

Elephants, Emus, Crocodiles and Lost Treasures

Children's Stories from safaris

By

John Sinclair

Most of these stories were compiled during various safaris during 2006 and 2007.

They are inspired by and dedicated to:

Laura, Hugh, Anastasia and Connor

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Preface

In 1968 I was organizing a wide range of adult education programs, when I volunteered to organize my first safaris for conservation. I took the view then, as I do now that conservation is for our grandchildren and future generations. So when my oldest grandchild at age seven asked me to tell her a story I thought I needed to be better prepared so that I could leave a legacy, not only of some wonderful bits of Nature which we have managed to salvage from predatory industrialization, but some stories which might foster better values and attitudes from my grandchildren.

My travels have provided me with lots of inspiration and a great store of stories. I just needed a bit of imagination and the encouragement of my grandchildren to tailor some of the stories to a much younger audience than I had been used to. Thus began this project which I hope gives others as much as preparing and presenting them has given me. I would particularly like to thank those who have encouraged and assisted me particularly Colleen Enchelmaier for her proof-reading.

*John Sinclair
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The Good Witch of Torres Strait

Laura inspired this story in October 2006 when she begged to be told a story about good witches. It was just before another Torres Strait safari. The coincidence of those two events resulted not only in this being the very first children's story inspired by a safari. It led to three stories every safari since.

There was a young boy called Toby who lives on a small island in Torres Strait with his parents, two brothers and two sisters. His older brother was Philemon and his other brother, Ralph was two years younger.

They lived a simple life without much money and without a car or electricity. Their small home had a roof made of palm fronds. There was no water supply on the island but there was a well which was a long way from their home. The three boys had to go up to the well every day to get the fresh water their mother and sisters needed for cooking and drinking and bring the water back to the house in buckets.

In their home they had few toys but they were happy and made small boats from coconut shells, sticks and bits of wood and they had boat races on the beach near their home. As well as playing with boats they loved fishing and swimming.

One day when the three boys were getting water from the well to take home for their mother, young Ralph fell down into the well. He could stay afloat but he couldn't climb out and his older brothers couldn't quite reach him.

Philemon ran back to the village to get help while Toby stayed to see what else could be done. He couldn't quite reach down to touch Ralph. Then he had a bright idea. He took the belt from his trousers and asked Ralph to do the same. When Ralph got his belt off he threw it up to Toby who joined the two belts together. With an extra long strap he was able to pull Ralph from the well and save him from drowning.

Ralph was so happy he said that he hoped that Toby could be given anything he wished for. Toby wasn't greedy and even though his family was poor, they were happy. So Toby didn't think they needed a lot of money. He just said that if ever he got in to such a difficult position that he might end up drowning some good witch would save him if his brothers couldn't.

Some time after that when Toby was much bigger he went fishing in a canoe. The canoe was a dugout made out of a big log. His father had given a man from New Guinea four big turtles in exchange for the canoe because there were no trees on their island big enough to make canoes from. They needed a canoe to go fishing outside the coral reef. The canoe wasn't very big and so the boys took turns each day to

paddle out to the reef where there were good, big fish to be caught.

One day when it was Toby's turn he was out fishing and hadn't expected the very violent storm that suddenly appeared before he had time to paddle back to the beach. The wind blew fiercely. The waves grew bigger. The sky grew darker and the canoe and Toby were tossed about in the rough water. Toby couldn't paddle. He just had to hang on and keep the canoe properly balanced. He was afraid of being tossed out but he wasn't. However the fish he had caught and his paddles were.

When the storm had passed it was dark and Toby was a long way out to sea. He couldn't see his island or any land and he had no paddles to help him even if he knew which way to go. He couldn't see the white foam of the waves breaking on the reef and he was afraid. He thought what it must have been like for his younger brother Ralph at the bottom of the dark well. Then he thought of the wish that Ralph had given to him.

He said aloud, *"I wish that a soft breeze would blow me back to the reef, back to my beach and back to my island home."*

Just then a voice in the dark said in reply, *"You have been a good boy to your family. You were very clever to save your brother. I am a good witch of Torres Strait and I will blow you home."*

Toby couldn't see anyone in the dark but then a gentle breeze began to blow. It blew softly for the rest of the night and when he woke at first light he could see the reef. He could see his island home and the breeze kept blowing softly until he reached the beach. When he got home his family was very happy that he was safe but nobody believed that there was really a witch in Torres Strait.



Pla and Tui and the Flood

This story was written during January 2007 after riding on an elephant down the Mae Kok River in Thailand.

Pla lived in Thailand with his father, Hoo, his mother, and his brother and two sisters. Because most people in Thailand have long names that are so difficult to remember, nearly everyone has a much shorter nickname that everybody uses. So nobody in Pla and Hoo's family used their real names much at all.

Hoo was a mahout, a man who looked after working elephants. He hoped that when Pla grew up he would also be a mahout. Once there were many mahouts and many elephants in Thailand but when the forest was cut down and turned to farmland to grow food for people, there was less food for elephants. Because motor vehicles could carry more than elephants and go faster and used fuel instead of eating forests, there was no need for working elephants. Now the only work that elephants do is to perform in circuses and let tourists go for rides on their backs. So there are now not many mahouts left in Thailand.

Then one day Hoo's elephant, Aleena had a baby and they named her Tui. So Hoo said that Pla could become a mahout but he would have to grow up with Tui so that they would understand each other. Elephants live for a long time, longer than most people and it is good if elephant and mahout grow up together as Hoo and Aleena had.

Tui was still too young to work and Pla went to school during most days but when he was out of school, Pla went home as fast as he could to play with Tui. They would go down to the river to play. Their favourite game was having splash fights. Pla and his friends would splash each other in the shallow water but Tui would suck up water in his trunk and squirt it at the children like a giant water pistol. Tui won all of the water fights and they had great fun.

Then one wet season the river flooded. It flooded a little bit most years but that year, the water rose faster than anyone expected and the water was much deeper. The bus driver wasn't expecting the water to be deep when he drove his bus in but suddenly the engine stopped and it wouldn't start again. The bus was stuck in the water that was continuing to rise and the people

couldn't walk in the strong current. The passengers were afraid of being drowned.

Pla was watching the floodwaters rise. He saw the bus get stuck and the people waving from the windows and shouting for help. He ran in to tell Hoo. Hoo said that anyone trying to walk in the strong current would be washed away but the heavy elephants would be safe but he had a problem because Aleena was so big that the people would find it hard to get up on her back. Maybe Tui could carry the people one by one to safety.

Hoo said that it was a dangerous job. So while Hoo went to get Aleena and a chain to see if they could pull the bus out of the river before it got any deeper, Pla and Tui waded out into the floodwater. Tui had never carried a heavier load than Pla and his friends on her back before but when Pla asked her to help and to carry heavier people, she didn't hesitate.

By the time Hoo and Aleena had got the chains attached to the bus, the passengers were all safe on higher ground. The bus was still stuck and hard for Aleena to budge by herself. So little Tui and Pla got behind the bus and pushed. It was all the help Aleena needed and soon they had the bus on high ground.

Pla and Tui were heroes. So were Hoo and Aleena. They proved that elephants could still work where motor vehicles couldn't and everyone in their village felt safer because they still had working elephants.



Pai and the Scarecrow

This story was written during January 2007 while travelling through the paddy fields for growing rice in Thailand and realizing that scarecrows, so common there are now rarely seen in Australia .

Pai and his family lived in a small village in Northern Thailand. Near the village they grew all the food they needed, rice, vegetables and fruit. They kept chickens for eggs and meat, and pigs and cattle for extra meat. To buy the extra things they needed, they sold some of the vegetables and rice they could spare. So it was really important that they grew and harvested as much rice as possible.



There was one problem though. They wanted the rice and so too did lots of birds and wild animals. To stop wild birds eating the rice before it could be put in the granary, most villagers had different ways of scaring birds away from their crops.

A very old villager who lived on his own near Pai's family had a scarecrow in his rice paddy to frighten away the birds but because the old man couldn't work as hard as he could when he was younger, he wasn't able to keep his scarecrow looking ferocious enough to frighten off the birds. The scarecrow's clothes began to look like dirty old rags and it didn't look like a person any more. The birds even began to use it as a perch before diving into the rice to gather the grain before the old man could. They sat on the scarecrow's outstretched arms as if to thank the old man for placing this perch so conveniently.

Pai was very worried because it was really important for everyone in the village that the scarecrows did frighten away the birds. Pai said to his brothers and sisters that if they didn't fix up the old man's scarecrow, the birds would eat all of the old man's rice and he would be very

hungry. So they decided to fix up the scarecrow before the rice ripened.

They took off all of the scarecrow's old rags. His pants were not too bad and so they washed them in the river and stuffed them full of straw and put them back. They found an old shirt that they patched up and washed and filled with straw and put that on the scarecrow. They had lots of fun making the new head. They got an old cotton bag and sewed on some buttons for the eyes. Pai carved a nose and ears out of wood and they tied those to the bag. Then they stuffed it full of straw and put it on the scarecrow's shoulders. It was fun to paint on the mouth and teeth so that the scarecrow looked very scary. The scarecrow still didn't look angry enough and so they painted some angry lines over his eyebrows.

They then took the remodelled scarecrow back to the old man's paddy field and put on its hat. It looked just like a real person.

To test it out, when Pai saw his cousins walking towards the scarecrow, he hid behind the paddy bank and when they were very close, he called out in a deep loud voice, "*Don't any of you kids touch one grain of my rice!*"

His cousins looked up at the new scarecrow and were so scared that they started to run away but Pai came out laughing and said that he was just testing the new scarecrow. He said that if the scarecrow could scare children, then it would scare away any birds.

And it did. No birds came anywhere near the ferocious new scarecrow in the old man's paddy field. The old man thanked Pai and his family for helping him to harvest such a good rice crop.



Walpiri & Kunai and the Shaky Bridge

This story inspired by a visit to Sapuka and to Einsegwak during a safari along the great Fly River in Papua New Guinea in November 2006 and meeting people and children there.

Walpiri and Kunai lived in Sapuka, a large village beside the mighty Fly River in New Guinea, where they went to school with 200 other children. The small school was built out of bush timber and thatch. The school had no chairs and all the children had to sit on the floor. They had no desks to sit at to do their writing, and there was rarely enough paper and pencils at the school for them to be able to practice their writing. Like most of the pupils at the school, they had very poor parents who could only afford for them to go to school for three years because after Elementary School, the higher the grade, the more it cost their parents.

The school could not afford to keep operating all the time so when it was hot and dry before the rains came the school often had to close. Walpiri didn't mind if the school closed three weeks before the main Christmas holidays because he could go with his family and his cousins and their families to a hunting camp. The hunting camp was a day's walk from Sapuka. To gather the food they needed to live, the family used the camp near the flood plains until the rains came in February as they always did.

Kunai was a good student and liked school and she was sad when she couldn't go to school. She didn't like the hunting-camp, which was fun for the men and boys, but very hard work for the women and girls. They had to walk a long way to collect water and then carry it back in heavy plastic drums to the camp to be used for cooking. Kunai thought that it was most unfair that the men and boys who were bigger and stronger than the women and girls never carried any of the water or other heavy loads. Kunai had to carry the water over a narrow shaky bridge made of two wobbly logs.

One day while carrying water back to village it was raining very lightly and the logs were slippery. Walpiri and other boys started jumping on the log bridge and made it bounce so it was hard to cross. Kunai didn't have any shoes and her feet were very muddy. Although Kunai had wonderful balance, she slipped off into the deep dirty water and the sticky mud.

Kunai spilt the clean drinking water she was carrying and so she had to walk a long way back to another creek to collect another load and carry

it all the way back to the camp. She very was angry with her brother.

When their father heard about Walpiri bouncing Kunai off the shaky bridge, he was very cross too. He said that for the next week Walpiri would have to carry all the water the family needed back to camp instead of Kunai.

Walpiri didn't like being forced to do what he called "*women's work*" but he had to obey his father. On the first day he carried the water he found out how hard it was for the women. He also fell off the shaky bridge when nobody was jumping on and it wasn't raining. He spilt his load so he had to go back to get another drum of water.

When he went back to school after Christmas holidays Walpiri tried to learn as much as he could because this was the only schooling he could expect in his whole life. Then one day, when the teacher was teaching a lesson on transport, Walpiri learnt about wagons. He thought that it would be good if his family had a little handcart to carry the water on. "*We could carry more water at a time and not need to go to the well as often and it wouldn't be such hard work,*" he thought.

His family saved some money and bought a pair of wheels and a timber box. They used bush timber to make the handles for their new light pushcart. After that, life for Kunai and other members of the family became a lot easier. Other families in Sapuka saw how useful a handcart could be and they thanked Walpiri for giving them the idea. They even had more time to fix up and repair the shaky bridge so that nobody ever fell off it again.



Meenow Goes to School

This story was inspired by staying with a hill-tribe family in Lo Yon, an Akha village in Chiang Rai Province of Northern Thailand and experiencing the joy of Children's Day there in January 2007. It was while walking near this village that Grandpa John seriously injured his right shoulder.

