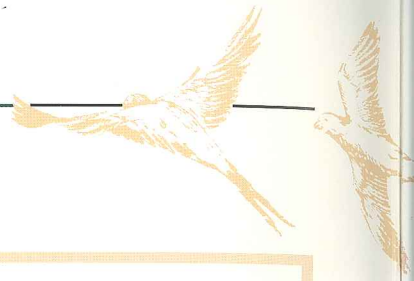


The

SUPERB PARROT





BRENT ARMOUR YEAR 6
RYE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



BRENT ARMOUR YEAR 6
RYE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) is also known as the Barraband or Green Leek. It is one of three birds in the *Polytelis* family; the others are the Princess Parrot and the Regent Parrot.

Superb Parrots are medium sized birds, about 400mm long. They can be identified by their long bright green tails, green bodies and blue tipped wings. Males are a richer green than females and have a bright yellow forehead and throat which is banded by a bold red ring. In flight, their sleek bodies, long pointed tails and backward swept wings give them a distinctive silhouette.

Despite its elegant appearance, the Superb Parrot is a hardy bird which can live for up to 25 years. However, its range is very restricted and numbers are diminishing. It is listed as *Rare* or *Vulnerable* in NSW and Victoria.

The clearing of box woodlands which provided forage and breeding sites is thought to be one of the main reasons for its decline. This, along with changes in agricultural activities, the clearing of dead trees for firewood, road kills, trapping and poaching have all contributed to a decline in the population.

Distribution

The Superb Parrot is endemic to the Murray-Darling Basin. It occurs in the river red gum forests and black box woodlands of the Riverina and northern Victoria and along the south west slopes of NSW. The birds move from these areas during late summer to over winter in areas as far north as the Namoi and Castleigh rivers in north-western NSW.

The birds return from wintering sites to breed between September and February. The South-west Slopes, Murrumbidgee Valley and Barmah-Millewa Forests have been identified as the major breeding areas.

The two areas discussed in this booklet are:

Murray-Riverina

The Murrumbidgee Valley between Hay and Narrandera in the north, and the Murray Valley between Barham and Yarrawonga in the south.

South-west Slopes

The area enclosed by the towns of Cowra, Rye Park, Coolac, Cootamundra and Young.

The highest concentration of nest sites on



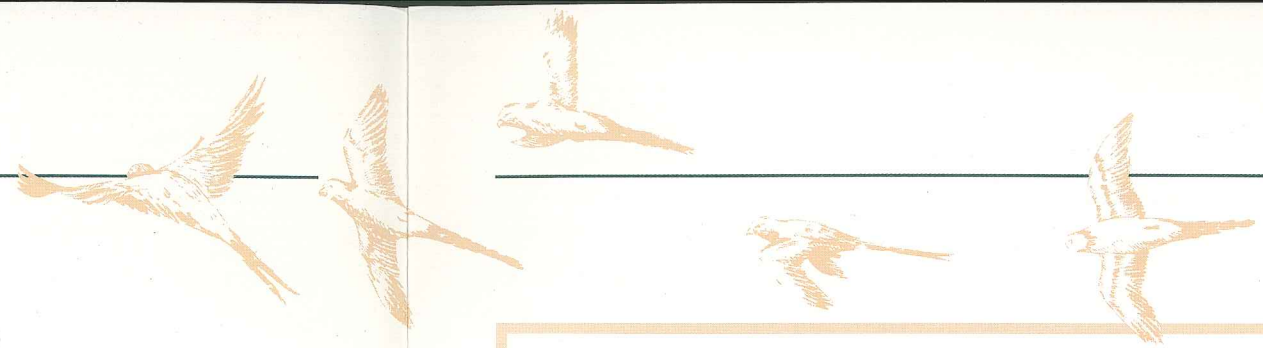
*Rare,
Beautiful, Peaceful,
Graceful, Special, Superb,
Yellow, Green,
Red*

MEGAN CRISP
YEAR 6
RYE PARK
PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Have you seen a Superb Parrot?
So graceful and so rare.
Their habitats were in Eucalyptus trees.
but humans, did they care?
They ripped all their habitats down,
and wrecked their lives as well.
Now they are on the endangered list,
and now their numbers have fell.*

KELLIE LACZICK & SARAH MAGEE YEAR 5
RYE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

**SUPERB
PARROT**



the South-west Slopes occurs in the Young, Yass and Boorowa districts. The ACT is on the eastern fringe of the Superb Parrot's range. While it is an uncommon visitor to the ACT, areas north-west of Canberra including Hall, Murrumbateman, Sutton and Gundaroo can play host to breeding flocks.



