

Wake Up, Drongo!

Story by John Carr
Illustrations by Astrid Matijasevic



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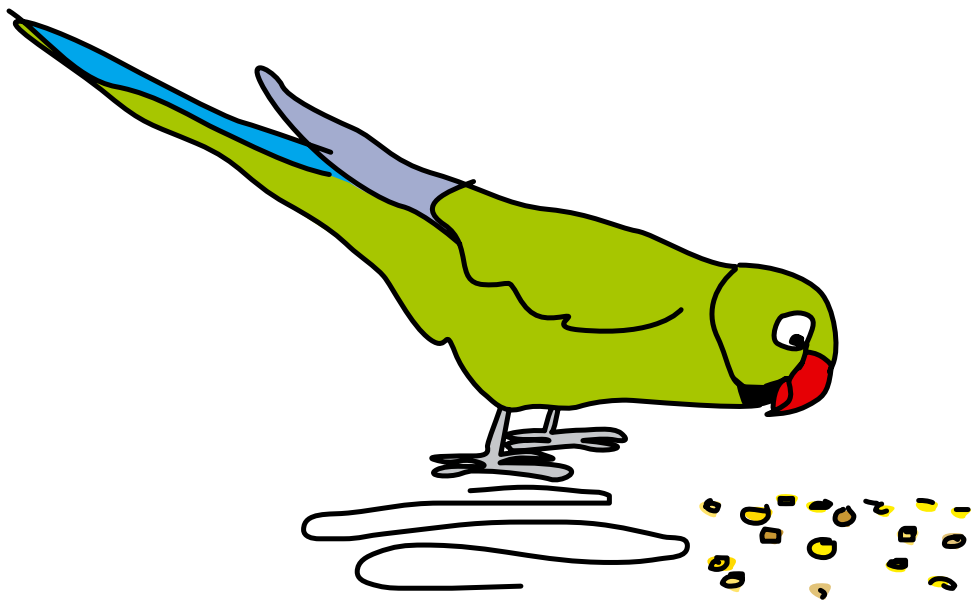
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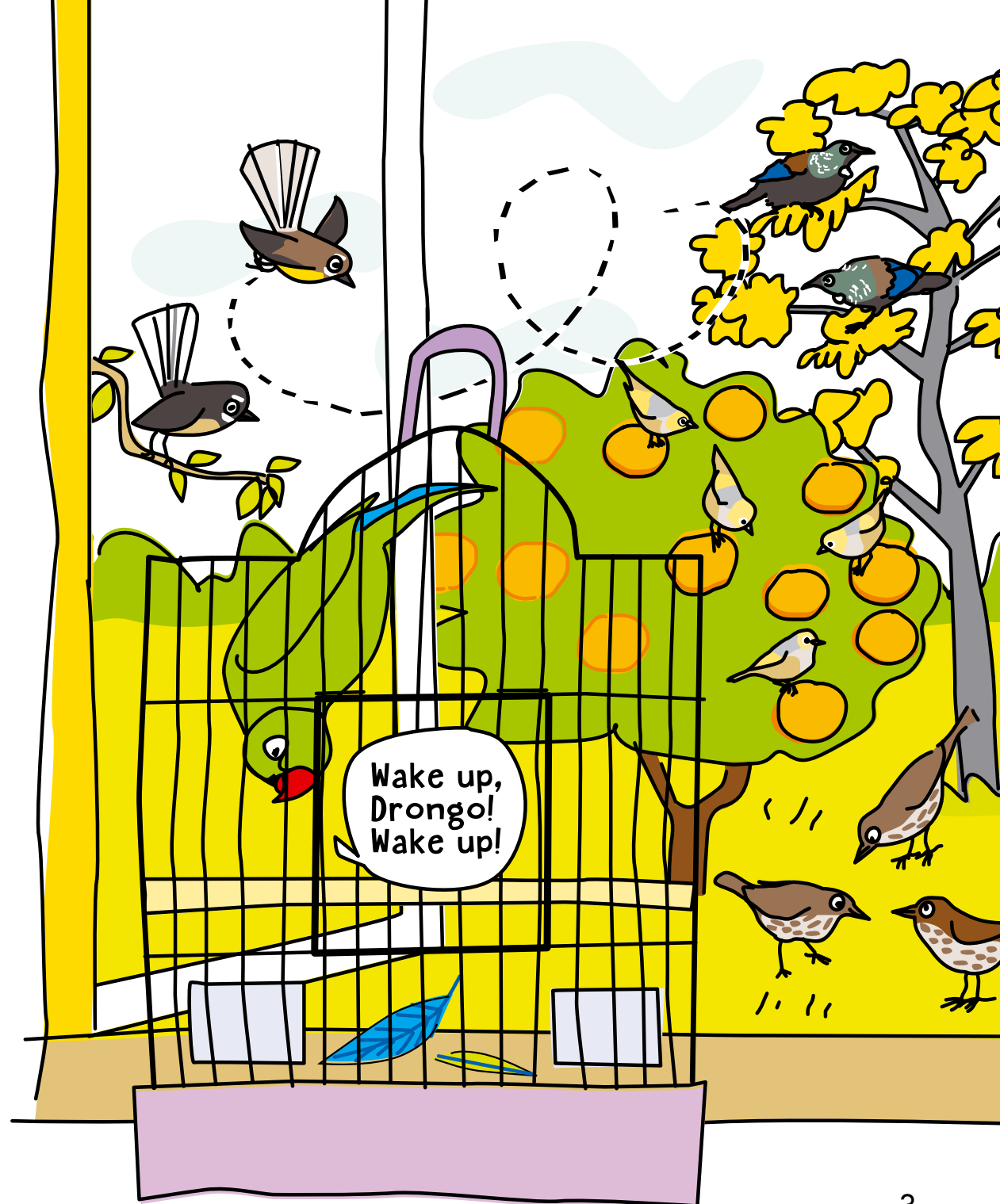


