

# 2026 Festival Program

27-29 March 2026

'Connecting Country and Culture'

Come camp by the ancient lake, home to the short-finned eel, where the Djabwurrung and neighbouring tribes have gathered for millennia and, today, hosts a thriving rural community.

## FRIDAY 27 MARCH

### Art Auction and Indigenous Dinner

5:00pm doors open

Lake Bolac Memorial Hall. Pre-view of artworks and drinks in foyer.

6:00-9:30pm Welcome to Country. Auction of art (see the Art Catalogue) and feast on a delicious dinner by **Mullum Mullum** Indigenous Caterers.

## SATURDAY 28 MARCH

### The Festival

8.00am Early morning nature listening with **Andrew Skeoch**, acoustic ecologist. Lakeside.

10:00am Gates open

10:30am **Welcome to Country** by Adeline Thomas and the story of the Eel trap sculpture told by Aunty Bronwyn Razem, the creator of the sculpture.

11:30am-1:00pm **Festival Forum** Theme: 'Connecting Country and Culture'

11.30am-5:00pm **Lakeside events** Workshops for all ages, activities for children, buskers stage, market stalls, information stalls, food vans, BBQ eel

7.30pm **Twilight Ceremony** As the sun sets, the Festival centrepiece, the Twilight Celebration, will unfold as the fires are lit and the traditional dancing begins.



LAKE BOLAC  
**EEL FESTIVAL**  
KUYANG LAPAKIRA  
- PLENTY EELS -

## MUSIC LINE-UP

1:30-10:30pm

**Pirritu's** (Brett Lee) music is gentle, honest and from the heart. He is Ngiyampaa man and First Nations singer-songwriter.

**Heart Songs** write and perform songs about people, present and passed, songs about the heart, for the heart and from the heart.

**Charlie Needs Braces.** Live looping sister duo, GuriNgai sisters Charlie and Miri perform their energetic musical landscapes of stories of their people, to keep culture and language alive.

**Stretch & the Truth** is a multi-instrumentalist, merging poetic storytelling with exceptional musicianship and folk, blues, and country inspired songs.

**Trudy Fatnowna Edgeley** is a multidisciplinary artist of Yidinji and South Sea Islander descent. Her music is grounded in a deep love of Country and a commitment to sharing cultural stories.

**Neil Murray.** Maverick award-winning song man, Neil Murray, is renowned for his songs about what it means to live in this country.

**Ruby Lou Band.** Ruby Lou sings you through the warmest, kindest corners of the universe. Backed by her incredible band, finding the funkiest beats in the folkier songs.

**Ganga Giri Band.** Their unique blend of tribal-tech beats and ancient-modern fusion creates a powerful, unforgettable live show that ignites audiences and unites hearts through rhythm.

## WORKSHOP LINE-UP

Create '**Extravagant Birds**' with Veronica Phillips and give farm waste new life by sculpting it into the form of one of the lake's threatened bird species.

How amazing is this! Trace Balla, renowned children's book author/illustrator, will tell you lots of interesting information about eels, show you some tips and tricks about **cartooning** and then you can make your own cartoon strip, all on the themes of the **amazing eels**.

Create your own **woven bush animal** with Gunditjmara artist and master weaver, Aunty Bronwyn Razem.

Join Bruce Watson, an experienced **ukulele** group leader who knows how to make it easy – and fun. Even beginners will be playing a tune in 5 minutes. Explore some ukulele techniques by singing and playing songs of Country, and even eels!

Learn ethical, sustainable and respectful practices of **tanning** and **leather crafting** with Josh McLean (the Bush Tannery) as he shows you how to turn eel skins into natural leather. Make your own magical and unique botanical **head wear** with Amanda Perry-Bolt and help out Peter Day with some **weaving** on a large fish sculpture installation.

Come along and join in the fun with visual artist, Catherine van Wilgenburg, making **cards** and **temporary tattoos** of our endangered flora and fauna.

Join master craftsman Eli Beke of Wedge and Edge and learn the basics of **greenwood carving** to craft your very own butter spreader or story stick.

**Have a yarn** with The Connies and collect some awesome environmental **swap cards**.

Brett Clarke invites you to join him as he shares an **Indigenous perspective** on our **festival theme** 'Connecting Country and Culture'

**Face-painting** for the kids.

Cook your own **deadly damper** on a stick over a fire pit with Julie and Aleyna and enjoy with honey, jam or just butter.

Water fun with Stuart McCallum. You can create **rainbow water** by exploring how salt increases the density of water and food dye changes the colour. You can also investigate **water bugs** using optical and digital microscopes and make your own images of the microscopic life in the lake.