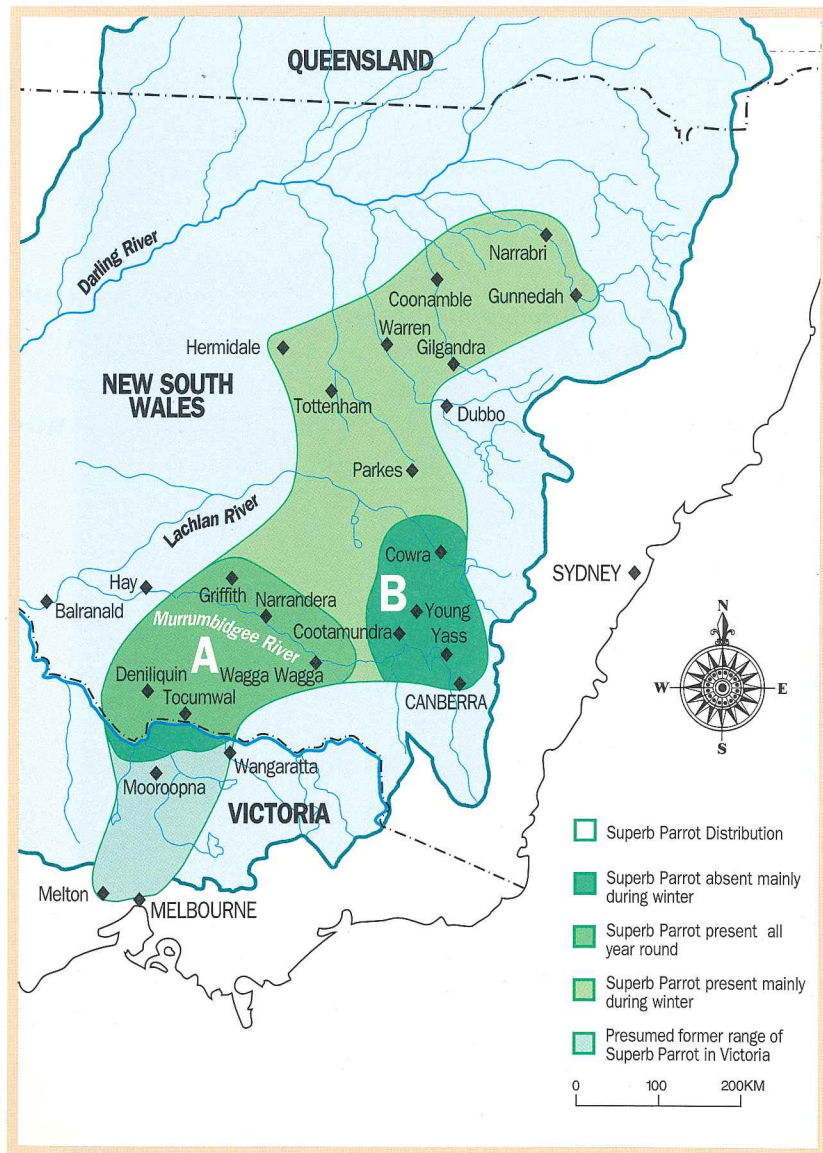
Feeding

The Superb Parrot utilises a number of seed producing plants varying in size from large trees to cereal crops. In the Murray-Riverina the majority of foraging occurs within the box woodlands. The birds feed on the flowers and fruits (mature and immature) of many eucalypt trees such as the river red gum, black box and yellow box. Superb Parrot forage sites are linked by green corridors or 'flightpaths' to nesting sites.

Throughout their range the birds feed largely on the ground where they harvest the seeds of grasses. They also forage in scattered box woodland where acacias and eucalypt seeds occur. It has been observed that over half of their foraging occurs on the ground.

The Superb Parrot visits the South-west slopes and ACT region between September and February. This coincides with their breeding season and the flowering of many acacias and eucalypts. Eucalypts and acacias are host to other plants and insects such as mistletoe and lerps which also provide the parrots with food. Foraging can occur in many places and the parrots will travel as far as 10km from a nesting site to gather food.

Superb Parrots are social birds and often feed in pairs or in small parties searching for seeds, nectar and grains. During the breeding season, flocks of males can be seen feeding together and collecting food for nesting females. This is done two to three times a day over a month or more while the eggs and new hatchlings are developing.



Superb Parrot Distribution. Breeding areas in Murray-Riverina (A) and South-west Slopes (B).

