

An artistic illustration of an owl with large yellow eyes and reddish-brown feathers, perched in a hollow of a tree. The tree trunk is textured with green and brown, and has many small, reddish-brown, star-shaped leaves or flowers. The background is a dark blue night sky with white stars. The title 'ELF OWL.' is written in a large, white, stylized font with a black outline, arched over the owl's head.

ELF OWL.

• AND HIS ECOSYSTEM •

Megan Noel



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ELF OWL



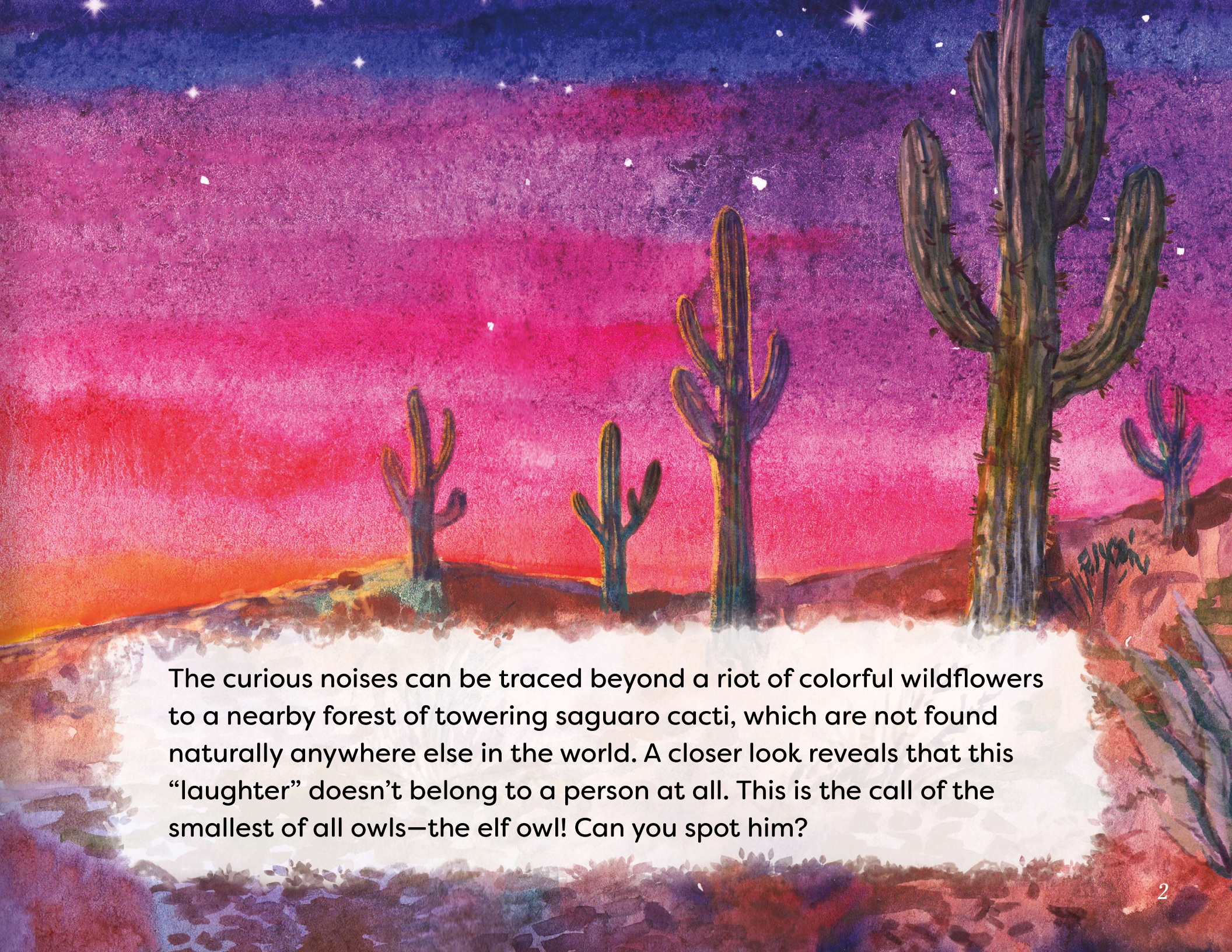
• AND HIS ECOSYSTEM •

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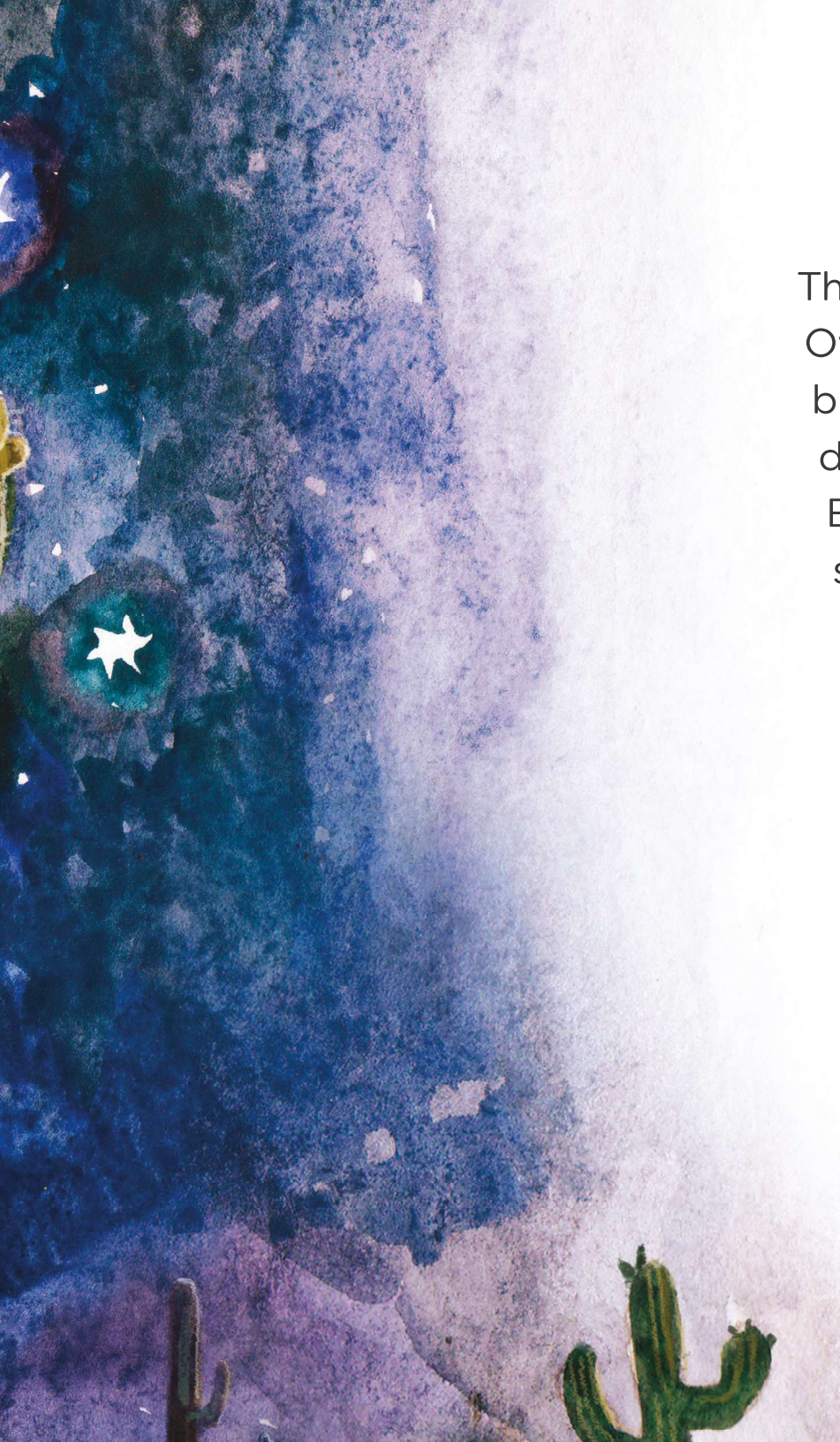


A glorious rainbow of brilliant colors streaks the sky as the burning sun begins to sink behind the hot, sandy dunes of the Sonoran Desert. Suddenly, as the first stars begin to twinkle overhead, a rather high-pitched chuckling sound breaks the evening stillness. It continues on and on, as if something is very funny. Who could that be?



