

The Book of Bush School

A world of our nature play stories, poems, games, bush craft and songs



Greater Sydney Parklands

Greater Sydney Parklands is the NSW Government agency that is the custodian of Greater Sydney's most iconic urban parks: Centennial Parklands (including Moore Park and Queens Park), Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park (including Wistaria Gardens), Callan Park and Fernhill Estate. We take a strategic and metropolitan view of Sydney's open space and parklands, working in partnership with our local communities to achieve sustainable and positive outcomes for our city.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay our deep respect to the True Custodians of all the Land (skies, waters, creatures, plants) where readers may be enjoying their own Bush School sessions.

First Nations People were the very first teachers and we honour their rich and ongoing connection with the Land which they have passed down to children through time immemorial.

We pay respect to any First Nations people reading this book. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Country.



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people and parks together

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Welcome

We welcome you to the Book of Bush School with all our love, excitement and care.

Here you will discover the wonderful world of our nature play stories, poems, games, bush craft and songs, which have become beloved by children and adults alike at Centennial Parkland's Bush School program.

We are passionate about the positive effects of our well-loved program, which is why we are aiming for Bush School to reach more children and families with this eBook. Using a slow place-based pedagogy with an ethic of sustainability, Bush School promotes children's emotional and physical wellbeing, environmental stewardship and advocacy and emotional connection toward their environment.

Whatever role you play in children's lives, it's our hope that you can utilise these resources to foster their connection to the earth – which in turn means themselves and their community.

It's a privilege to share the following works with you and we thank you for the opportunity.

With care,

**Dani Fine and
The Greater Sydney Parklands Education team.**

How to use the Book Of Bush School

We hope that navigating the Book of Bush School is fun and natural for you.

The resources are divided into four sections:

December, January, February : Shelter, insects and bush sounds

March, April, May: Birds, nests, leaves and turtles

June, July, August : Whale's journey

September, October, November: Tadpoles, frogs, natural dyes and materials

In each section you will find 2-3 stories with corresponding **poems, nature play activities, bush craft ideas and songs.**

Each resource can be thought of as a jumping off point: a moment of inspiration that can captivate children's imaginations so that they can engage in nature play in their own unique and meaningful way. And now, let's explore!

For example:

The story of the 3 Mother Magpies may lead a child to ask, "where do mother Magpies make their nests here?" Following the child's lead, we might go for an explore looking for Magpies and their nests.

Engaging children aged 6 and beyond:

You'll find that the bush craft and nature play activity ideas are written so that reading aged children can enjoy activities with or without adult support.



Hello fingers

After acknowledging the Country that we are learning and playing on, we use the care and respect we have for Country to warm up our Hello Fingers.

Once our fingers are warm, we can use them to greet all of our teachers at Bush School!

We lift our fingers to the sky and share our hellos together:

Hello sky

Hello sun

Hello trees

Hello birds

Hello insects

Hello soil

Hello family

Hello friends

Hello teachers

Hello me

(invite children to extend their own thank you)



 **Story**

 **Poem**

 **Bush Craft**

 **Nature Play**

 **Song**

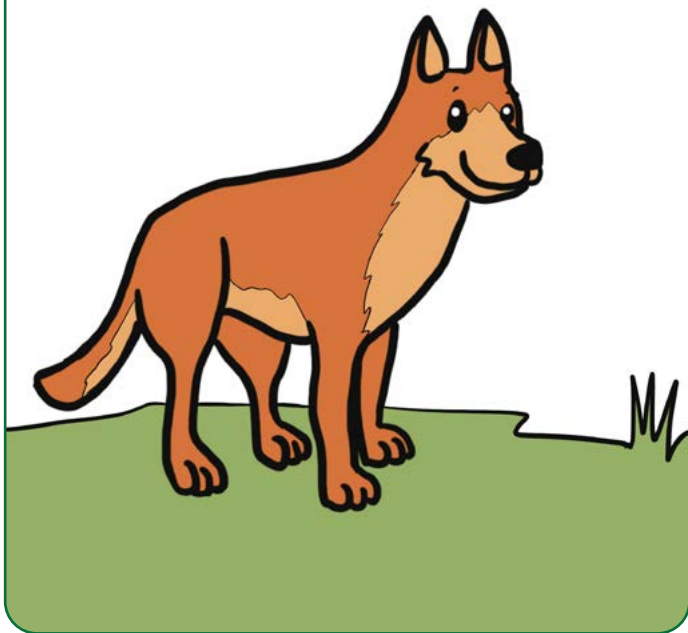


Shelter, insects and bush sounds: December, January, February

Dingo's first day of Bush School

By Dani Fine

Author's note: This is a story you can adapt to include any areas in the outdoor space that you will be utilising. It's a great story to retell together throughout the week, inviting children to add their own activities that Little Dingo might enjoy.



It was Little Dingo's first day of Bush School and he was feeling rather shy.

He looked around, all the dingoes were having fun playing in every direction! Some were digging holes, some were climbing trees, some were making art.... Little Dingo wondered, "what should I do?"

He made his way to the climbing tree. Two dingoes were climbing up the tree, they called for him to join.

"I'm a bit scared to climb up so high...I think I'll watch for today." Said Little Dingo. He watched as the dingoes kept 3 body parts on the tree at all times, he followed them with his eyes looking up, up, up as they climbed to the top and then down, down, down as they climbed back safely to the bottom.

Little Dingo was excited to try this out next time!

Next, he found the mud kitchen. "How funny," Little Dingo thought, "I've never cooked anything before, I usually hunt and forage for my food!" The other dingoes showed Little Dingo how they were mixing up the batter for banana muffins and mixing the ingredients for veggie soup. They invited him to mix. Little Dingo felt like being a bit silly, so instead of using his paw to mix, he took his big bushy tail and swirled it round and round the soup! The

Dingo's first day of Bush School

other dingoes got a great laugh...and so did Little Dingo! That was fun! When Little Dingo went to eat the mud pie he'd made, the other dingoes called out, "Stop!! It's only pretend!" Again, they all let out a big laugh. "Close one!" Little Dingo smiled.

At the chalk rocks, Little Dingo saw how the other dingoes were drawing big blue animals with water coming out of their spouts...can you guess who they were drawing? That's right, humpback whales! Little Dingo joined in, adding an ocean for the whale to swim in. Dingoes don't have fingers, as they have thick paws, so instead of using their hands to draw, they put the chalk in their mouths!

Then, in the distance, Little Dingo heard someone crying. It was a little girl dingo and she was at the balancing logs.

"What's wrong?" Asked Little Dingo. "I don't know how to balance!" she sobbed.

"That's okay," said Little Dingo, "You can watch me do it and when you're ready to try, I'll walk beside you, so you know you're safe."

Little Dingo took a deep breath in and out, he kept his eyes on the balancing log, he stretched out his dingo paws for extra balance and walked nice and slow across with great focus.

"Wow!" Said little girl dingo, "I'm ready to try."

Little Dingo walked beside her as she made her way to the end of the balancing log, her frown now replaced by a huge proud smile! "I did it!" she cheered. "Yes, you did!" Little Dingo replied.

Just then, Ranger Dingo let out a loud howl and they all made their way back to the log circle. There, Ranger Dingo brought out something soft, mouldable and cool. It was clay! Everyone was given a piece and everyone made something special that they had learned about at Dingo Bush School. Some dingoes made trees, some made insects that they'd seen under logs, some even made dingoes...they all felt happy and grateful to be together in the bush!

Little Dingo couldn't wait to try out and discover more new things next time.

The End.

Cicada makes his way up



By Dani Fine

Cicada lived underground in a giant community full of beloved family and friends. Together, they would eat the roots of the tree they lived under, where they had a vast network of tunnels that they loved to play hide and seek inside of.

Cicada and his family and friends lived in the tunnels a long, long, longggg time...about 17 years. That's probably much longer than you've been alive!

One day, Cicada noticed there were less and less of his friends around, he wondered where everyone had disappeared to?

He went down, down, down to the very bottom of the tunnel as low as he could go. It was very very quiet... there was hardly anyone around...

And so, he travelled back up, up, up, up, up, up through the tunnel as far up as he had ever gone... all the way to the surface of the soil! When he looked up, he was able to see the very tall and beautiful tree that they had spent so many years living under and whose roots they had enjoyed many a feast upon for the very first time! "Thank you tree!" Cicada called. It was also Cicada's first time seeing and feeling the brightness of the sun. And the vastness of the Bush all around. And the magic of all the animals who live above the surface of the soil!

Then, Cicada heard a beautiful symphony of songs filling the sky all around him! "Who could be making such sounds?" he wondered out loud...

"It's us!" his friends and family cheered!

"But, you don't look like you?" Cicada questioned. "I don't see any claws! And I sure don't remember you having wings?"

"We shed our final layer of skin and grew our wings. Now we can fill the sky with our songs so that we can find a partner! Join us!" they called.

Cicada's claws allowed him to make his way up, up, up, up, up that very tall tree to join his friends.

But, he couldn't sing just yet.... he too needed to shed that final layer of skin so that he could emerge with his wings! It felt like it took forever, but finally after a couple of hours, he made it out....

"I better go down and tell the others where we are", he said. But, after shedding his skin, he looked down to find he no longer had his claws to dig through the tunnels and his wings were too delicate to go underground.

Cicada felt sad that he couldn't get into the tunnel to tell his friends where everyone was. But, he trusted they would find their way up, up, up, up just as he and the others had before him.

And he was right! Soon, everyone had made their way out of the tunnel, up into their tree, where they sang their songs in search of a partner, so that a new generation of cicadas could enter the world!

The End.

The biggest stick in the bush

By Alasdair Taylor

Once upon a time there was a tree. A big tree whose branches spread far and wide. It was the biggest, oldest tree in the bush.

Growing high up on the tree was a branch. It was so high up it could see all of the bush below. It could even look down on the birds who perched and made their nests on the lower branches. It felt proud to be so high up. This stick thought it was the 'biggest branch in all the bush' because it towered over all the other branches on the other trees.

It loved windy days. When the wind blew, the top of the tree would rock back and forth and the branch would wave along with it, shouting "WHEEEEEEEEE!" because it was so much fun!

And its leaves would make a "WHOOOSSSSSHHH" sound.

"WHEEEEEEEEE!" "WHOOOSSSSSHHH"

"WHEEEEEEEEE!" "WHOOOSSSSSHHH"

Those were the branch's favourite days.

But one day, a storm came. The wind blew stronger and stronger.

"WHEEEEEEEEE!" "WHOOOSSSSSHHH" went the branch.

But the wind was getting even stronger. Lightning flashed and thunder boomed. It was scary for the branch.

Something felt wrong.

"WHEEEEEEEEE!" "WHOOOSSSSSHHH"
"CRRREEEAAAAK!" "CRRRRRRRACK!"
"CRRASSSHHH!"

What do you think happened?

Yes, the wind blew so hard, the branch broke off the tree and came crashing down to the ground!

"OOOUUUUCH!"

The poor branch lay at the bottom of the tree. It couldn't move anymore. And it felt its pretty leaves starting to go limp and dry.

"I don't like this" said the branch. "I used to be up high, taller than everyone else, the biggest branch in the bush! But now I am just a big stick lying on the ground. At least I can still be the biggest STICK in the bush," it said to itself proudly.

But things got worse for the poor stick. Little creatures started eating the wood under its bark. It tickled!

And a wallaby came along and pooped on it to mark its territory!

After a while, green hairy moss and funny little orange mushrooms started to grow on the stick.

"I wonder if these make me look silly?" thought the stick to itself.

The biggest stick in the bush

One day a bird came along and began to peck off the stick's bark so it could eat the little creatures who were eating the stick's wood. "This is NOT fair!," said the stick.

"There's no use complaining," said the bird. "all branches, all trees fall back to the ground eventually. That's just the way nature is. One day you'll rot and go back into the soil. That's what happens to everything in the bush!"

"Well", said the stick, "I wish I could be up high, just one more time before I turn into soil!"

Soon after, some children came into the bush. "I'm cold," said a boy.

"Me too," said a girl, "and it looks like it's going to rain! Let's build a shelter."

