

The Tale of the Malleefowl

Written and illustrated by Joshua Van Der Merwe, Harper Pursell,
Rhod Castillo and Riley Bourne from Merredin College



ENVIRO
stories



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, 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.

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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.

www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

The Tale of the Malleefowl

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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.

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National
Landcare
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wheatbelt
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It was a scorching hot summer's day as Cindy and Fred, the malleefowl, were working hard searching for food. As she scratched away in the leaf litter looking for some tasty insects, Cindy heard, and then felt, a strange rumbling. It was an enormous bulldozer.

Cindy rushed to Fred and told him about the bulldozer that was going to clear their home. Fred was wild with rage, "They can't do that! We need to warn the other animals."

The animals had to do something to save their habitat.



The malleefowl put their own lives in danger by running in front of the bulldozer and squawking loudly.


“MOVE! MOVE! Don’t destroy our land” they shouted.

Farmer Mack saw the commotion the malleefowl were making and slammed on the brakes in his bulldozer. “Oh, my goodness what was I doing?” he asked himself. Farmer Mack knew the malleefowl is one of Australia’s most endangered birds. “This is their habitat, and I was going to destroy it.”



After farmer Mack stopped the bulldozer, he came up with an idea about how to help protect the malleefowl on his farm. He decided to have a little chat with local rangers as they were the experts.

They came up with a plan to plant new trees and bushes that will produce food for the malleefowl. The rangers also told him to leave messy areas containing leaf litter, sticks and other debris alone as this was good for them to scratch in and find food.



All the leaf litter helped Fred and Cindy to make a mound. Fred dug a one metre hole in the mound for the eggs. Their mound was five metres wide and one metre deep.



Cindy and Fred worked hard making the mound perfect until Cindy was ready to lay her eggs.

Fred protected the mound further by coating and coating it with leaf litter, as he knew there was a storm coming.



The following night there was a storm, but deep in the mound it remained warm and dry. Fred was taking good care of the eggs!

In the morning, Cindy got ready to find some food. After a long day of scratching and foraging she finally came back with a stash of food.

Fred was exhausted and happily ate his share and then went back to doing his job.

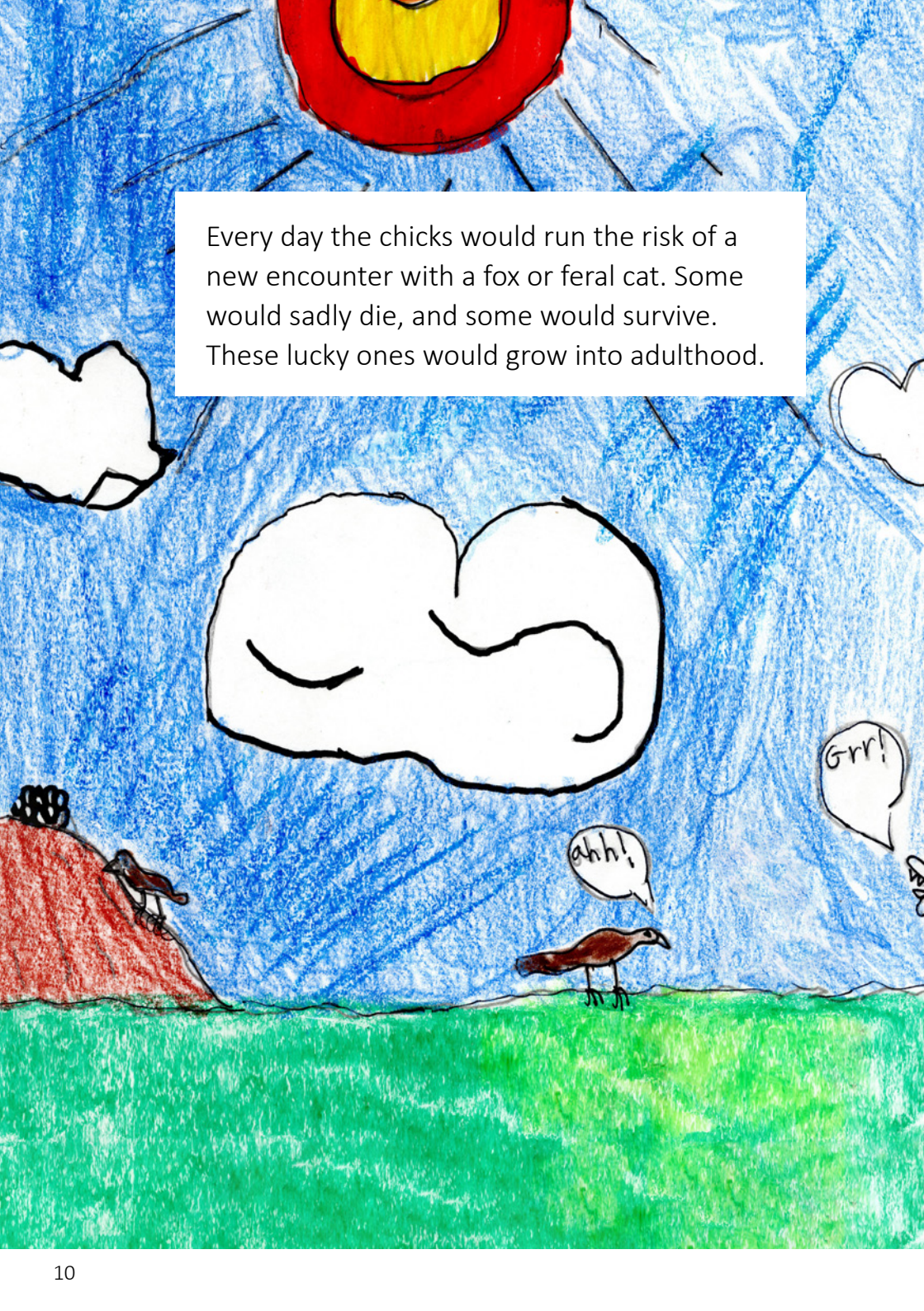
That night as they were protecting the mound, they heard a loud shrieking sound. There was a fox! They were so scared; they froze as still a statue to try and not draw the fox's attention.

