



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 149

December 2018

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.

**Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith**

Wednesday, 5 December 2018

**Jeff Gresham & Tim Griffin**

**“Rivers, lakes, and craters: gems of the southern Kimberley”**

**Mount Claremont Community Centre, 107 Montgomery Avenue**

Wednesday, 6 February 2019

**Mike Donaldson & Andy Lemessurier**

**“Aerial landscapes & historic rock art:  
a helicopter excursion to the north-west Kimberley”**

**Mount Claremont Community Centre, 107 Montgomery Avenue**

Wednesday, 6 March 2019

**Joanna Sassoon**

**“Imagining early 20<sup>th</sup> century Broome through  
the photographs of E.L. Mitchell”**

Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meeting.  
The Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from non-members.

**See page 4 for details of our new venue.**

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

With the year lurching towards its end we can look back at another interesting year for the Society with some great talks on natural history (carnivorous plants, sawfish), Aboriginal culture (Sam Lovell, the German Frobenius expedition), adventure (Drysdale River descent, Kimberley coast), and commercial enterprise (sandalwood, mineral sands). We also celebrated the publication and launch in July of the Society's highly acclaimed latest book, *The Natural World of the Kimberley*.

Society membership has remained stable at around 200 for some years but we have not succeeded in attracting many new younger members, and the average age of members seems to increase by a year every year. And there are fewer people interested in taking on roles in the management and operation of the Society, so that the same few people bear all the burden and responsibility for its continued functioning. This appears to be a common problem with all sorts of organisations from learned societies to community groups and sporting clubs. It seems that there are too many other ways for younger generations to learn about issues and places, particularly via social media and the internet.

For the Kimberley Society, which has been going for 25 years, it is difficult to see its survival beyond the next year or so without a new generation of Kimberley enthusiasts. My second 3-year tenure as Chairman comes to an end at the next AGM in April 2019, and we are still unsure who will take on the role from there. Some long-standing committee members have already indicated they plan to step down next year, and continued compilation of the *Boab Bulletin* is becoming increasingly difficult with few contributors or volunteers to help with its production. Having someone willing to take notes at some of our talks would be a big help. Arrangements could probably be made to have the notes typed for the newsletter.

The Society is in a strong financial position thanks to continuing book sales; we have an impressive record of high-quality books produced following successful one-day seminars and I think the Society can be very proud of these achievements. We have also financially supported many research and community projects in the Kimberley, and our monthly meetings provide valuable opportunities for people to learn about Kimberley matters that are generally not available elsewhere. They are also important for face-to-face social interaction. Our website is a great store of information. As well as the summaries from our monthly talks, we have book notes about a wide range of publications. It's not surprising that many Google searches for Kimberley information lead straight to our site.

Elsewhere in this newsletter there is a reminder to renew membership for 2019, and details of a new meeting venue for 2019. I encourage you to renew your membership, and also encourage others to join and take an active role in the Society. We need this if the Society is to continue its valuable contribution to our community.

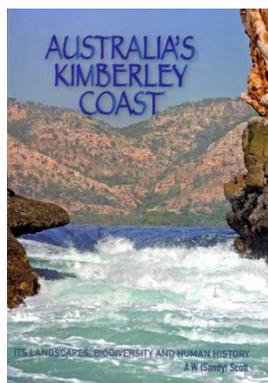
In the meantime, I look forward to seeing all of those members who can make it to our December meeting where, after the talk, we will enjoy the special Christmas supper that marks our last meeting of the year.

*Mike Donaldson*

## FROM THE EDITOR

A big thank you is due to Mike Donaldson for ensuring that our December newsletter was not embarrassingly short. A spinal fusion slowed your editor down but, all going well, things will be back to normal for the next newsletter.

## BOOK NOTE



***Australia's Kimberley Coast: its landscapes, biodiversity and human history*** by A W (Sandy) Scott. Axiom Publishing, Stepney, SA, 2018, ISBN 9781864768299, 338 pages, 240 x 165 mm, soft cover, full colour images & maps, bibliography, and index. Available through [Axiom Publishing](#), RRP \$59.95.

