

Bringing people, wildlife and wellbeing together

TEaM News...

Well it's been quite an exciting two weeks! We are beyond delighted that the TEaM team are well on our way back to face to face delivery. Plans for returning to the plot and the fire are in full swing, we even had our first Wellbeing Walk with 6 allotment members this week. As we walked and talked, it became apparent that the one thing that has kept us all going over the

last few months has been nature and time outdoors. It was lovely to be able to begin sharing that love of the outdoors together again. We had a lovely wonder

around War Memorial Park and almost managed to dodge the rain! Here's some of the nature we spotted including sap leaking from an injured tree, an enormous and beautiful copper beech, a wasp gall on a leaf and some of the largest conkers and acorns we'd ever seen. We were joined by WWT colleague, Kat who, it appears, is Master of Conker Collecting! Kat, it was lovely to have you with us!



Throughout lockdown, Jackie has worked beyond hard to maintain our allotment and keep the veg growing. It was wonderful to be able to donate this produce to Langar Aid, who provide hot meals for homeless people and those in need. It is a privilege to be able to support our community in this way.



Your wildlife...

We have had some lovely comments and photos sent to us this week!

A lovely walk recommendation from allotment member Margaret...

"While walking along the river Soar at Barrow last week Mrs Swan was there with 9 almost fully grown cygnets. What a majestic and beautiful sight! Blessings, Margaret"

Rosalind has been in touch to let us know about the wildlife in her garden, proving you don't need to go far to find nature. She's spotted a beautiful red admiral butterfly and grasshoppers and crickets. A lovely surprise as she hasn't had them in her garden for the last few years. Has anyone else noticed there are more around this year? Whilst having a good sort out, Rosalind came across some old seed packets. She sprinkled these in her garden not expecting much but low and behold, the cosmos have grown and flowered! A favourite down at the plot too, good old cosmos!!



Becky sent us this picture of a hedgehog she spotted out on a walk last week wandering along the pavement, to the next garden. What a lovely spot!

Sue has been busy creating this beautiful embroidery of things that her and Alan have spotted in their garden during lockdown.



Tracy has been spotting lots of wildlife over the last few weeks and took these fabulous photographs of a large white butterfly caterpillar having a good munch on her garden plants and also this squirrel. Wonder what the story behind that ear is?! The green woodpecker is a wonderful spot! Look at that beak!!



WILD-WORDSEARCH

Foraging

Beech nuts
Blackberries
Crab apple
Dandelion
Elderflower
Garlic mustard
Hazelnut
Honeysuckle
Lime
Mallow
Rosehip
Sorrel
Sweet chestnut
Wild garlic

Image: M Felstead

T	Z	B	N	O	I	L	E	D	N	A	D	B	N	S
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G	R	S	L	I	O	N	T	W	W	R	A	F	O	L
E	A	Y	E	U	K	P	U	L	I	D	T	O	E	K
R	B	C	L	I	M	E	N	P	L	A	S	C	F	C
C	A	I	D	Z	R	R	H	M	D	H	U	O	V	U
I	P	R	E	A	P	R	C	A	G	C	M	W	N	S
L	P	W	R	P	P	M	E	L	Z	E	C	A	E	Y
R	L	A	F	P	W	C	E	B	E	E	I	M	N	E
A	E	D	L	L	D	O	B	T	K	R	L	H	E	N
G	Y	S	O	E	G	E	L	L	F	C	R	N	K	O
D	I	B	W	H	S	P	Z	L	U	S	A	O	U	H
L	T	E	E	O	R	K	A	W	A	G	G	L	S	T
I	I	R	R	O	S	E	H	I	P	M	L	Y	B	Z
W	S	W	E	E	T	C	H	E	S	T	N	U	T	M

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

"I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees."

Henry David Thoreau

Name It!

Can you identify the wildlife in the photos?



1



2



3

Issue 19 answers...

Name It!

1. herb Robert 2. common tern 3. little egret



Missing Links...

Bird's-Ball (**eye**)
Monkey-Hatch (**nut**)
King-Man (**fisher**)
Wood-Room (**chat**)
Cow-Shod (**slip**)

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.

Eagle-Lid

Cow-Tern

Jelly-Finger

Bush-Knife

Camp-Blanket

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

Welcome to our last close-encounter with birds of prey. In this series so-far we have met 'Fletcher' the Tawny Owl, 'Mr Frosty' the Snowy Owl, 'Nipper' the young Kestrel, 'Zippy' the Peregrine Falcon, 'Juliet' the Barn Owl and lastly 'Dotty' the African Eagle Owl. Our final bird of prey to meet is 'Dolly' who is a Harris Hawk.