Meenow was an Akha girl and proud of it. Being an Akha meant that she belonged to the Akha Hill Tribe which had been based in a mountainous part of China for hundreds of years. Now her family lived in Thailand. Her grandmother had been born in China but during the Cultural Revolution the family had run into trouble with the government and moved to Burma where her mother was born. Soon there was trouble there with the Burmese Army who wanted them to work as slaves. So most of the Akha people packed a few belongings and went to Thailand where they felt much safer.

When the family arrived in Thailand they had no money and very few possessions except the clothes they wore and a few pigs and poultry. Her father and grandfather still had their jungle knives and they worked hard with them and soon they had cut down a lot of bamboo in the jungle and used it to make the frame and floor and walls of a house. They then cut elephant grass and made a thatched roof and soon the family was dry and warm. So that was where Meenow was born -- in the house her father and grandfather had built in the hills of Thailand near the Burmese border.

Although her parents and grandparents had never been to school, they were very clever people and knew a lot about the forest and all of the plants and animals that lived in it. As soon as they were old enough to use a jungle knife, they had worked in the forest or the fields from daylight to dark. They had to work very hard to grow and gather enough food for the family to last through the rainy season. The Akha women were very good weavers and they harvested the cotton from the field, spun it and turned it into very colourful clothes which all Akha people wear like a uniform. Every member of the family received a bright new set of clothes to celebrate every Chinese New Year.

The family was poor but happy but they had to work so hard that Meenow promised she would try to find a way to make their lives easier. Meenow was luckier than her mother who was born in Burma and her Grand-ma who was born in China because in Thailand every child has to go to school from age 5 to age 15. So while Meenow didn't have to work in the fields from daylight to dark, she worked very hard at school to learn all she could to make the lives of her family easier. She was soon able to read notices for her mother and father so they now knew what they meant. That made their lives easier. Soon they were able to read some signs for themselves.

The family began to be better off because of what Meenow had learnt at school.

One day Meenow stayed back to help her mother bring in an extra load of firewood before she left for school; so she was running a bit late. She thought she would take the shortcut past the waterfall to catch up with the other children who were taking the usual longer way around by the road. The shortcut was very steep and she had to wade across slippery rocks above the waterfall. Meenow though had very good balance and she thought, *"I will catch up with the other children and get to school in time"*.

As she was crossing the stream at the waterfall above the roar of the water, she thought she heard a call for help. She looked down and saw her grandfather. He had slipped on the slippery rocks and cut himself with his razor sharp jungle knife and he was covered in blood.

Meenow ran down to help him. She used the First Aid that she had learnt at school. First she stopped the flow of blood and used her school scarf to bandage up the wound. Then she got Grandpa to lie down and she raised his leg on a rock before running on to school to get help to get her Grandpa home again.

Until then Grand-pa didn't think that school was really very useful and that the family should have had Meenow helping her parents in the field but now he changed his mind. He said, *"Meenow the first aid you learnt at school stopped me bleeding to death. The signs you read for us help our family a lot. I hope that you can learn many more useful things at school because it is helping us already. You must also teach us more about what you learn."*

And she did. So the whole family was much better off because they were now safe in Thailand and Meenow was able to go to school.



Careless Carie Meets the Tim the Toadbuster

This was written during the February 2007 Kakadu in the Wet Safari while travelling with the Northern Territory's chief Toadbuster who was described the impact of the recently arrived cane toads.

Carie was a cane toad. She was big. Most female cane toads are bigger than male cane-toads but Carie was even bigger than most other female cane toads because she was in the frontline. Frontline toads enjoyed a feast. They had more food available than they could eat. Frontline toads in the Northern Territory's Top End had more food than any other cane toads in history. They ate frogs and lizards, grubs and worms and every kind of insect from flies to bugs and beetles and even sometimes other toads. They had big appetites and they grew fast and became very large. Carie could and would eat almost anything that fitted in her mouth.

But while Carie could eat anything she chose most animals that eat cane toads die because of the poison glands toads have behind their shoulders. As soon as any other animal puts a cane toad in its mouth both the toad and the other animal immediately die. Many animals had died when they ate Carie's brothers, sisters and cousins. The goanna who tried to eat Katherine died but so did Katherine. The Quoll who thought Keith Canetoad was just an ordinary frog like most of the other frogs quolls had eaten since time immemorial also died instantly. The water monitor that bit into Katrina died too. Sadly, all of the water monitors and all of the goannas and all of the quolls soon died out as soon as the cane toad frontline arrived. So too did most of the snakes and many birds like the jabirus and brolgas who loved eating frogs and didn't know that this was the only kind of frog they shouldn't eat or they would die. Death adders, King Browns, Black snakes as well as many other snake species that liked eating frogs quickly die out when toads appear on the scene.

Carie wasn't her real name. She had just shortened it from "*Couldn't Care Less*". That meant she wasn't worried about how many cane toads or other creatures died because she knew that there would be more cane toads because every year she produced about 100,000 eggs. Because the eggs and even her tadpoles are poisonous, most of them survived. Even the fish that ate the eggs died and so she knew that there would be thousands more cane toads to replace her if anything should happen to her. She also knew that there would soon be few animals left who could attack and kill her. So as fast as the

frontline could move forward the cane toads were taking over Northern Australia.

Carie was on the front-line heading north towards the bright lights of Darwin. Other front-lines were heading in towards the Ord River irrigation area in Western Australia. They knew that there would be many little creatures to eat there but soon, like everywhere else where cane toads have been, few lizards, frogs, grubs and insects would remain. Cane toads following the front-line don't have anywhere near as much to eat, so no other cane toads can grow to be as big as Carie and the other front line toads.

Carie didn't know and didn't expect that anything could stop the spread of cane toads. She was unaware of a group of people who have formed themselves into a band of Super-heroes known as "Toadbusters".

Toadbusters had started a war to keep Carie and other cane toads out of Darwin. They organized gangs to go out at hunting them down at night when the frontline was trying to sneak into Darwin without being seen. The Toadbusters had strong torches and special catching nets. They caught hundreds every night and thousands of toads every month.

Young Tim was a Toadbuster. Tim set traps for the toads by turning on special lights over specially built cages. The lights attracted hordes of insects and these insects attracted lots of cane toads that then got caught in the traps.

Carrie saw all of the insects buzzing about a light in a box. Feeling as hungry as ever, Carie wanted started eating them. Lots of other frontline toads were already in the cage eating the many insects buzzing about. When she had eaten all of the moths and beetles and other insects she could Carie thought it was time move closer to Darwin. Then she found there was a door on the box and she couldn't get out. She had been caught in Tim's trap.

Next morning some Tim came along and picked up the trap, opened the door and tipped all ten toads into a big black plastic bag and put the bag in a refrigerator. Carie thought how pleasant it was to escape the heat of the Northern Territory Top End in the refrigerator but soon she went to sleep and never ever woke up again.

Carie and the other toads caught in the trap were turned into a fertilizer. So, after destroying so

much native wildlife Carie was at last helping the country by making some plants grow better. Tim and the Toadbusters were happy because they had for some time stopped the Frontline from reaching Darwin where many cats and other family pets will die if they make the same mistake as the quolls and other wildlife and get some of the toads' poison. Carie has gone but Tim and his fellow Toadbusters keep on working to control cane-toads trying to get back all of the creatures that had disappeared due to the presence of the toads — reptiles, insects, frogs, birds and mammals.



Almangiye Waits for Big Rains

The difference between Kakadu in the Wet and Kakadu in the Dry Season is most dramatic and animals have to make huge adjustments to survive. The story of the long-necked turtle is particularly fascinating.



Almangiye was worried because he was impatient for the big rains to begin in Kakadu.

Almangiye lived with his family in an Aboriginal community in the middle of Kakadu. Although he was named Almangiye after the long-necked turtle when he went to school the teachers and others didn't try to call him by his proper name and just called him "Al" for short. This was really discourteous and didn't show a lot of respect for Almangiye's clan that had lived in this part of the Northern Territory for thousands of years.

Although he went to school like other Australians, Almangiye was very proud off his Aboriginal culture that is the oldest continuous civilization in the world. It existed long before the Eskimos, the Chinese or any African, American or European culture, and it had changed very little in over 50,000 years until the time of his grand-parents.

Almangiye grew up having to be able to speak the language of his father's clan that he lived

with and also the language of his mother's clan where his Uncle and many cousins lived and now that he was going to school he had to not only be able to speak another language, English, but also to read and write it.

Although Almangiye's grandparents had never been to school they taught him lots about the bush where he lived and all of the plants and animals in it. Before he started school he knew most of the plants by their Aboriginal names. He knew when they flowered and when their fruit was ripe. He knew about most of the animals and when they had their babies and when they made the best tucker.

Right now though it was the near the end of Gurrung, the dry season. At this time the billabongs were shrinking and getting smaller. The Magpie geese and ducks and crocodiles all crowded more and more around the little water that was left. This is the time when it was easiest to see most of the larger birds and animals of Kakadu that depend on the wetlands.

As some of the billabongs dried up completely the animals that could moved to the remaining water elsewhere. That was mainly the birds. Some crocodiles just dug holes in the mud and hoped it would rain before they died of heat. Several animals died if the rains of the wet season were late arriving. However Almangiye's namesake, the long-necked turtle had a very interesting trick for this time of the year. It had buried itself deep in the mud while it was still wet and before the mud began to bake

hard. It then just pushed its nose to the surface so that it could breathe and then it went into a kind of sleep. Long-necked turtles survived for weeks with the mud baked so hard they couldn't even wriggle a claw until it rained.

Almangiye had watched his namesake all through Gurrung and Gunmelong seasons which stretched from August to December. He had seen where his friend the long-necked turtle, the real "Almangiye" had buried itself in the dried out Billabong in mid November. Now he was so anxious for the rain to come to free his namesake from its clay prison. Other wildlife needed the rains to return too.

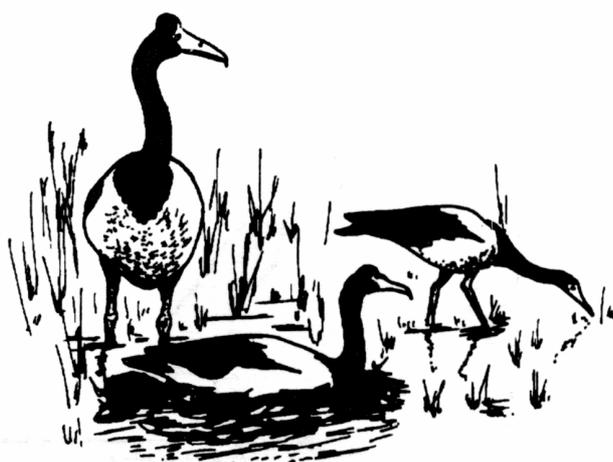
Almangiye's family had many ways of describing rain in their own Gun-djeihmi language. In English instead of saying "heavy rain", they described the rain in terms of whether it was "big rains" or if it caused floods they would refer to it as "the biggest rains". To free the long-necked turtle only required "big rain" but for Almangiye it seemed to take too long to arrive.

The red bush apples were ripe and even though he knew it wouldn't be long before some big rain came, Almangiye was most anxious. He would run down to the dry billabong every afternoon after school to see if his turtle was still there and still alive. Then the weather was very hot and very humid. He watched the storm clouds build up each afternoon. Then there were some light rains but although it wasn't enough to free his turtle from the baked clay, it was enough for the clouds of winged termites or alates to fly into the air from their nests. He knew that these termites

were the food for many birds and animals such as the Frill-necked lizard and soon they would soon be producing their babies. The small storms had caused green grass to start to replace the brown straw but they didn't cause the baked clay on the floor of the dry billabong to soften.

Then one December afternoon he saw a big lightning flash. A deafening roar of thunder followed it and it was a much bigger storm than any of the others. The wind blew hard and the rain poured down. Water washed off the rocks and the house roof. It started to flow over the land. It started flowing into the billabong. It rained until after dark.

The next morning Almangiye rushed to see what had happened. There was a lot of water in the billabong and he couldn't see where his turtle had been buried but he knew it was now free and he felt happy. Everyone in Kakadu always feels happier when the big wet arrives and the whole countryside seems to be much more alive.



Bamurru's Two Wives



Garrukul, the blue winged kookaburra was puzzled. For years he had watched Bamurru, the magpie goose, and his two wives make their nest out on the flood plains of the South Alligator River and up until now he had thought it was perfectly natural.

Garrukul and his wife had lots of domestic arguments. It happened nearly every dusk and dawn. Everyone around could hear their loud “krorpping”. Most people thought that they were laughing but domestic arguments are really no laughing matter especially if you can call out as loudly as Garrukul and his wife. Every day they woke up the whole of Kakadu and then continued arguing until dark.

That morning Garrukul and his wife had had a bigger argument than usual and he thought how unlucky he would be if he had to have two wives to argue with like poor old Bamurru. Garrukul thought Bamurru must feel miserable with two wives.

“I would hate to have to argue with two wives. Just one is bad enough,” he thought.

Then he thought also about Ginga, the big estuarine crocodile. Ginga had about six wives but Garrukul knew that Ginga was clever because Ginga didn't live with his six wives. He just let them go off to build their own nests on the banks of the South Alligator River each year. Each stayed close to her nest to keep away any other creatures that might want to eat the eggs or baby crocodiles when they hatched.