This is a substantially updated and expanded version of Sandy's 2015 book *The Kimberley Coast: a traveller's guide to its bays, basins, islands and estuaries*. Sandy has been a Guest Lecturer on Coral Expedition vessels *Coral Expeditions* and *Coral Discoverer* for some 20 years, explaining features of the Kimberley coast to interested passengers. He has embarked on considerable research relating to all manners of coastal features including European and Aboriginal history, geology, botany, marine and land animals and birds, habitats, and climates and tides. These are all covered in about 70 pages at the start of the book.

Most of the book relates to sections titled *Places to Visit* and these cover Lacepede Islands, Yampi Peninsula, Doubtful Bay, Saint George Basin, Careening Bay, Montague Sound, Vansittart Bay, Glycosmis Bay to Koolama Bay, and the Berkeley River. Each section contains detailed maps, line drawings and photographs to assist the reader in getting the most out of visiting these remote regions. Items of interest for each area are covered in text boxes and well-captioned photographs of geological features, unusual botanical species, and historical notes.

One noticeable omission in the book is any depiction of the Aboriginal rock art that occurs along the coast, although there is at least some mention of the more important sites such as at Ngumburi, near Raft Point in Doubtful Bay. This omission is presumably at the request of traditional Aboriginal owners, although this is not stated in the preface.

A very useful and well-illustrated publication for anyone travelling the Kimberley coast.

Kimberley Society provided financial assistance to help in drafting maps for this book, and Society members can get free postage from the publisher (normally \$14.95) until the end of January 2019 by quoting the shipping code KCBFREESHIPNOV on the Axiom webpage.

*Mike Donaldson*

## IN THE NEWS

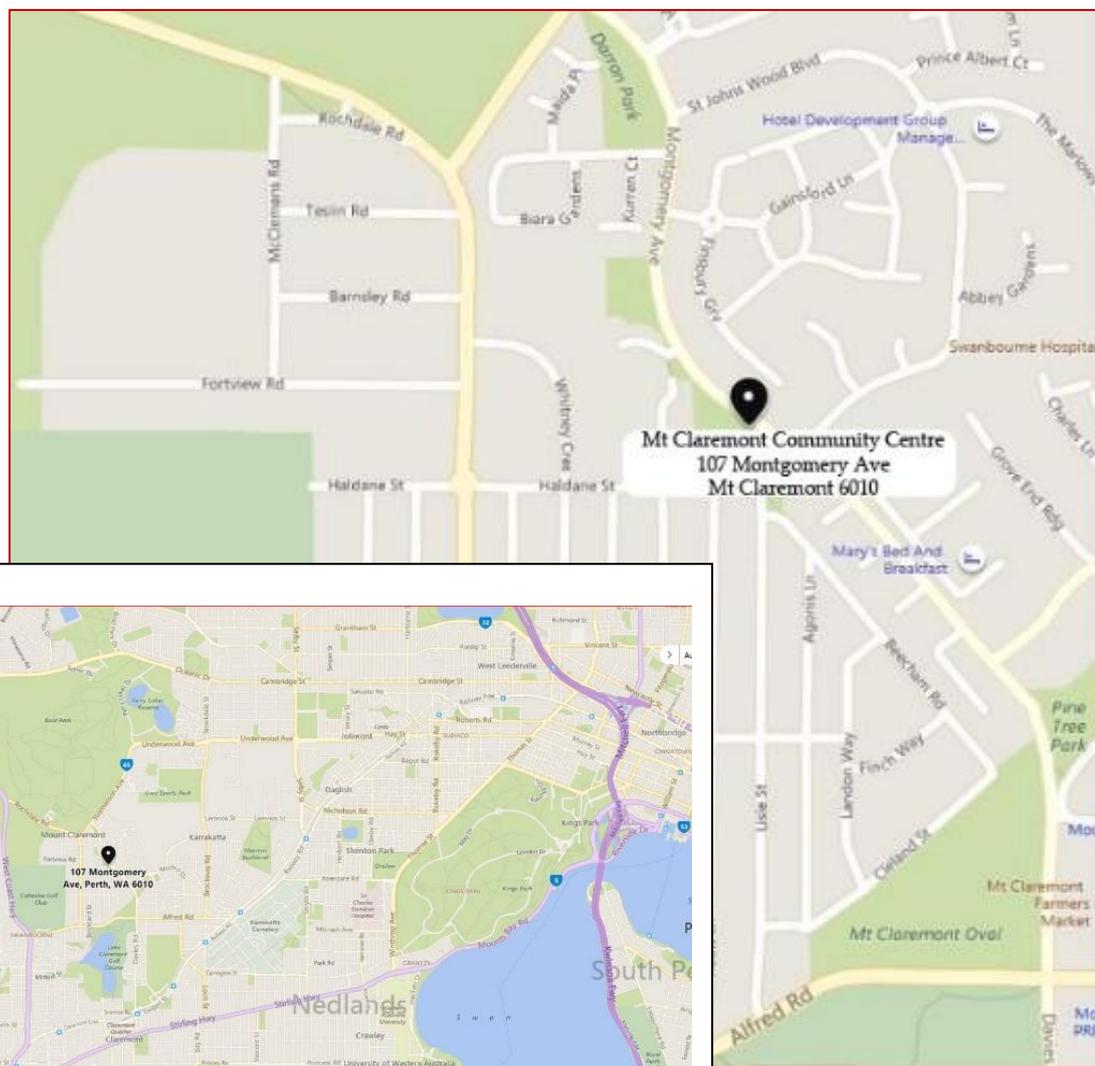
On 11 November, **Jason Carter** enjoyed a [headline](#) about putting Wyndham on the AFL map. Now eighteen, he was signed to the Dockers development program three years ago as part of their Kimberley zone. They have first access to him in the draft and, if he is selected, he will be the first AFL player to come out of Wyndham.