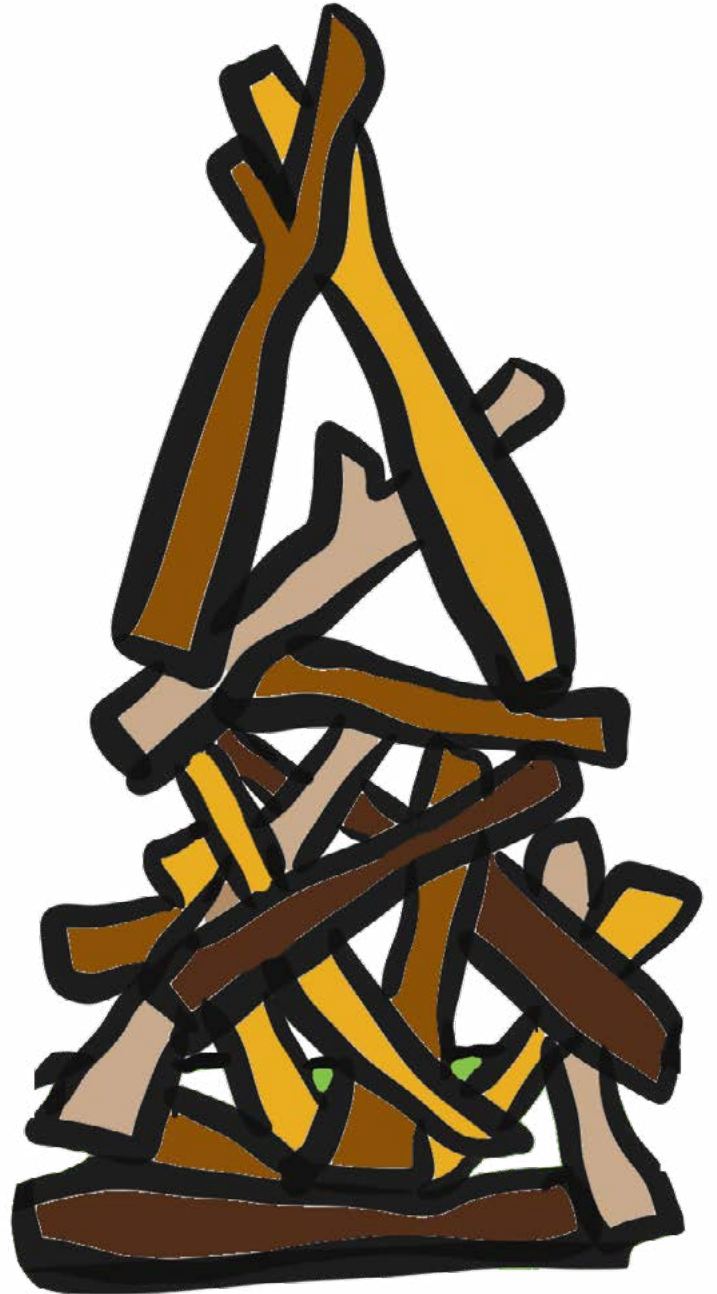
"Yes" said the boy, "Let's start with the roof stick – it's going to have to be a big one!"

"A-ha" said the girl, "I just found a huge stick – I'll bet it's the biggest stick in the bush!"

And the children huffed and puffed and pulled the stick up onto some other sticks so it made the top of a roof of a shelter. They covered it with more sticks, then bark and leaves to keep the wind and the rain out.

"Wow, this is such a good shelter" said the boy. "Lucky we found that big stick for the roof!"

And the biggest stick in the bush felt very happy and proud that it could be so useful as to help make a shelter to keep the children warm and dry!



Shelter, insects and bush sound poems

By Dani Fine

The whole earth is a family



Have you ever made friends with a mountain?
Have you ever sung songs with a tree?
Have you ever played a game
Of hide and seek with a bumble bee?

Have you ever danced with a rainbow?
Have you ever read a book to a plant?
Have you ever learned a lesson
from a teeny tiny ant?

All around, each place we look
Live unexpected friends
The moon, the stars, the sea, the sun
Have time with us to spend

Yes, every single place we look
New memories await
With rocks and trees and meadows
and streams
With whom we can create

So if ever you feel lonely
Look around and find
The whole earth is a family
Of friends through all of time



Everyone is needed, Everyone belongs



Nestled in the crevice of a paperbark tree
A tiny ant named Pat
was feeling blue as blue can be
Gazing at the bush below
Pat felt oh so small
He sighed, "there's nothing that an ant can do,
that matters much at all"

Pat watched the children building shelters
And the gardeners planting seeds
He gazed at the birds who danced and sang
And the busy bumble bees

"If only I were bigger
I'd do something so great
Everyone would notice
and they'd all celebrate!"

Then a voice appeared
belonging to an ant named Song
She said, "We don't have to be big
to be needed and belong"

In our tiny way, us ants
do humungous things
And these things matter greatly
even if nobody sees

We improve the health of soil
with our tunnels and our nests
And healthy soil means healthy food
that really is the best

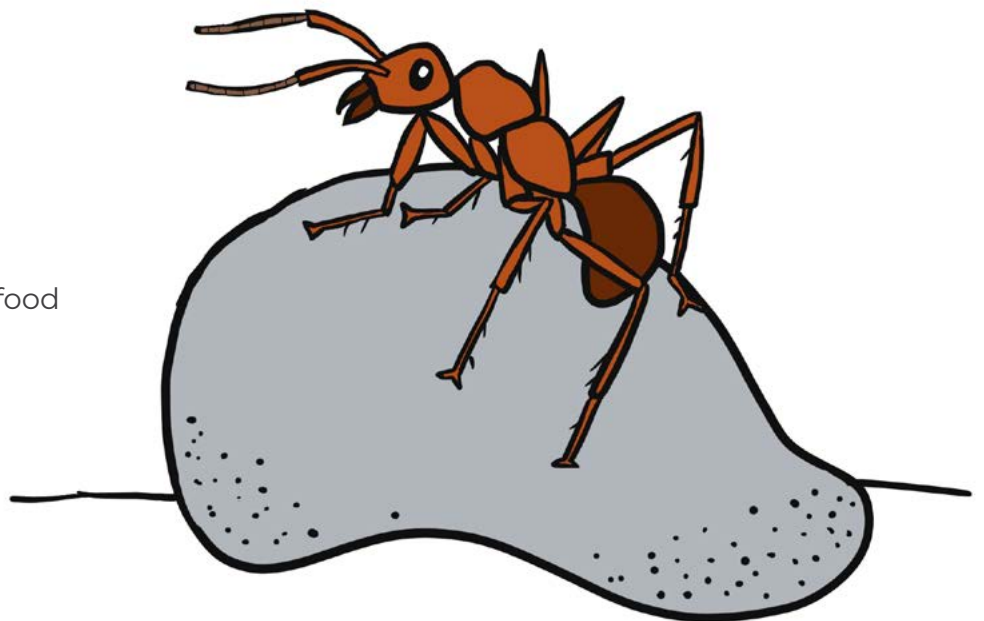
We help seeds to travel
to soil where they become
Big and strong and healthy
Happy plants under the sun

We also can keep pests away
like ticks and termites too
No one else can do things
quite the way that we ants do!

"But! even if we didn't do
all these amazing things," said Song
"Still we would be needed,
and still we would belong"

Pat looked out across the bush
smiling big and free
Feeling bright and proud and glad
And joyful, just to be

"I am enough, just as I am,"
Pat sang to his friend Song



Tree song

 **Listen**

I am a tree so tall and wise
My trunk grows up and forms my size
Into the earth, my roots grow down
My branches reach around and round

All around my food does grow
All around my oxygen flows
All around I provide animal homes
All around my love is known

I am a tree so tall and wise
My trunk grows up and forms my size
Into the earth, my roots grow down
My branches reach around and round

All around my food does grow
All around my oxygen flows
All around I provide animal homes
All around my love is known





Cicada shakers

Create your own cicada sounds!

What you need:

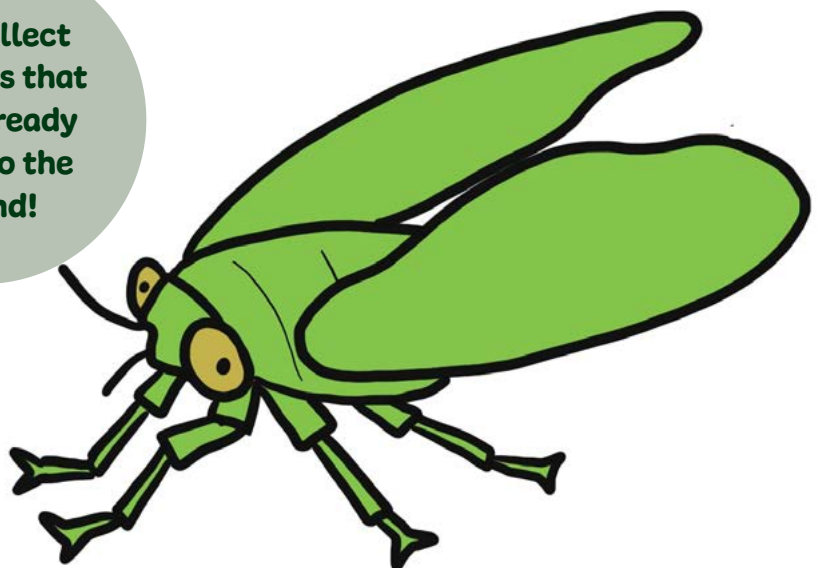
Plastic container with lid, loose parts such as small pebbles and twigs.

Let's get started!

- Take the lid off your container. You don't need a new container – why not reuse a water bottle or soap bottle?
- Go for a walk to collect small loose parts to fill your bottle with. You can test out the sounds of your loose parts by putting them inside your bottle, fastening the lid and giving it a shake.
- Add as many pebbles, sticks and soil as you like. Get a sound that feels best for you.
- Fasten the lid.
- Decorate with textas. Perhaps you would like to draw a cicada on the bottle?
- Enjoy your new instrument.



Only collect materials that have already fallen to the ground!



Make a cubby



Construct your own shelter using natural materials!

What you need:

Three Y-sticks, smaller sticks, leaves, grass, anything on the ground.

Let's get building!

- Lock two Y-sticks together. Y-sticks are sticks that have a fork at one end and look like the letter Y!
- Interlock the third longer Y-stick (the spine) into the two Y-sticks from step one to make a frame. You can also use a long straight stick for the spine instead of a Y-stick.
- Enclose the frame with other sticks (ribs) leaning from the spine to the ground making sure you leave an opening to the shelter.
- Weave in or lay over natural materials to enclose the sides like grass, leaves, branches, pinecones, etc.
- Play in and around your cubby –this is the best part!

Safety first!

- Check that your frame is sturdy so it does not collapse while building or playing in
- If you have built your shelter in a public place, always deconstruct it before you leave
- Always get your natural shelter materials from the ground, never from a living plant.



**You can also
build a mini
cubby for an
insect or toy
animal!**



Singing cicadas

Make your own cicada symphony!

What you need:

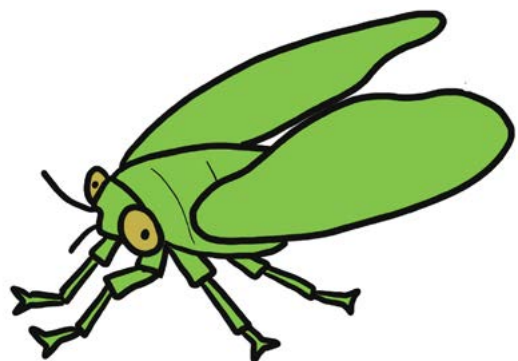
Cicada shakers (reused bottles filled with gravel), string, friends.

Let's get started!

- Hang cicada shakers in an area with trees within children's reach.

Let's get playing!

- Begin as cicada nymphs in the ground. Get into the spirit by putting on cicada claws, painting yourself brown and curling up into a small ball.
- Emerge from the ground and grow your cicada wings.
- Fly to a tree and practice using the shakers together to make a cicada song.
- Choose one person (adult or child) to become the predator bird who will fly around trying to catch the cicadas!
- Cicadas are safe when they are 'on a tree' and using their shakers. Just like in nature, the noise of everyone singing together scares off the bird predators.
- The predator bird calls out – "1. 2, 3, fly free!" which means it is time for the cicadas to fly around.
- When the predator bird comes out the cicadas must find a tree and shake their shakers.
- If the cicadas are staying at one tree and not flying around, the predator bird calls out "1. 2, 3, find a new tree!" to get the game moving.
- If cicadas get tipped by the predator bird before shaking their shaker, they become a predator bird too!





1, 2, 3 Hide behind a tree

Make friends with the trees in this fun game!

What you need:

An outdoor space with a few trees.

Let's get started!

- An adult will call out "1, 2, 3 hide behind a tree!" which means it's time to be quick and find a tree to hide behind!
- Once you have found your hiding tree, it's time to get to know it:
 - touch the tree: how does it feel?
 - smell the tree: what does it smell like?
 - listen to the tree: does it make a sound?
- An adult will call out "1, 2, 3 hide behind a new tree!" which means it's time to quickly find another tree!
- An adult will call out "1, 2, 3 come back to me!" which means the game is over and it is time to return to the group.
- After the final tree, you can give the tree a hug and a thank you!

