



OCEAN ACTION

An Adventure in Beachtown



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For primary school students.

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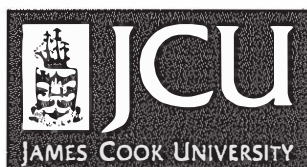
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An Adventure in Beachtown

by

Year 4 students,
St Joseph's School,
North Ward, Townsville

PREFACE

Ocean Action: An Adventure in Beachtown is the second book to be published in the Children's Science Writing Project Series, sponsored by the School of Education, James Cook University. The fiction story cleverly links the mystery of turtle killings with factual scientific information about marine habitats and environmental issues. As the inquisitive children in the fictional town of Beachtown solve the mystery they also learn about the unique characteristics of their coastal environment. The goal of *Ocean Action* is to encourage children in primary schools to develop an informed view of marine science whilst enjoying reading and related activities.

Ocean Action possesses another fascinating characteristic - it is written and illustrated entirely by children. Under the supervision of their teacher Ann Duane and with guidance from scientists and editors the Year 4 students of St Joseph's School North Ward in Townsville created the mixed genre story as they researched and studied marine topics as part of their school curriculum.

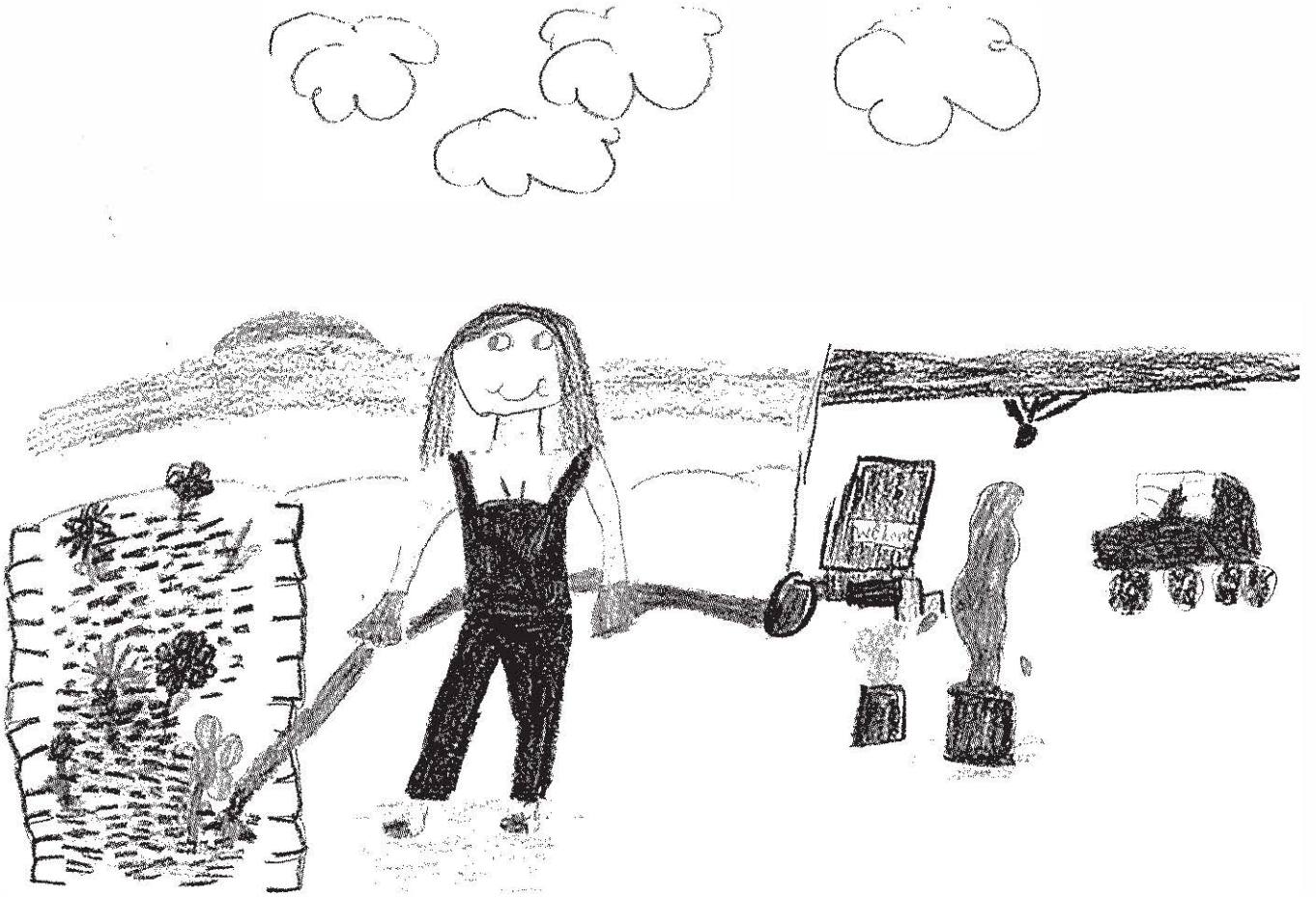
An exciting feature of this book is that its publication coincides with the Indian Ocean-South East Asia (IOSEA) Year of the Turtle 2006. While increasing public awareness and understanding of the threats faced by marine turtles, the campaign highlights the work of dedicated organizations that are striving to conserve these ancient creatures and the habitats on which they depend. The publication of this book is supported in part by the IOSEA Year of the Turtle 2006 Campaign.

