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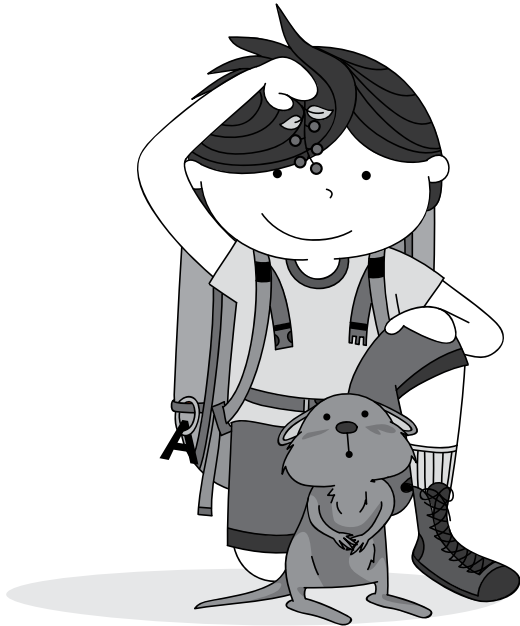
QUOKKING IN AUSTRALIA!

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF AMOS LEE



ADELINE FOO^M

Illustrated by STEPHANIE WONG



THE AMOS LEE SERIES



1 I Sit, I Write, I Flush!



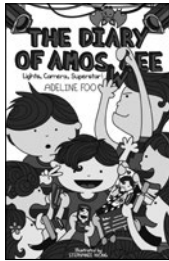
2 Girls, Guts and Glory!



3 I'm Twelve, I'm Tough, I Tweet!



3.5 Your D.I.Y. Toilet Diary to Fame!



4 Lights, Camera, Superstar!

THE WHOPIE LEE SERIES



1 Almost Famous



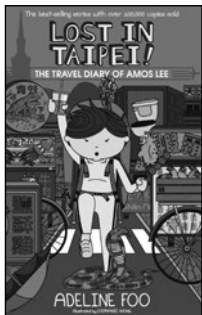
2 The Big Spell Off

QUOKKING IN AUSTRALIA!

The Travel Diary of Amos Lee

Written by
ADELINE FOO

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF AMOS LEE SERIES



5 Lost in Taipei!



6 Monkeying in Malaysia!



7 Seoul Searching!



8 Quokking in Australia!

Illustrated by
STEPHANIE WONG



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Published in Singapore by Epigram Books
www.epigrambooks.sg

Cover design by Stephanie Wong
Illustrations © 2016 by Stephanie Wong

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD SINGAPORE
CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Names: Foo, Adeline, 1971-
Wong, Stephanie, 1979- illustrator.

Title: Quokking in Australia!

Adeline Foo; author; Stephanie Wong, illustrator.

Other titles: Travel diary of Amos Lee series; 4.

Description: Singapore: Epigram Books, 2016.

Identifiers: OCN 935090602

ISBN: 978-981-4655-84-2 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-981-4655-85-9 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Boys—Singapore—Diaries—Juvenile fiction.

Diarists—Singapore—Juvenile fiction.

Perth (W.A.)—Juvenile fiction.

Quokka—Juvenile fiction.

