For Mandy, of course, and for Rachel – thank you for planting the seed.

And for my patient, generous, genius Mum – thank you for everything.

And, last but by no means least... for Joanie and Tess, my mayblossom fairy and holly blue, thank you for your wonderful fairy fact-checking!

-E.H.

For my mom and dad, Muriel and Richard. Thank you for always encouraging my interest in art and books.

-J.R.

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Meadowbrook House
Minstead
Hampshire
17th July, 1925

My dear Annabelle,

As you know, during my career I have made a name for myself studying plants, travelling the globe to learn everything I could about flowers and trees. However, what you do not know is that in the course of my work, I stumbled upon a new area of study - one that, in recent years, has become my true passion. I have gone to great lengths to keep this work a secret. I fear that if its real nature were known, I would be mocked by my colleagues and labelled a fool.
This secret work, my dear one, is the study of fairies.

Fairies are all around us, but they are shy creatures that can be very hard to find. You may have been lucky enough to see one already - at the bottom of your garden perhaps, or even in the attic. I have compiled this book as a guide to the different species of fairy around the world. Within these pages you will discover where and how fairies live, their role in the natural world, and how to find them.

I am about to embark on a voyage to South America, where I will journey into the depths of the Amazon Rainforest to search for the little-known hummingbird fairy. This expedition will be fraught with danger, so before I depart, I am sending you my book for safekeeping. Perhaps it will inspire some fairy-finding adventures of your own?

With all my love,
Aunt Elsie

An extract from
Aunt Elsie's diary:

Friday, June 23, 1875

What a peculiar day. As I was pottering in the garden after lunch, I heard snatches of tinkling laughter. They were coming from the greenhouse. Slowly and quietly, I tiptoed to the doorway, and stopped on the threshold. The laughter came again, very clearly this time. And then, to my amazement, a tiny winged creature, human-like in form, flattered out from among my tomato plants, and looked me square in the eye. I can't describe it as anything else but a fairy!



Aunt Elsie in her garden, 1923

WHAT ARE FAIRIES?

Before we start looking at fairies in detail, we must first explore exactly what these creatures are. All living things can be divided into groups depending on their physical characteristics. The great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus introduced this way of grouping plants and animals in the 1700s. Sometimes a newly discovered creature may not fit neatly into a particular category – but at least this system gives us a useful place to start!



Although the holly blue fairy has insect-like wings, it is likely that this creature is a type of mammal.

Fact or Folklore?

At first it may seem difficult to class fairies in an existing animal group. They have wings and lay eggs, which might suggest they are insects. But their bodies are very similar to humans', which could mean that they are, in fact, a type of mammal (a warm-blooded creature with a backbone that feeds milk to its young). After much research I would propose that fairies fall naturally into this category: they are mammals.