The Children's Science Writing Project Series has another mixed genre book published in 2004 called *The Hidden Secrets of Skull Island* (www.soe.jcu.edu.au/hiddensecrets/). Should readers wish to be challenged further, books from The Tropical Marine Studies Series, created as reference books for secondary students, are also available.

Dr Donna Rigano
Editor

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CHAPTER 1: MEET THE TURNERS

"Ten-thirty and Saturday, the first day of the holidays," said Mum as she turned off the tap after finishing watering. "I wish every day was a school holiday. Elisha is such a good Roxy-sitter. I can get so much gardening done."

Mum was mad about plants and enjoyed showing off her garden. There were lilies and hibiscus of every different shape and size. Mum had the best garden in the street.

"The last of the gardening. Thank goodness! Ready for Christmas," she said taking off her gloves as she admired the view of Beachtown, a huge smile on her face. "Time for a cup of coffee, or should I wash the car first?" she asked herself, looking over to her little automatic parked in the back yard. Deciding against more work, she went inside.

“AAAAhhhhhhhh!” screamed Mum, pulling at her hair as she looked in the lounge. Clothes were everywhere and there was sand on the floor. A bucket of shells was in one corner and in another, a pile of cuttle fish and seaweed. Roxy had dropped her dirty undies on the floor. Papers belonging to Dad had blown across the room. The carpet had wet patches and wet towels had been thrown across the couch. A drink had been spilt on the floor. The TV was on full blast and videos and DVDs were scattered across the room.

“How did they make this much mess? Elisha! Sunni! Jim! Roxy! Get here now! Quick! Clean up this pigsty.” Suddenly all went quiet. Mum stomped upstairs muttering about the mountain of trash in the lounge.

“Those kids are going to be in so much trouble.” She went straight towards Elisha's room where the two older girls were looking at magazines and talking about stuff – like what a mean girl Paris Hilton was because she spent all her money on herself. Jim, Elisha's cousin, had just bolted triumphantly into the girl's room.

“Wow! I've just beaten Robo King on the computer!”

“Great!” said Sunni, Jim's twin sister, sarcastically, not interested in Jim's computer games. Elisha just ignored Jim and kept on turning the pages of her book. She was only interested in anything to do with a marine environment. She loved the outdoors, going to the beach and the rock pools.

“Girls!” sighed Jim. “They show no interest,” and he turned to leave the room, coming face to face with his Aunty Lisa.

“All right! I'll show some interest,” she bellowed.

“Oh, what is it now Aunty Lisa?” asked Jim cheekily.

"I'll tell you what's going on now! You're turning off that computer and cleaning up the lounge room and don't talk like that to me young man."

"Oh, I'll do it later," mumbled Jim.

"No! Now! Elisha and Sunni, down you go and start cleaning up the mess. Where's Roxy?" Mum asked after opening her bedroom door and seeing that her youngest daughter wasn't there. There was a flush from the toilet – Roxy. The five year old spent most of her time flushing valuable items down the loo.

"Downstairs all of you. Clean up the lounge room or you won't be going to the rock pools with your Dad."

"I didn't do it," said Elisha. "Roxy did most of it."

"Yeah!" agreed Sunni and Jim.

"I don't care who did it. Just clean it up! This instant!" yelled Mum. "Dad will be home in an hour but you won't be going to the rock pools if you don't tidy up." Thinking that it would be a good idea to clean up the lounge if they wanted to go to the rock pools, they rushed downstairs.

"Beep, beep," went Dad's car horn just as the kids finished cleaning up the mess.

"I'm home," called Dad as he came in the door and hung up his keys. That morning, Dad had been finishing off something at work. He worked for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS). His shirt had a tear in it and his shorts were soaking wet and dripping all over the carpet. He had a bleeding finger, probably cut on a sharp rock at work. He looked hot and sweaty. In his job as a marine biologist, he often came home from work looking like this.

"Ready for the rock pools?" he asked, wanting to know if they were still keen to go.

"We can't go yet Dad," said Elisha. "We have to wait for Kate and Dash. You said they could come too."

"Well we can wait for a while yet. I'm in no big hurry. I'll just say hello to your Mum. Upstairs is she? Lisa!"

'Dd-d-dd-d-dd-ddddddd,' interrupted Dad's mobile phone with its latest ring tone – *Crazy Frog*. Last week it was *The Simpsons*.

