

3

Walkabout

Bio-eco maps

My early research led me to wonder about the plants and animals people told me about and that we never seemed to see. Ethnobotany was a way of learning more about the plant world, and it turned out that memory was essential. The research into ethnobotany led to a more focused examination of ecological knowledge in general, and to questions of ethics. The research meshed with Victoria River people's continuing struggle for social justice. When I began discussing with some of my Aboriginal teachers the idea of undertaking more thorough documentation of ecological knowledge, Hobbles Danaiyarri approved the idea and said: 'Before *kartiya* [whitefellas], blackfellas bin just walking around organising the Country.' Like so many of his statements, this one carried embedded within it an implicit critique of colonisation. *Kartiya*, he implied, have been walking around disorganising the Country ever since they came here. In subsequent chapters I will explore concepts and patterns of organisation and will look at disorganisation. In this chapter I take up the issue of 'walking around'.

The ethnobotanical work and my previous ethnographic study had enabled me to draw up lists of plants. I wanted to make a concerted effort to locate plants that I had heard about for years but had never seen. Many of the plant species on which people used to rely are no longer within the range of motor vehicles or day walks. Most middle-aged and elderly people had a great deal of knowledge and understanding which could not be demonstrated because there were no accessible environments.

Along with ethnobotanical surveys, I decided to work with maps—to take memory journeys and revisit the places people had walked in their youth. I sought to document the foods they had eaten as they travelled, as this seemed an appropriate way to engage memory with plants, animals and place. Aboriginal Australians generally have superbly developed spatial memory, and stories of travelling, stopping and getting food constitute the structure and much of the content of Dreaming stories as well as personal and familial histories. Inspired by Hugh Brody's (1981) study *Maps and Dreams*, and by Paul Stevenson's work with the Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville Islands (1985), I decided to map people's travels, recording the places they went and the food resources they used.

Between 1986 and 1991, I carried out biographical-ecological mapping with 15 people who, if they were all alive today, would range in age from over 100 years to about 60 years. Ten were men, five were women. The maps document resources in some areas for which no scientific surveys have been conducted. In addition, they document distributions from a time which is no longer accessible. In accessible areas such as nearby billabongs, the maps document former abundance of some species which are now absent entirely, or present only sporadically and in scarce amounts.

I took an individual approach, conducting interviews with one person at a time, and encouraging others to save their stories for their own map. Usually, a group of people listened to the interview, and sometimes others commented on the stories offered by the individual who was the primary speaker. I limited the maps to footwalking; driving trips and mustering trips were excluded for the purposes of this study. Accordingly, I worked with people who had been born early enough to have become young adults before motor vehicles became widespread. I worked with 1:500,000 scale maps as I knew from experience that smaller scale maps were still not accurate enough to provide the level of detail that would allow one to retrace a particular trip step by step, spring by spring. Using inexpensive dye-line maps, I wrote directly onto the map, and taped the conversation. These interviews produced vast amounts of information above and beyond documenting travels and food, but in no way did they explore the full range of the participants' knowledge. Some people found the process of listing foods tedious and sped it up by lumping foods together (plum, instead of several different kinds of plums; goanna instead of different kinds of goannas). More significantly, however, I was asking primarily about food, as I had a list of foods for which no specimens had been found. My lists

did not include any medicines or technological items that had not been identified, and therefore I did not probe the locations of medicines and technological resources.

The interviews gave pleasure both to the participants and to the audience group. Every person who demonstrated a breadth and depth of knowledge of Country, resources and skills expressed pride in that fact, and we all became interested in finding out who had ‘the biggest map’.

The colonising regime

All the participants in this study were born into relationships with Country, with other species, with other humans, with song cycles and ceremony tracks, Dreamings, designs and with places of power, as well as with foods and water sources. They were born for Country, in short, and nothing that had happened in the course of their lives had altered these foundational relationships. They were, however, wards of the state and their human rights were severely restricted until the mid-1960s.

Colonising society had laid a grid of cattle stations over their Countries, and so they were born into relationships with these vast properties. They were ostensibly under the protection of the ‘crown’, and that relationship was mediated by the Protector of Aborigines (later the Department of Native Affairs, and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs). Locally, however, they were answerable to the police, the station manager and the station personnel.

Most of these people worked for Wave Hill, Humbert River and Victoria River Downs stations. They learned the Law for their own Countries and regions; they learned the detailed knowledge of Country that enabled them to keep themselves and their families alive when station rations were at starvation level or non-existent. During the 1960s and 1970s they walked off the cattle stations, withdrawing their labour and demanding land and justice. Following the walk-off they went to live in communities where they were, for some time, out from under the strong scrutiny of white authorities: Yarralin, Lingara, Daguragu.¹

1 The Pigeon Hole people returned to the same community, immediately adjacent to the homestead —eds.

During the working year, 'rations' were supplied to workers and dependants under a scheme whereby stations received the labour of the workers in exchange for food, which was subsidised by the Australian Government (Stevens 1974, 82, 91; see also Rose 1991). Reports by committees of investigation from early to late indicated widespread under-resourcing of rations. One effect of insufficient and inadequate food was to require people regularly throughout the year to rely on bush tucker as well as rations. One effect of sedentarised use of bush tucker was over-utilisation of resource sites that were within walking distance of the station homesteads where people lived for much of the year.

There were positive benefits to the reliance on bush tucker: people had a varied and more healthy diet than would have been the case if they had lived on rations alone (flour, sugar, tea and beef were the staples). Knowledge of foods and food processing techniques were kept alive. Children carried out much of the food gathering, working to feed their parents who were required in station work. Jessie Wirrpa described childhood walkabout with pleasure:

We used to, all the kids, we used to go down to the river and getem that mussel, make a dinner camp, boilem that mussel, and *yawu* [fish, generic], catfish or bream. Silver fish, little *danyan*, you know. We used to boilem that mussel, oh, big mob. Takem back for mother, family.

Debbie: This just all you kids been go walkabout?

Jessie: Yeah. All go down the big river, getembad mussels, all the kids. Longa Jirriket [Dreaming site for her, Jirriket Dreaming, discussed in Chapter 4] ... We used to [be] fishing all day, catchembad *yawu*, and afternoon we go back home, takem *yawu*, and mussels for mother and granny.²

There were also negative effects, as I have mentioned: long-term degradation of resource sites, and widespread malnutrition at various times and places (discussed in Rose 1991; see also Berndt and Berndt 1987 for an excellent discussion of the social factors of malnutrition and starvation in the 1940s).

The practice in the Victoria River District was to work the Aboriginal labour force during the mustering season (roughly, the dry season) and then to release them from labour and encourage them to go bush during the rainy period.

2 Jessie Wirrpa, tape 78, recorded at Yarralin, 13 July 1986.

Encouragement took the form of giving people a few rations and telling them to come back when it was time to muster again. People really had no choice but to go bush where they could get food to keep themselves alive during the time away from the station. In addition, the brutality of station life pushed people into the bush for longer or shorter periods of time (see Snowy, below).

Numerous scholars have noted that this period of enforced walkabout was a critical factor in people's efforts to sustain their relationships with Country, their knowledge of Country, and their religious and social practices. It must also be noted, however, that the rainy time of year is a time when travel is difficult and when resources are not yet replenished by the rains. Prior to colonisation, large inter-group gatherings took place just after the rains when travel was becoming easier, and many foods were in abundance. One of the effects of colonisation, therefore, was to shift the intertribal ceremonies from a period of plenty to a period of relative difficulty both in terms of available foods and in terms of mobility (see Dora, below).

In spite of the periodic hardships of the past, the participants in the map study spoke fondly and enthusiastically of bush tucker, and characterised today's reliance on money and *kartiya* food as negative factors in a number of dimensions (see Kitty and Hobbles, below).

Life histories

I present portions of four life histories; portions of many others are included throughout this book. I have not sought to include lists of foods in their words, or to describe every trip; rather I have extracted some of the most characteristic and some of the most distinctive parts of each interview. I distil the list of all foods mentioned by Snowy later. The main themes that arose in these life history interviews are happiness and pride, expressed through knowledge and nurturance. My purpose in presenting these texts is to enable people's own words to communicate in their own way.

As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4, my teachers divide the Victoria River valley into a number of ecological zones, of which three figure prominently in their lives: savanna desert Country, river (freshwater) Country and saltwater (tidal influence) Country. The home Country of three of the four teachers whose narratives are excerpted here is in river Country; the fourth is in desert Country. Three of the four speakers tell of their encounters with ecological difference. Their stories thus give us their own insight into the warmth of home place, and the recognition of difference.

