BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

THE BOGONG'S SONG



A CALL TO COUNTRY

LEARNING PACK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Bangarra Dance Theatre pays respect and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, create, perform. We also wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose customs and cultures inspire our work.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (ICIP)

Bangarra acknowledges the industry standards and protocols set by the Australia Council Protocols for working with Indigenous Artists (2007). These protocols have been widely adopted across Australian arts communities to respect ICIP and to develop practices and processes for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultural heritage. Bangarra incorporates ICIP into the very heart of our projects, from storytelling to dance, to set design, language and music.

CULTURAL CONSULTANCY

For every Bangarra Dance Theatre production, our Cultural Consultants play a very important role offering support and guidance to creative teams and the artists. Our stories carry First Nations' Culture, and we are committed to upholding all necessary protocols in order to use Cultural information, so that these stories can be creatively retold on the world stage in a culturally safe and appropriate manner.

Cultural Consultants are Elders or senior community members who are connected to the Land and People of the area from where Stories live. They are involved from the very beginning of the process, and all the way through the creation and presentation stages.

We are ever grateful to all of our Cultural Consultants and their Communities.

THE BOGONG'S SONG

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Cover photo by Daniel Boud

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INTRODUCTION



Photo by Daniel Boud

Welcome to *The Bogong's Song: a call to Country.* This Story draws on the ancient Cultures and lived experiences of Australia's First Nations people – their care for Land, Sea and Creatures, their respect for Knowledge handed down from Ancestors, and their resilience to survive in a contemporary world.

The Bogong's Song honours the practices of keeping First Nations Cultures and Knowledges strong in our fast-paced modern existence of social, environmental and technological change.

We recognise that as young people become more conscious of the wider world around them, they are full of curiosity about their place within the world, and we hope that *The Bogong's Song* will inspire children's sense of personal connection to the Lands on which they live, and fuel a desire to learn about the way First Nations people understand their environments, both physical and spiritual. This awareness is incredibly valuable to both First Nations children and non-Indigenous children as they envision their pathways into adulthood.

USING THIS RESOURCE
This resource provides background information about the Cultural, geographical and environmental themes within the work, which we hope will support teachers, parents and guardians in preparing their students'/children's experience of the production. The themes explored are relevant across the Australian Curriculum in humanities, science, arts, health and physical education.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS – STAGES 2 AND 3.
Across the curriculum priority:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

GENERAL CAPABILITIES:
Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding, Intercultural understanding.

LEARNING/SUBJECT AREAS:
Humanities and Social studies, Technology and the Arts, Health and physical education.

THE POWER OF FIRST NATIONS' STORYTELLING

As children experience the production of *The Bogong's Song,* they are taking part in a creative and compelling form of First Nations storytelling in a way that they can relate to and imagine themselves as part of that Story.

As the show unfolds and the audience engages with the characters (both human and non-human), opportunities for children to learn about Australia's First Nations people and cultures – through a First Nations perspective – are both rich and diverse.

For example:

- Learning about other Cultures as a first step in developing an understanding of the human right to be able to express one's culture and participate in cultural life with dignity and equity.
- Learning about the threat to our natural world, from human action that disrupts the balance required for our planet's sustainability, and why this is critical as the world faces so many environmental challenges.
- Learning about the places where languages and traditions are distinctive to the people of that place, and how those people retain their connection through deep knowledge of Land, Seas, and Skies.

The Bogong's Song emphasises the pivotal role that the Cultural values of respect and reciprocity play in caring for Country and living in harmony with our environment.

The Bogong's Song is a call to Country as well as a call to young generations, to empower them with the knowledge that they can make a positive difference in the world.

The Bogong's Song is an interactive and immersive experience. Script, lighting, projection, set, costumes, props, puppets and sound evoke the characters, colours, music and rhythms of nature, transforming the stage into the environment of Australia's high country, opening up a fluid and creative space for imagination and play.

