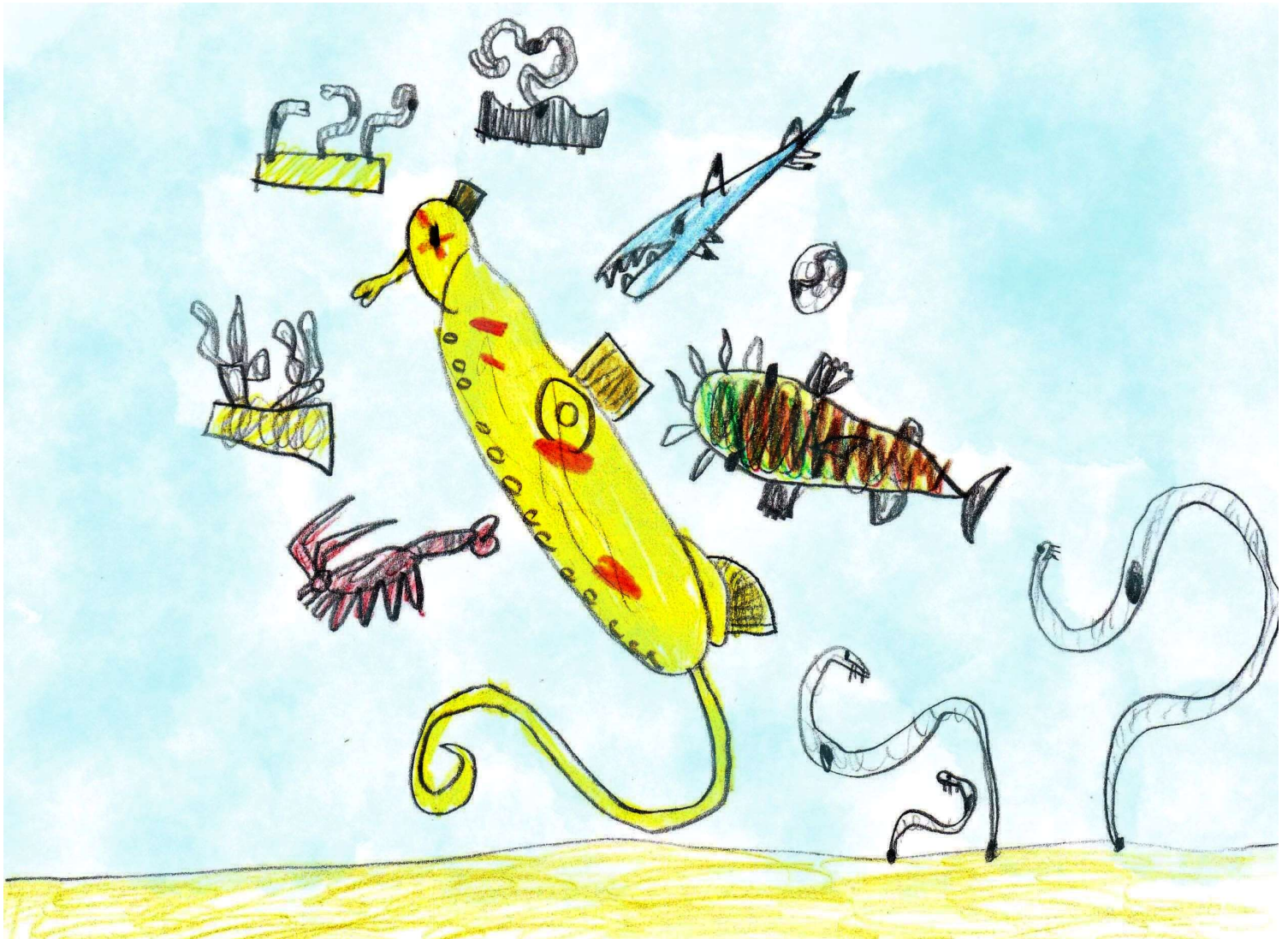


Seahorse Adventures

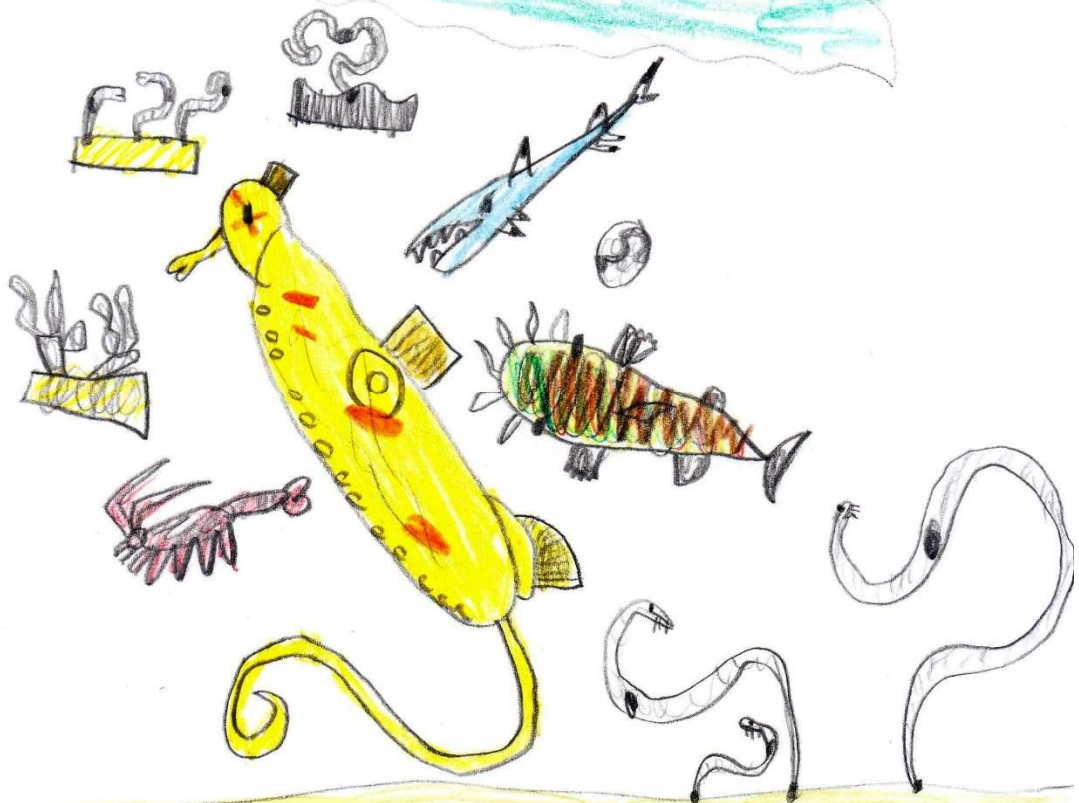
WALEA'S JOURNEY TO A NEW HABITAT



By Jonathan

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Waka and
the
Migration to the
new habitat