SUPERB PARROT

David Eastburn MDBC



FLOODED RED GUM FOREST TYPICAL OF THE MURRAY-RIVERINA REGION

Trees

- River red gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*
- Blakely's red gum — *Eucalyptus blakelyi*
- Yellow box *Eucalyptus melliodora*
- White box *Eucalyptus albens*
- Black box *Eucalyptus largiflorens*
- Grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa*
- Bimble box *Eucalyptus populnea*
- Mugga ironbark *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*
- Eurabbie gum *Eucalyptus globulus, bicostata*

Shrubs

- Cootamundra wattle *Acacia baileyana*
- Gold dust wattle *Acacia acinacea*
- Wyalong wattle *Acacia cardiophylla*
- Deane's wattle *Acacia deanei*
- Silver wattle *Acacia dealbata*
- Western silver wattle *Acacia decora*
- Western wreath wattle *Acacia saligna*
- Green wattle *Acacia decurrens*

SOME SUPERB PARROT FOOD TREES AND SHRUBS

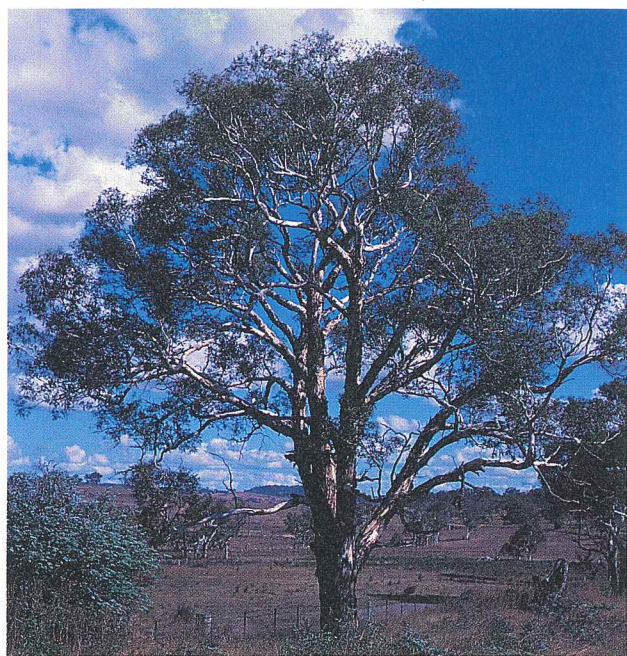
Sundry

- Dwarf cherry *Exocarpus strictus*
- Silky oak *Grevillea robusta*
- Emubush *Eremophila longifolia*
- Elm *Ulmus campestris*



Breeding

The Superb Parrot has been found nesting along the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Edward rivers in the Murray-Riverina, Barmah-Millew Forests and throughout the South-west Slopes. It prefers to nest in large trees which contain numerous hollows.



NESTING TREE SOUTH-WEST SLOPES

The typical nest tree in the region has a diameter (at breast height) of 1.57m, a height of 33m and a maximum crown width of 11m wide. The typical nest hollow is 17m above the ground and around 26m from a water course (see opposite). Black box, white cypress pine and boree are often associated with many breeding areas.

On the South-west Slopes, Superb Parrots nest in open woodland and utilise both dead and live trees. Some of the more favoured nesting sites include river red gums, Blakely's red gum, apple box, grey box, white box and red box. The typical nest tree varies slightly depending on whether it is alive or dead, but is generally between 17 and 20m high, have a diameter (at breast height) of less than one metre and a nest site around 10m high (see pages 6 & 7). The living trees have a crown width diameter of around 8 metres. The parrots tend to nest in or short distances from box woodlands and around 160-180 metres from a water source (dam or river). Western silver wattle is often associated with breeding sites.

