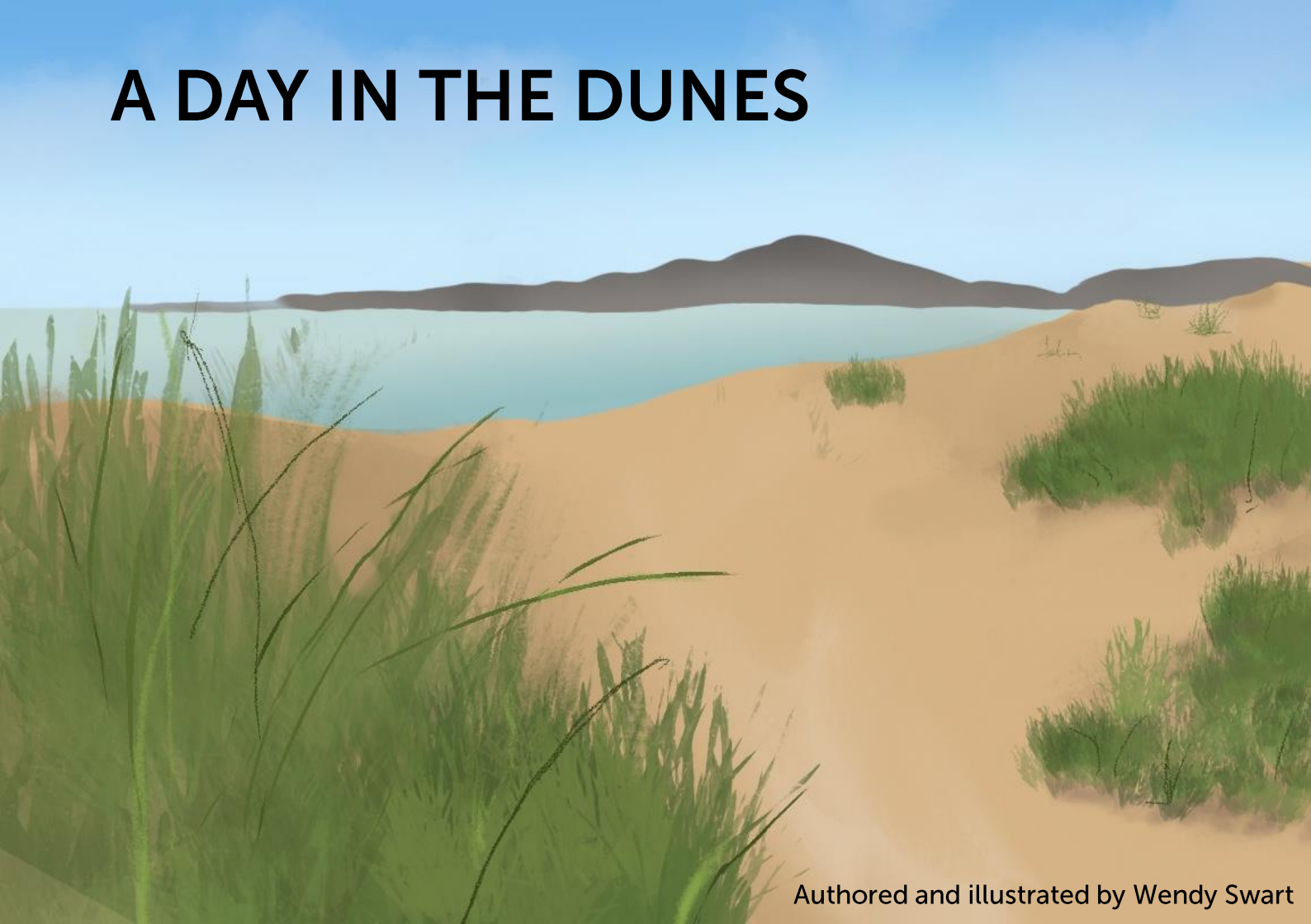
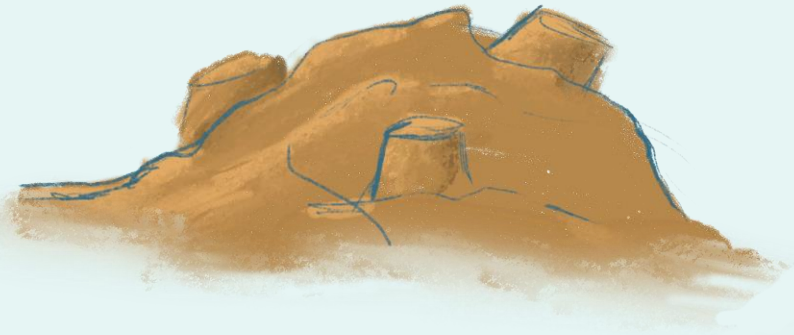
A DAY IN THE DUNES



