

Mrs. Owl's  
FOREST SCHOOL

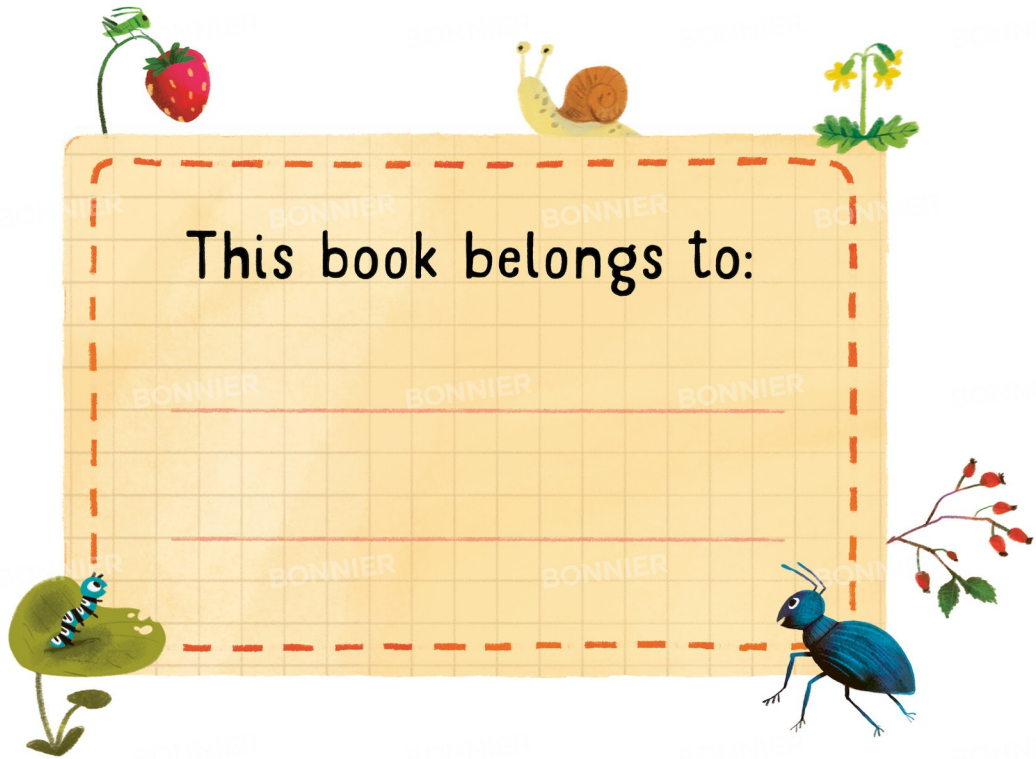
# THE VERY BIG DEN



Illustrated by **Seb Braun**

A story  
to share &  
activities  
to try!





This book belongs to:

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Dedicated to  
1st Wotton-under-Edge's  
Squirrel Scout Drey

A TEMPLAR BOOK

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**Stay safe!**

It's important to stay  
safe while you play outside.  
This symbol will warn you when  
you need to take extra care.



Forest School kit list:



Water  
bottle



Waterproofs



Sturdy  
shoes



Something  
to eat

Extras for a breezy day:



Warm jumper



Cosy socks

# Mrs Owl's FOREST SCHOOL THE VERY BIG DEN

Illustrated by Seb Braun





Deep in the woods, beneath the trees,  
the animals are gathering.  
It's time for Mrs Owl's Forest School!

Mouse, Squirrel, Fox and Rabbit sit in a circle.  
Above them, the wind rustles the trees and  
the birds are twittering.



Mouse, Squirrel, Fox and Rabbit use their  
twitchy noses, bright eyes and big ears to  
take in the sights and sounds of the forest.  
What can you see, smell and hear?

Next time you are outside, use all  
your senses, and see what you notice!



"Today, we're going to build a den!" says Mrs Owl.



"What's a den?"  
says Rabbit.



"It's a shelter, made of things we find in the forest.  
We'll need wood, leaves, grass and a coil of rope."

Mrs Owl holds up some rope.  
"That's one thing off our list,"  
she smiles. "But can you help  
me find everything else?"



The animals set off into the woods,  
looking carefully at the ground around them.



What can you see on the ground? Can you see any creepy crawlies among the branches?



