

# GO DOWN UNDER

## Study Guide

by Darren Liebman

Imagine a mysteriously diverse and beautiful land on the entirely other side of the planet ...

A land of endless coastline, vast deserts, verdant forests and towering cliffs ...

A land containing some of the most unique and varied wildlife on earth ...

A land that's been inhabited for many thousands of years by a mystical, nature-loving people ...

A land that produces an instrument called the didgeridoo, which sounds and looks as exotic as its name ...

A Land Down Under ...

A land called Australia!

### AUSTRALIA: The Land

... is an island, country and continent located between the South Pacific and Indian Oceans in the area of the world known as Oceania. It's the world's largest island, the only island continent, and the only country that's a continent. It's the world's sixth largest country, but is the smallest continent, followed by Europe, Antarctica, North America, South America, Africa and Asia.

... is nicknamed The Land Down Under because it's located entirely in the Southern Hemisphere. It is named after the Latin word *australis*, which means "southern." It was once connected to what is now known as Antarctica, via the super-continent *Gondwana*; about 50 million years ago, it separated and drifted north. Because Australia and North America are located in opposite hemispheres, their seasons are reversed. Australia's east coast is 14-16 hours ahead of Florida, depending on the month.

... is about the same size as the United States, minus Alaska and Hawaii, but has far fewer people. Australia, the world's sixth largest country, is home to approximately 22.7 million people, according to 2011 projections, while the U.S. has a population of about 312 million. Eighty percent of Australia's population lives along the coast.

... is the earth's flattest and driest continent, but includes a wide array of terrain: desert, mountains, swamps, rain forest (about one percent of the continent) and about 22,000 miles of coastline (more beaches than any other country). The vast desert area that takes up much of central and western Australia (about a third of the continent), including the Simpson, Gibson, Great Sandy and Victoria Deserts, is nicknamed the "outback." Uluru, a.k.a. Ayers Rock, the famous free-standing rock that sits near the country's center, is the world's second-largest monolith, measuring 1,000 feet high, 2.2 miles long and 1.5 miles wide. The tallest mountain is 7,310-foot Mount Kosciuszko, located in the Snowy Mountains range, New South Wales. The world's largest coral reef domain, the Great Barrier Reef, extends about 1,245 miles along the northeast coast. Australia's major rivers are the Murray and the Darling, located mostly in the southeastern part of the country.

... comprises six states - New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania (an island off the eastern-southern coast), Victoria and Western Australia - and two mainland territories, Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory. These territories function similarly to states, but the Commonwealth Parliament can override any legislation of their territorial parliaments. Australia also has several overseas territories, including two in Antarctica.

... has five cities of more than 1 million people each, as of 2011: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Its capital, however, is Canberra, located in the Australian Capital Territory. Other

Cairns, Hobart and Alice Springs. About 80 percent of east, which includes Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. The rest of the country is in the northern regions. The rest of the country is in the southern regions. The Aussie interior gets extremely hot during the summer months, reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit.

## AUSTRALIA: Human History

... was first settled by Europeans in 1788, when 780 British convicts arrived by ship near present-day Sydney. Many of the prisoners were shipped to Australia for offenses such as speaking out against the government and defaulting on loans. The first free settlers arrived in 1793.

... since 1901, has evolved from a colony of the United Kingdom to an independent and sovereign democratic nation. Australia Day (Jan. 26) is an annual celebration of Australia's nationhood, commemorating the ceremonious unfurling of the British flag at the head of Sydney Cove by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788. Many Australians, however, have termed Australia Day as Invasion Day, in reference to the ensuing Aboriginal subjugation.

... has two indigenous peoples: the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islanders. Although these two cultures share many traits and traditions, they are distinct ethnic groups. Just as our Native Americans were the first guardians of North America, the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are the original custodians of Australia. Indigenous Australians prefer to use the terms "Aboriginal person(s)" or "Aboriginal people(s)" rather than "Aborigine(s)." Many people consider "Aborigine(s)" to be culturally insensitive and offensive.

## THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ...

... have one of the longest continuously existing cultures on earth. Many scientists believe the ancestors of present-day Aboriginal people first arrived in Australia from southeast Asia, via New Guinea, about 50,000 years ago. They probably came in multiple migrations, traveling in small boats or rafts, and walking across islands whenever possible.

... traditionally do not call themselves Aboriginal. Different groups have different names, depending on which languages they speak and where they live. For example, the Koori people come from the Koori lands, in the modern-day states of Victoria and New South Wales, while the Murray people live in present-day Queensland. Instead of using the names, however, the first European settlers called all the original peoples Aborigines. "Aborigine" is derived from the Latin term *ab origine*, which means "from the beginning." Many indigenous Australians consider "Aborigine(s)" culturally insensitive and offensive.

... are very connected - physically and spiritually - with the land and sea, and all the creatures in those environments. A common Aboriginal expression is "The land is my mother."

... believe spirit ancestors at the beginning of time created the world, all its creatures and the Aboriginal way of life, and that everything, past and present, is related. "Dreamtime" or "Dreamings" are legends that tell of the experiences of the creation ancestors.