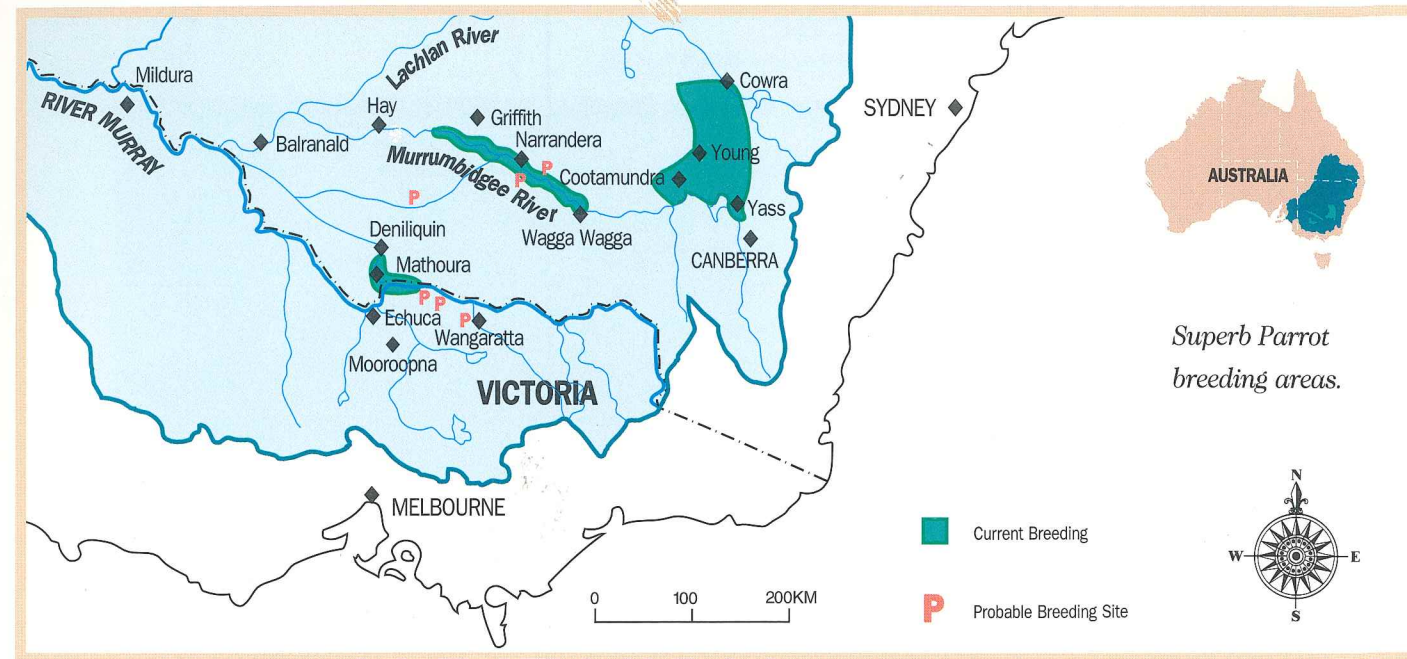
There is a tendency for Superb Parrots to nest in colonies containing up to six nests. The same trees can be re-used for breeding by the parrots and on occasions an alternative hollow in the same tree is used. The hollow can be used even after the tree has died. The parrots are known to nest well down into the hollow and sometimes as far down as the ground level. Four to five eggs are laid on decayed wood dust and have a 20 day incubation period before hatching. The chicks are born covered in a fluffy white down. The chicks begin to leave the nests between five to six weeks of age.

The parrots tend to disperse to the north and west after breeding. The red gum forests along the Edward River provide favourable feeding grounds for both the adults & their young.

These trees take at least 150 years to form hollows. The availability of trees for nest sites is critical to maintaining and increasing parrot numbers as nesting does not occur unless trees with suitable hollows are found.

Within the Murray-Riverina, the Parrot relies on the riparian river red gum forest for nesting. A typical nest tree is generally one of the largest trees in the forest and located within 9 kilometres of box woodlands.

