



Your Home My Habitat

A COMPILATION OF CHILDREN'S SHORT STORIES AND ARTWORKS

Part of Willoughby City Council's Wildlife Storybook Series

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Back Cover, Kanon Wada, Chatswood Public School

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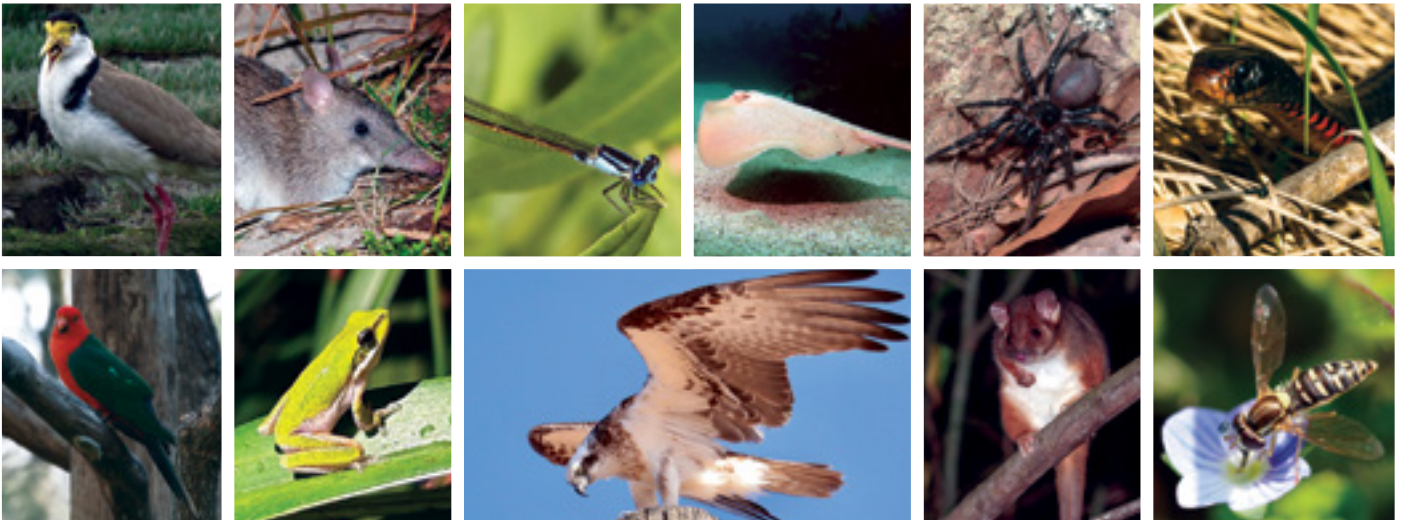
Willoughby's Wildlife Storybook Series

This book of short stories and artwork is part of an educational project designed to facilitate 'kids teaching kids' about the local wildlife in the Willoughby area. Year 5 students at each primary school were asked to research, then write and draw creatively about a local species chosen for their school.

An educational presentation was delivered to students at each school, communicating the key external features and unique behaviours and habitats of their chosen animal. Students also learnt about the many challenges their chosen animal face in an urbanised environment. This provides an opportunity for Council to communicate how our natural areas are managed and why.

This year's theme focuses on animal homes and habitats. Whether it is a tree hollow, a freshwater creek or a sporting field, our local environments within the Willoughby LGA provide crucial nesting sites and shelter for a diverse variety of wildlife species. For example, a pair of Eastern Osprey has occupied one of the sports lighting poles at the Mowbray Park athletics field for the past few years, likely due to the lack of suitable tall nesting trees in the area. Many of our wildlife species reside within built and altered natural environments, creating opportunities and challenges for their survival.

This storybook project is part of Willoughby City Council's wider Bushland Interpretive Program that offers guided bushwalks and talks for community and school groups. We hope an increased understanding of our natural wonders and this amazing creative work by our local kids continues to inspire the preservation of Willoughby's diverse habitats and wildlife.





Artwork by Maruka Murai,
Mowbray Public School

Read the Full Collection

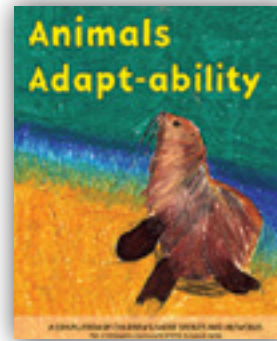
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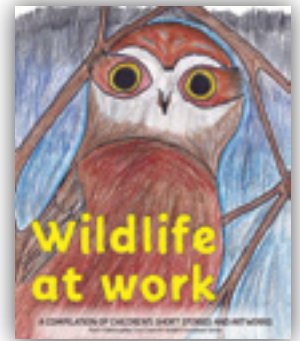
2021



2020



2019



2018



2017



2016



2015



2014



2013



2012



2011



Contents

Introduction	1
Artarmon Public School – Sydney Funnel-web Spider	8
<i>Artwork by Phoebe Fostanes</i>	
<i>Artwork by Mia Parisio</i>	
<i>The Great Bug Feast by Ivy Wang</i>	
<i>Ruth by Emily Shan</i>	
Castle Cove Public School – Common Stingaree	14
<i>Artwork by Emily Dunphy-Brown</i>	
<i>Artwork by Liam Baumont</i>	
<i>The Common Stingaree by Estella Mackenzie</i>	
<i>Who am I? by Joelle Lee</i>	
Chatswood Public School – Hover flies	20
<i>Artwork by Sophie Chan</i>	
<i>Artwork by Lucas Macri & Ethan Tang</i>	
<i>The Life of a Hover fly by Isabella Zheng</i>	
<i>An Act of Kindness that Provided a Home by Fanxi Wu</i>	
Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School – Common Bluetail Damselfly	26
<i>Artwork by Josh Curtis</i>	
<i>Artwork by Dalila Roberts</i>	
<i>The Damselfly by Mia Moore</i>	
<i>Damselfly the Hunter by Benedict Moss</i>	
Mowbray Public School – Eastern Osprey	32
<i>Artwork by Lili Shaw</i>	
<i>Artwork by Bruce Kusatani</i>	
<i>The Battle between the Ospreys and Ravens by Jackson Yee</i>	
<i>The Osprey's Revenge by Henna Nguang</i>	
Northbridge Public School – Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog	38
<i>Artwork by Aiden Loi</i>	
<i>Artwork by Charlotte Craddock</i>	
<i>The Great Adventure of Jack the Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog by Will Merrin</i>	
<i>The Frog Race by Zac Fisher</i>	
Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Primary School – Long-nosed Bandicoot	44
<i>Artwork by Isabella Rojas-Alali</i>	
<i>Artwork by Freya Shahlie</i>	
<i>Fox Chase by Sarita Jiang</i>	
<i>Escaped by Greyson Wei</i>	

St Philip Neri Catholic Primary School – Australian King Parrot.....	50
<i>Artwork by Joshua Zhao</i>	
<i>Artwork by Sofia Paparella</i>	
<i>Home Sweet Home (A Bird's Perspective) by Alessia Tredwell & Emily Scoble</i>	
<i>Me and You by Josephine Harris</i>	
St Pius X College – Common Ringtail Possum.....	56
<i>Artwork by Hugo Hasanoglu</i>	
<i>Artwork by Alexander Nunes</i>	
<i>The Possum Chase by Alexander Zhang</i>	
<i>One Lonely Possum by Massimo Guerrera, Artwork by Liam Gallery</i>	
St Thomas Catholic Primary School – Red-bellied Black Snake.....	62
<i>Artwork by Sophie Blackman</i>	
<i>Artwork by Eve Hair</i>	
<i>Predator and Prey by Emily Press</i>	
<i>Reunited! by Chloe Donald & Nina Gray</i>	
Willoughby Public School – Masked Lapwing.....	68
<i>Artwork by Ryan Chen</i>	
<i>Artwork by Julie Vidal</i>	
<i>An Adventure for Masked Lapwing by Anyee Thoo</i>	
<i>Masked Lapwings by Ethan Pringle, Artwork by Elizabeth Crabtree</i>	



**Artwork by Bita Hendi,
Artarmon Public School**

Spot the difference

Use your nature observation skills.

Can you spot the 10 differences and find all 11 species featured in this book?



Follow the path

Find the perfect home for all the animals in this book.



Funnel-web Spiders seek

thick grassy areas.



Stingarees love

deep tree hollows.



Hover flies will rest

build a nest called a drey.



Damselflies will be found

are found near water.



Ospreys nest in

open grassy areas.



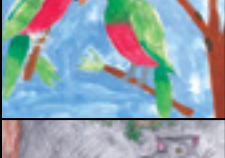
Dwarf Tree Frogs live in

deep, dark holes and crevices.



Bandicoots will nest in

coastal estuaries and rocky reefs.



King Parrots need

under leaves, twigs and branches.



Ringtail possums

around freshwater.



Red-bellied Black Snakes

open tall trees and structures.

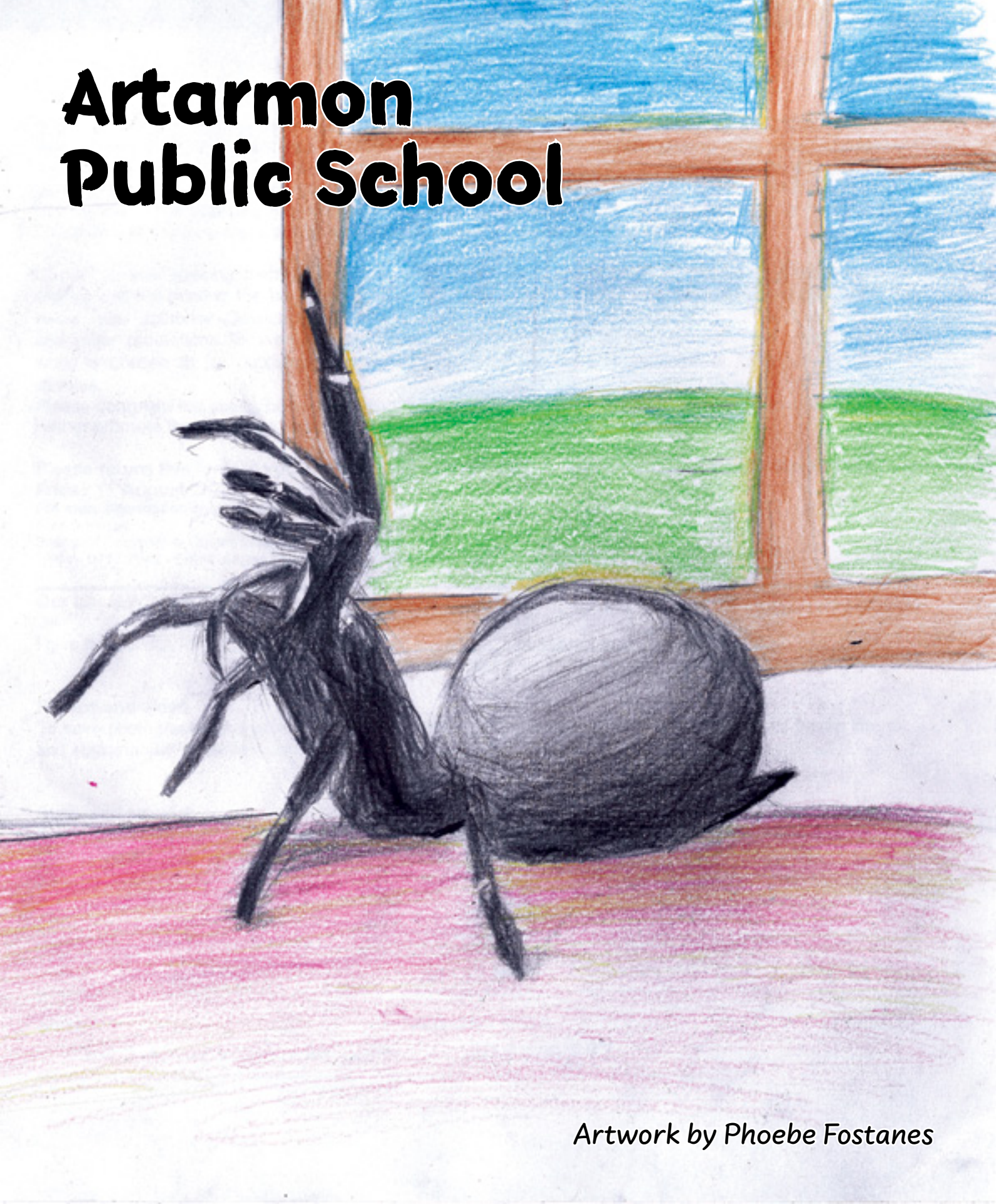


Masked Lapwings nest in

ponds and damp places.