... are linked to the creation time and nature through their totems, which are animal or natural objects that symbolize a family or clan. Whatever a person's totem, he or she must learn everything about it and never destroy or eat it. This is one of the Aboriginal ways of conserving the environment and all its creatures.

... were once divided into at least 250 groups, with a common religion but different customs and languages. Peoples' lifestyles varied a great deal, depending on where they lived. Desert tribes moved often, over a wide area, in search of water and food. Groups in wetter areas stayed in a fairly small region, moving just two or three times a year. Each tribe occupied a certain homeland and respected the homelands of others. Permission was needed to travel through someone else's land. More than two-thirds

... away from their ancestral homelands. (As of 2013, 21

... among all their different tribes, but all except about 20 are traditionally unwritten; therefore, painting, music, songs are important means of communication, by which to pass on traditions, laws and other information. Most Aboriginal languages are now written, and their main language is English.

... have the world's longest continuing art tradition, which began as rock art in Arnhem Land, located on the very central-northern tip of Australia. They also would - and still do - paint on tree bark, ceremonial poles, artifacts and their bodies. X-ray style, portraying bone structure and internal organs, first arose about 6,000 years ago and continues to this day. Traditional colors are red (derived naturally from ochre), yellow (ochre), white (clay or chalk) and black (charcoal). Interestingly, Aboriginal dot art is a contemporary painting style that arose from the Papunya Tula art movement in the 1970s.

... used the boomerang as a hunting tool. But while many people mistakenly believe Aboriginal people used the boomerang primarily to hunt game, it was mostly used to kill birds or to direct them into nets. In the latter situation, for instance, when a flock of birds was spotted, an Aboriginal hunter would imitate a hawk call. He or a hunting mate would then throw the boomerang above the birds, which would swoop down to elude the fake hawk and fly into strategically placed nets. Other Aboriginal hunting tools included clubs, spears and the hunting (or throwing) stick, which was thrown from a distance to take down large mammals or birds. A hunting stick, although similarly shaped to the boomerang, is lopsided on one side and not meant to return. Today boomerangs are mostly used for sport.

... had some permanent effect on the land, mostly from using fire to burn off old grass and make way for new green growth, and to flush animals out of the woods. This constant, controlled burning, traditionally used in small areas, created open woodlands for kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots and other game, and prevented undergrowth from building up to fuel huge, ultra-destructive wildfires. (Europeans had a much broader and detrimental influence on the land, by cutting trees for timber, clearing land for crops and overrunning grasslands with livestock.) In some parts of Australia, Aboriginal people, other landowners and national park rangers are returning to the use of "firestick farming" to prevent violent summer bushfires.

... experienced many of the same cultural challenges, indignities and atrocities, at the hands of the white settlers, as did our Native Americans and African-Americans, including racism, oppression, segregation, decimation and genocide. They also lost most of their sacred land to non-indigenous people, and all of these problems have caused trouble for the Aboriginal people ever since. They have suffered disproportionately high rates of depression, illiteracy, alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide, and even today an Aboriginal person's life expectancy is about a decade less than that of a non-indigenous Australian!

... numbered between 315,000 and 1,000,000 people (estimates vary widely) at the time of European settlement in the late 1700s; as of 2013, there were about 670,000 indigenous people, which was about 2.5 percent of Australia's total population. Most of today's Aboriginal people are of mixed Aboriginal and white descent.

... had complex cultural, political and economic rules and edicts, but Europeans did not initially understand or appreciate these elaborate social systems. Most European colonists considered the Aboriginal people primitive and inferior, partly because of their dark skin and the fact that they didn't have any native written languages. (The Aboriginal people communicated orally, musically and artistically.)

... became Australian citizens in 1947, yet didn't gain equal voting rights throughout the land until 1965, when Queensland became the last Aussie state to pass equal suffrage laws. In 1971 Neville Bonner became the first Aboriginal to sit in any Australian Parliament. And it wasn't until 1992 that the Australia High Court first recognized native land title in Australia, by passing the Mabo decision.

face discrimination and prejudice, and are underprivileged

and role models, including land rights pioneer Eddie Mabo;  
on; didgeridoo maker/player Djalu Gurruwiwi; NBA basketball  
tennis champion Evonne Goolagong; and Tasmanian survivor of

brutality Truganini.

... have their own distinct flag, created by Aboriginal artist Harold Thomas in 1971. The flag is designed with a black top half to represent the Aboriginal people; a red bottom half to represent the earth and the Aboriginals' spiritual relationship to the land; and a yellow sun in the middle, symbolizing the giver of life. Some people say the red represents blood, for the many thousands of Aboriginal people who died as a result warfare and disease after European colonization started in the late 1700s.

... can teach us all how to better live in harmony with the environment and all of its creatures, and perhaps even more importantly, how to live in harmony with ourselves.

## AUSTRALIA: Wildlife and Nature

Australia is one of the world's 17 mega-diversity countries, according to Conservation International. It is home to about 280 species of mammals (including 150 types of marsupials, more than any other country); 750-plus species of native birds; and about 700 species of reptiles, including 140 types of land snakes, 30 sea snakes and 370 lizards.

