

Alex and Rosie Learn About Wild Flower Meadows in Essex



A Story with Widgit Symbols
David Blakesley and Tharada Blakesley

Alex and Rosie Learn About Wild Flower Meadows in Essex

Stories by David Blakesley

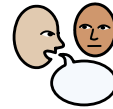
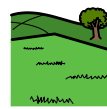
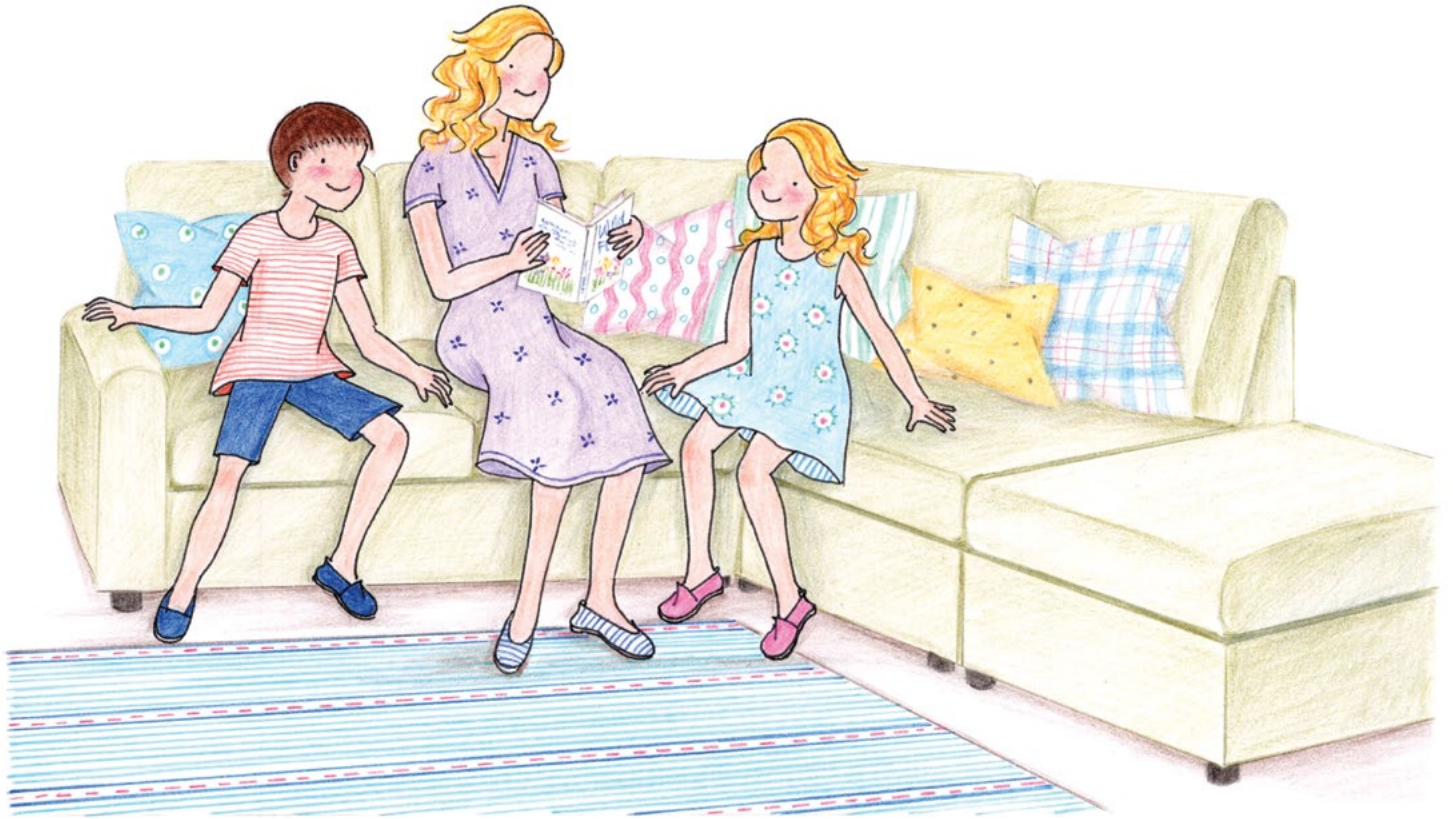
Illustrations by Tharada Blakesley



