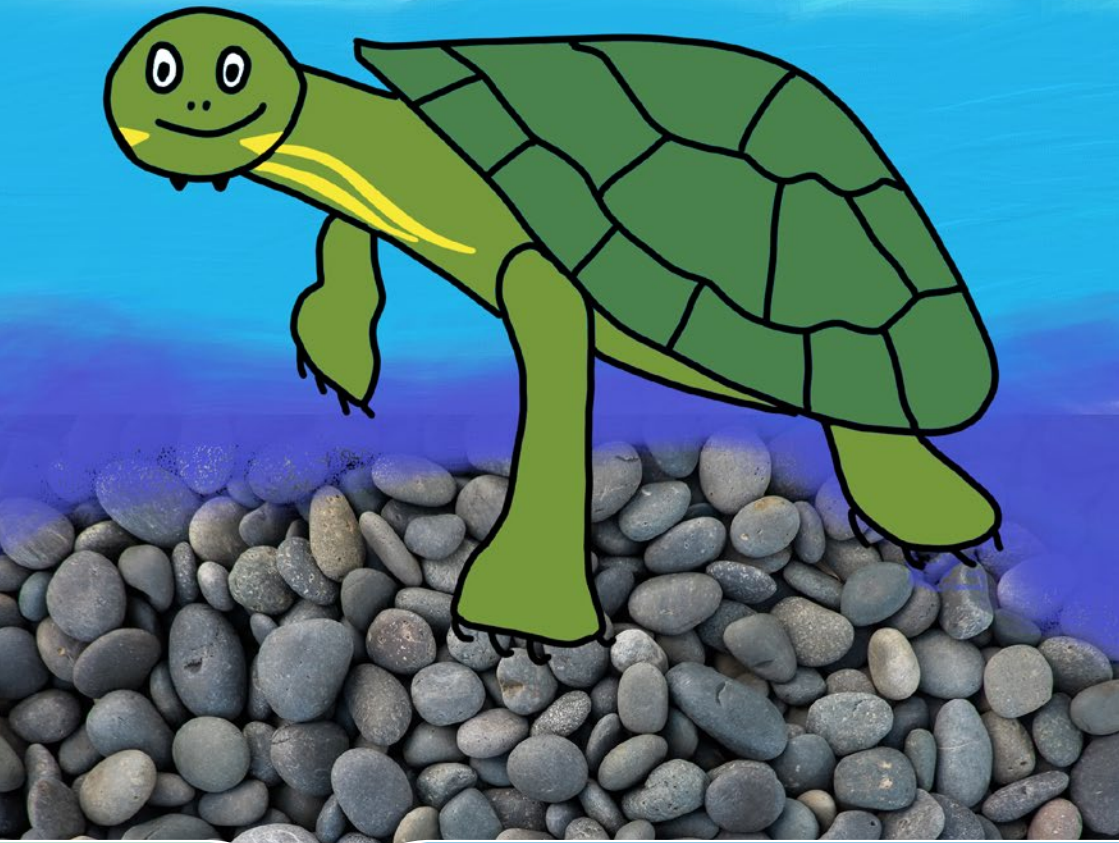


Manny Rivers to Cross



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is a literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeekKdesigns, 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

Hunter Local Land Services

Hunter Local Land Services works with land managers and the community to improve primary production within healthy landscapes. We help people make better decisions about the land they manage and assist communities and agricultural industries to be productive and sustainable into the future.

The Hunter Local Land Services region covers an area of approximately 33,000 square kilometres, extending from Mid Coast Council in the north to Lake Macquarie City Council in the south and Upper Hunter Shire Council in the west.

The landscape ranges from estuarine wetlands and mangroves, rainforests and freshwater wetlands to open grasslands, woodlands, eucalypt forests, lakes and foreshores.

The region has good soils, a subtropical climate and abundant rainfall which support a wide range of industries, including farming, forestry, fishing, oyster farming, tourism and nature-based recreation.

[**www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter**](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter)

Manny Rivers to Cross

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This book has been published as part of the Managing Our Mid-Coast Marvels Enviro-Stories program and involves schools learning about some of the precious animals, communities and habitats of the Mid-Coast region of NSW.

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A female Manning River Helmeted Turtle nestled on her gravel nest near the water's edge. She heard a quiet rustle from the bushes, but then there was only silence.

The Manning River Helmeted Turtle looked back over her shell, paranoid that a predator was stalking her. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw a vicious fox staring right at her and her eggs.

