

How to Donate to Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group

1. Send a cheque, payable to Chesterfield Tinnitus Support Group, to

Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group,
PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU

2. Make a payment directly into our bank account or set up a standing order. Our bank details are as follows:

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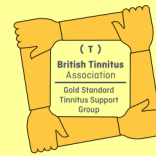
Account no: 20447083

Account name: Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group

3. Donate online using the secure Charities Aid Foundation website:

- Go to www.cafonline.org
- Click on the blue Donate to a Charity button at the top of the page
- Search for Chesterfield Tinnitus Support
- Select us from the list and click on the Donate button
- You can then make a payment using a card or PayPal

localgiving We received a Magic Little Grant of £500 through the partnership between Localgiving and Postcode Places Trust.



CHESTERFIELD & NORTH DERBYSHIRE

TINNITUS SUPPORT GROUP

Registered Charity Number: 1188354



Tel: 07821 132234

Chesterfield Tinnitus Support, PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU

Email: chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com

Wellbeing Magazine

January—February 2024 Edited by Audrey Carlin



Photo by Sarah Richards—Holmebrook Valley Park

**MAGIC
LITTLE GRANTS**

Special edition magazine
sponsored by Magic Little
Grants

Meetings and Contents – January/February 2024

Meetings and Joanne's Skipping challenge

AGM and Soup and Social Wednesday 13th March 2024

(See end of Magazine for details and booking form)

A Message from our Robin Redbreast
Nature in Winter by Audrey Carlin

The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Nature in Winter by Glenn Carlin

The "Dark" Matters by Joanne Gordon

Dog Emotions by Sally Bawden, Feel Good Dog Training

The Silver Birch and Build a Bug Hotel by Sarah Walters

Birch Tapping by Joanne Gordon

My Special Silver Birch by Audrey Carlin

Ducks on the Move by Sarah Walters

Winter Photography by Sarah Richards

The Benefits of Volunteering at Matlock Farm Park by Moira Holland. With thanks to Hayley Harding for the photography

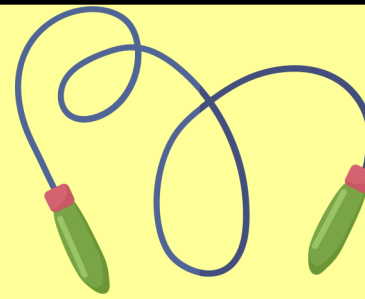
Home-made Soup Recipe from Sheila Smith

The Health Benefits of home-made soup

Book Review – Think Like a Tree by Joanne Gordon

Meeting information and Skipping challenge

Skipping Challenge 2024



During February Joanne will be undertaking a skipping challenge of 250 skips per day to raise funds for our group. Details of how to make a donation are on the back page of this

magazine.

If sending a cheque or you wish to gift aid your donation please complete this form

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Date..... Amount.....

Gift aid—please tick box

If I have ticked the box headed 'Gift Aid? \checkmark ', I confirm that I am a UK Income or Capital Gains taxpayer. I have read this statement and want Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group to reclaim tax on the donation detailed below, given on the date shown. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax / or Capital Gains tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all of my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Soup and Social Booking Form

FORM FOR THOSE RETURNING BY POST

Name.....

Mobile/Landline No.

Email.....

Name of person attending with you (if appropriate)

Please state choice of sandwich(es)

Special Dietary Requirements

PLEASE NOTE: If you book and then are unable to attend – please inform us AT LEAST 48 hours beforehand so we can inform the Badger.

Please return the booking form to: Joanne Gordon, Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group, PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU Or email: chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com

If you are booking by post please leave extra days for the post to arrive. Sending to a PO Box takes longer than normal post.

A message from our Robin Redbreast

By Audrey Carlin

The marks of tiny footsteps show
Like frozen music notes in the snow
And then I glimpse a bright red breast
It's too early yet to build a nest

He's been around for quite a while
And always leaves me with a smile
I know he's waiting for the Spring
But in the meantime, he sits and sings

A beautiful melody for all to hear
And to wish you all a **HAPPY NEW YEAR**



Nature in Winter by Audrey Carlin



This is our “Special Edition” about the benefits of Nature in Winter, a time of reflection and hope as the earth slumbers and beckons us to share in its tranquility, a most beautiful time of year. Winter’s unique beauty and muted charm places the other seasons into context, with its frost-shrouded shrubs and filigree leaves, once lush with vibrant colours, now lie in a muted tapestry, waiting to replenish the earth. After a heavy frost, I ventured into the garden to take photos of the beauty created, rather than “turning up the heat”. For



the briefest moment the leaves of evergreen shrubs were transformed into works of art, as were the stems of herbaceous plants and grasses, withered by the cold,



revealing their skeletal and sculptural beauty. The Cherry Tree caught my eye too with a layer of snow nestling on its bare branches and twigs, which prompted me to write a poem called:

The Cherry Tree Slumbers

She's shed her gown
Of red, gold, umber and brown
Now scattered on the ground like a shroud
Tall, statuesque branches bare and stark
Twigs like outstretched fingers point upwards to the sky
And a blackbird stops for a brief rest as it flies on by

A sprinkle of snow softly falls on her thick bare arms so dark
And she bares her soul to all who ponder her nakedness
And wonder why, when it is so cold, does she undress

But she doesn't feel the cold as she nestles firmly in the earth
Waiting for Spring to emerge exposing her transformational rebirth

But for now, she sits silently in quiet slumber
And I look in awe at her and feel quite humble.



Soup and Social AGM and Raffle

Wednesday 13th March 2024 11am—1pm

At The Badger, 81 Brockwell Lane S40 4ED

AGM business followed by talk by Helen Carter from National Energy Action. Talk to include

- Understanding your energy bills
- Smart meters and reading meters
- Priority services register
- Trust funds and government support
- How to save energy
- Insulation schemes

Lunch will be served with a choice of sandwiches. Choices are: Egg or Cheese or Ham on WHITE or BROWN Bread This will be accompanied by a mug of vegetable soup which is suitable for vegans and gluten free diet and home made chips Tea or coffee

Cost of the meal is £7.50 each

Payment: We will require you to pay on arrival please

To book please contact Joanne on 07821 132234 or email chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com or use the form

Please book by latest Thursday 7th March 2024

Raffle prizes would be gratefully received

as a reminder to value how I am different from other people, rather than allowing myself to be laid low by insecurity.” (Sarah Spencer)

Motivation - as the book is a call for action, no matter how small ‘be a good ancestor’ and, therefore, a to-do list of the changes to make.

