



Amazing

Friendships between Animals and Saints

Greg Kennedy SJ

Illustrations by **Kerry Lyn Wilson**



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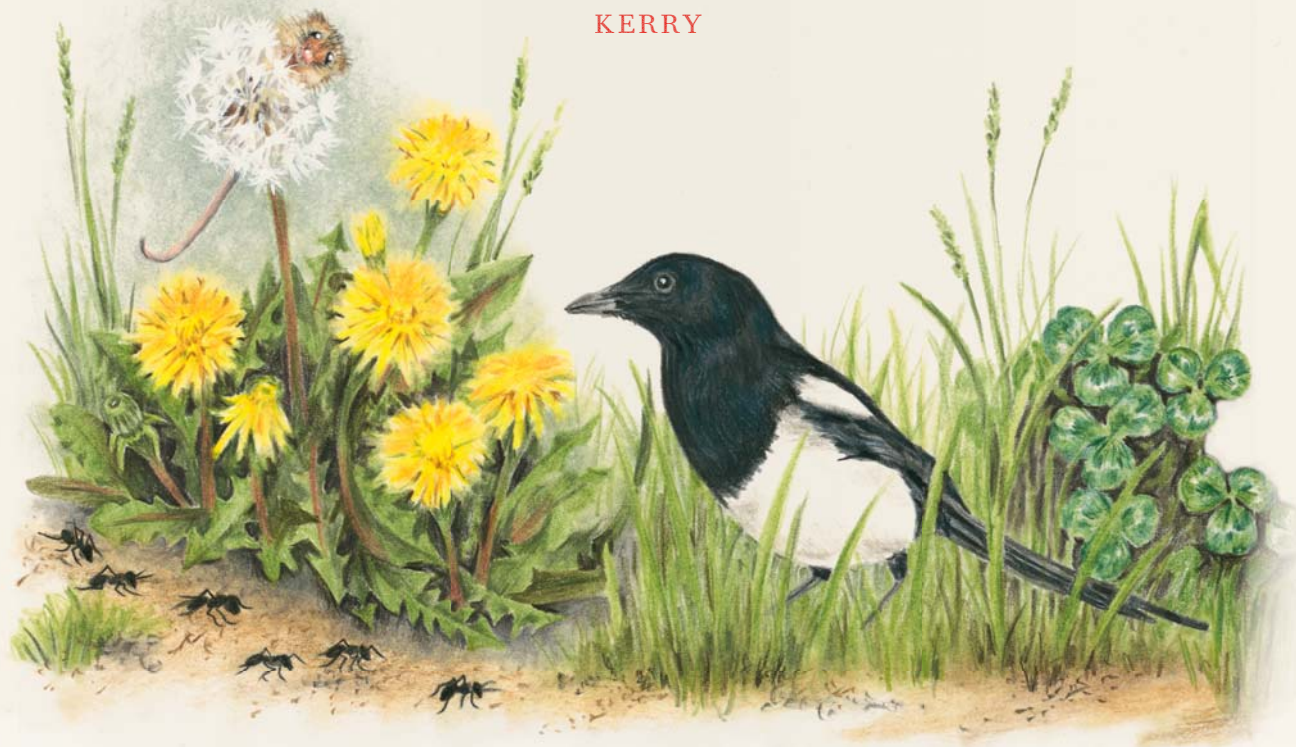
ABOUT THE ARTWORK

The artwork for this book has been prayerfully created to provide children with lots to gaze at and discover while the story is being read aloud. The elaborate borders around the stories are loosely based on illuminated medieval manuscript patterns that incorporate repeating circular motifs in their design. But the borders you will see here have been created using organic natural landscapes, each one highlighting an ecosystem from the country where one saint lived. Can you find the repeating circular patterns hidden in the borders? (Note: some scale and proportion has been adjusted to allow images to fit this rhythmic circular design.)

All the creatures in the borders come from this ecosystem. Children can try to find these creatures, as well as the Magpie that is hidden in each border. For parents and teachers/classes, additional information about the ecosystem and fun facts about the animals can be found at en.novalis.ca/Amazing-Friendships-extra-resources. This link will also provide diagrams showing the location of all the creatures in the drawings (just in case you can't find one)!

