

124

Autumn 2026

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animalwatch

PUTTING ANIMALS ON THE AGENDA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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CAMPAIGN?

ANIMALS IN CHRISTIAN ART AND
LITERATURE

THE ART OF ANIMAL RESCUE

IMPLEMENTING THE ANIMALS ACT



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Cover image: 'Autumn Pigeon Saint' by Ashley Dietrich. You can read more about Ashley and her work in this issue's article on 'The Art of Animal Rescue'.

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

A warm welcome to the autumn issue of *Animalwatch* magazine, where our theme is 'Animals in Christian Art and Literature'. Animals have long captured the artistic imagination and the ways in which they appear in texts and images can be very revealing. While these depictions may not always relate directly to questions of animal welfare, they can certainly shape wider attitudes - for good or for ill. Many of us will be able to recall the impact that certain children's films such as '101 Dalmatians', 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles', or 'Finding Nemo' had upon pet-keeping trends, while other animal films such as 'Free Willy', the story of a captive orca and a child's attempt to set him free, helped to raise important ethical questions about animals in captivity.

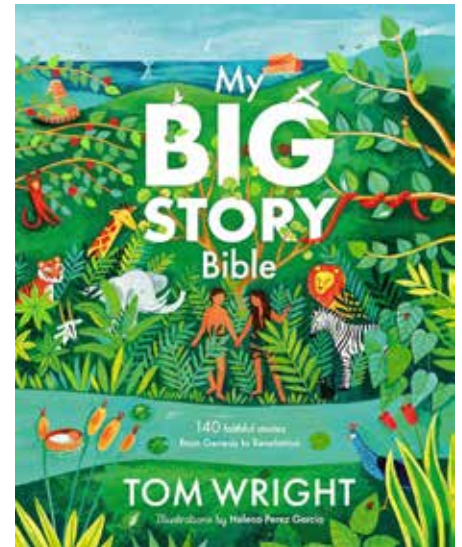
These same influences can be felt within the context of Christian art and literature. My own favourite example of this is the inclusion of a horse in many of the paintings of Saint Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus Road. The original account in the Acts of the Apostles does not make mention of any animals, yet later artists found that the horse(s) helped to portray the event: sometimes these horses are bowing

down or rearing up in response to the presence of the divine, even when the other human characters are not able to observe what is taking place. The horses are shown to be more attuned to the divine than many of the people, and in this they can function as an example for human beings to follow.

In my role as a Biblical Studies lecturer, I often ask my students to consider whose voices are being heard within a particular interpretation of the Bible, and, just as importantly, whose voices are being missed. The voices of animals - be they literal or figurative - are among the easiest to overlook, and it's all too common for their presence to be ignored in later commentaries and reflections. I find this especially interesting in comparison with the bright and lively ways in which animals often feature in children's Bible resources, such as the inviting cover image of *The Big Story Bible* included here. Just as we might take time to point out the different animals when looking at this picture with a child, I'd like to encourage us all to point out to others those places in the Christian story where animals feature, and where their voices especially need to be heard.

The theme for the spring issue of *Animalwatch* will be 'Rewilding'. 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 Monday 18th January.**

Rebecca Dean, Editor



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

Breeding Success for Rare Bird of Prey

The BBC recently reported that a male Montagu's Harrier, the UK's rarest bird, has successfully bred with not one but two mates, with a total of six chicks reared across the two nests. Two of the chicks have been fitted with satellite trackers to learn more about their behaviour and, it is hoped, to monitor where they nest when reaching adulthood. Montagu's Harriers are ground nesting birds, often nesting in farmers' fields, so it is important to identify nest locations to prevent them being inadvertently destroyed during the harvest. It can only be hoped that these birds will continue their recovery from near extinction in the UK.

Jennifer Brown, ASWA Committee Member

NEWS & NOTICES ASWA AT THE EALING AND PICCADILLY ANIMAL FAIRS

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.

AT A LOSS BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Good news! ASWA is now listed as one of the organisations offering resources on the subject of pet loss on the At a Loss website (www.ataloss.org). At a Loss is a wider initiative that offers various courses on bereavement and that aims to challenge the cultural silence around death that is all too common in the UK.

In March 2026, ASWA were delighted to have a stand at the Ealing Animal Fair for the third year running. We are always welcomed by visitors and some who attend regularly came over to our stand for information, books and cards. The many animal welfare charities attending created a wonderful sense of unified mission. There is the opportunity for the charities to promote themselves and speak about their work. This year, Peter Egan, British actor, animal activist, patron and Ambassador for the charity Nowzad founded by Pen Farthing, spoke about animal rescue in the conflict zones of Afghanistan and Ukraine. Other charities that attended were Compassion in World Farming, Animal Aid, Save The Asian Elephants and many more.

ASWA also attended the Animal Fair at St. James Piccadilly. Both these fairs are organised by Marion Garrett, who works exceedingly hard to make them a success. (Details at www.ealinganimalfair.london.) The St. James fair is held in their courtyard, which is good as people passing by can easily see the animal welfare stands. There were many exhibiting, including The Brooke animal charity, Animal Free Research UK, and the RSPCA.

