

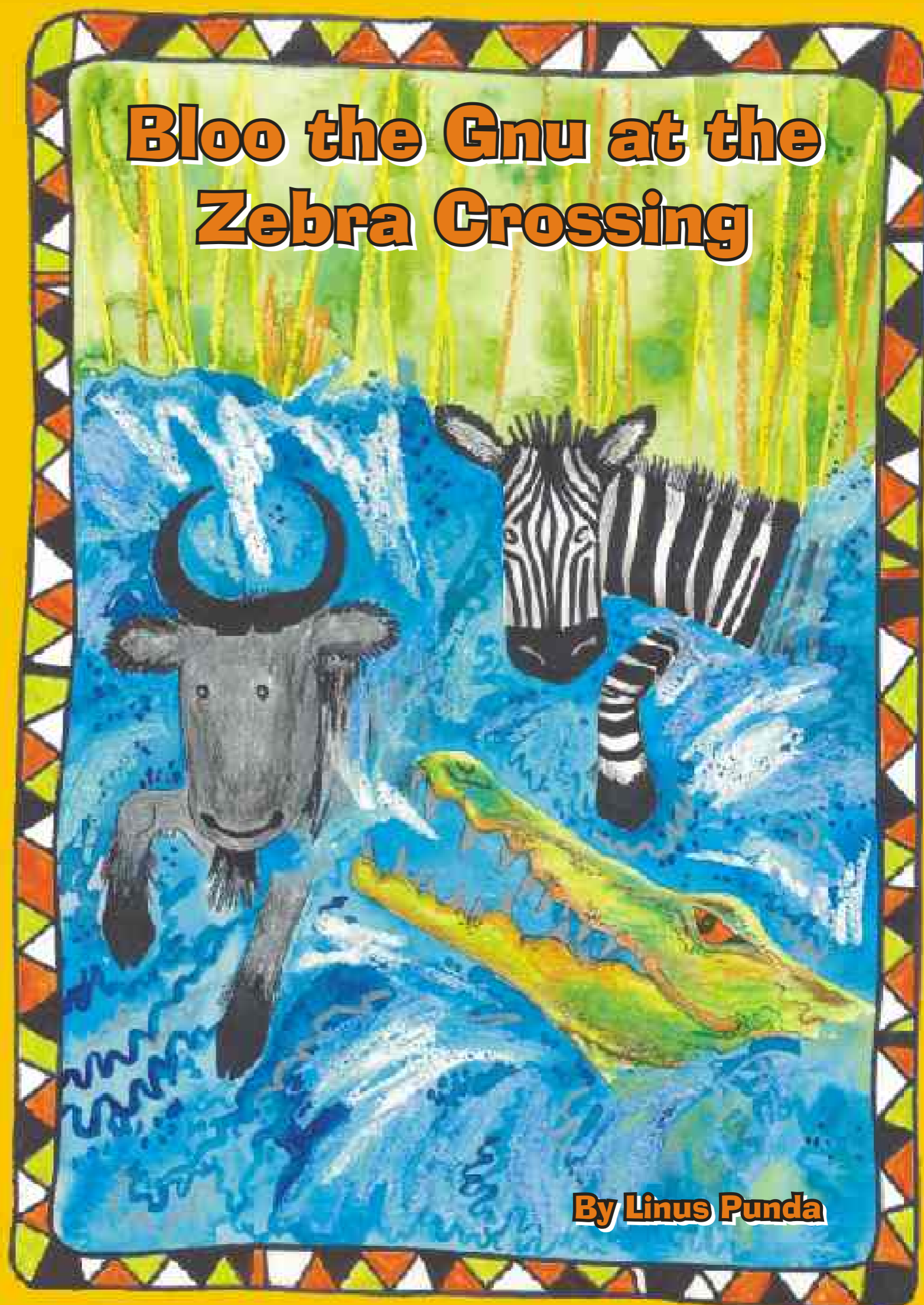
Bloo the Gnu at the Zebra Crossing

This is the story of Bloo the Gnu's journey across the grasslands of Africa and his attempt to cross the Mara River.

Bloo discovers from a familiar friend that,

**STOP,
LOOK,
LISTEN**

is not only helpful advice for avoiding crocodiles,
but also for crossing the road safely!

