

The Day I Went Wild



Year 5 and 6
Teesdale Primary School



The Day I Went Wild

Author: Year 5 and 6

Teacher: Meg Andrews, Alison Trevenen and Merron Southall

School: Teesdale Primary School

Acknowledgements: Stuart McCallum (Local Environmentalist)
and Claire Whitely (School Council President)

ABOUT TEESDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Teesdale Primary School is in the centre of a growing rural community. Located approximately 35 km northwest of Geelong, it offers the advantages of a rural lifestyle, with all services and facilities within easy commuting distance.

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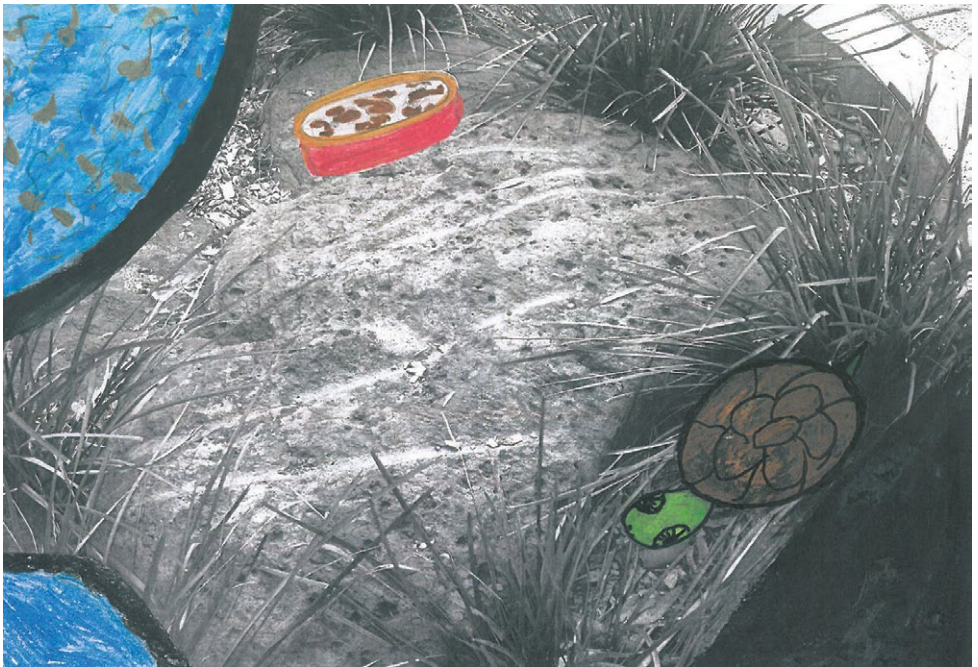
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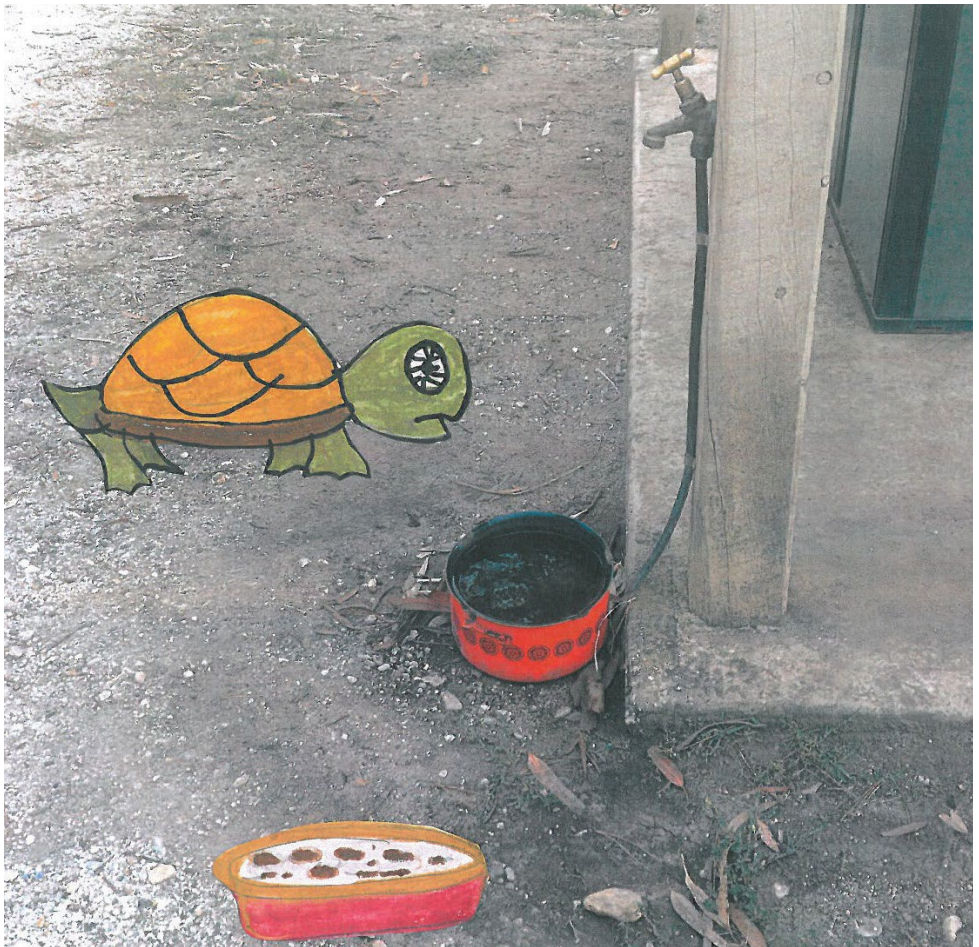
Josh used his birthday money to purchase a new pet turtle named Charlie from the Pet Shop. Charlie seems to spend all day and night trying to escape his new outdoor enclosure. No matter what Josh fed him, how clean he kept the pond; Charlie was forever getting caught in the wire fence or getting stuck on his back with his cute little webbed feet waving madly in the air.

