



by Matilda Hutterd (aged 11)

A rumble announces a massive metal monster, its giant teeth suspended over rolling black tracks. A young pūkeko stops in fear, and the beast squishes it flat. The rest get the message – this creature is not something to be messed with.

The pūkeko scatter to the far corners of the field, all indigo feathers and orange feet. From the safety of the trees, they watch a neon-orange vest get out of the monster and survey the area. Then the orange vest gets back into the monster and drives it forward. The claw descends and cuts into the soft mud, forming a large trench.

Then a different monster arrives – this one bigger, with a grey tube on its back. More orange vests get out, and one takes the tube. They feed one end into the muddy hole and push the other out a gap in the fence. One of the pūkeko stretches her wings and signals for the rest to follow. She takes to the air and flaps over the fence. Soon they are all airborne, specks of blue and purple in the sky. The pūkeko glide over roads and houses, searching.

The birds spy a swampy field, but when they land, three new pūkeko appear and squawk at the newcomers, driving them away. The group takes to the air again and continues its search for a new home. Swamp to field, field to swamp, they are driven away.

Finally, when the sun is setting, they find a spot next to a shallow pond. Bushes of harakeke line the pond, and a pair of swans glide across the surface. The pūkeko land and search for any signs the pond has been claimed by others. The swans aren't bothered, and the pūkeko settle in. They finally have a place to call their own ... until something comes to drive them away again.

illustrations by Maite Calla Moret (aged 14)



Draining the Swamp

by Matilda Hutterd

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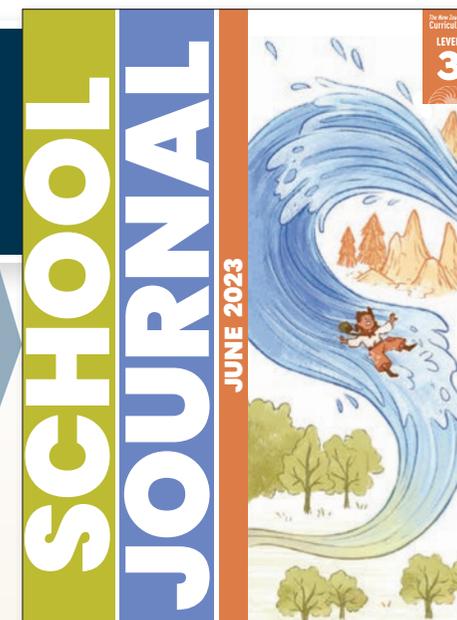
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