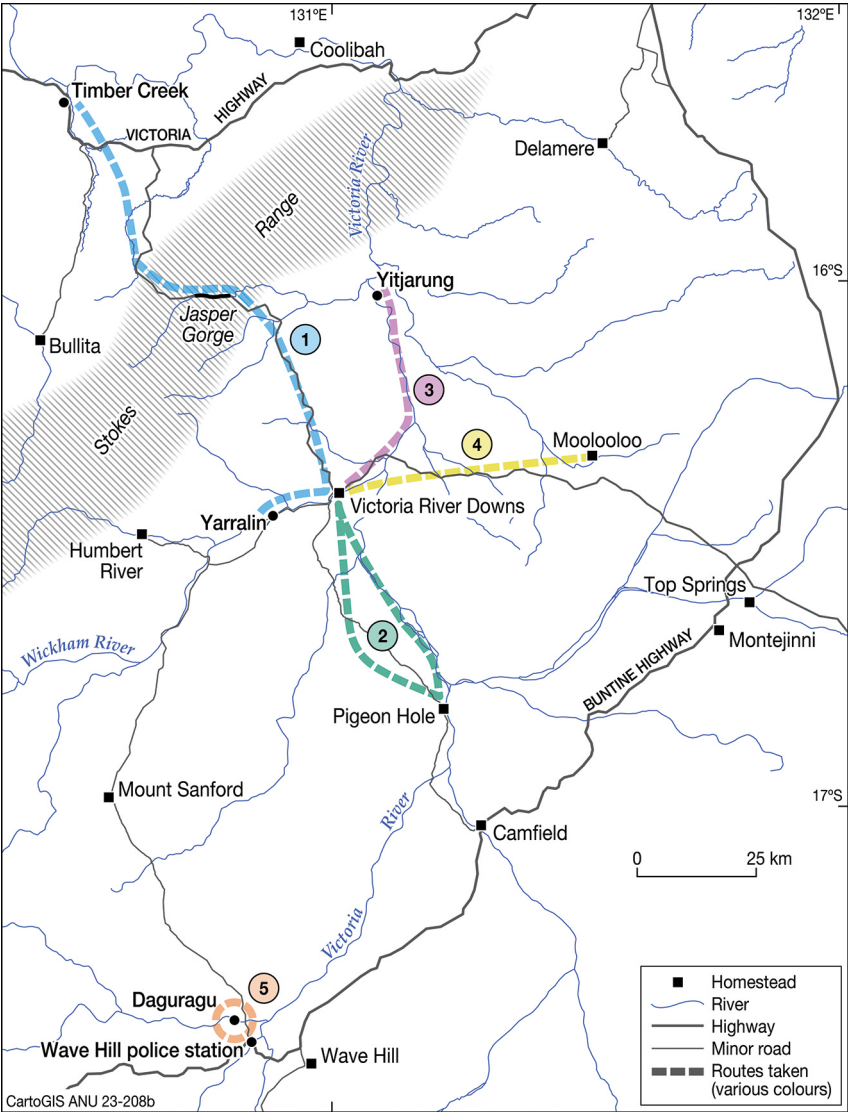
Dora Jilpngarri

Dora Jilpngarri was about 80 years old in 1986 when we made her footwalk map. She had been a valued employee of Victoria River Downs (VRD) station and spent most of her life at the head station (Centre Camp).



Figure 3.1. Dora Jilpngarri, Yarralin, 1982.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.



Map 3.1. Dora Jilpngarri's footwalk map.

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

1. *Jalyingarna* (sugarleaf – insect exudate on bloodwood), *janaka* (native rosella – inner of stalk eaten), *jikamuru* (water lily), *kakawuli* (long yam), *kamara* (black-soil long yam), *kilipi* (bush banana), *kitawa* (goanna), *kumpulyu* (white currant), *markul* (like a water lily), *mintarayij* (water lily), *muyin* (black plum), *namawurru* (tree sugarbag), *nankalin* (ground sugarbag), *ngamanpurru* (conkerberry), *pumparta* (lily seeds), *pampilyi* (vine berry), *purrungurn* (sugarleaf – insect exudate on river red gum), *tipil* (black currant), *wamatj* (*Livistona* palm), *wayita* (small tuber), *wilit* (small black fruit and spear shafts), *yamali* (fruit like a mango), *yarkalayin* (hairy yam).

2.	<i>Japungarna</i> (water goanna), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>yarkalayin</i> (hairy yam), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
3.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>kayalarin</i> (bush onion), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
4.	<i>Danyan</i> (spangled perch), <i>karayij karayij</i> (aka <i>martarku</i> , green plum), <i>partiki</i> (nutwood tree/seeds), <i>tuku</i> (freshwater mussel), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
5.	'Strike time' [this is when Dora was temporarily living at Daguragu], catfish (<i>warak</i> or <i>jalarlga</i>), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>warritja kambij</i> (crocodile eggs), <i>yawu</i> (fish).

I bin borning longa VRD. I bin born longa VRD.
We never go any way. I bin born there, longa VRD.
When I bin little bit big now, well mother bin take
me walkabout longa bush. Walkabout longa bush
this way, [to the] river. Any way, im bin takembad
me. Havem *wayita* [little tuber], havem *jikamuru*
[water lily], all right. We bin go longa [eat] *muyin*
[bush plum] and *tipil* [black currant, *Antidesma*
parvifolium], where im bin give me, growem up. My
mother bin only feedem up me la bush. All right.
Eatem *kilipi* [bush banana], and we blackfellow call
im *yamali*, like a mango, you know. Different way,
you know. Like a mango. We bin always, I bin always
havem *namawurru* [tree sugarbag]. And sugarleaf.

Sugarleaf is an insect exudate that appears on the leaves of two different eucalypts, one riverside and one topside. The two different eucalypts produce different flavours and textures of sugarleaf, and each is prized. Sugarleaf is a cold weather food and is harvested and processed by women. Dora continued:

Jalyingarna [one kind of sugarleaf]: im good.
And sugarleaf, nother sugarleaf *purrungurn*. Like a
porridge, im like a porridge. Longa riverside, no
more top—riverside. He sit up like a, he's sugarleaf,
only he's different, like a porridge. Sweet one. Same
[like] porridge, like that now. He's good tucker, all
the same. Im only [found along] river side. Put it in
a bag, and im good. Take im away. Wet im, and make
im round one like [a cake], and eat im, any way.

Jalyingarna longa bloodwood leaf, and nother
sugarleaf now, im longa *malan* [river red gum] ... Oh,
we bin always get a big mob there when I bin little

girl. I bin big girl too you know. Like that time. I bin always getembad [get sugarbag] meself when I bin big girl now. I bin always getembad meself. I bin do it, all the same. Mother bin always showem me, you know.

In speaking of childhood Dora kept returning to her mother's nurturance.

And nother one, nother one like a plum, *kumpulyu* [white currant]. And *kumpulyu*, Mother bin always feedem up me when I was little.

Memories of her mother triggered memories of sugarbag, the honey produced by native bees. It is classed according to where the bees make their hives: in trees, in the ground (under rocks), or in termite mounds. Dora's discussion of sugarbag brings together nurturance, knowledge and experience:

And mother bin always give it me sugarbag [native honey] from tree, mother bin always give it me. And *nankalin*, ground sugarbag. *Nankalin*, we call im, where im sit down in the ground. Good one too, eh? He can't make you sick, from ground, you know, sugarbag. He's good one properly, he can't make you sick. No mater how much you eat im, he can't make you sick. He's good one. Sugarbag longa tree, he'll make you sick when you havem too much, you know. Im makem you sick. No more that one longa ground. He's good one. He can't make you sick. Clean one too.

Along with her mother were all the old women, now passed away:

When I been longa VRD we been go holiday here, climb up la this Parlimulmul [on top of the Stokes Range]. Umbrella house, eh. Umbrella house [a massive boulder shaped like a mushroom, with a wide overhang all round]. We been camping out there, now we bin go that way, we been go that way, camp longa that nother place, right, we been go camp longa that nother place, might be Jilatmani, that one. All right, we been come back now. We been come back for go down long this Deep Creek. Right, that, that nother old woman been come up and tellem mefellow, 'Come on, let's go gettem that tucker. Big mob there.' Oh, we been gettem, fillem up longa all the billy cans, you know. Just washem and eatem. We been bringem down right up longa Deep Creek, that tucker.

Dora's father also nurtured her:

Ah, *makaliwan* [wallaby]. *Makaliwan*. My father bin always kill im longa [for] me. And rock kangaroo. Big one. *Jiya* now. *Jiya*—we call im that one.

Dora described travelling north from VRD Centre Camp to a waterhole called Larry's Lake. This was a regular trip for her family, and the retelling brought back memories of plenitude.

When we bin go Larry Lake, oh, we bin always eat im goanna, kangaroo. We bin always eat im all the way, go longa river, findem fish now, *yawu* [fish] now findem. Sit down longa river. Sit down longa *yawu*. Ah, sugarbag, we bin always find im. We bin always find im. We bin go, when I bin little girl like that, you know, we bin go right up. We bin right up there when I was little girl. My father bin always take me. And mother. Mother bin always taking me walkabout. We never hungry when we bin kids, you know. We never hungry. Mother and father bin always feedem we. We never bin hungry, little ones, little girl. They always feedem [us] up.

One of Dora's most memorable trips was the time she and her husband Jimmy, along with a larger group, walked, swimming across the rivers, to Coolibah Station for 'business'. Coolibah is about 120 kilometres as the crow flies from VRD Centre Camp and is beyond the riverine zone in which Dora's home Country is located. The group travelled through Jasper Gorge in order to get to Coolibah, and on the way they were caught by huge monsoonal rains. Having gotten beyond the range of Dora's and Jimmy's own knowledge, they had to rely on others in the group to teach them about the Country and different resources.

And going to Coolibah, that's [when I was] the big girl now, when I bin go married now. And me and Jimmy bin going there now. Long way that Coolibah. We bin going up the road [for] four months. Footwalk. Four months.

Too much wet weather, you know, rain bin all day, all day, all day. We never catch em up quick. Four months longa road.

Debbie: Up through *Kuwang* [Stokes Range]?

Dora: We bin cut across, you know. Longa that road, here [to] Potato Spring. Potato Spring this way, going up to Timber Creek ... Well after Potato Spring now, we bin go cut across now. Leavem that road. We bin going bush [cross-Country] now. Blackfellow road we bin followem. Blackfellow road. We bin go Jasper Gorge. We bin go from here [to] Jasper Gorge.