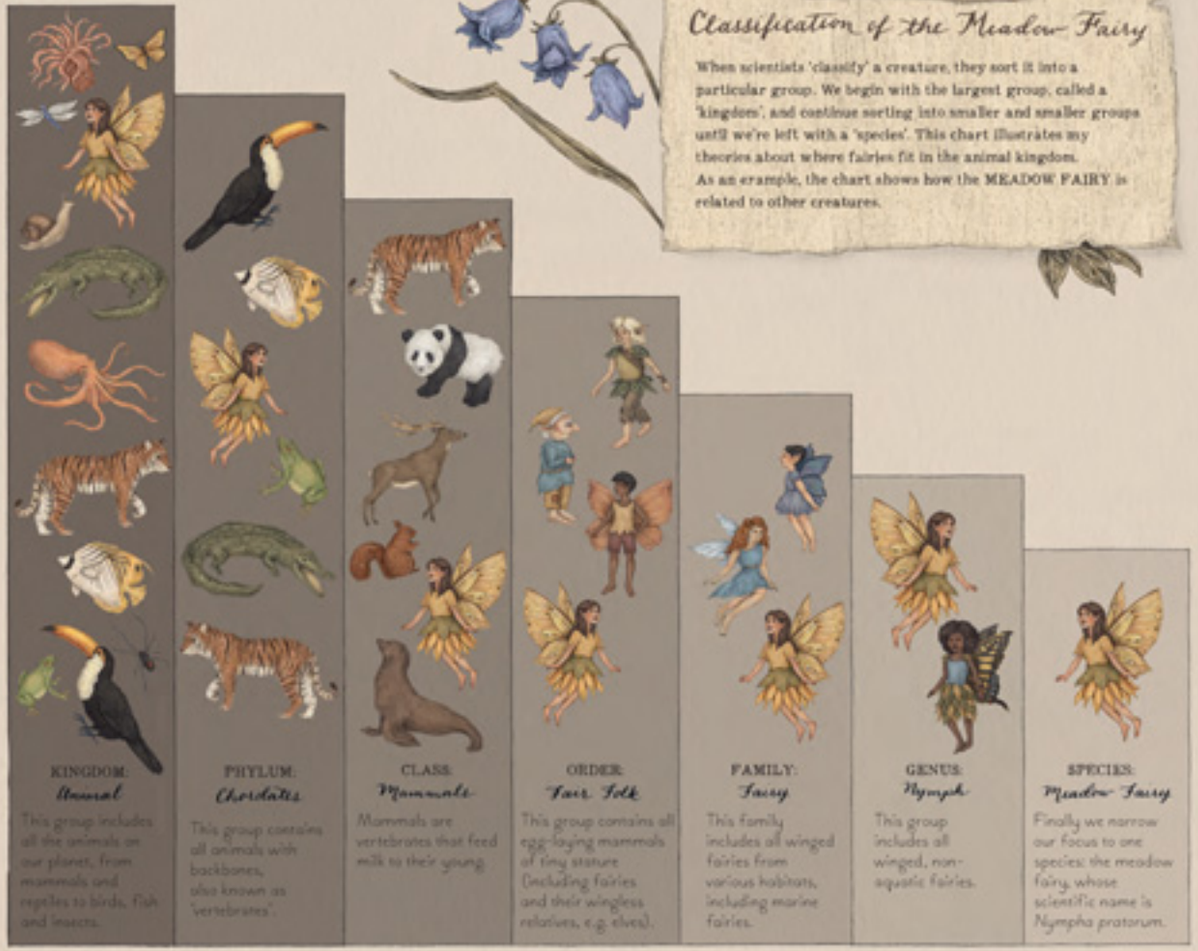
The Platypus Puzzle

Some might argue that the reason fairies are difficult to classify is because they don't exist. But how wrong they are! Consider the platypus. When this creature was first sent to Europe from Australia in the late 1790s, many scientists refused to believe that it was real. A furry creature with the body of an otter, the tail of a beaver and the feet and beak of a duck, which lays eggs like a snake? Impossible! Was it a mammal, a bird or even a reptile? Just because the platypus is tricky to categorise, doesn't mean it's not real – and the same is true of fairies.



Classification of the Meadow Fairy

When scientists 'classify' a creature, they sort it into a particular group. We begin with the largest group, called a 'kingdom', and continue sorting into smaller and smaller groups until we're left with a 'species'. This chart illustrates my theories about where fairies fit in the animal kingdom. As an example, the chart shows how the MEADOW FAIRY is related to other creatures.



THE ANATOMY OF A FAIRY

Fairies are tiny creatures – the largest measures only a few inches tall. In appearance, they are very similar to miniature human children, with one notable difference: wings. All fairies have wings, but they vary greatly between species. They may resemble butterfly wings, dragonfly wings, or even the wings of bees. This wing variation is the main characteristic that helps us identify different species of fairy.

SKELETAL STRUCTURE

The skeleton of a fairy closely resembles that of a human child, but is much, much smaller.

FAIRY WISHBONE

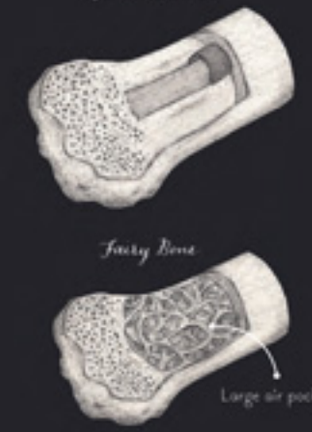
Another difference between human and fairy skeletons is that, while humans have two separate collarbones, called clavicles, fairies have a fused collarbone, like a bird's. This is called the wishbone. It helps strengthen the fairy's skeleton, so it can fly.





