

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

Mananga

THE EAGLE WARRIOR



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Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D'harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D'harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D'harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D'harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.



Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person's worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D'harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D'harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

Frances Bodkin

THE EAGLE WARRIOR

Mananga

A very long time ago there lived a great warrior, whose name was Mananga.





Mananga was not only strong and brave, he had the ability to see a very long way. Some said that he could even see tomorrow, but none said that in his presence, or they would find themselves laying in the dust with their ears ringing.

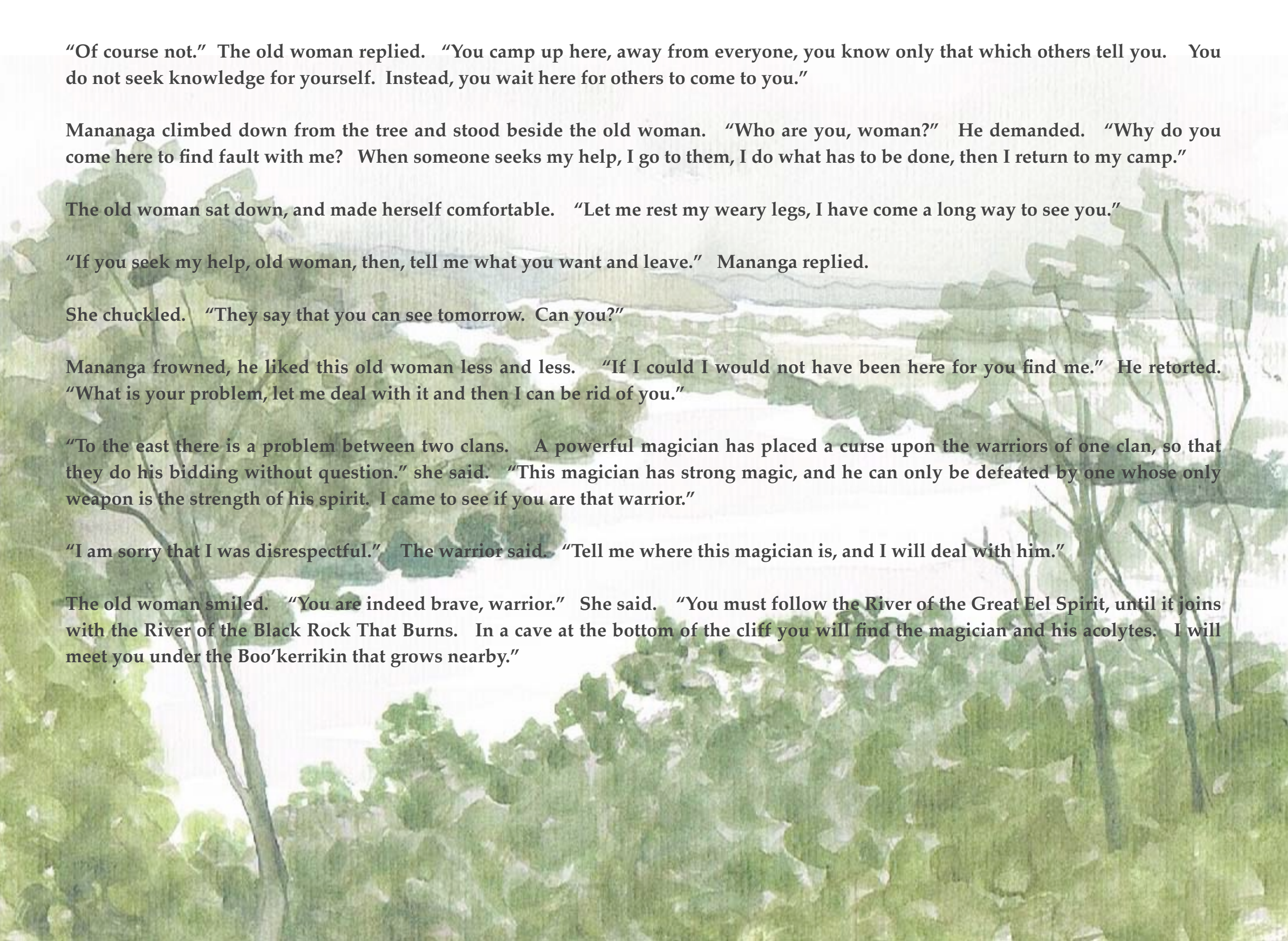
And because he could see such long distances, he always liked to camp on top of the highest hills.

