

*Jingi walla.
Garima gulimah!*



***Buniny** the echidna says
“Welcome! Look after this place!”*

Forest Playground Games

This booklet contains a series of games and stories which will help you and your children get the most out of ‘The Forest Playground’ which is nestled under rainforest trees in the picnic area at Rocky Creek Dam.

This forest is home to lots of plants and animals. They welcome you to play here.

By playing here, you can join in with the way they live! Each part of the playground teaches you something different about the forest and the water cycle.

*Nyah bih ah.
Nya nyah wen beh.
Jiehm wen.*



***Djanbung** the platypus says
“Have fun! Be aware! Have a look around!”*

Water cycle

Water is always moving around. It falls from the clouds as rain, and then into creeks and waterfalls into the dam, and then into rivers and then all the way to the sea.

Water also rises up into the air as steam, way up into the sky where it makes clouds. And then the clouds rain again!

Round and round in a circle, this is called the 'water cycle'.



Game: As you slide down the slide, pretend you are rain falling from the clouds, turning into a waterfall and splashing down into the dam. As you climb back up, you are the steam that makes the clouds again.



*In this picture, you can see **Djanbung** the platypus swimming in the water and **Jerranj** the frog climbing up as if he's the steam rising up to form part of the clouds. **Mujang** the long-necked turtle is sliding down the waterfall like rain falling from the clouds.*

Hiding hollow

Old trees have holes in them where branches have fallen off and some wood has rotten away. Can you see any of these holes if you look high up into the trees?

These hollows are used for shelter and making nests in by owls, cockatoos, possums and gliders.



Birds and animals make their homes in them and so the trees with hollows in them are called 'habitat trees'. Logging of very large old trees, called 'old growth logging' mean that there are less home for these animals and so they have nowhere to go.

Game: Which animal will you be as you climb on the hiding hollow and hide inside it? Will you make a nest in there or are you just sheltering from the hot sun or the rain? Be careful and look inside first before you get in.

*In this picture, **Miwin** the Powerful Owl is looking out at you from the hiding hollow. Her baby owls are taking their first trip outside the nest.*



Mushroom

Pademelons, bandicoots and possums eat mushrooms in the forest. In this picture, **Bundoon** the pademelon is munching on the mushroom. (Many mushrooms are poisonous to people though, so don't ever eat any mushrooms in the forest.)

These mushrooms or 'fungi' have tiny roots (called 'mycorrhizas') which link up with the roots of trees and help them to absorb food from the soil. In this picture, you can see the roots of **Boodgeregah** the fig tree, guardian of the forest, getting help from the tiny mycorrhizas to absorb his food.

Fungi get their food from breaking down logs, branches and leaves on the forest floor.

Their seeds (called 'spores') are spread around by the poo left by the animals that eat them.



Game: Try balancing on the mushroom and imagine how the pademelons, fungi and trees all help each other to survive.

Web of Life

All the animals and plants in this forest and the dam are connected to each other. They all need each other to stay alive.

In the rainforest, the sun gives the plants energy to live. Then the insects eat the plants, brush turkeys eat the plants and insects; and goannas eat the brush turkey's eggs.



In the water, in the creek and in the dam, the sun gives energy to the water plants called 'algae'. Insects eat the algae. Fish eat the insects and the algae. Frogs and turtles eat algae, insects and the fish's eggs!

The sun warms the bodies of the turtle and the goanna and gives them energy too.

Game: As you climb through the ropes, imagine all the creatures who live in this rainforest, the creeks and dam are part of this 'web of life'. Imagine that the sun is at the very top and animals who eat other animals and eggs are at the bottom. As you climb higher you get closer to where every creature's energy comes from.

*This picture shows how **Yelgun** the Sun, **Mandarahn** the small plants; **Jalum** the fish; **Yala** the insects; **Gadjul** the brush turkey; **Bhing-ghing** the short-necked turtle; **Jerranj** the frog and **Ngamal** the goanna are all connected to each other*



Carbon cycle

All living things are built out of carbon. It is in plants and animals and people. It is also in the air we breathe out as 'carbon dioxide'. Just like in the water cycle, this carbon moves around and around through the environment.

During the day, trees breathe in this carbon dioxide through their leaves and use light energy from the sun to make food, which then makes them grow. When the plants die, over a very very long time they can get buried in the ground and the carbon in their wood turns into coal and oil.



Carbon circles around between the air, plants, coal and oil buried deep in the earth. As we burn coal and oil, the carbon turns into carbon dioxide and goes up into the air, forming a 'blanket' of carbon high in the sky, which makes everything get hotter. This is called 'global warming'.

Game: As you spin round and round on the 'carbon cycle', think about the carbon changing from one thing into another, and know that the same amount of carbon exists at any one time, no matter what shape it is in.

This means that the more trees we plant and the more coal and oil we leave in the ground, then the less carbon dioxide and global warming there will be.

*In this picture, **Boodgeregah** the fig tree is a guardian of life as he is absorbing carbon dioxide from the air and slowing down global warming*



Jewel beetles

Lots of insects, or **Yala**, are so tiny that we don't see them in the forest. Even though they are small, they do very important things in the web of life.

They carry a powder called 'pollen' from one tree to another in the forest, helping the trees to make fruit and seeds. Insects also clean up the forest floor by eating dead leaves and animals. This helps make sure that the rainwater flowing from the forest into the creeks and dam is clean.



*The insect in this picture is called a Regal Jewel Beetle or **Yala**.*



Game: As you bounce around on these big 'jewel beetles', remember that insects play a very important part in the web of life by pollinating the trees in the forest, eating up dead leaves on the forest floor and making the water clean.



Cyclone

Cyclones and whirlpools both move in the shape of a spiral.

Cyclones are really big storms with heavy rain and strong winds. These big rains flood the creeks and fill the dam. In a healthy forest, the strong winds might knock down a few trees. This makes space in the forest for new trees to grow. If there are too many holes in the forest already, like when lots of trees have been cut down, a cyclone can be really bad for a forest by blowing down lots more trees.

Whirlpools are when water in a creek or river moves around and around in a spiral. If you watch a creek flowing down over rocks and pebbles, you will see it making different shapes, swirling around and making little 'riffles'. These shapes in the water are very important for keeping the water clean and full of air for the fish to breathe.

When your water goes down the sink at home, it is like a mini-whirlpool.



Game: As you spin around, imagine being a cyclone or whirlpool that moves in the shape of a spiral. Notice how the closer you stand into the middle, the faster the cyclone spins.

*In this picture, **Jalum** the fish and **Mujang** the long-necked turtle are waiting around on the bottom of the creek to eat all the algae, insects and shrimps that have got all stirred up by the whirlpool.*