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## **Cape crusaders : an ethnography investigating the surfing subculture of Cape Naturaliste, Western Australia**

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*Edith Cowan University*

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**Cape Crusaders: An ethnography investigating the surfing subculture of  
Cape Naturaliste, Western Australia.**

**Robert A. Holt**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Regional Professional Studies**

**Edith Cowan University**

**Western Australia**

**September 2012**

## **Abstract**

Surfing is a byzantine phenomenon. With a global army surpassing 30 million participants, the wave riding culture has escalated from an underground lifestyle into a mainstream colossus. This thesis investigates a unique population of the surfing culture, the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Located in the South West of Western Australia, Cape Naturaliste is home to the Cape Crusaders.

Surfing subcultures are isolated by time and space. These communities operate as distinctive subsets of the parent surfing culture. This claim is demonstrated by the critical consideration of academic literature and supported by data gathered during the inquiry. The research is scaffolded by Steward's 'theory of cultural ecology' and Bourdieu's 'cultural production theory' to enable subcultural hermeneutics. Ethnography is an anthropological methodology designed to investigate cultures. Ethnography is the manifestation of socio-cultural exploration. This thesis is ethnography.

The first surfers entered the Cape Naturaliste field through the Yallingup portal in the mid 1950s. These pioneers, the restless products of Perth's surf lifesaving clubs, were motivated by fun and by the search. However, the enduring subcultural vibe was determined by the youth of the counterculture. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was founded on a philosophy of respect, an egalitarian ethos of wave sharing and tolerance. The meteorology, oceanography and biology of the region are inimitable. Ecology shapes subcultural structure and function. The Cape Crusaders are Cape Naturaliste's local crew. They hold local knowledge. They communicate subcultural capital. The Cape Crusaders watch and wait for ocean and atmosphere to synchronise - and then they perform.

## Declaration

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Robert A. Holt (September, 2012)

## **Acknowledgments**

Initial appreciation goes to my supervisors, Doctor Julie Goyder, Associate Professor Wendy Giles and Professor Ed Jaggard. For her resolute faith in my writing style and for her constant support throughout the doctoral journey I dearly thank Julie. As mentor and enthusiast, over telephone, over Outlook and over Friday afternoon pints, Julie made me laugh and push on, even when the terrain was boggy. From my corner, Wendy's guidance and resolve during thesis completion encouraged review and enhancement with professional style. Ed calmly directed my research line with old-school philosophy. His passion for the historical aspect of this work prompted deep exploration of the original Cape Naturaliste surfers.

My family have supported me throughout my education. Thanks to my parents, Val and Ken, for enabling the academic opportunities that have led to this pinnacle. Thanks to my beautiful wife Annie for troubleshooting the technical aspects of the thesis and for putting up with my oscillations during the mission. Her patience, encouragement and confidence have sustained my endurance. Thanks to my son, Billy, for his humour and for his companionship at the beach. Long may you surf!

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## Chapter One: Waxing

*How does it feel?*

*To be on your own*

*With no direction home*

*A complete unknown*

*Like a rolling stone*

Bob Dylan

Like a Rolling Stone - Highway 61 Revisited (1965)

### 1.0 Introduction: Into surfing culture research

Surf-weary under a dazzling Maldivian sunset I first contemplated a doctoral journey. While gazing at the funnelling waves I recognised that my investigation would involve surfing. However, as I bobbed on the bow of our dhoni<sup>1</sup> pondering the ever-changing seascape, an epiphany struck. Surfing was not *actually* my research focus. As I observed a smiling surfer exit his ride with an excited hoot, I realised that my investigation would be about people - the people who surf.

Returning from holiday euphoria to cold winter reality, a PhD plan slowly emerged. Researching surfers was clearly anthropology. A methodology pre-existed to facilitate cultural interpretations. Using their ethnographic machetes, Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, Clifford Geertz, Robert Sands and a host of anthropologists had already hacked a trail for me to follow through the cultural jungle. I imagined these gurus in pith helmets, smoking pipes on the verandah of an old world thatched bungalow, conferencing over gin-tonics, discussing their cultural theories. And then I placed myself in the cliché. I recognised that studying the surfing culture was a valid line of research. Further inquiry led to further discovery. Pierre Bourdieu had formulated a relevant theory for cultural investigation. Julian Steward had realised the implication of ecology on cultural operation. Ben Finney, Kent Pearson, Douglas Booth, Leanne Stedman, Patrick Moser, Clifton Evers, Mark Stranger and other wave riding scholars had already taken surfing research to academe.

---

<sup>1</sup> The dhoni is a traditional multi-purpose vessel used by fishermen and tourist operators in the Maldives.

So my research session commenced. I took my first strokes into investigating the surfing culture. And I soon learned that the research journey is a solitary experience. Although I have been fortunate to have had guiding light supervisors, support from the Edith Cowan University's Graduate Research School and access to infinite literature at the click of a mouse, I found the doctoral road to be an isolated path. Fine (1993, p.269) validates this sentiment stating that "researchers are lone rangers, cowboys, individualists". The research route involves patience, thesis production involves seclusion and both processes involve perseverance. Surfing is a discipline like this too. When you enter the ocean, it matters little how many mates you jump in with. When you paddle out into the surf, you do so unaccompanied. There is no one to blame, there is no one to depend on. There are no umpires or adjudicators, no coach, no team mates. When you surf, you *are* on your own, a rolling stone.

### **1.1 Entering the lineup: What is surfing?**

As wine aficionados argue over the merit of oak, tannin and complexity, beer connoisseurs effuse on malt, hops and crispness. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and taste is in the palate of the quaffer. On the other hand, beauty is only skin deep and there is no accounting for taste. Like beer and wine, surfing is a 'many splendored thing'. Since the early Polynesians stood atop their wooden alaias<sup>2</sup>, the rudimentary act of wave riding has been surfing's keystone. Renowned surf historian Drew Kampion (2003, p.27) verifies this describing the formation of surfing culture as "concentric rings" that have developed around riding waves.

Surfing is about riding waves but going surfing is about escapism, idle time spent on the beach "away from the ugliness of civilised life" (Irwin, 1973, p.138). Surfing is reliant on the ocean as a fundamental energy source that is pivotal to all aspects of its "primeval way of life" (1973, p.139).

Surfing is about riding waves but the social bond of surfing defines "self" and provides surfers with a "sense of continuity" in the fluctuating world we inhabit (Hull, 1976, p.2). For the enthusiastic, surfing is a lifelong pursuit that outlasts "families, marriages and ... chemical addictions" (1976, p.7).

Surfing is about riding waves but the image of surfing has become a "packaged activity" that has been "appropriated" and recreated by the surfwear conglomerates (Lanagan, 2002, p.286). Surfing is a commodity that is "produced and consumed" (2002, p.290).

---

<sup>2</sup> Alaias are solid wooden surfboard, approximately six feet in length. The alaia design, used primarily by the ancient Hawaiian surfers, has made a recent resurgence in the modern surf culture.

Defining surfing is loaded with choice. This multiplicity indicates the depth and breadth of surfing's evolution. From the beaches of olden Hawaii to the waves of the new millennia, surfing is different things to different people. The process of defining surfing is a personal selection, a taste. Douglas Booth eloquently describes surfing as "standing upright on a board and guiding it across the face of a breaking wave ... a form of dance [that is] part of the culture of pleasure" (Booth, 2003, p.315). However I draw on Gerry Lopez to add his Pipeline<sup>3</sup> credibility to the range of meaning. "Surfing is hard ... a lifetime achievement ... a momentary victory" (Lopez cited in Kampion, 1993, p.119). The Zen-master illustrates the holistic nature of wave riding, stating that surfing stimulates something profound, "not just a mental stimulation or even a physical stimulation ... but something a little deeper. It's some kind of spiritual stimulation. And that's what's so goddamn cool about it" (Lopez cited in Barilotti, 2010, p.104).

Booth's 'guiding dance' and Lopez's 'hard momentary victory' correlate with my surfing definitional predilection. Surfing has been compared to bullfighting (Kampion, 1993, p.110). Surfing has been compared to sex (Fiske, 1983, p.144). Surfing has been compared to doing masculinity (Pearson, 1982; Stedman, 1997; Evers, 2006; Waitt & Warren, 2008). But in my view, surfing is incomparable.

Some work has been undertaken involving surfing spaces (Hull, 1976; Farmer, 1992; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Waitt & Warren, 2008). In his constructivist based investigation, Preston-Whyte described how individuals assign "meaning, purpose and significance to their interaction with the surrounding world" in relation to the Durban surfing field (2002, p.309). Nevertheless, ethnography involving the veracity of surfing subcultures as geographically distinctive entities is lacking. In applying the 'think globally, act locally' maxim, my research investigates the customs, the knowledge and the lifestyle of a specific social group (Fetterman, 1989, p.27; Sands, 2002, p.46). This investigation concentrates on a collective identity, the Yallingup/Dunsborough surfers. Situated on the northern tip of Western Australia's South West surf coast, Cape Naturaliste is home to a distinctive surfing subculture, the Cape Crusaders.

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Banzai Pipeline' is one of the world's most notorious surfing locations. Situated on the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii at Ehukai Beach, the Pipe's powerful waves and shallow reef create a life-threatening, spectacular surf environment. Gerry Lopez is Mr Pipeline.

## 1.2 Surfing and anthropology: Setting context

Hennessey (2007, p.79) estimates that in 1959, the worldwide surfing population comprised 5 000 wave riders. By 2005, that demographic had exploded to 23.5 million (ISA<sup>4</sup> website, 2006). To bring perspective to this figure, the Australian population at that time was 22.6 million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). ISA operations coordinator Kiko Toledo (Personal communication, February 24, 2011) approximates the contemporary global surfing population “between 30 and 35 million surfers”. Given that the world population is currently estimated to be 6.9 billion (US Census Bureau 2011), the surfing populace represents 0.4% of humankind.

Surfing is a global phenomenon. The surfing industry posted retail sales worth \$US 7.22 billion in 2008 (Surf Industry Manufacturers Association, 2009). This massive amount was down by a mere 3.5% from 2006 despite the nastiest global economic bellyflop since the Great Depression. More recently, Casey (2010, p.52) states that the surf industry in North America alone is a “\$7.5-billion-per-year business”.

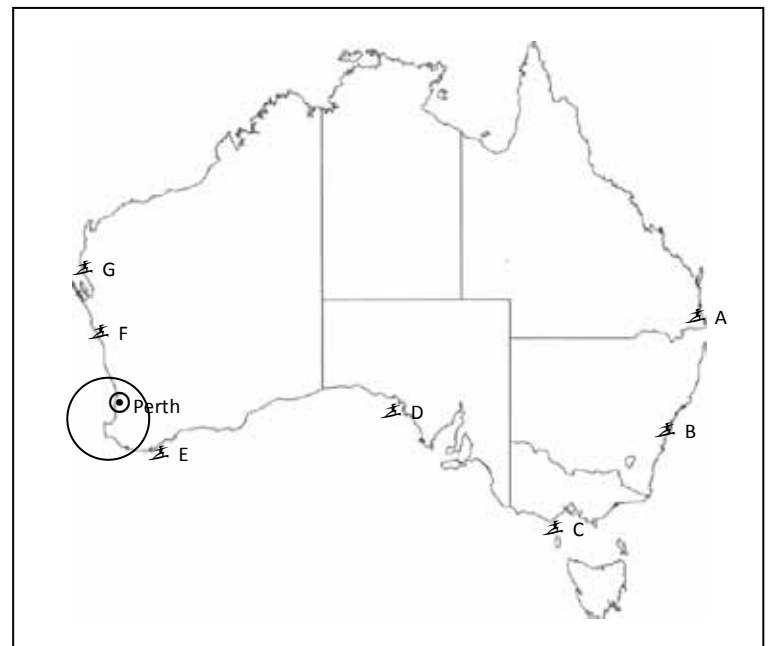
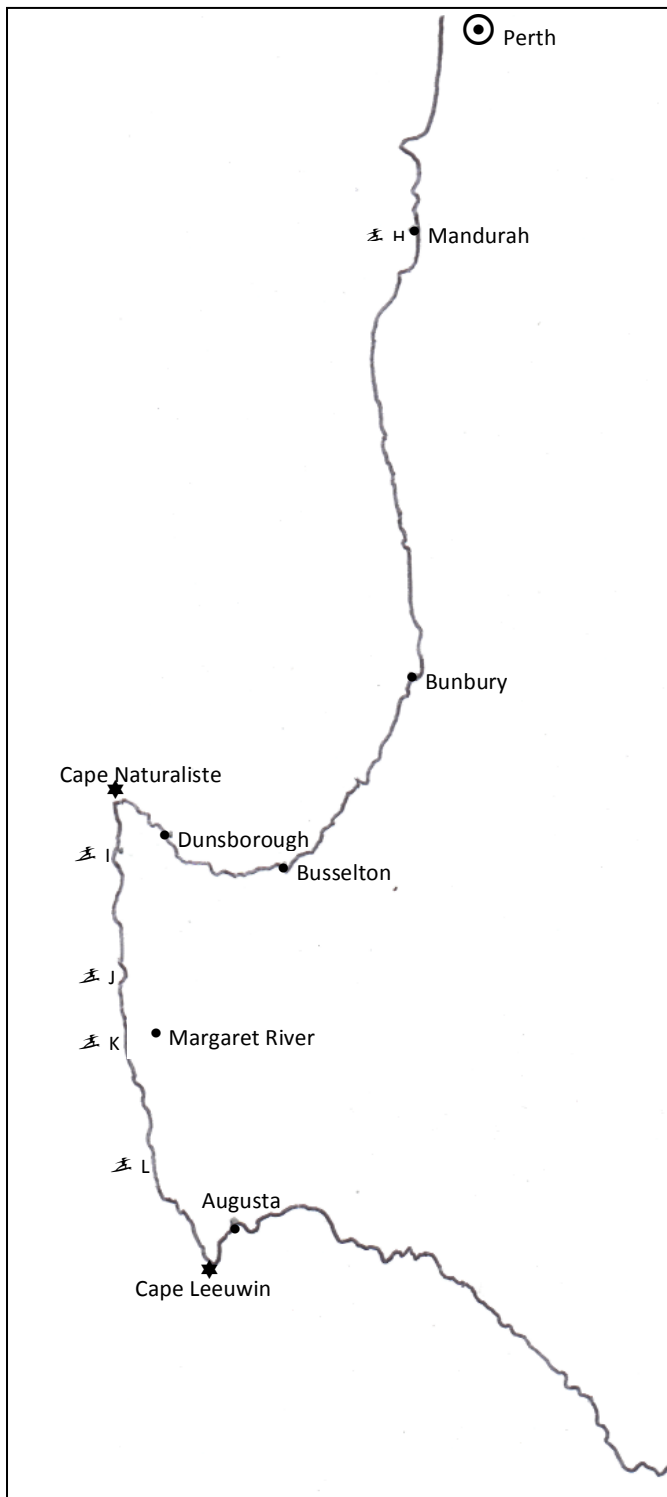
Glancing at the preceding figures underscores dual realities. Firstly, surfing has numerous affiliates and secondly, many dollars are invested in manufacturing the surfing lifestyle. Big business has penetrated surfing to the point of recasting its cultural mould. Surf attire is omnipresent, as lampooned by Gliddon (2002, p.2). “There’s a surf shop in Singapore but the roughest water [in the vicinity] is the condensation on its windows.”

Surfing is a way of life. The slogan made universal by global surfing conglomerate Billabong, ‘only a surfer knows the feeling’, captures the depth of emotion surfers invest in their culture. Interestingly, research by de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2007, p.204) acknowledges that surfing is “neither driven by brand or at risk of annihilation if a specific brand were to disappear”. The authors recognise that surfing extinction would only occur with the “disappearance of the wave” (2007, p.205). Surfing is about the community of wave riders. Surfing is about the surfers.

---

<sup>4</sup> The International Surfing Association (ISA) is the world governing authority for surfing.





#### AUSTRALIAN SURF SPOTS LEGEND

点 A	Gold Coast - Queensland
点 B	Sydney - New South Wales (Narrabeen, Maroubra, Bondi)
点 C	Bells Beach - Victoria
点 D	Cactus - South Australia
点 E	Denmark - Western Australia
点 F	Kalbarri - Western Australia
点 G	The Bluff - Western Australia

#### SOUTH WEST SURF SPOTS LEGEND

点 H	Mandurah
点 I	Yallingup
点 J	Cowaramup Bay (North Point, South Point, Noisies, Lefties)
点 K	Surfer's Point (Margaret River Main Break, The Box, Grunters)
点 L	Boranup

**Figure 1.1: Surf maps of Australia and the Cape to Cape region of South West Western Australia.**  
Thesis relevant surfing locations are identified in these representations. An enlarged illustration of Cape Naturaliste surfing locales is represented in Figure 6.1.

### 1.2.1 Riders on the storm: Who are surfers?

The above question has been asked and answered for over fifty years. Dixon (1966, p.117) states that “surfers are almost anybody”. However, I disagree. Suggesting that anyone can be a surfer is flippancy. An exacting phenotype characterises the surfer identity. Surfers require a body that enables arduous performance. Surfers require access to a specific environment, a marine playground that provides particular wave forms. Without these dual requisites, a person cannot be a surfer.

Surfers, according to Farmer (1992), are individuals with diverse attitudes to established societal standards. Surfers pursue “vertigo, catharsis and aesthetic rewards” (Farmer, 1992, p.247). These are connected with the wave riding experience and culminate in the dizzy heights of stoke<sup>5</sup>.

Surfers are very cliquy with fellow surfers “out of the water” (Farmer, 1992, p.241). Surfers seek out likeminded people in their social setting. Surfers enjoy a sense of belonging to their culture and typically recognise that their wave riding practice is extraordinary.

The tempo of waves and tides direct the surfers’ “moods and temperaments” having propensity to fuse surfers with nature (Flynn, 1997, p.6). Such “temporal order” is recognised by Flynn as a trait of hardcore surfers. Committed surfers show innovation in creating alternative lifestyles and careers that enable their involvement in wave riding when the surf rhythm is favourable. Surfers everywhere are ineradicably connected with the continuous fluctuations of the ocean and atmosphere.

According to Irwin (1973, p.142), surfers are “characters” who enliven their role through comedy and “unabashed performance”. Such unconventional, comical behaviour epitomises the surfing culture. Irwin (1973, p.142) describes the whacky La Jolla surf-nazis<sup>6</sup> and the infamous brown-eye manoeuvre that became a regular practice around Los Angeles beach towns in the late 1950s. Such group behaviours enable the surfer to derive amusement from “being ridiculous by conventional standards of propriety and not caring”.

---

<sup>5</sup> Stoke is a term utilised by surfers to describe the feeling of excitement, the adrenalin related ‘high’ associated with riding a superb wave. The word has recently been adopted in mainstream language to denote elation.

<sup>6</sup>The term surf-nazi is used to describe the “wave-crazed surfer” (Warshaw, 2010, p.161). The origin of the term can be traced back to the La Jolla surfing subculture in 1959. Warshaw states that this group were “the wildest surfers on the [Californian] coast ... [and] known as surfing’s loudest, roughest, drunkest partiers”. During one particular spate of high-jinx, Warshaw indicates that several La Jolla subcultural members dressed in Nazi uniforms, illegally acquired from a Hollywood set, goose steeped across the beach in a purposeful public display. Such antics were designed for effect and did not reflect an anti-Jewish sentiment or an allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The basis of such antisocial behaviour was rebellion and was intended to “piss people off” (Greg Noll cited in Warshaw, 2010, p.161). The surf-nazi tag reappeared during surfing’s 1980s surf punk era, describing the totally devoted, intolerant surfer character.

In categorising surfers, Evers (2006) highlights connections between body and feeling. The surfer's face is acknowledged as the "prime organ of affect" that epitomises the excitement associated with riding waves (Evers, 2006, p.234). He indicates that the visceral feeling a surfer experiences is outwardly displayed on the surfer's face as "immediacy of performance" (Evers, 2006, p.234). The diverse facial expressions exhibited by a surfer define the surfer. Surfers' faces personify exhilaration, pleasure, terror, embarrassment, abhorrence and annoyance. These emotions arise as a result of the surfing experience. Paraphrasing Evers' logic, surfers live their lives as surfers. That's what they do. That's who they are.

Surfers persistently think about surfing. They dream about waves in their sleep, they muse about waves in the classroom, at the office and on the worksite. Surfers converse with compatible fanatics about recent surf experiences and are constantly engaged in the prognosis of impending surf conditions. Surfers travel the planet searching for perfect surf. They drive for three hours to surf for two hours and then they drive home again, satisfied. Surfers read surfing magazines. Surfers read books about legendary surfers and legendary surfing. They are Tim Winton fans because his work contains surfing anecdotes. Surfers are artists. They 'doodle' waves - perfect waves, peaks, lefts and rights, always offshore, always barrelling<sup>7</sup>. Surfers love watching surfing DVDs. In a bygone era, they would attend the local cinema to preview the latest surf-movie with a likeminded raucous audience. Surfers click onto the Internet to check out the Association of Surfing Professionals' website streaming live action. The world's best performers on the world's best waves - Slater, Steph, *Parko*, Taj, Fanning / Mundaka, Snapper, *Chopes*, J Bay, Pipe. Surfers' clothes say surfer - so do their shoes, their cars, their hair, their skin. Surfers' best friends are surfers. Their fantasies involve warm water, hollow waves breaking on coral reefs and empty lineups<sup>8</sup>. Surfers hurriedly leave their lover's bed, miss their mother's birthday and pick up their kids late from school because surfing takes priority. Surfers become irritable when they miss a good session and cranky amidst a surf drought. Surfers are devastated when they blow a wave. Surfers are elated when they ride a smoker<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> A barrelling wave has a hollow, cylindrical quality. The term probably takes its derivation from the 'barrel' of a rifle. Barrels are also termed tubes, kegs, pits, tunnels and shacks.

<sup>8</sup> The lineup is a queue-like arrangement of surfers that is integral to the surfing field. Surfers in the lineup paddle into an appropriate position to catch and ride imminent waves. To the untrained eye, surfing lineups appear chaotic. In actuality, the lineup is a highly dynamic and complex surfing space.

<sup>9</sup> Smoker is surf slang for an 'excellent' wave. The smoking appearance of breaking waves is caused by offshore winds blowing spray from the back of a pitching wave face.

According to Irwin (1973, p.133), devoted surfers make a “commitment” to their surfing lifestyle. Such sophisticated involvement rewards surfers with a distinctive personality. Fiske (1983, p. 123) indicates that surfers look like surfers as a result of their “connotations of leisure” and their “naturalness”. Committed surfers recognise themselves foremost as surfers, not as teachers or plumbers, not as Australians or Hawaiians, not as mothers or daughters. Committed surfers immerse themselves in a holistic existence involving their practice. In her windsurfing ethnography, Belinda Wheaton (2005, p.148) labels the action sport lifestyle as “all absorbing”. The dedicated windsurfer, according to Wheaton (2005, p.149), adopts an identity. When dedication occurs en masse at a common location, this generates a “collective identity”, a subculture. Wheaton’s collectivity concept is pivotal to the Cape Crusaders’ research.

In 1968 Ralf Dahrendorf stated that humans behave with predictability. Reiterating the Shakespearian metaphor ‘all the world’s a stage’, Dahrendorf (1968, p.8) proposes that humans live their lives as “*Homo sociologicus* ... the social actor”. *Homo sociologicus* plays different roles on different stages. If *Homo sociologicus* acts the part successfully, then he/she must know what the role entails. Furthermore, he/she must also know how to deliver the acceptable lines, the appropriate gesticulation, the pause, the tears, the laughter, the money shot<sup>10</sup> at the appropriate moment. Like any demographic, surfers demonstrate variety. However, surfers also share numerous qualities in the way they act out their lives as surfers, as *Homo sociologicus surferensis*.

### **1.3 Research position, research justification: Holding the line**

The beach is fundamental in Australian life. Beach culture epitomises our island continent. Even so, Jaggard (1997, p.183) states that “until recently the study of beach users and beach culture was overlooked by historians and social analysts ...” Although there has been a recent surge of research regarding the surfing culture, a void exists about Western Australia’s surfing subcultures. The Naturaliste / Leeuwin region is one of the world’s finest surfing coastlines. This claim is reflected by the number of surfing tourists who visit the region annually and is reinforced by the number of surfers who have permanently migrated to the area. In exploring the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture, this thesis is designed to fill an academic niche that exists between Kent Pearson’s (1979) seminal work *Surfing subcultures of Australia & New Zealand* and Douglas Booth’s (2001) eminent scholarly contribution, *Australian beach cultures*.

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<sup>10</sup> The ‘money shot’ refers to a crucial scene in a movie or play.

Booth's account concentrates largely on the eastern Australian beach culture, particularly on the Sydney beach scene. His insightful narratives and scholarly perspective convinced me that an academic script can be entertaining as well as informative. Pearson investigated and described the two major subdivisions of antipodean surfing in the 1970s - surfboard riding and surf lifesaving. In defining the term 'subculture', Pearson provides essential scaffolding for this research. Although the surfing subcultures that Pearson advocated have diverged into separate cultures, his argument invites a renewed stance on the genre. Indeed, Farmer (1992) recognised a need to further explore the concept of surfing subcultures.

Additional research might look at regional differences in surfing cultures. Do West Coast [USA] values differ from East Coast surfing values [?] Do New England, Middle Atlantic, and Florida surf culture values differ? Perhaps some are more individualistic than others. (Farmer, 1992, p.248)

From an historical perspective, it is appropriate to assemble a variety of surfing narratives from the subculture. Inevitably, our surfing pioneers will pass. It is fitting to have their memoirs published in an official structure for posterity before their final wave. Decorated competitive surfer and victorious Australian surf coach Michael McAuliffe (Personal communication, July 2, 2009) indicated that a "well informed" literary work concerning the "development of the surfing culture in the Yallingup-Margaret River region" is currently lacking. Such a record is required to highlight an important piece of Western Australia's colourful beach history.

We live in an amazing moment in time. Our species has progressed to a point where we are able to devote time and energy to examine ourselves and to investigate our diverse cultures. Perhaps this is the ultimate example of species reflexivity. Throughout this research I have enjoyed the experience of observing people, meeting people, talking with people, reading about people and writing about people. These people share a love for surfing. Opportunities to explore a tiny grain of the surfing culture have provided me with enormous incentive. Subcultural interest in this research has been a motivating force that has enabled me to sustain my research and complete this thesis.

#### 1.4 Theory shaping research: Interpretivism A-frame

Theory communicates scientific and research principles. In the process of developing original theory and reflecting on pre-existing theories, researchers are called upon to be philosophers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.31). Accordingly, prestige is accorded by way of the Doctor of Philosophy award. As a scientist, applying a concept model to the word 'theory' evokes the atomic theory, the theory of evolution and the equilibrium tidal theory. Such positivist designs, put into place by Dalton, Darwin and Newton respectively, are fundamental to the natural sciences. As a social researcher, it is apparent that theory is as important to philosophical phenomenology as Einstein's theory of relativity is to physics. Miller and Brewer (2003, p.325) indicate that theories "open up research problems" by offering alternative techniques for looking at the world. Emergent theories are often juxtapositions of pre-existing paradigms and, as such, can serve the researcher as a foundation for their work. Qualitative research is theory-dependent and theoretically-based questions need to be asked and answered (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.326).

Interpretivism is "cultural reality" (Sands, 2002, p.84). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.7) state that interpretivism is "cultural hermeneutics", the science of human behaviour. Every culture is distinctive. Every culture warrants interpretation. In developing a theoretical framework, I have subdivided interpretivism into two middle range theories to fit between "isolated grand theory" and "abstract empiricism" (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.325). These theories are summarised in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Middle range theories framing Cape Crusaders' interpretivism grand theory**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Theorist</b>	<b>Summary of the theory</b>
Cultural ecology	Julian Steward	Location plays an important role in shaping the culture of a region. This is the society / environment nexus.
Cultural production	Pierre Bourdieu	Tools exist for contemplating, discussing & understanding culture. These are habitus, field, capital and practice.

#### 1.4.1 Cultural Ecology: Theoretical synopsis

Thumbing through the yellowing pages of my undergraduate biology text revealed that the word 'ecology' has its roots from the Greek *Oikos*, denoting household (Stephens & North, 1974, p.577). Ecology is based on the concept of ecosystem, the study of interactions between the living biota and the nonliving abiota, the "global household" (Levinton, 2001, p.39; Thurman & Trujillo, 2005, p.413). From the 11 000 metre depths of the Mariana Trench to the 8 000 metre elevations of the Himalayan Mountains, the human species has affected all earthly ecologies. Rapid evolution of *Homo sapiens* has resulted in rapid change to the planetary ecosystem.

Culture and ecosystem are closely linked. Different cultures have evolved in different environments and these have "changed tremendously" over time (Geertz, 1963, p.11). In the mid twentieth century, the search for an intuitive cultural paradigm was directed by anthropologists such as Barth, Gluckman, Colson, Steward and Geertz (Kaplan & Manners, 1972, p.75). The cultural ecology theory that developed as a result of this collaboration states that cultural systems are dependent on ecological factors. In other words, different ecologies shape different cultures (Steward, 1950, p.6). Steward used hunting cultures to explicate his cultural ecology paradigm. Considering two hunter societies with comparable technologies, Steward specified that different hunting cultures develop as a result of the animals present in the environment. Large herd animals such as bison, sought by indigenous North American's, require cooperative hunting stratagem. In contrast, smaller solitary animals like gazelle, targeted by African tribes-people, require stealth and camouflage techniques. Listing factors such as "landscape, nature and population density", Steward (1950, p.120) noted that the human / environment nexus is critical in shaping culture.

In subsequent work, Steward (1955, p.37) deemed that the interdependencies between culture and the environment were "core in cultural adaptation". This idea, supported by Kaplan and Manners (1972, p.75), implies that cultural ecology considers cultural adaptation on two levels. Firstly, cultures adapt to the environment and secondly, the practices of the culture then adjust accordingly. Ultimately however, cultures evolve because of "local natural variations" (Steward, 1950, p.134).

With respect to this work, it would seem likely that ecological inconsistency has the capacity to shape surfing subcultures. *Petitio principii*, the unique Cape Naturaliste ecology has been integral in shaping the Yallingup-Dunsborough surfing subculture. An organism's phenotype is a product of its genotype and its environment and this chestnut is foundation to chapter six of Cape Crusaders.

#### **1.4.2 Cultural Production: Theoretical synopsis**

Pierre Bourdieu's engaging writing style coupled with his ability to unite theory and method has positioned him at the forefront of modern sociology. The French philosopher contradicted the quantitative versus qualitative school of thought, suggesting that such artificial polarisation was harmful as "both modes of knowledge are essential" (Bourdieu, 1992, p.22). In stating that "science of the social world cannot be reduced to a social phenomenology or to a social physics", Bourdieu (1992, p.25) amalgamates scientific objectivism and social subjectivism. Bourdieu is famous for bringing reflexivity to the epistemological table. The circular relationship of self-reference that Bourdieu advocated and demonstrated while undertaking his famous ethnographies provided an ideal model for me to emulate in researching the Cape Crusaders (Wacquant, 2004). Bourdieu's practice is underpinned by direct observation of cultural behaviour and reinforced by the "actors' own explanations of their practice" (Jenkins, 1992, p.95). As such, participant observation and interview were essential methods in this ethnography. The cultural production theory is fundamentally organised through the concepts of habitus, field, capital and practice. Bourdieu implies that these entities determine the functionality of all cultures. Habitus, field, capital and practice determine how the Cape Naturaliste surfers acquire and apply the strategies, structures and understandings that are requisite for subcultural fit.

#### **1.4.3 Cultural description: Thick webs of signification**

Californian anthropologist Clifford Geertz is renowned for his 1973 publication, *The interpretation of cultures*. In this formative work, Geertz (1973, p.5) presents a series of essays reinforcing that "the concept of culture ... is essentially a semiotic one". Geertz implies that culture is represented by signs and symbols, by the "webs of signification" that guide the actions of the cultural members. The responsibility of ethnographer is to make meaning of these cultural markers through the provision of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p.6). This definition ratifies my research. The Cape Naturaliste surfers demonstrate distinctive signs and symbols. Semiotics categorise the Cape Crusaders as a subculture, as a subset of the wider surfing culture.

Geertz (1973, p.24) highlighted that the ethnographer must remain open-minded and alert in the field stating: "You either grasp an interpretation or you do not, see the point of it or you do not, accept it or you do not". Ethnographic description is the interpretive analysis of the flow of social discourse. Such description needs to start at the minuscule level in order for the ethnographer to attain "wall sized culturescapes" (Geertz, 1973, p.20).



While donning my ethnographer's hat I have endeavoured to follow the Geertzian formulae and observe the fine details of cultural participation. The importance of this notion became apparent to me upon reading Geertz's essay, *Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight* (1973, pp. 412 - 453). While visiting Bali in 1982 I attended a traditional cockfight in a secluded Kuta village. Thirty years later, after studying Geertz's essay, I came to appreciate the significance associated with that past cultural experience, which at the time merely presented as a raucous blood sport. During this ethnography I have strived to employ Geertz's established techniques to produce thick description and intuitive analysis. Although I am a Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural member, it has been important for me to maintain research neutrality. I have "behaved like a native" being a researcher amongst surfers while simultaneously being a surfer amongst surfers (Geertz, 1973, p. 415).

In considering cultural group dynamics, Geertz (1973, p.424) described the cockfight as a "a focused gathering, a set of persons engrossed in a common flow of activity and relating to one another in terms of flow ... a particular process that reoccurs rather than a continuous one that endures". This description is a wonderful parallel to surfing. To the uninformed outsider, surfing may present as a repetitive, perhaps monotonous, pursuit. Surfers know differently. Surfers identify with the flow of the wave riding activity and interact with other surfers in terms of this flow.

### **1.5 Research methodology: Paddling to the peak**

Gobo (2008, p.18) describes methodology as a "global style of thinking". In this research I employed ethnographic methodology. Ethnography originates from ethnology, the study of non-western cultures in the nineteenth century (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.1). Ethnography is a double-barrelled methodology. On one hand, it is a strategy, a qualitative tool. On the other hand, it is a product, a manifestation of the investigation. Geertz (1973, p.12) reinforces this opinion when he states that the ethnographer's function is "being there and being here". The ethnographer is able to interpret data after being in the field. The audience is able to read the work because the ethnographer has completed the descriptive task that stemmed from the field. According to Agar (1996, p.41), a valuable ethnography "will overwhelm the reader with [cultural] concepts and patterns". Agar advocates that ethnographical writing should be interesting and informative. This aligns with Geertz's (1973) thick description strategy. Ethnography should entertain the reader while providing accurate and insightful cultural description.

As this work incorporates personal narratives, it also assumes an autoethnographic flavour. Chang (2008, p.46) implies that autoethnography blends cultural research with personal subjectivity. Autoethnography provides the anthropologist with an opportunity to utilise “evocative” first person descriptions to make sense of a culture (Ellis, 1997, p.115). This technique involves incorporating relevant personal vignettes that demonstrate cultural interaction and cultural understanding.

Agar (1996, p.56) characterises ethnographers as “cultural hoppers”. I have always enjoyed hopping the world to experience diverse cultures. I am intrigued by the global surfing culture. This fascination with the people of the surfing culture has drawn me to be an ethnographer.

### **1.6 Research method: Establishing balance**

Where methodology is the process of scientific enquiry, method is the practical process of data gathering (Spradley, 1979; Fetterman, 1989; Agar, 1996; Brewer, 2000; Sands, 2002; Gobo, 2008). The data gathering procedure for this research sought to fill the Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) prescription. They state that effective ethnographers should “[participate]... in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions through informal and formal interviews” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3). Using such a “magpie method” has enabled me to gather diverse data, to validate theory, to enliven discussions and to ensure research reliability (Gellner, 1985, p.6).

Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski is regarded as the first ethnographer (Sands, 2002). In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski (1922, p.25) indicated that the ethnographer’s key objective is “to grasp the native’s point of view ... to realise *his* vision of *his* world”.

... In each culture, values are slightly different; people aspire after different aims, follow different impulses, yearn after a different form of happiness ... To study the institutions, customs, and codes or to study the behaviours and mentality without the subjective desire of feeling by what these people live ... is, in my opinion, to miss the greatest reward which we can hope to obtain from the study of man [sic]. (Malinowski, 1922, p.25)

Malinowski identified participant observation and interview as the two significant methods that are required to complete his ethnographic vision. These established methods, summarised in Table 1.2, were fundamental in the researching the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture.

**Table 1.2: Malinowskian framework as a paradigm for Cape Crusaders**

Malinowski's avenue	Malinowski's method	Cape Crusaders' method
"The imponderabilia of actual life, and type of behaviour" (1922, p.24).	"Collected through minute, detailed observations in the form of ... ethnographic diary. Made possible by close contact with native life" (1922, p.24).	Participant observations  Surf diary
"The corpus inscriptionum of native mentality" (1922, p.24).	"A collection of ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folk-lore and magical formulae" (1922, p.24).	Interviews  Photographs  Narratives  Auto-narratives

### 1.6.1 Participant observation: Look, listen, smell, taste, feel and hunch

The ethnographer must enter the world of the people being studied as a "participant observer" (Agar, 1996, p.9). Astute surveillance of the daily activities of the cultural actors occurs through "strip observation", viewing cultural life in situ, akin to a filmstrip (Agar, 1996, p.33). Agar's diagnostic surveillance underscores that the ethnographer recognises, understands and documents unusual and fascinating "cultural rich points" (Agar, 1996, p.33). As a surfing ethnographer, I have immersed myself in the ocean and involved myself in surfing practice. A participant observer is different to an observer participant. In her seminal ethnography on men's boxing, Kath Woodward (2009, p.558) described herself as "hanging about" rather than "hanging out" in the male dominated fist-fighting realm. This distinction is significant as "... hanging about does not result in access to the depth of insider information promised by hanging out". As a participant observer I have spent significant time "hanging out" with the Cape Crusaders. Being an active subcultural surfer has assisted me in the data gathering process. As a wave riding ethnographer I have been privy to an insider's view. Such positioning has enabled intimate observation opportunities. Notably, Butts (2001, p.4) supports this claim in stating "the only way tacit knowledge of [surfing] ... can be developed is through active participation".

Fieldwork has directed me beyond wave riding. My observational skills have evolved with this work. I have called upon all five senses during the data gathering practice while learning to appreciate the value of 'hunch' as being equally important. Conversely, maintaining neutrality is equally essential. Reflexivity requires constant attention - retaining an open mind, not predicting outcomes or prejudging situations. As a veteran surfer, I knowingly brought my own deck to the epistemological card table. However, the Queen Slippers were unmarked. I always shuffled the pack. I always dealt from the top. I strived to keep my observations candid and accurate.

It is all well and good to go surfing and observe wave riding dynamics in the name of cultural research, yet unless scenarios are speedily and precisely recorded, the point of the exercise is lost to vacuous synaptic clefts, gone and forgotten. To overcome cerebral deficiencies, I maintained a surf diary over 23 months of data gathering, from 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011. During this period I recorded 84 participant observations. Having camera, pencil and diary in my LandCruiser's glove-box was as obligatory as having the Sex-Wax<sup>11</sup> and the Banana-Boat<sup>12</sup>. I habitually incorporated such journal entries into the thesis structure after washing out my beloved E-Bomb<sup>13</sup> rubber and storing away my prized Merrick<sup>14</sup> shooter.

Maintaining the surf diary was tricky, fun and dynamic. Tricky, because in the post-surf space, salty, surfed-out, and lethargic, I seldom felt like taxing my brain - only a surfer knows that feeling. Fun, because in thesis development, I have had opportunity to reflect on my diary entries and consider the various surfing sessions I have enjoyed and shared during the research process. Dynamic, because in the process of diary-keeping, I have improved my documentation style and bettered my participant observation recording system.

In transplanting field notes into this thesis, I have modified Spradley's "Description Matrix" (1980, p.83) streamlining his nine parameters (space, object, act, activity, event, time, actor, goal, feelings) into a template that I have branded 'Naturaliste Narratives'. This scheme has enabled me to insert participant observation data within the context of this thesis. The Cape Crusaders' chronicle comprises my own flesh and blood experiences.

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<sup>11</sup> Zog's Sex Wax is a global brand of surfboard wax that was developed in California in the 1970s.

<sup>12</sup> Banana-Boat is a popular brand of sticky, waterproof sunscreen.

<sup>13</sup> The E-Bomb wetsuit range is produced by Rip Curl.

<sup>14</sup> Al Merrick is the chief designer/shaper for Channel Island Surfboards, California.

...ethnographic writing on physical activity [such as surfing] involves the construction of narrative that is often concerned with the researcher's subjectivity or how s/he becomes part of his/her research process. This narrative writing process is particularly applicable to studies based on immersed participant engagement ... the 'narrative turn' in qualitative research, such as ethnography, has resulted in authors moving away from assuming the stance of disinterested spectator toward assuming the posture of a feeling, embodied and vulnerable observer... this approach adds a valuable humanistic dimension to ethnographic research. (Hughson, 2008, p.422)

The more ethnography I write, the better ethnography I write. I am not Clifford Geertz, but then again, I am not Taj Burrow either. I love surfing. I enjoy writing. Recording field observations and manufacturing post-surf interpretations enhance participation observations.

#### **1.6.2 Interview and narratives: Question, encourage, and learn**

Perspective is a tenuous thing. Although cultural observation is imperative in ethnography, alone it is insufficient. Behaviours, patterns and cultural actions that are observed by the anthropologist are considered from the scientist's point of view. As such, these observations may contrast with reality. To achieve ethnographical nirvana, Spradley (1979, p.4) advises that "native realism" should be attained. In order to really understand a culture, an ethnographer must communicate with the cultural members in addition to observing them in action (Spradley, 1979, p.2; Brewer, 2000, p.75). An ethnographer depends on the cultural actors to explain cultural enigmas. It is the ethnographers' duty to "get inside the [cultural members'] heads" (Spradley, 1979, p.8). Indeed Joel Patterson (2010, p.14), editor of *Surfer* magazine, stated "connectedness to the surf community ... can only result from listening closely to [surfers'] stories".

Julie Cruikshank (1990, p.1) recognises that life histories "breathe life into academic writing". Stories are historical vehicles, used by people to "explain aspects of their culture ... aspects of their lives, place, space and social relationships" (Cruikshank, 2005, p.66). Stories present a base for ethnographic description. Fishers are not exclusive in their proclivity for tales. Surfers have always loved storytelling. Preston *Pete* Peterson, a legendary Californian surfer from the 1930s, could "sit and spin stories hour after hour about his 48 years of surfing ..." (Dixon, 1969, p.22).

Story telling allows the narrator an opportunity to explain a point via personal experience. Stories provide opportunity for learning. They foster respect for tradition. Stories provide entertainment. In this work, I have interviewed 74 surfers to collect over 36 hours of primary interview data. I always encouraged my interview participants to tell their stories. I eagerly listened and laughed as I questioned and recorded. Some of these narratives have been woven into this work. Narratives are primary ethnographic data. Narratives have enabled me to support my assertions and to enhance my discussions. By incorporating narratives into this thesis, I have depicted a sequence of characters and events that epitomise the spirit of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture.

### **1.6.3 Reflexivity, validity and ethics: Surfing down the wall of mirrors**

In the research process, ethnographers are affected by their background: their socio-economic status, their interests, their beliefs and their values. In the search for truth, cultural anthropologists are confronted with the problem of being a part of the world they are studying. It is argued that as a consequence, research may be tainted by researcher immersion. The ethnographer's position has the capacity to "delimit cultural observation through predetermination" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 40). An ethnographer lacking reflexive ability has the tendency to observe the cultural expectation; what the researcher thinks will or should happen. Such premonition may contradict cultural reality. "Good ethnographers," according to Fine (1993, p.274), "do not know what they are looking for until they have found it ..."

The solution to this dilemma is for the anthropologist to judicially consider how self-presence affects research outcome. Reflexivity involves the interaction between the researcher and the researched. This is described by Gobo (2008, p.42) as "the self-aware analysis of the dynamics between researcher and participant". Reflexivity involves the researcher constantly scrutinising his/her position in the field. This has been an ongoing part of my research, one that involved me stepping outside myself and gazing inwardly at my field position, as participant and as scholar. I was always cognisant of being a Cape Naturaliste surfer, a member of the subculture I was researching. I have not found this problematic. As indicated by Chang (2008, p.44) effectual ethnographies conducted by ethnographers about "their own people" can be valuable investigations.

When considering research from a philosophical perspective, seeking truth, solving problems and building knowledge are ultimate ambitions. From a more pragmatic angle, research aims to gather data to answer questions and explain phenomena. Research is a structured discipline. The long-established research tradition involves “data, arguments and reasoning ... withstanding careful scrutiny by the scientific community” (Shulman, 1997, p.9). It is customary that research methods should be consistent and that research quality should be excellent. To support quality assurance in this research I have triangulated my data, employing multiple methods in pursuing “convergent validation” (Campbell & Fiske, 1959, p.85; Mathison, 1988, p.13; Yin, 1994, p.33; Berg, 2004, p.6). By using a “wide combination of method” researchers are able to compare and contrast data and thus be confident of authenticity if different methods lead to similar effects (Mathison, 1988, p.15).

As a researcher, my professional ethics have been guided by a set of standards, constrained by Edith Cowan University and the wider academic community. Ultimately however, it is up to the doctoral scholar to implement ethical fieldwork and create a thesis with principled appropriateness. Participant observation means that the ethnographer intrudes on the cultural members’ lives. As an outcome, ethical issues may present. People being studied by ethnographers, whether they are surfers, drug addicts or bikies, are entitled to privacy. Gobo (2008, p.108) states that “researchers are not police officers, private detectives or investigative journalists”. Ethical codes associated with research aim to prevent deceitfulness and betrayal of the participant’s trust. Sands (2002, p.107) states that “the researcher has a moral obligation to consider possible repercussions of the investigation and communicate them to informants, making sure they understand.” I followed Sands’ recommendation prior to all interviews. Formal ethics clearance is a prerequisite in research required by most recognised institutions. In this process, an impartial panel is employed to assess the ethical implications of impending research. Permission to proceed is granted, or recommendations presented. In receiving ethics clearance, a researcher is on the way to undertaking data collection. Nonetheless, just because the protocols associated with ethics clearance have been ticked, it does not necessarily mean that a researcher is ethical in method.

This research has been highly visible to the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural members. In the process of participant observation, acquiring permission from fellow surfers was impractical and unnecessary. With my interview candidates however, ethical issues were taken into account. Digital recordings were maintained, emails archived and written consent was obtained from all interviewees. I have intentionally named my interview candidates in the text of this thesis. Identifying subcultural characters lends credibility to argument.

During the data gathering process, I was overwhelmed by the cooperation of my interview candidates. According to Sands (2002, p.114) most informants are “appreciative of the chance to talk ... to lend their experience to the ethnographer’s growing body of accumulated knowledge”. A salient point of this research involved my participation as Cape Naturaliste surfer. As an outcome of the investigation I did not wish to alienate myself in the eyes of my fellow surfers. I did not want to be considered a *rat*. I did not want this research to adversely disturb the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Care in reporting comes down to commonsense and reflexivity. This work is not a tacky exposé. This work is an ethical scientific ethnography. I intend to provide thesis access to my participants and have done my utmost to ensure that their experience with the research is honest and enjoyable. Gobo (2008, p.143) refers to this practice as “ecological heritage”.

Questions about the accuracy of “capturing culture” have been posed to ethnographers by deconstructionists such as Derrida and Foucault (cited in Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.13). Doubt about language and writing style has led to recent ethnographic reassessment. Although remaining value neutral can be an issue for the ethnographer, it is not a reason to avoid the methodology. Commitment and honesty, ethical and reflective practice is imperative in ethnography. Sometimes political flavour exists within cultural studies. When conducting research concerned with emotive issues such as sexism, racism or medical quandaries, it is not easy for the ethnographer to remain value-neutral. But when should researchers stop behaving as sensitive, responsible human beings and start behaving as unaffected, non-caring robots? Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.13) summarise the ethnographic methodology with panache.

All social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation ... Reconstructing our understanding of social research in line with the implications of its reflexivity ... throws light on the relationship between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Certainly there is little justification for the view, associated with naturalism, that ethnography represents a superior, alternative paradigm to quantitative research. On the other hand, it has a much more powerful contribution to make to social science than positivism allows.



### **1.7 Research questions: Ask, search and find**

In order to develop a research topic, questions need to be asked before answers can be discovered. In the research process, Robson (1993, p.25) suggests that after theory is applied and previous comparative research is deliberated, research questions should be considered. Research questions should connect abstract concepts and the empirical world. Research questions should encourage flexibility in discovery while acting as boundaries to demarcate the project (Robson, 1993, p.27; Punch, 2003, p.29). The ultimate function of research questions is to determine “who and what” will be studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.201). Research questions shape the data collecting process. The following questions were developed to strike a balance between a big-ticket project and an achievable inquiry.

- i. What is the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture?
- ii. Why is this surfing community regarded as a subculture?
- iii. How has the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture evolved?
- iv. In what ways does the environment shape the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture?
- v. How does this surfing subculture compare and contrast with other surfing subcultures?

Maria Gardiner (Personal communication, June 15, 2009) stated at a conference for doctoral students that a PhD thesis should be regarded as “a grain of sand on the beach of knowledge”. My five research questions have been rigorously contemplated during the course of this work. In addressing these questions, I have endeavoured to produce an informative, engaging and polished beach grain.

### **1.8 Thesis structure: Style, nuance and overview**

Surfing is a risky pursuit. Stranger (2009, p.265) describes the “cathartic properties of risk taking” in the wave riding experience. In big swells, most surfers are squeezed from their comfort zone to experience the euphoria associated with riding giants. Stranger (2009, p.265) discusses aesthetic reflexivity as a “sensual and emotional experience” that is generated through such risk taking. A key ingredient of the Cape Naturaliste subcultural habitus, big wave surfing is elaborated in chapter seven. As a surfer I comfortably put myself at risk in certain situations. Risk management, an enormous industry in our society, involves identifying potential danger, weighing up the options for accepting the situation and making the decision to pass or play accordingly.

During this research, I have consulted various PhD theses to learn how successful candidates have assembled their findings. Similarly, I have discussed thesis production with many people. I understand that the PhD thesis is bound by academic protocol. Nonetheless, imagination and originality are invited in thesis generation. Within the doctoral framework, there is risk involved in stepping into an innovative situation. However where there is risk, there is often reward.

After reading Helen Sword's work "Writing higher education differently: A manifesto on style", I felt compelled to produce a thesis that is "a pleasure to read" (Sword, 2009, p.320). To be rewarded on the style scoreboard, Sword entreats the writer to engage the reader with humour, passion and creativity. Stylish writing relates anecdotes and conveys examples. Stylish writing provides illustrations and metaphors to entertain and enlighten. The ultimate goal of Sword's style manifesto is to communicate a sense of self by displaying material in personal academic prose that welcomes the reader with precise, rich language "that [is] not stodgy" (Sword, 2009, p.333). In adopting Sword's manifesto, I happily put myself on the block in applying my academic writing style.

Spradley (1979, p.18) indicates that a fundamental aim of ethnography is to describe culture "in its own terms". By incorporating subcultural jargon into his ethnographies, Spradley enables the reader to appreciate subcultural linguistics. Moreover, this strategy allows the reader to recognise the significance attached to subcultural vernacular. Successful ethnographers translate cultural language into an appropriate and comprehensible form that can be grasped by people from outside the culture. This is known as "translation competence" (Spradley 1979, p.21). Throughout this work I have deliberately incorporated surfing argot. By directly quoting informants and utilising surf specific speech in context, I endeavour to emulate Spradley's translation competence technique.

Throughout this thesis I have followed in Aristotle's footsteps from *Poetics* (335 BC), concentrating on the drama/comedy *quinella*. Surfers demand drama - huge waves, lurking predators, fierce competitors. Drama is ubiquitous in the surfing space. Surfers love laughing. Celebrated for their ability to chuckle at themselves and chortle at their peers, surfers thrive on fun. Drama and comedy are elementary to the surfer's everyday life. Drama and comedy are integral to the Cape Crusaders.

This dissertation is organised into twelve chapters. In chapter two I outline culture and subculture as closely connected concepts that frame my research. Kent Pearson's original surfing subcultures are separated into a contemporary structure. This dissection enabled my ethnography. In the second chapter I consider 'stoke' as the fuel that ignites surfing's cultural engine.

Chapter three involves an autoethnographic view of my surfing life. From Coolites to Channel Islands, from Mandurah to Mundaka, surfing has directed me. In this section I situate myself as a Cape Naturaliste subcultural surfer, deeply immersed in the global surfing culture.

The dispersal of surfing from its Hawaiian homeland to the beaches of Australia is considered in chapter four. Significant people and important events have led to the development of rare, distinctive surfing subcultures at isolated coastal locations around the world. Beaglehole's (1937) concept of "cultural peaks" provided inspiration for this chapter.

Surfing burst into the South West of Western Australia through the Yallingup gateway. Chapter five provides a historical overview of how the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was born. It describes why the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture prospered. Yallingup's surfing pioneers lived the drama/comedy lifestyle. They forged the surfing subculture that the Cape Crusaders' currently enjoy. Their narratives make lively reading. Their discussions are rich primary data.

Surfing subcultures are ultimately shaped by their associated environment. The oceanography and meteorology of Cape Naturaliste have determined the Cape Crusaders' lifestyle. In Chapter six I investigate unique elements of the Cape's ecology. I consider some of the Cape Crusaders' favourite surfing locations and take a look at two prominent marine species. Julian Steward's cultural ecology theory grounds the sixth chapter of this thesis.

The next four sections of the thesis follow in Pierre Bourdieu's cultural footprints. In chapter seven I examine the Cape Crusader's subcultural habitus. Crowded lineups, big wave excitement and the surfboard artefact are considered as fundamental elements of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural body.

Chapter eight explores the surfing field. Surfing hierarchies are complex, dynamic battlefields. They sometimes reveal aggressive 'localism' behaviours. Female surfers are considered as being an integral component of the Cape Crusaders' subcultural space.

Knowledge is subcultural capital. Knowledge is subcultural gold. Local knowledge and subcultural communication underpin the ninth chapter of this thesis. This section glimpses at some of Cape Naturaliste's venerated surfers.

The Cape Naturaliste surfing practice is examined in Chapter 10. The Cape Crusader's orthodox behaviour involves respect. Although surfing rules are delicate, transgression consequence is hefty. Neophyte and veteran surfers are considered at opposite poles in surfing's subcultural practice.

The perceptions from a variety of quarters define the distinctive Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture in chapter eleven. The 'local crew', the adjacent Margaret River surfing subculture and visiting wave riders provide some wonderful insight into subcultural boundaries, sub-subcultures and into inter-subcultural rivalries.

Every chapter of this work commences with the lyrics of a topically related musical piece. Each of the chosen tunes has accompanied me on my surfing journey. Music, a universal phenomenon, is driven by creativity. Music has long been present in surfing's atmosphere. The melodious chants of the early Hawaiian wave riders have evolved into the modern surf-sounds of Weezer, Jack Johnson and Donavon Frankenreiter, evolutionary offshoots of the Chantays, the Atlantics and the Beach Boys. Music is intrinsic to surfing. Surfers love music and indeed, many musicians love surfing. Jimi Hendrix reportedly considered surfers as "the chosen race on earth" (Young, 1994, p.117).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p.5) suggest that the qualitative researcher is a "scientist, naturalist, field-worker, journalist, social critic, artist, performer ... a bricoleur". Prior to this research, I had not encountered the terms bricoleur or bricolage. These words, respectively indicating quilt maker and quilt, have a melodious ring when pronounced with the warranted big Gallic accent. I love French enunciation - *croissant, bon jour, voilà, mademoiselle*. I have attempted to assemble a vibrant, methodical montage. I trust that this thesis is a functional ethnographic quilt, providing warmth as well as colourful patchwork style.

## Chapter Two: [Sub]culture

*On the shore lay Montezuma, with his cocoa leaves and pearls*

*In his halls, he often wandered with the secrets of the worlds*

*And his subjects gathered round him like the leaves around a tree*

*In their clothes of many colours for the angry gods to see*

*And the women all were beautiful and the men stood straight and strong*

*They offered life in sacrifice so that others could go on*

Neil Young (Crazy Horse)

Cortez the Killer - Zuma (1975)

### 2.0 Introduction: Cultural context

When considering the *Homo sapiens* primate, anthropologists point to adaptations such as the opposable thumb, forward facing stereoscopic eyes and a developed cerebral cortex in explaining the species' rapid ascent up the evolutionary ladder. However the human body has undergone little physical evolution since its lineage branched from the early hominids.

According to Munn (1971, p.193), phenotypic modifications within the modern human species such as changes in skin colour, hair type and eye shape are trivial. The basic human structure has remained unchanged since the Neanderthals (*Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*) occupied the European continent 30 000 years before present. At that same time, the Cro-Magnon variety (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) was making enormous evolutionary inroads (Munn, 1971; Goldsby, 1971; Pilbeam, 1972; McKee, Poirier & McGraw, 2005). Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon humans belonged to the same species. Taxonomic delineation occurs at the subspecies level. A third subspecies, *Homo sapiens modern*, indicates our contemporary human taxonomy.

Significant change in the *Homo sapiens* species has occurred as a consequence of intellectual progression. Cultural customs and incomparable behaviours differentiate the modern human species from all other earthly organisms. Human culture has hurriedly progressed from Oldwan<sup>15</sup> tools en route to the use of fire and construction of shelter structures through agrarian reforms. Other cultural progressions include ritual burial, Palaeolithic cave-art and rudimentary metallurgy (Munn, 1971; Goldsby, 1971; Gibson & Ingold, 1993; Noble & Davidson, 1996). Throughout this succession, language and communication have improved immensely. Such development was significant in humankind's cultural enlargement. Lewin and Foley (2004, p.459) verify this stating "culture represents a means of passing information from individual to individual that is different from the classic genetic one, and so has a different evolutionary process". This concept is referred to as the gene-culture coevolution paradigm (Lewin & Foley, 2004, p.459).

The most important outcome of the Hominid's large cerebrum is that it provided the basis for culture and thus, unparalleled evolutionary success (Lewin & Foley, 2004, p.458; McKee, Poirier & McGraw, 2005, p.362). Human advancement, in terms of Darwinian mechanisms, has progressed from biological evolution to cultural evolution. *H.sapiens* success is, according to Goldsby (1971, p.77), a result of "profound cultural development". Unlike biological evolution, which generally requires many generations to unfold, cultural evolution can take place within the lifetime of an individual. Such advancement is largely attributed to the human capacity to learn. Culture is learned. Culture is transmitted. Pilbeam (1972, p.2) argues that it is our culture, the "imposition of arbitrariness", that differentiates us from all other organisms.

As a result of a rapid social evolution, the *Homo sapiens* species has opened up time to devote to pursuits other than food gathering, shelter building, procreation and elementary survival behaviours. Humans have made play and fun key ingredients of their existence. Did primitive hominids have fun? In my estimation they probably did. I have witnessed non-human species at play. Gibbons brachiating in the Sumatran rainforest canopy, dolphins boosting from the glassy Yallingup waves. These animals demonstrate fun-like qualities. This concept is supported by Huizinga (1950, p.1) when he indicates that "play is older than culture" because animals did not wait for humans to teach them to play. Play and the associated fun are significant human functions. Although having fun is not exclusively a *Homo sapiens* pursuit, our species has mastered the concept. Surfing is an example of high order human play. The associated culture is a culture of fun.

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<sup>15</sup> Oldwan tools were the first stone implements used by early hominids.

The capacity to learn and to manipulate the environment, migrate and communicate has resulted in massive *Homo sapiens* sophistication. Cultural development has magnified species separation and is a “chief mechanism that makes people humans and not animals” (Sands, 2002, p.3). Studying culture is not a straightforward process. Geertz (1973, p.23) states that cultural variation represents one of anthropology’s great resources that cannot be “squared with the biological unity of the human species” or written up as an “experimental variation ... [or a] proper function”. Studying the Cape Naturaliste surfing culture has been a complex task. Learning to surf, advancing surfing performance and maintaining the ability to surf are likewise complicated. Fortunately, hard work and having fun can sometimes be mutual processes.

## **2.1 Cultural definition: What is a culture?**

According to Hebdige (1989, p.5), culture is “a notoriously ambiguous concept”. Indeed eminent anthropologists Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1952) assembled more than 150 definitions in an attempt to describe the term ‘culture’. Renowned cultural researcher David Fetterman advocates that culture comprises the beliefs, knowledge and values of a “particular group” of people. Fetterman (1989, p.25) states that defining culture assists the ethnographer to “search for a logical, cohesive pattern in the myriad, often ritualistic behaviours and ideas that characterise a group”.

Hebdige (1989, p.9) indicates that culture encompasses life’s “rules, codes, conventions and linguistics” and that cultural research should clarify their “meanings and values”. Geertz (1973, p.5) similarly states that the concept of culture “... is essentially a semiotic one” and that ethnography is “not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning”.

Significant to this work, culture involves observable entities such as behaviours, customs and traditions. These tangible cultural features have allowed me to operate as a participant observer in the Cape Naturaliste surfing environment and to explore the associated culture as a result. Sands (2002, p.46) supports this notion by encouraging the social researcher to “describe collective behaviour and explain symbols and labels”. Sport-based ethnographies epitomise modern, practical anthropology.

## **2.2 Cultural division: Into subculture**

Returning momentarily to Linnaean taxonomy, the contemporary human animal is classified as *Homo sapiens* at the species level. Interestingly, two extinct archaic human varieties, Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal are likewise classified. Further separation is necessary to distinguish them at a subordinate rank. These three hominids are universally recognised as *Homo sapiens modern*, *Homo sapiens sapiens* and *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* at the subspecies level. According to universally accepted criteria, organisms of the same species have capacity to interbreed and produce fertile offspring. This illustrates the propinquity between species and subspecies.

The prefix 'sub' in the word subculture means part of the whole. Pearson (1979, p.18) identifies a subculture as being "a part of the broader parent culture ... [that] cannot be totally different from the culture of which it is a part". Culture, according to Pearson (1979, p.11), "is not an evenly woven cloth". This metaphor implies that the cultural fabric is composed of many subcultural patterns.

In discussing surfing subcultures, Hull (1976, p.5) emphasises that the 'sub' in subculture does not denote an inferior culture. Hull indicates that the subcultural division acts like a compartment, promoting judicious study of the wider culture. The subcultural rung, according to Hull (1976, p.6), is a "fascinating way of viewing social life". Pearson similarly stipulates that the concept of subculture is abstract, "an analytical device" (1979, p.11). Underpinning the Cape Crusaders' research, the subculture division has provided me with a sound unit of measurement in this inquiry.

### **2.2.1 Subcultural definition: What is a subculture?**

"Community" and "gang" are words utilised by Gelder (2007) to help him describe subcultures. Irwin (1973) used the term "scene" and Steward (1951) the phrase "tribal culture" similarly. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967, p.98) indicate that subcultures develop as a result of the close interaction between people who "share and embody" comparable beliefs and values. Subcultures generate traditions and rituals as a result. These in turn establish subcultural codes of behaviour. Symbols and language enable subcultural detail to be transmitted and stored. This "web of meaning" (Pearson, 1979, p. 15) perpetuates via communication. Subcultural myths and legends develop as a result. Throughout this thesis I have incorporated narratives to provide the Cape Crusaders with a voice, to add authenticity to their web of meaning. All subcultures evolve uniquely. A surfing subculture develops when people operate on the basis of their surfing interests in a delimited environment. As is evident in chapter five, the historical evolution of Cape Naturaliste's surfing subculture cannot be overstated.



In all subcultures, some members are more involved than others. Some subcultural members have more influence than others (Pearson, 1979, p.17). Subcultural variance is an expectation. Within the subculture, social actors may “partially accept, sometimes deny, [or] ... construct antitheses” to the subculture (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967, p.99). Correspondingly, Cohen (1955, p.66) suggests that individuals within the subculture who share status “gravitate toward one another and jointly establish ... norms [and] criteria”. Using this logic it seems reasonable to expect the existence of subcultures within subcultures, sub-subcultures perchance. This idea is examined in chapter eleven.

Clearly not all subcultural values, beliefs and norms have equivalent standing. Stratification may lead to defined pecking orders with “hip” subcultural members being more in tune with the subculture than others (Thornton, 1996, p.113). Subcultural success often depends on ‘local knowledge’. Such cultural capital forms a fulcrum for subcultural balancing and often determines an ‘us and them’ situation. ‘Us’ represents the subcultural members - the locals, the hardcore, the genuine, whereas ‘them’ represents the outsiders - the blow-ins, the mainstream, the fake (Thornton, 1996, p. 115; Gelder, 2007. p.64). The concept of subcultural knowledge is detailed in chapter nine.

Surfers are occasionally accused of being sheep - they follow fashion fads, they pursue other surfers into crowded lineups, they demonstrate a flock mentality. However multiplicity exists within all surfing subcultures. Although subcultural membership requires a “high degree of commitment” (deBurgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan, 2007, p.204), not every member is identical in their beliefs and values. Many varied surfers make for a vibrant subcultural fabric.

### **2.2.2 Subcultural taxonomy: Existence and relevance**

Subcultures are not recent developments. The bohemian subculture was adopted as a lifestyle by avant-garde artists such as Jack London, Jack Kerouac and Hunter S. Thompson. Subcultures in the music culture are commonplace. Led by the Sex Pistols in the late 1970s, the punk-rock subculture arguably initiated the alternative rock-music movement. Bob Marley’s 1980s reggae subculture made way for a ‘positive day’ of calypso soul tunes. Dance clubs are rife with “subcultural ideology” (Thornton, 1996, p.10). Significant examples of subcultural research include Cohen’s (1955) work on the subculture of juvenile delinquency, Wolfgang and Ferracuti’s (1967) account on the subculture of violence, Agar’s (1986) consideration of subcultures of heroin addicts and Armstrong’s (1998) subcultural study of British football hooliganism. Significant to this research is Wheaton’s (2000) ethnography concerning the Silver Sands (UK) windsurfing subculture.

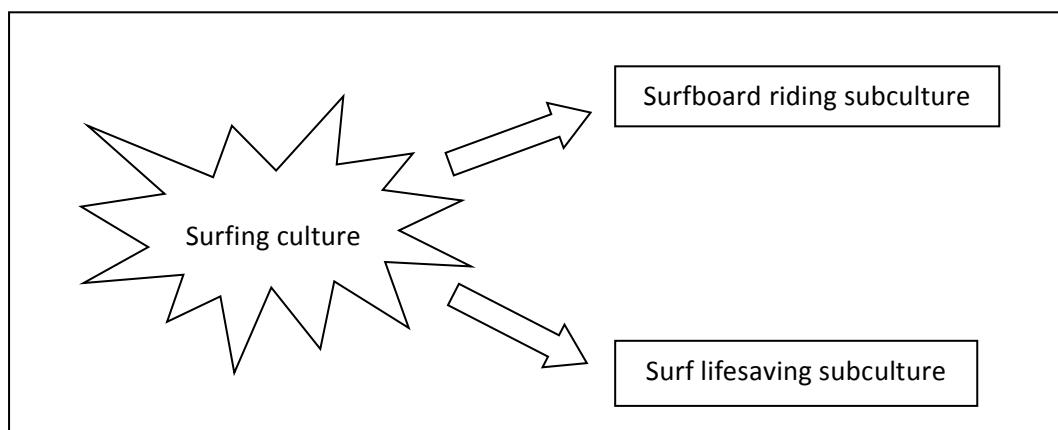
An important and highly relevant subcultural paradigm was proposed by Beaglehole (1937, p.138) in his work “Cultural peaks in Polynesia”. Beaglehole used geographical location as the basis for subcultural classification in order to “bring system into a large mass of otherwise inchoate data”. Beaglehole indicated that classifying Polynesia into northern, southern, eastern and western zones was inappropriate. He pointed out that the eastern islands (Tahiti, the Marquesas and the Cook Islands) exhibited enormous diversity in themselves.

Studies of isolated geographical groups within a wider area suggest that homogeneity of cultural traits is often less marked than differences. Thus differences in material culture, art styles and social organisation between islands of the lower Cook group ... are such as almost to imply that here each island possesses in its own right a subculture ... (Beaglehole, 1937, p.138)

Beaglehole suggests that although the concept of cultural area was important, further study concerned with ‘sub-areas’ assumed greater importance in distinguishing cultural patterns. Beaglehole’s theory validates the concept of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. In order to effectively investigate the cultures of Polynesia, Beaglehole stipulated that consideration should involve localised differences and similarities with equal intensity. Beaglehole referred to such trends as “cultural peaks”, an amusingly appropriate surfing descriptor.

### 2.3 Surfing subcultures: Splitting the peak

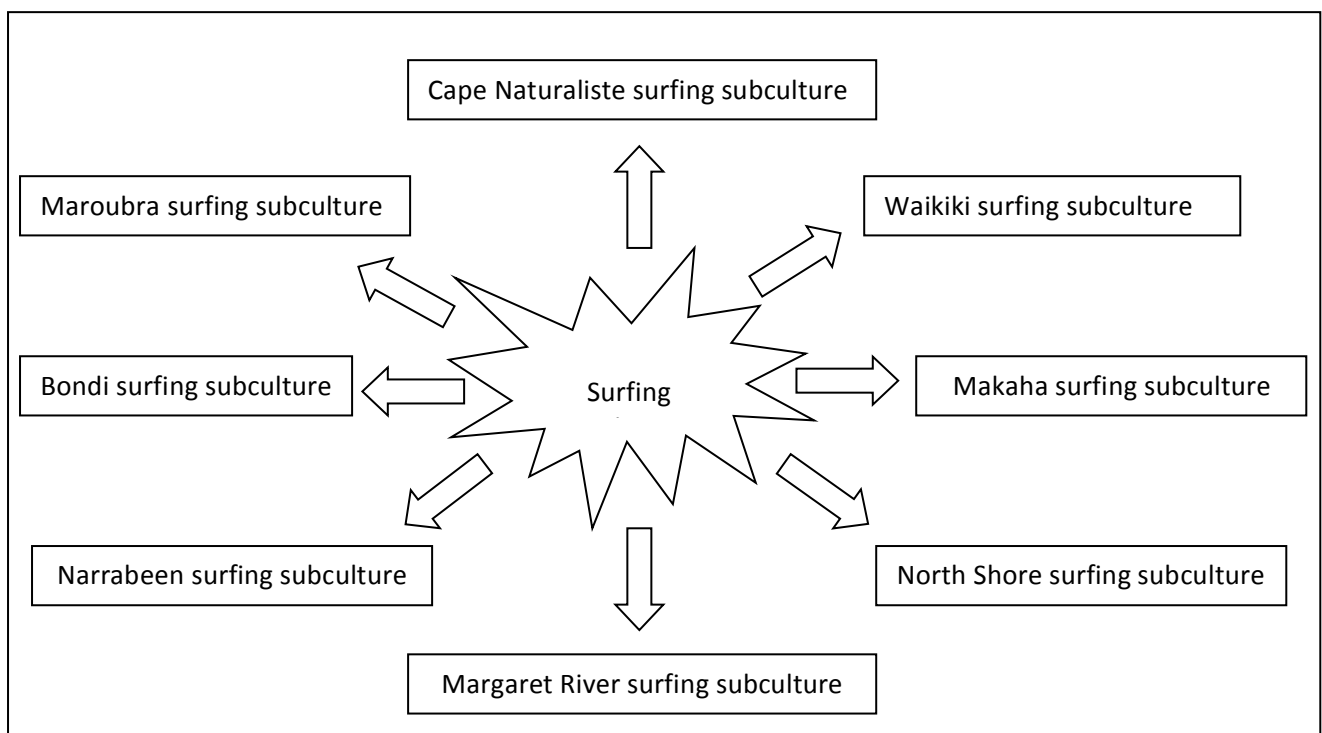
In *Surfing subcultures*, Kent Pearson (1979) indicated that the surfing culture comprised dual subcultures, surf lifesaving and surfboard riding. This classification is illustrated in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: Pearson’s 1979 cultural taxonomy**

Following this renowned publication, global change has been mindboggling. Thirty-two years ago, the surfing culture had a very broad base. However since then, surf lifesaving and surfboard riding have taken vastly divergent lineage. Pearson's scheme is no longer valid. Surf lifesaving and surfboard riding warrant separate cultural classification. Surfboard riding is surfing.

