

## POSTER PRESENTATION

### **Community Stories and Sense of Place Enhances Nature Connection.**

Sarah Way, Ways To Nature

#### **Abstract**

As a zoologist and operator of WA ecotourism business Ways To Nature, my goal is to connect people with nature through direct experience. I lead guided nature walks and use these interactions to educate my customers about biodiversity conservation principles through interpretation content that is engaging and accessible.

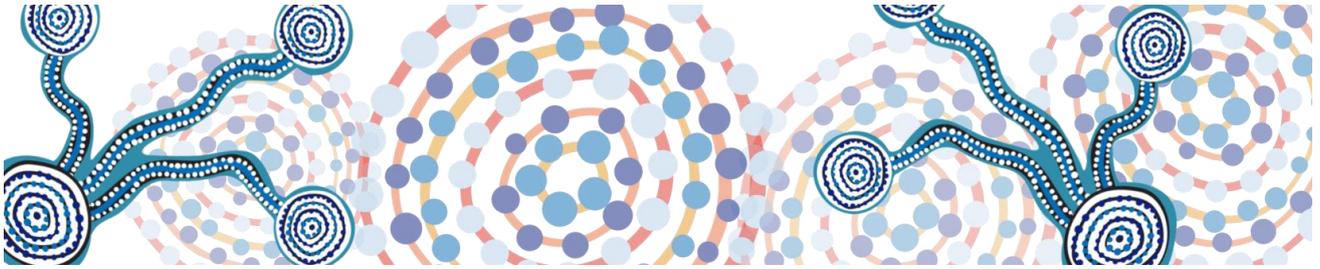
When designing my tours, my research into the Peel-Yalgorup wetland system where I operate was predominately scientific and focused on expanding my ecological knowledge to share with customers.

However, I also discovered strong emotional connections many different people have to these habitats, as well as a deep sense of environmental stewardship.

The Peel-Yalgorup wetlands not only provide important habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna, they also represent a profound sense of connection and place for the Mandjoogoordap community - both indigenous and non-indigenous.

My tours are now enriched with stories of how the wetlands shape and influence our community – and vice versa. Stories of past community leaders and environmental activists who fought for years to protect the Creery Wetlands, stories of people who work to rehabilitate and care for our wetlands or who have been inspired to create art in them and just take pleasure from being present in them.

Learning about and experiencing this sense of place compliments the appreciation of the wetlands' ecological aspects and provides a more intimate connection with, and understanding of, nature in our lives.



## Acknowledgement

Ways To Nature recognises and acknowledges the Noongar people of the Bindjareb region as traditional owners and pays respect to elders past and present.

Thanks to Marion Timms, Murray Love, William Hames, the Peel Preservation Group and George Walley for generously sharing their time and knowledge about Creery Wetlands Nature Reserve and Mandjoogordap's Djilba Gabbi.

## Speaker Profile

Sarah Way is a zoologist passionate about Australia's wildlife and the owner of small ecotourism business Ways To Nature. Sarah has spent her career working on threatened species conservation programs and created Ways To Nature to engage and connect people with nature. Sarah leads guided nature walks exploring the beautiful wetlands and reserves of the Bindjareb region in southwest WA, as well as nature-based school holiday programs and speaking engagements, drawing from her varied work as an Australian zoologist. Sarah is dedicated to inspiring a sense of wonder and appreciation of Australia's biodiversity through unique experiences with nature.

## Website links

→ <https://www.waystonature.com.au/>

