

The Raven of Eycott Hill

Once upon a blue moon a raven was born at the very top of an ancient ash tree, on the windy slopes of Eycott Hill.

Her sleek feathers were as dark as the midnight sky and her eyes as green as emeralds. She was named 'Twilight' because of the indigo blue feather under her left wing. She was a beautiful, perfect raven in every way, except one... Twilight could not fly.

Every day, Twilight would watch the other birds soaring magnificently in the sky. Buzzards gliding, curlews diving, owls swooping... but all Twilight could do was watch.

"I would give anything to fly," She shouted out to the sky.

"To feel the wind in my wings, I would give anything!"

As if by magic a beautiful short-eared owl with bright orange eyes landed next to her and whispered into her ear...

"Find Mungo the toad and soon you'll know, What to do and where to go."

Search by the marshes for green warty folk, Whisper your wish and wait for a croak"

The beautiful owl raised her wing and pointed towards the distant volcano that was spluttering out fiery lava. Twilight knew now that her quest lay within the jagged rocks and marvellous, mysterious marshes of Eycott Hill.

Twilight carefully climbed down from the safety of her ancient ash tree and looked back up at her warm, cosy nest. She had never ventured more than a few metres from her tree before and felt nervous and excited all at the same time.

Twilight thought about the words the short-eared owl had whispered into her ear and started to walk towards the misty marshes beneath the ash tree. As she got closer she noticed little creatures moving amongst the mossy carpets... and some of them were warty! All she needed to do now was make her wish and wait for a croak. Twilight looked out across the marsh and said her wish out loud...

"I wish for the gift of feathery flight, Show yourself please in this pale moonlight."

Soon bubbles started to appear in the murky waters and a large toad with green and yellow stripes appeared near her...

"My name is Mungo the marshy toad king. I hear your wish but I want your bling."

The gift of flight I will bestow, But in exchange I want your indigo".

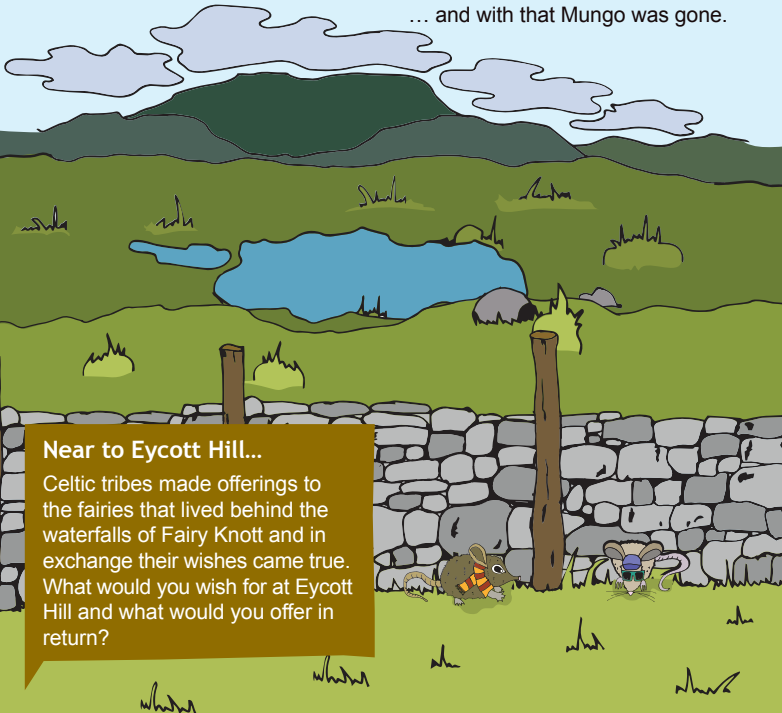
Twilight looked at the gleaming indigo feather under her wing and thought about the ancient Celtic tribes that had once lived around Eycott Hill. Her mother had always told her that if you wanted something, you had to give something else in return... an offering! Twilight loved her indigo feather but loved the thought of flying even more, so she plucked the feather out and handed it to Mungo.

Mungo's green and yellow warty skin, turned a beautiful indigo colour and shiny blue sapphires appeared on his crown... but still Twilight could not fly. Mungo turned towards her...

"A walk on the 'Wildside' you now must make, Over the wall and down to a lake."

Jenny Greenteeth awaits, so do take care, Avoid her talons and evil stare."

... and with that Mungo was gone.