Artarmon Public School



Artwork by Phoebe Fostanes



Artwork by Mia Parisio

Sydney Funnel-web Spider (*Atrax robustus*)

The iconic Sydney Funnel-web Spider is a venomous spider found in and around Sydney. One of the most distinctive features of this spider is its funnel-shaped silk tunnels which it constructs in cool damp places such as burrows or crevices under rocks, logs or inside tree hollows. These silky retreats serve as a place of shelter and ambush for prey. When the weather warms up, males leave their burrows in search for a mate and will sometimes venture into people's homes and be found in unexpected places such as the laundry room, garage, the inside of a shoe or even the swimming pool! Despite being considered as one of the most dangerous spiders in the world, there have been no records of fatal bites for over 40 years, thanks to the development of an antivenom.

The Great Bug Feast

by Ivy Wang

At daytime, the bugs roamed the earth, while at night-time Funnel-web Spiders roamed their stalking grounds. One day, news had spread that an anonymous visitor had invited every insect, larvae, snail, millipede, frog and other small creatures to a night-time party inside a mysterious silky hole.

First, they hiked through to the dry and open forests of the western slopes of Willoughby and set camp to wait for the party. Little did they know, that they were just on the brink of a Sydney Funnel-web Spider's territory. As the last of the group were nodding off to sleep, eight eyes flared open in the darkening sunset and advanced upon the sleeping bundle of animals.

As the animals awoke, they noticed that Lizard and Fly had vanished. They also saw that a clear path had been set up for them. As they wearily trekked on, following the trail, all was quiet, even Bee made his buzzing quieter. As the dark void loomed over the blue sky, the animals finally reached their destination. However, as they looked up, their eyes widened as they saw what was hanging above them.

Small weavings of pictures made of silk dangled from sticks, delicate lines of thin silver threads formed into a kind of sticky trap. All the different shades, blending in and blinding the creatures while making them wonder what lay inside the hole. It radiated danger and awareness. The creatures tensed up as the host came into view.

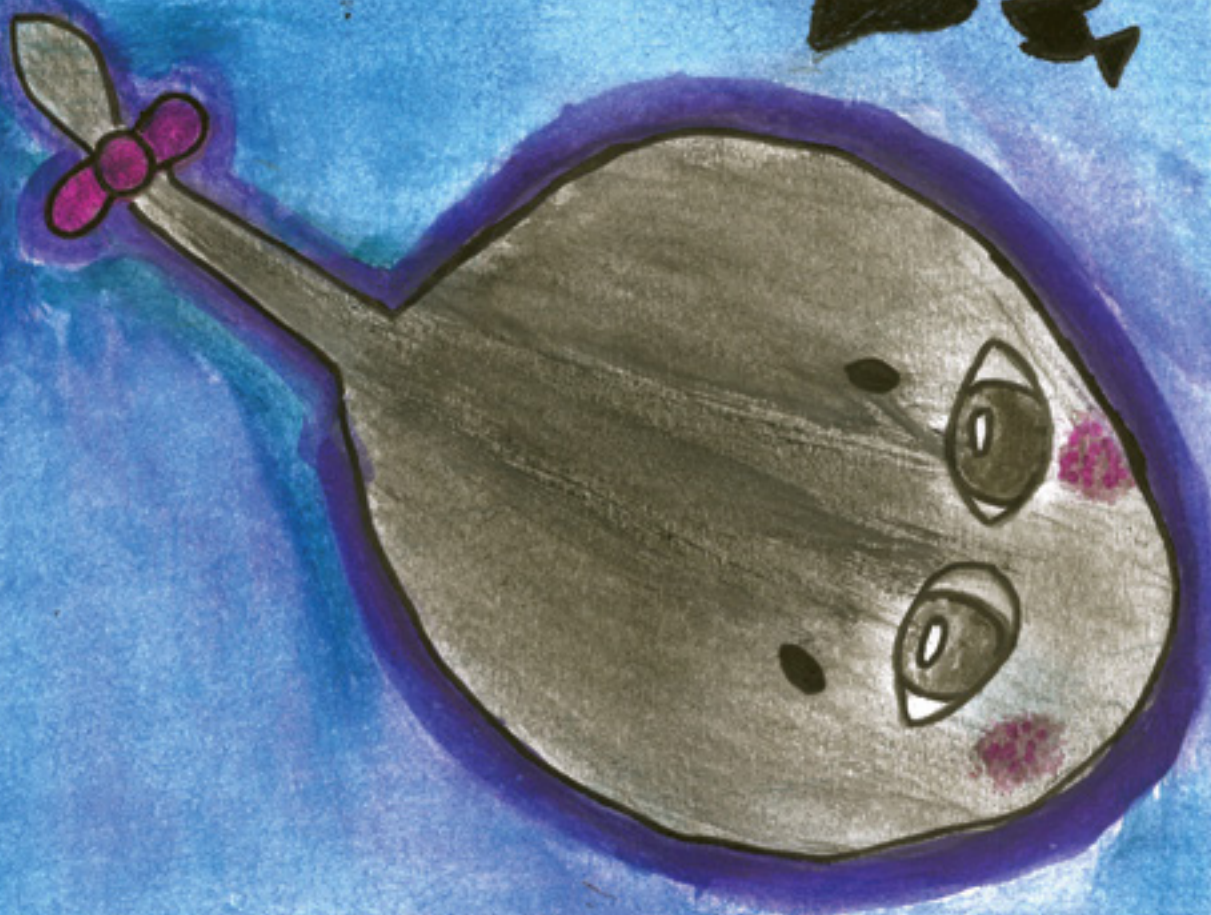


Ruth

by Emily Shan







Castle Cove Public School

Artwork by Emily Dunphy-Brown



Artwork by Liam Baumont

Common Stingaree (*Trygonoptera testacea*)

A relative to sharks, the Common Stingaree is the most abundant species of stingray found in the inshore waters off eastern Australia. Juvenile Common Stingarees enjoy feeding on shrimp, adults typically hunt for worms. Special sensors dotted around their bodies help the Stingarees hunt by picking up electrical signals from the prey as they move. Being a bottom-dweller, the Common Stingarees have special openings called spiracles on top of their heads to help with breathing while buried under the sand. Their preferred habitats include estuaries, sandy flats and rocky reefs and are often spotted along our local foreshore. Our shores provide a safe haven away from the open oceans. However, fishing activities, habitat degradation, construction and boats along our shores are all potential threats to these marine creatures.

The Common Stingaree

by Estella Mackenzie

Lurking beneath the waters, sand and sea,
Is a weird looking creature we call the Common Stingaree!

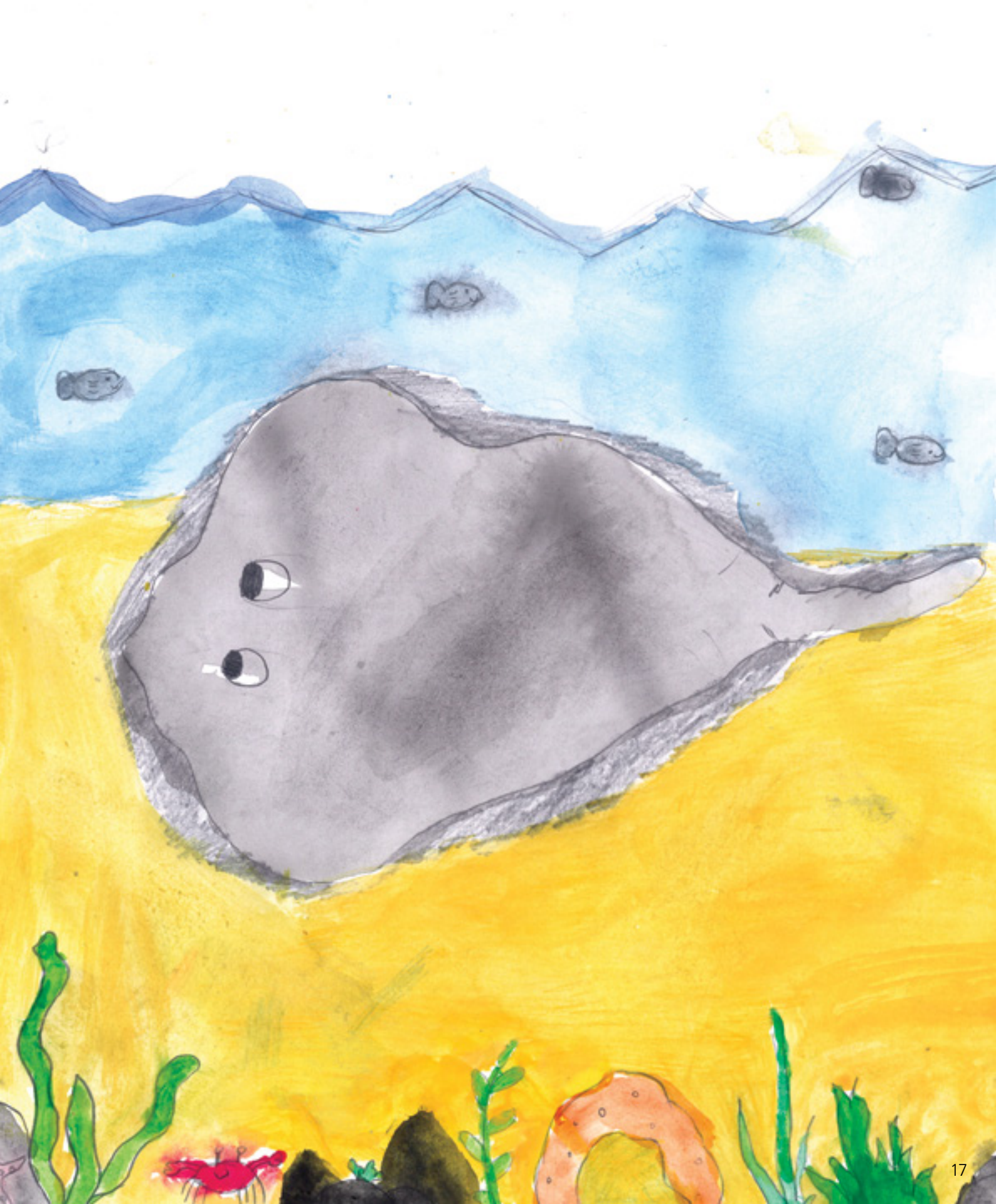
This flappy, weird creature, in the sand it does lay,
Waiting for vibrations to find its prey.

