

## Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps Aboriginal Values Introduction



Aboriginal values were identified across the landscape from the swamps, to the neighbouring woodlands © Nicole Motteux, 2021  
Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps are water-dependent ecosystems that support diverse plants and animals. They are characterised by having permanently waterlogged soil. Most swamps are on private land, and are now broken up due to agricultural development, leaving isolated fragments of swamps which are increasingly rare. There are many types of Fleurieu Peninsula Swamp, and all are important. Each swamp has its own mix of soil type, water cycles, wetting and drying pattern, landform and vegetation, all influenced by the underlying rock and soil types. Swamps usually have dense vegetation at varying heights in different parts of the swamp, providing a range of habitat for wildlife.

Aboriginal people possessed calendars that were specific to their *Country*, ranging from four to seven seasons in some areas. This helped them know where in the landscape they needed to be in order to make most of the food when it came into season. This variability in seasonal calendars was determined by a number of factors, which included wind direction, star movements and the flowering of certain terrestrial or aquatic plants. The landscape that includes Fleurieu Swamps has a number of elements that influence the availability of food, medicines and materials (see diagram right).

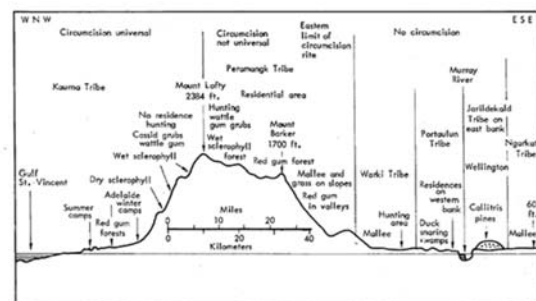


Fig. 20. Cross section from Gulf St. Vincent to the Murray River to show tribal boundaries.

Cross section of the landscape containing Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps.

Source: Tindale, N.B. (1974) *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*. Australian National University Press, Canberra, Australia. <https://openresearch.repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/114913> Accessed February 23, 2021. [p61]

These posts form part of the output from the Fleurieu Peninsula Swamp Aboriginal Values project supported by the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board follows an ethno-ecological approach (Dwyer, 2005). The project aims to understand and explain ecology as it was and is experienced and imagined by Aboriginal peoples from the eastern Fleurieu Peninsula

and Lower Murray regions. Documenting traditional ecological knowledge systems today, and their continuity with the past, can encourage better relationships between Indigenous peoples and land managers. By demonstrating the existence of a coherent non-Western perspective of the land, decision making processes concerning management of the environment can be more inclusive of modern Indigenous groups.

Information presented in this resource comes from anthropological and ethnobotanical literature, interviews with Aboriginal Elders with links to the Fleurieu Peninsula, and field days conducted at Fleurieu Swamps during 2020 and 2021. Values are grouped by categories identified by Aboriginal contributors, and include: Food plants; Medicinal plants; Food animals; Materials; Spirits and mythological creatures; and Other values such as fresh water and a place for clans to meet and trade.

Text: John Fargher Images: @nicolemotteuxphotography  
A full list of references for this Post are available at [\[link to references\]](#)