

# Serpentstar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

**Alban Arthan, June 2002**

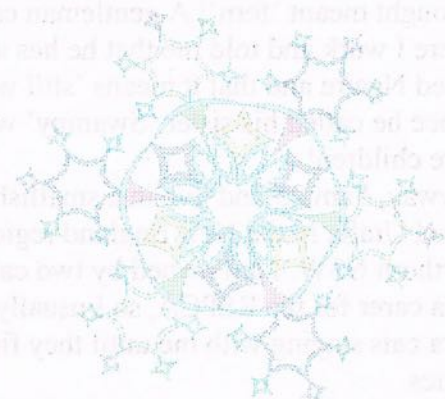
## Greeting to the Winter Solstice

Brightener of Darkness, hail!  
Keeper of Clearness, Opener of the Depths.

Gifts of plenty are arising,  
Winter wonders, white snows' fall.

Joyful be the heart within us,  
Open wide the guesting door,  
Wisdom waken in abundance,  
Warm our beings to the core.

From the 'Celtic Devotional' by Caitlin Matthews



## ***RUNNING FREE***

*Running free with the wind in your hair,  
Breathing in the cool crisp night air,  
Feeling the softness of sand beneath your feet,  
Jumping the waves as they lap over the beach,  
Listening to the song of the sea in the air,  
Your voice rings with laughter and happiness there,  
With love in your heart and joy in your soul,  
You'll remember this night, even when you're old,  
All your senses fill with a lust for life,  
There's no worries, no trouble, no strife,  
Your world falls back into true prospective,  
Relax and enjoy - tonight be reckless,  
So run free with the wind in your hair,  
Breathing in the cool, crisp night air,  
For the simple things in life are free,  
Just waiting there for you and me.*

- raelene taylor

## **A Book of Druid Poetry From the South Lands.**

My tutor, Keith, suggested the idea of producing a book of poetry, like the Order's existing book *Ffrwythau*, but with poetry from Druids in Australia and New Zealand.

What do people think of this idea?

I don't know anything about publishing books myself, so I have no idea what would be involved. Perhaps the people who published the Order's existing book could publish this one if it goes ahead.

Any input would be appreciated. ☺

(please contact the editorial address)

*Sionnach*





## EDITOR'S SPOT



Hello everyone and welcome to SerpentStar reborn!

I thought I would start by telling you a little about myself.

Some of you know me from the Assemblies, others from email or chat groups. My name is Ngaire (though I usually use "Sionnach" online), which is a Maori name that until today I thought meant 'fern'! A gentleman came into where I work and told me that he has a sister called Ngaire and that it means 'still water'. Hence he called his sister 'Swampy' when they were children!

Anyway, I am 25 and live in a smallish town called Uralla in the New England region of Northern NSW. I am owned by two cats, and am a carer for the RSPCA, so I usually have extra cats staying with me until they find homes.

I am currently in the Ovate grade, and have been for about 6 years (I wonder if that is some sort of record!)



### Websites

[www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org) - Website of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids

<http://members.aol.com/Oakwyse/>

- Website of Oakwyse, an American Druid. This site also contains information on Sacred Groves, including an Australian/ New Zealand section

<http://shell.world-net.co.nz/~unikorn/grove.htm>

- Website of The Grove of the Summer Stars in New Zealand

<http://www.druidorder.demon.co.uk/>

- Website of the British Druid Order

<http://gdosc.mybravenet.com/druidorder.html>

- Website of the Gaelic Druid Order of the Southern Cross

I have never edited a newsletter before, this is a new experience for me, so be patient with me if I make any mistakes. I am always open to constructive criticism!

I have a few ideas of things to put in the newsletter, poems, articles, a children's page, seasonal recipes, native tree lore, Aboriginal and Maori stories, to name a few.

If you have any ideas, or want to see something in SerpentStar, please let me know. This is after all your newsletter.

As always, submissions are welcome, so please send them in to the address below.

Winter has definitely set in here, nights down to minus four degrees, and the days no warmer than about fifteen! No snow yet, though some of our readers in NZ were having snow at the end of May!

We have articles about astrology, being a Druid in Australia, and more. Enjoy!

*Sionnach*

### National Tree Day

Sunday July 28

Phone: 1800 303 232 or  
see

[www.planetark.com.au](http://www.planetark.com.au)  
for more info.



