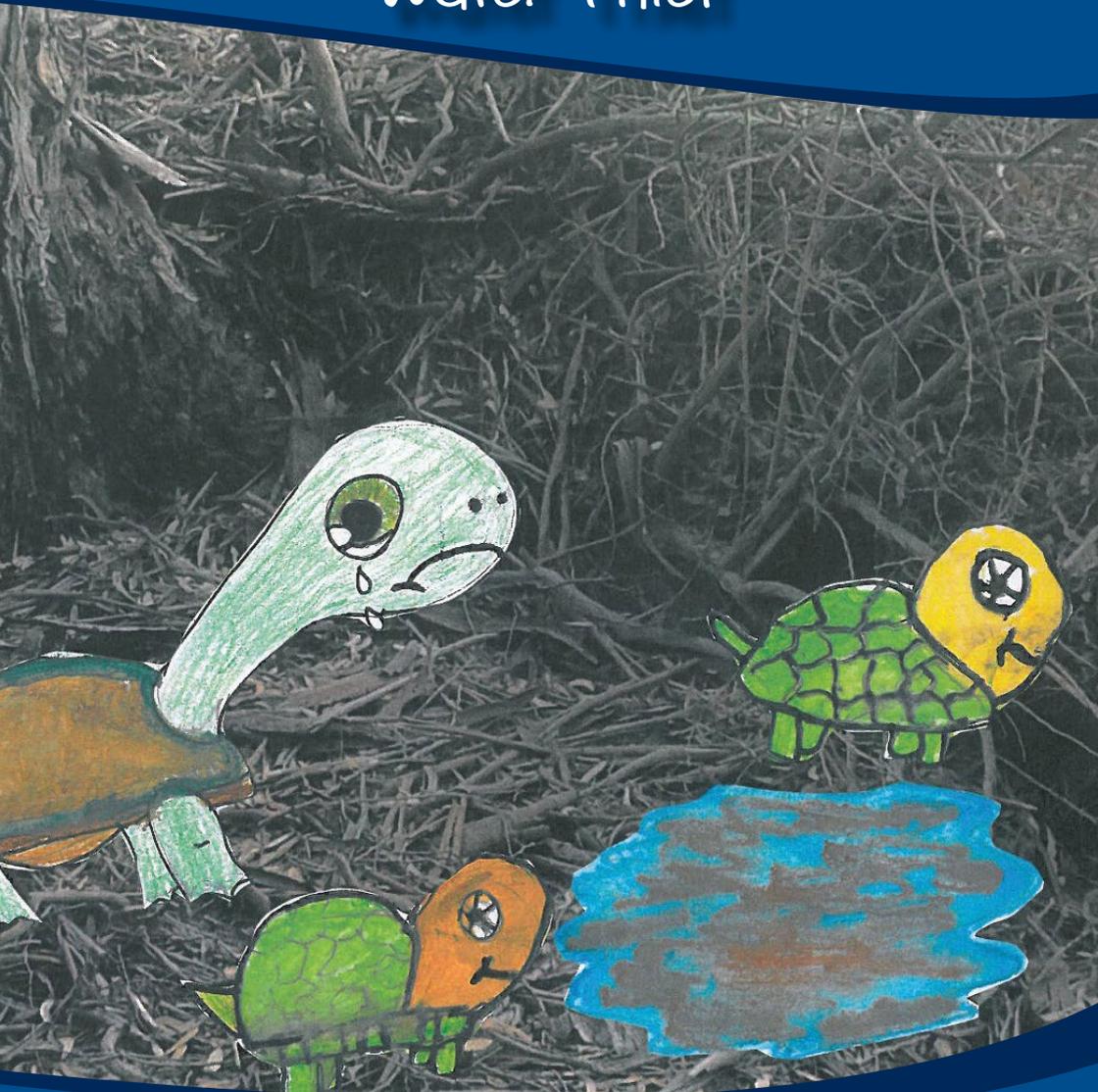


The "Native Hut Creek" Water Thief



Year 5 and 6
Teesdale Primary School



The “Native Hut Creek” Water Thief

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.

www.teesdaleps.vic.edu.au



Copyright © 2015 PeeKdesigns

The Enviro-Stories Education Program is a PeeKdesigns initiative.

Published by PeeKdesigns, www.peekdesigns.com.au

Citation: Teesdale Primary School. 2015. *The “Native Hut Creek” Water Thief*. PeeKdesigns, Victoria.



WEATHER BULLETIN...

THE WEATHER FORECAST FOR TODAY IS AGAIN 'CLOUDY', THE CHANCE OF LIGHT SHOWERS AND THE SAME FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK.



There's been no soaking rain since early September, and it is now April. Farmers are carting water to keep their animals alive, no crops have been planted and all of Teesdale township is on Stage 3 water restrictions. The Moorabool River stopped flowing and our Native Hut Creek is so dry the water weeds and grasses, that grow green all year round in and along the creek, have turned golden brown and died. We have a severe drought.