Chapter 1

“Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!” said Pirate, the parakeet. He wasn’t really talking, he was just copying words he had heard people say to him. Pirate repeated the words during the day when he was alone in the house in his cage.

Today, the window in the kitchen had been left open and Pirate could see and hear the birds in the garden. He heard the “cheet cheet” of the fantails. They flitted and fluttered among the fern trees, flushing insects into the air and eating them. He heard the cheeky chirps of the silvereyes as they pecked oranges in the orange trees. He heard the excited tweets of the thrushes as they tugged tasty worms from the soil and the loud call of the tui in the kowhai tree.

Today Pirate wanted to be free more than ever, and he knew what to do about it.



Chapter 2

Pirate had lived in his small cage for a long time. It had only one perch, a water container and a seed dispenser. There were no toys to play with, no ladders to climb and no cuttlefish to chew. Life in his cage was lonely and boring. Sometimes it was so boring Pirate pulled some of his feathers out just for something to do.

He had used his beak and claws to open the door to his cage before. So he did it again and perched next to the open window. He heard the squawk of a tui in the kowhai tree. He stretched his wings for the first time in a long time and launched himself into the air.

Pirate flew clumsily onto a branch at the top of the kowhai tree. He looked down at the tui below. He felt free and wanted to share his happiness so he called out to the tui, “Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!”