'DOLLY' THE HARRIS HAWK:

'THE WOLF OF THE SKIES'

Harris Hawks can be found in the southern United States, down through Latin America as far south as Chile and Brazil and also in Europe (most notably in the UK). They inhabit deserts and dry open wooded areas and feed primarily on other birds, mammals such as rabbits, lizards and larger insects. The males weigh in at around 700g but the larger females may reach 1200g with a wingspan of 100-120cms. Their courtship rituals include 'sky-dancing' where the males will seek to impress females by showing off their aerial skills by diving and twisting at speed in the air. They nest in small trees, laying 1-5 eggs that hatch after 31-36 days and exit the nest after about 40 days, (Harris Hawks may raise 2-3 broods in a single year). The lifespan of a domesticated Harris Hawk is up to 20 years with the oldest known wild bird recorded in Mexico at 16 years old.

Harris Hawks are very unusual for birds of prey in that they are social animals and even cooperate when hunting. Typically, 2-6 birds will hunt together using sophisticated calls to communicate with each other and hunting strategies which involve some birds flushing out prey (e.g. rabbit) whilst the followers swoop in and make the kill; the pack then sharing the spoils. This cooperative behaviour can increase hunting success rates by up to 10% and allow for larger prey to be taken. This communal behaviour even extends to the nest where 2 males and 1 female may attend the young.

As communal birds Harris Hawks have developed their collective language and their harsh, grating call can express a range of emotions such as warning, distress and happiness and groups have even been known to feed an injured member of the 'pack' until it can recover. In addition, they indulge in a behaviour known as 'back-standing'. This involves one bird landing on a perch (e.g. a cactus) with up to 3 more birds then standing one upon another on its back forming a 'stack'. It is thought that this behaviour has developed as a communal response to a lack of perches in their native American desert habitats. It is a good job that these hawks have also evolved toughened feet which allow them to perch on spiky cacti (especially with up to 3kgs of other birds on their backs!).

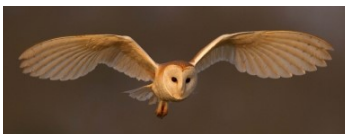


Martin with 'Dolly' pouncing on the glove!

TEaM does



Solve the anagrams to discover the only six owls found in the UK...



Issue 20 answers...

Ako - oak
Noraw - rowan
Zaelh - hazel
Aromyces - sycamore
Liwowl - willow
topsi necs - scots pine

wittle lol
warl bon
towly wan
alow-green old
thews-arool red
leooruee glean paw

'Dolly' therefore is a wonderful bird to finish this series on as she displays unique cooperative behaviours with others that have evolved to help the species succeed in hostile environments. It is for this reason that Harris Hawks are often referred to as 'The Wolves of the Sky'!

As this is our final 'Birds of Prey' close-up it is worth noting that all the species we have looked at are predators at (or near) the top of the food chain. This means that for them to survive, all the elements of the ecological system beneath them need to be in place. This makes them 'key -indicator' species that can inform us as to the relative health of the wider environment.

Finally, I hope that you have enjoyed sharing Ally and my day at 'Bird on the Hand' falconry centre, that you have learned some things about the various birds and that this series has helped you appreciate their remarkable natures.

Feature Species!!

Know Your Egrets

There are three main species of egrets that you are likely to see in the UK, Little, Great White and Cattle.



The Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) is the most common and can be seen in most parts of the UK especially around the coasts and estuaries of England and Wales. They can be found all year round and they breed in the UK. The Little egret is like a small heron with white feathers and lovely long plumes on its crest. It has long black legs, black bill and yellow feet. Little egrets feed on fish, frogs and crustaceans, they tend to stalk their prey in shallow water. They can be seen running with raised wings or shuffling their feet as well as standing still and waiting to ambush their prey.



The Great White egret (*Ardea alba*) is a tall white heron about twice the size of a Little egret. In fact, it is like a Grey heron but with longer legs and a S-curved neck. It has a yellow dagger-like bill and black lower legs and feet. Its upper legs are pale yellow, turning reddish in the breeding season. They enjoy wetland habitats and even farmland ditches. Like the Grey heron, the Great White egret will stand still in shallow water, neck stretched out or hunched down looking and waiting for fish, frogs and insects and then spearing their prey with its long sharp bill. Up until the late 1980's, Great White egrets were very rare in Britain and the first successful breeding occurred in the Somerset Levels in 2012. Now they can be found in south-east England, East Anglia and the Midlands.

Both the Little egrets and the Great White egrets were persecuted in the 19th century for their beautiful long-white feathers of their breeding plumage, which were used in fashion for decorating hats. These birds are now protected and increasing in number.



Cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) are rarer than the Great White egret. As the name suggests they are found among cattle, feeding on insects and worms that the livestock hooves disturbed.

Cattle egret are compact and slightly smaller than the Little egret with shorter yellow or greyish legs and a yellow beak, compared to the black legs (with yellow feet) and black beak of the Little egret. They are likely to be found in the south of England and Wales and tend to congregate in flocks during winter. Occasionally they are seen in the Midlands.



**Stay
safe**

