

A Guide to Poolgarla Walk Trail



Welcome to the Poolgarla Walk Trail

The Poolgarla (Bull Banksia) walk trail is one of three trails through the Banksia Woodland reserve. The reserve is located within Murdoch University's Murdoch campus and is managed by the University. It forms part of the Beeliar Regional Park.

The Poolgarla Trail is 1km in length, with interpretive signage linking the six Nyoongar seasons to the flora. Enjoy a walk and discover what is flowering during these seasons and the Nyoongar uses for them.

The trail can be enjoyed as a self-guided walk or by joining one of the occasional guided walks by the Murdoch branch of the Wildflower Society. Come experience and learn about the intricacies of the Banksia Woodland and its special place on the Murdoch campus and in Nyoongar culture.

This reserve is precious. Please help us protect this area from the spread of dieback and other plant diseases by staying on the paths and ensuring your footwear is clean before entering. Consider cleaning your shoes before leaving home with a brush or spraying with metholated spirits. Take only photographs; leave only footprints.



History of the Banksia Woodland Reserve

The lands now used for Murdoch University, Beeliar Regional Park and the Banksia Woodland were first used by Nyoongar Whadjuk people to move between the freshwater lakes and wetlands. Here they hunted and gathered a huge diversity of plants and animals to be used for food, medicine, shelter, tools and utensils. More recently, much of this region was used for grazing horses, cattle and sheep, and was planted with pine trees (*Pinus pinaster*) for timber.

The Banksia Woodland is unique in the region because it was logged for native timber (jarrah and marri), and used for grazing, but it was never part of the pine plantations. Therefore, the reserve has retained much of its precious soil structure and native plant diversity. A remnant of the old post and wire fence still stands near the Poolgarla walk trail's northern side. The walk trails were constructed by Murdoch University in 1994 and the University conducts ongoing significant environmental restoration projects to protect the Woodland's biodiversity values.



Pine plantation in the early 1950s – South Street is the curved road at the top right hand corner. Chelodina Wetland, now at the centre of Murdoch University's Campus, is centred in the photo, the edge of North Lake can be seen on the top left hand corner.

Location

The Banksia Woodland reserve is located at Murdoch University's Murdoch campus. Access any of the three walk trails through the Banksia Woodland reserve from Campus Drive, which comes off Farrington Road. An informal parking area is available off Campus Drive adjacent to the Somerville Baptist College, but please do not park in the College's grounds or on vegetation (see adjoining map).

Acknowledgments

Murdoch University stands on Whadjuk Nyoongar land. The University manages the Banksia Woodland reserve in conjunction with the Murdoch Environmental Restoration Group (MERG) as part of the Beeliar Regional Park. These information leaflets, and the interpretive signage along the Koorlo walk trail, were developed with Environmental Community Grant funding from the Department of Environment and Conservation. Photos supplied by Keith Lightbody, Leah Knapp, Neil Goldsborough, Tony Kirkby and Jiri Lochman.

Climate Watch

The Banksia Woodland is a Climate Watch trail. Record your observations about selected flora and animals on the Climate Watch app, and help scientists understand how climate change is impacting on biodiversity all over Australia.

Species of interest to Climate Watch are indicated on these brochures with a green and white dotted circle logo.



The Six Nyoongar Seasons

BIRAK (the fruiting)

December to January

This season is characterised by hot and dry easterlies with afternoon sea breezes. Nyoongar people would be fishing on the coast or in the estuaries using kaili (fish traps) and spears. Birak was also the time of firing of the shrublands to open the space up for hunting. This was done in a mosaic pattern to provide areas of refuge for animals.

Flora

Moodjar
Nuytsia floribunda
Christmas tree

The Moodjar is a root hemiparasite, which means it is photosynthetic and obtains water and mineral nutrients from its hosts. Nyoongars enjoyed the sweet gum that exudes from wounds on the trunk, which was collected and eaten raw. The tree is usually hard to spot, but during Birak the canopy is filled with a stunning mass of bright orange flowers.



Fauna

Bambi
Nyctinomus australis
White-striped mastiff bat

Bambi are chocolate-brown to black with two white stripes at the junction of wings and body. They are the largest bat found in the Perth region at 9cm and are the only bat in the region whose call is audible to humans. The "ting...ting...ting" sound can be heard at night. All bats are very active during Birak, feeding on an abundance of insects above the tree canopy. Bat boxes have been installed within the Banksia Woodland to create additional bat roosting habitat.



MAKURU (the wet)

June to July

During the season of soaking rains, Nyoongar people moved inland to the Darling Scarp to escape the cold coastal winds. This was the season for collecting meel (swan) and unana (duck) eggs. They would gather edible fungi and the fruits of the gandala (*Persoonia saccata* or snottygobble). The new season's crop of djita (orchids), kulang (bloodroots) and kara (milkmaids) were also gathered.

Flora

Djita
Pterostylis vittata or
sanguinea
Banded Greenhood

Pterostylis sanguinea is a brown, or sometimes green, orchid while *Pterostylis vittata* is green-white. It can be very hard to tell the difference. Look for them from May – the first orchids of the wildflower season in the Banksia Woodland. They are in full flower during Makuru.



