

Chris Coon and the Turtles



A long time ago, the Australian coast line was just one big stretch of sandy beach, with many creatures and plants inhabiting it. This was a time when there were no houses or cars, only trees, mountains and local, indigenous tribes. There was one particular place that was very special, it was a small stretch of beach that would later become known as Mon Repos. This beach was extra special, because it was the only nesting place of the Leatherback Turtle and even in these ancient times, the sight of these majestic beast was very rare.



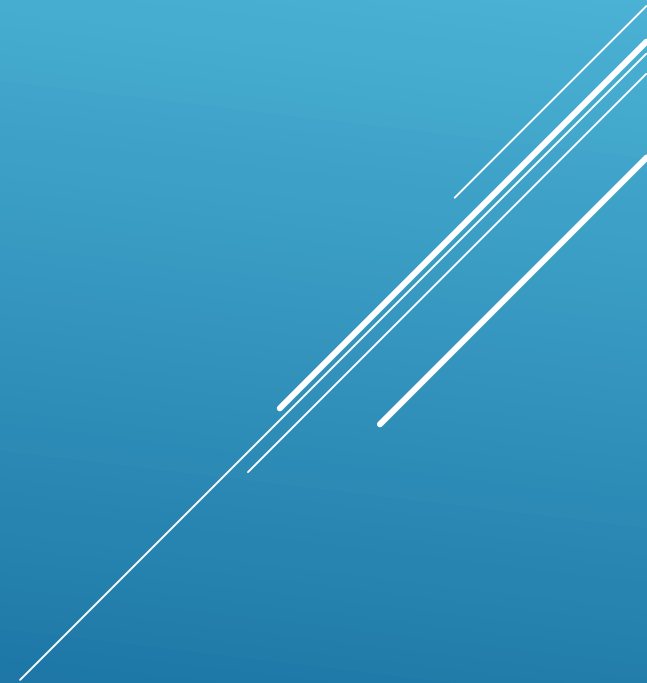


Hundreds of years later, the land around the beach has become a thriving city called Bundaberg, it sprawls across a huge area, hugging the coastline. In one small corner of the city, very close to Mon Repos, here, there lives a small, but very loud boy called Chris Coon, and his best friends Frank and Peter.





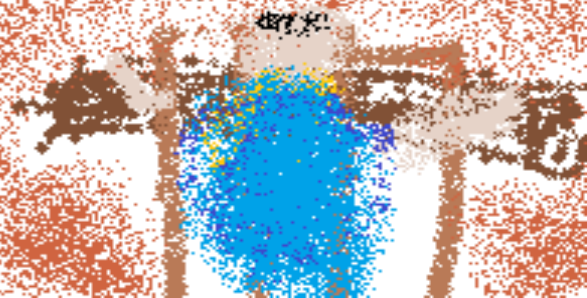
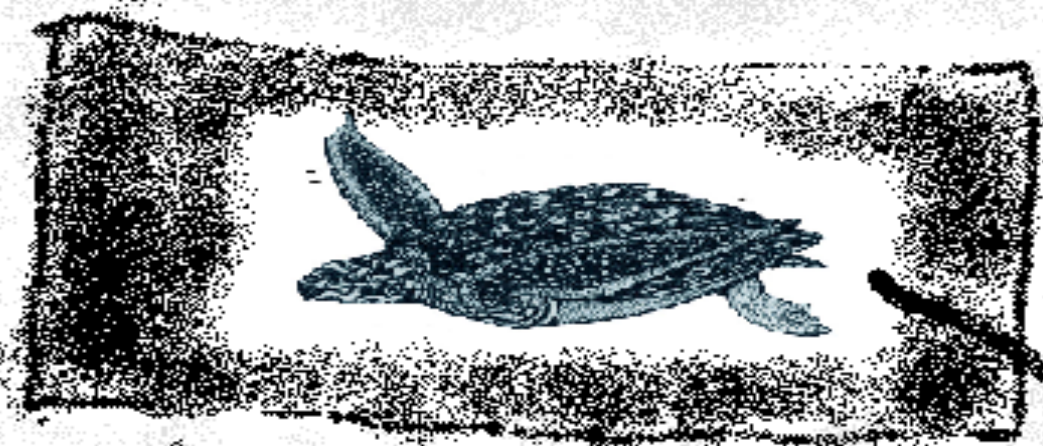
The favourite past-time, of these three boys was going down to the beach, but instead of playing in the dunes and swimming in the surf they thoughtlessly dropped bottles, cans and plastic bags all over the beach and cut down trees to build forts. The forts were especially bad, as they dug up the sand that was the precious hiding nesting place of the turtle eggs. The construction of the forts required logs and the boys found many trees just beyond the beach. The removal of the trees, took away potential feeding grounds for the native frogs and insects that inhabited the trees just beyond the beach. The damage the boys caused was awful, but they were only young and were not aware of the effects of their actions. Their attitude continued for a while until one special day at the local primary school.





This day at school, the class were learning about endangered species. Normally Chris was at the back of the class, not paying attention, doodling and chatting to his friends, but today he was sitting up straight and listening attentively. Mrs Lsten-Tome talked about how the turtles at the beach are not just any turtles but the endangered Leatherback turtle. She told the class the beach on the outskirts of town was the only beach in the world that these turtles nested at. She talked about how a turtle might mistake a plastic bag for a jelly fish, and when it eats it, it would cause it to die if it was not removed. The class learned why so many eggs are laid and why so few make to breeding age. "This is why the beach of Mon Repos is so important, without it, the Leatherback turtle would be unable to nest, and it would become extinct." Mrs. Lsten-Tome finished.





When Chris went home that day, he was a changed boy, no longer was the beach a playground for dumping rubbish and building forts, but a place that had to be protected and conserved. He worked hard, to undo the damage he had caused, by picking up the rubbish scattered up and down the shoreline, replanted the trees he had cut down and participated in turtle rescue operations. Chris is a different boy now, rather than having to change the environment to have fun, he is content to wander along the seaside and enjoy the scenery

