

RECONNECTING WITH THE LIVING PLANET

# Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

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January/February 2022



**The future  
in our hands**

AFTER GLASGOW • ECO-ANXIETY • REWILDING



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# Conflict and connection

In the face of the inaction and greed of global leaders, what hope do we have for a future world kept within 1.5°C of warming? One answer was made particularly stark to me recently as I was standing on the edge of Govan Graving Docks looking out at Glasgow's darkening cityscape reflected in the River Clyde. Just over the water, in the Blue Zone, global leaders massaged temples during the 26th Conference of Parties. It was Thursday afternoon, the day before the meeting was scheduled to close, but hopes of an agreement to limit global warming felt very far away.

Behind me were the ruins of an old pumping house, a ghost of Glasgow's immense shipbuilding industry. Built in the mid-19th century to repair ships, the dry docks have remained derelict since they were closed over 30 years ago. Today's Govan is a world away from its industrial past, with high unemployment and serious levels of poverty. Now home to shrubby trees and crumpled lager cans, the site had been eyed up for development into luxury flats but is now being slowly transformed into a wetland ecosystem to store carbon and rehabilitate the soil. This ecological transformation is a project of Blue Green Glasgow, a community interest company affiliated with the Blue Green Carbon programme, which combines restoration work with carbon offsetting.

A little further upstream, a light show dominated the skyline – a 70-metre-long LED installation flashing the message 'No New Worlds' across the water. Docked nearby (many suspected strategically), the steamboat TS *Queen Mary* blocked the view of the sculpture from visitors to the Green Zone, where the COP's corporate sponsors paraded their wares to the public.

As the sky darkened, the docks felt like a conduit of conflict – from issues of class, the legacy of our imperial past, and the struggle for equality versus corporate interests, to the war on Nature. Then the low hum of city noise was suddenly broken as a wren sprang out of a nearby buddleia and started to sing. The tiny bird, common in Britain though often unseen because of its size and subterranean habits, filled the gloaming with its voice – a powerful, fizzing lust for life.

On the other side of the wide, flowing river, leaders were concluding an agreement that would fail to challenge the rise in global emissions. So, what next? Like the wren, we have a voice and a desire to live. In the global north, we can acknowledge the connections and conflicts that construct the platforms we stand on, and give space for others in the global south to tell their stories. In her speech to a crowd of an estimated 100,000 people in Glasgow in the run-up to the COP, Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate said: "We remain hopeful because another world is possible. Together, we can make this happen. Strength and hope is our way forward."

In this issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist*, Jonathan Neale asks, "What next after COP26?" and urges the need to build mass movements to keep global temperatures below 1.5°C. Photojournalist Chris Trinh takes us to Minnesota, where Indigenous activists are protesting the Line 3 oil pipeline. Back in the UK, Laurie King and Katie Hodgetts explore how young people are finding ways to cope with eco-anxiety. In our themed section, we discuss rewilding – and what it means for farming, culture and ecosystems.

We are pleased to announce some changes to the magazine. Following the success of our Living Cities issue, the section Connected Life is here to stay. And our Ecologist section now brings the magazine and the work of our colleagues at [theecologist.org](http://theecologist.org) closer together.

As always, I hope this issue brings you strength and hope.



Marianne Brown  
Editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist*

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Sunflower, linoprint by Rosanna Morris  
rosannamorris.squarespace.com

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Photographs © Vatican Media

## GLOBAL AMBASSADOR

Satish Kumar joins talks at the Vatican on the climate emergency

Satish brings the ideals of nonviolence and spirituality to the global environmental movement. As testament to his vision and dedication, he was invited by the Vatican to participate in two intensive talks. The first was on ‘Faith and Science: Towards COP26’, where he was invited to represent the Jain community, and the second was on the role education needs to play in tackling the climate emergency. The core message from Pope Francis was that we all have to transcend our divisions and interests in order to get together and protect our common home, the Earth.

Earlier this year, Satish and his family were awarded a P.E.A. Award (People, Environment, Achievement) for

‘Greenest Family’, honouring a life-long commitment to living lightly on the Earth, and the pioneering work now being done by his children Mukti and Maya through Carbon Savvy – a CIC helping people to navigate the journey to a planet-positive lifestyle.

The P.E.A. Awards honour the climate heroes and changemakers leading the way to safeguard the planet. The 2021 winners also included climate pioneer Jessi Baker, CEO of Provenance, Artist Jasmine Pradissitto, and green pioneer Safia Minney for her innovative work on corporate responsibility and developing green business.

[www.resurgence.org/satish-kumar](http://www.resurgence.org/satish-kumar)  
[www.peaawards.com](http://www.peaawards.com)

## PROTECTING WATERCOURSES

A primary school learning programme to empower future generations

The Resurgence Trust and The Harmony Project have developed a teaching pack to support primary schoolchildren to learn in and from Nature.

This pack will help children reflect on how their local environment can be better respected, protected and regenerated. We hope the programme will empower future generations to take a lead in engaging with the environmental challenges we face, whilst also supporting them in this time of climate crisis.

Download the teaching pack and share it with your friends:

[www.resurgence.org/teachingpack](http://www.resurgence.org/teachingpack)



Photo by Roger Bradshaw / Unsplash

## FESTIVAL OF WELLBEING

Diverse, enriching talks on why wellbeing matters

Thank you to everyone who came to the Resurgence Festival of Wellbeing, making it a resounding success. We were delighted to be joined by speakers including Russell Brand, Lily Cole, Charles Eisenstein, Annie Lennox, Elif Shafak and Vandana Shiva. Michael Morpurgo explained what led him to set up Farms for City Children – all children have a right to know about Nature – and an

unexpected song. Heartfelt thanks to all our speakers, individual donors and our sponsors, including Weleda, Cowdray Estate, Network of Wellbeing and Earthsong.

The recordings from the event are freely available to ticket holders or available to purchase for £20 (£10 concessions).

[www.resurgenceevents.org/wellbeing21](http://www.resurgenceevents.org/wellbeing21)

# Forthcoming events

JAN  
17

## Earth Festival Community Gathering

If you have celebrated any of the Resurgence Earth Festivals with us over the last year, we invite you to gather to share the reflections and shifts that have been evoked by attuning to the seasonal cycle. Beginning with a grounding meditation and exploration of the eight Earth Festivals, this gathering will provide a space to offer thoughts on future Earth Festivals and connect with a community that shares a deep love of the Earth.



7–8pm, Zoom

JAN  
24

## Resurgence Readers' Group

Connect with like-minded people and reflect on the topics raised in the latest issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine. We will be discussing Hugh Webster's article 'With or Without Wolves?' and considering where next for rewilding.

7–8pm, Zoom

JAN  
26

## Resurgence Talks, with Louise Chester

*How to Harness Wise Compassion in Business to Build Presence, Purpose and Partnership*

A talk and Q&A with Louise Chester, whose mission is to enable thousands to find their purpose, create value and thrive not just in the workplace, but in all areas of their life. Louise founded Mindfulness at Work in 2010 after many years' training in and sharing the mindfulness practices and purpose work that have been so important for her.

7.30–9pm, Zoom

FEB  
1

## Earth Festival Meditation: Imbolc

When life is beginning to awaken deep inside the Earth, let us nurture ourselves and celebrate the first stirrings of Spring. Through meditation, Nature connection and seasonal reflection, let us attune to this time of great potential and tend to the seeds of our intentions for 2022.

7–8pm, Zoom

FEB  
16

## The Power of Love

Join Satish Kumar to celebrate St Valentine's Day. In this live talk and interactive Q&A, Satish will share his wisdom on how the power of love can help to promote personal, political and planetary wellbeing.

7.30–9pm, Zoom

FEB  
21

## Rewilding: A Trilogy of Talks

An exploration of rewilding land, body, mind and spirit. How can we contribute to resilient landscapes in the face of climate change and the Anthropocene? How can we tend to our gut flora and microbiome? How can Indigenous wisdom psychologically rewild us, re-sacralise our lives and relationship with the Earth?

Hosted by Pete Yeo, with guest speakers. Feb 21 and 28, and Mar 7.

7.30–9pm, Zoom

FEB  
23

## Resurgence Talks: Steve Waygood

*Capitalism and Climate Change*

A talk and Q&A with Steve Waygood, Chief Responsible Investment Officer at Aviva Investors. Steve founded Aviva's Global Responsible Investment team as well as its Sustainable Finance Centre for Excellence, which seeks to transform capital markets so that they become more sustainable.

7.30–9pm, Zoom

MAR  
14

## Resurgence Members' Event

Hosted by the Resurgence team, with guest speakers, this will be an opportunity for members to connect with the Resurgence community and celebrate the work of The Resurgence Trust.

7.30–9pm, Zoom

Details for all events, including the next Resurgence Book Club, can be found at [www.resurgenceevents.org](http://www.resurgenceevents.org)

# ECOLOGIST

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## EDITOR'S PICKS

We share our top three stories from the environment news website focused on environmental, social and economic justice.

### DIAGNOSING BRAIN POLLUTION

Advertising is fuelling the climate emergency by promoting polluting products and lifestyles, and it also has a damaging effect on personal wellbeing, write Andrew Simms and Emilie Tricarico. The dangers of this 'brain pollution' are the subject of a new non-government campaign, Ministry for the Climate Emergency, run by Badverts, which highlights the role of advertising in fuelling the climate emergency. "In studies, brain pollution is also seen to contaminate the human sense of care and compassion towards others," the authors write.



Still from Brain Pollution animation by Leo Murray and Andrew Simms

[tinyurl.com/ecologist-brain-pollution](http://tinyurl.com/ecologist-brain-pollution)

### FOX HUNTING IN THE DOCK

Late 2021 saw a flurry of good news for foxes as the conviction of a high-profile fox hunter was followed by a vote by members of the National Trust to ban trail hunting on the trust's properties.



Photograph © Jiri Sifalda / Unsplash

Ecologist editorial assistant Ruby Harbour was present at the court when Mark Hankinson, director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association, was found guilty of promoting the illegal killing of foxes under the guise of trail hunting. The court was shown clips from a private webinar about how to run legal trail hunts, attended by a member of the House of Lords and a former police inspector during August 2020. The videos were leaked and passed on to Devon and Cornwall Police. Andy Knott, chief executive of the League Against Cruel Sports, which was the complainant in the case, said outside the court: "That a British peer can chair a meeting in which the members were shown how to break the law shows how these people believe that laws don't apply to them. No longer can they get away with it." Trail hunting was again the focus of criticism when members of the National Trust – one of the UK's largest landowners – voted to ban trail hunting on the trust's properties. The trust is responsible for managing 620,000 acres of land. At its height in 2016, it issued 79 licences to 67 fox hunts to engage in trail hunting on its land.

[tinyurl.com/ecologist-trail-hunting](http://tinyurl.com/ecologist-trail-hunting)  
[tinyurl.com/NT-trail-hunting](http://tinyurl.com/NT-trail-hunting)

### DIVERSITY NEEDED FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

There is a worrying lack of diversity in climate change decision-making, according to a year-long study conducted in Bristol and published in the run-up to COP26. People of colour made up just 3% of discussions on climate change, and only 5% of participants at meetings to discuss a transition to a net zero future were men of colour – and they spoke only 1% of the time. White men and women were almost equally represented, but white males spoke on average 64% of the time. The results undermine the city's pledge to achieve a just transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2030, the authors said.

[tinyurl.com/diversity-climate](http://tinyurl.com/diversity-climate)

#### NEWSLETTERS

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[www.theecologist.org](http://www.theecologist.org)



Photograph courtesy of 350.org

# Bearing witness in the British Museum

My Indigenous collective are calling for a justice reset, writes **Calfín Lafkenche**

I come from the Mapuche nation in southern Chile. For decades forestry companies have occupied our ancestral lands, bringing not only crop monocultures but also violent criminalisation and militarisation. This is only part of the way that successive governments have contravened international norms and agreements that are supposed to safeguard our collective rights.

Our community is also particularly affected by energy generation investment projects that alter the course of our rivers, lakes and streams. These waters are sacred to the Mapuche nation, and for good reason: they are the basis of our food sources, which are now deeply damaged. Predictably, we also suffer directly the effects of climate change in every part of our lives, from agriculture to fish stocks, to traditional plant medicines, which are becoming more and more scarce.

Additionally, some of the so-called solutions to climate mitigation are actually harming our communities, for example the categorisation of our territories using international protection standards, but without the consultation and participation of our traditional authorities and frameworks. Conventional renewable energy technologies such as wind farms are installed in the territories of our Indigenous peoples without our consent.

On 25 October 2021, to mark the beginning of our UK journey to COP26, we brought sacred water from the highest parts of the Andes to the Americas section of the British Museum, which is full of stolen objects and symbols of colonial power. Our ceremony was not only a witness to centuries of colonialism and repression, but also a call for a justice reset that meets the needs and contributions of Indigenous people in a meaningful way.

The Minga Indígena (our collective of Indigenous nations) demands that the majority world recognise the deep unsustainability of so-called sustainable and other practices in our territories, and take steps to make binding agreements that honour all life on Earth.

Today, climate change is the most important issue that we face as humanity, and we must address it by taking a radically different path towards relating to one another in the future. I believe that we must put aside our political, economic, social and racial differences to ensure the future not only of humanity, but of all beings on the planet, including those that are less visible. This transition to a new paradigm must have in it the framework and accountability that will lay the groundwork of climate justice.

Bearing witness in the British Museum to our struggle represents this paradigm shift; the fact that the museum plans to return the sacred elements of our cultures in America is the recognition that great wrongs have been visited upon Indigenous peoples for centuries.

The ‘culture’ presented and kept in museums should be part of everyday life, and museums have a role in reflecting on and debating the issues around climate change so that their visitors can better understand the challenges we face together.

These institutions can contribute to improved relationships between different cultures and bring to the public both the work and histories of Indigenous people and our part in mitigating climate change.

We know that the British Museum refuses to disclose how much money it receives from fossil fuel companies – our presence is a reminder to them of their responsibility, both historical and present, to foster climate justice through transparency and reparations.

Now more than ever we must all understand that the remaining places of the greatest biodiversity are under the power and care of groups and communities such as those represented by the Minga Indígena. R

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Calfín Lafkenche is a climate campaigner from Mapuche on the coast of the Araucanía Region in the Lafkenche territory in southern Chile.



# What next after COP26?

We need to take matters into our own hands, urges **Jonathan Neale**

It was obvious, going in, that Glasgow was going to be a debacle. We were promised that governments would keep global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Now the national promises coming in about future emissions mean we are on course for 3°C or more.

When Greta Thunberg says that all the leaders of the world have failed us, she is right.

That is why the world leaders are forced to sit in the audience and listen to Thunberg castigate them. Look at us, they say. Aren't we good? You can see we are on her side, because we are allowing her to shame us.

They clap for her, but still they don't act.

Joe Biden has been the hope of the mainstream climate movement. He is now trying to pass a bill to spend US\$55 billion a year on climate. Under Trump in 2020 the US government spent more than 50 times that on Covid-19 measures.

Faced with Congress, though, what else could Biden do?

Bernie Sanders, on the campaign trail in the Democratic primaries for US president in 2016, said again and again: I know there is no way I can get my policies through Congress. But there is a power that can get those policies through Congress. For instance, I have promised to make student loans free and abolish student debt. If Congress will not pass that, I will call on the young people of America, in their millions, to descend on Congress and force them to pass what the American people had voted for.

The point Sanders made is crucial all around the world. For we must hope to elect governments that will take the necessary action to stop burning fossil fuels. And then we will have to descend on Washington and all the other capitals, in our millions, and make them do what the people elected them to do.

By contrast, faced with the defiance of Democratic senators Manchin and Sinema, Biden mobilised no one. Instead, he met privately with Manchin and Sinema to see what they would settle for.

President Xi Jinping of China did not even come to Glasgow.

In previous COPs, the NGOs, the campaigns and the unions outside have mostly taken sides on the same issues the delegates are debating inside. The movement outside has been the radical wing of the process. This time, outside and inside were talking about quite different things. There was a deep disjunction. We are at an impasse. The danger is demoralisation.

## What do we do?

We have to fight for one thing above all others: to stop burning fossil fuels. Not to reduce fossil fuels. Not some fantasy of net zero while we keep burning oil, gas and coal.

Fossil fuels and deforestation account for 42 billion tonnes of emissions each year, more than three-quarters of the total.

A massive programme can reduce that 42 billion tonnes to only 2 billion tonnes by providing the jobs to replace all fossil fuel use with renewable energy.

## Five things will make almost all the difference:

*First*, stop burning coal, oil or gas to make electricity. Instead, cover the world with renewable energy.

*Second*, change all cars, vans, trucks, buses and trains so that they run on renewable electricity.

*Third*, convert all existing buildings and all new builds so that they use far less energy for heating, and all that energy comes from renewable electricity.

*Fourth*, stop making cement and convert industry so that all the heating of materials is done by renewable electricity.

*Fifth*, stop deforestation.

Only governments can raise and spend money on that scale. We have been waiting 30 years for the markets and capitalism to rewire the world. Emissions are still rising.

Many, many other measures are necessary, but stopping fossil fuels is by far the most important.

Now we have to build mass movements from below all over the world to make that happen. And we need an explosion of democracy – the power of the people. Like it or not, we are embarked on a great struggle between love and death. 

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Jonathan Neale is a climate activist, novelist and non-fiction writer. @JonathanNealeAr

Illustration by Koren Shadmi

# Banking on our future

Tougher rules on fossil fuel investments could help avert economic disaster, writes **Brendan Montague**

**A** stupefying US\$2.75 trillion dollars of investments has been funnelled into the fossil fuel industry by the world's 60 leading banks since the Paris Agreement was signed six years ago. The five largest commercial and investment banks in the UK have, in even less time, piped more than US\$300 billion into the same carbon-polluting industry.

Members of Lloyd's of London, the global insurance marketplace, alone collectively hold more than US\$30 trillion in capital. These members collectively represent one of the four biggest oil and gas insurers in the world. This cash and cover supports projects like the Adani Carmichael coal mine in Australia, the Trans Mountain tar sands pipeline in Canada, the Bahamas Petroleum Company's offshore oil drilling, and coal mines in Poland.

**“If you want to finance new fossil fuel projects, do it at your own risk”**

This ongoing finance and insurance of fossil fuels in pursuit of short-term profits represents an existential threat to the life-support systems on which our civilisations depend and the stability of the global climate. But it also represents a historically unprecedented financial risk to the investors themselves – and to taxpayers like us around the world.

The world's leaders, from Boris Johnson as UK prime minister, to Mario Draghi as G20 president, could conceivably do the right thing and start restricting the exploitation of gas, oil and coal reserves. If those fossil fuel assets were then to become stranded, the billions' worth of investments could be rendered worthless or at least significantly reduced in value.

The world's biggest banks and their investors are deemed by governments to be too big to fail, a fact we have come to accept in recent decades. So when their fossil fuel bets do turn bad, national governments including in the US and the UK will again bail out the bankers. This will involve taking on massive loans and printing yet more money, before paying everything back by raising taxes and cutting services for decades to come.

But – unusually when it comes to our compound environmental crises and our global economy – there is one simple solution at hand. It would cost governments nothing. It could be implemented immediately. And perhaps

most importantly of all, it makes sense even to bankers. It is in the interests of the public – and also the investors themselves.

Economists Ann Pettifor and Stephany Griffith-Jones and economic historian Adam Tooze have called on the world's governments to introduce tougher regulations so that the banks have to impose the highest possible risk-weighting for capital requirements when investing in fossil fuels. Put simply, this means that when a bank wants to invest US\$1 in a coal mine it will need to hold a further US\$1 to absorb any future losses. When that coal mine closes down, the bank does not go bust and does not turn to the government for a bailout.

The fact that banks and insurers are currently allowed to radically underestimate the risk of investments in fossil fuels is in effect a subsidy. If governments regulated the sector properly – and protected investors and the public – the cost of such gambling would be significantly higher. The lack of regulation risks the stability of the global





economy, distorts the investment markets and keeps fossil fuels artificially cheap. Lest we forget, the fossil fuel industry already benefits from US\$1.54 million a minute in direct subsidies and tax breaks provided by governments, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Benoît Lallemand, secretary general of pan-European public interest association Finance Watch, published a letter to world leaders during COP26 in Glasgow calling on them to adopt 'one-for-one' risk-weighting for fossil fuel investments. He said: "The global financial crisis of 2008 – and its disastrous political aftermath – have shown what happens when systemic risks in the financial system go unaddressed.

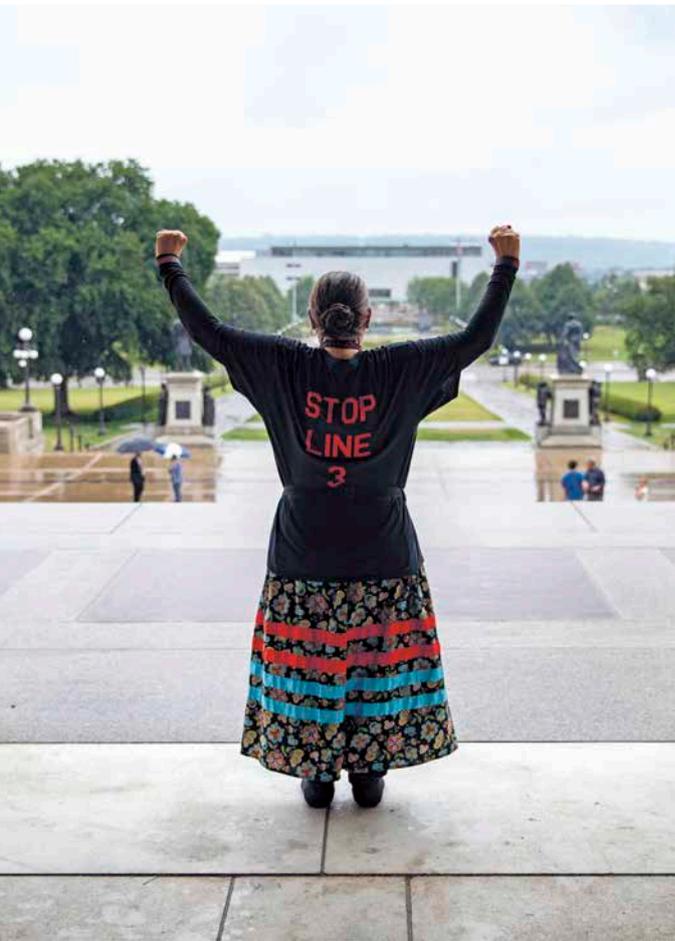
"Without action we face an even bigger economic crisis. This will be a failure to regulate of historic proportions, with the burden falling on taxpayers around the world when banks and insurers come begging for government bailouts. Our message to banks and

Protesters from Coal Action Network set up a climate justice memorial at Lloyd's of London to remember communities on the front lines of climate breakdown who are directly impacted by harmful projects and climate impacts. Flowers with over 600 individual messages from people across the UK were handed out to staff going in and out of the Lloyd's building. The group also called for Lloyd's to pay compensation for climate impacts. This action is the latest to target Lloyd's of London and the memorial is the first of many being planned. Photographs courtesy of [www.coalaction.org.uk](http://www.coalaction.org.uk)

insurance firms is this: if you want to finance new fossil fuel projects, do it at your own risk."

