

# Environmentally friendly farming with Grant Delves



Maddison Potts, Brianna Codemo,  
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Griffith North Public School



## Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

**[www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/](http://www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/)**

## Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

**[www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)**

## Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeekKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

**[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)**

# Environmentally friendly farming with Grant Delves

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## Local Land Heroes - Pests in Irrigation

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in and around the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekKdesigns education program.





## Introducing Grant Delves

Grant Delves is a passionate farmer who was born and bred in Griffith, New South Wales. After finishing school, Grant studied entomology at university. He worked as a research scientist for a few years, before deciding to move back to the family farm in Griffith to enjoy the country lifestyle.

Grant is fifty one years old and has been farming for twenty four years. He still loves his job.



## Why is Grant a Local Land Hero?

Grant works hard to maintain his farm in an environmentally friendly way. To help with the environment he uses Insect Pest Management strategies, and solar power to create energy and save money because his prune dryers use a lot of energy. Grant is the chairperson of Australian Prune Industry Association, a very important role, as well as being a farmer.

## Diversity

Grant diversifies his farm with a variety of different crops including prune trees, citrus trees and wine grapes. This diversity allows him to have a steady income as the fruit ripen at different stages of the year.

To run his farm, Grant works long hours. He works around thirty five hours per week in winter, seventy hours per week in summer and at least ninety hours during harvest time, and that's only per week!



## Problems with Farming

Pests can be a major problem in farming fruit. Some of the pests that Grant manages are hares, kangaroos, foxes, fruit bats, mites, insects and scale. There are also other problems with farming such as rising water table, the weather, and system maintenance. Grant has a wide range of treatments to manage his pests.





## **Insect Pest Management**

Insect Pest Management is a special method where farmers use environmentally friendly ways to control pests. They do this by using predatory insects that kill the unwanted pest, without harming the crop.

If the amount of pests is too much for the predatory insects to control, Grant will spray 'soft chemicals' to help control the pest. If he needs to, he will spray soft chemicals when the beneficial mites are dormant or use chemicals that don't harm the beneficial mites.