BIRDLIKE BONES

A fairy's bones are much lighter than a human's. This allows fairies to fly. Like the bones of a bird, fairy bones are hollow and are filled with a honeycomb-like substance that contains many air pockets. This means that fairies aren't very heavy, so they can take off easily.



Flight Muscles

Fairies have lots of small but strong muscles that help move their wings. Along with their powerful chest muscles, they have an extra set of flight muscles running down the middle of the back.



Flight Path

The flight path of a fairy often follows a jerky, fluttering pattern, similar to a butterfly's. A possible reason is that this type of flight pattern is difficult for predators to predict, allowing a fairy to evade capture and stay safe.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A FAIRY

Despite what countless fairy tales tell us, fairies can't shape-shift, transforming from one creature to another. However, after much careful study, I can confirm that they do go through several surprising changes as they grow. This process of change is called 'metamorphosis'. In all my years of research, I have not managed to discover how long fairies live for. Legend has it that they live forever...



1. *Fairy Egg*
A fairy lays one or two eggs on a leaf or twig. Eggs can vary from species to species but are usually covered in beautiful patterns. These patterns help us tell the difference between fairy and butterfly eggs, which are similar in size and shape.

2. *Flutterpillar*
After a few weeks, a fairy flutterpillar hatches from the egg. This youngster is looked after by its parents, who usually carry it in a papoose or sling while flying. The mother feeds her newborn with milk.

SWEETBRIAR FAIRY: FOUR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

3. *Cocoon*
After several months, the flutterpillar is ready for wings. Parents make a cocoon out of leaves, petals or spider's silk. Inside the cocoon, the flutterpillar changes. After two weeks, the cocoon splits open and a miniature winged fairy, called a moppet, emerges.

4. *Moppet*
Once the winged fairy has appeared, it is still extremely childlike and needs the protection of adults. It reaches maturity at around three years old.

DRYAD *(Nymphea quercus)*
The dryad, who lives among woods and forests, often lays her eggs on an oak leaf.



RIVER SPRITE
(Nymphea fluminus)
You might spot the eggs of the river sprite on the leaves of a waterside tree, such as an alder.



WICKLOW FAIRY
(Nymphea sidhe)
This Irish fairy lays her eggs among the ferns and heather of the Wicklow Mountains.



SWALLOWTAIL FAIRY
(Nymphea papilio)
The swallowtail fairy usually lays her eggs on parsley leaves, or amongst other herbs.



EGG IDENTIFICATION

The flutterpillar of the **DRYAD** has a greenish tail, helping it blend in among the foliage of the oak tree.

The **RIVER SPRITE** flutterpillar has a fin on its tail, presumably to help it swim back to the bank should it fall into the water from an overhanging branch.

Be careful when walking amongst heather: you might trample on the tiny flutterpillar of the **WICKLOW FAIRY**, decked out in greens and purples.

It's easy to mistake the blotchy tail of the **SWALLOWTAIL** flutterpillar for a bird's dropping! This may help disguise it from hungry birds of prey.



FLUTTERPILLAR IDENTIFICATION



A pair of **DRYAD** fairies make a simple cocoon for their youngster from a blanket of green leaves.

The **RIVER SPRITE** hangs its cocoon from the branch of a weeping willow tree, disguised as a catkin.

The thorny appearance of the **WICKLOW FAIRY'S** cocoon helps it blend in among the brambles.

Wrapped in dead leaves, the cocoon of a **SWALLOWTAIL** fairy is attached to a branch using fine strands of spider's silk. It looks like a twig, and stays hidden until the moppet is ready to emerge.

COCOON IDENTIFICATION

JUNGLE FAIRIES

The Amazon Rainforest is a remarkable place, bursting with life. This tropical habitat is packed full of lush plants that provide food and shelter for thousands of different types of animal. These pages contain just a glimpse of the Amazon's fairy folk. My research has only scratched the surface and I'm quite sure there must be many more fairy species in the rainforest, as yet undiscovered.



HUMMINGBIRD FAIRIES use up so much energy during the day that they enter a very deep sleep at night. In the morning, they take about an hour to properly wake up.

