



NATURE PLAY AND ETHICAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MORE-THAN- HUMAN: TEACHER'S REFLECTIONS

Professor Karen Malone



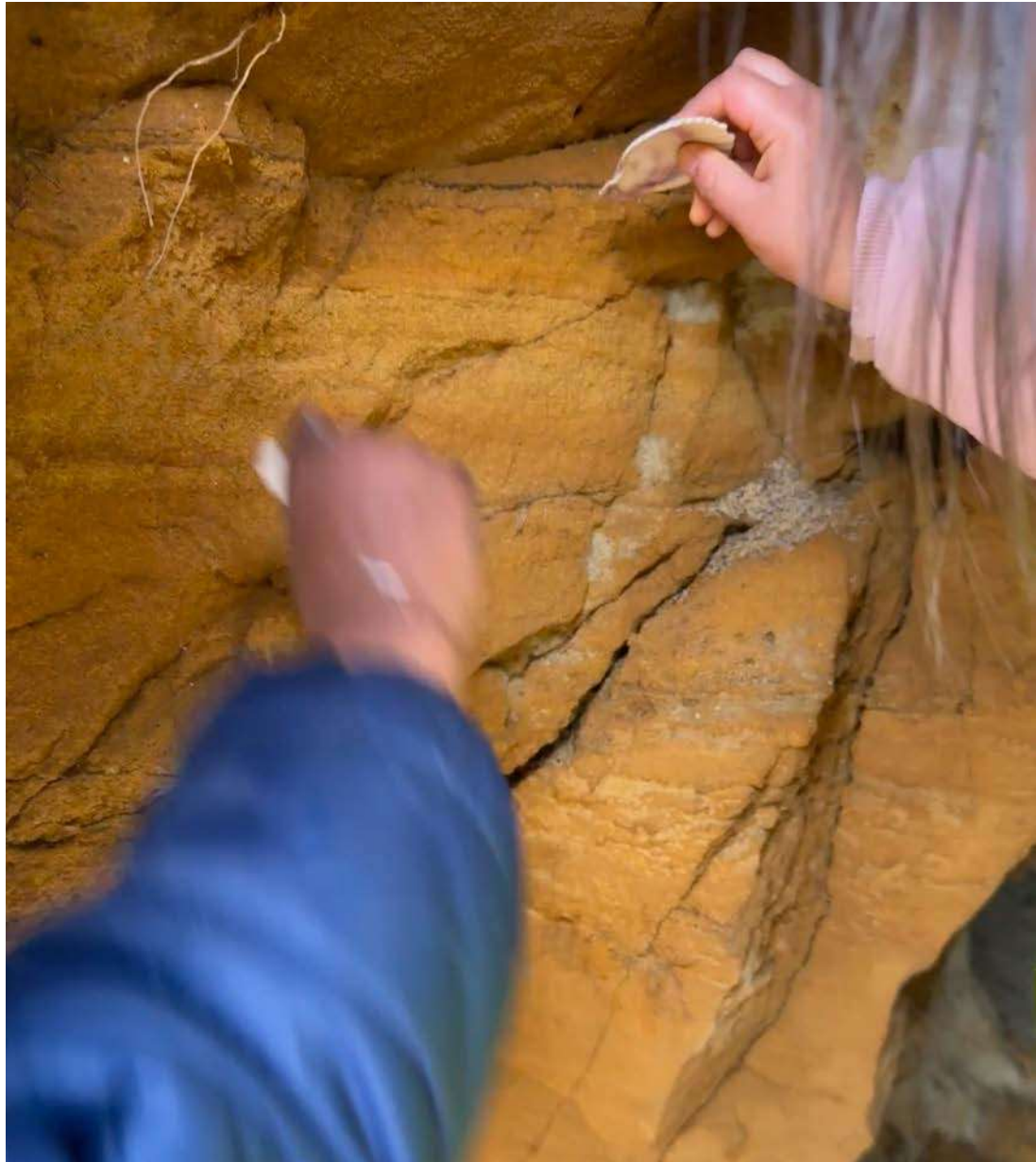
Location: Boon Wurrung People, Kulin Nation, Black Rock Beach, Melbourne, Australia



**ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF COUNTRY**

**WOMINJEKA
BOON WURRUNG**

Location: Boon Wurrung People, Kulin Nation, Half Moon Bay, Black Rock, Melbourne, Australia



LEARNING WITH ENVIRONMENTS

“At the heart of place-based learning is the importance of observing and connecting to your place, wherever that place may be” -

Molly Gerrish, from the land of the Menominee, Ojibwe, Potawatomi and Ho-Chunk People,

Reference: Warden and Fargher (2023) Beyond the Gate , p.171

Nature Touchstones stand as a reminder of the pivotal practices of nature pedagogues, offering opportunities for provocation, exploration, nurturing curiosity, awe and wonder. They act as springboards to new learnings and practices through being affected by what we encounter.

Sense of Wonder

Being Affected

Nature as Co-teacher

Walking-as-Method

Attuning with Nature

Sense of Place

Sensorial Knowing

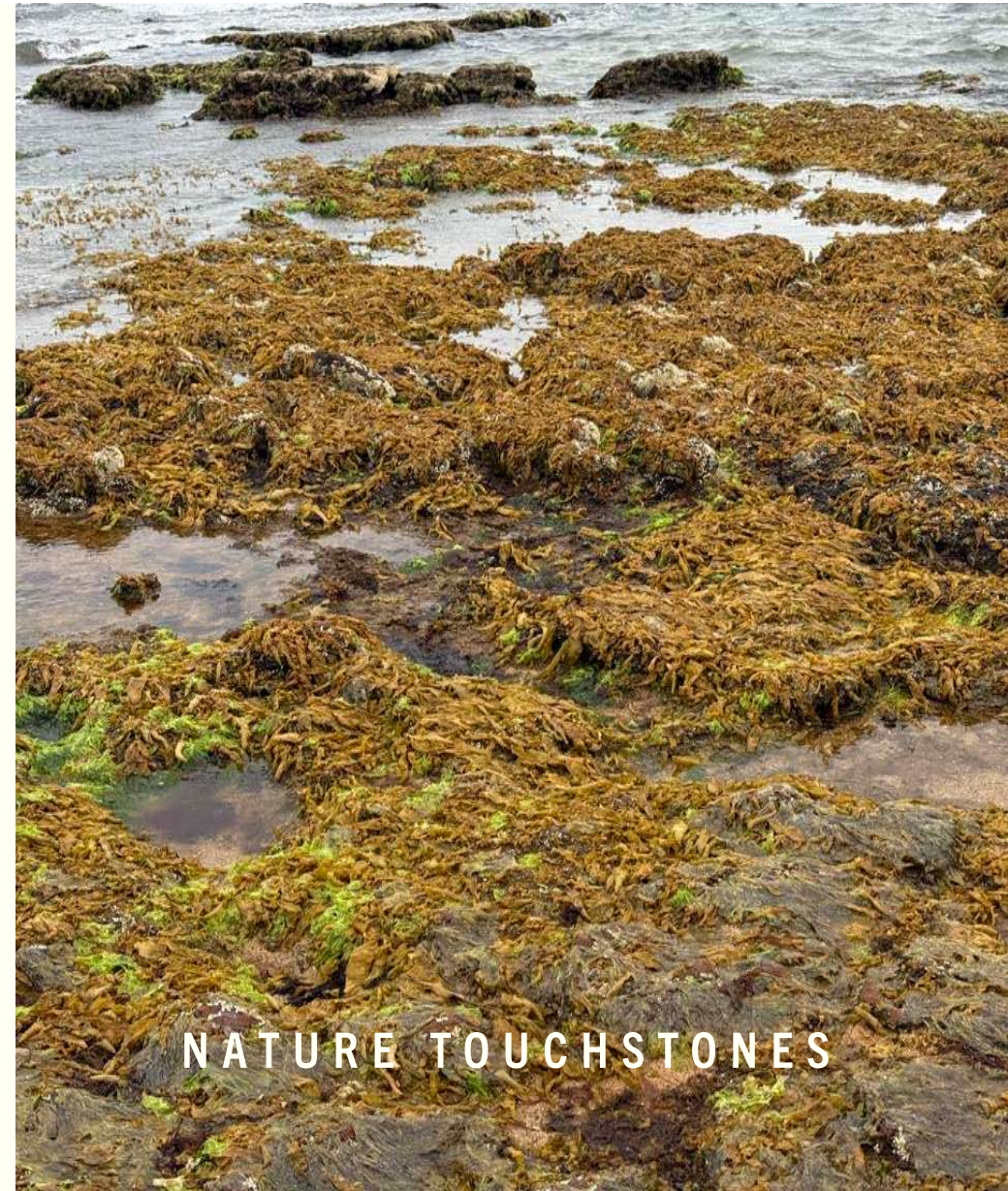
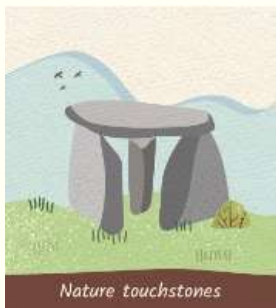
Patterns of Creation

