

# Aboriginal people inhabited W.A.'s midwest coast much earlier than previously thought

November 4 2016, by David Stacey

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Archaeologists from The University of Western Australia have discovered evidence of human activity in a cave in Western Australia's Midwest which proves that Aboriginal people lived there 15,000 years earlier than previously thought.

The research team carried out radiocarbon tests on samples from Yellabidde Cave, a [limestone cave](#) located near Leeman, in the traditional country of the Amangu people.

The results, published in *Australian Archaeology*, show that people began using Yellabidde Cave at least 25,000 years ago, just before the last ice age, around 15,000 years earlier than previous archaeological evidence suggested.

The cave has been known to Amangu people and members of the caving community for a long time, but its archaeological significance was only recognised in 2014, when a UWA team excavated the site.

During that excavation, the team found well-preserved remains of campfires, stone artefacts, and animal bone, as well as emu eggshell, which is why the Amangu traditional owners involved in the research gave the site the name 'Yellabidde', meaning 'emu'.

Amangu traditional owners Thomas Cameron, Reg Brockman, and Buddy Edwards said that their ancestors used the caves of the coastal plain to shelter from the heat in the warmest months of the year, while

they exploited resources like shellfish, kangaroos, emus, and lizards.

UWA researcher and PhD candidate Carly Monks said the radiocarbon dating of the site was important, because the cave is one of the first sites in the region to show evidence of repeated occupation over thousands of years.

"Archaeologists have long suspected that the sandy coastal plain between Perth and Geraldton contained evidence of Aboriginal occupation, but until now, research has only documented people's activities in the past 10,000 years," she said.

"This new information gives us an opportunity to look at how people's use of the landscape, plants, and animals changed over a long time period."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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