There was a lady attending the fair who is trained to help pigeons suffering from string foot, which can be caused by human hair or synthetic fibres that wrap tightly around the pigeon's toes, and eventually cut off the blood supply. The pigeon rescuers use a kit of small tools like nail scissors, tweezers, and antiseptic wipes to remove the thread. It was so fascinating to watch her gently catch the pigeons and treat them.

After being caught they would become relaxed and allow treatment, and, unless there are any complications, they are set free after they have been treated. Experienced de-stringers can spot string foot from quite a distance and many regularly visit areas in London where the birds congregate. If you are interested, you can find out more by going online to find any local groups in your area.

Janet Murphy, ASWA Committee Member



NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

SWEDEN

Spotlight on the Work of Swedish Artist John Bauer



The autumn issue of Animal Watch has the theme of 'Animals in Christian Art and Literature' - a wonderful theme that I would gladly write about from a Swedish perspective. I take the liberty in this report to showcase an illustrator that, although not explicitly Christian, seems to touch upon the meaning of compassion and the sacredness of all life in a moving way. John Bauer (1882-1918) was a Swedish painter and illustrator who was influenced by the Sámi indigenous people in the North of Sweden. They have a deep spiritual connection to the sacredness of animals and nature.

Bauer's illustrations are enchanting and touching, manifesting a sense of recognition in hidden layers

of the reader's imagination and soul. Animals act as gentle guides, companions to princesses and princes, and appear as living extensions of the forest. Rather than appearing wild or frightening, real fauna blends seamlessly into his mythical depictions. In Bauer's world of storytelling, the mighty creatures of the dark forests like the elks, bears, birds, and mesmerizing white horses, are depicted as magnificent and quiet in contrast to the small people and children. The difference in proportion evokes something magical imbued with a beautiful invitation to an otherworldly spiritual existence. Even the trolls and gnomes have animals of their own, and these creatures are seemingly part of the moss and rocks found in the forest.

I strongly recommend anyone, young or old, man or woman, adult or child, to take a look at Bauer's illustrations.

His most famous piece 'Among Gnomes and Trolls' is an excellent first choice that will bring enchantment and a longing for more of the spiritual mysteries found in Bauer's work.

Sandra Kinley



Julbock, John Bauer, 1912

AUSTRALIA

What Next for the Brumbies?



This 'News from Australia', is about a problem with no easy answers. Before Europeans and other nationalities came to Australia, the native animals thrived and did not impact on the fabric of the land. Then, we brought in many totally unsuitable animals. Horses, deer, pigs, foxes, cats, dogs, goats. Some of them became wild and spread across Australia, and continue to cause havoc to the land and native animals.

I'll just talk about horses. Across the country as a whole there are hundreds of thousands of wild horses. In New South Wales they are numerous in what is referred to as 'the high country', which includes the Kosciuszko National Park, a beautiful area visited by well over two million tourists each year, including winter when the snow resorts are open.

However, the horses trample the alpine bogs, erode stream banks, and destroy the habitat of native species. And the more horses there are, the less food there is for them. It is claimed by the New South Wales government that there are between six thousand and sixteen thousand horses in this



Brumby near Long Plain Road, Thennicke - Wiki Commons

area. This is a huge discrepancy on which to base policy. And the policy is that the government would like this number to be reduced to about three thousand horses. How to achieve this? In the past, and currently, this is to be achieved by aerial culling. It isn't hard to imagine the suffering and death that this method causes. The government is adamant that until the numbers are brought down substantially, fertility control measures will not even be considered, even if actually feasible.

The horses have many champions, not least because the wild horses,

called brumbies, are part of the folklore of Australia, and feature in poetry, books, and films. Currently, there are protests and appeals to the government to stop the cull, and with some success, as several legal challenges are holding up the process. There are also re-homing programmes, but they can only do so much.

It is true that these much-loved horses cause significant damage, but what will be the outcome for them?

Olga Parkes

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Learned Good Samaritan

I have come across a wonderful passage about care and compassion for a poor man and his overburdened horse in Izaak Walton's *The Life of Mr. George Herbert*, published in 1670.

George Herbert (1593-1633) was one of the metaphysical poets. Their work was characterised by its complex and concise form, often exploring the nature of God and His relationship with man and the natural world. John Donne, friend of George Herbert, was its master. Herbert wrote hymns, two of the best-known today being 'Teach me my God and King' and 'The God of Love my Shepherd is'.

Herbert was an academic, poet and priest. He was of noble birth, a courtier and friend of James I, and Public Orator at Cambridge. However, he felt called to a humbler life. He was ordained and in 1630 became rector of Bemerton, a small village some two miles outside Salisbury. He was a keen and talented lute player. Twice a week he would walk across the meadows to the cathedral to make music with his friends and attend Sung Evensong.

The following excerpt recounts the events that happened on one such walk. We see a learned man who nevertheless put himself out to show compassion to a poor man and his weary horse, a true good Samaritan. It is a reminder to us down the centuries that no one should be above following Christ's teaching to help any of God's creatures who are in need.