The consequence of splitting Pearson's surfing culture into two quantities necessitates consideration. As this study is concerned with surfing, I will not continue with the development of the surf lifesaving culture. My classification will follow the surfing derivation. Although global surfers share a parent culture, they are isolated by time and space at a geographical level. Surfers, while sharing a uniting cultural lifestyle, have various contrary norms. Physically secluded surfing subcultures represent responses to localised situations (Pearson, 1979, p.14). Subcultural members define and interpret situations that are based on local systems of shared meanings. With the notion of geographical subcultures in place, it would seem reasonable to represent surfing subcultures according to their location. This concept is illustrated in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2: Surfing subcultural taxonomy according to geographical situation.**

Although this model is obviously incomplete, its purpose is to portray how different surfing populations may be represented as distinctive, geographically isolated subcultural entities. The parent surfing culture is in reality composed of a myriad of microcosm subcultures.

## 2.4 Out of bounds: Border clarification

Boundary identification presents the ethnographer with an opportunity to delineate a subculture. According to Pearson (1979, p.18), defining the subcultural boundary is a dual procedure. Initially closely related subcultures require demarcation. Secondly, the subculture needs to be distinguished from the parent culture. Pearson declares that for a researcher to successfully utilise the subcultural taxonomy, it is vital to have a thorough understanding of the parent culture (1979, p.11). Relevant features of surfing's parent culture are examined subsequently in chapter three.

Gelder (2007, p.2) offers that subcultures create their own boundaries by territorialising places as "their turf". Subcultures tend to be antithesis to mainstream (Gelder, 2007, p.4). Gelder describes subcultures as having a "collective self-image" (2007, p.94) indicating that symbols and attitude shape distinctive subcultural style. Surfing subcultures have long been regarded as being unconventional (Young, 1994, p.106; Kampion, 2003, p.105). Surfing subcultures share characteristics with the parent surfing culture however surfers simultaneously display distinctive subcultural style. According to Hebdige (1989, p.103), it is through style that subcultures are recognisable. Surfers are united by culture yet surfers are isolated by their geography and separated by time. Wheaton (2007, p.292) stipulates that geographical specificity is an important factor in subcultural studies and that "lines of division" are relevant to all subcultures.

When biologists consider adjacent communities, it is usual to expect indeterminate intersections featuring a blend of dominants<sup>16</sup>. In nature, definitive community demarcation is unrealistic. Given the task of identifying a border between adjacent communities, it is highly likely that different biologists would construct different margins. An analogous situation to this positivist illustration exists in cultural anthropology. Boundaries between adjacent surfing subcultures are typically blurred. The idea of the subcultural boundary is regarded by Pearson (1977, p.59) as an "anathema" to the ethnographer. Subcultural boundaries are interpretations. Subcultural boundaries are in the eye of the ethnographer. In this research, the subcultural boundary concept is recognised as a significant concept by the Cape Naturaliste surfing members. The subcultural boundary notion is explored in chapter eleven.

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<sup>16</sup> Dominants are the most conspicuous species represented in an area. The dominant species is typically used by biologist to name the associated community, for example, a jarrah-forest community.

## 2.5 The Crusaders' view: What is the surfing culture?

Surfing subcultures have specific beliefs and values that are understood by the subcultural members (Pearson, 1977, p.42). These communal perceptions define and reinforce the subculture. Similarly, individual surfers may not advocate to the entire raft of subcultural norms. In many cases, subcultural surfers demonstrate individuality, the independence to make decisions that suit their phenotype. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967, p.103) imply that total commitment to all subcultural values is rare. Social groups are typically heterogeneous in nature. People are generally able to express varietal position without being ostracised from their chosen subculture. Latent values, those dissimilar to the values of the subculture at large, are expected. To understand and describe subcultural meaning, an ethnographer must appreciate that a range of beliefs and values are held by the cultural members.

At this stage of the thesis I call upon the Cape Crusaders to add veracity in defining the surfing culture. This data presents a range of interviewee perceptions regarding cultural description. It indicates divergence. It indicates commonality. Interestingly, several candidates spontaneously alluded to the existence of a separate Yallingup-centric surfing tribe. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural concoction is a complicated sweet and sour recipe. The initial definition illustrates that fervour bubbles within the subcultural domain.

**John Ferguson:** The surfing culture is all about riding waves ... the rest of it is bullshit really [laughs]. Nothing's better than the thrill of riding a wave, nothing! It gets down to the [pause] the *stoke* [emphasis] you feel after catching a good wave. I guess it's like what a drug-addict experiences, the high.

That 'high' is fundamental to surfing. Some call it a feeling, others consider it an unexplainable manifestation. Regardless, stoke is the outcome of surfing that hooks people into the culture. If waves are the food for stoke, as suggested by Kampion (2003, p.26), then the appetite for stoke is only suppressed by riding waves. It is only this experience that satisfies the surf-junkie. Surfing's name has changed over time. From *he'e-nalu*<sup>17</sup> to wave sliding to surf bathing to surf playing, the appellation has altered (Finney, 1959; Moser, 2008). Over the journey however, the enjoyment experienced in the wave breaking zone has been unwavering. The euphoria associated with riding waves is difficult to measure. The excitement associated with riding waves is difficult to express.

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<sup>17</sup> The ancient Hawaiian surfers termed surfboard riding *he'e-nalu*.

### 2.5.1 Stoke: Fuelling surfing's fire

In order to describe the depth and uniqueness of the surfing practice, surfers have adopted the term 'stoke' into their vernacular. The early Hawaiians' used the word 'hopupu' to label their heightened state of excitement associated with wave riding (SurfArt, 2010). In formulating a mathematical /surfing equality, hopupu = stoke.

From a physiological perspective, Casey (2010, p.176) indicates that surfing causes the secretion of a "potent cocktail of neuropeptides ... endorphin [and] oxytocin". These hormones are responsible for fight-flight responses and for life's feel-good moments. Casey terms these juices "natural opiates".

Several Yallingup surfers recognised similar endocrinal theories in relation to explaining their surfing stoke. "When you get a good wave, your body releases all these endorphins and it just makes you feel ... a natural high," said Bob Monkman. "I still get such a big buzz out of it ... you just feel like you're on top of the world."

"Getting a really good wave, the feeling of doing a turn, getting a barrel ... I've never done anything else where you get an adrenalin-rush like you do in surfing," stated Mike Annert.

Reedman (2010) indicates that stoked surfers are actually "enjoying a chemical cocktail triggered by the charged ions found in the atmosphere around turbulent water". When waves break, abundant charged particles are liberated and these ions contribute to the release of hormones such as endorphin and serotonin in the surfer's body (Reedman, 2010). Is it these organic endocrine compounds that produce the surfer's high? The answer is almost certainly. I hasten to add however that a devoted surfer, exposed to an intense ion scenario resultant from perfectly breaking surf, would be far from stoked if denied opportunity to actually ride the waves. Charged particles may hasten hormonal release, but the actual act of surfing ultimately reveals the stoke.

Brett Merrifield labelled the surfing culture as a "certain breed" who share a passion for riding waves. "But it's all about the feeling ... the stoke," he said.

"Defining the surfing culture?" laughed Jake Paterson. "Wow. That's a broad one isn't it? The whole culture is an individual thing really," he said. "It's all about fun ... but the stoke has many aspects."

Sharing stoke is perceived as an important social aspect of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Although 'sense of community' is not unique to the Cape Crusaders, I am convinced that in some contemporary surfing subcultures, wave sharing solidarity, once a universal component of surfing, has been eroded because of surfing's selfish nature. A common thread in these responses indicates that Cape Naturaliste surfing is about sharing the experience with friends and family.

"The surfing culture down here is all about friendship," stated Kevin Merrifield. "That crew that I first started coming down here with in the 1950s ... it's incredible to have had the experiences with those people. Every one of those guys was a character in their own right." Kevin paused before completing his definition. "That mateship has been very, very important to me. Surfing brings people together."

Karen Kavanagh believes that the surfing culture connects the Dunsborough community. "Surfing has certainly bonded our family," she said. "We're probably closer than most families ... the family that surfs together, etcetera, etcetera," Karen chortled. "Our kids know people [who] ordinarily they wouldn't know ... unless they were surfing. Surfing has taught our kids a lot ... Surfing teaches respect."

Mike Annert recognised the magnitude of the "professional surfers and older surfers" taking time out to interact with the "grommets"<sup>18</sup> in the Cape Naturaliste lineups. "We're lucky to be part of a small community. People generally look out for each other. People know each other and they care about each other. It's a great part of the surfing culture that's developed around here."

"The surfing culture involves a lot of egos," laughed Craig McConville. "But there are a lot of really nice people in it too ... It's about like-minded people who are bonded together in a local community. People know each other and know about each other. The local surfing culture is that you get to know the local crew. Our culture is about sharing our waves I guess."

"The social side of surfing is very important to me," said John Ferguson. "I love that part of surfing. I rarely go by myself. When you go surfing for a couple of hours, the amount of time you're actually on the wave is tiny. In that other time you're out there talking, laughing, joking and calling your mates onto horrible waves that they shouldn't go on." John laughed in reference to a recent late drop he challenged me into. "I don't play a competitive sport anymore. I really miss that social aspect of the team. I loved that when I played footy. So the way [to] compensate is by having your mates in the surf, hooting, and yelling and laughing ... and that's a big part of our surfing culture down here."

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<sup>18</sup> Grommets are neophyte surfers.

Importantly to this research, well-known Cape Crusader Mark Ogram spontaneously recognised that the surfing culture is actually a collection of multiple subcultures. As significantly, Mark also indicated that being a member of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture does not happen by accident. Subcultural membership requires vision, commitment, sacrifice and hard work.

**Mark Ogram:** There is one generalised surfing culture and a lot of subcultures I suppose. Maybe ... thirty years ago, the surfing culture was more of a defined culture, whereas now I think it's probably a little more diverse. A lot of people look at [surfing] as a sport, whereas we probably look at it as a lifestyle ... I think it is different from sport. Like people play tennis, but being a tennis player doesn't define your life. Or people play golf ... and they're out there at the same time every Saturday afternoon playing eighteen holes. But surfers ... live and breathe it. You base your whole life around surfing ... You can play golf or tennis wherever ... but if you're a committed surfer, you live it ... in a specific environment, where there's [sic] waves. People say to me 'you're lucky to live here' ... sure my life revolves around surfing and the surfing environment. But it's really not lucky that I live here. I've made my work to suit where I want to live. I could make more money if I lived in Perth ... but [chuckle] nah!

Dedicated surfing subcultural members organise their existence to accommodate their surfing practice. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is a "culture of commitment" (Wheaton, 2000, p.267). When favourable wave, wind and tide conditions align, the hardcore surfers are able to drop everything, activate their bodies and their boards and feed their surfing need.

### **2.5.2 Image: Being seen as a surfer**

Surfers are generally recognisable. This recognition is part of surfing's culture. Universally, there is an image associated with being a surfer. The surfer's phenotype, regularly bundled into the 'cool basket', is an upshot of the surfing function. Tanned skin, bleached hair and toned muscles result from hours of physical exertion spent under the sun in the surf zone. Jenkins (1992, p.75) designates that cultures may be categorised by the "deportment, the manner and style" of the cultural members. Surfing style is a brand, a stamp that marks the social actors. The surfer image is often revealed via surf related fashion and surf specific language. Billabong mirrors this notion with their renowned cliché, 'only a surfer knows the feeling'. On the flipside, this catchcry may translate to 'if you're not a surfer, then you really don't know'. Such style may be interpreted as cultural aloofness. Indeed, it may even be construed as ethnocentricity, a sense of conceited superiority held by the cultural members.



Contemporarily, surfing is ubiquitous. Wave riding highlights regularly play on the six o'clock news. Competitive surfing results are emblazoned across the popular tabloids. The surfing culture is gargantuan. More people want to be connected with surfing. More people want to surf.

Several interviewees stated that the surfing image is a significant part of the surfing culture. Interestingly, they clarified this notion in a double barrel response, explicating their personal position in the culture and recognising surfing affiliation as a privilege. Surfers should be grateful for being in the chosen few. Barry Young judiciously brought in both Lopez's "hard" descriptor and Booth's "stand up" simplicity. Such insight from this keystone Cape Crusader is unsurprising.

**Barry Young:** ... the surfing culture is much about being identified with the lifestyle ... I can go into an airport and I can tell who surfs and who doesn't ... [I] can spot a surfer. The culture is ... what it says about the person, the affiliation with the lifestyle. We've bred a concept now where it says, 'it's cool to wear this label' because the people who do this stuff [surfing] are cool. Only a fraction of a percentage of people on the planet surf! And that's what I've said to a few of my mates who have stopped surfing ... 'Do you realise how lucky you are to be a surfer?' You've got to keep doing it as long as you can. Learning to surf is a really hard thing - it takes a long, long while. We tend to forget about the journey we've been on in learning how to stand up and surf ... and we've all done it differently.

"People want to be seen to be part of the surfing culture," stated Brett Baker. "That's been brought on by surfing's corporatisation ... the Billabong and the Quiksilver empires. But surfing is a passion for riding waves, that's where the culture starts." Brett smiled while he deliberated his next response. "Surfing is an earthy experience ... it keeps you level headed, the ocean does that to you. You're hanging out with likeminded people and they keep you grounded too," he chuckled.

Warren Boyes labelled the current surfing culture as "mainstream". He considered his fortune in being a Cape Naturaliste surfer. "You get a lot of Europeans down here in their Wicked Vans [camper vans] and a lot of them can't even surf. But they [want] to be surfers, they're surfing wannabes ... and you can't blame someone for wanting to be part of the surfing culture," he laughed. "We're very lucky to be surfers down here."

With the global economic downturn, and perhaps through a degree of overexposure, the surfing image has recently taken a big hit. Surfing is now regarded as being conventional. As authenticity and surfing are symbiotic, the surfing image has taken correction in many quarters.

"I don't really like the surf brands anymore," said fifteen year old Maddie Kavanagh. "Surfing has become too commercialised, too mainstream and I like being a bit different." Karen Kavanagh supported Maddie's comments with some maternal wisdom. "I think they're starting to 'cotton-on' to that in the surf shops too. The girls aren't into the surfwear as much as they were five or ten years ago," she identified. "They're bringing in other boutique labels now, like Mink Pink ... and surf fashion has become more stylish, like Roxy."

Quiksilver, Billabong and Rip Curl are known in the surfing culture as 'the big three'. Until the recent fiscal meltdown, these conglomerates manipulated the surfing apparel marketplace. Stranger (2010, p.1123) terms their influence over the surfing culture as "pervasive and formidable". While surfing style represented by products may be regarded as 'cool' by the non-surfing community, some surfers have recently tended to shy away from these popular brands. According to Ford and Brown (2006, p.68), "real surfers" have developed an "ambivalence or ... disdain" towards the surf-fashion labels. Booth (2001, p.8) likewise states that "commercialisation threatens to undermine the cultural tenets of surfing". Wearing surf branded apparel does not make a surfer. The consumption of the surfing culture is easy. Authentic surfers know that surfing is hard. As a consequence, many bona fide surfers have recently shunned the popularly branded products in favour of alternative labels such as Rusty, Volcom or Hurley. Alternatively, such demographic has totally rejected surfing labels. Stranger's survey results (2010, p.1127) indicate that most consumption of surfing fashion occurs in urban locations. Fords and Brown's data (2006, p.73) suggests that surf fashion is recognised by long term surfers as being unimportant.

Lizzie Nunn believes that the surfing culture is an "integral part of our history". She identified "fashions, fads, icons [and] people" as contributing to surfing's cultural evolution. "Surfing has gone from underground ... to mainstream," she said. "You can go out to Moora and there's dudes [sic] wearing Billabong boardshorts." Lizzie stated that in Australia, surfing has been successful in "prostituting itself". She emphasised that surfing is big business. "It's much more about making money now. I don't like seeing people step away from the enjoyment level and take surfing too competitively. I wish it was like the seventies again and everyone just surfed for fun," she laughed.

Similarly, Len Dibben recognised that the contemporary surfing culture has become caught up with "image and clothes". Like many, Dibben believes that surfing has been compromised. "Surf shops are owned by the conglomerates now, not by surfers anymore." He paused, "Mark Ogram down your way, he's still about the surfboards." Len chuckled, "Me [sic] and the Cordingleys are ultimately responsible for that I guess [ironic chuckle] ... we originally started selling *their* clothes in our shops ... before that it was Adlers and Platts and Barronwear. People bought their surfing stuff from us."

Although old school Yallingup surfer Mick Marlin categorised the surfing culture as “freedom”, he also distinguished the corporatisation of surfing. “When I was young,” he said, “people looked upon surfing with scepticism ... It wasn’t until the professional era that people recognised surfing as a reputable pastime. You look at Quiksilver and Billabong ... they turned surfing into a huge conglomerate, a multibillion dollar thing ... that changed the shape of the surfing culture forever.”

“When I first started surfing it was a real antiestablishment type of thing,” said Bob Monkman. “That *was* [emphasis] the counterculture of the seventies.” Bob regards contemporary surfing fashion as being standard. “When I was growing up,” he said, “surfers wore clothing different to everyone else. We had a strong desire to be different from everybody else. We grew our hair long, we had a distinct look ... when we were young we went out of our way to be different.” Bob stated that the surfing culture is a “very important part” of the Dunsborough Yallingup community.

Connection to the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is more than emblematic. Fashion statements come and go by their very nature. What is chic at time ‘x’ becomes obsolete at time ‘y’. Fads follow trends as dynamically as fluctuations on the stock market. Surfers require waves and surfboards. Surf related apparel is often a diversion from wave riding.

### **2.5.3 Ultimate surf culture definitions: Stand-up tubes**

Defining the surfing culture is an expansive task. A universal filament in response to this question was the difficulty in containing a response. Stewart Bettenay’s full gamut definition highlights his profound insight into the surfing ethnicity.

**Stewart Bettenay:** I surf because I like riding waves, that’s why I do it. Sure there’s the friendship and the fun and the coast. For some it’s about lifestyle or image. There’s been big change in the culture. When we started it was not a mainstream sport, you couldn’t make a living out of it. It was backyard surfboard manufacturing ... The biggest change is the demise of surfboard manufacturing companies. They were once the focal point whereas now it is surf shops ... selling clothes, surf fashion... now the surfboard is almost like an accessory. The most important thing in the surfing culture is the surfboard ... now it’s the least profitable part. Surfing is about you, your surfboard and the wave [pause] you don’t need the rest of it.

In John's Gospel (2: 9-10), saving the best wine until last was considered astonishing at Cana. In this case, the exception speaks loudly. Damon Eastaugh is highly respected across the surfing world. In my opinion, his renowned wave riding abilities and unpretentious demeanour qualify him to ultimately define surfing's culture.

**Damon Eastaugh:** The culture has been borrowed a lot. One thing that makes me shake my head is when I see people with all the surfing garb on ... obviously they're not surfers ... What is it about surfing that they want to be part of? ... The culture is in part being used by the big players to sell their product. It makes me want to shy away from the big brands. Surfing is about adventure, the risk taking ... those things sound cliché, but they are the reasons I'm involved in surfing. 'Why am I surfing?' I have this conversation with myself a lot. I'm not doing it to wear the labels or to project out to people that I'm a surfer, or I'm part of this group that's different from you, or it's cool. Getting onto the SUP [stand up paddleboard] took me back to the basic level of riding a wave ... just standing there and riding the wave. And that's where I've come to ... I'm just happy to go out and ride a wave, going for a body-surf or whatever. And that's what surfing is. You can over-think it, but if you pare it all back, that's what it is. You're just riding a wave.

Surfing is a global phenomenon. Although the surfing culture has been borrowed, prostituted, divided up and manipulated, it remains a culture of fun. The Cape Crusaders recognise the significance of the parent surfing culture. Furthermore, they also recognise their tribe as being a distinctive subcultural corpus. This feature is explored in chapter eleven.

## Chapter Three: iSurf

*Ticking away the moments that make up a dull day*

*Fritter and waste the hours in an offhand way*

*Kicking around on a piece of ground in your home town*

*Waiting for someone or something to show you the way*

David Gilmour (Pink Floyd)

Time - Dark Side of the Moon (1973)

### 3.0 Introduction: Subcultural surfer

Surfing is a personal endeavour. The surfing culture is composed of millions of personal ventures, millions of backgrounds, millions of narratives. I am a wave rider. For forty years I have immersed myself in surfing. Surfing is one of my life's vital signs. Surfing controls me. My family, my friends, my place of residence, my vocation, my holidays, clothes, car, music, reading and dreaming are directed by surfing. My position in the surfing culture and my association with the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has guided this research.

Ours is a view that research is a personal endeavour. Ours is a view that all of us, as researchers, are inevitably shaped by our own culture and our own needs - our need to view reality in certain ways, our need to view research in certain ways, our need to arrange our observations in certain ways, and our need to present our results in certain ways ... this 'positioning' is the lens through which every researcher sees her or his research. (Hasselkus, 1997, p.81)

As a member of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture I view my reality accordingly.

I am positioned as a Cape Crusader.

I am positioned as a Cape Crusader researching the Cape Crusaders.

### 3.1 Early days: Coolites, Merrins and Mandurah

My first beach-life recollections are a mixture of evaporating memories. Sweet aromas of musty dune plants carried on warm easterly breezes. Glary sunlight bouncing off squeaky white sand. Cool clear-blue Leighton seawater. Proximal sounds of squawking seagulls. Distal sounds of crashing waves. Head spinning as I lay eyes closed, exhausted on my crusty beach towel.

The Holt family was a beach family. Like so many other lucky Australians we spent summer in the sun, on the sand. The beach was our playground and fun was ever-present. We skipped tennis balls off the ocean surface, we gazed out to Rottnest and we body-surfed the breakers before the big rusty fuel tanks that sat like silent sentinels behind us in the dunes at Port Beach. That was where my love affair with riding waves began. Riding waves, what an amazing sensation. Being possessed by some ghostly, natural energy. Being driven beachward in a frothy, turbulence of fun. How I wish I could bottle that feeling, the Midas touch. The intangibility of wave riding is the feeling.

We graduated to our black and yellow striped Coolites on a sweltering Christmas Day in 1971. Composed of polystyrene foam, the squeaky surfboards reminded me of Dad's esky, loaded up with freezer bricks and big brown bottles of Swan. The Coolites were five feet long with fat round noses, thick edges and wide tails. Those boards were ridden with total recklessness throughout our hot summer days. Leaping from prone to crouch, we developed our rudimentary surfing skills. It was on the Coolites that we cultivated a 'go for it' adage that surfers live. Collectively, we conquered hundreds of waves on our lumps of foam whilst grazing nipples, noses and bellies in the blend.

Merrin surf mats followed on our surf craft menu. George Greenough popularised the air filled mats in the 1970s psychedelic surf film, *Crystal Voyager*<sup>19</sup>. Looking back on childhood, my brothers and I tended to receive our new toys at the same time. To avoid fisticuffs, we'd use the 'ownership by colour' principle - me yellow, Dave blue and *Skeat* red. Alternatively, Mum would put names on our stuff. This was the case with our universally light-blue surf mats. Vallie was a champion of fairness. She excelled at keeping her three sons contended, preventing sibling quarrels whenever possible.

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<sup>19</sup> *Crystal Voyager* was released in 1973. Directed and produced by David Elfick and filmed by Albert Falzon, the 35mm movie featured the surfing of George Greenough and Nat Young. The innovative water-based footage of tubing waves and the hallucinogenic Pink Floyd sound track bedazzled the world of surfing cinematography.

The Merrins were a rubbery canvas material. They required significant labour-intensive inflation preceding use. My most permanent recollection of the surf mats was the giddiness that always resulted from ten solid minutes of inflation time. The task of getting the Merrin from flat to fat was a lung buster, but it always seemed worth the effort. The black plastic handles were immediately removed from our mats. It was obvious to the Holt boys that grips were only necessary for inept wave riders, people who required some hold-on security during the ride. The word 'kook' wasn't in our vocabulary back then. We weren't even up to using 'uncool'. But I remember those handles being regarded with indifference. On the flip side, the Merrins had fins. Fins were stylish. Fins were functional. They gave the mats some slight ascendancy over our extinct Coolites. The feeling of manipulating a turn on the wave face was new. It involved a sense of control.



**Fig 3.1: The Holt family on the beach at Leighton, circa 1971 - Author at right (Holt archive)**

Our post Christmas summers pivoted around an annual pilgrimage to Mandurah. We'd all traipse southward along the Old Coast Road in the grey-green EH station wagon with boat tagging behind chocked with bikes, fishing gear and surfing paraphernalia. Pop and Nanna Gray owned a bungalow about a mile from the beach at Silver Sands. It was a perfect retreat. We'd sleep on the front porch and rise before dawn to catch sand whiting from the shore with warm sunshine rising on our backs. We'd return after breakfast for the offshore surf and stay long after the sea breeze blew up, riding waves, digging holes and laughing. I'm sure we realised our good fortune.

During those untroubled days I picked up my primary beach skills. There were no surf coaches back then. Knowledge was gained through experience and observation. I learned the effect of the winds on the ocean. I took note of the swells. I studied the tides. Although the meteorology wasn't understood, I was always intrigued how some days presented us with good waves and some days did not. The beach was a mysterious playground. I treasured waves as a valuable resource.

At that time there were other sources of mystery too. The tanned girls in bikinis were most appealing. They'd pursue the older surfers around to the Stewart Street point where they'd sit on the beach chatting and smoking cigarettes. Their blokes were the real surfies. They had long blonde hair, earrings and big shoulders. They wore cool boardshorts. They rode fibreglass surfboards. There was a sense of danger associated with that crew and I'd learned throughout my boyhood that danger meant fun. We'd run around the beach and watch them standing on their boards, gliding across the waist high rollers with flair. I knew back then I was destined to be a surfer.

### **3.2 How's that? Cricket's out**

As a teenager growing up in a conventional Western Australian family in the 1970s, I was given the opportunity to play the traditional Australian team games, cricket and football. I loved footy however I found competitive cricket an obligation. The backyard variety of the bat and ball game was a different matter. My brothers and I played for hours on our 22 yards of garden paradise. With D.K. Lillee, Jeff Thomson, Michael Holding and Andy Roberts serving up attitude on the world stage, it was a fun time to be bowling short pitched sizzlers in our suburban tests. Modified cricket balls coupled with teenage testosterone made for plenty of bruising brotherly encounters.

On the summer weekends of 1975 I played cricket with the Melville 16s. I enjoyed training down by the river at Tompkins Park. I batted number seven and fielded at first slip, an all-round plodder. The highlight of my season came in our penultimate game at Richardson Park. We needed fifteen runs from the last two overs to win that match and qualify for the final. My partner and I managed to get us over the line, much to everyone's jubilation. Unfortunately, the team's penultimate game was my ultimate game. I was demoted to twelfth man for the final and spent the weekend on the scorebook. Although we won outright, and I was proud to be part of a victorious team, there was a sense of disappointment in missing out on that final triumph. On reflection, that was possibly my finest cricketing moment. The relegation made me contemplate my future in the sport. An important penny dropped at the end of that cricket season. An alternative way to spend long, hot summer Saturdays was at the beach - at the beach surfing.



### 3.3 Living in the 70s: Surfing in the 70s

My first fibreglass surfboard was a second hand, six-foot-eleven light blue Gordon & Smith diamond tail. Shaped by inaugural world champion Pete Townend, the 'Tubeshooter', had a magic hibiscus decal on the deck. I wish I still had that surfboard. It never ceases to amaze me how surfers remember intricate details about every surfboard they have ever owned, yet forget anniversaries, birthdays and bygone lovers with ridiculous ease. My G&S was left at a safe house in Rockingham to simplify surfing at the back of Penguin Island or down at Anstey's Beach with my surfer mates. There was a keen band of them who lived by the beach at Warnbro. Greg, Graeme, Lynda and a half dozen other freckled face youngsters were a fun group to hang with.

We attended different schools in Fremantle and regularly convened at the bus stop to debrief about weekend surfing escapades or discuss impending swells. We'd meet in the municipal library, but study was never on the agenda. We came for the magazines, the latest editions of *Surfer* and *Surfing World*. When those glossy periodicals hit the jarrah display stand, we'd transport them to the communal tables to carefully pilfer the centrespread posters. Those colourful images became blue-tacked hangings on my bedroom's floral wallpaper. The surfing publications were a chief source of daydreams - Pipeline and Lopez, Sunset and Hakman, Hang Ten, Golden Breed, Platts and Adlers. Unbeknownst to us, that media was our entry point into the global surfing culture.

Surfers everywhere recognise *Big Wednesday* (1978) as a winner. Directed by John Lilius and co-written with Denny Aaberg, the offbeat movie accurately portrayed growing up as a surfer in the 1970s. *Big Wednesday* represented the surfing culture with aplomb. A memorable personality of the movie was the craggy, bearded surfing elder, *Bear*. This fictitious character reminds me of our local surfing guru, Len Dibben. Len's surf shop in North Fremantle was located in a wonderful old limestone church, festooned with lead light windows and smooth wooden floor boards. I vividly recall the smell of Weeties wafting from the Nabisco factory across Stirling Highway on the offshore easterly as we entered Dibben's domain. Len's surfboards were legendary and like Bear, he was larger than life. As grommets, we'd gather around Len like little kids listening to Uncle Remus telling Br'er Rabbit stories. With keenness we'd tune into Dibben's surfing sermons. He'd preach about the big surf down-south. He'd espouse his theories on surfboard design. Len always had time to share a yarn with the local surfing neophytes. Len was more than being a clever businessman. He was more than a surfboard artisan. Len loved occupying his niche as a pioneer in the Western Australian surfing industry. Surfing was still a low key culture in the late 1970s, but it was going places fast.

### 3.4 The best days of your life: Freewheeling at university

My final year at high school saw most surfing activity confined to weekends and holidays. Occasionally, we'd wag a day from class, catch the train to Leighton and surf the winter banks under the watchful eye of the big red dingo painted on the flour mill above the beach<sup>20</sup>. When the swell was up, we'd walk the cold sand and take on the razor sharp Cables reef. In that era we'd confront the chilly grey ocean in board shorts and football jumpers. We smoked Winnie Blues, rode our Surfa Sam skateboards on the hot-mix and swapped Dylan, Young and Beatles albums. The company of pretty girls was highly sought after. Canoodling was rated subsequent only to surfing. Like hundreds of other Aussie kids, I was enjoying travelling the surfer's path. In November 1977 I passed my driver's licence, enjoyed the CBC Fremantle senior school ball and successfully completed my Tertiary Entrance Examinations. In the process, I somehow managed to negotiate admittance into a Bachelor of Science degree at the Western Australian Institute of Technology.

I commenced holiday work at Fremantle Cooperative Bulk Handling the day after my final chemistry examination. No schoolies week, no sleeping in. As a fresh-faced youngster, connection with the wharfie crew was a delicate process. Playing cribbage at smoko, sharing a few middies on the wood at The Rose Hotel and keeping a low profile around the silo enabled smooth transition from the classroom into an old-school work environment. We were paid in cash back then, a big wad of crisp, aromatic twenty dollar bills, straight from the mint and into the pocket. Ample overtime and cheap home living meant my first car and my first brand new surfboard were realistic targets. The vehicle, a reasonably priced Chrysler Gallant was a convenient ride to university and my ticket to the beach. Hastily modified with roof racks and a Rip Curl sticker, my car took on an unpretentious surfie look. The surfboard was a custom Jacko. A pristine 6' 8" pin tail flyer, shaped by gruff mountain-man John Jackovich in his Rivervale factory. The board had a simple motif on the clear deck and a fine blue pin-line paralleling the rails - a \$180 bargain investment. I was unenthusiastic about rubbing wax onto that immaculate instrument. The Jacko took up residence in my bedroom, the Gallant under the peppermint tree on Dad's Queensland-Blue.

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<sup>20</sup> The 'Great Southern Roller Flour Mills' is situated between several large Norfolk Island Pines on Stirling Highway in North Fremantle. The enormous red dingo image painted on the facade of the mill represents the Dingo Flour brand.

*Surfer* magazine (1999, p.209) listed the 1978 Coke-2SM Surfabout as “one of the all time greatest surf contests”. The event proved to be a defining moment in my surfing life. Presented primetime on the national Channel Nine network, Surfabout delivered flamboyant wave riding straight from Sydney’s North Steyne Beach into mainstream Australian households. The final shootout between Larry Blair and Wayne Lynch was conducted in remarkable waves. Engaging water footage, explanative lineup interviews, insightful commentary and exhilarating tube-riding ignited my surfing inferno. Surfabout exposed Australia’s beach pups to the cool style of the surfing culture. Surf fashion was then a reality. Golden Breed, Crystal Cylinders, Stubbies, Exacto, Hang Ten, Platts and Adlers were harbingers to the Quiksilver and Billabong empires. The sweet scent of surf wax was wafting on offshore breezes around the country. The taut feel of Rip Curl neoprene was grasping the bodies of a new generation of wave riding youth. Surfing was becoming a tsunamic Australian brand.

The cliché ‘your school days are the best days of your life’ is a furphy. I reflect on my university days as an extraordinary time for self realisation, a time for mixing with like minded people, a time for fun and learning, the best days. University life powered my surfing into warp speed. As an eighteen year old student-surfer, my life was spot on. Friday mornings were free from class contact. This enabled regular wave hunting at Leighton, Cottesloe and Cables or up on the northern beachies<sup>21</sup> at Scarborough and Triggs. Friday afternoons were spent at the university tavern checking out Dave Warner, Matt Taylor, The Angels, Hoodoo Gurus and Loaded Dice. It was at university that I met two of my greatest life-long friends, Kevin Woodthorpe and Jeremy Pearce. *Woody* and *Pearcey* were easygoing business students. They enjoyed a beer, a laugh and fun in the surf. Through Kevin I later met Andrew Murrie. *Drew* was always the life of the party. He still is. Andrew’s knowledge of music had me quickly tuning into Lou Reed, The Doors, Jimi Hendrix and Dire Straits. His devotion to comedy had me rolling on Monty Python, Cheech & Chong, John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Chevy Chase, John Candy and Steve Martin.

Life’s a beach - constant change, fun, excitement tempered with risk. I became obsessed with the South West coastline during the early 1980s. Our initial surfing trips down-south involved loading up the vehicles with surfing equipment, sleeping bags and meagre rations and exiting Perth via the Old Coast Road on a Friday evening. There was no Internet forecasting back then. We’d just head down to Injidup in hope. We camped under the Tea Trees behind the dunes. We treasured the environment like it was our birth right. That period of down-south surfing really was the ‘Goldie Locks’ era. There were enough surfers in the water to enjoy camaraderie but not too many to promote the anxiety associated with current crowded lineups. It was just right.

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<sup>21</sup> Waves that break on shallow sand bars are termed ‘beach breaks’. These zones are often referred to as ‘beachies’ by surfers.

We gradually developed an understanding of how the South West surf environment worked - when to head to surf the beach-breaks at Windmills, when to take the sketchy track to Bears and when to make the long walk out to Cape Clairault. We learned through trial and error. In the process, we made our fair share of mistakes. All too often we'd paddle out into hostile seas, more conducive to a fair flogging than a fun surfing experience.

An extreme incident provides the basis for our one and only near-tragic surfing tale. In a large rising swell, a few of us took to the water at Injidup on a cold, overcast winter morning. It was a dark, intimidating ocean. In hindsight, we should have observed the scene from the safety of the dunes. Bravado sometimes results in risky surf decision making. Although we'd previously tackled hefty swells, the manner in which the ocean grew on that day was mindboggling. After spending an hour paddling about wide-eyed and frantic, dodging massive sets, I remember picking off a wide one and exiting the lineup with relief. Drew did likewise. Kevin remained.

Twenty minutes later, Woody was way out to sea, barely scraping over mountains of water. I recall willing him through the monster sets as we stood dripping in the carpark. Woody lost his surfboard on a breaking wall, his legrope snapping like cotton. Without a floatation device Kevin took a pounding, smashed by the giant waves, picked up rag-doll fashion and hurled over the falls in a pathetic spectacle. We tried to come to his rescue; however, penetrating the shore break proved impossible. We watched helplessly as he was dragged northwards in the rip current. Woody was finally flung up onto P's reef. We raced out between sets to collect his limp body and hoist him onto the sand. Woody was delirious, his eyes rolled back in his head leaving the whites exposed in a macabre Linda Blair *Exorcist* mask. His mumblings were quickly accompanied by violent vomiting. As we continued to minister assistance I clearly remember Drew breaking the seriousness of the situation stating through a concerned snigger, "If he stops breathing, Holty, you're the one giving him mouth to mouth!" Woody survived and we learned a serious surfing lesson.

Good and bad experiences shaped our understanding of the ocean's temperament. Surf wisdom is collected slowly over time. We learned from each other. We learned from watching the hot locals. We learned from the magazines. We learned from the surf movies that regularly screened at the Regal Theatre in Subiaco. Our surfing was on the march.

Some radical surfboard innovations came to prominence at that point in time. Stingers, triple flyers, colourful sprays and channel bottoms reflected a new direction in surfboard exploration. The wide swallow tailed twin fin design was popularised by the flamboyant style of Mark Richards, quadruple world champion. Richard's sweeping bottom turns and aggressive snaps were revolutionary. Surfers everywhere tried to emulate the 'wounded seagull'. The *MR* superman motified surfboards were fast and manoeuvrable and like so many other surfers of the day, I wanted a piece of the twin fin action. My first 'twinnie' came from Odyssey Surfboards in North Perth. It was a 5' 10" swallow crafted by legendary shaper Bruce Smith. This board represented a monumental step from my Jacko. I had my board sprayed with a white Coca-Cola swirl over a light blue deck with a yellow bottom. I was stoked with the looseness of the design, amazed with the Odyssey's performance. That twin fin elevated my surfing practice to a new level.



**Figure 3.2: Post winter session with Drew and twinnie. Bunker Bay, circa 1980 (Holt archive)**

### 3.5 Up, up and away: *Baila Mi Hermana*<sup>22</sup>

Vision of Indonesian surf in the 1975 surf movie *Tubular Swells* tweaked my excitement. However the 1982 Hooley/McCoy classic *Storm Riders* blew my mind. I recently mentioned this to Jack McCoy. His response was as cool and exciting as his movie. “For me, Storm Riders was just a fun time in my life ... and we recorded that,” he said. “We were travelling and surfing and I guess guys like you felt out the vibe ... and the rest as they say, is history” (Personal communication, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2011).

Footage of palm trees fringing tropical beaches and cerulean, hollow waves breaking perfectly on shallow coral reefs had me ‘feeling out the vibe’, chucking boardshorts and tee-shirts into my backpack and scurrying to the airport. My first ever plane trip transported me to the ‘Island of the Gods’, Bali. Drew and I managed to do all the things I promised Mum we wouldn’t - chowing down magic mushrooms, riding motor bikes at velocity around the potholed Kuta streets and swilling Bintangs under the moon on the beach at the Sand-Bar. Bali was adventure.

The Balinese surf was superb. Inside an hour of jumping off Garuda Flight 879 and negotiating the humidity, heat and hassles of Ngurah Rai Bali International Airport, we were in the juice at Kuta Beach. I was thrilled to be surfing in boardshorts, dancing on the three foot glassy beachies in the tepid north-eastern Indian Ocean. We rode scores of clean, fun waves breaking along the Kuta/Legian strip during our stay at the Lestari Beach Inn. This was surfing!

In those days the villages of Kuta and Legian were separated by five kilometres of paddocks, bush and coconut palms. A limestone track skirted the beach front. There was no traffic chaos, no massage teams, no surf shops or boutiques. The crazy hubbub of twenty-first century Kuta was inconceivable. There were a few polite street hawkers, a couple of pirate-cassette shops and the occasional proffer of ‘mar-eeee-wannna’ from a shadowy alley, but Bali was relaxed and safe.

The Kodachrome snap of a clean, empty, tree lined Jalan Melasti on the following page unmistakably reflects laidback Kuta. The barking geckoes, the drifting dogs, the tasty satays, the scented offerings, the sweet Garam Gudang cigarettes and the beautiful Balinese people - these things were novel and exciting. The culture of Hindu Bali captivated me. We witnessed a Geertzian cockfight, a beachside funeral pyre, a traditional Balinese wedding ceremony. Our motor bikes transported us from the coral reefs at Lovina to the volcano at Kintamani. We wandered the ancient ruins at Ubud and we walked on low tide to the Tanah-Lot temple.

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<sup>22</sup> “Dance Sister Dance (Baila Mi Hermana)” was a song written by Chancler, Coster and Robinson and released on Santana’s *Amigos* album in 1976. The lyrics and music was made famous in surfing circles as the opening stanza in *Tubular Swells*.



**Figure 3.3: Jalan Melasti, Kuta 1982. Thirty years is a very long time in Bali (Holt archive)**

The Bukit Peninsula was the highlight of my first Bali visitation. The ride out to Uluwatu was frightening and the walk through the thorn trees gruelling. With hearts in mouth we approached the coast. The vibration of breaking waves carried through the afternoon humidity. Two animated Balinese lads carried our surfboards to the cliff top warung and called back to us - “Ombak! Ombak! Bagus ombak!”<sup>23</sup> What we saw below was a fantasy. We were gobsmacked. The ocean was a sheet of glass disturbed by the corrugations of long-period swell lines, racing down the reef. Ulus was on!

I felt like a pioneer as we clambered down the rickety bamboo ladder into Uluwatu’s infamous cave. Excitement coursed as we crossed the reef. My skin goose bumped as we paddled out into the world class waves. But there was a sense of connection with the space, a *déjà vu*. Uluwatu’s surf was as good as it looked in the movies. We rode the waves until dark -uncrowded, four to five foot, perfect on the falling tide. The Racetrack section on the end of the long winding left was epic. A few scrapes from bouncing on the coral were sprinkled with the penicillin powder, the wounds later paraded like badges of honour. At that point I realised surf exploration could result in unearthing treasure. For the first time I appreciated the existence of a big world that required further investigation.

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<sup>23</sup> English translation; “Waves! Waves! Good waves!”





**Figure 3.4: On the reef: Uluwatu, Bali with twin fins and Balinese caddies (Holt archive)**

### **3.6 *Es boa como milho*: As good as Europe**

Surf trips are a gamble, but surfers are an optimistic mob. Surfers are drawn by the lure of riding perfect waves in exotic locations. With that in mind, Jeremy and I quit our jobs, packed our surfboards and headed to Europe in 1986. At that time, long before the Quiksilver Pro had invaded the Basque coast, the European rite of passage for most young Aussies was more about Contiki Tours than catching waves. Pearcey and I had heard of some mystical beach breaks in France, a perfect left in Spain and cheap seaside living in Portugal. So we decided to take the punt. After a laborious flight to the UK we purchased a Ford Falcon sedan from an Arthur Daly doppelganger and jumped on the ferry to Calais. We were on the French Motorway, heading to Aquitaine before you could say *bon-jour*. When we made it to Hossegor twelve hours later, our lotto numbers bobbed up. For 21 consecutive days, the surf at Hossegor pumped. The quality beach-break peaks were amazing. Our surf feast was generated by a recalcitrant low pressure system loitering between Iceland and Greenland. Such North Atlantic fury produces vast swell energy that empties out in the Bay of Biscay. Hossegor is a wave magnet. We were iron filings stuck to its pole.



Spring life in the camp ground under the aromatic pine trees was superb. The local Biere Boc brew was tasty and affordable on our budget. Jeremy was a devotee of the Gauloises cigarettes. We were nourished by jambon, fromage, French sticks and the occasional chocolate from the Seignosse Supermercado. We played tennis when the winds wafted onshore, lounged on the beach between surf sessions, read Wilbur Smith books in the sun and enjoyed the indulgent lifestyle of an indolent surf traveller.

As Europe was somewhat of a secret spot on the surfing radar in 1986, we enjoyed the waves with relatively few competitors. Occasional participants from the US, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand bobbed up in the lineup; however, we generally surfed on our own. Although few local folk surfed at that time, the French loved the seaside. An intriguing element of Hossegor's beach culture was the regularity of the gorgeous topless local girls in the waves. Their presence was most distracting.

The harsh reality of 'good things coming to an end' meant that the Hossegor swell eventually subsided. We cleared border formalities with pre-arranged Spanish visas, the fabled Basque village of Mundaka beckoning. A beautiful fishing community located at the mouth of the Guernica Estuary in Spain's Bizkaia Province, Mundaka was a major pull for our European surf trip. We had heard yarns and seen photographs of a long, fast, hollow, left hander that peeled along a sandy bottom in front of the Catholic cathedral. Time to taste it!

We pitched our oversize tent on the terraced Mundaka camping ground and quickly acclimatised to the local lifestyle. The cuisine was delectable. We lived on the delicious bar snacks. The tapas served at the eighteen old-world bars on the cobblestoned lanes were magnificent. The vino tinto was excellent, and at fifty pesetas per glass, it was way too affordable. We dubbed our favourite cantina 'Cone-eyes' after the perpetually stoned, laconic young Spaniard who filled our wine glasses and supervised our tortilla demolition. It was amazing how this young bloke's demeanour sparked up when we presented him with a Hoodoo Gurus and Jimmy Hendrix tape over an afternoon card game. We were immediately treated like his best mates and the young local patrons started acknowledging us with smiles and greetings. Lesson learned - a small gift can bring much reward.



**Figure 3.5: Genuflecting before church: Mundaka's heavenly vision (Casikp website, 2008)**

We encountered other like-minded surfer travellers in Mundaka, patiently waiting for the waves to turn on. Days were spent kicking the footy and flicking the Frisbee on the river flat at low tide, playing 'five hundred' on the camp ground lawns, drinking frosty cerveza and enjoying luxurious afternoon siestas. Unfortunately, a new ground swell didn't eventuate. In reflection, we should have fled Hossegor earlier to ride the Mundakan freight trains, but it's always easy in retrospection. Local knowledge is gold to surfers - knowing the environment, knowing the field. The European map was hauled from the Ford's glove box and a travel plan was hatched - onward to Portugal.

Portugal - colonial giant of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, birth place of Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan, famous for its temperate climate, its musical fado and its ancient castles. Portugal - the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula, with over 1 000 kilometres of Atlantic-facing real estate. Friendly people, cheap pensions and home of the notorious *Supertubos* - Portugal ticked all the boxes.

Travelling through Europe was an enlightening experience. In addition to learning history and geography, we also developed an appreciation for language. Italian study was forced down my throat during my middle school years at CBC. Unfortunately, I did not grasp the significance of such tuition at the time. On our expedition, Jeremy and I always attempted to converse with the locals in their native tongue. We were generally successful in making ourselves understood. Many of the young European folk had an understanding of English and they seemed happy to practice their conversational language on us.

Of the informal French, Spanish and Portuguese language that we learned on our sojourn, 'es boa como milho' is the one phrase that still remains imprinted in my temporal lobe. We learned this expression from a group of Portuguese university students who were holidaying in Peniché. The girls were enthusiastic to hear our Australian tales. They laughed at our jokes and they were happy to drink coffee and red wine with us in the sunshine at our favourite café. After taking the girls to the beach for a surfing lesson on a warm Portuguese morning, they started chanting 'es boa como milho' in singsong unison. Their reaction was fascinating. The group were obviously stoked about their recent surfing experience, but what was the mantra all about? We learned the translation meant 'as good as popcorn'. Riding waves is a difficult experience to describe however likening surfing to popcorn had us in hysterics. Although we were assured that 'es boa como milho' was a huge tribute, a traditional Portuguese accolade, we tried to convince the girls to modify the wording. "Try as good as beer," we suggested. But the girls wouldn't hear of such blasphemy. For the remainder of the trip at any feel-good moment, Pearcey and I would laugh while we trotted-out our newfound Portuguese sonata in unison.

Our surfing experience in Portugal was unreal. From the northern beach breaks of Costa Nova and the Aveiro Peninsula, through the points at Figueira da Foz and Nazaré, the wedging peaks at Peniché and the heaving reefs at Ericeira, we were treated to quality waves. Unexpectedly though, surfing became *almost* secondary on the journey. We enjoyed our immersion in the Portuguese culture. The Escudo was a cheap currency. Being spoiled by Portuguese widows in their homely pensions was a welcome change from our subsistent tent-life regime. Restaurant food was ridiculously affordable and the two-litre wicker bottles of red wine were a bargain.

We visited museums, art galleries, universities, cathedrals and castles. We became conscious of the proud Portuguese maritime traditions. We developed a taste for the omnipresent grilled sardines. We sat mesmerised as the Portuguese Forcados challenged the all black bulls in a rugby style scum at the Grande Corrida. We visited the docks in the wee hours of the morning to sip wine while watching the tanned fishers unloading their catch. Portugal was 'es boa como milho'.



**Figure 3.6: Forcados under lights: Grande Corrida, Figueira da Foz, Portugal (Holt archive)**

### **3.7 Living the dream: Living down-south**

Towards the end of the 1980s I noticed that my wave-riding dedication was slipping. Although I was arguably at the peak of my surfing ability, a lack of regular practice in quality waves saw my surfing fitness diminish and my surfing enjoyment degenerate as a consequence. A comfortable existence in peri-urban Lesmurdie, a distant hour from the Indian Ocean, was bringing the curtain down on my surfing routine. A premature mid-life crisis loomed, large and dark.

Opportunely, subsequent to an ideal Yallingup summer holiday, my partner suggested that the time was right for us to assume a new direction. Annie's recommendation to permanently move to the South West was life-defining. In the process of establishing new careers, building a house and having our son, we smoothly assimilated into Dunsborough's community. Playing and coaching football, teaching at the local high school and clocking up hours in the lineups of Cape Naturaliste enabled me to befriend several local surfers. I recognised that these folks had similarly risked metropolitan security in pursuit of their surfing passion. The Cape Naturaliste surfers were indeed dedicated wave riders. Surfing was the force that gathered them and connected them.

Further surf based exploration ensued with these likeminded tribal members. Hard boat trips to the Banyaks, resolute voyages to the Mentawais, comfortable vacations to the Maldives and numerous road-trips around the periphery of our great island. I have spent vast time and energy practicing in the lineups around Yallingup with these people, learning about our environment, learning about them and learning about myself. After sixteen years, I feel a comfortable sense of belonging in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture.

I am a Cape Crusader



**Figure 3.7: Reward for effort: Bangkaru magic, North Sumatra 2003 (Hubs archive)**

### **3.8 A surfer's life: A fortunate life**

"This is my grandson Robbie, Valre's boy. He's a surfer!" In her later life, that was how my grandmother often introduced me. At the time, such classification didn't strike me as being significant. I'd just smile respectfully and glow. Thirty-five years down the track however it is now clear that dear old Nanna Gray recognised surfers as being distinctive, even exclusive. And she was evidently proud to divulge this information to her cronies.

My position in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has involved good luck, hard work, perseverance and lots of fun. Many pieces formulate my surfer jigsaw.

My family, my friends

My place, my space

My body, my soul

These things have sanctioned my surfing.

I am blessed to be a surfer.

## Chapter Four: Osmosis

*At Haggerty's and Swami's, Pacific Palisades*

*San Onofre and Sunset, Redondo Beach, L.A.*

*All over La Jolla, at Waimea Bay*

*Everybody's gone surfin'*

*Surfin' USA*

Mike Love (The Beach Boys)

Surfin' USA - Surfin' USA (1963)

### 4.0 Introduction: Hawaii's gift to the world

Although Pearson (1979, p.31) indicates that wave riding took place on Africa's Atlantic coast in the nineteenth century and Finney and Houston (1996, p.25) mention that early Peruvian mariners utilised swells in commuting to fishing grounds, surfing's cradle was undeniably Hawaii. Transmission of the surfing culture from these Polynesian shores has been described by Sweeney (2007) as "cultural diffusion". Diffusion, a physical process, involves the movement of particles from a region of high concentration to a region of lower concentration.

Osmosis, an analogous biological process, is specifically concerned with the diffusion of water molecules. Water is a mover, a dissolver, a biological necessity. From a surfer's perspective, water is the medium that facilitates oceanic energy propagation and thus enables the wave riding experience. I draw similitude between water diffusion and cultural diffusion, specifying the phrase 'cultural osmosis'.

When considering the surfing culture, various elements have dispersed from regions of high surf concentration to regions of lower cultural concentration. Like osmosis, some cultural particles are transferred while others are retained in the transmission process. The philosophies of burgeoning surfing communities are shaped accordingly. The products of such cultural osmosis are eclectic, dynamic and independent cultural mixtures. These are surfing subcultures.

Duke Kahanamoku described his vision for surfing osmosis in beachboy style.

For many years it has been a desire of mine to see the people of other nations derive pleasure and benefit from the Hawaiian surfboard ... It is my dream to some day tour other countries and personally acquaint people with the uses of the surfboard ... it commands respect ... (Kahanamoku cited in Blake, 1935, p.iii)

This chapter is not intended to be an extensive account of surfing history. It is not a surfing almanac. There is plentiful literature published in this genre (Finney, 1959 & 1960; Young, 1994; Booth, 1999 & 2001; Kampion, 2003; Walding, 2006; Moser, 2008; Warshaw, 2010). Chapter four explores characters and events responsible for dispersing the surfing culture into distinctive, isolated subcultural entities.

#### **4.1 Out of Asia: From Hawaiki with love**

Austronecian migration from Southeast Asia into remote Oceania commenced approximately 3 500 years before present (Jobling, Hurles & Tyler-Smith, 2004, p.354). Descendents of these people, according to Kirch (1997), developed the distinctive “Lapita civilisation” that comprised successful agrarian method and expertise in navigation and maritime exploration. From the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, emigration to the islands of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa commenced 2 000 years ago (Jobling et al., 2004, p.355). Exploration of the North Pacific culminated with the occupation of the Hawaiian island chain as early as A.D. 300 (Stasack, Dorn & Lee, 1996; Kirch & Green, 2001).

The ocean-going nomads who voyaged and settled the uninhabited Pacific basin became known as the Polynesians. According to Walker (2008, p.91), Tongan scholar Epeli Hau’ofa indicated that the Pacific Ocean was a veritable highway, linking the islands and people of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. In their forty foot long, double hulled sailing vessels, these daring mariners negotiated over 2 000 kilometres of open ocean using celestial, oceanic and biological elements as the basis for their navigation (Lewis, 1972). The vast Pacific ‘Moana’ was fundamental to Hawaiian existence. Captain James Cook (1784) recognised that the Hawaiian people were intimately connected with their marine environment, “masters over their aquatic domain ... in swimming, fishing, wave riding ... and long-distance ocean navigation” (Cook cited in Walker, 2008, p.92).



## 4.2 The first wave: Surfing ancient Hawaii

Uncertainly clouds the precise starting point for Hawaiian wave riding. The Polynesians indisputably utilised offshore swells in their journeying. They almost certainly harnessed breaking waves to passage outer reefs on their shoreward return from fishing expeditions. The sense of speed and momentum, the sensation of being one with the ocean were most likely regarded with great excitement. Repeating wave riding in leisure was most probably an extension of survival pragmatics.

The early Polynesians lacked a written communiqué so most aspects of their culture have been learned via oral history. Patterson (1960, p.120) indicates that legends confirm surfing rapidly developed after Hawaiian settlement. Myths and folklore identify he'e-nalu as an intrinsic part of the ancient Hawaiian culture. A great deal of surf related oral history was recorded as a result of Sheldon Dibble and endemic Hawaiian scholars Kamakau, Malko and Hale'ole who sought out native informants and recorded their legacy (Moser, 2008, p.4). Other important wave riding associated stories were published by William Westervelt (Patterson, 1960, p.12; Moser, 2008, p.26).

Kane surfed the waves of Oahu and ... Maui ... he surfed through the white foam, the raging waves ... from Maui ... to Hawaii and on to Mauwele ..." (Moser, 2008, p.36).

This preceding mantra outlines the extent of he'e-nalu across the Hawaiian archipelago. At this early stage in surfing's history, different wave types in diverse surfing environments probably triggered dissimilar surfing styles and unique wave riding customs. Surfing subcultures were emerging.

## 4.3 King of the point: Surfing with the *ali'i*

Although he'e-nalu was a pastime enjoyed by many Hawaiians, it was the *ali'i*<sup>24</sup> who were fêted for their surfing prowess. Finney (1959, p.330) describes the adventures of champion surfer Chief Naihe and Patterson (1960) includes surfing tales about King Umi, Chief Paeia, Chief Lo-Lale, King Kawaokaohale and Princess Kelea in his work. The Hawaiian royalty used a specific type of surfboard, the olo, composed of the lightweight wiliwili timber (Finney, 1959, p.329; Moser, 2008, p.127). These surfboards were extremely large, "between 14½ and 18 feet long, 16 and 24 inches wide, and 5 and 8 inches thick" (Booth, 1999, p.37). The cumbersome nature of such giant planks meant that they were stored near the surfing grounds and towed around the breaking sets to the lineup by canoe caddies (Finney, 1959, p.335).

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<sup>24</sup> The *ali'i* was the ancient Hawaiian royalty, the chiefly or noble rank.

Having access to suitable surfing spots and the command of human power necessary to lug the olo giants to the beach and into the waves was a royal luxury. The olos were difficult to surf in short lived, steep faced waves. Their length and lack of mobility meant that they were prone to nose dive and tricky to manoeuvre. Contrary to these features, the large boards were stable and buoyant. This made them undemanding to paddle and relatively easy to stand on whilst riding appropriate waves.

Oahu's southern coastal plane was recognised by the ali'i as being a prosperous region. According to Kirch and Sahlins (1992, p.19) this was ideal country for cultivating taro, a staple in the Polynesian diet. The adjacent Honolulu shoreline provided access to fishing grounds and to the rolling Waikiki surf. Olo boards performed best in "gently breaking waves" (Finney, 1959, p.329). This suggests that specific locations were used by the monarchs to ride their olos. Finney (1959, p.344) supports this assertion stating "... the surf at Waikiki ... was forbidden to all but the queen". Such restricted surfing access meant that various subcultural elements had opportunity to develop in the waves, on the beach and around the luau<sup>25</sup> at different locales, in different surfing populations. Class distinction had the propensity to set up surfing subcultures in these early surfing cliques.

#### **4.4 The shape of things to come: Surfing's cultural peak**

Alternative to the olo was the shorter, narrower and thinner alaia surfboard. According to Booth (1999, p.37) the alaias measured "between 7 and 12 feet long, 13 and 20 inches wide and ½ and 1½ inches thick". Alaias were successfully ridden on "steep, fast breaking waves" kakala waves due to their manoeuvrability (Finney, 1959, p.335). Kakala waves are synonymous with the reefs of the Kona Coast of Hawaii, where "surfing activity was concentrated" (Finney, 1959, p.335).

Numerous isolated surfing communities existed around the fringes of ancient Hawaii. He'e-nalu was practiced on most islands across the archipelago. Indeed Finney (1959, p.344) compiled a list of 106 separate surfing locations throughout the Hawaiian chain. Such diversity in surfing sites, isolated by hundreds of nautical miles would have certainly perpetuated local, distinctive surfing communities. There was probably little cross pollination between outlying surfing populations at this stage of surfing's development. Primitive transportation method and regular warring between island tribes meant that surfers practiced on their home breaks. It was unnecessary to traipse around the islands searching for surf when suitable waves were present on the immediate coastline. For this very reason, the Hawaiian Islands are still regarded as Earth's surfing stronghold.

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<sup>25</sup> A luau is a Hawaiian celebratory feast.

Beaglehole (1937, p.138) describes “areal developments” in Polynesian culture as “cultural peaks”. This is an engaging metaphor when used relative to surfing. Beaglehole suggests that isolated geographical groups show greater degrees of difference than homogeneity in many cultural characteristics. He theorises that such variation resulted in the development of unique subcultures on the various islands of Polynesia.

One may conceive Polynesian culture as a congeries of sub-cultures that tend to differentiate themselves rather sharply from each other... By studying the local use of patterns common to the area ... one may get some idea of the cultural profile of a specific pattern. (Beaglehole, 1937, p.140)

This hypothesis has obvious relevance to the Cape Crusaders’ research. If surfing subcultures existed on the islands of ancient Polynesia, then it would seem logical to suggest that surfing subcultures contemporarily exist in distinctive coastal communities, such as Cape Naturaliste. Amalgamating the concept of cultural peak with specific cultural patterns has the potential to explain the evolution of surfing subcultures in different situations at different times. The growth of Hawaiian surfing for example was a momentous cultural peak. Within such a significant development the prospect for subcultural splitting would seem likely.

Steward’s theory of cultural ecology similarly resonates when considering the ancient Hawaiian surfing cultural peak. Evolutionary pressures associated with the Pacific Ocean most certainly influenced the Hawaiian people to be maritime hardened, skilled wave riders. The environment played a significant role in determining the nature of these early surfing subcultures. The society / environment nexus is reinforced by Finney (1959, p.344) in stating that the Hawaiian archipelago consists of many locations where “the ocean swells and the land [intersect] ... to produce excellent surfing waves.” As argued in chapter six, Steward’s cultural ecology theory is equally pertinent when investigating contemporary surfing subcultures.

#### **4.5 Cultural wipeout: Surfing’s near demise**

Effect of European incursion into the north Pacific was as colossal as the Polynesian invasion that preceded it by some 1 400 years. This historical episode, often treated with sadness, trepidation and a sense of embarrassment, took he`e-nalu to the precipice of extinction. In terms of surfing’s cultural osmosis, one positive outcome of Captain James Cook’s ‘Voyage of Discovery’ in the late eighteenth century was the first westernised descriptions of surfboard riding (Moser, 2008).

The fallout from the collision between Western culture and Hawaiian existence was extreme. The ruination of surfing was an inevitability of that clash. Although he`e-nalu wiped out from the crest of a large cultural peak, it persevered. In light of the following mindboggling statistics provided by Lind (1955), such resolve seems remarkable.

By 1900 the number of Hawaiians had dropped from an estimated 300,000 in 1778 to less than 40,000 ... and then comprised only 25.7% of the total population of the Hawaiian Islands. (Lind cited in Finney, 1960, p.317)

Doing the math determines that in 120 years, the indigenous Hawaiian population nose-dived to an incredible 13% of its pre-Cook census. The isolation of the Polynesian people meant that evolution in solitude was a recipe for disaster. When Europeans and Americans arrived they brought with them the marvels of “metal, guns, cannons, uniforms ... [and] alcohol” (Kampion, 2003, p.36). Unfortunately, the intruders also introduced a host of invisible pathogens. These microorganisms caused plagues of disease that culminated in the aforementioned death rate.

The decline in the endemic Hawaiian populace meant comparable cultural impact. Finney (1960, p.317) suggests that the “breaking of the kapu system” in 1819 brought traditional Hawaiian culture to its knees. This system of taboos provided the guidelines, beliefs and values that underpinned everyday Hawaiian life. The downfall of this structure “cut the Hawaiians adrift from their gods and rituals” leading to the near extinction of surf chants, surfboard construction and surfing’s cultural plumage (Finney & Houston, 1996, p.53). As portrayed by Finney (1960, p.317), by the beginning of the twentieth century, surfing was “an impoverished remnant of a once highly elaborate pastime.” The solvent of the surfing cultural solution had all but evaporated. Surfing’s osmosis almost dried up.

#### **4.6 The missionaries’ position: Though shalt not surf**

As well as bringing measles, smallpox and venereal disease, the haoles<sup>26</sup> also brought their God to the Hawaiian shores. Calvinist missionaries from Boston introduced Christianity to Hawaii in 1821 (Patterson, 1960, p.142). Christian living meant hard work, bizarre clothing and prudish values for the Polynesians. No more languid hours under the palm trees, no more gambling, no more casual sex and no time for the unproductive he`e-nalu leisure. The puritanical brethren believed that surfing was “immoral and evil” (Wheaton, 2005, p.144).

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<sup>26</sup> The Hawaiian word haole is used to define something as being foreign to Hawaii (Patterson, 1960, p.149). The term is contemporarily invoked with racist connotations.

Strict principles of modesty imposed by the missionaries saw the traditional Polynesian loin cloth replaced with cumbersome neck to knee attire. Consequently, opportune surf bathing was virtually impossible. Surfing was recognised by the Calvinists as a means of promoting sexual freedom, a sinful act that contravened God's laws. This notion is validated by the following journal entry made by Lyman (1834) as cited in Kirch and Sahlins (1992, p.73):

... Playing in [sic] the surf board was a favourite amusement in ancient times. It is too much practiced at the present day and is the source of much iniquity, inasmuch as it leads to intercourse with the sexes without discrimination.

The indoctrination that was implemented by the Calvinists caused the Polynesians to disregard the pleasure of surfing. In the 1840s surfing was a rare sight in the Hawaiian Islands and by 1876 few young Hawaiians knew how to surf (Finney, 1960, p.315). Surfing reached a nadir circa 1900 when it completely disappeared from the Kona Coast, the onetime heartland of Hawaiian he'e-nalu. Pockets of surfing resistance survived the onslaught. Patterson (1960, p.143) states that the only place surfing was "maintained with any degree of enthusiasm" was on Lahaina Beach, Maui. Finney (1960, p.316) indicates that surfing's last bastion was at Waikiki, Oahu. Why did these surfing subcultures persist in the face of annihilation? Who maintained the rage to keep the alaias gliding and the tapa loincloths wet in the Pacific surf? "Only strong men who were fired with a purpose ... continued to surf at the former surfing centres" (Patterson, 1960, p.144).

Imagine, for an instant, if reality mirrored a B-grade science fiction movie and extraterrestrials suddenly invaded planet Earth. Imagine if these invading aliens enforced a wholesale change to our earthly ways of life. Imagine if in the process of such make-believe world domination, these intruders banned surfing. It is difficult looking back thorough the foggy vortex of time to view history. Nonetheless, I believe that this absurd scenario is a reasonable analogy of Hawaii's disintegration. In spite of ET's ruthless world domination, I imagine that an uncrowded, sun-lit, corduroy lined ocean would be too much for some surfers to endure. Some surfers would be unable to defy that irresistible temptation to go surfing. Some surfers would risk everything to chance wave riding. Surfing would survive such an alien assault. Surfing did survive such an alien assault.

Surely not all of the evangelists were uncompromising, cane wielding zealots. An occasional blind eye was undoubtedly turned as surfers took to the breakers at Waikiki and Lahaina. Rational people of that era probably recognised the beautiful nature of he'e-nalu. Over time, tolerant principles came to bear on the Hawaiian Islands and surfing's cultural osmosis was given a shot in the arm, a kinesis to drive the process across the permeable Pacific membrane.

#### **4.7 Vagabonds and adventurers: Surfing on the road**

Catalyst molecules accelerate chemical reactions. Catalysts speed up osmosis and provide the 'oomph' necessary to drive molecular transmission. World renowned authors Mark Twain and Jack London were important human catalysts who hastened the dispersion of surfing from the tropical North Pacific into western society. Twain visited Hawaii in 1866, writing several editorials regarding his adventures for the *Sacramento Daily Union* (Kampion, 2003, p.36; Moser, 2008, p.117). Six years later he published "Roughing It", a humoristic account of his travels and adventures. This memoir vividly illustrated the excitement of surfing to a worldwide audience.

When the charismatic Jack London arrived in Hawaii in 1907, he was introduced to surfing the gentle rollers at Waikiki Beach by Alexander Hume Ford. This experience captivated London as indicated in his memoir, "The Cruise of the Snark" (1913). London dubbed surfboard riding "a royal sport for the natural kings of Earth". He outlined the physics of surfing with poetic sensitivity. His colourful, self-deprecating descriptions conveyed the exhilaration of surfboard riding to a huge audience in the United States and in Britain. London's accounts were published in magazines such as *Woman's Home Companion* and *Pall Mall Magazine* (Moser, 2008, p.137). Bitten by the surfing bug, London's stoke was apparent in his persuasive memorandum of fun. As Jack Kerouac stimulated popular American wanderlust in the 1950s with his apocryphal "On the Road", so too did Jack London, forty years beforehand.

#### **4.8 Ford and Freeth: Actions speaking louder than words**

After Hawaii was annexed as an American territory in 1898, wily developers recognised an opportunity to sell the beachside culture to homeland tourists and expatriates. Leeward of Waikiki's picturesque Diamond Head proved a destination of choice. Hotels, restaurants and a veritable tourist precinct sprung up adjacent to the palm treed beach in rapid time.

Alexander Hume Ford was a US national who discovered the delights of surfing Waikiki. "I lingered until months rolled into years and I could stand upon my board and enjoy the sport that has no counterpart" (Ford cited in Moser, 2008, p.150). The Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Club and the Hui Nalu were established as an outcome of Ford's enthusiasm for surfboard riding (Kampion, 2003, p.37; Moser, 2008, p.147). These establishments encouraged endemic and expatriate members to partake in surfboard riding invigorating the "Waikiki beachboy tradition" (Moser, 2008, p.147).

A young fellow who excelled in Waikiki's surf was George Freeth. Of Irish Hawaiian extraction, sixteen year old Freeth taught himself to stand on a surfboard in 1900 (Young, 1994, p.43).

... Waikiki Beach is known the world over for its surf-board riders ... determined to learn the lost art of surf-board riding I took a large board, shaped it to suit my weight and started... the native boys laughed at me ... Now they hailed [sic] me as the reviver of the lost art. (Freeth cited in Moser, 2008, p.154)

Freeth was the first haole to perfect the art of stand-up surfing. In 1907 he was invited to California to demonstrate his wave riding talents whilst promoting the launch of the Los Angeles-Redondo Beach Railroad (Young, 1994, p.43; Booth, 1999, p.37; Kampion, 2003, p.38). Posters were plastered all over Los Angeles advertising the "man who could walk on water" (Dugan & Bignell, 2009). Largely as a result of Freeth's exhibitions at Redondo and Venice Beach, the Californian love affair with surfing began. He'e-nalu diffused eastward, from its cultural Polynesian epicentre across the Pacific Ocean as "Hawaii's gift to the world" (Finney & Houston, 1996, p.13).

#### **4.9 Californication of surfing: Disney on waves**

Duke Kahanamoku and Tom Blake were key personalities who invigorated surfing's cultural osmosis. George (1999, p.24) astutely links these wave riding legends stating "... while the great Duke nobly represented a spiritual link to his ancient Hawaiian sport ... Blake provided the modern model for all who came after".

A Waikikian beachboy, Duke Paoa Kahinu Mokoe Hulikohola Kahanamoku represented the United States in the swimming pool with distinction at three successive Olympic meets. In 1914 Duke took surfboard riding to the Western Pacific when he visited Australia. His influential wave riding demonstration at Freshwater Beach is detailed later in this chapter.

After travelling to Hawaii in 1924, Blake conveyed the surfing image to a worldwide audience publishing surfing photographs and articles in *National Geographic* and *Popular Mechanics* (Moser, 2008, p.155). An amalgam of Hawaiian and Californian surf cultures, Tom Blake was "a key conduit between early twentieth-century beachboy culture ... and the California surf subculture that ... exploded into American pop culture in the fifties and sixties" (Lawler, 2008, p.153). Blake carved his reputation as a man who "understood and adopted the Aloha frame of mind" (Kampion, 2003, p.45).

The earliest surfing subcultures beyond Hawaiian shores flourished in San Onofre, California. Perched between Los Angeles and the Mexican border on Highway 101, San Onofre was the surfing stronghold of the 1920s. Kampion (2003, p.48) indicates that camping out on the sand around bonfires, the palm frond clad shack, automobiles on the beach, redwood long-boards and ukuleles and were all distinctive symbols of the San Onofre surfing subculture.