<https://www.thinklikeatree.co.uk/>

Sarah’s ideas for being a good ‘Ancestor’ – some small steps

Don’t

- Buy single-use novelty items
- Or clothes you will only wear once
- Fly when you can take the train

Do

- Check how the product you intend to buy is made. Is it a sustainable source?
 - Look at renewable energy sources from suppliers
 - Try some volunteering in the community
 - Buy a re-useable cup and take it to the coffee shop
 - Look for toiletries and cleaning products which don’t pollute the land or water
 - Invest savings ethically
 - Plant a tree and give it a friend!
- Sarah does acknowledge there will still be ethical challenges but do your best and don’t feel guilty

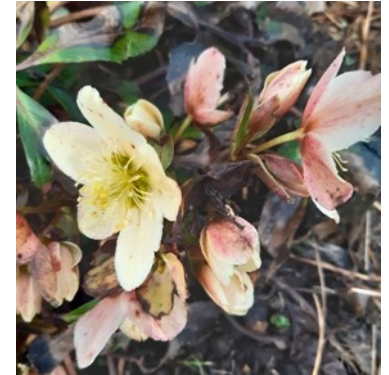
In February there is everything to hope for and nothing to regret”

By Patience Strong



Whilst many lie in dormant slumber, there are plenty of plants that do seize the opportunity to burst into life; Cyclamen with its beautiful painted leaves with flowers in shades of rose, cerise and white which love to hide under shrubs but exposed enough to

attract your attention. The philosopher, Plato, described the plant as far back as the 4th century BC. The name is derived from the Greek word 'kuklos', which means 'circle'. I am always excited when the Hellebores appear, one of my favourite winter flowers, commonly called the Christmas Rose, which bring back memories of my grandparents.



The Snowdrop, however, is my favourite as it dares to venture out into the cold wintery earth but also for its symbolic meaning of “Hope”. The Snowdrop became the symbol of ‘consolation’ during the Crimean war. The failure to provide the soldiers with food and warm clothing during the first freezing winter of the conflict left them bitter and demoralised. Then in early 1855 the bare earth began to come alive with flowers and their flagging spirits revived and soldiers sent home pressed snowdrops to their families. As one of the first flowers of spring, they often symbolise new beginnings, hope, rebirth and the ability to overcome challenges. This makes the Snowdrop a very positive flower to give someone who might be going through a difficult time and need some extra support and encouragement.



As stress is our body's response to pressures from challenging situations in life, with a feeling of being overwhelmed and under pressure, being in touch with nature can help us to feel better.

As the Dalai Lama says:

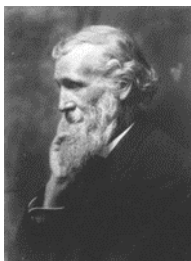
“Nature can generate many positive emotions, such as calmness, joy, and creativity and can facilitate concentration. Nature connectedness is also associated with poor mental health, particularly depression and anxiety.”

I asked my son for his perspective of the health and wellbeing benefits of nature in winter, having worked in the NHS for a number of years in the role of Operational Manager of A&E at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield, in Specialist Cancer Care Services at Weston Park and now in Specialised Rehabilitation at Northern General, and this is what he said....

The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Nature in Winter

by Glenn Carlin

Wellbeing encapsulates the overall health of an individual, both physically and mentally. A state of contentment where you feel healthy, happy and satisfied. There are many factors that contribute to personal wellbeing, including lifestyle choices, relationships, dietary habits, physical exercise, personal achievements, but equally as important is our interaction with nature. This interaction is not limited to just physical activities but extends to the psychological comfort that nature provides.



Embracing Nature in Winter

Nature has always been a sanctuary for humans, offering a refuge from the hustle and bustle of modern life. The famous naturalist, John Muir, once said, “In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.”

practice and real case studies including Sarah's own story. Sarah Spencer has had to overcome many difficulties, experiencing mental health problems as a teenager as well as the challenges of getting and then being diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder. No matter how hard things got, Sarah always found solutions in nature.

The book does not shy away from difficult topics, including death both on a personal level as well as that of the planet as we face the challenges of climate change. Sarah makes suggestions for creating a simpler life, moving away from consumerism and taking small steps to help the environment.

There is a lot to take away from this book—Acceptance of Self

The 100% in nature challenge

Aim: to engage with the rest of the living world 100% of the time

Here are some of Sarah's examples to work towards this

1. Walk in a park or woodland
2. Plant a pot or a window box of flowers
3. Share an allotment or community garden
4. Put up pictures of paintings and photos of nature
5. Wear flowery shirts or clothing (my friend always compliments me when I wear my butterfly dress)
6. Have a plant in your bedroom (which covers the question about what to do when you sleep)
7. Take a scenic walk to the shops
8. Plant a tree in your back garden or local community

“Many of us have favourite trees that we love regardless of their contorted ways. I love to look at the hollows and scars of mine

The book then takes us through 6 key principles which are further broken down into manageable sections.

These key principles are:

- Observation**
- Purpose**
- Surroundings**
- Connection**
- Resilience**
- Future**

Supporting our Wellbeing

Some of the ideas contained in this book aren't new. Sarah talks about us all being unique, finding what works for us, re-framing thoughts, using mindfulness, zooming out to gain perspective, continue learning and making connections with others including as simple as passing on a smile.

However, what is different, is how Sarah weaves the information around interesting facts and analogies to trees, allowing us to unlock the power of the natural world. This element of the book really appealed to me.

Principle 4 discusses the importance of making connections and building relationships.

“Plunge your head into a forest floor and you'll find a white web of activity. Hidden beneath the soil is a network of mycorrhizal fungi connecting trees, communicating their needs and allowing them to share nutrients. This system allows established trees to give to others in need and thus maintain the health of the whole forest.”

A beautiful book

“Think like a Tree” contains lovely quotes and illustrations, as well as exercises to help the reader put the principles into

John Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838 and lived there until the age of eleven when his family emigrated to America. During his lifetime he was a farmer, inventor, shepherd and writer but became famous as an influential Naturalist and Conservationist teaching people the importance of experiencing and protecting our natural heritage.

John Muir's philosophy resonates with the scientific evidence that supports the health benefits of nature. Studies have shown that spending time in nature can lower stress levels, improve mood, enhance focus, and even increase lifespan.

