

This is the tale of a very small shrew, who lives in the dunes, by the sea with a view. Surrounded by wonders both epic and small, but due to her shyness sees not much at all.

Day and night she snuffles for grubs hides in her tunnels and scampers through shrubs. She scoffs more than her bodyweight every day. She is tiny but mighty in every way. Except one...

Mia the pygmy shrew has never left home. She's a solitary girl who lives all alone. Although she has Murlough, right here, to explore she stays in her tunnel way back from the shore.

She doesn't quite realise that she's missing out. There are so many magnificent creatures about! Seals and porpoise that swim in the bay, Minke whale and dolphins that frolic and play.

**DAZZLING PYGMY SHREW FACTS**

**SIZE:** AROUND 3 TO 4 CM LONG, WEIGHING IN AT ONLY 4 GRAMS!

**TOP SPEED:** 8MPH!!

**UNIQUE FEATURES:** POINTY NOSE AND SHORT TAIL. BROWN SILKY FUR AND SILVER TUMMY

**SPECIAL SKILLS:** AMAZING CLIMBERS

**DEFENCE TACTICS:** VERY AGGRESSIVE AND TERRITORIAL (YOU CAN ACTUALLY HEAR THEM FIGHTING)

**LIFESPAN:** AROUND 1 YEAR

**WORLD RECORD:** FASTEST HEARTBEAT AT OVER 1000 BEATS PER MINUTE

**DIET:** INSECTS, SPIDERS AND WOODLICE

**WEIRD FACT:** STINKY SCENT GLANDS ON THE BACK OF THEIR LEGS MEAN THAT PREDATORS RARELY EAT THEM

**FOLKLORE:** THEY WERE ONCE THOUGHT TO BE VENOMOUS!

SHAKESPEARE WROTE A PLAY ABOUT THEM CALLED THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

So Mia decided one day to be brave and peeped her cute nose up out of her cave. She saw a bright creature fluttering by. "WOW!" she said, "It's a butterfly!"

"Did you know our dunes are 6000 years old?" Said the beautiful creature, who seemed rather bold. "Stone Age cave folk once lived here, you know. I'll show you around, come on, let's go!"

So Mia and Nora set off to find out what beautiful Murlough was all about. "We'll start in the heathland," said Nora with glee and past the ponies they went happily.

Wildflowers, reindeer moss and lichen-filled hollows Hundreds of birds like linnets and swallows. "Our home is AMAZING," the friends said together, then stopped for a rest in the pretty pink heather.



The dunes are amazing with so much to see:

Super fast lizards and beetles and bees. Strange-looking plants like stork's-bill and cat's-ear. It's a big sandy playground, there's nothing to fear!

So Mia and Nora raced down the hill and spotted a bird with a huge curvy bill. "I'm a mud-loving curlew," he said with a wink. "I can suck up a ragworm before you can blink."

Nora loved flora and started to find some interesting plants... the mysterious kind. Devil's finger fungus and lady's bedstraw, shepherd's cress, cat's tail and plenty more.

But as they got nearer, Mia started to fear. "We're right by the beach, I've never been here." So Nora took hold of the little shrew's paw and bravely together headed down to the shore.

**Fabulous Flora and Fauna**

There are some incredible plants and flowers that grow at Murlough. You can spot bluebells in spring and beautiful pink orchids and bright blue viper's bugloss in summer.

Because there are so many flowers here, the insects love it too, especially the butterflies. Look out for marsh fritillary, whose larvae grow on devil's-bit scabious, common blue, small copper, dark green fritillary, grayling, small heath and meadow brown.

The cryptic wood white and small elephant hawk moth get the 'Best Named' award!

Down on the beach there was plenty of treasure. "I love it here, I'm not scared...it's a pleasure." There were purses from mermaids and seaweedy strands and big giant jellyfish asleep on the sands.

Sandcastles, driftwood and plenty of shells. Bright shiny pebbles and sea salty smells. It's paradise here by these waters so blue, home to sea squirts, urchins and basking sharks too.

There are so many legends that come from the sea: galloping white horses and shape-shifting selkie. What about the merrow with her magic red cap and Finn McCool, the great giant chap.



"Look over there at that white cotton tail, bouncing and binking along the dune trail. There are plenty of rabbits that live in the warrens. A seal told me once they were brought by the Normans."

"This place is incredible, what more do you know?" asked Mia the shrew who was starting to glow... Glowing with pride that her home was HERE. "Murlough is special", she said with a cheer.

"The rabbits and bees, and insects like me, All love these flowers that grow by the sea. There are bluebells, primroses and blackberries too and wild thyme for bunnies and of course pygmy shrew!"

"Let's head to the sand dunes" Nora said with a smile. "It's beautiful there, I've not been for a while." So the friends headed east where the marram grass grew. They looked out to sea, what a fabulous view!



**Did you know...**

THAT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR MURLOUGH BECAME AN ARMY BASE. THERE WERE BARRACKS TO HOUSE THE SOLDIERS, A RIFLE RANGE AND AN AIRSTRIP. THE AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WHO WERE STATIONED HERE WROTE HOME TO TELL FAMILY AND FRIENDS HOW BEAUTIFUL MURLOUGH WAS. ONE SERVICEMAN DESCRIBED THE DUNDRUM BAY AREA AS AN ANCIENT EMERALD LAND WHERE TRIBES ONCE CLASHED AND MYTHICAL CREATURES LIVED. THE RAF WERE BASED HERE AFTER THE WAR ENDED.