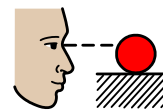
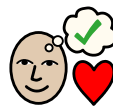
Introduction

Autism and Nature is a non-profit organisation dedicated to enriching the lives of autistic children, by helping to engage them with the countryside and rural heritage. 'Alex and Rosie Learn About Wild Flower Meadows in Essex' tells the story of two children, Alex and Rosie, who learn about meadows from a book given to them by their Mum. After reading the book, the family visit four natural places with wild flower meadows across North, Mid, South and West Essex. Finally, they sow wild flowers in their own garden. The story should allow parents, carers and teachers to discuss topics such as the importance of protecting meadows; the resources that wild flowers provide for wildlife (for example nectar and pollen); and creating new wild flower meadows. We hope that it will appeal to younger autistic children and children with speech and language difficulties, and encourage their interest in the countryside. Hopefully, families will be inspired to visit meadows in their local area, and/or one or more of the places featured in the story, including: Grange Farm - Chigwell Meadows; Mill Meadows; Fordham Hall Estate; and Great Notley Country Park. Each of these places is also featured in a revised edition of Autism and Nature's 'Visiting the Essex Countryside: a guide for parents, carers and teachers of autistic children'.

This book was generously funded by Essex County Council Short Breaks for Disabled Children and Young People, and the Fowler Smith and Jones Trust. We are especially grateful to Jo Mason for her continued support for our work and help with distribution. We would also like to thank Tone Blakesley, Bob MacMillan, Ron McCombe, David McGough and Andy Stables who kindly allowed us to base artwork on their wildlife photographs. We would like to thank Guillaume Duclaud-Williams (Widgit Software Ltd) for his valuable help and advice with symbolising the text. Finally, we would like to thank Tone Blakesley for the layout of the book. EBook versions can be downloaded from the websites of Widgit Software Ltd (www.widgit.com) and Autism and Nature (www.autismandnature.org.uk).



"I have been given a lovely book about meadows," said Mum.



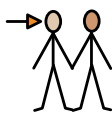
Alex and Rosie were very interested to look at it.



Dad



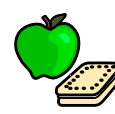
brought



them



drinks



and a snack.



He



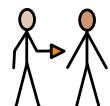
smiled.



"I



think



you



will be reading



for some

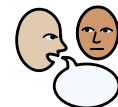
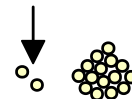
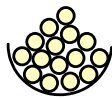
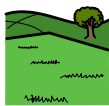
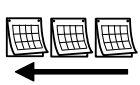


time!"

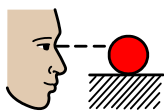
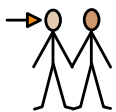
Marbled white



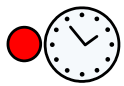
Peacock



"Old meadows with lots of wild flowers are rare," said Mum.



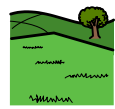
They looked at a page about old hay meadows.



"Before tractors were used, hay was cut by hand."



"The hay was stacked in horse-drawn carts."



"After the hay was cut, animals grazed in the meadows."



"Just like today."



Long hoverfly



Ten-spot ladybird



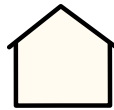
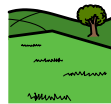
Six-spot burnet



Buff-tailed bumblebee



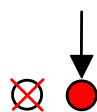
Common carder bee



"Wild flower meadows provide shelter and food for insects."



and



other



insects



pollinate



the flowers."

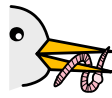
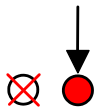
Skylark



Lapwing



"Lapwings and skylarks nest on the ground in meadows."

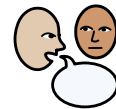
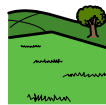


"Other birds visit the meadows to feed on insects and seeds."

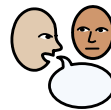
Badger

Fox

Brown Hare



"Foxes and badgers hunt in meadows," said Mum.