“Ginga doesn't live with his wives so he doesn't have any big arguments with any of them. Maybe that is why crocodiles are rarely heard but why everyone hears kookaburras' arguments.” Garrukul thought. Garrukul laughed to himself and thought, *“That is why old Ginga has such a big smile.”*

Garrukul was so worried about his arguments with his wife that he went to visit Bamurru to try to solve his puzzle.

“Why do you have two wives when all other birds in Kakadu have only one?” asked Garrukul.

“Well!” replied Bamurru. *“You build your nest in the hollow trees. You can get in the shade of your nest in the middle of the day and escape the fierce midday Kakadu sun. My wife and I had to build our nest out in the middle of the flood plain near the wild rice. It is very hot, especially during Gudjeuk and there is no shade.”*

“But!” said Garrukul, *“That doesn't explain why you have two wives.”*

“Well it was too hot for my wife Maggie, to sit there on her own tall day so she wanted me to share the chores. That would be the right thing to do. But it still meant that she had to spend half of the day on the nest in the hot sun in the middle of summer. She thought that this was still too much. Then she said one day that our nest was so big that we could fit in twice as many eggs. She said that if I had another wife to share the work with we could raise twice as many chicks but each of us spend our time sitting on the nest in the fierce sun,” Bamurru concluded.

Garrukul was almost satisfied but he still puzzled over the smoothness of the relationships.

“What about the domestic arguments? I get into a lot of strife with just one wife! I just couldn't face twice as many domestics,” he said.

Bamurru replied, *“Magpie geese also have a few domestics. You can hear them honking and having domestic spats at all times of the day and night and even when they are flying past. That is why some peculiar Kakadu people call us ‘Knobble-headed-honking-flappers’. Yet rather than double the number of domestic disputes, having two wives cuts the number of domestic arguments in half.*

“If I had my way I would like to be like Ginga and have six wives. That would mean even fewer arguments and even less sitting out in the blazing sun. But my two wives say our nest isn't big enough for even three wives and they just don't want another in our nest. So I am left with only two wives and that is enough,” said Bamurru.

Emily & Eric Emu

During the 2007 Mungo Mutawintji and More safari in March lots of emus were seen, great flocks at a time with father always attending to his brood. That inspired this story of devotion to domestic duty.

Emily Emu was born in the Hattah Lakes of North Western Victoria. She grew up to have a wonderful life in the National Park. It was at Hattah that she met a wonderful husband, Eric. Eric was the most devoted and attentive husband any emu could wish to have. He did absolutely everything she wanted him to do without any hesitation or complaining.

Even though emus can't fly, they do have wings and Emily's wings were only as large as your finger. All Emily had to do was flick her very small wings and to Eric it meant something like *"I need you to do something for me."* Eric then always rushed up to see what she might need.

As summer was beginning to disappear Eric started to become clucky. He suggested to Emily that they might think about having a family. Emily didn't ever admit it but she was just plain SPOILT. She wasn't at all keen on being tied down with a family. She realized that having a family would mean that she wouldn't be able to go anywhere she pleased and do just what she pleased. She realized that she just didn't want the responsibility of raising a family.

When she told Eric how she felt, he replied, *"Oh! OK. I don't mind but if you just lay the eggs, I will do the rest and you can continue to be fancy free while I hatch the eggs and raise the chicks."*

Emily couldn't believe her ears. (Yes all birds, even emus have ears even though you can't see them.) *"Well does that mean I also get out of building a nest too?"* Emily asked.

"Yep!" said Eric.

Emily quickly responded, *"Then it's a deal!"*

And so Eric, who had never built a nest before, scratched together a shallow heap of grass which he called a nest.

Then over the next two weeks Emily proceeded to lay nine huge green eggs in it until she felt she had done all that was necessary for her to keep her side of the bargain.

A strange thing happened while she was in this egg-laying mood. All of her feathers became darker. As soon as she had finished laying they went back to their normal drab, grey-brown colour.

When the egg laying was done she wandered around the lakes and had great fun catching up with the gossip from the many mobs of emus that wander around Hattah

While Emily was busy socializing Eric just sat on the nest. He sat there for almost ten weeks. He was on the nest from mid-May until almost the end of July. He hardly ever left the nest. He was afraid that foxes and goannas would steal his eggs if he went away (and he was right). Even a fierce and unexpected winter storm didn't budge him from his duty. Eric lost a lot of weight while he was hatching his brood. He was determined to give them the best care.

After many weeks he heard some unusual noises. The first of the chicks inside the very large green eggs had started to peck their egg shells open from the inside. Eric kept sitting on the nest until the last green egg hatched. He was then the proud father of nine beautiful black and brown striped chicks.

Although the chicks couldn't fly and never would if they were like other emus, they could run quite fast from the day they were hatched.

It took several days for Eric to track down Emily to proudly present her with their new flock of wonderful chicks but Emily was soon off socializing. She didn't stay around for long and left Eric to do all of the raising of the chicks.

The greatest threats to the survival of the chicks were domestic dogs and motor vehicles. Eric could frighten off the dogs with his rushes and loud grumpy drumming noises but cars took no notice of him. So he just had to teach the chicks to stay away from roads.

Eric watched teach of his chicks grow in size. As they grew bigger they lost their brown stripes and turned black. There had been a lot of rain in the Murray River catchment that winter and in late August the river reached flood levels and overflowed into Chalka Creek. That filled the Hattah Lakes where they lived.

There were problems sometimes because his chicks were mischievous. Ernie was very cheeky and his favourite trick was to sneak up on any dogs that came into the National Park and peck their tails when they weren't looking. He would then run away so fast that no dog could

ever catch him. He used to say, “*Serve them right! Dogs are not supposed to be in National Parks anyhow!*”

Eric and the chicks only occasionally saw Emily. She was always visiting other mobs of emus to pick up interesting gossip that she passed on to the next group she met.

One day while she was with a group of friends, Emily saw Eric and the chicks on the other side of Lake Hattah. She wanted to show off the family that she rarely saw and so she called them with a loud drumming sound to come over to her side.

Emily’s call seemed so urgent. Because Eric ALWAYS did whatever Emily asked, he immediately plunged into the lake and began swimming across to her. Although the chicks had never had a swimming lesson in their life they immediately followed their father. (*All emus can swim naturally although emus usually live in places where there is no need to swim*). As the nine chicks swam in a line following Eric with just the tops of their black backs and necks

showing they looked like some serpentine monster.

Some campers beside the lake saw this unusual sight and were frightened. They told other people what they saw and soon everyone about started hearing stories about the Hattah Monster who lived in the lake. The people who heard the story didn’t know that it was really Eric and his chicks and it was only because Eric ALWAYS did whatever Emily asked, whenever she asked.



Bimbi, the Barkendji Boy

One of the rich experiences of the Mungo Mutawintji and More trips is the contact with the Barkendji people of the lower Darling River and their efforts to cross two very different cultures. It is that difficulty which inspired this story.

Bimbi was a Barkendji boy who grew up with his Aboriginal family in Broken Hill. He was proud to be an Aboriginal but he was sad because he couldn’t speak any language other than English. He knew his people’s territory covered land for hundreds of kilometres along the lower Darling River, he didn’t know much about the land. He also knew that the Barked people once had their own language. He had started to learn it at school. Knowing some of this ancient language made him proud of his heritage and more determined to learn more about Barkendji culture.

One day his old grandfather who lived in Wilcannia visited his mother and father and Bimbi asked him to teach him about Barkendji land and culture because Grandpa knew so much.

Grandpa said, “*You should come with me and I will take you on a camping trip along Barka. That is the name for the Darling River and I will show you how the old people lived in this*

country before there were any sheep or cattle or white people here and tell you some of their many stories which I learnt when I was a boy.”

And so they set off. Grandpa took him first to Mutawintji.

“*This area is now a National Park but from the as far as people can remember Aboriginal people from all around came to Mutawintji to carry out many ceremonies. This is where boys and girls were changed into men and women and learnt their new responsibilities. This is where they learnt how to behave and what would happen to them if they did not follow the Aboriginal rules,*” Grandpa told young Bimbi.

“*What rules?*” asked Bimbi.

“*There were many,*” said Grandpa.

Grandpa then told Bimbi about *Wirtu Wirtu Thuringa*. These women guided the Barkendji on the right things to do. Now they are now a group of stars which white-fellas call the Seven Sisters and sometimes “Pleiades”. Grandpa said

that from their position in the sky they still kept watch over the people night and day. He also told Bimbi what happened if people didn't do what they were supposed to.

Over the rest of the trip Grandpa told him lots of stories which had been passed down from old people to Barkendji children over the ages. They were all interesting and Bimbi often asked Grandpa to tell them to him again because they were so interesting and because it helped him understand Barkendji culture so much better.

Before they left Mutawintji, Grandpa had shown him many places where these stories were also told in the rocks and in the cave shelters. Bimbi realized just why Mutawintji was such a special place, not only to the Barkendji, but also to many Outback Aboriginal groups.

Grandpa then took him on to Wilcannia and told him about the many fish which once lived in the river there before the white-fellas had taken all of the water out of the river and how the old people used to catch Murray River cod without white-fella fishing lines.

"They also caught turtles in the river. They were good tucker." Grandpa said. He also told him about the many other foods which the men, the hunters caught to feed their family groups. *"Away from the river they hunted kangaroos and emus and birds which they brought down with boomerangs and echidnas goannas and snakes,"* he said.

"Yuk!" said Bimbi. *"I wouldn't like to eat snake"*.

Just then Grandpa saw a big carpet python asleep in the sun with a big bulge in its middle. *"It has just eaten a bandicoot and is slow and trying to digest it,"* said Grandpa and he sneaked up and caught it and took it to their camp by the river where he cooked it in the coals of the fire.

"This tastes good," said Bimbi. *"It is just like chicken and fish"*

"I like it too," said Grandpa. *"But Echidna tastes even better and if you catch goannas at the right time they also are really delicious."*

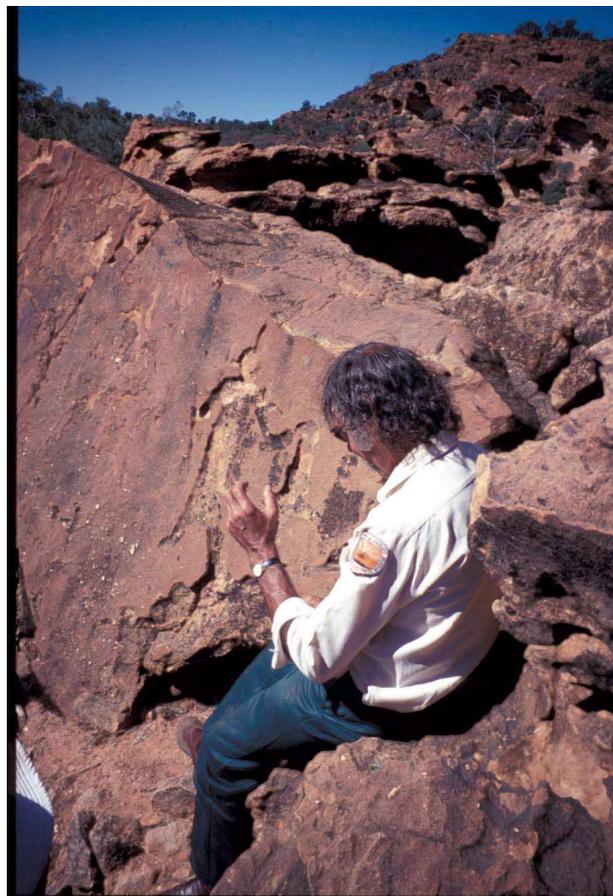
They then followed the Darling River down to Menindee where there are some huge lakes. When they got there they saw there was a big dam on the river diverting water into the lakes.

Grandpa was unhappy because he said that the river was being ruined by white-fella greed.

"They take all of the water out of this river to grow cotton crops and grape crops and other crops and to supply big cities like Broken Hill and Adelaide. They think that all of the water should be used for people and forget that other creatures in the world like the ducks and fish and wild animals need water too. White-fellas need to show more respect for Nature," he said.

They stopped in Menindee where Grandpa had a Kangaroo shooter friend. They got some Kangaroo tails and took them to their camp among some very old River Red gums beside the Darling River in Kinchega National Park where Grandpa cooked them.

The next day they went back to Broken Hill where Bimbi couldn't wait to tell all his Barkendji friends what he had learned. He told them of Wirtu Wirtu Thuringa and other stories and why they had so much heritage to be proud of. They all agreed that they would treasure their cultural heritage and work to protect Barka — the wonderful Darling River which is so important to their heritage.



Gol Gol — The Ghost of Mungo

This story was inspired by the spectacular landforms of the Lake Mungo lunette where any bones found on the surface are checked for antiquity by seeing how well they stick to one's tongue.

Gol Gol began life as a hairy nosed wombat a long long time ago. In fact it was 40,000 years ago. He lived on the eastern shores of Lake Mungo when the lake was full of water and full of fish and lots of interesting animals lived around its shores.

Gol Gol lived in his burrow all day and only came out in the late evenings and had to go back to bed as soon as it was daylight. So, he didn't see very much of what was happening.

