



poetry challenge 2021



THE THEME IS NATURE:
WRITE US A POEM
ABOUT THE BEES,
ABOUT THE BIRDS,
ABOUT THE BEETLES . . .



TYSOE RECORD'S

POETRY CHALLENGE

ENTRIES Feb 2021



INTRODUCTION TO THE ANTHOLOGY

Many have debated exactly what it is about the natural world that is so healing to the human soul. Eco-therapists, psychologists, conservationists, and just nature lovers, suggest notions of reconnection, simplicity or even raw challenge. But perhaps most potently, nature inspires a sense of wonder and calmness.

How can we describe, in words, an experience that captures these qualities? It requires a combination of words that say more than their individual meanings. And it requires an appropriate rhythm, so each image emerges for the reader just when and as it should. It's not easy: too many words, or in a clumsy tempo, can confuse the experience the poet wishes to share.

Of course, the protest poem is slightly different. It isn't peace but indignation that inspires that expression. 'Spitting tacks' at some disrespect for the natural world, the protest poem needs very specific 'tacks': words which will evoke a fullness of imagery that inspires agreement or an equal rage or concern in the reader.

Both kinds of poem were submitted to the Tysoe Poetry Challenge 2021, and those judged to be the best were chosen by those honoured with the task, including myself. Having a panel of judges is valuable, for each of us has a slightly different response to the pictures painted by the poets' words. The winners were those who gained the highest combined scores from all the judges, notably 'Hope Springs', with joint second place to 'Dandelions' and 'Into the Verge'.

Well done to all the poets! Publishing them all, we know that you, dear reader, will have your own favourites. Every poem inspires us to think, reminding us of nature's 'wonder-full' beauty and, crucially, of how much we really need to respect and care for nature in our lovely Parish of Tysoe and the world beyond.

Emma Restall-Orr
Sun Rising Nature Reserve

POETRY CHALLENGE ENTRIES

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Spring

by Elina Williams (aged 4 1/2)



spring



I like Spring.

I love to hear birds
sing.



I like flowers and

Jumping in puddles
in showers.



HAPPY



I lÍRe sun



SPring is fun



By ELIna

age 4¹/₂



Hope Springs

By Linda Leonard

Sometimes snow is falling
And often times it rains.
Mist lies heavy on the hills.
Fallen leaves block drains.
Autumn chill is long replaced
By heavy frost or ice
For Winter holds us in a grip
As strong as any vice.

Then suddenly I see the snowdrops
Lighting up the world
And small green shoots of daffodils
And trees with buds unfurled.
I hear the drill of woodpeckers
As they prepare for Spring
And listen to the heavenly sound
Of all the birds that sing.
I feel a warming in the air.
I see the days grow long
And all these signs of nature
Fill my weary heart with song.
At times when life seems dreary
And we're struggling to cope
The Spring's impending coming
Fills the hearts of all with hope.

Lucky

By Sylvia Wigram

If we can go on a nice long walk
If we are lucky, with a friend to talk
There is always so much to see
You don't have to get down on your knee
To see all the lovely flowers coming
Won't be long before the bees are humming
All the lovely snowdrops white
And the beautiful moon at night
If you cannot walk, you can stand still
And look at the beauty across the hill
All the trees are so fine
Perhaps even have a glass of wine
So don't be sad
Be assured the future's not bad
The sun coming through the trees in the morning
And you just got up so you are still yawning
Wake up and see the light
Don't worry the future's bright
Look at the clouds passing through
They are amazing it is true
You are lucky it is so
So so lucky to live in this great place Tysoe

Ode to the Bugs of Tysoe (or Observations from my Lockdown Walks) By Dawn Short

There are many bugs to see, here in the country,
I really can't begin to name them all;
Flies fly and little beetles scurry.
Grasshoppers hop and hairy spiders crawl.

I've seen a fair few woodlice in my garden
And ladybirds who eat greenfly for dinner.
My favourite though must be the "Devil's Coach Horse"
He's scary and, in my book, is the winner.