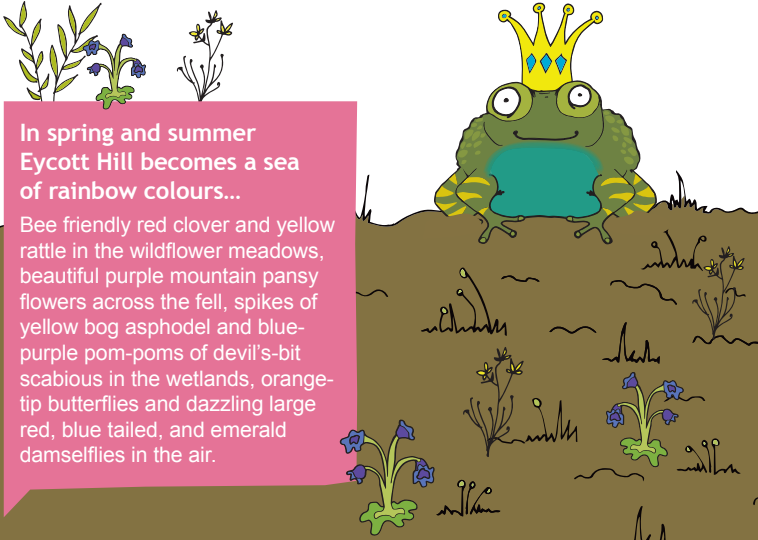


Near to Eycott Hill...

Celtic tribes made offerings to the fairies that lived behind the waterfalls of Fairy Knott and in exchange their wishes came true. What would you wish for at Eycott Hill and what would you offer in return?

In spring and summer Eycott Hill becomes a sea of rainbow colours...

Bee friendly red clover and yellow rattle in the wildflower meadows, beautiful purple mountain pansy flowers across the fell, spikes of yellow bog asphodel and blue-purple pom-poms of devil's-bit scabious in the wetlands, orange-tip butterflies and dazzling large red, blue tailed, and emerald damselflies in the air.



Twilight walked cautiously, remembering tales of Jenny Greenteeth; the marsh witch who pulled young prey into the marshes and gobbled them up with her sharp teeth. She looked out towards the 'Wildside'...

"A beautiful, vast and mysterious land, Ancient volcanoes and rock statues grand."

Magnificent marshes, dragonfly humming, Peewit calls and snipe a' drumming.

Flowering fields and meadow grass waves, Delicate butterflies, ravens brave.

Eycott's Wildside, a sight to behold, A place whose story has never been told."

All seemed still, so Twilight started to hop across the marshy lake where Jenny Greenteeth lurked; using islands of boggy grass and tufts of reeds...

Suddenly the waters started to swirl and a monstrous creature emerged...

hair like wet, slimy seaweed, scaly skin dripping with green goo...

she licked her sharp green teeth and moved towards Twilight...



There really are some...

amazing carnivorous marsh plants here. Sundew and butterwort catch flies and gobble them up!

the little raven froze with fear and dared not look into her eyes...

"A little bird so tender and new, A perfect snack for me to chew."

You wish to fly and cross my lake, But in exchange what can I take?

Perhaps your eyes, so emerald green, You'll give to Jenny the marshy queen.

I'll only take the colour you see, Then in exchange... I'll set you free."

Twilight noticed the boggy waters moving and little plants coming alive all around her, snapping at her tail feathers....



Are you brave enough...

to shout out Jenny's jingle when you get to the top... "Jenny Greenteeth where are you, make a sound and we will too!"

"Take the emerald colour in my eye, But please in exchange help me to fly!"

Jenny Greenteeth swirled the waters and chanted a spell; her eyes started to turn a beautiful emerald colour and as Twilight looked at her own reflection in the lake hers turned grey. Jenny Greenteeth pulled a long, green wet plait from her hair...

"Now take this braid to the hill of fire, Whisper to the earth what you desire."

Pass the rocks of fangs and fairies, Be sure to watch for beasts and lairies.

Ringlets, orange-tips and yellow rattle. Are never far from the witches' cackle.

So look for these colours and soon you'll know, What to do and where to go."

And with that Jenny disappeared into the murky waters.

Twilight hopped across the island and then rested under the rocks of the fairy steps; she left a little piece of white rock there called quartz, which she knew fairies loved, and wished for good luck. As she walked towards the fiery volcano her imagination ran wild... jagged rocks turned into ferocious dinosaurs, lizards and snakes slithered past hurriedly and damselflies hovered around like spies.

Twilight ran up the side of the volcano, dodging the hot lava that spluttered across the sky.

As she stood on the edge of the crater she held Jenny Greenteeth's long, green plait in the air...

"Toads and witches hear me now, I hold the braid from Jenny's brow."

My indigo and emerald I gave to you, Like nymph and sprite you turned and flew.

Past marshes and goblins I journeyed far, Beautiful butterflies and pale bog star.

I have bravely walked under moonlit sky, Now grant me my wish and LET ME FLY!"



If you stand under the summit rocks...

and look back at them you might be able to see Twilight with her wings spread.

fun local story walks

for children and the young at heart

The Raven of Eycott Hill

A family story trail around Eycott Hill

By Anja Phoenix



Easy to follow Map & Story Explore, Spot things & Search for clues on the way



The bit for grown ups....

Wildlife A variety of birds including skylark, raven, snipe and curlew, butterflies, dragonflies, and lots of wild flowers.

