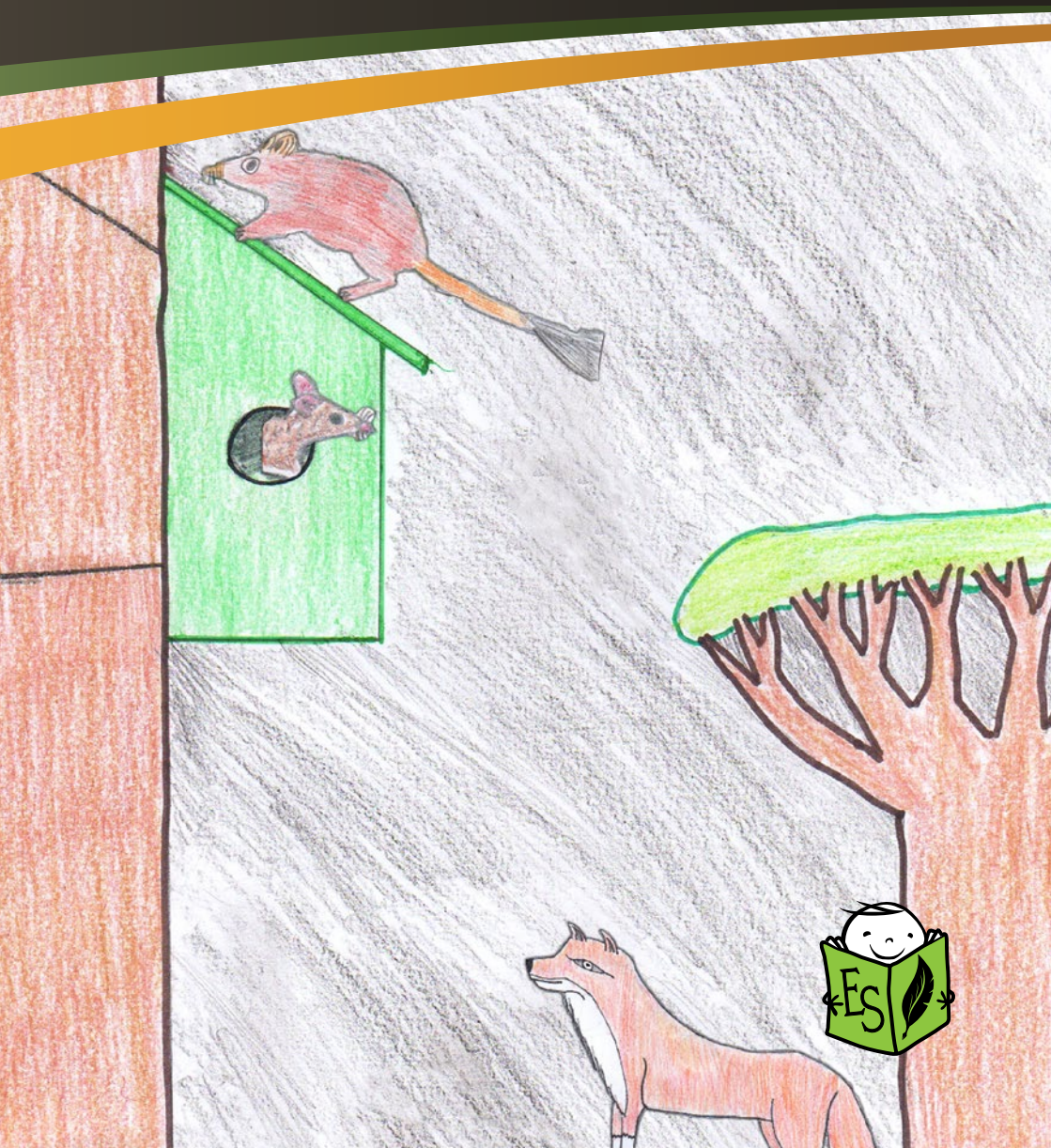


The Phascogale Box

Written & illustrated by Adele Nicholl, Kane Airey
and Ingrid Tipton from Hyden Primary School



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource 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

Wheatbelt NRM

Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated (Wheatbelt NRM) is an independent community-based organisation involved with natural resource management endeavours within the Avon River Basin of Western Australia.

www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

The Phascogale Box

Authors: Adele Nicholl, Kane Airey and Ingrid Tipton

Teacher: Christina Nicholl

School: Hyden Primary School

Hotspot Heroes

The Hotspot Heroes Enviro-Stories Program involved schools from the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia learning about the biodiversity, threatened species and feral animals in the Wheatbelt area. A Hotspot Hero is someone who is willing to stand up and take action to help prevent our threatened plants and animals from fading into oblivion.

