

# Interpretation matters

Issue 2 | AUTUMN 2013

*... as it enriches the visitor experience*



*In this issue :* The Cows are on the Loose | Let Me Introduce | Mandalay Revamp | Interpretation and Community | Embracing the Change

# W

elcome to the second edition of 'Interpretation matters', the Interpretation Unit's Newsletter that aims to keep you up to date with what's what, who's who and helpful how to's in interpretive planning, product development and training.

In this issue we have our first "Let Me Introduce" article, a chance for everyone to meet either one of DEC's regional-based Interpretation Officers or one of the field staff who's main duties revolve around interpretation. We might even throw in the odd Parks and Visitor Services Officer. Pop on over to page 4 to find out who's the first 'cab off the rank'.

Thanks for all the positive feedback we received after our first issue and while we originally aimed to have these come out quarterly, the work-load here in the Unit has meant we are a little behind but we will endeavour to have at least two issues arrive in your inbox this year.

To make this happen, we also need your involvement, like Christina Denton who submitted The Cows are on the Loose article (see page 3), we would love your articles to be featured in our newsletter. Our word limit is around 200, and we would love photos and captions to make it more appealing, after all don't forget the 1/3 rule includes 1/3 graphics!!

As the end of the financial year approaches it is proving to be just as busy this year as the last few, so don't forget if you need anything done it really should be with the Studio by now. All interpretation projects needs to be submitted using the Interpretation Order form, just hit the send button on the form and an email will automatically be generated so you can send it through to Jacki. Of course, it goes without saying that we also need the text, photos, maps etc and in the likely event these are too large to email, please use the transfer drive or send these through on CD or DVD.

Cheers,

Karen Shaddock, this issue's Newsletter Designer and Coordinator (we like to share it around).

## Online Resources

\*Clicking on the red text will take you to the page.

With the change from the old CALM Web intranet site to *the Source* we have lost the capability to load up the hundreds of pdfs that were previously available to you. We are looking at ways to make these available, but in the mean time, Gwen has compiled a number of category based sign examples and these are loaded on our intranet.

- Risk sign examples - check our [Risk Signs page](#)\*
- Dieback sign examples - check out [Dieback Sign layouts](#)\*
- Management sign examples - check out [Management Signs](#)\*
- Don't forget to regularly check out our [intranet site](#)\* for all our latest information.

We can also do a manual search for you if none of the examples cover what you are looking for.

Don't forget to let us know if you have any issues with these pages so that they can be fixed.

Please pass this newsletter onto your Ranger staff for reference.

## Missed an issue?

Old issues of 'Interpretation matters' are available on the Interpretation Unit website.

## Cover page:

Mandalay Beach Interpretation,  
D'Entrecasteaux National Park

## The Cows are on the Loose!

Christina Denton



Late last year my husband and I took a short holiday to the south west. Passing through the small country town of Cowaramup I was suddenly transported back to my childhood as I encountered a 'herd' of dairy cattle and calves scattered along the verges of the main street of town.

The realistic expressions and body positioning of the cows were exactly that of our inquisitive "girls" that I used to encounter when trundling up to them in the paddocks with their weekly trailer load of hay or arriving at the gate to bring them in for milking.

"Pull over!" I cried to my husband. Born and bred on a dairy farm, and where a lot of my happiest memories were made, I was immediately engaged by these life-size fibreglass cow sculptures and I just had to stop, inspect and interact!

Making my way through the herd, the tourist in me took and posed for photos next to and on top of them, whilst the artist in me inspected their life-like coats and finer features for accuracy and the editor in me checked their ear tags for typos! Yes, typos.



Businesses had made clever use of advertising space on the cows' ear tags, that would usually represent a cow's identity and ownership, this time representing a business, product or effectively placed QR code, whilst maintaining a realistic looking sculpture. I was impressed.

Our interaction with the herd led us to engage with the locals and learn that each cow is sponsored by Cowaramup businesses and is designed to attract tourists as well as benefit the businesses through advertising. We can vouch for that... we found ourselves making a connection with a town that had not previously drawn us in, 'playing tourist' posing with *Daisy* and *Buttercup*, connecting with the locals...and making several unplanned purchases!



Suitably impressed with her sunhat, "Daisy" the surf shop's cow eagerly awaits her custom-made bikini that is on order.



Random person on cow©: Dad never let me sit on our cows!

## Let me introduce ...

*Susan Pedersen, Interpretation Officer  
Shark Bay World Heritage Area*



### *in her own words ...*

I didn't know it at the time, but my career in interpretation began on Fraser Island in 1994. Before that, I had tried a few different jobs and completed a Bachelor of Applied Science.