If there are a variety of trees around, you can practice tree identification by having children hide behind different types of trees. Or practice observation skills by having children hide behind the greenest tree, the tallest tree, the shortest tree, etc.



 **Song**

Shelter, insects and bush sounds songs

Bush School anthem



(Call and response)

Here at bush school
here at the bush school

I climb and I play
I climb and I play

I listen to the earth
I listen to the earth

To find my way
to find my way

I sing with the cicadas
sing with the cicadas

And the dingoes too
the dingoes too

I sway with the trees
sway with the trees

And the sea so blue
the sea so blue

I thank the soil below me
thank the soil below me

I thank the sky and sun above
thank the sky and sun above

I feel all the earth around me
feel all the earth around me

Surrounding me with love
surrounding me with love

Surrounding me with love
surrounding me with love

Surrounding me with love
surrounding me with love

Surrounding me with love

Shaker song



(You can use the shakers that you created to shake along to this tune)

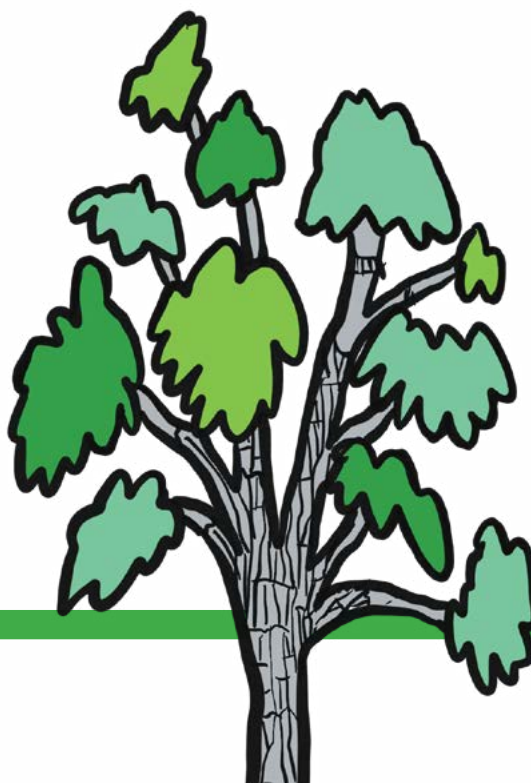
Up, up, up,
Up, up, up
cicada's song goes up, up, up

Down, down, down
Down, down, down
cicada's song goes down, down, down

Up and down,
Up and down
cicada's song goes up and down

On the ground,
On the ground
cicada's song goes on the ground

All around
All around
cicada's song goes all around
cicada's song is all around



Twinkle, twinkle dragonfly

(To the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)

Twinkle, twinkle dragonfly
How you spread your wings so wide
Up above the world so high
Down to the water for food you dive
Twinkle, twinkle dragonfly
Now it's time to say goodbye

(First sing small using hands as dragonfly wings, then sing big using arms as dragonfly wings)



If you're a tree and you know it

(To the tune of If you're happy and you know it)

If you're a tree and you know it
Spread your branches (spread, spread)
If you're a tree and you know it
Spread your branches (spread, spread)

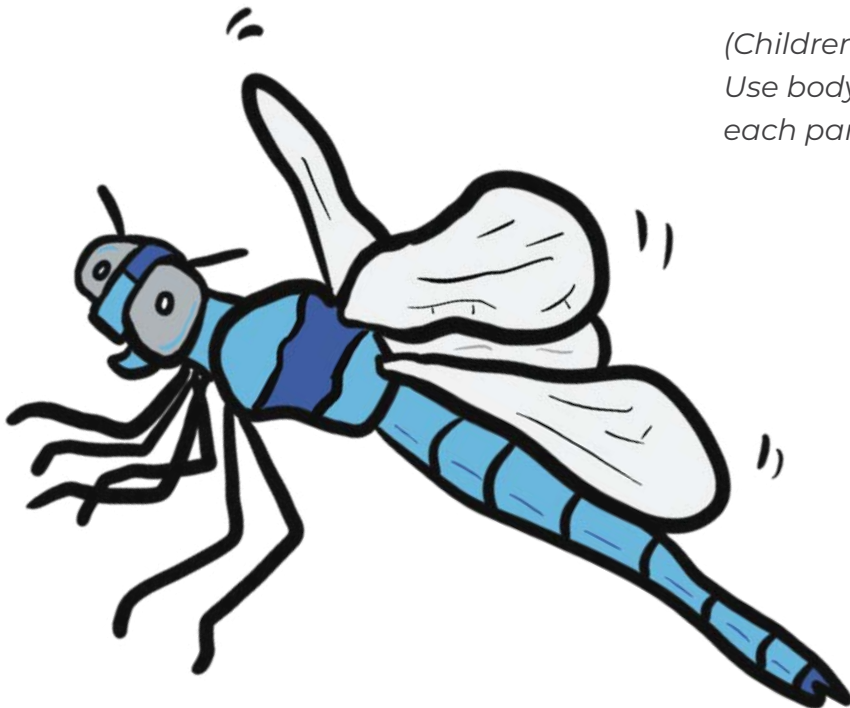
If you're a tree and you know it
And you really wanna show it
If you're a tree and you know it
Spread your branches (spread, spread)

If you're a dingo and you know it
Wiggle your ears (wiggle, wiggle)

If you're a bird and you know it
Sing your song (tweet, tweet)

If you're a turtle and you know it
Swim a long (swim, swim)

(Children can come up with their own ideas. Use body movements to represent each part)





 **Story**

 **Poem**

 **Bush Craft**

 **Nature Play**

 **Song**



Birds, nests, leaves & turtles:

March, April, May

Lilly The leaf's magical colour

By Dani Fine

Lilly the leaf awoke on the first day of Autumn full of joy and excitement! She gazed around at the hundreds of trees containing thousands of leaves, surrounding the Paper Bark tree she called home.

"Look at all the colours!" she exclaimed. "I wonder what colour I will turn?" she wondered out loud...

"Actually..." her leaf family on the paper bark tree started to try to explain...

"Actually, I think I'd like to turn RED best of all!" Lilly shared.

She looked out at the Maple trees and told the leaves, "Soon I'll be firey red, just like you! Any day now!...it is Autumn after all!"

The maple leaves gave a confused smile, as they drifted down, down, down from the top of the tree trunk landing on the soil...

The next day, Lilly woke up SO excited to see her new red colour..

She looked down and to her dismay...she was still...green!

"Hmmm...if not red, I wonder what colour I'll turn?" Lilly said...

"Actually.." her leaf friends tried to explain again..

"Actually, I've decided I like YELLOW best of all" Lilly gazed off at the Elm tree, proudly proclaiming to the bright yellow elm leaves, "Soon enough, I'm sure I'll be yellow, just like you!"

They gave that same confused smile as they drifted down, down, down to the soil.

The next morning, Lilly woke again to discover that she was STILL...Green!

"Oh no," Lilly thought... "if not yellow, I wonder what colour I will become..."

"Actually..." again, her leaf family tried to explain....

"Actually, I've decided I like ORANGE best of all" Lilly gazed off, proudly proclaiming to the pine leaves, "soon enough, I'm sure I'll be orange, just like you!"

Again, she received that same confused smile, as down, down, down the orange pine leaves fell to the soil.

The next morning, Lilly found herself feeling quite sad when she looked down again to find, she was still...green!

"I don't understand it?"

Finally, all of her leaf family spoke at once, so Lilly wouldn't be able to interrupt them.

"Actually, the Paper Bark Tree is an evergreen tree! That makes us evergreen leaves. We will always and forever be green" her leaf family kindly explained.

Lilly looked around her. She had been so busy looking out admiring the dazzling colours of the other trees, she hadn't been able to appreciate the vibrant bright special shades of green she and her own leaf family would forever be.

"Actually, I like me just the way I am" smiled Lilly,

"And I like all of you just the way you are, my evergreen family!"

The End.

Strong back, soft front, wild heart

By Louise Kiddell .

Inspired by Brene Brown work on courage and vulnerability.

There was once a very brave and adventurous young turtle. He lived in a beautiful lake surrounded by forests and mountains. He just loved to explore – he wanted to see the whole forest and climb the highest mountain. He had a wild spirit and he wanted to see and do everything!

One day he was out attempting to climb the highest mountain. He was very strong and brave so he often chose the hardest way up, to challenge himself. But the path he chose up was full of jagged rocks and spikey cactuses. They prickled and poked his soft belly until he could take it no longer – “ouch ouch ouch!!” he screamed! Then the turtle had an idea – he would spin his hard shell around to protect his soft front. “Brilliant!” he thought, “now I’ll be able to go anywhere without feeling any pain!”. But it was very difficult to walk with his shell spun around. He really couldn’t feel anything, but he also couldn’t walk very well. He was clumsy and top heavy and when he was trying to climb over a rock he overbalanced and fell! “Nooooooooo” – all the way back down to the bottom of the mountain he slid, crashing and bumping himself along the way.

After some time, at the bottom of the mountain, he woke up and opened one eye. He was next to the stream and there were soft, wet plants all around. Next to him, there was a snail,

having the most delicious time rubbing her soft wet belly over the juicy soft river grasses. “Why have you turned your shell around” she asked. “It looks like you’ve gotten yourself into some trouble.”

“Well I’m an adventurer you see, I like to go to the wild places, the highest mountains, the craggy peaks. And us adventurers, we need shields.”

“Doesn’t sound very brave to me, if you have to put up a shield. For me, to be brave is to feel everything. To feel when you’re scared, to feel when you’re lonely, to feel pain and then you can enjoy the glorious delicious feels like this soft wet river grass. For me, being brave is to have a strong back (she tapped her shell), a soft front and a wild heart. Want to try it?”

The turtle did like the sound of that and wanted to join in the fun, so he spun his shell back around and jumped and slid into the soft wet river grasses. Soft front, strong back, wild heart.



Birds, nests, leaves and turtles poems

By Dani Fine

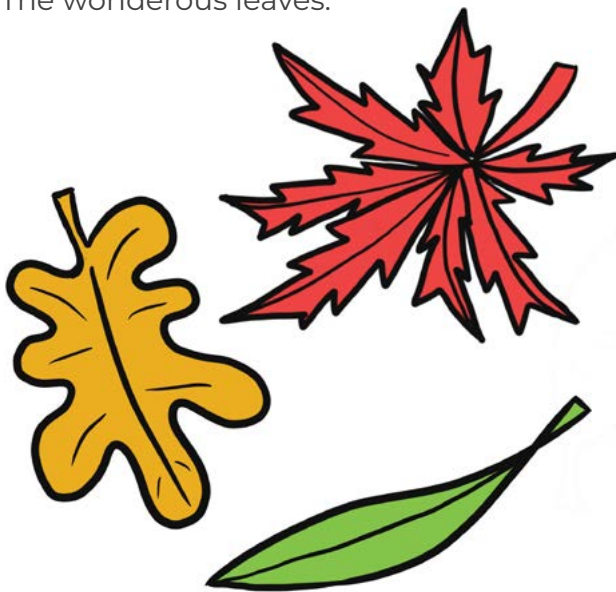
Autumn leaves



From green to gold
To yellow, then brown
Down the leaves fall
To the ground

Bare the branches
Will remain
Until springtime
When things change

“Thank you”
Calls the gentle tree
To her friends
The wonderous leaves.

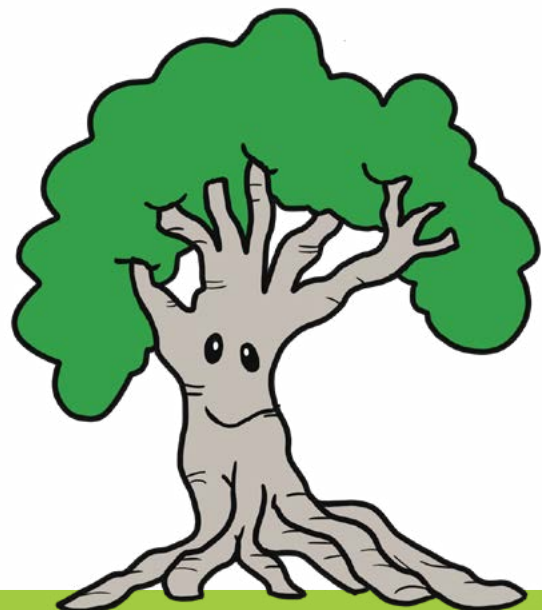


Magic tree



There is a tree somewhere out there
hidden in the wild
A tree that’s made of magic
That she shares with every child
A tree that is so peaceful
Every bird can fall asleep
Nestled in the comfort
Of her calming graceful leaves

A tree that is so generous
She fills the sky with air
So clean and so delicious
That everyone wants to share
A tree that has a story
That is waiting to be told
To anyone who listens
And carefully beholds
Yes, there is a tree somewhere out there
A magic tree it’s true
And if you look and listen closely,
You can meet her too!