At the Australian Training Awards dinner in Sydney on 15 November, **Soleil White** was announced as the [Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year 2018](#). A Yarawu & Bunuba woman living in Broome, she recently completed a Certificate IV in Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, qualifying as an Aboriginal Health Worker, and is now undertaking a Diploma of Nursing.

Since May, when the WA Government began a 12-month trial to redirect Perth holidaymakers from Bali to Broome, [10,000 cheap fares](#) have been booked.

## NEW MEETING VENUE FOR 2019

The Society is moving house! After some years at the Dalkeith Hall, from the February 2019 meeting we will relocate to the Banksia Room at the **Mount Claremont Community Centre, 107 Montgomery Avenue, Mount Claremont 6010**. This is a much better facility for our meetings and will have a much improved screen for presentations and vastly improved acoustics. There is plenty of parking and a good kitchen facility for our suppers.



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE 1 JANUARY 2019

With a new year fast approaching, we encourage members to renew membership for 2019 by the end of January, either online by direct credit to the Society's bank account or by posting the renewal form attached to this newsletter with payment.

Subscriptions remain the same as this year and we encourage you to select email copies of the newsletter to help reduce costs and allow you to experience full colour images in the newsletter.

## **MORE FROM THE HOWARD COATE ARCHIVE**

Lay missionary Howard Coate recorded hundreds of myths from Worora and Ngarinyin people in particular in the 1940s and 1960s. These are some examples.

### **The native cat and the python**

Once upon a time when the birds, reptiles and animals lived like human beings they were allowed to marry any girl or boy from the different groups of people. So Widginurra [the Native Cat] chose a python for his wife.

It happened at a certain time that there was another tribe coming over to fight them. They could tell by smoke signals that they saw at daytime. So the Widginurra tribe quickly sent out spies to find out as to how very far the enemies camped or whether they could be their other tribal relations. The spies were already back in camp by sunset with the news about the enemies.

The men folk got their fighting weapons ready and told the women and children to run away and hide while they fought the enemy.

In the early hours of the morning the enemies raided the camp but the Widginurra's men were ready and fought their hardest till the sun rose. While the spears came pouring down on them Widginurra got a spear into his side so he was quickly taken away to a safe place and was attended by the women who were hanging closely around their menfolk. The enemy tribe were driven back and were beaten.

So the remaining tribe made another camp and waited till Widginurra got better again. As the days went by he got worse. He asked all the witch doctors to come along and try to make him better but they could not. His wife, the python, cried and cried because one of the witch doctors had said he would pass away when the sun set.

