

Up!

ISSUE 12 SEPTEMBER 2021

The Forest



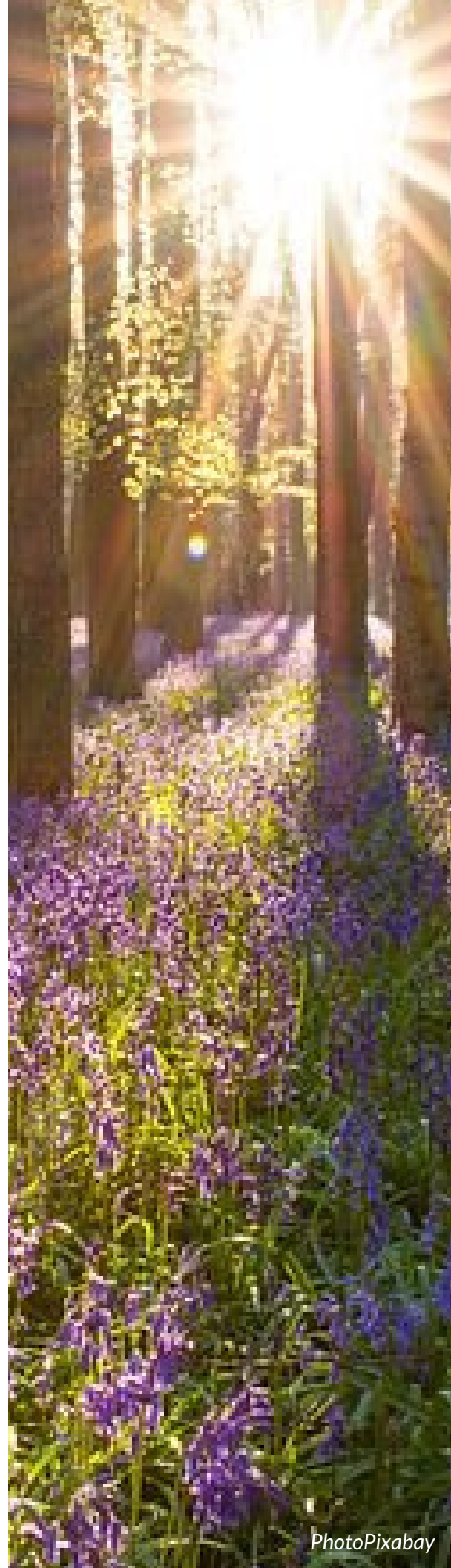
Accentuating the Positive



Making the world a
better place -
one page at a time

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Up Front!

Welcome to this month's Forest-themed edition of Up!

Writing this where we are currently situated feels strangely appropriate, as this month's Up! is coming to you from deep in the Scottish Highlands, among vast pine forests and within sight of Loch Ness. No sighting of Nessie yet, but we live in hope!

This month we bring you the real Robin Hood, we meet the people who are working to save the red squirrel and we talk re-wilding and tree-planting. Then to top it all off, we have some spectacular UK wildlife photographs, as well as your best Forest poems and our regular book review page, this month's focus being on great reads for young people.

Happy reading!

Bridget & Harry x



This month's wonderful front cover photograph is by Peter Burnham (see more of Peter's work on p. 4 & 14)

Step Up!

STEVE LOWE

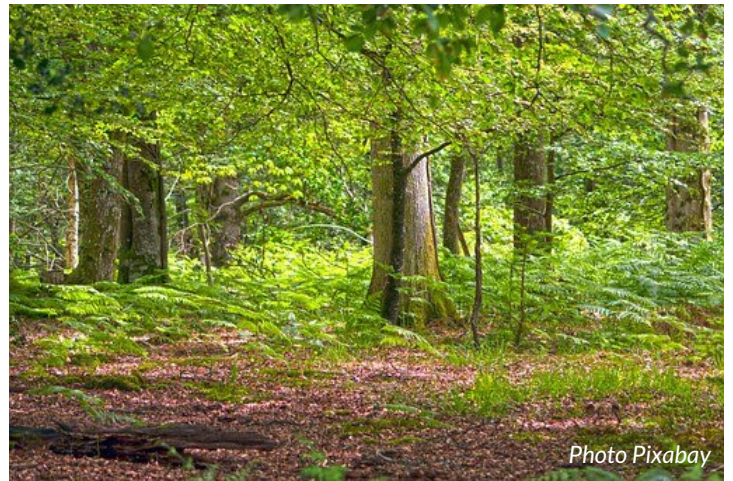
Up!'s outdoor man and his vision of a 'geet big Geordie forest'!