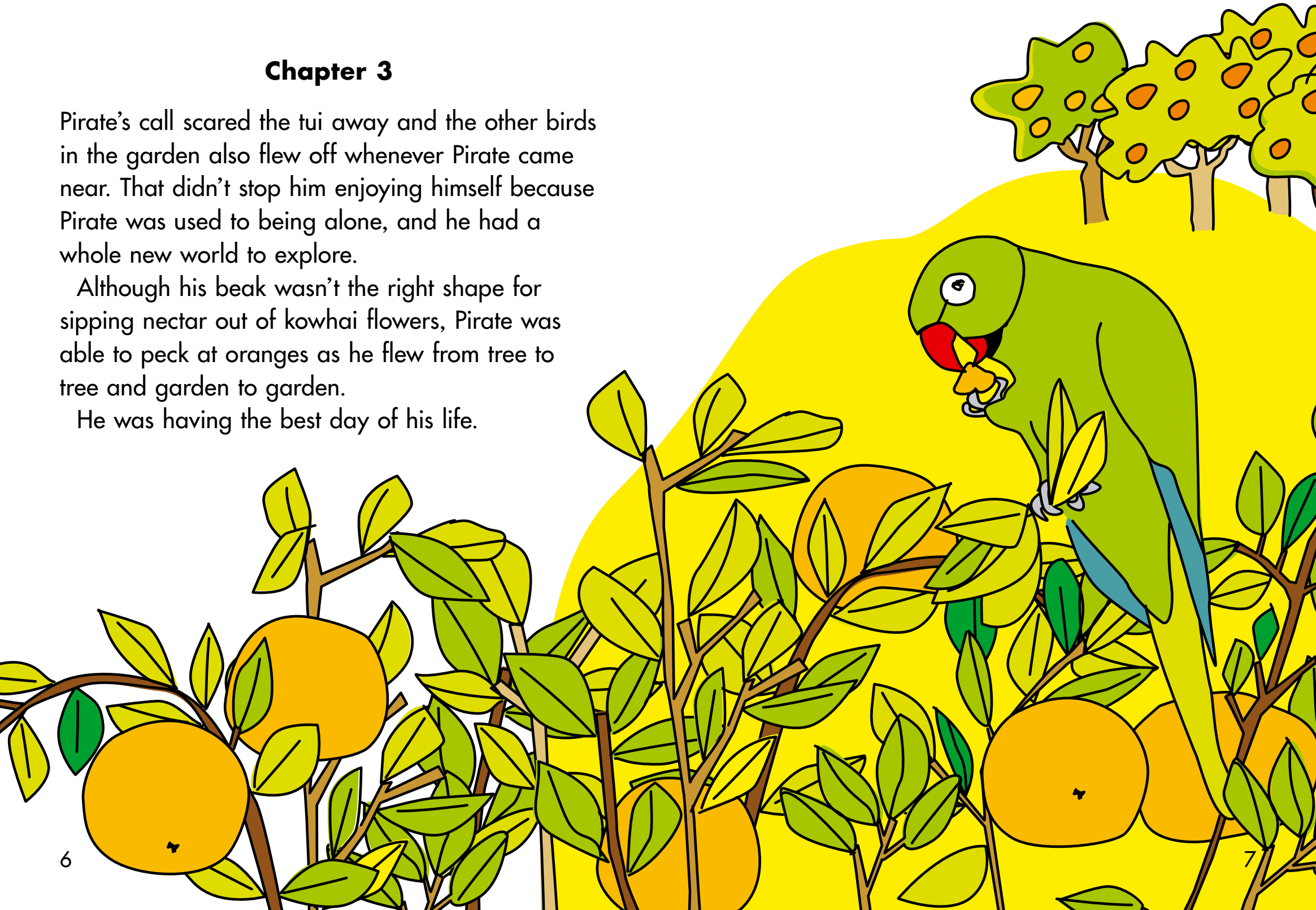


Chapter 3

Pirate's call scared the tui away and the other birds in the garden also flew off whenever Pirate came near. That didn't stop him enjoying himself because Pirate was used to being alone, and he had a whole new world to explore.

Although his beak wasn't the right shape for sipping nectar out of kowhai flowers, Pirate was able to peck at oranges as he flew from tree to tree and garden to garden.

He was having the best day of his life.



But when the sun went down, it was dark and cool. Pirate hopped from branch to branch in a large pohutukawa tree, looking for a warm place. Cold and tired, he finally drifted off to sleep, only to be woken by something dripping on his head.

Pirate had seen rain through the kitchen window before, but this was the first time he had felt it, and he didn't like it. It was falling so hard on his head. He was now cold, tired and wet. For the first time today, he wished he was at home.



Chapter 4

“Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!”

At first Toby thought he was dreaming. Then he heard the words again and he thought maybe it was his dad. Toby’s dad sometimes called him “Drongo” as a joke when he did something silly, but it didn’t sound like his father.

“Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!” It was coming from the garden. Toby pulled up the blind and looked out. It sounded as though it was coming from the pohutukawa tree, but he couldn’t see anyone in it. Maybe one of his friends was playing a trick on him!



