

The Mouse, the Wallaby and the Bulldozer

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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

The Mouse, the Wallaby and the Bulldozer

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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
natural resource
management

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One sunny Djilba day (when it starts to become warmer and the lakes fill up with water) in Merredin, 2018, Pseudo, the western mouse, and Boomer, the banded hare-wallaby, were going on a walk in what is now known as the solar farm.



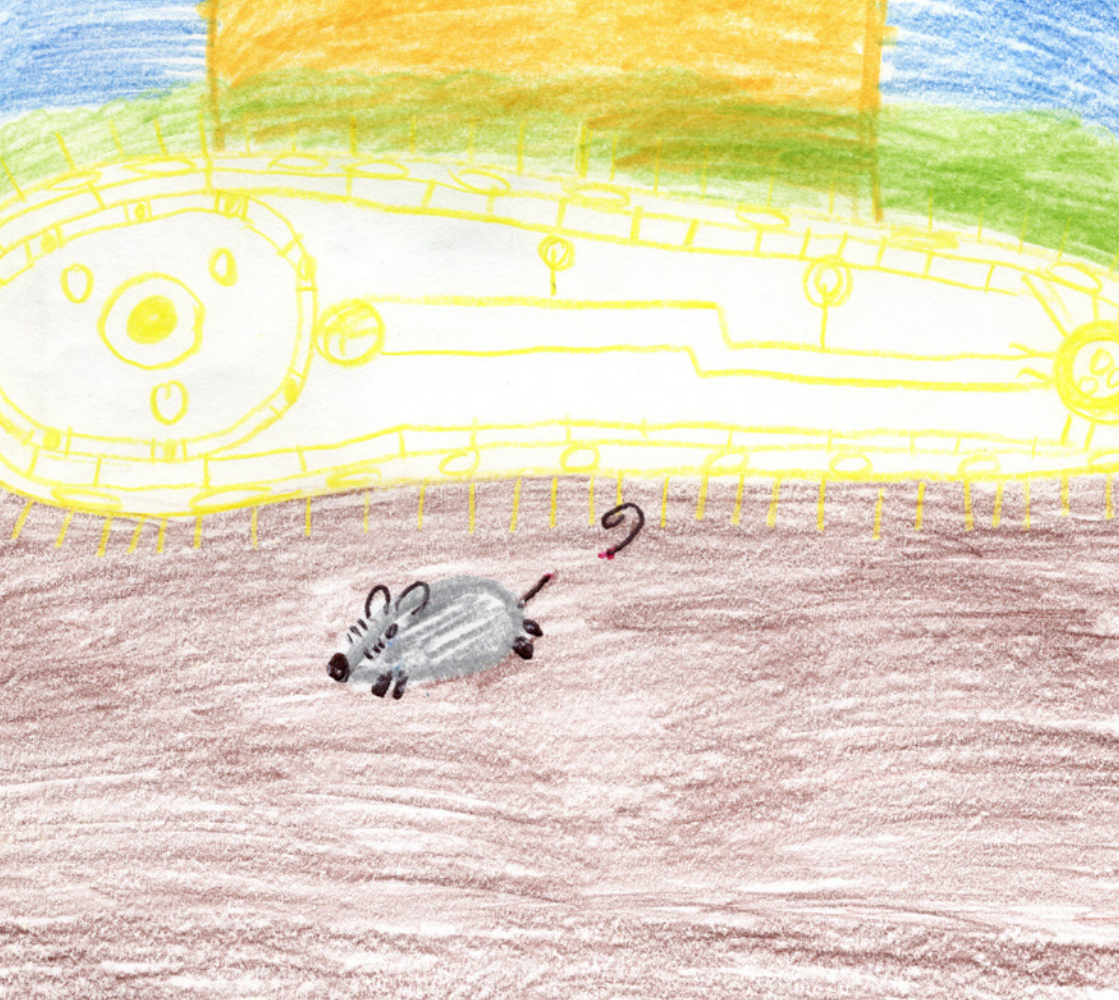
During their charming walk, they saw many different orchids, such as donkey orchids, sun orchids and spider orchids.

Suddenly they heard a peculiar noise...

They swung their heads only to see a monstrous yellow machine with a huge blade charging at them. “Run!” shouted Boomer.

It had already cleared their homes and kept on destroying all the natural habitat in its path.





They sped away faster than a lightning bolt, but Pseudo lost the tip of his tail to the bulldozer's blade.

"Ouch!" he yelled and grabbed his tail. He cried until there were no more tears left to cry, but he had to keep running.