On feeding

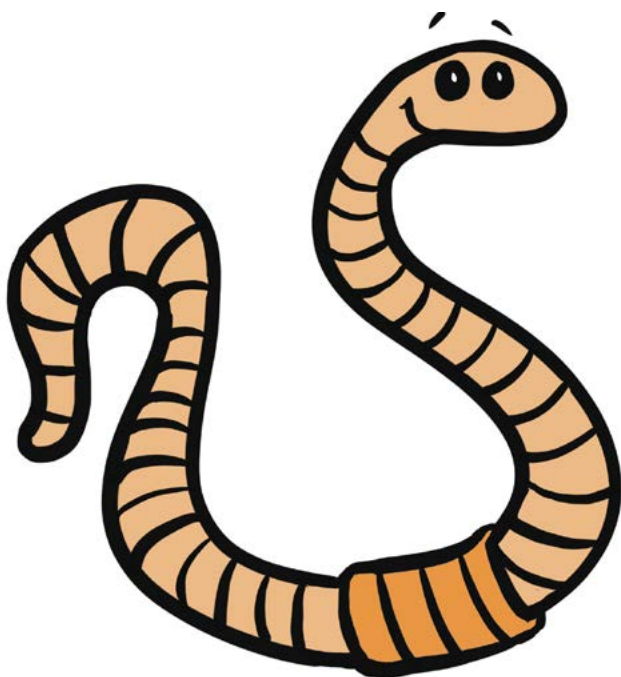
 **Listen**

The worms feed the soil
The soil feeds the seeds
I water the seeds
Till they grow fruit
And then that fruit feeds me

And once I'm full of fruit
I feed my sister too
And when my sister's full
She does the things she loves to do

My sister loves to dance
My sister loves to sing
My sister loves to give and share
And care for everything

Her caring feeds the earth
The earth feeds the seeds
The seeds grow into food
That everyone can eat!



I built a nest

 **Listen**

I built a nest
I built a nest
I built a nest
It's time to put it
To the test
I take a yawn
And start to rest
Oh yes
I think this nest's
The best

Hiding turtle

 **Listen**

Nice and calm
Turtle basks
In the gentle
Morning sun
And then she dips
Inside the pond
To hide from everyone
Where oh where
Did turtle go?
We wonder, yes it's true
Until we see a ripple form
And that's a certain clue
Under water
Turtle hides
Until up, she takes a breath
Hello turtle!
We all cheer
We're glad you haven't left!



Leaf mobiles

Create a hanging nature decoration!

What you need:

Raffia or any natural string-like material, scissors, loose natural parts.

Let's get started!

- Choose a nice long stick to hang your leaves from.
- A good tip is to choose a stick that is bigger than your hand but no longer than your arm.
- Collect a variety of leaves from the ground. Different colours, shapes and sizes!
- Cut a piece of string to hang each leaf from. Think about how low or high you want each leaf to hang and cut the string accordingly Practice your tying skills and tie each piece of string onto the stick.
- Tie each leaf to a piece of string.
- Cut a long piece of string to go across the entire stick to hang your mobile up.
- Attach the string to each side of the stick with a double knot.
- Where will you hang your decoration?



Only collect materials that have already fallen to the ground!

Adult supervision is ALWAYS required while using scissors!



Clay turtles

What kind of turtle will you make?

What you need:

Natural clay, loose natural parts such as seeds, sticks and pinecones.

Let's get started!

- You may want to begin by looking at some pictures of turtles or imagining what a turtle looks like in your mind.
- The shell is a good place to start. You can roll clay into a shell shape or use loose parts such as pinecones as the shell.
- Now it's time for the legs, tail and head. Again, you can use clay or loose parts such as leaves and sticks.
- Finish by adding details such as the eyes, mouth and maybe even a pattern for the shell. Whatever you imagine!

Let's get creative!

- Make a nest for your turtle to lay their eggs in!

**Can't find
natural clay?
Make some
homemade
play dough!**





Nest robbers

Make your own nest and guard your eggs!

What you need:

Natural loose parts and a collection of white rocks, pinecones, or seeds.

Let's get started!

- Imagine you are birds and put on your wings, feathers and beaks.
- In groups of two or more, work to make your nest by collecting sticks, leaves and twigs and forming them into a round shape.
- Lay your eggs by placing seeds, rocks, pinecones, etc. into the centre of the nest.
- While one team member guards the nest, the others go out and collect food (seeds, leaves, etc.).
- Select one child to be a fox (or other predator) who will prowl the area trying to steal eggs.
- Birds must use their bird calls to alert each other and help protect the eggs from the fox.
- Once all the eggs within a nest are stolen, the birds become foxes too!
- Play until there is only one team of birds left.
- How does it feel to be a bird protecting your nest?



Guard your nest

Pay close attention to keep turtle's nest safe!

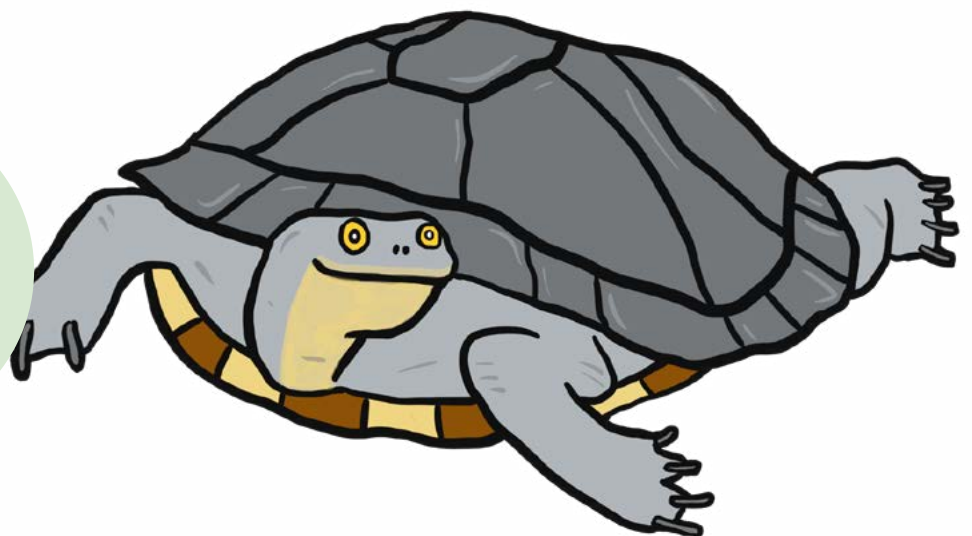
What you need:

Natural loose parts and an outdoor space to build.

Let's get started!

- Use team work to build a safe nest for turtle's eggs using natural loose parts.
- Place eggs (pebbles, pinecones, etc.) in the centre of the nest.
- One child starts off as the turtle while the rest are foxes (predators).
- The foxes begin in a row a few metres away from where the turtle is guarding the nest.
- The turtle's back is to the foxes and can only turn around when a sound is heard.
- The fox must walk quietly towards the nest. If the turtle hears a sound and turns around, the foxes all freeze.
- If the foxes keep moving when the turtle turns around, they must start back at the beginning.
- The goal is to quietly steal the eggs from the turtle's nest once the foxes get close enough.
- How hard must a turtle work to protect their eggs? How hard is it for foxes to move without being heard?

**Help me
protect
my eggs!**



Song

Birds, nests, leaves and turtles songs

Autumn leaves



(To the tune of Mary had a little lamb)

Autumn leaves are changing colours, changing colours, changing colours. Autumn leaves are changing colours all over town.

(Hold up both hands and turn them back and forth)

Autumn leaves are changing colours, changing colours, changing colours. Autumn leaves are changing colours all over town.

Autumn leaves are falling down, falling down, falling down. Autumn leaves are falling down, down to the ground.

(Hold both hands up high, as you wiggle your fingers and bring them down towards the ground)

Autumn leaves are falling down, falling down, falling down. Autumn leaves are falling down, down to the ground.

Take a rake and rake them up, rake them up, rake them up. Take a rake and rake them up, on the ground.

(Pretend to rake leaves)

Make a pile and jump in and jump in and jump in. Make a pile and jump in, on the ground.

(Pretend to make a pile of leaves, then jump in)

Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, autumn leaves, autumn leaves, autumn leaves, autumn leaves, are on the ground.

There are many pretty birds



Inspired by Ella Jenkins song "Many Pretty Trees all Around The World"

There are many pretty birds all around the bush

Many pretty birds all around the bush

There are many pretty birds all around the bush

Here's a pretty bird now

It's a Magpie (it's a Magpie)

It's a Magpie (it's a Magpie)

It's a Magpie (It's a Magpie)

Let children choose the next native birds etc.

Kookaburra

Cockatoo

Lorikeet

Ibis

etc.



Song

There's a turtle on the floor



*(Inspired by There's a Spider on the floor,
by Raffi)*

There's a turtle on the floor, on the floor
There's a turtle on the floor, on the floor
Oh, who could ask for more
Than a turtle on the floor
There's a turtle on the floor, on the floor

*Have children choose places where the turtle
could go – the sillier the better. Come up with
fun rhymes – e.g:*

There's a turtle on my head, on my head
There's a turtle on my head, on my head
There's a turtle on my head
Yes, you heard what I just said
There's a turtle on my head, on my head





 **Story**

 **Poem**

 **Bush Craft**

 **Nature Play**

 **Song**



Whale's journey

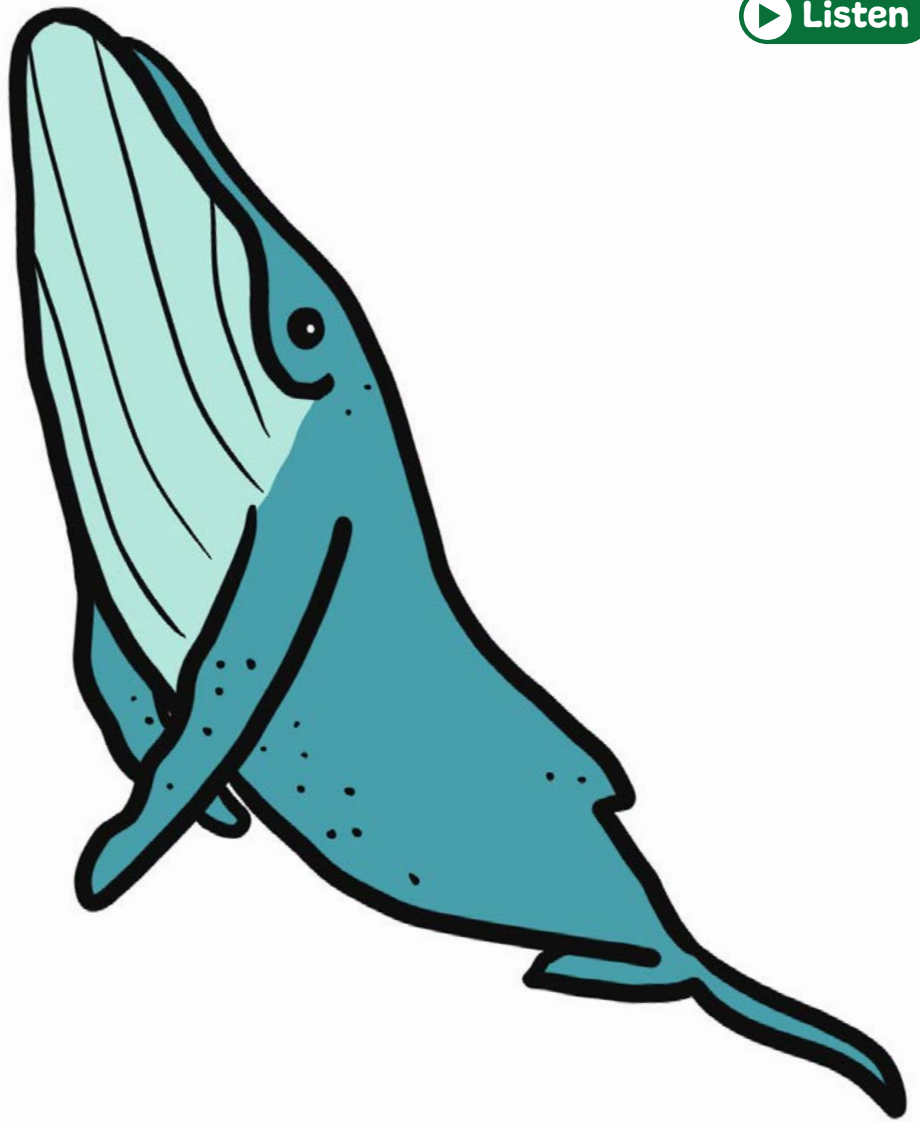
June, July, August

Story

Listen

The whale, The wattle, and the barnacle

By Susi Maldonado
and Louise Kiddell



It was the time of year when the yellow wattle came out. All the humans knew to look to the ocean and they would see the whales making their migration. They could also hear the song of the whales, because whales sing as they swim.

