saying..

Pleased to meet you."

working very well yet."

The egret looked down in surprise and bent his

"Are you lost, little egret? We don't normally see

Rosa, by the way. I am a rare pink grasshopper.

"Yes, I suppose I am a bit lost, little friend," said

the egret. "I'm not sure what to do or where to

go, so I thought I might wander to the top of this

landed this morning by the sea. My wings aren't

admiration, flapping her little wing stumps. "Mine

haven't grown yet, and being a pink grasshopper,

it's hard to stay camouflaged in the marram grass

clever and secretive. Ohhh, I can't wait until I can

like the green grasshoppers. I have to be very

"Well, you are very brave to come out all by

from home, as I don't recognise anywhere."

yourself and say hello. My name is Huck, I'm a

little egret and I think I must be a very long way

"Well, Huck, welcome

to St Annes, I'm Rosa!

"At least you have wings!" said Rosa with

lovely sand dune and have a look around. I crash

wading birds on the sand dunes. My name is

long, slender legs so he could hear what she was

These are the 'swirling sand dunes' and over

'magnificent mudflats'! Just look at your long

legs and beak; surely you must be a wading

Rosa hopped onto Huck's head tuft and rubbed

cheery tune. "Come with me," she said. "I will

there are the 'secretive saltmarshes' and

bird. You were born to fish, I would say."

her long hind legs together, chirping out a

Rosa and Huck marched to the top of the

'blowout' along with the trail of tiny creatures,

from the top was amazing. The sand dunes

coloured plants that grew miraculously out

of the sand. Insects of all shapes and sizes

"This is my home," said Rosa proudly. "I was

born on these dunes and I LOVE them. Look

at this beautiful blue plant - it's called sea holly.

Careful, it's very prickly! And look at these little

hairy buds with yellow flowers popping through

- it's called 'Isle of Man cabbage'. Most of my

grass but I love the sea mayweed; if you rub

the flowers together they smell of chamomile!

My friend the burnet moth loves the bird's-foot

trefoil plant, her caterpillars adore the yellow

vipers bugloss... Oh, I love my home."

flowers. Take a look around you, Huck... those

beautiful, deep purple flowers on the grass are

Huck looked out across the dunes. Gatekeeper

butterflies danced in the spring air and lizards

yellow fellow suddenly landed on Huck's beak

"That's Vern," chuckled Rosa. "He's a mining

bee and lives in little tunnels that he digs in the

sand dunes. They are 80cm deep sometimes!

Don't worry, by the way, vernal mining bees

rarely sting. Anyway, didn't you two meet earlier?

"Buzz!" replied Vern and flew off to collect nectar.

warmed themselves in the sunshine. A fluffy,

insect friends live in the marram and lyme

who were all feeling a bit braver now. The view

rolled off into the distance, dotted with amazing

show you around."

buzzed about happily.

so well camouflaged. They make little trapdoors in the sand and leap out to catch their prey and they are amazing hunters. They carry their spiderlings on their back and use the moon and sunlight to help them find their burrow."

"WOW! That's amazing," said Huck. "The dunes and slacks are amazing too but I don't think I

"Don't worry," said Rosa. "You will be OK."

The dune slacks buzzed with life. Caterpillars and bees fed on the yellow rattle flowers and the birds sang happily in the trees. "It might not be your home here, Huck, but look how important the dune slacks are for so many other creatures. That beautiful bird is called a common whitethroat. THEY FLY from Africa every year around April time. The males arrive first to pick a patch and start building a nest home to impress the females! We call them beardies... can you see why?"

Then a beautiful bird with a bright red face, brown back and yellow wing patches rested on a thistle. "Look, Huck, there's a goldfinch. Those goldies love eating seeds. They get together in groups called charms. Aren't they lovely?" As the pair wandered through the dune slack a black arrow-shaped bird zoomed past catching flies, and flew over the ponds drinking on the wing. "Fantastic, it's the first swallow of the year!" screeched Rosa. "They fly all the way from Spain and Africa to come here, Huck. It's good luck to see the first swallow, so maybe we

The sun was setting now and the air began to forest' over here, Huck. We will be safe and cosy there.'

"Oh, that's just Doogie. He's a Natterjack toad. He lives here with the pond skaters," said Rosa. Doogie turned his warty bottom towards Huck and plodded back into the mud with a squelch. It was so warm and sheltered in the dune slacks that Huck began to feel a bit sleepy. He sat down next to some pretty blue cranesbill flowers under the shade of an apple tree. He had a little nap but was suddenly woken by a little squeaking sound nearby. "Look!" said Rosa. "There's a little mouse nibbling on the dewberries! The plants in the dune slacks are great hiding places for little rodents like shrews and voles too."

The noon sun was high in the sky and Huck

was beginning to feel peckish. He spotted a

pond below surrounded by rushes and reeds

All at once the rodent orchestra squeaked a special song just for Huck.