"In another walk to Salisbury, he saw a poor man with a poorer horse, that was fallen under his load: they were both in distress, and needed present help; which Mr. Herbert perceiving, put off his canonical coat, and helped the poor man to unload, and after to load, his horse. The poor man blessed him for it, and he blessed the poor man; and was so like the Good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse; and told him, 'That if he loved himself he should be merciful to his beast.' Thus he left the poor man; and at his coming to his musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert, which used to be so trim and clean, came into that company so soiled and discomposed: but he told them the occasion. And when one of the company told him, 'He had disparaged himself by so dirty an employment,' his answer was, 'That the thought of what he had done would prove music to him at midnight; and that the omission of it would have upbraided and made discord in his conscience, whensoever he should pass by that place: for if I be bound to pray for all that be in distress, I am sure that I am bound, so far as it is in my power, to practice what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet let me tell you, I would not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul, or shewing mercy;

and I praise God for this occasion. And now let's tune our instruments.'"

(Project Canterbury, <https://anglicanhistory.org/walton/herbert.html>)

Rosemary Fitzherbert Jones

Journey of an ASWA Speaker Down Under

In so far as Jesus was the human face of God, our humanity parallels his in varying degrees, hence our life's journey has its desert experiences, its crucifixion and resurrection places. My journey as a fledgling ASWA speaker from 'down under' felt like a desert experience for some time, testing my resolve and sense that God had called me to this role. Following my maiden speech at my regional home parish of St Mary's Woodend, I was required to undergo a long, rigorous, and at times stressful for this technologically challenged senior, clearance process. Having obtained clearance, despite extensive (and expensive) advertising of my availability mainly in my large regional area of Macedon Ranges, I was met with a wall of indifference for several months. Along the way I was cautioned by clergy to 'tread carefully' with the farming community, which may have been a clue to some aspects of this apparent indifference.

Then, at Eastertide, the season of resurrection, something wonderful happened! I secured a booking with a suburban U.C.A. church (Uniting Church in Australia) where I was warmly and enthusiastically received, one measure of the level of interest being that in a congregation of approximately forty, thirty magazines were picked up from my stall. I now have a booking at a suburban Anglican Parish to speak at their Animal Blessing Service and another booking at an Anglican Parish in my region. Resurrection has come at last! Thanks be to God!

P.S. I would love to hear from other ASWA speakers about their experiences, either in the magazine or privately.

Janine McDougall, ASWA Speaker for the State of Victoria, Australia

If you'd like to contact Janine privately, please email me at animalwatch_editor@outlook.com and I'll be happy to pass her details on – Editor.

The Great Stag Hunt

This year has been hot. For all the challenges that brings, stag beetles, it seems, are making the most of the high temperatures. This year, over 18,000 beetles have already been recorded in the Great Stag Hunt, the highest for any year since the survey began almost thirty years ago, and the total is set to continue to grow through to September.



© Helen Tomlinson

In Britain, stag beetles seem to be associated with urban areas (rather than woodlands, where you might expect them) and gardens can provide excellent habitats. Females lay their eggs in the soil, and the larvae develop for three to five years, feeding on rotting wood. It's these large, creamy white grubs with orange heads that gardeners often unearth. Stag beetles play an important role in our gardens, recycling soil nutrients during their time as larvae, during which they only eat dead wood so don't do any damage to living plants.

Adult beetles started to appear earlier this year, too. But what a hotter world will mean for stag beetles in the longer term, we don't know. As summers become hotter, we will have to adapt. Our wildlife and our gardens will change. Hopefully, though, there'll still be the thrum of stag beetles to be heard on a summer's evening.

To get involved in the Great Stag Hunt or to find out more about the work of the People's Trust for Endangered Species, please visit our website: www.ptes.org.

David Wembridge, People's Trust for Endangered Species Conservation Team Member

Wildlife Banknotes

Mammals	Birds	Amphibians, Insects & Fish
• Bottlenose dolphin • Brown hare • European hedgehog • Grey seal • Pine marten • Red fox	• Atlantic puffin • Barn owl • Common kingfisher • Eurasian curlew • Great spotted woodpecker • White-tailed eagle	• Atlantic salmon • Basking shark • Bull-tailed bumblebee • Common frog • Emperor dragonfly • Marsh fritillary butterfly

Readers may be interested to learn that British wildlife will appear on the next series of Bank of England notes, to be in circulation from 2030. The public consultation period for the selection of animals closed in July, and we will have to wait until the end of the year to see which have been chosen from the shortlist of eighteen, included here.

Keith Cottrell

WHAT NEXT FOR THE '30 BY 30' CAMPAIGN? A CONVERSATION WITH CANON VAL PLUMB



As many readers will be aware, Canon Val Plumb brought a Private Members' Motion (PMM) to General Synod in July, asking the Church Commissioners to commit to the '30 by 30' target. This goal, created by the United Nations' Global Biodiversity Conference in 2022 and subsequently adopted by nearly 200 countries, would have required the Church of England to safeguard thirty percent of its landholdings for nature by the year 2030. The motion was opposed in its original form, though it did pass with an amendment proposed by the Rt Revd Graham Usher, Lead Bishop for the Environment. This amendment retained a wider commitment to biodiversity but removed the specific '30 by 30' target.

I caught up with Val to find out her perspective on this decision and her thoughts on where the Church of England – and its individual members – should go from here.

