Tyu-ron teen Pitthirrit
(Pitthirrit the Plover)

Meaning of the Story

The story is a cultural representation on how the plover got its spurs on its wings. Tyu-ron carried two spears, one on each shoulder and when he turned into the plover the spears turned into its spurs. The story also identifies the importance of the eel as a food source and trading commodity to the Gunditjmara.

It has long been established that the Gunditjmara not only trapped eels in small numbers but also farmed them in large numbers. A series of interconnected weirs and channels at Lake Condah has been identified as a sophisticated aquaculture system designed to promote the spawning of eels in large numbers and to allow for easy harvesting. Once harvested the eels were smoked in hollow trees to preserve them for trade over long distances.

Spurs of the Plover

The nesting plover defends its territory against all intruders by calling loudly, spreading its wings, and then swooping fast and low, and where necessary striking at interlopers with its feet and attacking animals on the ground with a conspicuous yellow spur on the carpal joint of the wing.
Eels and Eel Trap

Children can create story board illustrations for the cycle of eel migration.

**Project based activity - The story of the migration of eels**

After spawning off Vanuatu and Noumea, the *larvae* (hatchlings) follow the east-Australian current down the east coast and into Bass Strait (blue arrows on map). As they approach the coast of Victoria the eels larvae turn into *glass eels* ('glassies').

The glass eels enter the various rivers (the examples shown below are the Hopkins River, Merri River and Darlot's Creek) and as they head upstream they turn into *elvers* ('bootlaces') and swim on, negotiating weirs, rapids and waterfalls on their way to the lakes and still headwaters.

In the lakes they settle down and mature into the fully-grown short-finned eels. They can live in the lakes for up to twenty-five years. At full maturity the eels turn a silvery colour, head downstream, out to sea and make the long swim back to the spawning grounds in the Pacific where they reproduce and then die (red arrows).
Eel (Kuyang) Life cycle

Eel Trap

Film - Repairing ancient eel hunting networks
Protocols for Classroom Activities

Classroom activities must be facilitated by local Aboriginal people to whom the stories belong. These stories are the cultural heritage of the Gunditjmara and require local cultural knowledge and authority to articulate them accurately.

Aboriginal Studies is a requirement for all curriculums nationally and schools should incorporate these activities as part of their cultural education program. Engaging local Aboriginal people to facilitate these activities will in most cases require a payment (at least equivalent to casual teacher rates) for their services. Please see Aboriginal Community contact details below.

Local Aboriginal Community Contacts

Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation – Heywood

Gunditj Mirring Aboriginal Corporation – Heywood

Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative – Warrnambool
T: 03 5559 1234

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation – Warrnambool
T: 0419 132 471 E: [easternmaar@gmail.com](mailto:easternmaar@gmail.com)

Kuyaang Maar Aboriginal Corporation – Warrnambool
T: 0407 391 888

Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly Citizens (DWEC) - Portland