It gets some vibrations from the sensors on its tail,
Then it silently glides along the prey's trail.

The delicious meal is a little sea slug,
The sneaky Stingaree slithers closer to the bug.

The Stingaree pounces and covers the bug,
Sadly, that is the end of the little sea slug.

Feeling content, the Stingaree slithers away,
And goes back to the sandy bit of its bay.



Who am I?

by Joelle Lee

I live along the shorelines of beautiful Eastern Australia,
And Middle Harbour too,
I live amongst the rocky reefs from shore,
At a depth of 60 meters,
Who am I?

When I'm young,
I feed on shrimp,
When I grow old and mature,
I feed on worms in the sand,
Who am I?

The top layer of my skin,
Is a beautiful greyish brown colour,
My leaf-shaped caudal fin flows about as I swim,
I grow up to 52 centimetres,
Who am I?

Do you know who I am yet?

I swim gracefully,
My fins slowly flowing in the water,
Up and down, up and down,

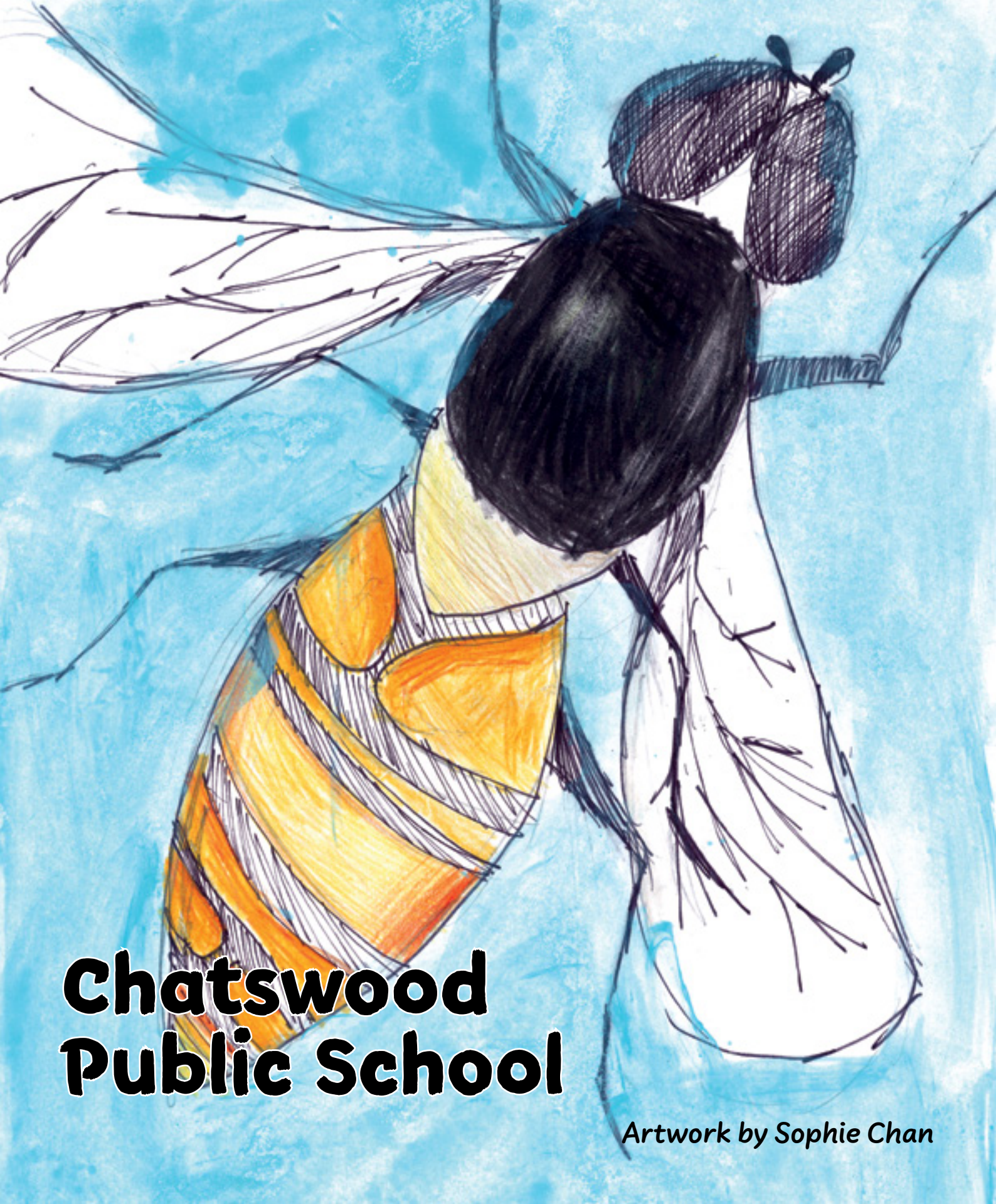
When my fins flow downwards,
They are just able to brush,
The tiny grains of sand,
Who am I?

I find my food,
With my special sensors,
I can sense the electrical signals,
Made by my prey,
As they move amongst the sand,
Who am I?

When you're at shore,
And you see a sign that warns you I'm here,
Just shuffle your feet,
In the sand,
I won't bite,
I'll just glide away,
To let you have your summer fun!

Have you guessed who I am yet?
Let me introduce myself,
I am,
The Common Stingaree.





Chatswood Public School

Artwork by Sophie Chan

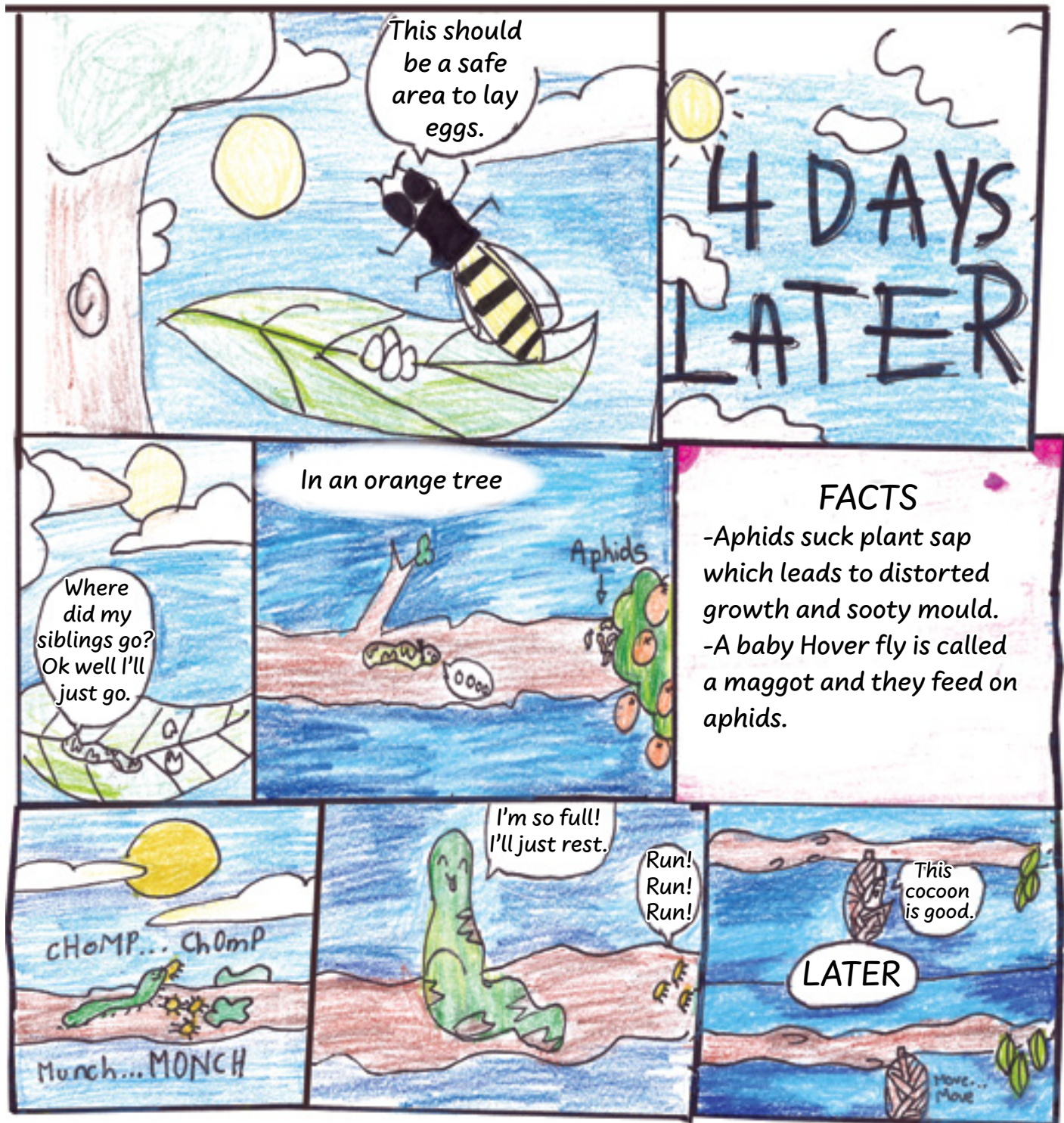


Hover flies (Syrphidae)

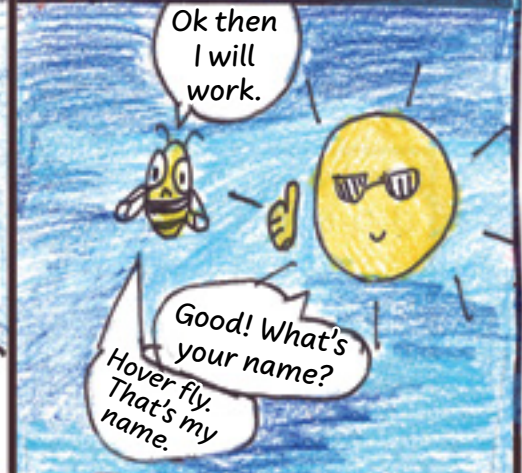
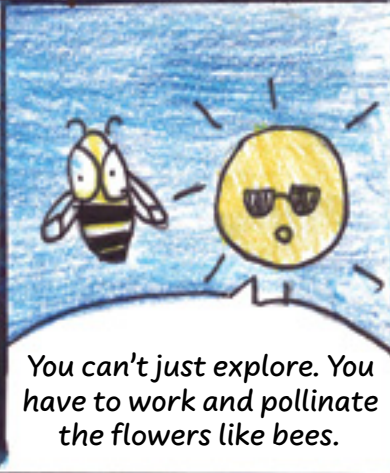
Hover flies include a large group of fly species that are often seen hovering mid-air, which gives them their name. These harmless insects are masters at mimicking bees and wasps. They do so by having similar warning colouration of black and yellow, a narrow wasp-like waist, and even the ability to mimic the stinging action. One of the key distinguishing features of a Hover fly is that it only has one pair of clear wings, while bees and wasps have two. Hover fly larvae are excellent natural pest controllers with their big appetites for pests such as aphids, while adults work tirelessly pollinating flowers as they feast on pollen and nectar. Found in many parts of the urban environment, Hover flies find shelter in places such as the underside of leaves, twigs, branches, long grasses and even rocks.