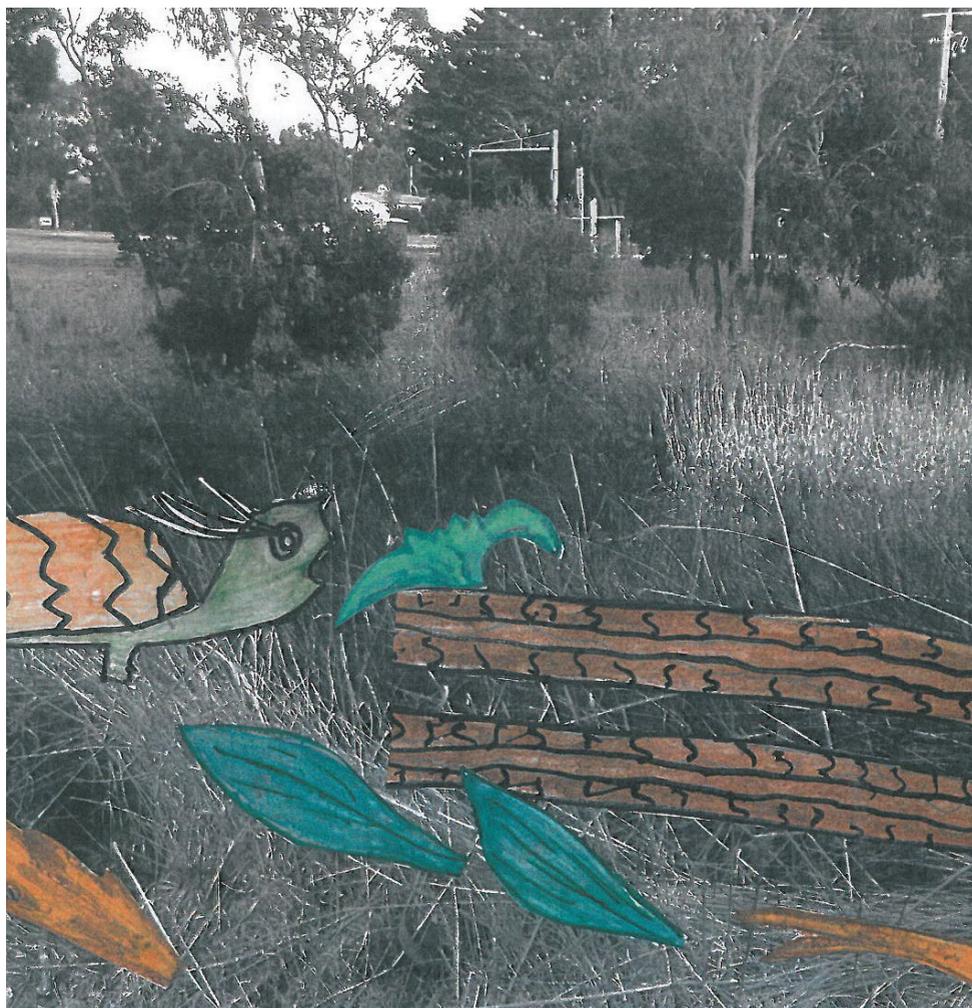
To learn more about the turtles who live there, the school's environmental group were watching the turtles as they come out at dusk to feed in the pool of water. Chris noticed the water receding very fast with each passing day.

"The water can't evaporate that quickly!" he protested.

