

Kel Richards
**GUMTREE
GULLY**



A 'Two Ways to Live' bush yarn

Bluey the Possum and Rocky the Wallaby love living in Gumtree Gully. But along with their bush friends, they're about to face a danger that could destroy everything.



KEL RICHARDS works on radio and writes books. He has two children of his own, and he read them heaps of stories when they were younger. They used to complain, "Dad, don't do the funny voices, just read the story".



two ways to live



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GUMTREE GULLY



Welcome to Gumtree Gully. It's a place where animals like Bluey the Possum and Rocky the Wallaby live and play with their friends. But it's also a place where danger is lurking just around the corner. As you read the adventures

of Bluey and Rocky and their friends in Gumtree Gully, you'll find some lessons hidden inside the story about God and Jesus and us. Watch out for the section at the end of each chapter that tells you 'What's inside this story'.

I hope you enjoy it.

KEL RICHARDS



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

Gumtree Gully

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Matthias Media

(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)

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Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

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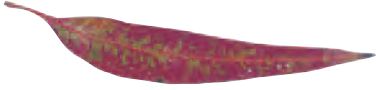
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ISBN 978 1 921068 11 9

Cover and internal illustrations by Graham Wade.

Design and typesetting by Lankshear Design.

Contents



1. The Ranger	5
2. The animals.....	13
3. The bushfire.....	23
4. The rescue	31
5. Out of the ashes	41
6. The choice	49
Things for adults to talk about with kids	59



1. The Ranger



BLUEY THE POSSUM and Rocky the Wallaby were playing a game. They were racing between two big gum trees, each trying to prove that he was faster than the other.

Rocky would lean forward and hop on his powerful hind legs in huge strides, while Bluey ran overhead, leaping from branch to branch in the tall river red gum trees. Each time they raced, the result was a dead heat — Bluey was just as fast through the trees as Rocky was over the ground.

Three times they raced, and three times they got exactly the same result. After the third race, the two young friends went and sat in the shade, with their backs against the trunk of the biggest gum tree.

“Why do they call you Bluey?” asked Rocky.

“Because I’ve got red fur”, said the possum.

“That makes no sense.”

“You’ve got to understand”, Bluey explained, “that Australians call most red-heads ‘Bluey’. I think it’s meant to be a joke.”

“In that case, I don’t get it”, said Rocky. “Come on, let’s race again.”

And for a fourth time, the two raced over the course, and, for the fourth time, the result was exactly the same—a dead heat—a tie between the hopping rock wallaby and the leaping possum.

While they were catching their breath, Bluey the Possum suddenly said, “Ssshh! I think I can hear something...”

“What can you hear?” asked Rocky.

“Nothing at all when you’re talking. Now keep quiet and listen very carefully.”

Both animals pricked up their ears and listened very carefully. Then they heard it: the sound of big, heavy boots, crunching over the dead leaves.

“Someone’s coming”, said Bluey in a hushed voice.

“I wonder,” said Rocky, “I wonder if it could be...”

His voice trailed away. Both young animals knew they were thinking of the same person. But it was Bluey who whispered, “Could it be... the Ranger?”

“You go and look”, insisted Rocky. “From the tree-tops you should be able to see.”

Bluey hesitated only for a moment. Then he took off, climbing straight up the tree trunk to the very top, then leaping from branch to branch until he reached a point near the top of one of the tallest gum trees where he could see the track that led into Gumtree Gully.

Down below on the track, walking into the gully, he saw a man. The man was wearing the big, heavy boots, the wide-brimmed hat, and the khaki uniform of the Wildlife Ranger.

A minute later, Bluey was back by Rocky's side, saying breathlessly, "It's him! It's him! It's the Ranger!"

Rocky looked worried. He said, "What do you think he wants? Will he give us orders? Will he want us to clean up Gumtree Gully for him? Do you think he might pack us up and move us somewhere else?"

"Let's ask the others", Bluey suggested. "They've lived here longer than us. They'll know about the Ranger."

The first one they asked was Curly the Koala. They found him curled up in one of the forks of his favourite blue gum, sound asleep. Bluey had to shake his grey, furry shoulder to wake him up. When they finally got him to understand that the Ranger was coming, Curly said, "I don't care. I just want to sleep. Go away and let me snooze, there's good kids."

Next they went to where Jacko the Kookaburra was sitting, on a higher branch of the same tree. When they told Jacko about the Ranger, he burst out laughing.

"What a joke!" he said. "As if we should bother to take the Ranger seriously! I think this idea about the Ranger being important is a real hoot! I don't care what the Ranger thinks or what the Ranger says. I just treat him as great big joke!" And he began to laugh his feathery head off.

On the ground, under the same gum tree, Rocky and Bluey found Sneaky the Goanna. When they told him the news, he said, “So, he’s coming, is he? I think I’ll hide. I suggest you do the same. Don’t let the Ranger catch you and start giving you orders. Duck out of the way. If he happens to see you, agree with whatever he says and then ignore him as soon as he goes away again. That’s what I do.”

Rocky and Bluey weren’t happy with any of these suggestions. They headed towards the creek. There they found Paddle the Platypus having a swim. He was swimming slowly and gracefully, doing backstroke and heading upstream. They called him over to the bank and told him the news.

“So, the Ranger’s coming, is he?” said Paddle. “All I can say is—bother! What a nuisance! I don’t want the Ranger telling me what to do—giving me jobs to do. I just want to play and swim and frolic in the water. That’s what life is all about—having fun. Bother the Ranger! That’s what I say.”

And he dived back into the creek. At that moment, Wise Old Wombat waddled out of his hole in the creek bank. Rocky and Bluey told him about the Ranger.

Wombat thought for a moment and then sat the two young animals down and told them a story.

“The Ranger”, said Wombat, “has the right to expect us to listen to him and obey him. You see, the Ranger is



also a farmer. This land—Gumtree Gully—is on his farm. He paid for it, so he owns it. When he first bought it, this gully was barren and lifeless—it had been cleared and felled. He paid for all the trees and bushes and plants you see around us. He planted them with his own hands. This is all his work.

“As for us animals who live here... well, you were probably too young at the time to remember it, but he rescued each and every one of us from dangerous places where the bush was dying, and brought us here to live in safety and peace. We owe our lives to him. Because of his loving care, the government appointed him Wildlife Ranger to look after Gumtree Gully and to look after us. So, when the Ranger comes, you listen to him carefully and do whatever he tells you to do.”



What's inside this story?

The Ranger in this story is a bit like God in our world. God made this world and everything in it—including us. Just like the Ranger, God brought us into this world he created, so that we could live here and serve him.

This means God is in charge of this world—he is the King.