Long Necks and Short Tales

A Compilation of Children's Short Stories and Artworks

Part of Willoughby City Council’s Wildlife Story Book Series
Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
Protecting Willoughby's Wildlife

Chapter 1 - Artarmon Public School - Christmas Beetle ........................................................................... 5
Santa Claws' Big Adventure by Charlie Donnellan and Rachael Gong
The Christmas Beetle Conundrum by Tara Allen and Nena Harmstorf

Chapter 2 - Castle Cove Public School - Brown Antechinus ................................................................. 11
Brown Antechinus by Sophia Au
Another Home for Cookie by Mia Harrison

Chapter 3 - Chatswood Public School - Powerful Owl ........................................................................ 17
Powerful Owl by Xanthe Elizabeth Wolfe
Oli the Powerful Owl by Cailyn Yuan

Chapter 4 - Mowbray Public School - Buff-banded Rail ...................................................................... 23
Buff-banded Rail by Minchae Kim and Sara Thompson
Tilly Sees the World by Anna Lucas

Chapter 5 - Northbridge Public School - Golden-crowned Snake ........................................................ 29
The Snake Prince by Lizzy Judson
How the Golden-crowned Snake got its Crown by Emi Watson

Chapter 6 - Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Primary School - Superb Lyrebird ...................................... 35
How the Lyrebird got its song and mate by Marco Balverde
Finding Love by Venedict Valerio and Jaydan Lee

Chapter 7 - St. Philip Neri Catholic Primary School - Eastern Long-necked Turtle ................................ 41
How the Eastern Long-necked Turtle Got His Name by Lucy O'Brien
How the Eastern Long-necked Turtle Got its Name by Hugo Paddon-Row

Chapter 8 - St. Pius X College - Eastern Blue-tongue Skink ................................................................ 47
Red the Blue-tongue by Joshua Monico
Skink's Got My Toes! by Romy Koziol

Chapter 9 - St. Thomas' Catholic Primary School - Red-crowned Toadlet ........................................... 53
Red Crowned Toadlet by Dominique Doust
Anyone Can Be a King by Piper Warner

Chapter 10 - Willoughby Public School - Black Prince Cicada .......................................................... 59
Who Am I? by Elyna Lau
Darkness by Jonah Sarich-Prince, artwork by Jayden Colacino
Willoughby’s Wildlife Story Book Series

2015
- Magic Corridors

2014
- There’s Something in the Water

2013
- Beauty and the Mini-Beasts

2012
- Miss the Insects’ State
- Pig
- The Reel That Don’t Have Their Bizzle
- The Hunter That Couldn’t Stop
- The Hurt Little Lorikeet
- Daredevil Darren
- Mike and the Moon
- Sita’s Feather

2011
- Hello, the Baby Long-nosed Bandicoot
- How Sugar Gliders Got Their Wings
- Oleander’s Mope
- The King Name Game
Willoughby’s Wildlife Story Book Series

This book of short stories is part of an educational project designed to facilitate ‘kids teaching kids’ about local wildlife in the Willoughby area.

Year 5 classes at each primary school in Willoughby were asked to focus on a local wildlife species that has become rare over the years. Examples of these include the Superb Lyrebird, Golden-crowned Snake and Red-crowned Toadlet. An educational talk was provided for students to learn more about these species and highlight the importance of biodiversity in ecosystems. Then, students shared their knowledge by writing a short story on their designated animal and read it to a younger student.

This book contains two stories from each participating school. The book and others from previous years’ competitions are held at local and school libraries across Willoughby. Similar to last year, books will be distributed to schools and libraries across Greater Sydney, spreading the conservation message further.

This project is part of Willoughby City Council’s wider Bushland Interpretive Program. The program engages the local community to live with the natural environment in a sustainable way, and helps the Willoughby community understand and participate in the preservation of the environment through its educational and awareness raising activities.

Willoughby City Council hopes each story in the series will inspire more children to take a keen interest in their local environment and wildlife.

If you would like to learn more about Willoughby’s environment, please contact Willoughby City Council on 9777 1000 or visit www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au to view our list of guided bushwalks, events and walking track maps.
Protecting Willoughby’s Wildlife

To preserve and protect our native wildlife, Council has designated selected bushland reserves in the City as ‘Wildlife Protection Areas’ (WPAs). These areas have special habitat that help protect some of our most unique wildlife.
Christmas Beetles

• The Christmas Beetle is a member of the scarab family and spends most of its life underground as pupae feeding on plant roots and decaying plant. The pupa looks like a c-shaped grub which you may have seen when you dig in the garden.

• Christmas Beetles emerge as a beetle from underground around Christmas time, hence their name. Their carapace are in shades of brown and green and usually have a beautiful metallic sheen.

• Christmas Beetles are large beetles, growing to around 20-30mm and they live on Eucalypt trees where they feed on the leaves.

• The total number of Christmas beetles reported in the Sydney area has declined over the last 30 years due to grassy woodland areas being developed for housing and the use of pesticides that kill scarab beetles in lawns.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks.

Help protect Eucalyptus trees and grassy areas so that Christmas beetles have a variety of food sources and places to lay their eggs and grow up as pupae. Avoid using pesticides in the garden including the lawn where the pupae may be living.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.