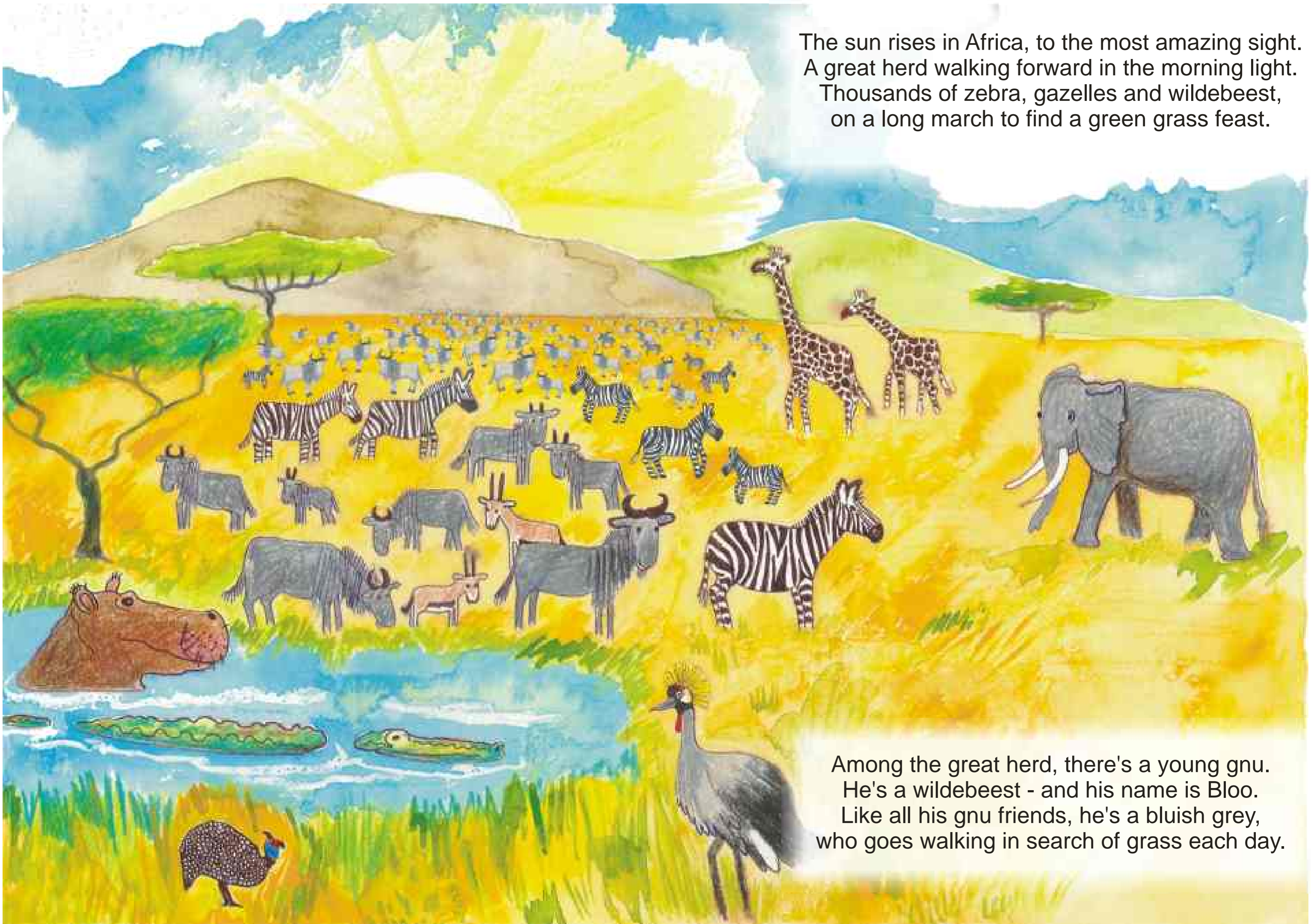


By Linus Punda



Bloo the Gnu
is a walking mascot created by
Derbyshire County Council's
School Travel Plan Team
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Illustrations courtesy of N. S. Hunt,
Ladycross Infant School

