



Series: The Magical Animal Fairies

Book: Erin the Firebird Fairy

Ha Ha!

Kirsty Tate held her breath, trying to keep her fingers steady on the camera as a little brown sparrow only a few steps away pecked at something on the ground. She was crouched at the edge of a woodland clearing, framed by leafy trees and bushes, with dappled sunlight streaming through. She pressed the button on top of the camera. Click! There – perfect.

‘Brilliant,’ said her best friend, Rachel Walker, who was crouching next to Kirsty. She took her pencil and ticked off the sparrow’s picture from a list she held on a clipboard. ‘That makes five birds we’ve found and photographed,’ she said feeling pleased. ‘The sparrow, thrush, blackbird, robin and magpie. Just the blue tit to spot now, and we’re done.’

The two girls were spending a week of their spring holiday at an outdoors adventure camp. Today was Nature Day, and all the campers had been put in pairs and given a list of plants, animals or insects to track down and photograph. At the end of the day, they were going to gather around the campfire and share their discoveries with everyone.

Rachel and Kirsty sat on a fallen log to look at the birdwatcher’s guidebook they had been given. Rachel flicked through until she found a page about the blue tit. ‘Here we are,’ she said, looking at the photograph. ‘So it’s got a blue head, wings and tail, and a yellow chest. Well, that should be easy enough to spot.’

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'It says here that the blue tit is acrobatic and cheeky, and has a funny call: *tee, tee, tee,*' Kirsty said, reading aloud. She put her head on one side, listening hard. 'I can't hear anything like that,' she said after a moment.

'I'll have a look with these,' Rachel said, picking up their binoculars and scanning the glade. She moved them around slowly, spotting clumps of primroses and nodding daffodils, but no blue tits. The only bird she could see was a robin perched on a tree stump. Rachel chuckled to herself as a joke suddenly popped into her head.

'What's so funny?' Kirsty wanted to know.

'I just thought of a joke,' Rachel said. 'Which bird steals from the rich to give to the poor?'

'I don't know,' Kirsty replied.

'Robin Hood!' Rachel giggled.

Kirsty smiled. 'I like that,' she said. 'I've got one too. Which bird tells the best jokes?'

Rachel shrugged. 'I give in,' she answered.

'A comedi-HEN!' Kirsty replied. Both girls laughed.

'My turn,' Rachel said. 'Why does a hummingbird hum?'

'I don't know,' Kirsty said.

'Because it's forgotten the words of the song!' Rachel cried, bursting out laughing. Kirsty, too, was helpless with laughter for a few minutes.

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Kirsty recovered herself after a while and wiped her eyes. Then she caught sight of something unusual up in the tree tops. 'Hey – what's orange, red and yellow and perches on a branch?'

'I don't know,' giggled Rachel, thinking it was another joke. 'What *is* orange, red and yellow and perches on a branch?'

'No, no,' Kirsty said. 'I mean it. There's a bird up there, and it's the most beautiful creature I've ever seen. Look!'

Rachel stared up with her binoculars. She blinked in surprise as the bird came into view. It was as big as a parrot, with a long, trailing plume of orange, red and yellow feathers that shone brightly in the sunlight, almost like fire. 'Wow', she breathed. 'What *is* it?'

Kirsty began leafing through the guidebook to see if she could find a picture that matched the unusual bird, but its pages included nothing remotely like it.

Then the girls were startled by a sudden peal of laughter. It didn't seem quite human, somehow. 'What was that? Kirsty whispered, staring around.

The laughter came again – and Rachel aimed her binoculars at the strange bird. To her amazement, it was tipping its head back, with its beak open, making the laughing sounds! 'It...it's the bird!' she said, nudging Kirsty. 'The *bird* is laughing. It must be magic!'

Kirsty's mouth fell open in delight as she realised something. 'Yes – you're right,' she said, smiling. 'I bet it's the Magical Firebird from Fairyland!'

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Read the rest of *Erin the Firebird Fairy* and discover what magic happens next!

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