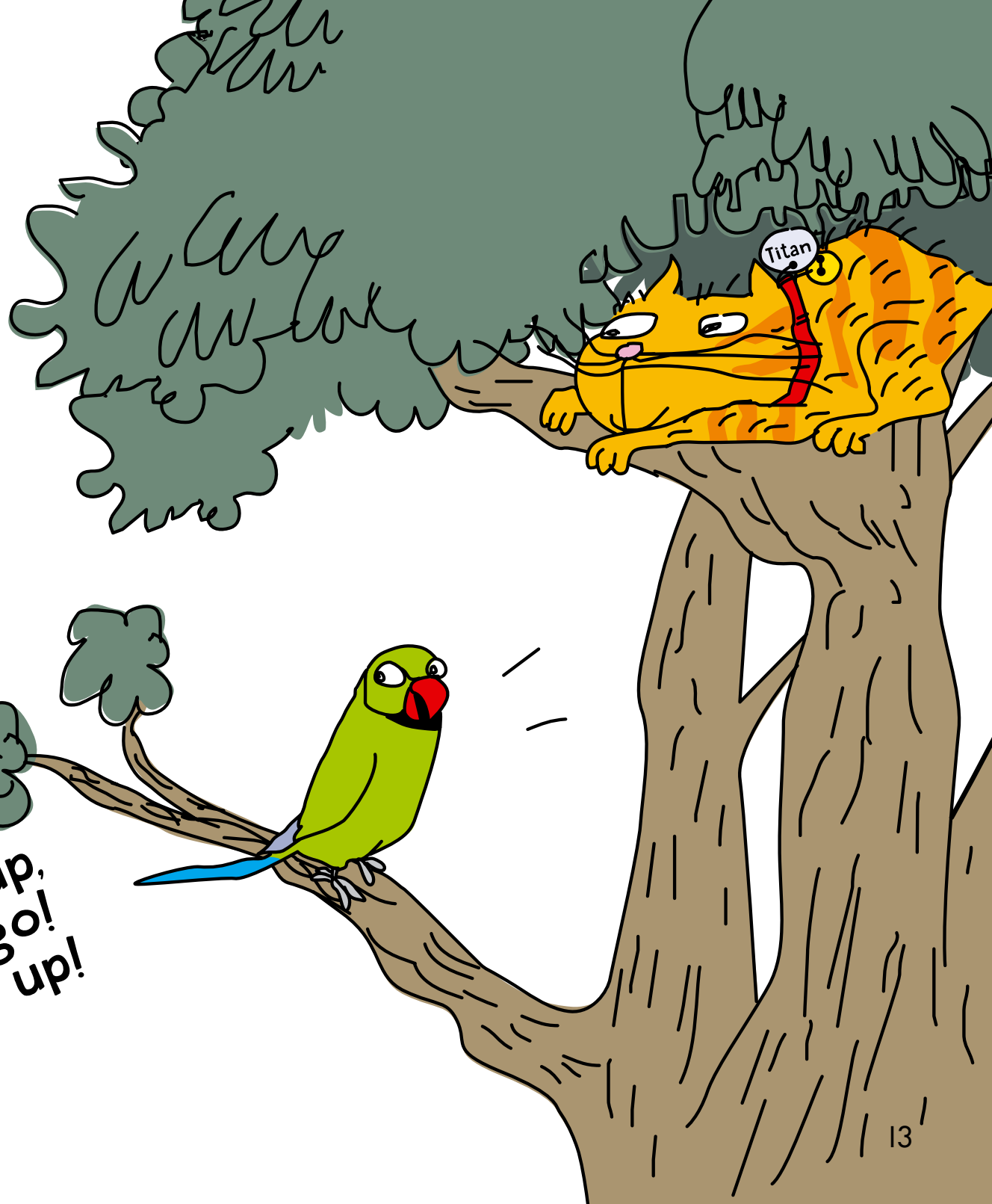
Then, through the leaves, he saw a flash of colour and movement on one of the branches. It wasn't one of his friends at all, it was a bird. A large green parakeet was perched on a small branch. The bird seemed to be looking at him.

"Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!" it said.

Toby laughed. "Hey Mum! Come and look at this!" he shouted excitedly.

Then he saw something that turned his excitement to horror. On the branch above the parakeet, very still, eyes fixed and ready to pounce, was Titan, the neighbour's cat.

**Wake up,
Drongo!
Wake up!**



Chapter 5

Toby leapt out of bed and sprinted for the door.

“Go away, Titan!” he shouted as he ran outside. But as Titan prepared to pounce, the bells on his collar jingled. Pirate flew off the branch and Toby’s shouts sent Titan scuttling down the pohutukawa tree and over the wooden fence faster than lightning on roller blades.

Toby looked back up the tree to where the parakeet had been perched. It wasn’t there. Toby had no idea where it was until he felt something on his shoulder. He thought it was his mother’s hand until he heard the noise.

“Wake up, Drongo! Wake up!”



Chapter 6

Toby's mother couldn't believe it when Toby walked inside with a parakeet on his shoulder.