Mananga's great deeds and brave feats were well known throughout all the lands and all the Peoples, and often people would come from far and wide to seek his assistance. Mothers would seek him out to teach their sons, for Mananga never used weapons in his battles, other than the strength of his own body, and the cunning of his own mind. But always, after each battle, he would return to his camp on top of the hill alone.

Then one day an old, bent woman came to him, her white hair shimmering in the sunlight, and leaning on her walking stick she looked up at him as he rested in the branches of the great tree that stood atop his hill.

"You call yourself a great warrior, Mananga." She laughed. "Look at you, lazing in the tree tops, while your people need help."

Mananga sat up, and looked down at the old woman, puzzled. He could not remember having ever seen her before, yet, in a way she looked very familiar. "I was not aware that my People needed help." He replied.



"Of course not." The old woman replied. "You camp up here, away from everyone, you know only that which others tell you. You do not seek knowledge for yourself. Instead, you wait here for others to come to you."

Mananaga climbed down from the tree and stood beside the old woman. "Who are you, woman?" He demanded. "Why do you come here to find fault with me? When someone seeks my help, I go to them, I do what has to be done, then I return to my camp."

The old woman sat down, and made herself comfortable. "Let me rest my weary legs, I have come a long way to see you."

"If you seek my help, old woman, then, tell me what you want and leave." Mananga replied.