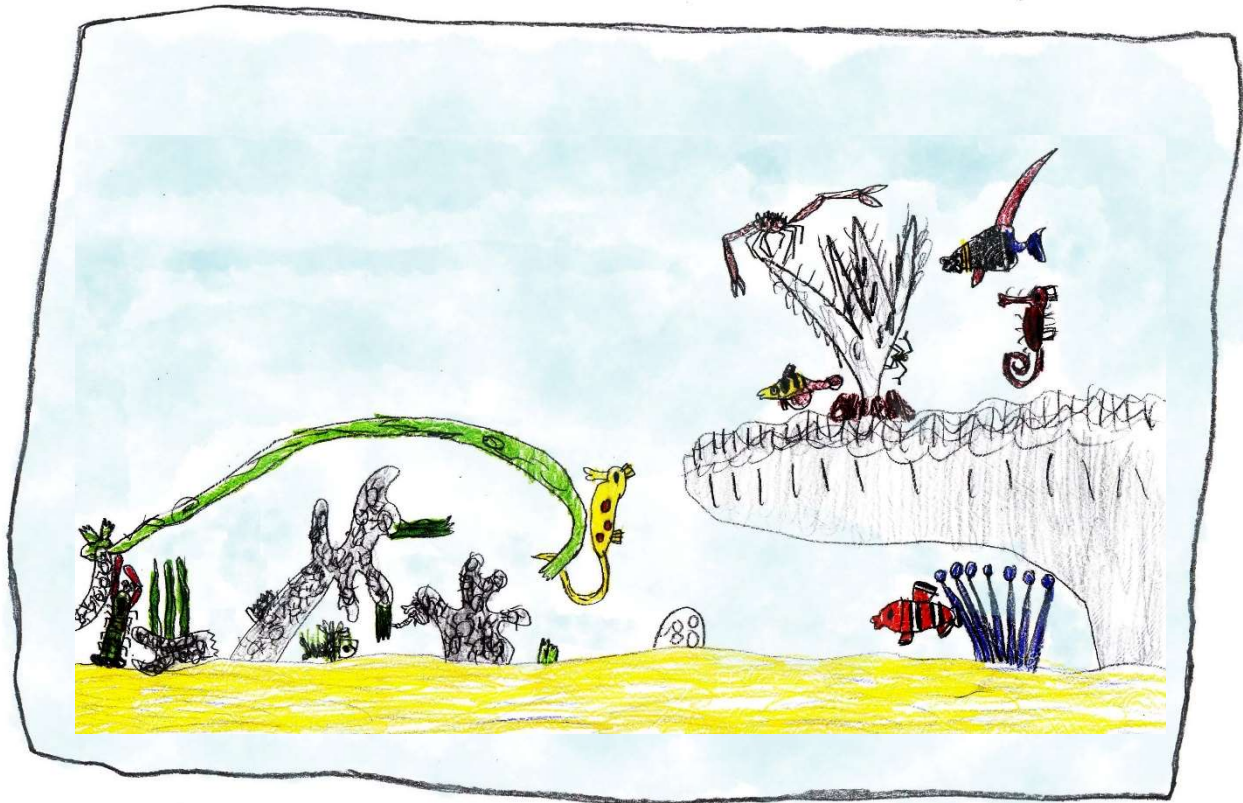
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CHAPTER 1. THE PROBLEM

A long time ago, there lived a pygmy seahorse named Walea. He was a little fish with big dreams. His coral bleached and he wanted to find a new habitat to live in. He thought and thought how to get to a new habitat.



Bleached coral

Then, he remembered there was a dangerous oasis to swim across. There were seahorse-loving garden eels and stinging coral...

Then, without thinking, Walea set off.

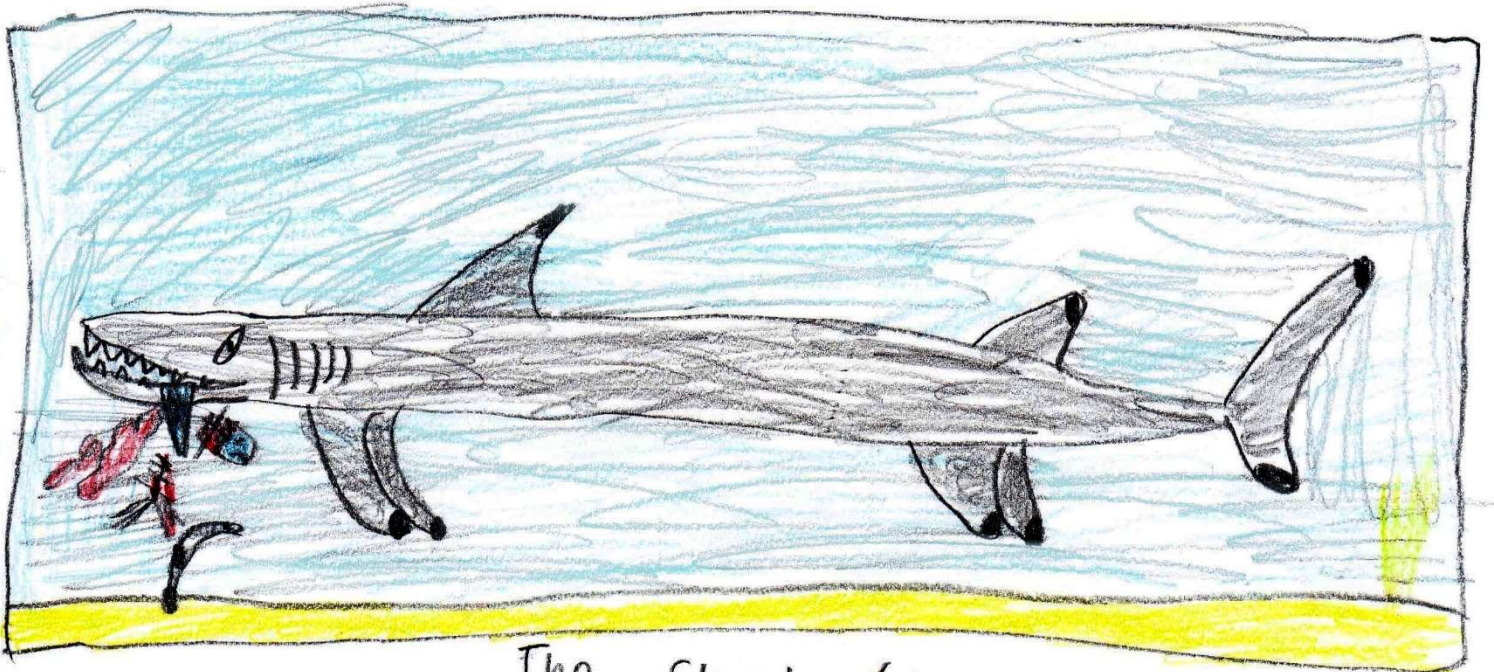
First, he had to cross a labyrinth of dead coral, which fish can enter, but never exit. He grabbed a long piece of kelp with his tail, flung it across the labyrinth and pulled on it. He soared through the water and landed at the exit. "Piece of cake!"

Then, there was a sandy oasis, which continued for 100 fish miles.

CHAPTER 2. THE OASIS

He saw some odd-looking holes. Walea was wondering what they were. Walea inspected them. He studied them. He observed them.

Then, "Swish! Snap!" A garden eel almost caught him. Walea dodged the holes until they ended.



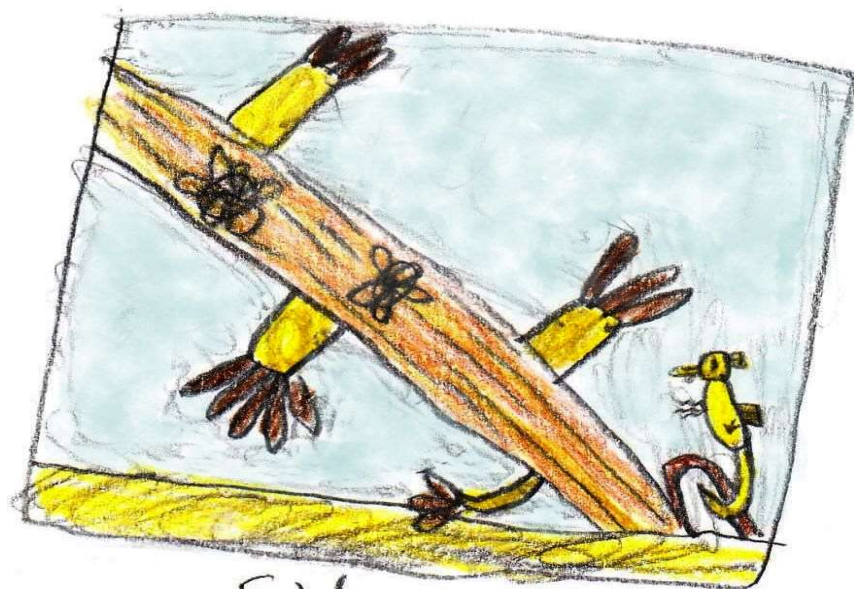
The shark (oh, scary!)

Under the sea, it was getting dark. And sharks started to come out. Walea hated sharks. Then, he saw one coming near.