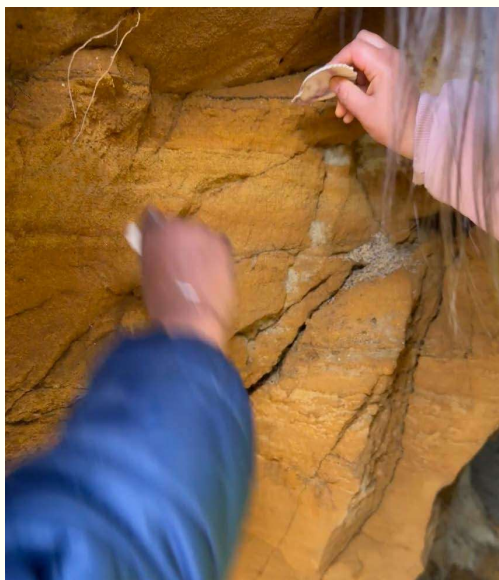
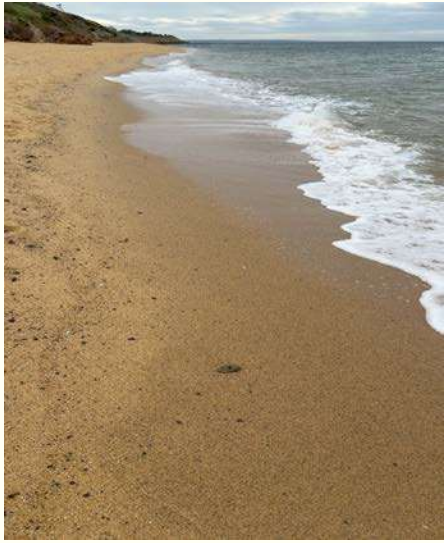
Silence and Ritual

Stories and Storytelling

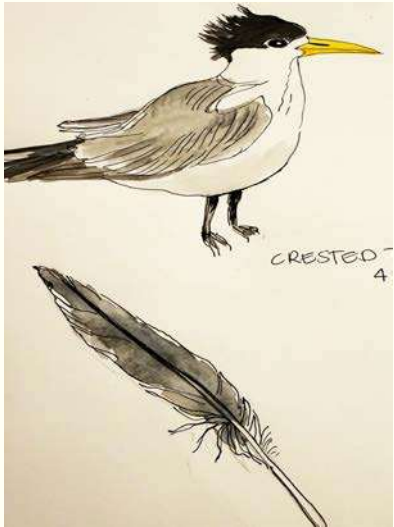
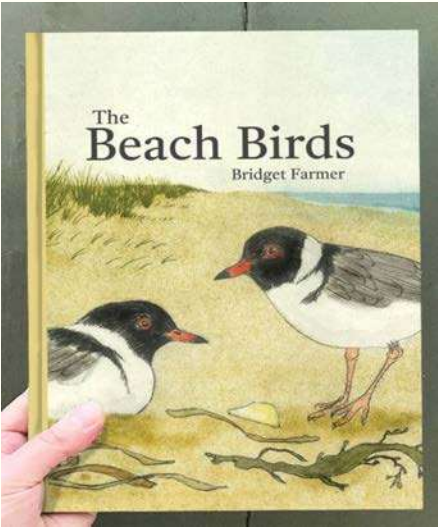
Earthly as Gift Giver

Ethical Challenges









DOCUMENTING WITH VISUAL DIARIES

Working in the visual diary requires educators to act ethically in their documentations and to recognise ambiguities, be open to sensation, intra-ruptions, the unanticipated, and to concede that knowing is always situated, incomplete and biased.
— Lasczik et. al (2024)



Figure 1. Children working and collaborating in visual diaries during the inquiry.

