy over 59 min 30 sec and European society less than 30 sec².

In the south-west of Australia the jarrah and karri forests were inhabited by eight tribes. Because these people obtained their food by hunting and gathering, they undoubtedly knew in great detail the distribution, numbers and annual cycles of all the plant and animal species important to them. A significant aspect of this knowledge would have been the actual names they used to identify the plant species in their environment.

Although Western Australia was visited frequently by Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Aborigines generally avoided them. Even after the British colonized Western Australia in 1826, few Europeans befriended individual Aborigines or made extensive observations of their customs, behaviour or language, and the destruction of Aboriginal society in the south-west was far advanced before professional anthropologists were

present to record such details.

Our knowledge of this vocabulary, although limited, is founded on the efforts of three men: Robert Menli Lyon, George Grey and George Fletcher Moore, and information collected late last century or early this century. Lyon lived at the Swan River settlement from 1829-1834 and at various times was in charge of Aboriginal prisoners; Grey lived at the settlements of Swan River and King George Sound at various times between 1838 and 1840; and Moore was Advocate-General at the Swan River settlement and was resident in Perth and at Upper Swan (Millendon) from 1830-1840 (and later).

Aboriginal names were recorded phonetically. The lack of any systematic or scientific study of their variation within and among tribes means that few names were documented, and their accuracy cannot be guaranteed. An amusing example of such problems is the central African tree named *Khaya nyasica*. *Khaya* is not the native name of the plant but literally means 'I don't know'.

In the first few decades of settlement in Western Australia, many English names for plants came into use. Frequently, these names were descriptive (red gum, white gum) or alluded to some similarity with a familiar species (mahogany, native pear, willow).

The Forests Department's first Conservator, Charles Lane-Poole noted that about 1860 the name 'Swan River mahogany' was altered to jarrah, "as it was generally recognized that this was better timber than mahogany, and that it had so many fine qualities that it deserved a name of its own". Lane-Poole was also responsible for promoting the use of marri instead of redgum. He wrote "Following the decision of the Forestry Conference, in order to avoid confusion with Murray River redgum (*Eucalyptus rostrata**). Western Australian redgum will in future be called 'marri' in all official publications. Marri is the aboriginal name."

Lane-Poole's logic and procedure seem also applicable to flooded gum (confused with *Eucalyptus grandis*), blackbutt (confused with *E. pilularis*) and she-oak (of which there are many species). We should extend the use of Aboriginal names for native flora in Western Australia wherever it is feasible to do so. Aboriginal names are more appropriate than the often clumsy European names, and they would serve as a tribute to the original inhabitants.

This process is well advanced in respect of mammals. Vernacular names of Australian mammals derive from Aboriginal names — for example, bettong, chuditch, koala, numbat, quenda, quokka, quoll, tamar, woylie and wombat — no doubt because they are more apposite than the clumsy terms native bear, marsupial mouse, native cat and kangaroo rat.

Recently I collected together some 250 names used by Aborigines to refer to just over 100 plant species in south-western Australia, and systematized their spelling. Certainly, these names (on photographs opposite) look odd at first glance, but most are short (2-3 syllables) and, after a little practise, roll off the tongue easily.

The list has been derived on the basis of a sympathetic reading of the available evidence on names,

* now known as *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

but with an eye to practicality in common use. The spelling system adopted is again phonetic.

Consonants are sounded as in English, except that 'ng' sounds as in ring. Vowels are sounded as follows: a as in father, e as in met, i as in bib, o as in low, and u as in put. These conventions are generally neglected. For example, most people mispronounce numbat as numb-bat, instead of noom-bart.

Most of the names gathered refer to tree species occurring between Perth and Albany. Aboriginal names of most other plant species have either not been recorded or, when they were, insufficient description was provided (so that it is now not possible to attach the current scientific name to the Aboriginal word).

Several of the Aboriginal words listed would be suitable common names for plant species. Examples are balga, djiriji, gulli, gulurto, mutyal, twotta and willarac. This would extend a firmly established practice of using Aboriginal names, e.g. jarrah, marri, morrel, wandoo, tuart, karri and mallet.

Where no Aboriginal name has been recorded and no well established English common name is available, it would seem easier and more precise to learn and use the scientific name (Latin binomial).

It is stressed that this is a provisional list and constructive, documented suggestions for modifications or extension are invited.

References

1. Pearce, R.H. and Barbetti, M. 1981. A 38 000-year-old archaeological site at Upper Swan, Western Australia **Archaeology in Oceania** Vol 16 No 3, 173-8.
2. Flood, J. 1983. **'Archaeology of the Dreamtime'**. Collins, Sydney. 288 pp.
3. David Ward, Forests Department of Western Australia, personal communication.