As Summer expires somewhat drably, I look forward with great anticipation towards Autumn in Northumberland. Not only because of nature's bounty of brambles and windfall apples - although a good crumble and custard is hard to beat - but because, for me, it heralds the onset of tree planting.

A fresh day, good company and a bag of locally native trees is a perfect autumnal way of keeping active, having fun and contributing to the environment all at once. It's something I have been participating in for years and 2021 is no different in that regard, although from a planetary perspective it feels as if it is becoming more vital!

It's common knowledge that trees lock up carbon of course, but most of the trees that are planted in the UK are later harvested, which feels a bit like an own goal. In fact, most of the forestry grants are geared that way, to incentivise planting as a crop rather than for their own sake. Thus, we also get forests of plastic protecting the flush of growth beyond the nibblers' reach, but usually staying in place permanently or well beyond their usefulness has expired.

So, we are good at planting trees, but we don't really create woodlands, and certainly not forests in the correct sense, with entire ecosystems that are interdependent and maintain an environmental balance that is much more than just that carbon bit.



A true forest contains the right trees in the right place and in many ways the proper way to do this would simply be to let nature take the lead. Seeds will settle and grow where they are suited. They will develop shapes and forms that are dictated by place, weather, browsers and other ecological factors - without the need for humans at all. But to do this in the UK is difficult - because land belongs to somebody.

National Parks, for instance, belong to somebody else and not to the nation. The best way to develop woodland there, in my view, would be to remove sheep. It is really noticeable in some parts of our most highly protected upland landscapes, that there are few trees. This reduces the shade in watercourses, removes habitat for specialist species such as ring ouzel and leads to a loss of plant life as well.

Interesting then to notice the intention to create Great Northumberland as part of a package of measures to lead to a carbon-neutral UK by 2050. It is intended that up to one million trees will be planted across 500 hectares of land in Northumberland between 2020 and 2024.

The first stage of this ambition is for three new public forests covering up to 500 hectares. Forestry England has already started planting 145 hectares at Rushy Knowe, on the shore of Kielder

Step Up!

STEVE LOWE



Water, and recently announced the purchase of 100 hectares of land at West Woodburn. The claimed reduction in CO2, increases in provision of green recreational space for recreation may be temporary though as the other ambition is to provide the nucleus for new forestry and timber industry.

There is no stated intent to alter land use, such as leaving permanent forests, as part of the strategy. I hope I am wrong, but it feels as if that is going to be down to individuals? In which case, step up! We can make it happen!

For instance, the fantastic Woodland Trust have a scheme whereby communities can obtain free trees to plant in their local area. These can form hedges, small copses or the start of woodlands. They can be in schools, on public land or even on private land, provided the landowners give permission!

In my own case, I have two packs of 450 native trees arriving for planting at two locations, at one of which, the landowner is happy to plant his



WOODLAND TRUST

entire landholding (for wildlife). Being local and planted by locals, we expect they will be looked after, and that the area will develop an ecosystem on top of its existing features. If other local groups want to order their own trees, we have space for even more!

We also have people growing trees from tree seed harvested locally, which will be added to the nursery stock. Easy to do and fun, with the bonus of knowing that a few pots and a bit of compost will produce a living entity that will be here long after we have gone, churning out oxygen, providing heat and flood reduction, homes to wildlife and potentially even food (or drink)! Then once it has done that, it will be recycled by the ecosystem to provide vital elements to help its offspring thrive.



An experienced wildlife professional, Steve currently works freelance with Northumberland Rivers Trust as well as undertaking work with volunteers on local heritage and archaeology projects. His hope is to leave the world a better place.

Snap Up!

PETER BURNHAM

A Northumberland photographer shares some of his favourite photos ... and his secrets for taking great shots

How did you first get into photography

A family tradition! My father was a member of the Gosforth Camera Club back in the 50s and was always involved in both still and cine photography. My first camera was a Brownie 127 which I won in the early 60s from a competition on the back of a pack of Quaker Oat Krunchies – my favourite breakfast at the time. With my dad's assistance I started developing and printing black and white film.

Various cameras later I gave up processing my own films and moved on to slides. I guess it was the 70s when holiday slide shows were compulsory 'entertainment'. More recently, digital photography has been a complete game changer, removing the expense of films, providing great quality and amazing photo edit capabilities.

What's the longest you've ever waited to capture that perfect shot?

I've certainly waited 2 to 3 hours without getting a shot. It took me 3 successive nights to get my first shot of a Pine Marten. That was at the Aigas Field Centre, near Inverness. More locally I've spent quite a few evenings trying to get a picture of a Barn Owl in flight on Warkworth



dunes. I've no 'perfect' pictures, I just keep trying to get better ones. Although sitting in a hide for a few hours may not be everyone's idea of fun, there's a certain pleasure in the anticipation.

