

123

Summer 2026

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animalwatch

PUTTING ANIMALS ON THE AGENDA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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Front cover image: Animalwatch Editor Rebecca's rescue pony Sansa (left) with her friend Princess. Photo taken by Trinity Keenan-Evans.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please make a note of the events happening in the coming months. The diary will be updated in the next issue as we receive information about other events taking place.

October

4th October at 10:45am:

Service for Animal Welfare Sunday.
St Mary's Church, Lace Market, High Pavement,
Nottingham NG1 1HN. Speaker: Revd Professor
Helen Hall, ASWA Chair.

November

8th November at 3pm:

ASWA Remembrance Service for Animals in War.

The Animals' War Memorial, Brooke Gate,
Park Lane, London, W1K 7QF. Speaker: Anna
Baggott, PDSA.



HELLO AND WELCOME TO ANIMALWATCH

'Hello, World' by NASA



Welcome to the summer issue of *Animalwatch* magazine, where our theme is 'Shared Planet, Shared Lives'. I began to prepare the issue in April, when the news pages were full of stories of the Artemis II space mission, along with some incredible photographs of Earth from space. At the press conference following the successful mission, Christina Koch – newly the

first woman to fly around the moon – reflected on the language of being part of a crew, noting that this was about shared cares and needs and that all members of a crew were "inescapably, beautifully, dutifully linked." She went on to say the following: "I know I haven't learned everything that this journey has yet to teach me, but there's one new thing I know. Planet Earth, you are a crew." This powerful recognition of our shared home, shared lives and shared responsibilities is something that is reflected in many of the contributions to this issue of *Animalwatch*.

This is my first issue as Editor. I hope to be able to continue the sterling work that Jen Brown has carried out in this role over the past few years, and must

begin by thanking Jen, along with ASWA Secretary Samantha Chandler, for their assistance in helping me to get started in this new role. Happily, Jen will still be contributing to the magazine, as well as continuing in her role on the ASWA Committee.

The theme for the autumn issue of *Animalwatch* will be 'Animals in Christian Art and Literature'. If you would like to contribute any writing or images on this theme, or indeed to share thoughts and updates that fit the wider remit of *Animalwatch*, please feel free to send these through by emailing me at: animalwatch_editor@outlook.com. The deadline for submissions is **Tuesday 1st September**.

Rebecca Dean, Editor

A WARM WELCOME

to our new members. We look forward to hearing from you.

We are pleased to welcome fourteen new members who have joined since the publication of the Spring issue.

To all our new members we extend a warm welcome and we would ask that you, along with our existing members, encourage others who share your concern for animal welfare to join. Introductory leaflets are available from the Secretary.

ASWA SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

If you have a group or service that would welcome an ASWA speaker, we would love to hear from you! We often travel a fair distance so please call to discuss it. We usually bring a stall and literature and always liaise with our hosts to ensure the talk is appropriate for their particular audience. Keep the invitations rolling in!

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANIMALWATCH

We very much welcome contributions to *Animalwatch* from our readers. We are interested to hear about the positive things being done for animals in your churches and communities. We also welcome informed pieces on specific areas of animal welfare, such as items relating to animal welfare law, the history of animal welfare, and theology. Articles should be submitted to the

Editor either as typed manuscripts by post or by email as Word documents, with any accompanying photos sent as high resolution jpg files. Items submitted as pdf files or email text cannot be accepted. Submissions must be the contributor's (sender's) own original work, and (unless otherwise agreed) not published elsewhere. Items may be edited for length, readability, and

appropriateness of content. Publication of submitted items is at the Editor's discretion. In submitting an article, the contributor assigns copyright for the piece to ASWA. For items submitted by email, please assume your item has been received unless you get a delivery failure notice. The Editor is unable to acknowledge receipt of individual submissions.

ASWA MERCHANDISE

A variety of merchandise and literature is available from the newly updated ASWA website: www.aswa.org.uk.

ASWA literature: a range of literature on a variety of animal welfare subjects available.

PAWS for Prayer cards: paw shaped cards with a prayer for companion animals printed on one side. £0.20 each.

Egg Cards: egg shaped cards with a prayer printed on one side. £0.20 each.

ASWA bags: handy cotton shopping bag with the ASWA logo. £4 each.

ASWA badges: show your support for ASWA by wearing a lapel badge with the ASWA logo. £1.50 each.

Sticker sheets & books: Activity sheet with stickers (ravens or bees), £2.00 each.



GOOD NEWS

Tech Support for Hedgehogs

A recent report by the BBC highlighted a project being conducted by researchers at Cambridge University that is using satellite imaging, GPS trackers, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to monitor hedgehogs and their habitats. Satellite data analysed by AI can monitor hedgehog habitats and track how these are affected over time by things like development and climate change. The GPS trackers provide data on hedgehog movements. It is hoped that, together, the information gathered can be used to make changes to reduce the decline in hedgehog numbers seen in recent decades. Using high-tech tools in this way may not just help hedgehogs; it might also provide a blueprint for looking after other species affected by human activity.

Jennifer Brown, ASWA Committee Member

NEWS & NOTICES

Don't forget, you can follow ASWA on social media:

Facebook Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals.

Instagram angsocwelanimals.

You can also keep up with what's new via our updated website:

www.aswa.org.uk

Check the website for the latest resources, including materials for children & youth.

