

# Run <sup>Until</sup> Can Fly

Written by Brenda Daniels  
Illustrated by Amy-Jane Jenkins

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#### **CONTRIBUTORS**

Dr Kyle J. Lloyd produced and edited the book as an awareness project for the White-winged Flufftail and its wetland habitat.

Karlien Muller and Brendan Lloyd designed and compiled the book as the project's graphic designers.

**For Rachel, Emma, Iola and Ronan**

*One summer day in the mountains of  
South Africa, Wetland watched a young  
White-winged Flufftail named Saro ...*



'I wish I could fly, Mama,' Saro said.  
'A bird who can't fly! It's a calamity!' the Flufftails said.  
Saro's Mama said, 'Run until you **can** fly.'  
So, as Sun warmed my morning mist, Saro ran.





He weaved between my grasses, where I trickled and sang.

'Hum, heem, whee!' whistled Oryx, the African Clawless Otter, 'Where are you going?'

'I don't know. I can't fly. But Mama said I should run until I can fly.'



Oryx laughed. 'Can I come with you? I'll swim while you run. I've never been able to fly.'

'**Cowabunga**, yes!' said Saro, 'I'll race you!'

So, as Wind whooshed my edges, Saro darted and Oryx dived.



**Creak, crack, crick.**

‘I’m going this way, I’m in the lead!’ Oryx whistled.

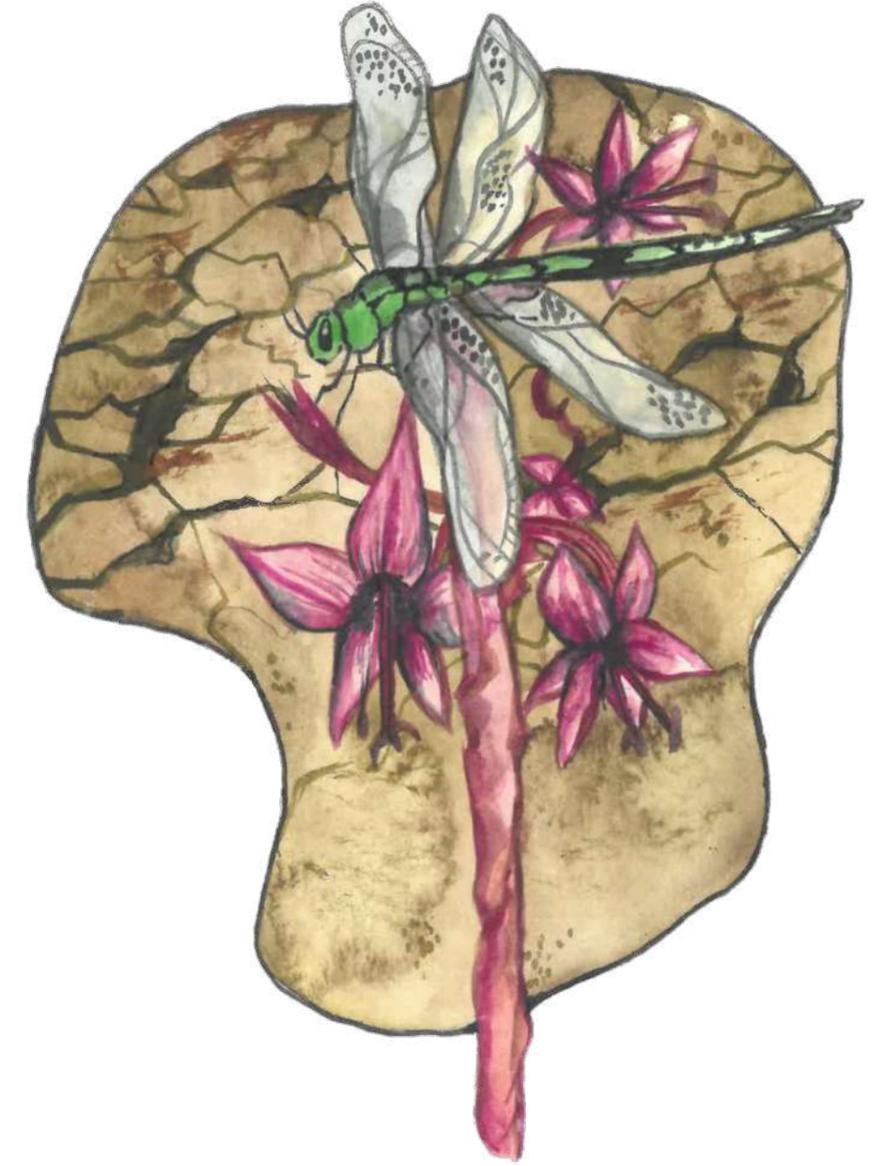
‘Oryx, no!’ clicked Saro.

