

Farmer Tim and his swordtail problem



Year 5/6

Leaning Tree Steiner School





Enviro-Stories

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

Northern Agricultural Catchments Council

The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council delivers activities and programs in combination with community groups, business and industry, non-government organisations, and all levels of government to conserve and enhance natural assets and advance sustainable outcomes in the region.

Feral Fix: Feral Animal Education and Control provides a strategic regional approach to integrated feral animal management across the Northern Agricultural Region (NAR). This project aims to improve community capacity and increase the number of land managers adopting more coordinated approaches to feral animal management.

www.nacc.com.au

Farmer Tim and his swordtail problem

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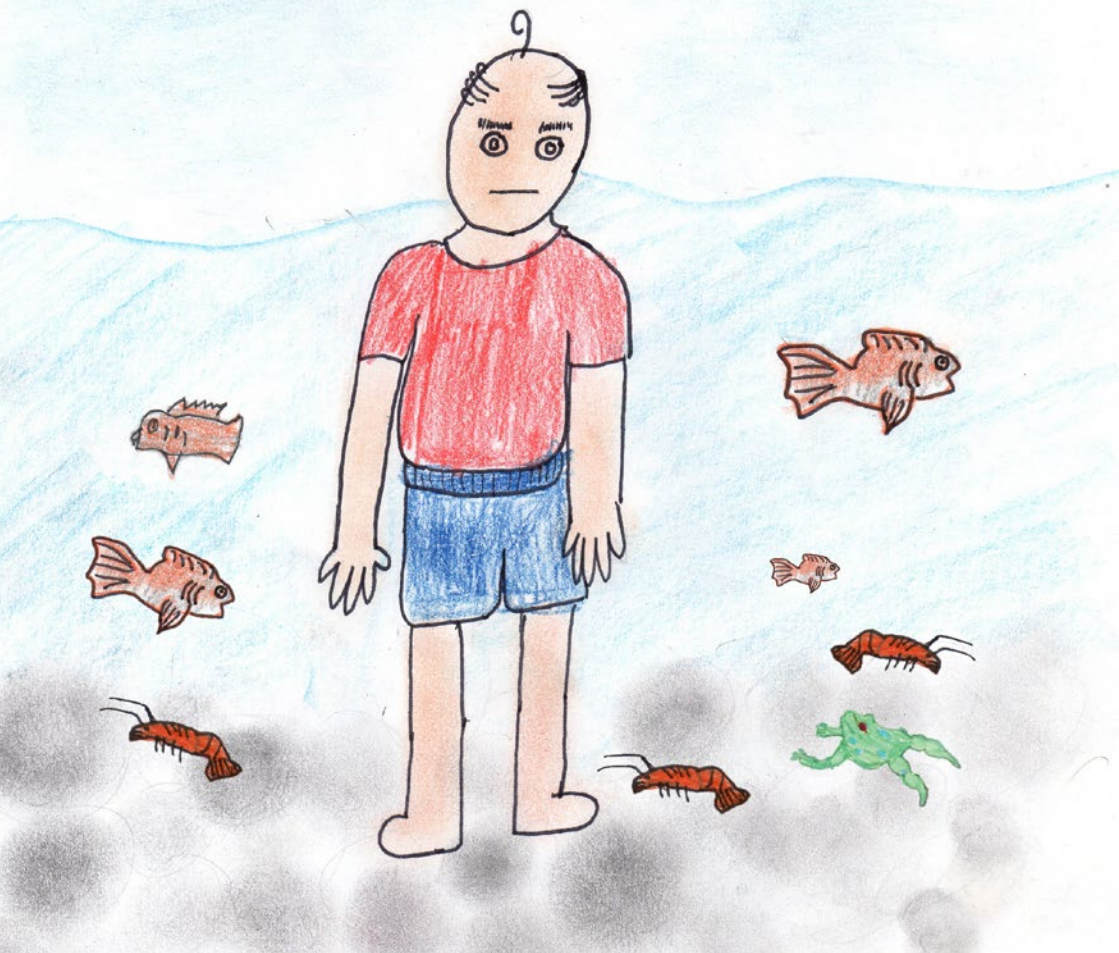
Enviro-Stories is a Peekdesigns initiative, www.peekdesigns.com.au.

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Once upon a time on a farm there lived an old man named Tim.

Every morning Tim would walk down to the river to have a quick dip with his friendly fish. He loved watching the native fish, frogs and marron swimming around in the flowing stream at the bottom of his paddock.