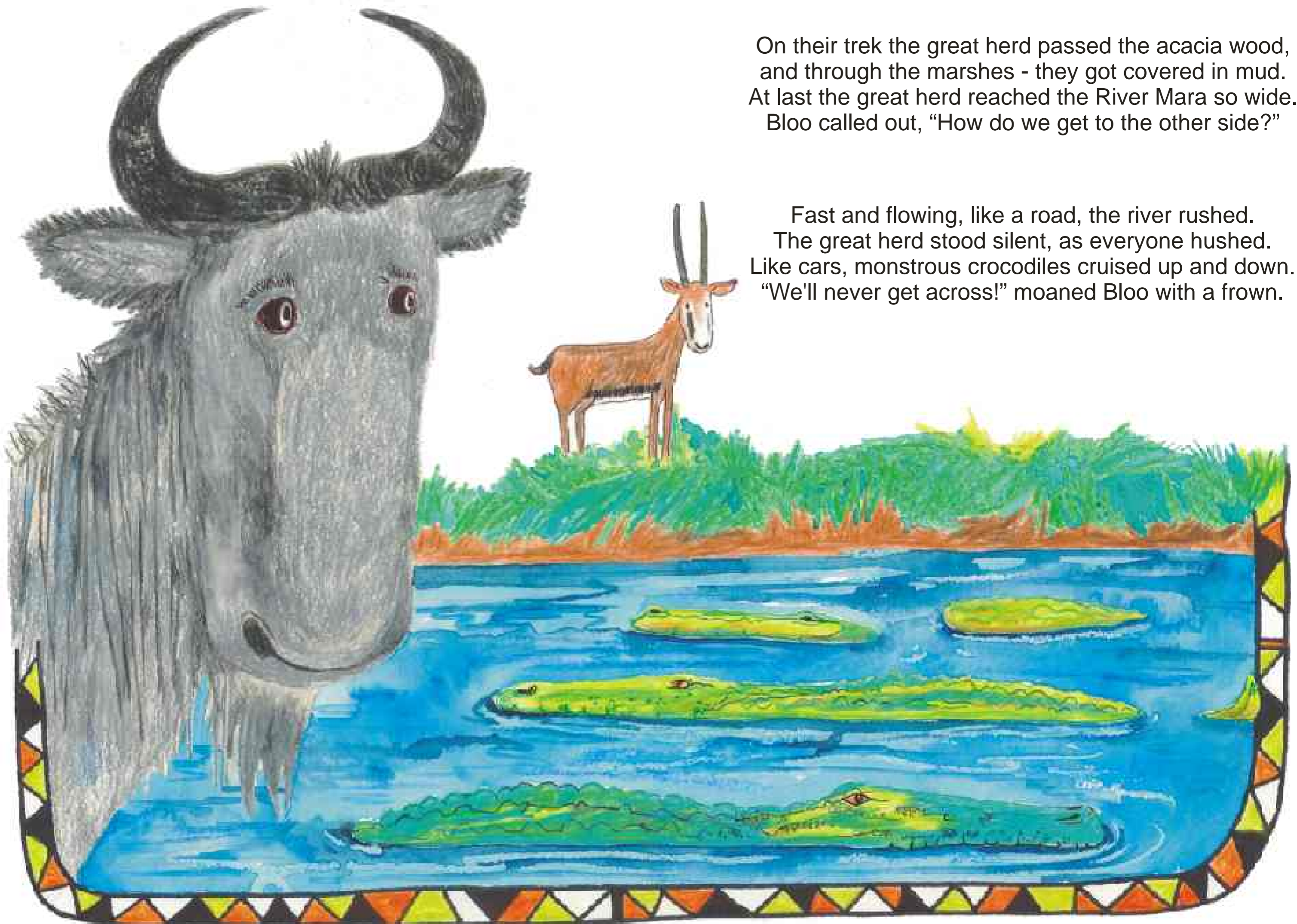
The sun rises in Africa, to the most amazing sight.
A great herd walking forward in the morning light.
Thousands of zebra, gazelles and wildebeest,
on a long march to find a green grass feast.



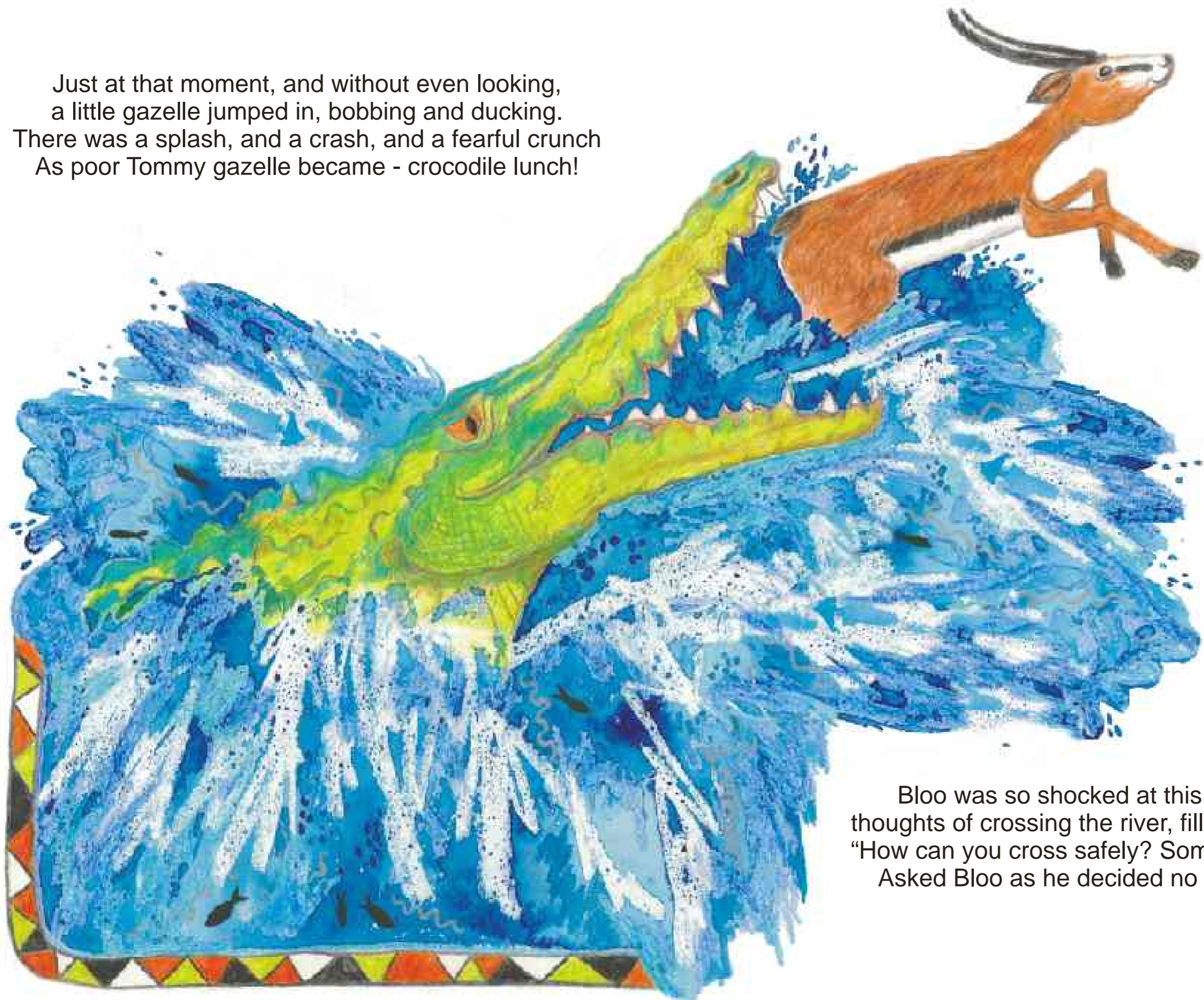
Among the great herd, there's a young gnu.
He's a wildebeest - and his name is Bloo.
Like all his gnu friends, he's a bluish grey,
who goes walking in search of grass each day.