The duo bolted down the road into the remaining bush. They were too busy looking for safety or a new home that they did not see the hungry fox stalking them.

Boomer heard a twig snap, turned his head and noticed a streak of orange running past. He whispered to Pseudo, “there’s a fox.”

Vulpes, the fox, hadn’t eaten for three days. When he saw some droolingly delicious brunch run past, he decided to sneak up on them.

Meanwhile, Aquil, the wedge-tailed eagle, was soaring through the sky when he saw Vulpes and thought, “What a good target to practice my diving skills.” She drifted in the air for momentum before diving down on the fox.



Vulpes didn't expect a thing, so he lunged at Pseudo. Before Pseudo could get out of the way, he was swallowed whole by Vulpes.

He may have survived the bulldozer, but the western mouse was just a mouthful for the fox.





Suddenly there was a rush of feathers, but Boomer couldn't see what was happening through his teary eyes.

The next thing he saw was Vulpes lying on the ground, wounded and bleeding but still eyeing off a stunned Boomer!

With another snap of a twig, Bracco Leigh, the local farmer came out of nowhere with his .22 rifle and shot Vulpes, the fox.

Boomer couldn't believe his big wet eyes. In a split second so much death and loss had happened, one for a good purpose and another with a heartbreaking outcome.

What hope did the native fauna have when their homes are cleared, and predators show no mercy?





Bracco noticed Boomer standing as still as a statue. The farmer hadn't seen a banded hare-wallaby before and knew they were at risk of no longer surviving in the Wheatbelt. Bracco carefully gathered Boomer up and rang Wheatbelt NRM.



Bracco was told about the nearby Wadderin Nature Reserve, which has a 2-metre-high electric fence to keep predators out.

He took Boomer to Brian Cusack, who introduced him to the reserve.



Boomer lived there for another 3½ years, along with many other native animals who became his family.

He was very happy there. Boomer met Murray, the brush-tailed phascogale, and other native mammals that need protection for their species' survival.

We must protect our native animals like the banded hare-wallaby and western mouse. If we don't protect them, they will become extinct like the long-tailed hopping mouse. We don't want any other amazing species to die. Find out how you can help at www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au.



www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au



Western mouse

Pseudomys occidentalis

Description

The western mouse is a small mammal that has been described as a 'roman-nosed' rodent, which is an accurate description of this species' rounded snout. Its fur is dark grey and yellowish-buff, overlaid with black guard hairs. The underside is pale, greyish-white and the paws are white. The tail is long and distinctively marked; it is pale grey with a dark brown line down either side of the upper surface. The soles of the hindfeet are only slightly granulated and the pads under the toes are small near the tips of the toes and larger further back.



Habitat

The western mouse was historically found in a band across southwestern Western Australia to the southern Nullarbor Plain and the south coast near Ravensthorpe. The species is now restricted to the Ravensthorpe Range, Fitzgerald River National Park and several other small reserves in the Avon region. It occurs in long-unburnt vegetation on sandy loam or sandy clay loam soil, often with patches of gravel. The vegetation can include a variety of species but usually includes patches of very dense shrubs and often quandong and sedges. The first specimen of this species was collected in Tambellup in 1930. The Western Australia Museum also collected this species during surveys in scattered wheatbelt reserves in the 1970s.

The western mouse is a social animal and spends its days in a group, down a burrow 20–40 centimetres deep. The burrow has a single vertical entrance that connects to a large semi-circular loop two to three metres in diameter. A nesting chamber is situated opposite the entrance.

Banded hare-wallaby

Lagostrophus fasciatus

Description

The banded hare-wallaby is a type of marsupial. It has long, shaggy fur; grizzled grey colouring on top, pale grey underneath and dark transverse bands across its back and rump. Its tail is grizzled grey and sparsely furred with a black crest on the last third of its length. It may be distinguished from the burrowing bettong and the rufous hare-wallaby by being darker on top and by the transverse bands.

Habitat

The last mainland specimen of the wallaby was collected in 1906 near Pingelly, Western Australia. Populations still exist on Bernier and Dorre islands, and attempts are being made to reintroduce animals to the other island and mainland sites. Formerly the distribution of the banded hare-wallaby included the Avon region and there is fossil evidence from the southern Nullarbor and near the Murray River in South Australia and into New South Wales. Island populations occur in acacia thickets.



Credit: Tim Bawden

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.



Top (L-R): Reuben Davies and Daniel Jones
Bottom (L-R): Jack Cusack and Clancy Chapman

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