This project is supported by Wheatbelt NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.



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Wheatbelt NRM

269 Fitzgerald St | PO Box 311

Northam WA 6401

Phone: +61 8 9670 3100

Fax: +61 8 9670 3140

Email: info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

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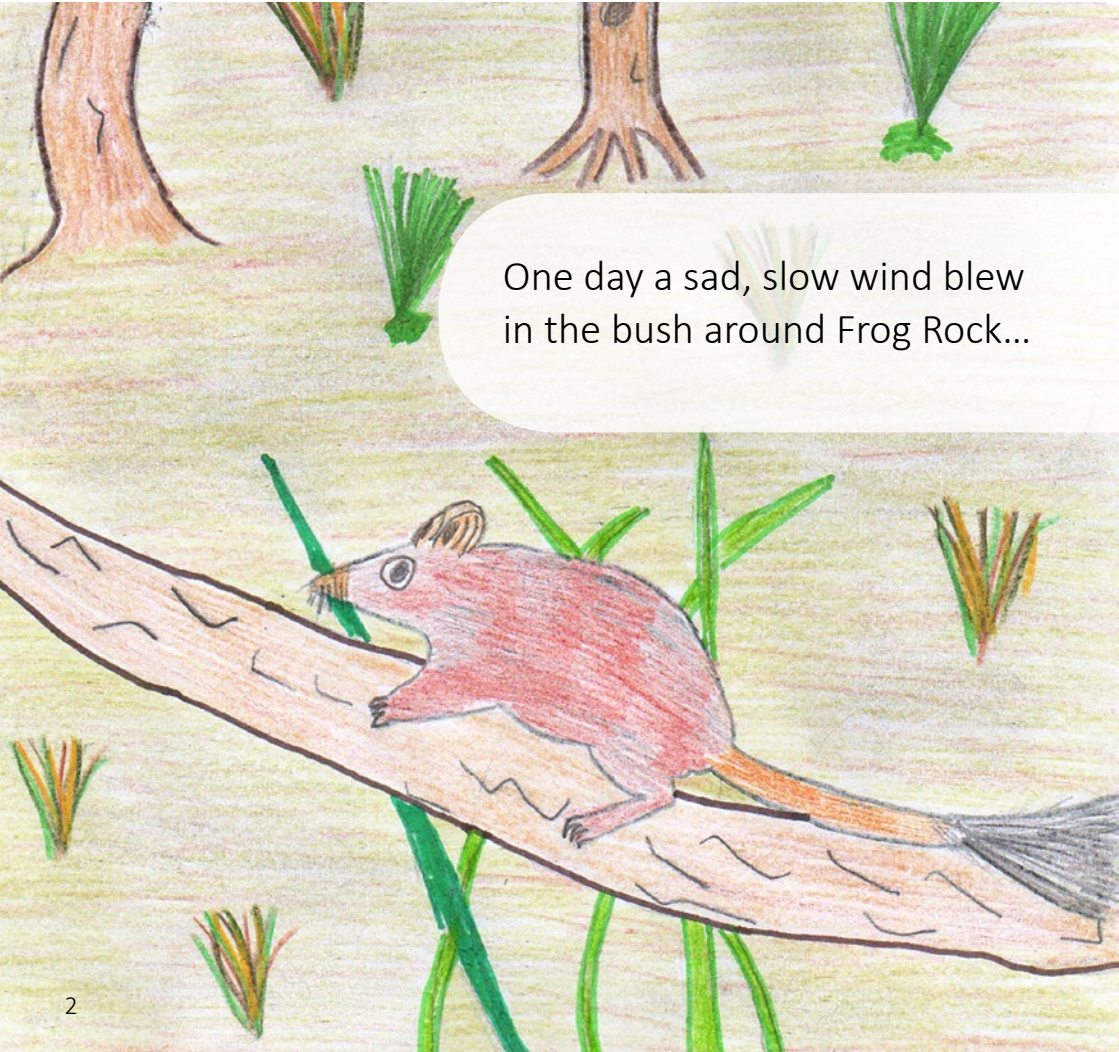
Enviro-Stories is a Peekdesigns initiative, www.peekdesigns.com.au

Phone: +61 411 729 444

Email: admin@peekdesigns.com.au

Hi! My name is Rania. I am a Red-tailed Phascogale. I live in trees and enjoy eating insects. I have a fluffy reddish tail and am a native carnivorous marsupial. I am an endangered species only found in the Wheatbelt area of Western Australia.