On their trek the great herd passed the acacia wood,
and through the marshes - they got covered in mud.
At last the great herd reached the River Mara so wide.
Bloo called out, "How do we get to the other side?"

Fast and flowing, like a road, the river rushed.
The great herd stood silent, as everyone hushed.
Like cars, monstrous crocodiles cruised up and down.
"We'll never get across!" moaned Bloo with a frown.



Just at that moment, and without even looking,
a little gazelle jumped in, bobbing and ducking.
There was a splash, and a crash, and a fearful crunch
As poor Tommy gazelle became - crocodile lunch!



Bloo was so shocked at this terrible sight,
thoughts of crossing the river, filled him with fright.
“How can you cross safely? Someone must know.”
Asked Bloo as he decided no further he'd go.



“I'll go and ask monkey at the giant baobab tree.
He's so much cleverer and smarter than me.”
So off Bloo set at a steady gnu trot,
to find vervet monkey in his tree top spot.

The giant baobab tree stood mighty and strong.
It's branches filled with the sound of weaver bird song.
Bloo called out loudly, “Vervet monkey, where are you?”
“The river's too dangerous to cross, what shall I do?”

Vervet monkey said, “I can cross the river just fine.”
“Just simply join me and swing on this vine”.
Bloo looked up and said, “I can't do that!
I'm far too heavy and that vine will just snap!”