The Life of a Hover fly

by Isabella Zheng



10 DAYS
LATER



An Act of Kindness that Provided a Home

by Fanxi Wu

This is the story of a kind girl called Spring and a lucky, brave Hover fly. One warm spring day, a little larva Hover fly was born. It opened its eyes and saw a bright pop of colours surrounding it. It was perfect. The Hover fly saw clear blue sky, lovely green leaves and beautiful blooming colourful flowers. He loved it, a perfect home.



In less than no time when he was fed and watered, he decided to rest in his little home as a "pupa". When he came out, he would become a beautiful adult Hover fly.

But when the Hover fly came out, all the beautiful plants were gone. Poor Hover fly couldn't see any friends or family. He felt scared. The Hover fly used its newly grown wings and flew past nothing but rocks and buildings. "What is this place?" He thought.



But the Hover fly was brave and resilient. He waited patiently and believed that one day, he would have his lovely home and family back again.

After a few days went by, a pretty girl named Spring moved into the place where the Hover fly had been staying. Hover fly learned that she loved plants and nature. When she met Hover fly, she decided to make him a proper home and give Hover fly friends.

She planted many flowers in the city and made sure it had plenty of food. And Hover fly's dream came true! The sky was blue and clear and there were lovely green leaves and blooming flowers just like before. But the best of all was that Hover fly had family, friends and a new human friend, Spring!





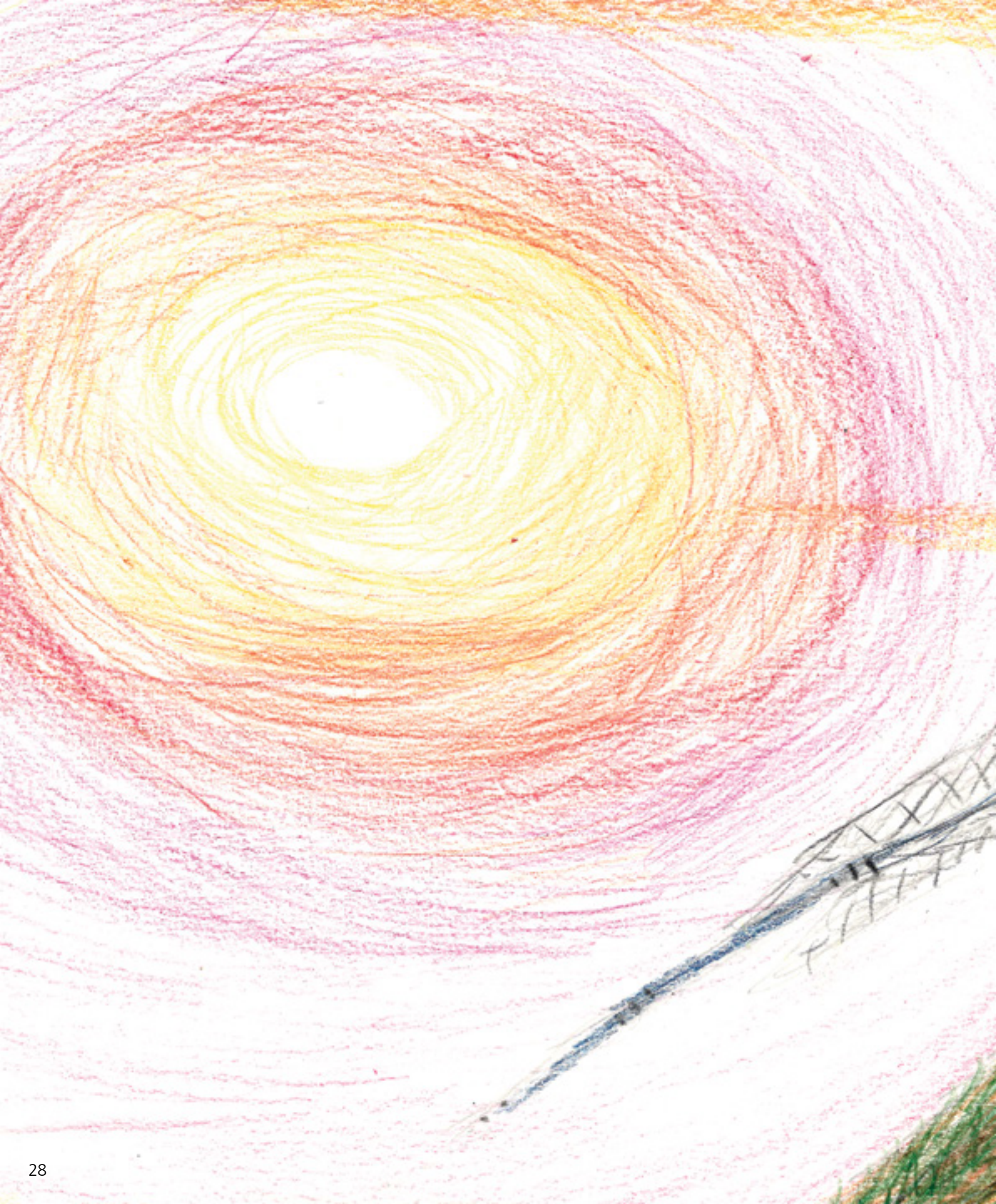
Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School

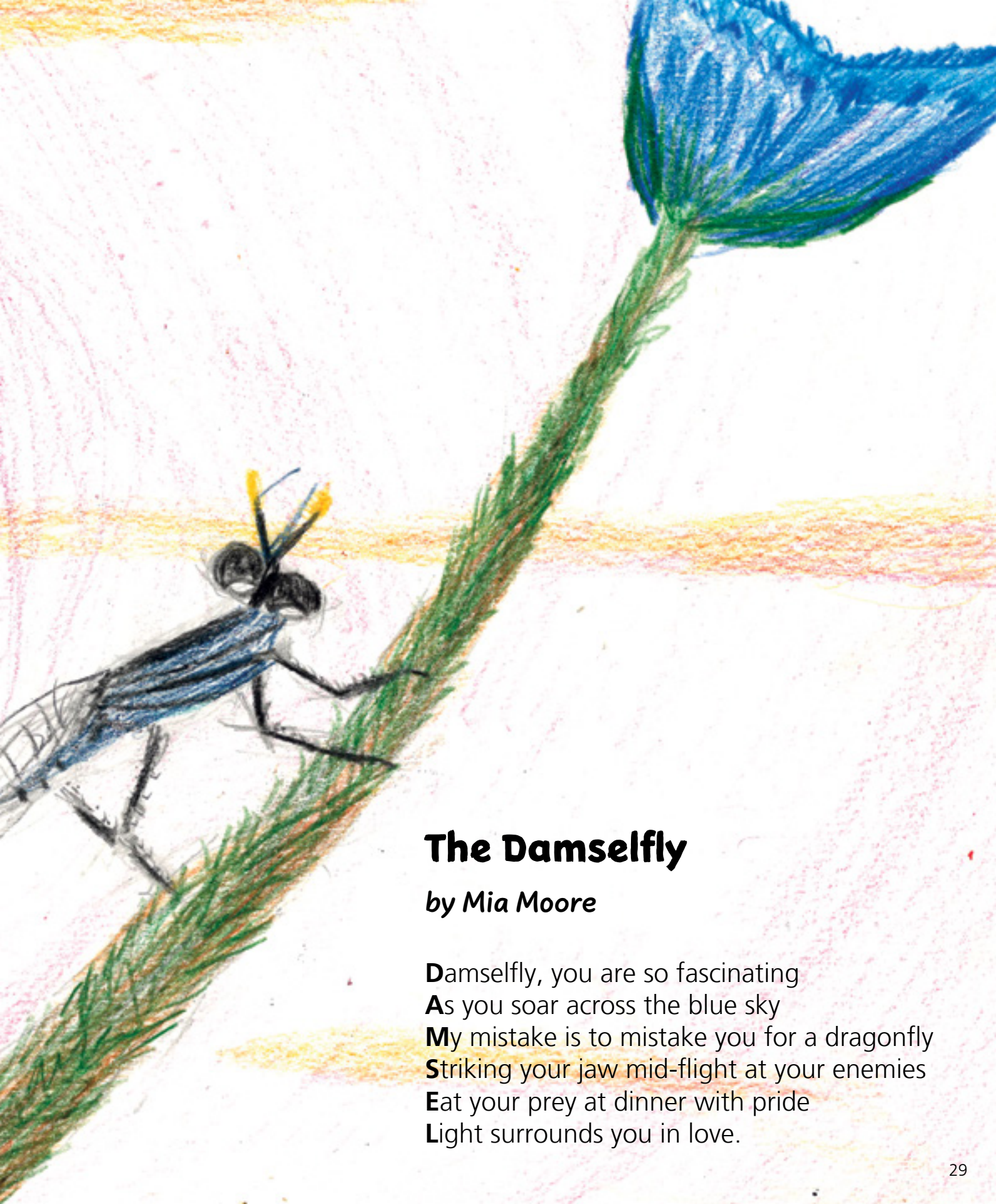
Artwork by
Josh Curtis



Common Bluetail Damsely (*Ischnura heterosticta*)

The Common Bluetail Damsely is one of the largest Damsely species in Australia. Often mistaken as dragonflies, damselys have slimmer, more slender bodies. When resting still, they fold up their wings instead of spreading them out like dragonflies do. Damselys have been around for more than 300 million years and have evolved into excellent hunters with superb flying skills and excellent vision. While adult damselys feed on mosquitoes and flies, the larvae feast on other aquatic invertebrates such as mosquito larvae and tadpoles. Aquatic environments such as freshwater creeks, lakes and ponds are where you would typically find them. These habitats are important nurseries, as well as breeding and hunting grounds for both larvae and adult damselys.





The Damselfly

by Mia Moore

Damselfly, you are so fascinating
As you soar across the blue sky
My mistake is to mistake you for a dragonfly
Striking your jaw mid-flight at your enemies
Eat your prey at dinner with pride
Light surrounds you in love.