The shark was going toward Walea! He was super scared, but brave. Then, Walea saw a small, rock cave, and swam in. Now the shark was so close, Walea felt the water coming in and out of the shark's gills. The shark then swam away.

When the shark swam away, Walea came out of hiding. Then, Walea saw a whole underwater garden of stinging coral.

The stinging coral gave him an idea. Walea found a non-stinging area, clung to it, and fell asleep.



Stinging coral
(ouch)

CHAPTER 3. THE SEAWEED BED

Before Walea knew it, it was already day. He felt confident he could get to his destination. He started to travel again.



Then, the water became shallower, shallower, and started to have more shells in it.

Then, the sea floor changed to a grim seaweed bed, with fish skeletons littering the area.

Walea entered with fright. There was a big obstacle. He had to dodge an ornate wobbegong, a small fish-eating shark. Easy. He just swam over it.

Walea was very tired and hungry. He clung to a seaweed blade with his tail, alternately sleeping and waking up.

Then, he saw something he had not seen in two days... Food! He swam towards it and sucked it up. Yum! It was a microscopic shrimp.

He clung to a seaweed blade again.

After resting, Walea began to move again.

After a short while, a human swam over Walea. Walea was stunned, did not move, and got propelled to a wobbegong.

Wobbegong noticed him and started to suck him up. Walea was scared, but still he used all his powers to get out of the strong pull force.

CHAPTER 4. THE GATES OF THE BLUE CRAB

At last, Walea escaped from the strong force that pulled in water into the wobbegong's mouth.

After that, he travelled and travelled. And he saw a blue crab that guarded the passage. When the crab put its claw up, Walea quickly swam through the open claw.



How close the claw snapped
shut to Walea

Just in time, because as soon as Walea swam through the claw snapped shut!

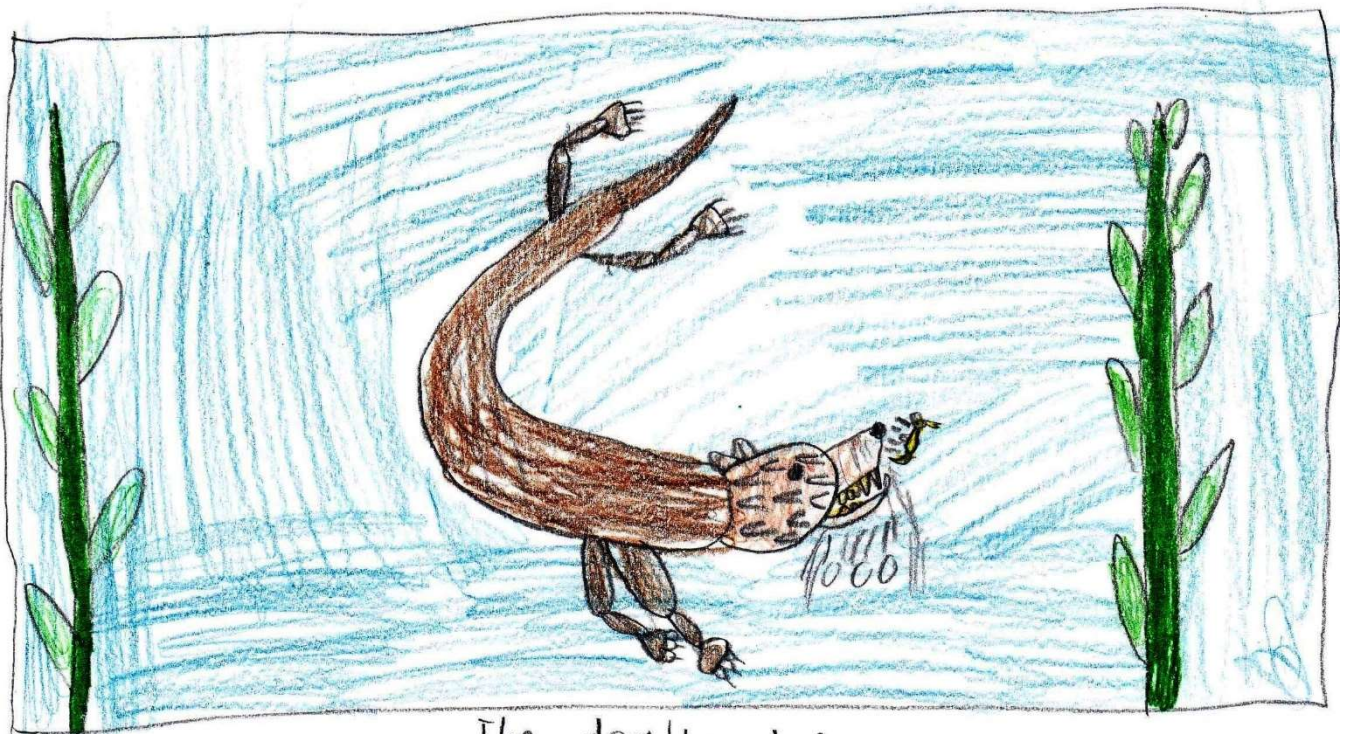
"That was close!" thought Walea. After that, he felt relieved and he swam on. He found a group of shrimp and ate it all.

CHAPTER 5. THE KELP FOREST

After the huge meal, Walea rested to wait until all the food gets digested.

When he set off again, suddenly, the seaweed bed turned into a towering kelp forest.

Walea had to be careful because a Western sea otter colony lived in the kelp forest. And they loved eating seahorses.



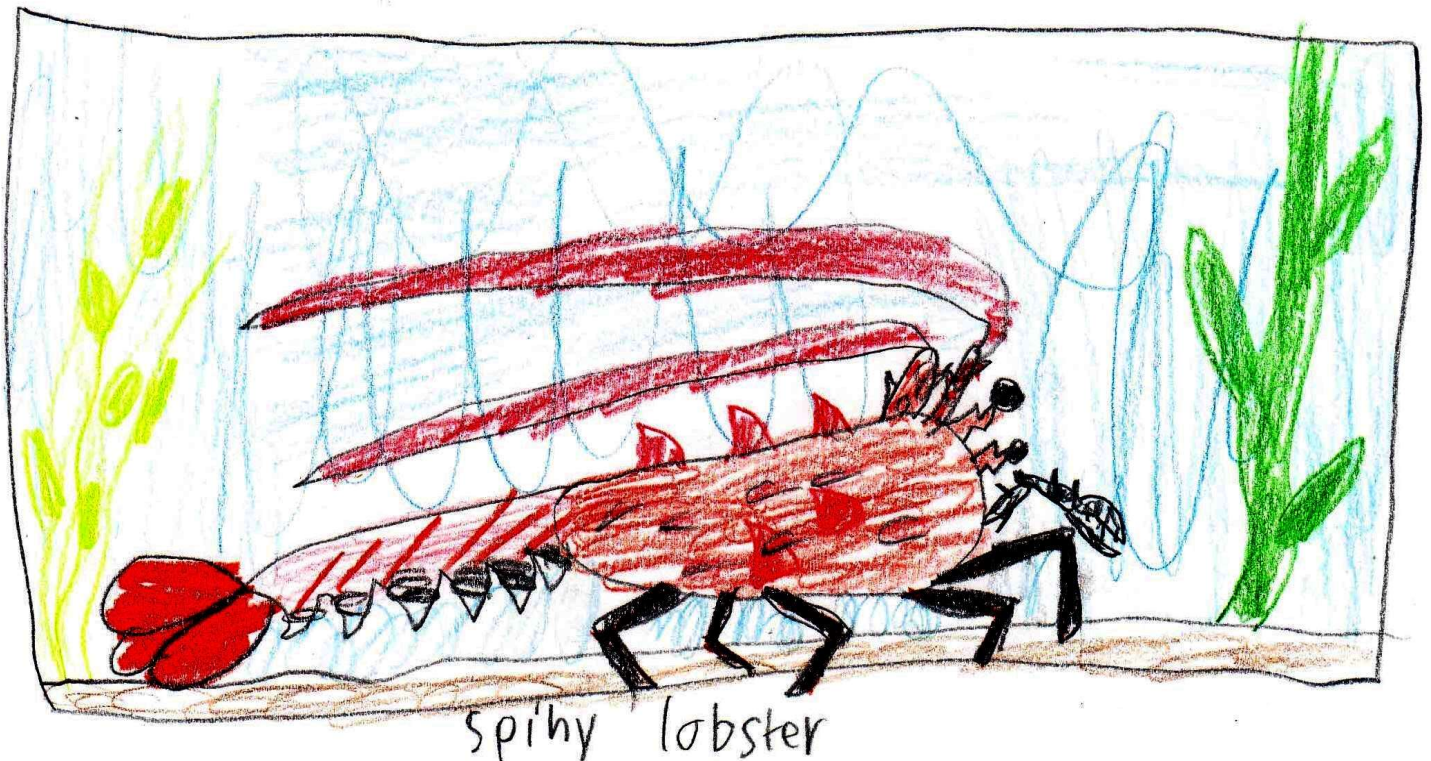
The deadly dodge game
Walea vs. Sea otter

And right now, there was a sea otter diving towards Walea.