There's one big bug which still remains elusive;
You only see the trail it leaves behind.
But the Litter Bug is thriving here in Tysoe,
I wish it were the last one of its kind!

This pest cares not for its surroundings,
It sullies all without a second thought.
It does not see the need to expend effort
To put rubbish where it knows it really ought.

"Exterminate!" for some, may be an option
But education, for me, is a better call;
For that lazy act that seems to you so little,
Makes our village less attractive for us all.

So, for those who need some further clear instruction,
Here's guidance on the better way ahead.
Cans/bottles/packets don't belong in ditches;
Don't discard them; put in the bin instead!

A special mention also for one sub-class,
An unpleasant breed who seems to work alone.
Bags of dog mess don't live in (or under) hedges;
You've bagged it up, now jolly well take it home!

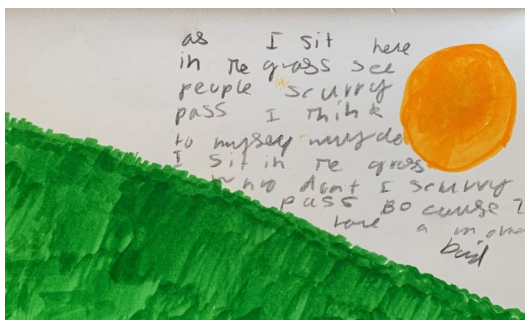
I really must not ramble on much longer
(It's truly in my nature so to do).
Next time YOU ramble out in Nature
Please take your rubbish safely home with you!

(PS If you could not leave gates open too, I'd be most grateful).

Sunrising Hill

By David McCartney (Age 11)

As I sit here in the grass
See people scurry pass
I think to myself why do I sit here in the grass
Why don't I scurry pass
because I have a mo-
ment



Nature and Country Folk

By Gayle Tompkins

The birds in the sky
as I watch them fly
Not social distanced in the air
I sit and stare

When snow is on the ground
It's so pretty all around
a winter wonderland
and Tysoe looks so grand

But with snowdrops pushing through
and daffs and crocus too
we're all hoping spring
will end this lockdown thing

The muntjac peep from verges
as the sign of spring emerges
evenings lighter, days are longer
the sun is getting stronger

Pheasants party and the reason
It is ended – shooting season
on country lanes, playing 'dare'
in front of cars without a care

With fishing rods cast, quietly sat
there's one country sport some are still at
Whether it's coarse, or fishing with fly
It's a wonderful way to pass lockdown days by

Wintry walks at the top of the hill
looking at the view – such beauty, so still
We're lucky, we are, in the place where we live
surrounded by nature which just seems to give

So this poem I've written which I hope entertains
for nature is magic, if it's sunny or rains
Let's all take a moment to stop, listen, look
to the beauty of nature in each cranny and nook.

Nature Lies

By Malcolm Benjamin

Natures Lies

Nature Dies

Oh, no it doesn't!

Spring comes around
And from the ground
A plethora of colour!

First white,
Then yellow, red and green.
Which sets a really, pretty scene.

The bugs, the bees
The birds that chatter.
Life moves on and that's what matters!

Mother Nature

By Mel Johnson

Mother Nature is a funny old soul
Said the rabbit while deep inside his hole
For down in this earth I see things are stirring
The roots are growing the insects are whirring

Oh yes cried the field mouse
From his little straw house
I can feel the earth quivering
While I sit here shivering

Oh yes cried the owl with a glorious hoot
As he cleaned and he preened his feathered suit
But when will Spring come cried the robin and wren
Soon he replied but I can't say quite when

For though I am wise I must confess
I never know when she will put on her dress
But I feel her presence I know she is here
With her power and magic she brings each year

This earth is preparing for her glorious show
When trees will blossom and flowers will grow
She is warming the soil and preparing the air
In order to greet her gifts so fair

She will clothe this land in golden robes
Of rose red velvet and ermine throws
Flowers will arrive and the bees will hum
At last we shall feel the warmth of the sun.

