

WALKING IN GAGUDJU COUNTRY: EXPLORING THE MONSOON FOREST

By Diane Lucas and Ben Tyler, illustrated by Emma Long

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 5-10, **PRIMARY SCHOOL**, Foundation – Year 5

NOTE TO TEACHERS: Activities suggested below are adaptable to age groups far beyond the range recommended above. The author has used similar storytelling, songs and puppetry teaching activities in workshops for ages from kindergarten to year 12. Use the activities below as a guide, and adapt them to the interests and aptitude of your classroom.

THEMES: Kakadu, the environment, rainforest ecosystems, plants, birds, animals, Indigenous languages, First Nations Australian history and culture

CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS: 

- **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM** (science, maths, visual arts, English literacy and language)
- **SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM** (HASS, science and visual arts)

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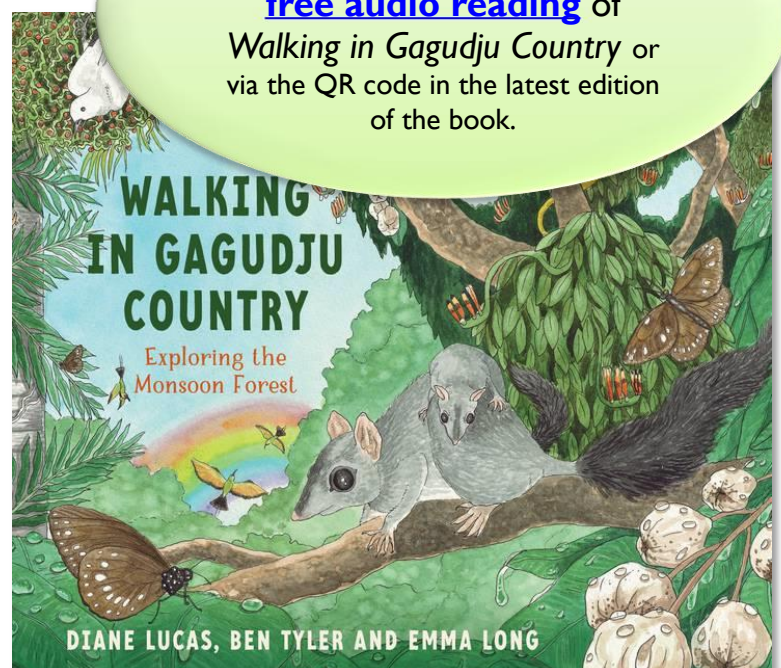
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NEW! Click this link to listen to the [free audio reading](#) of *Walking in Gagudju Country* or via the QR code in the latest edition of the book.



INTRODUCTION

This rich and fascinating book brings together First Nations Australian knowledge and history with Western science. It is a collaborative way to vicariously experience one of the unique habitats of Kakadu National Park.

For children, teachers, librarians and students, *Walking in Gagudju Country* offers a model of discovery of place and culture. It also includes Kundjeyhmi language names, and lush and enchanting illustrations.

This celebration of the natural world, which encourages children to care for country, provides an abundance of opportunities for classroom activities, discussions and assessments to assist teachers with covering units of work across many areas of the curriculum, through the lenses of Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture.

STORY SUMMARY

Walking in Gagudju Country concentrates on the monsoon forest areas of the Top End of northern Australia, from Northern Queensland to Broome in Western Australia.

This book is written to encourage you, wherever you live, to consider the habitat and seasonal aspects of your own geographical location. It is written to encourage research into First Nations culture of your region; this will also expand your knowledge and understanding of the environment.

The activities and suggestions in these Teachers' Notes can be adapted for themes and used as focus ideas across the curriculum from foundation through to upper primary education. The authors wish to emphasise that children will benefit from the holistic approach of exploring these topics under a broad theme like 'The present season in a monsoon forest' (or any habitat close to your location).

Q&A WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR, EMMA LONG

1. Tell us about your inspiration for the illustrations in this book and how you created the lush imagery.

I spent many hours out in nature exploring urban and rural bush settings. Occasionally, I joined Ben and Di as they walked together. Other times I walked with my family across different parts of the country and just took time to connect with and observe nature. I tried to tap in to my childhood experiences and the adventures I had discovering 'new' wildlife – that was wonderfully inspirational.

My process is quite detailed and each illustration from rough form to final artwork takes up to two weeks to create. I enjoy working in a variety of media and for this book I used ink and watercolours. It has been such a joy as I work to learn new things and make new discoveries about the way the watercolours move and interact.

Whenever I felt troubled or unsettled by the progress of a spread or my work in general, I took that as a sign that I had been cramped painting at my desk for too long! I packed up a little travel kit and went and spent a morning painting in one of the urban monsoon forests or headed out for a night or two in the bush where everything comes back into clear focus. Every single time I headed outdoors to paint I came home energised and ready to spread colour across my room once again!

2. What makes this book outstanding to you?

It's a privilege to learn First Nations language for the flora and fauna of country. That, and the ideas of connecting with one another through walking on country and love of country – this is outstanding in this book. I also love that it promotes the preservation of country and all of its glorious inhabitants.

Q&A WITH THE AUTHORS, DIANE LUCAS AND BEN TYLER

1. What do you see as the main features of the book?

DL: This is a story about looking and listening closely, encouraging both children and adults to see, hear, smell and feel the land more deeply.

It is an invitation to walk in the bush and take a closer look – to hear the stories the bush tells you of the past and of the present, and the stories of the land that have been passed along in time by Aboriginal elders.

This story provides glimpses into how Aboriginal people live and continue to live, as they have done walking the land for thousands of years.

2. What is the essence of this book?

BT: The essence of the book is family, in the Biniñ sense of the word. It describes how we relate to the natural world and each other and everything inbetween that is ancient, complex and elegant. It's about the origin stories and how we came to be through Ancestral Creators who made the world and the rules to live in harmony on Mother Earth with all as one big family. We all belong.