SUPERB PARROT

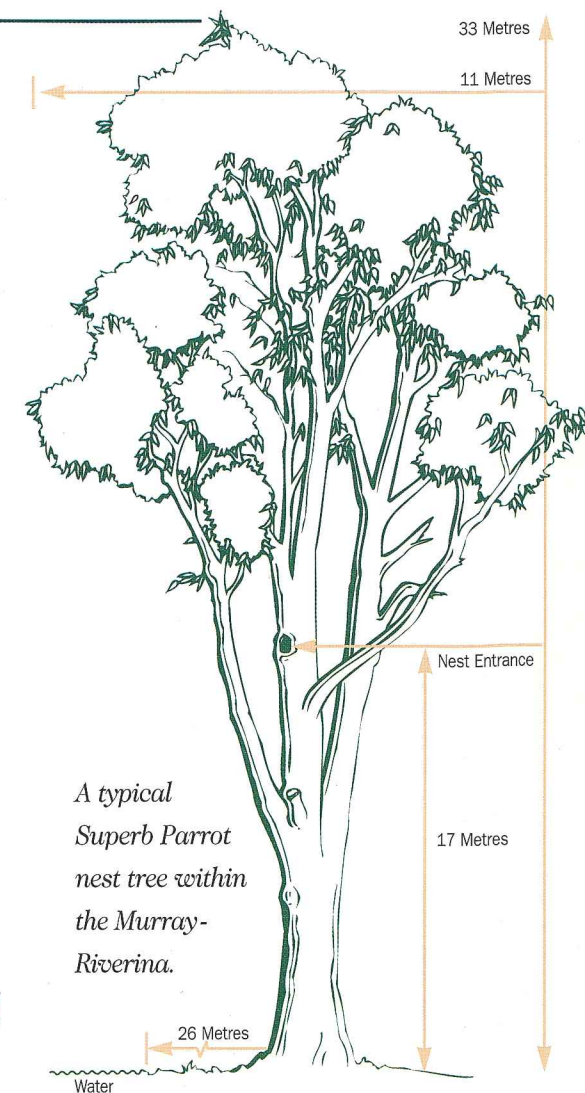


*The Superb Parrot is endangered.
So we humans have to save it
Always keep your cat in at night
So the Superb Parrot doesn't get a fright
Don't let grain fall on the road
Or the Superb Parrot might die like a toad*

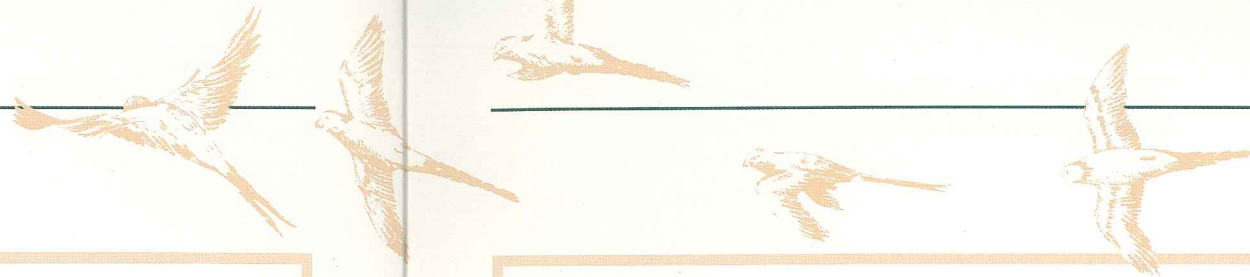
*The Superb Parrot is a beautiful bird
It doesn't like to be seen or heard
The male bird has a yellow head
The female bird has a beak which is red
The male parrot has a crimson chest
But I think the female parrot is the best.*

*The Superb Parrot lives far from the ground
Which might mean it doesn't like to be found
They like to forage on the ground
And I don't think they make much sound
The Superb Parrot will fly 10km for food
I think they must do it when they're in a good mood*

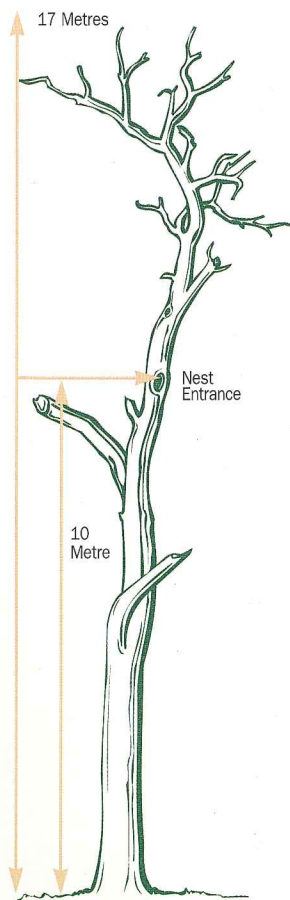
BY GEORGE HENDERSON YEAR 5
BOWNING PRIMARY SCHOOL



A typical Superb Parrot nest tree within the Murray-Riverina.



A typical Superb Parrot nest tree (dead) on the South-west Slopes.

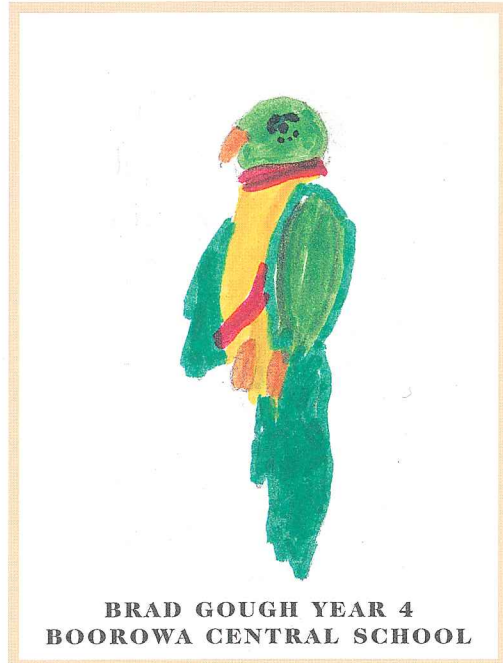


SUPERB PARROT

Management

What can be done to protect the Superb Parrot?

