

Wild Norley

Think Global But Act Local

May

Phil Gifford - Chair of Norley Wildlife Group (NWG)
01928 787217 Email: ansellpgifford@gmail.com

NATURE'S POWERS AND SPELLS ON OUR DOORSTEP

*Untill the vision waked with time
And left me itching after rhyme
Where little pictures idly tells
Of natures powers & natures spells*

*From the Progress of Rhyme
John Clare, the so-called "Northamptonshire
Peasant poet"*

One more year has passed since I quoted the poem above, *Think Global - Act Local* remains our watchword and rightly so as climate change and the loss of biodiversity have not yet got to the point where they are necessarily recognised as pivotal to the very survival of the human race. Sir David Attenborough has spelled out the wonders of wildlife in Britain and the devastation we have wrought upon it.

One thing however that is critical to any endeavour to undo this harm and that is the majority of us has to care, for as he says *"No one will protect what they don't care about: and no one will care about what they have never experienced"*.

Luckily everyone in the village, like John Clare did so long ago in Hepston, can behold the wonders of spring, on their own doorstep and let nature's powers and spells work their magic. The *Lost Words* book by Jackie Miller and Robert MacFarlane seeks to renew our connection with the natural world, which can so easily be lost and often for the young not even made. I hope you too will like her delightful painting of the bluebell and find his memorably haunting poem as literally spellbinding as I. The bluebells in the Wild wood next to St John's will be in full bloom and so take care, stay on the path, treading on the bluebells damages them and you risk being drawn into their blue abyss, into the land of the Faeries!



*Blue flowers at the blue hour-
Late-day light in a bluebell wood.
Under branch, below leaf, billows blue so deep,
sea-deep.
Each step is taken in an ocean.
Blue flows at the blue hour: colour is current,
undertow.
Enter the wood with care, my love,
Lest you are pulled down by the hue,
Lost in the depths, drowned in blue.*

THE FROGS THEY WOULD A WOING GO



Thankfully the time of the Batrachians i.e. amphibians' annual migrations are now over. Note I use the plural as there are two, one to the water to breed and one from it, though the latter is often less frenetic. Sadly, although many were saved on their journey to the ponds at Norley Bank Farm (well done Neil & Margaret) many, probably hundreds did not survive their encounters with road traffic. Despite the permanent toad crossing signs which are soon to

be installed, we will, I think have to organise “toad patrols” next year.

As described in the song *A Frog he would wooing* go such amatory activities carry a number of dangers other than road vehicles and the one I witnessed still makes me shudder. Our pond is now amphibian friendly, but is so far bereft of any concealing vegetation. At the end of February, a large grey heron stood motionless on the far side when quick as flash, a large frog was speared, battered, tossed and gulped down, followed by a second. I can still see it puffed up trying to save itself but all in vain, as it was swallowed just as quickly. The heron wiping its bill on its powdery chest feathers then flew off, possibly to digest its breakfast or to find some equally slimy eels, to complete it.

Carry Akroyd



Here hunts heron. Here haunts heron. Huge-hinged heron. Grey-winged weapon.

Eked from iron and wreaked from blue and beaked with steel: heron, statue, seeks eel.

Rock still at weir sill. Stone still at weir sill. Dead still at weir sill. Still still at weir sill. Until, eelless at weir sill, heron magically... unstatues.

Out of the water creaks long-legs heron, old-priest heron, from hereon in all sticks and planks and rubber-bands, all clanks and clicks and rusty squeaks.

Now heron hauls himself into flight - early aviator, heavy freighter - and with steady wingbeats boosts his way through evening light to roost.

(R MacFarlane: Lost Words)

Later that day I went to the spot and found masses of frog spawn. Every day I examined it anxiously, were the little black dots in the eggs fertile? Were the resident moorhens, the visiting wildfowl, two pairs of mallard and mandarin ducks, half a dozen teal, a stropky coot and two Canada geese going to gobble it up? But they slowly developed, so by the end of March the little orphaned tadpoles were wriggling around consuming their egg case jelly.

BEATING THE BOUNDS - NORLEY COMMONS - HEALTH ASSESSMENT & CITY NATURE CHALLENGE (CNC)

This, the third now, was carried out on 30th April and a digest of the report to CWAC and the Parish Council will be on Facebook, together with an account of the CNC.

Although not common land, the acquisition of 20 acres on Sandycroft Farm with the Memorial Garden (common land) at its centre is still ongoing. It is a tremendously exciting prospect and plans are being drawn up for a variety of wildlife habitats. One of which, a traditionally managed community orchard, will also let Norleyans appreciate its unique qualities, with a diverse array of fruit trees, many specific to the North West, including apples pears, plums, mulberries, damsons, cherries, crab apples and quinces.

OTHER NEWS

- Our next meeting is 7.30 - 9.00 pm 10th May 2023 at Sheila Hills' house (15 School Bank).
- NWG will be at the WI's Seed and Plant Swap on 20th May, 10am - 2pm at the Village Hall. Please come, we have all sorts of ideas to make Norley's gardens more wildlife friendly, all on a budget!
- Our next workday will be Sunday 28th May, see Facebook for details.
- Great news, Chester Zoo has got another year's funding for its Nature Recovery Corridor (now Networks for Nature Project). It has already helped NWG considerably and we are all so pleased that we can continue to contribute and benefit from it.

- A spring garden survey form is on our Facebook page, I hope you will fill one in, recording all the wonderful magical things that give us so much pleasure.