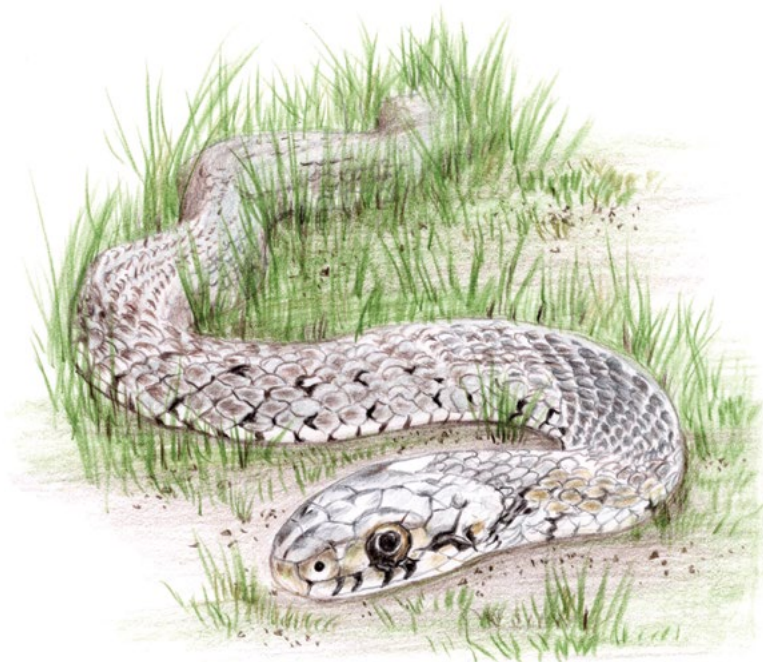


"Hares graze in meadows," said Alex.

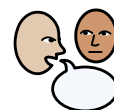
Common toad



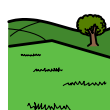
Grass snake



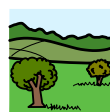
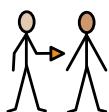
Common frog



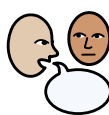
"The book should include grass snakes," said Rosie.



"Frogs and toads feed in meadows too," replied Mum.



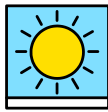
"Would you like to visit a wild flower meadow?" asked Dad.



"Yes please!" said Alex and Rosie.



A few



days



later,

the

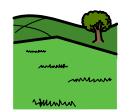


family



visited

Chigwell



Meadow.



The

meadow

is

very good

for

wildlife.



Tufted vetch

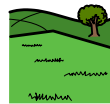


Oxeye daisy

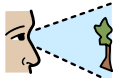
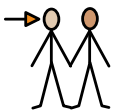


Buttercup

Red clover



The wild flowers in the meadow were very colourful!



They saw oxeye daisy, cat's-ear, red clover and buttercup.



Common blue



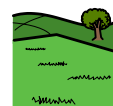
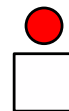
Migrant hawk

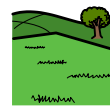
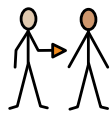


A migrant hawk was hunting for insects.

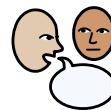
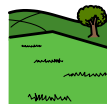


Common blue butterflies were flying over the meadow.

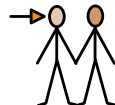
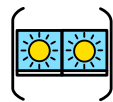
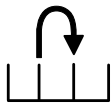




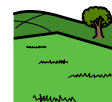
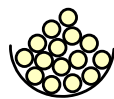
"Because you really enjoyed the meadow..."



"We are going to visit more meadows!" said Dad.



The following weekend, they visited Great Notley Country Park.



There were a lot of wild flowers in the meadows.

Common vetch



Cat's-ear



Meadow cranesbill



Alex



liked

the



meadow cranesbill.



Rosie



found



wild flowers

that were



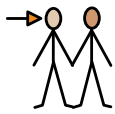
colourful



too.



Dog rose



They



also

found



wild flowers

in the



hedgerows.



Alex

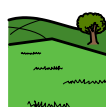
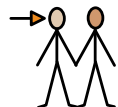
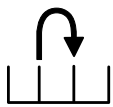


liked

the

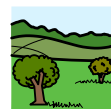
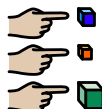
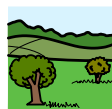


dog roses.