To start with, can you tell us about what motivated you to bring your proposal to General Synod?

The starting point for me was the growing realisation that all kinds of things are compromising nature. Summers don't quite feel like summer anymore. There's a difference, something's happening. This is supported by statistics: over the last century we've lost ninety-seven percent of UK wildlife flower meadows, up to seventy percent of our woodlands, over forty million birds have disappeared from the skies, and, of course, there's the insects: years ago, we'd be surrounded by clouds of midges in the summer months, and they are just not there anymore. I began to pray about this, but more importantly, I began to panic pray.

In considering how to respond, I was drawn to the '30 by 30' target. These figures came about because scientists have recommended that we need roughly thirty percent of land globally to be given over to biodiversity in order for nature recovery to be possible: this is the scale of the current crisis. And I thought, 'well, I haven't got loads of land, but I know someone who does.' The Church of England is one of the biggest landowners in the country and it has a strong portfolio worth over eleven billion pounds. They use that land for all kinds of things, including housing and farming. They currently also use three and a half percent of the land to support biodiversity.

As Christians, we celebrate being part of God's creation and, of course, we have the fifth mark of mission to strive to safeguard all creation. I want the Church to be a leading light in bringing about the change that is needed, so I decided to take a Private Members' Motion to General Synod to ask our commissioners to reconsider the amount of land that they're offering for the biodiversity crisis.

Who did you work with in bringing the PMM to Synod?

Many people were behind me in bringing the PMM – I had over one hundred signatures from other elected members of General Synod – and I've also had a huge amount of support in the aftermath. One of the things that's been beautiful about this is that I didn't do it by myself. This isn't just an Anglican thing, this is a worldwide Christian thing, and something that affects all of us. I also linked up with Operation Noah and Green Christian as well as with a wonderful eco-group called Wildcard whose ethos centres around rewilding.

As a note to readers, Wildcard produced a booklet for this campaign that's called 'Into the Garden'. This is available on their website: <https://wildcard.land/>.

The PMM was passed in an amended form. How are you feeling about things now?

Although the PMM didn't fail as such, I feel that the amendment that came from the group from Bishop Usher, who is the environmental bishop, significantly watered down what I was trying to say. I wanted something that was more measurable – even if it was smaller than the thirty percent – or a committed level of financial support for this work.

This was very hard for me, because I am in a scenario where I believe that nature is no longer negotiable. We can't put a pin in these things, because this is about our actual existence. If our biodiversity continues to collapse around us, then inevitably our water and food supply will change. This is why biodiversity has now become a national security threat.

However, I do appreciate that they are doing something rather than nothing. When I sit in the garden and I hear the birds, I feel blessed that I've tried to do something. It settles my heart and soul, but it doesn't end here.

What do the next steps look like for you?

I intend to hold the commissioners to account, and I will expect a briefing and an update from the 2027 Synod. Whether I am a member of General Synod at that point or not, I am just going to keep hammering away.

One of the really positive outcomes of this is that it has opened a huge

conversation channel between myself and other concerned members of the Church of England.

I've also been invited to be a panellist on the first ever British National Food Security Conference in London this month. And I continue to have good contact with the Church Commissioners.

So, it's not as if I've submitted the PMM and then said, 'well, it didn't work, so I'm not doing it anymore.' Continuing the conversation will be one of my next steps and if necessary, and if re-elected to General Synod, I will bring further PMMs as required.

It sounds like you are hoping the conversation will continue to grow, and that increased awareness and support will help drive change. How can readers of AnimalWatch get involved with this?

One of the things that let the PMM down was that there was no episcopal support during the vote. Every present member of the House of Bishops supported the amendment, but none supported the initial '30 by 30' proposal. So, what I would recommend is for people to keep bringing this back to the centre of discussion in their own dioceses. We need to remind bishops just how important it

is – that nature is not negotiable. We need to ask ourselves whether we want the Church to be a leader or a follower in creating change.

The House of Bishops has just published a teaching booklet called *Hope for All Creation: A Theological Response to the Environmental Crises*. What we need now is for these words to be accompanied by action.

Rebecca Dean, Editor

All images courtesy of Val Plumb

ANIMALS IN CHRISTIAN ART AND LITERATURE

I invited ASWA patrons and committee members to tell us about their favourite animals from Christian art and literature. I hope that you enjoy the variety of responses included below.

Rebecca Dean, Editor

Balaam's Donkey

My favourite animal in the Bible can be found in the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter 22. She is a donkey and, yes, she is female, with the underlying suggestion of the time that she would be less intelligent than a male donkey! The story (and it is a story, and should not be taken literally) is full of humour.

The donkey belonged to a prophet named Balaam. Balaam had been summoned by King Balak of Moab in the land of Canaan because huge numbers of Hebrews had come out of the wilderness and were about to invade the King's land. 'Please come and curse these people for me to drive them away', said the King.

Balaam prayed to God for guidance and was first instructed not to go. But later he was told that he could go, but that he must bless, and not curse, the Hebrew people.

Balaam saddled his donkey and set out. But God made the journey difficult for him by obstructing his way on several occasions by an angel, whom the donkey could see but Balaam could not. The donkey refused to move forward and lay down on the pathway, and she was beaten by her master for doing so.