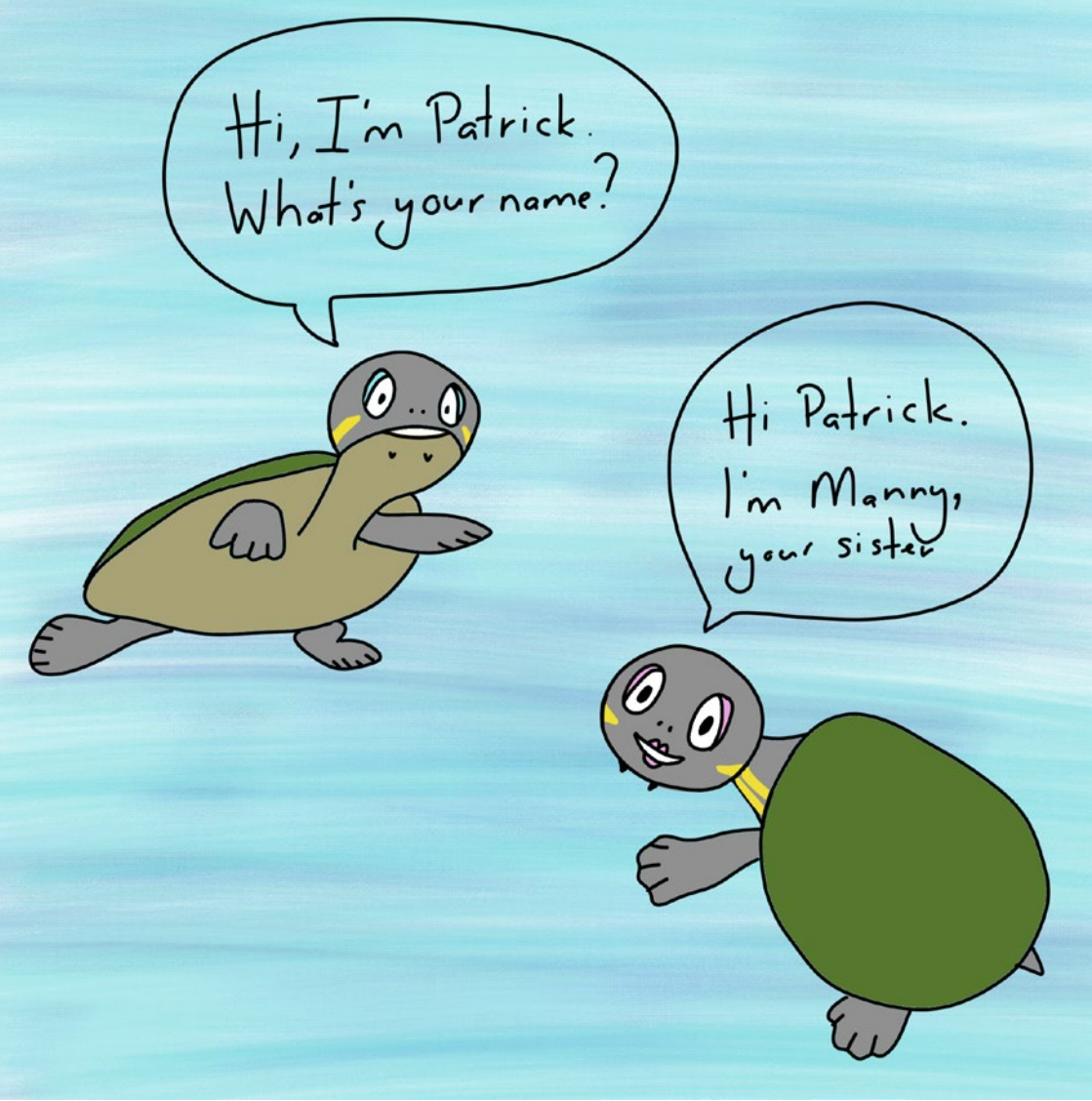
In a courageous move, while under attack, the turtle selflessly sacrificed herself and stayed to bury her eggs deeper in an attempt to save them from the fox. She was then dragged through the bush, never to be seen again.



The Manning River Helmeted Turtle eggs were lying in the gravel, until one day when a chubby pig stumbled tiredly over to the edge of the riverbank. It saw the vacant nest with a clutch of turtle eggs on the other side nestled in the sandy gravel.

The pig trotted carefully through a shallow rapid, occasionally losing its footing, but licking its lips with the thought of an easy meal. The pig devoured the eggs in one foul swoop!

However, the pig missed two eggs that were buried deep under the sandy gravel.



Hi, I'm Patrick.
What's your name?

Hi Patrick.
I'm Manny,
your sister

The eggs stayed hidden in the gravel until the time they simultaneously hatched and, for the first time, Manny saw her brother Patrick.

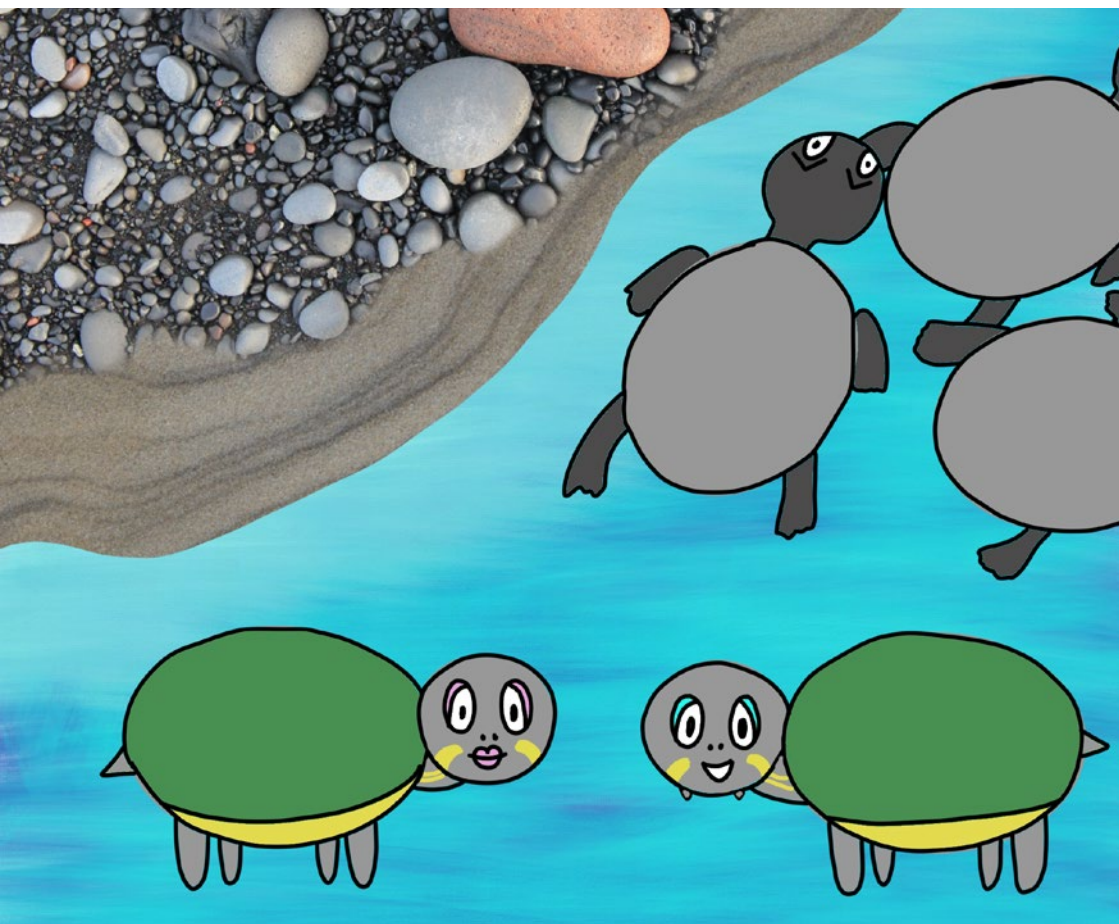
They glanced at each other and smiled before setting off on their first adventure together, looking for food. They found Sandpaper Figs floating on the surface which provided a delicious sweet snack.