But why the Magpie? These striking black-and-white birds are found in all the countries where these saints lived. Having a very mischievous nature, they often steal things and take them back to their nests. You never know what you might find in a Magpie's nest! At the end of the book you will discover the Magpie's nest full of unusual items. Can you find which saint's page each item came from?

KERRY





INTRODUCTION

Saintly Creatures and Their Friends

“I do not call you servants any longer . . . but I have called you friends” (John 15:15). These words, spoken by Jesus to his disciples, can now be found on the lips of many everyday saints who talk to animals. Friends, not servants. While this may sound like a strange way of addressing cows, snakes and seagulls, it is not unheard of. Indigenous communities around the world have long inhabited a world of many peoples: human people, bear people, fish people, tree people, even rock people. All of them children of the Creator; all siblings in a single family; all friends.

Traditionally, we have known saints as holy, human people who help others see the face of God more clearly. As the stories in this book reveal, saintliness is also active in other creatures besides humans. Do not the otters who warm Saint Cuthbert’s frozen feet act out of the same love and compassion that moved Saint Isidore to give half his hard-earned grain to hungry pigeons? We could also call this book *Saintly Creatures and Their Friends* to remind us that every creature, human and otherwise, is called to reflect the Creator’s goodness back to the others.

This book tells the story of just a few saintly creatures in the hopes that readers will begin making new, wider friendships of their own. One joyful truth about an ever-expanding universe of friends is that it crosses fences of time. The communion of saints teaches us that we are united also with holy creatures who walked the Earth long before us. Indeed, just as there exist friendships between species, they also exist between generations. Although she built her monastery 1600 years ago, Saint Brigid still speaks to me when I enter into her story. The same holds true for all the other saintly creatures you will meet in these pages.

Could it be that, in their saintliness, they anticipated my friendship with them today? Can I start seeing myself as a friend of the many “peoples” who will walk this Earth 1600 years from now? If so, surely this would inspire me to be more careful about how I treat today the house of my future friends! This expansive

sense of time is further explored in this book through the modern “moral” of the traditional stories. From them we learn a great deal about our current ecological situation.

With each saint comes a quote from Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’*, published in 2015. This is a document of such hopeful magnitude that its reach far surpasses the Roman Catholic Church, and even all Christian churches. Like friendship itself, it is universal in scope. Its words are repeated here so as to keep them spoken, appreciated, alive and lived.

You might be wondering for whom this book was illustrated and written, since it is not pure story, not pure science, and not pure spirituality, but a mixture of all three. Simply put, this book was made for children, but children as Jesus understood the term when he declared that only children can enter the kingdom of God. The stories themselves are both timeless and ageless. They offer something for everyone, regardless of years. That said, the additional ecological material takes some growing into. This book, therefore, hopes to be a lifelong friend of children of all kinds, speaking to them in different ways at different points of their changing “childhood.” Real friends never grow stale or boring, no matter how long you’ve known them.

GREG



*First of all, we’d like to dedicate this book to Marilyn Gillespie
whose wise kindness brought Kerry and Greg together*

