



OMNIBUS BOOKS

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Teachers' Notes You Turkeys!

MICHAEL GERARD BAUER
ILLUSTRATED BY NAHUM ZIERSCH

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INTRODUCTION

Jake's dad is determined to chase away the scrub-turkeys that are digging up his flowers and ruining his perfectly pruned shrubs. And from Plan A to Plan E – Eliminate! – that is what he tries to do. But in the end it's his daughter Anna who offers the best advice. Sharing. So Jake's dad turns his back yard into turkey paradise, with a pond, native plants and even a huge pile of bark chips. But what do you think happens next?

This is a tale of learning to live with nature instead of fighting it. Scrub-turkeys are renowned for their ruinous habits and determined characters. Much like Jake's dad. But it is humans who have invaded the turkeys' territory and so it is humans who must learn to share.

From tall tales to spooky stories and everything in between, **Mates** are all-Australian stories for Aussie kids, illustrated in colour on every page.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Gerard Bauer was born in Brisbane. He taught at schools in the Brisbane–Ipswich before resigning in 2000 to pursue his dream of being a published writer. His first novel *The Running Man* won the CBCA's Book of the Year (Older Readers) Award in 2005 and has since garnered many other honours including international awards.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nahum Ziersch is an illustrator and graphic designer based in Adelaide who specialises in Flash-based games and animation. He also does editorial illustration for magazines including *Australian Traveller*.

ACTIVITIES

The following questions can be used to begin a class discussion, or they can be answered individually, in pairs or in groups.

1. English

The **Mates** series explores many commonly understood elements about what it is to be Australian. The **Mates** are made specially for Australian children. One of the ways that we know we are Australian is to do with how we speak.

a) Michael Bauer uses interesting expressions to describe things in *You Turkeys!* like: 'they'll wreck the joint' and 'I reckon that'll do the trick'.

These expressions are called 'colloquialisms', which means an informal, or casual, way of saying something. Australians are very good at using colloquialisms.

- Can you think of any great-sounding colloquialisms? How many can you come up with?
- Can you think of one your mum or dad or grandparents often say?

b) Scrub-turkeys are also called 'brush turkeys' or 'bush turkeys' depending on where you live in Australia.

- Can you think of two different names for the same thing? For example, in South Australia a corner shop is called a 'deli' and in Victoria it is called a 'milk bar'.

You may like to get together with a friend to complete this activity.

2. History

a) Despite its name, Australian scrub turkeys are not related to American turkeys although they look quite similar. Bush turkeys are native Australian birds and they live in eastern Australia from far north Queensland to Illawarra in New South Wales.

- Can you mark on the map of Australia where bush turkeys might be found?
- Scrub-turkeys usually like to live underneath a rainforest canopy, can you think what similarities there might be between a rainforest and a back yard?

b) Since European settlers arrived in Australia, our cities have grown and grown, even sometimes taking over rainforests where scrub-turkeys live. What do you think about this?

- Should the scrub-turkeys move somewhere else? Would you like a scrub-turkey living in your back yard? Remember, they love to scratch up veggie patches and move compost heaps!
- What other native animals live happily in your back yard? Have you seen possums, or kookaburras, or frogs? Do any of these animals cause damage to a garden?

3. Creative Activities

a) What do you think of Dad and Jake's scarecrow? Did you think it would scare the turkeys? Draw your best scary scarecrow.

b) Invent a new blurb for the back cover of *You Turkeys!* Remember, you are trying to entice people to read it!

c) Imagine it is your job to make advertisements for radio. Prepare a short audiotape advertising *You Turkeys!* or the **Mates** series.

d) If you removed the words, the pictures of *You Turkeys!* would tell the story. Over a week, compose a visual diary where you draw an event that happens to you each day.

e) What next? Write about how you would feel if scrub-turkeys dug up your back yard.

4. Natural History

Points for discussion:

- a) What are your experiences with native animals? Ever had a possum in your bedroom or a frog in your toilet?
- b) Scrub turkeys build a big mound and then lay their eggs in it to keep them nice and warm. When the eggs hatch the chicks dig themselves out. But many eggs don't survive because they are the favourite food of goannas, snakes, dingoes and dogs. How might we make our back yards safer for scrub-turkey chicks?
- c) Scrub turkeys use their beaks to test the temperature of their mounds. Can you use a thermometer to measure the temperature inside your classroom and outside?
- d) Scrub-turkeys are a protected species. This means you are not allowed to hurt them or damage their nests. Can you think of any other protected Australian animals? Why is it important to protect animals?

5. Geography

- a) What identifies this as an Australian story? Do you think it could take place anywhere in the world?
- b) Imagine you had to write a story based somewhere in Australia. Where would you choose and why?
- c) Mark on the map of Australia where Michael Bauer lives. Mark on the map all the places that people in your class have lived or visited.
- d) The mallee fowl also builds a huge nest in which to bury her eggs. Find out more about this bird. Is it endangered? Where does it live?



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