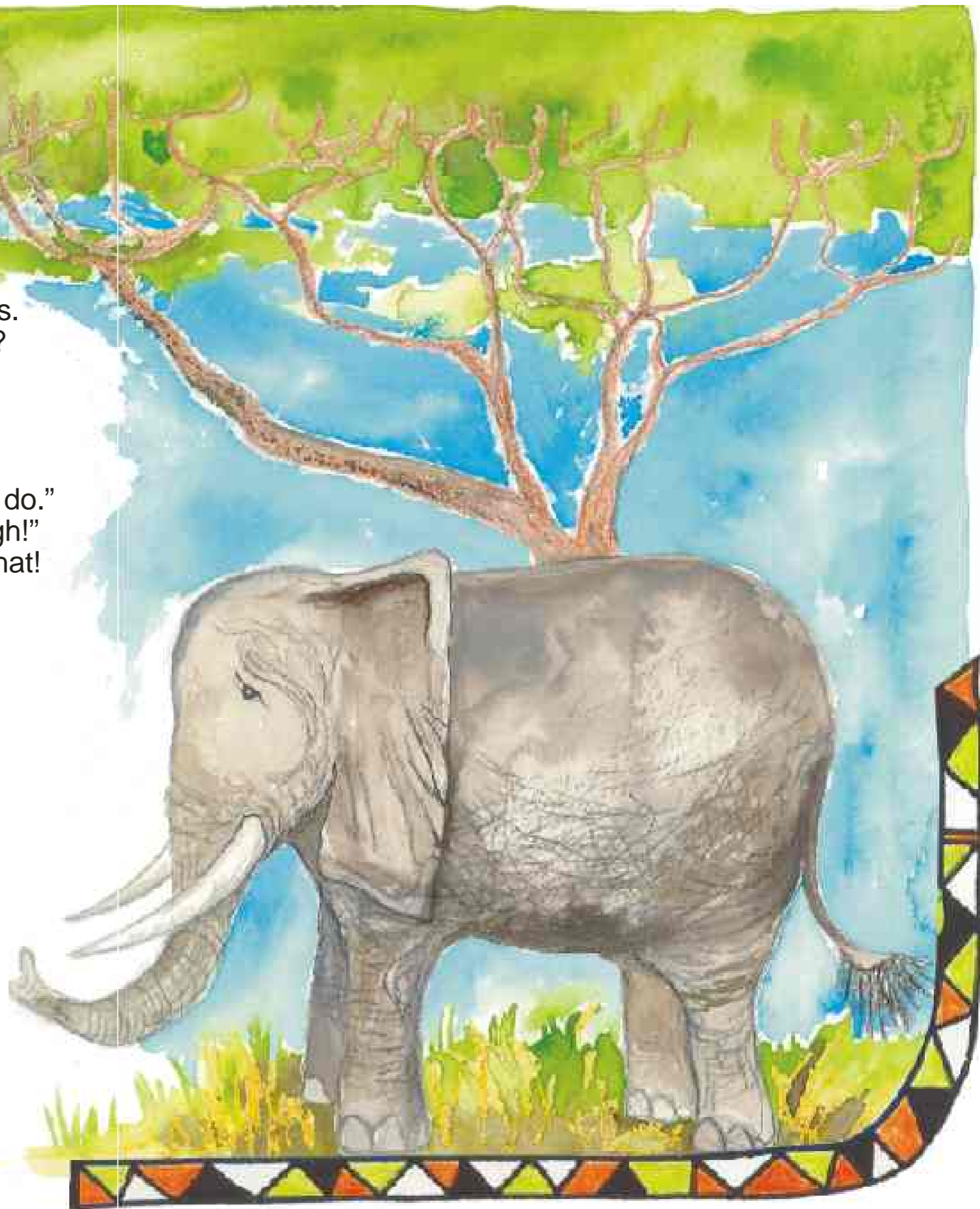
So monkey suggested, “Ask Tusker, she'll know,
she'll be able to tell you the best way to go.
Tusker is an elephant, as big as a bus,
she can cross the river without any fuss.”



Bloo found the huge elephant eating acacia tree leaves.
He called out to her, "Tusker can you help me please?
"The river's too dangerous to cross, what shall I do?
How do you get across safely? I haven't a clue!"

Tusker the elephant said, "Crossing the river's so easy to do."
"Use your trunk like a snorkel and charge straight through!"
Bloo looked down his nose saying, "But mine's not like that!
I'm sure if I tried I'd just end up like a drowned rat!"

So Tusker suggested, "Ask the hornbill - he'll know,
he'll be able to tell you the best way to go."
Hornbill's a bird, who lives in the old fig tree,
the strangest looking bird you ever did see.



In the old fruit tree hornbill's eating fig after fig,
until there's nothing left, but just the bare twig.
“The river's too dangerous to cross, what shall I do?
Have you any bright ideas?” asked Bloo the Gnu.

Hornbill answered, “Crossing the river's such an easy thing.”

“All you need is a few flaps of a feathered wing!”

“Well that really isn't much help to me!” cried Bloo,
“As flying, is one thing, I've not got the power to do!”

“Well who else is travelling along your side?”
asked hornbill as another idea he tried to find.

“With Tommy gazelles and zebras black and white.
Should that help at all?” Bloo hoped that it might.

“Of course, Belisha the Zebra is one you should ask.
She's the one who can help solve this difficult task!”
Bloo turned to the hornbill and called out, “Thanks”.
Then set off to find his friend at the riverside banks.



Now we all know zebras are stripy, black and white,
but do they really know about how to cross right?



“The river's too dangerous to cross, what shall I do?
Hornbill told me you'd help me.” said Bloo the Gnu.