"What a beautiful bird," she said. "It must be somebody's pet. Let's get him to the SPCA."

She got a large cardboard box out of the garage to keep the parakeet safe and secure in the car. She poked some holes for air.

"Now put him in the box Toby, and we'll go. Someone will be looking for him."

"Just a minute," smiled Toby. "There's just one thing I want to do first." Toby tiptoed into his dad's bedroom with the parakeet on his shoulder. Then he lowered his shoulder close to his dad's head and waited. He didn't have to wait long.

"Wake up, Drongo!" squawked Pirate.
"Wake up!"



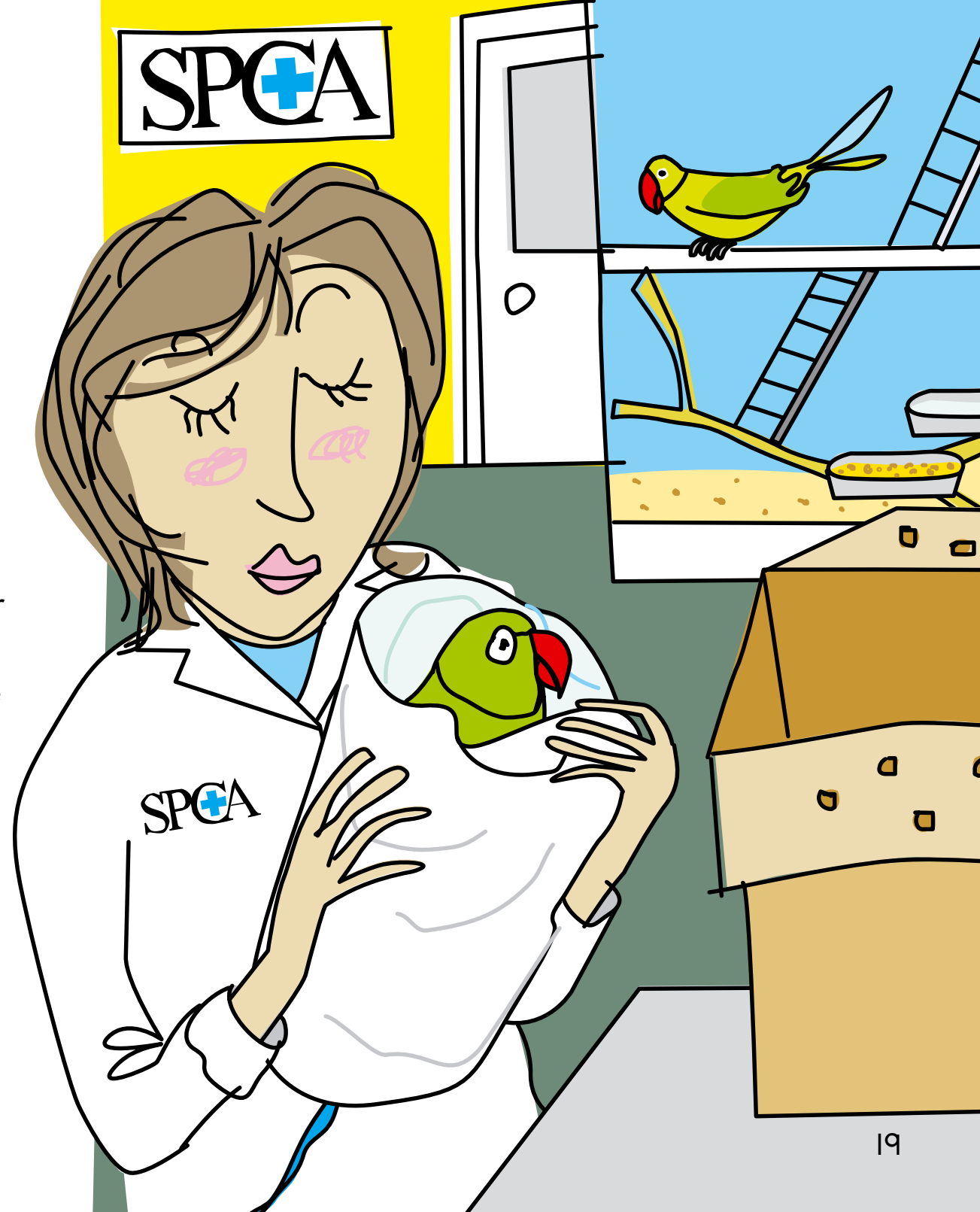
Chapter 7

Toby and his mum were still laughing when they got to the SPCA. Pirate wasn't so happy. He was glad to be safe, but he didn't like being in a box.