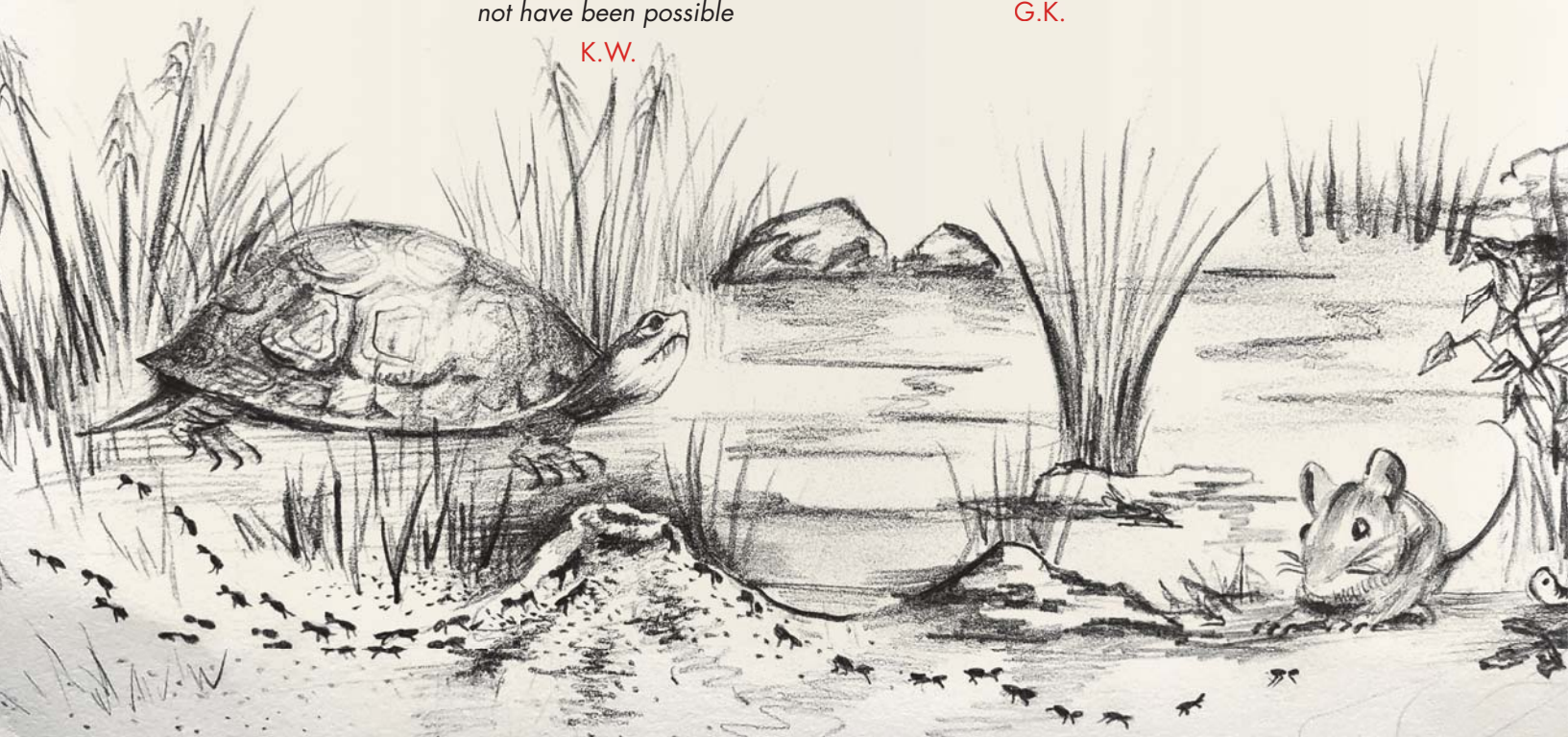
then

*To Paul, Rowena, Stephanie and Laura
without whose love and support this would
not have been possible*