God opened the mouth of the donkey so that she could speak to Balaam, and she upbraided her master for being so cruel and stupid. It was then that Balaam's eyes were opened, and he saw the angel and realised that his donkey had saved their lives. When Balaam reached King Balak, Balaam refused to curse the Hebrew people but continued to bless them, much to the disappointment and anger of the King.

The story always reminds me that the animal kingdom has many more perceptions than we humans have. They may not be able to speak, but they have huge depths of knowledge and understanding.

Rt Revd Richard Llewellyn, ASWA Patron

Saint Jerome and His Lion Companion

Saint Jerome produced the first translation of the Bible into Latin in 404 AD. He was a great scholar, but in those days controversy raged over much of Christian doctrine, and in that controversy he was a fierce debater. So, it is nice to think that he had a softer side. Legend (and it is legend) has it that he took a thorn out of a lion's paw and that thereafter the two became friends. He is always portrayed in art in his cell at Bethlehem with the lion. I love Dürer's version. When he drew the saint with lion and dog, Dürer had not yet seen a lion (that had to wait for a few years when he visited Ghent). Saint Jerome may be translating that wonderful verse in Job 12.7: 'Ask the animals, and they will teach you' (in Latin *interroga jumenta et docebunt te*).



'Saint Jerome in His Study', Albrecht Dürer, 1514 _
CCO _ Metropolitan Museum of Art

Philip Petchey, ASWA Committee Member

Armed Bunnies, Snail Steeds and Other Marginalia

Medieval manuscripts are known for their beauty, but also sometimes for their quirkiness. The term 'marginalia' refers to the artwork and notes that scribes included in what would otherwise have been the blank margins of the page. Sometimes these had obvious practical purposes, highlighting key parts of the text, or were clearly decorative in nature. On other occasions, their purpose is more debatable. Seemingly strange drawings of mace-wielding rabbits or knights riding snails may have been intended to convey moral messages or social commentary, but could equally have been wholly or partly for fun. Animals were a favourite source of inspiration, and were often depicted as empowered to exact justice or even revenge on errant humans. We do not know exactly what the scribes who created them were thinking, but their fascination and sympathy for the creatures vividly comes to life.

Revd Professor Helen Hall, ASWA Committee Chair

The Good Shepherd

As a member of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, I have always found images of Jesus the Good Shepherd as a focus for devotion, reminding me of his loving care and hopefully inspiring me to follow his example. The Greek word translated as 'good' really means 'beautiful'. Early frescoes of the Good Shepherd showed Jesus as a young shepherd boy in a short tunic, carrying a ram (like the Roman god Mercury) and clean shaven, as are all early images of Christ, but later paintings and Byzantine icons portray him not as a shepherd boy but as a divine figure in kingly robes. He still carries a rescued sheep across his shoulders because Jesus



'Marble statue of The Good Shepherd carrying a lamb, c. 300-350, from the Catacombs of Domitilla, Vatican Museums', Carole Raddato _ CC BY-SA 2.0 _ Wiki Commons

seeks out the lost. He knows his sheep and they know him, and he leads them to eternal life.

Rt Revd Dominic Walker, ASWA President

The Innocent Wisdom of Winnie-the-Pooh

I once had a girlfriend to whom I wrote often, and, when I did, I decorated my letter with small illustrations of Winnie-the-Pooh. It became a bit of a thing between us and I've never quite outgrown Pooh, even if we both outgrew the relationship.

Winnie-the-Pooh has to be one of my favourite literary animals. Not that we know much about his faith commitment. He remains quite private about that. But he does seem to have inspired considerable philosophical commentary, such that there were successful follow-up books such as *Pooh and the Philosophers* and *The Tao of Pooh*.

I love not only E.H. Shepard's inspired illustrations, but also Pooh's innocent wisdom. Who can resist a bear who says things like 'a hug is always the right size,' or 'people say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day.' Pooh gets my vote any day.

Rt Revd John Pritchard, ASWA Patron

Jonah, the Sea Dragon, and the Hungry Caterpillar

My favourite book in the Bible is the book of Jonah, in which God speaks through a number of animals – most famously through a whale, but also through a very hungry caterpillar. The 'whale' is shown here as a sea-dragon (*ketos*) on this detail from a fourth century mosaic covering the floor of the early Christian cathedral at Aquileia. The human cast of thoughtful 'pagans' consists of the crew of a vessel sailing to Tartessos in southern Spain, and the entire population of

Nineveh, alongside their animals, who all listen to God and attempt to teach a self-righteous preacher-prophet the meaning of compassion.

At the end of the book, God reminds Jonah that he cares for the animals of Nineveh just as he cares for its human inhabitants. The Book of Jonah is the only humorous and light-hearted book in the entire Bible and though in my chosen image we see the *ketos* swallowing our obdurate prophet, do not be alarmed: we know it is only to return him to his duty and give him a time of reflection in the creature's belly to compose a psalm! The only casualty in this gentle book is a shrub of uncertain size, the victim of that voracious, holy caterpillar!

