

*The Ballad of*  
**Pip the Pied  
Oystercatcher**



MC Classes Years 7-11  
Gloucester High School

# 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](http://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.

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

# The Ballad of Pip the Pied Oystercatcher

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Sarah Jenkins, Austin Dickson and Bear (dog).

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.

Content for this book has been based on the Hunter Local Land Services threatened fauna fact sheet – Australian pied oystercatcher.

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Once upon a sandy shore in the land of New South Wales,  
Lived a pied oystercatcher named Pip, who had many exciting  
tales.

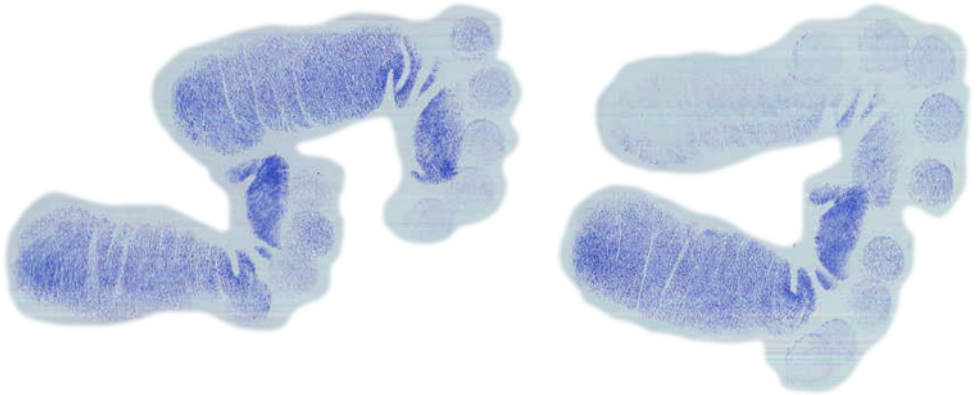
With feathers as dark as midnight and a bright, shiny bill,  
He called the Mid Coast home, a place he cherished still.



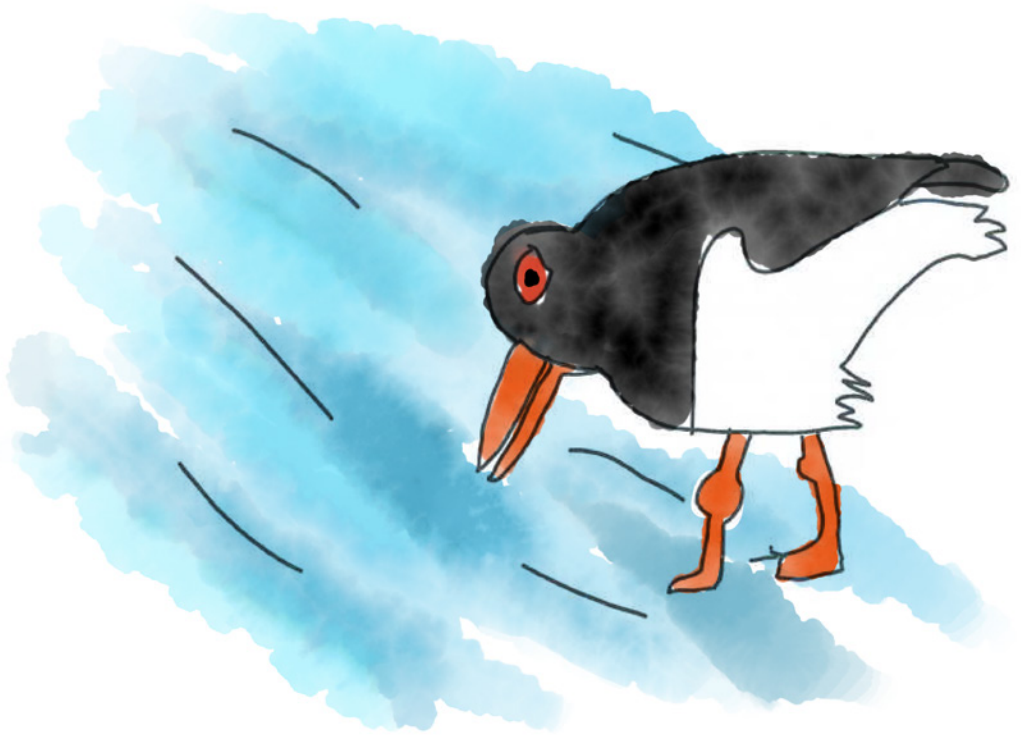
Pip was special, quite unique, a bird so hard to miss,  
With white upon his breast and belly, in the sunshine's gentle kiss.  
His legs were pink as coral, and his eyes a fiery red,  
A wader of the shoreline, where his daily food was spread.