CULTURAL CONSULTANTS

Aunty Doris Paton – Gunai and Monero Ngarigo

Arthur Little – Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi, Ngunnawal and Yuin

The Ngarigo Cultural Authorities

CREATIVE TEAM

Performers
Benjin Maza and Tjilala Brown-Roberts

Director, co-writer, choreographer
Yolande Brown

Co-writer & provocateur
Chenoa Deemal

Music
Brendon Boney

Songwriting & Composition
Yolande Brown

Set and costume designer
Richard Roberts

Set design associate
Annaliese McCarthy

Lighting designer
Ben Hughes

Lighting design associate
Eben Love

Video designer
Justin Harrison

Illustrator
Cheryl Davison

Puppet Master and Maker
Vanessa Ellis

Traditional dance
Brent Watkins

Accompanying Music
Uncle Sean Ryan

SYNOPSIS

What guides you through the darkness when you've lost your way? A whisper on the wind. A shimmer in the stars. A moth in flight.

When a brother and sister turn out the lights for the night, they are swept into a dream that becomes a portal to their Dreaming. Pulled by the magnetism of the Bogong Moth they journey into an extraordinary world where Country shares its secrets. In this place, the past speaks through stars, trees, and grasses. Healing begins in the silence between breaths, and we discover that even the smallest creatures have a vital role to play.

CREATIVE PROCESS



Photo by Yolande Brown

The process for creating *The Bogong's Song* involved several stages of development starting with research On Country, meeting with conservation scientists and gathering a great deal of published material. The writers/ directors then conducted in-depth Cultural consultation with Elders and senior Community members, before starting to draft the script and scenography for the work.

This first stage was followed by conversations with designers – set, props, costume, video, puppets, projection and lighting. Gradually the work began to take shape. The creative process was conducted as a very close collaboration over many weeks. Ideas were scoped, tested and refined. An additional aspect to this work, is the incorporation of AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language) into various scenes. Learn some of this sign language HERE.

As the process continued, production crews became involved to essentially solve any technical issues as they arose to make sure the creative team and the artists, were supported to realise their vision for the work.

The last stage of the creative process is when the story is shared with audiences. We sincerely hope *The Bogong's Song* will inspire children to do their own creative storytelling. Stories are very powerful. They carry the emotional, intellectual and physical imprints of who we are, how we live in the world, and how we inspire action for change.