Damselfly the Hunter

by Benedict Moss

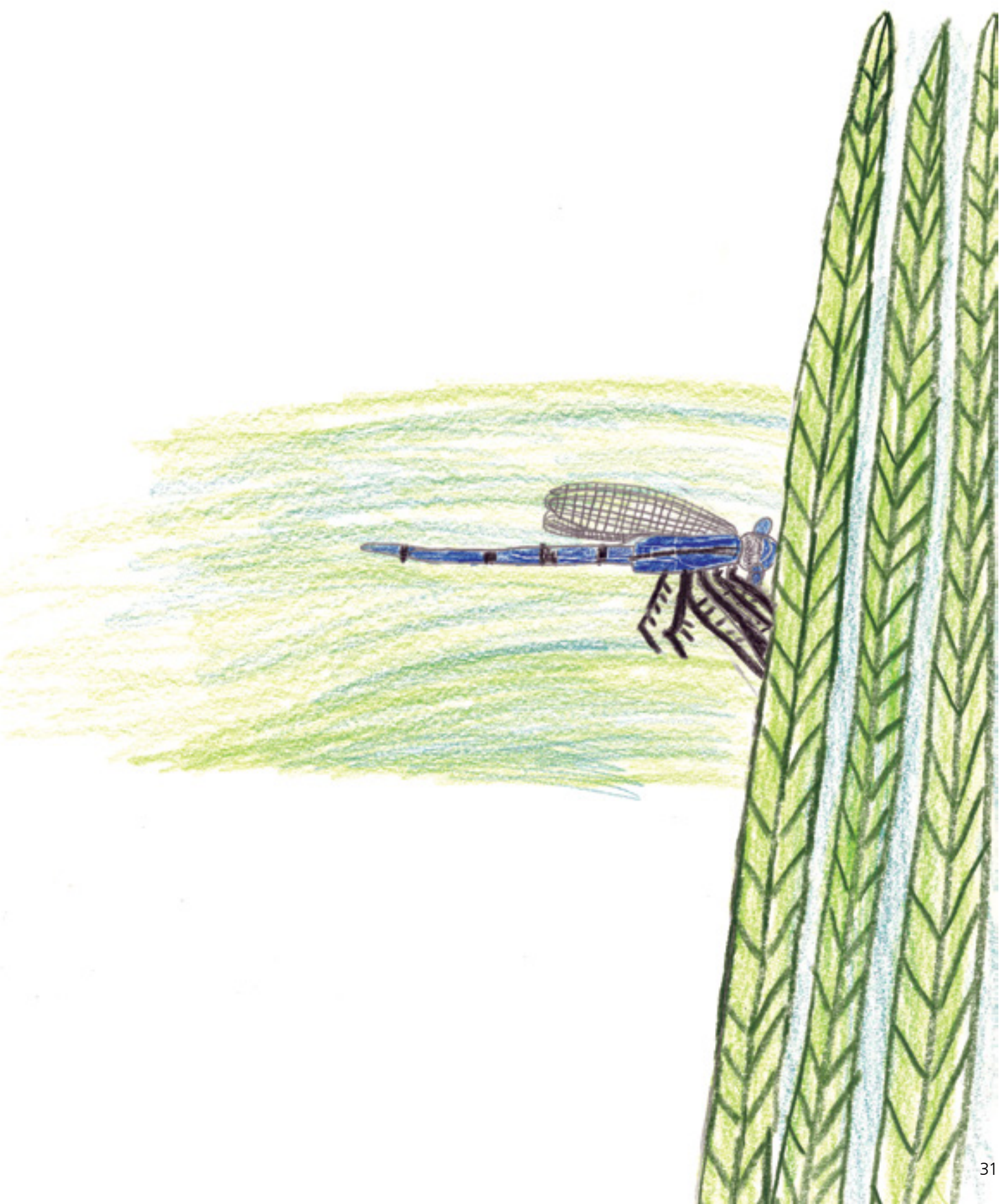
I shoot through the sky when I see a mosquito.
I am the fastest of the insects, but I lose the mosquito!
I know I can find him.

There he is!
I launch myself at him with my legs shaped like a basket,
I have him!

I zoom back to my friends and they explode with cheers,
I knew I had set a damselfly record.

I fly home.
I pass over the very same pond I grew up in.

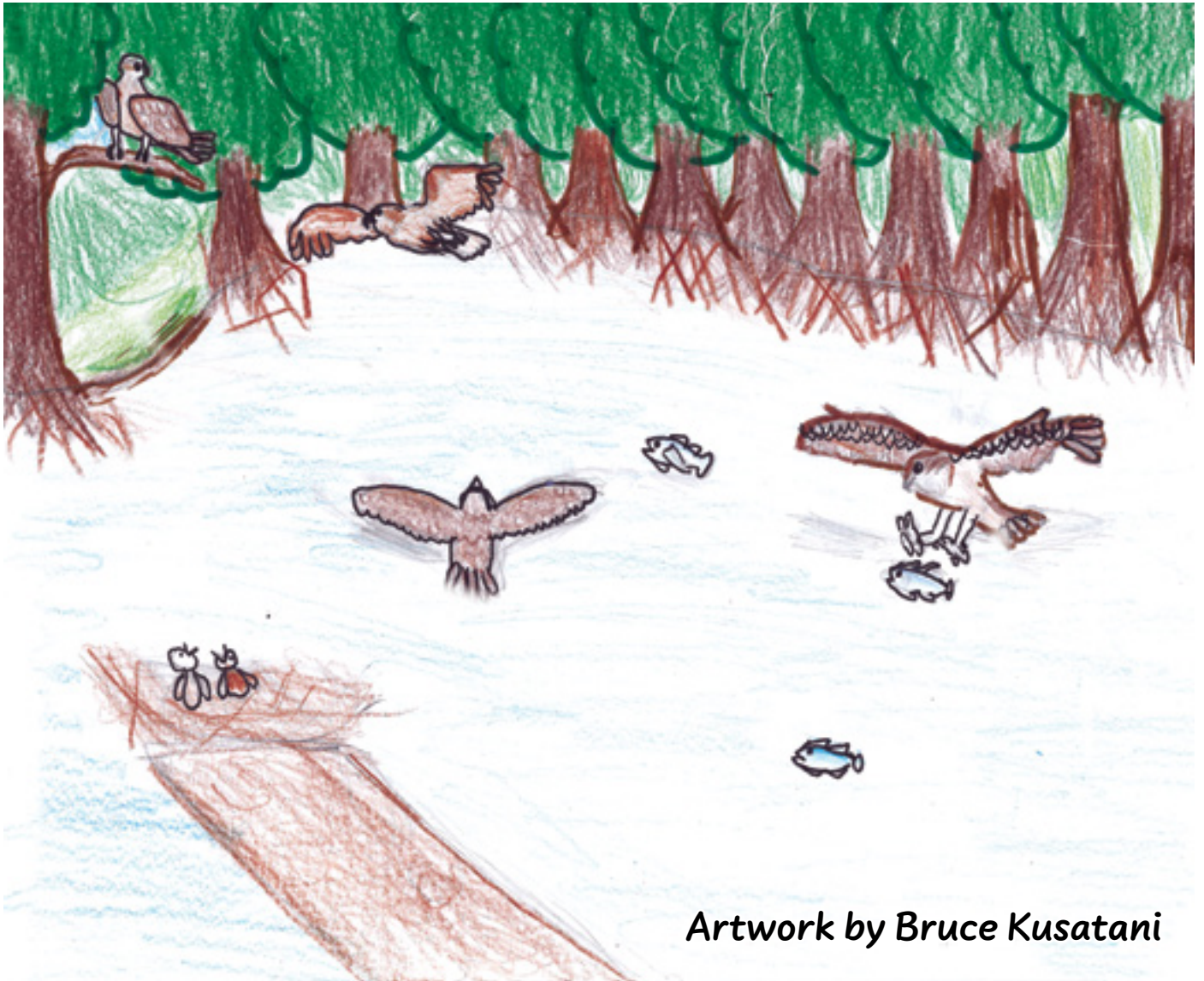
Up by the water that was so clear,
I see some mosquito larvae that back when I was a baby,
I would have hunted down.



Mowbray Public School



Artwork by Lili Shaw



Artwork by Bruce Kusatani

Eastern Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*)

The Eastern Osprey is a medium-sized fish-eating bird of prey with an impressive wingspan of up to 180 cm. This raptor is well adapted to hunting fish (such as mullet) using its strong, forward-facing talons with reversible outer toes and keen eyesight. Coastal and other aquatic environments are important habitats and fishing grounds for these birds. Locals in the Willoughby LGA may be familiar with a pair of Eastern Osprey that has taken up residence atop a spotlight at the sporting field at Mowbray Park. Sadly, due to a lack of suitable large nesting trees, these vulnerable birds are increasingly being forced to build their homes on unusual structures

The Battle between the Ospreys and Ravens

by Jackson Yee

Two hundred years after a truce between the Australian Ravens and Eastern Ospreys was made, an Eastern Osprey was born. This Eastern Osprey was not just any Eastern Osprey, it's colouring was off. Its feathers were a slight fire-red and it didn't have a dark band across its eyes. All the wondrous animals lived in peace now since there was a truce.

"Chirp! Squawk!" Shrieked the Eastern Osprey as it got absolutely bombarded by Ravens. It got away with a few large wounds. The Raven ruler, with greed in his eyes, had broken the truce!

After the attack, two of the most successful Osprey spies were sent on a secret mission. They reported some immensely terrible news. Apparently, the attack was a miniature distraction, and they were planning a ridiculously large attack to take the bush and keep it all to themselves. Then all the animals would bow down to them.

The monarch of the Eastern Ospreys bravely organised a battle plan that could be very risky. The number one priority was to save the newborn baby, even though it was an odd-looking chick.

"This bush belongs to all the animals, not just you!" roared the Osprey ruler. "How exactly are you supposed to stop us?" the Ravens sneered. "Attack!" commanded the Raven leader. The Ravens all swooped in.

Back in the hollows of a tree... It felt lonely without the Osprey Monarch. Suddenly, WHOOSH!!! The Osprey ruler appeared in a puff of smoke. "We have to fight them together!" he said, and off they went.

The battle was looking good for the Ospreys. Each Osprey was scratching with razor-sharp talons. In the end, every Raven except for the ruler had fled. The ruler launched at a male Osprey. Surely, he would perish if he got hit. Suddenly the newborn, odd-looking Osprey leapt in front of the male

Osprey, taking the hit. The newborn fledgling then turned into a pile of ashes.