Thank you owl for these wise words
Cried the rabbit and mouse and all the birds
And we like them should give a cheer
For the gifts she brings us year upon year

Now I must end this little ditty
It may not be wise, it may not be witty
But I hope you will smile and I'm sure you'll agree
There's none so grand as Mother Nature can be.

Nature Poem

By Caitlin Small (age 16)

A nature poem, about nature,
The nature I have seen,
Around and about, through the hills,
All the places I have been.

I never saw the horse with its shiny golden mane,
I never saw bright daffodils sprouting in the lane,
My eyes have never gazed at a litter, flock or herd,
As they're glued to the pavement watching out for turd.

There will be no watercolours of views from round the town,
Only colour on the canvas is a nasty shade of brown.
I've trodden every footpath, in sunshine or in flood,
It truly is quite beautif- oh god I hope that's mud!

Tysoe, Edgehill, Shenington, all the places in between,
The sheer quantity of faeces is becoming quite obscene,
Your negligence of feculence is genuinely distressing,
As if you thought your dog's grimy gifts would be some sort of blessing,
If my dad loses one more shoe, he may have some form of fit,
From accidentally stepping in your puppy's stinking, excrement.

This really is the primary source of all of my frustration,
I can't enjoy my walk with all the doggy defecation.

Tomorrow will be a Good Day
(A fitting tribute to Mother Nature and Captain Tom)
By Sue Webb

Sunrise across the sky is creeping.
Blackbirds sing their welcome greeting.

Fox to his den is sneaking.
Barn Owl's swooping, hunting.
Kestrel's hovering, searching, screeching.

Cockerels crowing, chickens clucking.
Calves cavorting, cows cud chewing.
Sheep stand sulking, lambs are bleating..

Horses stamp, quietly grazing
Rabbits run, fast escaping.
Deer look on, watchful, gazing.

Nature's hand you cannot stay
And as we heard a great man say
"Tomorrow will be a good day"

Nature in the Raw

By Anon

Harsh and unforgiving the Beast from the East blows hard,
Covering the landscape with a fresh coat of white virgin snow and ice.
Making the earth as hard as iron, water like a stone.
Record freezing temperatures see people dressing like fashion-conscious Eskimos,
Their fluorescent down-filled jackets, searingly bright against the white.

Nature in lockdown, but there's no stopping in doors for some!
No central heating or cosy fire to go home to, no microwave to defrost the worms.
The store cupboard's empty, no packet of dried insects to open as a last resort.
Birds puff up their feathers against the cold and peck away at fatballs in the feeders,
Either that or face being frozen to a crisp.

A ghostly barn owl patrols the verges in daylight as hunger calls
Hoping that a shivering vole will make a dash for it, a fatal error!
It's tough at this time of year – either too wet or too cold or too both.
Thin pickings, down to last reserves– Nature in the raw in tooth and claw.
Let's hope with the coming of spring she can replenish her stores once more.

Sparrows

By Alison Cross

The sun is creeping over the brow of the hill.
Light warms and steadily fills the branches.
The hedge is waking.
The humans are abed in their dwellings but our chatter is slowly rising.

My kin have dwelt in the hedges of this hamlet for as long as the stories can tell...
many frosts ago there were abundant places to crowd and clatter
but the humans tidy their bits of green and our vantage points are fewer.

The springing is coming and soon we'll be readying for new broods.
Many cousins foundered in the frozen time but our young will soon take their branches as their own.

For now we must busy our light hours with foraging, puddling and heckling the fanged ones.
The humans awaken and we must again share our world.

Into the Verge

By Jackie Keyser

Lockdown litter picking, alone amongst my thought -
Every item I pick up is something once was bought.
Now tossed without compassion from vehicle onto verge
Where fauna and rich flora with hedge and ditches merge.
Lying in the water, buried under grass,
Shredded onto razor thorns as slowly, time does pass.
And there inside a bottle, a tiny body found -
A mouse had wriggled, tight, inside, but trapped, it starved or
drowned.
So, whilst I make no diff'rence to the greater global scene,
I know that every piece I pick protects a tiny being.
And working in the sunshine on a balmy spring-like day
My reward is really simple, when a raven flies my way.
And there's the curlew's haunting call, a tingle in my spine -
For nothing beats pure birdsong, and the pleasure is all mine.