Figure 3.2. The Black-Headed Python Dreaming boab at Manjajku (Bottle Tree Waterhole), Jasper Gorge, 1982.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

We bin go from here right up to Gorge, longa that big bottle tree. We bin go down there. We bin find em that *walmatj* [palm tree, tucker], that *walmatj* we call im. They bin always break im, clean im up, they bin always give it we. We no more savvy that *walmatj*. We no more savvy eating *walmatj* before. We don't know. We bin try im—oh, im sweet! ... we bin likem eat im. We bin [keep] going up. We bin always findem little bit of *wayita* [yam] there longa road. That big *wayita*, you know, big one *wayita*. Proper *wayita*. Only big one. Different from this place [VRD], this one. That's big one *wayita*. *Minterpala* [we, inclusive] bin kill [dig up/cook] im and big mob, well all bin go, camp. Killem little bit of *kakawuli* [long yam] there, *kakawuli* there, big mob *kakawuli*. We bin killembad all the little ones, you know. No more big ones, all the little ones. Little ones all the *kakawuli* we bin killembad. Eat im.

All right, next time we bin getem *markul*. *Markul* [a kind of water lily] there little bit of billabong there gotem *markul*. That side billabong, we bin getem *markul* there, little bit. All right. We bin eatem all the way sugarbag [honey] now, cutembad [chop out] tree sugarbag, all the way. Go longa that Potato Spring now. Nother *kakawuli* they bin find em. They bin give it we [to us] for eating, *kakawuli*. We bin camp there two nights longa Potato Spring. All right. Tomorrow morning we bin cross, now, leavem that road now, main road. We bin go longa blackfellow road, now, cut across. Findem all the way sugarbag, that's all. Findem sugarbag, one each. Sometimes goanna, findem. Next time nothing. Next time findem goanna. All the way like that. Too much rain. You know, too much big rain bin going up all the way. We never catchem up quick that Coolibah. We bin long time longa bush. Long time. Never catch im up.

Belong to little boy business [initiation]. We bin takem two little boys. We bin corroboree there long Coolibah. Where we bin come back, that's the one plenty tucker. Lotta *kakawuli* killembad [digging up and cooking] all the way *kakawuli*. Killembad all the way. We bin cross now, go longa Timber Creek. We bin follow that nother road now. Timber Creek way, now, we bin followem. We bin havem *nankalin* [ground sugarbag], big mob. *Nankalin* big mob ... Only we bin [eating] *kakawuli* now, come back time ... No more findem more beef [meat] now, only *kakawuli* we bin eatem when we bin come back.³

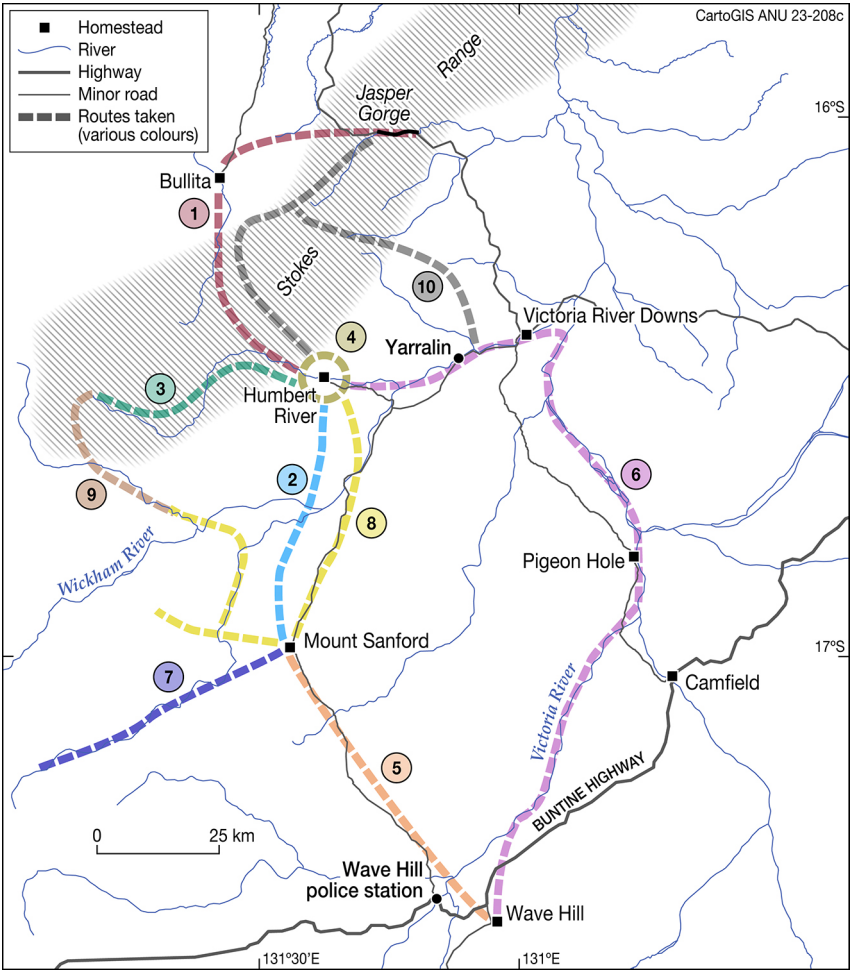
Snowy Kulmilya



Figure 3.3. Snowy Kulmilya engaged in young men's business, Yarralin, late 1981.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

³ Dora Jilpngarri, tape 82, recorded at Yarralin, 18 July 1986.



Map 3.2. Snowy Kulmilya's footwalk map.

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

1.	<i>Didi</i> (peewee), eaglehawk (wedge-tail eagle), <i>jakarin</i> (sand Country, like a potato), <i>jalyingarna</i> (sugarleaf on bloodwood), <i>jamunang</i> (gooseberry), <i>jamut</i> (plains turkey), <i>jangana</i> and <i>jarkulaji</i> (brush-tail possum), <i>japungarna</i> (water goanna), <i>jarrwana</i> (<i>Pandanus aquaticus</i>), <i>jibilyugu</i> (duck), <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>jimanik</i> (unidentified), <i>jimilawumuru</i> (unidentified), <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>junkuwwuru</i> ('porcupine' echidna), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>karrang karang</i> (diver duck), <i>kayalarin</i> (bush onion), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>kitikiting</i> (like a water goanna), <i>kitpan</i> (bitter cucumber), <i>kulijpa</i> (yellow kapok), <i>kulpin</i> [<i>kulpun</i> ?] (hawk), <i>kumira</i> (budgerigar), <i>kunamulun</i> (olive python 'kunutjari'), <i>kurangij</i> (unidentified), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>lamawut</i> (witchetty grub), <i>lamparlampara</i> (bush tobacco), <i>malajaku</i> (big sand goanna), <i>maran</i> (wild pussy cat 'walamunpa'), <i>marpalangpalang</i> (pigeon), <i>mijat</i> (unidentified), <i>mintarayij</i> (water lily), <i>nankalin</i> (ground sugarbag), <i>ngamanpurru</i> (conkerberry), <i>palatmawu</i> (bandicoot), <i>parangara</i> (white cockatoo), <i>partiki</i> (nutwood tree/seeds), <i>pulkal</i> (black plum), <i>purrungurn</i> (sugarleaf from river red gum), <i>tilipi</i> (possibly fig), <i>wajipat</i> (bush potato), <i>wajilarn</i> (galah), <i>wak wak</i> (crow), <i>walmalmaji palarr</i> (stone Country tobacco), <i>walujapi</i> (black-headed python), <i>walukpil</i> (black cockatoo), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>warrpa</i> (flying fox), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>wititpiru</i> (spinifex pigeon), <i>yaramulku</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>yarkalayin</i> (hairy yam), <i>yawu</i> (fish), <i>yiparatur</i> (emu).
2.	Same tucker as 1.
3.	Same tucker as 1 and 2, including: <i>kamankira</i> (spear grass), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>kungkala</i> (fire-stick), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>namawurru</i> and <i>nakalin</i> (tree and ground sugarbag), <i>pulkuru</i> (bamboo?), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>wilit</i> (small black fruit and spear shafts).
4.	<i>Kakawuli</i> (long yam), <i>pikurta</i> (bush potato).
5.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>kayalarin</i> (bush onion), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>mintarayij</i> (water lily), <i>takirin</i> (Polynesian arrowroot), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
6.	Same tucker, including: <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>namawurru</i> (sugarbag), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>warritja</i> (crocodile), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
7.	Same tucker as 5 and 6, including: <i>japungarna</i> (water goanna), <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>ngamanpurru</i> (conkerberry), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile).
8.	[notes indecipherable].
9.	[indecipherable].
10.	Rock holes and springs (Mulutpayi, Kajutarnang, Jangara, Kulinjiwuru), antbed sugarbag.

Snowy Kulmilya was born on Humbert River Station in about 1927 and grew up there. As he said, 'I'm belong to that Country.'⁴ His footwalk experience was only moderately extensive compared to others, but it was remarkably intensive. He travelled with his father in areas of his father's Country that were difficult of access other than by foot, and he came to know them very well.

4 Snowy Kulmilya, tape 89, recorded at Yarralin, 27 July 1986.

When I bin kid, when my father was alive, he bin take me walk, sometimes months, four months, two months, like that, la bush. Come back. Just living on bush tucker.