Authored and illustrated by Wendy Swart



A trip to the beach was Elliot's favourite way to spend a day of the long summer school holidays.

He could do all the things he loved. Playing in the water, building sandcastles, and kicking his football.

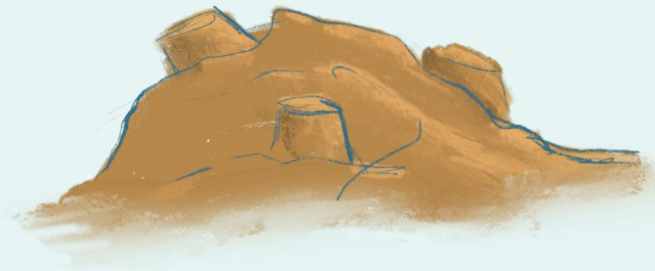
One day, when the sun was shining, Elliot and his family decided to head for the seaside.

They walked along the path and over the sand dunes to reach the beach. Elliot and his younger sister, Jane, started to play football as soon as they could, so Jane ran on ahead.

Jane was eager when she kicked the football and it went flying back the way they'd just come, straight into the sand dunes. Elliot turned and ran after it.

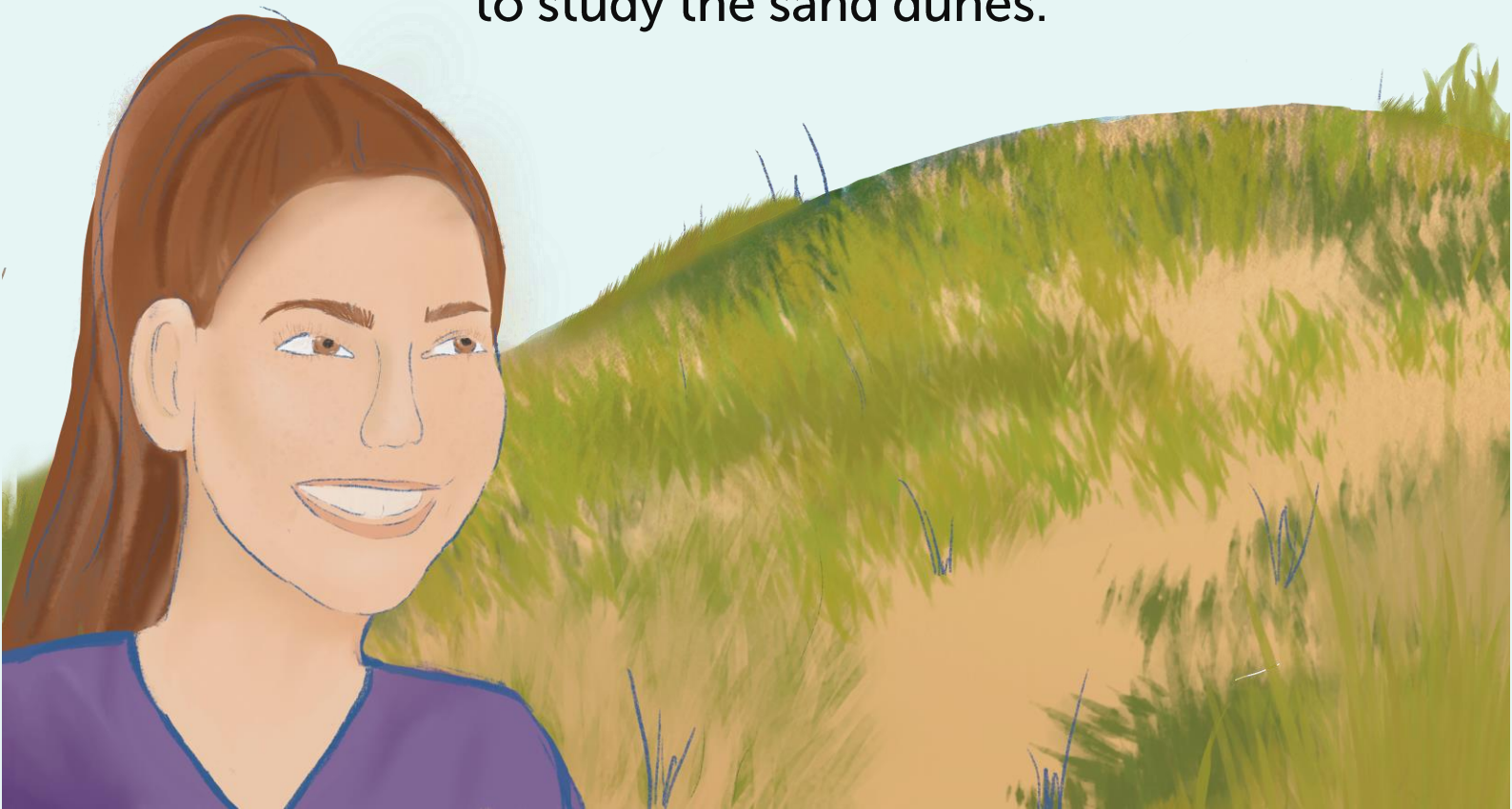
As he ran back, he saw a family friend, Seren, sitting with a notebook in the middle of the dunes.