Paradise lost (a bit of a moan)

By Jane Jervis

There are Creatures in my garden, some imposing, some so sweet
Like that tiny little bunny enjoying the spring heat.
For him it was idyllic, lots of lettuces and sprouts
He munched and grew and flourished - 'twas we who went without.

One day I came across a stag not thirty feet away
He raised his splendid antlers; I'm boss he seemed to say
He stepped, he stamped his hoof, then turned and leapt aside,
He'd gone. I'd won that time but later could have cried.

For he came back another day, when antlers needed rubbing.
We'd handy little saplings just right for fearsome scrubbing.
He scratched, heaved, ripped and pushed, almost without trying
And left small trees bereft of bark and inevitably dying.

Pigeons eat the broccoli and cabbages and greens,
Those slugs are in potatoes whilst black fly swathe the beans.
The mole is very busy making mountains on the lawn
And burrowing 'neath the onion patch for me to spot next morn.

The badger is a menace, though sweet to see at play.
He dug the edges of the drive in search of worms - his prey.
He bulldozed through the strawb'rry net - not a fruit remained.
I hope he had a stomach ache, was sick and ill and pained.

A fox came through at dead of night and left his calling-card.
It stank - I had to clear it up which was so very hard.
Those creatures are against me - they TRY to aggravate
They best take care and listen, lest they end up on my plate.

There are creatures in my garden - forgive me if I cuss.
Sometimes I found wond'ring - is there anything LEFT for us?

Sergeant Spike

By Shirley Cherry

Reporting from the churchyard bunker

It's two in the morning
And there's no sign of vice,
No shows of mischief
By any mean mice.

Tawny was hooting
From atop the tall pine
Calling to his neighbours
if they had the time.

But no Rolexes here,
not even a Swatch.
Who needs an arm-bracelet
When you've got the church clock?

The bats are oblivious
To the loud sounding chimes.
Their aims are carnivorous,
They're not bothered by time.

So, it's back to my bunker,
My cosy retreat,
At least once inside
I can put up my feet.

With the odd earthworm to nibble
As I settle down to sleep,
I'll be shutting my eyes now
You won't hear a peep!

I'll be snoozing my head off
Till the winter months pass
And the green shoots emerge
in the warmed spring grass.

Then, having rolled up my bedding
To make it look neat,
I'll be back out on patrol
Waddling down the street

Only a few hedgehogs are left
Look out for us and be aware.
KEEP CALM AND MAKE BUNKERS
We'll be grateful that you care.

Spring

By Jo McGinn

Sskylarks singing high in a sky of cerulean blue,
Pigeons cooing softly, fat chested, perched up high,
Robins, beady eyed, worm hunting, thin from harsh winters,
Intricate spiderwebs adorn the budded hedgerows,
Noises all around: birdsong, children's chatter, hope
Grows as, once again, Mother Nature awakens from her
slumber deep.

When Amongst the Bluebells

By Patricia Marland

When amongst the bluebells my feet with careful tread
Walk in the spreading woodlands, boughs Cathedralled overhead.
Birds' sweet song as whispered breeze brings movement in the trees,
The earthy smells, the dappled light, the buzzing of the bees.

A world of beauty, quite apart from daily cares and worry.
A time to dream, to stand quite still, away from constant hurry.
The calm descends to ease away all care from furrowed brow.
To be renewed, begin anew; it works I know not how.

It's nature's way of setting right all wrongs and daily woes,
It lifts the spirit, soothes the heart, takes away the lows.
Listen carefully to nature's sounds, see sights beyond compare.
It's a wonderful world where we all live, a world that needs our care.