'We all love the slacks, They're full of tasty snacks. Berries, seeds and treats Are stacked beneath your feet. But egrets need salty fishes, So listen out for salty swishes!'

Rosa gave the mice a little wink and smiled at Huck, who was tapping his feet to the tune.

"Are there any buzzing creatures here in the dune slacks? I am wondering who might land on my beak this time?" asked Huck.

Rosa chuckled. "Well, there are some other amazing insects in the dune slacks like small heath butterflies and wolf spiders!"

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"Come and see this, Rosa," said Huck, who used his long legs to wade through the secretive creeks. Rosa peered over Huck's head and below them a tiny flat fish rested in the sandy mud. "I think that's a young flounder fish," said Rosa. "The adults at sea mainly hunt at night and are really good ambush predators. Watch out, little shrimp!" The young flounder stayed motionless,. It was so well camouflaged. "The adults can change colour to blend in, how clever is that? I wish I could change colour," said Rosa, looking at her

bright pink legs.

To see a little egret is great luck! Fifty years ago they were very rare in England but now you can often spot them fishing in the saltmarsh at St Annes. In many cultures they are symbols of strength, purity and patience, and if you are lucky enough to spot one, your life will be long!

"You are lovely just the way you are, Rosa," said Huck and she gave him a lovely little chirp to say thank you.

It was evening time now and the setting sun reflected in the saltmarsh pools, turning them a beautiful pink colour. "Look, Rosa, you are camouflaged now!" chuckled Huck as Rosa sat next to one of the pools.

"Wolf spiders are really hard to spot as they are and used his long legs to ski down the sand dune towards it. "Wait for me!" called Rosa. Huck stood quietly and patiently again next to the water's edge making croaking and bubbling sounds (egret chatter is great to listen to). A warty head peeped out of the water and croaked back, and Huck jumped up in surprise!

will find where you belong soon," said Rosa.

feel cool. "Let's sleep the night in the 'minibeast

"Maybe I could stay here with you then?"

asked Rosa, looking up at her feathered

friend. Huck looked out across the mudflats

and knew that this was his home. "I belong

the tiny pink creature at his feet.

here, Rosa," he said and smiled gratefully at

The little egret of St Annes

Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way

Easy to follow Map & Story

By Anja Phoenix

Malks

YIOIS

St Annes and surrounding coast

The Little Egret

Explorer Treats and How to Get There

By public transport: Catch the number 17 bus (Blackpool Town Centre - Saltcotes Road) to King Edward VII School.

Walk along Clifton Drive North towards Myra Road, then

turn right onto Myra Road and you will see Fairhaven Road

Carpark. The walk begins on the Beach behind here, which

can be accessed via the slipway to the left hand side of the

Beach Café Fylde is a great place to stop before you begin/

and cold meals and snacks and an ice cream parlour. Free

parking is available in the red bays closest to Beach Café

Fylde for customers whilst they are using the café. Please

This adventure takes you along St Annes Beach and up

through the Sand Dunes. The saltmarsh is a very delicate

and tidal landscape which is easily damaged by trampling

and can be extremely dangerous. Please only explore the

saltmarsh on a receding tide, take care not to trample salt

mud as this can be very slippery. When exploring the sand

dunes and do not enter fenced off areas. Please keep dogs

on a lead and watch wildlife from a distance – birds use lot

of extra energy flying away if disturbed. Please take away

any litter or put it in the bins provided to prevent damage to

wildlife and wild spaces. There are many nice picnic spots

along this trail, which we hope you will enjoy. Please note

that fires and barbeques are not permitted in this area due

For more information on facilities, please visit the Fylde

to the high risk of fires spreading here.

Council website: www.fylde.gov.uk

marsh plants and be careful when walking on saltmarsh

dunes, please keep to footpaths to avoid damaging the

after you finish this trail. They have a varied menu of hot

By car: park for a fee at Fairhaven Road Car Park.

Getting There

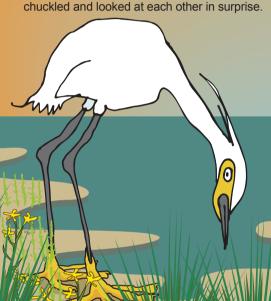
check opening times online.

A family story trail around

sennA 12 To

It was a clear and bright spring morning on the shore of St Annes and at the edge of the saltmarsh a young Little Egret was curiously peering into a shimmering pool of salty water. He had feathers as white as snow, eyes as pale as the moon and beautiful bright yellow feet that rested gently on the sandy path.

