



# SPECTACULAR SPLENDID SWAMPS



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY


Wurundjeri people have a strong and continuing connection to the watery forests where Helmeted Honeyeaters flit.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners of this habitat, and we thank them for caring for this precious place. We pay our respects to them, their culture, and to their Elders.

We are all so lucky to play, learn and live on the lands and in the waters of the oldest living cultures on Earth. We promise to walk gently, respectfully and with kindness wherever we go.





An artistic illustration showing the lower legs and feet of three people wading through a swampy area. The person on the left wears a red skirt and dark boots. The person in the center wears a dark, patterned skirt and dark boots. The person on the right wears a blue skirt and dark boots. They are surrounded by tall, green grass and water. The background is a bright, hazy white.

Humans squelch and plod  
and stumble through swamps.  
Soggy, stinky, sludgy.  
Better to chop, change and fill.

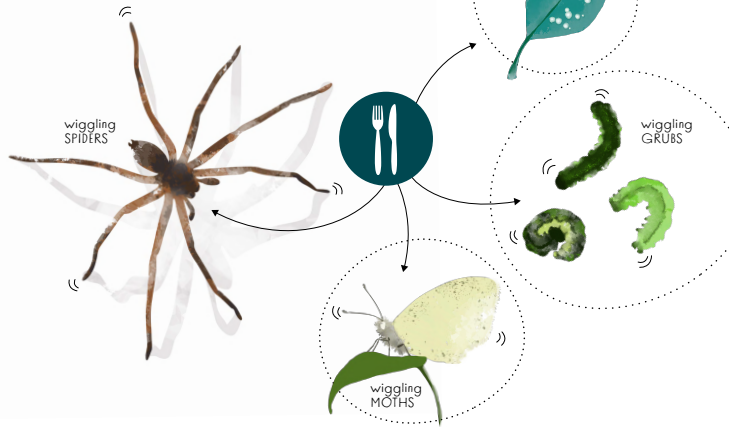
But Hope knows that swamps  
are more than just mud.  
Rustling, watery wonderlands.  
Better to keep,  
treasure and protect.



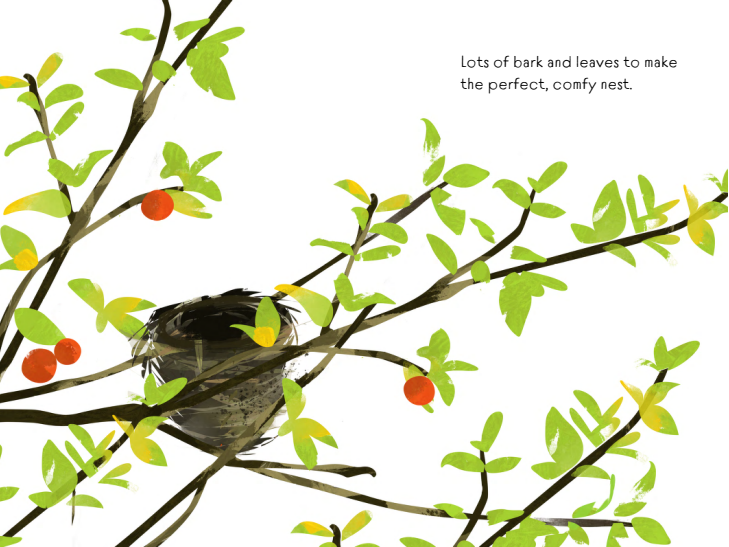
Hope




Plenty of wiggling insects  
and sweet treats to munch on.



Lots of bark and leaves to make  
the perfect, comfy nest.



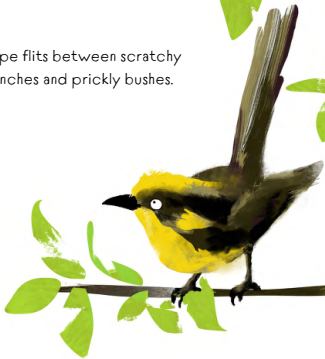
A watercolor illustration of a large, gnarled tree trunk, likely a gum tree, with thick, dark brown bark. The tree branches out into green leaves, some of which are long and narrow, resembling eucalyptus leaves. In the foreground, there are several yellow woolly shrubs with small orange centers. The background is a soft, hazy white, suggesting a misty or overcast day.