The Sunrise Project, a global climate campaign, and Finance Watch have launched a 'one-for-one' campaign. They are asking that governments begin the "implementation of prudential regulation for fossil fuel financing commensurate with the risks involved". The campaign has already won support from NGOs around the world. Chris Hohn, co-founder of The Children's Investment Fund Foundation, a hedge fund with approximately US\$30 billion in managed assets, has called for similar government measures. R

Brendan Montague is editor of The Ecologist.



# Water protectors on the frontline

**A**n Indigenous-led movement to stop a new pipeline corridor transporting tar sands ramped up over the summer as drilling began under more than 20 river crossings. The Line 3 pipeline has been constructed by Enbridge, a Canadian multinational company, across Anishinaabe land. It is slated to carry tar sands from Alberta, Canada, down through North Dakota, across Minnesota and then to a port in Superior, Wisconsin, and at full carrying capacity can transport around 800,000 barrels per day. This makes the emissions output of the Line 3 pipeline roughly equal to that of 50 coal-fired power plants. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources granted Enbridge permits to pump 5 billion gallons of water for use in the construction process during a historic drought.

Protesters have set up resistance camps along the Line 3 route in order to provide a home base for water protectors fighting the pipeline. To delay construction,

water protectors locked down to construction equipment, formed peaceful blockades, and held marches to raise awareness about violations of Indigenous sovereignty and destruction of Nature.

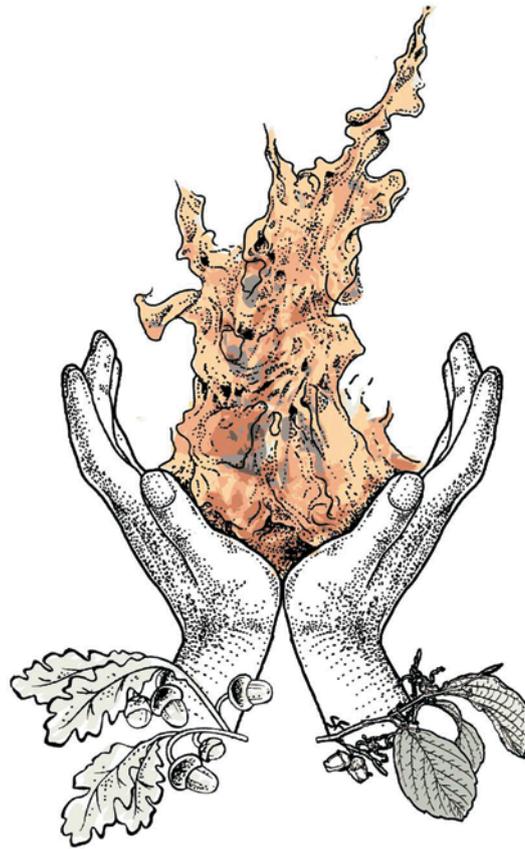
To date, more than 1,400 people have been arrested trying to stop the pipeline, counting arrests on the frontlines and at protests throughout the Great Lakes region and in Washington, D.C. For their climate activism, more than 80 of these arrestees are being charged with felony theft, and could face years in prison. In October 2021, Enbridge announced that construction on the pipeline was complete, but the fight is ongoing and has shifted into advocacy mode, with water protectors urging the Biden administration to pull the permit for the pipeline project and complete an environmental impact statement on Line 3, which has yet to be done. **R**

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Chris Trinh is a freelance photojournalist.



Images from left, clockwise:  
 Anita Wolfe wears a "Stop Line 3" shirt on the steps of the Minnesota state capitol; Five water protectors stage a sit off on an Enbridge easement on the Shell River; Indigenous youth face off with police at Red Lake Treaty Camp; Water protectors Gabe (left) and Rainbow (right) hold hands while confronting police at Red Lake Treaty Camp; Red Lake Nation members and allies protest Enbridge's Line 3 tar sands oil pipeline on the Middle River in Northern Minnesota.  
 All photographs © Chris Trinh [www.christhaotrinh.com](http://www.christhaotrinh.com)



## Express connection

Laurie King finds out how young people are turning eco-anxiety into empowerment

*“Through barren thorns we plant our seeds to be sown, but with no nourishment how are we meant to reap our crop and plant our standing stones?”*

This is a line from ‘Heavy is my Heart’, a song written by 21-year-old Mikey Tait (stage name Karacta) from south-west London. It expresses his dissatisfaction with humans’ disconnection from Nature and from each other. Tait is by no means alone in thinking this. According to preliminary findings from a survey of 10,000 young people in ten countries, 59% of respondents said they were very or extremely worried about climate change. Over half felt “sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty”. The research, led by the University of Bath, concluded that climate anxiety in many children was associated with “inadequate governmental responses” and urged immediate action as a result. As ecopsychologist Joanna Macy argues, when we feel disempowered we closet our anger, fear and anxiety. The result is denial, depression and apathy. How, then, in the face

of continued inaction on the part of many governments, can we help mitigate this? Part of the answer lies in creating a safe space for connection and expression.

The Visionaries is a London-based organisation that works with schools to help young people gain a sense of empowerment and a healthy relationship with the natural world. “As long as we are disempowering people from a young age, which the education system often does, we are delaying the possibility for more participatory solutions to the climate crisis,” operations director Max Girardeau tells me. He explains that the ‘hero mindset’ in the current education system encourages young people to believe that someone else in a more advantageous position will fix the global problems, rather than taking responsibility themselves.

To counteract this, The Visionaries runs wilderness rites

of passage experiences for young people from inner cities to help them develop confidence in themselves and appreciate their own gifts. Girardeau feels that this sort of transition experience from adolescence to adulthood is often not supported in society and the current education system and is vital to the empowerment of young people. Some of the young people who participate have never been outside the city (sometimes even their own postcode), and having time alone in Nature and camping with a group of others is a novel and transformative experience for many. Tait took part in one of the programmes. “We were walking barefoot to connect with the earth and I had this weird thing,” he told me. “I thought, why is dirt from the ground associated with something nasty? It’s just earth. I can wash it off. It’s not hurting me. So why has that been an issue for me? Why, until now, have I not walked outside barefoot? Why is it weird? We live on this Earth but we can’t walk barefoot.”

His song ‘Heavy is my Heart’ was inspired by the experience. “If you listen to the songs I write now compared to what I wrote before, they are very different,” he says. “The Visionaries allowed us to express our fears differently – through art, music, activities. It’s important that people can get their opinions out there.” Leah also took part in the programme. She told me she felt she was able to leave elements of her old identity and struggles behind and focus on helping others to develop confidence. “I just felt so different afterwards and realised that I wanted to build a new identity based on helping people, like they do at The Visionaries.”

Lucy O’Hagan, who runs similar wilderness rites of passage programmes at Wild Awake Ireland with social ecologist Kathryn McCabe, explains that it is important to hold space for emotions like rage and grief for our young people. “They can often feel the pain of the Earth,” O’Hagan told me, “and this should be expressed, not shut down.” Self-esteem and confidence, Girardeau suggests, are key to encouraging young people to act in healthy and positive ways. This is especially important for groups who are marginalised.

Social enterprise Solutions for the Planet also creates safe spaces for young people to express themselves and engage with big global issues such as climate breakdown. This work includes a podcast for young people to voice their views on current issues. The organisation also runs a year-long project with secondary schools called Big Ideas, which supports young people to come up with creative, beneficial, achievable solutions, helping them to unpack the problems so that at each

stage they can feel in control rather than becoming overwhelmed by catastrophic issues. In 2018, one of the groups on the Big Ideas programme came up with Sea Savers, a campaign to remove single-use plastics from school canteens, which has now been rolled out by 60 schools.

The work of these organisations highlights the need of the education system to shift to focus on encouraging young people to develop confidence in their own opinions and be taken seriously for their ideas rather than just getting good grades. This would help to promote better relationships and also foster a sense of responsibility and agency, instead of an overwhelming sense of fear and eco-anxiety. In the words of Tait, “It’s the way of presenting the facts about climate change that is important. You can strike someone with fear and control or you can encourage them to explore it and express it in their own way.” 

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Laurie King is a freelance writer passionate about sustainability, food and Nature connection.

Artwork by Seán Fitzgerald  
Photograph by Bríd O’Donovan



# Building resilience



Young changemakers are supporting each other to tackle burnout. Katie Hodgetts shares a project

Illustration by Monica Garwood  
www.monicagarwood.com

I started campaigning in youth climate spaces in 2017 after feeling that my generation’s right to a just and fair future was being jeopardised by a handful of powerful adults. The urgency and lack of action from elected officials left me doing everything possible to galvanise and mobilise others. I coordinated a year-long youth anti-fracking campaign, campaigned tirelessly with the UK Youth Climate Coalition, became a Global Youth Awards finalist for services in ‘empowerment’, co-founded Bristol Youth Strike 4 Climate, organised and spoke at protests of up to 30,000 people with Greta Thunberg, and more.

## Eco-anxiety is not something to pathologise, because it’s a rational and legitimate response to an emergency

In 2019 I burned out. The pressure to be the generation who ‘fixed’ it, to be a ‘perfect’ activist and to be taken seriously in adult spaces became too much. I wanted to give up and step back completely.

After taking some serious time to rest and reflect, I started on a mission to build more support systems for young people taking brave steps towards climate engagement. In 2020 I began The Resilience Project, which was generously offered a home by the not-for-profit social enterprise Collectively, a nimble organisation equipping changemakers to create lasting impact, together. The Resilience Project became a critical intervention into the

youth climate movement, which was being hampered by high rates of eco-anxiety, burnout and poor mental health. We started designing programmes that centred youth voices and youth experience, focusing on building community rather than campaigns.

Over eight weeks, our resilience programme builds strong communities of care for young people through peer-to-peer support. We surface the really hard bits of youth climate engagement together, sit with them, and move slowly into more hopeful and resilient spaces.

Last summer at the Resilience Residential, we trained six pairs of young changemakers to host the eight-week programme in their local movements with their peers. What has resulted is six thriving resilience circles – in Bristol, Cardiff, Manchester, London (for people of colour), East London and Glasgow (in the run-up to COP26).

Our circles have routinely been reviewed as life-changing, because of the invaluable nature of creating communities where you can feel that you are seen, heard and understood. We start from a shared understanding that all of our emotions – joy, anger, fear – have a seat at the table, and that eco-anxiety is not something to pathologise, because it’s a rational and legitimate response to an emergency.

Our 2021 circles are finishing soon, but there will be plenty more ways for young people to get involved, get skilled up and get active in their local communities. You can follow what we’ll be doing in 2022 on our Instagram page @theclimateresilience or on our website [www.theresilienceproject.org.uk](http://www.theresilienceproject.org.uk) 

Katie Hodgetts is a youth climate justice activist. You can find her on social media @KTclimate

“Many adults tell me they are inspired to do more and ask me what that could be. My answer is to challenge yourself and get out of your comfort zone, explore your boundaries and do something, anything that means you can look these young people in the eye and say you did everything you could to make it up to them.”

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*Paralympian James Brown*

James Brown is serving a year in prison for climbing onto a plane at London City Airport to highlight the climate emergency. His daughter is calling for people to write letters of support to him.

Email: [jamesprisonmail@gmail.com](mailto:jamesprisonmail@gmail.com)

Post: James Brown, A5398ER, HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Road, Wandsworth, PO Box 757, London SW18 3HS

Please write your name and return address on the back of the envelope.



# Rooting for butterflies in Delhi

Vandana K meets the residents who are opening their city to insects

Indian red flash at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Delhi  
Photograph by Sohail Madan

**W**ith more than a hundred recorded species of butterfly in Delhi, the insect population seems tiny in comparison to the 20 million people living here. As rampant construction takes over the city, the spaces where butterflies live are shrinking. But some residents of the city recognise that these little winged creatures need homes too.

**“There are six families of butterflies in the world, of which five are found in Delhi”**

One of these people is ecologist and lepidopterist Sohail Madan, who heads the Conservation Education Centre (CEC) run by Bombay Natural History Society at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary. He is working with a group of citizen volunteers to build a butterfly corridor that will conserve butterflies and help them travel easily. Together they have created 67 butterfly parks in the city.

On a Sunday morning in September, Madan is leading a butterfly walk at Asola Bhatti, where the first

butterfly park was established in 2017. The walk begins in a new nursery, where a cloud of white orange-tips has descended upon a blue pea vine. “Butterflies are a very successful and old species on this planet. The role of butterflies goes beyond being pollinators. They are an important part of the food chain. There are six families of butterflies in the world, of which five are found in Delhi,” Madan tells us. India has over 1,300 species of butterfly.

It’s not just the dwindling butterfly habitats that are under threat. “The use of insecticides is causing the collapse of insect populations. We have to ensure there is no poison in our gardens and parks, for butterflies to flourish,” says Madan. In 2017, he started Delhi Butterfly Month to spread awareness about butterfly conservation. In 2020, a consortium of citizens, non-profits, academics and scientists across India came together under the banner of Big Butterfly Month (BBM). The aim was to count butterflies around India, as they indicate the health of our surroundings. “Today butterflies are alienated into islands. People write to us saying they have gardens but they don’t see butterflies any more,” says Shantanu Dey, coordinator of BBM and a co-author of *Common Butterflies of Delhi-NCR*. In September 2021, BBM organised online talks, walks,

counts, workshops and contests.

Back in Asola Bhatti, the walk is followed by a butterfly count, where people count butterflies for 30 minutes to estimate their population in an area. During BBM, participants record the species of butterfly they count, and enter their findings on websites such as India Biodiversity Portal and iNaturalist, which serve as databases. Madan feels that the coronavirus lockdown was a turning point that propelled the butterfly-watching movement further in India. "Everybody feels that butterflies are disappearing. The growing access to mobile and digital photography has also helped," he says.

There is a small but growing citizen science movement in India that is rooting for butterflies. Take for instance the man behind Delhi's first butterfly park in a residential neighbourhood. Anil Kapur was so fascinated by the butterflies he saw at Asola Bhatti that he went there twice a week to photograph them. One day he asked CEC if they could make such a park near his home.

Kapur found a 1.5-hectare park in his neighbourhood, Mandakini Enclave. It had enough sunlight but was covered in garbage. After receiving a green signal from the community, he began cleaning the park. "I got 500 saplings of host and nectar plants," he says. "We planted them over two weeks in the monsoon in 2019." Today the park is home to 22 species of butterfly.

"A butterfly park doesn't look like a normal park," explains Kapur. "Some said weeds such as *aak* (milkweed) need to be pulled out... They thought that, since butterflies are good-looking, the park should also be good-looking. This perception is changing. Now people ask me if we can make another butterfly park."

This love and respect for butterflies is being passed on to the next generation in some schools. Anita Singh

Yadav gained the Best Teacher Award in 2019 after she initiated the creation of a butterfly habitat in the Government Co-ed Senior Secondary School in Sector 5, RK Puram.

On an October morning, a team from CEC is visiting the school with saplings for the butterfly patch. These include senna, curry and sago palm, lemon, kalanchoe and Indian laburnum. Each plant is a host for a different butterfly species. Bringing back butterflies has a dual function. "Butterflies bring dragonflies, robber flies, grasshoppers and many types of bee. These insects attract birds such as bulbuls," says Geeta Yadav, an ecologist from the centre.

Previously the school had ornamental plants that were changed every season, but now it has switched to mostly butterfly-friendly native species. "Earlier I perceived weeds negatively. Now I realise they are larval host plants. I also learnt that undergrowth is essential for butterflies, so we don't remove it any more," says Anita Singh Yadav.

Among the group of students is 16-year-old Ankit Kumar, who has planted a *vajradanti* tree (*Barleria prionitis*), host to the lemon pansy. He holds a set of laminated illustrations with information about butterflies. "This reminds me of the butterfly Pokémon," he says as he shows me an image. "They come to birth their future generations on plants."

As the planting comes to an end, Anita Singh Yadav tells her students, "Butterflies show us change is possible. People think larvae are ugly, but look how beautiful they become." R

Vandana K is an independent journalist based in Delhi, India.

Butterfly walk at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Delhi  
Photograph courtesy of BNHS Delhi



# Wood be good

Gary Cook meets former tree surgeon turned activist Robin Walter

“You learn a lot about conflict when you’re thirty foot up a tree, with a chainsaw,” Robin Walter reflects with a rueful smile.

Walter spent the early nineties in London’s leafy suburban gardens, working as a tree surgeon and gaining a rather unusual perspective on human nature. He would often have pulled the cord, unleashed the saw’s terrifying burr and be about to start pruning when a neighbour of the tree’s ‘owner’ would appear, followed by another and another. From his bird’s-eye vantage, he could see them – they usually couldn’t see each other over their garden walls – and they often wouldn’t see eye to eye on the impending surgery either.

**As the second-biggest importer, behind China, we spend £7.6 billion a year on forest products**

Dangling from a rope, Walter would then enter into some delicate negotiations, balancing his client’s wishes to reduce the crown with an onslaught of conflicting requests, from “Take it down. We’re always in its shadow” to “It’s my favourite. Don’t touch a branch.”

Finding empathy with every standpoint is what helped Walter develop his unique arboreal nous and an open-minded realism that we need more of today. Politicians of every hue are falling over themselves to quote ever more ambitious plans to plant millions of saplings to improve the UK’s pitifully poor tree cover, which currently stands at a sparse 13% compared with a healthier European average of 38%. But Walter is well aware that even this seemingly innocuous and virtuous aim comes with trap doors of controversy.

For a start, within that 13% we have too many monocrop plantations, so we need to be wary about being seduced by the vote-garnering pledges. “We have to spend more time asking what sort of trees we need to plant, and where,” explains Walter in his calm voice as we chat on a park bench overlooking the gentle folds of the Blackmore Vale near the town of Shaftesbury in

Dorset. “A productive conifer plantation would have about 2,500 trees per hectare, whereas a wood planted for diversity might have only 1,100 trees per hectare.”

Walter, who moved to Dorset in 1996, questions our status quo. “Should we be planting on degraded highland landscapes? Do lowland heaths, created by our past tree-clearing actions, deserve more protection? There are so many conflicting claims on land. How do we reconcile those?”

Fortunately, he has an answer. “Imagine the British Isles with large forests, small woods and a countryside dotted with trees, covering a third of our land. Some of these forests are hard-working and productive, supplying timber for building, carpentry and home heating; others might emerge from the return of wild Nature and native trees. Small community woods could be gently managed for wildlife and people, or planted to hold back flood waters. Exhausted farmland could relax and welcome back its protective mantle of trees and scrub.”

He sets out these ideas in his book *Living with Trees*, published by Little Toller Books for Common Ground. The book exudes the charity’s trademark style of considered arguments layered with various design catnip distractions by internationally renowned environmental artists such as David Nash, Kurt Jackson and Ackroyd & Harvey. After a foreword by Judi Dench and introduction by Richard Mabey, Walter’s enquiring mind reaches like tree roots, extending into every aspect of arborealism from architecture to education, rewilding to agroforestry, interwoven with practical answers for how to reconnect with trees.

The stats are intriguing and depressing by turn. We in the UK covet wood almost as much as we love our pets. As the second-biggest importer, behind China, we spend £7.6 billion a year on forest products. About 80% of the 56 million cubic metres of wood we use is imported. Of the 11 million cubic metres of timber we produce ourselves, it is shocking to discover that 10% is made into plain old MDF and panelboard.

Stints as a Woodland Trust manager and an auditor for the Soil Association, coupled with his tree surgeon days, have led Walter to conclude that we need to redress the fundamental imbalance in our relationship with Nature. He fears we are on the brink of disaster.



City Tree by Romy Blümel, 2016  
Commissioned for LEAF! a Common Ground newspaper

## “Ideally, every parish and town should be encouraged to develop a vision for trees in their locality”

We need more trees in towns and a more diverse farmed landscape. Modern forestry has cleaned up its act and he believes we should be using more home-grown timber to lock carbon into wooden buildings. “Ideally, every parish and town should be encouraged to develop a vision for trees in their locality.” His book leads us through the tricky decisions we all need to ponder to make these things happen.

He’s walking the talk too. He is a committed XR activist and looks vaguely revolutionary, tall, slim and dressed in a battered leather jacket. He is also a central force in the Shaftesbury Tree Group, along with ecological visionaries Angela King and Sue Clifford – founders of Common Ground and Apple Day. Together they are greening the hilltop town. The group has produced two tree walk maps (which I helped create)

and has an ambitious five-year tree-planting scheme. Covid has curtailed the plan to involve the whole community in planting for the moment, but Walter and a small team still managed to get nearly 1,000 trees and saplings into the ground last winter.

Inevitably, a few of them were uprooted by late-night park users almost immediately. Walter shrugs and takes on the expression I imagine is that of a man dangling from a tree again. “We need a situation where everybody wants trees and that’s the norm. Sadly we’re a long way from that.” But he’s ready to dust down his negotiating skills if need be. R

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Gary Cook is a writer and artist. [www.cookthepainter.com](http://www.cookthepainter.com)  
All royalties from *Living with Trees* are donated to Common Ground. [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk)

# Free wheeling

PL Henderson explores how cycling has helped women's emancipation



Cycling is booming, in a revolution activated as a social side effect of the global pandemic. A pedal-powered response to the events of 2020 saw sales of bikes in the UK rise by 60% at the beginning of the first lockdown. Meanwhile, in Europe, in order to cater for the increased bicycle use, millions of euros are being devoted to improving infrastructure related to cycling. Yet it is a movement motivated for many by more than precautions regarding health matters or maintaining fitness. Rather than simply utilising this mode of transport to move from home to work and back, as suggested by the authorities, getting on our bikes may be viewed as having more convoluted meaning. The limitations brought about by lockdowns and the curtailing of individual liberty, as a critical social obligation, have been essential in saving lives, yet such unprecedented restrictions have also caused many to truly appreciate the brief sense of freedom the outdoors has offered as vital for mental wellbeing. One of the most popular ways to escape into localised worlds has, in turn, been on two wheels.

While contemplating the new boundaries placed on our lives during the pandemic, it is important to note that for one group of people limitations in terms of movement and lack of access to public space have been both a historical and a global reality. This was, and still is, a fact of life for many women, due to social norms, gender roles and threats to safety. The invention of the bicycle, however, has aided the cause of women's emancipation, both in terms of the past and in the modern day. The challenges that eventually allowed women to escape a life of confinement in the western domestic sphere began in earnest in the latter part of the 19th century. Decades earlier, bicycles had begun emerging from countries such as Germany and France. The penny-farthing is perhaps the best-known early model, an unwieldy and dangerous bicycle with an oversized front wheel. Such designs were certainly not user-friendly for men, never mind women in a Victorian era in which they were expected to wear long, heavy

skirts with layers of petticoats. The narrow waists of dresses restricted bodily movements even further, even causing damage to internal organs and problems for the spine. This was not the only problem, however. The issue of apparent correct feminine behaviour, which encompassed extremely strict codes of conduct, prevented women from attempting anything other than very limited perceived 'lady-like' activities.

