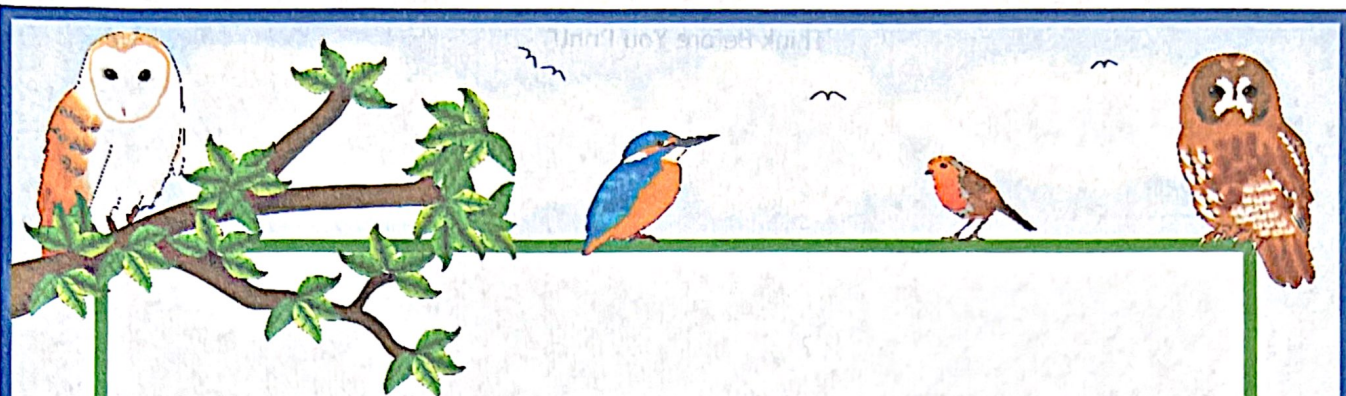


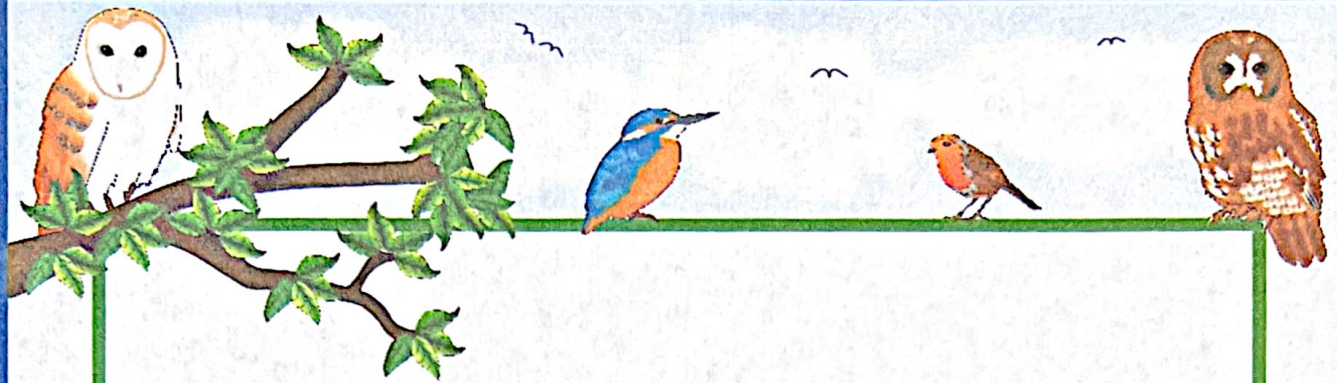


The Woodland Animals Adventure

It was the middle of summer and the skies were blue, the sun was shining brightly ... and all was good in the woods. Bertie Butterfly and his best friend Buzz Bee were waiting patiently for Curly Caterpillar (Bertie's new brother) to hatch! The Ant troops were hurriedly marching up and down the trodden path of the large oak tree, busily about their daily work. Jasmine Jay and Woody Woodpecker were enjoying swooping in and out of the trees, seeing who was the fastest, whilst Rob Robin flitted around the woodland, checking that all was peaceful within this extraordinarily close community of creatures.

Elsewhere, Red Squirrel and Grey Squirrel were squabbling over their lunch. Red Squirrel was determined to win today, as Grey Squirrel was rather bigger and stronger, so was usually victorious!