The soothing sounds of a flowing river, the rustling leaves in a forest, the chirping of birds, or the sight of a beautiful landscape can have a profound calming effect on the mind. This interaction



with nature can lead to reduced blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension and the reduction of stress hormones, thus promoting a state of relaxation and wellbeing. [Photo: Linacre Woods]

Nature encourages us to engage in physical activities, which further enhances our health. Activities such as walking, cycling, or simply a stroll in a park can improve cardiovascular health, strengthen muscles and boost overall fitness. Of course, it's not possible for everyone to be as active, but just taking a walk in your own garden, watching the birds and the changing landscape, or even watching nature programmes on television, can give you a boost of dopamine. In essence, nature acts as a natural health booster, enhancing our physical health whilst nourishing our mental wellbeing.

Although winter is often associated with indoor activities and cosy fires, embracing nature during winter can lead to a multitude of benefits, both for our physical health and mental

wellbeing. The winter landscape, with its snow-covered trees and frozen ponds, offers a unique beauty that is vastly different from other seasons. The world seems to slow down, providing a sense of peace and tranquillity that is hard to find in today's fast-paced world. This peaceful environment can have a calming effect on the mind, reducing stress and anxiety.



[Countryside photo taken on one of Joanne and Mum's winter walks about 15 years ago]

Thank you Glenn for contributing to our magazine from your perspective of the importance of nature in winter that opens up opportunities and encouragement to enjoy the winter season. I remember the countryside walk well; it was a fine day when we set out but later in the day it started to snow quite heavily.

The “Dark” Matters by Joanne Gordon

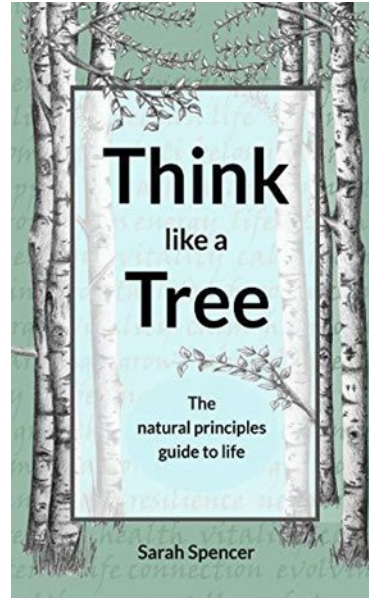
Getting up in the dark, leaving work in the dark, always filled me with a sense of discontentment and mourning for the light. However, a few years ago, an article changed my perspective, it was about ‘accepting’ and going one step further to embracing the dark.

The Danish term ‘hygge’ is closely associated with being mentally prepared for winter and taking positives from it.

From then on, my walk home in the dark took on a new

Book Review by Joanne Gordon

Think like a Tree (by Sarah Spencer)



Think like a Tree “sounds bonkers”, but that is exactly what Sarah Spencer is asking us to do in this intriguing self-development book. It contains advice and information for improving our wellbeing as well as that of our community and planet, leaving it healthy for future generations. At the heart of this book are the benefits and lessons we can learn from nature, in particular trees.

Connecting with Nature

Sarah begins by highlighting some of the benefits of being out in Nature. Although research has found that even looking at pictures of nature can help improve our wellbeing, the book follows the findings by the University of Derby which suggests that to truly benefit from nature we must be an active participant.

Senses – engaging all the senses

Emotions – connecting with feelings of joy, wonder

Beauty – appreciating landscapes or small details and being able to express those feelings

Meaning – exploring what nature means. Think!

Compassion – extending our sense of who we are to include nature and to care for living things

(Research University of Derby - information used from “Think Like a Tree”)

Soup can boost your feelings of wellbeing, it is comforting for many people and can give you a welcome lift on the darkest days of the year when you're feeling at a low ebb, or alternatively, if you have been out for a walk or shopping, it can warm you up. You can prepare a batch ahead of time and freeze it in individual portions, simply defrosting and heating up when you need it. Soup also makes a fantastic way to use up your leftovers, says Nichola Whitehead, roasted veg is delicious transformed into soup, you just need to add some stock, heat everything up and blitz the mixture with a blender.

Many people swear by chicken soup as a treatment for the common cold, and science backs this up to some extent. A 2000 study from the US found that this comforting broth calms upper-respiratory inflammation, and research has highlighted its effectiveness at breaking up mucus and helping the cilia of the nose clear away infection.

Finally, the report in Saga continues, "soup can help you reduce your carbon footprint. Soup is a hearty one-pot, one-burner meal, so it's environmentally friendly." Cooking soup instead of a meat and two veg dinner should save you money on your energy bills too. You can't go wrong!



And finally, thank you to Joanne for sharing her latest Book Review with us which emphasises what the National Trust states that "Trees stand for hope"

perspective, the darkness felt peaceful, noticing my surroundings, it was the same experience but new and even a little bit exciting.

This year, however, with a change of job, from 25 years of being office based to now working as a gardener with my husband, the darkness once again began to represent a loss. A loss of working hours and a loss of time spent in our own garden. It was impacting on my mood. Low mood in the winter months is not uncommon. 'Healthy' an online magazine states that "3% of people in the UK are diagnosed with full-blown seasonal affective disorder (SAD), there's also a milder form, which is much more common and can result in low mood. Sub-syndromal SAD, or 'winter blues', affects 21% of the population in the UK."

It was time for a reminder as to why we need the dark! Jacqueline Yallop, writing in 'The Guardian', states "dark matters!" - "not only does darkness offer unique physical and mental benefits to humans, it is vital to plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and insects...."

Darkness is good for us

On average most people require 6 – 9 hours' sleep at night, and to sleep well we need darkness. According to **Timo Partonen**, Research Professor at the National Institute for Health and Welfare, "the quality of sleep is simply better in the dark than in the light'.

"Melatonin is the main sleep-producing hormone in humans. The body produces it in large quantities only at night and in the dark. Melatonin production is clearly dependent on the amount of light outdoors," says Partonen. This is why we advocate turning off devices and dimming lights to help get a good night's sleep. We will explore this more in our "Special

Sleep Edition” in March/April.

Embracing the dark

Embracing the dark may mean having sight of animals that come out when we are usually tucked up in bed. Foxes are usually spotted at dusk or dawn. Last year I had a surreal experience. I was working into the evening on my laptop when I heard a tap on the patio door. Expecting one of the cats, imagine my surprise when I saw a black nose, pointed features and the red-brown fur of a fox, looking longingly into my warm living room.

Nature in the dark

On a cold, drizzly evening in February, my husband and I stand in a damp field sipping chilli hot chocolate from a flask, occasionally stamping our feet to fight off the cold. We are joined by others with flasks and binoculars, as we all patiently wait for a Starling murmuration. It starts slowly, we are not quite sure if the spectacle has begun, gradually it builds momentum as Starlings gather, then they begin to twist and turn, making shapes against the darkening sky.