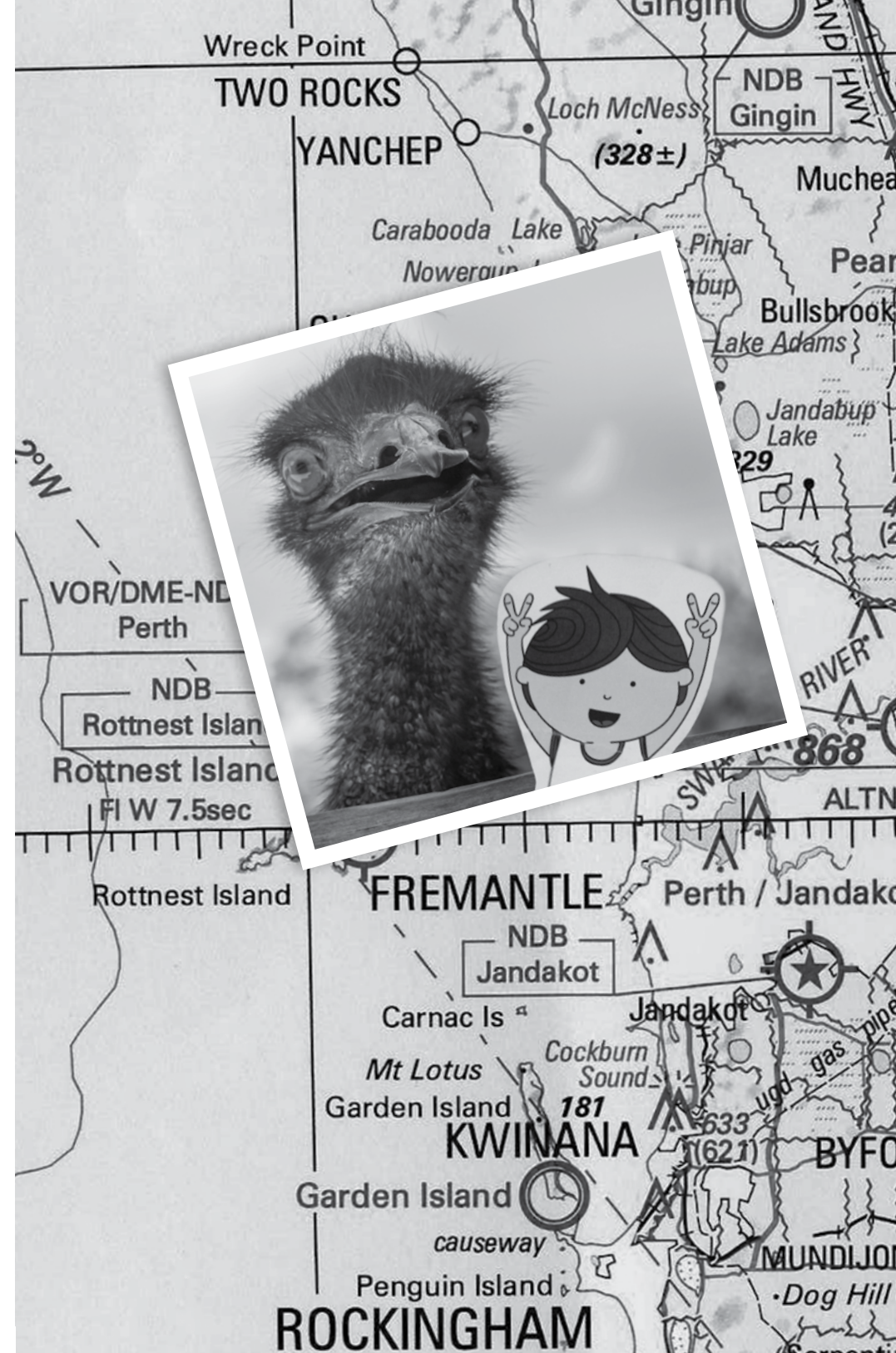
Social media—Juvenile fiction.

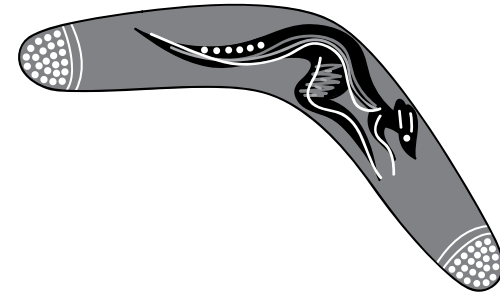
Classification: LCC PZ7 I DDC S823—dc23

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents
either are the product of the author's imagination or are
used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons,
living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1






It's one of those hare-brained ideas. You know, the sort that grips you and sends a tingling feeling right through to the roots of your hair. You are wary of the idea, but you are also consumed by an insane desire to see if you can do it!