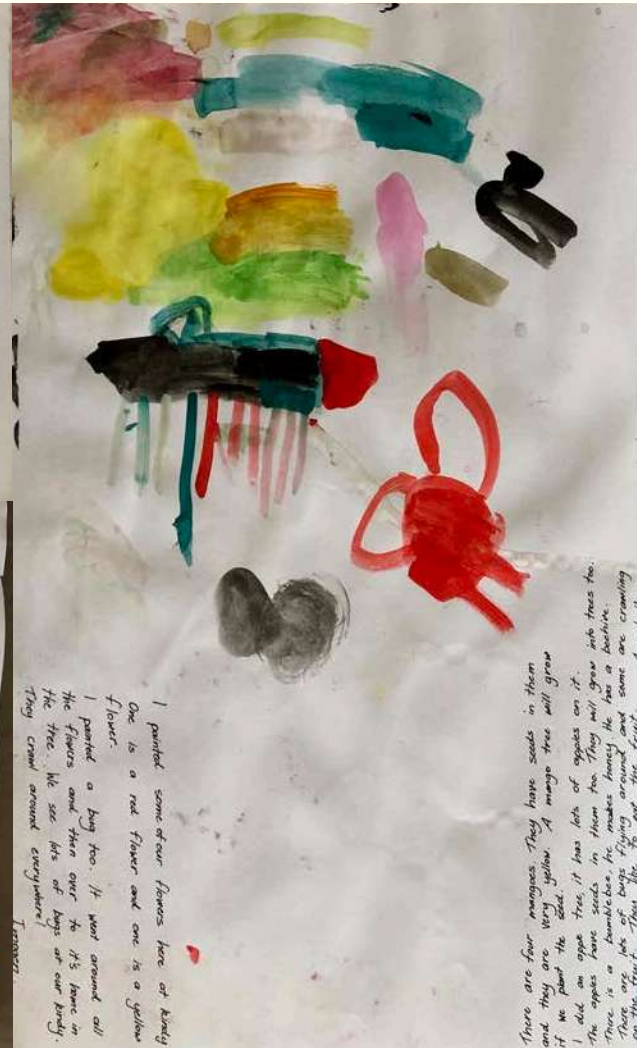
Images of Visual Journal – HORIZON Project (Researchers Amy Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, Karen Malone, Lexi Lasczik, Linda Knight, Maia Osborne)
Lasczik, A., Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, A., Osborn, M., Malone, K., & Knight, L. (2024). Engaging visual diaries in early childhood nature play as pedagogical arousal. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 50(2), 188-210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391241276885>

