

Malleefowl Mayhem

Written and illustrated by Levi Fidge, Jake Hobbs
and Zara Whitwell from Wheatbelt Primary
Extension and Challenge



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.

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.

www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Malleefowl Mayhem

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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.

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



National
Landcare
Program



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

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Citation: Fidge, L., Hobbs, J. and Z. Whitwell. 2023. *Malleefowl Mayhem*. Wheatbelt NRM, WA.

ISBN: 978-0-6483307-6-9

Series: Hotspot Heroes Enviro-Stories, Book

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

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Sand begins to rumble on the malleefowl mound as a heavy, 100-tonne truck of wheat speeds down the dirt road. Sharp gravel and stones fire towards Mitchel at the speed of light. Some of the stones puncture one of Mitchel's wings.



Mitchel is a malleefowl and has black, white and chai-coloured feathers with stripes. Like most malleefowl, Mitchel is about the size of a chicken. He prefers to walk, not fly, and loves to eat grain.



Mitchel flees towards his mound, where his wife (Machelle) is monitoring the temperature of the eggs. “What happened to your wing?” Machelle screamed. Mitchel replies, “A huge truck zoomed past. Then all of a sudden, my wing got shot by a rock.”



“Go sit down. Now!” she demands,
“I’ll get you some food.” Machelle
ran to where some wheat had
spilled on the road. She picked up
as much grain as she could.