First, the friends need to gather logs and branches for their den.  
There are so many different shapes and sizes!



"Your branches should be as tall as me," says Mrs Owl.  
"Try to find ones with forked ends."

"I found one!"  
Fox cries.

"This one looks like a wand!"  
giggles Rabbit.

"I'm too little," sniffs Mouse,  
but nobody hears.



Squirrel starts to  
clamber up a tree.

"Wait!" says Mrs Owl.  
"We can only use branches that have  
fallen off the trees already."

"Look carefully at the trees," says Mrs Owl.  
"Can you see how they're all different?"

## MRS OWL'S GUIDE TO TREES

Trees come in lots of different shapes.  
Here are some to look out for:



### OAK

Oak leaves have  
a distinctive  
wiggly edge.

### HORSE CHESTNUT

These leaves look  
a bit like hands  
with five fingers.



### BEECH

These are oval,  
glossy leaves with  
saw-toothed edges.



### WHITE ASH

Leaves have a tight  
pattern of veins and  
grow in groups.





Soon the animals have gathered a big pile of branches.  
"Wonderful," says Mrs Owl. "Let's get started!"



Working as a team, the friends prop two long sticks into the forked branch.  
They have made a tripod shape!

Mrs Owl loops a piece of rope around the three branches and shows  
the animals how to knot it in place.



Now the friends lean smaller sticks along two sides of the den.  
They do it again, and again . . . it's starting to look like a tunnel shape!



## MRS OWL'S GUIDE TO KNOTS

Here are a few knots you can try making. They might take a bit of practice!

### OVERHAND KNOT



1. Make a circle with the rope.

2. Push one end of the rope through the circle.

3. Pull to tighten! This is a quick easy knot to learn.

### REEF KNOT



1. Using two ropes, cross them over, left over right.

2. Cross over again, right over left.

3. Pull to tighten. This is used to tie ropes together.



"HOORAY! It's finished," says Fox.

"But I can still see the sky," says Squirrel.

"That's because it hasn't got a roof yet," says Mrs Owl.

"For that, we need lots of little twigs and leaves."

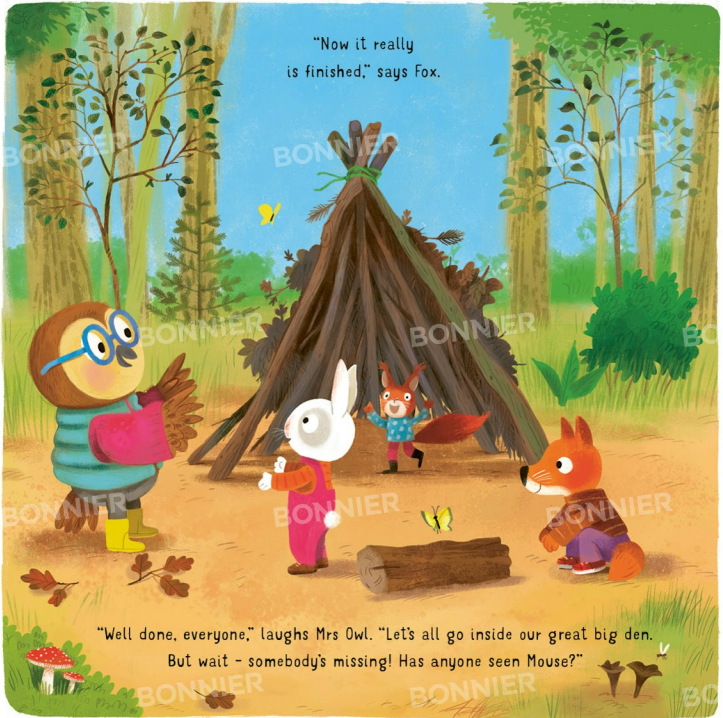
All the animals hurry to gather tiny twigs and big armfuls of scrunchy leaves.

They stuff them into every gap. The animals are working so well as a team.

All except one . . .  
Mouse feels too small to help.








"Now it really  
is finished," says Fox.

"Well done, everyone," laughs Mrs Owl. "Let's all go inside our great big den.  
But wait - somebody's missing! Has anyone seen Mouse?"



Mouse isn't anywhere to be found.  
**"Mouse? Mouse!"** they call.