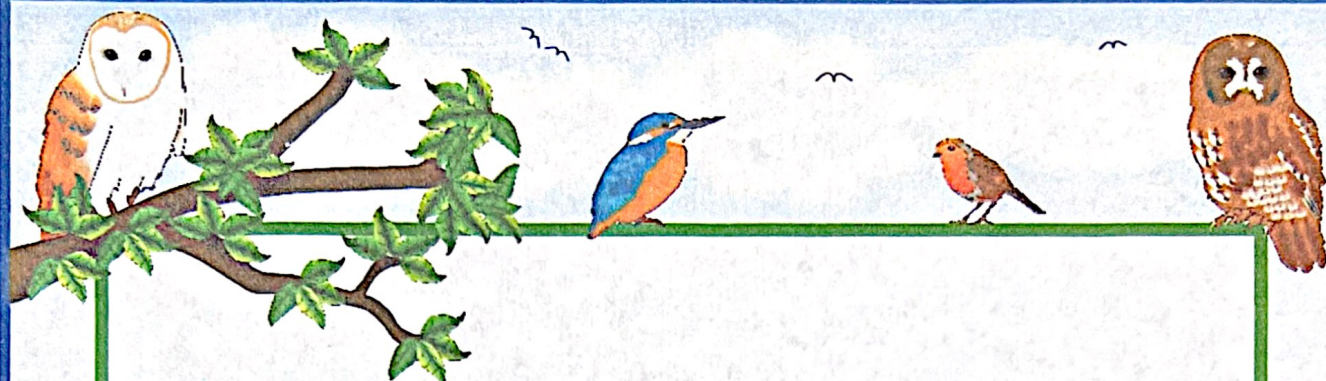


As Rob Robin was going about his duties, he noticed that a new family of deer had moved into the furthest point of the woodlands. He decided to keep a low profile until he had spoken to the other woodland members at the gathering this evening.

Every night at dusk, all the woodland animals would meet in the clearing to discuss any outstanding matters or new developments. It also gave the diurnal animals the chance to mingle with their nocturnal friends and catch up on the gossip, before retiring to bed.

As the sun began to set, the animals began drifting towards the clearing. They arrived in small groups, deep in conversation. Woody Mouse, Victoria Vole, Willie Weasel and Harry Hedgehog all arrived with Ratty; whilst, from the opposite direction, Clara Cuckoo flew into the clearing together with Oscar Owl, Jasmine Jay & Rob Robin. Woody Woodpecker was not far behind, but he had spied a rather interesting hole in the old oak tree and had gone to investigate!





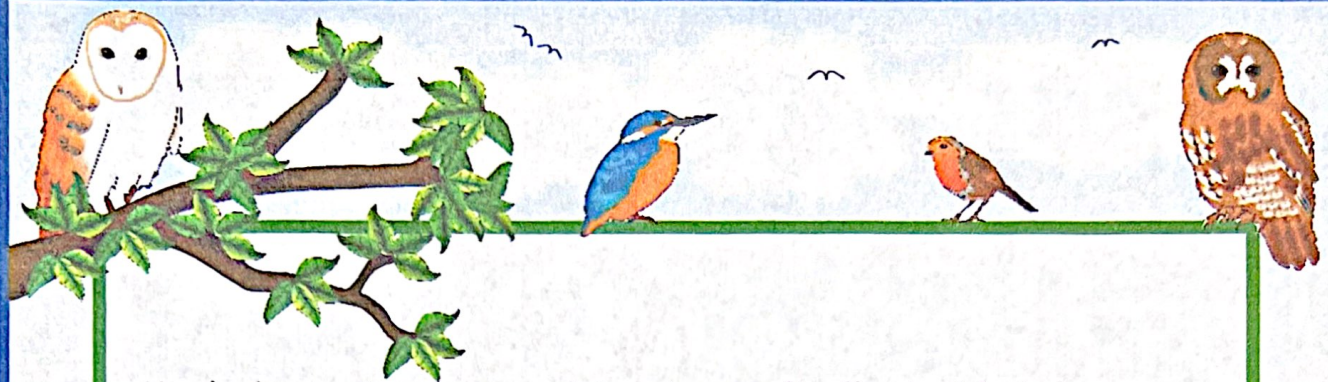
As the butterfly family fluttered towards Base Camp, they were joined by a group of very excited moths preparing for their evening adventures and some rather tired Ants, enjoying the charming company of Belinda Beetle.

Once all the animals had gathered, a group of very distinguished and larger woodland animals approached. As they got nearer, a lull in the conversation occurred and all eyes focussed on the final group's arrival. Reggie Rabbit and Ollie Otter led, closely followed by Frances Fox and Brock Badger.

As Brock Badger was the oldest member of the group, he addressed the colony of animals and welcomed them to the gathering ... Rob Robin waited patiently to share his important news. Finally, it was his turn. He took great delight in sharing with his friends, his discovery of the family of deer and was eager to be guided through his next steps. There was an excited bustle through the gathering as they heard this exciting news.