Sometimes it is hard being a phascogale as there are many things that threaten us. This is my story about survival.

A hand-drawn illustration of a red-tailed phascogale, a small marsupial, perched on a thick, light-brown tree branch. The phascogale has a reddish-pink body, a large eye, and a long, bushy tail. It is surrounded by green grass and small green plants. In the background, there are more trees and a light green sky. A white speech bubble is positioned in the upper right area of the illustration.

One day a sad, slow wind blew in the bush around Frog Rock...



I lived there with my friend Robert and my brother Fred. It had been a long, dry summer. No rain at all! The leaves on the ground were so dry that they cracked and crumbled as the animals moved around.

I have never experienced such heat as the day
the fire came. *Roaring, crackling, smoking!*
Flames devoured the trees, taking our hollows.



The fire ate its way through hectares of bush,
leaving only smoldering, black logs in its wake.

We fled Frog Rock and tried to find an empty
hollow. It was extremely challenging, as most
of the hollows were already inhabited by birds.

We eventually found one. It wasn't much, but
we could call it home.

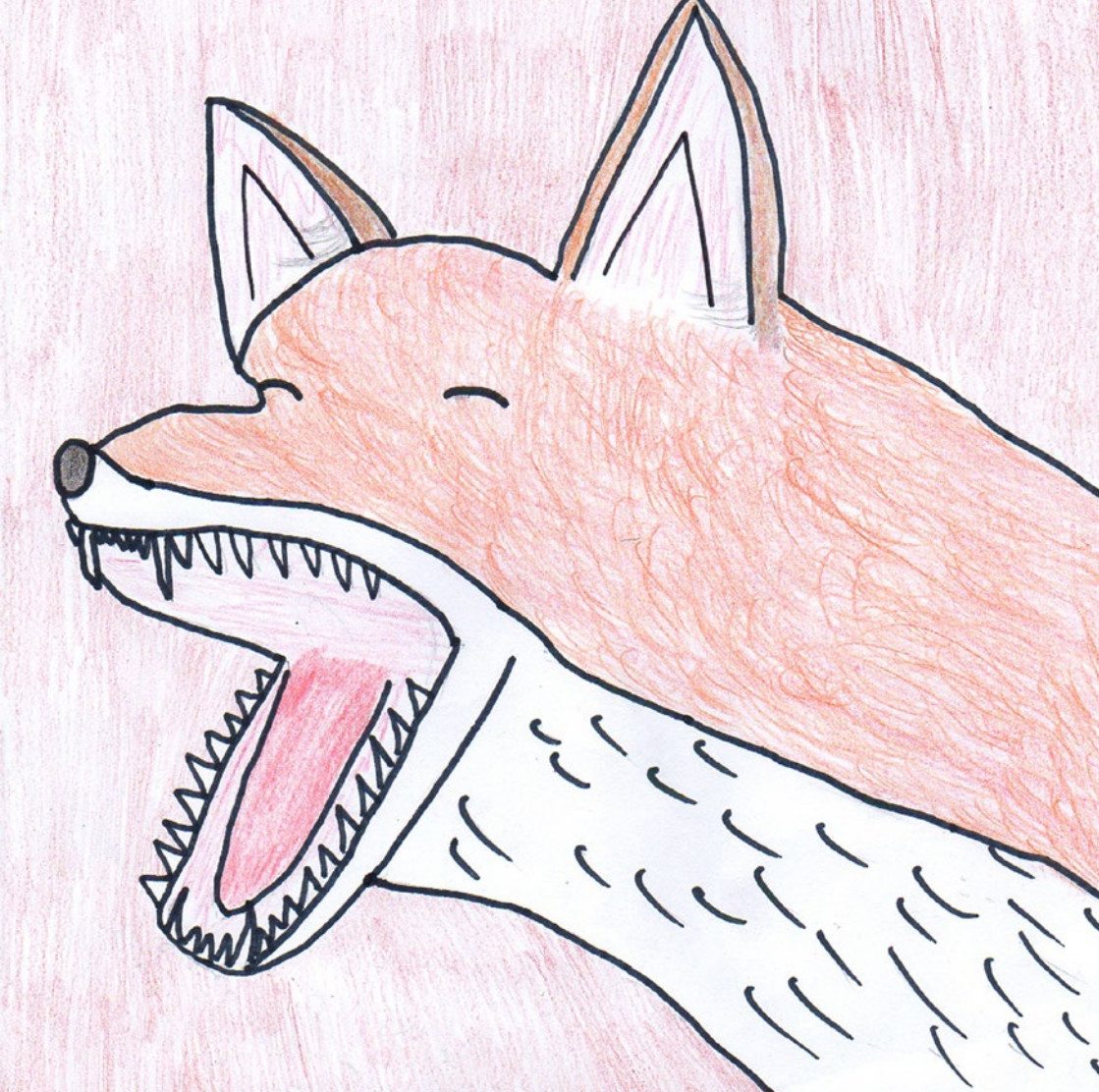




Late that night, I went out to try and find some food. I returned with some hard, tough, half burnt insects for us to eat.

It was then that I saw her. A fox prowling around our tree. Sneaking, hunting and trying to kill.

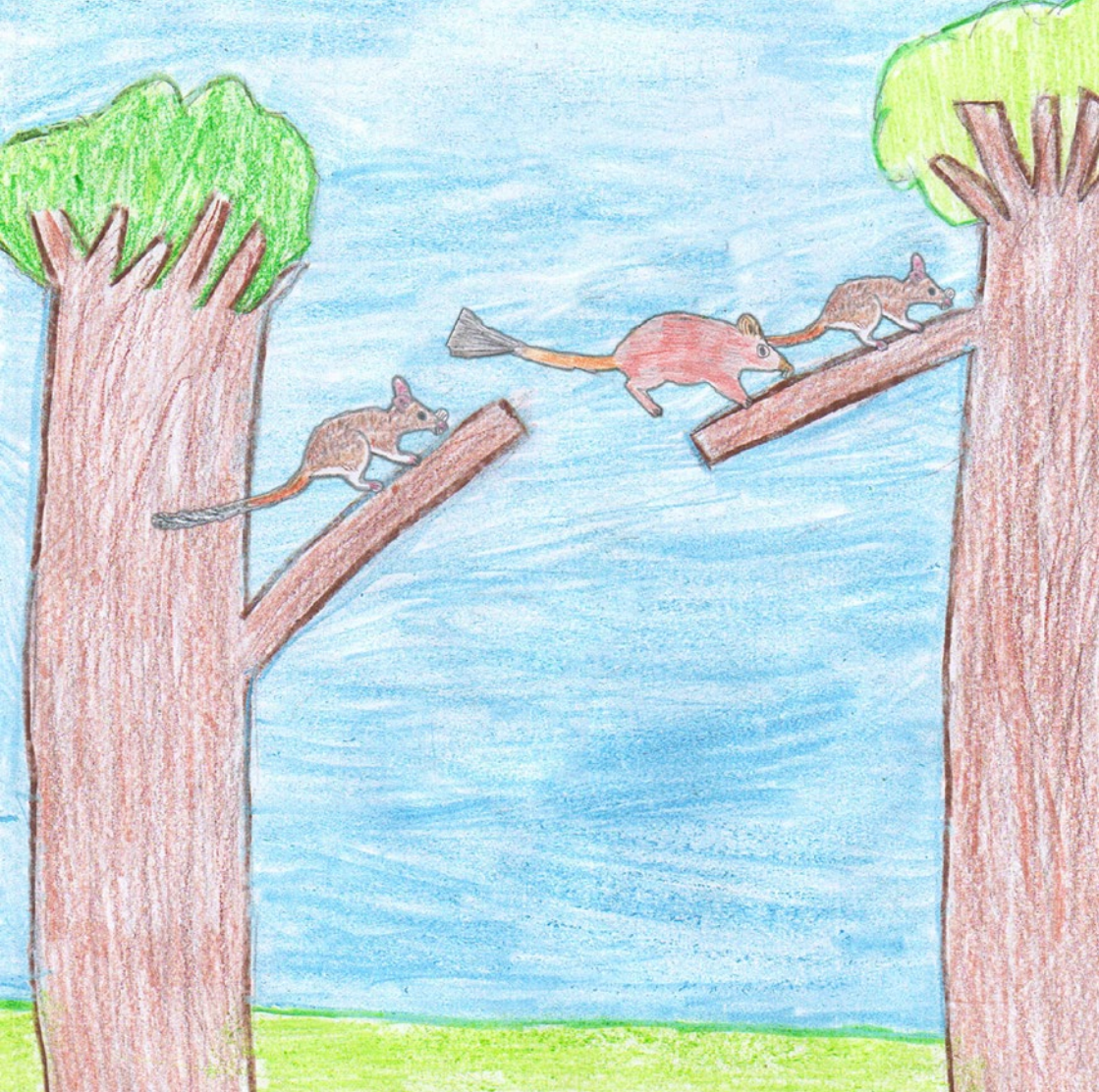
She smelt us, looked up hungrily and growled.