VISUAL DIARY AS A BECOMING

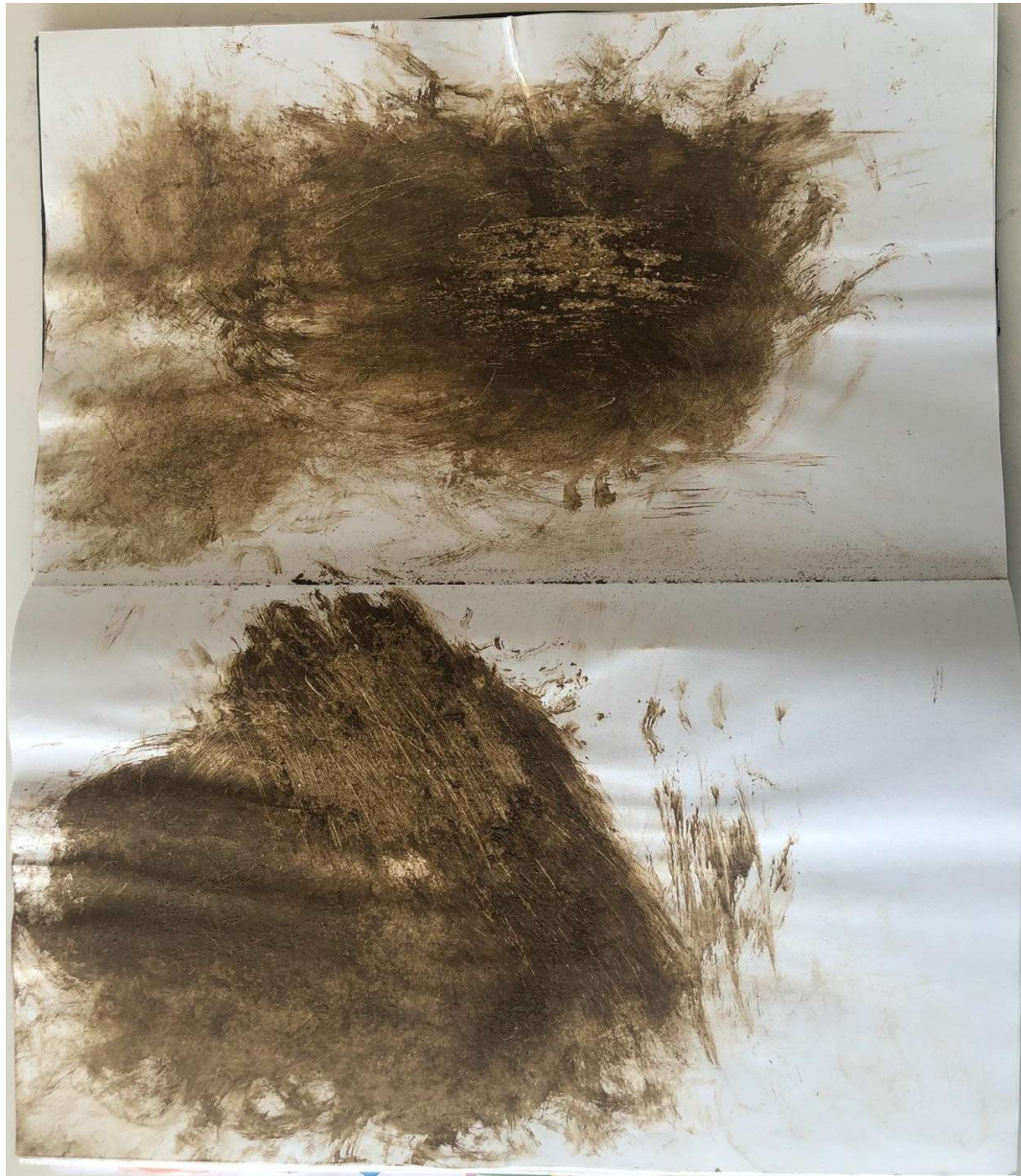
The visual diary quite transcends its usefulness as a pedagogical mechanism or an instrument of recording and reflecting; it is potentially much more. In this project, we witnessed educators, children and ourselves as academics engage with the visual diary in profound and unexpected ways, affording rich insights into nature play, scientific concepts and perhaps most significantly, the more-than-human. - Lasczik et. al (2024)



CHILDREN - STORYING OUR JOURNEY







On our zoo safari I loved seeing the chimpanzees.
Baby Capri runs around with the blanket on her back.
The mum sits around with baby Capri. She looks
after her baby Capri. She is so small and so cute.