### Disclaimer

Opinions published in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Order.

### Submission/Subscription Details

Subscription is \$10 per year for four issues, or free via email. Email format is MS Word 2000. Please let me know if you require a different format.

Submissions can be sent via email:

[negan@tpgi.com.au](mailto:negan@tpgi.com.au)

or snail-mail:

N. Egan

PO Box 316, Uralla, NSW, 2358

SerpentStar is printed on 100% recycled paper



Albert  
Namatjira



# **Bringing It Home**

by Vyvyan



Ned Kelly

Druidry is a flexible system but it has its constants, and ancestors, archetypes and mythic heroes, sacred places and deeply venerated historical events are all more or less essential to Druidry.

We know Druidry as a Celtic thing and, while it was eclipsed on the European continent and in the Middle East and northern Africa, and its magi, scholars and philosophers, and its ruling classes forced to take refuge in Britain's wild and inhospitable extremes and further west in Ireland, we know that the Celts were not originally exclusively Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Celtic traditions have their roots in a thousand or more years of worldwide Celtic venturing before the rise of Greece and Rome, and in those ancient times they made significant cultural exchanges with indigenous peoples on every continent.<sup>1</sup>

In those days the Celtic tradition was not so much the cherishing of a particular canon of 'Celtic' tales about 'Celtic' heroes and gods as about the selective acquiring of new tales and the subjecting of them to characteristically Celtic treatments in order to sanctify them, so that they might mediate their magic into the culture via the resultant mythos. They selected according to specifically Celtic criteria, and from them, through their mythic treatment of them, elicited the forms and qualities of enchantment and magic that still draw people like us to Druidry.

Cultures are shaped inwardly by their traditions, by the heroes, gods, ancestors and other identities whom individuals are encouraged to contemplate from early childhood to old age. Their institutions, values, morals, emotionality, religious attitudes, modes of reasoning, patterns of thought, responses to other, concepts of normality, attitudes to birth and death, erotica, warring, and models for love, beauty and truth and much much more are derived from and maintained largely by the power of the mythology, history and fiction carried in the minds of its individuals.

Now in the case of legends and myth, as distinct from fables and fiction, there is usually some historical truth evident or obscured within it. There *was* a Fionn MacCumhaill – okay, he was probably a whole, centuries long military tradition, but he represents real people who lived and fought, feasted and brawled, loved, worshipped, married and died way back in the ancient past, and whose genes, replicating generation by generation down through the ages, are the material inheritances of millions of their descendents who are alive on Earth today. There *was* a Rhiannon, a Merlin, a Guinevere; and if we asked them to, no doubt they could show us the reality of their gods and their dragons.

They belong to Europe, and if you go to their ancient haunts you can connect powerfully with them, I'm told, in a way that just can't be done from this hemisphere through pictures in books. The same is true of Celtic sacred places such as Iona and the megalithic sites. But, as Bard, Ovates and Druids, we respond to their enchantment, and we need to use their specifically Celtic way of eliciting, transforming and sacralizing the magical power of place, of our own antipodean culture heroes, and of some of our more potent cultural memories.

<sup>1</sup> For an account of evidence of ancient sustained Celto-Phoenician and Celto-Egyptian presences in Australia, complete with descriptions of astronomical henges and other arrangements and alignments of standing stones, read *Mysterious Australia* by Rex Gilmore, Nexus Books.



The roots of our Druidry are in Europe, but it begins to flourish here exuberantly as we recognise, vitalise and consciously utilise the spiritual soil of our own cultures. We Southern Hemisphere Druids are finding legitimate ways to be nourished from the mythos continually being generated by the deeds of our own hero men and women, the fraught, passionate and still sometimes painful engagement between our human cultures and the land and the elements, and the potent events of our respective comings into being as multicultural nations.

The indigenous peoples and the pre-Historic Asian and European colonists who appear to have preceded the modern Europeans here have responded to this imperative as it applies to them in their own ways, and while a European shamanism can't just 'plug in' to theirs, it is part of the Druidic tradition to respect and even collect new cosmologies, knowledge systems, and magical practices, wherever they may be found, and to integrate them into a specifically Druidic worldview. Many of us, reading or hearing the indigenous sacred lore of our lands and discovering its native animals and trees are finding it possible to welcome its archetypal beings, spirit people and culture heroes into our own Druidic pantheons, mead halls, and groves, and as spirit friends, into our homes and our daily lives.