Space for us all among the  
towering gums and woolly shrubs.

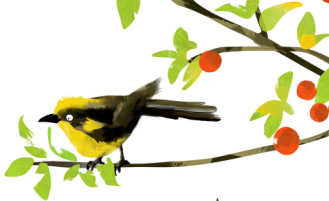
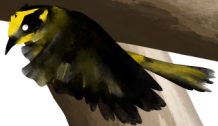
Room to zoom through  
twinkling, gurgling waters.



Hope flits between scratchy  
branches and prickly bushes.



'We need humans to love  
this little swampy home!' Hope says.  
'Who will help me change their minds?'  
The honeyeaters peck at the bark  
and silently dive away.





**SOS**  
**SAVE OUR**  
**SWAMPS!**

Slop, swish, SPLAT.

'Humans love to follow signs!'

Hope hops down the sizzling road,  
hiking up her note.





But eyes dart sideways,  
and the humans hurry away.  
Glossy square houses appear  
where trees were this morning.

She ruffles her feathers and soars back into town.  
'Humans will do the right thing if they know how!'  
Hope slots her mail into little rusty letterboxes.





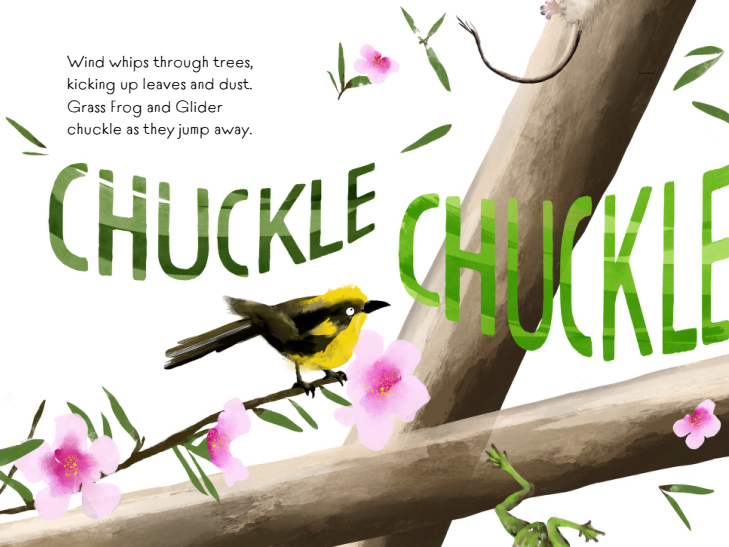
But the swamp keeps shrinking.

Hope drifts through the sweet,  
tangled shrubs. Crash!  
'Sorry, Glider and Grass Frog!  
I'm on my way to see the humans again.'  
'You might not change their minds,'  
growls Grass Frog.  
'You're too small to make  
a difference,' says Glider.



Wind whips through trees,  
kicking up leaves and dust.  
Grass Frog and Glider  
chuckle as they jump away.

CHUCKLE CHUCKLE



Hope sinks down into her nest  
and cries and cries.  
'They're right. Humans will never love  
this little swampy home!'





Crunch, crunch, CRACK!  
Kind human voices drift up  
with each giant step.  
She wipes her eyes and peeks out  
from the tiny woven nest.  
'Hope, we got your letter.  
We're here to help!'





'We've brought seedlings  
and many caring friends.  
We are going to build you  
a swampy wildlife corridor.'  
'I've never heard of a  
wildlife corridor,' says Hope.  
'What does it do?'



'It connects patches of precious forest and bush,  
so you and your friends can zoom  
across streams, rivers and swamps!  
Hope bops and hops and skips  
across broad brimmed hats.  
'Thanks to your letter, we know  
this special place needs protecting.'





Hope glides and flaps through  
never-ending bushland.  
Twinkling, gurgling waters,  
young gums and prickly shrubs.  
These humans know that swamps  
are more than just mud.  
Rustling, watery wonderlands.  
Best to keep, treasure and protect.