He opened shells like magic, with his beak so long and strong,  
Feasting on the ocean's gifts, where the waves sang their song.  
Mussels, worms, and crabs, all became his tasty treats,  
In this salty world he wandered, with nimble, agile feet.



Pied oystercatchers play a role in this sandy, coastal land,  
Balancing nature's harmony, like footprints in the sand.  
But Pip had many threats as he danced upon the shore,  
People, pets, and vehicles – he needed help for sure.



Port Stephens held a secret, a treasure to behold,

With 250 birds at home, their story slowly told.

With fox control and careful planning, their numbers began  
to rise,

But in other places, Pip's family faced tougher skies.



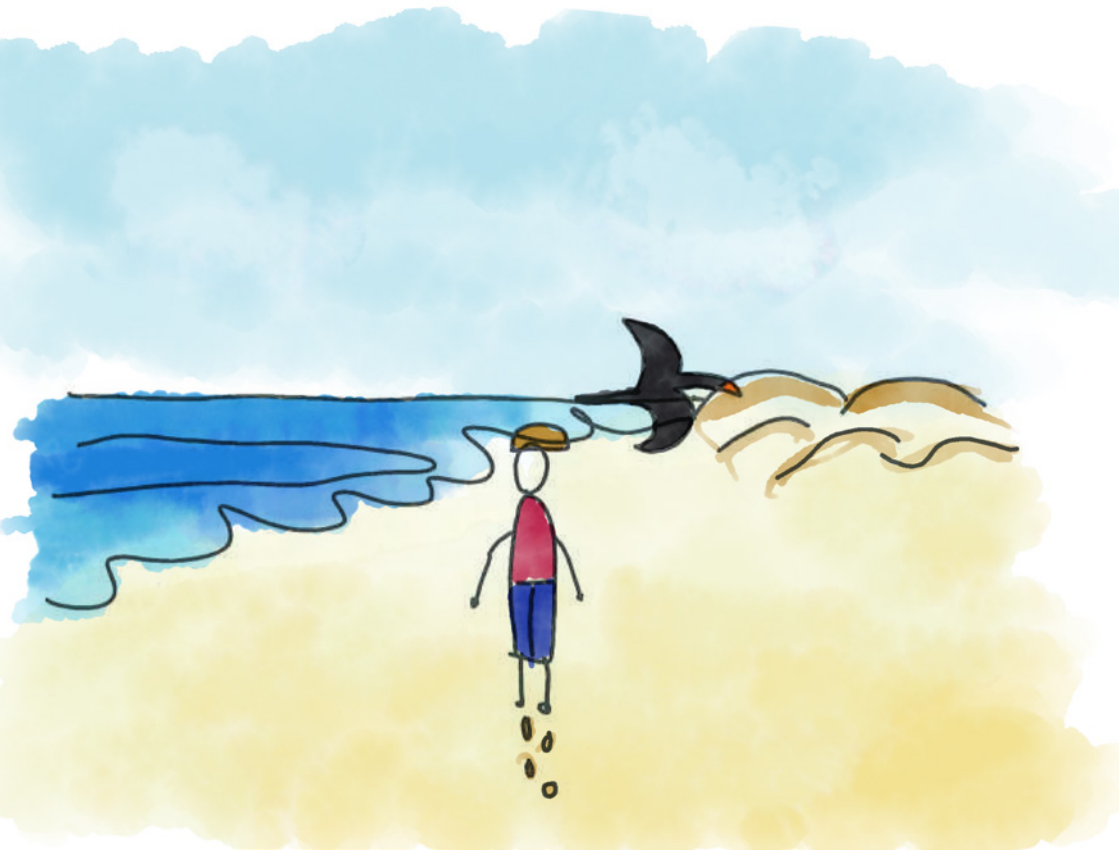


Nesting on the sand and pebbles, they sought the perfect space,

A territory within 200 meters of the shore, a breeding, sacred place.