The people at the SPCA were very nice. The vet had a close look at Pirate's eyes, beak, wings, stomach, feet, feathers and tail and said that he was a healthy male bird but a bit underweight.

"After he has done some stray time with the Higginbottoms he'll be perfect," she said.

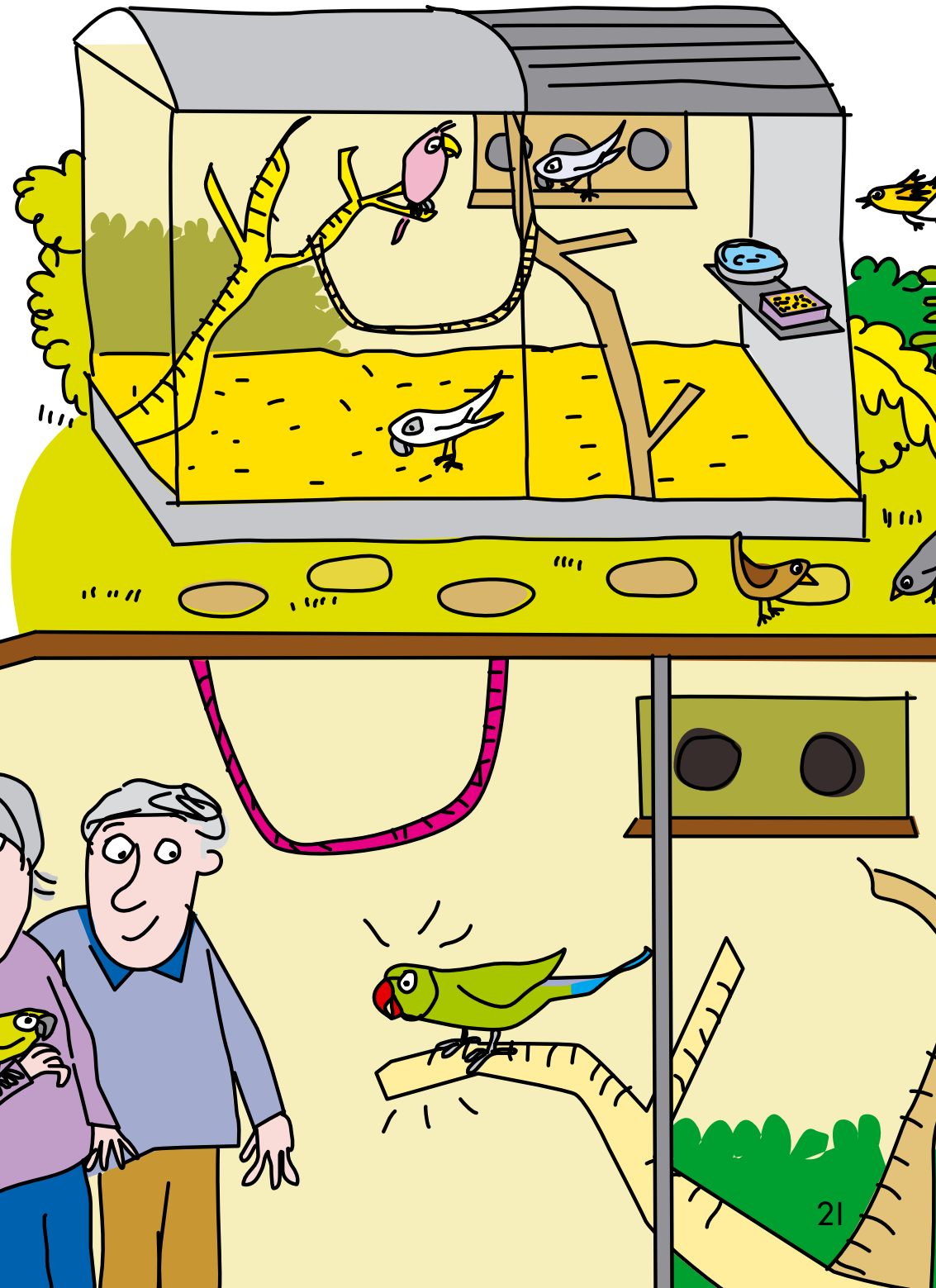
"Stray time" was the time that SPCA animals spent being looked after by kind people until their owners come to get them, or a new home was found for them. The vet was right – the best place for a bird to spend stray time was with Mr and Mrs Higginbottom. They loved birds.