After that, a deadly dodge game began. The game raged on and on. Then, Walea swam near a rock, the otter swam for him, but Walea swam away fast.

The otter did not notice Walea swim away. The otter crashed into a rock with a sickening smash.

Then, he saw a spiny lobster walking to the end of the kelp forest.



CHAPTER 6. HITCH-HIKING

Walea wanted to travel on the lobster and to not waste energy. So he grabbed a leg of the lobster, and waited for the lobster to bring him closer to the end of the kelp forest. There, the lobster halted. Walea was propelled off.

Then, he saw a sea rabbit (a kind of sea slug), and Walea swam on to the sea rabbit.

The slug was too slow. He swam off the slug.

Then, he saw a school of tuna. Walea knew they were very fast. Walea grabbed the tail of the tuna. The tuna felt it, and WHOOSH!!!! The tuna swam super fast.

The ride was so fast, Walea almost slipped off.



Zoom!!

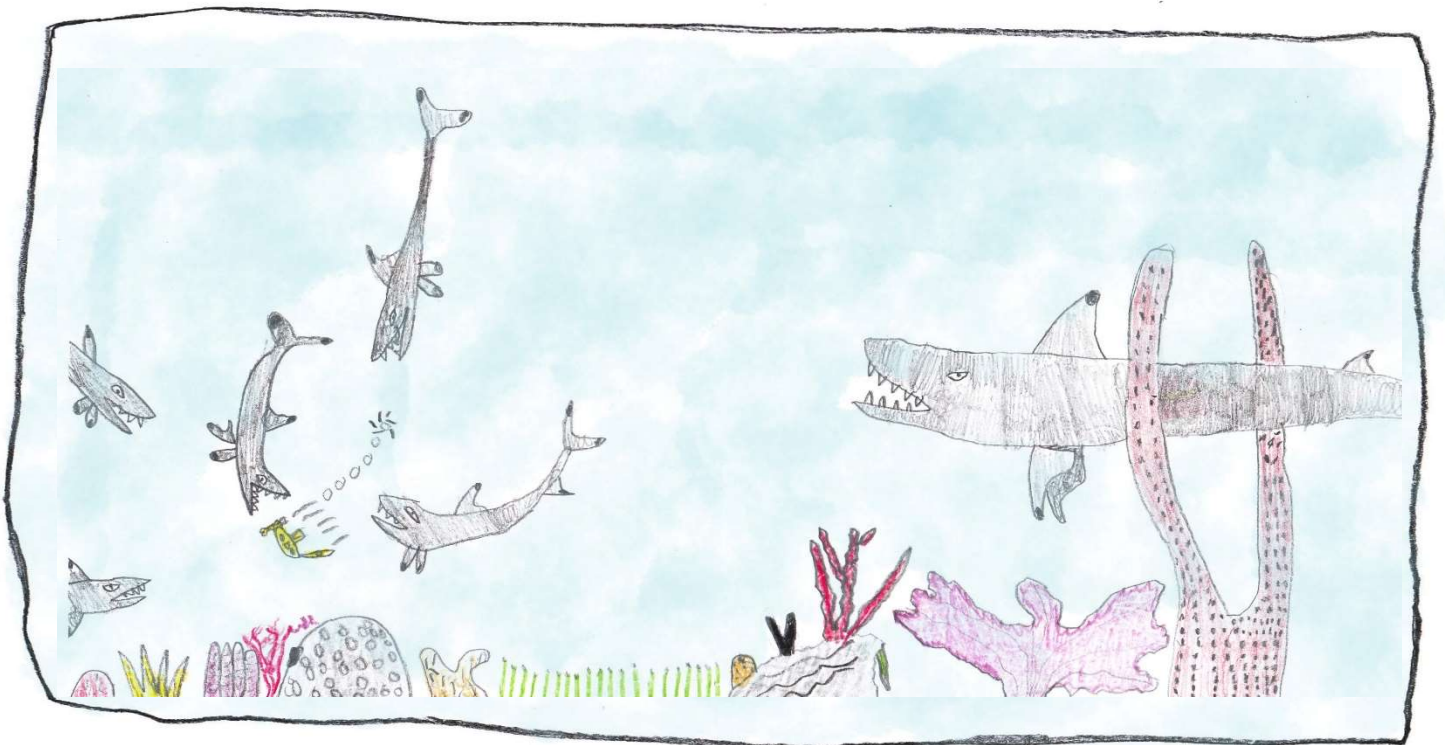
In no time, he was at the end of the kelp. And, in front of him, towered a healthy coral reef, and it was home!!

CHAPTER 7. THE SHARK ATTACK!

Walea swam into the coral reef. There were just too many fish clogging the pathways.

Walea decided to grab a coral with his tail and rest from his long journey.

He rested for the entire day, and woke up at night. There were swarms of sharks swimming the coral reef, looking for food.



Shark attack!

Then, a shark spotted him. It swam toward Walea. Walea was small, so he swam away before the shark could notice him.

The shark crashed into the coral, and got stuck.

Walea dashed-swam for cover. Then, he saw a brain coral with a pathway in it.

CHAPTER 8. THE MORAY EEL

He swam in and drifted to a sound sleep. When it was morning, Walea went out to explore his home. It was perfect! Walea loved exploring.

When he came across a strange shaped hole, he swam in. He saw starring blue eyes open. It was a moray eel! He got snatched in its mouth.

Walea was about to get swallowed. He had to act fast. with his bony tail, he scraped the eel's throat. the eel felt it, and harked him up.



The moray eel snatch

Walea quickly swam out of the cave. He swam home, a damaged brain coral.

He wanted to eat, and his hunger level was dangerously high. And one of the corridors was filled with amphipods, his favorite food. He ate it all. He was ready to switch homes, because he lived in a small patch of reef in the black lagoon, an oasis that lasted for 400 fish miles.

There was black sand, and the Eel King. He had to cross those to reach a better-quality reef.

He set off again.

CHAPTER 9. THE PIPEFISH RIDE

Walea saw a pipefish school. He grabbed the tail of one pipefish, squeezed it tighter, and they swam on.

When they reached a fishing ground, they had to dodge. Walea and the pipefish hid in the occasional seaweed clump, and went to the next, when there were no fishing hooks, until they reached the end.

