

Impressions of Nature



October 23

October

30th Sept - 27 October Ivy Moon begins September

6th National Badger Day

13th-15th Global Bird Weekend

21st Apple day

28th Oct - Nov 24 Celtic Month of the Reed or Straw

28th Full Moon Blood or Hunters Moon

29th Day light saving ends

31st All Hallows eve or Halloween

In October we are settling in to Autumn, there are leaves on the ground and storms arrive to helping them to fall. Deciduous trees begin to change colour, we don't always get a colourful Autumn in Cornwall because it's so damp. We don't have large ancient woodlands due to historical mining, ship building and few large trees because of the wind. However that isn't to say that Autumn can't be gorgeous. The berries on the mostly bare Hawthorns are bright red this year and so plentiful, considered to be the British avocado by some but very welcome to wildlife too. Fallen leaves also play a vital role in our local eco systems, Moth and Butterfly larvae, spiders, snails, worms, millipedes, mites, ground beetle (who eat slug eggs) and many other creatures benefit from the leaves on the ground and in turn support the birds, mammals and amphibians as a food source, so where ever possible I try to leave the leaves! Spiders become more visible as the morning dew clings to their webs especially the garden orb spider.

October sees the continuation of bird migration as many species prepare to fly south for the winter. Birdwatchers can spot flocks of geese, swans, and other migratory birds passing through, the starlings in our local village have moved on (but others will start to arrive soon) and I haven't seen a swallow for a few weeks now, but look forward to seeing the first fieldfares and Redwings probably towards the end of the month.

Its Fungi foray season I like to try to identify wild mushrooms, but it is an area for development for me as I have limited knowledge of the local fungi. After spending most of its time below ground the Autumn rain signals that its time to fruit and spread its spores.

Apple Day is celebrated on October 21st and is a lovely celebration of apples and orchards, we have had a bumper year again for apples, which is apparently attributed to the weather last year and the warm spring.

Global Bird Weekend is a global opportunity to get involved in some citizen science all you need to do is watch birds on 14th to create a home bird count. Then report what you find from anywhere in the world on the [eBird](#) worldwide bird checklist program.

All Hallows' Eve falls on 31st October each year, and is the day before All Hallows Day (also known as All Saints Day in the Christian calendar) The Church traditionally held a vigil on All Hallows' Eve when worshippers would prepare themselves with prayers and fasting prior to the feast day itself. The name derives from the Old English 'hallowed' meaning holy or sanctified and is now usually referred to as Halloween. Also known as Samhain (meaning Summers end) for the Celts the day began at sunset with darkness. It marks the end of the harvest and beginning of winter and also the new year. It is the end of the cycle of birth and growth and considered the point of death. Death is always followed by rebirth and while this is the end of the old year, it is the beginning of the new year. It is first mentioned in Irish literature from the 9th century, associated with many important events in Irish mythology, it was said to be marked by great gatherings and feasts, it was when the ancient burial mounds, which were seen as portals to the Otherworld, were opened.

People disguised themselves as harmful spirits in order to protect themselves from bad forces. Apparently on South Uist, sheepskins including the skull and ears were used by the guiser. In the 16th century there are accounts of people going from house to house in costume (or in disguise), usually reciting songs or verses in exchange for food. Impersonating these spirits or souls was also believed to protect them from the same spirits or souls. Large fires were lit and there are accounts of bones being cast into the flames, with the embers then used to light household fires to distribute the protective forces of the fire. Lanterns started to appear during the medieval period and apparently Irish migrants took the tradition of carving a lantern (from a turnip) to America where the pumpkins were found to be easier to carve.

It is the Celtic month of the Ivy, its flowers being one of the few wild plants in flower in October, meaning they are very important for bees and other insects. Ivy flowers signify friendship, fidelity and marriage.

The flower of the month is the Marigold, *Calendula Officinalis*, which is steeped in symbolism and meaning as well as many medicinal properties.



“What We Sow” based on the Ovid
poem called Actaeon

Floral Focus
the Marigold
(*Calendula Officinalis*)

About the Marigold

The flower of the month is the Marigold, *Calendula Officinalis*, mine are still flowering and adding a lovely bit of colour to my garden. They are often associated with the sun because of their bright yellow and orange colours. They symbolise warmth, happiness, and positivity. In the language of flowers, they can also symbolise gratitude, healing, or remembrance. Often used to convey messages of appreciation and sympathy.

In medieval Europe, calendula was considered a symbol of the Virgin Mary, Also known as “Mary’s Gold” to early Christians, the marigold held a sacred significance. Garlands of marigolds adorned the statues of saints, especially the Virgin Mary, symbolising her radiance. Its floral symbolism conveys “winning grace.” In ancient traditions, marigold garlands served as protective talismans, hung at doorsteps to ward off evil. Placing these garlands beneath a bed was believed to inspire prophetic dreams.

Calendula petals are edible and have been used in culinary applications they have a slightly peppery flavour. They are also used to make teas and infusions as a mild remedy for digestive issues, creams and ointments are used to soothe skin irritations, such as cuts, burns, and insect bites.

