

A walk with Gwynne Hanmer, our local and passionate environmentalist



Catchment Champion

Bradley Chaplin, Ashleigh Simpson,
Georgia Webb and Cailyn Knill

Blighty Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. **www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html**

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. **www.wirraminna.org**

Murray Darling Association

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. **www.mda.asn.au**



Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. **www.envirostories.com.au**

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Authors: Bradley Chaplin, Ashleigh Simpson, Georgia Webb and Cailyn Knill

Teacher: Nathan Fisher

School: Blighty Public School

Catchment Champions

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



**Catchment Management
Authority**
Murray



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Here is the story of Gwynne Hanmer, our catchment champion. Gwynne lives in the Murray catchment area of Blighty, southern NSW. Her love of plants and trees as a young person has led to her becoming interested in the native flora of the Blighty district.

Introducing Gwynne

Gwynne was born in 1941, in Melbourne. Her mother and father, Lilah and Alan Edwards, lived on the outskirts of Melbourne in Mitcham. In those days, Gwynne describes her home as a wonderland surrounded by wild flowers, luscious paddocks and a creek in walking distance. Gwynne was becoming increasingly aware of how quickly houses were taking over the beautiful countryside.



Gwynne in her family garden at Mitcham

Growing Up

Gwynne loved to help her mother in the garden at their home in Melbourne. Her mother did floral art and was a dressmaker. Gwynne later trained in horticulture, learning to grow fruit, vegetables, flowers and trees. After completing her course, she worked at a plant nursery, planned landscape gardens and grafted fruit trees for orchards.



Gwynne (right) with a fellow student in the glass house at Burnley Horticultural College



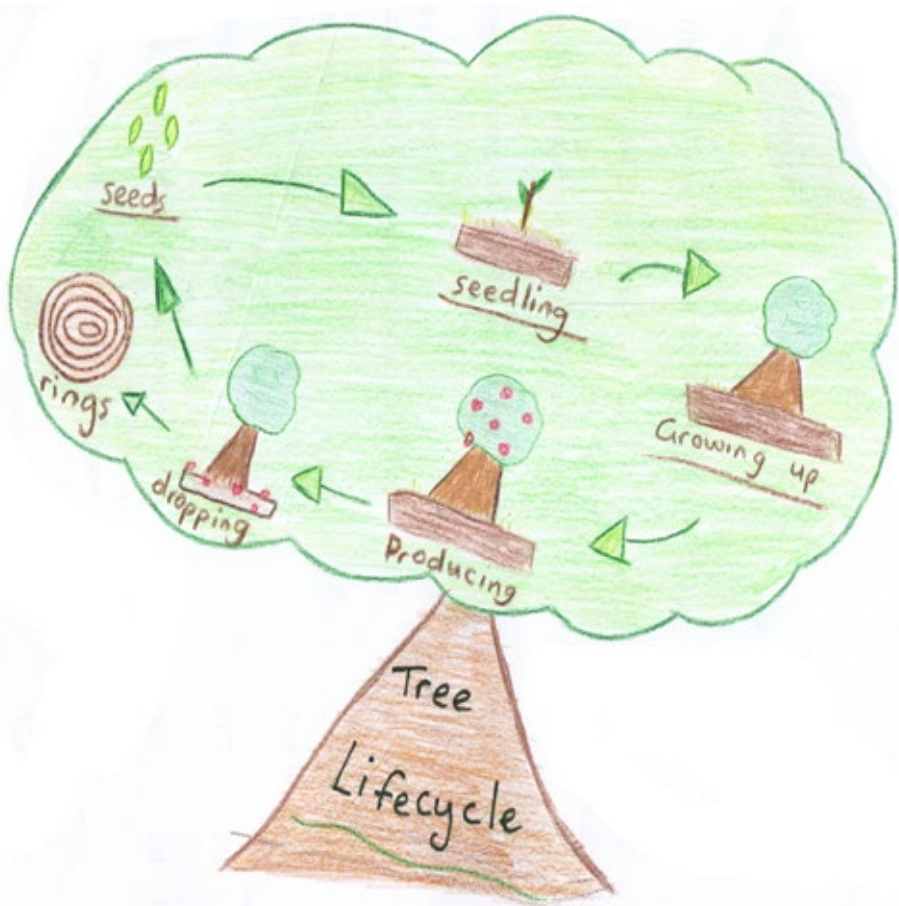
Ted, Kaye, Gwynne and Phillip on Kaye's wedding day

Family And Learning

After Gwynne and Ted married in 1970, they settled in the Blighty area, where they had two children, Phillip and Kaye. From the beginning of their marriage they grew trees on their property. Over the years, through trial and error, they've discovered better ways of planting and growing native flora. In 1986, Gwynne and Ted were awarded the NSW Forestry Commission Award for the 'Best Windbreak on an Irrigated Farm'.



