



Establishing prior knowledge: What do you know about the wedge-tailed eagle? How can we learn about the wedge-tailed eagle?

- **Questions of the day:**

- What do you know about the wedge-tailed eagle?
- How can we learn about the wedge-tailed eagle?
- In what ways will we investigate and share what we are learning about the wedge-tailed eagle?

Tuning in: The wedge-tailed eagle has been around for a very long time. Before the concept of curriculum and today's knowledge systems of Science, HASS, English and Visual Arts, there were creation stories. Creation stories were passed on to instill ways of behaving and to guide younger generations. The eagle, and often specifically the wedge-tailed eagle, feature prominently in the creation stories of many Australian Aboriginal Nations, Clans and People.

[Inquiry and Place Based learning and teaching practices](#) can help us contextualise and learn about unique and interrelated knowledge systems across Australia. With this in mind, you can foreground your *WWW!* inquiries by recognising and learning about the importance and significance of eagles in the creation stories of Australian Aboriginal people.

Finding out:

kurina

kurina (say 'ku ree nah') is the palawa kani word for wedge-tailed eagle, or eaglehawk.

The bird itself has been described as the 'king of the Australian skies' and 'Australia's mightiest bird of prey'. It makes sense then, that this amazing and majestic bird features prominently in the culture of some of the First Peoples of Australia, including that of the Kulin nation of central Victoria, where he is called Bunjil.

Unfortunately, any such stories of kurina are lost to us, as a direct result of Invasion and Colonisation – or perhaps they are simply 'resting in the pages of settlers' journals', awaiting to be retrieved, in the same way that the word 'kurina' was retrieved, and brought back to life, by once again being spoken.

- Theresa Sainty, Pakana woman, lutruwita (Tasmania)

Bunjil

Bunjil is seen as a creator of all living things and is often portrayed as an eagle, including the wedge-tailed eagle. Wurundjeri creation stories describe how Bunjil took shelter in a cave ([Bunjil's shelter](#)) located in part of the [Gariwerd/The Grampians](#) which is recognised as one of the most important Australian Aboriginal rock art sites. There are pictures available of this site within the Black Range, near Stawell in Victoria. This story is part of Jadawadjali heritage, and the site is of Bunjil in human form with his two dingo dogs.



<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/sites/bunjils-cave-heritage-site>

Learning about the Creation stories of the places we live, work and play in is one of the ways to connect into the history of the places in which we teach and learn, and acknowledge the connection to Country that First Nations people have had for millennia, and continue to have.

Rather than rewrite a story that isn't ours to rewrite, we encourage you to follow the below link and scroll down to the Gariwerd Creation Story as delivered by [The Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd.](#)

Further portrayals of this special Creation story are elaborated via spoken word and visuals in the following video, brought to life with a clever combination of modern and traditional techniques (4:09).

Video: Bunjil The Eagle:



Bunjil creation stories can be woven and revisited regularly through our HASS, Science, English and Visual Arts inquiries over the next 10 days. This approach invites us to recognise and appreciate the distinctive ways in which Australian Aboriginal Creation stories can facilitate connection making across and between the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum specifically:

- **Cross Curriculum Priorities** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Sustainability;
- **Learning Areas** Science, the Arts (Visual Arts), HASS, Technologies and English.
- **General Capabilities** Literacy, Intercultural Understanding, Critical and Creative Thinking, Numeracy, ICT



Going further: Learning about Science, HASS, English and Visual Arts through Bunjil and Waa Creation stories

“At the end of his time on earth, Bunjil rose into the sky and became a star...Now, if you look at the Southern Cross, you can see the story told in the stars. At the head of the Cross is Bunya, the timid possum. Three of the stars are the spears hurled by the Bram-bram-bult. The large western star is the spear-that struck Tchingal in the chest, the smaller star next to it is the spear that passed through his neck, and the star at the bottom of the Cross is the spear that struck him in the rump.”

- Gariwerd Creation Story as delivered by [The Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd.](#)

[Matthew Fielding](#) (ecologist, University of Tasmania) has completed a PhD investigation on scavenging by birds, including the wedge-tailed eagle. He is particularly interested in how birds interact with humans, including their place within Aboriginal Australian culture. Through his work with the DEEP (Dynamics of Eco-Evolutionary Patterns) Lab, he draws our attention to how the Bunjil Creation Stories demonstrate a complex [ecology of relations between bird species and the environment](#):

“What Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples see in the sky are not only planets, stars and other physical bodies, but something much grander: a confirmation of what we already know about how the world operates – time, life, our place in the universe.”