There's a real buzz when you are dealing with wild animals. Just to have them show up is a privilege and you never quite know what you are going to be faced with. My best picture of a Roe Deer (in a field of poppies) was taken when I'd planned to be photographing the local Barn Owl.

In contrast I've recently been on a photo shoot at a falconry centre. You can get some great shots in this situation, where the birds more or less do what's expected of them. However, I'm much happier waiting somewhere for a couple of hours in anticipation of what might (or might not) happen with a wild animal. The buzz just isn't there if the task is too easy.

Whilst the above may be appropriate for many mammals and birds of prey, there are others where a different approach is appropriate. Have your camera at the ready for porpoise, dolphins and seals on local boat trips. You might be very lucky and spot a larger cetacean, although your best chances are on whale watching trips abroad.

Snap Up!

PETER BURNHAM

There are easier subjects. You can get reasonably close to some of our more common birds, with waders and other shore birds being particularly appealing. We've got some great wildlife habitats along the Northumberland coast, some of which have established hides. Garden birds such as the tits and finches are good subjects. Then there's our insect life such as dragon and damsel flies, bees and hover flies. Even the humble blue-bottle and similar become great subjects when you enter the world of macro photography.



What tips do you have for any would-be nature photographers?

The first priority is an interest and understanding of nature. What animals do you want to photograph, where can you find them, how do they behave, can they be encouraged to a feeding station with the feeder preferably out of shot? More important than your picture is the animals' welfare and in some situations they have legal protection. Over enthusiastic photographers can present a danger to wildlife.

The camera is a secondary consideration and what's right for you will depend on the quality of image you are seeking, the weight of equipment



you are prepared to carry and the size of your budget. Familiarity with your camera is essential as you may need to react quickly when your quarry is in sight. Practice on the easy stuff first. Camera settings will depend on the subject and environment. There are some excellent tutorials on YouTube.

The quickest way to improve the quality of your photos is to delete all those images that aren't quite up to scratch. With nature photography that probably means most of them! For images that are worth keeping, I might do a minor amount of post-processing. I use Open Source software called GIMP, which can be obtained for free with tutorials available on YouTube. I'll often crop an image and consider sharpening and adjusting the light levels. Infrequently I might change the colour intensity, convert to black and white or clone out any distractions within the final photo.

Are there any woodland creatures that have so far eluded your lens?

My primary interest is animals of the UK, but I've no particular species in mind. I'd quite like to get some family photos of young foxes and improve my portfolio of otter, hare and dragon fly photos. It's not that these have eluded me, but I'm seeking better pictures to bring out the character of the animals.

Snap Up!

PETER BURNHAM

Many of my photos are chance encounters while I'm out walking, with return visits when a good location is identified. I'm more likely to target a specific animal when planning a holiday, which might involve a wildlife sanctuary or whale watching trips.



What's your favourite shot you've even taken?

I'm an amateur photographer with an interest in nature, not a dedicated nature photographer. My photography comes in fits and starts. I'm delighted to have some reasonable shots of animals, but my favourite pictures are candid shots of some of my favourite performers from the folk music scene, who are sadly with us no more - Vin Garbutt, Roy Bailey, Tony Benn, Louis Killen and Mike Waterson all look down on me from the sitting room wall at home. Another wall holds a large canvas print of a Blue Whale taken in the Azores. That was a bit special.

You can see more of Peter's photography on page 14



A good snapshot keeps a moment from running away

E Welty

Taking pictures is savouring life intensely, every hundredth of a second

Marc Riboud

Photography takes an instant out of time, altering life by holding it still

Dorothea Lange

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF FORESTS

In the Taiga

Siberian reindeer herders never said goodbye
or looked back when they departed,
never greeted an arrival until later.
They never stopped at a roadside grave
(there were many) in case its death gave chase.

When no-one says goodbye to their dying
(there are many) and very few arrive
to be greeted, we too listen for a thawnote of snow
for the clicks of our reindeer's fetlocks
as they rise from sleep in a lift of light:

a river that doesn't quite bite, a patch
of sunlight perhaps, a dandelion flower
a robin's fluting, a fieldfare's squawk in a thorn
words that never melt.

Rebecca Gethin

Lost Lesson

I placed my hand on a beech,
its reach in height and girth and years
far exceeding this paltry human's span.
I walked away,
ignorant to what the tree would teach me
if only my untutored fingers could
read this bark.

Gerda Pickin

I Believe in Trees

Those silent citadels
standing against long
nights of wind and cold.

Broken willow bramble
scratches a pale sky after
yesterday's ice storm.

Each spring small buds
blossom as bugs and
butterflies orbit boughs.