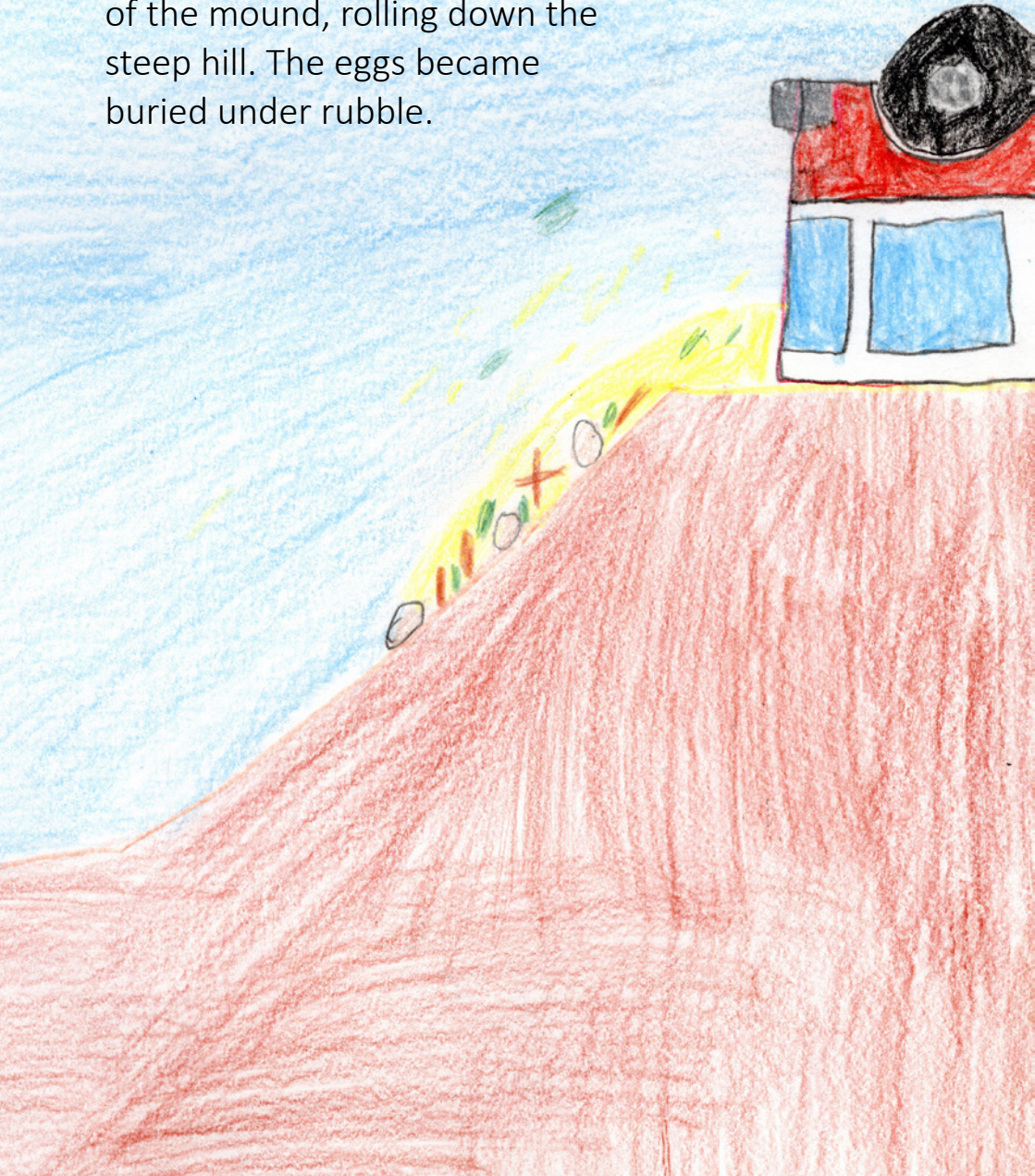


Machelle had been so busy that she hadn't noticed Fred, the fireman, racing down the road towards a fire 40 km away. The fire truck was headed straight for her. Machelle started to run, but as the fire truck came closer, she realised that running wasn't enough.

Machelle began to flap her wings, but it was too late. The fire truck flattened Machelle. It rolled over and crushed Mitchel as well. The fire truck narrowly missed the malleefowl mound, keeping three eggs alive.



As the fire truck flipped and hit the ground, it made a shock wave and sent three eggs out of the mound, rolling down the steep hill. The eggs became buried under rubble.



A curious fox came to check what the noise was, and as soon as he smelt the eggs, he went in for dinner. He ate two, missing one of the eggs.

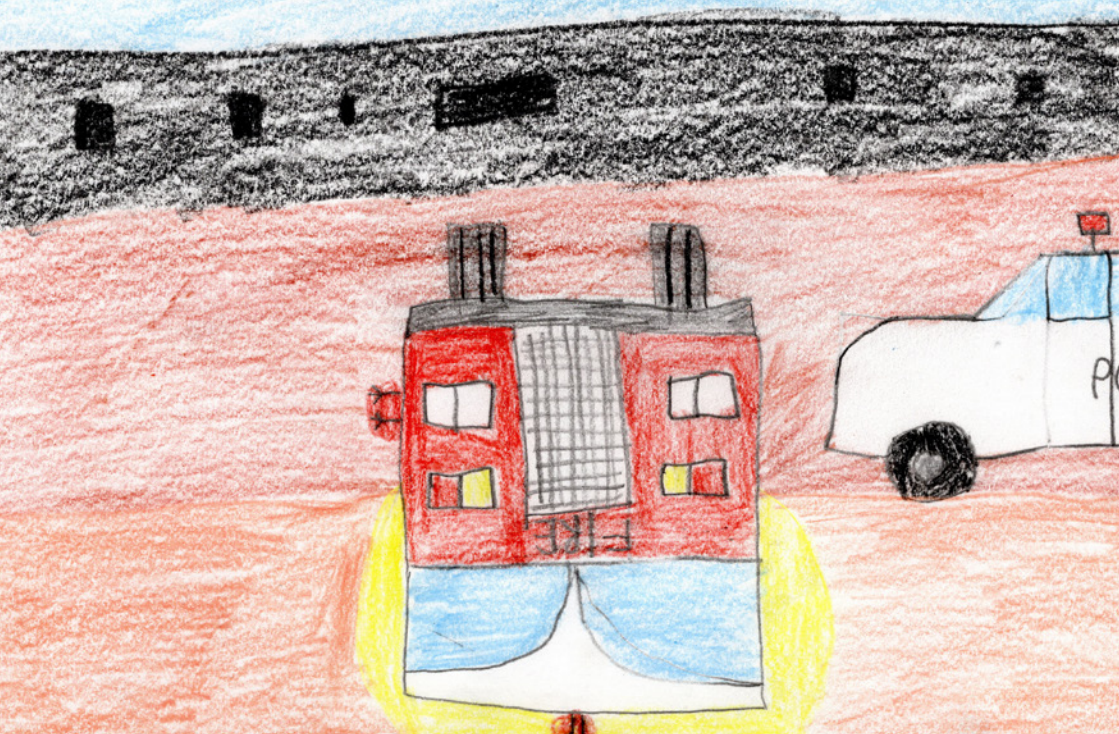


The fox then scooped a bait that was laid by a landholder, with support from Wheatbelt NRM, the previous week.