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Much discussion occurred, but it was finally decided that Brock Badger and Frances Fox would travel to the edge of the woods, during the night and quietly investigate. Rob Robin was instructed to meet them at dawn and collect his next course of action for the day, regarding the deer.

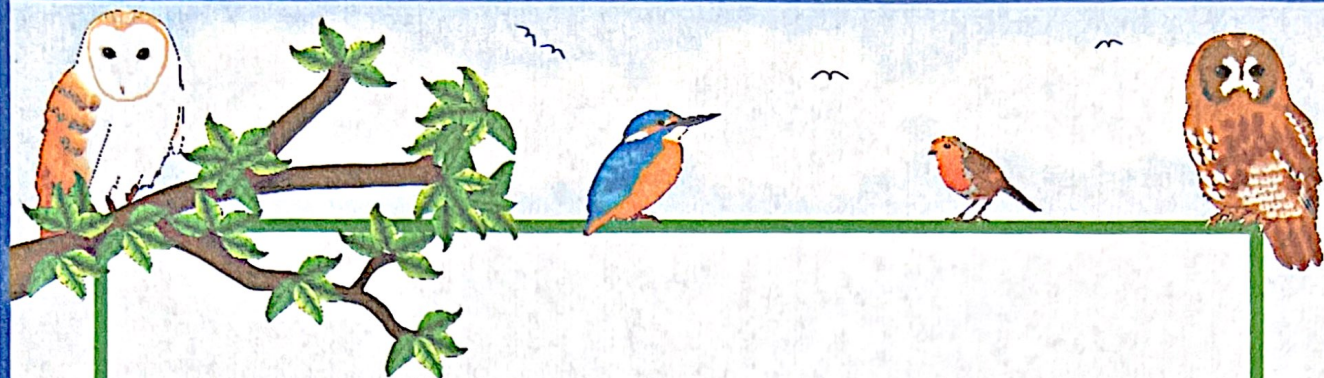
As the meeting drew to a closure, the animals went their separate ways; some for a well-earned rest and others for an exciting night of activity.

Six months earlier, in a different part of the world, Black Bear was feeling rather sad and lonely. He longed to have a group of friends who would accept him for himself. A group of friends that would not be frightened of him and expect him to be ferocious, but a colony of animals that would recognise his gentle nature and allow him to live in harmony among friends, just being himself.

It was at this point that Black Bear made the most important decision of his life! He would travel the globe until he found his group. He was sure that he would recognise them when he saw them.