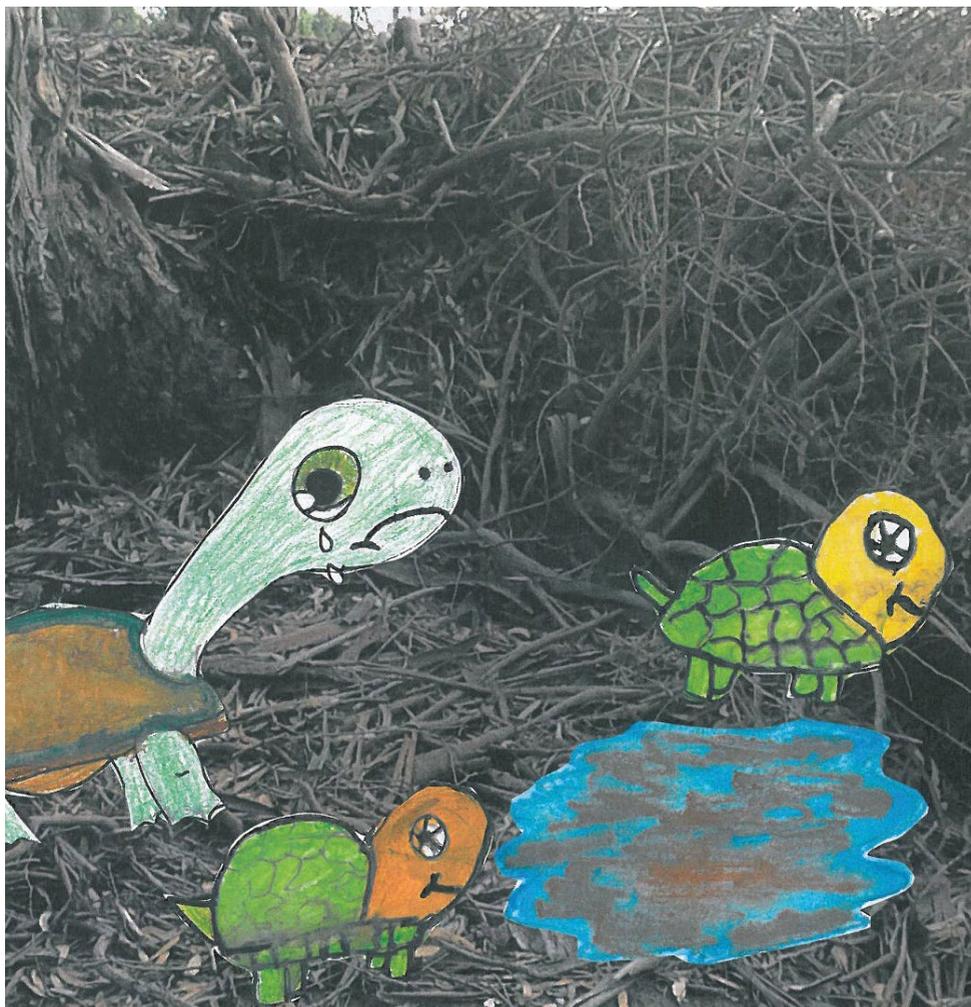


Tessa noticed damage to the vegetation and the banks of the creek, tyre marks on the edge of the lagoon and wet patches of soil where there shouldn't be any.

“Someone is stealing the turtle’s water!” Heath exclaimed. “We must do something to save our turtles.”

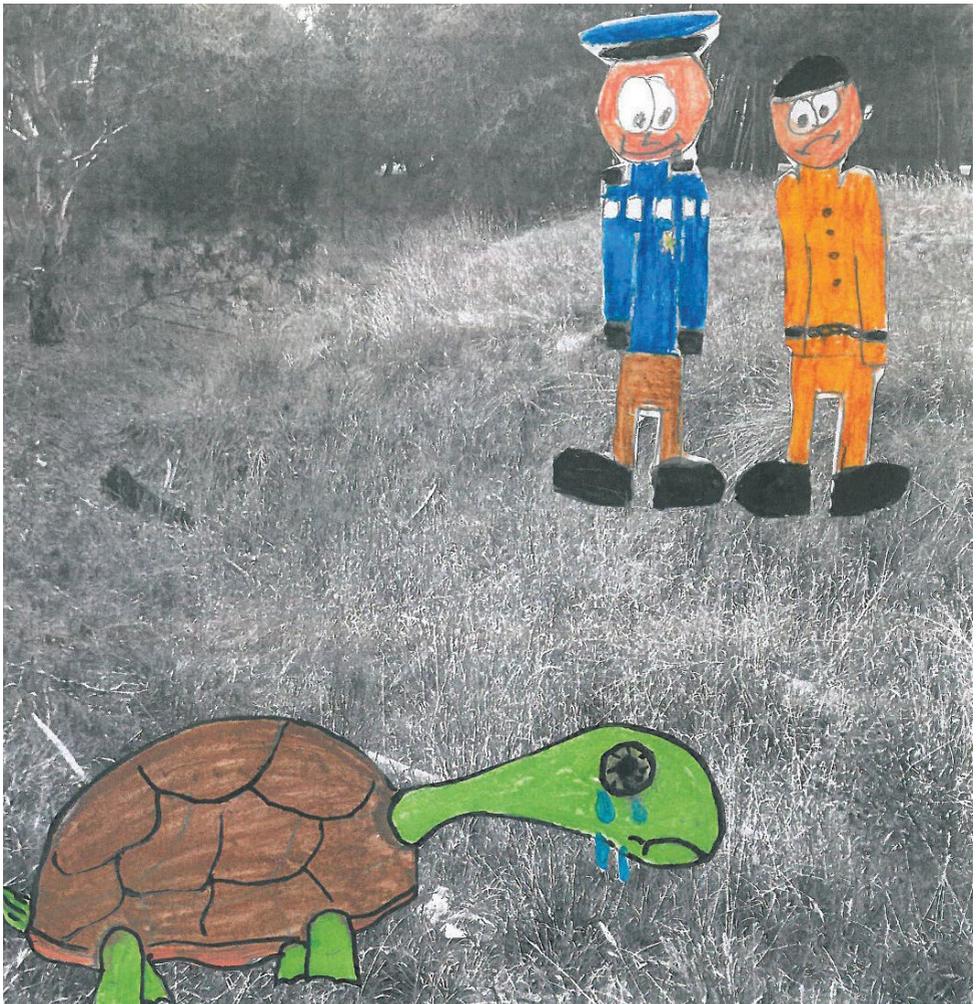


The turtles continued to wake each night and amble their way to the pond. It was now just a few centimetres deep and becoming very muddy. The food they needed was scarce and the water undrinkable. The turtles were hungry, thirsty, isolated and looking very thin.