On my last trip to the Amazon Rainforest, I made a remarkable discovery. At the edge of a sunny clearing I encountered a darting, shimmering fairy. Her quick-beating wings made a distinct humming sound as she flitted from flower to flower, sipping nectar. Close by, I discovered several tiny nests made from silk, carefully hidden in the undergrowth, each containing a soundly sleeping fairy.



It is unclear how the hummingbird fairy manages to beat its wings so much more quickly than other fairies. This intriguing species warrants further research!

Hummingbird Fairy
(Nymphia volitans)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

HOME: A tiny nest made from grasses and spider's silk.

FEATURES: Shimmering jewel-like wings.

BEHAVIOUR: Just like hummingbirds, these fairies are very agile fliers; they can fly forwards, backwards, sideways and even upside down! Their wings beat countless times a second – too fast for the eye to see. They spend their days visiting hundreds, if not thousands, of trumpet-shaped flowers, sipping nectar using a grass straw.

Malachite Fairy
(Nymphia viride)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

HOME: Sleeps in the curled-up leaves of the touch-me-not plant.

FEATURES: Wings similar to the malachite butterfly (vivid markings warn snakes and birds of prey to steer clear).

BEHAVIOUR: These social fairies are sun-lovers, often basking on leaves right at the top of the rainforest canopy. They take it in turns to keep watch for hungry eagles and spectacled owls, so others can enjoy feeding on fruits, sunbathing and grooming.



The **MALACHITE FAIRY** often wears clothes stitched from beautiful rainforest blooms.

The touch-me-not plant closes up its leaves if anything brushes them, to frighten away hungry insects. If you look closely at the curled-up fronds you might find clever malachite fairies dozing in these leafy sleeping bags! The leaf provides a comfy place to rest and protects them from predators while they sleep.

The tail of the **RAINFOREST NYMPH** flutterpillar looks very similar to a snake's head, complete with frightening eyespots! This is very useful for frightening away predators.



The **RAINFOREST NYMPH** is one of the largest fairy species, with a wingspan of up to 10 centimetres. It can be spotted near jungle riverbanks, grazing on the berries of the camu camu tree or on sweet passion fruits.

Rainforest Nymph
(Nymphia amazonia)

HABITAT: Amazon Rainforest, South America.

HOME: A treetop nest close to water.

FEATURES: Shimmering blue wings, remarkably similar to the blue morpho butterfly.

BEHAVIOUR: The rainforest nymph has a clever method of hiding itself away. When it feels threatened, it closes up its dazzling wings, revealing the brown, mottled undersides. These allow it to blend in with tree branches and dead leaves.

DESERT AND SAVANNAH FAIRIES

Deserts may appear to be barren wastelands, but if you look closely you'll find a surprising amount of wildlife: birds, insects, reptiles – and yes, even fairies! Deserts are places of extremes, so the creatures that live here have to be tough to survive. The temperatures soar during the day and plummet at night. Because of the heat, many desert fairies sleep in the day and come out at night-time.

Dew Fairy (Nymphe aquarum)

HABITAT: Sahara Desert, North Africa

HOME: A burrow in the sand.

FEATURES: Glossy wings reflect the sunlight to keep the fairy cool during mysterious. Like a camel's, to protect the eyes from sand.

BEHAVIOUR: Early each morning this fairy flits from plant to plant, carrying dewdrops to those that need them most.

The Sahara Desert receives hardly any rain, making it one of the driest places on earth. The plants here get their water from the dew that collects on their leaves at night. The little **DEW FAIRY** has an important job to do: it spends its time making sure that the desert plants have enough water to survive, distributing dewdrops as the sun rises.

Cactus Fairy (Nymphe cereta)

HABITAT: Sonoran Desert, United States and Mexico.

HOME: A hole in a cactus left by a gila woodpecker.

FEATURES: Thick skin on the hands and feet protects the fairy against cactus spines; large ears help body heat escape.

BEHAVIOUR: These fairies emerge at night to feast on the bright red fruit of the saguaro cactus. Their large ears allow them to listen out for hunting owl spells.