One day when he was taking his morning dip, Tim saw some dead tadpoles floating around in the water. He was sad, but he wasn't too worried as he knew this was just part of the cycle of life.

He fished the tadpoles out of the water and buried them in his fish cemetery.



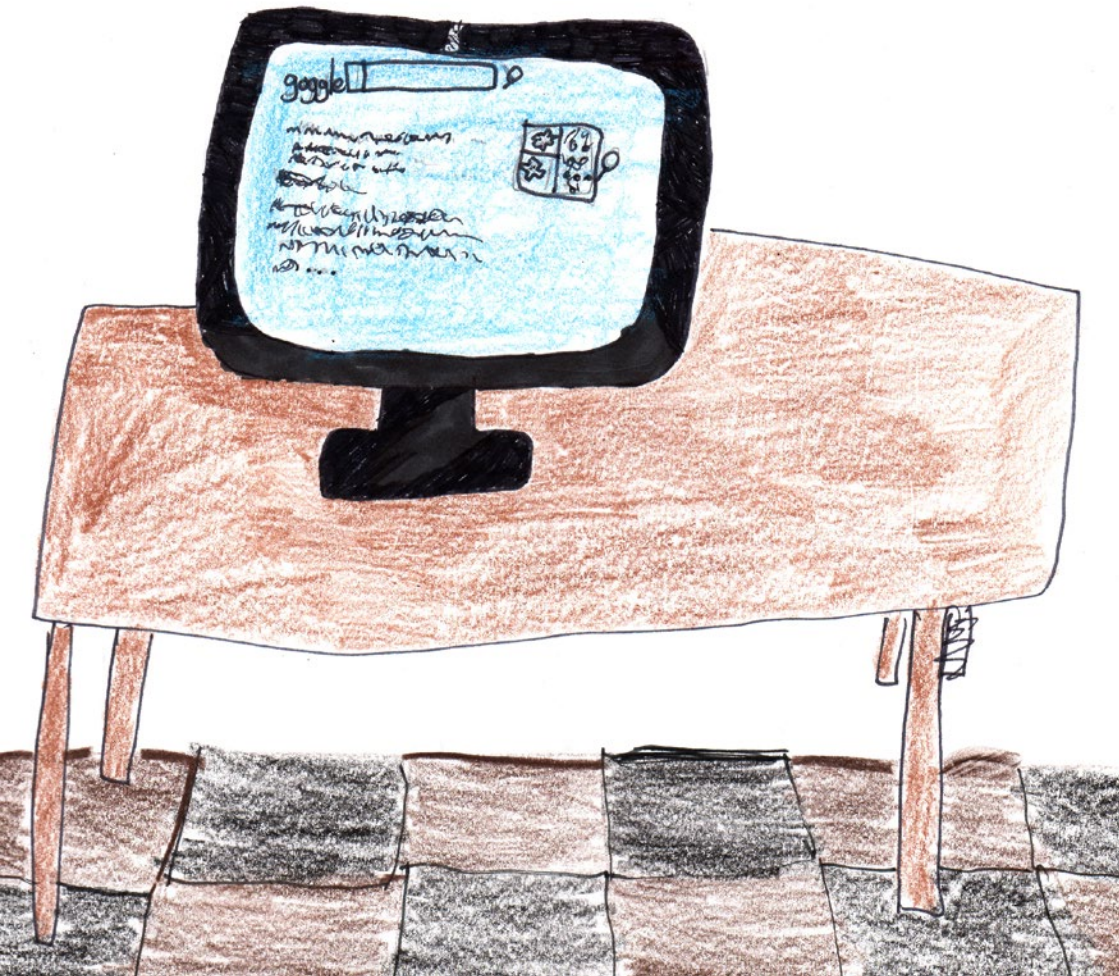
The very next day Tim lazily plodded down to the old river and was shocked to see more dead tadpoles and five dead fish floating gently down the river.

Tim was starting to get suspicious, so he went to investigate.



Tim learnt that feral fish were a threat to native freshwater fish because they are highly adaptable and can tolerate all sorts of habitats.

He wondered... what are the chances of a feral fish being in the river?





Tim thought about anything strange he had seen in the past few weeks.

He had noticed the river was a bit murky, which could mean there was a decrease in water quality. Also, there was something strange about a few of the native fish in the river. They looked like they had a parasite growing on them.