The Aztec Marigold is associated with the Mexican Day of the Dead and they are used as bright decorations for the graves to attract the souls of the dead. This annual celebration typically takes place on November 1st and 2nd, it is a time for people to honour and remember their deceased loved ones.



The Marigold By George Wither

When with a serious musing I behold
The grateful and obsequious marigold,
How duly every morning she displays
Her open breast, when Titan spreads his rays;
How she observes him in his daily walk,
Still bending towards him her small slender stalk;
How when he down declines, she droops and mourns,
Bedewed, as 'twere with tears, till he returns;
And how she veils her flowers when he is gone,
As if she scorned to be looked on
By an inferior eye; or did contemn
To wait upon a meaner light than him.
When this I meditate, methinks the flowers
Have spirits far more generous than ours,
And give us fair examples to despise
The servile fawnings and idolatries,
Where with we court these earthly things below,
Which merit not the service we bestow.



Marigolds By Robert von Ranke Graves

With a fork drive Nature out,
She will ever yet return;
Hedge the flowerbed all about,
Pull or stab or cut or burn,
She will ever yet return.

Look: the constant marigold
Springs again from hidden roots.
Baffled gardener, you behold
New beginnings and new shoots
Spring again from hidden roots.
Pull or stab or cut or burn,
They will ever yet return.

Gardener, cursing at the weed,
Ere you curse it further, say:
Who but you planted the seed
In my fertile heart, one day?
Ere you curse me further, say!
New beginnings and new shoots
String again from hidden roots
Pull or stab or cut or burn,
Love must ever yet return.



Featured Creature the Buzzard

About

The Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) is a common and captivating raptor often seen perched on posts surveying the world around it, soaring high above us enjoying the thermal updraft or striding around a field hunting invertebrates. They can be found in a variety of habitats, I see them mainly in open grassland or farmland, but they are also seen around the coast and on heath & moorland and woodland, it is this adaptability which has helped them thrive in the UK in recent years. They are the most ubiquitous bird of Prey in the UK and the breeding population has increased 95% between 1995 and 2020 (BTO). There are around 63 thousand Pairs in the UK (2016) and they were first recorded in Medieval times.

From a natural history perspective, the common buzzard is an important predator in its ecosystem. It primarily feeds on small mammals, birds, and carrion, helping to control populations of rodents and maintaining the health of the ecosystem. Its distinctive mewing call is a common sound in many landscapes and adds to its mystique.

In European folklore and mythology, the common buzzard has been associated with both positive and negative attributes. In some cultures, it was believed that seeing a buzzard flying overhead was a sign of good luck or a harbinger of fair weather. In others it was considered a bird of ill omen, associated with death and doom. In medieval Europe, these birds were often associated with witches and were believed to be their familiars.

The buzzard's appearance and behaviour also play a role in its symbolism. With its soaring flight and sharp eyesight, it symbolizes freedom, vision, and perspective. In some cultures, the buzzard is seen as a symbol of renewal and rebirth because of its ability to transform carrion into life-sustaining energy. Its watchful behaviour means it is often seen as a symbol of protection.

In the Welsh Mabinogi tale “Math fab Mathonwy,” Lleu Llaw Gyffes, a legendary hero celebrated for his remarkable feats, undergoes a transformation into a bird of prey. However, his heroic stature is put to the test when his wife’s betrayal nearly leads to his demise. In response to her betrayal, Lleu takes flight in the form of a hawk and finds himself in the realm of the dead, where he begins to decay while perched in a tree. Fortunately, his friend Gwydion, a skilled magician, locates him and brings him back to the land of the living.



Poetry

The Hawk In Autumn By James Grahame

Farwell sweet Summer, and thy fading flowers
Farewell Sweet Summer, and thy woodland songs
No woodland note is heard, save where the hawk,
High from her eyry, skims in circling flight,
With all her clamorous young, first venturing forth
On untried wing. At distance far, the sound
Alarms the barn door flock, the fearful dam
Calls in her brood beneath her ruffling plumes
With crowding feet, they stand, and frequent peep
Through the half open'd wing.
The partridge quakes, among the rustling corn.
Ye gentle tribes, think not your deadliest foe is now at hand.
To man, bird, beast, man is the deadliest foe .



To A Hawk By E.W. Barnard

How gallantly thy soaring wing
Hath won yon place on high!
And there remains, unwavering,
As if its home were in the sky!
Usurper I thence thou spread'st afar
Terror—like some portentous star!
The birds that skim the lower air
To covert dark, with shrieks repair
For well thy sudden swoop they know,
Thy lightning glance, and deadly blow.
The leveret crouches close and still,
On rushy brake and sheltering hill
With rustling wing, and fearful wail,
Slow round their young the plovers sail
And Man's dim eye and giddy brain
Up to that dazzling height strain after thee in vain.