Animal-friendly Church Awards

Is your church animal friendly? ASWA sponsors the Animal-friendly Church award to recognise those churches that take animal welfare seriously as part of their ministry and mission. Churches can apply at any time and those meeting the necessary criteria will be awarded animal-friendly church status. Information is available on the website or from the Secretary.

WELCOME TO NEW ASWA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jonathan Sutton

Jonathan is an ecologist passionate about improving the welfare of farmed and wild animals. He is excited about engaging people of all ages with the natural world through science and theology. He hopes to work with ASWA to help the church to build God's kingdom for all animals: human and non-human alike.



Sherry-Ann Taylor

Sherry-Ann Taylor is the Community Fundraising Coordinator at St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust in London. She grew up in South Africa where nature, and animals have always played an important part of her life. She is passionate about animals and the welfare of wild animals and our natural world. She is married with two adult daughters and one grandson. She shares her home with Bella, the one-eyed Boston Terrier and Biscuit the Chihuahua. Sherry is excited to be working with ASWA to help make a difference to improve God's kingdom for all creatures.



WORLD DAY FOR LABORATORY ANIMALS

Our Patron, Bishop Lynne Cullens, joined the rally being held in Trafalgar Square on 25th April to raise awareness of World Day for Laboratory Animals. It was convened by several animal rights organisations and there were various speakers addressing the gathering.

In 2024, there were approximately 2.64 million scientific procedures involving living animals in Great Britain, and with statistics widely available citing that up to 95% of drugs deemed safe in animal studies subsequently fail during human trials, it can feel a bleak world, not only for the creatures involved but also for those of us with a heart to see animals living lives free from pain and fear.

But there is hope and there are actions each of us can take. You can find some ideas for how to help on the website for World Day for Laboratory Animals, which is www.worlddayforlaboratoryanimals.org.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA

Widespread desire for animal welfare reform



I would like to write a little about the direction I see animal protection going in Australia. As Christians, together with compassionate people of other faiths and none, we can encourage care and protection for animals, but we cannot enforce it. Public pressure helps, but I believe that only government legislation can make the impact we long to see. So how can that happen?

Currently, in Australia, I see the major advances as being in the hands of the large, well-established and committed animal protection organisations. In Australia the Australian Alliance for Animals is composed of such organisations – Animals Australia, Compassion in World Farming, Four Paws, Humane World for Animals Australia, Voiceless, and World Animal Protection.

The Alliance recently commissioned research from BehaviourWorks, Monash University, Melbourne. A survey took place in 2023, and a follow up survey was undertaken in January and February 2026. This was an online survey of over 1000 adults representative of the population (age, gender, location). The question asked was “Is Australian animal welfare fit for purpose?” The answer was, overwhelmingly, “No.” Both surveys had very similar results, indicating that support for reform is widespread, across city and regional areas and across the political spectrum. People want stronger animal welfare laws. Recognition of animal sentience is a clear expectation which must underpin changes in animal welfare laws. There is currently distrust of government and industries that use animals and great support for an independent authority to oversee animal welfare policy. Government should then be responsible for making and enforcing animal protection laws.

It is really exciting that the recently concluded Australia-European Union Free Trade Agreement explicitly recognises animals as sentient beings and contains high level provisions requiring cooperation on animal welfare standards, practices and research. The Alliance has strong grounds to urge the Australian government to factor animal sentience into trade negotiations with other trading partners.

The high-level work of the Alliance is underpinned on the community level by the ongoing work of RSPCA, numerous rescue groups, Animal Liberation, and many other small but effective organisations, and there are three Animal Justice Party Members of Parliament, one each in West Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

Olga Parkes

SWEDEN

Sad news for the snowy owl



The snowy owl has now been officially declared extinct nationwide in Sweden. It is very sad news indeed. The snowy owl has been a long-standing symbol for the wild mountain world which is magnificent and vast up north in Sweden. It is tragic news and a most alarming signal of imbalance in Mother Nature. Over 200 species are

now nationally extinct in Sweden and thousands more are under threat.

Good news! Åsa Andersson has created a Haven of Peace and Life on her farm outside of the city of Västerås. She offers life as it should be for hundreds of rescued battery hens. Free from living in darkness, free from forced egg laying, free from restricted living space. Free! To roam, to sit on perches, to peck corn when they like, and to breathe fresh air and

no longer be forced to lay eggs. Just peace and life as it should be. She gets the hens from industrial egg factories. She says she does not want to buy them as that would just reinforce the aspect of profit (albeit very small) to the industry. Instead, she exchanges her home baked vegan cakes for the hens. Needless to say, no eggs go into those cakes!

Sandra Kinley

EXERCISING KINDNESS

Exercising Kindness is a new initiative set up primarily to raise funds for animal welfare charities whilst offering programmes to inspire us to make more time to get out in nature and keep as active and healthy as we can. We also do a Walk for Peace on the 2nd of each month and a Litter Pick on the second Sunday. Some members join together, while others go out by themselves in their neighbourhood.

Membership starts at £7 a month and every penny goes into a prize draw. At

present the monthly draw is £300, and the winning member chooses which animal charity receives the money. There is also a members' prize draw with some super prizes. You can email me on lynne@exercisingkindness.co.uk for more information and sign up at www.exercisingkindness.co.uk. We are thrilled that Peter Egan has agreed to be our patron and look forward to welcoming you to our community.

Lynne Chitty



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Animalwatch in Honduras!