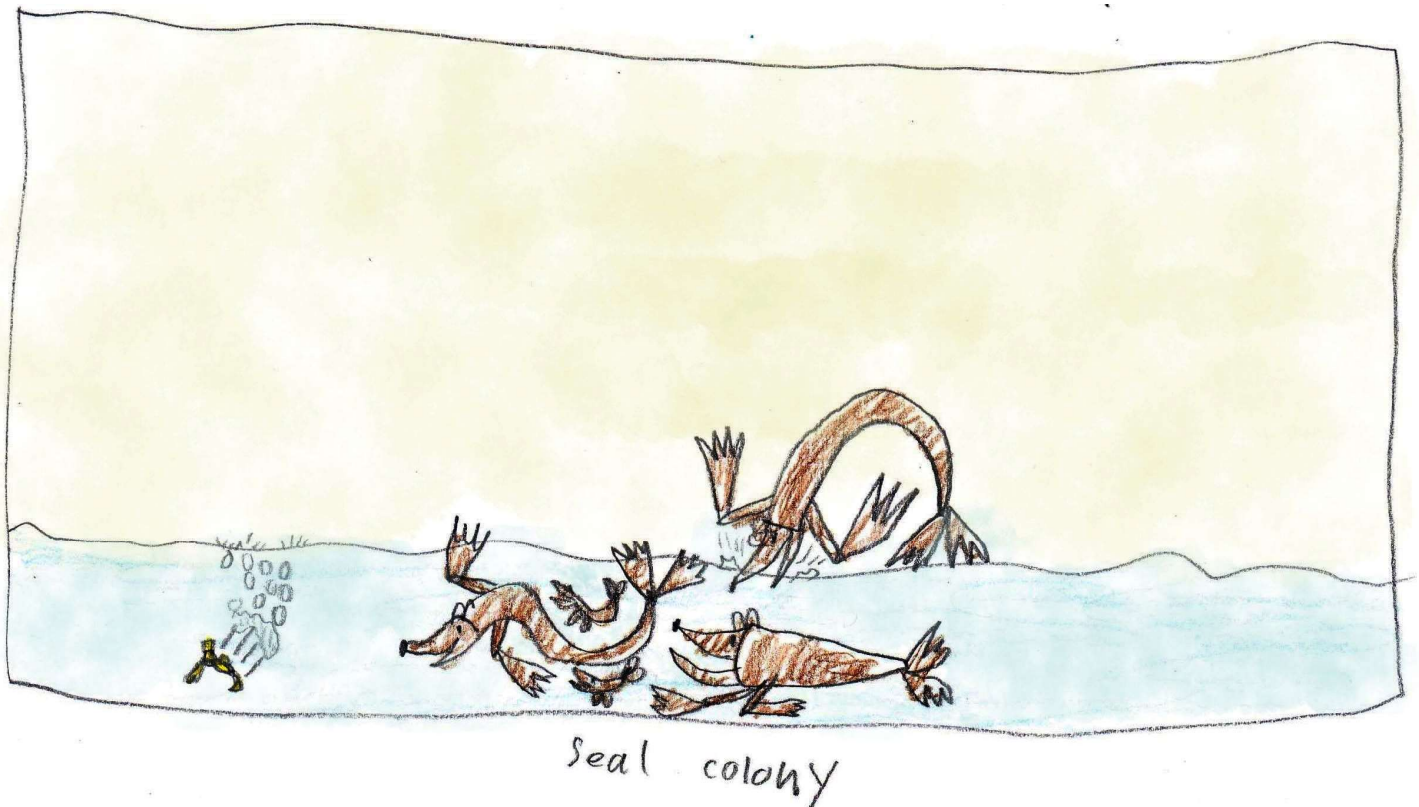


The oasis was very cold, so they swam very close to the water's surface. But...

...There was a cormorant flock flying toward them. When the cormorants came to attack distance, cormorants started to dive like aerobatic planes.

Walea let go of the pipefish's tail. Then, he saw a seal colony swimming toward him. He had to swim deep underwater.

When Walea successfully swam away, he noticed a medium-sized hole.



CHAPTER 10. THE EEL KING

Walea remembered about garden eels, and out of that hole there came the Eel King.

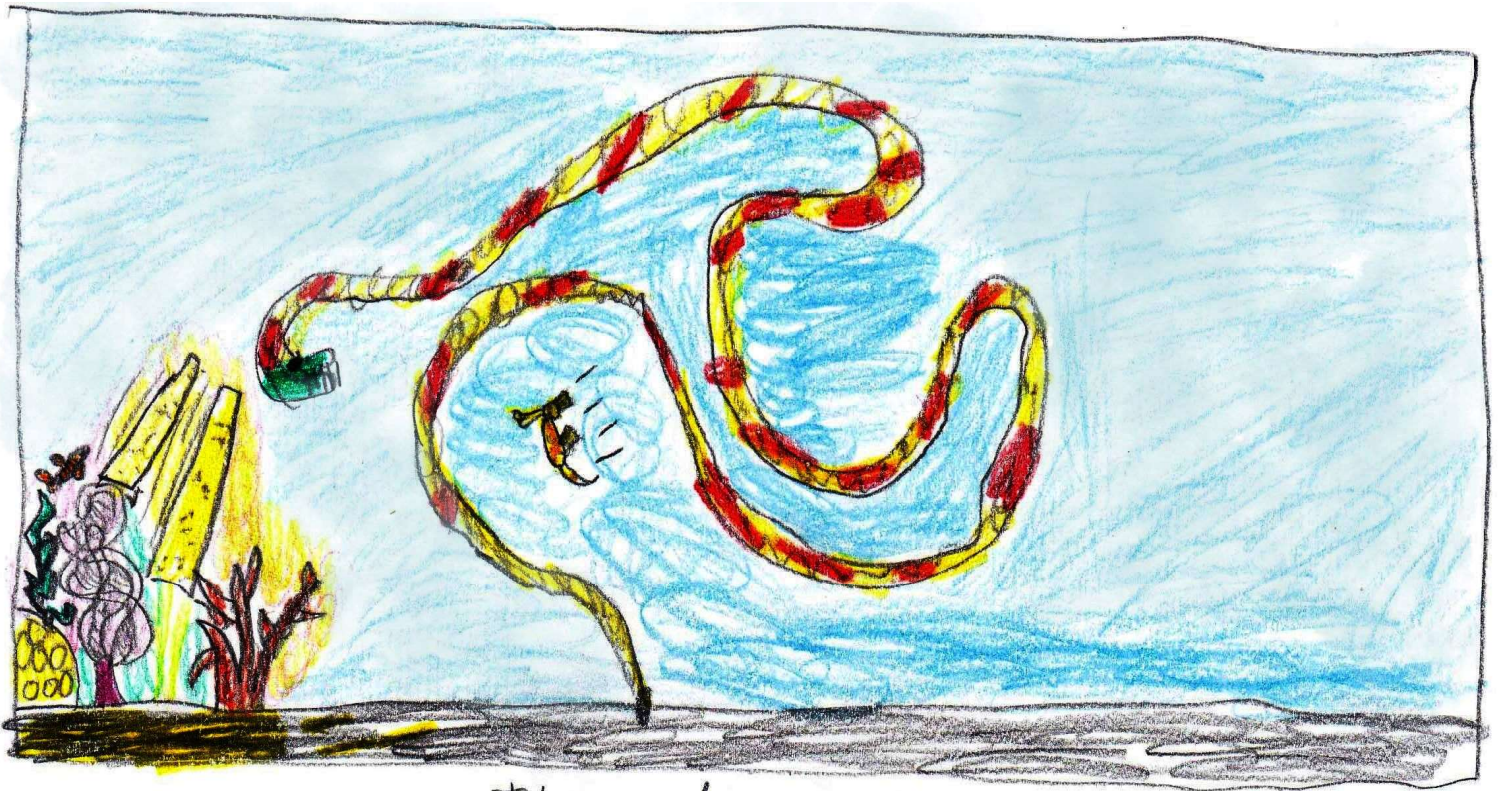
Walea could see his permanent home in the underwater horizon, a colorful coral reef glowing in the sunlight. He could not wait to get there.

The Eel King bended in a tangly disaster.

Walea had to swim around the curves without touching them, or he would be eaten.

Walea swam in a zigzag motion.

Walea went through the pathways in between the eel's body. When Walea passed the dodge game, the eel slid into its burrow.



The eel king

Walea could see the coral reef which was going to be his permanent home! The coral reef seemed to come closer and closer.

Finally, he reached the start of the reef.

CHAPTER 11. FINALLY HOME!

"It is a paradise!" thought Walea. There were corals, only patches of dead coral, and his favorite, Nephthea coral. He just needed to find one patch of Nephthea coral, one meter wide and long.

Then, he saw a strange yellow glow. He came closer and saw his favorite coral to live in: the Nephthea coral, color: yellow, width: one meter.

He swam in. He loved his home and decided to settle into a quiet and peaceful life. He found a dome of his favorite coral and swam in.

