

A Language of Birds

Paintings Inspired by Wildbirds & Poetry



by Suzy Sharpe

A body of work exploring the human - animal relationship, but is also inspired by poetry, mythology, folk tales and most importantly the experience of seeing wildlife in our often tumultuous world.

The magical momentary glimpse of a Barn Owl, the barely heard hoot of a Tawny Owl or the distant flock of lapwings whilst passing an estuary, or standing under a cloud of 200,000 starlings and trying to ignore the roar of the busy rush hour road close by; the hectic human landscape of wind turbines, power cables, plastic, and roads ever present, navigated daily by our wildlife.

From Barn Owl by R. S. Thomas

“It is the breath
of the churchyard, the forming
of white frost in a believer,”



Ghost
80 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

From Crow and the Birds

“When the owl sailed clear of tomorrows conscience
And the sparrow preened himself of yesterday’s promise”

Ted Hughes



Tomorrows Conscience
80 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

From The Owl Who Comes

“and his eyes,
like two moons “

“and if i wish the owl luck
and I do,
what am I wishing for that other
soft life,
climbing through the snow?

what we must do,
I suppose,
is to hope the world
keeps its balance”

Mary Oliver



Moon Eyes
60 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

The Owl

When cats run home and light is come,
And dew is cold upon the ground,
And the far-off stream is dumb,
And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.
When merry milkmaids click the latch,
And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
Twice or thrice his roundelay,
Twice or thrice his roundelay;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

Alfred Lord Tennyson



Towards Morning
60 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

Yr Wylan (The Seagull)

A fine gull on the tideflow,
All white with moon or snow,
Your beauty's immaculate,
Shard like the sun, brine's gauntlet.
Buoyant you're on the deep flood,
A proud swift bird of fishfood.
You'd ride at anchor with me,
Hand in hand there, sea lily.
Like a letter, a bright earnest,
A nun you're on the tide's crest.

Right fame and far my dear has –
Oh, fly around tower and fortress,
Look if you can't see, seagull,
One bright as Eigr on that wall.
Say all my words together.



Fair Gull
30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Board

Let her choose me. Go to her.
If she's alone – though profit
With so rare a girl needs wit
Greet her then: her servant, say,
Must, without her, die straightway.

She guards my life so wholly
Ah friends, none prettier than she
Taliesin or the flattering lip
Or Merlin loved in courtship:
Cypris courted 'neath copper,
Loveliness too perfect-fair.



White Moon
60 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

Seagull, if that cheek you see,
Christendom's purest beauty,
Bring to me back fair welcome
Or that girl must be my doom.

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By Dafydd ap Gwilym
(1340-70) Ceredigion,
translated by Tony Conran



Bell
80 x 80 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveller hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.
Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.
The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Returns the traveller to the shore,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)



Curlew Song
80 x 80 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

Sonnet To The Curlew

Sooth'd by the murmurs on the sea-beat shore,
His dun-grey plumage floating to the gale,
The Curlew blends his melancholy wail
With those hoarse sounds the rushing waters pour.
Like thee, congenial bird! my steps explore
The bleak lone sea-beach, or the rocky dale,--
And shun the orange bower, the myrtle vale,
Whose gay luxuriance suits my soul no more.
I love the ocean's broad expanse, when drest
In limpid clearness, or when tempests blow:
When the smooth currents on its placid breast
Flow calm, as my past moments us'd to flow;
Or when its troubled waves refuse to rest,
And seem the symbol of my present woe.

Helen Maria Williams (1759 – 1827)



Congenial Birds
30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Board



30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas



30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

Moonlight on the Bosphorus
(“ La lune etait sereine. “)

Bright shone the merry moonbeams dancing o'er the wave;
At the cool casement, to the evening breeze flung wide,
Leans the Sultana, and delights to watch the tide,
With surge of silvery sheen, yon sleeping islets lave.
From her hand, as it falls, vibrates the light guitar.
She listens — hark! that sound that echoes dull and low.
Is it the beat upon the Archipelago
Of some long galley's oar, from Scio bound afar?
Is it the cormorants, whose black wings, one by one,
Cut the blue wave that o'er them breaks in liquid pearls?
Is it some hovering sprite with whistling scream that hurls
Down to the deep from yon old tower a loosened stone?
Who thus disturbs the tide near the seraglio?
'Tis no dark cormorants that on the ripple float,
'Tis no dull plunge of stone — no oars of Turkish boat,
With measured beat along the water creeping slow.
'Tis heavy sacks, borne each by voiceless dusky slaves;
And could you dare to sound the depths of yon dark tide,
Something like human form would stir within its side.
Bright shone the merry moonbeams dancing o'er the wave

by Victor Hugo



Hovering Sprites
60 x 60 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

Sonnet: The Crow

How peaceable it seems for lonely men
To see a crow fly in the thin blue sky
Over the woods and fealds, o'er level fen
It speaks of villages, or cottage nigh
Behind the neighbouring woods
when march winds high
Tear off the branches of the hugh old oak
I love to see these chimney sweeps sail by
And hear them o'er the knarled forest croak
Then sosh askew from the hid woodmans stroke
That in the woods their daily labours ply
I love the sooty crow nor would provoke
Its march day exercises of croaking joy
I love to see it sailing to and fro
While fields, and woods and waters spread below

John Clare



Black Rainbow
30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

The Jackdaw

There is a bird who, by his coat
And by the hoarseness of his note,
Might be supposed a crow;
A great frequenter of the church,
Where, bishop-like, he finds a perch,
And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,
That turns and turns, to indicate
From what point blows the weather.
Look up -- your brains begin to swim,
'Tis in the clouds that pleases him,
He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,
Thither he wings his airy flight,
And thence securely sees
The bustle and the rareeshow,
That occupy mankind below,
Secure and at his ease.



Thrice Happy Bird
30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Canvas

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses
On future broken bones and bruises,
If he should chance to fall.
No; not a single thought like that
Employs his philosophic pate,
Or troubles it at all.

He sees that this great roundabout,
The world, with all its motley rout,
Church, army, physic, law,
Its customs and its businesses,
Is no concern at all of his,
And says what says he? Caw.

Thrice happy bird! I too have seen
Much of the vanities of men;
And, sick of having seen 'em,
Would cheerfully these limbs resign
For such a pair of wings as thine
And such a head between 'em

William Cowper



30 x 30 cm Acrylic & Mixed media on Board

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