

Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps Aboriginal Values People and landscapes surrounding Fleurieu Swamps

What people observe in the environment is as much a product of the importance their culture places upon each type of object, as it is upon the acuity of their vision. Internationally, it has been recognised that there is an imperative for traditional ecological knowledge to be incorporated into the contemporary understanding and management of natural and cultural landscapes. An ethnobiologist remarked that: *We live in a world where biological and cultural diversity are being lost at dizzying rates. As ethnobiologists we know that losses of diversity in both of these realms are inextricably intertwined.*



Everyone sees a landscape differently, and that informs the value they place on it

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Because much of the area containing Fleurieu Swamps was difficult to develop for agriculture, there were few early settlers to observe Aboriginal life around swamps after European settlement. Little is known of the Aboriginal use of the uplands of the Fleurieu Peninsula as little survey or dating of Aboriginal sites in these areas has been undertaken. It was almost 50 years after European settlement that market gardening and dairy farming started to operate well in the Mount Compass District, and these enterprises did not flourish until the advent of artificial fertilisers and better understanding of how to manage swamp soils – in the 1920's and 30's. By 1909 more than 50 houses were reported in the District, still sparse compared with neighbouring Goolwa, Victor Harbour and Willunga – so there are few European records of Aboriginal life around the Swamps.



David Wright on his market garden established on reclaimed Fleurieu Swamp below Mount Moon near Mount Compass in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy [Mount Compass Archive](#)

Other posts in this series from the Fleurieu Peninsula Swamp Aboriginal Values project, supported by the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, tell stories of food plants, medicinal plants, food animals, materials as well as spiritual and mythological creatures valued by Aboriginal people in the Fleurieu Swamps.

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