Green new leaf fits
your hand so perfectly.
The future lies in your palm.

Summer afternoons...trees
boogie in sunshine showing
off their emerald gowns.

Birds reciting litany in woods.
Each rainfall the forest
grows taller, more verdant.

Shy autumnal bird, did you
brush against the moon
to get that pale down?

Tenacious...one
ragged leaf
clings to the bough.

Joan McNerney

As it's Up!'s first birthday next month, we're asking for poems on the theme of Celebration!

Feel free to interpret the theme as you see fit and send up to 3 poems (no more than 20 lines each please) to: TalkToUp@gmail.com

Look Up!

CRAMLINGTON & DISTRICT RED SQUIRREL GROUP

Up! meets a dedicated group and finds out the importance of building bridges ...

**You're a voluntary conservation group, aren't you?
Can you tell us a bit about the work that you do.**

Yes we (Cramlington and District Red Squirrel Group, CADRS) are a voluntary conservation group. We have over 200 monitoring boxes in the Cramlington, Blyth and Seaton Valley area which covers 24 square miles and 40 volunteers who visit the boxes every 7-10 days to check for squirrel activity. The results are gathered from a simple velcro sticky pad that catches hair samples as the squirrels access the box to feed. This enables us to monitor our red squirrels and also identify when grey squirrels move into the area. We also have garden monitors who keep us up to date with their garden visitors.



We've often driven under the rope ladders that join one side of the nature reserve to the other. Can you tell us how this initiative came about, and are the squirrels using them?

The group had talked about a rope bridge across



the B1326 for a couple of years. The busy road separates a hazelnut woodland and Seghill woods (mainly the old Seghill pit heap) so separates the reds from their dinner when the nuts are ready, especially at this time of year. The fatalities rose year on year until we had to act. We had worked so hard to establish this thriving population of red squirrels and it was heartbreaking to hear yet another report of a dead red on that road.

Firstly we liaised with a Scottish group who had installed a rope bridge in a more rural location, then surveyed our area to try and establish the best placement for the bridge. We found a local rope maker who estimated a cost of £800 so then we just needed to raise the money. A Just Giving page was set up and through people's generosity we actually raised enough for 2 bridges. The bridges were to be delivered in late March 2019 but lockdown got in the way.

Eventually with help from Northumberland County Council and Warren Access the bridges were installed on August 8th 2020. Of course no one knew if the bridges would be used by the reds, all we could do was tempt them with a trail of food and keep our fingers crossed. Thankfully, less than a week later someone reported that they had seen the bridge being used when on their morning work commute. We checked our monitoring cam footage and sure enough a fuzzy red blob could be seen crossing the road but at a safe height. This year we have only had 1 road fatality.

Look Up!

CRAMLINGTON & DISTRICT RED SQUIRREL GROUP



Red Squirrel Awareness Week begins on 20th September. What have you got planned?

We have a number of events planned for red squirrel awareness week including a talk at Cramlington Community Hub with guest speakers as well as info on what our group gets up to. We have scheduled red squirrel walks in the nature reserve at East Cramlington and a fun online 'where am I?', featuring our red squirrel mascot Cad R Squirrel. Cad is going to be busy that week as we also have event stalls at Manor Walks and SUEZ in Seghill too. We will have a few online competitions and will launch our CADRS calendar.

Are there any do's and don'ts in terms of human contact with red (and grey) squirrels?

We do ask that people don't feed the squirrels. This seems unjustified to many however there are great risks to our red population if this advice is ignored. Feed scattered on the ground will attract vermin and grey squirrels, giving rise to potential cross contamination of diseases like adenovirus and Squirrel pox, both deadly to red squirrels. As a group we sterilise our monitoring boxes every

month to help protect against the spread of these fatal diseases, including any garden boxes that we oversee. If we don't know about random garden feeders that can attract both reds and greys, we can't carry out this important part of our conservation work. Because grey squirrels out-compete our native smaller red squirrels as well as carry (but are not affected by) the squirrel pox virus ... the sad fact is that if we have grey squirrels in an area, we will not have any reds.

Sadly last year we lost a number of red squirrels to Adenovirus in New Hartley, luckily we managed to localise the problem after suspending all monitoring activity in the surrounding area, but not until the deaths had reached double figures and those were just the ones that had been discovered. Feeding reds can also make them more dependent on humans and less cautious. This native species has managed to survive since the last ice age because of its shy, discreet presence and wary nature, please help keep it that way.



How can people get involved and help?

Our group is also the custodians of East Cramlington nature reserve so we have a lot of volunteer activities for anyone, young and not so young, who enjoy wildlife and the outdoors. We hold introduction sessions for red squirrel conservation work throughout the year (keep an eye on our facebook page if interested) and monthly maintenance mornings at the nature reserve on the last Sunday of the month. We are a

Look Up!