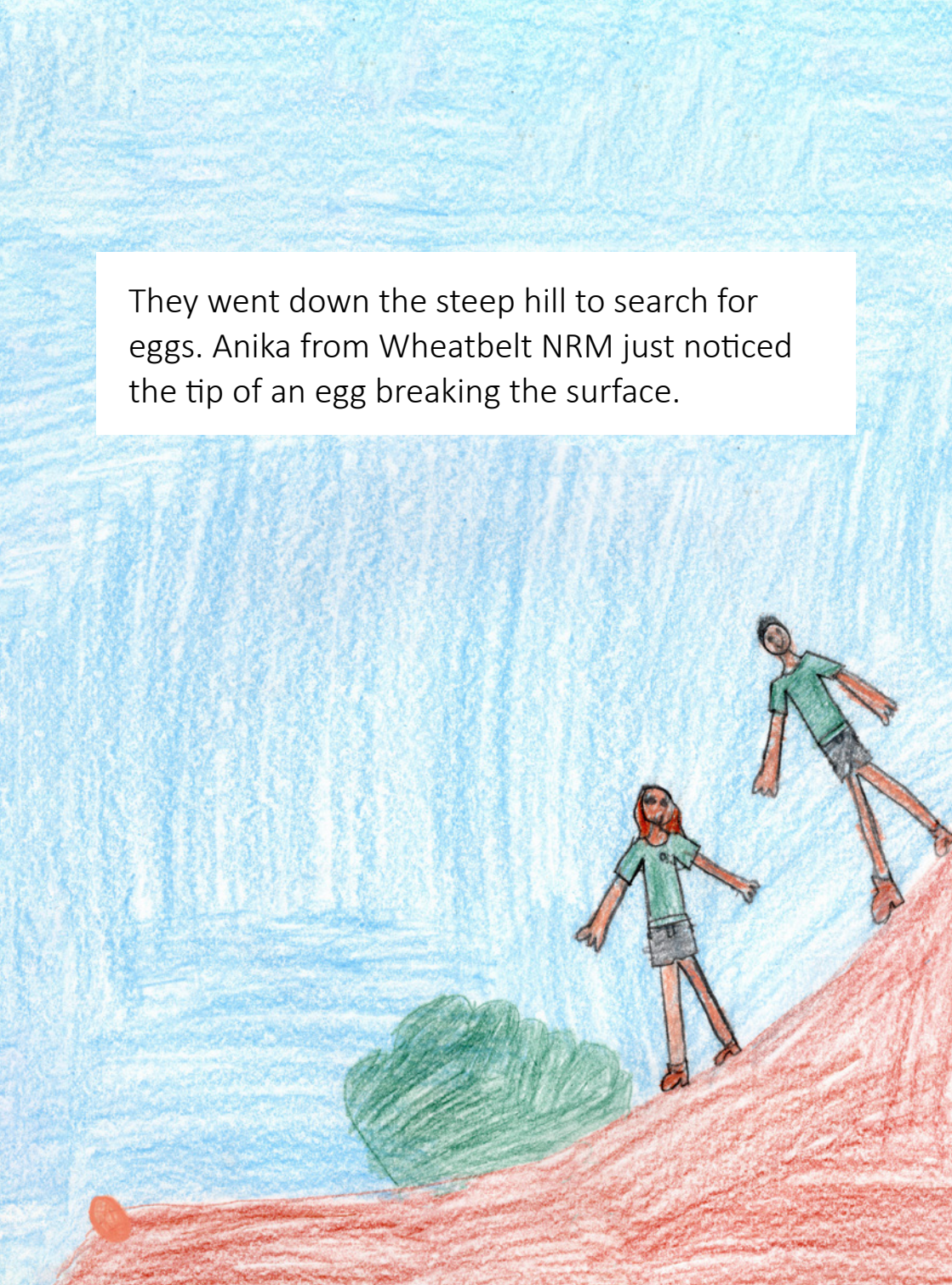
The cunning fox died in the morning.



Later that day, the police arrived at the scene and noticed the newly flattened mound. They quickly called Wheatbelt NRM, who sent some officers out straight away. When they arrived, they saw the ruins of the mound and immediately looked for eggs.