Rehearsal photos by Sam Muller

A STORY OF BELONGING – SACRED CONNECTIONS

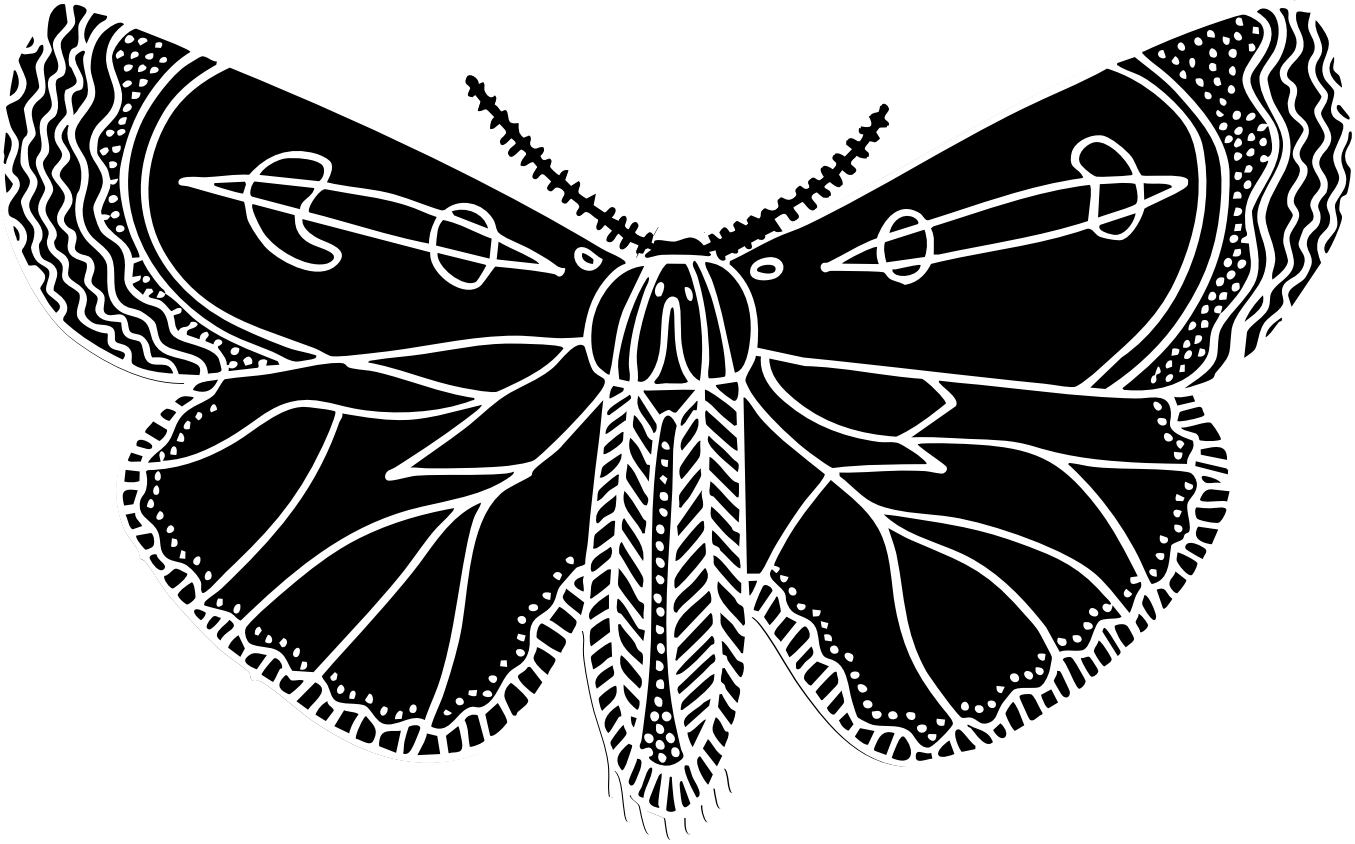


Illustration by Cheryl Davison, 2025.

The Bogong's Song speaks to and from the histories and Cultures of our First Nations peoples and their relationships to Land, Sky and Waters, as well as the incredible creatures and plants that inhabit this Earth.

The Bogong Moth holds deep cultural significance for many Aboriginal clans across south-eastern Australia. The annual arrival of the moths in the high country signals a time for ceremony and feasting. Ancient songlines carry the Bogong Moths' story, which is steeped in information regarding Cultural, social, and environmental sustainability.

Bogong Moths were an important food source for Aboriginal people. The moths were carefully roasted on hot rocks, then either eaten or ground into a paste and made into delicious, nutty flavoured 'moth cakes', providing a rich source of fatty acids for good health. They remain an essential food source for a range of native creatures including the Pygmy Possum whose story is very much part of the Bogong Moth's story.

The Bogong's Song also involves the stories of other creatures, Guthega Skink, and Crow, as well as unique native flora, such as the Snow Gum and a variety of alpine native grasses. All of these species are very significant in relation to Ceremony, Lore, Totems, Art and Kinship.

THE CREATURES WHO HAVE A SPECIAL ROLE IN THIS STORY

THE BOGONG MOTH

small, vulnerable and elusive – Knowledge is her superpower.

SPECIES / HABITAT

The Bogong Moth (*L. Agrotis infusa*) is a fascinating and unique Australian species. Fossil evidence indicates that the Bogong has been around for at least 2000 years, however given that moth species itself has been on Earth for about 190 million years, it is likely that the little Bogong has been here for a very long time.