The first photograph is taken at Middleton Top, Stoney Middleton, but we didn't manage to get a photograph of the actual murmuration, though we witnessed the build-up as the

starlings gathered behind the trees out of sight, then suddenly emerged in a huge swoop but we were in awe of the spectacle and hadn't got the camera at the ready! Television programmes

4 med carrots, chopped
1 med onion, chopped
2 x 400g tins of tomatoes
1 apple, chopped
1 tsp of ground ginger
100g red lentils
Splash of cooking oil
600 ml stock or water

1. Soften the onion in the oil in a pan
 2. Stir in the ginger
 3. Add the carrots, tomatoes, lentils and liquid
 4. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 mins
 5. Add the chopped apple and simmer for another 10 mins
 6. Blend when cooled. Reheat, and season if needed
- Enjoy.

*Thank you Sheila for sharing your delicious recipe with us.
We will enjoy!*

The Health Benefits of Home-made Soup

Extracts from Saga Magazine

Homemade soup is wonderfully wholesome as long as you go easy on the salt and saturated fat. It really is the ultimate healthy meal or snack” says registered “dietitian, Nichola Whitehead writing for Saga magazine. She goes on to say “soup is a go-to food when temperatures plummet and whether you're heading out or coming in from the cold, a quick bowl of your favourite soup should work wonders warming you up.” If you're feeling very chilly, opt for ingredients that help heat the body such as ginger and spices like cinnamon or cloves. Drinking enough water during the winter months is rather challenging but you can help keep your hydration levels up by eating soup, which, of course, has an exceptionally high water content.

So, everything you would need for a great day out in the countryside throughout the seasons, and especially wintertime, to give your health and wellbeing a boost.

The Mental Health Foundation has undertaken research which shows us that the quality of our relationship with nature is part of the reason for its positive impact on our wellbeing. Researchers use the term “*connectedness*” to describe the ideal relationship.

There are ways that we can develop our connectedness with nature. Activities that involve the ‘Senses’ (this is something we have written about on many occasions in our magazine and often used as inspiration for our poetry too) which can help to develop our connection with the natural world, as can activities where we feel emotions such as compassion, perceive beauty or find meaning in nature.

Thank you Moira for sharing with us the enjoyment of volunteering at Matlock Farm Park and the benefits as the Dalai Lama says “...being in touch with nature can help us to feel better.”

Winter is the time for comfort

The famous author Edith Sitwell said, “*Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.*”

So, after a lovely day out, or even a short walk, what better way to warm up than to enjoy one of Sheila Smith’s delicious homemade soups, and here Sheila shares one of her recipes with us.

CARROT, TOMATO, LENTIL & APPLE SOUP

from Sheila Smith



have illustrated much larger gatherings of murmuration but it was, nevertheless, a spectacle which can only be witnessed in winter as the light fades. According to the internet the best time to witness a murmuration is between October and March in the UK.

Star gazing

With the earlier dark nights, now maybe the best time to look up to the sky and notice the stars and constellations.



There are, of course, other benefits of the darkness; getting an early night, cosying up for a film or favourite sit-com, catching up on that reading list or indoor hobbies such as writing poems, sewing or knitting. As well as indulging in some nourishing soups.

[Photo taken of the snowflakes falling against a backdrop of the night sky]

With this reminder, my mindset begins to change to one of acceptance of the darkness as well as the anticipation of spring and new life

Into the Light

The inevitable passing of time and after the dark nights comes daylight and there is good reason for us to make the most of it.

According to Dr Anne Fothergill, Principal Lecturer in Mental Health and Shaun Hough, Senior Lecturer in Mental Health, University of Wales.

“When sunlight hits a specific area of the retina in your eyes, this actually triggers the release of Serotonin (the “feel-good” chemical) in the brain. An increase in Serotonin is linked to higher mood levels.”

Take exercise

Furthermore, the morning may be a good time to take a walk; studies have repeatedly shown that walking in the morning can boost energy levels for the rest of the day, especially when done outdoors. This doesn't have to be a long walk to feel the benefits and could be a walk in the woodland, local park or even around



your garden if your mobility is restricted. If this is too much, studies have also shown that just being out in nature is beneficial.

[Photo: Linacre Woods]

Call of the Deer

White Edge, Curbar is a picturesque moorland view where we have taken a morning run, particularly in late autumn, hoping to see the deer. We were rewarded this autumn, when at the end



of October, we witnessed the mating call of the stag, bolving. Simon took a video on his mobile phone but as it is something we had waited a long time to experience, I decided to share it with you. Another spectacle of nature which is uplifting.

The park has a large selection of animals including llamas,



goats, meerkats, turkeys, peacocks, deer (which gives Moira the opportunity to make up stories to tell the children about Santa's reindeers). Also cattle, wallabies, ducks, alpacas, ostriches and sheep to name

but a few. However, the small animal barn is a firm favourite for children with the chance to cuddle rabbits, guinea pigs and chicks and the opportunity to help feed young lambs. Horse riding lessons and pony trekking is also available at the farm where children can learn about the countryside and have fun along the way.

On the morning of their visit to Matlock Farm Park, snow had fallen quite heavily so the children had a great time, not only taking part in activities in the barn, but also walking round with Mrs Claus to see the animals and playing in the snow. A truly magical Christmas outing!

Matlock Farm Park also offers indoor and outdoor play areas for children with The Rainforest, which is great fun with slides, climbing areas and soft play toddler area with a relaxing viewing area to watch the children while the parents and/or grandparents can enjoy a coffee. The outdoor play is great too, with a super go-kart track and play areas. A licensed café is on site serving delicious homemade food. Matlock Farm Park is open all year round

In today's busy world, stress and mental health issues have become more common. However, Moira has found that a powerful antidote exists by immersing herself, as a volunteer, with the animals at Matlock Farm Park. Moira exudes enthusiasm when talking about how spending time with the animals has helped to reduce her stress and anxiety and



improved her mental wellbeing. At the Park she is able to engage with all the animals including horse riding as well as the children who regularly visit the Park. However, at Christmastime, Moira transforms into Mrs Claus and spends time with the children, telling them stories and singing to them as well as helping Santa Claus and ensuring everyone has a good time.