- The major threat to the Superb Parrot is the unplanned clearing of trees and woodland in the parrot's range. Trees along roadsides and river banks, in paddocks and forests can all provide habitat. Clearing, extensive grazing, vegetation removal or decline, weed invasion and fire can all destroy existing and potential breeding and feeding habitats.
- Trees offer a range of habitats for animals and birds throughout their life and beyond. Around 40% of known nesting sites on the South-west Slopes occur in dead trees. Removing dead trees for firewood or for other purposes can destroy Superb Parrot breeding sites and reduce overall parrot numbers.
- Planting favourable tree species such as box trees and wattles in rural areas and on urban fringes can provide feeding sites, protection and eventually breeding habitats. Trees and shrubs can fill in gaps in flight corridors or create new paths that connect breeding and feeding areas.



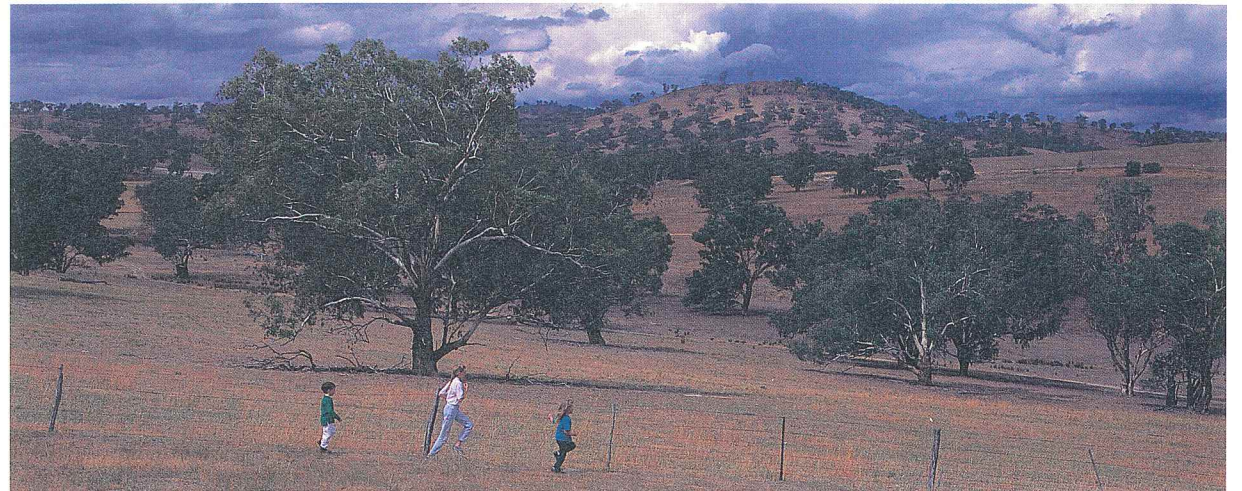
BRAD GOUGH YEAR 4
BOOROWA CENTRAL SCHOOL

- Road kills can be minimised by looking out for parrots and driving cautiously in areas of high populations or when birds are foraging along roadsides.
- Spilled grain on roadsides encourages the Superb Parrot to forage in a high risk area. Covering grain trucks can prevent spillage and possible fatalities.

