

Turtle Watch: Oblong Turtle Role-play

Equipment: poster, lake fabric, large & small soft toy turtles, reeds, playdough eggs, trowel (to dig hole – like fox predation). Also for display and discussion: jars of hatchling/eggs/carapace/skeleton/fox scat, fox and turtle specimens.

Role play:

Welcome everyone. Thank you for coming to this session ... on Turtle Watch ... some big picture ideas to start ...

I'm going to tell a story about the wetlands ecosystem, about lakes and rivers, plants and turtles ... take this turtle hatchling here ... it was found dead on a path heading down to the lake. Why was it dead? This may have been the scenario ... describe lake scene with human-friendly grass ...

Mother turtle emerges from the water in early October. There is a low pressure system coming in over the coast so mum knows it is a good time to lay her eggs (low pressure systems means rain – water important for optimal egg development). She goes to climb out of the lake water and is confronted by tall, dense, exotic water weeds – she struggles her way through and eventually comes to the shoreline ... but there is no suitable nesting site here, no sandy environs ... only dense kikuyu grass ... she pushes and struggles through this ... for hours ... there is no sand only a “lovely green park that the human like for picnics”. The female turtle struggles on for about 500 metres, climbing up and down high curbs, crossing dangerous roads, until she comes to a suitable sandy patch. Here she lays her eggs; once completed she returns to the lake ... her job done.

In July the following year the hatchling emerges; is it safe? The hatchling has a long perilous journey to the lake ... will this hatchling survive the predation of the water birds and bewildering maze of the tall kikuyu grass and weeds ... no, it collapses and dies on the way ... dies of dehydration and exhaustion ...

So, we have students and members of public asking ‘what can be done?’ Together, we can work together to find solutions ... Turtle Watch is one such solution. In this project we have the coming together of environmental concerns, economics, and values, social, community and governance issues ... all different aspects of sustainability ... all overlapping, integrating ... in a whole systems thinking approach ... to achieve solutions to real world concerns. You can be a citizen scientist and help by ... recording sightings via Hotline and ClimateWatch website.