- Astronomy ([The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curriculum Project](#), 2019)

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curriculum Project is an excellent place for teachers and students to further their understanding of and appreciation for the world’s first astronomers who continue to hold and communicate valuable astronomical knowledge.

There are also [some excellent examples](#) of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people working together to map what we can know and how we can further our learning about people and place through Aboriginal Creation stories and Astronomy.

“In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, everything on the land is reflected in the sky. The sky serves as a scientific textbook — a map — that is home to a wealth of knowledge for those who are able to interpret and read the information it holds.”

- Astronomy ([The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curriculum Project](#), 2019)

“From glowing rocks to a pre-historic fossil, from beautiful paper-cut worlds to an ancient story in the sky – what will you find ‘around here’?”

- mapiya lumi | around here (2021), *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*



Reflect and Act: What are the Creation stories of the Country upon which you teach and learn? In what ways does the wedge-tailed eagle feature in those stories? To further explore these and other inquiry lines, consider:

- Where and for what purpose can different disciplinary ways of knowing, being and doing to help us learn more about the cultural significance of the wedge-tailed eagle?
- How might we use these to help us make important holistic observations about the wedge-tailed eagle?
- What is occurring in the environment and Country (land, sea and waterways) at key moments in the life cycle of the wedge-tailed eagle?
- What do our wedge-tailed eagle observations tell us about the ways different species work together to maintain a healthy ecology?

Learning about the broad and deep histories of the wedge-tailed eagle provides multiple entry points for culturally mindful, place-based and multi-disciplinary inquiry across the Australian Curriculum Learning Areas of HASS, Science, English and The Arts (Visual Arts). Drawing upon oral histories gives important cultural context about social order, as well as insight into ecological relationships and dynamics.

This knowledge is a living part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and continues to evolve. Through learning about stories and histories pertaining to the wedge-tailed eagle, we can better appreciate the depth, wealth and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and its contribution to national identity. Such inquiry also allows us to identify, recognise and reimagine Euro-centric notions of disciplinarity, and disciplinary ways of knowing and doing.



[Australian Curriculum v9.0 links:](#)

Content Descriptors: Years 3-4

English (Strand: Literacy)

- (Sub-strand: Interacting with others) Use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas (AC9E3LY02)

HASS (Strand: Knowledge and Understanding)

- (Sub-strand: History) the diversity of First Nations Australians, their social organisation and their continuous connection to Country/Place (AC9HS4K01)
- (Sub-strand: Geography) the ways First Nations Australians in different parts of Australia are interconnected with Country/Place (AC9HS3K04)

Science (Strand: Science Inquiry)

- (Sub-strand: Communicating) write and create texts to communicate findings and ideas for identified purposes and audiences, using scientific vocabulary and digital tools as appropriate (AC9S3I06)

[Victorian Curriculum links:](#)

Level 3 and 4 Content Descriptions:

Visual Arts

- (Strand: Explore and Express Ideas) Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](#))
- (Strand: Respond and Interpret) Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCAVAR028](#))

**Further Research/Resources:**

Budga Budga Aboriginal Co-operative. (2022). *Gariwerd/Grampians: Gariwerd Creation Story – The Dreamtime Story*. Retrieved from:

<https://budjabudjacoop.org.au/about/gariwerdgrampians/>

Fielding, M. (2021). *Australia's birds are embedded within Aboriginal Australian Culture*. Retrieved from: <https://www.deep-group.com/post/australia-s-birds-are-embedded-within-aboriginal-australian-culture>

Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2016). *Project Zero: See, Think, Wonder*. Retrieved from:

<http://pz.harvard.edu/search/resources/see%2520think%2520wonder>

Langton, M. (2019). *Fire, water and astronomy: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture comes to life in the classroom*. The Guardian. Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/11/fire-water-and-astronomy-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-culture-comes-to-life-in-the-classroom>

Murdoch, K. (2022). Cycle of inquiry Oct 2020 slides. Retrieved from:

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