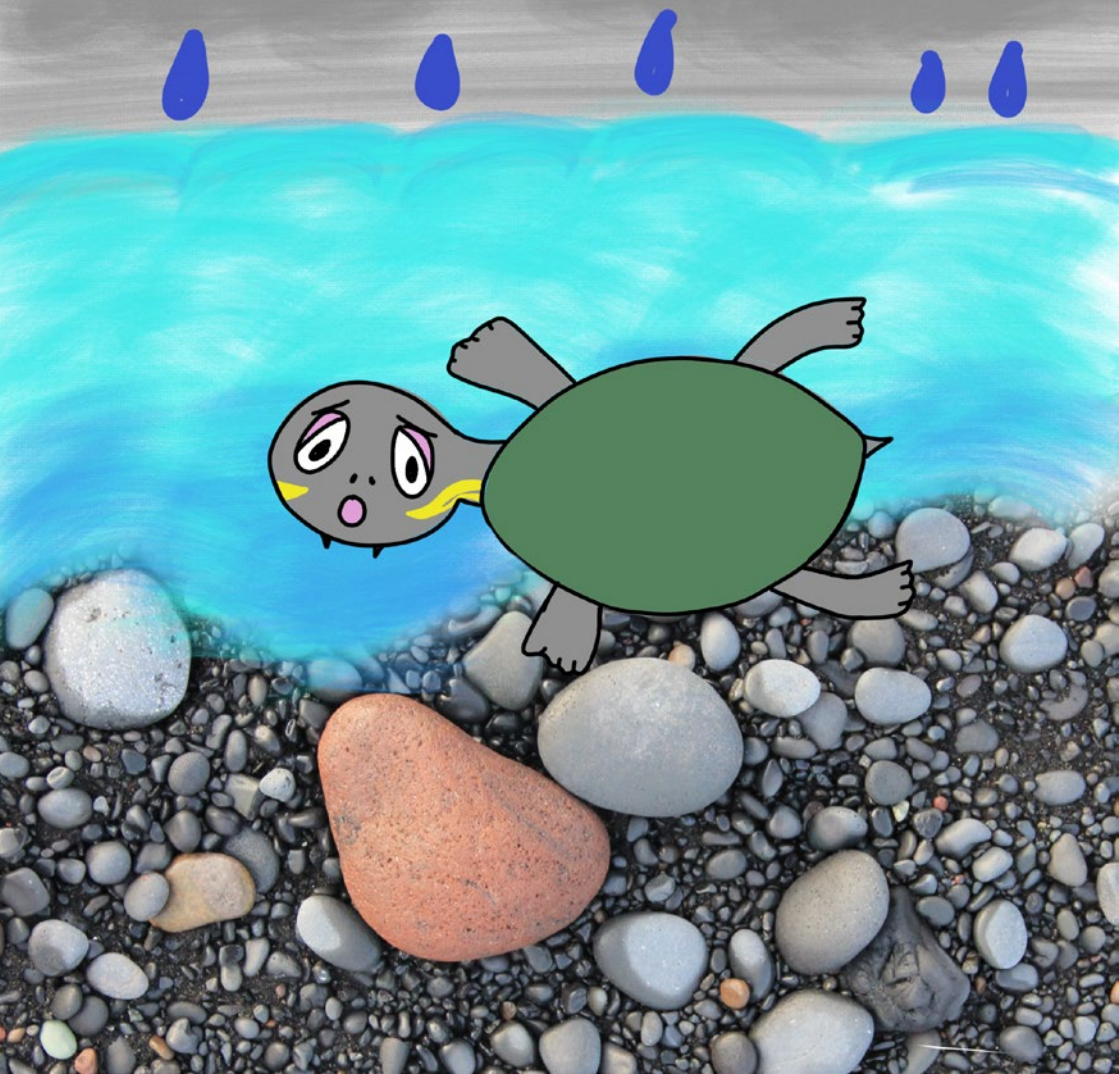
The two of them had an instant bond and were inseparable. The years passed and they grew into their teens together.

One day, lurking from the shadows, swam some Murray River Turtles with attitude and entitlement.

