

The Quest



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is a 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

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

The Quest

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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.

This program has been supported by Hunter Local Land Services.

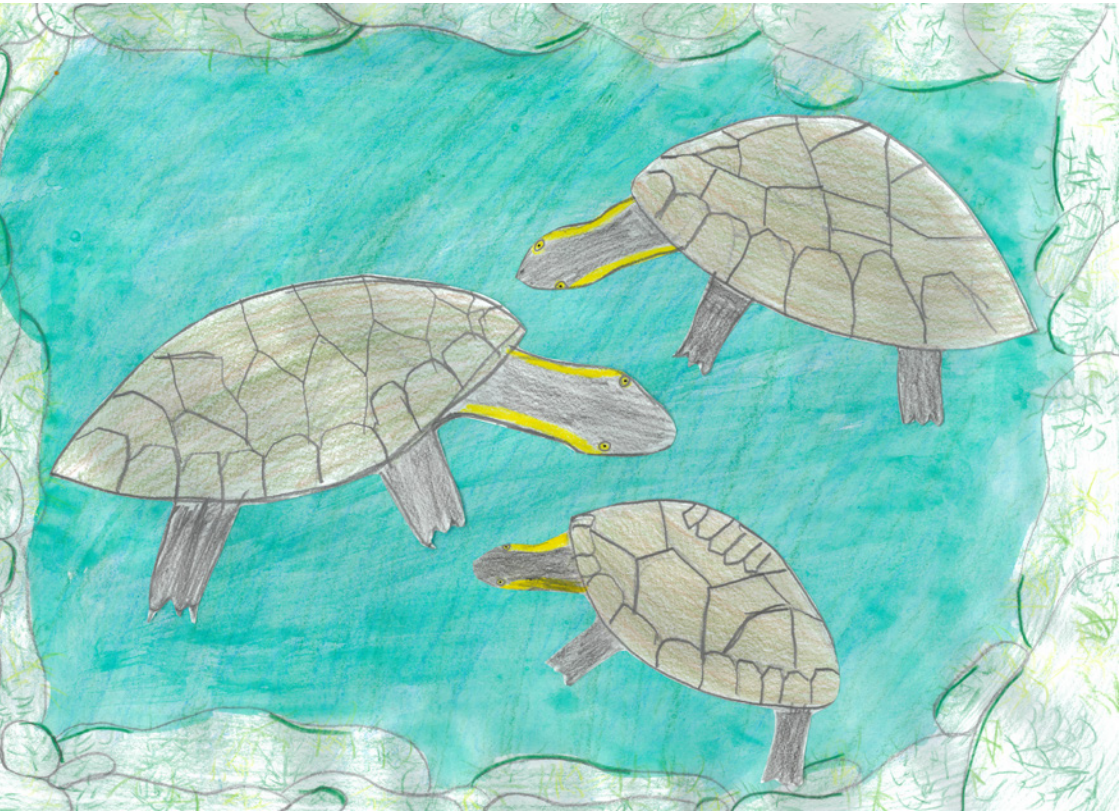
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It had been a long hot spring and things were getting tense in the waterhole. Six bright moons had passed since the last drop of rain had fallen from the sky. A meeting of the Manning River Turtles was held to discuss the situation. Larry the Lyrebird and Edna the Echidna came too, along with Phoebe the Platypus.



"Never in my life have I ever seen our waterhole so small and dirty," said Old Mumma.

Old Mumma was a Dingo Creek legend. At 20 years old, she was the oldest Manning River Turtle in the district and her species were the oldest freshwater turtles in the land. They had once shared their waterholes with dinosaurs!





"What's the news from the other waterholes Larry?" she asked.

"They've all dried up Old Mumma," Larry said.

Edna's quills drooped sadly.





Old Mumma thought back into her long memory. Nothing had prepared her for the fact that the water might dry up.

"I once heard a story about a place upstream called The Great Falls. Apparently, the water never runs dry there. If we're going to survive this drought, we need to leave now, before it's too late," she said.



The first few days were the hardest. Old Mumma, her son Henry and the rest of the Manning River Turtles were terrified each time they had to walk between waterholes, so everyone did their best to help them. Phoebe used her sensitive bill to find the best way forward, while Larry and Edna kept watch from the bank. Henry led the younger turtles, while Old Mumma protected them from the back.



Early one morning, Edna reported to Larry that she could smell danger nearby. Larry perched on a low branch to investigate. He saw a flash of orange fur and realised a ginger cat was stalking them from behind.







“DANGER!” he called.