Christmas Beetle - artwork by Annabel Hutcheson & Talia Yin
Santa Claws' Big Adventure
by Charlie Donnellan and Rachael Gong

I saw the last house in the distance, my last stop. Deliver these Christmas presents and my job would be done until next year. As I trudged towards the house my wings fluttered nervously but my beetle instincts told me to keep going. As I reached the house the Christmas lights lit up the place invitingly. As a beetle, I couldn't resist the light. Knowingly, I walked around the common bug zapper and fluttered inside.

The first thing I saw, as I entered the final house, was the Christmas tree. It was smothered with candy canes, baubles, tinsel and lights. I was touched. All that was missing was the star. I flew up to the bedroom of the child and quietly entered. On top of the bed was a posh looking Persian cat. I crept past and put the presents in the child's stocking. CHLOE was stitched on the front. As I prepared to leave, I heard a faint meow. I turned around just in time to see the cat lunge forward and close its paws around me.

"My name is Sleek," the cat hissed. "Any last words?"

I drew a deep breath as the cat's sharp teeth neared.

"Sleek! Let go of that poor creature."

The lights had been switched on and behind Sleek was a cross looking girl. Chloe. Sleek was lifted up and thrown out of the room, hissing as he went. Chloe gave me an apologetic smile.

"Sorry about Sleek. His stomach speaks louder than his heart. I wish I knew your name."

"Santa Claws," I tried to say but from the expression on her face, I have a feeling that all she heard was the chittering of a bug.

"You Christmas beetles are so pretty! I wish I could fly away with you!"

With that, she walked down the stairs to the tree upon which I sat to be her star. When Chloe saw me she smiled and seeing that made my heart melt.

"Stay there!" she ordered and left the room.

I spotted Sleek underneath the tree preparing to pounce. Luckily at that moment Chloe returned. She held a camera and I smiled as she snapped my picture.

"Goodbye beetle!" she whispered. "Goodbye Chloe," I thought as she opened the window and I flew away. Another successful Christmas. More successful than others will ever know, because I had made a friend.
The Christmas Beetle Conundrum
Tara Allen and Nena Harmstorf

Vibrant leaves danced in the zephyr. Sweet smelling flowers decorated the garden for the festive season. Olive and Leo gazed at the towering eucalyptus tree and could barely see the tips that seemed to dissolve into the white fluffy clouds. Olive’s chestnut brown ponytail swished as she stroked the papery bark.

As Leo rifled through the leaf litter, crushing up the dried leaves so he could smell the rich, strong scent, he came across a strangely chewed leaf.

“What could have done this?” Leo asked Olive. “Grandpa has shown me all the insects that chew the leaves, but no insect would chew in this pattern!”

“I’ve never seen a leaf like this before,” replied Olive. “Let’s go and ask grandpa.”

Grandpa was sitting in his old wooden rocking chair, gazing out across the shores of Balmoral Beach.

“Grandpa?” Olive asked gently tapping his elbow as Leo held out the leaf.

“Ahh,” sighed Grandpa. “This brings back so many memories.”

“What is it?” questioned Leo.

“It’s a leaf bitten by a Christmas beetle.”

Grandpa’s grin spread from ear to ear, as he told stories of the Christmases he had spent as a child.

“The minute you entered your house and turned on the lights, shiny green shells would glint everywhere. When you looked out your window all you could see were multicoloured beetles tapping to get in!”

“But grandpa why doesn’t that happen now?” cried, Olive.

“Humans are what happened.”

Olive and Leo were curious and wanted to find out where the beetles lived. Olive thought they lived on the shores but Leo thought they lived in the rock pools. Although the two children were adamant that their own idea was correct, they came to a compromise, they would check both areas.

First Leo led the way to the rock pools where they checked thoroughly, but to Leo’s annoyance the Christmas beetles were not there. Next Olive raced to the beach where they sifted through the sand. To their frustration, there were no beetles. Olive and Leo felt miserable as they watched the sun sink below the clouds.

“I bet you’ll find a surprise in the Eucalyptus tree tonight, why don’t you come and take a look,” grandpa said with a wink.

Leo and Olive trudged up to the old tree and saw glimmers of green shining in the last dregs of sunlight.

“Christmas beetles!” exclaimed Olive.

“We’re going to have the best Christmas ever!” Leo shouted.
Brown Antechinus

- Brown Antechinus are a small native carnivorous marsupial, with a long pointed snout, bulging eyes and four pairs of small sharp incisor teeth.

- Brown Antechinus are mostly nocturnal, coming out during the night to prey upon insects, spiders, centipedes and sometimes small reptiles and frogs.

- Female Antechinus give birth to undeveloped naked young that latch onto teats in the pouch for up to 50 days. The pouch is an open slit found on the belly.

- They live in forest and woodland, sheltering and nesting in caves and tree hollows.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. Brown antechinus are very dependent on having the right sort of nesting habitat for their survival and they are also very vulnerable to predation by cats and foxes.

Logs and rocks in and near bushland are habitat for a wide range of animals including Antechinus and their prey. You should never disturb or remove these from the bush because the animals that use them will lose their homes.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.

Brown Antechinus - artwork by Thomas Garrett
Brown Antechinus
by Sophia Au

Brown Antechinus digging in the dirt and leaves,
Finding spiders, insects, centipedes.
Sometimes small reptiles and frogs,
Can be found in communal nests and logs.

It's a greyish, brownish colour.
Its ears are rather large.
Its tail is as long as its body,
Or a bit shorter.

Habitat of woodlands and forests.
Wet, hot, trees, trees, trees, leaves.
Where? Northern and Eastern Australia!