THE  
END



## YELLINGBO NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve is a precious, protected place in the Yarra Valley. It is 45km or about an hour's drive east of Melbourne. Yellingbo is a great home for Helmeted Honeyeaters because of its swampy forests alongside networks of creeks and streams. The forests and creeks around Yellingbo are home to about 285 types of plants and 230 types of animals.



This beautiful and important ecosystem is under threat from human activities. Land clearing for farms and houses has left only a few small patches of healthy habitat.

Changed water and land use on surrounding farms has altered the flood cycle, meaning swampy forests either don't get enough or receive too much water. The majestic, towering gums throughout this book are Swamp Gum. The health of these gums can suffer from changes to the flood cycle. This leads to loss of habitat and shelter for birds like Helmeted Honeyeaters.

There aren't many rustling, watery wonderlands like this left in Victoria, so Parks Victoria Rangers, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, volunteers and other organisations take care of this special place. They remove weeds and pests, plant native trees and make sure waterways stay healthy.



## HELMETED HONEYEATER

Helmeted Honeyeaters are striking sweet seekers, and only found in Victoria.

These birds are about as tall as a birthday card and weigh less than seven grapes!

Helmeted Honeyeaters have black cheeks, yellow ear tufts and a bright yellow helmet of feathers. These birds have a long tongue that they use like a paintbrush to slurp up sweet treats, like nectar and honeydew.

They can help their swampy forest stay healthy by eating little lerp insects that can infect the leaves of gum trees.

In return, the forest looks after them too.

Did you notice the little plant with red berries throughout the book? Helmeted Honeyeaters love the Prickly Currant Bush because it is great for building nests in and keeping little birds and their eggs safe.

Helmeted Honeyeaters build cup-shaped nests out of leaves, bark and grasses, and use spiderwebs to help it all together.

What amazing engineers!



## PLATYPUS

These shy and secretive creatures are known as monotremes because they lay eggs but feed milk to their babies. Platypus are the perfect swimmers – they have strong, webbed feet and long, sleek bodies covered in waterproof fur. Their flat bills pick up signals from moving prey as they search for a night-time snack on the bottom of their watery world. Since their food only lives in healthy waterways, platypus are known as indicator animals. This means they can tell us when a freshwater habitat is healthy just by living there. You'll never find a platypus swimming in a polluted stream! Can you tell if Hope's swamp is healthy?

**You can show that you love these animals by loving their swampy homes too!**



## GROWLING GRASS FROG

Don't let the warts deceive you – Growling Grass Frogs are gorgeous critters! These awesome amphibians spend the first part of their life as tadpoles in water, then live on land as adults. These fantastic frogs like slow-moving ponds, streams and swamps with plenty of plants around the edges. You can see their special ears near their eyes, which they use to listen out for insects, other snacks and of course to hear their own unique, growly call that sounds like a motorbike – *craaaaaaw-oooork ar-ar*. Growling Grass Frogs have a superpower – they can breathe and drink through their skin! This means they are good indicator animals because polluted water will make them sick and they will move if their habitats aren't healthy.



## FEATHERTAIL GLIDER

Feathertail Gliders are tiny forest thrill-seekers. These marsupial daredevils hurl themselves from trees and make a parachute with their legs and gliding membrane. They steer and brake using their flattened tail and can float through the air for an amazing 14 metres! At night, they search for tasty treats like pollen, nectar and insects in the treetops, jumping from towering gum to towering gum. They spend their days sheltering in tree hollow nests. When it gets cold, they wrap themselves up in a ball, fold their ears flat and huddle together with their friends to save energy. It's important that we care for the health of Swamp Gums so that these little dare-devils can find food, shelter and a home in our swampy forests.

The sweet seeking Helmeted Honeyeater is Victoria's critically endangered bird emblem, and it needs our help! Caring for the streamside, swampy forests just outside Melbourne is very important. Keeping these places healthy protects this beautiful bird's habitat.

## HOW COULD YOU BE A FRIEND FOR WILDLIFE?



© State of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning).

This e-book was supported by the Victorian Government through the *Caring for Our Environment – Faunal Emblems Program*.

Written by Jordan Charters, Parks Victoria. Illustrated by Tania Ennor.