Eucalyptus macrocarpa Mudelka



Callitris preissii Maro (Rottneest Island Pine)



Banksia grandis Pulgarla (Bull Banksia)



Hakea victoria Dalyongurd (Royal Hakea)



Eucalyptus salmonophloia Wurak (Salmon Gum)



Hakea laurina Kodjet (pin cushion)



Eucalyptus erythrocorys Ilyari



Anigozanthos manglesii Kurulbrang (Kangaroo Paw)

Latin name

**Recommended Aboriginal Name
(tentative phonetic rendering)**

<i>Acacia acuminata</i>	Mangard
<i>A. lasiocalyx</i>	Wilyurwur
<i>A. lasiocarpa</i>	Padjang
<i>A. microbotrya</i>	Kalyang
<i>A. saligna</i>	Kudjong
<i>Agonis flexuosa</i>	Wonil
<i>A. juniperina</i>	Wodi
<i>Allocasuarina fraserana</i>	Kondil
<i>A. huegeliana</i>	Kwowl
<i>Anigozanthos manglesii</i>	Kurulbrang
<i>A. viridis</i>	Kurulbardang
<i>Astroloma serratifolium</i>	Kondrung
<i>Banksia attenuata</i>	Piara
<i>B. grandis</i>	Pulgarla
<i>B. littoralis</i>	Pungura
<i>Beaufortia squarrosa</i>	Puno
<i>Billardiera lehmanniana</i>	Kurup
<i>Bossiaea aquifolium</i>	Nedik
<i>Callistemon phoeniceus</i>	Dubarda
<i>Callitris preissii</i>	Maro
<i>Calothamnus quadrifidus</i>	Kwowljard
<i>C. sanguineus</i>	Pindak
<i>Carpobrotus virescens</i>	Kolboko
<i>Casuarina obesa</i>	Kuli
<i>Chorizema cordatum</i>	Karlya
<i>Daviesia divaricata</i>	Marno
<i>Dioscorea hastifolia</i>	Wararn
<i>Dodonaea attenuata</i>	Warning
<i>Dryandra carduacea</i>	Pingurl
<i>D. nivea</i>	Pudjarn
<i>D. sessilis</i>	Pudjak
<i>Eucalyptus angulosa</i>	Kwararl
<i>E. astringens</i>	Malard
<i>E. calophylla</i>	Mari
<i>E. celastroides</i>	Mired
<i>E. cornuta</i>	Yeid
<i>E. diversicolor</i>	Kari
<i>E. doratoxylon</i>	Keidjngund
<i>E. erythrocorys</i>	Ilyari
<i>E. eudesmioides</i>	Marlarli
<i>E. falcata</i>	Dulyumuk
<i>E. flocktoniae</i>	Merid
<i>E. gardneri</i>	Kwoakol
<i>E. gomphocephala</i>	Duart
<i>E. guilfoylei</i> }	Dingul Dingul
<i>E. jacksonii</i> }	
<i>E. longicornis</i>	Moril
<i>E. loxophleba</i>	Dwoda
<i>E. macrandra</i>	Dwed
<i>E. macrocarpa</i>	Mudelka
<i>E. marginata</i>	Djara

Latin name

**Recommended Aboriginal Name
(tentative phonetic rendering)**

<i>E. megacarpa</i>	Pulidj
<i>E. occidentalis</i>	Moidj
<i>E. patens</i>	Dwuda
<i>E. platypus</i>	Murd
<i>E. rudis</i>	Kulurda
<i>E. salmonophloia</i>	Wurak
<i>E. tetragona</i>	Dalyeruk
<i>E. transcontinentalis</i>	Pungul
<i>E. wandoo</i>	Wondu
<i>E. woodwardii</i>	Gunguru
<i>Exocarpos sparteus</i>	Djuk
<i>Gastrolobium laytonii</i>	Prilya
<i>Haemodorum paniculatum</i>	
<i>H. spicatum</i>	Mardja
<i>Hakea laurina</i>	Kodjet
<i>H. oleifolia</i>	Dungyn
<i>H. preissii</i>	Dandjin
<i>H. recurva</i>	Djarnokmurd
<i>H. victoria</i>	Dalyongurd
<i>Helipterum manglesii</i>	Ngyamingyaming
<i>Hovea pungens</i>	Puyenak
<i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i>	Kudjid
<i>Jacksonia sericea</i>	Waldjumi
<i>J. sternbergiana</i>	Kapur
<i>Kingia australis</i>	Pulonok
<i>Kunzea ericifolia</i>	Pondil
<i>Lambertia inermis</i>	Djidiok
<i>Lepidosperma gladiatum</i>	Kerbin
<i>Macrozamia riedlei</i>	Djiridji
<i>Melaleuca elliptica</i>	Ngow
<i>M. nesophila</i>	Mindiyed
<i>M. sheathiana</i>	Buri
<i>M. uncinata</i>	Kwidjard
<i>Nuytsia floribunda</i>	Mudja
<i>Oxylobium lanceolatum</i>	Wonidj
<i>O. parviflorum</i>	Dilya
<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>	Koma
<i>Platysace cirrosa</i>	Karna
<i>P. maxwellii</i>	Karno
<i>Podocarpus drouyniana</i>	Kula
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Mundangurnang
<i>Ptilotus manglesii</i>	Mulamula
<i>Santalum acuminatum</i>	Warnga
<i>S. murrayanum</i>	Kulya
<i>S. spicatum</i>	Wilarak
<i>Synaphea polymorpha</i>	Pinda
<i>Typha domingensis</i>	Djandjid
<i>Xanthorrhoea gracilis</i>	Mimidi
<i>X. preissii</i>	Palga
<i>Xylomelum occidentale</i>	Djandjin
<i>Verticordia nitens</i>	Kodjeningara
<i>Viminaria juncea</i>	Koweda



Nuytsia floribunda Mudja (Christmas Tree)



Pteridium aquilinum Mundangurnang (Bracken)



Hovea pungens Puyenak (Devils Pins)