Cute and cuddly. Timid.
I'm not a mouse.
The poor males only have 11 months to live!
Don't call me a mouse.
I Am A Marsupial.
In winter they mate for two weeks,
NON-STOP.
No eating, no drinking, no sleeping

Male Antechinuses die why?
Because they don't eat, drink or sleep.
So they die of exhaustion,
And stress.
Stuartii Antechinus is his Latin name,
   Named for James Stuart.
   Friend of entomologist William Sharp Macleay
   Who discovered him!

Six to eight baby brown Antechinuses,
   Carried in a pouch.
   Young are left in a den,
   Before becoming independent.

I'm scared of
   Snakes, lizards and birds.
   Predators they are and
   EAT ME they will.
Another Home for Cookie
by Mia Harrison

I am a Brown Antechinus and my name is Cookie. My nest is in a hollow log in North Arm Reserve. The reserve is a safe place where I can find plenty of insects to eat, fresh water in the streams and tall trees to climb and hide in.

It’s dusk and I’m hunting for some juicy beetles on the track. Suddenly I hear footsteps, human ones, a slow rhythmic thud. I scurry quickly into the bush, hiding from the danger as the big feet come closer.

The feet pass my hiding place. I am scared and eager to find my nest. I run as fast as I can, my soft paws hitting the ground two at a time as I scamper past tree trunks, across crumbling sandstone and through thick tangles of bracken.

After what seems like hours of running, I stop and look at my surroundings. I have no idea where I am, or where my nest is either. I don’t recognise any of the other plants or rocks here, and there is no one around to ask. I look for a hollow log or dense bush, away from predators and other dangers.

I run toward the other end of the clearing, frantic for somewhere to hide and sleep for the rest of the night. I see a small, cosy-looking hollow in a young Eucalyptus tree near the edge of the clearing, and quickly climb up to it, cautiously poking my small head in to have a look.

It is dark and comfortable, perfect for me!

For the rest of the night I rest in my new home, preparing for the morning when I will make a new nest and start searching for a mate.

I can raise my own children here, they will simply love it!
About the Powerful Owl

• The Powerful Owl is the biggest owl in Australia and can stand up to 70cm tall and has a wing span of up to 1m.

• The Powerful Owl is a carnivore, eating mainly medium to large tree-dwelling mammals, particularly the Common Ringtail Possum.

• The Powerful Owl mates for life (over 30 years in some cases) and pairs defend an all-purpose territory year-round.

• The male prepares the nest, which is usually a vertical hollow in a large old tree, and provides the female and young with a constant supply of food during the early part of the nesting period.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. Loss of suitable nesting sites in old trees is a major threat to Powerful Owls but they can also be put at risk by the loss of their prey to predation by other carnivores including cats and foxes.

Old trees are very important for many Australian animals. Hollow bearing trees are essential for these animals to breed in and should be kept.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.

Powerful Owl - artwork by Marcus Carr
Powerful Owl
by Xanthe Elizabeth Wolfe

He stares teacher-stern,
Yellow-eyed
A grey-masked night prowler.

Patiently poised
Swivel-topped
On his lofty perch.

Whoo? Whoo?
Enquires this solitary sentry
Sadly, sighingly.

A feather-bound
Bundle of muscles
Readied on clenched claws.

Binoculars trained
Listening, lurking
A concealed, camouflaged killer.

Suddenly swooping
Swiftly, silently
The sharp-shoed shadow falls.

Descending in darkness,
Fierce feet in flight,
Shrouded in clouded night.

Crushing conqueror
Scissored beak slicing.
The deed is done.

Family fed,
He resumes his lonely post
Of watchful waiting.
Oli the Powerful Owl
by Cailyn Yuan

Oli the Powerful Owl is an ordinary Owl except for the fact that he is my pet Owl. One night, I went to bed but I could not go to sleep. I wiggled and squirmed on my bed until I decided to sit up. I heard the call of Oli and watched him land on a nearby branch. His large amber eyes scanned the whole surroundings looking for movement. Suddenly, something caught his eyes. He stared carefully at some leaves rustling below him. Out emerged a little baby Possum, all alone in the dark.

Now was his chance. He sprung right into action, gliding swiftly through the air never taking his eyes off the Possum knowing if he did he might lose it. The Possum scurried faster but was no match for Oli. He swooped, picking up the Possum with his razor sharp talons. He flew up to his hollow in the old tree in my garden. Then something caught my eye. Little white chicks emerged from the hollow and fed on the Possum. Oli was a girl and she gave birth to chicks! It was an extraordinary sight for me to see a real Powerful Owl hunting and feeding.
About the Buff-banded Rail

- The Buff-banded Rail is a medium size ground-living bird that often lives near water.
- It is very secretive as it darts in and out of tall grass and shrubs hunting and foraging for crustaceans, molluscs, insects, seeds, fruit, frogs, carrion and rubbish.
- It has very distinctive colours with a white and grey eyebrow and orange-brown streak on its breast.
- It makes a simple nest on the ground in thick grass or reeds but little is known about its breeding activity.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. As ground living birds, Buff-banded Rails are particularly vulnerable to predation from foxes, cats and dogs. Losing their habitat to over clearing can put them at greater risk of being attacked by predators.

Backyard ponds are a great way to attract lots of wildlife. If you have thick ground covers and grasses around your pond, Buff-banded Rails may come and visit.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.
Mowbray Public School

Buff-banded Rail by Angus Mackay
Buff-banded Rail
by Sara Thompson and Minchae Kim

Once, near a lake overgrown by thick weeds, was a family of Buff-banded Rails. They loved their home and everything about it. The family consisted of a mother, father and their two sons, Mannie and Jay. As Mannie and Jay were young they would often accompany their mother when leaving the nest.