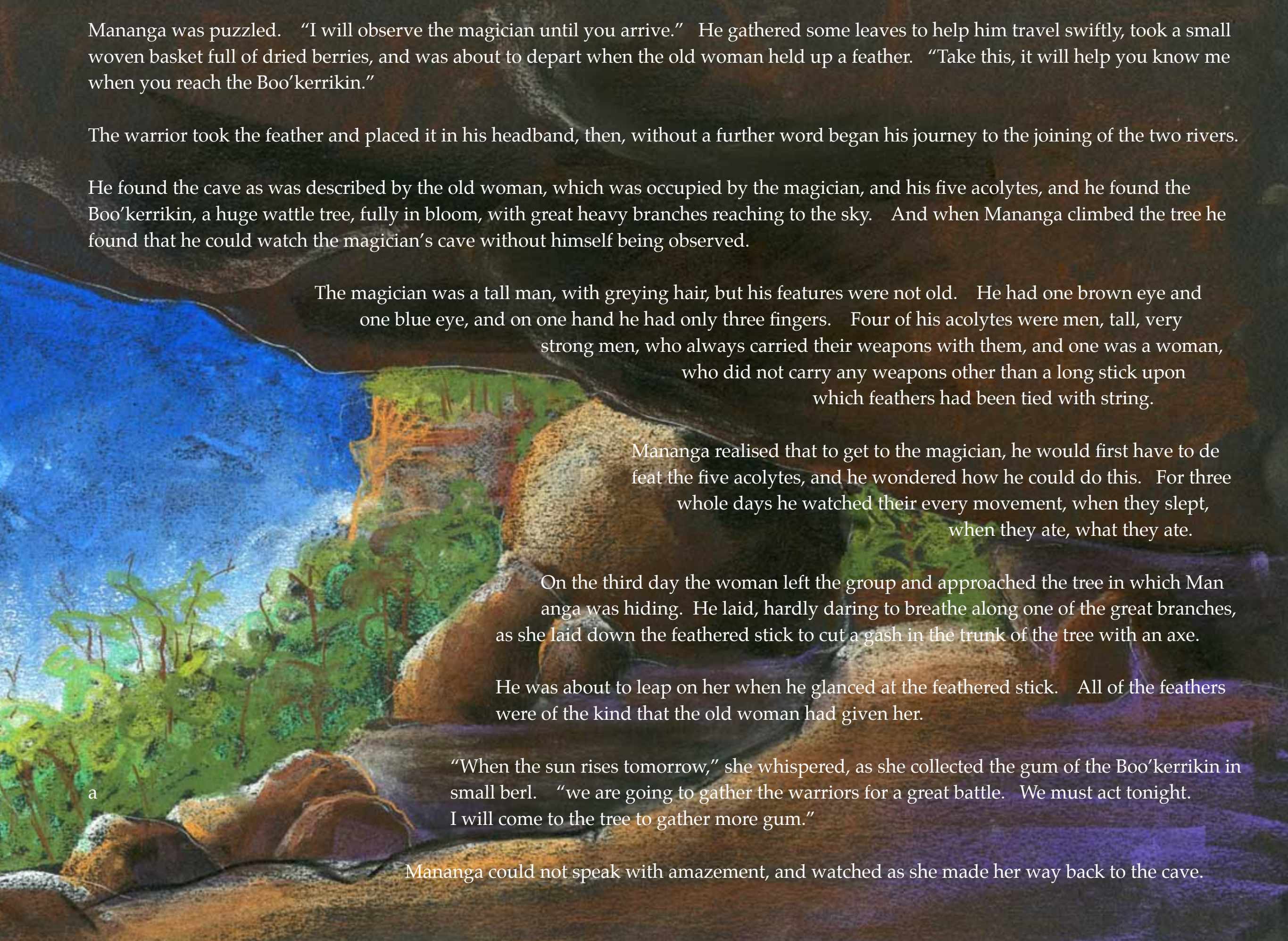
She chuckled. "They say that you can see tomorrow. Can you?"

Mananga frowned, he liked this old woman less and less. "If I could I would not have been here for you find me." He retorted. "What is your problem, let me deal with it and then I can be rid of you."

"To the east there is a problem between two clans. A powerful magician has placed a curse upon the warriors of one clan, so that they do his bidding without question." she said. "This magician has strong magic, and he can only be defeated by one whose only weapon is the strength of his spirit. I came to see if you are that warrior."

"I am sorry that I was disrespectful." The warrior said. "Tell me where this magician is, and I will deal with him."

The old woman smiled. "You are indeed brave, warrior." She said. "You must follow the River of the Great Eel Spirit, until it joins with the River of the Black Rock That Burns. In a cave at the bottom of the cliff you will find the magician and his acolytes. I will meet you under the Boo'kerrikin that grows nearby."



Mananga was puzzled. "I will observe the magician until you arrive." He gathered some leaves to help him travel swiftly, took a small woven basket full of dried berries, and was about to depart when the old woman held up a feather. "Take this, it will help you know me when you reach the Boo'kerrikin."

The warrior took the feather and placed it in his headband, then, without a further word began his journey to the joining of the two rivers.

He found the cave as was described by the old woman, which was occupied by the magician, and his five acolytes, and he found the Boo'kerrikin, a huge wattle tree, fully in bloom, with great heavy branches reaching to the sky. And when Mananga climbed the tree he found that he could watch the magician's cave without himself being observed.

The magician was a tall man, with greying hair, but his features were not old. He had one brown eye and one blue eye, and on one hand he had only three fingers. Four of his acolytes were men, tall, very strong men, who always carried their weapons with them, and one was a woman, who did not carry any weapons other than a long stick upon which feathers had been tied with string.

Mananga realised that to get to the magician, he would first have to defeat the five acolytes, and he wondered how he could do this. For three whole days he watched their every movement, when they slept, when they ate, what they ate.

