Teacher Resource Sheet: Mangrove Story

Phase of learning
Years 3 - 4, Years 5 - 6

WA Curriculum
K-10 English, K-10 Science

Region
North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, West Coast

Summary
This Teacher Resource Sheet is associated with the Lesson: A mangrove ecosystem

Mangrove story

Mangroves are an amazing plant, as they have to survive and grow in some of the harshest conditions in the world.

Who can tell me what conditions these are?

[*They grow in salt water on the edge of the ocean*].

Today, I'm going to tell you a story that I hope will show you just how important mangroves are to some of the species we find in our waters. In fact, we will put some of the species we put up on the board today.

Barramundi was born from an egg. When his mother laid her eggs, she hid them in among the roots of a **mangrove tree** early in the wet season. While some of his brothers were washed upstream on the high tide, he was lucky enough to stay put. What an interesting world for him to grow up in and what an exciting place to explore. And there's so much for him to eat! What are some of the things you think he eats when he is still so small?

[*Mostly microscopic (teeny tiny) plants and animals called **plankton**. There are thousands of them!*]

Now, barramundi doesn't stray far from the mangrove roots and fallen trees. Why do you think that is?

[*There are lots of others who would like to make a meal of him. It is also such a productive environment. Briefly describe why*].

He spends his days watching the world around him. Who else do you think Barramundi might share his shelter with?

[***Crabs** scurrying from their burrows for food (they eat detritus, the muddy layer of ooze underneath the dead mangrove leaves); **mudskippers** dancing from the water to the mud banks, always wary of anything that moves; **sea jellies** that float in and out with the tide; **oysters** that scratch his back as he moves between the maze of mangrove roots; and **bull sharks** who make a feast of anything that goes past*]

Oh what a very busy place this is!

Barramundi has to be very careful because if it is dinner time for him and his friends, it must be dinner time for other animals in the mangroves. From the surface of the water, he catches a glimpse of a slow-moving shadow above him. He moves quickly back into his place in the mangrove roots. "Just in time," he thinks, as the shadow swoops towards the water. What do you think it is?

[*Any one of the birds (**pelican**, **osprey**, **cormorant**, **sea eagle**) that live in the mangroves – a very hungry bird*].

The bird flies away juggling an unlucky **mullet** in its long beak.

As the **clouds** become a more permanent feature in the sky and the wet season sets in, Barramundi is bigger and braver and decides to move out of his comfortable home in the mangrove roots to see what the river is like closer to the freshwater. Here, he notices the species of **mangroves** are different. Why do you think that is?

[*they are better suited to the fresher water. Discuss zonation*].

"Hmmm… looks like there are some interesting things to eat here," thinks Barramundi and makes himself a new home among the branches of a fallen tree. He sits, still and silent in the branches, waiting for a small fish to stray from the school. Barramundi opens up his big mouth, sucks in a huge amount of water and 'boof', snaps up the fish for a tasty meal.

As he gets older, he will eat almost anything that will fit in his mouth. He enjoys insects (for example, **dragonflies**, **mosquitoes**), **prawns** (a real favourite), **frogs** and fish, including other **barramundi**, **mullet** and **archerfish**. His relatives have even been known to eat baby **crocodiles**!

With all this food around him, Barramundi is a very happy fish. When he's not busy eating, Barramundi uses his big bright orange eyes to watch what goes on above, in the mangrove forest around him. What are some of the things you think he might see?

[*He sees **fruit bats** hanging upside down, asleep after a long night hunting for food; **snakes** slithering in the tree branches trying to warm their bodies when the **sun** comes out from behind the cloud; **mud whelks** in camouflage eating algae from the mud; **lizards** scurrying back to their homes, the beautiful **flowers** of*

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MANGROVE STORY

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