The curious noises can be traced beyond a riot of colorful wildflowers to a nearby forest of towering saguaro cacti, which are not found naturally anywhere else in the world. A closer look reveals that this “laughter” doesn’t belong to a person at all. This is the call of the smallest of all owls—the elf owl! Can you spot him?





There he is! It is springtime, and Elf Owl has just recently returned to his breeding grounds here in the arid desert ecosystem of southern Arizona. Elf owls never build their own nesting sites, so he has chosen to move into an abandoned Gila woodpecker hole, high in this sturdy saguaro. Now he must defend his territory and attract a mate with which to share his new home, so he calls out across the moonlit landscape.



Because the bright desert days are hot, many other creatures are also just beginning to stir as the daylight fades away. Crickets, katydids, and other nocturnal insects raise their chirping chorus. They sustain elf owls and many other creatures in this hot, dry climate with their protein and water content.

ECOSYSTEMS

in Your

BACKYARD



by Nyree Bevan



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY



ECOSYSTEMS in Your BACKYARD

Written by Nyree Bevan
Cover design by Phillip Colhouer



Did you know that in your backyard there is an ecosystem? You might be wondering what that is. An ecosystem is a community of living organisms that interact in a particular place. The organisms all work together to create a circle of life. Our incredible earth is full of many ecosystems, and they are all connected. In fact, the earth is one gigantic ecosystem. Yet some are small, like your neighborhood or your own backyard. Even just a small potted plant is an ecosystem!





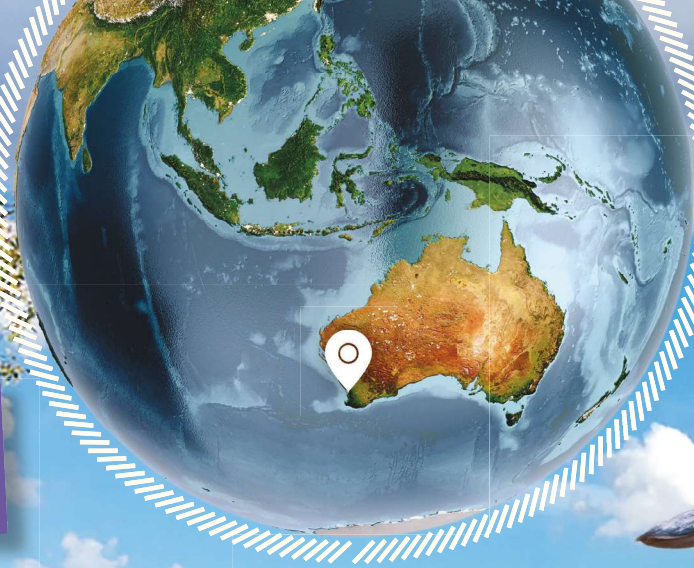
Let's travel around
the world and explore
the ecosystems of three
different backyards.



First, we'll head
to beautiful
Dunsborough in

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Right next to a river, there is a little green clapboard house, and in the backyard are lots of tall trees. Up in the trees live many wild birds, such as weiros, willie wagtails, and kookaburras, creating quite a ruckus. Down in the grass, you might see kangaroos bounding away or snakes seeking some shade from the hot sun. All year long, pesky mosquitoes buzz around.



KOOKABURRA



DIAMOND PYTHON

The weiros like to eat the seeds and berries in the trees and bushes. In turn, they help to spread those seeds so more bushes and trees can grow.



WILLIE WAGTAIL



Willie wagtails eat mosquitoes, which is surely a great blessing to the other animals and people in the area! The kookaburras eat insects, fish from the river, and even small snakes.





KOOKABURRAS

Snakes eat mice and other small critters, whereas kangaroos feed on the grass and bushes. They are so much fun to watch as they hop from bush to bush with almost no effort! When a kangaroo gets old and dies, the smaller lizards and some birds will feed on the carcass. Their waste helps to fertilize the soil so more plants can grow.

Every animal works together to make the ecosystem function.

God never creates something without a purpose, and if you sit and watch the ecosystem in your backyard, you can see His amazing hand at work!

