



RATTY'S BIG ADVENTURE

LARA HAWTHORNE

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For Jack

With special thanks to my mum Sonja Porle for listening and helping,
to my dad, William Hawthorne, for botanical advice,
George McGavin for insights on the expedition and wildlife
and Matthew Jebb for Papua New Guinea tree references



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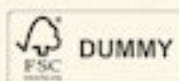
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RATTY'S BIG ADVENTURE

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This is the tale of a giant vegetarian rodent called Ratty.
He lives deep inside an extinct volcano called Mount Bosavi,
which is hidden in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea.
Ratty's home is almost impossible to get into, and just
as difficult to climb out of . . .

Deep in the rainforest, there stands a majestic volcano. It soars high above the treetops.

Undisturbed for thousands of years, its deep crater is home to many curious creatures . . .



...including Ratty.



Ratty was one of the largest animals in the volcano, and life was good. All his friends lived nearby and there was plenty of time to do his favourite things like taking long naps and nibbling forest fruits.



One lazy morning, Ratty was staring up at the sky, when he spotted the most delicious, brightest, juiciest fruit he had ever seen.



He **HAD** to have it, and so Ratty started to climb.



Huffing and puffing, he *almost* gave up ...



... but finally, he reached the treetop and grabbed the fruit in both of his greedy paws.



And then he froze.

All around him was the most amazing view he'd ever seen.

"So this is the outside!" Ratty gasped. "There must be **BIGGER, BETTER, FRUITIER** things out there!"

And with that, he dropped the yellow fruit to the ground and decided to get out of the volcano to explore.





As Ratty climbed down through the trees, the rainforest choir began singing. Miniature parrots sang intricate tunes and tropical birds flashed their vibrant feathers.

Usually Ratty joined in, but today his mind was elsewhere. "Shhh! You're distracting me with your racket. Outside I will find a bigger, better choir to join!"



A flurry of butterflies danced for Ratty and the beetles twinkled like jewels. "You're blocking my view. Make way! I'm off to find bigger, better dancing insects, with brighter colours!" he called as he passed.

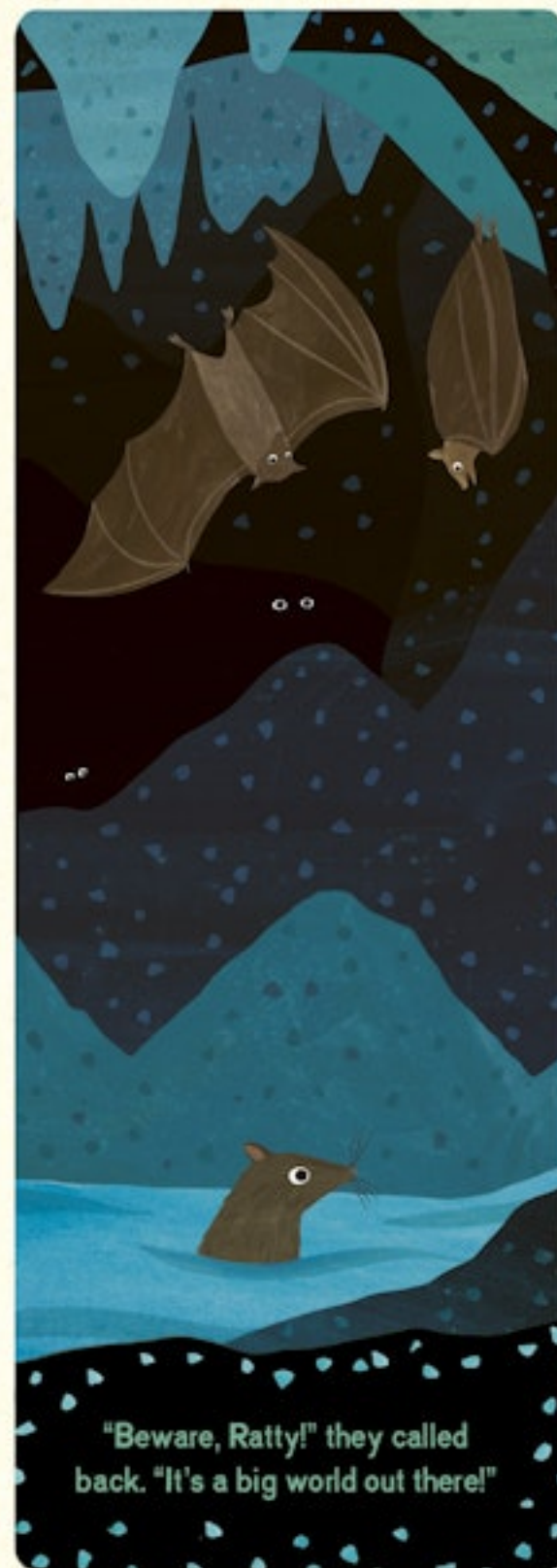
On the crater floor, Ratty found his friends playing.
"Come join us, Ratty!" called the frog.