Mannie was the oldest and getting ready to make his own way in the world. So one day he went out alone to find his own food and found something more than he expected.

"Mum! Mum!" Mannie anxiously called. Mannie’s mother could hear both panic and excitement in his voice. As he entered the nest, his mother looked up somewhat disgusted with the raucous noise he was making and wondering at the sudden loss of his manners.

"Yes Mannie?" his mother responded while giving him a dubious look.

"I…," his sentence was cut short as he tripped on a particularly large stick, falling at his mother’s feet.

"Oh dear," she cried helping him to his feet with her red-orange beak.

"Well? What was all the yelling about Mannie?" asked his mum, curious to understand what the story was this time.

"Mum, I saw it! I really saw it!" exclaimed Mannie so loudly Jay woke up from his sleep.

"Really Mannie, what is it?" while trying to encourage Jay to go back to sleep again.

"I saw a-a-a Screecher!"

"A WHAT?!" yelled his mother furiously, trying to determine if this was a practical joke.

Before Mannie could reply, a giant Screecher (AKA: a human’s machine whose purpose was to destroy native habitats-barrelled out of the small woods just beyond the marsh).

"RUN!" his mother cried. Mannie turned and saw his father pushing Jay out of the nest into the woods, getting as far away from the Screecher as possible.

Mannie was terrified listening to the thunderous booms and bangs and, as quickly as it started, it stopped. The anxiety and fear were too much and Mannie lost consciousness.

When he woke, he was surrounded by humans putting something over his beak. He fell asleep…

Later, waking in the forest, Mannie walked to where his nest used to be, sadly finding nothing but hard concrete. His home was gone.

Sensing movement, he looked up and saw three Rails edging towards him. It was his family. They had found him. He would know his father’s Buff-band anywhere. Reunited at last!
Tilly Sees the World
Anna Lucas

"Eeeeeee"

I jump out of bed, recognising Mum's alarm call at once. Jumping out of the nest, I dive underneath because I know that Mum is telling us to get to cover. Stupid idea! Under a nest is where a fox would first look for a Buff-banded rail!

Jumping out again I look for my family, but I can't see them anywhere.

"Tilly", I look around as I hear the voice, but something clicks, everything goes black.

Light suddenly envelops me in its warmth.

"Well where did you come from?" a voice says above me. "You must've been caught in a fox trap by mistake."

Quickly I jump under the thing I'm on and huddle in the corner. A face appears and I shrink back, trying not to be seen. The thing reaches out and grabs me, gently, and I feel soothed at once.

The thing puts me in a monstrous machine. It growls and suddenly lurches forward, speeding into the bush.

The thing takes me to every fox trap in the bush, but no luck. Finally, we get to my nest and I jump out glad it is all over, and rush off. I stop suddenly and run back and peck the thing to say thank you, then I run back.

"Well, you little..." But it stops and smiles. "Well goodbye you!" it says.

Then it hurries off quickly.

"Well, Tilly you've seen the world!" Mum says as she envelops me in a hug. "What was it like?"

"Well it was strange and there was a thing..."
About the Golden-crowned Snake

• The Golden-crowned Snake is a small nocturnal, terrestrial snake that hunts lizards, frogs and smaller snakes.

• Golden-crowned Snakes will act aggressively if approached but they are not a dangerous snake. Only mildly venomous, they very rarely bite.

• Usually living in forests, the Golden-crowned Snake is also happy in urban bushy backyards and parks and will sleep by day under rocks or timber.

• Females will lay an average of six eggs and incubate them in a nest under rocks.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. Golden-crowned Snakes are often attacked by cats wandering at night. They also get killed whilst basking on the road.

Habitat for nesting and shelter are very important for Golden-crowned Snakes as they are hunted by many animals and are mistakenly feared as dangerous by people.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.
Once there was a girl called Frankie. She lived with her mother and father. The thing she loved doing the most of all was going on bush walks with her family. Frankie loved the sound of all the animals singing in perfect harmony, she loved the flowing rivers that would whisper secrets to her, Frankie loved the trees which would let her climb up to see the birds and the beautiful sky.

One day Frankie felt as if someone new had come in the bush but it was not a person... it was an animal. As Frankie walked under the canopy she saw something out of the corner of her eye. She jumped! She stopped. Then she saw it "OH!!!! It's only a Golden-crowned Snake", Frankie sighed in relief. "I'm not just a snake... I'm a prince" declared the snake mysteriously. Frankie's jaw dropped in astonishment. She asked the snake how he could talk and he said he was born with that ability.

Frankie and the prince had a wonderful afternoon, telling stories and getting to know each other. Eventually Frankie had to head home. "I'll see you again won't I?" Frankie anxiously said to the snake. "Yes, yes, you will" the snake whispered happily as Frankie walked away.

A month had passed and the prince and Frankie had become the best of friends. Early one morning Frankie was awoken by the sound of tractors and bulldozers heading to the bushwalking tracks!! Frankie leapt out of bed, pulled on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt, slipped her socks and shoes on as fast as she could then sprinted down the stairs and out the door. She ran and ran and ran as fast as she could, jumping over rocks and small streams until she was there right where the prince lived. The machines were getting closer!