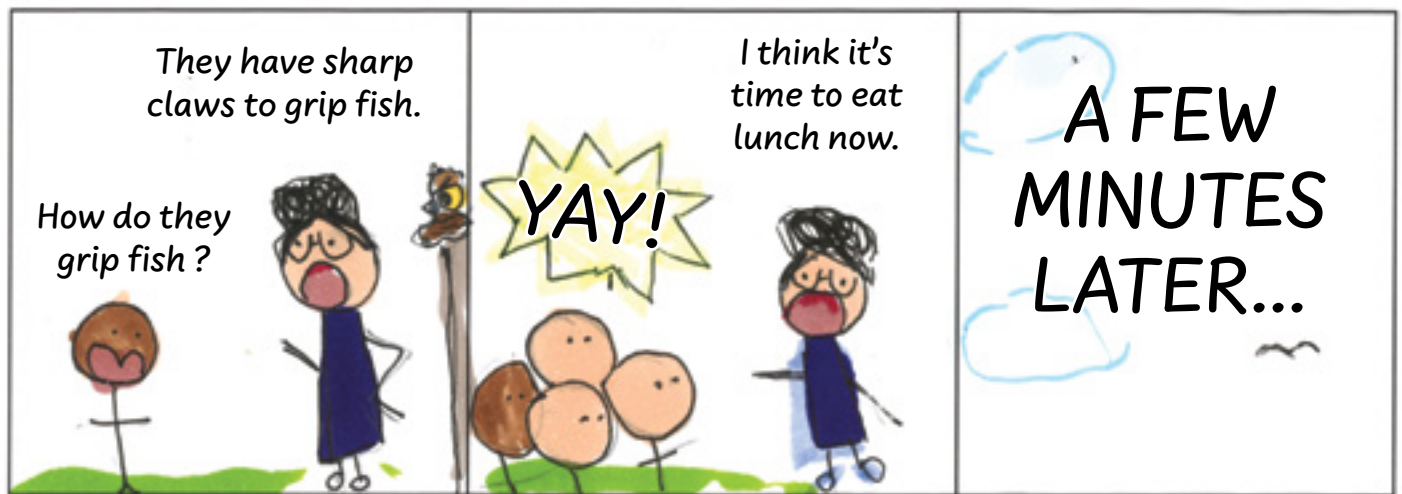
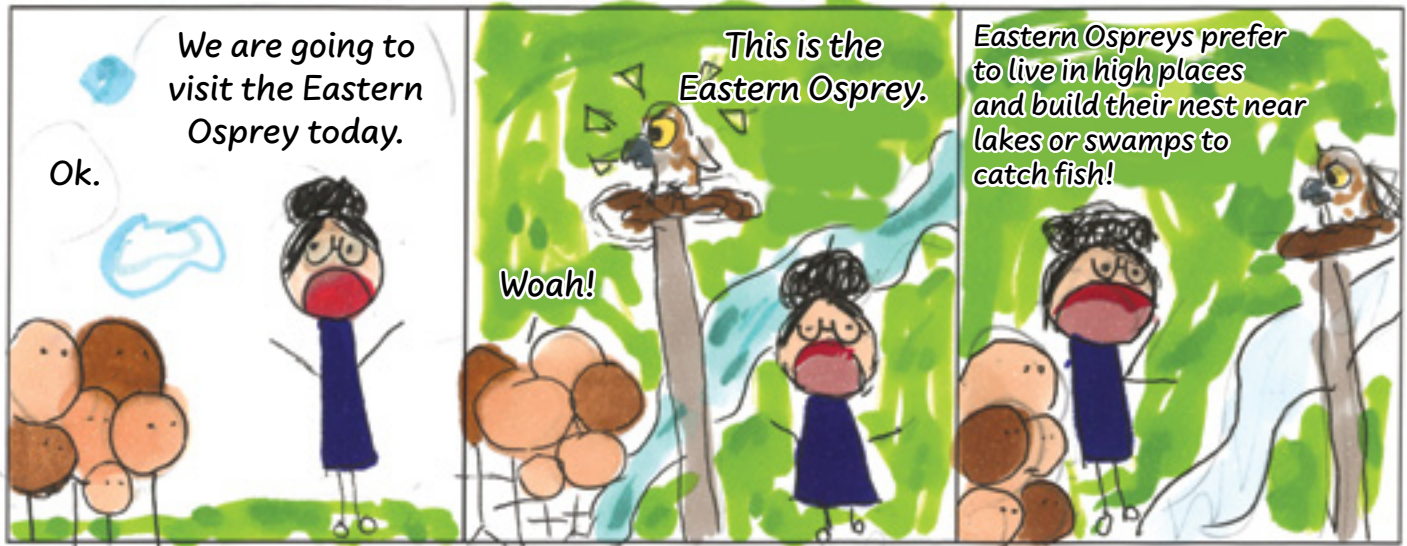
One day later, he was reborn from the pile of ashes, only to find that he is a Phoenix* not an Eastern Osprey.



*A Phoenix is a powerful mythical bird that symbolises rebirth, nature's regeneration and new beginnings.

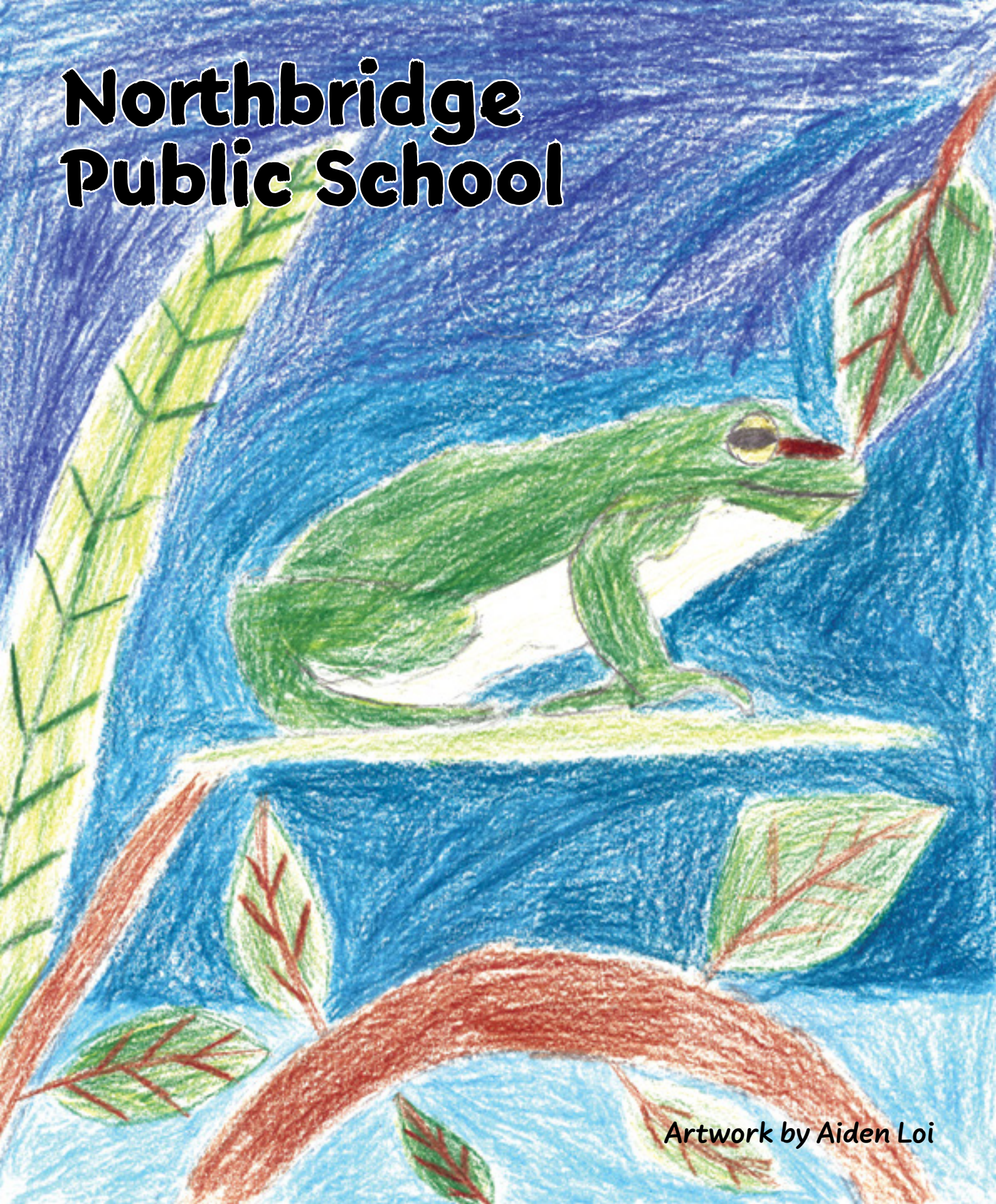
The Osprey's Revenge

by Henna Nguang





Northbridge Public School



Artwork by Aiden Loi



Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog (*Litoria fallax*)

A tiny frog just 2.5cm in length, the Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog is brightly coloured in green, white and bronze. During spring and summer, the smaller male frogs make their unique mating call to attract females. This unique call is a two-part call consisting of a long "Wreeeeek" sound followed by a sharp "kik kik, kik kik". They often live in large groups, typically on vegetation near bodies of water such as ponds and swamps where females also lay large clusters of eggs. In the Willoughby local area, you can often find these little frogs in places such as golf course ponds. Frogs around the world are in rapid decline due to disease and loss of suitable and healthy habitats. Building frog hotels using simple materials such as PVC pipes is an excellent way of inviting these amphibian friends into your backyard.

The Great Adventure of Jack the Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog

by Will Merrin

Down in the depths of Flat Rock Gully, lived an Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog called Jack. This tree frog was lonely. All of his other friends had hopped to the other side of the gully but he couldn't jump as far as them, so he was stuck on the side where kids build bike jumps.

Jack heard the rattling of chains and the clicks of gears all day and night. He stayed in his little pond all day and waited and waited. Then suddenly, he had a great idea. He thought about his plan each night and perfected it even more.

Because Jack was so small, he could hold onto a kid's seat! He was so excited about his idea that he hopped onto the track and almost got squished. The next day, he hopped onto the kid's bike and got ready. The gears of the bike rattled and clanged as the kid climbed up the hill, and Jack was getting scared. The kid put his feet on the pedals and started moving. He pulled on his handlebars, and they were in the air. Then, they landed with a loud thud.

Jack hopped off the bike and went to meet all his friends. He told his story to his friends and they were amazed. They spread the story to all the frogs in Flat Rock Gully and now everybody knows about the story of Jack, The Great Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog.



The Frog Race

by Zac Fisher

There was once a bunch of tiny frogs who arranged a running competition. This race took place at an extremely high tower, one of the best towers known to man. A big crowd gathered around the tower to watch the race and to cheer on the contestants.

The race began...

No one in the crowd really believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower. They shouted, "Oh, this is way too difficult!!! No one will ever make it to the top! There is not even a chance, the tower is just too high."

The tiny frogs began collapsing, one by one, except for those who kept thinking positive.