Elliot had always been a curious child, so he ran over to see what she was doing.

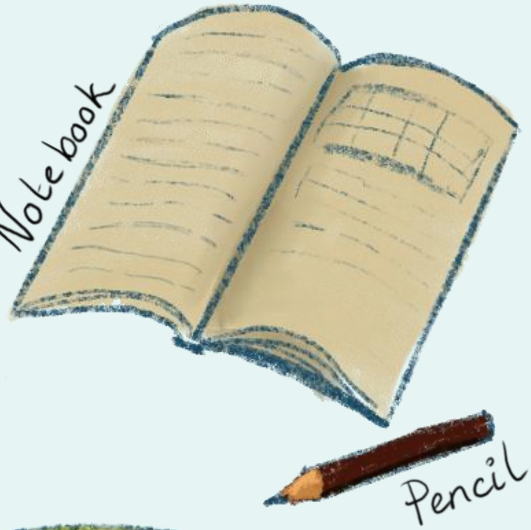


Not being able to work it out, Elliot bounded closer and said, "Hi Seren! I think you are in the wrong place. The beach is that way and so is all the fun! There is nothing to see here."

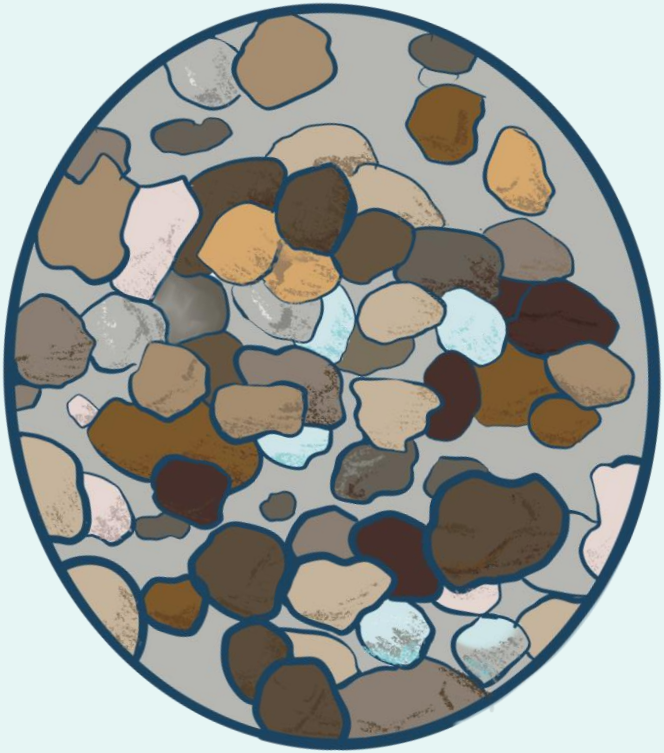
Seren now had a big smile across her face and replied, “Hello Elliot! Thank you for letting me know, but I am here to study the sand dunes.”