**Figure 4.1: Duke Paoa Kahanamoku. Gliding traditional *olo* under Diamond Head, Waikiki 1931**  
(Adler & Lynch, 1999)

The 1920s were times of relative affluence in much of North America, particularly in ‘Californiay’. In the shadow of the First World War and prior to the Great Depression, the excitement of jazz and the novelty of cinema roused America’s younger populace. The advent of mass produced automobiles stimulated a generation of surfers to search the western coastline for idyllic waves. One of the chosen few was John *Doc* Ball, surfing’s first photographer. Ball (cited in Gault Williams, 2004) estimated at that time, only “fifteen or twenty” surfers enjoyed the warm Southern Californian waves. The first Pacific Coast Surfing Championship was conducted at Corona Del Mar in 1928 and the legendary Palos Verdes Surfing Club was formed in 1934 (Cody, 2010).



... Doc Ball and Aidie Bayer were the people who started the Club [Palos Verdes Surfing Club] ... with Tulie [Clark] and Hoppy Swarts ... there was the Malibu Surfing Club, San Monica and Hermosa [Surfing Clubs] ... When we surfed, everybody who went for the wave got it and everybody rode it ... You didn't have any cutbacks, there wasn't any 'this is my wave' stuff ... (Fenton Scholes, Surfing Heritage Foundation, 2009)

As the warm climes of Southern California beckoned surfers towards the Mexican border, other surfing destinations were revealed to the north of Los Angeles, along the frosty Ventura coastline. Rincon, County Line, Point Dume and Malibu provided extensive points and protected bays that culminated in long, glassy ocean walls. These were perfect playgrounds for the mainland US surfers who enthusiastically tolerated the cold Pacific briny. After the Second World War, surfers such as Bob Simmons, Matt Kivlin and Joe Quigg recognised Rincon Point as "The Queen of the Coast" (Kampion, 2003, p.58). Further to the north, hardened wave riders took to the frigid surf at Shelter Cove, San Francisco.

From San Diego in the south to Santa Cruz in the north, isolated surfing groups popped up along the 1 300 kilometre long Californian coastline. Similar to the beachside communities of the islands of ancient Hawaii, distinctive west coast surfing locations created segregated surfing populations. Shaped by oceanographic, climatic and demographic variables, these communities grew their own surfing styles, behaviours and values. Isolated populations generated diverse surfing subcultures. For the ravenous manner in which the Californians seized and assembled surfing solutes, Booth (2001, p.91) nominates California as the "birthplace" of the modern surfing culture.

#### **4.10 Florida: Lift off at Cape Canaveral**

On the opposite coastal margin of the United States, surfing's wave was breaking on Florida's seashore. Sepia images of Tom Blake at Miami Beach indicate that surfing osmosis had permeated Florida shortly after surging into California. Blake referred to Florida as a "virgin" surfing region and indicated that he enjoyed riding the "pretty good" waves (Blake cited in Adler & Lynch, 1999, p.61). The Florida Surfing Website (2010) lists Dudley and Bill Whitman and Gauldin Reed as prominent early Floridian surfers.

We had a pretty strong group early on. I have a picture with twenty-five boards on the beach that we built ourselves. ... Daytona was the focal point in Florida for surfing in 1936 ... (Reed cited in Gault Williams, 2004).

On America's Atlantic beaches in the 1930s, disconnected by time and space and fashioned by idiosyncratic environmental circumstances, Florida's wave riders were styling discrete surfing subcultures. These coastal spaces were the breeding grounds of future world champion surfers Lisa Anderson and Kelly Slater.

#### **4.11 Waikiki's Wizard of Oz: Surfing in the land downunder**

Australia really is the lucky country. Isolated as an island continent, Australia is fortuitously plonked on the Tropic of Capricorn, wedged in the mid-latitudes between South East Asia, the Pacific, Indian and Great Southern Oceans. Open to consistent swell trains on eastern, westward and southern margins, Australia is a wave magnet. *Terra australis incognita*, the unknown southern land, was an opportunity looking for surfing to happen.

Australia's pioneering beach goers were subjected to some ludicrous regulations from the late 1800s and into the twentieth century. It took people like William Gocher and Archbishop Kelly to challenge laws structured on strict Victorian moral ethics and driven by the infamous prudish terrier, Mrs Grundy (Young, 1994; Booth, 2001; Walding 2006). Eventually a sensible beach edict concerning dress standards and bathing times was developed by the late 1930s (Booth, 2001).

Duke Kahanamoku's surfboard riding exhibition at Freshwater Beach was a defining Australian surfing moment. Two days before Christmas in 1914, on a chunk of roughly hewn sugar-pine (Booth, 2001, p.38), Duke thrilled onlookers demonstrating "hard cornering and trick riding the likes of which the locals had never seen before" (Walding, 2006, p.7). This episode set surfing stoke into the eastern Australian coastal population. The Chinese proverb - 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime' - may seem incongruous when applied to the Freshwater surfing display. The implication of its inclusion precipitates when considering Kahanamoku's legacy. Duke's surfboard remained in Australia when he returned to the United States. The board was unsurprisingly duplicated, Duke's wave riding style was imitated, and surfing was activated in the land downunder.

Sadly, Australia's unforgiving beach environment directly affected surfing's osmosis. Although the plentiful waves were important, fun elements of early Australian beach practice, they proved potentially lethal. As the number of people partaking in "surf-bathing" around Sydney beaches climbed at the close of the nineteenth century, so too did the number of drownings. In 1899, a "Life Saving Brigade" formed at Manly Beach in an attempt to keep the public safe (Jaggard, 2006, p.31). This initiative snowballed into the Surf Lifesaving Association of Australia (SLSA). Jaggard indicates that by 1970, SLSA had saved more than more than 170 000 people. He hastens to add that the organisation is responsible for saving an astonishing 12 000 lives per annum (2006, p.xiii).

Early surf lifesaving groups and the Manly Council were at odds with surfboard riding on Sydney's beaches. When swimmers packed into a torrid surf scenario, and cumbersome, solid lumber surf craft were added to the blender, blood and tears inevitably flowed. Surfboards were regarded as dangerous instruments by the authorities and were hence forbidden. Eventually the establishment altered stance on surfboard usage and regulations were gazetted in Ordinance 52 of the Local Government Act (1917) in an attempt to segregate body surfers and surfboard riders (Young 1994; Booth, 2001). The smouldering outcome of this bureaucracy is continued later in this chapter.

#### **4.12 Surfing's structural menu: Cigars, hotdogs and potato chips**

The surfing cultural solution was superheated by the advancement of the surfboard throughout the twentieth century. Like many scientific sequences, improvement in surfboard design was largely serendipitous, a result of trial and error. Experimentation was driven by curious, clever participants, passionate surfers, visionaries who were enthusiastic about elevating their surfing performance to a new echelon. Some 50 years along the calendar, millions of surfers are still motivated by that same stimulus - to enhance wave riding performance with the advantage of new surfboard technology. Mulling over the amount of time and energy that has gone into bettering the task of riding waves is mindboggling. Notwithstanding, I am pleased to be included in those motivated millions.

During the early 1930s, Tom Blake recognised that mass was antithesis to surfing performance. Blake used innovative plywood material to laminate an internal skeleton-like frame producing the world's first hollow 'cigar surfboard' prototype (Young, 1994, p.50; Walding, 2006, p.16). This design substantially augmented surfboard paddling, receiving excited endorsement from Duke Kahanamoku (Blake, 1935, p.67). Blake eventually had his patented "Hawaiian Hollow Surfboard" established as the preferred lifesaving vessel across the United States (Kampion, 2003, p.45).

As the big surf relentlessly pounded Oahu's shoreline, American expats who settled in Waikiki recognised that surfboard shape and wave riding style were directly proportional. A crew of the young haoles started pushing themselves to tackle larger waves at previously unriden locations. Frustrated by sliding-out<sup>27</sup> whilst attempting to turn at the wave base, these trendsetters hatched a cunning plan to prevent such irritating wipe-outs. By narrowing the surfboard's tail and tapering a keel-like ridge into its underside, the resultant surfboard shape enabled a skilful surfer to hold the board in a trim-line and coerce it centrifugally through a bottom turn.

According to Borte (2000) these "Hot Curl" designs were the original surfboards intended for riding big waves. In response to this successful surfboard shape, Wally Froiseth, John Kelly and Fran Heath searched Oahu for superior waves to test their skill and their new Hot Curls. Through this period, surfer confidence rocketed. Surfing technique progressed and a new breed of youthful surfers known as the "Empty Lot Boys" materialised.

We were the Empty Lot Boys ... You know where the big banyon [sic] tree is in Kuhio Park? Well, that used to be a big empty lot ... The banyon tree's hollow, so ... we'd just put our boards in there ... in the middle of that tree. Nobody'd take 'em in those days ... No problem. (Froiseth cited in Gault-Williams, 2005)

The Empty Lot Boys were a separate entity to the chic crew at the Outrigger Canoe Club. They were likewise different to the Hawaiian beach boys down the road at the Hui Nalu Club. In the process of developing their distinctiveness, Wally Froiseth recalled that 'the Boys' caused some static with their surfing elders. "They were all mad with us because we were making waves. We were passing them .... [We were] the mob-across-the-track kind of guys" (Froiseth cited in Young, 1994, p.56).

Froiseth, Kelly, Heath and their wonderfully nicknamed buddies *Rabbit Kekai*, *Dicky Cross*, *Woody Brown*, *Whitey Harrison*, *Tarzan Smith* and *Pete Peterson* surged into a new surfing frontier (Young, 1994, p.55; Kampion, 2003, p.52). These youngsters were the first surfers to hunt in earnest for big waves. Although the ancient Hawaiians took to water at some of the big wave venues around the islands, their primitive surfing craft prevented successful conquest of the really big swells. This was the first time in history that surfboard design had allowed the XL wave realm to be ridden. All that was needed was the courage, coordination and confidence of the Empty Lot Boys to close the loop. They were the first to conquer the heavies at Makaha on Oahu's west coast. They were the first to take to the mountainous outer reefs at Sunset on the North Shore. They were a fresh breed of surfer, forerunners to the hotdog surfing style, a new surfing subculture.

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<sup>27</sup> Sliding-out described the manner in which a rudderless surfboard uncontrollably skidded at the wave base during a turn.

Just as wave riding functionality was being driven in surfing's heartland, a large hole was punched into the cultural membrane. The World War II handbrake was abruptly pulled on. Global focus became blurred after the Third Reich marched into Poland in 1939. However, when Pearl Harbour was bombed to smithereens shortly thereafter, the barbwire barricades were rolled out onto Waikiki's beaches. Surfing's osmosis rapidly cooled.

On the west coast of the USA, surf culture unfolded in a different mode to the Hawaiian big wave charging. Enthusiastic surfers like Bob Simmons, Joe Quigg and Matt Kivlin turned to science to come up with new "hydrodynamic planning hulls" (Simmons cited in Kampion, 2003, p.55). These boards, typically made of light-weight balsawood, became known as known as "potato chips" (Kampion, 2003, p.56). These surfboards were the intermediate connection between the old school redwood clunkers and the short board designs of the 1960s.

In a quest to skilfully ride the long Californian rights, west coast surfboard designers continued their experimentation. Low density materials such as balsawood and Styrofoam were used in combination with new fandangle resins, hardeners and fibreglass cloth laminates. These innovative chemicals, essentially produced as an outcome of the war effort, promoted ground-breaking surfboard shaping. In conjunction with the aforesaid three amigos, Californians Dale Velzy and Hap Jacobs took surfboard technology into new directions. The successful Velzy-Jacobs partnership became synonymous with the original "Malibu surfboard" shapes (Young, 1994, p.73). The birth and improvement of the Malibu dictated surfboard design direction until the late 1960s.

... [The Malibu surfboards] were between 9 and 11 feet long and 22 inches wide, with shaped (either square or round) tails, and covered with two layers of 10 ounce fibreglass cloth ... [they] weighed around 20 pounds ... they were the first purely functional wave-riding craft. (Booth, 1999, p.40)

The Malibu metamorphosis was responsible for ushering surfing into a user-friendly dimension for two reasons. Firstly, the light-weight structure made the surfboard transportable. Surfers could convey their wave riding vehicles to the beach via reasonably priced automobiles with relative ease. Secondly, the art of surfing was made easier. The Malibu permitted easy paddling and responsive turning on a very stable platform. During the late 1940s and into the 1950s, the Malibu board determined surfing style. Interestingly, this arrangement is in antagonism to the current situation where surfing style determines surfboard design. Nose-riding, head dips, fading take-offs, holding a trim, rudimentary cutbacks - these wave riding manouvres became intrinsic to the hotdog style of surfing that originated in California and evolved around the world's surfing subcultures.

#### **4.13 Radical re-entry: Boomeranging back to Australia**

The world's largest ocean, the Pacific, was named by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan during the inaugural global circumnavigation in 1520 (Thurman & Trujillo, 2005, p.10). Surfing's osmosis across the Pacific and into Australia was convoluted and intriguing. Dixon (1969, p.107) indicates the strength of this development, stating that surfing in Australia "progressed faster and more radically than in any other part of the world".

Following Duke Kahanamoku's surfing expression sessions at Freshwater in 1914/15, surfboard riding was by and large an appendix of surf lifesaving. Pearson (1979, p.48) refers to this as domination of surfing by the SLSA. He states that for Australian's interested in surfing, the surf lifesaving clubs provided "focus and framework" for all surf riding recreation. Surfboard paddling was an important form of SLSA competition however most participants were more concerned with paddling speed than wave riding style (Pearson, 1979, p.48).

Maroubra surfer Frank Adler modified Blake's hollow surfboard prototype in 1934. His subsequent success in paddling competition with the sixteen foot long "toothpick surfboard" prompted other lifesavers to follow suit, abandoning their awkward solid boards (Young, 1994, p.51). As a result of the toothpicks, the 'straight-hander' technique became customary on Australian waves. Surfing downunder in the 1950s involved catching a wave, standing bolt-upright and planing directly towards the beach (Pearson, 1979, p.57). Since the Duke's demonstration some 40 years previously, little had altered in the Australian surfboard riding method.

The most popular wave riding method downunder until this time did not involve a surf craft. Blake (1935, p.44) recognised that "bodysurfing was Australia's leading water pastime". Australians had become obsessed with the art of bodysurfing since Vanuatu émigré Tommy Tanna introduced the skill to Manly in the 1880s (Appel & Clarke, 2009). In Pearson's estimation, a lack of an indigenous surfboard riding tradition coupled with the swimming-pool-centric early European settlers meant that Australia's surfing culture originated from bodysurfing roots (1979, p.34). During the 1950s, Jaggard (1997, p.184) states that the lifesaver/ bodysurfer was responsible for triggering wave riding on Perth's metropolitan surf beaches. Similarly, national surf belt champion Lockie Cottman identified that it was the body-surfers who "opened up Yallingup" before surfboard riding took hold of the South West of WA (Cottman cited in Jaggard, 1997, p.184). This pattern of body-surfing predating surfboard riding is not unique to Australia. Californian surfing ace Preston Peterson bodysurfed the Banzai Pipeline "to feel the power of the waves", his surfboard being unsuitable for riding the steep, pitching wave type (Dixon, 1969, p.24).

Although the majority of Australian surfers of this era were riding waves as a spin-off of their lifesaving duties, a divergence was fracturing the relationship between the old school disciplinarian lifesavers and a new breed of hedonistic surfers. The lifesaving fundamentals of teamwork, competition, self-sacrifice and mateship, were, according to Jaggard (1997, p.186), contrary to the self-indulgent obsession of riding waves.

Once osmosis is fully activated, the process of movement continues unabated until equilibrium is accomplished. Australia's surfing osmosis went forever past the point of stability in the spring of 1956. A promotional opportunity was recognised by SLSA visionary Allan Kennedy to showcase the lifesaving sport at an international carnival coinciding with the Melbourne Olympic Games (Jaggard, 2011, p.76). A triangular meet, the Queen's International Carnival was organised and delivered at Torquay, Maroubra and Collaroy beaches on Australia's eastern seaboard (Booth, 2001, p.95; Lanagan, 2003, p.169; Jarratt, 2010, p.53; Jaggard, 2011, p.77). Several members of the American and Hawaiian teams brought their innovative balsawood Malibu surfboards with them on the journey. As well as utilising these surf craft in the paddling competition, the visitors undoubtedly intended to ride some uncrowded, quality Aussie waves.

In a training session at Cronulla, excited onlookers watched in awe as Greg Noll, Tommy Zahn and Mike Bright demonstrated hotdog style surfing on Australian beaches for the first time. When the international lifeguards headed south to Victoria, word of their surfing ability preceded their arrival. According to Jarratt (2010, p.55) "somewhere between 40,000 and 70, 000" people turned out on the sand to witness their skills at Torquay. With their fresh techniques and their ground-breaking hardware, the Yanks imported new-wave surfing into Australia. However, it was more than surfboards and style that excited Australian surfing. The timing was right. The Malibu's were powerful catalysts that "allowed a pre-existing set of attitudes to be articulated in a particular way" (Stratton, 1985, p.209). In paraphrasing Dylan, the times they were a changing.

The surfing scene in Australia was ripe for a revolution in board design. For those persons wanting to ride waves, the requirement in boards was not paddling speed, but manoeuvrability while wave riding. It appears highly likely that innovative efforts in Australia were already turning to wave-riding design when the [M]alibu board was introduced, and it helped to freshen the winds of change into a revolutionary gale which eventually swept around Australia, creating a surfing movement apart from that dominated by the SLSA. (Pearson, 1979, p.58)

Australian surfers, lifesavers and surfer lifesavers recognised the implications of this renaissance. Toothpicks were traded for Malibus. Straight hand surfing was swapped for hotdog styling. Aspiring surfboard manufacturers and keen wave riders purchased and/or copied the American surfboard designs. By 1957, Scott Dillon, Gordon Woods, Bill Wallace and Barry Bennett were importing balsa from Ecuador, resin and fibreglass from the USA and manufacturing Malibu surfboards on Australian soil (Dixon, 1969, p.108; Booth, 1999, p.40). A burgeoning surfboard manufacturing trade developed in Brookvale, a northern Sydney suburb. This industry soon spread to Melbourne, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast (Walding, 2006, p.26). Young (1994, p.90) states that by 1959 over 1 500 Malibu balsa wood surfboards had been produced in Australia. Greg Noll (cited in Raymond & Bradbury, 2010) summarised the situation delightfully through a laugh in "Going Vertical", a recent surf movie that documented the story of the short board revolution. "Shit, when we left those boards down there, they [the Australian surfers] just went nuts". This cultural peak of surfing's osmosis provides an ideal opportunity for episode transition.

Distinctive surfing subcultures originated, developed and prospered as a result of wave riding multiplicity in Hawaii, California and Australia. Wheaton (2005, p.147) states that "local differences remind us that globalisation is not a linear [or] uniform process of cultural homogenisation". The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has developed its own distinctive flavour during a 57 year period of evolution. The initial ingredients that determined the success of the subcultural recipe are outlined in chapter five.



## Chapter Five: Yallingup

*We used to go down to the beach at night*

*Fireflies dancing in the promenade lights*

*Ah those rock 'n roll bands used to really swing*

*And I'd do the foxtrot with sweet Christine*

*Speakin' to me with her gentle hands*

*Fly on down to Wonderland*

Richard Clapton

Deep Water - Goodbye Tiger (1977)

### 5.0 Introduction: Surfing into Cape Naturaliste

For the most part, Western Australians are ardent beachgoers. Scorching summer temperatures, white sandy shores and the crystal-clear Indian Ocean underscore an enthusiastic South West beach culture. The state's beaches are playgrounds. Wave fun in the turbulent azure waters is intrinsic beachside entertainment. Up until the mid 1950s, body-surfing was the most significant element of Western Australian beach play (Jaggard, 1997, p.184).

To protect Sandgroppers<sup>28</sup> from the hazards of ocean bathing, Western Australia's first surf lifesaving club was established at Cottesloe Beach in 1909 (Brawley, 2006, p.42). The Western Australian Surf Life Saving Association was founded thereafter in 1925 (Jaggard, 2006, p.54). Surf club membership involved patrol duties. Surf club ethos involved community service. Surf club activity involved passionate competition. By the 1950s surf lifesaving clubs were entrenched along the Perth coastal fringe. However at that juncture, a contrasting force was materialising on the western front. Hot on the heels of the Malibu catalyst, surfing's osmosis surged across the Nullarbor Plain. A new age was rolling out across the nation - the age of fun, fun, fun.

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<sup>28</sup> The term 'sandgroper' is a nickname given to Western Australian citizens.

### 5.1 Surf lifesaving surfers: The times they were a changing

Cottesloe Beach was the launching pad for Western Australian surfing. Bruce Gaston, a member of the Cottesloe Surf Lifesaving Club for over 64 years, rode the *Cott* surf in the 1930s with blokes like Aubrey Melrose, Albert Hall and WA's first wahine, June Smiley (Bedford-Brown, 2005, p.58). Long before the groyne was constructed at the northern end of the Cove in 1960, Gaston and his mates were 'straight-handing' the Black Rock offerings.

Ron Rankine-Wilson joined the North Cottesloe Surf Lifesaving Club in 1940. He enjoyed a successful competitive career at club and state level. One of the first to surf the metropolitan beaches on a "stand-up board" (Findlay, 2006, p.52), Rankine-Wilson recognised Trigg Beach as the jewel in Perth's surfing crown while trawling for tailor on his double wave ski. Rushing back to the clubrooms to reveal his discovery, Rankine-Wilson's excitement was greeted with disbelief. Ron eventually persuaded the cynics to accompany him on the northward journey and the expedition paid off in spades. "When we got there the shape of the waves was absolutely fantastic ... and we had it to ourselves for a while" (Rankine-Wilson cited in Findlay, 2006, p.52). The excitement released in finding a new surfing spot is obvious from Ron's portrayal.

The Western Australian surf lifesaving clubs attracted strong bodied, larrikin sorts who enjoyed bravado, a laugh and a beer. Members of the surf clubs were generally happy to do their community service and to take pleasure from the associated camaraderie and beach activities. However, for some young lifesavers, the self gratifying sensation of riding waves was preferential to the long hot hours spent on patrol duty. Searching new frontiers for ideal surf locations seemed a better option than being bound by the stringencies of the surf club. Rules and regulations were in contrast to a new generation of Aussies. Perth's surf lifesaving clubs indirectly acted as a conduit, leading many young beach goers along a divergent route. The state's first surfers were by and large SLSA emigrants.

Kevin Merrifield connected with the beach as a seventeen year old, riding his pushbike "to body-surf the dumpers at City Beach". Tony Harbison hailed from the same country. *Harbo* was introduced to the City Beach Surf Club by the late George Kino. "He was a top bloke," said Tony. "He took me in, showed me the club. We ambled through the boat shed, checked out the boats and the tower. George invited me to join the club as a cadet. He got me off the streets." Tony laughed, "I got into just as much shit, but a different kind of shit."

Around the same time, Mark Paterson commenced his love affair with the ocean, body-surfing the breakers at his local beach. "My surfboard riding started in the mid fifties at the North Cott Surf Club. I'd pinch the older bloke's sixteen footers." *Pato* typically rode the toothpick surfboards on the Cottesloe reefs. "Sometimes we'd paddle down to the Cable Station, surf all morning and then paddle back again," chuckled Mark. "Those are my early memories of the sixteen footers." Kevin Merrifield pointed out that Western Australia's primary surfers originated from the surf lifesaving ranks. "They were mainly ex-clubbies," he said. "Most of them were disenchanted with all the regimentation that was going on in surf lifesaving. They just wanted to do their own thing and be free and have fun."

## **5.2 Go south young man: The search begins**

The inspiration of having a freshly discovered surf break to oneself is a concept that has always tempted surfers to explore likely coastal destinations. Beaches beyond the Perth metropolitan area were being scrutinised by enthusiastic wave riders at this phase of surfing's osmosis. Twelve nautical miles off Fremantle, Rottnest beckoned like a desert Island. To the north, Yanchep offered an above average left hand point. To the south, the coastal hamlet of Mandurah provided some tasty beach-break morsels. Interestingly, the surfing potential of the State of Excitement was recognised by the world's surfing guru, Duke Kahanamoku. "The [Western Australian] coastline is vast, and countless beaches await the arrival of the first surfer. Perth is where most of West Australia's surfers live ... [however] they have not begun to touch the numberless beaches which are so isolated and unspoiled (Kahanamoku & Brennan, 1968, p.156).

In the mid 1950s, seventy kilometres south of Bunbury, the South West regional hub, powerful wave trains were detonating on Cape Naturaliste's limestone outcrops. The process had been going on for sixteen million years, unrelenting and virtually ignored. But that was all about to change. Kevin Merrifield described his "first real surfing experience" to me over a coffee in the watery winter sunshine on the lawn at Yallingup Beach. He had just returned from a successful surfing mission, having scored a "few solid waves" at Margaret River in the morning. "I first came down-south on the January long weekend in 1955 with my cousin *Spider* Evans. We hit Yallingup and we couldn't believe our eyes as we drove down the gravel road here. Yallingup was huge!" Kevin was mesmerised by the mountainous marching swells, exploding on the outer reefs at *Yalls* on that first occasion. Compared to the typical summertime surf the youngster was accustomed to around Perth, this was a whole new realm.

Mark Paterson's first adventure to Yallingup was with John Shaw in the mid 1950s. "Those early trips down-south were with the blokes from the surf club. *Artie* [Shaw], Jimmy Keenan, *Cocko* Killen, *Davo* Williams and Bernie Huddle, they were the same blokes who got me into surfing in 1952." Mark recalled that the "oomph in Yallingup's juice" lured a particular surfer breed. "The guys who came down here to surf, they were special, there's no doubt," he said. Courage and determination have long been vital ingredients in the surfing culture. Those qualities were clearly prerequisites for the original Cape Crusaders.

Like most surfing venues around Australia, body-surfing preceded surfboard riding at Yallingup. According to Tony Harbison, champion beltmen Rod Baker and Donny Morrison body-surfed Yallingup in 1953. Although there is slight conjecture as to who was first to surf on boards at Yallingup, "after an awful lot of talking with [his] mates", Kevin Merrifield believes that Ron Drage, Bill Pratley and *Moonshine* Hill were in the field around the 1953/54 juncture. Tony Harbison confirmed Kevin's account after leaping to his feet during our interview and returning from the adjacent living room with a cherished memento. He tapped on the slightly blurred, framed photograph that he carried in his gnarled hands. The image, displayed overleaf as Figure 5.1, was of nine likely-looking lads standing in a football team pose before the Yallingup seascape. Tony gesticulated wildly. "That's Bernie Huddle, and Bill Pratley, Ronnie Drage and that's Bruce Hill, Moonshine. Well, he was the equivalent to Taj Burrow." Tony paused in reverence, slowly shaking his head. "What Bruce couldn't do on a sixteen foot surfboard!" He completed his narrative with poise. "Moonshine, Bill and Ronnie, yep, they were the first on boards to paddle out at Yallingup and surf it in early 1954." Tony listed Keith Kino and John Budge as regular Yallingup surfers. "But we all got into it in dribs and drabs," he concluded.

"When we got the hang of it down here, it was virtually on every weekend," chuckled Mark Paterson. "I remember loading up the cars, putting the boards on top ... the excitement of heading down-south." Paterson recalled the southbound journey as an adventure. "We'd hatch a plan mid-week, jumped in somebody's car on Friday night and head down the old South West Highway." A favourite stop for the troupe was at the Wokalup Pub for a few frosty refreshments. Mark laughed, "And away we'd go, full of jam, we drove down, as you did in those days."

In referring to getting "the hang of it down there", Paterson infers that the Yallingup novices had to figure out a fresh set of surfing variables, atypical to Perth's beach ecology. Learning how to predict the meteorological conditions that produced optimal surf conditions at Yalls was probably a gradual process, one that involved trial and error, one that involved sharing subcultural knowledge.

Most of the early surfing forays to Yallingup were carried out over the quiescent seasons. For young Kevin Merrifield, balancing a successful league football career at Subiaco with his passion for riding waves was a tricky act to maintain. “Weekends away at Yallingup were mainly confined to summer and autumn. It wasn’t full on winter surfing in those days,” stated Kevin. “*Horse Williams* and I were probably the first footballers to get into surfing.” Kevin recalled the mutual exclusivity of the two activities. “There were many times on a Saturday morning when I’d go down to the beach at Triggs and if the surf was looking pretty good, I’d go out.” Kev laughed as he shook his head. “And then I’d wonder why I couldn’t get a kick in the afternoon. I don’t think that’d go down very well now.”



**Figure 5.1: The Yallingup surf crew circa 1956. (Harbison archive)**

**(Left to right) Dave Williams, Jim Keenan, Bernie Huddle, Artie Taylor,**

**Tony Harbison, Bruce Hill, Ray Evans (behind in cap), Kevin Merrifield, Graeme Killen**

Those initial ‘surfari’s’ to the South West were a rite of passage for our young surfing pioneers. From their vivid and entertaining recollections, those primary excursions represented significant, life changing events. In the Noongar language, Yallingup literally translates to “place of love”. The boys had clearly fallen head over heels with their new domain.

### 5.3 Environment shaping subculture: The Cape Crusaders' genesis

Like most contemporary Australian surfers, the original Yallingup watermen loved the outdoor life. The environment shaped their actions, their beliefs and their values. Under the trees, around the camp fires, in their hammocks, with their beer and crayfish, a new breed of youthful Western Australian surfers had stumbled into nirvana. Those environmental elements were intrinsic to the fun shared by the boys as they tackled the waves breaking on Yallingup's ledges. Mark, Tony and Kevin avidly shared their brilliant recollections.

**Mark Paterson:** We camped out in the Melaleuca trees. Later there was the brick toilet block over there [pointing]. The old concrete cisterns, with the overflow on the front ... we'd put a rock on top of the valve and she'd overflow [laughs] ... that was our shower. But the Melaleucas, they've all been cut right back ... it was just one big seething mass. No carpark of course. There were old wooden steps and a bathing shed down on the beach ... at the front of the lagoon there. The steps got demolished by us for fires, our necessities over that period of time [chuckle]. And that was Yallingup. We still had the sixteen footers. This was before we graduated to balsa boards ... and the reef was open slather for crays [big laughs].

**Tony Harbison:** We had our hammocks under the Tea Trees. A bottle of beer on a rope hanging from the branches ... you'd swing it around have a drink, and then swing it on to the next bloke. You couldn't see our camp, the trees were that thick. You couldn't see us at all. We had our fire for cooking ... and the crayfish in Yallingup lagoon, ohhh hoo hoo [laughs].

**Kevin Merrifield:** In those days we'd camp out here at Yallingup Beach. It was all natural bush ... Melaleuca tress. We all had ex-Royal Australian Navy hammocks and we'd pitch a hammock between the trees [laughs]. We'd come down here from Perth with a half a dozen cans of baked beans and spaghetti, light the old camp fire and that was home, which was great. Not too flash when it rained of course [reflective pause] ... They were great times.

### 5.4 Finding direction: Surfboard design, surfboard modifications

Booth (1999) articulates the significance of changing surfboard configuration on the surfing culture. Yallingup was initially tackled by surfers atop their Blake-esque toothpick boards. Back then, just like today, surfing Yallingup's waves involved danger and risk. But the boys were up to the task, happily charging the surf despite their awkward craft and occasionally crafty backyard modifications.

"I remember John Budge wasn't a very good swimmer," said Tony. "To avoid losing his board, *Budgie* made two handles for the front of his sixteen-footer. He held onto them under the waves. When he was we caught inside, he'd roll off the board and hang on like fucken crazy to those handles. He later invented one that would swivel." Tony shook his head. "Budgie never lost his board."

Keeping control of the clunky surf craft in the wild swells off Yallingup using the chrome handle method must have been shoulder wrenching. Kevin and Tony recalled an amusing moment in the waves involving surfer ingenuity gone horribly wrong. "The first person to attach himself to a board was Bill Pratley. Bill tied a bit of rope around the chrome handle and tied the other end around his waist, half inch rope." Kevin paused with a grin, "And he went out at Yalls on a pretty big day... he took off and blew it and he literally got dragged all the way into shore. About every ten seconds or so you'd see this little head pop up in the foam and then down again." Kevin laughed. "How he didn't drown I'll never know!" Tony was a little more circumspect in recounting the same tale. "Bill's first leg rope, yeah I remember that all right, twenty foot of rope tied around his waist ... he came unstuck and we just watched on in disbelief. He [was] washed inside, near unconscious. We nearly lost him that day."

When a butterfly fluttered its wings on Australia's east coast in 1956, a cyclone was generated on the opposite side of the continent. The Melbourne Olympic Games inadvertently heralded the start of a new era of surfboard riding in eastern Australia. The isolated western surfing scene was keen to follow the lead from across the continent. Tony recalled "some American surfers" bringing their balsa surfboards down-under for a hot-dogging exhibition associated with the Olympic Games. "I was over there at the time," said Tony. "The Yanks were ridiculed. 'What are these clowns going to do?' we all said." Tony rocked back in his chair with delight and scoffed, "Well fuck me! They just went right outside to the point, where the rocks are. 'Ya don't do that!' we said." Tony paused with effect, shook his head and continued in dismay. "And they just carved the bags out of it!" Harbo roared with merriment. "About six of them [surfboards] were left here in Australia. Two of them came back here to WA ... They sold for twenty pounds each, about two weeks wages back then."

Mark Paterson's early surfboards were homemade "ten foot hollow ply boards" that were "rehashed" from cut-down sixteen foot toothpicks. "They were bloody heavy though," recalled Mark. "They had these bungs in the front to let the water out. We graduated to balsa boards in the late fifties down here. They brought them across from the United States in 1956 with the Olympic thing." Mark recalled that it wasn't until the early 1960s that Western Australian surfers "graduated" to foam surfboards. "We were a couple of years behind the eastern states ... and then the boards became shorter and wider and thicker, teardrop things ... all different shapes and sizes followed."

I quizzed Mark about his early attempts in tackling the exacting process of surfboard manufacture. “I remember I bought a block of balsa from Boans<sup>29</sup> and put it on the train,” he chuckled. “It was about eight foot long, four inches thick and about two foot wide from memory. Got it off at Cottesloe and walked home with it.” Mark vividly remembered the shaping and laminating process with good mate Kenny Seares. “We glassed it with chop-strand mat, the stuff they were using on boats back then. It was a mistake I never made again. We didn’t have the woven mat. We had to grind it down in the garage. What a mess! Dust and itchy bloody stuff everywhere!” Alas for boys, all the itch, sweat and tears did not produce a durable product. Like most surfboards of the period, frailty and destruction accompanied the new-fangled materials and sticky manufacturing process. “Two surfs on that thing at Cottesloe out from the pylon ... snapped it in half. No stringers, no nothing.” Mark chortled. “So we looked east and bought Gordon Woods balsa boards. We got two of them shipped across. That was the first new board I ever had.”

Fremantle stalwart, Len Dibben, came into to prominence on the western surfing front after returning home from “Navy Nashoes<sup>30</sup> in 1956”. Following a memorable stint on HMAS Sydney, Dibben was drawn into the burgeoning surf craze in Perth. “I started surfing with Ron Drage from City Beach. He had a car ... and we surfed mainly at Leighton and Cottesloe. When the *Gidget* movie came in, that influenced a lot of people [to go surfing],” recalled Len. “You couldn’t buy surfboards here back then. Some people were making those hollow wooden boards. I found some instructions and made some with my mates. About the same time I bought a balsa board from Kenny Seares. I took the bloody thing out to Scarborough and broke it first wave.”

I smiled internally at this stage of the interview, discovering that Len had purchased his first balsa board from Kenny. Now if my speculation is correct, that surfboard had been hastily offloaded to Len after Mark Paterson’s twin contraption had perished in the waves at Cottesloe. Shifty characters those old-school surfers.

Len reminisced about his surfing companions from around Cottesloe in the early sixties. “*Cliffy* Hills, Bob and Gary Burge and Terry James ... when we finished playing footy and rugby on a Saturday afternoon, we’d all go surfing at Cott together.” Len acknowledged Tony Harbison and Kevin Merrifield as two highly respected surfers of the period. “The surf lifesavers, they were the best surfers back then. They knew how to paddle and how to swim ... those blokes grew up in the waves up at City Beach.”

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<sup>29</sup> Boans was a famous department store situated between Wellington and Murray Streets in the Perth CBD.

<sup>30</sup> National military service was introduced in Australia in 1951.



As one of the state's most respected long-term surfboard shapers, I was keen to question Len about Western Australia's infant surfboard industry, particularly what attracted him into the business.

**Len Dibben:** Boards started trickling over from the east - Bennet, McDonagh, Bill Wallace surfboards, in the late fifties early sixties. Bennet was making those pig boards ... narrow noses with round tails. I got a double stringer, nine foot three ... it had a wooden fin. By 1961 Brian Cole and Joe King were making King-Cole Surfboards in Wembley. I bought a board from them, a white board. The glass and resin was pretty ordinary then ... they didn't make clear boards. In 1962 I met Leon Cole ... he had previously made them [sic] hollow surf lifesaving boards. The Cordingley's were making a few boards out of their shed in Mosman Park and the Hawke boys were doing some from Osborne Park. Some mates said to us 'get going and make surfboards', so we got two blanks, and sold them ... and then four blanks and they went and before you know it, we had made and sold a heap of boards. The partnership lasted a couple of years ... I started Len Dibben Surfboards in 1963/64.

Dibben's importance to the Western Australian surfing fraternity cannot be overstated. He was spontaneously acknowledged by legendary Yallingup wave rider George Simpson. "I started surfing in 1962 on Coolites," recalled George. "In '65 I bought a Gordon Woods balsa board. Then I got a brand new Dibben, a nine foot three. Yeah, Len, he was a very big part of the WA surfing scene."

### **5.5 An enduring equality: S = F.A (Surfers = Fun. Antics)**

The bravado and frivolity associated with our contemporary surfing culture is not a new phenomenon. The down-south surfers of the 1960s enjoyed their surfing life in and out of the water. As time moved on, Yallingup's sleepy hamlet realised that the new wave of émigré were fast becoming a permanent curio. Caves House<sup>31</sup>, a once tranquil honeymooner's retreat nestled in beautiful gardens above Yallingup Beach, became an entertainment zone for the wave riders. The boys proved themselves as honest, fun loving young blokes. They soon established a strong rapport with Bill Copley, the publican lessee at Caves House. Bill's discernment of the surfers' character was particularly important in the opening chapter of Cape Naturaliste's surfing subculture. A bright businessman who recognised thirsty patrons, Bill welcomed the boys with trust and generosity, despite warnings "that the boardriders were a wild, uncontrollable lot" (Copley, 1987, p.8).

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<sup>31</sup> Yallingup's Caves House is an iconic Australian hotel. It has been the local surfers' watering hole since the 1950s.

“Bill Copley, yeah he was wonderful to us up at Caves [House],” stated Mark Paterson. “We spent most of our time Saturday afternoons and nights up there. Bill donated the old laundry shack to us. It was our [West Coast Boardriders’] clubhouse. We cleaned it up, set up our double-decker wire beds and that was ours for about ten years. We moved on up there from the Tea Trees and hammocks,” he laughed.

Kevin Merrifield unmistakably valued the confidence that Bill Copley placed in the young surfers. “When Bill went to bed at about ten o’clock on a Saturday night, he left the boys in charge of the bar ... pouring beers and putting the money in the tin. It was all on the honour system.”

Reciprocally, the boardriders were also treasured by Bill as fun-loving customers, as honest citizens and as intrepid guardians. “Once about 50 bikies arrived [at Caves House] ... the local surfing lads sorted them out, sending them on their way” (Copley 1987, p.8). Describing the boys as “dedicated athletes”, Bill penned that he was “proud to have many of [the] boys as friends” (1987, p.8).



**Figure 5.2: Beachnik convoy exiting Yallingup on the gravel, 1960 (Daily News archives)**

As the global surfing culture progressed and popularised during the 1960s, so too did the Cape Naturaliste subculture. Following the lead from California, surfing clubs appeared around the beaches of Australia. Len Dibben mentioned the early surfing associations that emerged over onshore refreshments at Caves House. “Tony Harbison, Brian Cole and Joe King ... ‘The Wheels’ we used to call them. They formed the West Coast Boardriders Club,” Len laughed profusely. “And then we started up the Yallingup Boardriders Club a bit later and called ourselves ‘The Little Wheels’.

Although surf-brand tee shirts and labelled boardies were an unknown commodity of that period, surfers of the day were recognisable. The boys’ unusual appearance and extroverted personalities frequently had them in the cross hairs at the local Busselton pubs. “Yeah, we’d wear unusual clothes [pause] funny shorts, thongs, sunglasses, weird hats ...,” said Kevin Merrifield. “When we headed off to the Commercial or the Vasse for a beer on a Saturday night, we’d more often than not finish up having fisticuffs with the local farmers. One night at the Yoongoorilup Hall during the dance interval was particularly memorable. We took a bit of a belting from a group of big brawny farmers ... [they] literally heaved us out the back door.”



**Figure 5.3: Funny shorts, sun glasses, weird hats - Yallingup cool dudes, 1960 (Daily News archives)**

Mark Paterson recalled that the surfers weren't "very popular" in the nearby Busselton community. "They didn't know who we were or what we were," he laughed. "We were regarded as ratbags and [we] didn't try to beat that reputation ... it was a sign of the times. We just kept coming down and they finally accepted us [pause] after about five or ten or so years." Mark roared with hilarity. "They realised that we were part of the future of the place."

Surfers are an enduring bunch. The 'way-out' status accomplished by the early Yallingup crew was quietly considered complimentary. As the Beatles and Rolling Stones were igniting the 1960s global pop culture, the Cape Naturaliste wave riders were mixing tunes into their surfing subculture. "Moonshine played clarinet, the Taylors had their own band, Huddle played piano," reflected Tony Harbison. He continued with a wonderful narrative of the pioneer surfers "beating the system", something that has long been a component of the surfing culture. "Moonshine would stroll into the hall and the doorman would challenge him; 'Hey mate, where's your ticket?' He'd hold up his clarinet. 'I'm with the band mate' ... and through he'd go. And then he'd hand the clarinet out the window to me and I'd come in with the same trick." Harbo laughed profusely. "Surfers being surfers, it was a great scam ... and cups of tea and cakes at half time."

Len Dibben recalled Don Bancroft blowing his trumpet and the "sing-song celebrations" that took place around the campfires down at Yallingup Beach. Kevin Merrifield's musical memories involved a firing up the portable 78 record player. "We'd sit outside at Caves and play jazz records. The music was a big part of the surfing culture, even back then," affirmed Kevin.

History is as much about colourful characters as it is about prominent events. Wave riding in the 1950s/1960s era was nourished by the surfers making their own fun. In this primordial stage of the South West's surfing evolution, the counterculture scene of the 1970s was distant and unimaginable. In those seminal years, surfing contests were creating ripples that gradually developed into a new competitive surfing philosophy. Up until this point, most rivalry between Yallingup surfers involved throwing a few darts up at Caves House, not throwing big turns during heats. Surf equipment of the day was undeveloped, uncomfortable or uninvented. Surf practice of the day involved mateship and wave sharing not aggression and wave hogging. Black and white images of surfing at Yallingup in the early 1960s clearly captured the essence of surfer camaraderie, several riders straight handing a peeler in unison. Surfing was all about fun back then. Nonetheless, as a result of numerous hours spent refining surfing style in Yallingup's big swells, a highly talented subcultural assemblage was developing.

“Surfing down here then with no crowds, we had lots of laughs, lots of fun,” smiled Mark Paterson. “But competitions slowly developed. Ampol [Petroleum] supported us, the surfing fraternity.” Mark recollected about an event where scaffolding and an Ampol banner were erected out on the reef at Yallingup. “It was the first sign of professional surfing in the South West,” Mark stated. “The West Australian Surf Riders Association [WASRA] started shortly afterwards. By the mid 1960s the surfboards were getting shorter and the balsa had gone forever. Foam and fibreglass were the new things. Surfers were being sponsored by the new surfboard manufacturers.”



**Figure 5.4: Yallingup 1960s style: No drop-ins, no call-offs, no worries (Daily News archives)**

Tony Harbison recalled some of the highlights of the “first Ampol state championships that were conducted in big twelve foot surf” at Yallingup in May 1964. “Zac [Alex] Kochanowitsch won the first state [board riding] title,” remembered Tony. “He made the Australian side and competed at Manly ... the year that *Midget* [Farrelly] won the world title. Bobby Keenan won it the following year and competed for Australia in France. He was runner-up to Midget that year.” Tony was proud to append. “So there were some great surfboard riders coming out of WA even back then.”

Following the 1964 state titles, several hot local surfers were recruited into Cordingley Surfboards' sponsored team. Tony Harbison, Mark Paterson, Alex Kochanowitsch, Bob Keenan, Joe Wilson, Barry King, Karl Schumacher, Peter Bothwell, Tina Daly and Stefanie Meyer were listed on a Cordingley promotional advertisement as "the strongest [team] of its kind". The competitive element of surfing was thus successfully introduced into the local subcultural mix. When trophies and prizes were awarded and prominence and reputation were on the line, a new direction was taken in surfing.

National heroes such as Midget Farrelly, *Nat* Young and Kevin Platt were influenced by the elite Californian wave riders of the era. Phil Edwards, Mike Doyle, Mickey Dora and Joey Cabell exemplified an innovative, artistic style of hotdog wave riding. They took surfing to a new cool echelon, and the Australians were quick to mimic, master and progress the new techniques. The Yallingup surfers shadowed the surfing method that was tried and tested in the heavy juice of Hawaii, on California's long points and on the renowned beach breaks at Sydney's North Narrabeen. But the local style was distinctive by necessity. Shaped by the steep, fast breaking, powerful waves of the region, the Cape Naturaliste surfers were formulating their own unique subcultural style.

One of the state's most respected surfer-shapers is Murray Smith. Murray grew up swimming and fishing at Scarborough. As a fourteen year old surfer, Murray remembered "sharing" his solitary beach breaks with Kevin, Mark and Tony over winter. After graduating from the metropolitan waves, Murray made his first pilgrimage to Yallingup in 1960. "My first trip down-south was when I was sixteen, at Christmas time. We camped out in the Melaleuca trees of course," he laughed. "We'd just lobbed and Kevin Merrifield showed up. He told us how to get out to the break through the lagoon. He toddled off across the reef and we followed him out. That was my first surf at Yallingup."

Murray enjoyed outstanding success in the competitive surfing arena since that initial foray. In 1966 he was victorious in the state open title and he was a finalist in the same division from 1965 to the early 1970s. More recently, Murray won the 1980 Australian masters title (SRO Website). Murray's genuine humility prevented him from talking-up his personal triumphs. However, with some mild cajoling, I managed to pry a few of his secrets for competitive surfing success.

**Murray Smith:** I always enjoyed competitive surfing. You've got to read the waves ... feel the ocean moving ... know the local conditions. Yallingup's a perfect case. If you see Indicators go off, you know there will be a set four minutes later. And that's the same everywhere. There will be something that gives you ... an idea of what's going to happen. Some guys can't get the hang of that. Competitive surfing is an art of patience, not paddling for ten average waves, but paddling for four good waves ... knowing when to pick the best waves.

Knowledge of the ocean, understanding the local conditions, reading the game, and enjoying the competitive arena - the same aptitudes that defined Murray as an outstanding wave rider are still applicable to contemporary surfers. Although competitive surfing has progressed to an amazing level, it is important to remember where, when and how it all started.

## **5.6 Search and you will find: Discovering the breaks**

Global surfwear company Rip Curl have long hung their corporate hat on the concept of 'The Search'. Their celebrated advertising campaign is based on the unconditional hunt for perfect waves. Exploration was elemental in the youthful Cape Naturaliste surfers' psyche. The down-south surf environment was extensive and raw. In many cases, it was also relatively inaccessible. The region has always been a vast wave field. The early surfers came to realise the depth of their discovery in a gold-rush scenario.

Tony Harbison's recollection of his initial quest for waves beyond Yallingup involved an unsuccessful jaunt to Injidup with some local fishermen. "They picked us up in an old jeep at first light at the Wyadup turnoff ... Moonshine, Huddle, Cocko and me. We chucked our boards on and they took us in. We paddled out on the sixteen foot toothpick boards, absolutely hopeless! No way in the world could you handle that type of steep surf on them," he laughed. The lads were stuck outside for hours. The straight-handing technique they had honed on Yallingup's rollers was ineffectual on the sucky late takeoffs at Injidup. In relation to surfing style, surfing environment and surfing equipment, Tony made a very important observation at this juncture. "You've got to consider the equipment we were riding back in those days. The surfboards determined where and how we surfed." Although Tony's comment appears to be a statement of the obvious, it remains relevant to surfing today.

"Surfing came into the South West though Yallingup. This was the start of it!" Mark Paterson stated emphatically. "Yallingup was the hub of surfing ... We eventually fanned out down to Gallows and to Guillotines." Mark smiled as he recalled the day the boys "hired *Butch* [Guthrie] to push a track with his old D4 dozer" down to the Guillotines break, north of Cowaramup Bay. "We virtually drove in behind it, fantastic. I can't believe we didn't get in the shit about that though," laughed Pato.

The regional centre of Bunbury swiftly provided contribution into Yallingup's surfing populace. The charismatic Tom Trigwell was one of the early surfers to regularly make the Yallingup trip from Bunbury, when footy games and cattle sales weren't taking priority.

“Yeah, in those early days, we’d come down from Bunbury and surf Yallingup mainly.” Tom nominated Geoff Culmsee, Ronny Carlson and Mick and Peter Manolas as regular Bunbury surfers. “They called the cove Bunbury Break,” he said. Tom outlined how the weekend camping escapades to Injidup involved careful preparation. “We used to drive and park by the rocks on the beach at Inji in our FJ Holdens. The boys would stay out at Inji ... and put a five gallon keg in the back of the FJ. We had a temprite with ice going through it,” he laughed. “And away we’d go!”

On the eastern side of Cape Naturaliste, Bunker Bay unexpectedly provided beautiful clean waves connected with extra large swells and cold southerly winds, attributes of wintertime synoptics. Tony Harbison mentioned Barry King fortuitously scoring surf for the first time at the Farm. “Barry was a brilliant surfer. He won state junior and open titles,” recounted Tony. “The King family had some land out at Bunker’s. One day, Barry’s mum made him go and visit his uncle. Begrudgingly he went out and low and behold, the Farm was eight foot solid.” Tom Trigwell also had memories involving surfing escapades at the Farm in the early 1960s. In his distinctive fashion, Tommy rattled off several narratives describing those halcyon times. “You could drive all the way down to the sand dunes at the Farm,” he said. “There were some good gutsy riders back then too. There was one rider I remember, *the Ghost* ... Howard Kent.” Tommy paused and repeated the nickname in a theatrical whisper. “The Ghost! He always had on this white zinc stuff. Wherever you turned up at the Farm, he would always be there, way out the back, sitting further out than anyone else. He’d pick the set waves off. He was a legendary big wave rider that bloke.”



**Figure 5.5: *The Ghost* - Howard Kent. Parked up and painted up, beachside at Yallingup circa 1960s**



The never-ending search meant that surfing's south-western osmosis continued unabatedly. The southern path progressed past Cowaramup Bay and down to Margaret River. 'Margs' soon took on the mantle as Western Australia's premier big wave venue, a reputation that it still deservingly maintains today. When the first surfers stumbled upon the Margaret River Mainbreak, word escaped with bushfire vigour. "I think the Cordingley boys were the first to spot the potential at Margs," suggested Tony Harbison. "They came back to us one day and said the waves down there were three times bigger than Yallingup. We gave it the 'yeah right'. Cliffy Hills and Robbie Birch, they went down and surfed it the next day."

Tony subsequently recited an incident that involved his first Margaret River waves. The experience was clearly a watershed moment in his surfing life. "One day when Yallingup was completely flat, Kevin Merrifield and me [sic] packed up our surfboards and our families and we headed down to see the place for ourselves." After temporary bamboozlement, the boys pulled into the local store seeking directions to the coast. Heading towards the Margaret River mouth, Tony and Kevin rounded the gravel bend and were presented with a corduroyed ocean that tipped over into perfect peaks on the outer reef at 'Surfer's Point'. Their excitement was analogous to what Hynson and August experienced when they stumbled upon the South African vision in *Endless Summer*. "When we saw the waves at Margaret River for the first time ... wow!" Tony paused reverently. "There it was. Unbelievable!"

Murray Smith likewise noted that the early surf explorers discovered that Margaret River attracted "much more swell than at Yallingup did." Murray identified that the consistency of the big Margaret's surf changed his behaviour. "We really started to spread our wings south towards Margs at that time ... I rarely came up to Yallingup after that. Down there, the waves were bigger with more guts. The size! That was the attraction. And it still is the attraction." Murray's uncompromising opinion identifies South West surfing subcultural designation. His credence underpins this research.

Since the mid 1950s, the bush telegraph effectively dispersed reports of the quality down-south surf. Surfers from Bunbury, Perth, interstate and overseas followed the lead of our intrepid pioneers, searching for the powerful, ubiquitous waves between Naturaliste and Leeuwin. The 1960s saw many more surfers join the global lineups. To some extent, surfer density around Yallingup was diluted by the discovery of new surfing spots. However, revolution was in the air. An era of antiestablishment, rebellion and alternative attitude was about to take surfing's osmosis on a new ride. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was acquiescent with the shift.

## 5.7 Down-south counterculture: The big set wave

Roszak (1970, p.11) indicated that the counterculture was “the spirit of the times”. Widespread 1970s anti-Vietnam War sentiment following Cold War consternation generated an international, youth-based rejection of preceding cultural standards. Music, sexuality, literature, media and politics were thrown into commotion as a consequence of this revolution.

The counterculture stood against the traditional values of middle-class society, and manifested its rebellion in several ways: long hair, rock music as showcased at Woodstock, free sex, drugs, and riots ... Through protests and anti-war demonstrations, the counterculture challenged the governmental institutions ... the youth spoke out for what they believed in. (Radical Times, 2010)

Surfing was a hefty part of the countercultural revolution. The 1970s surfers were often derogatorily branded as ‘dole bludgers’. According to Law (2001, p.29) “the hedonism that the ‘surfie element’ displayed was far more threatening than ... temporary exploration of energetic youth ... [surfers were] the new breed of unemployed”. The long haired, pot smoking, acid dropping, hippy surfers of the 1970s redirected the surfing culture. Wave riding transcended from a developing, acceptable, competition-based recreation into an antisocial threat that was off traditional society’s map.

As the Vietnam War raged on in South East Asia’s steamy jungles, Bob McTavish, Dick Brewer and George Greenough ushered surfboard design into bold, new frontiers. The shortboard revolution coincided with a liberalised global atmosphere, an atmosphere of change and rebellion. A lucrative surfboard manufacturing industry in California and eastern Australia flourished in the wake of this directional shift. Niches opened for professional surfboard shapers. Surfing entrepreneurs evolved and prospered.

Mick Marlin grew up on the north Sydney beaches in the early 1960s, surfing the waves at Narrabeen. After his best mate scored a “Dale Velzy pig board”, Mick purchased a seven foot balsa teardrop surfboard “with a nose block and a plywood fin”. As his surfing style quickly progressed, Mick acquired his first foam board, a Bennett shape from the Brookvale factory. Surfing uncrowded waves at North Narrabeen was Mick’s standard routine. “I’d go down to the beach on a Saturday morning and sit on the steps of the surf club and wait for a car to pull up,” Mick recalled with a grin. “Usually it was the guys who worked for Barry Bennet ... in their custom FJs [Holdens]. I wouldn’t go out on my own. In those days sharks were a real concern. Then more kids started getting boards, more kids started surfing. It really took off.”

Like most Australian boardriders of the time, the young Sydneysider relied on the surfing publications and surf films to paint a picture of the wider surfing culture. These media displayed the cool hotdog techniques of the American wave riding heroes Dora, Noll and Edwards. They framed the celebrated waves of Malibu, Sunset and Waimea. The movies and magazines also showcased our Australian shredders. Farrelly, Young and McTavish developed global legendary surfing status. And the right hand points at Noosa, Burleigh and Crescent Head along with the big cold bombs at Bells Beach became famous on surfing's world stage.

"We were getting these magazines with photos taken by guys who knew about surfing," said Mick Marlin. "Hawaiian and Californian waves and surfers mainly." Mick fondly recalled the first sixteen millimetre surf movies that played at the Collaroy and Avalon surf clubs. But when the surf movies started screening at the theatre, all hell broke loose. "We'd scream and yell, we couldn't believe what they were doing on the waves. They were pretty wild events. They had to get security at all those early movies by John Severson." Mick implied that the early surf films were not only entertainment, they were also educational. "That was the only way [we] knew what was going on," he said. "Watching those surfers was coaching us what we should be doing. Now the kids have their parents and Taj [Burrow] and all the local surfers to look up to, whereas that was all we had."

There was a new affluence attached to surfing in the flower-power era. Airline travel was relatively affordable and custom made surfboards were accessible. The middle class kids of coastal Australia and the United States had money in their pockets, time to spend and surfing role models to emulate. Led by Bruce Brown's 1966 epic surfing movie *Endless Summer* and later turbo-charged by Alby Falzon's 1972 *Morning of the Earth*, surfers looked beyond their local breaks and began heading off to exotic locations. A new form of global travel materialised. Surf tourism was born. Adventurous wave riders trekked to Hawaii, Mexico and Indonesia in search of perfect, unpopulated waves. The South West surf secret was soon out, divulged by magazines and movies, and dominoed by loose lips. The Yallingup sirens enticed a fresh crew of surfers to the Cape Naturaliste lineups, immigrants from Perth, from the eastern states and from far-flung California.

"Early in the part, surfers went to Hawaii. Then we started chasing it up in Queensland," Mick Marlin related. "*Endless Summer* was the big one that motivated me to get to South Africa. It just blew everyone away seeing 'Bruce's Beauties' ... every surfer wanted to surf there. It became a magical Mecca ... wow, everyone wanted waves like that." Mick paused, "Our parents had to cope with the depression and just when they got on their feet, along came World War Two. Then they had kids. Our generation changed all that. And now we're changing the retirement scene too." Mick grinned. "I don't want to give up and die. I want to be out there doing things ... going surfing."

Booth (2001, p.107) defined the countercultural wave riders as “subversive soul-surfers”. This tag largely developed as surfers explored and attempted to describe their surfing feelings, an infinite ambition. For some surfers, wave riding evolved into an amalgamation of personal development and spiritual enlightenment of “esoteric interpretations ... freedom and escape” (Booth, 2001, p.113).

Talented soul-surfer Ted Spencer described his surfing enhancement as much more than advancing kinaesthetics. Ted’s mystical delirium was part of the psychedelic, all-embracing groovy scene that was the counterculture.

Refining your surfing does not simply mean refining different manouvres [sic], in a deeper sense it means refining your very self ... a refined person understands that he [sic] is not the body or the mind, but the sustained energy ... within the body.” (Spencer cited in Young, 1994, p.105)

Some surfers sought rebirth with their wave riding. Popular Californian surf artist Rick Griffin became a born-again Christian, Hawaiian “pocket-rocket” shaper Dick Brewer assumed the yoga philosophy (Kampion, 2003, p.104) and Australian shortboard revolutionary Bob McTavish converted to the Seventh Day Adventist faith (Young, 1994, p.106). But as sectarian groups such as the “Christian Surfers” germinated, surfing was becoming a religion in its own right.

Surfing’s uprising was more about mind-expanding chemicals than deities. Many surfers of the day were identified with the “long hair and smoking pot” lifestyle (Young, 1994, p.107). As Hendrix, Morrison, Zeppelin and Floyd were taking rock and roll music into a new direction, Hakman, Lopez, Peterson and Lynch were inventing rock and roll surfing. Surfers were infamous for experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs. Cannabis, hashish, psilocybin and lysergic acid all contributed to the surfing trip. While mind altering drugs were stimulating experimentation in surfboard design and in surfing style, they were also having a devastating effect on an unsuspecting generation across the nation. The ‘needle and spoon’ soon followed. Heroin destroyed too many people during the counterculture.

But not all seventies surfers were lazy, grass-choofing hippies. Some surf aficionados recognised there was a dollar to be made from merchandising the surfing culture. Surf retail stores prospered. Surf apparel companies Hang Ten and Golden Breed flourished. Wetsuits and legropes, innovative surfing hardware, allowed more time surfing and less time shivering or swimming after errant surfboards.

Competitive surfing was also popularised with events staged on the North Shore of Oahu, at Bells Beach in Victoria and on Sydney's famous surf stretch. The world's best surfers realised the potential for a professional surfing career on a global surfing circuit, a notion that five years earlier would have been ridiculed as a bong-induced delusion.

Robert Conneeley was destined to be a champion competitive surfer. While in primary school, Rob's father had Gordon Woods craft him an "eight foot potato chip prototype". Under the tutelage of surf club renegade *Bluey* Mayes, Conneeley sharpened his surfing style at the south end of Bondi in the late 1950s. A love for the contest and a penchant for victory developed early in Rob's surfing life. As a teenager he battled it out against Nat Young, Midget Farrelly and Rodney Sumpter. Rob realised national repute by defeating Young in the 1964 Australian junior titles at Manly. "Surfing was really elevated at the 1964 world championships," stated Rob. "Ampol sponsored the event and it was very well organised and promoted by Bob Evans. There was an estimated 60 000 people on the beach ... and a great deal of hype." In coining this period of Australia's surfing culture as "an era of disproportionate exposure", Conneeley identified that "not much was really happening" at that juncture. "People didn't attend football matches and cricket games as they do now. Suddenly, when surfing burst onto the scene, we were getting these double page spreads in the middle of the Sunday papers. It just clicked on." Rob reflected and chortled. "And beating the Yanks [chuckles], that was a big part of it too of course."

Rob lived the surfer's dream and accepted the challenge of riding the vast Hawaiian swells in 1964. Returning home in April 1965, Conneeley tasted victory at Bells Beach, the unofficial Australian titles of the period. McTavish (2009, p.317) states that the Good Friday waves of that year were the "biggest Bells ever". It was freezing down there. It got really big in the final ... bigger than those beautiful waves that Simon Anderson rode there on his thruster [in 1981]. Terry Wall very nearly perished ... Bells' [victory] was the pinnacle of my competitive surfing.

The late 1960s heralded a new era for surfing. In penning his strong editorial, "We're tops now", John Witzig predicted the knell of nose-riding and the initiation of an aggressive strain of surfing, representative of the Australian "school of involvement" of the time (Moser, 2008, p.191). While this was happening, Rob was positioned in Queensland, enjoying the Sunshine Coast. During this period Conneeley developed his appreciation for the country lifestyle. However the north coastal strip, although beautiful, warm and relaxed, was exposed in *Morning of the Earth*. Rob and his wife Di turned their attention in an opposite direction, westward to fresh surfing grounds.

Steep Point, jutting as Australia's most western prominence, appeared a likely surfing destination. "It looked like a wave magnet," said Rob. "So we headed in that direction. We missed the Bluff ... but we had some great waves at Kalbarri." I inquired if Rob was the first to surf at Jake's Point in Kalbarri. He chuckled, "Nah, those bloody Kiwis beat me to that." Slowly returning southwards, the Conneeleys pulled into Dunsborough in the spring of 1973. There, Rob and Di lived in their Toyota mobile home, setting up on a block near the cemetery. Rob met American shaper Tom Hoyer, who was making surfboards in Dunsborough. "We fenced around a bit ... and when he was sure that I wasn't bringing across all the Sydneysiders and I realised he wasn't bringing out all his Yank mates, we developed a friendship," said Rob. I inquired why Rob and Di didn't settle down permanently around Cape Naturaliste. "I was looking for something different. Grunters and Redgate were fresh and I loved hanging at Cowaramup Bay." Rob described a "magnetism" that attracted him to Margaret River. They were looking for lots of fresh water, keen to be self sufficient and grow their own fruit and vegetables on some acreage. "We camped out around Cowaramup. We loved Ellensbrook and we lived in an old farmhouse down at Forest Grove. We loved the big trees, the greenery of the forests and the bush down at Margaret River." Different ecologies attract different people. Different surfing subcultures form as an effect.

Before the viticulture boom and before the region acquired an international surfing brand, Rob and Di cut out an idyllic existence on the banks of Margaret River. In those days, Rob had to "rouse people to go for surf". He did his utmost to keep Margaret River surfing furtive. "I didn't want to encourage a mass surfing population down here," he told me. Although times and tides have changed, and South West surfing crowds have proliferated, Conneeley still enjoys tackling the big swells at Surfer's Point.

Along with Taj Burrow and Jake Paterson, Ian Cairns is arguably Western Australia's most highly regarded surfer. As a youngster growing up in Perth in the mid 1960s, Ian's surfing experiences involved "urban grovelling" on the reefs south of the Cottesloe Groyne, at Cove, Seconds and Isolators. Ian's life changed forever however after a family vacation to the South West in 1966. "My first trip down-south was during a humongous winter storm. Cape Leeuwin was biblical!" exclaimed Ian. "The memory of that incredible weather has stuck with me. What a contrast to Perth's waves. It was huge ... powerful. Once I surfed North Point, I was hooked. My surfing group started getting down there regularly after Murray Smith's crew and after John Staley from Bunbury."

Cairns' competitive surfing rapidly blossomed. Standing well over six foot tall, *Kanga* was a strong, aggressive wave rider. His big body functioned best in the big surf. Ian developed his surfing style in the South West swells. He learned from his wily WA surfing elders. Ian recalled losing the first round in the state titles at Yallingup in March 1967. "I stuck around to watch John Staley win the men's final at big 'Huzzas' [South Point]. I remember Murray Smith taking off really deep out at South Point. The size and the scope of those waves made an indelible impression on my sixteen year old noggin. To this day, being out at either location in a fifty knot gale, by myself and dodging bombs ... it's adventure, the essence of what surfing means to me." During that seminal era, few imagined the future for competitive surfing. Ian Cairns was a highly successful big wave riding warrior. He won six West Australian titles and took honours at the 'Smirnoff World Pro Am' in 1972.

Cairns ... was a big, bright, outspoken regular footer from Perth and a monster in bigger waves. [From 1971-1975] he'd put together the best record of any Australian in the North Shore pro events. The surf press loved him. 'We put our lives on the line,' Cairns half-snarled at one reporter. 'We go out there and take *insane* risks, we go over the falls and get *annihilated*, we impress the crowd - and yet we make such a measly amount of money.' (Warshaw, 2010, p.317)

Ian recognised the potential of professional surfing. His actions, his words and his passion fuelled the competitive surfing insurrection of the mid 1970s. This notion was emphasised by Dunsborough surfing identity John Malloy. As a long term South West resident, John's insightful commentary regarding Cairns' impact on the surfing culture is pertinent. "I became mates with Ian Cairns in the early days, and he used to frighten the daylights out of me," John chuckled. "He'd come around and take me out [surfing] to places that I didn't really want to go, places that I didn't want to be." John reflected. "Ian has brought a tremendous amount to the table. He has driven professional surfing to where it is now. Surfing needed somebody like Ian to stand up and beat the drum, and he was not scared to beat the drum. He made it happen!" John recalled the Australians and the South Africans who made "professional competitive surfing" what it is today. "And a lot of the current boys are reaping the rewards of Ian standing up and speaking his mind."

George Simpson is a Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural marvel. His surfing prowess and his fishing exploits are legendary. George's chiselled features and mountain-man physique are indicative of his hard work and his love of outdoor Australia. George's sense of humour and his fun-loving nature endear him to all. His strong surfing style and encyclopaedic mind of Cape Naturaliste surfing knowledge have widened over forty five solid years in the South West lineups.

**George Simpson:** I started surfing at Cott when I was about fourteen with Ian Cairns. He'd just come over from Sydney and he was at the same [surfing] stage as me ... I first came down here [Yallingup] in 1966 ... with the older guys, we didn't have our licenses. We had to pay for our petrol. I remember pounds had just changed to dollars. Five dollars, two for fuel, and three for food ... and that'd set ya up for the weekend [laughs]. There were a few City Beach guys, a few from Scarborough ... but that was it! You'd come down on the weekend and you'd be lookin' for someone to go for a surf with. All those early guys, Kevin, Tony, Cocko, Mark Paterson ... the blokes of the fifties and the early sixties, they seemed to fade out a bit ... Harbo went up north working, Kevin was playing football. They had families and stuff. So there was a bit of a lull down here in the mid to late sixties.

George clearly recognised his serendipity. "Our generation, we were there at the right time. Tony and Kevin, they started it all, but without the right gear. But once that started, surfboards went down from nine foot boards to eight foot to seven six [7' 6"] and then down to six four [6' 4"] ... in about a year, it went down that much." Surfing performance similarly advanced at a rapid rate. "We were starting to do things on waves you couldn't do on the longer boards," said George. "We started surfing the bombies and at Carpark [Injidup], places that you couldn't previously surf."

As the shortboard revolution launched into overdrive, the Cape Naturaliste surf enticed enthusiastic wave riders to relocate from Perth. George was part of the trickle of surfers who decided to live the surfer's dream. There was little tourism, no wine industry and not much work. But the pioneering subcultural members were present for the waves. Those young men were hardcore wave riders. They became the first permanent Cape Crusaders. "I think that Murray Smith was actually the first guy to come down here and live. Then came the guys like Bob Monkman ... we'd all come down here on the weekends. On a busy weekend there'd be thirty surfers." George specified the significance of Geoff Culmsee setting up a down-south lifestyle with his family. "Geoff was the first one to start making surfboards down here ... he moved to Eagle Bay, to a little farm house there. I first ran across him when I moved down."

It must have been a huge decision for the young surfers of the counterculture to move wholes-bolus in pursuit of their wave-riding passion. Nonetheless, courage and confidence that typifies surfers in the water generally follows them in their terrestrial life choices. George took the plunge and moved fulltime to Yallingup in 1969.



But if the folklore associated with the exodus of surfers into the South West from Perth and the eastern states is impressive, then John Malloy's migration from the United States to Yallingup is extraordinary. John grew up in Los Angeles, "a long way from the ocean". He recalled the impact of surfing magazines in shaping his early surfing life. With a small band of high-school buddies, John regularly made his way down to surf the weekend waves at Santa Monica and Malibu. As a nineteen year-old, John's spirit of adventure took over. He boarded a Norwegian freighter as a work-away, paying for his passage by toiling at sea. On the voyage across the Pacific Ocean, John and his mates were in surf heaven. In transit, they scored great warm waves in Tahiti, Samoa and in Fiji. But the distant South West coast of Australia summoned him.

**John Malloy:** We'd heard about Margaret River. We'd seen photos in the magazines ... so we decided to make our way out to Western Australia. That was always our intention. I didn't really know much about the east coast at the time. Margaret River looked like a great place. So we arrived in Sydney ... young blokes with surfboards. We got to the Hume Hwy and hitchhiked across the Nullarbor to Perth, and then down to Yallingup. It was in 1972. We arrived at a good time of the year in autumn ... beautiful weather, beautiful waves. I just loved the place straight away. We ran out of money and when winter set in, we went back to Perth for five months to work. I worked as a brickies labourer. I saved enough money to buy a movie camera, a Bolex sixteen-millimetre to take some footage of the surfing down around this area. I came back down-south in November that same year. We got jobs around the place, milking cows, working as rouseabouts in the shearing sheds, washing dishes at Caves and at the Lobster Pot [Restaurant]. I did that for a couple of years.

John fondly remembered the first time he and mate Carter stumbled upon an offshore reef near Smiths Beach. "The waves down this way were significantly different to anything I'd ever surfed before. I clearly remember our first surf out at Supertubes. We just couldn't get over how perfect the waves were ... and we couldn't believe that there was nobody else in the lineup."

As well as being a diligent worker and an avid wave rider, John was also a surfing entrepreneur. Recognising that a market existed for legropes, a relatively new surfing hardware accessory, John started the Pipelines brand in 1974 with a business partner. By introducing urethane chord and injection moulded parts, the Pipelines product radically transformed the legrope manufacturing process. The adaption resulted as an outcome of the down-south surf. Product endurance in the big wave environment underpinned John's legrope evolution.

As Murray Smith and Tony Harbison previously noted, John described a sense of disparity between the waves up at Cape Naturaliste and those down at Margaret River. He smiled. “We certainly got intimidated very quickly down there at Margaret River. We were fine up to a certain size, but when it got over that ...” John paused in his classic contemplation mode. “It’s a very serious wave Margarets,” he smiled.