On the run-up to Christmas, I happened to mention to my friend, Hayley, about Moira and she

immediately knew who I was talking about because they had previously been to Matlock Farm Park at Christmas and she had a video of Moira (as Mrs Claus) interacting with the children. Hayley told me they had booked to go again for Christmas 2023 and I asked her to take photographs so I could share the enjoyment that Matlock Farm Park gives to everyone, and especially at Christmastime, with Mrs Claus . [Photo of Mason with the ducks & geese]



Helping Nature

Getting out in nature, as well as undertaking a caring act can have positives for our own mental health and there is plenty we can do to help garden birds during the winter.

The RSPB website states “put out bird food and water on a regular basis through winter. In severe weather, you may find you need to feed twice daily. Birds need high-energy, high-fat foods during cold weather. Always adjust the quantity given to the demand, and never allow uneaten foods to build up. Once you have a feeding routine, try not to change it as birds will become used to it.”

It is also important to keep bird feeders clean; the RSPB advises “Brush off debris every time you put out fresh food and scrub the table with a mild disinfectant solution weekly. Move the table from time to time to stop droppings building up underneath”

Just a word of caution, however, “Some bird diseases can infect people. The risk is small, but precautions are worth taking. Wear gloves and thoroughly wash your hands after cleaning bird baths and bird tables. Clean feeders outside with separate utensils.”

For more information visit <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/helping-birds-and-wildlife>



Watching nature can boost your mental health, so why not participate in the Big Garden Birdwatch at the end of January every year. In 2023 half a million people took part which included myself and Dad. It's simple to be involved, register and the details will be sent to you. Essentially

it involves spending just one hour watching and recording the birds you see (there is a criteria in order that you don't potentially count the same bird twice, but this is explained in the information) and then sending off your findings to the RSPB. To get involved.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>

The daylight hours may be shorter over the next few months but that gives us good reason to make the most of the light and getting a dose of nature can really help our sense of wellbeing. Getting outside can also mean we begin to notice the first signs of new life emerging from the cold earth to let us know Spring is on its way.

Uplifting Nature

Winter offers a unique opportunity to engage with nature and reap numerous health benefits. It's a time when we embrace the cold, venture outdoors, and let nature work its magic on our wellbeing. As we've seen from my brother's story, the benefits are significant, impacting both our physical and mental health. So, let's put on our warm clothes and cosy hats and step outside, and explore the winter wonderland that awaits us. Remember, every season has its own charm, and winter is no exception. So, let's make the most of this season and all the health benefits it has to offer.

However, always remember to dress appropriately for the cold weather. Layering your clothes can help keep you warm, and wearing waterproof shoes can keep your feet dry. Also, don't forget to protect your skin from the harsh winter air by using moisturiser and lip balm.

Moreover, exposure to natural light during winter can help regulate sleep patterns. Despite the shorter days, making the most of the available daylight can help maintain our circadian rhythm, leading to better sleep quality. As the renowned sleep researcher Dr Matthew Walker points out, "Light is the most powerful entrainer of our internal biological clock." There will be more about Sleep in our next "Special Issue" magazine.



Water rat, January, Chesterfield

But birds are not the only wildlife to be found in the park, this water rat was very shy, hiding near the reeds, but was still for long enough for me to take the image.

So if it's dry and sunny, whatever the season it's always worthwhile getting outside in the garden or a public park nearby if you cannot manage further afield to the seaside. And if you keep your eyes open there may be wildlife to point your camera at.

Photos © Sarah E J Richards

Thank you Sarah for sharing with us your wonderful journey in nature captured with your beautiful photography.

The Benefits of Volunteering at Matlock Farm Park

Story from Moira Holland



With thanks to Hayley Harding for sharing her photographs of their day's outing to Matlock Farm Park, Christmas 2023

[Photo of Moira (Mrs Claus) with Mason and Ruby (on right) and their two cousins, Maisie and Jenson - Christmas 2023]



And at Spurn Point near Bridlington we found a redwing perched on a wall. One of the delights of photographing birds is the fun when getting home and identifying the species. Searching through our bird books to change our understanding of what we originally thought was a thrush to deciding it was a redwing instead.

Redwing, October, Spurn Point



Treecreeper, January, Chesterfield

You don't need to travel far from Chesterfield in order to see the wildlife in the winter months. Near us is the Holmebrook Valley Park where there is a lake and also several bird feeders that are regularly filled up with seeds. During Lockdown this was one of my regular walks and I usually took my camera along. It provided an escape from the restrictions. Near the bird feeders I found a

treecreeper and a nuthatch, both frequent the same tree.



Gulls, December, Chesterfield

Even common birds populate the park and are sometimes photogenic, like these three gulls perched on a fence.



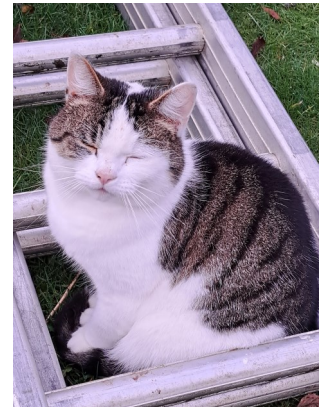
Nuthatch, February, Chesterfield

Thank you Joanne for your story about "Dark Matters" which puts a whole new perspective on the importance of the dark nights and how we can enjoy the winter days.

Towards the end of summer 2023, one of our members, Judy Thompson, and her daughter, Linzi, came over to visit us and whilst sitting in the garden watching the ducks on a peaceful sunny afternoon, Linzi got out her mobile phone and held it up to identify the sound of the bird serenading us. It was, of course, the Robin. Linzi explained it is an App called "Merlin" and you can identify the birds visiting your garden by their song. Since installing the App on my mobile phone, which was free, I have been surprised at the variety of birds visiting our garden and keep a notebook recording their visits. As well as the robin, blackbird, sparrow, dunnock and starlings, we have had the great tit, bluetit and long-tailed tit. Also chaffinch, wren and linnet, as well as the bigger birds like wood pigeon and doves. I would never have known we had been visited by so many species had it not been for "Merlin". Another way of engaging with nature from your garden.



When we interact with animals, our bodies release oxytocin, which is known as the "feel-good" hormone. It helps reduce stress and makes us happier. Whether we cuddle with a furry friend, walk with a loyal companion, or observe wildlife in their natural environment, the emotional bond and unconditional love from animals make us feel balanced and emotionally content. Sometimes during the winter months, we need motivation to go out into the cold weather but our pets, whether they are cats, chickens, ducks, horses or dogs, they need us. Many households have a dog and here, Sally talks about Dog Emotions so we can understand them better.