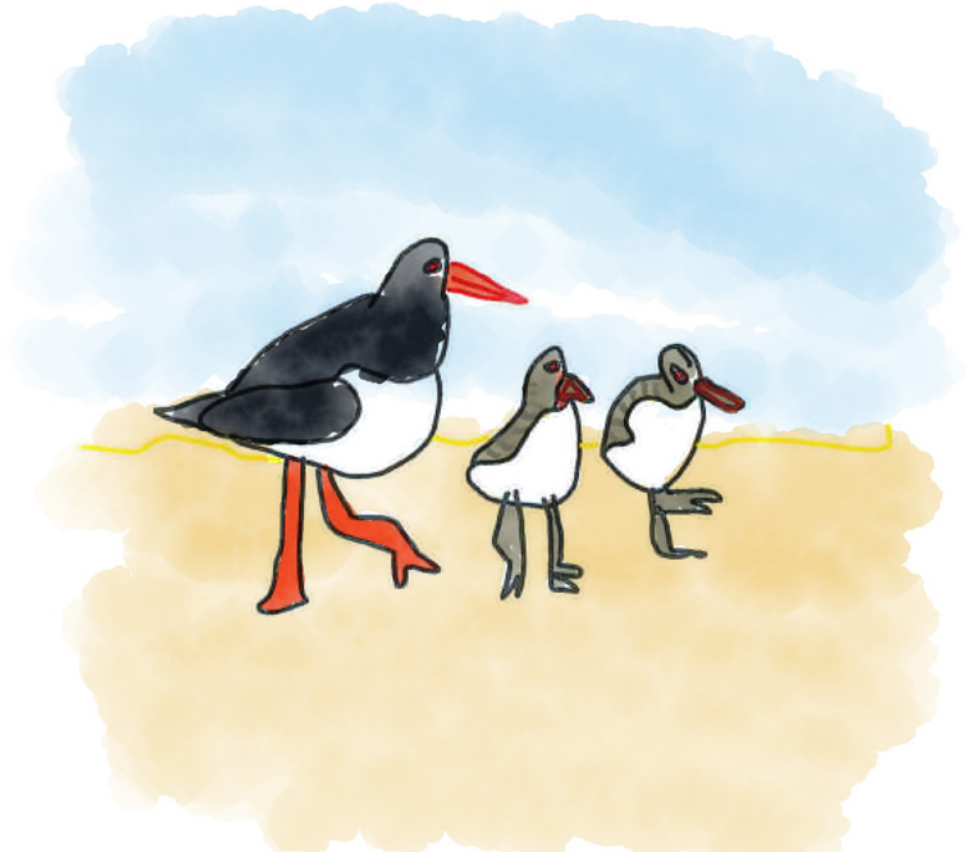
Sharing duties, both mum and dad, protected eggs with care,

But if disturbed too often, they'd leave their nest laid bare.



Beach-nesting birds were at risk, their numbers going down,  
As people crowded beaches, not watching where they'd walk  
around.

The biggest threat to Pip and friends, it wasn't hard to see,  
Was the disturbance caused by us, when we ventured to the sea.



Pip's call, a high-pitched 'peep-a-peep,' was heard from far away,

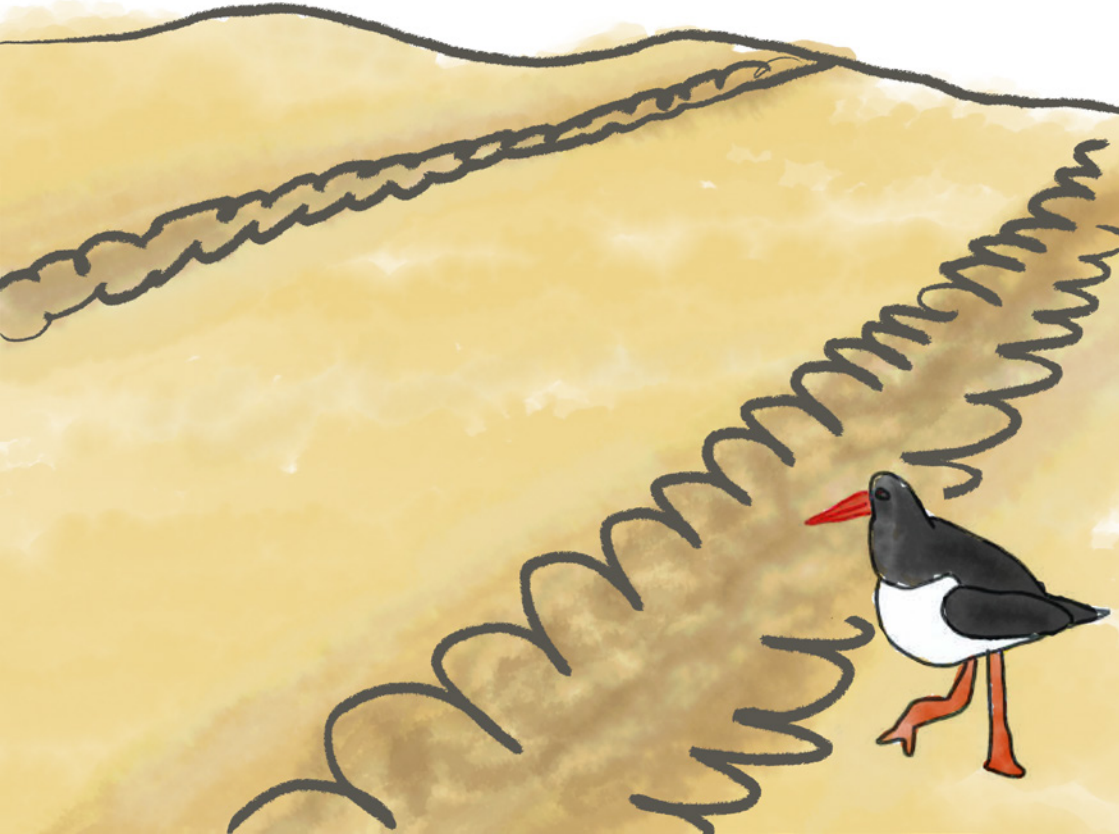
A warning cry to humans: "Keep your distance, don't come my way!"