Fortunately, as the 19th century neared its end, the invention of the safety bicycle would help change the way women both lived and dressed in the west. Looking rather like the standard design of bikes today, this development accounted for female dress codes by incorporating a lower crossbar on certain models. Concerns from the medical profession of the era strangely included the idea that cycling could cause women particularly all manner of conditions and diseases, from appendicitis to goitre. Doctors were also horrified that women might experience certain 'pleasures' while sitting on bicycle saddles. Despite such anxieties, the new cycling craze, openly available to men, was beginning to entice women. Even these novel machines were difficult to conquer, however, as fashions for full dresses and skirts still caused mobility restrictions. Finding a remedy to the problem of women's dress in relation to bicycling was perhaps the catalyst for many female dress designers to work with lighter materials and to produce new styles such as split skirts. To maintain female modesty, solutions to the activity of cycling needed yet more thought. Amelia Bloomer was a US women's rights advocate already aiding such causes by raising issues like dress reform in her newspaper *The Lily*. Such attempts to improve women's lives faced the inevitable detractors. Nevertheless, buoyed by these

discussions, in addition to pioneering feminists sporting baggy breeches in challenges to the status quo, women were soon wearing a form of pantaloons that, in turn, adopted Bloomer's name.

Dress reform campaigns for women, certainly influenced by activities like cycling, were growing in the 19th century and endorsed by many artists involved in progressive art movements of the age. Designer, embroiderer and educator Jessie Newbery from the Glasgow School, in addition to being involved in the women's suffrage campaign, created innovative light-weight designs in women's clothing. Wearing such apparel, the suffragettes on both sides of the Atlantic were utilising new freedoms in their personal mobility to liberate women more widely, and the bicycle was integral to this. Using cycling as a means to get beyond the perimeters of their expected worlds, women could attend meetings, form alliances and gain strength. The use of the bicycle was even endorsed by leading figures of the suffrage movement such as US campaigner Susan B. Anthony, who noted its worth in boosting women's self-reliance and respect.

## Cycling is still an act of brave female defiance against gendered restrictions in many areas

In terms of female emancipation, the bicycle has continued to aid the global cause. Schemes offering cycles to poorer women farmers in countries such as Zambia have revolutionised lifestyles, for example. In communities without access to motorised transport and in regions that lack infrastructure such as decent roads, this has lightened the work burden of women while empowering them in terms of their independence. Female students in many countries have benefited from projects offering them the use of bikes, enabling them to travel to school more safely. In a world where 30 million girls do not attend high school, with the threat of male violence in public spaces as a major deterrent, such initiatives are vital – though obviously not the solution. As with the suffragettes, cycling is still an act of brave female defiance against gendered restrictions in many areas, particularly in countries where women partaking in the activity may even be subject to arrest. In a contemporary age in which the bike has helped ease the temporary endurance of loss of liberty and access to spaces, it is certainly worth contemplating how lifelong restrictions have impacted the lives of others and also how the bicycle remains a symbol of liberty for many. R

PL Henderson is an art historian and curator of the Twitter feed @womensart1

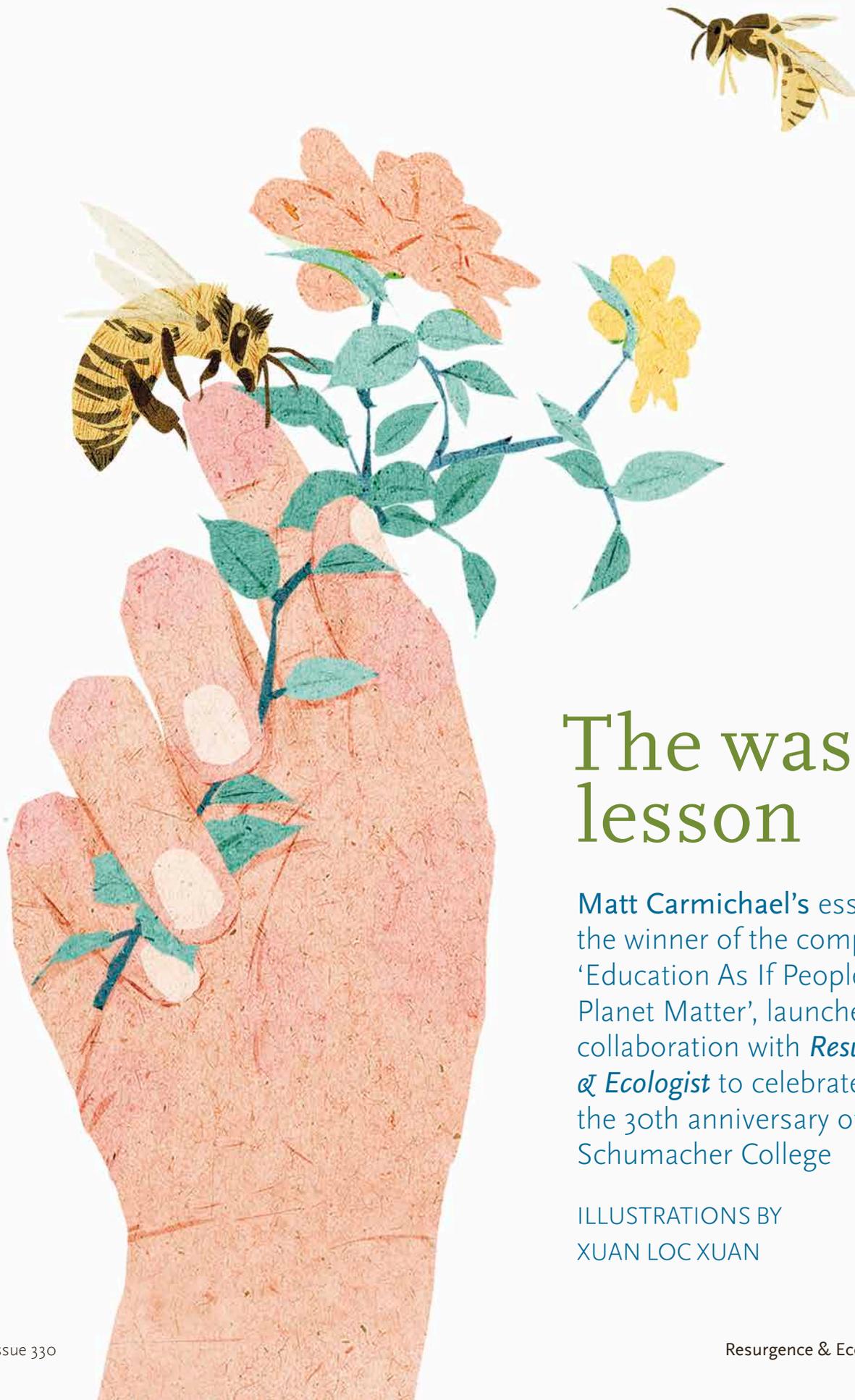


Illustrations  
by adams carvalho

“The power of education lies in its capacities to connect us with the world and others, to move us beyond the spaces we already inhabit, and to expose us to new possibilities.”

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*From the report 'Reimagining Our Futures Together: A new Social Contract for Education', published by UNESCO, November 2021*



# The wasp lesson

Matt Carmichael's essay is the winner of the competition 'Education As If People and Planet Matter', launched in collaboration with *Resurgence & Ecologist* to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Schumacher College

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
XUAN LOC XUAN

**W**asps are welcome to disrupt my English classes. It's happened more often this spring because of the requirement to keep windows open during the pandemic. I once resented the working time lost coaxing the little gatecrashers back out of the window, students screeching, swatting, pronouncing the death sentence. But six years ago something sticky-sweet on my finger from lunch presented me with an opportunity. I let the little creature linger on my open hand. "Watch out, sir! They can sting without dying, sir, not like bees!"

"Why would it sting me? In late summer they can be grumpy but this one's fine. I think it's a male because its abdomen's quite slim."

## A minute ago we were in rows facing the front. Now we are in a circle

I'm among the desks, and a few students lean closer to see. "You know, without wasps, we'd be plagued by swarms of flies and midges and their rotting flesh everywhere. Wasps keep our ecosystems in balance. Without wasps, our food would be more expensive and less healthy because farmers would use more toxic spray to protect crops. There are 30,000 species of wasps and most are pollinators just like bees. There are even some beautiful flowers – orchids – that wouldn't exist without wasps; they've evolved to look and smell like female wasps to trick males into pollinating them. Did you know there are honey wasps?"

Students further away stand up for a better view. Some move closer. "In Japan you can eat wasp larvae in fancy restaurants." Disgusted cries. "There's research going on into a wasp venom that might one day save your life, because it kills cancer cells without harming healthy cells."

A minute ago we were in rows facing the front. Now we are in a circle.

In *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered*, the economist E.F. Schumacher identifies the heart of the problem: we must decide what we want our economies to do for us, otherwise the relationship is easily inverted and economies enslave us. He devotes a whole chapter to education, writing, "If western civilisation is in a state of permanent crisis, it is not far-fetched



to suggest that there may be something wrong with its education." That crisis is today so glaring that many young people themselves are aware of the inadequacy of their own education system. Through the brilliant Teach The Future campaign some are demanding a curriculum review so that sustainability and climate change are taught "in all subject areas". How would that look?

I've devoted much of the past two decades to communicating the reality of climate change in Leeds to all



“If western civilisation is in a state of permanent crisis, it is not far-fetched to suggest that there may be something wrong with its education”

kinds of audiences, and I've learned that people have a great appetite for scientific explanations, but that knowledge on its own yields unpredictable responses. Depending on their prior value systems, people I've addressed have done everything from disrupting oil-sponsored art exhibitions to starting a climate denial blog. So education as if people and planet matter cannot rely on accurate information transfer alone. Indeed, if Schumacher is to be believed, we must address not just the content of the curriculum, but the purpose of

life: “‘know-how’ is nothing by itself,” he writes; “it is a means without an end... the task of education” must be “first and foremost the transmission of ideas of value, of what to do with our lives.”

This question cannot be avoided. Every education system is necessarily an expression of – and therefore a teacher of – particular values. Ours grew out of the liberal tradition – ‘liberal’ because it aimed to free thinking from stifling religious dogma. Its curriculum, introducing the subjects we still learn, served the



industrialising economy and nascent democracy, but made assumptions which are at the root of the ‘permanent crisis’ we now face: that Nature is a soulless mechanism to be moulded to human purposes; that its stock is effectively limitless; and that waste products are of no great significance.

It’s striking that the rise of neoliberalism – a new stifling dogma sanctifying the freedom of markets to generate profit – coincides roughly with destruction on a vast new scale, when 80% of all carbon has been emitted, and 60% of total animal populations have been lost. The education system has been refashioned to enshrine neoliberal values. Head teachers are trained

as managers of learning factories which compete with each other for tomorrow’s children by proving that they are filling today’s up, like milk bottles on a conveyor belt, with the knowledge and skills to compete with each other in another, adult, market – for jobs.

Education as if people and planet matter must be based on very different, life-affirming values. Most teachers are motivated by a desire to care for children, so even now, in small ways, the system subverts itself covertly. In fact, I think this is what happens when a wasp disrupts my English class. Years after that first wasp lesson, a student gave me a thank-you card when she left school. She said that I had inspired her to

## What kind of education system tells you about subjunctive clauses before you're twelve, but never explains why we need wasps? What else is it not telling you?

participate in the Youth Strike for Climate and to study philosophy at university. To my astonishment, she cited not my many carefully planned lessons and assemblies around climate change, but “when you held the wasp.”

Pondering this has led me to the view that education's purpose is best expressed not in terms of Schumacher's abstract *ideas* of value, but in terms of concrete *relationships*. Answering his unavoidable question places people in relationships with each other and Nature, and these roles become the fundamental learning outcomes of the education system, feeding through into the economy and wider society. When I held the wasp, students' relationships with wasps were transformed from something like antagonism to something more like allyship, and for at least one this set her on a new path.

There are several dimensions to the way this transformation takes place in the wasp lessons. Firstly, there are some facts which students have to make sense of. They are about how wasp and human interests align. The ecophilosopher Freya Mathews says, “if my identity is logically interconnected with the identity of other beings, then ... my chances of self-realization depend on the existence of those beings... our interests converge.” Such information is necessary if people and planet both matter.

Secondly, an emotional dimension moves students from alarm towards empathy. In *Life's Philosophy*, the philosopher of deep ecology Arne Naess argues for an education that takes “more account of feelings”, committing a chapter to cultivating “A feeling for all living beings”. An education system fit for the future today's children face would produce emotionally literate young adults, more aware of deep motives in themselves and others, and experienced in conflict resolution.

But without a wasp present in the room, I doubt I'd have received that thank-you card, just as reading this essay you cannot ask some of the questions my students have asked over six years: “What's it doing now?” “Can I hold it?” The presence of a living being is compelling, but factory education is addicted to smartboards, as though consciously acclimatising children for a semi-virtual life. What if children's curricular entitlement was expressed in living encounters rather than

topics? Outdoor classes would be a daily expectation. Visits by artists, asylum seekers and war veterans would be as commonplace as textbooks. Neoliberal education relies on divorcing school life from community life, but students of every age should be deeply involved in serving their local communities, for example by growing food, visiting old people and creating what Schumacher called intermediate technologies.

Finally, there is magic in the spontaneity of the wasp lesson. Naess links the central “feeling of being on a voyage of discovery” to slower, deeper learning within a spacious curriculum. Factory learning is ruled by the monstrous god Chronos, but wise education must revere the Greeks' friendlier god of time, Kairos, whose educational incarnation is the teachable moment. This spring, when he has alighted incarnated as a wasp, I've dived into big questions: given that there is no known biological life anywhere else in the universe, how valuable is a wasp? Who gave you the idea that it's OK to kill wasps? If “everyone” thinks so, does that make it true? (So the best of liberalism still contributes!) What kind of education system tells you about subjunctive clauses before you're twelve, but never explains why we need wasps? What else is it not telling you?

Around 2,400 years ago the Taoist teacher Zhuang Zhou wrote, “I know the joy of the fishes in the river through my own joy as I go walking along the same river.” If we take young people for those walks, literal and figurative, the relationships they form with people and planet will empower them to work out the rest for themselves. A student recently said: “Sir, I think you've convinced my brain that wasps are OK, I just don't know if I like this one.” Before I could respond, someone else piped up, “Sammy. He's called Sammy. Bet you don't want to kill him now!” R

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Matt Carmichael is a secondary school teacher from Leeds. The essays to receive second and third prize, by Deepa Maturi and Guy Dauncey respectively, are available to read at [www.resurgence.org/essaycompetition](http://www.resurgence.org/essaycompetition) For more information about the prize, visit [www.campus.dartington.org/schumachercollege-essay-comp-winner](http://www.campus.dartington.org/schumachercollege-essay-comp-winner)





## Going wild

**T**oday we are using the equivalent of 1.6 Earths to sustain our lifestyles, and the ecosystems that create life on this planet are slipping through our fingers. One way to counteract this trend that has gained popularity in recent years is rewilding – a form of ecological restoration that reinstates natural processes, often by bringing back lost species into a landscape. From herbivores such as beavers with their urge to build dams to wolves and their taste for elk, the reintroduction of these animals can help transform ecosystems, restore biodiversity and, in the case of areas like wetland and woodland, help store carbon and mitigate climate change. But the landscapes subject to rewilding are not empty – they are also people’s homes and livelihoods. So how can we balance the need for ‘wild’ places and the needs of the communities who live there? Join us in the following pages as we explore this question. **R**

*Reduce Speed Now (One-Stop Car Park: Hawkweed, Ribwort Plantain and Common Vetch)*  
Oil on aluminium road sign, 120cm x 130cm, Nessie Ramm (2021)  
nessieramm.co.uk

# Connecting our landscape

Coreen Grant speaks to rewilding pioneer Isabella Tree



Isabella Tree by Francesco Guidicini

When Isabella Tree and her husband Charlie Burrell embarked on what would become the UK's shining example of rewilding, they had no idea what the future held. Though they have been dubbed 'the King and Queen of Rewilding', Tree remains exceptionally humble as she describes the dramatic transformation they witnessed on their West Sussex farmland. "I don't think we can really take much credit for it," she says. "We had hit the buffers with farming, and we wanted to work with the land rather than battling against it. Nature just did its thing on our land."

The story of Knepp Estate and its rapid evolution from unprofitable agricultural land to a rewilded landscape teeming with endangered species is chronicled in Tree's prize-winning best-seller, *Wilding*. It tells how the couple handed their 1,400 hectares of farmland back to Nature: ripping out fences, abandoning the use of pesticides, and introducing free-roaming herds of animals.

"The book was really about the astonishing resurgence of Nature," Tree explains. "That was beyond any of our imaginings, and even the scientists on our advisory board couldn't believe the pace of change and uplift of biodiversity." *Wilding* ends on this note of hope

for the sheer power of Nature to revitalise and recover when given the space. But I'm curious to learn what Tree has been focusing on at Knepp since the book was published three years ago.

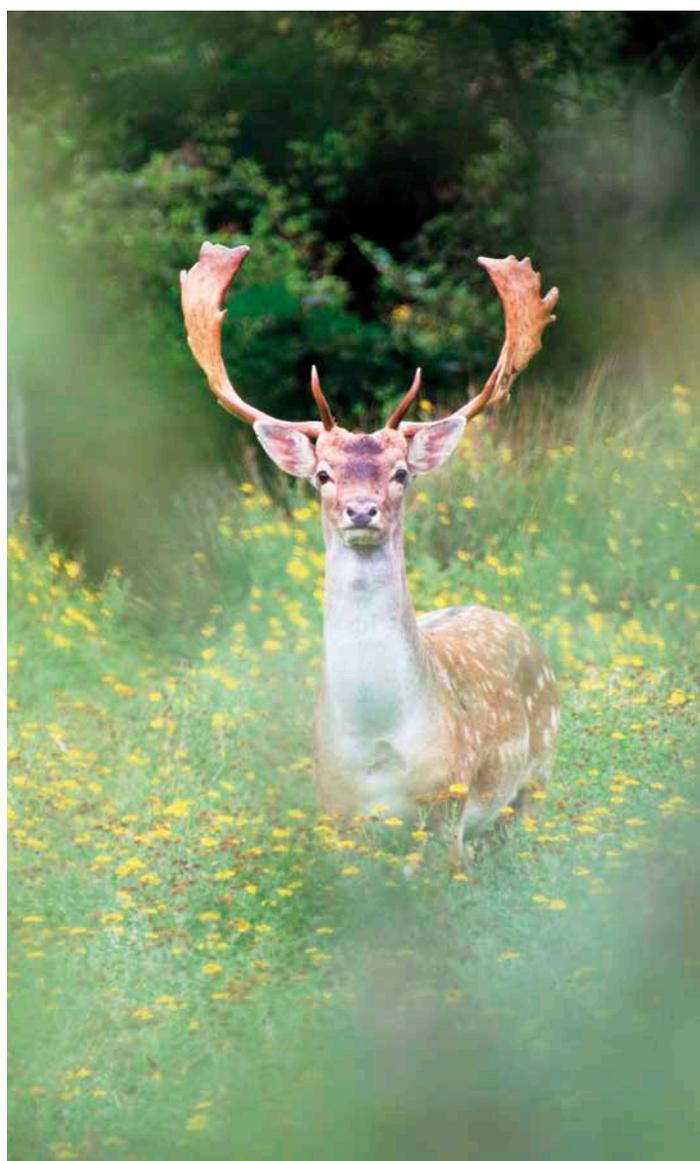
Successful though their rewilding project has been, Tree says, she's aware that Knepp on its own is an island. The density and variety of species within Knepp cannot spill out and colonise, because there is a dearth of high-value habitat surrounding the estate. "We now have this incredible biodiversity hotspot, but we're living in a bubble," Tree admits. "It was a beautiful place to be for lockdown, but whenever we leave this bubble, we're hit by the desertification of the land around us."

Their focus now is on collaborating with neighbours on the vision to connect Knepp. One such project focuses on linking Knepp to the sea, while another looks northward to areas such as St Leonard's Forest and Ashdown Forest. The aim is to connect Knepp with different Nature-rich environments and habitats – from heathland to heavy clay to chalk to salt marsh – thus creating a significant ecosystem with natural processes flowing through the landscape on a large scale.

This next stage of Knepp's evolution involves talking with landowners and farmers about what they can do to connect areas of biodiversity: perhaps allowing hedgerows to grow out as buffers, reducing their pesticides or even considering regenerative farming. "Obviously, these farmers aren't going to want to rewild the whole of their land," Tree says. "Some are on very profitable farmland, and we don't want that either: we need land for agriculture. It should be the best land, obviously, rather than marginal land like ours. But there are ways of leaving some areas for Nature within that patchwork."

Tree's goal of connecting Knepp to a wider Nature-full landscape has been threatened in the past year by controversial development plans for 3,500 houses on a greenfield site right on the border of Knepp. Tree admits that a year ago they were full of despondency, with the council having seemingly made up its mind already. However, she shares the encouraging news that just recently all building plans in the district have been put on hold due to an edict by Natural England that developments will only be approved if water neutrality can be demonstrated.

The area around Knepp also has an additional level of protection, provided by an unlikely hero: a 5mm-tall mollusc called the little whirlpool ramshorn snail. Thanks to the charity Buglife, this snail is protected by international law. Natural England has flagged that



Photograph by Rachael Smith  
Instagram: @rach\_at\_clovers

## “There’s an amazing David and Goliath story going on here”

extracting any more water from Knepp's catchment could threaten the snail, thus putting the brakes on any development plans. "There's an amazing David and Goliath story going on here," Tree tells me happily.

Tree hopes that society is beginning to move away from the 'build, build, build' mentality of the past decade, a mantra she describes as "very much old school" yet still embedded at local government level. Instead, she says, we are heading towards a new type of thinking: one that focuses on Nature recovery, regenerative agriculture, connectivity, and thinking together.

"I think things *are* beginning to shift," she says. "I wonder if it is partly due to COP[26], and partly because people are slowly beginning to understand that, actually, this is serious. Nature recovery isn't just the icing

# Grassroots level

In May 2021, Inkcap Journal published an investigation revealing that a quarter of local councils in England have plans to rewild. I asked Isabella Tree what she thought local authorities could be doing to aid Nature recovery.

For a start, she suggests that local councils have an ecologist as part of their team so that they truly understand how Nature works: how green space can properly function in towns, how a wildflower meadow is created and maintained, and why they should consider leaving road verges unmown.

She also has big hopes for the Environment Bill and its inclusion of local Nature recovery strategies. Tree believes these are a critical framework for improving connections between high-value Nature areas in different districts and working towards a national network. Without proper

connection, isolated Nature reserves and biodiversity hotspots like rewilding projects will begin to struggle with issues such as genetic inbreeding, she explains – but a designated recovery network could give species the flexibility and space they need to bounce back.

Tree would also like to see closer relationships between environmental organisations and councils. Ultimately, however, she points out, change needs to start at grassroots level and it is up to the people who elect councillors to demand the right thing by Nature. “There’s lots of things happening around us [at Knepp], lots of villages beginning to think green and go pesticide-free, so change is happening – but I would love to see it gather even more momentum and become unstoppable.”