How can you engage your hearing to **connect more deeply to nature** around you? Acoustic ecologist, Andrew Skeoch, will show you! You'll hear the natural environment around you in a whole new way.

## SUNDAY 29 MARCH

8.00am Early morning nature listening with **Andrew Skeoch**, acoustic ecologist. Lakeside.

### Lake Walk

The Eel Festival, in collaboration with Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group (BBCAG), will host a lake walk on the shores of Lake Bolac, which is the final event.

10:00am-12:00pm Lake Bolac boat shed to Glenelg Hwy. BBQ lunch & shuttle bus included.

*Program subject to alteration*

**TICKETS NOW** at [www.eelfestival.org.au](http://www.eelfestival.org.au)

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# Running sheet



SATURDAY 28 MARCH

## Festival Forum

11.30am-1.00pm

### Speakers

- **David Allen** – Representative of Beyond Bolac, a local group working to improve biodiversity in the Fiery Creek, Lake Bolac and Salt Creek catchments. David will share his appreciation of the country and culture he has grown up and farmed in.
- **Andrew Skeoch** – Audio ecologist who brings his deep listening practice to the Festival. Andrew will share principles of listening to country and invite us to open our ears to the natural world.
- **Marj Thorpe** will speak about the campaign to save the Djab Wurrung trees. Marj has been involved with the case to protect ancient, culturally sacred trees in southwestern Victoria, including 800-year-old birthing trees and directions trees deeply significant to the Djab Wurrung people for women’s business, birthing, and songlines.
- **Meekah Merriman**, named the 2026 Warrnambool Young Citizen of the Year, is a proud young Indigenous woman, using art and storytelling to create belonging, share culture and advocate for young people.

### Music

<b>1.30 pm</b>	<b>Pirritu</b>
<b>2.30 pm</b>	<b>Heart Songs</b>
<b>3.30 pm</b>	<b>Charlie Needs Braces</b>
<b>4.30 pm</b>	<b>Stretch &amp; the Truth</b>
<b>5.30 pm</b>	<b>Trudy Fatnowna Edgeley</b>

<b>6.30 pm</b>	<b>Neil Murray</b>
<b>7.30pm (sunset)</b>	<b>Twilight Ceremony</b>
<b>8.30 pm</b>	<b>Ruby Lou Band</b>
<b>9.30 pm</b>	<b>Ganga Giri Band</b>
<b>10.30 pm</b>	CLOSE

### Workshops

	SESSION TIMES	WORKSHOP	PROVIDER	Pre booking on website
All day	11.00 am – 5.00 pm	Creating sculptures of the lake’s threatened species using farm waste	Veronica Phillips	NO
	11.00 am – 5.00 pm	Botanical Headwear. Woven fish sculpture installation	Amanda Perry-Bolt, Peter Day	NO
	11.00 am – 4.30 pm	Deadly damper on a stick	Julie Green & Aleyna	NO
	11.00 am – 4.30 pm	Rainbow water	Stuart McCallum	NO
	11.00 am – 4.30 pm	Water bugs	Stuart McCallum	NO
	11.00 am – 5.00 pm	Endangered fauna and flora tattoos and card making	Catherine van Wilgenburg	NO
	11.00 am – 5.00 pm	Roving -distributing environmental swap cards	The Connies	NO
	11.30am – 12.30pm	Hand crafted green wood carving – butter spreader.	Eli Beke	YES
	11.30am – 1.00pm	Cartooning the Amazing Eel Story ‘ <u>Primary school students</u> ’	Trace Balla*	YES
	11.30am – 12.30pm	Eel skin tanning	Josh McLean	YES
	11.30am – 1.30pm	Weaving – bush animals	Aunty Bronwyn Razem	YES
	12.00 – 4.00pm	Face painting		NO
	2.30 – 3.30pm	Hand crafted green wood carving – story stick.	Eli Beke	YES
	2.00 – 3.30pm	Cartooning the Amazing Eel Story ‘ <u>Secondary students &amp; adults</u> ’	Trace Balla*	YES
	1.00 – 2.15pm	Ukulele fun with songs that don’t suck	Bruce Watson	YES
	2.00 – 3.00pm	Eel skin tanning	Josh McLean	YES
	3.00 – 4.00pm	Presentation: Connecting Country and Culture	Brett Clarke (Boorook)	YES
	2.00 – 4.00pm	Weaving - bush animals	Aunty Bronwyn Razem	YES
	4.30 – 5.30pm	Presentation: Deep Listening to Nature	Andrew Skeoch	NO

\* Trace Balla, Author/illustrator of children’s books