NINE days in the Australian wilderness tracking echidnas and quokkas to understand their mating and birthing habits. Er... I haven't the faintest idea why this is sooooo important. But when Alvin and Anthony said they would do it in a beat, I couldn't say no.

It started as a silly Whatsapp chat.

Chats **Wassup jetsetters**
Alvin, Anthony, Jolin, Sheila, Amos 

Alvin:
Name one big challenge that no kid has ever done.

Anthony:
Eat live worms.

Naah. That's too gross.

Alvin:
Eat a raw egg.

Anthony:
I've done that since I was five! Half-boiled egg with butter and kaya toast.

Jolin:
We eat that in Malaysia, too!

Sheila:
Bet no one has ever eaten an emu egg!

Alvin:
Whaaat?

Sheila:
One emu egg = 16 chicken eggs!

Hahaha...yeah, we should totally do that!

Anthony:
At Fairprice. Finest.

Duh. You can't find emu eggs in the supermarket.

Jolin:
I know! We fly to Australia!

Sheila:
Wow. Can we?

Er. Who's paying?

Alvin:
The school would pay. Eco-volunteer trips.

Anthony:
What do we have to do?

Alvin:
Sign up for a programme. To volunteer in the wilderness.

Looking for an emu egg. Riiiiight.

Jolin:
I know a website that promotes these trips!
Like tracking birth data of the echidna!

Whaaat? What is that?

Sheila:
Don't forget the quokka! Seen the selfies on Instagram?
The happiest creature on earth!

Jolin:
I saw those! I want a selfie with the quokka too!

Alvin:
So who's in?

Sheila:
Sounds cool! I want to go!

Jolin:
Awesome! I'm in!

Anthony:
Me, too!

Alvin:
Amos?

Umm. Yeah. Okay.

Alvin:
When we find the emu egg, we'll eat the BIGGEST one, EVER!

Jolin:
Great! I'll find out more and email everyone! This will be fun!

Alvin changed the subject to "Operation Auzzie Emu Egg"

And just like that, we got sucked into going on the trip. Unlike the last time, there won't be a fundraising effort. Phew. No need to lie to Mum about raising money "to protect wildlife". Alvin says the school has a fund that sends students overseas on eco-volunteer programmes. "Take the learning out of the classroom", "Partake in field work to experience the symbiotic relationship between man, nature and animal". You know, the usual yadda yadda speech.

So it looks like Jolin and Sheila, our friends from Malaysia, are really excited about this idea. Alvin, Anthony and I will reunite with them during the one-week September holidays. We have chosen Perth. We will be seeing Australia's unique wildlife, creatures not seen in any of the other continents in the world. Oh boy. I guess that's something to look forward to. BRAGGING CLAIMS ON INSTAGRAM, YAY!