David Eastburn MDBC



BARMAH-MILLEWA RED GUM FORESTS

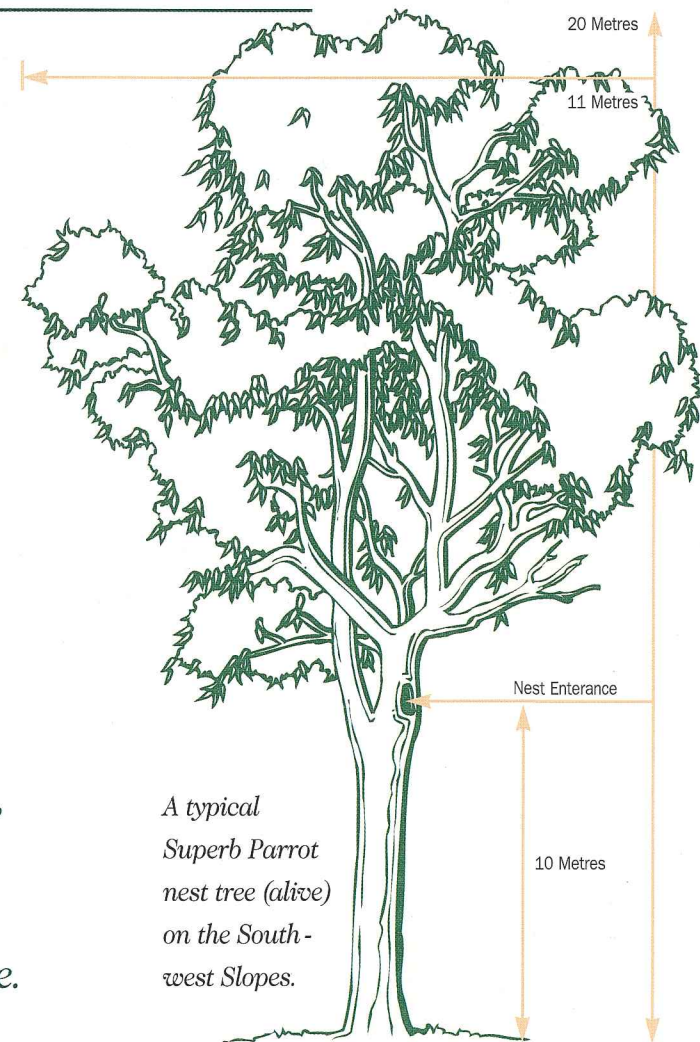


David Eastburn MDBC

YELLOW BOX WOODLANDS SOUTH-WEST SLOPES

*The Superb Parrot is so cool,
so please don't be a fool,
If you start cutting down the bird's home
I'm sure they'll let out a great big groan.
Cover wheat trucks that go on the road,
Because injured parrots cannot be sewed.
These parrots are a lovely kind,
So if you feed them they will not mind.
You often see the birds flying in a pair,
But when they come on to the road
people don't care.
These birds have a right to a living,
so why can't you do a little bit of giving.
Their colours are superb when blending in,
they make your eyes spin and spin.
When you have read this poem,
I'm sure you'll leave these poor parrots alone.*

BY JENNIE SHANNON YEAR 6
BOWNING PRIMARY SCHOOL

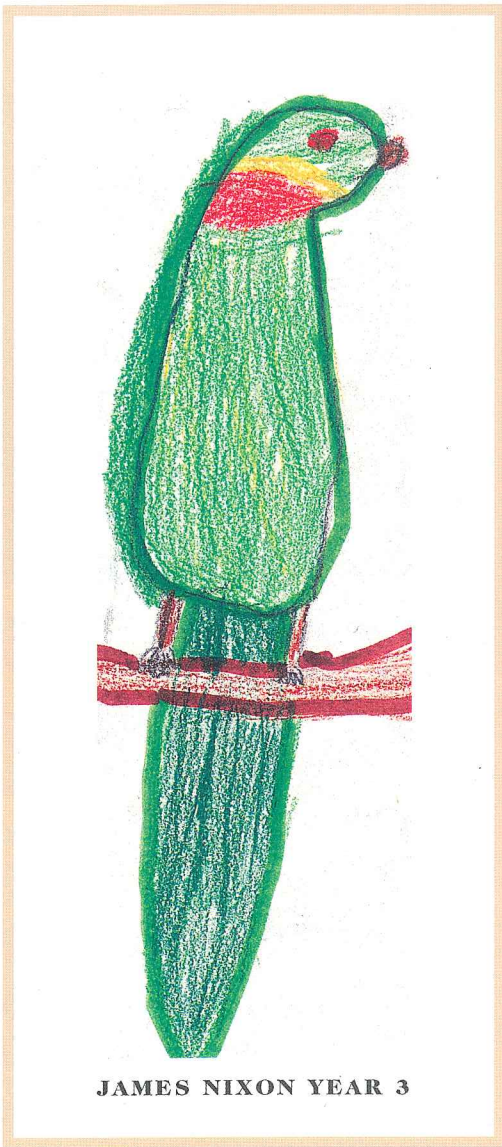


A typical Superb Parrot nest tree (alive) on the South-west Slopes.