Despite its abundance of unique fauna and flora, Australia, just like Florida, has suffered ecological and environmental damage due to non-native species of animal and plants either escaping or being released into the wild. The dingo, Australia's wild dog, is believed to have been the first non-native animal Down Under. Although dingoes did, and still do, cause environmental damage, Australia was quite ecologically balanced until the late 1700s, when the first English settlers arrived and introduced a slew of non-native, havoc-wrecking creatures.

They brought sheep, cattle, goats, pigs and rabbits for food; cats and dogs for pets; foxes and deer for hunting; and horses and camels for transport and exploration. These animals led to overgrazing, land erosion and predation of natural species. Many of these animals escaped and became feral.

But that was just the beginning of Australia's intrusive animal problems. Europeans later imported water buffalo and deer for hunting and food, cane toads for insect control, and many more. Non-native predation of indigenous species, along with habitat destruction and water-supply fluctuation, has resulted in Australia having the world's highest mammalian extinction rate, according to *National Geographic*.

Florida also suffers environmental problems due to both feral and non-native animals. LESSON: Do not release any animal, either wild or tame, that does not already occur in the environment!

### Words to learn ...

\*fauna - *n.* the animals of a specified region or time.

\*flora - *n.* the plants of a specified region or time.

\*carnivore - *n.* any flesh-eating animal or plant.

\*herbivore - *n.* animal that feeds on plants.

\*omnivore - *n.* animal that feeds on both flesh and plants.

\*ecology - *n.* study of the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. Also: the study of the interaction of people with their environment.

\*environmentalism - *n.* work related to protection of the natural environment.

\*indigenous - *adj.* refers to people, plants or animals originating naturally in a region. (Australian example: saltwater crocodile; Floridian example: American alligator)

animals, and sometimes customs and diseases, native to a  
lian example: platypus; Floridian example: Florida panther)  
animal that has escaped from captivity and established self-  
. In Australia, wild horses, pigs and cats are feral, while  
o animals were deliberately released to establish wild  
populations. However, "feral" is now generally applied to any non-native animal that causes serious  
damage to human interests.

Dingoes are a good example of Australian feral animals. They were originally brought to Australia  
by Asian seafarers 3,500 or more years ago. Aboriginal people used dingoes for food, companions,  
hunting aids and bed warmers, but many dingoes escaped into the wild and disrupted the ecology by  
killing native wildlife.

Domestic dogs were brought to Australia by Europeans in 1788 and their release into the wild has  
continued since. Dingoes and other wild dogs are widely distributed throughout the country and are  
present in most environments. (The dingo is increasingly crossbreeding with the domestic dog.)

In the U.S., cats and hogs are among the worst feral pests. In large part due to irresponsible pet  
owners, tens of millions of cats live wild in our country, killing hundreds of millions of songbirds, reptiles  
and mammals. Feral hogs tear up landscapes and vegetation and eat native plants and animals.

\*exotic - *adj.* refers to *any* organism (either tame or wild) that is outside its natural range. It  
may be an animal that has been introduced from another country, or it may be an animal that has been  
translocated to another part of a country. For example, kookaburras have been introduced to south-west  
Western Australia. Some synonyms of exotic, in the context used above, are non-native and introduced.

\*invasive - *adj.* refers to any organisms (usually transported by humans), which successfully  
establish themselves in, and then overcome, otherwise intact, pre-existing native ecosystems. Invasive  
species are a major threat to biodiversity (the collected wealth of the world's species of plants, animals  
and other organisms) as well as to agriculture and other human interests.

Invasive creatures in Florida include many species of reptiles and fish, as well as the nutria (a large  
South American rodent) and fire ants. According to *National Geographic*, Florida spends million of  
dollars annually just to control invasive plants, such as Australian melaleuca! Synonym for invasive: alien.

\*extinct - *adj.* no longer in existence. Since 1788, 27 native Australian mammals species, along  
with 23 bird and four frog species or subspecies, are thought to have become extinct. One example of  
extinction is the thylacine, a.k.a. Tasmanian tiger, a dog-like marsupial. The thylacine disappeared from  
the mainland with the introduction of dingoes about 3,500 years ago and was then hunted to extinction  
in Tasmania. The last known specimen died in 1936.

\*species - *n.* category in the classification of living organisms consisting of similar individuals that  
can produce fertile offspring only when they mate within their group. Related species make up a genus;  
related genera make up a family; related families make up an order; related orders make up a subclass;  
related subclasses make up a class; related classes make up a subphylum; related subphyla make up a  
phylum; related phyla make up a kingdom.

\*amphibian - *n.* any of a class of cold-blooded, scaleless vertebrates. Amphibians include frogs,  
toads, newts and salamanders, which usually begin life in the water as tadpoles with gills and later  
develop lungs. Most amphibians live both on land and in water. Frogs, which are different than toads, are  
the only group of amphibians found naturally in Australia. In 1935, in a glaring ecological blunder by  
humans, the cane toad was introduced to the state of Queensland to eat beetles that damaged sugar  
cane. However, the toads did not control the beetles and ate almost any small creatures they could  
catch. Just as disastrous, its eggs, tadpoles and adults are all poisonous, and many native animals and  
domestic pets have died after mouthing or eating cane toads.