Revd Professor Martin Henig, ASWA Vice President



'Aquileia Basilica Giona Ingoiato Mostro Marino', Yukio Sanjo _ CC BY-SA 3.0 _ Wiki Commons

TALKING POINT

In the Eye of the Beholder?

As the well-known saying goes, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', and that can be as true of art as other forms of beauty. Animals appear in art in a variety of ways, some we might think more beautiful than others. In religious art, animals are sometimes peripheral, such as in nativity scenes, or symbolic, as when John the Baptist is depicted with a lamb, representing Jesus, the Lamb of God. Including animals in these scenes can add an extra dimension to the image, either as the artist's way of drawing our attention to important attributes of the human figures depicted, or referencing other passages of scripture (the ox and the donkey in nativity scenes are an example of this).

We're more likely to find animals as the principal figures in a painting or sculpture outside the realm of religious art. There are drawings and paintings that seek to depict animals in their natural habitats. These are often beautiful and very well observed, but may stir in us some feelings of unease, as we know that many of these pictures were done as Europeans forged empires in other parts of the world, where they discovered plants and animals new and different to any they had previously known.

Sporting images, typically of horses and hounds may also be both beautiful depictions of the animals themselves and deeply disturbing, either portraying directly or glorifying hunting, animal fights, or other activities in which animals

were put at risk of harm for human entertainment. But there are also images that simply seek to honour the animals they immortalise. Are all these different types of images to be considered equally worthy of the term 'beautiful'? Is it possible to admire the technical brilliance of the artist apart from the subject matter recreated? And should we be more attentive to the presence of animals in art, taking note of how they are shown and what the artist is trying to tell us through their inclusion?

Jennifer Brown, ASWA Committee Member

THE ART OF ANIMAL RESCUE

Our cover artist Ashley Dietrich holds BFAs in Art History and Studio Art, a minor in Philosophy, and completed graduate studies in Archaeology and Biocultural Anthropology with the Byzantine St Stephens Project at the University of Notre Dame. Her artwork is dedicated to funding Olive's Place Dove & Pigeon Sanctuary Inc.; a nonprofit she founded in Oklahoma, USA, to provide long-term care for disabled and domestic birds.

Ashley's paintings feature avian subjects, inspired and informed by her years as a wildlife rehabilitator. She depicts birds naturalistically, yet renders them in an illustrative and symbolic manner – creating an otherworldly environment with gold leafing, embellishments, and ornate backgrounds. Current projects explore anthropomorphism through stylized portraits, which investigate the themes of veneration and symbolism. Pigeons are a primary subject of many of the pieces, with the purpose of elevating a species that is underappreciated but deserving of respect.

The choice to communicate reverence for the sanctity of animal life is at the core of the use of religious imagery in pieces like this issue's cover image, 'Autumn Pigeon Saint'. This is the ideal visual language to express awe, and designate value and respect. The process of painting and ornamentation of these pieces are meditative activities, tied to the mission of the sanctuary itself - to encourage the viewer to contemplate the value we place on individual animal lives.

More about the sanctuary and artwork can be found at www.olivesplace.org.

Ashley Dietrich, Olive's Place Dove & Pigeon Sanctuary



Cover image 'Autumn Pigeon Saint'



Evangeline the dove supervising work in the studio.



Maeve the blind pigeon alongside one of Ashley's pieces.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND MUST SPEAK OUT AGAINST FACTORY FARMING

“Whatever conclusions Christians reach about eating animals in principle, rejecting systems that frustrate their flourishing by design should be a minimum response.”

This article is reprinted with permission from the 31 July edition of the Church Times (churchtimes.co.uk/subscribe).

At a recent Idler Festival in Hampstead, I heard Rowan Williams discuss his new book, *Solidarity*. He spoke of *solidarity* as requiring us to notice whose voices are absent from our shared life. Afterwards, I asked him whether this concern might extend beyond human communities to animals. Raising those famous eyebrows, he agreed, and described the omission of animal life from our thinking about solidarity as ‘an absence for us’.

This exchange occurred, serendipitously, one day before a new teaching document from the House of Bishops, ‘Hope for All Creation: A Theological Response to the Environmental Crises’, was presented to the General Synod. One of the Church’s strongest official affirmations of animals, this striking document goes some distance towards remedying this absence.

In its claim that ‘all creatures and all elements of creation have a direct relationship to their Creator and matter to God in their own right’, it rejects the assumption that animals serve only human interests. Animals’ worth is ‘not measured by their utility or aesthetic value to human beings’, but rests in their identity as creatures created, sustained, and delighted in by God.

So far, so good. But, if animals matter to God ‘in their own right’, this creates obligations for the Church. The document begins to draw out these obligations by arguing that New Testament patterns of love, restraint, and care for weaker members may extend beyond human relationships. It calls Christians to practise ‘solidarity with other creatures in their suffering and vulnerability’. Yet, faithful solidarity cannot remain indifferent to systems that prevent animals’ flourishing and living lives that glorify God. The clearest test of this solidarity is, therefore, how the Church responds to intensive animal farming.