We used to run in the bush, no tobacco, no tea, no sugar, no nothing, no [white man's] tucker. We used to living longa lily and all the bush tucker ... Or kangaroo. We never run out for tobacco. Plenty of bush tobacco la bush, you know. And tea. That *lamparlampar* [bush tea], you know. Put im la bag, fill im up. Make it ... every morning. And that *jikamuru* [water lily] good enough, [and] sugarbag. We never think about all them *kartiya* tucker, you know. We used to go la bush. That's where I learned. Just living la bush tucker.

He described walking from Humbert River to VRD:

Goanna. We bin living [on] goanna, turtle, crocodile, and fish. Kangaroo sometimes. When we couldn't findem turtle, anything, la river Country, when we too late, well we just see kangaroo on the road, well we just kill im. That's all. Kangaroo, turtle and fish, and crocodile. And sometimes we bin go longa billabong getem that lily. *Mintanyij* [water lily] now.

Like many of the speakers, Snowy spoke of the toxic tuber *kayalarin* which must be prepared according to a long and arduous procedure in order to make it edible.

And that *kayalarin*, that cheeky one. We bin getem that one, some old old women, they bin always getem, cookem up, and getem stone, smashem up and makem properly black. When you eat that half cooked, he's burn all your mouth. No good. Pretty good tucker when im cookem up properly. Good one. You can eat.

Snowy spent time living in the bush, not just at holiday time but for longer periods as well, to escape the hardships of station life. (For more about life on Humbert River, see Rose 1991, 229–35, 244–45.)

Oh, we didn't want to run away. But that head stockman didn't, you know, we didn't like him hurting us. We didn't like it ... we were too small. And, that was early days. We all bin frighten. Them old people didn't take a place [stand up] for us too. You know, poor buggers, some of them reckoned, 'No good. Never mind. You'll

have to go away tonight and see your father out bush. Them should be this way la so and so place.' ... Soon as that sun go down, just roll our swag and go away ...

Debbie: So when you were a kid, young fellow, anyhow, there were people living in the bush, you could run away easy findem?

Snowy: Yeah. We used to go down there and find them. We know where that place where they always live. We know where the spring place. We used to go down there ... Just follow the track, from old track to new track. We knew where he's living. We know he's just going straight in that place.

When Snowy ran away to be with bush people, they were living in relatively inaccessible areas: the rough Country high up on the stony watersheds between the big rivers. This is Country where the locations of water were not self-evident and where knowledge made the difference between life and death. Much of his map shows a deeply detailed knowledge of the locations of water, and his account of time in the bush names one spring, rock hole or crevice after another. He described a rock hole within which the water was so deep that even birds could not access it.

You'll see flat rock there ... He got a hole like that, not much wide ... And water there inside. You got a bit of string, billy can on a string. Let em down, get that water there. No bird can sing or anything. Water is there inside. [It is a] well. We used to get the water and chuck im on a flat rock there. Feed [give water to] them dogs, feed them up.

The dogs helped with hunting: 'They always chase kangaroo ... They bin always hunting, them dogs, and chasem them and catchem kangaroo too.'

Snowy and others reciprocated, sharing food with their dogs.

Snowy explained the use of a fish poison made from the leaves and pods of *parrawi*. When the leaves and pods are wetted and rubbed, they make a lather that poisons fish. This method is used in small, contained water sources where the poison will work without being washed away:

Nother spring callem Karlayi. Karlayi, im right up la hill. We bin getem that *parrawi*. You know *parrawi*, that *parrawi* tree. Getem that leaf and killem that leaf

now, makem that soap. Killem all the fish. Get all the fish there. But we didn't frighten [for] drinking that water [ourselves]. We bin always drink. Yeah. When he settle down, you can still drink. He can knock that fish, but you right for drink.

We bin get them dead, [and] you see em them small one [fish], chuckem out outside there [from] that water. Give it la them dog to eat. You know that little one little one fish.

Snowy claims his history and his knowledge as an outcome of footwalk and the teaching of his Elders. Both are defining features of who he is and where he belongs:

I know that far when I bin running la mine father and mother. I bin learning all the time. That's what I know tucker from here properly, and beef, I know what I can eat im from bush. I know which way I'm going to. I know the Country.⁵

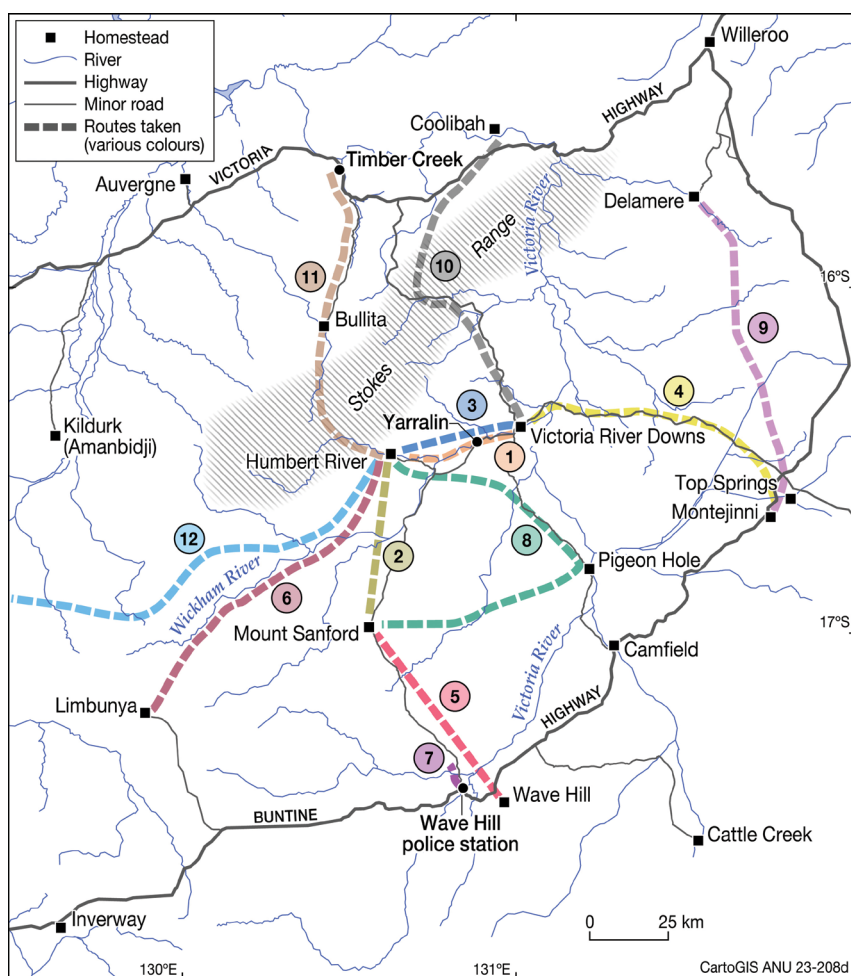
Kitty Lariyari



Figure 3.4. Kitty Lariyari (left), Maggie John (middle) and author (right), Yarralin, 1982.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

⁵ Snowy Kulmilya, tape 90, recorded at Yarralin, 27 July 1986.



Map 3.3. Kitty Lariyari's footwalk map.

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

1.	<i>Jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>ngamanpurru</i> (conkerberry), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
2.	<i>Jarkulaji</i> (brush-tail possum), <i>japungarna</i> (water goanna), <i>jarrwana</i> (round yam), <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna), <i>kanjalu</i> ('water chestnut'), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>kartkarta</i> (<i>Gomphrena canescens</i> , use not recorded), <i>lunkura</i> (blue-tongue lizard), <i>mangurlu</i> (seeds), <i>nankalin</i> (ground sugarbag), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>yarkalayin</i> (hairy yam), <i>yawu</i> (fish), <i>yingki</i> (kurrajong seeds).
3.	<i>Jamut</i> (plains turkey), <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>ngamanpurru</i> (conkerberry), <i>yawu</i> (fish).

4.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>pararayij</i> (green plum), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber).
5.	Same tucker as elsewhere, including: <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag).
6.	Same tucker, no different from elsewhere, including: <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>kamara</i> (black-soil long yam), <i>walmart</i> (<i>Livistona</i> palm), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>yarkalayin</i> (hairy yam).
7.	Same tucker as elsewhere, including: <i>jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>kuwalampara</i> (turtle), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>waiyita</i> (small tuber), <i>yawu</i> (fish).
8.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>kamara</i> (black-soil long yam), <i>kirrawa</i> (goanna), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>nalja</i> (sand goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>walaku</i> (dingo), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), yams (not specified).
9.	Same tucker as elsewhere, no different, including: <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), no <i>kamara</i> , no <i>kakawuli</i> .
10.	Same tucker, including: <i>kakawuli</i> (long yam), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>markarin</i> (bush grape), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>pararayij</i> (green plum).
11.	<i>Jurulana</i> (small tree with fruit), <i>kakawuli</i> (long yam), <i>karil</i> (wild cucumber), <i>kumpulyu</i> (white currant), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>pararayij</i> (green plum), <i>tipil</i> (black currant).
12.	Same tucker, including: <i>jikamaru</i> (water lily), <i>walaku</i> or <i>nurrakin</i> (dingo, dingo pups), [the remaining names are indecipherable due to damage (— eds)].

Kitty Lariyari spent most of her life working for Humbert River and other stations, and many of her travels are interwoven with her working life.⁶ Lariyari was about 67 in 1986 when we did this interview. Her sister Kitty Maliwa was a keen listener. Maliwa had never been able to travel much because as a child she was crippled. She provided commentary on her sister's story.