I was in Honduras visiting our Partner Organization, Helping Hands for Hounds of Honduras, and three other animal welfare organizations. I brought an assortment of ASWA magazines to hand out. We visited a school and brought two horses. The Equinos farrier demonstrated hoof care and then a few of the students got to try it on a very patient and gentle horse.

In this location, just outside of Choluteca, horses are used to carry firewood and water, and to pick up trash from houses and bring to a central location (a dump). Many people earn their living thanks to the cart horses, but as is usual, they don't have the money for vet care. Equinos de Honduras offers vet care clinics with farrier stations. I spent a day at one of their clinics where the vet treated forty horses and the farrier filed and cleaned hooves and shod a subset of the horses.

Karen Menczer, Founder and Director of Animal-Kind International

A Tribute to Mickey



I would like to say how supported I felt through the prayers of members

through the ASWA prayer chain, when I lost my lovely cat Mickey after sixteen years of companionship. It really helped. ASWA helped me bring her back from Uganda where I had been working as a missionary as I couldn't leave her behind. It is wonderful to be part of an organisation of real animal-lovers who understand how it feels to love a pet. Thank you all so much.

Mary Mills

Hedgehog Helpers



Rev'd Katrina O'Neill from St John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, Inverness, has shared a photo with us of one of the hedgehog boxes they have made and installed in the church garden.

In Search of Bunny Foster Carers



Image by Blue Cross

For the past two years, my daughter and I have had the privilege of volunteering as foster carers with Blue Cross, welcoming guinea pigs and rabbits into our home. It has been a deeply rewarding way to care for God's creatures in a very practical, hands-on way—offering safety, healing and hope to animals in need.

Our role as foster carers is simple in idea, but rich in responsibility. Each animal that comes to us has its own story. Some arrive nervous or withdrawn, others unwell or recovering from surgery. We provide a calm, loving environment where they can begin to trust again. This involves one-to-one time, appropriate housing, enrichment activities, fresh food and water, and, where necessary, administering medication or offering post-operative care—particularly following neutering, which helps prevent further unwanted litters and reduces pressure on already stretched rescue services.

The need for this work is growing. Blue Cross currently has around fifty rabbits in their care, with more than fifty others on a waiting list in need of foster or permanent homes. Over the past year, the charity has seen a 25% increase in rabbits coming into their care and a 40% rise in requests to rehome them. Behind these statistics lies what has been described as a "hidden pet welfare crisis," as rising living costs mean that many owners are struggling to provide for their animals.

As Steven Craddock, rehoming and fostering operations manager, explains: "We're urgently appealing for more people to foster rabbits and other pets as we face a growing demand for our services. Foster carers like Liz are vital in helping us support more animals." It is humbling to play even a small part in that wider effort.

For us, fostering has also been a shared journey of compassion and responsibility—values that resonate deeply with the Christian faith and our call to be good stewards of creation. One of the most joyful moments is seeing a once-timid rabbit or guinea pig grow in confidence and eventually move on to a loving forever home. There is both a sadness in letting them go and a deep sense of fulfilment in knowing they are ready for their next chapter.

Blue Cross provides full training and covers all associated costs for foster carers, making it accessible for many who feel called to help. If you have the space in your home and heart, fostering can be a truly meaningful way to serve—bringing care, dignity and love to animals in need.

Liz Houghton

TALKING POINT

A Shared World

Sit out in your garden or in a park, and it will soon become clear to you that we share our world with many other species. You are likely to hear birdsong and perhaps see small mammals, such as rabbits or squirrels. Bees, butterflies, and other insects (some more welcome than others) will do their aerial dances around you. Immersing oneself in this community of species not only reminds us that we are not alone in this world, it's

also good for our physical, mental, and spiritual health. But both garden and park are, in many ways, artificial spaces. They are filled with the things of nature, but we humans have created them, given them boundaries, and very likely decided which plants are allowed to grow there. That, in turn, determines what insects, birds, and other animals are likely to call it home. Humans are not the only species who engineer our surroundings to suit our needs – beavers, too, can reshape whole landscapes. But no other

species does it quite so extensively as we do, nor in a way that displaces so many other creatures. It's natural, but is it right, that we give greater weight to our perceived needs than to the needs of other creatures, for example when considering building new infrastructure? Should we be making more effort to share the spaces we are already using with other species?

Jennifer Brown, ASWA Committee Member

PETS & THEIR PEOPLE: EXHIBITION REVIEW



Pets & their People
11 March 2026 – 27 September 2026
S.T. Lee Gallery, Weston Library,
Bodleian Libraries, Oxford
Admission: Free

Pets & their People explores the history and psychology of the bond between animals and people across various areas of life, including work, study, and travel. It traces these relationships from early human encounters with wild animals through to the development of pet keeping and the incorporation of animals into human families. The exhibition showcases a number of rare artefacts, several of which have

never previously been displayed, and the mixed media collection of letters, drawings, photographs, outfits and toys is charming and thought-provoking in equal measure.

There are occasional reminders of the exhibition's location within Oxford's university context, such as the enjoyable slideshow of the likes and dislikes of the various pets who find their homes within the network of Oxford colleges. However, most of the items have a wider reach that underlines the lengthy history of human-animal entanglements. These include a third or fourth century letter suggesting the acquisition of a puppy for a woman experiencing loneliness, an Ancient Egyptian papyrus that appears to denote a 'congestion charge' document for a camel, modern-day pet cemetery photographs, and letters between friends purporting to be written by their pets.