Dog Emotions by Sally Bawden Feel Good Dog Training



Last summer Audrey asked me to do a presentation about dogs at the Tinnitus Soup and Social meeting at The Badger pub in Chesterfield. I was thrilled and immediately decided to speak about dog emotions as I find this subject fascinating and fundamental to understanding the behaviour of our dogs. The presentation seemed to go down well with people saying they

enjoyed it so here is the write-up for those who were unable to attend the meeting.

Everyone knows that to be a good dog owner we need to think about the needs of the dog in relation to food, shelter and exercise but what often isn't spoken about are the emotional needs of dogs and how, when we understand these, we can give our dogs a happier life and often improve their behaviour. Emotions are needed for survival and dogs actually find it harder to process their emotions than humans. They often need a bit of help from us, so I hope you find this information useful.



What we know about animals often stems from what we know about humans and Jaak Panksepp was a Psychobiologist and Neuro Biologist who identified seven primary emotions in the brains of animals and humans. Emotions are created in the centre of the brain in the Amygdala and the Hypothalamus. The



Heron, November, Scarborough

This particular visit was very generous in the wildlife opportunities given. A curlew was an unusual bird for me to encounter and capture with my camera. It is a wader with a very long curved beak that it uses to probe deeply into the mud or sand for crabs and other prey. It is a red-listed bird whose population is decreasing.

Another favourite of mine is the heron, seen fishing in the shallow pools left by the receding tide. Patience and a steady hand are needed to photograph them in flight.



Curlew, November, Scarborough

Near Scarborough are Bempton Cliffs. A mile walk from the little station of Bempton will get you to the RSPB reserve and a little further on along the coastal path you can usually spot gulls and other birds. Unlikely to encounter the famous puffins in the winter months but the gannets usually put on a splendid display flying on and off the cliffs.



Gannet, October, Bempton Cliffs



October, Scarborough

The weather can provide glorious opportunities for photography. On another visit to Scarborough after a light shower, the sun came out and a double rainbow was revealed. The outer band is quite faint but was lovely to see.

One big advantage of visiting the seaside off-season is the lack of crowds. This is the North Bay Scarborough in late November, with few people on the sidewalks and the sand that the outgoing tide is revealing.



November, Scarborough

As the tide goes out the rocks in the bay are exposed. This provides a feeding ground for wading birds looking for a morsel amongst the seaweed and boulders.

A visitor that I delight in seeing is the Oystercatcher. My first sighting was back in the late 1980s when I was working in New York. I visited Oyster Bay, Long Island on a day trip and was amazed at seeing this smart bird. With its distinctive long red beak it's easy to spot though I have not seen them at Scarborough in recent years. This photo was taken during a visit in November 2010. The seaweed provides context to the image.



Oystercatcher, November, Scarborough

primary emotions Panksepp identified are **Seeking, Lust, Care, Play, Grief, Rage and Fear.**

Here is a brief explanation of Panksepp's 7 core emotions and then we will look at **Seeking** and **Fear** in more detail.

Seeking – It is within a dog's genes to seek resources (food, attention, sex, toys etc). Dopamine is the main neuro transmitter involved with seeking. It is the emotion involved in anticipation and is what we feel when we gamble or when we check our mobile phones for a message. It creates motivation and is what gets us up in a morning. Dopamine is needed for learning to occur. Animals love seeking and exploring, it is involved in the hunting process.

Lust - when this emotion is stimulated animals show sexual behaviour.

Care - creates feelings of tenderness and love and leads to parenting behaviour in animals.

Play - the concept of joy is associated with play. It creates a bond and inhibits fear. Playing with our dogs creates a bond and trust.



Grief - this emotion creates a feeling of sadness and activates the release of the stress hormone Cortisol, it is involved with separation anxiety.

Fear is when animals freeze or flee. Animals are generally more fearful and more irrational than humans, what we may see as insignificant can create fear in dogs, for example a noisy crisp packet blowing in the wind. It is within a dog's genes to avoid danger.

Rage is when animals feel increased fear and will try to inflict damage, for example biting.

SEEKING



So now let's look at the core emotion of seeking in more detail. When I start dog training consultations with my clients, one of the first things we talk about is 'seeking'. The reason I do this is because allowing dogs to seek is so beneficial and enjoyable for them and allowing them to do this can help other areas of the dog's life that may be causing an issue for them and their human caregivers.

When dogs seek it creates dopamine in their brains and makes them feel good and seeking can counteract the negative feelings of fear. Animals have a spontaneous tendency to learn about their environment through seeking and the seeking system is never turned off altogether.

So how can you encourage your dog to seek? Well surprisingly putting food into a bowl for a dog to eat can be considered a dis-service to them as it doesn't allow for the arousing feel-good creation of anticipation and dopamine created when seeking, only the de-arousal consummatory behaviour. Think about how you could scatter feed with your dogs at home and hide food or toys for them to search for. This can also help when dogs are feeling fearful in a certain place on walks and change their negative emotions of fear into the positive emotion of seeking, although if they are very fearful their digestive system may have been affected and they may be unable to eat.

Doing training with our dogs can also activate the seeking system as the dog is working to hear us ask for a 'sit' for example which will then predict that a treat is on its way. It's the sound of the word 'sit' that starts the dopamine response rather than receiving the treat itself. Using clickers in training can also produce dopamine as the dog searches for the golden sound of the click.



November, Clumber

built by Sir Titus Salt around 1853. Known as Salts Mill it is a fascinating place to visit if you are, as I am, interested in the industrial past. While I was wandering around the nearby village I noticed some leaves on the stone pavements and thought they would make an abstract photo.

This was taken at Clumber in the autumn. A still day, partially overcast – but that just adds character to the image.

I always look out for shapes, patterns and “quirky” images. In November 2015 I paid a visit to Saltaire near Bradford, West Yorkshire, to see a textile mill



November, Saltaire

Another image presented itself on a visit to Scarborough after a snow fall. It was cold and I was primarily taking photos of the seabirds. The gulls had been walking along on the beach and left impressions of their webbed feet in the snow.



November, Scarborough



Crocus, February, Kew

The gardens in February are also home to early spring crocus which carpets the grass below the trees.

Occasionally some freak of nature occurs, and this was the case when Ladybower reservoir ran dry after the long hot summer of 2018. This revealed part of Ashopton village that had been submerged when the reservoir was built in 1943. In addition to various monuments and relics being revealed the ground was cracked and dry. This gave an unusual aspect to the photo. In the foreground is the cracked earth of the basin; in the background are the autumn colours of the forest nearby,

providing interesting layers through the photo.