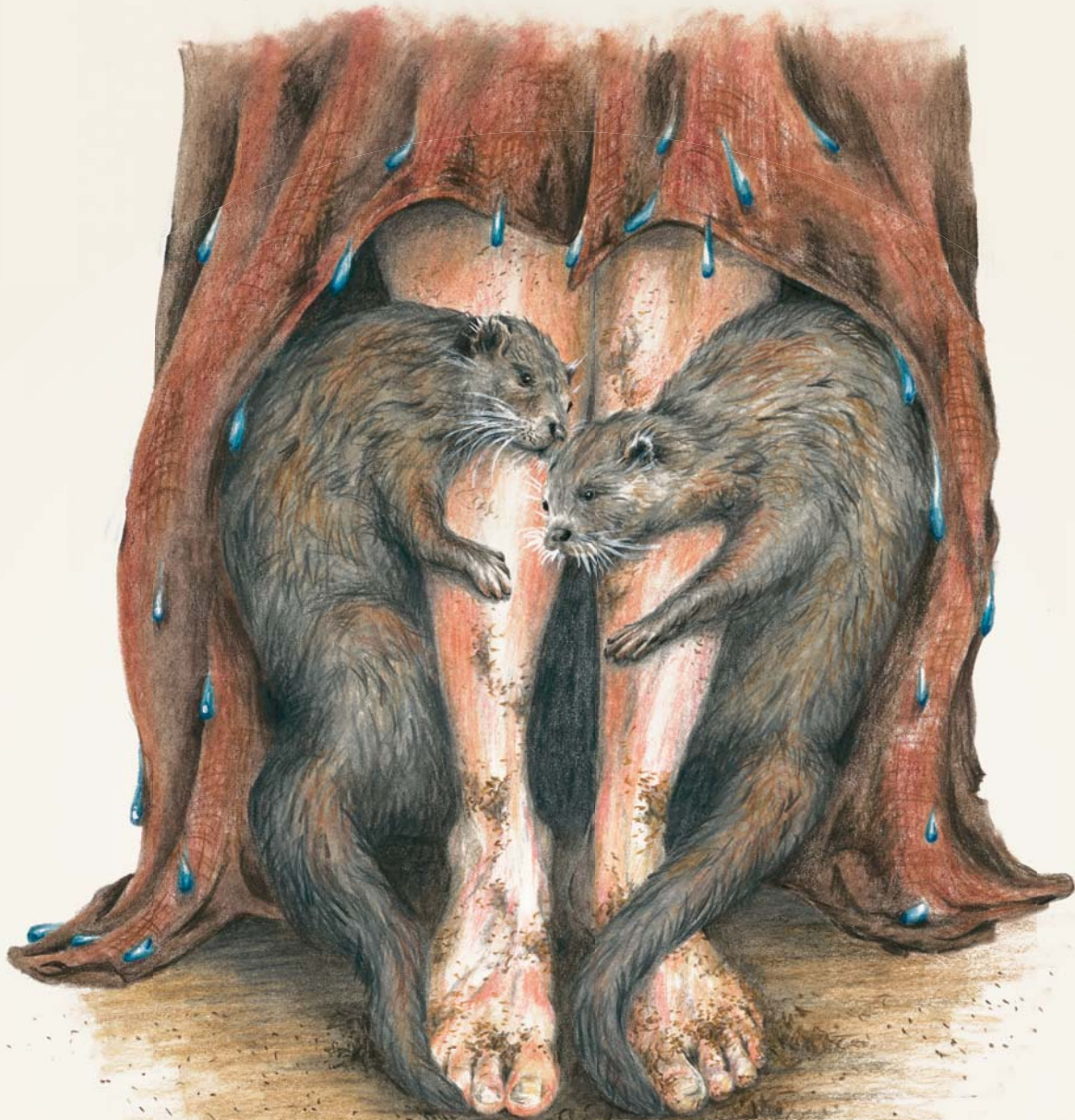
To Megan and Lauren

G.K.

K.W.



Saint Cuthbert and the Otters



*The two otters at Saint Cuthbert's feet,
bit blue by the North Atlantic,
had nothing to do with begging or worship.
They were twin models of compassion
showing off their exquisite furs.*



Saint

Always kind and gentle with others, Saint Cuthbert could be hard on himself. Often he prayed all night, refusing his eyes a single wink of sleep.

One day a fellow monk, curious to know what Cuthbert did after sunset, followed him secretly to the seashore. Hidden behind a boulder, the spying monk watched Cuthbert walk, clothes and all, into the cold Atlantic Ocean. Up to his neck! There he stayed until morning, singing hymns to the beat of the surf drumming on the rocks. The monk grew more and more anxious as the hours wore on. “Oh my! Oh my!” he fretted. “Poor Cuthbert will come out of the sea a holy icicle!” But the fear of giving himself away kept him glued to his hiding place.

Finally, the morning sun rubbed its sleepy face awake in the eastern sky. Feeling its first pumpkin-coloured rays on his cheeks, Cuthbert finished his last song and walked out of the dark ocean



Cuthbert

onto the shore. The hidden monk, who had long since entered dreamland, awoke with a start, scared that he would find Cuthbert had turned into a frozen log floating on the tide. Instead, there he was, standing tall on the beach, dripping water from his long, brown robe. But he wasn't alone. Two otters, sleek and shiny, sat on his feet, warming them with their breath and beautiful fur. The monk couldn't believe his eyes, or his ears, which tingled with the tender words of thanks spoken by the saint to his compassionate companions. Never had the monk seen so strong a man so softly receive care for his body. Never had he heard such gentle and grateful words.