George Simpson recalled the first time he met John at the beach in the early seventies. “Tom Hoyer had turned up just before John. And after that came Patrick Bloomer. They were the first American surfers down here.” George described John, Patrick and Tom as “mellow guys” who were keen to keep the South West waves under wraps. “John and I hit it off straight away. We became great mates. Johnny wanted to stay out here permanently. He just loved the place.”

John did stay in Western Australia. He “ventured up north for eight years in 1976 to pay off a few big bills” working on the Dampier-Tom Price railway and roofing houses in the mushrooming mining towns. However the Yallingup lifestyle always beckoned him. John returned down-south and settled there for good. He started *Creatures of Leisure* in 1987, setting up premises on Clark Street in the Dunsborough heartland. Twenty-five years later, Malloy’s business enterprise has developed into a globally recognised surfing icon, and John is still enjoying his surfing life.

The lack of wave riders meant that surfing was habitually an isolated experience during the counterculture. Surfer scarcity is a 2011 fantasy; far from the current maddening crowds. Like the modern situation however, surfers of those early days were concerned about reasonably priced tucker and affordable living. “In that 1969 period, mid-week there’d only be four or five of us out surfing,” recalled George Simpson. “A couple of the Bunbury guys came down ... Glyn Lance, John Staley and Ronny Jefferies. We all lived in farmhouses around the district.” George gravitated to a premier Yallingup beachfront location in 1971. “I moved into Surfside [restaurant] and moved up from washing dishes to cooking,” he chortled. “Over summer, we’d do a hundred and fifty breakfasts, and a couple of hundred burgers at lunch and a hundred dinners. I still remember, steak, chips, salad with an egg and two pieces of bread and a cup of tea cost \$1.10 - amazing!”

The hunt for new surfing spots between the Capes continued on in earnest. As exploration was occurring to Yallingup’s south, thinking outside the box, Simpson peered northwards. From time to time he observed smoking waves, feathering in the distance on the Cape’s outer reefs. Acting on a hunch that quality untapped surf was in close proximity, George’s search unearthed a wave treasure trove, Naturaliste’s three crowns.

**George Simpson:** I used to sit out at Yallingup and look up along the cliffs and see all the bombies going off up there. In August 1971, on a Wednesday ... I got Vickie Jagger to drive me, Mick Pearce, a kiwi guy, and Mark Rodenburg up to Sugarloaf. We walked back to see what we could find. It was a northerly blowing and about a three foot swell. We walked over the hill and we could see the three waves there. You could tell that with a bigger swell and the right winds ... it had real potential. About two weeks later, it was about four foot at Yallingup with a north-easter. We went back up there. It was a Wednesday as well. I remember this because we nearly called it 'Wednesdays' ... in fact the first four times we surfed it, it was always on a Wednesday [laughs]. Anyway, we parked up at Sugarloaf and walked in ... a good half hour walk, and there they were, about four to five foot. No one there of course, no one had ever surfed it ... We went racing down the hill and we had our first surf there, the four of us - Tony Harbison, Russell from Queensland, Glyn Lance and me.

The three discrete breaks prompted the 'Babies', 'Mammas' and 'Pappas' taxonomy. Way tastier than perfect porridge and much more fun than a comfortable chair. These Three Bears delivered an exceptional wave riding field. And just how good was that initial session? George's faraway eyes indicated something akin to the famed Cape Saint Francis episode in *Endless Summer*. "Yeah I remember it clearly to this day," he grinned. "We paddled out and I got the first wave at Babies. Paddling back out I looked down to Mammas and saw a wave break ... I paddled over there and caught one. We were like two year olds, totally amped!" I asked Georgie if the foursome kept a tight lid on the newly discovered treasure chest. He nodded knowingly. "All the crew were going south, 'Lefties' hadn't been found at that stage. Peter Bothwell and Pete Dyson found it the Christmas after we found Bears." George paused and calmly considered the question. "Yeah, we kept it pretty much to ourselves for over twelve months, we kept it really quiet. Only six of us knew it even existed." Naturally, word slowly leaked out. But George hastened to add that "ten guys in the water represented a busy weekend" during that phase of the Cape Naturaliste subculture. Although Georgie had told his tale of discovery a hundred times before that rendition, he radiated over a swig from his cold beer. "And that was Bears!" he concluded with his characteristic big beaming grin.

Countless Cape Naturaliste surfing anecdotes exist. I have been privy to many of them. Stories involving adventure, camaraderie, happiness, mistakes and tragedy develop within all surfing subcultures. Many of these instances are propagated over time, etched in folklore, often achieving legendary status. Narratives are fundamental in characterising distinctive surfing subcultures within the global surfing culture.



**Figure 5.6: No wonder the boys were “totally amped”. Imagine being first into this lineup  
Chair, bed and porridge just right at Three Bears (Wayne Davies image)**

### **5.8 Yallingup: The South West’s surfing portal**

Yallingup was the gateway for surfing into the state’s South West. In the introduction of the official 1966 state surfing championship programme, the West Australian Surf Riders’ Association (WASRA) recognised Yallingup as the “surfing capital of the state ... renowned throughout Australia as one of the finest surfing areas in the country”. The National Surfing Reserves collaboration was created in Sydney, 2005. This initiative aspires to recognise significant Australian surfing sites. Renowned surfing locations such as Maroubra, Angourie and Crescent Head have been sanctified as national surfing reserves. Margaret River was declared a reserve in 2010. Yallingup was bestowed NSR prestige in December, 2011. According to the NSR website (2011), “National Surfing Reserves are iconic places of intrinsic environmental, heritage, sporting and cultural value to a nation. NSR embrace all peoples to enjoy, understand and protect special coastal environments of universal value to the surfing world.” As a surfing spot that is considered “sacred” by the local surfing subculture, as a surfing environment with quality waves that has had “long term usage”, Yallingup is one of Australia’s eminent wave-riding destinations. Yallingup occupies a prominent niche on the NSR’s website. Yallingup is the spiritual home of the Cape Crusaders.

## Chapter Six: Ecology

*Sometimes when I hold still, feel the earth turn round*

*As I stand and watch, the sun goes underground*

*Walking through the night air, big moon up above*

*Mist over the ocean, it's a different kind of love...*

*You can feel the energy, underneath your feet*

*Close my eyes and realise, there's other ways to see ...*

Damian Lovelock (The Celibate Rifles)

Big World - Spaceman in a Satin Suit (1979)

### 6.0 Introduction: Where do the Crusaders play?

During the mid-twentieth century, the academic quest for an alternative to the anthropogeography paradigm was driven by sociologists such as Frederik Barth, Max Gluckman, Elizabeth Colson and Julian Steward (Kaplan & Manners, 1972, p.75). The ensuing cultural ecology theory involved recognising the significance of the society / environment nexus in anthropology. This theory proposed that the ecosystem was crucial in determining human cultures. Previous approaches held confidence in the principle that the environment was not causative in cultural shaping. Ecology was merely viewed as a limiting factor (Geertz, 1963, p.2).

Julian Steward's "areal research projects" involved expansive investigation of cultural regions. His work came into prominence during the Cold War period. Steward (1950, p.6) recognised that understanding foreign cultures promoted greater tolerance of others. In postulating that cultural systems were dependent on ecological factors, Steward listed "landscape, nature ... and population density" as being significant in determining associations between the human species and the environment (Steward, 1950, p.120).

Steward (1950, p.134) implied that subcultural variations could be explained by “cultural-ecological processes”. He indicated that ambiguities arose as a result of the local environment. For example, dissimilar environmental conditions led to divergent agricultural practice. In response to these variations, cultural peculiarities and differing community lifestyles developed (Steward, 1950, p.155). Steward later deemed that interdependencies between cultural functionality and the environment were “cultural core”. Such cultural activities were nominated by Steward (1955, p.37) as being “social, political and religious” in nature. This idea is supported by Kaplan and Manners (1972, p.75) when they state that cultures “adapt to the environment”. Consequently, the “institutions of the culture” adjust over time.

Divergent surfing subcultures exist because of dissimilar environmental pressures. These ecologies largely determine surfing functionality. Cultural core disparity exists between all surfing subcultures and divergent ecologies result in a process of evolving subcultural adaptation. As the cultural ecology theory is based on a “delimited field of inquiry” (Geertz, 1963, p.10), I have realised the opportunity to research the distinctive Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. The sixth chapter of this thesis considers of the ecology of Cape Naturaliste. This section examines the meteorology and oceanography of the region and glances at prominent macrofauna that inhabit the environment. Chapter six describes some of Cape Naturaliste’s surfing locations and illustrates how the Cape Crusaders revere their domain. This chapter emphasises that ecology shapes a surfing subculture.

## **6.1 Naturally Naturaliste: The Cape environment**

Cape Naturaliste is an expansive 250 square kilometre peninsula. When I visualise the south western corner of Australia I imagine an island - an island on the world’s largest island. To the north and to the east we are surrounded by the desert. To the south and to the west we are hemmed by the ocean. The south west chunk of our continent has evolved over eons as an isolated pocket. The region exists as a unique entity. Seclusion is part of Cape Naturaliste’s magic. Protruding like a prognathic chin from the face of Western Australia’s seashore, Cape Naturaliste is pinned to Earth’s 33° 32’ S / 115° 02’ E coordinate (Lighthouses of Australia, 2005). Cape Naturaliste is enclosed by Geographe Bay on its eastern flank. This boundary encompasses the seaside communities of Eagle Bay, Dunsborough and Quindalup. The Bay is blessed with magnificent beaches, the nomadic Dunn Bay sandbar and extensive nearshore seagrass meadows. Bunker Bay and Meelup are popular summertime tourist destinations. The Meelup Regional Park boasts impressive coastal woodlands that extend to the beachfront at Castle Rock and Point Piquet.

On the Cape's west-side is its alter ego, the wide-open Indian Ocean. This stretch of coast is renowned for its "rugged sea cliffs [and] windswept granite headlands" (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2010). From the surfer's perspective, the shoreline is in close proximity to a narrow continental shelf. Deep ocean waves rise up abruptly when they contact the numerous limestone platforms that line the Cape's neritic zone. These sedimentary reefs are the basis of the region's wave-forming bathymetry.

The Cape Naturaliste ecology is biodiverse, its beaches are magnificent, its seascapes are inspiring. But beauty extends way beyond visual stimuli. Cape Naturaliste has an aroma as distinctive as its scenery. Odours are keys that unlock memories. Odours evoke emotions. Odours remind me of bygone surfing episodes. Hockey and Collinson (2007, p.122) state that "odour is a symbol of self" listing fragrances such as "cut grass ... [and] pristine trainers" as smells that substantiate the active personality. Around Cape Naturaliste, surfing allied olfaction tend to be seasonal. Autumnal change brings the scent of warm rain on the dusty heath, the fragrance of blooming gardenias, the bouquet of winter preparation in the form of brand new wetsuit. Fresh neoprene is my favourite surfing smell. When the cold westerlies blow hard off Geographe Bay, they convey the whiff of briny ocean-ozone mixed with burnt jarrah billowing from Dunsborough's chimneys. Over spring, warming smells of dune flora are carried on offshore breezes to surfer's nostrils - the sugary smell of *Scaevola*, the musty waft of the *Westringia*. The odour of distant bushfires is regular on the same easterly breezes later in the year. The classic summer sweet bush-smoke, trapped under a durable heat inversion reminds me of those languid afternoon surf sessions at the top of the Cape.

A myriad of sensory stimuli define the ecology of Cape Naturaliste. Perception of these cues defines the environment to the subcultural surfers. Flynn (1987, p.400) recognised the intimacy of the surfer / environment relationship stating that "the surfer surfs *with* the ocean ... reading the wave's movements semiotically and improvising a dance narrative in synchrony with that reading". The Cape Crusaders recognise their kismet living in the Naturaliste setting. Although surfers are lured to the district by the regular Indian Ocean swells, attraction between person and place goes beyond the waves. The Cape Crusaders have a strong affinity with their space.

"Yeah the environment down here is amazing," said Craig McConville. "I just love the rawness and the energy of the place." Brett Baker is "most happy" when he is home in Dunsborough. "I'd never want to leave here," he said. "It's the best! I've appreciated the place even more since I've been working away [in New Guinea]." Recognising Cape Naturaliste as "God's country", Mark Cooper moderated his zeal with a little pragmatism. "I hope this place remains unspoilt ..." he said.

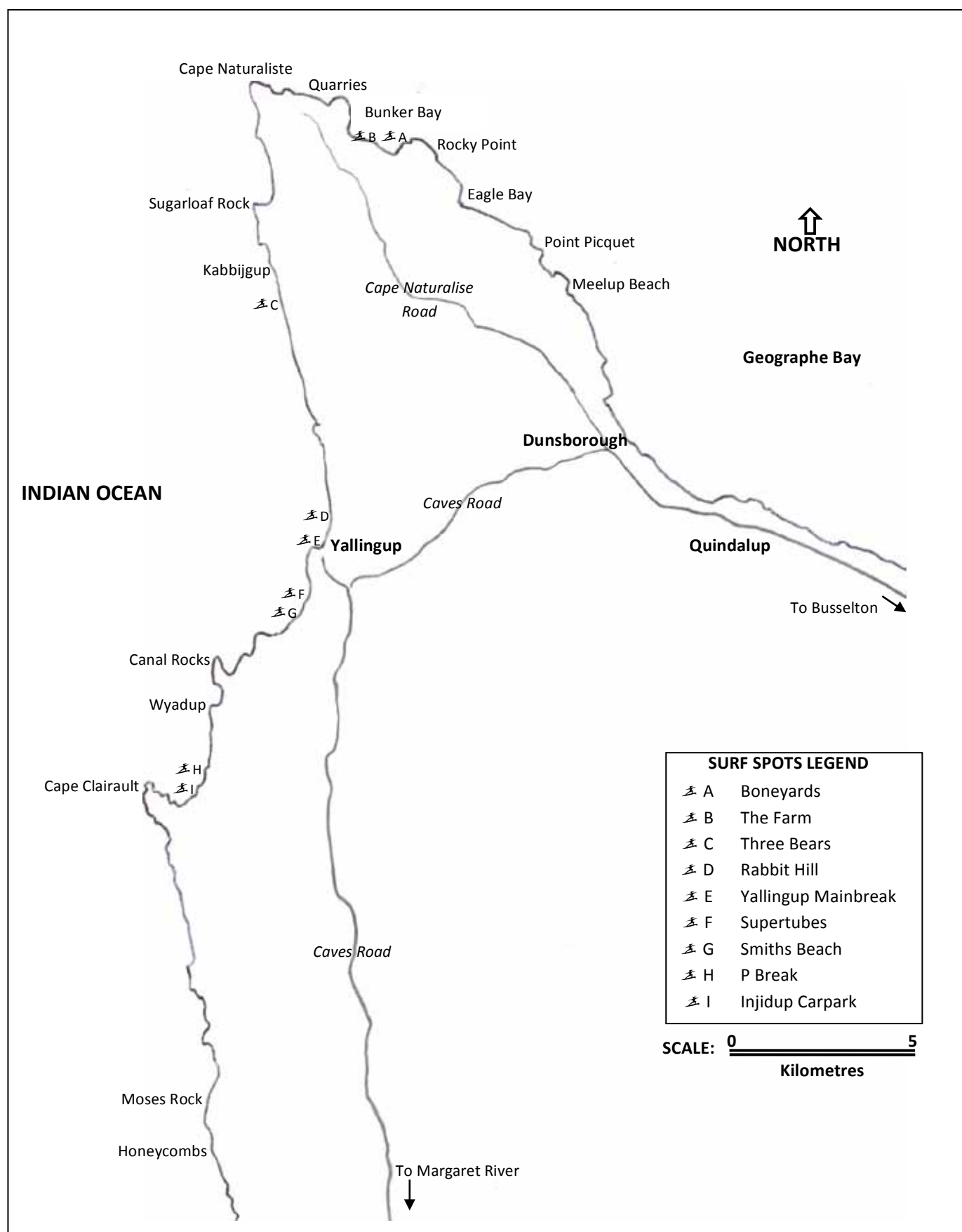


Figure 6.1: Surf map of the Cape Naturaliste region



Although the high energy surf draws wave riders from far and wide, the remoteness of the Cape Naturaliste location is not to everyone's taste; 'many are called, few are chosen'. A distinctive type of person successfully settles to make Naturaliste home. "The power of the surf attracts a particular type of person down here. You learn about the environment pretty quickly ... and you learn your boundaries too," laughed Adrian D'Espeissis. "Surfers who live around here are attracted to this environment," said Brett Merrifield. "They deliberately make their lifestyle here."

Mike Annert believes that people who settle around Cape Naturaliste "value the environment more than material things." Mike likened going to the seaside as a form of meditation. "I can just go to the beach and look at the ocean for hours. I've got to see it regularly, whether it's flat or pumping. I have to go for a swim, have the ocean washing over me." Mike realises that not everyone observes the environment in the same way. "I reckon some people who come to live down here see the environment more closely than others. They see the cold fronts coming through, the rain and the winds. They understand the weather, what the swell's doing, where the wind's going to be." Mike believes that many people from the metropolitan area lose touch with nature. "They just see their back fence. They don't interact with the rawness like we do down here," he said.

"Surfing is a lot about place and solitude," observed Tegan Arnold. "Some people go surfing to be on their own in the ocean." After living in the area for over twenty five years, Tegan stated she is still "mesmerised" with the Cape Naturaliste country. "Every time I drive over the hill at Yalls, I'm stoked." Tegan appreciates that the testing wave field of Cape Naturaliste is not everyone's cup of tea. "No doubt the size and power of the waves has [sic] a bearing on who come here to live. You don't get that in Perth," she laughed. "You can spot the out-of-towners when it's big because they don't go out. They're in the carpark, hanging out. They're having their ice coffees and stuff."

"I remember reading an interview that Taj [Burrow] did in one of the magazines recently," said Luke Thomas. "They asked him, 'What would be worse, not being able to leave Yallingup or to leave and never being able to come back again?' ... and he answered 'That's too hard. It's a place I love, but you need to refresh from time to time.' It's nice to be able to go away and recognise how good it is down here," said Luke. "When I go on a trip, after a while I can't wait to get back home."

Mirroring the "absence makes the heart grow fonder" adage, Luke's comments provide a wonderful segue. Although the Cape Crusaders enjoy their surfing life in the state's South West, a bit of time away from the home base is always a welcome distraction. The people of the Dunsborough Yallingup region enjoy retreating from their home turf from time to time. Seasonal vacations typically involve surfing escapades. Some might say that's like 'leaving work to cart bricks'.

### 6.1.1 Exit, stage left: Escape the Cape

At any given time, fortunate surfers are enjoying idyllic waves at some location on Earth. The notion of “the search” involves the surfer’s quest for finding and riding perfect waves. According to Jarratt (2010, p.49), this was originated by Greg Noll in his debut movie, *Search for Surf*. Universally, surfers dream of riding long walling waves in secluded tropical locations. Surf travel involves a spirit of adventure, a spirit that possesses most surfers. Many Cape Naturaliste surfers are prepared to direct significant time, energy and funds into surfing based vacations to achieve what Buckley (2010, p.427) terms “competitive advantage” as a part of their wave riding habit.

“Winter-time gets long, cold and hard down here,” said Garrick Jackson. “Everyone gets away up north or to Indo [Indonesia] ... holidays around here involve going surfing in tropical destinations.” John Tognini likewise indicated that the annual surf trip is about temporarily escaping the Cape’s bleak winter period. “The annual surf trip is an important part of our local surfing culture,” he stated. In recognising the “fun involved in escaping winter ... and relaxing with your mates”, *Togs* joked that on such vacations, “your biggest decision involves which boardshorts to wear.”

“The surf trip is a big part of the culture down here ... everyone does it,” nodded Damon Eastaugh. “It’s like a ghost town around here in winter.” Surfers tend to take surfing with them wherever they go. Damon’s honeymoon involved a “massive trip around the world” that enabled an opportunity to enjoy some exotic, uncrowded waves. “We hired a boat in Tahiti and sailed around ... looking for surf. We went to Mexico, to Puerto [Rico], looking for waves. We had a great trip ... we did some of the best things [we’ve] ever done.”

Stewart Bettenay asserts that “getting away during winter is part of life” around Cape Naturaliste. “If you can avoid part of the winter it makes it all the more enjoyable down here. Getting the tropical fix ... the fun of going somewhere exotic, the lure of surfing waves you’ve seen and heard about in the magazines or the movies. You want to go and see it for yourself.” Stewart nominated the Albert Falzon classic surfing film, *Morning of the Earth* as a watershed moment in his life. “It did it for me ... those waves we first saw from Indonesia. [We] never thought of waves in Indonesia, I always thought it was flat water up that way ... I guess we had a very narrow focus on what was out there ... but when we saw those blokes surfing Uluwatu at six foot in board shorts, warm water and tropical palm trees, wow!”

“Most of my surfing these days happens up north at Gnarloo,” said George Simpson. “I pull in up there in May and stay right through winter until September. I still love getting up to Indo ... I did the Mentawai trip recently.” George reflected that he and his peers were fortunate in the early seventies to enjoy places like Bali without the current tourist throng. “We had the place to ourselves. There were next to no tourists, we were finding places ... the day that Padang was first surfed, I was there [laughs] ... in 1974 with Richard Harvey. We met up there ... and found so much surf out on that [Bukit] Peninsula. It was just amazing.”

In discussing the annual Cape Naturaliste exodus, “the search” was specifically acknowledged by Lizzie Nunn and Luke Thomas. “One of the greatest gifts that surfing gives you is the search,” said Lizzie. “Everyone gets away over winter down here. The town basically shuts down, everyone’s off to Bali, Indo, Gnarloo, Exmouth ... it’s a beautiful part of our subculture that’s indicative of the area.” Luke stated that many of the Dunsborough tradesmen “convert their work truck into a desert mobile” to enable escape during the clutches of winter. “Surf travel has prospered because so many people are looking to get away from their crowded local breaks and surf at some quiet tropical locations,” said Luke. “It’s all about the search isn’t it?”

Surf travel is a noteworthy part of the global surfing culture. Environmental position and fiscal ramifications ultimately determine when surfing subcultural members vacate and where they search. Home practice for many Cape Naturaliste surfers is put into torpor as a result of an elongated cold winter phase. For others, this period, free from crowds and burgeoning with enormous swells is the time to keep the home fires burning and appreciate the severity of the environment. Dunsborough Yallingup wave riders rate their regular surf-related holiday as a function of their environment. The search is intrinsic to the Cape Crusaders.

## **6.2 Meteorology: Cape Naturaliste’s spicy weather**

Understanding the processes involved in wave production is important surfing knowledge. As elaborated in chapter nine, the well-informed subcultural surfer has strategic capital. Understanding provides opportunity. Informed surf decision making often leads to a competitive edge. Familiarisation with the idiosyncrasies of the local environment is an important aspect of all surfing subcultures. Local knowledge is gold to subcultural members. As a science, surfing has advanced markedly since Tom Blake theorised about seasonal variance on the Hawaiian archipelago.

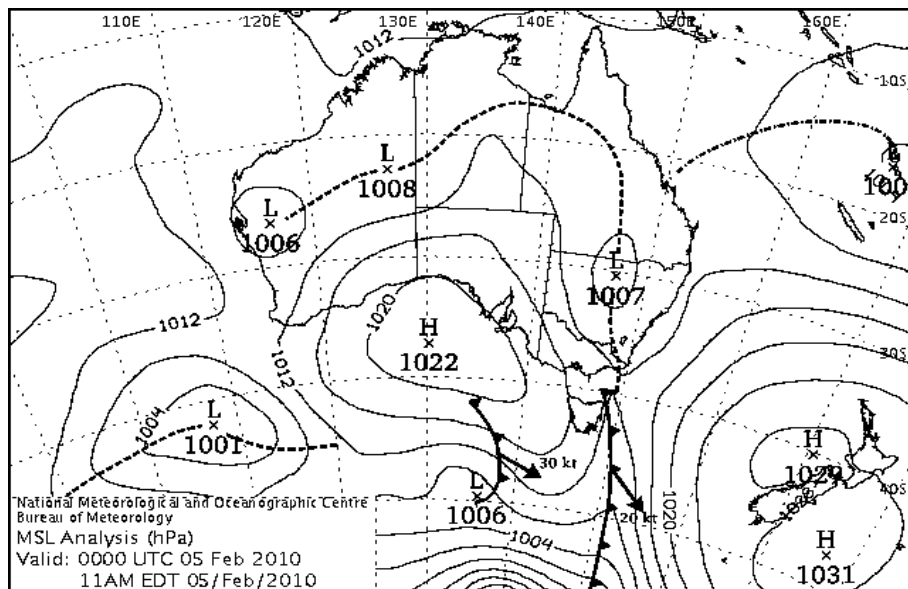
I have seen ... waves at Makapu Point in the winter time, while on the other side of the Island ... at Waikiki beach, there was no surf. Evidently the gravity pull of the planets has something to do with it ... there seems to be a drift influence to the ocean around the Hawaiian Islands ... this leaves the north side of the Islands open to heavy swells in winter months and from the south in the summer... (Blake, 1935, p.65)

Blake's attempt at explaining the Hawaiian cyclic shift in surf conditions is ridiculous. Nonetheless, he clearly recognised seasonal surfing trends. The Hawaiian Islands, sitting like tiny specks in the immense Pacific, typically receive December-February swells from the semipermanent Aleutian low pressure systems in the Gulf of Alaska. Over summertime, swells punch up from the opposite direction, generated by vast storms traversing the Southern Ocean. Although gravitational force has a major effect on our tides, it is Earth's position on its tilted axis, revolving elliptically around the Sun that determines synoptic scale weather patterns and swell genesis.

English poet William Cowper announced in the eighteenth century that "variety is the very spice of life". Cowper's words have particular relevance when considering the assortment of atmospheric patterns that characterise Cape Naturaliste surfing. Such meteorological multiplicity was exemplified during the course of this research. The extreme El Niño droughts of 2009/2010 were in stark contradiction to the La Niña inundations that we experienced midwinter in 2011. Such chalk and cheese contrast typifies midlatitude weather. The southern hemisphere latitudes, between 30° and 50°, are infamous for the persistent, powerful westerly wind regime (Crowder, 2000, p.70; Ahrens, 2005, p.14; Aguado & Burt, 2007, p.279). Embedded within this airflow, like giant whirlpools in a fast flowing river, are intense low pressure systems bearing long, tail-like cold fronts. These systems bring winter rainfall and cold winds to South West Australia. They also produce the swells that bombard the coastal periphery. The Southern Ocean extends virtually unimpeded by land at these latitudes. In this hostile place, gales blow for weeks over "the greatest fetches anywhere on the planet" (Colas, 2001, p. 12). In the Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties such systems have the capacity to produce a "fully arisen sea" where waves attain "their natural maximum height for the wind strength" (Butt & Russell, 2004, p.35). Data presented by Thurman and Trujillo (2005, p.275) indicates that wind blowing in excess of 100 kilometres an hour over a 2 500 kilometre fetch for three days has the capability to produce waves with lengths over 200 meters and heights in excess of 30 metres (100 feet). In the deep Southern Ocean, such conditions produce gigantic, nonstandard "southwesterly swell more than fourteen seconds ... where all the wave mechanics start becoming a little fuzzy ..." (Arabonis cited in Casey, 2010, p.275).



Cape Naturaliste surfers typically look for easterly winds. This situation arises when slow moving anticyclones loiter in the Great Australian Bight as indicated in Figure 6.3. Winds that blow in an anticlockwise direction out of these high pressure systems carry warm, dry air from the Australian deserts. The disposition of these easterly airstreams cleans up the approaching Indian Ocean swells. A tepid, offshore breeze adds enormous value to the Cape Naturaliste surfing field.



**Figure 6.3: Summertime Australia: Dominated by a blocking high pressure cell (BOM website)**



**Figure 6.4: Smoking offshore Yallingup: End product of a persistent anticyclone (Holt archive)**

Sturman and Tapper (1996, p.186) indicate that such “quasi-stationary anticyclones” migrate slowly eastward, obstructing the progression of weather through the mid-latitudes of Australia. On the Leeuwin / Naturalise coast, these high pressure cells establish a customary easterly wind regime that works in beautiful antagonism to the southwesterly swells. However, once in a blue moon, a different meteorological combination throws the Cape Crusaders an unusual tasty bone to savour.

### **6.2.1 The north swell: A day in the life**

The penultimate day of January, 2011 was an extraordinary episode in modern Cape Naturaliste surfing history. Like so many other Cape Crusaders, I vividly remember the occasion. It was the first time I surfed my brand new Merrick Flyer. It was also the day we reaped the whirlwind of Cyclone Bianca.

The Internet showed a two metre, fourteen second swell running on that morning, nothing untoward. Although the direction was abnormally north, we nonchalantly put that down to the degenerating cyclone off the Batavia Coast, no biggie. So we took off to Bears. Upon arriving at the top of the Cape, we realised the error of the decision. Our home-ground was totally alien. The entire line-up was out of synch. Waves were breaking in places we’d never seen before. Hazy gibberish from a departing surfer confirmed that the swell was rising and closeout sets were the norm. Our anticipated lazy Sunday session turned into a survival surf. The carpark emptied as the swell jacked.

Removing our wetsuits in the sunshine, we observed the empty ocean for twenty minutes - mesmerised. This state of affairs was completely different to anything we’d ever witnessed. We discussed our poor surf choice. The limestone reefs at Bears, like most surf spots around Cape Naturaliste, have been gradually weathered by prevailing southwesterly swells. Waves from that direction peel evenly across the seafloor, producing favourable surfriding conditions. Northerly swells on the South West coast are rarities. This was a novel experience for us. And then the penny dropped. Although Bears was not working properly in this weird system, somewhere else was probably firing.

Word spread quickly that the Wyadup Wedge was ‘off its trolley’. Like Bears, the lineup was in complete antithesis to the normal situation. Instead of the unrideable slabs that typically manifest at Wyadup in big southerly swells, Tropical Cyclone Bianca had served up a northerly wave-feast in front of the gigantic granite boulders. Solid open barrels were racing across the super shallow sandbank at the Wedge. The big game players were all there, tube gorging with style.

Back in Yallingup on holidays from his Sydney based career, home-grown Cape Crusader Simon Barratt couldn't believe his fortuitous timing. "You just don't get the cyclone swells down in the southwest ... to get this from Bianca, to get a north swell, was just amazing" (Barratt cited in Serong, 2011, p.43). Taj Burrow was also in the South West, on downtime from his ASP world tour duties. Taj's excitement about the episode was obvious. "I have never seen a day like it in my life. Not once. There are old guys who've lived on the coast here for 50 years, and they've never seen it. ... [N]ever have we had something like Bianca ..." (Burrow cited in Serong, 2011, p.46).

One of the brilliant outcomes of technology is that occurrences like the Bianca day can be easily archived for posterity. I highly recommend checking out some of the action on the Billabong website, *Taj Burrow and Friends*, at URL <http://vimeo.com/20730414>



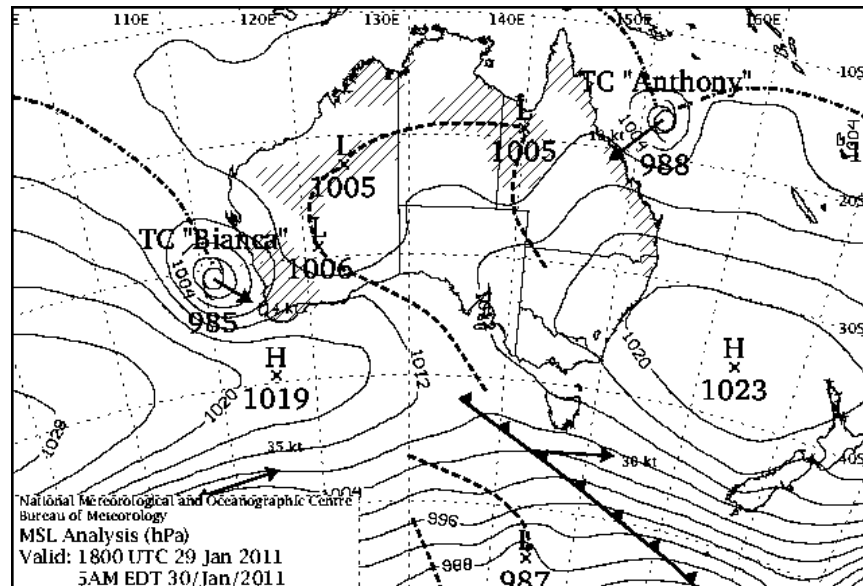
**Figure 6.5: Thankyou Bianca: The Wyadup Wedge erupting like Krakatoa (Epic Swells image)**

Although the footage and photographs present a perfect surfing scene of the Wyadup field, in reality, the waves were extreme, well out of *most* surfers' league.

It was so top-to-bottom, so difficult to negotiate ... [it] was owned by the southwest's best surfers, all Hawaii vets Jake Paterson, Jay Davies, Damien Warr, Taj, and master winemaker cum big-wave hunter, Damon Eastaugh ... Legropes were exploding out of plugs. Panic buttons were pushed when eight foot sets held surfers in the impact zone, neither letting the rider in or out. (Riley, 2011, p.74)



We finished up scoring some epic waves late in the afternoon at Yallingup. The left was converted into an Indonesian freight train and the right peak counterfeited Sunset. Across the break, surfers were scoring extraordinary rides, hooting, laughing and shaking their heads. Drying off I watched a spectacularly bright-orange sun meld with the Indian Ocean. I realised that we'd been part of a very special Cape Naturaliste surfing occasion. Sunday, January 30, 2011 was a day in the life.



**Figure 6.6: Bianca's arrow tells the story**

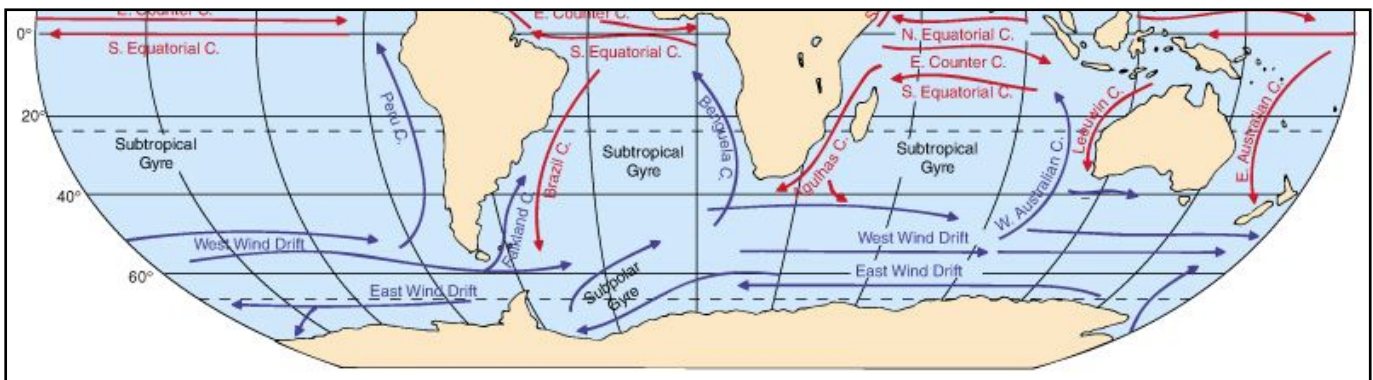
#### **Mean Sea Level pressure / Australian Region (Bureau of Meteorology website)**

"Following that north swell," reflected Garrick Jackson, "a couple of days later, there was an enormous pack out at Yalls, about eighty guys were out ... and everyone was talking about it." Garrick recalled that there was "an exhausted feeling [after] Bianca ... like everyone was satiated." Post Bianca was a time for basking, a time for contemplation. "Everyone got so many good waves," said Garrick. "It was like it was as good as it's ever going to get."

By Monday morning TC Bianca had vanished into the Indian Ocean and TC Anthony was degenerating over the Northern Territory hinterland. However a new threat was imminent. Yasi was on the radar. Fuelled by the superheated Coral Sea, Cyclone Yasi was on a collision course with far north Queensland. Those intense systems journeyed all the way across Australia to bring atypical northerly swell events to the Naturaliste Cape during the summer / autumn junction of 2011. La Niña, The Girl - What a babe! Is she to become a regular southern hemisphere visitor? Will she become a frequent flyer in our ever changing climate? Or was Bianca just a one night stand, a fleeting visitor who will remain part of the Cape Crusader's folklore for a long time to come.

### 6.3 Wonderfully warm: The Leeuwin Current

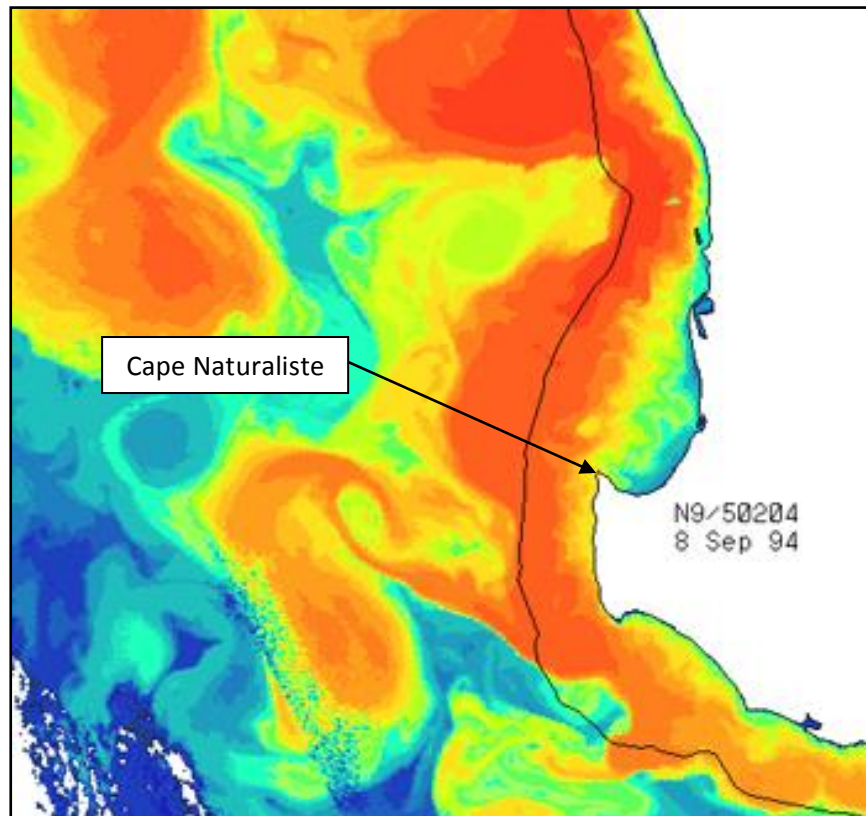
When considering the southern hemisphere's midlatitude regions, it is interesting to compare the western coastlines of South America, Africa and Australia. Cold water, originating in the Southern Ocean, flows toward the Equator on the continental west coasts. These frosty currents form eastern boundaries of the South Pacific, South Atlantic and Indian Ocean subtropical gyres. As indicated by Thurman and Trujillo (2004, p.234) subtropical gyres are analogous to circuits of moving water that are centred in the ocean basins. The southern hemisphere surface currents are driven in an anticlockwise direction by the regular Trade Wind and Westerly Wind regimes. The Peruvian and Benguela Currents run adjacent to the South American and African west coasts respectively.



**Figure 6.7: The three subtropical gyres of the southern hemisphere. (Thurman & Trujillo, 2004)**

These nearshore regions are highly productive marine ecosystems because deep, cold, nutrient rich water upwells to the ocean surface. When this oceanic bottom-water is transported into the photic zone, microscopic phytoplankton proliferates. The resultant energy conversion by way of photosynthesis provides the basis for substantial trophic relationships, resulting in high biomass food pyramids. The world's most productive fisheries are the South American anchovy and the African pilchard fisheries (Nybakken & Bertness, 2005, p.355).

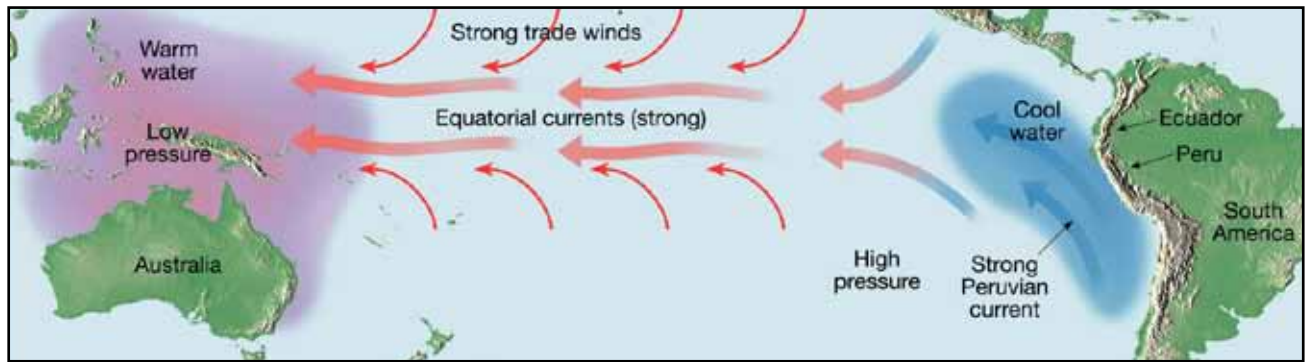
However the eastern boundary of the Indian Ocean basin displays a completely different state of affairs. The cold West Australian Current is displaced offshore, pushed westward by the warm, southward flowing Leeuwin Current. As a result of this unique oceanographic feature, water temperatures adjacent to the Western Australian coast are approximately 4°C warmer than those along the Western African and South American peripheries at the same latitude (CSIRO Regional Currents, 2003). The Leeuwin Current is clearly visible as a red flow, snaking southwards past Cape Naturaliste along the Western Australian coast in the CSIRO colour enhanced satellite image in Figure 6.8 overleaf.



**Figure 6.8: The distinctive, warm Leeuwin Current. (CSIRO, 2003)**

Sea surface temperatures have a massive influence on coastal weather. Warm water interacts with cold polar fronts to produce significant rainfall events. The presence of the Leeuwin Current means that the southern corner of Western Australia experiences a surprisingly moderate Mediterranean climate. Lutgens and Tarbuck (2007, p.195) describe the latitudinally comparable Atacama Desert of South America and the African Namib Desert as “cool, dry and often fog enshrouded locations”.

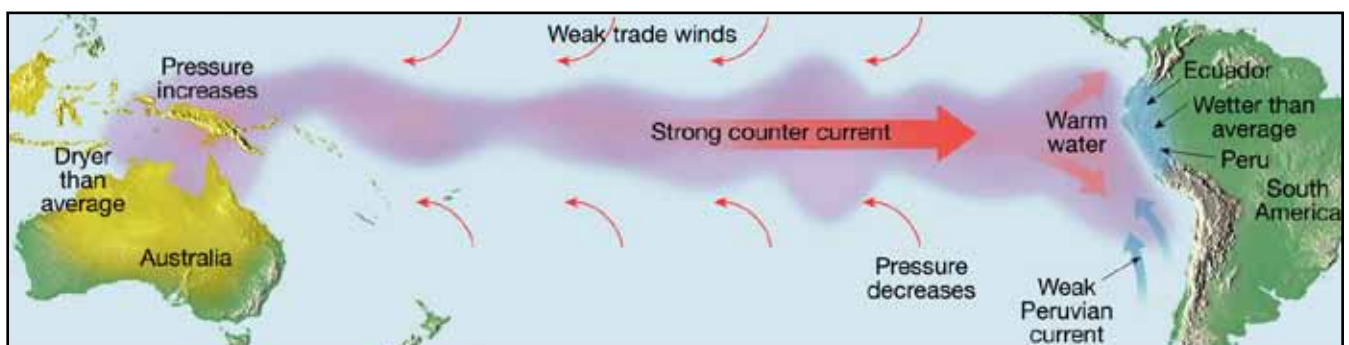
Seasonally speaking, the strongest Leeuwin flow occurs during the Australian winter period. Oceanic conditions in the eastern Pacific Ocean directly influence the vigour of the Leeuwin Current. The link is related to the flow variation of warm equatorial water through the Indonesian archipelago and into the north-eastern Indian Ocean. Under typical conditions, the cold coastal upwelling associated with the Peruvian coast creates a large-scale high pressure region. This results in strong south-east Trade Wind activity operating in the Pacific Ocean and causes a massive movement of oceanic water via the Pacific Equatorial Current. A “net piling up” of water occurs in the Western Pacific and the sea levels in the western Pacific can be 300mm higher than in the eastern Pacific (Lutgens & Tarbuck, 2004, p.195). The manifestation of this gradient is a strong Indonesian throughflow circulation that drives the Leeuwin Current along the West Australian coast. This event is represented in Figure 6.9.



**Figure 6.9: Pacific Ocean circulation during a typical Peruvian Current. (Lutgens & Tarbuck, 2004)**

When an exceptionally strong, extended Peruvian Current operates along the South American Pacific margin, a La Niña event arises. Extremely frigid oceanic temperatures in the eastern Pacific elevate the thermocline gradient. More water is pushed between Australia and the islands of New Guinea and Indonesia, enhancing the Leeuwin Current flow.

From time to time however, a prolonged warm current works in antithesis to the Peruvian Current. This El Niño situation is illustrated in Figure 6.10. In this oceanic fluctuation, Trade Wind activity declines, the Pacific gradient wanes and the Leeuwin Current substantially weakens.



**Figure 6.10: Pacific Ocean circulation during an El Niño event. (Lutgens & Tarbuck, 2004)**

The unusually warm Leeuwin Current experienced during 2011 was a major conversation topic around the Cape Naturaliste lineups. Sightings of Albacore and Black Marlin abounded, boardshorts became standard surfing attire and shivering Cape Crusaders were absent. Perth meteorologist Patrick Ward indicated that the 2011 La Niña was “one of our strongest on record”. Oceanographer Charitha Pattiaratchi stated that CSIRO temperature sensors in the Leeuwin Current recorded 31°C sea surface temperatures, over 5°C above average (Ward & Pattiaratchi cited in Amalfi, 2011).

The Leeuwin Current has impacted on the climate of Western Australia since the Pleistocene ice age (Gingeles, De Deckker & Hillenbrand, 2001, p.867). This distinctive oceanic circulation has determined the evolution of life in the South West. The highly irregular El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) adds weight to the notion of a globally functioning ocean. It is remarkable to consider that oceanic events occurring on the other side of the planet have a significant impact on the Cape Naturaliste subcultural surfing practice. The Cape Crusaders are aware of the significance of this oceanographic anomaly. They appreciate the Leeuwin Current as an exceptional aspect of their maritime environment. Surfing in medium weight steamers during the cold winter season and in springsuits at other times enlivens the Cape Crusaders. Cape Naturaliste is an enviable midlatitude surfing field.

#### **6.4 Give me a break: Cape Naturaliste's surfing spots**

Surf spots are more than 'x marks' on a map. Surfing spots are extraordinary locations, exceptional marine fun-parks. Surfers drive to surf spots with butterflied stomachs, with adrenalin coursing. Some days, surfers depart surf spots with euphoria, with muscles aching and with bullet proof confidence. Other days, surfers depart the same locations with disappointment, with teeth clenching and with self-doubt. Surf spots embody surfing memories - fond memories of triumph, 'unfond' memories of ineptness.

Surf spots establish the subcultural field. Surf spots evolve over time. Longitudinal transformation may be due to natural or anthropogenic effects. Human influences on surfing locations include groyne construction, beach modification and dredging. Changes to the Cape Naturaliste environment are ongoing. Paths, tracks, lookouts and stairways have been constructed in coastal pose. Toilet blocks, cafes and resorts have materialised. Roads have improved. Beach accesses have altered. Some sand dunes have blown out, others have stabilised. Sandbanks and berms come and go with irregular regularity. Coastal evolution is a certainty.

Perceptive surfers interpret their surf spots through natural signs. According to Fiske (1983, p.120) the beach can be understood "semiotically ... read as a text". Cyclic shifts in nature are termed "tempo" by Bourdieu (1992, p.59). Surf related tempo is elaborated in chapter nine. Environmental fluctuation involving sand movement, tides, wave patterns and winds dictates practice in all surfing subcultures. Each and every surfing location across the planet is unique. Surf spots are created by ocean action, by tectonic upheaval and through continental drift. Such slow, perpetual processes produce matchless bathymetries and orientations that determine wave quality at any coastal zone.

Surf spots have personalities. They change. They are moody. Surf spots have their good days and their bad days. In reality though, surf spots *are* places. Surf spots represent different things to different people. Surfers anthropomorphise surf spots by way of their experiences. Surfers look at the coastal zone through surfers' eyes, that's what they do. Surfers see things differently to non-surfers. Surfers recognise the implications associated with the regular spray of water from the back of a feathering peak, with the foam trail left in the wake by a dying wave and with the oblique alignment of a nearshore limestone reef. Surfers and environment have placental connection.

The ocean and the atmosphere are ultimately responsible for the cause and effect of the surf zone. The immensity of this causative system on the surfing culture cannot be overstated. Earth's ocean is enormous however at the micro-level, it is the coastal interface that governs surfing subcultural practice. Surfers are classically parochial and proud of their subcultural environment. This is conspicuous from the following excerpt.

Along all of California's varied coastline there's only one Malibu ... blessed with an unusual social and geographic setting ... the bathymetry produces some of the finest 'hot-dogging' waves in the world ... When [storms] from South America send powerful swells ... the waves of Malibu show their best ... Malibu, man that's a groovy place. (Dixon, 1969, p.36)

Preston-Whyte (2002, p.321) surveyed South African surfers in Durban to determine the respondents claimed "a strong identification with their favourite surfing space". These surf spots were regarded as "special" because they were "associated with good memories, they offered a sense of community ... and they frequently produced waves favoured by the respondent".

The Cape Crusaders are similarly passionate about their home ecology. From the 1950s to the 2010s, numerous personalities have been shaped by the Cape Naturaliste environment. Conversely, many individuals have shaped the vibe of the associated surfing subculture. The many varied surf spots that turn-on in diverse wind and wave conditions make Cape Naturaliste an attractive wave riding locality. Different surf spots appeal to different surfers - 'one man's meat is another man's poison'.

When I asked talented Cape Crusader David Anderson the question, 'What is your favourite Cape Naturaliste surf spot?' he answered with *Sale of the Century* swiftness. "Supertubes for sure!" he stated without using the buzzer. "I've got so many good memories of Supers, the all-time summer of 93," he reflected with starry eyes. "We got it four to five foot, pristine so many times that year," he chortled. "When that place is on, wow, you can't beat it. The rush, free falling into it, and then you're racing. Supertubes is an amazing wave!" declared *Ando* over mouthful of his cold Peroni.



Warren Boyes has a penchant for Injidup's northern neighbour. "I love surfing P-Break, it's the best ... that's my favourite wave. I've always loved that big steep drop, the big back door barrels. Low tide on a four metre swell, that's it. I've had some of the best waves of my life out there ..."



**Figure 6.11: P Break unleashing early morning wrath on two hapless victims (Epic Swells image)**

"I love Shallows," stated Luke Thomas unequivocally. "If you're from out of town, you'd look down there and think there's only one surfing spot ... but really there's about ten different punchy spots. Luke described a subcultural trap as wasting hours driving around looking for the best available waves. "Often, the best spot is the first spot you checked in the morning," shared Luke with a laugh.

"Yallingup!" responded Stewart Bettenay without hesitation. "The right, that's my favourite spot. It's a world class wave ... Yalls needs that westerly swell [but] it never ceases to amaze me how good and how different that wave can be." *Stewie* discussed the "moods to Yallingup" with authority. "The south peak, the centre peak, the north peak," he listed, "Yallingup can break in a myriad of different spots." Stewart indicated that one of his reasons for rating Yallingup so highly was due to its capacity to hold a range of swell. "It can break perfectly at three foot ... it can break perfectly at ten foot." The "variation and the scope of the environment" endear Yallingup to Stewart and many of the Cape Crusaders. "I just love the place. Yallingup's our meeting place," he concluded.

#### **6.4.1 Three Bears: Hot, cold, just right**

The waves at Three Bears were first ridden by George Simpson and friends in 1971. I sometimes consider that this often crowded surf spot has been utilised by surfers for merely 40 years. This reflection verifies the youthfulness of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture.

In his detailed work on the beaches of Western Australia, Short (2005, p.187) classifies the Bears locale as WA724, part of the Kabbijup Beach taxonomy.

The main beach ... is a 270m long relatively straight steep sand beach backed by an unstable climbing foredune which has reached the top of the bluffs and blown 50m inland. The beach is fronted by a calcarenite [limestone] intertidal platform then outer reefs, with the Three Bears surf break over the reefs. (Short, 2005, p.187)

Short's scientific description accurately describes the beach profile of this magnificent section of the Cape Naturaliste coast. Three Bears is one of the Cape's most popular surfing spots. It offers variety, it presents challenge. Although the reefs at Bears work in a range of swell size, they are arguably at their best in summer/autumn with a clean swell and a warm easterly breeze blowing off over the peninsula. Three Bears epitomises the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. I have no intention of divulging my understandings of the intricacies of the Bears break. Such local knowledge is hard won subcultural capital, learned via extensive practice. Repercussions for blabbing surfing secrets can result in exile and I am unwilling to 'rat out' the local surfing subculture. The following descriptors from two popular surfing guide books offer Three Bears advice. These passages illustrate that accurately describing a surfing spot is a complex task. Comparing and contrasting the following reviews demonstrates that surf spot analysis is a subjective business.

To the south of Sugarloaf Rock near Kabbijup [sic] Beach, along an extremely heavy four-wheel drive-only track ... you'll find three left-handers known as the Three Bears - Baby Bear, Mama Bear and Papa Bear - with Mama Bear usually the best. These Bears do their thing - intense, hard-breaking barrels - on smooth SW to W swells and NE to E winds ... For experienced surfers only. (Warren, 1999, p.224)

Three long left reefs to surf in all sizes of southwest swell. Classic WA reef breaks - jacking takeoffs and square sucky barrels. On small days surf Baby Bear. If five foot plus surf Mama Bear. When it's big, eat your porridge and go deal with Papa Bear who awaits you furthest out. (Blair & Horan, 2009, p.252)



Bears is a Cape Naturaliste playground. The following interview block quotes testify that Three Bears is a highly cherished environment, much-loved by the Cape Crusaders.

**Lauren Smith:** Bears is my favourite wave ... it is home. We grew up listening to stories read to us about the Three Bears [laughs] ... now we get to be amongst it. I love the versatility of the place ... I love the raw, rugged backdrop. I love it on smaller, fun three to four foot days. You can almost predict the people you'll get to catch up with ... But I also love her flipside ... the bigger six foot days. The crowd is thinner... bound by an underlying need to survive ...

**John Ferguson:** What's my favourite spot? Bears of course, Mammals! It's consistent, a good peak that 'goes both ways, left and right' [Said with a chuckle like Lieutenant-Colonel William Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*]. You know, it's punchy and quick ... it's got everything I like. It's not as easy as Babies, so you get more people who flounder and get in the way there [laughs]. Getting up to Bears can be a mission sometimes, but that's part of the adventure, being in the car with the boys and having a laugh.

**Eli Ryan:** ... the thing about Bears is that you can surf it on a range of conditions, just over a metre right up to three metres if you're that way inclined. It's probably the most consistent wave up this end of the coast. If you've only got a couple of hours to surf, you don't hesitate. You just head straight up to Bears and smash it. ... You get to know the crowd that surf up there too. You get accustomed to the lineup [and] that's important.

**Lizzie Nunn:** Bears is my favourite surf spot. It has absolute childhood memories attached to it, surfing with Misty [RIP] ... and my cousin Lisa, every morning we'd be up there. When my dad got his four wheel drive we'd head up there together ... when I rock up I instantly know where to paddle out and get my share of the waves ... It's like going to the local pub

**John Tognini:** Bears is the best, I like how you know what to expect in any given conditions. The drive in is beautiful ... you know the crew up there. It's our 'bread and butter' wave.

Surfing Bears is a ritual. According to Alexander (2004, p.527) "rituals are episodes of repeated and simplified cultural communication in which the direct partners to a social interaction ... share a mutual belief... Ritual effectiveness energizes the participants and attaches them to each other [and to] the relevant 'community' at large." From the previous excerpts, the Bears ritual is a thriving reality. The uncomfortable journey to the top of the Cape, the familiarity of the break's intricacies, and the sense of self in the lineup - these ingredients add zest to the Bears surfing ritual.



**Figure 6.12: No time for porridge. Beautiful big Bears, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011 (Nick Hunt image)**

#### **6.4.2 Naturaliste Narrative: Bear hunting**

**Time:** Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010, hot, dry, north easterly winds - another summer day in spring

**Space:** On the way up to Bears

**Act & Actors:** “It’s always an adventure going to Bears” my twelve year old son Billy remarked after we made a successful mission to the top of the Cape last summer. We’d witnessed a two metre long carpet python slither across the track and an ocean full of frolicking humpbacks. We’d narrowly avoided a head-on collision on a blind bend. We laughed on the white sand before surfing the small offerings. The 4.7 kilometre long track up to Bears is an unpredictable, bone jarring four wheel drive experiment. Superheated black dirt draws tyres like quicksand. Jagged limestone boulders threaten exhaust systems. Steep inclines beckon unwary drivers into the saltbush. However the pot of gold at the end of the uncomfortable rainbow brings deserved reward to the resilient Bear’s pilgrim.

**Thick Description:** A two point two metre, thirteen second swell had my intestinal butterflies fluttering. I'd been awake since dawn - checking the web, sorting my gear, pacing with espressos, too aware of the gusty northeaster whipping the pebbie leaves into a frenzied dance. Be patient, the wind will back off eventually. The cicadas had been chirping for hours in the morning humidity, harmonising with the warbling magpies. Jasmine perfume completed the springtime setting. My edginess finally got the better of me, again. Locking in the Cruiser's hubs I headed northwards along the bubbling bitumen. Cricket was on the radio. O'Keefe giggled incessantly while Mitchell paraded gratuitous statistics. The Poms had us on the ropes - immaterial news to the Naturaliste surfers.

Turn off the blacktop, click on the high range, pull in the mirrors, wind down the window. Elbow out, deep breath in, green go. Bounding over the corrugated sand the keys collide noisily in the ignition. My pocket knife bounces off the dash. It joins mobile, wallet, thongs and sand under my sweaty feet. Shit, slow down! Be cool!

I swing up the limestone knoll and over the multiple diversion hurdles. The Department of Conservation boys *tried* to mitigate track deterioration this year. Not that run-off was an issue during the El Niño of 2010. Blocking highs, grooming offshores and clear skies had been monotonous. Sure I felt bad for the grain cockies, but such meteorology is a surfer's delight.

Looking over my right shoulder down to Bunkers, the wind is chopping up the Bay. I see swell lines rounding the Cape and the butterflies flicker again. The easterly accelerates along the D'Espeissis' fence-line. It gains momentum as it races down the knoll to the Indian Ocean, hundreds of metres below. At the top of the Cape the view is a postcard. Brilliant blue sky patched with a piebald of flimsy cirrus clouds. A perfect indigo lined ocean. Waves race across the sandbanks at Kabbijgup. They spin and turn inside out with a silent burst of whitewater and a shower of offshore spray. "I wonder if that'll be surfable when the swell drops?" I say aloud to no one.

The nastiest section of the track looms. A new level of concentration develops. It's rocky and gnarly, a scarred moonscape. It spreads and steeply stretches downwards like a nightmare, perpetually intensifying with the surfer traffic. I imagine a vehicle easily overbalancing here, somersaulting through the cliffy heath, and coming to rest in the briny way down below. This track did not even exist fifteen years ago and now it's past its use-by date. Surfers have a huge impact on their environment. What will the Bears track look like next year? What will the trek entail in ten years?

On the straight at last - accelerating, bouncing and craning southwards. There's a pack on it, but Bears is grinding beautifully, again.

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## **6.5 Marine mega-fauna of the Cape: Wild wildlife**

The Indian Ocean is the habitat of a myriad of organisms. Some of Earth's most noteworthy marine species congregate in the waters off the South West tip of Australia. Pink Snapper, Australian Salmon and the West Australian Dhufish keep the finfish anglers enthusiastic. Abalone, Blue Swimmer Crabs and the Western Rock Lobster provide five-star fare for the clued-up invertebrate hunters. Seals and sea-lions, pelicans and petrels, corals and cuttlefish, sea grass and sea lettuce - the diversity and density of our local marine life is truly awe-inspiring. This section of the thesis considers three of the prominent mega-fauna species that frequent the Cape Naturaliste oceanic environment.

### **6.5.1 Marine mammals: Hump-backed and bottle-nosed**

Due to their extensive position in the ocean, surfers regularly have opportunity to observe marine animals in detail. The Cape Crusaders are habitually treated to amazing displays put on by acrobatic bottle nose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the breaking waves.

Their spins and aerial manoeuvres are enthralling. Dolphins clearly have fun surfing. I am always fascinated to observe other people's reactions when they see a pod of dolphins break the surface around the Cape Naturaliste lineups. Unsuspecting tourists are often initially terrified, mistaking the cetaceans for other, more insidious creatures. Local surfers are generally unperturbed when the dolphins appear. Dolphin attendance in the Cape Naturaliste lineups is almost an expectation. As a generalisation, the local surfers receive a great pleasure from seeing the bottlenosed beauties sharing their waves. "I love being in the ocean and seeing the wildlife around Yallingup," said Eliza Greene. "The dolphins are amazing. I feel privileged to live here and see them all the time when we're surfing." Tegan Arnold similarly values witnessing the bottlenosed mammals. "Every time I see the dolphins out in the surf, it's a buzz. It's a big part of going surfing around here, seeing the dolphins." Tegan mentioned the significance of the dolphins as a popular tourist attraction. "People come from everywhere, from all over the world to check them out," she said.

But dolphins aren't the only marine mammals that adorn our nearshore environment. Annually, thousands of humpback whales complete a cyclic migration from Antarctica to Western Australia's northern waters on the Humpback Highway. This 13 000 kilometre round-trip takes the marine giants right past Cape Naturaliste's nearshore zone.

During autumn, the humpbacks head to warmer climes around the Exmouth Gulf and the Kimberly coast. In these tepid waters, the whales calve and mate. As part of their reproductive behaviour, the humpbacks put on spectacular breaching displays that attract fascinated whale-watchers from across the planet. Towards winter's end, the migration enters its southern phase and the humpback population returns to the highly productive summer Antarctic Circle. Here the bulky cetaceans binge on the planktonic krill blooms. According to Environment Minister Bill Marmion (cited in the Sydney Morning Herald, 2011), an estimated 30 000 humpbacks complete the migration annually. The Western Australian humpback armada is the largest in the world, an amazing recovery considering the population was estimated to be only 200 when whaling was halted in 1978 (Berry & Towie, 2010).

I love seeing the different species of whales off the Cape Naturaliste coast. Humpback's leap and frolic, Southern Right's lethargically breach and blow and the enormous shiny Blue's impersonate surfacing submarines with elegance. These denizens of the deep are magnificent animals. Whales command human attention, they deserve our respect. Whale tales are always noteworthy narratives. Tegan Arnold's description of her close encounter with a marine leviathan is legendary in Dunsborough's surfing circle. *Teges* was surfing with about fifteen other wave-riders on the shallow offshore Supertubes reef when an unexpected visitor presented itself to her in the lineup.

**Tegan Arnold:** We saw this big humpback off the back of the reef. Joel Maley and I were like 'let's go up closer and check it out'. We got right behind it - I'm talking about two metres away, really close, having a good ol' look. We didn't realise it had its baby with it. The whale started swimming away, but then it turned around and lifted its head right out the water and let out this massive roar [big laughs]. All this water and stuff went everywhere. Its head was right up out of the water! It was looking right at us! Man, it was so close ... you could see the barnacles on it. And then Joel ... let out this scream [huge laughs] ... and he turned around and pushed me back towards the whale [more laughter]. The whale went underwater and started coming towards us ... we thought it was going to charge us ... it was right there [points] ... it was huge! And that roar was something like a lion would do ... [the] noise that came out of the blowhole. We just hoofed it back up onto the reef. The other crew were on the reef ... laughing, just cracking up ... they couldn't believe their eyes. Then it just disappeared under the water and took off. That was so funny, hearing Joel scream like a little girl. But having the whale coming after us ... that was a really big moment of my life.

As the whale population grows and more individuals enter the population through birth, it stands to reason that more will grow old and exit the population via death. In 2011, the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation reported an inordinate number of whale fatalities. Department spokesperson Peter Collins indicated that he was baffled by the number of sick and dying whales off the Western Australian coast during the 2011 migration. He stated that many whales appeared “malnourished and sickly”. The Department carried out autopsies on many of the beached whales over the winter period to ascertain their reason of death (ABC News, 2011). A change in one animal population has ramifications on inter-reliant species. When there is more prey, it is logical to anticipate an increase in higher order food chain populations. More whales mean more whale predators.

#### **6.5.2 Old Whitey: White Shark, White Death**

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2011 was a day that rocked the Cape Crusaders. Twenty-one year old Kyle Burden was attacked and killed by a Great White Shark while surfing at Boneyards in Bunker Bay. This was the first occasion that a person had perished as a result of shark attack in the waters of Cape Naturaliste. The local surfing subculture had forever changed.

Surfing involves confronting danger. Surfing necessitates stepping into vulnerability. Big waves, ultraviolet radiation, sharp reefs and aggressive competitors spell risk. Humans have evolved as terrestrial animals. The marine environment is in reality a foreign realm to our species. The ocean is the habitat of some of Earth’s keystone predators, the *Selachimorpha*. Sharks are dinosaurs. They are highly efficient carnivores. Their physiology has developed over millions of years. Sharks are designed to feed on other animals. Mammalian prey forms a component of some shark species’ diet.

Sharks evoke fear in humans. The notoriety of Spielberg’s 1975 epic *Jaws* verifies this assertion. Surfers universally recognise the danger posed by sharks; however, in most cases, the consideration of shark attack does not deter a surfer’s practice. If fear of shark attack was at the forefront of a surfer’s decision making process, then that individual would not surf. Notwithstanding, bravado does not eliminate the primeval feeling that all surfers experience - ‘I could get eaten by a shark’.

We’ve all thought about sharks when surfing. Most of us have been asked by a member of the non-surfing community, “Aren’t you scared of sharks out there?” or “Have you ever seen a shark?” ... the thought of Great White sharks will occasionally creep into our heads, and maybe for good reason (Dimond, 2011).

Shark attack has long been associated with surfing. Fiske (1983, p.138) recognised the threats involved in confronting nature. "Escape into the surf ... can mean escape into sharks ... a motif that merges nature, the body and physical sensation with the reversal of the hunter: hunted relationship." Fiske (1983, p.137) describes such risk as part of the surfer's "politics of pleasure".

Surfers are not the exclusive human target of sharks. Scuba divers, snorkelers, swimmers, paddlers and water-skiers are also shark victims. There are more than 4 000 individual shark attack investigations recorded in the International Shark Attack File (ISAF, 2011). Nonetheless, when a surfer is killed by a shark, the world media have a field day with the grotesque outcome. Wanton journalism has the capacity to fuel the human trepidation of sharks.

According to the Burgess (ISAF, 2011), "there are ... 70-100 [worldwide] shark attacks annually resulting in about 5-15 deaths". Although shark attack trends have increased in the recent decade, the ISAF recommends that care be taken in drawing hasty conclusions from their data. They suggest that shark attack increment is most likely due to a higher incidence of human ocean bathing.

As world population continues its upsurge and interest in aquatic recreation concurrently rises, we realistically should expect increases in the number of shark attacks and other aquatic recreation-related injuries. (Burgess, ISAF, 2011)

Dimond (2011) states that during the last decade in the USA there was "a 73 percent increase in shark attacks compared to the 1990s." Dimond indicates that along the Californian coast since 2000 there have been 56 shark attacks. Seventy percent of these have involved surfers. Correspondingly, CSIRO research determines that shark attacks in Australia increased from "6.5 incidents per year in the decade 1999-2000 to 15 per year over the past decade" (Fleming, 2011, p.65). Data tabulated in the Australian Shark Attack File (2011) shows that in Western Australia there have been a total of 119 shark attacks on people since records were commenced in 1791. Of that total, 18 of the attacks have been fatal. It stands to reason that with more people using our ocean, the greater the likelihood of shark/human encounter. It also stands to reason that with many more people involved in the surfing culture, more surfers will be attacked by sharks. But shark attack statistics are really cold, heartless facts. These numerals provide little consolation to the friends and families of the unfortunate shark attack victims. They don't make a surfer's return to the ocean any easier after a life has been violently taken from the lineup. Statistics are used and abused by scientists, columnists and politicians as effectively as they are by footballers, cricket announcers and stockbrokers. Data regarding shark attack are charlatans.

Surfers don't really care about the likelihood of being killed by falling coconuts. Surfers don't want to know about 'death by lightning' probability. Surfers understand that being attacked by an apex predator is a reality in their culture. When shark attack occurs in any surfing subculture, fear, uneasiness and anger infects the local surfing populace like a virus. Along the Naturaliste / Leeuwin coastline, three young surfers have lost their lives as a result of violent shark attacks in recent times. Mandurah surfer Brad Smith (30) was killed by two sharks while surfing at Noisies on July 9, 2004. Busselton surfer Nick Edwards (31) was killed at South Point on August 17, 2010. Most recently, Willyabrup bodyboarder Kyle Burden (21) perished in the waves at Boneyards. In each case, it is almost certain that the Great White Shark species, *Carcharodon carcharias*, was responsible for the attack.

Bruce, Stevens and Bradford (2005, p.1) believe that Great Whites travel over extensive distances to habitually revisit particular feeding sites. "These include pinniped [seal] colonies that are prime feeding areas for adult and sub-adult animals". Individual sharks show variation in site fidelity. An example involving individual sharks returning to seal colonies at the Farallon Islands, California indicates that one shark "was sighted 15 times over seven seasons, in the same area off the islands" (2005, p.36). In work completed off the Neptune Islands in South Australia, "of 43 white sharks identified from tags or distinctive marks ... between April 1989 and February 1991, 49% were subsequently re-sighted, always at their original locations (Bruce, Stevens & Bradford, 2005, p.37). The conclusion drawn by the scientists is that Great Whites revisit feeding locations on a "semi-regular basis checking them out for potential prey".

In his watershed research on the Great White Shark, eminent CSIRO marine scientist Barry Bruce determined that the *Carcharodon carcharias* species has a range of food preference. Considering the gut content of 17 different sharks, Bruce (1992, p.6) discovered that bottle-nose dolphins, squid, fish, other sharks, rays, crustaceans and seals appeared in the stomachs of the sampled animals. Bruce (1992, p.7) indicates that seasonal variation in Great White migrations were "correlated to movement associated with reproduction, seasonal availability of suitable prey, and sea surface temperature". It would seem logical that Whites migrate to destinations coinciding with the aggregation of their prey species - to seal colonies during the pupping season, to enclosed waters during fish spawning events. Klimley, Le Boeuf and Cantara (2001, p.634) state that hunting strategies of the *Carcharodon* are "uniquely adapted to the life history of seals and sea-lions at widely separated coastal locations ... Sharks concentrate feeding efforts around shallow zones surrounding pinniped colonies." The close association between Whites and pinnipeds is irrefutable.



Great Whites have an amazing capability to migrate vast distance. One creature was tracked swimming the entire breadth of the Indian Ocean from South Africa to Western Australia.

This shark's course of 11,100 km entailed a counter-clockwise displacement of more than 750 km off the southern tip of Africa, followed by a remarkably direct path toward northwestern Australia, indicating that white sharks do not need oceanic islands as gateways for transoceanic migrations (Bonfil, Meyer, Scholl, Johnson, O'Brien, Oosthuizen, et al., 2005, p.100).

Why do Great White Sharks attack humans? Is it mistaken identity, confusing surfer with a seal? Is it curiosity, using sharp teeth and powerful jaws to feel an unknown marine creature? Is it hunger, a famished shark responding to the stimuli of a long empty digestive tract?