With the climate changing no doubt this will happen again, if it does I will be out with my camera. It takes effort to go to visit these places but is so worthwhile. I sometimes find it hard to summon up the energy to go out but once there it is relaxing and so pleasant. Of course it helps if, as this day, it was a sunny if cold day.

Water adds to any photograph, especially if the surface is still enough to create reflections .



October, Ladybower reservoir



health issues.

Sniffing also comes within the seeking system, sniffing is how dogs see the world as it is their primary sense. The information dogs gain from sniffing the ground can include what type of animal was previously there, when they were there, what sex they were and if they had any

Allowing our dogs to sniff on walks is imperative, if they can't sniff it is the same as us going outside with a blindfold on. If our eyesight was as strong as a dog's sense of smell, we would be able to see a stop sign on the moon.



We think of a walk as being linear with one foot in front of the other, whereas for a dog the concept of a walk makes no sense, they want to explore and gain information through their noses. See if you can spot your dog air scenting the next time you go on a walk, this is all part of the prey drive and makes our dogs feel good. Scent work is a great activity to do with your dog, look out for 'scentwork' classes in your area which could include mantrailing (searching for people) and tracking (following a track on the ground).

FEAR

Dogs are born with the ability to respond to stimuli which may be associated with danger such as pain, movement, noise and smells in order to avoid danger and increase their chance of survival. When animals are in fear they may either freeze or flee. Subtle signs of fear in dogs are yawning, lip licking, turning

their head away, showing the whites of their eyes (what we call whale eye and what people often misinterpret as guilt but is actually a sign of appeasement as they can see that their care giver is angry or annoyed). These body movements also send a message of no threat to others. More severe signs of fear can be panting, drooling, shivering and crouching.



When we think of reactive dogs who may lunge or bark at things in the environment it is often a sign of fear of whatever is approaching such as a person or dog. This is often worse when the dog is on a lead because they lose all sense of control and agency to flee so may lunge or bark to get the other dog away. As dogs are very good at

predicting events their fear may increase if they are repeatedly put into places where something scary **could** happen, such as on your daily walking route if they are repeatedly feeling fear and barking and lunging at dogs or people. It then becomes so ingrained into the dog's brain that it becomes a habit. It is important to avoid these confrontations whilst working on changing their emotions from positive to negative.

What is also important is how we as humans are feeling and how this rubs off on our dogs, so we may find the walk stressful if we are worried about seeing dogs and what may happen and a small tip is to take some breaths and try to smile at your dog because if you feel good that will transfer to them and help them to feel good too.

How easily is your dog recovering after a reaction? This is important too and this is where the seeking system can help them, along with access to things to chew like bones, kongs, rabbit ears etc. as these help dogs to decompress and let off steam, a bit like us taking a bath, calling a friend or doing some meditation.



November, Chesterfield

trees in the winter. Even if the tree has no covering it can still be attractive, as this photograph of a windswept tree near Bakewell, taken in February before the leaves had started to emerge.

If I can add something like a wall or fence in the foreground then so much the better – it adds interest to the view.

Deciduous trees are forever changing, covered with green foliage in the spring and summer followed by beautiful autumn colours and then bare leafless



February, near Bakewell



Orchid, February, Kew

In early February Kew Gardens holds an annual orchid festival in the Princess of Wales conservatory. These exotic blooms fill the glass house with vibrant colour. The festival lingers on for over a month so there is usually plenty of time to arrange a visit. This year the event runs from 3rd February to 3rd March and will include many plants from Madagascar where they grow in the wild.

Winter Photography by Sarah Richards

Most of my photography trips take place in the spring or summer months. The advantage at Kew is that the days are long and from May to September I can get into the grounds at 8 am when it is quiet.

When the days start to shorten and the temperature drops it's all too easy to just stay indoors, after all what is there to take photographs of anyway? But of course there is – lots of wildlife and nature there ready to take my mind off the grey skies and the cold.

My journey of nature photography in the dark months starts in my back garden. The snow arrived and all were tucked up inside, except for a fox who found his way into the garden and was lying near our surrounding hedge. He stayed there happily for quite a while enabling me to take several photos of him, through a window, till he roused himself and left to find another spot. I realise some people do not like foxes – we do not encourage them, except for recently putting a bowl of water down on the lawn. They seem to like our garden and visit most nights, probably because it is a bit of a “wild” garden and we have no pets.



February, Chesterfield

During lockdown I ventured out every week for some exercise. About a mile or two away from our house is a reservoir, and en route I pass green fields on the edge of town. In the winter the sun sets early and as it goes down long shadows are created of the trees. Although my main interest in photography is flora and fauna if I see an attractive lone tree I will always try to take a photo.

Finally, I would like to say that it is always important to remember that if a dog is showing a behaviour that is undesirable to you and you may be finding challenging, then this is always a message that something is a problem for the dog too and the behaviour is serving a purpose for them to feel better. When we have worked out what the function of the behaviour is we can start to think about what to change and the first place is emotions.

If you would like to get more information on dog emotions or anything to do with your dog's behaviour in general, please don't hesitate to contact:

Sally

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07828 12305

Thank you very much Sally for your fascinating story about dog emotions and how to develop a happy relationship with your pet. Many people have dogs and what better way for you and your pet to enjoy nature in winter than taking a walk in the countryside, good for both your pet's and your wellbeing. The photos are from canva, for which Sally has a fully paid licence .

The Silver Birch and Build a Bug Hotel

by Sarah Walters

I'm sure that all of us are familiar with silver birch trees. They are a very common tree, particularly so in the areas that have previously been the site of coal mines. This is because they are what's known as a "pioneer species" of tree. Because they are so quick to germinate and spread, they are one of the first trees to appear on ground that has previously been disturbed. I regularly take the train between Sheffield and Leeds and on my last trip I noticed just how many clumps of birches can be

spotted along the trackside around the old mining communities of South and West Yorkshire. There are also a great many of them at Chesterfield's own Poolsbrook Country Park - which was formerly the site of Ireland Colliery. What was once the spoil heap is now a green hill with footpaths and areas that have been left to return to a more natural state - and silver birches have colonised the whole area. Here's a photo that I took there while on a walk with Joanne last autumn.



The silver birch is quite easy to identify - as their name suggests, they have a trunk that is silvery white and will shed bark. The leaves are triangular with a rounded base and in the spring they grow little catkins, with male and female versions appearing together on the same tree. The male catkins are long and yellowy brown in colour, while the female ones are smaller and bright green. The female catkins are pollinated with the help of the wind, and they thicken up, change colour and shed their seeds in the autumn.