The Buzzards By Martin Armstrong

When evening came and the warm glow grew deeper
And every tree that bordered the green meadows
And in the yellow cornfields every reaper
And every corn-shock stood above their shadows
Flung eastward from their feet in longer measure,
Serenely far there swam in the sunny height
A buzzard and his mate who took their pleasure
Swirling and poising idly in golden light.
On great pied motionless moth-wings borne along,
So effortless and so strong,

Cutting each other's paths, together they glided,
Then wheeled asunder till they soared divided
Two valleys' width (as though it were delight
To part like this, being sure they could unite
So swiftly in their empty, free dominion),





Curved headlong downward, towered up the sunny steep,
Then, with a sudden lift of the one great pinion,
Swung proudly to a curve and from its height
Took half a mile of sunlight in one long sweep.

And we, so small on the swift immense hillside,
Stood tranced, until our souls arose uplifted
On those far-sweeping, wide,
Strong curves of flight,—swayed up and hugely drifted,
Were washed, made strong and beautiful in the tide
Of sun-bathed air. But far beneath, beholden
Through shining deeps of air, the fields were golden
And rosy burned the heather where cornfields ended.

And still those buzzards wheeled, while light withdrew
Out of the vales and to surging slopes ascended,
Till the loftiest-flaming summit died to blue.



Medieval

There is much confusion in History about Falcons, Hawks and Eagles and they tended to be spoken of as one entity with differing traits. However with my secular mind and upbringing I just enjoy the strangeness of it all... so here are some of the things I found

The blessed Gregory comments on the hawk and how it moults.

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom and stretch her wings toward the south?' (Job 39:26).

"It is the custom of hawks in the wild to spread their wings when the south wind blows, so that their limbs are warmed by the wind to release their old feathers. When there is no wind, they create a breeze by spreading their wings to face the rays of the sun and beating them; and thus, as the pores of their body open, either their old plumage falls out, or new feathers grow in.

This signifies, therefore, that the hawk moults in the south wind, if not that every saint is warmed by the touch of the breath of the Holy Spirit and, casting aside his old way of life, takes on the form of a new man"





Here are some excerpts from the wonderful Aberdeen Bestiary “The hawk is a bird armed rather with spirit than with claws, having great courage in its small body. It gets its name, accipiter, from accipiendo, accepting - that is, a capiendo, taking to itself. For it greedily seizes other birds. For that reason it is called accipite, meaning one who seizes by force. Therefore Paul says: ‘You suffer if a man take of you’ (Corinthians 2, 11:20); but while he means to say ‘siquis rapit, if any man seizes something from you by force’, he says ‘siquis accipit, if any man take’.

It is said that the hawk is lacking in parental care towards its young, for when it sees that they are able and trying to fly, it does not feed them but beats them with its wings, throws them from the nest and forces them from a tender age to catch prey for themselves lest, when they are fully grown, they should become lazy. It takes care lest in their childhood they grow idle, or are given up to pleasure, or grow weak from inactivity, or learn to expect food rather than to seek it for themselves, or abandon their natural vigour. Hawks stop bothering to feed their young in order to make them bold enough to seize food for themselves.

Things I try to do

1. Join conservation groups
2. Support Charities who protect habitat and wildlife
3. Share good practice in Fishing, Farming and Land management
4. Vote with my purse, dont support substandard practice in anything.
5. Sign petitions to protect birds and habitat
6. Share my love of wildlife with friends and family
7. Sign petitions to end persecution and improve understanding
8. Dont use pesticides, herbicides or poison in the Garden
9. Let the grass grow, insects love dandelions and daisies.
10. Grow wildflowers, plant native trees and plants that support pollinators.
11. Encourage insects to the garden, it all starts with the insects.
12. Put up bird Boxes
13. Mulch flowerbeds to keep moisture in
14. Grow some food... no matter how little.
15. Have as many waterbutts as I can.
16. Leave the leaves to provide habitat for insects etc.
17. Plant trees
18. Only ever forage sustainably and responsibly

This is essentially a research project, I aim to look at a different bird, animal, plant or tree each month. It should be taken as a work of fiction or at best a starting point for your own research, as most of the information at this point is based on folklore, storytelling, very old non scientific books and unquantifiable hearsay.

I enjoy gathering poetry, songs, facts, stories and information to further understand, celebrate and share the depth and breadth of the relationship between humans and non humans, from the medieval bestiary, mythology, folklore and fables, with their often strange didactic and allegorical meanings.

More of my artwork can be found on my [website](#) including greetings cards, prints, printmaking, original drawings, paintings and related products.

You can also follow me on social media and if you can like and share my posts it would be much appreciated and makes it all feel a little more worthwhile!

Some links for further information:-

[British Trust for Ornithology](#)

[RSPB](#)

[Birdlife](#)

[The Wildlife Trusts](#)

[The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust](#)

[Plantlife](#)

[The Hare Preservation Society](#)

[The Badger Trust](#)

[RSPCA](#)

[Woodland Trust foraging guidelines](#)

See You In....



November

If you would like to see some more of my work including original paintings, drawings, printmaking and greetings cards please visit my website www.suzysharpeartist.com