CRAMLINGTON & DISTRICT RED SQUIRREL GROUP

very pro-active and fun group. We also have a donation function set up on our website for those who wish to support us financially as without funds our group wouldn't be able to operate.

CRAMLINGTON AND DISTRICT



RED SQUIRREL GROUP

*To learn more about the work of CADRS
and maybe purchase a calendar
check out the following:*

<https://www.cadrsg.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/CADRS>



Tales Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Can't see the wood for the trees? Read on to discover what's true and what's not ...

What is it about woodland that attracts so many myths and ghost stories? You can't go near a forest at nightfall without thinking of headless horsemen, grey ladies or huge black dogs that carry curses to anyone who sees them. Perhaps it's just the innate sense of the unknown, being unable to see a way through the mesh of trees and branches, or perhaps the terrible notion of getting lost and never finding our way back home!

Whatever the reason, there seem to be more myths and legends attached to forests than you can shake a stick – or branch – at. And this being our 'Forests' issue, we needed no further invitation to explore a few...

Robin Hood

Well, where else were we going to start? The story of the man who lived in the woods but outside the law has been told so many times, with so many variations, he has become a part of our national fabric. But who was the real Robin, if he even existed at all?

Well, one thing's for certain - he didn't speak with an American drawl, a la Kevin Costner! Your writer will go to his grave with Mr Costner's heavily accented line "Tonight we shall dine at my father's house in Notting-haaaairm!" embedded into his brain.



The first account of Robin Hood, written in 1377 and still held by the British Museum, tells us that Robin was a South Yorkshire man born in 1170 in 'Lockersley' (now Loxley, a suburb of Sheffield). After that, accounts vary. There is one particularly attractive tale of him and Little John (yes, he was real too) having an archery contest from the top of Whitby Abbey.

The spots where their arrows landed were subsequently named Robin Hood's Close and Little John's Close. However, as these are both over a mile from the Abbey, we can assume this tale (like the arrows) are a little far-fetched!

The other doubtful element is Maid Marian. Sadly, she is nowhere to be seen in earlier accounts so we can assume she was a later addition. One thing though that all the accounts seem to agree on is how Robin met his end. Elderly and ailing, he visited his aunt at Kirklees Priory. Sadly, she had been paid to poison him and duly did so. He called for Little John - still by his side into old age - who held Robin up to a window. Robin shot his last arrow and asked Little John to bury him where it landed - and there, within an arrow shot of the priory, is his mound. Little John lived on and is buried in a churchyard in Derbyshire.

Tales Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER



The Green Man

A curious one, this. Everyone knows what a Green Man is, yes? A carved, stone face, generally a man of the forest, to be found hidden away in corners of old English churches. Well, yes ... but actually there's a little more to him than that. Depending on which book you read, Green Men figures - symbolic representations of re-birth, nourishment etc - first began appearing in the 2nd century but not, as you might expect, in the UK.

There are accounts of them from that time in Iraq, Borneo, Nepal and India. And there is certainly a 4th century one still to be seen at St. Hilaire-le-grand in France. So the popular interpretation of the Green Man being a pagan, or pre-Christian, figure may be true.

Meanwhile closer to home, old blighty seemingly determined not to be outdone, a dig on a Roman Villa in Suffolk uncovered a silver salver bearing an image suspiciously like the hairy fella himself. Sadly though, this turned out to be a Roman depiction of Neptune the sea God, with the face foliage being seaweed rather than vegetation.

But who was the original Green Man based on? Unsurprisingly, no one knows. There have been links made to Dionysus (the Greek God of Fruitfulness), Odin (Norse God of War) and others. The list even includes Jesus and Father Christmas!

Whoever he or it was, here's a challenge: go into any old Norman or Saxon church and look up at the roof, then trace a line from the centre to the corners. You might be surprised to find a face full of foliage staring back at you!

Robin Goodfellow

Also known as Puck, Robin is a hobgoblin, also known as a sprite or fairy. There have been



many such variants on this but Robin's longevity may well be down to one W Shakespeare Esq, who had the good sense to place the wee fellow in the middle of his most famous play, A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Tales Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

But what exactly was a hobgoblin supposed to be? Well, as the name suggests, a hob was a place in the back of the hearth – particularly in a rural abode – and the story goes that at night the spirits of the hobs would gather in the forest (where else?) and plot who to favour and who to play tricks on, depending, one supposes, on who had earned it! It seems Hob became Rob, then Robin.