North America's Sonoran Desert is famous for its amazing saguaro cacti, which can grow up to 15 metres tall. They provide homes for many creatures, including **CACTUS FAIRIES**.

Queen of the Night (Nymphe cereus)

HABITAT: Chihuahuan Desert, United States and Mexico.

HOME: A burrow at the base of the cereus cactus.

FEATURES: Beautiful wings resemble the petals of the cereus flower.

BEHAVIOUR: This fairy is very difficult to spot, emerging only when the cereus flowers bloom.

The rare **QUEEN OF THE NIGHT** desert fairy looks after the night-blooming cereus. This plant flowers for only one night a year in the middle of summer. When the special night arrives, the Fairy darts between the fragrant blooms, carrying pollen from one to another, so new flowers will grow.

Peri (Nymphe peri)

HABITAT: Great Salt Desert, Persia.

HOME: Shares a burrow with a family of Persian birds, which are relations of gerbils.

FEATURES: Large ears and large eyes for seeing in the dark.

BEHAVIOUR: The peri helps the Persian bird guard its nest, keeping watch for sand boas, horned vipers and other snakes. It rests during the heat of the day, coming out at dusk and dusk.

The **PERI**, named after the Persian word for 'fairy', is well designed for life in the scorching desert. It has large ears that allow body heat to escape, so it can stay cool.

Fairies are not the only visitors to the cereus flower: hawk moths also like to dine on the sweet nectar.

FAIRIES OF THE SAVANNAH

The grasslands of the world, from tropical African savannahs to the cooler steppes of Asia, are home to some remarkable fairies.



Savannah Fairy

This sociable African fairy often makes its home in an abandoned termite mound, or in the nest of a weaver bird.



Prairie Rose Fairy

In the grasslands of the United States, you might be lucky enough to see this fairy flitting among the flowers of the prairie rose.



Steppe Sprite

On the rolling steppes of Russia and Mongolia, this shy fairy is very well concealed among the waving grasses.

FAIRY LANGUAGE AND SECRET SCRIPTS

You may be curious to learn how fairies communicate with each other. Do they use human languages, do they speak their own secret fairy language, or do they interact in other ways? Just like humans and other animals, fairies have various methods of making themselves understood, from speaking, whistling and calling to writing.



Fairy Speech

Whenever I am searching for fairies in the wild, I begin by simply listening. Often, the chattering of our winged friends can easily be mistaken for birdsong, and only a very experienced listener can single out the high-pitched chirrups that belong to fairies. However, although I can identify fairy language when I hear it, I have sadly not yet been able to understand their speech. I would venture that different species of fairy around the world speak different languages. Some sound like tinkling music, while others resemble the jabbering of a busy colony of birds.

Body Language

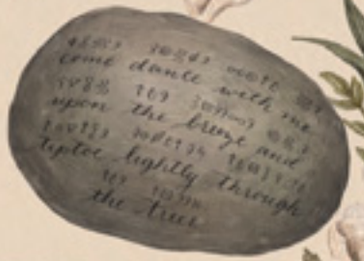
Fairies have others ways of communicating with one another aside from spoken language. Actions and gestures are key in the fairy kingdom: a curt flick of the wings or a swift shrug of the shoulders can express anger, while a quiet humming noise produced by gently vibrating wings often indicates pleasure, similar to purring in a cat.



Letter Writers

Remarkably, it appears that in some instances, fairies have even managed to learn human languages. How else do we explain the miniature letters that now and again appear under children's pillows when they lose a tooth? However, I believe fairies use human languages only in their written forms – so far, I have not heard any fairies actually speaking any recognisable human dialects.





The Fairy Alphabet

During the course of my studies, I have occasionally discovered tiny symbols scratched onto tree bark or scrawled across leaves. Although I guessed these symbols had been placed there by fairies, for many years I was unable to decipher their meanings. But one afternoon, as I was digging in my vegetable patch, I unearthed a large, smooth pebble that changed everything. On this pebble were etched a series of tiny symbols in fairy script, and beneath them was carved a phrase in English. Looking more closely, I realised that the English words were a translation of the fairy script. This single pebble was the key to unlocking the secrets of fairy writing!



Using the stone as my guide, I was able to decode the fairy alphabet.