"Stop! No! Please my friend's in there!" Frankie screamed at the two workers. "OK! What's your friend's name so we can get him out of there?" exclaimed one of the workers. Frankie froze in fright. What if they find out he's a snake? Frankie thought as the worker hopped out of his vehicle and waved his hand in front of her face. Then Frankie had an idea. If I can just keep stalling maybe the prince could slither away, she thought. "AHHH a spider!" Frankie let out a fake scream. Meanwhile, the snake prince was trying to turn himself into a human. He knew he could do it but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't do it. Then all of a sudden a beam of light shone out of the bush "YES!" Frankie squealed to herself as out came the snake prince as a real boy! The workmen turned around slowly. "What are you doing here?!" said the Prince. "Ah I see, trying to dig up my land, are you?" the prince said grandly looking down at them. Frankie's eyes lit up as if she had just seen fireworks "W-we're v-very sorry y-your majesty", the workers said sheepishly. "You should be," the prince said grandly. The workers walked droopily back to their vehicles and drove away in shame. "We did it!!!!" cheered Frankie and the prince they did a high five and he immediately turned back into a snake.
How the Golden-crowned Snake got its Crown

Emi Watson

Edward was a golden snake with a loving family and lots of friends. But he was never satisfied with what he had and always wanted more.

He lived in Eastern Australia and his family's home during the day was under stones, logs and leaf litter in the forest.

At night Edward and his family hunted for lizards, frogs and blind snakes in the dark forest where the only light was the beautiful moonlight shining through the canopy.

While all the other snakes in the forest were happy hunting in the dark Edward dreamed of the sun on his scales and the warmth that he would feel in his body in the sunlight.

One day while the rest of the family was asleep, curled up safe from feral cats, Edward decided he had had enough of the dark. He put sunscreen across his eyes and face and went to visit the sun goddess. As he got closer he could feel it getting hotter and hotter and his beautiful golden scales began to burn and turn dark brown.
Finally Edward arrived and begged the sun goddess to be a day time snake. Edward was starting to feel a bit spoilt about all that he had asked for. The Sun Goddess exclaimed, "Edward you are a very lucky snake, you have a loving family and fun friends. Go home and be grateful for what you have not what you don't".

Edward started to make his way home realising how lucky he was and felt bad for what he had done.

When he arrived home his family was shocked to see he was now brown with a golden crown where the sunscreen had been.

From then onwards the golden snake was known as the Golden-crowned Snake and never asked for anything again.
About the Superb Lyrebird

• The Superb Lyrebird is best known for the male’s tail which is shaped like a ‘Lyre’

• The Superb Lyrebird feeds on insects, spiders, worms and occasionally seeds. It finds food by scratching with its large feet through the leaf-litter.

• The male secures a territory, attracting potential mates by singing and dancing on one of several mounds within it, while throwing the tail forward over the body and shaking it.

• It is a ground-dwelling species in moist forests, but roosts in trees at night. Birds are sedentary, rarely moving large distances and generally staying in a home-range about 10km in diameter.

• The female builds a dome-shaped nest of sticks, which can be on the ground, on rocks, within tree stumps, or in tree ferns and caves. The nest is lined with ferns, feathers, moss and rootlets.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks.

The Superb Lyrebird, nesting and spending most of its time on or near the ground, is very vulnerable to attack by predators like cats, foxes and dogs.

Large areas of healthy bushland in range of urban areas are essential for the survival of this unique species of Australian bird.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.
How the Lyrebird got its song and mate
by Marco Balverde

CRACK! SNAP! Jack digs with his firm, cold hands looking for brown squishy bugs underground. Every day Jack would practice different sounds but they ended up very weird like GRPPP, SWANGG, BOBRANG. He never attracted any girls.

Jack would stumble across some other animals but he never could communicate with them, but while he was walking out of the bushes there came a beautiful lyrebird.

She was as brown as chocolate with twig thin legs. Her feathers look like they were from angels’ wings. Alleluia! It felt like time had stopped and he didn’t want anything else in the world.

As light went down and darkness rose, the two mesmerised lyrebirds felt a chill rising through their spines. An orange flash. Sharp teeth. The scent of a carnivore.

Two yummy lyrebirds would fill the fox’s hungry belly. All of a sudden, there came a loud, sharp whistle. The fox turned and fled when he heard the high pitch noise of the humans. But it wasn’t a human at all. It was Jack! He had heard humans whistling from the houses nearby.

The lyrebirds were lucky to live and be free in a place called Willoughby.
Finding Love
by Jaydan Lee and Venedict Valerio

Mike, a large brown looking pheasant* is dashing through the forest near Sailors Bay scouting for food. Dodging and weaving past trees, he comes across a patch of pink, slimy and disgusting worms. He gobbles them up. "CRACK!" Mike swivelled his head around and heard danger approaching.

He bolted off like the wind trying to escape the danger. He scurried back to his tree and flew to his branch. When Mike looked back, the feral, ferocious fox vanished. "Ka Ka," Mike investigated the noise. He glided down to the forest floor and sprinted to the sound and saw another male Lyrebird doing a courtship dance, making twenty different sounds of other birds. The Lyrebird is attracting many females to his presence. Mike suddenly sighed saying, "Will I ever find my true love?"

At that sigh, the Lyrebird turned around and looked at Mike "You okay?" "No," replied Mike. "I can't sing well, so could you ppleaseeease help me?" "Of course. So when do you want to start?" questioned the Lyrebird.

"Can we do it now?" asked Mike.

"YES," replied the Lyrebird. "Firstly, can you mimic a kookaburra call? That always excites the females!"