"I shall have a feast tonight. A feast fit for a fox. I am Phoebe the *Furr*-ocious. You have two choices, stay up there and have a slow painful death of starvation, or come down now and die like any honorable phascogale, in the jaws of a frightening fox. You have 3 seconds to decide."

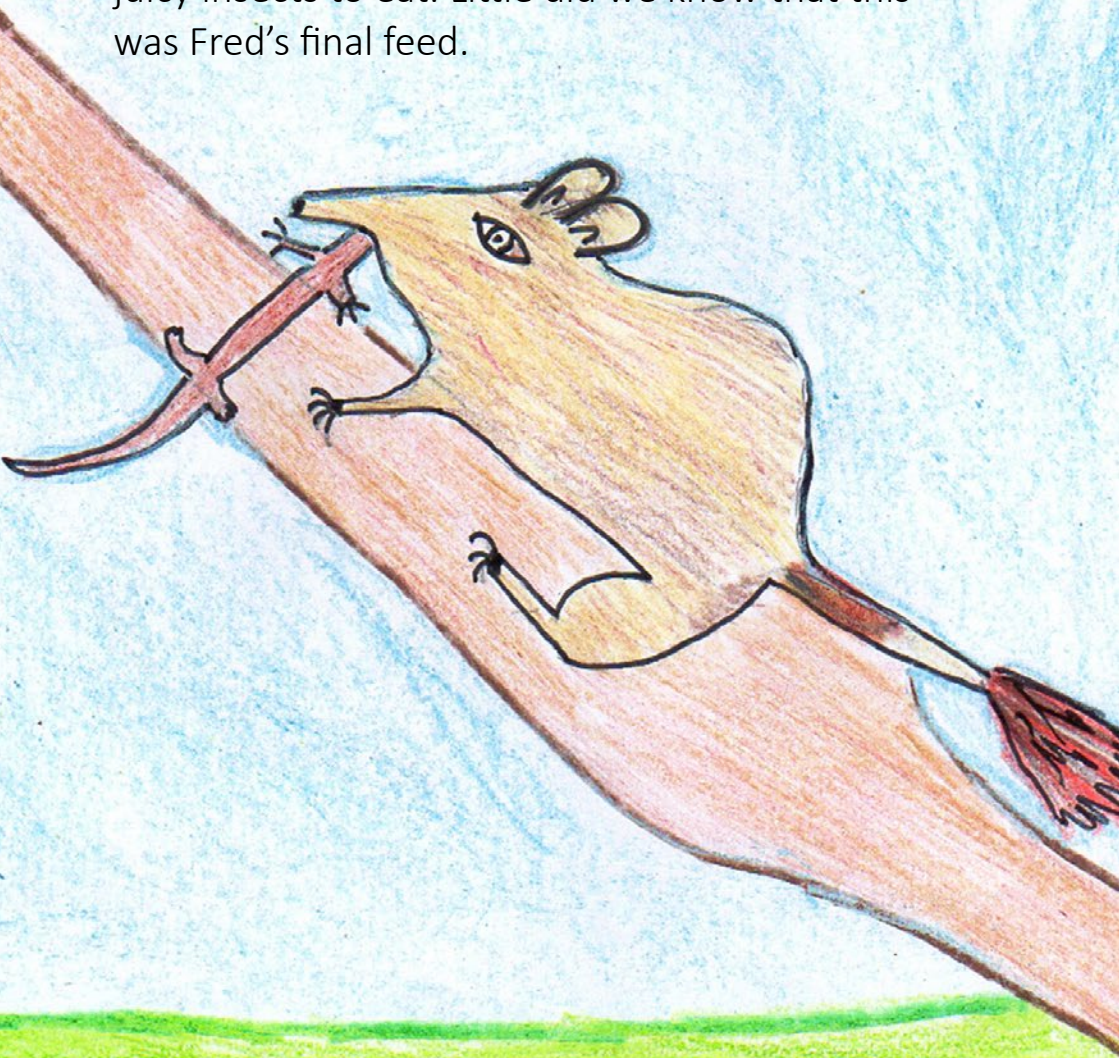


We trembled with fear as Phoebe counted down. We knew we could no longer stay here. Examining our surroundings, Robert came up with the smartest idea, "If we climb right