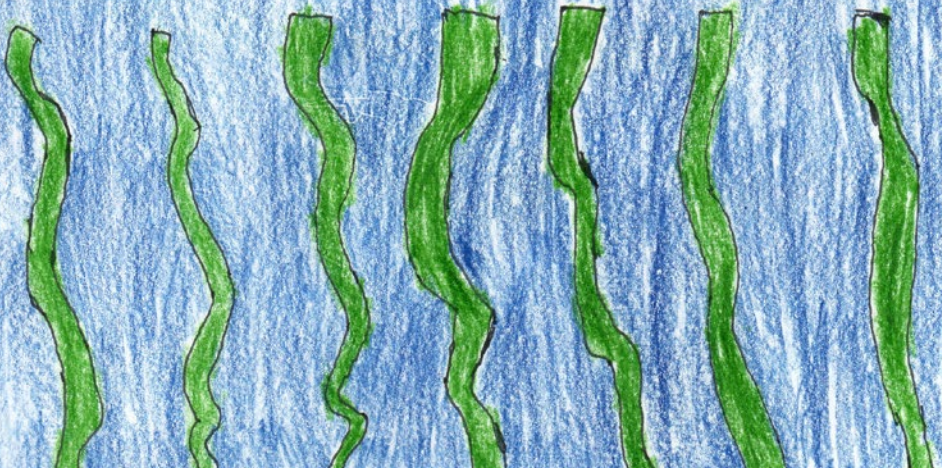


Convinced that it was a feral fish, Tim decided to keep a close watch on the river to see if any feral species were swimming around.

After hours of patiently waiting, Tim finally found a weird type of fish that he had never seen before. It zoomed past in an orangey, silvery flash.

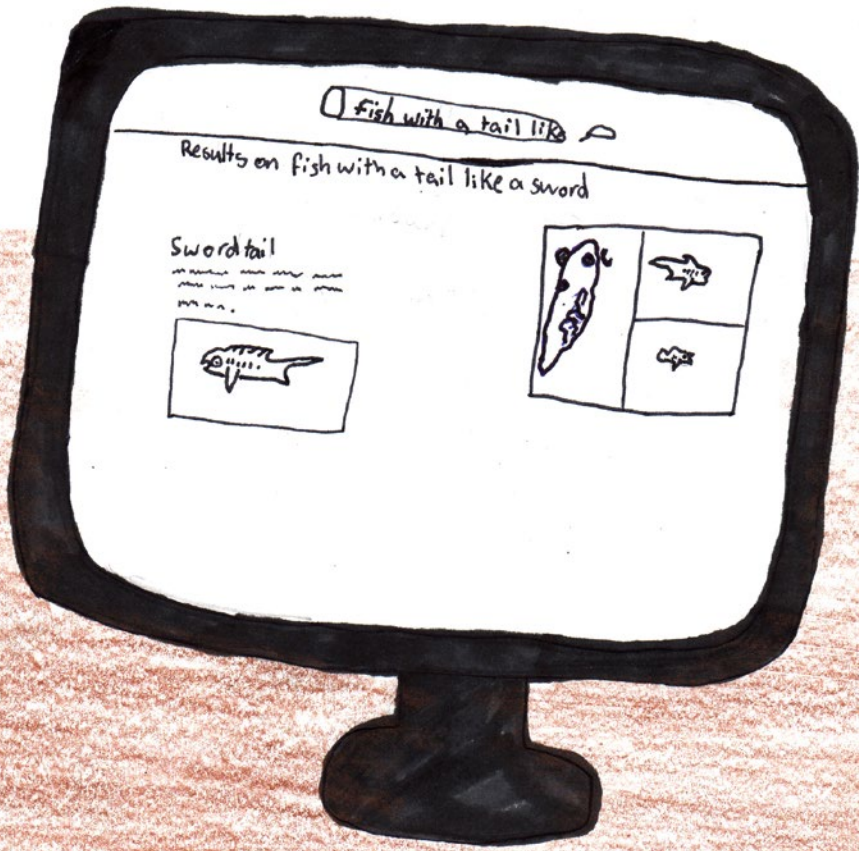
The fish species was orange and silvery in colour and had a long pointy bit on the end of its tail fin - like a sword.