The Babes In The Wood

A phrase often used as a headline these days by the tabloid press to report on terrible crimes against children, but Up! isn't here to cover such stuff. The original tale though is grisly enough on its own – two children abandoned in the woods, who die and are covered with leaves by robins.



The story was first published as a ballad by a Thomas Millington of Norwich in 1595 and has been frequently worked into the fabric of other stories – it also appears in the panto Mother Goose, for example. It's also been conjoined

with various characters from the Robin Hood legend (yes, him again!) and Hansel & Gretel, perhaps a more suitable marriage.

Nobody really knows the origin for the tale, whether it's based on real events, but in the Norfolk villages of Griston and Watton (both neighbouring Wayland Woods) there are signs depicting the supposed events of an evil uncle paying two criminals to abduct and kill two children. The criminals, not having the heart, abandon them in the woods to their fate.

Whatever the truth behind any of these legends, it's clear the woods hold an appeal to us that has endured over millennia. Forests are a place of beauty and of fear, of discovery and of danger. Perhaps it's best we leave it to Rudyard Kipling to capture its mixed allures, its final line still sending a shiver down my spine....

*They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.*

*Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.*

*It is underneath the coppice and heath,
And the thin anemones.*

Only the keeper sees

*That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.*

*Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few.)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods...
But there is no road through the woods.*

Cartoon Corner



You can contact John at pickinjohn@gmail.com

Up!'s resident artist brings you fun facts from the forest ...

Binturongs or bearcats live deep in the forests of Southeast Asia. These chilled out creatures are famous for smelling just like hot buttered popcorn. The distinctive whiff was long thought to be caused by an oil gland under the tail. But scientists have now discovered that that tantalising cinema foyer scent is produced by a chemical compound in binturong urine. Apparently binturongs pee on their feet and tail and this helps them to mark their territory.



Photography by Peter Burnham



Rustling Up!

STEVE LOWE

Never happier than when in among the trees, our man thinks he can hear something in the bushes ...

Forests in their natural state are often seen as places of mystery, magic or danger. In folklore they often symbolise the areas beyond which people normally travel safely, somewhere where strange things lurk, and unknown perils await the unwary traveller.

With my “ecology” hat on, I would agree!

Forest are places that should contain bears, wolves, beavers, wild boar, pine marten and big cats. All my favourite books say so - from folk tales to Game of Thrones. Some may be welcoming and light, whilst others can be dark and brooding, depending upon the trees.

In many of our UK “forests”, we have monocultures of spiky conifers, where exploration is difficult, and you always empty needles and snapped twigs out of your collar and pockets. And those animals are mostly absent.



Sure, you are likely to catch a fleeting glimpse of the roe deer’s white rump as it romps away silently, you will hear goldcrests or crossbills in the treetops or owls hooting at night, but of other denizens you will have to travel to areas where mankind has kindly allowed them to be released. Like the Scottish Beaver Trial - even the phrase suggests they may be guilty of something!

The reason these animals are no longer here is because the folklore and stories of the past have that element of danger, which is no longer considered acceptable, or where the value of pelts was high, so they were hunted to extinction.

Species reintroduction is the process whereby a species re-establishes a population where they have previously been driven out.

Globally, reintroduction has been shown to be successful. One example is the gray wolves, where researchers began to understand the critical role predators play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem, and started to release them into Yellowstone National Park in the mid-1990s. That effort is now hailed as a huge success for the long-term health of the park and its many other inhabitants. But it comes with problems as well, so must be carefully considered - after all the reason for localised extinction is probably still present!

Rustling Up!

STEVE LOWE



Better, in my view, is to manage and properly protect areas of habitat, especially forests. One such charity doing this is The World Land Trust who undertake remarkable work to purchase and manage forest land across the globe, usually by empowering local communities to have a stake in it.

Their current campaign, Operation Ocelot, aims to purchase forest and mangrove in Guatemala, which is home to a number of rare species. But it is one of many in which the charity has made significant efforts for endangered species such as orang-utan and gorilla.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKDNr82gE94&ab_channel=WorldLandTrust

In the UK, we shy away from land purchase for public use (somehow military bases appear an exception). But why couldn't the State own National Parks, for instance? In recent times, I have suggested "public" land purchase in critical

areas (for habitat restoration or re-creation) would be cheaper and more sustainable than constantly issuing payments for doing "less damaging activity". It seems to fall on deaf ears. But it is one reason why the charitable sector is important – because we can all become members of our local wildlife trust, RSPB, National Trust, etc as they are performing this and other functions. I would be the first to admit that is less than perfect, but we can all make a difference. Meanwhile, I will return again and again to my personal favourite "Forest", in Ariundle Oakwood in Strontian, Scotland, where rain dampened air creates a fairy-tale woodland worthy of the Brothers Grimm.