3. What inspired you to write this book?

BT: I am always inspired when I go walking and talking with Diane on country wherever we are. We share a special bond through a shared Kakadu life together with many wonderful times, memories, and stories that continue, inspire and connect us to Kakadu people, places and culture.

DL: The writing of this book was inspired by a walk Ben and I took through a monsoon forest with a mutual friend. Together we shared stories in our learnings and memories relating to trees and animals, birds, insects, hunting and gathering, stories from the elders of past times and some Dreaming stories.

Our friend found the intricacies of these stories intriguing, so Ben and I (having walked the land and shared ideas and stories for many years) decided to write this story.

We then met Emma, who also lives in the Northern Territory and is inspired by the natural world. She shares her love of the natural world while walking with her children and paints her observations into

beautiful illustrations. Together we bring this collaborative story to you.

4. What was your introduction to the stories of Kakadu?

DL: I was employed by the Gagudju Association to be the teacher for the community at Patonga outstation in Kakadu. That's where I met Ben – he was only 6 years old.

There were 17 to 30 children in the little bush school I taught at, aged 2 to 26 years old. The number of children attending was seasonal, depending on when the roads were not flooded.

We had such fun together. The children taught me so much about the bush and of course the adults did too. The children showed me how to dig yams, collect fallen bush fruits, how to keep mosquitoes away and how to read the bush.

Everyone spoke Kundjeyhmi language so they taught me and I would use this alongside English in our reading, writing, listening, talking and telling activities for our learning. I would often say to the children that they taught me more than I taught them! They laughed. It was a good two-way learning.

5. Can you tell us a bit more about how this story came together?

DL: I always carry a little sketch book and an exercise book around with me and whenever I get an idea I write notes or little verses or sketch things in the books. Something to prompt further writing or paintings.

I try to take a walk daily. Often as I walk, I make up songs along the way, as I notice something around me. After creating the song lines and rhythms over a few days or a week, I record the song on my phone so I don't forget the tune. I keep coming back to the songs so quickly I remember them in my mind and create movements to help recall the songs easily. I share these songs with people, young and old, when I encounter the seasonal situation with others.

For example, I made a song about a flowering bush apple tree, this week, in the season of kurrung because I met with many of these trees in flower as I walked in the bush.

6. What sparked your interest in writing stories for children?

DL: When I was a child we would write letters to our aunts and uncles and grandparents for Christmas and after our birthdays to thank them for our gifts. For most of my secondary schooling I was sent to boarding school, here I began to enjoy writing letters to my family and friends. We did not have mobile phones or even the use of phones to phone our families, so we wrote letters.

When I left school, and studied education and then worked, I travelled overseas during my holidays. I enjoyed writing letters to share my experiences with friends and family. I took lots of photos and painted or drew stories and made recordings of sounds and festivities as I lived and worked in different places to share oral stories with my letters.

7. Tell us more about the collaborative process of putting a book together.

BT: Di and I came to write this book because we are family, in the Bininj sense of the word, and so like family do, we talked and talked and talked about so many things.

Then one day we went walking with a friend in the bush. We shared our stories with our friend as we walked and talked through a monsoon forest. This book is the result of this special day we walked with our friend that reflects the relationship between Di and me as teacher/student in Western way and as mother/son in Bininj kinship way.

For me, I was learning more about book writing from Di because she has written a few books before, and I have not. From our discussions, I realised we could not include everything in one book, so Di and I made decisions to exclude some things that we could always add to another storybook. I enjoyed working with our wonderful illustrator Emma, our publishing team and our Kakadu elders.

As a First Nations author working on my first ever book about my home in Kakadu I was mindful of keeping culture at the front of our processes to help remind us all and ensure our book was respecting Bininj/Mungguy peoples and cultures.

Respecting culture is very important to First Nations mob, especially when talking about First Nations people, stories, and topics. It means that we can work ethically in a culturally sensitive way that helps us create meaningful good work that everyone can enjoy.

The book is written to acknowledge the Kakadu way of life: continuing to live, hunt, and gather on country, and to pass on our Elders' stories for inspiring the next generations of Bininj and Balanda kids. This is important because they will become the next mob to look after country and people and pass on the stories forever.

I learned that making something special like a book takes a long time, and means working cooperatively and respectfully with many different people who share in the one vision of bringing the story to life where it can be shared widely and enjoyed forever.



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

NOTE TO TEACHERS

Cross-curricular activities: Although the notes below group activities under learning area headings, most of **these activities can be taught right across the curriculum**. For example, an activity that sits under a humanities heading might just as easily fit within a science teaching context. These activities encourage the holistic **development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity**. Cross-curricular work offers a creative way to develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding while motivating them to learn through stimulating, interconnected topics. It also gives teachers opportunities to encourage active enquiry, taking the initiative, and discussion and debate by children.

Safe Mode for classrooms: Teachers are reminded that links to online content can be accompanied by sometimes distracting and/or inappropriate advertising. Please view all links prior to sharing them in a classroom setting to evaluate appropriateness. In addition, adjust classroom computer settings to safe mode to remove and block advertisements and other distractions from web pages and videos. A number of helpful and simple-to-use resources are available online to enable this function.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

(English, science, maths and visual arts)

Every season, create a nature table

A table in the classroom displaying items found in nature through exploration. The items themselves and the action of hunting for the items outdoors can be the catalyst for many learning opportunities and teachable moments.

SCIENCE

- Guided excursion: Take a walk around the school grounds, close by bush or nearby forest or monsoon forest and look at what is going on (students can gather treasures they find into small cane baskets).
- Stop and feel the leaves and bark of trees, crush a leaf and smell its scent (many trees have leaves with very distinct scents which can help you remember them). Don't encourage students to taste leaves as they could be poisonous. Collect fallen leaves that are striking or attractive.
- Whilst on your nature ramble, take a break for morning tea. Place found items in the middle of a cloth or ground sheet. Sit around the objects and foods, and discuss the details of the groups of found things. If you know they are edible, taste the fruits from trees. In northern Australia there are many types of bush apples (*Syzygium* species, in southern Australia these are often known as lilypillies).