Everyone quickly went into hiding. Henry found a submerged log and one-by-one the turtles dived down to safety. Old Mumma was about to dive in too, when the cat pounced on her. She tried to protect herself by tucking her head underneath her shell, but her neck was too short. She felt the cat’s claws pierce her delicate skin.

Larry gave a growling noise from the bank to try and distract the cat, but it was too hungry to notice. With a final deadly bite, she picked Old Mumma up by the neck and carried her away.

Everyone was devastated by the loss of Old Mumma. She had been their Elder. But there was no time to grieve because they had to keep going.



Henry was so sad that he wasn't watching where he was going. He thought he was heading into some nice wavy creek weed, but it was an old fishing trap. By the time he realised what he had done, it was too late.

He started to panic.

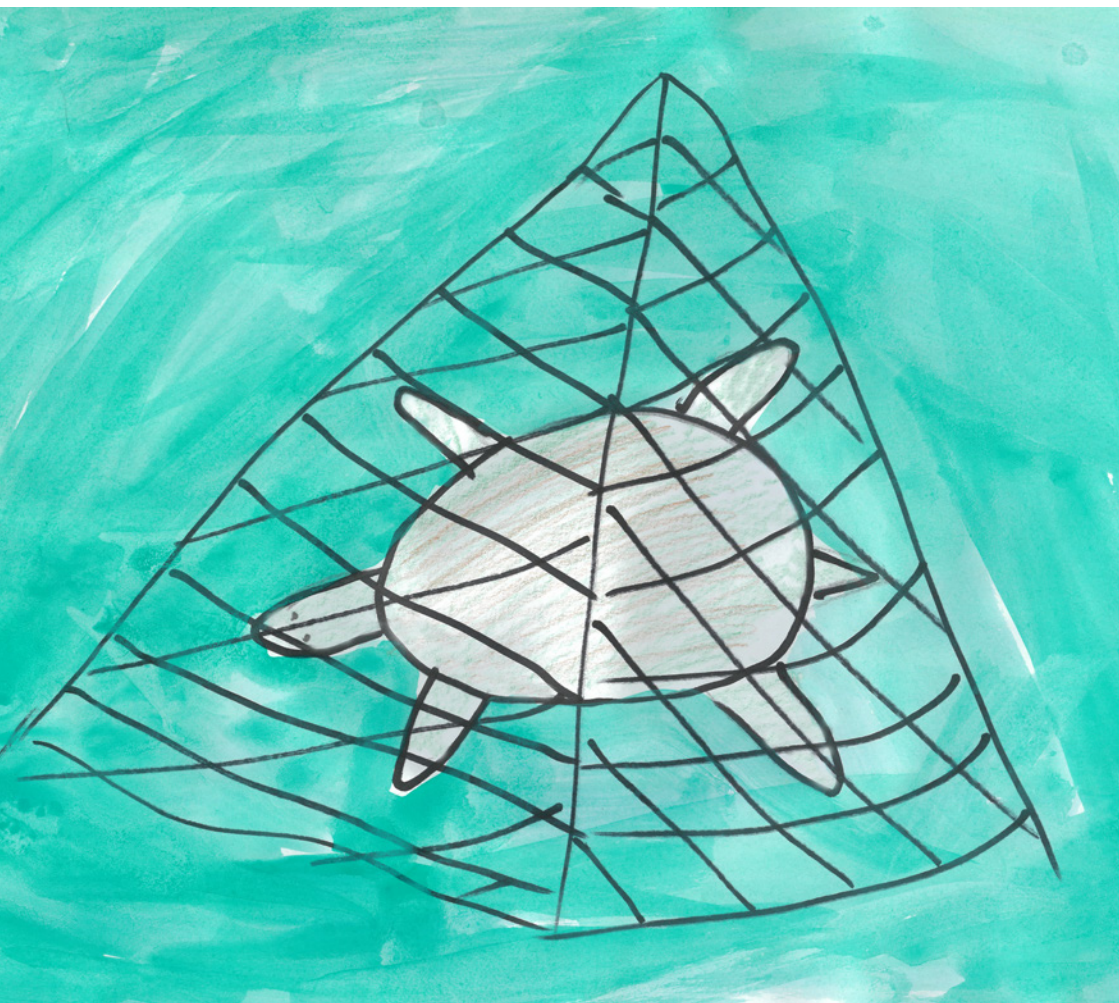


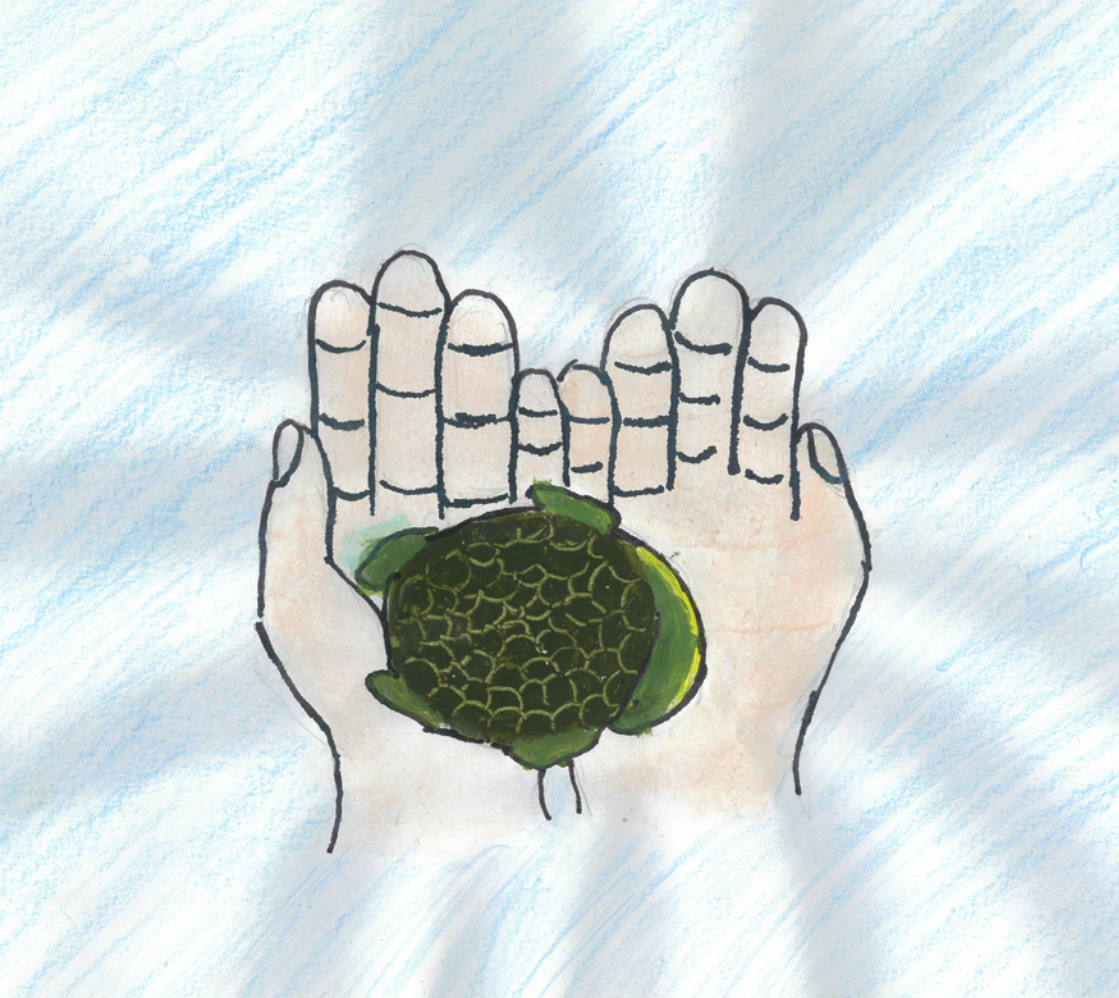
Phoebe tried to help him, but he was completely stuck. Just when they thought they would have to leave him behind, Larry gave an unusual call.

"A human!" he warned. Everyone immediately went into hiding. You could never be too sure with humans. Some were nice and some were not.

"Hey look over here! Someone's left a pyramid net in the water!" said Ranger Tim.

"Oh no! There's a Manning River Turtle stuck in there! Poor little guy!" said his friend Ranger Clare.





They pulled up the net and set Henry free.

"People shouldn't just leave their nets unattended like this!" said Tim.

"Let's check further upstream and see if there are any others," said Clare.



Once they were gone, everyone came out of hiding.

"That was a close call!" said Phoebe, glad her friend was safe. Henry nodded, pretty shaken up by the whole ordeal.

Finally, the next day, the little group made it to The Great Falls.

Larry composed a new song for the occasion and they all splashed and played, enjoying the fresh clean water.

In the months that followed, Edna retold the story of their 'Quest' so many times, that they have now all become Dingo Creek celebrities. Their portraits are even featured on the walls of Bobin Public School.





Bobin Public School Murals



Larry and Edna



Phoebe and Henry

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