

Nature Matters – 2017

Changing Nature



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Exploring the diversity of responses to the natural world

Thursday 16th – Saturday 18th November 2017

Stamford Arts Centre, St. Mary's Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 2DL

Nothing in nature stays the same. From the microscopic to the mountainous, from milliseconds to millennia, the natural world is constantly changing. Humans are perhaps the greatest agents of change, driving it for our needs and wants. This complex threading of natural and man-made change can be both enriching and destructive. Understanding change is vital to living sustainably as part of the natural world.

Thursday 16th November 18.30 – 21.45

Exploring change through words and actions. We will explore the ways in which we document, create and respond to changes in with the world around us, through conversation between author **Patrick Barkham** and co-founder of the Eden Project **Tim Smit**, chaired by **Mary Colwell**.

18.30 – 20.00 Welcome drinks. A chance to meet friends and colleagues and view the John Clare exhibition on display in the art gallery space.

20.00 – 21.45 New Networks Conversation. Welcome by Chair **Mary Colwell** (including introduction to the John Clare Exhibition by artist **Carry Akroyd**).

Carry Akroyd is a painter and printmaker whose subject is the landscape, with a particular focus on history and wildlife. A member of the Society of Wildlife Artists, she is the jacket artist for *The British Wildlife Collection* series of books, and illustrated *Tweet of the Day*. She illustrated three books of John Clare's poetry, and continues to create a seam of work relating to the 'Peasant Poet' and his relevance to today. She exhibits regularly in a few small galleries. **Patrick Barkham** is a natural history writer for the *Guardian* where he has reported on everything from the Iraq War to climate change. His first book, *The Butterfly Isles*, was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje prize. His second, *Badgerlands*, was shortlisted for the Ondaatje Prize and the Wainwright Prize. *Badgerlands* won the best general non-fiction prize at the East Anglian Book Awards 2014. Patrick's latest book, *Islander*, is a journey to meet the human and non-human residents of Britain's smaller Isles – a celebration of currents that flow away from the mainstream. It is published in October this year.

Mary Colwell is a writer and producer of TV, radio and internet programmes, specialising in the areas of natural history and religion. Her first book, *John Muir – The Man Who Saved America's Wild Places*, was published in 2014. She is now working on her second book, *Curlew Moon*, about her 500-mile walk to raise awareness about the decline of the species. **Sir Tim Smit** is best known for his achievements in Cornwall. He 'discovered' and then restored the *Lost Gardens of Heligan* with John Nelson. Tim is Executive Vice-Chairman, and co-founder of the multi-award-winning *Eden Project* in Cornwall. It began as a dream in 1995 and opened its doors to the public in 2000. Since then more than 18 million people have come to see what was once a sterile pit, turned into a cradle of life containing world-class horticulture and startling architecture symbolic of human endeavour.

Friday 17th November 08.30 for a 09.30 start

09.30 – 09.40 – Introduction to the day – Derek Niemann.

Prologue: 09.40 – 10.00

Michael Benton. Changing Environments – a deep-time perspective

Nature is undergoing unprecedented change driven by human activity. How are we to understand this? The fossil record shows us that change and extinction are normal – so how unusual is the current amount and rate of change? How do historical and palaeontological approaches enrich our understanding of modern extinction rate, risk, and climate change?

Session 1: 10.00 – 11.00

Changing Oceans – Chair Jeremy Mynott.

We live on a blue planet. The oceans make up the majority of the earth. They are so vast it is easy to assume they are immune to the actions of humanity. But are they? Three people have lived and breathed the oceans and documented the change they have personally experienced at the poles, in the tropics and through the way we treat ocean life.

Contributors: Doug Allan, Helen Scales, Phillip Hoare

Coffee: 11.00 – 11.45

Session 2: 11.45 – 13.00

New Networks Debate – Chair Ian Newton

Over the last 50 years, farming methods have intensified. Small mixed farms have been replaced by large monocultures, the use of chemicals has increased, land has been drained, hedgerows removed, forests planted and meadows turned into cropland. The farming landscape has altered radically and wildlife has declined. Is this inevitable? By 2050, Britain will be one of the most populated countries in Europe; can we produce food for 76 million people and still have room for wildlife?

Contributors: Michael Astor, Rebecca Hosking, Davy McCracken.

Lunch: 13.00 – 14.15

Epiphany: 14.15 – 14.30

Film of people's experiences sent in by the public. Why we love nature, and what inspires us.

Booking tickets

Tickets can be purchased through our website (www.newnetworksfornature.org.uk).

Thursday evening only – 'in conversation' £15

Day ticket Friday £50*

Day ticket Saturday £50*

Two-day ticket (Friday and Saturday) £85*

Three-day ticket (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) £100*

Optional Friday evening informal supper £10

* includes refreshments (Tea/coffee/lunch – as last year, we are using locally sourced, organic catering)

If you have a query about the event, about your booking or about New Networks for Nature itself then please email info@newnetworksfornature.org.uk.