Ted and Gwynne receiving their award



Tree Life Cycle

As you can see from the picture above, seeds fall from trees and grow into seedlings (young trees). As they grow and mature, seeds form and eventually fall to the ground. Many years later, when the tree dies, a cross section of the trunk can be used to tell the age of the tree. This is done by counting the rings.

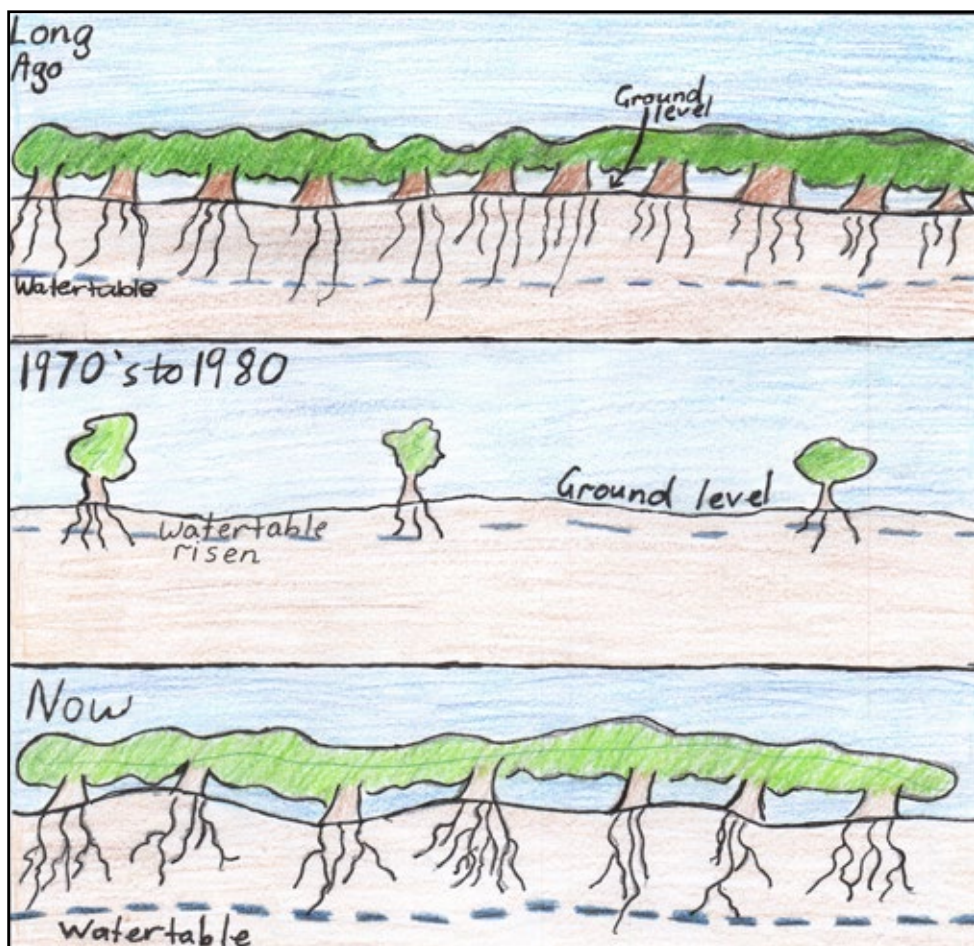


The Water Table

The water table is a boundary line between saturated and unsaturated soil. It rises when there aren't many trees to drink the water. The water table lowers when salt tolerant native trees are planted. These large trees (for example, river red gums) are often called 'pumps' because they use so much water.

How Native Trees Help Lower the Rising Water Table

In the 60's, 70's and 80's, many trees were cut down for farming and cropping programs. During this time, wet seasons were common and the underground water level began to rise up. Unfortunately, the water brought salt with it and trees that had been there for 50 to 60 years were dying. Gwynne and others in landcare groups learnt that to help solve this problem, more native trees needed to be planted.