up to the top of the tree we should be able to jump very far from tree to tree and escape."



We all agreed to try. Quietly, we crept out of our hollow and up to the top of the tree. We ran along the longest branch and leapt to the next tree. We continued this tactic from tree to tree until eventually we escaped from that dreaded fox.

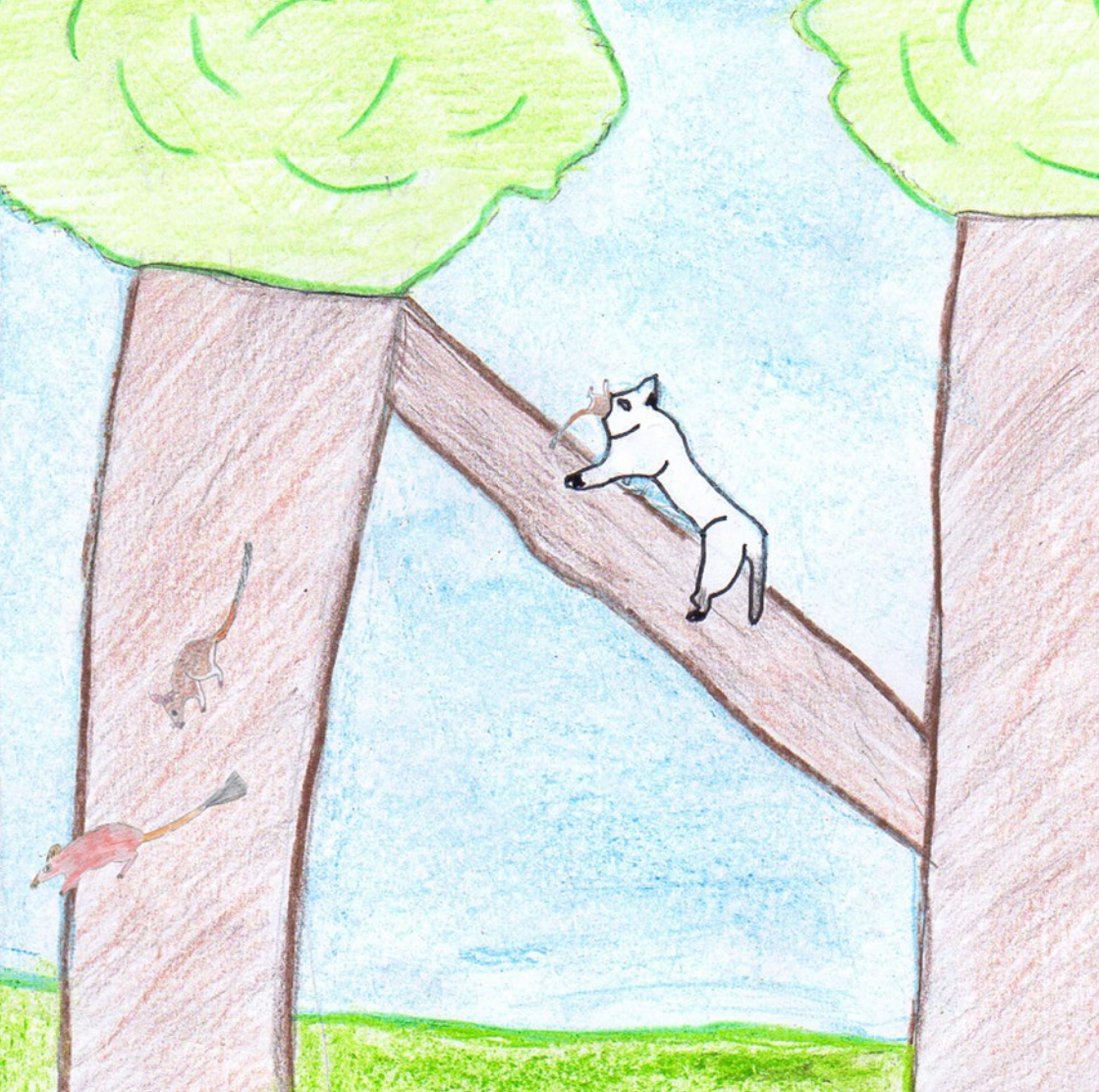
As a new day began to dawn, we found some juicy insects to eat. Little did we know that this was Fred's final feed.



