

Tomaga estuary treasure hunt



Activity checklist:

- ✓ Activity sheets
- ✓ Sun protection (hat, sunscreen and sunglasses)
- ✓ Pencil
- ✓ Container or bag to collect any plastic washed ashore

The Tomaga River sits within a Habitat Protection zone of the Batemans Marine Park. Marine parks help conserve our state's marine life for present and future generations, while providing a great opportunity to improve public understanding and enjoyment of our unique marine environment.

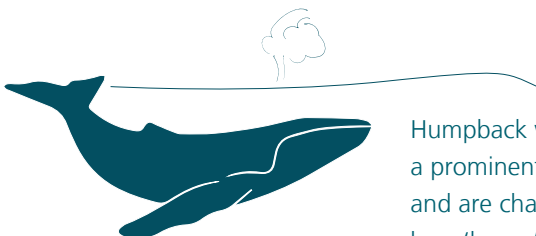
Tomaga River is a part of the traditional Aboriginal Country of the Yuin people, whose boundaries stretch the length of the NSW south-east coast and west to the Great Dividing Range. The local Yuin people are known as Walbanja. The river's unique environment provides an abundance of natural resources. Activities included fishing, construction of fish traps, hunting and egg collection. Local grass

species provided seeds for damper, edible shoots and fibres for baskets and mats.

Coastal saltmarsh is listed as endangered along the NSW coastline. They often appear devoid of animal life, but saltmarshes are vital in the estuarine food chain, providing a home for many animals such as crabs, insects, spiders, worms and small shellfish; all food for young fish and other marine life. Saltmarshes also provide an important high tide roosting area for wading birds.

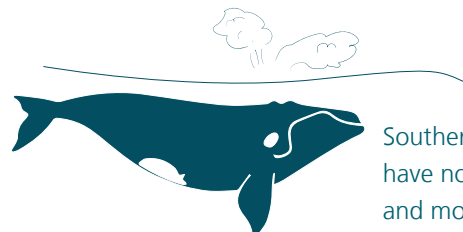
Between June and October, you might be lucky enough to see visiting humpback and southern right whales out past the river mouth. Check the horizon for breath signs.

Humpback whales



Humpback whales have a prominent dorsal fin and are characterised by a 'hump' back.

Southern right whales



Southern right whales have no dorsal fin and move slowly close to shore.

While the coastal and marine environments are beautiful, they can be dangerous. Take care while walking and remind children to be wary of slippery rocks or broken glass. Make sure they know how to recognise venomous creatures like bluebottles and blue-ringed octopuses.

Spot it at low tide! (tick the checkbox)

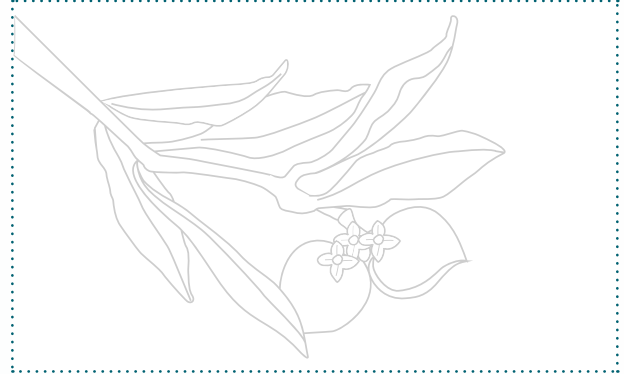
Walk along the riverbank between the Tomakin boat ramp and the Tomakin club and see if you can find some of these species.

This plant is Samphire, its scientific name is *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*. This saltmarsh plant is often called the asparagus of the sea. It is a native succulent and has a salty seawater flavour. It is mostly found in coastal areas periodically inundated by saltwater.

Samphire



Trace a grey mangrove seed pod

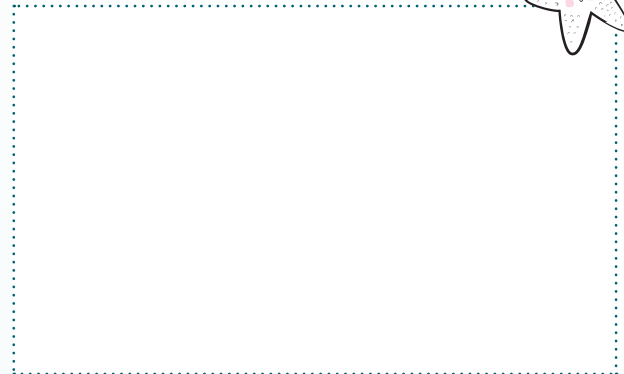


Mangroves have developed to thrive in salty water. Mangroves direct the salt they take in to particular branches and leaves then allow them to drop off, removing the salt from the plant. The most obvious feature of the grey mangrove is its spiky vertical roots, called peg roots, which can be seen at low tide protruding from the mud and sand. These roots act like snorkels, drawing in oxygen to the root system allowing the plant to breathe. Mangroves provide habitat and food. They also act as a buffer, reducing erosion and maintaining water quality.