\*bird - *n.* any of a class of egg-laying, feathered vertebrate with a beak, two wings, and two feet,

about 750-plus native species of birds, including two of the both of which are flightless. The wedge-tailed eagle is

backbone, including (but not limited to) insects, spiders, crabs, crustaceans, mollusks, sponges and echinoderms. More than 90 percent of the world's creatures are invertebrates. Just among insects, there are about one million known species! There are roughly 25,000 species of spiders, 2,000 of which live in Australia and several of whose bite can be fatal to humans.

\*mammal - *n.* any of a large class of warm-blooded vertebrate that secretes milk for nourishment of its young. Class Mammalia is divided into three subclasses: monotremes, marsupials and placental mammals.

\*marsupial - *n.* any of an order of mammals born incompletely developed, hairless and blind. A baby marsupial climbs to its mother's belly and attaches itself to a nipple, then suckles milk until it's ready for independence. Many female marsupials have belly pouches that shelter their young. Australian marsupials include kangaroos, koalas, wombats, wallabies, possums, numbats, bandicoots and the Tasmanian Devil. (North America's only marsupial is the possum, which is a different species than its Aussie cousins.)

\*monotreme - *n.* any of the lowest order of mammals that lay eggs and have a single opening for the digestive and urinary tracts and genital organs. The world's only monotremes are the platypus and the long-beaked and short-beaked echidnas (spiny anteaters). The platypus is endemic to Australia; the short-beaked echidna is found Down Under and in New Guinea; and three long-beaked echidna species are found only in New Guinea.

\*placental mammal - *n.* mammal that grows inside the mother's body until it is well developed and then can suckle milk from its mother's nipples when it is hungry. Humans, dogs, cats, apes, dolphins and thousands of other mammal species are placental.

\*reptile - *n.* any of a class of cold-blooded, scaly animals that includes snakes, lizards, crocodiles, tortoises and turtles. Australia is home to about 700 species of reptiles. While many Australian snakes are venomous - 20 species, including the northern death adder, brown, taipan and tiger snakes, produce venom that can kill a human - all of its lizards are non-venomous.

\*marine - *adj.* of, found in or produced by the sea. Oz has more coastline than any other country, and its waters contain an amazing array of life, including 3,600-plus fish species and mammals such as dolphins, dugongs (similar to manatees), seals, turtles and whales. The Great Barrier Reef, made up of about 2,800 separate reefs covering 135,000 square miles along the northeast coast, is home to 2,000 fish species and 350 types of coral. But Australia's waters can be as dangerous as they are kaleidoscopically beautiful. Among the potentially deadly creatures are sharks, sea snakes, stone fish (world's most venomous fish), cone shells, saltwater crocs, blue-ringed octopi and, perhaps most dangerous of all, box jellyfish - arguably the most venomous animals on the planet. Box jellies are found in the coastal waters of northern Australia and have been documented with killing about 70 people. Fortunately, many beaches use nets to keep box jellies out of swimming areas. Nets are also used along some New South Wales beaches, including many in and around Sydney, to protect swimmers from sharks.

\*symbiosis - *n.* close existence and interaction of two different species, usually to the advantage of both. For instance, termites eat wood and other plant matter. In the termites' guts are tiny organisms that break down tough plant fibers. Sometimes, however, the symbiotic relationship favors one of the species, to the detriment of the other. This is sometimes the case with termites and Australian eucalyptus trees. Termites sometimes live in these trees and help fertilize the nearby ground with their droppings, but they also damage the trees by eating part of it. Most traditional Aboriginal didgeridoos are made from termite-hollowed eucalyptus trunks.

world, behind the ostrich; too large to fly, but can run as fast as a cheetah. Emus lay the eggs - one of which can be about 12 times as large as the eggs until they hatch and then care for the young; live everywhere but the very top of Australia; adult height is 5 to 6.5 feet.

\*frilled dragon (frill-neck lizard) - has folds of skin that form a large, colorful, fan-like collar around its head; when frightened, opens its mouth and makes a loud hissing noise as the frill opens up like an umbrella; if need be, can travel very quickly on its two hind legs; eats mainly insects, but will eat other lizards; grows to 28-35 inches long; lives in northern Australia.

\*kangaroo - more than 40 species of this marsupial live Down Under, from small tree kangaroos, which live in north Queensland's mountain rainforests and can weigh 13-16.5 pounds, to the red 'roo, which can be as tall as a man and weigh 180 pounds. Kangaroos have exceptionally powerful rear legs for hopping; the Eastern grey kangaroo has reached bounding speeds of 40 mph and jumped nearly 44 feet in length, while the red has jumped more than 10 feet vertically.

\*koala - marsupial that eats almost exclusively the leaves of certain eucalyptus trees; diet is so low in energy that it sleeps up to 20 hours a day and rarely leaves safety of tree; name "koala" means "no drink" in certain Aboriginal languages, because koalas obtain most of their water from eucalyptus leaves; only mammal, other than the greater glider and ringtail possum, which can survive on a diet of eucalyptus leaves; has rear-opening pouch, like wombat; is *not* a bear; lives in eucalypt forests of eastern Australia; adult weight is 24-26 pounds.