Lariyari: I bin borning longa VRD. My daddy bin working, mother mine, they bin working la VRD. Im bin engineer, mine daddy. I bin there until I bin big girl. Mine uncle bin takem me for married now, la Humbert River.⁷

Debbie: Well when you were living at VRD, when you were little girl, what tucker you bin havem that Country?

6 Kitty Lariyari was also known as Dadada—eds.

7 Kitty's uncle gave her to her promised husband at Humbert River Station.

Lariyari: Tucker? What about lily? *Jikamuru*. *Jikamuru* and *namawurru* [tree sugarbag]. And *kirrawa* [goanna], and *junkuwuru* [porcupine/echidna], and the *jiya* [kangaroo], we bin havem *dumaj* [lots and lots]. But river country crocodile we bin havem. My daddy bin getembad. *Kuwalampara* [turtle]. And *yawu* [fish]. *Kirrawa*, *yawu*, im bin always getembad, mine, mine daddy. Mine daddy bin getembad gotem *mlarang* [with a spear]. Goanna, and *jiya* im bin killem gotem *mlarang*. Im bin takem me walkabout. While im bin walkabout, im bin killem food for me, *jiya*, *kirrawa*, *yawu*. Sometimes mine mummy bin going hunting for *jikamuru*, for sugarbag, *namawurru*, im always go hunting. And *wayita* [small tuber].

My husband bin give it me same way. When I bin married. Same way im bin givem me. Im bin takem me la bush too, walkabout. Holiday, you know. La bush. La my Country! Back to Layit [upper Wickham River] and come out la [Mt] Sanford [outstation]. All around Country im bin takem me, when I bin married. But I never bin go hungry.

Mmm. *Jikamuru*, *wayita*, *namawurru*, *kanjalu* [probably a type of 'water chestnut'], *junkuwuru* [porcupine/echidna], *kirrawa* [goanna], *yawu* [fish], blue-tongue [lizard], we bin tuck out. Im bin always feed em up me, makem me growing up, my husband. All around im bin takem me la bush, holiday, you know, I bin always come back la job. We bin working Humbert. I bin horseman, you know, me.

Debbie: You? Riding horses?

Kitty: Yeah. When I bin young.

Next time, mefellow bin always go bush again, holiday. Come back this way now, la VRD. Mine daddy bin live yet. Footwalk. Footwalk job. This time we got a motorcar. No more first time holidays, nothing. We bin always footwalk. (For more of Kitty's working life, see Rose 1991, 203–4.)



Figure 3.5. The Pilimatjaru sandstone, Gordon Creek, VRD, 1984.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

Kitty described a route of travel in the holiday time that took her south and west into her father's and father's fathers' Country. They made a big loop from Humbert River Station to Mount Sanford (an outstation of VRD) following the Wickham River for part of the way. From Mount Sanford they travelled through the rough Pilimatjaru sandstone Country to Pigeon Hole and then back to Humbert River.

Mefellow bin always go Sanford, Pigeon Hole, Wave Hill. From Sanford mefellow bin go this way now, river, all the way, la that Pilimatjaru River, eh? Pilimatjaru River now mefellow bin always go. Oh, mefellow bin findem *kirrawa*, *wayita*, *ngamanpurru*, *jiya*, *kirrawa*, too much. *Wayita*, we never bin go hungry, nothing. *Jikamuru*. Any kind *mangari* [tucker from plants]. *Muyin* [plum]. You know *pararayij*? [That's the] green plum. Mefellow bin tuck out, right through, come out la Pigeon Hole. From Pigeon Hole, mefellow bin come up this way, Whitewater River [on Humbert River Station], Whitewater come out. Footwalk, you know. Come out la William Yard. Go la Humbert now. Go work now. Likey that all the way.

Another of her trips took her to Limbunya Station. This trip too started out following the Wickham River, which is the defining river of her mob of people. Following it into Limbunya they went into the region of the headwaters.

Wickham River, mefellow bin follow aaaaalll right up. We bin turn off now. Proper bush now, mefellow bin go. Camp half way. From all the way now, come out Limbunya now. *Namawurru* [sugarbag] again. *Muyin* [plum], same tucker. *Namawurru*, oh, you can't beat im *namawurru*. That Country proper [best sugarbag]. *Jikamuru*, *wayita*, you know *kamara* [yam]? That yam, long long one. That *mangari* too mefellow bin tuck out ... I bin all round Country, me. Footwalk.

When I bin lose mine husband, you know. Im bin passed away, well I bin come up from Humbert River. I bin come up Centre Camp now [VRD], I bin working. From Centre Camp ... [go to] Montejinni ... We bin helping that [Montejinni] missus bela ironing clothes, for washem clothes, and settem table, likey that, you know ...

[Tucker], oh, *wayita* [small tuber] again. Same *mangari* [tucker]. Like this way where mefellow bin havem. Same *mangari* we bin havem [at] Montejinni. You can't beat im bela *kirrawa* [goanna], bela *jiya* [kangaroo], Montejinni country. *Kirrawa*, *yawu* [fish], all the same. *Namawurru* all the same. *Muyin*, *kamara*, *wayita*. Montejinni country you know, proper big big one [*wayita*].

Kitty described learning to eat palm heart in Limbunya Country where the *Livistona* species, as yet undescribed, is said by Aboriginal people to differ from the one in Jasper Gorge. At any rate, once she learned to eat palm hearts she ate them as well when she travelled through Jasper Gorge.

Kitty: You know *walmart*?

Debbie: Yeah.

Kitty: Yeah. *Walmart* I bin havem la ... Limbunya. Limbunya I bin tuck out *walmart*. Then I bin savvy now for Coolibah country, *walmart*. This one [Jasper] Gorge, eh? Plenty there now, *walmart*.

I bin la Bullita. Just look around, that's all, [for] holiday. Sometimes I bin go gotem dray now, you know, wagon? There now *kakawuli* [long yam] big mob. Big mob *kakawuli* there now, mefellow bin always killembad [dig up/cook] ... We never bin hungry la bush ...

Kitty's younger sister, Maliwa, asked her: 'You bin havem frog?'

Kitty Lariyari: [In] that Country alabad [everyone] havem. Montejinni country, you know.

Kitty Maliwa: You bin havem?

Lariyari: Yeah. Sand ground country. No more this one river country. [That one] Where im sit down la *kaja* [desert]. Proper good feed.

Maliwa: You like im, Debbie?

Debbie: I had the leg part, from those really big frog, they just bin cook em up leg part, in a different Country they do it that way. But that *nalja*? How do you cook it?

Lariyari: Cookem with small stones in a coolamon, cookem. When you put em salt now, oh, proper. You can't give it anybody [you don't want to share it].

Maliwa: You naughty girl havem frog.

Lariyari: Good one. And *walaku ngurakin yabayaba* [dingo pups]. Im bin taste like porcupine.

Maliwa: Sister, you naughty girl, havem frog, no good.

Debbie: You still worrying about for that frog?

Lariyari: Mefellow bin always tuck out [eat plenty]. When mefellow bin hunting la bush you know, walkabout.

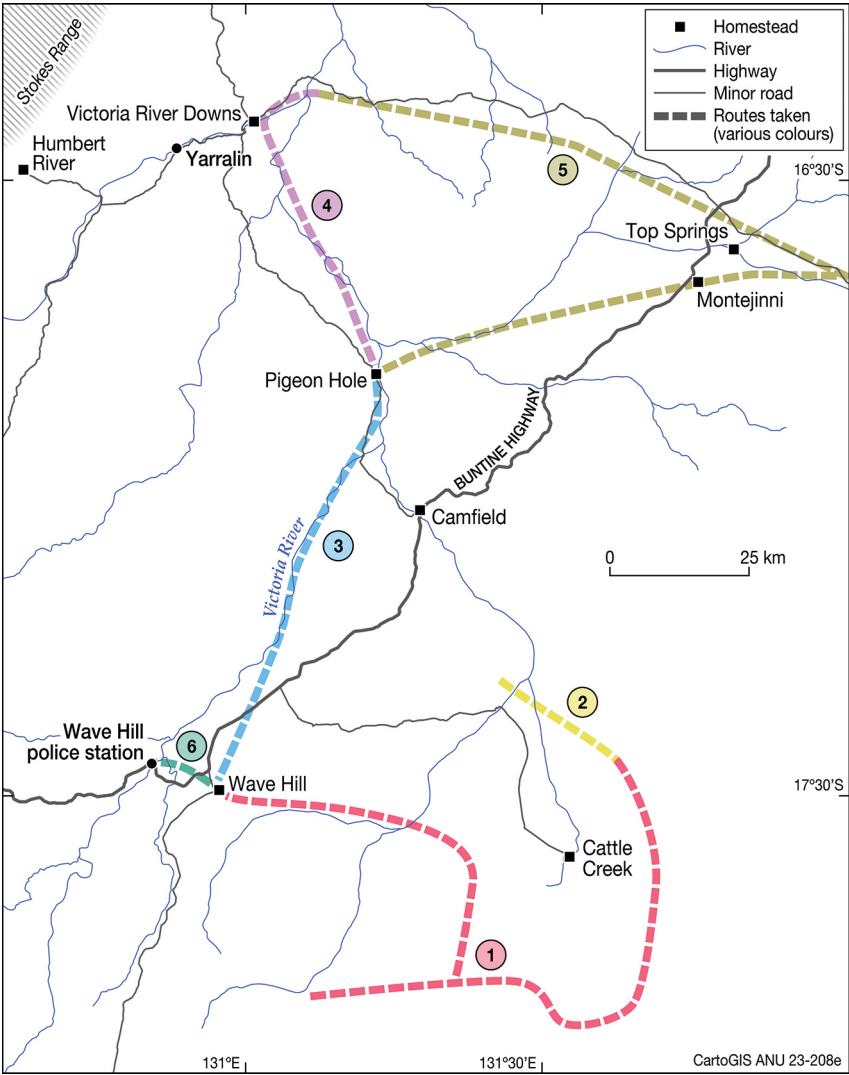
We never bin going hungry like this time where we sit down hungry fellow. [Like today] Where we wait about for money, that's all. That way we bin go now, wait about for money, that's all, this time. Wait la money bela this now, nothing no more, we no more bin havem *tarnku* properly [the feeling of being full of food], nothing.⁸

Hobbles Danaiyarri



Figure 3.6. Hobbles Danaiyarri, spinning hair string, Yarralin, c. 1985.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.