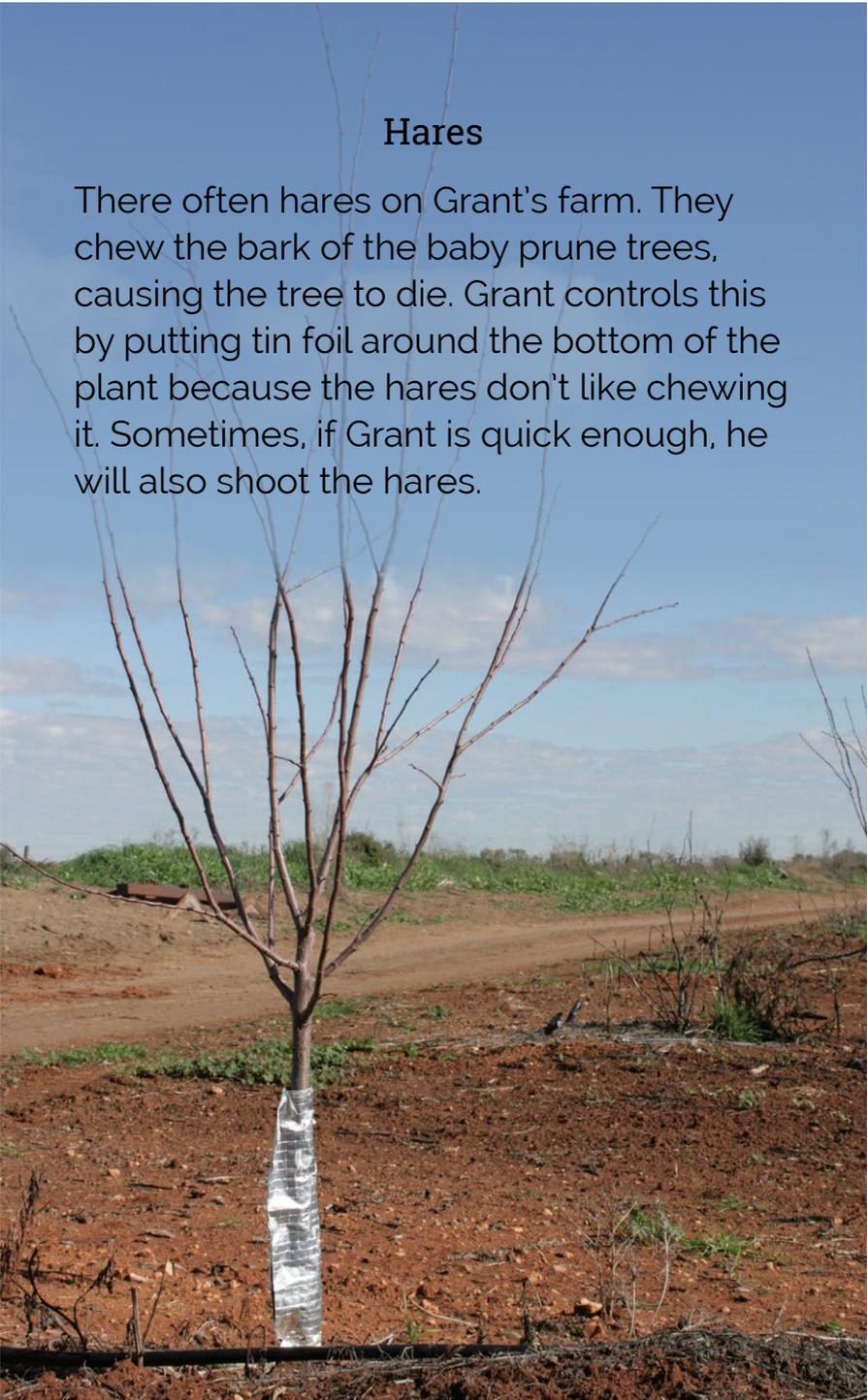
## Mites

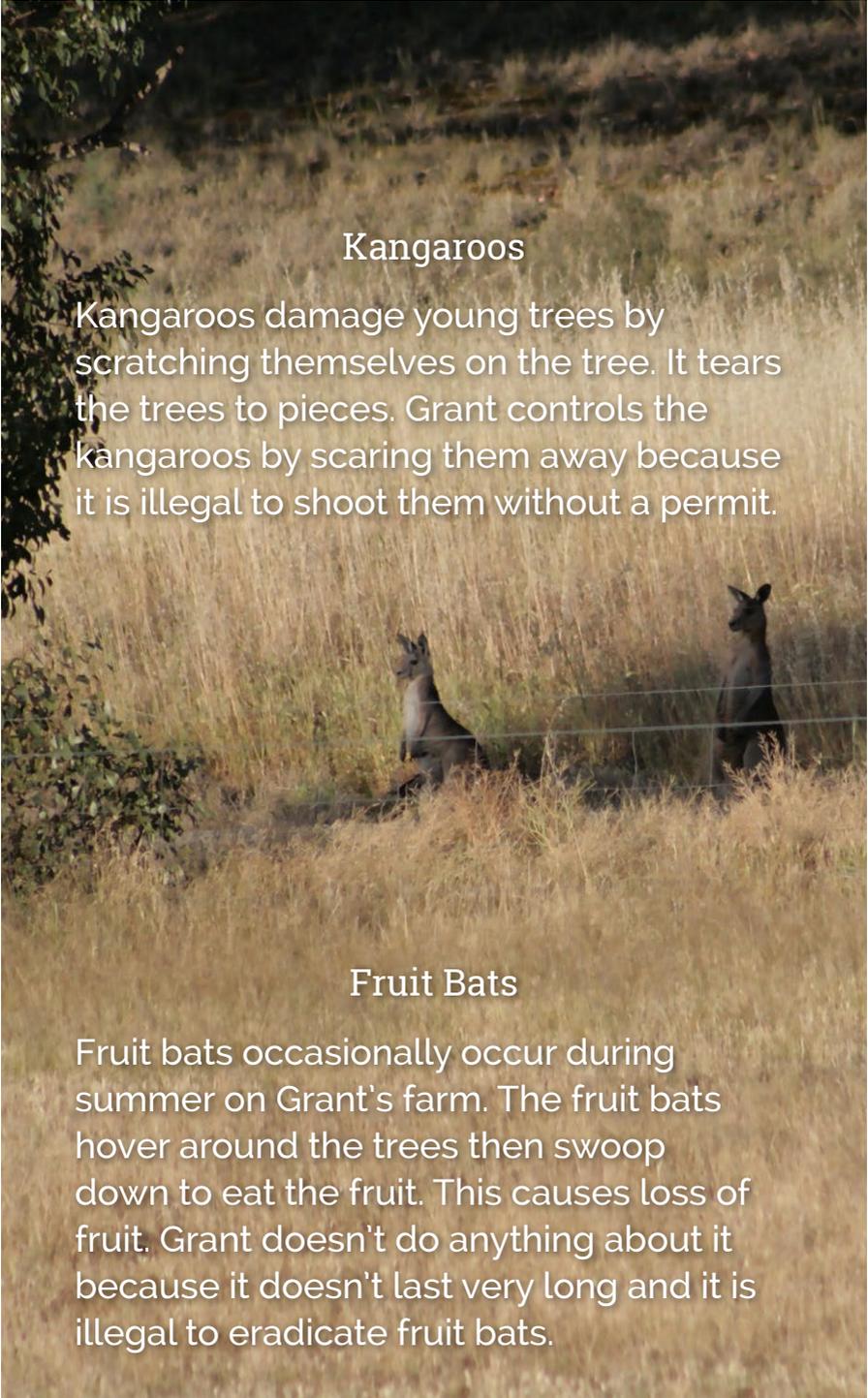
There are many types of mites, but the most common mite on Grant's farm is the two spotted mite. Mites feed on the leaves and cause the tree to be unhealthy. Grant manages them by using a predatory mite which feeds on the two spotted mite. If he needs to, he will spray soft chemicals when the beneficial mites are dormant.