Elliot paused, “I have walked through the dunes so many times to get to the sea. There is nothing here, except sand and some grass.”



“Well Elliot,” said Seren, “there is more to sand dunes than you might realise. Especially if you are just running past to get to the sea. May I tell you the story of the dunes?"



Close up of sand grains

Seren started to talk about how the sand dunes form.

"To begin, sand gets carried from far away and ends up on the beach. The wind blows up each grain of sand until it becomes a small clump of sand, an embryo dune."

"Over time, the wind pushes more sand onto the embryo dune and plants trap the sand. The dune grows bigger as more sand is added. Shifting sand is an important part of dunes, allowing them to move."

“Dunes don’t move. They are just sand,” said Elliot.

“Not quite Elliot," Seren explained, "the wind helps them move very slowly, in fact, more slowly than our eyes can see."

Elliot looked at Seren with a bored look.

Silver - studded blue butterfly

"Now look over there", Seren pointed, "do you see behind the dunes, where there is a puddle of water? That is a dune slack."

"Dunes support so many forms of life, from orchid flowers to great crested newts, and rabbits, along with so many more things," explained Seren.

"I've never seen that before", Elliot replied, looking more interested.

"Try and slow down and close your eyes, what do you hear?" asked Seren.

Elliot realised he could hear the grass rattling, birds chirping and frogs croaking.

Elliot started to wander around the dunes slowly looking at everything around him. Eventually he saw a rabbit hopping about, a sea of gorgeous flowers and even a sand lizard.

Seren mentioned that there are also northern tiger beetles and other tiny critters around.

Orange peel fungus

"**Wow**!", gasped Elliot.

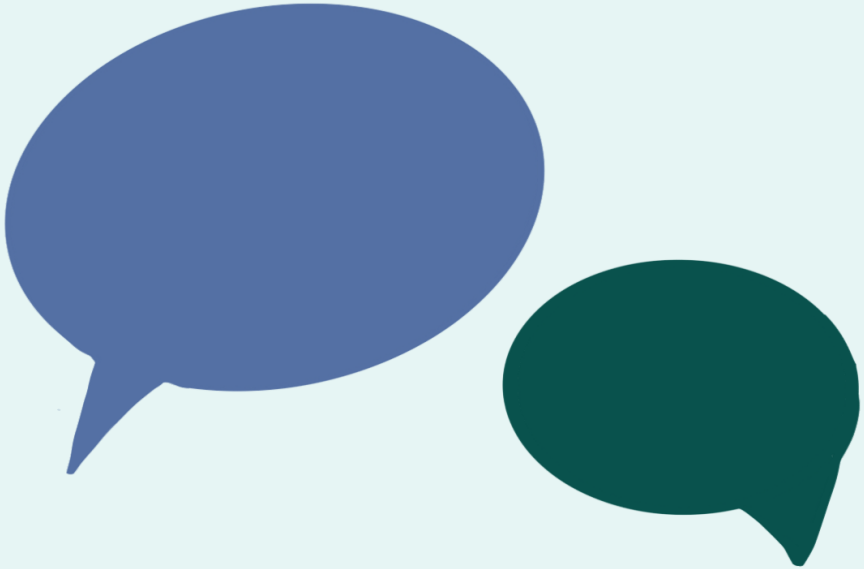
"I am so glad you have found the sand dunes interesting, Elliot; I hope you'll explore them more. And why not come back through all the different seasons?

The colours and sights you see change throughout the year and there are so many new things to explore and find."