The Higginbottoms had two aviaries in their back garden – a large one for their own three parakeets, and a smaller one in the far corner of the garden for sick or rescued birds.

Pirate spent seven happy days in the small aviary, though it didn't feel small to him. He loved all the space. There were different climbing and perching places. The food was interesting and Pirate also liked the company of Mr and Mrs Higginbottom.

The Higginbottoms liked Pirate, too, and when no-one came to collect him after seven days, they moved him into the parakeet aviary so he could stay there forever.



Chapter 8

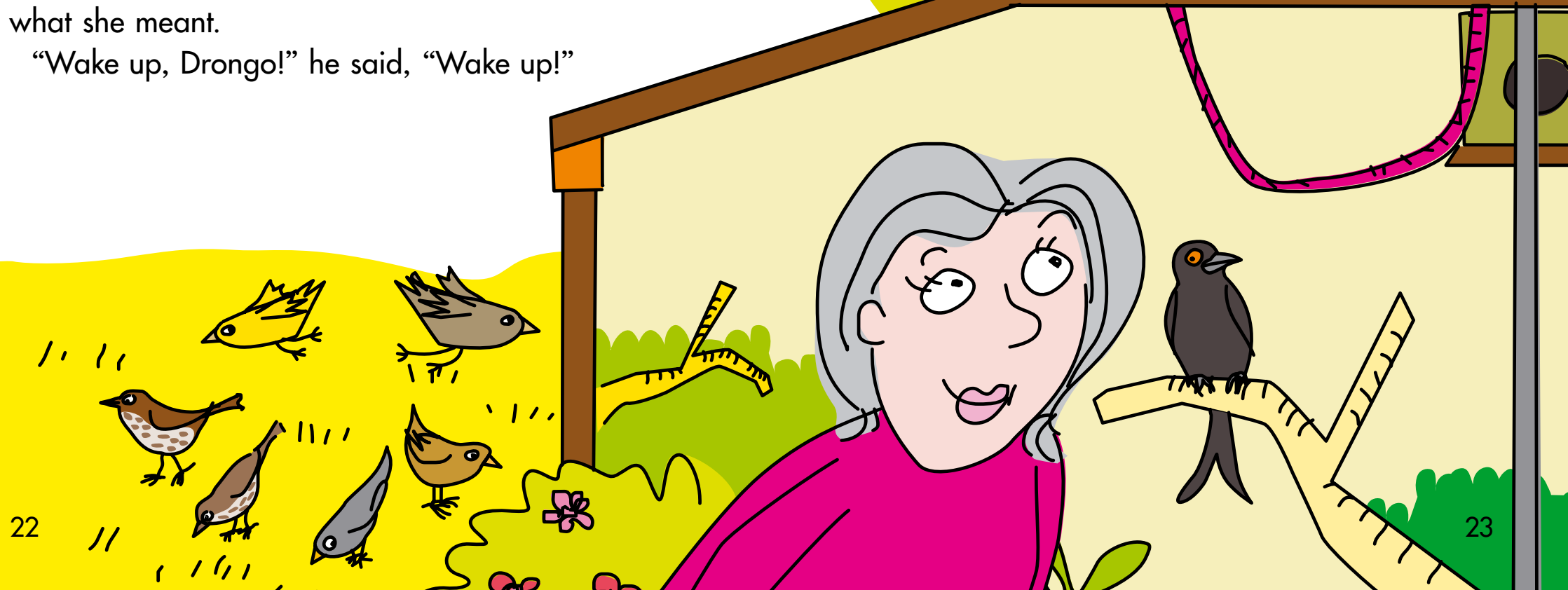
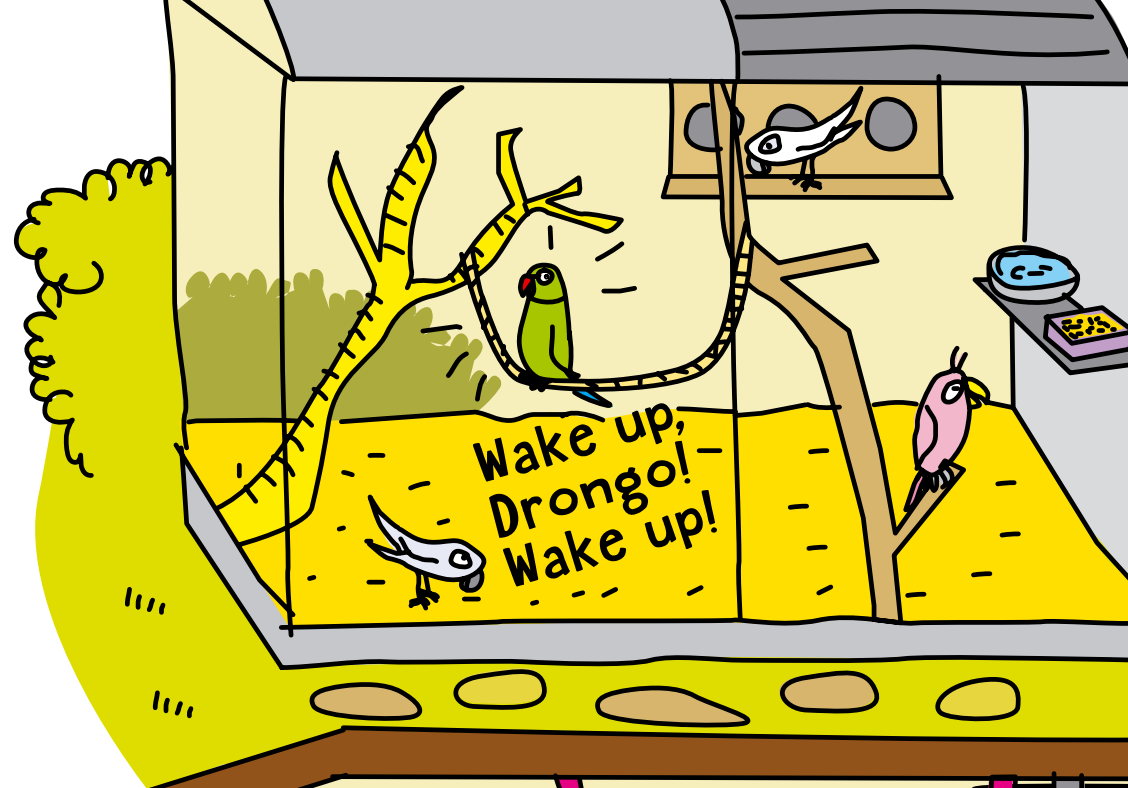
One day Mrs Higginbottom brought a new bird to the stray time aviary. It was small and black with a forked tail. Pirate looked on as Mrs Higginbottom released the new bird into the aviary and watched it explore its new home.