Naturally, our 'Celticism' is being influenced by this, acquiring Oz, Kiwi and other Pacific accents and flavours, just as the pre-Roman Gauls of Galilee, the Helvetian Gauls and the Gauls of ancient Britain all brought their own distinctive accents and flavours to their nevertheless genuinely Celtic paths.

We are importing sacred lore and wisdom from the Old World into our countries along with those of other exotic cultures as we choose them or they choose us, but it's natural and empowering for us to be looking for our own countries' well-springs of mythic power as well.

It's no accident that when I try to think of Australians who have a place in my personal unedited pantheon, the list bristles with Celtic names: Ned and Kate Kelly and the whole gang, and a whole string of bushrangers: Jack Doolan, Bold Jack Donahue and Captain Starlight with his grief-stricken Aileen. There's the malevolent Captain Logan of Moreton Bay, Bourke and Wills and Captain John MacDouall Stuart, Sr Mary McKillop, Johnny O'Keefe, Chips Rafferty. As potent myth we have Rafferty's Reef, Buckley who had no chance, and despite having Murphy's Law to grapple with, we live the life of Riley. When it rains, Hughie it is who "sends 'er down". Celtic mythology produces Celtic heroes.

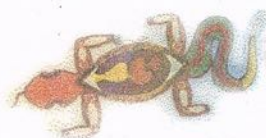
But there are also people like Benelong, Ludwig Leichhardt, Albert Namatjira, Thistle Thornton, Bobby Sykes, Germaine Greer, Wylie, Dawn Fraser, and Yvonne Gooloogong - not necessarily Celtic, or not obviously so, but all heroes in the best Celtic sense.

Celebrated in song and verse we have wry-backed shearers and blue-bellied joes, jolly swagmen, camp cooks, jillaroos and drovers in abundance, and any number of identities and tales that offer themselves as magical ingredients in our personal Druidries. These are all Australians, but New Zealanders and others will be conscious of their own.

To be continued next issue.







## Traditional Aboriginal Myth

As Printed In Web Of Wyrd #10

Anon.



Back in the Dreamtime, Gidja the Moon lived by the river with the Bullanji people. They made fun of him, because he was round and fat, with little stringy legs and arms.

Gidja loved Yalma, the Evening Star, but she laughed at him too. So Gidja made a magic circle of stones, and at dusk every night, sat in his circle and sang of his love for Yalma. He made so many songs! So, Yalma agreed to marry him and the Bullanji people held corroboree for them.

Now Yalma had a baby daughter - Lilga, the Morning Star. Lilga would go hunting with her father, Gidja.

One day, while gathering honey, a limb fell off a tree and crushed Lilga, so she died. This was the first time that anyone had ever died. Poor Gidja mourned his daughter, but the Bullanji people were afraid, and blamed Gidja for bringing death to the world.

When Gidja carried his little Morning Star in her coffin over the river, some men cut the ropes holding the bridge, and he fell into the river. The coffin drifted out to sea, and today, you can still see little Morning Star shining out at sea.

Gidja climbed out of the river, and made a fire. He carried a bright burning brand from the fire, and walked through the forest. The people saw him and were afraid. Then they saw it was Gidja, and were angry. They tried to kill him, but couldn't, so they picked him up and threw him up into the sky. As he rose up, he cursed the people, and said they would all die, and remain dead.

But he, and the grass, would die, and would come back to new life. And so it is. Gidja grows fatter and fatter, and then fades away like a little old man. Lilga though, shines brightly. Just like he said, Gidja comes back to life. At dusk on the third day after he dies, you can see him again, floating like a baby's cradle, waiting to start again.

<http://www.paganlibrary.com/index1.php>

## Transcendental Beach Woman.

Beach woman turns over on the sand. She's lifting  
coil after coil of her fish-finned flash of gila-  
beaded body showing dark-light dreams, shifting  
self after self through phased space-time bands. Shiela  
after shiela turns on the beading sand hand in hand  
with her all-skying bloke, her cloud-brained raining-bright  
green-giving, golden-sunned shine of the many-manned  
air. I story my scales with the devas' deeds. My mind-light  
throws living shadows of my cells - they are my ranges -  
makes songs for my rivers in my wisdom-shaped terrain.  
I am wound in the bright rain-glitter coils of the winds' changes.  
My children nuzzle me, questioning me. My scales explain.