But it was too late.

‘Hah, hah, help! Saro, I can’t stop!

The channels are taking me from the wetland.’

‘**Calamity!**’ cried Saro.



‘Run until you can fly!’ whispered Dragonfly.



My crackles snatched at Saro's feet.

But he ran.

In circles.

He fluttered.

He hopped.

And then he high-jumped.

'I see you, Oryx. Turn till you hear  
Wetland's trickling song,' clicked Saro.  
So, Oryx turned and she found where I  
trickled and sang.



'Phew, thank you. You ran till you high-jumped, Saro!'

'I did?' Saro said, '**Cowabunga!**'

So, because of his high-jumping, Saro wanted to run  
again. And because of my foot-snatching crackles, he ran  
a different way.



He weaved between my grasses where I filtered and flowed.

And Oryx swam in my shallows.

Saro's friend Gus, the Wattled Crane, was slurping sedges as

Saro and Oryx rushed by.

'Kahee, kahee, kahee,' he bugled. 'Where are you going?'

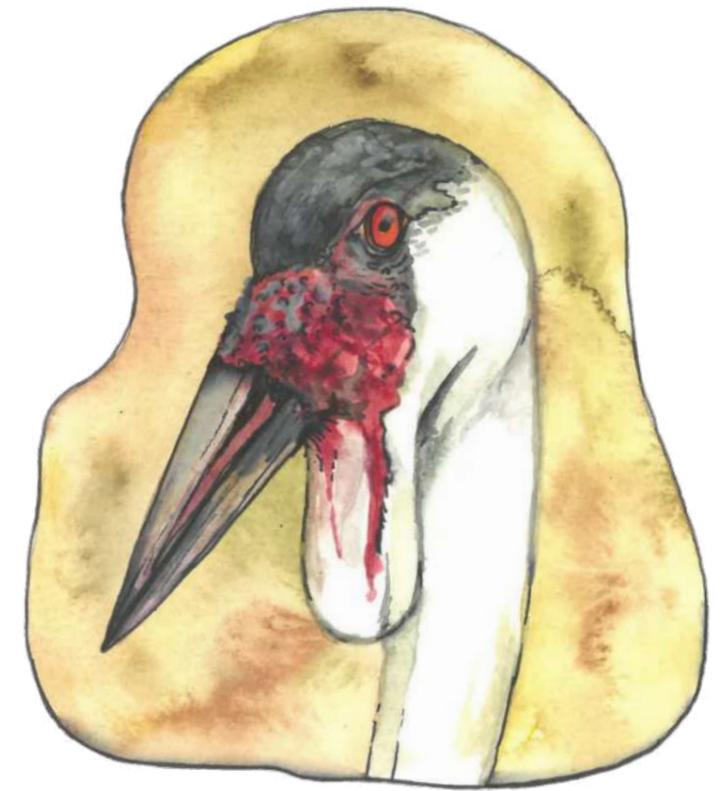
'I don't know. I can't fly. Mama said I should run until I can fly.'

'Can I come with you? I'll stride while you run.'

'**Cowabunga**, yes!' said Saro, 'We'll race you!'

So, as Rain splashed my peat, Saro darted and Oryx dived and

Gus strode.



**Glug, glug, glug.**

'Oh, look at those succulent sedges, I'll reach them first,' bugled Gus.

'Gus, no!' But it was too late.

**Sink, suck, clank!**

'Filth, toxic, strange,' shouted Gus. 'I'm trapped. We're all doomed. Leave! Warn the rest!'



'**Calamity!**' cried Saro.

'Run until you can fly!' whispered

Dragonfly.

But Saro couldn't run ...!





Foot-swallowing sludge dragged at one foot and then another.

‘Oryx, help. Swim!’ he clicked.

So, Oryx swam. In circles. She danced and dived past Gus’s trapped foot. Past Saro’s sludge-swallowed feet.

And then Saro could run.  
In circles.  
He fluttered,  
hopped,  
and then he swooped - at Gus.  
And Gus’s foot came free.



‘Kahee, kahee, kahee,’ bugled the crane.

And with one flap he was in the air.

‘Phew, thank you Saro and Oryx.’

Oryx whistled, ‘You ran until you swooped, Saro.’

‘I did?’ said Saro, ‘**Cowabunga!**’





So, because of his swooping, Saro wanted to run again. And because of my foot-swallowing sludge, he ran a different way.

He weaved between my grasses where I cleaned and sieved. Oryx swam in my shallows, and Gus stalked across my peat.



Thunder **boom-boom-boomed**. Lightning **flash-flash-flared**.