\*kookaburra - two species of this bird are the blue-winged kookaburra and the laughing kookaburra; the laughing kookaburra is the better-known and larger of the two - it can grow to more than 17 inches long and is often heard letting loose a loud, chuckle-like call; its cry is often imitated through the didgeridoo; while the blue-winged kookaburra prefers to hunt over water, the laughing kookaburra usually hunts on land for insects, frogs, reptiles and rodents.

\*platypus - one of only three egg-laying mammals on earth, it has a bill and webbed feet like a duck and waterproof fur like a seal; the male has venomous spurs in its hind ankles; walks with a lizard-like gait; has been around since the time of dinosaurs, more than 100 million years ago; adults weigh 1.5 to 6 pounds; eats crayfish, worms, shrimp and insects; spends almost all of its life underground or underwater, in or near fresh water along the east coast of the mainland and in Tasmania.

\*saltwater crocodile - world's largest members of the crocodylian family; has reached 23 feet in length and is considered extremely dangerous; lives in estuaries, rivers, swamps, floodplains and the sea of northern Australia; was almost hunted to extinction before becoming a protected species in 1972; smaller, freshwater crocs can also be found Down Under; one of the most notable differences between crocodiles and alligators is that when a croc's mouth is closed, its lower canine teeth can still be seen, while a gator's teeth are hidden when its mouth is closed.

\*short-beaked echidna - also known as spiny anteater; one of only three species of egg-laying mammals, called monotremes (others are platypus and long-beaked echidna, the later of which exists only in New Guinea); found throughout Australia in bush; weighs between 4.5 and 15 pounds.

\*Tasmanian devil - Australia's largest marsupial carnivore; was common on mainland until about late 1500s, but today is only found in Tasmania; nocturnal, hunts from dusk to dawn for dead animals, insects and small mammals; has aggressive temper when cornered or threatened, but is not considered dangerous to humans or their domestic animals; weighs 15-20 pounds.

\*water-holding frog - in dry conditions, this frog digs a burrow at the foot of a bush or tree and hibernates; its bladder serves as a storage tank for water and shed skin forms a water-saving cocoon; after rain falls, the frog surfaces, sheds the cocoon, feeds and breeds; was used as a water source by

Australia near waterholes and swamps that fill after rain. marsupial resembling a small bear; two species include the red wombat; has rear-opening pouch, like koala; when both hind feet.

## AUSTRALIA: Random Info

\*Australia became a country in 1901 when six colonies federated to become the Commonwealth of Australia (still the official name). The government is a democratic, constitutional monarchy with a federal-state system.

\*Britain's Statute of Westminster 1931 formally ended most of the constitutional links between Australia and the United Kingdom. The final constitutional ties between Australia and the UK were severed with the passing of the Australia Act 1986, ending any British role in the government of the Australian states.

\*The Queen of England is still considered the official head of state, although it's mostly a ceremonial title. The Australian prime minister is actually the main decision maker, and many Australians want to eliminate the English monarch as the head of the state. Australians voted against becoming a republic in a 1999 referendum, but the issue continues to be divisive.

\*The Australian flag is composed of three parts: the Union Jack (British flag), representing the initial European colonization by Great Britain, in the top left corner; the seven-pointed 'Star of Federation', representing Aus' six states and all its combined territories, in the bottom left corner, and the Southern Cross constellation, which can be seen from all of Australia's states and territories, taking up the right half.

\*The most popular sports Down Under include cricket, rugby, Aussie Rules football, basketball and, of course, all water sports.

\*The Australian dollar is its monetary unit.

\*Major exports include wool, beef, lamb, coal, gold and iron ore.

\*The world's largest cattle station, located in South Australia, is the size of Belgium.

### Unique words ...

\*bananalander - native of Queensland

\*barbie - barbeque

\*beauty! - excellent!

\*billabong - waterhole

\*bloke - guy

\*bludger - shirker, freeloader

\*brumby - wild horse

\*bush - rural area

\*bush tucker - wild edibles

\*cozzie - bathing suit

\*dunny - outhouse

\*fair dinkum - honest

\*footy - Australian National Football

\*g'day - hello

\*greenie - environmental activist

\*hoon - fool or idiot

\*jackeroo - stockhand

\*lollies - candies

- \*ropeable - angry
- \*sheila - Australian woman
- \*squatter - gentleman rancher
- \*station - ranch
- \*swag - possessions carried by a traveler in the bush
- \*tucker - food

## THE DIDGERIDOO & ABORIGINAL MUSIC

Have you ever seen the TV show "Survivor" or heard an Aussie-theme commercial and wondered what is the enchantingly strange sound - "waowaowaow" - in the background? Mate, it's the didgeridoo, an Australian Aboriginal aerophone woodwind instrument that sounds and looks as exotic as its name.

\*Essentially a hollowed-out tree branch, the didgeridoo, a.k.a. didg, is among the world's oldest instruments, and it produces a dynamic range of otherworldly sounds and tones. Besides being played solo, the didgeridoo is also used to accompany singing, dancing, chanting, drumming and almost all other forms of music, and for various types of therapy.

