RECONNECTING WITH THE LIVING PLANET

Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

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March/April 2021

Watershed moment

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Changing course

Rivers have shaped landscapes over millennia, arteries of fresh water that have carved paths through rock and soil from source to sea. As they bring life, so any kind of disruption like droughts or floods can take it away. As I write this, storms have triggered flooding across England, with rivers bursting their banks, damaging homes and infrastructure. It's just a taste of what is to come, as research shows climate change can increase the probability of heavy rains by 40%. Rivers have provided humanity with a good place to set up home for thousands of years. It is now, as we micromanage the landscape like never before, that a swollen waterway threatens the most disruption. In the words of Wendell Berry: "Men may dam it and say that they have made a lake, but it will still be a river. It will keep its nature and bide its time, like a caged animal alert for the slightest opening."

There are other human impacts too: pollution and reduced space for other living things that can help keep rivers healthy. As our relationship with Nature frays, the threads connecting us become all the more precious, and people across the world are fighting to protect the rivers they love – and winning. In this issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist* we meet some of the people doing just that. Vandana K investigates grassroots activism in India, and Nicola Cutcher celebrates a recent victory by citizen scientists in Ilkley, England. Li An Phoa walks along the river Meuse, and Derek Gow brings beavers back to Britain.

With many of us still living in isolation under the dark cloud of Covid-19, Julian Abel explains why being compassionate is good for us, and Russell Warfield speaks to Rutger Bregman about his book *Humankind*. In Arts, Louisa Adjoa Parker interviews poet and nurse Romalyn Ante about migration, and how the care industry has shaped her life and that of her family in the Philippines.

We hope these stories will, like spring buds and vaccines, help light up the darkness.

In another, more sombre, celebration of life, we are also very sad to share news of the death of Peter Abbs, whose wisdom and talent have helped nourish Resurgence over the last 40 years. We miss him.

Marianne Brown
Editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist*

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Cover image: **A single flower / ray of hope by Zena Holloway** zenaholloway.com

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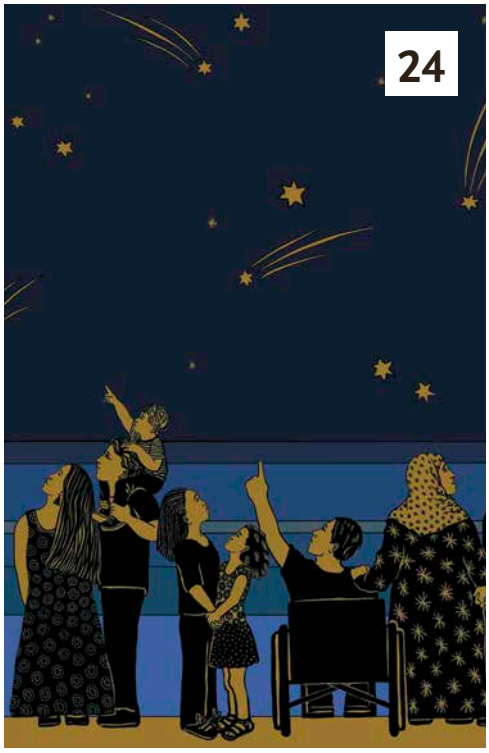

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Protection for ocean giants in Mozambique

Melissa Hobson reports on the impact of a new fishing law

After years of lobbying, a new commercial fishing law will offer protection in Mozambique for several threatened species, including manta and mobula rays and whale sharks. For the Marine Megafauna Foundation (MMF) this is a huge step in the right direction.

The legislation, which came into effect on 8 January this year, also mandates turtle excluder devices on industrial and semi-industrial nets. Fishers must land the full body of any shark caught with fins attached, and bycatch must be thrown back unless prior written permission has been given to use it for research. The harvesting of live coral and destructive fishing practices on coral, seagrass and mangroves have been banned.

Getting to this point has taken years of lobbying and research, in particular MMF's studies on the Mozambican coastline's importance for these ocean giants, and the threats posed by human activity, primarily fishing pressures. A 2017 study illustrated the urgent need for protection, showing that populations of manta and shortfin devil rays in southern Mozambique had declined by over 90%.

Simon Pierce, a co-founder of MMF, said: "Whale sharks were first listed as globally endangered in 2016 and giant mantas followed last year. This is a national response to step up protection for them and their habitats, which will also benefit the other threatened species living along the Mozambican coast."

Protection in Mozambican waters will have a wider impact for these highly mobile marine species, according to Pierce: "We've tracked 'Mozambican' whale sharks swimming to Madagascar, South Africa and Tanzania. It's important now to synchronise regional protection efforts so we can create the equivalent of marine Serengetis for these ocean giants."

Healthy populations of megafauna are vital for a balanced ocean ecosystem. Protections for megafauna also benefit

Whale shark © Gaby Barathieu / Coral Reef Image Bank

other marine species and, as a result, local fishing industries. Many Mozambican communities rely on the ocean for food, and for income from ecotourism activities.

The legislation also makes rules around legalising community fishing councils (CCPs) much clearer. Emerson Neves, MMF's conservation project manager, works directly with the fishing communities that will be affected. This, he pointed out, is a huge benefit: "Most of the community are willing to build a CCP, but it wasn't really clear how this could happen." He continued: "This law will make it far easier for our fishing communities to manage their impact by empowering them to create no-take zones and enforce rules limiting the use of [destructive] gear."

It also facilitates easier communication with the government, to report illegal fishing activity, for example. Neves explained: "If the CCP is legalised and well organised, they can have a voice to the government. They can complain, report what has happened, and the government can heed them because they are officially an organisation."

While this is a huge achievement, there's more to do. Several NGOs are pushing for other vulnerable species – including hammerhead and leopard sharks – to receive protection too. And whilst some countries have good regulations, many could do more. Pierce concluded: "Hopefully other governments will see this leadership from Mozambique and update their own laws to meet the global marine conservation challenges we're staring down."

Melissa Hobson is a freelance writer with a love for Nature and the ocean. She is the founder of Baleen, an ocean sustainability newsletter. baleen.substack.com

Spiny starfish on a a seagrass bed in West Wales
© Andrew Pearson / Alamy Stock Photo

Ocean action plan would boost biodiversity and economy: report

An ocean recovery action plan could not only help mitigate the climate crisis and rebuild biodiversity, but also deliver the economy with an additional £50 billion by 2050 and help create 100,000 new jobs, according to a new report published by WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue. The report proposes a 10-year action plan to restore UK seas, and highlights the costs of business as usual. The plan includes restoring coastal ecosystems such as seagrass and salt marshes, sustainably deploying offshore renewables, and better management of marine protected areas. Currently just 1% of UK waters are fully protected by law. In 2019, UK seas failed to meet government standards on good environmental health against 11 out of 15 indicators, including those relating to birds, fish and seabed habitats.

www.tinyurl.com/value-restored-uk-seas

River watch

Nicola Cutcher reports on a new campaign

Photograph © Mikhail Mikheev / EyeEm / Getty Images

Journalist George Monbiot is teaming up with campaigning film-maker Franny Armstrong for a live investigative documentary about the shocking state of Britain's rivers, and what can be done to clean them up.

Every river, lake and stream monitored in England is polluted. Monbiot said: "Our rivers should be beautiful, complex ecosystems. But on our watch, they've become open sewers, poisoned by sewage and farm slurry. They're dying before our eyes."

Rivercide will be streamed live online, as it happens, in July this year. Monbiot will present the hour-long programme from a polluted river in one part of the country, with experts, campaigners and some special guests joining him from other areas. They'll show how the agencies charged with protecting our rivers have been progressively under-funded and under-resourced and are failing to adequately monitor water quality and enforce action against polluters.

Having crowdfunded the costs of production to enable editorial independence, *Rivercide* is also crowdsourcing intelligence about the state of Britain's rivers, and investigating all forms of river pollution. Armstrong said: "We're asking people to go out and take pictures and video of their local rivers, particularly any pollution incidents they have witnessed. We also want to incorporate some citizen science to test water quality."

Monbiot and Armstrong are great believers in people power and hope to attract a large online audience. Whilst Monbiot will be challenging politicians and confronting polluters, he'll also be showing how we can turn the situation around and help to restore Britain's rivers to the natural wonders they ought to be.

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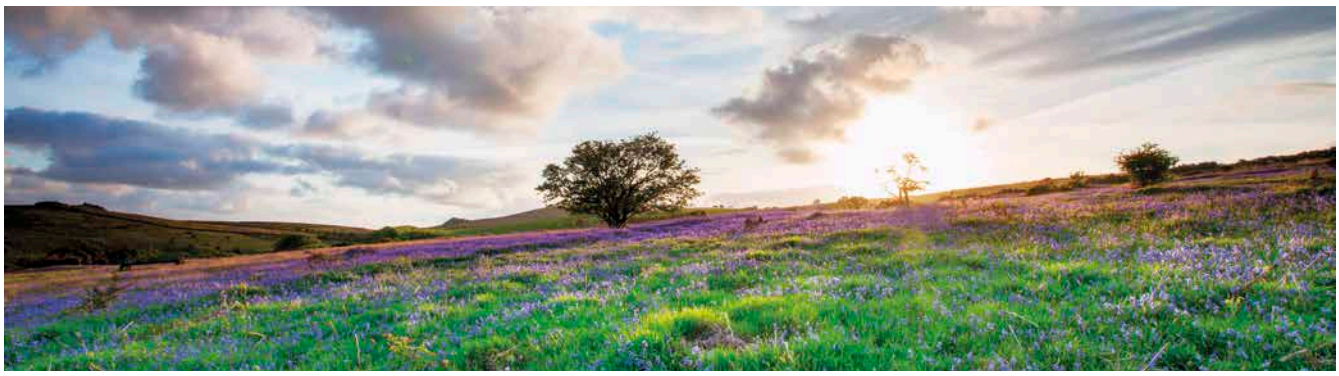
www.rivercide.tv

Nicola Cutcher is an investigative journalist. (See The Right to Bathe, in this issue, page 38.)



Bluebells flowering at Holwell Lawn, Dartmoor
© Matt Whorlow / Alamy Stock Photo

Forum opens to bring meadow makers together

Devon-based charity Moor Meadows has created a new online community platform to connect meadow makers far and wide. On the forum, which is free to join, members can post questions by topic and receive answers from the whole community of meadow enthusiasts. There are also opportunities to join or even start up local community groups of meadow makers in different parts of the county. Moor Meadows was set up in 2015 by a group of local people who wanted to help each other in conserving, restoring and creating wild-flower-rich grasslands in the landscape of Dartmoor.

forum.moremeadows.org.uk

Ecologist Leo Gubert at grassland planting site on the A30
Image courtesy of Highwaysindustry.com

Wild-flower verge scheme aims to reduce carbon footprint

A new policy by Highways England in the way it manages road verges aims to improve biodiversity and cut its own carbon footprint. The plans revealed by the government-owned company, which is in charge of maintaining England's motorways and A-roads, focuses on creating the types of soil that encourage the growth of wild flowers. As competitors like dock, grasses and nettles outcompete other wild flowers in richer soils, the initiative includes removing topsoil from new grassland areas to reduce the nutrient level, or adding subsoil or bare substrate such as chalk. The areas are seeded with appropriate wild flowers or are allowed to regenerate naturally. As well as creating open grasslands high in biodiversity, the plan reduces maintenance visits for mowing or transporting topsoil. Kate Petty, Plantlife's road verge campaign manager, said: "Our research shows that nearly half of our entire flora grows on our verges, making this an exceptionally important habitat for wildlife, which needs all the help it can get."

www.tinyurl.com/verges-soil-wild-flowers

Image © Mr. Meijer / Shutterstock

Charities and public decry lift on neonics ban

The UK government decision to allow the use of the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam for the treatment of sugar beet seed in 2021 has prompted condemnation from charities and the public. In 2018, use of the pesticides was banned across the European Union due to the harm they cause to bees and other wildlife. In a press release, Joan Edwards, director of public affairs at The Wildlife Trusts, said: "We will be writing to the Prime Minister requesting that he reverse the Secretary of State's decision and focus support for farmers to adopt non-chemical alternatives so that agriculture supports nature and does not destroy it." Dave Goulson, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trusts said: "Neonicotinoids are harmful to insect life in minuscule amounts; for example just one teaspoon (5g) of neonicotinoid is enough to deliver a lethal dose to 1 ¼ billion honeybees – enough dead bees to fill four long-wheel-base lorries." Several petitions to reverse the decision have been launched, including one that gathered nearly 74,000 signatures at the time of writing.

tinyurl.com/speakout38degrees
tinyurl.com/wcl-insecticides

Photograph © Stewart Ferguson

OBITUARY

Peter Abbs (1942–2020)

Peter Abbs, poet, emeritus professor of creative writing at Sussex University and contributor to *Resurgence* for over four decades, has died aged 78

Peter was born, three months premature, in Sheringham, Norfolk, to Eric (a coach driver) and Mary (a shop assistant). Against the odds, he survived. At the age of 11 he decided to train for the priesthood, but after a few months studying at a Catholic seminary in Liverpool he changed his mind and returned to his family, taking O levels and A levels at Norwich Technical College – the first generation in his family to stay at school after the age of 14. He went on to do a BA in English and Philosophy at Bristol University, before becoming a teacher.

It was moving to a remote Welsh smallholding in 1970 that fundamentally changed Peter, introducing him to ideas of ecology and the burgeoning green movement. Establishing a smallholding with his wife and three young children opened his eyes to the realities and challenges of self-sufficiency, farming, and living from the land. In Wales he met other smallholders, and pioneers of organic and biodynamic farming, becoming deeply influenced by the writings of E.F. Schumacher, Leopold Kohr and John Seymour. Kohr and Seymour visited Peter on his smallholding, where he and his wife, Barbara, grew their own organic produce, kept chickens and attempted to farm their own pig. When Peter's children turned the pig into a playmate, Peter realised he could neither kill nor eat it – an epiphany that resulted in a less ambitious, 'plant-based' smallholding.

During his six years in Wales, Peter also wrote, published, and taught at Aberystwyth University, as well as helping Barbara home educate their children. At their kitchen table, he founded and published the magazine *Tract*, a forum for exploring ideas that were to preoccupy him for the rest of his life: questions of identity, creativity, and the place of art in human life. He also continued writing poems – poetry was to be his enduring passion. His first volume of poetry, *A Fisherman of This Sea*, was published in 1965 and was immediately praised in *The Observer*. A further 10 volumes of poetry won the praise of Seamus Heaney, Kathleen Raine and Ted Hughes.

Peter was constantly inspired by Nature and by the landscapes in which he lived – from the north Norfolk coast of his childhood to the valleys of Wales, from the rolling downs of Sussex to the Greek island of Paros. He edited the first book of eco-poetry, *Earth Songs*, published by *Resurgence* in 2002. Meanwhile, his own work continues to appear in print, with poems this year in *Prospect* and the *New Statesman*. His last poem was completed on the day he died.

Peter left Wales for a post at Sussex University, where he co-founded an MA (now the MA in Creative Writing) and earned a reputation as a charismatic and impassioned mentor, nurturing a new generation of teachers and creative writers. He completed a doctorate on autobiography, wrote 10 polemical books on the philosophy of education, gave lecture tours across the world, and regularly authored articles for magazines and newspapers. His work for *Resurgence* began in the 1970s when he first met Satish Kumar and became the books editor. Within a few years Peter had become the poetry editor, a position he held – with great pride – until 2019. His last article appeared in the January/February 2021 issue.

He is survived by his second wife, the writer Lisa Dart, three children – Miranda, Theo and me – and eight grandchildren.

Annabel Abbs




Resurgence Talks

We would like to thank all readers who continue to support The Resurgence Trust's fundraising activities. Your help makes a real difference to the charity and enables us to continue with our various projects.

The monthly Resurgence Talks form part of these activities and take place over Zoom on the last Wednesday of each month.

Julia Hobsbawm, the author of *The Simplicity Principle*, will speak on 31 March on Reclaiming Simplicity in a Complex World. Bill McKibben, the founder and senior adviser emeritus of 350.org, will be speaking on 28 April on The Last Useful Decade? A Report from the Frontlines of the Climate Fight. Gail Bradbrook, a co-founder of Extinction Rebellion, is our May speaker. Her talk, on 26 May, is entitled Effective Methods for Overcoming the Domination Paradigm.

On 30 June, the distinguished lawyer Philippe Sands will reflect on Ecocide? Issues to Think About.

Booking information for all these talks can be found at www.resurgence.org/talks

COMMUNITY

Space to listen

Charlie Jones and Brigid Russell introduce a new project

The pandemic is shining a light on how important it is for us to have places where we can share out loud our thoughts and feelings. To find sustainable and humane ways of moving forward from lockdown, we surely need a better quality of listening and more meaningful connections.

In response, many people are embracing #SpacesForListening. We are consistently hearing appreciation for a space in which there is no pressure to offer others a 'fix', or to reach actions. The focus is on listening and connection, rather than 'wellbeing' or 'resilience'.

Each of the #SpacesForListening involves eight people meeting over Zoom for about 50 minutes, in a structure of three rounds, each of two minutes per person. The spaces for listening are unedited and confidential, and we do not interrupt each other. We participate as people first; we do not introduce ourselves by our job titles.

People take turns in preset order, and we each experience a level of listening, an equal chance to share, and a spirit of appreciation. Anybody is free to 'pass' when it is their turn. We each respond to the following prompts:

Round 1: How are you, and what's on your mind?

Round 2: Any reflections or feelings in the light of Round 1?

Round 3: Anything to take away, and anything that has resonated that you have appreciated?

It is a space of peers in which the facilitator is an equal participant, rather than an expert leading the session.

We believe that the best way to understand the quality and potential of this approach is to experience it. No special training is required to facilitate.

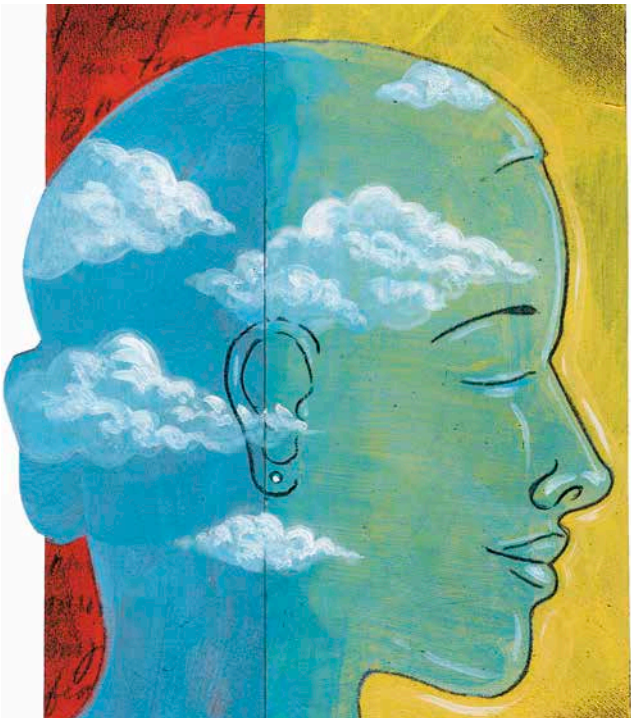


Illustration by Leigh Wells / Ikon Images

Charlie Jones is a clinical psychologist at North Bristol NHS Trust. Brigid Russell lives in Stirling and works as a coach and consultant with people across public and third sectors.

www.tinyurl.com/spaces-for-listening

For more information about events and other news from The Resurgence Trust see page 70.

Do you have a project you want to share with the Resurgence community? Get in touch via editorial@resurgence.org

Fitting the bill

We have an Agriculture Act, but there's a lot left to do, writes **Vicki Hird**

On 11 November 2020, the first UK Agriculture Act in more than 50 years received royal assent. At Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, our objectives for the bill included making farm payments dependent on the delivery of public goods, boosting whole farm agro-ecological approaches, including public health as an objective, ensuring better supply chain rules to stop abuse, protecting food standards, and better protection for workers.

We pressed our concerns about how the climate and Nature emergency should be tackled through land use, agroforestry, soil protection, and regulation of supply chains. We raised the alarm on losing the farm diversity so critical for Nature and landscapes, farm livelihoods, rural coherence and new entrants.

So, what did we win? Well, much farm support will now be based on delivering public goods or benefits – supporting farmers while helping deliver on top priorities like Nature protection, soil health, climate change mitigation, clean air and water, and animal welfare. Environmental Land Management schemes and other policies across all four nations should be powerful ways to make farming more sustainable, but much depends on how schemes are designed and funded.

A mention in the act of agro-ecology, soil protection and greater recognition in the debate of the role of whole-farm approaches such as organic in delivering sustainable food and farming were all positive developments.

We also lobbied successfully for new supply chain transparency and fair dealing regulations in the act, vital for helping to protect farm livelihoods and sustainability in the UK and overseas. If properly implemented this could be a real game changer, as we know concentrated power higher up the food chain leads to abusive practices. Finally, the act includes a multi-annual financing process, which will ideally ensure that public support is continued – giving farmers stability – and a legal commitment to provide regular reviews of UK food security – vital, given the challenges ahead.

On the downside, on agroforestry, new entrants and county farms, climate and pesticide targets we got promises, but not on the face of the bill. We also fought hard but ultimately failed to get public health as a purpose – it is obvious to most of us that food is health. Sadly we did not get better protection for farm workers. Another hefty issue we pushed on was to try to stop new UK trade deals lowering food standards. Sustain generated

over 5,000 emails to MPs and coordinated a 'famous farmer' letter, which garnered over 1,000 signatories and added to a groundswell of support for a huge, broad coalition (and unprecedented public concern, with 2.65 million signatures on petitions, and 260,000 letters to MPs) calling on parliamentarians to protect our animal welfare, food and environment standards in trade deals.

We won concessions and partial U-turns to enhance parliamentary scrutiny, but not a final big ask to give standards a better legal footing. This means the progressive parts in the act are all at risk from more agri-food imports produced to lower standards. We will also need to remain vigilant, as the act largely assigns powers rather than duties and lacks a strong regulatory framework. We may well lose thousands of farms through the multiple risks ahead: an uncertain support regime; basic payments reduced to 2027; trade deals threatening lower-standard imports; Brexit disruptions to markets and supply chains; and climate change impacts such as weather extremes.

As a result, we're working hard to influence the development of Environmental Land Management schemes, and securing the fair dealing rules, properly enforced, for suppliers. We're also trying to help secure better routes to market and innovative finance for agroecology alongside seeking fair, land-based climate action in the food system (in the run-up to the 2021 COP26 international climate change summit in Glasgow).

More immediately, we will be working hard to influence the draft Trade Bill. As a sop to campaigners, the government has put a temporary Trade and Agriculture Commission on a statutory footing, and (partially) expanded its membership and its lifespan. But it is actively trying to write public health out of its remit, giving rise to the question of who will be considering the impact of trade deals on our food standards, health and diets. What about increased residues of banned pesticides on imports? Who will protect us from the abuse of antibiotics in farm systems and increase our vulnerability to increased anti-microbial resistance? We'll continue to put these questions, and more, to the government.

Vicki Hird is Head of Farming at Sustain.
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Illustrations by Brad Cuzen
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The end of neoliberalism... *so, what next?*

Historian Rutger Bregman shares his optimism with **Russell Warfield**

Humankind was released with almost unbelievable timing. Just as this book came along, arguing that we are fundamentally cooperative and decent rather than competitive and selfish, the first wave of Covid-19 put the thesis to the test on a global scale. Rutger Bregman was vindicated. Yes, there were a few fights over toilet paper. But by and large, in every place, across every population, under every political system, people came together to protect one another.

"The response from the vast majority of people has been impressive and resilient, millions of people around the world radically adjusting their lifestyle to stop the virus spreading, and going against their own intuition," Bregman agrees. "We have evolved as a very social and physical species. We want to see each other, we want to feel each other, hear each other, touch each other, and all that has become much more difficult. But still people are willing to do what's necessary."

Although it resonates so strongly with the here and now, Bregman's book actually reaches back through the centuries to prosecute its case. At its base, *Humankind* sets up a dichotomy between Hobbes and Rousseau. Arguing that Hobbes' vision of human selfishness has become the entrenched view of human nature, Bregman seeks to reassert Rousseau's argument that the innate decency of humans is corrupted by civilisation.

In recent history, with neoliberal capitalism actively extolling greed and individualism as virtues, we internalised the Hobbesian view of human nature more than ever, and we began to perform it like never before. "People become what we assume they are," Bregman says. And we have assumed the worst of each other for decades now. However, he's optimistic that the tides are turning, and people are receptive to a different view of things.

"In the nineties, cynicism was the avant-garde, but now having a more hopeful view of human nature is becoming more and more popular," he says. "You can even see it on television, the kind of reality shows that are made. It used to all be like *Big Brother* and how horrible we can make people be to each other. Now we have *The Great British Bake Off* – people being nice to each other and having a good time."

This is not the first wave of change Bregman seems to have

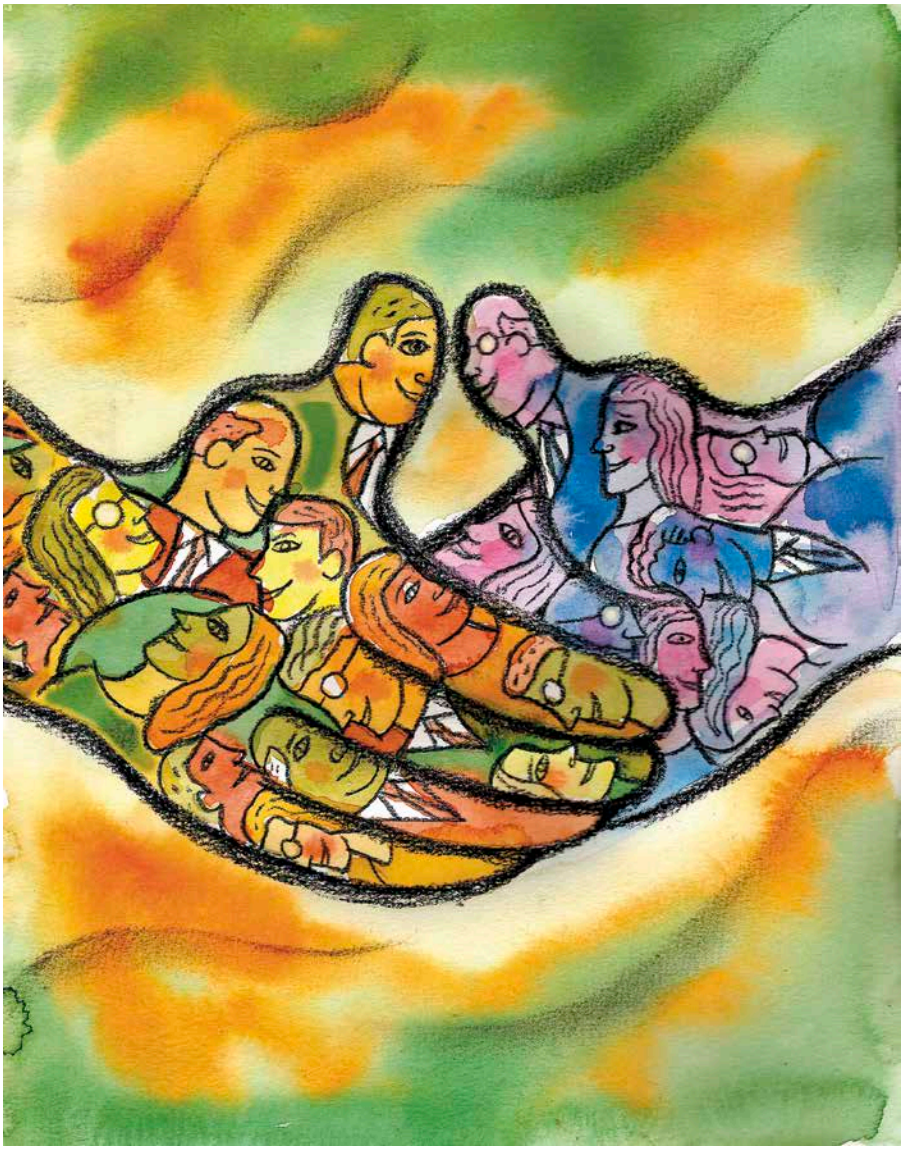
anticipated. The current moment has vindicated not only this rosier view of human nature, but also the arguments of his previous and first book, *Utopia for Realists*. Just a few years ago, arguing for a radical reduction in the working week and a universal basic income was a fringe position. Now Bregman jokes that his friends say he's mainstream and a defender of the status quo, as one liberal democracy after another dabbles in both policy areas as a response to the crisis.

"If you told anyone that five or ten years ago, people wouldn't have believed it," he agrees. "It's a very strong shift. What we're witnessing is the end of neoliberalism. The big question is what will replace it. I can tell you a hopeful story, or I can also tell you a very dark one."

Despite standing at a historic crossroads in modern history, Bregman is much more optimistic about the potential of transformative change today, compared to the aftermath of the financial crisis. That's thanks to the rich ecosystem of bold progressive ideas that have taken root in the public discourse in the last 20 years.

"I've always believed that crises are big opportunities," he says. "There's that famous Milton Friedman quote that in moments of crisis things depend on the ideas that are lying around. I've argued that the problem with the 2008 crisis was that we hadn't done our homework. We knew what we were against, but we didn't know what we were *for*."

I'm interested in testing the outer limits of his optimism, however. Of course, while Covid-19 has been devastating both for entire societies and for individual people and families visited by personal tragedy, it is also the case that – as far as potential pandemics go – we have been quite lucky. I ask him whether he thinks there are any limits to our natural inclination towards decency and solidarity, for instance under conditions of a pandemic that would result in near-certain death for anyone who caught it.



Artwork by Leon Zernitsky www.leonzernitsky.com

"I've always believed that crises are big opportunities"

Bregman won't be drawn on whether there is a specific tipping point where conditions become so intolerable for humans that we snap into full-blown Hobbesianism. But he underlines one point: "I'm not arguing that people are fundamentally *good*." He says that his one regret of the book is how easy it is to read on holiday with a glass of white wine and convince yourself that everything is going to be OK. Instead, he stresses that, often, it is difficult to do the morally right thing if it means going against the thinking of the community around you.

He tells me he's currently reading the diary of a Dutch resistance fighter who rescued 300 Jews during the war, but only by virtue of basically bullying those around him into doing the right thing. In every other area of his life, this man was deeply unpleasant. His marriage fell apart, he ended up in fights with all his friends, and he had to move around ten times.

Bregman gives this as an example of how moral courage and progress often, paradoxically, come from being quite a difficult person. He half jokes that this should be the subject of his next work. A self-help book about how to make life more difficult for yourself. "The book you wish you had never read," he laughs. I can't quite tell how serious he's being about the book itself, but it's very clear that he believes we're entering another period of history where basic decency isn't enough for a truly moral life.

"If you live in a social democratic Scandinavian country, life doesn't ask much of you. If you're a nice, decent person, that's good enough. But if it's true that we're moving into an era of climate breakdown, democracies going into trouble," he continues, "maybe... maybe that asks more of us." R

www.rutgerbregman.com

Russell Warfield is books commissioning editor for *Resurgence & Ecologist* and a freelance writer.

"What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?"

– Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Survival of the kindest

More experts are arguing in favour of human compassion, writes Julian Abel

At the same time as Rutger Bregman published *Humankind* in 2020, Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods published *Survival of the Friendliest*. Their work as evolutionary anthropologists has shown how friendliness and cooperation have been a driving evolutionary force that meant *Homo sapiens* predominated over the other many species of hominid. In the same year, Lindsay Clarke and I published *The Compassion Project*, describing the transformation of the town of Frome through the vision of Helen Kingston, the lead GP at Frome Medical Practice, and Jenny Hartnoll, who set up and has run the community development service of Health Connections Mendip. (See Issue 307.) We discuss in the book the profound implications and applicability of making best use of compassion in our educational institutions, our businesses and the environment, and the necessity of the transformation of the politics of compassion. Lying at the heart of environmental destruction is a lack of compassion. Unless the political will is present to have concern for our future and our children's future, the battle to stop continuing fossil-fuel emissions, loss of biodiversity and increasing consumerism will still rage.

In the hope of providing reasoning, emotion and inspiration, the *Survival of the Kindest* podcast on the Compassionate Communities UK website seeks to find tales of the presence and absence of compassion in the many spheres of life. Guests have spoken about the startling contrast of compassion and its lack to be found in the history of the Iraq war. The same shocking contrast can be heard through the tales of experiences

Illustration by Matt Booker www.mattbooker.co.uk

Three good reasons to be compassionate

Social relationships are more effective at keeping us alive and feeling healthy than diet, exercise or giving up smoking or drinking, and far more effective than drug treatment of high blood pressure. Robert Waldinger, fourth lead of the amazing Harvard and Glueck Studies of Adult Development, which have been observing the lives of men from Harvard and Boston since 1938, says: "There was a strong correlation between men's flourishing lives and their relationships with family, friends, and community. Those who kept warm relationships got to live longer and happier."

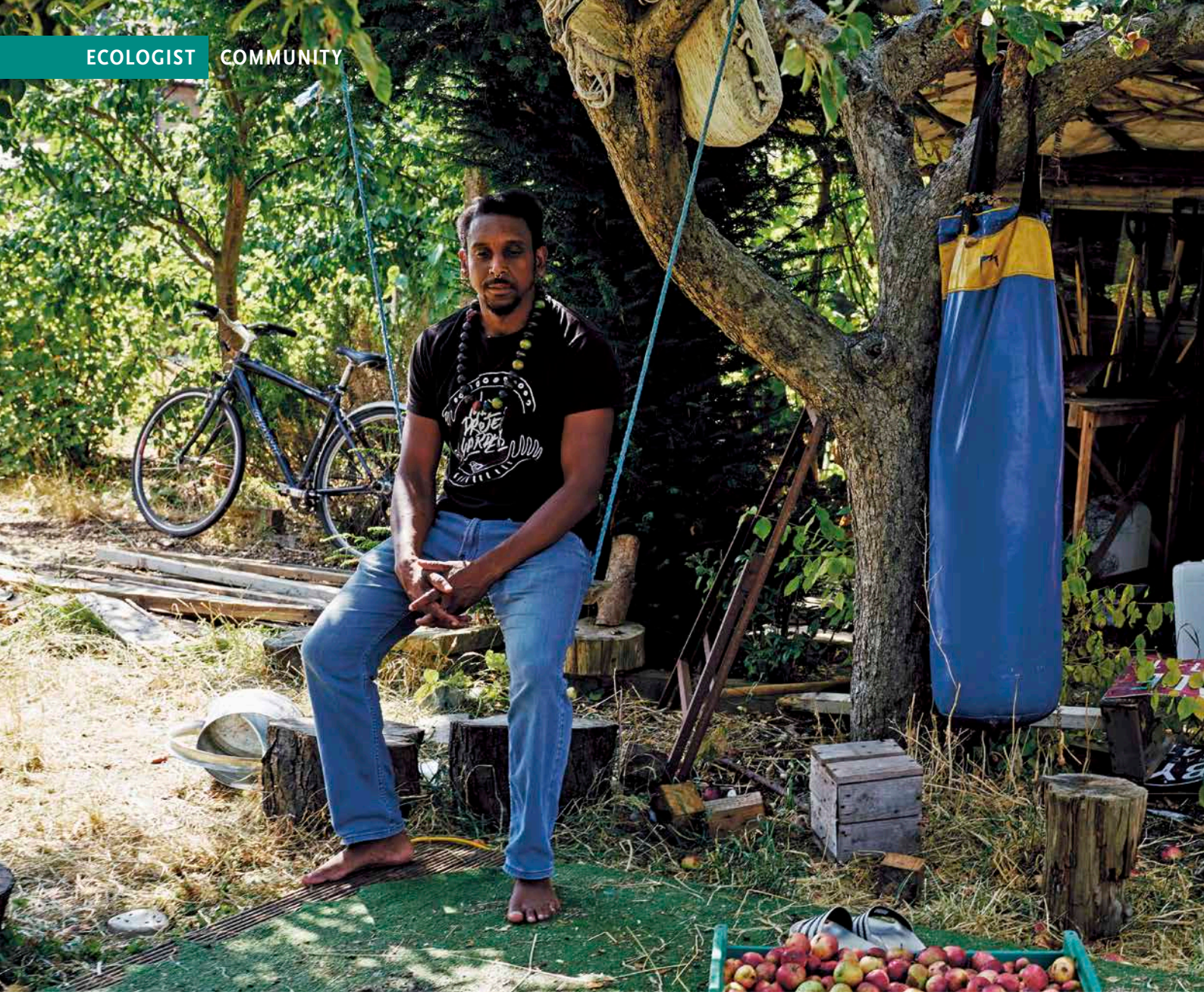
The converse of good social relationships, the impact of feeling lonely, is bad for our health. The sense of loneliness, whether this is amongst people or in isolation, increases risk of premature death by about one third.

Compassion is built into our evolution, not just in humans but in all animals with backbones. The hallmark of compassion and socialisation is the hormone oxytocin, which is present throughout the animal kingdom. Humans, the most social of animals, are the outcome of hundreds of millions of years of evolution, and we have survived through helping each other out. Survival of the kindest is a much better description of the importance of our social nature than survival of the fittest, which was coined by the 19th-century philosopher Herbert Spencer and was the start of social Darwinism.

of working with First Nation communities in Canada. Mary Lou Kelley, who started a programme of palliative care amongst these communities along with First Nation researcher Holly Prince, describes how European-centric culture focuses on independence. First Nation communities are more interested in interdependence, kinship with one another, with animals and with the environment. Oh, how we cry out for such kindness! And Jonathon Porritt discusses his latest book *Hope in Hell*. We have reason for hope, which he describes as more than being optimistic. Hope is the cause for action.

Signs of this great manifestation of hope can be seen all over the world. Extinction Rebellion and the schools protest started by Greta Thunberg follow the great tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience that has proved to be so effective in instigating change. Programmes of compassionate communities are developing across many continents, including North and South America, Australasia, Europe, and South and East Asia. And at last the good-heartedness of these initiatives is supported by the economic sense of concern for our future. The fossil-fuel industry is no longer a match for renewable energy production, with renewables now overtaking the largest oil industry company, Exxon, on stock markets. There is hope, but it will be the unstinting efforts of us all that will continue to make this compassion potential ripen across the globe.

Julian Abel is a consultant in palliative care and Director of Compassionate Communities UK. *The Compassion Project: A Case for Hope and Humankindness from the Town That Beat Loneliness* is published by Octopus Books (2020).
www.compassionate-communitiesuk.co.uk/podcast



Growing together

Ian Solomon-Kawall describes how being a primary carer led him to help marginalised Londoners

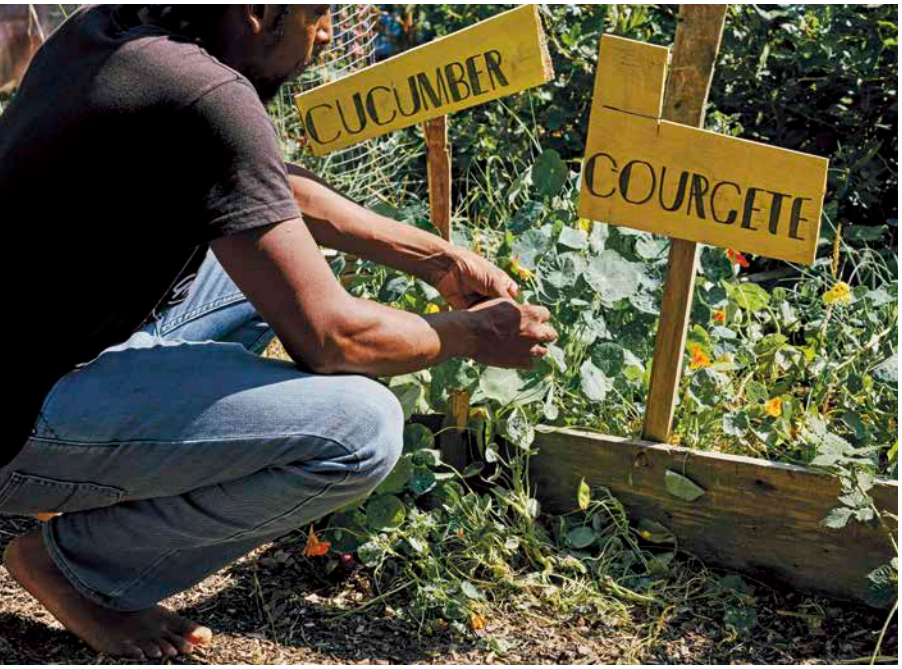
My mum had a very traumatic life. She was not happy and suffered from a multitude of mental and physical illnesses, including bipolar disorder, depression and alcoholism. I was her carer for 20 years before she passed away in 2005. I moved back to her council home a year before she passed and have fortunately been able to stay there since then.

Being a carer can be very isolating, so for the next step I wanted to create somewhere for people living locally who felt marginalised to have a nurturing place to go.

May Project Gardens began with the help of a friend of mine, Randi Mayers. Randi was what I call an Earth Man. A year after Mum transitioned, he started living in the garden. He was passionate about Nature and started converting the garden into a permaculture garden. Once I became more familiar with its principles and ethics, I realised that a lot of the work I had been doing already was permaculture, I just hadn't known it. Randi did not want to be credited in the project's name, so I suggested using part of his surname that was also my mum's first name, May.

One of the main strands of the project is our award-winning Hip Hop Garden, which engages

Photographs courtesy of May Project Gardens



urban youth with Nature through Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop is a tool to allow young people to express themselves in a universal language that transcends their geographic restrictions. It also captures their transformation as they spend more time in Nature. The programme is delivered through five modules: Wellbeing, Food, Hip Hop, Employment and Entrepreneurship, and Event Management. We make music and we grow and share food together in the space.

Hip Hop is the largest youth culture in the world and grew out of the rubble of the Bronx. It enabled people to transcend the hardship of the physical environment and create a world where they were completely free even if it was just for a moment. Iconic Hip Hop artist 2Pac called his album *The Rose That Grew from Concrete*, so the parallel between Nature and Hip Hop transcending inner cities is profound. As an artist I use Hip Hop to raise awareness and provide solutions to environmental issues. My latest release, 'L-I-T-T-E-R', commissioned by the Peak District National Park, was perfectly timed to address the amount of pollution that took place after and during lockdown in places of natural beauty such as parks and beaches.

The project has made a huge difference to a lot of people's lives, but running it can be very difficult. I am dyslexic but was only diagnosed three years ago, and for nine years there was no funding, as most funders require you to have the ability to write and read and process information in a logical sequence, rather than just relying on lived experience or track record, so I had to support the project out of my own pocket. Many people don't see the value of organising a space for people, or appreciate the expertise that it involves. I hold multiple roles on any given day. On an open day at the garden, for example, I'm a buddy, teacher, host, permaculture gardener and manager. These multiple roles are not recognised and not remunerated financially, so I have to draw finance from different streams to ensure I have sufficient funds. In 2020 we launched a fundraiser to raise £25,000 towards a deposit to buy the property from the council and secure our future. We managed to raise £18,000, but it took us five months to do so.

People come to the garden from a huge range of different backgrounds: refugees, asylum seekers, business people, permaculture enthusiasts and those who just want to be part of an alternative community based on values of humanity. Despite all this, they do have one thing in common: they come to us looking for connection – connection with Nature and with each other.

www.mayproject.org

Ian Solomon-Kawall is co-founder of May Project Gardens. To support the project visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/growmpg

The road ahead

Transport must be at the heart of a low-carbon future, writes Helen Beynon

In May 1992 I attended a rally against the building of the M3 motorway at Twyford Down in Hampshire. There were the usual speeches, but I wasn't listening. I was watching tiny spiders scurrying between flowers of wild thyme, rock rose and orchids. I took off my boots for a moment: to tread heavily on this land seemed a sacrilege. I started listening when someone shouted out – at the bottom of the hill the road builders were blocking a canal as part of the motorway construction. A great sweep of people surged down, pulled out the rubble and set the waters flowing again.

Rebecca Lush was one of those jailed in 1993 for her part in the protests at Twyford. Last year she joined seasoned transport campaigner Chris Todd at the Transport Action Network (TAN), putting into practice lessons learnt in road campaigns of the 1990s, supporting local campaign groups and helping them work together long before the bulldozers move in, when there is the only real chance of stopping a road. TAN is also opposing the government's current road-building plans through legal challenges that highlight the environmental threats posed by the UK government's second road investment strategy (RIS2).

Lush says that the impetus behind RIS2 is the same as in the 1990s, stemming from "politicians wedded to outdated thinking and vanity projects". Roads are justified on the grounds that they boost the economy and jobs, an impetus that has grown with the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In comparison, investment into alternatives to road transport remains comparatively insignificant.

> Rising carbon emissions have become central to objections to road building

RIS2 commits £27.4 billion to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) over the next five years, with £14.1 billion for 'capital enhancements' such as new roads or increasing the capacity of existing ones. Controversial schemes include the A303 Stonehenge road tunnel, where planning inspectorate recommendations to withhold consent, based on impacts on the World Heritage Site, were overruled by the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, last November. Proposed tunnel entrances would impose a major constructional feature on the sensitive prehistoric landscape surrounding the henge, and construction of the tunnel would damage both ancient features and artefacts in the subsoil. At Twyford, statutory measures to protect biodiversity, landscape and archaeology were ignored and led to concerns that the scheme would establish a dangerous precedent. The same fear has been voiced for Stonehenge, and Shapps's decision has attracted objections from UNESCO (the United Nations culture and heritage committee) as well as road campaigners and archaeologists.

Beyond Stonehenge, proposals such as the Arundel bypass in Sussex, the A417 in the Cotswolds, and the A66 in the Pennines pose threats to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or national parks, while urban schemes like the Silvertown Tunnel in London risk increases in local air pollution. Funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) is also available for road schemes proposed by local councils, such as the Norwich Western Link, which would impact chalk streams, ancient woods and a large colony of rare barbastelle bats. The rigour of scrutiny applied to

Artwork by Carry Ackroyd www.carryakroyd.co.uk
From *Tweet of the Day* by Brett Westwood and Stephen Moss (John Murray)

assessing these applications is being questioned by transport campaigners.

Since the 1990s, rising carbon emissions have become central to objections to road building. Lush says the government stance is that electric vehicles will sideline these concerns and that new roads are needed to meet an anticipated increase in traffic when electric vehicles make driving cheaper and greener. TAN and other transport campaigns believe that this stance ignores the carbon emitted from new roads between now and the widespread use of electric vehicles, coupled with emissions from embodied carbon, construction work, traffic increases and higher speeds.

A report by Transport for Quality of Life estimates that the total additional emissions between now and 2032 as a result of RIS2 will be about 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide ($MtCO_2$) – even without the possibility of out-of-town car-dependent developments that might result from more permissive planning policies. Increases will take place in a period when the UK needs to cut emissions by about 167$MtCO_2$ – negating around 80% of the potential carbon savings from electric vehicles on the SRN between now and 2032. The figures demonstrate that RIS2 is incompatible with the UK's legal obligation to cut carbon emissions in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and the emerging principles for the DfT's own decarbonisation plan.

Twyford Down is now a gaping chasm filled with traffic and fumes, a reminder of the destruction caused by many new roads and of how direct action campaigns in the 1990s were born from frustration when traditional campaigning had failed. Those protests are remembered for the noisy defeats of Twyford, the Newbury bypass, and more, but there were also quiet victories where road schemes were dropped or modified in the wake of intensive campaigning. Proposals at Salisbury, Hereford and the East London River Crossing at Oxleas Wood were shelved, and the Hindhead bypass in Surrey was redesigned and put in a tunnel to protect the landscape and biodiversity.

Will there be direct action again, born from the same frustration? Druids have already promised action at Stonehenge, and protests against the high-speed railway HS2 have shown how communities, ecologists and climate activists will almost certainly turn their attention to major infrastructure projects. There have been many changes in the last 30 years, but one thing remains certain: solutions to how we transport ourselves and our goods must be at the heart of our vision for a low-carbon future.

Helen Beynon is a writer, ecologist and environmental campaigner. www.twyfordrising.org

Photographs © Ramsey United

Poles apart

A leading scientist in Poland is using his personal story to deliver a stark message, writes **Anna Turns**

A new documentary, *It's Okay to Panic,* is a compelling story about a high-ranking Polish climate scientist's mission to convince people that climate change is a real and imminent problem. "Many of us don't realise the climate catastrophe is coming and this is the very last moment that we can do something about it," says Szymon Malinowski, 62, director of the Institute of Geophysics at the University of Warsaw, at the start of the film. "I can't stop thinking about it and I try to tell everyone because we must wake up."

The professional climate educator is rational yet emotionally connected, despite science rarely being associated with feelings or instinct. He fears that continued inaction will cause ecological, social and economic collapse, but he remains hopeful, explaining to me via video link from his Polish laboratory, "I am a positive person, so I am frustrated that there's so much talking and no action, but there has been a visible shift in public opinion in the last couple of years. It is not yet strong enough to ensure reasonable action, but people are beginning to recognise the problem."

For the past 15 years, Malinowski has tried to warn the public and the government about the scale of the climate crisis in Poland. He paints a complex picture in an articulate manner and he now insists that Poland and the world need a sudden system change, stating, "We're reaching the limits of this growth." But he explains that most Polish people are "pretty passive" and that it is imperative that the majority of the leadership in power be convinced of the urgent need for a transition to net zero before any rapid change can be expected.

Poland is the fastest-growing economy in Europe, yet as the EU begins to make plans for a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, Malinowski agrees that Poland is an outlier in terms of this transition. "The problem is pretty complicated and we are looking for simple solutions, but climate is a very clear example that our current approach does not work any more," he tells me.

Poland relies on coal for 80% of its electricity production, but Malinowski maintains that the biggest problem is total emissions. "The issue is our dependence on carbon. Any type of energy production has an environmental impact," he explains. "General energy use includes transportation and [heating] homes with oil and natural gas. The way we use the energy is absolutely wasteful. We need a carbon tax – people would learn very quickly."

Malinowski describes the current economic model as "decoupled" from the physical world: "It's completely disconnected from any kind of natural interactions – we don't pay for the environmental services or damage to the environment, so the costs are externalised to future generations." But things are beginning to change. A year ago a big coal plant in Poland was abandoned, and the government has made its first agreement with the miners that coal mining has to be stopped before 2049. The youth climate strikes that have barely been acknowledged by the government are now starting to have a very small impact, as Malinowski explains: "Recently, in one of the documents from the ministry of education, there was a short note about the need for climate education. It was just one sentence but it appeared for the first time ever. It's a tiny sign that some things are changing. We have to have hope."

"The issue is our dependence on carbon. Any type of energy production has an environmental impact"

American film-maker Jonathan L. Ramsey, who directed the documentary, hopes it will be a catalyst for instigating positive change across Poland: "This is an intimate portrait of Malinowski's life and mission, and hopefully it can be a good tool to change the world at this special time in history."

In the film, Malinowski revisits the impressive hydropower plant engineered by his father in the 1970s and 1980s, which now serves as a renewable buffer for the power grid. When there is excess power in the grid, it uses the spare power to pump water to the higher reservoir, and when the grid doesn't have enough power, it uses water to generate more. Thinking back to his father's legacy, he muses: "It's crucial to leave behind a couple of things that others will simply appreciate. And Father did. Not only this power plant, but he also left us." He agrees that his father was "quite forward-thinking" with his careful approach to Nature, and above all he remains optimistic, saying: "It's better to do something now than nothing at all."

www.itsokaytopanic.org

Anna Turns is a freelance journalist.

Real heroes

Rivera Sun describes how research for a novel led her to become an activist

Midnight, eight years ago: the moonlight poured in through the windows of my earthship house. The manuscript of my novel *The Dandelion Insurrection* was sitting at dead halt on the desk. The clock ticked and tocked in annoying tyranny. My characters were in trouble. I'd posited a hidden corporate dictatorship in a fictional United States "just around the corner of today". My plucky activists had launched their bold little rebellion. But now, they – I – had a problem: how was I going to get them out of that mess?

I was a young activist, midwifed into action by the glorious madness that was the Occupy movement. I didn't have a clue what made movements tick. I had no idea how a bunch of fictional activists could tackle a hidden corporate dictatorship.

When you tap into the history and power of nonviolent struggle, it upends your understanding of the world

So I did what any self-respecting millennial would do. I googled it.

"How to bring down dictators . . . nonviolently", I typed.

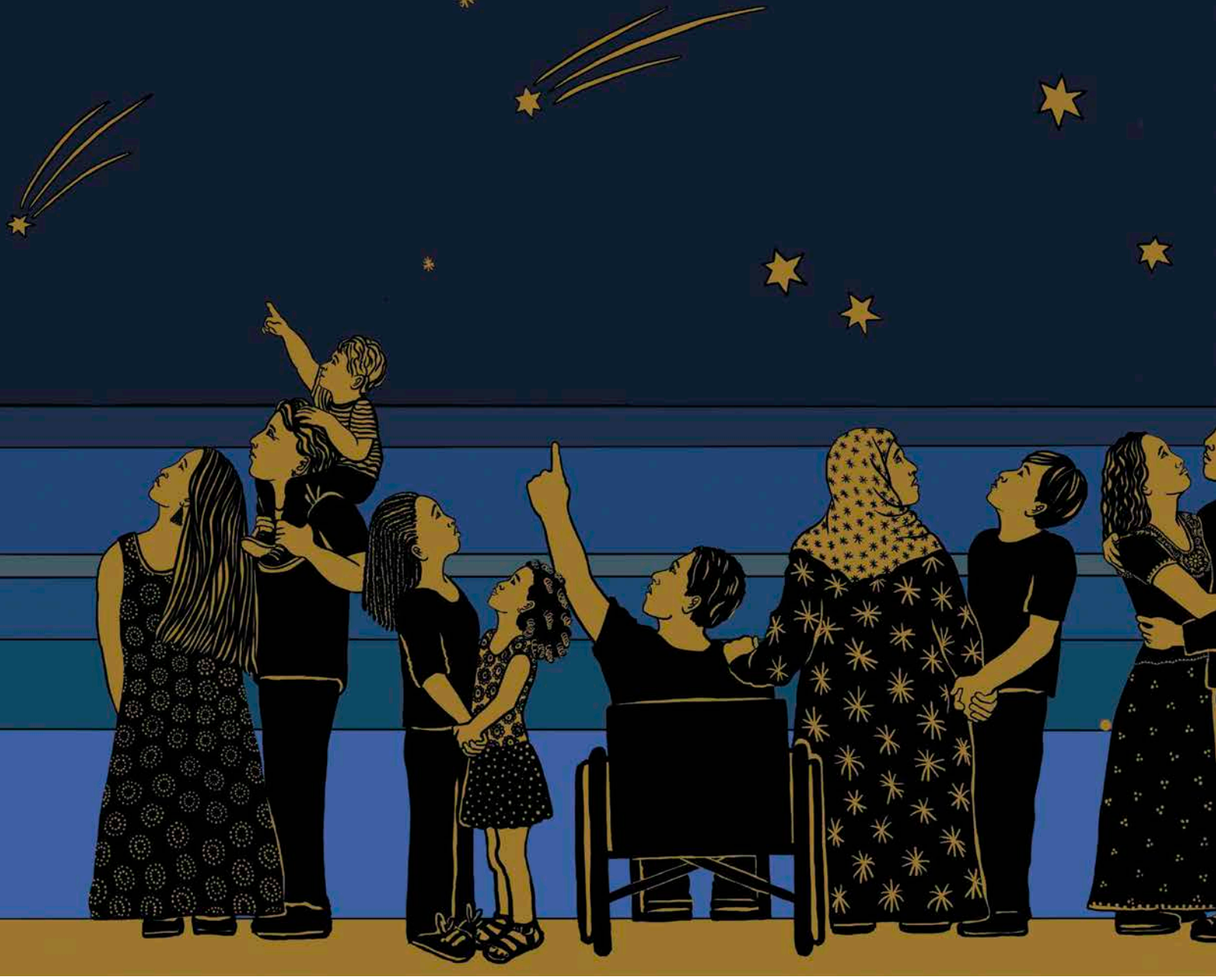
That last word was a hat-tip to my father's ghost. He had been a conscientious objector and an organiser against the Vietnam War. I could hear him lecturing me about how violence doesn't fix anything, war is murder, and you can't solve a problem with the same thinking that caused it. He'd never leave me alone if I advocated for violent revolution, even in the context of a novel.

At the time, I thought the search engine might kick back something on Gandhi and King, or maybe Ursula K. Le Guin had written some speculative fiction about nonviolence. (It turned out she had, but I was still years away from reading *The Eye of the Heron,* let alone Starhawk's *Fifth Sacred Thing.*) Luckily for me, the internet churned out answers – 4 million hits' worth, to be precise. One fellow, Gene Sharp, had even written a handy 90-page pdf that could be downloaded for free.

Why not? I thought, and printed out a copy of *From Dictatorship to Democracy.*

Just like that, my life lurched in a new direction.

When you tap into the history and power of nonviolent struggle, it upends your understanding of the world. The tools of nonviolent struggle come from the blood, sweat and tears – the heroic efforts – of ordinary, extraordinary people around the globe. Nonviolence is as old as the hills – or the pyramids, as a strike of Egyptian pyramid builders in 1170 BCE shows. For millennia it has been used to liberate oppressed peoples and win socio-political rights. It has saved forests, like the original tree-huggers, the Bishnois, did in India in 1730, later inspiring their successors, the Chipko



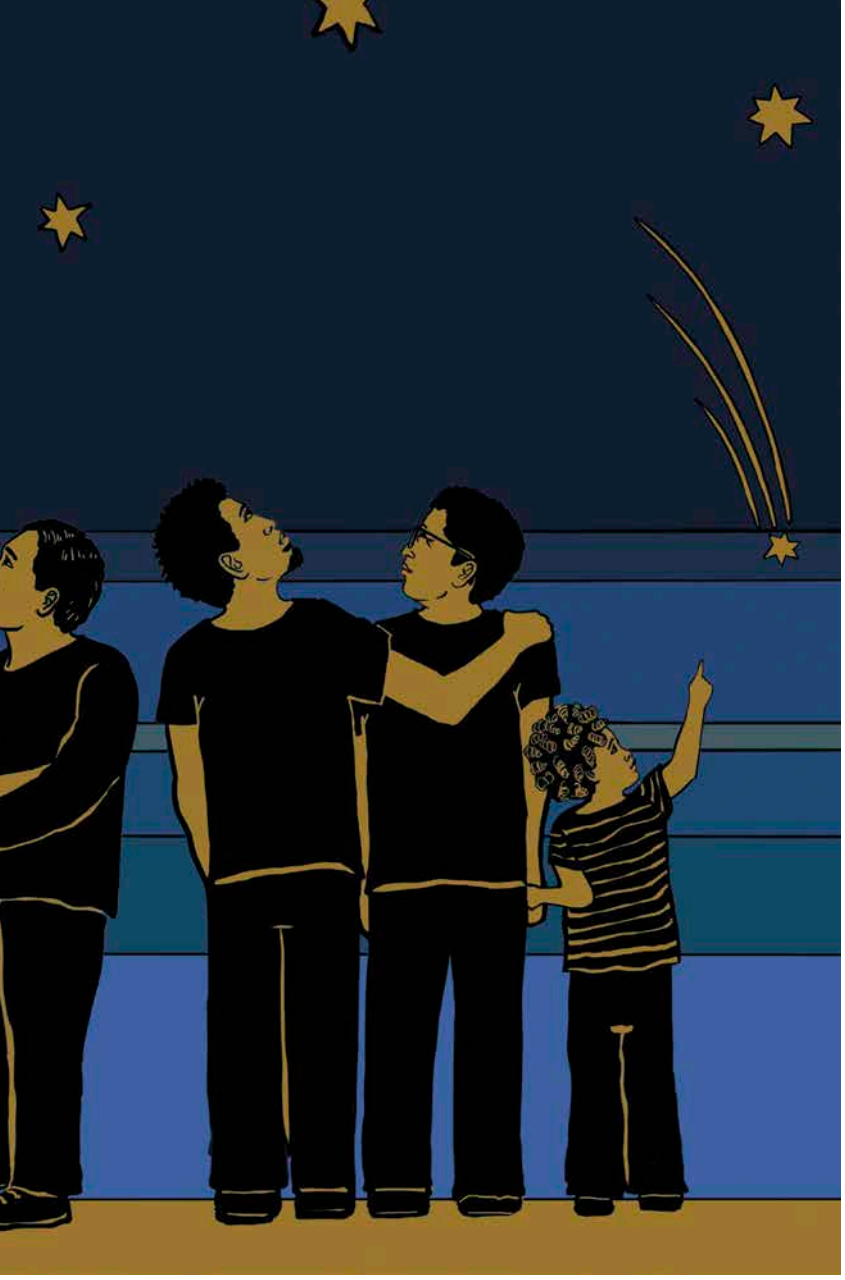
movement, in the 1970s. It has stopped wars like the Second Liberian Civil War and ended occupations, like Gandhi ousting the British. It has won workers' rights, women's suffrage, racial justice, environmental protections, and more.

In researching for *The Dandelion Insurrection*, I spent weeks reading the Global Nonviolent Action Database, exploring case study after case study. Each time I heard a brilliant strategy or tactic, I jotted down a note on how to use it in the novel.

As fast as I learned, I wrote. I revised chapter after chapter. I improved the strategy of my characters' movement. I learned to think beyond the typical US belief that if we just shout loud enough, change will happen. When I was 18, I saw first-hand that this approach couldn't stop the Iraq War despite mobilising the largest demonstrations in history. So, older and determined to be wiser, I dug into the research to learn what was truly effective. Over and over, I saw that movements succeeded when people refused to go along with injustice. We had to stop cooperating with dictators. We had to quit playing their games. We had to disrupt life-as-usual. We had to bring business to a grinding halt. That's when traditional power holders concede to the demands of a popular movement. Using this approach, nonviolent struggle has been shown to be twice as effective as violent means.

Why do we still teach that violence is the best – or only – solution to our problems?

I'll admit that I was obsessed. For the first time in my life I felt powerful. I felt like I understood how we could solve the problems we face. Nonviolence was a science, an art, a philosophy and a phenomenal toolbox. There are over 300 methods of nonviolent struggle, from strikes to boycotts, protests, occupations, blockades, shut-downs, sit-ins, walk-outs, rallies, marches, and more. I printed out Sharp's *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action* and read the accompanying book that offered case studies of each method. If these were the tools in the toolbox, I wanted to understand engineering and design, architecture and blueprints, crew management and construction. These were the tools to build a new



Artwork by Jen Bloomer / Radici Studios radicistudios.com

world and deconstruct the injustices of the old one.

In applying all this to the scenarios for my fictional movement, I wound up giving myself a robust education in how nonviolent struggle works. As *The Dandelion Insurrection* launched into the world, readers started inviting me to do readings in their communities. I agreed, on one condition: that we also hold a workshop to share the knowledge of nonviolent struggle. Over the years, I've facilitated hundreds of workshops and trained thousands of people. I've unpacked the toolbox of nonviolent struggle with as many communities as possible. I wrote a study guide to summarise the stack of books I had read. I adapted to online teaching, first to cut down on my carbon footprint, and then to adjust to the pandemic restrictions.

I firmly believe – then and now – that everyone should know these powerful strategies and tools. One person alone can't wield nonviolence the way millions of us can together. Despite this knowledge being as vitally important as learning to read and write, our standard educational system fails to teach us how to make change with the most effective tools ever invented.

How could I not know this? I remember asking myself as I read through a pile of books on nonviolent struggle that was nearly as tall as I am. The knowledge of how ordinary people can create extraordinary change seemed like a critical piece of information in a world plagued with injustice and threatened by existential crisis.

To me, the stories of nonviolent struggle are the heroic epics we all need to know

If this nonviolence stuff *works,* I wondered, why do we still teach that violence is the best – or only – solution to our problems?

It's not only academia and the news media that promote this false notion. In entertainment and literature, we are still churning out thousands of novels and films each year that depict violence as heroic, necessary and the best option. Nonviolent plot twists rarely appear in these stories. I found myself growing angry that the stories our culture tells us are not empowering us with the skills we need in these times. Every child I knew could list a dozen weapons – swords, guns, knives, daggers, bows and arrows, spears, cannons, bombs, and so on – but if I asked them to name nonviolent actions, they furrowed their brows and sometimes mentioned protests.

What would stories be like if we replaced violence with nonviolence, weapons with nonviolent tools? What would our world be like if children knew how to use boycotts, strikes, blockades, and the rest of the 300+ methods of nonviolent struggle? To me, the stories of nonviolent struggle are the heroic epics we all need to know. We should draw upon their source material to inspire our fictional novels, our superhero movies, our folk tales and our urban legends. They should be the examples we carry in our hearts as we move into action in our world. This is what I strive to do with my novels.

Since that midnight writing session eight years ago, *The Dandelion Insurrection* has grown into a trilogy including *The Roots of Resistance* and *Winds of Change*. The novels have been read in tree-sits and on the frontlines of activist blockades. They've been taught in resistance studies in universities and read in book clubs at peace and justice centres. Words from the books have been spoken at rallies, filibusters, teach-ins, and memorial services honouring life-long activists. These stories have stepped off the page and into the lives of changemakers. In doing so, they have honoured the lineage of nonviolence that inspired its actions, and returned that inspiration to the hearts of people working for change.

Activist and author Rivera Sun has written numerous books and novels, including *The Dandelion Insurrection* and *The Ari Ara Series*. She is the editor of Nonviolence News and a trainer in strategy for nonviolent movements. www.riverasun.com

Stream of life

Rivers have many powers: they carry sediments and sentiments, revive lands and minds, connect places and times. They are sources of life and of conflict; paths of stories travelling the Earth. Their flow continually reminds us – we all live downstream, or upstream, from someone, we are all neighbours.

Monika Vaicenavičienė

Author and illustrator of *What Is a River?*
to be published in English by Enchanted Lion Books in March

What Is a River? is a picture book is about rivers and the plentiful connections they have with us, humans. It follows a child and her grandma as they look for answers to a question – what is a river? In their imaginary expedition, they discover rivers flowing in the sky and living organisms; meet pilgrims and conquistadores, magical shape-shifting river dolphins and older-than-dinosaurs species of sturgeon; fish and bathe; and explore many other things.

Drawing on geographical, historical and mythological references, and personal observations, the book brings together both factually accurate and poetic storytelling to create a story of interconnectedness and wonder.

monika.vaicenaviciene.com/what-is-a-river

Wholesome flow

Vandana K investigates the twists and turns of grassroots activism to save India's waterways

Having grown up next to the Vishwamitri River in the 1970s, Rohit Prajapati remembers its abundance of life: buffaloes drinking from the water, farmers using it to irrigate their fields, and local people fishing for carp. As he grew older, however, the river began to change. From the banks of this 80-kilometre waterway, which flows through the western state of Gujarat in India, Prajapati saw that people who bathed there were getting skin infections, buffaloes were sickening, and municipal rubbish was being dumped into the water. In 1996 he decided enough was enough, and he and some college friends helped set up Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, a voluntary organisation that looked at the environment as a livelihood issue, an important part of this being the life of the river.

"We have built leadership from the ground up," he told me. "We support locals who are affected by pollution directly by training them in data documentation. We take photos and collect water samples regularly to get them tested. We write very detailed reports and communicate regularly with authorities."

Their passion has won results. "While dumping of waste in the river has stopped on a large scale, it is still happening. The struggle to protect the river is still on," said Prajapati.

In 2016, he and his fellow activists filed a petition to the National Green Tribunal, a judicial body that looks into environmental issues in India. They opposed a riverfront development project proposing to construct within 500 metres of the Vishwamitri. As a result of the petition, the project was officially withdrawn.

The campaign to rejuvenate the Vishwamitri is one of many grassroots movements in India against river pollution. India is home to seven major river systems, made up of 400 rivers. During 2018, 351 polluted stretches were identified on 323 of these rivers, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board, a government body responsible for promoting clean rivers and preventing pollution. The main causes of water pollution in India are disposal of domestic sewage, industrial effluent and solid waste into water bodies, the construction of big dams that obstruct the flow of rivers, making them more vulnerable to pollution, and the encroachment of construction on floodplains.

People power

People's movements for rivers in India can be traced back to the 1980s, when the Narmada Bachao Andolan ('Movement to Save the Narmada') was formed to protest against the construction of many big dams on the Narmada River, which flows through western India. This model of nonviolent Gandhian protest through solidarity marches, hunger strikes and litigation continues to this day.

Photograph © Sunil Ghosh / Hindustan Times via Getty Images

Hindu seers from Matri Sadan, an ashram in Haridwar in north India, have undertaken many long fasts to protect the Ganga, a river that serves 400 million people and is the country's most sacred. Tarun Bharat Sangh, an NGO founded by water conservationist Rajendra Singh, also known as 'India's Waterman', joined the ashram's efforts by running a national campaign. As a result, in 2009 the government of India declared the Ganga a National River and formed the National Ganga River Basin Authority. Despite this official milestone, change did not come. In 2018, GD Agarwal, an 86-year-old seer from Matri Sadan, died after 111 days of fasting to oppose sand mining and hydropower projects in the Ganga. His demands were never met.

In 2006, a group of individuals and organisations formed Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan, which means 'Long live Yamuna' in Hindi, to take up the cause of the Yamuna River, which flows through the capital, Delhi. As an advocacy campaign, they have filed petitions to the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and the National Green Tribunal to get justice for the Yamuna. In 2015, the tribunal gave a

historic judgment promising to rejuvenate the Yamuna over a series of phases. The group continues to push for this order to be implemented and keeps an eye out for any new threats to the river.

"For a long time, people believed that a river needs cleaning, which is a myth," Manoj Misra, convener of the group, told me. "We need to understand the river as a system. Cleaning is one aspect of it, and if you just focus on that you miss the larger picture. The wholesome flow of a river is a natural consequence of a revived river."

In 2017, Rally for Rivers was launched by the Isha Foundation, an organisation led by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, a popular Hindu spiritual leader. The campaign, which focuses on planting belts of trees alongside rivers to stabilise the soil and increase the flow of water, has garnered media attention and celebrity endorsements. According to the Rally for Rivers website, the campaign was supported by 162 million people. It resulted in the formation of an executive committee by the prime minister's office to look into the recommendations made by the campaign, along with the signing of memorandums of understanding for river revitalisation between the Isha Foundation and six state governments. Two of these state governments and the Ministry of Water Resources committed to planting 850 million trees in total, and Rally for Rivers launched projects to revitalise the Waghadi River in Maharashtra and the Cauvery River in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. However, the campaign has attracted criticism for lacking a scientifically sound approach and for ignoring larger issues that plague rivers, such as pollution, dam construction and sand mining.

The whole system

"In India there are a large number of local and small efforts tied to the conservation and protection of rivers, which collectively give hope," said Himanshu Thakkar, coordinator of South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, an informal network of organisations and people working on issues of water in the region. "There are many instances where these groups have managed to bring about some change temporarily in a stretch of a river. In some cases, they have also brought long-term change or stopped the worst from happening. Unfortunately, it has not led to change in the governance of river pollution."

"Local campaigns don't highlight larger issues. They have not understood the interconnection of complex issues," said Suresh Kumar Rohilla, senior director of the water programme at the Centre for Science and Environment, a policy research think tank based in Delhi.

The movement against river pollution in India is not without other difficulties. Last year, the government passed a bill that restricts NGOs in India from receiving funds from foreign donors. "The space for civil society is shrinking. Small organisations struggle with attracting funds as well as workers. It is not an easy situation and it is challenging to continue work with what is available," said Misra. He fears that in the short term the movement will suffer badly and many small organisations may close down.

Despite this, Misra is positive that the movement for rivers will bounce back in time: "This situation is transient. Regimes change and spaces reappear. That's where hope stands."

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

Volunteers help clean the Yamuna River as part of the Clean India Mission

Stills from Beavers: Nature's Ecosystem Engineers by Lauren Cook for Beaver Trust @laurens_colours
lodge.beavertrust.org/media-hub

Rewilding Britain's waterways

Marianne Brown meets 'beaver man' Derek Gow

The road to Derek Gow's farm is muddy and wet and often indistinguishable from the ditches at either side. Much of the track is flanked with 'improved' grassland, ground dominated by grass species that outcompete native flowers and fine grasses. This dearth of biodiversity is typical of the landscape here in West Devon, but Gow's 300-acre patch promises something quite different. The farm, home to his wildlife consultancy business, breeds wild animals for reintroduction: mostly water voles, but he also houses wild cats and storks. Since he bought it in 2006, much has already been transformed by some of his most storied residents: beavers.

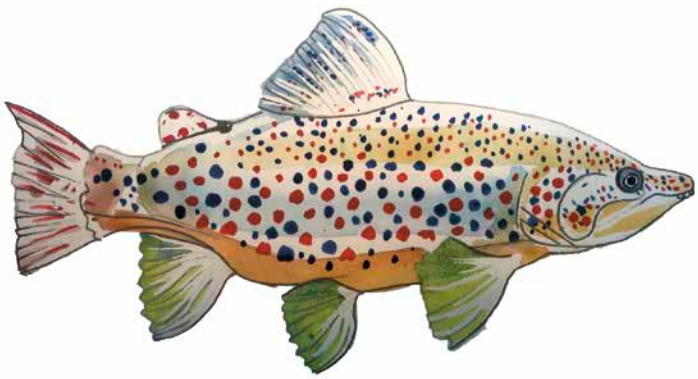
Beavers, Europe's largest rodent, are a keystone species, transforming the landscape around them and creating habitats for numerous other creatures. Their dams, built in shallow rivers and waterways, provide nurseries for fish and other water-dwelling critters, and the clearings they create by cutting

down trees for food and material for their dams and lodges give space for wild flowers and pollinators. Riparian trees like willow, black poplar and rowan have evolved to accommodate the habits of these toothy herbivores.

The animals have been doing this for the last 40 million years, and in the Anthropocene their presence on our waterways has other benefits too. By slowing the flow of water with their dams, beavers can not only reduce the risk of flooding downstream, but also help the land retain water in times of drought. Added to this, the dams can help reduce pollution by trapping agricultural runoff and preventing it from flowing downstream. As if *that* weren't enough, wetlands like the ones beavers create can store up to five times more carbon than dry areas. Britain is one of the most Nature-depleted countries in the world, ranked 189th out of 218. So why aren't there legions of beavers across this island helping us sort out our ecological crisis?

The answer is that there might have been if we hadn't killed them all. Hunted to extinction for their fur, scent glands and meat, the last beavers in Britain disappeared in the 1500s. Thanks to people like Derek Gow (or 'Beaver Man', as he is described by Alastair Driver, director of Rewilding Britain) they are coming back.

The first official reintroduction of beavers in Britain took place in Kent in 2002, and today there are an estimated 550 beavers in the UK – not many compared to Germany (35,000) and Poland (125,000), but the situation is hopeful. "The idea of having beavers in the landscape [in Britain] is light years away from where it was a quarter of a century ago," Gow tells me.



As a Nature conservationist, Gow has spent much of his career arguing the case for the restoration of beavers. In his book *Bringing Back the Beaver* (Chelsea Green, 2020), he describes battling senseless levels of bureaucracy, misinformation and agonising caution, in the crusade led by him and other specialists to enable the return of these ecosystem engineers. As well as his keen powers of observation and belligerent wit, he pulls no punches in communicating the urgency of our situation.

A large part of the problem is bringing beavers back into a micromanaged landscape reserved entirely for industrial farming. As well as breeding beavers at his farm, Gow translocates others from Tayside, Scotland, where conflict with farmers has led to culling. Beavers were given European Protected Species status in May 2019, meaning they could only be shot under licence. However, out of an estimated 450 beavers in the Tay catchment, 87 were officially culled in Tayside in 2019, a move that prompted widespread condemnation in the media.

A recent opinion poll commissioned by The Scottish Rewilding Alliance showed that 66% of Scots thought beavers should be translocated instead of being killed when they needed managing. Only 5% disagreed. This public support bodes well for the beavers, Gow says, but changing the attitudes of many farmers is going to require political will. "A much wider part of society is saying: we want Nature, we want to live in a landscape where other things live too. We do not want to live in a landscape where everything dies and we pay for it."

Gow blames farming subsidies for encouraging many farmers to seek to preserve the post-world-war-two farming landscape. Up until Brexit, the UK government paid farmers nearly £3 billion as part of the Common Agricultural Policy. I ask Gow if there is any hope post Brexit that farmers could be paid to have beavers on their land. "It's certainly something that's been talked about," he says. "There's a strong hope that, with the 25-year environment plan, farmers are going to get paid to actually produce Nature. Now, quite how that's going to translate we don't know."

The tide for restoration has emphatically turned, Gow says. Following the successful five-year beaver trial on the river Otter in East Devon, the government promised a consultation on the management of beavers in the wild. Gow is optimistic about the results. "At the moment we're treading water, putting licence applications into Natural England for small projects, enclosed projects or single isolated river systems. But when this decision is reached we'll move to bigger and bigger projects."

Marianne Brown is editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine.

Derek Gow will be speaking at a Resurgence event later this year. For more information visit www.resurgenceevents.org/events

Wood engravings by Nancy Haver www.nancyhaver.com

Understanding the current

Lisa Schneidau listens to the lessons of old tales

Britain and Ireland hold over 4,000 miles of watercourse, depending on how you define a river. From source to babbling brook, down through flood plain to the sea, our rivers are the circulatory system of our landscape, shaping our environment and being shaped in turn. They are part of the miraculous global cycle of water.

However, the untamed and changing nature of our rivers has been manipulated by people over many centuries, from the time that water was used to transport the Stonehenge sarsens over 6,000 years ago. Rivers clean, drain, wash and dilute; they transport us, create energy and give us water to irrigate crops. Rivers soothe us, inspire us and give us space to play. As a result, as with other wildlife habitats, there are no rivers in Britain and Ireland that can be claimed as completely natural or wild.

Look more closely at your nearest watercourse, and you will discover that beyond any notion of being tamed, our rivers have been sick for some time. The ever-increasing intensification of our farming systems means that some rivers are no more than large industrial drains, while others are choked with sediment and nutrients. Stocks of salmon and trout are in sharp decline. Water Framework Directive data show that 65.7% of water bodies in Scotland, 52.8% in the Republic of Ireland, 40% in Wales, 31% in Northern Ireland and just 16% of water bodies in England were in good ecological status in 2018 and 2019.

We are getting something very wrong with our rivers, and yet they can still bite back. As storm incidence increases with climate change, and water rushes down through denuded catchments that cannot soak it up, society is struggling with flood risk and major flood events. The same voices that want to dredge, engineer and control our rivers will only get louder in response.

As an environmentalist, a folklorist and a storyteller, I am curious about the stories of our rivers. How do our folk tales reflect society's historical relationship with rivers? Could they help inspire our actions to improve matters now?

Dangerous waters

Throughout these islands, rivers have long been given names and assumed characters, and sometimes they have been deified: think of Old Father Thames, or Sabrina/Hafren (the river Severn). This reflects the living nature of rivers, but also their power – in the rush of water or in the still deep pools, rivers can kill. Selkies in Scotland, morgens in Wales, and grindylows in England are supernatural creatures from our folklore ever ready to lure unsuspecting humans into deep water.

A favourite character of mine is Jenny Greenteeth, a water hag from north-west England whose spindly fingers grab careless children from the riverbank and drag them to a watery death. It's easy to imagine Jenny in a modern river, caked with sewage fungus, her eyes crawling with bloodworms, her teeth slimy with weed: pollution makes her even scarier. But in the days when a trip to the river was part of the daily routine, to collect water and to wash, perhaps these stories were a practical warning too.

> Folklore and folk tales about the environment can give us useful pause for thought

Other river monsters are more subtle. The river Dart in south Devon has a piskie character that calls curious farm workers with the plaintive cry, "Jan Coo! Jan Coo!" This story gave rise to the rhyme: "River Dart, river Dart, every year you claim a heart," which sadly still seems to hold true to this day.

Underwater mystery

River ecosystems are largely hidden from human eyes, and in the old days people who understood the magic of British rivers were wise indeed. Celtic mythology abounds with tales of the sacred salmon, a mysterious beast that leaps and travels against the flow, swims in fresh and salt water, and covers great distances to return to the place of its birth. The salmon often appears in our folklore

together with the hazel tree, also a mercurial bringer of wisdom.

An early story of the Irish hero Fionn mac Cumhaill tells of a salmon that ate nine hazelnuts from the trees overhanging the Well of Wisdom on the river Boyne. The salmon acquired all the wisdom in the world, and after many years it was caught by the old druid Finegas, who knew that if he ate the flesh of the fish he would gain its wisdom. Finegas told his student Fionn to watch over the fish as it sizzled on the fire. A drop of hot fat from the salmon's skin fell onto Fionn's thumb and, unthinking, he put it to his mouth, so it was Fionn who gained the wisdom. After that time, all Fionn had to do when he needed wisdom was to bite his own thumb.

There's a powerful story from County Durham concerning the young John Lambton, a wilful fellow who instead of attending church one morning decided to go fishing in the river Wear. An old man warned him that no good would come of his actions, but John stayed by the river all morning, catching nothing until the very last minute, when he fished out a small, salamander-like creature with nine holes on each side of its head. "This must be the Devil himself!" John Lambton boasted, but after a while, bored and chided again by the old man, he disposed of the creature down an old well.

Years went by, and John went off to the Crusades. It was only when livestock started to disappear that the locals realised something was wrong. The worm, now grown, was so huge that it had coiled itself around a local hill seven times, and it set about terrorising the neighbourhood, eating sheep, cattle and children. John Lambton, returned from the crusades, battled with the great beast and killed it, with the aid of witchcraft. However, he didn't follow all the advice he'd been given and this resulted in a family curse that lasted through the generations.

It's a story about the consequences of irresponsible actions, and of bringing monsters to light but not dealing with them properly. With respect to the state of our rivers, and the consequences of their poor management, no further interpretation is needed.

Folklore and folk tales about the environment can give us useful pause for thought, and these river stories are no exception. Will we be wise enough to know when to respect rivers, to give something back and put right the damage we have done, and to leave more space for rivers to become wilder again? Or will we continue, blind to our impacts and our pollutions, to push things too far? R

Lisa Schneidau is an ecologist, author and professional storyteller. Her latest book *Woodland Folk Tales of Britain and Ireland* is published by The History Press. Her book on river folk tales will be out next year. Join the Resurgence readers group on 12 March to discuss Lisa's article. www.lisaschneidau.co.uk

The source of life

Li An Phoa walks 900 kilometres to campaign for drinkable rivers

The source of the Meuse, the river I grew up next to, lies on the side of an asphalted road in rural northern France. Cars rush by the small grey stone monument that marks the watershed of the river. It is raining, exactly what I had hoped for. All these raindrops are the true source of the Meuse. Rain that falls here ends up in the North Sea, everything that falls just south of here flows via the Saône to the Rhône into the Mediterranean, and raindrops that fall a bit more to the west will contribute to the Marne, flow into the Seine and through Paris, and end up in the Atlantic.

The barely 400m-high Langres Plateau is not known as a spectacular tourist destination, but it is of major significance for all life in the three watersheds that meet here. From this source, all life downstream is dependent, whether it be larvae, fish eggs, birds of prey, drinking water for people, or irrigation for the fields. Inside the watershed, the Meuse provides water to 9 million people, and to 7 million people outside the watershed. In cities including Brussels, Antwerp, The Hague and Rotterdam, and the whole Dutch province of Zeeland, people drink treated surface water from the Meuse.

Sources are holy places that you need to approach in silence and with respect. That's what I learned from Mona Polacca, one of the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, an international alliance of elders that focuses on issues such as the environment and human rights. If anywhere, the source should be the place where drinking straight from the river should be possible and normal, but as I look around and see the cows in the pastureland all around I am cautious about taking a sip – microbes in dung, pesticides and chemical fertilisers have probably affected the water quality. I do so anyway.

I have been thinking about drinkable rivers ever since 2005 when I drank from the Rupert River during a canoe trip in subarctic Québec. When I returned three years later, the water was no longer drinkable, having been polluted as a result of dams and mining. Fish died, people got ill. I realised that the water quality in our rivers is the result of what happens in the entire watershed, of all of our actions every day – how we feed ourselves, how we clean our homes – and that drinkable rivers are therefore an indicator of the health of a habitat.

This inspired me to walk the full length of the Meuse in 2018 for 60 days. Along the way, I spoke to over 1,000 people – children, mayors, entrepreneurs, journalists, teachers and directors of companies – about drinkable rivers. With local people, we monitored the water quality each day, contributing to citizen science.

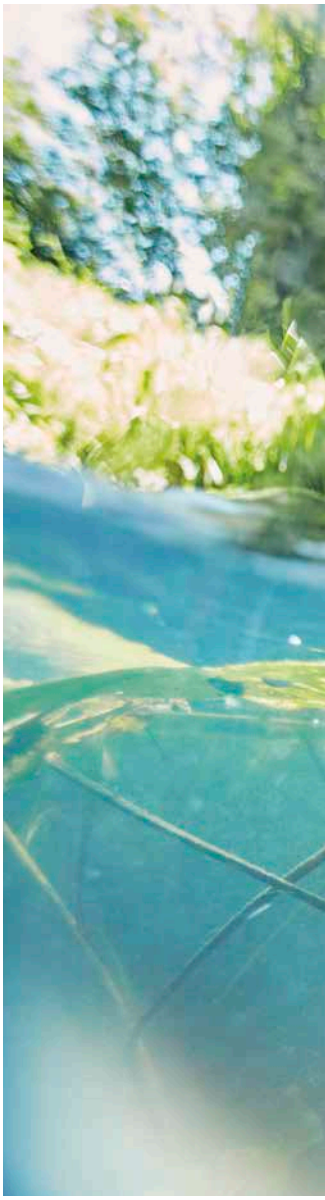
My journey along the Meuse taught me that we are river families and that water is our bloodline. Caring for our rivers means caring for ourselves.

Li An Phoa is the founder of Drinkable Rivers, a not-for-profit organisation. The film *A Long Walk for Drinkable Rivers* documents her story along the Meuse – an English version will be announced later this year.
www.drinkablerivers.org

Photograph by Henk Ganzeboom

The right to bathe

Citizen scientists could set a precedent for cleaner waters in the UK, reports **Nicola Cutcher**



Photograph by Zena Holloway zenaholloway.com

While volunteering at a Nature reserve in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, Karen Shackleton heard from angler Steve Fairbourn that instead of catching fish on his line in the river Wharfe, he was catching sanitary towels, condoms and wet wipes. He said that when it rained, raw sewage was discharged into the river.

Shackleton went out in the rain to see for herself. She found a river full of sewage: "It was gushing out and shooting straight across the river to the opposite bank and I could see sewage filling the river for as far as the eye could see. It's like a grey discharge, which makes the water go cloudy. It was absolutely shocking."

Water companies are permitted to release raw sewage into rivers. It's supposed to only happen in exceptional circumstances, to prevent flooding from extreme rainfall when sewers might otherwise become overloaded. Yet Shackleton discovered that raw sewage was entering the river frequently, after only short spells of light rain. This isn't peculiar to Ilkley. In 2019 water companies in England discharged raw sewage into rivers and streams on more than 200,000 occasions and for over 1.5 million hours.

Having grown up swimming and playing in the Wharfe, Shackleton couldn't accept things as they were. She thought, "It might be legal, but it's wrong." She spoke to a local radio station and circulated photographs and footage to a local Facebook group and, in her words, "people went bananas." Residents were outraged to see the river of their Yorkshire spa town treated as an open sewer. They decided to form the Ilkley Clean River Campaign.

Shackleton reached out to people in the community with different skill sets, including Rick Battarbee, an eminent freshwater ecologist. To understand whether sewage could pose a risk to the human health of people entering the Wharfe, Battarbee needed to know the concentrations of faecal bacteria in the river. He searched for the data, assuming that the Environment Agency, Public Health England or Yorkshire Water would be monitoring the water. Yet none of them was, because there was no requirement to do so.

Battarbee then devised a scientifically robust method to measure concentrations of coliform bacteria. He took water samples in sterilised bottles, refrigerated them and sent them to an accredited laboratory for testing. He ran a workshop on the riverbank for volunteer samplers, and Ilkley's expert-led citizen scientists sprang into action.

In spring 2019, Battarbee's team, led by Fairbourn, started monitoring upstream and downstream of the Ashlands sewage treatment works. The highest level considered safe for bathing is 900 coliform units (cfu) per 100ml. When the river was in low flow, *E. coli* levels upstream of the treatment plant were safely low, but downstream of the plant they were 35,500 cfu – almost 40 times the safe level. This meant that it wasn't only the overflow discharges of raw sewage that were the problem. In fact, the treated sewage constantly pouring out the plant was the major source of the high levels of *E. coli* in the river and represented a continuous contamination threat for swimmers downstream.

When the river was in high flow, *E. coli* levels were high both above and below the treatment works. Battarbee now wanted to know the sources of *E. coli* above the treatment works. Extending the monitoring area, he found that many tributaries had livestock and septic tanks creating high concentrations of *E. coli*, but that these levels were diluted when they joined the main river. He only found high levels of *E. coli* in the Wharfe upstream of Ilkley when the combined sewage overflow (CSO) was discharged at Addingham.

Many coastal beaches have designated bathing water status, but no rivers

The reading at Addingham was shocking – 780,000 cfu, over 800 times the safe limit. Sewage should discharge into a receiving river with sufficient flow to carry it away, but Addingham's CSO was discharging into a small millstream that was a dry channel hidden in a wood.

In a bid for a cleaner river, the Ilkley activists decided to apply for designated bathing water status. In the UK many coastal beaches have this status, but no rivers. Designated bathing waters

are monitored for *E. coli* throughout the bathing season, and unsafe levels are flagged up for remedial action. Battarbee organised a landmark day of citizen science in August 2020, monitoring 60 sites along the full length of the Wharfe, including 33 sites of recreational importance. This provided a snapshot of the health of the river, with teams of volunteers testing on the same day at around the same time. Not one recreation area was found to be safe for playing in.

Battarbee is pleased to have demonstrated the efficacy of science to his community and provided data that lends weight to the group's efforts to clean up the river. He laments how the Environment Agency has been underfunded and under-resourced, but he sees great potential for citizen science to complement official monitoring: "Communities can offer local knowledge and enthusiasm and provide boots on the ground to hugely improve the quantity of sampling data, whilst the Environment Agency can share its professional expertise and resources to analyse the samples. We've done this on a shoestring budget and had real impact."

Just before Christmas the Ilkley Clean River group made history, when the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced that part of the river Wharfe would be granted bathing water status, making it the first river in the UK with this designation. Ilkley's community effort has set a precedent for other rivers around the country and inspired groups to investigate the murky waters in their own backyard and demand better. R

Nicola Cutcher is an investigative journalist working in broadcast and print media. cutcher.co.uk

A guide to cleaner water

- Research the main sources of pollution in your area. The Rivers Trust has a map of sewage outfalls in England. Your local Rivers Trust might also have information about local pollution from agriculture and other sources. www.theriverstrust.org
- If you're designing your own citizen science project, think carefully about what you want to measure, where and why. Ensure that your methods are scientifically robust and that your results will be credible and useful. You need to test before and after pollution events and upstream and downstream of potential pollution sources. Test in all weathers and different flow conditions.
- Build on publicly available data. Look at where and when official monitoring is happening and seek to fill in the gaps. This may mean monitoring for different things or monitoring in more locations more frequently.
- Reach out to local academics and experts for guidance, advice and support. FreshWater Watch can support groups wishing to test nutrient levels such as phosphates and nitrates. freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org
- As well as gathering data, take photos and footage of pollution sources to communicate what you discover and raise awareness. Share your findings through public meetings, social media and the press.
- Tell it as you find it. Don't adopt the jargon of the environmental agencies or water companies. They might call a discharge of raw sewage a 'spill', which implies something accidental happening irregularly. Use plain language that accurately communicates what you discover.

A coalition is building to end sewage pollution, organised by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS). You can read more about the Ilkley Clean River group on the SAS website, including the group's full citizen science reports. www.sas.org.uk

Memories by Glynne James glynnejamesart.com

Bonding and belonging

Satish Kumar explores the landscape of love

Love is the suspension of doubt.

To love, I need to believe in myself and believe wholeheartedly in the person I love.

To love means to cancel our habits of criticising, complaining, controlling and comparing the people we love. These are the four lethal and anti-love Cs.

The C of criticism

When we criticise the beloved, we are sitting in judgement. We are effectively saying, "I am right and you are wrong." We are saying, "There is only one right way and that is my way. I want you to do things my way." This is arrogance. Love and arrogance are like chalk and cheese. They don't go together. Love is the fruit of humility.

Love is not bondage. Love is bonding and belonging. Love is not a merger of two souls. When in love, 1+1=11, not 1+1=2.

Love is a promise of companionship in the arduous, unpredictable and marvellous journey of life.

We have been educated to cultivate a critical mind in all circumstances. We have been conditioned to think that doubt is always a good thing. The methodology of Cartesian doubt has been put on a high pedestal and used as the basis of most educational systems.

Critical thinking and the methodology of doubt are useful in the field of philosophy and in other intellectual pursuits. Criticising and doubting is a mental activity suitable for brainwork. But when it comes to love, friendship and relationships, criticism needs to be replaced with appreciation. Trust needs to be enshrined in our hearts in place of doubt. Relationships and love grow in the ground of the heart, and the heart is nourished by the nectar of trust.

The C of complaining

When we complain, we are also sitting in judgement. We are saying to the beloved that they acted carelessly; that there is a particular standard of behaviour, and their actions fall below that standard; that their conduct is either irresponsible or objectionable. Complaining is aggressive. Being aggressive is like being a pair of scissors: it cuts our hearts to pieces. Love and aggression don't sit well together.

Love is not about expectations. Love is about unconditional acceptance of the other as the other is. We are all different and diverse. That is so beautiful. The sun of love rises in the dawn of diversity and makes a thousand flowers bloom. Love proclaims, "*Vive la différence!*"

Complaining comes from absence of acceptance and lack of trust. Complaining and doubting are bedfellows.

My proposition is not absolute. There is room for complaining against social injustice, environmental degradation, racial discrimination, the arms race and other similar systems of waste, pollution and violence. In these situations we are entitled to complain, oppose and protest, but without hatred and without abusing the upholders of the unjust order. We can and we must stand up for truth, integrity and beauty. But we must do so with love and compassion in our hearts for those who, in their ignorance, are perpetuating unjust social systems.

We all make mistakes. We just make different kinds of mistake. Making mistakes is completely normal and natural. The only way to grow is to learn from our mistakes. Learning never stops.

The C of controlling

The wish to control others is contrary to love. By wishing to control others, I am putting myself in a superior position, in the position of ego. Ego is the enemy of love.

In a loving home there is true mutuality and reciprocity. No one is inferior or superior. Everyone takes care of each other. In a loving home we experience motherly love, fatherly love, brotherly love, sisterly love, romantic love, erotic love, love of food, love of cooking and cleaning, love of baking and making, love of caring and sharing. My ideal home is a control-free zone!

Love is not possessive. Love is liberating.

When in love, we participate in the process of living, rather than wishing to be in charge of other people's lives.

Desiring to control others is to doubt in the ability of others to self-manage and self-organise. Feeling the urge to control others is to doubt the truth that everyone is gifted with their own integrity and imagination.

But you may ask, "Is there a constructive way to use the desire to control?"

The answer is: yes, there is. We can control our anger, our greed and our ego. Such self-control can free us from conflicts, confrontations and wars. If we make a shift from control to conciliation, we can live among others with a sense of community. We can grow in the garden of generosity. We can experience a profound sense of gratitude and grace. We can swim in the sea of love.

The C of comparing

When we compare one person with another, we are in the den of dualism. We are caught in the concept of good and bad, or right and wrong. The Sufi poet Rumi wrote, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there." That is the field of friendship and unconditional love, where we transcend the tyranny of comparison and fly on the wings of wisdom. Everything has a place and everything is good in its place. In Nature snakes and swans, roses and thorns happily exist together.

Only with unconditional love are we able to heal the wounds of anger, fear and despair.

A tree does not discriminate between a saint and a sinner. It offers its cool shade and fragrant fruit to all and everyone, whoever they are – poor or rich, wise or fool, human or animal, bird or wasp. A tree loves them all. Let us learn how to love from a tree.

There is no good and no bad. Things are just as they are; or, if there is good and bad, good and bad go through every human heart.

Each and every person is unique, a special gift from the universe. When we are in love, we value and celebrate the intrinsic dignity of our beloved without comparing them with anyone else. There is no comparison between a rose and a rhododendron, or between mangoes and melons, or between Asians and Africans, or between a Tagore and a Tolstoy. Each and every living being deserves to be appreciated and cherished on their own terms.

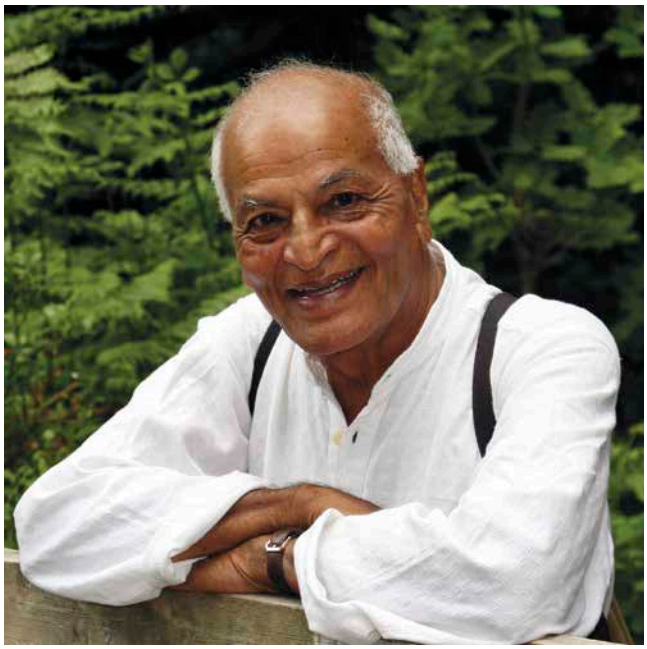
When we wish to *have* a lover, we are likely to compare one person with another. But when we wish to *be* a lover, we are more likely to rise above comparisons.

Every kiss is uniquely ecstatic in itself. No two kisses can be compared!

Pragmatists compare and contrast. Lovers accept and rejoice.

So here is a simple meditation for every morning: may I avoid criticising, contradicting, complaining, controlling and comparing. Instead may I practise compassion, consolation, conciliation and communication. Furthermore, may I cultivate courtesy and caring. May I learn to appreciate and praise others and give thanks for all the gifts of life I receive every day! R

Satish will discuss his book *Pilgrimage for Peace: The Long Walk from India to Washington* (Green Books, 2021) at our Resurgence book club on 21 April at 7pm. www.resurgence.org/bookclub



"When we feed each other, we give a bit of ourselves to form the fabric of someone else."

– Ruby Tandoh, Eat Up: Food, Appetite and Eating What You Want

DIY pub grub

As lockdown lingers, **Aimee Ryan** serves up some comfort food

Beer-battered Tofish and Chips

Serves 2

Preparation time:
20 minutes, plus cooling
Cooking time: 30 minutes

For the tofish
1 x 390g block of extra-firm tofu, drained and patted dry
1 sheet of nori
juice of 1 lemon
80g plain (all-purpose) flour
50g cornflour (cornstarch)
150ml vegan-friendly pale ale

For the chips
1kg King Edward potatoes, peeled and cut into chunky chips
750ml vegetable oil, for frying

For the mushy peas
1 tbsp dairy-free butter
200g frozen petits pois
a handful of fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
1 tsp white (distilled) vinegar
sea salt and ground black pepper

To serve
vinegar
vegan mayonnaise
lemon, cut into wedges

Rinse the chips in cold water to remove excess starch. Add them to a large saucepan of cold, salted water and bring to the boil, lower the heat and simmer for 5–8 minutes until just softened. Drain, pat dry and arrange on a baking tray. Refrigerate for at least an hour or, covered, overnight.

Make the mushy peas. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Add the peas and cook for 5 minutes until soft. Add the mint and vinegar and, using a potato masher, crush the peas until mushy. Season, and place a lid on the pan to keep them warm.

To cook the chips, heat the oil to approximately 180°C and carefully lower half of the potatoes in. Cook for 4–5 minutes, or until they are crisp and golden. Use a slotted spoon to carefully remove the chips from the oil and drain on paper towel. Repeat with the remaining potatoes. Season generously with salt.

While the chips are cooking, prepare the tofish. Cut the block in half horizontally and create fillet shapes, triangles or just rectangles. Using scissors, cut the nori sheet into matching shapes, so that it sits neatly on top of the tofu. This will resemble fish skin and also adds a fish flavour. Squeeze half a lemon over the tofu pieces and pat the nori shapes on top so they're fairly secure.

Use the same pot of oil as you used to fry the chips, and reheat it until it's reached approximately 160°C. Make the batter by whisking together the flour, cornflour and ale, and then season. Dip the tofu shapes into the batter and carefully transfer them to the hot oil. Cook for 3–4 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oil with a slotted spoon.

Sprinkle the tofish with salt and vinegar and serve with the chips, peas, lemon wedges and mayonnaise.

Edited extract from *Great British Vegan* by Aimee Ryan of Wallflower Kitchen, published by White Lion Publishing (2021).

Photograph by Jamie Orlando Smith

Wake-up call

Endangered birdsong inspires Cosmo Sheldrake

Wishing by Louise Pettifer www.louisepettifer.co.uk

Every day, all over the world, birds sing the sun up and sing it down again. Ever since they evolved the ability to sing, they have responded to the changing light of dawn and dusk by bathing the world in song. But in many parts of the world these outpourings are diminishing. I am 31 years old and I grew up in London, and even within my lifetime I have noticed dramatic changes in bird populations and the volume of birdsong. One in four UK bird species is now on the Red list of conservation concern. In the last 50 years we have lost 40 million birds in the UK. Some of Britain's most celebrated songbirds have been added to the Red list in recent years, including nightingales, skylarks, song thrushes and cuckoos. These trends do not have to be a one-way trajectory, and with effective conservation initiatives it is possible for bird populations to recover. Two recent success stories include the nightjar and the bittern, which have moved from the Red list back to Amber.

This is the context for my album *Wake Up Calls*, which consists of pieces of music composed almost entirely out of recordings of endangered British birdsong. The project began in 2012 when my girlfriend gave me a painting of a tawny owl and asked me for a song about an owl in return. In response I found recordings of all the British owls, and by slowing them down by varying degrees in order to make a kind of prepared piano of owl song, I composed a piece called 'Owl's Song' as a lullaby.

The project has evolved over the last nine years. Many of the pieces were composed as presents for friends and family to use as customised alarm clock sounds in the hope that they might wake up unvexed by the urgency of a traditional alarm. The pieces worked well, but they had an unintended side effect. Everyone who used them reported that they became sensitised to the dawn chorus and would often wake up at the slightest sound of birdsong. These pieces have certainly had the same effect on me.

Sound can be a powerful tool in conservation. A fish ecologist named Steve Simpson has demonstrated that playing the sounds of healthy coral reefs to degraded reefs in Indonesia can help encourage fish to repopulate the reef and graze on the algae that might otherwise smother it. He calls this technique "acoustic enrichment". It is possible that there is no direct equivalent in bird conservation, but the way in which we design, conserve and contribute to our acoustic environments can have an impact on the biodiversity and health of our ecosystems.

It is my hope that this music will serve as a wake-up call to help us become more aware of the glorious polyphonic sound worlds that surround us before many of these voices become extinct in Britain, and to remind us not to take for granted any of these creatures and the music that they make.

Cosmo Sheldrake is a multi-instrumentalist musician, producer and composer. *Wake Up Calls* was released in September 2020 on Tardigrade Records.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement.

'I believe the Spring has come at last,' said the Giant.

– Oscar Wilde, The Selfish Giant

The world of pavement weeds

Amanda Tuke goes for a plant walk in London

Wonder Weeds XXXXI by Lynn Bailey
www.lynnbailey.co.uk

Back in spring 2020 I began to notice pavement plants. As our local suburban wood swelled with visitors, and trips to Nature reserves felt irresponsible, I walked the locked-down streets of south London instead. The simple rhythm cleared my head, but increasingly I tuned in to the details of street trees and opportunistic weeds too, the latter benefiting from our council's benign neglect. I greeted the flowers I could identify and photographed the ones I couldn't. And I wondered about them.

Seven months on, and beauty is not a word that immediately springs to mind in this unremarkable 1950s housing estate in Streatham, but that is what we are looking for on this warm autumn morning. I'm meeting botanist Roy Vickery and others to enjoy the weeds growing on the estate's pavements. Vickery has been sharing his knowledge with urban plant enthusiasts for over 35 years and I'm exceptionally excited to be out with an expert today.

"My plant walks are mainly on city commons and cemeteries, but a couple of years ago I started leading walks here," he tells me.

Eyes down, we progress painstakingly around the estate, identifying and listing weeds as we go. There are still a number in flower, probably benefiting from the milder temperatures – the urban heat island effect that many cities experience.

There is no plant discrimination here. We enjoy equally the beauty of wild plants and garden escapees and the stories Vickery tells us about them. First we find the unassuming yellow-green flowers of common groundsel, which poor people in Victorian times collected to sell as food for caged birds. In a corner, bristly clumps of green alkanet are thriving, a plant in the forget-me-not family that made its escape from gardens in

the 18th century. The vivid yellow flowers of catsear dot the verges, the tiny leaf-like scales that clasp the stem giving this plant its name. A lone black nightshade has found a refuge by a fence, the shape of its white and yellow flowers contrasting with the black fruit and revealing it's in the potato family.

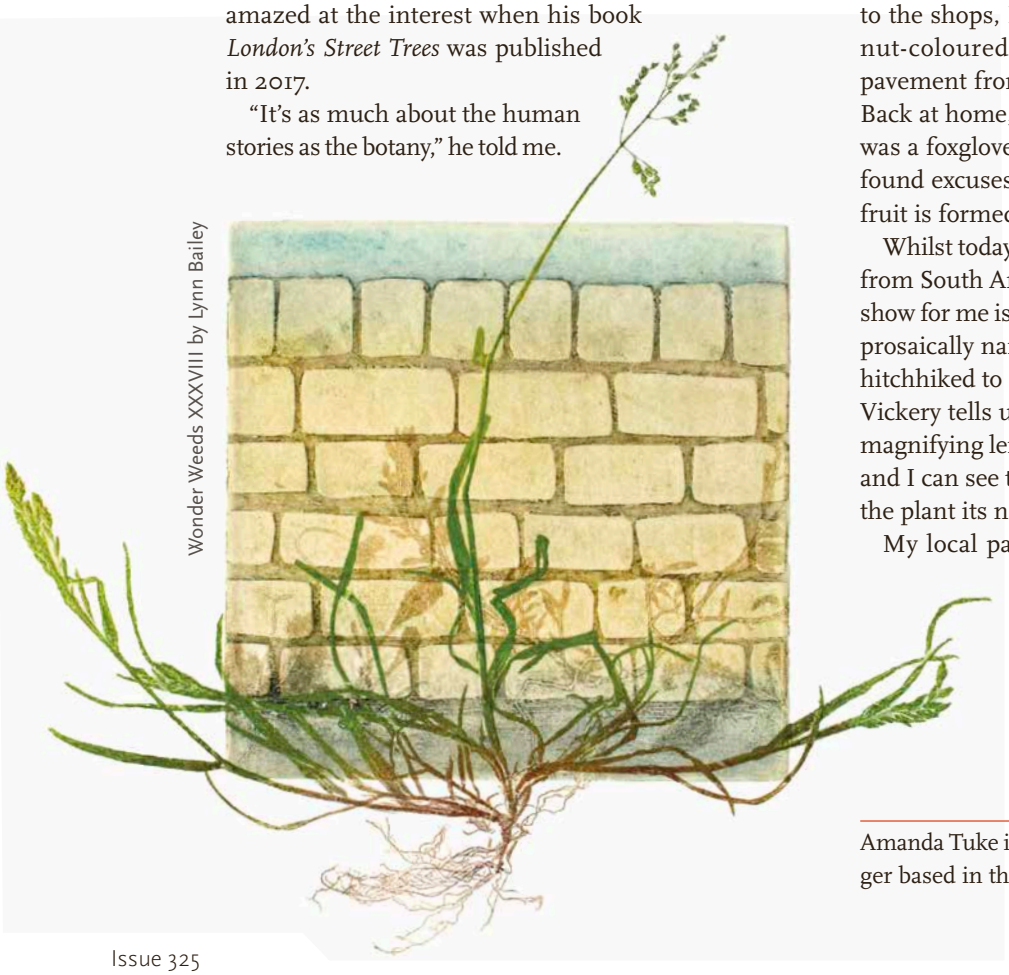
I'm part of a long tradition of London plant enthusiasts valuing urban weeds, from Edward Salisbury's second world war bombsite plants to today's street botanists who blog about the weeds they find.

At the start of 2020, Sophie Leguil, social media botanist and passionate advocate for urban plants, launched her campaign More than Weeds. Inspired by the weed-labelling campaign in Paris, she has highlighted the importance of pavement plants for invertebrates and argued against the use of glyphosate weedkiller on our streets. After attending an online talk, I asked her what was the most interesting pavement plant she'd found in London.

"It's a garden plant called harestail, a grass with lovely pompom-like flowers," she told me. "It made me smile. I'm a botanist, but you don't always need to see plants in a scientific way."

It would be hard to appreciate weeds growing in pavement tree pits without relishing the trees they encircle too. Author and urban tree enthusiast Paul Wood was amazed at the interest when his book *London's Street Trees* was published in 2017.

"It's as much about the human stories as the botany," he told me.



Wonder Weeds XXXVIII by Lynn Bailey

Wonder Weeds XXXVII by Lynn Bailey

"Everything from the plant hunters to the social and architectural decisions that informed their planting. These are the things I continue to find fascinating."

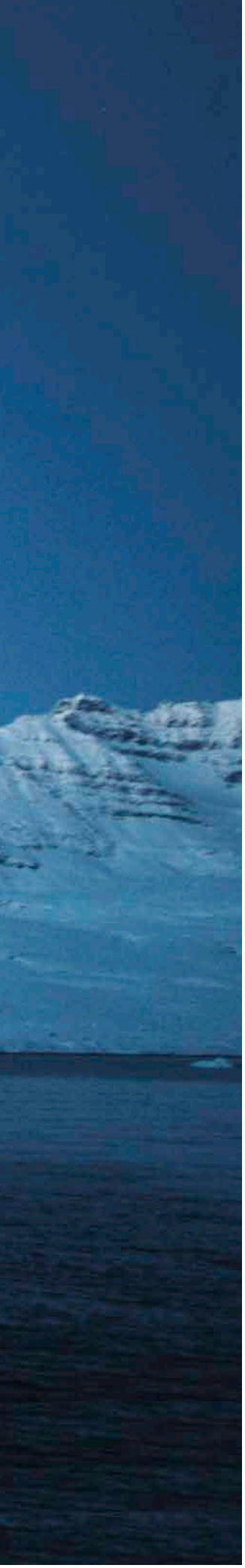
Fired by Wood's enthusiasm, I became much more aware of the trees I passed. On a routine trip to the shops, I found an extraordinary spray of chestnut-coloured seed cases that had fallen onto the pavement from a tree with large heart-shaped leaves. Back at home, a little detective work revealed that this was a foxglove tree, native to China. Since then I have found excuses to visit it every few weeks as this year's fruit is formed.

Whilst today Vickery is showing us weeds originating from South America to South East Asia, the star of the show for me is a tiny plant from the Mediterranean. The prosaically named four-leaved allseed, which probably hitchhiked to London in plant pots, isn't common, but Vickery tells us this estate is its stronghold. Using my magnifying lens, the details of a tiny sprig are revealed, and I can see the intricate multi-seeded fruit that gives the plant its name.

My local pavements have become places to pause and enjoy weeds and trees, rather than simply being my path out of the city. US artist Mark Tobey said: "On pavements and the bark of trees I have found whole worlds," and I'm out there walking the streets of south London in search of those worlds.

Amanda Tuke is a Nature and environment writer and blogger based in the wilds of suburban south London.

Projection on ice by David Buckland



Siren call

David Buckland extols the power of performance poetry

Asking a collective global society to shift its day-to-day, learned behaviour – to evolve, in record time, a sustainable way for 8 billion people to live on our very modest planet – is a hugely challenging task. The solution is bound to be complex, full of contradiction and emotional conflict. This is artistic territory, where a poem, a performance, a piece of music can weave the zillion jumbled threads together into some form of meaning. As we watch our habitat under stress, dealing with its own virus of human activity, as we log our inadequate political response, compromised by industrial and consumer intransigence, the poet can, with one line, cut through to our emotional core.

In May 2020, international not-for-profit Cape Farewell commissioned the Siren Poets – Shagufta K Iqbal, Peter Bearder, Liv Torc and Chris White – to communicate this message. They did not restrict themselves to the written word, but amplified their ideas through performance, music, beat-box and collective force. Rising to the not insubstantial challenge of creating behaviour-shifting work, they embraced the complexity, made the quest personal, recorded films, and in September performed live at the Watershed, Cape Farewell's HQ in Dorset. They were tasked to make their initial delivery virtual, a response to the Covid-19 restrictions, each reaching out to their own community via social media.

Shagufta K Iqbal ran an online workshop with her aunt, preparing food traditionally, underlining how the food we eat is a shared expression of social living, sadly restricted by the Covid-19 lockdown. She then teamed up with musician Pete Yelding to perform a haunting piece of poetic insight:

Yet we are eating a land and a sea
that tastes of what we have done.
But there is a song
that starts as a slight buzz,
sends a murmuring ripple,
building like waves through bodies.
Listen.
You are being called to do better than this.
Listen.
You are being called to protect more kinder than this.
– Shagufta K Iqbal, from 'An Ode to An Nahl'

Peter Bearder created *New Normal*, a performance work where the delivery of the sounds of the words is inseparable from the words themselves. It is a scary, edgy piece that addresses the unconscious fear in all of us when faced with the scale of climate's undeniable truth. Peter was dealing with his own personal mental anguish, but, as with great artworks, this powerful work – which is fear itself – can transform the personal into the collective.

Speaking of the opportunity to make work through the Siren Poets commission, Peter said:

"How can we deploy the human voice to disturb, charm and enchant in a time of Covid and climate change? The Siren Poets Project gives us a platform to try and answer these questions. My intention is to try and widen the cultural bandwidth around both Nature and poetry. I want to create poetry that speaks directly to planetary disintegration, poetry that decomposes and disfigures language, expanding its musical elements to express the primal drives of our animality. I want to throw up tangled liaisons between the psyche, the body, and the sprawling algorithms of the biosphere, combining spoken word 'sound poetry' with Gaia theory, transpersonal

Above: Pollution Pods by Michael Pinsky
Right: Shagufta K Iqbal recording at the Watershed

psychology, and digitally created soundscapes."

Our online spoken word content reached an audience of well over 10,000, as well as generating an exceptional social media following. It engaged a total of 118 public participants across ten Siren-led creative writing workshops, generated a rich offering of online resources, and resulted in a live finale performance of the newly commissioned work, which was broadcast as an online public event in October 2020.

I created Cape Farewell 20 years ago to instigate a cultural response to the climate crisis. Realising that a lone artistic voice couldn't address the scale of the climate challenge, I corralled like-minded artists, musicians, wordsmiths and designers from the creative estate to imagine what might be possible and perhaps inspire our way out of this ecological mess; to lay pointers for us to see light where it is too easy for darkness to prevail.

Ten years of Arctic expeditions drew attention to melting ice caps and stressed oceans, but the realisation dawned that there is no need to travel so far afield: the warming is affecting us all with uncontrollable fires, wilder hurricanes, rising seas, deluges of rain – but these are only the physical manifestations. The climate challenge is about what it means to be human and our collective footprint on this Earth, on which we are so dependent. In this challenge, it is we who are centre stage.

In September 2019, Cape Farewell installed Michael Pinsky's sculpture *Pollution Pods* on the front lawn of the United Nations in New York for the climate extinction summit. We are planning an expedition to the Marshall Islands in July 2022 to join the Marshallese as they endure what could be the demise of their 3,000-year-old ocean culture, and, closer to home, with RiverRun, we are exploring the chalk rivers of Dorset and how agricultural ingress and human waste are causing the algal blooms in Poole Harbour. Post Covid, our Siren Poets will perform their Siren call at festivals and music venues across the country.

Despite its brilliant passage of evolution, humanity has created some serious challenges that we cannot duck any more. The only way to rebalance is to redraw our framework and eradicate our dependence on burning the planet's resources and the digging up of billions of years of planetary history for very short-term human gain. A cultural shift on a global scale is required – creative insight and intervention has the power to give light and direction. R

David Buckland is founder and international director of Cape Farewell. www.capefarewell.com

Writing home

Louisa Adjoa Parker speaks to poet and nurse Romalyn Ante

Romalyn Ante was born in the Philippines and came to Britain with her family when she was in her teens. She is now an award-winning poet living in Wolverhampton, where she also works as a registered nurse and psychotherapist. Her poetry collection *Antiemetic for Homesickness* was published in 2020.

LAP: One of the collection's most obvious themes is migration. Can you tell us a little about your background?

RA: I lived in the Philippines until I was 16. My mum was working abroad as a nurse. While she was away life was still good – my dad and grandparents took care of me. The only problem was growing up without a mum. You can't talk to males about some things. My mum started leaving when I was 12, so I didn't spend my formative years with both parents. It was hard, but I got used to it. It's very common in the Philippines. The government can't provide economic stability, so throughout history many people have left the country.

What was it like coming to the UK?

It was very different from the Philippines – I had a real culture shock. For example, in the Philippines there are two seasons, and in the UK there are four. Mum brought us together to reunite, but it wasn't easy – it became apparent we hadn't grown up together. One poem in my collection includes the line, "my children walked past me as if I was a palm tree". Relationships can break down; it is not the same when you see your mother again. This transcends through time; it's happening now. In 2018, 9 million Filipino children, known as 'orphans', were left behind by their parents.

I had to adjust to language and relationships, as well as place. At 16, you are idealistic but not innocent – the fire in me was strong. I had to restart my life in a new country. The UK government didn't acknowledge my high school diplomas and I couldn't get to university unless I was a resident. I had to repeat my GCSEs although I'd already done them. Values were different in the UK, too. People were more liberated; 16-year-olds did whatever they wanted. At home we followed tradition. Language was different – Filipinos usually speak American English because of the American occupation.

Your book opens with an incredibly powerful poem, 'Half-empty'. Can you tell us how the poem came about?

I got the idea for 'Half-empty' when I was watching the news. Prince Philip shook hands with a nurse and said, "The Philippines must be half-empty." I felt that those words were metaphorical about the country and also about mothers who leave their children. I also wanted to explore medication – in the Philippines when you can't afford medication you go to the pharmacy and buy one or two tablets. The form of the poem is a medical prescription and reflects half of a person, a country, an idea.

Your poetry is infused with stories of caring for sick people. How do you negotiate two different careers, and how has your healthcare background shaped your poetry?

The things that propelled us to leave the Philippines were not all economic. My grandmother died of kidney failure, as she couldn't afford treatment. I wanted to show people in the UK: you are lucky you have the NHS, although it's not perfect. I wanted to merge how things are in the Philippines and the UK. I wanted to show that to be a nurse you have to have courage.

For me, nursing and being a poet are the same. Nursing is about honing your skill of paying attention. You look at a wound – its texture, colour, smell. You look at clear liquid and can tell if it's saline or morphine. Poets learn to be attentive to what's going on around and inside us. There is healing in both.

Artwork by Whooli Chen @whooli.chen

Half-empty

"The Philippines must be half-empty;
you're all here running the NHS"
– Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Drug:

Migrationazoline (available in full or half-empty bottles)

Indications:

- prophylaxis of parents who nag like surgical drills saying they did not send you to college to become a healthcare volunteer
- episodic blindness secondary to power cuts
- ulcers on the lips from eating *kamote* and *kangkong* every night
- chronic ache for a house and garden of your own
- chest tightness and/or dyspnoea as you watch your child drool over Special Siomai

Contraindications:

- do not take this medicine if you have a weak stomach or sensitivity to the tug of your child at your skirt

Cautions:

- your husband may look for another lover while you're gone
- you may not be able to fly back home in time for your mother's burial
- your child may forget your name

Side effects:

- drowsiness/vertigo/nausea
- behavioural changes
- weight loss (when you deprive yourself of a steak bake and ceaselessly convert pounds to peso)
- severe acne (unknown relatives who demand money)
- low mood (on occasions like *Noche Buena*)
- bloating (as you yearn for the sweetness of *lanzones* or see flakes of desiccated coconut in the black November sky)
- intermittent euphoria (when you hand the bald girl her crocheted unicorn hat and her mother the discharge form)
- acute insomnia (when a child on a stretcher is rushed through the door – his face blood-soaked, and for a second you think of the one you left back home)

Romalyn Ante

Having said that, I don't tell them at work I'm a poet! If you cross boundaries too much you can get lost somewhere in the middle. I want a time when I can just be a nurse and a time when I can just be a poet.

I felt I had to write this book – there are many Filipinos in the UK working in the healthcare sector, but the country doesn't know much about us. The book enabled me to show the side effects of migration, leaving your homeland, family and friends.

The NHS is topical right now, as are themes of migration and home. What other aspects of these themes might you want to explore further in the world we exist in now?

Many people think the collection is about a Filipino nurse longing for her country as well as hearing voices of the past. That's true, as it explores memories of growing up, but I hope if readers look deeper, they might realise that voices of the past transcend to present-day women. Families are breaking apart because they need to provide a better life. In third world countries there is no stability. In rural parts of China, for instance, parents go to the city for work. With Covid-19, parents left their children and couldn't go home, as they were scared of passing the virus on. These things are happening now and will continue.

Can you tell us about your writing journey?

In the last year of primary school, a teacher told me I could be a writer one day. Growing up, I wrote poems in my mother tongue. The only books I had were what I needed for school. We couldn't afford books – we weren't poor, but we could only meet basic needs. A neighbour who was migrating left dusty books in their front yard. My siblings and friends clambered over the locked gate and took them. I've always been drawn to literature. When I was growing up, my grandparents and mum told stories of journeys and snowy English landscapes.

In 2012 I graduated as a nurse. During lunch I'd read a book of poetry from the library. I also wrote, submitted to magazines and attended workshops. In 2017, I was chosen as one of the Jerwood mentees after attending an Arvon Foundation course the previous year. Pascale Petit was my mentor. She inspired me and boosted my confidence. It was the start of everything – to find someone who can help you learn your craft.

What are you working on now?

A memoir-type series of essays, mostly about the relationship between mother and daughter. It's an extension of the poetry collection: the things I want to say truthfully. There's a Spanish proverb: "Put your finger in the wound." I want to allow readers to touch my wound, to write the stories with a certain transparency.

In the future, I'd like to focus on mental aspects of health. Although my background is in medical nursing, my specialism is children and young people's mental health. I'd like to explore this through my writing.

Antiemetic for Homesickness is published by Vintage.
www.romalynante.com

Louisa Adjoa Parker is a writer with a particular focus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history.
www.louisaadjoaparker.com

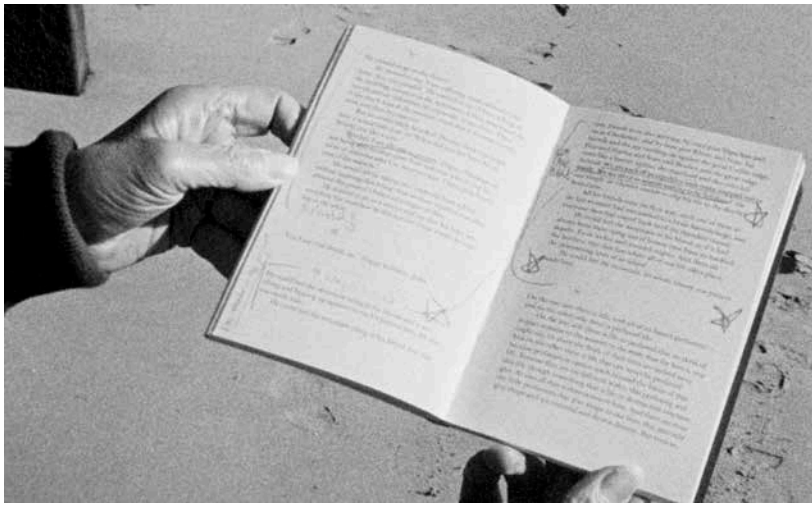
Lights, camera, creative action

Huw Wahl explores the expanding genre of ecological film-making

We all know the power of a quality environmental campaign documentary, which can stir us to act, bring to life abstract statistics and facts, or enable us to see clearly the impact of a climate injustice and its effects.

Films like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and the series *Our Planet* (2019) are of great value in raising awareness, shifting opinion, and informing us in a direct and important way about the climate crisis. Yet there is also another sense in which film can speak to the situation we have created: a sense that can cultivate our emotional resources, encourage changes in representation, and sensitise us to the world and the shape of things to come. Recent works such Ben Rivers' *Ghost Strata*

Above left & below: Upstream ©Rob Petit & Robert Macfarlane
Above & right: The Republics © 2020 Huw Wahl



(2019), which takes us on a personal and sometimes mystical journey into humanity's impact on the Earth, or Rob Petit and Robert Macfarlane's *Upstream* (2019), in which the viewer travels down the River Dee as if on a bird's wing, accompanied by writing by Macfarlane, demonstrate how film, as well as practically addressing sustainability, can in itself become what the ecological artist David Haley calls "creative direct action for ecological regeneration", working to bring to the fore the materiality of our day-to-day lives, advocating new perceptions in which we might linger for longer than the duration of the content. If we are to listen to the philosopher Bruno Latour's caution that we don't have the right imagination or the psychological make-up to deal with the flood of terrifying news pouring in every day, and therefore need the arts to develop our resourcefulness, we need films that nourish us in this way just as much as we need a good campaign movie to get behind.

Take for example the disturbingly beautiful *Purple Sea* (Amel Alzakout & Khaled Abdulwahed, 2020), an experience of the refugee crisis predominantly shot underwater, which destabilises our sense of place and challenges the role of aesthetics, or *The Gleaners and I* (Agnès Varda, 2000), a trip through modern France in which the history of gleaning and its contemporary practice are put together in a poetic and playful narrative containing both the personal and the political. These films and others – both present-day and historical – are in their own unique and visceral way part of an important move towards an expanded ecological cinema firmly pushing at the boundaries of what it might contain.

In the new Becoming Earthly film season at The Barn in Aberdeenshire, we explore the above works and more – including my latest film, *The Republics* (2020), which I made with the poet Stephen Watts, exploring landscape, history and memory through the power of words to celebrate and resist. In a series of screenings, Q&As and discussions, we encourage 'becoming earthly' as a process of grounding, engaging with the thin skin of the Earth we live on, and helping to create and expand the genre of ecological film-making as it begins to include works not only of advocacy, but of embodiment and feeling too.

Huw Wahl is currently working on a film with the working title *Under Wind, Tide and Oar*, about people who sail boats without engines, using the ancient ways.
The Becoming Earthly film season will run online from 12 to 21 March 2021. www.thebarnarts.co.uk

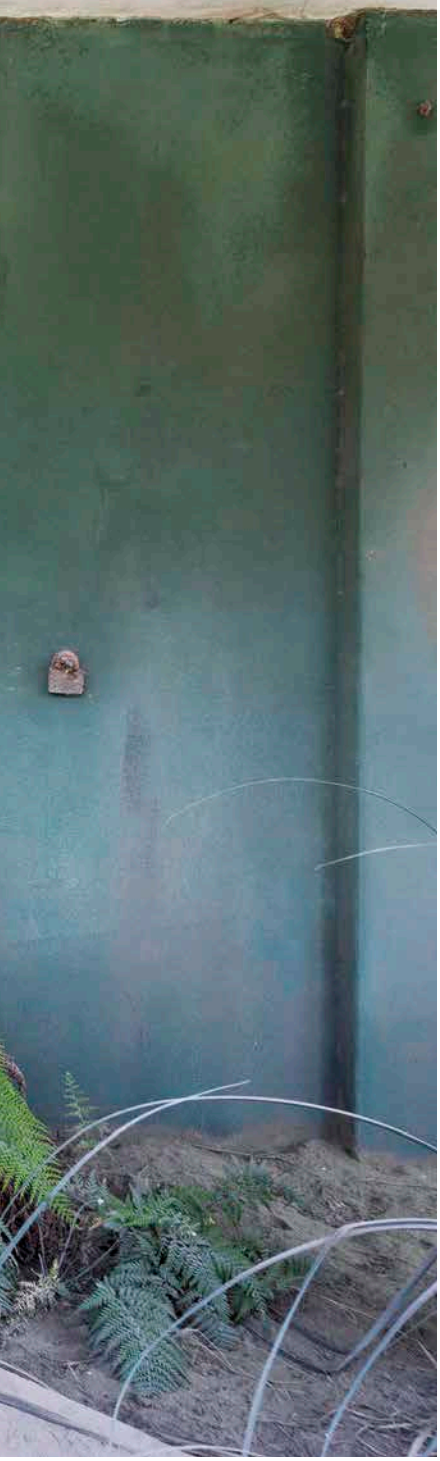
Brave new future

Tiffany Francis-Baker finds hope in tales of ecological restoration

The Reindeer Chronicles: And Other Inspiring Stories of Working with Nature to Heal the Earth
Judith D. Schwartz
Chelsea Green, 2020
ISBN: 9781603588652

Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-human Landscape
Cal Flyn
William Collins, 2021
ISBN: 9780008329761

In the second act of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare wrote that there is "nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so". I have always loved the idea that you can choose whether something will affect you in a certain way – whether to be angry or kind, whether the cup is half full or half empty. It's harder to take the positive view in the face of climate breakdown, but nonetheless I have recently been allowing myself to feel hopeful for the first time in a long while. I hadn't acknowledged how deeply rooted my eco-anxiety was, building slowly and steadily for the last decade or so, and it was only when the US election results came through that I saw how low the last few years had brought me. But with the election came the recognition that there was still



Photograph © Jonk
www.jonk-photography.com

a huge movement of people who believed in a brighter future, and I realised how Nature, like hope, needed only an inch of breathing space to push through the cracks and bloom again.

Schwartz's upbeat, solution-focused narrative differs from Flyn's more stoic, poetic approach

Judith D. Schwartz writes about the power of perspective in *The Reindeer Chronicles*, a book that takes us on a global tour of some of the most ecologically damaged places on Earth, and introduces us to the people who are successfully restoring them. She recalls hearing about a workshop facilitator who was working with a group of tribal leaders in Mali to increase food production. Asked whether they thought they could manage a 50% increase without western technology, they immediately said no, it was impossible. The facilitator then asked what they would do if it *were* possible. Without the pressure of their entrenched beliefs, the participants came up with several ideas, and by the time the facilitator visited them 15 months later food production had increased by 78%.

How many of us have heard a friend or relative ask, "What's the point in trying to save the planet? We're all doomed anyway"? The psychology behind this is fascinating, especially as what they're saying simply isn't true. We have all the resources we need to restore the environment to a healthy state and protect human society along the way, yet some still choose to surrender to despair – or relinquish responsibility. Schwartz writes passionately about an alternative view that shows us how a harmonious relationship with Nature is not just a dream for the distant future, but a reality that is already taking shape. She takes us from a soil-restoration project on China's Loess Plateau to a desertification reversal in the Middle East, as well as to northern Norway to hear how Indigenous reindeer herders are trying to work with the government to conserve the fragile Arctic ecosystem. With echoes of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, we also hear how Indigenous women in Hawaii are pushing back against decades of social and ecological damage from the sugar industry. Above all, Schwartz advocates for communication over combat, demonstrating how an open mind can be the most powerful force for change.

Cal Flyn's *Islands of Abandonment* takes us on an anthropocentric journey to some of the eeriest places on Earth, once inhabited by humans but now left to be reclaimed by Nature. Hope is alive in both books, yet Flyn weaves it through with a poetic understatement, hidden in the text, just as Nature is hidden, yet very much alive, within the polluted landscapes she visits. One of the difficulties with envisioning a greener future is that we sometimes accidentally imagine the past instead – a Wordsworthian idyll, free of plastic and pesticides. I know I'm guilty of comparing the present day with an imagined past, but this isn't a realistic approach to a better future. As Robert Macfarlane showed us in *Underland*, we have left traces in the earth that cannot be erased. We must forge a new path for ourselves, accepting what we have done, working with what is left, and creating something new for our children to inherit.

Islands of Abandonment is a manifesto for this idea, finding the beauty in once desolate places and reminding the reader that there are few disasters Nature cannot recover from, if given time and space to heal. Flyn discovers a radioactive wilderness in Pripyat, toxic waterways in New Jersey, abandoned botanical gardens in the mountains of Tanzania, and a Scottish island ruled by free-roaming cattle abandoned when the last human inhabitants left for the mainland. Each location is permanently scarred, haunted by human industry, but amongst the debris Nature is reclaiming its territory. These places also offer respite in an era when human development seems to have spread to every corner of the globe. We are reminded that, no matter how populous we seem, and how few spaces remain untouched by human civilisation, we can disappear almost as quickly as we arrived.

Both *The Reindeer Chronicles* and *Islands of Abandonment* offer ecological hope for the Earth and every organism that still calls it home. Schwartz's upbeat, solution-focused narrative differs from Flyn's more stoic, poetic approach, but in the end they are both love letters to living things, encouraging us to believe in the combined power of human intelligence and Nature's resilience. We are invited to see that change *is* possible when we allow ourselves to hope. As both authors' research shows, we can help Nature and humanity to thrive, but first we must let go of the past, learn from the present, and embrace a brave new future.

Tiffany Francis-Baker is a Nature writer and illustrator from the South Downs, Hampshire. Her third book, *Dark Skies*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2019.
www.tiffanyfrancisbaker.com

A question of power

Grace Blakely reviews a book about what happens when companies get too big

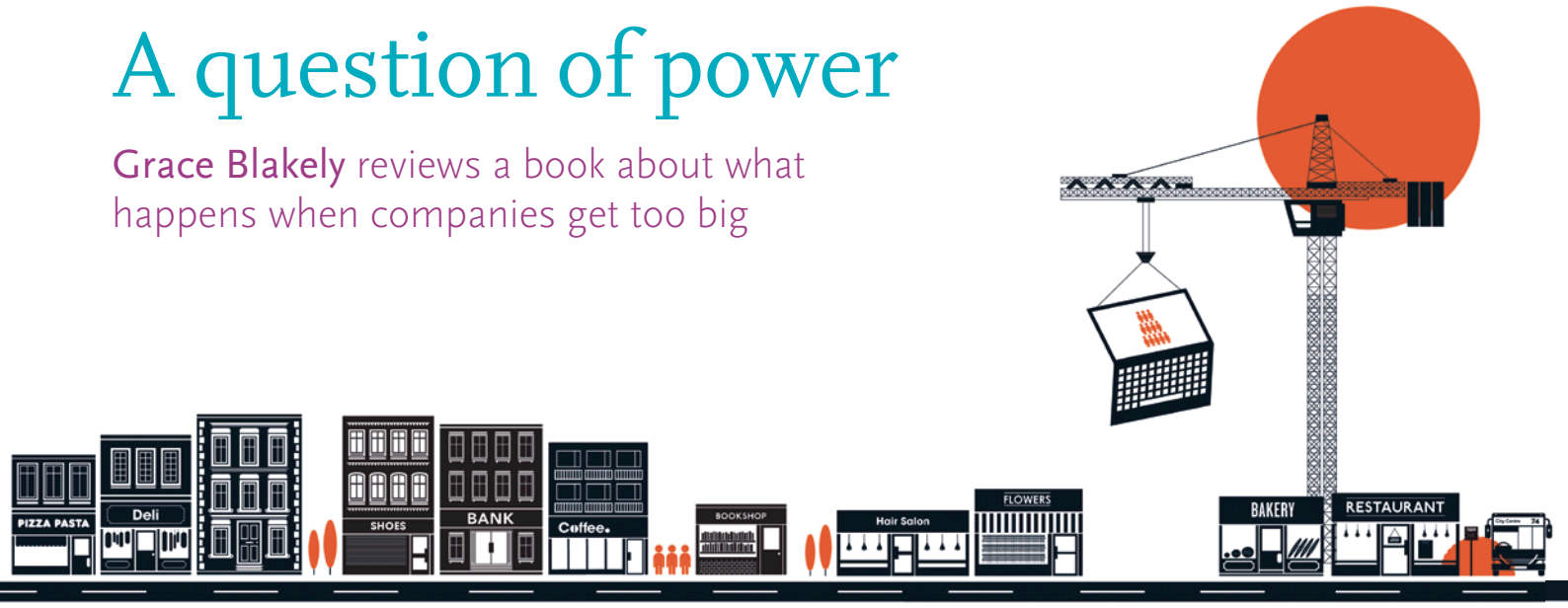


Illustration by Robert Hanson / Ikon Images

Competition Is Killing Us: How Big Business Is Harming Our Society and Planet – and What To Do About It
Michelle Meagher
Penguin, 2020
ISBN: 9780241423011

Crises like the one through which we're living tend to stifle competition. Big firms – with higher margins, stronger financial networks and closer relationships with the state – tend to survive, while smaller ones often go under. Similar dynamics seem to be at play today: within the first few months of the Covid-19 crisis, firms like Amazon, Google and Tesla saw their share prices skyrocket as investors flocked into tech stocks, imagining these would be safe from the pandemic-induced slowdown. By August, the value of the tech companies was equal to a quarter of the entire S&P 500 index in the US. Meanwhile, small businesses were struggling to overcome the huge bureaucratic hurdles that stood between them and state support.

Michelle Meagher's new book, *Competition Is Killing Us*, helps to put these dramatic levels of market concentration in a wider political and historical context. Meagher, a former competition lawyer who became disillusioned after working on mega-merger after mega-merger that seemed to achieve nothing other than boost the profits of some of the most powerful corporations in the world, takes the reader on a journey through the multiple legislative and ideological changes that have brought us to this point, as well as revealing the negative effects that rising market concentration has had on the economy.

She takes us back to the 1980s, when the ideological transition from Keynesianism towards supply-side economic policy led to a shift in the foundation of competition law away from a wider emphasis on market power and towards a narrower one of 'market efficiency'. On the one hand, this narrowed the focus of competition law, which came to consider only the impact of market concentration on prices and consumer choice. On the other hand, supply-side economists' suspicion of 'government failure' (as opposed to market failure) increased the burden of proof on those attempting to enforce competition law and therefore reduced caseloads among many competition authorities.

At the same time, and as I argue in my book *Stolen: How to Save the World from Financialisation*, there was a material and ideological shift in corporate governance, which saw the interests of shareholders placed above those of all other stakeholders. 'Maximise shareholder value' became the nostrum in boardrooms throughout the US, the UK and Europe. As well as share buybacks and increasing dividends payouts, mergers and acquisitions activity provided an easy way for corporations both to increase share prices today, and to boost profits tomorrow by consolidating their market power.

Throughout this period, as Meagher notes, as long as consumer prices weren't rising, regulators weren't concerned. And yet rising monopoly power has created so many economic, social and political problems that competition policy has now become an increasingly important concern for policymakers. Monopoly power also often means monopsony power – the power associated with being the dominant buyer in any one market, including the labour market – which can drive down wages and increase inequality. And while Joseph Schumpeter may have argued that temporary monopoly is a necessary reward for innovation under capitalism, many monopolistic firms are managing to retain their market power over very long periods, not by innovating, but by crushing or buying up their competitors.

This question of market power – which is largely ignored in much of the economics profession – is really what Meagher's book is all about. Economic outcomes are not neutral. They derive from and reinforce unequal power relations between different economic actors. In the world that emerges from the pandemic – where poverty, inequality and climate breakdown will all be the most pressing issues humanity faces – Meagher's book reminds us that these questions of power should be far more central to the way we think about the economy. R

Grace Blakeley is a staff writer at *Tribune* magazine.

Taking on an empire

Georgina Quach counts the cost of free delivery

The Cost of Free Shipping:
Amazon in the Global Economy
Jake Alimahomed-Wilson & Ellen Reese (eds.)
Pluto Press, 2020 ISBN: 9780745341484

Flicking through TV channels recently, I stumbled across a documentary titled *The Truth About Amazon*. Airing just days before Black Friday, the series seemed poised to awaken British shoppers to the sinister tactics behind Amazon, whose stated aim is to be "Earth's most customer centric company". But would this change viewers' shopping habits? Perhaps not, given that the presenters also unveiled their tips for finding the best bargains on Amazon.

The Cost of Free Shipping, by contrast, doesn't stop at the consumer: the book broadens our picture of the way we shop, by exploring links between this multifaceted tech giant and the communities it exploits. Lining miles of conveyor belts and machinery in Amazon warehouses are people.

As a daughter of refugees deeply aware of the power of immigration authorities, I was horrified to learn of Amazon's links with deportation operations in the US. Through a series of essays, the book's contributors set out to uncover the retail world's most secretive deal – the one driving Amazon's soaring profits at a time when all other shops were losing theirs. At one point in the pandemic, the company was reported to be making sales of almost US$11,000 a second. But this volume also spotlights our ability to forge alliances across borders – to mobilise mass human creativity for global change, from virtual rallies to boycotts.

There is a bitter irony that Amazon – our planet's most valuable corporation – has become so central to the fight for corporate action on the climate crisis. In 2019, Amazon Employees for Climate Justice gathered almost 8,000 signatures from Amazon software engineers, designers and other workers on an open letter to CEO Jeff Bezos demanding that the corporation adopt a comprehensive climate action plan. This action was one of the largest employee-driven environmental initiatives in history. During the global climate strike later that year, 1,000 Amazon employees in Seattle walked out of their jobs. In response, Amazon pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2040 and to purchase electric vehicles.

As this book highlights, what makes the corporation so powerful – a tight supply chain that can deliver packages within hours – is the same factor that makes it so vulnerable to disruption. To show the power of collective action, the essay by Peter Olney and Rand Wilson takes the example of Amazonians United, a worker-led group that campaigned for better healthcare benefits and air conditioning on-site. Amazon's reliance on speed gives workers more opportunities to effectively resist its practices.

However, the big problem is Amazon's constant pushing of the costs of emissions and pollution onto different communities. It owns so many delivery stations and fulfilment centres that if there's disruption in one area, orders can just be sent to another. In its relentless push for e-commerce dominance, Amazon has built logistics checkpoints across major highways across the US, bringing traffic with them. Areas near distribution centres have become known as "diesel death zones" because of the levels of air pollution there from emissions. Jake Alimahomed-Wilson's essay humanises the raw facts with moving case studies. We step into the shoes of Miguel, an undocumented immigrant and delivery driver in Los Angeles. "The Rabbit stresses me out," Miguel says, referring to the tracking device that pressures workers to hit targets. For low-wage subcontracted workers like Miguel, Prime Day is a solitary race – where bathroom breaks could cost them not only missed packages, but also their jobs and livelihoods.

Amazon's free shipping is not *free* at all: it creates enormous costs for communities and workers alike, particularly communities of colour. *The Cost of Free Shipping* shows us concrete solutions to a human problem that seems far beyond our reach. Global resistance against Amazon has pushed the climate crisis onto the corporate agenda, inspired workers to come forward, and given agency to the many real people who before felt utterly helpless. R

Georgina Quach is a British-Vietnamese journalist and content writer. www.georginaquach.com

H is for humanity

Adam Weymouth enjoys a collection of essays from Helen MacDonald

Vesper Flights
Helen Macdonald
Jonathan Cape, 2020
ISBN: 9780224097017

Like many people, I was blown away by Helen Macdonald's *H Is for Hawk*, a memoir that set the death of her father alongside her training of a goshawk, a recalcitrant and bloody-minded raptor. Her battles with the bird mirrored her battles with her grief in a manner both devastating and transcendent. Yet the book's success and many accolades spawned an entire subgenre of Nature writing whereby the author undergoes some personal transformation echoed in the non-human subject of their choice. Many of these books feel tin-eared and derivative to me, and it is exactly this need that Macdonald explores in her stunning collection of new essays: our yearning to find a foothold in the natural world to deal with our own muddled emotions.

Macdonald describes her collection as a sort of *Wunderkammer*, a cabinet of wonders – like those cases of natural and artificial curiosities in certain stately homes some centuries ago. As important as the objects were themselves, it was the reading of their relations, the juxtaposition of seeing such items side by side that provoked a feeling of wonder in the observer. These individual essays are about badgers and ants, goldfinches and swans, but through their constellation Macdonald is able to get at something fundamental about the human condition.

Although the essays take in a wide swathe of British wildlife, birds, Macdonald's foremost passion, are never far away. In the first essay, 'Nests', she writes that when she was a child they "challenged my understanding of the Nature of home in so many ways", and it is this restlessness of spirit, in some sense bestowed on her by birds, that permeates her writing. There are essays about the Olympian migrations of cuckoos and storks, about human migrants in search of home, about the migratory creatures that make a mockery of borders. She follows a scientist high onto the plateaus of the Atacama Desert on an expedition to get a sense of what life might exist on Mars.

Macdonald has a flair for noticing what the rest of us might walk past: a column of ants spiralling into the air in their annual mating dance; a small flock of rare waxwings on a busy shopping precinct. "I am far from an industrious soul," she writes, "except in my capacity, perhaps, to pay close attention to things." Frequently the naturalist's close observance and appreciation of minutiae is juxtaposed with the parochialism of the English character. During the war, feeding birds became a national pastime as the protection of our garden birds took on a kind of nationalist fervour. In 1934, when Norfolk farmers learned that the skylarks eating their wheat were migrants from the continent, they shot them for perhaps having sung to Nazis. In times of crisis, Macdonald suggests, we search for meaning in what is close at hand. Perhaps that is the reason for the explosion in new Nature writing. And yet ultimately she makes the case that by coming to notice and to know better our own patch, we come to better inhabit the world: not just our own patch, but all of it.

Animals can teach us things. They are not trivial, unintelligible parts of our lives, and to believe that is not to Disneyfy them. They are repositories for our hopes and fears, and what we think about them says much about what we think about ourselves. Macdonald describes our animal encounters as like reading the Tarot, in their ability to provide inexplicable, irrational insights into our own deepest emotions. And, she writes, "on my travels I've talked to many strangers about grief, and birds, and love, and death." R

Many Happy Returns (etching) by Janis Goodman www.janisgoodman.co.uk
See more of Janis's work at www.mashamgallery.co.uk

Adam Weymouth is a freelance writer.

Magic for strange times

Jini Reddy enjoys new ways of connecting with the world

A Spell in the Wild: A Year (and Six Centuries) of Magic
Alice Tarbuck
Hachette, 2020
ISBN: 9781529380873

"What a deep joy I think, to spend one's life trying to find new threads to connect us to the world, new ways of speaking with its secret corners, new points and moments of connection." So writes Alice Tarbuck, scholar and witch. This passage only comes at the end of *A Spell in the Wild*, but it's a beautiful summation of the joys of her craft.

Admirably, the book is accessible not only to those already enchanted by notions of magic, but also to all other comers. Part of this is down to the academic rigour Tarbuck brings to her subject (though she is never dry or dull), and her philosophical approach, allied with her skill and clarity as a writer. It is an exceptionally thoughtful memoir and a sensitive, discerning exploration of many strands of witchcraft, past and present. As a starting point, she walks us through the months of the year as a way of sharing the "curious magic of the world, the way it shimmers and changes if you walk through it as a witch, with your eyes open".

Tarbuck is a forager and a maker, and Nature lovers will warm to the passages where she describes her fondness for filling her pockets with fallen leaves and berries and herbs on her wanderings. These can happen in woods, in scrubby back alleys, or for her, once, memorably, at a midsummer wedding. The wild is her muse, the source of much of her magic, and an extension of her very self. But this book isn't just about Nature cures. We also learn about the practice of honouring the dead, sex magic, fortune telling and divination. We learn too about witches and their history of protest.

A witch, she explains, is practised in the art of making things happen, of altering herself and the world through the exercise of will and attention. Though this is not a book of spells, or 'grimoire' in witchy parlance, at the end of each chapter, rather deliciously for those wanting to have a go, is a spell or magical recipe of some sort. Among them are a weather spell, a fever cure, a charm for money, and a spell for getting rid of something – my favourite, as all you need is an egg.

What drew me deeper into the book and heightened my admiration for Tarbuck was the awareness she brings to issues relating to social justice, to colonisation, and to the fetishising of ancient landscapes, within a British context. Inclusion comes naturally to her. Not everyone can practise magic in idealised surroundings, and nor do they need to. And not everyone, she stresses, is able to be 'out' about their practice. "There are some people for whom, culturally, that would be extremely difficult," she explains.

Magic, she goes on to say, "can happen in prison cells, it can take place in portaloos, it doesn't require ancient stones or extraordinary labyrinths to walk around". Later she adds: "We work with plastic, with processed water, with air miles, with deforestation and communal bins that stink all summer with that sweet, cloying rot. Thinking magically is also, always, thinking ecologically, thinking about the great wide world that we inhabit." Ultimately, she writes, witchcraft is a way of understanding the world, of realising it is not separate from us. "We are in the world and the world is in us."

Wondrous, insightful and steadying, *A Spell in the Wild* is the perfect companion for the strange times in which we find ourselves. R

Jini Reddy is the author of *Wanderland* (Bloomsbury, 2020), shortlisted for the 2020 Wainwright Prize.

Photograph © n_defender / Shutterstock

Seeds of resilience

Kate Blincoe welcomes some creative thinking on farming

Illustration by James Daw www.daw2art.com

A Small Farm Future: Making the Case for a Society Built Around Local Economies, Self-Provisioning, Agricultural Diversity and a Shared Earth
Chris Smaje
Chelsea Green, 2020
ISBN: 9781603589024

As a farmer's daughter, I am realistic about growing food. Even with modern machinery, it is always full-on, with gruelling, repetitive work. Dad didn't ever come on holiday and he couldn't stop harvesting for my summer birthday. It is nerve-racking too: all that year-round labour and expense can be wasted with just one heavy storm flattening a crop, or a few weeks of drought killing a carefully nurtured field. Rural idyll is a hard, dangerous gig, with an elevated risk of injury and high suicide rates.

I brought this scepticism and realism to Chris Smaje's book *A Small Farm Future*. Surely a future of small farms would be one of endless graft, uncertain rewards and no space for holidays, celebrating or culture?

But then I only have to cast my mind back a few months, and there we all were, standing in front of empty supermarket shelves and feeling utterly hopeless about how we would put decent meals on the table in a pandemic. Meanwhile, because the supply chain had faltered, millions of tonnes of food went to waste. There were no holidays, celebrating or pleasure then. When it comes down to it, food security is fundamental to everything. In certain situations, our current system, focused on cheap, processed food, is not working.

Modern food production often fails our environment too. An industry reliant on fossil fuels, imports and maximising yields leads to biodiversity loss, climate chaos, desertification and water pollution. And still the holy grail of 'food for all' is not found. Malnutrition and hunger persist across the world and in parts of even the wealthiest countries.

The key questions that Smaje addresses in *A Small Farm Future* are, what would a truly resilient society look like? How would it work with our planet's ecology to establish a deeply sustainable future?

His answer is to have more people working in agriculture or horticulture on small farms, serving local markets – predominantly their own households. Establishing a low carbon footprint would be key. It is a system that would not have faltered in the face of a pandemic.

Smaje is a social scientist and anthropologist by training and is well accustomed to examining aspects of social policy, social identities and the environment. For the last 15 years, he has been wellies-on, practising what he preaches, as a co-worker on a small farm in Somerset, south-west England. He brings a multidisciplinary approach that explores many different pathways, beyond the merely utopian, for achieving a more sustainable future.

This book is not an easy read, but it is well written. Maybe I've sought too many lazy books recently, but this isn't one to pick up at bedtime. It is intellectual, rigorous and thought-provoking: a book to switch your brain on, not numb it.

Do not be put off by the initial gloom as the author details our depressing mess-ups in stark terms, defining them as 'crises' and 'wicked problems' and pointing out the inevitability of 'trade-offs' in life. It is only by recognising the scale of the problem that we can move forward. Thankfully Smaje takes us by the hand and leads us on, answering our questions – such as "Is there enough land?" – past all this carnage, to something hopeful and indeed beautiful.

We've sleepwalked our way into the current global crisis. There will be more to come unless we address many of the problems flagged up in this book. I am still sceptical about the practical application of Smaje's solutions in our modern world, but this creative thinking and debate are essential. R

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

Stalling for profit

Gwen Buck welcomes a podcast on the PR of climate denial

How They Made Us Doubt Everything
BBC Radio 4
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000l7q1

'Sweet Child of Mine' is riffing behind blaring news reports of record heatwaves, and George H.W. Bush is on the campaign trail, rallying around climate action: "1988 is in a sense the year the Earth spoke back. Our land, water and soil support a remarkable range of human activities, but they can only take so much."

Illustration by Katie Edwards / Ikon Images

This opening scene from the BBC's podcast *How They Made Us Doubt Everything* almost feels like an alternative reality rather than a documentary. It's a reminder of how long we've been hearing reports of new record temperatures and politicians saying that we need to act on climate change.

The podcast tells the story of why it's taken so long for any meaningful climate action to come about. The easily listenable 15-minute episodes expose the tactics used by the PR gurus for the tobacco industry in the 1950s, and subsequently the fossil-fuel industry, to avoid regulation, victim compensation and ultimately any responsibility for their destructive products. Their PR playbook revolved around the mantra "Doubt is our product." They knew that the science was correct, so they had to create doubt to halt action. By creating detailed segmentation analysis on which members of the public to target, funding scientists and then using scientific jargon against itself, these industries successfully muddied the water so as to be able to carry on business as usual.

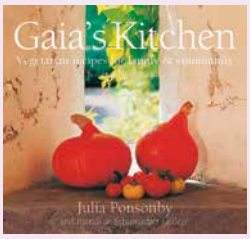
Whilst many of us may already be familiar with the events described in the podcast, the extracts from uncovered documents and interviews from those involved are no less shocking. The podcast doesn't shy away from the media's role in spreading doubt about climate science. It even tells how the BBC has been complicit, pitching ideological arguments against fact.

Sometimes I wanted the presenter, Peter Pomerantsev, to give more energy and more emotion to the story of such a scandal, but the beauty of this podcast is in its simplicity: to know that the BBC is documenting what we now know as fact, that fossil-fuel companies not only knew about climate change in the 1980s, but also actively worked to undermine action on it.

In a time when disinformation is rife and climate action is more urgent than ever before, we need to know stories such as this – that vested interests will put profit before the health of people and planet. This story has been exposed, but how many scandals such as this are yet to be uncovered? R

Gwen Buck is policy adviser for Green Alliance. She tweets at @EcoGwen

ALL ABOUT SPRING



GAIA'S KITCHEN

Julia Ponsonby

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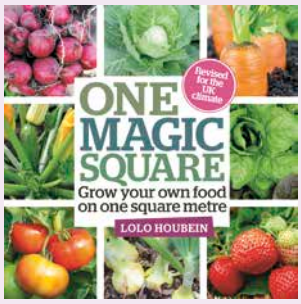

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The best and cheapest food is the food you grow in your own garden. *One Magic Square* shows how, with a 10-minute effort, you can start your own food garden on a single square metre. With simple plot designs starting with salads and gradually expanding, you can take the first steps in growing your own food organically. *(Hardback, 358 pages)*

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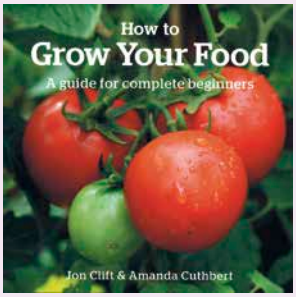

HOW TO GROW YOUR FOOD

Jon Clift & Amanda Cuthbert

If you've never opened a seed packet before and want to grow your food but don't know where to start, this book is for you. It gives advice on everything from planting seeds to harvesting your crops and dealing with problems – and it doesn't matter whether you have a whole garden or just a patio, a balcony or a windowsill. The book features a range of vegetables, fruit and herbs that are easy for the beginner to grow. *(Paperback, 132 pages)*

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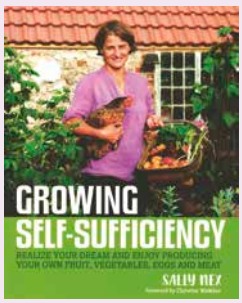

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Sally Nex

Growing Self-Sufficiency is a practical and inspirational guide for both the beginner and the experienced gardener. It explains how you can enjoy the satisfaction and pride of providing food for yourself and your family, whether you have just a small balcony or back yard, a large garden, or a homestead or smallholding. *(Paperback, 240 pages)*

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We know we all need to reduce our environmental footprint. *Six Weeks to Zero Waste* is an accessible and aspirational programme to eliminate waste – and it goes beyond plastic. TV presenter Kate Arnell will help you on your path to rubbish-free living, with the principles of the 5 Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle and rot). From cutting down on food waste and decluttering, to making homemade health and beauty products, you'll soon be on your way to a zero-waste lifestyle. *(Paperback, 224 pages)*

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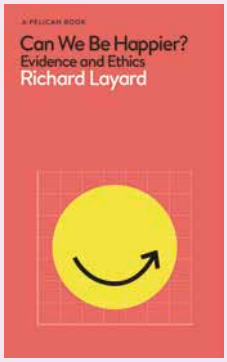

CAN WE BE HAPPIER

Richard Layard

Most people now realise that economic growth, however desirable, will not solve all our problems. Instead, we need a philosophy and a science which encompasses a much fuller range of human need and experience. This book argues that the goal for a society must be the greatest possible all round happiness, and shows how each of us can become more effective creators of happiness, both as citizens and in our own organisations. *(Hardback, 397 pages)*

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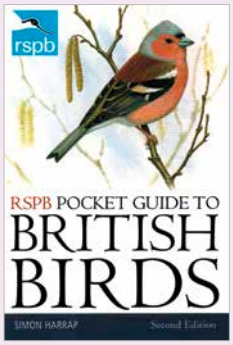
£3.02UK, £4.79 EU, £9.73 ROW



POCKET GUIDE TO BRITISH BIRDS

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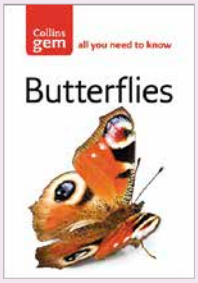

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Michael Chinery

The ultimate portable guide to 240 of the most common butterfly and moth species in Britain and Ireland. This pocket guide features species descriptions, colour photographs and illustrations throughout for quick and easy identification. *(Paperback, 256 pages)*

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Letters to the editor

PAST EXPERIENCE

I write in response to Science in the Polar Night in Issue 323.

I recently read *A Woman in the Polar Night,* a moving memoir of a year spent in Svalbard written by Christiane Ritter and first published in 1938. Ritter's experiences took place over 80 years before the Hearts in the Ice expedition and it was interesting to see how the extract from Hilde Falun Strom and Sunniva Sorby's blog in June 2020 echoed in part the atmosphere and thoughts contained in the memoir, particularly with regard to their "deepest and darkest fears" and what you learn about yourself by being in such a situation.

Ritter was not a scientist; in 1933 she went to Svalbard to join her husband (who had been part of a scientific expedition) in this remote place in a hut at Grey Hook (in the north of West Spitsbergen) with no connections to the outside world. It is worth mentioning that she did overwinter in Svalbard and while for the most part she was there with her husband and his friend, there were times when she was by herself, including for periods of 13 and 16 days. During one of these spells there was a 9-day storm and she had to dig her way out of the snow-covered hut in order to get wood to keep herself warm – a matter of survival. I wonder if Strom and Sorby were aware of Ritter, who had been there so many years earlier, at times totally alone; I think this can only have added to the intensity of her experiences.

Ritter describes the environment in this inhospitable part of the world and her growing pleasure in living there so close to Nature. She was aware of the impression this stay made on both her body and her mind, such that she later said, "A year in the Arctic should be compulsory to everyone." I recommend her book as a wonderful read and a companion piece to Lynn Houghton's article.

Carol King
Cornwall

LESSON PLANS

Thanks for running the article on our Peaceful Schools project in the September issue. I just wanted to add a weblink in case anyone wants to follow it up:

https://quakersmidwales.org/peace-education

We would love to see the programmes replicated and are very happy to pass on our experience, share our resources and offer advice to potential projects. In the present crisis we are not able to go into schools to deliver the programmes directly, though schools are saying the work is ever more important. However, we have been developing resources that we can send into schools, for teachers to use themselves, and looking at ways we can continue to work together.

Helen Porter
(via email)

KINDNESS IN CRISIS

Thank you for including the beautiful article by Adam Weymouth, Kindness and Coronavirus. I have been saddened by the total exclusion in *Resurgence* (as in all mainstream media) of alternative perspectives on living with "Nature" in the form of yet another virus to add to the thousands we have evolved to manage. Adam oh so gently draws attention to the interpersonal costs of lockdown that will haunt us for years to come. Thank you for being the only publication to allow this gentle alerting voice.

Jen Turner
(via email)

RELIGIOUS ROOTS

Reading the article by Anne Baring (Issue 324) on the religious roots of our environmental crisis, I recognised much that she wrote about patriarchal approaches and the tendency to instrumentalise creation and accept that the Christian church, of which I am a part, bears some responsibility for that. However, I was disappointed by the inaccuracies that the article contained, the stereotyping of Christianity and the seeming hostility towards the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Just as examples of questionable statements, she dates the story of the Fall to the reign of Josiah, but that strand of Genesis dates to 200–300 years earlier; she suggests that the early church inked out a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, but the four Gospels that make no mention of this predate any document that does, so it hasn't been

redacted out; far from playing down the role of Mary Magdalene, the Gospels give her a pivotal role as the first witness of the resurrection – and that in a society where the testimony of women was often rejected; Baring says that the Fall was used to blame Eve (and it has been), and yet when Paul talks about the Fall he only ever cites Adam for the blame.

Nor are the scriptures hostile to the creation. The Law provided for care of the creation; Hosea speaks of human failings causing the creation to mourn; Paul writes of Christ as the Saviour not only of humanity but of the whole created order.

There is also a tendency in Baring's article to see Christianity as a monolithic faith that rejects the material universe and creation. Yet the Eastern Orthodox have a rich theology of creation, and even more markedly the Celtic Christian tradition had an amazing sense of God in the created world. This doesn't deny that we have sometimes gone in wrong directions but it does ask for recognition of those other strands.

My experience is that there is a strong environmental movement within the Church and Christian theology today and it would be a shame if somehow that were to be marginalised and those that should be working together were pushed apart.

Ian Souter
Bath

THANK-YOU NOTE

This is a short mail to thank you for and congratulate you on the consistently excellent quality of each edition.

Not only is the content – articles as well as illustrations – invaluable, promoting ecological awareness and action on many levels at this time of ecosystem collapse, but the attention to detail is, in my view, exemplary. I´ve been a subscriber for many decades, and despite the unrelenting challenges we collectively face, each edition manages to radiate light and vision.

Hearty congratulations and very many thanks.

Simon Windeler
(via email)

TWITTER

Connected by Nature
@MAViatte

Lift the lid of doubt, fear, distrust, and let love flow out. No criticism, complaining, nor comparing. Instead, participate! The wonderful Satish Kumar @Resurgence_mag w/ an inspiring message; worth heeding as we embark on 2021.

TWITTER

Lewis Garland
@lewisgarland

This beautiful article in @Resurgence_mag fully captures what @FencesFrontiers do & why! Kobi's words are so moving: "I will always remember the first as a walk full of hope, care & kindness. It was the first time I was welcomed by English people" #Refugeeswelcome
@Jini_Reddy article from issue 324

TWITTER

Alison Menzies
@alisonmenziespr

'This is a book of now... #FiftyWordsforSnow is both gorgeous and important to hunker down with, whatever the weather outside" – truly wonderful review thanks
@Kateblincoe
@Resurgence_mag
@eandtbooks

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.

Resurgence readers meet up online

Please join us for the next meeting on 12 March, via Zoom. This is an opportunity for you to share ideas and come together with fellow readers to discuss ideas within the magazine. This month we will be discussing rivers.
www.resurgence.org/groups

An evening with George Monbiot

This event has been rescheduled and will take place on 17 May 2021. George Monbiot: *Dying from Consumption* will include talks, music, video and a live Q&A with George Monbiot to educate, engage and entertain. An evening hosted by Lulu Urquhart with contributions from Jonathan Neale, Mac Macartney, Mobius Loop and TreeSisters.
See website for updates **www.resurgenceevents.org**

Resurgence Centre events

Bringing the Resurgence Centre garden to you – we are planning a monthly ecological gardening tutorial and activity pack for children. More information will be sent out in our newsletter. Make sure you are signed up to the mailing list on our events website.

We are launching a series of wildlife talks online. The first will be with Derek Gow on beavers, rewilding and ecology. We are also planning to bring you a talk on swifts, to coincide with their return to the UK. See our events website for information on all our courses.
www.resurgenceevents.org

Festival of Wellbeing, 30 October 2021

Following the success of last year's online event, we invite you to join us for a day of inspirational speakers and Q&A with Lily Cole; Charles Eisenstein; Vandana Shiva; Ann Pettifor, economist and author of *The Case for the Green New Deal*; Paul Polman, co-founder and chair of IMAGINE; Beccy Speight, CEO RSPB; and many more. During the festival Michael Morpurgo will be reading his uplifting story 'The Song of Gladness'.
For programme updates and tickets:
www.resurgenceevents.org

Resurgence Summer Camp

We were hoping to run the summer camp at Green & Away from 2–4 July 2021. Due to the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and the impact on live events we have decided to postpone this event for another year.

Resurgence events at a glance

12 March
Resurgence readers' meeting
River folklore
Online 2–3pm

22 March
Earth Festival
Online meditation 7–8pm

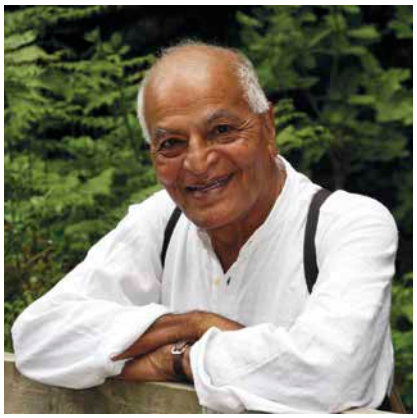
31 March
Resurgence Talks: Julia Hobsbawm
Reclaiming simplicity in a complex world
Online 7.30–9pm

Date tbc
Beavers and ecology talk
With Derek Gow

21 April
Resurgence book club
With Satish Kumar
Online 7–8pm

28 April
Resurgence Talks: Bill McKibben
The last useful decade?
Online 7.30–9pm

www.resurgenceevents.org



Book club with Satish Kumar

Join Marianne Brown and Satish Kumar on 21 April at 7pm to discuss Satish's latest book, *Pilgrimage for Peace: The Long Walk from India to Washington* (Green Books, 2021), followed by a book club chat.
www.resurgence.org/bookclub

Biodynamic Training

Growing the Land, Growing People

2 year practical course

This Level 3 regulated qualification, endorsed by the *Biodynamic Association Board of Studies*, aims to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to become an independent and confident biodynamic practitioner, working on a biodynamic holding.

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

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

Practitioner working on High Riggs biodynamic market garden

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

Dates: 2020: 26-28 Oct, 20-22 Nov, 2021: 15-17 Jan, 19-21 Feb, 6-8 Apr, 28-30 May (Delivered at multiple Ruskin Mill Trust locations in England and Wales).

Fee: External course fee: £1800 RMT staff: no fee

endorsed by Biodynamic Association Board of Studies

ruskinmill

Course information and application:

email: info@rmlt.org.uk web: biodynamictraining.org

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a Journey of the Soul into Colour

the human being as a work of art in time and space

OVERVIEW: This course addresses the theme of the human being as a work of art in time and space through three lenses of colour:

- *Biography* as a work in time
- *Art therapy* as a new sacred space
- *Creating pigments* from plant and earth substances

COURSE FACULTY: Dr Susanne Hofmeister, Karin Jarman, Anna Willoughby, Richard Mace

DATES 2021: 16-18 April, 18-20 June, 3-5 September, 26-28 November and **2022:** 28-30 January, 22-24 April

COURSE FEE: £900 (inc. course materials, meals & refreshments)

INFORMATION: www.thefieldcentre.org.uk

BOOKING: info@rmlt.org.uk

VENUE: The Field Centre, Gloucestershire, GL6 0QE

SHARED LIVES PROVIDERS
and Adult Placement Scheme

ruskinmill tirceridwen

Do you want to help transform the lives of young people?

Contact us:

brad.challinor@plasdwbl.rmt.org | 07875 548056
lyn.ozcan@trl.rmt.org | 07957 455183

Supporting students residentially

Coleg Plas Dwbl in Pembrokeshire and Coleg Ty'r Eithin in Carmarthenshire are looking for Shared Life Providers as part of their expanding Adult Placement Service which offers the opportunity for local families to support our students residentially in their family home.

Shared Lives Providers work on a self-employed basis and receive a generous weekly allowance in exchange for:

- *Providing a supportive learning environment*
- *Offering support and guidance with household tasks*
- *Encouraging social and cultural activities and social skills*
- *Ensuring the safety and welfare of the student*

Ruskin Mill Trust, an educational charity supporting young people with complex needs including autism, is seeking households to provide warm and caring environments for our students to live in while they learn.

www.rmt.org

MEd in ***Practical Skills Therapeutic Education***

New for 2021, this taught Master's Degree in Education is a three year part-time course being launched by the Ruskin Mill Centre for Practice.

The programme is an opportunity to critically explore and examine the function and impact of *Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.* The course is delivered through seven modules: six modules of 20 credits each; and a final 60-credit dissertation module or research/practice project that provides a platform to focus research skill development.

This Master's programme will appeal to educators in special education, education and practical skills, along with other individuals wishing to take the next step in their educational journey.

Faculty: Dr Gill Nah, Dr Sue Reed, Dr Keith Griffiths, Simon Reakes MSc, Matt Briggs MSc, Berni Courts MSc, Leigh Bown, Constantin Court, Aonghus Gordon MEd, other practitioners from Ruskin Mill Trust, and guest lecturers.

External course fee: £5000 RMT Staff: no fee

ruskinmill centre for practice

Course information and application: Applications will open in January 2021. Details on thefieldcentre.org.uk | Additional information at info@rmlt.org.uk

RESURGENCE & ECOLOGIST ADVERTISING

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May/Jun	5 March
Jul/Aug	5 May
Sep/Oct	5 July
Nov/Dec	5 September
Jan/Feb	5 November
Mar/Apr	5 January

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www.emsm.org.uk

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fernismith@gmail.com

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www.loveyoursketchbook.com

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Economics' 'ecologically illegitimate' concepts, functioning as part of an ecological world, cause social and environmental, ecological 'unsustainability' .
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Details : Ecohesion.forum@gmail.com

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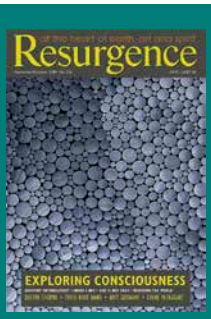


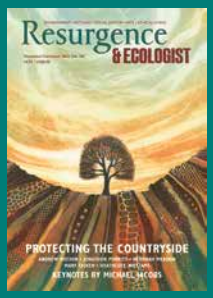
ARCHIVE ISSUES

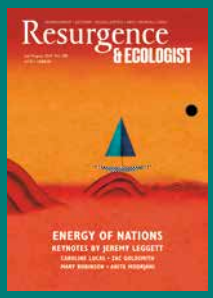
available in print and pdf format

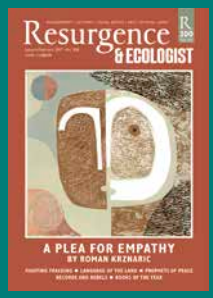
Revisit and enjoy an exploration through the archive of *Resurgence* magazine and *Resurgence & Ecologist*. You'll find a selection of archive issues available to purchase on our website – with issues going back 50+ years.

These issues of *Resurgence*, and *Resurgence & Ecologist* include articles by our highly-respected contributors – environmentalists, visionaries, scientists, activists and artists. Inside, you'll also find regular columns, eco-poetry, and of course a splash of colour within our Arts pages.

To browse and buy archive issues visit: **www.resurgence.org/archive**







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Dear Members and Supporters,

The Resurgence Trust is a registered charity. We publish *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine, run two websites and organise educational events.

We would be delighted and grateful if you would consider leaving a legacy or bequest to The Resurgence Trust. Your gift would enable us to continue to serve the Earth and humanity for the next 50 years and beyond.

If you decide to leave us a bequest, please let us know. You can email legacy@resurgence.org or write a letter to me at The Resurgence Centre, Fore Street, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6AB

We recommend that you consult a qualified legal adviser when preparing or amending your will.

Satish Kumar

Satish Kumar

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Celebrate 30 years of head, heart and hands with us! Join us for the launch of our new book Transformative Learning, with performances from local poet Matt Harvey and a-capella choir Glorious Chorus.

3.30pm, 21 May. Book online at Dartington.org

Schumacher College

Essay Competition

A writing competition to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Schumacher College in collaboration with *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine.

The present system of education prepares young people to uphold the old paradigm of materialism, consumerism and economic growth. As we enter the 'Age of Ecology', we need a system of education dedicated to the new paradigm of human and ecological values.

Schumacher College has been setting an example of such holistic education for the past 30 years. To celebrate our 30th anniversary we are inviting you to participate in our essay competition on the subject: '**Education as if People and Planet Matter**'.

First prize £5,000 | Second Prize £2,000 | Third prize £1,000
Essay length: 1,500 - 2,000 words
Entry fee: £10.00 (or $15.00 or €15.00)
Deadline: 1 July 2021
Winners announced: 1 October 2021

Dartington Trust

Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

For more information about the competition and details on how to submit, please visit: **Schumachercollege.org.uk/essaycompetition**

Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

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The Resurgence Trust... more than a magazine

The Resurgence Trust is an educational charity that strives to help everyone connect – with each other and with the planet. We publish *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine and The Ecologist website (**www.theecologist.org**). We also host regular events, courses and talks including the Festival of Wellbeing and monthly Resurgence Talks (**www.resurgenceevents.org**). The Resurgence Trust is based at The Resurgence Centre in Hartland, North Devon, EX39 6AB.

Online readers' group

Held via Zoom every two months with the release of each new issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine. Our offline Resurgence readers' groups are not meeting at the moment. But, for the future, when we can all meet again, to check if there's a group near you or find out how to start your own group, visit **www.resurgence.org/groups** or call us on 01237 441293.

Book Club

Held via Zoom every month with the book author and a chance for participant Q&A.
www.resurgence.org/bookclub

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