It was getting dark, so Walea started to sleep. He checked for sharks. There were not sharks. He slept.

Then, it was morning. Walea wanted to know his home better, so he started his day with some exploring.

Then, he saw an area of bare sand surrounded by coral. And, in the middle was a coral with a pygmy seahorse family living on it.

The family saw Walea, and let him join them.

The family had 34 babies, so Walea wanted to spend time with the babies. He showed them his home, and the area that is not dangerous surrounding their habitat.



After that, he led the babies home. Then, he realized that the pygmy seahorse adults were his mom and dad! They told him that they got separated a long time ago by the largest swarm of sharks in their history, after a big storm.

So, Walea decided to switch homes again and live on the coral with the seahorse family.

Then, he remembered his mating season. He had to find a mate fast! Then, we saw a beautiful pink seahorse, his mate, and they began their dance.

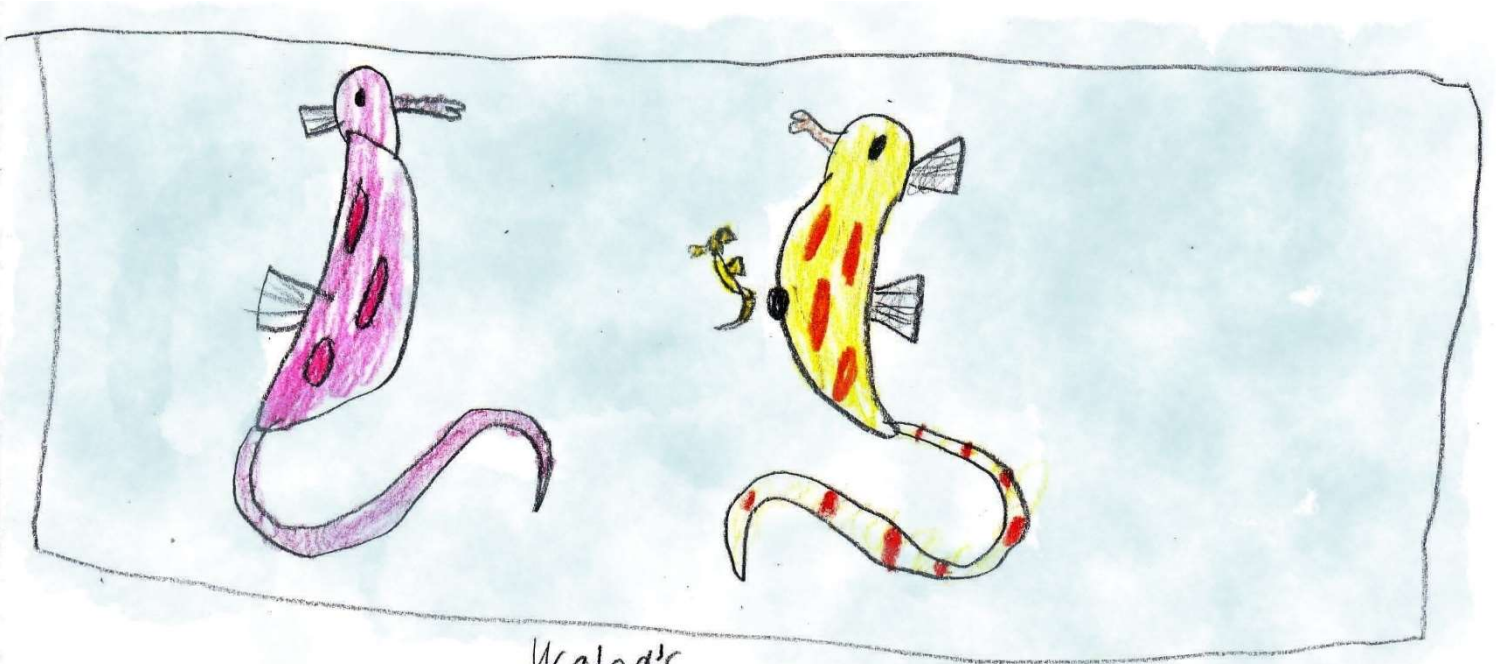
They swam to a sandy spot and started a dance among the coral.

Two weeks later, something was wiggling in his belly! Then, a baby seahorse came out!!

Walea gave birth to 34 baby seahorses (or fries), which were pink and yellow.

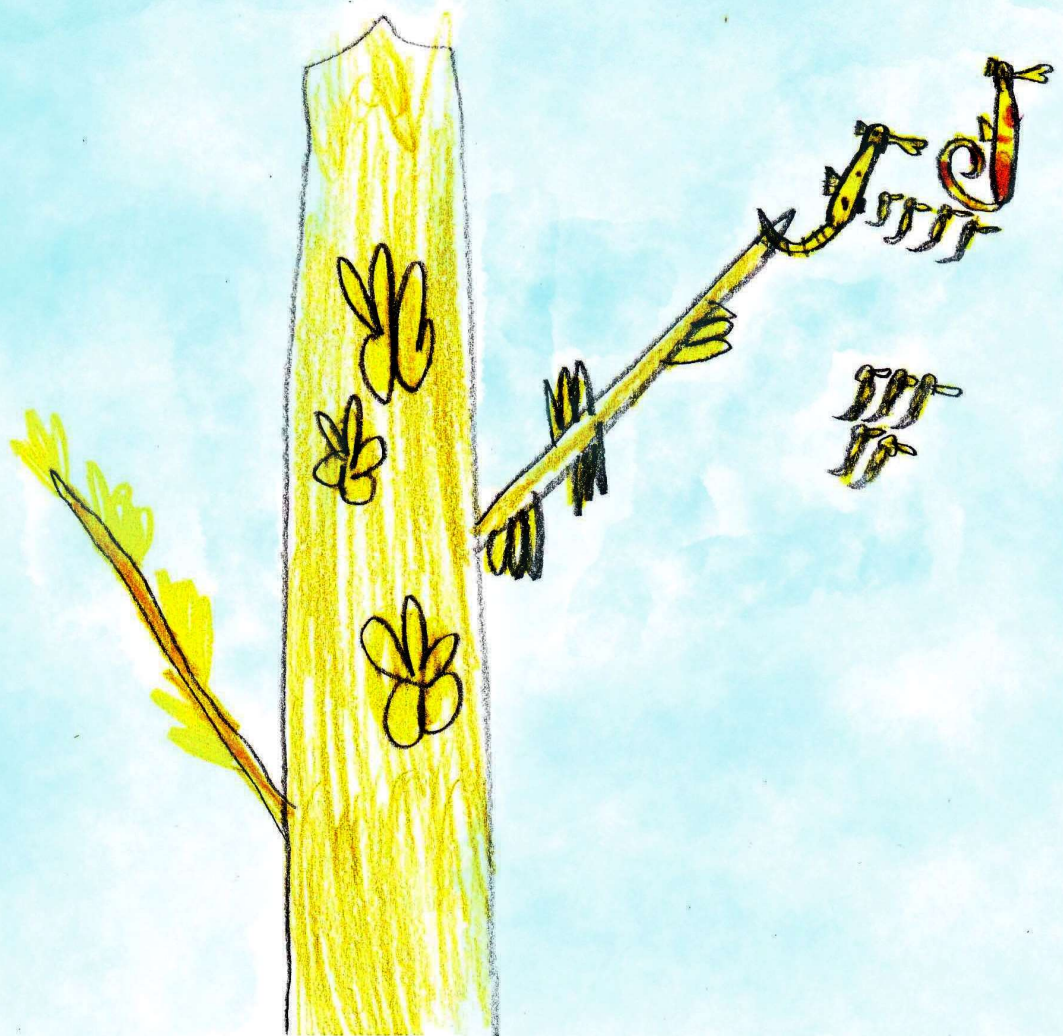
After a while, the pink baby seahorses and Walea's mate turned yellow in color, to match their home coral.

After that, they lived happily on their soft Nephthea coral, which looked like a beautiful flowering tree.