All the whales were swimming up the coast, from the cold southern waters to the warm northern waters, except for one. This little whale had never made a migration before and she was quite scared. It was a long way to swim and she thought that she might be better off staying home, where she knew she was safe.

But luckily, she had a very helpful barnacle sitting on her shoulder who gave her helpful advice and thoughts.

The barnacle said hey little whale, I think you can do it, I think you can make the swim. Because I've seen you swim, I've seen you sing, you can do anything!

And the little whale was sure getting lonely on her own, she could hear the song of the whales getting fainter and fainter as they made their way up the coast. And she wanted to join and be with her family and friends. So on this day, the little whale decided to listen to the helpful barnacle and she swam out of her home and started making her way north.

The whale, the wattle and the barnacle

But soon after she left, she came up to a huge iceberg! It went down hundreds of metres under water. She couldn't swim under it, she couldn't go round the side, she knew she'd have to jump over it. She didn't think she could do it and was going to turn around when the helpful barnacle whispered "I think you can do it, I think you can make the jump. Because I've seen you swim, I've seen you jump, you can do anything!"

And on this day, the little whale listened to the barnacle, she took a huge breath and swam down deep, deep, deep into the ocean, under the fishing boat and came up the other side and took a huge breath "pfffffffff" with a blast from her blowhole. And on the other side, she could hear the song of the whales even louder and she was happy she had listened to the barnacle.

She happily swam along a little more, singing her own song now and suddenly the land on either side started to close in on her, getting narrower and narrower. She couldn't go around it, under it or over it, she would have to go through it. But it was a long dark tunnel and she was scared.

Luckily, the helpful barnacle was there to help and it whispered "I think you can do it, I think you can make it. Because I've seen you swim, I've seen you sing, you can do anything!"

So once again she took a deep breath in and began to swim through the long, dark tunnel. She swam and swam and eventually she saw the tunnel open out and felt the warm waters of the north surround her. She could hear the song of the other whales so loud now and just around the corner there she saw them, all singing together. She knew she had made it and she was so happy she had listened to the helpful barnacle.

So now you know that when the golden wattle is out it's the time of year when the whales make their migration and if you look out to the coast you might see a little whale just like the one in today's story, bravely making her way to the warm waters of the north to meet her family.



The Story of the whale's song

Written by Daniel Silver. Adapted by Susi Maldonado.

There was once a whale who swam through the ocean on its own in search of friends. One day the whale saw a group of whales, he approached them and started to talk to them through a song.

“Gurrup, gurrup, gurrup” sang the whale

“Uuuueeee, uuuueeee, uuuueeee” answered the group of whales

“We don’t sing the same”, the whale thought. He tried talking to the whales in a different way. He did it through play, he did his whale jump.

The whale swam into the water and out he came with a big jump and landed on his back. The group of whales went down into the water, they came out, jumped, but they landed on their right side. They just couldn’t quite seem to communicate.

The whale continued swimming alone through the ocean. He found another group of whales, he approached them and once again started to talk to them through a song.

“Gurrup, gurrup, gurrup” sang the whale

“Mmmmmmm, mmmmmmm, mmmmmmm” answered the group of whales.

These whales didn’t sing his song either. He tried talking to the whales in a different way. He did it through play, he did his whale jump.

The whale swam into the water and out he came with a big jump and landed on his back. The group of whales went down into the water, they came out, jumped, but they landed on

their left side. They just couldn’t quite seem to communicate.

The whale continued swimming alone through the ocean. He found a new group of whales, he approached them and once again started to talk to them through a song.

“Gurrup, gurrup, gurrup” sang the whale

“Click, click, click, click” answered the group of whales.

Once again, the whales didn’t sing his song. He tried talking to the whales in a different way. He did it through play, he did his whale jump.

The whale swam into the water and out he came with a big jump and landed on his back. The group of whales went down into the water, they came out, jumped, but they landed on their bellies. Still, they just couldn’t quite seem to communicate.

The whale continued swimming alone through the ocean. He found a new group of whales, he approached them and once again started to talk to them through a song.

“Gurrup, gurrup, gurrup” sang the whale

“Gurrup, gurrup, gurrup” the whales sang back.

It was the same song, he could talk to them! The whale then decided to play. He swam deep under the water and out he came with a big jump, landing on his back. The group of whales went down into the water, they gave a huge jump and they landed on their backs too! They could play the same game.

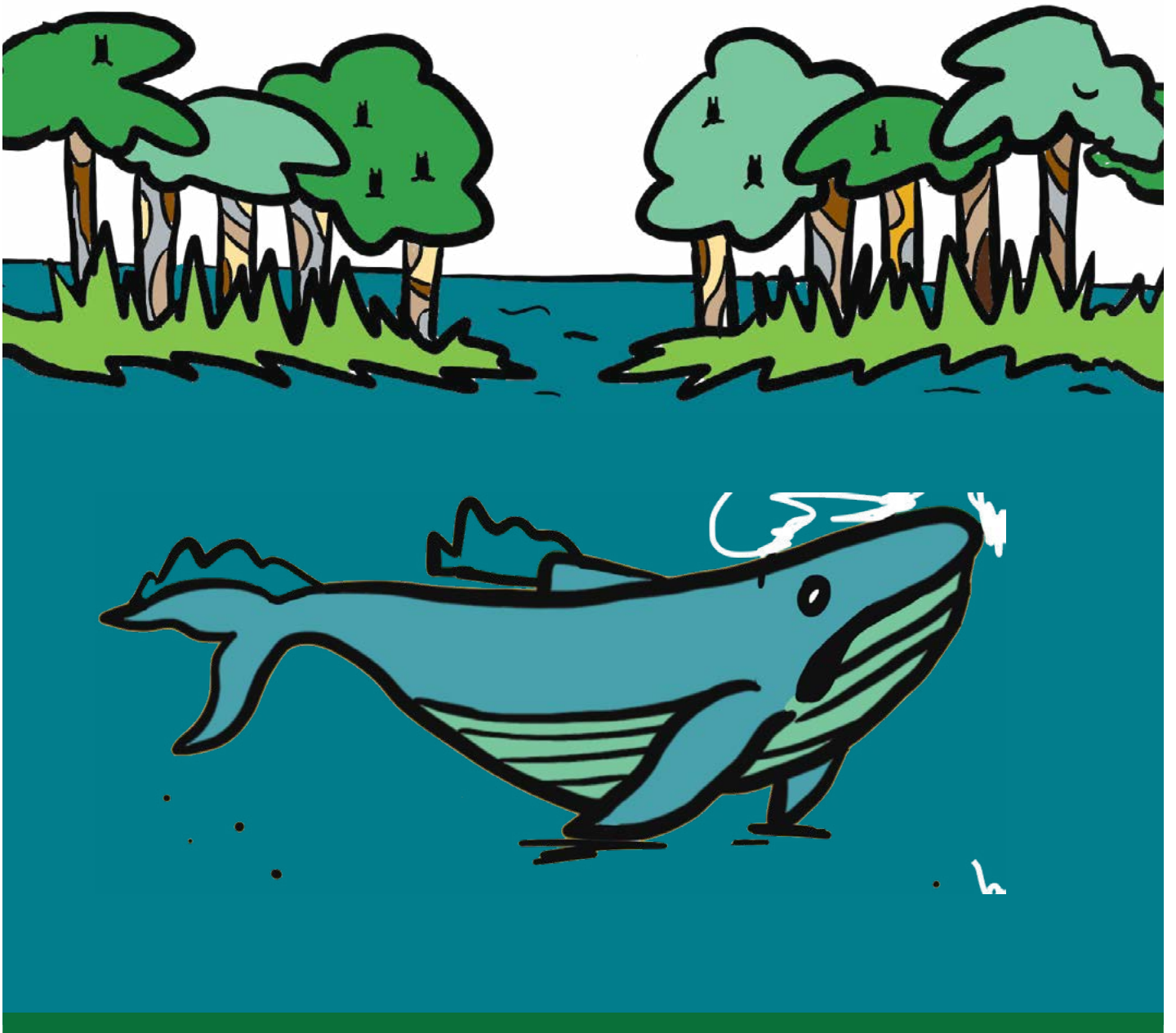
The Story of the Whale's Song

It was such a joy to play and sing together!

Together they decided it sure would be nice to share their songs and games with the other whales in the sea and to learn their songs and games too.

They made their way back through the sea, sharing and learning new and different songs and games with the other whales. Their circle of friendship, songs and games had grown.

The End.



Whale song

by Dani Fine

The sea is dancing
With whale's song
Which echoes out
So full and strong
Through the coral
Whale's song bends
Finding unexpected friends
The octopus bop
The dolphins dive
The fish all groove
To the whale song jive
As the sun rises up
And winds back down
Whale's song travels
All around
Filling hearts
with rhythm and fun
Whale's song
Is a gift
To everyone

 **Listen**

Listen, listen, all around

by Dani Fine

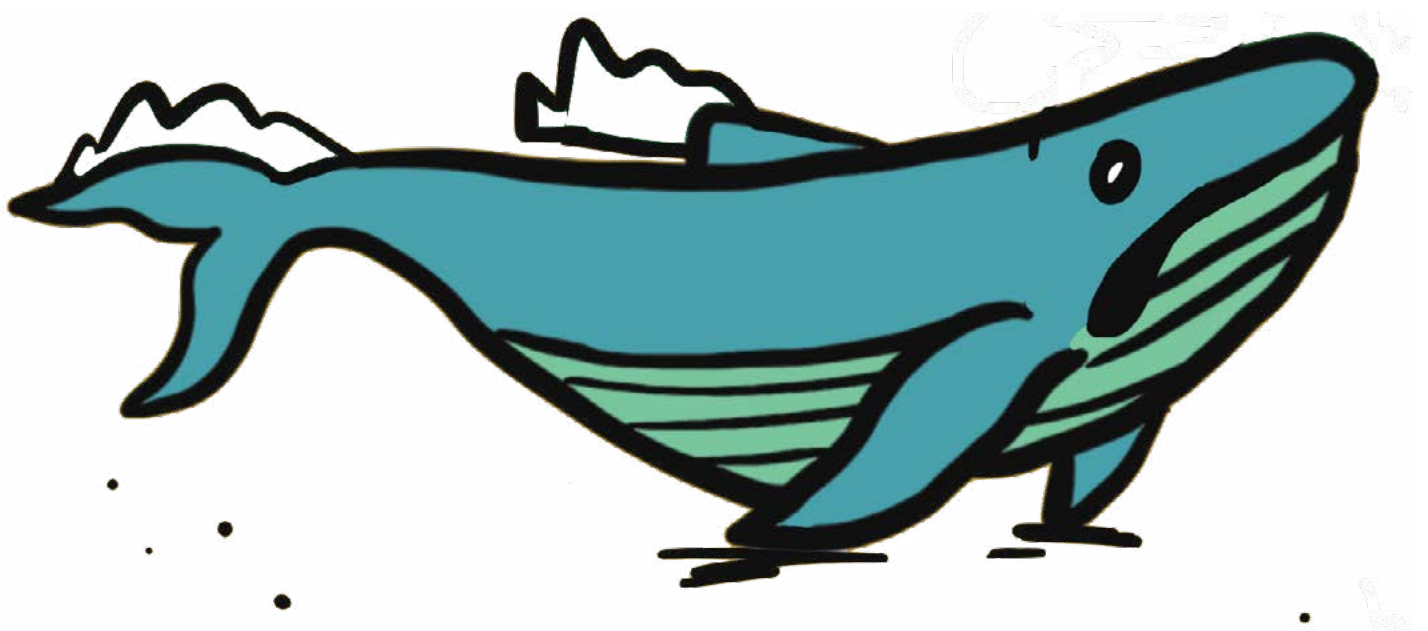
Listen, listen, all around
The sun goes up, the sun comes down
Listen quiet, touch the ground
Does the sun make a sound?

Listen, listen, carefully
To all the trees that you can see,
Listen quiet, listen free
Is there a sound inside the tree?

Listen, listen, to and fro
To the earth, so rich below
Listen quiet, listen slow
Do the plants make a sound as they grow?

Listen, listen, you and me
All of us so magically
Make our sounds in harmony
What sound does your heart want to sing?

