Symbols of Western Australia
SYMBOLS

Symbols provide a visual representation of an idea or word. They take many forms and are used at many different levels of society. When you look around, symbols are everywhere and are used to familiarise us with signs, products, brands, companies and governments. Symbols do not only come in the form of a flag or animal, they can also be a collection of words or a song such as Australia’s National Anthem ‘Advance Australia Fair’ which was proclaimed in 1984.

The Commonwealth of Australia and all the States and Territories have a range of identifying symbols that are used to produce a feeling of identity, pride or national belonging. As well as our Coat of Arms and flag, Western Australia has the animal, bird, floral, marine animal and fossil emblems that represent our State. This booklet provides a description of these emblems as well as the date they were proclaimed.

Additional information can also be found at the following web sites—

Western Australia State Symbols:  

Commonwealth of Australia Symbols:  
www.itsanhonour.gov.au/symbols

For further information please contact—

State Ceremonial and Events  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
Perth, Western Australia  
Telephone (08) 6552 6333
THE COAT OF ARMS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
THE COAT OF ARMS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Coat of Arms of the State of Western Australia was granted by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, by Royal Warrant dated the 17th day of March 1969.

The blazon of the Arms is as follows—

In Heraldic Terminology

*For Arms:* Argent on a base wavy Azure charged with a barrulet wavy Argent a Black Swan naiant proper.

*And for Crest:* On a Wreath Or and Sable The Royal Crown between two Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanths manglesii*) flowers slipped proper.

*And for Supporters:* On either side a Kangaroo holding in the exterior fore-paw a Boomerang-proper.

As the same are in the painting hereunto annexed more plainly depicted to be borne for Our said State on Seals, Shields, Banners, Flags, or Otherwise – according to the Laws of Arms.

In Current Terminology

*For Arms:* A silver shield with a base of rippled blue across which is a thin wavy silver stripe. A black swan, in natural colour, and in horizontal position is floating on the blue base which represents water.

*And for Crest:* Resting on a gold and black wreath is the Royal Crown between two Kangaroo Paw flowers accurately depicted.

*And for Supporters:* Two red kangaroos support the shield held between them. A boomerang accurately depicted is held by each in their other forepaw. The Coat of Arms is to be used on seals, shields, banners or otherwise according to the Laws of Arms.

Abbreviated Form

With the consent of the Garter Principal King of Arms, the Arms will be produced, for the use in Western Australia, in abbreviated form without the helmet and mantling. A helmet and mantling is depicted in correct heraldic form in the Warrant to conform to heraldic principles, but omission thereof for general usage is in line with the usage of the Commonwealth of Australia and other Australian States.

Guidelines for Use

Unauthorised reproduction of this Coat of Arms is an offence under the *Armorial Bearings Protection Act 1979*. Authority to reproduce must be sought from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Perth, Western Australia email: commonbadge@dpc.wa.gov.au.
THE FLAG OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
THE FLAG OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Description
The flag of the State of Western Australia is the British blue ensign, consisting of a blue flag with the Union flag occupying the upper quarter next to the staff, differed in the fly or half of the flag further from the staff, by the State Badge situated centrally in the fly.

History of the Flag
The black swan has been associated with Western Australia from the earliest times. Vlamingh, who explored the Swan River in 1697, gave it the name on account of the number of swans found upon it, and for a number of years after the foundation of the settlement, it was generally referred to as the Swan River Colony.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Black Swan should come to be accepted as the emblem of the State, though no record can be found of any early official pronouncement on the subject.

It was in use in the eighteen thirties, only a few years after the establishment of the Colony. It appears on Bank notes, issued in the early thirties on account of shortage of specie, and on the "Swan River Guardian" newspaper, first published in 1836; the Royal Arms, with the Swan below, appears at the head of the first issue of the Western Australian Government Gazette of 20 February 1836.

A design showing the Black Swan was selected for the first Western Australian postage stamps, issued in 1854. This same device was used on the Ordinances of Western Australia in 1858, and appears on reprints of earlier Acts which were made in that year.

On 17 August, 1869, an Order in Council was issued authorising the Governors of Colonies to fly the Union Flag with the Arms or Badge of the Colony in the centre. A circular from the Secretary of State notified the Governors of this fact, and Frederick A. Weld, Governor of Western Australia, in a despatch dated 3 January 1870 submitted a sketch of the badge which it was proposed to adopt i.e., a black swan on a yellow background. He stated with regard to it "This Colony at its commencement was usually known as the Swan River Settlement, and the Black Swan is represented upon its seal, and has always been considered as its special badge, or cognizance."

