



# CONWAY CRITTERS™ FIND THE KEY


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The Critter Story is  
dedicated to my grandchildren,  
Kate, Anna, Walker and Sawyer,  
and to all the children of Conway.





"Diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means knowing that each individual is unique and different in a variety of ways. Diversity moves beyond tolerance of these differences to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of each individual."

## CONWAY CRITTERS

Conway Critters, diverse are we,

But all belong to our family.

Some are large and some are small,

And some you hardly notice at all!

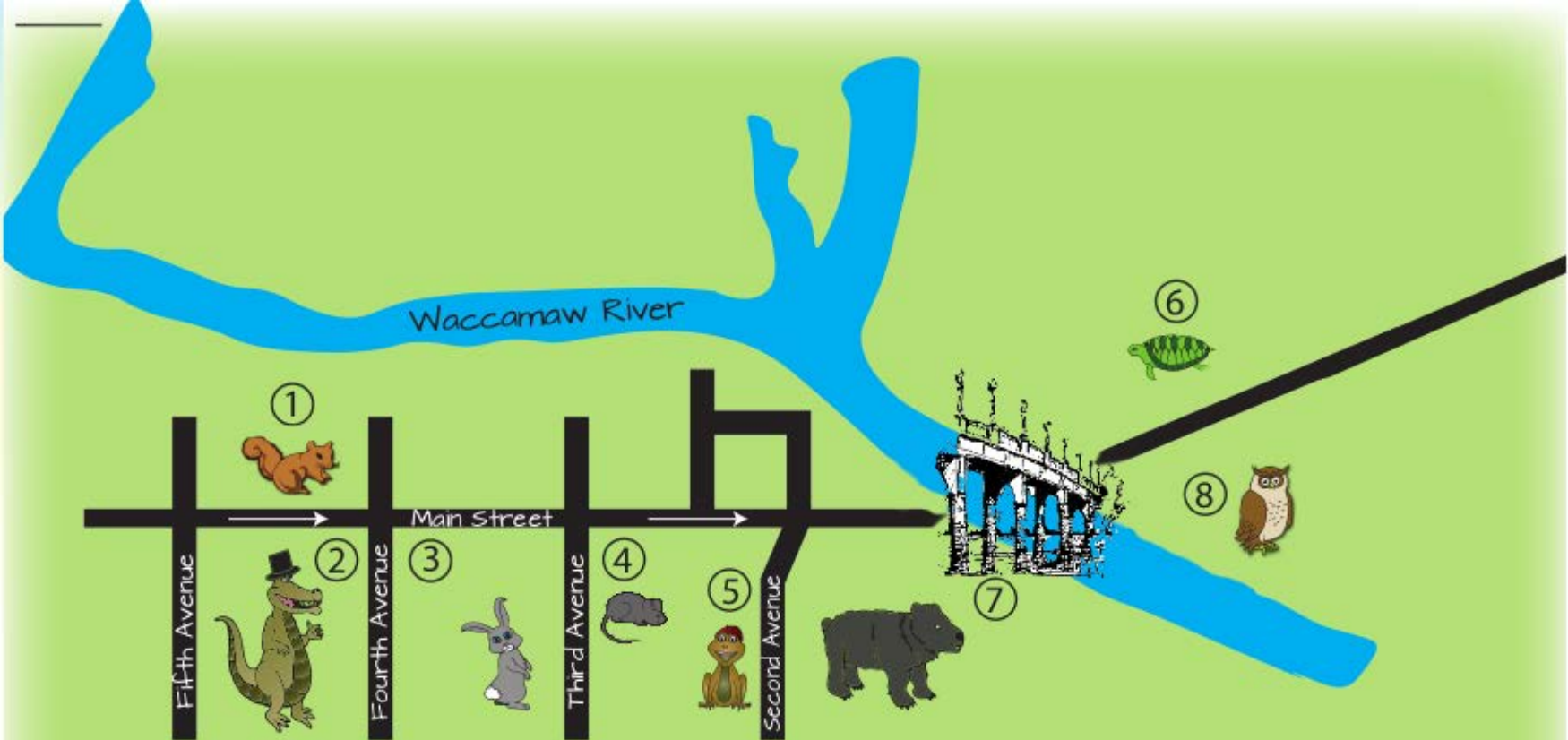
Some have scales and some are furry. Some  
move slowly while others always hurry!