The extent of human affection for and dependence upon animals is left in no doubt, although the exhibition also invites reflection upon the motivations that lie behind human behaviour towards animals, as well as the ethics of our desire to keep animals as pets.

Since not everyone will be in a position to visit the exhibition for themselves, Animalwatch has obtained permission to share a close-up image of one of the items on display, entitled, 'Inventory of our Family at Northill.' This is a list of the eighty-two family members of a Bedfordshire soldier, away from home and fighting in Flanders. Written and sent in the year 1745 by his seventeen-year-old daughter, Maria Madan, the list includes human servants, cattle, dogs and puppies with their own names, pigs, chickens, a blackbird, a greenfinch, and an owl. The list raises fascinating questions about who and what truly constitutes our family or our sense of home. If you look at the Young

Members' page within this issue, you'll find an invitation to create an inventory in response.

Anyone who is able to visit Oxford in person may be interested to note another exhibition running in the same library: The Wonder of Birds. This is inspired by the Book of Birds, the latest collaboration from the award-winning nature writer Robert MacFarlane and illustrator Jackie Morris. It runs until 3rd January 2027 and admission is free.

Rebecca Dean, Editor

Images used by permission of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford



Inventory of our Family at Northhill. 1745.

Mama	3 Kittens
Mr. Watcher	2 Guinea pigs
Maria	2 Guinea piglets
Ben	2 Geese
Charles	6 French Ducks
Fredt	6 English
John	10 Chickens
Gardener	2 Starlings
Kitt	1 Black-bird
Mr. Thomas	2 Gold-finches
Mr. Betty	1 Green-Finch
Lucy's Cook	1 An Asp
Long May the Laundry maid	1 An Asp-Cott
Short Belly the Housemaid.	1 An owl.
Sally Christmas - Nursery maid	
	<u>In all 82</u>

Poppe	} Cattle
The old mare	
Little Cheltenham	
The Colt	

Seaney	} Dogs
Turko	

Young Turko	} Puppies
Young Jersey	
Sackin	
Hoover	
Boora	
Bido	
Kanger	
Maggie	

1 Sow
 10 Piggys
 1 Boat
 1 Cat

A family of 82. Image credit - MS. Eng. Lett. d.288, fol. 11r. Northhill, Bedfordshire, 1745

ANIMAL FRIENDLY CHURCH AWARD WINNERS



ASWA secretary Samantha Chandler had a conversation with the most recent winners of this award: The United Benefice of Balderstone, Mellor and Samlesbury in the Diocese of Blackburn.

Congratulations on winning this year's Animal Friendly Church award. What does it mean to you that your Church has received this award?

As a Benefice of three churches, we were very surprised at winning this award, but at the same time very excited and what a privilege. For us it is an acknowledgement of all the hard work that has been put in by so many of our three congregations, who have put in so much effort and commitment to make our churches all animal friendly. It helps us promote our ethos to the local communities that everyone, including animals, are welcome in our buildings and how much we all care about the protection and care of God's beautiful creation. It has helped us to involve more people, who perhaps would not have volunteered before, to participate in making our churches and surrounding areas more animal friendly – yet there is still much more we can do.

Is being an animal friendly church something that is important to the majority of your congregation?

Over the past few years, the understanding and importance of our care for animals and the environment in and outside of our churches has become more important. We only use eco-friendly cleaning products, humane traps for mice, who are released back into the church grounds, Fairtrade coffee, tea and other products. Every few months, members of each congregation come to tidy and check on the wild animals that inhabit our churchyards; replacing broken bird feeders, filling water bowls and making sure the edges of the graveyards are kept wild. We have also planted many wildflower areas to help the bees and other insects. During these workdays many of the local community will come and help us.

During our Sunday services we often have a few members of the congregation who bring along their dogs, who enjoy

being fussed over; also, a few dogs have been at some recent weddings. At one wedding, the bride arrived on a horse! As a Benefice we try very hard to follow an ethical lifestyle in caring for God's Creation.

Has winning this award helped to raise your profile of animal welfare in your church? Has it had any impact on how your church is viewed in your community?

Winning this award has certainly raised the profile of animal welfare in our three churches and the whole Benefice. The Diocese of Blackburn has published a few articles celebrating our award and also promoting what we are doing within the Benefice. We have been praised by our Bishops for the work that has been achieved and have even joined our Forest Church events. We have been contacted by other churches within the Diocese and beyond for information about how they can become Animal Friendly churches, and they have asked to visit to see firsthand the work that is being done. We have also been asked to speak at our Deanery Synod to promote this work.

Excellent work is also being done in our three church primary schools; they have created bug houses, butterfly gardens, making bird feeders etc. They even made their own purple poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday, and some children were there to lay this at the war memorial.

We already have the bronze eco award, and both this and the animal friendly award and information are on display in the three churches and on their noticeboards outside. We are in the process of including the Animal Friendly Logo on our weekly notice sheets and in our monthly magazine. Many of the local community come and join us when we have special services or events that are especially for animals, such as our regular pet services. It is amazing to see the great variety of pets people have.

Can you tell us some of the animal-friendly things that your church does?

As a Benefice we are fortunate to be located in the beautiful Ribble Valley in Lancashire. Our Benefice covers a vast rural area made up of many small villages and a very large number of farms and woodlands, as well as the beautiful River Ribble which flows through the Benefice. Our lives are centered around the rural and farming seasonal clock. Our service times are linked to milking time on the many farms in the Benefice, so the farmers are able to attend the Sunday service.