\*The didgeridoo is best described as a simple instrument played with much complexity. It is a one-note instrument that can be played up or down by half a pitch according to mouth aperture. An experienced player will use everything from his or her lips, tongue, cheeks, throat, vocal chords and diaphragm to coordinate sounds, rhythm and breathing.

\*The didgeridoo has been played for at least 1,500 years, and is mostly associated with the Aboriginal tribes of Arnhem Land in Northern Australia. Since then, the didg has spread among many Aboriginal tribes, and around the world.

\*"Didgeridoo" is actually an English onomatopoeic word, used to represent the sound that early explorers thought the instrument made. Other spelling variations include didgeridu, didjeridoo and didjeridu, or didg(e) for short. Two of many Aboriginal terms for didgeridoo are yidaki and yirdaki.

\*In Aboriginal culture, the didgeridoo is used in both ceremonies and informal settings, often as an accompaniment to chanting, singing and dancing. Traditional Aboriginal performances usually consist of powerful rhythms paced by one or more singers (one of whom is the lead songman), each with a pair of sticks or some percussion, and one didgeridoo. If a didg is unavailable, the piece can still be performed.

\*In some Aboriginal tribes, the didgeridoo is only played by men, but in other tribes men, women and children all play it. Ceremonial didg playing, however, is almost always reserved for initiated men.

\*The Aboriginal people have more than 20 native sound instruments, most of which are percussive, such as clap sticks (clapping boomerangs can be used for the same effect), hollow log drums, skin drums, rasps, rattles, bull-roarers and sticks that are beaten on shields. In some tribes, stones are used instead of wood. Hand clapping and body slapping is used by singers of both sexes, sometimes as a substitute for clap sticks. The Aboriginal people have no traditional stringed instruments, although some stringed instruments are found in contemporary Aboriginal music. The only other native wind instrument besides the didgeridoo is the gum leaf (folded leaf whistle).

\*Most traditional Aboriginal didgeridoos start as a branch or trunk of a eucalyptus tree that's been naturally hollowed out by termites, which nest by the trillions in Northern Australia. After cutting the branch or trunk to an appropriate length - most didges range between 4 and 5.5 feet, although some are much larger - the crafter cleans out any remaining termites and pulp, and styles the didg to his

smooth the outside before either a) decorating the didg with  
in animals; or b) leaving the didgeridoo with a natural wooden  
on the blowing end to create a comfortable mouthpiece.

\*bull roarer - free aerophone instrument made of a slab of wood usually shaped like a miniature surfboard that's attached to a long piece of chord at one end; the performer twirls the wood via the chord, which makes an eerie sound that Aboriginal people - and many other native peoples around the world - believe is the voice of an ancestor, spirit or deity; occasionally referred to as the "bush telephone", is used in rites-of-passage rituals of many indigenous peoples.

\*circular breathing - musical technique for continuous playing of the didgeridoo, in which air is breathed through the nose while maintaining a drone.

\*clap sticks - Aboriginal instrument, also known as click sticks, used to keep rhythm with the didgeridoo; boomerangs are also sometimes clapped together in rhythm with the didg.

\*corroboree - English version of the Aboriginal word caribberie, used to describe Aboriginal ceremonies that involved singing and dancing.

\*drone - continuous humming sound caused by softly vibrating the lips on the didgeridoo mouthpiece, it's the foundation of all didg playing.

\*eucalyptus - chiefly Australian evergreen tree that is favored by the Aboriginals for making didgeridoos. Australia is home to about 500 species of eucalyptus trees, and certain eucalyptus leaves are koalas' main food source.

\*tonguing - method of rhythm in which the tongue is quickly snapped to the front, top, and bottom of the mouth to add texture to a rhythm.

\*trill - didg-playing technique in which the player rolls the tongue (similarly to rolling r's in Spanish dialect); turns a basic drone into an unusual, growl-type sound.

\*vocalizing - using voice to make sounds through the didgeridoo while droning.

## HOW TO (EASILY) MAKE, DECORATE & PLAY A DIDGERIDOO, BULL-ROARER & CLAP STICKS

Nothing beats playing an Aboriginal-crafted eucalyptus didg, and we highly recommend purchasing from an authentic Aboriginal store or craftsman, if your budget allows. If you can't make it to Australia, there are many websites that sell traditional didgeridoos

Non-traditional didgeridoos are also made worldwide from other woods, agave and bamboo, and sometimes even plastic, leather or clay. DDU edu-tainer Lindsey Dank makes and sells his own didgeridoos, made from many types of woods and even denim, at [hometreecreations.com](http://hometreecreations.com).

But for those on a restricted budget - especially teachers looking to introduce their students to the didgeridoo - there are other options. We highly recommend using cardboard tubes, which are chemical-free and recyclable.

Stores that sell fabric, such as Hancock Fabrics or JoAnn, often give away cardboard tubes (a.k.a. spiral tubes) for free. The only drawback is they sometimes only have a few tubes available on any one day.

Tubes from the fabric store usually measure 4-5 feet in length. Ideally you should cut them down to 40- 45 inches, although a little longer or shorter is OK. Mid-range sizes are best because a long didgeridoo requires much air and might sound loose, while a very short didg (a.k.a. mosquito didg) will be high-pitched and offer limited tone variation.