“Thank you, Seren - I am going to tell Jane about this. She will love it!”

Elliot grabbed the football and ran back to the beach to find his little sister.

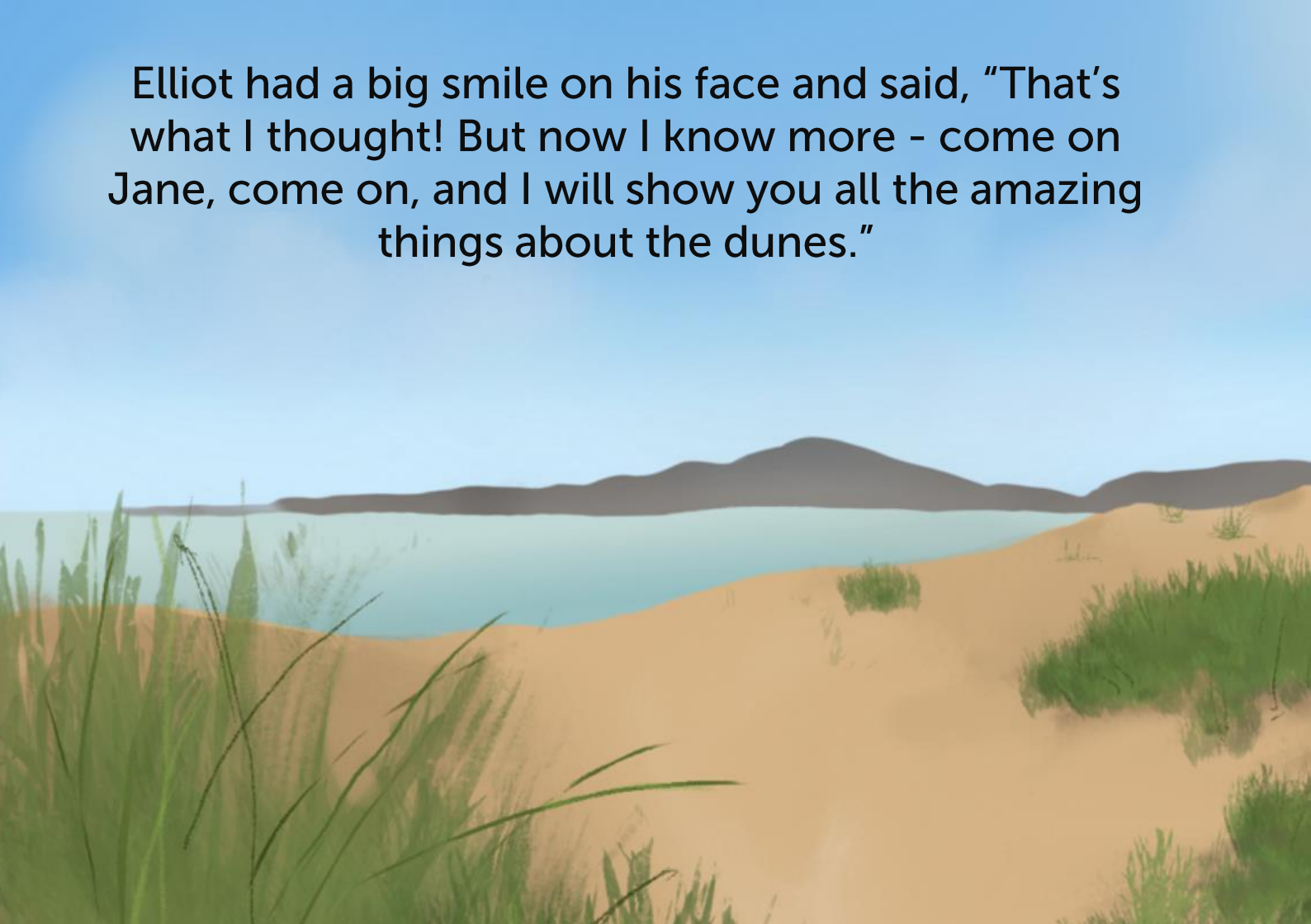
Jane was beginning to wonder where Elliot had gone to, since he had been gone a while, but then she saw him running out onto the beach.