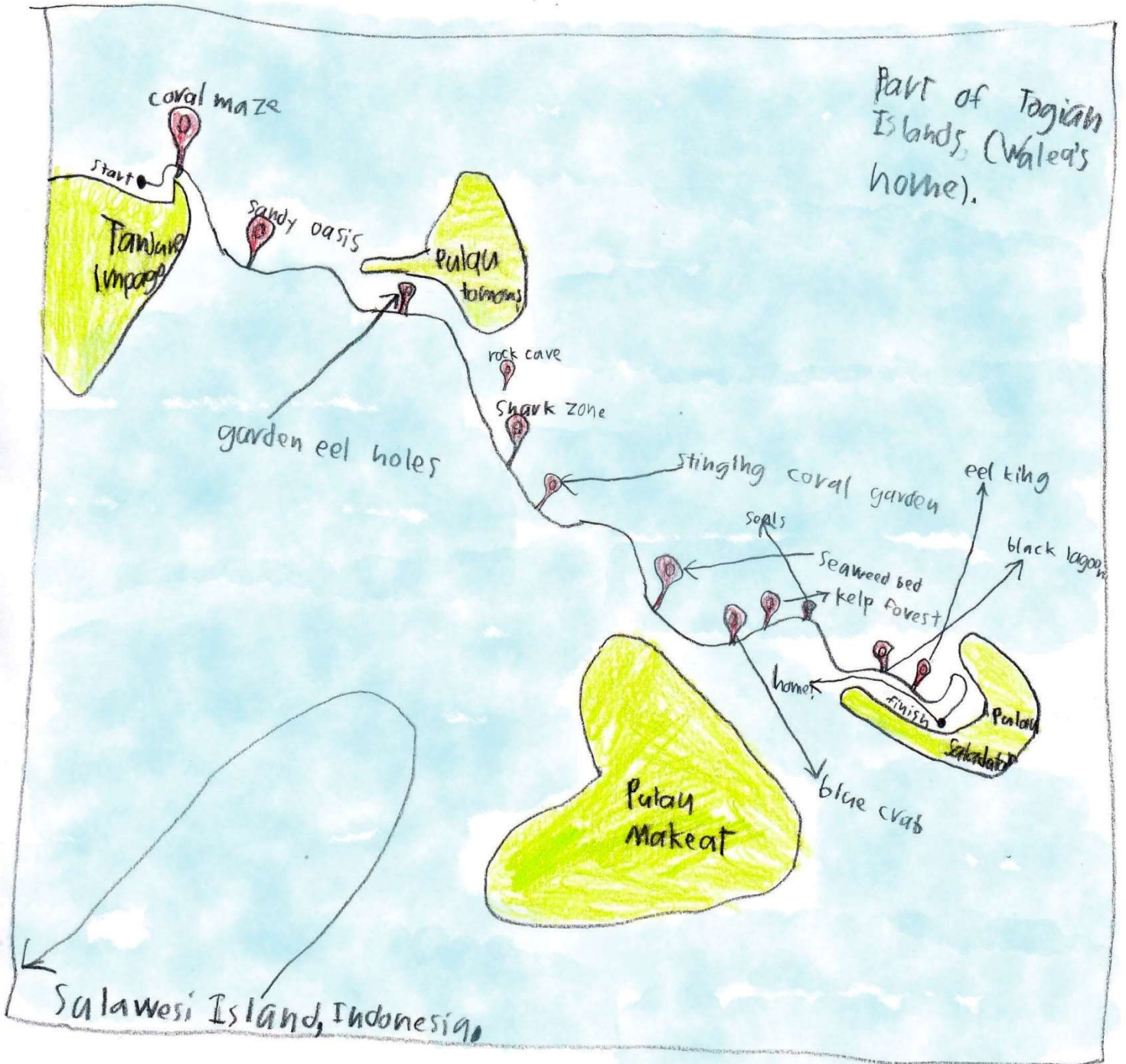


Waled's first baby

The end



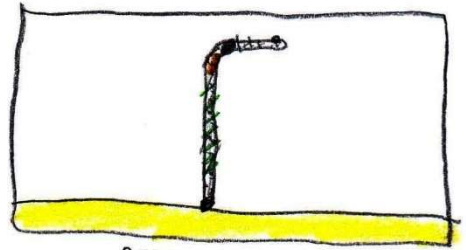
WALEA'S ROUTE



Species names used in the book

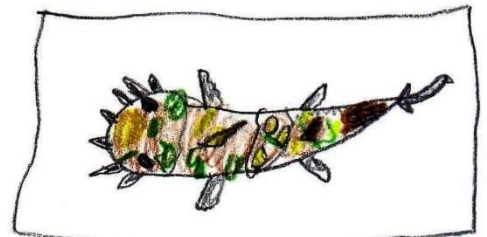
This section introduces you to
All the species names included in the book.

Garden eel - an eel living its whole life in a hole,



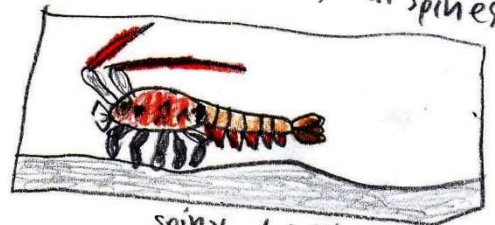
Garden eel (Spotted)

Ornate wobbegong - a carpet shark with a bushy mouth



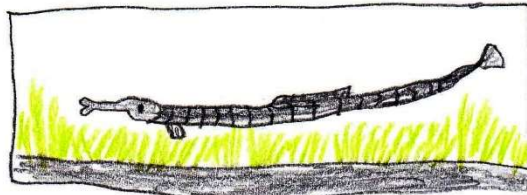
Ornate wobbegong

Spiny lobster - a lobster that has no claws, but spines.



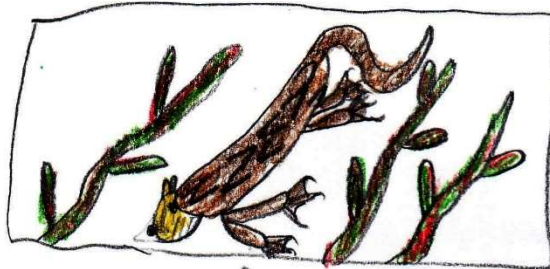
spiny lobster

pipe fish = a fish that looks like ^{a tiny} crocodile without legs.



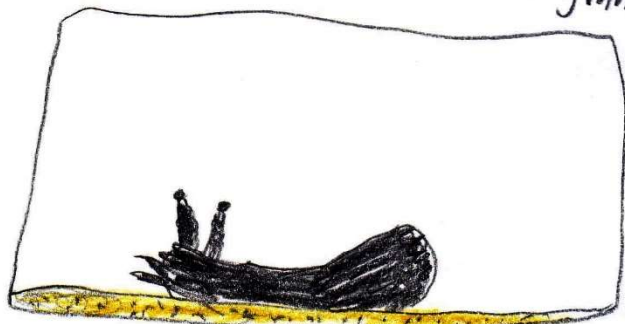
pipe fish

western sea otter = a subspecies of the sea otter.



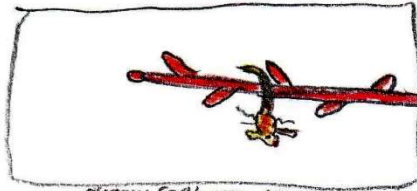
sea otter (western)

sea rabbit = a kind of sea slug, weighing some kilograms.



sea rabbit

pygmy seahorse = a seahorse that is tiny, 1.4 centimeters being their smallest.



pygmy seahorse (smallest)

ABOUT THE WALEA PYGMY SEAHORSE

(Our Walea is a Walea pygmy seahorse)

The Walea pygmy seahorse (*Hippocampus Waleanonus*), is a small sized seahorse that is endemic to the Tomini Gulf of the Togian Islands in Indonesia. They live on only one species of soft coral called the *Nephthea* soft coral, living in a Togian Islands reef.