Stalks and stems **scritch**ed and **scrap**ed. And I **squish**ed and **squeez**ed.

This time it was Saro who was in the lead. 'I'll reach the Pineapple Lilies first,' he clicked.



This time it was Oryx who swerved and slowed...

Gus who leaned and paused...

'Saro, NOOOOOOOO!' it was Gus and Oryx who cried.



But it was too late.  
**Click, thunk, snap!**





Mesh. Tight.

Stuck.

Trap.

'Calamity!' cried Saro, 'Help, help!'



But fingers, larger even than Gus's claws felt for Saro. A voice, louder even than thunder declared,  
    than thunder declared,  
**'A White-winged Flufftail. I've found you at last!'** The fingers turned Saro. They stretched out his peppered wings. Tweaked his rufous tail. Dabbed at his beak. The fingers tapped Saro's ankle. Placed a ring around it.  
And went **clink!** And then those fingers covered him...





**Lub dub, lub dub, lub dub**, went Saro's heart, **lub dub... lub dub... lub dub**

'Kahee, kahee... kahee,' bugled Gus from behind my bulrushes.

'Hum, heem... whee,' whistled Oryx from my evening waters.

And then...



The fingers opened ...  
*'Run until you can fly!'* shouted everyone.  
Saro blinked. His feet tiptoed on the giant's pebble-smooth skin. Then - they ran, and, with *one* flap of his wings Saro rose into the air.

Higher he rose, the tips of his wings flashing white above my sedges. Above my star-twinkle sleep. Above where I trickled and sang, squished and squeezed, above where the creatures in me chattered and chirred.

*'You're flying, Saro!'* chorused everyone.

**'Cowabunga!'** clicked Saro. *'So I am!'*

And with one flap Gus rose into the sky and flew above Saro. And Oryx swam in my shallows below.

*'Thank you, Gus and Oryx, I'm flying!'* clicked Saro.



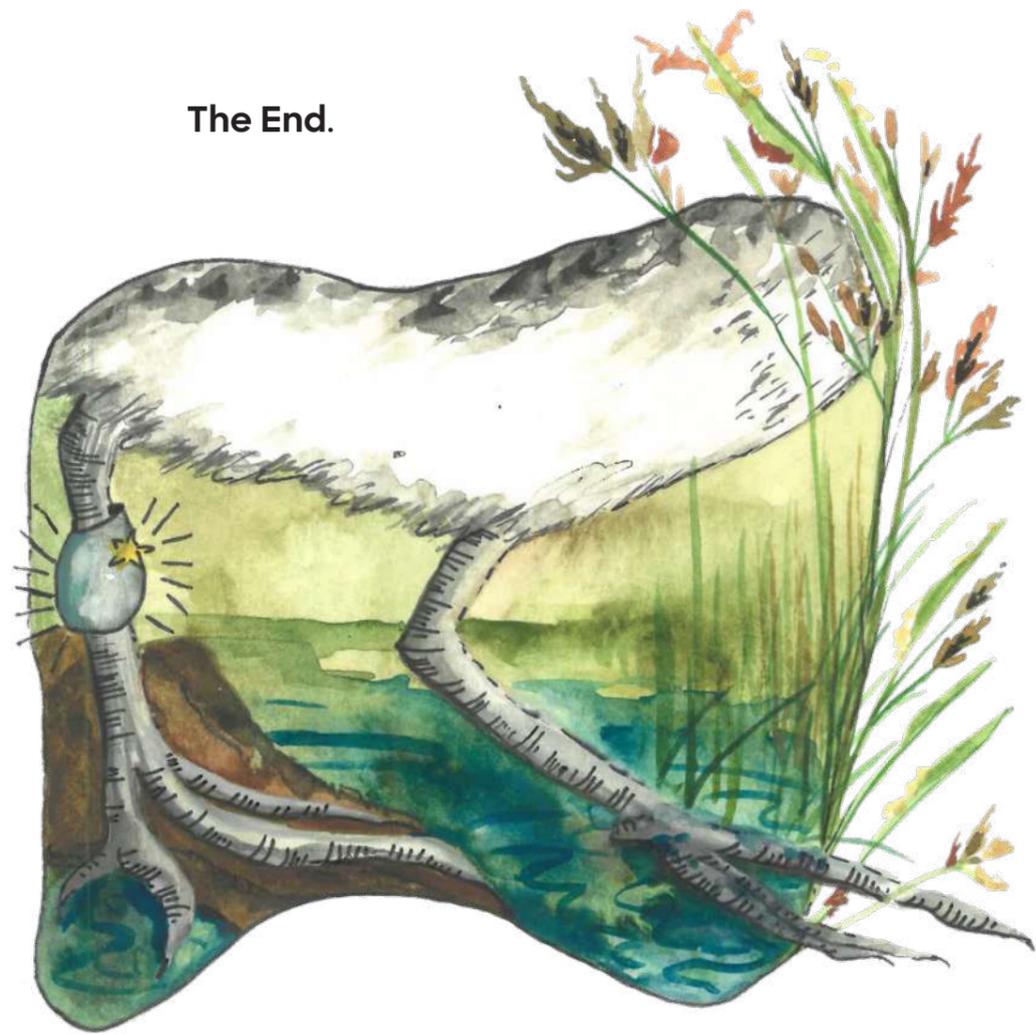
When Saro reached home he landed beside Mama's nest.