The three friends said goodbye. Two slipped back into the sea. The third began his homeward climb, humming his way back to the monastery. The hidden monk, however, had to wait to get over his shock. You don't see that sort of love every day.



Cuthbert (634–687, Northumbria, British Isles; feast day: March 20) began training as a soldier, but a divine vision steered him from the battlefield into the monastery at the age of 17. There he humbly accepted increasing responsibility, eventually becoming the abbot of the famous Lindisfarne abbey. During his life he survived plague and developed gifts of healing, which many ill people continued to receive even after his death.

Not only did Cuthbert miraculously cure the sick, he also worked miracles in the area of prevention, or more accurately, preservation. During his many prayerful hours on the seashore, he fell in love with the eider duck. These, he sadly observed, were considered a local delicacy. Townsfolk would scour the beach for their eggs and their bodies to scramble, boil and barbecue, leaving the survival of their population in peril. Cuthbert used his leadership, intelligence, charm and moral authority to enact what were perhaps the first conservation laws in Europe. Nesting sea birds and their brood became protected thanks to Cuthbert. To immortalize this achievement, the eider took on Cuthbert's name in Scotland, where it is still known as the "Cuddy" duck.

To contemplate ...

It is enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. (Pope Francis, *Laudato si'* #155)

Throughout the history of religion, spiritual discipline, which in itself is healthy and helpful, can tend to slip into harmful suspicion of material reality. Too often this results in a hostile attitude towards the human body, which is misinterpreted as the seat of sin, shame, temptation, wickedness and death. Christianity, unfortunately, has gone through periods of deep amnesia, forgetting that the Creator made humans in a divine image and that their bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit. To disdain the gift of embodiment is really to reject the generosity, wisdom and good will of the Creator.

In a secularized world, contempt for the body also manifests in dangerous social phenomena such as anorexia, bulimia, substance addictions (including to junk food), excessively extreme sports, cosmetic surgery, chronic sedentary lifestyles, and other ways of being that disregard the wholesome needs of the human organism. Science now confirms what

Scripture always asserted: that our bodies are literally made of Earth. To care for them prudently, lovingly and non-obsessively is to care directly for Creation. At the same time, it is to care for the Earth indirectly, because healthy, integrated people typically consume fewer resources and apply less burden on the medical system.





Many birds are architects, building marvellous homes for themselves. Some, like Magpies, are also artists, decorating their nests with colourful objects. The Magpie's nest is filled with items borrowed from the saints in this book. Which item goes with which saint?

*Listed on these two pages are all the creatures that inhabit the drawings.
Can you spot and name them?*

SAINT CUTHBERT

- 3 Arctic Terns (mother & 2 chicks)
- 2 Common Guillemots (mother & chick)
- Dragonfly
- 2 Grey Seals
- 2 Herring Gulls
- Kittywake
- Magpie
- Marram Grass
- Mullet
- Mussels
- 3 Puffins
- Sandpiper
- Sea Anemone
- Sea Lavender
- Sea Otter
- Sea Urchin
- Shore Crab
- Starfish

SAINTS ISIDORE & MARIA

- Black Rat
- 3 Cats
- Chicken
- Eurasian Golden Oriole
- Giant Peacock Moth
- Haystack
- Iberian Green Frog (Perez's Frog)
- Iberian Hare
- 2 Iberian Ibexes
- Imperial Eagle
- Isidore's Well
- Magpie
- 10 Pigeons
- Purple-edged Copper Butterfly
- Pygmy Marbled Newt
- 4 Sheaves of Wheat