A frantic phone call to the pet shop to ask for advice was of little help. He talked to Jai about his Eastern Long-necked Turtle project to see if he could help him with some factual information that would make Charlie settle down.

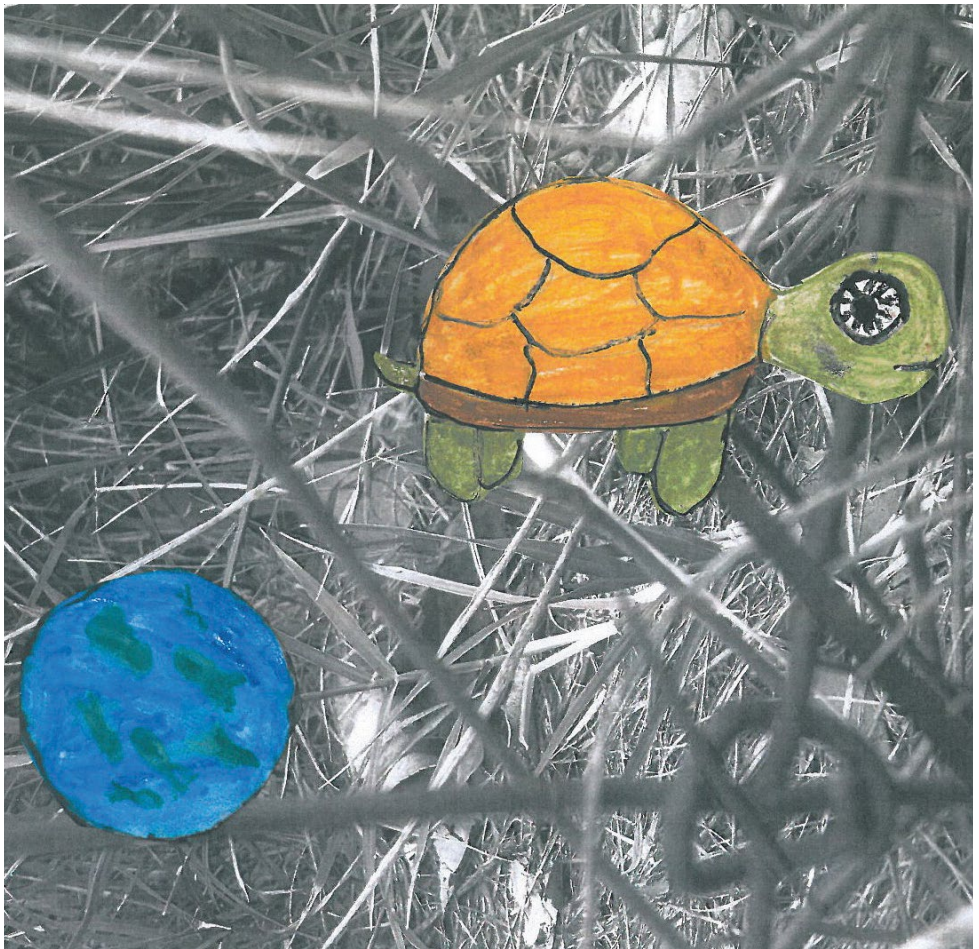


Mr. McCallum, a local environmentalist and conservationist, came to our class to give us a talk about caring for our turtles at Turtle Bend. Josh made lots of careful notes and asked many questions.

"If your new approach doesn't work, you may have to release him back into the wild to save his life," Mr. McCallum recommended.



Days and weeks went by and nothing seemed to work. His food was untouched; he still became caught in the fence and was found flapping upside-down on his shell. Charlie was becoming weak and thin. He rattled around inside his patterned shell as he ambled very slowly around still looking for an escape route.



With tears in his eyes, Josh decided the best way to save Charlie was to tag his shell with a bright green label and release him into the pond at Turtle Bend.

“Someone might have taken him from the wild and put him in the pet shop to just to make money,” Josh thought. “Or maybe he is lonely and wants a turtle friend to play with.”



The listless, little turtle crawled slowly out of the cardboard box and into the grasses on the edge of the pond at Turtle bend. Josh placed a bowl of tadpoles from his horse trough on the bank then watched him until he was safely swimming in the muddy water. Little bubbles rose to the surface of the pond and burst. Charlie seemed happy swimming slowly around and exploring his new home.



Josh walked slowly home, dragging his feet along the gravel path, feeling both sad and happy at the same time. He didn't sleep very well that night and had many bad dreams about Charlie trying to find his way home and being run over by the big log trucks that ran day and night through Teesdale.





By Friday Josh was feeling better and his dreams were no longer about Charlie. He woke early to help feed the chooks and Emily, the dog, only to discover a turtle caught in Charlie's enclosure fence. The turtle had a green tag.

"Charlie's come home!" shouted a very excited Josh.

But his joy was short lived. The turtle had bite marks on his shell, a crack near his tail, large bite wounds on his face and legs and his shell was full of dry, caked mud.

A frantic phone call to Mr. McCallum described what had happened to Charlie.

"You might have placed him in another turtle's territory," he explained. "And it looks like there has been some fighting over food, space and mates."

"I might have killed him!" wailed Josh.

"You might try releasing him in a different place." Mr. McCallum suggested. "Keep in touch and let me know what happens."



Josh and his friend Adam took Charlie back to Turtle Bend and released him upstream, behind an island of trapped logs and branches from last year's floods that extended across Native Hut Creek.

The water was shallow but Charlie seemed very happy to be free again.



On tree planting day, the school students planted indigenous shrubs and grasses around the banks. They collected tadpoles from their horse troughs and dams to help Charlie grow stronger.

Charlie did not come home to Josh again.



Charlie felt safe and free in his new environment. There were plenty of water bugs and lots of tadpoles from the local kids to eat. Charlie's painful wounds healed and his energy levels increased. He loved life here at this very safe place called Turtle Bend.