Ratty shook his head. "I have no time today!
I'm off to find a bigger, better place to play!" said Ratty.

"Be careful! It's not all fun and games out there!"
replied the cuscus.

"I'm a giant rat! What is there to be scared of?"
Ratty retorted. And with that he hurried downstream.







With a whoosh, Ratty popped out of the crater and plopped into a big, strong river.

In a panic, he clung onto a floating piece of bark. "Phew!" said Ratty, looking around. The outside world wasn't as different as he had imagined, but perhaps bigger, better things were just around the corner.

As Ratty floated along, he reached out to grab a tasty looking fruit, but a furry creature snatched it away. "Paws off!" grumbled the tree kangaroo.



He waved at some dancing insects, hoping to see them flutter and twinkle, but they did not know him so they hid.




Ratty saw a choir of birds and tried to join in, but they were alarmed by his squeaky voice and flew away.



There was also a place that had no fruits, choirs or insects. Ratty shuddered. He certainly didn't want to end up in this place.




The illustration depicts a scene in a lush jungle at night. A brown mouse with a long, segmented red tail is perched on the bridge of a large green crocodile's nose. The crocodile is partially submerged in a blue river, with its head and front legs visible. The mouse is looking down at the crocodile's mouth, which is slightly open, revealing sharp white teeth. The background is filled with various tropical plants, including palm trees and broad-leafed shrubs, some of which are illuminated by small, glowing orange and pink lights. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and adventurous.

The river carried him along until ... WHACK!
Ratty bumped into the largest animal he had ever seen.
"Wow! You're almost as big as I am!
What wonderful sharp teeth you have!"

"Why yes, I am famous for my teeth in fact," smiled the crocodile.
"I was just going for dinner. Would you like to join me?"


Ratty was flattered. A new friend at last. "Certainly!" he replied.

"Jump inside. I'll take you there." The crocodile opened her
jaws up wide, and Ratty peered inside ...

A crocodile with its mouth open, showing sharp teeth, in a dark cave with bats and a snake.


But just as he felt those sharp, shiny teeth along his back ...

... the cave bats swooped down and snatched him away! The crocodile's jaw snapped furiously. "My dinner!" she shouted. Only then did it dawn on Ratty what the crocodile had intended. Perhaps his friends had been right all along.



Ratty thanked the bats as he was swept away over the treetops. Scanning the landscape, he spotted a patch of forest with bright yellow fruits on top of tall trees. "Let's go there!" Ratty said to the bats.

"That's your home!" they replied.
"We thought you wanted an adventure?"
"No more adventures, please," said Ratty.
"Just take me home."



Back in the safety of his volcano, Ratty sat on the forest floor and was soon joined by all his friends. He was unusually quiet.

"Well? How was your time outside the crater?" asked the frog.
"Oh, it was marvellous. Totally unforgettable. I made a friend actually. I was even invited for dinner." Ratty lied.

"So will you go back tomorrow?" asked the beetle.

"No," said Ratty.

"Another day?" asked the cuscus.

"No. I don't think so," said Ratty. "As much as it was *great*, I've realised something very important. It turns out that everything I want is right here inside this old crater."

And with that, Ratty hugged a yellow fruit close to his chest and drifted off to sleep, surrounded by twittering tropical birds and beetles as bright as jewels.

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Journey to Mount Bosavi

Nestled in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea is the collapsed cone of a volcano that last erupted over 200,000 years ago. It is called **Mount Bosavi**. Because it is very difficult to get to, the crater is the perfect place for wildlife to develop undisturbed. In 2009, a team of researchers set foot inside as part of an expedition. Here are some facts from their journey ...