Try to make the least indent, don't crush the hidden leaf.
Try to leave it all 'as found', no rubbish in the street.
When amongst the bluebells our feet with careful tread
Walk in the spreading woodland, boughs Cathedralled overhead!

My Den

By Erin Small (Age 11)

My den has been in my garden since I moved here,
Its not the prettiest of dens a bit battered.
But it's a den,
I haven't been using it since all the leaves have gone and as I said
before it's a bit battered.
When I first used it as a den, I was only 6 or 7 back then it had lots of
leaves all a greenish yellow,
I put pebbles on the floor to make it posh.
But now 4 years later its just waiting for someone anyone to play in
it,
No one ever will I've told you what it used be like but now it's
unusable since,
There are spikes
The floor is no longer covered in pebbles but instead bird poo
However, it has many uses
Not for me though
For my cat Luna
She uses it as a toilet
A place to hide
And something to climb
So, you see dens are extremely useful and fun to have.
That is my den!

Robin's Quest

By Beki Benjamin

I blink my eyes,
Stretch out my wings,
As I awaken from my rest.
I look to the ground, listening for sounds
Before flying from my nest.

The sun is rising,
The sky is light,
I can feel the day is warmer.
I sing my song, so all can hear
That spring is around the corner.

Soaring high,
Towards the clear blue sky,
I survey my own home patch.
Imagine my surprise to see
Two pigeons eating on my thatch.

I come swooping down,
Glide without a sound,
Until I'm just above their heads.
I dart between the two grey birds,
Quickly snatch away their bread!

Feeling proud,
Feeling smug,
That breakfast has come early!
I swiftly peck every crumb,
Before carrying on with my journey.

The day lies ahead
Filled with the hope of love,
As I set upon my quest.
To find a mate, who cannot resist
My glorious bright redbreast!

Dandelions

By Allison Aves

Along the lane, beside the stream,
Their yellow petals shine and gleam.
In swathes of golden sunshine sit
The dandelions, where insects flit
And sparrows chirp along the banks.
I wander slowly and give thanks
For all the wondrous bright green springs
Before the heat of summer brings
The jaded colours of the trees
And butterflies and honey bees.

Ode to My Fence

By Jo Small

I noticed you
Out of the corner of my eye,
After panting,
My way
Up the hill.

But I carried on with my run,
Getting the run done.
No time for fun.

Then life became less urgent.
Things began to slow.
I began to question,
What are you running for Jo?

I notice you now
In the fullness of my gaze,
After panting,
My way
Up the hill.

I pause and see
The view, the hill, the trees
There every day,
Waiting for me.

I stop and spy
The clouds, the sun, the sky,
There every day,
Although mist can make the view shy.

You're part of my life now.
I see you in my mind.
While washing up.
Or running.
You're easy to find.

You taught me how to breathe.
You showed me how to slow,
To press pause on Strava
What are you running for Jo?

. . . AND THE JUDGES ARE:

Rosemary Collier

A Professor in the School of Life Sciences, University of Warwick and the driving force behind Tysoe's Wildlife Friendly initiative.

Anton Lesser

An actor well-known for his roles in *Game of Thrones*, and Chief Superintendent Bright in *Endeavour*. He lives in Tysoe and records his favourite poems from the entries for us.

Digby Norton

Oxford English graduate, and former publisher and advertising consultant who has a lifelong love of books and literature.

Emma Restall-Orr

An environmentalist, deep ecologist, a vegan believing in minimal consumerism, her politics favour personal responsibility and co-operative community.

Beverley Thorpe

Tysoe's Parish Clerk and keen supporter of the village's wildlife initiative, submitting the successful grant application for Caring for the Cotswolds. Beverley launched the Poetry Challenge last year.

Isobel and Peter Watson

Iso is a former magazine sub-editor with a keen eye for grammar, while Peter is a trained Zoologist and an avid naturalist.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR JUDGES

The Poetry Challenge 2021 is run by the Tysoe & District Record. The entries have been collated into this booklet by Shirley Cherry, Editor.