"Kinda," replied Mike. "But I'm not good at it. I'll give it a try, Kkakl kakl!" "Close enough," said the Lyrebird. "Listen, teet, teet, teet. That was a lorikeet sound, now you try."

"Ok I'll try. Teet, teet, teet," sang Mike proudly.

"Very good, now let's try something else," said the Lyrebird.

The last thing that Mike needed to practice was the tail feather dance. "That's one of the important things you will need to master," said the Lyrebird to Mike. "Ok let's see your dance. Shake it baby!" said the Lyrebird.

"Ok," Mike replied. He put his tail feathers high in the air and started to shake his feathered 55 centimetre tail. "That's it, you're now ready," the Lyrebird shouted.

He remembered all his training and treaded off deeper into the bush and searched for a clearing. He kept trying and trying and there was no luck but then he had an idea. He started to scratch the ground removing debris out of his way. After two hours he finally cleared a spot for his dance. He lifted his tail feathers and started to make different varieties of bird calls. Suddenly, approaching his way was a beautiful, elegant female Superb Lyrebird. Mike finally found his partner and he started to try harder. The female Lyrebird saw his compassion and fell in love, she stepped closer and they both flew away together forever.

*Native pheasant was a name given to the Suburb Lyrebird by early Europeans.
About the Eastern Long-necked Turtle

- As its name suggests, this turtle has a long neck, which is usually about half the length of its carapace (shell).
- It has webbed feet used for swimming and digging. The colour of the carapace varies through shades of brown.
- The Eastern Long-necked Turtle lives in freshwater habitats including wetlands.
- It feeds on aquatic invertebrates, tadpoles and small fish.
- In summer, female Eastern Long-necked Turtles dig holes in sand or in soft sediments along stream banks and lay about ten eggs.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. Eastern Long-necked Turtles need clean waterways to hunt and nest in.

Pollution in streets flows into stormwater drains effecting not only the fish, frogs and other small animals that live in our creeks but also the turtles that hunt them.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.

Long-necked Turtle - artwork by Imogen Cantlon
St. Philip Neri Catholic Primary School

Eastern Long-necked Turtle by Lachlan Ambrogio
How the Eastern Long-necked Turtle got his Name
by Lucy O’Brien

Way, way back in the Dream Time there lived a Turtle. He was a pretty ordinary Turtle and he was the smallest out of all the Turtles in his village. The mean Turtle only liked him since he would do anything he told him. So one day the little Turtle wanted to stand up for himself by saying "no!" But when he went up to the mean Turtle to talk to him, he just ignored him again.

When the big annual race came, the little Turtle was determined to win so he trained and trained, day and night. When he went up to the starting line he saw the biggest, fastest and strongest Turtle was racing too. "On your marks, get set, GO!" said the commentator and the race was on.

The little Turtle was small and fast but he was still behind. The big Turtle was winning by a mile and started showing off for the crowd. Waving and dancing around. He didn’t see the tree root and fell heavily with a loud crash! The little Turtle wanted so badly to win so he leapt over the fallen Turtle, sprinted across the finish line and came first!

All the other Turtle cheered him on. Except one. The mean Turtle that had been cruel to him all along. After the race, the little Turtle went up to the mean Turtle and said "I do not want to be a slave to you anymore, mean Turtle."
Then mean Turtle found a hole and stuffed little turtles head right in. "Ouch!", said little Turtle and tried to pull his head out but it was stuck. Day after day, the little Turtle tried to get out of the hole. He wriggled and pulled and twisted but could never get out. Finally, one day the mean Turtle came back in regret and pulled the body of the little Turtle and finally got him freed.

The only problem was that his neck was now really, really long from all the pulling. Tired and sore, the little Turtle made his way back to his friends but they just laughed and laughed at him. So one night he ran away and he swore to never come back.

He decided to go east across the hot long desert and the open flat plains until he came to a place called Turtle Town. He walked into town and he was so pleased he started crying with joy. He found out that all the Turtles had the same problem as him so they decided to call themselves the Eastern Long-necked Turtles. And that was the story of how the Eastern Long-necked Turtle got its name.
How the Eastern Long-necked Turtle Got Its Name
by Hugo Paddon-Row

Long ago, on the East Coast of Australia in a suburb called Northbridge, there lived a Turtle named Shelly. Shelly was pregnant and looking for somewhere to lay her eggs. She wanted to be near the water so she set off to find the perfect spot.

She came to the foot of a big hill, and she thought if she climbed to the top she could look down to the water and find a great place. She wanted to lay them near some rocks so that they could be hidden from predators such as lizards and birds.

When she reached the top and looked down to the water she saw it! The perfect spot, a circle of rocks. It was a long way down and she was very tired from her walk uphill, so she had a great idea if she rolled on her back, her shiny shell would let her slide all the way to the bottom. All she would need to do was tuck in her head and legs and she would be off like a rocket!

But Shelly soon realised she was going way too fast. She really needed to stop quickly so she stuck out her feet and started cartwheeling down the hill. CRASH... BANG... OUCH !

She hit the rocks, and her head was stuck between the two largest rocks. She started to pull backwards, but nothing happened. She kept on pulling, her neck was getting longer and longer but her head stayed stuck! Shelly started to cry loudly. She did not want to stay stuck, she wanted to lay her eggs.

A boy called Bob was out walking and heard all the noise, and came to see if he could help. "Oh dear," said Bob, "You're really stuck".

"I am," said Shelly. "Can you help?"