He did see lots of Aboriginal people who were sitting around their campfires cooking fish, yabbies and mussels that they had caught in the lake or an emu or a kangaroo but Gol Gol tried to keep away from them because he thought that they might want to cook him in their campfires.

Gol Gol saw that there was trouble brewing on the lake shore because the Aboriginal people were looking other things to eat as well as the fish, yabbies and mussels they caught in the lake. They were busy hunting kangaroos and emus more than ever but now they were becoming more interested in catching animals like him which mainly moved about at night. They were already busy hunting thylacines, devils and even bettongs that weren't as big as wombats. Gol Gol saw the Aboriginal people light fires at the mouths of some wombat burrows to smoke them out.

One day they came to his burrow and lit a very smoky fire but Gol Gol thought that if he went outside he would be cooked so he stayed where he was and a strange thing happened. The smoke that the Aborigines were making from their fire turned him into a spirit.

Aboriginal people all around Australia have special smoking ceremonies to chase away the bad spirits. They pass new-born babies through smoke and use smoke in many ways. They didn't know though that they had turned Gol Gol into a good spirit who would stay on the shores of Lake Mungo for thousands of years to watch over it.

Gol Gol saw the climate change many times over the years. He watched the lake dry out and the cold westerly wind blow sand from the floor of the dry lake bed on to the dunes where his burrow had been and where his bones still lay.

Then the climate changed again. After thousands of years of being bone dry, Lake Mungo filled again. The Aboriginal people were happy again and had plenty of food but some animals like the thylacine which had been driven away in the dry period never came back. The dunes grew new forests and people were happy.

But then after thousands more years it happened again. Lake Mungo was dry again and the wind began blowing a new layer of sand from the dry lake bed up on to the dune. The dune was now much higher and much wider than when Gol Gol was alive and his burrow was buried even deeper.

Fewer Aboriginal people now lived around the lake because there were no more fish, yabbies and mussels to catch and all the wombats and devils were now gone.

More years passed. Then something happened very suddenly. Some white people came. They chased away the Aboriginal people. They built houses and sheds in the dry lakebed and brought with them sheep and goats. These new animals ate the food that the kangaroos and emus used to eat and soon there were fewer wild animals left around the old lake.

Worse was to come. Some white man had let some rabbits loose near Melbourne. Within a few years there were so many rabbits living on the old shores of Lake Mungo that along with the sheep and goats they had eaten out most of the trees, grasses and other plants on the lake's dunes and the sand started to blow away.

As strong winds blew they shifted all of the sand that had covered Gol Goll's burrow. Soon there were people visiting the lake dune (lunette) which they called "The Walls" to see what they could discover about who had lived there and why. Many scientists visited the dried out lake and eroded lunette. They had more trouble working out what had happened at Lake Mungo over the thousands of years than they would have had doing a jig-saw puzzle.

They finally got together a good picture of what life on the lunette had been like and Gol Goll's ghost had to admire how clever they were. The scientists were so impressed by what a special place it was that they even put Lake Mungo on the World Heritage List. Gol Gol and Mungo's names became famous. Now more people want to protect this special place.



Silky's First Big Trip

During the Lord Howe Island safari in May, 2007 it was noted that climate change was affecting many of the island's special birds. Petrels and Tropic-birds were later arriving to start their breeding and the number of shearwaters was conspicuously lower than previously observed. This is an important story.

Silky was a Fleshy-footed Shearwater. She was born, or rather hatched, in a burrow on beautiful Lord Howe Island where her parents and grandparents and thousands of Silky's relatives had also come into this world. There were thousands of their burrows on Lord Howe Island.

Silky's parents had arrived on Lord Howe Island in September after having spent the southern winter cruising around the Northern Pacific Ocean where it was summer. They arrived back on Lord Howe Island and started to dig their burrow amongst the palms at Middle Beach, but before they could get the burrow as deep as they wanted they struck a rock. Well it was like a large lump of coral and because they couldn't go any further they had to start all over again. They looked around for another place to dig a burrow but there was no more room at Middle Beach.

Every night there were thousands of webbed feet scratching out sand to see who would be the first to finish their burrow and lay their eggs. There is a very strict rule amongst all shearwaters all around the world and that is that they ***must never be seen on land in the daylight***. That meant that they could only dig in the dark and during the day if their burrow wasn't deep enough to hide away in they had to fly out to sea and stay there all day until after dark before they could come back to finish their hole.

Because all of their neighbours had crowded together so closely in the palm forest, Silky's parents had to find somewhere else to dig their burrow. Eventually they found a lovely spot between the roots and trunks of a big Banyan Fig near Ned's Beach. Here they created the best burrow they had ever dug and laid just one egg.

Mum & Dad Shearwater took turns to sit on the egg in the burrow by the big Banyan and every morning before it was daylight, one of them would leave the burrow and fly out to sea to gather food. The other parent would hide all day in the burrow and wait until after dark when the partner would fly in.

Just after dark it was pandemonium with thousands of shearwaters wailing like loud

"meeowing" cats. The ones who had been at sea all day were calling out something like, "Where are you? It is dark and I can't see you." Their mate would be calling from the bottom of the burrow (because they couldn't leave their egg, "I'm over here and I am hungry. Hurry home and bring me something to eat."

That is the first thing Silky can remember about the life in the burrow — the loud wailing every night. When Silky was hatched her parents took it in turn to go out every day and when they came back they would cough up some of the fish they had caught during the day to feed Silky and their spouse. But most of the fish were fed to Silky.

Silky got her name because when she hatched, she had no feathers just a silky brown down. She kept her down while she grew to be almost twice as big as her parents.



Silky with most of her down replaced by feathers

Near the end of March Silky began to change. She started to grow some feathers like her parents. The silky down all over her wings started to be replaced with sooty coloured feathers.

Then one day in April Silky's parents said to her, *"You're a big girl now. In fact you are twice as big as us and we need to fly off to the Northern Hemisphere before it gets any cooler here on Lord Howe Island. You need to hurry up and grow your feathers. Until then you won't be able to fly. We can't wait that long so we are going tomorrow and we hope that you will soon*

be able to follow us and get to where the weather and the water is warmer.”

The next morning before it was sunlight instead of just one parent leaving the burrow, both parents flew off and Silky knew that they wouldn't be back that night. Silky was sad but she knew what to do. She now had very little down left and she had never been outside the burrow. So as soon as it was dark she went out of the burrow under the big Banyan to look around to see what Lord Howe Island looked like in the moonlight. She knew that she had to be back in her burrow before daylight.

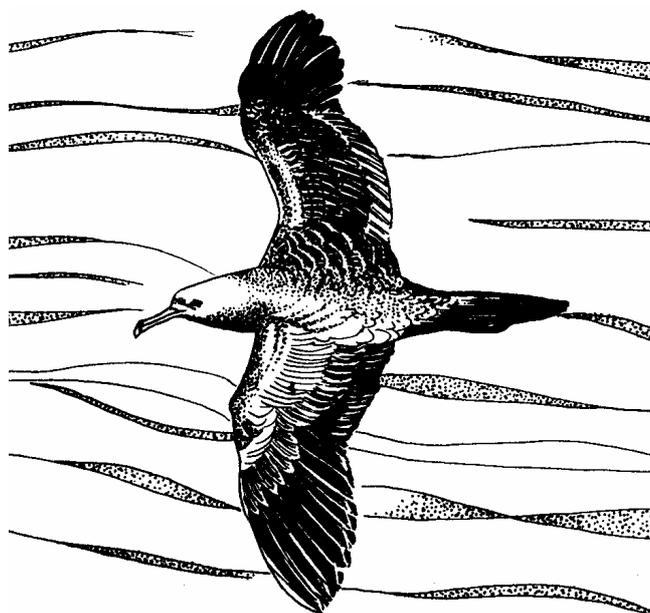
She did that every night and while she was out she stretched her wings and started to flap them. She wandered further away from her burrow every night and even wandered into people's houses. One night she wandered into a restaurant but the people there caught her and threw her out. While she was exercising outside the burrow she began to make friends with other chicks who like her had no parents to care for them.

By the end of May she had taught herself to fly. She had even begun taking test flights and she started to think that the weather was getting too cool and maybe she should head to a part of the world where the weather was warmer. So at the beginning of June when one of her friends said that they should see if they could find their parents, she agreed. So the following night before the sun rose Silky and her friends went on a big flight and knew they wouldn't ever go back to the burrows they were leaving.

Silky and her friends were now flying over the sea as they headed north to warmer weather. When they got tired there was no land in sight and so they stopped and rested on the ocean. Silky had never swum before but she found that her webbed feet helped her to swim very well. In fact without ever being taught, Silky found that she could do many amazing things.

She would skim over the waves with her wing tips nearly touching the sea but without ever getting them wet. Then she realized that was why her family were called Shearwaters. She found she could catch fish and she had her first meal since her parents had left her weeks earlier. She had become so thin and so light while she had nothing to eat but now she was the same size as her parents and she just loved all of the things she could do. That was just the beginning of Silky's big trip.

Now she no longer looked soft and silky. Her friends said, "*You don't look white and silky anymore. You need a new name.*" So they started to call her Suzie Shearwater. As they flew up to the other side of the world where the weather was warmer, they knew that next summer down south, they would return to beautiful Lord Howe Island along with all of their relatives and friends. *That would be their next big journey.*



The Tale of Two Islands

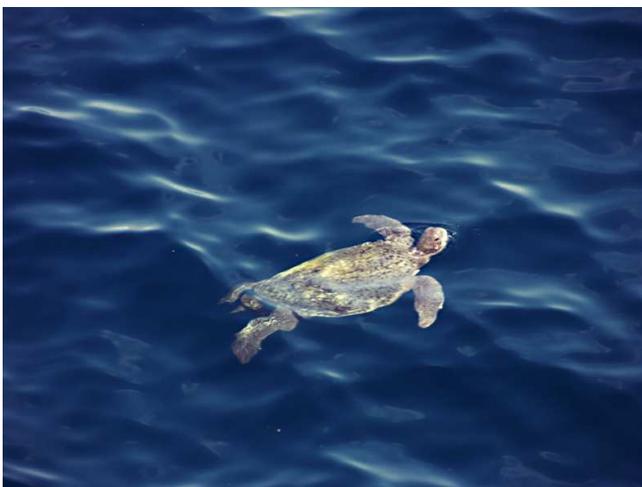
Every year on Lord Howe Island a turtle can be seen swimming in the Old Gulch on Lord Howe Island. It is too cool for turtles to nest there and so this is a story about the nearest place to Lord Howe Island where this turtle might nest — Fraser Island.

Myrtle Turtle lived on Lord Howe Island. She hadn't always lived there. Years earlier she had hatched on a beach on Fraser Island. There weren't many turtles nesting there then but when she wasn't even as big as a wind up toy and when her flippers felt like rubber, with 100 brothers and sisters she had pushed her way through the fine sand to the surface.

"Come to think of it again," thought Myrtle, *"I have never seen such fine sand as on Fraser Island."* That was because Myrtle had never set foot on land or sand from that moment to this. She lived entirely in the sea. Although she had to breathe air, she even slept at sea. At other times she could dive down and stay under-water for almost half an hour.

When she was very small, it was very dangerous being too close to the shores because lots of big fish and sharks who ate small creatures like Myrtle were there. So she went as far out to sea as possible and hid in little rafts which floated around the ocean. She ate anything she could. Gradually she grew. Her flippers no longer felt like rubber. They became very strong. Her colour had changed from grey-blue to brown and her shell became harder and thicker.

When she was bigger than a dinner plate and her shell was as hard as a cow's horn she felt safe from being attacked by big fish and sharks and thought to herself, *"There must be better places than this raft to live."*



So Myrtle went exploring a wide area of the Pacific Ocean. One day she looked up and saw

two giant mountains rising out of the sea. They rose so high that they had their feet in the ocean and their heads in a cloud.

They looked so interesting and so wonderful that she moved in for a closer look and to her amazement she found that the mountains were at one end of a most beautiful small island which was covered mainly with a magical palm forest. But what amazed Myrtle most was that it was surrounded by a wonderful coral reef with the most colourful array of brightly coloured fish. There were lots of fish and anemones and corals and sea urchins and sharks. Myrtle had discovered a Wonderland.

Myrtle decided that she would stay at Lord Howe Island forever but then started thinking about the fine sand of Fraser Island. She thought she would like to feel it again. There was sand surrounding Lord Howe Island but it was mainly coarse being mainly made up of broken down corals.

Myrtle also had another thought and she thought how nice it would be to have some babies of her own. So when the weather began to get warmer after a cool, wet and windy winter on Lord Howe Island, Myrtle decided to set out to return to Fraser Island.

Myrtle still doesn't know how she got there because it was about 1500 kilometres from Lord Howe Island to Fraser Island. She just started swimming and it wasn't long before she saw the long beaches of Fraser Island. She didn't like the first bit she saw because there were lots of motor vehicles driving along the beach.

