RECONNECTING WITH THE LIVING PLANET

Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

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Power to the peaceful

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A tapestry of life

The world has changed since the March/April issue of Resurgence & Ecologist left the printing press. Now, as you read these words, another country lies in ruins and another generation is forced to experience the existential threat of nuclear war. As CND General Secretary Kate Hudson said, “there is no possibility whatsoever” that war will resolve the situation. “Only dialogue and openness to the concerns of others will make a difference.”

It was with an air of surrealism that we started mapping our ‘peaceful protest’ section in the May/June issue, planned as it had been months in advance to mark the erosion of civil liberties in the UK. It was also a reminder of our legacy and our role in these times of crisis. Resurgence was born out of the anti-nuclear movement of the 1960s, bringing with it a message of peace. Today the magazine is a kind of tapestry. The interwoven weft threads creating the picture are science, philosophy, wellbeing, economics and the arts; the warp threads, the foundation, are empathy and connection. By understanding how everything is linked and opening ourselves to the concerns of others, we can take a clear view of reality. This is the backing for what Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone call Active Hope. The next stage is to identify what we hope for, and to take steps to move in that direction.

Woven throughout the tapestry in your hands is the theme of peaceful protest. In our Ecologist section, Brendan Montague interviews barrister David Renton about the implications of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which is currently going through the UK parliament, and Eve Livingston argues the role of trade unions in nonviolent environmental activism. In our themed section, Yasmine Dahounou speaks with ecofeminist Vandana Shiva about how a group of ‘tree-huggers’ 60 years ago inspired India’s recent nationwide farmers’ protests, a movement “driven from love for the Earth and dignity and pride in their vocation of farming”, Shiva says. In Wisdom & Wellbeing, Jane Goodall tells Satish Kumar that one of her greatest reasons for hope is young people.

We take a look at the toll protest can take on our bodies. Youth striker Helen shares the moving story of how her disordered eating became entangled with climate anxiety, and Emma Smart, a protester with Insulate Britain, writes about her hunger strike.

Caring can also come with an emotional cost. In our Feature Story, Charlie Jones and Dan Warrender write about how people in a caring role can nurture ‘compassionate care’ without being overwhelmed. “We know really that vulnerability, pain and ultimately death are part of our shared human experience,” they write. “To embrace our humanity is to embrace our imperfections and vulnerabilities.”

To celebrate connection, we introduce the first in our new series of essays, In the Company of Trees. In this issue, environmentalist Anita Roy and sound artist Jason Singh write about ancient yews.

This brings us back to the warp threads, connection and empathy, two powerful words that, as Kate Hudson said, will make a difference in these troubled times.

Marianne Brown
Editor of Resurgence & Ecologist

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CRISPIN TICKELL

Oliver Tickell pays tribute to his father, a long-standing friend of Resurgence

You may already know that my father, Sir Crispin Tickell, died in January at the considerable age of 91. His principal claim to fame is to have been the diplomat who convinced Margaret Thatcher, the then prime minister, that climate change was a serious threat to humanity and the planet we live on, and that we had better do something about it.

His early life followed a proper course: as a scholar at Westminster School and later at Christ Church, Oxford, military service in the Coldstream Guards, and passing the Civil Service exams with flying colours. But that list of conventional accolades belied the innovative thinking that, for example, led him to take a year’s sabbatical at Harvard to write his book *Climatic Change and World Affairs*, published in 1978, and to become a pioneering London cyclist around 1970, riding into the Foreign Office’s Western Organisations Department round Hyde Park Corner and St James’s Park on his small-wheeled folding Raleigh.

His most enjoyable posting was as ambassador to Mexico, where he immersed himself in the country’s light, colour, food, art, culture and people, and set about climbing a succession of lofty volcanoes, often in the company of his driver Ismael, who became a good friend. And so the official Ford Crown Victoria, increasingly battered over the years, would appear at dusk at humble pensions in remote mountain villages, and the two would make a brisk dawn departure for the snowy summit.

My father was a long-term reader of *Resurgence* and counted its guiding light, Satish Kumar, as a good friend.

Oliver Tickell is a writer, a journalist, and former editor of *The Ecologist*.
Forthcoming events

Carbon Ambassadors Course
An eight-week course from Resurgence and Carbon Savvy that will give you a complete overview of how carbon footprints work, the global, national and individual perspectives, and the biggest things we can do to save CO2 and how these can raise our quality of life. The course features special guests from diverse fields who share their own experiences and insights on how to approach climate action. Speakers will include Satish Kumar, Richard Layard, Kirsty Schneeberger and Mike Berners-Lee.
Fridays 9–11am, Zoom

Hope in Action: Beyond Narratives of Us and Them
When faced with so many intersecting crises, how can we have effective conversations about contentious topics with people with whom we disagree? How can we move beyond dualistic and combative narratives of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘win’ or ‘lose’? And how can we communicate in a way that cultivates hope, action, connection and change?
With Ruth Ibegbuna (The Roots Programme), George Marshall (Climate Outreach), and Alex Evans (Larger Us).
7.30–9pm, Zoom

Resurgence Readers’ Group
Connect with like-minded people and reflect on the topics raised in the latest issue of Resurgence & Ecologist magazine. Charlie Jones and Dan Warrender will join us to discuss their article ‘Making space for compassionate health care’, exploring how caregivers can move from anxiety to empathy.
7–8pm, Zoom

Resurgence Talks: Tim Lang
The Future of Food
In his latest book, Feeding Britain, professor of food policy Tim Lang examines the UK as a case study of a rich country’s food system. He proposes that this is more fragile than it appears and that the only route to security is to put sustainability, health and social justice at its heart.
7.30–9pm, Zoom

Acorn Poetry Festival
A nourishing online celebration of poetry with recitals from more than 20 leading poets, including Gillian Clarke, Tishani Doshi, Ben Okri, Matt Harvey, Ruth Padel, Pascale Petit and Rowan Williams.
For further information, booking and full programme, please visit: tinyurl.com/AcornPoetryFestival
10am – 5pm on both days, Zoom

Earth Festival Meditation: Summer Solstice
Join us to celebrate this high time and the abundance of Nature. Let us honour the powerful energies of the Earth and sun and their effect on us with guided meditation, seasonal reflection, journalling and Nature-connection practices.
7–8pm, Zoom

Resurgence Talks: Jon Alexander
Citizens: Why the Key to Fixing Everything Is All of Us
Driven by a deep need to understand the impact on society of experiencing 3,000 commercial messages a day, Jon Alexander gathered three Masters degrees, exploring consumerism and its alternatives from every angle. In 2014 he co-founded the New Citizenship Project to bring the resulting ideas into reality. In his book Citizens he shares these insights with the world.
7.30–9pm, Zoom

Resurgence Summer Camp
Join us for a weekend of inspiring talks, workshops, music, storytelling and poetry. Immerse yourself in a weekend of connection, bringing the ideas and ethos of Resurgence to life. Explore ideas and take part in activities to nourish your mind and spirit, including a Resurgence Earth Festival meditation. Ticket price includes all meals (vegetarian). Places limited to 140.

Details for all events can be found at www.resurgenceevents.org
ARTS AND CULTURE SECTORS CUT TIES WITH OIL GIANTS

The National Portrait Gallery and Scottish Ballet have dropped BP sponsorship, as environmental campaigns increase pressure on cultural institutions to drop ties with fossil fuel companies. After more than 30 years of sponsorship, the National Portrait Gallery says ending ties with BP will help the institution align with its goal of net zero by 2050. The Scottish Ballet, which aims to be carbon-neutral by 2030, was called out by climate activists during COP26 in Glasgow last year for its ties to BP. The Royal Shakespeare Company and the Tate have already severed ties with the oil giant, after campaigners shunned art institutions for allowing sponsorship with oil companies to greenwash their reputations whilst promising to shift towards cleaner energy. This is the power protests have in challenging old narratives!

tinyurl.com/ecologist-bp-dropped

SEED SAVERS’ QUIET REVOLUTION

The beauty of collecting your own seeds from harvest is that most fruits and vegetables produce more than one gardener could ever use. This is why seeds have long been used as gardeners’ currency. Swapping also increases diversity in flourishing communities. A Quiet Revolution, a film made by the Gaia Foundation, depicts a London seed-saving movement. Gardeners working alongside the London Freedom Seed Bank are breaking down race, class and gender barriers. Urban growing spaces provide a network for seed-saving opportunities, with seed varieties specifically suited to local environments. Some seeds have been passed down through generations, alongside the knowledge that community and diversity are always stronger and more resilient than commercial alternatives.

tinyurl.com/ecologist-seed-savers

JOBS, NOT PLANES

A move towards cleaner travel could reduce emissions – and create 340,000 jobs. Despite receiving a £12 billion bailout from the Covid Jobs Retention Scheme, the aviation industry cut more than 45,000 jobs during the pandemic. An annual investment of just £9.5 billion would promote research into technological developments to reduce emissions in aviation, says a report from climate charity Possible and employment think tank Autonomy. It would also help expand the rail network and enable people to travel without flying.

tinyurl.com/ecologist-jobs-not-planes

Photo © BEN STANSALL / AFP via Getty Images

Helene Schulze tends planters at the Garden of Earthly Delights in Hackney, London © Andy Pilsbury

Photo © BERNABEU / Dave Benett via Getty Images

Editor’s Pick: A Quiet Revolution, a film made by the Gaia Foundation, depicts a London seed-saving movement.
Britain’s uninsulated homes could be fuelling war

Yasmin Dahnoun looks at how the UK might be heating conflict in Ukraine

The failure of the UK government to insulate homes and build renewable energy infrastructure during the last decades means energy companies will be forced to spend billions on Russian gas imports this year – potentially helping to fund Russia’s war on Ukraine.

The UK imported almost 34 terawatt-hours of Russian liquefied natural gas in 2021 – despite there being almost no such imports as recently as 2017. Current Russian oil imports to the UK equate to about 7% of UK total imports, and about 4% of UK gas demand.

This means the UK will be spending £2.3 billion on Russian gas this year – or £6.3 million per day if buying at today’s wholesale gas price of about £68 per megawatt-hour. British Gas owner Centrica is in talks to exit its supply deals with Russian gas firm Gazprom “as a matter of urgency”.

Boris Johnson plans to phase out oil supplies from Russian oil imports by the end of 2022 in response to Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. This will result in even higher gas bills for families and businesses across the UK. Wholesale gas price rises are already driving energy bill hikes, with gas directly adding at least £500 to the average annual domestic bill under April’s new price cap, and a further £68 due to supplier collapses.

On top of the increase in the cost of living, with rising energy bills, food and transport costs, changes in income tax and stagnant wages will push many UK households further down the poverty line.

Simon Cran-McGreehin, head of analysis at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit in London, said: “The UK has been spending billions of pounds on Russian gas that could now be being used to fund Putin’s war in Ukraine. This is another reason why the UK needs to break its dependency on gas – insulating our homes, deploying electric heat pumps and shifting from gas power stations to renewables is the way to do it.”

For Europe, it will be a lot harder to stop funding Russia, because Russia is the main supplier of EU crude oil and gas. One of the biggest pipelines in the world, Druzhba pipeline, carries oil from the eastern part of Russia to points in Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany. The continent’s high consumption and limited alternatives make diversifying energy supplies across renewable sources an urgent matter.

If UK homes were upgraded using insulation and other heating efficiency measures, such that the average Energy Efficiency Rating moved from band D to the government’s target of band C, each household would use on average 20% less gas, overall UK gas demand would fall by 8%, and imports could be reduced by 15%. UK homes are considered the oldest and leakiest housing stock in western Europe, according to a report by the BRE Trust.

The current gas crisis hitting the UK has been years in the making. The cheapest source of clean energy is onshore wind – which also has the obvious advantage of ending our dependency on oil and gas coming from regions of the world suffering from wars and despotism.

Yasmin Dahnoun is a member of the editorial team at The Ecologist.

“The UK needs to break its dependency on gas”

Illustration © Matt Harrison Clough / Ikon Images
Protecting our right to protest

Brendan Montague speaks to barrister David Renton about the UK's Policing Bill

The future that confronts younger generations seems extremely perilous, with the climate crisis already upon us while fossil fuel burning increases globally. Older generations compound this injustice by suggesting that it is the young who must surrender their youth to campaigning for climate action. Barack Obama, once ‘leader of the free world’, famously said: “To all the young people out there – I want you to stay angry. I want you to stay frustrated... Gird yourself for a marathon, not a sprint.”

And in this very moment Boris Johnson and his Conservative government have decided to introduce the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. So young people now have to gird themselves for a spell in prison if they take part in the most basic forms of climate protest. People now have to sacrifice time that should be spent learning, or hanging out, to protest for the right to protest for a future without being arrested and thrown into prison. This is a triple injustice.

David Renton is a practising barrister and the author of the forthcoming book *Against the Law* (Repeater, 2022). He described some of the absurdities of the Policing Bill (as it has become known) in an article for *The Ecologist* online, and his arguments were picked up when the proposed legislation was in the House of Lords. We went back to him and asked, is the bill as bad as it seems?

“T...
Renton responds. “For example, in the House of Lords, the government tried to rewrite the legislation to make it unlawful for a protester to attach themselves to “another person, to an object or to land”. Undoubtedly this clause was included to punish environmental protesters locking on to a static object to make it harder for the police to arrest them. That particular clause was defeated in the Lords, but the government is expected to try again to pass it.

“The pattern with all previous legislation has been that, once the contents of an authoritarian bill are widely known, protesters innovate – they come up with new tactics to get around an apparent ban. My hope is that, whatever form of the bill passes, that cycle of innovation will continue. But, at least for a while, protest will be much harder.”

There is an almost all-encompassing feeling that, as the impacts of climate breakdown worsen, and the need for action becomes clearer, governments around the world are responding by becoming more authoritarian. But is this feeling really supported by the facts? Renton is an expert on authoritarian regimes, both past and present. What can he tell us?

“A number of countries have elected leaders in the past decade who show clear authoritarian sensibilities – the likes of Trump, Modi, Bolsonaro. All over eastern Europe we have seen relatively liberal societies fall into forms of managed democracy, where opposition parties have few rights and protests are criminalised.

“The government here in the UK has been trying to expand its powers by taking over public bodies and replacing their leaders with government loyalists. We have seen that at the BBC, in the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and elsewhere. There is also an alarming trend of the government making ever-greater use of ‘secondary legislation’ – powers to legislate without parliamentary scrutiny.”

Finally, then, what should our response to the Police Bill be? Will protesting the right to protest alienate the public, and drain significant resources away from other campaigning? Do we have any choice?

Renton concludes, “If we don’t campaign in support of protest rights, we will lose them. There is nothing in principle to stop Britain becoming a new Poland or a new Hungary. What stops that threat is when people make use of their rights – whether that be jurors standing up against political prosecutions, or ordinary citizens taking to the street.”

Brendan Montague is editor of The Ecologist.
Unionise for climate justice

Workplace organising is an essential form of environmental activism, writes Eve Livingston

As the climate crisis continues to escalate and governments show few signs of responding with the urgency or at the scale required, trade unions at both national and branch level have a key role to play in environmental nonviolent activism. Whether through holding companies to account, supporting wider activism and campaigning, or providing a space for political education and discussion, they can utilise their existing power in pursuit of environmental aims. And by clearly illustrating the interconnectedness of the climate cause and that of workers’ rights and conditions, they can build further power behind both.

The climate crisis is also a crisis of capitalism. We live in a carbon economy that works to generate profit, with no regard for, and at the direct expense of, people and planet. Economic growth is seen as an unqualified good, despite the environmental sacrifices necessary for it to happen. The scale of structural change required to change the course of climate catastrophe is fundamentally incompatible with the capitalist status quo. But within this system, workers have a unique and potentially powerful role as brokers of the capitalist mode of production: when we mobilise people in this capacity rather than solely as the world’s citizens or victims of climate change, we can unlock a new kind of power.

Despite the clear conflicts between capitalist work and the protection of our planet, almost every worker today will find that their employer has its own climate or environmental commitments. What these look like will vary from employer to employer – net zero targets; divestment of pension funds; a reduction in carbon emissions; a review of supply chains – but recognised union branches can play an important role in holding their employers accountable to them. And by embracing ‘green collective bargaining’, or the integration of climate and environmental issues into union negotiations, unions might even push for far more ambitious and meaningful commitments.

Beyond the workplace, unions can also provide support and strength to climate and environmental campaigners in society at large. Across the country, trade unionists and their branches have backed climate strikers and activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain, both in person at marches, rallies and direct actions, and materially through motions of solidarity and financial donations. Climate justice requires a diversity of tactics and a plethora of activists and campaigners, each focusing their efforts where they can. By organising both within and beyond the workplace, unions and their members can make use of their own existing strength while also building power within the wider environmental movement.

A lesser-celebrated aspect of workplace organising is the role it can play in political education and the politicisation of workers. Union spaces and the relationships they engender can be formative for workers new to the movement, helping them join the dots between their own experiences and a system of capitalist work built to exploit them. By incorporating environmental and climate issues into these conversations and spaces, workplace unions can be sites for the creation of new environmental activists able to articulate the relationship between climate justice and workers’ rights, and the role of capitalism within the climate crisis.

Workers have a unique and potentially powerful role as brokers of the capitalist mode of production

Of course, there are challenges for trade unionists who wish to use workplace organising as a lever in the fight for climate justice. Draconian anti-union laws have steadily restricted the issues about which unions can take industrial action, outlawing, for example, strikes over causes that go beyond narrow and restrictively defined workplace issues. Within the union movement itself, too, there can be resistance: well-unionised workers in polluting industries such as aviation and fossil fuels may feel threatened by action and rhetoric that ultimately seek to abolish their current roles. The labour and environmental movements both have a role to play in persuading these workers, fighting for their futures, and building solidarity.

Ultimately, though, the fights for climate justice and workers’ justice are inextricably linked and serve to reinforce and advance each other. While workers might fight for a four-day week to regain some control over and balance in their lives, it is also a key way in which an employer could reduce its carbon emissions. While a just transition or Green New Deal is central to climate justice, it is also an opportunity to fight for the creation of high-quality and unionised jobs. Climate justice can only be achieved with unprecedented changes to our economic and industrial systems and structures. Workplace organising, then, is an essential form of environmental activism – and one that has the potential to be transformative.

Feeling the heat

As temperatures rise, people in India are finding ways to cool down, reports Vandana K.

Painting by Ramesh Jhawar
www.rameshjhawar.com
Surekha Chaurasia packs disposable cutlery from the tiny one-room home she shares with her family of six in Bhagwati Nagar, an informal settlement in Ahmedabad in the western state of Gujarat in India. Like most homes in India’s low-income neighbourhoods, Chaurasia’s has a cement roof. She would feel the first signs of the suffocating heat when the plastic spoons she had to pack would warm up. “I had low blood pressure, dizziness, itchiness, fatigue, fever and diarrhoea in the summers,” she said. Due to the heat, her family members also fell ill frequently.

Chaurasia’s family has two fans and an air cooler, but they were not enough to cool her home. “It was impossible to eat inside, so we sat outside the house for our meals. The children would sit outdoors all day long and even studied there. During work, I took small breaks to sit under the shade of a tree,” she said.

Like many of the poorest people in South Asia, Chaurasia and her family were suffering from heat stress. Heat stress occurs when the human body heats up excessively, causing dehydration, inability to focus, dizziness and extreme fatigue, among other symptoms. It is a growing concern in India, a country with a hot tropical climate and the monsoon, a wind system that brings heavy rainfall. During the monsoon, high humidity can cause heat stress despite relatively low temperatures.

The year 2021 was the fifth-warmest in India since 1901, according to the India Meteorological Department. India is also prone to heatwaves between March and July, peaking in May. There has been a significant increase in the average number of heatwave days in the country. Not only are the heatwaves becoming more severe, but they are also happening at new locations – north-western, central and south-central parts of the country. Of the 50 cities that are most affected by heat stress around the world, 17 are in India, including Delhi and Kolkata, which are placed second and third in the list.

Moetasim Ashfaq, a scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Tennessee, co-authored a study, published in 2021, which projected that deadly heat stress will become common across South Asia already at 1.5°C of global warming. The study found that demographic factors such as the high density of population in cities and the large number of people who work outdoors in agriculture make South Asian countries more vulnerable to heat stress. “These hot temperatures will be achieved before 2050,” warns Ashfaq. “We don’t have much time for adaptation. There are a lot of people working outside, many of whom are below the poverty line and homeless. The world has to aggressively reduce global mean temperature.”

If heat stress and climate breakdown are burning issues for marginalised groups in India, why are people not more angry about it? When Disha Ravi, a climate activist with Fridays For Future India, began talking to domestic workers and labourers near her house in Bangalore, she noticed that often women were the sole breadwinners and also faced abuse at home. “They just have to put food on the table. They can’t afford the privilege of considering heat stress,” she said. “In the general climate agenda, heat stress is relatively low priority. This is because in India, issues related to the environment itself are of low priority. Also, in some parts of India, flooding and air pollution are more of a problem that feel more life-threatening. So people don’t talk about heat stress.”

Yuvan Aves, an ecological activist based in Chennai, thinks it is necessary to develop climate change terminology in regional languages to start the conversation. “It is important to articulate climate change. It’s an amalgamation of experiences and phenomena. There are no words for climate change in regional languages like Tamil. When you know the name of something, you can have a relationship with it,” he said.

“There are no words for climate change in regional languages like Tamil”

At a policy level, the Indian government has taken notice of the increasing heat stress. The first Heat Action Plan was made by the city of Ahmedabad after it experienced a deadly heatwave in 2010. This later led to the creation of a National Heat Action Plan in 2015. In 2021, India also created a National Action Plan on Heat Related Illnesses. Yet the state has initiated no large-scale solutions on the ground.

For now, solutions to heat stress are coming from non-profits and social enterprises. In 2009, Mahila Housing Trust (MHT), a non-profit based in Ahmedabad, started working on cooling solutions for people living in poverty in the city. “We did a baseline survey on energy usage in homes and found out that the residents had very high energy bills. Their homes lacked ventilation and natural light,” said Bhavna Maheriya, programme manager at MHT. MHT also conducted a study that showed how increased indoor temperatures adversely affected the
productivity of women who worked from home, reducing it by 50% during summer afternoons. This meant less income, which further drove them into poverty.

“If we keep spreading awareness, there will be a solution…”

MHT offers a variety of heat-resilient roofing technologies through microloans granted by its credit cooperative. These include solar-reflective paint, which reduces indoor temperature by 4–5 degrees and costs around 25 rupees per square foot. Typically, a 100-square-foot roof requires 8 kilos of paint. Using this product on her home has helped Surekha Chaurasia live with the heat in Bhagwati Nagar. “Now my children are able to study indoors and the family’s health has improved. Even our relatives visit us often because their own homes are too hot,” she said.

So far, MHT has been able to work on the roofs of 17,000 homes in six Indian states – Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh – and the city of Delhi, and has also shared the technical knowledge with organisations in Bangladesh and Nepal. Ashden, a UK-based non-profit that works on climate solutions, recognised MHT in 2021 for its work on cool roofs. However, the pandemic has disrupted the installation of new roofs and led to an increase in the price of some technologies, such as Modroof. “We find that solar-reflective paint is the most effective and its price is still not so high. Its cooling effect lasts for at least two years and it is a very easy-to-implement solution,” said Maheriya.

CBalance, a social enterprise based in Pune, began work on thermal comfort in informal housing in 2021. The organisation partnered with two non-profits – Mashal in Pune, and Hasiru Dala in Bangalore – to visit households in order to understand how people were coping with heat. “We invited residents to attend a participatory design workshop, and, based on the community’s feedback, we modified the designs,” said Vinita Rodrigues, project assistant at CBalance. In October and November 2021, they made 14 installations using six cooling methods – aluminium foil, water-filled PET bottles, wood wool, rooftop gardening and dormer windows, working with local metal fabricators and architectural colleges to implement these ideas.

The current roof-cooling solutions are just the beginning. For adaptation to happen at ground level, there needs to be a collaborative model where governments, corporates, universities, non-profits and communities work together. For instance, MHT’s work has inspired Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to announce that it will provide solar-reflective paint to 15,000 homes in its Heat Action Plan. South Asian countries also have to start planning solutions according to the latest heat-stress projections, keeping in mind the needs of women, children and older, ill and disabled people. Governments also need to create shelters for homeless people.

“I feel anxious about the future. If we keep spreading awareness, there will be a solution and we might find some relief. Nowadays we are planting trees and taking care of them,” said Chaurasia, who now works as a community leader with MHT and speaks to women in the community about cooling their homes.

Vandana K is an independent journalist based in Delhi, India.
“It has never been ... more important for humanity to anticipate the consequences of our continued reliance on phenomena such as fossil fuels and unsustainable manufacturing processes... Can we now rise to this epoch-defining challenge and safeguard the planet for the sake of our descendants?”

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
For a long time, my life has been discoloured by disordered eating. Many people involved with climate activism, especially young people, have reported an amelioration in their mental health struggles after joining the climate movement. I would like to be able to report that the simple act of becoming a climate activist made everything better. In reality, however, this was far from the case. Climate activism is not a cure for any climate-exacerbated mental health issues – the only cure for climate-related mental health issues is for our governments to listen to the science, and act on the climate and ecological emergency. However, what began to happen as I became more involved in the fight for climate justice was that, everywhere I looked, I was being forced to acknowledge my own hypocrisy. How could I expend so much energy demanding that the government listen to the science while my own actions paralleled theirs, albeit on a much more personal scale?

Slowly, I started to see my own warped sense of reality mimicked in the way that our governments were ignoring the climate crisis. It was almost surreal; my own compensatory behaviours were being reflected back at me on a global scale.

Climate accounting was no different to the way that I would twist my calorie intake to pretend that I wasn’t sick. I would joke about loving food in front of people to reassure them, in the same way that companies greenwash to shield themselves from their massive ecological impact. As I watched handfuls of my hair snake down the plughole in the shower, I would pretend that it was just the stress of university – while at the same time, governments everywhere refuse to acknowledge the environmental destruction that their policies condone.

When my lips became so dry that I couldn’t smile without them cracking open and bleeding, when I shiver against my hot-water bottle in bed at night, when I dreaded standing up because I knew that my whole world would slide away into nauseating darkness, I would remind myself of the goal: thinness. I was taking everything from my body and giving it nothing in return, because my health did not matter an iota to me. Even when I was diagnosed in 2018, very little changed; becoming thinner and thinner remained more important to me than anything else. Our governments are treating our planet the same way. Their refusal to act on the science is a symptom of being blinded by an impossible goal; becoming richer and richer is more important to our governments than anything else.

Sometimes, it takes a sick mind to recognise a sick system.

I am under no illusion now that I was killing myself. This terrifies me, because I can see the impact that the same reasoning, from our governments, is having on the planet. However, I do have hope. I realised that I had to change, that my behaviour was unsustainable. I had to let go of the thing that was most important to me – losing weight. This was a wrench. It was difficult and scary and uncertain. I was losing my control, my way of life, throughout most of my youth, and I did not know what sort of world I would be facing when I recalibrated my priorities. However, because I finally accepted reality, I will, I hope, be alive and healthy in twenty years. I chose to live, rather than to simply exist.

We know that the endless economic growth of a fossil fuel economy is not compatible with survival of life as we understand it. We know that we must seriously lower our emissions in order to achieve the 1.5-degree limit of warming set out in the Paris Agreement, and we know that we need to act now in order to stand a chance. We have all the facts that we need. We now need the political will to change the system.

To our politicians, our leaders, I say this: change is scary. A total recalibration of our aims and motivations seems unnerving and impossible in equal measures. Regardless of how it may feel, you must realise that, sometimes, we have to be brave. We have to take that first step. Now, right now, we need you to take it for us. You have to listen to the science. You have to realise that no amount of money is worth the destruction of the planet. You have to realise that monetary wealth can no longer be the primary measure of worth.

You have to choose to let the planet live.

Helen is a British student studying history in Glasgow, Scotland, and is an activist with Scottish Youth Climate Strike and the #SaveCongoRainforest campaign. This is an edited extract from Tomorrow Is Too Late: An International Youth Manifesto for Climate Justice, edited by Grace Maddrell (The Indigo Press, 2021).
Yellow Brick Road, reduction linocut print by Nancy Murgatroyd

www.nancymurgatroyd.co.uk
The call of frogs, the buzz of dragonflies and the sound of water are like music during the monsoon in the Myristica swamps. The trees, with their network of knobbly roots and damp soil, are like magical works of art that have been carefully preserved since the Jurassic age. The swamps are ancient and alive, thriving with a rich biodiversity of organisms. Butterflies pollinate the fruits, and the hornbill helps disperse seeds to faraway places. The swamps are not just biodiversity hotspots: they are also important carbon sinks, a feature that could help them in the face of increased habitat destruction.

Once widespread across India’s Konkan coast, these tropical freshwater swamps are now a fast-shrinking, patchy and endangered ecosystem. They are found in slow-moving watercourses in the forests of the Western Ghats, a mountain range stretching 1,600km from north Mumbai to the tip of southern India. Once covered with dense forest, this area contains a large part of the country’s plant species and many endemic animal species, but growth of populations around protected areas and other forests has led to habitat destruction, increased fragmentation, wildlife poaching and human–wildlife conflict.

Saving the Myristica swamps

One of India’s biodiversity hotspots is under threat, but there is hope, reports Kavitha Yarlagadda
Amid the variety of life in the swamps are 24 species of dancing frog, so called because the male frogs stretch out their long hind legs to expose their slender white webbed toes to attract mates. The area is also home to 227 species of reptile and one of the most primitive families of flowering plants, the Myristicaceae, which thrive in waterlogged conditions. The aerial roots of these trees are of two types: knee roots, which pop out from the ground and aid in the exchange of gases, and stilt roots, which grow from the main trunk and support the tree in the unstable soil.

“Myristica trees act as sponges and retain water,” says T.V. Ramachandra, a senior scientist at the Centre for Ecological Studies. The seeds are also used as spices and have medicinal value. In addition to their benefit of nurturing biodiversity, these ancient ecosystems have been “silently helping the globe in the removal of carbon” amid the backdrop of global warming, Ramachandra writes. The ground below wetlands consists of large volumes of peat.

The area is also home to 227 species of reptile and one of the most primitive families of flowering plants

Ecological Studies. The seeds are also used as spices and have medicinal value. In addition to their benefit of nurturing biodiversity, these ancient ecosystems have been “silently helping the globe in the removal of carbon” amid the backdrop of global warming, Ramachandra writes. The ground below wetlands consists of large volumes of peat.
which keep considerable amounts of carbon locked in. If these areas are threatened and the peat breaks down, the resulting carbon emissions contribute to climate change.

In India, parks, conservation and community reserves and sanctuaries are designated as protected areas, amounting to 5.02% of India’s land area. In these areas human occupation and the exploitation of resources are limited. Most of the swampland falls outside of them and is prone to human exploitation. One solution, because of the swamps’ high capacity for carbon sequestration, could be to offer carbon credits to farmers to guard and protect the watershed vegetation. “Wetlands protect our shorelines from storms and rising sea levels; protecting wetlands can also help pull greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and directly remediate the drivers of global climate crisis,” writes US-based conservationist and biologist Charles van Rees.

The Kathlekan swamps in the Western Ghats are recognised as a heritage site by the Karnataka Forest Department and hence come under the protected area. But the biggest issue that most of the swamps face is encroachment in the form of paddy cultivation and other plantations, as the swampy soil is suitable for cultivation. “Mapping the swamps should be done to identify and earmark these wetlands as protective zones. The fact that new species are being constantly found is a sign of pristine ecosystem,” says Priya Ranganathan, a researcher with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment.

A planting programme is under way to restore the swamps, with over 50,000 saplings planted since 2016. Leading this effort is R. Vasudeva, professor of biology at the College of Forestry in Sirsi. “It is crucial to involve people so that they have a sense of ownership of the conservation of swamps and ensure that they are not disturbed or encroached,” he emphasises. There is hope. People are beginning to realise the important role of swamps, and the urgency of protecting them.

Kavitha Yarlagadda is an independent writer based in Hyderabad, India. She writes on the environment, health, science, technology, culture, food and lifestyle.

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Right: Vine snake feasting on a lizard
Below: A foot flagging frog (Micrixalus kottigeharensis)
Photos © Pradeep Hegde Instagram: @pradeep_hegde
Don’t say that I will depart tomorrow – even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving to be a bud on a Spring branch, to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, to fear and to hope.

The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that is alive.

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Extract from ‘Please Call Me by My True Names’ by Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022)
In the summer of 1999, as a young woman, I set out to southern France towards Plum Village, a community that has grown to become the largest monastery in Europe. It was founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, known as ‘Thay’ by his students (a word that means ‘teacher’ in Vietnamese). My aspiration for the journey was a search for myself, to heal my and my father’s emotional wounds from the war in Vietnam.

As I watched and listened to Thay’s gentle voice, for the first time I felt pride in being Vietnamese. Because sitting in front of the meditation hall was a humble Vietnamese monk surrounded by hundreds of people and families of different races and cultural backgrounds – like sunflowers in the fields of Loubès-Bernac all facing in the same direction. But most of all I felt his compassion and love like rays of sunshine reaching to the refugee girl who was deeply buried inside me. His words echoed in my ears – that I can help my father’s suffering by taking care of mine. I knew I was at ‘home’, to reconnect, to look after my inner child by returning to myself with each breath and step to touch the seeds of joy from my ancestors, and from my father in the present moment.

Life for me is like a raft on the river, and Thay’s beautiful, insightful yet simple words in the Five Mindfulness Trainings (a guide to living a peaceful and compassionate life and to practise with and be supported by the sangha) are my oars, helping me to navigate through the water’s rapids, twists and turns. His poems and songs are my constant reminder to stop and float on its gentle flow, to look up at the passing blue sky, listen to the running streams, smell the sea breeze, and fully embrace Nature’s beauty. These are enough to make me happy.

Thay said, “If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating on this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there is no rain; without the rain, the tree cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist... So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are.”

Realising and touching the universal truth of what he meant by ‘interbeing’, our interdependence with all of life and Nature, had expanded my heart space, blossoming beyond compassion to self, to an openness for healing.
others and the Earth.

Thay’s love for Mother Earth so deeply resonates in his teachings and writings. My family recites this one before meals – The Five Contemplations:

This food is a gift of the Earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work.

May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude to be worthy to receive this food.

May we recognise and transform unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed, and learn to eat with moderation.

May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that reduces the suffering of living beings, stops contributing to climate change, and heals and preserves our precious planet.

We accept this food so that we may nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, build our sangha, and nourish our ideal of serving all living beings.

Thay’s passing had signified a personal transition for me. His ray of sunshine had turned into a flame to light my candle so that he and I can continue to brighten my path and to those around me and beyond.

And looking back at the trail I have made in this life, I see at a far distance an unsteady set of solitary footprints had gradually become firm and joined with many footprints of others. Side by side with my sangha, I’m taking each step with Thay, each step touching Mother Earth, each step responding to our precious world with compassion and love.

Phuong Quach is an occupational therapist living in London with her family. They practise together with Family Sangha. The UK sangha is currently working to establish Being Peace, a Plum Village practice centre in the UK. For more information please visit plumvillage.uk/beingpeace

I felt his compassion and love like rays of sunshine reaching to the refugee girl who was deeply buried inside me

Dreamer by Mariann Johansen-Ellis www.mariannjohansen-ellis.com
Making space for compassionate health care

Charlie Jones and Dan Warrender
explore how caregivers can move from anxiety to empathy

As you’re reading this, we’ll have come through another winter that, at the time of writing, feels anxiety-provoking and daunting. Demands on the UK health and social care system are higher than ever as we face whatever the latest evolution of Covid-19 brings (with Omicron the latest variant). Our energy and resources are severely depleted, and there is understandably high public expectation to get through the backlog of waiting lists. But let’s not pretend everyone wasn’t stretched before. This is a continuation of huge pressure, exhaustion, frustration and moral distress. Of course, there are inspiring stories too. What we see is people trying to do their best, stretched far beyond their limits.

Stepping back from the crisis, we hear conversations happening along the lines of “We can’t carry on like this” and “We need to do things differently.” In this feature, we’d like to share some thoughts on how healthcare services could be different.

We wonder who you are, reading this. Perhaps you are in a caring role (as a ‘health professional’ or perhaps an informal or unpaid carer), or maybe you are in receipt of care (as a ‘patient’, for example), or maybe both. We are all people, first and foremost. We invite you to notice and become aware of your reactions as you read this – your thoughts, and what comes up for you.

To start with, we encourage you to engage with an abstract exercise. Hear the following sentences in the voice of David Attenborough. Imagine him peering from a cupboard in a healthcare working environment, studying staff behaviour. What does he hear, and see?

“Here, these people are working in incredibly difficult circumstances, facing daily decisions that may link to life-and-death outcomes. As a result, they routinely experience...”

Paintings by James Gouldthorpe
anxiety and, to survive, they have developed strategies, which come in the form of ‘professional’ practices and procedures. These behaviours seem to form the basis for giving care, but are in fact defensive and self-serving.”

Of course, we are being provocative here. And also, we wish to invite you to consider some of the aspects of our behaviour that might be beneath our conscious awareness. Perhaps this might be the next season of *Planet Earth* – an uncomfortable mirror, reflecting back some of our habits and unexamined ways of doing things.

We believe that reconnecting with our humanity is not so much about a wagging finger of ‘must do better’, but more of a gentle reminder that, as people, we are necessarily imperfect, and vulnerable: we want to care, and we experience anxiety and pain. We want to feel safe, and it’s important to reflect and think carefully about the spectrum of our humanity. People trying to help people.

There is a necessary emotional cost to caring. Caring relieves pain and suffering when the person being cared for (the ‘patient’) can see an impact on the carer (the ‘health professional’) – it’s this connection that enables comfort. Empathy, a necessary ingredient of good care, has been described as getting into the water with someone without drowning. Whilst caring may not always involve experiences so overwhelming, that there will be no cost at all is as likely as walking through water without getting wet.

Compassionate care is what gives ‘professionals’ a sense of meaning, joy and satisfaction, and is, we believe, what ‘patients’ want. However, compassionate care can create anxiety and pain in the caregiver – this is a natural, realistic part of caring. So the challenge is, how do we respond constructively to this anxiety and pain?

There are helpful and unhelpful responses.

Our sense is that we have created a broad culture aimed at streamlining healthcare delivery that seems to reward and encourage unhelpful, formulaic ways of responding to anxiety, and we’d like to suggest some ways that could help us nudge towards more helpful ways of responding.

**What do we mean by ‘unhelpful responses’?**

At times people adopt practices and ways of working to avoid, numb, or get rid of the anxiety that arises naturally in the dynamic of caring. We believe that
an unhelpful response is anything that contributes to ‘unthinking’, and this happens at both individual and institutional levels. It’s nearly 70 years since Isabel Menzies Lyth wrote about how organisations such as hospitals develop various ways to defend against the anxiety arising from caring and coming close to people in very vulnerable states. These ‘defences’ are perhaps not consciously designed to address anxiety, but rather they function to protect healthcare workers. Importantly, these defences create suboptimal conditions both for patient care and for workers to develop more healthy, more mature ways of responding.

What do defences look like?
Defences can come in various forms, such as aspects of the mechanical processes we use, such as having detailed protocols for everything (so that we don’t have to think); the detachment of ‘being professional’; constant busyness, and constant change; and labelling people with dehumanising terms. Clinical processes can encourage a focus on discrete tasks, and perhaps labelling people by their clinical condition, which can be managed through performing standardised protocols and rituals. These practices potentially make it more difficult to build up a holistic relationship with an individual person, and they also help to avoid the experience of strong feelings.

How do ‘unhelpful’ approaches get reinforced?
When we are aware of strong feelings in a colleague, we might pathologise and individualise. We interpret any expressions of anxiety as that individual colleague’s ‘problem’ – something that can be quickly and tidily swept away in offers of counselling, or wellbeing toolkit solutions, cleansing the rest of the environment. Our take is that this approach seeks to improve healthcare experiences by introducing yet more mechanistic solutions, rather than taking the time and care to make sense of our defences. And ironically, these further ‘solutions’ simply add yet more layers to our defences.

What does a ‘helpful’ response look like?
We believe it is far more helpful to notice the anxiety, name it, and feel free and safe to talk about it within a supportive relationship or context. It’s not about judging it as ‘bad’ or getting rid of it. We might call this ‘sitting with’ or ‘containing’ the anxiety.

This could be in more formalised support spaces like clinical supervision or various forms of reflective or listening spaces, or it could be more informal, just the day-to-day relational fabric of our work – team check-ins, having breaks with colleagues where just through our daily chatter we can express “Woah, I’ve had a really tough morning” and then feel not only heard, but really listened to. It could be anything that contributes to thinking about what we’re doing and why, how it might affect us, and how that in turn might influence the way we work.

How could we develop our capacity to respond in this helpful way?
Imagine if we could occasionally step back and take a curious observer position – discover our inner Attenborough, and share what we observe if we wish to. Our sense is that supportive relationships can enable each of us to feel a sense of safety to think out loud, to explore our clinical experiences in a way where we can be confident there will be no judgement or criticism. Also, we feel that supportive relationships can hold some challenge, some edge – being alongside, while also appreciating difference as a way of keeping thinking fresh and open.

Doing the best job we can, we would argue, is not about avoiding our anxiety, but acknowledging it, talking about it, understanding it and learning from it.

Human relationships are best balanced between support and challenge, with support meeting our human needs, and challenge pushing us to admit that we are human, imperfect and capable of being wrong, and thus increasing our ability to think and grow. Both support and challenge need to be approached with empathy, and when done well may allow us to have difficult conversations and embrace critical thinking without descending into antagonism.

While many of us nod our heads at the idea of these more helpful responses, they are in fact very difficult to enact. It takes a big effort and commitment to move into a more helpful way of responding. This seems even more difficult in the current pandemic context of everyone being exhausted on multiple levels. Individuals cannot ‘just do’ this – it needs to be made easy to do these things at an organisational level. When we are exhausted, and where there are so many competing demands, it is easier to do something that seems to promise immediate relief, such as finding a generic protocol or toolkit off the shelf, when in fact these things might be more part of the problem. Our sense is that what can be most stressful is navigating the convoluted processes that we have put in place. Paradoxically, the processes put in place to block out anxiety can in fact cause more anxiety.

And what about power and hierarchy?
We talk about compassionate health care, person-centred care, shared decision-making, and collaborative care, and yet we also identify ‘patients’ and ‘professionals’, creating the potential for tricky power dynamics, and a dominant narrative that is often owned and led by the professionals. Hierarchy exists too amongst
healthcare professionals, with power and status being defined through different bandings and pay scales. We talk about working in a multidisciplinary way, yet we don’t typically talk about hierarchy. Power is all around us and can get in the way of honest conversations – who speaks first? How are decisions made? None of this is intrinsically bad, but our sense is that it is useful to bring some of these power and relational dynamics into our conversations. As a reflective exercise right now, you might consider your own working conditions, and ask, “Are there things I would do differently if I could?” If the answer is yes, what are the powers preventing you from doing so?

It might seem so obvious that it doesn’t need saying, and yet it might be so obvious that it is often forgotten: the ‘us and them’ of professional and patient are socially constructed, and, as psychiatrist Irvin Yalom suggests, we may each be better described as ‘fellow travellers’.

Embracing our humanity
We know really that vulnerability, pain and ultimately death are part of our shared human experience. Perhaps we have overplayed and industrialised the role of ‘health care’ and the machinery of health care. Perhaps we have lost our connection to our common humanity.

There is no anxiety-free way to care for another person. Our aspiration is to embrace the anxiety and know that support is available. The problem is that when we feel anxiety we often then see ourselves as imposters, and not good enough. However, as Neil Gaiman puts it, “Maybe there weren’t any grown-ups, only people who had worked hard and also got lucky and were slightly out of their depth, all of us doing the best job we could, which is all we can really hope for.” Doing the best job we can, we would argue, is not about avoiding our anxiety, but acknowledging it, talking about it, understanding it and learning from it.

To embrace our humanity is to embrace our imperfections and vulnerabilities. We are wondrously dynamic, caring creatures. Uncertainty and anxiety are intrinsic to health care, and instead of creating multiple layers of problematic defences against this, we need to weave helpful ways of facing and containing this anxiety – space for honest exploration of some of the complexities; space where we can admit we’re scared, we don’t have all the answers, but we’re trying to do our best, and let’s ask how we can help each other out.

Charlie Jones is a clinical psychologist at North Bristol NHS Trust. Dan Warrender is lecturer in Mental Health Nursing at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.
Prayer for Peace

At this time of conflict and strife in Ukraine, we urge everyone to use their soul power and pray for peace in Ukraine and around the world. May the two sides engaged in conflict recover their wisdom and find common ground upon which the house of peace can be built. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” is as much a political imperative as it is a spiritual principle. I launched the Prayer for Peace with Mother Teresa in 1981. This prayer is secular and non-denominational and could be said by the people of any religious faith or none. Please say the prayer at noon wherever you are:

Lead me from death to life,
From falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope,
From fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love,
From war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts,
Our world, our universe.

Satish Kumar is editor emeritus of Resurgence & Ecologist.
Resurgence magazine was born in 1966, when the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Committee of 100 were deeply engaged in nonviolent protests against the nuclear arms race. Bertrand Russell and hundreds of other peace activists were imprisoned because of their resistance to the bomb. The founding editor of Resurgence, John Papworth, was an integral part of the resistance movement at that time. War Resisters’ International, together with the newspaper Peace News, was at the forefront of nonviolent direct action to stop the cold war, symbolized by the bomb.

I was 25 years old when I read that 90-year-old Russell had been put in prison for protesting against the bomb. I was so inspired by his courageous action that I set off from India on foot with my friend E.P. Menon, without a penny in our pockets but the courage of conviction and trust in our hearts, to go to the four nuclear capitals of the world, Moscow, Paris, London and Washington, to protest and resist the arms race.

The US counterpart to the European movement against war was the struggle against racism, which also resulted in the imprisonment of large numbers of activists. Martin Luther King himself was imprisoned 29 times for refusing to obey the system of racial discrimination. My friend and I were honoured to meet this radical champion of nonviolent resistance. King was an embodiment of love and radical action. He said to us: “People want me to pursue gradual change, but justice delayed is justice denied.”

At the time when King was engaged in nonviolent resistance he was called a criminal, but now he is a national hero and his image sits in the Oval Office of the White House.

Nelson Mandela suffered in prison for 27 years and eventually became president of South Africa. I was so moved by Mandela’s imprisonment that I joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement and stood in front of South Africa House on cold wintry mornings with my friend Canon Collins.

All these heroes of nonviolent resistance willingly accepted the consequences of their actions. They were prepared to suffer for the cause. Mahatma Gandhi even said, “I will go to prison as a bridegroom goes to the wedding chamber.” Gandhi spent 12 years behind bars in India.

Emmeline Pankhurst and the suffragette movement were part of the noble tradition of nonviolent resistance that states that noble ends must be achieved by noble means. This is why nonviolent activists are prepared to take suffering upon themselves rather than inflict suffering on their opponents. This ideal continues to inspire people in our own time. The struggle against the arms race, against racism and against climate catastrophe is a continuum. Greenpeace has been setting shining examples of nonviolent direct action. Extinction Rebellion has attracted people of all ages to readily volunteer to be arrested, as they are prepared to suffer for the sake of our precious planet Earth. Greta Thunberg sat in the street in Stockholm suffering ridicule and laughter in order to remind us of the stupidity of industrial civilisation. Vandana Shiva and Jane Goodall are activist heroes who have been engaged in the lifelong struggle to restore regenerative culture and agriculture.

The story of nonviolent resistance is long as well as inspiring, exhilarating and energising. To make life sacred, we, the nonviolent activists, make sacrifices, but we do it with pleasure and with love. Resurgence has celebrated such activism for the past 56 years. May it continue to do so in the next 56 years.

Satish Kumar’s book Pilgrimage for Peace tells the story of his 8,000-mile walk in vivid detail. To purchase a copy, visit: shop.resurgence.org/books
“Chipko of the farmers”

Yasmin Dahnoun speaks with Vandana Shiva about India’s long legacy of peaceful protest

It has been nearly 60 years since a group of women farmers in the Himalaya, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, hugged trees to protect them from the chainsaws of government-backed logging. Known as the Chipko movement, they sparked similar protests across the country, eventually leading to a ban on commercial felling. Today their legacy lives on, as seen in the recent farmers’ protests that resulted in the repeal of three controversial bills. (See Agriculture at a Crossroads, Issue 327.) Thousands of farmers marched peacefully, many on foot, from Punjab and its neighbouring states to Delhi in a year of mass protests. I spoke with ecofeminist and food rights advocate Vandana Shiva about how Chipko influenced the farmers’ protests and continues to inspire small farmers across the world.

**Yasmin Dahnoun:** Chipko means to ‘hug’ or ‘hold’ in Hindi, since tree hugging was a big part of the movement. Would you say this kind of peaceful protest was inspired by Gandhi’s principles of satyagraha (nonviolence)?

**Vandana Shiva:** Yes! Many of Gandhi’s immediate disciples moved to India to work with him in the freedom movement. The ideas of direct civil action are very much inspired by Gandhian ideas, and women absorbed this, particularly because they relied so intimately on the forest. The beauty of Gandhi’s teaching is that it’s wide enough to be adapted to any situation. For example, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) went to Seattle in 1999 for the international forum on globalisation, we had months of civil disobedience and direct action – there were organised young people on the streets with their arms connected through pipes, blocking the roads. I stopped and I asked them, “How did you think of that?” They smiled at me and said, “Gandhi.”

**YD:** The Chipko movement was incredibly successful in many ways. In the 1980s, prime minister Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi imposed a 15-year ban on felling in the Himalaya. But was this ban truly implemented on the ground?

**VS:** On the logging issue, yes. Forest policy shifted from being an extractive policy to being a conservation policy. It was recognised that the forests of the Himalaya are primarily systems of water and conservation. But now the biggest cause of deforestation in India is due to the madness of dam building and our global addiction of highways to nowhere.

**YD:** In recent protests, hundreds of thousands of farmers in convoys of tractors, horses and on foot marched across India. After a year of peaceful protest, prime minister Narendra Modi repealed the three controversial laws around farming, which had loosened rules protecting farmers from the free market and threatened to destroy their livelihoods. What made the movement so successful?

**VS:** First, they united across gender, class and religion. Secondly, they were doing a Chipko of Mother Earth. In a way, the Indian farmers are the ultimate statement of what taking care of the Earth means, and the dignity and freedom that it involves. Thirdly, their message is strong. They are saying, “We will not be violent. We are small farmers who feed India by working with Mother Earth,” and, most importantly, “We will be the defenders of this landscape.”

**YD:** The protesters were met with police batons, teargas, water cannons and concrete barricades, yet they continued to march towards Delhi. What influenced their tactics to remain peaceful?

**VS:** They remained peaceful because they know about our past freedom movements, they know that violence incites more violence, and that the rulers will always have more guns than they could ever accumulate. And...
Chipko Tree Huggers of the Himalayas #75 1994
© Pamela Singh, courtesy of the artist & sepiaEYE, NYC
“The movement is driven from love for the Earth and dignity and pride in their vocation of farming”

even though there were attempts to fabricate violence on behalf of the farmers, those were exposed. Over these many years, the reason farmers have stayed nonviolent is that the movement is driven from love for the Earth and dignity and pride in their vocation of farming. I call it the Chipko of the farmers.

YD: How do these protests reflect the wider degradation of small farmers’ rights around the world?

VS: The laws that Modi tried to implement were laws that had been shaped by The World Bank in 1991. Most people forget there is an international structure of exploitation, built post war to prevent freedom from becoming true freedom. These are instruments of colonisation, and recolonisation. The International Monetary Fund, The World Bank and the WTO try to deregulate the market and corporatise farming – and democracy always throws them out. And these same forces that are trying to destroy the small farmers of India are the same forces destroying farmers in England, Africa and America.

YD: In what way can activists come together to protect the rights of Nature as a united cause?

VS: The environmental movement for too long has focused on single issues. Western environmentalism is still caught up in the idea that we are separate from Nature. We are alive because Nature gives us life. You cannot disconnect the issue of the soil, or water, or biodiversity. So first of all we need to look at the brainwashing and expose it. Secondly, we need to be alert to how our governments are being hijacked and how our policies are being shifted towards corporate dominance. Thirdly, we need to reclaim our food sovereignty. The single biggest revolution is to eat in ways that protect and regenerate real soil, real seed, and then you are eat the gifts of the Earth and support the hard work and labour of real farmers.

Vandana Shiva would like to dedicate this interview to her dear friend and founder of The Ecologist, Teddy Goldsmith.

Yasmin Dahnoun is a member of the editorial team at The Ecologist.
As I was being led away in handcuffs from the ancient stone underbelly of London’s Royal Courts of Justice, the judge’s words rang in my ears: “You have broken the social contract... you have caused economic harm.” Despite 66 days of sitting peacefully on motorways with Insulate Britain, nine arrests and now being escorted by security van to prison, I wasn’t ready to stop my protest. With 8,500 people dying annually in the UK from cold, damp homes, plus UK government failure at COP26 to avert two degrees of warming, I felt resolutely that my demand was justified and it would take more than incarceration to silence me.

I hadn’t prepared. Anxiety had enabled me to skip breakfast that morning. Hunger strike had been a looming possibility, but as I gazed steadfastly out of the small square window of the van it hit me as a necessary reality. Refusal of the government to even acknowledge our legitimate protest increased the determination in my heart. The words of David King, former chief scientific adviser to the UK government, “What we do over the next three to four years, I believe, is going to determine the fate of humanity,” echoing in my mind. At that moment, my window view of Knightsbridge a drive-by of consumerism, I made an enraged yet composed decision to stop eating.

On day 7 my refusal of food began to register with prison authorities. On day 10 I was hastily transferred to a healthcare wing. On day 16 my MP wrote a letter and requested a visit. Practically, I strictly measured fluids and meticulously noted medical observations, vital signs, sleep and thoughts. Mentally, I found focus and control in a situation orchestrated to silence and stifle my freedom to protest. Physically, my limbs were narrowing, my skin flaking, and my head dizzy if I exerted more than a slow walk along the corridor. Emotionally, I felt a solemn empathy with those who have no choice in their starvation.

I felt pangs of guilt for desperate political prisoners worldwide with no release date. I endured a profound glimpse of and deep humility for resisters throughout history. I experienced an overwhelming sense of privilege and responsibility to use every opportunity available to me to scream climate and social injustice from the confines of my cell isolation.

My method of protest was extreme, but these are extreme times

I stopped eating for 26 days, one day for every failed COP meeting since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed. My blood sugar fell to 3.1 millimoles per litre. Doctors warned that if it dropped below 3.0 I could slip into a hypoglycaemic coma. I lost 12kg in weight.

My method of protest was extreme, but these are extreme times. A criminal clampdown on nonviolent protest combined with the radical love and intense urgency of climate activists will inevitably only increase the lengths peaceful demonstrators will go to – lengths of sentence and sacrifice.

From glueing myself to tarmac, through custody and court-room, to prison cell and starvation, I know this is how I must now use my body in nonviolent civil resistance for survival of our life systems.

Emma Smart is a former ecologist who has dedicated the last three years to direct action for the climate and ecological crisis.
A dancer in a black tutu emblazoned with the yellow and green burning sun of BP’s logo poses with her arms stretched above her head. At her feet, bodies in colourful waterproofs and eye masks saying ‘Earth’ lie collapsed on the cold grey pavement of a Glasgow street. They sing “Extinction” softly and in tight harmony. A banner attached to the advertising board outside the theatre presents the message in the starkest terms: ‘GET OIL OUT OF THE ARTS’. In the finale, the dancer is gradually persuaded to remove the BP logo, to much celebration from the choir.

The performance was part of a musical protest outside the Theatre Royal by BP or not BP? and Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir in the final days of COP26. A few months later, life imitated art as the Scottish Ballet announced in February that it was cutting ties with its oil sponsor. The news came on the same day that the National Portrait Gallery in London was also ending its partnership with BP. (See The Ecologist news on page 6.) The news was hailed as a “major win” for the campaign group BP or not BP? “One by one cultural organisations are finally making the right ethical decisions,” Zoe Lafferty, a member of the group, said.

The creative tactics wielded by BP or not BP? are epic – not least an action in 2019 that involved the construction of a giant Trojan horse, which they smuggled into the British Museum to protest a BP-sponsored exhibition about the ancient city of Troy. In an interview shortly before the event, co-founder Jess Worth told Resurgence & Ecologist that the group’s use of humour was a powerful tool “to cut through the PR spin”, as long as the jokes are not disrespectful or flippant. (See An Epic Protest, Issue 319.) This taps into what Naomi Klein says in her book No Logo: “Something not far from the surface of the public psyche is delighted to see the icons of corporate power subverted and mocked.”

Cutting through the spin is no easy task within capitalist societies, where it is difficult to escape the coercions of consumerism, the language of advertising permeating and directing so much of our lives. In the words of critical theorist Herbert Marcuse (in his book One-Dimensional Man, published in 1964): “The people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home,
Care to dance

Dressed in her BP-logo tutu, Francesca Willow spoke to Resurgence & Ecologist outside the Theatre Royal

I’m not the only one in the dance sector who is environmentally minded, and groups like BP or not BP? and Liberate Tate have been working on removing oil and gas and fossil fuel institutions one by one. I think dance hasn’t been so much of that conversation. It’s been the Scottish Ballet and the Royal Ballet, the big companies, but I know that the rest of us who make up this sector – teachers, performers – this is something we all really care about because we can’t have any dance on a dead planet. It’s time for this sector to become more involved in the conversation.

The important thing about actions like this is that they are always focused at management and boards of directors who are making these choices. They are never focused on the workers. That could be said for a lot of environmental actions, because you’ve got to have solidarity with normal working-class folks, and the arts sector in general across the board has been really squeezed, and wages aren’t necessarily always good and the jobs are scarce. A permanent contract is hard to come by – a lot of dancers are employed on a freelance basis. It’s very unstable, especially during Covid. From what we know, it’s not exactly clear how much BP sponsors the Scottish Ballet, but we know it’s something really small, so those companies could exist without that sponsorship. As we’ve seen with the Edinburgh Festival, the Tate, the RSC and the National Theatre, all of which have ended partnerships with fossil fuel institutions, we’ve seen that this can be done.

Francesca Willow is a freelance dancer and activist. @ethicalunicorn

“The people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment”

kitchen equipment.” But the use of art and humour can be a very powerful counterforce to this. In a form of protest known as ‘culture jamming’, groups as diverse as the Vancouver-based magazine Adbusters, Russia’s Pussy Riot, Banksy in the UK, and international artist collective Brandalism work to subvert the messages of consumerist society through tweaking the wording on billboards and through street art and music.

If culture jamming is anything, writes Mark Dery in the Foreword to *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, it is “the dream of reclaiming our sense of ourselves as citizens in a culture that insists on reducing us to consumers – wallets with mouths, in advertising parlance”. The term can be defined as negative, as in the blocking of commercial messages, or it
can be likened to a musical jam session, an experiment in cultural forms, and becomes something more creative and constructive, “seeking artfully to invent new visions of the future”, according to Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink in their introduction to the same book.

Reverend Billy and The Church of Stop Shopping see their role as illuminators in helping people to reclaim a sense of themselves. They have been doing this for over 20 years, under the direction of Savitri D, through Billy Talen’s sermons and the passionate performance of the choir. As part of their actions against Bayer/Monsanto, they filled a hearing by the Environmental Protection Agency with gospel-style music, singing “Monsanto is the devil, no glyphosates,” and they marched into a glyphosate chemical plant. They have ‘exorcised’ a Starbucks and danced through the streets of New York City with Mickey Mouse on a cross. “A lot of our work is just making things visible. Running with a giant neon arrow and pointing at something, that’s a vanguard position. It’s here, the crisis is right here,” Savitri D told *Resurgence & Ecologist*.

While the work of groups like BP or not BP? focuses a lot on press coverage and social media to disrupt the one-way flow of corporate messaging, Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir have a different goal. “Our mission is to introduce wildness into public space and open up public space into a different kind of behaviour,” Savitri D says. This can be seen in the way they interact with people in the street, singing and dancing. Many bystanders turn and watch: some look shocked or turn away, some laugh, and others even join in. “The street is a charged space because there are players that you can’t control, pressures that you can’t foresee,” Savitri D says. “The police, casting them in the play, for example. The street has the unknown in it in a very powerful way.”

This ‘wildness’ has to come from inside, Billy continues. “Wildness must come from an invitation to wildness, dancing with wildness, becoming wildness. And let the attacks on wildness, by Bayer/Monsanto for instance, let them be the outsiders and meet them from wildness so you have that strength.”

At a time when it’s all too easy to find yourself sucked into doomscrolling the latest global news, an injection of humour is very welcome. Whether it is through ‘subvertising’ advertisements on billboards and spreading the word on social media, or via flashmobs and creative actions on the street, the jamming of this consumer messaging is a huge relief. It gives us the space to step outside our commodified reality and see it for what it really is. The successes of the campaign against oil sponsorship of the arts show too that it works. Savitri D and Billy Talen take this peaceful protest one step further by inviting us to look away from advertisements and see each other.

Marianne Brown is Editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist*. 

“A lot of our work is just making things visible”
Being the light without burning out

Georgie Gilmore and Flo Scialom offer advice on how to be hopeful in times of crisis

It is understandable to feel a sense of hopelessness at times: we are living in a context of climate emergency, widespread injustice, ineffective political leadership, and corporate excess. However, this is just one side of the story of our world.

The injustices we face have birthed many impactful movements of change, such as Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter. Many of these intersecting movements are now coming together in new and powerful ways. Young voices are also breaking through the noise, such as activist Autumn Peltier, poet Amanda Gorman and many more. “There is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it,” Gorman wrote. In this extraordinary period of history, we are all being called to embody a hope that, at times, is difficult to feel. But as visionaries Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone point out, hope is “something we do rather than have”.

Hope can be nurtured by remembering our interconnectedness: with each other, with Nature and with the sacredness of life itself. This involves moving beyond the story of separation about whether we will ‘win’ or ‘lose’ the ‘fight’. This oversimplified narrative, which we have internalised from our competitive culture, can erode the resilience and hopefulness of protest movements. We can get trapped in combative mode and lose touch with the deep care that initially led us to take action.

At the same time, being hopeful does not mean denying the reality of our times, or the work required to create change. We need to honestly acknowledge the scale of the challenges we face, as well as the historical context and unjust structures through which current crises are unfolding. But it is also vital that we take a stand for what we hope for – a more just and regenerative world – and then take political and practical steps in that direction.

This is not always easy, especially when trying to maintain active engagement over time. When involved in protest movements or resisting the destructive systems of which we are a part, we can at times feel exhausted, burned out and powerless. Yet through acknowledging our interconnectedness we can more clearly see ourselves as part of a wider whole and know that we do not need to solve all the world’s problems on our own.

We are each a piece of the puzzle, and each of us has a unique role to play, says activist Sarah Corbett. If we can engage with actions that inspire us and act out of love and service – rather than a sense of sacrifice or fear – then we are more likely to be able to sustain action towards the future we hope for.

Hope in Action is an ongoing series organised by The Resurgence Trust and the Network of Wellbeing. The next event, ‘Beyond Narratives of Us and Them’, takes place on 17 May. resurgenceevents.org

Georgie Gilmore is Outreach Officer for The Resurgence Trust.
Flo Scialom is Communications and Events Manager at the Network of Wellbeing (NOW).
Living with hope in trying times

Satish Kumar talks with Jane Goodall about her new book

The Omega Institute in New York State gave me the opportunity to have this conversation with Jane Goodall, who is an outstanding champion of ecological sustainability and social harmony. She is a UN Messenger of Peace and a protector of wild chimpanzees.

Satish Kumar: You have written this wonderful book, The Book of Hope. How do you maintain hope? We are surrounded by all these big problems like the pandemic, climate change and poverty. You still maintain this deep hope in your heart. How do you do that?

Jane Goodall: Well, first of all, let me explain what I mean by hope. Hope isn’t something passive. I see us now as in a very dark tunnel, and at the end of this dark tunnel is a little star of light, and that’s hope. Well, we don’t just sit at our end of the tunnel and hope that light will come to us. No. We have to roll up our sleeves and crawl under and climb over all the obstacles between us and that star of light. So hope is about action. If we lose hope, that’s the big disaster. If we lose hope, why bother? Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die! When you have hope, you take action, and you see
that you are making a difference and that makes you feel good, and if you feel good, you want to feel better, so you want to do more, and then other people get inspired, so it’s a, sort of, outward spiral gathering in more people as it goes.

Although we’re surrounded by doom and gloom, there are also so many amazing things happening. Recently, an absolute landmark decision was made in Ecuador, where the Constitutional Court, the highest court of law, upheld the rights of Nature. The court told the government that they had to remove all of their mining concessions from places that were protected. And that’s a big step forward. That gives me hope! If the whole world would respect the rights of Nature, what a different world it would be! Every major culture has the same golden rule: do to others as you would have them do to you. Supposing we all followed that rule, wouldn’t it be a fabulous world?

One of my greatest reasons for hope is the young people, because once they understand the problems, they take action – they just go with it. In our Roots & Shoots programme, they choose projects that they feel deeply about, to help people, to help animals, to help the environment, because it’s all interrelated. Young people are changing the world, they’re changing their parents and they’re changing their grandparents!

Young people as well as people at large need to establish a spiritual connection with the natural world. We need to encourage outdoor education. Schools need to tell young people about climate change and about all the things that humankind is doing that are harmful to Nature.

SK: We need to learn from Nature, learn in Nature and learn about Nature. Nature is the greatest teacher. But what do you mean when you say a spiritual connection with Nature? Generally, we talk about looking after the planet, looking after people, improving environmental conservation and social harmony. Could you expand on this idea of spiritual connection with Nature?

JG: When I am out in Nature, particularly in the rainforest, and when I am on my own in Nature, I feel that I am an integral part of it. I remember being out in the forest one day. There were no chimps around, but there were birds and insects and beautiful foliage. I thought to myself, well, this is the great spiritual power of Nature that I feel all around me, I think there’s a spark of that spiritual power in each one of us, and

“When you have hope, you take action”
because we’re human we like to name everything, so we call it a soul or a spirit, and I thought to myself, a little spark of that spiritual power is in every single plant and every single insect and every single animal. So, if we human beings have souls, then all those other beings also have souls. Nature is alive. I felt the spiritual power of Nature. Being out in Nature gives you this amazing feeling of being one with the universe. That is what I call our spiritual connection with Nature.

**SK:** But we live in the age of the Anthropocene, in a human-made world. People living in cities have little connection with Nature, and whatever Nature they have is all human-made. There is very little wild in the cities. How can people connect with Nature when they are so urbanised?

**JG:** We have to revise and redesign our cities. One way forward is urban tree planting, because when you plant trees you bring Nature into cities. With trees come the birds and the insects. If you go through a big city and if you go through the affluent areas, you will see nice tree-lined streets and there are gorgeous gardens and parks, and then you come to an area where it’s all cement, concrete and grim. That’s where the poor people live. We have to work in those areas and bring Nature there. There was an experiment in Chicago. They took two areas of high crime and they started to green one of them, they planted trees and flowers there. You know, the crime level there dropped dramatically. Then they quickly did it for the other one, where the crime level hadn’t dropped. Again they witnessed profound changes for the better in that area as well. We need to greener our cities. In Japan they have invented this thing called Forest Bathing. City people spend time out in the forest and experience the healing power of Nature. Doctors are prescribing time in Nature, because Nature is therapeutic, Nature heals. So let us bring Nature back to our cities. Nature and culture should surely live together.

**SK:** You have dedicated your life to saving chimpanzees, and there are many other conservationists who are protecting rhinos, tigers and elephants, but we also have to take care of our little species, the insects, the flowers, the birds and many other small creatures who live in jungles as well as in the cities.

**JG:** Yes, because these small creatures are actually the foundation of everything else. One of the tragedies of our time is that with industrial farming we are destroying the biological composition of the soil. By cutting down the trees and killing the soil with artificial fertilisers we are upsetting the natural balance of life. We need to go back to small-scale farming, regenerative farming, permaculture and agro-ecology. That is what we need to do. We know what to do to make the world a better place, but do we have the will to do it?

**SK:** Yes, you and I know, but we are a small minority. If you look at big business and the big corporations that are in charge of industrial farming, that are involved in genetic engineering, that produce heavy machinery, artificial fertilisers and artificial intelligence, they don’t seem to know. Yet they are dominating food production. And governments around the world don’t seem to know either. So how are we going to take this message out there into the world of factory farms and agribusiness? How are we going to convince them that we need to produce food without harming biodiversity and wildlife?

**JG:** Well, let us start with the good news. There are some big corporations out there that are now actually changing. They’re not just greenwashing.

I was talking to the CEO of a big corporation just a few weeks ago and he said, “Jane, for the last eight years I’ve been really working to make my business ethically, environmentally and socially responsible.” He said there were three reasons. “First, I saw the writing on the wall, that we’re using the natural resources faster than Nature can replenish them, and if we go on with business as usual that’s the end. Second, consumer pressure. People are beginning to demand products that are made ethically. Young people and children, too, are telling their parents: I don’t want that, it’s got palm oil from an unsustainable plantation. I don’t want that, it’s got factory-farmed animal in it.” Then he said, “The thing that really tipped the balance for me was about 10 years ago. My little girl came back from school, she was eight years old, and she said: ‘Daddy, they’re telling me that what you do is hurting the planet. That’s not true, is it, Daddy? Because it’s my planet.’”

**SK:** That is good news, but the world at large is still following biologically and ecologically destructive practices, and the European Union is giving subsidies to such big and destructive farms. In America and Australia megafarms of industrial scale are ruling the roost. You and I are talking about family farms and small-scale farms. How are we going to change the big wide world? Are you still hopeful? Time is running out.

**JG:** Well, Satish, if you think of the changes that have happened in the last 10 years, they are significant. If you think of the awareness that has grown, even during the pandemic, that is remarkable. Think of the number of people who now realise that we need a different relationship with Nature, we need a more sustainable, greener economy, we’ve got to stop thinking that the be all and end all is the annual growth of GDP, at the expense of the future. That number is incredibly big, and that is encouraging. Such changes are going to be the catalysts. They give me hope.
The thing that I found doesn’t work is putting blame and guilt on people. If you’re approaching high-ranking officials or CEOs, and you’re telling them that they’re bad people and don’t understand what they’re doing, that they have to change and they must change, that is not a constructive approach. At that point they won’t listen, because they’re thinking, how can I refute it, why should this person tell me that I’m doing everything wrong? But if you can find a way to get in there and open their hearts, then you have a chance to change them, because real change comes from within.

**SK:** I agree. Our activism has to be driven by love—not by anger, not by fear, not by anxiety, not by preaching, but by love.

**JG:** Yes, that’s where the hope is. I always give people the benefit of the doubt. Maybe they’re really ignorant, maybe they haven’t understood. Some businesspeople have been brought up in this tough business environment, in this cut-throat world, and they haven’t really thought about what they’re doing, so to get them to see the light is a big task! You’ve got to have a feeling for people. You’ve got to have love in your heart and try to find a connection with their heart and help them to understand that caring for Nature is in their best interest. Then they’ll feel better and they will change. This is the nonviolent way of transforming the world.

Satish Kumar is the author of *Elegant Simplicity.*


“I think there’s a spark of that spiritual power in each one of us”
Tree time is slow time. Stand by an old tree for a while and watch how your fast, animal body responds. Your breath lengthens, your heart rate drops, your shoulders relax. It seems that the tree is urging you, ever so gently and on the sly, to step into the same slow river in which it exists – a river so glacial that to our restless human eyes it appears rock solid.

The longest-lived of all native British trees is the yew, *Taxus baccata*. There are around 330 ancient yews in the country – that is trees over 1,000 years old. Of these, 60 are more than 2,000 years old and just 10 have crossed the three-millennia mark. One of these lives eight miles from my house in the small village of Ashbrittle on the Somerset/Devon border.

It is surprisingly little known hereabouts, and even in the yew literature it is not much referenced: far more column inches are devoted either to the oldest yew – thought to be the 5,000-year-old yew at Fortingall in Perthshire – or the most historically significant, the Ankerwyke Yew in Berkshire, beneath which (or so it is said) King John signed the Magna Carta in 1215.

Yew time

Anita Roy visits a 3,000-year-old neighbour
The Ashbrittle Yew is thought to be over 3,000 years old – the kind of age that stops you in your tracks. A friend of mine, who lives in the village, agreed to introduce us.

A small weather-beaten sign stands on the village green, pointing “To the church & yew tree”. My friend bids me wait a moment at the gateway to the churchyard. “We’ll ask permission before we go in,” she says. “It’s only polite.” We stand, listening, me a little bemused. A robin sends out a trilling song. The breeze lifts a branch. She nods: we have been given the all-clear.

The Ashbrittle Yew pre-dates the church by at least 2,000 years. Over the centuries, it has hollowed and split, creating a circle of seven trunks, each as massive as a full-grown tree, the whole thing lifted up on a raised dome of earth 12 metres in diameter, as though it has, by sheer, slow force, built its own pedestal to rest upon. Legend has it that the raised tumulus is in fact a Bronze Age or even Neolithic burial mound, or perhaps where the skulls of tribal warriors lay buried by the invading Romans. Red-stained bones found near the base perhaps indicate pagan rituals and rites.

The dense, evergreen crown is pierced with spikes of dead branches, bleached white by the sun, whose skeletal aspect adds to the tree’s other-worldly aura. The spirit of the yew is said to be half-human, half-bird and has been seen – or so they say – around these parts.

Tucked into the fissures and hollows are votive offerings: a small plastic flower, a painted pebble, a screw of paper. Hopes, prayers, blessings. In one place, a small section of bark lies on the ground. Above it, the exposed piece of sapwood glows silvery red, like fresh scar tissue, already healing. I place the bark piece back on the trunk and it fits, neat as a jigsaw piece, like an island on the map of the world.

The yew seems to stand at a crossroads – some see a killer, others a healer, angel or devil. Every part of this tree is poisonous, except the bit that looks like it really should be: the bright red berry-like aril that bears its seed. And yet the very chemical that makes it toxic – Taxin B – is now used to treat cancer.

Engraved on a stone in the shade of its branches are the words “I am the resurrection and the life”, a sentiment that applies as much to the tree itself, with its extraordinary powers of regeneration, as the figure on the cross. Fred Hageneder makes a strong case for Yggdrasil, the tree of life and axis mundi of Norse mythology, being a yew. In Anglo-Saxon, he notes, “Ih” means both ‘I’ (the conscious self) and the yew tree; in Old High German the word for yew, “eo”, also means ‘eternal’ and ‘always’. “Somehow,” he writes, “the yew tree has always reflected eternal consciousness.” Even the name ancient peoples conjured up for God – Yahweh – sounds to my ear like the wind calling the tree by its true name.

To stand by the Ashbrittle Yew, the living deity of this place, is both humbling and mind-expanding. He – it’s a male tree, as you can tell by the flowers – has witnessed human history since the Iron Age. His very existence demands that we open the doors of perception a little wider. I cannot help but think that were time itself – that most abstract of concepts – to clothe itself in physical form, it would take the shape of this yew.

Anita Roy is a writer, editor and environmentalist. Her books include A Year in Kingcombe, Gravepyres School for the Recently Deceased and Gifts of Gravity and Light.
The sound of time

Jason Singh has been using biofeedback devices and analogue synthesisers to create a composition derived entirely from an ancient yew in Devon

When I came to do the recording, I felt that I was in the presence of something older than anything else I have known as a living thing. Part of me wants to be held by it. I want to be in it and disappear into it.

The last time I was recording, I was touching the yew. What I hadn’t realised was that most parts of the tree are highly poisonous and there are toxins released by it that can kill a person. I was touching the yew and I had my biosensors and I was connecting it to parts of the trunk and to the leaves, and I started feeling really nauseated. I had no idea why until I posted something about it on social media and someone said, “Oh, go back there in spring when it’s really toxic.” It lets off a fine white powder from the leaves. So in a way I still don’t really know what my relationship with it is in terms of feeling.

I’ve always had a real connection between the visual world and the sonic world. I’ve always found that in this part of the tree here, if you look into it, it’s almost sonic. I can hear it – that movement and those textures. So being able to use technologies that are picking up and converting those electrical signals from the tree into music enhances that connection between the visual and the sound.

I use technology called MIDI Sprout, which consists of a tiny computer with two little crocodile clip sensors. I attach these to the trunk of the tree, and they measure the electrical signals that are created by the tree when it’s being watered, or photosynthesising, or under attack – things like that. The computer converts that electrical signal voltage into notation that can be recognised by a synthesiser, which then plays it as sound. That’s how I derive the raw compositions from the trees. Sometimes I leave the recordings as they are, and at other times I will arrange, edit or use the compositions as inspiration for new pieces of music.

What I’m trying to get across through these works is that thing of spending time with something and developing a relationship with it. I really want people to listen – not just to have a walk in the park and smell the flowers, but also to listen to their environment in new ways.

‘Ancient Yew’ is part of an ongoing work, Plant As Composer. The recording was made by a tree estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 years old, in the centre of the Dartington Estate, Devon. You can listen to it at tinyurl.com/singh-ancient-yew

Jason Singh is a Nature beatboxer, producer, DJ, facilitator and performer. He is currently artist-in-residence at Dartington Trust. jasonsinghthing.com
As the crickets’ soft autumn hum
is to us
so are we to the trees
as are they
to the rocks and the hills.

Gary Snyder (from Axe Handles, 1983)
The wind is whipping across the North Wessex Downs. A conspiracy of ravens battles the weather, and so does Nicola Chester, author of *On Gallows Down*. She guides me along the Neolithic long barrow on the hill that lends its name to the title of her book. I finished reading her memoir about place, protest and belonging last night, but I’m not prepared for the eerie stillness that surrounds the gallows, or gibbet. This replica, which has been replaced several times over the years, towers over us at four metres high.

This gibbet was only used once. As we walk beneath it, the story from *On Gallows Down* of the adulterous lovers who were sentenced to death for murder plays in my mind. But now it has become a symbol of protest: for starters, it’s been cut down twice in objection to the death penalty.

Chester can see the gibbet from her window. Some mornings, she draws back the curtain and sees a flag or sign hanging from the huge wooden structure. Now a single thread caught on a splinter flutters above us, and she says it’s left from a Pride flag.

“It’s such a powerful meeting point,” she says. “It seems to sort of gather stories to it and be this focus point for protest as well.”

From the top of the hill, we can see across fields belonging to the rural estate, roofs from the village of Inkpen, and, just beyond, Highclere Castle, the setting better known globally as Downton Abbey. We squint into the distance to see Greenham Common, where the peace women set up camp for 19 years in opposition to US nuclear weapons being housed in that very spot.

“I don’t think I realised it at the time, but they were such a galvanising force,” Chester says of the Greenham women. Their camps were destroyed on a daily basis and they were living in squalor. Their endurance, she says, was phenomenal. When they first arrived, she was just 10 years old and living about a mile away from Greenham. She’d see them on her way to school, or as she walked to the riding school at the weekend to look after the horses.

“I very quickly realised that they wanted the same things I wanted,” she remembers. “I wanted the common back. I didn’t want the missiles there. I wanted to free-roam the common again, like I had before.”

The idea of being free to explore the landscape runs through Chester’s book. Since the time of the Greenham women, she’s taken her own journey into activism, inspired by Nature. If there was a mascot in the natural world to reflect her activism, she says, it would be a lapwing. They have the
“That’s when I got angry, and that’s when I put my body in the way”

highest number of alternative names of any bird, and she describes them as bewitching. But they’re in trouble, threatened by the way humans farm.

For Chester, Nature and protest are now inseparable. Her resistance began when the Newbury bypass was being built, cutting right through the countryside that she called home. “That’s when I got angry, and that’s when I put my body in the way,” she says.

In On Gallows Down, Chester relives those early years of protest. She remembers the heathland, Nature reserves, and ancient woodlands that would be destroyed, and the people who made homes in treetops and camps to stop the destruction. She joined them in creating human barriers and tussling with security guards. To her, building this huge stretch of road was unsustainable, and wildlife would be lost in the process. Beyond all that, this was her playground. Her home.

Chester lost this battle, but the fight to defend Nature didn’t end there. “I quickly realised there was no going back. This was the path I was now set on,” she says.

Nature and protest collided in Chester’s life, but so too did a third factor – writing. From a young age, she used words to connect with the natural world, flicking through books to find out the name of a species and discovering more along the way. Writing was a way to take measured time to reflect on the world, celebrate it, and explore it.

For Chester, writing is activism. It could be a well-considered tweet. A newspaper column. A book. “It provokes thought, it provokes conversation,” she says.

Living in a tenanted house on a rural estate, she knows she has to be careful. She doesn’t want to upset her landlord. And yet in her book she addresses issues like management of the farmland, pushing towards creating a better home for Nature, saying things that she thinks need to be said. She is taking a personal risk to get a message across. “Putting it in writing, you’re bearing witness,” she says.

She’s written a column for the local newspaper for around 18 years, detailing the joys of Nature alongside the declines she’s seen in the natural world. That, she says, is a record in itself. She hopes other people will read her words, relate to them, and go on to form their own protests.

Gentle protest has its place, but for Chester it is not enough. As she describes in her book, her role in the Newbury bypass protests was a supportive one. She climbed trees, but she didn’t camp in them. Others went further than she did. “I did what I could, but I drew strength from people who were willing to do more than I was,” she says. And in turn she lent strength to others who wanted to resist, but for whatever reason couldn’t be as involved as she was.

Many years have passed since Chester’s days of climbing trees to protest the bypass, but she has a message for her younger self: “Keep going. You’re not alone, there is a building movement,” she would say. “And you’ve got to have hope. You’ve got to have joy as well. That’s where Nature comes in.”

As we leave Gallows Down, redwings swoop overhead, and Chester looks up in awe. In that moment, it is clear to see why Nature gives us such a powerful urge to resist.

On Gallows Down: Place, Protest and Belonging is published by Chelsea Green.
Katie Dancey-Downs is a freelance journalist who specialises in human rights, Nature and the environment.
Louisa Adjoa-Parker: Can you tell us about your family and background?

Pascale Petit: I was born in Paris and soon afterwards I was taken to live with my grandmother in rural Wales. When I was two and a half I went back to Paris until I was seven. I was in a children’s home some of the time: my parents were very dysfunctional. My background has the dichotomy between the countryside of my early years and the stark urban reality of Paris. In Wales we had a council house with no hot water, but it was a happy place – my grandmother was loving. She was Indian, which was a family secret at the time. I would ask her, “Gran, why do you have a suntan in the winter as well as summer?” She would reply that it was because she was always in the garden.

In contrast, 1950s Paris was a grey place. I was unhappy there. When I was back with my grandmother, she would say, “If you’re naughty you’ll go back to Paris,” so it became a threat. I loved the countryside and my grandmother’s huge garden. I would help with farm jobs and hide in hedges and under tree roots; I loved vegetation as well as the animals. I only learned at my grandmother’s funeral that she was born to her father’s maid in India and brought up as part of his family. Teachers told me she was “the (good) witch”: she had a strong second sight and often told me stories of the supernatural world.

LAP: You draw on Nature so much in your work. Can you share further memories of being in Nature as a child?

PP: My grandmother’s garden was my first wild planet: her lawn was my savannah, the shrubbery the jungle. When I was 12 my mother bought an overgrown, steep vineyard in the south of France. There were stone huts we had to hack our way to. The insects looked huge. There were hornets, snakes and lizards. I got to know my mum there but had a difficult relationship with her. I went to live with her when I was 13; she had come to Wales, leaving behind a glamorous life in Paris. It was an unhappy time for us both. As soon as I could, I ran away to art school. When I lived with my mother, I needed to escape from her, so I would go to my room and draw and write. I made worlds in my head where I could be safe. I fell in love with the romantic poets, and I adored Keats.

LAP: Tell us about your journey as a writer.

PP: I’d always written poems, although I wasn’t very good. I was a sculptor at the Royal College of Art but found it too hard physically. I realised I could make things with words better than I could with materials. I transitioned, teaching Gaia projects in schools, and then I stopped sculpting altogether. Making poems, for me, needs to be physical, organic, sensory, perhaps a leftover from creating worlds to escape into, and trying to capture the natural world in its wild state in case it vanishes.

My first book started with my first obsession, waterfalls. I learned about Angel Falls in Venezuela – the highest waterfall in the world – and went there twice, flew over it, canoed to the base. Looking at it was like looking at my god. From that grew my interest in the Amazon rainforests and the tribal people who live there, everything they know, their incredible myths. My next obsession was jaguars. I was spending time in Paris writing and watching jaguars at the zoo. I went to the Peruvian Amazon and saw harpy eagles, king vultures, and even a jaguar in the wild! In Mama Amazonica I wrote about the Amazon as my abused and mentally distressed mother.

LAP: How do you explore a sense of place and belonging through your work?

PP: I was always displaced as a child and didn’t feel I belonged. I was drawn to the Amazon because I felt an affinity with it, and I decided to go to India because I’d started writing a collection about my grandmother, Tiger Girl. She’d told me stories about being in a cot in a tent when a tiger entered. So I read about tigers, realised how threatened they are.

I fell in love with India, its forests, wildlife and national parks. You can’t get all your information from books. For example, you would never know that trees give out smells to discourage predators. One of the most incredible things was the feeling of being in a theatre when prey animals spot the tiger or leopard and begin to make their operatic alarm calls.
The Reader, 2017 (gouache on paper) by Ashley Amery
**LAP:** Do you think eco-poetry has a role in communicating the urgency of the environmental crisis?

**PP:** Recently I have begun considering myself an eco-poet. If I’m writing a poem about somewhere, I have to go there and absorb things to the roots of my being. I’ve always been struck by the wonder of the natural world. I wrote a poem in the voice of the beast of Bodmin Moor, speaking through the landscape. I’m frightened that animals are going to disappear. I think I have a duty to write about these things.

**LAP:** What role do you feel diverse voices might play in this?

**PP:** I am extremely interested in this. I lead workshops on looking at non-Euro-centric views about Nature and eco-poetry. These are bringing fresh air into British Nature poetry, of which there is a wonderful tradition. I’ve always been excited by what other cultural outlooks bring to Nature poetry. There are many new and exciting voices.

**LAP:** Do you have any advice for new or emerging poets with an interest in land and Nature?

**PP:** Don’t follow the fashion. Be the fashion! Write about whatever you find exciting. Look for your own way to write form. Books can go a long way, but it’s not the same as immersing yourself in a place. Smell it, get the breath of it. Finally, don’t just read British poets or poets of your own generation. Read widely, including poetry from other cultures about the natural world.


Listen to Pascale share her poetry as part of The Resurgence Trust’s Acorn Poetry Festival on 11 June. Buy tickets at tinyurl.com/acorn-2022

Louisa Adjoa-Parker is a writer with a particular focus on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse history. www.louisaadjoaparker.com
Please do touch

The past 18 months have not invited a lot of touch. Quarantined at home and isolated from friends, many people have felt a lack of connection both emotionally and physically. This summer, on form will celebrate so much of what has been missing in our lives: art, Nature, contemplation, communication, and the joy of touch, the sense that has been found to calm our nervous centre and slow down our heartbeat. Over 300 stone sculptures will be exhibited in the heavenly gardens and landscape of Asthall Manor in Oxfordshire. Visitors are urged to engage with the sculptures, to stroke, smell and feel the ancient surface of each stone. This multi-sensory experience affects people in deep-rooted and unexpected ways. The 2022 on form exhibition runs at Asthall Manor from 12 June to 10 July. www.onformsculpture.co.uk
On entering her 70th year, Jenni Dutton has never felt so liberated. In terms of her ongoing creative endeavours, in addition to her new-found role in activism, the English artist is approaching life with renewed vitality and purpose. Known particularly for her explorations in the medium of textile art, Dutton has often focused on themes of love and loss within the intimacy of family. This, in turn, has now been related to a much bigger picture – the ecological crisis of our times.

Born into a shifting household due to the demands of her father’s army career, Dutton spent her childhood between living in Cyprus and at a boarding school in England. Both had an influence on her future artistic route. The freedom she was allowed on the Greek/Turkish island involved investigating the local landscape, creating sculptural forms from whatever found materials were available. Her educational experience, while conversely restrictive, created an opportunity for her to investigate the great artists to be discovered via the school library, and drawing became her release from homesickness. The influence of an art teacher would also solidify her path to eventual enrolment into the venerated Saint Martin’s School of Art in London.

Her adult artistic journey, which began with consideration of abstract painting, was soon interrupted by the realities of single parenthood, a need for stable work, and a period as a secondary school art teacher. As is so often the case for women in the arts particularly, a lack of support and options for primary carers can hugely impact careers. For Dutton, however, her later caring role became a subject expressed in some of her best-known and much-respected body of work.

After a period focusing on mosaics in sculptural representations of the female form, Dutton began to experiment with a familiar and practical medium, textile art. Having always enjoyed making for family members, she was also very much aware of it as a domestic legacy passed down through generations of women as part of a significant matriarchal lineage. Creating a series of empty dresses, combining textile art with materials from Nature such as feathers, bark and snail shells, Dutton alluded to mythology and the crafts of witches, while symbolically contemplating our connection to the natural world. “Nature dictates the order of our lives, from birth through ageing to death,” she reminds us.

Looking after her mother, who was suffering from dementia, would steer Dutton towards considering ideas of memory, which helped her to cope and to contextualise her difficult situation. The Dementia Darning is a series of 16 large-scale embroidered portraits, influenced by scanning family photo albums, an activity that engaged both Dutton and her mother.

Experimentation with sewn past and present representations of her maternal subject was seemingly the perfect form of expression. She explains: “The word ‘darning’ implies repair and I found so many associations with memory relating to sewing, ‘losing the threads of memory’, ‘thoughts unravelling’.”

As the project grew, Dutton recorded the growing fragility of her mother’s condition, using finer yarns for her artworks. As one in six people over the age of 80 in the UK will develop dementia, her experience and resulting work, which has been exhibited and widely acknowledged, certainly reflects a topic many will relate to.
Subsequent artworks have included a series of sewn self-portraits known as Absurd Selfies, in which the artist turned her artistic articulation to themes of self-exploration and ageing. While her subject matter may appear challenging, Dutton’s work also conveys emotional insightfulness and even quite a dark and understandable humour amidst the apparent absurdity of the human condition. Thinking about her own grandchildren in conjunction with our human failings in looking after our world, however, is an extremely serious issue to which Dutton is now connecting her art.

Now based in Somerset, she has become an activist in a bid not only to support the cause of saving this planet but also to branch out from the gallery and create work that is very much related to the current cultural, as well as actual, climate. Attending various protests while adorning her own design known as the Climate Crisis Cloak (with headdress) with appropriate slogans and images has become an imperative activity for her. “I need to feel relevant, to effect change, to influence people…” she says.

Jenni Dutton’s insightful artworks, which embody seven decades of human experience and brilliant creativity, certainly surpass such expectations. To view more work by Jenni Dutton: www.jennidutton.com Twitter @JenniDutton @WeareWiveyXR and Instagram @jennidutton9342

PL Henderson is an art historian. Her book Unravelling Women’s Art: Creators, Rebels & Innovators in Textile Arts is published by Aurora Metro & Supernova Books (2021). @womensart1
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Maya Angelou (from ‘Still I Rise’)
Amplifying the voices of African activists
Vanessa Nakate’s story moves Jini Reddy

A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring a New African Voice to the Climate Crisis
Vanessa Nakate
Pan Macmillan, 2021
ISBN: 9781529075687

Confronting the unjust power structures that leave those on the frontlines of the climate crisis vulnerable and voiceless, Vanessa Nakate has crafted a memoir that goes beyond the personal. She makes a spirited, engaging narrator, and her voice is all the more powerful for it; when the lives of those around you are at immediate risk, you don’t hold back. We know that climate justice is linked to social justice, and A Bigger Picture illustrates in sobering detail just how this plays out.

The Everest-like challenges this young Ugandan environmental activist has faced on her journey to bring climate justice to Africa are shared by many in her country and across Africa. Societal pressures rooted in gender are inescapable: well-brought-up young women are meant to be “demure and respectful”, she writes. Stand on the street with a placard, and you might be accused of being a prostitute.

In Uganda, strikes are illegal – you could be arrested and, worst-case scenario, disappear. You’d be confronted by a lack of funding, indifference from your fellow citizens, and racism abroad – in Davos, at the World Economic Forum, Nakate was cropped out of an Associated Press photo, in which she, the lone Black African climate activist, posed alongside four white activists. (“Does that mean I have no value as an activist or that the people of Africa don’t have any value at all?” she asked, in an impassioned video that went viral.)

Nakate highlights the challenges activists from African countries face in getting accreditation to conferences and in securing visas or funding visits to speak abroad, and a lack of opportunities to speak once there. The voices of Black activists often go unheard at home, another facet of colonialism’s toxic legacy. “There’s still a form of white supremacy that operates in Uganda, and elsewhere I’m sure, because as Africans we have been told to think that white people are above us…”

The picture Nakate paints is bleak, but she is not without hope

All of this has spurred Nakate on to amplify the voices of her fellow African activists, among them Ugandans Hilda Flavia Nakabuye and Leah Namugerwa, Zambian Veronica Mulenga, Kenya’s Elizabeth Wathuti and Nigeria’s Adenike Titilope Oladosu.

The risks to African ecosystems that fuel her activism are many: flooding, famine-inducing drought and locust plagues that drive migration and leave people in a state of desperation and hopelessness; oil pipelines that lead to the resettlement of families and a loss of wildlife habitat; and the deforestation of the Congo River Basin’s rainforest, the ‘second lungs of the Earth’.

The picture Nakate paints is bleak, but she is not without hope – the activist in her strives to find solutions and generate support. She points to grassroots projects, some of which she has helped to implement: the provision of solar panels for family homes, efficient cooking stoves in schools to reduce the need for firewood and coal, and the growing of fruit trees and successful tree planting. Green jobs too, she says, are crucial if Africans across the continent are to move away from a reliance on fossil fuels.

The education of girls, she emphasises, is vital to addressing the crisis. “We need women in the rooms where decisions are being made that affect the climate. Educating girls brings them into those rooms, and expands the number and approaches of possible decision-makers and solutions.” Let’s hope Nakate’s brand of common sense spreads, and fast.

Jini Reddy is the author of Wanderland, shortlisted for the Stanford Dolman Award for Travel Book of the Year and for the Wainwright Prize.
A force of grace

Jane Goodall’s manifesto for hope inspires Alistair McIntosh

The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for an Endangered Planet
Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams
Viking, 2021
ISBN: 9780241478578

I have a minor but enduring memory of Jane Goodall. In 1999, the Centre for Human Ecology, of which I had been the teaching director, put on a landmark conference at Findhorn called For the Love of Nature? Speakers came from around the world, and there were some 300 delegates, many of them penniless students. While the conference put British ecopsychology on the map, it broke the bank. Goodall was the highest-profile speaker in a star-studded cast. She’d requested just her institution’s standard fee (of which more later).

Now to this book of hope. Douglas Abrams weaves rich anecdotes together as he walks us through a conversational garden with Goodall, pausing only for the odd watering with her favourite horticultural supplement, Johnnie Walker Green Label.

Goodall got into primatology not through zoology, but through secretarial studies. Her early passion was to be a naturalist – a lover of Nature – and not a scientist, whose study can be more reductive. The breakthrough synthesis came when she met the eminent paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey. Two days earlier, he’d suddenly lost his secretary. It then transpired that he also needed an accomplice who could go out into the wild and study primate behaviour.

Everything connects, and animal rights cannot be separated from social justice

In those days, the presumption of objectivity by which science worked meant that emotional attachment to animals was taboo. Lab conditions were often cruel, something that became another of Goodall’s campaigns. Even in the field, animals were depersonalised, referred to by numbers rather than names.

Leakey had a hunch that to study primate behaviour at a level that might cast light on human origins, women might be better at the job. Not for nothing did the leading three – Dian Fossey, Biruté Galdikas and Jane Goodall – later earn the moniker ‘the Trimates’

Goodall resisted pressure from some quarters to play down primate aggression. Aggression, she thinks, has its roots in both nurture and nature. It has “almost certainly been part of our genetic makeup”, she tells Abrams, inherited from our hominid ancestors. Born in Hampstead in 1934, she has witnessed war at first hand, not just in Africa, but also in her childhood England. Churchill remains her hero, and the second world war taught her much “about death and the harsh realities of human nature – love, compassion, courage on the one hand; brutality and unbelievable cruelty on the other.”

Hope, to Goodall, is not mere optimism. Hope is humble. It does not claim to know the future. But humble isn’t feeble. “You need hope to get you going, but then by taking action, you generate more hope. It’s a circular thing,” she says. That circularity brought her round from non-human primates back to humans. Chimpanzee problems are “inextricably linked to people problems”, she asserts, and thereby she came to realise that “unless we helped people, we could not help chimps.” In short, everything connects, and animal rights cannot be separated from social justice.

“There is an old soul in that child,” an elderly woman told her nanny when Goodall was a baby, and Goodall speaks often of “a Great Spiritual Power”. She felt it in the Tanzanian forest in the 1960s, and she felt it again in 1977 when raised to ecstasy before the great rose window of Notre Dame. Her spirituality, she insists, is not a “touchy-feely tree-hugging hippie sort of thing”. Rather, it’s a moral and spiritual force that she glimpses now in youthful climate change protesters.

This book owes something to Mr Walker’s whisky, much to Douglas Abrams’ gardening, and most to greatness of soul. And about that speaker’s fee? She waived it, graciously releasing our people from embarrassment. This book portrays Jane Goodall as a force of grace.

Alastair McIntosh is the author of Soil and Soul and Poacher’s Pilgrimage.
In the mid-1960s, even Martin Luther King, Jr. was reluctant to speak out against the Vietnam War, afraid the inevitable rift with Lyndon B. Johnson’s White House would jeopardise hard-won progress on civil rights. In this environment, opposition was muted, and to much of US society resistance bordered on treason. The country was swept into a protracted and deadly war that now stands as an infamous if largely unheeded warning against the pitfalls of military adventurism.

But some did resist, and what started out as a few small and marginal groups of draft opponents eventually grew to become one of the most inspirational and effective exemplars of nonviolent resistance to emerge from the turbulent social conditions of 1960s and 1970s America. Yet, despite history’s almost complete exoneration of opponents to the Vietnam War, the term ‘draft dodger’ still evokes a strong association with cowardice in many sections of American society. Judith Ehrlich’s film The Boys Who Said NO! seeks to recast these young men instead as brave, morally prescient draft resisters, and position draft resistance as an important and ultimately successful example within the broader tradition of nonviolent resistance.

Perhaps one of the most compelling arguments against violence is its ability to generate trauma that ripples out beyond the place and time of its original event. But The Boys Who Said NO! demonstrates that principled nonviolent resistance and courage in the cause for justice can ripple just as profoundly as violence or oppression.

Beyond inspiring others, the film demonstrates not only how the movement helped to shift public sentiment against the war, but also that in doing so it had a material impact on the war’s outcome. As audio of Richard Nixon expressing his desire to use an atomic bomb demonstrates, the administration, left unopposed, was prepared, if not eager, to kill many more millions. By 1970, draft resistance had become so widespread that the military needed to draft three people to get one soldier, a fact that seriously hampered the government’s ability to wage war.

All in all, The Boys Who Said NO! is a compelling and well-told story, featuring interviews with many of the key figures from the time, helping to bring an overlooked aspect of the anti-Vietnam movement out of the dark.

Josh Stride is a freelance writer.
In over 30 years of environmental activism, I’ve collected a small library of books on campaigning and surviving the emotional costs it can incur. These include *Earthforce!*, by Sea Shepherd founder Paul Watson, a brusque set of instructions for direct activists, and Rebecca Solnit’s *Hope in the Dark*, which urges us to reset our personal despair over ecological damage.

Anthea Lawson’s *The Entangled Activist* takes its place among these by asking why campaigners unconsciously replicate “so many aspects of the systems we don’t want”. This question troubled Lawson while working for human rights organisations and led her to consider that the answer lay in the lack of attention to the ‘inner life’ of activism and “how the damage that is caused by the systems we are trying to change runs through us too”. From this starting point, Lawson sets out to examine how activists are ‘entangled’ in the problems they are trying to fix and in a mix of guilt, urgency, moral righteousness and sometimes seeing themselves as heroes or saviours.

Lawson draws heavily on her experiences of working for a number of humanitarian organisations and attending London street protests, including Extinction Rebellion demonstrations. She writes candidly about burnout, the combination of physical and mental fatigue frequent among campaigners across many movements, and considers the unhealthy culture that can exist in charities, such as workplace bullying and cover-ups of sexual abuse. Lawson is also honest about the context for her book, acknowledging that she writes from a UK perspective, that her experience is framed by her background, and that professional campaigning in Britain tends to be a middle-class domain. She does, however, include extensive interviews with fellow activists from across the globe, which gives the book a wider reach and includes reflections on the ‘white gaze’ of much campaigning work. Although my experience is somewhat different from Lawson’s, as I have always worked outside of the campaigning sector, I recognised the patterns of overwork, exhaustion and guilt, along with their impacts both on the individual and on how campaigners relate to the ‘non-activists’ around them.

Having set out her ideas and background, Lawson offers a series of chapters with titles I immediately wanted to turn to, such as ‘Common Habits of Entangled Activists’. Each of these is extensively researched and meticulously referenced and draws on many concepts from psychology and philosophy. Among those quoted are Carl Jung, Audre Lorde, Oliver James and novelists from Ben Okri to Terry Pratchett. When I first picked up the book, I was concerned that the concepts and theories examined would be hard to grasp for a reader not drilled in psychological studies. I was quickly reassured, as Lawson’s research is well handled, and each new idea is carefully and clearly explained. Although the book ends with a series of questions for groups or individuals to consider or discuss, the emphasis is on well-informed reflection rather than self-help.

*The Entangled Activist* deserves a place in my library, although I did find myself reflecting that it is important never to lose sight of the many gains, from workers’ rights to environmental protection, brought about by protest or lobbying. As I read Lawson’s book I recalled that, in my own life, activism has frequently been hard but also a source of joy, and how campaigning, usually alongside compassionate and dedicated people, has often maintained my faith that collective action is an important catalyst for change.

Helen Beynon is a writer, ecologist and environmental campaigner. www.twyfordrising.org
Planning for the planet
A socialist vision of the future leaves questions unanswered for Russell Warfield

Half-Earth Socialism: A Plan to Save the Future from Extinction, Climate Change and Pandemics
Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass
Verso, 2022
ISBN: 9781839760310

In 2016, the biologist E.O. Wilson published Half-Earth, arguing that we ought to give up half the planet to Nature, free of humans, in order to protect biodiversity. It’s an idea as simple as it is radical; as difficult to argue against as it is to advocate. In their book Half-Earth Socialism, indebted to Wilson’s thesis, Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass bravely take on the task of making the case that rewilding half the Earth is a necessary condition of averting the worst of the intersecting crises of climate, Nature and future pandemics, and that only socialism will get us there.

The central thrust of the book argues the need for central planning in order to stay the course through the decades ahead, while eliminating markets almost completely. The logic of capital accumulation and the humanisation of Nature will take the planet off a cliff, the inevitable conclusion being uncoordinated attempts at geoengineering that are liable to end in complete disaster. Instead, the climate crisis demands conscious decision-making based on all the best available data, with a particular aim of radically transforming land use so that more and more can be rewilded each year.

The authors make a good attempt at rescuing conservation from the shadow of colonialism, while chastising traditions of the left for Promethean impulses. But whether you find their positions to be persuasive almost feels like a moot point when the outcome they are advocating feels so vanishingly far away from where we are now. Sure, things seem unchanging until suddenly they are not, but it does feel like a stretch of credulity to bother setting out how certain models of central planning could limit warming to 1.5 degrees when that means slashing emissions by half in the next eight years alone.

What is the revolutionary agent for any completely unprecedented system of global government, let alone a devoutly socialist one? From where will such a movement build its power in the next... three years at most? The authors offer nothing on this front other than a few vague references to a “revolution” preceding the state of affairs they describe.

In fairness to Vettese and Pendergrass, they are under no obligation to plot a roadmap from the actually existing 2022 to their imagined mid-century of global, ecological socialism. It’s their book, and it’s a task enough to rehabilitate the reputation of central planning while situating it within a hitherto untested framework of sound ecological principles. Furthermore, they say that this book is to be read explicitly as a utopian text in the tradition of William Morris, indicating that they realise that this vision feels far-fetched.

The final chapter of the book is literally a piece of fiction
that imagines a man’s experience of 2049, inspired by Morris’s novel News from Nowhere. It’s striking that, for a utopia, it could easily be read as a dystopia for a lot of contemporary western citizens: energy quotas, enforced veganism, manual labour for everyone, and daily participation in protracted democratic decision-making. Basically, life would be one huge climate camp.

It may sound austere, but it’s refreshing to read utopic writing that doesn’t rely on glib technofixes and promises of near limitless abundance, visions that have an obvious allure but can ultimately be unpersuasive. Vettese and Pendergrass’s is a humble utopia. There is solidarity, fulfilment, full bellies, and plenty of leisure time. Crucially, there is a climate in repair, which is more than enough to win me over in my darkest hours, and certainly a utopia compared to many of the more plausible versions of the mid-21st century. How we arrive at this future is another question entirely.

Russell Warfield is communications manager for the climate change charity Possible.

We need to talk
A book on what we can do to tackle the climate crisis galvanises Ed Davey

Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World
Katharine Hayhoe
Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2021
ISBN: 9781982143831

Katharine Hayhoe is a distinguished climate scientist and a devout evangelical Christian. She is a Canadian national who lives and works in Texas, where she now serves as chief scientist for The Nature Conservancy, one of the world’s largest environmental organisations. She has a Twitter following of 210,000, and delivered a 2018 Ted Talk – ‘The most important thing you can do to fight climate change: talk about it’ – which has been viewed over 3.9 million times, and which forms the basis for her compelling and uplifting book Saving Us.

The premise is as simple as it is profound: the climate crisis is too urgent to fall foul of bipartisan division, in which (perhaps especially in the US) conservative political leanings can lead citizens to climate denial, even in the face of compelling scientific evidence, thereby denying climate action the widespread political support it so urgently needs. The answer: spend time with those with whom you disagree, listen to them respectfully, understand their underlying values and worldview, and then talk with them about the climate issue in ways that speak to them. More often than not it is possible to reach a shared understanding – and to convince people who might otherwise consider climate action a liberal conspiracy to act in favour of the climate on the basis of their own values and beliefs.

In addition to this fundamental, humanistic insight – the value (and bravery) of talking to others about climate change – Saving Us provides a well-structured and clear-sighted roadmap setting out what needs to happen. Here, Hayhoe writes with academic rigour as well as an admirable capacity for synthesis: this is a climate scientist with the ability to distil the scientific and policy literature for the benefit of the general reader. Case studies and illustrative examples – on renewable energy, transport, cities, Nature, the ocean and land use – abound. This is an excellent, up-to-date primer on the global climate crisis and the key ways forward.

The author’s deep faith is worn lightly: although referenced briefly throughout the book, and clearly helpful hinterland when engaging with faith and community groups, this is not a theological treatise grappling with the climate crisis from the perspective of a devout believer. Only one brief section explicitly addresses how Hayhoe’s two worlds – of private belief juxtaposed with public action in a largely secular setting – interact.

But perhaps, echoing the Book of Corinthians, the book’s quietly expressed faith underscores a more explicit focus on ‘hope’ and ‘love’. The hope is that human beings might yet act with the vision and moral courage needed to avert climate (as well as ecological) catastrophe, especially when their concerns have been acknowledged, and when they have been equipped with the arguments and evidence that they need. And the love is expressed through a belief in the best of human nature to act with wisdom and foresight, and for every human being on this Earth to be a force for good in addressing the climate crisis – irrespective of their political beliefs or broader worldview.

When I finished the book, I immediately resolved to spend more time with the ‘unconverted’, to do more in my personal life to act on climate, and to believe that we might still have the chance to steer this ship to a safe harbour. Hayhoe is one of the world’s most accomplished communicators on climate, and the fact that this book and its message have landed so well and with such a broad audience is itself a cause of hope. Saving Us remains a real prospect, especially if we move fast and with unprecedented determination, and Hayhoe will have played her full part if we do.

Edward Davey is Co-Director of the World Resources Institute in the UK, and Policy and International Engagement Director of the Food and Land Use Coalition.
**Flourish: Design Paradigms for Our Planetary Emergency**  
Sarah Ichioka and Michael Pawlyn  
Triarchy Press, 2021  
ISBN: 9781913743260

*Flourish* applies ideas borrowed from regenerative agriculture to the design of buildings and urban space. Regenerative agriculture restores a farm ecosystem’s health by providing continuous cover with multiple tiers of crops, and enlisting fungi, arthropods and natural predators to aid the soil. Sarah Ichioka and Michael Pawlyn, built environment professionals with a background in urban consultancy and architecture, apply this thinking to their profession. The book aims to inspire practitioners and clients through applying systems thinking. The authors are delightfully eclectic in their sources of inspiration, and they draw from ecological economics, biology and even music and film. Their bookishness sometimes creates an academic feel, but, as they acknowledge, the application of such thought to buildings and infrastructure design is still in its infancy and the conceptual case has still to be made.

The authors are critical of the current vogue for sustainable buildings defined by green building codes and weak planning policy. Too often, these are co-opted for marketing purposes without delivering the radical reductions in energy use or ecological restoration needed to remedy planetary crises. The book has five substantive chapters. Each illustrates a socio-economic paradigm, set out below, identifies solutions from the academic literature, the natural world, or other industries, and then, where possible, locates examples of good practice from the built environment.

The discussion about ‘possibilism’ asks who sets the agenda for designing the built environment. The client, city planner, architect and local activists share authority. One mayor sets out the challenge: “A city is not something that happens … you make choices every day.”

Next is a critical look at mechanistic assessment tools like cost–benefit analysis or building accreditation, which do not adequately capture the system-wide environmental effects of developments. Instead the authors advocate applying general principles such as sourcing materials locally.

The book goes on to argue that short-termism impedes good long-term decision-making – the financial calculus discounts the long-term benefits of conserving materials and energy. Instead of stewarding resources like our metal ores, sand and aggregates, we down-cycle resources. We should treat buildings as ‘material banks’ with closed-loop cycles of repair and reuse.

“A city is not something that happens ... you make choices every day”

The authors then explore the idea of symbiosis. This chapter identifies several collectively conceived buildings in traditional Philippine societies, and small experimental ones in the west like Los Angeles Eco-Village. But these are few, as symbiosis is antithetical to the property market.

The book ends with case studies on how buildings contribute to human development beyond monetary return. These include localising food growth within cities, such as Singapore’s ambition to increase food resilience, replacing fossil-fuel-based energy systems with energy efficiency and building-integrated renewables, and reducing the use of toxic materials.

*Flourish* sketches a new agenda for built environment professionals to make their profession part of the solution, not the problem. But, as the authors recognise, the system that needs to change is far wider than building professionals alone, and the book’s radical and attractive vision invites a wider audience to the conversation.

Prashant Vaze enjoys a book on regenerative urban planning

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Prashant Vaze is an author and analyst who works on climate and finance issues.
Poetry in the time of Covid

Rashi Goel finds hope in a new book

Anthropocene: Climate Change, Contagion, Consolation
Sudeep Sen
Pippa Rann Books & Media, 2021
ISBN: 9781913738389

When I chanced upon this book a couple of months ago, I wasn’t sure whether I would enjoy it. After all, I had only started reading poetry very recently. Poetry on Nature? Yes! Poetry on climate change and the pandemic? This idea brought with it some hesitation at first. Would it be too dark, depressing? Would it bring back haunting memories of the months I spent recovering from ‘long Covid’? Yet, as an avid environmentalist and voracious reader, I was excited by the fact that a contemporary Indian literary figure, Sudeep Sen, had responded to the burning issue of climate change. I flipped through the book. On the inside back cover were these words by the poet Czeslaw Milosz: “My generation was lost. Cities too. And nations. But all this a little later. Meanwhile, in the window, a swallow.” As I looked outside my own window to see a bright blue kingfisher perched atop a branch, I began to smile. I was ready to read.

I peeled away the dust jacket to reveal a sunny yellow cloth cover embossed with silver letters – a cover that made me want to run my hands over it slowly as I contemplated the meaning of the words that lay within. Inside, the pages are thick and grainy with an off-white tone – unbleached paper that absorbs some light, bringing about a feeling of nostalgia as I read on. This book is unusual in that Sen, a poet, journalist, graphic designer and photographer, led the entire production from the cover design to the choice of paper. These aspects seem to bring attention to tactility, a quality that is becoming lost in the times of the pandemic, a subject that forms a key part of the book’s contents.

In the prologue, Sen quotes Japanese film-maker and artist Akira Kurosawa: “The role of the artist is not to look away.” And Sen made it a point to not look away. He created a book out of his deep, consistent observation of his surroundings – the trees, the sky, the people, Nature. I see a sort of chronological progression in the book: first came climate change and then came the pandemic. Through his works in the climate change section, Sen combines his knowledge of the world, gained by extensive travel and reading, with scenes from his home city, Delhi. The reality and inevitability of climate change then gives way to the dark heaviness of the pandemic. The section ‘Contagion’ highlights the larger problem, that the pandemic might only be a symptom of climate change.

Sen talks in this book about how humans and our capitalism have ruined the planet. He talks about the hardships of marginalised communities and the privilege of the rich. He talks about disease, death and recovery. He observes how Nature came to life while the rest of the world slowed. Most of all, this book told me that heartache and hope belong together. Sen quotes Stanley Kubrick: “However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.” This is the note the book leaves us on – the beauty of light and hope. For me, this multi-genre work of poetry, prose and photography has beautifully captured agony, urgency and action through the author’s words, distilling the emotions of millions across the world into this compilation.

Rashi Goel is an independent consultant and journalist based in India. You can find her on Twitter. @RashiGoel
Widespread poverty and malnutrition, an alarming refugee crisis, social unrest, economic polarisation have become our lived reality as the top 1% of the world’s 7-billion-plus population pushes the planet and all its people to the social and ecological brink. In Oneness vs. the 1%, Vandana Shiva takes on the ‘Billionaires Club’ whose blindness to the rights of people, and to the destructive impact of their construct of linear progress, have wrought havoc across the world.

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*Jonathan Neale*

“Fight the Fire is the most compelling and concise guide to averting climate breakdown.” – Brendan Montague, editor, The Ecologist.

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Satish Kumar

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Mac Macartney

In the winter of 2009 Mac Macartney walked from his birthplace in England across Wales to the island of Anglesey, once the spiritual epicentre of late Iron Age Britain, navigating by the sun and the stars, with no map, compass, stove or tent, and in the coldest winter for many years. The Children’s Fire records that journey, and seeks to lay bare the aching loss of knowing and understanding sacredness as it applies to everything ordinary that brings joy to the human heart. (Paperback, 185 pages)

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HOW TO SAVE THE WORLD FOR FREE

Natalie Fee

A fun and accessible guide to a serious and weighty issue, How to Save the World for Free recognises that millions of people making small changes to their lifestyles can make a real difference to the global environment. Featuring countless tips that cover every aspect of our daily routines, this is an invaluable tool in the fight against climate change and pollution. Natalie Fee’s upbeat and engaging book is a life-altering guide to making those changes that will contribute to helping our planet. (Hardback, 208 pages)

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Thich Nhat Hanh

Bringing together ancient wisdom and contemporary thinking on the subject of mindfulness, Peace of Mind is a book that provides a practical foundation for understanding the principles of mind/body awareness. “You could spend the rest of your life reading and rereading this deceptively simple book; it is that deep” – Rick Hanson, Buddha’s Brain (Paperback, 154 pages)

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HOME WORK
Fiona Dobson's article ‘A turning point for Nature? ’ (Issue 331) rightly pointed out the need for bold and binding targets to restore Nature on a truly ambitious scale. Failing to reach agreements at the upcoming conference on biodiversity, COP15, doesn’t bear thinking about. There is far too much at stake.

As current president of COP26, the UK government has a responsibility to ensure that COP15 marks a turning point for our fractured natural world. That starts by giving the Nature emergency the political attention it deserves. Attendance at COP15 shouldn’t be delegated to others, and we urge the prime minister to lead from the front by attending the conference himself.

Ultimately, credibility on the global stage stems from ambitious domestic policy. To be a world leader on environmental issues, the government must deliver on restoring Nature at home. This includes protecting and connecting at least 30% of the UK’s land and sea for Nature by 2030. Research shows that only around 5% of land is currently protected and wildlife populations have shrunk by an average of 60% in the last 50 years. We need to see much greater urgency, investment, and political ambition to turn the tide for Nature, both in the UK and around the world. There really isn’t any time to lose.

Elliot Chapman-Jones
Head of policy at The Wildlife Trusts

REWILDING FOR LIFE
Your article ‘A turning point for Nature?’ turned a welcome spotlight on the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s 15th conference (COP15). With growing calls for world leaders to upscale action to tackle the overlapping Nature and climate emergencies, rewilding must be part of the solution.

As your article stated, a key outcome of COP15 must be a target to ensure Nature restoration across at least 30% of the world’s land and sea by 2030. We are calling for this 30 by 30 target to be delivered here in Britain – a mix of Nature recovery areas, with 5% being core rewilding areas of native forest, peatland, moorlands, heaths, grasslands, wetlands, saltmarshes and coastal areas, and no need for loss of productive farmland. These targets should be doubled in our national parks, which are often woefully Nature-depleted. Our Wilder National Parks campaign is calling on the UK government and devolved administrations to ensure wilder national parks, and our public petition can be signed at tinyurl.com/WNP-petition

Richard Bunting
Rewilding Britain
www.rewildingbritain.org.uk

NAKED AMBITION
It’s an old article, yet it seems even more relevant today than when it was written in 2009 – and will continue to do so. ‘The tyranny of trends’ (Issue 254) certainly struck a chord with our naturist community, who continue to advocate that living without clothing should be seen as a perfectly acceptable option in today’s society. Given the damage to the environment and to people’s mental and physical wellbeing outlined in the article, it’s obvious that overcoming the ridiculous puritanical and Victorian mindset that forces people to wrap their bodies in textiles would go a long way to addressing climate change. If governments are serious about addressing climate and environmental catastrophe, along with mental health, then the issue of legitimising public nakedness needs to be given due urgency.

Andrew Cook
(via email)

EARTHSIZE
Some things need saying urgently, as I think we all know. 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.

I always come back to the garden – mine and others’ – as symbol and reality; as a microcosm of the actual and potential salubrity of the Earth; as the place where we might achieve spiritual nourishment and existential certainty; where what we create adds to the Earth and does not subtract from it; where we don’t take more than we give back; where children – vulnerable, impressionable future generations – may understand that our egregious exploitation for personal gain over many centuries need not continue unabated. Interestingly, George Orwell once said, “Outside my work the thing I care most about is gardening.” One does not associate such gentleness with the author of 1984.

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)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTERS**

In our January/February 2022 issue we featured a quote from former Paralympic champion James Brown, who was jailed for a year in September 2021 after glueing himself to the roof of a plane as part of an Extinction Rebellion protest. In December he was released on bail. Following an appeal, his sentence was reduced to four months. “Since my conviction, many people have written to say that they have been inspired to step up, take bold action and make a stand,” he said.

**TWITTER**

**Radical Honey**
@radicalhoneybee

Some of yesterday’s #SmallBeauties: Spring getting right into the cells of a giant thistle of my acquaintance. Finding shepherd’s purse in flower. That alder catkins brighten even the greyest day. Bright pink camellias. Attending @Resurgence_mag’s Spring Equinox meditation. Tea.

**TWITTER**

**Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall**
@HughFW

I’m really looking forward to talking this evening with the always-inspiring Satish Kumar and his brilliant @Resurgence_mag colleagues @brownmariannes and @EcoMontague

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

Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.
The Avatamsaka Sutra is the source of the well-known image of Indra’s Net. Indra’s Net is a vast, cosmic lattice that contains precious jewels wherever the threads cross. There are millions of jewels strung together to make the net, and each jewel has all the other jewels reflected in it. In Indra’s Net, the one is present in the all, and the all is present in the one.

In our ordinary discriminatory world, we see a teapot as a single, independent object. But if we look deeply enough into the teapot, we will see that it contains many phenomena – earth, water, fire, air, space and time – and we realise that in fact the entire universe has come together to make this teapot. That is the interdependent nature of the teapot. A flower is made up of many non-flower elements, such as clouds, soil and sunshine. Without clouds and earth, there could be no flower. This is interbeing. The one is the result of the all. What makes the all possible is the one.

We can see the nature of interbeing and interpenetration in every seed and formation. Interpenetration means that the all is in one. The flower cannot easily exist by itself alone. It has to ‘inter-be’ with everything else. All phenomena are like that. The Buddha said, “This is, because that is.” This is a simple but profound teaching. It means that everything is related to everything else.

Thich Nhat Hanh was a Zen master, a poet and a peace and human rights activist. He died on 22 January 2022.
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Left: The science and art of making biodynamic preparations

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- Vivian Griffiths
  - (Hone of) John Ruskin, Coniston Lake
- Laura Wallwork
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Illustrations by Linda Scott
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Resurgence & Ecologist 77
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.

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“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

Photograph: Mark Gough
The Resurgence Trust presents

**Acorn Poetry Festival**

Online 11-12 June 2022 (10am – 5pm BST each day)

**Poets include:**

Fiona Benson  
Ben Okri  
Kate Bingham  
Moniza Alvi  
Elizabeth-Jane Burnett

Paula Byrne  
Dom Bury  
Gillian Clarke  
Maura Dooley  
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Ella Duffy  
Matt Harvey  
Jane Lovell  
Helen Moore  
Ruth Padel

Jason Allen-Paisant  
Pascale Petit  
James Thornton  
Liv Torc  
Rowan Williams

**TICKETS**

Whole weekend: £25.00 (concessions £20.00)  
For whole day Saturday or Sunday: £15.00 per day (concessions £12.00)  
Morning only (10am to 1pm) or afternoon only (2pm to 5pm): £8.00 (concessions £6.00)

*More info and bookings: tinyurl.com/AcornPoetryFestival*

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

Tickets:
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For any enquiries, please email sharon@resurgence.org

For booking details and further information on the talks, please visit www.resurgenceevents.org/events

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

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Tim Lang
Professor of Food Policy at City University of London’s Centre for Food Policy

The Future of Food

His latest book Feeding Britain (Pelican, March 2020) explores the UK as a case study of a rich country’s food system. He proposes that this is more fragile than it appears and that the only route to security is to put sustainability, health and social justice at its heart.

Jon Alexander
Author and co-founder of the New Citizenship Project

Citizens: Why the Key to Fixing Everything Is All of Us

Jon Alexander, author and co-founder of the New Citizenship Project. Jon began his career in advertising, winning the prestigious Big Creative Idea of the Year, before making a dramatic change.

In 2014, he co-founded the New Citizenship Project to bring the resulting ideas into contact with reality. In Citizens, he is ready to share them with the world.

Samantha Walton
Author, editor and Reader in Modern Literature at Bath Spa University

The Future of Farming


This event is a fundraiser for The Resurgence Trust, an educational charity registered in England and Wales (no. 1120414).
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
www.resurgenceevents.org
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 us online via Zoom, or check if there is a group meeting near you at www.resurgence.org/groups or by calling us on 01237 441293

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www.resurgence.org/bookclub

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community, connection & place

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For more information and inspiration visit:
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