The Bogong Moth breeds in the hot dry climate of low lying lands and aestivates (hibernates) in cool caves or crevices above 1800 metres. Measuring between 2.5 and 3.5 centimetres, these clever little creatures start life as tiny larvae feeding on plants and leaves, before spending a short time as pupae in the soil until they finally hatch as moths. The young moths feed on nectars to fatten up in preparation for their long 1000 kilometre journey to reach the caves of the high country in eastern Australia. How they know where to go is truly miraculous, but scientists believe they do this by taking cues from the stars and certain landforms, as well as the Earth's magnetic field. Basically, they have a brilliant and complex navigation system built into their brains. Once they reach the caves they aestivate over the summer months. They don't eat during this period, using their fat reserves to survive. When the weather starts to cool, they travel back to the breeding ground, and their life cycle is over.



Photo: Lyn via Moth tracker

STATUS

The Bogong moth was classified as Endangered in 2021. This was after a particularly severe drought in 2017 that saw numbers drop by about 99%.

Recently their populations have started to increase, but with factors such as climate change, agricultural development, light pollution interrupting their navigation skills, and invasive animals (brumbies, goats, pigs and cats), the little Bogong is being threatened on all fronts.

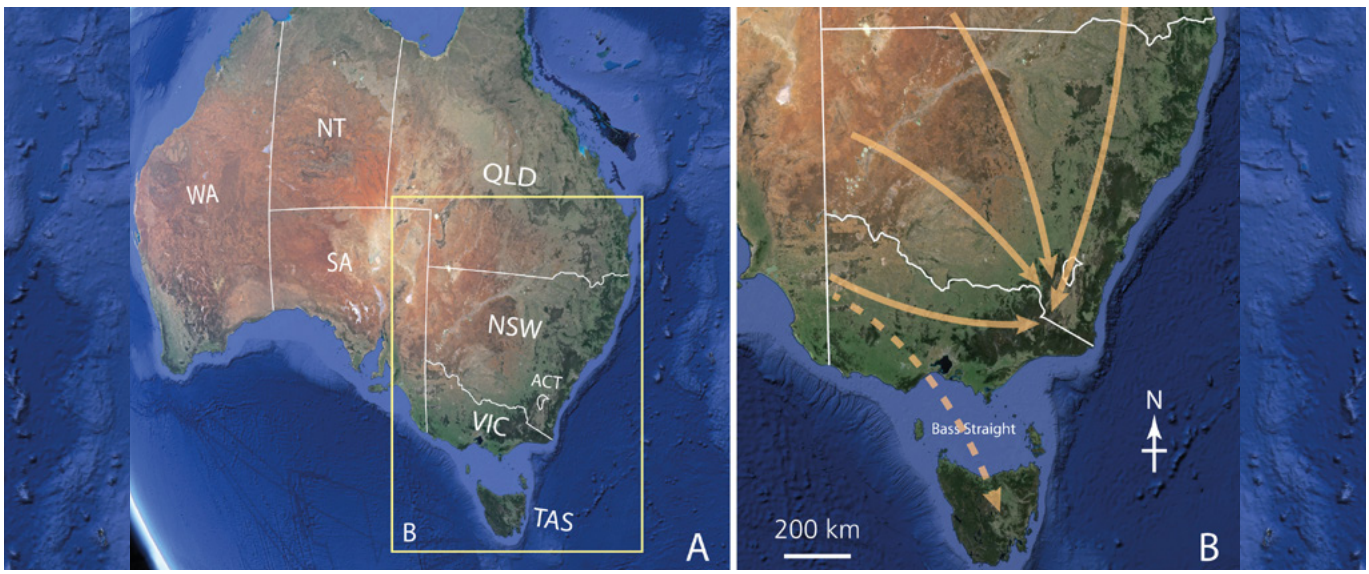


Image courtesy of Professor Eric Warrant,



THE PYGMY POSSUM

understands the superpower of scale. She is strong and capable, regardless of her size.