The Blighty Tree and Salinity Group

Between 1989 and 1992, Gwynne was a member of the 'Blighty Tree and Salinity Group'. During this time, they received \$40,000 per year from the NSW government to buy trees, tree guards, weed mats and fencing materials. Bus trips and seminars were also organised to educate the community on the successful growing of trees. Gwynne's husband Ted was the president, however, many locals helped enthusiastically with the project.



Tree seeding field day

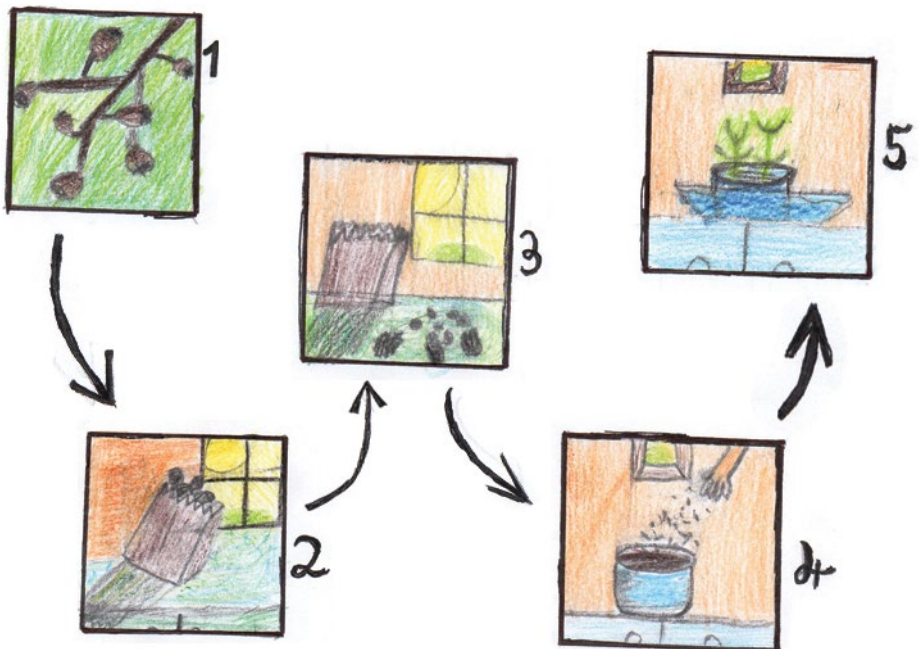


Animal Encounters

Greening Australia advocated planting corridors of trees to encourage birds to go from one area to the next. This was encouraged because smaller birds won't cross large open paddocks. After the native tree corridors had developed, Gwynne noticed many new and varied birds, such as the: blue wren, blue faced honey eater, white plumed honey eater, robin red breast, kingfisher and butcher birds.


Propagating a Black Box Tree

- Step 1:** Collect mature seed pods that are not bone dry or open.
- Step 2:** Place in a paper bag and leave to dry.
- Step 3:** Gather the seeds once the pods have opened.
- Step 4:** Sprinkle seeds on top of a coarse sandy mix in a small tub with holes in the bottom.
- Step 5:** Place in a shallow dish of water.
- Step 6:** Plant out the seedlings once they have two sets of permanent leaves.



Hopes and Plans for the Future

Gwynne has two children and six grandchildren who she encourages to take an interest in the environment. She loves to see schools teaching children to grow foods and take part in environmental projects. Gwynne is very proud that her two children have also taken an interest in the environment. They have both built energy efficient houses and she hopes that her knowledge will continue to be passed through the generations of her family.



Gwynne and two of her grandchildren - Jessica Hanmer (left) and Sarah Hanmer (right)

We would like to thank Gwynne Hanmer for letting us write this story about her life. We hope that Gwynne's passion for the environment continues to inspire and motivate others.



Back Row: Ashleigh Simpson and Georgia Webb
Front Row: Bradley Chaplin, Gwynne Hanmer and Cailyn Knill

2013 Year 6, Blighty Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative
Catchment Kids writing
program was showcased
at the Seventh World
Environmental Education
Congress, held in Morocco
during June 2013.



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