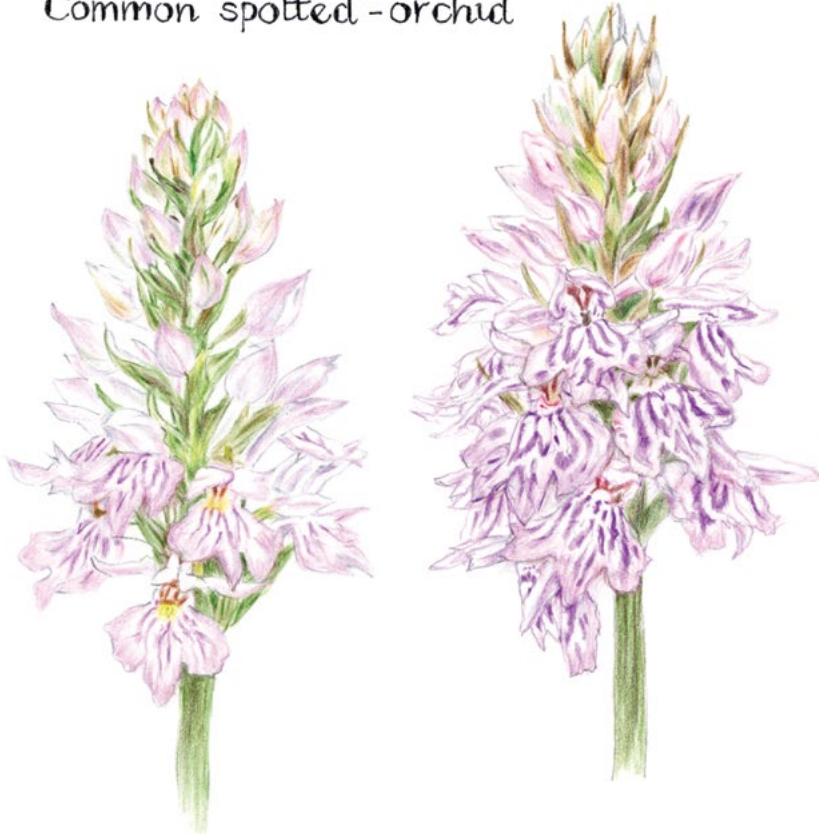
Next, they visited Mill Meadows in Billericay.

17

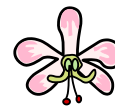


There are 17 fields, and each field has a different name!

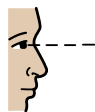
Common spotted-orchid



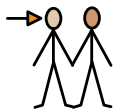
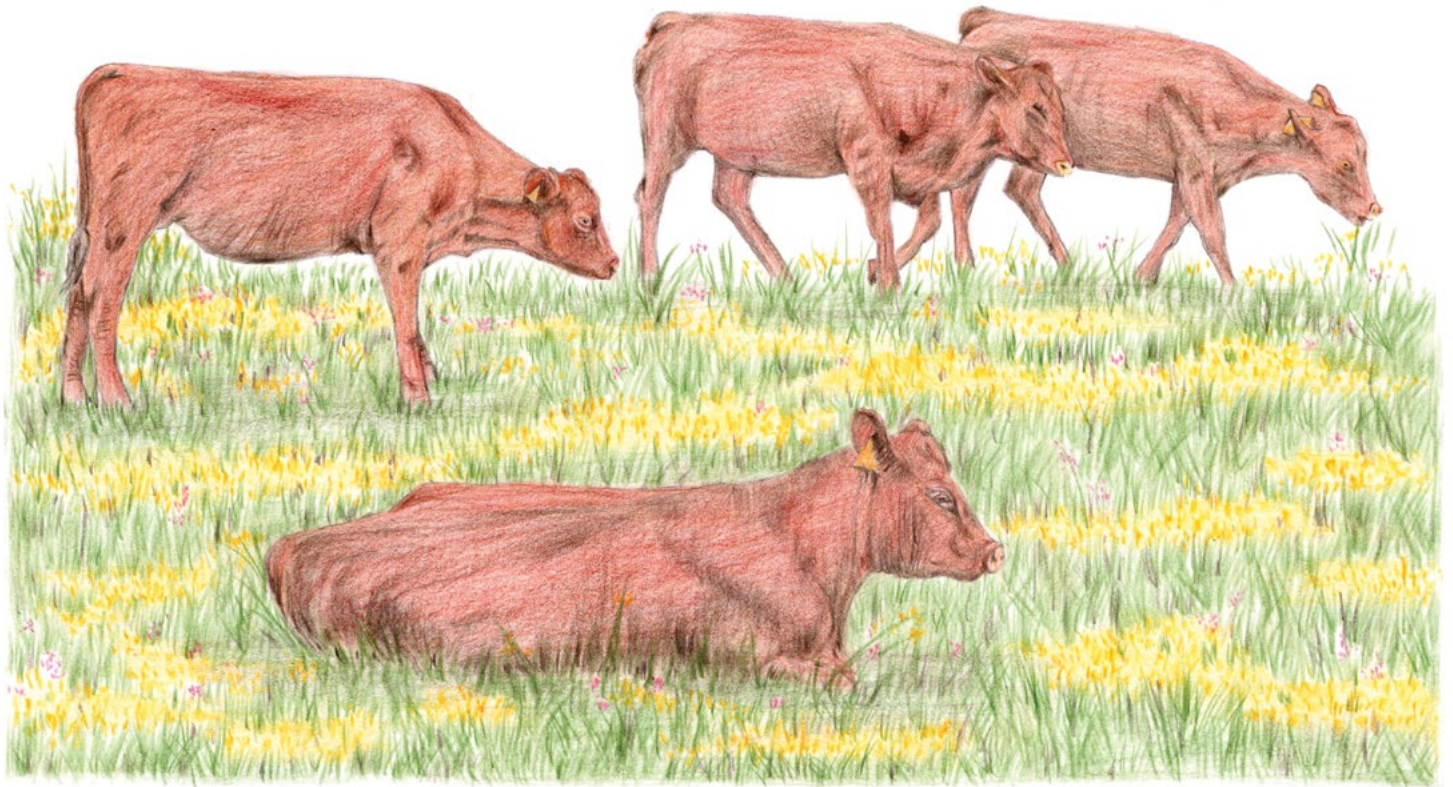
Large skipper