## “Whatever little piece of soil we have jurisdiction or stewardship over, we can do something positive with it”

on the cake. It is something you do wherever possible, wherever there’s space to do so, and something at the heart of government policy. So that’s what we hope the trajectory of travel is.”

In order to help people take full advantage of any space available, Tree is currently writing a ‘book of wilding’: a rewilding handbook of sorts. Initially envisaged as a small pocketbook one might take out on a walk, it has since, Tree tells me, “rewilded itself, and turned into a hairy, uncontrollable, ravening monster” – so it might be a few pages longer than planned. The essence remains the same, however. After the success of *Wilding*, Tree was inundated with an incredible response from the public reacting to the story of hope that Knepp represents. People wanted to know how they could replicate what was happening at Knepp on their own land.

Tree is very clear that you do not need to own 1,400 hectares – or even one hectare – to make use of the book of wilding. In fact, there will be an entire chapter devoted to rewilding cities. “Whatever little piece of soil we have jurisdiction or stewardship over, we can do something positive with it,” she says.

She explains that the smaller the land, the more human intervention is needed to replicate the natural processes that are missing, because of the constraints of space – which is where the handbook comes in. Tree hopes that having accessible rewilding advice between the covers of a book will help people to think practically about how they can contribute to a webbing of Nature restoration throughout the landscape.

“It goes back again to this theme that seems to be possessing us at the moment, which is connectivity. If you have a back garden, you can persuade your neighbours to cut a hole in the fence or hedgerow, and that becomes a hedgehog highway. If everyone in the street goes pesticide- and herbicide-free, and perhaps one person can have a pond, another a beetle bank, then suddenly you’ve got a chain of habitats that becomes really significant.”

Although there is still a long way to go to realise the interconnected landscape she envisions, Tree is hopeful that society is moving in the right direction. “Twenty years ago rewilding was a dirty word,” she laughs. “You couldn’t have said it without people’s hackles rising. But now it’s mainstream.” Knepp may have led the way, but it is no longer alone on the rewilding scene by any means. R

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Coreen Grant is a freelance writer based in Edinburgh, with a particular interest in the intersection of Nature and culture. She is editorial assistant at Inkcap Journal. [www.inkcapjournal.co.uk](http://www.inkcapjournal.co.uk)

# Sea change

Restoring marine life can help heal the planet, writes **Richard Bunting**

**O**ur oceans are in trouble as much as our land. They have suffered centuries of unsustainable abuse and exploitation. They have been plundered for vast quantities of fish, with huge areas of the seabed smashed and stripped of life. Globally, only 13% of oceanic waters are now considered truly wild.

The seas around Britain were once home to the biggest creatures on the planet – including blue, humpback, fin, sperm, bottlenose and sei whales. But the whales were hunted to local near extinction for meat and oil, before commercial whaling in Britain ceased in 1963 (although a worldwide moratorium was not put in place until 1986). Smaller species and precious habitats haven't escaped our relentless de-wilding. As recently as the mid-1990s, ships were trawling huge volumes of sand eels – a prolific lynchpin of the marine food web – from the North Sea to send to Danish power stations to generate electricity.

The Firth of Forth – once home to a 150km<sup>2</sup> oyster bed, believed to have been the largest in the world – was raked out in the 19th century and is now devoid of oysters. In an ongoing decline, a huge proportion of seagrass meadows and shellfish beds have vanished over the past century. Although over a third of Scotland's seas now have some form of protection, damaging activities such as scallop dredging and bottom trawling are banned from less than 5% of coastal waters.

But hope is still there, which is where rewilding comes in. At sea, as on land, rewilding can help us reverse the Nature emergency and fix the climate crisis, while benefiting people. Healthy seabeds drive a richer marine ecology, so when marine habitats recover, so does everything that relies upon them. Healthy seas – especially rich biodiverse habitats such as coastal saltmarshes, kelp forests and seagrass beds – are also vital in the fight against climate breakdown because they sequester vast amounts of carbon.

Marine rewilding can offer fresh opportunities for communities and for creating local Nature-based economies too – including regenerating once-bustling harbours and coastal towns. For these reasons, Rewilding Britain is calling for rewilding and Nature recovery across at least 30% of Britain's land and seas by 2030.

To make that happen, our politicians need to step up. But meanwhile people aren't waiting, and increasing numbers of projects are taking action to allow the rich rainbow of underwater habitats – and the vast swirl of sea life – to recover.

From Dornoch Firth to Lyme Bay, inspiring initiatives are leading the way by restoring seagrass meadows and kelp forests. Oyster regeneration projects are under way in Argyll, Essex and the Solent.

Members of Rewilding Britain's Rewilding Network, which is bringing together large-scale Nature recovery projects from across the country, include RSPB Wallasea Island – a stunning mix of marshland, lagoons, ditches and sea in Essex, restored through a managed realignment project and now a habitat for a wide range of species.

On the Isle of Arran, Lamlash Bay – home to one of Scotland's largest maerl beds – has pioneered with spectacular results a 2.67km<sup>2</sup> no-take zone within a wider 280km<sup>2</sup> no-trawl reserve, thanks to the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST). As detailed in our recent report, 'Rewilding and the Rural Economy', COAST also demonstrates how a community can support local jobs and businesses by protecting and restoring Nature.

Such initiatives offer a blueprint for bringing our seas and coasts back to health. R

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Richard Bunting is a spokesperson for several rewilding charities, including Rewilding Britain, Trees for Life, SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, and the Scottish Rewilding Alliance.

Illustration by Daniel Triendl [danieltriendl.com](http://danieltriendl.com)

# A sense of belonging

Gaelic should have a central place in Scotland's rewilding plans, argue **Fiona MacIsaac** and **Magnus Davidson**

**R**ewilding, although a relatively new concept, has taken on a different meaning for almost all those who use the term. From leaving gardens to grow as they please, to landscape-scale initiatives, many rewilding organisations also differ in approaches to describe what they hope to achieve.

The global authority in conservation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) describes rewilding as “the process of rebuilding, following major human disturbance, a natural ecosystem by restoring natural processes and the complete or near complete food-web at all trophic levels as a self-sustaining and resilient ecosystem using biota that would have been present had the disturbance not occurred”. The IUCN CEM Rewilding Thematic Group has set out 10 rewilding principles, of which the seventh recognises that rewilding be informed by both science and Indigenous and local knowledge.

In Scotland, with no recognised Indigenous peoples – in itself a not-uncontested position – the rewilding movement can usefully look to be informed by two recognised Indigenous languages: Scots and Gaelic. Whilst Scots is spoken across the country, Gaelic is the language of the Gàidhealtachd, an area that covers broadly the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. Unfortunately, Gaelic is often ignored or – worse – dismissed by many organisations and academics working in the management and restoration of ecosystems across the country.

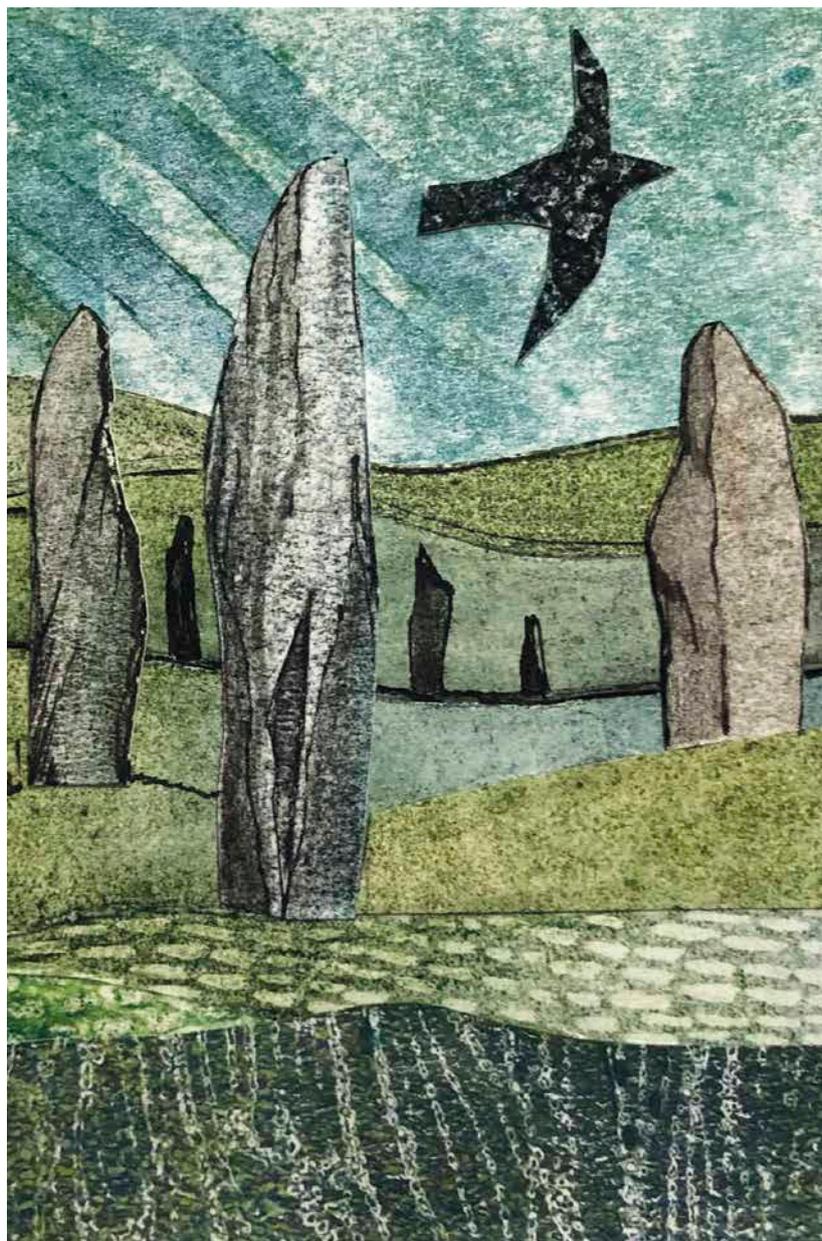
At a most basic level, the language offers a literal blueprint for what much of Scotland could look like ecologically if rewilded. In the work of Roddy Maclean, who outlines links between Gaelic and the environment, examples can be seen such as Carn an Tuirc in Aberdeenshire, suggesting the presence of boar, and a number giving hints to the presence of bears, such as Alt a’ Mhathain.

Maclean’s recent report ‘Ecosystems and Gaelic’ for NatureScot, Scotland’s Nature agency, makes a number of recommendations on utilising Gaelic to inform the rewilding debate, and importantly to build bridges between Gaelic and Highland communities, and non-Gaelic-speaking advocates of rewilding.

In a broader sense, knowledge of Gaelic helps to colour the landscape. The naming of the colours in Gaelic holds a level of nuance that doesn’t have an equivalent in English. There are clues to the nature of the environment present in place names that reveal themselves to Gaelic speakers,

and these clues can reach back to a past where there was dense forest in a place that is now treeless or to a place that was once inhabited but is now empty of people. Meg Bateman describes this in *Cànan is Cùltar* as a particularly Gaelic way of seeing.

Looking to Gaelic to describe the landscape without encompassing the culture and heritage of the language would ignore the real value it can offer – how we can live





Artwork by Gill Thompson, artist and printmaker - Isle of Lewis  
[www.gillthompsonartistprintmaker.com](http://www.gillthompsonartistprintmaker.com)

in, with, and for the landscape. The concept of *Dùthchas* is an important one to keep in mind. The dictionary definition may offer up 'place of birth' as one of the definitions of the word, but the idea goes much deeper than that. It is a tie to the land, and a deep sense of belonging to the land rather than the land belonging to you. Familiarity with the idea offers a chance to look at different ways of interacting with the environment – and in understanding the tie that many have with the environment. Working with this concept at the forefront could offer an effective model for any rewilding efforts in the Highlands and Islands.

The loss of Gaelic language and culture is intertwined with land dispossession across the Gàidhealtachd. During the period of the Highland Clearances, the forced eviction of tenants across the Highlands and Islands between 1750 and 1860, people were replaced with sheep under the guise of 'improvement' and subsequently as markets and tastes changed sheep were replaced with grouse, deer and forestry. With these new land uses came ecological degradation. Dispossession, emigration, and persecution of Gaelic culture also led to the loss of language across most of the Gàidhealtachd. Many of these areas were more ecologically diverse, and wild, when people were in them speaking Gaelic.

## Many of these areas were more ecologically diverse, and wild, when people were in them speaking Gaelic

The framing of places in the Gàidhealtachd as wilderness, pushed by some rewilding proponents, is problematic in that it could be seen as dismissing the deeply held sense of *Dùthchas* that still exists within communities in these areas of Scotland. It could also be seen as erasing the history of the clearances, a wound that has never healed fully.

Gaelic in Scotland continues a steady trend of decline and faces collapse of the last remaining vernacular networks. Against the backdrop of climate and ecological crises, rewilding is being promoted as a solution across much of Scotland, and in particular the Gàidhealtachd. But the challenges facing the region go beyond environmental. Today we are facing increasing difficulties for young people who wish to remain in Gàidhealtachd areas, due to a lack of affordable housing and job opportunities, and in turn the Gaelic language suffers.

Rewilding in Scotland faces criticisms of exploiting land inequality and an unregulated land market. Perhaps not unexpectedly the trend has seen new landowners, mostly men, of large estates setting out to 'improve' the natural environment, often with large amounts of capital created in unrelated industries and elsewhere in the world. To many this feels like a repeat of the past.

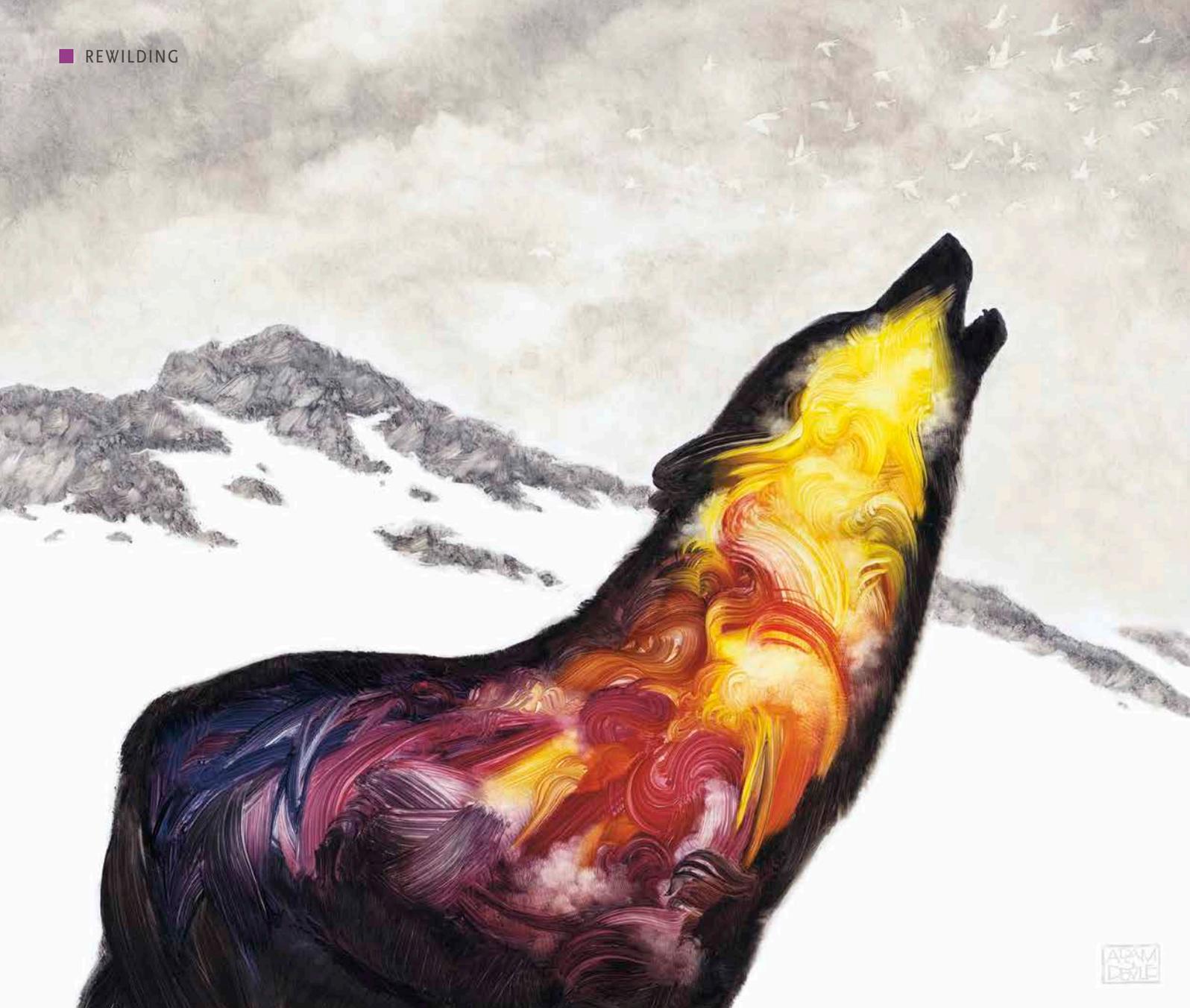
Any effort towards rewilding should bear these issues in mind and work with communities to ensure that the human isn't left out of the equation – that culture and language have a central place in any proposal. The onus here should be on the rewilding community.

The language offers much to inform ecological restoration efforts in Scotland, but it would be exploitative of the rewilding community to do so without understanding and accepting that this environmental knowledge can only be realised properly with the support of speakers. Otherwise, Gaelic and Highland communities run the risk of rejecting rewilding. The failure of these efforts will fall more heavily on the rewilding community, as local communities have an existing model that offers more to them: *Dùthchas*. **R**

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Fiona MacIsaac is an artist who lives and works in Uist. Her practice focuses on issues surrounding the environment, Gaelic culture and identity.

Magnus Davidson is a researcher from the North Highlands with an interest in understanding the social, economic and cultural aspects of the environment.



Artwork by Adam S Doyle  
adamsdoyle.com

# With or without wolves?

Hugh Webster asks where next for rewilding

Recently the rewilding movement has begun shifting away from the ‘cores, corridors and carnivores’ philosophy on which the American rewilding movement was founded, looking instead for ways to promote wildness on a variety of scales and in a variety of settings beyond the wilderness realm. Rewilding organisations are anxious to allay

public concerns about potential conflicts with large, toothy predators, while also reassuring communities – especially in the Scottish Highlands – that rewilding does not necessarily mean de-peopling.

In truth, rewilding has long been a plastic term, with even professional ecologists unable to agree precisely what it might mean. This malleability has undoubtedly

contributed to the phrase's popularity, with its multi-interpretability and occasional incoherence identified as key qualities in encouraging wider support for rewilding. However, might there be a risk that such a nebulous term might end up meaning nothing at all?

## Ultimately, a wolf is no wilder than a blue tit

In particular, playing down ambitions to reintroduce large carnivores such as the wolf appears to undermine hopes that parts of Britain might ever again feel authentically wild, or benefit from the restoration of fundamental natural processes dependent on these apex predators. However, while the Scottish Highlands may contain more than enough space and wild prey to support free-ranging wolves, nobody should imagine that, after such a long absence, the reintroduction of the wolf would be straightforward.

For a start, reintroducing wolves into a landscape with so many unguarded domestic animals – Britain supports more sheep than anywhere else in Europe – would appear to be asking for trouble. And, of course, wolves would have to be *actively* reintroduced, requiring political will, public buy-in, and a certain amount of boldness from environmental groups, none of which yet exists. Meanwhile, in other places around Europe, naturally dispersing wolves continue to provoke mixed emotions, celebrated by wildlife lovers but often vilified and persecuted by farmers and hunters, resented as much for the cultural changes they threaten as the economic losses they may cause.

Such sentiments become amplified when wolves, long viewed as symbolic totems of wildness, become lightning rods for other contemporary resentments. In an oft-repeated pattern, killing a wolf has come to be viewed as an act of resistance, symbolic of rural defiance against distant authorities, arrogant outsiders and meddling environmentalists who presume to tell people how their land should be managed or how their livelihoods may be earned.

Progress navigating these human dimensions of conflict remains slow. Overcoming such antipathy requires conservationists to be forthright about the risks posed by reintroduced carnivores while simultaneously remaining encouraging regarding the possible benefits. Wolves *are* large and potentially dangerous predators, but a case for wolves might still be built around the economic potential for wolf tourism, the possibility of

conservation payments for people living and working in 'wolf zones', and the possibility of premium pricing for 'predator-friendly' livestock products. And that is before considering all the possible ecological benefits of restoring an apex predator.

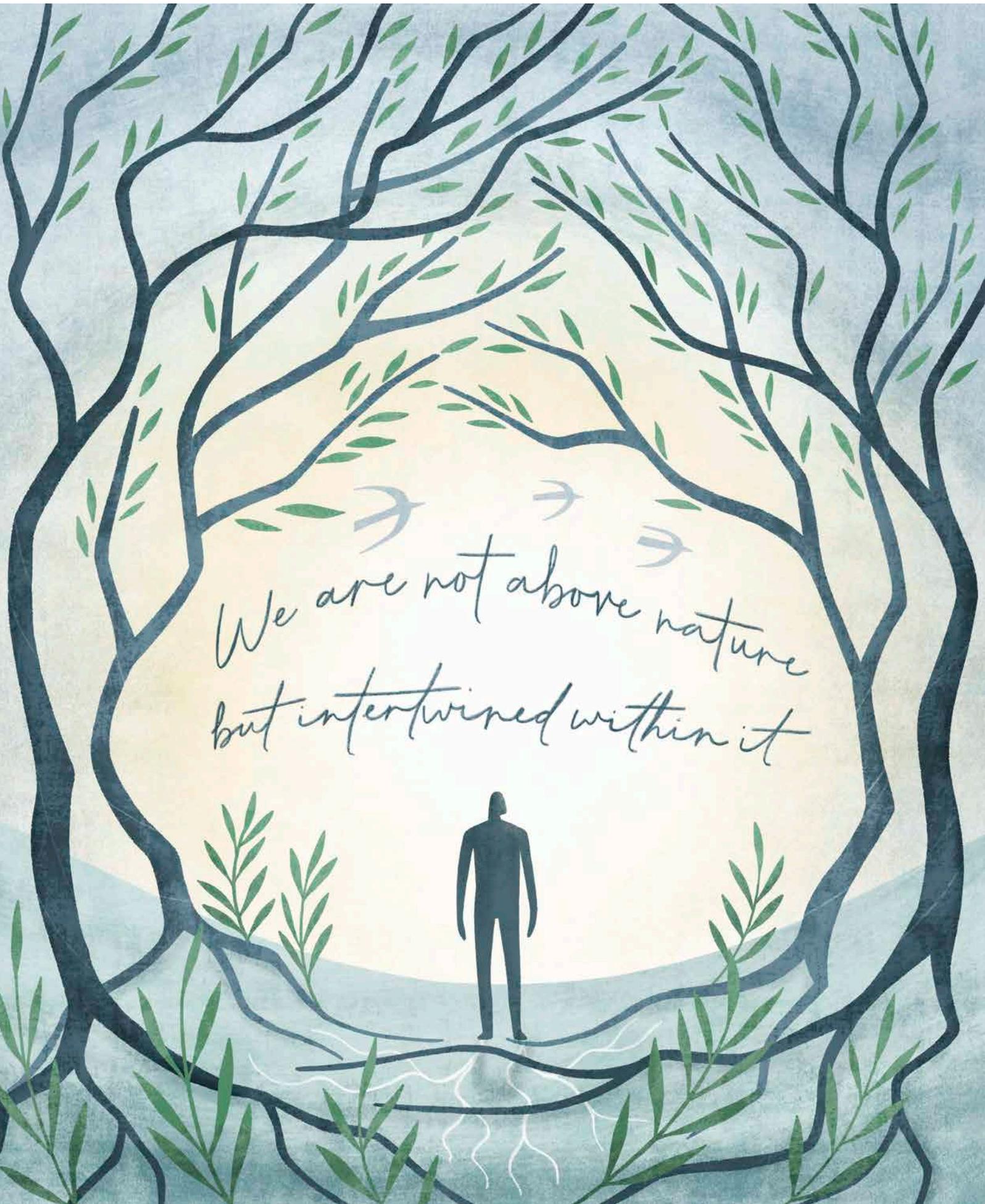
On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the science supporting the wolf's role as a catalyst of so-called trophic cascades remains inconclusive, especially in heavily modified, human-dominated landscapes. Some conservationists have even expressed concern that uncritically framing the wolf as an ecological saviour may be setting it up to fail. If we ever hope to successfully reintroduce wolves in Scotland, we must avoid creating false expectations and ensure that the communities who would live alongside them are ready to accept their presence, even if complete consensus may never be possible. We must also have systems in place to mitigate any negative impacts, and where mitigation measures fail, we will need to reconcile ourselves to the option of lethal control.