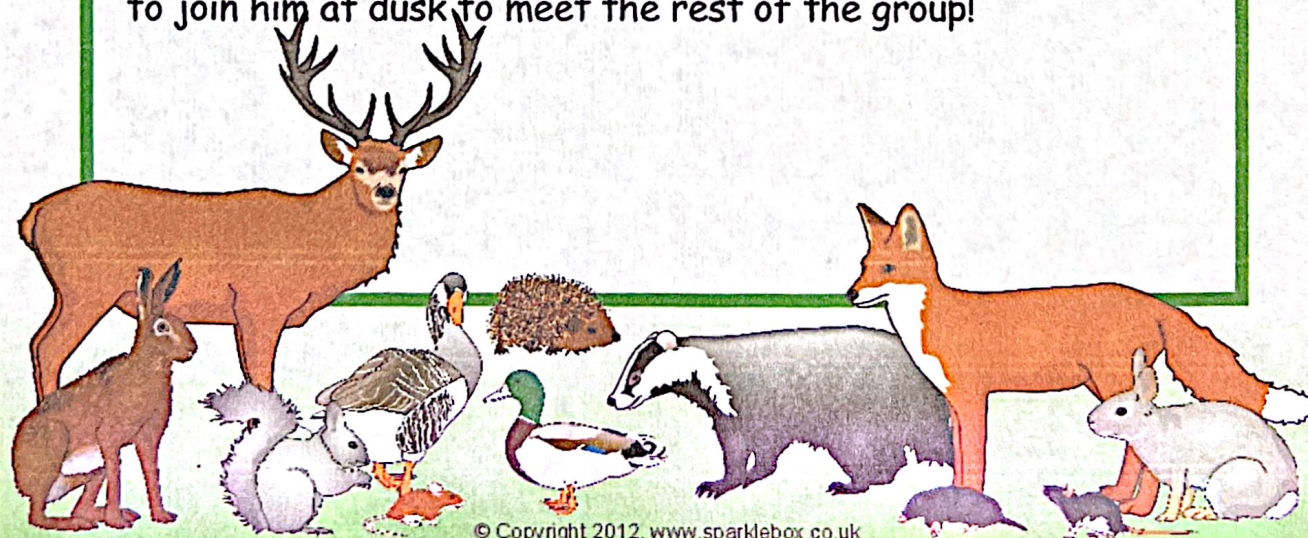
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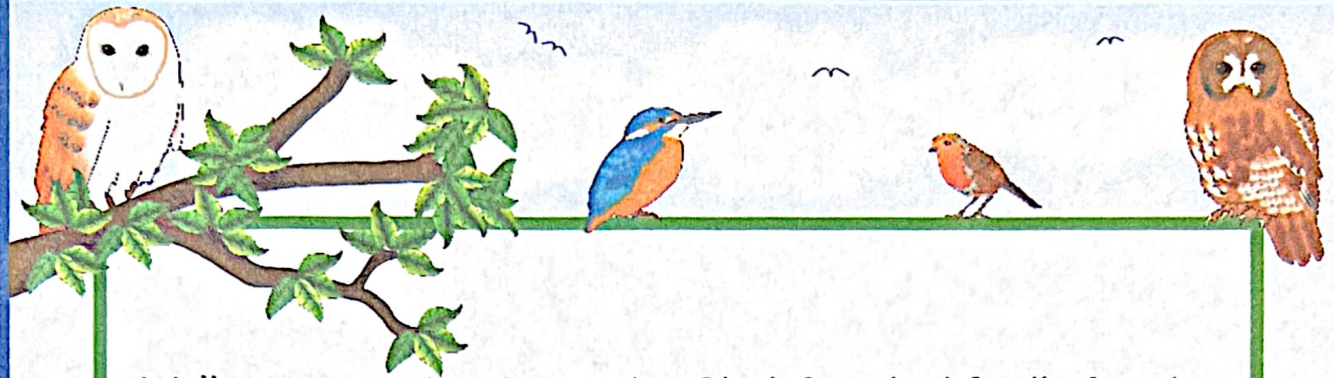
So it was, that Black Bear's adventures began. He travelled near and far, meeting many interesting animals, but none of them felt totally fulfilling. He continued his quest.

One day, as he was exploring new territories, he noticed that the sky was filled with an array of beautiful birds. He followed them for a while and eventually decided to rest. As he lay, soaking up the midday sun, a very small brown and red bird fluttered down next to him. It was Rob Robin the messenger bird! Black Bear stayed very still for fear of frightening this little animal, however Rob Robin neared fearlessly up to him and introduced himself. Very shortly, the two were engaged in conversation as if they were old friends. Black Bear was interested to hear about the other woodland animals and felt very relaxed in this little chap's company. Rob explained that he was on a mission to a family of deer to invite them to join the Woodland Gang.

Black Bear could not believe his good fortune at stumbling across this patch of woodland. The next part of the conversation took his breath away - Rob Robin was inviting him to join him at dusk to meet the rest of the group!



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Well, as you can imagine reader, Black Bear had finally found his colony and as black bears are both diurnal and nocturnal, in this small corner of the world, he had the best of both worlds! However, our story does not end there...

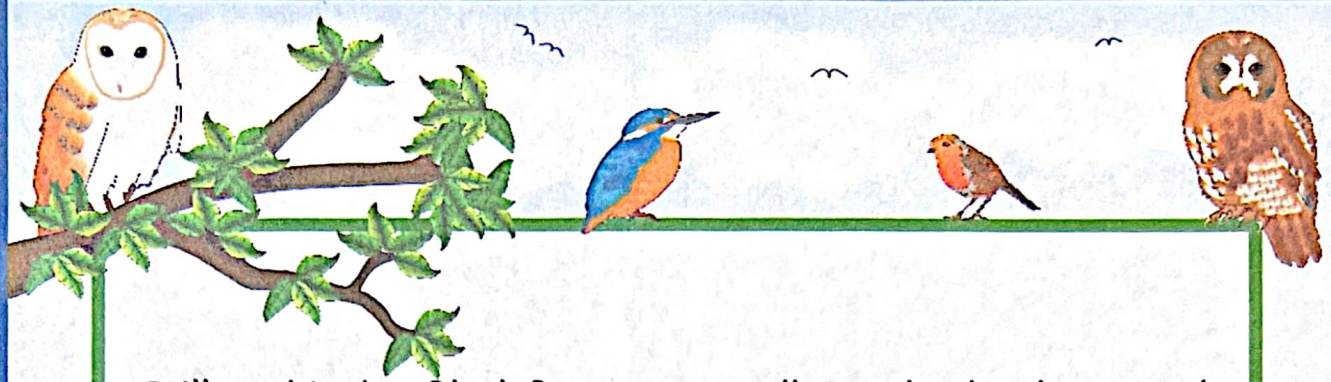
It was approaching Midsummer's Day. The woodland friends decided that it was nearing the time for their annual party, so many of the animals were busily preparing for this magnificent occasion.