Map 3.4. Hobbles Danaiyarri's footwalk map.

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

1.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna), <i>kalngi</i> (like a tomato), <i>kinjirrka</i> (like a tree seed, root part too), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>lukarara</i> (grass seeds, mate for <i>mangurlu</i>), <i>mangurlu</i> (seeds), <i>mulyukuna</i> (black-headed python), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>ngurnungurnu</i> (stone Country tobacco), <i>pikurta</i> (bush potato), <i>walaku</i> (dingo), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber), <i>yarkajiri</i> (similar to <i>kalngi</i> , like a tomato).
2.	<i>Wayita</i> (small tuber).
3.	<i>Jikamuru</i> (water lily), <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>yarkalayin</i> (hairy yam).

4.	<i>Jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>kamara</i> (black-soil long yam), <i>kilipi</i> (bush banana), <i>kitawa</i> (goanna), <i>namawurru</i> (tree sugarbag), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber).
5.	Same as 4, including a lot of 'porcupine' (echidna).
6.	Same foods as 4 and 5 including: <i>jiya</i> (kangaroo), <i>junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna), <i>kamara</i> (black-soil long yam), <i>kayalarin</i> (bush onion but different name), <i>malangarna</i> (sugarleaf – insect exudate on snappy gum), <i>muyin</i> (black plum), <i>namawurru</i> and <i>nankalin</i> (sugarbag), <i>nanjalnga</i> (sugarleaf bloodwood), <i>nanka</i> (small animal), <i>palatmawu</i> (bandicoot), <i>punjari</i> (fig), <i>tijirpan</i> (piebald kangaroo), <i>wayita</i> (small tuber).

Hobbles Danaiyarri was born at Cattle Creek on Wave Hill Station in about 1926. His mother was carrying him when she and his father lived out on one of the great plains of Mudbura Country around Cattle Creek, and he spent childhood time there. Although over the course of his life his travels on foot were extensive, his stories were most of all about his own Country at Cattle Creek. His words convey some of the sense of loss that arises with a particular conjunction of displacement and environmental change. When people belong to and are part of their Country and at the same are separated from it, they may experience a sense of loss that is heightened by the suspicion that if they were to return it could all be so different that they would not know it, or, perhaps even worse, it might not know them.

I was born, and my mother bin bringem [me] out, my father bin bringem [me] out, too long they bin in the desert all day, they bin walk around really biggest that Country. But my mother bin bringem me and that time from desert. That what my mother bin walk around and my father bin walk around. Right up to Cattle Creek stock camp. Soon as my mother and father bin coming back now [to] Wave Hill Station. You know. Where the people live right at that police station. That's where I bin born, right on the police station, Wave Hill.

Debbie: Were you living in this part when you were kid?

Hobbles: Yeah. When I was kid, now, coming back now ... when I was kid, I bin running into this area all around. Mother bin take me. Father bin take me.

I was have a lotta good tucker from my mother. We never findem flour and sugar long time ago. Because we bin living really [bush] tucker. Really,

when im bin growing [me] up longa rown [one's own, or their own] land. That's what now. Well we bin havembad lotta *mangorlu* [grass seed], my mother bin fillem longa coolamon. And start to take that *mangorlu* all around longa that coolamon, taken back where that [camp] place. And findem them flat stones, flat one, and killem im tucker there [grind it]. My mother bin get a water and chuckem out, wetenem out that tucker. My mother bin getem flat stone and start to work my tucker now. My mother bin work now. I can see em my mother used her hands and used that [grind] stone too. And really fine nice that tucker. When im bin la really flat one and running down la little rock hole. And that tucker bin still fill im in there. That tucker bin really full, all right. They bin get bark, round one bark, and [make it] just like a pannikin, and get that *mangorlu* then, really [good] tucker. And im bin make lotta fire, and he not put im in the coals, [but] just [on] the hot ground, you know. My mother bin just put that tucker, put im in. And coverem with a sand, you know.

Hobbles vividly described the 'collector ants' who gather seeds and whose seed stores are then raided by people:

Nother *mangari* [vegetable food]—white ant bring him. All the seeds he bring from grass and stack em up like sugar. Just like paw paw seed but more pretty one. Ants been build em up, women take em and put em in coolamon. Take it away to make bread. Make a hole, empty seeds, keep water handy. Got a light stone, grind em up, make a really nice fine flour. Fill up coolamon. Cook in coals, or you can eat it raw, no worries. Cooked one, you never will give it longa somebody [because it tastes so good]. *Mangorlu* [grass seeds] really sweet, that one.⁹

Hobbles discussed some of the plant foods that are part of the desert Country of his childhood:

9 Hobbles Danaiyarri, notebook 17, 70.

Well, that *kalngi* [probably a solanum], he's the good tucker like a tomato. You know, when the mother [and] father was show me that tucker, that's the right tucker too. Strong one tucker. That's what we bin havem from beginning. Beginning im growem lotta tucker. That's what my relations [give it] you know, lotta them people bin give me that tucker. *Kalngi*, [and] what we callem *yakajiri*. That's nother tucker, *yakajiri*. *Kalngi* and *yakajiri*, twofellow same one tucker, but different fruit twofellow gottem. And this one *lukarara*. Nother tucker. Im mate longa *mangorlu* [grass seed] again. Different, [and] still hunting around for *pikurta* [yam]. He's good tucker.

That water, that thing, really good. You can't [go] hungry at all. That's what bin growem up me. After that, oh my mother all gone. My father all gone. Out of the big area and longa this one now.

Hobbles's family left the big plains of the desert Country and became moderately sedentarised on Wave Hill Station. He described going into Country that was new to him, and learning about new tucker, like the little tuber, *wayita*.

Well you come back again now, you come back, you leave that plains again, you come back longa different soil now, you findem what they call im *wayita* [little tuber]. You leavem plains Country now, you come back findem *wayita*.

That's when we come back longa river Country, findem all the *wayita* now. Still all longa ranges country, you know? Good size. You bin leavem what they call im big plain. You leavem. You into the river, too, you go longa other river, you might findem *wayita* there. Righto.

Like others, he expressed memories of plenty: 'We never run out for flour or nothing. Plenty tucker, plenty tucker.'¹⁰ He cherished the foods that had given him body and life, and he linked the knowledge of his own being to the Country and people who nurtured him. Such knowledge is itself life-sustaining, he suggested.

10 Hobbles Danaiyarri, notebook 17, 70.

Footwalk politics

Hobbles held the view that demonstrations of local Aboriginal knowledge would convince white people of the justice of Aboriginal people's statements of continuing ownership of the Country. Like many other Aboriginal people, he contrasted his knowledge and care with that of white people's lack of knowledge and care:

That old woman should be teach im [white people], learn [teach them] to use that tucker, and showem that tucker. Old *kajirri* [woman] bin findem tucker, you know. Well, this kind the really important for people, what we think, you know. We know, we think now, on white man. But still we know Country side. Still we know tucker side. We not careless [forgetting] longa something.

To belong to a place, and to own the knowledge for the place, is to know how to live there. The same point can be made concerning food and water. As Ngarinman man Daly Pulkara said about food:

We can get im [food], right up end to end [Country to Country]. And some *kartiya* might [be] walking there, [and] he reckon 'no tucker'. And he's walking on top of the tucker now!¹¹

Riley Young was equally emphatic:

Two different Law. Nother Law belong to *ngumpin*, blackfella. You know him been walking on this land for many many years. Him been walking by foot, him been carting up him swag la him shoulder. He didn't worry about tobacco, he didn't worry about tucker, he didn't worry about tea, he didn't worry about any kind of feed. Because he been living by sugarbag, bush yam. That kind of a Law him been living. Goanna, or they used to trap em all them birds, gotem spear, kill him, longa water, or any kind of bird. That's all they eat.¹²

11 Daly Pulkara, tape 80, recorded at Lingara, 15 July 1986.

12 Riley Young, tape 42, recording date and location unknown.

Under the regimes of colonisation which have so marked people's lives, hunting is also an assertion of autonomy, as Daly contended: 'I don't care about money, that's your way. I got kangaroo, goanna, fish, long as I sitting on the land.'¹³

Good hunters

Good hunters like Jessie Wirrpa are highly valued members of families and communities. Snowy explained to me:

Mularij we call im, proper good shot. Good shot man. Really good shot for everything.

He could findem anything, or killem anything for eat, you know, really *mularij*. When him findem everything, really good shot. Good shot. Findem anything la bush. And might be one time him gettem kangaroo, one time all that *takaran*. That one they call him *mularij* now.

