

1

This is our tale, as told by a newt who is crested and splendid and ever so cute. His fire-orange belly has spots of black and a fine frilly sail grows tall on his back.

You will solve some mysteries, discover wild ways, spot some bugs where the meadow grass sways, find the trees where the woodspirits sleep and discover some beasties that live in the deep.

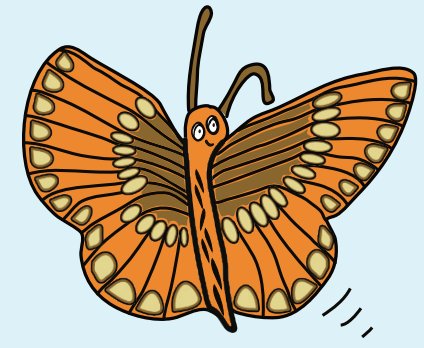
He's a cool mini dinosaur, who's got a tale to tell and a feathery friend who will sing it as well. Together they'll show you why Watchtree's wonderful, that there's magic and secrets and creatures so beautiful.

The story of Watchtree is so special, it's true! Our skylarks in springtime will sing it for you, so...

Let's begin our adventure when this land was the sea and explore some wildlife that once lived at Watchtree...



4



Nature is blooming, our wetlands are lush, our woodlands are wild and our meadows are plush! The insects are buzzing, the grasslands are green, there is so much wonder that's come from what's been.

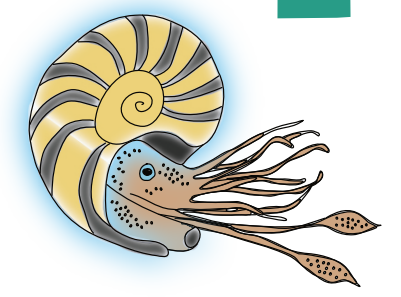
Search through the meadows for bright butterflies like skippers and ringlets and peacocks with eyes. There are elephant hawk moths and dragonflies too and bright orange beetles to name but a few.

Down in the grass there are shrews, mice and voles, millions of creatures in their own hidey holes. So lie in the grass and take time for a rest. See if you can spot me, I'll be waving my crest!

Did you know Skylarks like Iris have been watching over Watchtree for thousands of years? When you see and hear the first skylark in spring, it fills you with hope and magic and warmth



2



Let's fly back in time, the Jurassic, oh WOW! When creatures called ammonites lived here somehow. They swam in an ocean that was lovely and hot, they had sharp beaks and tentacles and sea-salty snot!



Next came the glaciers and Watchtree was frozen, this is 400 million years after the volcanic explosion! Then footprints arrived, it was Stone Age folks, and here was an ancient woodland of pine trees and oaks.

Then the Celts and the farmers cleared the land and built clay dabbin houses from mud, straw and sand. Barley fields swayed in the warm summer air, but Romans and Reivers said, "You better BEWARE..." "We like this spot and we've come for your treasure, we will take your farms and your money with pleasure." But the folks who lived here were clever, you see, and they climbed a tall Oak and called it Watchtree!



Can you find this symbol on your map? Turn over to find out more about life on the last farm at Watchtree...

5

In winter I go sleeping in walls, roots and logs and I share the woods with the toads and the frogs. When the sun starts to shine it's time to wake. In springtime we'll all make our way to the lake.

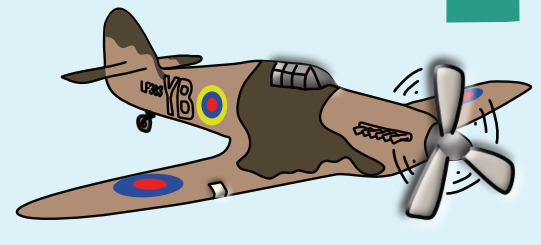
Listen for cuckoos in April, "CUCK-OOOO". If you are here at dusk hear the owls say "TWIT-TWOO". Our friends the woodpeckers love to peck little holes and to suck up the grubs and to tease all the trolls!