The egret stood very still for a long time, staring patiently into the pool below. Overhead, gulls soared on the sea breeze and the waves gently lapped on the mudflats nearby. Behind him on the sand dunes, tiny creatures cautiously peeped out of the marram grass, wondering what he would do next. Perhaps he was fishing? Or maybe looking at his handsome reflection? Suddenly, a small fish leapt out of the pool with a slosh but, instead of catching it in his beak (as most egrets would do), the little egret jumped into the air with shock and fell back onto the sandy path. The tiny creatures in the marram grass all



carried away by the wind). The tiny creatures secretly followed the curious bird, making sure they stayed camouflaged in

but there are some clues to help spot the

Crickets stridulate (sing) by rubbing their wings together. Grasshoppers chirp by rubbing their hind legs together.

tummies. Crickets have ears on their legs.

grasshoppers prefer grass.
5. Grasshoppers can jump about 25cm high and around 1 metre long. If humans

could jump as far as grasshoppers do,

relative to size, then we could leap the length of a football field.

6. Grasshoppers can fly and spit liquid to defend themselves.

The little egret stood back up on his long, thin

legs, shook the sand out of his feathers and

started to walk up a thin, sandy path towards

the 'blowout' (a hollow where the sand has been

1. Crickets have longer antennae.

3. Grasshoppers have ears on their

4. Crickets eat other insects but

the dewberry bushes and lyme grass. They didn't want to be spotted just in case somebody fancied them for breakfast! Halfway up the path, the egret stopped and peered down a long, narrow hole in the sand. Once again he stood patiently, just watching. Crickets chirped and goldfinches sang their happy tune from the trees nearby. Suddenly, a mining bee buzzed up out of the hole, straight towards the little egret. He jumped back in surprise and flapped his wings in shock! The tiny creatures all chuckled ... clearly this curious little white bird was a bit confused.

All at once, a delicate pink grasshopper hopped out of the marram grass and landed gently between two of his long, yellow toes. She bravely looked up at the egret's long, pointy beak and called to him, hoping he would hear ...

elloooooooo!" she chirped. "I'm down here"!

and seemed to go on for miles. There were beautiful shells of all shapes and sizes, some jewellery boxes with little hinges. Some of the shells even had patterns on them. He used where the treasures lay and Rosa hopped around spotting strange items that looked like they came from another world.

A 'sea mouse' is actually a scaly worm which normally lives buried under the

reflection... THE MUD FELT GOOD!

and found himself surrounded by spiky rushes and spartina grass swaying in the sea breeze... HE LOVED IT!

In the little pools he could see shore crabs and shrimp fanning around... HE FELT HUNGRY!

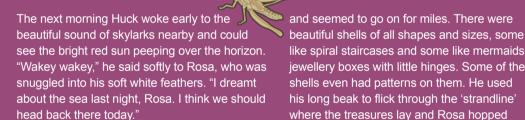
agworms are like huge underwater nillipedes. They live in burrows in the muddy seabed. They cast a sticky nucus net by the entrance to their ourrow and catch plankton and other small particles that pass by. Sometimes they leave their burrow and dance along to search for more food. Curlew and godwits love to gobble them up; they make quite a good meal at 10cm

He had made his way right out past the saltmarshes now and onto the mud flats when he suddenly realised someone was missing! "Rosa!" he called out across the bay. He waited and looked around frantically. "Rosa, where are you?" In a flash Huck opened his magnificent white wings and soared up into the sky! He was flying! He knew he must find her quickly. As he reached the edge of the saltmarsh a speckled bird with amazing red legs flew right towards him, and perched on the end of his wing was a tiny pink grasshopper! Rosa hopped with all her might through the sky and landed on Huck's head tuft. "Thanks, Mr Redshank!" she shouted, "wahoooooo!" Rosa and Huck dived back down to the saltmarsh and landed this time without a crash. "Didn't think you could get away from me that easily, did you?" Rosa asked with a smile. Huck gave her a wink with his bright moon-like eyes. "Not a chance,

sparkling pools. Samphire plants stuck out of the mud like bright-green trees and ragworms danced around in the shallow creeks.

The friends rested a while in the rushes listening to the reed buntings singing and watched the wading godwits fishing in the

Rosa," he said softly.



'Good idea, Huck," said Rosa sleepily. "Let's go and see what the tides have left for us today."

Rosa sprung out of the forest and headed through the spiky marram grass towards the beach. "TREASURE!" she shouted excitedly and jumped towards the 'strandline' with her antennae in the air.

The 'strandline' is a long line of debris deep ocean. It's a great place to look for sea treasures!

The adventurous twosome were the first creatures on the beach and ahead of them lay treasures and secrets from the depths of the sea, left there by the early morning tide.

"Just look at these, Huck, they're called 'mermaid's purses'. They are actually egg cases from skates, rays and sharks! And these funny little furry balls are the empty shells of sea potatoes... Oh and look here, Huck, these are masked crab and shore crab cases that moult off when they grow a new suit of armour! I LOVE beach-combing."

