Story Trail

This story is in six parts. Where you see this pawprint, stop and read the part of the story about the animal you see. Follow the route on the back of this book.
In the forests of Scotland a long time ago beside a wide loch and below a Munroe, a boy and his sister were out for a walk laughing and playing as they wandered and talked. Her hands held like claws and a gleam in her eye the girl pounced on her brother and loudly she cried “I’m the best at pouncing this forest has seen, no one in this forest can pounce quite like me!” “Well” laughed the boy “you are quite good it’s true but wildcat can pounce much better than you! He moves through the forest not making a peep, silently stalking, waiting to leap, then quick as a flash before it can flee he will pounce on a mouse to eat for his tea” “Ok” said the girl with a smile “I agree wildcat is better at pouncing than me.”
As they sat in the forest below the big hill
the girl hid from her brother, quiet and still.
“Where are you?” he asked, but there he could see
her foot sticking out from behind a tall tree.
“I’m the best at hiding this forest has seen,
no one in this forest can hide quite like me!”
“Well” laughed the boy “you are quite good it’s true
but lynx can hide much better than you!
In the shadows of branches and bushes and leaves
her spots keep her hidden where no one can see.
She patiently waits disguised by her fur,
she’ll be watching you but you won’t see her.”
“Ok” said the girl with a smile “I agree
lynx is much better at hiding than me.”
They walked through a meadow of flowers and bees
the tall grass swaying in the gentle breeze.
The girl picked a flower, held it to her nose
and she deeply breathed in the scent of the rose.
“I’ve the best sense of smell this forest has seen,
no one in this forest can smell things like me!”
“Well” laughed the boy “you are quite good it’s true
but wolf can smell things much better than you!
He uses his nose to sniff out a meal,
tracking a scent through forest and field.
He can sniff out his friends and even can tell
if they’re a boy or a girl and how old from their smell.”
“Ok” said the girl with a smile “I agree
wolf is much better at smelling than me.”
They lay in the grass looking up at the clouds, naming shapes that they saw and laughing aloud. “That one looks like a fish” said the girl to the boy, “And that one’s a duck!” she said pointing with joy. “I have the best eyesight this forest has seen, no one in this forest can see better than me!” “Well” laughed the boy “you are quite good it’s true but eagle can see much better than you! High up in the clouds she soars through the sky spying small creatures with her sharp eyes. She can spot a hare from a mile away then swoop down in a second to land on her prey.” “Ok” said the girl with a smile “I agree eagle has much better eyesight than me.”
They walked down the shore to the edge of the loch and dipped their toes in the water as they sat on a rock. They watched tadpoles and minnows dart here and there, the girl paddled her feet and loudly declared “I am the best swimmer this forest has seen, No one in this forest can swim quite like me!” “Well” laughed the boy “you are quite good it’s true but otter can swim much better than you. His long sleek body and muscular tail help him glide through the water and hunt without fail. When he paddles along with his little webbed feet he can chase down a fish or frog to eat.” “Ok” said the girl with a smile “I agree otter can swim much better than me.”
As they started for home, the sun low in the sky
worn-out and weary with sleep in their eyes,
the girl yawned a great yawn and slowed in her tracks
so the boy let her clamber up onto his back.
“I’m the strongest creature this forest has seen,
No one in this forest is stronger than me!”
“Well” laughed the boy “you are quite strong it’s true
but bear is really much stronger than you.
She can swipe through a log with her strong sharp claws
and can bite through a bone with her powerful jaws.
She can dig out a den in no time at all
to keep her cubs warm when the snow starts to fall.”
“Ok” said the girl with a sigh “I agree
bear is much stronger than I’ll ever be,
but there must be something at which I’m the best,
something special that I do better than the rest!”
“Of course!” cried the boy “There’s something its true no one has such a wild imagination as you!

You can pounce like a wildcat, you can hide like a lynx, you can smell like a wolf, you can see like an eagle, you can swim like an otter, you’re as strong as a bear...

You imagine these things and much more I can tell, no one else in this forest can imagine so well. You can think of the animals, the lynx, wolf and bear of the eagle the otter and the wildcat out there alive in the forest amongst the tall trees, happy and peaceful and wandering free.”

Paws for thought...

Did you know?...

Wolves, lynx and bears used to live in Scotland until they were hunted to extinction. What effect do you think this had on other Scottish animals such as deer?

Scottish wildcats are an endangered species. It is thought that there are less than 100 wildcats left in the wild. Can you think of any other Scottish animals that are endangered?

All animals are specially adapted to their environment like the ones in this story. Some have big ears to hear prey or predators, some have special markings and colours to help them camouflage with their surroundings. What do you notice about other animals in the zoo that would make them suited to their natural environment?
The Story Trail was written and designed by Beth Savage for Camperdown Wildlife Centre in 2013.
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