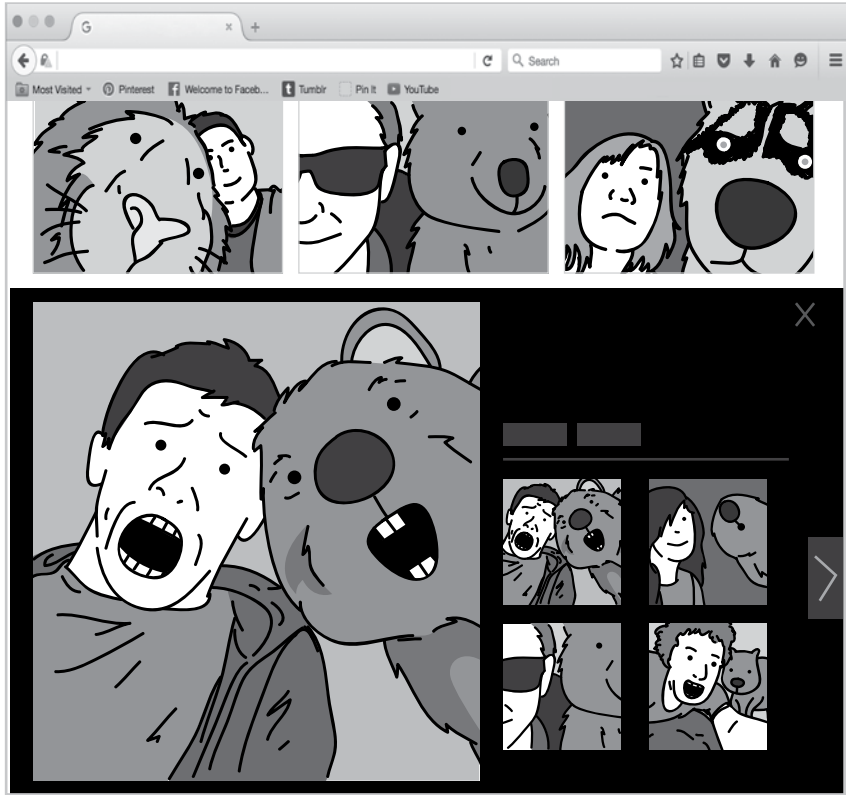
Anthony said it would be awesome to come up close to an egg-laying mammal... Hmmmm, would he be referring to the echidna or the quokka? What are these creatures anyway? Unlike our previous adventure, I feel hopeful about this trip. My FIRST time going to Australia, with my best friends from Singapore and Malaysia. What can possibly go wrong?

Amos Lee



QUOKKA, HERE WE COME!

I looked up the quokka on the Internet. Imagine my surprise when I saw so many people posting crazy selfies taken with the quokka. And get this; these are all ADULTS putting their faces beside the quokka, looking absolutely gaga!



What is the quokka anyway? It's one of the smallest wallaby species in Australia. The quokka used to be in abundance around 3,500 years ago. In more recent years, they have been found only in southwest and Western Australian mainland areas.

It's a small population really. But, boy, when you see these pictures, you realise why the quokka is "trending" on social media. They are so CUTE! Every picture has them looking either dopey or like they are begging for food. And their innocent, happy "smile" just makes you want to KISS THEM right away! They are either genuinely happy, or hmmm... maybe these pictures have been photoshopped!

Whatever it is...nothing beats being the first KID to be seen and photographed with these adorable furry creatures! Better still, if the right person sees my posts (and I bet I can take better pictures than ADULTS), maybe he would turn out to be some rich enterprising businessman. Just call me! You are more than welcome to cash in on my face, my name or something.

Imagine how awesome it would be to INSPIRE an original line of #QuokkingAmos merchandise! Oh well, lesser toys have been made based on characters, like one famous kitty that claims she isn't a cat but a British schoolgirl.

Make no mistake.
The quokka is REAL.
I can't wait to be
the FIRST kid to draw
worldwide attention
to this creature
from Australia!
So call me, maybe?



THE FAMOUS "CRASHER SQUIRREL"

A quick search on "famous animals" came up with the story of a bumbling rodent who accidentally crashed into a couple's snapshot taken in Banff National Park in the Canadian Rockies. The resulting photo of the "Crasher Squirrel" appeared in the National Geographic website and quickly travelled through the world. The squirrel appeared in many hilarious situations and doctored historical settings. If one squirrel can create so much buzz on social media, imagine what my quokka can do hah!

SAYING BYE TO FAMILY

Leaving was easier than I thought. Mum had been giving me the cold shoulder during the last two weeks, after I told her that I was going to Perth on a school-sponsored eco-holiday. She didn't want to talk about it, but boy was she quick to offer to sign me up for all kinds of holiday programmes. Right here in Singapore.