'Mama,' clicked Saro, 'I ran until I could fly.'

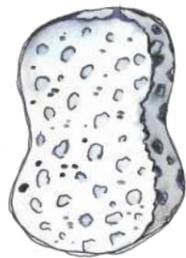
'**Cowabunga!**' clicked all the Flufftails. 'So you did.'

And they crowded around Saro and admired his shiny new ring.

The End.



## Information Page

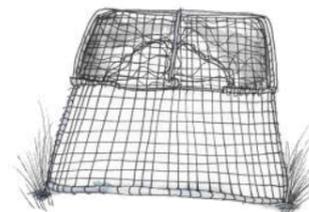
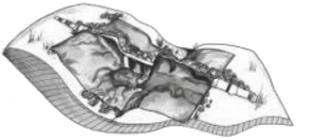


The **White-winged Flufftail** is a tiny bird about as tall as your hand is long (eight centimetres). Its scientific name is *Sarothrura ayresi*, named after a South African ornithologist, Thomas Ayres, who found the bird in 1876. It lives secretly in between plants – called **sedges** – on wet, muddy ground – called **wetlands**. The bird makes little nests by tying sedges together into **tepees**. These are tents shaped like a triangle. The White-winged Flufftail is a champion for wetland conservation. This is why we call it a **wetland ambassador**. An ambassador is someone who promotes and acts like an advert for something. Wetlands are important because they work like big bath sponges that hold water and slowly let it out, all the while cleaning the water as it leaves. They can do this because of their special mud called **peat**. Peat is dead plant roots, leaves and stems that build in layers over time underneath the water. Wetlands also provide homes for many different animals. One of these animals is the **African Clawless Otter**. This otter's scientific name is *Aonyx capensis*. It has partly webbed and clawless feet. Another wetland animal is the **Wattled Crane**. This bird's scientific name is *Grus carunculata*. It is very tall, about as tall or even taller than an adult person! Under its beak the Wattled Crane has two droopy wattles that look like white shopping bags full of groceries. These wattles grow longer when the crane is excited and shorter when it is worried.



People have not always known how important wetlands are for us. And, so, they have done harmful things to them. Things like allowing litter and poisons to go into wetlands or draining water out of wetlands in big channels. This means that the homes of the White-winged Flufftail, African Clawless Otter and Wattled Crane are no longer safe for these animals to live in. People called **conservationists** (people who help nature) work to protect our wetlands. Some conservationists **rehabilitate** (fix or restore) drained wetlands by putting in structures that help to spread the water throughout the wetland. Others help White-winged Flufftails by learning more about them. To do this, they try to catch the bird in **flaptraps**. The traps do not hurt the bird. When a bird is caught, the conservationist will carefully measure it, gently put a ring on its ankle (**tarsus**) and then let the bird go. This ring has special information that helps the conservationist identify and track where the bird is going.

You can be a **wetland ambassador** too! You can do this by not littering; by trying to save water at home (like turning off taps when brushing your teeth or taking shorter showers); by sharing what you have learnt with your friends and making posters about wetlands for your classroom; and – best of all – by asking your parents or teachers to take you often to visit and experience wetlands.



## Supported by



### Brenda Daniels

Brenda Daniels is a writer, living in Durban, South Africa. After obtaining her master's degree in children's literature in 2021, Brenda switched from journalism and editing to the writing of children's books. She believes in the intelligence of young people and in the power of the natural world. As such, she trusts that the young readers of books like *Run Until You Can Fly* will not only understand what they read, but also go on to embrace nature's enormous ecological value.



### Amy-Jane Jenkins

Amy-Jane Jenkins is a South African Visual Arts teacher and freelance creative illustrator. Between her studies and travels, Amy-Jane spends most of her time painting and designing for her business, Little Jane Florals. Her love and passion for South African flora and fauna have led to a keen interest in nature conservation. *Run Until You Can Fly* is Amy's first publishing illustrative challenge and she hopes it will be an exciting educational tool for children for many years to come.





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