SPECIES / HABITAT

The Mountain Pygmy Possum (*L. Burramys parvus*) lives in the alpine regions of NSW and Victoria in areas above 1300 metres, mostly in grasslands between the boulder-fields of basalt and granite. Their habitat occupies a very small area of less than eight square kilometres around Mt Higgenbotham, Mt Butler, Mt Bogong and Mt Kosciuszko.

Until 1966, the Pygmy Possum was thought to be extinct. All that existed were fossil remains discovered in 1895. The creature had not been sighted after colonisation. But in 1966 a live male wandered into a ski lodge in Victoria, and in 1996 another population was discovered at Mt Buller.

Pygmy Possums are very small – about 250 millimetres long and they weigh between 30 to 40 grams. They live for around 12 to 13 years. Their diet consists of berries, fleshy fruits, seeds, nectar, insects and Bogong Moths – their main source of protein and fats. The possums need to eat lots of Bogongs before they go into their seven month long hibernation under the snow.

STATUS

The Mountain Pygmy Possum has been listed as Endangered in Australia since the early 2000s and Critically Endangered by the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 2008. Climate change, more specifically rising temperatures, is their biggest threat, as they require deep snow levels for their full hibernation period. They are also threatened by the decline of their main food source, the Bogong Moth. Also threatening their habitat are nearby busy ski fields where human activity has caused significant environmental degradation. Feral species such as cats and foxes are also a danger to Pygmy Possums.



Photo: Courtesy of Zoos Victoria



Photo: William Betts, 2018.

THE GUTHEGA SKINK

providing light from his solar panel scales is his superpower.

SPECIES / HABITAT

The little Guthega Skink (*L. Liopholis Guthega*) measures around 11 centimetres and lives at the highest altitude of any Australian reptile.

There are two distinct populations of the species. One in the Kosciuszko National Park, and the other in the Bogong high plains of Victoria. They live within rocky boulders and dense vegetation where they can burrow in, breed and protect themselves from weather and predators. They like to eat insects, spiders, and snails in summer, then as the weather cools, they start to eat plants and berries. They live for about 10 years. As a species, they have been around for about 100 million years.

STATUS

The Guthega Skink is classified as Endangered in NSW and Critically Endangered in Victoria. The main consideration for this classification is the fact that the two areas of occupancy are so limited.

NATIVE CROW

steeped in gravitas and ancestral responsibility.

SPECIES / HABITAT

The habitat of the little native crow (*L. Corvus bennetti*) spans a large part of Australia. Measuring about 50 centimetres in length, this little bird has completely black plumage, beak, and legs. They are quite social, forming large flocks that roam extensively as they search for food.

Crows and ravens look very similar to each other, with ravens being the slightly larger of the Corvidae family. They eat a variety of foods including grains, fruits, insects, small animals, and eggs.

STATUS

Currently crows and ravens of Australia are classified as Least Endangered, despite the fact that the population appears to be decreasing. This decline is not yet believed to be approaching the thresholds of being Vulnerable.



Photo: Shane Carroll

ALPINE GRASSES

grounding and calming with the ability to spread peace is the grasses superpower.

SPECIES / HABITAT

There are many species of grasses and herbs that thrive in the Alpine regions of eastern Australia, including snow grass, robust wallaby grass, common wheatgrass and feldmark grass. These deep rooted, low growing plush grasses create large mat-like patches across the often harsh conditions of the Alpine. They protect the soils and are very drought tolerant. The deep roots of these grasses play an important role in holding water and providing nutritious food for small native marsupials.

Unfortunately, these grasses have also been discovered by non-Indigenous grazing animals and despite there being tight restrictions on agricultural grazing in the Alpine areas, feral animals such as pigs, goats, horses and deer have degraded many of the grass fields.