As soon as the sun set, he passed away. It is said his spirit must follow the sun rays to the other world. Although the man had been dead his wife and relations slept with him and made a big fire beside him until the morning.

In the early hours of the morning the wife left after smoking the camp as well as herself. It is done to this day by the women folk. The menfolk made a platform and put him on it and covered the body with paper bark and branches. The widow had already cut her hair and put black ochres all over her head and face. In the early hours of the morning and before the sun set she would gather bushes and make a thick smoke in which to smoke herself with; that meant that the spirit of her husband would not come to her or anywhere near the camp.

On the third day while the widow (after smoking herself) was sitting down, to her great surprise she saw her husband coming towards her, but instead of welcoming him back to the camp she only said, "Why did you come back to life again?" I have cut my hair and put on black ochre all over my head and face and now you come back to me again, so just turn around and go to your grave and die".

So the poor Widginurra did as he had been told and went back to his grave and died.

So that is why the python has a black head and the womenfolk do the same as she did as a widow (today).

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### **Sun**

There was great excitement in sun land because every sun wondered as to which one of them would go down to the other world to give its light to the people who lived in darkness.

While the daughter sun and rattler the snake were having an argument because the rattler wanted to be up there too, the sun said you have no bright glowing walking sticks like the ones that I have. But said the snake I do not need walking sticks and I can just slide up and through the pine trees without any trouble, but you will have to go through all that trouble if you go and your sticks would be caught in the pines and would waste a

lot of time struggling to free them. While all the suns were bathing in the clear fresh water the Mother sun said I will give light to the people in the other world. So quickly did her daughters collect the walking sticks and had given them to her then she slowly rose from the water, then up the bank, over hills, then suddenly she came to the pine trees. She struggled to get through but could not so she turned back to the river where she had come from. She told the rest she could not go through the pine trees.

Little sun said, "I have my chance now of going". She quickly got all her sticks together and had taken the same path.

Rattler the snake had gone on in front because he wanted to be up there first. He said, "I will wait half way past the middle, then when little sun comes along, I will bite her then I will rule the sky to give light to the people".

Little sun was lucky. She was able to get her walking sticks through the pine trees, then climbed up the sky. She was so happy, she forgot everything behind; she only whispered, "it's a pleasure having to give light to these helpless people of the world".

So she walked and walked, she was feeling happy but tired when she came to the middle of the sky. She stood up for a while, then started again.

Not very far from the centre, rattler sprung up and bit her all over. She tried hard to free herself, but could not. She got into a temper. She had been red hot boiling. At last she gave in, then slowly cooled down as she went further. She thought to herself, "I am near the end of my journey, but not quite, I have miles to go to Mother sun yet".

In the afternoon, round about 2 o'clock, the sun is very hot. People say it is then the rattler is having a fight with her. When the sun is cooling down and is further still, they say the snake has bitten the sun and she is suffering with pain, her eyes are becoming dim from the poison. She must use her sticks more. That is why the rays are seen better when the sun sets in the western sky.

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### **Mt Trafalgar and Mt Waterloo**

A story related by Bungami to Howard Coate probably in the early 1950's

For some days the tribe had been travelling towards the famous Rock. This massive rock may be seen for many miles around. It is one of the great landmarks of the country, its modern name is Mt Trafalgar, but the ancients knew it by a different name. From the time it was placed there it was called Ngunbaoguwa, which means, the place of 'her back'. It stands bolt upright from the surrounding plain.

The owners of this country love to hear the stories of these ancients and their deeds are told again and again as the places are visited in the hunting cycle by the people in the locality.

The younger ones learn the history and geography of the place as they move about and the older ones never tire of the repetition of these stories. Too soon these ancient names will be no more, the careless 'moderns' will never know of the heroes who walked the land.

The colourful meaning of the names given to almost every place lives with the mythology of the times. Each name bears a secret, a story or an incident and here is a wealth of stories that may be lost forever.

The Worora, for such was the name of this tribal group, were at last camped in the dry creek bed in full view of this magnificent rock. The few children were fossicking about on the banks chasing first one lizard and then another till the shadows of evening began to fall. They had no need to look for food, yet such is the hunting nature of all such naked little fellows they couldn't help themselves.