On the third day the woman left the group and approached the tree in which Mananga was hiding. He laid, hardly daring to breathe along one of the great branches, as she laid down the feathered stick to cut a gash in the trunk of the tree with an axe.

He was about to leap on her when he glanced at the feathered stick. All of the feathers were of the kind that the old woman had given her.

"When the sun rises tomorrow," she whispered, as she collected the gum of the Boo'kerrikin in a small berl. "we are going to gather the warriors for a great battle. We must act tonight. I will come to the tree to gather more gum."

Mananga could not speak with amazement, and watched as she made her way back to the cave.



He watched the woman as she gathered food for the men, or retrieved their weapons as they practised their spear throwing skills. But Mananga also noticed that as she carried out her duties, the magician watched her closely, and the warrior did not like the look in the magician's eyes.

Mananga was suspicious, he felt that the woman was in grave danger, and the magician was the source of that danger. He took the feather from his headband and studied it, hoping that in the feather there was be some clue to the identity of the woman. It was the largest feather he had ever seen, larger even than the tail feathers of the emu. And it was exactly the same colour as his skin.

It was then that he noticed that she was approaching the tree, and he was about to move to meet her when he noticed that the acolytes were following her. He was about to call out a warning, when he saw the magician, alone and unprotected, standing outside the cave, watching with an evil grin on his face.

"Use the feather!" Came the voice of the woman.

He felt a movement in his hand and looked down to find that the feather had grown, and that feathers were coming out of his skin, along his arms and down his body. He moved his arms and he soared upwards, out of the tree, above the tree, he saw the acolytes look up in amazement, and he saw the magician, with fear in his eyes, turn to seek shelter in the cave.

Mananga felt great power surge through him, his arms had become wings, his feet had become sharp talons, and his mouth had become a cruel sharp beak. He grabbed the magician in his sharp claws, then flew high into the sky, soaring upwards until the two rivers looked like nothing more than two small rivulets of sweat running down a man's brow.