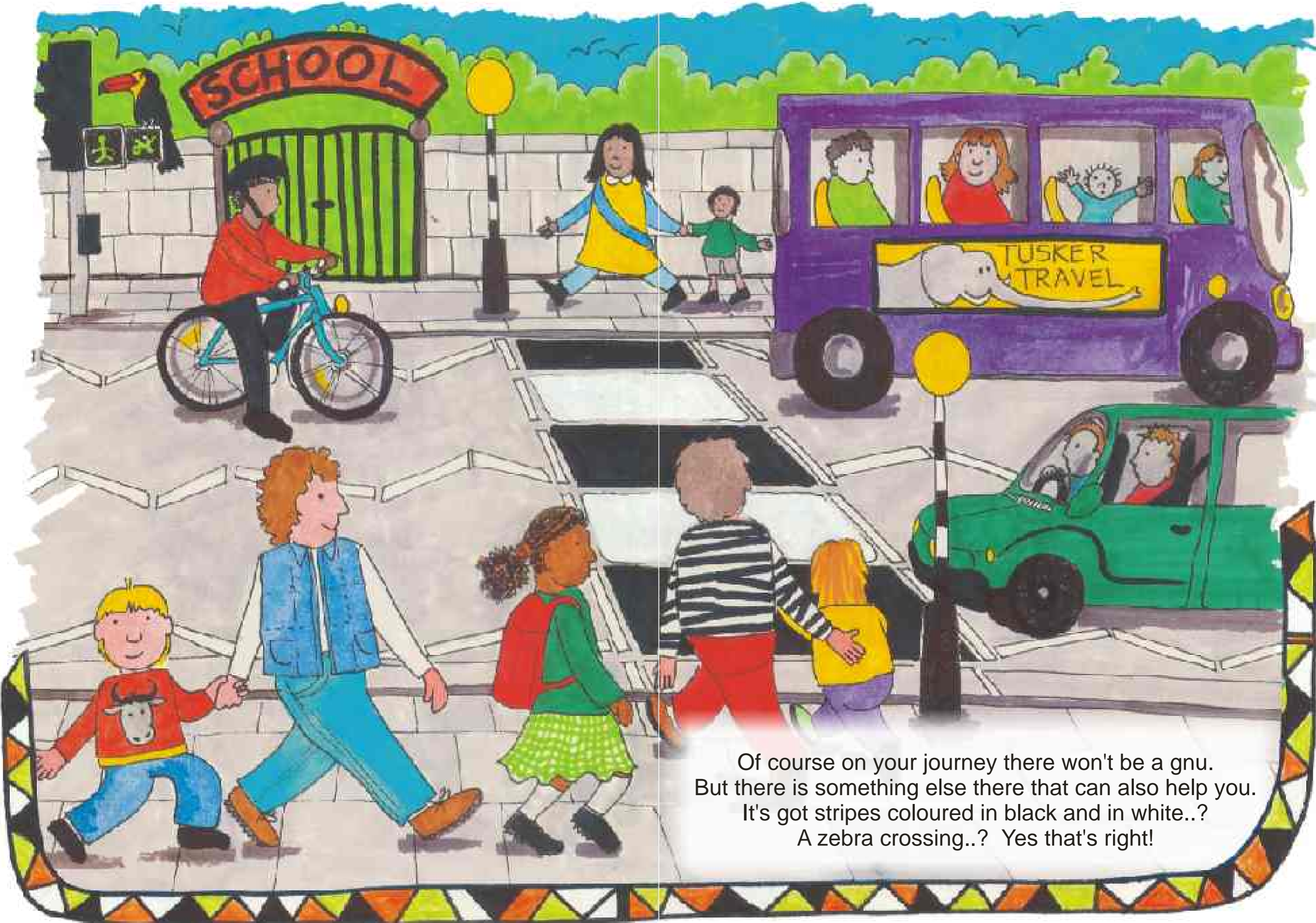
Belisha explained “First STOP and LOOK all around,
and use your ears to LISTEN carefully for any sound.
If you see a croc coming then just let it go by,
get caught in his teeth and you surely will die!”

So Bloo stopped and looked for crocs all around.
And using his ears, he heard no crocodile sound.
Nothing was coming, so in jumped Bloo.
Crossing the river safely, it was easy to do!

STOP , LOOK and LISTEN, that's a very good rule,
crossing without doing it would make you a fool!
Bloo turned to Belisha and said, "Thank you my friend.
If you'd not told me this, I may have met a terrible end!"

Now boys and girls this rule is also for you.
STOP, LOOK and LISTEN just like Bloo the Gnu.
Follow this rule, it's called the GREEN CROSS CODE.
It'll help you whenever you want to cross the road.





