

Managing mangroves

Mangroves are trees that can grow in salt water, where the land meets the sea. There are about 30 different species of mangroves in Solomon Islands. One of the largest mangrove areas of the country is in South Malaita, covering West Are'are Lagoon, Maramasike Passage and Raroisu'u Bay. These mangrove forests are a vital source of food and cash for coastal communities. Mangrove forests can be protected by controlling the cutting and clearing of trees, respecting fishing closures, properly disposing plastic waste, and rethinking and enforcing agreements with logging companies.



Many communities manage their mangrove resources by temporarily closing an area. Sticks are placed at the entry of the channels. Banning fishing for a specific period is an effective way to protect marine resources.



The *Maasina Ruru* movement was born in South Malaita. It strove to unite Malaitans in an effort to develop the local economy and demand self-determination. *Maasina Ruru* is still remembered as an example of what community cooperation and determined leadership can achieve.



The mangrove forests of South Malaita are customary owned. In general, people can use the mangrove resources for subsistence, but commercial harvesting requires the permission of the land owners. Customary institutions remain strong in Are'are, providing a foundation for the sustainable management of mangroves.



Mangrove forests are important coastal ecosystems. They are like nurseries in which many fish species, such as snappers, wrasses and parrotfish, hide and feed as juveniles before moving to deeper waters as adults.



Mangroves are an important source of food for coastal communities, especially when the weather is too rough for fishing at sea. Women collect ark clams, mud shells, mud crabs and mangrove fruits in the mangroves to feed their families.



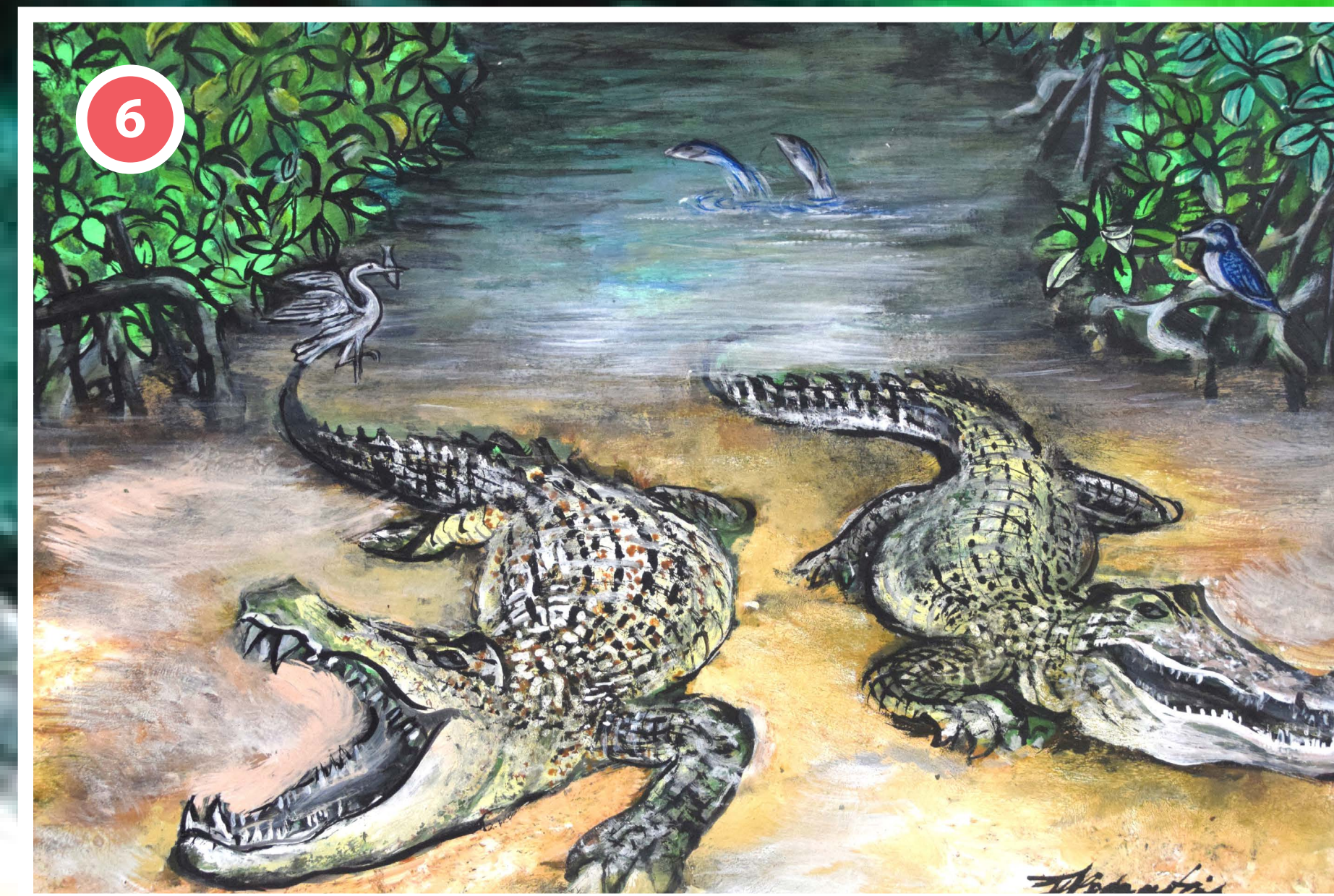
Mud crabs are an important source of income for people in South Malaita. The crabs are caught in the mangroves and transported to markets as far as Honiara. The best way to safeguard this important fishery is to avoid harvesting undersized crabs and to ban taking female crabs with eggs.



Mangrove forests protect the coast. In areas where mangroves have been cleared, damage from cyclones is often much more severe.



The clearance of mangroves by logging companies to construct log ponds poses a threat to this important ecosystem, and endangers the livelihoods and food security of coastal communities.



Many different plants and animals can be found in the mangrove forests. Saltwater crocodiles inhabit the river estuaries and lakes, and pose a risk to people. Crocodiles are feared and revered as guardians of the mangroves.



A great number of taboo sites are located in the mangrove forests of South Malaita. This shows how important mangroves are in the culture and history of the Are'are people.