Ultimately, a wolf is no wilder than a blue tit. But wolves do make a place *feel* wilder. Wolves threaten to disturb our comfortable lives and challenge our dominion over the natural world. In *Feral*, George Monbiot admits how his enthusiasm for rewilding derives from "reasons scientific, economic, historic and hygienic, but none of those describe my motivation". Rather than any predictable or quantifiable benefit, what really motivates him, and what continues to motivate so many others, is the thrilling capacity of wild animals – and especially wild predators – to enchant and surprise us.

It is undoubtedly inappropriate to talk about reintroducing wolves to Britain at any time soon, especially when a focus on wolves threatens to entrench opposition to other forms of rewilding. But we should pause before repudiating the possibility of wolves altogether, however challenging they may be. Wolves inspire hatred and love, excitement and fear, but never apathy. Never that. Wolves, perhaps more than any other animal, have the capacity to provoke and inspire, to grab the attention and generate interest in a wildness that, for many, seems sorely missing from our intricately managed and carefully manicured landscapes. And if it can be agreed that rewilding means any one thing, it should surely be that. R

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Hugh Webster is a conservationist and writer interested in rewilding, environmental education and human-wildlife conflict. His children's book, *The Blue Hare*, is published by Natural Storytelling. We will be discussing this article at the Resurgence Readers' group meeting on 24 January 2021 and asking, "Where next for rewilding?"



# Long live the wild

Satish Kumar welcomes the wonder of wilding

**B**ill McKibben wrote his groundbreaking book *The End of Nature* in 1989. It highlighted clearly the negative and damaging power of industrial civilisation. Many scientists have since declared that we are now living in the Anthropocene epoch. One species, the human species, has become the dominant species. It is the age of human colonialism!

The human footprint on our precious planet Earth is now so large that it leaves little space for wildlife. Human encroachment of land is so extensive and rapid that ever-increasing areas of the Earth are being occupied by agri-business and factory farming. More and more soil is being covered by concrete. Governments around the world are obsessed with the building of unending infrastructure: highways, railways, airports, seaports, business parks, shopping centres and much more.

Mountains are moved, rivers are dammed and forests are demolished in order to feed the endless greed for financial gain.

Industrial civilisation rules not just the land but the oceans too. We treat them as the dumping ground for industrial rubbish, particularly plastic. Massive fishing fleets rule the seas, in addition to cargo ships, naval ships and submarines.

Destruction of biodiversity and impingement on the habitats of other-than-human species is labelled 'development' or 'progress' and it is done in the name of economic growth. In the age of the Anthropocene, Nature is merely a means to an end: the end of more production, more consumption and profit maximisation. And yet, in spite of this massive manipulation of wildlife, humanity is no nearer to ending hunger or deprivation and bringing equal dignity to all human life.

Having colonised the land and the oceans, industrial civilisation is now on a mission to colonise space. After polluting the soils, poisoning

the oceans and filling the atmosphere with greenhouse gases, the next target is to colonise the moon and Mars!

In the background a new movement is emerging, a movement of rewilding the land. A small number of farmers are saying that enough is enough: that we need to take from Nature without destroying Nature.

There is no shortage of food in the world, but 30–40% of food is being wasted. Industrial farming is producing greater and greater quantities of food as a commodity to make money but with a lower quality of nutrition to feed and nourish people. In the process agribusiness is becoming the worst culprit by contributing greenhouse gases and causing climate catastrophe.

Agriculture, in its original and authentic form, is an incredible invention. If we can practise agriculture without waste and pollution, without vast amounts of carbon emissions and without diminishing biodiversity, it is an ecologically sound practice. But mechanised and industrialised agribusiness is a curse on millions of species who have as much right to flourish on the Earth as humans do. Just as we recognise human rights, so the movement for wilding recognises the rights of Nature.

So I would like to see the wilding movement grow. There will be a time in the future when humanity will find a perfect balance between the wild and the cultivated. At the moment that balance is lost. Therefore, the ever-increasing encroachment and the impingement on wild places must stop and let us hand over some of our farmland to the wild.

Wilding is one great way to address the climate catastrophe.

Long live the wondrous wild!



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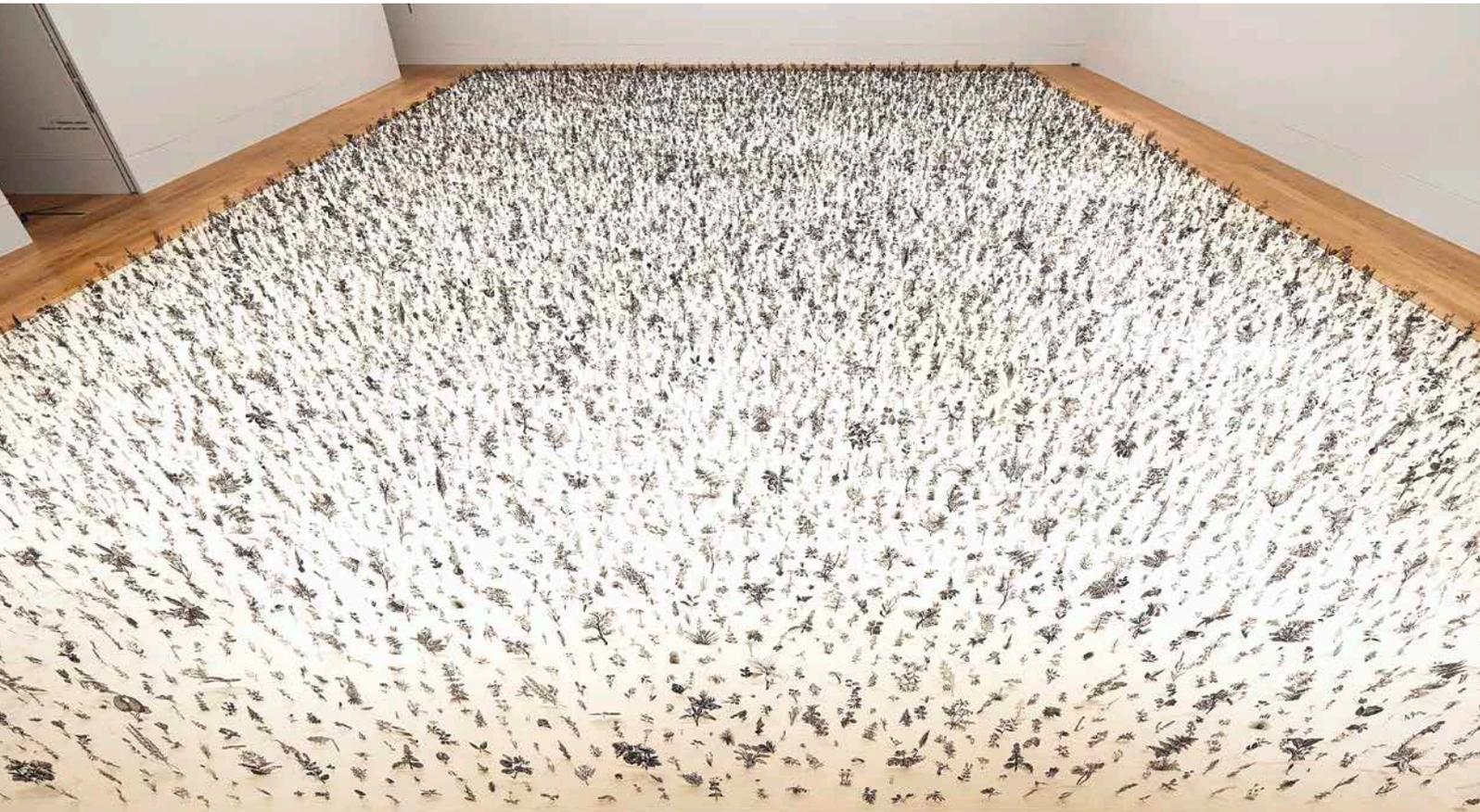
Satish Kumar is the author of *Soil, Soul, Society*.

# From the ashes

Zadok Ben-David speaks to Anna Souter about his new exhibition



Detail from Happy Days, 2021,  
25cm x 20cm x 13cm.  
Hand-painted stainless steel and Plexiglass



Blackfield installed at Kew Gardens

A field of flowers stretches across the gallery floor, thousands of black silhouettes standing as if in memorial. The mood is sombre. To visitors walking around the edge, however, another perspective slowly reveals itself: the backs of the flowers are painted in cheerful, bright colours. The atmosphere is transformed to one of beauty, life, and hope.

The installation 'Blackfield' is at the heart of Zadok Ben-David's exhibition *Natural Reserve* in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art at Kew Gardens. Consisting of 17,000 hand-painted metal silhouettes, the work simultaneously evokes the ecological crisis and offers the possibility of resurgence and hope. The artist explains that when visitors enter the space, they are faced with "a landscape that looks as if it's been burnt, whether by a war, a wildfire, or some other disaster. Slowly, as you move around, you see what happens after the disaster, and you see that there is a possibility of experiencing the other extreme. It's about life."

Ben-David chose to use the flower as an "image from Nature that we give as a symbol in both sadness and happiness". Each flower in the installation was produced in his studio. He spent six months finding botanical illustrations in 19th-century encyclopaedias, painstakingly reproducing the images and using a magnifying glass to join any loose lines. The complete silhouettes were then replicated in stainless steel, using a photo-etching technique.

Ben-David explains, "I started painting them myself, but then I realised I wanted more than a couple of hundred. So I started getting assistants, who painted them in my studio. They were young artists. There were hardly any restrictions

on how they painted the flowers. They could choose any colour. The only guidance was that I didn't want abstract painting on the flower; I wanted it to look like a flower. At one point I employed about 16 people in the studio." He now has a collection of over 30,000 painted flower silhouettes, an archive he draws on to create different iterations of the installation.

**"I try to create a bridge between contemporary art, which often seems quite remote from our lives, and the reality that we are living every day"**

The meaning and associations of 'Blackfield' change according to its context. For example, Ben-David showed a smaller version of the installation in a museum in northern Portugal, a region that increasingly suffers from wildfires. He recalls that many visitors initially thought of a recent fire and its aftermath. However, when they saw the more colourful side of the installation, they were "reminded of when the first rains came and the trees started growing again and the vegetation returned". This is an important reminder, he suggests, that "people see what they have experienced in their lives. As an artist, you can't ask people to see things from your own experience. I try to create a bridge between contemporary art, which often seems quite remote from our lives, and the reality that we are living every day."



“I feel that we tend to forget that we are part of Nature, that we are not the masters of Nature”



Left: Winter's Heart, 2021, 25cm x 20cm x 13cm  
 Hand-painted stainless steel and Plexiglass  
 Above: Blackflower boxes  
 Below: The Scratch. Hand-painted  
 stainless steel and Plexiglass.  
 All images from Natural Reserve  
 by Zadok Ben-David at Kew Gardens  
 Photographs by Roger Woolldridge

Installing 'Blackfield' in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew provides a new context for the work. Previous iterations of the project have been shown in museums and contemporary art galleries, where audiences expect to encounter sculpture. At Kew, however, the work is installed in a gallery dedicated to botanical art in the midst of acres of garden where beds of real flowers are carefully cultivated. Visitors may be more familiar with plants than with art; the meaning of the work shifts from a primarily metaphorical realm into a new relationship with both living plants and the history of botanical art. The installation is also accompanied by new works for which Ben-David has drawn on images from Kew's extensive archives, embedding the exhibition in its historical and geographical setting.



Ben-David is concerned with the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, and the role of human beings within our damaged ecosystems. "I feel that we tend to forget that we are part of Nature, that we are not the masters of Nature," he says. This is emphasised in works such as 'Natural Reserve', and also 'Evolution and Theory', where the artist presents silhouette illustrations of human beings, animals and plants together in a display case, recalling the cabinets of curiosities that prefigured today's museums and botanical archives alike.

Like the central installation 'Blackfield', the other works in this exhibition evoke a sense of wonder as a tool for fostering care towards the environments in which we are enmeshed. Ben-David argues that the nonhuman world deserves our respect: "Look at what's happening now: a little tiny invisible virus has put a stop to the whole world and brought it to a standstill. I think once we accept and understand that we are part of Nature and if we take care of our environment more, it will be to the benefit of not only other creatures but also ourselves." R

*Natural Reserve* is in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, Kew Gardens, London until 27 March 2022.  
[tinyurl.com/ben-david-kew](http://tinyurl.com/ben-david-kew)  
 Anna Souter is a writer, editor and curator with an interest in contemporary art and ecology.



Foundle, a chalkstone carving



Jo Sweeting carving Bide



Bide, lettercarved boulder

# Re-Wilding the wordhoard

*Re-Wilding the Wordhoard* is a collaborative project that celebrates dialects from across the British Isles and honours a sense of place through the use of carved boulders, woodcuts and writing. It brings together the work of letter-carver Jo Sweeting, writer Tanya Shadrack and author Louisa Thomsen Brits. For the first carved piece, the three women found a large chalk boulder high on the South Downs and carved into it words from the Sussex dialect. These included 'foundle', meaning 'anything found on a Sussex hillside'. 'Foundle' is also the name of the project. The trio are now bringing the concept to the North Devonshire shoreline, where Sweeting will work on the beach, carving words gathered from the local dialect into stone boulders. "It seems to me that this project brings together three areas of current interest and relevance: the fight against what linguists call 'dialect decline'; a celebration of regional identity and local distinctiveness; and the broad mission of environmental/land art to encourage and reconfigure awareness of place and Nature," author Robert Macfarlane said in a statement of support. "I am very attracted by the idea of the main stone/shore boulder onto which Jo proposes carving as having a life of its own; moving and migrating, being shifted by tide and storm (like David Nash's famous wooden boulder). For language moves too; has its own longshore drift, its own erosions."

R

Readers are invited to submit British dialect, with a special interest in Devonian, via the website [tinyurl.com/wordhoard-devonshire](http://tinyurl.com/wordhoard-devonshire)

Instagram: [thestonecarver](#); [louisa\\_thomsen\\_brits](#); [tanyashadrackwriter](#)

# The Owl

No one sees him  
though his voice fills the dark  
wrapping the house,  
echoing across the cold night,  
across the misted paddock and steaming river,  
beneath the perfect arc of a silent,  
outstretched wing.

Enfolded in my arms, you listen  
as he calls to his mate  
and drift into sleep.

Love is your small body close to mine  
breathing softly.

It is the peace of your moon face,  
your tiny hand in mine,  
the smell of your warm, soft hair  
like the downy underbelly of our lovestruck tawny  
it comes at me in elemental form,  
fills me with terror.

Somewhere in feathered cloak,  
he silently sweeps the woodland floor  
quartering for the faintest rustle,  
ready to swoop.

*Emilie Jelinek*

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'The Owl' is the winner of The Beaver Trust's inaugural Ecological Emergency International Poetry Competition 2021. The second and third prize winners and the winner of the Best Beaver Poem will be published on the Resurgence website: [www.resurgence.org/beaverpoetry](http://www.resurgence.org/beaverpoetry)  
[www.lodge.beavertrust.org/competition](http://www.lodge.beavertrust.org/competition)



They tried to bury us but they didn't know we were seeds. Artwork by Molly Lemon [mollylemon.com](http://mollylemon.com)

# Three steps to change the world

Social reform starts at the grassroots, writes **Satish Kumar**

**B**ig rivers emerge from small springs. They spring forth in remote hills. Big ideas to change the world are also born on the edge. Great movements to transform societies do not start from the centre: they start in small places and incubate in some unknown sections of society.

Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in a bus. That led to a bus boycott, which inspired a small town priest, Martin Luther King, and thousands of others at the grassroots level, eventually becoming a great movement to end racial injustice in America. Parks and King did not come from the White House. They came from the fringe. Yet the racial justice movement finally shook the centre of government and mainstream society, and now images of Parks and King adorn the White House.

Whether it be Emmeline Pankhurst, Mahatma Gandhi,

Rachel Carson, Nelson Mandela, Greta Thunberg or Malala Yousafzai, all social reformers start their journey of transformation from the fringes. Then their ideals and values, their science and innovation gain popularity and there is greater awareness at the grassroots level. Once the new vision and values obtain large support among people, governments start to listen. They see not only the merit in these ideals and values, but also the votes in them, and therefore they embrace these ideals. Thus pragmatism meets with idealism, and a legislative framework is put in place to satisfy popular demand.

Once governments come on board, industry and commerce see new business opportunities and benefits of change, and they begin to invest in products and services that meet the expectations of governments and gain the support of ordinary citizens.



Thus ecological, social or political transformation is a combination of the vision of radical idealists and activists, the legal framework provided by a pragmatic government, and implementation by the business community.

Take the example of renewable energy to replace fossil fuels, which cause climate catastrophe. In 1973 the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) was established in the remote hills of Wales. At that time not one wind turbine or solar panel was producing renewable energy anywhere in the UK. The founders, who began to experiment with wind power and solar power, were considered either crazy or impractical idealists.

No one in government or in the business world or, least of all, in the oil industry believed that one day wind and solar power would be a real resource to meet the nation's energy needs. But gradually hundreds of thousands of people began to visit CAT. It became a destination for eco-tourism and even for eco-pilgrimage.

A strong grassroots movement began to emerge in support of renewable power. Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and scores of other environmental NGOs

endorsed the project of CAT. They promoted and strengthened the people's movement for renewable energy. Only then came government subsidies, and finally businesses started to invest in companies like Solar Century, Good Energy and Ecotricity. Even big mainstream electricity suppliers started to embrace the change. Gradually millions of solar panels and wind turbines spread across the UK. It became an energy revolution! By 2020 more than a quarter of energy consumed in the UK was supplied from wind and solar sources.

The development and spread of renewable energy within the last four decades shows that in order to bring a successful social transformation idealistic NGOs, pragmatic governments and realistic businesses need to collaborate and work together. While doing so, NGOs need to stay ahead and maintain their radicalism and remind politicians and entrepreneurs that ethical, ecological and social values must always be the guiding principles behind their actions. Political or commercial considerations should always remain subservient to the ideal of planetary wellbeing.

The planet is in the process of continuous evolution – physical evolution as well as an evolution in consciousness. There will always be a need for a new Gandhi, a new

Greta, a new Mandela and a new Malala as a part of the evolutionary process. At first they will be ridiculed and dismissed or even persecuted, and eventually they will be accepted and followed. Even if their radicalism will sometimes be forgotten, their subtle influence will endure.

Activists and idealists often ask how they can persuade politicians and inspire entrepreneurs to accept ethical and ecological values. The answer is to act out of the courage of conviction and with great patience and deep commitment but without any expectation of an immediate outcome.

## There will always be a need for a new Gandhi, a new Greta, a new Mandela and a new Malala as a part of the evolutionary process

With this consciousness we need to do three things:

First and foremost, be the change that you wish to see in the world. Words and thoughts gain power only from practice. One example is stronger than a thousand words. As a radiator radiates warmth, we have to radiate change. The pioneers of CAT set a shining example that attracted attention from all corners of the country. This is the first step: be the change.

The second step is to communicate the change. All great idealists and activists have also been great communicators. There are many ways to communicate. Pablo Picasso communicated his ideals of peace through painting. His heart-wrenching image of Guernica touched and moved millions of people around the world. Rachel Carson communicated by writing a marvellous book, *Silent Spring*, which laid the foundation for the environmental movement. Monty Don communicates by being an exemplary gardener. Martin Luther King communicated through his rousing speech 'I have a dream'. All of us, the activists, need to develop skills of communication to bring about change in the world.

And the third step is to organise the change. Start an organisation to present and promote your vision and ideals. Eve Balfour started the Soil Association. Gaylord Nelson started Earth Day. Jane Goodall started Roots & Shoots. Dorothy Stowe started Greenpeace. Similarly, Friends of the Earth, the Green Party and thousands of other organisations were started by radical dreamers who wanted to change the world, and they have. We can start an organisation or we can join an organisation. Join Extinction Rebellion, join Fridays For Future or any other organisation that speaks to your heart.

These, then, are the three steps: Be the Change, Communicate the Change and Organise the Change. Then we will be able to inspire governments and businesses to join the change! R

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Satish Kumar's new book is *Pilgrimage for Peace: The Long Walk from India to Washington*.

# The spice is right

A perpetual pickle delights Sandor Katz



Photograph © Ollo / Getty

**A**dam James is a former student of mine who started his own fermentation business, Rough Rice, in Hobart, Tasmania, after extensive travel to explore different fermentation traditions. We stayed in touch, and he invited me for a visit when I came to Tasmania in early 2020. Adam served me a very memorable lunch. The meal was simple and included rice and lots of different pickles and fermented condiments.

The most novel items from the pickle plates were a flavourful, bright yellow fermented turmeric paste and daikons that had been pickled in it, absorbing the turmeric's colour and flavour. Adam was using the turmeric paste as a pickling medium, and both the pickles and the paste it was pickled in, a condiment in its own right, were gorgeous and flavourful. On a small deck outside his apartment sat a row of big ceramic crocks, each with a capacity of more than 100 litres. One of them was filled with the bright yellow-orange turmeric paste – the paste was actually turmeric blended with garlic and turnips – and vegetables buried within. It turned out that the paste was a couple of years old, and Adam was using it as a perpetual pickling medium – adding vegetables, removing them days or weeks later, and adding more, like *pao cai* or *nuka* (the Japanese style of pickling in a rice bran medium). Adam generously shared a recipe for his turmeric paste, which appears here. I've had a batch going ever since in my kitchen, with turmeric, garlic, and turnips from my garden, and I've enjoyed a wide range of vegetables pickled in it. My current favourites are onions, cut in half, and celery. When the paste inevitably gets watery – the salt draws water from the vegetables – I remove flavourful liquid using a small ladle and use it in dressings, marinades and sauces.