STATUS

While Alpine grasses are typically very hardy, some species are under threat from loss of habitat, climate change, feral animal feeding habits, and poor fire management, resulting in various species being listed as Vulnerable or Endangered. These grasses are a vital part of the ecology of the Australia's high country, and any loss of species has significant impact across the ecosystem for soils, plants, trees and many animals.



Photo: Yolande Brown

SNOW GUMS

wisdom and listening is Uncle Snow Gum's superpower.

SPECIES / HABITAT

Snow gums (*L. Eucalyptus pauciflora*) are very strong trees found in the Alpine regions of Australia. Their colourful bark and twisted trunks are visually beautiful. They play an important role in maintaining the ecosystem and the snowpack. They are the only tree that grows above the snowline, so they serve as a water reservoir capturing the melting snow and fog which they release gradually into the Murray Darling basin providing 26% of its water.

Snow gums are believed to be able to live for over 200 years if they are not disturbed. Typically, they will grow to between 20 to 30 metres high. Their green leaves glisten in the sunshine and in spring their blossom of white flowers produces a pear-shaped fruit that tastes a little like wintergreen, a type of mint.

STATUS

In NSW, snow gums are classified as Critically Endangered. Even though they are able to regenerate after a bushfire due to their store of carbohydrates under the outer layers of bark, climate change is causing more frequent bush fires, so the snow gums do not have time to heal before the next fire. But these trees have another even more destructive foe – the Longicorn beetle. The Longicorn is native to Australia but not to the Alpine region. Its own loss of habitat has caused it to migrate and look for trees to feed on. This beetle has caused enormous damage to the snow gum – whole forests being ringbarked by the scarring of the beetle so that the water cannot reach the tops of the tree. This is called dieback and has tragically spread throughout NSW, Victoria and the ACT.

HOW CAN YOU HELP BOGONG MOTHS?



BECOME A MOTH TRACKER!

Scan to visit the Moth Tracker page

MOTH TRACKER

ZOOS VICTORIA *Fighting Extinction*

Moth Tracker is a citizen science initiative developed by Zoos Victoria which aims to gather open-source real time data on the dates, locations and numbers of Bogong Moths travelling during the annual migration periods.

This data is then shared with experts, partners and government to support research and conservation actions for this small but mighty Endangered insect.

Submitting a moth sighting on the Moth Tracker website is quick and easy. Simply take a photo of the moth/s and visit the Moth Tracker website to upload and add in your location. We don't collect any contact details of people submitting Moth Tracker sightings, only their name.

Anyone can become a Moth Tracker, all you need is your phone or camera and to be on the lookout for these special moths in your day to day activities.

WHAT DOES A BOGONG MOTH LOOK LIKE?

- Bogong Moths are small, approximately 2.5 – 3.5 centimetres in length.
- They have a brown/grey body, with a dark stripe running down each wing
- They have two spots on that stripe, that are the same colour.
- The top spot is shaped like a circle, and the bottom spot is shaped like a kidney



Image: Chloe, via Moth Tracker

NOT SURE IF THE MOTH YOU'VE SEEN IS A BOGONG MOTH?

That's ok! Upload your photo to Moth Tracker and the Zoos Victoria team will verify it for you.

FOR TEACHERS

We highly recommend this classroom resource for Bogong Moth. Produced by Zoos Victoria.

Bogong Moth Teachers resource (Primary)

MORE ONLINE RESOURCES

LINKS

- Fighting extinction. Zoos Victoria
- Mysteries of the Bogong Moth Museums Victoria
- Platypus Australian Museum
- Cool.org Teaching resources for greater understanding of critical environmental and social issues.
- Professional learning Narragunnawali – Reconciliation Australia
- Protect our winters. Protect our Winters helps our outdoor community protect the integrity of Australia's unique alpine environment and lifestyle from climate change.