Places are limited and tickets will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

New Networks for Nature is a broad alliance of creators (including poets, authors, scientists, film-makers, visual artists, environmentalists, musicians and composers) whose work draws strongly on the natural environment. The multiple impacts of place and the natural world are central to the nation's cultural life: New Networks for Nature wishes to reflect these truths and celebrate them.

Founded by Tim Birkhead, Mark Cocker, John Fanshawe and Jeremy Mynott in 2009,

New Networks for Nature is a Registered Charity (No. 1165027) run by a steering group currently consisting of Carry Akroyd, Tim Birkhead, Mary Colwell, Jonathan Elphick, John Fanshawe, Matt Howard, Gill Kerby, Richard Kerridge, Harriet Mead, Jeremy Mynott, Derek Niemann, Kate Risely and Mike Toms.

www.newnetworksfornature.org.uk

Twitter: @networks4nature

Cover: E A Janes/Nature Photographers Ltd

Friday 17th November (continued)

Session 3: 14.30 – 15.30

Historical Perspectives – Chair Katrina Porteous

Attitudes to nature have changed over the centuries. From ancient Greece to modern times our view of the natural world has altered radically. Understanding past perspectives on non-human life can be both enriching and enlightening.

Contributors: Jeremy Mynott, Erica Fudge, Isabelle Charmantier

Tea: 15.30 – 16.00

16.00 – 16.15 – Visual interpretation

Redshift and *Cobra Mist* – films by Emily Richardson

Session 4: 16.15 – 17.15

International Perspectives – Chair John Fanshawe

It is easy to become locked into our own cultural views of the natural world, yet other countries often see nature differently.

Contributors: Mike Edwards, Alice Owen, Nishant Kumar.

Informal supper in the Ballroom (optional) 18.00 – see the website for more details about this opportunity to join us in networking and socialising.

Doug Allan spent seven years in Antarctica as a research diver, scientist and photographer for the British Antarctic Survey, before changing direction to full time filming in 1983. Since then he has become one of the world's best known and respected cameramen.

Michael Astor has developed his farming estate into a diverse rural business. Since 2004, he has chaired the West Cambridge Hundreds group, which combines farmers, land owners, managers and conservation bodies to oversee wildlife hotspots on a landscape level.

Michael Benton is a palaeontologist who has made fundamental contributions to understanding the history of life. He is interested in drivers of all aspects of macroevolution, including the Permo-Triassic mass extinction, the largest mass extinction of all time.

Isabelle Charmantier gained a PhD in history of science from the University of Sheffield in 2008, which was followed by a post-doctoral position at the University of Exeter (2009–2013). She is now Deputy Collections Manager at the Linnean Society of London.

Mike Edwards has spent much of his life trying to prevent the destruction of 'wild' spaces - both real and imagined. Over the past 17 years, he has roamed the world playing didgeridoo and teaching people why it is crucial to love nature.

John Fanshawe is an author and environmentalist based in north Cornwall. Over the last three decades, he has worked on bird and biodiversity conservation in the UK, Kenya and Tanzania; primarily for the charity BirdLife.

Erica Fudge is a historian of animals and teaches in the School of Humanities at the University of Strathclyde. She is also director of the British Animal Studies Network, a network that brings together scholars, NGOs and others with an interest in human-animal relations.

Philip Hoare is the author of eight works of non-fiction, including *Leviathan*, which won the Samuel Johnson Prize for 2009. His latest book, *RISINGTIDEFALLINGSTAR*, is published by Fourth Estate, and tells human and animal stories of the sea.

Rebecca Hosking is a tenant farmer at Village Farm, 175 acres of organic pasture and woodland on the coastal tip of south Devon. Awarded an MBE for her work in wildlife conservation, Rebecca describes the ethos of Village Farm as "Farming With Nature".

Nishant Kumar is a DPhil student and Felix scholar at the University of Oxford, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). He studies the urban ecology of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* in Delhi.

Davy McCracken is Professor of Agricultural Ecology and an Associate of Scotland Rural College's Rural Policy Centre. He has more than 25 years' experience of investigating the relationships between European farming systems and farmland biodiversity.

Alice Owen is an environment professional with 12 years' experience in protected area management and wildlife conservation in East Africa. She has practical experience in the challenges of wildlife management, including the conservation of biodiversity hotspots.

Ian Newton has enjoyed lifetime interests in both farming and birds. He is a past President of the British Ecological Society and the British Ornithologists' Union, a past Chairman of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Trust for Ornithology.

Katrina Porteous is a poet, historian and broadcaster, much of whose work involves a detailed and loving celebration of the people, landscapes and wildlife of the Northumbrian coast where she lives. Her most recent poetry collection is *Two Countries* (Bloodaxe, 2014).

Emily Richardson is a UK based film-maker who creates film portraits of particular places. Her work focuses on sites in transition and covers an extraordinarily diverse range of landscapes including empty East London streets, forest, North Sea oil fields and post-war tower blocks.

