

On the Trail of the Plains-wanderer: A Precious Australian Bird

AUTHOR

ROHAN CLEAVE

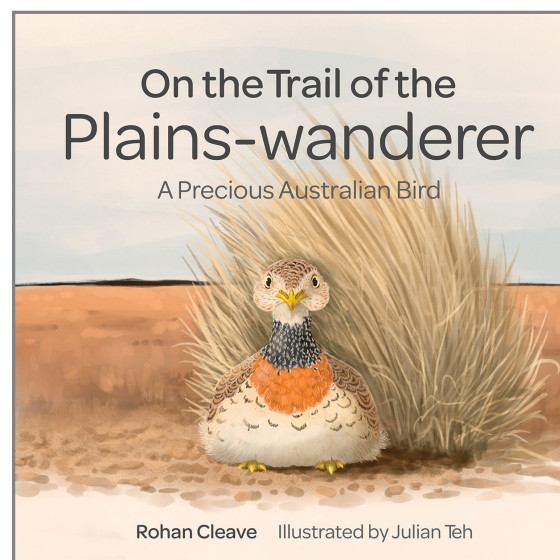
ILLUSTRATOR

JULIAN TEH

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

The Plains-wanderer is unlike any other bird on Earth—it's one of a kind!

On the Trail of the Plains-wanderer tells the true story of one of Australia's most critically endangered bird species. This unique, quirky and precious bird faces many threats, but continues to survive against the odds. Discover more about this fascinating bird and see how people are providing hope for their future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rohan Cleave is a zookeeper at Zoos Victoria. His books have received CBCA Shortlist and Notable listings, a Wilderness Society's Environment Award for Children's Literature and a Whitley Award for Children's Natural History Book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Julian Teh is a Canberra-based scientific illustrator. Fuelled by a lifelong passion for birds, he uses his paintings to tell the stories of his birding experiences.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the book, talk to the students about how some animals might adapt to keep themselves safe from predators and a hostile environment. Can they think of any examples of animals that have adapted over time or whose behaviour helps protect them? Write the examples on the board.
- Ask students what extinction means. Can they think of any animals that are extinct or in danger of extinction? Discuss what might cause an animal to become endangered.
- The Plains-wanderer is an Australian bird. Ask students to think about what other birds are native to Australia. Ask them to identify how those birds look different from the Plains-wanderer, and how they are similar.
- Discuss what information in the book explains why the Plains-wanderer is in danger of becoming extinct. Talk about both climate change and land management.
- The Plains-wanderer lives in a part of Australia that is dry and inhospitable. Talk about what this bird does to help it survive in such a hot, dry part of the country.
- 'No other bird exists like them anywhere on the planet. This is why the Plains-wanderer is so important.' Ask students why this makes them so important.
- Ask students to explain the purpose of a glossary in a non-fiction book. Ask them what has been done to certain

words in the text to help the reader identify which words will appear in the glossary.

- Talk about some of the words in the book that might not be familiar to students, but which don't appear in the glossary. As a class, discuss what they mean; does reading the whole sentence help? Examples include:
 - vast
 - semi-arid
 - lurking
 - ambush
 - dew
 - clutch (of eggs)
 - motionless
 - low-pitched
 - safe haven
 - humidity.
- The illustrations in the book are life-like. Ask the students why they think the illustrator has chosen to use this kind of illustration style for this book. Talk about the fact that when students are learning about an animal and its habitat, life-like illustrations can help them better understand the text they are reading.
- Think about the environment in which the Plains-wanderer lives. Discuss how climate change might affect their habitat; will it make it easier or harder for the birds to live there? (Point out the mention of drought, floods and fire in 'Threats' on p 32.)
- Ask students to create an information poster or booklet about the Plains-wanderer, using information they've learned from the book. Include illustrations, and the following information:
 - What do they look like?
 - What is their habitat? Where do they live?
 - What do they eat?
 - What are their predators?
 - How do they keep themselves safe?
 - Interesting facts about the Plains-wanderer.
- The word 'Plains-wanderer' is a noun—as a group, ask the students to explain what a noun is, and the difference between proper nouns, common nouns and pronouns. In groups, write the headings 'common noun', 'proper noun' and 'pronoun' on a large sheet of paper, and write down examples of each from the book under the relevant headings. They can then present their findings to the class.
- Discuss how zoos are helping to boost Plains-wanderer numbers by captive breeding. Research what captive breeding is, and consider what benefits and risks there may be in captive breeding. Choose a zoo and visit its website to try to find out what captive breeding programs they have, and for which animals. Write a report on what you discover, including illustrations of the relevant animals.