This is a beautiful and atmospheric remnant of ancient oakwood that once spanned the Atlantic coasts of Europe from Norway to Portugal, our own rainforests. One can dream of such a thing in its dapple shades.



Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF FORESTS

Queensland Rainforest

Among trees tall as cathedrals
and wider than pillars
we were pinpricks of flesh
among the ocean of branches
and shadows, the strangling vines.
An orchestra tuning of birdcalls –
whip bird, currawong, cat bird.
Far away a kookaburra
jackassed. Sounds without names
but sounding their names.
Scents we could taste, so thick
they lodged in the throat.
In the distance a chainsaw howled,
a car's brakes yelped: lyrebirds sing
whatever they hear.

Rebecca Gethin

Fairy Hunting

Our house looks out on ancient woodland.
The girls and I go hunt for fairies.
Look under branches, arching roots
under hornbeam trees I tell them.

The eldest frowns. But we can't see them.
I explain that eyes don't work for fairy-spotting.
The winged ones speak to us,
voices in our minds if we believe.

We walk down winding foxpaths,
see a stirring in the trees,
a dancing swarm of light.
There they are cries the littlest.

Susan Castillo

Keith

Kinder folk may smile at him, when passing
on some forest track, receiving in return a nod,
but rarely words. Others point and laugh
or spray graffiti on his shack. He doesn't care:
it is no more than sheltered space to sleep.
His home is all around him, within the arms
of his true friends, the trees. He understands them,
lives with them the times of dying and rebirth.

It is his business to ensure their immortality.
There is a purpose in the twisted trails he threads
between the trunks and in the unclaimed patch
of sunlit ground. He gathers acorns, and he walks
so many steps this way, so many that,
marks precisely where to press them in soft earth.
The names of those who mock will die with them:
his will rise in oak and live a thousand years.

Tim E Taylor

Elder

Eller; fire-kindler, hollow for pipe or bellows.
Judas' gallows, cursed and crooked
forever bent, destined always to lie low.

Hyldemore the elder mother dwells in your stem,
expects respect, ask permission to take her wood.

Friend of The Devil, Hob, Old Harry, to carry
his hags, the witch's steed of branch and twig.

Elf home, taste the leaves, see faery-folk ride.
Her bitter sap contains the deadly cyanide.

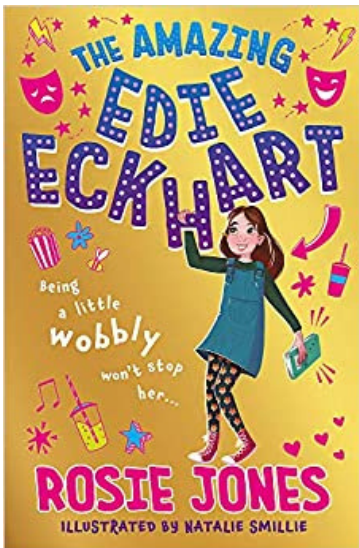
Rustic champagne from the floret's curd.
Crimson berry wine, a simple magic,
dark fruit-syrup to sooth and cure.

Tom Moody

Read Up!

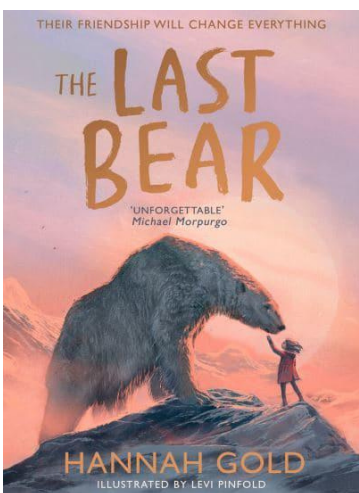
MEGAN PATTIE

It's back to school time, so here are some great books for young readers. Because no backpack is really ready for the new term without a new book chucked in!



The Amazing Edie Eckhart by Rosie Jones (Hachette Children's, £6.99)

Edie Eckhart is an aspiring playwright, a big fan of food, and is very excited to start secondary school with her best friend, Oscar. Edie also has cerebral palsy, which makes her “a bit wobbly”, but doesn't dampen her spirit in the slightest! Edie's diary entries, narrating her first term at secondary school, are full of fun and plenty of Edie's signature confidence, but she soon finds out that secondary school comes with lots of new challenges. Featuring a wonderfully diverse cast of characters, and cool illustrations by Natalie Smillie, comedian Rosie Jones' debut is a laugh-out-loud, engaging story about friendship and embracing change.