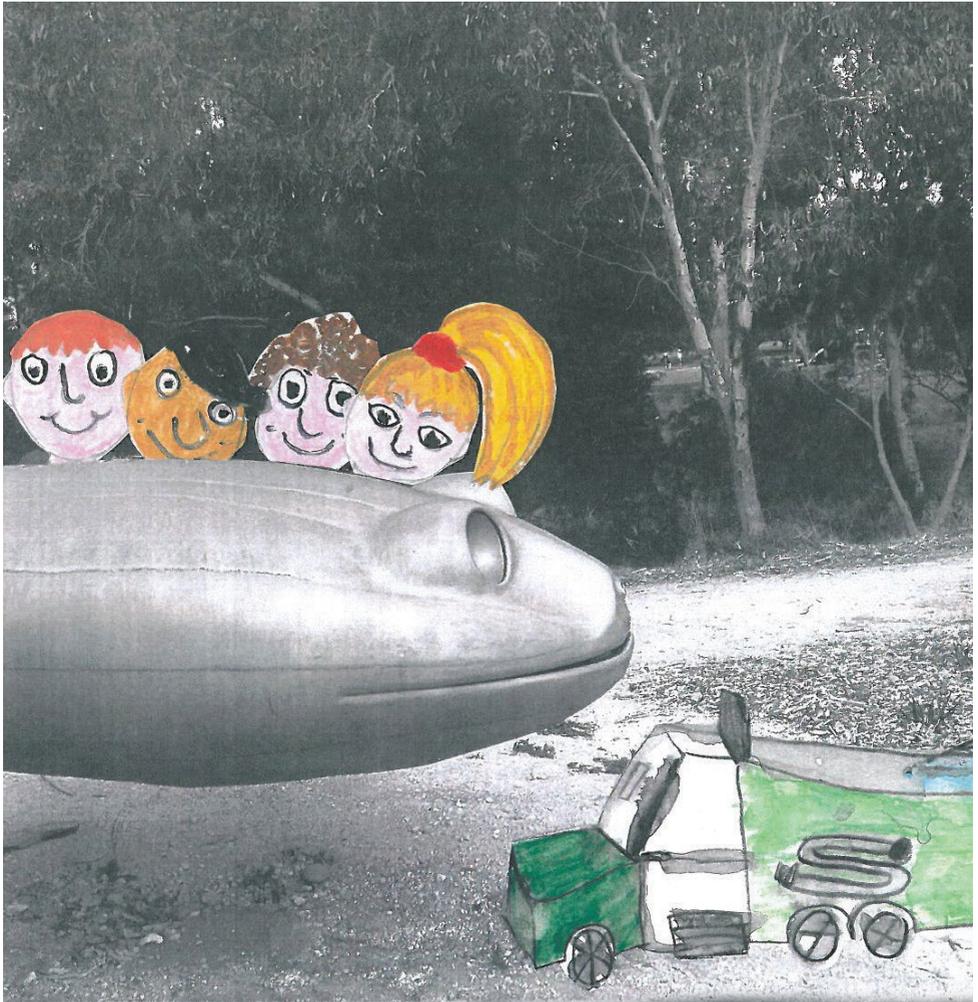


“They will die if we don’t help them,” said Max. “Let’s call the police.”

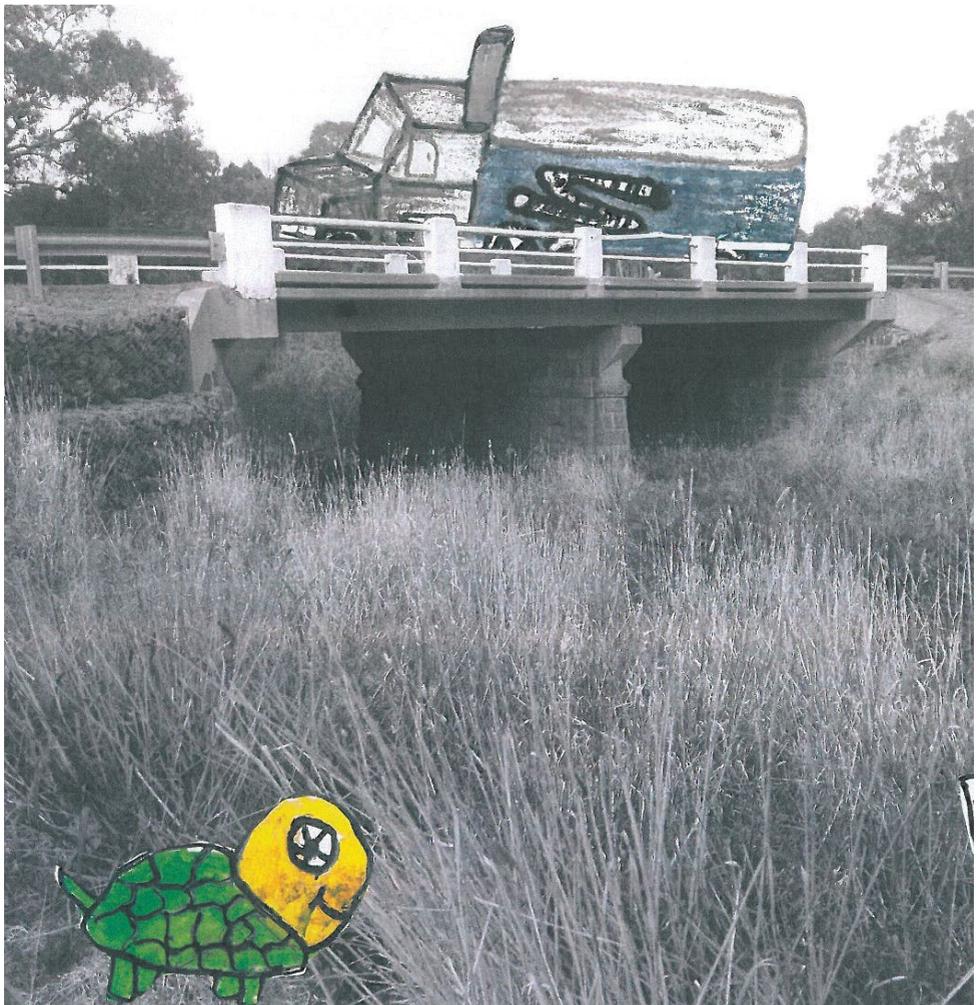
The local policeman was unable to help them find the water thief. He was too busy with human thieves, so the group decided to investigate themselves.



