

Local land heroes Controlling pests



Miranda Miller, Emma Taylor,
Phillip Cook and Shay Friend-Crane

Albury 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/

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

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

Local land heroes

Controlling pests

Authors: Miranda Miller, Emma Taylor, Phillip Cook and Shay Friend-Crane

Teacher: Liz Dick

School: Albury North Public School

WARNING: This book contains images that may be distressing to some readers. Please be aware that images of dead animals shown in this book have been killed under humane conditions.

Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

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 the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. 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 Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

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



Local Land Services



Australian Government



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Rex Dennis was born in Wagga Wagga, and was the eldest of 6 children.

He left school at the age of 12, worked on a dairy farm and did odd jobs on farms in Ournie, near Jingellic, Tallangatta and Corryong.

44 years ago, he moved to Tumbarumba to a hobby farm and farmed an intensified piggery. Rex moved to Rosewood 24 years ago.



Animals such as foxes, rabbits, feral cats and dogs, feral pigs, rats and mice make farming a challenge for all farmers. During his time farming on dairy farms and with the piggery, Rex had to deal with many of these pests and also with the noxious weeds: Paterson's Curse and Saffron Thistle.



Before the arrival of Europeans to our shores, Australia's native plants and animals were isolated. Since then, introduced animals and plant species have threatened their habitat, food and shelter. Protecting our valuable flora and fauna is a very important role that we all need to take seriously.





Foxes were introduced to mainland Australia in the 1850s for hunting. They are predators and scavengers and a threat to livestock. In one year Rex lost more than 50% of his lambs to foxes. They also took chickens and ducks. They prey on small rodents and marsupials, and on many bird species. Foxes can be controlled with fox proof fencing, fox baits and spotlighting, which requires a gun licence.

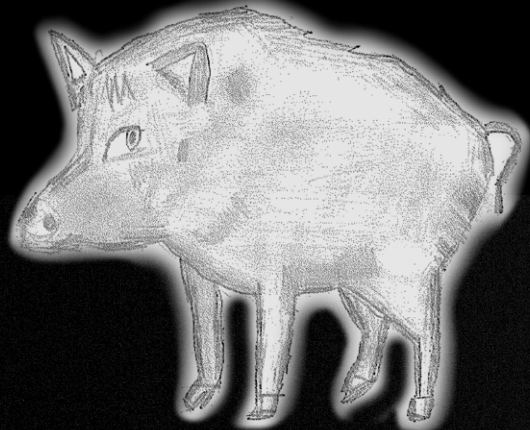
Paterson's Curse was common on many properties that Rex farmed. It choked out other grasses and overtook the paddocks and was spread by sheep and cattle. He eradicated it by using chemicals and by not letting it flower for 5 years. A herbicide called 'Brush Off' is used today and is much safer than past treatments. Farmers need to alternate treatments so that the weeds don't build up resistance.



Saffron thistle is a weed that was introduced from the Mediterranean region and western Asia. Cattle will not go near it as it causes injuries to their mouths, hooves and eyes. They can also get diseases from the weed. To stop saffron thistle growing, Rex used a herbicide called 'Brush off'.



Feral pigs arrived with the First Fleet. They cause damage by hunting lambs, eating crops, damaging the land, fences, water sources and native plants. They also carry diseases. Trapping them in cages, fencing stock and laying baits, controls feral pigs.





Rats and mice come in groups and can cause plagues on farms. They get into the hay, eat the seeds and chew the hay cords, which creates a mess. They also contaminate food, cause losses to farmers and disrupt farming communities. Rex used traps and rat poison to eradicate the pests.



Rabbits were introduced to Australia with the First Fleet. Rabbits cause losses to farmers through crop and land damage and they damage native plants. Rex used to have rabbits on his property and he controlled them by fumigating the burrows, laying baits and also by using rabbit traps. Introducing controlled diseases is effective in reducing rabbit populations across most of Australia.



Feral cats don't usually cause too much trouble to farmers and can be useful at times, getting rid of mice, rabbits and other rodents. However they do eat small native and rare mammals, birds, lizards, marsupials, mice and insects and they also carry diseases. About 80 endangered and threatened species are at risk from feral cats in Australia. Traps and poisons can be used to control them.

We would like to thank Mr. Rex Dennis (Shay's Grandad), for giving his time and letting us visit his farm. He has taught us about the challenges that farmers face on an everyday basis and how the problems can be resolved.





Miranda Miller, Phillip Cook, Emma Taylor and Shay Friend-Crane

2015 Year 6, Albury 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