"Hey bum-breathers!" they confronted Manny and Patrick. "Why don't you just give up and join the Macquarie gang?" they threatened.

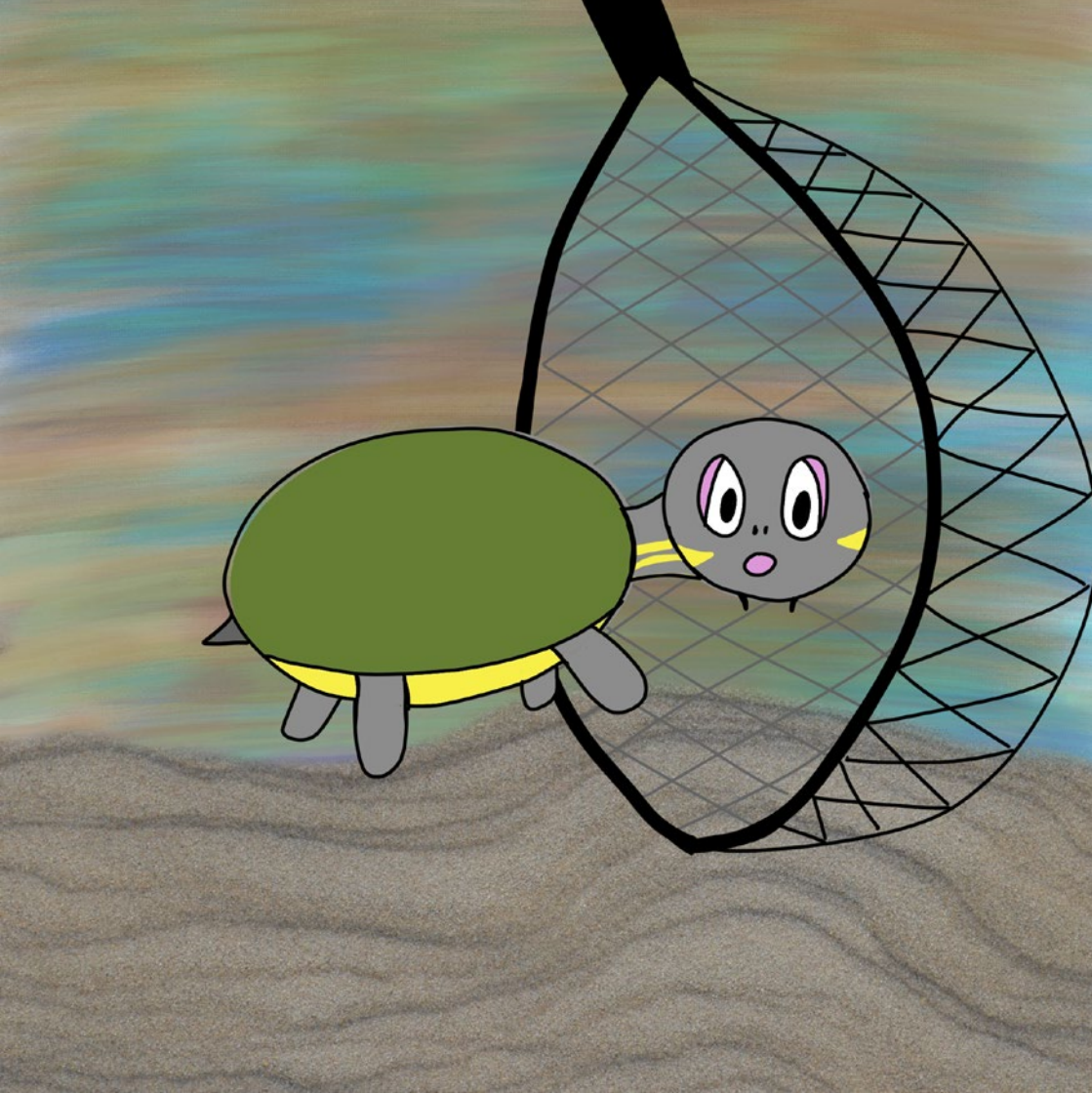
They were bullies and intimidating, but Manny and Patrick were proud Manning River Helmeted Turtles and they didn't want to join their gang. They started swimming as fast as they could away from the Murray River mob. Patrick just managed to slip through, but Manny was forced into the fast flowing current and was dragged hundreds of metres downstream, away from her brother.





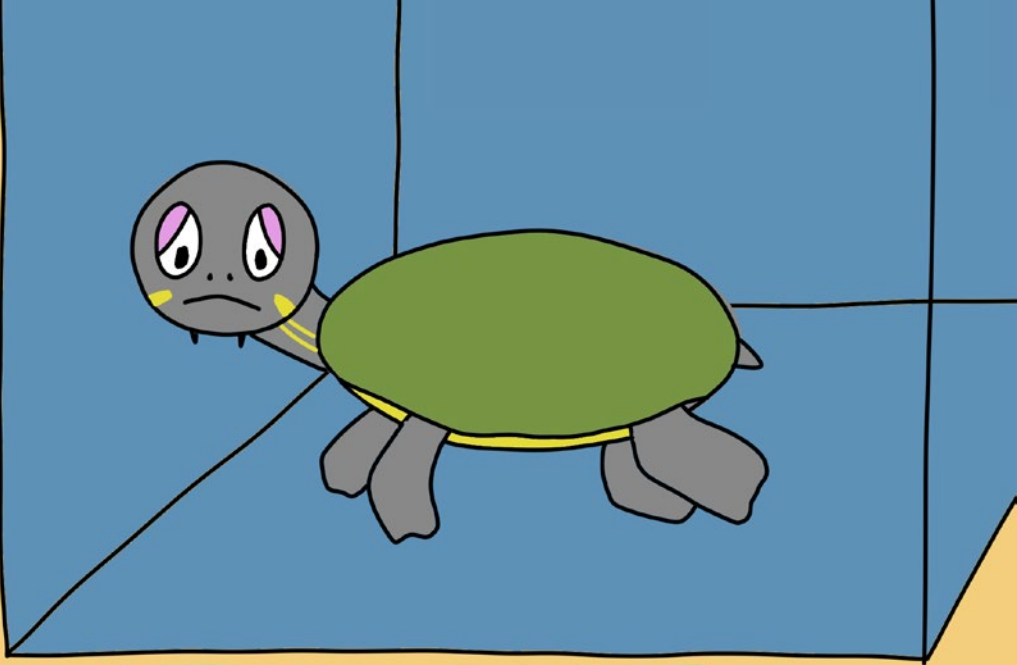
Disorientated, Manny popped her head up to see a storm brewing from the west and, as soon as she saw the dark shade of the clouds, she knew she was in trouble.