Planning and conducting:

Participate in guided investigations to explore and answer questions.

Questioning and predicting:

Pose and respond to questions, and make predictions about familiar objects and events.

- Keep your eyes peeled. Look for insects, cocoons, spiders, etc. on the trees and leaves.

Look for tracks from animals, insects and wind on the ground. (The closer you look the more you see. This enlivens your senses to your surroundings – children are very good at this because they are closer to the ground.)

Look for flowering and fruiting plants and trees as you walk. What insects and birds are visiting the flowers?

Look up – what is happening in the sky? (Colours, cloud patterns, cloud movements from wind.) What direction are winds coming from?

- Use your senses. Sit alone in the bush and make a sound map by drawing what you hear.

Sit with a tree for 15 minutes (looking, thinking, feeling, being with the tree) and then come and talk and/or write about it.

- Watch a bird or butterfly, bee or preying mantis, etc. A poem or question, song or story may arise for each child – inspiration from nature.

Evaluating:

Compare observations with those of others

Listen and perform:

Listening to and performing simple haiku poems about familiar topics such as nature and the seasons.

ENGLISH: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY, SONG AND STORY

- **Tell a story**

Read *Walking in Gagudju Country* to students. Discuss the themes throughout the story and ask students to select one of those themes. Students can choose to write a story, tell a story or act a story out to the the class. Encourage the incorporation of nature in their stories either through animals, birds insects or trees and flowers.

Creating texts:

Create short imaginative and informative texts that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate multimodal elements, for example illustrations and diagrams.

- **Role play**

Read or tell children a story about animals, birds or insects. Get the children to re-enact the story playing the various roles. Providing children with colourful silky flowing cloth, poncho style to place over their head, can inspire them to explore movements of the character they have chosen from the story. (On pp 22-23 a story about *berrerd-berrerd*, the rainbow bee-eaters, would be great for children to re-enact.)

Knowledge and understanding:

Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama.

- **Storytelling traditions (oral narrative)**

Invite some local First Nations people to your school to tell some stories about the bush.

Work with a local First Nations organisation to arrange an excursion to collect some bush foods in a bush habitat and tell stories of that place. By walking the land and hearing stories of the land, children will be encouraged to respect the land.

Identity:

Listening to Elders' traditional stories, making links between people, stories, songs of Country/Place and the social importance of connections to History.

Perhaps some First Nations children in your school have songs and knowledge of the season and habitats to share with your class.

- **Onomatopoeia**

Discuss 'onomatopoeia' and how First Nations language names for birds relate to the sound of their calls. These sounds/calls are fun to play around with in groups or individually and could be turned into a guessing game or mimic of particular birds as another role play activity.

- **Storytelling through song**

Make up a song with the children that relates to your observations from the nature rambles you have done. It can then be part of your story. (See Appendix I for examples of songs of this kind.)

- **Making instruments for sound effects**

Collect tall grasses (eg. spear grass). Bind two layers of grass together with thread. Insert small stones in between the grass. This beautiful instrument sounds like 'wind blowing through the grass'.

Find a piece of bamboo or wood. Cut grooves across it and run a stick up and down the grooves to mimic the sound of a frog croaking.

Bamboo can also make a beautiful rain maker. Hammer nails into a piece of bamboo; plug one end with a cork; fill the hollow bamboo with little stones or rice, then plug the other end. Holding the bamboo upright allows the rice or stones to run through the nails, giving gentle rain sound effects. A rain maker can also be made with cardboard tubes if bamboo is not available: <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/rainstick/>

Children love to experiment and will come up with more sound effects if given the chance. Let them play around with craft materials or allow them to collect items in the bush or school yard. As the teacher tells a story, children can chime in with instruments at the appropriate times – this requires children to listen carefully. **Good listening is an essential language arts skill.**

Playing a tune on an accompanying instrument, like a recorder, guitar, flute, piano or drum, can really set the mood for a particular place or season.

Listen and perform:

Listen to, recite and perform poems, chants, rhymes and songs, imitating and inventing sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme.

Listening to and performing simple haiku poems about familiar topics such as nature and the seasons.

Listening to and talking about music and musical instruments from different contexts and cultures.

MATHS

- Use collected fallen leaves for primary school maths activities adapted to year level:
 - Group leaves in ascending size order.
 - Group leaves into different colours.
 - Use leaves as counters for doing basic addition, subtraction, multiplication or division exercises.
 - Measure the leaves and represent findings in graphs and pie charts.

Processing and analysing data and information:

Use a range of methods to sort information, including drawings and provided tables and through discussion, compare observations with predictions.

VISUAL ARTS

- While you're outdoors, make mandala patterns on the ground. Find some examples and methods here: <https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/news/create-your-own-art-nature>
- Back in the classroom, make a mandala from the leaves glued onto a circular piece of cardboard cut from an old box – start the design in the centre of the circle and work outwards in a circular pattern. Different coloured sands could also be used to make a mandala. Hang these with string in doorways and windows to be seen and enjoyed. Some ideas here: <https://nurturestore.co.uk/forest-school-mandala-activities>
- Collect interesting sticks from the ground. Use these to make sculptures, mobiles or as props for your nature table.
- Working with clay: Ask students to think about what native animals live in their area. This might require further research. (See the list of Children's picture books in the reference section at the end of these notes for some suggestions of lovely books on native animals).

Explore ideas, experiences, observations and imagination to create visual artworks and design:

Use and experiment with different materials, techniques, technologies and processes to make artworks.