 **Listen**





Charcoal whales

Make a humpback whale with charcoal!

What you need:

Charcoal, large piece of paper, bumpy surface.

Let's get started!

- Find a bumpy surface to place your paper on top of. The bumps will represent the whale's barnacles!
- Bumpy surface ideas: rough dry rock, dry soil or textured log.
- Humpback whales have a dark grey colour, just like charcoal! Enjoy running your charcoal across your whale cut out or whale drawing as you fill the entire whale into a bumpy shade of grey.
- Don't forget to add eyes, a mouth and maybe some more barnacles!
- Does your whale have a name? What would their song sound like?



You can cut a whale pattern out of your paper before you begin!





Rhythm sticks

Decorate your rhythm stick to start a bush band!

What you need:

Sticks, chalk, yarn or string, loose parts such as pinecones or leaves.

Let's get started!

- Choose two sticks that are no longer than the length of your elbow to your fingertips.
- Test out the sound they make by tapping them together until you get just the right sticks with the right sound.

Let's get decorating!

- There are many ways to make your rhythm sticks look and sound special.
- To get the right look: add colour with chalk, tie coloured yarn or string around the end where your hands will hold them and tie decoration to the top such as feathers or leaves.
- To get the right sound: use string to add natural materials such as leaves and pinecones to the top of your sticks to bring some variety to the types of sounds you can make with your sticks.
- Play your instrument by yourself or with friends to start your own bush band!



How do
your sticks
sound?



A whale's tale

Make your own whale migration obstacle course!

What you need:

Ropes, tunnels, cones, natural moveable obstacles such as rocks, sticks and logs.

Let's get started!

- Put together an obstacle course that promotes balancing (on a log), climbing (over rope), jumping (over pebbles), crawling (through a tunnel) and other varied movements.
- Make sure to have a clear starting and ending point.

Let's get migrating!

- It's time to become a whale and imagine putting on your blubber, barnacles, tale and flippers.
- Make your way through the obstacle course. Practice your whale song, pretend to eat krill and don't forget to take big breaths in and out of your blowhole!
- How long did your journey take? Was it easy or difficult?
- Can you move through the course as a different animal? Try crawling, swimming or flying through!



Musical whales

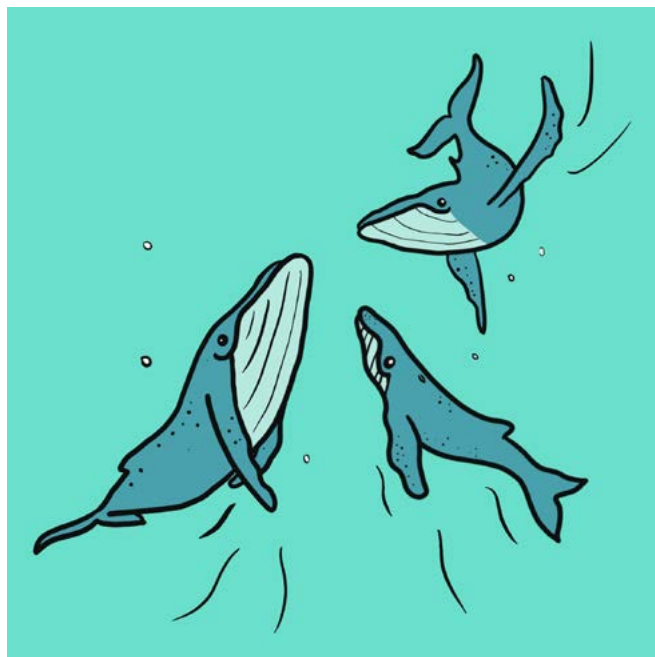
Sing and dance to your own whale song!

What you need:

A couple of sticks, some friends to help make music and to dance with.

Let's get started!

- The ocean is a musical place filled with the songs of whales.
- Adults use rhythm sticks to create a beat while children become whales and sing their whale song.
- Whales make many different sounds. They click, they howl and they whistle! Sometimes they put all these different sounds together! Test out the variety of sounds to find your own whale song.
- As the rhythm sticks tap, the whales dance, jump and sing with the music.
- Practice your whale tail slaps, breaching leaps and dancing and swaying through the water.
- When the rhythm sticks stops the whales freeze staying as still as possible until the beat starts again.



 **Song**

**The animals
sleep tonight**



In the bush
The quiet bush
The ____ (*have children choose an animal*)
sleeps tonight

In the bush
The quiet bush
The ____ sleeps tonight

Then they wake up
(then they wake up)
Then they wake up
(then they wake up)
Then they wake up to greet the day!

**5 whale calves
went out one day**



5 whale calves went out 1 day,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
But only 4 little whales came back!

4 whale calves went out 1 day,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
But only 3 little whales came back!

3 whale calves went out 1 day,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
But only 2 little whales came back!

2 whale calves went out 1 day,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
But only 1 little whales came back!

1 whale calf went out 1 day,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
But NO little whale came back!

So now Mommy Whale went out today,
Over the waves and far away
Mommy Whale called, "click click click clack"
And all 5 whale calves came right back!





 **Story**

 **Poem**

 **Bush Craft**

 **Nature Play**

 **Song**



Tadpoles, frogs, natural dyes and materials

September, October, November

Bush School birds



By Dani Fine

Bush School was in session and all through the park the sound of children having fun singing, playing and laughing could be heard.

The many birds high up in the trees and down low in the pond began to wonder, who is having all that fun and how can we join?

The Magpie declared, "I know the sound of that laughter, it must be Kookaburra!"

And off she flew to find Kookaburra. When Magpie arrived, Kookaburra didn't seem to be playing and having fun. Instead, she was nestled high in the gum tree, very focused on finding insects to eat down in the grass.

Magpie explained, "Kookaburra I'm sorry to interrupt, but I've heard the most wonderful joyful sounds echoing through the park, someone is having lots and lots of fun and I want to join! They're singing and laughing...do you know who it might be?"

"I think I do know!" Kookaburra exclaimed. "Currawong lives nearby and sings a beautiful whistling song, it must be him!"

Together they flew to the Casuarina trees where Currawong spent most of his days.

Only when they got there, Currawong wasn't singing, laughing, or playing. He was busy nibbling on some insects.

Kookaburra explained, "Currawong, I'm sorry to interrupt, but we've heard the most wonderful joyful sound echoing through the park, someone is having lots and lots of fun and we want to join! They're singing and laughing and playing...do you know who it might be?"

"I think I do know!" Currawong exclaimed. "I know a very playful friendly bird, who lives in the pond – it's Duck!"

And so, they made their way to the pond, soaring above the trees and swooping down low to find Duck. When they arrived, Duck didn't seem to be playing, she was busy looking for water plants to eat.

Currawong explained, "Duck, I'm sorry to interrupt, but we've heard the most wonderful joyful sound echoing through the park,

someone is having lots and lots of fun and we want to join! They're singing and laughing and playing...do you know who it might be?"

"I'm sure I know!" Duck proudly and confidently stated, "but you won't believe me! I'll have to show you..."

A bit confused, Magpie, Kookaburra and Currawong followed Duck, flying above him as he made his way over a bridge, down a pathway, away from the pond and to a most wonderful place full of.....

CHILDREN!

They'd found all the children at Bush School! Together, the birds joined the Bush School kids as they sang and danced to a rainbow song about colours!

The birds all agreed that these Bush School kids were lots of fun and the bush school kids were so caring and respectful, the birds felt safe to spend time with them! They decided to come back and visit often, enjoying songs, stories and playtime together in harmony!

The End.

Story

The tale of Thomas the tadpole

By Alasdair Taylor

The first thing in his life that Thomas could remember was wriggling and squirming through a big ball of clear, sticky jelly.

Suddenly it felt colder and Thomas was moving fast – he had a little tail and was swimming through water. Much easier than wriggling through jelly!

Thomas had left his egg and become a tadpole!

Thomas found lots and lots of other tadpoles swimming around him – they were small and black with round heads just like him.

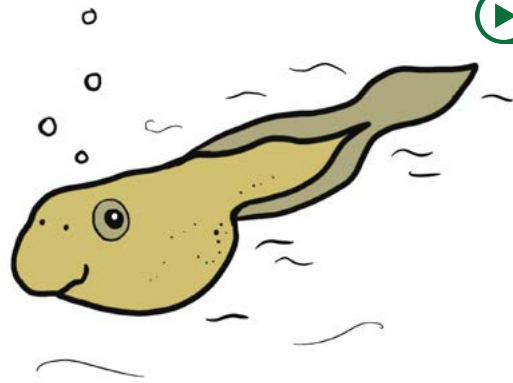
Rays of golden sunlight shone through the water. Thomas and the other tadpoles loved the sunny, bright parts of the pond. The water was warm there and it was easy to see the plant food which they liked to eat.

Thomas didn't like going near the dark, shadowy places in the pond. The water was colder there and he couldn't see everything, which felt scary to him.

But every time the tadpoles swam into the sunlit places, there would be a 'SPLASH' and suddenly some of them would disappear!

When Thomas grew a bit bigger, he found out why the others were disappearing. He could hear the Mummy and Daddy frogs croaking and creaking: "Watch out for the fish! Hide from the fish!"

Listen



The tadpoles were disappearing because the fish were eating them!

"But where can I hide from the fish?" asked Thomas.

"Lily pad! Lily pad!" croaked the frogs.

"But I can't climb out of the water onto the lily pad" cried Thomas, "I've got no legs!"

"UNDER THE LILY PAD!" croaked the frogs.

"But it's dark under the lily pads and that makes it cold and scary!" said Thomas.

Just then, a big fish came swimming towards Thomas, its mouth open, ready to swallow him up!

"HIDE NOW!" croaked the frogs!

Thomas darted under the lily pad. The fish lost sight of Thomas in the dark and swam away to try and catch the tadpoles who still swam in the sunlight – they were the ones who were still too scared to hide under the dark shade of the lily pad.

One morning Thomas woke up and found he had two little legs! He could swim a bit faster and was less afraid of the dark. "I'll keep hiding under the lily pads to escape from the fish – I want to live to grow bigger!" Thomas would say to himself.

The tale of Thomas the tadpole

Another morning soon after, Thomas woke up to find he had grown two more little legs! That means he now had....four legs!

“Wow!” said Thomas, “Now I’ve got four legs, I want to climb up on the lily pads just like the adult frogs!”

Thomas tried so hard, so many times to climb up on the lily pad, but his little legs weren’t strong enough.

“Don’t give up, Thomas!” croaked the frogs, “keep trying!” croaked the frogs!

“One more time, here I go!” shouted Thomas. He wriggled and struggled and wriggled so hard, HIS TAIL FELL OFF!

“My tail’s gone!” said Thomas, but suddenly he realised he was standing on the green lily pad.

“A-ha” croaked a Mumma frog, “you won’t need that tail anymore – you’ve become an adult frog!”

Thomas was so happy! He saw a mosquito fly past. He felt hungry just looking at it. Suddenly a long tongue popped out of his mouth, caught it and swallowed it! “Yum!” croaked Thomas in his new adult froggy voice, “I like the taste of bugs!”

Now Thomas could jump from lily pad to lily pad catching bugs as he went. His favourite was dragonflies.

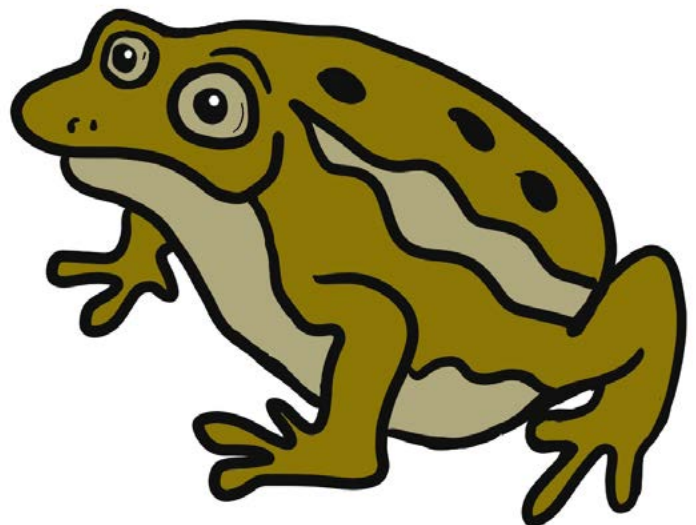
And Thomas could still swim using his legs, but he had to come up for air to breathe. He also had to watch out for some of the bigger fish, who fancied some frog for their dinner! But Thomas could now climb out of the water onto lily pads and rocks to get away.

Soon Thomas met a lady frog. They mated and the lady frog became a mumma frog and laid lots and lots of eggs in the spawn jelly.