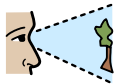
In Oakfield, Alex found common spotted-orchids.



Rosie spotted a large skipper.



They



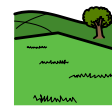
saw



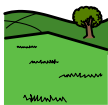
Redpoll cattle



grazing



in the meadows.



The meadows



have not



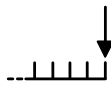
been

ploughed

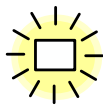
100



for hundreds of years!



The last meadow the family visited was in Fordham.



20



This is a new meadow, that was sown about 20 years ago.

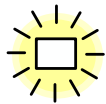
Grass vetchling



Yellow rattle



Bird's-foot-trefoil



Because it is new, there are fewer plant species.



Alex and Rosie found yellow flowers and crimson flowers.



Whitethroat



Chiffchaff



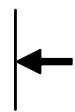
Blackcap



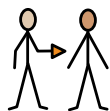
Birds were singing in the hedgerows.



The meadows at Fordham were very peaceful!



Back home, Dad had an idea.



"Would you like to grow your own wild flowers?"



"Yes



please!"



Alex



and Rosie



were very



excited.



"We



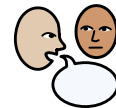
will sow seeds



in the garden



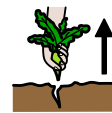
in the autumn,"



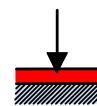
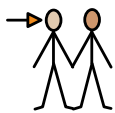
said



Dad.



A few months later, Alex and Rosie cleared a patch of weeds.



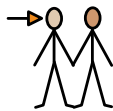
They raked the soil to produce a smooth surface.



Dad



gave

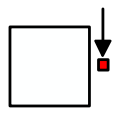


them

a packet of wild flower seed.



Mixing



the

tiny



seeds

with



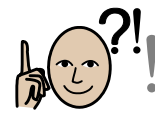
sand



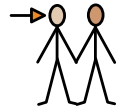
made



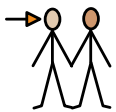
sowing



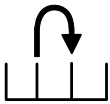
easier.



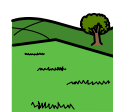
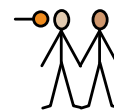
The weather was dry, so Alex and Rosie watered them.



They had to be patient, and wait for the seeds to grow.



The following summer, the garden was full of colourful wild flowers.



Alex and Rosie were very proud of their meadow.

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Autism and Nature, Kent.

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Alex and Rosie learn about wild flower meadows from a book given to them by their Mum. After reading the book, the children are keen to visit Essex wild flower meadows. They love the wild flowers and insects that they see, and decide to plant wild flowers in their own garden.

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