As we munched down our first decent meal since the fire, we heard a strange tinkling sound. We whipped around to see what the noise was and saw a big vicious cat.



"I am Frosty the Feline. And I am very sick of cat food in a packet. I am made to eat it every night," she snarled. "But not tonight. Tonight I will unleash the wild animal inside of me and eat a juicy nocturnal phascogale."



We turned to leap up our tree but the cat was stronger and faster. She jumped ahead of us and grabbed Fred. She chewed him violently and there was nothing we could do to save him.

Robert and I ran as fast as we could. Our lives depended on it.

We journeyed for many days, saddened by the loss of my brother. We needed to find a safe place away from foxes, cats and fire.

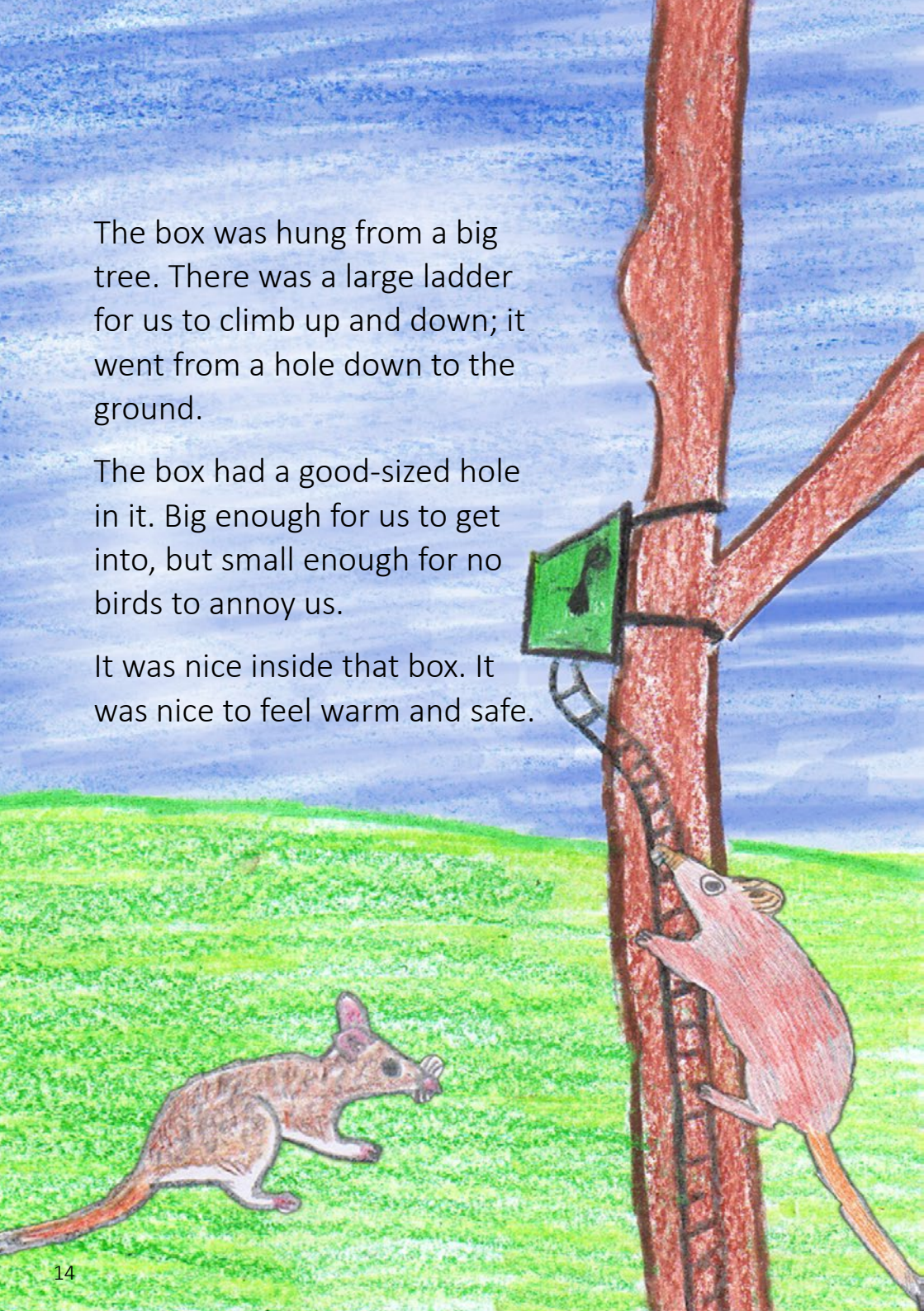


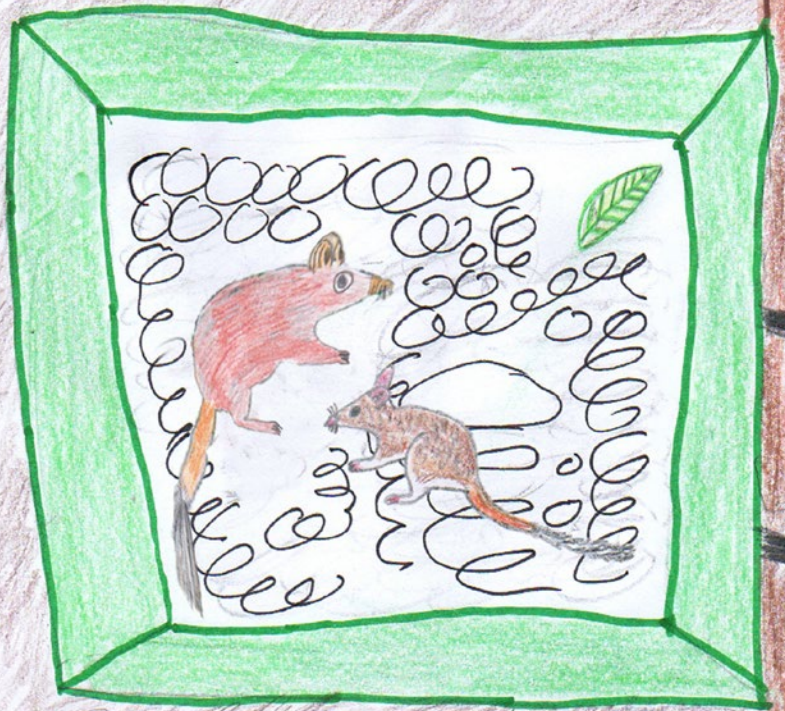
Finally we stumbled across a big green box. At first we feared that humans were nearby because we could smell them all around. They had obviously made the box. We waited and observed that box for a whole day and night, but no humans came anywhere near.

The box was hung from a big tree. There was a large ladder for us to climb up and down; it went from a hole down to the ground.

The box had a good-sized hole in it. Big enough for us to get into, but small enough for no birds to annoy us.

It was nice inside that box. It was nice to feel warm and safe.





Down on the floor of the box there was even some soft, fluffy wool. It was a great home. I could even raise babies in this home and help the survival of our species



I now feel sorry for all of the other phascogales out there that don't have a warm box like us. I hope that people make more boxes so our species can live safely. Our survival depends on help from humans creating more available nesting spots and culling predators such as foxes and cats.



Adele Nicholl, Kane Airey and Ingrid Tipton

2015 Year 5/6/7, Hyden Primary School