Adam James' turmeric pot Photograph © Sandor Katz



## Turmeric paste

Adam James shares his recipe

Photograph © Adam James

### TIME FRAME

About 1 month for paste; at least 1 week for fermenting vegetables

### EQUIPMENT

Food processor or immersion blender

Jar or crock with at least a 2-litre capacity, with an interior and/or exterior lid

### INGREDIENTS

*for about 1.5 litres of paste*

400g turmeric root

300g garlic cloves, peeled

400g Hakurei or other small, tender turnips

3 tbsp salt (roughly 4% of the combined weight of the turmeric, garlic and turnips)

About 375g vegetables (daikons, turnips, carrots, celery or others) to pickle once the pickling medium is mature

### PROCESS

Using a food processor or an immersion blender, grind the turmeric root, garlic cloves, turnips and salt with just enough water (roughly 500ml) to form a thick paste.

Ferment the paste in a jar or crock for about a month, stirring periodically. For best results, protect the surface of the paste from air with an interior lid or a layer of plastic.

After a month or so the paste should be active enough to start using as a fermentation medium. Simply submerge the whole vegetables. Turnips and daikons work really well, as they are not too dense.

Depending on the temperature, the size and density of the vegetables, and how vigorous the medium is, the vegetables should be fermented in about a week; however, I often leave mine for a month or even longer. The resulting pickles take on the intense yellow (another reason why white vegetables are good), shrivel slightly due to water loss, and have a wonderful acidic and earthy crunch.

The paste itself can be used on its own as a condiment, as a base for a salad/vegetable dressing (thinned with olive oil, water and a dash of rice vinegar), or as an excellent addition to fire ciders and fermented hot sauces. I use it as a base for brown rice congee that I serve at the farmers' market, and it's a fantastic addition to shio-koji for an intense, 'fresh' hit of zingy umami. R

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This is an edited extract from *Fermentation Journeys* by Sandor Ellix Katz (Chelsea Green Publishing, October 2021), reprinted with permission from the publisher.

# Reality show

Seeing theatre in our surroundings can connect us to the planet, writes **Katie Dancey-Downs**

**A** shelduck wades through the marsh, flashing a bright red beak. Enter, stage right, a second bird. A mate? They inch towards each other, and then at exactly the same moment burst into flight. Seconds later, a swan flies overhead, gangly and imposing. As I round the corner, I spot three swans seemingly in conference. Another appears, waddling towards the trio. I wonder about the relationships between the birds. Are they at ease? What do the blackcaps and the whitethroats think of the giant birds clumsily trudging around the marsh?

We don't need to sit in an auditorium to see theatre. Scenes like this unfolding in the natural world happen whether or not we choose to stop and watch, and they are not created for us, but it is like watching a performance. As we stop and become Nature's audience, we don't have to be passive. Can we push ourselves further than simply watching the stage before us?

## Stopping and looking

I talk to Evelyn O'Malley, a theatre practitioner and senior lecturer at the University of Exeter. She explains that while theatre is a human-created activity, when someone stops to look at events in Nature they're deciding that those events are dramatic in some way.

"This thing has its life and its life is persisting, regardless of whether I'm noticing or not. But by noticing it, I am allowing myself to be affected by it in some way, like I would at the theatre," she says.

She recalls sitting by the window with her son, watching as starlings pulled worms from the ground. A host of sparrows arrived. They followed the starlings around the garden, and then sneaked in to pull the worms straight from their mouths. It was dramatic, and she was learning about the characters of the birds.

As an audience member at a more conventional performance, she says, you're stopping and entering someone else's world. By tuning into what's happening around you in the natural world, you're learning, or being affected by it in some way.



## Collaborating with Nature

This idea of being in a heightened state of awareness resonates with Dianne Regisford, who is a visual and performance artist, an energy healer, and a PhD researcher at Oxford Brookes University.

Regisford steps back to give a definition of what theatre means to her: an arena where we gather to watch and participate. These spaces, she says, hold stories. And for her,



Artwork by Elin Manon [www.elin-manon.com](http://www.elin-manon.com)

experiencing the performance of Nature is not about watching. It is about communing with Nature.

"I'm studying water at the moment," she says, talking to me online from her home in Oxford. "And I'm observing and meditating on how I commune with water." A body of water, a river, the glass of water she drinks in the morning, she says, are elements that are alive.

"I go to the river, and I connect with the ripples, the

currents, and they're different every day. I meditate by the river."

The practice of being outside and actively communicating with Nature is something from which people are disconnected, she feels.

"To go out for a walk and experience Nature in this way, where you see the tiniest raindrop on a leaf and you pause to notice what's going on around you: life becomes so beautiful



when you're able to engage in the world like this," she says.

A long, bow-like instrument hangs on the wall behind Regisford. She brings it to the screen and explains that it's an *Uhadi*, a traditional African Xhosa instrument. A *calabash* (a type of gourd) is attached to the bow, and resonates when placed against the musician's skin. When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Regisford took to visiting the river every day with the *Uhadi*. She meditated, and she played. She describes it as sonic healing. This was her way of collaborating with Nature, and it was a theatrical performance.

### Beyond the proscenium arch

Regisford does not just think of Nature as theatrical: she connects with it. But what happens if we look at the world as a stage, without thinking any further?

In the proscenium arch that frames a stage, we see what we want to. Everything else is blocked out. If we put this metaphorical proscenium arch around Nature, O'Malley asks, "What kind of violence in the landscape do we not see because we see it as picturesque?"

A documentary might show us a pristine landscape, but we don't see the plastic pollution or deforestation just out of shot. If we only look at Nature as scenery, O'Malley says, it reaffirms the idea that humans are in control. It's a dangerous notion.

O'Malley gives an example. If we're looking at smoke moving through the air, we should be thinking about where it's coming from, where it's going, how it impacts bird life in the area.

"I don't think any audience member is ever passive, because we're always present, we're always thinking, even if we're not physically interacting with something," she says.

The scenes we see in the world do not stand alone – they are connected. O'Malley explains that as well as seeing what's happening in front of us, we can also see a landscape, histories and future trajectories, ecology, and the interconnectedness of all these things. And the relationship with human life. How, for example, were the passing motorboats affecting the shelducks I spotted in the marshes?

Both O'Malley and Regisford talk about the theatricality of Nature in terms of connection. As well as encouraging us to slow down and take the time to really see what's in front of us, it's about something deeper. Rather than simply being entertained by what we see, we can think about the bigger picture, we can follow the trail of the stories, and we can remember that we are a part of Nature too. R

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Katie Dancey-Downs is a freelance journalist who specialises in human rights, the environment and culture.

# Rain sometimes turns to hail

Lev Parikian records a British year through Japan's 72 seasons

14–18 February

Beginning of spring (*Risshun*, 立春)

Fish emerge from the ice (*Uo kōri o izuru*, 魚上氷)

This is not a season to be trusted. You pull back the curtains to clear skies, but check the forecast and there's treachery afoot: rain, wind, squally nonsense set to ruin your afternoon.

According to the Japanese calendar, fish emerge from the ice, then duck back down again sharpish if they've got any sense.

What I'd like is a proper cold spell. Frost and ice and maybe snow. But instead we get unsettling wind and spirit-sapping rain. February, the shortest and longest month.

For some reason I stop on my way out. There's no flash of colour to catch my eye, nor a particular movement, but some instinct makes me look at the wisteria to the right of the front door, its branches twining up from the knobby base. Despite their slenderness they give the impression of age, a wizened aspect in stark contrast with the fresh whitewash of the wall behind them.

In a couple of months they will throw out frothing cascades of lilac-coloured blooms, the epitome of sub-urban horticultural splendour, framing the windows in a way satisfying to the eye, if a mite hackneyed to

some tastes.

But I love wisteria. Partly because it's one of the ones I know. But it's also that delicate colour, and the impression of light and air the blooms give when in full spate. A champagne plant.

At this stage it's no more than the merest hint of growth, the tiniest, most tentative toe in the freezing swimming pool. From the rough branch comes a hard, dry twig, and from the twig the darkly curled beginnings of a leaf, and cradled in that growth is a morsel of palest yellow, so embryonic it looks ready to duck back in at any moment.

It's the last day of the *sekki* ('beginning of spring'). However tiny it may be, the wisteria bud has appeared just in time. R

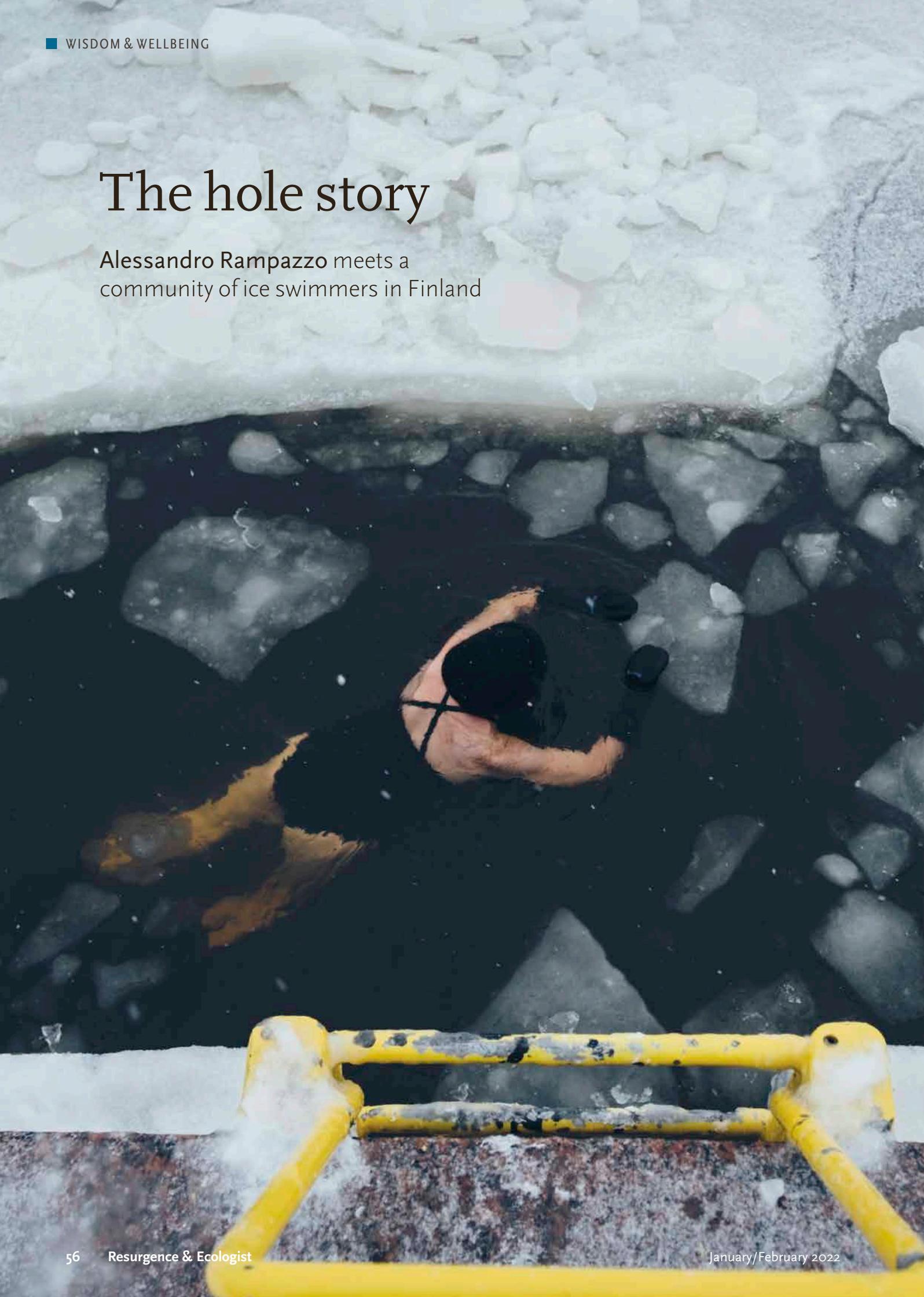
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This is an extract from *Light Rains Sometimes Fall* by Lev Parikian, published by Elliott & Thompson (2021). Join Lev to discuss his book for our Resurgence book club on 10 February at 7pm. [www.resurgence.org](http://www.resurgence.org)

Artwork by Margot Tohkou Olejniczak [www.m-olejniczak.ch](http://www.m-olejniczak.ch)

# The hole story

Alessandro Rampazzo meets a community of ice swimmers in Finland





Photographs by Alessandro Rampazzo

There is a special place off a dock in Helsinki, Finland – a hole in the ice. This small area of exposed water is the centre of a community who meet up in person and online to share their passion for ice swimming. Unlike other winter swim spots, there is no sauna here: just a bench, some hooks attached to the fence, and a small clearing in the frozen sea.

The man behind the community is ice swimming enthusiast Mikko, who moved to the area six years ago. Keen to find people to share his hobby, he set up a Facebook group, which today has over 600 members.

For some it's just refreshing, for others it's meditative, and for others still it acts almost like a medicine. "It helps with my anxiety," one young woman tells me. The hardest part is not swimming in the water, which ranges from between 0 and 3 degrees C in a normal winter. The challenge is getting out and braving the air, which can reach -20 degrees. "It's so cold and your body has to fight against it, so you can't be anywhere else with your mind," says another woman, Tuuli, who comes here to release tension before or after work.

Because of the very cold weather, it would take just a few days for the hole to disappear into the surrounding ice. To prevent this, the group organises a meeting time for *avantotalkot* (voluntary work to clear the ice) and people get together to reshape and enlarge the hole. This sense of community, as well as the health benefits of ice swimming, has meant that during lockdown the hole has been a lifeline for many. R

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Alessandro Rampazzo is an Italian photojournalist based in Finland.  
[www.alessandrorampazzo.com](http://www.alessandrorampazzo.com)



Illustration by Yoshiyuki Yagi

# Good books

Looking for a compelling read in the new year? Jini Reddy shares her recommendations

As someone who is drawn to narrative writing that crosses genres and cultures, I've found compiling a book list with *Resurgence & Ecologist* readers in mind a real treat! I've relished the opportunity to shine a light on ideas and authors who are looking at the world, including the natural world, in fresh and compelling ways. I hope you'll enjoy the following.

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## Spirit Run: A 6,000-Mile Marathon through North America's Stolen Land

Noé Álvarez

Catapult, 2020

ISBN: 9781948226462

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If ever a book deserved a broader readership in the UK, it is this gripping memoir. Noé Álvarez comes from a working-class Mexican American background and manages to escape his job as a fruit packer, courtesy of a university scholarship. He struggles to fit in and by chance hears of a First Nations movement called Peace and Dignity Journeys, marathons that help Indigenous runners to reconnect with their lands and ancestry. He quits his studies, signs up, and begins a gruelling 6,000-mile run, a journey of self-discovery and healing across stolen lands from Canada to Guatemala. The run is fraught with physical dangers and human tensions, and the story Álvarez tells is propulsive and deeply moving.

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## World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks and Other Astonishments

Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Souvenir Press, 2021

ISBN: 9781788168908

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This is far from the matter-of-fact collection of essays about natural phenomena the book's cover suggests. The author, Chicago-born, and of mixed Filipino and South Indian descent, weaves her heritage into the story and presents an unusual and beguiling blend of cultural memoir and Nature writing. Aimee Nezhukumatathil grew up in the United States, and she and her family led a peripatetic existence. Wherever they moved, she found that a particular plant or animal or some other aspect of the natural world offered guidance, connection and kinship. Her irrepressible spirit and zest for life shine throughout the book.

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## Bewilderment

Richard Powers

Penguin, 2021

ISBN: 9781785152634

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Trees, most poignantly the redwoods of California, gave *The Overstory*, Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize-winning opus, its soul. *Bewilderment* continues the ecological fiction theme, but this time the deep love between a widowed astrobiologist and his grief-stricken son takes centre stage. How is a father to offer comfort to a child who is mourning the death of his environmental activist mother as well as raging against the destruction of the planet? Bound by their passion for the natural world and the cosmos, the pair navigate a dystopic near-future and their relationship with touching honesty.

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## Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Searching for an American Utopia

Adrian Shirk

Counterpoint, February 2022

ISBN: 9781640093300

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Becoming a primary carer to her father-in-law in her mid-twenties, with all its attendant anxiety, sets Adrian Shirk off on an odyssey through American utopian communities. Driven by a deep desire to live in community, the author explores everything from the radical faerie communes of Tennessee to the pacifist ecstatic-dance-loving Shakers and the Bronx rebuilding movement. A mix of travel writing, memoir, historical biography and spiritual journey, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth* – the title is drawn from a Belinda Carlisle song from the 1980s – is impeccably researched and vivid in its telling. Given the current state of the planet, it will likely provoke some serious soul-searching too.

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## Small Bodies of Water

Nina Mingya Powles

Canongate, 2021

ISBN: 9781838852153

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What is a body of water? What has this connective, life-giving force meant to the author at various times in her life? This ‘umbrella’ theme allows for wide-roaming essays on language, migration, movement, Nature, colonialism and the intersections that exist between them. Nina Mingya Powles has lived in Shanghai, New Zealand, London and Malaysia, and her canvas spans continents – no room for parochialism here. In a book filled with metaphors, dreams and vignettes, she brings her poet’s eye to all she alights on. A deserved winner of the Nan Shepherd Prize.

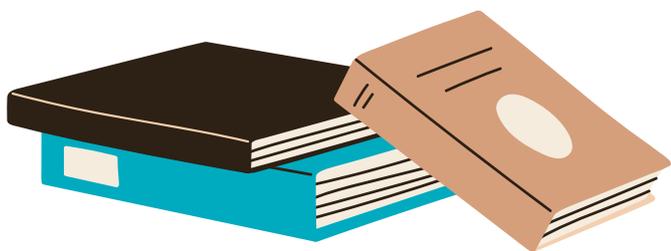


Illustration © GoodStudio / Shutterstock

## On the horizon

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### Everything the Light Touches

Janice Pariat

HarperCollins, 2022

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Proofs weren’t available at the time of compiling this list, but I’m a huge fan of Janice Pariat’s previous fiction, and there’s a buzz surrounding *Everything the Light Touches* – it will be published simultaneously in India, the UK, and the US. Pariat is an award-winning Indian author who grew up between the plains of Assam and the hills of Meghalaya and has explored the landscapes and lives of people in Northeast India in her previous novels and short stories. This, her most ambitious novel to date, spans four centuries and a quartet of narratives, but connection underlies all. “How do we see the world around us? In fixity or fluidity? In categories or unity?” she asks. Encounters with travellers, including a young Indian woman, a British science student, the botanist Linnaeus and a plant-obsessed Goethe, feature alongside Indigenous communities in India, and sacred forests. 

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Jini Reddy is the author of *Wanderland*, shortlisted for the Wainwright Prize for UK Nature Writing and the Stanford Dolman Award for Travel Book of the Year.

# Listen up!

## Three podcasts with different worldviews

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### Planet A – Talks on Climate Change

[www.buzzsprout.com/1196159](http://www.buzzsprout.com/1196159)

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In this podcast, Danish Minister of Climate, Energy and Utilities Dan Jørgensen asks some of the world’s leading experts, policymakers and activists to share their thoughts on how to stem climate change. Now into its third season, the podcast offers a variety of thoughtful insights into the challenges we are facing, as well as some of the solutions. We are reminded throughout that Denmark has a goal of becoming a climate leader, but Jørgensen does not shut down criticism, thus creating an informative and refreshingly open conversational tone.

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### On the Green Fence

[www.dw.com/en/on-the-green-fence/a-55160456](http://www.dw.com/en/on-the-green-fence/a-55160456)

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Produced by German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, this fortnightly podcast explores complex and often divisive environmental issues in a friendly and accessible style. Episode highlights include ‘We Didn’t Have the Luxury to Care about the Environment’, where two brothers who grew up in a working-class neighbourhood in western Germany discuss their at times differing takes on environmental activism. Presenter Neil King guides listeners with enough authority and humour to make this a very entertaining and informative listen.

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### The Climate Question

[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w13xtvb6](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w13xtvb6)

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This weekly podcast from the BBC World Service gives a global perspective on climate-related issues with the tagline ‘Stories on why we find it so hard to save our own planet, and how we might change that’. General themes range from football – how the ‘beautiful game’ is affected and contributes to climate change – to gas flaring. More country-focused topics include the North American heatwave and ‘Putin and the Planet’. Presenters vary each week, but the use of two helps create a tone of ‘banter’ even though the script is very slick.

# Roots of change

The story of the rise of Norway's downy birch impresses Colin Tudge

Photograph © Kimberley Jekel / Shutterstock

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## The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth

Ben Rawlence

*Jonathan Cape, 2022*

ISBN: 9781787332249

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In the very long term – many thousands of years – global warming could be good for humanity and the natural world, at least if it came upon us slowly, with time for life to adapt. Greenland would be green again and enormous areas of Siberia, Canada and even Antarctica would be opened up to a vast array of creatures as they were in the past, and to sizable populations of humans, as they never were in the past. But in the immediate term and for the foreseeable future, as everyone knows, global warming is a disaster. The lowlands flood, the forests burn, wildlife perishes and ancient cultures and languages disappear.

### Very little in this world – not even trees – is unequivocally good

Trees are the very visible indices of change. Their fate reflects the state of the whole world – and what happens to them is the cause of further change, since to a large extent they are the makers of landscape and of weather, and so many other creatures, including humans, depend on them. For the past few years, Ben Rawlence has been observing and analysing their changing fortunes, not, as is more usual, in the tropics or in England, where woods and forest are rapidly being reduced to pasture and desert, suburb and bypass, but in the North: Scotland, Norway, Russia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland.

The position is complex, however – as illustrated not least by the rise and rise of *Betula pubescens*, the downy birch, in Norway. We are generally told – and quite rightly – that the loss of trees is a catastrophe. We lose habitats and their wildlife, and also lose one of the principal mechanisms by which

the world's climate is ameliorated – for trees en masse create rain but also reduce flooding, and remove warming carbon from the atmosphere. The present, frenetic deforestation is suicide. But in Norway a whole range of creatures including the iconic, keystone reindeer need a very cold and therefore treeless landscape. When the ground is covered with snow, which it is for much of the year, the reindeer dig through it to the highly nutritious lichen beneath and in normal conditions this is easy, for when it's very cold the snow is like sand. But when it's warmer, the snow half-melts and then freezes to form ice, which the reindeer find hard or impossible to penetrate. Besides, the lichen does not grow so well in warmer conditions, when it faces more competition from other plants.

The Sámi people follow the reindeer as they migrate north and south with the changing seasons, and build their lives around them: milk, meat, hides, horn, bones and transport. Traditionally they let the reindeer decide when and how quickly they migrate, for they are most in tune with the landscape and the weather. Nowadays, though, says Rawlence, the government seeks to regulate, as governments do, and to tell the Sámi (and the reindeer) where to go and when. Few governments are properly aware of ecological realities.