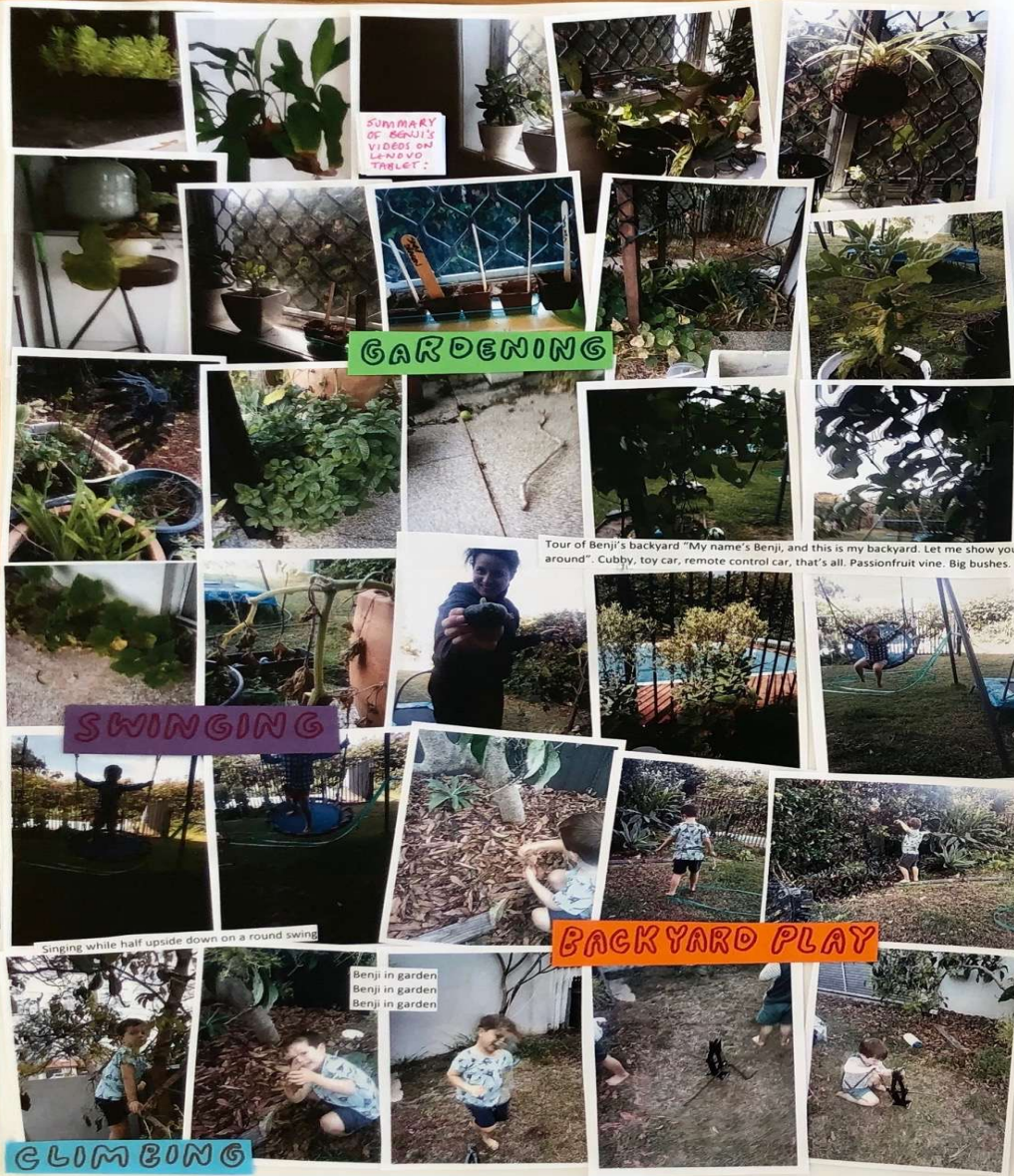
In the bird aviary
I saw lots of colourful
birds, the black swan,
the white spoonbill, the
cassowary. They were
flying around but the
cassowary can't fly.
Emu and Ostrich can't
fly either.
The eagle Valkari, can't
fly either.

5/1/19



EDUCATORS - DOCUMENTING OUR JOURNEY







Oral storytelling is one of the foundations of children's development of language and literacy. It's also one of our foundation practices at Birdwings... We share planned stories which often have ourselves, props and scenery specially prepared. These stories we have written, or we retell from known stories and books that we love. They are chosen to celebrate seasonal change, to share cultural knowledge to acknowledge current interests of the children, explore relevant therapeutic themes or to purposefully share knowledge of local nature...