Helen Scales is an author, documentary-maker and oceans expert. Her latest book, the Guardian bestseller *Spirals in Time* about seashells and molluscs, was a book of the year in The Economist, Nature and The Times.

Some housekeeping

Photographs taken at our event may be used for promotional purposes; if you have any concerns or queries regarding this, please find a member of the organising committee.

Your registration includes tea/coffee and lunch for the days you have registered for.

As a courtesy to speakers and other delegates, we ask that all **mobile phones** and electronic devices be changed to silent mode before entering into any session.

In the event of an **emergency** SAC staff will guide you to safety. There will not be any fire alarm tests during our conference, so any alarm should be considered the real thing. Please speak to a member of the conference organising committee should you have any **questions**.

Saturday 18th November 08.30 for a 09.00 start

08.00 – 09.00 – Morning bird walk

09.20 – 09.30 – Introduction to the day by Jeremy Mynott

09.30 – 10.00 – Performance

Steve Waters discusses the power of drama in communicating about nature.

Session 1: 10.00 – 11.00

Changing Perceptions of Hidden Worlds – Chair Juniper Kiss

Not all of wildlife is easy to see and those who are showing us hidden worlds are helping change how we look at the whole of nature around us.

Contributors: Georgia Locock, Jack Perks, James Parry.

Coffee : 11.00 – 11.30

Session 2: 11.30 – 12.30

Changing What We See – Chair Tim Birkhead

Seeing the familiar through different eyes can be transformational. Three different contributors are changing the way the natural world is viewed.

Contributors: Mya-Rose Craig, Heather Hunt, Mike Benton

Lunch: 12.30 – 13.45

13:45 – 14.00 – Poetry and prose

Katrina Porteous performs her poetry on change and nature.

Derek Niemann reads a passage from his book *A Tale of Trees*.

Session 3: 14.00 – 15.00

Change through creativity – Chair Richard Kerridge

Portraying the natural world through artistic expression can bring new insights and perspectives.

Contributors: Harriet Mead, Dafydd Davies-Hughes

Tea: 15.00 – 15.45

Session 4: 15.45 – 16.00

Music Finale – Mike Edwards on the didgeridoo.

Review and looking ahead to 2018: 16.00 – 16.45

Tim Birkhead FRS is professor of behaviour and evolution at the University of Sheffield. His research on promiscuity in birds helped to re-shape our understanding of bird mating systems. His undergraduate teaching, outreach, scientific research and popular science books have all won awards.

Mya-Rose Craig is a 15-year-old British Bangladeshi birder, naturalist, conservationist, environmentalist, activist, writer and speaker. She is based near Bristol and writes the successful Birdgirl Blog, with posts about birding and conservation from around the world.

Dafydd Davies-Hughes is a storyteller. Drawing on a life of work, play and discovery in wild places and a passion for his native Welsh folklore and mythology he weaves stories that stir and tantalise the senses and reveal the magical in everyday experiences.

Heather Hunt trained as a clinical and child psychologist in the NHS. She now puts time and energy into managing an ancient woodland and an adjacent field, enjoying and exploring the different ways a diverse range of people engage with and benefit from nature.

Richard Kerridge is a nature writer and ecocritic. *Cold Blood: Adventures with Reptiles and Amphibians*, published in 2014, is a mixture of memoir and nature writing. Richard leads the MA in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University.

Juniper Kiss is a highly motivated undergraduate student at Anglia Ruskin University on the Marine Biology with Biodiversity and Conservation course. She has worked with invasive species and biocontrol agent testing.

Georgia Locock is a young conservationist and blogger. She has been fascinated by all wildlife, especially birds and badgers, since a very young age. At 18, she is still a very keen birder and uses trail cameras to record badgers on a regular basis.

Harriet Mead is an award-winning sculptor and the President of the Society of Wildlife Artists (SWLA). During her time at the helm of the SWLA, Harriet has worked to broaden their audience and to shrug off the negative connotations of wildlife art.

Jeremy Mynott is the author of *Birdscapes: birds in our imagination and experience* and has a book in press on *Birds in the Ancient World*. He is an Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge.

Derek Niemann is a freelance writer, editor and teacher of creative writing at Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education. A country diarist for the Guardian, his books include *Birds in a Cage* and *A Tale of Trees*.

James Parry is a writer and consultant specialising in history, heritage, wildlife and the environment. He is currently working on a book about Emma Turner, the pioneering early 20th century bird photographer.

Jack Perks is a wildlife photographer specialising in freshwater fish. Wildlife has always been his passion and inspiration throughout his career as a natural history photographer. He has filmed and featured on Springwatch, Countryfile, The One Show and Mr Crabtree Goes Fishing.

Steve Waters is a playwright who also writes for television and radio. He is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia; his book *The Secret Life of Plays*, is published by Nick Hern.

Find out more about our speakers and our programme on our website:

www.newnetworksfornature.org.uk