Night after night they hid and watched. At midnight on the third night they saw a truck drive into the park. It had a large tank on the back of the tray. The driver drove right to the edge of the pool. It lowered a hose and started the water pump on the truck.



Tessa wrote down the number plate, Max recorded a detailed description of the truck and the person, and Heath kept a lookout. The students followed the truck without being seen. It went out of the park and down the road, until they lost sight of it.



The local policeman found the name of the water thief and commended the students for their efforts to save the little turtles.

“You certainly know a lot about them,” he said.



“Jai has completed a science project on the Eastern Long-necked Turtle and local environmentalist, Mr. McCallum, visited our school and told us about our turtles and how we can protect them,” Max explained.



We now know that:

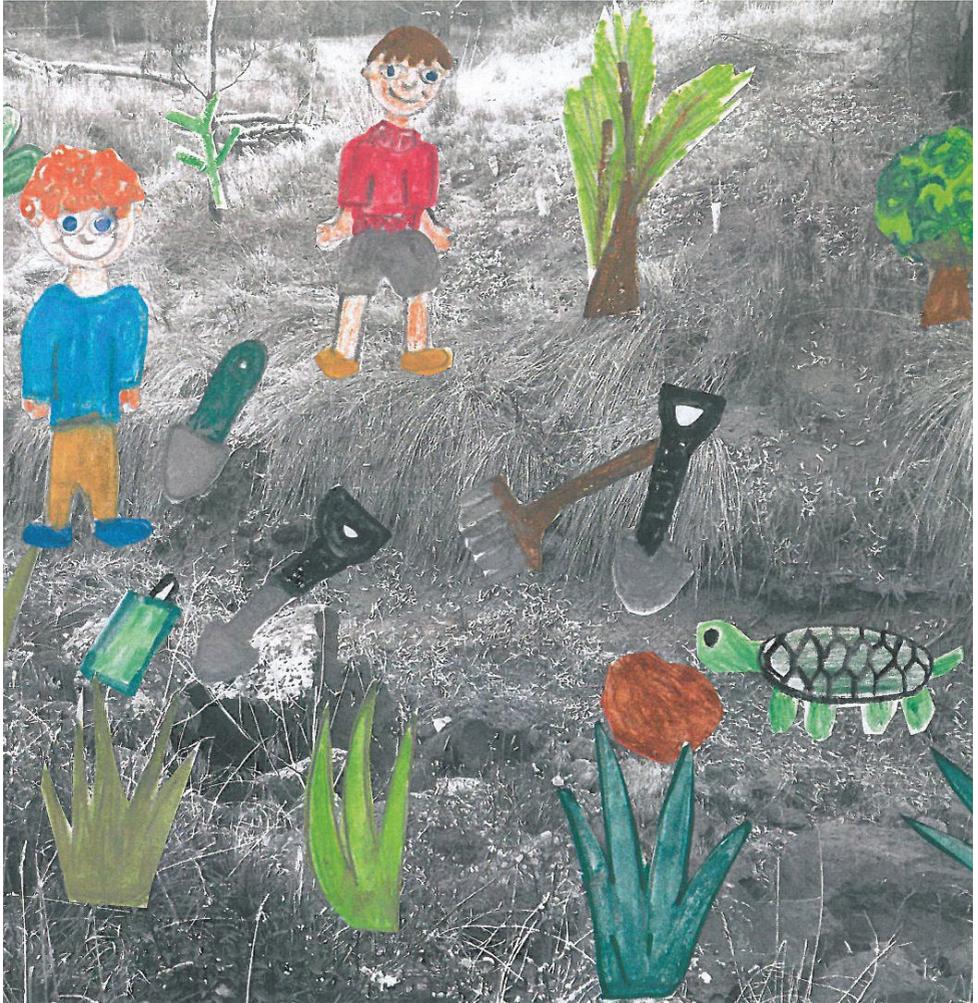
- Eastern Long-necked Turtles live in the Native Hut Creek.
- They have been in Native Hut Creek since the Wathaurong people were the only people living here.
- They hibernate by burying themselves in moist leaf litter under trees during the dry season when the creeks and dam water dries up.
- They eat small crustaceans, fish, frogs and tadpoles.
- They lay between 4 and 20 hard-shelled eggs during spring and summer.
- A turtle's spine is attached to the inside of its shell.
- They are sometimes called 'Stinker' turtles because they squirt pungent liquid from their musk glands when threatened.
- They have webbed feet and sharp claws for swimming and digging.