We used to see em some fellow can't hunting kangaroo, anything, well they call him *kuwajal*. That mean he's [just] good enough for get a feed from somebody else.

Mularij and *kuwajal*, twofellow.

DR: Is that for men only, or for women too?

SK: For woman, everybody. Woman *mularij* too. Some woman *mularij*, some woman *kuwajal*. Well even man, too, same.¹⁴

I would never underestimate the physical skills of hunting, as I am completely aware of the limitations of my own skills. While acknowledging the skills of patience, aim, stalking, hiding and all the other physical aspects, it is important also to acknowledge the huge amounts of knowledge that go into making a good hunter. Some of this knowledge concerns co-occurrences in the rhythms of life. Allan Young explained that when the cicadas (*nyirri*) sing, the turtles are becoming fat:

13 Daly Pulkara, notebook 3, 52.

14 Snowy Kulmilya, tape 90, recorded at Yarralin, 27 July 1986.

We hearem *nyirri*. *Nyirri*, when im sing out longa tree where im sit down. We know, must be turtle, might be come out now. Well that was long time, they go get the spear, them old people. Long as they hearem that *nyirri* talk, they findem walking around, that turtle, they killem gottem spear.¹⁵

Cicadas are not telling hunters that they should go for turtles, any more than animal tracks tell the hunter that he or she should find and kill the animal. Cicadas hang out along the riverbanks in the big trees there. They tune up their sound apparatus in the hot and humid time of year, and they let loose in a chorus that feels like a physical blow. Being who they are in the world, having a form of action that announces itself vividly in long ear-splitting cries that seem to reverberate inside one's skull, cicadas do what they do. The pattern of the world is that they do this and at the same time turtles are getting fat and becoming more active. The further pattern of the world is that people hear this. If they know what is happening, they grab their spears and go hunting.

Hunting techniques rely on detailed knowledge of animals—their characteristic behaviour, their preferred foods, their times of day and their hiding or resting places. Turtles, for example, eat the fruit that falls off the *japawin* (riverside fig trees, *Ficus coronulata*). People can eat this fruit too, and so do birds and fish. When you go fishing in the hot and wet time of year, you might eat some of the fruit yourself, and then you would throw some in the water to attract turtles or fish.

Different people have different techniques. Riley Young described hunting with a spear:

And we used to killem turtle gotem wire. Where im always come out eatembad, we used to chuckembad that tucker from fig tree. Chuck im and im come, killem gotem wire [spear with wire point], finish. Oh, big mob we used to kill im. And goanna we used to tuck out—*malajaku*. Or sometimes we used to go sneak up and look la bank, you know, slowly, see im crocodile lying down la sun. Putem wire la im la backbone. That kind of a feed we bin living la bush.¹⁶

15 Allan Young, tape 116, recorded by Darrell Lewis at Katherine, 24 August 2000.

16 Riley Young, tape 86, recorded at Yarralin, 24 July 1986.



Figure 3.7. Riley Young Winpilin trimming a sapling for a spear shaft, Lingara, 1981.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

Old Jimmy (Manngayarri)¹⁷ described a more detailed method for killing crocodile:

You climb the tree, you sit down got a wire, you see it come out, you kill it [spear it]. Kill im, and pull im out outside, and give im bit of *karnti* [wood or stick], and let im bite the *karnti*. He bite that. That *warritja*, you give im stick like that, let im bite that one. Well he can't bite you then. Now you kill im. That way.¹⁸

Dora described the same method for killing crocodiles and added that when she was a kid people used to catch turtle with their bare hands and toss them up the bank for the kids to kill.¹⁹

Hunting and fishing stories can go on and on. My purpose here is simply to highlight a few techniques and let them reverberate with other techniques discussed elsewhere (for example, fish traps in Chapter 5 and hunting 'porcupine'/echidna in Chapter 6). They will also have to stand for a rich body of knowledge and stories that in its totality comprises most of daily life, at least for the good hunters.

Dingo

The one exception to the unambiguously happy stories of hunting concerns dingoes. Formerly people in this region ate dingo pups. Today they do not, and this is not only because there may be fewer dingoes because pastoralists lay bait for them, but more significantly (I think) because people who have not eaten dingo find the thought repellent.

Kitty Lariyari was one of the few people I interviewed who spoke of eating dingo pups:

Dingo? Yeah. I been havem. Montejinni country. Little little one, you know, oh, good one.

Kitty Maliwa [Lariyari's sister]: No more me. I'm myall [uneducated or unsocialised] one [for eating dingo].

17 This is Jimmy Manngayarri, who is a different Jimmy from the one previously mentioned in this chapter.

18 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 109, recorded at Yarralin, 13 August 1991.

19 Dora Jilpngarri, notebook 6, 21.

Lariyari: Tastes like porcupine, eh, *Junkuwuru* [*'porcupine'*/echidna]. Mmm.

And *walaku ngurakin yabayaba* [dingo pup-pups].
Im bin taste like *junkuwuru*.²⁰

Daly Pulkara spoke of dingo pups, and his experience is more characteristic of people today:

And one time ago we went up to place called Broadarrow Creek, we found a dog there, dingo. And they went up to make a tucker out of him. Old people reckoned, 'That's good tucker, that.' 'What you call him?' '*Ngurakin*.' 'What do you mean he's the good tucker?' 'Good tucker we eat him.' 'I never tried him. He might make me vomit.' 'No, good tucker that one dingo. [As] Long as you throw the guts away and leave it rubbish.' 'But you eat that?' 'He's good,' they reckon. He might be good, but me, I don't like it head part. That's what I been reckon. And them old woman and my father used to eat that dog, dingo from bush. Yeah, they been havem, gotem big one, but I like that pup-pup.

DR: Pup-pup more better?

DP: Yeah, pup-pup more better. When they roast him, oh, good. I been look it look good when they been roast em. 'Might be good,' I nearly eat him for a while. Oh, leave it till proper really cooked, I tell you. You look good. He might be good tucker too. And my father tell me, 'Yes, they eating that tucker.' 'Yeah?' They used to lost [stop doing] that now. Too much they been eating la *kartiya* [white men's tucker] mostly. Must be. I been used to get along *kartiya* [tucker] too. Plenty longa *kartiya* [white men], I been get all the good tucker, and ... look like, 'I don't want to eat any more puppy.'²¹

Snowy's experience was similar to that of his brother Daly:

20 Kitty Lariyari, tape 85, recorded at Yarralin, 24 July 1986.

21 Daly Pulkara, tape 80, recorded at Lingara, 15 July 1986.

They been havem dingo but I been never havem. I know ... *Ngurakin* they been havem before, them old old women and old old men. Long time [ago]. They been still eat him when I been kid like one of these fellows here. But I didn't like to eat him. We been living on kangaroo. Just that smell, you know, when you get him raw one, cut him up, smell, when you cook him, him like pussy cat again.

DR: Dingo?

SK: Yeah. But we no more like to eatem, you know, because we been growem up some dog there, some small ones. We been think about that one. No more them old women, they been always just cut em up and cookem up and eat him.

DR: When your old people been eatem that dingo, they been growem up first time and then kill him after?

SK: No. That one they been get him that wild one. Wild pup, you know. Kill him whole lot, just cookem. Sometimes they been always get a spear and spear big one. Killem, [and] just put him la fire [to cook].²²

According to my teachers, only one animal is fully commensal with humans, and that is the dingo. Everything humans eat, dingoes eat too.²³

Memories

In Table 3.1, I include the numbers of foods that each speaker mentioned. In my view, it is impossible to draw strong conclusions from these figures, as they represent individual variation along with all the other factors. Some people like Big Mick and Dora Jilpngarri loved to talk extensively and exhaustively about detailed knowledge. Others preferred to lump species together and gloss over the detail. Having said that, there may be significance to the fact that the most detailed information was provided by Big Mick and Snowy Kulmilya, both of whom had spent extensive periods of time living in the bush.

22 Snowy Kulmilya, tape 90, recorded at Yarralin, 27 July 1986.

23 Debbie intended to add a discussion of domestication here and to reference Annette Hamilton's work—eds.

A sense of the extensive knowledge of foods can be gained by examining just one list, the foods named by Snowy Kulmilya (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Foods remembered being gathered by Snowy Kulmilya.