Conway history is told as you follow their trail.

Our critters, though silent, will not let you fail.

The Critters of Conway have found the key.

The key is to live in harmony.



CONWAY CRITTERS<sup>®</sup>  
(Map Not to Scale)



The land at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Main Street was originally part of a large grove of live oak trees that grew on the bank of the Waccamaw River. Constructed in 1935 this building was Conway's first federal post office. The Horry County Museum occupied the building from 1981 to 2014. After the museum relocated, Horry County Council gave the building to the City of Conway. Today the building is called Fifth & Main and it houses the Conway Visitor Center. The building also provides space for Conway Downtown Alive and community events. This structure has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2009.

Maggie the Squirrel woke from her nap on the branch of the old oak tree. She fetched an acorn from the pile she had gathered the day before and began to fill her rumbling tummy (crunch, crunch). Maggie saw Conway's Mayor on the sidewalk speaking to a young girl, but she could barely hear them talking over the noise of eating the yummy, crunchy acorn.

"You see, Conway's greatest treasure (crunch, crunch) is the key," the Mayor said.



As she swallowed her acorn, Maggie's little ears perked up. What did the Mayor just say? Always adventurous and ever so curious, Maggie knew she had heard something very important!

Maggie is the baby of a large squirrel family. Her older brothers and sisters never have time to play with her, so Maggie has to use her imagination and make up her own games. All she really heard was a few words about a key and treasure, but those words put visions in her mind. She imagined a treasure that could mean riches for them all.





Maggie is one of eight critters who live in the historic downtown district. These animals are very special, and they are known as the Conway Critters. The Conway Critters know a lot about the city so Maggie thought she could ask them to help her find the key. With this plan in mind, she hurried across the busy Main Street to find Augustus the Alligator.





Augustus the Alligator lives beneath the Alligator Oak on the grounds of the First United Methodist Church. This live oak is so named because its branches resemble an alligator lying along the trunk of the tree. The Alligator Oak (*c. 1537*) and all of the live oaks of Conway are protected by ordinance for future generations. Conway has been a Tree City USA for many years, and the live oak trees are considered to be our city's oldest citizens. As you travel Conway's streets you will see the importance placed on preserving these great oaks. The City of Conway plants young trees grown from the acorns of the historic oaks throughout the city as part of its "Baby Oak Program."

Augustus watched Maggie from his usual spot under the large oak tree on the grounds of the church. Augustus is large and rather scary looking, although he really is a peaceful, calm critter. His skin is dark and scaly and looks like the bark on the tree that shelters him, named the Alligator Oak. The other Conway gators prefer to live nearby in the Waccamaw River. Augustus likes to be alone, so he spends his days watching the cars go by on Main Street.



Maggie knows that Augustus has lived in Conway for a very long time. Surely he would know where to find the key! "Oh, Augustus," said Maggie. "Can you PLEASE help me? The mayor needs us to find a key that may have been hidden since 1732, when the settlers first came to our City. Please see if you can help."

At first Augustus thought the search was just one of Maggie's silly games. Maggie was so excited that her large bushy tail twitched left and right.



"Maggie," Augustus said, "You are my friend and I want to help you, but I have never seen anyone hiding treasure. We will see what we can find."

So together, Maggie and Augustus began their search in all the places nearby, but they did not find the key. Augustus said, "Maggie, each of the Conway Critters lives in a different part of downtown, so maybe they will help us if we ask."







Sweet Pea the Rabbit was nibbling on the green grass in Kingston Park when she looked up and saw Maggie and Augustus coming down Main Street. Sweet Pea is a small, grey rabbit with large floppy ears, big eyes, and a fluffy tail. Sweet Pea is very smart, sweet and timid. She comes from a very large family so Augustus and Maggie thought some of her many brothers and sisters might know about the key.



