

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:21



Gäwa news

Edition Six 2014



This term we welcomed Ian Morris and Russell Dempster, both environmental educators, to spend a week with our students to share their extensive knowledge of the Arnhem Land region's plants and wildlife.

The opportunity to use our beautiful landscape as the classroom provided a wonderful learning experience for our students.

Each day we followed Ian, Russell and others from our community to observe and gather knowledge about our natural surroundings. We explored the *Retja'* (the monsoonal rainforest) areas around Gäwa, documenting the plants and animals that we found in these places. We compared it to the *Diltji wana* (dry woodland forest) and saw how the plants and animals support one another.



Learning on our Country



What an amazing week of listening, exploring, and enjoying God's creation, seeing how God has put the world together for his purposes. Our Creator's intricate design was evident in many ways!

We are very thankful for the wonderful privilege of spending a week with these wonderful men learning more about our country.

Yolŋu have a strong connection to their land, often depicting their environment through *dhäwu* (stories), *manikay* (songs) and *bungul* (dance). Learning on country encouraged knowledge to be shared and students showed us just how much they know about their land. It was a great time of learning from each other.



The children recounted our excursions through written and illustrated works and we all learnt many new words in both English and Yolŋu Matha.



Grand Gapu (Water) Tour

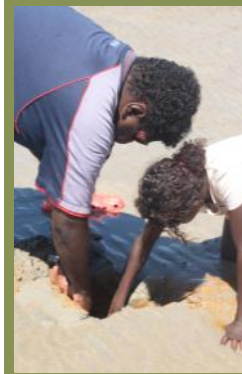
Banthay and Basma led Damala class on a tour of *Gapu* sites on a recent excursion. The day started in Gäwa. We went to look at the *Gapu Ganydjula* (waterhole) and learned that long ago people lived in Gäwa but back then they camped close to the waterhole. Banthay showed us how the site of the waterhole could be found even when it dried up due to the reeds which grow there. In dry season, the people could dig at the waterhole to find *gapu*.



Next, we went nearby to the new Gäwa bore and the nearby *badarrmon* (paperbark swamp). We learnt about how *gapu* can be found in *badarr* (paperbark trees) that have a lump-like growth on their trunks. Basma showed us how to make a *dhaniya* (water container) from the bark of the paperbark tree which could be used to collect *gapu* in when travelling without a container.



After a yummy morning tea, we went on to Ban'thula homeland. Stopping along the track, we saw the site of an underground creek where they used to dig to find *gapu* in the dry season. We decided not to dig for *gapu* ourselves since it was midday and Banthay said the water would be 2-3 m underground! As we sat in the shade, Banthay told us stories of how a very large group of people lived there thousands of years ago and how you can find very old oyster shells where they were camping. He shared about how before mission days people would find bottles which washed ashore and not know what they were. They used them however, to store their *gapu*.



Our next stop was the beach at Dharrwar where we had our lunch. We talked about how Christ is the Living water and how we are like His water containers, He fills us to overflowing and then we spill the Living Water to others!

At Dharrwar we went for a walk on the beach and found the spot where *gapu-rappiny'* (fresh water) bubbles up on the beach. The students dug a hole and let the fresh water fill it. After the dirt had time to settle a bit, we all had a tiny taste. The water wasn't salty at all!



We had a great day together and we are grateful that Banthay and Basma shared their wealth of knowledge with our class!