We have an active Forest Church each month which uses the vast natural resources found in our local area to make bughouses, planting wildflower meadows, creating butterfly habitats, riverside walks to watch the wildlife etc. Each time the group meets you can hear and see the excited adults and children, as they put on their wellies and raincoats, raring to go on their next adventure.

We have an annual pet blessing service and regular pet services throughout the year. We have a special service in October for Animal Welfare Sunday, where it is a delight to see so many different animals. Each year on Remembrance Sunday, we are joined by the shire horses from Thwaites' Brewery who lead the procession from the church to the war memorial in the village of Mellor. At this service we also remember all the animals that gave their lives during times of war. The clapping of the horses' hooves on the tarmac alongside the silence and the ringing of the church bells is a very solemn, yet poignant moment. We are joined for this act of remembrance by the whole village.

At Balderstone we have a group of people who spend their evenings on Toad Patrol. They make sure each evening that the toads cross the road safely to their local ponds; this group turn out whatever the weather. On a regular basis the community come out to organise a litter pick to keep the local environment clean and tidy. We are always amazed at how much litter people throw from their cars as they pass through the Benefice in their cars on the A59.

We always include prayers in our services for God's creation and the welfare of animals, also we often reference animals in our sermons too. The church yards have many bird feeders which are topped up regularly, there are areas of wildflowers and wild areas where animals can hide and make their home in safety.

Recently the three churches have been involved in raising money for a local animal rescue centre charity that was about to be closed due to funding issues. Thankfully, they have had a reprieve and are able to continue to care for sick and injured animals. As a Benefice we are always looking for new ways in which we can further our involvement in making the area we live in and share more animal friendly. We, as a Benefice, are also working towards completing our silver eco-award.

**Samantha Chandler,
ASWA Secretary**

HENS, HAPPINESS, AND HELPING OTHERS TO THRIVE



This article is reprinted in Animalwatch with the kind permission of the British Hen Welfare Trust.

“Providing a space where others can flourish is the greatest satisfaction,” says recently enthroned Archbishop of Wales Cherry Vann. The first woman – and the first openly LGBTQ+ person – to hold the role in the UK, she carries immense weight and responsibility. Yet just outside her window, a congregation of hens rehomed through the British Hen Welfare Trust reminds her daily of the quiet power of small acts of grace.

Over the years, Vann has rehomed 23 ex commercial hens through the Trust. Her current eight, she says, are a vital part of her daily rhythm – from letting them out at first light to “putting them to bed” each evening. Their presence, she adds, is a grounding counterpoint to public life: “a reminder that care begins with noticing”.

Her first birds arrived in cardboard boxes from a local BHWT rehoming event. “To be honest, at the time we probably mostly wanted them for the eggs,” she admits. “But we also knew we were saving them from an early death.” What she didn’t expect was how much they’d change her. “We had no clue what we were letting ourselves in for – the sheer joy of it.” That joy persists. “They follow me to the gate, wings flapping, waiting for their food,” she laughs. “That makes me smile every single time.”

Caring for her hens slots neatly into her working day. “They live in a field just behind my office,” she says. “Depending



on the light, I’ll go down first thing, let them out, replenish the food and water, and give them a clean.” The eggs are collected through the morning, and in the evening either she or her partner Wendy heads down to “tuck them up” for the night.

Not every day runs smoothly, though. A few years ago, one adventurous hen flew over the garden wall and vanished into a neighbour’s steeply tiered garden below. “I had to walk all the way up the hill, across the road, and down another hill to reach her,” Vann recalls. “Then I had to coax her with sunflower seeds and carry her home under my arm along the main road. I must have looked ridiculous – but there was no way I was leaving her behind.” It’s the kind of story, she says, that perfectly sums up hen keeping: unpredictable, sometimes undignified, but endlessly endearing.

She talks to them as she works. The hens bustle at her feet, curious and unafraid. “There’s something lovely about an animal that doesn’t run away but comes toward you,” she says. “They make me feel connected to nature – to life in its broadest sense.”

For Vann, the flock also keeps her attuned to the natural world. “I love getting up at dawn and going to bed with the sun,” she says. “In summer, they’re still pottering around at 10pm, not ready for bed. It reminds you of the seasons and of life’s patterns. Their time is ruled by light, not screens or schedules.”

But care, she cautions, isn’t just affection. “What we think is kind can sometimes be dangerous.” That lesson came painfully when a fox took her first flock after she’d left the coop open overnight. “It was

horrible,” she says quietly. “We felt we’d let them down, when we only wanted to give them a sense of freedom.” That moment reshaped her understanding of compassion: true kindness, she learned, must include protection and boundaries.

She’s also learned from how the hens treat one another. Pecking orders, she says, “are very real – and often brutal.” One undersized hen, nicknamed Scrap, was bullied and refused food. “It was awful to watch – they just went for her.” So, she and Wendy built a small “hospital” pen where weaker hens could rest and eat in peace. “Providing a safe space where she could recover and gain confidence is so satisfying,” she says. Scrap now looks the healthiest of them all, though she still waits her turn at mealtimes.

The practical rewards are modest but meaningful. Vann’s favourite meals are simple – omelettes, tortillas, hard boiled eggs in summer salads. With eight hens laying, there are plenty to share. “We give a lot away,” she smiles. “People really appreciate them.” One neighbour swore the eggs made her best Christmas cake yet.