Soon Thomas saw the tadpoles hatch and swim around. He was sad to see some of them get eaten by fish.

So Thomas sat on the lily pad and croaked: “Hide under the lily pad – don’t be afraid of the dark and the cold. Then you’ll be safe and you can grow up into an adult frog like me and sit on a lily pad in the sun and catch bugs! A FROG’S LIFE IS SO MUCH FUN!!”

The End.



Birds, nests, leaves and turtles poems

By Dani Fine

You can hold the whole earth's hand



You can kiss a wave
You can hug a mountain
You can be best friends
With the land
With the land
The stars can tuck you in at night
The moon can sing its song so bright

And you can hold the whole earth's hand

You can sing songs to the plants and gardens
You can be best friends
With the land
With the land
The animals can tell you tales
Dingoes, bats, foxes and whales

And you can hold the whole earth's hand

Swaying with the breeze
Moving like a tree

You can hold the whole earth's hand.

Every colour is a gift



Light on water
Soft and blue
Dianella Berries
Purple blooms
Butterfly
Of orange and gold
Black Currawong sings
So big and bold

Every colour is a gift

Leaves of green
Fields fade to cream
Paperbark coloured dreams
Happy soil
A deep rich brown
Yellow wattle all around

Every colour is a gift

Yes, what a boring place
It'd be
Without the colours
That we see
I'll tell you
Though you didn't ask me:

Every colour is a gift



Pounding pigments

Make natural prints with flowers and leaves!

What you need:

Fresh flowers and leaves, rolling pin or smooth rock, white paper, wax paper, newspaper.

Let's get started!

- Find a workspace where you can safely pound your leaves with a rolling pin or rock.
- Go for a walk and collect colourful flowers and leaves. Ask permission and harvest sustainably, being mindful not to take too many flowers or leaves from one plant.

You can also use an old cotton sheet or t-shirt to print on!

Let's get noisy!

- Protect your workspace by putting down a layer of newspaper.
- Place your white paper on top of the newspaper.
- Place your brightly coloured flowers and leaves on top of the white paper. Make an interesting pattern or design with them.
- Place a large piece of wax paper over the top of the flowers and leaves.
- With a rolling pin or a smooth rock, pound the colours of the plants onto the paper. Thick plants might need extra pounding so be careful of your fingers!
- Remove the wax paper and check your design. Do you need to pound in some more? Do you need to add more flowers?
- Once you are happy with your design, let the natural pigments air dry.





Fantastic frog art

Make a leaping frog from leaves!

What you need:

Paper, glue, leaves, pencils or crayons, loose natural parts.

Let's get started!

- Look at some pictures of frogs – What shapes can you see?
- Frogs have an oval body and four long legs.
- They also have awesome webbed feet!
- Think about the frog you will make. How many leaves will you need?
- Go for a walk and collect some natural parts such as leaves, sticks and seed pods.

Let's get froggy!

- Choose one large leaf to be the frog's body and stick it in the middle of your paper.
- At the tip of the leaf, add the frog's eyes. You can draw them on or glue on small seeds.
- Choose some medium leaves. Glue them on either side of the large leaf to make the legs. Think about how frog legs look and bend.
- Draw on feet and toes to each leg with pencils or crayons.
- Let the glue dry before hanging up in a special place.

**How many
leaves did you
use to make
your frog?**



Colour, spot, sort

How many different colours can you find?

What you need:

A colour wheel of any kind, a bucket or bag for collecting loose parts.

Let's get started!

- Take your colour wheel out for a walk.
- Be on the lookout for items in nature that match the colours on your colour wheel.
- Gather as many different colours as you can remembering to only collect items that have already fallen to the ground.
- Enjoy your rainbow!
 - how many different colours did you find?
 - are there different shades of the same colour?
 - will the colours change over time?
- Put your rainbow items together into a work of ephemeral (temporary) art to enjoy!.



Make a colour wheel with an egg carton and different coloured objects or use paint swatches!



Frog hop games

Hip hop hooray - let's leap like a frog today!

What you need:

Friends to play with.

Let's get started!

- Do you know the life cycle of a frog? Research the many stages frogs go through before they can hop!
- Use the frog life cycle to inspire some of your game actions.

Let's play!

Froggy Says (Simon Says)

- Make all your instructions 'hop-able'. For example, Froggy says 'hop in a circle'.
- You can also use the life cycle. For example, Froggy says 'be an egg' or 'grow a tail'.

Ribbit, Ribbit, Jump (Duck, Duck, Goose)

- Sit in a circle with your friends; you are all tadpoles.
- One person becomes a frog and hops around the outside of the circle. As they pass by each tadpole, they say 'ribbit'.
- When ready, the frog taps a tadpole in the head and says 'jump!'.
- The tadpole must hop up and try to catch the frog before they get back to the empty space.

Leap Frog

- Line up in single file.
- The first person in the line steps forward and crouches down. They are the first frog.
- The next person leaps over the first person, steps forward and crouches over becoming the second frog.
- Keep playing until everyone has had a chance to jump over all the frogs.
- If you have many friends, you can race teams against each other or see who can jump the furthest!

Song

Circle of love



I draw a circle of love around my foot
A circle around my foot
I draw a circle of love around my knee
A circle around my knee
I draw a circle of love around my hand
A circle around my hand
I draw a circle of love around my face
A circle around my face
I draw a circle of love around you
A circle of love around you
I draw a circle of love around me too
A circle around me too

Rainbow in the bush



*(To the tune of The Wheels
on the Bus)*

The rainbow in the sky goes back and forth
Back and forth
Back and forth
The rainbow in sky goes back and forth
All through the bush
The red in the rainbow goes
Flash flash flash
Flash flash flash
Flash flash flash
The red in the rainbow goes
Flash flash flash
All through the bush
The orange in the rainbow goes
Whoosh whoosh whoosh
Whoosh whoosh whoosh
Whoosh whoosh whoosh
The orange in the rainbow goes
Whoosh whoosh whoosh
All through the bush
The yellow in the rainbow goes
La la la
La la la
La la la
The yellow in the rainbow goes
La la la
All through the bush



Song

Animal dance!

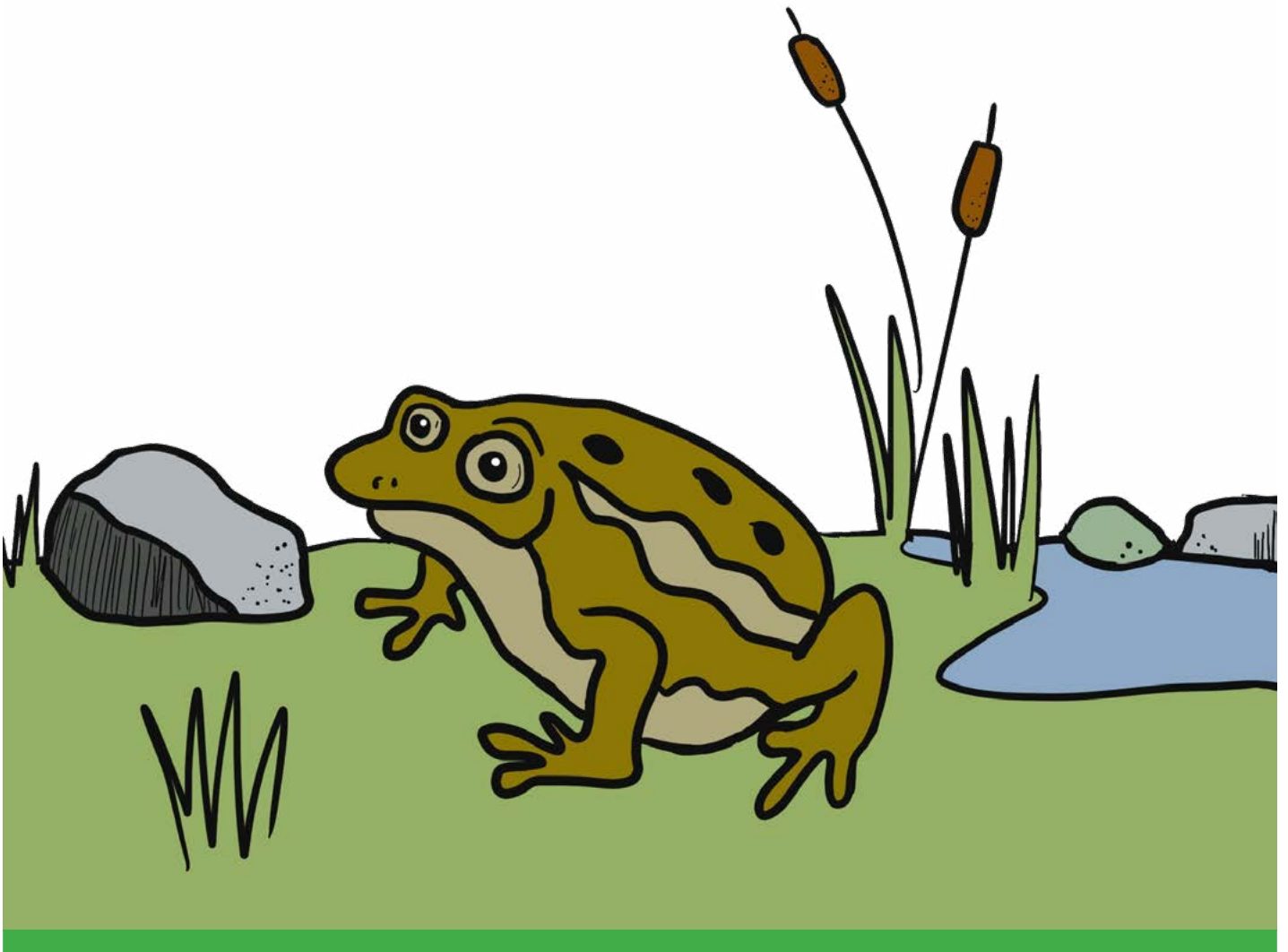


Animal dance, animal dance
Lets all do the animal dance
Animal dance, animal dance
Dance, dance, dance

(Have children choose an animal e.g.)

*Butterflies fly, butterflies fly
Let's all do the butterfly fly
Butterflies fly, butterflies fly,
Fly, fly, fly*

*Kangaroos jump, kangaroos jump
Let's all do the kangaroo jump
Kangaroos jump, kangaroos jump
Jump, jump, jump*





Thank you fingers

Now it's time to use a bit of magic to turn our hello fingers into thank you fingers. We have much to be grateful for!

We lift our fingers to the sky and share our thank you's together:

Thank you sky

Thank you sun

Thank you trees

Thank you birds

Thank you insects

Thank you soil

Thank you family

Thank you friends

Thank you teachers

Thank you me

(invite children to extend their own thank you)





Our philosophy

Thank you for taking the time to delve into “The Book of Bush School.” We hope the ideas contained in these pages make it far and wide, to reach educators, parents/ carers and others interested in promoting outdoor opportunities for children /youth.

Bush School at Greater Sydney Parklands is offered as a program for 2.5 – 5-year-olds, “The Book of Bush School” is primarily focused on that age group. However, with creativity the experiences contained in these pages can be adapted to any age. Increasing connection with nature, self and each other will come from completing these activities, including for the grown-ups who lead them.

The benefits of Bush School are extensive and well documented, there is significant research worldwide that promotes all manner of advantages. However, simply observing at a Bush School session, will give you insights into how beneficial it truly is. The laughter and chatter, conversations and interactions - all point to plentiful enjoyment and development of social skills. The children climbing trees and balancing on logs, are showcasing the development of physical literacy, resilience and achieving challenge in risky play. As the

children’s hands work with clay and natural materials you see creativity emerging literally in front of your eyes. Bush School develops all facets of wellbeing and resilience – social, emotional, physical and more. It encourages deep learning and creative independent play.

The real point of difference of Bush School is that children experience a connection to place, understanding of nature and the development of wonder in the world. Outdoor programs by their very design, connect people to their surrounds, culture and history. Bush School activities respect the First Nations culture of where they are located, often including local story as central to activities as an integral part of programs.

In my roles as an educator, researcher and parent I see the wonderful advantages of outdoor play on a daily basis. These roles have enabled me to see significant growth in the area of outdoor nature based play over the years. I am very confident with “The Book of Bush School” even more children will be able to connect with the great outdoors in play, fun and awe.

Dr Amanda Lloyd
Nature Play Development Manager
Greater Sydney Parklands

Inclusion and accessibility

Creating a culture of care & belonging in your Bush School sessions means:

- Everyone has a voice and is appreciated for who they are

Tip: Children can express themselves in their own way through: Play, talking, singing, movement, sound, etc. and be responded to in a thoughtful, connected way.

- Feelings are welcomed and explored.
- Soothing spaces are available for children to regulate, feel their feelings and ground.