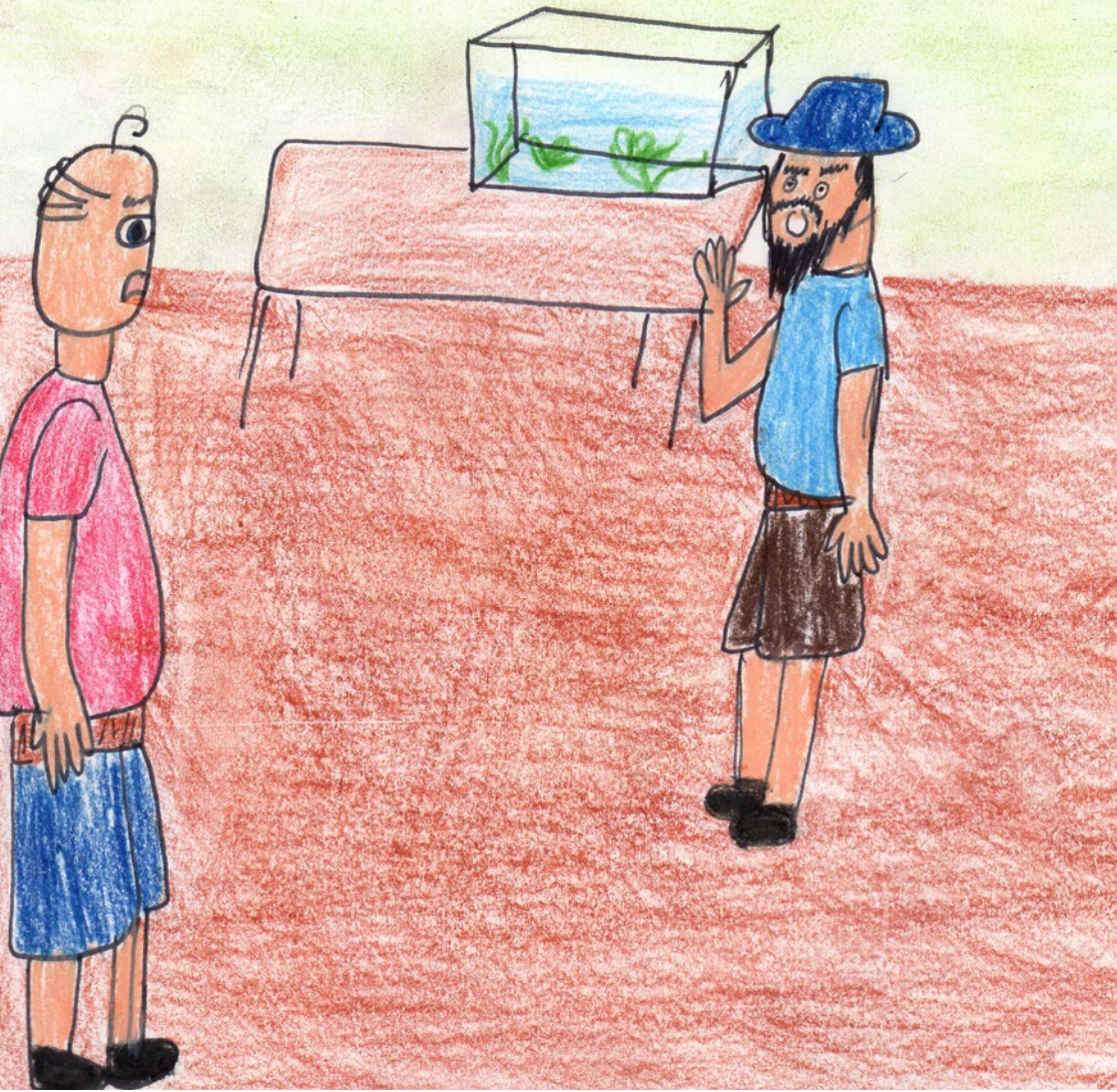
Tim had never seen anything like it.



That night Tim researched on his computer and found that it was a called a swordtail fish. They were bad news as they compete with native fish for food and space.

Tim knew his neighbor had an aquarium with swordfish. He wanted to know more so he went to Paul's house down the road.





When Tim arrived, Paul welcomed him into his house.

Tim looked towards the fish tank and saw it was empty and asked Paul where his swordtails were.

Paul replied cautiously, "I released them into the river because they were too hard to take care of."