Barry (cited in Webb, 2004) states that Great Whites are highly developed predators. "They are not mindless killing machines ... they don't hunt for fun. There's no need for them to kill ten seals at a seal colony. They won't go round biting everything in their path". This view is supported by University of California shark authority Peter Klimley (2003) when discussing a fatal White Pointer attack on a woman who was swimming among a group of seals in Californian waters.

That shark could have consumed her if it had wanted to. But it hit her, then realized she was not a seal and let her go ... [Great White Sharks] don't eat humans. Humans are not nutritious enough. They are not worth the effort... The fat in seals' outer coats makes up half their body weight and has twice the calories of muscle. Seals and sea lions, not people, are Power Bars for the white shark. (Klimley, 2003)

The southern coastline of Australia is a Great White Shark hotspot. Several well documented hypotheses can explain the heightened activity of this species around Cape Naturaliste. International protection under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has been afforded to the *Carcharodon carcharias*. The population has increased as a consequence. There has been a significant enlargement in pinniped and whale populations in the local waters. Extra prey means greater predator population. More people are swimming and surfing. More people are in the ocean, more people are actively looking for sharks. Interestingly in this research, before the nonfatal shark attack on surfer Mick Bedford at Conspicuous Cliff near Walpole on the south coast of Western Australia in June 2010, not a single interviewee mentioned sharks as an element of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Unsurprisingly, this trend changed significantly during the later course of my data collection. Most recently, when I asked my interviewees to describe some of the things they disliked about surfing, sharks went to the top of the charts with a bullet.

"I don't like sharks," said Brett Baker with a nervous laugh. "But they don't really feature in my decision making process [pause]... most of the time." Teenager Matt Annert recalled "one nasty experience" when he witnessed a shark while surfing at Shallows. "That spooked us all pretty bad," he said. Warren Boyes and Stewart Bettenay indicated that although they detest crowded lineups, they don't mind some company in the water. Said Warren, "With the shark situation down here at the moment I don't mind having a few other guys out." Stewart elaborated with a wry grin, "I don't like surfing by myself ... I like to have someone else on the menu as well as me [pause] and that isn't being flippant ... [sharks are] on everyone's mind at the moment." Stewie conveyed some anecdotes of fresh sightings. "A guy at Bears saw a giant White grab a seal recently. Some guys got chased out of the water at Moses Rock. Tony Hardy and the boys, they got chased out at North Point by a very big White on the Memorial Day [for Nicholas Edwards]." Stewart paused and shook his head, "Shark attacks? There's a lot of unknowns in surfing aren't there!" I asked Stewart what his theories were to account for alarming incidence in White Shark goings-on. "Whales," he immediately responded. "I lived down here in the early seventies and I can't remember seeing one single whale back then. Now, you can't go down to the beach without seeing a whale this time of the year. We went out whale watching with the family recently ... and there was like a freeway of whales out there."

After describing a recent frighteningly close encounter in the waves of Margaret River with "a very big shark", Courtenay Gray calmly outlined his opinion on the situation. "I'm not really into the whole culling thing, but we've got to work something out," he said. "We've upset the balance enough in the ocean. I don't think killing them all is going to achieve anything." Courtenay continued to suggest that the recent spate of shark sightings may in part be due to misidentification. "We have a hell of a lot of dolphins in the water down here," he emphasised. "Kids at school [Margaret River Primary School] were coming up to me regularly saying things like 'we saw another shark out at Gracetown' ... it was constant. And the media whip it up too." I questioned Courtenay about the increment in the Great White population. "The last fatality up your way at Boneyards, that's real close to that big seal colony near the Cape [Quarries] ... Whites have survived for millions of years haven't they? They know where their food is at. Mick Manolas [Margaret River guru surfer/shaper] told me recently that he never saw a whale on this coast until he was fourteen," continued Courtenay. "And he reckons he never saw a seal anywhere." In paraphrasing Mick's recollections, Courtenay detailed that some of the locals would take decisive action against the pesky pinnipeds at Cowaramup Bay. "The fishermen along this coast would go down and shoot the seals [because] they'd get into their nets. They'd go out onto South Point and they'd just shoot them all." Courtenay temporarily suspended the tale and provided a straight-laced conclusion - "No seals, no whales [pause] ... no sharks."

On the afternoon of Nick Edwards' attack, I contacted Ian Cairns in California to convey the sad news and ask for his opinion about sharks and surfing. Ian had already learned of the South Point fatality. "Yes, that was bad news," he indicated. "At one of my favourite waves too. I was out there in March when I was in Western Australia. I was sitting seventy yards further out than everyone and I was thinking *those* thoughts." However Ian was philosophical about the situation. "Being part of the wilderness is one of the reasons I love the South West. It's all about adventure, one against the odds, harsh conditions ... and that involves braving [sharks]."

David Anderson indicated that the Cape Naturaliste community consensus called for some radical action. "That last attack [Kyle Burden] has had a massive effect on all of us, huge!" he stated. "You take a look on *Facebook* at the moment ... everyone's onto it. You know, 'get a drum, get a big bait and a big hook and let's get rid of it!' *Ando* broke from the *Jaws* / *Amity* scenario and concluded. "But I'm really not that happy with that." Dave put forth an insightful upside to the recent chain of events. "I was out at Inji Carpark the other day with Garth and *Adzy* ... four foot, and we were the only ones out. How rare is that? It was gold." David reflected on the gravity of the situation before continuing, "It's really tragic about the fatality, but I mean there's no one in the water at the moment. You still have to surf. I was surfing Yalls yesterday and everyone was looking down, checking what's goin' on below. Everyone's completely on edge. And I was thinking, surfing has gotta be the only sport in the world that you can go out and get eaten alive." Dave laughed with irony. "But what do ya do? Ya surf, that's what ya do ... ya can't stop. That's like letting the terrorists win isn't it! We're not stopping travelling because of them." *Ando* finalised dialogue from a family man's perspective. "I want my son to have as much fun surfing as I have had [pause] ... but you know, I'll worry more about sharks with him than I do about myself."

Surfer density in the Cape Naturaliste lineups definitely diminished following Kyle Burden's attack. They followed the same trend after the Smith and Edwards tragedies. However, surfers recover from their terror. They overcome apprehension and they re-emerge in the field. Throughout September 2011, shark related conversation around Dunsborough was ubiquitous. Although views on dealing with the situation were diverse, the commonality was that 'something had to be done'. When Bryn Martin disappeared off Perth's Cottesloe Beach, another unmistakable victim of a White Shark, the media went ballistic. From television current affairs programs to talk back radio, from chat-rooms to social-media sites, Old Whitey was firmly locked in the sights of most Western Australian citizens. In *The Sunday Times*, Liam Bartlett editorialised in traditional *60 Minutes* style.

Despite numerous attacks and deaths in the past few years from Margaret River to Peth, not once has the opportunity been taken for the suspected killer to be culled ... For some reason we have become prisoners of a feel-good mentality that dictates great whites should be treated like *Free Willy* no matter what mayhem they have caused. (Bartlett, 2011, p.60)

Shark attack drives the media into a bloody feeding frenzy. Shark attack sells newspapers. Shark attack diverts the population from our typical daily bad news stories. Hugh Edwards, shark expert and author, expands on this notion.

Human beings have always been fascinated with the creatures that can kill them. There's nothing like a fatality to make an imprint in the public mind. And every time people start to feel comfortable, there seems to be another one (Edwards cited in Parry, 2010).

Brett Merrifield is one of the Cape's regular early morning surfers. After seeing Brett interviewed on the GWN nightly news, I re-established contact to incorporate his proposal concerning the shark dilemma into this work. "We seem to be hearing about more [shark] sightings over the last couple of years, which is a concern for all surfers. When Kyle Burden was attacked ... everyone straight away thought, 'Hey, this is out of hand!'" Brett listed a series of shark sightings at Gracetown, and others at Meelup, at the Busselton jetty and at Old Dunsborough since the fatality at Bunker Bay. "I have been bumping into surfers daily raising the shark issue ... people are saying that something needs to be done. This is a big concern amongst surfers ... [and] the general community too." Brett petitioned local parliamentary ministers, Troy Buswell, Barry House and Norman Moore. "It's got to a stage [where] I thought I would send a letter ... simply stating my concern." Brett's letter suggested that authorities should consider "culling sharks that are close to shore ... [and] putting humans at risk".

A public forum regarding the 'shark problem' was conducted in Busselton in October, 2011. Representatives from the Western Australian Department of Fisheries, Surfing WA and approximately 70 community members attended. As a result of the meeting it was established that augmented beach patrols between Bunbury and Margaret River would include helicopter surveillance for summer. Fisheries WA indicated that additional research pertaining Great White Shark behaviour was planned in the future. The most significant discussion topic at the forum involved the determination of threat from resident sharks that posed an imminent danger to humans. Clarification to define the term "imminent danger" was by and large unresolved.

Department of Fisheries representative Stuart Smith (cited in Robinson & Pucar, 2011, p.13), suggested that although the White Pointer species is protected, a protocol exists “which allow for a shark to be destroyed ... when human life is in immediate or imminent danger”. That progression would seem to be easier said than done. By the time a vessel is activated, armed and able to destroy a lurking Great White, the beast would have retreated into the abyss. It’s not like killing a rabid dog or stalking a rogue lion or tiger. The ocean is vast and *Carcharodon* are elusive.

Pragmatically, shark attack is not a new concept to the Cape Crusaders. Unbeknownst to me before this research, a surfer was severely mauled by a shark while surfing at Yallingup in the early 1960s. This episode was recalled by Mark Paterson, who witnessed the grisly assault from the water.

**Mark Paterson:** The recent shark episode prompts a memory. One Easter we were out at Yallingup in the surf. There were a few surfboats out ... every Easter they had a surf carnival at Bunbury, and when the event finished they’d come down here ... and get some waves. There were about ten blokes out using those little hand boards, body-surfing. There were salmon everywhere of course ... and one bloke, he was treading water out there, flippers on, felt this thing nudge him [mimicking yelp]. The shark had its mouth open and he put his elbow straight into its mouth. It must’ve been a bronzy [bronze whaler] ... tore his arm [points to forearm and bicep] there, there ... right up his arm. Bang! Bang! Lucky the surf boat was out there! They loaded him up. He was bleeding like hell ... and brought him ashore... Brian Audas, *Pud* Audas. That was his name. That’s a long while ago. That was just an inquiry by that shark. If it was a big one, it would’ve tore [sic] his arm off for sure.

According to the World Shark Attack database website (2007), twenty five year old Brian Audas had his arm bitten by an unknown type of shark while he was body-surfing at Yallingup on April 13th, 1963. The shark that attacked him was estimated to be between 1.8m and 2.4m (6’ to 8’) in length.

On Australia Day 2011, long before the springtime shark attack commotion had kicked in around Dunsborough, we had friends over, visiting from Perth. On our way out the door, with wetsuits and surfboards ready and expectations high, we were farewelled by my mate’s wife with an outrageous parting. “Don’t get eaten,” she warbled. I felt anger, dread and pity in an instant. I shot her a look that would have jolted a hungry White Pointer. Why would someone utter such a preposterous thing to three surfers heading out for a morning wave? Putting every excuse for the remark aside, the menace of shark attack is currently at the forefront in every Cape Crusaders’ mind. The Cape Naturaliste surfers love their environment. The Cape Naturaliste surfers respect their environment.

## Chapter Seven: Habitus

*Heart and soul, body and mind*

*Meet me on the river of time*

Van Morrison

River of Time - Inarticulate Speech of the Heart, 1983

### 7.0 Introduction: What is the Crusaders' subcultural body?

Surfing is a multifaceted pursuit. There is risk in surfing, but where there's risk, there is fun. There is challenge in surfing, but where there's challenge, there is opportunity for a personal best. There is an unwritten script in surfing, so there is the possibility for a Cinderella finale. Surfers share commonality. Surfers display eccentricity. Surfing is about the surfers. Although surfing is a personal performance, surfers do not play out their surfing life in isolation. Surfers behave as social actors, functioning in communities with other surfers.

A particular body type is essential to competently participate as a surfer. To be successful in wave riding, surfers require athleticism. Surfers need endurance and sharp reflexes. Surfing necessitates a sturdy base of support and a precise centre of gravity. The surfers' physique mirrors his/her activity. Such is described as the "surfing body" (Ford & Brown, 2006, p.120). Although fundamental in enabling wave riding practice, the surfing body involves more than a specific somatotype.

In his philosophical work *Metaphysics*, Aristotle used the term "hexis" to describe the whole-body disposition in exploring the concept of existence (Aristot. Met. 5). Recently, Bourdieu (1992, p.52) refreshed Aristotle's terminology coining the word "habitus" to define the distinctive character of a cultural body. Habitus illustrates the possessions and dispositions that enable cultural members to achieve "modus operandi".

Bourdieu treats social life as a mixture of apparatus and perception. Habitus is the structure that enables cultural practice to function. Habitus generates cultural acuity and action. Habitus culminates in commonsense behaviours that become positively sanctioned within a culture. On the contrary, incompatible extravagances are eliminated. Habitus is a cultural shaping force, initiating adaptation that results in cultural endurance. Conversely, if habitus fails, cultural extinction is likely.

As the embodiment of culture, habitus presents the ethnographer with an opportunity to understand the expert skills that people require to succeed in their culture. The Cape Crusaders are bound by the “dynamic intersection of structure and action, society and the individual” that is habitus (Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone, 1993, p.4). The outcome of this intersection is the subcultural corpus that permits the Cape Naturaliste surfers to achieve Bourdieu’s *modus operandi* and act out their surfing role. Chapter seven concentrates on how the Cape Crusaders cope with ever increasingly crowded lineups, why they love the challenge of riding the big surf and why the surfboard is a significant apparatus in their subcultural habitus.

### **7.1 Coping with crowds: More is not merrier**

In 1971, Paul Witzig (cited in Melekian, 2009, p.86) waxed lyrical that if everyone in the world surfed we would exist in a more peaceful place. “When everyone does it [surfing], there will be no time for wars and killing”. Forty years later as the surfing population geometrically soars, Witzig’s prophecy seems unlikely.

Crowding in the surfing zone according to Buckley (2010, p.426) is a “complex social phenomenon with a long history”. The surfing population was much smaller during the counterculture. Surfing was then confined to a few coastal locations that were developing subcultural traits. However, even in those times of ‘peace, love and dope’, surfers were annoyed by the presence of ‘others’ in the water. At any point during surfing’s osmosis, other surfers have been recognised as competitors, as nuisances, as problems. Other surfers get in the way. Other surfers take waves. Other surfers hassle. Other surfers crowd the lineup - not me.

Mark Paterson recognised that Yallingup’s lineups started to populate during the late 1960s. It was during the next decade that Paterson detected “a bit of aggro” permeating the field. “You know, the ‘I’ve been here longer than you’ stuff started to creep in,” he said. A mild enforcer mentality was developed by the “regular crew”. Greedy surfers were shunned and board flicking was taboo. “If one bloke got out of line, they’d sort him out pretty quick,” said Mark with a wry chuckle.

“Crowded lineups are not new to this era,” said Craig McConville. “Back in 1984, about 30 east coast guys moved into Smith’s Beach, and they’d travelled about in packs, 20 or more of them. They’d all hit the surf at the same time. They’d just bomb it. It got crazy” Such pack mentality clearly exacerbated lineup tension.

Mike McAuliffe recognised the existence of the 'rose-coloured-glasses' syndrome in surfing. "Yeah, we get it in every surfing generation ... the 'it was much better in our day' type of mentality," laughed Mike. "But it's a fact ... crowds have always been a very big part of surfing."

With increased crowds comes increased competition. The crowded surfing scenario often reverts to the natural selection principle, the survival of the fittest. With many competitors vying for a limited resource, struggle ensues. When there are many surfers competing for limited waves, antagonism and aggression often develop. As highlighted by Hardin (1968) in "Tragedy of the Commons", when a resource is shared by a communal population, individual members of the population will endeavour to optimise their gain. Hardin indicates that overpopulation has led to heightened competition within the human species. As a result, the concept of the 'commons' has become irrelevant. Curtailing the global population is Hardin's final radical solution to the dilemma.

The only way we can preserve and nurture other and more precious freedoms is by relinquishing the freedom to breed, and that very soon. 'Freedom is the recognition of necessity' and it is the role of education to reveal to all the necessity of abandoning the freedom to breed. Only so, can we put an end to this aspect of the tragedy of the commons. (Hardin, 1968, p.1248)

Sharing a valuable commodity seems to contradict the intrinsic selfish nature of our species. The idea of sustainable surfing practice involves surfers recognising that other surfers are entitled to be in the field, sharing the waves and sharing the stoke. A significant aspect of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is the concept of respect. By and large, the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture recognises the value of respect. Sadly, practising such respect is sometimes a different matter.

Veteran Dunsborough surfer Phil Rundy indicated that escalating crowds has lead to "heightened competitiveness and hungriness" in the surf. "Things have changed from when it was really relaxed, and everyone was taking turns," said Phil. "I've noticed there's less respect for the surfing elders now." Rundy believes that the change in culture can be explained by a "greedy mindset" that has crept down south with a recent influx of surfers from Perth. "Or maybe it's just a result of people who haven't taught their kids to respect others. It's not hard to say, 'You go this one mate. I've had plenty of waves' rather than rushing back out to take the inside position again," lamented Phil.



Warren Boyes similarly recognised the importance of subcultural respect. "Before I moved down here, I got to know the local boys and I learned to respect them. That's a big part of it, the respect." Warren laughed, "Ignorant people really annoy me in the water. They just paddle out and go straight to the top of the lineup. And if there's an old fella out there who has lived down here for years and deserves respect, like Barry Young or Ralph Redman, let him score a couple of set waves. Some crew just don't give a shit about anyone else except themselves - selfish pricks!" he spat.

Champion Yallingup longboarder Brett Merrifield knows that Cape Naturaliste's "quality waves" attract surfers from far and wide. "I reckon it's important to become matey with other surfers and to respect other surfers. A lot of longboarders can be real wave-hogs, but you have to learn to share waves. Most of the crew down here allow other people to surf without any hassle." Brett recognised that this accommodation "generates a good vibe that is uncommon in other surfing subcultures".

Wayne Bartholomew was crowned the world professional surfing champion in 1978. *Rabbit* was famous for his 'bust the door down' approach in dealing with crowded lineups. Bartholomew is one of my surfing heroes. A nonchalant tube riding style and a cool out-of-water demeanour endeared *Bugs* into the hearts and minds of grommets growing up during surfing's formative years. Bartholomew no longer hassles for his waves. Like a fine Cabernet, he has mellowed. "If you just keep surfing, keep going out there ... you'll end up getting your share ... sometimes you'll get skunked... other times you'll have a good session" (Bartholomew cited in Melekian, 2009, p.93).

Hawaiian lightning bolt Gerry Lopez did not capture a world surfing title. In fact, Lopez's competitive results contradict the surfing stature his *Mr Pipeline* nickname bestows. Nowadays, Lopez's surfing philosophy is akin to less is more - the minimalist outlook of a mature, well balanced surfer. "You have to adapt," says Lopez. " ... with more people in the lineup ... one nice turn... a quick cover up ... a little bit goes a long way." (Lopez cited in Melekian, 2009, p.95).

Triple national surfing champion Michael McAuliffe intuitively likened coping with crowds to a game of chess. *Stomper* is the Bobby Fischer of the South West surf fraternity. "Like most surfers, I find crowds can be annoying, but that can also be mentally stimulating." Mike emphasised that a "change in attitude towards dealing with crowds" is imperative to maintain surfing enjoyment. He believes that "concentration" is vital for surfing success. "You've got to be thinking about the lineup ... this guy's a pawn and he's the king. So I'll work around him and I'll knock him over," Mike chuckled. "And some days that technique works great ... using your mind and strategies and ocean experience." McAuliffe paused to collect his thoughts and smiled, "Other days, you'll just get smoked [laughs], it doesn't matter what you try. And you go in with your tail between your legs!"

Coming to terms with the reality of the throng is difficult for the majority of wave riders. Surfers who make excuses and fail to put themselves into the busy lineup run the risk of fading away. And as Neil Young once quavered in his inimitable off-key pitch, 'It's better to burn out than it is to rust'. Mike Annert pragmatically simplified the situation stating that "you've just got to deal with the crowds." John Tognini laughed while delivering his surfing philosophy. "If you paddle around lots, you'll pick up a few waves. I try not to have too many expectations nowadays, but one thing for sure, you won't get any waves sitting around in the carpark and sooking will you?"

Old-hand Cape Crusaders such as Ralph Redman have witnessed the rise and the rise of the Cape Naturaliste surfing population. Our earliest surfers could not have possibly anticipated that their quiet lineups were destined to explode. Surfers gain wisdom through sharing hours in the ocean, from having fun with other surfers and appreciating every wave ridden as being precious. I asked Ralph to explain how he manages to score waves in the busy surfing field. Ralph answered in mock disbelief. "What are my strategies for dealing with the crowds? I don't tell you that secret do I?" Ralph laughed and continued. "Like everyone, I wish it wasn't quite so crowded down here. I mean you've just got to put up with getting fewer waves now." In bygone days, Redman set a "twenty of thirty" wave booty to a typical surf session whereas now, he's satisfied to pick up a dozen rides. Ralph reflected on a recent outing at Injidup with a grin. "I had a great surf at Inji yesterday and got six *really* good waves." He laughed and continued. "But then I want it to be 'ground-hog-day'. I want to go back and get it exactly the same. But it won't be of course." Ralph did outline his tactics for dealing with crowds however I promised not to reveal his surfing secrets in this thesis. Ralph rocked back in his chair, took a sip of his coffee, put his tongue firmly in his cheek and continued, outlining a past solution for preventing the overcrowding dilemma. "What we wanted to do Rob, was to put up a *great big* [emphasis] fence across up there at Capel. Right across the highway, and don't let anyone else in! It was a nice dream."

And then there is a novel contemporary solution to the problem. John Ferguson is as well-known for his grumpiness as he is for his ability to pick up waves in a packed lineup. John thinks laterally in avoiding the surfing mob. He would rather settle for an uncrowded second-rate wave than a perfect packed lineup any day. "Yeah, dealing with crowds," he chortled. "That's a big issue! More people ... but we're not getting more waves are we?" John suggested that artificial reefs might provide some respite, spreading the crowds out over a wider field and taking better advantage of the regular Cape Naturaliste swell events. John bewailed the surfers' sheep mentality. "I hate the way [that] a lot of surfers can't think for themselves," he scoffed. "You can be out there surfing a nice beachie, peaks everywhere, and someone will paddle out right next to you. That really shits me!"

### 7.1.1 Why the upward trend? Explaining surfing's bull market

As the surfing culture has been greedily consumed by the masses, its burgeoning popularity has culminated in elevated participation rates. Ultimately, with more global surfers it stands to reason that some have dominoed down to the once-sleepy Yallingup. Some of the current Dunsborough surfing population are involved with fly-in / fly-out mining employment. Such a career means extended leisure time, a highly desirable outcome for surfers. The lifestyle associated with the recent Western Australian mining bonanza has enabled people to comfortably live in the South West. When the surfing miners are at home, they are free to fully enjoy the surfing conditions that prevail.

During the economic boom, building projects around Dunsborough proliferated. Many surfers who immigrated to the Cape Naturaliste region during the late 1990s were involved in the building industry as skilled tradespeople. These Cape Crusaders have always enjoyed the prospect to work hard and to surf hard. Opportunity drew these folks to the region. When the surf situation is meagre, the trades-people literally go 'hammer and tong' on the building site to free up time for when the surf is optimal. The Crusader tradies aim to avoid the weekend crowds by scheduling their surfing activities mid-week. "Most of the tradesmen down here are keen surfers," stated Karen Kavanagh. "You can't get a tradie out when it's offshore and pumping," she laughed.

Surfing is a tricky process to master. This degree of difficulty has always been a limiting factor on the surfing population. However learning to surf in the 2010s is easier than it has ever been before. As participation becomes easier, more people take up surfing. Professional surf schools provide patient, organised surfing tuition for novice wave riders. Mass produced, soft, buoyant surfboards mean that young wave riders do not run the risk of copping a whack in the mouth from an errant hard surfboard rail. Unlike the 1970s and early 1980s, contemporary parents habitually approve of their sons and daughters engaging in beach recreation. The popular perception of good, healthy, outdoor fun has rightly replaced the antiestablishment stigma that once dogged surfing. And as children are starting to surf at a younger age, older participants are remaining surfers for longer.

Stewart Bettenay indicated that the new Forrest Highway, comfortable automobiles and accurate meteorological prognostication enable metropolitan surfers to easily make the down-south journey when the surf is on. "Before, you just had the weather chart. Now with a five day forecast, you can accurately pick the surf conditions. And modern cars, how good are they? Crew come down from Perth for a wave and drive back home." However the long time Dunsborough surfer is rational about the situation. "You've got to expect more and more people down here. That's just how it is."

Although Dylan Kavanagh reflects Stewart's logic, he is less accepting of the burgeoning crowds. "Crowds, they're a *big* [emphasis] problem ... people know when the surf is going to be good and they plan for it." Dylan predicted "more localism" developing in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. "Surfers are getting annoyed with all the crew coming down from Perth. It's been worse since that new freeway opened for sure. It's only a couple of hours drive now, and that's an easy road trip. Crew come down for a surf and drive back up in one day. It's getting ridiculous."

International surfers have recognised Cape Naturaliste as a beautiful, wave rich environment, safe, friendly and uncomplicated. Surfing is omnipresent. Surfing is a mainstream phenomenon. From Ross Clark-Jones riding the Amazonian Pororocca to Mark Matthews taking death drops at The Right on our south coast, surfing dominates prime time current affairs programs and sport roundups. Kelly Slater's ubiquitous smiling face is as recognisable as Tiger Woods' glint. Billabong and Quiksilver are as universal as Gucci and Levis. With such glamorous exposure, it is little wonder that more people want to participate in the surfing culture.

## **7.2 Big wave surfing: Size does matter**

As a teenage television viewer of the 1970s, I remember being amazed by the *Thrill Seekers*. Hosted by the *Rifleman*, Chuck Connors, the ground-breaking reality program involved foolhardy daredevils participating in life-threatening routines. The remarkable and the risky were core to show. Since then, we've witnessed a multitude of thrill seekers exit their flaming hoops in finale. Evel Knievel was replaced by the Crusty Demons, Eddie The Eagle usurped by Glen Plake and Steve Caballero overthrown by Tony Hawk. Likewise in the big surf, a new wave of thrill seekers has evolved. A "rarefied tribe" of elite riders travel the globe seeking to tackle the planet's biggest swells (Casey, 2010, p.18). Surfing thrill seekers have taken big wave riding to incredulous levels.

The Leeuwin / Naturaliste coastal strip is renowned for its world class big waves. Since tales of huge, raw Indian Ocean swells leaked from Margaret River following the 1969 national titles, surfers from around the world have been lured to South West WA. Big wave surfing pervades the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Big wave surfers are a key element of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Regardless, Howard (2005) indicates that Oahu's North Shore still remains the testing ground for the "bravest and boldest surfers on the planet". Nominating Pipeline as the definitive "man-versus-nature" cauldron, Howard personifies the tenuous relationship that exists at the Pipe through the tragic death of Tahitian surfer Malik Joyeux, who perished there in 2005.

To prevail at the Pipeline, a surfer must fiercely compete with Earth's best big-wave chargers just to jockey into a position to penetrate a wave. Maintaining focus, the surfer must then paddle down a vertical slab of ocean as it explodes over a shallow, treacherous igneous bathymetry. Under the pitching Pipeline lip, the chosen surfer is rewarded with a fleeting opportunity to stand in a wide open cylinder of salt water. Yet a thin line exists between the barrel of a life and the end of a life.

South West surfing luminary Courtenay Gray knows all too well that big wave riding can be terminal. Courtenay 'temporarily' lost his life during a winter session at the Banzai Pipeline in 1998. After taking a heinous wipe-out, Gray was catapulted headlong into the reef. He was knocked unconscious and remained submerged under subsequent waves for over five minutes. Courtenay's lifeless body was dragged onto the beach where he was resuscitated by Hawaiian water patrol veteran Terry Ahue in a miraculous outcome (Personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2010). Courtenay amazingly returned to confront the Pipeline waves weeks after his near demise. Gray's reputation as a stylish, unassuming, brave big wave rider is well-known throughout the global surfing culture.

Courtenay is not isolated as a Western Australian with big wave standing on the North Shore. Surfers from the South West have long been recognised as fearless, highly skilled participants. Ian Cairns commenced the charge with his gladiatorial efforts at Sunset, Pipeline and Waimea in the 1970s. More recently at the Pipeline Masters, arguably the most prestigious ASP world tour event, two Yallingup surfers have held the highly coveted trophy aloft. Jake Paterson was victorious in 1998 and Taj Burrow crowned Pipe champion in 2009. Two Cape Crusaders have won the world's most esteemed surfing event, an astonishing feat.

Injidup surfer Damon Eastaugh personifies the smooth cabernet sauvignon wines he produces at his family's Flying Fish Cove Winery. A dual winner in the ASL Oakley Big Wave Award, Damon's exploits in XXL waves are legendary. His 2006 ride at the notorious Cow Bombie, located several kilometres off the South West coast, is regarded as one of the biggest waves ever ridden in Australia. Damon's apparent comfort in the big surf environment, whether paddling his 9'6" rhino chaser or towing-in with long time amigo Courtenay Gray, contradicts the treacherous situation. The respect Damon radiates for the ocean and his surfing colleagues is unmistakable. Damon states that surfing performance and fitness are symbiotic. Health is a necessary condiment in his surfing life. "I love keeping fit," said Damon. "I do a lot of beach running, I go to the beach in the morning as a matter of course ... I've been getting into stand-up paddling as exercise. I really enjoy getting out on the ocean, its good fun fitness. I got right into swimming when I was recovering from a recent injury ... I like to mix it up a bit. It keeps me interested"

Damon's "recent injury" was a very badly fractured his leg. He acquired this damage while surfing the Womb, a heavy reef break located south of Cowaramup Bay. Damon indicated that he was "under-gunned" with his surfboard selection on the day. Watching the video footage of the catastrophe unfold is like watching a train crash. Damon miraculously negotiated a late drop down a warping wave face. He executed a whipping bottom turn that deserved to be rewarded with the barrel of the year. But the surf gods were brutal. Eastaugh was propelled under the thick slab of the wave's pitching lip. Considering that a cubic metre of water has a one tonne mass, the impact compressed the surfer into the deck of his surfboard like a hydraulic pile driver, splintering tibia and fibula. That was not the end of the punishment. Damon's damaged leg was repeatedly pulled by his surfboard, connected to fractured limb by his legrope. Eventually he was carried to safety by several surfers and driven to the Margaret River Hospital. Damon was out of surfing action for eight months.



**Figure 7.1: Damon Eastaugh coiled at the base of a Cow behemoth (Jamie Scott images)**

Damon indicated that the adventure associated with locating and riding big waves is synonymous with surfing's spirit of discovery. He and Courtenay have been partners in their quest for riding the Holy Grail for over a decade. Chatting to Damon over a cold beer, it was clearly evident that his penchant for the ocean, his zest for life and his infectious stoke stem from what he termed "the pure ecstasy and thrill associated with standing on a surfboard, riding a wave."

Paul Paterson's status as a big wave charger belies his quiet demeanour and easy smile. Paul is a habitual invitee in the illustrious Eddie Aikau memorial big wave event annually staged during the Hawaiian winter at Waimea Bay. Unlike most surfing competitions, the *Eddie* only comes to life when the surf is clean and the swell size exceeds the 25 foot minimum vertical height. This has only occurred eight times since inauguration in 1984/85. Invitation to compete is bestowed only on the chosen few. Like all Eddie Aikau participants, Paul's invitation has been very well earned. *Antman* won the 1996 World Cup at Sunset Beach. He was victorious in the 1999 Reef Big Wave Award and he recently prevailed in the ISA big wave championships held at Todos Santos, Mexico. Paul characterises surfing respect in his wave riding conduct. His actions in big surf have earned him equivalent respect. Paul recently enthralled the Edith Cowan University's Surf Science students with snippets from his surfing career. "This region has a reputation for some of the heaviest waves on the planet. Many surfers from South West WA are highly regarded by the world's surfing community and this has a lot to do with their experience in riding the big waves down here. But it's much more than just surfing big waves. Many of our local surfers have developed their reputation in Hawaii, where you've got to give respect to earn respect" (Personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2010).

Jake and Paul Paterson are two of Australia's finest surfers. The brothers are described by Warshaw (2003, p.451) as "rough and tumble regular-foot [surfers] ... whose surfing seems to improve with the size and the danger of the waves ..." Jake and Paul are modest, down-to-earth blokes who represent the heart and soul of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. They have grown up in the testing Yallingup surf. The Paterson's wave riding habitus has been shaped by their elders, their peers and by the powerful subcultural swells. Local surfers are understandably proud of their successful peers. Like Damon, Courtenay, Taj and Ian, the Paterson's represent subcultural success on the world stage. Their style endears them to the surfing culture, to surfers across the planet.

Wave size is a relative quantity however and "what's big for some is only medium for others" (Lourie, McCoy & Hoole, 1982). This enduring line from the celebrated *Storm Riders* movie was eloquently delivered over footage of Simon Anderson carving up the large, cold turquoise walls at Bells Beach, as Aussie Crawl pumped out "Unpublished Critics" in the background. The big surf field is a classic example of a self-governing space. Surfers who occupy the niche and succeed in this competitive arena deserve the associated recognition and respect. After driving up the Kamehameha Highway to Oahu's North Shore on my first visit to Hawaii in January 2010, I had the opportunity to witness enormous waves exploding perfectly on Pipeline's second reef. There, standing safely in the crowd on Ehukai Beach, I realised that I have never had the skill-set, the temperament or the courage to attempt surfing in the big Pipeline field.

Courage is considered to be “the ability to overcome the overwhelming fears of harm or death” (Lopez, Koetting O’Byrne, & Petersen, 2003, p. 186). Usually, courage is exhibited in situations that were not sought, whereas big wave surfers flourish in the extreme situation. Lopez et al. (2003, p.188) suggest that such risk-taking is “not pathological”. There is a certain breed of surfer who thrives on riding waves that have the capacity to crush and kill. Riding the big surf involves confronting danger. However, what is big surf? Big surf is reflected by the surfer and in the surfer’s actions. People who are comfortable in big surf have an ability to activate an exceptional survival instinct. Most surfers have an upper limit that regulates their practice. Experienced surfers recognise their limitations and this is important not only for personal safety, but also for the wellbeing of fellow surfing participants. A hazardous drop-in, an errantly tossed surfboard or an ignorant paddling episode in any surfing environment can result in injury. This outcome is geometrically amplified in the big surf. Surf rage and associated violence often surfaces in such dire circumstances.

**Mike McAuliffe:** I sometimes compare the [big wave] situation to football. If you imagine Subiaco Oval, and you’ve got the Eagles and the Dockers playing on it. And then all of a sudden some amateur team rocks up on the surface and starts playing. It’s just not going to work is it? [Laughs] Someone’s going to get hurt, someone’s going to get angry, there’s gonna be blood. And when you really think about it, it’s probably amazing that more aggro doesn’t happen in the surf down here, and that more injuries don’t happen on the big days. I look at Margies some days, and see some of the close calls and wonder how some people survive. But you do see some nasty injuries, blood and every now and then some violence.

People get hurt in the surf. People get maimed in the surf. People die in the surf. Like all extreme sports, the danger in surfing is part of the attraction. Surfers are thrill seekers. Surfers thrive on the adrenalin surge brought on by late drops, vertigo and speed. Mums worry about their kids, girlfriends agonise about their boyfriends and wives fret about their husbands - sometimes. Karen Kavanagh summed up the situation perfectly. “I love watching my kids in action in the surf. It’s great to watch them progress.” But Karen admitted that she worries about her children during their practice. “My eyes always look for sharks.... If one of them falls off, I hold my breath until I see them pop up again.” Karen indicated that the “size and the power of the waves” around Cape Naturaliste is scaled much higher than in Perth. Karen noted that she gets particularly anxious when the family are in the mix at the remote Three Bears location. “If something goes wrong up there, it’s a long, long way to go for help. I always think of Damon [Eastaugh], when he hurt himself ... He snapped both bones in his leg. That was very nasty!” Karen ensued, quickly glossing over her husband’s painful surfing episode. “Sean broke his leg surfing at Bears a while ago ... that was a nightmare.”



Although wave size is relative to the wave rider, consistent performance in substantial surf boosts surfer confidence and drives the search for quality large waves. Big wave practice involves participants confronting fear while being “aware that powerful psychological experiences are probable ... Being in nature at this level transforms the human tendency for anthropocentricity and replaces it with ecocentricity and the realization of true courage and humility” (Brymer & Oades, 2008, p.124).

Consistent practice in the big surf is a reality for the Cape Crusaders. Surfers who are drawn to settle in the Dunsborough / Yallingup region commonly have the ability and the confidence to cope with such challenging conditions. Regular surfing in the big wave field substantially elevates performance. Surfing involves pushing personal limits. Launching off the precipice of a large wave contradicts basic survival instincts. Success in conquering the big wave drop provides a narcotic thrill, however failure in take-off can result in considerable hurt. Regardless, the outcome of tackling large surf shapes confidence, and surfing confidence frequently determines the next chapter a surfer’s life. Evers (2006, p.237) supports this notion stating “... after surfing big waves, a bloke is either more scared or less scared the next time”. That is a magnificent observation. Wave size can be rated on an ambiguous scary-scale. After a successful six foot session at Bears, returning to four foot Injidup is a cinch. However, a nasty hold-down or an atrocious wipeout can devastate a surfer’s confidence. Such a battering generally makes the next expedition into the solid surf realm one of trepidation and apprehension.

There appears to be oscillating thrill levels associated with surfing in waves of fluctuating size. According to Stranger (1999, p.267) “... experienced surfers reported that although they could still find satisfaction in smaller waves, the thrill achieved was not as intense”. The feeling of conquest following surfing large waves is a mixture of achievement and relief. However, every time a surfer takes to the water, a new story is written. The craving to reproduce the thrill-feeling of riding large waves is not guaranteed. Such contentment seldom arrives. That explains why the successful big surf episodes stay memorised by most wave riders, branded in for life. Ask any long term surfer to recite a favourite surfing session and I can guarantee that the narrative will not entail surfing a gentle two foot beach break. Tony Harbison’s vivid recollection returns us to a bygone Cape Naturaliste big wave arena - maxed out autumnal Yallingup, bombing on the reef in the late 1950s.

**Tony Harbison:** When we woke up the next morning, jeez ... [we had] never seen anything like it in our life! Yallingup was closing out from Canal Rocks right up to Sugarloaf ... enormous. We just sat and watched it all day Good Friday. Saturday it had halved in size and we still just sat and watched it. Sunday it had halved again... it was still closing out, but it was breaking closer to shore. So we decide that someone better have a crack. Cocko Killen and Jimmy Keenan went out on their double ski. Moonshine and me [sic] on our nine foot hollow ply-boards. We sat down on the edge of the lagoon and watched it for an hour, and then we decided to go. We got a mile or so out [when] Cock and Jimmy went past us like rockets, going up and up the face of this thing. It was feathering and I reckon there was [sic] three ski lengths up the face of this monster. They just got to the top and hovered, and then fell over the back of it. [We] were paddling close to one another, we shook hands and I said, 'Good luck mate, this is it!' We slipped off the back [of the surfboards] and we got hit with a forty foot wall of white water. Cock and Jimmy just kept going out and out. They couldn't get back in. Cock couldn't talk for a week after that ... those waves were monsters, blotting out the horizon... A big part of it [surfing] is about testing yourself out in big surf. It's a wonder that we've only lost four or five [surfers] out there over the years really.

Page (2003, p.308) states that "it takes a special breed of surfer with ... desire, skill and luck ... to ride the biggest waves on the planet". He indicates that big wave occurrence is "transitory and cyclical" and that such rare nature makes extra large waves gold-like commodities for the serious big wave chargers. Page (2003, p.311) outlines the 1959 "swell of the century" he experienced as a surfer growing up in California. He described the waves as "thirty foot lampposts". Just like Tony Harbison's previous narrative, such exceptional big wave events are indelible. They remain steadfast in the surfer's mind forever.

Conquering the challenge of riding big waves is an experience that teaches humility and self-respect. The confidence that is generated from success in the big wave field is long-lasting and has the capacity to lift a person through periods of hard times. Brymer and Oades (2009, p.119) state that extreme sport experiences are "transformational ... spill[ing] over to life in general". Having the ability, fortitude and providence to take on the task of surfing big waves activates strength and poise to cope with life's testing times. Big wave riding "makes you a better person, makes you more content, makes you realize more what life is all about" (Brymer & Oades, 2009, p.119).

In his Miles Franklin Award winning novel *Breath*, Tim Winton depicts the fluctuating scenarios that transpire in the big wave arena as young Pikelet tackles the Old Smoky outer reef.

Together those rides wouldn't add up to more than half a minute of experience, of which I can only recall a fraction ... the staccato chat of water against the board ... [the] illusion of being at the same level as the distant cliffs ... [the] angelic relief of gliding out onto the shoulder of the wave in a mist of spray and adrenaline. Surviving is the strongest memory I have, the sense of having walked on water. But already I wanted more. I was hankering for a third ride ... I paddled up to the impact zone and in a moment of overblown confidence put myself in the path of something the size of the Angelus town hall ... I got to my feet and felt the whole edifice bulge and mutate beneath me. For half a second I saw the shadow of the reef far below. The heavy board fell from under me like a leaf and I sprawled down the hard, unyielding face without it, bouncing from hip to hip, unable to break the skin of the water. I was falling down a staircase - one that never seemed to end, which collapsed on me and shot me skyward before snatching me down again so its rubble-spill might drive me headlong across the reef, rattling and wracking me all the way. (Winton, 2008, p.96)

From Greg Noll taking on enormous Sunset in his black and white hooped trunks to Laird Hamilton's world famous Teahupoo Godzilla, big wave riding has always been salt and pepper in surfing's recipe. Big wave riding is a vital part of Cape Naturaliste's surfing subcultural habitus.

### **7.2.1 Naturaliste Narrative: What's big for some!**

**Time:** Big Thursday - 3rd February, 2011 (0830 - 1130)

**Space:** Bears [Babies], 3 m swell, 16 second period, strong offshore wind, sunny, frothing crowd

**Act & Actors:** Ash and Matt, Jack Nicholson, Fergs and Togs

**Thick Description:** La Niña had Australia jumping as Cyclone Yasi hijacked the nation. I woke early to learn the doomsday predictions didn't materialise and north Queensland escaped total annihilation. After watching Koshy trot-out the news on the morning TV, I chomped down a banana and a plum with my second espresso. The Girl<sup>32</sup> was dishing up another swell-treat for the Crusaders to relish. Summer 2011 was a surf banquet of disproportion.

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<sup>32</sup> La Niña is Spanish for 'The Girl'.

Buoyweather had predicted a solid rising swell, and I had planned my week accordingly. Waiting for the computer to boot-up, I fibbed to my exiting wife that I was spending the day working on my thesis. The screen opened with unexpected news as I swilled my third short-black. A gutless, 1.36 metre swell showed on the Cape Naturaliste swell buoy site. “What a hoax!” Luckily, the ‘measure twice / cut once’ axiom drilled into me by the carpentry master from my days at CALM<sup>33</sup> resonated. Checking the Albany buoy indicated a 16 second swell period. The waves were on the way.

Togs and Fergs called. They were dawdling. Time and tide wait not. The ocean was cherry-ripe to quickly go big, bigger, biggest. My impatience won again. I packed my gear, clicked in the hubs and was up Naturaliste Terrace in an instant, solo. Involuntarily my breathing deepened as I dimmed the radio commotion. Dabbing sunscreen onto my face I smelled the musty bush and noticed the Marri<sup>34</sup> in full bloom, covered with squawking back cockatoos. ‘An early Marri flowering means a wet winter’ I heard the old Walpole bushy say in my subconscious. Anxiety creates distractedness.

Back on the track again, bouncing and shaking. How many times have I driven up here in the past month? It must be at least a dozen outings to Bears. The keys jangled in the ignition like Dylan’s tambourine. I’m driving too fast - I’m edgy. Abdominal butterflies always materialise before I put myself into the big surf ... and prior to dental appointments. Passing two cars heading out with long faced, dry haired occupants added degrees to my anxiety. The wind was right. The sun was out. Why were they heading back without surfing? It must be sizey up there.

*Edge* D’Espeissis crawls past me on his way back up the hill. He smiles, nods and mouths the word ‘big’ across the jagged limestone. I see the orderly corduroyed swell lines banking all the way down to Antarctica. Kabbijgup was on steroids. The wind was forcefully fanning the looming swells, blowing torrents off their breaking backs. The waves decelerated as they rose. They exploded in silent slow motion at the base of the cliffs. I finally make the carpark. It’s much bigger than I expected. Matty and Ash are drying off in safety. With wetsuits around their midribs, they confirm that it’s gone from comfortable to heavy in quick time. They grin in unison, satisfied that they have dined well and escaped to safety. Basking in reflection, my students know that I still have to job in front of me. “Have fun, Holty!” drawls Ash slowly, chuckling through his American enunciation. My idea of fun is surfing three to four foot waves. What I was focusing on through the grubby windscreen was more akin to frightening than fun.

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<sup>33</sup> CALM is the acronym for the now defunct state government agency, Conservation and Land Management.

<sup>34</sup> Marri trees are commonly termed red gums. Their pale yellow flowers are most conspicuous during late summer. The blossom is a favourite food of the South West’s rare and rambunctious black cockatoos.

I avoid making eye contact with anyone. I have hit the green button. The springy was on my body before I realised I had suited up. I was in autonomous mode, trance-like. Dragging the wax-comb teeth across the sticky deck of my new surfboard, I grinned to myself. I had owned the Flyer II for just over a week. My beautiful new toy was being put to the big wave sword again, the third time in as many days. The carpark was full of onlookers. Plenty were procrastinating. Plenty were apprehensive. Plenty were not going surfing today. They were smoking cigarettes, unfolding wetsuits, uncovering surfboards, 'waiting for the wind to back off'. They were postponing the inevitable, making the choice not to play. I put myself down the timber flight and over the limestone before I had opportunity to join the spectators. "Don't kick your toe," I audibly said while negotiating the rocky minefield. I hurried the last section of the weathered staircase. I galloped around the narrow left turn over the warming black sand. I stepped off my lucky piece of smooth triangular granite onto the cool soft white beach.

I checked the scene from eye-level vantage. Immediately a mountainous set wave smashed the lineup. This was followed by three similar sized walls. Leggies snapped like string. Surfboards washed onto the reef without their humans. My first decision was easy - I would paddle out to Babies. Two young blokes waited uneasily on the reef in waist-deep, surging whitewater. They searched for a lull between the waves, for an opportunity to jump into the keyhole, negotiate the shore-break and paddle out. I decided to stretch and observe the field. I watched where waves were breaking. I monitored their frequency, checked for friends and foes already immersed in the mayhem. One of the reef-lads launched into the churning whitewater. He was abruptly swept sideways in the rip while paddling strongly to the safety of the channel. His mate was untimely, he botched the entry. Misjudging his leap off the reef, he copped a wave slab fair on the head. He was buffeted backwards, pitched up onto the limestone before me as I sat elongating my fragile hamstrings. Although he tried to look unconcerned, he was justifiably ruffled. Making a clever decision, he sheepishly returned to the safety of the beach behind me. Decision making is an enormous part of surfing. Clever decisions make dream-surfs, poor decisions make nightmares.

I stood, firmly fastened the Velcro of my Creatures leash above my right ankle, stretched the urethane and stepped into the colosseum. I spotted the young surfer 30 metres off the reef. He looked back over his shoulder to locate his buddy who was shuffling back up the stairs. He was on his own. But you always fly solo in the big surf. I waited for a set to empty-out, hastened across the bubbling platform and leaped into the ocean. My admission was fortunate. Game on.

The water roused me. Terrestrial torpor was discarded and reality clicked in. My paddling was purposeful and measured. My breathing was long and calm. I felt surprisingly relaxed, a good start. I noticed the horizon moving, the gusty easterly wind ruffling an imminent set. The pack spotted the approach and adjusted position accordingly. The first wave was a monster. It gutted the lineup. Some surfers successfully duck-dived the maelstrom, others were whipped backwards with the exploding wave. I was happily wide of the avalanche, stroking obliquely towards the next swell.

A solitary surfer presented on the inside of me. He unmistakably intended to take his opportunity. His face was plastered with white zinc, his eyes were bulging, his lips were pursed, his resolve was clear. He was an old hand, balding, wiry and steely. Like me, he was riding a big-wave chaser. I had not seen him before at Bears. In that millisecond I likened him to Jack Nicholson's Joker character. I felt myself momentarily chuckle at the ridiculousness of the thought - the Cape Crusaders' Batman, Robin, Joker connection. In doing a Malinowski impression, reflexivity ignited. How did I appear to other surfers? Did I have the 'kangaroo in the spot-light' look going on? What was my position in the pecking order today? Was my anxiety mirrored in my behaviour? I was observing myself observing the subcultural members, doing a self participant observation. So this is what ethnography is all about! I was excited but I was also distracted. Then the gravity of the moment crystallised. Concentrate, this is serious! The wave was a detonated bomb - fused, ticking and ready to go off.

Jack paddled hard into the monster, disappearing from sight behind the mobile wall of ocean. A muffled chorus of hoots echoed from the recovering pack. Water rained down all around me in a noisy shower as I dropped two metres down the back of the wave. Momentarily lying motionless on my surfboard I recognised the surreal hush of the situation. But 50 metres outside, another crest loomed. I immediately pulled towards the steepening apex of ocean, swung diametrically and resumed paddling with the wave looming behind me, shadowing me. A mantra automatically echoed in my subconscious - "Make the wave! Make the wave! Make the wave!" Water was shredded up the face of the breaker by the offshore gale. It blasted into my eyes, temporarily eradicating my vision. I stroked without sight. I stroked harder and deeper. I really wanted that wave. I really needed that wave. "Make the wave!" I silently continued.

My body was lifted vertically on my surfboard. Hesitation was not an option now, it was a death sentence. I put in two more big strokes. Legs kicking and shoulders rotating, I blindly leapt to my feet feeling the waxy substrate under my left toes, feeling my right foot contact the deck pad. The sensitivity between feet and fibreglass was fantastic. Moving my mass forward, maintaining a low, wide crouch I automatically prepared for entry. I was set to ride.

My squinting eyes cleared and my vision returned. I had entered the wave late and deep. The extra strong offshore had held me up for a split second, intent on launching me over the waterfall with its pitching lip. The delayed takeoff prevented my much-loved pump turn manoeuvre at the top of the wave. Instead, I instinctively kept in the crouch and swooped vertically to the bottom of the wave. I sensed release as my surfboard snugly fitted into the contour of the steep wave-face. Keeping the surfboard's nose out of the water is imperative on a late drop. Nose-diving a set wave is an awful outcome. Nose-diving shreds reputation and destroys confidence. Nose-diving hurts body and soul. My Merrick maintained momentum and held its position. It chattered underfoot like a silenced machine gun. The smooth orange fins hummed and then firmly bit the wave.

I had only been in the water for a few minutes. I was still warming up. I cautiously rotated into a long arch at the wave-base, a drawn out bottom-turn driving my surfboard upwards and outwards onto the clean wall, leaving the boisterous chaos behind. I was flying in control. The feel-good hormones were oozing, lighting up my brain - fight, flight and stoke. My eyes refocused on a new point above. A long section of the wave was set to cascade into my path. Time slowed. The event approached in singular frame, slow-motion footage. Taj would have grabbed a rail and disappeared behind the curtain. Lopez would have loaded his back foot and stalled for a clean tube. My decision was more about survival than a cavernous backdoor barrel. I looked up vertically to the impending torrent. I bent my knees, coiled my body and contracted my muscles in readiness. A millisecond later I felt myself unwind. My body worked in autonomous unison, snapping the Merrick up, around, down and under my weightless body. I re-entered the wave face with a blissfully loud crack. Straightening my line away from the avalanche I angled towards the shore and exited the ride. Briefly discombobulated in the whitewater, I popped up and drew a quick breath. I pulled myself on the Merrick and was dragged across the reef to the safe dark channel. I ignited with stoke. I allowed myself the opulence of reliving the previous few magnificent seconds of my life, my first wave for the day. I was off the duck with a smoker - right time, right place and right decision.

I leisurely paddled back out to the take off zone, basking in post wave euphoria. Coming alongside Jack Nicholson, I noted he was in a similar state, returning for another roll of the dice. "Nice wave," he nodded. "And yours?" I enquired. "A bewdy!" was the reply in slow Australian surf-brogue. I laughed, he laughed. We paddled back out silently for another chance at bliss. Togs and Fergs were on the beach, slowly suiting up. They readied themselves for what I had just experienced - the decision to play, the surveillance, the entry, the uncertainty, the excitement, the fear, the first wave. Surfing mirrors life. As the late great Michael Hutchence belted out in front of INXS, "Sometimes you kick, sometimes you get kicked!"

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### 7.3 Habitus props: Subcultural artefacts

Cultures usually necessitate participation. Being in a culture means being involved in the culture, doing what the culture does, doing what the other cultural members do. Arguably, variations in cultural participation may be used to delineate cultures into subcultures. Cultural members typically require specialised equipment to effectively participate their culture. Footballers need footballs. Bikies need motorbikes. Rock musicians need guitars. Development of surfing hardware has elevated surfing performance, improved surfer comfort and made surfing more accessible to a wider range of bodies. Surfing equipment has evolved with the surfing culture.

“The biggest changes I’ve noticed in surfing is [sic] to do with the equipment,” said Mark Paterson. “The surfboards, the wetsuits, the legropes, even the boardshorts. When we started we just wore baggies and tee shirts.” *Pato* scoffed, “Just plain tee-shirts without all that stuff all over them.”

In order to affect functionality, cultural members require specific props. Gobo (2008, p.175) refers to these physical cultural assets as “artefacts”. In stating that cultural artefacts are “instruments that perform, objects that supplement and mechanisms that enhance ...” Gobo (2008, p.176) classifies artefacts as technological, cognitive or organisational. Such classification aligns with the surfing culture, as summarised in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1: Artefacts necessary for cultural function**

	<b>Technological</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Organisational</b>
<b>Gobo’s definition</b>	Instruments that perform or enhance or supplement cultural practice.	Objects that supplement cognitive capacity through storing and processing cultural information.	Mechanisms that enhance the capability to predict and plan for cultural action.
<b>Surfing exemplars</b>	Surfboard, wetsuit, wax, suitable vehicle, leg-rope, boardshorts, board cover.	Books, magazines, DVDs, surf movies, camera, photographic images, film clips, surfing diary.	Surf forecasting & real time websites, allied subcultural members, mobile phone.



Using Gobo's hierarchy as a basis, I consider the surfboard as the primary technological surfing habitus-prop. Surfboards are treasure to surfers. Ancient Hawaiian surfboards were crafted by respected kahuna artisans. As the surfboard was central in early Hawaiian surfing tradition, it is reasonable to assume that perfection was expected in the functionality of such valued artefacts (Blake, 1935, p.78). In more recent times, the importance of the surfboard / surfer relationship was confirmed by Blake in describing Duke Kahanamoku's experience in riding an innovative sixteen foot hollow surfboard at a time when his surfing had "gone stale". According to Blake's (1935, p.62) account, the ride went to Duke's head "like wine ... [he] yelled and shouted at the top of his voice ... He was happy ... the [surfboard] put new life into him ...".

In the 2010s, innovative surfboard materials such as epoxy resin and expanded polystyrene foam coupled with ground-breaking manufacturing processes have enabled surfers to elevate performance to lofty heights. On the whole, the evolving surfboard is largely responsible for the burgeoning surfing culture. When Bob McTavish started tuning his 'fantastic plastic machines' in the late 1960s, he acted as a selective agent in true Darwinian sense.

### **7.3.1 New surfboard: Work of art, thing of beauty**

Surfboard enhancement has catalysed surfing osmosis. There are surfboards for novices, surfboards for mature surfers and surfboards for the elite. There are surfboards designed for big wave riding and surfboards designed for small, fun sessions. The surfboard is pivotal to the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture and this fact does not escape the Crusaders.

As a performance driven culture, surfing has come a long way since Barry Young procured his first Gordon Woods shooter in the early 1960s. "When we get a new board now, we look at the fin system, the shape, the dimensions of the surfboard, the materials ... all that," stated *Baz*. "When I bought my first new board I [didn't] have a clue about it. There wasn't any variation back then. They were all nine foot long and the same dimensions." In that pre-McTavish era according to Barry, "you'd just go in and buy something to stand on." He laughed, "Most of us were just young kids having a dig ... we certainly weren't over-thinking it."

Ordering a custom made shape from the local surfboard shaper is an exciting experience. Picking up the brand-new surfboard *should* be a wondrous event. However, I have always found the event to be an emotional cocktail. Just like purchasing a new motor vehicle, the new surfboard experience is often a mixture of uncertainty, apprehension and excitement. 'What if the board's a lemon?' 'What if doesn't paddle well?' 'What if it's too heavy?' Are my 'what ifs' universal in the surfing culture?

Getting the pristine surfboard safely from the shop is like bringing a newborn home from hospital. Don't knock the rail! Don't swing it into the doorframe exiting the shaping bay! Make sure the baby is snug in its board-bag! Make certain the package is secure on the racks! An age-old surfing nightmare involves the never immersed, brand-new surfboard flying off the car roof on the way home from the shop - Youch! And when the surfboard arrives home, it does not mean the anxiety is over. After cajoling your beloved virgin safely onto the lounge-room carpet you are then faced with a round of defiling rituals. Accurately applying the adhesive deck-grip onto the correct site, screwing in the fins, not too tight, not too loose, and then rubbing the sticky wax onto the flawless deck in a ceremony of besmirch. Waxing up a pristine surfboard always snaps me from my new-board trance. But I am being flippant. In reality, a new surfboard is one of my favourite things in life.

It is imperative to get off to a good start on a new board. I always wait for optimal surf conditions to christen them. Shit surf and shit surfing tags a new surfboard as shit. Surfers everywhere invariably look for *the* magic surfboard, a panacea that will augment their prowess, a silver bullet to vanquish the waves. I'm sure that such a beast exists for me. I live in the optimism that someone someday will corner the Nannup Tiger, capture the Yeti or net Nessie. I too am confident that I have not yet ridden my Excalibur surfboard.

Surfboard related conversations occur worldwide among surfers. As a participant observer attentively tuning into lineup banter, it was evident that surfboard chat makes up a major chunk of the Cape Crusaders' dialogue. Surreptitiously listening to lineup conversations during wave lulls often indicated excited capital exchange. "How's the new board going?" Was that board shaped in AB's profiler?" "Is that one of Oggy's new Blackbeards?" "What are those Firewires like?" "Did you use the 6'10 in the Mentawais?" "How long is that board? How wide? What thickness?" "What do you reckon about those Tuflites?" "How much did that stick cost?" "Have ya got FCS or Futures in that board?" For every question there is an erudite answer. For every answer there is a probe. Surfers love talking about surfboards. Word-of-mouth capital involving surfboards disperses like bushfire in the tinderbox Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture.

Farmer (1992, p.247) notes that “the surf shop” is an important part of all surfing subcultures. Such venues provide “a place where much social interaction occurs between surfers and norms and values are learned”. Farmer labels surf shop personal as “gatekeepers of the surfing culture”. Local surfboard shapers such as Mark Ogram, Jamie Rielly, Dave Macaulay and Zac Ogram (Yahoo Surfboards), Al Bean (AB Surfboards), Boyd Purdy (Yallingup Surf Company), Chappy (Chapstar Surfboards) and Dave Manion (DMD Surfboards) are talented artisans who have stood the test of time to endure in a highly competitive surfboard market. The Cape Crusaders recognise the importance of such talented shapers in their community.

“I’ve been with AB for years now,” said Barry Young. “Al and *Oggy*, they realise what older surfers need. It’s great having a shaper who understands that.” Barry continued his praise of the two shapers, indicating that their expertise is “a very important aspect” of the local surfing subculture. “We’re really lucky that we’ve got Mark and Al up this end. I don’t think they have anyone down there [Margaret River] who shapes specifically for the older blokes.”

Brett Baker, Bob Monkman, Mick Marlin and Adrian D’Espeissis pointed out that the local shapers have accumulated knowledge of the local conditions and applied this to their craft. “The local shapers understand what works best in our waves,” said Brett. Bob indicated that the rapport between surfer and shaper is important. “Surfers down here relate to the local shapers. Sure you’ve got your mass produced boards, but I reckon most of the local blokes get the local shapers to build their boards. I’ve recently been getting a real buzz out of surfing an *Oggy* fish.” Mick stated that knowledge determines the relationship between local surfer and shaper. “*Oggy*’s been here for a long time. He can shape a board that is suitable for you ... Mark takes into consideration what you need. He knows his boards.” *Edge* D’Espeissis implied that the local product fits the local field. “The resident shapers used to be a really big part of the local culture, but it’s changed a bit recently. A lot of the local crew are getting onto the Merricks and Simon Andersons. But in the waves down here, those boards don’t last.” Adrian stated that he’d rather ride a surfboard that had been “specifically shaped” for the Cape Naturaliste conditions. “I’m surfing a board shaped by *Oggy* at the moment. It’s a semi-fish and I love it. It goes really well!” Adrian concluded with a huge grin.

Mark Ogram is a highly regarded member of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. With his wife Sherylle, *Oggy* moved to Western Australia from New Zealand in 1988, searching for quality, consistent surf. “There wasn’t much surf on the east coast of NZ,” Mark told me over a cold beer in his Dunsborough surf shop. Mark started shaping with Rusty in Perth, but “fell in love” with the Cape Naturaliste waves and the environment. He moved down to Dunsborough and set up Yahoo Surfboards in 1990. I asked *Oggy* how he originally became involved in manufacturing surfboards.

I've always loved it, it just evolved," said Mark. "I was doing an engineering degree for a couple of years before I broke the news to my parents," he laughed. "For the next ten years mum was telling her friends I was having a year off uni." When Oggy first started making surfboards, it was all encompassing. "I'd go surfing, come home and play with designs. It was all I could do ... dream of working with surfboards."

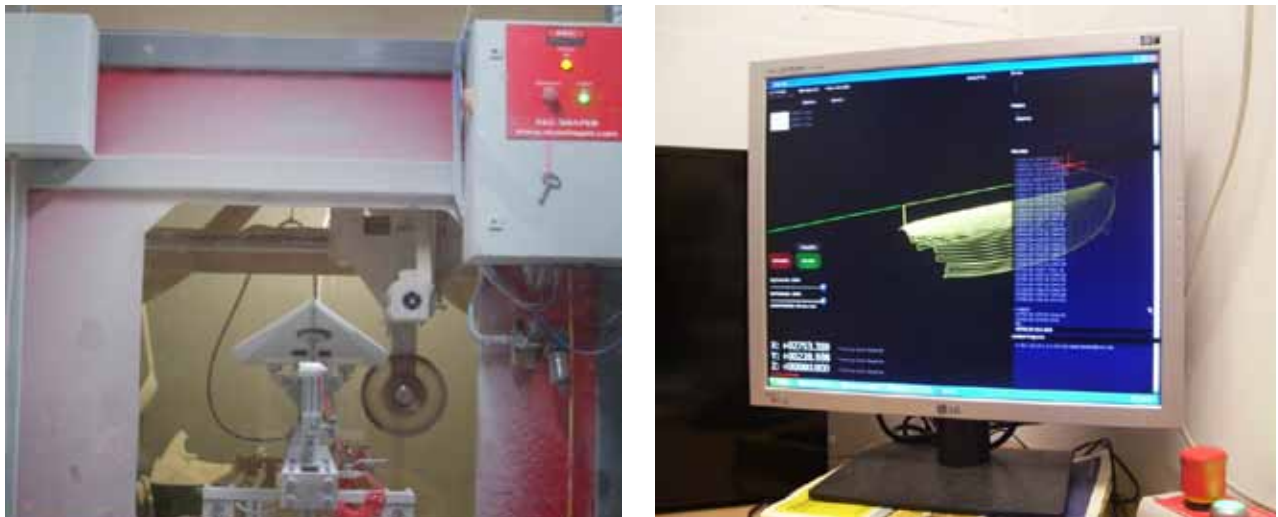
Mark's surfboard designs have evolved with practice and patience. He enjoys testing his ideas in the waves at Yallingup and Bears. Mark refines his craft via self performance and through regular discussion with his clients. Craftsmen hone their skills over time. Artists develop reputation via experience and success. "Whenever I'm surfing, I'm thinking about surfboard design. Sometimes I wish I didn't. It'd be nice to go surfing and not think about it." Mark's analysis has paid off. He is a highly respected Cape Crusader. "There are always people who want to talk about surfboards with me," stated Mark. "Sometimes I'd rather be anonymous, but hey, [the ocean] is a pretty good office isn't it?"



**Figure 7.2: Mark Ogram in the shaping bay: Subcultural sculptor (TML images)**

Mark is renowned for his hybrid surfboard designs. His Blackbeard and Dhufish models appeal to a wide variety of surfers. His boards are designed for the Cape Naturaliste environment. Many people mentioned Mark's prominence in the local surfing subculture. When I asked Oggy if he perceived his eminent subcultural stature, he smiled and scoffed at the suggestion. "Nah, I don't rate myself as being that important. I'm not a great surfer ... I just love having fun out there," he said. "Most of us are average surfers. I guess that's where people connect with what I'm doing ... I design my boards for my own needs, and it just so happens that it suits other guys."

Across the road on Naturaliste Terrace, guru shaper Al Bean has embraced recent technology. AB invested in a state of the art profile shaping machine that mechanically carves out surfboard structures from bare foam blanks. His computer-driven robot enables rapid, micro-refinement in perfecting surfboard design. The method leads to a marvellous product and top end performance.



**Figure 7.3: Al Bean's surfboard profile machine: Fine tuning design (Alice Kilgour images)**

"I like to provide input into my surfboards," stated Mike McAuliffe. "I've been getting my boards from Al Bean for a while. He's using the profile machine and I find that a massive advantage for getting boards shaped *exactly* [emphasis] the way I want them." Mike reckons that the process produces an advanced result that can be tweaked in fine tuning future shapes. "I've had two 'six threes' [6'3"] and two 'six eights' [6'8"] ... I've ridden them in various conditions and have gone back to AB with advice." Through such communication, Al has refined Mike's surfboards. "I can really feel the difference in those boards on the feedback I have provided," confirmed Mike. "You can't have a surfboard that can do everything in every condition ... but having the board on the computer ... it's amazing, putting dimensions into the machine and having it pop-out twenty minutes later."

I remember shopping with Mum at Foodland on Canning Highway. The only cheese in the refrigerator was the blue-cardboard-boxed variety. That was it, one flavour - take it or leave it. Visiting the supermarket last night on a cheese mission, I spent five minutes deciding on a parmesan product. Our society has made variety an art. Choice underpins the market economy. Choice underpins the surfboard market. Surfboards are as diverse as the surfers who ride them.

Surfers have endorsed the Internet as a vehicle for purchasing new surfboards. As such, eminent manufacturers from around the planet have placed their shapely wares on display - Merrick, Preisendorfer, Webber, Anderson, Richards, Lynch, McTavish, Byrne, McCoy, Brewer ... the list goes on and on. New technology and surfer imagination have led to the creation of faster, lighter and more responsive surfboards. Companies such as Surf-Tech, Firewire and Global Surf Industries have revolutionised the surfboard manufacturing process. Such variety has the capacity to cause the consumer bewilderment. Alternatively, such variety leads to experimentation in developing and trialling new surfing habitus. Variety is spice.

Al Merrick is one of the most highly regarded shapers on the planet. His Channel Island surfboards are proven winners. Having grown up on polyurethane surfboards, John Malloy has taken his surfboard preferences into the new age. Whether he's racing along a set wave at Injidup or styling on a long Sultans right, John is at home standing relaxed on his M13 Tuflite. Old dogs can learn new tricks! "I have three Al Merrick Tuflites," said John. "A seven footer, a seven six and an eight footer and they're all great boards. I find as I'm getting older, they paddle a bit better. I can sit outside and pick a few set waves off." John acknowledges the "merit in traditional surfboards", but he has "really grown accustomed" to the new epoxy shapes.

Warren Boyes admitted his "fetish" for Al Merrick's Channel Island designs. "I've got sixteen boards but a lot of them are sentimental," Warren laughed. "I get my Merrick's through Toddy at Country Waves. I jump online and look at the models that I think will suit me." Warren indicated that he enjoys trialling different surfboards. As a talented surfer, Warren has developed a reputation as a successful competitor in the local Yallingup Boardriders. He recognised that the global marketplace has presented consumers with an opportunity to surf the world's finest surfboard designs. "Surfers can now get their boards from the best shapers in the world. How good is that?"

Similarly, Stewart Bettenay looks to eminent Australian surfer / shaper Wayne Lynch for his surfboards. "I really like the Tuflite epoxy boards," he said. "My main board is a six nine and I've got a seven two as well. I reckon Wayne Lynch knows what he's doing [laughs]. I enjoy the epoxy material, the float it gives you. And I like the Lynch designs ... I always liked the way that he surfed."

Firewire surfboards have recently taken the surfing world by storm. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has readily consumed the EPS, parabolic rail craze. Luke Thomas indicated to me that Dunsborough's Country Waves surf shop had expanded one of Australia's largest Firewire accounts. Craig McConville was animated about his beloved Firewires. "I've got a six four and a six ten and I'm absolutely stoked with them." Craig pointed out that surfers are very influenced by their peers, sharing valuable knowledge as cultural capital. This concept is discussed further in chapter nine. "Todd from Country Waves, he first spoke to me about the Firewires. I thought they'd be too light but after trying them, I was hooked. It's a big part of the surfing gig isn't it, sharing surfing knowledge. People ask me about them all the time and I say 'you've gotta try them'. I'm really on them because they're so responsive, light and great to paddle." Craig believes that surfers develop "an amazing affinity with their surfboards". This notion reinforces their importance as cultural artefacts.

Ex-ASP champion surfer Jake Paterson is currently shaping a few of his own boards. Jake mentioned that most contemporary professional surfers don't have much involvement in the manufacturing process. "When I was sponsored by Mick Manolas, I'd go out to Injidup and watch all my surfboards get shaped. I'd get right into the whole fine tuning thing." Pato chortled, "I'm not sure if it was good for Mick though. I might've done his head in I reckon!" Jake was "fussy" about what he wanted and "fascinated" by the creation of the new surfboard. "Out of a block of foam, how it's mowed down and sculptured like a piece of fine art. That precision has always blown me away. You can never shape the same board twice. I don't care if it comes out of a machine or what." Jake designated that the process is so variable because of the number of "hands that touch the surfboard ... from the sander to the guy that sticks on the fins." Jake concluded explicitly with some wise words through a wide grin. "If you've got a magic board, then it's a one off. So look after it ... and enjoy it."

## Chapter Eight: Field

*Ah, I had to learn fast, I had to learn fast*

*And when I knew at last, I knew at last*

*Hell and heaven can be one and the same*

*If you don't know how, you should by now*

*Every pleasure always holds an equal share of pain but it all works out, I have no doubt*

Dave Faulkner (Hoodoo Gurus)

Castle in the Air - Kinky (1991)

### 8.0 Introduction: How do the Crusaders play?

Bourdieu uses the term 'field' to represent the structured social stadium. Integral to the field are the hierarchies and the autonomous rules that determine cultural / subcultural practice. Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone (1993, p.5) state that Bourdieu's field is a "multi-dimensional space" in which cultural members develop their habitus. Fields are determined by the "stakes that are at stake" (Jenkins, 1992, p.84). Higher stakes promote fierce antagonism for prominent cultural position. The cultural field is a "space of conflict and competition ... a battlefield" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.17). This analogy is parallel to a pecking order and as such, is highly relevant to the surfing culture.