The team found a special type of bracket fungus. When it discharges its spores, it looks as though it is steaming!



Mount Bosavi is so large it generates its own weather system! It is often wet and humid.



Hegigio river

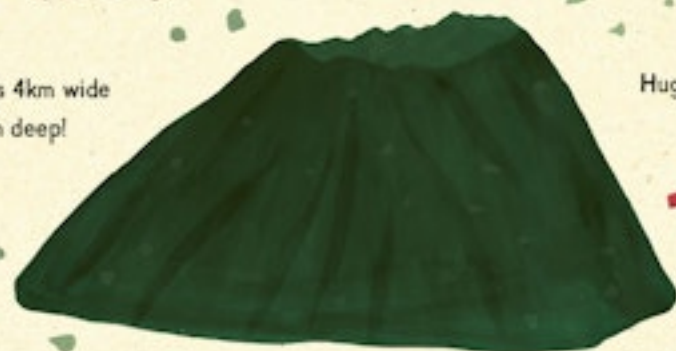
A crocodile's nest was found outside the crater.



Huge, powerful waterfalls stream down from the mount.



The crater is 4km wide and 1km deep!



Much of the forest to the south of the volcano has been destroyed by loggers. One of the reasons for the expedition was to ensure the protection of the volcano.



Caves beneath the volcano provide watery underworlds for many species, some of which are new to science.



The team set up a base camp in the local villages before heading for the crater. The camp could only be accessed via a small plane.



The Bosavi Woolly Rat

Ratty is based on a real life rat that the team found inside the volcano. As the crater was completely isolated for thousands of years, the rat evolved uniquely and so there is no other species like it in the world. For now, it is known as the

Bosavi woolly rat, but it might be given a scientific name in the future.

Here's what else we know about it...

HABITAT

Scientists aren't exactly sure where the Bosavi woolly rat lives, but it probably builds a nest underground.

APPEARANCE

The Bosavi woolly rat has thick, silvery-grey fur, which gives it its name.

DIET

It has a vegetarian diet of leaves and roots.

SIZE

At over 80cm long, the Bosavi woolly rat might just be the biggest rat in the world. It's about the size of a cat!



Did You Spot . . . ?

The animals of Mount Bosavi are so unique they occur nowhere else on Earth.

Because they have no fear of humans, some people think they are also the friendliest animals on the planet! The 2009 expedition uncovered 55 new species, 16 of which were found in the crater itself. Go back through the book and see if you can spot some of Ratty's special volcano friends.



PAPUAN HORNBILL
(*Rhyticeros plicatus*)



BUFF-FACED
PYGMY PARROT
(*Micrositta pusio*)



COMMON
TUBE-NOSED BAT
(*Nyctimene albiventer*)



PURPLE SPOTTED
SWALLOWTAIL
(*Graphium weiskei*)



WESTERN
LONG-BEAKED ECHIDNA
(*Zaglossus bruijnii*)



BEETLE
(*Eupholus schoenherri*)



KING
BIRD-OF-PARADISE
(*Cicinnurus regius*)



BOSAVI
SILKY CUSCUS
(*Phalanger sericeus*)



TREE FROG
(*Litoria sauroni*)



DORIA'S
TREE-KANGAROO
(*Dendrolagus dorianus*)



Glossary

BARK

The outermost layer of trees and woody plants.

CAVE

A natural underground chamber or tunnel.

CRATER

A large bowl-shaped hole in the ground, usually caused by a meteorite impact.

CROCODILE

A large carnivorous reptile with long jaws and tail, and short legs.

CURRENT

Water moving in a definite direction.

CUSCUS

Possums that live in New Guinea and Australia.

DOWNSTREAM

The direction of water as it flows towards the mouth of the river or stream.

HABITAT

The natural home of an animal or plant.

RAINFOREST

Dense forests with high rainfall and wide biodiversity; usually found in tropical climates.

RIVER

Wide, flowing body of water.

RODENT

A group of mammals that includes rats, mice, hamsters and squirrels.

TREE KANGAROO

Marsupial herbivore adapted to living in trees.

VEGETARIAN

An animal or person that does not eat meat or fish.

VOLCANO

A mountain with an opening that lets out lava, rock fragments and gasses from beneath the Earth's crust.

