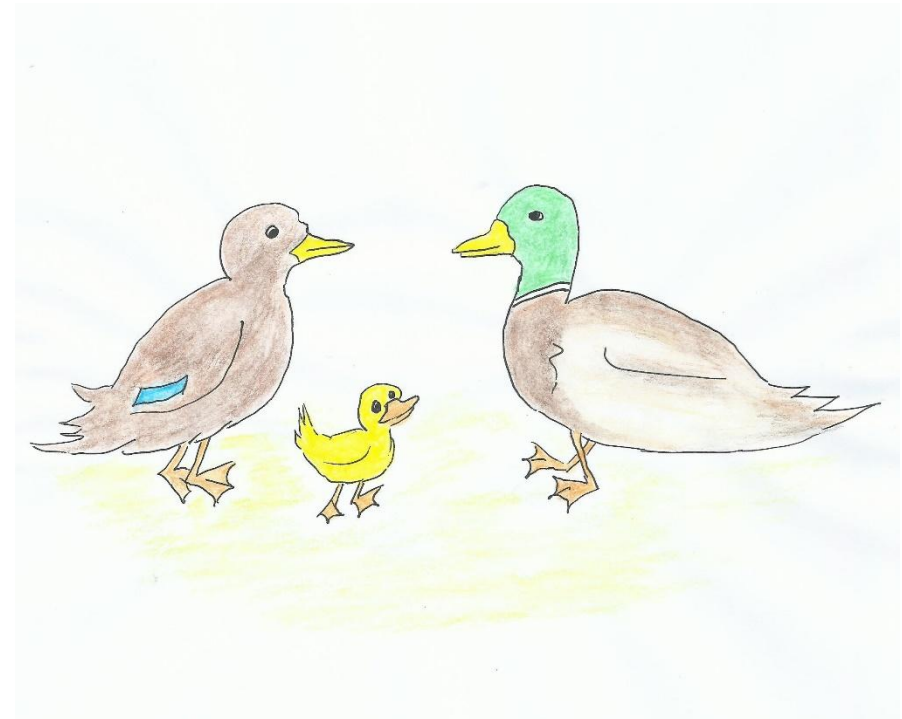


WATER PARK
TALES

Martha Mallard



Mr & Mrs Mallard had a big family. There were four boys and four girls; Mobby, Moffy, Monny, Moppy, Mossy, Motty, Mozzy and Martha.

"I'm just going out to get some food" Mrs Mallard said one morning. "Now, you may stay in the nest or you can swim on the lake but don't...." she paused for a moment and looked at them all sternly "....*don't* go near to the river."

"We won't, mummy" they all shouted.



The ducklings swam on the lake. Mobby and Moffy played with a ball that some children had left behind. Monny and Moppy squabbled over a flower. Mossy, Motty and Mozzy went to talk to Carla and Caitlin Coot.

Martha was bored. She forgot what her mummy had said. She climbed out of the lake and decided to explore the park.

“This is exciting” thought Martha.



Shoosh! Shoosh! Shoosh!

Martha could hear a strange sound. She followed the sound till she came to the edge of the river.

Shoosh! Shoosh! Shoosh! The sound of the river was very loud.

Woof! Woof! A dog barked suddenly behind her.

Martha jumped. She tried to steady herself but she lost her footing and tumbled head first into the water.

SPLASH!!