... The stories come up again in conversations as we recall details in our daily work. Spontaneous storytelling frequently occurs along the track. These might be shared experiences told and retold while we walk, playful re-enactments when we stop to rest or eat. Very often, when we enter a familiar part of the track we will tell the story of what happened here last, or of what we saw, and then continue to share with each other what we learned, and what we've discovered since.

And so stories become a part of our living relationships with each other and with our surroundings. This is the basis of Ecological Storytelling." Birdwing Blog. <https://birdwingsnature.wordpress.com/2018/08/09/storytelling-on-the-track/>

three-ways-to-explore-nature-culture-and-our-relationships-with-both

ecological storytelling

Ballun, Ballun gaureimagur ngullingi - numulagu jarjum wonga bugeramu - Ballun, Ballun gaureimagur ngullingi River, River tell us a story - share your dreaming with the children - River, River, tell us a story... Our story song, I wrote it using Kombumerri words checked with local language speakers



Telling stories inside children's play spaces, using things that they play with. A flexible, responsive, emerging story about the signs of spring incorporating children's observations of seasonal change in our space: flowering + fruiting trees, bird and butterfly behaviour. Snake sightings.



STORYTELLING - FINDING PLACE



Responding to the Canungra Bushfires with different forms of storytelling including 'journaling'. This was therapeutic as we came to understand fire and our relationship with it.

Modelling stories so children become storytellers. Stories using children as props. The Hungry G

"Adults often need the security offered by a story book rather than freely telling a story. Telling a story about a found object comes naturally to children. A box becomes a dinosaur bone with an imaginative story behind it. Telling rather than reading a story allows the storyteller to make eye contact with the audience and actively engage them in the process. Creating story sticks or story stones often promotes story-telling." (Buckton, H. (2005))

Eye contact. Brief moments to listen, share and learn through metaphor, drama and song. Sharing concepts.



SILKY OAK

Grevillea robusta "Kambullum"

"Look! That tree has yellow flowers". Pointed out by a 4 year old. Then we see all the tall Silky Oaks around the place because of their distinctive flowers. Will we remember this tall tree after it flowers? And will we remember where they are? Narell pointed out the leaves look like feathers. There are lots of the ground. Maybe ~~we~~ can remember this tree when it is not flowering by its feathery leaves that drop at the base. For now we can take our bearing by the bright yellow and gold way up high. We look UP!

This tree found its place in our storytelling: my story "The Four Friends" shared a silky oak flower between them: Wallaby, possum, bandicoot and lorikeet. They don't all eat blossoms but the story talks about that, and like always it changed every day, always related to place and the people we are with, sharing our knowledge of our surroundings.



"Not only are the flowers of the Silky Oak the favourite of many varieties of birds such as parrots and honeyeaters, but Grevillea spp. were also used by Aborigines in the manner described above for the Banksia and Melaleuca spp. (making a sweet drink).

"The well-known Silky Oak grows on one site only on the Reserve but its connections to the local Aboriginal food economy are well documented. The local name is Kambullum (Cressy 1947). There are records which indicate that the Aborigines sucked nectar from the flowers. The Silky Oak is reputed to be the best producer of nectar of those Grevilleas in the eastern states (Low 1991:143). The Cribbs simply describe the species as being "one of the richest sources of nectar" (1970:214). The tree also produces a gum after injury to the trunk which may have had some use but not necessarily as a food such as that of certain wattle species. It may well have had some useful adhesive properties.

