

## BUSH BIRDS

HELEN MILROY

ISBN (HB): 9781760992422

YEAR LEVEL: K–3

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Sustainability

### ABOUT THE BOOK

'Little birds, big birds, all different kinds. How many bush birds can you find?' From curious blue wrens to booming emus, and from feasting lorikeets to eagles soaring, *Bush Birds* by Helen Milroy is a fun and lively read with bold illustrations designed to celebrate the birds in our bush.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. She was born and educated in Perth. Helen has always had a passionate interest in health and wellbeing, especially for children. She is currently a professor at UWA, a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, and Commissioner with the National Mental Health Commission.

### THEMES

- Native birds and wildlife
- Australian bush habitat
- Observing nature
- Celebrating nature
- Connecting with your environment

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

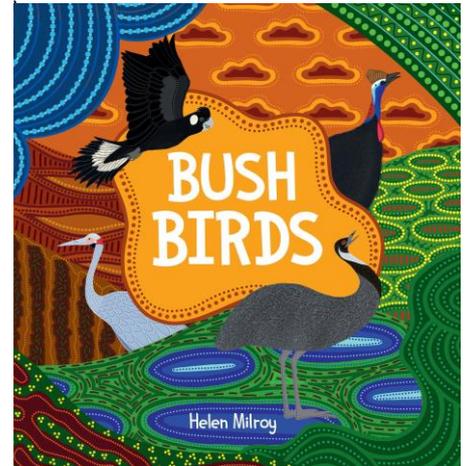
K–3 English

K–3 Biological Sciences

K–3 Visual Art

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author website: [helenmilroy.com](http://helenmilroy.com)
- Australian Museum – bird fact sheets: [australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/birds](http://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/birds)
- Birdlife Australia – find a bird: [birdlife.org.au/all-about-birds/australias-birds/find-a-bird](http://birdlife.org.au/all-about-birds/australias-birds/find-a-bird)
- Atlas of Living Australia – Exercises: Foundation to Year 2: [ala.org.au/classroom-exercises/exercises-foundation-to-year-2](http://ala.org.au/classroom-exercises/exercises-foundation-to-year-2)
- Aboriginal Dreamtime Stories: [Popular Aboriginal Dreamtime Stories | Welcome To Country](#)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Look at the cover of the book. How do the colours make you feel? Does the cover make you want to read the book? Explain why or why not.
2. Can you name any of the birds on the front cover? (black cockatoo, cassowary, brolga, emu) Have you ever seen these birds in real life?
3. What is your favourite bird? Why do you like this bird? Have you seen it in real life? What noise does it make?
4. Turn the book over to look at the blurb. The text reads: Little birds, big birds, all different kinds. How many bush birds can you find? Make a class list of all the bush birds you know. How many can you think of?
5. Have you read any of Helen Milroy's other stories, such as *Backyard Birds*, *Backyard Bugs*, *Backyard Beasties* and *Owl and Star*?
6. *Bush Birds* is a rhyming story. Do you like rhyming stories? Are they fun to read aloud?
7. This story gives clues about how each bush bird lives. Answer these questions to make connections:
  - a. Blue Wren pops out. Why do you think it was hiding?
  - b. Why would Budgerigar roll in dew?
  - c. Where would Lorikeet find nectar?
  - d. Why might a Rosella need a bath?
  - e. How do you think King Parrot got its name?
  - f. Why do you think Black cockatoo is calling?
  - g. What makes Eagle good at soaring?
  - h. Cassowary runs and leaps, but can it fly?
  - i. Why do you think Brolga has such long legs?
  - j. Why do you think Emu has such big feet?
8. Certain words from the story are written differently to the rest of the text. What type of words are these? Do the surrounding illustrations help you understand the words?
9. If possible, take a walk outside or in the bush. Make a list of birds you see. Are any in the story?

### Biological Sciences

1. On a simple illustration, label the following parts of a bird: beak, wings, feet, head, eyes, tail. (Modify activity as needed to suit students' abilities. For example, younger students may match words to the image while older students can copy or write words into blank spaces.)
2. Do all birds look the same? Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two birds from the story, for example, emu and blue wren.
3. Look at the final illustration which shows the 10 birds together. Group together the birds that look similar. What features do they share?
4. What makes a bird a bird? List the common characteristics that scientists use to define a bird (backbone, warm-blooded, feathers, lay eggs, bill/beak, two legs).

The term native means the birds are only found in Australia, whereas endemic birds are only found in a particular area. Make a list of birds you know that are native and/or endemic to your local area. Are any of the species threatened or endangered? What threats do they face? (Conservation status and threats are available in BirdLife Australia profiles: <https://birdlife.org.au/bird-profiles/>)

### Creative Writing

1. The story is written in rhyming couplets, meaning the last words of two sentences rhyme. For example, 'Blue wren pops out into **view**, budgerigar rolls in the **dew**'. Can you come up with your own bird-themed rhyming couplet?
2. Write another word that rhymes with these words from the story: view/dew, fruit/suit, red/overhead, sky/high, along/song.
3. Describe the bush using your five senses. What would you see, hear, smell, feel and taste?

4. Choose a bird from the book and write down as many adjectives as you can to describe what it looks like, how it sounds and how it acts.
5. Imagine one of the birds as a picture book character. Write a few sentences describing your character, for example: How would it act? Who would it be friends with? What would it wear? Does it have a job?
6. Write a short story featuring a bird as the main character. Include an orientation (who, when, where), complication/problem and resolution.
7. Use each highlighted verb from the story in a new sentence: pops, rolls, feasts, cleans, dazzles, calls, soars, leaps, strolls, booms.

## Visual Art

1. How would you describe the art style in *Bush Birds*? What medium (pencil, paint, digital, etc.) do you think Helen Milroy used to create this artwork?
2. Which illustration from the story is your favourite? What do you like about it?
3. Choose a bush bird not featured in the story and create an artwork in the style of Helen Milroy.
4. As a class, make a model of a bush habitat using found objects like sticks, feathers and dried leaves. Create model birds from air dry clay (or materials of your choice) to populate the habitat.
5. Copy, cut and laminate images of the birds from the story. Attach each bird to a popstick and use as puppets to retell the story.

## First Nations Cultures

1. Helen Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. What is the language group of the area where you live? Do you know any words in this language?
2. Birds are often important in First Nations stories. Research the culture of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people from the area in which you live, and find out which native birds are important to them and why.

The **CLASSROOM EXPRESS** FREMANTLE PRESS  
EDUCATION NEWS

 [fremantlepress.com.au/classroom-express](https://fremantlepress.com.au/classroom-express)

   @FremantlePress  Sign up for enews  [fremantlepress.com.au](https://fremantlepress.com.au)