"What about tennis, you said you wanted to pick up a new sport? Or what about music? I know! You can learn to play the handbells!" Seriously? Do I look like a handbell ringer?

She even said she would find someone to hire me for a part-time job, if I wanted to earn some money during my holidays. Naaah... It's Perth or nothing. I couldn't see

how this trip was different from the trip to Malaysia I went on with the SAME friends. Then Mum said something embarrassing, "Your friend's Uncle was tagging along on THAT trip. But now MY BABY is all on his own, without a chaperone!" Oh man, she had better not say that in front of my friends.

Mum only came around, and accepted the fact that I was leaving, when we were at the airport. Dad must have finally gotten through to her! I was grateful. Only he would understand how much I needed to get away. It will be just three more years before I have to join the army. If Mum doesn't start trusting that I can take care of myself, she will never be able to stop worrying about me.

It was heart-warming to see my family so excited in seeing me off. Whoopie and Everest were practically beside themselves vying to take the best "wefie" shot. Mum was a little teary-eyed, but she tried her best to be brave. Thank goodness there was no melodramatic crying. Hey, this wouldn't be the first time I'm "running off into the wilderness", as she likes to call it. I would be in good hands. At the last check, there were at least seven schools from the Southeast Asian region signing up for this eco-volunteer programme.

The Australian organisers encourage students to travel without accompanying teachers, but they have written to our parents to assure us that there will be experienced

field guides to lead us. What's more, every participant has received a link to our Team Leader's profile. Dad shared my Team Leader's profile with me. It was fantastic to know that we would be getting a retired teacher who cooks in his spare time! That means we won't be starving on this trip, hurray!

Mum must have been reassured after reading his profile. I would definitely be, if it were my kid going into the forest with him.

FACEBOOK

Sam Yeng Friends ▾ ✓ Following ▾ Message ...

Timeline About Friends 8 Mutual Photos More ▾

About

Overview	Age: 56 years old
Work and Education	Occupation: Retired teacher (Former teaching experience in international schools in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong)
Places Lived	
Contact and Basic Info	Nationality: Malaysian
Family and Relationships	Current residence: Bunbury, Perth, Western Australia
Details about Yeng	Hobbies: Outdoor adventure and exploration; cooking with a special interest in bush tucker; diving; rock wall climbing; wildlife photography
Life Events	Family: Married to an Australian Chinese with two sons in university

His e-File even came with glowing testimonials from parents and past students whom he had led on expeditions. He even had a commendation letter from the former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, lauding him for his "innovative approach in imparting life lessons to students." Live the wild life! is apparently his service motto.

Just before I went through the departure gates, Dad pulled me aside and said, "It took a lot to convince your mother to let you go without an adult accompanying you. If there are any problems, you mustn't be afraid to let the organisers know. And promise me, call me if you need help, okay?" I nodded silently as I grabbed him for a bear hug.

Suddenly, I felt unsure about myself. Alvin and Anthony were surreptitiously watching me. I could tell they were waiting to see if I would buckle under pressure and maybe cry a little. I wasn't going to give them that satisfaction.

I turned to Mum, and she surprised me when she smiled wanly before ruffling my hair. "You're a big boy now, go and have a good time. Don't forget to call us when you reach Perth." Whoa, that was it? I grinned, my confidence returning. Everest saluted me while Whoopie just swatted me on the backside. And then I was through the glass doors. No tears. No room for fear. Fifteen and on my first trip to Australia with my best pals! Oh yeah.

Off to a good start!



A representative of the WildCITY Eco-Tourism Company met us at the airport and drove us to Perth city after we touched down. It was reassuring to see people my age joining the tours from several Southeast Asian countries! AND HOW WONDERFUL TO SEE JOLIN AND SHEILA AGAIN! WHAT A GRAND REUNION! I couldn't wait to start the trip!