Tip: Create a cozy, comfortable spot that all children know they can go to when big feelings arise. Use the “tell it to a tree” method to allow children to express big feelings.

- Accessibility is considered when choosing an appropriate outdoor learning space.
- Proper seating options and mobility pathways are prepared ahead of time depending on children’s needs.

Children with sensory sensitivities can be primed by letting them know what to expect ahead of time in terms of:

- sounds in the environment
- animals they may see
- sights they may see
- exposure to water/elements.

Tip: A spare change of clothes is always a good idea as sensory sensitivities can arise when clothing gets wet from rain or sweat!

The best way to ensure that all children’s unique needs are being met is to utilise a relationship-based approach: Get to know children, listen to them, observe them, move slowly, don’t rush. When we know the children we are teaching, we can adapt and respond to their needs efficiently.



Choosing an outdoor space

Getting to know an outdoor space over time gives children the opportunity to form meaningful connections with place and experience a deep sense of belonging. We suggest choosing an outdoor space close to your home to revisit as you enjoy the Bush School activities in the pages to follow.

Some pointers

- The space doesn't need to be too big.
- Children must be able to safely and freely explore.
- You can create your own natural boundaries together.
- Aim for a space with many loose natural materials (referred to as "loose parts" throughout this book) present: think about access to fallen leaves, twigs, seed pods, bark, etc.

The outdoor space is where all the Bush School magic, play, child led opportunities and exploration occur!

Here's a map of our Bush School site to give some inspiration for child-led free play opportunities in the outdoor environment!



Mud kitchen

Materials needed: A watering can and some old pots, pans, cups.

What's happening: Children engage in imaginative play that encourages thinking creatively, practicing patience and problem solving. The Mud kitchen promotes Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) through the encouragement of role play, sharing and turn taking with peers. The open-ended nature of mud play allows children to freely create without fear of making mistakes, contributing to their sense of self and bolstering confidence.

Playing in the mud stimulates children's senses through touching a variety of textures with both their hands and feet which squish in the mud.

Gross motor skills are activated as children have opportunities to lift and pour from large watering cans, balance while splashing in puddles and transporting materials. Fine motor skills are utilised to stir, decanter and to paint using mud, sticks and paper bark.

Climbing tree and balancing logs

Materials needed: None – find a tree with low branches that are thicker than a child's leg.

Children have an opportunity to engage in safe risk taking and making informed decisions.

What's happening: Tree climbing utilises gross motor skills, builds muscle strength and hand and eye coordination and allows children the independence to assess their own physical abilities.

Tree climbing is excellent for children's resilience, self-esteem and confidence - as they feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride when they can get to new heights on their own!

At the climbing tree, you can teach children the rule of three:

- 3 body parts on the tree always for balance and safety
- no more than 3 children in the tree at once to protect the tree and the children
- if there's a line, spend 3 minutes and then share the tree with a friend.

Through this method, children learn reciprocity – showing respect for the tree by not putting too much weight on it and moving safely to protect their own bodies, their friends' bodies and the tree's body.



Chalk rocks

Materials needed: Chalk. Look for large rocks, sticks, etc. to draw on.

What's happening: Children are exposed to drawing on vertical surfaces which improves dexterity and control. Here, children can interpret the world around them and express their ideas through drawing and colouring. Process-oriented art explorations engage fine motor skills, mindfulness, creativity, collaboration and connection.

Outdoor setting at large

Children make their own observations and discoveries while grounding, exploring and playing in their environment. Here, we see the sparks of wonder, awe, connection, respect and responsibility for the environment emerge as children form relationships with the plants, animals, soil and sky around them.



A word on using natural materials

Throughout the resource section of this book, you will find that we often refer to using “loose parts” in our bush craft and play.

We define loose parts at Bush School as: Natural materials that have fallen to the ground and are no longer growing.

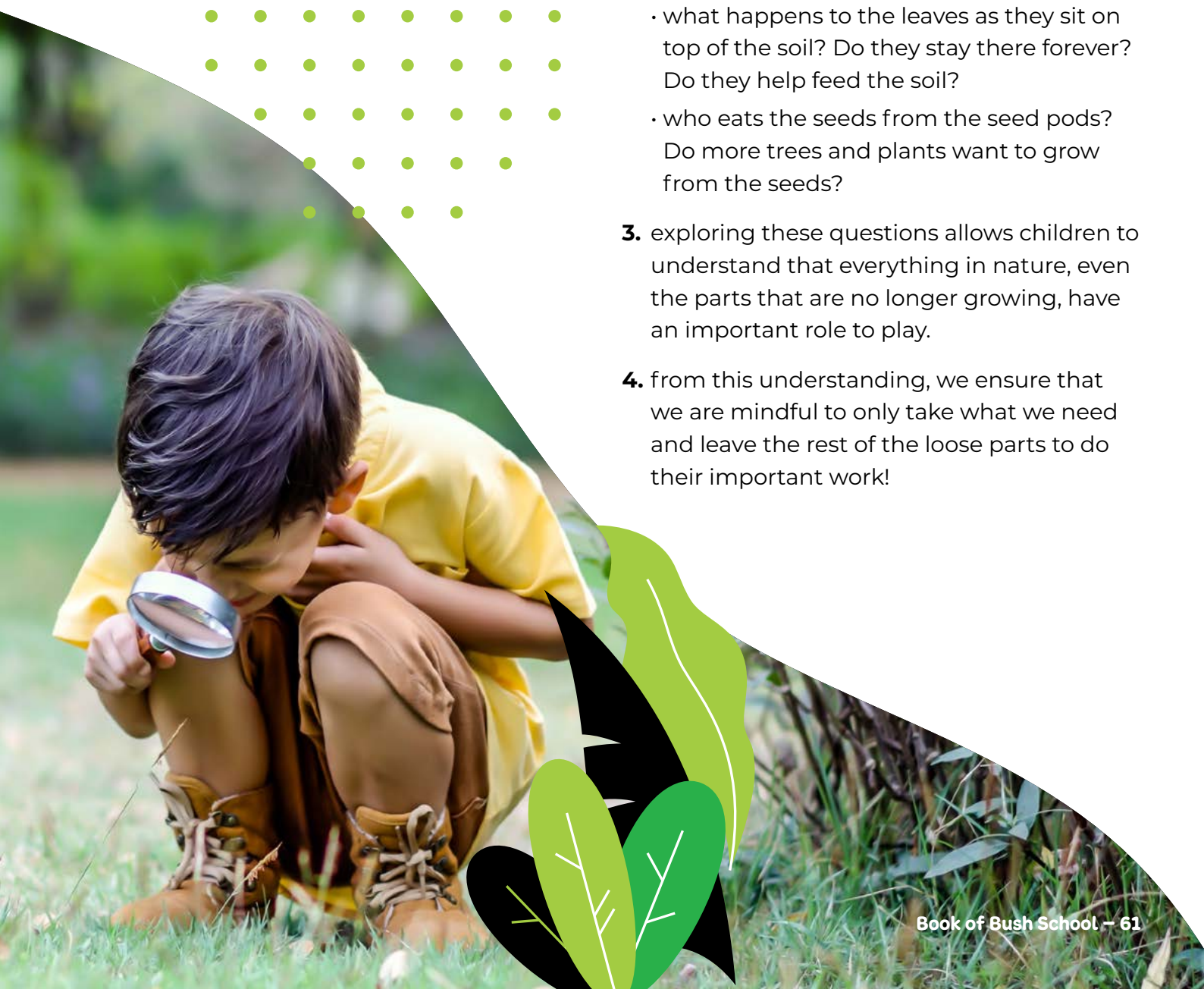
Examples: Fallen leaves, sticks, seed pods, bark.

Using these materials presents an opportunity to teach children about the interconnected cycle of life!

How?

We explain that:

1. we try not to take parts that are still growing – we allow them to continue to grow so that they can live their full life.
2. even the loose parts that we find on the ground have a job to do – this is a chance to wonder together with open ended questions:
 - who might make a home in the twigs and sticks on the ground?
 - what happens to the leaves as they sit on top of the soil? Do they stay there forever? Do they help feed the soil?
 - who eats the seeds from the seed pods? Do more trees and plants want to grow from the seeds?
3. exploring these questions allows children to understand that everything in nature, even the parts that are no longer growing, have an important role to play.
4. from this understanding, we ensure that we are mindful to only take what we need and leave the rest of the loose parts to do their important work!



Original art works for you

Click on the artwork to download a colouring page or full colour poster!



Caring for Country

Artist: Rebecca Cawthorne Wiradjuri Woman

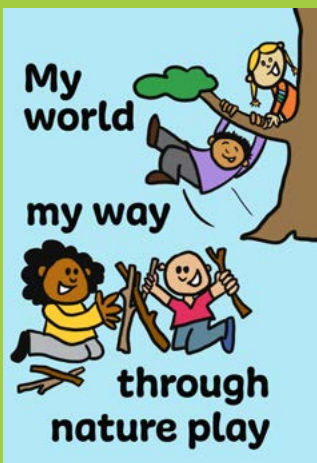
I wanted to create a piece that sends us a reminder of the importance for caring for Country as it is the source of our spiritual, cultural and physical nourishment. I wished for people to connect through the powerful yet gentle gaze held within the eyes of a First Nations Woman, she is surrounded by Native Australian plants that are used for medicine and food. The plants include Ficus coronata (Sandpaper Fig), Cyanthea Cooperi (Lacy Tree Fern), Banksia serata leaves and a flowering Waratah.



Child's Right

Artist: Dani Fine

This playful piece offers a powerful reminder that it's every child's right to play freely outside. This message is dear to my heart as I am an advocate for all children everywhere to have equal and equitable access to connect to the natural world.



My World, My Way

Artist: Sam Crosby

Additional nature play resources

Background reading

- Angela J. Hanscom, *Balanced and Barefoot*, New Harbinger Publication; 1st edition, (2016)
- Claire Warden and Dough Fargher, *Beyond the Gate*, Pademelon Press; 1st edition (2023)
- Frances Bodkin, *D'harawal Climate and Natural Resources*, Frances Bodkin; 1st edition (2013)
- Fran Hughes, Sue Elliott, Karen Anderson and Barbara Chancellor, *Early Years Learning in Australian Natural Environments*, Oxford University Press; 1st edition, (2021)
- Jon Young, Evan McGown and Ellen Haas, *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*, OwlLink Media; 2nd edition (2010)
- Linda Akeson McGurk, *There's No Such Thing As Bad Weather*, Touchstone; Unabridged edition (2023)
- Nature Play Gallery – Maggie Dent <https://www.maggiedent.com/nature-play/> (29/08/2023)
- Pasi Sahlberg & William Doyle, *Let the Children Play; How more play will save our schools and help children thrive*, Oxford University Press; 1st edition (2019)
- Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, Atlantic Books; 2nd edition, (2010)

Activity ideas

- Alan Reid and Harry Breidahl, *Outdoor Environmental Games*, Gould League of Victoria Inc; 1st edition (2018)
- Jane Worroll and Peter Houghton, *Play the Forest School Way*, Watkins Publishing; Illustrated edition (2016)
- Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks, *The Wild City Book; Loads of things to do outdoors in towns and cities*, Frances Lincoln Adult; 1st edition (2014)
- Juliet Robertson, *Messy Maths, A Playful, Outdoor Approach for Early Years*, Independent Thinking Press; 1st edition (2017)
- Kate Hubmayer, *Nature Crafts for Aussie Kids*, KATE HUBMAYER; 1st edition (2014)
- Theresa Casey and Juliet Robertson, *Loose Parts Play Toolkit, Inspiring Scotland & Thrive Outdoors; 2nd edition, (2019) <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Loose-Parts-Play-Toolkit-2019-web.pdf>*

Book in at Bush School:

Greater Sydney Parklands created Bush School, a flagship nature play program that reconnects urban children and their parents with nature. Led by our expert education rangers, the program offers storytelling, bushcraft, free play, art-making and nature games. These activities help children develop creativity, confidence, focus and a sense of responsibility while exploring and learning at their own pace.

To find out more, visit us at GreaterSydneyParklands.gov.au

Credits

All original illustrations in Book of Bush School created by Sam Crosby

Caring for Country poster by Rebecca Cawthorne, Wiradjuri Woman

Child's Right poster by Dani Fine

My World, My Way poster by Sam Crosby

Design by Elton Ward Creative

Created by Dani Fine

Edited by Dani Fine and Christian Eckardt

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All Centennial Parklands Bush School educators of past and present,
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Bush School children and their caregivers of past and present,
Sam Crosby, for the original Centennial Parklands Bush School spark of inspiration.

It is our collective creativity, care and knowledge that made this book possible.





Notes



Notes





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people and parks together