Mrs Higginbottom saw Pirate taking an interest.

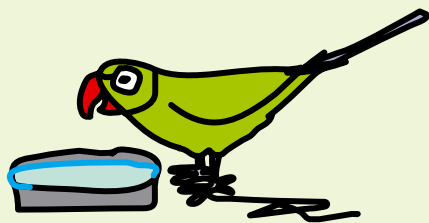
“You’ll like this one, Pirate,” she said. “She’s a drongo bird and I’m going to put you in charge of waking her up every morning.”

Pirate stared at Mrs Higginbottom as if he knew what she meant.

“Wake up, Drongo!” he said, “Wake up!”



Care of Birds



- Birds need the company of other birds to feel safe and happy. They love having other birds around.
- Birds need somewhere safe to live, away from animals that might hurt them. Protect your birds from the sun, rain and wind, but still keep the area well aired.
- Birds like perching up high, so place perches as high as you can. Do use the right size perch for your bird.
- If you keep birds in an aviary, make it the BIGGEST you can. By keeping a bird in a small cage you are taking away its natural behaviour to fly. So let birds fly – in an aviary, a closed home or, if trained, free flying.
- Offer toys, interesting food and other things to make your bird's life better. Aviary birds sometimes like water sprays or to bathe in water baths.
- Provide a shallow dust bath or water bath to find out how your bird likes to bath. Water baths should get deeper over time and have steps or something that makes it easy for the bird to get out.
- Birds always need clean drinking water, where they can reach it, but where it can't be tipped over, pooped in or walked in by other birds. Keep it in the shade so it doesn't warm up during the day. Hanging drinkers are helpful.

Visit kids.spscaeducation.org.nz to learn more about caring for birds