The police Sergeant traced the owner of the truck and interviewed the thief. Because of the drought, the man was desperate for water for his sheep but couldn't afford to buy it from the supplier. He thought no-one would miss the water on the pond.

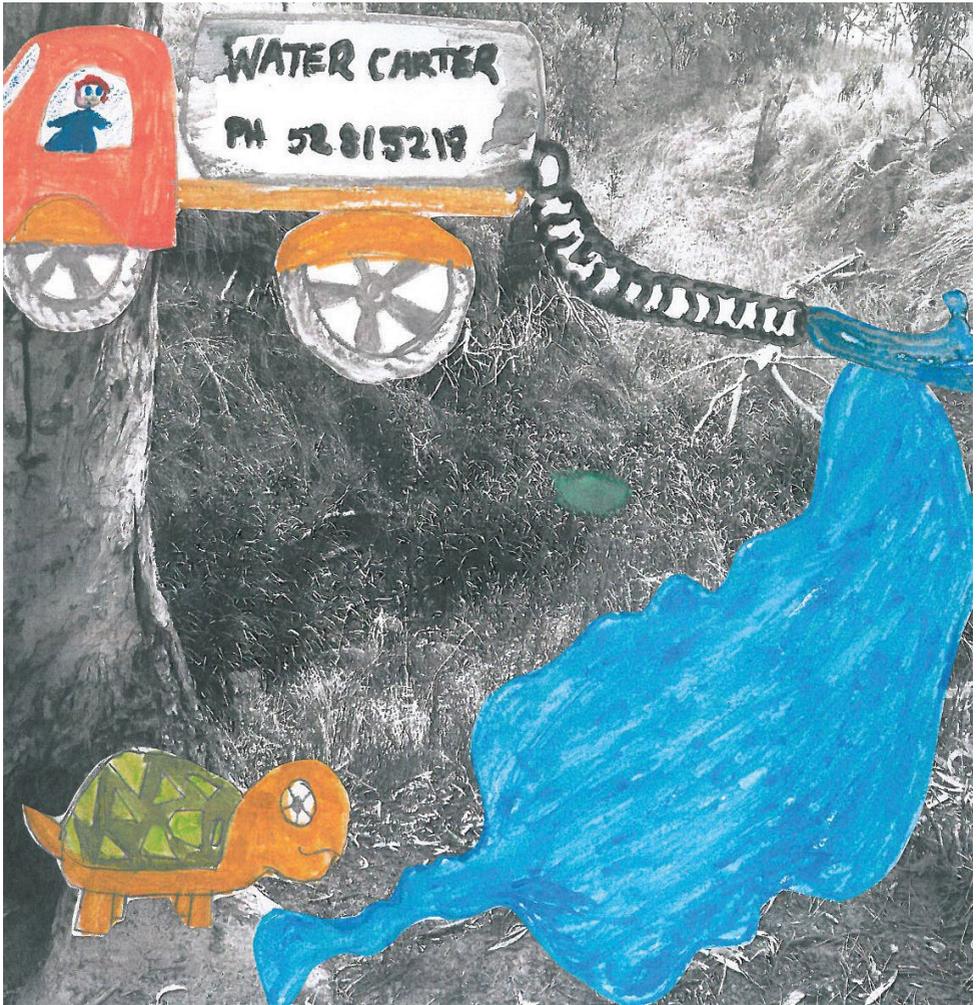
He didn't realise that he was endangering the turtle's lives by taking the water. The man was very apologetic. He agreed to talk to the students and help them restore the turtle's home.

"We would like you to help us save our turtles," Max explained to the farmer.