Black Bear had never been to a party before, yet alone one on such a grand scale! He decided to go for a little stroll through the woods. He really wanted to bring something rather special to the party, to thank his friends for their love and care, but could not think of anything. Suddenly, he heard rustling in the bushes. As he approached cautiously, he spied a group of children with two very important looking grown-ups.

He later learned that these children were Beavers and that the two Very Important People with them were Kim and Raksha, their leaders.

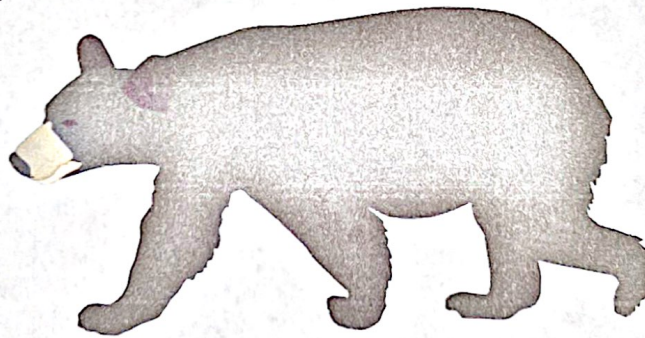


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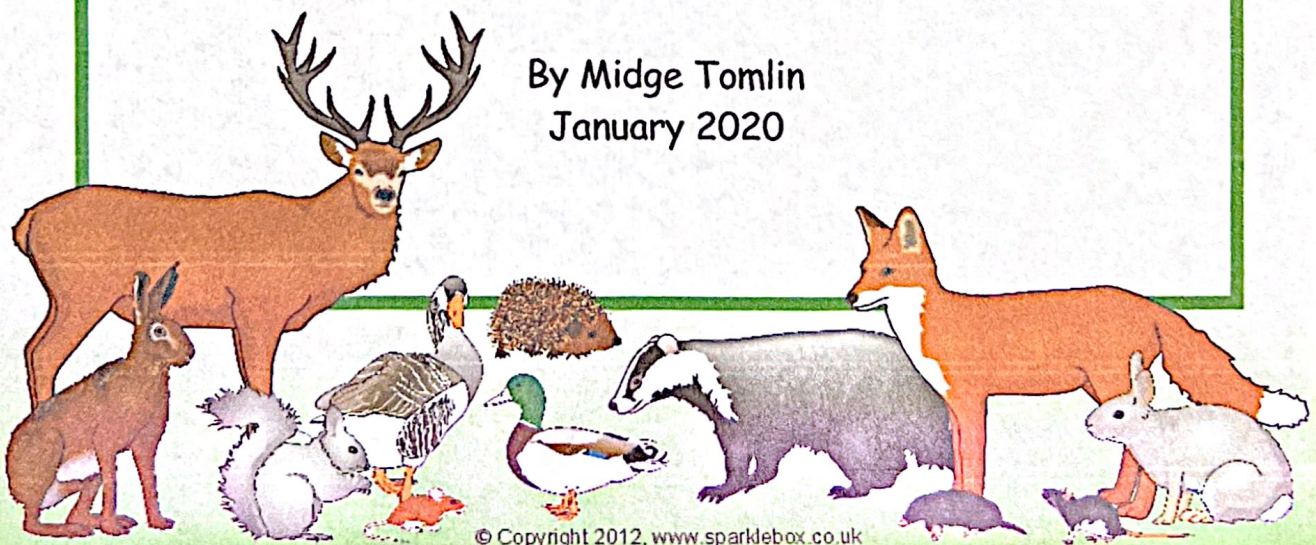


Still to this day, Black Bear cannot tell you why, but he sensed that this group of humans were fine people and trustworthy. Before he knew it, he could hear himself inviting them all to the party! He had no qualms that the other animals of the woods would feel the same as he - completely at ease with them all.

Indeed, this was so. The entire mix of animals and humans worked wonderfully. They all shared a common ground and the same values for friendship and respectfulness; recognising the importance of allowing people to be themselves, thus enabling them to develop and grow at their own speed. The midsummer party was a great success and many lifelong friendships were made!



By Midge Tomlin
January 2020



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