



Magabala  
Books 

#### Teacher Notes

### **Counting Aussie Animals in my Backyard**

written by **Bronwyn Houston**

illustrated by **Bronwyn Houston**

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

#### **OVERVIEW**

Bronwyn Houston makes counting to 10 so much fun! Her textured and vivid illustrations bring a tropical Australian garden to life, with a touch of humour thrown in. From kookaburras laughing on a fence to bull ants marching through the dirt ... find out what these Australian animals get up to in Bronwyn's backyard. A counting book with a difference.

- Strong focus on Australian plants, animals and habitats.
- Rich, vivid and evocative illustrations in a style similar to Eric Carle's *Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
- Perfect for early readers — rich in illustrative references which support a text vetted by early literacy specialists.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR**

Bronwyn Houston is descended from the Nyiyaparli and Yindijibarndi people in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. She lives in Broome with her husband and three children. Bronwyn finds inspiration in the landscape and colours of Broome, and the natural world of the Kimberley region, where she was born. For *Counting Aussie Animals in My Backyard* she has had to go no further than her own garden to unearth myriad fascinating creatures.

She has also created *Loongie the Greedy Crocodile* with Kiefer and Lucy Dann (2008), *Staircase to the Moon* (2010), which was adapted as a play and will tour the Kimberley in 2014, and *My Home Broome*, a collaborative schools-based project with young WA writer, Tamzyne Richardson and student artists from three Broome-based primary schools (2011).

#### **THEMES**

Australian Animals

- The text features a variety of animals found in Australia, describing their characteristics

Counting

- Number and counting is a feature of the text

Poetry

- The traits of each animal are described with the use of poetic devices such as alliteration and imagery.

## **WRITING STYLE**

*Counting Aussie Animals in my Backyard* is suitable for an early childhood audience. It combines colourful and beautifully drawn illustrations with a simple, lyrical text that allows young readers to count and explore a range of gorgeous Australian animals. It is a useful way to introduce the concept of number as well as poetic language.

## **LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM**

These notes have been written in context with the Australian Curriculum. The appendix highlights a selection of relevant cross-curriculum priorities, general capabilities and content descriptors across a range of year levels that the following activities address.

## **CULTURAL NOTES**

An effective way to include Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander information is to regionalise it within your curriculum. Educating your students about their own local history, bringing to life the Indigenous past of your region and using local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (wherever possible) within the school and classroom context is a wonderful way to start.

## **CLASSROOM IDEAS**

- Use the cover of the book to revise the numbers 1-10. As the book is read for the first time, allow students to count the animals in sequence.
- Use each page opening to investigate graphemes and phonemes in the words. Practise letter recognition for each animal.
- Have students spell the numerals 1-10 in words and practise spelling/writing the numbers.
- Use flash cards to help create sight words of the numerals.
- Play 'memory' using cards to match the digits with the numbers in words.
- Create your own version of *Counting Aussie Animals in my Backyard* using different animals. What would these animals do? What are their characteristics?
- Introduce poetic language such as alliteration and imagery. Look for these devices in the text and discuss their effectiveness.
- Use the text to explore new vocabulary. Use new words in sentences of your own.
- Recreate your favourite page in *Counting Aussie Animals in my Backyard* in the style of Bronwyn Houston. Display in the classroom. You may wish to use collage for this.
- Watch YouTube clips of animals such as kookaburras and cockatoos to observe them in their natural environment. Discuss the way in which

the author has described their behaviour. Try coming up with your own descriptions using different Australian animals.

- Why do you think the author has included mosquitos in her text?
- Perform each page of the book by becoming each animal.
- Find out more about your favourite animal from the text and share in a short oral presentation to your class.
- Write simple sentences to explain what is happening on each page opening.
- Use the vocabulary in *Counting Aussie Animals in my Backyard* to examine syllables and sounds in spoken texts.
- Use the text to explore parts of sentences such as capital letters and full stops.
- Write a story in the role of one of the animals in the text.

## Appendix – Links to the Australian Curriculum

Year Level	English - Language	English - Literature	English - Literacy	Mathematics – Number and Algebra
Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that punctuation is a feature of written <a href="#">text</a> different from letters; recognise how capital letters are used for names, and that capital letters and full stops signal the beginning and end of sentences (<a href="#">ACELA1432</a>)</li> <li>Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (<a href="#">ACELA1786</a>)</li> <li>Recognise rhymes, syllables and sounds (phonemes) in spoken words (<a href="#">ACELA1439</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a <a href="#">text</a> (<a href="#">ACELT1578</a>)</li> <li>Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry (<a href="#">ACELT1785</a>)</li> <li>Replicate the rhythms and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures (<a href="#">ACELT1579</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver short oral presentations to peers (<a href="#">ACELY1647</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish understanding of the language and processes of counting by naming numbers in sequences, initially to and from 20, moving from any starting <a href="#">point</a> (<a href="#">ACMNA001</a>)</li> <li>Connect <a href="#">number</a> names, numerals and quantities, including zero, initially up to 10 and then beyond (<a href="#">ACMNA002</a>)</li> </ul>
Yr 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the parts of a <a href="#">simple sentence</a> that represent 'What's happening?', 'What state is being described?', 'Who or what is involved?' and the surrounding circumstances (<a href="#">ACELA1451</a>)</li> <li>Explore differences in words that represent people, places and things (nouns, including pronouns), happenings and states (verbs), qualities (adjectives) and details such as when, where and how (adverbs) (<a href="#">ACELA1452</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Listen</a> to, recite and perform poems, chants, rhymes and songs, imitating and inventing sound patterns including <a href="#">alliteration</a> and rhyme (<a href="#">ACELT1585</a>)</li> <li>Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (<a href="#">ACELT1586</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences (<a href="#">ACELY1655</a>)</li> <li><a href="#">Read</a> supportive texts using developing phrasing, fluency, contextual, semantic, grammatical and <a href="#">phonic</a> knowledge and emerging <a href="#">text processing strategies</a>, for example <a href="#">prediction</a>, monitoring meaning and rereading (<a href="#">ACELY1659</a>)</li> </ul>	