The people had only that day secured a very good haul of fish. The elders had taken the bark of a certain tree and strewn it on the waters of a nearby waterhole. The fish had become intoxicated, or stupefied; 'drunken fish' they call them. They swell up and float on the water. Quickly willing, skilful hands grasp these fish and throw them out on to the

banks to be dispatched or sometimes thrown straight on to hot coals. The bigger fish – barramundi and the like – are cooked in earth ovens in the same fashion as the kangaroo may be. No scraping off the scales, for when they are cooked all peels off and leaves the clean white flesh, a meal fit for a king. Cooking fires are seldom near the sleeping fires because ants are plentiful where the scraps have fallen. This too is the law of the ancients who left little to be desired for the welfare of the people.

The fires were flaring up as stars peeped out once more, and the tribal story teller was in good form. It would never do for one to take the place of such an orator. This position is like that of the 'Song-master' jealously guarded. Little stories or rather incidents by some of the older men were told and appreciated as could be estimated by the peals of laughter that rang out into the night. Gradually this gave way to the first gentle and then more vigorous click of the music sticks and then the elders broke out into songs concerning this massive rock. Songs about the hammer-headed shark and the other shark, the flying foxes and all the other animals that had taken part in bringing up this landscape marvel.

To the uninitiated these songs are not easy to follow but nothing was lost to the people in these days. When the singing was finished the orator began to tell the story, the history of the stone.

He spoke once more of the god-like ancients who had marked out the landscape. These mighty ones once walked like men. The ones in this particular area had longed, like many others have done to make a name for themselves so that they could be remembered by the generations following. It was to their honour and worship that these songs had been made.

Here they bemoaned the fact that their country was flat and had no distinguishing feature, nothing they could be proud about. No high place from which they could look out over the country or out into the great ocean. Younger men had suggested this or that but nothing satisfied, till one day the man of wisdom spoke. They called him O:ru-gude which means having his ears. The ears being the seat of wisdom the name had come to mean the 'wise one'. "Can't we look for a suitable hill and carry it?" He had heard the suggestions of others and was too wise to belittle these and when his own suggestion was made they all agreed. "Yes, yes, maybe we could carry one" they all said. They searched about in every direction and located one in the country of their neighbours north of them. It was a great mountain but too big; anyway, they all decided to look at it and see what could be done. The name of the mountain was Nunbunu and that was the one they had in mind. "We must have a memorial" they said, "something by which we can live in the memory of men forever."

After further consultation they set off walking single-file to their neighbours who owned the mountain. Fear filled the hearts of the people to whom they went when they saw the long, long file of men coming towards them. "What have they done" they said to each other. The mountain was a totem of these people, the residents of the place.

"What is it?" they hailed the coming men. Then they had a conference together and the travellers said "We have had this hill in mind for some time. We want it to be a memorial for us. We have been travelling for some time looking for such a hill and this would give the memory something to lean back on. It is most suitable."

"Well" said the locals "what about dividing it into two and you people taking half of it?" They put the matter to each other and were very glad. Satisfaction filled their hearts. "That's good luck" the Wunbanguites said. So they split it. "Now," said the locals, "what about you fellows lifting it up? We can't help you along with it, we have done our part, we have given you the stone" – as much as to say, that is surely enough! They lifted it onto their shoulders and struggled along with it. In one place they swam with it. They rested it in mid-ocean and called it Naradjabanara. They went on with it to a place called Njurinbana. There they put it down. "Oh, wait a bit and let's have a spell" they said. They put the matter to each other. "Right-oh" they said to each other, then they hoisted it up and pushed it along as it were, on their shoulders taking it along over there.

They cut across the Hunter River, before the sea was there. At the mouth of the Prince Frederick Harbour they cut across to the point. They only took it that far at this stage. "Oh, let us put it down and get our wind, our shoulders are getting very sore" they said to each other. "Well, we'll put it down first at Mlindjargad, the eating place." So that's what they did, they put it down while they were resting. "Then they got up and carried it to a place like from there to there," said the speaker as he pointed with his long bony finger. Their shoulders were already soft and they had become bow-legged under the weight of the great rock. "Oh, let's put it down" they said, "our shoulders have had it". Oh, we'll put it down at Wulunguri – the 'joint' place, there our thoughts can lean on it – reflect on it. They also had a rest at the 'dog-calling' place.