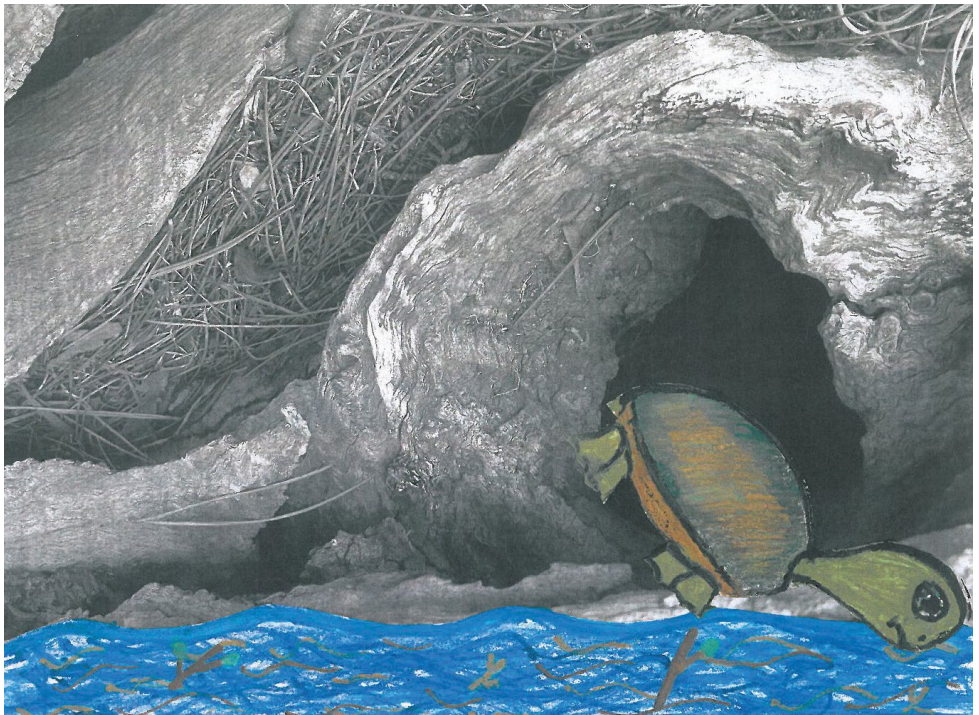


Charlie woke one afternoon feeling very chilled and like he was floating.

"I'm dying!" he thought.

Cold water swirled through his new warm burrow and it was rising faster by the minute. Charlie scrambled half asleep, out of the burrow and down the bank, only to be hit by a huge wall of dirty water, loose grass, branches and debris. The fast, cold swirling currents pulled him under, threw him around and around and then dragged him down stream.

His log island was totally destroyed. The new plants the students so carefully planted in the creek banks were swirling all around him. He was scared to death.





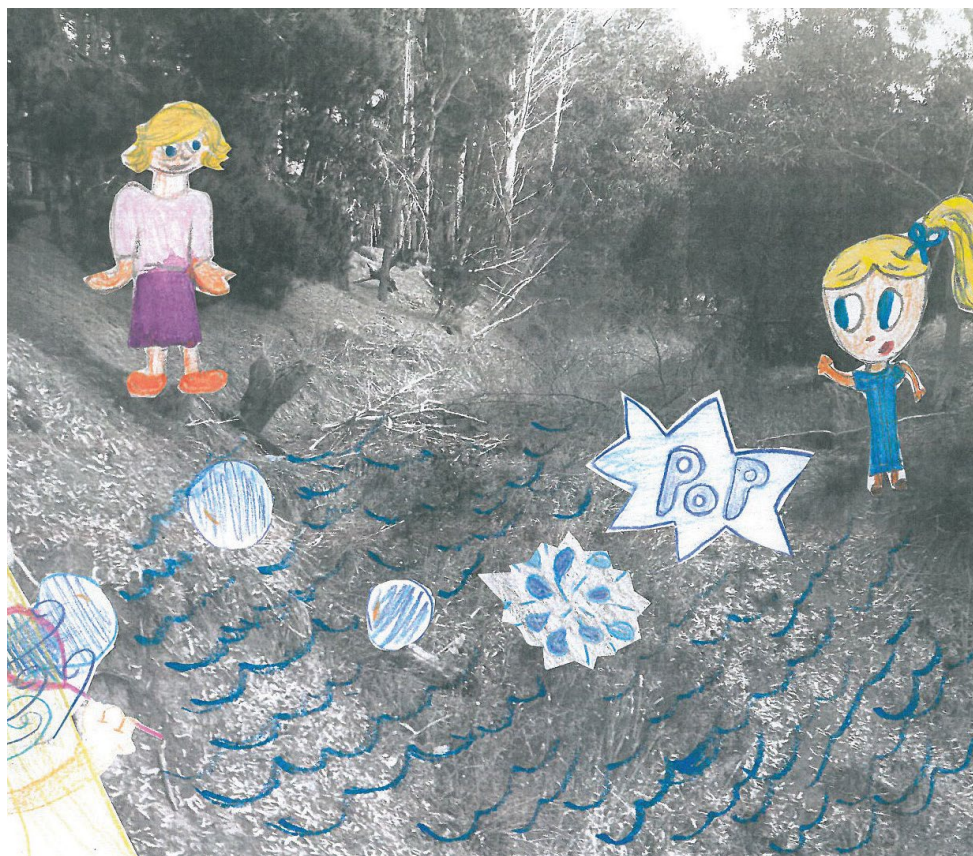
A tiny voice called out, "Grab my tail. Quickly GRAB my tail."