In Bourdieu's (1992, p.68) opinion, a tiered system of cultural attitude means that different habitus' produce different manifestations in different fields. This hypothesis lends support to the existence of distinctive surfing subcultures. Varied surfing subcultures develop as a result of the differing stakes at stake. The resultant subcultural vibe is determined by the subcultural participants and the distinctive surfing environment. For example, on Oahu's North Shore, surfing stakes are lofty. Occasionally they approach a life and death struggle. The world's best surfers vie for the world's best waves, with media, sponsors, and audience adding pressure and intensity to the blender. Enormous competition and frequent violence reflects the magnitude of the available cultural reward. This extreme exemplar is one of surfing's greatest battlefields. Although the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture does not match the intensity of the North Shore, the associated field involves a flagrant struggle. There are no easy waves in an intense surfing field.



Fields are self-governing spaces. They vary from place to place, from subculture to subculture. Whether talking about artists, sportspeople, scientists or academics, social actors trudge through the complex cultural quagmire to define a position within their field. Naturally, in any situation involving hierarchical friction, an opportunity exists for cultural disparity. Such inequalities in the field result in domination, subordination and equivalence (Jenkins, 1992, p.85). These rungs on the social ladder afford access to cultural capital that reinforces pecking order. Bourdieu's concept of field thus has significant implications for the complex, fluctuating interrelationships that exist between surfers. Hierarchical pecking orders are a real component of the surfing field.

Waves are "subcultural spaces" (Wheaton, 2005, p.149). Complex associations are constantly forming and breaking like water's hydrogen bonds. These relationships are the basis of the surfing field. Field boundaries are concerned with position inside cultural arrangements. Such 'ladder-positions' are inexact and fluid. Social actors are frequently concerned with preserving and/or improving their positions within the field. For this reason, Jenkins (1992, p.85) terms this situation the "field of struggle". This chapter explores the field of struggle considering Cape Naturaliste's surfing hierarchies, localism and the female Cape Crusaders. Fields can be compared and contrasted across differing subcultures. Different subcultures are refined through the development of their field. The ever changing Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural field is a fine example of this argument.

### **8.1 Cape Naturaliste surfing hierarchies: Pecking in the surf**

When surfers gather at any wave field, competition is inevitable. Surfable waves are scarce. These maritime treasures occur fleetingly at rare locales around the ocean periphery. To the non-surfer, one breaking wave resembles any other. However, surfers develop a keen eye for wave worth. Surfers discriminate waves. They differentiate wave features and they assess wave types. Surfers learn to recognise potential for an idyllic ride. As surfers develop this knowledge a "King Solomon's Mine" scenario develops. Good waves are valuable. Best waves are treasure. Why pick up silver when you can collect gold? How much wealth is enough? Greed is an explicit ingredient in surfing. Surfers want to ride the finest waves. They crave to possess these rare diamonds. When waves are plentiful, surfers gorge. When waves are rare, surfers clash. Competition promotes an authoritative pecking order. In recent times, the surfing field has become an extremely competitive stage. The number of waves being served up by the ocean atmosphere system has not altered significantly in recent geological history. Surfer density on the other hand has risen sharply. The surfing subcultural hierarchy replicates a battlefield.

### 8.1.1 World renowned Crusaders: Winners and gridders

The Cape Naturaliste surfing field is characterised by hierarchies. These are typically determined within the subculture by the Cape Crusaders. At the top of the pecking order are the world class surfers who have developed their reputation as skilful competitors and courageous chargers on the universal field. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has several alpha-roosters pecking in the run. Taj Burrow is a surfing superstar, a globally recognised sportsperson. When the name 'Arnie' is uttered around the world, images of Arnold Schwarzenegger present. Likewise, 'Taj' immediately conjures up depictions of the famous Yallingup surfer in the surfing culture. Taj is a brand.

Burrow's mind-blowing videos ... and his ushering of above-the-lip surfing into the competitive realm have established the natural-footer as one of surfing's most prominent athletes. Arguably the most technically-sound aerialist in the game and an inspiration to today's most promising athletes, Burrow has clinched nine elite event wins ... in his impressive career ... (ASP, 2011)

Jake Paterson competed on the ASP world circuit with distinction for 12 years. Victorious at the Pipeline Masters (1998), back-to-back winner at Jeffrey's Bay (2000, 2001) and triumphant at Sunset (2003), Jake's impressive record on the professional tour is matched by his love of family, friends, fun and the South West surfing environment.



**Figure 8.1: Jake Paterson: Sipping from a backyard keg: (Shane Dawson image)**

Jake's performance in the surf never ceases to amaze me. As I observe *Pato* surfing up at Bears or out at Yallingup, it is evident that he is still as stoked as ever. We have many radiant Cape Crusaders; Damon Eastaugh, Mel Redman-Carr, Paul Paterson, Jay Davies, Damien Warr and Bob Monkman to name a few. The list of Cape Naturaliste surfing luminaries is long, talented and decorated. Elite athletes command respect in their field. They deserve respect in the lineup. Interestingly, I have never witnessed any of those renowned surfers overtly waving their sceptres in a social surfing scenario. My observations deem that these champions are amenable and humble community members. They are aware of their abilities and prominence, yet respectful of their positions. Nonetheless, I am certain that on the competitive battlefield their true spirit for victory surfaces.

### **8.1.2 The ever-changing field: Movement and transitional lineups**

Surfing hierarchies are in a constant state of flux. Succession in the surfing lineup occurs from dawn to dusk. Such sere<sup>35</sup> is typical in biological communities. Change is expected. Species' density and species' diversity fluctuate diurnally, seasonally and over extended periods. Populations are affected by inter and intra species competition, promoting the Darwinian 'survival of the fitter' complex. When all is said and done, surfers are animals involved in an intense struggle. Limited resource plus hungry completion equals a fierce field.

The notion of an ever-changing field is recognised by Evers (2004, p.30) indicating that movement is crucial in surfing. A surfer's movements determine his/her surfing manouvres. Surfing manouvres determine style and this determines repute. Surfers observe other surfers. They perceive good surfing. They perceive poor surfing. Other than in the competitive arena, good surfing style is not rewarded by scores or medals. Good surfing in the recreational environment is rewarded by placement on the surfing hierarchical ladder. Good surfing promotes recognition from fellow surfers. Good surfing expands self confidence and self satisfaction. Good surfing is recognisable when a wave rider successfully negotiates a risky manouvre, when a surfer takes off late on a powerful beast, when a surfer's board throws up volumes of spray off the back of a watery wall. Good surfing can be heard from the auditory 'thwwackkk' of a fast, vertical turn off the top of a steep, breaking wave. Good surfing can be seen from a surfer's fins wafting above the wave lip as a surfboard reaches warp speed and fleetingly leaves the liquid medium. Good surfing can be sensed as a surfer temporarily vanishes behind a section of plunging fluid, enveloped in the cavern between wave-face and pitching-lip. Good surfing determines field position. Good surfing determines the surfing hierarchy.

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<sup>35</sup> Developing ecosystems, those in an intermediate stage of ecological succession, are said to be in sere.

Good surfers occupy the apex positions of the hierarchical pyramid. They are afforded the opportunity to ride the best available waves in a surfing session. And that is why it is important for the majority of surfers, we second and third tier participants, to adhere to Evers' movement theory. I recall an animated football coach once bellowing at me; "If you want to pick up kicks, Holty, you've got to run. Run to get kicks!" In a convoluted way, this logic applies to the surfing field. A surfer must paddle around effectively to pick up waves. Sitting for an extended time and admiring the environment is fine, however this strategy does not result in wave riding success. Sitting still results in getting cold and remaining waveless. Momentum is essential in tactical surfing.

Motion is especially important in the beach-break field where waves break with irregularity. Changing tides, changing sandbanks and changing swells means changing wave patterns. Alert surfers concentrate on environmental change and use their observations advantageously. The surfing field is a conveyer belt. Surfing is often about paddling around in a cyclical situation. 'Surfer A' catches wave. 'Surfer B' paddles to the take off position. 'Surfer C' paddles up the line. 'Surfer A' paddles back out to the tail of the queue, and so on, ad infinitum. Scrutinising the scenario from the dry safety of the Bears lookout is bordering on comedy. The scene is similar to an army of ants racing about the brick pavers on a warm summer morning. At a glance, the overview appears random and disorganised, however that is not the case. Surfers do not regard the merry-go-round lineup with frivolity. To the trained eye there is order. A definitive system of self-governance exists in the surfing field. Although umpires are absent, don't think there are no rules in surfing.

The surfing lineup fluctuates because of the wave riding feat. When a surfer successfully paddles into a wave and rides it, he/she leaves the take-off position. This movement promotes a vacuum, opening up a temporary niche for another surfer to occupy. This void is typically usurped with swiftness. Such physical interchange of position within the field theoretically assists in promoting an ordered field. When the take-off position is vacated by a surfer who has selected a wave, the next surfer in the lineup typically presents at the top of the order. This surfer is generally the one closest to the take-off zone, nearest to the breaking wave peak. This surfer has generally been waiting longest and should technically take their turn to paddle into the best position to catch the ensuing wave. However, there is smoke and haze associated with this rather unscientific process. Human nature regularly disrupts theory. Just as queue jumpers exist at the front bar of Caves House, so too do they present in the Cape Naturaliste surfing field. This is where angst and frustration can bubble over and aggressive behaviour can manifest. One of surfing's important unwritten rules promotes taking turns. Violating this tenet is aptly termed 'snaking'. As is the case in most Australian surfing fields, snaking is treated with disdain around Yallingup. Snaking is a crime against surfing humanity.

Waves do not function with the mechanical regularity of a playground carousel. Cunning surfers 'read the play' and pick off smaller waves that push past a congested take-off zone. Astute surfers sense cleanup sets. These are the abnormally large wave trains that characteristically emerge during any Cape Naturaliste surfing session. Such rogue bombs break further out to sea. They often cause mayhem in the lineup. Set waves wash surfers about like flotsam and jetsam in an aftermath of turbulent whitewater. This scenario, termed 'getting caught inside', has many effects on the field.

Cleanup sets spread surfers out in the lineup. Surfers get washed to shore. Surfers break legropes and lose their surfboards. Surfers experience unavoidable hold-downs, prolonged unpleasant periods spent submarine. These violent immersions sap energy and erode confidence. Cleanup sets are magnificent at adjusting the surfing field. Cleanup sets hit the field reset button. They wipe the slate clean. Surfers with a feel for the ocean innately recognise imminent cleanup sets. They move, quickly, accurately and calmly to the hotspot and they are rewarded with the gratification of riding the largest, and often the best, waves of a surfing session.

Surfing hierarchies transform with changing personnel. The field transforms as the cohort changes during a surfing session. When new surfers enter the field, they establish themselves in the hierarchy. When sated surfers vacate the field, they free up their position in the pecking order. If greedy participants join the field, the mood in the water alters accordingly. Surfers quickly notice this evolution and respond accordingly. Selfless become selfish, wave-sharer becomes wave-hog. Smiles disappear, hoot are silenced, eyes narrow and foreheads furrow. When ignorant people assert their greedy nature, surfing field order is replaced by anarchy and the hostility monster quickly appears. All subcultures have tolerance limits that are essential for field functionality. These parameters should not be ignored by the social actors. Borrowing from Donnelly and Young (1988, p.237) "critical aspects ... typically concern circumstances wherein it is necessary to trust ... [an] opponent ... to display an appropriate aspect of subcultural identity".

The lineup changes on a personal level too. If a surfer catches a great wave, their position in the pecking order may be augmented. Self confidence escalates after riding one or two set waves with effect. If such wave riding is recognised by others in the lineup, relative promotion results. If a surfer falls from a wave, misses a takeoff or blows a regulation manoeuvre, position in field is stripped in court-martial style. If failing to perform is detrimental in the surfing field, then failing to go is self-destruction. When a surfer pulls back from the precipice of a substantial wave, they fail to go. 'Go for it!' is a surfing truism that is enlivened in practice. Hesitation and surfing are incompatible.

If a surfer decides that a wave is too daunting to commit to, they fail to go. This decision is typically an evasive action involving a wide-eyed cessation of paddling and a hasty, double-armed windmill reverse. Such unceremonious retreat is scorned. A resultant awkwardness felt by the reluctant rider is typically obvious. Shame regulates the surfing pecking order. "The shame one feels in failing to meet the requirements of certain waves ... the shame experienced when I fail to take-off on certain waves ..." (Evers, 2004, p.37). I have experienced such shame. I have failed to go. I have put in the short paddles to avoid a hazardous slab at Supertubes or a late air-drop at Boneyards. Most surfers have experienced the shame, and many surfers carry the associated regret for long periods.

Editor of *Surfer* magazine, Brendon Thomas openly describes his lament for a lost opportunity on a solid right at South Africa's famous Jeffreys Bay.

I'd blown it - pulled back on a wave that I could have made. But I was younger then, and it had been too much: the shrieking offshores, the eye-stinging spray, the wall bending out to eternity. It was a classic J-Bay howler - up to that point the best lump of water I'd ever encountered. If I'd had the stones to go, it would probably still rank as the best wave of my life. But I didn't go. I'm forced to relive that failure every time I see a [J-Bay] lineup shot ... (Thomas, 2011, p.28).

However, regret can also be a huge motivational force in surfing. Consideration of the unknown shapes a surfer's psyche. 'Would I have made that late takeoff?' 'Would that have positioned me for a tube?' 'Fuck it, why didn't I go for that?' Regret can spur a surfer to paddle harder for the next set, to paddle deeper into a more critical take-off position, to put the head down and to take the plunge - to go for it! Surfing is all about taking the plunge. Leaping onto a steepening wall of roaring water adjacent to a bubbling reef is a scenario that would be earnestly avoided by most. Only a fraction of humanity would live that predicament. Of that fraction, only some would take the plunge and seize the reward. Fiske (1983, p.147) delves beyond the surfer's hedonistic pursuits stating that in the act of wave riding, surfers develop the capacity to "shut off conscious thought" and utilise pure, instinctive behaviour, promoting a body over mind inequality. This is the surfer's "visceral connection" to their practice (Evers, 2006, p.233). Going with the subconscious is underpinned by self-confidence and fed by ego. Surfers should enjoy the gaze of others upon them. Pressure should enable performance. Don't over think surfing. Don't try too hard. Go for it surfie! Don't look back!

Ultimately, the surfers in the lineup at any given time determine the subcultural field. Hierarchical attitude starts at the apex and filters through the ranks. Mike McAuliffe recognised that if the best surfers are first-rate citizens, then it stands to reason that a cheerful atmosphere will permeate the field. "Sure you get aggro in the water, but if the good surfers are good people, you get a good vibe in the water. They keep the lid on it," said *Stomper*. Surfing photographer Mark Cooper recognised that law and order generally operates in the Cape Naturaliste field. "The lineups around here are pretty good," he said. "Most people are happy to share a few waves and not over-compete."

Talented Dunsborough wahine Belinda Anderton believes that the surfing pecking order has become somewhat distorted recently. "There are a lot of newer, younger surfers who are good hasslers and many of them don't have the lineup mentality. They don't take turns... I don't think they actually understand what the hierarchy means."

The competition that exists in the field between talented subcultural members is magnified by the power of the Cape Naturaliste surf. This generates a feedback loop scenario. If a surfer wishes to succeed in the field, then he/she needs a competitive edge. That may involve fitness or paddling strength, courage, skill or reputation, or more likely a combination of all those qualities. To be in the loop, a surfer must devote time and energy to the lineup, share waves, play by the rules and earn deference. Old school Quindalup local Tommy Trigwell was candid with his opinion as always. "Yeah, sure, some of the local surfers, they make it a bit harder for outsiders ... and that's fair enough too. Let's face it, if you want to surf the good breaks and fit in ... then you have to earn respect."

John Ferguson considered field fluctuations and self-assessment. "When you see a certain guy paddle out into the lineup from around the area, you'll know where he sits into the pecking order. You know how you fit into the pecking order too." Similarly, Barry Young defined the situation from a personal perspective. "When I'm surfing I am constantly sizing up the lineup, trying to figure out what's going on and where I fit into the groove."

There is a distinction between local surfers being alpha stakeholders in the pecking order and heavy localism behaviour. As a resident member of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture for sixteen years, I have not seen one physical assault in the local lineups. As an idle spectator, I observed a surfer punched-out before a crowd of onlookers after a Pipeline indiscretion. I had been watching the surf for two hours. Why are some surfing locations more prone to aggression in the lineup? Some surfing involves participation in a hazardous environment. Sometimes ignorant and incompetent participants endanger the wellbeing of others. Michael McAuliffe's extract specifies that in certain circumstances, firm reprisal is essential for field order to transpire.

**Mike McAuliffe:** In any lineup you get your blow-ins and you get your kooks ... and they've got as much right to paddle out at six foot Margaret River or Three Bears as the best surfer who has been surfing it for twenty-five years. And that surfer, the kook-tourist, he won't take waves off the best surfer. But they can be very dangerous ... I reckon no matter where you go, there'll always be a dickhead in the water, and there'll always be the same blokes who get into an argument. But every now and then, there are some crew who do deserve a tongue lashing, and if they're not responding to that or respecting that, then maybe they do need a clip around the ears. I'm not going to be the one to dish that out, but there are people who are willing to do that ... And if that's what is needed to keep the law and order [long reflective pause] ... then so be it.

### **8.1.3 Naturaliste Narrative: Double-faulting on match point**

**Time:** Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2010 (High noon)

**Space:** Uncrowded Injidup Carpark, 4 foot, light offshore, glassy ocean, five ★ rating

**Act & Actors:** Baz Young, half a dozen unfamiliar surfers ... and Mr X

**Thick Description:** Surfing is a game of change. Oceanic conditions fluctuate. As tide, wind and swell are in perpetual motion, surf quality is continuously modified. The surfing lineup is a movable feast too. When conditions are favourable, as long as the sun is shining, surfers enter and leave the field. Surfer quantity and surfer quality varies over time. The temperament of the surfing lineup oscillates accordingly. Every now and then, when all variables coincide, the equation of perfect surf with few contenders is balanced. The possibility of being included in such an ideal, rare moment entices surfers like a Lotto jackpot.

The 2010/11 juncture was a meteorological anomaly in the South West of Western Australia. A surging Leeuwin Current and a series of blocking high pressure cells in the Great Australian Bight brought dry dams and drought. As the pastoralists rued another year of dusty paddocks, the Cape Naturaliste surfers clicked their heels and gorged at the wave trough. A quiescent atmosphere delivering light easterly air streams made for an unforgettable, extended surfing period.

Injidup Carpark is a diamond in the Cape Naturaliste surfing tiara. Inji's triangular limestone bathymetry has the capability to throw up large, fast, long walling waves that steepen and pitch with reliability in the hefty south-western swells. Inji is my favourite beach in the world.



Setting off at lunchtime, all the prognostics looked perfect for the Carpark. I tried to dampen my expectations for the impending expedition. Surfing fantasies seldom eventuate as realities. I steered up and over the Wyadup crest and was greeted by a sun-drenched ocean. Long, blue-groomed swell lines traversed the scene. Such a spectacle is awesome - a wintery ocean in a summery mood. Humming down to the road's end, my excitement grew. The musty fragrance of the coastal heath reminded me of previous sojourns to Injidup. Olfaction and memory are closely positioned in my psyche, smells produce instant recollections. Injidup's scent elevated my anticipation to shrill level.

Peering through the flickering bush I noticed a handful of bodies floating above the reef in the corner of the Bay. I pulled up into the front row of the carpark with a skid, simultaneously leaping barefooted from the Cruiser onto the cool, smooth bitumen. The scene before me was a magazine spread - glassy ocean, organised groundswell and six surfers in the line-up. The planets had aligned. I exited my terrestrial clothing and entered the tight-rubber wetsuit in a Superman switch. No telephone box was required. There were no idle bodies in the carpark to offend. Down the pine steps I skipped, surfboard poised under my arm. I trotted over the berm and onto the quicksand beach crest. No time to stretch, no delay! I pressed on my leggie as I watched an unriden, head-high wave thunder loudly down the reef. Yeeeharr! I cupped a handful of the Indian Ocean and swilled its saltiness in my mouth. Stepping into the field, excitement was tempered by anxiety.

I had decided from home to take my favourite Merrick for a run that day. The M13 model is well-matched to riding the freight-trains at Inji. It carries me quickly into the fall-line and enables rapid descent down the steep wave face. There is no such thing as a perfect surfboard. If there was, all surfers would practice with the identical craft. Different stokes for different folks. Different surfboards suit different surfers with different surfing styles. However, the yin and yang philosophy applies in this matter. The Merrick's paddle power is offset by a lack of manoeuvrability. The readily obtained momentum gained by the long plan shape is traded-off by the equivalent rail length that must be set with hasty precision on a precipitous launch. The Taijitu principle of 'losing on the roundabout and winning on the slide' applied to the Injidup playground that afternoon.

The initial surfer contact I made was with Cape Naturaliste guru, Barry Young. As a goofy footer, *Baz* rides Inji's rights with his back to the wave face. Barry's white teeth gleamed as he raced before the speeding Injidup lip. His reflection followed on the translucent wave that was feathering well above his head. I hooted loudly, acknowledging *Baz's* smoker. He laughed as he kicked out alongside me on the wave shoulder, exiting the wave prematurely with his arms extended above his head in deserved celebration. "Rob this is fabulous ... it's so clean and perfect, and nobody out!"

Two successive waves conveyed euphoric surfers down the reef. I put in the extra big paddles and soared to an unguarded takeoff zone. A set immediately presented and I picked off the second wave. Relaxed and low in the takeoff, I flew to the base and looked up high and tight to a point above me on the pitching peak. The Merrick came around easy, its fins vibrating softly beneath my back foot. The board did all the work. I just fixed my gaze, uncoiled and rotated my shoulders. High under the lip we flew. I instinctively set the board diagonally across the ever-steepening wall. In a semi crouch I was engulfed by the cascading curtain of water. Time in the tube! There are no clichés that adequately describe the experience. I exited in a burst of wave drops, feeling myself smile. I was buzzing, stoked.

The wave tap remained open. Superb waves presented. Waves were ridden superbly. A handful of happy surfers shared without anxiety, without urgency. The vibe was set on the relaxed channel. Hoots echoed out like siamang howlings from the jungle. Language was colourful, superlatives only outnumbered by profanities. This was a day to remember. Surfers joined the lineup, but there was a reluctance to leave. And then it all went wrong. Why did he have to show up? Mr X, my surfing nemesis. He regards me similarly. We have 'had words' in the surf. That history added to our animosity. He acknowledged me with a sneer and I childishly reciprocated. 'Prick!' I heard myself think. But another voice immediately sounded off. 'Concentrate! Don't get fazed! Don't let him ruin the surf!' Although population in the lineup had increased, the volume of waves fed the field's appetite. Barry and I shared yarns between sets, although I vigilantly watched for Mr X. I didn't want him paddling up inside me, jumping the queue and snaking the takeoff position.

During a typical surfing session, above-average wave trains steam into the field. Looming outside the surfing lineup, the set of the day approached. It was visible from the ruffled whiteness of its near breaking peak. Touching the limestone substrate below us, the wave was already slowing, elevating, feathering and preparing to discharge. I was well placed. This was my beautiful wave. The peak confronted Inji reef on the north east corner, ensuring a long, walling ride. I paddled into position, smoothly swung around on my beloved blue Merrick and stroked into action. The shadowy wall elevated my body surfboard complex, tilting me downwards. Gravity kicked in and I was away. Taking off on hefty waves is a much-loved part of my surfing. Going from prostrate to standing on a steepening ocean wall is an amazing feeling. It all happens so quickly. It's a rush. Bodily actions take place without conscious thought. Eyes open fully, pupils dilate, weight goes forward and balance is established. Reflexes, intuition, feelings, call it what you like, a mysterious aspect of surfing is the autonomous embrace of the surfer's body. Things just happen. Launching into a big wave can be intimidating. It can be terrifying. But it is always exhilarating.

The secret to takeoff success is relaxing and going instinctive. Don't over-think the act and never contemplate failure. I knew at that moment that every eye in the lineup was focused on me and my wave. I had experienced similar inspection previously. I had always relished the fleeting opportunity to fly my kite in the limelight. A surfer's ego craves such occasion. This is where the chips are cashed-in, currency is collected and field positions are earned. Did I try too hard to act the part of the cool Crusader? Did I over think the moment? Maybe I just made a silly error, a misjudgement? I know I did make the mistake of looking down and making eye contact with the surfers paddling below. Instead of just letting them watch me, I took my eye off the ball. I went from an unfocussed automatic surfer to a focussed falling surfer. In that microsecond I failed to penetrate the wave, I failed to position the Merrick and I failed to set the rail. I became aware of the significance of the situation. I realised the inevitability of my immediacy. I saw Mr X sneering, willing me to crash and burn. I saw *Baz* grinning, willing me to make the drop. I saw other randoms, mouths agape with envious eyes craning up at me, the chosen one. And then I did the Ivan Lendl Wimbledon double fault. I realised the implications of blowing that wave, and that's exactly what I did.

Tumbling in white water, I fell from king to pauper in solitary, dark, confused silence. In the disorder my emotions had opportunity to gel. Embarrassment, anger, disbelief - 'How the fuck did I manage to blow that wave? Profanity! What a kook!' I wanted to remain submerged in the turbulent whitewater for as long as possible. Coming to surface meant facing the mob. There was no excuse, no exoneration. When I burst the surface Mr X's immediacy was almost scary. "You just blew wave of the day!" he smiled sardonically. One man's poison is another man's meat. There was no basis for reply. I tried to appear disinterested as I fetched my Merrick. I climbed back on with an impassive face, but inside I was seething, gnashing, humiliated. My ego was crushed. There was nothing to do, nothing to say. *Baz* paddled over and chortled, trying to perk me up with some light banter. "You know Rob, when you're having a beer tonight, you won't remember all those excellent waves you rode today mate, you'll remember that one. But that's surfing!" Barry was right. I suddenly felt tired and cold. I escaped the embarrassment taking a scrap straight-hander to the beach. I walked back up the stairs of shame, only to have a random spectator in the carpark offer me the sympathy that I didn't want.

As a surfer occupying a position in the middle of the Cape Naturaliste surfing field, I have opportunity to ascend and descend the hierarchy every time I practice. Blowing a wave is an unfortunate part of surfing. It's like muffing an easy putt or missing a simple set shot at goal. The majority of social actors are imperfect in practice. When we play, we wager our confidence and our status. However, like all forms of gambling, a surfer must speculate in order to accumulate. 五五五

## 8.2 Localism: Don't live here? Don't surf here!

My first international surf trip was to Indonesia in the winter of 1982. Fired up by vision of Peter McCabe and Thornton Fallander in *Storm Riders*, we ventured to Bali to ride the express lefts at Uluwatu and Padang. During that initial tropical adventure, I cannot recall any Balinese surfers in the field on the Bukit Peninsula. A few young kids from the nearby village at Belongpule played on our boards in the low tide rock pools, but at that time, Bali was juvenile in the scheme of surfing's osmosis. The surfing culture had not infected the local populace. One of Bali's most respected surfers, Rizal Tanjung, was just six years old at this juncture. Proclaimed on a Rip Curl website (2010) as "The King of Bali", the talented goofy footer knows how to ride deep, high and long in the Bukit's glassy cylinders. I've seen Rizal dominating on the Bukit. I've witnessed him seize total authority at Canggu. Rizal (cited in Leonard, 2007, p.24) describes his ethos involving Bali's most revered wave.

Surfing at Padang-Padang, I'm always happy. The people who surf there are my friends, so it's nice. We gather in the farthest spot, we Balinese, and nobody is allowed to come inside us ... if anyone goes inside us, we let them know it's not right ... at Padang-Padang we have to control the crowd. In a way we're like policemen... we decide which waves we take and which waves other people are allowed to take. We have to control the lineup. Nobody else is allowed to control it.

Rizal makes apparent his belief that the Balinese surfers are guardians of the Padang-Padang field. Control instead of commotion, order and not anarchy. Is this attitude consequential to Bali's subjugation? From Dutch and Japanese colonial oppression to the recent international tourist plague, the Island of the Gods has been pushed and shoved by foreigners. The Bukit waves are an Indonesian treasure. Should the Balinese surfers have the right to control the Padang lineup?

The desert rimmed sedimentary reefs of South Australia hold heavy swells and enigma. A profusion of *Carcharodon* whites patrolling the cold water of the Great Australian Bight would expectantly be the principal gatekeepers of the surfing lineups at Cactus. But that is not the case. I have enjoyed some wonderful waves at Cactus. I have also had the Cactus treatment. This extensive menu included having our tyres punctured, being verbally abused in the surf and being repeatedly snaked and/or dropped in on by some of the 'local lads'. Now I'm not sooking. It is always an expectation that shit will go down at some stage of an SA desert adventure. Nonetheless, I can categorically state that when we surf at Cactus, we show respect at Cactus. When surfing Cactus, you ride the world class rights, but you also participate in a very heavy field. If you surf at Cactus, then you buy your ticket.

None of our gang ever copped a whack in the mouth at Cactus during our many 1980s autumnal sojourns. I never actually witnessed physical violence in the chilly surf, although we did see some 'haymakers' thrown at a Penong Hotel hoedown. A principal basis of Cactus intimidation is tied up in folklore. Tales of rifles being fired over visiting surfer's heads, rumours of shoreline beltings, of vigilantly nastiness are rampant. Cactus is infamous. The majority of hostility I observed while surfing at the top of Eyre Peninsula flowed from surfers who were themselves blow-ins to the desert environment. Sure there was old *Moose*, the heavyweight silverback, sitting outside like Ayres Rock, barking parade-sergeant orders to the pack; "Joey's wave! Fred's wave! Mine! Yours! Go! Go! Go!" That was all tickety-boo, even amusing. And then there was *Ronnie* who operated the camping ground. He was cool enough on the land, bordering on friendly. However in the water he didn't want to know you, aloof and uncongenial. But the blokes who gave us grief at Cactus, the desert rats who spent most of their days pulling bongs in the shadowy beachside cave, they had only been residents of the Point Sinclair scene for an instant. Do such self-proclaimed despots have authority to make life difficult for journeying surfers? Do such bigots have right to claim custody of the desert lineup?

MacKay (2010, p.59) indicates that people generally have a strong desire to find "my place". However he also recognises that its pursuit can bring out the worst in human behaviour. Wars fought over territory, the illegal immigrant dilemma, neighbours fighting over fences - these examples demonstrate how humans intensely compete for place and space. As a civilised species, *Homo sapiens* is yet to learn how to temper longing for "my place" with generosity, compassion and respect (MacKay, 2010, p. 62).

Localism is a surfing buzzword that involves surfers marking-out their territory. Localism has a strong negative connotation in the surfing culture promoting visions of violence and intimidation (Evers, 2004). The term was not used by Irwin (1973) in his ground breaking work on the surfing scene nor by Hull (1976) in his thesis on the Santa Cruz surfing community. Both authors recognised crowding as a potential problem in surfing's future. Irwin (1973, p.148) referred to a "sequence of corruption" in describing how experienced surfers labelled novices as "kooks" and viewed them "... as nuisances ... as unwelcome pariahs". Nonetheless, Warshaw (2010, p.263) states that localism was alive and well in the 1970s listing various Californian surf breaks, Hawaii's North Shore and Australia's Narrabeen and Eyre Peninsula as regions of intimidation and "bad vibes". According to Scheibel (1995, p.255) localism describes the "various exclusionary cultural practices by which a number of surfers attempt to control access to particular surfing spots". This can manifest as bullying and aggression under the guise of "cultural preservation".

Sydney's notorious Maroubra Beach epitomises the ugliness of surf localism. The Bra Boys, a gang of 'local' Maroubra surfers, were propelled to mainstream notoriety with the release of the 2007 *Blood is Thicker than Water* documentary. The gang has been implicated with narcotics and violence and were prominent in the 2005 Cronulla race riots (Silkstone, 2005). Incidents involving surf violence at Maroubra are well documented. Evers (2010, p.85) states that the Bra Boys "exploit localism ... and surfing in an ugly way" promoting violence as cool and necessary to "protect what is yours". Localism emanates from people "not wanting to share" and although it is supposedly about "locals looking after one another ... it rarely is" (Evers, 2010, p.86).

Long time respected surfing journalist Nick Carroll states that surfers declaring "ownership of a surf break ... goes to the very heart of our moral code. Nobody owns the waves ..." (Carroll cited in Young, 2000, p.60). This perspective is mirrored by Cape Naturaliste's Jake Paterson. "Localism is gross," stated Jake emphatically. "Who decides who gets the waves in their spot? A wave is such a unique thing. It comes once. If someone takes it off you, it's a done deal." Jake paused and continued, stating that localism is based on people who "take things that don't belong to them." Jake made the point that "nobody owns the ocean". He described his own experiences with localism on the world stage. "It's pretty gross how heavy it gets. I've seen the worst of it in Hawaii ... and even in some places in Indo. It's gnarly! I guess I can understand it, but I don't like it. There are plenty of waves to go around and if everyone shares a bit, it makes for a much happier surfing vibe."



**Figure 8.2: On the kerb graffiti: Smith's Beach, February 2011 (Holt archive)**

Nat Young has been on the giving and receiving end of localism incidents. His adage “surf today for tomorrow” indicates a softening of position on acute local behaviour in the surfing space. Nat implies that the some surfers around his home base at Yamba still play the local card indiscriminately. “... [Many] people around here ... like to be treated as local ... what constitutes a local? Anyone who starts beating their chests and saying ‘I’m from here, where are you from?’ they need to travel ... realise we’re all locals of the bloody planet.”(Young cited in Barilotti, 2010, p.25)

Travelling teaches people about culture. Travelling teaches people about tolerance. Travelling teaches people that the world does not owe them special privileges. Travelling teaches surfers that waves are a valuable commodity, sought after by many like-minded adventurers. Surfers gather around such limited areas. Damon Eastaugh states that “surfing is a broad spectrum”. Surfing is composed of many varied personalities. “I try to take a pretty tolerant attitude and don’t judge too much, but the thing I don’t like when I travel is localism.” Says Eastaugh, “I haven’t had bad experiences with it around here, we’re living in a pretty good area ... I don’t see heavy localism around here.” Damon summarised the situation superbly. “I think localism is a product of small-minded people who haven’t travelled much. If you’ve travelled, it is hypocritical to be showing localism behaviour at your home break. When you’re overseas, you keep your head down ... you show respect.” He smiled through his famous last words, “and you usually won’t get into trouble.”

Mark Ogram similarly regarded travel as a method of preventing localism’s gloomy shadow. “Most of our local surfers get away regularly on surf trips. If you travel and you surf somewhere else, well you’re not going to be the heavy local in your own back yard. That’d be totally hypocritical. That’s the vibe I get anyway.” Oggy implied that the search for surf promotes an “an open-mind” that encourages tolerance and a wave-sharing culture. The Cape Crusader’s penchant for surf travel was previously detailed in chapter six.

The connection between localism, pecking order and respect is often conversed in trilogy. Mike McAuliffe acknowledged that most people around Margaret River and Yallingup tend to surf locally, “not travelling up and down the coast looking for waves like they did in the seventies and eighties.” Michael believes that surfers tend to practice at a few breaks around their home area. “With that, you can get localism going on at the various breaks. And that leads to definite pecking orders.” Mike reiterated the notion of struggle in the surf field. “You get your best surfers, your intermediates and your blow-ins ... and they’re all trying to fit into the lineup.” Mike deems that the surfers who frequent a particular surf spot “tend to get a bit more respect” at that break. This arrangement has been the basis of the surfing functionality since the 1950s.

Compared with other surfing locations that she has visited in Queensland and New South Wales, Jasmin Ives has found “minimal aggro” in the Cape Naturaliste waters. “I think there is a type of mild localism here, especially with the older generation,” she laughed. “But maybe that keeps things in check a bit.” Ian Morris similarly believes that low level localism exists around Cape Naturaliste. “It’s not an angry, antisocial thing. It’s on a friendly scale,” he said. Ian continued to contrast lineup behaviours in the Cape Naturaliste and Margaret River subcultures. “At Margs, there are a dominant crew and they let you know they are there ... it’s the ‘if you don’t live here, then we don’t want you surfing our waves’ mentality.” Ian labelled the Cape Naturaliste subculture as “accommodating and open minded”. He implied that environment determines field vibe, stating that localism extent can be explained by “how many breaks” there are in a subculture. “More breaks, then less localism. It spreads out the egos a bit. We’re lucky around here with the assortment of our surfing spots.”

Mike McAuliffe also considered the relationship between ecology and field. In stating that Margaret River Mainbreak has a “bit of a reputation” for localism behaviour, Mike reasoned that Bears and Lefthanders are comparable fields. “That’s probably because of the nature of the waves that break at those spots. Those are three of the most consistent waves in the region. They can be surfed from two foot to eight foot plus, offshore or onshore, high tide, low tide. Therefore more locals are surfing them. So there’s constant pressure in the lineup ... and that can cause aggression.”

Garrick Jackson deemed there is a sense of “parochialism ... and not localism” around Cape Naturaliste. “There’s a core group of guys that are in the water all the time ... they make up a definite part of our subculture,” said Garrick. “There’s [sic] no real enforcers in the lineups here ... nobody who’s a heavy local. Our subculture is pretty forgiving really. I’d say it’s accommodating.”

“Obviously with surfing there’s a protocol and if that gets broken, then people respond,” said Eli Ryan. “And some people *do* [emphasis] need to be spoken to.” According to Eli, this is necessary to remind some that “etiquette” exists in surfing. “We’re generally pretty good down here. Compared to the east coast and Hawaii, localism isn’t really a big thing here.” He paused before continuing. “Sometimes we probably need to have a bit more enforcement, without the violence, to moderate the hasslers. Not to the extreme level.” Eli laughed and then stated. “If you did get punched-out down here, then you’ve really done something very wrong!”

Barilotti (2010, p.25) lists the five most “localised waves in Australia” as North Narrabeen, Kalbarri, Cactus, Maroubra and Burleigh. Cape Naturaliste or Margaret River did not feature in his article.



### 8.3 Girls in the curl: Chicks can surf

Women have long been enthusiastic wave riders. Hawaiian folklore is “replete with tales of female surfers” (Booth, 2001, p.4). Kamakau (1865) describes the “beautiful chiefess” Kelea-nui-noho-‘ana’api whose greatest pleasure was surfing (Moser, 2008, p.20). Legendary Waikiki “girl surfrider” Makalea is auspiciously portrayed by Blake (1935, p.16). Mamala is depicted as a female demigod who was a “wonderful surf-rider” (Patterson, 1960, p.123).

Clearly the wahines of ancient Polynesia were held in high regard for their surfing prowess. As well as signifying respect for surfing ability, another commonality exists in the descriptions of ancient women surfers. The wahines were regarded as being beautiful by their male observers.

... this one bore not a mere swimmer, but a nymph, a nide symbolisation of all the pagan islands in the seven seas. She was a tall girl with sun-shot black hair streaming behind her in the wind. She was ... slim and supple, and as she stood naked on the board her handsome breasts and long firm legs seemed carved of brown marble, yet she was agile, too, for with exquisite skill she moved her knees and adjusted her shoulders so that her skimming board leaped faster ... (Michener, 1960, p.250)

Michener’s objectification takes the masculine gaze to an outrageous level. Nonetheless, like their male counterparts, the female surfer’s body reflects rigorous exertion and repetitive routine. This by-product generates a womanly phenotype of athleticism, a sculptured beauty. Lorber (1998, p.16) argues that sports “... construct men’s bodies as powerful ... [and] women’s bodies [as] sexual.” However aren’t powerful bodies sexual too? Healthy, fit bodies exude sexuality. Add archetypal sun-bronzed skin and sun-bleached hair to the mix and ‘voila’, the powerful, sexual, beautiful surfing phenotype emerges. Male surfers appraise female surfers, and the converse situation is applicable.

I asked some Cape Naturaliste wahines if the guys “checked out” the girl surfers. Tegan Arnold roared with laughter. “Sure! Of course they do, absolutely ... but the surfer girls check out the guys too.” Maddie Kavanagh admitted to being a “social butterfly” at the beach. “I really enjoy seeing everybody in the surf ... I love the ocean and I love surfing, and I like looking at the boys as well.” The self-effacing Lauren Smith is a talented surfer. She is not frightened to mix it in the big swells up at Bears. Loz has forged her lineup reputé accordingly. “Do guys check out girl surfers? Definitely not me,” she chuckled. “I look like a drowned-rat out there. And I don’t have time to check out the dudes. I’m more concerned with scoring waves than scoring phone numbers.” Lauren paused and laughed in reflection. “Although I passed Benny Cousins on the way up to Bears recently ... That may have convinced me otherwise!”

In Fiske's (1983, p.144) opinion, male surfers are concerned only with hegemony, seeking bliss analogous to the "ecstasy of sexual orgasm". Fiske (1983, p.145) proposes that the male surfers' objective is the domination of waves and women, through "surfing, sex, drugs [and] alcohol". Fiske's description of surfing actually fails to incorporate the female wave rider. In fact, in his commentary on surfing, Fiske (1983, p.134) relegates females to the back of the panel van stating: "Males are active and dominant, and females are passive and subordinate ... females are passengers, spectators, there to be won, possessed, flaunted by the males". Fiske is wrong!

Wheaton (2005, p.149) states that surfing hierarchies are determined by aptitude. As such, the surfing field "subtly" excludes female participants "via a culture of meritocracy". Stedman (1997, p.81) similarly suggests that in the postmodernism period, women were excluded from the surfing field and the "masculinisation of surfing" resulted. However in contrast, Thorpe (2010, p.182) indicates that gender does not represent a "specific social field". She implies that the masculinity/femininity nexus is better considered as a component of the field. Such distinction makes sense in this subcultural analysis.

The surfing field is a male dominated space. Thorpe (2010, p.199) utilises the term "hypermasculine fratriarchal" to describe the analogous snowboarding field. Nevertheless, she indicates that opportunity exists for both "men and women to share snowboarding experience and lifestyle". Surfing fields in Australia are typically subjugated by young, white, middle-class male representatives. In saying that, 'young' and 'white' and 'middle-class' are all comparative adjectives.

The surfing field is a battlefield, a field of struggle. The surfing field seldom shows favours. Surfers rarely recognise other surfers as being young or old, as black or white, as male or female. When involved in practice, surfers recognise other surfers as challengers for a limited resource. Other surfers are wave competitors. The surfing field is a male dominated field. However, as a reflexive ethnographer, I regularly witnessed the encouragement of active female participation in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural field.

### 8.3.1 A night at the movies: Gidget gets the puberty blues

Two important cinematic events invited women into the surfing field in the post war beach culture. Frederick Kohner's *Gidget* was released as a Hollywood movie in 1959. "The little girl with big ideas" demonstrated to the surfing world that women could successfully stand upon and manoeuvre the innovative, foam-based Malibu surfboards of the 1960s.

I whirled around and brought the board into position. There was no waiting. I shot toward the first set of forming waves and rose. I stood it... I gritted my teeth. 'Shoot it,' I yelled. I was lifted up sky high... 'Ole!'... I was so jazzed up ... 'Shoot it, Gidget. Shoot the curl!' My own voice had broken away from me ... (Kohner, 1957, p.148).

When *Gidget's* fun attitude was coupled with the surf-music craze, the active Californian beach girl image blossomed. Female surfing participation was refreshed. According to Moser (2008, p.175), *Gidget* was the "initial spark" that elevated female surfing into popular youth culture. Women's competitive surfing in Australia soon reflected such involvement. At the 1964 world surfing championships conducted at Manly Beach, Australian girls Phyllis O'Donnell, Gail Couper and Heather Nicholson dominated the tournament (Walding, 2006, p.43).

Subsequent to the release of the motion picture *Puberty Blues* in 1981, Australian women were empowered to partake in wave riding. Speed (2004, p.55) states that the work of Gabrielle Carey and Kathy Lette acted as a "strong feminist tract" that boosted girls' surfing participation. *Puberty Blues* encouraged nonconformity in the male-centric surfing field (Speed, 2004, p.57). A crucial moment in the film was when the lead characters, Deb and Sue, proved to the chauvinistic Greenhill pack that 'chicks can surf'<sup>36</sup>. Because of this triumphant wave riding scene, scores of Australian women were encouraged to transcend the beach-bunny stereotype and take to their local waves.

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<sup>36</sup> As a young teenager, Mark 'Occy' Occhilupo spontaneously delivered the infamous line "Chicks can't surf!" during the production of *Puberty Blues* on Cronulla Beach. "I just yelled it out on the spur of the moment, and the director asked me to do it again, and they ended up using it in the movie" (Occhilupo cited in Occhilupo & Baker, 2008, p.25). Occhilupo was crowned world surfing champion in 1999. He is an Australian surfing legend.

A decade later, Stedman (1997, p.81) suggested that the arrival of the 'thruster' surfboard threw a wet towel over women's surfing. In Stedman's opinion, the nature of the three finned board perpetuated a faster, more aggressive form of "power surfing" that was in antithesis to the feminine style (1997, p.82). Women were "begrudged good waves" and in Stedman's estimation, male surfers developed a "misogyny" that became ingrained in the postmodern culture (1997, p.85). However, nothing lasts forever. Fourteen years since Stedman penned her work, women such as Lisa Andersen, Pam Burrridge, Layne Beachley and Stephanie Gilmore have forever changed the face of female surfing with their powerful, graceful wave riding techniques on the popular thruster design. Professional female surfers are respected athletes. Their proficiency and courage in the surfing field has elevated the women's ASP surfing tour to a valued and popular global sporting domain. Local Cape Naturaliste girls such as Melanie Redman-Carr, Mikaela Greene, Carly Lynch, Holly Monkman, Karen Chandler, Crystal Simpson, Lizzie Nunn, Eliza Greene, Maddie Kavanagh, Thea McDonald-Lee, Jasmine Ives, Bel Anderton, Lauren Smith and Tegan Arnold consistently demonstrate that Stedman's concept of female surfers as being "non-powerful" is extinct. Chicks can surf!

### **8.3.2 Fashion, fun and folks: Reasons to surf**

The surfing fashion behemoth is notably responsible for elevating female surfing. Girls have long recognised the surfing lifestyle as being cool. This aspect of the culture is overtly marketed by the global fashion labels. However girls also recognise that surfing is healthy and fun. The springboard for the feminine surfing revolution interestingly presented during Stedman's era of misogyny.

Cape Crusader Lizzie Nunn described the 1980-1990 decade as an "exciting time" for female surfing. Recognising the era as being "watershed", Lizzie recalled that "professional surfers were [suddenly] treated like rock stars." During that time, Lizzie was employed by Surfing Australia as national women's director. "My mission was to get more women involved in surfing at the grass roots level. We developed events such as the 'Rip Curl girls go surfing day'. There was a cultural shift in making girls' surfing more organised and better fun," she said. "Schools wanted surfing on their curricula [and] surf coaching in Australia exploded. Women's surfing was growing at fifty percent per annum." According to Nunn, this trend peaked in 1996 when seventy-two percent of the surfing classes at Surfing Australia were composed of females. Lizzie signified that the corporate giant Quiksilver consequently became involved with female surfing through their gender specific Roxy label. "We knew we'd hit it then. When Roxy caught on that girls spend lots of money, it all took off. It was no secret that girls loved surfing before then. It was just that big industry had to get it," chuckled Lizzie.

As well as the surf fashion industry's push for female inclusivity in surfboard riding, Booth (2001, p.176) lists the surge in "dynamic role models" such as the charismatic Lisa Andersen, in explaining the sudden growth in women's surfing. Highly successful ex-professional surfer Melanie Redman-Carr is a local surfing legend. She is a wonderful role model for the current crop of female Cape Crusaders. Mel commenced her surfing career touring on the ASP Women's circuit in 1992. During her time at the elite level, Melanie was victorious at the Margaret River Pro event on four occasions. She won the Billabong Pro at Jeffery's Bay in 1999, the Roxy Gold Coast Pro in 2001 and 2006, the O'Neill Sunset Challenge in 2005 and the Billabong Pro at Tahiti in 2006. One of the original surfers to be born and bred into the Yallingup-Dunsborough surfing community, Mel's surfing obsession commenced as an eleven year old, surfing with her brothers Justin and Patrick and fellow grommets Daniel Wake, Taj Burrow and Craig Hitchins. Mel was later joined in the waves by likeminded surfer-girls Holly Monkman, Lizzie Nunn and Misty Ellis (RIP).

The Cape Naturaliste surfing field is a testing environment, especially for the novice wave rider. There are limited surfing locations around Yallingup that are amenable for learning how to surf. Protected points function spasmodically over the chilly winter season. Placid beach-breaks are infrequent. Powerful waves breaking on shallow reefs are the rule. Steep drops and late take-offs are the norm. This is an environmental reality. Such wave characteristics make surfing difficult for neophytes. The premise of natural selection rings true in the Cape Naturaliste marine jungle. The fittest survive. The persistent persist. The 'no pain / no gain' cliché applies. Nonetheless, the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture accommodates all surfers with tolerance. In saying that, there are few favours distributed in the surfing lineup. If you expect a leg-up from fellow surfers, then you are in for disappointment. Learning to surf is difficult. It is physically demanding, potentially dangerous and highly competitive. Like all sports, encouragement and positive reinforcement is a necessity for success at the entry level. For young girls, learning to surf around Cape Naturaliste is a tricky process that requires determination and daring. Being born into the field normalises the adjustment however success in any forum requires drive from within as well as encouragement from without.

"As a young girl I didn't have any real problems learning how to surf," said Melanie Redman-Carr. "I learned step by step, the same as everybody else." Mel appreciated the support she received from the local surfers. She chuckled, "Yeah sure, they'd yell 'go for it' and give me a few waves. They'd show a bit more leniency to me than to the cocky young boys who were catching all the waves." Mel laughed. "I reckon male surfers actually enjoying seeing a girl catching a few waves." Melanie concluded. "Girls still aren't that common in the lineup. When I see a girl paddling for a big wave I really cheer her on."

“The surfing feedback I get from the local blokes is always positive,” affirmed Lauren Smith. “It makes me so stoked to hear dudes calling me into waves. There’s a lot of that around here. It makes me want to charge harder and take off deeper.” Loz puts the egalitarianism of the surfing field into beautiful perspective. “In the water ... we are all the same.”

Jasmin Ives believes that although some “blokes can make it difficult” to get a wave, she generally gets treated “just like other surfers” in the lineup. Jasmin laughed and indicated that wave count is predicated on physical condition. “I’m getting older. I’m not as fit as I used to be when I was a grom,” she laughed. Jazz reckons that although the number of girl surfers in the Cape Naturaliste field is low compared to other places she has visited. “But they are definitely on the increase.”

“Every time I go down to the beach, I see more girls surfing. It’s different now, it’s more acceptable,” stated Tegan Arnold. “When I was young, the guys were like ‘wow, did you see that chick pulling into the barrel’. Now I don’t think that it’s such a talking point, seeing girls surfing.”



**Figure 8.3: Cape young guns, Mikaela Green and Carly Lynch in full battle dress (Holt archive)**

The paternal influence is an enormous force ushering young girls into their surfing journey. The following responses indicate that Cape Naturaliste fathers love seeing their daughters join the wahine tribe and sharing their surfing stoke. “The first time I ever stood up on a surfboard was when I was ten, with my lovely Dad, Tony McGill,” recalled Jasmin Ives. Mel Redman-Carr was introduced to surfing by her father, Ralph. “I was usually stuck at the beach getting bored, waiting for dad to come in from the surf.” Mel recalled the pragmatism of her situation. “It wasn’t a case of *if* I was going to surf, it was *when* I was going to start surfing.” Maddie Kavanagh, Holly Monkman, Lizzie Nunn and Tiff Riggs were all introduced to surfing by their dads. Such support is important for many girls surfing ingress. From the fatherly side of the fence, George Simpson discussed his daughter’s entry into the sport of kings ... and queens.

**George Simpson:** Crystal came running up to me one day when she was about thirteen ... ‘Dad, would you teach me to surf... I’m not kidding!’ [Laughs] She’d always loved horse riding ... she was a champion swimmer and a good runner ... but she never went surfing. I said, ‘Okay Crystal, if you do it my way. Every day, no matter what it’s like, we go down to Yallingup. If it’s too big we paddle in the lagoon, to build your arms up a bit’. Every day ... for three weeks we went over Christmas, most of the time it was ideal. I’d push her into waves, and stayed out in the surf with her. Then one day we were coming down and it was about three foot Yallingup. I stopped talking on the hill but Crystal kept going. She paddled across the lagoon, out there by herself. I watched her. And that was it. From that point on she was a surfer! And now she’s a surf coach. She’s very good with the kids, tolerant and patient. It’s really hard work the coaching, long hours in the water. Jason [Crystal’s brother] went the other day to give her a hand for a couple of hours [big laughs] and he was absolutely rooted!

Like the Simpson clan, the Greene’s are a talented surfing family. Stewart and Kristen have two daughters who live to surf. “Dad got me into surfing when I was about six, and I hated it!” said Eliza with a giggle. “I went in my first comp when I was about nine, the Gromsearch, and I won it.” Eliza burst out laughing, “I just loved surfing after that.” Kristen recalled that Mikaela was “just a baby” when Stewart first took her surfing at Yallingup. “I was ‘having kittens’ about her going out surfing,” she said. “Yeah, I was probably a bit of an idiot when I look back on it,” admitted Stew. “But, Mikaela has always been an adrenalin junkie. It was breaking at Mainbreak. I picked her up under my arm and carried the board and her outside. This set wave came through, and we took off and I was thinking ‘jeez!’ All the grommies in the lineup were going ‘yaaaahhh, woohoooooh!’ and Mikaela was screaming. Not with fear, but with absolute joy. Ever since then, she has loved surfing.”

Hennessey (2007, p.79) indicates that during the late 2000s more women entered the surfing culture as a result of boards and equipment “being designed for female figures and ... surfing schools and tours that cater specifically to women”. The standard of women’s surfing has skyrocketed in recent years, both on the professional circuit and in the recreation field. As a twenty-two year old with four consecutive ASP world surfing champion titles, Stephanie Gilmore epitomises a new wave of female surfers. Her gleaming ‘Colgate’ smile and her confident approach have endeared Steph into the hearts and minds of the surfing world. Although Stephanie’s style is much about her uncanny ability to extract speed from her waves, it is polished to a diamond by her distinctive feminine touch.

Female surfing has always been awkward. Lisa [Andersen] was the first one to break out of that. Pam Burridge had a nice style... There was always an excuse, like our hips are too big, the female body just doesn’t work the same way a guy’s does. I was just like, ‘no, I don’t think that’s a good enough excuse’. Times are changing ... It [surfing style] was never something I had to work on. I just felt comfortable working with the wave instead of fighting against it ... The best thing you can do is learn how to read the wave... (Gilmore, cited in Baker, 2010, p.32)

“The current standard of girls surfing is exceptionally high ... it just gets better every year,” said Mel Redman-Carr. “The men are still ahead, but it’s really good to see the women are closing the gap. Some of the current women’s styles are beautiful to watch. Steph’s is so fluid, and still critical.” Mel recognised the Greene girls surfing potential. “I see Michaela and Eliza surfing quite a bit and they are really good ... really tenacious. It will be interesting to see how they go.”

### **8.3.3 Body identity: Making masculinity**

Thorpe (2010, p.183) recognises that the “snowboarding field” enables male participants to create “masculine identities”. This similarly applies to surfing. As put by Evers (2006, p.231), “going surfing [is] doing masculinity”. However this concept should not prevent women from being active surfing participants. Women can accept exclusion or “successfully negotiate spaces for themselves ... by demonstrating physical prowess and commitment” (Thorpe, 2010, p.189). Such an attitude enables the female surfer to earn her stripes and like any other surfer, work her way into the surfing lineup, through the field of struggle. This concept does not just apply to female surfers. According to Evers (2009, p.895) “... even though women, homosexual men, other ethnicities ... are surfing in increasing numbers, they are still outnumbered [by heterosexual Anglo-Saxon men] ... and sit below them on the pecking order in the lineups in Australia.”



Likewise, Thorpe (2010, p.189) states that the “snowboarding fraternity not only excludes women but also marginalizes ... older men and novices”. As an ‘older man’ in the field of struggle, I accept that I must work very hard to catch waves. There are no easy waves in a competitive surfing field. A surfer either makes adjustments to his/her surfing mindset to cope with a small wave count or alternatively surfs at another location without a crowded, talented hierarchy.

Male chemistry promotes masculinity. The fearless, risk-taking, tough-guy stereotype dwells in the surfing culture. The female surfer is generally a more cautious participant than her male counterpart. According to Woodward (2009, p.28) “women can only go so far in ‘doing masculinity’ ... because the masculinity [is] ... predicated upon a history of risk-taking, danger, adventure, the practice of physical force and exclusivity, all of which constitute the making of traditional masculinities”. Masculinity is linked to the male body. As aptly expressed by Thorpe (2010, p.193), “men and women use and manage their bodies in very different ways in most cultures”.

As discussed in chapter seven, courage is an essential ingredient for success in the surfing field. Courage is a personal trait that manifests itself in a person’s behaviour. Bethany Hamilton personifies courage. In 2003 as a talented, happy go lucky thirteen year old surfing at Hanalei Bay on Kauai, Bethany was attacked by an enormous Tiger Shark. She lost her left arm in the assault. In the months that followed, Bethany’s courage escalated to an extraordinary level.

... after being released from hospital, Bethany did something possibly more astonishing than surviving the attack when she paddled a soft-top longboard out ... and on her third wave, popped up with only her right arm. (Patterson, 2011, p.51)

Bethany’s return to the surfing field after such a horrific experience is an extraordinary feat. As a consequence “her life became a whirlwind of media attention ... from *Oprah* to *Good Morning America* ... from the *New York Times* to *Der Spiegel*” (Patterson, 2011, p.51).

Smaller scale courage is no less significant. Courage is an individual attribute that is measured on an arbitrary scale. At a 2010 surfing class held at ‘Cobblestones’ near Cowaramup Bay, we were greeted with empty, solid-blue surf on a stunning spring morning. Given that a fatal shark had occurred nearby months earlier, some of our students were understandably on edge. Post session, I quietly asked a couple of our participating female surfers about their feelings in the practice. The following quote demonstrates the depth of commitment, confidence and courage that successful surfing commands.

**Thea McDonald-Lee:** This was a surfing performance class so I was determined to perform. The recent shark attack freaked me a bit. Some of the girls psyched each other out but if we psyched each other up instead I reckon we would have all gone out. I love these classes. I get to surf with the girls. I did some serious venue analysis [but] I was still a bit hesitant. The atmosphere changed when Moana and Alice decided to go for it ... I felt calm. We were escorted by three gentlemen [chortles] into the water and I felt comfortable and safe. We all fed off each other. I loved it! Surfing is great, but surfing with great people is the best. I felt the good side of adrenaline ... pushing but not restricting. I could sense myself grinning... Surfing is a real test of character. Every time you go out, you achieve and a bit more. Your character is built a bit. The ocean rewards those who have the balls to paddle out the back ... [pause] even if they're out there shitting themselves [laughs].

*Some of the girls “showed balls” and put themselves into the lineup that day. Some of the girls rose to the challenge. Some of the girls immersed themselves into a very tricky situation. These surfers showed courage. These surfers exhibited determination. They engaged when some of their peers refused to play. In my opinion, the previous description is magic. It describes surfing through the eyes of an astute young woman. As surfers, “we feel our body and then we experience emotion” (Evers, 2006, p.232). Emotions qualify the surfing experiences regardless of gender. Girls and boys feel the rush associated with surfing. Girls and boys feel surfing’s stoke. The human phenotype is shaped by a combination of environment and genotype. The presence of the XX chromosome set has not prevented many Cape Crusaders from being integral subcultural members. Local girls are ripping in the Cape Naturaliste waves. Local girls are having fun in the Cape Naturaliste waves. And to paraphrase an old adage, ‘whoever is having the most fun is the winner’.*

## Chapter Nine: Capital

*Many dreams come true, and some have silver linings*

*I live for my dreams, and a pocketful of gold*

Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin)

Over the Hills and Far Away - Houses of the Holy (1973)

### 9.0 Introduction: What do the Crusaders know?

Capital is equated with wealth. Fiscal capital involves tangible possessions such as property, stocks, art or cash. According to Bourdieu (1992, p.121), knowledge is wealth, knowledge is cultural capital. Knowledge presents subcultural members with an opportunity for success "... in a system of distinction in which refinement in cultural tastes is the foremost marker of status" (Ford & Brown, 2006, p.62). In the process of augmenting capital, the subcultural member has potential to refine cultural taste and so enhance field position. With respect to surfing subcultures, supplementary capital stimulates betterment in wave riding practice and as discussed in chapter eight, distinguished surfing performance leads to an elevated field rank, a marker of subcultural status.

According to Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone (1993, p.4) knowledge allows subcultural members to control the "destiny of self and others". This suggests that knowledge sharing is subculturally significant. Like material wealth, cultural capital is only genuine if it can be converted into liquidity. Capital is valuable when it can be shared with others. At the subcultural level, generous sharing occurs between members through communication. No person is an island, no surfer is an island. Anderson (1972, p.1) states that a "way of life is something to be shared ... to live as a person is to share". In my experience, local surfers who share surfing practice also share surfing capital. Such experiential sharing "bond[s] mates" (Evers, 2006, p.241). Cape Naturaliste surfers exist in a confined community and capital sharing is fundamental to the associated subculture. Surfers refine their cultural tastes through distributing their experiences. Knowledge, like high level performance, is a marker of distinction. But sharing knowledge involves more than divulging secrets. Capital sharing is about philanthropy. As surfing is fundamentally a selfish pursuit, selfless giving seemingly contradicts the very basis of the wave riding culture.

Consumption of cultural capital involves understanding the value of knowledge. This is referred to by Brubaker (1985, p.755) as “apprehending meaning”. Surfing subcultural members who are well informed have knowledge that has normally been collected through a lengthy learning process. *Homo sociologicus surferensis* is eternally learning. Surfers learn through shared experiences, through trial and error, through patience. Surfers learn over their entire surfing journey. This notion is paralleled by Evers (2006, p.234) when he states that surfers “learn as they assemble with the field”. High order learning involves a purposeful pursuit of knowledge, an intention for personal betterment. This is the genuine surfer’s Holy Grail; to accumulate surfing wisdom, to be a better surfer, to assemble with their surfing subculture.

Some surfers possess strategic surfing knowledge. They understand the kinesiology of surfing techniques. They recognise the importance of diet, flexibility and fitness in their surfing existence. They appreciate the benefit of utilising innovative surfing technologies in enhancing their surfing performance. These surfers know how to practice.

Some surfers possess environmental surfing knowledge. They understand the meteorology and oceanography responsible for producing optimal surf conditions. They comprehend how waves break. They are in tune with the ever changing rhythm of swell, wind and tide. These surfers know where and when to practice.

Chapter nine considers features of the Cape Naturaliste surfers’ subcultural capital. This chapter emphasises the significance of local knowledge, the Cape Crusaders’ bullion. Wealthy individuals have their pockets full of knowledge currency. In this chapter I investigate how the Cape Naturaliste surfers communicate, what they communicate about and why they communicate. Sharing underpins the notion of subcultural capital.

### **9.1 Local Knowledge: The home-ground advantage**

When Western Australian AFL teams West Coast and Fremantle play at Subiaco Oval in Perth, they are afforded a home-ground advantage. Performance occurs before a parochial crowd. The players and coaches have intimate familiarity with the environment. The opposing team has endured a significant travel schedule to compete away from their support base. Although playing on the home-ground does not guarantee victory, it unquestionably favours the resident team. The home-ground advantage concept applies to many sporting codes, at many sporting venues.

Understanding the intricacies of a home-ground is an example of 'local knowledge'. From an anthropological perspective, local knowledge involves more than geographic awareness. Canagarajah (2002) implies that local knowledge is based on the beliefs and orientations that have developed as a result of a specific practice occurring within a particular subculture. "Local knowledge is context bound, community specific, and non-systematic because it is generated ground up through social practice in everyday life" (Canagarajah, 2002, p.243). As a consequence, it is realistic to conclude that local knowledge is distinctive from global knowledge. Local knowledge is also distinctive from scientific knowledge. In defining scientific knowledge as "abstract [and] invariant through space or location" and local knowledge as "holistic, contextual [and] adaptive" Kelkar (2007, p.298) indicates that the latter is more subculturally significant.

Surfing subcultural capital is local knowledge. Carroll (2007, p.18) describes local knowledge as "a subtle awareness of how a certain piece of coast reacts under any [combination] of swell and weather". Carroll labels local knowledge as both "wisdom" and "awareness", indicating that these qualities are compiled over a long period of time, becoming "almost an unconscious thing" (2007, p.18). Carroll's "certain piece of coast" reference is analogous to the home-ground concept. Understanding the Cape Naturaliste piece of coastline is Cape Crusader capital.

Local knowledge is an embedded element of all surfing subcultures. Local knowledge separates subcultural members from outsiders. Local knowledge answers the local surfing questions - the 'when' and the 'where' questions. Surfers who hold and effectively use local knowledge have a well developed sense of the home-ground and thus possess subcultural wealth. Such rich individuals are recognised by others as being wise surfers, those who are 'in the know'.

Jake Paterson is a Cape Naturaliste surfing legend. He is acutely aware of the magnitude of capital in his home-ground practice. "Local knowledge is an important part of our subculture ... for sure," said Jake. "Growing up down here you get to know how it all works." He laughed as he thought of a highly specific example. "I can spot one particular rock at Yallingup and I know the tide's low enough to surf Mufflers. It's crazy. That one little rock in the middle of the bay can give me the indication that it's right." Jake listed "swell direction, the winds ... and [the] Cape effect" as other exemplars of subcultural capital. "You can drive past Injidup and the wind can be howling southerly ... yet Yallingup can be still offshore. You can often see the line [of wind] out there to the south. I'm not sure if the Margies crew are onto that one yet," smiled Jake. "Down at Margs, all the windsurfers will be out there in the onshore gale ... you get back up here and Supers is on, with a light southwester ... perfect waves." He paused and then laughed. "You're gunna have to not print that!"

“I’ve got my landmarks at most of the spots I surf around here,” said Adrian D’Espeissis. “I have markers on the beach that I look for, I line them up. I know where to sit to get waves. Most of the surf spots down here are reefs, so they break with reliability ... once you figure out the takeoff spot, you’ve got it sorted. Then you can play around a bit ... try taking off a bit deeper, get a feel for it.”

Brett Baker recognised that “local knowledge means knowing the conditions.” Brett’s passion for the Cape Naturaliste meteorology was apparent. “Being a surfer means understanding the weather patterns and what they mean around here ... looking for the high [cirrus] clouds, knowing the Cape effect ... and what the big high pressure systems bring with them. It all comes from experience.”

Surfing practice is directed by earthly cycles. These cycles include seasonal cadence, the day/night sequence and meteorological variables such as tides, winds and swells. Natural rhythms are referred to by Bourdieu (1992, p.59) as “tempo”. Although different surfing subcultures are influenced by similar tempo, global tempo is rarely coincidental. Tempo incidence differs across the planet. Wind patterns change, tidal variances differ, distant storms and cyclones generating swell conditions come and go. The dynamic nature of the global weather system is tempo causative. As a result, most surfing subcultures experience their prime surfing seasons at a specific time of the year that differs from place to place. For example, surfing conditions on the North Shore of Oahu is finest in January/February/March. The Bukit Peninsula in Indonesia is optimal during June/July/August.

Although the Cape Naturaliste surfing season is arguably most favourable during summer and autumn, one of the subculture’s distinguishing attributes is that worthy wave riding prospect occurs throughout the year. Different surfing locations around Yallingup activate in dissimilar conditions. These are experienced at different times of the year. Thus, Cape Naturaliste surfers are able to practice on *most* days. The Cape Crusaders are blessed. They have access to an elongated practice period, a rarity in the surfing culture. The Cape Naturaliste surfing tempo is a cacophony. The Cape Crusaders require an ear for the tune and discernment for the beat. This concept was discussed by Creatures of Leisure General Manager, Garrick Jackson.

“Yeah we’ve got a lot of variability ... big wave bombies, small wave spots, inside [Geographe] Bay. You can surf all year round here, in all conditions.” Garrick pointed to the Gold Coast as a seasonal, divergent example. Because of the changeability of Cape Naturaliste’s surfing ecology, Garrick believes the effective surfers “have their finger on the pulse”. Such observations form baseline local knowledge. “The hardcore locals, they’re watching it the whole time ... they’re waiting for the wind to go around, for the tide to fall, the swell to pick up a bit.” Garrick pondered for a moment. “Maybe we do look a little more deeply at the conditions than other groups around the coast.”

Successful subcultural members understand how the local conditions function. They are in tune with the tempo. Evers (2006, p.241) states that at “particular surf breaks, some surfers know the winds, swells, and tides that bring out the best in the place”. When the ocean-atmosphere tempo is understood on the local scale, it manifests as a “visceral connection with nature” (Evers, 2006, p.233). Subcultural capital connects surfers who want to practice perfectly in the biggest and/or best waves available at a specific location. Surfing knowledge is attained slowly, over a long journey.

Veteran Cape Crusader, John Malloy, outlined his local knowledge viewpoint with distinction. “You can harp on about the fact that it’s pretty busy now ... but this place is our home. We’ve grown up here. We’ve learned to surf here. We’ve been here for a long period of time.” John indicated that he can “still paddle out at Carpark or at Yallingup or up at Three Bears” and get waves because he “know[s] the place that well.” As significantly, John philosophically added that local knowledge and wave count need to be mitigated by a bottom-line. “But really, it’s what you take into the water sometimes. Your attitude when you paddle out, that often determines how you surf.” Although local wisdom sets subcultural members and outsiders apart, a surfer’s mind-set underpins his/her surfing practice regardless of location. Attitude is a contagion that determines field temperament. Attitude shapes the subcultural vibe. This concept is further explored in chapter ten.

#### **9.1.1 Crystal ball gazing: Surf prediction**

Surfers are devout weather watchers, preoccupied by the circumstances that create optimal surf. Surfers observe weather patterns with the same fervour as farmers and fishermen, craving information about impending surfing conditions. Armed with predictive capital, surfers make life decisions to complement their practice.

Surfers have been empowered by technology. Satellite imagery, math models and advancement in communications have enabled surfers to more efficiently scrutinise the global ocean. Surfers everywhere have enthusiastically absorbed the Internet into their culture, greedily grasping extrapolative and real-time meteorological information. Numerous restless surfers are tapping away on their keyboards at this very moment, accessing surf related information about their local surf breaks and about surfing destinations thousands of miles distant. Some privileged participants are able to drop everything to pursue the exceptional big wave producing synoptic patterns with the confidence that modern technology typically gets it right.

Contemporary prognostication tools have made surf prediction child's-play. Websites such as Buoyweather, Weatherzone and MagicSeaweed provide surfers with remarkably reliable seven day forecasts regarding impending surf conditions. However, whether the WWW is a surfer's friend or a surfer's foe is open to interpretation. As multiple wave riders gaze into the same crystal ball, there is now little advantage in prognostic skill. Everybody has access to the same data. If this capital is ubiquitous, then the edge associated with bygone surf prediction has vanished. There is no longer genuine skill in meteorological analysis. There no longer exists authentic local knowledge in determining impending swells or favourable winds. I regret that many young Cape Crusaders will not acquire the ability to peer at a synoptic chart and understand its convoluted implications. Checking for an idle high pressure cell in the Great Australian Bight coupled with a tight low in the Southern Ocean has long been a favourite summertime penchant of mine. The curving isobars have always predestined that Bears was about to come alive. Now, an effortless mouseclick provides forthcoming swell size, period, direction along with impending wind strength and bearing. Is easy better?

As a result of modern technologies, our world has become more accessible. Internet data specifying forthcoming tempo arouses an abundance of surfers. Well-informed surfers from the metropolitan area are able to adjust their commitments to practice down-south when impending surf conditions are favourable. This situation has long existed on weekends and holidays. Unfortunately nowadays, uncrowded surfs during the working week are relatively rare events around Cape Naturaliste. The cliché 'Doesn't anybody work anymore?' is commonly bandied about beachside carparks when the mid-week lineups are overpopulated. Does the invading Perth armada have the capacity to dilute the Cape Naturaliste surfing fraternity to the point of subcultural extinction? Indeed Wheaton (2007, p.292) argues that the Internet has led to the demise of some localised subcultures. As designated in chapter seven, many Cape Crusaders are disillusioned by the jam-packed field. The following responses point out that the World Wide Web is accepted as a reality. Most Cape Naturaliste surfers are empowered to take advantage of the Nostradamus technology in seeking capital concerning future and real-time tempo.