But first, there were formalities. All students had to exchange souvenir tokens with one another, which were pre-prepared by our schools. We swapped laminated cards of beautifully illustrated native wildlife, sharing what we had read and researched about these unique creatures. When it came to our turn, Alvin and Anthony made me the spokesperson. I felt awkward when I saw the "mascots" presented by the other groups.



Malaysia
Orang-utan



Myanmar
Burmese roofed turtle



Indonesia
Sumatran tiger



Vietnam
Tonkin snub-nosed leaf monkey



Brunei
Belalong tree frog



Cambodia
Sarus crane



Thailand
Asian elephant



Laos
Saola
(also known as the Asian unicorn, an antelope-like creature)



Philippines
Philippine eagle



Singapore
Leaf-dwelling daddy-long-leg spider

Why is it that other countries have awesome creatures like the fearsome tiger and a princely eagle to offer, while we only have an extremely insipid spider to show? Great. I hope this won't suggest that we Singapore kids are anything like the wimpy-looking spider.

But we didn't dwell too much on that. We were FAR MORE EAGER to catch up with Jolin and Sheila! We split up from the rest; the five of us couldn't stop chatting on the ride to our reporting campsite! But the mood turned serious when Anthony whipped out a guidebook from his haversack. I saw the title and shuddered.

"Things That Will Kill You Horridly in Australia." Really. Must he? The girls went deathly quiet as they started flipping through the pages. The boys took turns to read from the book next... And boy were we glad we were not on a surfing trip, or a beach holiday!

Get this, out of the list, we only have to fear snakes, and maybe some type of spiders. But the bad news is: there are THREE deadly snakes and they are found everywhere in Australia!



THINGS THAT WILL KILL YOU HORRIDLY IN AUSTRALIA

THE BOX JELLYFISH

One of the most lethal animals in the world! Found on the coast along the Great Barrier Reef. Its stings are often fatal. I heard peeing on yourself if you are stung helps.

THE TAIPAN

Nothing Chinese about this. It's a large, fast moving and highly venomous snake. It's found throughout Australia.

SALTWATER CROCODILE

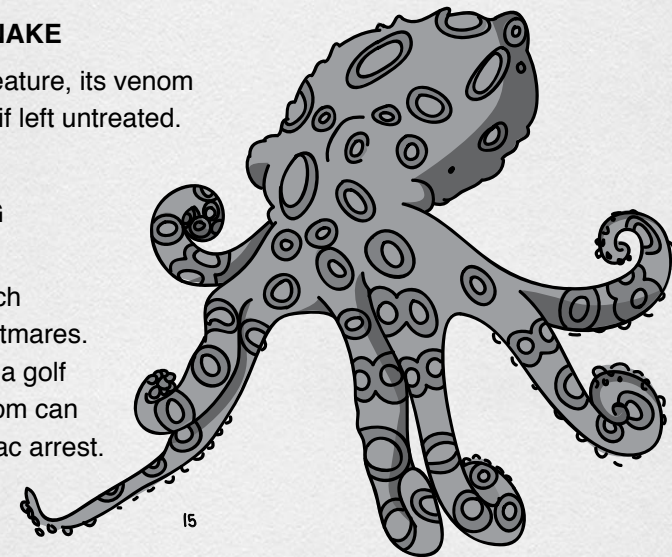
Grows up to five and a half metres in length! A giant! Has a powerful "Death Roll" attack. You don't want to bump into this when swimming in the swamp.

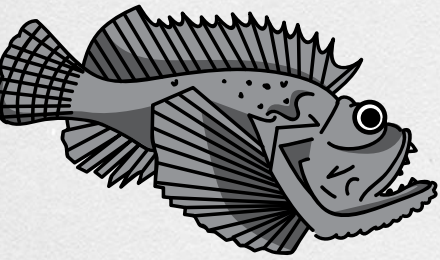
BROWN SNAKE

A deadly creature, its venom quickly kills if left untreated.

BLUE RING OCTOPUS

Stuff of beach holiday nightmares. As small as a golf ball, its venom can cause cardiac arrest.