The use of this badge was confirmed by a later Governor, William C. F. Robinson, in a despatch dated 27 November 1875.

The use of the badge of Western Australia (on the Blue Ensign) began some time prior to 1870, following the Admiralty Letter of 16 January 1866 prescribing the use of a defaced Blue Ensign by vessels belonging to, or permanently in, the service of Colonial Governments.

In September 1912 when the Royal Warrant was issued granting Armorial Ensign and Supporters to the Commonwealth of Australia, the Black Swan was used as the emblem of Western Australia.
THE FLORAL EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RED AND GREEN KANGAROO PAW
(Anigozanthos manglesii)
THE FLORAL EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RED AND GREEN KANGAROO PAW
(Anigozanthos manglesii)

The striking flower of the Red and Green Kangaroo Paw, found naturally only in Western Australia, is the State's floral emblem.

Announcing the choice in November 1960, the Premier of Western Australia, David Brand said “... the Kangaroo Paw is so outstanding that it was the logical choice. It has grace and beauty, striking colour and distinctive outline – and it grows naturally only in Western Australia.”

It was considered that the emblem would heighten tourist interest in the State’s wildflowers and was recommended by Premier Brand on the advice of the State’s Tourist Development Authority.

The Red and Green Kangaroo Paw is one of eleven species of Anigozanthos. The name Anigozanthos, meaning “irregular flower” came from botanist J.J.H. de Labillardiere who, as part of a French scientific expedition sheltered near Esperance, on the South Coast of Western Australia in 1792 and was the first European to collect the Kangaroo Paw. The common name comes from the appearance of the unopened cluster of flowers that resembles the forepaw of a kangaroo.

From the early days of the Swan River Colony, botanists were intrigued by the unique plants of Western Australia. With encouragement from government naturalist James Drummond, settlers sent seeds and specimens back to England. Prominent among these was the Red and Green Kangaroo Paw, which was introduced to England in 1833 and described in 1835 by a British botanist, David Don.

Several members of the Mangles family (of whom Ellen, the wife of the first Governor, Captain James Stirling, was one) were plant enthusiasts and promoted the cultivation of Swan River seeds in England. The family was honoured in an earlier name for this species – the Mangles Kangaroo Paw.

The Red and Green Kangaroo Paw is the best known and most famous of all the Kangaroo Paws. It is found in many areas of remnant bushland near Perth and is common in the sandy coastal plains of the south-west of the State.

This stunning plant has long flattened leaves at its base and brilliant red and green flowers that appear in spring and summer in fan-like clusters at the end of red felted stems. The sturdy high stems provide a ready-made perch for honey-eaters and wattle-birds, which are often seen clinging precariously to the stem, drinking nectar from each of the flowers in turn and helping in pollination.

The Red and Green Kangaroo Paw was proclaimed Western Australia’s floral emblem on 9 November 1960 and was subsequently incorporated into the State Coat of Arms.
THE FAUNAL (BIRD) EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BLACK SWAN
(Cygnus atratus)
THE FAUNAL (BIRD) EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BLACK SWAN
(Cygnus atratus)

Although the Black Swan is found in wetlands throughout Australia, this graceful bird has had a special association with Western Australia from the earliest times. Aboriginal lore tells how ancestors of the Noongar people, the indigenous Australians living in the south west of the State, were once Black Swans who became men.

However, it was not until the voyages of Dutch explorers to the Great South Land in the 17th century that the existence of Black Swans was reported to the rest of the world. Until then people in Europe believed that all swans were white.

In 1697, Dutch explorer and navigator Captain Willem de Vlamingh explored and named the Swan River where the capital of Western Australia, Perth now stands – on account of the flocks of Black Swans he sighted in the estuary. Some 130 years later, Captain James Stirling, investigating the area as a future British colony, also reported a flock of over 500 Black Swans flying over the river.

As a result, the original European settlement in Western Australia was named the Swan River Settlement (or Colony) and the Black Swan became a recognised symbol of the new Colony, appearing on government papers, bank notes, postage stamps and other publications such as the Swan River Guardian.

The Black Swan was also used on the original State Crest, which was used prior to the granting of the Warrant for the State Coat of Arms. The Crest sometimes incorporated the motto “Cygnis insignis”, which means “noted for swans”. Subsequently the Black Swan was incorporated into the design of the State Badge, the State Seal, the State Coat of Arms and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

It is not surprising therefore that the Black Swan was the obvious preference when consideration was being given to the selection of a State bird emblem. It was proclaimed as the bird emblem of Western Australia on 25 July 1973.

