



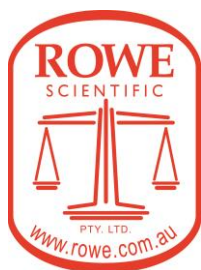
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Science Writing

Year 3-4

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Goldie's Legacy

A Story of Conservation

By Milla Pagsanjan

The sun shines through the clouds while the rain falls down over a cold Melaleuca. Dr Shannon Troy loves this secluded, beautiful land in the south-west corner of Tasmania's wilderness. She sits watching her favourite animals in the world, the Orange-bellied Parrots. Dr Shannon was doing what she did best, observing for her research and planning releases of captive birds. This time, she was watching her favourite parrot, 'Black Red L', whose clutch of five eggs was finally hatching. She will have just one clutch this season as the yearly migration to the mainland is drawing nearer.

Goldie opens her eyes for the first time. She has spent a long 21 days growing big and strong in her egg. There are four other eggs in the clutch and she is excitedly waiting for them to hatch. Goldie takes in her surroundings. Looking down at her was a beautiful bird with bright green and yellow feathers and an orange patch on her belly.

"Who are you?" asks Goldie.

"I am your Mum. I am here to help you grow strong, little hatchling. I will feed you and keep you warm. I will look after you until you are ready to be released into the wild. I should warn you though Goldie, you must always be aware of the dangers of predators. Cats and foxes! Snakes! Not to mention Sparrowhawks! You will have to always be on the lookout. After all, we are a critically endangered species! My job is to prepare you for the big migration."

As the weeks passed by, Goldie grew stronger. She loved the big aviary with its seeds, delicious veggies and little pellets of food. Her Mama warned her again,

"The wild environment and migration won't be easy like this Goldie. You must be strong and learn to survive on your own."

"Mama why do we need to migrate? The keepers are worrying that it is such a long way for a tiny bird to go. There's hardly any of us left and they are wondering how we will find our way. It is going to be a colder than usual winter but they aren't worried we won't be able to thermoregulate, whatever that means!"

"Trust the process Goldie," soothed Mama, "The old birds have been telling us that there is enough habitat and food. The scientists and keepers are doing their best to help us rewild and we must do our part. It's time, Goldie, you are no longer a fledgling. It has been 9 weeks since you hatched, you must start to prepare for release, then migration."

I am not sure if I want to migrate, thinks Goldie to herself. She has heard Dr Shannon discuss this with the Melaleuca keepers. She sounds nervous too, but she is sure that migrating is absolutely necessary, after all, if the birds didn't follow their biology and migrate, would they even be OBPs? Will there be more abundant food for us in this new land? Are we chasing better weather? What's wrong with staying home, in the cozy tree hollow, in this safe aviary? I have heard that we are only one of three types of parrots in the world that migrate. The other non-migrating parrots like our cousins, the Elegants seem to be doing just fine!

Time passed quickly and Dr Shannon took Goldie to a newer, bigger, more open aviary. Goldie's legs felt like jelly and her tummy was doing backflips. There was a small glass panel and her favourite Paper Daisies on a little ledge. Dr Shannon encourages her to step out onto the ledge. As she does, she feels a rustling of her feathers. Was that wind? She had never felt wind before. Goldie loved watching and learning from the other birds as they told her their stories of their own past migrations to the mainland. For the first time, Goldie felt hope. Maybe this would be a pretty awesome adventure after all.

There it was, freedom! It was so close, she could almost touch it. Goldie's heart felt like it was beating out of her chest. As the sun sets and the sky becomes darker, Goldie knows that soon it would be time. She and the other juvenile birds had decided they would fly across towards King Island and try to get to Victoria in one go. She leaned forwards, stretched out her wings and took off from the aviary ledge, flying north for the Winter. Goldie looks forward to coming home to Melaleuca next Spring to help continue the legacy of her species. When she comes home, it will be her turn to lay her own little clutch, to save the wild population. Dr Shannon will be there, waiting and hoping to see them again.

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Reference List

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- Fact checking and discussions

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