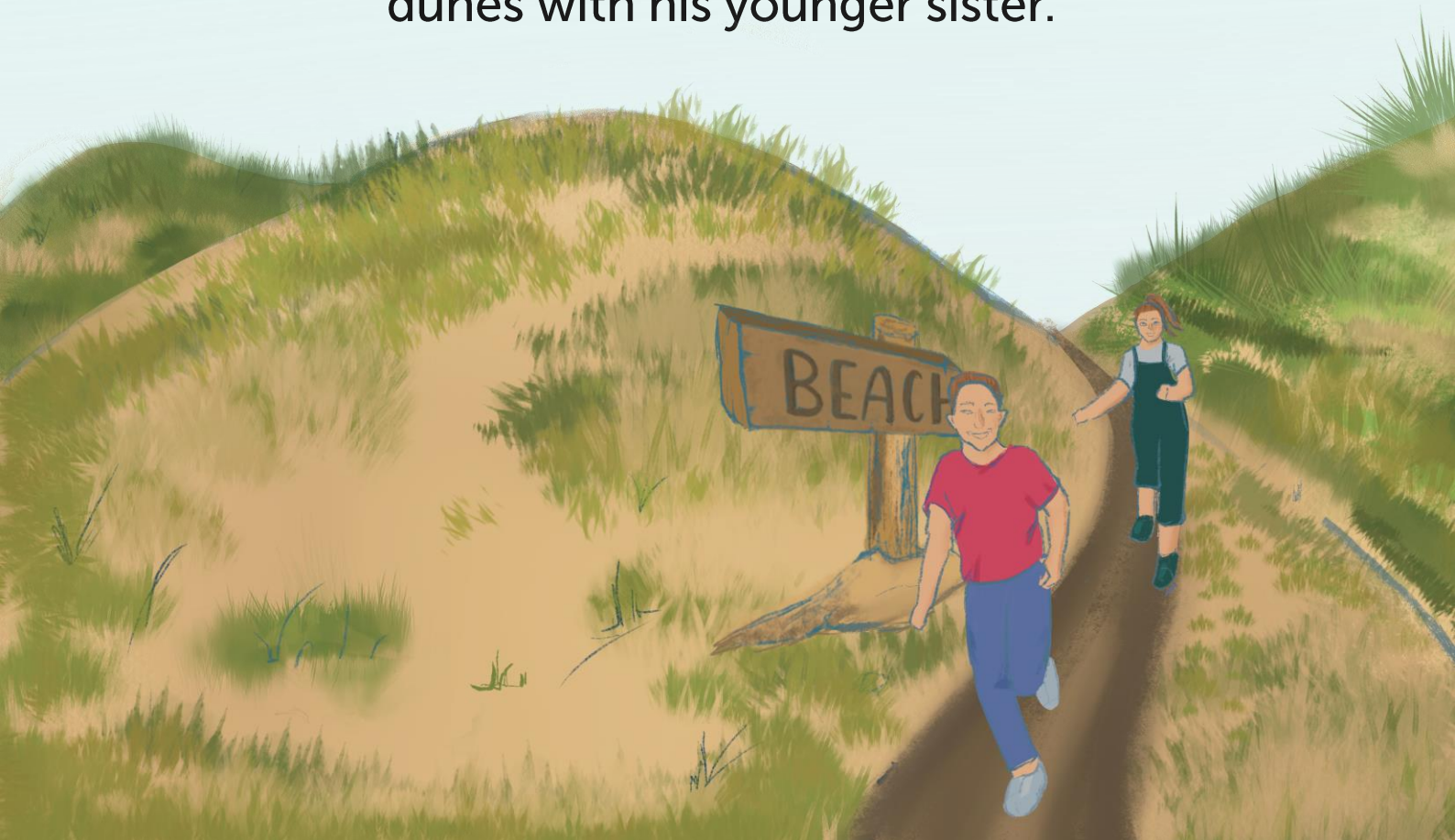
Arriving breathless, he explained that he had learned a whole bunch of new things about the dunes. His little sister looked at him, confused, and said the same thing Elliot had said earlier.