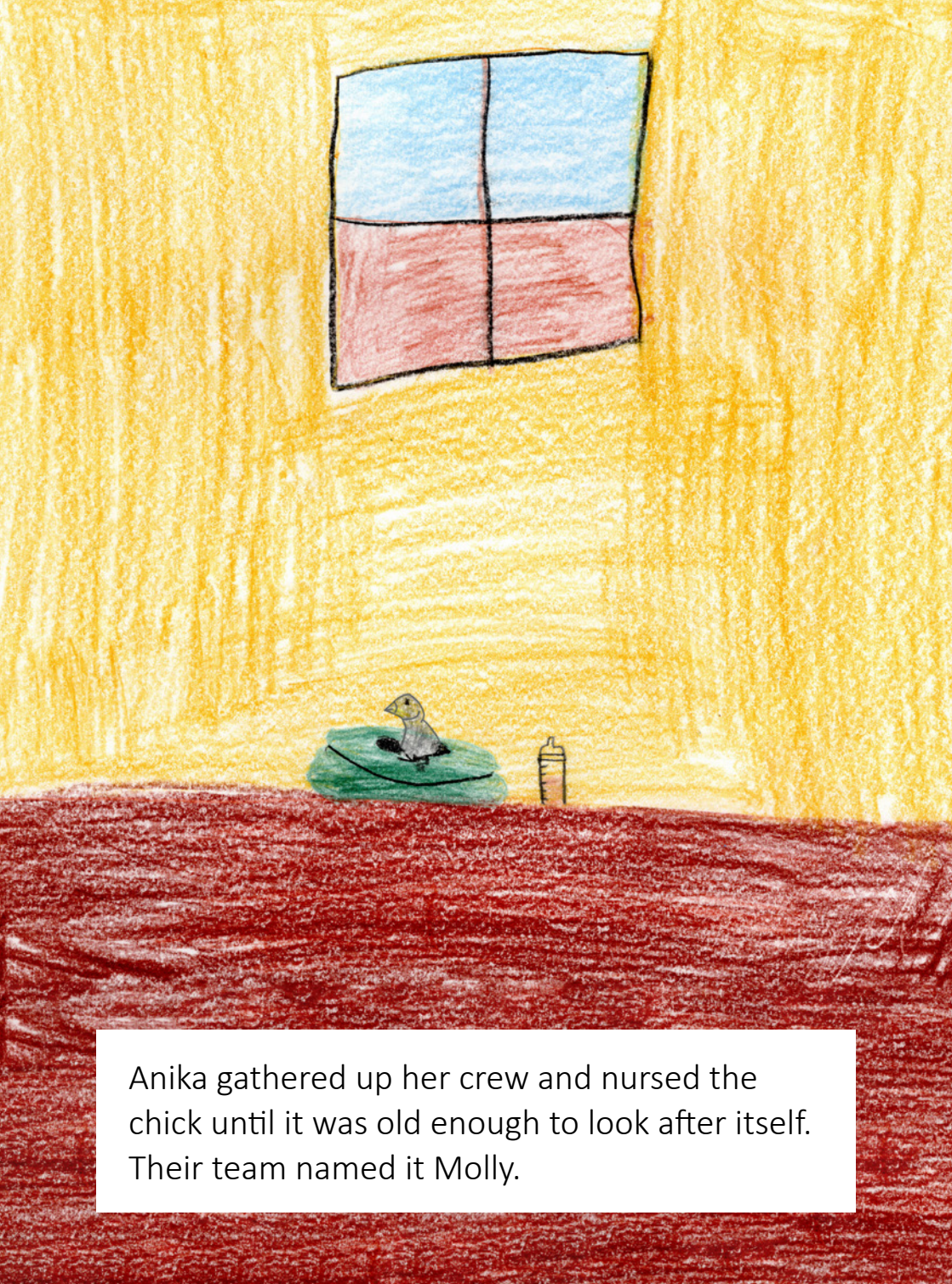


They went down the steep hill to search for eggs. Anika from Wheatbelt NRM just noticed the tip of an egg breaking the surface.



As she picked up the egg, it broke into pieces, leaving a newly hatched malleefowl chick. Beautiful combinations of white, black and beige covered the fluffy, fragile chick.





Anika gathered up her crew and nursed the chick until it was old enough to look after itself. Their team named it Molly.

She went to a nearby nature reserve and released the chick. The nature reserve is surrounded by a sturdy, vermin-proof fence. Outside the fence, baits are regularly laid to control feral predators and pests.





It is a safe sanctuary where the malleefowl chick can thrive and meet others to ensure their species is protected.

We need to keep managing safe places like this to help all our native species to survive and thrive.

Predator exclusion fencing

Introduced animals pose a serious risk to the native flora and fauna of Australia.

While predator exclusion fencing can provide great protection to populations occurring within the fenced area, there are several considerations to weigh up before installing a predator proof fence. These include:

- The costs of installation.
- The area of land being fenced – while a 100 hectare fenced area might provide enough habitat to support viable populations of many native animals, some important species, such as the chuditch require much larger areas – 1 male chuditch, for example, has a range of 1,500 hectares! Many thousands of hectares would need to be fenced to maintain a viable population.
- Fence monitoring and maintenance – fences can be damaged by storms, animals and other things – echidnas are well known for their ability to create holes under predator fences that cats and rabbits can access!

Other conservation activities, such as pest animal control, stock proof fencing and revegetation can also provide great habitat protection to allow a diversity of native species to thrive without a predator proof fence.



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2022 Year 5 and 6, Wheatbelt Primary Extension and Challenge