Completing my degree in Canberra led to work with NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, but nothing permanent. When the gap between contracts got a bit long I found myself working for Tower Software writing records management software documentation and running training courses.

Home (Darwin) beckoned so I meandered north and visited Fraser Island on the way. There I enjoyed a few ranger talks and one made quite an impression on me. It was about feeding wildlife, or rather, why we shouldn't feed wildlife.

While I hadn't fed anything on Fraser Island, I had recently fed a fat possum and rosellas at Wilsons Promontory. During the ranger talk I hung my head in shame because I should have known better.

The impact that talk had on me was quite profound. It made me realise that you can make a difference by talking to people. Soon after that I started working as a tour guide on Yellow Water.

My tour guiding stint extended from Yellow Water into other parts of Kakadu and the Top End. It was great for a while and led to managing the Bowali Visitor Centre in Kakadu and a contract writing a communication plan for Parks & Wildlife Service NT.

On the strength of this I became Interpretation Officer for PWSNT Katherine region where I finally found my niche. The creative and logical sides of my nature were finding their balance.

As much as I loved working for PWSNT, I wanted to try self employment so I gave up job security to work as a consultant. A job at Shark Bay conveniently advertised three years later rescued me from the perils of working and living alone.

So here I am interpreting a paradise where the desert meets the sea. I have magnificent sea views and can respond almost instantly to a flatwater emergency. I have become so adept at managing flatwater emergencies I can do them standing on my head.

# Involving our Community in Interpretation

Jacki Baxter

Joint management and involvement with our Indigenous Communities is an ever-growing opportunity for interpreters. I would like to share an opportunity that I had for the King Jarrah site near Manjimup.

As part of the redevelopment of this site, I arranged with the local Walganup Aboriginal Corporation to engage a consultant (Caring for Country Funding) to work with this group to document a collection of stories for their country.

The result was this wonderful collection of stories that could be used when interpreting sites in that Region.

The purpose was to have the collection of stories endorsed by this group so that they were immediately available when the opportunity arose to use them.

The Walganup Aboriginal Corporation for their intellectual ownership and management of the content retained the document.

Noongar people from this region possessed a remarkable gift for tracking ... it was said they could track a dog over ironstone!

With the King Jarrah project the Walganup Heritage Officer then advised me which stories were appropriate to be used.

This allowed me to then have an artist create the paintings appropriate to the panel contents.

This project was very rewarding for me because of the contribution and enthusiasm for sharing these stories by our Walganup community.


### Welcome to King Jarrah

Kia kia mooditj Jarrah

Noongar people of the South West welcome you to King Jarrah. Please respect and care for these traditional lands.

The jarrah forest supports many plant species, from delicate orchids to brilliant coral peas and honey-scented white clematis. Something is always in flower in the jarrah forest, but the best wildflowers occur between September and November. In the quieter seasons take a close look at the fruits of the forest. The King Jarrah Path explores some of the tactics that plants of the jarrah forest use to survive and reproduce.

Suitable for schoolchildren and pushchairs, the assisted trail leaves a barbecue area and meanders for 600 metres through the understorey of the jarrah forest.



**Be Wise:**  
Leave this natural environment for all to enjoy. Please carry out all fire.

**Be considerate:**  
Continue to keep this a dog friendly forest area by keeping your dog on a lead. This helps reduce disturbance to native wildlife. Pick up your dog's waste and take it home with you. Bins have not been provided at this site.

**Be mindful:**  
Felling logs and branches provide habitat for many creatures. Firewood collection is not permitted.

**Be careful:**  
Your enjoyment and safety are our concern but your responsibility.



### Showing the Way


When settlers started to explore this region around the 1820s, they used aboriginal people from the local Noongar tribe to show them the way and help them to survive in the forest.

Noongars used traditional walk trails to their towns, some of which have become the roads and highways that we use today. These trails led to their traditional camping grounds - places where food and other resources were most plentiful. Some South West towns are built on these camping grounds.

Not only did they show their traditional lands, they also demonstrated their hunting and survival techniques to these settlers, educating them about edible plants such as eucalyptus, and emu plants. They shared their Cultural knowledge on how to process the nuts of the zamia palm to remove the poisonous toxins. Another valuable skill that they passed on was how to prepare kangaroo and possum skins (Stocks) for use as warm clothes in winter.

Most importantly to the early settlers, Noongars showed them the way to the best water sources. One such place was called Taggerds, meaning 'Big Water'. It was later given the European name of 'Lala Muir' after one of the families that settled in the area.