Traditionally, too, the downy birch stayed further south or lurked in hollows, sheltered from the worst of the weather. But as the climate has grown warmer these trees, says Rawlence, have emerged from their trenches “like infantry”, and marched across the landscape, turning it first to scrub, and soon to woodland. This adds to the global tree cover, to be sure – but at the expense of a precious, specialised landscape and the creatures and culture that went with it. Very little in this world – not even trees – is unequivocally good.

Rawlence is a fine ecologist and an excellent writer with the rare ability both to tell an absorbing tale and to convey the subtleties of science. *The Treeline* is timely, salutary and eminently readable. Excellent. R

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Colin Tudge is a co-founder of the Oxford Real Farming Conference and The College for Real Farming and Food Culture.

# Hunter and hunted

Derek Gow reviews a book about predators

*Beak, Tooth and Claw: Living with Predators in Britain*

Mary Colwell

*William Collins, 2021*

ISBN: 9780008354763

I like and admire Mary Colwell very much. Her commitment to the restoration of Nature is deep. I believe her confession that she had during the preparation of *Beak, Tooth and Claw* “wept at the callous stupidity, self-centredness and short-sightedness of humanity”. If you are soul-deep rather than patrician, attached rather than, well, detached, then this response is inevitable.

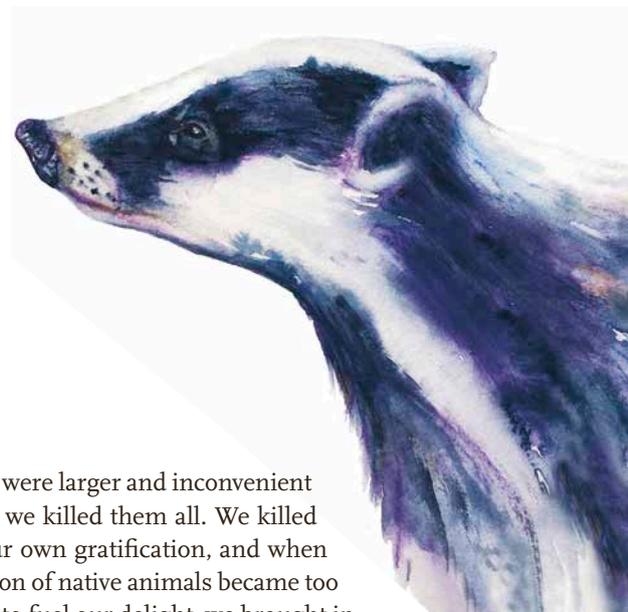
I think this book is a jolly good effort for those who would make sense of the briar-like tangle of illogicalities that define our relationship with predators.

Our relationship with wild creatures in Britain is easy to explain. If they were very small and of no worth at all, we ignored them utterly or killed them by accident without

The simple endless cycle of killing, which never achieves anything other than more killing, is firmly established in human form



Paintings by Sam Parker  
@ Sparks Art UK



care. If they were larger and inconvenient or valuable, we killed them all. We killed them for our own gratification, and when the population of native animals became too diminished to fuel our delight, we brought in foreign species to kill instead.

Colwell's book elaborates and explains the above, including vignettes of delightful description. Gentle mists rise from the waters of Loch Linnie “as though the lake were gently exhaling”. For those of us who believe in a living planet, whole and complete, this use of language is exquisite.

Working as I have been doing for the last few months on a comprehensive history of the wolf in mainland Britain, I keenly understand that predators have never been an easy subject. Although, seals or sea eagles aside, the guilds of raptorial species we have allowed to remain are, in terms of size and impact, modest, when a creature of whatever kind takes anything from us it becomes an inevitable wolf of sorts. A desecrator and a thief. When the common otter was once the ‘river wolf’, the pike its watery equivalent, and the orca its marine relation, even the relatively innocuous European field hamster before its destruction was called by the Dutch the ‘korenwolf’ as a result of its grain-pinching penchant. The modern English word vole, is derived from the French *voleur*, meaning thief. At a time when even the smallest stealer of seeds was a crook, the petty takers of warm, cosseted rabbits from their warrens, chickens, lambs, game-fowl and fish were unsurprisingly criminals of the highest order.

Although we are no longer starving 12th-century peasants living in damp, mossed hovels made from our own dung for whom the loss of even minor resource is critical, the attitudes evinced by some individuals with regard to their modern objects of ire is not removed far from the dung.

Colwell tries to be fair and in large part achieves this ambition, but the simple endless cycle of killing, which never achieves anything other than more killing, is firmly established in human form.

It's a good book with good stories like the one about Septimus the seal, whose skeleton carries in excruciating detail the visible agonies of his long life.

Buy it and enjoy. There aren't many laughs but it will certainly make you think. R

Derek Gow is an ecologist, reintroduction specialist and farmer. His first book, *Bringing Back the Beaver*, is published by Chelsea Green (2020).

# The power of caring

Lynne Segal welcomes a look at how compassion could transform politics

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## How Compassion Can Transform Our Politics, Economy and Society

Matt Hawkins and Jennifer Nadel (eds.)

Routledge, 2021

ISBN: 9780367353940

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Are we seeing an expansion of the notion of ‘politics’, still traditionally viewed as all about power, and wars of position over how to obtain it? That is the hope of the editors of this book, Matt Hawkins and Jennifer Nadel, who want to transform politics by placing practices of compassion at the very heart of it. It might be suggested that something like this was proposed by second-wave feminists, with their view that the personal is political. However, that understanding had the more specific goal of insisting that our intimate and domestic relations, how we care for others and feel about ourselves, are also political. The goal of this collection is more ambitious, and close to one I have also been engaged with in the Care Collective, leading us to publish *The Care Manifesto* (2020), attempting to place care itself front and centre of politics.

This anthology on ‘compassion’ comes from the political grouping Compassion in Politics, headed up by its editors. Its contributors are from diverse theoretical and activist backgrounds, all committed to compassion in politics. Some of its activist scholars in particular are a little more sceptical about achieving that goal, knowing the colossal hurdles we face after decades of pitiless austerity policies, soaring inequality, rising racism and the continuing neglect and disparagement of poor and vulnerable people.

However, the collection opens with hope, as Lord Dubs, that abiding knight of political compassion, suggests that the combined crises we now face – the refugee calamity, climate breakdown and the continuing Covid-19 pandemic – have brought us to a crossroads (the word of the moment). Surely we must now realise that it’s time to rethink all aspects of the kind of society we wish to build for future generations, or else face unprecedented calamity. It closes with similar hope from its editors, noting that compassion is a potential in all of us “and possibly the most powerful” one. In between there are some wonderfully informative essays on the significance of compassion, and why we need to build it, especially as historian Barbara Taylor and philosopher Anthony Grayling emphasise, accepting that we are essentially social beings. This means we must circulate our recognition of the interdependence of all people, and our shared interest in promoting reciprocity on every front.

Yet, as all the contributors emphasise, we are routinely taught the very opposite by our right-wing media, encouraging mechanisms of denial of any such recognition, teaching us to ignore, disdain or avoid anyone outside our chosen group, while urging a ubiquitous competitiveness. Thus

Marina Cantacuzino, the founder of the Forgiveness Project to encourage post-conflict reconciliation, admits that “contempt for the outsider is now an everyday affair, spat out as much by politicians as the person sitting next to you on the tube.” But she remains committed to the power of storytelling as one of the most effective tools for creating a less hate-filled and divided society, enabling us to channel grief and regain personal agency following trauma. However, many sufferers will have little access to any form of trauma resolution, while selective, self-serving collective stories are routinely deployed to spread fear and resentment. This has led many to suggest that it’s not reconciliation and compassion, but anger and antagonism that are the defining emotions of our age.

“Contempt for the outsider is now an everyday affair, spat out as much by politicians as the person sitting next to you on the tube”

Certainly, carelessness and cruelty are prevalent themes in many of the contributions. Writing on immigration policy, sociologist Ala Sirriyeh notes that the prospects for greater compassion there seem ever bleaker. However, she agrees that public mobilisation in support of asylum seekers does offer glimmers of hope, suggesting what could be a truly compassionate policy. Similarly, Pragna Patel, one of the founders of the long-lived Southall Black Sisters, emphasises that compassion will never be enough unless it can be “harnessed to a struggle against the unequal allocation of and abuse of power in our families, communities and state structures”.

This is an important book. My only reservation is that the optimism of its editors remains at odds with the pessimism generated by so many people’s continuing support for our current British government, still enabling market greed and encouraging antipathy to the vulnerable. Strategies for political change are crucial, accompanying our commitments to care and compassion. R

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Lynne Segal is emeritus Anniversary Professor of Psychology and Gender Studies, Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck, University of London. She is co-author of *The Care Manifesto*.

# Eating together

Ed Davey reviews a book connecting consumers, nations and organisations



Illustration by Sophie Casson [sophieccasson.com](http://sophieccasson.com)

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## Can Fixing Dinner Fix the Planet?

Jessica Fanzo

*Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021*

ISBN: 9781421441122

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Over the past two years, at the height of the pandemic, a controversy has beset the United Nations surrounding its Food Systems Summit, which took place largely virtually during the UN General Assembly in September 2021. To its detractors, the summit was doomed from the outset. This was a new process that appeared to sideline the UN's Committee on Food Security, held to be a more representative and inclusive body; a summit in which big business was actively involved; and a summit run by UN special envoy Agnes Kalibata, a former minister of agriculture of Rwanda who had gone on to lead the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, accused by some of propagating industrial agriculture and GM crops in the African sub-continent.

For others, the Food Systems Summit was an exciting prospect and a valuable initiative: dubbed a "people's summit" by the organisers, it led to over 1,000 food systems dialogues around the world, involving over 100,000 people, and appeared to privilege the ideas and views of a wide cross-section of the food community, including on agro-ecology and regenerative agriculture. Over 100 countries submitted national food systems pathways – encompassing health, nutrition, environment, climate – to the summit. The US government committed US\$5 billion to global hunger alleviation and food security, as well as US\$5 billion to relieve hunger at home. The Gates Foundation put another (almost) one billion on the table to fund global nutrition efforts – its biggest ever contribution. Global businesses signed a declaration making solemn commitments to reform across a wide range of areas, from marketing to transparency in supply chains. Environmentalists, hunger experts, youth groups and UN agencies forged new coalitions, including to advance living incomes in food supply chains and to provide healthy, nutritious, sustainable school food around the world.

In the midst of the fractious build-up to the summit, in which these two characterisations formed the basis of most media coverage, Jessica Fanzo, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Food Ethics and Policy at the Johns Hopkins University, published two short, elegant, incisive, nuanced and humane books on the global food system, which cut through much of the controversy and set out the issues in a rigorous and enlightening manner. *Can Fixing Dinner Fix the Planet?* is the more deliberately accessible of the two, written for the general reader and providing a well-structured and intricately woven account of the food system's role in hunger, diets, nutrition, food security, livelihoods, climate and biodiversity, interspersed with examples and case studies from the author's academic studies globally and in the US. The book could be read in one sitting, and is greatly enriching and stimulating. It is the fruit of a life's work and study of the subject.

*Global Food Systems, Diets, and Nutrition*, co-authored with Claire Davis, is more of an academic textbook, with pages of references and citations from the literature. It contains a helpful account of the successes and shortcomings of the much-cited EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health, published in early 2019, which suggested the adoption of a "global planetary health diet". But it is also characterised by the same concise, pithy writing, clear structure, and nuanced argument, and provides valuable insights into the complexity and heterogeneity of the issues faced by the world's many and varied food systems.

Above all, both books – in their global scope, scholarship, and moral feeling for the subject – manage to transcend the ideological divisions that beset the Food Systems Summit, to focus instead on clear-sighted, far-reaching recommendations for governments, UN institutions, companies and consumers by which the food system could be urgently improved for the benefit of people and planet alike. R

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Edward Davey works for the World Resources Institute and is the author of *Given Half a Chance: Ten Ways to Save the World* (Unbound, 2019).

# Plant portraits

Kathryn Aalto enjoys a look at plant life across the globe

## Around the World in 80 Plants

Jonathan Drori, illustrated by Lucille Clerc

Laurence King Publishing, 2021

ISBN: 9781786272300

Unlike fictional people in a novel or real-life subjects in non-fiction, the colourful cast of characters who star in Jonathan Drori's *Around the World in 80 Plants* might well be centre-stage in an English farm, field or garden.

Nettle. Rhododendron. Clover. Barley. Hop. Sphagnum.

The same could be said for plants featured from Southern Europe, including saffron crocus, tomato, artichoke, mandrake, and more. In this botanical journey, the reader is transported to different regions of the world for engaging and rich portraits of plant life.

Drori's book is beautiful, with quality paper and fine font, a perfect gift for any gardener. It follows his best-selling and widely translated *Around the World in 80 Trees* (2018), also published by Laurence King. Finely illustrated in subdued hues – burgundy reds, mustard yellows, slate blues, olive greens – by Lucille Clerc, combining drawing and screen-printing, *Around the World in 80 Plants* has the satisfying feel of a short-story collection. In each of the two-page profiles, much ground – plant science as well as human history and culture – is packed. It is a book of broad strokes, making it ideal to read over coffee while gazing through the window at your garden.

Drori is a trustee of the Eden Project and Cambridge Science Centre and an ambassador for the World Wide Fund for Nature, and he was a trustee at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew for nearly a decade. He has a particular interest in economic botany, ethnopharmacology, and plant genetic resources, and has been a part of botanical expeditions.

Drori's narrative non-fiction conveys factual information in often striking and vivid writing. His prose is dense, marked by scientific pop and spark as well as poetic lyricism. In his essay on Spanish moss *Tillandsia usneoides*, he writes: "An eerily iconic plant of the swampy Southern states, it has skeletal, finger-length leaves that curl together into chains, forming elongated grey-green curtains that drape from trees and telephone wires." Of cannabis, or hemp, *Cannabis sativa*, he writes that it has a "dewy sparkle" and is "raffish and unfussy about its habitat". Of nutmeg *Myristica fragrans*, "Girdling the shiny nut is a succulent, lacy layer, an utterly sensual blood-red aril, or seed covering, which is itself surrounded by a fleshy husk."

Ancient to modern uses of plants, alongside places of origin, add cultural and historical backstories. The book is a quick and satisfying survey, to be picked up and put down, to be inspired by, and to tickle your imagination. What it lacks in depth, it makes up for in breadth. Take as contrast Michael

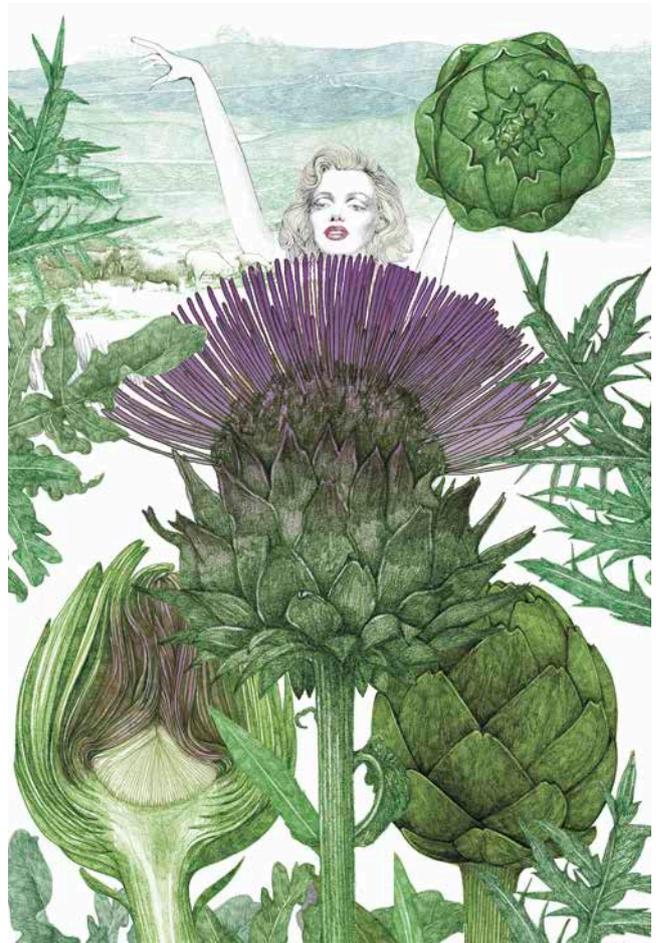


Illustration by Lucille Clerc

Pollan's 2021 book *This Is Your Mind on Plants*. Three plants are studied in depth in a first-person account – opium, caffeine, and mescaline – and the impact on the reader is more lasting. I suggest reading the two books one after the other.

*Around the World in 80 Plants*, for the general reader, is an inspiring taster representing, Drori writes, a fraction of diverse botanical life. His strong introduction reminds us about the vital role plants play in the complex web of life. "Our futures depend on these ecosystems and the relationships between them, but sadly, biodiversity is under threat from rampant human consumption, our agricultural practices and climate change." Drori wants us to enjoy the remarkable plants he profiles, "while sparing a thought for the hundreds of thousands of others that also warrant our attention and, often, our protection".

Enjoyed over your ethically sourced cup of morning *Coffea arabica*, the book is an invitation to see the world as a garden we must all tend with care. R

Kathryn Aalto is the author of three books, including *Writing Wild: Women Poets, Ramblers, and Mavericks Who Shape How We See the Natural World*. [www.kathrynaalto.com](http://www.kathrynaalto.com). @kathrynaalto

# A year in microseasons

Kate Blincoe enjoys a British version of a Japanese calendar

Light Rains Sometimes Fall: A British Year Through Japan's 72 Seasons

Lev Parikian

Elliott & Thompson, 2021

ISBN: 9781783965779



Artwork by Clover Robin

**A** hook. Must every book have one? Is it the result of an elevator pitch world, where you have just twenty seconds to sell your concept? This book is about a British year, split into Japan's 72 seasons. The idea seemed to me a little contrived, a way of repackaging the ancient art and science of phenology and Nature diaries, but then I began reading.

*Light Rains Sometimes Fall* is a delight from start to finish. Each of those 72 sections is a perfectly balanced, completely whole mini-story. The Japanese calendar has short, Nature-inspired names for each microseason, a period of five, or occasionally six, days, and the author, Lev Parikian, gives us a British version of each. So the Japanese 'Thunder ceases' becomes 'Some leaves turn yellow' and 'Grass sprouts, trees bud' in March is our 'Blackthorn sheds blossom'.

The concept works on various levels. First, the short sections – each just a few pages long – are perfect for dipping into. I'd often find myself picking up the book, planning to read just one (instead of pointlessly scrolling on my phone), and finding myself racing through several. It brought little bursts of Nature into my day. I plan to reread it all more slowly this coming year, in glorious synchronicity with each dated entry.

The structure also creates an intensity of the gaze, a hyper-focus on the little shifts and changes around us. It is particularly fitting because the book covers lockdown in the UK and many of us will have experienced that heightened observation and deep connection with the natural world that came with a life stripped bare of many of its usual distractions. It's a tender, intimate account of Parikian's local patch.

There are few moments of cross-over with the Japanese calendar, but when they occur, it is satisfying.

Parikian finds a street full of flowering cherry trees, highly important in Japanese culture, near to his home, and explains: "The ritual of *hanami* (flower-viewing) has been around for over a thousand years, finding its expression not just as a group activity, but as a pivotal theme in poetry and art."

For me, the biggest surprise and pleasure of the book was the humour. It is genuinely funny and irreverent – nothing dull or preachy going on here. And the footnotes of joy merit special mention. Footnotes have a dull reputation – where you might look for some geeky extra info or check that the author has provided a credible reference. Not here. Parikian has elevated them into the funniest gems, scattered liberally through the book. Telling us of "Forty-nine photographs; forty-nine shades of green," the footnote adds, making me guffaw out loud, "So nearly a worldwide erotica sensation." It's like reading with a mischievous friend who always misbehaves in class and sends you notes that make you giggle.

I am also keen to celebrate the rise of the imperfect naturalist. How refreshing it is to have an author who doesn't pretend to know everything, and who is on the same journey of discovery and curiosity that many readers (and indeed writers) are. I'm so over the rather patriarchal, authoritative voice that places itself on a higher realm. And that's not to say that Parikian doesn't bring a richness of knowledge and research to this book – he absolutely does – but rather that informing the reader comes second to providing wonder and entertainment.

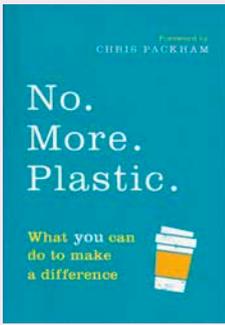
If the hook of this book is contrived, I no longer care. It works. And if you'd like to see the year afresh, then *Light Rains* will bring you a bright new perspective, just like stepping outside after the first rain in weeks and taking a deep breath in. **R**

Kate Blincoe is a Nature lover, author, writer and mother.



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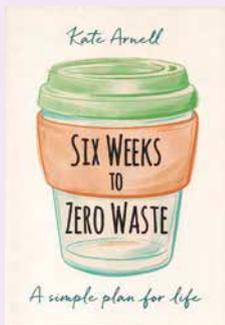
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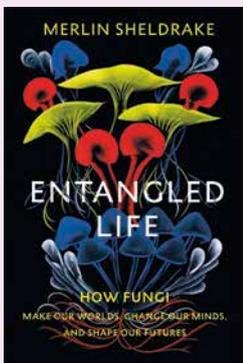
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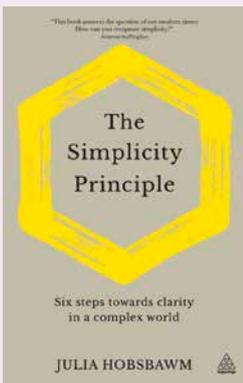
*Merlin Sheldrake*

In this captivating adventure, Merlin Sheldrake explores the spectacular and neglected world of fungi: endlessly surprising organisms that sustain nearly all living systems. Neither plant nor animal, fungi are found throughout the earth, the air and our bodies. They can be microscopic, yet also account for the largest organisms ever recorded, living

for millennia and weighing thousands of tonnes. From redefining the boundaries of intelligent life forms to providing us with the building blocks of foodstuffs and medicines, *Entangled Life* demonstrates just how integral fungi are to sustained living on this planet.

*(Hardback, 358 pages)*

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**THE SIMPLICITY PRINCIPLE**

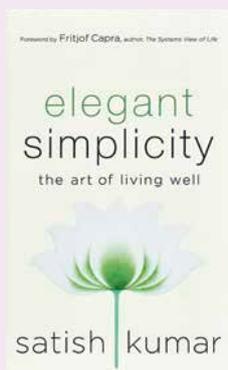
*Julia Hobsbawm*

Modern life is getting more complicated; we crave clarity, calm, and freedom from a life that increasingly puts the machine before the human. In this practical new book Julia Hobsbawm provides a workable system for home and business life based on Nature and neuroscience. If you know that life can

be calmer and more productive, but need help getting there, *The Simplicity Principle* will help you break free of complexity. It's time to gain control of your focus and productivity and believe in one mantra above all: keep it simple.

*(Hardback, 246 pages)*

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## ELEGANT SIMPLICITY

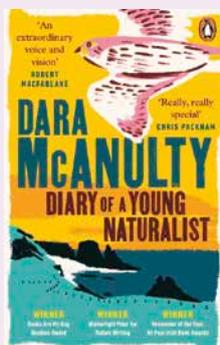
Satish Kumar

A coherent philosophy of life that weaves together simplicity of material life, thought and spirit. It is a life guide for everyone wanting to escape from the relentless treadmill of competition and consumption,

and seeking a life that prioritises the ecological integrity of the Earth, social equity, and personal tranquillity and happiness.

(Hardback, 181 pages)

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## DIARY OF A YOUNG NATURALIST

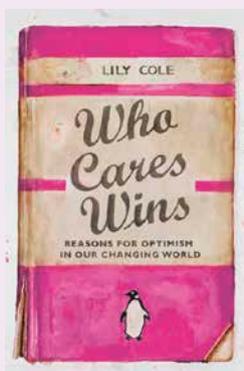
Dara McAnulty

*Diary of a Young Naturalist* chronicles the turning of 15-year-old Dara McAnulty's world. From spring and through a year in his home patch in Northern Ireland, Dara spent the seasons writing. These vivid, evocative and moving diary entries about his connection to wildlife and the way he

sees the world are raw in their telling. McAnulty writes: "In sharing this journey my hope is that people of all generations will not only understand autism a little more but also appreciate a child's eye view on our delicate and changing biosphere."

(Hardback, 224 pages)

£12.99 plus postage



## WHO CARES WINS

Lily Cole

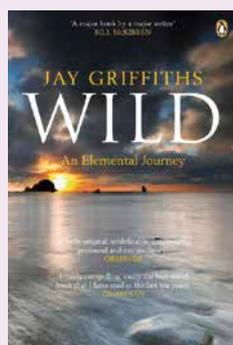
Lily Cole's timely volume gathers testimony from entrepreneurs, activists and key cultural figures with a view to addressing the polarising issues in the world today. Idealistic without being naive, *Who Cares Wins* is an eloquent plea for tolerance, understanding and compassion.

Cole has met with people around the

world who are working on solutions to our biggest challenges and are committed to creating a more sustainable and peaceful future for humanity. The book explores issues from fast fashion to fast food, and renewable energy to gender equality, and offers a beacon of possibility in challenging times.

(Hardback, 448 pages)

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## WILD

Jay Griffiths

Part travelogue, part manifesto for wildness as an essential character of life, *Wild* is a one-of-a-kind book. It describes an extraordinary odyssey, courageous and sometimes dangerous. It is by turns funny, touching and harrowing, and offers a poetic consideration of the tender connection

between human society and wildlands. "I took seven years over this work, spent all I had, my time, money and energy. Part of the journey was a green riot and part a deathly bleakness ... In the end – a strangely sweet result – I came back to a wild home."

(Paperback, 460 pages)

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# Letters to the editor

## WATER WORKS

Stephen McMurray (Issue 329) convincingly wrote about the social value of green spaces within our cities and the need for our policymakers to recognise the role of Nature in our mental health. In 2021 the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) demonstrated that being by water provides the biggest positive impact on people's mental health compared to all other ways to connect with Nature.

Having had the privilege of being involved in creating the largest wetland habitat creation project of its kind on the River Thames and River Thame in Oxfordshire, namely the River of Life II scheme, I can easily appreciate how our waterscapes hold such appeal. Being in this watery environment brings about a degree of conscious presence that is hard to shrug off, given the multi-sensory stimulus available. A quiet moment free of swirling thoughts of past or future when we can revisit our inner child – curious, imaginative and with wonder.

Land & Water Ltd is developing a habitat creation scheme on the River Thames at Rainham Marshes, the largest such project ever constructed inside the M25. A significant area of new wetland habitat will be created from re-engineered spoils, with the importation of over 6 million tonnes of wet and dry spoil material. This material is being repurposed to form the basis of a new landform and will cover the site to collect rainwater to fuel the wetlands.

The site sits between Veolia's landfill site at Rainham and the RSPB's Rainham reserve. The new area will create 1,000,000m<sup>2</sup> of habitat, resulting in the formation of more than 5km<sup>2</sup> of continuous habitats. The site will provide East London with an oasis for wildlife, owned and managed by the RSPB, and an opportunity to take solace and engage with Nature.

**Tom Cartmel, Project Manager for Land & Water Services**

[www.land-water.co.uk](http://www.land-water.co.uk)

## RUBBISH CONNECTION

How strange it is that many in a parish council in Mid Devon could not make the connection between the emergence of rubbish and the emerging of the Industrial Age; with the incessant call for expansion and development. In his review in Issue 329 of Annette Kehnel's *Wir konnten auch anders* ('We Could Do Things Differently'), Tim Gorrington mentions that the word 'rubbish' did not appear in dictionaries until the early 20th century. There is much to thank our medieval ancestors for – a way of living built on the belief in producing families who were all skilled in

mending and repairing items necessary for their day-to-day survival. No such thing as throwaway, prior to the prodigious waste we know today.

Excellent book. Essential reading in every government office.

**David Harvey**  
Wiltshire

## OUR ONLY HOME

No one who ever truly gazed at a butterfly could contemplate harming the Earth. No one who ever placed their palms together and prayed sincerely could countenance the destruction of plants, animals, deserts, mountains, forests and oceans. No one who ever strolled through native woodland could ever willingly acquiesce in the poisoning of lakes, rivers and the very air we breathe. But, these days, many of us suffer from a profound disconnection from the Earth that is, after all, our only home.

Modern lifestyles militate against an abiding love of the soil: politicians, entrepreneurs and academics would benefit, like children, from actually getting their hands dirty in real soil rather than talking about the vitality of the natural world in endless seminars and conferences while the fabric itself crumbles.

In the face of wanton global destruction and environmental ennui, we need with great urgency to reinterpret our relationship with the Earth by adopting a kind of gentle, authentic spiritual resurgence. Otherwise we face a bleak future of panicky striving and competitive conflict.

The symbolic but preternaturally present butterfly dancing from flower to flower, marvelled at by the intrigued toddler; the mindfully picked bloom presented with loving simplicity to a mother; the dolphin leaping with breathtaking beauty above tumultuous waves: these touching things and more may raise consciousness and serve at least to begin healing a maimed planet, easing it towards robust health and lasting, sustainable plenitude. In a reverent human attitude towards Nature lies the salvation of the Earth.

The philosophy informing these views is more fully explored in my volume of essays, *Pearls in the Web and Other Reflections: Thoughts on Nature and Spirituality*.

**Peter Quince**  
(via email)

## A BETTER WAY

When we emerged from Lockdown 1, and I returned to a lovely Qi Gong class, I said to our leader, "There must

be a better way,” and he replied, “Yes, there must be a better way.” Since that small exchange, I have searched for alternative views from scientists, health professionals, psychologists, journalists and authors.

I know from dialogues amongst my family and friends that there are deep differences of both opinion and understanding about ‘the science’, the propaganda, lockdowns, social distancing, face masks, school and university closures, mass vaccination, vaccination of children and young people, vaccination passports, border closures and more. Amongst people who share many common perspectives politically and socially, these issues have divided us and have been hard to talk about.

Perhaps we can agree that the pandemic and the worldwide governmental responses to it have damaged mental and physical health, livelihoods and our natural environment. Poor people, children and young people have lost and suffered most. Our societies and our world are more unequal as a result.

*Resurgence & Ecologist* contributors and readers are deep thinkers. I urge you to open up these subjects – grasp the nettle, face the elephant in the room. Give us thoughtful, respectful perspectives on these issues. Give us some insights into the impacts on the developing world. Give us some suggestions about how things can be done better the next time a virus escapes from the wild or from a laboratory. Give us thoughts on how we can heal our damaged selves, relationships, communities and democracy.

**Jill Evans**

Middleton-on-Sea

## POETRY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

What has poetry to say in times of extremis such as the current pandemic and the gathering climate crisis? Are the arts at such times irrelevant, a luxury?

We often use the word ‘humanity’ to describe what is best in us: a compassionate, benevolent, loving way of being. My contention is that the resonances of a poem can help connect us with what is deepest in ourselves – what is ‘real’ and essentially ‘good’. With the expansion of our awareness we come to our senses and become a force for good in the world.

In my own poetry, which comes mostly out of the landscape of my home on the Suffolk coast, I am trying always to be present enough in my wanderings along river paths, field tracks and in communion with woods to give a voice to Nature in the poems that come to me – I would almost say are given to me – although of course Nature speaks so much more eloquently and poetically

in her own voice if we can but take the time to listen.

*Resurgence & Ecologist* is one small voice, the poems it publishes smaller voices still; but many voices swell to become a chorus for hope and healing in these troubled times!

## This is what they said

I am practised (though far from perfect)  
in the art of doing nothing;  
Just being alive in the world, fully present  
to that one precious moment;  
and it is not easy,  
so used are we to hurrying on,  
hurrying on to the next bit of living  
that we forget how to live now.

I was standing on a rise at a field's edge  
looking down at a sun-spangled estuary,  
tasting the fresh sea breeze,  
when out of the corner of my eye, I saw,  
a hedge away,  
two roe deer,  
quizzically observing me,  
and although fleeting  
(they bounded away, as they usually do),  
It felt to me like a meeting.

Later I imagine them telling the herd  
in whatever way they might do that:

*We saw a human today.  
What were they doing?  
Nothing, just standing –  
just looking –  
just listening –  
just smelling the air.  
What was their intent?  
Just being, just belonging,  
to this astonishing world.*

**Peter Watkins**

Co-founder, Inside Out Community

We have yet to hear a response from Stanley Johnson regarding readers’ concerns over the interview we published in the Sept/Oct issue. Many thanks to those who have been in touch regarding this.

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We welcome letters and emails commenting on *Resurgence & Ecologist* articles and issues. These should include your postal address. Send your letters to The Editor, *Resurgence & Ecologist*, The Resurgence Centre, Fore Street, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6AB or email [editorial@resurgence.org](mailto:editorial@resurgence.org). Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

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### 2 Berney Marshes, Norfolk 2021

The reserve protects a large area of wet grassland, intertidal mud and saltmarsh in the Norfolk Broads.

**Protected species:** golden plover, lapwing, pink-footed goose, redshank, wigeon.



## UPCOMING PURCHASES

### 3 Wast Neaps, Island of Yell, Shetland

The second largest of the Islands of Shetland, Yell is home to a stunning range of seabirds and otters.

**Protected species:** skuas, merlin, red-throated divers, curlew, snipe.

### 4 Horse Common, New Forest National Park

A vital extension to the Franchises Lodge Reserve, this neglected woodland will provide habitat for a host of birds and other creatures.

**Protected species:** lesser spotted woodpecker, nightjar, dartford warbler, spotted flycatcher, hawfinch.

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RSPB Berney Marshes during winter



Horse Common will provide habitat for a host of birds such as the lesser spotted woodpecker

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External course fee: £5000 RMT Staff: no fee



*Course information and application:* Applications are now open.  
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- Have a basic understanding of interactions in the natural world, including soil, plant, animal, human being and cosmos

Left: The science and art of making biodynamic preparations

## Course deliverers and locations

Mattias Emous (course lead)

Upper Grange garden, Stroud

Vivian Griffiths Brantwood

(Home of John Ruskin), Coniston Lake

Laura Wallwork Plas Dwbl, Clynderwen

Roberto Romano Clervaux Gardens, Darlington

Sean Murphy Trigonos, Nantlle, Caernarfon

Dr Katherine Buchanan Fairhill, East Lothian

## Dates and further details

February to July 2022

[biodynamictraining.org/step-by-step/](http://biodynamictraining.org/step-by-step/)

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The course provides participants with the opportunity and competencies to work with people with differing educational and developmental needs in a therapeutic context through biodynamic, ecological activities. The programme has two primary areas of focus: biodynamic training *Growing the Land* and social therapeutic education *Growing People*.

Our charity volunteer scheme provides full-time unpaid work. In return charity volunteers receive RMT training, accommodation (if required), subsistence and expenses, and undertake the Ruskin Mill Biodynamic Training programme.



**Faculty** Pieter Van Vliet, Berni Courts, Ed Berger, Laura Wallwork, Mattias Emous and others

**Charity volunteer and RMT staff** no fee

**Dates** Due to Covid-19, delivery dates will be communicated at point of application

**External course fee** £1800



Practitioner working on High Riggs biodynamic market garden



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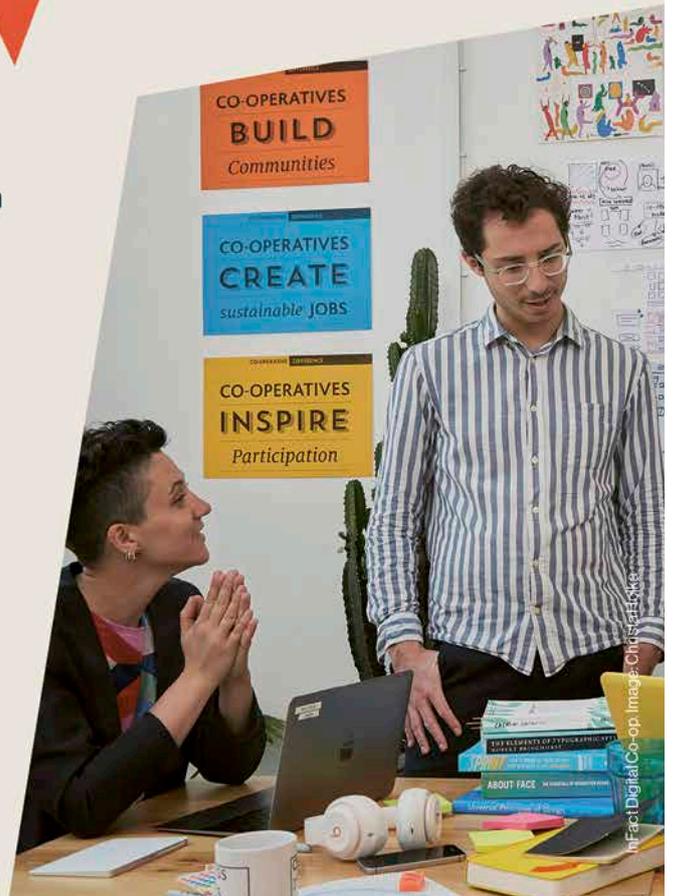
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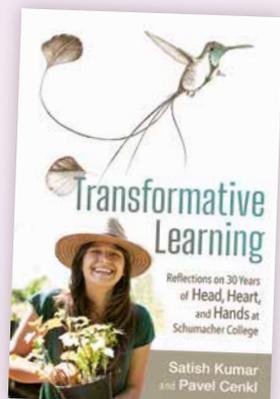


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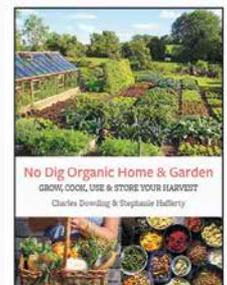
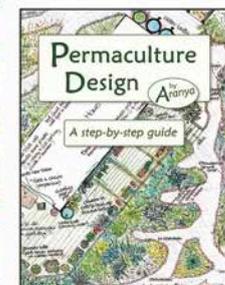
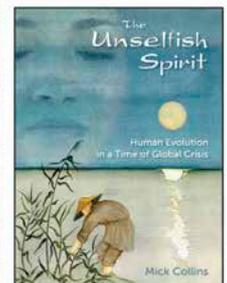
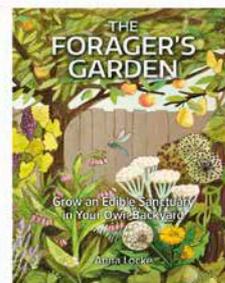
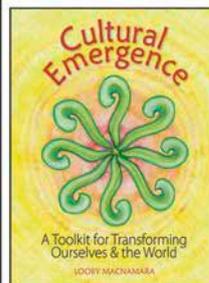


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## Help secure the future of THE RESURGENCE TRUST

Leaving a legacy to The Resurgence Trust is a powerful way to demonstrate your commitment to the planet, people and environmental education.

A gift in your Will can ensure The Resurgence Trust will be able to continue with its much-needed work of advancing the education of the public in areas of conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment globally, arts, culture and human values.

For more information on pledging a gift to Resurgence in your Will:  
[www.resurgence.org/legacy](http://www.resurgence.org/legacy)

*"The Resurgence Trust is dedicated to the wellbeing of the Earth, for now and forever which includes the wellbeing of ourselves, of all people, and of future generations."*

Satish Kumar, Editor Emeritus,  
*Resurgence & Ecologist*

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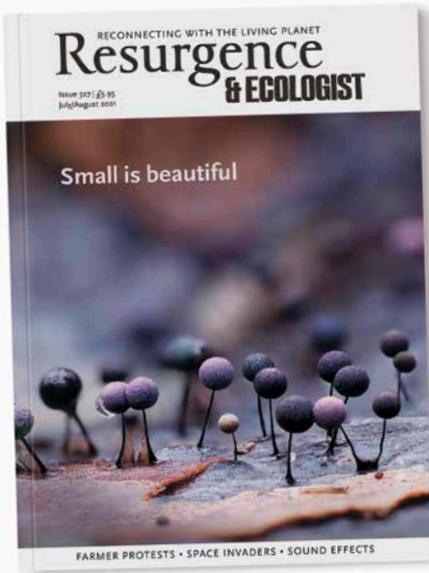


The cottage is part of The Resurgence Centre and is nestled between our Events Centre and Editorial office.

To find out more and book, visit:  
[www.airbnb.com/h/smallschoolcottage](http://www.airbnb.com/h/smallschoolcottage)

Photograph: Mark Gough

# The Impact of Resurgence 2021



*“Resurgence has been addressing issues of ecology, biodiversity, spirituality and sustainability for over 50 years. Now these issues are in the centre of public discourse. But there is still a long way to go. The message of Resurgence is as urgent today as it ever was. While we celebrate our impact, we are committed to continue this vital work in caring for our precious planet Earth and her people. Thank you for your participation in this great journey of transformation.”*

– Satish Kumar, Editor Emeritus, *Resurgence & Ecologist*

The Resurgence Trust continues to produce unique and impactful publications and events. In our annual ‘Impact of The Resurgence Trust’ report we highlight key areas of our work over the last year.



## *This year, Resurgence has...*

- Published six innovative, inspiring, cutting-edge and beautifully designed issues of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine, including a special issue on Living Cities.
- Reached an engaged readership in every corner of the globe through The Ecologist website, providing up-to-date, independent information on environmental, social and economic justice.
- Successfully launched the Ecologist Writers’ Fund, raising money from readers to pay contributors who would not otherwise be able to conduct research and write for free.
- Published *Fight the Fire* by Jonathan Neale, a compelling guide to averting climate breakdown. This free e-book has been downloaded 12,000 times.
- Welcomed thousands of people to our educational events online, including the Resurgence Festival of Wellbeing, monthly Resurgence Talks, and themed trilogies, reaching audiences from around the world.
- Collaborated with the Network of Wellbeing to deliver four ‘Hope in Action’ online events exploring how we can maintain hope, wellbeing and resilience in a time of global crisis. The last one was held as part of the COP26 People’s Summit.
- Produced our first teaching pack to help primary school teachers explore the life of a local river or other watercourse with their classes.
- Produced a three-minute film to convey the breadth of the work of The Resurgence Trust.
- Completed a three-year renovation project to create a home for The Resurgence Trust in a sustainable and carbon-neutral building.

In addition Satish Kumar gave over 100 talks to audiences in many countries, including Canada, France, Portugal, India, The Netherlands, Qatar and the United States. He participated in a conference, ‘Faith and Science Towards COP26’, at the Vatican.

The work of The Resurgence Trust is all possible due to the support of our readers, members and donors, as well as trusts and foundations, for which we thank you!

If you would like to read the full ‘Impact of Resurgence Report 2021’ you can download it from: [www.resurgence.org/impact](http://www.resurgence.org/impact)

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# R RESURGENCE TALKS

via ZOOM

A regular programme of online talks, inspired by the ideas within *Resurgence & Ecologist*, covering a range of issues including the environment, arts, meditation and ethical living.

These Zoom webinars start at 19.30 GMT

### Tickets:

All talks £6.50 each (including booking fee)

For any enquiries, please email [sharon@resurgence.org](mailto:sharon@resurgence.org)

For booking details and further information on the talks, please visit [www.resurgenceevents.org/events](http://www.resurgenceevents.org/events)

The Resurgence Trust is grateful to Fattoria La Vialla for generously sponsoring the monthly 'Resurgence Talks'

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26 Jan 2022

### Louise Chester

*Founder of Mindfulness at Work*

#### How to harness Wise Compassion in business to build Presence, Purpose and Partnership

In 2002 Louise decided to fully live her purpose by bringing teaching on presence and compassion to the corporate world. She founded a not-for-profit retreat centre in 2003 and then Mindfulness at Work in 2010.



23 Feb 2022

### Steve Waygood

*Chief Responsible Investment Officer at Aviva Investors*

#### Capitalism & Climate Change: Rethinking finance so that it delivers rather than destroys the Paris Agreement

Steve has worked for Aviva Investors for 15 years and founded its Global Responsible Investment team as well as its Sustainable Finance Centre for Excellence, which seeks to transform capital markets so that they become more sustainable. Steve started his career at WWF-UK, working on its ethical and environmental investment policy.



30 Mar 2022

### Ann Pettifor

*Political economist, author and public speaker*

#### The Case for the Green New Deal

Ann's latest book, *'The Case for the Green New Deal'*, was published in hardback in 2019. The paperback version, with an added chapter, 'Afterword', was published a year later. She is director of PRIME (Policy Research in Macroeconomics), a network of economists promoting Keynesian monetary theory and policies and focusing on the role of the finance sector in the economy.

This event is a fundraiser for The Resurgence Trust, an educational charity registered in England and Wales (no. 1120414).

# Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

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### Membership Rates

Six issues per year UK: £36  
Rest of the World: £46

## OVERSEAS AGENT

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## The Resurgence Trust...more than a magazine

The Resurgence Trust is an educational charity that seeks to inform and inspire change and connection – to each other and to the living Earth. Resurgence promotes planetary and personal wellbeing, social justice and spiritual fulfilment. It strives to contribute to a better world for all through the pages of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine, through a broad range of events, and through The Ecologist website, which publishes free, daily, online environmental news. Find out more about this movement for change:

[www.resurgence.org](http://www.resurgence.org)

[www.resurgenceevents.org](http://www.resurgenceevents.org)

[www.theecologist.org](http://www.theecologist.org)

## Readers' groups

Explore ideas that have the power to create change by meeting with fellow readers to discuss the latest issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist*. Join Resurgence online via Zoom, or check if there is a group meeting near you at

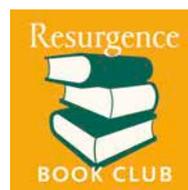
[www.resurgence.org/groups](http://www.resurgence.org/groups) or by calling us on 01237 441293



## Book club

Held via Zoom every month with the book author and a chance for participant Q&A.

[www.resurgence.org/bookclub](http://www.resurgence.org/bookclub)



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