

Gliding Towards a Better Future



Stephanie Altass, Grace Quinlivan,
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Murray High 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 Local Land Services and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

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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Local Land Heroes

In 2014, students involved in the **Creative Catchment Kids** program researched and wrote stories about 'Local Land Heroes' - people, businesses or industries who contribute to productive agriculture and healthy environments along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services. Production of this booklet was supported by the Slopes to Summit (S2S) partnership of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative through funding from the NSW Government's Environmental Trust.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations 2014 International Year of Family Farming.
www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/



Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.



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Photographer: Peter Merritt

Squirrel Gliders

Squirrel gliders are small marsupials; they have a small, light pink nose and big black eyes. Their bodies are roughly 50cm long with thick grey-brown fur. They are mainly found along the eastern borders of Australia, where the landscape might be dry, open forest, woodland or tall coastal forest; anywhere they can really adapt to.



Photographer: Mark Doyle (bottom)

Sadly, these cute creatures are threatened as their habitat is slowly but surely being removed, making it difficult for them to glide from tree to tree.



This means they have to start walking across roads where they become vulnerable to foxes, cars and basically anything that can get to them.



Photographer: Kylie Soanes

They need old trees with hollows to live in, but these hollows can take 100 years to form, because all the old trees are getting chopped down for firewood, agriculture and human settlement. This means the hollows are much harder for the gliders to find and use for protection.



Photographer: Peter Merritt

For scientists to monitor the declining number of Squirrel gliders they need a way to catch them and record information about their wellbeing. The scientists also do surveys on them to find out how many Squirrel gliders are in the area. They do 5 to 7 nights of trapping at each site to make sure they get accurate information for their survey.



Photographer: Mark Doyle

The scientists set up a cage trap, which has a trigger that is baited with biscuits, honey and oats. When the Squirrel gliders glide over and climb into them for shelter, the trap door is triggered to close when they nibble the food. Each trap gets checked every day.



Photographer: Megan Collins

Sometimes the traps will catch other animals such as possums or mice, but some smaller animals can take the food without the trap going off. There are no dangers to the animal in this process. The animals are incapable of being injured from the cages. There is also no way for them to get caught on the cages.



Photographer: Peter Merritt

When caught, the Squirrel gliders are micro chipped near the shoulder blade and have a small hole punched in their ear. The ear is also tattooed (with a non poisonous ink) to find out if they have been trapped before or if they still need to further examine them.



Photographer: Peter Merritt

Many farmers in the past have had to use barbed wire fences which the Squirrel gliders get caught on and unless found and saved, they are left to starve to death. The Burrumbuttock LAMP (Local Area Management Plan) is encouraging farmers to look at alternative fencing methods in some areas. They are also threatened due to getting hit by cars when they are on the ground that is why they glide from tree to tree.



Photographer: Peter Merritt

Over the next few years the Burrumbuttock communities are going to be encouraged and supported in providing food sources for gliders. They can be helped further if their food sources are sustained and planted more around their home area so they do not have to travel large distances for their resources.



Photographer: Megan Collins



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2014 Year 9, Murray High School

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Local Land
Services
Murray



Local Land
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Riverina



Australian Government