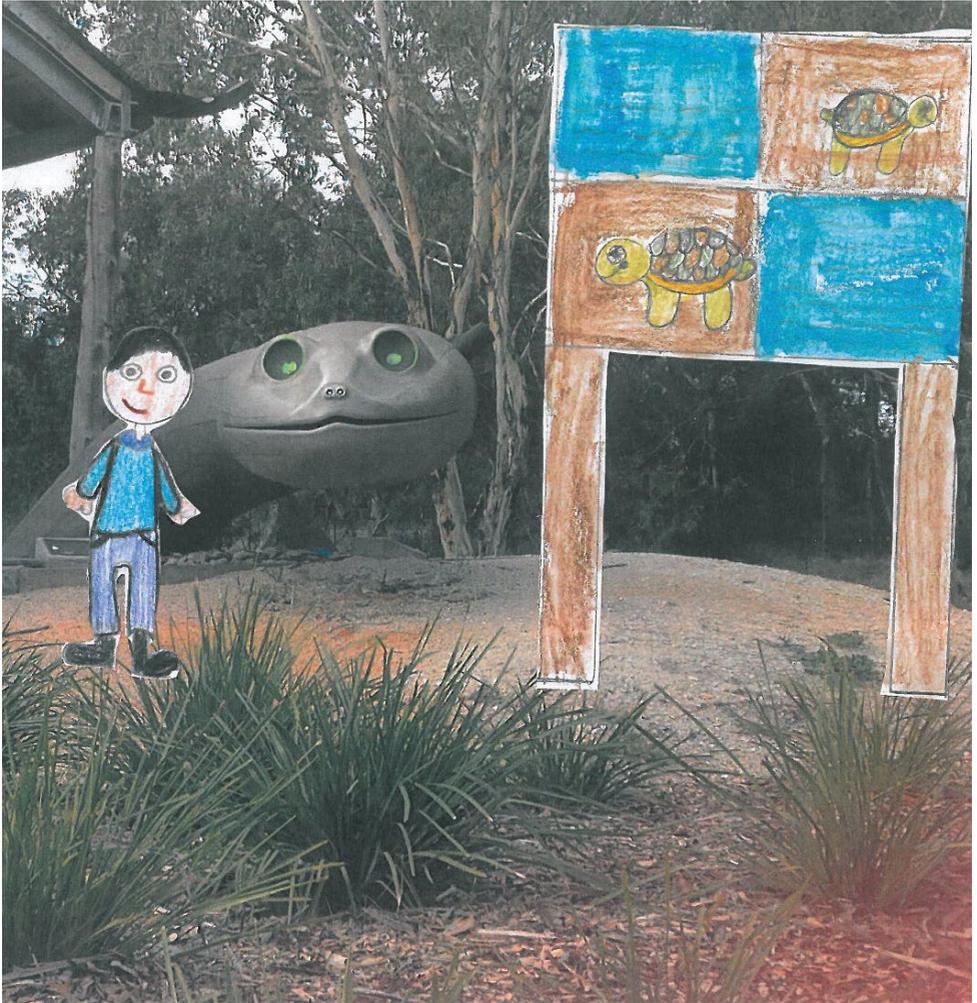




The Teesdale Primary School's Environmental Committee organised a 'Save the Turtle Day' to repair the damaged river banks, replant the trees and shrubs, and to replace the water in the Turtle Bend pool. The farmer came with his truck, shovels, rakes and lots of indigenous grasses and shrubs from Mr. Murphy's Teesdale Plant Nursery.



The students asked the farmer to release the water upstream so that the pond wouldn't be stirred up and muddy. Small creatures and other food might wash down to the turtles as it flowed towards the Turtle Bend pool.



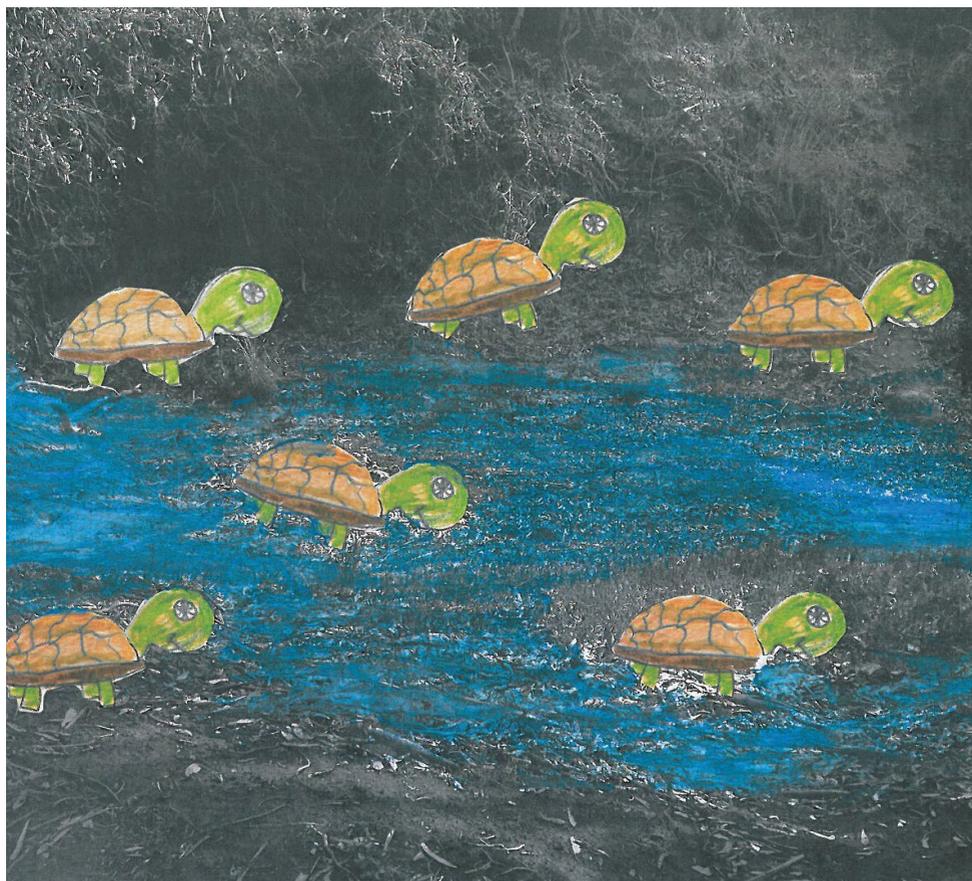
The Golden Plains Shire erected new signs to educate Turtle Bend visitors about the Eastern Long-necked Turtles living in the nature reserve. The signs let everyone know the penalties for removing water or native flora and fauna. There is also a photo board of the work done by the Teesdale Primary School Environmental Committee to protect the turtles.