She likes living in Kingston Park because it is located on a busy street corner with lots of lights from cars and stores. The nearby marquee of the Theatre of the Republic has colorful lights that Sweet Pea loves!

"Oh, Sweet Pea," said Maggie, "Can you help us look for a key?" "Of course," said Sweet Pea, "You know I will. I'm so glad that you asked me!"

When Augustus came near the timid little rabbit's ears stiffened, and she stopped eating. She was frightened of Augustus because he was





was such a big guy, but Augustus was gentle, friendly and very polite. Sweet Pea soon learned that size does not matter at all, and she even let Augustus hold her up to look in some high places for the key. She felt like she was flying when he held her up in the air. She had never been able to hop so high.



They all had fun searching, but no key was found. The three critters decided to move on and continue their search.





In 1802 the corner of Main Street and Third Avenue was the site of a wooden structure that served as the first Horry County courthouse. In 1825 Robert Mills, a noted architect who was born in Charleston, South Carolina, designed the current building. In 1908 the City of Conway purchased the building from Horry County to use as City Hall. This building has been significant as the county and city centers of government for almost 200 years.

The iron gates at the front of City Hall were designed and built by Tim Weitzel. The gates were donated by the Conwayborough Historic Neighborhood Association in memory of the late Mayor Gregory K. Martin.

Maisie the Mouse played in the grass near the tall clock on the corner at Conway's historic City Hall. Maisie is small and brown with tiny ears and a long skinny tail.

Her mother had taught her a version of a rhyme that said "Hickory Dickory Dock, Dock ... no mouse can climb on this clock!" Maisie keeps all of her friends away from Conway's famous clock.

Maisie is one of the smallest of the Conway Critters, but she is brave and very smart.



Often she creeps into Council Chambers and listens to the meetings, so she knows quite a lot about the city. Maisie is funny and a little headstrong! Sometimes these traits get her into trouble, especially when she decides to join tour groups visiting City Hall. Most of the visitors run quickly into the building when she appears!

When Maggie, Augustus and Sweet Pea arrived, they explained their task to Maisie. The critters searched around the clock and City Hall, but no key could be found.



Maggie was sad as it was getting late in the day. Augustus was tired and Sweet Pea was, too. Maisie and Maggie could barely stay still because they were so excited. After giving up the search at City Hall, they decided to move along and visit other places. As they ran along the path, the critters chattered together.





This small, beautifully designed garden, named the Robert Mills Garden, is located on the grounds of Conway City Hall. The fountain was originally purchased and brought to Conway from the City of Charleston, South Carolina in 1914, and it is the focal point of this space. The ornate fountain replaced a wooden horse trough that provided fresh cool water for horses as well as for people who drank directly from the water pipe. The F. G. Burroughs mural accross the street depicts one of the many steamships that transported goods in the early years.



Gaston the Frog saw the critters as they came into his beautiful little garden. The Robert Mills Garden is Gaston's home.

Gaston is a magnificent critter! Instead of being small and green like most Conway frogs, he is a dark chocolate color and quite large with a round belly and really long legs. Unlike the other critters, Gaston did not grow up in Conway. He is a city frog who came on a boat all the way from New York City. When he saw this lovely



garden, he hopped right in and has lived there ever since. Gaston has a funny clipped way of speaking, so he does not sound southern.

Maisie, Maggie, Sweet Pea and Augustus all gathered around. They sat down in the shady little garden. Sweet Pea gave them all water from the fountain and they rested for a time.

Maggie was getting upset because nothing was going her way. Her dream of finding riches was fading away.