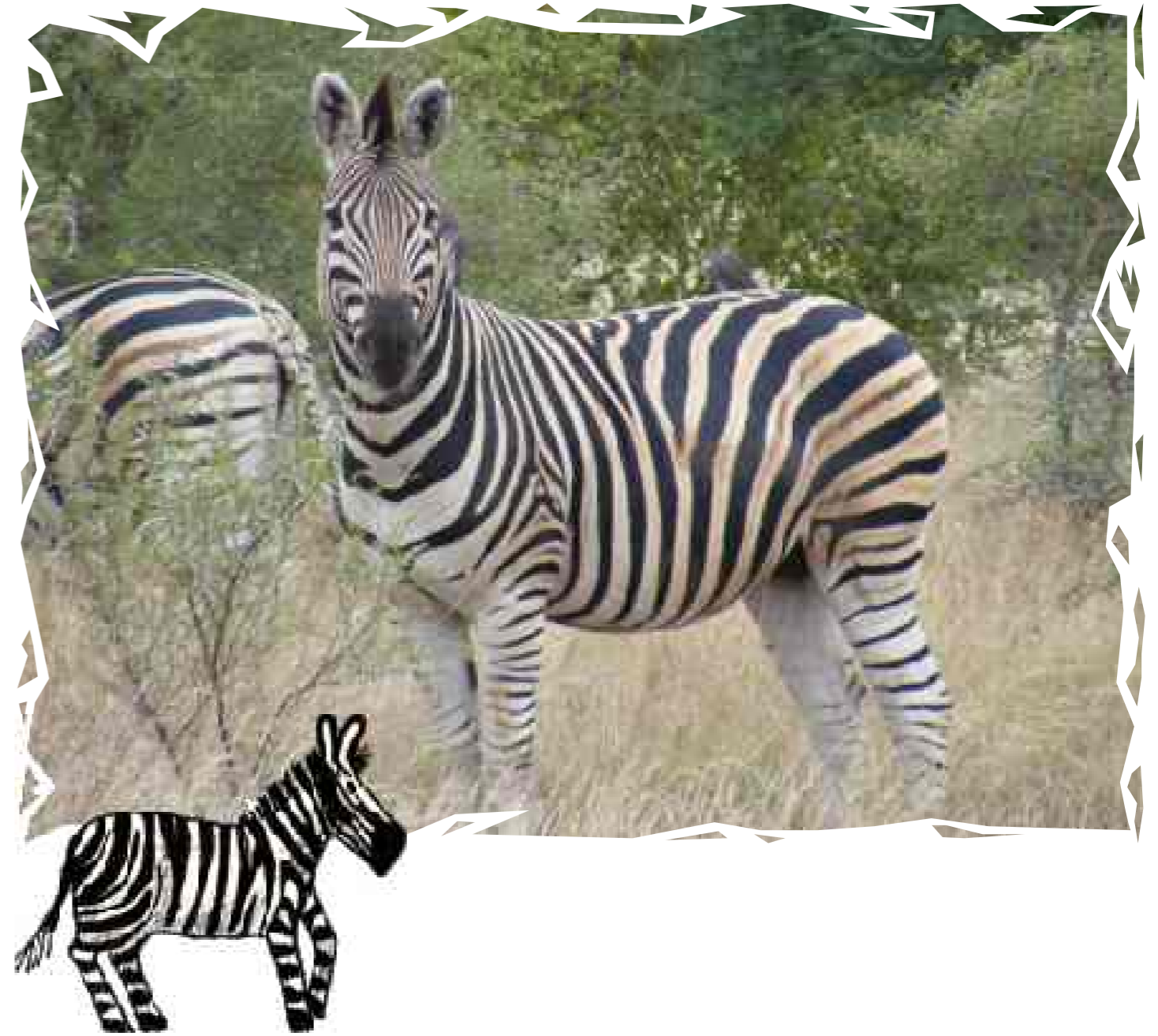
Of course on your journey there won't be a gnu.
But there is something else there that can also help you.
It's got stripes coloured in black and in white..?
A zebra crossing..? Yes that's right!

About the characters.



Bloo the Gnu

The Blue Wildebeest is an inspirational walking mascot. Wildebeest walk over 2000 miles as part of their annual migration across the grasslands of East Africa.



