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Autumn 2016

Price £2 (free to members)



animalwatch

PUTTING ANIMALS ON THE AGENDA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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DORIS' DIARY

Hello! My name is Doris, and I am a Border Leicester ewe with very large ears! I was rescued by ASWA secretary Sam Chandler, as I had outlived my usefulness as a breeding ewe.

Below are some great events ewe may enjoy!

Sunday 2 October Animal Welfare Sunday

ASWA Annual Service, St Cross Church, Winchester, 9.30am. The preacher will be the Rt Revd Dominic Walker OGS, ASWA President and former bishop of Monmouth.

Annual pet service, Great Malvern Priory, 3pm. For more details contact greatmalvernpriory@me.com.

Sunday 9 October
Animal blessing service, St John Vianney Church, Wantage, OX12 8ER, 3pm. Speaker: Revd Hedley Feast. Refreshments for humans and animals provided after the service. For more information, email labcott@googlemail.com.

Saturday 15 October
Animal blessing and thanksgiving service for pets, St Martin's Church, Mortimer Road, Kensal Green, London, NW10 5SN, 2pm. Led by the Revd Graham Noyce. All well-behaved pets welcome. For further details of the service, please email: animalblessing@hotmail.co.uk or telephone 07958-950137.

Sunday 18 October
Animal Service, St Mary's, Childwick, AL3 6JJ, 11.30am. This short act of worship (30 minutes) has been especially shaped to thank God for creation and to pray for animal welfare. Pets welcome to come for a blessing. For more information, please visit www.stmichaels-parishchurch.org.uk/home.asp.

Saturday 22nd October
Interfaith Celebration of Animals & AGM, Golders Green Unitarians, 31 Hoop Lane, London, NW11 8BS
AGM at 2pm, Celebration at 3pm. Speaker the Revd Prof Martin Henig.

Sunday 13 November
ASWA Remembrance Service at the Animals' War Memorial, Park Lane, London, 3pm.

for further details of events, please visit the website: www.aswa.org.uk



HELLO AND WELCOME TO ANIMALWATCH

Welcome to *Animalwatch*. In this issue, we look at different forms of advocacy for animals, from taking an interest in creatures often dismissed as 'pests' to reports on a rally against live exports, and a talk given by ASWA patron Tony Campolo. Also in this issue you will find a report on this year's prisons wildlife award.

We hope that you enjoy keeping up-to-date with news and information on our website. Do check regularly for resources and information about upcoming events. Please do make a note of the dates in Doris' Diary – especially the annual service in October and the Remembrance service in November. We hope to see you at both of those events.

Please send any items for consideration for *Animalwatch* to Revd Jennifer Brown, Editor, PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT. Email is even better – animalwatch@jenbrown.org.uk. Please note that, owing to space restrictions, it may not be possible to print all contributions, and that letters and other contributions may be edited for length.

Jennifer Brown, Editor

The deadline for the Spring magazine is **Monday 23rd January 2017**.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

The ASWA committee, members and supporters met once again in St Michael's Church, Chester Square, London.

During her annual report, the Chair, the Revd Helen Hall, thanked the committee and the President, the Rt Revd Dominic Walker, together with the Vice President, the Revd Dr Martin Henig, for their continued support and guidance. She also thanked Keith Plumridge for his tireless support in the role of Membership Secretary and in particular for the excellent email service he runs to keep ASWA members up to date with current issues and events. If you are on email and would like to be included in this list, please contact the Secretary.

There had been no need for a postal ballot for the election of committee members as the number of candidates did not exceed the vacant posts available. Therefore, Samantha

Chandler was re-elected as Secretary and George Ochola, Sarah Dunning and Keith Cottrell were all re-elected as Committee Members.

The Chair said that this had been, "An important and significant year for ASWA." ASWA had submitted a report on domestic pets to the EFRA Committee (Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs). She reported on the progress of the Animal Friendly Church initiative and encouraged ASWA members to speak to their own churches about applying. ASWA is now also a member of the All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) and an ASWA representative attends their meetings at the House of Commons.

The Chair also commented on the great importance of prayer both for the society and for animal welfare issues in general. She praised the prayer group run by Sarah Dunning

which included many ASWA members and said that prayer support was vital for the continued success of the society.

There were a couple of theological questions from the floor and a vote was taken regarding an increase in the annual subscription rate to £20. The meeting was unanimously in favour of the increase from 1st January 2017. Concessions for OAPs and those on benefits will remain.

The guest speaker was Dr Brett Cochrane from the Dr Hadwen Trust [See the summer issue for a summary of Dr Cochrane's talk].

A Warm Welcome to our new members. We look forward to hearing from you.

Carolina Bowie, Anstey, Hertfordshire

Philip Mark Bullock, South Shields, Tyne and Wear

Brenda Forrester, Chester-le-Street, Durham

Rev Dr Jan Goodair, Huntingdon, York

Philip Guyott, Chard, Somerset

Mary Hall, Bideford, Devon

Sheila Hargreaves, Alresford, Hampshire

Nicola Peters, Gilwern, Abergavenny

Julie Pleass, Marlow, Buckinghamshire

Valerie Reisenman, Leasowe, Moreton, Merseyside

Barbara Robson, Stape Pickering, Yorkshire

St James's Church, Piccadilly, London

Christ Church with St Philip, Worcester Park, Surrey

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

GOOD NEWS

Important US marine reserve extended

At the end of August, President Obama extended the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument off the coast of Hawaii. This is an area of vital marine habitat, and the extension of the National Monument will provide protection not only for coral reefs, but also for whales, sea turtles and other species. President Obama's action means that this protected area now covers more than half-a-million square miles of ocean and is the largest marine reserve in the world.