STONE FISH

Looks like a rock?
Obviously. Its venom causes shock, paralysis and tissue death. The bitten limb might have to be amputated, if you haven't died first.

THE RED BACK SPIDER

Most famous poisonous spider! The red striped spider's venom induces severe pain, but thankfully, deaths are rare.

TIGER SNAKE

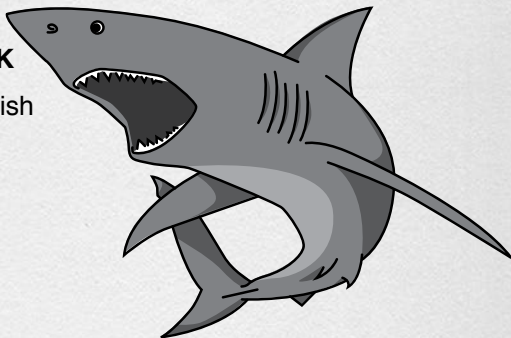
Another of the many venomous snakes found in Australia, especially in the southern regions.

FUNNEL WEB SPIDER

Looks like a Tarantula! It has fangs that can penetrate fingernails or shoes. Eeeiuw! Found in the eastern coast of Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

GREAT WHITE SHARK

The largest predatory fish on earth. In the ocean, to be accurate!







All the excitement we felt for this trip died down.
Trust Anthony to be the wet blanket.



WHAT'S WEIRD AND ONE-OF-A-KIND!

- Seasons in Australia are back to front!

DEC FEB	MAR MAY	JUN AUG	SEP NOV
			
SUMMER	AUTUMN	WINTER	SPRING

- 80% of all plants and animals that live in Australia are found NOWHERE ELSE in the world.
- Australia is the driest, flattest, hottest and most climatically challenging of all the seven continents. The other six continents are Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe and Antarctica. Only Antarctica is more hostile to life.

- 50 million years as an island and continent has protected Australia's indigenous life forms from competition. Just to name two: eucalyptus in the plant world and marsupials in the animal world evolve uncommonly. Think about it, how do marsupials move? They bounce, and they can stand on two feet, like the kangaroo.
- Some of the smallest and most vulnerable native animals in Australia are driven close to extinction, by an introduced species, the fox. These poor creatures, the numbats, bettongs, quolls, potoroos, bandicoots, rock wallabies and platypuses, need urgent protection!
- The *Megascolides australis* are the world's largest earthworms of Gippsland, occupying the vast eastern corner of Victoria. These earthworms can grow up to three metres in length (double the height of a man!) and more than 15 centimetres in diameter (as wide as a bowl!) When they move, you can hear a gurgling sound in the ground.
- The short-beaked echidna and the duck-billed platypus are monotremes. They are primitive mammals that lay eggs, and after their babies hatch, they are nourished with their mother's milk. The word monotreme refers to "one-holed", referring to the cloaca, a single opening for the passage of eggs or sperm, faeces and urine.

- Did you know that the echidna is hatched from a single, sticky, GRAPE-SIZED, soft-shelled egg? Amazing, right?!



Image credit: Echidna, photograph by Mike McKelvey, courtesy of Piper Films, Australia



Image credit: Rottnest Island, courtesy of Eng Junjie, Daryl

- Now on to the quokkas! One of the smallest wallaby species, they are marsupials. They carry their babies in a pocket of skin on the mother's stomach. Quokkas have shorter hind legs than other macropod species. Largely herbivores, they eat native grasses, leaves, stems and bark of plants.
- Quokkas have been used in medical research on muscular dystrophy as they suffer from the same disease.

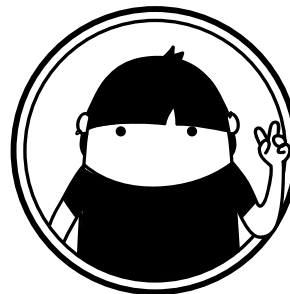


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adeline Foo is a Singaporean scriptwriter and children's book author.

A graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Asia, she started writing picture books in 2006. To-date, she has written 27 books, 13 of which are picture books. Her bestselling work is *The Diary of Amos Lee* which was published in 2009. *The Diary of Amos Lee: I Sit, I Write, I Flush!* won the inaugural Red Dot award for "Best Junior Fiction" presented by the International School Libraries Network (Singapore) in 2009. *The Diary of Amos Lee: I'm Twelve, I'm Tough, I Tweet!, Lost in Taipei!* and *Seoul Searching!* have won the Popular Readers' Choice Awards in 2011, 2014 and 2015.

The Diary of Amos Lee series has been sold to India, China, Indonesia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Turkey. The book has also been adapted into a television show in 2012. As of 2015, the series has sold more than 220,000 copies in Singapore and abroad.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

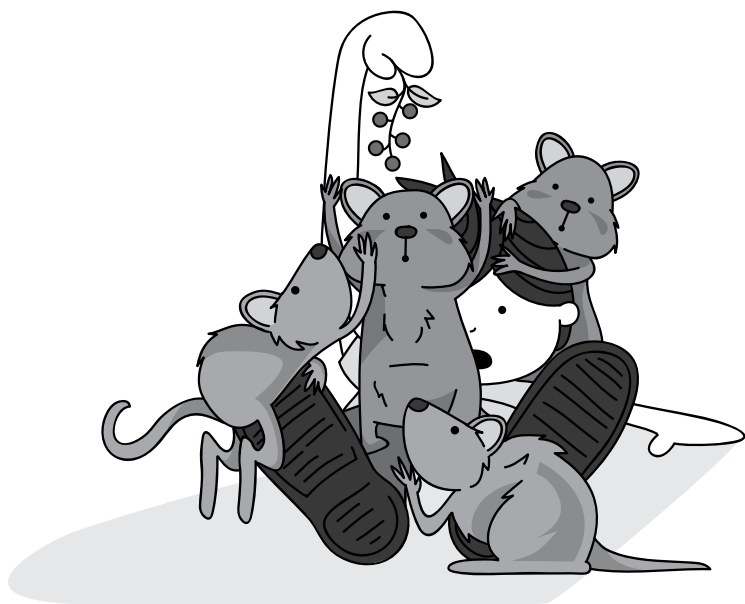
Stephanie Wong is a graphic designer and illustrator.

She is the illustrator of the best-selling children's series, *The Diary of Amos Lee* and *The Travel Diary of Amos Lee*. She has also illustrated a picture book titled, *The Little Nightingale Who Can't Sing*.

Besides books, Stephanie also illustrates for magazines and collateral, and has participated in numerous exhibitions and conducted workshops both locally and in the region.

She has a soft spot for Melbourne, Australia having spent three years there while studying for her degree. No one does coffee, chilli hot chocolate and brunches better than the Auzzies. Not forgetting, too, the Tim-Tam Slam.

For other adorkable projects, check out her website www.steffatwork.com.





QUOKKING IN AUSTRALIA!

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF AMOS LEE

I'm off to Perth with my best friends, Alvin and Anthony! And Jolin and Sheila from Malaysia, too! Our mission is to track down a special Ozzie animal that has been overlooked for years. Here's a clue: it's the happiest creature on earth! The Quokka!

Now wouldn't it be great if I could catch... Er I mean, see one? But this is Australia. I have to be careful not to get caught handling one, or I may just be deported out of the country in shame! Hmmm... Surely it's OKAY to take a selfie with it, right? Am I going to be Famous Amos? You bet!

Quick, a selfie opportunity with a Rottneest Island resident



ROTTNEEST ISLAND

Out and about on a sunny day in the city



PERTH



Just chilling out with my seagull buddies

FREMANTLE



Checking out some Fremantle sights

ISBN-13: 978-9814655842



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