Provide the children with clay and either guide them with creating or encourage them to create some of these native animals and insects from clay for the nature table. Incorporate natural found objects into the clay sculptures (e.g. small sticks or strong grass pieces can be used to represent echidna quills in clay).

- Felt puppets: With the help of parent helpers or teacher assistants, arrange sessions to sew felt puppets or assist with felting of puppets to represent some animals, insects or flower blossoms for the nature table. Similarly to the clay creatures, natural found objects can be incorporated to the felt puppets for added features and detail.

These interactions with nature, and the thought and engagement after those experiences provide children with an opportunity for oral stories to develop as they interact with the animals, birds, insects, plants and each other.

- After the outdoor walk, students will be more in tune with their surroundings and have a greater awareness of the place and the season. Discuss the colours of the season and provide a selection of coloured soft cloths for the nature table. Students can choose fabric that represents the colours of the earth, sea, river, forest, floodplain, sky and vegetation.

Arrange these on a table that is positioned in a special place within the room. Let the children know it is a special place for their collections and creations that can be added to throughout the season. Coloured cloths can be draped, hung on curved bamboo or a stick and placed on a wall to represent the sky.

Communicating:

Represent and communicate observations and ideas in a variety of ways.

- **Rubbing, printing and painting**

Find leaves and place under paper. Use beautiful wide-based oblong bees wax crayons to draw across the paper to reveal the leaf shape. (Stockmar bees wax crayons are a wonderful resource in the classroom for this activity.) Attractive patterns and pictures emerge with these colourful crayons. Give children time to experiment with these.

Choose one, two or three colours of paint and spread across a piece of perspex. Students use their fingers to create/draw a pattern or a mood. Place a sheet of paper or cardboard or cloth on top of the paint and gently press down and peel off to create a monoprint.

This activity can be extended by adding coloured papers that can be torn and glued (collage style) to build up a picture into a story. Combine artwork and sew together to make a book interspersed with songs, poems and stories for each season or habitat.

- **Look closer**

Page through *Walking in Gagudju Country* to find the close up illustrations. Ask students to make their own special drawings in their art book. They could even take their art book home to draw special close up studies of plants, animals, insects or birds from their own garden. These books could be shared in class each week or fortnight over the school year.

Investigating and exploring Country and Place:

Explore country/place with Elders/community members or park rangers, for example, by identifying different trees, plants, animals and insects, making leaf and bark rubbings, observing how different bush foods grow and are used, observing different animal behaviour, such as hiding by camouflaging, taking photos or drawing and writing captions and comments to make a class book

Additional notes about Nature Tables

Creating a new nature table each season will stimulate awareness for the children of the passing seasons and the associated environmental changes throughout a year. Additional pieces can be added to the nature table by the children or teacher after every nature ramble throughout the seasons. Having this table as a focus means that children can come to it to play and interact, by themselves or with others, with the objects and characters of each seasonal table. For children under 10 years, interest can be added by encouraging the creation of imaginative characters like blossom fairies, earth and fire gnomes etc. The fairies' hats can be made to resemble the flowers or fruits of the season from each habitat.



CROSS CURRICULUM CRAFT – SHADOW PUPPETS

Consolidate skills in the language arts, visual arts, craft and even maths with this activity for the classroom, playground or bush.

1. Set the scene

Set up a shadow puppet theatre in preparation for storytelling, creating an atmospheric backdrop.

Make the shadow screen by tightly securing a rope at the required height and hanging a white sheet over the rope. There should be adequate space in front of the theatre for an audience, and behind the screen for the actors (who'll be holding the puppets) and a light source. An added attractive feature for the theatre is a colourful rainbow cloth hung over a curved piece of bamboo.

Set up a spotlight behind the sheet (a torch works well) to shine onto and illuminate the shadow puppets. Sunlight from the right angle can work equally well if the theatre and show are being set up outside or on a verandah.

2. Tell the story

Get students to sit in front of the theatre and tell them a story relating to an animal or bird. Whilst listening, students can imagine which subsequent character they might like to make into a shadow puppet.

3. Make the puppets

Students choose a character from the story and prepare to make it into a shadow puppet. Puppets can be simply made with cardboard from cereal or biscuit boxes, a piece of coat-hanger wire (or bamboo sticks), paper fasteners and masking tape. Use the method below or refer to the many websites online that have alternative make-it-yourself shadow puppet design ideas:

- Draw the two dimensional character onto the cardboard.
- Cut out the main body part and the various movable parts separately (e.g. the tail, head, wings, etc.)
- Fasten the movable parts to the main body by using split pin paper fasteners. Eyes, tongue, body spots, etc. can be cut out completely to give a better shadow effect to the puppets. Coloured cellophane can be glued over these cuts to add colour. Older students can refer to Indonesian shadow puppetry books or websites for more complex puppet designs and effects.
- Cut coat-hanger wire with pliers or wire cutters into ~40cm long pieces (bamboo skewers can be used as an alternative to wire coat hangers)
- Bend the wire into shape and secure the wire piece to each cardboard puppet piece with masking tape. For moveable parts like a head or tail, you will need to operate more than one wire. For very young children, create simpler puppets (with only one piece of wire).
- Experiment with the wire pieces to work out suitable lengths for the various parts of the puppet (a great mathematical exercise to tie-in with this creative task).

As the puppets are made, students can try them out behind the sheet screen to see where adjustments might be necessary.

4. Retell and perform the story

Retell the story with children acting out their character puppets. For added drama, include sound effects with voices or instruments. Then divide the class into smaller groups and get each group to make up their own story (they should nominate a scribe to write it down). Repeat the process of making shadow puppets for the story. Get each group to perform their puppet show for each other. Families can be invited to view these performances.

Knowledge and Understanding: Exploring a system such as a marionette or Indonesian wayang kulit shadow puppet to see that by combining materials with forces movement can be created. Manipulating objects, puppets, 2D images and available technologies to create stories. Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama. Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community, to an audience.



SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (HASS, science and visual arts)

HASS and SCIENCE



Seasonal impact

- In the monsoon forest how do the seasons affect the movements of birds, animals, reptiles, plants and insects. What changes are there in feeding, nesting and mating? Encourage students to explore these interactions.

Colourful calendars

- Research a range of indigenous calendars (CSIRO in Darwin, in consultation with Indigenous people, have compiled this great resource – seasonal calendars for many language groups in the Top End of Australia <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/natural-environment/land/About-the-calendars>) and find out what names First Nations people in your area give the current season, and other seasons. These calendars are available for many parts of Australia and you will be able to find how winds, plants, animals etc. give seasonal indicators to First Nations people.

Make a seasonal calendar for your area using the one in *Walking in Gagudju Country* (p1) as a reference.

- Invite some local First Nations people to your school to tell some stories about the seasons.
- Research how seasons are experienced in other places. Compare seasonal features in the the tropics with other parts of Australia and other diverse places around the world. Find out how seasons are celebrated in these places, and the stories of the land.
- What effect does wind direction have on the seasons?
- List the plants from the book (with words or pictures) and make a chart of their seasonal flowering and fruiting cycles. Then do the same for the native trees where you live (e.g. eucalypts, wattles, bush apples etc.).
- Select one season.
 - Study the seasonal cycle of an animal, bird, plant or insect where you live.
 - What tree flowers or fruits in this season?
 - What nectar is available for birds, bats, bees and other insects for this season and for the pollination of plants to occur?
 - How far are seeds dispersed by birds, bats or winds in this season?
 - What habitat changes occur in this season?

Inquiry and skills Research:

Collect data and information from observations.

Gathering information about the weather and seasons from the media, their own observations and from stories (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories).

Knowledge and understanding History:

How the present, past and future are signified by terms indicating time.

Examining seasonal calendars of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups (for example, the Gagudju (Kakadu) and the D'harawal (Sydney) calendars, each with six seasons, the Arrernte (central Australia) with five, the Woiwurrung (Upper Yarra Valley) with seven, and north-east Tasmania with three).

Inquiry and skills Analysing:

Listening to different Dreaming and Creation stories about the change of seasons.

Knowledge and understanding Geography:

Comparing First Nations People's seasonal calendar for the local area with the four-seasons calendar.

Communicating and informing:

Describing the seasons, identifying and recording indicators of seasonal and weather changes, for example, behaviour of animals, reptiles, birds, insects, plants; changes in wind direction, charting different forms of plants during the seasons, such as flowering, fruiting, shedding of bark, night sky and star formations; developing their own (class) seasonal calendar.

Inter-species connections

- Identify the references throughout *Walking in Gagudju Country* to identify observations First Nations people have made that relate stories of animals, birds, insects and plants. An example is the story of kurrih (blue-tongue lizard) and annyunyek (grape vine).
- With a friend, read through both *Walking in Gagudju Country* and *Walking through the Seasons in Kakadu* to find more stories of connections between species.
- Observe nature: Go for a walk in the school garden or grounds, at home, local bush, or a national park and observe what is going on. Feel the barks of trees, look for flowers or fruits on the ground. Look at the shapes of leaves and trees, smell the scent of leaves, look for fungi emerging from the leaf litter or growing on trees or fallen logs, watch and listen to birds, observe the movements of animals and insects, look out for tracks on the ground or bark of trees and leaves. (These observations, the small details that catch the eye, could be drawn, photographed, recorded on film or audio files, written down, discussed or just absorbed as a sensory experience.)
- How many birds and animals can you find in *Walking in Gagudju Country*? Make and staple a booklet out of two sheets of A4 paper folded into quarters. Choose a bird or animal and draw them on the front of the booklet – inside the booklet, draw pictures of the foods it feeds on on each page.
- Identify the native trees in your school, at home or nearby bush by using available plant identification books or simple plant keys. Observe and list the birds and insects that reside in or around the trees. Do you notice any preference of the birds and insects for particular trees or shrubs? Why? See if they are after nectar or fruits?

Science and understanding:

Investigating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples understand and utilise the life cycles of certain species.

Describing the stages of life cycles of different living things such as insects, birds, frogs and flowering plants. comparing life cycles of animals and plants.

Planning and conducting:

Participate in guided investigations to explore and answer questions.

Class project: Plant a native tree in your school area and/or a bush tucker garden, so it encourages wildlife to visit the garden. For advice ask local First Nations people, council gardeners, Greening Australia employees, botanists in the area or native plant nurseries.

Seasonal Festivals

Festivals are a way to recognise and celebrate happenings of a season. They are best organised in a location where you get a real feeling of the native bush habitats around you. (For example you could have a school, community or family picnic to celebrate the flowering of the waterlilies during the season of Yekke at a location where waterlilies are flowering. Each class, group or family could bring along a story, song, dance, play, musical composition inspired by the season or an art/craft activity to share.)

During each season you could organise a festival in your school, community or classroom to celebrate the season. Songs, poems and stories that the children have created could be shared or performed at this time. Foods to gather could be displayed, shared or walks to collect the foods could be arranged.

HASS and VISUAL ARTS

Hunting and gathering, surviving off the land

- Take a class trip to look at some rock art in Kakadu, Litchfield, Kimberleys, Cape York, Sydney, or look at rock art in books and read some stories about hunting-and-gathering nomadic cultures.
- Refer to *Walking in Gagudju Country* and talk about the plants, animals, birds, fruits, yams, etc. you could eat as you moved across a floodplain or forest during a year. Describe how you would dress, camp, hunt, gather, eat. After discussions, organise some role play activities, like moving through different habitats catching food (co-operation and communication being important aspects of this activity).
- This could be followed by students making a diary in written or picture form or even music or song – moving across a floodplain/forest/woodland during a season or a year. Alternatively, it could even be a large class mural or soundscape that can be added to throughout the seasons of your region.