In a life defined by leadership and firsts, shaped by history and spiritual tradition, Vann finds grace not in the grand gestures but in daily acts of care. For her, tending a flock is part of the same quiet calling: noticing what’s around us, protecting the vulnerable, and making space for others to thrive. “That’s the real joy,” she says.

Andy Hill, British Hen Welfare Trust

YOUNG MEMBERS' PAGE

Welcome to our young members' page. This page features in the summer issue of *Animalwatch* each year. We'd like to make this your space, and to do that we need contributions from our under-18s readers. We want to hear from you! And if you have a suggestion for a feature to add to this page, do let us know.

BIBLE STUDY

In this magazine, we have been thinking about how people and animals live together and care for each other. It is hard to imagine a world without animals in, so it makes sense that the Bible talks about animals a lot too. Sometimes the Bible even uses animals to help us understand what God is like.

Here are a few verses from Psalm 91 – one of the poems in the Bible:

Whoever goes to the Lord for safety,
 whoever remains under the
 protection of the Almighty,
 can say to him,
 "You are my defender and protector.
 You are my God; in you I trust."

He will cover you with his wings;
 you will be safe in his care;
 his faithfulness will protect and
 defend you.

(Psalm 91:1-2, 4, Good News Translation)

Here, God is compared to a bird protecting its babies with its wings. Many birds do this to keep their babies safe, warm, and dry, using their wings like a soft, feathery blanket or tent. Sometimes you can only see the chicks' tiny feet because the rest of them is hidden under their mother's feathers!

People often think of God using powerful words like 'king' or 'ruler,' but the Bible also shows that God is gentle and caring, like a mother bird looking after her chicks. This helps us understand how much God loves people and wants to keep us safe.



ACTIVITY

On page 8 of the magazine, you can see part of a very old letter. A teenage girl wrote it to her dad while he was away from home. In the letter, she made a list of all the people and animals in their family. There were 82 altogether! The list contains farm animals, pets, and the wild animals that visited their garden.

Some of the animals have names. The writing is hard to read, but you might spot two puppies called 'Rover' and 'Ranger.' Other animals are just named by what kind they are, like the chickens or an owl.

Now it's your turn! Can you make a list of all the animals that are part of your home? You could include pets that live with you, animals that visit your garden, or creatures you see from your window or on your street. If you want, you can draw a picture of the animals instead of writing a list.

WORDSEARCH

See if you can find the nine different pets – and one animal that might not be such a great pet – written inside the wordsearch grid. The words can go in any direction, including diagonally. If you get stuck, you can find the answers on page 14 of the magazine.

L	C	R	L	T	D	H	S	I	F	D	L	O	G
G	R	A	D	A	O	B	I	A	I	B	A	O	S
G	M	A	C	C	D	B	R	G	N	G	O	O	C
U	R	H	C	R	E	B	G	A	R	E	D	B	P
I	D	U	H	D	H	D	O	C	B	C	G	E	A
N	R	H	I	I	H	E	G	L	C	B	E	E	T
E	E	A	C	E	S	R	O	H	P	D	I	L	E
A	H	M	K	H	G	H	B	M	D	O	C	T	R
P	I	S	E	K	E	E	A	E	D	G	M	A	C
I	T	T	N	U	H	G	R	T	C	D	O	C	E
G	B	E	A	R	D	E	D	D	R	A	G	O	N
E	B	R	O	D	G	R	R	F	A	D	B	I	I
U	L	I	D	C	R	O	C	O	D	I	L	E	T
E	I	C	D	R	C	C	D	O	E	E	E	R	E

- HORSE
- DOG
- BEARDED DRAGON
- GUINEA PIG
- CAT
- GOLDFISH
- CHICKEN
- RABBIT
- CROCODILE
- HAMSTER

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/9653519/>

LOOK AT THE BEES

The Rt Reverend Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich, and the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment, said: "The wonders of the world are the birthright of every child. [...] Every child should have the chance to connect with God's wonderful creation." I'll second that a hundred percent!

Many bees visit our vicarage garden and we recognise most of them as the honey bees who live next door in our church walls. There are two colonies on both north and south sides of our church. They have been there for years and swarm just about every year. It's then that I phone the local bee keepers who race to collect them. Apparently, ours are very gentle bees, so they are particularly sought after by the bee keepers. I tell them, "It's because they are holy bees!"

On one occasion we hosted a pollinator picnic in the churchyard, which was tremendous fun for everyone and included a service of Holy Communion. We had all sorts of lovely activities for both children and adults. In fact, bees are something we regularly teach our children about.

Last summer during our Sunday family service I was teaching the children about the bees and how wonderful they are and how important to us. We made some lovely bee crafts too. The big bonus that day was it just so happened that at the end of that service the bees decided to swarm and had gathered on a blossom tree branch in the churchyard right outside the front door.

The children were fascinated and we stood watching them closely. Bees are less likely to attack you when they don't have a hive to protect. I got close enough to even see some of the scout bees doing their waggle dances. And of course, I always have my trusty camera with me!

We waited for the bee keeper to arrive and both children and adults were fascinated by the way he smoked the bees and then knocked them into a temporary hive. This particular keeper has plenty of meadow land for them to be kept on. He told us that if he didn't collect them, then they'd find their own home, which often turns out to be very unsuitable like in the eaves of a house, under roof cladding or in chimneys, where residents often end up having

them destroyed. So, the beekeepers are a real blessing to us and the bees here.