Christians may disagree about whether eating animals is permissible in principle; yet, the moral status of intensive farming should be less contentious. About 1.16 billion chickens were slaughtered in the UK last year. Of these, more than 90 per cent came from fast-growing breeds that reach slaughter weight in as little as 35 days. This extreme growth puts enormous pressure on their bodies, which suffer routinely from lameness, broken bones, heart failure, and respiratory collapse.

These are not simply occasional failures of care within an otherwise neutral system. The system itself frustrates creaturely flourishing by design. The mother hen, whom Christ invoked as an image of divine love (Matthew 23.37), is reduced to a unit of production. Intensive farming is, therefore, an unavoidable test of whether the Church’s solidarity with suffering creatures will become more than theological language.

One of the most compelling concepts in ‘Hope for All Creation’ is structural sin: unjust systems that distribute benefits and harms unequally. Intensive animal farming fits this account with disturbing clarity. Retailers and consumers receive abundant inexpensive meat, while animals bear its hidden cost through suffering on an immense scale. Yet, when the document turns from structural sin to practical action, it does not apply this analysis to intensive animal farming.

That omission becomes particularly clear in the document’s practical recommendations. Although it suggests that the Church’s local care might extend to ‘pets, farmed animals and wildlife’, it says little about what that care would require. Its clearest reference to the consequences of meat consumption concerns rainforest destruction. That is true, but it risks making animals morally visible only through their carbon footprint. A cow is not only a source of emissions; a chicken is not only part of an unsustainable system: they are living, feeling creatures, whose lives matter to God ‘in their own right’.

When the document addresses food served by churches, it asks only that congregations demonstrate the ‘responsible sourcing of ingredients’. Left undefined, it evades the central question: which farming systems should churches refuse to support? If churches are serious about bringing hope for all creation, they must ask whether routinely purchasing products from intensive farms is consistent with that vocation.

Whatever conclusions Christians reach about eating animals in principle, rejecting systems that frustrate their flourishing by design should be a minimum response.

A credible first step would be to make plant-based food the default at church gatherings, which would reduce institutional dependence on intensive farming. The same principles should shape church procurement, investment, land use, and public advocacy. These measures would not settle every Christian debate about animals, but they would begin to align the Church’s practices with its theology.

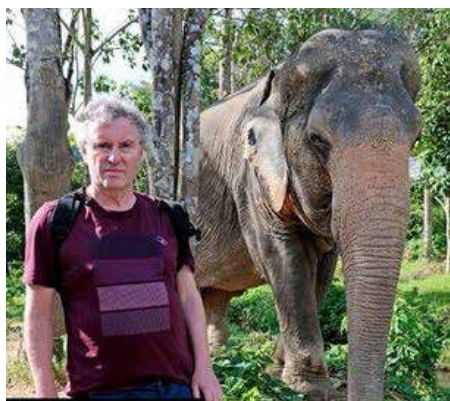
The House of Bishops’ endorsement of such a rich understanding of God’s creatures is a significant step towards addressing the Church’s longstanding neglect of animals. Yet, true solidarity requires the Church to follow animals into the places where their suffering remains hidden and to challenge the systems that depend on it. ‘Hope for All Creation’ has provided strong theological foundations. The task now is to make that solidarity visible in the Church’s institutions and shared life.

Daryl Booth, founder of the Christian charity Sarx (www.sarx.org.uk)



© Andrew Skowron _ We Animals

IMPLEMENTING THE ANIMALS (LOW-WELFARE ACTIVITIES ABROAD) ACT 2023



Duncan McNair with an Asian Elephant.
© Save the Asian Elephants

The landmark Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023 passed into law three years ago this month with enormous public and Parliamentary backing. Duncan McNair ponders why, despite strong Labour support before the last Election, the government has done nothing to implement it since assuming power in 2024, failing to help save numerous species from torture and extinction.

Why is law needed in the UK to regulate animal tourism abroad? Why has implementation not happened?

Each year millions of animals are harmed and killed in tourism round the world. This threatens the survival of the planet's most iconic species, all for tourism 'fun'. The UK plays a huge role in this. The charity I lead, Save The Asian Elephants (STAE), has identified 1,100 companies today advertising 300 brutal elephant venues alone in the UK. This growing market of abuse reflects the lack of any effective regulation.

The fate of baby elephants, for example, is to be snatched from the wild, with herd members who try to protect their young being killed. As I've witnessed, the babies are isolated, beaten, ripped and stabbed, screaming and crying in front of their mothers. This so called 'breaking of the spirits' is to ensure easy use in tourism. Half die in the process. Add to the list baby monkeys enslaved from the forests to a life of selfies, tiger cubs used as photo props then drugged and chained for life in tiny cages, lion cubs used in 'walking with lions' experiences later sold on to be inexpertly shot to death in little cages, dolphins in tiny featureless pools till death, and ostriches

agonisingly injured from forcible riding in endless races. Properly enforced law is crucial as time ticks down for so many endangered species.

Decades of industry self-regulation have failed. Today, fifty-five of the 300 unethical venues are promoted by members of ABTA, the trade association for UK travel agents, tour operators and the wider travel industry. The government has held many closed-door meetings with ABTA and its commercial lobbyists. Shockingly, the government now talks of 'industry-led, non-legislative options', even though it is the travel industry's long-drawn out failure that occasions the need for law to replace voluntary, unmonitored, unregulated 'guidance' with minimal take up and no consequences – a reckless market.