Seasonal migration

- Research the seasonal movements of First Nations people across the land. Refer to maps of areas where people forage and hunt for foods. This article outlines historic seasonal hunting and gathering movements: [Aboriginal Life pre-invasion](#)

Class project: On a large map of Australia, draw or stick pictures of where food can be found in various regions. Bonus challenge – split into groups and make a map for each season. Compare maps to note the similarities and differences.

- The positions of the sun, moon, and stars in relation to the Australian landscape provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with information to predict changes in the environment in relation to seasons, weather patterns and the behaviour of plants and animals: <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/teaching-guides/curricula-project/astronomy>
- Read about early European explorers in Australia and their interaction with First Nations people. Why did so many early European explorers ignore First Nations cultural knowledge about the land? Look at extracts from diaries to discuss this in groups. (Leichhardt's journal, John King's diary, Stuart's journals, etc.) Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu* will reveal new light on the journals of some explorers in southern Australia.
- How have First Nations people shared their rich knowledge of the land both in the past and in the present, of natural and cultural landscapes, plants, animals and Dreaming stories of creation? (Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu* is revealing as to the invasion by Europeans of First Nations Lands and the theft of resources.) For more background information on how climate, weather and culture are interrelated, visit this page on First Nations weather knowledge from the Bureau of Meteorology website: bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/index.shtml

Planning and conducting:

Participate in guided investigations to explore and answer questions.

Communicating and informing:

Describing and recording different weather and seasons of their Country/Place in a picture diary or a series of paintings.

Earth and space sciences:

Daily and seasonal changes in our environment affect everyday life.

Learning how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' concepts of time and weather patterns explain how things happen in the world around them.

Investigating how changes in the weather might affect animals such as pets, animals that hibernate, or migratory animals.

Earth and space sciences:

Learning how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' concepts of time and weather patterns explain how things happen in the world around them.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

ABOUT BEN TYLER



Ben Tyler is a Bininj entrepreneur and founder of bush food brand Kakadu Kitchen. He currently lives in Darwin on Larrakia country, studying business at Charles Darwin University. On his breaks he returns home to Kakadu to visit his mum and family at their remote family outstation at Patonga Homestead, located beside the Jim Jim Creek in Kakadu National Park. Ben loves gardening with his mum Jessie, and both were very happy when his sister Mandy discovered her green thumb during the Northern Territory's Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. Mandy now teaches her grandsons Anthony and Tyrese to love gardening too. The Kakadu billabong family community enjoy growing many types of tropical fruits and vegetables like pawpaw, banana, tomatoes, broccoli, citrus trees, mangoes, cashews, custard apples, tamarind and bush foods like red apple, white apple and native lemongrass. The community includes close relatives from Tiwi Islands and has always been a place that welcomes family, friends and visitors into their busy, noisy, joyful billabong home in Kakadu.

ABOUT DIANE LUCAS



Diane Lucas grew up exploring the bush in New South Wales. She moved to Kakadu in her late twenties. There she worked as a schoolteacher on an Aboriginal outstation and in turn was taught many things about the bush. From 1991 to 1996 Diane worked on a research project in Kakadu, documenting traditional resources on the South Alligator River floodplain and surrounds. She was encouraged by the elders to write about the land and get stories to children. They have supported her efforts as an educator with her children's books, the first being *Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu*. Since then she has had six other publications. She now lives only two hours from Kakadu, with her husband, and maintains a close relationship with the people and country of Kakadu. She and her husband travel in northern Australia and Africa doing botanical and fire ecology work. Diane is inspired by wild landscapes and the cultural context of these places, and the way children explore and play in wild habitats with such ease. She does much of her writing as she travels and walks in the bush.

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

ABOUT EMMA LONG



An accomplished artist, Emma Long has exhibited regularly in group and solo exhibitions across the Northern Territory. Her passion for creative arts has led her to work as an art educator in secondary schools as well as pursue a Bachelor of Visual Arts, a Certificate in Printmaking and a Graduate Diploma of Education. She is inspired by the fresh, raw beauty of nature and feels most at home in the bush with a brush in hand. Emma lives in Darwin with her husband and four children and continues to work as an illustrator and an art educator.

CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

Children's Picture Books

- *Young Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe
- *Spines in the Sand* by Diane Lucas and Colwyn Campbell
- *Waterlilies* by Diane Lucas and Colwyn Campbell
- *My Home in Kakadu* by Jane and Christine Christophersen
- *An-Me Arri Ngan – The Food we Eat* by Gary Fox and Murray Garde
- *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon
- *Wan'kurra the Golden Bandicoot* by Diane Lucas and Colwyn Campbell
- *Brumbies in the Night* by Diane Lucas & Colwyn Campbell
- *Scrubfowl* by Sandra Kendall
- *Quoll* by Sandra Kendall
- *Bushwalk* by Sandra Kendall
- *Leaftail* by Narelle Oliver
- *Sugar Glider* by Pauline Reilly
- *Spirit of the Forest – Tree Tales from around the World* by Helen East, Eric Madden and Alan Marks.
- Percy Tresize's many books about the Dreaming
- *Pigs and Honey* by Jeannie Adams
- *Going for Oysters* by Jeannie Adams
- *Where is Kangaroo* By Jill Morris and Lynn Tracey
- *Papunya School Book of Country and History* by Papunya School Community
- *Tjarany Roughtail* by Gracie Greene, Joe Tramacchi and Lucille Gill
- *A Natural History and Field Guide to Australia's Top End* by Penny van Osterzee, Ian Morris, Diane Lucas and Noel Preece. Contains diagrams and the story of wind patterns of the world.