The following 'Letter to the Editor' from 'Thomas Muir' appeared in the Blackfoot Times on 18th July 1914 and has been edited to highlight Noongar assistance in early waddie (white meat) exploration:



*"... I led to my brother... This side out of the [Noongar] lands, and the path between and will take the settler's way and the settler will find the dog's way and... I have a few days and the [Noongar] will take them but my brother [Noongar] is the one that will take them... One did not see one with..."*

*"We were out on [Noongar] lands just opposite a point where the lake is about 1/2 mile or a mile above the [Noongar] camp in the lake time on that way to [Noongar]..."*

*"A deer time ago I was called on one evening I could show them a certain track... I saw a [Noongar] line to show them the right path..."*

*"Yes one of a settler"*

### Queejup - The Noongar Stockman

"He could ride the anything!"

The legendary Noongar stockman Queejup (pronounced 'Kwee-jup') is believed to have lived in the later part of the 1800s. His exact birth date is unknown. Queejup's birth time (now on display) originally grew on [Noongar] Road, but was removed during roadworks in 2006. Part of the tree was salvaged and transported to this site for preservation.

Queejup was renowned in this region and beyond for his exceptional skill and flair as a rough rider and horseman. A proud Noongar man, Queejup was said to possess the uncanny gift of charming horse spirits. His ability as a stockman was highly regarded by land owners with whom he worked.



Queejup was one of many Noongar stockmen that made a significant contribution to the pastoral industry around Manjimup. Many pioneer stories describe their skill in tracking escaped stock and, in some instances, tracking and saving the lives of lost riders.

These Noongar workers were rarely paid money, but instead received rations of food such as tea, sugar and flour. Other jobs that Noongar men had in the 1800s included fruit picking, wheat reaping, milk-milking, shearing, dogging, timber felling, road building, skins trading, shearing, sheepherding, horse breaking, dog recondition and farm handiwork.

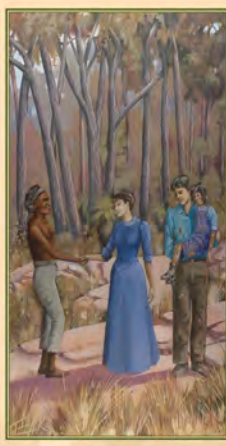
Tragically, sickness took the life of Queejup, as it did with many Noongar people in the area in the late 1800s. He developed a fatal cough, perhaps a symptom of pneumonia, and was taken to the Noongar hospital at Susanston. The hospital turned him away for reasons unknown. On the way back to Bellamack, Queejup said that he would like to rest for awhile and died during the night in the wagon that was transporting him.

### Tracking

"Noongars could track a dog over ironstone!"

Noongar people from this region possessed a remarkable gift for tracking, partly due to their sharp-eyed perceptivity to the natural environment. Their tracking ability left many pioneers in awe. One pioneer said Noongars could track a dog over ironstone, especially the women... they were a clever people! (Scott 1993).

There are many accounts of settlers becoming lost and disoriented in the forest. One pioneer told the story of a Noongar man who tracked a lost settler's child near Iringdown. Even though it was dark and the tracker only had the light of a lantern, he found the lost child.



Noongar people sometimes tracked fellow Noongars who had broken traditional laws. One day a Noongar man limped up to a homestead near Lala Muir with a spear through his leg. He had been speared once as punishment for breaking a Noongar law, but escaped before his punishment was complete. The pioneer's wife took out the spear and treated the wound. The Noongar man went quietly on his way.

Shortly after, the group of settlers who were tracking him arrived at the homestead. They said they had tracked him all the way from Mount Barker. They left the homestead in hot pursuit of the offender.

It is not known whether they caught the runaway, but it is highly likely they did and completed his punishment.

# The Mandalay Beach Project

Alena Kessell

Mandalay Beach in D'Entrecasteaux National Park was named after a Norwegian ship that was wrecked there on the 15th of May 1911. Miraculously the ship's captain and crew survived the wreck and were rescued by local pioneers.

The remains of the wreck are buried under the sand in the shallows at Mandalay Beach and are only revealed every 5 - 10 years when the beach recedes. Therefore, to share the story of the Mandalay with visitors to the site an interpretive exhibit was erected in the early 1990's by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management. However, overtime the exhibit became deteriorated and was vandalised.

In 2011, to mark the 100th anniversary of the wreck, the Warren Region PVS staff decided to develop a new interpretive feature to enhance the visitor experience at Mandalay Beach.