The rain pelted down, bouncing off her hard shell and, soon after, the river rose and the flow increased. She tried swimming out to safety but the current was too strong. After thirty seconds Manny was rolling across the rocks through the trees and eventually out of sight.



Manny quickly drifted away until eventually she became stuck on something. She looked down and saw something unusual and then thought, 'Oh no! I know what I'm stuck on. It's a net!'

As Manny tried to free herself, she became more and more entangled.



Rare Manning River Turtle

The net belonged to a fisherman who hauled it from the river with poor Manny trapped inside. When the fisherman took a closer look he saw the yellow stripe and realised it was the rare Manning River Helmeted Turtle.

The fisherman said to his friend, "This thing is worth a fortune!"

"Woo Hoo! Let's sell it on the black market!"

They took Manny home in a glass container and posted her picture on a black-market Buy, Swap and Sell.

Late one night, as Tim Faulkner from the Australian Reptile Park was getting ready for bed, he received a text message from his co-worker, Tam. The message read "Have you seen what's advertised on Buy Swap & Sell, mate?"

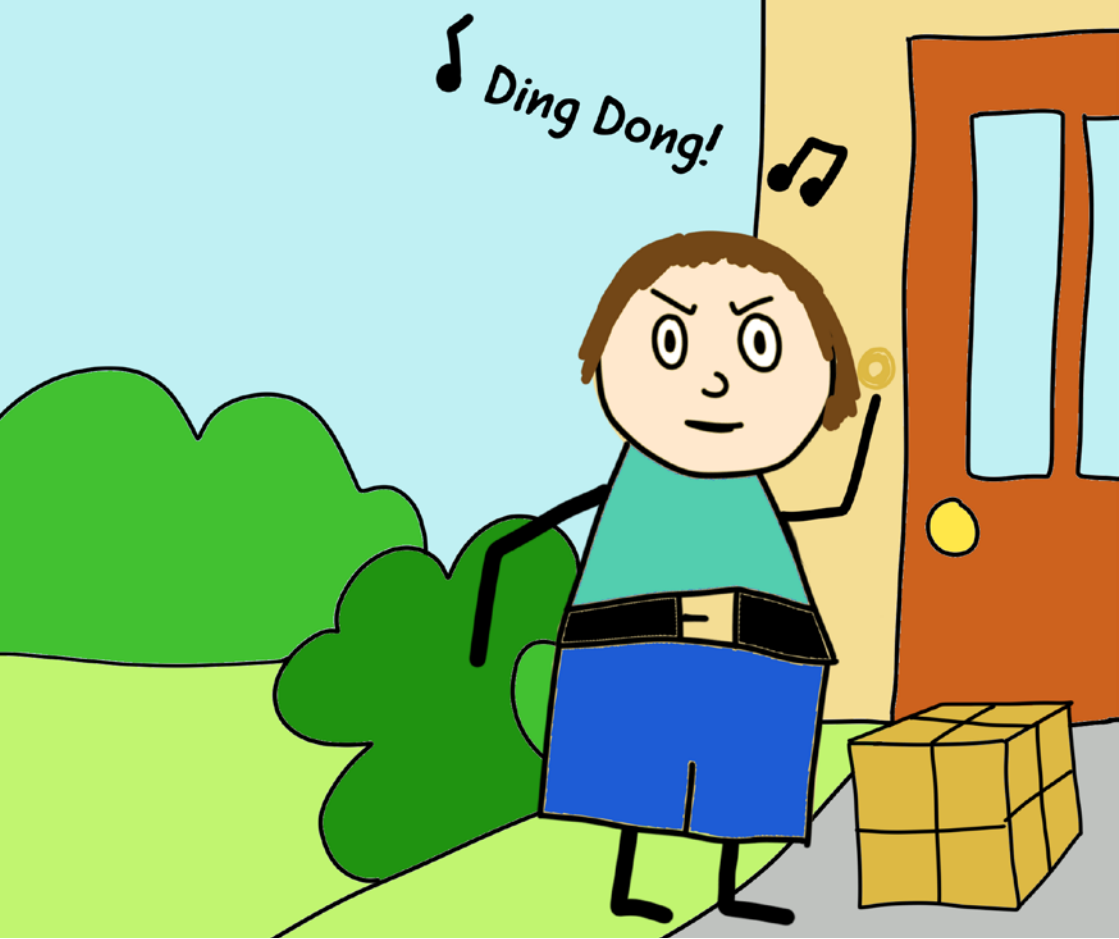
Tim replied back in an instant with "No! What?"