Bob went over and grabbed onto Shelly's shell and pulled and pulled as hard as he could. Finally, POP! Shelly came flying out backwards. She felt really strange, what was wrong with her neck? It felt very long and floppy!

She thought that this new long neck would be a good thing to help her catch food for her babies, so she settled down into the rocks to prepare to lay her eggs.

And that is how the Eastern Long Neck Turtle got its name.
About the Eastern Blue-tongue Skink

• To frighten off predators blue-tongues open their mouth wide and stick out their broad blue tongue that contrasts vividly with the pink mouth.

• The Eastern Blue-tongue Skink in urban areas has a large territory taking in a number of backyards in its home range.

• They shelter at night among leaf litter or under large objects on the ground such as rocks and logs.

• Blue-tongues are not very agile and the animals they eat are mostly slow-moving. Their teeth are large and they have strong jaw muscles so they can crush snail shells and beetles.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. Eastern Blue-tongues are very vulnerable to predators but can also get hit by cars and lawn mowers.

If you are lucky enough to have an Eastern Blue-tongue in your garden, make sure they have plenty of shelter in the form of logs, pipes, rocks and some thick long grasses. Encourage your neighbours to do the same.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.
Eastern Blue-tongue Skink by Julian Fitzroy
Red the Blue-tongue
by Josh Monico

This is the story of a Blue-tongue Lizard who was called Red. Red was no ordinary Blue-tongue. He was a true Blue-tongue, yet he had been born with a red tongue. Red was the only lizard he had ever known with a red tongue, and that made him feel useless and alone. Until one day....

School excursions were something Red dreaded. Red used every excuse to avoid them but the day of the school bushwalk the teachers were not letting him off the hook this time.

The excursion was taking them deep into Flat Rock Creek bushland in Willoughby. After hours of walking, it soon became obvious the teacher had taken a wrong turn and the students were becoming scared and worried. Suddenly a Kookaburra, the most feared predator of all Blue-tongue lizards appeared. The group turned and ran but were soon cornered by the big bird. The teacher tried to scare it away but the fearsome bird did not flinch. Then from the back of the pack, Red appeared. He knew it was now or never. If he didn’t do something this could be a feeding frenzy for the bird Red scurried to the front of the group, he stood up on his hind legs, stretched out his neck and poked his bright red tongue towards the kookaburra. Terrified, the long feared beast fled in disbelief at the sight of a red tongued Blue-tongue.

From this day on Red was always treated like a hero. It made him feel special and that he belonged with other Blue-tongues. Being different had saved his friends’ lives and never again would he feel useless or lonely.
Skink's Got My Toes!

by Romy Koziol

A Skink is trying to eat my toes! I run and run around my pool, I look behind me. I think it's an adult, 30 to 50cm. I think it is a female because it is twice as big as the others. She is probably really hungry. Around and around we go, she starts to stop and I get inside my house.

Why are they going for my toes? My toes are probably as big as their head, I wouldn't try to eat someone's head. Ok back to lizards, where are they? There they are, and they just went under that rock. They must have got scared of me because I am the best, the strongest, the bravest. I am the king of all the lizards, nothing can stop me. "Ahhhhhhhh," I scream as the female lizard pops up right in front of my screen door. She looks right at my toes.

She must be thinking, "Romy you better run before I get angry and finally eat your toes for dinner!" I run upstairs to tell mum and dad. "Mum, Dad there's a Blue-tongue Lizard downstairs!" My parents and I run downstairs to see nothing there. "WHAT! SHE WAS JUST THERE A SECOND AGO" I yelled. It must be a stealthy lizard Ninja, my parents walk off with disappointment and anger.

Where did that little one go? I will find you. But then I realise that she was just probably hungry and I was the one disturbing it from its life. I should have never fed it. Now it probably depends on me to feed it every day. What have I done? I will never ever feed an animal again, even if it's right in front of me. I won't ever feed it.
About the Red-crowned Toadlet

• The Red-crowned Toadlet is easy to identify by the bright orange-red triangle or ‘T’ shape on its head and a stripe on its lower back of the same colour.

• The Red-crowned Toadlet is restricted to the Hawkesbury sandstone areas surrounding Sydney.

• They call several times in quick succession, as these frogs commonly live in small colonies and answer each other.

• The Red-crowned Toadlet breeds in damp leaf litter.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks. The Red-crowned Toadlet is very susceptible to water pollution and habitat changes caused by overshadowing weeds.

Pollution down the drain can kill many species of frog in our waterways. Collecting and re-locating frogs and their tadpoles can cause amphibian diseases to spread.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.

Red-crowned Toadlet - artwork by Bella Burrows

© Stephen Mahony
St. Thomas’ Catholic Primary School

Red-crowned Toadlet by Siena Mellino
Red-crowned Toadlet  
by Dominique Doust

You might think, "What is that thing?"
Well, there are many types of toadlet in Australia. 
The colours of this one are rich and distinctive, 
And its nature and personality are totally addictive.

It’s warty, slimy, small and skinny, 
But this Red-crowned toadlet is very mini. 
It is grey and orange, white and red, 
With a T-shaped crown upon its head.

They live close by near creeks, soaks and sandstone, 
in dry sclerophyll forest, heathland and woodland.

You may not have heard them, their sound to be sure, 
Is the noise that is made by an old creaking door.

But there is a problem with pollution, 
So as their friends we must find a solution. 
So we can all live here together in the Willoughby area!
Billy the Red-crowned Toadlet was always a small creature. He lived in Sugarloaf Creek and always got teased by his friends.