Now estuaries are special, full of marvellous mud, So let's go explore it, you know we should, full of worms for waders, a fabulous feast there are pure white egrets and plenty of geese.

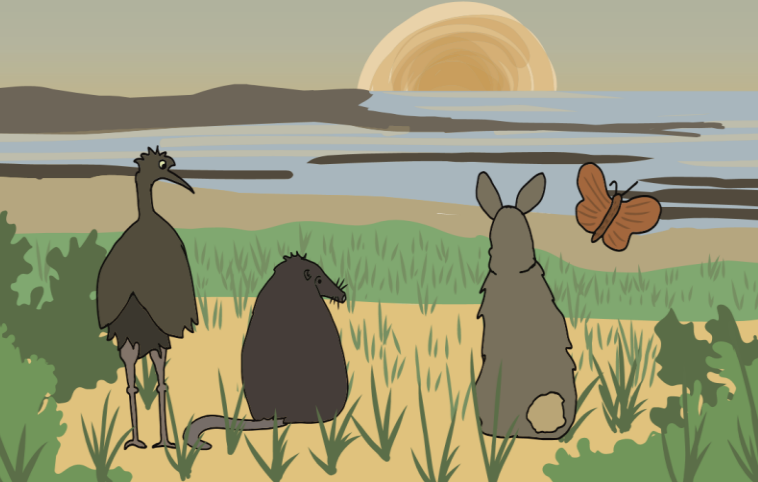
Estuaries love changing, just like the tide. Mia was in heaven, her eyes were wide. "I cant believe all this magic is the place I call home. Now I've seen all these wonders I'll never be alone."

They watched gannets diving and flocks of knots Nora said this was her favourite spot. An otter played by them, the seals gave a wave and Mia felt fabulous for being so brave.

But now it was evening and getting quite late So back to the heathland went our shrew and her mate. The

**Look out...**

ACROSS THE ESTUARY AND SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT ANY SEALS LOOKING BACK AT YOU ... IT'S USUALLY JUST THEIR HEADS POPPING OUT OF THE WATER BUT SOMETIMES THEY HAUL THEMSELVES UP ONTO BALLYKINLER BEACH. THE HARBOUR SEALS SUNBATHE LIKE A CURVED BANANA! THERE ARE ALSO GREY SEALS LIVING HERE.



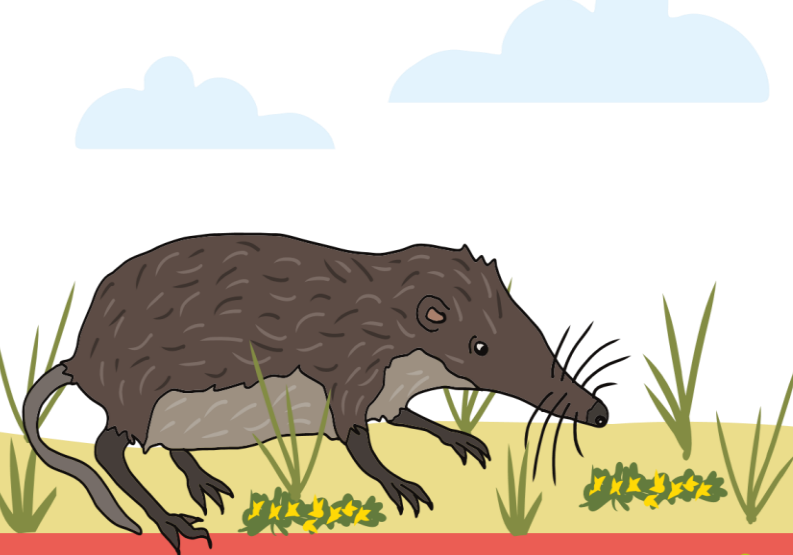
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for children and the young at heart

**Walks around Newcastle, County Down**

Mia the Pygmy Shrew of Murlough

A story walk around Murlough National Nature Reserve



**Easy to follow Map & Story**

Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way

**Tale trails**

**Murlough Tale Trail**

Car Park Location: There is a National Trust car park at the entrance to Murlough Nature Reserve, 3km south of Dundrum on the A2.

Route Length: 2km

Route Description: This route follows the path of the 'Brandy Pad', an old smugglers' route, where alcohol, spices, tobacco, tea, coffee and silk once made their way to the secluded villages in the Mourne mountains avoiding the Customs and Excise officers! The track into the hills follows the river through beautiful heathland with breathtaking views of both the sea and the mountains. In summer butterflies and dragonflies can be seen and many birds such as linnets around the gorse bushes. The coastal cliffs are used by numerous seabirds such as fulmars and gannets for nest sites.

The name 'Bloody Bridge' refers to a massacre at the site in 1641 when a number of prisoners were slain and thrown over the bridge into the river, turning it red. You can either follow the spaghetti junction and down to the beach, turn left and follow the beach until you reach the next yellow marker. For the shorter route, head inland on the Archaeology path or continue along the beach and around Murlough House and woodlands for an additional 5 km loop.

**Bloody Bridge, The Brandy Pad and Maggies Leap**

Car Park Location: From Newcastle, follow the A2 south for 3 miles. The car park is on the left before the bridge.

The Outdoor Partnership works to support the people of Northern Ireland, Wales and other UK areas to take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit. We work with clubs, schools, individuals and specialists to increase opportunities for people in Northern Ireland to achieve their potential through outdoor activities, active participation, volunteering, training and education.

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