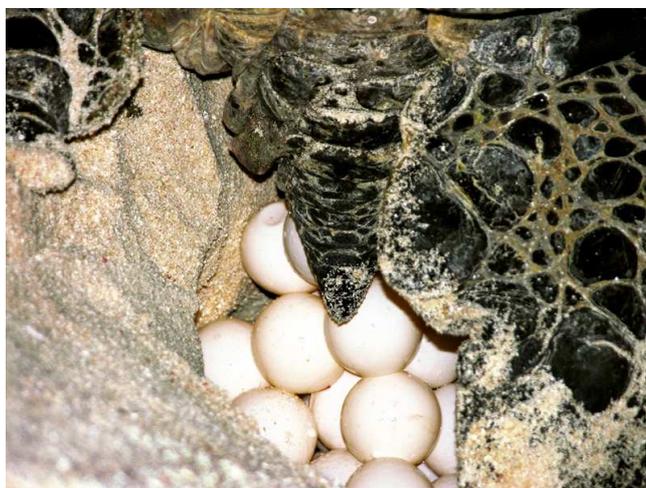
"I don't want my babies being run over by motor vehicles," she thought and so she kept swimming until she reached the northernmost point of Fraser Island. Here there were very few motor vehicles.

Myrtle met up with many other turtles. They were mainly Green turtles like herself but some were Loggerheads and they were all there because they wanted to lay their eggs in the fine sand of Fraser Island.

They didn't just want to lay one or two eggs. Each had come to lay over 1000 eggs. They

wouldn't do it all at once. In early November Myrtle went ashore and laid 120 eggs. To lay these eggs she climbed up the beach one night near high tide. Once she was in the grass she felt comfortable and started to dig a huge hole with her flippers until she felt some moist sand under her belly.

Then with her hind flippers she carefully carved out a very neat egg chamber. It had taken her over two hours to dig her body nest and carve the egg chamber. She lost count as she laid about 120 eggs. Then she spent another two hours filling in first the egg chamber then the larger shallow body nest. By the time she had finished and hauled herself back to the sea, she was exhausted by the effort.



Over the next three months she repeated that operation seven times until she had laid over

1000 eggs. Then she swam back to Lord Howe Island knowing that she wouldn't feel the fine sand of Fraser Island again for another three years when she would return to lay once again. While she loved Lord Howe Island and its coral reefs, the beaches there weren't warm enough to incubate her eggs.

"Anyhow," she said, "although they are a long way apart, this way I get to enjoy two wonderful World Heritage islands."



Billy and Buffey and the Bouncing Stones

There are deep holes on the "beach" of the Old Gulch on Lord Howe Island where kids have fashioned forts amongst the round rocks which, if thrown, do actually bounce. That inspired this story.

Billy and Buffey lived on the most beautiful island of the whole Pacific Ocean — the World Heritage listed Lord Howe Island. They had a wonderful life growing up on this little Paradise. They could go swimming any time they wanted. It just wasn't ordinary swimming in a pool. They wore masks and snorkels and explored the coral gardens of the most southerly coral reef in the world. They could go fishing and often brought home enough fish for their mother to cook a meal for the whole family. There was also so much to explore in the hills and forest around the settlement that they were never bored and always had something interesting to do or to look forward to.

They went to school with forty other kids. Like all of their schoolmates, they wore a green

uniform and had to wear hats to school but they didn't wear shoes. They thought how lucky they wore that they had such freedom which mainland kids don't get. Most kids rode bicycles to school and the school bike racks had bicycles of every size. They often raced other kids but they had a problem with tourists who like to walk down the middle of the few roads and streets around the settlement and they had to be careful not to run into them especially when they were racing.

They loved school but they loved even more the holidays when their parents took them camping at North Bay. Sometimes they walked over the northern hills and down to North Bay but sometimes they went with their parents and the camping gear in the glass-bottom boat. Then they could see the coral gardens and fish in a

part of the lagoon which wasn't so easy for them to explore from their home.



North Bay, Lord Howe Island

Mt Eliza is centre top with the Old Gulch to its right.

They loved North Bay because most of the time they had the place to themselves. During the day a few tourists would wander in, but only islanders were allowed to camp there and so the tourists were only there for a few hours in the middle of each day. Most other islanders chose to have their holidays on the mainland and so there were rarely any other campers present.

Apart from snorkelling, they went fishing at the herring pools and explored the rock pools there. Almost anytime they visited North bay the area was swarming with sea birds. There always seemed to be some birds nesting summer, winter, autumn or spring. There were noddies, sooty terns, mutton-birds, tropic-birds as well as many waders along the shore and forest birds. Billy and Buffey' dad knew all of the bird species on Lord Howe Island and he taught his children to identify them

They loved camping at North Bay most because they liked to climb Mount Eliza from where they could see almost the whole of Lord Howe Island and they loved it because they could play at the Old Gulch.



The Old Gulch Bouncing Stones Beach



View of Lord Howe Island from Mount Eliza

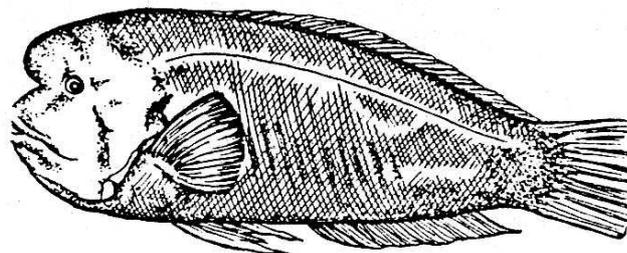
The Old Gulch had a beach of big round rocks which had been rolled over and over by the waves millions of times. Not only were they round and smooth, but also Billy and Buffey found out that they bounced like golf-balls.

Billy and Buffey often had stone bouncing competitions to see who could get the most bounces from a stone.

When he saw their games, their father who always liked to joke told them about a man who every time he found something amazing always said, *"Well stone the crows and starve the lizards!"* He also reminded them about how *"Sticks and stones will break your bones..."* Then he told them some proverbs such as why *"People who live in glass-houses shouldn't throw stones"*. He also told them about why they should *"Leave no stone unturned,"* and reminded them that *"Rolling stones gather no moss."*

One day Buffey threw a stone that bounced so high it landed in the water hard on the head of a big Double Header fish. Billy waded out into the water to get the fish, which they took back to their parents in the camp.

Dad made the joke of the day when he pronounced the fish as *"Stone dead"*.



Lord Howe Island Double Header

Finding the Lost Treasure

This is a story developed during a safari with the School for International Training to Fraser Island in March 2007 and was inspired by seeing Aboriginal artefacts exhumed by the south-easterly wind.

Laurel and Ewen were really thrilled. They were going to spend their school holidays with their grandparents on Fraser Island. They were very eager to see their grandparents again and to explore Fraser Island which they had heard so much about but seen so little of until now.

At the Hervey Bay ferry terminal, their parents gave them presents and messages to deliver to their grandparents. Then they were on their own until their grandpa met them on Fraser Island. They saw a pod of dolphins while they were on the ferry crossing Great Sandy Strait.

On reaching Fraser Island, they excitedly greeted Grandpa and climbed into his 4WD truck. Then they bounced across the island on the rough sand track. Fraser Island was very different from their home. It had lots and lots of trees. They were the biggest trees they had ever seen and they grew so close together that the forest was thicker than any they had ever imagined in the fairy stories they had heard when they were younger. In fact they didn't see any houses at all until they had crossed the island to arrive in the small village where Grandma and Grandpa lived. Even here there were only a few houses and a shop but there was a wide wonderful beach which had huge waves rolling up onto it with a constant roar.

That night after they enjoyed Grandma's delicious dinner, Grandma took Laurel into her room and pulled out a small jewellery box. From there she took out a gold ring.

She said, *"Laurel, you are my oldest grand-daughter just like I was my grandmother's oldest grand-daughter and she was her grandmother's oldest grand-daughter. When I was your age my Grandma gave me this ring. It is very old. It must have been made more than 200 years ago. Maybe even more and it has been passed down through many generations. When your first granddaughter is old enough, I want you to give it to her."*

Laurel was overwhelmed. It was a family treasure and she had the honour to keep it for her grand-daughter. She tried to fit the ring on her finger but it was a bit too big and was loose on her finger. Grandma said that it would fit her a lot better when she was older. She was very excited when she went to bed that night.

The next day Grandpa said that he would take them to Wabby Lakes where they could have a swim. Wabby Lakes are very deep and have a steep forest on one side and a sand blow on the other. Grandpa took them for a walk over Stonetool Sandblow where he showed them some small, sharp flakes of stone which had been used by the Aborigines as tools.

When they got to the lake for their swim Laurel found that she had lost her ring. It must have slipped off when they were looking at the stone tools. They went back and looked but they couldn't find this precious family treasure.

Laurel was so sad that she thought it would spoil her holiday. Grandpa tried to make her feel happier by taking the two to wonderful places. He even took them fishing and showed them how to find wongs in the sand and use them as bait. Ewen was most excited when he caught his first fish. It was a bream and grandma cooked it for him. But while Ewen was happy, Laurel was still very sad about losing the ring. It was spoiling her holiday.

One night a few days before they were due to go home there was a big storm. The sea roared really loudly and the wind rattled the windows.

The next morning Grandpa said, *"I think that storm may have swept Stonetool Sandblow and we might have a chance of finding your ring."*

"How could a storm help?" asked Laurel.

"Those stone tools were once buried beneath the sand but the wind scoured the sand away and left them lying on top. The same thing might have happened with your precious ring," Grandpa replied. *"We will at least give it a go. It will be a sort of Treasure Hunt, but it will be for real buried gold."*

So off they went to search amongst the stone tools before anyone else disturbed the surface. Ewen spotted something glinting in the early morning light and sure enough it was the lost ring. They had found the buried treasure on Fraser Island.

Laurel put the precious ring away in a jewellery box which Grandpa gave her and she still keeps it there waiting for the day when she might be a Grandma and pass on this precious family heirloom to her grand-daughter.



Bendy and Dang

On a safari in 2006 Grandpa saw a dingo running across the road with something in its mouth. When the dingo stopped in the bush to look back at him, Grandpa saw that it was holding a bandicoot.

Bendy is a Long Nosed Bandicoot who lives with lots of relatives on Fraser Island. Bendy and all of his relatives have to be always watching out for dingoes because while Fraser Island dingoes like to eat fish and rats, bandicoots are dingoes favourite food. That is why bandicoots come out mainly at night and because they can smell their favourite food, truffles in the dark. They use their long noses to snuffle the truffles which they always eat with great relish. Because dingoes are colour blind and can't see well in the dark if a dingo comes prowling around at night most bandicoots can usually get away but sometimes the dingoes are lucky and dingoes like bandicoots as much as bandicoots love truffles.

Bendy though had a problem. Although he was brighter than the average bandicoot he was scared of the dark and so while other bandicoots were out all night smelling out and digging up truffles, Bendy would be huddled up in his nest which was a shallow hollow in the ground lined with grass and leaves and with the entrance covered over so that no dingo would find him either night or day.

However, if Bendy didn't go out truffle hunting at night because he was scared of the dark, it meant that he could only get his meals in the daytime when the Dingoes were always prowling around looking for anything they could eat, particularly small juicy long-nosed bandicoots like Bendy.

Bendy had another problem. His nest was in the territory of a really nasty and always hungry dingo called Dang. Dang was mean and lean and he knew there had to be a bandicoot about and so whenever Bendy sneaked out of his nest during the day, he always had to be on the lookout for the dastardly Dang Dingo. As well as watching for Dang, he always had to keep his eye on his escape route just in case Dang found him out truffling in daylight. Bandicoots are very small, not much bigger than rats, and nowhere near as fast as dingoes, which is why dingoes catch so many.

One morning when Bendy was just getting his long nose down the funnel-shaped hole he had just dug with his small forepaws, he heard a twig snap nearby. Just as Dang was about to pounce on him Bendy raced for a nearby hollow log. Dang was so close behind him that he almost had Bendy's tail in his sharp gleaming teeth. Then Bendy disappeared up the log and Dang slammed into the log so hard that his snout got stuck. Meanwhile Bendy was able to run out the other end and get away.

That made Dang even angrier and more determined to catch and eat Bendy. He was always looking to see when he could get a chance to catch this clever bandicoot. Bendy knew he was in greater danger and so he started to set alarms like twigs which cracked loudly when stood on. These alarms warned him if Dang was about while he was gathering truffles. He arranged the cobwebs of the Golden Nephilla spiders like trip wires to shake the leaves to warn him.

Bendy became really clever at working out escape routes if the alarm systems warned him that Dang was close. His best trick when Dang was about to pounce was to stop on a long branch leaning over a log and then turn around to face Dang. Then when Dang pounced he landed on the other end of the branch on the other side of the log. It was like a see-saw but because Dang was so much heavier than Bendy, when he jumped on the branch it sent Bendy catapulting into the air right over Dang's head. Bendy landed safe and sound and got away because Dang had no idea of which way he had gone.

Bendy caused Dang to go hurtling into lakes. Dang came out like a drowned rat. Dang got many nose-bleeds from slamming into trees while trying to get through small holes that only Bendy could get through. Dang should have given up trying to catch Bendy and saved himself many injuries. However it didn't turn out like that. Instead, Bendy started to get so upset at causing Dang so much grief and harm that he decided things had to change. By coping with the dangers of a dingo in daylight, he lost his fear of the dark.

So now Bendy is like other bandicoots on Fraser Island and does his truffle hunting at night. Dang still bears the scars of his futile fights with Bendy but he has now abandoned chasing bandicoots and they are now both wiser and happier.



Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny

These two characters appeared in a children's story in 1989 for the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation. Their relatives are still on Fraser Island having adventures.

Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny were two little midgies that lived in the sedges and small low shrubs on the western side of Fraser Island. Midgies are so small that they are like little specs of dust and they are hard for people to see. Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny didn't live alone along the western side of Fraser Island. There are millions and millions (some might even say trillions) of other midgies. They live there to keep out of the strong winds from the east.

Midgies are so small that even a light breeze can seem like a cyclone and so they stay low and close to the ground and protected by the bushes and sedges or they will be blown away.

Most of the time on Fraser Island the wind blows from the east. That is why midgies can't live on the eastern side but swarm on the western side. However some times the wind changes and it does blow from the west. Then midgies have to be very careful. They go to ground. If they stick their heads up high, they can be blown away.

Provided the wind wasn't too strong, both Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny loved to go wind surfing in the small puddles around the swamp. It was fun to go zooming across the water left in the footprint of a human who had ventured into the swamp. However they had so much fun zooming around the footprint that they had worn out the sail on their wind surfer. It was torn and it was time to get a new one.

That was how it was when one day Itty Bitty told Teeny Weeny that he was going to visit his Uncle Max Mini on the other side of the swamp to get his wind surfer a new sail. Uncle Max Mini was so clever that he could make almost anything and he had made their wind-surfer in the first place.

It was a long journey but it wasn't too bad because he was safe from the easterly wind on the western side unless it was very, very strong. However just as he was leaving his Uncle Max Mini's home the wind swung around and started blowing from the west.

Uncle Max said, "*You will have to be very careful now and don't attempt to fly or you will be blown away.*"

Just then a big tree nearby was blown over with a big crash and a big "Whoosh". The tree fell down so close to Itty Bitty that there was a big blast of air. It caught Itty Bitty by surprise and being so small he and the sail he was carrying were shot high into the sky like a rocket. Suddenly he was no longer safe from the westerly wind which blew the tree down and he was tossed and rolled high above not just the

shrubs and sedges but higher than the highest trees on Fraser Island. He sailed right over the rainforest and thought that he would disappear out to sea but then when the wind eased off a bit, he used the windsurfer sail he was carrying to head down to land.

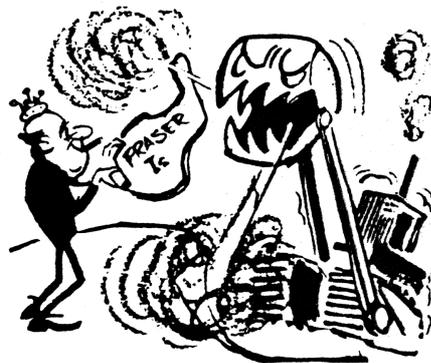
Luckily, Itty Bitty landed in a little village called Eurong. He was lost cold and frightened. He got blown up against the wall of a house and was nearly knocked out but he was able to creep slowly around to get behind the wall and shelter from the wild westerly wind until it blew itself out.

After a few days the wind turned around. When it was blowing from the east, Itty Bitty got out his wind surfer sail and stood on a little mound where the breeze was a bit stronger. Then he held the sail above his head like a parachute. He took off like Superman. He went right across Fraser Island again. He went over the top of the rainforest again and when he saw his beloved swamp below him he pulled in his sail and dropped slowly to the ground and there to greet him was sweet Teeny Weeny who thought that he would never come back and Uncle Max Mini who was so pleased to know how useful his sail had been and how it had helped him have such a great adventure.

A Grim Fairy Tale

My first children's story published by was back in 1971. It was a very political allegory about how some Queensland politicians were tricked by being offered a small post of gold into allowing one of Queensland's greatest treasures, Fraser Island to be destroyed by a very vile sand eating ogre.

"Courier Mail" sub editor, David Bray helped tidy up the original version and had "Courier Mail" cartoonist, Stewart McRae illustrate it. Luckily a copy survived and it is now part of this collection,



Come in Sucker

This story was written in about 1988 as a part of the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation's campaign to stop a resort being built in a beautiful swamp on the western side of Fraser Island. The resort was approved to go ahead but the two central characters, Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty survived.

Once upon a time in the far out land of Queens lived two midget sandflies, Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty. They were so small that it was very hard to see them. They looked like two specks of dust. Although they were very tiny they had a big bite which made anyone who was bitten very sore and very itchy.

Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty lived in a big swamp, on the biggest sand island in the world. This swamp was a wonderful place to live, being beside a beach and beside a big, beautiful, mangrove-lined waterway with lots of other sandflies. It was a beautiful landscape with many places to shelter amongst the mangroves. Best of all, on this part of the Great Sandy Island there was hardly ever any winds that make life impossible for such tiny little animals. This made it very hot and steamy in summer, but that didn't really worry Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty. However, it made it so cold in winter that for a few weeks they had to snuggle up all day in their rugs and not go out at all.

Despite the wonderful environment in which they lived they were always very unhappy because they were very hungry. They needed to suck bright red blood. The problem was there was not much blood about. Because they couldn't swim they couldn't suck the cold blood of the fish. Although there were lots of birds about, the birds flew too fast for such tiny sandflies to keep up with. The echidnas, snakes and goannas were covered in quills and scales and thick skins. The only animals they could get their teeth into were a few wallabies, dingos and bush rats, which occasionally came down to the beach to drink at the small creek which drained their swampy home. Even these animals caused some difficulty because it was hard to get past the fur and thick hide to drink their precious blood.

One fine day Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty saw some strange new creatures coming to their swamp. These creatures, known as humans, never normally came near the home of Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty because they didn't like being bitten. Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty loved

humans. They weren't covered in fur, quills, scales or thick skins and it was easy for sandflies to drink their bright red blood (although curiously a few of the humans thought that they had blue blood).

Teeny Weeny and Itty Bitty decided to find out why these humans had come to their swamp and what they were doing. Itty Bitty heard one man say that they would get a pot of gold if they measured up the swampy home of Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny. The promise of gold apparently stopped these men from being chased away by the sandflies and their bigger, blood-sucking cousins, the mosquitos. The men walked through the swamp with tape measures and funny instruments and put sticks in the ground all over the place.

Teeny Weeny heard one man say, *"If we can find a few silly rich people to come up here in winter when the sand-flies are snuggled up in bed and it is too cold for them to come out and bite, and if it isn't raining when the swamp is so boggy, then they may buy this swamp and build a resort on it. The stupid people will never know how many sand-flies are here until we have our pot of gold."*

All of this deception made Teeny Weeny very angry and she was determined to bite the nasty man so viciously that he would go away forever. Then another man said, *"Can you imagine thousands of people coming to have a holiday in this swamp? There will have to be a lot of changes around here before that happens or the only people who will make money from this insect infested land will be us."*

When she heard this Itty Bitty stopped Teeny Weeny from biting the first man. She said, *"If we can control ourselves for a little while soon we shall have lots of people to bite and we will never be hungry again."*

Teeny Weeny replied, *"Can you believe that anyone would be so stupid as to give these naughty men a pot of gold for tricking them? And what will happen if things do change*

around here so much that we can't live here or we can't drink the lovely red blood?"

Itty Bitty said that it would be impossible to change things so much that clever sand-flies could not survive and get more blood than the sandflies were getting at present. *"Once the stupid people have given these naughty men their pot of gold, they will try everything to get another pot of gold in return and so there will always be humans around for us to get blood from,"* Itty Bitty added.

And Itty Bitty was right. Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny and all of the other sand-flies had a feast on everyone who came, but

The naughty men who measured up the swamp got their pot of gold. However, they lost their gold by investing in other silly projects. The councillors and the silly officials of Queens, who were tricked into helping the naughty men, were unhappy because they found out that the rainbow disappeared as soon as the naughty men got their pot of gold. The poor people of Queens were unhappy. They had to pay dearly in extra taxes because their officials and councillors were tricked. The stupid people who were tricked by the naughty men into buying the swamp for the pot of gold, spent even more gold trying to change things around the swamp on Great Sandy Island.

The people who owned the swamp tried to keep their visitors and guests inside the buildings like prisoners so that the sand-flies couldn't touch them. The guests were unhappy about that but when they eventually went outside Itty Bitty and

Teeny Weeny and all of their relatives were waiting.

The stupid people who now owned the swamp tried to destroy it and the beautiful waterway. They sprayed the shores. They removed the mangroves. They even drained the swamp and then they filled it up again. Nothing worked. The sand-flies only seemed to thrive on everything that the stupid people did. The owners lost more gold, more blood and more tears.

The buildings which they put up beside the swamp fell down due to a big wet sand slump. The owners lost still more pots of gold while other humans came to try to *"fix things up"*. The owners always said that they were *"making improvements"*. The funny thing is that nothing seemed to be *"improved"*. Still, there were always people coming and giving up their blood and their gold. None of the people were happy.

Only the sand-flies were happy. There was so much human blood now coming to the swamp that all of the sand-flies, especially Itty Bitty and Teeny Weeny lived happily ever after.

This story has a moral: *Fools and their gold are soon parted.*

It also shows that there will always be silly suckers around to put the bite on (especially when Itty Bitty, Teeny Weeny, their brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, second and third cousins, twice removed, etc., etc., etc... are waiting to benefit from the blood transfusion process).

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The Honest Woodsman

This was an adult story written in 1990 to aid FIDO's campaign to stop logging on Fraser Island. It was a children's story written for an adult audience.

Once upon a time, a little boy named George Forester lived with his father, Gung-Ho Forester in the far out land of Queens. They lived in the beautiful bush of incredibly beautiful Great Sandy Island where Gung-Ho worked as a woodsman.

Gung-Ho had one strong motto in life. It was, *"Always tell the truth"*. He taught this message to his son, George, from the time that George was a baby.

Gung-Ho often told his son, *"Telling the truth is the most important thing in life and we must always tell the truth no matter how much it hurts."* George took his father's message to heart.

Gung-Ho earned his living as a woodsman. At first, he liked working in the beautiful forest amongst the grand and majestic trees and the colourful and charming birds and animals. He liked the fresh air and the open spaces. That is



why he had become a woodsman. Gung-Ho liked to take little George with him when he went to work in the forest.

After working for some time in the forest, Gung-Ho fell under the secret spell of the big greedy sawmillers whom he worked for. This spell was spelt M O N E Y. It led Gung-Ho to abandon his principles and to begin to tell lies about the work he was doing in the forest.



What began as little lies became bigger and bigger. Suddenly he realized that he had been telling whoppers. Because he was under the spell of M O N E Y, he found it hard to tell the truth even to his own son.

Gung-Ho became blind to the beauties and grandeur of the magnificent great Sandy Island forests which he was cutting down. Once he began to be bewitched by the spell he even began to cut down the most ancient majestic forest giants to feed the greedy sawmillers. He could no longer hear the songs of the birds and the calls of the animals because of the roar of his powerful chainsaw.

One day Little George asked Gung-Ho, "*Why are you chopping down those big, old, hollow but beautiful trees?*"

"*Because they are useless,*" replied Gung-Ho, although he knew that they were only useless to the greedy sawmillers who didn't want them because they were old or gnarled or had little value as timber.

Little George said, "*But they can't be useless because the trees are beautiful. Lots of birds and bees and other insects and animals eat the flowers and leaves and fruit. Many of them seek shelter and protection in their leaves and hollow limbs and make their homes there.*"

Gung-Ho did not answer.

When Gung-Ho came to the largest tree in the forest he told little George that the trees he was chopping down were "over-mature". He said that he was only removing the largest trees to

increase the productivity of the forest. However he knew that he was only doing it to try to satisfy the greedy sawmillers who wanted the biggest trees that they could get their saw teeth into.

When little George asked if people who became old and stopped growing or producing were also "*over-mature*" and should be removed to improve the productivity of society, Gung-Ho did not answer. Nobody had ever questioned him on what was productivity in terms other than wood production.

When they went into the most beautiful part of the grand forest of Great Sandy Island. Little George said, "*Why are you chopping down trees in this beautiful rainforest?*"

"*That is not rainforest at all,*" said Gung-Ho, "*It is wet sclerophyll forest.*" He knew that hardly anybody knew what the difference was between wet sclerophyll forest and rainforest and that most people thought that the great Sandy Island forest was rainforest.

"*Why are you destroying this beautiful forest by removing all of the large trees?*" asked Little George another time.

"*I am doing this to improve the forest,*" Gung-Ho lied. He knew that the practices he was engaged in amounted to forest destruction. All of the woodsmen on Great Sandy Island had been told to mislead any person who dared to ask such questions.

The greedy sawmillers regarded the forest as their own although the forests belonged to all of the people of the land of Queens.

On George's seventh birthday, Gung-Ho, being very fond of axes, gave little George a tomahawk for a present. It was a very fine and a very sharp little axe .

George was very anxious to test out his new tomahawk. So when Gung-Ho went out to work in the woods, George decided to test it out on his father's favourite mango tree. He kept on testing the tomahawk until before he knew it the tree came crashing down to earth with a greater impact than Jack's giant beanstalk even with the Giant in it.