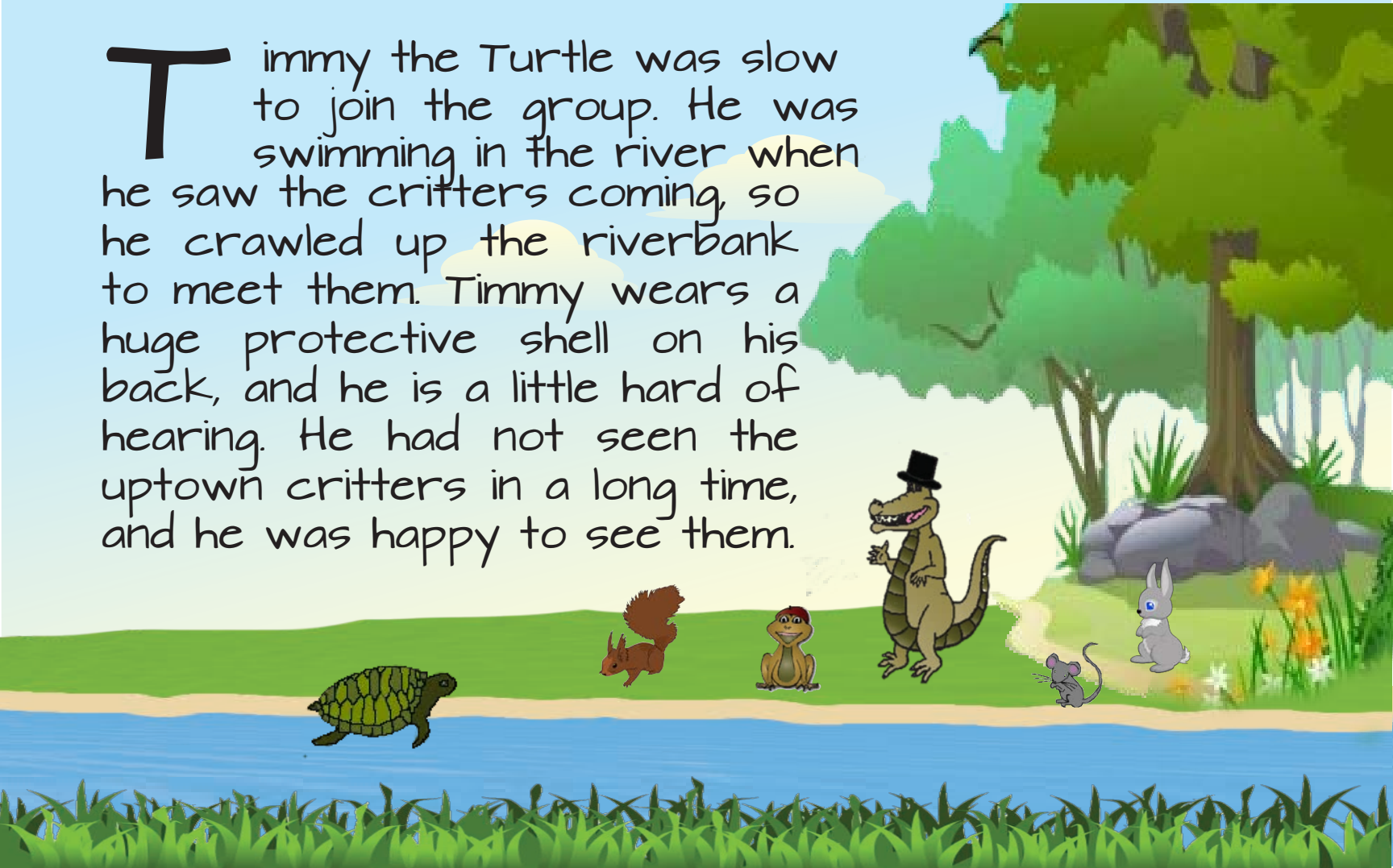
Gaston said, "Let's go to the Riverfront and ask the critters who live there to help us look for the key. Maybe that's where it's meant to be." They all went to Riverfront Park where the Waccamaw River flows through Conway. The critters who live along the river were surprised to see the uptown critters arrive. It was a long walk from town so they did not visit often. Something important was going on.