Charlie took hold of the wet slippery tail and felt himself being pulled upwards and then all went black. When he opened his eyes he saw another pair of eyes looking at him.

"I thought you were dead," the little turtle cried.

Charlie looked at the face before him.

"You look like me!" he said "You must be an Eastern Long-necked Turtle too!"



Josh and his friends discovered to their horror that the new pond they had found for Charlie had been washed away in the flood. Having searched the length and breadth of Turtle Bend and Native Hut Creek, and fearing for his little turtle pet, Josh and his friends camped out the night.

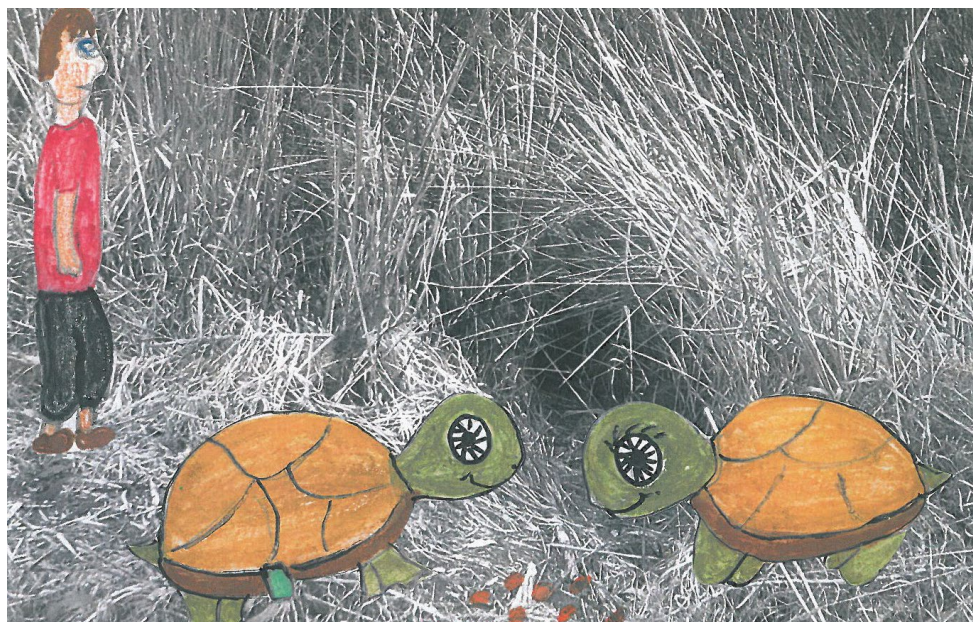
At dusk the tired kids noticed tiny bubbles in the deep pool at the river's bend. The tiny bubbles kept popping up all over the pond.

Josh sprinkled some turtle food he still had from the pet shop and waited to see if the turtles would come out of the water to feed. Slowly one turtle ambled slowly and carefully up the bank to the food, then two, then three.

After sitting very still on the cold bank for hours, the kids had counted 6 turtles all eating and playing together but no Charlie.

"I'm going home, I'm frozen stiff," moaned Adam.
"Your turtle has drowned or been washed too far down stream. Also, you shouldn't feed native animals because they won't be able to find food for themselves and die!"





Josh didn't hear Adam's comments. He was watching something extraordinary that was unfolding on the far slope of the pool.

A small turtle with a bright green tag and an even smaller turtle were ambling side by side across the native grassland towards the food. They stopped, head bobbed and then continued their journey towards the pet shop food.

Josh walked slowly home in the dark with a small tear in his eye and a definite spring in his steps.

"This is a story I will write for my literacy project, even my science project," he beamed. "And for my next pet I think I will have a stick insect."

This book has been published as part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program. 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.

Inspiring Local Literacy

www.envirostories.com.au





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