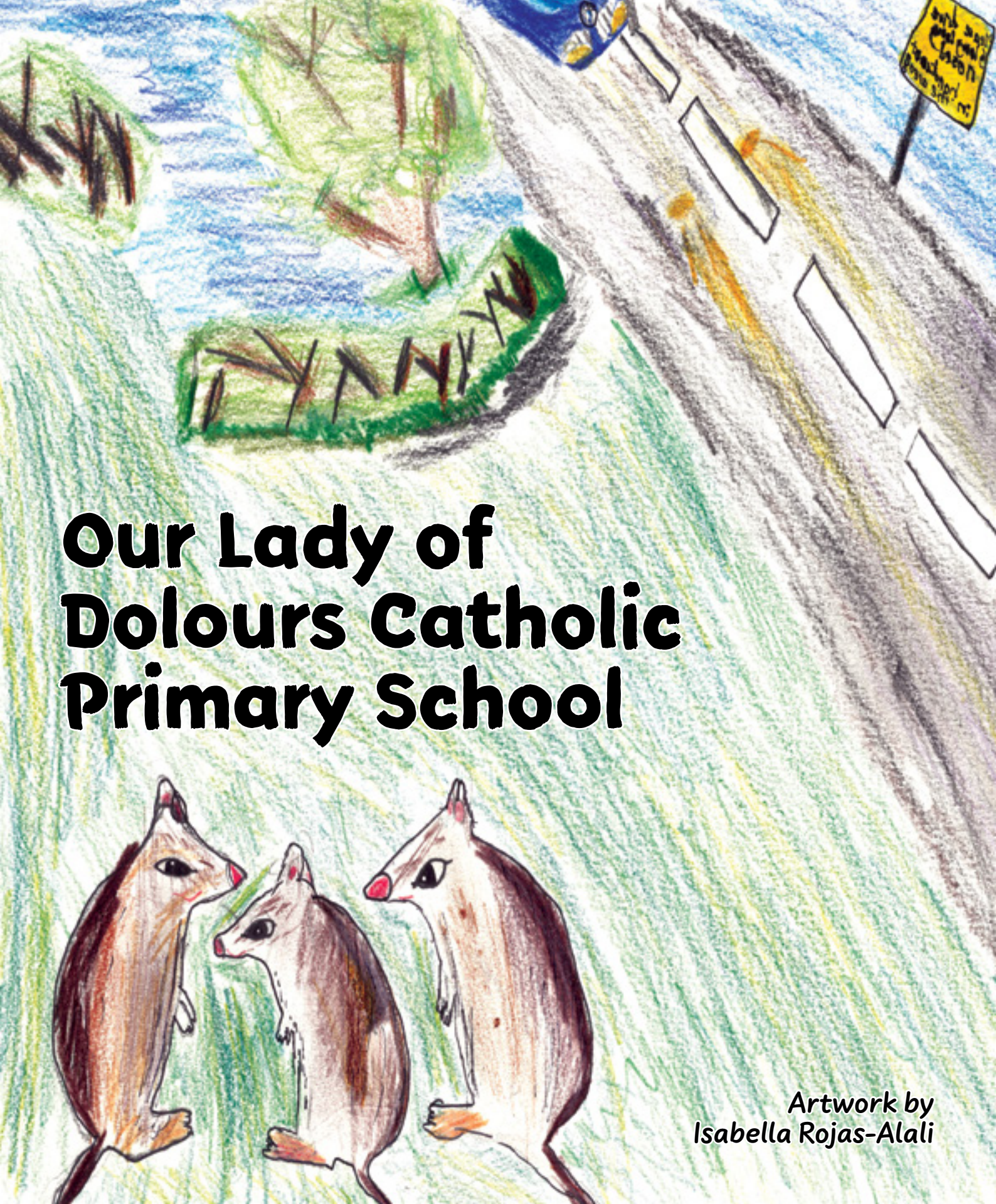
More tiny frogs got tired and gave up. But one continued higher and higher. This one would not give up! And he reached the top.

Everyone wanted to know how this one frog managed such a great feat.

His secret? The little frog was deaf!!

The wisdom of this story is, ignore the pessimism of others. It can take your dreams away from you. Stay positive.





Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Primary School

Artwork by
Isabella Rojas-Alali



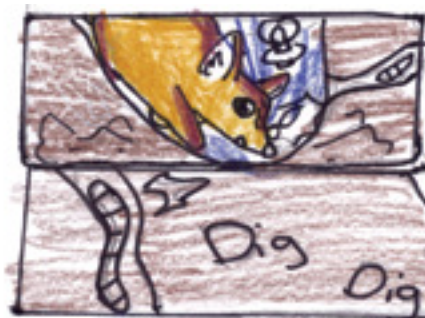
Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*)

The Long-nosed Bandicoot is a small marsupial native to Australia. It is easily recognised by its long, pointed snout which it uses to search for food, including insects, fungi and plant roots. Next time you go on a bushwalk, be sure to keep an eye out for small cone-shaped holes in the ground. These are left behind by bandicoots as they dig for food at night. By constantly digging, bandicoots help improve the health of the soil by turning over organic matter and bringing deep soil and their nutrients up to the surface. Bandicoots build nests made of grass and other plant materials among shrubs, hollow logs or old rabbit burrows. Unfortunately, the Long-nosed Bandicoots face many threats, including introduced predators such as dogs, cats and foxes and dangers from cars in urban areas.

Fox Chase

by Sarita Jiang





Escaped

by Greyson Wei

CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH. At 2:00am, a young bandicoot galloped across Artarmon in the chilly rainforest, looking for food. He used his strong hands and long nose to dig and look for fungi, insects, tree roots and a shelter for tomorrow.

Two hours later...

The young bandicoot had dug up 200 holes. He finally found some delicious food. He gobbled down on the fungi he had found. Meanwhile, a cheeky fox was waiting for the bandicoot to fall for his trap. The young bandicoot galloped across the rainforest. The cheeky fox waited and waited until the trap got triggered.

The cheeky fox checked the trap and when he noticed that it wasn't a bandicoot, it was a black rat. The fox sighed, "Well it is better than nothing." Suddenly, the fox saw the bandicoot and chased after him! The bandicoot was running for his life! When the bandicoot saw a human made trap, he got an idea and stopped suddenly. The fox couldn't stop in time and got caught in the human trap!

The young bandicoot was safe at last and went back to his shelter to enjoy a lovely sleep.





St. Philip Neri Catholic Primary School

Artwork by Joshua Zhao



Artwork by Sofia Paparella

Australian King Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*)

The Australian King Parrot is a colourful and familiar sight in some of our local bushland reserves. Both male and female birds are adorned with emerald green and scarlet red feathers, with the males being the only Australian parrots with a completely red head. Feeding on a variety of seeds, fruits and berries, they play an important role in helping plants disperse their seeds. Tree hollows provide precious and vital homes for these birds to shelter, nest and raise their young. The Australian King Parrots are particularly picky with the tree hollows they choose to use, preferring old Eucalyptus trees that have deep hollows with an entrance at least 10m above the ground! Building nest boxes is a great way to provide artificial alternative homes for the King Parrots.

Home Sweet Home (A Bird's Perspective)

by Alessia Tredwell and Emily Scoble

Up to our hollow, up to our home,
Nice and warm, where our chicks can roam.
But now it's gone, no more play,
We have to find a new home by the end of the day.

Searching, searching, nothing can be seen,
Flying over our Australian bush, untouched and clean.
I take a glance and through the corner of my eye,
I see a vast tree that reaches the sky.

I see a big hollow right in the tree,
Just big enough for my family and me.
I fly towards it, and my heart blossoms,
I peer inside and... ring-tailed possums.

I turn around, my heart full of sorrow,
Then I hear a voice coming from the hollow.

"Stop!" Says a possum, with grey and black hair.
"There's plenty of space. Why don't we share?"

I turn around, my mind spinning,
I glance back at my family grinning,
Maybe our new life is just beginning.

Our life is perfect, now and forever,
In this hollow, my family now together.
The two possums don't bother us,
They have been so kind, they have earned our trust.

We're moving on from our tragedy days,
Right into a brand new phase.
In a home, you're not supposed to be alone,
Family is what makes it Home Sweet Home.



Me and You

by Josephine Harris

I spread my wings and head toward the sky,
Sometimes days are hard to get by.
I'm always alone when I fall asleep at night,
The feeling of loneliness is so bright.

The sun has risen so I take flight,
There is a lovely lady in my sight.
My only chance,
I'm ready to dance,
I start to prance.
I think she likes my lovely pants.
She starts to look,
She thinks I look good.

The moon is up,
The sun is down,
The leaves are falling all around.
As I huddle in my hollow I hear a sound,
I listen closely and do not frown.
I see her lovely face at night,
Something's wrong as she takes flight,
I hope that she will be alright.

My mind is buzzing as I search the sky,
I never got to say goodbye.
The day goes by like it never began,
I start to think I'm not her man.
Hiding in the leaves, afraid to come out,
With a massive feeling of worry and doubt.
I fly back to my hollow, scared and sad,
My body starts to feel achy and bad.

My worry starts to fade away,
As I see her face today.
In my hollow, it's now or never,
We will always be together.
I'm not lonely, not anymore,
As I open my new door.



St. Pius X College



Artwork by Hugo Hasanoglu



Common Ringtail Possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*)

This adorable marsupial is relatively common in the urban environment. During the day, the nocturnal Ringtail Possum sleeps in its soccer-ball-sized nest built out of sticks and branches, called a drey. A single drey can cozily fit up to 8 possums and is usually built in the canopy and limbs of trees to hide from predators. One of the most distinctive features of the Common Ringtail Possum is its long prehensile tail with white tip, which it uses as a “fifth limb” to climb and move between branches. The Common Ringtail Possum enjoys a varied diet of leaves, flowers and fruits and therefore plays important roles as pollinators and seed dispersers in our local bushland. Making artificial dreys using hanging baskets is a wonderful way to create habitats for these furry marsupials.

The Possum Chase

by Alexander Zhang

The dawn of a new day arises as a Ringtail Possum woke up in his drey. The young Ringtail Possum is called Pine. As he got up to the huge Eucalyptus tree forest, Pine reached for a Eucalyptus leaf. Munching on the fresh leaf, Pine thought about exploring the forest. Finishing the leaf, Pine went off to explore the unknown.

Running through the branches, Pine quickly ducked and jumped over the undergrowth. Suddenly, a shadow was hovering over him. Pine looked up to see a Powerful Owl soaring over him. Rushing through the branches, Pine tried to outrun the owl, but he was no match. The owl dived down with its talons wide open. Unthinkingly, Pine jumped down from the branch, using his prehensile tail to hang onto the branch, just avoiding the owl's talons. Climbing back, Pine quickly thought of what to do. Remembering Tracey, a nice and kind woman, he scurried through the trees and landed softly on the grass of Tracey's backyard.

As fast as lightning, Pine ran up a trunk and leapt into an artificial drey, protected by a wooden roof. Then, he heard a bang. Pine looked out to see the Powerful Owl flying away. He must have given up, thought Pine. Climbing back up to the trees, Pine found a branch to rest on. Suddenly, he sensed another animal on the branch. He turned to see a Powerful Owl sleeping next to him! Suddenly the eyes of the owl slowly opened.



One Lonely Possum

by Massimo Guerrera, Artwork by Liam Gallery

A slight blur of flames captures the possum's eye. "MOVE OUT!" says a teenager to his friends. As the teens run out of the bushfire, the possum wakes up only to feel his heart dropping and fear inside his body telling him to get away. While all the flames surround him, there is one small gap left. As he jumps along to escape, he knows that the hunt for a new home begins.

Hunting for a new tree is ridiculously hard especially as you need to find the perfect tree. There are a lot of creatures out in the wild and for a Ringtail Possum, it is even harder because Powerful Owls are everywhere in the area.

The possum's eyes are alert over the haze of the smoke, being guided through the midnight sky. His heart is whispering to rest and stay calm whilst his brain is telling him to leave as soon as he could. Just like most possums, he listens uncontrollably to his brain.

As the day comes, and the possum maneuvers through the bushland, the sky is clear and after hours of searching, he finds one massive house covered in thick white paint. A decision comes to mind, and he jumps into the attic window. He crawls carefully through the house, fearful of what he might find. The possum is tired and just wants to sleep. Maybe it is safe in this house.

He discovers a clueless man looking at him with scary eyes. The possum circles the room, and the man picks up a broom and begins to chase the possum out the door. The possum scurries through the grass, continuing to search for a new home and some food.



St. Thomas Catholic Primary School



Artwork by Sophie Blackman



Artwork by Eve Hair

Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*)

With a shiny black body, contrasted with a crimson red underside, the Red-bellied Black Snake is one of the most iconic snake species in our Australian bush. Unlike most snake species which lay eggs, these snakes give birth to live young, up to 40 babies at once! They favour moist areas near bodies of water and are surprisingly great swimmers, capable of staying fully submerged underwater for as long as 30 minutes! Being an ectotherm, they regulate their body temperatures by sunbathing or retreating to cool shady areas. Some of their favorite hiding spots include logs, old mammal burrows and grassy habitats. Encounters with the Red-bellied Black Snake in our local bushland are rare as they are quite elusive and would often shy away from humans.

