

# 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY FEATURE

## NATURAL HERITAGE



### LAKE PLEASANT VIEW: A WADJELLA PERSPECTIVE

*Peter Murphy, Conservation Officer*

Located near Albany and on the fringes of Mt Manypeaks, the site covers approximately 6-hectares of land, with an awe inspiring monolithic granite outcrop peppered with overhanging rock shelters, waterholes and remnant vegetation surrounding a good part of its base.

There are a number of archaeological and ethnographic sites, with the most exciting discovery found to date, a piece of burnt shell belonging to a Long-necked tortoise.

It was found tucked away in one of the many ancient sheltered fire hearths. Archaeologists say the shell is around 12 000 years old.

On approaching the site, I couldn't help noticing a hive of human activity. There was a crowd of volunteers from Greenskills - pulling and spraying invasive weeds, such as Eastern States Wattle and Bridal Creeper. There was also a number of archaeology students from Flinders University, South Australia involved in archaeological digs under the supervision of archaeologist David Guilfoyle, with guidance from Nyoongar custodian and elder Wayne Webb. Other traditional owners present, including Vernice Gillies, and Treasy and Iva Woods also provided a warm welcome.

My work involved conducting a preliminary flora and fauna study, whilst exploring the sites long-term viability for retaining ecological and biodiversity values.

Large eucalyptus trees such as Marri, Jarrah and Yarri, and several large Hakea shrubs abutted the base of the monolith. I was thrilled to see the distinguishable shape of a cut-scar on a Marri tree.

Being careful not to disturb ancient fire-pits, or damage the remaining native plant species, I came upon several Bushtucker plants such as Billardiera, Leucopogon, Clemantis and Patersonia tucked away in small well-worn drainage valleys.



Lake Pleasant view - Wayne Webb and with Flinders University student Hayley Heffernan. P Murphy.

On reaching the summit, a spectacular vista was revealed including a 200-hectare freshwater wetland with Mt Pleasant as the backdrop. I tried to imagine from wadjella eyes, what it may have been like 12 000 years ago.

Staring out over the landscape, I reflected on Treasy Wood's story about how the lake and its surrounds came into being as part of Nyoongar tradition.

Over 30 species of native plants and at least 20 species of fauna were documented during my visit, including a number of small frogs seeking shelter amongst granite boulders from a rising midday sun. A number of gnamma holes peppered the monolith: evidence of a time when Nyoongar people understood the importance of conserving water.

As my feet finally touched the boodja (earth), most of the visitors were milling around a pot of billy tea - giving me a good opportunity to ask Vernice Gillies what the site meant to her and her people, particularly now that it was back in traditional owners hands.

"It gives my people hope... hope for our heritage, culture, tradition, and especially for our young people. But it's also symbolic in the reconciliation process," she said.



Marri Scar tree at Lake Pleasant View. P Murphy.  
Large eucalyptus trees such as Marri, Jarrah and Yarri, including several large Hakea shrubs abutted the base of the monolith. P Murphy.

### *The Story of the Lake - told by Treasy Wood*

*During the Dreamtime there were two sisters who both loved the same man, but he was very cruel and would beat both of them. One day they decided to run away together to escape his cruelty, but he eventually tracked them down and killed both of them. As both sisters lay dying from their mortal wounds, they cried and cried until their tears eventually filled the lake. Overlooking the lake (to the northwest) there are two noticeable hills, and each hill represents the place of their burial.*