Teacher Resources

- *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe
- *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior* by Eric Wilmot
- *Singing with the Seasons, Songs for children* by the Cycad Sisters (order CD from website: www.dianelucas.com.au)
- *The Nature Corner – celebrating the year's cycle with a seasonal tableau* by M.v Leeuwen and J. Moeskops
- *All Year Round* by Ann Druitt, Christine Fynes-Clinton and Marije Rowling
- *Putting the Heart Back into Teaching* by Stanford Maher and Yvonne Bleach
- *Seasonal Crafts* series by Gillian Chapman

Further Reading

- *Tracking Knowledge in North Australian Landscapes* edited by Deborah Rose and Anne Clarke.
- *Natural History Guide to Kakadu National Park* by Ian Morris
- *Story About Feeling* by Bill Neidjie
- *Gagudju Man* by Bill Neidjie
- *Fire and Hearth* by Sylvia J. Hallam
- *Hunter-Gatherers Today* by J. C. Altman
- *Bush Foods – Arrernte Foods* by Margaret-Mary Turner, illustrated by Shawn Dobson
- *Walking the Boundaries* by Jackie French
- *Traditional Ecological Knowledge* edited by Nancy M. Williams and Graham Baines
- *The Sydney Language* by Jakelin Troy
- *Punu – Yankunytjatjara Plant Use* by Institute for Aboriginal Development.
- *Mutooroo – Plant use by Australian Aboriginal People* compiled by Glenn Leiper, illustrated by Janet Hauser.
- *Bushfires and Bushtucker – Aboriginal Plant Use in Central Australia* by Peter Latz
- *Top End Native Plants* by John Brock

- *Economic Structure and the Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land* by Donald F. Thomson
- *Mr Sandman Bring Me a Dream* edited by A. Croker. Papunya Tula Artists Pty. Ltd. and The Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd
- *Inside Black Australia – An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry* edited by Kevin Gilbert
- *Wildlife of Kakadu and the Top End of the Northern Territory, Australia* by Greg Miles
- *Kakadu – Looking After Country the Gagudju Way* by Stanley Breedon and Belinda Wright
- *Kakadu – Natural and Cultural Heritage and Management* by Australian Nature Conservation Agency & North Australia Research Unit & A.N.U

- *Of Birds and Billabongs* by Allen Fox and Steve Parish
- *Kunwinjku Art – from Injalak 1991-1992: The John Kluge Commission* by John Kluge
- *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land* by Donald Thomson
- *Arts of the Dreaming – Australia’s Living Heritage* by Jennifer Isaacs
- *Journey in Time* by George Chaloupka
- *Nanbaree* by Isobel (with paintings from the Watling Collection, Natural History Museum, London)
- *Traditional Resources of the South Alligator River Floodplain (Volume 1)*, edited by Diane Lucas & Jeremy Russell-Smith

For further ideas on how to use *Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu* as a text in classrooms, exploring visual and written literacy, as well as First Nations culture and language, science and the arts, refer to Diane Lucas’s teachers notes here: [Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu](#)

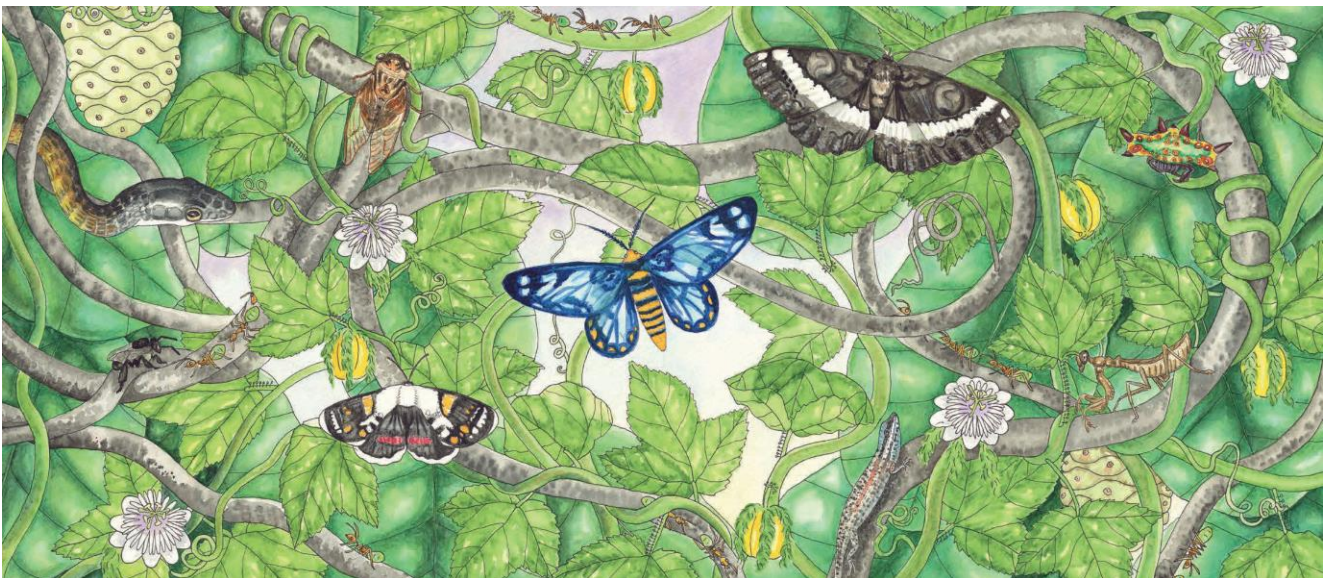
The above set of A&U teacher’s notes also contain activities that can be adapted to *Walking in Gagudju Country: Exploring the Monsoon Forest*.

Films

- *Kakadu Man* (1990)
- *The Big Wet* (1993)

Audio

To assist with the pronunciation of words in *Walking in Gagudju Country – Exploring the Monsoon Forest*, listen to this free audio reading of the book by Diane Lucas and Ben Tyler: www.allenandunwin.com/walking-in-gagudju-country



APPENDIX 1: Seasonal songs by Diane Lucas

Here are some songs I have made and often use when telling a story. Each has a very simple tune, lyrics and rhythms that may be of inspiration to you to learn and/or to make your own songs. Make actions for each line to add fun.

