

Book reviews

August 14, 2020

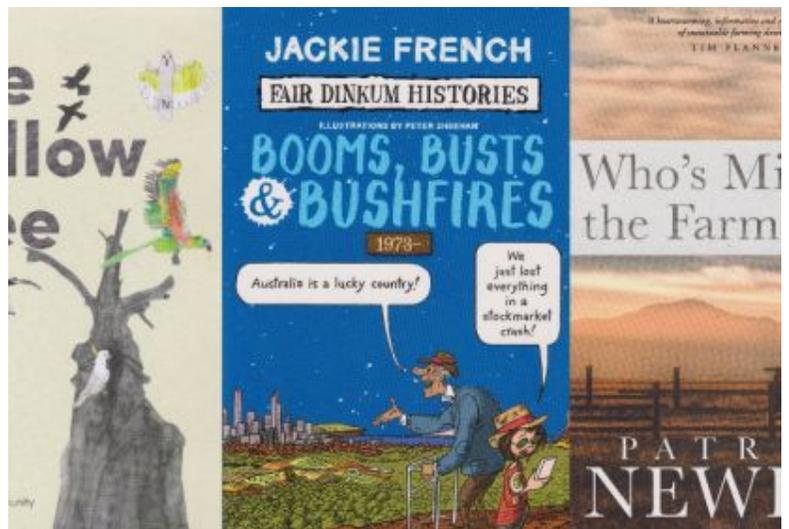
The Hollow Tree

By Mark Mordue, Robyn Chiles and Inner West school children, Addison Road Community Centre Organisation, 2019

This book celebrates how critical trees are for supporting Australia's remarkable diversity of life. The book is written from the perspective of one dead Sydney Blue Gum who still brings life to a plethora of birds, microbats, lizards, and insects at the Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville.

Habitat trees can take 200 years to form large enough hollows for wildlife to nest and live in. This fact explains why Australia has one of the highest rates of species extinction in the world, with so much original old growth forest cover now extinguished. Young trees just cannot provide these vital hollows.

In 2014, Addison Road Community Centre pioneered 'habitat creation' when it was decided rather than cutting down a dead tree, it was better to perform special adjustments to save it and turn it into a valuable Habitat Tree. The tree had its branches removed to make it safe, and artificial tree hollows were created to provide the necessary spaces, nesting and shelter boxes for a variety of species. A camera was then installed to monitor who was making use of these hollows. This is something to inspire all schools to consider transforming a large tree that is near the end of its life, to a Habitat Tree.



Congratulations to the students and teachers at Dulwich Hill Public School, Ferncourt Public School, Marrickville West Public School, Taverners Hill Infants' School and Wilkins Public School, who participated in this urban habitat tree publication and project. NSW Teachers Federation members can obtain a free copy of *The Hollow Tree* by emailing Mina at programs@addiroad.org.au or calling 9569 7633. School excursions and workshops can be arranged to visit this Marrickville Habitat Tree.

Booms, Busts & Bushfires

1973-
By Jackie French, Illustrations and Cartoons by Peter Sheehan, Omnibus Book from Scholastic Australia, 2011

Booms, Busts & Bushfires provides a glimpse into Australia's history since 1973.

Despite being written in 2011, long before the recent catastrophic Black Summer bushfires and the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the book provides a fascinating backdrop to ask the important questions about the past, present and future.

This book prompts questions like: Why have we not taken the warnings of the past pandemics? Why have we

never imagined the end of cheap mass air travel? Why has globalisation made us so vulnerable? Why has it taken us so long to realise that coal-fired power stations are not just emitting toxic fumes nearby but also releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide that is rapidly destabilising the Earth's climate?

This is great book to get young people thinking about history and how important it is.

Who's Minding the Farm

In this climate emergency

By Patricia Newell, Viking an imprint of Penguin Books, 2019

Patricia Newell puts progressive farmers at the centre of this book — farmers who understand climate science and sustainable agriculture.

Author Patricia Newell bought a farm named Elmwood in the Hunter Valley, on the edge of the humongous coal mines that continues to pollute the air and water, destroy good agricultural land, and scar the landscape. There, she learnt not only to become an organic farmer, but also developed her deep understanding of regenerative and ecologically responsible agriculture.

Patricia Newell takes on taboo topics that are anathema to a healthy rural landscape — land clearing and water theft. In particular, she highlights the crises of exhausted soils and the need for urgent resources to heal and regenerate the land back to health.

She carefully navigates the 'greenie vs farmer' binary, while courageously and sensitively tackling issues about the dire state of the planet. She highlights the dilemma of her wonderful farmer neighbours who give such loyalty and generosity, but then close their door when she begins talking about the climate crisis.

This is an important book about how organic and regenerative farming can provide solutions to the climate emergency.