The bird is similar in size and shape to the European species, but its plumage is black, often tinged with brown, and with white wing tips. The scientific name for the species “atratus” means “dressed in black”. The beak is red with a white band near the tip. A Black Swan stands about 106-140 centimetres with a wingspan of almost two metres. It ranges over wide expanses of water (both fresh and salt) and builds a bulky nest in swamps and lakes.

Males and females are similar in size and appearance but males can be identified in flight by their larger neck and, when swimming, they hold their neck more erect. The female lays between four and eight eggs which take about 40 days to hatch. Both parents care for the young fluffy beige-grey swans, called cygnets. Black feathers start to appear on the young after about 3-4 weeks. Cygnets begin to fly at about two months of age but stay with the parents until the next breeding season. Swans mate for life, sometimes living 40 years.
THE FAUNAL (ANIMAL) EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

NUMBAT OR BANDED ANTEATER
(Myrmecobius fasciatus)
THE FAUNAL (ANIMAL) EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

NUMBAT OR BANDED ANTEATER
(Myrmecobius fasciatus)

Although it was once widespread across southern Australia, the Numbat has become extinct throughout most of its range and today survives only in small patches of forest in the south-west of Western Australia.

The destruction of its habitat through clearing for farming and the introduction of foxes with European settlement led to the decline of the species. While the Numbat is still endangered, listed as vulnerable, the outlook is gradually improving. Following fox control, new populations have been established in nature reserves and forests. As part of its Native Species Breeding Program, the Perth Zoo is breeding Numbats for release into protected habitats.

The Numbat is a unique pouchedless marsupial with a distinctive appearance. It is a small animal with a slender body and a reddish-brown coat that has prominent white bands and a long bushy tail. The adult Numbat is about 41 centimetres long (including the tail) and has a narrow, pointed snout and dark stripes across the eyes.

Its preferred habitat is woodland, with thick undergrowth that is littered with fallen branches. It shelters in hollow logs, trees and burrows and searches during the daylight hours for termites. In the wild, the Numbat eats an exclusive diet of termites. Since it’s not strong enough to break into termite mounds themselves, the Numbat waits for termites to be out in the shallow feeding galleries (the underground ‘highways’ that termites travel in from the nest to feeding areas). With its sharp claws it digs insects out of logs and sub-soil down to the termite galleries and uses its long tongue to flick the termites into its mouth. An adult consumes up to 20,000 termites per day, the equivalent of ten percent of its body weight.

Unlike most marsupials, the Numbat is active during the day, with its lifestyle being closely linked to termite movements. In summer, termites are out early in the day but retreat deeper into the soil as the day becomes hot. During that part of the day, Numbats retreat to a cool hollow log and wait for later in the cooler part of the afternoon when termites are close to the surface again. In winter, the termites are not active until late morning when the soil begins to warm, but they remain active until dusk. The Numbat stays out at this time to feed.

The Numbat is basically a solitary animal, each with its own home range, the boundaries of which are fairly flexible. In summer, before the breeding season, the male roams a long way from the home range in search of females. Four young are usually born between January and March. They are carried or nursed by the mother throughout winter. When they grow fur, they are placed in a small underground chamber, lined with grass and leaves at the end of a one to two metre long burrow, while the mother hunts for termites. The young are quite active and will play near the nest during her absence. The young are able to fend for themselves by October and leave the burrow by the end of the year.

The Numbat was proclaimed the animal emblem of Western Australia on 25 July 1973.
THE FOSSIL EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

GOGO FISH
(Mcnamaraspis kaprios)
THE FOSSIL EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

GOGO FISH
(Mcnamaraspis kaprios)

In the far north of Western Australia, southeast of Fitzroy Crossing, are the remains of a giant barrier reef that 375 million years ago teemed with wildlife. From shales known as the Gogo Formation, that formed in quiet inner-reef bays, have come exquisitely preserved, three-dimensional skeletons of the fishes that swam in these ancient seas. Preserved as original bone in limestone nodules within the shale, they represent the best preserved early fishes in the world.

One of the major groups of extinct fishes that swam around these ancient reefs is a group known as the placoderms. One is *Mcnamaraspis kaprios*, a fish that in life would have been about 25 centimetres long. Like other placoderms is characterised by a bony head shield that articulates in a ball-and-socket joint to a trunk shield. In life it possessed a shark-like body, with a single dorsal fin; broad, fleshy paired pectoral and pelvic fins; and an anal fin.