With tiny striped chicks in tow, their nests were hard to see,

Defending them with all their might, from danger they'd soon flee.



But there's hope for Pip and friends, if we all do our part,  
To protect the precious coastline and help them from the start.  
Respect the signs and fences that mark their nesting space,  
Avoid crushing eggs unknowingly, keep a safe and cautious pace.



Drive only where it's allowed, below the high tide mark,

Don't let cars roll over eggs, especially in the dark.

If you see a bird take flight, then you're way too close, you see,

Frightened birds leave nests behind, and in harm's way they'll be.



Keep dogs on leash, or at dog beaches they can roam,

Off-leash dogs can scare the birds, who leave their nests  
and homes.

Rubbish left on beaches is a danger we should mend,

Take your trash when you leave, “Take three for the sea,”  
we recommend.



Entangled birds in fishing lines, a problem we must fix,  
Clean up after going fishing, should be one of your tricks.  
If you own land near their homes, control the fox's pace,  
Be a responsible pet owner, keep pets confined at your place.



In this Mid Coast wonderland, with oystercatchers by the sea,  
Pip and his friends live peacefully, where they're meant to be.  
With love and care, we'll help them thrive, in this coastal land  
so grand,  
For pied oystercatchers like Pip, are treasures on the sand.



## A bit about Pip

Pip is a pied oystercatcher, a medium-sized shorebird 42–51 cm long and weighing about 400–780 grams.

Pied oystercatchers breed from September to January and have a clutch of 2 to 3 eggs. The young, when hatched, are tiny, brown, striped chicks that leave the nest within a few days. Adults will defend their nests by pretending to be injured and luring the predator from the eggs or chicks.



Pied oystercatchers are currently listed as Endangered in New South Wales. Although it is possible to see pied oystercatchers right along the coastal regions of NSW, in the Hunter and Swansea/Lake Macquarie estuaries there are only small numbers of birds recorded.



Photo credit: S. Darnell

## You can help the pied oystercatcher

- Respect signs or fencing indicating beach-nesting birds and keep out of those areas.
- If you are allowed to drive on a beach, only drive below the high tide.
- If a bird takes flight, you're too close. Keep your distance – at least 250 m for pied oystercatchers.
- Walk dogs only on designated dog beaches and keep them on leash.
- Take your rubbish with you when you leave the beach and 'take three for the sea' –pick up three extra pieces of rubbish every time you are at the beach.
- Be a responsible pet owner and keep your pet confined to your property –day and night.



Photo credit: P. Merritt

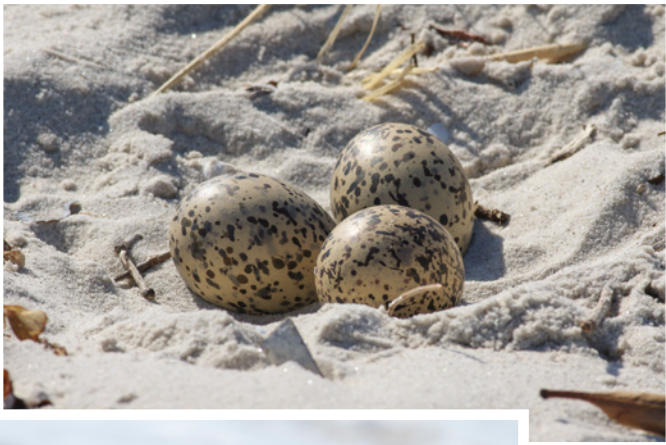


Photo credits (top to bottom): R. Burton, A. Stuart and R. Palazzi

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Left to right: Nathan Dwyer, Tineah Richards, Edward Hollingsworth, Henry Greenham, Tiko Samson, Nathan Hill, Jaxon Griffis-Powick, Millie Harris and Bear (dog)

Front: Sarah Jenkins

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