


Read

# Night-time noises

What's that going bump  
in the night?



An illustration of a garden scene. At the top, a tree branch with autumn-colored leaves (red, orange, yellow) is visible. A red squirrel is perched on the branch. To the right, a yellow and blue bird is perched on a branch, and another similar bird is flying nearby. A yellow bird feeder hangs from a branch. The background is a light blue sky. The bottom half of the page shows a girl with dark hair, wearing a yellow shirt and a blue scarf, looking into a hole in the ground. The hole is surrounded by green grass and various plants, including purple flowers and tall green stalks. A white picket fence is visible in the background. A small black bird is flying in the air. A white snake is coiled on the ground near the hole. A brown object, possibly a shell or a piece of wood, is on the ground near the hole. The overall scene is bright and colorful.

It was almost Halloween when a loud screech woke Alex up in the middle of the night. Hardly daring to breathe, she peered through a gap in the curtains. The garden was empty. "Maybe I imagined it," she said.

The next day, she went to look outside. Something had been there. She found prints in the garden, pawprints with long claw marks. The tracks went right across the lawn.

The next night, a loud crash woke Alex. She jumped out of bed and looked down into the garden. Something had knocked the bin

over. Alex saw a long tail disappearing into the bushes and she spent the rest of the night hiding under the covers.

The next night, Alex woke up again. This time, she heard something snuffling and grunting outside. Whatever it was, it was getting braver. And nearer. What on earth could it be? And what did it want?

In the morning, Alex found a hole in the flower bed. And in the hole was... a big smelly poo!

Well! What kind of monster did that?



The next night it was Halloween. Knowing that monsters didn't like light, Alex kept her torch by her bed to scare it away. The wind blew round the house. Trees creaked. An owl hooted. Alex lay in bed, her eyes wide open, waiting and listening.

Then she heard it, a snuffling and a grunting in the garden. It was coming. Closer and CLOSER...

Trying to feel more brave than scared, Alex shone her torch into the garden. Now she could see what had been

making all the noises and leaving all the tracks and signs. It had a black nose and orange fur, a white chin and chest. It had two pointy ears and two bright eyes. It swished its bushy tail and cocked its head as it watched her calmly.

It wasn't a monster at all.

It was a fox. It had come into the garden digging for earthworms and rooting in the bins for food.

Alex was no longer scared, she was enchanted. Imagine, a fox, in her own garden!

Alex and the fox watched each other for a few moments before the fox slunk quietly away into the dark.

Alex was sad to see it leave, but the fox came back often. She didn't always see it, but Alex knew it had visited by the tracks and signs that it left.



Illustration: Kate Slater. Story: Pat Kelleher