White-bellied sea eagle

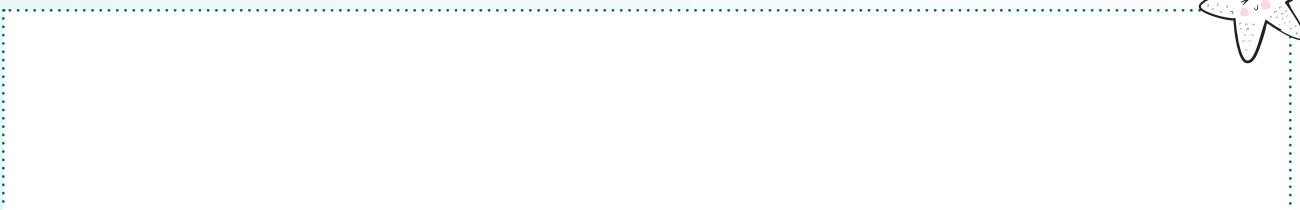


Draw a sea eagle nest



The white-bellied sea-eagle feeds mainly off aquatic animals, such as fish, turtles and sea snakes, but it takes birds and mammals as well. It is a skilled hunter and will attack prey up to the size of a swan. White-bellied sea-eagles build a large stick nest, which is used for many seasons in succession. The nest can be located in a tree up to 30m above the ground but may also be placed on the ground or on rocks if there are no suitable trees.

Draw mangroves along the Tomaga estuary



Spot it at low tide (continued)

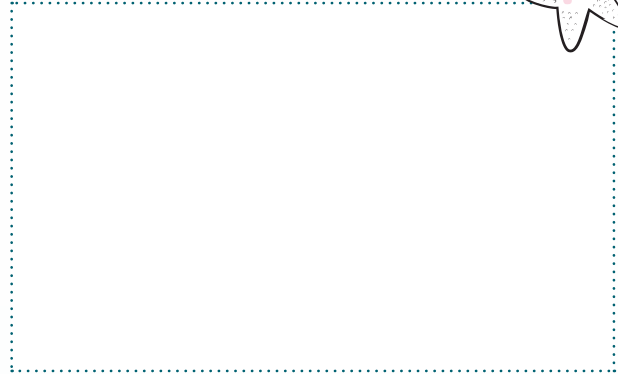
3.

The semaphore crab is a common equal-handed crab. The adults have purple claws and juveniles have light orange claws. They get their name from waving their claws around, which repels other males but also entices female crabs to enter the male's burrow. Crab is called dhuail (dh-oo-ril) in the local Aboriginal language, Dhurga.

Adult semaphore crab



Draw a semaphore crab



Soldier crab



How many crabs can you see?



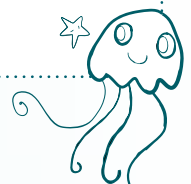
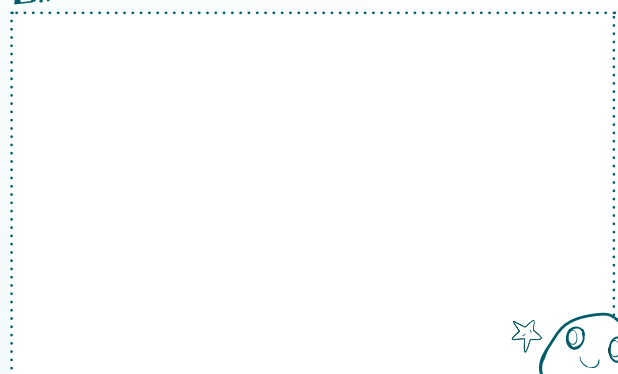
Soldier crabs form large armies on sandy areas of estuaries. When they feed they leave many small round pellets of sand behind them. Soldier crabs are the only crabs that can walk straight ahead. Birds such as herons and ibis eat soldier crabs.

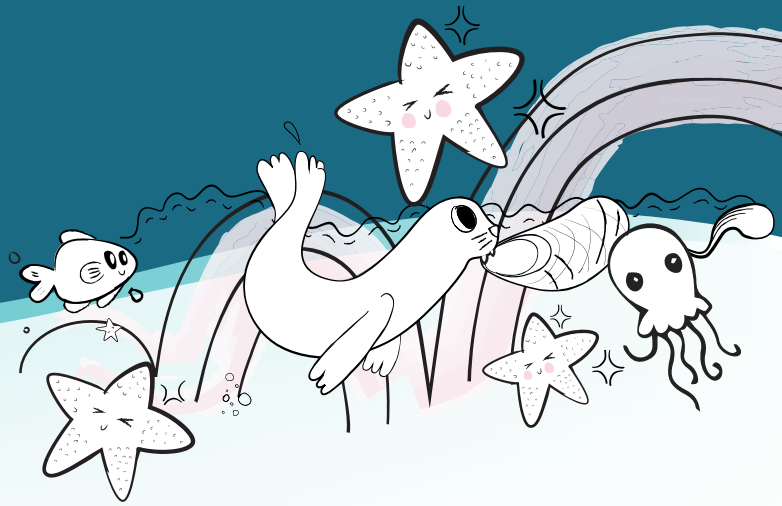
Mud whelks eat small particles of dead plants and animals as well as algae. The whelks eat mud as they crawl over the surface and digest food from it. The unwanted mud and sediment are passed through the digestive system. Birds, octopuses and stingrays eat mud whelks, as did the local Aboriginal people.

Mud whelk



Draw a mud whelk





? There are so many interesting things to find. List or draw your favourites: 



How to be a citizen scientist

You can help save marine life by becoming a citizen scientist. Discarded plastic or fishing tackle can injure or kill marine life – we need to learn more about litter so we can stop it at the source and that's where you can help. It's easy to download Tangaroa Blue's Australian Marine Debris Initiative App from www.tangaroablue.org/resources/clean-up-data-collection/amdi-app then record the type of any litter you find.

For more information or to get involved visit www.esc.nsw.gov.au/living-in/environment/

If you see illegal activity in the marine park, contact Batemans Marine Park office on 1800 043 536 or log it on the NSW Fisheries website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/compliance/report-illegal-activity

This environmental treasure hunt was developed by Eurobodalla Council with assistance from Minga Aboriginal Cultural Services.