Song for the season of Kurrung

(dry-hot time, mid August to mid October)

Earth hot
sun bright
leaves fall like rain...
Trees of the woodland flower and fruit,
bringing many songs to the forest.
Karnamarr crunch on the eucalypt seeds,
Torres Strait pigeons eat the palm seeds.
Fringed neck lizards hunt in the sun,
and rest clinging to a tree.
The green plums flower,
the days are hot.
Now it's *Kurrung* we go to the spring
to cool off.
Earth hot
sun bright
leaves fall like rain...

Song for the season of Kunumeleng

(storms build up, mid October to mid December)

The clouds line up
Big thunder heads
Namarrkon calls across the land,
It's going to rain today...
The grass is growing,
New green leaves dance with the wind,
It's going to rain today.
The birds are nesting in the trees
The bush is alive with song
It's going to rain today.
The ants are running all around
building castles in the sand,
It's going to rain today...
Namarrkon calls across the land,
It's going to rain today,
It's going to rain today...

Songs for the season of Kudjewk

(monsoon, season of rains, mid Dec. to late March)

I.
Wind blows
water flows
streams fill
fish swim
and children sing...
They sing to the sun
they sing to the clouds
they sing to the earth
they sing to the spring
They sing to the moon
they sing to the stars

they sing to trees
that blow with the breeze
They sing...

2.

There's spiders in their webs
Spiders in the trees
Spiders on the bark
Spiders curled in leaves
Spiders in the ground
Spiders everywhere
Spiders, Spiders, Spiders

Songs for the season of Bangkerreng

(when the last wild rains come, April)

I.

See the changes in the bush
the grass is browning
the rains are leaving
bangkerreng is here again

The south-east winds blow right in
dragonflies hover with them

fish are fat in the creeks
kurrih lizards have their babies

See the changes in the bush
the grass is browning
the rains are leaving
bangkerreng is here again

Marridjak flowers smile to the sun
anmorlak plums are falling

angodjmong-mong have their flowers
honey-bees eat their nectar

See the changes in the bush
the grass is browning
the rains are leaving
bangkerreng is here again

Raku birds nest in the grass
goose have had their babies

Tadpoles grow their little legs
now the season is changing
(chorus)

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2.

The yam vines are climbing
climbing climbing
the yam vines are twining
around the trees

Their bulbs are swelling
swelling swelling
the yam bulbs are swelling
in the ground

Their flowers are fragrant
fragrant fragrant
their flowers are fragrant
and hang from the vine

Their leaves are shapely
shapely shapely
their leaves are shapely
like lily pads

Soon the yams will be ready
ready ready
soon the yams will be ready
to dig and prepare

Song for the season of Yekke
(windy dry time, May to mid June)

May Wind

In May the cool wind
comes at night
and gently stirs the leaves
Day brings a stronger wind
it blows away the water
And the leaves fall like rain
And the leaves fall like rain

The full moon brings this wind
and stirs the soul within us
The spirit of the land
whispers all around
And the leaves fall like rain
And the leaves fall like rain

Song for the season for Wurrkeng
(cool dry time, mid June to mid August)

The wind is tangling through the clouds

The wind is tangling through the clouds
high up in the sky
the sky is filled with wondrous things
that keep on moving by

White horses gallop across the sky
and now they move on by

A puffing dragon fills the sky
and wiggles along with the wind

The wind is tangling through the clouds
high up in the sky
the sky is filled with wondrous things
that keep on moving by

Penguins walking in a line
a tangle of wind
breaks their line

Brolgas gliding in a spiral
higher, higher, higher,

The wind is tangling through the clouds
high up in the sky
the sky is filled with wondrous things
that keep on moving by

A whale is surging in the sea
and blows away with the wind

A turtle crawls across the plain
a flurry of wind takes it away

The wind is tangling through the clouds
high up in the sky
the sky is filled with wondrous things
that keep on moving by

2.

The Colours of Wurrkeng (song by Laureen Ward)

Come walking through the colours
It's the flowers of Wurrkeng

See the sunny-yellow kapok flowers
And the golden wattles glowing

Come walking through the colours
It's the flowers of Wurrkeng

Patches of soft hazy purple
It's the flowers that cover the Calytrix bushes

Chorus

The scent of pale yellow paperbark blossoms
Full of honey sweet nectar

Rival the huge orange flower brushes
Heavy on the Grevillea

Chorus

Dazzling red-orange flowers
Brachychiton blooming gaily

Our souls are filled with colours
It's the season of Wurrkeng

APPENDIX 2

PRONUNCIATION OF KUNDJEYHMI WORDS USED IN THIS BOOK

The **orthography** used in this book is that proposed by linguist Murray Garde. It will assist you with your pronunciation of the Kundjeyhmi words used throughout the book. Linguists have changed the spelling since Diane Lucas published her previous book, as such, there is a change of spelling in this book.

Vowels

a as in **about**, **but**

e as in **bed**

i as in **bit**

o as in **pot**

u as in **put**

Diphthongs

ar as in **task**, **farce**

au as in **house**

ai as in **why**

ee as in **air**, **their**

eu as in **hell**

ei as in **they**, **hay**

iu as in **hill**

oi as in **coin**

ou as in **pour**, **raw**

Consonants

b as in **bank**

d as in **dog**

dj as in **jump**

g as in **gall** (beginning word or syllable)

h as in Cockney **wha'** for **what**

k as in **cake** (ending of word or syllable)

l as in **lift**

m as in **mad**

n as in **nose**

ng as in **sing**

nj as in **canyon**

r as in **rice**

rr as in Scottish **carry** (ie. Rolled rr)

rd as in American pronunciation of **harder**

rl as in American pronunciation of **Harlem**

rn as in American pronunciation of **harness**

w as in **wit**

y as in **yell**