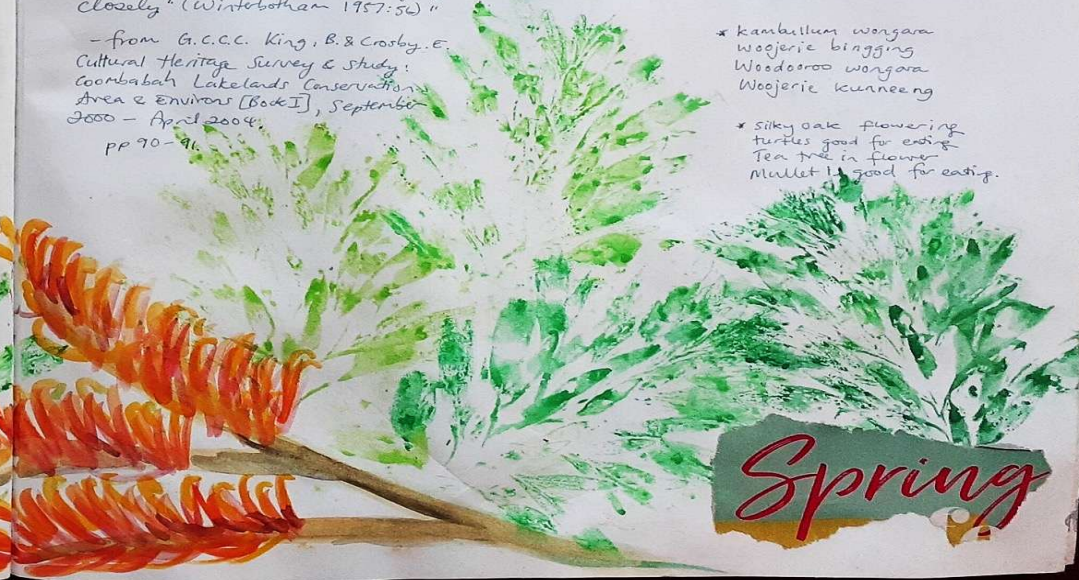
"The Kombumerri also used this tree as an indicator species as they also did for the Paperbark Tea Tree. A poem, quoted earlier, remains as a reminder of the value of these trees to the local food economy.

"In another part of Queensland north of Brisbane, the flowering of the Silky Oak indicated that the eels were best for eating. In fact the names of the tree and the eel were identical in the Dugidjan language, "because if you peel the bark off a silky oak stick, and also skin an eel, you will find that the pattern of the underlying fibres in both resemble each other very closely" (Wintrobther 1957:56)

- from G.C.C.C. King, B. & Crosby, E.
Cultural Heritage Survey & Study:
Coombabah Lakelands Conservation
Area & Environs [Book I], September
2000 - April 2004.
pp 90-91.

* kambullum wongara
woojerie bingging
woodooroo wongara
woojerie kunnene

* silky oak flowering
turtles good for eating
Tea tree in flower
mullet is good for eating.



Spring



Our long-term Little Bladders children have seen the full life cycle of dragonflies over the seasons from eggs in the creek to nymphs and seeing the dragonflies stretch their new wings on a reed. We've not noticed the life cycle of a beetle. They are a mystery. We don't see many.

Nina (5)

Lenny (4)



As a child, I had a creek behind my house. I played there and found penny farthings, eggs and gobblers. Beetles (snails, rainwater beetles) living under logs and stones were found in my back garden. I loved to find them and watch them hatch. I kept them as pets and then released them.

Where have all the Christmas beetles gone? I remember so many shiny, colourful beetles in my childhood....

Beetle.....



We found a beetle. It crawled on us.



Beetle printing at the creek



I had a little beetle, so that 'Beetle' was his name and I called him Alexander and he answered just the same. **DECEMBER 19**



Lenny (4)

Lillian (2)

ETHICS OF CARE- DOCUMENTING RAISING QUESTIONS?

Connecting to our local environment.

Lagoon Excursion - March 2019.

Full of water
- so many turtles
- lots of pelicans, birds, ducks.



Lagoon Excursion - Nov 2019

No water
- No turtles
- a few birds and ducks.



Focusing our gaze







Inside the fish was blood. The fish was dead. It wasn't moving, it wasn't swimming or breathing. It was dead - Ava

I saw the fishy. I saw the fin. I wish it was swimming - Connor

Very yucky. Very Stinky. – Eleanor.

The fish was stinky. I didn't touch it. Everyone else was touching it. – Addison.

Miss Kelly cut it open. Inside the fish was really bloody. I pulled out the throat, the gills, the guts - Annabelle

The eyes were all globbly. I didn't like it. –Stella

The fish was very smelly. I felt the tail and I touched. It was yucky. – Chloe.

I smelt the fish. I didn't like it. I felt sad- Maggie

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