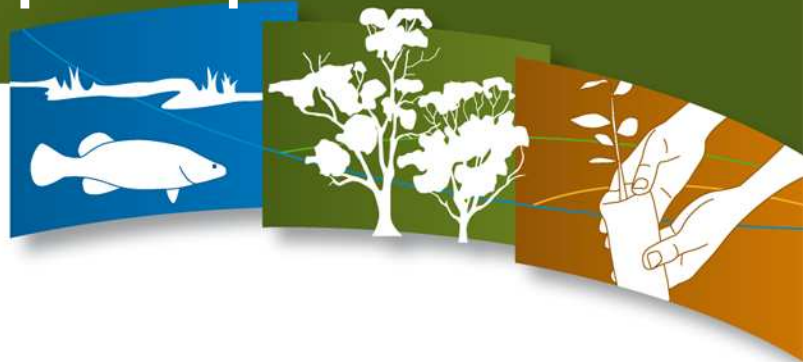


The Loddon River from an Indigenous perspective



Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

The Indigenous communities traditionally linked to the Loddon River and Tullaroop Creek are the custodians of cultural heritage along these waterways. The Indigenous people of the area have occupied its landscapes for millennia and continue to have a strong affiliation with it.

The way of life along waterways

The waterways and wetlands provided a ready supply of water, fish and other fauna. Aboriginal camps tended to be in close proximity to water and so there is a high concentration of Aboriginal artefacts in these areas.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal people occupied most of the Loddon catchment. The riverine environment of the lower Loddon would have provided a relatively rich diversity of food sources. Plant foods were the mainstay of the Dja Dja Wurrung, with hundreds of plants, such as the Myrrnong, Cumbungi and Nardoo being exploited. The early white settler Henry Godfrey recollected the Aborigines' use of canoes to raid the nests of ducks and other water birds along the lignum-lined creeks for their eggs.

Clues to the past

There are numerous mounds (often called ovens or middens) along the Loddon River. Middens most likely contain charcoal, animal bones, freshwater mussel shells and other stone artefacts. Some middens were often used as Aboriginal burial sites. Other evidence of Dja Dja Wurrung occupation can also be observed, including trees scarred by the removal of bark to make canoes, shelters, containers and shields. Other artefacts such as stone tools and axe heads also occur.

The territory of the Baraba Baraba and Wamba Wamba Aboriginal people included the Loddon River downstream of Kerang. A number of cultural heritage sites have been located, including mounds or ovens, graves, scarred trees and surface scatters containing freshwater shells, stone artefacts and burnt clay (Ross 1989).

Several towns along the Loddon River derive their names from Aboriginal words. Baringhup gained its name from the Aboriginal word 'barangoop', meaning place for drinking water (Willis 1988).

In 1840, the first company of white men crossed the Loddon River and took up land near the current township of Laanecoorie for a sheep run. Many of the Dja Dja Wurrung lived along the banks of the river at this point. The aborigines called it 'Languycoorie' which means long water hole, hence the name Laanecoorie (Cain undated).

Kerang Lakes

The Kerang Lakes are rich in Aboriginal history with over 400 Aboriginal sites recorded on the Victorian Archaeological Survey Register (Parks Victoria 2002).

Many Aboriginal sites have been located on the eastern shores and lunettes around the Third Lake, Middle Lake and Reedy Lake complex. Shell middens containing freshwater mussels are most abundant. Other sites include mounds, graves, hearths, artefacts, surface scatters and scarred trees (Ross 1989).



*A scarred tree is a culturally significant site.
Photo: Angela Gladman, North Central CMA.
Reproduced with permission from the Dja Dja Wurrung and Jaara Jaara people.*



Protecting cultural heritage sites

Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and areas are protected by legislation under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007*.

As Indigenous heritage sites and places are at the core of Indigenous people's physical, spiritual and cultural existence and identity, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria must be consulted regarding their identification, protection and enhancement.

Connection and belonging to places, landscapes and community

For Aboriginal people it may be difficult to separate the social and environmental services provided by cultural heritage sites as the people, their environment and their cultural beliefs are strongly interlinked. According to Aboriginal Dreaming, Aboriginal people were descended from the land at the time the earth was created. The people, therefore, are a natural part of the environment from which they are born (North Central CMA 2003). This creates a sense of belonging, attachment, custodianship and responsibility for the maintenance of the natural environment. This sense of belonging to significant places and landscapes is important for much of the community throughout the North Central CMA region.

Working together with Indigenous groups

The recognition that greater involvement of Indigenous groups is required in land and water management is encapsulated in the *Protocols, Principles and Strategies Agreement for Indigenous Involvement in Land and Water Management*. Implementing this agreement will foster open communication between Indigenous groups and natural resource agencies (North Central CMA 2003).

In maintaining Indigenous cultural heritage, it is vital that opportunities for Indigenous groups to rebuild their connections with the land are enhanced.

Would you like to find out more?

To find out more please contact:

North Central Catchment Management Authority
P.O. Box 18
HUNTLY VIC 3551
t: (03) 5448 7124
www.nccma.vic.gov.au

The Aboriginal Affairs Victoria website at:
www.dvc.vic.gov.au/aav.htm

The Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. website at:
www.koorieheritagetrust.com

Alternatively, next time you're in Melbourne take the time to visit Bunjilaka - Museum Victoria's Aboriginal Centre. To find out more, see the website at:
www.melbourne.museum.vic.gov.au/bunjilaka/

Information for this fact sheet was sourced from:

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- NCCMA (2003) *North Central Regional Catchment Strategy 2003 - 2007*.
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