Fauna

Kumal
Trichosurus velpecula
Brush-tail Possum

The Kumal is a nocturnal, semi-arboreal marsupial that mainly feeds upon eucalyptus leaves (a folivore), but is also known to eat flowers, small mammals (e.g. rats), grubs and insects. Its tail is prehensile and naked on the underside which helps it grip tree branches, much like an extra hand. Kumals shelter from the cold, wet, weather in large hollows in old tree trunks.



BUNURU (the hot and dry)

February to March

Bunuru's hot easterly and northerly winds were a signal to Nyoongar people that it was the best time for collecting kula (native plum), kogain (zamia nuts) and parrot eggs, spear fishing for jilgi (marron) and hunting for karta (monitor lizard). Various housekeeping activities were undertaken, such as making wandi dishes in preparation for the group's autumn travels inland.

Flora

Marri
Eucalyptus calophylla
Marri

The common name 'Marri', is from the Nyoongar word for blood, which refers to the reddish 'kino' gum that seeps through the trunk's bark. The fruits, commonly called Honkey nuts, carry large seeds that provide an important food source for some species of parrots, including black cockatoos. The flowers, prevalent during Bunuru, also provide a nectar food source for cockatoos and other birds.



Fauna

Karta
Varanus gouldii
Gould's Monitor

The Gould's monitor is a ground-dwelling lizard that excavates large burrows for shelter. It is diurnal, meaning most of its activities take place during the day. If startled or threatened, this goanna stands on its rear legs and runs very quickly to climb to the highest point nearby. It is a relentless forager, so look out for its foot and tail prints across the sandy tracks. It is also known as the sand goanna, the sand monitor, or racehorse goanna.



DJERAN (first rains - first dew)

April to May

Djeran's cooler winds from the southwest bring night time dew and sometimes frosts. Nyoongar people would begin moving inland from the coast, stopping along the way at coastal lakes to hunt buyi (tortoise), meel (swans) and unana (ducks). Kangaroo skin cloaks were worn with the fur facing in to shed rain and stay warm.

Flora

Djiriji
Macrozamia riedlei
Zamia

Nyoongars knew that the nuts from the Djiriji (on the male plants), which were ready in Djeran, were edible if soaked and buried for a long time first. European settlers tried to eat them raw, which resulted in cyanide poisoning. Djiriji are from an ancient genus of plants, *Macrozamia*, which includes up to 40 species of cycads that are endemic to, or only found in, Australia.



Fauna

Buyi
Chelodina oblonga
Long-neck or oblong turtle

The Buyi's remarkable neck can be even longer than its body length. Buyis are members of a group collectively known as 'side-necked turtles', due to the characteristic manner in which the neck is retracted sideways in front of the shell leaving the head exposed. Buyis are found in the *Chelodina* Wetland on Murdoch University's Murdoch campus. They can venture in to the Banksia Woodland to lay their eggs, which hatch during Djeran.



DJILBA (time of flowering)

August to September

Nyoongar people began to move westward toward the coast as the weather warmed. Along their journeys they collected bird eggs such as gnowan (mallee hen), fungi and worin (yams), hunted quenda (bandicoot), onger (kangaroo), kumal (possum) and speared fish. Stone axes and other tools were also made during this season.

Flora

Djara
Eucalyptus marginata
Jarrah

Nyoongars used Jarrah to create the boomerang and wandi (dishes) because of its strength and durability. Pieces with natural curves in them were highly sought as they already had the necessary shape. Today, Jarrah is valued as a beautiful timber for furniture making and construction. Jarrah trees flower from June to January, providing nectar for birds, and later small gum nuts containing seeds favoured by black cockatoos.



Fauna

Quenda
Isodon obesulus fusciventer
Bandicoot

Nyoongars called this small marsupial 'Quenda'. They have muscular bodies and strong legs for digging for insects and fungi. Look for the tell-tale small conical holes in the ground as you walk the trail. Quenda are vulnerable to predation by foxes, cats and dogs. Their conservation is dependent on having dense habitat for nesting and migration. They are a 'priority' species for conservation, and are sometimes referred to as 'urban refugees', as urban growth has isolated small populations in vegetation remnants amongst suburbia, such as at the Murdoch campus.



KAMBARANG (the flowering)

October to November

Springtime in the Banksia Woodland is the height of the wildflower season. Groups of Nyoongars began returning to the Swan Coastal Plain, taking advantage of this area to hunt wooda (bronzewing pigeons), dowerin (ringneck parrots) karta (monitor lizard), yorn (bobtail), ulart (blue tongue lizard) norna (tiger snake) and dugite, and collect buyi (tortoise) eggs.

Flora

Balga
Xanthorrhoea preissii
Balga

During Kambarang, the female Balgas produce a long, vertical flower spike, visited by many insects and birds for its nectar. Balga was an important plant to Nyoongars because it had so many uses. The flowering spike made the perfect fishing spear and its flowers were soaked in water to make a sweet drink. The leaves were used to create mia mias (shelters) or bundled together to make fire torches.



Fauna

Merops ornatus
Rainbow Bee-eater

Rainbow bee-eaters are brilliantly coloured birds that grow up to 24cm in length (including their elongated tail feathers). They migrate here from northern Australia, New Guinea, and Indonesia, arriving in October (Kambarang) – a long trip to eat our bees and other bugs! They nest in tunnels that they dig into the bare ground, which makes them vulnerable to attack from foxes and dogs. Please remember to keep your dogs on a lead when in Regional Parks, including the Banksia Woodland reserve.