"A poacher is trying to sell a Manning River Turtle!" Tam said with urgency.

Tim replied back in a flash "What's their name and how much are they advertising it for?"

Tam carefully replied back, "You know we could get them arrested for stealing a Manning River Turtle from the wild!"





Tim almost dropped his phone as he came up with a plan to catch the wildlife poacher, "Let's contact them to try and buy the turtle first so we can rescue it. And then the police can arrest him."

"Good idea! We'll save the threatened species and we'll catch the crook! I will buy it on my phone. There. Done."

The next day... Ding-dong! The Manning River Helmeted Turtle package had arrived.

"That package looks heavy! Please come in and just put it over there on the floor," invited Tam. Just as the wildlife-poacher set foot inside, the police came out from behind the door and arrested him.

They had saved Manny!

Manny arrived at the reptile park after being intercepted. "Whoa! Tim this turtle is fantastic. Have you got other Manning River Helmeted Turtles to put it with?" Tam asked.

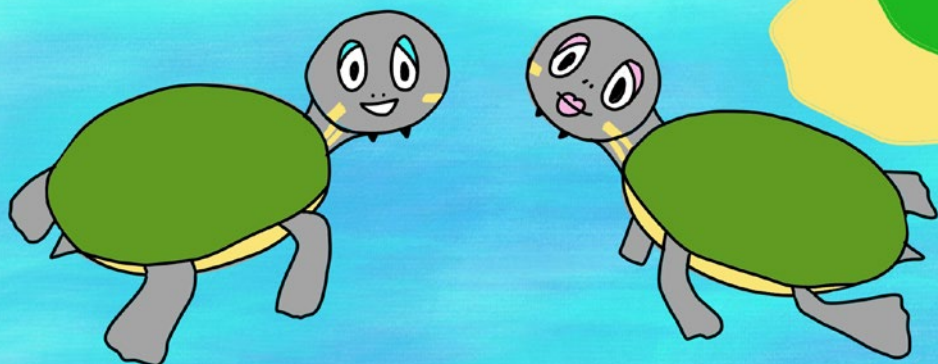
"Yeah we certainly do. As an added bonus, this one is a female!" Tim replied.

"You sure, Tim?"

"Yes she will be an important part of our breeding program that is trying to save the species. It will be a great mate for Jim, one of our males!" Tim said with excitement. "Now, let's see if they breed."

Tim and Tam set up a tank for Jim and Manny ensuring that the conditions were just right. It took a bit of time, but the breeding program was a great success.

AUSTRALIAN REPTILE PARK



The Australian Reptile Park van arrived at the Charity Creek Bridge carpark with a team of anxious scientists. They pulled the heavy crate from the van with Manny and her babies inside. They struggled down the steep embankment with the precious cargo.

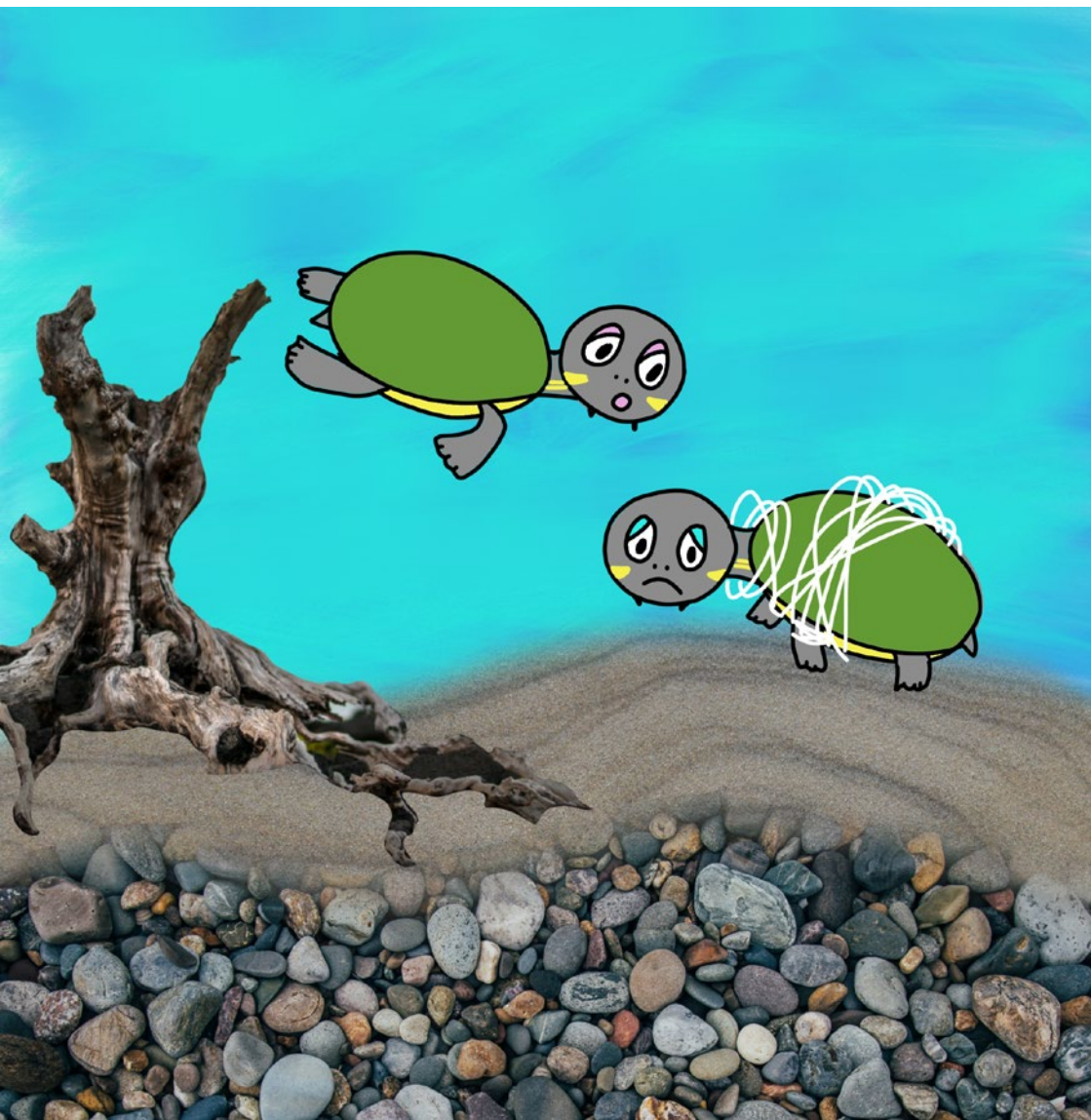
As they drew nearer to the edge of the river, salty tears clashed with the fresh water beneath their feet. With shaky hands, they grabbed Manny first and slowly guided her into the shallows. They then opened a door in the crate for her babies to be re-united with their mum. The turtles disappeared into the shadows of the deeper pool.