THEN (left) - the original exhibit (photo circa 1990s) and NOW (right) - new exhibit installed

## All hands ahoy!

Warren Regional Interpretation Officer - Bron Anderson - and PVS Interpretation Officer - Alena Kessell - launched the project in mid-2011 and worked with various DEC staff, WA Maritime Museum staff, volunteers and the local communities to develop the story for the new interpretation exhibit.

The Walpole and Nornalup communities were invited to contribute to the Mandalay story and they came forth with enthusiastic support for the project.

Descendants of the local pioneers, who assisted with the rescue of the ship-wrecked crew in 1911, donated scans of old family photos and letters that were relevant to the Mandalay story.

Local historians provided references and research material that they had collected about the Mandalay story.

The Walpole and Nornalup Districts Historical Society contributed old and recent photos of the Mandalay shipwreck on Mandalay Beach.



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## Running a tight ship

With so many contributors to the project, communication was a vital ingredient to ensure that the Mandalay story was comprehensive, accurate, succinct, and agreed to by all involved, prior to submitting the text and images to the Sign Design Studio for sign development. This process required;

- regular meetings and telephone / email communication with everybody involved in the project;
- showing constant courtesy and gratitude towards volunteers for their involvement in the project; and
- allowing enough time for everybody (staff and volunteers) to provide their comments on and/or endorsement of the draft text for the new signs.

The thorough communication prior to submitting the sign brief to the Sign Design Studio resulted in only ONE required change to the first draft of the new signs. Which, therefore, enabled a smooth and speedy sign design and production process.

DEC designer Shaun Bunting creatively combined the text and imagery provided in the sign brief to produce three beautiful new signs to tell the Mandalay story.



## Prepping the deck

PVS staff from DEC Walpole worked hard to prepare the site for the new interpretive exhibit. They re-built the wooden platform and railings and created a frame for the new signs that resembled a ship's wheelhouse cabinet.

The wooden deck and the 'wheelhouse' styled sign frame added to the story of the Mandalay because it created the impression of standing at the helm of a ship. To add to this maritime experience, we added an interactive feature - a ship wheel - which we ordered from an online website!

## Success with flying colours!

It is amazing what you can achieve with a modest budget, good communication and the involvement of the local community. The collaborative efforts of various DEC staff, volunteers, and the local community resulted in a successful interpretation project that had a huge amount of local support. So much so that the project has been nominated for an award in the WA Heritage Awards for 2013 for 'an outstanding interpretation project that enhances a place'.

## From the designer's desk:

I hear you ask, how can I achieve minimal edits during the design process? Well, that's easily answered! Take a leaf out of Alena's book and get all your text approved prior to submitting the job. It makes it a pleasant experience with a faster turn around, not just for the designers but for everyone involved.



THEN (photo 2011)



NOW

# Embracing the Change

Karen Shaddock

The drive along Mundaring Weir Road has recently changed, no longer will you see the outdated mission brown and white routed timber signs, often overlooked by visitors. That's right, Beelu National Park has now been re-signed at all its major recreation sites, at road decision points and at its major Park Boundaries with the new DEC Sign System in the Jarrah Marri Colour Palette.

It can lay claim to being the first National Park in the metropolitan area to embrace the change on such a grand scale.

Perth Hills District used their maintenance budget to replace the old signs with the new. By using the team at the Jarrahdale workshop for the frame manufacture they dramatically cut the cost of having the frames made through external metal work companies.

As attested to on a recent visit to Beelu, the team at Perth Hills have done a fantastic job and the recreation sites now have a new lease of life.

Other parks and reserves that have embraced the change to the new DEC Sign System and their relevant colour palettes include:

- Windjana Gorge - all signs are now in the new system
- Geikie Gorge - the majority of signs are done
- Purnululu - 2 major campgrounds are done and installed, with the whole of park now sign planned and being mocked up by the Studio with the aim of having them in place for the 2013 visitor season
- Mirima - park boundary signs done
- Parry Lagoons - reserve boundary signs done
- Shark Bay WHA - all the recreation areas with Francois Peron are done
- Fitzgerald River - most of the Eastern Precinct is done and the Western precinct is not far behind with the sign plates and frames now ordered.
- Torndirrup - all the signs are now done and being installed throughout the Park as time permits.
- The Walpole Wilderness Area and Frankland District parks have had the majority of the park boundary and major recreation sites done

- Tuart Forest National Park - has the majority of its signs done
- Wiltshire-Bulter National Park - has its park boundary signs done
- Lesueur National Park - all signs done
- Pinnacles Desert - all signs done, and Nambung National Park has all its routed signs now painted in the new colour palette with new Park Boundary signs along Indian Ocean Drive in the new system and colour palette.
- Many of the small nature reserves in the Esperance District, including those way out on the Nullabor are now painted in the new colour palette.
- Peak Charles is the first of the parks within the Great Western Woodland to move to the new colour palette and there is a larger order of park boundary and directional signs currently being quoted for production.