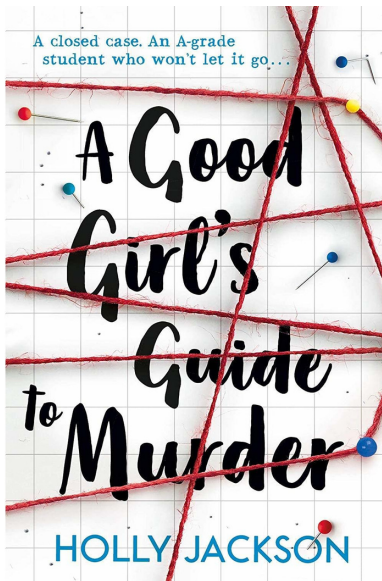
The Last Bear by Hannah Gold (HarperCollins, £12.99)

When April Wood's father is posted to the Arctic Circle to monitor changing temperatures, everyone tells her that there are no bears on Bear Island, but on her first night there, she is sure she glimpses a mighty shape on the horizon. Left to her own devices in a wild and remote land, April goes in search of the bear she is sure she saw, and so begins a magical friendship and a tremendous adventure.

Hannah Gold's vivid writing brings to life a remarkable part of our world, with such originality that her descriptions almost read like a fantasy; a sense which is heightened by Levi Pinfold's magnificent illustrations. April's incredible story, however, reminds us that the Arctic is a very real part of our planet, and one that we are in danger of losing. I finished this book with a tear in my eye and a full heart. It is sure to light up children's imaginations, and inspire them to join the fight against climate change.

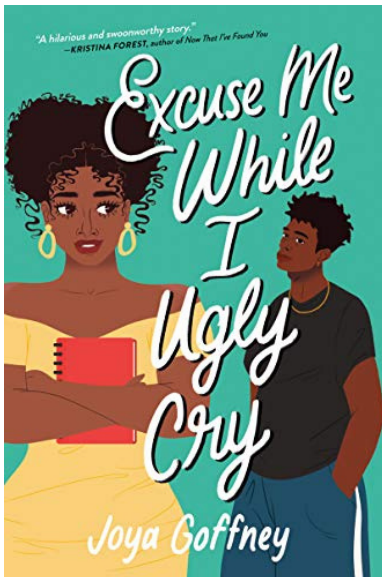
Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE



***A Good Girl's Guide To Murder* by Holly Jackson (HarperCollins, £8.99)**

Pippa Fitz-Amobi does not think they got the right person for the murder of Andie Bell five years ago. So, she decides to make the case the topic of her final-year project, applying her keen intellect to finding out what really happened. But as the truth starts to unravel, Pippa finds that her project is dragging her down a dangerous road. I was, and still am, absolutely addicted not only to this novel's incredibly compelling murder mystery, but also to Pippa's fierce sense of justice, and her determination in the face of adversity. The first in the Good Girl's Guide To Murder series, this novel is sure to grab teen sleuths and crime fans.



***Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry* by Joya Goffney (Hot Key Books, £7.99)**

Quinn Jackson loves making lists. Lists of her best memories, lists of all the boys she wants to kiss, lists of all the times she has ugly cried. Deeply personal lists. So, when her journal goes missing and ends up in the hands of an anonymous student at her high school, it is a disaster, especially when they start to use Quinn's lists to blackmail her. Joya Goffney winds an intense blend of teen drama and romance together with a powerful discourse on race in this story of a girl who is left with no choice but to come out of her shell.

Megan Pattie is a poet and bookseller who enjoys real ale and collects dragons.

She lives on the north east coast with her partner, two cats, and a rabbit.

You can find her on Twitter @pattiepoetry.



*Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist,
but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.*

Neil Gaiman

Coming Up!

There we go, another one done! Thanks again to our brilliant regular contributors, and to you, our readers.

Next month is a biggie – we'll be 11! To celebrate our birthday, we'll be aiming for a bumper issue, with our focus on Wellbeing. This is such a hot topic right now – and is actually the reason we started Up! in the first place. Looking back 12 months, the country was tight in the grip of Covid. There was so much uncertainty, with families kept apart, vulnerable people housebound and everyone struggling in one way or another. And that's not even taking into account the fact that many of us lost our nearest and dearest. A terrible time.

12 months later, the virus is still here but life is slowly beginning to return to normal ... or at least a version of it. Many challenges lie ahead, not least of which is adjusting mentally.

All of which reinforces why Community is so important. Humans are not a solitary animal, we need each other. So October's Up! will be packed with even more positive stories about how we can rebuild, working together to help one another. That's why our tagline from day 1 has been 'Making the world a better place, 1 page at a time'.
See you next month!



Much love
Bridget & Harry xx



Don't forget, if you have any suggestions for future articles or features, we'd love to hear from you.

Just email us at TalkToUp@gmail.com