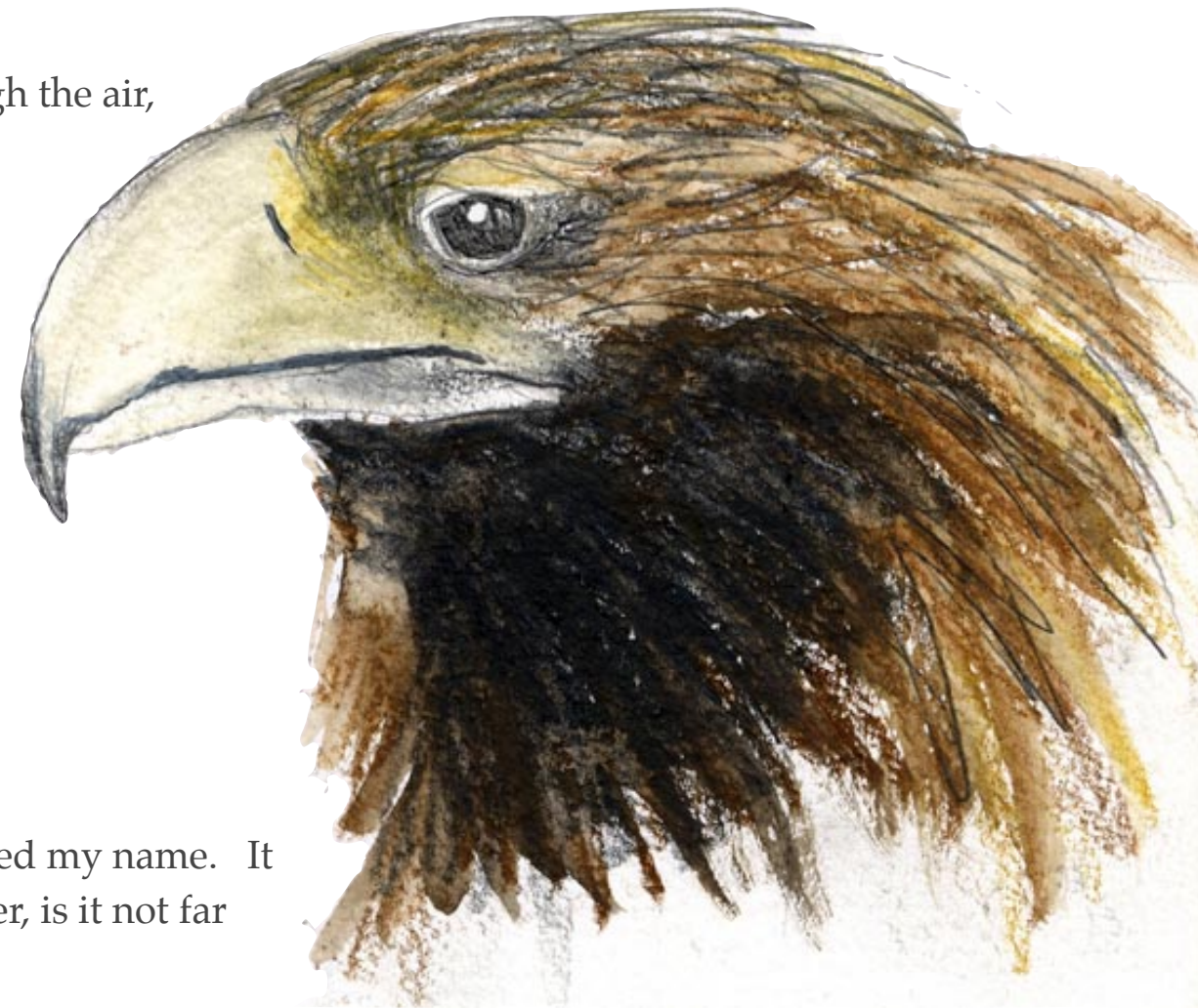
Then he dropped the Magician, listening to the man's scream as he fell through the air, until finally the evil man hit the ground in a cloud of dust.

It was then that he remembered the woman, he dove down to the Boo'ker-rikin to find her leaning against the base of the tree, with the bodies of the four acolytes scattered around. She smiled at him, sadly. "He was my brother." She said. "You have a choice, you can return to your own form, and to your chosen path, that of a warrior, the defender of The People. Or you can remain as you are now, the foreseer, the protector of the People."

"And you?" He asked.

She smiled, again, "That depends upon your decision."

He frowned, "It has been my honour to defend the People since I first received my name. It is something that has made my heart feel good." Then he smiled, "However, is it not far better to protect the People - so that there is then no need to defend?"



The woman's smile glowed, and before his very eyes she changed, brown feathers began to grow out of the skin on her arms and her body, her feet became talons, her arms became wings, and with a cry of joy she soared high into the sky, with Mananga following her, imitating the graceful, dancing flight of the Eagle.

Some information about Mananga, the Wedge-tailed Eagle

Aquila audax

The Wedge-tailed Eagle has long wings (wingspan 2.3 m), a characteristic long, wedge-shaped tail, and legs that are feathered all the way to the base of the toes. The bill is pale pink to cream, the eye brown to dark brown, and the feet off-white. Young Wedge-tailed Eagles are mid brown in colour with reddish-brown heads and wings. They become progressively blacker for at least the first ten years of their lives; adults are mostly dark blackish-brown. The only difference in plumage between the sexes is that a female adult is generally slightly paler than her mate. Females (4.2 kg - 5.3 kg) are also larger and heavier than males (3.2 kg up to 4.0 kg). Wedge-tailed Eagles are Australia's largest raptors (birds of prey). The Tasmanian subspecies (*Aquila audax fleayi*) is listed federally as endangered.