Rabbit's ears twitch. She can hear a soft  
rustling sound nearby. "I think I know where  
she is," she says, and hops away.



Rabbit follows the scrunchy, crunchy sound, all the way to a little bush. She twitches her ears and creeps closer. It's Mouse. But what is she doing?

"Mouse, are you alright?" says Rabbit.



"I was too small to help make the den," says Mouse. "So I went looking for leaves. And now I'm making a nest."

"That looks so cosy," says Rabbit. "Can I help?"

Together, the friends pile the fallen leaves into a big, round nest. They line it with soft things from the forest, like moss, a feather and some grass.



Mrs Owl tells them about animals, like woodlarks, that build their nests on the ground.



"Excellent," says Mrs Owl.  
"Mouse has shown us something important.  
You can make all kinds of shelters in the forest:  
big ones and small ones.



Would you like to make a bug hotel  
for our very smallest friends?"

**"Yes please!"** the animals chorus.

Do you think you could make a bug hotel at home?

## MRS OWL'S GUIDE TO BUILDING A BUG HOTEL

You will need:



Cardboard tubes



Dried leaves



Sticks



Pinecones

1. Fill the centre of each cardboard tube with  
a mix of twigs, pinecones and dried leaves.



2. Find a shady, secluded spot  
for your bug hotel.



3. Arrange the tubes in layers. You could  
add in upturned plant pots or yogurt pots.



4. See who comes to  
live in your bug hotel!



"Please, can we go in the big den now?" says Fox. "It's SO exciting."



Everyone hurries inside. You can't see the sky any more. Side by side, the friends can feel the soft leaves and rough branches of the den ticking their backs.

But outside, the sun is still shining, and a butterfly flutters past.



"Can we sleep inside it?" asks Squirrel, stifling a yawn.  
"Maybe not tonight," says Mrs Owl. "But do you know what dens are best for?"



“For telling stories . . .”

Can you make up a story about a mouse,  
a rabbit, a squirrel and a fox?

Does it feel different if you listen  
to a story somewhere cosy like  
inside a den or a tent?



Everyone snuggles down to listen to Mrs Owl's tale. And would you believe it, it's a story about a mouse, a rabbit, a squirrel and a fox.

“Well done, everyone,” says Mrs Owl. “You all worked together to build a very big den – and some brilliant little dens, too. But I think there's still time for one last thing . . .”



It's hot chocolate round the fire!

Every day at Mrs Owl's Forest School ends the same way.  
The animals sit around the campfire, sipping their toasty hot drinks.



They all know to be very careful near  
the fire. And they love to see its  
orange flames crackling.

Fires can be dangerous!  
Only light a fire with  
a supervising adult.  
Never leave it unattended,  
and don't get too close.



The sun is starting to sink, the birds are singing their evening  
song, and everyone is feeling just a little bit tired.



"It's home time now," says Mrs Owl.  
"See you next time you come to Forest School."



Everyone can enjoy what Forest School has to offer. It doesn't matter if you go to Forest School or if you've never heard of it! Whether you live in the countryside or the city, you can try some of these activities . . .

## AN ANYWHERE DEN

Using everyday objects, see if you can:

- Build a den in the park
- Build a den in your sitting room
- Build a miniature den for a toy



1. Try making an arrowhead shelter indoors using a sheet or blanket, tied to the legs of a table!



3. Tie the string to one table leg.



2. Fold the sheet in half and place a pair of socks in the middle fold. Tie some string around the socks.



4. Pull out the edges of the blanket, and weigh down the inside of the blanket with tins or books.



## TREE DETECTIVE

Have you ever looked closely at the nearest tree in your garden or street? What sort of tree is it? Do any animals live there?

- Draw a picture of your tree
- Use a book or the internet to find what type of tree it is
- Stick a leaf from your tree next to your drawing
- Write down what creatures live in it
- Measure its trunk with a tape measure



Remember you don't need to go very far to see nature. See what wildlife you can spot in your garden, at your local park or even just from your doorstep. Can you see any insects if you sit on your doorstep for 15 minutes? Or hear any birds?



Never go anywhere without a responsible adult. If you go into the woods, make sure an adult has a fully charged phone with them in case of emergency.







See you next time you come to

# Mrs Owl's FOREST SCHOOL