They rested it on a sandy place. "It's moving, Oh, it's moving, it's going on" they yelled. "Well, we'll take it on a bit" they said. "Just edge it along" they said. "We'll put it properly at the Balanbalanna, the 'shining' place. We'll take it carefully and put it down firmly." They got it in this direction. They pierced the clouds with it. They bent it over this way. "It's slowly slipping" they said. "Let us pick it up properly while all the people have gathered round. Call out to everyone to come and help us." Then the hammer-head shark and the two kinds of stingray, all the animals and fish came, for these were still men. There also was the crab and the two kinds of mud snakes, the black and yellow mangrove snake, then the cranes and the water rats and other breeds of rats and the possums. All these stood in a bunch. The Wunbanguites and the circumcised flying foxes and the Gowarites – another variety of flying fox. These edged it along while the crab was crawling along.

"Hi, dig underneath it" they told the crab. "Alright," replied the crab, "I'll lift it from underneath." While he went underneath they balanced the mountain on this way from the sides and back.

"You flying foxes, hook your claws in and lift it up from the top, or that fellow might get pinned" they said. They were watching out for the short-backed crab. They were constantly giving each other advice about this big job. This Mount Trafalgar leans towards the East. Already it was moving away and became heavy for the ones on top, the ones who were holding it from the air. They were the flying foxes. They dropped it and pinned the crab underneath. There was a great cry "Hi, you shouldn't have done that, it smashed him, it smashed shorty away down there". That's how his back became flat. The top-ones were the cause of the accident when they lost their grip. Then after a while they got hold of it properly. The ones below kept hanging on. "Hi! We want to pull him out. The fellow pinned underneath is struggling" they said. They managed to lift it for a while and they pulled him out.

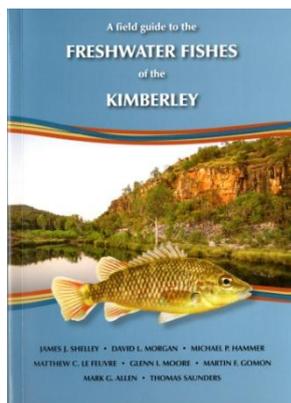
"Only one piece of the mountain is bothering us and we can't do anything with it" they said. So they took the piece they couldn't do anything with and made (Mt Waterloo) Nubunari. This is what the Wunbanguites did and then they were satisfied.

"Ah, we went a long way for it" they said and then they danced till their very livers were expanded — till they were filled with joy. Our purposes are established. This is wonderful, the mountain looks so high. The level ground wasn't suitable before. It had no mountain. They gave a great sigh and went their ways. The ones from the sea turned again to it. The animals and salt water-ites and snakes remained near the mountain. The two mountains are now the Ungur, spirit-centre places. It was right here the Wunbanguites shifted it along.

The old men again broke into song and to the clicking of the music sticks the children went to their camp fires to scrape little hollows to sleep in to dream of the time when the crab was squashed under the great rock and think once again of these wonderful heroes of days so long ago.

Editor's note: In preparing these stories for publication, Mike Donaldson introduced minor punctuation and spelling corrections.

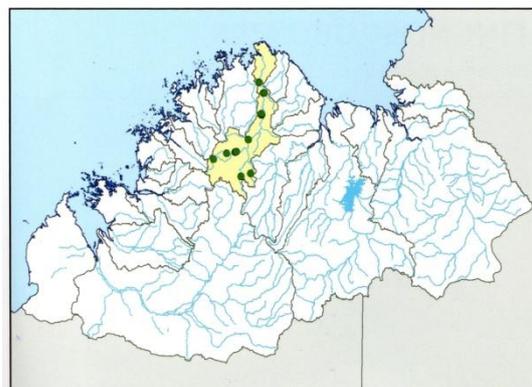
## BOOK NOTE



***A field guide to the freshwater fishes of the Kimberley*** by James J Shelley, David L Morgan, Michael P Hammer, Matthew C Le Feuvre, Glenn I Moore, Martin F Gomon, Mark G Allen and Thomas Saunders. Murdoch University Print Production Team, WA, 2018, 262 pages, 210 x 150 mm, soft cover, full colour images & maps. Foreword by Tim Winton. Available at Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory [Web Store](#). RRP \$20, plus, if relevant, \$10 postage within Australia.