Diameter, however, is more important than length, and it's important to look for tubes with a

eter should be between 1 1/4 and 1 7/8 inches, with an ideal  
er than 1 1/4 inches and wider than 1 7/8 are very tough to

o buy tubes from a supplier such as [www.papermart.com](http://www.papermart.com). On  
. The best option here is 1 1/2 inches in diameter and 30 or

36 inches in length.

You also could try using a gift wrap roll or gluing together paper towel rolls. These options usually don't sound good because of their thinness. But they still can be painted and decorated, and they have a relatively small environmental impact.

(Note: although we use PVC didges for our workshops, we do not recommend giving PVC pipes to your students. PVC is environmentally harmful when thrown away. We keep and reuse our PVC didges - and thoroughly disinfect them after each workshop, of course. We appreciate your concern for the environment!)

For decorating, use permanent markers or paint in standard colors: black, yellow, red, white, blue, green, etc. Then conjure up a decorative theme, such as Australian animals, marine life, astronomy or whatever inspires you. Think of the didgeridoo as a tubular painting canvas. You can even add texture by gluing on stones, leaves and crystals. They also can add stickers and/or cut-outs, or maybe even leaves and other natural items. And a final benefit of a cardboard didg is that it doesn't require a mouthpiece.

### **Playing the didgeridoo ...**

The basic vibrating sound, known as droning, is made by loosely buzzing the lips inside the mouthpiece. The key is relaxation. Slightly extend your lips as if to give someone a peck on the cheek, then buzz the lips as if imitating a horse. If you're used to playing a brass or woodwind instrument, concentrate on buzzing the lips looser than normal ... because tight lips and mouth will not work! You will know if you are droning by the tingling sensation in your lips and mouth.

Of course, droning is just the beginning of learning how to play the didg. For learning more advanced techniques such as vocalizing and circular breathing, as well as more info on making and decorating a didgeridoo, contact Darren or Lindsey.

### **Make clap sticks ...**

They can be any size or thickness, but they must be strong enough to take a beating. Easy plan: Go to any home improvement store and buy plain wooden dowels that are about 1 1/4 in diameter. Most dowels are 30-40 inches in length. Have an employee cut them into sections of about 9 1/2 inches each. You'll need a pair for each student. The kids can paint and decorate them, if they'd like. A store manager might be willing to donate the dowels if you offer to promote their company.

### **Make a bull-roarer ...**

Carve or shave wood into the shape of a mini-surfboard (6-12 inches long). Punch a hole at one end and tie on a strong string for twirling, then paint a favorite animal or environmental theme

The bull-roarer produces vibrational sounds as the flat object rotates in the air. Altering the bull-roarer's size and its rotational speed affects the pitch. The smaller the bull-roarer, the faster it can be twirled, resulting in a higher pitch; a larger instrument that spins at a slower speed results in a lower pitch. Changes in the speed and angle to the ground can produce the sounds of a whimper, scream, moan, roar and more!

## **EDUCATIONAL LESSONS & ACTIVITIES**

**Social Studies:** Study Aboriginal culture and the hardships they've had to overcome, similar to

ck populations.

ge and a map. Pinpoint all states, territories, major cities and  
l systems and what makes it such a unique continent. Create  
l arrival; European arrival; settlement, etc.)

didgeridoos, clap sticks and bull roarers (instructions above).

Listen to and study traditional Aboriginal music and music from other indigenous cultures.

**Art:** Construct and decorate PVC didgeridoos, clap sticks and bull-roarers (instructions above).

Study and create the different styles of Aboriginal art, including bark paintings, X-ray and dots.

**Reading & Writing:** Get acquainted with the correct meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the Didg Lingo and other previous sections. Study and report on any Australia-theme readings, such as those in the didgiography (below).

**Science:** Learn about the animals of Australia and their unique characteristics. Contrast the ecological problems created by non-native and feral animals Down Under and the environmental trouble caused by similar pest animals in the United States (especially in Florida).

**Math:** Compare Australia vs. U.S. by numbers / ratios for population, miles (to/from/within Aus), land mass, coastline, beaches, highest & lowest point, hottest & coldest place, animals (mammals, birds, marsupials, etc), landmarks (ex. Great Barrier Reef vs. Keys reefs)

## WEB LINKS (use to plan classroom lessons)

\*Aboriginal Art Symbols: [www.aboriginalartonline.com/culture/symbols.php](http://www.aboriginalartonline.com/culture/symbols.php)

\*Aboriginal Art, Culture and Didgeridoo: [www.aboriginalaustralia.com](http://www.aboriginalaustralia.com)

\*Aboriginal Art, History & Culture: [www.indigenoustralia.info/index.php](http://www.indigenoustralia.info/index.php)

\*Aboriginal History & Heritage: [www.eniar.org/history.html](http://www.eniar.org/history.html)

\*Aboriginal Musical Instruments: [www.didjshop.com/austrAboriginalMusicInstruments.htm](http://www.didjshop.com/austrAboriginalMusicInstruments.htm)

\*Australia Facts & Stats: [cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html](http://cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html)

\*Australia Travel Guide: [www.australiatrek.com](http://www.australiatrek.com)