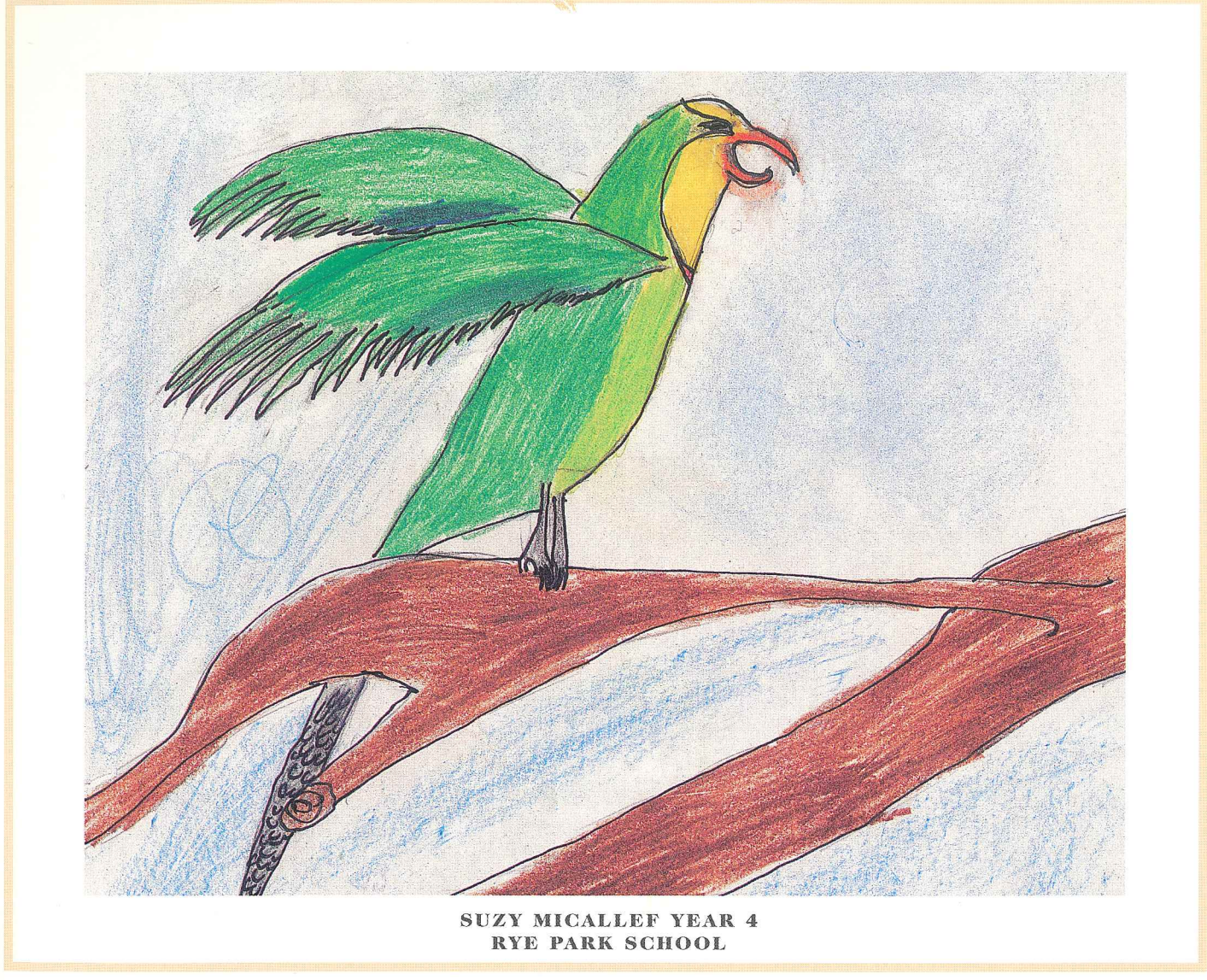


- Cats will prey on endangered animals, birds and reptiles and are known to kill over 100 species of native birds. The animals at greatest risk are those which forage on the ground and are smaller than the cats themselves. Superb Parrots foraging on the ground can be a vulnerable target for cats. Responsible cat ownership can minimise fatalities to our native fauna and prevent an increase in stray cat numbers and involves:
 - Desexing and the tagging domestic cats,
 - Keeping cats inside at night and using a multi-belled collar
 - Reporting the presence of feral cats
- Report any suspicious situations which might indicate illegal trapping or poaching activities. These are likely to occur during the period from October to January when the males are in foraging flocks to feed nesting mothers. If the males are trapped the females are forced to desert their young or starve.

These activities can all contribute to the survival of the Superb Parrot as well as other native birds, reptiles and marsupials.



JAMES NIXON YEAR 3



SUZY MICALLEF YEAR 4
RYE PARK SCHOOL

*What does this parrot look like?
 Does it fly or does it hike?
 Is it happy, is it mad?
 Or is it really very sad?
 Is it big or is it small?
 Does it even eat at all?
 After all the things I've heard,
 Please save this beautiful, rare bird.*

DAIN ALCORN YEAR 6
RYE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

SUPERB PARROT

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Sue Streatfield, Project Officer, Greening Australia. May 1995.

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**CERRYANNE MEARS YEAR 4
BOOROWA CENTRAL SCHOOL**