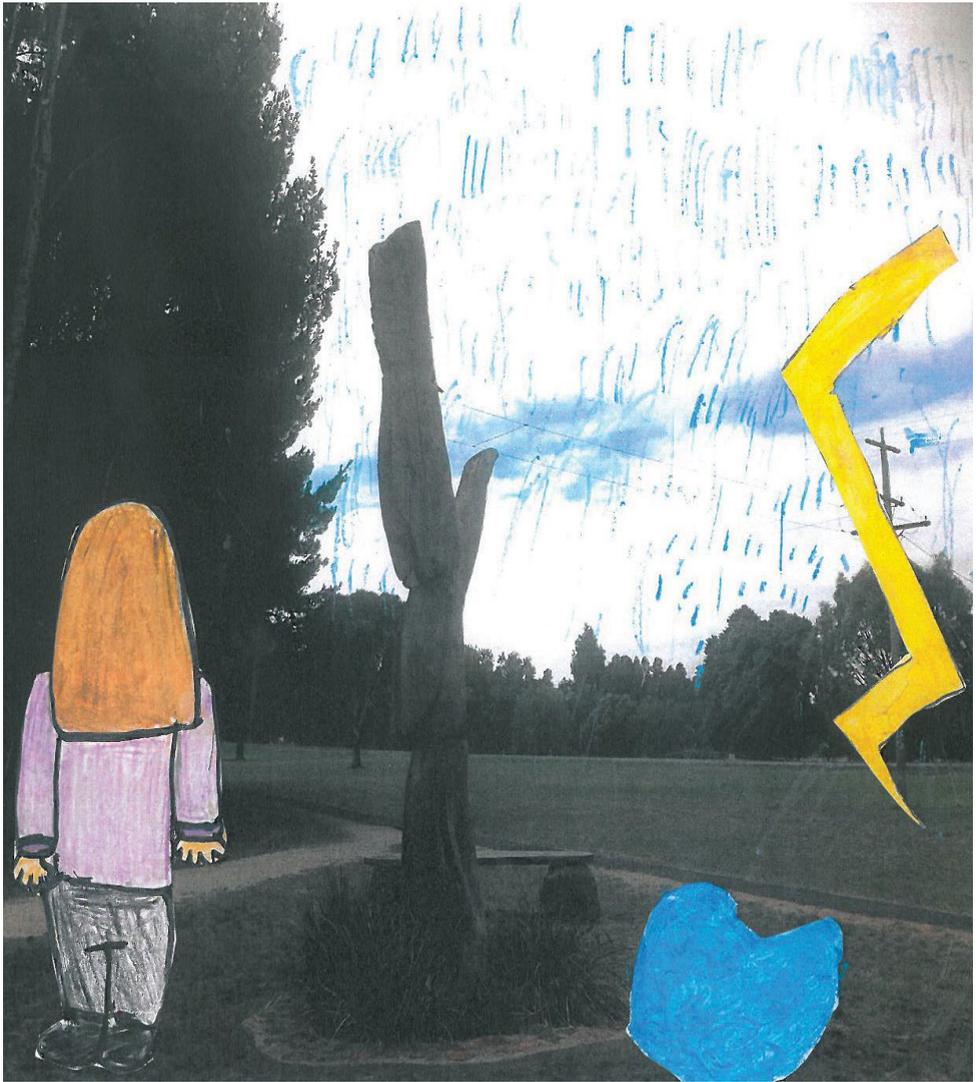
Late one night at Turtle Bend, the students watched and waited.

“I count two turtles,” whispered Max.

“No, there is another and that makes three,” corrected Heath.

By 9.00pm, when Heath’s father came to pick them up, they had seen six turtles all feeding and playing quietly in the Turtle Bend pool.





"It's not over yet," Tessa sighed. "Now all we need is RAIN, RAIN, RAIN! And lots of it!"

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

Enviro  Stories



Year 5 and 6
Teesdale Primary School, 2015