"The Internet shits me!" exclaimed John Ferguson. "It really does." John indicated that as a young surfer he developed the skills necessary to anticipate the surf. "You had to study when a swell was coming, what the weather was going to be like. You had to work out your surfing forecast for yourself. It was an art." John scoffed. "But now, you just go on the Internet and you pick the day next week you're going surfing. It takes all the skill out of it, which annoys me." Ferguson took an extended pause and reflected his statements with a laugh. "But in saying that, I still use [the Internet] all the time."



“The high tech stuff involved in wave prediction just blows me away,” said Jake Paterson. “You can look at the site and say, ‘I’m gunna get up to Gnarloo on Thursday. It’ll be six foot and build to eight foot on Friday and then drop off a bit on Saturday’. Are you kidding me?” Jake laughed. “Back in the day you’d go camping at Gnarloo and it’d blow its box off ... northwest for three days.” However Paterson immediately reiterated the downside of the technology. “But I guess there’s good and bad to it. The Internet has definitely added numbers to the lineups down here.”

Although dependable, Internet surf prediction is not always perfect. This is a good thing. Natural tempo is imperfect and often surprising. Laird Hamilton, a globally revered big-wave aficionado, recognises surfing forecasts as conjecture. “... forecasting’s a crapshoot. I wait until I see the whites of the eyes” (Hamilton cited in Casey, 2010, p.284). Hamilton’s scepticism is palpable. Such a ‘Doubting Thomas’ riposte suggests that previous prognostication experiences have served him a frustrating cocktail of success and failure. Electronic inaccuracy has made Hamilton cynical. He requires real-time verification, visual affirmation to evaluate a swell event. Cape Naturaliste guru Mark Ogram reflects a similar stance at the local level. “The swell forecasting technology has made [surf] prediction easy. It’s pretty reliable and popular.” However Mark put a proviso on his capital commentary. “But we still get good [surfing] conditions that slip past people who rely solely on the [electronic] data. You don’t know unless you go,” he laughed. Many factors are required to produce a wonderful wave-riding scenario. Whether a surfer is chasing death defying Cortes Bank monsters or glassy Yallingup barrels, the only way to really judge surf conditions is to observe the environment first hand, up close and personal.

### **9.1.2 Banks of silver: Surfing above the sand**

Most Cape Naturaliste surfing locations involve stable sedimentarily substrates that trip swell lines into surfable walls with reliability. These remarkable limestone reefs have been gradually weathered by the relentless ocean energy since Gondwanaland first faced the Southern Ocean. However we are also blessed with a variety of sand bottomed beach breaks that sporadically fire-up after periods of strong winds and huge swells. Sediments from the beach berm are eroded out to sea and if conditions are complementary, obliquely oriented sand bars form offshore. Such sandbanks are transient. They quickly come, they quickly go. The ocean moves sand at an amazing rate. Favourable conditions can transform waves from unrideable closeouts into peeling perfection in a matter of minutes. Tide, swell direction and wind all have a big bearing on beach break orientation and associated wave quality. When tempo concurs, surfers enter an exciting ephemeral playground.

The Cape Crusaders are constantly on the lookout for ideal sand banks to emerge. They watch in secrecy, looking through binoculars from high vantage points, waiting for gales and swells to ease, hoping for a change of wind direction, anticipating beach metamorphosis. When the beachies are on, the first in is typically the best dressed. Time, patience and effort (TPE) are involved in finding and surfing good banks. For that reason, most Cape Crusaders hold information regarding beach erosion and sand bank formation close to the chest. But for the capitalists who know what they are looking for, beach break reward is worth the TPE. There are many potential beach breaks around Cape Naturaliste. Some are enigmas, most are temperamental but all are alluring. Such is the sanctity of the 'mysto-beachies' that adorn the Crusader's home environment.

Divulging information regarding beach breaks is recognised as one of the great acts of subcultural capital sharing. Such knowledge distribution is often done in a burst of unbridled excitement. It is sometimes performed to let fellow surfers know that they have missed a narrow window of opportunity. It is sometimes implemented as an act of kindness, perhaps in the hope that such sharing will one day lead to the favour being returned in a symbiotic gesture. ASP boy-wonder Taj Burrow understands the significance of capital sharing regarding the Cape Naturaliste beach breaks.

"If you ... know of a sick little bank, you have to keep your mouth closed about it. It happens to me at home, I get all excited and tell a few people about an early I had. By the time its lunch, word's out and ... everyone's over it. It's tough but word of a fun bank spreads like a disease. Zip it, okay?" (Burrow cited in McIntosh, 2005, p.31)

One of Burrow's favourite beach breaks, the infamous Rabbit Hill, lies just north of Yallingup. When Rabbits is in sync, it produces powerful, hollow waves that powerfully explode in inches of water above the sand. Terrific tubes, spectacular skydiving and broken backs result. Eli Ryan identified the Rabbits/Burrow synergy through a grin, "... whenever Rabbit Hill is on, Taj always seems to be around." He shook his head and rocked back with incredulity. "I don't know what it is, but ... Taj and Rabbits, they have this mystic relationship," he laughed.

Many Cape Crusaders indicated their proclivity for chasing the region's transient beach breaks. The white sand, the crystal blue water and the fast hollow waves beguile surfers. Nevertheless, time is precious and opportunity cost precludes some surfers from devoting this limited commodity to the search. Adrian D'Espeissis signified the effort involved in beach break scrutiny. "I keep an eye on the beachies. But because I'm so busy at work now, I don't have time to waste. If I'm surfing at Bears I'll often have a look over the hill at Windmills or see if there's any sand at Patch. But I won't just drive around to the back of Inji anymore, or just drive down to check Honeycombs."

Time poor surfers tend to rely on the bush telegraph to signify beach break readiness. Such capital sharing is an act of generosity. "If you don't keep your eye on the beach breaks you can miss out," stated Ian Morris. "Some people let you know, and you are always putting your feelers out ... if someone says they've surfed here or there, you take note of that. You wake up and if the conditions are right, you check it out." Ian was quick to add that such "swapping of surf related information [occurs] only with close mates."

Beach break variety is a Cape Naturaliste treat. The steep drops and the racy sections above the sand appeal to the subculture's top performers. "There are some amazing beachies around here when they're on. There's a certain crew that closely follow the beachies ... watching and waiting for them to come to life," said Garrick Jackson. "The beachies are really high performance waves." Garrick noted that a "discrete group of surfers ... looking for hollow pits" keep a vigilant eye on the beach break domain. "The banks come and go, but when they're on, they're amazing." I reminded Garrick about a Mitchell's beach break session we shared together in the spring of 2009. "Yeah I remember that day for sure," he grinned. "You hear people talking about the good surfs they had on beachies for ages," he laughed. "And you go back looking for that same bank for years."

Eli Ryan's excitement, passion and familiarity of the Cape Naturaliste beach breaks reflect his holistic subcultural knowledge. "I love our beach breaks," he stated. "When they turn on, they're world class. They're heavy and they're perfect ... [but] they just don't happen that often." Eli advised that when sandbanks do form, they quickly become populated with the region's best surfers. "But you can get some of the best pits [tube rides] of your life. When Windmills gets that horseshoe bank thing happening, you take off and get shacked, come out, do a turn or a cutback and line up another barrel ... there aren't too many beachies around like that where you can get the double barrel." Eli laughed and provided an opinion about sharing subcultural capital. "I've never had a problem with telling people when a bank is on. I know a lot of crew like to keep it under their belt ... but I mean it's got so crowded." He paused, "Let's face it. There aren't any secret breaks down here anymore."

## 9.2 Surfing communication: Sharing subcultural capital

Language is fundamental to cultural communication (Goodenough, 1981; Gibson & Ingold, 1993). Language enables knowledge distribution and capital exchange. Subculturally specific language allows members to converse in code-like argot. According to Agar (1986, p.21), language is linked to culture as a “storehouse of tradition”. Individuals who understand subcultural language have the key to the capital vault.

Thornton (1996, p.10) points out that cultural capital is gained not so much from what you know, but from who you know and who knows you. Being well-connected enhances position in the subcultural field. Being well-connected bestows status, develops profile and permits opportunity for valuable surfing related interaction. Scheibel (1995, p.254) supports this idea indicating that cultural capital involves “patterns of meaning-infused symbols that produce communication and knowledge in everyday life”. Communication between subcultural members has the capability to produce a “mythic ancestry” that characterises a “culture’s essence in narrative terms” (Burke, 1947, cited in Scheibel, 1995, p.254)

Surfers communicate with other surfers. They talk amongst themselves while surfing. They talk in the ocean between sets. They talk in the car on the way to surf, in the car on the way home. Surfers hatch surf-plans on their mobile phones before practice, prognosticating and fantasising. They chat in the carpark overlooking the lineup pointing while whistling as perfect waves peel off before them. Surfers talk after practice, basking in post-surf delight or moping in an aftermath of ‘undelight’. Surf talk is not confined to the surfing field. Surfers talk among themselves in the public domain. They talk in the coffee shop, in the bar, in the hardware store, the supermarket, at footy, at yoga, at school and at work. Surfers talk about surfing with other surfers wherever and whenever they can.

In describing London’s obscure street language Gelder (2007, p.14) implies that a specific language set, an argot, is used by people who are “united by common interests”. Gelder demonstrates that different argot is employed by members of the closely related opiate and cannabinoid drug-user subcultures (2007, p.16). Language acts as a subcultural code. When the code is broken it has the potential to “yield a vast amount of information” (Gadamer cited in Sands, 2002, p.xiv). This inference is obviously important for all anthropologists. Although a common universal thread exists, subcultural language styles and vocabularies appear to isolate surfing populations. Surfing subcultures exhibit distinguishable symbolism in the form of surfboard brands, hardware preference and surf fashion. This in turn promotes subcultural identity and interpretation. Such social practices are termed “situated practices” (Gobo, 2008, p.173).

### 9.2.1 Naturaliste Narrative: Nobody says cowabunga anymore

**Time:** Thursday March 24<sup>th</sup> 2011 (8 am); Another superb autumnal day in the South West.

**Space:** My home office, in front on the Dell screen with telephone and espresso at hand.

**Act & Actors:** John Ferguson & Annie Holt

**Thick Description / Thick Conversation:** Weezer's *Sweater Song* sounded on my iPhone just before 0800. Brian Bell's impressive guitar solo is the ringtone attached to my good surfing mate John Ferguson. *Fergs* introduced me to Weezer on the 1998 Bali ASG tour. It seemed like a fitting tribute to attach his number to the tune. When the *Sweater Song* goes off it invariably means surf talk. This instance was no exception. John was cooking up a surfing scheme.

"Hey mate. What's happening?" I asked. There was no pretence of salutation from the other end of the technology, just an immediate excited tirade.

"Have ya checked the Net? 1.8 meters at 13 seconds. That easterly's pretty radical but its gunna back off. Swell's jumping. Low tide's at noon. Reckon it'll be even better than Tuesday!" John took a quick breath following his sweetener - Tuesday's surf was sublime. Fergs was edging his gavel closer to striking a deal. I paused momentarily, rolling my eyes and smiling. I moved into standing and unconsciously stretched.

"Mate, I can't! I've got a heap of writing to do. I can't go today. I've got to get this chapter nailed."

"Bullshit! Do it tonight! Ya can't surf at night can ya? These are the days ya live for." John was making atypical sense. I imagined him doing a Cheshire cat impersonation on the other end of the handset, grinning, basking in his humorous wisdom and flawless argument.

"Where are you thinking? Spot X?" My automatic inquiry materialised as I sauntered into the kitchen. I was hopeful some momentum would pacify my conscience and ease my decision-making process.

"Nah, the Creatures' boys went in there yesterday. No sand in the corner. They finished up surfing at Mufflers. I reckon we head straight up to old faithful. It'll be smokin' up there. The rights will be grinding on that falling tide. You love those rights Holty. I'm thinkin' we go up about ten. We'll get the change of shift then. Come-on, stop pretending. I'll drop by your place. We'll take your car hey? My diff's sketchy and the track's fucken gnarly at the moment! It'll be going off up there! Ya know ya wanna surf!"

“Arrrrrrhhhh - I’ll see how I go.” There was a chuckle in my ear and the phone sharply disconnected. I knew that Fergs would be frothing in my driveway like an Eveready Energiser bunny just before ten.

Annie raised her eyebrow. She shook her head slowly, tilting it backwards in disbelief. “Good luck with the research.” She deliberately paused. “And have a good surf,” she recited slowly, sounding out every word in deliberate melodious ridicule. The door closed with my wife’s exit. I knew I had two hours of writing time before I was going surfing. Two hours of waiting for the wind to subside. Two hours for the tide to fall, for the morning crew to exit. Two hours to wait, two hours too many! “Concentrate” I mouthed quietly to myself ...

I did have a good surf up at Bears that morning. I had a great surf - lots of laughs, lots of fun. Sometimes the universe delivers. Karma, providence, good luck, it’s all about being in the right place at the right time. I am reflecting on the session now, smiling as I write. I am replaying a large hollow right, steepening in my path, bubbling and walling up on the shallow reef. I am reliving a reasonable cutback, coming around smoothly with a spray of water, punching off the foaming section to continue my ride. I am recalling the conversations I had with *Hoppy*, remembering *Arns’* lineup banter, recollecting *Togs* nodding acknowledgement from across the channel at *Babies*. I am smirking as I relive *Ando* giving the notorious ‘old mate’ a harsh grilling regarding his queue jumping tendency. I am reviewing myself hoot loudly, drawing lineup attention to *Fergs* dropping stylishly late into a solid bomb. Such capital communications, verbal and non-verbal, are integral to all surfing subcultures. In documenting this element of Cape Crusader practice, I am applying Spradley’s translation competence with a dash of Bourdieuish reflexive sociology, straight from the field and into the thesis.

On the return journey from Bears, I had opportunity to reflect on my early morning telephone dialogue with John and understood its significance to this work. I recognised that a considerable autonomous subcultural exchange had taken place. Would a non-surfer understand that conversation? Would a surfer from outside the Cape Naturaliste environment comprehend the subcultural argot and crack the Cape Crusader’s code?

Surf spot nomenclature, nicknames, jargon divergence - surfing linguistics fluctuate from place to place and from age to age. The surfers’ argot is an ever-changing feast. Some terms are universal, others are subculturally specific. Some terms remain ingrained in the surfing culture, others are transient, discarded like flared jeans, platform shoes and cheese cloth shirts.

Nobody says cowabunga anymore.

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### **9.2.2 Talk is cheap: Capital is expensive**

Surfers' conversations habitually involve wave riding feats. Surfers everywhere "remember and talk about different swells, best barrels and worst wipeouts" (Evers, 2006, p.241). Interestingly, such surf related talk tends to be regarded as being trivial by non-surfers. To the outsider's ear, discussions regarding the wave riding culture presents as small-talk. Ubiquitous, surf related communication stigmatises surfers as being single faceted. As an enthusiastic surfer, I have often been met with retorts such as 'Don't you get sick and tired of surf talk?' or 'Is surfing all you ever discuss?' I'm confident that many other surfers have received similar mild insults. To those in the surfing circle, such innuendo is dismissed with indifference, even smugness. Like economic capital, cultural capital is highly sought after. Significant surfing knowledge is accumulated via communication.

Surfers are guarded about hush-hush surf spots. They keep new swell prognoses close to the chest. Surfers withhold information about improving surfing manouvres. They don't like divulging information about effective new fin designs. But they do! Surfers do share their secrets. Surfers splurge their subcultural capital. However, such sharing does not happen with everyone. Distributing capital is an act of generosity. Sharing occurs with the select few. Surfers distribute capital with other surfers who also have cultural capital. Capital consumption is all about building synergies and is often based on the 'what's in it for me' attitude.

Knowledgeable subcultural members develop their precision over time through their experiences. Conveying valuable cultural capital enhances a surfer's status. Divulging valuable information has the potential to enhance a surfer's reputation. Wise surfers are admired. Veteran surfers are respected. They are often consulted. Their capital opinions are highly valued.

On the other hand, making an incorrect prediction, overstating the merit of a secret surfing location or 'talking-up' personal surfing performance is frowned upon in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Big talk, foolish talk and self talk results in nosediving capital credibility. On occasion however, attempting charitable surf-related sharing can backfire. I am regularly reminded about the following fateful Samaritan slipup by my good surfing mates Dean Fancote and Kim Beers.

### 9.2.3 Naturaliste Narrative: Good grace turns to mud

**Time:** Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009 (11.30 am); A cold, sunny winter's day, southerly winds, solid swell.

**Space:** Bunker Bay - Boneyards

**Act & Actors:** Capital sharing is a delicate aptitude - Sam and *Doddsy*, Dean and Kim

**Thick Description:** After saving up my hard-earned for months I decided to upgrade my crusty old steamer with a premature birthday present. I finished up going with an innovative, front-loading Rip Curl E-Bomb after receiving the good-oil from Lukey Thomas at Country Waves.

Modern wetsuits are bliss. They're soft and they're smooth. They smell wonderful. Neoprene sticks to the torso like a superhero costume. New wetsuits have amazing thermal insulation properties. New wetsuits keeps surfers warm and agile for extended periods in the chilly ocean. I was keen to christen my brand-new suit in style.

Checking the Naturaliste swell buoy, I was stoked to see a 13 second wave period mounting like a Nick Natanui<sup>37</sup> leap. I rapidly drove out to Bunkers and checked some promising wave trails at Boneyards from the top of the hill. It was a beautiful clean ocean.

In the carpark, I eagerly pulled into my new wetsuit only to discover that I'd put the bloody thing on back-to-front. I scolded myself with an audible 'you're [expletive] kidding!' and hastily stripped. Fortunately nobody was present to witness me goose that initial entry. After a minute standing nude on the cold bitumen, I resorted to donning my glasses in order to determine correct admission procedure. The new fandangle, front loading chest zipper was one trick that this old dog did not anticipate. Not an optimal start to the session.

Excitedly I ran the Bay with surfboard underarm. I was surprised to discover that the waves were a good deal better than I'd anticipated. The two young local blokes in the lineup were demolishing the fast breaking right-handers in copybook sequence - late drop, bottom turn, stall, tube, pump and exit. The boys curtly nodded as I joined them. I had interrupted their ambience. I slowly blended into the equation, sharing the quality surf, hooting and laughing under the soft winter sun. The ocean was a transparent green-blue hue. The white sand bank's silhouette toppled the swells into racing cylinders with regularity.

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<sup>37</sup> Nick Natanui is an AFL footballer contracted to the West Coast franchise. Standing at an imposing 201 cm, the "Flying Fijian" is renowned across the national competition for his dreadlocks, his exciting perpendicular leap in the ruck and his high marking antics.



After a couple of hours I left the scene and ambled back up to the car in post-surf delight. Looking back down onto Bonies, the lads were still out shredding, sending up rooster-tails of spray, disappearing behind the pitching veils of ardour. My Good Samaritan side unexpectedly emerged in the euphoria. I decided to share the secret with a couple of my surfing amigos who I knew would appreciate the tip. I buzzed Dean Fancote and Kim Beers on the mobile while releasing myself from my E-Bomb in a watery, squelching, sucky rupture. After indicating the perfect conditions I headed home for a hot shower, a hot pie and a hot cup of tea.

Now the story should end happily here, but it doesn't. Surf conditions wait for no man / woman. By the time the boys downed their carpentry tools and made it out to Bonies, the swell had jumped and the tide had dropped. The situation had changed from marvellous to mud and I was bestowed a new nickname as an outcome. A grinning Dean still labels me *Hoaxy* as a result of that capital sharing episode. I regularly take a hammering about the 'bad call'.

I'm sure there's a lesson here for the wider surfing culture. Loose lips ... *五五五*

### **9.3 Local legends: Crusader capitalists**

The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is composed of many surfers who command a strong awareness of their surfing environment. Such astute social actors exist in all surfing subcultures. Surfing elders are a distinctive, important subcultural population. These wise individuals are characteristically esteemed because of their wave riding deeds and because of their local knowledge. Their opinions are treasured as a result of their precision and endurance. It is through local legends that subcultural knowledge is reinforced. Although surfers gain considerable capital thorough experience, it is also gleaned through the guidance supplied by subcultural elders. I pay very close attention to many of the old-school Cape Crusaders when they discuss history, surfboards, ecology and kinaesthetics. I am not alone in recognising such veterans as being iconic subcultural constituents.

"Yeah, we have many great surfers down here," said John Malloy. "George Simpson is a fantastic surfer ... a great waterman. He knows the place down here as well as anybody." John added George's brothers Michael and Johnny to the prodigy list. "Ian Cairns is a surfing legend. Mitch Thorson is another who made his mark on the world. And of course Dave Macaulay, he's a remarkable surfer," John nodded. "Dave showed everyone in the surfing world that if you work hard you can achieve anything."

“Everybody knows who Andy Jones is,” stated Eli Ryan. “A lot of crew still get the surf report from him in the morning. He’s clued up on what’s happening at the local surf spots ... local knowledge.” Eli added Mark Hills to the inventory. “*Hillsy*, having the surf shop and all, he’s been very influential in the local community ... doing the surf report on the radio and on TV for such a long time. If I’m buying a leggie I still go in and get it from Mark. He’s a good bloke ... he’s good to have a chat with.”

“We’ve got a few fair dinkum local legends down here,” smiled Warren Boyes. “Blokes like Barry Young and George Simpson.” Warren pondered and recommended fervently that I should “get *Georgie* [Simpson] and *Baz* [Young] down on the record” in this research. “You know, those blokes have such a huge bearing on our surfing culture down here ... and it’s important to get all that historical stuff down so we don’t lose it ... and record it for the future.” Thanks Warren, job done.

There are a multitude of elders who have influenced and shaped the local surfing subculture. Many of these prominent surfers have generously contributed to this research. Surfing veterans deserve the respect they are afforded. Such esteem in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture does not happen by accident. Surfing capitalism is gathered through hours of patient practice and durable high quality performance.

### **9.3.1 Capital communication case study: Who’s afraid of the Big Bad Baz?**

On a magnificent Wednesday morning in May 2010 I was surfing Mammas with about 20 other eager souls. Although the sun was shining and the waves were top quality, the vibe in the water was solemn, almost simmering. There was no overt aggression in the lineup; however, stern faces and little talk meant that everyone was tense. I felt myself grinding my teeth, clenching my jaw. I was being far too serious in the beautiful situation.

I didn’t even notice Barry Young paddle up from Pappas, but I certainly heard his big-bad-wolf booming entrance. “Right, the lot of you can fuck off now! I’m here and I mean business!” The lineup momentarily panicked. Heads turned. Surfers slipped about. However, most of us recognised Barry’s broad, white-toothy grin as a symbol of fun, as a gesture of goodwill. The angst dissolved instantaneously. Looking around the group sitting on their surfboards, some smiled, some nodded knowingly and some joined *Baz* in rambunctious laughter. One or two random onlookers looked uncertain, perhaps even confused. Barry’s lofty position in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture enables him to bring such unscripted merriment to an intense surfing field. Such capital communication reflects self confidence and indicates knowledge of situation.

When I reminded Barry of the occasion during our interview, he explained his rough-house entry with wisdom and humour.

**Barry Young:** [Laughing and nodding his head] Yeah I remember that morning all right. Sometimes it's nice to take some tension out of the lineup isn't it? Now that I'm at ease with my surfing, it's not just about having a good surf, it's more about having a good time. So if I can bounce off a few people and ... get a few good waves, then I've had a *really* [emphasis] good time. I don't know if everyone has that same outlook?

A circle-work scenario of smiling wave riders quickly materialised after Barry's thunderous arrival. Surfers picked off sets in harmony and returned to the lineup to patiently wait their turn. Congeniality was imparted to the system because of an intuitive act. I am convinced that such an entrance would not always result in the same outcome. Nonetheless, Barry's cultural clout enabled him to recognise the atmosphere and have the poise to deliver an effective message. I watched Barry closely in the lineup that day. I respect him as a surfing elder. I admire his skill and his style. I enjoy the way Barry brings distinction to our Cape Naturaliste surfing lineups. I am not on my own with this deference. The local crew adore *Baz*. He is an apex Cape Naturaliste surfer, insightful and highly respected. Barry's pockets are bulging with cultural capital.



**Figure 9.1: Barry Young enjoying “really” good times in the Maldives (Dara Archive)**

## Chapter Ten: Practice

*The sea is foamin' like a bottle of beer*

*The wave is comin' but I ain't got no fear*

*I'm waxin' down so that I'll go real fast*

*I'm waxin' down because it's really a blast ...*

*I'm goin' surfin'*

*I'm goin' surfin'*

Rivers Cuomo (Weezer)

Surf Wax America - The Blue Album (1994)

### 10.0 Introduction: What do the Crusaders do?

Practice is what people do. Social behaviour and everyday life parallel practice. Likening practice to a game, Bourdieu (1992, p.67) stipulates that “pragmatic faith” is essential for successful practice. Practice can only be mastered when the relevant “... skill, dexterity, delicacy [and] savoir-faire...” are displayed by the player (Bourdieu, 1992, p.80). Capital and practice are symbiotic. Fundamentally, “savoir-faire” enables social actors to develop strategies that enhance their practice by comprehending and utilising the rules of the game.

Subliminal understanding of cultural practice is referred to by Bourdieu as “doxa” (1992, p.72). This involves the player becoming so immersed in their culture that practice becomes “second nature”. Doxa is orthodox cultural behaviour. Doxa is cultural common-sense. When doxa becomes embedded, cultural practice becomes autonomous. Jenkins (1992, p.70) refers to such reflex behaviour as “a feel for the game”. Practice would not occur “unless it [was] taken for granted” (Jenkins, 1992, p.71). Surfers ride waves, at a glance, that is the surfer’s game. But a surfer’s practice involves much more than this thin wrap. Surfers consume surfing. Surfers live surfing. Living surfing may not be an immediate realisation however in full metamorphosis, such top order practice is a reality. For most Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural members, wave riding practice is doxa.

Surfing is a difficult game to master. It is logical that effective practice involves a long journey. Surfing practice is an ever changing, indirect course. Practice evolves with surfer as surfer evolves with the practice. Practice evolves with maturation of body, mind and soul. Surfers progress the wave riding continuum from timid young surfers, to egotistical adolescent surfers, through astute adult surfers to wise veteran surfers. Practice evolves at different rates for different subcultural members and different levels of practice attainment result accordingly. During the surfer's journey, practice is in a constant state of fermentation. Ingredients are added and the concoction is always bubbling away. Ultimately, and unfortunately, all surfers drop-out from their wave-riding practice. Family commitments, work obligations, health issues and old age cause practice termination. Reality means that all surfers eventually stop surfing.

This chapter considers several aspects of the Cape Naturaliste surfing practice. It considers the Cape Crusader's surfing doxa. It examines the concept of respect. It looks over surfing's rules. At the outset this chapter I investigate the surfers who have been born into the subculture. Chapter ten concludes with the notion of surfers riding their final waves.

### **10.1 Entering the game: Born and bred Crusaders**

Bourdieu (1992, p.68) recognised that people inherit specific cultural practice stating "you have to be born in it". The earlier a person enters a culture, the more likely it is for that person to acquire cultural knowledge and thus be a successful cultural practitioner. Early cultural entry promotes opportunity for early practice. Early practice promotes doxa which matures as instinctive behaviour and manifests in cultural "savoir-faire".

In addition to an exacting somatotype, surfers require specific environmental placement to facilitate wave riding practice. Without access to suitable surf conditions, it is unlikely that a person will succeed as a surfer. Having won 11 world championships during his remarkable career, Kelly Slater is widely regarded as the greatest surfer of all time. However if Slater had been born in land-locked Eurasia, it is probable that he would not have realised his wave riding potential. This notion is supported by Donnelly and Young (1988, p.225) when they imply that subcultural recruitment is not only dependent on ability and enthusiasm, but also on "life circumstances and proximity". Kaplan and Manners (1972, p.78) refer to this notion as "environmental possibilism", where features of the natural habitat play a "permissive role ... offering opportunities in certain directions ..." Serendipity has much to do with the Cape Crusader's subcultural practice.

Being born into the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture provides wave riding opportunities. More specifically, being born into the subculture provides access to an environment of testing surf conditions. Natural selection is underpinned by the 'survival of the fittest' concept. Only the physically capable and psychologically apt prosper in the Cape Naturaliste surfing field. The harshness of surf and the toughness of the lineup tend to weed out fragile neophytes.

The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture emerged some fifty years ago. We are now witnessing the subcultures' first born and bred leaders. These people have an inherent insight into Cape Naturaliste surfing. They are the first filial generation, the progeny of the initial cultural members who immigrated to the district. These surfers grew up in the waves of Yallingup as 'grommets', inheriting the subcultural beliefs and values that were introduced to their field in the 1950s/60s and refined and established during the early 1970s. These folks recognise themselves as the original wave of home-grown Cape Crusaders. They appreciate their fortuity and value their subcultural status.

"Being born and bred in Yalls, it's hard to escape surfing," observed Luke Thomas. "I've grown up with surfing all around me." Luke recognised his good fortune growing up on the hill at Yallingup. He "loved" his childhood, "building cubbies and going surfing." Luke, a famed local artist, believes that much of his creativity "stemmed" from the ocean. "Growing up in our environment, you appreciate your connection with the ocean. Without the ocean I would be lost."

Adrian D'Espeissis stated that his older brother Nick got him into surfing. "Everyone around here surfed. It was just an expectation, you had to surf." Adrian recalled spending "countless hours at Yallingup" with local lads Toby Heyring, Simon Barratt and Mark MacKinnon. "Si was sponsored. When we got dropped off at Smiths and it was five foot and heaving [pause] well, you learned pretty quickly," he laughed. "We were so lucky growing up down here back then."

Simon Barratt appreciates the encouragement he received "as a grommet" from the local surfing fraternity. "You couldn't ask for a better place to grow up!" he stated. Simon recalled a prominent boyhood memory that unfolded at the top of the Cape. "The first time I ever surfed up at Bears I was about six or seven. I'd progressed to surfing the Yalls reef, but Bears was still pretty spooky." After spending a morning watching his father Steve enjoying the ideal conditions, Simon announced he was ready to take on the waves at Babies. "Dad was stoked," Simon laughed. "He took me out through the channel. I missed a few small ones and then he pushed me into rouge four foot set. I got absolutely flogged. A full-on nosedive to head slap." Simon remembered "coming up in tears" before taking leave to the car. "But it must have worked ... because next time we went up there, I had no qualms." They bred them tough back in those halcyon days.

Some of Karen Chandler's early surfing memories involved "taking the old Bears track past Rabbits" and driving the rugged bush tracks to the isolated breaks at the back of Injidup. "Four-wheel driving is such a buzz when you're trying to find a wave. It's a really big part of down-south surfing." Like many other interviewees, Karen indicated that learning to surf in the Cape Naturaliste environment involved perseverance and hard work. "I felt like a very small fish in a washing machine when I started," she giggled. "Around here it's pretty much reef and deep water, not too many nice sandy beachies where you can touch the bottom." Karen labelled the environment as "raw". She noted that "getting dumped" as a novice surfer was commonplace. "I guess it either made you tough or really shit-scared," she surmised.

Thirteen year old Matthew Annert is a contemporary Cape Naturaliste grommet. "When I was little, dad used to take me to Bears and I watched him surf. I loved the bumpy trip up to Bears." Matt's rudimentary surfing practice occurred "in the rock pool near Babies", where father Mike would push him along on his board. "Then I started going to Meelup ... when I was eight, I surfed in the lagoon at Yalls. I wasn't fussed on big waves at first," he laughed. "The first time I surfed Bears I was pretty frightened. The first duck dive out there, I got washed in straight away, washed back in over the reef. I don't reckon I went out there for two years after that." Matt believes that "it's a lot easier" to learn surfing skills in Perth. "The waves are smaller ... much gentler than down here," he stated. Matthew proudly recognised that Cape Naturaliste has "some of the best, most powerful waves in Australia."

Eli Ryan recalled maturing in a very talented wave riding pool. "I grew up surfing with Taj [Burrow]," he announced. "He's always been cool in the water." Eli reminisced that Jake and Paul Paterson were very generous to the neophyte surfers. "Jake was on the [ASP] tour when we were grommets. [Jake] and *Ant* did a lot of work with the juniors through Quiksilver. They've always been really supportive." Eli noted that he "always appreciated growing up" with such munificent elite surfers in the Cape Naturaliste subculture. "We've got a lot of really good surfers down here," he emphasised. "Some of the best in the world, but they've always been pretty cruisey."

"I've always lived in Dunsborough and my dad has always surfed," stated Melanie Redman-Carr. As a youngster, Mel recalled being "stuck at the beach" waiting for father Ralph to exit the waves. For Mel, it was an expectation that she would take up surfing. She commenced her wave riding as an eleven year old. "I guess we were the first generation ... born into surfing around here ... Daniel Wake, Taj [Burrow], Craig Hitchins ... Corey Norman. We were initially bound by our parents' surfing, but when we started driving, [we] formed our own little surfing cliques."

"I'm fortunate that I'm the son of one of the original pioneer surfers in the South West," stated Brett Merrifield proudly. "I started on a Coolite ... and then progressed to a fibreglass board." Brett admits to "loving" the surfing way of life at Yallingup. "Living around [Cape Naturaliste] is a privilege ... this is the best part of the world," he affirmed.

Holly Monkman is the eldest daughter of one of Cape Naturaliste's most esteemed surfers, Bob Monkman. "Growing up surfing and living in this area was amazing!" recognised Holly. "We've got some of the best waves in the world ... and cool locals who surf great." Her initial boat adventure to the Mentawais was a life-changing experience. "I've been back three times, but that first trip with dad was some of the best waves I've ever seen." I asked Bob about his memories that involved sharing the waves with his big girl. "I love surfing with Holly," he smiled. "Unfortunately it doesn't happen that much anymore because she is on the other side of the country. I'm going to get away with her up north next year ... that Mentawais trip we did together was unreal."

Parents want the best for their children. Parents want their children to be happy. By and large, parental surfers want their children to be involved in the surfing lifestyle. They appreciate the magnitude of the rewards that surfing brings. Surfing parents often live by the 'surf together, stay together' axiom. Born and bred Crusaders are characteristically inducted into the Cape Naturaliste subculture in a process of pre-socialisation with their parents and/or siblings.

Donnelly and Young (1988, p.223) suggest that in the early stage of recruitment, novice members create a "stereotypical image ... a caricature" of the culture / subculture. Over time, this perception ripens to the point where neophytes recognise themselves as members of a specific subculture that exists within the boundary of the larger parent culture (Donnelly & Young, 1988, p.224). This concept is clearly significant to my research. Young Cape Crusaders recognise themselves as Cape Naturaliste subcultural surfers, a subset of the wider surfing culture. They are characteristically proud of their subcultural membership having practiced long and hard in a testing field to establish themselves as successful rookies.

A conversation with the surf-centric Greene family reinforced that Cape Naturaliste is a complex surfing environment to enter. It was obvious during the interview that surfing young guns Eliza and Mikaela treat their subcultural apprenticeship as a badge of honour. Stewart lamented the aging process while contemplating some of Ralph Redman's bygone advice. Kristen identified surfing's selfish nature. On the other hand, she indicated that surfing has galvanised her family unit with dedication and purpose.



**Eliza Greene:** When we first started surfing down here, we used to learn on the bank at Torpedoes. Dad would push us in our massive blue foamie [laughs] ... and he would hold onto the back and keep the nose of the board up.

**Mikaela Greene:** Yeah we never surfed on soft waves when we were starting down here because there aren't any. Smiths [Beach] sometimes had a bank ... or at Torpedoes.

**Stewart Greene:** It is [emphasis] difficult for kids to learn down here ... I'm stoked [the girls] persevered and they love it. It's funny how things change ... I recently had both hips done [replacement surgery] and when I went surfing after months of doing the rehab ... it was like I'd never been surfing in my life [Wild laughter from the girls]. It made me again respect people learning to surf ... I'd get onto a wave and just fall off, it was horrible. I'd become a kook, an old kook! [Chuckles] My head knew what to do but I just couldn't get my body to work. Ralph Redman once said when Mikaela was young ... 'You know Stewie, you start off and you're the surfing kingpin. You're the surfing legend around them [the kids]. But then gradually, *you* [emphasis] become the frightened one and they'll be surfing bigger waves than you' ... and that's exactly what's happened.

**Kristen Greene:** The thing that needs to be mentioned in your report Rob is that Stew got the girls into surfing so he could take them on surfing holidays. It was purely a selfish thing [Mikaela and Eliza laugh]. Instead of going on a Club Med holiday or a cruise, it was like 'if my girls surf, then my wife will have to come on a surfing holiday' ... the Mentawais or Bali or Gnarloo. We never started the girls off surfing with the competitive side in mind. That just evolved after the first Small-Fries [Billabong junior surf event conducted around Cape Naturaliste]. But now the girls are driving that ... if they want to surf competitively, then we're happy to support them. We will back them one hundred percent. If they show us the commitment, we are happy to put the resources into it. Anything that keeps them healthy and happy! Our girls are active girls. As a mum, I notice if they haven't been surfing. Take them to the beach and let them loose in ten foot surf ... they get home and they're calm, happy, they eats lots and sleep lots [Kristen laughs].

Talented, dedicated people born into the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture have a potential career path in professional surfing. Taj Burrow, Jay Davies, Mel Redman-Carr and Holly Monkman confirm this detail. Parental support is requisite for all promising elite athletes to succeed in their field.

Surfing elders impart their local knowledge to the younger subcultural members through capital sharing. Such information often involves “what to do and where to sit” (Evers, 2006, p.241), information that has been accumulated over long term perseverance in practice. This is real surfing wisdom. Sharing wisdom is an act of generosity. As a result of such edification, new generation surfers accelerate their progression within the subculture. In addition to tactic knowledge, neophytes are also tutored in tolerable subcultural behaviour. This process determines the foundation of the novice’s subcultural personality.

When philosophical sharing occurs across a surfing subculture, local traditions become ensconced and acceptable subcultural values are reinforced. According to Donnelly and Young (1988, p.224), during identity construction, the budding subcultural member intentionally assumes “mannerisms and attitudes ... style of dress, speech, and behaviour that they perceive to be characteristic of the ‘achieved’ subculture”. But the joy of learning surfing is not all one way traffic. Sometimes as much stoke is achieved by the guru as it is by the protégé.

“We bought the Quindalup block when Thomas was in a basinet,” recalled Tom Trigwell. “When he started surfing, I’d paddle out with him and sit in the lineup at Yallingup and I’d just watch him.” Tom paused in a considered reflection. “There’s nothing better Rob. Whatever sport your kids play, you follow every moment of it. It’s not long before they’re on their own, doing their own thing.” Tom roared laughter during his next statements. “You know, I still follow Tom’s surfing [pause] I’ve given my young bloke the shits, following him around. But I just love it, I love watching him surf.”

In the course of guidance and experimentation, young affiliates confirm their subcultural personality. Profile building is perpetuated through receiving positive reinforcement from the accepted subcultural elders. As surfing is a highly competitive field, young surfers must make the most of their opportunities “because to decline may lead to the offer not being repeated” (Donnelly & Young, 1988, p.227). Acceptance into the subcultural field occurs when the novice displays appropriate skills and behaviours. On the other hand, if inappropriate behaviour is exhibited, or if neophytes are unable to rise to challenges set by subcultural members, then subcultural exclusion is likely. In the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture this may involve young surfers showing intimidation in the lineup or failing to commit on large waves. According to Donnelly and Young (1988, p.227) “overt displays of fear can destroy an individual’s potential career” and lead to the “establishment of a negative reputation”. Similarly, when grommets are identified as being greedy, obnoxious or bigheaded in performance, they are quickly pulled into line by their subcultural elders. Grommets who fail to heed the local rules either shape up, or risk becoming subcultural pariahs.

## 10.2 The Cape Naturaliste vibe: Sharing and respect, peace and love

In describing the formation of the early Yallingup surfing community, George Simpson validates Donnelly and Young's socialisation theory. In the following quote, arguably the most important in this work, George defines the Cape Naturaliste subculture as one that was founded on wave sharing and tolerance. In discussing the lineup "vibe", George describes an intangible quality, one that differentiates the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture from many others. He indicates that surfers who fail to heed the unwritten principles face consequences. Although difficult to delineate, the distinctive Cape Naturaliste subcultural vibe is recognisable. It is a real and present spirit.

**George Simpson:** Our original thing around here was to always take turns. We started that over 40 years ago. We never ever harassed anyone who came here. If they were willing to come out and take turns and share the waves, we'd welcome them. If they came out thinking 'drop in' ... we'd tell them to go somewhere else. So that *vibe* [emphasis] has been created over time, originally set up by the guys that first come here. We're hippies remember [big laughs]. *Harbo* [Tony Harbison] and Kevin's [Kevin Merrifield] era, they were footballers - tough, hard blokes ... but right into [surfing]. We were the hippy era in the 1970s. Earrings, long hair, [laughs] ... when we came down here the farmers thought we were the weirdest thing they ever seen ... we were all 'peace and love' and that sort of thing. And that's how we were in the surf. We shared our waves ... and that vibe has continued here more than anywhere else I've seen. Although this happened a long time ago, our kids inherited it. And you'll find the local kids here aren't gnarly. There might be the odd one, but not many... and they get tuned! If they want to drop in and snake ... they get tuned! Robbie Conneeley did that Tribal Law thing ... 'Great thing Robbie' ... [chuckles] but we've been doing that here for years. We've had an unwritten law up here. And we've lived it!

The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was founded on principles of tolerance and trust. It was based on a concept of sharing. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was built on respect. The word respect has many connotations in the surfing culture. The word respect is regularly bandied about by surfers. Most Cape Crusaders recognise the significance of respect in their subculture. "There seems to be a fair bit of respect between the surfers up here. Most of the local crew are onto that philosophy I reckon," said Stewart Bettenay.

"I remember when I was teaching my boy to surf," said Phil Rundy. "Letting him know that when someone is on the wave, whether you think they're going to make it or not, you give them the benefit of the doubt, you show them respect."

Mike Annert identified that some surfers are selfish. "They want to take every wave," he grimaced. Mike admitted he doesn't like hassling, however he believes that "it is sometimes necessary to engage to pick up a few waves ... but don't paddle inside and don't drop in. Show people respect."

"Maybe there's a bit of hostility around here from time to time, but locals in any surf community tend to be a bit hostile," reckoned Luke Thomas. "They put in the time in the water. If anyone comes from outside and starts hassling, then they'll get trouble. People have got to show respect to the crew who live here and surf here," stated Luke.

It is not only the adult surfers who recognise the significance of respect in the Cape Naturaliste lineups. Talented thirteen year old grommets Boston Kavanagh and Matthew Annert enthusiastically incorporated the word in describing their insight into the local subculture. "I look at the older guys that I've met through dad and mum and I respect them," said Boston. "I know how much they love surfing, how much they've been through to get into surfing and keep surfing." Matt believes that "surfing is best" when the queue system is effectively operating. "Surfing is about everyone getting a go, not just one or two people getting every wave. It's about sharing waves ... and showing respect."

Although the surfing practice pivots on respect, when all is said and done, respect is only a word. Respect is a theory, a philosophy. For respect to function, it must be played out as a two-way street. "Respect others and they'll respect you ... anyone in any lineup has rights equal to anyone else in that lineup" (Carroll, 2002, p.29). In reality, respect is often overlooked. As indicated by Carroll (2002, p.29), highly skilled surfers and surfers with keen local knowledge have "an advantage" over surfing novices and outsiders. It is the cerebrally evolved subcultural member who recognise this surfing situation and opt to adhere to the give respect / get respect aphorism. Evers describes the multiplicity of the respect concept.

The word 'respect' has a long history in surfing ... It can mean respect for the established rules, codes and pecking order that we grow up with, and which become part of our lives. Sometimes it is used to police these rules and codes, and forces others to obey them. This can be a negative form of respect that uses bullying and prejudice to work. Respect can also work very differently. Seen in a positive light, it can mean meeting people and the ocean on their own terms. Respect can be about an exchange where you do not impose your own expectation or worldview on others (Evers, 2010, p.141).

In reality, some surfing subcultures are renowned for their fraudulent classification of respect. In using the word 'localism', these subcultures display a complete no tolerance approach to outsiders. An attitude of violence often underpins such surfing fields. This is in stark contrast to a subculture of respect. Oahu's North Shore, Sydney's Maroubra and Eyre Peninsula's Cactus have reputations for violence. Aggressive behaviour is an expectation in those lineups.

In this research, all interviewees were asked about their experiences involving violence in the Cape Naturaliste surfing space. The vast majority of respondents indicated they had not witnessed physical confrontation on Cape Naturaliste beaches.

"I've never really seen any violence around here," stated Eli Ryan emphatically. "You get words, heated discussion ... but some people need to be spoken to." Eli admitted to having "a word" in the lineup if the surfing "etiquette" was being disregarded. "We're generally pretty good compared to the east coast and Hawaii. Localism isn't really a big thing here," he said. Eli believes that sometimes there needs to be more enforcement "without violence" to moderate the hasslers. "It's pretty generous here really, that's probably why we get so many tourists. If you get punched-out down here, you've done something very wrong," chortled Eli. "Give respect and get respect as they say."

Warren Boyes has never witnessed violence in the surf around Cape Naturaliste. "I've been involved with a couple of altercations that could've gone that way though," reflected Warren. In one instance a surfer dropped in on Warren, "blew up [and] invited [him] to the beach to sort it out". However things calmed down and the lads finished up shaking hands. "Sometimes when someone gets aggressive, it's best not to be aggressive back," recommended Warren. "Put water on the fire!"

"In our surfing community you don't get violence ... maybe just a few words," stated Brett Baker. "You get the odd idiot who thinks he's TB [Taj Burrow] and I'm not frightened to have a quiet word if it's needed. Not being confrontational," chuckled Brett, "but just a gentle reminder."

Mike Annert recalled seeing "fists thrown up at Bears last summer" for the first time. "I recognised one bloke as a Bears regular," said Mike. "Considering how long I've been surfing around here, it doesn't actually happen often." Mike also indicated that "words" are sometimes exchanged. "But it settles down pretty quick... most of the local crew, they know the surf etiquette."

Yallingup surfing legend, Kevin Merrifield, described South West surfers as "pretty welcoming." Kevin was recently on the wrong end of some heavy localism while holidaying in Mauritius. He has also witnessed surf related violence at Margaret River. The following incident occurred at Surfer's Point, four years ago. Kevin described the harsh consequences of good advice ignored.

**Kevin Merrifield:** A guy I recognised came out on a ski and I said to him, 'Look, skis aren't taken kindly to down here, so be careful ... hang out on the shoulder and whatever ya do don't drop-in!' So of course the first thing he did was drop-in. He got verbally attacked from that. And then he dropped in a second time. One of the locals [name mentioned] who's built like a brick shithouse, he just paddled over to this bloke and turned him upside down. Held him under for what seemed to be an eternity ... almost drowned the guy. I've seen a few punch-ups in the water ... most of the time the guys are reasonable. Down at Margs we consistently get guys from all over the world, Japanese, Brazilians, Americans, everywhere. Most of the time they're welcome ... but they're certainly told to watch what they're doing. There's a pretty strict set of rules, the 'Tribal Law' that Rob Conneeley put together. Stick by that. Respect what's going on there. Respect the lineup.

Surfing is a hedonistic pursuit. Demonstrating respect in surfing involves altruism and this is a contradiction to many of the selfish motives that underpin surfing. Generous surfers show respect, generous surfers deserve respect. In my 15 year experience as a Cape Naturaliste surfer, I have witnessed countless instances of respect in the lineup. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has many generous members. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has some miserly members. You can't always expect respect in the surfing field of struggle.

### **10.3 Feel for the game: Know the game, know the rules**

In order to fully understand cultural practice, the anthropologist must "go back to one's own games, one's own playing of the social game, to realize that the sense of the game is ... the realization of the theory of the game ..." (Bourdieu, 1992, p.81). This quotation reflects Bourdieu's reflexive style. Surfing is a game and as a practitioner / participant observer in the surfing game, my reflexivity has been significant in this work. By observing myself as a surfer, I have utilised narratives from a first person standpoint to reinforce discussion and add value to thick description. Successful cultural practitioners have a "feel for the game" (Jenkins, 1992, p.70). Surfing is a game played by surfers. Huizinga (1950, p.9) characterises game play as "freedom ... an interlude in our daily lives ... played out with limits of time and place". Surfing is play. Surfing is fun. Surfing is an interlude. The play/fun relationship is an entwined entity.

[Fun is] ... the intensity and absorption of play ... the supra-logical nature of the human situation ... we play and know we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational. (Huizinga, 1950, p.4)

Play and fun are dissolved in the same fluid. They happen together. They are processed in brain and stored in the memory together. Play and fun are examples of high order metacognition. Play and fun are keystone to the surfing culture. Surfers who demonstrate quality wave riding performance typically experience more fun in play than those who perform poorly. Surfing performance is highly subjective. Surfing performance is highly relative. A snappy vertical front side top turn that I would be thrilled to accomplish would be a regulation manoeuvre for Jake Paterson. A deep Rob Holt tube ride would be a fleeting head-dip for Taj Burrow. Such relativity applies to many things in life.

The twin values my father imparted to me as a young footballer developing a feel for the game are correspondingly appropriate to surfing. “As long as you’re doing your best and having fun,” he’d say. “That’s all that really matters.” As a veteran surfer and as a cultural researcher I have observed many surfers in practice. The best surfers in the lineup *are* those who are having the most fun. These wave riders experience high doses of stoke. The most stoked surfers are those who catch waves and ride those waves to the best of their ability. These surfers experience hyper-fun. These surfers enjoy the surfing game, and surely, that is what really matters. This situation can be represented by the following simple equation.

$$\text{Catching Waves} + \text{Wave Riding Performance} = \text{Surfing Fun}$$

The surfer who catches waves and performs optimally in riding the waves is having fun in practice. Increments to either variable on the left-hand side of the equality augment the fun sum. Having fun is surf cultural doxa. Surfers would not surf unless they experienced the bliss that manifests with successful practice. Smart surfers recognise the fun associated with surfing game. These surfers have a feel for the game.

Having a feel for surfing motivates surfers to develop strategies that enable successful play. This involves grasping the rules of the practice. Huizinga (1950, p.11) states that “all play has its rules”. Play creates a semblance of order and for order to be maintained, rules are essential. Game rules govern game practice. Surfing is a modern game, a lifestyle game, an action game. Surfing is a highly competitive game. There are rules in surfing however the rules are rather ambiguous. In recreational surfing, rules are not overseen by umpires or adjudicated by referees. In free surfing there are no governing bodies monitoring regulations, there are no judges assessing performance or imposing penalties for infringement. You do not require a licence or a nomination to be a surfer. No official rule book exists for the non-competitive surfing realm. A culture with a magnitude of thirty million participants without rules should approach anarchy. But there is order in the surfing game.

Although Taj Burrow states that “there are no hard and fast rules” in surfing (Burrow cited in McIntosh, 2003, p.63), there is a code that governs wave riding behaviour in most surfing subcultures. Surfing conventions are adjudicated by the players as part of practice. Surfing etiquette has evolved with the culture, as a result of the culture and facilitates rudimentary organisation in practice. This system of self governance relies on self control and respect. The surfing code directs wave riding practice from a position of uncontrolled, total anarchy, to a situation of semi-controlled, partial anarchy. Two fundamental surfing rules involve right of way and wave sharing.

### **10.3.1 The First Commandment: Thou shalt not drop-in**

Dropping-in, according to Carroll (2002, p. 28) is the “act of taking off on a wave that was already being ridden by another surfer”. This tenet sounds simple enough. However in a crowded lineup, with many surfers jostling for position to takeoff on an imminent wave, surfers are sometimes smote. The surfer who is paddling closest to the breaking part of the wave has precedence for that wave. This is generally the most critical position for taking off. Anybody who paddles into the wave in front of that surfer is technically dropping-in. But like many game rules, the drop-in statute is open to interpretation. Ford and Brown (2006, p.79) state “the ‘drop-in rule’ generally serves to benefit the more skilful surfers ... and those with especial local knowledge of the breaking characteristics of a given break”. This statement reflects the notion that experienced surfers have a feel for the game. Such operation demonstrates high level subcultural doxa. Figure 10.2 depicts a drop-in sin.

### **10.3.2 The Second Commandment: Thou shalt not snake**

Snakes are surfers who don’t wait their turn. Surfing protocol is violated by yellow-bellied sea snakes. They immediately paddle to pole position, irrespective of other surfers who have been waiting in queue. Snakes are the gluttonous surfers who think they have privilege to ride every wave. By and large, these surfers are as ignorant as they are arrogant. They require a gentle reminder that they aren’t entitled to every set. Snakes are the same people who push-in at the front bar. They didn’t share their toys when they were kids. Snakes go missing when it’s their round. They never pay back the ten bucks they regularly scrounge. Snakes exist everywhere. Scheibel (1995, p.253) states that the actions displayed by these slippery reptiles leads to “frustration for many, and anger for some”. The serpent analogy symbolises “Satan” and being snaked is being “sinned against by someone who has not resisted the temptation of acting improperly” (Scheibel, 1995, p.253).



### 10.3.3 The surfers' code: Tribal Law

Ian Cairns has always stood up to iniquitous localism tactics. His defiance of heavy violence on North Shore Oahu in 1975 has been well documented (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; Gosch, 2009). "I have an issue with localism," stated Cairns. "It stems from my time in Western Australia ... where waves are there to be shared. Being told when to leave the water ... that doesn't gel with me... It's bullshit." (Cairns cited in Serong, 2010, p.55).

The following interview excerpt reflects Cairns' wave sharing passion. The passage unearths a palpable rivalry that exists between surfers and bodyboarders in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. This section of interview reveals the product of respect deficiency, snaking and frustration. It indicates how disregarded rules and selfish attitudes can lead to raw animosity.

**Tom Mansfield:** I hate boogers [bodyboarders]. I can't respect them when they don't respect the lineup. They move that one metre deeper, because they don't have to get to their feet [scoffs]. Then they think they can get every wave... I can't stand that! They reckon they play by different rules ... at Supertubes and Boneyards, they're just annoying. I just drop in on them now ... it's amazing how angry they can make you!

**Ashley Williamson:** Yeah, the other day at Boneyards, this booger just snaked me and then he's called me off [said in total disbelief]. He went 'yewww!' He called me off! And I just jumped on him. 'Fuck you mate!' [laughs]

**Mathew Mansfield:** The nature of the wave at Supers makes it easier for them ... as a surfboard rider I know that I can't go as deep at Supers without going over the falls and onto the reef ... but on a bodyboard, I know I could drop in and back door it without any effort... there's no consequence for taking off late on a bodyboard.

**Tom Mansfield:** Another thing that really gets me is the arrogance that goes with some of these bodyboarders ... 'mate, what you're doing is lying down and leaning!' [Big laughs] ... I mean great, but toddlers could do that ... I know the [professionals], those airs they do are amazing, but it's the guys who come down and don't respect the lineup that shit me! They're the same guys who wear boxers under their wetsuits [laughs].

**Mathew Mansfield:** Yeah the guys at the top end, they understand the system. They wouldn't be snaking you out at Bonies.

George Simpson implied earlier in this chapter that an unwritten version of the surfer's code has been "lived" in the Cape Naturaliste lineups since the early 1970s. Lynch (2006) credits Margaret River surfers Rob Conneeley, John McTaggart and Roscoe Kermode with implementing the South West's "formal version [of the] Tribal Law". The following graphic appears on the steps at Yallingup Beach. Ford and Brown (2006, p.138) state that such "basic principles have been retained and evolved across the surfing world". Codes of conduct may differ between surfing subcultures however their universal existence explicates the quest for respect in the surfing lineup.

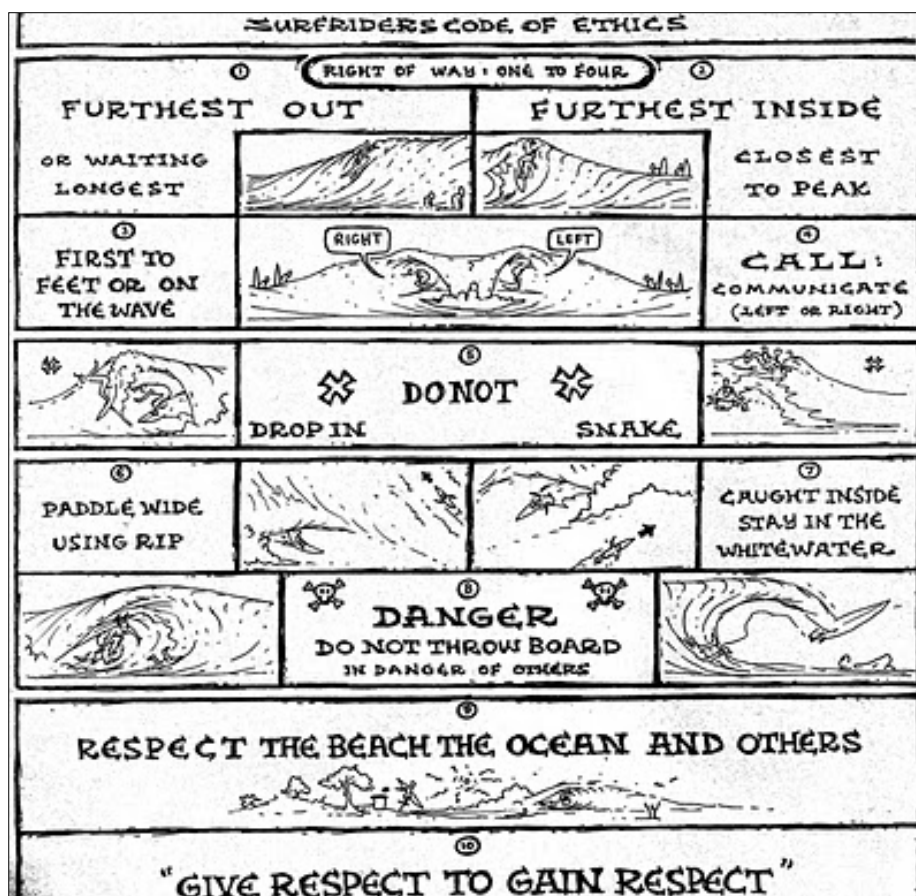


Figure 10.1: Tribal law: The South West surfing code of ethics.

The surfing lineup is a complicated self regulating space. Surfers control field behaviour. Where there is a limited resource there is intense competition. Where there is a common resource, greed emerges. When surfers play, surfers compete. "Victory can be a prize, not a laurel wreath but a gage ... people compete to be first in strength or dexterity, they compete with extravagant display ... with cunning and deceit" (Huizinga, 1950, p.210). Surfers with a feel for the game know how to compete. Most of these surfers compete within the framework of the subcultural code of ethics. Unfortunately however, some surfers compete avariciously with cunning and deceit.

### 10.3.4 Naturaliste Narrative: The pelican

**Time:** Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010, late morning, mid-tide falling to perfection

**Space:** Mamas, 4-5 foot, 13 second swell, light offshore, sunny, moderate crowd / 5★ rating

**Act & Actors:** There are no umpires on the free surfing field. There are no referees, no judges or linesmen. The drop-in rule, although ambiguous, anoints the surfer closest to the peak of a breaking wave. That surfer theoretically has entitlement to ride the wave. I'm certain that nobody paddles into a lineup with the deliberate intention of infringing on a fellow participant. Every surfer is guilty of breaking the drop-in tenet at some stage of their practice. Likewise, every surfer has been the victim of a drop-in indiscretion. Harmony in the surfing space is rare and transitory. One egotistical viper can whip an orderly surfing scenario into an Okay Corral shoot out. The limited wave resource transforms some surfers into pigs-at-the-trough. I dislike queues. I hate queue-jumpers.

**Thick Description:** My pre-practice nerves disintegrated after riding a couple of flawless waves. I was even granted a rare hoot of approval from an unknown surfer after pulling a snappy re-entry on wave two. Such nonverbal, minimalistic praise is an ego pumper. I was in tune with the clean swell, a qualified Cape Naturaliste surfer, confident and comfortable in the zone. Tommy Trigwell, *Hoppy*, *Ando* and *Boysey* were in the lineup. They were dismantling the sets with their usual style and energy. Like Olympic gymnasts, good surfers give the impression of being unhurried. They are relaxed in their kinaesthetics. They have time in their performance.

I hadn't noticed the pelican at that stage. He was floating anonymously as I waited in line, approaching pole position. My first scrutiny came when he let a smoker pass by, skulking wide eyed, out of the firing line to the safe wave-shoulder. His default released me to the top of the queue. I paddled out and deeper, sensing an imminent boomer. I love serendipity. A big, glassy, blue-green wall approached, feathering under the light offshore. It was my ticket to ride.

Paddling for a critical wave boots the sympathetic nervous system into action. Adrenalin surges and instincts take over. I felt my pupils widen in my slitting eyes. My heart boomed in my torso. My paddling deepened as I accelerated into the wave. I was in that precarious position that surfers love. As my mass tipped forward I plummeted over the chasm, down the steepening wave face. But in those hazy milliseconds, I sensed trouble. Glancing left I noticed the pelican flapping into takeoff. I made eye contact with him. I saw him see me see him. I was in deep commitment, launching. Surely he was going to pull back. But he didn't. I called out. He kept coming. This was as blatant as it gets. No whistle, no free kick, no fifty metre penalty, no report - expletive, expletive!

Really good waves are not *that* common in my humble surfing existence. That boomer had my name written all over it. That was my wave. As the jewel was being shamelessly burgled, I grabbed my outside rail and exited through the wall, screaming bubbled submarine profanities. I felt violated, fully ripped off. The pelican took that wave all the way to the beach in a pusillanimous retreat. Receiving consolatory offerings from a few of the witnesses, I gradually recovered from the disappointment.

Life's like that sometimes - dud apples, stale Twisties, broken Christmas presents, standoffish girls. There were other exciting waves ridden that morning, one of the many great sessions of autumn 2010. Did the pelican really believe that was his wave? Did he think I was not going to make the tricky drop? Did he believe that I had snaked him to the top of the queue? Was he ignorant to the drop-in protocol? Or did the pelican just have his pig face on?

Surfing is much about perspective. Surfing is all about respect.



**Figure 10.2: Author applying the brakes with a pelican on the perch. (Wayne Davies image)**

#### 10.4 Cultural doxa: The Cape Crusaders motivations

Why do people surf? Eighty-four year old surfing guru Dorian *Doc* Paskowitz exclaims that surfing is an “essential vitality ... a pizzazz” in his life. Paskowitz confesses that he is sceptical about modern medicine. Instead he relies on being “extra moderate” and conscious of diet, exercise and rest that enables him to maintain his surfing practice. “Surfing recreates you,” he states. “I’ve gone into the water literally ready to blow my brains out and come out ... a warrior” (Paskowitz & Pray, 2009).

Triple world surfing champion Andy Irons sadly passed away in November 2010. From eternal rest via the *Billabong* website (2010) Irons indicates why he was drawn to surfing.

... It’s all about the feeling I get when I’m riding that wave. Surfing keeps my life on an even keel, without it I’d tip into oblivion ... [Surfing] is the coolest thing in the world ... I surf because I’m always a better person when I come in.” (Irons, 2010)

The majority of surfers take their position in the surfing culture for granted. The orthodox behaviour of most surfers is simply ‘I am a surfer’. But surfing is a convoluted phenomenon. What makes wave riding so alluring? Is it the Blake (1935) “spirit of the youth”? Is it the Pearson (1979) “sense of freedom”? Is it the Farmer (1992) “thrill of the vertigo”? Is it the Irons (2010) making of a “better person”? Clearly, people surf for diverse *raison d’être*. Surfers ride waves to have fun, to liberate stoke. Surfers surf to achieve the unique feeling, the feeling that only surfers’ feel. Notwithstanding, converting the surfing feeling into words is a complicated task.

What surfers [receive] from surfing is both a sense of personal satisfaction and of belonging to a group they feel cannot be understood by non-surfers ... Experience tells them not to bother even attempting to explain their passion to non-surfers. The feeling satisfies a psychological need, one that clears the mind and cleanses the spirit. Riding across the face of a wave, the surfer almost achieves a feeling of weightlessness, and is able to express [himself/herself] by manoeuvring body and surfboard, with only nature providing the energy to keep moving. (Butts, 2001, p.4)

Although extraordinary surfing sessions remind surfers why they practice, most surfers do not dwell on the meaning of their surfing life. In asking my contributors ‘Why do you surf?’ they had opportunity to reflect on their wave riding practice. Surfing stimuli are as many and varied as surfer personalities. Although subliminal acceptance of cultural immersion is doxa, true enlightenment occurs only when a person realises his/her good fortune in being a surfer.

Bob Monkman is a subcultural guru in Yallingup's surfing ashram. "Once you get bitten by the surfing bug, you're a surfer for life," he stated. "We're so lucky being surfers!"

"Surfing is the "best thing in the world," stated Jake Paterson. He recognised himself as "one of the fortunate ones" who has been able to make a career as a professional surfer. "It's never going to be 'Ah, I have to go surfing today', it's 'guess what? I'm going to go and get some waves'. "My motivation is to ride waves. As an aside I stay fit and keep at a level where I'm still respected in my job [Quiksilver]."

Warren Boyes and Lizzie Nunn both labelled surfing as "an addiction." Said Warren, "Today I had some amazing barrels, but I was looking at the Internet when I got home straight away, and it's going to be really good again tomorrow. " Warren laughed, "I love being a surfer!" Lizzie stated that surfing is in her blood. "If I can't surf I become irritable," she said. "It's about paddling out and being a part of another world."

"I surf for the pure enjoyment of the activity," said Damon Eastaugh. "I came home from a good surf at Yalls last night and thought 'I really enjoy doing this'. There have been periods in my life when things weren't going too well, and [surfing] maybe loses appeal when you're not in a good space. Initially I blamed surfing for some things going off the rails, but then I thought, 'Hang on! This is actually the thing that I need in life. This is what keeps me going!' and I ditched that attitude." Damon's doxa has evolved over time. "When you're young you get caught up with focusing on the whole performance. Now I sit back and enjoy the horizon ... I try to take the whole experience in."

"My big motivation to keep surfing is to go with my mates," said Luke Thomas. "That's why I love surfing, the social side of it. I mean surfing is my main topic of conversation." Luke cherishes his surfing friends and his surfing memories. "There's nothing better than surfing with my mates ... even if the surf is absolute horse ... there's nothing better than surfing with half a dozen mates and you're all out there talking shit." Luke laughed and pointed to Yallingup. "Out there, that's the best playground ever I reckon!"

As the general manager at Creatures of Leisure, Garrick Jackson considers himself extremely lucky to be "fully immersed" in the surf culture. "I've always had interest in surfing but I've really got involved since living down here and working in the industry." Garrick has an affinity with the Cape Naturaliste environment. He highly values his position as a subcultural member. "I love the ritual, checking the conditions, talking to guys in the water ... the social element, the gamesmanship involved with surfing down here," he smiled. "You get to know the local guys from surfing ... You see these blokes regularly ... they share a common life element."

#### 10.4.1 The surfing religion: Spiritual stoke

Evers (2009, p.903) states “[m]en who surf do not surf to go out and ‘conquer’ nature ... they become part of contingent geographical assemblages that re-arrange their sensual life. It is why surfing means so much”. Likewise, (Flynn, 1987, p.398) states that “the surfer surfs with the ocean wave, reading the wave’s movements semiotically and improvising a dance narrative in synchrony with that reading ... the ‘ceremony of play’ is carried out by the surfer, in spite of physical hardship, in order to achieve a meaningful order of humanity’s balance with natural life”. Surfers have intimacy with nature. They have a profound relationship with the ocean.

“I can’t imagine my life without surfing. I need to surf,” said Lauren Smith. “I love surfing because it’s so humbling ... one session you can be scoring the sickest waves. Everything is working for you, you’re sharp, doing turns bigger than ever ... and the next session everything turns upside down.” Lauren laughed. “You realise the power of Mother Nature.”

Brett Baker enjoys the “amenity” of surfing. “Being on the water, being able to get on a good wave,” he stated, “it gives me my time, my peace and tranquillity... being challenged by Mother Nature.”

“It’s very hard to explain what surfing is to non surfers,” stated Kevin Merrifield. “It’s the affinity, you and the ocean, Mother Nature. It’s something that just can’t be explained to those who haven’t had that experience. I love the ocean, getting out there. It’s almost a form of meditation being out there,” he said nodding towards the Yallingup lineup.

Autonomous surfers do not spend inordinate time navel-gazing. They are usually too busy living their surfing lives. Surfers seldom have the luxury of devoting minutes to contemplate their practice. When such reflexivity does occur, it is often accompanied by an epiphany of feel-good glow. This self perception is a component of surfing stoke, the realisation of the distinction associated with being a devout surfer. In my surfing practice I have experienced appreciation of practice. Such deliberation has enabled me to cope with problems, to tolerate life’s mundane chores and to endure periods of pain. I am convinced that I am not alone with this doxa. In line with the Bourdieuan theory of “pragmatic faith”, sophisticated surfing practice verges on being religious. MacKay (2010, p.70) indicates that religion satisfies the “powerful human desire to believe in something in the realm of the non-material”. Surfing is an intermediate phenomenon, a transition between matter and energy. Surfers have faith in the surfing. Surfers are motivated by surfing.

The following excerpt from Clifford Geertz's *Religion as a cultural system* indicates that religious activities and motivations are closely allied.

A motivation is a persisting tendency, a chronic inclination to perform certain sorts of acts and experience certain sorts of feelings in certain sorts of situations, the "sorts" being commonly very heterogeneous and rather ill-defined classes in all three cases ... Motives are thus neither acts (that is, intentional behaviours) nor feelings, but liabilities to perform particular classes of act or have particular classes of feeling ... when we say that a man [*sic*] is religious, that is, motivated by religion, this is at least part ... of what we mean. (Geertz cited in Banton, 1966, p.96)

For the dedicated Cape Naturaliste surfer, wave riding is a "persisting tendency, a chronic inclination". Surfers "perform certain sorts of acts" - nailing cutbacks, getting tubed, blasting re-entries. Surfers "experience certain sorts of feelings" - happy, proud, frightened, impatient, nervous, angry, stoked. Surfers practice in "certain sorts of situations" - big waves, small waves, crowded, alone, with mates, dawn, dusk. In line with the Geertz excerpt, the surfing "sorts" are mixed and varied and the surfing motives are "liabilities". When we say that a person is a surfer, we mean they are motivated by surfing, motivated by surfing's acts and feelings. Surfing is a religion.

#### **10.4.2 Flicking out: Riding the last wave**

Walker (2011, p.67) refers to them as "lifers". The men and women who maintain their surfing practice for as long as possible. This involves "a never-ending commitment" that is regarded by a tongue-in-cheek Walker as "a borderline psychological flaw" (2011, p.67). Inevitably however, every surfer will ride his/her final wave. I find that an ominous concept. Family and work commitments, health and fitness constraints and ebbing enthusiasm dictate surfing durability. In my estimation though, the longer a surfer maintains practices, the greater the extent of the surfing reward. It's a positive feedback loop. The longer you surf, the longer you want to surf. Experience teaches us to appreciate life. Moreover, experience teaches us to especially treasure the best things in life - the fun, the laughs, the happy people, the high moments. The following comments from a range of mature Cape Naturaliste sea-dogs indicate that surfing longevity takes hard work, perseverance and energy. But clearly, these veteran Crusaders fully live their surfing lives. They are evidently and understandably satisfied by that reality.



“To think that at sixty-two I can still surf. I can still go out and do it,” laughed Mick Marlin. “Whereas a lot of guys I grew up with have given it away. I love surfing ... I don’t want to sit at home and watch the footy and cricket on TV. Bugger that!” he scoffed.