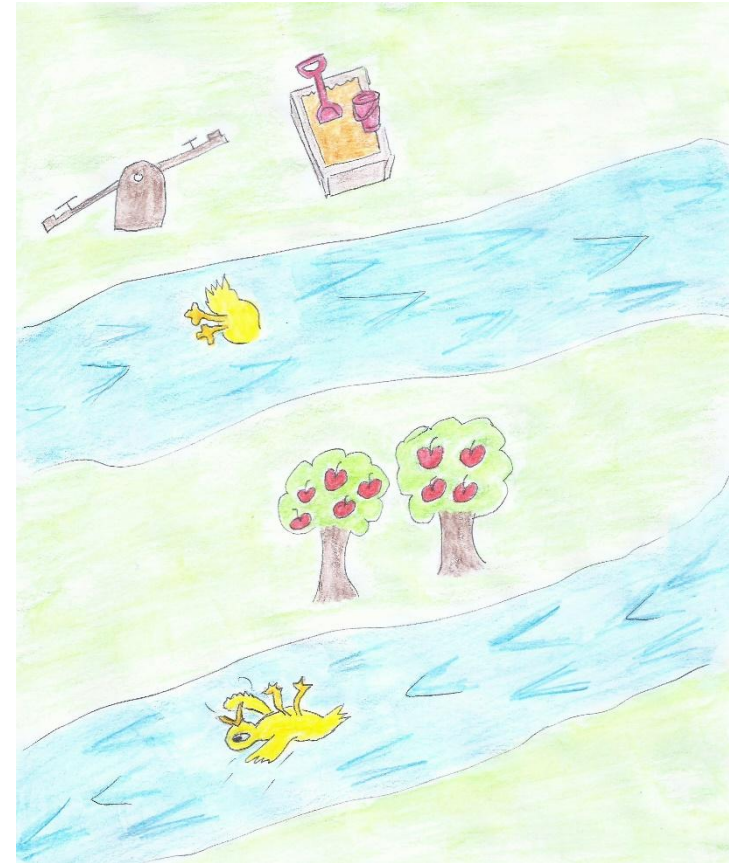


The river was moving quickly. Martha's feet paddled as fast as they could but the water was too fast. She was struggling to stay upright.

"Help" called Martha. "Mummy, Daddy help me! Help!"

But Martha's mummy and daddy couldn't hear her.

The water was flowing faster and faster and Martha was carried quickly downstream. She hurtled past the playground and past the orchard, alongside the meadow and then on down the river.



Ollie and Octavia Owl were sitting side by side on a branch over the water.

"Help" Martha waved to them. "Please help me" she called.

"What did Martha say?" said Ollie, frowning. Ollie had excellent eyesight but he couldn't hear very well.

"I think she said 'hello'" said Octavia, smiling.

"Hello" Octavia called out to Martha and she waved cheerfully. Octavia's hearing was no better than Ollie's!



"Help" called Martha when she saw the twins, Bree and Blake Blue Tit. "Please help me."

"Oh dear. It looks like Martha is in trouble, Blake" said Bree, worriedly. "Can you swim?"

"No. I can't swim" replied Blake. "Can you?"

Bree shook her head.

"We can't help poor Martha" they both said, sadly. "We can't swim."



Keeley and Kodi Kingfisher were enjoying the afternoon sunshine when they heard a small voice below.

“Help! Help! Can you please help me?”

“Oh dear” said Keeley. “That looks like little Martha. I think she needs our help, Kodi. You go to find her mummy and daddy and I’ll see if I can stop her.”

Kodi flew off to look for Mr and Mrs Mallard.



Keeley flew after Martha who was being swept along the river at a frightening speed.

A large tree branch hung over the water. Martha reached up to grab it but she missed the branch and fell back into the water with a splash. The water was moving so quickly, it tossed her roughly from side to side.

“Hold on there” called out Keeley. “We’ll help you, Martha.”



Keeley plunged head first into the cold water.

She dived to the bottom of the river then turned sharply and swam straight back to the surface, emerging from the water at incredible speed.

Swiftly Keeley flew up into the air, circled round and then plunged back into the river again.

Once. Twice. Three times.

Keeley dived in and out of the water so fast that Martha never even saw her.



But the fish saw her.