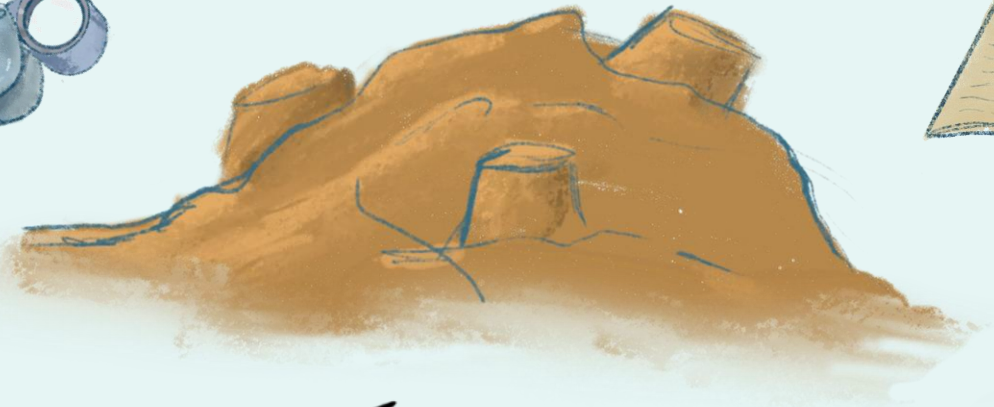
"But it is just sand?"

Elliot had a big smile on his face and said, “That’s what I thought! But now I know more - come on Jane, come on, and I will show you all the amazing things about the dunes.”

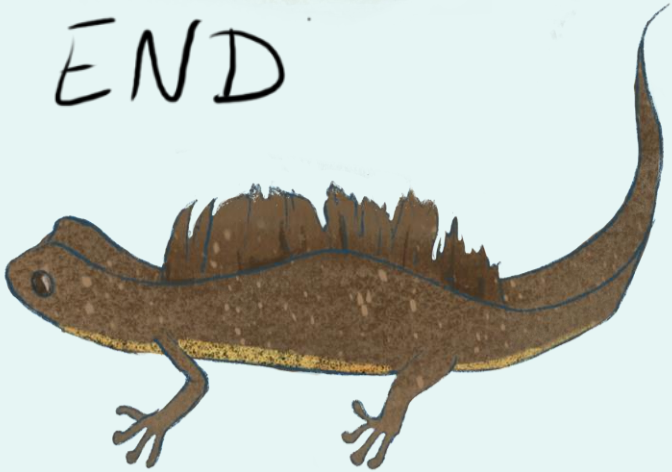


Elliot walked back to the dunes with Jane close behind him, excited to share the story of the dynamic dunes with his younger sister.





THE END



A short guide to exploring the dunes

We hope this story makes you want to step outside and explore the coast near you with family and friends. If you do:

- Enjoy the sand dunes and discover the amazing natural landscape. But please respect local signage and guidance.
- Remember dunes are internationally-important wildlife havens, protected by law. They are homes to hundreds of types of rare wild plants and animals
- Take care - it is easy to trip or fall on steep and unstable dunes. Explore with care.

The creation of this story was supported by the Dynamic Dunescapes project. Dynamic Dunescapes is a pan England and Wales project working to rejuvenate sand dunes and support the amazing life found in these habitats. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the European LIFE Programme, project partners include Natural England, Plantlife, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales and The Wildlife Trusts working alongside other local groups and private landowners.

The deepest thanks is extended to both the project and those who reviewed and offered feedback on earlier drafts of this story.

About the author and illustrator

Wendy grew up in the sand dunes in Namibia and when she came to study marine science at Bangor University, the Welsh dunes caught her attention. She especially loves the seasonal variation in the dunes throughout the year.

TWYNI AR SYMUD | DYNAMIC DUNESCAPES

The beach was Elliot's favourite place to spend the summer. Playing in the water, throwing his frisbee, kicking his football. Then one day he explores the dunes with Seren – a sand dune scientist who points out all the amazing things about dunes, like all the life that the ecosystem supports. Elliot finds a whole new world to explore and a favourite place to be.

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