\*Australian Didgeridoo Cultural Hub: [www.ididj.com.au/home/index.html](http://www.ididj.com.au/home/index.html)

\*Australian Museum: [www.australianmuseum.net.au](http://www.australianmuseum.net.au)

\*Didgeridoo Specialists: [www.didjshop.com](http://www.didjshop.com)

\*National Geographic (world geography based on U.S. National Geography Standards):

[nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction](http://nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction)

[nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions](http://nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions)

## RECOMMENDED LISTENING

There are hundreds of didgeridoo albums worldwide to choose from, including everything from didg solos to didg mixed with world music, African drumming, techno, ambient, symphony, rock n' roll, reggae, etc. You might not find many of these albums in your local store, but they're definitely available on the Internet. Just type in "didgeridoo music" on a search engine, and away you go.

These are just a few of the titles of my favorite didgeridoo players ...

\*Adam Plack & Johnny Soames: *Winds of Warning* (1997)

\*David Hudson: *Guardians of the Reef. Walkabout* (1999); *Yigi Yigi* (1997)

\*Dragonfly Rhythms: *Live at the Parlounge* (2006)

\*Dr. Didg: *Out of the Woods* (1994)

\*Jeremy Cloakes & Ken Sands: *Resonance*

\*Outback: *Baka* (1990)

\*Randy Graves: *Your Didjeridu Companion* (2002)

\*Stephen Kent: *Landing* (1995); *Songs from the Burnt Earth* (2002)

- Them Land* by Penny Tweedie, New Holland Publishers, Australia, 1998. (middle school)
- And Kangaroo Played his Didgeridoo* by Nigel Gray, Scholastic Publishing, Sydney, NSW, Australia, 2005. (early childhood)
- Australia: The People* by Erinn Banting, Crabtree Publishing Company, New York, 2003. (elementary)
- Blood on the Wattle* by Bruce Elder, New Holland Publisher Pty Ltd., Frenchs Forest, New South Wales, Australia, 2003. (high school)
- Celebrate Australia* by Ken Duncan, Ken Duncan Panographs Pty Ltd., Wamberal, NSW, Australia, 1998. (elementary)
- Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* edited by Peter Sutton, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, 1989. (middle school)
- Dreamkeepers* by Harvey Arden, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1994. (high school)
- Encyclopedia of Australian Wildlife* by Steve Parish, Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd., Archerfield, Queensland, Australia, 2000. (elementary)
- Ernie Dances to the Didgeridoo* by Alison Lester, Houghton Mifflin / Walter Lorraine, United States, 2001. (elementary)
- From Alice to Ocean* by Robyn Davidson and Rick Smolan, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, 1992. (middle school)
- Koala Lou* by Mem Fox, Penguin Group, Camberwell, Victoria, Australia, 1988. (elementary)
- Mutant Message Down Under* by Marlo Morgan, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1994. (middle school)
- Pheasant and Kingfisher* by Catherine Berndt, Mondo Publishing, New York, 1994. (elementary)
- The Aboriginal Peoples of Australia* by Anne Bartlett, Lerner Publications Company, Minneapolis, 2002. (elementary)
- Voices of the First Day* by Robert Lawson, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont, 1991. (high school)

**Additional research material:**

- Australia* by Paul Smitz and others, Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, Footscray, Victoria, Australia, 2005
- National Geographic* maps
- The Oxford Essential Dictionary*, American edition, Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, 1998.
- The World Book Encyclopedia*, 2003 edition.
- Webster's New World College Dictionary*, fourth edition, Wiley Publishing, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, 2002.
- Numerous web sites and CDs

## ABOUT DARREN LIEBMAN

**"Approach life with an open mind – along with passion, drive and purpose – and you will be amazed at the opportunities and wonders that cross your path." -- Darren Liebman**



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the mystical instrument of the Aboriginal people . while visiting  
trips Down Under. He bought his first didg while visiting Aus in  
on with the termite-hollowed eucalyptus trunk. Upon returning to  
decided to share the didgeridoo's positive vibrations with as many  
people as possible.

In 2001 he founded Didg Revolution, dually a didgeridoo-percussion musical trio and a movement focused on expanding awareness of the didgeridoo and the rich Aboriginal culture behind it. In 2002 he created Didgeridoo Down Under, an Australia-theme education & entertainment program. He and his mates perform year-round at schools, libraries corporate events and other venues throughout the eastern U.S. Since 2003 they have combined to present more than 3,000 shows and workshops ... at 2,000-plus venues ... for well over 300,000 viewers and participants.

Since graduating from the University of Florida in 1994 with a journalism degree, Darren also has worked as a newspaper journalist, freelance writer, freelance photographer and athletic trainer. He encourages everyone, regardless of age, to pursue their passions with creativity, zest and vigor.

Darren is a native of South Africa. He lives with his wife, Sarah; son, Jack; and daughter, Ella, in Tampa, Fla.

**DIDGERIDOO DOWN UNDER**  
**Music – Education – Motivation – Character Building!**  
**[www.didgrevolution.com](http://www.didgrevolution.com)**  
**[darren@didgrevolution.com](mailto:darren@didgrevolution.com)**  
**813-961-4656 / 813-833-8856**