

THE YALLOC BULLUK BUNURONG

The Yalloc Bulluk are one of the largest clans of Bunurong People. Their traditional land took in the eastern catchment of Westport Bay, also the catchment of the Powlett River, French Island and Phillip Island.

The Yalloc Bulluk, along with other Bunurong clans, the Burinyong Bulluk of Mornington Peninsula and the Lowandjeri Bulluk of the Tarwin River, were some of the first Aboriginal People in Victoria to make contact with European mariners and there are many documented accounts by these early mariners in archives all over the world.

An example is the journals of *Durmont D'Urville*, commander of the French ship the *L'Astrolabe*, who in 1826 records his visit to Westport Bay and reports seeing sealers, their Aboriginal wives and children. He also visited a Yalloc Bulluk village around where present-day San Remo now stands, here he reported that there was over 50 to 100 huts.

Like most other Indigenous Peoples, Yalloc Bulluk People changed with the seasons. Though a seasonal change didn't always mean a move to another camp, it almost always involved a change in diet as certain resources become abundant and others faded until the next season.

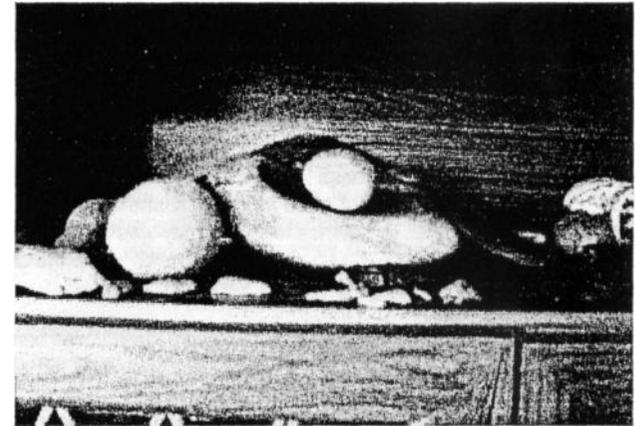
During the warm summer months, the Yalloc Bulluk would make bark canoes and visit French Island and Phillip Island to catch seal and mutton birds. Other days would be spent foraging the Westport Bays many tidal flats or the rocky platforms of the Bass Coast for their favourite shellfish, or perhaps fishing for snapper at the mouth of one of the many mangrove inlets that run into the north-eastern side of Westport Bay. A part of everyday was the 1-2 hours spent harvesting indigenous vegetables and fruits such as orchid bulbs or wild currents.

As summer came to an end the Yalloc Bulluk would begin making cloaks and rugs from possum and kangaroo skins, and collecting the flower stems of the grass tree, which was a favoured timber for making fire, and steeped in lore. The Yalloc Bulluk needed these things to survive but they would quite often make or collect a little extra for trade or as a gift for friends or family unable to get their own.

In winter, the Yalloc Bulluk would meet with other Bunurong clans or Koolin People at their favourite hunting grounds in the Dandenong¹, Bass Valley and Upper Powlett River. Here the People would co-operatively hunt kangaroos, wallabies, emus and possums, dig out wombats and snare small marsupials. They would catch eels and fish from the many creeks and swamps, and also harvest yams, the piths from the tree fern and Cumbungi. They would also collect the many mushrooms that grew in the damp weather.

The Yalloc Bulluk would also take special trips to the Gurdies to catch lyrebirds, whose feathers were prized for ceremonies and had spiritual significance; they would of course eat the bird.

As winter began to shy away from summer, the eiders of the Yalloc Bulluk would see the first blooms of the Ti-tree and declare it was once again time to travel back to the swamps and coastal lagoons for the egg season, when thousands of wading and aquatic birds would begin to nest and lay their eggs, swan eggs being the favoured type, and strict collection and management protocols applied to the harvesting of this much anticipated resource.



Various Aboriginal tools used in everyday life of the Bunurong People