Before the first settlers came to this area, the Waccamaw Indians fished, hunted, and cultivated this land. When the settlers came, this country was a pine forest with only a small area cleared for the town. Conway sits on a high bluff on the west side of the Waccamaw River. The Waccamaw River is one of the prettiest and most important streams in the low country. In the beginning, the settlement was very isolated and connected to other towns only by boats that traveled up and down the river.

**T**immy the Turtle was slow to join the group. He was swimming in the river when he saw the critters coming, so he crawled up the riverbank to meet them. Timmy wears a huge protective shell on his back, and he is a little hard of hearing. He had not seen the uptown critters in a long time, and he was happy to see them.



"Timmy", said Maggie, "I'm so glad to see you. We need your help to look for a key that is important to the Mayor and me. I rush around, always on the go, but you move slowly and take your time. Working together will make us strong. The Conway Critters, we always get along!"



Timmy knew the Riverfront really well as he had lived there a very long time. Maisie climbed up on his back to take a little ride and help him look around. Maggie, Augustus, Gaston, Maisie and Sweet Pea searched the big Riverfront Park.





The Waccamaw River Memorial Bridge was built in 1937 as a memorial to Horry County citizens who served in America's wars from the American Revolution through World War I. Spanning the scenic black waters of the Waccamaw River, the bridge has beautiful gothic style arches beneath it. The Burroughs Riverwalk borders the land on one side of the river and lets citizens and visitors "walk on water."



Beauregard the Bear was asleep under the bridge when Maisie woke him with her noises as she searched. Beauregard jumped up very quickly because he is scared of small critters like Maisie.



This is funny because Beauregard is a great big bear covered in black fur from his head to his toes. His toes are larger than Maisie!

Beauregard sleeps during the winter and he stays in the shade during the summer because his fur makes him really hot. Beauregard is actually very shy and timid.



"Beauregard," said Gaston, "Maggie heard the Mayor say there is a treasure that can mean riches for us all. We have searched the town, but our plan is just not working."



Beauregard said, "Maggie, I'm so sorry but I don't have a clue! I don't know anything about a key or treasure." The little mouse Maisie said, "Beauregard, all you need is a friend to work along with you. We can help each other and figure this out together." So the smallest and the largest critters paired up to help search the park.





The Gregory K. Martin Riverfront Park was a vision of the late Mayor Greg Martin, and City Council named the park in his memory. This landmark for Conway opened in 2001 and it welcomes tourists and residents. The Burroughs Riverwalk borders a portion of the park under the Main Street Bridge, and the marina separates this portion of the Riverwalk from Riverfront Park.

Ollie the Owl was the last to arrive that day. When it was almost dark, he joined the rest of the critters.