I am. I create my days. I make in my pristine palm  
my grain-rivered days. Recreated now I am. I am calm.



# CELTIC WHEEL OF THE YEAR ASTROLOGY

Copyright Moonwind Rose

Our ancestors developed astrology from painstaking observation of the visible planets and the two luminaries against the background of constellations as they moved around the northern hemisphere's pole stars. Our ancestors undoubtedly celebrated these observations with ritual as there are many archaeological sites around the world oriented to mark the passage of these events through the points of their first seasonal appearances above or below Earth's horizon.

The Celts used 'naked eye' astronomy to develop a system of astrology to locate the Self and the Community in time and space by referring to the swirl of patterns appearing in the skies. Stonehenge, the preliterate calendar is an example of this. Indeed, Stonehenge itself would not have the mathematical accuracy it now enjoys if it were constructed one hundred miles away from its present site. Location is very important and these stone monoliths marked both the place and the passage of time:

Celtic astrology and in particular Druidry encourages us here in Australasia, through the eight Wheel of the Year festivals, to identify this sense of time and place in terms of the southern hemisphere by observing and acknowledging what happens to the our environment with the Southern Cross dominating our skies.

It can therefore be misleading to follow the calendar dates of the northern hemisphere to mark the seasonal festivals here. Whereas our northern cousins celebrate Taurus in the springtime, it is autumn here and when Samhuinn is celebrated at the end of October it is difficult to imagine it as a time of darkness when we are rejoicing for Spring. However, the sun is in the same Astrological sign for both the southern and northern hemisphere and these differences, if acknowledged, can deepen our understanding of the universe and the blessings it offers to us here on Earth.

To locate ourselves in time and space we must first look to the heavens where we find, among other constellations, the Southern Cross, Scorpius and Orion the major features in our starry skies. Then if we consider the Earth as a whole and acknowledge that the astrological energies from the universe flow over her, then we can mark our territory with what energies are available to us at the time. We live here, in Australia or New Zealand, and to us the Taurus and Scorpio we know represent complementary manifestations of the same energy flowing to the northern hemisphere. We just feel it differently. In this way, if we are guided by the Druid principle to locate Self in time and space, then a deeper understanding of the festivals themselves can bring a deeper understanding of our place in this celebration of life on Earth.

Of the eight Druid festivals, four are solar and four are lunar, creating thereby a balanced scheme of interlocking masculine and feminine observances for a calendar year. The solar festivals, the masculine ones, are marked on astrology calendars by the sun entering Cancer, Capricorn, Libra and Aries. However, there is much confusion about the calculation of the lunar festivals, the feminine ones, which take their timing from traditional calendar dates passed down through European history rather than astronomical observances or astrological events.

The Druid year begins in the autumn darkness at the onset of winter at Samhuinn - a lunar festival associated with the new moon. The other festivals alternate between through the masculine solar cycle (the Alban festivals) and the feminine lunar cycle to form an interlocking system of observances of the yin and yang energies as they ebb and flow throughout the year.

## Solar cycle

Viewed from Mother Earth, the sun's light can be likened to a spotlight that shines down on parts of the earth at different intensities depending on the distance from the equator. As the Earth is positioned relative to the sun, the spotlight of sun's rays falls only between 23.5 degrees northern latitude and 23.5 degrees southern latitude crossing the equator twice on its yearly path. These latitudes are called Tropic of Cancer (north) and Tropic of Capricorn (south) respectively as the sun appears, from Earth, to move into the first degrees of those astrological signs. The sun's path between these two extremities (or solstices)



when it appears to enter the astrological signs of Aries and Libra.

These events are experienced here on Earth as the broader seasonal cycles of winter and summer when the sun reaches the tropics and spring and autumn when it crosses the equator at the equinoxes. Our ancestors marked these times with standing stones and the Celtic festivals celebrate the energies from the universe which are available to us at those times.

### **Lunar cycle**

There is much confusion about the exact calculation of these lunar festivals as dates are usually taken from traditional holidays of the northern hemisphere. If we are to understand and honour our place on Earth, ie. The southern hemisphere, then these lunar festivals should be observed more accurately or rather, more astrologically. Whereas it takes the sun twelve calendar months to mark its passage from one extreme to the other, it takes the moon just one calendar month - a cycle which is endlessly repeated. However just as the sun cycle recognises four significant events as two extremes (solstices) and two in balance (equinoxes), then I suggest that the lunar cycle should do too.