Personally, I could spend all day watching them. They are fascinating, beautiful insects. We've been rewilding our churchyard to increase biodiversity, which will really help them. And from time to time we bring the children into the vicarage garden to watch them foraging and gathering nectar from the flowers here. One little four-year-old boy was so excited and screamed out, "Look he's going on to all the flowers and eating them!"

One of the things I loved about last year's church swarm was that the very next week, the second hive swarmed. We hadn't noticed them until a little three-year-old who had been present the week before took me by the hand and excitedly said "Lynn, come see bees." So, I dutifully went out with her into the churchyard, expecting her to point at the bees coming and going into the walls, but instead she took me to a tree where this little one had spotted the swarm. I was amazed! She had remembered seeing the swarm from the previous week and had her eyes open wide searching. I was delighted. And so was she!

Our churchyard gives a great opportunity to teach our little ones about the beauty of these glorious insects. We are at such a crucial time where we need to understand the importance of teaching children as well as adults to care for the planet. After all, it's our children's future at stake! If we teach them about the bees, then they are more likely to want to help care for them. Our children were definitely, as Bishop Graham said, "connecting with God's creation" and that's so wonderful to see.

Here are some interesting Bee Facts -

- There are more than 20,000 species of bees.
- Bees have five eyes and six legs.
- They can see all colours except red.
- Each one has 170 odorant receptors, giving them an incredible sense of smell to sniff out flowers!
- Honey bees live in hives (or colonies). The members of the hive are divided into three types: Queen, Workers, and Drones.

- The average hive can house around 50,000 – 60,000 bees.
- Almost 99% of the hive is female! Female honey bees, or worker bees, make all of the decisions in the hive and do all of the work. There are a couple of hundred male bees in a hive, but they don't do much but sit around and eat food. They wait for an opportunity to mate with the queen and as soon as they have done that they die!
- Worker bees can visit 50 – 100 flowers in one single trip to collect nectar.
- The queen bee can lay over 2,500 eggs per day.
- It takes 21 days for an egg to develop into an adult bee.
- Honey bees can fly at a speed of around 25km per hour and beat their wings 200 times per second.
- If you see an exhausted bee, then do give it some sugar water, not honey. Honey can introduce disease into the hive.

Loving Creator, may Your blessing come down upon bees and their hives. May they multiply and be fruitful and be preserved from anything that threatens to harm them. Amen.

**Lynn Hurry,
ASWA Committee Member**



HOME TO ROOST: GOLGOTHA AFTER EASTER



Image by ChatGPT

As anyone who loves or has loved an animal will tell you, they can be peculiarly attuned to changes of emotion and trauma. Last week I had the flu and for the duration, my cat, Percy, ignored me completely; it was only when he tentatively let me touch him that I knew I was better. Likewise, people who have visited Auschwitz have told me, though others say this is apocryphal, that no birds fly overhead, nor are there any fish in the river.

Call me a spoilsport but I hate AI and avoid using it whenever possible. I believe technology should enable people to be more creative, not threaten the few creative jobs that exist. But on Good Friday, after the Three Hours Devotion, I struggled to find an image of Golgotha after the crucifixion, so asked AI to create one. A Scottish council recently attracted criticism for funding an AI-generated mural depicting an American bald eagle. I wouldn't like to say what are the birds in the above picture, but I doubt they are Jerusalem natives if this is anything to go by!

When I was a teenager, I visited the Somme on a school trip and, wandering off the beaten track, was struck by the

silence of the woods that still bore the scars of battles fought over a hundred years ago. As someone who suffers from depression, I felt during Good Friday like a veteran revisiting a battlefield years after; though the scars and the memories remained, the land had healed and grassed over. There was sunlight again and birdsong, and in that moment, Golgotha no longer held any fear or dread for me. After all, the war was won, and if I was called upon to fight again, I knew I could not lose.

And so, I became fascinated by Golgotha outside of the events of Holy Week and determined to return it to itself and no longer define it according to what happened there, just as I am not defined by my experiences. The picture shows a twilight outcrop, with what looks like daisies, dandelions and buttercups taking the place of crosses, of which only the holes remain. The birds are likely a composite of lots of different types, and many reading this will know far better than me which of our feathered friends we are likeliest to see and hear now and in Jesus's time, though the Bible gives us some clues. There is the cock that crows and signals Peter's betrayal; the dove in

which form the Holy Spirit anoints Jesus during his baptism; eagles, on whose wings the strong and hopeful soar; sparrows, not one of whom falls outside our Father's care. A friend who lived in the Middle East for many years tell me the Palestinian sunbird is particularly lovely; that bulbuls and hoopoes are ubiquitous, and jackdaws too, as well as sparrowhawks and kestrels.

I don't know how often Golgotha was used for executions or how disturbed these are by death and bloodshed. But from now on I will think of it as it might have looked and felt and sounded after Easter, when the crosses have been removed and new life grows and blooms. For just as Jesus invites us back into paradise, so too I am convinced that the birds that nested on Golgotha came home marvelling that there, the God who loved them saved the world. Listen to them sing.