"Dad's pretty funky," laughed Elisha to her cousins, Sunni and Jim who were there for the school holidays. "I learn a lot from Dad about the marine environment too. Every holiday he teaches me really hard scientific words. His Holiday Scientific Horribles, he calls them HSH for short. He tests me too, to see if I can remember them. I like it. It's so much fun." They listened to Dad's end of the conversation.

"Hello. Tim Turner. Yeah. Mmmm. I'm at home. I'm taking the kids down to the rock pools. Why's that?" he asked as he went out back for better reception. Beachtown was in an awkward position and it was sometimes hard to pick up a signal.

"I wonder who that is," whispered Elisha as Dad closed the door for some privacy. "It's probably work, something to do with turtles. October to January is the nesting season, when the turtles come ashore to lay eggs. There has been an increase in the number of dead turtles in the last few years. Yesterday some kids were kicking a turtle, a flatback, as it came ashore to lay its eggs. Dad was so angry! Someone new has started work with Dad, trying to find out who's killing the turtles. He's got a son, called Zac, who's around about our age. Hope we can still go to the rock pools," she added hopefully, knowing Dad's job nearly always came first.

"I'm on my way," said Dad as he came back inside and reached for his keys. "Okay you kids. If you want to go to the rock pools we have to leave now."

"But, but Uncle Tim. You said Kate and Dash could come and they're not here yet," said Sunni. Sunni wasn't afraid to have her say, even to Uncle Tim. She had long blonde hair and loved wearing long skirts and frilly blue tops (unlike Elisha who wore only blue three-quarter pants and blue tops). She was a friendly, knowledgeable girl but didn't like being told what to do. Elisha and Sunni got on great together even though they had different personalities and interests.

"Well they'd better be here quick or they'll miss out," interrupted Dad. "I've got a serious situation to attend to."

"Oh Dad!" complained Elisha, wishing that her friends Kate and Dash would turn up soon.

"Everyone in the troopy," added Dad, ignoring Elisha's complaints. "Something urgent has come up at work. I'll just say goodbye to Mum. Lisa! Work's called. I'm heading down to Chownsy Bay. I've got the kids. Back in a couple of hours," he called loudly from the bottom of the stairs before rushing for the door. "Come on you kids. Let's get going," said Dad hurrying them up. "I'm meeting Roy, my new assistant, either at the beach or the rock pools. I'll get these turtle killers, if it's the last thing I do."

They all headed for the door, Dad leading the way. Elisha bent down to pick up her hat at the same time Sunni and Jim reached the door. Sunni fell on top of Elisha and Jim on top of Sunni, half in and half out the door. Everyone was tangled up.

"Get off me now," said Elisha to Sunni.

"No! You get off me," said Sunni pushing at her.

"I'm the one squashed on the bottom," said Elisha.

"Your feet stink, Jim," said Sunni screwing up her nose.

"Like yours don't," said Jim. "Your feet are worse than mine."

"My stomach's hurting," screamed Elisha. "Get off me!" she screamed even louder.

"Uncle Tim! Sunni's pinching me," lied Jim.

"Kids, I'm leaving now," warned Dad as he came back to sort out the fight. Jim finally picked himself up, then Sunni and then Elisha.

"You're a nerd," Elisha said to Jim horribly.

"Okay, okay, in," said Dad impatiently as they hopped in the car. "We'll never get there at this rate," said Dad. "Hurry up and get in the troopy." The kids piled in excitedly.

"Where's Roxy?" asked Dad impatiently looking back towards the house.

"She's back up here," called Mum from upstairs. "In the toilet."

They heard a flush coming from the toilet and Roxy came running downstairs and out of the front door, swinging her bear and singing, *'Do you know the happy bear, the happy bear ...'* They all laughed because Roxy was funny and so cute.

"Hurry up, Roxy," said Elisha.

"Hurry up Roxy," mimicked Roxy.

Finally they were all in the car. "Belt up," said Dad. "Check Roxy's please Sunni." They were about to leave when a car pulled up in the driveway. It was Kate and Dash. Everybody cheered.

"Come on Kate and Dash," said Dad waving to their mum as she backed out. "We don't have a lot of time."

Kate and Dash were brother and sister and they were pretty popular. They were Japanese and they had been in Beachtown for three years. When Elisha's parents were studying in Japan, they met Kate and Dash's mum and dad. They became good friends and then the Tanakas migrated to Australia. Kate and Dash climbed into the back of the troopy and slammed the door.

"Sorry we're a bit late Mr Turner," they apologised politely.

"It's all right. We're on our way – at last," sighed Dad who seemed very worried about something.

"Something big is happening," thought Elisha, glancing at her dad as he gathered speed. "Dad's always like this when he's onto something. I'm going to find out what it is. I'm sure I can help. This is going to be a **great** holiday." Elisha loved excitement and adventure and catching the turtle killers was sure to be just that!