The Wedge-tailed Eagle is found throughout mainland Australia, Tasmania and southern New Guinea, from sea level to alpine regions in the mountains, but prefers wooded and forested land and open country, generally avoiding rainforest and coastal heaths. Eagles can be seen perched on trees or poles or soaring overhead to altitudes of up to 2000 m. Wedge-tailed Eagles build their nest in a prominent location with a good view of the surrounding countryside. It may be built in either a live or dead tree, but usually the tallest one in the territory. In some parts of Australia, where tall trees are absent, small trees, shrubs, cliff faces or even the ground may be used. The density of active nests depends on the abundance of prey and other resources. In most years, nests are usually 2.5 km - 4 km apart. If conditions are particularly good, the distances apart may be less than 1 km because the birds require smaller areas to find sufficient food.

Wedge-tailed Eagles eat both live prey and carrion. Their diet reflects the available prey, but the most important live items are rabbits and hares. Rabbits usually comprise about 30-70% of the diet. Other food items include lizards, birds (weighing over 100 g) and mammals (usually weighing over 500 g). Wedge-tailed Eagles will kill lambs, but these make up only a small percentage of their total prey.

Carrion is a major food source; roadkills and other carcasses are readily eaten. Many of the reports of predation on lambs result from birds scavenging already dead animals. Up to 20 birds may attend a carcass, although only two or three feed at any one time.

Wedge-tailed Eagles may hunt singly, in pairs or in larger groups. Working together, a group of eagles can attack and kill animals as large as adult kangaroos. This explains the scientific name of the Wedge-tailed Eagle which means 'bold eagle'. Under ideal conditions, an eagle can lift about 50% of its body weight. Often, eagles may cache food items on a branch near the nest area.

Wedge-tailed Eagles are monogamous and apparently mate for life. If one bird of a pair is killed, the survivor will find a new mate. Established breeding pairs are territorial and live in the one area throughout the year, defending around their nest sites from other Wedge-tailed Eagles. (They are also known on occasion to attack intruding model airplanes, hang gliders, gliders, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.) Surrounding the territories are large home ranges in which the birds hunt for food but do not defend. There is usually overlap between the home ranges of two or more breeding pairs and of non-breeding birds.

The nest is a large structure of dead sticks, usually reused for years, often reaching considerable size. Nests 1.8 m across, 3 m deep and weighing about 400 kg are known. Nests have a shallow cup on the top, lined with fresh twigs and leaves. Sticks are added by a bird while it stands in the nest. If these sticks are dropped outside the nest, no effort is made to retrieve them. Piles of dropped sticks 1.8 m high have been recorded under the nest trees.

The timing of breeding may vary from location to location and from year to year according to the local availability of food. Both parents share in the duties of nest building, incubation and feeding of the young.

A clutch consists of white eggs measuring 73 mm x 59 mm with varying amounts of reddish brown spots and blotches. These are laid at intervals of two to four days. Incubation starts with the laying of the first egg. Because of the intervals between laying, the eggs do not hatch simultaneously. The first chick hatches larger than the second, which in turn is larger than the third. Survival rates of the chicks vary considerably depending on local conditions, including prey abundance and the amount of disturbance. A breeding pair usually rears only one young per clutch, although in a good year, two chicks may fledge in some nests. Because of the differences in size, the oldest and largest chick has the best chance of surviving. If food is scarce, it will kill and eat its smaller nest mates.

Chicks hatch covered with a white down. For the first five weeks or so, the adults must deliver food to their mouths. After this time they are able to recognise bits of food on the floor of the nest and can feed themselves. The young acquire their first feathers during the second week after hatching. If threatened by predators, the chicks lie flat in the nest, but will defend themselves if required. The adults, in contrast, make little defence of the young. The juveniles remain with the adults for about 11 weeks after leaving the nest. Young and non-breeding birds disperse, moving to wherever conditions are suitable. Juveniles are known to have moved over 850 km in a seven to eight month period.

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>