Kollgul and how the Tarral’bai Came to Be
Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D’harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D’harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D’harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D’harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.

Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person’s worthiness to ownership of that story.
The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D’harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D’harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

Frances Bodkin

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A very long, long time ago, the Eel Dreaming Spirit, Parra’dowee, used to travel down the Great River of the Wirrim’birra to the Boora Birra for a meeting with his old friend, Boo’am-billyee, the Shark Dreaming Spirit. These old friends would often meet to discuss business, and the happenings of their Peoples. But this time, the perceptive Boo’am-billyee could see that Parra’dowee was much troubled and as she nudged a tasty morsel to her old friend she spoke.

“I sense that you are concerned, my friend.” She said. “Why do you not tell me, even if I cannot help you, the telling will make you feel better.”

The Parra’dowee nodded sadly. “I had not meant to weigh you down with my troubles, but I am deeply ashamed of something that I have done.”

Boo’am-billyee looked at her friend in great surprise. She could not imagine the Parra’dowee doing anything of which he could be ashamed, and she would have laughed out loud, if she had not seen the deep shame in the Eel Dreaming Spirit’s eyes. “How can I help?” She asked.

Parra’dowee took a deep breath, he had not meant to show his feelings so openly to his friend, but then he realised that the Shark Dreaming Spirit, as with all sharks, had a very sensitive nose, and could smell emotions as easily as one can smell food.

“Many years ago, a young man whose name was Kollgul came down from the mountains to the swamps of Mull’goh. He seemed a sensible young man, who was eager to learn, who was polite, and respectful. He did me many favours, and in return, I taught him many things, more than I should have, without bothering to test his worthiness to learn these things.”

Boo’am-billyee listened silently as Parra’dowee told of a false magician who came from afar and lured Kollgul away from his home in the mountain above the swamps of Mull’goh, who told him of untrue things, of how he could be a great warrior, feared by everyone by using the magic that this false magician would teach him.

Kollgul believed these untruths and told a few of his friends who came to listen to the false magician tell of how Koll’gul was really a great warrior, who could claim all the lands be-
tween the mountains and the sea. His friends were greatly impressed, and followed him as he made his way down the Great River.

They were overjoyed and danced and sang as Kollgul caused the old ones to flee in fear of his magical tricks taught to him by the false magician, and as he and his friends marched down the Great River they were joined by others who had been exiled by their own clans.

But the false magician, although he knew of some magic, did not know how to stop the spells once they had been made. Thus, the lands were left spellbound, and unhabitable.

Parra’dowee told Boo’ambillyee of how Kollgul had learned of Tarral’bai, the Place of Secrets situated under the Parra’woori, and he wanted to possess the secrets, so that not only The People would fear him, but all creatures, even the Dreaming Spirits.

Boo’ambillyee smiled, and Parra’dowee felt a chill of fear at the sight of those sharp teeth. “Let him break my laws and I will eat him.” She said. “Slowly.”

Parra’dowee stared at his friend, then suddenly, he too smiled. “We must protect the Place of Secrets.” He said. “But perhaps we can also trap the false magician, and Koll’gul and his followers.”

Kollgul, the false magician, and his followers slowly made their way down the Great River, bringing fear to many of those who opposed him, and to those he could not bring fear he caused grave injury, or caused false accusations to be brought against them. The People of the Sweet Water cried out to Parra’dowee to help them, but Parra’dowee told them to be patient.

Soon Kollgul and his band moved down to the Banarong where they found the Carer of the Well of Secrets trying to hide the well from his eyes. When she tried to protect the well from him Koll’gul grew angry and struck her with his bundi, killing the frail old woman.

When he found only water in the well, he threw her body into the hole so that no other would ever be able to drink from the well. This action not only angered the Spirit of This Land, it also angered all other Spirits that something that was so sacred could be desecrated. Each of the Spirits hungered for revenge for this action, but Parra’dowee quieted them.
When there were times that the Spirits needed to take human form they drank from the waters of this well, gently they removed the old woman’s body and gave her the proper rituals, before becoming people and setting up camp right on the northern most part of the Parra’woori to wait for the arrival of Kollgul and his band.

It was not long before Kollgul saw their campfire and, accompanied by the false magician, entered the camp, fully armed. The Spirits feigned horror as the armed men demanded to know where the Place of Secrets was. They cried out loudly as if they were afraid, making so much noise that the false magician could not weave his spell. Losing his temper, Kollgul raised his spear to kill the nearest one.

At that moment Parra’dowee struck the Banarong with his tail and the earth shook violently. By the time the false magician, and Kollgul and his followers got to their feet the spirits had reverted to their natural form and disappeared. Kollgul then knew fear.

He knew then that he had broken many laws, and he knew that his punishment would be dire.

He turned to the false magician. “Help me, this is all your fault.” He said.