“Surfing gets into your blood, and that’s why we continue to *want* [emphasis] to surf,” stated Murray Smith. “I love being out there on the water ... with [my] own thoughts, looking for waves to ride. Surfing grows in you. You want to keep doing it for as long as you can. Look at Kevin [Merrifield], he still gets out there ... he still surfs solid Margarets. That’s pretty amazing ... Kevin is a reasonable surfer but he’s courageous, he’s gutsy. He’s a very fit man and that’s a telling point. Surfing fitness is so specific. There’s no exercise that matches it.”

Ian Morris classifies himself as an “ocean junkie”. After an accident kept Ian from the surf for seven years, he believes he is “keener now than ever before.” Ian uses a variety of surf craft and recognises this affords him a “much bigger scope” to practice in a range of conditions. He does “a bit of yoga and stretching” to keep himself in top surfing fettle. “I look at a lot of my friends ... and a lot of them can’t surf anymore.” Ian shook his head thoughtfully. “I’m surfing until I drop!”

Mike McAuliffe recognised that his surfing practice has evolved. “I guess I’m from the old school,” he stated. “I like drawing long lines and big turns. And for an older surfer, it promotes longevity in surfing.” Mike declared he enjoys the “Tom Curren smooth, flowing” time-honoured style of surfing.

“Surfing is something I love to do and some days I do it better than others,” chuckled Barry Young. “I’ve learned how to accept that situation ... You’ve got to realise that when you’re sixty-three you’re not going to surf like you did when you were forty.” Baz believes that a realistic approach to performance is essential for surfing longevity. “As soon as you recognise that, I reckon you can surf all your life. If you’re expecting too much of yourself, then you’ll have to give it away ... go and play golf or something because there will be no satisfaction.”

Prolonged surfing necessitates evolution. Long-term surfers change their practice as their bodies’ weather. The above philosophies emphasise that extended wave riding practice involves knowing self and knowing style. According to Evers (2009, p.899) surfing styles “highlight how bodies are part of a dynamic sensual existence”. Knowing that the game is changing facilitates a shifting feel for the game. When I observe the lineups, when I check the surfers at Caves House or at Craig’s coffee-shop, I don’t see too many grumpy old Cape Naturaliste surfers. I see lots of stoked old Cape Naturaliste surfers. They froth like grommets - brown skinned, wrinkled faces, laughing through wide grins, with character bodies and steely awareness. The grumpy old surfers? Well, they no longer surf.

George Simpson acknowledged that crowded lineups and a busy lifestyle have adversely affected his down-south surfing practice. "I've still got it in me," he laughed, "but I like it offshore, warm water, when the sun's out." George specified that "the enthusiasm to go surfing is difficult to maintain."

"You have to keep making yourself surf," stated Stewart Bettenay. "You have to force yourself to surf." Stewart believes that winter provides a real challenge to the veteran surfer. "It can get pretty bleak down here ... and you've gotta make the effort. If you don't go, the next time it gets harder and so on." Stewart recognised that fitness is difficult to maintain. "You lose your fitness really easily as you get older. You gain weight and you lose flexibility and get injuries. You've got to be fit to surf."

Mature surfers who are willing to put in the hard lineup hours and maintain a sensible level of flexibility and fitness reap their wave rewards. Durable surfers have been shaped by their extensive practice. Veteran surfers have acquired Barry Young's minimalistic realism philosophy. Surfing elders are committed. They are submerged in their practice. Lifers exist in every surfing subculture. They are pinnacle representatives of surfing's cultural doxa. "Over time lifers get a kind of Zen capacity to live in the moment. So maybe the lesson for surfers is if you focus on this life - as opposed to other versions of the good life - you can find daily satisfactions" (Johnson cited in Walker, 2011, p.70).

The Zen inference? The minimalist philosophy? A Gerry Lopez exit is clearly needed. "Just a moment here or a moment there ... one good turn, a tube. Those kinds of things can carry you for a long time" (Lopez cited in Warshaw, 2010, p.295). As an outcome of the fun produced in the wave riding experience, a surfer's psyche apprehends meaning. With respect to this work, meaning apprehension involves the surfer recognising his/her privilege of being a Cape Naturaliste surfer. This involves the surfer sensing oneness with ocean and oneness with subcultural field. Evers' surfing field assemblage is genuine subcultural practice.

## Chapter Eleven: Crusaders

*Some call it heavenly in its brilliance*

*Others mean and rueful of the Western dream*

*I love the friends I have gathered together on this thin raft*

*We have constructed pyramids in honour of our escaping*

*This is the land where the Pharaoh died*

Jim Morrison (The Doors)

The WASP - LA Woman (1971)

### 11.0 Introduction: Subculture revisited

Although the term ‘subculture’ has been previously detailed, I have purposefully saved the subsequent descriptor for this moment. According to Gordon (1947, p.46), a subculture is a “functioning unit which has an integrated impact on the participating individual[s]”. Subcultural involvement occurs via a sequence of “population segments” that may be classified according to their “region” (Gordon, 1947, p.47).

Surfing subcultures are structured population segments that can be regionally categorised. A surfing subcultures’ functionality directly impacts on the behaviours and philosophies of its members. Surfing subcultures are distinctive units, separated by time and space. Although the parent surf culture provides ultimate direction for the global surfing populace, surfing subcultures operate as discrete communities. Surfing subcultures are at the ‘sharp end’ of the surf culture. At this micro-level, environment, habitus, capital and field fuse to bring about a local surfing practice and an idiosyncratic subcultural style.

In chapter eleven, the Cape Crusaders are placed under the high power objective lens. I examine the identity of the subcultural members. I reconsider and broaden the concept of the subcultural boundary. I compare the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture with the adjacent Margaret River surfing subculture. In this penultimate chapter, I take further steps in answering my research questions and progress towards thesis climax.

### 11.1 Subcultural identity: The local crew

As discussed in chapter six, the surfing environment plays a significant role in shaping the related surfing subculture. Although surfing is a worldwide culture, surf practice is concentrated in distinct localities. Buckley (2010, p.405) reinforces this point in stating that lucrative surf-related tourism is “tied to highly specific features of the natural landscape”. Ultimately, wave type determines surfing practice and surfing practice determines surfing subcultural style. This thought is identified by Evers when he indicates that a specific surf environment attracts and connects like-minded surfers.

My local wave rises, warps, peels and mutates over a very shallow slab of rock. The blokes who ride it are considered gutsy, tough, and respected by other surfers ... the danger, relief, joy, and pride ... bonds together a particular group of blokes - the ‘local crew’ ... (Evers, 2006, p.236)

With regard to this research, the local crew are the surfers who reside in the Cape Naturaliste community. The local crew recognise themselves as apposite subcultural members. As importantly, the local crew recognise the other local crew. They know the identity of their fellow subcultural surfers. They also recognise the non-subcultural surfers, the outsiders.

“At the places we surf, like up at Bears, you recognise the familiar faces,” said Mike Annert. “Most of the people are pretty cool. People are pretty good about sharing the waves around here.” Mike used the term “camaraderie” to describe the strength of the local crew’s bonds.

“Being part of the surfing community means getting to know the people who surf here,” stated Warren Boyes. “People come down here for a year or so, and then they move off. They don’t really get to know the community ... they were never really part of the local culture.” Long term Dunsborough and Yallingup community members become acquainted beyond the surfing field. Surfers convene at a neighbourhood level and discuss their surfing practice; at sports clubs, at Rotary, at the pub, at yoga, at the volunteer fire-fighters, at the local school parents and friends meetings. Such community involvement adds volumes to the local crews’ subcultural attachment.

“The people that belong to this local surfing community are distinctive for sure,” observed Mark Ogram. “You see them around the place all the time ... but there’s [sic] attitudinal differences too.” Mark mentioned that some visiting surfers tend to get overexcited in the field. “They froth a bit more ... I don’t think they’ve got the same respect or the manners that most of the local crew have. They’re desperate to get waves [pause] ... at any cost.”

As a self-confessed “surf observer”, Damon Eastaugh acknowledged that he identifies regular faces in the Cape Naturaliste lineups. “You get to know the local surfers,” he said. “The real subculture is prominent now [June], without the big hoard of tourists. The real subculture is really about the people who live down here isn’t it?”

“What we have down here is people who know people,” said Brett Baker. “That’s the tribal aspect ... that’s the subculture. Sure you get your strays, but you know the locals and they know you ...”

The Cape Naturaliste local crew is undeniably diluted by the influx of weekend and seasonal surfers. These regular ephemeral invasions bring foreign beliefs and values to the subcultural field. Nonetheless, through recognising and acknowledging their fellow subcultural members, the Cape Crusaders strengthen their surfing affiliation. The surfing subculture is corroborated. Familiarity with other subcultural members forges a sense of belonging, a clannish association - the tribal aspect.

### **11.2 Distinction: The Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural style**

In order to portray a surfing subculture as being unique, it is valuable to define the style of that subculture. Surfers from different geographies develop dissimilar surfing behaviours. Isolated wave riding communities evolve different subcultural philosophies and to some extent, they generate diverse wave riding mannerisms. This notion is maintained by Evers (2006, p.234) in discussing the style of the Gold Coast surfer.

To become a surfer is an ongoing and dynamic biological, sociological, and psychological process of adaptations. For instance, surfers from different regions develop different styles. The Gold Coast surfer paddles with powerful strokes and has a relaxed posture when riding. He languidly moves with the warm water and long peeling waves of Burleigh Heads, Kirra, and Currumbin. Bodies are dark brown and hair lightened from the tropical sun, whereas chests are broad from paddling against the ferocious rips. Surfers saunter in boardshorts and thongs with arms hanging loosely. I am a second-generation ‘Goldie’ surfer. I am deeply informed and may even have inherited an affective body attuned to surfing. Watch a ‘born and bred Goldie boy’ make adjustments to the board and for the wave as he slides about inside a barrel—this is where a surfer rides behind the falling curtain of water. You will see him mold his body to fit as if it is instinctive; all the waves of this region are very hollow. (Evers, 2006, p.234)

Although the Cape Naturaliste surfer has numerous similarities with the Gold Coast surfer, Evers' lively picture of the "Goldie" wave rider magnifies the diversity. The Cape Crusader does not obtain an extensive suntan under the warm tropical sun. Bodies are browned in the crisp midlatitude atmosphere, from fierce ultra-violet rays bursting through a thin ozone veneer. The tan does not indicate boardshorts or bikinis. Toasted skin is confined to face and hands, the remnants of the body shielded by a standard neoprene suit. The Crusaders' broad chest is not built from paddling against the rips of world famous point breaks. Physique is honed by persistently working through hefty six wave closeout-sets, without respite, in dark cool, heavy water. The Cape Naturaliste surfer does not attain tube riding abilities from casually pulling into long, perfectly barrelling walls. The Crusaders' tube sense is a reflex action. It is acquired from learning to negotiate late takeoffs and dangerously wonky drops. It is honed through practice in punishment / reward scenarios involving short-lived, pitching, thick-lipped slabs of ocean that snap surfboards and twist knees.

Subcultural variation is obvious through considering just three convenient parameters. Other differences exist between these two surfing subcultures, between all surfing subcultures. Although surfing has universal commonalities, surfing subcultures display disparity. I am not implying that the Cape Naturaliste surfers are superior to the Gold Coast wave riders. I argue they are distinctive. To depict the Cape Naturaliste surfers' style, I call upon the Crusaders to provide subcultural definition. Interestingly, Luke Thomas brought Evers' "Goldie boy" into the fray for immediate comparison.

"On the Gold Coast, on any given day there are half a dozen blokes out there 'ripping-the-bags-out-of-it' on those points. The number of surf shops along that strip ... the weather, all the camera guys ... that all affects the surfing standard. Having good surfers in your area reflects the local surfing subculture." Luke paused. "Down here it's still got ... [a] country feel about it. Our environment reflects the people who surf down here - big waves and heavy water and powerful surfers."

Although Mikaela Greene is a youngster, her wise observations are reflective of her successful competitive surfing career. "The surfers from down this way ... are more reef-break oriented. They surf heavy reef breaks and I notice that in their styles. They're kind of slower ... they take more time with their bottom turn ... they really wrench it. The east coasters tend to be more flicky ... They like doing lots of quick turns. Down here, they're always looking further down the line for sections, so they can get time to do that big bottom turn and really smash the lip."

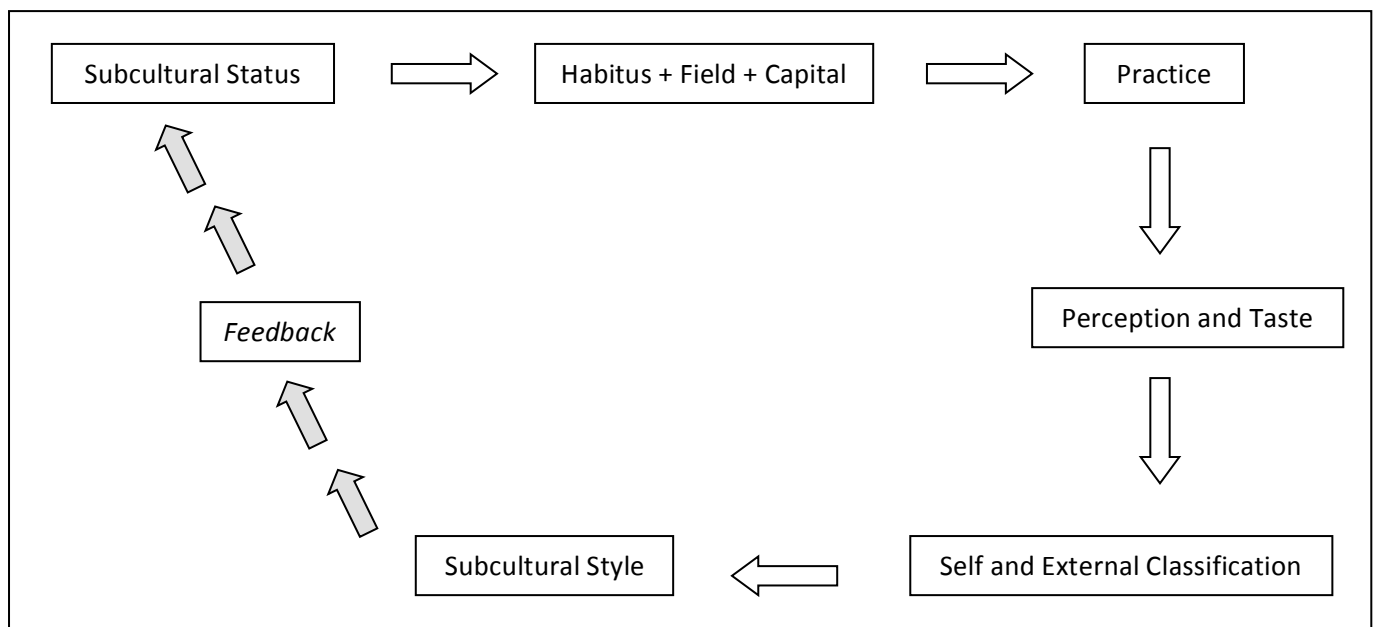
Subcultural style involves more than surfing skill and surfing standard. Subcultural style is a good deal about the subcultural vibe. Adrian D'Espeissis and Warren Boyes reiterated George Simpson's subcultural philosophy. "There's always great camaraderie out in the water around here, it's something I really like," said Adrian. "Everyone knows each other, surfing together year after year. People actually do share waves around here." Warren suggested that the temperament of the subcultural members determines the nature of the lineup. "A distinctive feature of our subculture is that most surfers are pretty laid back [and] relaxed in the lineup. Most of the [local] crew don't mind sharing [waves]... and that's what our culture is about I reckon." The subcultural leaders have an enormous responsibility for determining the nature of their subculture. If the preeminent surfers have a magnanimous demeanour, this promotes lineup law and order. In contrast, if the best subcultural surfers are selfish, supercilious and aggressive, this will contaminate the subcultural vibe and hostile localism will be the norm.

The quantity and quality of the Cape Naturaliste waves nurtures the standard of the subcultural surfers. This creates competition within the subculture. Competition leads to greater struggle which elevates surfing performance across the field. The scenario is akin to a natural selection cycle and as a result, the subcultural 'species' is enhanced over time. "We've got lots of really good waves around here, powerful waves," noted John Ferguson. "Because of that, the surfing is better. There's a longer pecking order ... a harder pecking order, and that has potential to transform your surfing." To be a successful surfer in the lineups of Cape Naturaliste, a competitive edge is indispensable. Skill, strength, endurance, knowledge and courage are needed to thrive. "You've got to be fitter, you've got to be able to read the surf better, you've got to be able to push yourself ... or the simple truth is [laughs] you don't get waves, you just don't fit in," Ferguson concluded.

John's view regarding fitting into the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture has special relevance to Bourdieu's prominent work, *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Bourdieu reveals that subcultural class and subcultural style are invariably linked (1984, p.54). He makes the point that people constantly identify satisfying and unpleasant aspects of their life. Via a "sense of distinction", class and culture unite people from similar backgrounds while simultaneously differentiating them from people from dissimilar backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1984, p.56).

[Class and culture] distinguish in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has - people and things - and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others.

This notion struck me as being relevant to the surfing culture. Surfers choose their clothing, their motor vehicles and their surfing equipment as surfers. Hardcore surfers select their place of residence and their friends to promote their practice, to be a surfing subcultural member, to be recognised and classified as one of the local crew. Specific surfing subcultures are systems that refine social status. Jenkins (1992, p.141) implies that economic and cultural capital shape social class and taste. As elaborated previously, habitus, field and capital govern surfing practice. Subcultural practice in turn moulds reputation and determines self-confidence. These attributes produce an individual's subcultural style. Style constantly evolves. As a result of input variability from the aforementioned variables, style ultimately feeds-back to a person's subcultural status in an ever oscillating cycle. I have pooled Bourdieu's and Jenkins' logic producing a feedback loop flowchart to illustrate this sequential relationship in Figure 11.1.



**Figure 11.1: Flowchart summarising Jenkins' interpretation of Bourdieu's culture and distinction.**

Fitting into a subculture involves identity confirmation. Donnelly and Young (1988, p.234) indicate that this process occurs gradually, via recognition and reputation. In the Cape Naturaliste surfing field, actions reverberate much louder than words. Skilful and brave surfing actions stimulate confirmation from the established subcultural members. Within the universal surfing culture, courageous big-wave riding, radical manouvres and deep-tube practice are examples of deeds that augment the surfer's image. Similarly, performing "crazy acts" boosts subcultural reputation (Donnelly & Young, 1988, p.235). Within the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture, brave performance in solid surf is compulsory for subcultural acceptance. Extreme actions catalyse high-profile esteem.



In contrast, reputation fragility is all-pervading. Reputation fragility affects all subcultural members. Failing to go on a risky takeoff, recurrent etiquette breach and egocentric talk bring a surfer crashing down harder than a heinous wipeout. Inappropriate behaviours are identified and quickly communicated within the subculture. Similarly, authenticity is mandatory for survival in the Cape Naturaliste surfing cohort. According to Donnelly and Young (1988, p.236), “the individual must be the person he has claimed to be”. It is little wonder that the highly respected Crusaders have an unassuming approach to their surfing practice. Cool style typifies the subculture.

The local crew have ultimately shaped the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural temperament. In paraphrasing George Simpson’s perspicacity from chapter ten, the subcultural vibe originated with the region’s first resident surfers in the early 1970s. This unwritten philosophy was underscored by a willingness to take turns and to share waves. This vibe has undoubtedly evolved over a 40 year period, yet an attitude of broadmindedness remains fundamental to the subculture. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is composed of a diverse group of wave riders - men, women, boys, girls; long-boarders, short-boarders, paddle-boarders, body-boarders; surfers who practice at dawn, those who ride waves at dusk; elite, novice and middling surfers.

“If you look at what we’ve got down here in the sleepy South West,” deliberated Luke Thomas, “our surfing culture is so varied. It’s a mixture of people, the wine, the art, the forest [and] the ocean. It’s much more than just going surfing.” Luke incisively identified that surfing subcultures are inimitable. “[If] you look at all the pockets of surfing communities around the world, they’re all different ... totally different to our culture here.”

“The surfing community around Cape Naturaliste is absolutely different to anywhere else,” stated Tom Trigwell emphatically. “Wherever people are living and surfing all the time, they recognise it as their home break. The surfers from around Dunsborough, they knock around together. There’s [sic] lots of different personalities, lots of variety ... There’s some lovely people in surfing down here, and it’s good to have a yarn with them. Surfing bonds like-minded people together,” said Tom.

“The young guys and the older guys mix in well up here,” indicated Murray Smith. “It’s a nice blend. Ninety-nine percent of the people who go surfing around here, they’re just out to have fun and enjoy themselves. You look at the guys [who surf] up at Bears, that’s how it is.”

Julian Steward (1951, p.374) specified that tribes are cultural subsets. Tribes are subcultures. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural members exhibit normal behaviours within their tribe. The Crusaders behave with predictability and distinction. Their value system is consistent and collective. Their practice is an infusion of their habitus, capital and their field.

### 11.2.1. Wheels within wheels: The sub-subculture

An unexpected line of discussion involving 'sub-subcultures' appeared during this ethnography. A clique of Crusaders regularly practices at daybreak. These early birds are recognised as being a subcultural subdivision. Surfing at first light is often an uncomfortable, bleary-eyed experience. Nonetheless, work and family commitments demand that some enthusiastic surfers hit the ocean at the crack of dawn. Dangerous diurnal ultraviolet radiation encourages other hardy wave riders to suit up in the wee hours, before our star gets directly overhead. Other subcultural members perceive a less competitive lineup in the first sunlit hours. These parameters unite an assemblage of likeminded subcultural surfers, the Cape Naturaliste dawn-patrollers.

"The early morning surfers, you get to know them all," stated Melanie Redman-Carr. "They're similar types of people, maybe a bit less confrontational. They want to catch heaps of waves ... but they don't want to come head to head with other surfers."

"I'm a 'time of the day guy' with my surfing," smiled Damon Eastaugh. "I surf early in the morning ... mainly because of work and the Sun. You see the same old crew for the dawn surf. Brett Merrifield, Bob Monkman, Garrick and the Creatures [Creatures of Leisure] boys, Mel Redman [pause] you can set your clock by these guys. It's like wheels within wheels."

The "dawnie" is Garrick Jackson's and John Ferguson's favourite surfing session. "I like surfing at Yallingup early in the morning ... I know all that crew," said Garrick. "You see the same crew out there [Yallingup] all the same time for the early. It's like a mini group of people who create their own culture," stated John.

Getting up in the dark and substituting a warm cosy bed for a cold, soggy wetsuit is an unpleasant experience. Nonetheless, the rewards these keen subcultural surfers reap justify their suffering. Die-hard dawn-patrollers exist in all surfing subcultures. Trundle down Caves Road at first light and you'll regularly find Mike McAuliffe hitting Mainbreak with the Margs' early morning crew. "We've been surfing the dawnie together for a long time. Some of the blokes have been surfing every morning for thirty years ... now that's keen!" Mike laughed. "They're up at four every morning in summer ... sitting in the car [in] their wetties ... How do their wives cope with that?" After another chuckle Mike added a superb reflection about the daybreak practice. "And some days, someone's having a great time and someone's getting belted ... and it'll all be different the next week. I enjoy the chats in the carpark after ... we come in, adrenalin pumping ... talking at a million-miles-an-hour. I really enjoy that part of our subculture."

The early morning surfers form a subset within the subculture. Surfing with relatively few people, many who are frequently recognisable, adds collective value to the surfing experience. Damon's concept of "wheels within wheels" brings to mind the intersecting circles of a Venn diagram. The sub-subculture theme is a valid research line for prospective surfing ethnographers to contemplate.

However, while the previous surfers are scooting across the frosty Yallingup grass and paddling through the cool lagoon at sunrise, other Crusaders are happily tucked snugly away under their doonas, dreaming of a sunny, warm midmorning session, post coffee and vegemited toast. "I'm an anti-morning-man for sure," chuckled Luke Thomas. "I don't like the cold at all. I'm an arvo guy. I love those light afternoon offshores, the LAGO<sup>38</sup> sessions ... there's nothing better than coming in at sunset and having a beer with the boys," he mused.

Cohen (1955, p.66) suggests that individuals who share status within a subcultural frame of reference "gravitate toward one another and jointly establish ... norms [and] criteria". Although unified, the Crusaders are an eclectic group. Opportunity for individuality exists in all flourishing surfing subcultures. Variety produces a vibrant, robust subcultural mixture. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is as vivacious as it is distinctive.

### **11.3 Out of bounds: The line in the sand**

Subcultural territories are finite spaces. If the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is a geographical entity, then it should be separated from adjacent subcultures by a boundary. As declared in chapter two however, clearly defined subcultural boundaries are an ethnographic impracticality. Boundaries between adjacent subcultures are open to interpretation.

In considering the Cape Naturaliste surfing territory, to the north and to the west is the open Indian Ocean. The east is flanked by the sheltered coastline of Geographe Bay. Gazing to the south opens up an invitation to contemplate the concept of a neighbouring surfing subculture, the Margaret River tribe. Surfer's Point, Margaret River is located 45 kilometres south of Yallingup. Margaret River is Western Australia's most famous surfing location.

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<sup>38</sup> LAGO is the surfers' acronym for the 'late afternoon glass off' surf.

The Margaret River surfing subculture borders the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. The Cape Crusader's subcultural practice normally involves surfing the waves of the Cape Naturaliste environment. Geographical division defines the surfing subculture. In other words, a surfing subculture is a delimited environment. Although hard and fast subcultural boundaries are deemed "unrealistic [and] blurred" by Pearson (1979, p.18), interview participants collectively recognised the existence of a neighbouring subculture and an associated boundary. Where is the Cape Naturaliste - Margaret River surfing subcultural frontier positioned?

The Kavanagh family, John Tognini, Mark Ogram, Damon Eastaugh, Brett Baker, Brett Merrifield, Mark Cooper and Warren Boyes identified Injidup as the subcultural boundary line.

Barry Young and Lizzie Nunn rate the Moses Rock Road as the subcultural borderline.

Phil Rudy and Mike Annert regarded Juniper Road, as the Cape Naturaliste margin.

Craig McConville identified Cowaramup Bay as the boundary and Bob Monkman reported feeling "a bit uncomfortable" driving down the Gracetown Road on his way to the surf.

Prominent Margaret River surfers Mal Caithness, Courtenay Gray and Michael McAuliffe established their northern subcultural boundary at Gracetown, Cowaramup Bay. "If you live up that end, you surf up that end," stated Mike resolutely. Courtenay's response to the border positioning inquisition is a magnificent affirmation for the subcultural case. "The border is North Point and Cowaramup Bay is Margaret's territory." Courtenay collected his thoughts and fired a grinning subcultural broadside. "What wave past North Point do we want anyway?" He laughed at his tongue-in-cheek rejoinder.

Courtenay's rhetorical question demonstrates a healthy subcultural parochialism existing between the adjacent tribes. Wheaton (2003, p.86) designates that members of "new sport subcultures" strive for autonomy. Such independence promotes subcultural segregation, an 'us and them' mentality. When we were kids, it was always the East Fremantle versus South Fremantle conflict in the local football league. Contemporarily it is the West Coast Eagles versus the Fremantle Dockers. The 'north of the river' versus the 'south of the river' rivalry has long existed around the Perth metropolitan area. It has forever been Western Australia versus the 'eastern states'. I could continue with the trans-Tasman rivalry, with the ANZAC spirit ... ad infinitum. However I have made my point. People connect to their place. Subcultural members bond with their tribe. Such attachment, such pride of place, such tribal affiliation has the potential to drive subcultural camaraderie into a healthy 'one-eyed' echelon. Staunchness is a big part of the Australian way.

### 11.3.1 Boundary determinant: Time to practice

Surfers spend significant time in their cultural pursuit. Such time consumption is sometimes recognised by non-surfers as selfish, as conceited, as a waste of the precious resource. Similar “outsider perceptions” are reported by Wheaton in relation to windsurfing subcultures (2003, p.88). Time is a key subcultural determinant (Wheaton, 2003, p.86). The temporal variable was regularly mentioned by subcultural members from either end of the Naturaliste / Leeuwin coast in explaining the actuality of the diverse adjacent subcultures.

“Distance becomes a big factor in your surfing as you get a bit older,” stated Lizzie Nunn. “You’re pushed by work. You have to factor distance and time into the choice. I rarely surf down at the [Cowaramup] Bay anymore ... I don’t feel the need to drive up and down the coast looking for surf all day.” She laughed. “Jeez, how many times have we done that?”

Jake Paterson is “set in his ways” with his surfing practice. “I don’t drive to Margs much now. My surfing is based on travel ... the time involved. I’ve put 300 k’s on the clock driving around for hours chasing surf, and the first spot we checked at Rabbits, we should have surfed that.” Jake laughed.

Kevin Merrifield was “pissed off” when the track from Yallingup to Bears was closed. “Now I’ve got to go from Yalls to Dunsborough and around the back to the Sugarloaf Road. For me, to go from Millbrook to Margs takes twenty-eight minutes. It takes me thirty-five minutes to get to Bears ... and it’s about a quarter of the distance,” he shook his head. “The tyranny of distance plays an important part in most surfers’ decision making processes these days ... people don’t have the time to venture far and wide anymore.”

Financial commitments, family responsibilities, business acumen and relationship obligations direct most Cape Naturaliste surfers’ practice. Nonetheless, when the tempo is optimal, committed subcultural members release time to practice. Surfers generally abhor time wasting. The economic law of ‘opportunity cost’ means that time spent travelling to and from the field is time unavailable for wave riding. In our society of convenience, the local waves are those that are handy. Time is precious. Time is expensive. Time ticks in the surfer’s psyche. According to Barry Young, time resolves the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural boundary. “There are two surfing subcultures down here ... and they’re separated by just thirty minutes. That’s a really interesting thing isn’t it? I haven’t surfed down at Margarets for years ... it’s another territory down there.”

#### 11.4 Cape Naturaliste's surfing subculture: The Crusaders' view

Although all wave riders belong to the universal surfing culture, in certain rare localities, surfers congregate to become affiliates of distinctive surfing subcultures. These surfing tribes display variety in style, beliefs and values. The environment and the people shape the subcultural character. The Cape Crusaders recognise their subculture as being idiosyncratic. They love being part of their tribe.

"The culture of this area is built on the back of surfing," said Phil Rundy. "Surfing is huge part of our region and our economy. Without surfers, it wouldn't be what it is now ... It's a cool thing to be a surfer down here."

"We're a subset of the bigger surfing family," said Bob Monkman. "You could look at surfing subcultures in Perth too ... they're all separate locations and they're all slightly different. [People] associate me with surfing down at Yalls ... there is that 'you belong to this tribe' sort of thing."

"Our surf culture is unique for sure," stated Karen Chandler. "It's unique in the sense of its physical location ... but unlike many surfing subcultures, we are accepting to non-locals surfing in the area."

"Recently I saw a couple of old chaps at the supermarket... pulling their surfboards out of their cars, comparing their new boards," laughed Warren Boyes. "What suburb would you go to in the world where there are these two old fellas looking at their surfboards in the carpark? How good is that? Dunsborough's a great town. Everyone's on the same wavelength ... and surfing's all-pervading."

As an ASP elite athlete, Jake Paterson rode some of the planet's best waves. In this interview extract, *Pato* identified environment and people as the prime Cape Naturaliste subcultural determinants.

**Jake Paterson:** Every surfing place has its own unique culture. Maybe Ericeira [Portugal] reminds me a bit of here. They've got a couple of quality class waves ... the coastline is similar and the people. They love the ocean like us ... they have that knowledge of the ocean. Hawaii on the other hand [scoffs] is over the top. You need the laid back atmosphere as well as the waves to get close to what we've got. This is it! I've been all around the world. I mean the Cape, and that water out there [Geographe Bay], it's phenomenal. It's a bit of paradise ... and that's no secret. But it's not for everyone. It's a country lifestyle. Wintertime can be pretty heavy ... and the crowd over summer with the big Fremantle Doctor<sup>39</sup> blowing ... can do your head in. But it is what it is ... and you get to know the tricks [laughs]. It's special down here alright!

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<sup>39</sup> The Fremantle Doctor is the vernacular given to the regular strong sea-breeze that brings afternoon relief to the coastal South West strip during the hot summer months.

The Crusaders are proud to live and surf in their “laid back atmosphere”. They are stoked to be elements of a “cool” subculture that is genuine and “all-pervading”. The locals learn their “tricks” through their practice and capital sharing. The local surfers are “accepting”. They live a surfing life. They’re tuned into the same subcultural “wavelength”. This enables fun surfing in a marvellous environment and an enjoyable coastal lifestyle.

#### **11.4.1 Looking in: The outsiders’ perception**

A pivotal component of my data emanated from non subcultural members, ‘outsiders’. It has been intriguing gathering and deciphering many visitors’ perceptions regarding the Crusaders.

Eminent Australian surfing journalist Alison Aprhys recently toured the South West in search of “leviathan waves ... pristine beaches and uncrowded surf breaks” (Aprhys, 2006). Dragging her McTavish surfboard all the way from New South Wales, Alison found the Yallingup waves to be a challenging revelation.

“When I paddled out there I was immediately surprised by the power of the surf,” she told me. “The volume of water in those waves at Yallingup was new to me. I’d never experienced anything like that before.” Alison sat wide of the takeoff zone and had a good long look at the surf. “I finally built up the nerve to paddle into a wave and it jacked up so quickly. The takeoff was really late [and] I was horribly pitched.” In the process of experiencing the “longest hold down” of her life, Alison was rescued by a Crusader in shining neoprene. “The reef was bubbling around me ... and suddenly this surfer appeared in the white water. ‘Are you all right love?’ ... And he helped me back out.”

After completing the arduous return paddle, Alison devised a fresh strategy. “The steep drops meant there was no time for hesitation. Commitment was needed, no pussy-footing around.” Alison’s fortitude was rewarded. “When I finally caught a wave I could feel the rumble under my board ... I was thrilled.” Eventually Alison called it quits and grabbed a well earned latte from the beachfront café to enjoy in the sunshine. “I listened to a few of the locals on the lawn discussing the surf,” she laughed. “They were using words like ‘cruisey’ and ‘nice little swell’ to describe the waves.” Alison guffawed. “They were T-Rex waves!” Later that day, Alison had an interview scheduled with Bob Monkman in Dunsborough. “Can you imagine my surprise when Bob turned up to our meeting and *he* [emphasis] was the bloke who came to my rescue in the morning. Amazing!” she exclaimed.

But of course not everyone has a favourable opinion of the Cape Crusaders. Dirk Holman comes from Coffin Bay in South Australia. Dirk completed his undergraduate science degree at Edith Cowan University (ECU) South West and is currently employed by the Rodney Fox Foundation researching Great White Sharks around the Eyre Peninsula. A strong goofy footer, Dirk has some interesting insight into the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. "The Dunsborough Yallingup district is definitely a distinctive [surfing] subculture," he identified. "My impressions were that it's an affluent, almost elitist subculture. The surfers in the region seem really influenced by the pop culture of surfing, wearing brand name clothes, surf stickers on their cars ... and usually riding new surfboards. The surf brand image around Cape Naturaliste ... I haven't noticed it as pronounced anywhere else." I asked Dirk to describe his impressions and experiences relevant to Cape Naturaliste breaks. "The lineups differed from place to place for sure," he nodded. "Bears differs to Yallingup in terms of surfer demographic and attitude. Bears attracts its share of old blokes ... who use attitude to make up for ability. I'd usually surf Papas to avoid these types. I don't deal with fuckwits when I'm trying to enjoy the surf," he laughed. "I think the transient, tourist population of Yallingup, as well as the more unpredictable lesser wave quality, contributes to a less intense atmosphere at Yalls."

Andrew Winchester travelled from Sydney to study science at ECU South West in 2002. Following graduation, Andrew completed a postgraduate diploma with the Bureau of Meteorology. He was the chief meteorologist with the Australian Antarctic Division on the 2009/2010 expedition. Upon returning from Mawson, I caught up with him and discussed the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. "A big difference in surfers from the east coast and around Dunsborough is most people live in Sydney or on the Gold Coast because that's where the work is. Surfing is a bonus," Andrew said. "Whereas people move down here specifically for the waves ... [they] find a way to fit their work in around their lifestyle. Surfing here is a much higher priority ... and it shows in the surfers' feelings towards the area. They definitely don't take it for granted."

Tom Mansfield originates from West Tasmania. He lived in Dunsborough while completing his tertiary science qualification at ECU South West. "The surfing subculture is really well developed here, more than anywhere else I've seen," said Tom. "It's big on the Gold Coast but ... it's hardcore here. There's a pride in being a part of it too ... that's what I reckon a local surf culture is, pride in your surfing town. Down here, people are passionate about it. They're here to go surfing," he said. Tom believes that the powerful waves of the region shape the subcultural membership. "I remember when [name] came over from the east. She was 'I can't surf these waves. They're too powerful and quick'. She's gone home now because she couldn't handle it down here. The majority of the east coast waves are peeling waves ... more forgiving. Around here it gets serious. It can be ferocious."



Perth based surfers Jeremy Logan and Simon Harvey shared some interesting insight into the shifting demographics of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. "I reckon there's a distinctive subculture around here for most of the year. But that probably changes during the holiday period with all the tourists," said Jeremy. "It's understandable that the local surfers would form bonds, and as such a subculture," deemed Simon. "I mean you must see the same faces around in the lineups, at the pub [and] the local petrol station all the time ... I guess the influx of 'out of towners' modifies that a bit."

I asked Jeremy if the environment was responsible for shaping the subculture. "As surfers get to know their local breaks they develop an ethos towards them." Jeremy used an interesting analogy to support his case. "Consider ol' Ketut from Bali," he laughed. "You put him in a steamer and chuck him out into a shifty, crowded, six foot Bears lineup and he wouldn't be as comfortable as he would be out at Canggu in boardies would he?" Jeremy chortled. "Yeah, the down-south surfing environment, it has a huge bearing on the subculture around here for sure." Jeremy admitted to witnessing "some minor localism" in the Cape Naturaliste lineups. "But it's not that bad," he quickly added. "You get your fuckwit locals everywhere, but most of the guys around here are cool. It doesn't compare to Da Hui [North Shore] or the heavy Hossegor locals I've experienced. I've been coming down-south surfing for over twenty-six years now ... and I've never felt threatened."

### **11.5 Adjacent subcultures: Two tribes**

Salient to this research, Julian Steward (1951, p.375) indicated that closely associated tribes display dissimilarities. Adjacent subcultures exhibit diversity. The Margaret River surfing field is "perceived as Australia's most consistent and challenging big wave forum" (Colas, 2001, p.40). A globally acclaimed surfing competition, the Margaret River Pro (formerly known as the Margaret River Masters) is annually conducted at Surfer's Point, Margaret River. The Pro is beamed to the world via live Internet streaming. Such exposure makes Margaret River a surfing destination for many of the planet's best big-wave aficionados.

"Margaret River has more recognition than Yallingup as a surfing centre," stated Mike McAuliffe. "I reckon that's partly because of the international surfing competition." The Margaret River reputation developed worldwide after the 1969 Australian Titles. "Tom Hoyer saw a poster of Wayne Lynch doing a bottom turn at Margs Mainbreak after that, and that drew him here," said Mike. When surfing in the USA and in Europe, Mike noticed that the Margaret River brand was renowned for the local wine, and for the big surf. "The Margaret River name, that's what brings them here."



Figure 11.2: The 2012 Pro concept: Taking the Margaret River brand to a global audience.

(Telstra Drug Aware Pro website)

In portraying Margaret River subcultural surfers, many Cape Crusaders used terms such as ‘hardcore’ and ‘hippy’ as adjectives. The Margies surfers are notorious big-wave chargers. As well as exhibiting dissimilar characteristics, the adjacent subcultures also display a noticeable rivalry.

“I think the Margies crew like to *think* [emphasis] they are more hardcore,” said Mike Annert. “Sure they have bigger waves ... but we have some really respected big wave surfers up this end. Blokes like *Ant*<sup>40</sup> and Jake [Paterson] and Damon [Eastaugh] and *Taco*<sup>41</sup>. But they head down there to surf Cow Bombie and North Point ... The nature of the waves down there draws a certain breed of guys into that sphere who want [sic] to go out and charge it. Margaret River has got an international reputation. It’s parallel to the North Shore.”

<sup>40</sup> Paul Paterson’s nickname is *Ant* / *Antman*.

<sup>41</sup> Damien *Taco* Warr is a renowned Yallingup big wave charger. Damien won the 2012 Surfing Life / Oakley Big Wave Award riding a monster at the Cow Bombie.

“They chase the big stuff down at Margs. They like it when it’s pumping, twelve to fifteen foot. Those blokes are a different variety, they’re fully committed,” said Mark Cooper. “I’m not really sure how to describe it ... but a different mentality exists. Both communities are approachable and pretty friendly ... but I do know there is strong rivalry between the Margs boys and our Yallingup bunch ...”

In recognising ecological differences between the two localities, Garrick Jackson identified the “southern aspect” of Margaret River as a factor contributing to the subcultural distinction. “Everything is slightly bigger, slightly colder and slightly windier down in their environment ... maybe that makes their crew a bit harder. They’re certainly more hippy down there,” he laughed.

Phil Rundy believes “a divide” exists between the surfers of the two areas. “Up here, I probably see it as being a bit more middle class, whereas Margaret River is probably more like [pause] Denmark, a bit more alternative. The environment shapes the people who come to live at a place. The people who settle in Margaret River love the trees, it’s a bit cooler, the air is different ... it’s rawer down there. Up here we’ve got Geographe Bay. The water’s bluer, it’s more Mediterranean.”

“They’ve got longer hair down there, and they wear beanies,” laughed Ian Morris. “There’s definitely more of a hippy feel. They chase bigger surf down there too. They’re probably a little bit more hardcore than us. Up here it’s more family oriented ... and more job oriented perhaps.”

“Just like Noosa, Byron [Bay] and Torquay, Cape Naturaliste is well and truly on the map as a distinct surfing subculture,” stated Jack McCoy. “I think there are two different surfing subcultures down-south. The hippies are in Margaret River and the yuppies are in Yallingup.”

“I used to go down surfing at Margs a lot. There was always that real macho, big wave surfer identity down there,” recalled Mick Marlin. “Up here, it’s more diverse, different age groups ... Malibus [longboards] are accepted, different guys are accepted. I think it’s a lot friendlier feel around Cape Naturaliste. Maybe the egos get in the road down there?”

Mark Ogram believes that “a bit of the hero aspect” exists in the Margaret River surfing subculture. “I don’t know if that’s why they live down there, if they move there for that reason or if the physical area actually shapes that attitude.”

“The surfing culture here is different to Margs for sure,” exclaimed Craig McConville. “They reckon we’re ‘silver spooners’ up here, that we’re soft ... that we’ve all got it too easy. They reckon they’re more hardcore,” he laughed. “And they are!” Craig continued after another chortle. “The waves are bigger down that way, they ride bigger boards ... and they’re less friendly. I know that for a fact.”

"They're a whole different breed down there," stated Lizzie Nunn. "Margaret River is a lot like Nimbin. But there are similarities between the surfers down at Margies ... [and] the surfers up here. Maybe they're a bit more feral in their appearance, and that's because of the influence of the hippies in their town. But let's face it," Lizzie paused, "we're Claremont down-south! We're just the western suburbs. So they probably identify us as 'silver-spooners'," she laughed.

Dirk Holman chortled prior to his response. "I'm not sure if it's because they get less sunshine down there at Margies, but they're profoundly different. There's a proliferation of bearded, gun-riding surfers at Margarets ... it's almost an avant-garde subculture down there." The South Aussie pondered and laughed again. "If I had to use a metaphor to describe the two subcultures it's the 'Margaret River lumberjacks' and the 'Cape Naturaliste princesses'."

A genial, competitive relationship exists between the Cape Naturaliste and Margaret River surfing subcultures. Collecting a range of perceptions from an assortment of social actors has helped in unravelling Pearson's subcultural "web of meaning" (1979, p.15). The following interview excerpts, from six of Cape Naturaliste's best, add credence to the argument that distinctive South West surfing subcultures are separated by time, by space and by philosophy.

**Bob Monkman:** Yeah, difference between the Yallingup crew and the Margaret's crew has existed from the word go. They seem to be far more aggressive in the water. If I go down there to surf ... I get the stink eye. If the Margs guys come up here ... that's definitely not that situation. Around here, it's a pretty easy-to-get-on-with group of people ... It's all about respect. I think our area is probably more accepting ... none of that harsh localism stuff.

**George Simpson:** Ian [Cairns] and I bought a property down at Margaret River early in the piece ... that was the place to be, the big waves. Then in 1974, a bunch of guys started coming over from the east coast. Up this end, the surfers were mostly Western Australians. Many of them started getting married younger ... this became the family end of the coast. Down there, it was 'Margaret River, yeah!' In 1969 they had Australian titles ... and again in '73. Everyone heard about Margaret River, so they went down there. Very few settled up here. So that localism that turned up at Margs ... it came from over east with that first crew.

**Barry Young:** There *is* [emphasis] a vastly different culture between both areas. The savvy of the surfers is different ... there's two separate surfing cultures that really don't intermix. The guys up this end are much more relaxed. It's much more hardcore down there.

**Murray Smith:** With [names], they can be a bit more aggressive down there. I find that it's a bit more laid back up this end, and that's why I'm up here now [laughs]. You can come in and have a chat with someone, and not get your head punched in [laughs]. The thing about Margs is that everybody's got to ride Margaret River. It's all about riding the Main Break, that's the notch in the belt. That brand attracts crew from over east and from overseas for sure. Yallingup is a bit different. They give and take a bit more out there ... they bend a little.

**Jake Paterson:** I used to go down to Margs heaps ... to surf Gas [Bay] and the Box. But I find myself only going down there once or twice a year now. And you know what, I don't see the guys from down there coming up here. I'd say there's [sic] two separate cultures for sure. Cowaramup is like the mixing zone ... and I reckon North Point is undoubtedly the best wave down here. Travel time separates the groups ... from here it takes the same time to go up to Bears or down to Lefthanders. I've always had a four wheel drive so I'd rather go up to Bears. You know all the local crew up at Bears [and] you know what the conditions are like.



**Figure 11.3: Surfer's Point lighting up under a gloomy sky (Russell Ord Photography)**

**Damon Eastaugh:** There's definitely a big wave mentality down there at Margaret River. There are a lot of good big wave surfers ... and they come from all over. They've gravitated down there. When you're out down there in big surf, you'll see the same faces, the guys that love riding big waves ... There's obviously something that they need from their surfing that is intrinsic to Margaret River, something they wouldn't get up here. At Yallingup, you get more variety. You can ride a mal, a fun-board, occasionally ride a serious board. Surfing is stepped down a level up here, it's not as critical ... I don't know if they're more hardcore. They're more focused on big wave riding. Margaret River must be one of the most consistent places in the world for size ... there's always a swell ... The surf down there is different. It's more powerful.

Courtenay Gray's cross-subcultural connection situates him in the box-seat to comment on the adjoining surfing tribes. Courtenay spent nine years living in Yallingup before settling down in Margaret River in 1997. He reflected that "the two subcultures have a definite perception" vis-à-vis each other.

**Courtenay Gray:** When I was living up there [Yallingup], I was tagging along with Mitch [Thorson] and Damon [Eastaugh] and we'd often come down here and surf the Bombie and Gas. We sort of had a foot in both communities, whereas generally you don't have much overlap ... they're really different communities and cultures. I think the waves up the northern end of the Cape are more user-friendly [pause] ... anyone from anywhere in the world can pull up at Yallingup and have a surf. It's a more manageable wave ... whereas the waves down here are trickier, they're rawer. We're a lot more exposed. That end of the coast handles the winter surf better. They've got a lot cleaner conditions ... at Carpark and at P Break. That end handles the wind better for sure ... but we get the bigger swells.

Courtenay's initial commentary immediately reinforced the 'us' and 'them' concept recognised previously by the Crusaders. I asked him to compare and contrast the people who make up the subcultures. "If you look at the people who have been here long term, they're generally a more of a rugged character." Courtenay listed off a few familiar Margaret River entities and continued. "It does seem like less of the Perth surfers tend to base themselves down here." Courtenay suggested that surfers from Perth's "western suburbs" were inclined to use the Cape Naturaliste end of the coast. I interrupted Courtenay and asked him if there was a feeling in the Margaret River subculture that the surfers from around Cape Naturaliste were envisaged as "silver spooners", as inferred by preceding Crusader interviewees. He laughed enthusiastically before responding wholeheartedly.

**Courtenay Gray:** This conversation came up recently with a few crew [names] from up there ... you know, 'who's the toughest?' [Laughs] Well, I'll be honest with you, the guys from this end of the coast they think you blokes are a bunch of 'girl's blouses' up there [big laughs]. The biggest bunch of 'Nancies' [laughs] ... soft metrosexuals ... designer jeans [chuckles]. No one judges you by what you look like down here ... if you rock up to the surf from the building site or if you're the local doctor ... you just paddle out together ... you're not judged on what you do [or] what you look like ... There's always been a difference between the two surfing communities.

A strong rivalry exists between the Cape Naturaliste and the Margaret River surfing subcultures. Courtenay verifies Bob Monkman's and George Simpson's aforementioned beliefs. The difference between the adjacent subcultures has always existed. The subcultures are composed of different people. The subcultures practice in different environments. These two simple facts mean that the two tribes are distinctive. The Cape Naturaliste and Margaret River surfers display attitudinal variance. Founded on different traditions, the unique surfing subcultures exist and function as separate units.

## Chapter Twelve: Waning

*The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind*

*The answer is blowin' in the wind*

Bob Dylan

Blowin' in the Wind - The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan (1963)

### 12.0 Introduction: Cutting back

The cutback is a practical yet artistic surfing manoeuvre. Since first seeing Thornton Fallander emerge from that famous Lagundri<sup>42</sup> tube and immediately put his single-fin on rail with fluent velocity, I have been enthralled by the cutback. When accomplished with momentum and proper timing, the 'cuttie' propels a surfer back from the wave shoulder to the pocket in a figure-eight trajectory.



**Figure 12.1: Dirk Holman revisiting the source: Mentawai adventure 2010 (Dewata archive)**

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<sup>42</sup> The 1982 Hoole / McCoy classic surf movie *Storm Riders* is renowned for the surfing footage captured at Lagundri Bay, Nias. A highlight of the film was Thornton Fallander's solo session, stylishly riding perfect Sumatran waves with Sharon O'Neill's melodic *Asian Paradise* as the background score.



Such kinaesthesias ignite the centrifugal receptors in the surfer's brain, much like the zig-zagging rollercoaster excites a sideshow rider. Carroll (2007, p.46) describes the cutback as a "body torque" involving "subtle and critical" surfboard negotiation. The cutback is an apt metaphor to use in concluding this ethnography. Cutbacks require looking backwards with perceptive eyes. Cutbacks involve instinctive retrospection. Cutbacks speedily return a surfer to where he/she had once been in a big burst of ocean spray. Cutbacks complete the ride with established technique. In this conclusion I cut back to methodology and to method. I cut back to theories and to theorists. I cut back to key literature and to underpinning foundations. I cut back to the unlocked questions and research findings. Maintaining the musical tone, the thesis culminates with a rhythmic coda.

### **12.1 Thesis torque: Reflecting on the journey**

This research involved the investigation and description of Western Australia's Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture, the Cape Crusaders. An anthropological study regarding the Cape Naturaliste surfing tribe had not occurred prior to this work. Positioning my research intent between Pearson (1979) and Booth (2001) activated my research journey. Successful transition through the proposal and ethics milestones and into the topic-related literature buoyed me with a sense of confidence regarding the validity and potential of this inquiry.

The initial *Waxing* chapter described surfer and surfing. Both terms are intricate. Both terms are wide-ranging. Many varied definitions prescribe that wave riding is different things to different people. Theory provides a framework for all philosophical phenomenology. This work was scaffolded by the interpretivism theory. Interpretivism is cultural hermeneutics, cultural interpretation. By deconstructing the grandeur of interpretivism into a pragmatic scale, Julian Steward's theory of cultural ecology and Pierre Bourdieu's cultural production theory became my twin epistemological towers. Employing these mid-range paradigms enabled a theoretical framework to be effectively translated into research procedure.

In this work I employed ethnography methodology to answer the fundamental research question, 'What is the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture?' My data gathering methods emulated Malinowski's (1922) famous Trobriand ethnography. As a long term, practicing Cape Naturaliste surfer, I was afforded the luxury of accessing many generous subcultural representatives. Their perceptions and their opinions inspired me, as they excited me.

By incorporating surf stories throughout this thesis, I deliberately empowered the Cape Crusaders with a loud voice. Interview data was bedrock in this research. Narratives sustained my assertions and enlivened my discussions. Narratives illustrated characters and outlined events that epitomise the spirit of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. To achieve Spradley's (1979) "native realism", the ethnographer must completely enter the subjects' world. 'Hanging out' as a participant observer in the Cape Naturaliste wave field, I acted as a surfer observing surfers and as a surfer observing self. Reflexive observation opened me up to a range of intimate data gathering opportunities. Participant observation and interview method have lynchpinned this ethnography.

As well as being a qualitative research methodology, ethnography is also a writing style, the manifestation of the investigation. My writing style is my ethnography. Throughout this work, I have endeavoured to generate an engaging and informative thesis. Optimistically, I have communicated the vibe of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. Expectantly, I have conveyed the significance of Aristotle's drama/comedy duopoly to the subculture. Drama and comedy run miscible in the arteries of all Cape Crusaders.

Chapter two, *[Sub]culture* considered the close association between culture and subculture. Using a positivist parallel, subculture is to culture as subspecies is to species. Conversely, a key element of this section inspects the digression of the two entities. Terms such as community, gang, scene and tribe have been utilised in conveying meaning to the subcultural concept. A subculture is an idiosyncratic collection of people who share comparable beliefs and values. As an outcome of these interrelationships, subcultures generate traditions and rituals. These become subcultural codes of behaviour that are often stored and transmitted semiotically. This is Pearson's (1979) subcultural "web of meaning". The Cape Naturaliste surfing tribe is a geographically defined subculture. Subcultural boundaries are blurred, open ended interpretations. Subcultural demarcation was an intriguing element of this work.

In using the letter 'i' to prefix to the word 'surf', a contemporarily applicable title was generated for the third chapter. *iSurf* is an autoethnography, positioning me in the surfing culture and outlining my place in the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture. From Mandurah to Mundaka, from Bears to the Banyaks, as a cultural-hopper my surfing journey has polished my ethnographic lenses. Surfing has determined my subcultural phenotype.

Osmosis is the diffusion of water molecules. *Osmosis* also entitled the fourth chapter of this thesis. This section described the transmission of surfing from its north Pacific hub. Surfing communities have existed as subcultures since the early Hawaiians rode their local waves around the archipelago. Chronological works concerning surfing tribes, influential wave riders and surfing's dispersion were absorbed and inserted into this section. The unearthing of Beaglehole's (1937) concept of areal culture truly energised me. In describing Polynesia as "congeries of sub-cultures" Beaglehole validated geographically determined subcultures. From Polynesia to California en-route to eastern Australia, surfing's osmosis into distinctive surfing subcultures was argued in chapter four.

Recalling Bob Dylan to introduce *Waning* was a dual-purpose strategy. "Blowin' in the Wind" is a bookend, synergising with "Like a Rolling Stone" that opened *Waxing*. However, the main purpose of these lyrics is related to my research questions. An inherent function of all research is to answer questions and in the process, add to epistemology. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge. Epistemology involves knowledge gathering and knowledge understanding. Epistemology is founded on belief and underpinned by truth. By accurately gathering data, through openly representing data and via critically analysing data, a researcher adds value to epistemology. Long before Plato, humans have asked the 'why' questions. Although epistemology is just a word, it defines the process we use to answer these 'why' questions. Answers are often ethereal. Answers are often open to interpretation. Answers sometimes open other questions that require additional research in response. Regardless, Dylan's enigmatic libretto provides a worthy symbol for my research outcomes. The bulk of this thesis, from chapter five to chapter eleven, answers my research questions. All answers pre-exist, they're in the wind. A successful researcher must ask the correct questions, to the correct people, in the correct context in order to stop them blowing.

To accurately describe a culture, it is essential for an ethnographer to revisit cultural roots. Cultural traditions commence at a specific point in time. People who were present at cultural genesis are not always available to the ethnographer. In this research I was privileged to access some of the primary Cape Naturaliste surfers. With unabashed joy I listened, looked and laughed as keystone Cape Crusaders Kevin Merrifield, Mark Paterson, Tony Harbison, Tom Trigwell, Murray Smith and George Simpson divulged their memoirs and their subcultural wisdom. Chapter five initially returned us to the mid 1950s when the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture was a pup. The fresh-faced surfers of the day were products of the Surf Lifesaving movement. From regimented patrol duties on Perth's sandy beaches to carefree wave riding on Yallingup's limestone reef, a sense of exploration and fun lured these young pioneers down-south. As an outcome of enjoying the ocean, the waves and the adventure, our surfing forefathers also set the tone for the current surfing subculture.

Cape Naturaliste's surfing subculture was based on a spirit of discovery. Catalysed by rapidly evolving surfboard functionality, the original Cape Crusaders took surfing from Yallingup to Injidup to Cowaramup and further south to Margaret River. By the early 1970s, clever surfers peered northwards towards Cape Naturaliste to where the Bear lay hibernating. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture truly evolved during the counterculture. The original vibe of respect was set at this juncture. Systematic wave sharing occurred because of the nature of the first resident Cape Crusaders. Violent localism was not tolerated and a philosophy of acceptance was activated. Yallingup was the gateway of surfing into the South West. Yallingup is still Cape Naturaliste's surfing Mecca. Chapter five is a cutback through time. Without doubt, this is my favourite section of the thesis. *Yallingup* provided a historical snapshot of the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture and simultaneously commenced answering my research questions.

The theory of cultural ecology reinforces that environment and organism are indelibly linked. Steward (1950) labelled the interdependencies between cultural functionality and the environment as "cultural core". Cultural ambiguities arise because of the local ecosystem. As an outcome of these variations, cultures evolve into subcultures. Divergent surfing subcultures exist because of dissimilar environmental pressures. These ecologies determine surfing operation at the micro-level. Chapter six, *Ecology*, analysed Cape Naturaliste's environment. Meteorological, oceanographic and biological aspects of the region were considered. An important ingredient of all surfing subcultures are the local surf breaks. Every surf spot is unique. Surfing locations establish Cape Naturaliste's surfing practice. During the course of this research, two noteworthy events jolted the Cape Crusaders - one was a tragedy, one was a treat. Boneyards and Bianca accentuate the intensely close, unpredictable, personal relationship that exists between the Cape Crusaders and their place. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is inimitable because of its unique ecology.

*Habitus* describes the dispositions that enable wave riding 'modus operandi'. Bourdieu used this term to define subcultural spirit. *Habitus* generates subcultural acuity and builds subcultural behaviour. *Habitus* is a subcultural shaping force. Like all highly regarded surfing locations, Cape Naturaliste is a burgeoning surfing field. Congestion leads to clashes, vitriol leads to violence. Surf related rage is a modern example of Hardin's (1968) tragedy. Reasons for the increasing surfing population were considered in this chapter. Some subcultural crowd-coping strategies were investigated. The Naturaliste coast is renowned for code-black surf. Size matters in surfing. In this chapter, the courage and challenge associated with 'riding giants' was discussed. The rewards of risk were revealed.

Gobo (2008) asserts that artefacts connect cultural functionality. The surfboard is a structure that underpins all surfing subcultures. Successful subcultural shapers are artisans that craft specifically designed surfboards to suit local conditions. Although the global surfing marketplace is wide open, many Cape Naturaliste surfers remain loyal to their hometown shapers. Surfers have passionate love affairs with their surf-craft. Surfboards are the body and soul of wave riding habitus.

High quality waves are a rare and precious resource. High class surf spots are fields of struggle, battlefields. Heavy aggression has unfortunately become the norm of many surf-centric subcultures. Violent manifestation of intense competition seldom presents in the waves of Cape Naturaliste. In the eighth chapter, *Field*, the Cape Naturaliste surfing subcultural space was investigated. Concepts including surfing hierarchies, the dynamics of the transitional field and localism were discussed. The significance of female Cape Crusaders was also examined in chapter eight. No one gets a free ride in the Cape Naturaliste waves. Determination and courage are surfer ingredients. All surfers work hard for their wave riding reward. But as Hoodoo Guru Dave Faulkner truthfully sang, “every pleasure always holds an equal share of pain”.

Chapter nine, *Capital*, explored subcultural knowledge. Local knowledge is surfing gold. Local knowledge is a marker of subcultural distinction. In all surfing subcultures, an implicit understanding of the local meteorology and oceanography is requisite for success. The Cape Crusaders know their home-ground. Understandably, they exploit their home-ground advantage. The Cape Naturaliste subcultural members are residential surfers. They are proximal to the surf. They are constantly monitoring the surf conditions. Capital based prediction and experiential based appraisal means that the committed Cape Crusaders have a sensitive finger on the local tempo. Ephemeral sand banks were considered as an example of this notion. Fast breaking beachies are a rarity around Yallingup. Knowing when and how these fields function was recognised as being valuable information. Knowledge sharing between local surfers was closely linked to this aspect of the subculture.

Bourdieu terms orthodox cultural behaviour “doxa”. Surfing cultural-commonsense is displayed through wave riding style and performance. In chapter ten, the insights of the first generation of ‘born and bred’ Cape Crusaders were examined. The concept of the subcultural vibe was amplified. The contemporary Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture inherited philosophies from the original ‘hippy surfers’ of the 1970s. The Cape Crusaders value their subculture as one founded on fun, respect and wave sharing. Effective practice involves having a ‘feel for the game’. The Cape Crusaders understand the laws associated with their subculture. Etiquette infraction is commonplace in surfing subcultures. Violations are dealt with differently in various subcultural fields.

*Practice* concluded with an inspection of surfers' motivations. Stoke and spirituality drives the dedicated Cape Naturaliste surfer. Regrettably, no surfer practices forever. This topic was examined through the eyes of some local surfing statesmen. Long-term Cape Crusaders have a highly developed feel for their game. They live surfing, connected as wave riders to the field through their practice.

In the penultimate chapter, *Crusaders*, I ascertain that the Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture is a real and present entity. The Cape Crusaders are aware of their subcultural affiliation. They are proud of their subcultural association. The Cape Crusaders recognise that they belong to a distinctive subset of the wider surfing culture. They identify themselves as the 'local crew'. Furthermore, outsiders acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon. Visitors to the Yallingup region distinguish the subculture. So too do surfers from the adjoining Margaret River subculture. Although similarities abound between these two adjacent tribes, the Margaret River surfing subculture has a different heritage and a different ecology to its northern neighbours. A diverse subcultural philosophy exists as a result. A healthy rivalry surges between the two subcultures. Although they are separated by a blurred border, these independent surfing subcultures are largely determined by temporal and spatial variables.

Beaches are in constant flux. Accretion adds to the berm. Erosion confiscates sediments. This research imitates the beach. This thesis is in beach-like transition. A doctoral work could be an eternal quest. When to finish? Where to finish? How much is enough? What do I put in? What do I leave out? These questions are probably posed and addressed by most doctoral candidates. I have drawn a quasi-line in the sand at this point. However, like the beach, this work remains in evolution. I will keenly publish relevant academic papers in the future. Perhaps a book revealing the Cape Crusaders' story will materialise. Hopefully this manuscript will trigger others to ask pertinent questions of their surfing environments. In my estimation, the Margaret River surfing subculture needs academic exploration. This is one of hundreds of potential wave riding tribes that warrant ethnographic description. Subcultural language requires examination. Surfers' nicknames, surf spot nomenclature, the ephemeral terms that ebb and flow within subcultural argot are a fascinating opportunity, demanding analysis. Sub-subcultures are open for investigation. The complex relationships between shortboard surfers, Malibu riders and bodyboarders exemplify unfinished ethnographic business. Histories deserve recording. Ecologies warrant exploring. Practices merit inspection. As previous researchers have motivated me to pursue the Cape Crusaders' subculture, I trust this work will stimulate the accumulation of more sand grains onto our epistemological beach.

Prior to this research, my surfing life mirrored Bourdieu's doxa. I have viewed my practice as my orthodox behaviour. I have regarded my position as one of local crew with nonchalance. Intimately researching the Cape Crusaders has provided me with a precious opportunity. As a rewarding offshoot, I now fully appreciate that I am part of a highly evolved, unique subset of the worldwide surfing culture.

## **12.2 Coda: The close-out set**

Rosen (1988, p.297) describes a coda as a "postscript", an addendum designed to establish "balance" in closure. The purpose of a coda is to "add weight ... and dignity" to the ending of a significant composition (Rosen, 1988, p.304). Beethoven used codas, so too did Mozart. Like a musical masterpiece, wave riding warrants an enthralling crescendo. Successful surfing necessitates completing a wave with style. Falling after an epic tube ride diminishes the feat. Failing to land an impressive aerial manoeuvre lessens the deed. Similarly, a surfer always aspires to conclude a surfing session with a laudable ride to the beach. Returning to shore on a dud wave is undesirable. This coda aims to complete my ethnography on a high note, with a melodious finale.

When Pope Urban II urged the "knights of Christendom" to restore Christianity to the East in 1095, he was greeted with cries of "*Deus lo volt*" - God wills it (Mayer & Gillingham, 1972, p.11). For nearly 200 years, the Crusaders waged Holy War in the distant lands of the Middle East, Eurasia and Africa. The Crusaders' battlefield environments were unfamiliar and intimidating. The Cape Crusaders have campaigned on their home-breaks for only 50 years. From the lefts of Bears to the rights of Injidup, from Boneyards' beachies to Supertubes' slabs, the Cape Crusaders identify with their environment. The local crew make good use of their home-ground advantage. Local knowledge is hard learned and frugally shared. Local knowledge is a fortune. The Cape Crusaders value their subcultural capital.

The unique ecology shapes the Cape Crusaders' surfing subculture. Raw, consistent swells from the Southern Ocean break with power on Naturaliste's reefs. Wind patterns fluctuate with seasonal regularity. When the warm, sunny offshore regime emerges, the local crew feast on the world class waves. Whales and dolphins frequently visit the Naturaliste field. So too do Great Whites. The remarkable megafauna are part of Cape Naturaliste's marine jungle. When La Niña pumps tepid Leeuwin Current water down the WA coast, the Cape Crusaders enjoy lengthy time surfing in lightweight neoprene. The temperate Indian Ocean, the blue skies, the fresh smells and the wide variety of world-class surf spots produce a spectacular wave riding environment. The Cape Crusaders adore their maritime playground.

Crusading was expensive. The knightly Crusaders absorbed themselves “in something that was very costly” (Riley-Smith, 1999, p.16). The Cape Crusaders devote significant funds to their practice. A wave riding predilection is expensive. The Cape Naturaliste surfer possesses a multiple surfboard quiver. Specific surfboards run in particular swells. Specific surfboards run at particular surf spots. Surfboards are the quiddity of subcultural habitus. Surfboards are costly props. The Cape Crusaders acquire wetsuits, surfboard bags, leggings, surfwax and deck grips - structures that enable wave riding function. They wear surf apparel. They steer four wheel drives. They journey in search of surf. Surfing is expensive. Surfing necessitates financial investment. Fiscal speculation does not complete commitment. Time is precious. It costs time to go surfing. Opportunity cost is a perpetual human battle and fitting practice into life is costly. When the tempo is right, the Cape Naturaliste surfers are willing to pay any price to play. The Cape Crusaders spend heavily to participate in their subculture.

Symbolism was prominent throughout the crusades. The lance symbolised weapon functionality. Heavy cavalry symbolised tactical operation. Crosses on shields symbolised Christianity. According to Riley-Smith (1999, p.24), the knightly uniform evoked an “alluring image of chivalric prowess”. The Cape Crusaders have distinctive symbolism. Brand preferences depict subcultural affiliation. Local shapers proudly display logos on their wares. Local shapes exemplify subcultural affiliation. The Yahoo, AB, EXP, Chapster and DMD symbols define the Cape Naturaliste surfer. West wetsuits are prominent. Creatures of Leisure hardware products are ubiquitous. Dunsborough is Creatures’ town. The Cape Crusaders enjoy donning surf-branded clothing. Low key is preferential. Over-labelled is over-done. Over-labelled is over. Cape Naturaliste style is country style, laid back and cool. The global economic tsunami has dealt the big surfing corporations a universal hit. Surf brands come and go but the surfing culture survives despite corporate extinctions. The Cape Naturaliste surfing subculture will thrive as long as the winds blow easterly and the swells run southwesterly. Other symbolism depicts the Cape Crusaders. They flaunt NAT licence plates. They exhibit Dunsborough Sharks football club emblems. They display Yallingup Boardriders stickers. The Cape Crusaders’ vehicles are identifiable. So are their owners. The Cape Crusaders are recognisable. The Cape Naturaliste local crew are recognised by the other subcultural members. The Cape Naturaliste local crew are recognised by the outsiders. Lineup familiarity promotes subcultural identity. The members of the subculture are the greatest symbols of the subculture.

The Cape Crusaders’ surfing style is shaped by the powerful waves they ride. Strong bottom turns, big snaps, intense tubes, ‘undelicate’ and exciting surfing style. Subcultural style defines subcultural membership. The Cape Crusaders enjoy being the local crew.



The Crusaders demonstrated “courtly manners ... language and vernacular expressions” (Riley-Smith, 1999, p.24). Implying that the Cape Crusaders display courtly manners is probably drawing a long bow. On the other hand, they do adhere to an overt code of conduct. As is the case in most surfing subcultures, the ‘don’t drop-in’ and ‘don’t snake’ tenets form the basis of the Cape Naturaliste surfers’ etiquette. The Cape Crusaders are a tolerant tribe yet they do not accept flagrant violation of their principles. Although violence is a rarity in Cape Naturaliste’s lineups, stern reminders keep ignorant scoundrels and greedy wave-bandits in check. The Cape Crusaders are accommodating, to a point. They operate on a premise of respect. Old and young, male and female, talented and inept, all surfers are admitted into the Cape Naturaliste field. Nonetheless, field endurance is respect-dependent. Wave-pigs, bullshitters and egomaniacs do not persist. The Cape Naturaliste surfers live by respect. Turn taking and lineup consideration underpin the subculture. The Cape Crusaders revere their subcultural philosophies. They also utilise a local argot. Surfer nicknames and surf spot nomenclature typify this dialect. Although the parent surfing culture initiates and maintains a universal surf based language, local idiosyncrasies demand specific subcultural communiqué. Argot peculiarities exist in all surfing subcultures. Argot is the subcultural code. The Cape Crusaders comprehend their subcultural communication.

The Crusaders were brave combatants. The culture of the crusades epitomised “warrior toughness” (Riley-Smith, 1999, p.25). The formidable waves and competitive lineups of South West WA entice a specific surfer type. In a bona-fide natural selection scenario, timid and fragile participants do not endure. The Cape Crusaders regularly encounter combat situations in their domain. Antagonism ensues in the Naturaliste waves. The big-wave arena is one that involves risk. Injury does occur in this realm. But surfing-stoke and adrenalin-release are closely connected. The Cape Crusaders’ subcultural habitus involves confronting danger. Bravery and decisiveness are essential surfer traits. Courage leads to confidence. Confidence elevates performance. The Cape Naturaliste surfers fight for their wave riding riches. The Cape Crusaders are warriors in their field of struggle.

The Cape Crusaders’ reward does not entail “remission of sins [and] afterlife bounty” as the Knights Templar presupposed (Riley-Smith, 2009, p.64). Nevertheless, the Cape Crusaders’ devotion and valour are subculturally recognised, admired and remunerated. The ultimate fruits of battle involve living in the moment, savouring the simple hedonistic pleasure of standing on the ocean, of feeling surfboard and energy connected underfoot. The Cape Crusaders embrace their instincts when a big, steep, turquoise wall of Indian Ocean reels-off on the limestone reef before them.

The Cape Crusaders demand drama. The Cape Crusaders love laughter.

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