



The LEGEND of

NEED

THE VICTORIAN GRASSLAND EARLESS DRAGON



In a time not so long ago,
there was a place (not as
far away as you might think)
which was home to more
animals than you might
imagine... or see!

A brown salamander with a curled tail is perched on a large, reddish-brown rock. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with tall grasses and a white flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, which serves as a backdrop for the text.

Between blades of grass, in the shadows
of shrubs and the earth's fine cracks,
there lived ants and beetles, spiders and
birds, lizards and snakes

And a little someone
named Ned, who was some
kind of us... some kind of us...



DRAGON!

"Dragon?" said Ned,
who really hadn't
thought about it before.
"Well, that's pretty cool!
If I'm a dragon, then
I must be able to fly."



Even to see how far and how high,
Fred wandered until he came across
a hill -- which wasn't exactly big.
He scrambled up it as quickly
as he could and launched into the air...



UGHH.

That didn't look good.



"Chef" said Herb,
"I guess that didn't work."

"If I can't fly then maybe
I'm not a dragon. I must
be some kind of cat...
some kind of... cat!"





DRAGON!

and a Blue-banded Bee,
whizzing over Herd's head.
'Haven't seen you in a while!'

"Interesting," said Fred
to himself. He sat on a rock
and gave it some thought.

Wow.

Maybe I'm not
the kind of dragon
who can fly.

Maybe I'm the
kind who's really
big and scary.



A large brown bear is shown from the chest up, peering over a grassy hill. The bear's fur is a mix of brown and tan. In the background, a green field stretches to a horizon line, with two cows grazing. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

Keen to see how tall and how
tall they are, Ned hid behind the
rock and waited silently.

When he heard the sound of
a grizzly, he jumped out and
attempted a

ROAR...



cough

cough

cough

cough

cough!!!



"Oh hey," said the striped legless lizard
calmly. "Haven't seen you in a while!"
She was about the same size as Ned,
and didn't seem frightened at all.



"That didn't work either," thought
Wes, who by this time was feeling
a bit fed and confused --

to find and confused that
he barely noticed he was about
to cross paths with a...



SNAKE!



DRAGON!

and the Tiger Snake, slithering in his way and muttering to himself, "Haven't seen him in a while..."





"Hm," said Fred.
He found a patch
of sun to rest in
and gave it some
more thought.

Hmm.

Maybe I'm not
the kind of dragon
who can fly.

...or be scary.

But maybe I'm
the kind who can
breathe fire.

Keen to see how real and how tall,
Fred got up and began to practice
his pull and puff. He gathered some
sticks and some logs and some...





Hey,
DRAGON!

said an Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard, "That's not a branch - that's my tail!"

"Whoops, sorry," said Hed. "I was just collecting things for a fire."

"Hed used" said the lizard, and she scurried off leaving Hed to look around with worry.

NOTHING
FEELS
RIGHT





Feeling more lost and confused than ever,
Hed began to wander aimlessly.

Taking unfamiliar paths, he used to wonder,
"Can't fly. Can't breathe fire. Not big. And not even
a little bit scary. I wonder if I'm a dragon. I must
be some kind of ant... some sort of ant... Baaaaa..."



He'd still sit straight up in his thoughts,
he forgot to look where he was going.
It wasn't long before he crashed
into something—

"What on earth is that?" he thought.

OINK!



Head looked up and up,
and up and up, and
up and up, until finally
he saw a pair of eyes
peering down at his.

DRAGON!

came a voice. He wasn't
sure if he should be scared,
but the eyes and the voice
seemed kind.

2005
RICORDI &

"Hah, you've got it wrong,"
said Med sadly. "I'm not
a dragon. I can't fly or breathe
fire or do anything."

The Med's surprise, for now,
greeted with laughter.





"You're not a mythical dragon.
You're an actual dragon!
& Victorian-Crossland Barless
Dragon - a real little legend
you might say."

"You're very special. We haven't
seen you for a long, long time.
We were worried that we might
not see you ever again."



For the first time in ages, Neal felt good.



I AM A
DRAGON!

"A real little legend!"
he said to himself.

THE
END



ALMOST!



Though he didn't yet know it, Neil would soon be in the care of a keeper at Melbourne Zoo, who was dedicated to helping him survive.

Victorian Crocodyl Barbers Dragons have declined drastically in the wild and are now on the brink of extinction. This is due to the degradation and fragmentation of their natural habitat through urban development, agriculture and pesticides; less than 1% of native grassland habitat remains in Victoria.

These dragons were rediscovered in 2003 on natural temperate grasslands, west of Melbourne, having not been seen since 1989. Zoos Victoria and their conservation partners have urgently established an insurance population and a conservation breeding program, to restore these dragons to the wild.

MEET THE CHARACTERS



Ward

A little legend! He grows up to 15 centimetres long. Has enormous horns and red scales, and likes eating flowers. Like other 'barrens' dragons, he has a hidden water sac connected to scales. You can tell that a Victorian Crested Spiny-tailed Dragon by the fold of skin down his side.



Crested environment

Ward's natural habitat is in the Victorian Mallee Plains, which was once lush with tufted grasses like Kangaroo, Gopher, Wallaby, Spear and Tussock grass. Mostly treeless, it has cracking basalt soil that's a deep red or grey with boulders and rocky outcrops.



Wolf Spider

Massive! It's an eyesight and goes out hunting instead of waiting prey in a web. Ward makes his home in the burrows of Wolf Spiders and Wood Chicks.



Blue-headed Wren

A native bird who has a special 'song' method of pollinating the endangered Mahoe! How silly - see if you can spot this plant!



Striped Legless Lizard

A shy, endangered creature who shares her natural habitat with hoki. She can drop her tail and jump to avoid predators.



Tiger Snake

One of the most venomous snakes in the world with the tiger like stripes. He's a good swimmer, and frogs are his favourite food!



Eastern Blue-banded Lizard

She is one of the largest members of the skink family. Her smooth scales and legs surfacing in the early morning.

ACTUAL

THE END



Illustrations by Terrie Brown
Text by Linda Mueller and Bethel Henshawigan

ZOOS

FOR KIDS

By Jerry Johnson