## Hares

There often hares on Grant's farm. They chew the bark of the baby prune trees, causing the tree to die. Grant controls this by putting tin foil around the bottom of the plant because the hares don't like chewing it. Sometimes, if Grant is quick enough, he will also shoot the hares.



A photograph of two kangaroos in a field of tall, dry grass. One kangaroo is sitting on the left, and another is standing on the right. A thin wire fence runs across the middle ground. The background is a grassy hillside. The text is overlaid on the image.

## Kangaroos

Kangaroos damage young trees by scratching themselves on the tree. It tears the trees to pieces. Grant controls the kangaroos by scaring them away because it is illegal to shoot them without a permit.

## Fruit Bats

Fruit bats occasionally occur during summer on Grant's farm. The fruit bats hover around the trees then swoop down to eat the fruit. This causes loss of fruit. Grant doesn't do anything about it because it doesn't last very long and it is illegal to eradicate fruit bats.



## Foxes

Foxes chew on drip lines that water the trees to get an easy drink. The foxes are not controlled because Grant's farm is in a populated area, and he would need powerful guns to kill them which could be dangerous to people living nearby. They do not cause much of a problem for Grant, so he just fixes the damage they cause.

## Water Table

A rising water table can be a major problem in farming. Thousands of years ago this area was covered with sea water. The water had salt in it so when the land rose up from the water the salt was still in the ground. If you water your crop too much the water rises back up with the salt, and can kill your crops.

Grant manages this problem by watering carefully, and only as much as his plants need. He has installed a tile drainage system several metres underneath his farm to drain any excess water away.





## **Worst and Best Part of Farming**

The worst part of Grant's job is when it's really hot and he still has to work. The part he enjoys most is talking to people, encouraging them to try farming, and understand that there's actually a lot of science behind it.

We wish to thank Mr. Delves for showing us his farm and teaching us things we didn't know. We also thank Mrs. Adams for all of her help putting our book together.

## Fun Facts about Hares, Kangaroos, Foxes, Fruit bats and Mites

- Like rabbits, hares are herbivores (plant eaters).
- Hares are born with fur and their eyes are open.
- Kangaroos usually live to around six years old in the wild.
- Kangaroos can swim.
- The fox is the smallest member of the dog family, although it also has many similarities with cats.
- Foxes can eat almost anything including berries, worms, spiders and even jam sandwiches.
- There are around 1000 bat species.
- The fruit bat is said to have the best vision out of all bat species.
- Some mites are so small that you need a microscope to see them.
- Over 48,000 mites live on earth.



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2015 Year 6, Griffith North Public School

## CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and  
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the  
2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be  
competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



**Local Land  
Services**  
Riverina