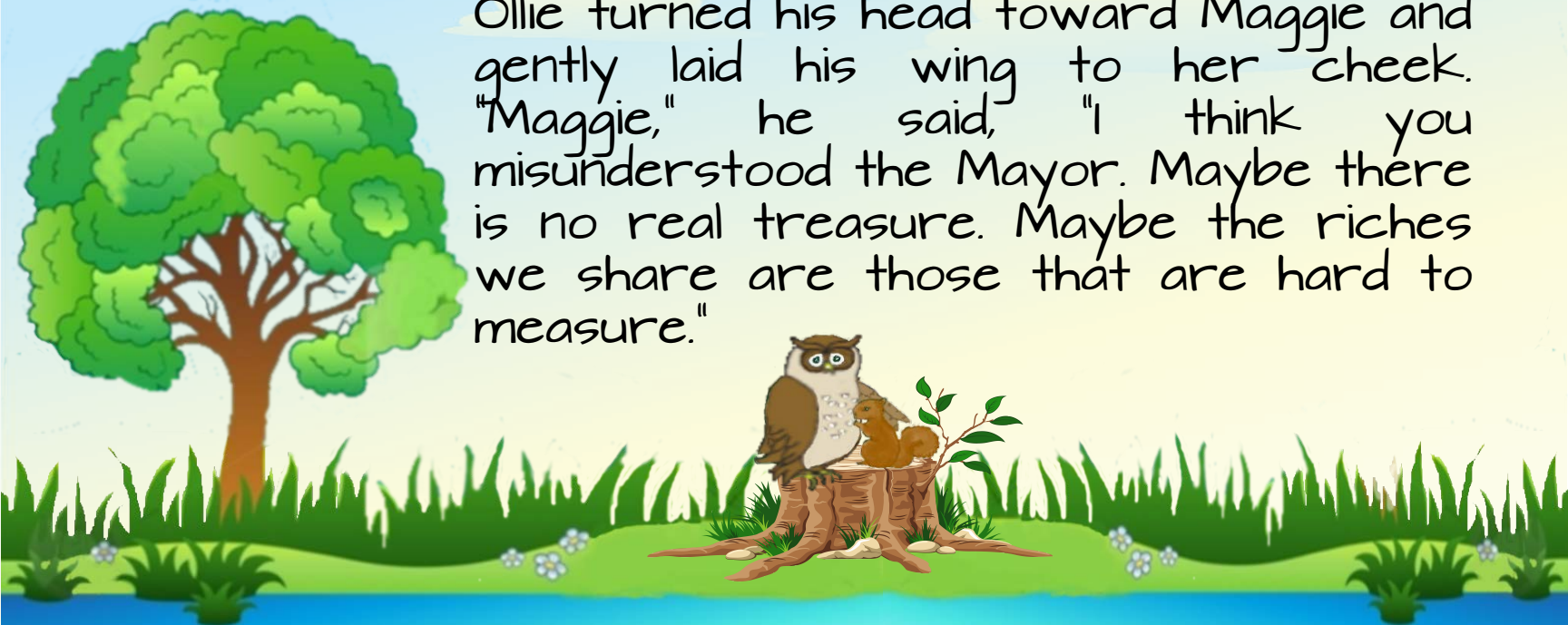
Ollie is a large, feathered bird that has lived at the Riverfront his entire life because he has an injured wing and can only fly short distances.

Ollie joined the group while they were still searching for the key. After some time had passed, Maggie called all the critters together, and she began to talk to them.

"Our lives could have been so much better if we had found a treasure to share. It is almost dark and we haven't had any luck.

The critters were all sad because they had failed in their task, but mostly because Maggie was so unhappy.

Ollie turned his head toward Maggie and gently laid his wing to her cheek. "Maggie," he said, "I think you misunderstood the Mayor. Maybe there is no real treasure. Maybe the riches we share are those that are hard to measure."



"Look at your friends  
who helped you with all their  
might. Maybe, Maggie, the key  
to Conway has always been in  
your sight.



We are different in every way,  
But we all came together on this day.  
We had a task, to find a key.  
And that's what we did, it seems to me.  
You've been searching throughout the town,  
When what's important has been all around.  
Riches and treasure are not Conway's key.  
The key to this city is our harmony."



The End

## HISTORY OF CONWAY CRITTER PROJECT

The Conway Critter Project began in 2016 when City Council Member Jean Timbes suggested that Council invest in a unique way to market Conway's downtown attractions. The project would use bronze animal sculptures, located in downtown historical areas to attract both residents and tourists. This group of "critters" would provide visitors, especially children, with the history of Conway in a fun way and would focus on Conway's diversity as the theme for the project. With Council approval and a budget of \$15,000, the City paired with Coastal Carolina University's art department to design and sculpt the bronze critters. The only criteria the City gave for the designs was the animals "look friendly." The results of this project are eight bronze animals that welcome visitors and tell the history associated with each location. A storybook and a coloring book, both written by Jean Timbes, tell about the critters and their mission. Ms. Timbes' granddaughters, Kate and Anna, are the illustrators for the critters in both books.



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## Voices of Animals

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Debbie Smith.....	Sweet Pea the Rabbit
Barbara Blain-Bellamy.....	Maisie the Mouse
Adam Emrick.....	Gaston the Frog
Timmy Williams.....	Timmy the Turtle
Tom Anderson.....	Beauregard the Bear
Sanford Graves.....	Ollie the Owl