When Gung-Ho came home he was very angry and cross. He said that if he found who had chopped down his favourite mango tree, he would punish them severely. He did not suspect

his little son, George. However George spoke up and said, *"Father, I cannot tell a lie! It was I! I did it with my little hatchet."*

Gung-Ho asked, *"Why did you do it?"*

"Well you chop down trees all day and I was just copying you, I was doing it to improve the mango tree. That is what you say when you are chopping down my favourite majestic and grand old trees in the forest," little George replied.

After little George told the truth about chopping down the mango tree a remarkable thing happened. Gung-Ho should have been very cross with George. Instead, he was pleased that George had been so honest. He did not punish him but said, *"It is more important to tell the truth and suffer the consequences, than it is to tell a lie"*.

Then Gung-Ho realized how his dishonesty which had deceived little George had resulted in his own punishment. Gung-Ho also remembered that he had once been as honest as Little George before he had begun telling the greedy sawmillers' lies. Now he realized how the greedy sawmillers' lies had cost him his favourite mango tree.

The next day Gung-Ho went into the forest to cut down more trees. He was quieter and more thoughtful than usual. For the first time in years he thought about what he was doing to the giant tallowwood tree. As soon as Gung-Ho's axe bit into the bark he heard a faint *"Ouch"*.

He thought that he must have been going mad. Once again he swung his axe and once again he heard the same *"Ouch"*.

"Who is there?" he asked.

Then he heard a little voice that spoke like the sound of the wind whistling through the tree leaves. *"I am Timbo the Tree Trite. I am one of the spirits of the forest."*

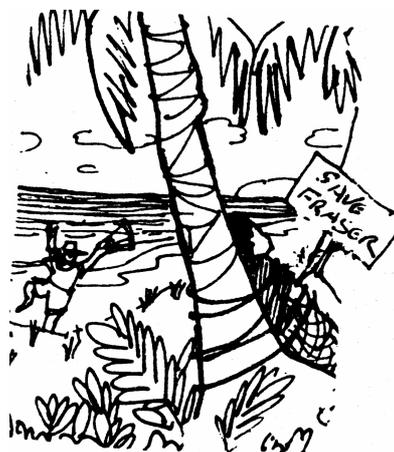
Gung-Ho saw a small green creature that was nursing a great injury caused by his axe. *"Do you realize just how much damage you are doing to this forest? Every time you swing your axe it bites into our flesh. Do you know that yesterday you destroyed the home of a family of ringtail possums, the nest of a family of kookaburras, two families of honeyeaters not to mention spiders, ants and lizards?"* asked Timbo.

Gung-Ho stood with an open mouth while he listened to Timbo describe how the forest had

suffered from the blows of his sharp axe and the roar of his fierce chainsaw. The tears rolled down his cheek and he said, *"I am sorry. I did not think much about it. I was only doing my job as a woodsman. How can I help fix up this damage?"*

"You could start by not chopping down trees and begin to replant new trees to repair the damage you and other woodsmen have caused. And you must stop telling lies about what you have been doing to the forest. Those lies caused your own son, honest George to make an honest mistake when he chopped down your favourite mango tree," Timbo replied. *"Our names should remind you to treat the forest right. If you do you will be happier. You should listen to the sounds of the birds and animals instead of the words and spells of the greedy sawmillers."*

The spell of M O N E Y was broken.



Gung-Ho vowed to tell only the truth ever after. He refused to take any more money from the greedy sawmillers. He vowed to make the Great Sandy forest a National Park to protect the remaining trees and the life of the forest.

He became a nurseryman and instead of cutting down trees, he grew trees and sold young plants to help repair the damage caused by the greedy sawmillers. He even became a "greenie". Although he did not make as much money as when he was a woodsman, he was much happier being poor but honest.

When he took young George for a walk in the woods he was again able to observe the majesty and beauty of Nature. He again heard the sounds of the forest and he was sorry that he had caused so much damage. George grew up to be a "Greenie" too and they both worked to stop other people chopping down trees and they lived happily ever after.

A GRIM FAIRY TALE

(Without a happy ending)

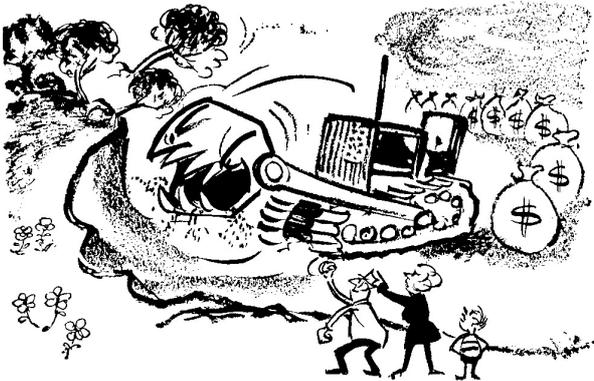
I wrote this pseudo children's story in 1971 as part of the FIDO campaign to stop sandmining on Fraser Island. Sandmining ceased there on 31st December 1976 as a result of our sustained campaigning.

Once upon a time in the far off land of beautiful Queensland, there lived a lot of little hobgoblin princes who ruled the country as they pleased. One day, a sand-eating ogre moved into the beautiful state. This ogre used to gobble up the sand to suck out all its goodness and riches and then spit it out.

At first, the good people of Queensland did not mind the sand-digging ogre in their beautiful state. Then one day they noticed that the ogre was not only taking out the goodness and riches from the sand but he was gobbling up trees and the beaches and many of the things which the good people loved very dearly.

The good people of Queensland were very cross but they did not say anything because they were nice, polite people who did not want to cause a fuss. They did not mind what was gobbled up, because they lived in the most beautiful state with lovely bush and beaches and kangaroos and koalas and birds and flowers.

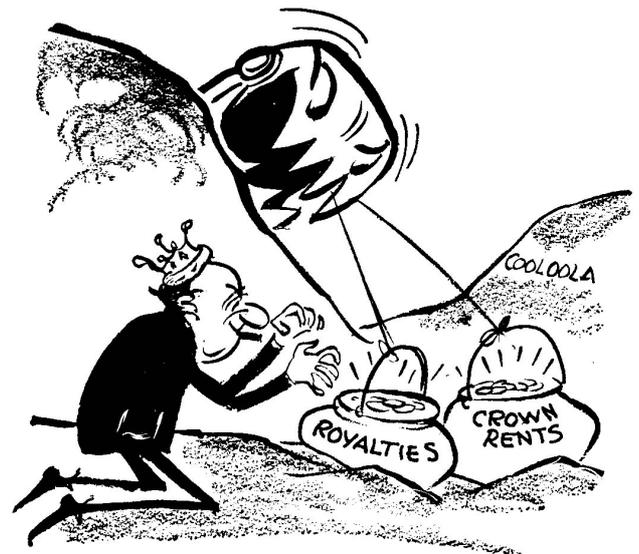
They were poor people, but they were happy people. They didn't see any purpose in raising a fuss especially a the goblin princess told them, *"If we do not give our riches to the good white ogres and warlocks who protect us, they with will come and toke it tram us anyway"*.



Then one day the sand-eating ogre wanted to start gobbling up colourful Cooloola, one of the loveliest parts of beautiful Queensland. The poor people of Queensland got very cross and asked the goblin princes to tell this sand-eating monster to go away but the goblin princes liked the sand-eating ogre because the sand-eating ogre had placed the spell of the green paper on them. The poor people of Queensland said that they needed the colourful Cooloola as a playground for their children and their children's children. They wanted to make colourful Cooloola into a common of the realm to be preserved

as a National Park but the goblin princes said this could not be so and the sand-eating ogres, in order to assist the goblin princes, taught them the spell of white paper which they tried to use.

The poor people, whose hearts were true, were not affected by this spell. They became very, very cross and were ready to seek a new lot of goblin princes to rule the land when suddenly a good fairy came along and cast a good spell over the goblin princes. The goblin princes then agreed that they would not let the sand-eating ogre into colourful Cooloola. The ogre fumed and smoked and made all sorts of rumbling noises that frightened the goblin princes. The goblins locked the sand-eating ogre out of colourful Cooloola for a little while. But the ogre had broken the fairy's magic spell and the goblin princes did not ever declare colourful Cooloola to be a National Park.



Then the sand eating ogre's appetite got really big and he was so hungry that he decided to gobble up fabulous Fraser Island which was the biggest sand island in the world.

The good people, poor though they were, looked around at the things that they had loved and which had made them so happy for so long in beautiful Queensland. They said that their beautiful state was not so beautiful any more and that made them cross again. It made them very cross that the goblin princes wanted to let the oil-sucking vampires look for nourishment on the Great Barrier Reef.

Then one day the poor people found a little dog called Fido, who was the watchdog of fabulous Fraser Island. The poor people liked Fido and fed

him with the little bits and pieces they could afford. Then Fido began to bark and bark. Although he barked very loud the non-taxpaying sand-gobbling ogre had plenty of nourishment from the goodness and riches he had already sucked from the Queensland sand. He was able to rumble much louder than Fido and make the goblin princes deaf the barking of Fido and the Queensland people. He could see the riches in fabulous Fraser Island's sand and his mouth watered for it.

He dangled a pot of fairy gold that he called crown rent and royalties before the goblin princes. That bewitched them even more.



The goblin princes were also frightened of the loud rumblings of the sand-eating ogre and his

incantations. They promised that since he could not eat up colourful Cooloola then he could gobble up any part of fabulous Fraser Island he liked. The goblin princes looked to their poor over-taxed people and said that they could have any part of fabulous Fraser Island that the greedy and-eating ogre didn't want and also what he spat out as a National Park for their children to play in.

That should be the end of this unhappy fairy tale and everyone should have lived happily ever after but it wasn't.

Fido was cross because although he barked louder than the sand-eating ogre's rumblings and spells stopped the goblin princes hearing him.

The people weren't happy because they wanted to know how the pot of fairy gold bewitched the goblin princes and they wanted the same land the sand-eating ogre was being fed with for their National Park.

Even the sand eating ogre was unhappy because he knew he would need more green paper and more fairy gold to cast new spells before he could gobble up more of Queensland after devouring fabulous Fraser Island.

The sub-editor of the "Courier Mail" altered the original version and some of the cartoons in 1971 because some Queensland politicians may have deemed them defamatory at the time suggesting corruption.

Kassuka and the Crocodile

This story was inspired by three cruises up Papua New Guinea's mighty Sepik River and meeting many villagers to whom crocodiles are central to culture

Kassuka lived in a small but beautiful village on a lake in New Guinea. All of the houses were built over the water on big tall poles and the only way to reach them was by canoe. So almost as soon as Kassuka learnt to walk she also learnt to paddle a canoe because that was the only way she could get out of the house to play with her friends. It was the only way her family could move about. When she was older it was the only way she could go to school.

Her father went out into the forest and cut down a big tree to make Kassuka her canoe to go to school in. He cut off all of the branches and then towed the floating log back to the village where he hauled the log up onto the verandah of their home above the water. Then he spent many days chipping out the inside of the log with his sharp axe and an adze until there was just the outside of the log left and that then became Kassuka's dugout canoe.

To reach her school Kassuka had to paddle up a long narrow channel called a barat. She did this every day. Kassuka and the other children though were not the only users of the barat. Crocodiles lived in the waters of the rivers and lakes of New Guinea. Often Kassuka saw crocodiles in the barat. One day she saw a very small crocodile. She liked it so much because it was so cute that she didn't tell her father about it. She thought that her father, like most other men in the village, might have caught her special crocodile to sell to the crocodile farm.

Every day she saw this crocodile on the way to and from school always about the same part of the barat. She wasn't afraid of it and the crocodile wasn't afraid of her. Every time she saw it she smiled and waved in a secret friendship.

One day as she was going to school though she saw another crocodile in the barat and it was following her. It was getting closer and closer. It was probably because her family's dog was in the canoe with her and crocodiles love to eat dogs. Kassuka was going to drop off the dog at her grandmother's home that was near the school. But the big crocodile was getting closer and closer and Kassuka was getting very scared because she thought that the crocodile might tip the canoe upside down to tip out the dog.

As she got to the place where her friendly baby crocodile lived Kassuka saw it swim out right up to the big crocodile. It stopped chasing Kassuka and turned away and left her to catch her breath and drop off her dog at Grandma's.

Kassuka never took her dog in the canoe again and she never got chased by a big crocodile either but she thinks that because she was kind and saved the little crocodile from the crocodile farm and became friends with it, it saved her and her dog from being thrown into the water with the big savage crocodile.

The Rivalry of Goodjerri and Girrawan

A story from the 2007 Tropical Rainforest & Reef Safari inspired by observations of a scrub turkey nest beside the verandah of Peter and Karen Stanton at Cairns Crystal Cascades.

In the rainforest there is always competition for space. Most people know about the competition that the trees and vines have to reach the light. Some plants like vines climb up on other plants to reach the light because if they don't get enough sunlight they die. Other plants like the strangler figs start out near the tops of other trees where they have enough light and stretch their very long roots all the way down to the ground, wrapping up their host tree with their roots in the process.

However this is a story about competition for space in the rainforest between Goodjerri and Girrawan, two birds who were competing for space to build a nest on the floor of the rainforest. Goodjerri is the Gurramay name for the scrub turkey. Although his nest is quite large it doesn't take up anywhere near as much land as he needs to scrape the forest floor to build his nest.