1.	<i>Namawurru</i> (sugarbag)	31.	<i>Mijat</i> (unidentified)
2.	<i>Jikamuru</i> (water lily)	32.	<i>Karil</i> (bush cucumber)
3.	<i>Wayita</i> (small tuber)	33.	<i>Kitpan</i> (bitter cucumber)
4.	<i>Yarkalayin</i> (water plant with corms)	34.	<i>Malangarna</i> (sugarleaf from snappy gum)
5.	<i>Wajipat</i> (bush potato)	35.	<i>Purrungurn</i> (sugarleaf from red gum)
6.	<i>Ngaruyu</i> (honey)	36.	<i>Lamawut</i> (witchetty grub)
7.	<i>Nankalin</i> (ground sugarbag)	37.	<i>Wak wak</i> (crow)
8.	<i>Yaramalku</i> (tree sugarbag)	38.	<i>Kumira</i> (budgerigar)
9.	<i>Kitawa/malajaku</i> (sand goanna)	39.	<i>Wajilarn</i> (galah)
10.	<i>Warritja</i> (freshwater crocodile)	40.	<i>Garawa</i> (eaglehawk)
11.	<i>Japungarna</i> (water goanna)	41.	<i>Karrang karrang</i> (diver duck)
12.	<i>Kayalarin</i> (bush onion)	42.	<i>Jibilyugu</i> (duck)
13.	<i>Ngamanpurru</i> (conkerberry)	43.	<i>Marpalangpalang</i> (pigeon)
14.	<i>Pulkal</i> (black plum)	44.	<i>Paragnarar</i> (white cockatoo)
15.	<i>Kilipi</i> (bush banana)	45.	<i>Tirrak</i> (black cockatoo)
16.	<i>Kalijpa</i> (pulki, root part)	46.	<i>Wititpuru</i> (spinifex pigeon)
17.	<i>Partiki</i> (nutwood tree)	47.	<i>Jawintingarna</i> (unidentified)
18.	<i>Kuwalampala</i> (turtle)	48.	<i>Kunamulun / kunitjari</i> (olive python)
19.	<i>Yawu</i> (fish)	49.	<i>Jimaruk</i> (water python)
20.	<i>Jiya</i> (rock kangaroo)	50.	<i>Walujapi</i> (black-headed python)
21.	<i>Junkuwuru</i> ('porcupine', echidna)	51.	<i>Walamunpa</i> (pussy cat) (<i>maran</i> = wild)
22.	<i>Kitikiting</i> (like a water goanna)	52.	<i>Jangana</i> (brush-tail possum)
23.	<i>Jamut</i> (turkey)	53.	<i>Jarkulaji</i> (possum)
24.	<i>Warrpa</i> (flying fox)	54.	<i>Palatmawu</i> (bandicoot)
25.	<i>Takirin</i> (like a potato, in sand Country)	55.	<i>Puwun</i> (marsupial mouse)
26.	<i>Korayijkorayij</i> (bush plum or bush orange)	56.	<i>Kakawuli</i> (long yam)
27.	<i>Lamparlampara</i> (wild tea)	57.	<i>Pikurta</i> (yam)
28.	<i>Tilji</i> (wild tea)	58.	<i>Mintarayij</i> (water lily)
29.	<i>Yiparatur</i> (emu)	59.	<i>Walaku</i> (dingo)
30.	<i>Jarrwana</i> (unidentified)		

Source: Author's summary, from recollections of Snowy Kulmilya.

Along with knowledge of foods there is the knowledge of how to cook them. My notebooks are filled with recipes for how to cook foods, and while many of these are urgent, such as the correct methods for leaching toxins from foods, others are specifically to improve flavour. Many of the recipes have Dreaming origins, and many of them are locality specific. For example, the way to cook a turtle, for Yarralin people, differs from the way neighbouring peoples cook the same species of turtle. Differences at this level are constitutive of identity—of home, localised nurturance and belonging.

In some ways the fact that so much of this study is memory work was disheartening to my teachers. They had been nurtured—fed and taught—by their older people, and yet they encountered radically diminishing contexts for feeding and teaching their younger people. Memory, in Hobbles's view, is a form of connectivity between generations of people and Country:

We remember now, you know. Too many [much] tucker now, white man tucker—biscuit, cold drink, anything, they coverem up [they overlay other knowledge]. But still im remember, still we know ... Grandmother and father bin give us beef and tucker, and really making me grow. Give us the tucker, we bin always eat em. Till we bin know. Well, that word now. Father bin do all the best longa teach we proper way. How we put the spear, how we cut the tree for biggest spear, like that. How we going to get the bamboo. We get em bamboo, we know. Ah, here they got a bamboo. Cut em off. Take em up. We get a kangaroo tail, and get a string [tail tendon], tie it on [the spear to hold the point in place]. That kind of thing, we bin know. We remember that tucker too. That word now.²⁴

24 Hobbles Danaiyarri, tape 91, recorded at Pigeon Hole, 27 July 1986.

Walking with crocodiles



Figure 3.8. Nina Humbert, Lingara, 1982.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.



Figure 3.9. Nina Humbert’s painting of the Jirrikit and Warritja Dreamings (acrylic on canvas), 1991. In the author’s private collection.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

This painting constitutes another form of memory, situating and sustaining knowledge through visual designs. It is the work of Nina Humbert, Jessie Wirrpa's younger sister, and is the first painting produced in Yarralin using acrylic on canvas. Nina combined the naturalistic style of rock art in the Victoria River region and conventional design elements such as circles for waterholes with a style of dot painting that was brought north out of the desert via Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Daguragu. Jirrikit is the Australian owllet nightjar (*Aegotheles cristatus*), one of Nina's main Dreamings. Here he is shown in the form of a man. He was interested in killing the crocodile that lived in a waterhole in the Wickham River, and so he travelled north into a neighbouring Country in the Stokes Range to get a particular spear shaft made from a shrub that grows in this zone of higher rainfall (*Grewia breviflora*). In the painting we see him with his spears, and we see the crocodile in the waterhole. In the upper centre is another of the Dreamings for Nina's Country: Jimaruk (water snake, probably *Enhydryis polylepis*). Her eggs are positioned on either side of her. Along both sides of the painting are billabongs and other ephemeral waters that are connected with the main Jimaruk billabong, and with the main waterhole on the Wickham River. Jimaruk was walking back and forth among the waterholes. She made a camp (a site now known as Jimarukala) and put her eggs there. If you 'bust' the eggs, snakes will come out everywhere. Jimaruk was looking for permanent water; she went up to two billabongs but couldn't make a big hole, so she went back to the river and there she changed over into a Rainbow Snake. She continues to live in the permanent waterhole.

The crocodile here is the freshwater species (*Crocodylus johnstoni*). It differs from the larger saltwater crocodile (*C. porosus*) in several ways that are significant to humans, the most important of which is that it does not hunt people. Its bite can be dangerous, but Victoria River people swim with freshwater crocodiles all their lives without mishap. By contrast, saltwater crocs are predators for large mammals, taking people regularly, although far more tourists than locals are taken.

While by no means exhaustive, this painting tells a lot about a portion of Nina's Country and Dreamings. You see the main waterholes and their connections to the more ephemeral waters, and perhaps you glimpse the importance of knowing about permanent, ephemeral and subterranean waters. Jirrikit with his spears shows a trade relationship with a neighbouring Country. The stories themselves make more connections outside the painting. This is to say that, like the tin cans at the Nanganarri billabong, the stories from this place work their way outward into the world: the

crocodile was killed and was carried up into the sky where he can be seen today in a set of stars; the boys who killed the crocodile are still in the area as a stone. The story tells of moving waters. When the river goes down and the permanent waterhole near the homestead at VRD is shallow, you can see the two boys and Jirrikit's whiskers there in the bed of the river. When the river comes up the Dreamings can no longer be seen, but when the river goes down again, there they still are.

Nina's painting also refers indirectly to social history: Jirrikit was there in the area in the form of a rock, but when they built the airstrip at Victoria River Downs station they knocked him over (Rose 1992, 108–9). Her painting shows us eco-place in its Dreaming presence, and in its connectedness to other places. As I will discuss in later chapters, this work speaks as well to seasons and communication. It thus shows us connections in the ephemeral world.

It is important to think about how much we cannot see. Most of what I have described was explained to me by Nina and Jessie. The knowledge that people bring to their Country fills in the ambiguities that are held present in the designs (see also Lewis and Rose 1988). As Eric Michaels (1993) and others have shown, Aboriginal art privileges the living, and upholds the rights of knowledge held by senior people. Another frame for this painting is the fact that it was painted by Nina: she painted her Country and Dreamings because these are the places, Dreamings, stories and knowledge of events that she has the right to condense, depict and share with others.

Yet another part of Nina's painting is its implicit references to seasons (Chapter 6). When the two kids tormented Jirrikit, he pulled a bit of his whisker, and sang up a big cold wind. That wind scoured the trees off a big black soil plain. The two kids saw the wind, and ran for their lives, but the wind caught them and carried them up into the sky, and then threw them back down, dead. It took the crocodile up into the sky, and there it remains today.²⁵

That constellation is probably the Southern Cross. You do not actually see the crocodile; you just see men standing around it trying to spear it. When the constellation jumps up in the sky it is cold time. The big winds and the cold weather come together with Warritja, the crocodile, the constellation.

25 Big Mick Kangkinang, notebook 39, 79–82 (as told by him).

Now, look again at Nina's painting and consider that it is figuring motion. From the perspective of motion, Jirriket is travelling, the crocodile is swimming, the boys (who are not shown) are plotting to kill it, the water snake is laying her eggs, the waters are flowing back and forth. It thus spills out into time—the eggs will hatch; the rain will fall to replenish the ephemeral waters. And the Country is being cared for because here is the evidence of an owner who knows her Country. The painting shows time, place, motion, care and renewal, condensed on canvas but actualising in the real world of eco-place.

Looking at the painting as a condensation of motion implicates the viewer as a participant. If this is a glimpse of the happening world, how does the viewer fit in? The painting can thus be seen as an invitation to encounter the people who will take you to the places and teach you the stories, perhaps even show you 'something'. While preserving the authority of people whose responsibilities are to these Dreamings, these places and this knowledge, the painting is also a call—an invitation to become present.

A footwalk perspective suggests that structure is best understood as pattern. Structure can be abstracted, pattern is embedded. My shift from structure to pattern signals a movement away from concepts of stasis and reproduction of stasis, in favour of concepts of recursive motion. In this and subsequent chapters I will be proposing that pattern, while predictable, is also ephemeral. An analogy is with ripples caused by a stone in a billabong. The ripples are predictable, but their occurrence is contingent. In order for patterns, like ripples, to remain, contingency must be charged up through the recursions of life in the changing and ephemeral world. The stones must be thrown.

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