*Mcnamaraspis* is special in that the fossils have an annular cartilage preserved in the snout, the first evidence for this structure in placoderm fishes. This is significant in demonstrating that placoderms were close relatives of sharks. This, combined with the sharp, prominent teeth imply that *Mcnamaraspis* was a voracious predator, probably feeding on the small, shrimp-like crustaceans that abounded in the warm, tropical seas of prehistoric Western Australia.

*Mcnamaraspis kaprios* was found by Western Australia palaeontologist, Dr John Long in August 1986 and described by him in 1995. The name *Mcnamaraspis* was a tribute to Dr Ken McNamara of the Western Australian Museum for his extensive research on Western Australian fossils. The Greek ending ‘aspis’ means shield, so the literal translation is ‘McNamara’s Shield’. The Greek species name *kaprios* means boar-like, as the Gogo fish had prominent boar-like tusks on its lower jaws. The common name is derived from the Gogo Formation where the fossils were found, which in turn took its name from Gogo Station in the Kimberley.

The initiative for Western Australia to adopt a fossil emblem and for that emblem to be *Mcnamaraspis kaprios* came from pupils of a Perth primary school – Sutherland Primary School in Dianella. Following a campaign the school initiated in 1994, a State Fossil Emblem Committee was formed in 1995 to provide advice to the then Minister for the Arts regarding appropriate fossil emblems for Western Australia. Following public consultations and consideration of public submissions, the Gogo Fish was recommended to Cabinet as the fossil emblem of Western Australia and was proclaimed on 5 December 1995.
THE FAUNAL (MARINE ANIMAL) EMBLEM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WHALE SHARK
(Rhincodon typus)
In the dappled light of the ocean, the Whale Shark can swim past almost unnoticed despite its size, due to its grey skin with yellow markings that act as camouflage. This pattern is unique to each animal and much like a human fingerprint, can be used to identify them. These markings and its large mouth, up to 1.5 metres wide, distinguish the Whale Shark as a striking inhabitant of the ocean.

The Whale Shark is in many ways an animal of contradictions. Although it is the largest living fish at a length of up to 12 metres, it is a docile and gentle giant that eats the tiniest organisms of only millimetres in size. While it breathes through its gills like a shark, it filter feeds like a whale by pulling plankton, krill and crustaceans through mesh-like screens in its gills. Although it has thousands of tiny teeth placed in rows within its enormous mouth, it does not use them for feeding.

The species was identified and described in April 1828 by English doctor, Andrew Smith, who was living in Cape Town and watched as fishermen harpooned the giant creature. Over the years, tall tales have been told about intrepid encounters on the sea with these enormous fish, with some unconfirmed stories of Whale Sharks up to 20 metres long.

The species originated approximately 60 million years ago and represents a link to the prehistoric past. Whale Sharks live for 70-100 years and do not reproduce until they reach approximately nine metres long. It takes a Whale Shark pup up to 30 years to reach this size. Scientists in Western Australia are working to discover more, as there is still much we do not know about the Whale Shark.

Although they are found in tropical and warm oceans across the equator, Whale Sharks have become famous for their gathering during autumn and winter in oceans off Western Australia and have been seen as far south as the Kalbarri cliffs. Whale Sharks are capable of diving to depths of 1,286 metres but usually spend their time swimming and surface feeding. This makes Western Australia one of the best places in the world to see these spectacular creatures.

Whale Sharks are a vulnerable species and in Western Australia they are respected and protected.

The Whale Shark was proclaimed the marine animal emblem of Western Australia on 12 November 2013.
PERSONAL FLAG OF THE GOVERNOR OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Description: The Personal flag of the Governor of Western Australia is the British blue ensign, consisting of a blue flag with the Union flag occupying the upper quarter next to the Staff, differenced in the fly or half of the flag further from the Staff by the State Badge surmounted by the Crown of Saint Edward situated centrally in the fly.
GOVERNOR’S FLAG PROCLAMATION

[Extract from the Government Gazette (No. 47) of 27 May 1988.]

PROCLAMATION

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
GORDON REID, Governor

By His Excellency Professor Gordon Reid,
Companion of the Order of Australia,
Governor of the State of Western Australia.

[L.S.]

I, THE Governor, acting with the advice and consent of the Executive Council of the said State do hereby declare that from this date forward the personal flag of the Governor of Western Australia shall be the flag of the State of Western Australia with the Crown of Saint Edward surmounting the State Badge and is more particularly described in the Schedule hereto.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the State on the 12th day of April 1988.

By His Excellency’s Command,
Peter Dowding,
Premier.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN !