

Bringing people, wildlife and wellbeing together

Nature Thoughts...

It is commonly known spending time with nature has a positive impact on our wellbeing. It is why TEaM exists. I've lost count of the number of times I've heard people comment on how they've spent so much more time outside recently and how much better they feel for it. Social media is full of posts from famous (or sort of famous) people showing pictures of their gardens, walks they've been on, advocating time outdoors and many television programmes highlight the benefits of spending time outdoors. My favourite lockdown outdoor TV has been the too short lived Spring Watch and weekly Gardener's World both of which have run features on the benefits of spending time in nature and mental health and wellbeing.



But have you ever wondered why nature has this effect? There is an increasing stack of evidence-based research appearing and plenty of very interesting and informative literature to be found online and in print. Whilst doing some research of my own, I came across an interview with Florence Williams, author of *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative*, for National Geographic in 2017. Without even reading Williams's answers, some of Simon Worrall's questions alone made me think about things that had never occurred to me previously, guiding my further research and leading me down all kinds of rabbit warrens of thought and theory about the link between nature and wellbeing from history and various cultures as well as science.

In one question he quotes Williams: "Science is now bearing out what the Romantic Poets knew to be true." Anyone that's at the very least watched period drama adaptations on TV, if they don't have a library dedicated to Jane Austen, will know exactly what the heroes and heroines do when they needed time to think, usually about a love dilemma. They disappear off into the wilds and wander fields and gaze out from the tops of sea cliffs. Williams goes on to explain that neuroscientists are now able to add evidence to this romantic image. By hooking volunteers up to EEG units (which measure brain waves) and sending them out to walk around a range of landscapes, they were able to monitor brain activity in noisy city streets and compare it with brain activity whilst walking around parks and green spaces. They noticed that "the frontal lobe, the part of our brain that's hyper-engaged in modern life, deactivates a little when you are outside. Alpha waves, which indicate a calm but alert state, grow stronger." If we are calmer and more alert, surely we are able to think and process feelings with more clarity. Wandering the fields and 'wild swimming' seemed to work for Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy!



In the 1800's across the ocean, in America, a man named Frederick Law Olmstead had become an important leader of the conservation movement, recognising that natural places needed to be protected in the face of industrialisation. He also, alongside his peers, recognised that people needed green spaces too. As New York city seemed to grow overnight, gardens were protected for the higher societies, but any access to nature was all but lost for the poorer 'working classes'. The only green spaces left open to all were cemeteries. People were observed sitting in cemeteries in quiet contemplation and also using them as outdoor social meeting spaces. And so, long story short, Central Park was born; a green space providing access to nature for all because it was realised that nature was not just a luxury for the rich, it was a necessity for everyone.



Travelling west across a second ocean, we arrive in Japan. Japanese culture has always been intertwined with and based upon nature. More recently, Japanese researchers have been studying the link between use of senses and our environment. When we are in an urban environment, we generally only rely upon sight and hearing, we pay little attention to other senses. When we are in the forest, all our senses are awakened. We can smell the trees and earth and we've moved from flat, straight, predictable, concrete pavements to uneven, twisting and turning paths, often without a clear line of sight ahead and even our balance can be tested. We can hear birds, streams, the breeze in the trees, twigs breaking underfoot—

completely different sounds to process from phones, computers, traffic, and crowds.

In the interview, Williams refers to a researcher named Dr Frances Kuo. At the University of Illinois, USA, from the 1990s onwards, Kuo has studied the relationship between people and their environment. Her research established a strong connection between the presence of trees and the health of the community in an area. She found there were lower crime rates and less social aggression in housing projects where there were trees compared to where there were none. Its thought that this may be because areas with green spaces encourage people to spend more time outdoors and when more people spend time outdoors, they begin to chat and get to know each other and a closer community bond is formed.

Need more science? A study led by Dr MaryCarol Hunter at the University of Michigan shows that spending 20-30 minutes sitting or walking in nature significantly reduces the stress hormone, Cortisol, in the body.

If, like me on a personal level, the only evidence you really need that getting out in nature makes you feel good is the way you feel while you're out there, then put the science down and enjoy 20 mins a day! If you can, take a photo of the space in nature that gives you a lift and send it to us to share, we'd love to see the places that bring you joy!

Have a lovely walk or enjoy relaxing in your garden, Rosie



WILD-WORDSEARCH!

Landscapes

- Cliffs
- Desert
- Fen
- Freshwater
- Grassland
- Mountain range
- Ocean
- Rainforest
- Salt pan
- Savanna
- Taiga
- Tundra
- Urban
- Woodland



Image: Rosie Charter

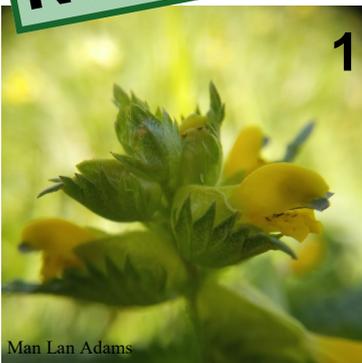
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R	O	U	K	W	N	I	S	S	B	A	I	G	A	E
G	O	O	W	A	H	D	E	S	E	R	T	G	O	S
M	D	M	F	W	T	A	R	S	B	C	D	N	E	F

Challenge... Find the two hidden words that hint at next week's theme!

"Knowing that you love the Earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the Earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship into a sacred bond."
Robin Wall Kimmerer

Name It!

Can you identify the wildlife in the photos...



Issue 17 answers...

Name It!

1. garlic mustard
2. red-and-black froghopper (*Cercopis vulnerata*),
3. blue tit fledgling



Missing Links...

- Grass-Fall (land)
- Dog-House (house)
- Seal-Hill (ant)
- Hawk-Patch (eye)
- Summer-Piece (time)
- Spring-End (tail)

Missing Links...

Your task is to find the missing word that follows the first clue and precedes the second. For example, the answer to Rain-String could be 'Bow' giving Rainbow and Bowstring.

Seed-Robber

A-Flour

River-Line

Team-Ward

Cloud-Line

Answers next week!

You can also follow TEaM on social media for a Daily Dose of Nature...



The Environment and Me



theenvironmentandme



TheEnviroandMe

CLOSE-UP WITH BIRDS OF PREY

Recently my wife and I were privileged to take a day at the 'Bird on the Hand' falconry centre to experience handling and flying a variety of birds of prey. We booked this for our wedding anniversary back in April but due to Covid restrictions it was postponed; it has now re-opened. Over the next few weeks we would like to share this experience with you so that we can really appreciate together the beauty of these wonderful creatures. We flew 7 different species over the day so over the next few issues we will look at a variety of owls, a falcon, hawk and a kestrel.



Ally and Fletcher communing

Our first two birds are both owls but owls that could not be more different in terms of size: 'Fletcher' the Tawny Owl and 'Mr Frosty' the Snowy Owl.

Fletcher was hatched in a prison and so as an ex-con he was named after Norman Stanley Fletcher (the main character in the comedy series 'Porridge'). Tawny Owls are small birds which have the distinctive 'Toowit Toowoo' sound you may have heard. This is in fact the call of a pair of owls with the female making the 'Toowit' sound and the answering male making the 'Toowoo' call. Fletcher was particularly friendly and not only flew from perch to hand but also settled on people's shoulders

Tawny owls hunt at night (nocturnally) and fly silently in order to ambush their prey which typically consists of mice, voles and even insects or worms. The bird's average weight is 200-300g, they mate for life and are occasionally predated upon by

Goshawks.

Mr Frosty on the other hand (sorry for the pun!) is a Snowy Owl which is a large bird that normally lives in the Arctic Circle and hunts across the Tundra (a mostly treeless wilderness which is characterised by low temperatures and snow-covered or frozen ground). Snowy Owls hunt by sight and sound and can detect small rodents moving under the snow cover. They then swoop down and pounce, punching through up to two feet of snow to get their prey. They also hunt Lemmings, Arctic Hares and even ducks or seabirds. They have bristles around their beaks which can sense nearby objects and feathered feet which act as insulation. With a wingspan of 4-5 feet and a thick layer of insulating feathers they are one of the larger owls, weighing in at around 2-3kgs.

All birds of prey have an ideal 'flying weight'. If the bird is over this weight they will become relatively inactive for a while but should their weight drop below their ideal for any length of time it can prove harmful to their health. For the smaller Tawny Owl this is more critical than for the larger Snowy Owl. In all cases it underlines the need for a good habitat and plenty of available prey if they are to stay healthy and survive.

Finally, different owl species have differing eye colouration. Tawny Owls have brown eyes suggesting that they like to hunt a night whilst Snowy Owls have yellow eyes indicating that they like to hunt during daytime.



Ally with Mr Frosty

Next week, Martin introduces us to Nipper the Kestrel and Zippy the Peregrine Falcon



TEaM does



Unscramble the letters to discover some common British garden birds...

Issue 17 answers...

seork ttmtle-storm kettle

cmie apfr-camp fire

mhocamk-hammock

gknildin-kindling

dntier-tinder

dofr iwoe-fire wood

dlabbrick

tube ilt

biorn

sruhth

prowars

nudonck

Find Your Sit Spot

A 'sit spot' can be anywhere in nature where you can sit for a while undisturbed; somewhere you feel safe. When my sister pulls ("stealth coasts") into her drive after work, she refuses to get out of her car for five minutes (or longer if she can get away with it) and takes that time to sit and decompress before hectic family life recommences! Your car can be your safe space... or your garden, a grassy patch by the river or an open window. So long as the 'spot' remains the same. The aim is to build a relationship with that space, by returning to it often over a period of time. Getting to know the nature that lives there, the shapes of the trees or plants, the spaces between them. You could sit for minutes or hours, in sunshine or rain. Darkness and moonlight bring a new perspective as do changing seasons. As our relationship with that space deepens, we may find a better understanding of ourselves. We can be drawn to the nature in our sit spot that mirrors our feelings in that moment. Try keeping a sit spot journal. What changes over time? What remains constant? What themes arise for you there? How do your emotions change as you sit? What's your favourite thing in that space; how does it sooth you? Happy sit spot!

References and further reading...

There are a wealth of ideas for things to do and resources to download on the Action for Happiness website (this is where the attached Altruistic August calendar comes from!):

www.actionforhappiness.org/

This is a fab page on the Mind Website about mindfulness, what it is and how it can help:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/about-mindfulness/

Some easy read articles about nature and mental health...

National Geographic: We Are Wired to be Outside

www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/02/nature-fix-brain-happy-florence-williams/

Psychology Today: Does Nature Make us Happy?

www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-moment-youth/201403/does-nature-make-us-happy

Harvard Health Publishing: A 20 minute nature break relieves stress

www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/a-20-minute-nature-break-relieves-stress

For a more in depth research based report:

Natural England Commissioned Report from The University of Essex: A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care

Read of the Week...

Rewilding: Meditations, Practices and Skills For Awakening in Nature by Micah Mortali

"Today we live mostly urban lives, and our vital wildness has gone dormant. With Rewilding, Mortali invites us to shed the effects of over-civilisation and explore an inner wisdom that is primal, ancient and profound... part celebration of the natural world, part spiritual memoir, and part how-to guide, Rewilding is a must read for anyone who wants to embrace their wild nature and essential place on living Earth."

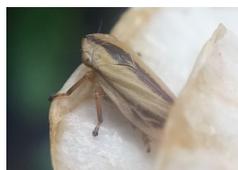
This book is great. There is so much content I couldn't pick one single quote so I give you part of the blurb instead! It has sections on animal tracking and fire building with kit lists and safety advice as well as yoga, mindfulness and meditation exercises. It's great for dipping into depending on need or mood!

Feature Species!!

Froghopper



Do you recognise this from issue 13? Yes, it is 'cuckoo-spit'. It is a mass of frothy bubbles that seems to appear on plant stems everywhere especially from May to June. It is a protective cover for the nymphs of an insect called froghopper (*Philaenus spumarius*) which is also known as spittlebug. The froth helps to shield the nymphs from predators, insulate them and prevents dehydration. Most people have seen cuckoo-spit but not a froghopper. Why? Because they are fast jumpers and subtle in colour.



There are ten species of froghoppers in the UK. They have a varied pattern from black and white to shades of brown as well as black and red. They are so called because they are like a frog in that they are very good at jumping. Amazing jumpers, they're only 4-10mm long but jump as high as 70cm! It is like a person jumping over a tower block! They can be found in gardens, waste grounds, road-side verges and grassy areas. Both the nymph and adult feeds on plant sap using their special sucking mouthparts and do not really harm the plant. They are fascinating insects which are often missed because they can jump very quickly and disappear. They can be seen from June to September, so keep your eyes out for them. Don't blink or you may miss them!



**Stay
safe**

