

BOUNCING BACK: AN EASTERN BARRED BANDICOOT STORY

Auhtor: Rohan Cleave and Coral Tulloch

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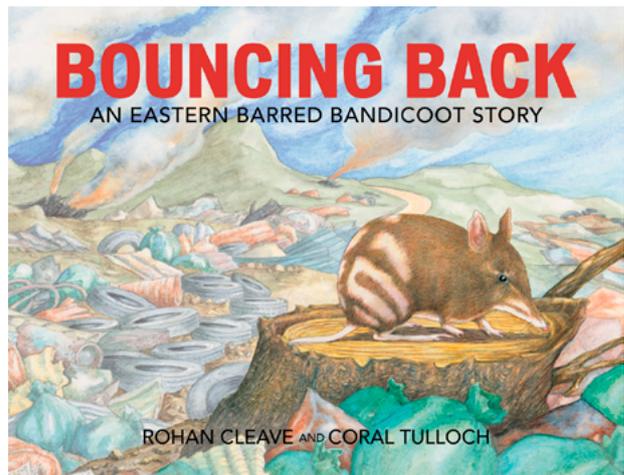
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Who would have thought that a small population of eastern barred bandicoots would have been discovered in the 1980s living among hard rubbish that included old car wrecks at the Hamilton waste disposal tip in western Victoria? In his book, *Bouncing Back: An Eastern Barred Bandicoot Story*, Rohan Cleave tells the unlikely but true story of how this species successfully bounced back from the edge of extinction. This picture story book both informs its readers and engages their thinking about Australia's vulnerable native wildlife.

The story is told through the eyes and experiences of an eastern barred bandicoot which very much appeals to years 3 and 4 students. The narrative opens with factual information about the appearance and life cycle of eastern barred bandicoots. Students were taken aback upon learning of these bandicoots' two to three year life span, the three month maturing of females and their short pregnancy of just twelve-and-a-half days.

Coral Tulloch illustrated the text with soft, clear pictures that detail the physical features of this bandicoot species. Worthy of mention is Tulloch's depiction of the waste tip, a salutary pictorial lesson in what happens when a species faces extinction owing to habitat loss, predation and human activity. Opening this book the reader sees a detailed landscape of the past where bandicoots survived, a stark contrast to the endpaper depicting a degraded environment of the present. The illustrator's visuals clearly support the text.

I read this story as a two part serial to my science classes concluding the first session at the illustration of the tip. Students were captivated and keenly anticipated what might happen next. Prior to reading the second half of the book, I used the opportunity to probe students' understandings of the most suitable habitat that would support this species' survival and how its physical features might work for it. The narrative reveals in detail the importance of active human interventions



in redressing endangerment and clearly demonstrates a success story where a species' survival has been supported by establishing captive breeding programs and protected free range habitats. These ideas gave rise to much reflection and discussion about the future of the eastern barred bandicoot as well as endangerment issues. The narrative points the way to a positive outcome for the future of the eastern barred bandicoot on mainland Australia.

The target audience for this book could include students ranging in age from seven to twelve years and lends itself to an inquiry learning approach. The message conveyed through Rohan Cleave's story is easily understood by eight-, nine- and ten-year-olds. The content has clear links to Science as Human Endeavour and Biological science of the Australian Curriculum.

It's a story of struggle, disruption, adaptation and survival of a species told by people committed to making a difference. *Bouncing Back: An Eastern Barred Bandicoot Story* contains the vital threads of good story telling. It certainly captured the interest of my students, raising as many questions as it answered. There is much to recommend this book as a welcome addition to a public or school library.

Teacher Notes (PDF download) support is available on the CSIRO publishing site and provides a teacher with comprehensive background information and links to Australian Curriculum.

<http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/7771/#forteachers>