Connor Hansford

BOOK REVIEW

Hannah Bourne-Taylor, Fledgling: A Memoir of Nature and Nurture (Aurum Press, Quarto UK, 2022). ISBN-13: 978-0711266681 292pp Paperback £9.99

This is a moving memoir of the author's attempt to rehabilitate two fledgling birds from her home in Ghana. Having moved from the UK with her husband for his work at a school, but prevented by the conditions of her visa from working herself, Bourne-Taylor finds herself struggling with loneliness. She seeks solace in the natural world around her home, discovering a sense of purpose in the unexpected project of hand raising two baby birds.

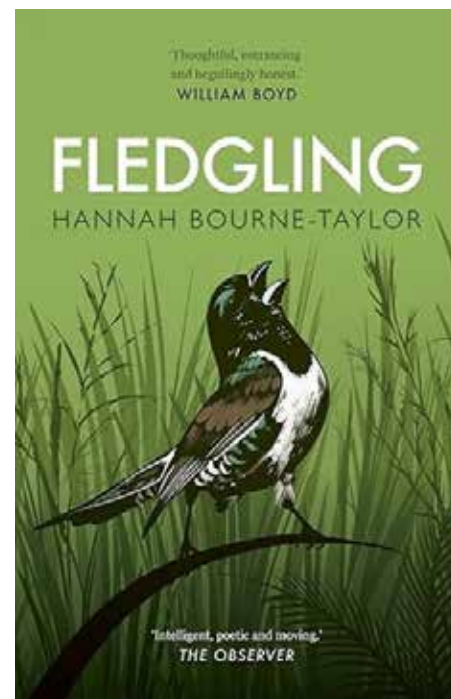
It is a beautifully written story that offers lyrical descriptions of the wildlife of both Ghana and the UK, as well as moving accounts of struggle and loss. Bourne-Taylor does not shy away from describing the sometimes harsh realities of the

natural world, and while this makes for an emotional read in places, it also captures the power and the importance of human connection with the non-human world around us.

"I had a sense of awe that I never got used to. There he was, a wild bird, born from a little egg high up in a grass nest between the dark leaves of a mango tree. Now he was with me, comforted by the beat of my heart and the sound of my voice. I got to see this. I got to feel this. A wild creature in the palm of my hand." (p.162)

Readers may also be interested in Bourne-Taylor's more recent book: Nature Needs You: The Fight to Save Our Swifts (Elliott and Thompson, 2025). This is focused on the conservation of swifts in the UK, and was longlisted for the Wainwright Prize for Conservation in 2025.

Rebecca Dean, Editor



WORDSEARCH SOLUTION:

L	C	R	L	T	D	H	S	I	F	D	L	O	G
G	R	A	D	A	O	B	I	A	I	B	A	O	S
G	M	A	C	C	D	B	R	G	N	G	O	O	C
U	R	H	C	R	E	B	G	A	R	E	D	B	P
I	D	U	H	D	H	D	O	C	B	C	G	E	A
N	R	H	I	I	H	E	G	L	C	B	E	E	T
E	E	A	C	E	S	R	O	H	P	D	I	L	E
A	H	M	K	H	G	H	B	M	D	O	C	T	R
P	I	S	E	K	E	E	A	E	D	G	M	A	C
I	T	T	N	U	H	G	R	T	C	D	O	C	E
G	B	E	A	R	D	E	D	D	R	A	G	O	N
E	B	R	O	D	G	R	R	F	A	D	B	I	I
U	L	I	D	C	R	O	C	O	D	I	L	E	T
E	I	C	D	R	C	C	D	O	E	E	E	E	E

ANIMAL BLESSING

Will be held at:

St. Martin's Anglican Church, Mortimer Road, Kensal Green, London NW10 5SN

(Two minutes walk from Kensal Green station and the No. 18 bus route)

ON:

Saturday 3rd October 2026 at 2:30pm

LED BY THE REV'D GRAHAM NOYCE



An enjoyable, relaxed event for animal lovers from across London to celebrate the special relationship we have with the animals who share our lives.

All well-behaved creatures great and small are welcome, or bring along a photo.

You are also welcome to send us the names of your animal companions, past and present, and we will include them in the blessing.

Refreshments provided afterwards.

For further details, please email: animalblessinguk@gmail.com or telephone: 07778-453578



"When I look into the eyes of an animal I do not see an animal. I see a living being. I see a friend. I feel a soul."

- A. D. Williams





ANNUAL SERVICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY Sunday 4th October 2026

All welcome

A SPECIAL SERVICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY
ON SUNDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2026

SPEAKER:

REVD PROFESSOR HELEN HALL - ASWA CHAIR

Choral Eucharist - 10.45am

Venue: St Mary's, Lace Market, High Pavement,
Nottingham NG1 1HN

www.aswa.org.uk | Email: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

Parking: Reduced price parking if you use Broadmarsh or Lace Market car parks (both just a few minutes walk from the church). If using Park & Ride, we are 3 minutes walk from Lace Market Tram Stop and numerous bus routes serve the City Centre.

ARE YOU AN ANIMAL FRIENDLY CHURCH?



Christians have a sacred duty to care for God's Creation

The Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals is now awarding 'Animal Friendly Church' certificates to churches which practise and promote a compassionate attitude towards God's creatures.

Applicants will also be automatically entered into our annual '**ASWA Animal Friendly Church of the Year Award**'
The Winner will receive a hamper full of ethical and useful goodies for your Church and a plaque to display on your wall.

For further details visit our website

www.aswa.org.uk

or apply in writing to: PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT

E: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

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