They can be yellow, pink, purple, orange, and many more colors. They can change their color to match the coral they live on, decreasing the risk of predation. The Walea pygmy seahorse has small white orbs "growing" on their bodies, to match the white marking on *Nephthea* coral. Described from one specimen in 2009, it is as small as 2 rice grains lined up. It has a tail as long as its body, it is capable of holding stems of *Nephthea* coral, which is a big area for seahorse grasping range.

Walea has large eyes on a "hill" located at the right and left side of the head, and the eyes sit on

top. The skeletal system of the Walea pygmy seahorse is strange: it has both an exoskeleton and an endoskeleton, and the seahorse is the only fish that has that characteristic.

Walea seahorses are related to the Satomi's pygmy seahorse, which inhabit the ocean around the Borneo Island. The Walea pygmy seahorse is also called the Walea soft coral pygmy seahorse, hence its name that it lives on soft coral. During mating season, two pygmy seahorses grip tails and tumble about in the water, making the dance. The female gives the male her eggs into a special sac on the male's belly. After two weeks, 1-34 babies are born, one at a time.

Walea can swim lengthy distances from one coral to another, reducing the chance of habitat loss. It has bumps on the body that look like the bumps on the Denise's pygmy seahorse and the other pygmy seahorses. It can curl its tail to its head and pretend to be a floating piece of drift dirt, preventing predation. It has a short snout,

covered in branches of fake dirt, making the snout stumpy.

Walea seahorse is not listed yet on the animal conservation level list, due to lack of good quality data. Almost all of the seahorses are vulnerable because of pollution, global warming, and fishing (especially trawling for shrimp, which uses a sock-shaped net dragged along the seafloor destroying everything on its way). Bleaching of coral threatens and destroys seahorse habitats, leaving them with no place to live. If they go extinct, too much shrimp will swarm their habitat, clouding the water. Seaweed beds and coral reefs will not get enough sunlight and bleach even more.

Fortunately, there is iSeahorse, that encourages people to save seahorses together, and put seahorse observations online. You can also Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle all the time, to reduce the amount of plastic and other garbage in the oceans.

HOW YOU CAN HELP SEAHORSES

If you know a lot about seahorses, send seahorse info to friends and other people you know. Encourage friends and other people to save seahorses. Take out the garbage out of parks and nature centers and reserves. Tell shrimp fishers to not trawl as much. Tell people you know that polluting is horrible to sea life and to recycle plastic.

To help more, save the pygmy seahorses, the most endangered seahorses on the planet. Work more on saving the Walea pygmy seahorse, the rarest seahorse in the sea. Stop everything that hurts all sea creatures, anywhere, everywhere.

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle!!

SPOTLIGHT: SEAHORSE FACTS

Fact #1

The Satomi's pygmy seahorse is the smallest seahorse in the world, reaching a size of 1.4 cm.

Fact #2

The Sodwana pygmy seahorse is the only African pygmy seahorse.

Fact #3

The zebra seahorse is the only striped seahorse.

Fact #4

The potbelly seahorse is the largest seahorse.

Fact #5

Hippocampus japapigu, or the Japanese pygmy seahorse, is found on Hacho-Jima Island and nowhere else on Earth.

AMAZING MIMICKERS!

The Bargibant's pygmy seahorse and the Denise's pygmy seahorse look so much alike that divers sometimes mistake a Denise's pygmy seahorse for a Bargibant's!

The species even live on the same coral species, a Gorgonian sea fan.

SEAHORSE SPECIES

1. Pygmy seahorse
2. Denise's pygmy seahorse
3. Walea pygmy seahorse
4. Pontoh's pygmy seahorse
5. Weedy pygmy seahorse
6. South African pygmy seahorse
7. Japanese pygmy seahorse
8. Korean seahorse
9. Bigbelly seahorse
10. Fisher's seahorse
11. Zebra seahorse

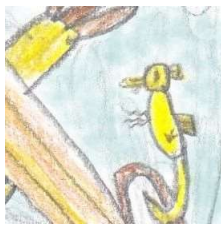
PIPEHORSE SPECIES

1. Pipehorse
2. Undescribed species
3. African Pipehorse

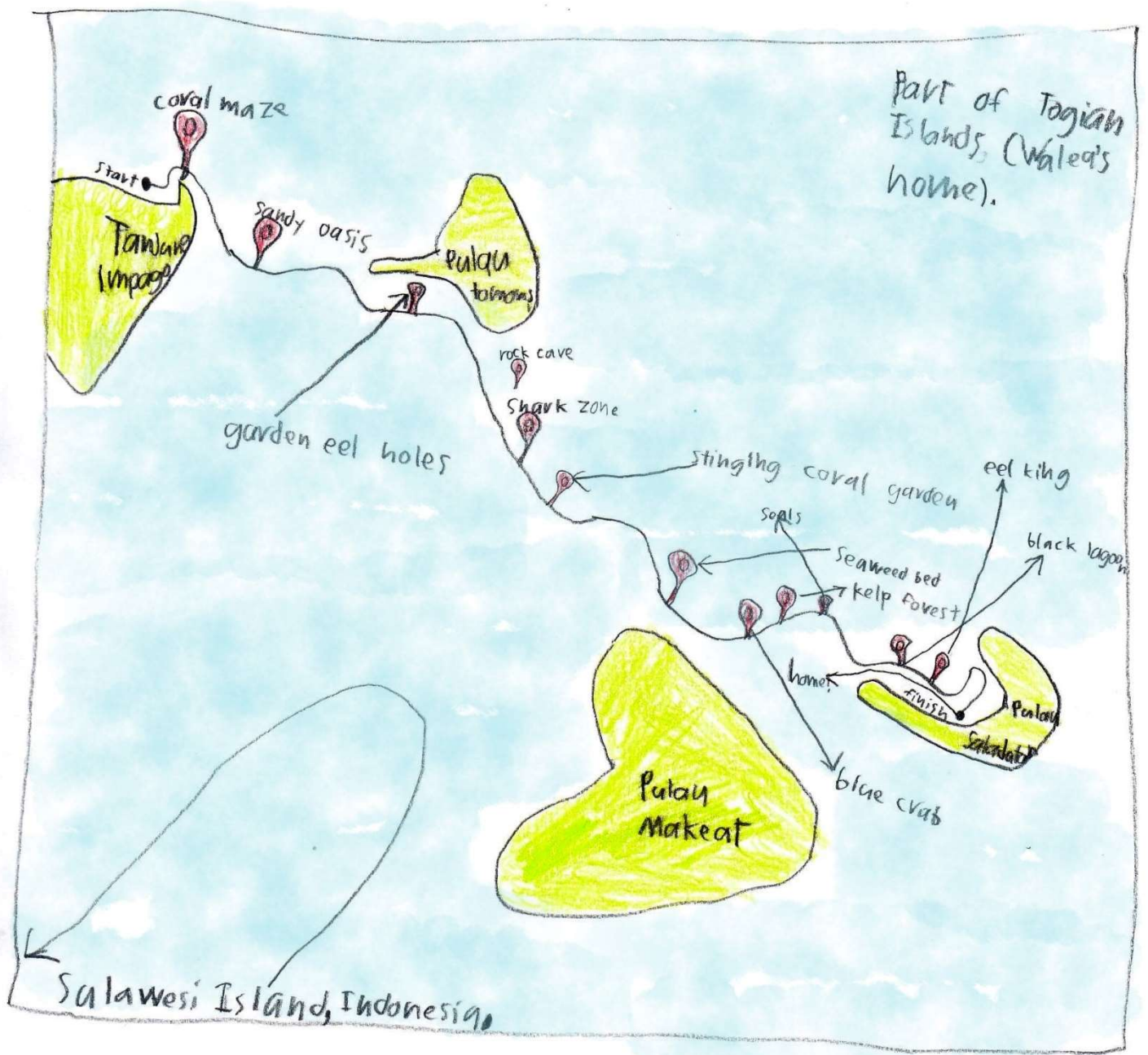


About the author

Jonathan loves nature and protects wild animals. Jonathan especially loves seahorses. He blogs about saving them at JoZoLabs.us.



Please visit iSeahorse.org to learn more about [Project Seahorse](http://ProjectSeahorse.org) and things you can do to help seahorses.



Jonathan 2022

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