Explorer extra Visit some other Cumbria Wildlife Trust nature reserves. Try Thacka Beck near Penrith, Wreay Woods, or Quarry Banks near Carlisle.

Directions Grid reference for the car park NY 394 301.

By car: From the M6 junction 40 follow the A66 towards Keswick. After approx. 7 miles turn right, signposted Hutton Roof (look out for the Sportsman's Inn from the A66), take the next left, and take at the Sportsman's Inn, just off the A66 near Berrier, the Mill Inn signposted Hutton Roof, Berrier and Whitbarrow. Follow this road for 1.6 miles through the hamlet of Berrier; the reserve is on the left-hand side.

By bicycle: Eycott Hill Nature Reserve Sportsman's Inn.



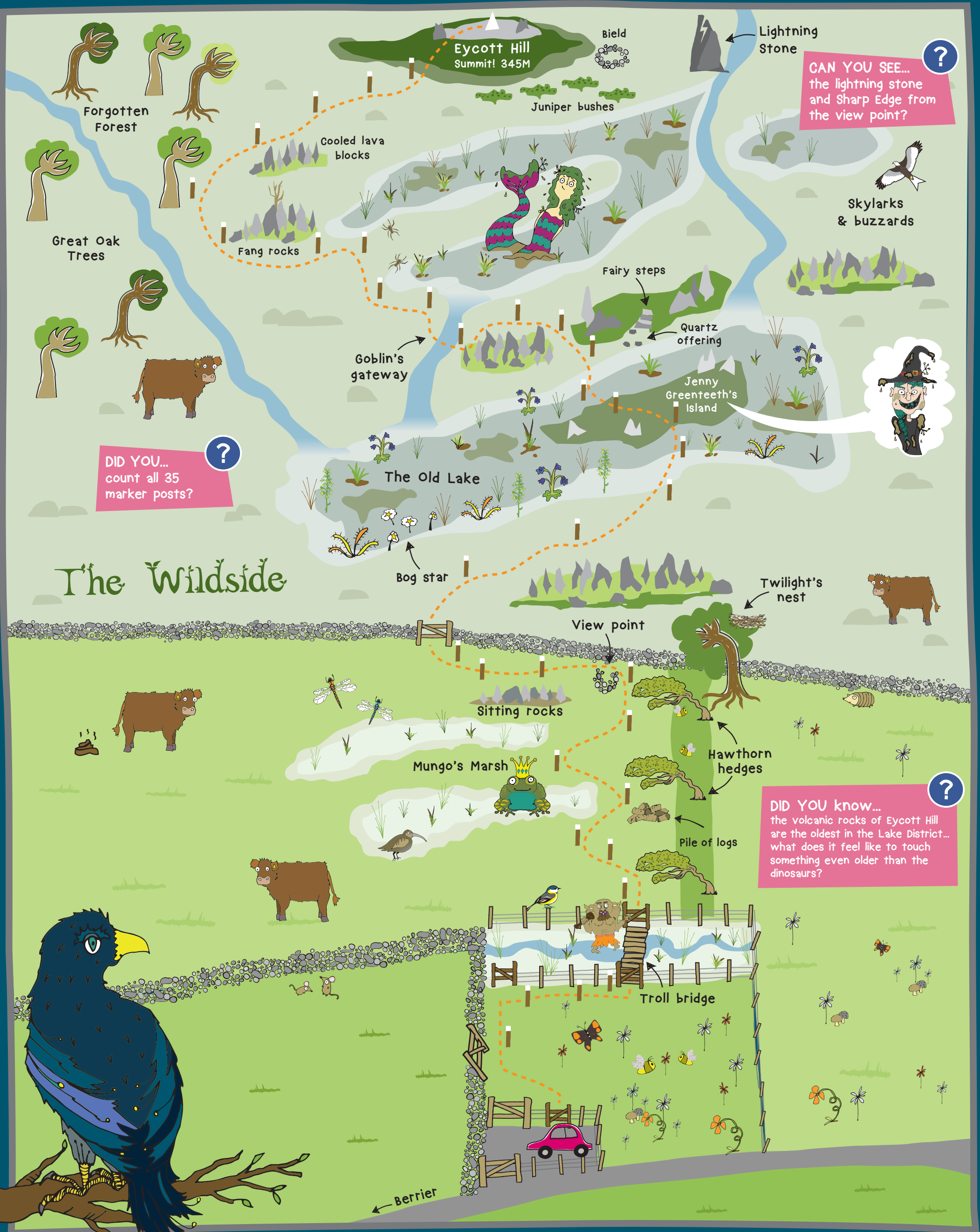
TAKE CARE Please keep dogs on a lead to avoid disturbing the wildlife and grazing animals that are on the nature reserve year round. Please be particularly vigilant around grazing cattle and consider letting your dog off the lead if you're approached by the cattle. Don't once past the cattle.

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