It seems to me that the resultant saplings will grow just about anywhere, but apparently their most favoured areas are heathland and woodlands in drier parts of the country. They are also to be seen in many gardens, where they attract a range of wildlife. I had heard that robins are particularly attracted to birch trees, which was the main reason why I decided that I wanted one! As they can grow up to 30M tall, they might not be suitable for a smaller garden, but I investigated the feasibility of growing one in a pot - and this can be done. Therefore, a couple of years ago when my parents asked me what special present I would like for my 50th birthday, I responded with "A silver birch tree in a big terracotta pot, please!" My wish was granted and delivered and

This winter it clung on to some of its golden leaves, resembling a mop of blonde hair, until Christmas when others around it, including the Cherry tree, succumbed to the chills of winter. When it is bare, it transforms into a quirky sculpture with flailing arms.

Sarah Walters sent me this lovely photograph which she took on her way home from work in November. I thought it was so endearing, and unexpected, that I am sure it will bring a smile to your face too.

Ducks on the move by Sarah Walters

Sarah says:



"I took this photo in Sheffield yesterday (22nd November 2023) which might make you smile. A pair of ducks had taken up residence in the water feature outside the train station. They were getting a lot of attention and

enjoying it very much. When I went to get my train home, the drake was admiring his reflection in that big steel wall! I wish I'd had time to photograph that too but I was running late."

Chris also states that no more than a gallon should be taken, the hole should be plugged afterwards with a piece of wood shaped to fit and the tree should not be tapped every year.



We took only a small amount to taste it, and it was delicious, like cold pure water with a hint of syrup. As well as a tonic it can be made into wine or mead.

[The Silver Birch provides climbing practice for Bailey]

Birch Sap Wine

Birch sap wine was introduced to Britain from the Baltic and is still commercially made on a small scale in Scotland. Writing in 1718 Ned Ward, author of 'The London Spy' described it as "Wine drawn out of a birch tree...

drinks almost like mead, and makes a man's mouth smell of honey." (Taste the Wild)

My Special Silver Birch by Audrey Carlin

Following on from Sarah's Silver Birch story, I became fascinated with the tree over 46 years ago when my son was aged 6. He was in the Beavers, and one day came home with a little Silver Birch sapling. We ceremoniously planted it in the front garden and it is a beautiful, sculptural tree.



me and my potted silver birch are in our second year together. It appears to be very happy in the pot on my patio as it has grown quite a lot taller and looks to be in good health. I feed it with my homemade comfrey tea and I topped up the compost a little last summer.



Having my own silver birch has allowed me to observe the catkins closely and last autumn I collected some of the seeds. The female catkins crumble really easily into hundreds of little brown seeds, so you can see how they have become such a successful species. Each tree must have the potential to

create a forest full of saplings, I may sow some in the spring, if I remember!

Another reason that I liked the idea of having a birch tree of my own, aside from the potential robins, was that they were once used to make cotton reels. Birch

wood has also been used to make besom brooms - supposedly the chosen transport of witches! In Finland, where the birch is the national tree, birch twigs are used for beating the body in the sauna. I don't think I'll be trying that though!

As with many trees, in more recent times the birch has been found to have a medicinal use. The sap contains Betulin and Betulinic Acid, which has cancer fighting properties. The sap is drinkable, but this isn't something that I've tried - I wouldn't know how to go about extracting it and would be worried about



damaging the tree. For me, the health benefits of the silver birch come from watching the wildlife take advantage of what it offers to them. Last summer, I went outside one day to find my tree covered in caterpillars, which sure enough soon attracted the attention of the local Great Tits - it is so soothing to watch them hopping about and hanging onto the little branches to get to the grubs. I've yet to see a robin sit in it, but I'm waiting and watching...and while I do this my stresses melt away.

Build a Bug Hotel

Bug hotels for the garden have risen in popularity in recent years. We have come to realise that far from being something to be exterminated by poisonous chemicals, insects are vital to the health of a garden. Spiders, woodlice and beetles are important food for creatures such as frogs and hedgehogs that in turn will help to keep the more annoying garden visitors such as slugs and caterpillars under control. Ladybirds, that most lovely garden friend, need somewhere to bunker down over winter - and if you keep them close then they will set to work keeping next year's aphids under control more quickly. Every creature has a role to play in the web of life and the more species you have in your garden, the healthier it will be.

It is a good idea to offer lots of different little habitats - and not to be too tidy. A pile of twigs here and a drift of leaves there will make a difference. Or you can purposely build a bug hotel - and the good news is that you don't need any special equipment. Any gardener is likely to have all that they need already to hand. Here's a photo of one that I have situated next to my greenhouse. The outer casing is an abandoned wooden box and I have just shoved in a bunch of things

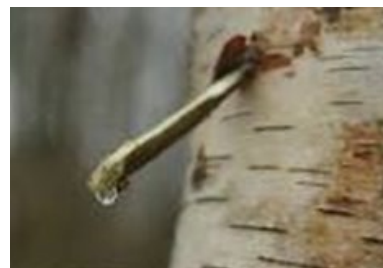


that I found lying around. Broken pots, little baskets, twigs, shells, pine cones and broken pieces of bamboo cane are all in there somewhere. What you need to create is a range of hidey holes and nooks and crannies for the little creatures to settle in, away from the wind and frost. My efforts were rewarded in the autumn when, while doing a bit of weeding, I happened to spot a tiny young frog investigating the bug hotel. It hopped in and disappeared from sight, seemingly very happy to be there!

Thank you Sarah for your Silver Birch and Bug Hotel stories. Silver Birch is a favourite tree of mine too and like you, I discovered that it germinates very successfully. Joanne also adds a short story about Birch Tapping.

BIRCH TAPPING by Joanne Gordon

Over the years my husband, my brother, Glenn and I have undertaken a number of foraging and outdoor cooking courses with 'Taste the Wild', run by the very knowledgeable and lovely Chris and Rose Bax. Their foraging courses based in their own Wood in Yorkshire have featured on one of the trips with the Hairy Bikers. However, although not on one of the courses but



through their newsletter, we received details about tapping a Silver Birch tree for sap. As Sarah mentioned, you have to be careful not to damage the tree, tapping can only be undertaken in the early part of the year when the tree is relatively bare. Chris gives this information "check the size of the leaf

buds on the tree – they should still be small and tight (officially the size of a squirrel's toe!)"