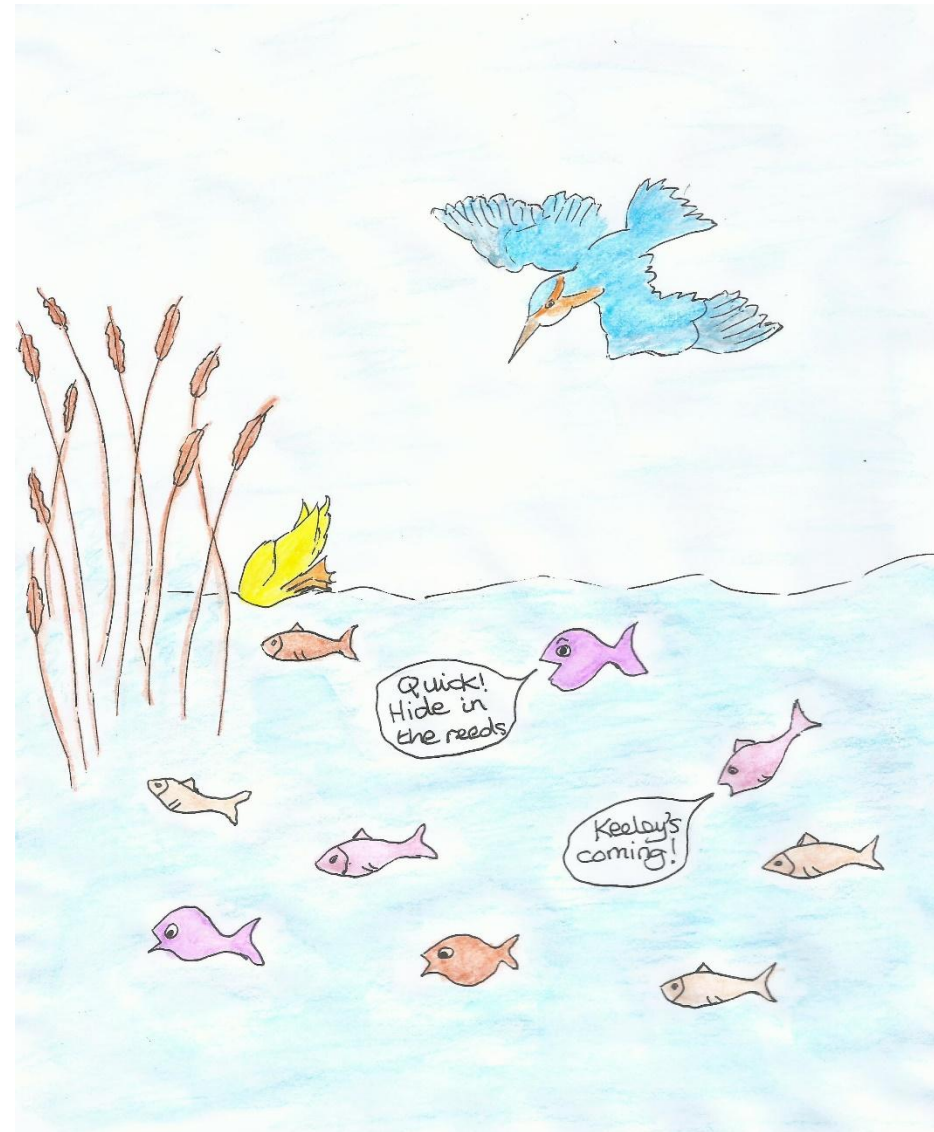
“Watch out!” shouted one fish. “Keeley is trying to catch a fish.”

“Quick! We need to get away” a second fish called.

“Keeley is trying to catch a fish” word spread quickly among the river fish.

“Let’s hide in the reeds” they all said “we don’t want Keeley Kingsfisher to catch us.”

Soon fish appeared from everywhere. Hundreds of fish. There were fish of all shapes and sizes.



Martha had never seen so many fish.

There were big, round ones with pink scales, small, yellow ones with blue tails, green spikey fish with black stripes. The river was filled with fish and they were all swimming towards the reeds by the river bank.

Martha was carried along by the swarms of fish. Suddenly she felt herself being lifted out of the river and up onto the river bank.

“Daddy” she called out happily when she saw Mr Mallard flying overhead.

“Oh” said the fish “Keeley wasn’t trying to catch us, after all. She was just trying to save Martha Mallard.” One by one they began to swim away.



“Thank you so much, Keeley and Kodi” said Mr Mallard.
“Thank you, little fish, for saving Martha.”

“Now, how am I going to get Martha back to the nest?”
wondered Mr Mallard, frowning deeply. “She’s too small
to fly all the way home.”

“I know” he thought quickly . “I’ll carry Martha on my
back. I’ve seen Gary Grebe do that with his
children.....and Susie Swan. Perhaps I can do it too. Climb
up, Martha.”

So Martha climbed onto Daddy’s back and she had a
lovely ride home.

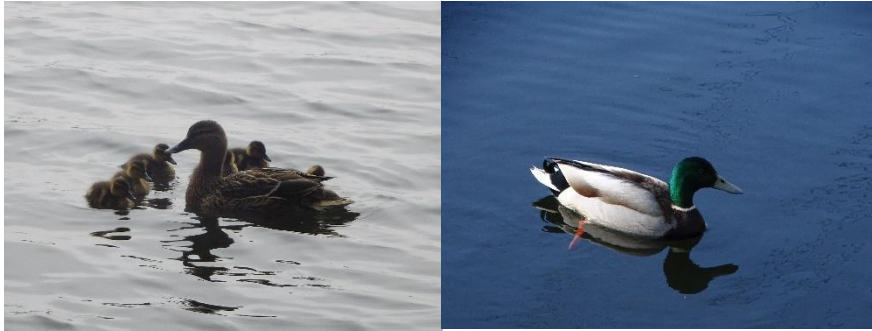


When Martha got home she told Mobby, Moffy, Monny, Moppy, Mossy, Motty and Mozzy all about her adventure.

“It was very exciting” she told them “but I’m not going to go near the river again.”

And she didn’t....at least not for a while anyway!





Female mallard with ducklings and (right) male mallard

Mallards are the most common of all ducks in the UK. They have lots of ducklings, sometimes with families of ten or more