Samhuinn (Halloween) appears to be associated with the new moon as it is consistently referred to as a winter festival to celebrate transformation, darkness, death and rebirth whereas Bealteinne (May Day) is associated with spring notions of fruitfulness, sexuality, birth and vitality and therefore the full moon is indicated. It appears reasonable then that the other two lunar festivals of Imbolc (in early spring) and Lughnasadh (in early autumn) should be associated with quarter moon astronomical events. Both festivals relate to balancing equal proportions (ie male/female, day/night, light/darkness etc) and both can be seen as equidistant from the new and full moons. These lunar festivals can then mirror the solar festivals marking the two extremes of new and full moon and the two crossings of the equator at the quarter moons as the moon follows its track across the sky in its waxing or waning phases.

It is interesting, although it shouldn't be too surprising, that all four lunar festivals, if calculated in this way, have associations with the Taurus/Scorpio axis. If they are celebrated in the northern hemisphere, when the moon is waxing to our waning moon and vice versa, then they are celebrated when the quarter moons are in Taurus, whereas we would celebrate when the quarter moons are in Scorpio.

### **Calendar discrepancies**

The orbits of the Earth around the Sun and the Moon around the Earth are not neat. If they were in that ideal situation, a lunar eclipse would occur at every full moon and a solar eclipse at every new moon and the solar cycle of twelve months would mesh with the lunar cycles instead of being out of synch as the thirteen lunar cycles appear now.

Researchers have claimed that using markers such as the ancient stone markers of our ancestors, the accuracy of marking the passage of time reaches 98% accuracy and can even predict solar eclipses.

The ancient Coligny calendar, used by the Druids, reconciles the Sun and Moon discrepancies by adding an extra month every now and again following a regular number of years' turnaround. There were no fixed dates in the Druidical calendar scheme, just floating dates and this could explain why there is such variation in festival dates around the world.

As Samhuinn (or Halloween) is associated with a period of time known as 'no-time', this could relate to the need for extra days to adjust the calendars over a set span of years.

### **Differences in Calculation**

The main difference lies in the lunar cycles. Calculations for festival dates should reflect both the spirit of the time and its astrological significance as it fluctuates from year to year.

The Taurean new moon is the energy available to us at the time of Samhuinn, whereas its opposite, the



full moon in Scorpio heralds the spring Bealteinne energy. In between, the waning quarter moon is celebrated at Lughnasadh before the autumn equinox and the waxing quarter moon of Scorpio is celebrated at Imbolc heralding the spring equinox. These dates must vary from the northern hemisphere dates as the waxing and waning energies are on different sides of the full moon at its apex.

If these lunar festivals are looked at in this way, it becomes clear that although the energies are of different strength, the Scorpio/Taurus axis become strikingly significant. The Scorpio/Taurus energies are, out of all the astrological energies, the most fertile energies of the whole zodiac and this is just what our ancestors of farming and animal husbandry lifestyles would have needed to keep their communities sustained. Our ancestors, Druid or otherwise, were indeed working in harmony with Nature.

Celebration of these festivals is far more than an attempt to revive customs more appropriate to a different era. They can be vital to our understanding of the passage of time in the here and now and give us some measure of the association of our lives to our place within nature, our community and the world beyond. In addition, they link us to our ancestors through their painstaking astronomical observances and their astrological thinking and guide us to our futures as we stand here on Earth.

This energy is available to us as we celebrate, in our own ways, these special astronomical events. If part of the celebrations are held outdoors, then these events can actually be experienced as you look to the sunset or quarter moon shining down on you as you locate yourself in direct relationship with the sun and moon.

In addition, if we in the southern hemisphere build these festivals into our own culture, we can help to balance the northern hemisphere energies which flow so strongly through those significant points in the year. In this way we can bring harmony of the masculine and feminine to our entire world, not just our little corner of it.

To be continued next issue.



## Seasonal Recipes

### Simmering Winter Pot Pourri

Originally designed for use on wood stoves, this works just as well on gas or electric stoves. All you need is an old saucepan, or stove-top kettle, and you house will be filled with a wonderful fragrance.

