

ABORIGINAL CULTURE: A MAJOR TOURISM DRAWCARD

An increasing number of overseas, interstate and even local visitors are asking tour operators where they can learn about Australian Aboriginal people, their culture and their relationship with the land and its wildlife.

To help meet this demand, CALM Aboriginal Heritage Officers Noel Nannup, Kevin Hill and Koodah Cornwall, all Nyoongar people from CALM's Aboriginal Tourism, Education and Training Unit, have begun running hands-on cultural education tours at the new Balga Mia Village in Yanchep National Park.

To test their viability, the Heritage Officers ran an experimental tour for local tour operators, who have

since been offering them to their clients.

About 40 tour operators took advantage of the tour. Activities included lighting a fire with sticks, making string from sedge grass, which is used in the construction of the on-site temporary dwellings (known as mias). They also learned how to make glue from charcoal collected from the forest floor, grass tree gum and kangaroo droppings. Participants then used the glue to make a 'taap' or serrated-blade bush knife.

Before moving from the village to take their guests on a 'walkabout' along the Yanjidi Trail, the Heritage Officers described how the on-site mias, each in a progressive stage of

construction, had been made.

Six stops were made along the trail, reflecting the Nyoongar people's six seasons, and how it was necessary to follow them as they changed, adapting their diet to whatever food was most plentiful in each season.

The walkabout was punctuated with other stops to hear many surprising snippets of information. For example, aromatherapy, now so popular with the wider community, has been practised by Nyoongar women for thousands of years, as has the use of inhalants made from native plants to relieve nasal congestion.

At the time of writing,

more than 500 people had enjoyed the the Balga Mia Village tours, and it is expected that with the approaching cooler weather, many more will be wanting to take part.

The Aboriginal Heritage Officers are passionate about sharing their vast knowledge, and their stories, eloquently told, are punctuated with much gentle humour, making the tours a relaxing and enjoyable learning experience.

For further information on tour content, entry fees, and times and days the tours operate, please phone Yanchep National Park on (08) 9561 1004.



Left: With the fire finally alight, Koodah Cornwall entertains tour operators, while Kevin Hill prepares to show them how to make glue the Nyoongar way.

Photo - Verna Costello/CALM

CORRECTION

We wish to correct an error in the second caption on page 46 of the Summer 1998-99 issue of *LANDSCOPE*. The caption should have read:

"Squatters' shacks, common along the central west coast, are gradually being removed. This is in line with the Government's Squatters Policy."

The photo on page 45 shows a diver and sea lion. It is no longer permitted for divers to approach marine animals so closely. Please contact CALM Wildlife Protection Branch for guidelines.

Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

LANDSCOPE

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Western Everlasting, see page 22, follows the same successful approach to protecting threatened plants as Western Shield did for mammals.



Beneath its black and burnt exterior, the common balga is giving up its secrets. See 'Believing the Balga' on page 10.



For 25 years, CALM's Wildlife Research Centre in Woodvale has been 'A Centre of Diversity'. See page 36.



The spectacular coastline of Torndirrup National Park has been years in the making. See page 28.



Read how locals, CALM and other agencies are working together to save the Lake Muir-Unicup wetlands. See page 49.

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C O V E R

'Moving Mala' (page 17) tells the story of the translocation of these endangered mammals from Australia's Central Desert Region to a small island off WA's north coast.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



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