"This is AMAZING!" said Huck as he looked around in astonishment. "I feel like a birdy

The sandy beach swept away towards the sea

"Wow, look at these Huck, they've come up from the deep ocean. I think this one is a 'sea mouse' and these are 'dead man's fingers'...

sandy seabed. It's about as big as a mouse, and covered in hairy bristles.

Huck ran over to Rosa. He had something have found some whelk egg cases, Huck. Some people call them seawash balls because in the olden days they were used as sponges. Whelks are pretty gruesome.

'Dead man's fingers' are a type of coral that grows into a fleshy blob. They attach themselves to rocks but can get knocked off during a storm and washed up on the beach.

The first to hatch eat their unborn brothers and sisters! They have a razor-like tongue that drills into its prey and sucks out the flesh, yuk!" Huck looked a bit frightened and flicked the egg cases back onto the beach.

"It's OK, Huck, nothing lives in them now," said Rosa.



Huck looked down and noticed that he was standing on hundreds of squishy little tubes. "What are these, Rosa?" he asked curiously.

"I think they're sand mason worm casts. The worms use grains of sand and fragments of shell to build a little tube to live in. They are usually buried in the sand with just their crown of tentacles sticking out so they can catch food in the sea. They look a bit like a mini sand tree. Look, there are hundreds of them!"

Rosa and Huck beach-combed for hours on the golden sands listening to curlew calls and seabird sounds. Huck was getting used to the feel of the sand and shells under his feet until he stepped forward and suddenly felt like he was in another world. The sand had become more like glistening mud and all around him were little creeks and pools full of sparkling sea

Huck placed his long yellow feet into one of the pools and looked down thoughtfully at his

He ventured along one of the secretive creeks

The secretive saltmarsh was awesome and Huck suddenly felt right at home. He used his dark beak to jab like lightning into the pools, catching little fish and gobbling up molluscs. HUCK LOVED MUD DIPPING!

"And I belong in my dunes," she said, smiling back towards the shore. Rosa hopped onto Huck's back and the little

egret leaped magnificently into the sky. He was the most magical bird she had ever seen. "I can fly!" shouted Rosa. Together they flew over the saltmarshes and mudflats and looked around at the magnificent place they both called home. Huck landed gently at the edge of the sand dunes and Rosa hopped off into the marram grass. "You are the kindest and bravest little creature I have ever met," said

The tiny pink grasshopper looked up at the white egret and waved her little antennae. Huck turned to watch the sun dip below the horizon, but when he looked back she was gone. "What a very clever little insect," he thought to himself as he looked out over the shimmering saltmarshes. And as he stood on the beach watching the spectacular St Annes sunset he knew that this was the place where he belonged... what a very special place it is.

Find out more at:

www.lancswt.org.uk

/ Merseyside

Manchester &

Lancashire,

The Fylde Coast

The bit for grown ups....

This interactive Tale Trail explores the wonderful wildlife and

coastal landscape of Lytham St Annes. You can follow the trail

Estuaries are where the freshwater of the river meets the salty

animals, from vast flocks of wading birds to salt-loving plants,

The Ribble Estuary is so important for wildlife that it has been

designated as a Marine Conservation Zone. A Marine Conser-

vation Zone (MCZ) is a type of protected area at sea designed

to safeguard nationally important, rare or threatened habitats

and species. The Ribble Estuary supports a wealth of wildlife

smelt (the cucumber fish) in England. The Ribble Estuary and

Fylde Sand Dunes are also nationally recognised and desig-

The Fylde Sand Dunes provide an important habitat for many

rare species of bird, insects and plants, as well as providing an

effective natural flood defence for the town of Lytham and St

Annes. Unfortunately more than 80% of our sand dunes have

been lost over the past 150 years but the remaining dunes in

and still form the most significant part of the Borough's coastal

defence. With funding from the Environment Agency (and the

help of volunteers and the local community), Fylde Council,

make the dunes a better place for wildlife and people.

Blackpool Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust work hard to

Around half the UK's wildlife lives in the sea; from microscopic

plankton to mighty whales. But our seas are under pressure

from all sides. Lancashire Wildlife Trust aims to inspire people

events and immersive activities, we help people discover their

local wildlife and inspire future generations to protect our seas.

to value and care for our precious seas. Through exciting

Fylde make up more than 90% of Lancashire's sand dunes,

nated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

including some of the last surviving populations European

sea. They are home to special communities of plants and

and explore the areas that Huck and Rosa visit in the story.

The trail will take around 45 minutes to complete

Estuaries, Dunes & Wildlife

shoals of fish and hidden worms in the mud.

Places to visit around

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www.livingseasnw.co.uk

Get involved

pread the word about the amazing wildlife in the habitats of the Ribble Estuary and Evide Sand Dunes! We would love to hear from you! Share pictures of your coastal adventures on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and tag us @LivingSeasNW and @FyldeSandDunes