You see Goodjerri is a strange bird who decided to be different from almost all other birds and instead of sitting on a nest for weeks to hatch his eggs into chicks he built a nest with its own heating system which saved him a whole lot of sitting. The trouble though, was that to make the nest heating system work he had to scrape a lot of leaves and litter from the forest floor into a big mound. Then when it started to rot it heated up the mound. That was the heating system for his nest to incubate any eggs laid there.



Another thing was very strange about Goodjerri. He always started to build his very big nest long before he had found a wife. In fact that was one of the things that helped him to find a wife.

Scrub turkey hens spend all of their time when they aren't eating, wandering around the rainforest carrying out nest inspections. If they find a nest that they really like they become the wife of that turkey. And indeed that was the way that Goodjerri's various wives found him. It was because of the wonderful mound that he had scraped up from the forest floor.

Once they were married, although rarely did they stay married for very long, Goodjerri would dig out a hole in his nest and check the temperature by dangling his handsome yellow wattle into the hole. When he was satisfied he would invite his new wife to lay her eggs there. Then his wife would wander off carrying out her nest inspections.



This is where the story becomes a bit ridiculous. Goodjerri thought that the self-heating nest would save him from a lot of tedious work incubating the eggs. So instead of tedious work, Goodjerri had a harder job. He had to guard the nest from egg robbers like Gagan, the goanna, who was always keen to dig up turkey nests to get any eggs he could find and he had to stop other scrub turkeys trying to move in on the part of the rainforest where he gathered his leaves and litter and finally he had to keep inspecting the nest to see that it was the right temperature. If it was too hot he would scrape away the litter and if it was too cool he had to go and find more new leaves and litter to add to the nest. He was so busy doing all of this fighting and checking that he hardly had time to eat. So much for a male invented labour-saving device!

Into this scene one day wandered Girrawan. (That's the Gurramay name for the Orange-footed Jungle Fowl). Girrawan was also a megapode like Goodjerri who also built a mound to incubate his nest. He was just like Goodjerri, but much more handsome. Unlike Goodjerri, Girrawan had only one wife and they were inseparable and went everywhere together.



Mr & Mrs Girrawan

Goodjerri and Girrawan got into a big dispute about who had the right to build a nest on the patch of rainforest that Goodjerri claimed. The dispute began when Mr and Mrs Girrawan were ready to start raising their family. Girrawan decided that Goodjerri had already taken the best spot but when he tried to take over, Goodjerri chased him away because Goodjerri was a tough old turkey that had been in many fights and won most of them.

Girrawan and his wife looked everywhere but the competition for space was such that there was nowhere else they could find to lay their eggs.

Then Girrawan got a brainwave. He told his wife that they could save themselves even the energy of building any nest and get silly, tough old Goodjerri to do all of the work for them. So when Girrawan next walked up to the Goodjerri and challenged him, Goodjerri was very angry.

Karranji's Trials & Tribulations

A story from the Wet Tropics inspired by the observations of Peter & Dave Stanton watching a cassowary cross the white line on a bitumen road near Flying Fish Point

Living in one of the most beautiful parts of the whole world surrounded by rainforest and with a coastline lined with coral reefs Karranji's life should have been very happy. Instead Karranji's life was full of troubles and tribulations. — And all because of people.

You see Karranji was a cassowary that lived in North Queensland's tropical rainforests where cassowaries have lived forever. Things didn't

He chased Girrawan, but Girrawan wouldn't go away. They had the chase of their lives. So it took a long time before Goodjerri could finally get rid of Mr. Girrawan and get back to his nest.



What Goodjerri didn't know is that all of the time that he was out chasing away Mr. Girrawan, Mrs. Girrawan had slipped into Goodjerri's nest mound and laid two eggs.

Goodjerri continued to keep his self heating nest at the right temperature and his chicks continued to come out of the mound one by one but one day when he wasn't looking two beautiful Orange-footed Jungle Fowl chicks dug their way to the surface of the mound and then they looked around and flew to the nearest tree and began calling out for their parents who were nearby waiting for them. They knew that Orange-footed Jungle Fowl chicks can fly as soon as they leave the nest. Girrawan and his wife were waiting for their chicks.

Meanwhile poor busy, bossy Goodjerri never knew that his nest had incubated the chicks of his main rival for the floor of the rainforest.

change much for cassowaries when the first people arrived in this area. In fact it was the Kuku Yalangi people who gave him the name of Karranji. True, the Kuku Yalangi people sometimes ate cassowaries but then there were many thousands of cassowaries and not very many people and they roamed over a large part of North Queensland and they lived there so happily. They could stroll along the beautiful

beaches or follow the beautiful water-courses and they could raise their chicks with no bother. Cassowaries were then the Kings of the forest. .

That has all changed now. Now there are very few cassowaries in Australia and there are hundreds of thousands of people living in the area where they once ruled over the forest.

The people in plague proportion now are a lighter colour than the Kuku Yalangi and instead of living a simple life in harmony with the land it seems as if they can't live without motor cars, electricity, large houses, gardens and lawns, pets and domestic animals. These people arrived only two hundred years ago but they don't rule the forests. Instead they destroy it and change it and it has become very difficult for Karranji and other cassowaries to survive in this new environment.

True, Cassowaries, particularly male cassowaries did have problems before these new people moved in. Female cassowaries only lay eggs. Then even though the males were the kings of the forest they had to do servants' work. They built the nests, hatched out the eggs and raised the chicks. Each batch of chicks took two years to raise. They were very busy kings. They had to scare away a few dingos and hungry goannas and keep them from being eaten by the Kuku Yalangi.

Now although the new people who have moved in and taken over the land from the Kuku Yalangi don't eat cassowaries any more and they even pass laws to protect cassowaries, they have created lots of trouble for Karranji and his mob.

First they started of by cutting up the forest into small parcels. All the Kuku Yalangi belonged to the land. They all shared its bounty. Nobody ever "owned" the land. The land owned them and they had to live in harmony with it to survive. But the now the new people demand "ownership" of the land and sell it and sub-divide it, and speculate on it. They mark out the bits of land they own by building fences to keep other people (and cassowaries) out of "their land". Then they build houses and bring in pets and build gardens but their fences don't seem to keep their pets or animals or garden plants inside.

The garden plants have escaped into the jungle which is rapidly becoming ever more choked up

with weeds. The cats sneak out and take lots of small birds and animals from the forest when nobody is looking. They are deadlier hunters than the Kuku Yalangi but because of Karranji's size they don't worry cassowaries. What worries cassowaries are dogs. Dogs gang up and attack cassowaries and although Karranji has a very long dagger like middle toe on each foot that has killed many dogs that come too close, many of his chicks have been killed by dogs.

But the biggest pest the new people brought with them and which escaped into the forest wasn't their weeds or pets. It was their pigs. True, the new people are very fond of pigs even though they also love to eat pork and bacon. They make up Fairy stories about the "Three Little Pigs" and make out the Big Bad Wolf to be a villain. However, as far as Karranji is concerned all wild pigs that live in the forest are bigger villains than any "Big Bad Wolf" could ever be. They not only eat most of the fruits of the forest which fall from the large trees which were meant for Karranji but they root up the forest floor looking for truffles and roots and anything else they can eat and they are progressively wrecking the forest and causing more and more cassowaries to starve.



Karranji — King of the Rainforest

But the new people have not only cleared so much of the forest and caused the rest of the forest to be changed with weeds and pests they have introduced but they have fragmented the forest in many other ways. They have cleared large tracts to make ways for their power lines so every home can have electricity and they have created roads. At first roads weren't too much of a problem for cassowaries because they were just narrow tracks through the forest and these were easier for cassowaries to walk along than having to make their own way through the thick and often thorny forest. But then the new

people turned these tracks into roads and they became ever wider destroying still more forest. Then the new people got progressively bigger and faster cars and it was dangerous for cassowaries to walk along any road. Thousand of cassowaries were killed on the roads.



The new people then started putting up signs to warn motorists of the dangers of cassowaries and that cassowaries are protected but people still drive too fast and still cassowaries are killed on the roads. Now they are doing something even stranger to the roads where Karranji lives. The first big change came about when they turned the road from gravel to black bitumen so that their cars can drive faster. That was really scary for Karranji and he then began to avoid the bitumen roads and never walked along them as he did along the narrow gravel tracks. However the new people have made a network of roads and

they go everywhere. Karranji can't live without having to cross roads several times a day and each time he does he is risking his life for fear that a car will come and skittle him.

But the other day Karranji almost broke his neck and it wasn't because of a motorcar. He came up to a road which he had crossed many times before and found that one of these new people had painted the bitumen with white lines. He didn't know just why they had done this and in fact he didn't even know if the white lines weren't alive. He came to the edge of the road and just stood there and stared and dared not cross. Eventually though he knew he would have to cross this strange white line on the black bitumen. He ignored the car that was doing the right thing and waiting for him to cross. He just stared at the line. He walked up to it and walked back. Finally he got up enough courage and he charged at the line and jumped. He crash landed on the embankment on the other side of the road and slid down nearly breaking his neck.

Eventually he stood up shook himself and his handsome black droopy feathers and said, *"These new people are certainly going out of their way to make it possible for we cassowaries to survive in "their" world!"*

Larry, the Larrikin Cyclone

A story of the impact and terror of the biggest cyclone in a century to hit North Queensland

Although you could feel Larry, and you could certainly hear him, and had to fear him. You couldn't actually SEE him. That was the scary part. You didn't know where he was and which way he would blow next. That made Larry a larrikin. But because he was so big he was a very bad larrikin.

Luckily Larry didn't live longer than two weeks or he may have done even more damage. Some very hot days in the Coral Sea brought Larry to life. The sudden rise of hot moist air from the sea helps incubate cyclones. As Larry started to move across the hot sea surface towards North Queensland he quickly grew in size and strength and soon he was a full of fury and full of mischief as he thought of landing in Queensland's wonderful Wet Tropics region. He was ready to create havoc. And havoc it was.

Larry was not just an ordinary cyclone. North Queensland was used to cyclones and had seen

countless ordinary cyclones. Larry was a Category FIVE Cyclone, which is as big and as powerful as any cyclone can grow. The Weather Bureau thought that Larry would be bad and he certainly proved how bad he was. However Larry only thought that he was mischievous.

Larry thought of himself as being like the Big Bad Wolf in the story of the Three Little Pigs and he was ready to huff and puff but he not only was ready to blow houses down he was ready for much more mischief.

He started out by whipping up the sea to produce big waves. Normally the Great Barrier Reef stops big waves hitting the coast along North Queensland. However Larry had enough puff to start big waves. These smashed lots of coral on the reefs. Then they crashed against the rocky headlands but they couldn't do much damage. Then Larry turned the waves on to the erodible shores like the low dunes of Edmund Kennedy

National Park where the waves chewed into the soft shores. They tore out not only the entire beach but thousands of trees growing on the dunes behind were washed into the sea.

Larry was happy with the havoc he caused there so he started further inland.

The big *Acacia mangium* trees were made of very strong wood and thought that they would not break under the pressure of Larry's strongest blast. But Larry just laughed and blew off every leaf instead and turned to them and said, "*If I don't get you one way, I'll get you another. Without any leaves you will die anyhow!*" And they did. Now their ghostly Mangium skeletons stand out like tombstones on the hillsides showing the ferocity of Larry.

Larry liked being mean. He tore off every branch he could get at on the Hoop and Norfolk Island pines and made them look more like knobbly flagpoles than the once handsome trees they had been. He tore the tops off the Kauri pines and lashed the tall forests.

The trees in the forest thought that they were safe with mutual protection and support but Larry just laughed and got between the trees so they couldn't lean on each other and then just left them with limbs torn off and almost no leaves looking more like telephone poles than trees. The forest turned from green to brown because there were no more leaves.

Some trees thought that they were so big and strong Larry wouldn't have a chance but with these he just tried his "Big Bad Wolf" trick and huffed and puffed til he did blow them down.



Larry took the roofs off the houses. He cased sheds to collapse on any cars machinery or people inside. He blew down chook houses and even tried to take the feathers off the chooks.

He said, "*I like bananas,*" and then blew down every banana tree in North Queensland leaving the farmers with nothing to sell and the people elsewhere had to pay a lot of money for any bananas they could get from elsewhere.

He also brought lots of rain and flooded the country. He blew the tops off the halls and schools and then poured rain inside to damage everything there. He flattened the sugar cane and turned it into a tangled mess which would make it very difficult harvest. He even wrecked the big Mourilyan sugar mill so badly that it would never again be able to turn sticks of cane into sugar.

When he reached the Atherton Tableland he had lots of fun at the Crater Lakes. He just swirled around faster and faster and after he had blown off all of the leaves and most of the branches of the big trees he then played fiddlesticks with them leaving few standing and most of them lying in a big jumble on the forest floor.

His best trick though was to turn the many waterfalls on the Tablelands into huge fountains. He just gusted up underneath the wrier falls and blew the water up into the air. It was an awesome sight.

Larry used up a lot of his energy while he was creating sch mischief and after a few hours he became weak. Then almost as quickly as he was created he disappeared. But in one wild night he did so much damage that it will take years for the people, the birds and other animals and forest to fully recover. But what will happen if more cyclones like Larry blow in before that recovery. Then the people of North Queensland won't be as happy as Larry, the Larrikin cyclone.