Recent colour palettes that have been approved include:

- Yawuru Conservation Estate with a number of park boundary signs currently being quoted for production.
- Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park & Ngari Capes Marine Park
- Jurien Bay Marine Park, an order for Park Boundary signs are now in the Studio for design and quoting.
- Yanchep National Park





# Seriously Dude!

Karen Shaddock

A commonly heard complaint that drifts over the walls from the designers is 'how many words, you have to be joking'.

In fact a conversation held this morning revolved around that very subject. It was about an email I had just received from an external friends group with regard to a sign they were proposing. They had earlier come to me for advice and I had sent them some information and examples. What they sent back was a draft sign layout for my comment.

An extract from the email reads 'I know DEC usually keeps the information to a minimum, however please let me know if you have any suggestions or comments on the contents.'

So I open the file and what I see before me is so many words that 'Seriously Dude' pops out of my mouth before I can stop myself.

The sign they are proposing, which admittedly won't be on DEC land, is 800 x 600 in size. A DEC sign of this size has around 150 words. This proposed sign had 325 just in the first column, with a grand total of 569 words, not including the heading.

It's graphic content was a tiny picture stuck up in the top right corner and some sort of watermark along the bottom, behind the text which was 11 point.

Now I know that not everyone has had graphic design experience, but I would be hard pressed to think that anyone would look at this sign and think it was legible, let alone appealing enough to make someone stop and read it's content.

The reality is that most visitors are not coming to your recreation site to read a sign, research shows that as little as 2% of visitors will read a sign in its entirety, you can up the number if you make the sign appealing, both in content, number of words and design.

We use the 1/3 principle, a industry standard for graphic design, to try and raise the percentage for you. Basically it is 1/3 text, 1/3 graphics and 1/3 white space. This is why we have word limits, this is why we ask for a range of illustrations or photos to be provided, this is why we have templates we work within.

Our word limits are not there to make things harder, in fact they are there to make things easier for you to get your message across to the visiting public.

## Your audience can be broken into:



The Streaker  
93%

The Stroller  
5%

The Studier  
2%

There is a saying here in the Interpretation Unit that we often utter 'Be Brief, Be Brilliant', we appreciate when you try and when you don't well Seriously Dude you'll be hearing from us about chopping the word count.

Just in case you don't know or have forgotten here are the word counts (including photo captions) for DEC signs:

400 x 300 signs - 60 words

600 x 450 signs - 80 words

800 x 600 sign - 150 words

900 x 1200 signs - 250-275 words

After all would you stop and read this:



Thankfully not one of ours,  
800 x 1200 in size

# Watch out for : *Interpretation splatters*

an ad hoc 'HOT topics' email update.

*A chance for all of us to share any interesting interpretation news or useful online resources. If you find a website you would like to share take the time to email the URL to Jacki and before you know it 'Interpretation splatters' will be hitting selected inboxes.*

## *Our Next Issue:*

We want *Interpretation matters* to be a point of reference and we need your input to make that happen. Please feel free to provide feedback and to share your stories and projects. We look forward to photos of jobs in-situ, anecdotes from the field ... you get the drift.

Please email these to *Jacki* so she can compile for the next newsletter.

*Deadline for article submissions is July 2013.*

## *Who's Who & What we do...*

*Interpretation is the craft of enriching visitor experience. It stimulates interest and appreciation for natural and cultural resources and promotes actions that support their conservation and management. Interpretive media may include guided walks, talks, drama, demonstrations, displays, signs, brochures and electronic media.*

Our Unit provides advice and consultation on a variety of interpretation services, including: Interpretation Planning, Standards Development, Sign and Display Design, Training, Consultancy Projects and Evaluation. To find out more go to [our intranet site](#).

### **Meet the team**

Jacki Baxter - Acting Interpretation Unit Coordinator  
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### **Enquiries:**

- Jacki Baxter - Sign Planning, Submitting Interpretation Projects, General Enquiries
- Gil Field - Strategic Planning
- Karen Shaddock - DEC Sign System & Signs (Management, Risk, Directional)
- Lorna Charlton - Communication Planning

The Interpretation Unit works in close conjunction with the Recreation and Landscape Unit whose staff can be contacted for information or advice on hardware for visitor facilities including display shelters.