But the false magician was also afraid. He saw that the Parra’woori was now separated from the land, where they had walked was now deep, swiftly flowing water.

And swimming in those waters they could see the fins of many sharks. On a small beach near the campfire of the spirits, the Parra’dowee came ashore, and smiled up at Kollgul.

“You now have the Place of Secrets in your possession.” Said the Great Eel Dreaming Spirit. “Do with it what you will. If you can find it.” Then he disappeared.

Kollgul looked around him. The Parra’woori was now an island, an island on which there was not a tree large enough to build a canoe to enable them to cross the channel. An island where the only food was a few scrawny roots buried in the shallow soils. An island where oysters did not grow, where birds did not come to roost in the few trees, where only a few lizards lived.
An island guarded by the children of Boo’ambillyee.

Kollgul had got what he had hungered for, The Parra’woori and the Tarral’bai, the Place of Secrets, but it would do him no good. He and his followers were trapped there, left only with two choices, to starve to death on the island, or to take the chance and swim across the channel.

One of his followers, a woman, whose name none remember, jumped into the water, and swam across the channel. They watched her as she swam, followed by the fins of the sharks. Finally she made it on to a rock on the opposite shore. They could hear her laugh with joy as she stood on the rock and waved to them.

It was then that a huge shark, bigger than anything they had ever seen before, leapt out of the water, soaring over the rock, taking the woman in one single mouthful.

Kollgul and his followers stared in disbelief as the only sign left of the woman was a few spots of her blood on the rock.

Boo’ambillyee, swam across the channel to where Kollgul and his followers were waiting. She smiled up at them from the water. “I am very patient.” She said.

“But I will dine on each of you.” Then she swam off, and disappeared beneath the waves.

Kollgul turned to the false magician and once again blamed him for all that had happened. Then he turned on his followers telling them that if they had truly believed in him, none of this would have happened.

For a long time they lived on the island, getting weaker and weaker, fearing to go down to the small beach for fear of the sharks. They had seen Boo’ambillyee leap from the water to take the Forgotten One, they were not going to risk the same fate.

One by one they died, until only the false magician and Kollgul were left. Each lived on opposite ends of the island, each never speaking to the other, but each cursing the other every day.
Then one day, Kollgul was standing on top of the cliff, watching the sharks swimming around below him when he saw something. He quickly laid down on the edge of the cliff and looked over.

“The sign!” He cried. “The sign! I have found the Place of Secrets!”

It was then that the great form of the Boo’ambillyee surged up out of the water. Kollgul could only stare at those terrible teeth before they closed around him and dragged him down into the depths of the sea.

Nearby the false magician heard the fearsome scream. He sat down upon a rock on the highest part of the island, and there he died. His body rotted away, until only a black mark was left on the rock, to remind The People of what happens to those who make false claims.

After a while, Parra’dowee and Boo’ambillyee met once again to discuss business. When they were about to part, Parra’dowee turned to Boo’ambillyee. “I think it is about time that we returned the Tarral’bai to The People.” He said. “But this time we will ensure that none can misuse it.”

Boo’ambillyee nodded her agreement. Together they sang the song, and a great storm came.

Soon the channel between the island and Banarong was filled with sand, and once more The People would be able to come to the Parra’woori for ceremony, and to tell the story of Kollgul and the false magician so that their children would know that if one tries to own something that is not truly his, then only evil can befall him. Or her.
Boo’ambilyee

Greynurse Shark

*Carcharias taurus* (Rafinesque, 1810)

For many years, the Greynurse Shark was accused of being a 'maneater'. This is far from the truth.

Identification: The Greynurse is a distinctive fish which is usually grey-brown on top and a dusky white underneath. Both dorsal fins and the anal fin are of a similar size.

Juveniles have reddish or brownish spots on the posterior (back) half of the body and tail. These spots often fade as the shark ages, but are sometimes still visible on adults.

The Greynurse Shark grows to a length of 3.6 m. Males mature at 2.1 m and females at 2.2 m.

Distribution: The Greynurse Shark occurs in tropical and temperate waters in the Atlantic, Indian and western Pacific Oceans, although the species is known by different common names in different regions. It is recorded from all states of Australia except Tasmania.

Habitat: The Greynurse Shark lives in shallow coastal waters from the surf zone down to 60 m, although it has been recorded from water as deep as 190 m.

During the day, individuals are usually found in the vicinity of dropoffs, caves and ledges.

Feeding and Diet: Greynurse Sharks feed on fishes, which are pierced with the sharp teeth. The species has fang-like teeth which are visible when the shark's mouth is closed. The teeth of the Greynurse Shark are constantly being replaced. Older, damaged or blunt teeth on the exterior surfaces of the jaws are replaced by new teeth every eight to fifteen days.