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups pine or spruce needles
- 1 cup broken cinnamon sticks
- 2 cups chopped orange peel
- 1 cup rosebuds
- ½ cup cloves
- ½ cup allspice berries

Mix together and leave in an airtight container for a few days

1½ cups orris root soaked in 2 teaspoons cranberry oil, and 1 teaspoon each of pine oil, sweet orange oil, and cinnamon oil

Mix together as above and keep in a separate container.

Combine all the ingredients and leave for a few weeks to mature.

When the mixture is ready, add as much as you wish a saucepan of water and allow it to simmer gently.

(from 'Pot Pourri' by Joanna Sheen)

### Recipes for the Oil Burner

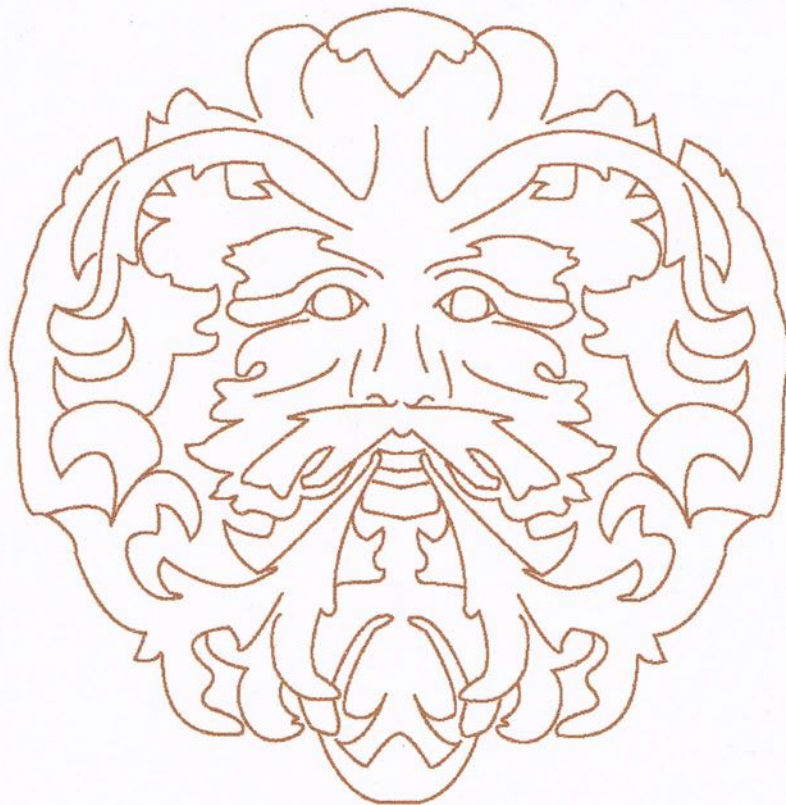
#### **Winter fragrances    Christmas fragrances**

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 drops clove oil    | 2 drops frankincense oil |
| 3 drops ginger oil   | 2 drops myrrh oil        |
| or                   | 2 drops sandalwood oil   |
| 3 drops cinnamon oil | or                       |
| 3 drops orange oil   | 2 drops cinnamon oil     |
|                      | 2 drops orange oil       |
|                      | 2 drops clove oil        |

(from 'Aromatherapy' by Judy Chapman)



# Children's Page!



From the Greenman Coloring Book  
By [Eliza@sacredspiral.com](mailto:Eliza@sacredspiral.com) &  
[Ravenfox@sacredspiral.com](mailto:Ravenfox@sacredspiral.com)

D B B P C A S S O W A R Y  
C C L R D N E A O E H A M  
R R U U O I I C D K A V O  
O F G R E W N H H A C L E  
C P M D R T N G P I C E S  
O K O A L A O S O L D I G  
D Q U O L L W N N Y O N C  
I G O A N N A O G A E D A  
L E E I P G A M N U K F E  
E P M P O S S U M G E E H  
T I M U K A N G A R O O D  
A F A I R Y P E N G U I N  
F R U I T B A T U R T L E

## AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

BLUE TONGUE	FAIRY PENGUIN
BROWN SNAKE	FRUIT BAT
CASSOWARY	GECKO
CICADA	GOANNA
CROCODILE	KANGAROO
CURRAWONG	KOALA
DINGO	MAGPIE
DOLPHIN	POSSUM
ECHIDNA	QUOLL
EMU	TURTLE