This very welcome field guide is the result of a collaborative initiative between the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, University of Melbourne, Murdoch University, Museums Victoria, and the Western Australian Museum (which explains the long list of authors). There is also a vast list of people who have contributed to the research on Kimberley freshwater fishes, particularly traditional Aboriginal owners but also pastoralists and helicopter pilots.

The book highlights the diversity of the Kimberley freshwater fish and recognises 65 species, of which 32 are endemic to the region. There are brief introductory chapters on biogeography, historic climate change and biodiversity, evolution of Kimberley biodiversity, habitats, threats and conservation status of Kimberley freshwater fishes, Aboriginal languages, and classification. There is also a strong section on fish anatomy and line drawings of the main fish families to aid in identification.



The main body of the book comprises facing pages with a photograph of each species and a detailed map showing its distribution, as shown in the example above of the Drysdale Grunter (*Syncomistes rastellus*), a species endemic to the Drysdale River. Apart from general descriptions of each species, there are notes on recognition, biology and habitat, distribution, and conservation issues.

A great book that will be much appreciated by naturalists, fishers, and eaters.

*Mike Donaldson*

## PURNULULU WORLD HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The State Government is inviting expressions of interest for committee members of the Purnululu World Heritage Advisory Committee. An advertisement appeared on page 49 of *The Weekend West* on 17 November, with a closing date of 7 December. For more information, contact Bill Dempsey (Department Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions) at [bill.dempsey@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:bill.dempsey@dbca.wa.gov.au) or on 08 9168 4200.

## FRACKING

On 27 November, the [WA Parliament lifted a state-wide moratorium on fracking](#). That decision was taken while our printer was processing the hard copy of this newsletter. With more time available to finalise the electronic version, updating this brief report was feasible.

The Labor Government imposed the moratorium last year while an [Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry](#), chaired by Dr Tom Hatton, looked into the effects of fracking on the environment. The results of the inquiry have yet to be made public but, after talking with Labor insiders, journalist [Joe Spagnolo](#) wrote on 25 November that the report was “favourable” towards fracking and that the gas extraction technique was likely to be allowed in the State’s north. His article and others indicated that, if that decision was taken, it would please the [WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy](#) while disappointing [Environs Kimberley](#), the [Greens](#), and various other people who remain strongly opposed to fracking. In the Kimberley, Traditional Owners are divided on the issue. The [Nyikina Mangala](#), the [Nyul Nyul](#) and the [Yawuru](#) people are against fracking while [Yungngora Aboriginal Corporation](#) sees it as an industry that could help its young people to find work.

In the lead up to the recent vote, [Josie Farrer](#) – a Gidja woman and Labor Member for Kimberley – wrote a [Facebook post](#) on 24 June urging ‘all my Kimberley mob and the people of Western Australia to join me in keeping the pressure on the State Government until we see a full ban on fracking in the Kimberley and all of Western Australia’. By 11 October, almost 14,000 signatures had been collected on a [petition](#) that called for the Legislative Council to support a state-wide ban. About 600 people assembled outside parliament to witness its delivery. The petition was tabled a week later. On 8 November, a full page advertisement endorsed by Midnight Oil, The Waifs and 24 prominent people from the Kimberley and elsewhere supported Josie Farrer’s call for the ban. That advertisement sparked a stream of letters to the editor, some railing against the signatories, other arguing that fracking is safe. At least four Labor politicians declared their opposition to fracking but, by 26 November, several had taken the position that their scope might be limited to ensuring that it is properly regulated. When parliament decided to lift the moratorium, it added the Dampier Peninsula to the banned areas list, which previously had included only the South West, Peel and Perth regions. That concession goes some way towards recognising the strength of the opposition to fracking in parts of the Kimberley.

## COUNCIL 2018-2019

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