What is the law? And how will it help?

The Act bans the advertising and sale of tickets to customers in England and Northern Ireland for low welfare activities involving any vertebrate species abroad. The test is whether an activity would be unlawful if occurring here. Resolutely implemented, the law would help protect vulnerable species from extreme exploitation, and unwitting customers from great danger, and shift the market towards ethical standards including genuine sanctuaries and wildlife reserves. The reputational

damage of prosecution is a potent threat in a competitive market.

What will be the impact of implementation of the Act?

The Act throws a lifeline to many vulnerable species and real prospects of a shift to ethical tourism. A fragmented market needs uniformity and compulsion of law. Unethical venues are advertised through a huge array of websites, social media, shops, travel magazines, broadcast media and billboards. This great diversity of outlets is not susceptible to industry regulation, unlike a standardised legal framework to which all are subject.

With rising public awareness, ethical standards and expectations normalise. Businesses will remodel and, pursuing the PR benefits of being overtly green, they will seek new venue providers who will also start to adapt to ethical standards. This strong public support will enhance the efficacy of the law, with high levels of public engagement such as reporting of breaches. Protection of animals is in our genes – e.g. The RSPCA receive over 100,000 reports of cruelty a year.

Proper implementation of the Act would also have an impact on those working with captive animals: mahouts (handlers) endure appalling conditions of economic servitude, social ostracism



Elephant torture in Thailand. © Lek Chailert

and great danger. Human trafficking can also feature within this picture. Ninety-two percent of mahouts are reported to have been attacked by elephants, causing major injury. In contrast, at ethical venues, mahouts are brought into a safe environment and working conditions.

What is required now to implement this law?

The Environment Secretary need simply introduce 'Activity Regulations' – a list of those practices to be banned from being advertised – by a draft Statutory Instrument laid before both Houses. The

process is straightforward. In early 2024 STAE sent the government and opposition parties a detailed paper prepared with numerous experts documenting those brutal activities that should be banned. It evidences the appalling cruelty of each activity listed, telling a tragic story across a huge canvas.

Finally, a message from Helen Costigan, whose sister Andrea, a twenty-year-old student nurse, was horribly killed in front of her by a brutalised show elephant in the year 2000. She says, 'A former Defra Minister told us that tourists noticing anything untoward should report it to

their travel agent on returning home. But Andrea couldn't do that – she came home in a coffin.' Today that venue, Nong Nooch in Thailand is, like many others, far larger, crueller and more dangerous than ever – and today, shockingly, is promoted by 113 companies in the UK.

Duncan McNair is CEO of Save The Asian Elephants and Co-ordinator of the Low-Welfare Act Coalition. He is the Law Society of England and Wales' Legal Hero of the Year.

THE BIBLE AND...

'The Spirit Descending Like a Dove'

'In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."' (Mark 1:9-11, NRSV)

In the Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23), the Holy Spirit is described as 'descending like a dove'. The dove is an evocative image, reminding us of earlier parts of the Bible such as the flawless beloved in the poems of the Song of Songs (e.g. 2:14; 6:9), or the story of Noah's ark (Genesis 8:6-12), where the dove is sent out from the ark on three occasions in order to determine whether there is enough dry ground for the others to disembark. Outside of our biblical texts, the dove is often used as a symbol for peace, but there is a risk that this imagery on its own can confuse our reading of the baptism passages.

In the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) of the Bible, the word for 'dove' is actually the same as the word for 'pigeon': no differentiation was made between the two. This is also true of a number of languages today, including Spanish and German. Given that – particularly in British culture – pigeons have a very different reputation to doves, you might like to pause for a moment to reflect upon the idea of the Holy Spirit as being 'like a pigeon'.



Wood Pigeon in Flight', Jacob Spinks / CC BY 2.0 / Wiki Commons

Most of us will be able to easily bring to mind the noisy, clattering, 'flap' of a pigeon taking off or landing at close range. What would it mean to apply this imagery to the accounts of Jesus' baptism? It certainly disrupts any impression that this scene is one of peace and serenity. It might instead convey the arrival of the Spirit as something exciting or even startling. This is underlined by the Markan account, which includes another dramatic image in the description of the 'tearing apart' of the heavens before the Spirit's descent.

I wonder whether this 'pigeon' imagery speaks to you today? Perhaps it might challenge your ideas about what it looks (or sounds) like for God's Spirit to be at work. Perhaps it might bring to mind places or people who are in need of the powerful and surprising intervention of God's Spirit. Take a moment to pray about these situations now, and perhaps use any sightings of pigeons in the coming days as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence in the world.

Rebecca Dean, Editor



THEY ALSO SERVED

Remembering the Animals of War



Join us at the Animals War Memorial,
Park Lane, London

Sunday 8th November – 3.00pm

Speaker: Anna Baggott - PDSA

Further details:

Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

Email: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

www.aswa.org.uk



ANNUAL SERVICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY **Sunday 4th October 2026**

All welcome

A SPECIAL SERVICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY
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Choral Eucharist – 10.45am

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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.

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For further details visit our website

www.aswa.org.uk

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