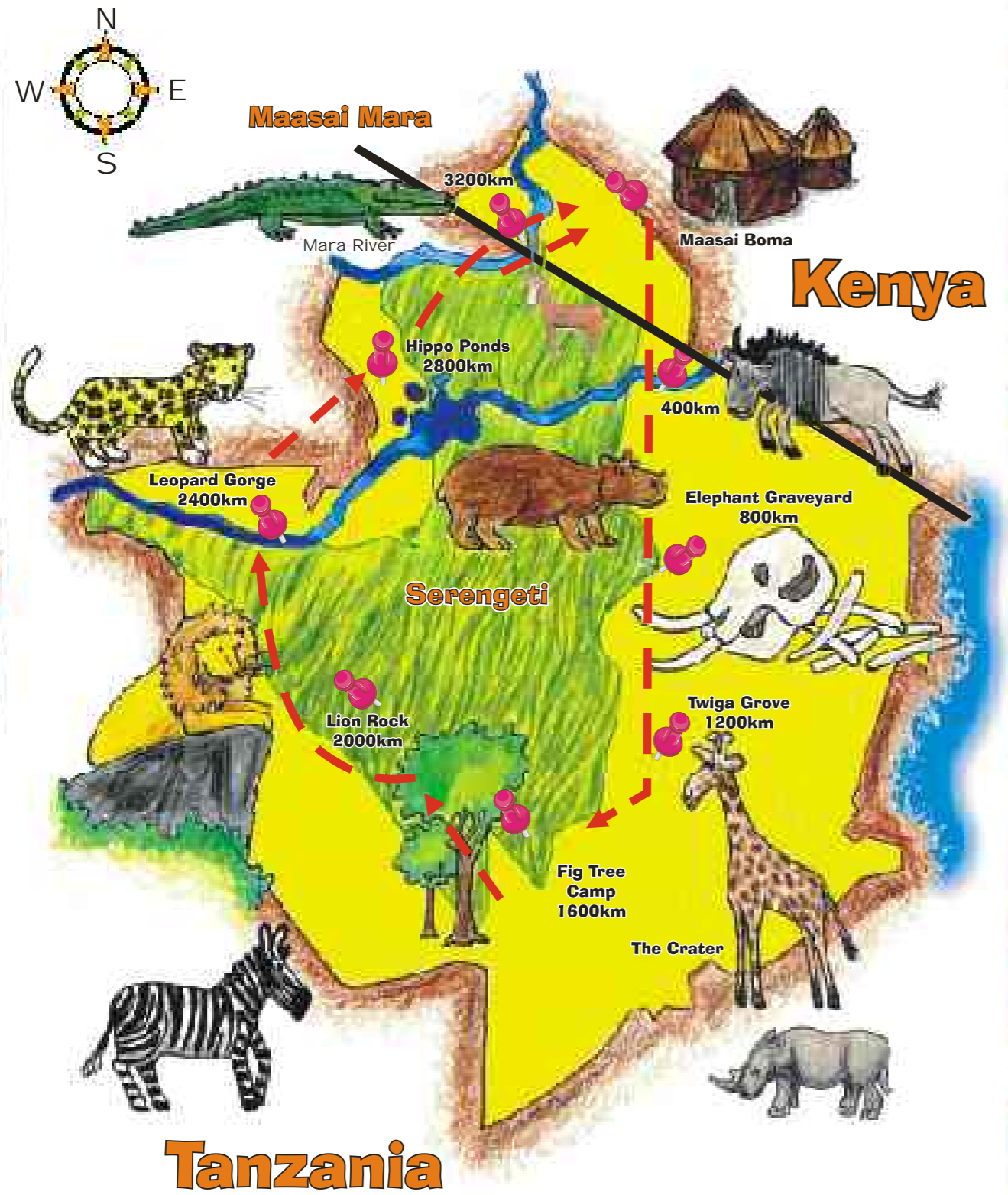
Belisha the Zebra

Zebras are a familiar companion of the wildebeest. The first zebra crossing was installed in Slough in 1951-so called on account of its black and white stripes. The black and white poles with a flashing amber light on top, which forms part of a zebra crossing, was named after the Minister of Transport who introduced them, Mr Leslie Hore Belisha.

About the author

The author has travelled throughout Africa, although Linus Punda is not his real name. It is a play on words -'punda' is Swahili for zebra, and 'Linus' a reference to lines or stripes.

Follow Bloo on his journey



Key
 Gnu migration route
 Place of interest
 Kenya / Tanzanian border

Distances (km/miles)	Description of part of migration
0 km (0 miles) October	The gnu migration reaches the Maasai Mara at end of the dry season (which is in October).
400km (250 miles) November	The migration heads south to get ready for the start of the new rainy season. The gnus do not travel alone they travel with other grazing animals such as zebras and Thompson's gazelles.
800km (500 miles) December	The rainy season has started and the Serengeti Plains are covered with fresh grass. Here we pass the elephant graveyard, this is a place where elephants go when they get old to die.
1200km (750 miles) January	The Gnu migration stops here for a while to eat the short grass on the southern plains near Twiga Grove. (Twiga is Swahili for Giraffe).
1600km (1000 miles) February	We travel close to the Ngorongoro Crater, there are around 2 million gnus, zebras, and gazelles as well as many predators on the plains. Gnus start to have their young which are called calves. Black rhino can sometimes be seen in this area, they are very rare animals, there are only about 3000 left in the wild.
2000 km (1250 miles) April- May	The migration starts moving slowly passed Fig Tree woodlands, as heavy rain sets in, wild flowers come out in full bloom. The gnus have to make their way carefully passed Lion Rock.
2400km (1500 miles) June	The migration also passes Leopard Gorge. The rains are stopping and the dry season is approaching, the migration has to cross the Grumeti river, where many gnus are eaten by crocodiles.
2800km (1750 miles) July- August	The migration heads back towards the Maasai Mara area to eat the grass here. The migration passes Hippo Ponds.
3200km (2000 miles) September	The Gnus have to cross the Mara River to reach the Maasai Mara, here again many are eaten by crocodiles. The crocodiles in the Mara River are some of the largest in the world and can be 5-6 metres long and weigh over a tonne.