- Southern Smooth Snake
- Spider
- Woodmouse

SAINT KEVIN

- Blackbird
- Blue-eyed Grass
- Brent Goose (Pale Bellied)
- Bulrushes (Cattails) (*How many can you find?*)
- Cinnabar Moth & Larvae
- Common Reeds (*How many can you find?*)
- Diving Bell Spider
- Duckweed
- 2 Fly Agaric Mushrooms
- Frog
- Lapwing (Green Plover)
- Lily Pads
- Little Grebe
- Magpie
- Mute Swan
- Ox-eye Daisies (*How many can you find?*)
- Paper Wasps (*How many can you find?*) & nest
- Pine Martin
- Red Darter Dragonfly
- Scots Pine
- 2 Signets
- 2 Silver Birches
- Viviparous (Common) Lizard
- Worm
- 5 Yellow Flag Irises
- 8 Yellow Water Lilies

SAINT MARTIN

- Alpaca
- 4 Andean Condors (2 adults, 2 young)
- Chinchilla
- Guanaco

- ☐ 2 Guinea Pigs
- ☐ Llama
- ☐ Magpie Tanager
- ☐ Northern Mountain Viscacha
- ☐ Peruvian Hairless Dog
- ☐ Spectacled Andean Bear
- ☐ Woolly Mountain Tapir

SAINT BRIGID

- ☐ 2 Ants
- ☐ Bracket Fungi
- ☐ Ferns
- ☐ Great Spotted Woodpecker
- ☐ 2 Irish Jays, 4 eggs in nest
- ☐ Irish Stoat
- ☐ Irish Wren
- ☐ Ivy
- ☐ Kerry Spotted Slug
- ☐ Leisler's Bat
- ☐ Lichen & Moss
- ☐ Long-eared Owl
- ☐ Magpie
- ☐ Marsh Fritillary Butterfly
- ☐ November Moth Caterpillar
- ☐ Ox-eye Daisies
- ☐ Red Fox
- ☐ Red Squirrel
- ☐ Sessile Oaks with acorns
- ☐ Snail
- ☐ Spider
- ☐ 2 Wild Boar
- ☐ 6 Wild Boar piglets
- ☐ Worm

SAINT GILES









- ☐ Black Forest Polecat
- ☐ Common Buzzard
- ☐ Common Genet
- ☐ European Badger
- ☐ Fallen Log
- ☐ Ferns

- ☐ Hoopoe
- ☐ Lerot (or Bandit) Dormouse
- ☐ Magpie
- ☐ Maritime Pine
- ☐ Moss
- ☐ 2 Norway Spruce
- ☐ Ortolan Bunting
- ☐ 3 Red Deer (buck, hind, fawn)
- ☐ Short-toed Treecreeper & nest
- ☐ Umbrella Pine

SAINT FRANCIS

- ☐ Alpine Gentian
- ☐ Alpine Marmot
- ☐ Alpine Wild Poppies (*How many can you find?*)
- ☐ Bat
- ☐ 3 Carpenter Bees
- ☐ Centipede
- ☐ Cleopatra Butterfly
- ☐ Clover
- ☐ Earthworm
- ☐ Eurasian Harvest Mouse
- ☐ Eurasian Skylark nest & 3 eggs
- ☐ European Pine Vole
- ☐ European Swallowtail Butterfly
- ☐ Fire Bug
- ☐ Garden Ants (*How many can you find?*)
& Anthill
- ☐ Hummingbird Hawk-moth
- ☐ Italian Dandelions
- ☐ Italian Wolf Pup
- ☐ Magpie
- ☐ Mediteranean Spur Thighed Tortoise
- ☐ Monte Subasio
- ☐ Moon
- ☐ Mosquitoes (*How many can you find?*)
- ☐ Pygmy Shrew
- ☐ Two-tailed Pasha Butterfly Chrysalis
- ☐ West European Hedgehog
- ☐ Wild Strawberries (*How many can you find?*)
- ☐ Wild Violets

Parents and teachers: revisit these Amazing Friendships online at en.novalis.ca/Amazing-Friendships-extra-resources, where you will find more materials for exploring:

-  *curriculum-linked resources and lesson plans for class use*
-  *fun facts about the creatures and their ecosystems*
-  *printable lists of creatures so children can check off the ones they have found*
-  *visuals that can be projected on a screen for group reading and discussion*
-  *labelled diagrams that can be projected naming all the creatures in the story borders*
-  *discussion starters to inspire thought (at a range of grade levels)*
-  *introductory, age-appropriate contemplative activities based on each story*
-  *printable art activity/colouring pages*



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