The scientists felt ecstatic, knowing they had just helped the survival of a threatened species.



As Manny and her babies rediscovered their new natural environment, Manny noticed a turtle wrapped in fishing line, struggling to free itself from a hook.

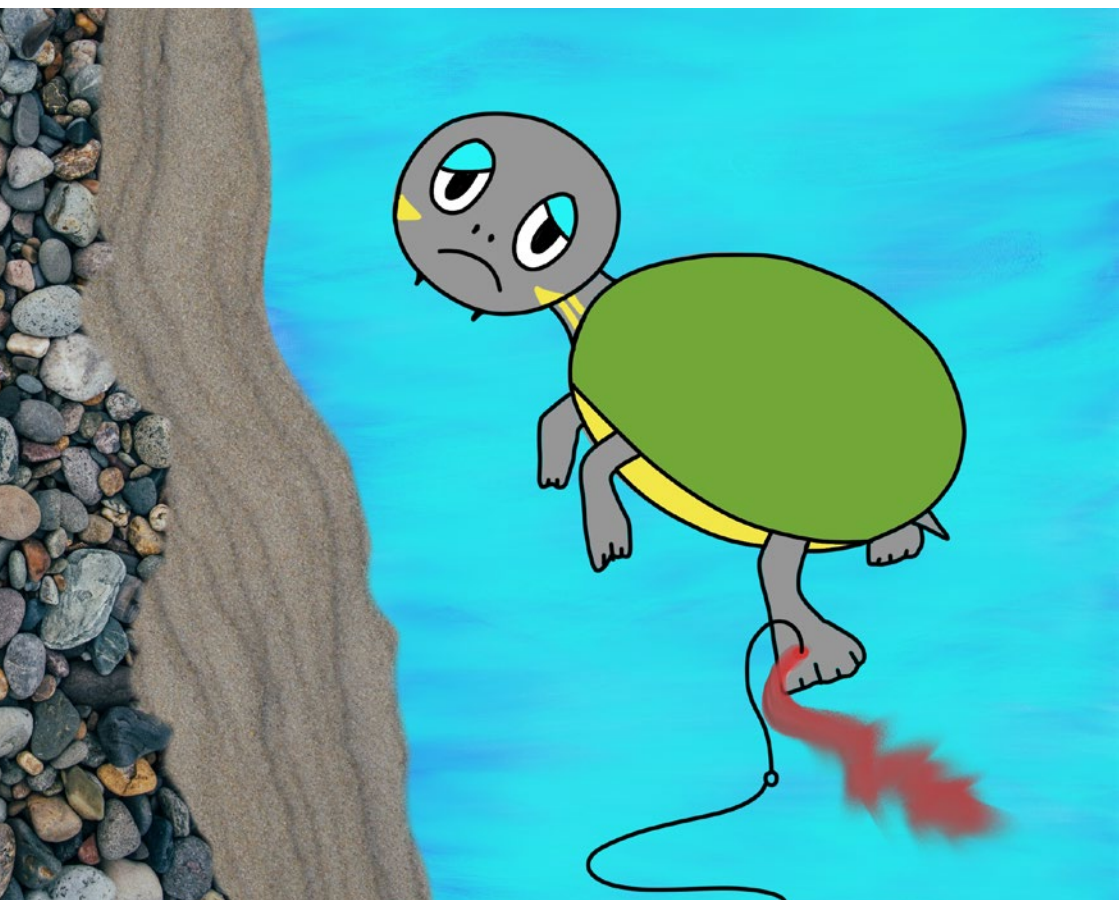
"It's Patrick! It's Patrick! He's trapped!"



Manny started to rub and push against the fishing hook but it just pushed it deeper into Patrick's leg. Blood slowly clouded the water.

Tim dived in with no self-preservation to help Patrick. Tim swam over to help free him from the line and hook. He gently held Patrick and yanked at the fishing hook. It slowly but surely worked. The metal hook dislodged from his exhausted, bloodied leg.

The fishing line was unravelled by Tam with pliers and a screw driver. The poor tired Patrick was treated by the rangers the best they could but they still had to release Patrick with Manny.





As soon as Patrick was released with Manny and her 23 babies, they went to find a submerged log for shelter. At the bottom of a gentle rapid, they found a log jammed underwater against a tree. They swam in and Manny found some slime to treat Patrick's wound.