Predator and Prey

by Emily Press

It's a hot summer day
And you start to get hungry
You then realise
It's a plan you must devise
Hunting here and there
Hunting everywhere
Is that a frog you see?
Dinner finally!
Just as you reach its path
You think you have a chance
but...
It's off with a hip and a hop
Wait...
Is that a baby snake?
Perfect prey it would make
You're silent on the grass
When you're near the baby snake
You pounce and make a brake
With a sliver and a slide
A knip and a knap
No snake for you tonight.



Millie

Reunited!

by Chloe Donald and Nina Gray

I leapt into the crystal clear water, relief flooding through my body, heat radiating off the morning sun. Suddenly, a flash of midnight black and crimson red tore through the water. Then came the unmistakable forked tongue of the Red-bellied Black Snake. It had sensed my presence. The sinister smirk on its face proved it wasn't here to make friends. Ignoring the warmth of the water, my body froze, my toes digging into the luscious river floor. Fear tumbled over me like a wave crashing on the sand. Just. Stay. Still.

In a flash it was there. I dared to breathe, would it be my last? I breathed again. Nothing. I waited, waited for the excruciating pain of the bite. 1000 kilometres an hour wouldn't describe the speed of my heart right now.

With the cool breeze and strong sun came a vivid flashback...

"It's okay," I cooed.

The tiny creature whined as I gently dabbed at its wounds. It was the most stunning creature I had ever seen. A Red-bellied Black Snake.

"It must be the same snake!" I thought to myself. One way to find out. I held my hand out, wincing in fear. It swam the few inches it needed to get to me and crawled up my arm. How had I forgotten? I had released him near here. This habitat was his perfect home, all his meals perched on nearby rocks!

Reunited again my little snake. A tear said goodbye to my glistening eye. I had never been happier.



Willoughby Public School



Artwork by Ryan Chen



Artwork by Julie Vidal

Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*)

With a black and white head, bright yellow facial wattle and a striking “kekekeke” call, the Masked Lapwing is a bird that is hard to miss. Known for their protective and bold nature, Masked Lapwing parents fearlessly defend their nests and chicks from potential threats by swooping and diving at them. Being ground-dwelling birds, they spend most of their lives on the ground around marshes, mudflats and open grasslands where they feed on insects and worms. Many Masked Lapwings now live in the urban environment and sometimes make poor housing choices by insisting on nesting and raising their chicks in the middle of a sports field, grassy park, popular beaches and even on the flat roofs of buildings. As a result, they are often affected by dogs, human disturbances and lawnmowers.

An Adventure for Masked Lapwing

by Anyee Thoo

Humans are now coming, chattering along the sand,
And joggers run across the worn land.
But peace is disturbed, by kids with bikes,
Shouting and daring each other, interrupting the hike.

It's only a few seconds till the boys see the nest,
Oh no! The teenagers pick up sticks with zest.
And throw them at Lapwing's chicks!
Lapwing was horrified; she needed a trick.

When daylight shines, the morning Cockatoos screech,
And a Masked Lapwing wakes up in the nest on the sheltered sand
of the beach.

The Cockatoos go for their dawn shower,
While Lapwing glances at the tree above with the wattle flowers.

But she had an idea, and flew away,
The chicks were scared, they thought, "Have we been led astray?"
But Mother and the Cockatoo swooped in,
And protected their kin.

The teenagers ran fast away,
And the Cockatoos went about their way,
And the Masked Lapwing continued her way through.
When night was due,
The proud bird looked up at the moon,
And started her "kekeke" midnight tune...



Masked Lapwings

by Ethan Pringle, Artwork by Elizabeth Crabtree

The sun had dived into hiding, yet it was still hot and humid. Four eggs sat there, waiting. It had been four weeks of protecting and defending. Vivian had been worried sick waiting and yearning for the moment to come. That very moment arrived with the slightest sound of an egg cracking and little birds chirping. She was overjoyed when two eggs burst open to reveal Ethan and Ryan. But then ZRRRRRRRR!! A lawnmower named Kai came charging into the nest. Vivian was only fast enough to save two, Ethan and Ryan, who had just hatched from their eggshells.

2 months later...

Vivian thought that this was the end but no, it had just started. Vivian just wanted to keep her children Ethan and Ryan safe, so she needed a plan. A plan that will send this formidable creature back to the deep dark depths of the cave that they call the shed. Vivian had witnessed Kai before, and she knew his weaknesses and strengths. He can easily run us over but if we burst the yellow box that they call the fuel tank, then it will run out of power. "So that is the plan!" said Vivian, her voice filled with confidence. "Ethan and Ryan, you guys distract Kai while I will get ready to dive and break the yellow box," Vivian whispers.

Later in the afternoon everything seemed dark and gloomy, the world was filled with despair, even the trees looked droopy and down. ZRRRRRRRR!!! This time they were ready to fight. They took off, speeding towards Kai, zooming around and around, blocking Kai's eyes, until the perfect moment... Vivian came pelting down, faster than the speed of light, but got whacked by Kai and bounced off him sending her to the ground.

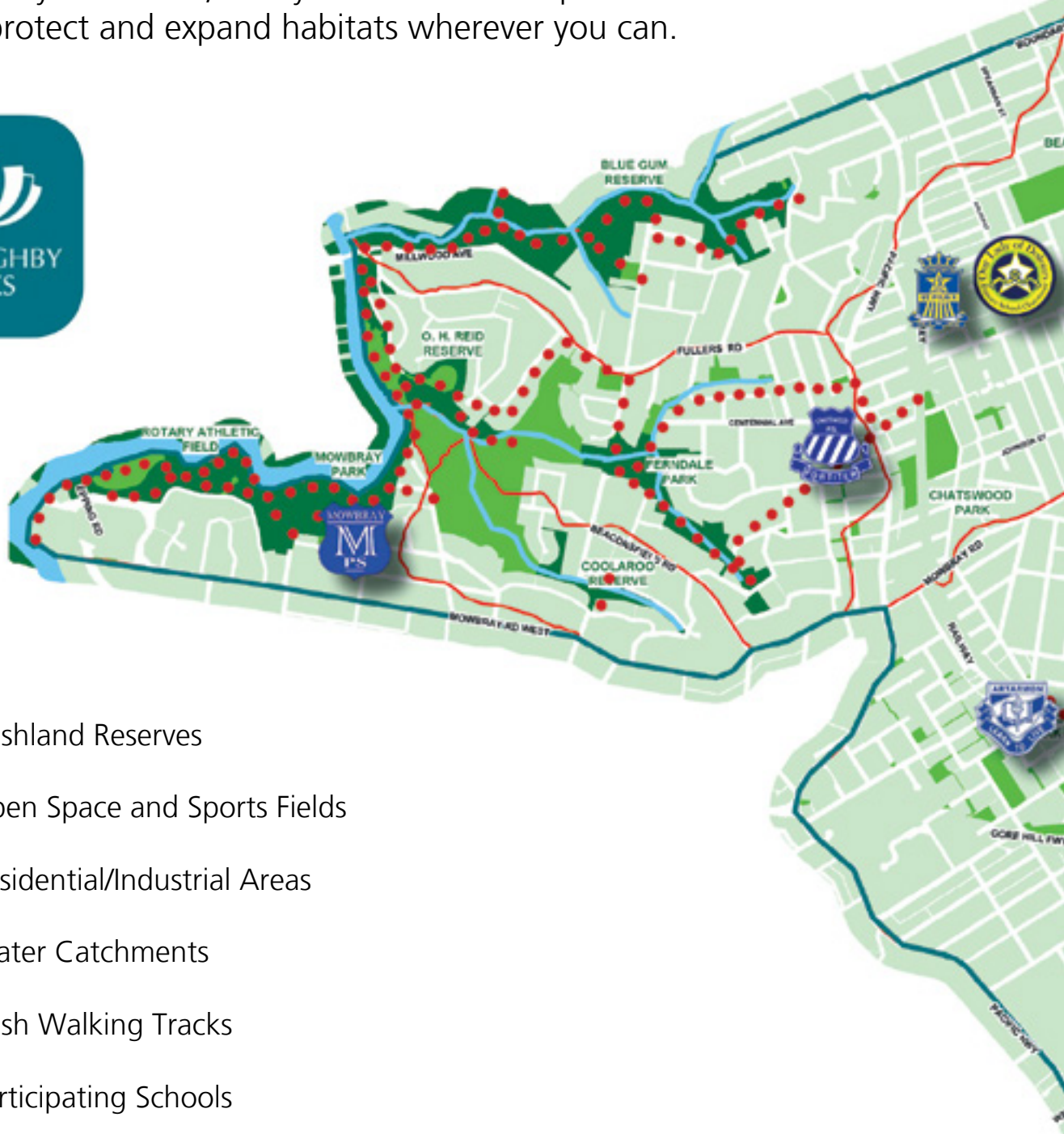
It was now or never. Ethan's fate depended on this moment. Ethan leapt forward, wings outstretched, causing a beautiful shadow to cast down upon Kai then CRACK!!! The plastic was adorned with cracks, petrol was leaking around Kai, but nothing happened in that moment... Kai laughed wickedly. It came barging toward Ethan, ripping up blades of grass, adding a trail of destruction in its wrath. Then, suddenly, it stopped dead in its tracks standing there stagnant... They had done it!







Ethan's heart lifted as he emerged victorious, he was flooded with pride. But this was not the end. Ethan flew over to mum faster than he had ever flown before. "Are you alright mum?" Ethan and Ryan asked with intense concern "Yes" she replied, smiling. Ethan and Ryan were relieved. They flew home and the world around them seemed a little bit brighter.



Our Wildlife Calls Willoughby Home

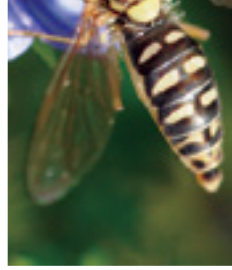
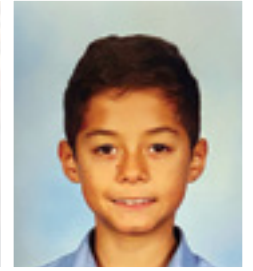
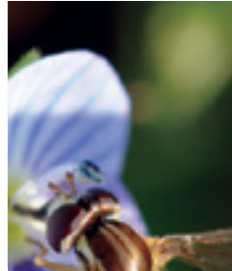
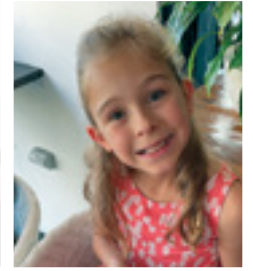
Wildlife cannot survive just within the green spaces on this map. Species move to find food, water, shelter and a mate. Microhabitats exist within your school, backyard and streetscapes. Watch out for wildlife, protect and expand habitats wherever you can.



-  Bushland Reserves
-  Open Space and Sports Fields
-  Residential/Industrial Areas
-  Water Catchments
-  Bush Walking Tracks
-  Participating Schools



This book was created by Willoughby's



kids and is dedicated to our local wildlife.



The cycle of a Hoverfly