There was Cookie the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Siena the Green Tree Snake, croaky the Striped Marsh Frog and Lily the Eastern Water Dragon.

Every day at noon the clean water from the houses rushed down into the river.

This was Billy’s favourite part of the day because all the other animals were having dinner and Billy was just alone with no one teasing him.

Then suddenly the water stopped. Billy was afraid and went to tell the others.

“Guys there’s been a water blockage and now no water is coming out!” So the others left dinner and rushed to see what was happening.

“We need someone small to go and get the plastic bag out of the pipe,” said Cookie the Cockatoo. “I’ll do it!” said Billy, but all the others said no just because you’re small doesn’t mean you can still do it, we need someone strong.
So Siena the Green Tree Snake tried it but it was too slippery so she slithered back out. Croaky the Striped Marsh Frog tried it but it was too dark for his liking. Lily the Eastern Water Dragon nearly got it but her strength was lacking so she gave up. Finally Cookie the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo tried it but her beak got stuck in the pipe.

While the others tried to pull Cookie’s beak, Billy secretly snuck in the pipe because he knew he could do it, fit through the pipe and get the plastic bag. Billy began his journey through the pipe. He was so delighted, he made it through the pipe and reached the bag! He scatted all the way out of the drain.

"I've got it, I've got it", yelled Billy. All his friends were all so happy and promised to never tease him again about his size.

To his disbelief the wise Owl sat in his tree and had watched everything happen. He flew down with his gorgeous white wings and stopped right beside him.

"Billy," he said. "You have shown me and your friends that you can do anything". As the wise owl was saying this he handed Billy a red crown. If you humans don't pollute the waters now you might even be lucky enough to see Billy the Red-crowned Toadlet at Sugarloaf Creek.
About the Black Prince Cicada

• Cicadas are the loudest insects in the world and there are more than 200 species in Australia - male cicadas sing to attempt to find a mate.

• Cicadas feed by piercing the surface of plants like gum trees, with their mouth stylets

• Cicadas spend most of their life underground. It has been suggested that some of the large, common Australian species of cicada may live underground as nymphs for around 6-7 years.

• The predominantly black form from the Sydney and Central Coast regions is commonly known as the Black Prince.

Wildlife in urban areas face a lot of pressure being hunted by dogs, cats and foxes, as well as due to being poisoned by pesticides. They also lose their homes due to stormwater pollution, weeds, clearing of bushland and removal of branches, logs and rocks.

Black Prince Cicada, like many insects, are very susceptible to pesticide, particularly spray that goes on lawns.

Don’t use pesticides.

If you own a cat you should never let it wander outside your property or into the bush. Cats are natural hunters and will hunt native animals if we let them.
“Who Am I?”
by Elynna Lau

The other creatures wonder
how I make my sound,
but when I start to tell them,
they almost pound me into the ground!

I tell them...
maybe it’s the drum-like tymbals
and the thick, thick ribs?
Now that I’ve told you
Do you think I’m telling fibs?

The other creatures try to find
how I get my sight,
But when I tell them what I know
They all think I’m telling lies!
I say... maybe it's my five eyes
three small and two are big
But the way they look at me,
it makes me want to dig!

Now do you know who I am
after I told you all those clues?
Well, if you didn’t, here’s another...
I’m black and kind of blue!

That’s right, you guessed it
A Black Prince Cicada - that’s me!
I live in places that have rivers
And you’ll find me in gum trees.
Darkness
by Jonah Sarich-Prince

Maryborough through to Bega, today was the big day. It was the day the Cicada hatchlings broke through the damp underground in which they were living. In seven whole years of boredom they had explored every area, found every tunnel. Everything offered the same - dirt, rock and darkness.

Now they could finally experience beaming light, towering trees and the cool breeze washing over their hard shell. They could finally taste fresh air instead of gulping up the air that was filtering through the sickening old dirt. But hatchlings being hatchlings, they weren't going to do this without a little competition. Race time!

All the hatchlings took up their positions. Bobby decided to move away from everyone and dig at the wall opposite the group. He had found a hole in the dirt that the previous hatchlings had broken through. He decided not to tell his twin siblings about this amazing discovery. Bobby wanted to be the first out.
He broke down his wall of dirt and traversed through the rocky tunnel leading up to civilisation. He perched his foot on a jagged loose rock. It slipped out from the dirt wall and Bobby lost his footing. He latched onto a pebble lodged deeply in the old dirt, but his weight dragged the pebble slowly through the mouldy dirt that had been rotting for what must have been an eternity. He clung to the pebble and was only inches away from breaking through the rich soil. He was tearing at the dirt that was keeping him trapped, when finally a light streaked through and he clambered up.

Bobby gazed in awe at the life surrounding him. His throat suddenly started shouting at him and he became aware of how weak he was. He plodded over to the foot of a great She-Oak and drank the sap that dribbled down. He began his trek up. He dug his arms behind or on top of anything he could. He hauled himself further and further up the tree. He was finding it hard to traverse the tree as his shell felt heavy and dry on his back. He settled down on a piece of bark to get his energy back but little did he know a crack on his shell was getting bigger and bigger. Finally, the shell made an ear wrenching crack and he jumped. Huge black wings sprouted out and Bobby looked at them in surprise. He realised what was happening as a deep revving noise was escaping from his throat. He let go of the tree and flew, for the first time, into the sun.
A Willoughby City Council Wildlife Story Book