Manny had 23 babies and she was very healthy. Many years later, her babies were fully grown up and swam down the river. Manny was lonely now but always remembered her children.

But, one day, she heard "Hey Mum!"

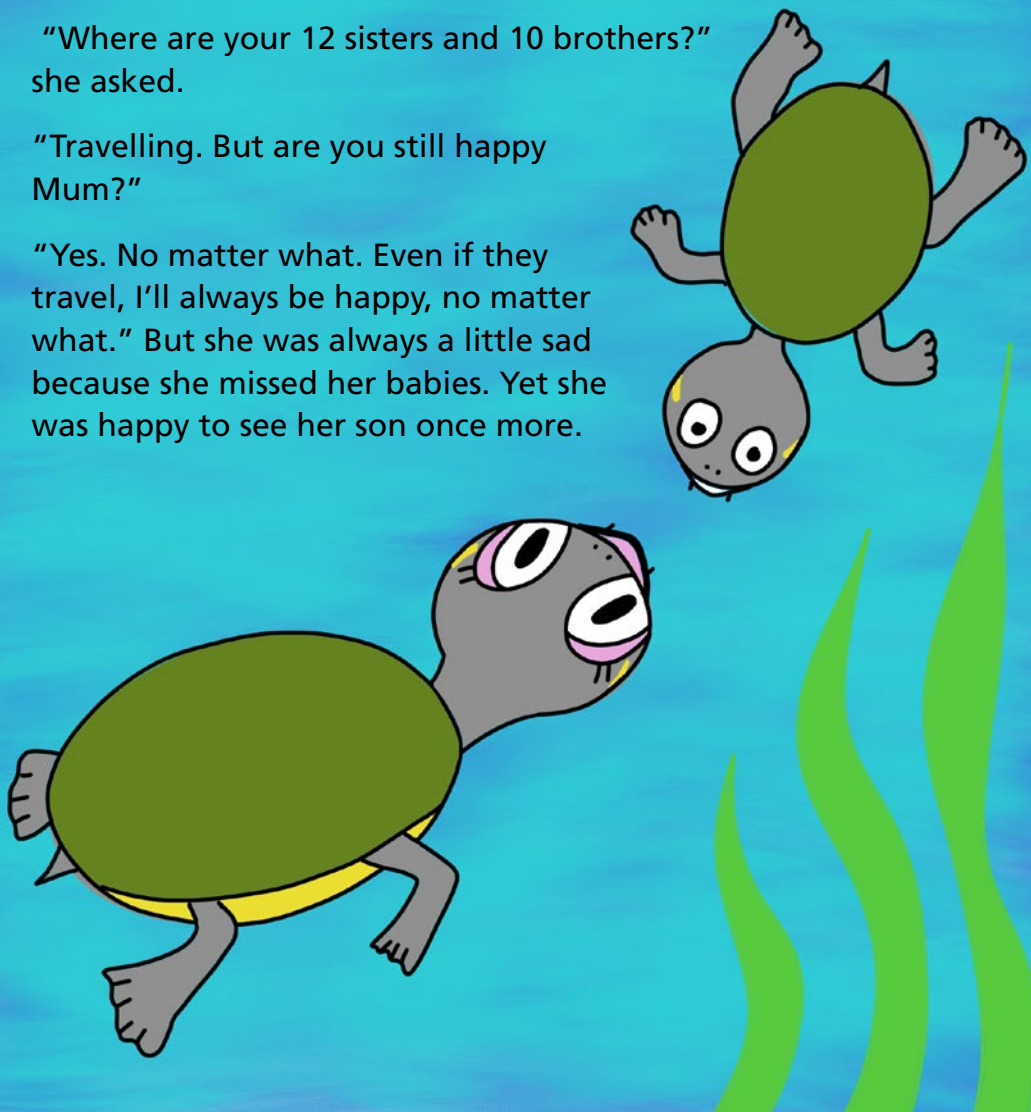
"Could it be? No, it can't be! Phillip?"

"Yes Mum. It's Phillip!"

"Where are your 12 sisters and 10 brothers?" she asked.

"Travelling. But are you still happy Mum?"

"Yes. No matter what. Even if they travel, I'll always be happy, no matter what." But she was always a little sad because she missed her babies. Yet she was happy to see her son once more.



Did you know?

- Foxes can eat female Manning River Helmeted Turtles while they are laying eggs, then eat the eggs in the freshly laid nest.
- Turtle eggs are eaten by foxes and pigs.
- Nests are thought to be about 30cm in diameter and are made in sandy gravel beds close to water, often on the inside of river bends.
- They are omnivorous, predominantly feeding during the day time on large insects, fruit and water plants.
- The Manning River Helmeted Turtle breathes through its bottom.
- Inter-breeding and competition with the Murray River Turtle (*Emydura macquarii*) is a threat to the Manning River Helmeted Turtle.
- Lots of turtles mistake man-made unhealthy things for food and gulp it down, or curiously check it out with catastrophic consequences.
- Manning River Helmeted Turtles are very distinctive with barbels under their chin and yellow stripe along its face and neck.
- The Manning River Helmeted Turtle is at risk of poachers selling them illegally.
- Most breeding programs for aquatic species are very expensive to run because conditions need to be just right.
- Manning River Helmeted Turtles can be victims of fishing lines and nets.
- The Manning River Helmeted Turtle's habitat is the Manning River catchment. It lives in both rocky and sandy rivers, with boulders, logs and underwater caverns with some deep pools.
- They are likely breed during February to April and lay around 20 eggs in a single clutch per year.

ENVIRO

stories



Cedar Class
Mount George Public School, 2020