BOOKS

- *Moth Hunters*. Josephine Flood, Gecko Books, 2010
- *Tiny Possum and the Migrating Moths*, Julie Murphy, and Ben Clifford, CSIRO Publishing, 2021.
- *Australian Alps*, 3rd Ed, Kosciuszko, Alpine and Namadgi National Parks, Deirdre Slattery, CSIRO Publishing, 2025.
- *The Story of Platypus*, David Welch and Reggie Sultan, David Welch Publishing, 2019.



ACTIVITIES

1 ON COUNTRY LEARNING

'Country can be talked to, it can be known, it can itself communicate, feel and take action. Country for us is alive with story, law, power and kinship relations that join not only people to each other but link people, ancestors, place, animals, rocks, plants, stories and songs within land and sea. So, you see knowledge about Country is important because it's about how and where you fit within the world and how you connect to others and to place.

***Welcome to my Country,* L. Burarrwanga, Dr S. Wright, Dr Sandi Suchet-Pearson, Dr Kate Lloyd, Allen & Unwin, 2013.**

We recommend this book to teachers, parents and guardians to guide the planning of learning activities related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across the curriculum. Taking the classroom on to Country, for inquiry learning that incorporates Cultural significance within the study of sciences, creative arts, and the humanities, can be a powerful and enduring educational experience.

2 A VOICE FOR COUNTRY.

Ask children/students to write a statement on behalf of Country and the creatures who are part of that Country. Everyone has the freedom to speak up for the protection of Earth's natural ecosystems that have sustained life for millions of years. We can all be a Voice for Country.

The children's statement could be a promise to nature, an affirmation to learn more about the Country they live on, or a letter to decision makers. It could be any kind of written or visual communication. As an example, here is a poem by Penny aged 10, which was directed to the NSW Minister for the Environment in 2025.

Reclaim Kosci

Dear Minister
I say this with great sorrow
And I really, really mean it
But the creeks are all polluted
It's this silt, we need to clean it.
Without the pristine dirt-free rocks
Stocky galaxias can't lay their eggs
Life trampled down by wild horses
Helpless fry crushed by giant legs.
But about the threatened corroboree frogs
Infected by a deadly fungus

They're also losing sphagnum bogs
Their vital pools depend on us.
These horses, they're the real problem
Please repeal the Kozzi horse heritage act
We beg you all to try and stop them
The frogs will die, and that's a fact.
I say this for the fish who died
I speak for activists who tried
And if we stop and change our ways
The frogs will live another day.

3

BOGONG MOTH MAKING

MAKE A MOTH, MAKE A MOTH MOBILE, CREATE SOME SHADOW PLAY

Materials:

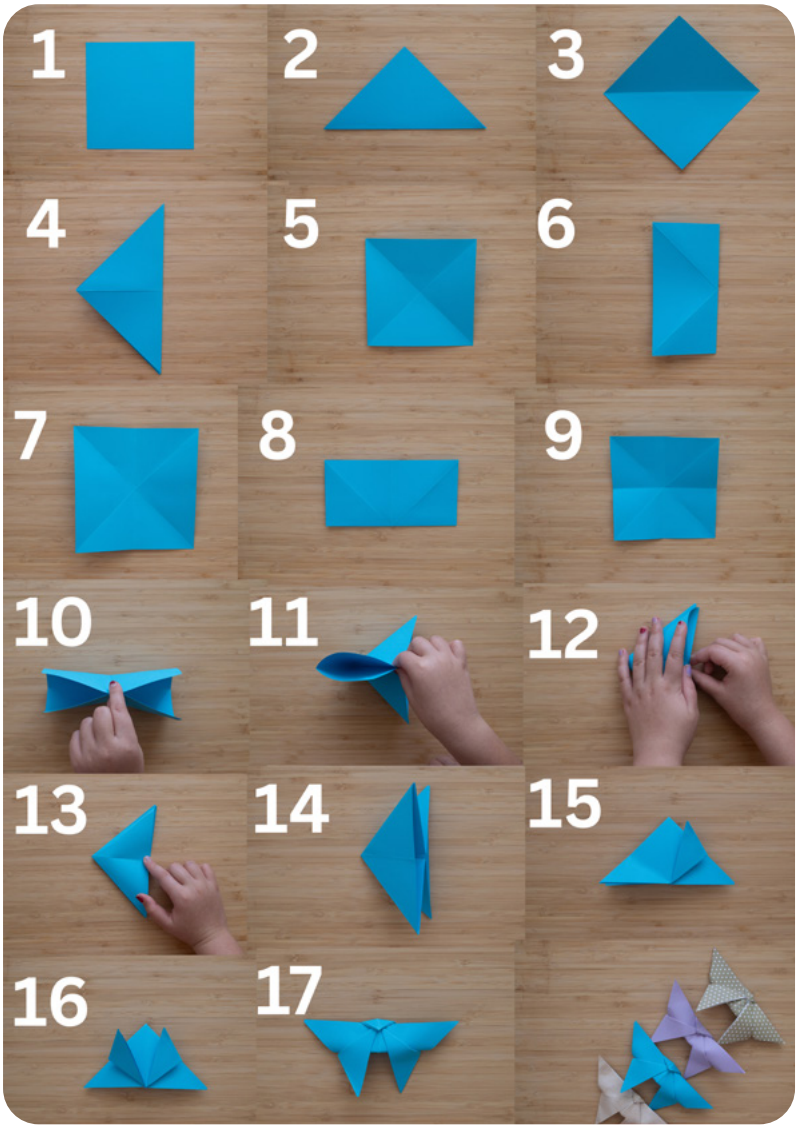
- Paper (not too stiff, 80 gsm or less) cut into squares. We used 15 x 15 cm size. (Voice for Country (see page 12) could be written on the paper).
- Coloured pencils or crayons, markers, acrylic paints for decorating.

To make a mobile:

- A circular or square frame, or even a coathanger.
- Thin string or thick cotton
- Hole puncher

For shadow play:

- A torch



Watch this video created by Molly Boney and her Mum Tessa Buku, to learn how to make your own Bogong Moth.



THE BOGONG'S SONG

REFERENCES

Publications
Wintle, Tunney, Cadenhead, Visintin, Mackay, Crossing, Hutton, Monk, Naccarella, Southwell, Broome, Caley, Heinz, Kreisner, Weeks, White, McDonald, Warrant, **The Bogong moth, *Agrotis infusa*: cultural context, knowledge gaps, conservation and monitoring options. Interim report,** Threatened Species Recovery hub, National Environmental Science Programme, November 2021.

Warrant, Frost, Green, Mouritsen, Dreyer, Adden, Brauburger, Heinze, **'The Australian Bogong Moth *Agotis infusa:* A Long-Distance Nocturnal Navigator',** Frontiers in Behavioural Neuroscience, Vol. 10, Article 77, April 2016.

Coombs, D., Langdon, S., Jabir, Z. et al. **The impact of Learning from Country on teachers' understandings of place and community: insights from the Culturally Nourishing Schooling project.** Aust. Educ. Res. **52**, 665–686 (2025).

Conservation Advice for Liopholis Guthega (Guthega skink) Department of Climate Change, Energy and Environment and Water, Australian Government, 20 August 2024.

Migration map page 7.
The migratory routes of Bogong moths. (A) A map of Australia showing the Australian States and Territories. The yellow box shows the region of Australia shown in (B). (B) The likely migratory routes of Bogong moths during the spring migration (the autumn migration occurs in the reverse direction). Arrows show the migration of moths to the alpine regions of NSW, the ACT and Victoria from southern Queensland, western and northwestern NSW and western Victoria. Some moths, blown from western Victoria by northwesterly prefrontal winds, even cross Bass Strait to arrive in Tasmania (where they either breed or estivate, returning to Victoria during what appears to be a reverse migration in autumn). Because we are currently unsure whether this is a true migration or an accidental displacement by winds, the Tasmanian arrow is shown as dashed. Images taken from Google Earth.

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bangarra
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