Fortunately, Farmer Mack had installed a cage trap and the fox triggered the trap. Although the trap missed it, the fox was scared by the commotion and ran away.





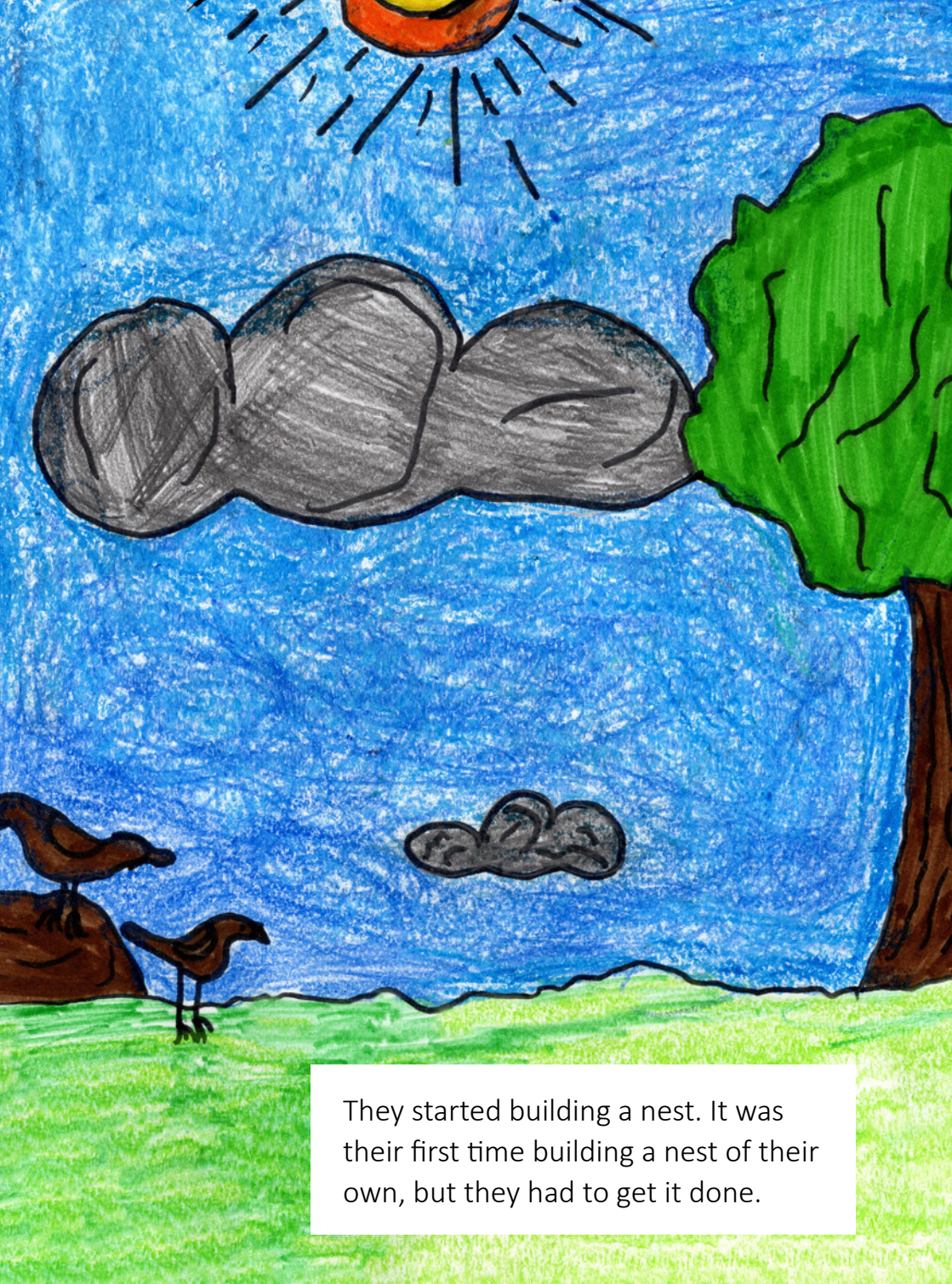
After about 55 days the eggs hatched and the chicks slowly made their way onto the top of the mound. Fred took no notice of them as one by one they toppled down the mound. They were off on their own. What they didn't know was that they were in for a hard life.