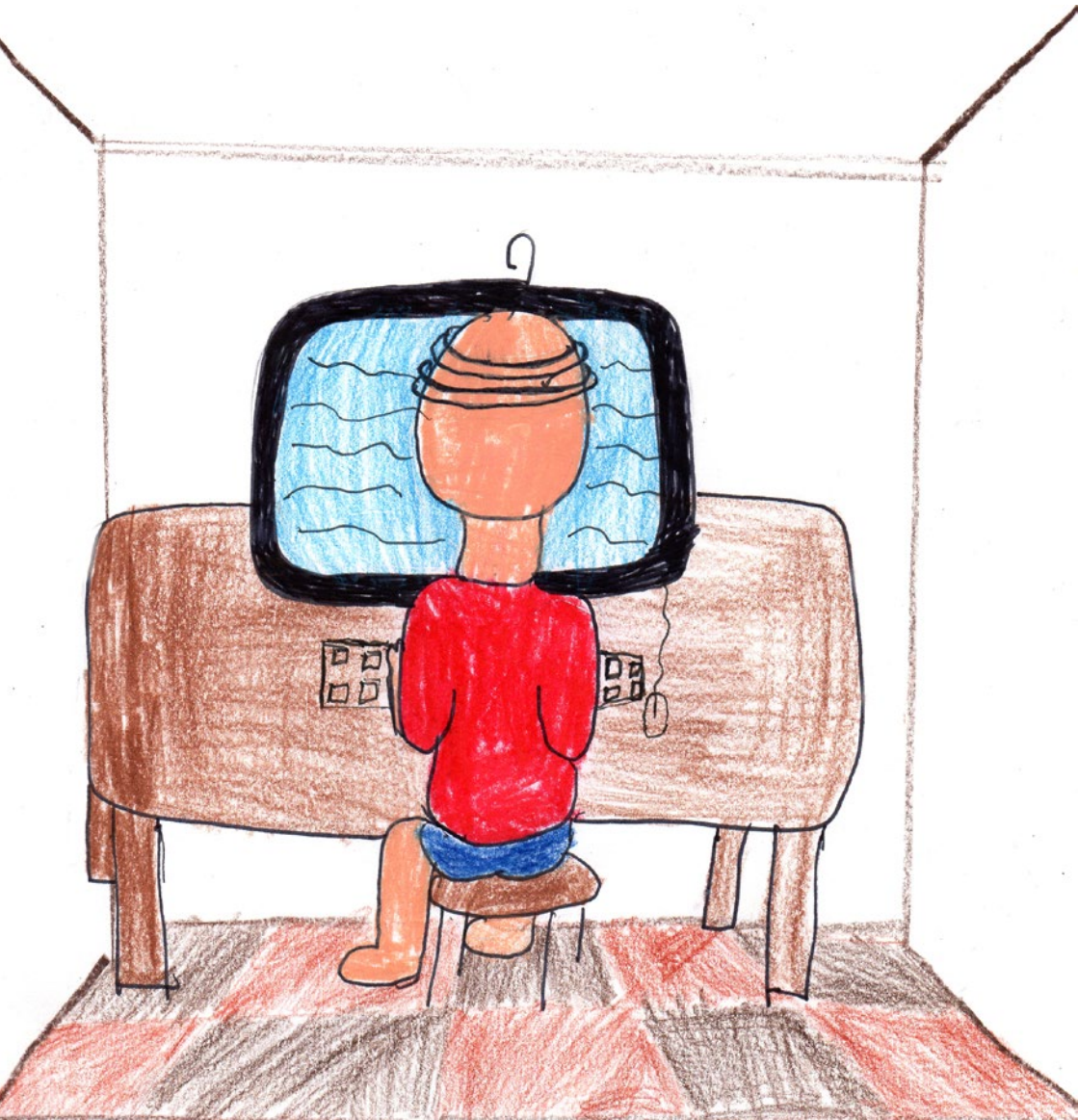


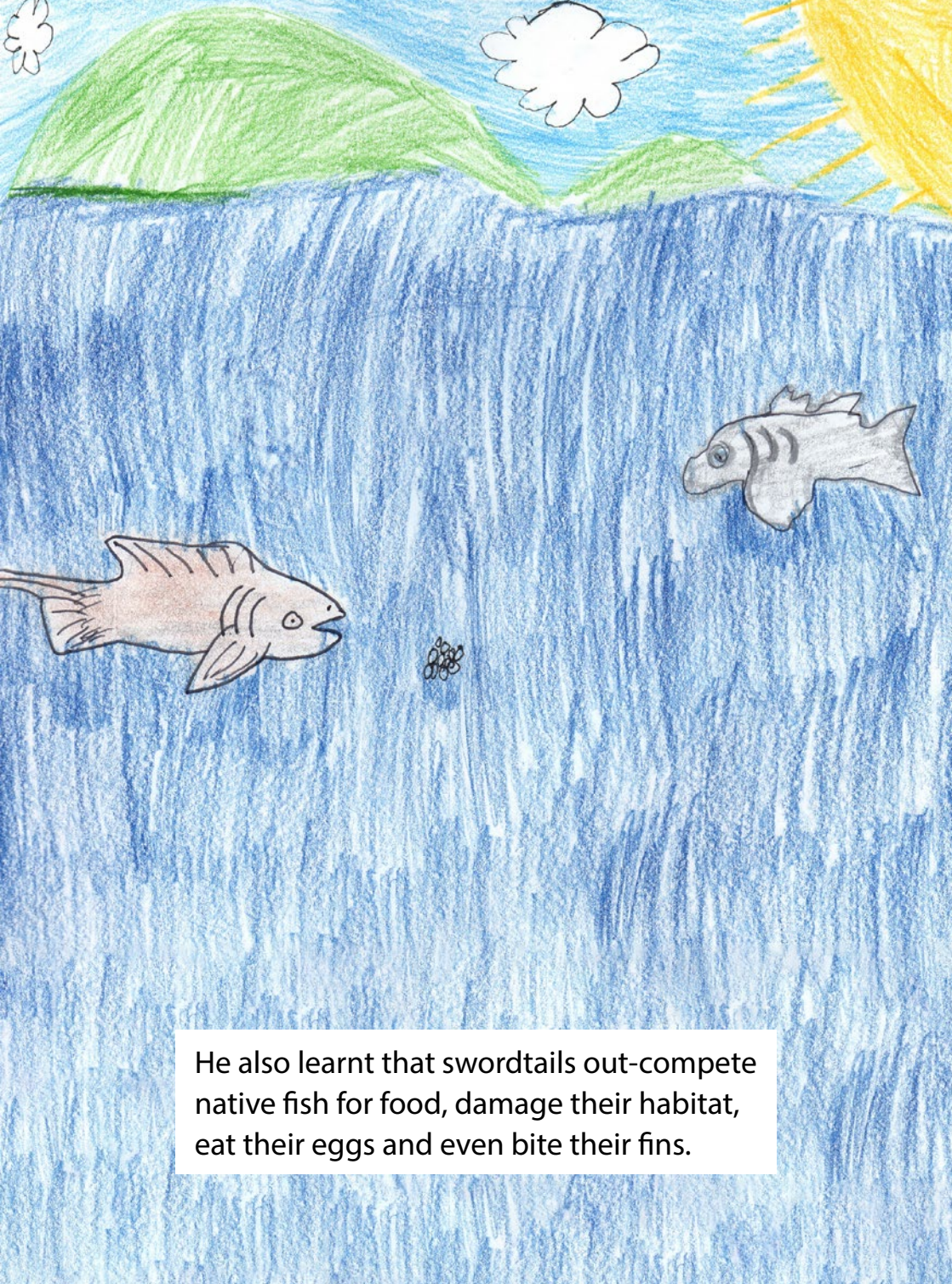
Tim was furious! This rude and uncaring action was degrading the river environment and killing the native fish.

He yelled at Paul, "You should know better! Why did you do a stupid thing like that?"

Tim stormed out of the room and drove off.

That night Tim researched all the ways to catch these pesky fish. He found out that swordtails were considered an invasive animal. They breed and spread quickly because they can tolerate a wide variety of environmental conditions.





He also learnt that swordtails out-compete native fish for food, damage their habitat, eat their eggs and even bite their fins.



Tim worried that these swordtails might produce live young in large numbers in a short amount of time.

He decided he would set some fish traps in the river and check on them every day.



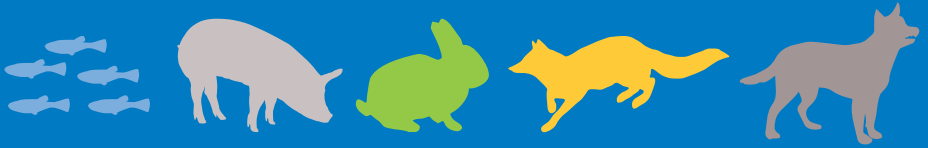
When native fish were caught in the traps, Tim would carefully release them back into the river.

When he caught swordtail fish, he disposed of them using the preferred method by the RSPCA.

After a few weeks, Tim noticed that the river looked clearer and his native fish, frogs and marron looked healthier. The swordfish were gone and the river was returning to its natural state.

Problem solved!





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natural resource
management program