We hop past the feeders, we wave at the deer and we hide in the leaves when the herons are near. The woodlands are magic, it's where woodspirits hide it's where witches make broomsticks and dragonflies glide.

So when in the woodlands REMEMBER to watch for fairies and pixies that live in the moss and for wizards and nixies making their spells and enjoy all the magic and foresty smells.



3



Now, can you imagine the skies filled with wings, not the feathery kind like larks or starlings, but huge Lancaster bombers and Hurricane fighters and Typhoon planes coming back from all-nighters!

There were runways, radio towers and secret stores for unused bombs and spy craft and more. The Royal Air Force were based here you see, so the birds and the bees said it got rather busy!

But then to this land a great sadness came and the land filled with tears and the sky with flame. The earth fell silent and Watchtree turned black... But now there's a magic that's bringing life back.

Foot and Mouth Disease devastated the farming community in 2001. Watchtree was used for the mass culling and burial of nearly 500,000 animals. You can still see the burial ditches along the grasslands. As Watchtree was the UK's largest mass burial site it seems only right to remember the lives that were lost.



6

Now I love lagoons and our lakes are just dreamy but on hot summer days it can get pretty steamy, so me and the kids like to rest by the pool, where we paddle and play and go to newt school.

I tell my young newtlets that we all need each other, to look after the Earth and your sisters and brothers. I tell them that something quite special's arising, that our home is unique and in all ways surprising. Coz under your feet, something's starting to grow. Watchtree's coming alive and she'll put on a show. So go and explore and see Watchtree's full glory and together we'll make the next page of our story.

We learn about warblers that sing in the reeds and shelducks and shovellers that filter the weeds. We wonder how moorhens can walk on the water? Why toads like to crawl and don't hop like they oughta?



Find out more: www.Watchtree.co.uk
Published by Tale Trails www.taletrails.co.uk
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Wildlife Watchtree Nature Reserve is a registered charity with a mission to provide a haven for a wide range of habitats and species. It is a community asset for people to enjoy, appreciate and be educated in the values you can observe a number of deer grazing close by, as well as listen to the increasing number of wild birds who make Watchtree their home and watch them feeding from our hidden Count the newts and explore the ponds to see what lives under the water, and try to spot our native hare. Don't forget to keep an eye out for the many insects too!

Walk Overview From the Visitors Centre Car Park, the information board located between the cafe and the Watchtree Wheelers area.

Terrain The trail is fully accessible in all directions. The route follows some woodland paths and farmland trails, which are mostly dry underfoot and can all be navigated by pushchairs and wheelchair users.

Education For more details on our Education Zone and educational visits, please go to www.watchtree.co.uk/education.

Opening Hours Watchtree is open from 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week. If you'd like to access the area outside of these hours, you can become a member of Watchtree by going to <https://watchtree.co.uk/support-us/>

Some Simple Rules Dogs must be kept on a short lead, and please pick up after your dog - bins are located around the reserve. No smoking or fires on the reserve, and please - no littering. Please keep to the trails, and be courteous to other reserve users. Please be aware other vehicles operate across the reserve and all children must be accompanied by an adult. No unauthorised use of motor powered scooters, quadbikes, segways and other toys (excluding mobility aids) and no remote-controlled toys including drones.

How to get there Satnav users can use postcode CA5 6NL to find Watchtree. Watchtree is signposted from the Orton Grange exit on the Cardewles Roundabout on the A595, and onwards all the way to the reserve. From Carlisle, take the exit for Kirkbride on the Moorhous Road roundabout, when passing cakes and traybakes, a range of coffees and teas. You can also try the fantastic flavours of Three Hills Gelato in our ice cream hatch, located next to Watchtree Wheelers!

Top Tips for using this trail There are over 6km of Trail which winds round the beautiful, though protected nature reserve of Watchtree. The many tea-cycle facilities, equipment and training for the public help you find them and take it further by using the QR codes to bring the story to life!

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fun local story walks for children and the young at heart
Watchtree NATURE RESERVE

The Adventures of Flash & Iris

A Story Walk around Watchtree Nature Reserve

By Anja Phoenix

Easy to follow Map & Story Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way
Tale trails