A child's drawing of a landscape. At the top is a large sun with a yellow center and a red ring, surrounded by black lines representing rays. The sky is filled with blue crayon strokes. There are several white clouds with black outlines. On the left, a red hill has a small black structure on top and a brown bird perched on its edge. In the center, a larger brown bird stands on a green grassy field. To its right, a speech bubble contains the word "ahh!". Further right, another speech bubble contains "Grr!".

Every day the chicks would run the risk of a new encounter with a fox or feral cat. Some would sadly die, and some would survive. These lucky ones would grow into adulthood.



One day, after he reached maturity, one of Cindy and Fred's malleefowl chicks was out looking for food. He stumbled into a female malleefowl who was also scratching around. They checked each other out and decided they were suitable mates. They went to find a good place to make their own mound.



They started building a nest. It was their first time building a nest of their own, but they had to get it done.



Over the next few months, the nest was prepared. A storm brought the rain they needed to wet the leaf litter in the mound. Once they covered their mound in leaf litter and sticks their eggs could be laid.

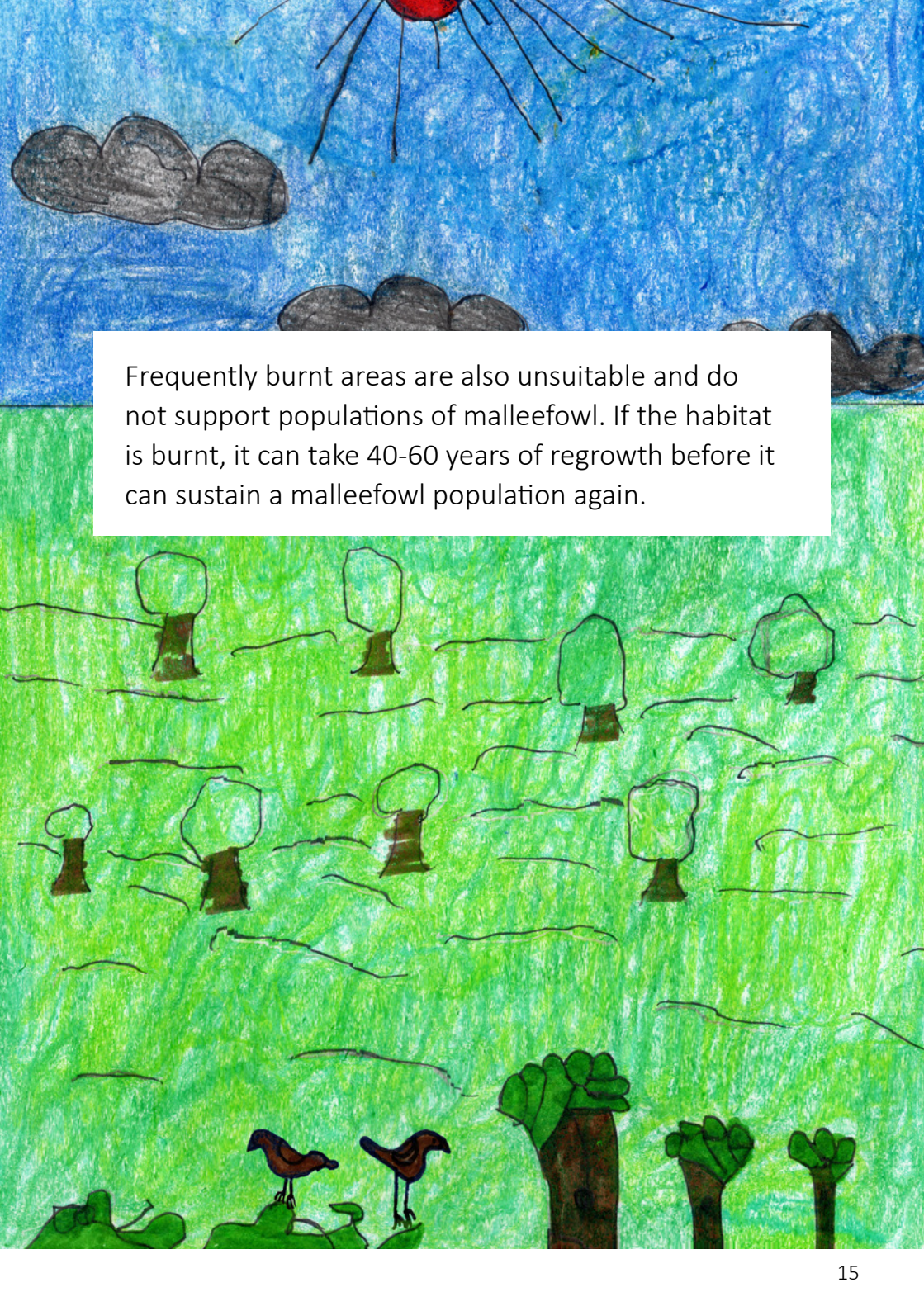
Cindy and Fred's descendants would continue to help the malleefowl population grow in the area near Farmer Mack's farm, all because he protected them.



For the malleefowl to survive we need to stop clearing the Australian bush, which is their precious home.

Malleefowl live in mallee eucalypt or acacia woodlands and need a variety of shrubby bushes and natural messy areas.

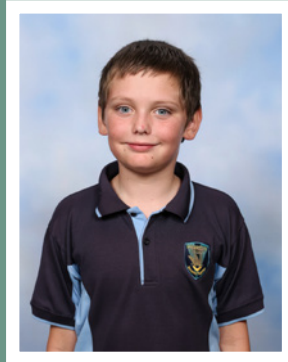
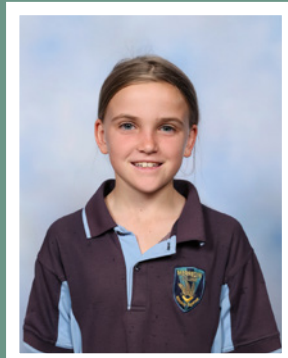
The key to their survival is a habitat with a variety of trees and protective covering.



Frequently burnt areas are also unsuitable and do not support populations of malleefowl. If the habitat is burnt, it can take 40-60 years of regrowth before it can sustain a malleefowl population again.



*We all need to do more to
protect the malleefowl habitat
to ensure the continued survival
of this endangered bird.*



Top: Joshua Van Der Merwe and Harper Purssell
Bottom: Rhod Castillo and Riley Bourne

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