Heterocercal tail: The Grey Nurse shark has a tail with a long upper lobe and a shorter lower lobe. This type of tail is described as heterocercal. When such a shark swims, the large upper lobe tends to push the snout of the shark down. This is balanced by the lift produced by the pectoral fins and the ventral surface of the snout.

Electroreception: Sharks have the same five senses as humans; taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell, but in addition have a sixth sense; electroreception. The underside of the Grey Nurse Shark's snout is dotted with pores. Each of these leads to an organ (ampula of Lorenzini) which can detect electricity.

Sharks can detect very weak electrical currents. This extra sense gives sharks the ability to detect and attack prey at close range without needing to see the prey item. This can be advantageous in murky water or if the shark is a bottom feeder which relies on finding prey buried in the sediment.
The electroreception capabilities of sharks also gives them the ability to navigate using the Earth's magnetic field. This is possible because an electrical conductor (the shark) moving through a magnetic field (the Earth's) generates an electrical field through the conductor. Sharks can navigate by responding to changes in this electrical field.

Large Oily Liver: Many bony fishes have a structure called a swim bladder which is used to control buoyancy. Sharks do not have swim bladders. Instead, they have different buoyancy regulating mechanisms that involve the liver and fins. The oily liver of the Grey Nurse Shark has been developed to a huge degree and occupies a large proportion of the body cavity. Shark oil is lighter than seawater and this gives the shark buoyancy.

The Greynurse Shark also swallows air at the surface, and holds it in the stomach. This provides buoyancy and enables the shark to hang almost motionless above the bottom.

In the early 1900s, shark liver oil was used to light the street lamps of Sydney.

Countershading: Greynurse Sharks are countershaded, the dorsal (upper) part is dark, mostly a grey to bronzy colour whereas the ventral (lower) part of the body is pale. This adaptation results in the fish being difficult to see from above because the dark colour of the dorsal surface of the fish blends into the dark colour of the water below. It helps to make the fish also less visible from below because the light colour of the underside of the fish is less noticeable against the light shining from above.

Life cycle: After fertilization, the developing young are enclosed in egg cases within each uterus of the female. They hatch from the egg cases at about 55 mm in length and then eat not only unfertilised eggs, but also their siblings. After about nine to twelve months two young are born, one from each uterus.

Greynurse Sharks are ovovivaparous. They produce eggs which hatch inside the female and have no placental connection.

Mating and reproduction: Internal fertilization occurs in all sharks. Sperm transfer occurs through the claspers of the male.

Danger to humans and first aid: It is generally a slow-moving species that is not considered dangerous to people, although it should never be provoked by divers.

**Parra**

**Southern Shortfin Eel,**

*Anguilla australis* (Richardson, 1841)

Identification: The Southern Shortfin Eel is the only freshwater eel in southern Australian waters with a uniform body colouration.

Size range: It grows to about 90 cm in length.

Distribution: The species occurs widely throughout the Western Pacific region.

It lives in still, often turbid, freshwaters. Mature eels migrate to sea to spawn and young eels return to freshwater habitats.

Reproduction: Short finned eels have an interesting life-cycle. The mature adults migrate from fresh water to the sea in order to spawn after which it is believed they die. Where they actually spawn is uncertain but is believed to be in the South Coral Sea off the coast of North Queensland. Mature females about a metre in length have been found to contain more than 3 million eggs.

The eel larvae, known as leptolephali because of their leaf like flat shape, are carried south by the East Australian Current from their spawning grounds until they reach the continental shelf. At around this time they metamorphose into the normal tubular eel shape although devoid of any pigment and so are known as glass eels.

When the glass eels begin to migrate into fresh water they may be anywhere from one to three years old. Migration begins in the autumn in Northern regions reaching Western Victoria by mid spring. Whilst in the estuarine waters the glass eels quickly develop into fully pigment elvers and adjust to fresh water.

Subsequent migrations from the estuaries into fresh water involve both elvers and glass eels and may happen after, during or before the main migration from the sea. These migrations are know as "eel fares" from which the term "elver" is derived. Generally these occur at night and may involve as many as four different age classes.

The upstream migration continues well into the upper reaches of the river systems and elvers and glass eels (and adults) can overcome even large obstructions such as dams and waterfalls by the simple expedient of traveling overland in damp conditions, with a motion much like snakes.

Eels can live for a long time and females may reach the age of 35 years before feeling the urge to begin the cycle all over again. Males may live for 25 years. However females as young as 10 and males as young 6 may begin the downstream migration to breed.
Diet: Opportunistic, mainly carnivorous feeders, eels eat all manner of aquatic animals including fish, insects, yabbies, shrimps, molluscs and frogs.

See more at: http://australianmuseum.net.au/southern-shortfin-eel-anguilla-australis#sthash.r52xS1k1.dpuf