

# Ross the Rosella

By William Loader



I live in Perth in Western Australia. We have lots of wonderful birds, but when I got back from Orange earlier this year I saw something very surprising. There in our backyard was a rosella. We have rosellas here in the west, western rosellas, but this one was different. Western rosellas have red fronts. This was an eastern rosella, like the rosellas on the farm in Orange. Eastern rosellas have yellow fronts. We don't have eastern rosellas in Western Australia, so where did it come from?



Here is my first photo of it, the very first time I saw it. I decided I should tell the Department of Agriculture. They need to know about strange birds. It may have escaped from a bird cage and might go back, they suggested, or it may have been carried across from the other side of Australia by accident.

We keep seeing it, so one day I decided to sit outside be very still and try very hard to look like a bird. Ross the rosella sat on a branch and looked at me. I smiled and he flew off. Next time don't smile, I told myself.

So next day about the same time I sat outside and closed my eyes. I must have fallen asleep and I had a dream.

There was Ross sitting on a branch right in front of me and saying hello in a bird kind of way. "You're not from here, are you?" I remarked.

Ross twitched his head as if to say: "You know I'm not. Why did you ask?" "I'm from Orange," he declared.

"You're from Orange?" I exclaimed. "Really?"

"Yes," said Ross. "Didn't you notice the extra fluffy thing in your pocket!"

"Ha, ha!" I said. Ross has a sense of humour.



"Have you ever been on the Indian Pacific Train?" Ross asked.

"One day, we'll take the train," I said. "You came on the train?" I asked.

"I was feeding on some delicious grasshoppers beside the railway tracks one day and suddenly the train appeared out of nowhere travelling very fast.

"I flew up into the air to get out of its road and I hit the side of a carriage and before I knew what had happened I was lying on my back at the bottom of a carriage between some suitcases. It must have knocked me out. When I came to, it was dark and someone had put a cover over the suitcases and I couldn't get out."

"That's terrible," I said. "So you were trapped in the carriage under the cover."

"Yes," Ross said. "The cover was a net. I had to smile because it was bird netting, to keep birds out of the carriage, but I was on the wrong side of it!"

"It's a wonder you didn't die. You must have been there for three whole days. You poor thing!" I said.

"Not so bad," said Ross. "I learned how to pull the zips of the suitcases with my beak and open them. It's wonderful what you find. I must have eaten half a packet of biscuits, some very juicy apples, and even some grapes. I like grapes."

"So it wasn't all that bad." I said.

"Oh, but it was exciting," said Ross.

"Why exciting?" I asked.

"In one station," answered Ross, "there were lots of grasshoppers. They could jump through the netting. I used to wait till they were inside and then I'd catch them – yum! But much more exciting and bit scary was what happened one night. It was all dark and quiet and suddenly I saw a light flicker. It was a man with a torch. He came to the carriage, looked around and then lifted the cover. He wanted to steal some of the luggage. I let out a very loud screech. It woke the guard in the guardsvan and suddenly he was there, and police were there and they arrested the man."

"After that I knew there was a little hole in the cover and if I was careful I could slip through. So when no one was looking I would slip out and fly over to where I saw berries and bugs or grasshoppers and then I would fly back and no one would see me. I really liked those biscuits and there were more suitcases to open and explore."

"Eventually we came into Perth. The train stopped and didn't start moving again. I had to think what to do. I could see a big truck parked in the carpark stacked with sacks of wheat. I decided to fly over to it and was just in time getting out before they came to unload the suitcases. It's not hard to peck a hole in one of those sacks, so I perched between two sacks where no one could see me and had a good feed as the truck drove off from the station."

"Unfortunately the driver caught sight of me in his rear vision mirror and next thing I knew he was parked outside the Warwick Police Station where I'm sure he was going to report me. But I'm not stupid. I simply flew away to those trees over there and I've been here ever since."



"I like your backyard and thanks for the bird bath where I can have a drink."

"Amazing," I thought and promptly woke up. Sure enough, there was the eastern rosella. As soon as I opened my eyes, it flew off. Lesson learned – don't open my eyes!

Next day I was there again and again it was such a warm and pleasant day that I soon fell asleep and again there in my dream I saw the rosella, but it was bleeding. It had lost many of its feathers on one wing. Something terrible had happened. The people at the Agriculture department had told me that something like this might happen. The other birds might attack it because it is a stranger and try to kill it. Poor Ross! Oh no!

What could I do? Fortunately, my friend Galah was walking across the grass towards me in my dream.

"Galah", I said. "What has been happening?"

Galah was very old and very wise. "Sometimes birds can be very mean, just like you people can be very mean. Some people are friendly and some people are not. Birds are like that, too. I try to tell my family to be kind."



"O, Galah, please help poor Ross!" I cried.

I was in fact so sad that I woke up as you sometimes do after a bad dream and as I opened my eyes there flashing before me were the colours of the eastern rosella flying off, but it was just a dream.

Next day I wondered and worried a little about poor Ross. I did not see him. The next day he also failed to appear. I began to think I should look around under the trees. Was he lying dead somewhere, ants crawling on him? A terrible thought.



On the third day early in the morning I went out to get the paper and I heard it. The soft "toot toot toot". Can that be Ross the rosella, I thought? It sounds like his call. When I came back into the house with the paper and looked through the window, there he was walking around with Galah and also some corellas. A tear of joy rolled down my cheek. Ross didn't see, so didn't fly away until they all left.

I don't know how long Ross will be around. One day he will die as all birds do. I hope he is not attacked. I hope he finds friendly birds. Friendly birds and friendly people make our world safe.