NEWS & NOTICES

Don't forget, you can follow ASWA on Twitter – [aswanews](#)



You can also keep up with what's new via our website – [www.aswa.org.uk](#).

Animal-friendly Church awards

Is your church animal friendly? Last year, ASWA launched the Animal-friendly Church awards. 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.



Animal Welfare Sunday

Animal Welfare Sunday is Sunday 2nd October 2016. Resource packs are available to download from the ASWA website, or in hardcopy from the Secretary.

ASWA Annual Service

This year's annual service will be held at St Cross Church, Winchester on Sunday 2nd October, 9.30am. The preacher will be ASWA President, the Rt Revd Dominic Walker.

Animals in War Service of Remembrance

The annual Remembrance Service at the Animals' War Memorial, Park Lane, London, will be on Sunday 13th November 2016 at 3pm. This service has been growing year on year, and provides an opportunity to remember animals who have given their lives in war and those who continue to serve in our armed services and police forces.

ASWA Membership Fees

From 1st January 2017, the annual subscription rate for ASWA membership will increase to £20. This increase was agreed by unanimous vote at the 2016 AGM.

ASWA Local groups

Don't forget that there are ASWA local groups in different areas.

- The Watford group meets monthly. Members come from as far as Tring, Milton Keynes and Chesham to this group. The contact for this group is Sarah Dunning (01923-467502).
- There is an Ecumenical group, the Three Counties Animal Welfare Prayer Group, who meet for a service at Gloucester Cathedral at 12.15 on the first Saturday of each month. The contact for the ecumenical group is the Revd Helen Hall (01633-677775 or helen.hall123@ntlworld.com).
- The Revd David Austin has recently started an ASWA prayer group in the Norwich area. If anyone is interested in joining, David's contact details are 01603 469112 or dsj.austin@hotmail.com.

ASWA is always keen to support the formation of new groups. If you are interested in starting a group in your area, please contact the Secretary.

TALKING POINT

What happens to our rubbish?

If you live in the UK, you will undoubtedly have heard recent news reports about plans to ban the use of plastic microbeads in cosmetics and other products. The USA already has such a ban in place. Why have these microbeads become a problem? Because they are used in cosmetics and cleaning products, microbeads end up in water systems and, eventually, in the oceans. There, they are consumed by marine animals. Not only do fish fill up on these tiny beads instead of real food, the beads also collect toxins, causing them to become concentrated, potentially harming the animals that consume them. There is concern that as these toxins work their way up the food chain, they are eventually consumed by humans, with unknown but potentially harmful effects. Even if the ban comes into force, there will still be a huge problem with plastic waste in our oceans. How much effort do we put into recycling our plastics? Do we know where they go when the recycling is collected? Should we, as consumers, start demanding alternatives to plastics in our products and as packaging? Public demand is credited for the move to end the use of microbeads. Can we make even more of a difference?

THE UNSEEN LIVES OF MOLES



“What’s that!?” Martin braked the Skoda to a halt, making us to put out our hands to brace ourselves.

“On the side of the road – quick, let’s look!”

We stepped onto the tarmac. I spotted the small, dark animal moving rapidly through the sheep-cropped grass at the verge. Standing around the mole, we watched its velvet coat shimmering between black and silver. Every movement was rapid, the naked snout probing and sniffing. Its short tail was club-like, and held upright, and the front feet were broad, spade-like hands held close to the body. The ends of the dirty pink fingers were armed with thick long nails, and when the mole moved forwards it rocked slightly from side to side, unable to press the palms of its hands simultaneously to the ground beneath it.

“What was it doing above ground?” asked Martin as we got back into the Skoda. Having completed the first year of my scientific research on, of all things, moles, I knew the answer.

“It’s young, and it’s leaving home. After they’re born the youngsters live in their mother’s tunnels and after two months have grown almost as big as she is. The food runs out and either the kids leave willingly or they’re thrown out by mum – we don’t know.”

As we drove home I explained how tough life is for young moles. They travel above ground and beneath

leaf litter looking for somewhere to live, and many die of dehydration or starvation, or are picked up by predators. Nearly two-thirds of them won’t live to their first birthday. Of the survivors, a lucky few might stumble on the abandoned tunnels of a dead neighbour, or even usurp a resident. The rest have to find somewhere to build their own homes, somewhere where there is enough food and where the soil is strong enough to hold a tunnel but not so firm or stony as to be difficult to dig.

The tunnels of a mole spread over an area of some 1,500 square metres, and the total length of tunnel in such a territory is more than a kilometre. About 2,000 kilograms of soil has to be dug out, and this by an animal that weighs on average 100 grams. A young mole scratching out the first few centimetres of its new home has a thousand hours of digging ahead of it. But digging and finding food place such a strain on a mole that it only digs for four and half hours a day, and so its tunnel system will take 220 days to complete.

A mole’s tunnels are not only its home, but are a trap and larder for its food. Soil invertebrates accidentally enter the tunnels, and wander for a while before burrowing their way out. Earthworms are especially favoured, and the mole eats them head first, pulling them through its nails to squeeze out the gritty gut contents like toothpaste.

The mole’s physiology is adapted to the low oxygen and high carbon dioxide levels that occur underground, and its body is supremely designed for digging, with immensely strong shoulders and forelegs. The mole digs with one hand at a time, alternating them as it rasps soil from the tunnel’s end. Then it turns and pushes the dirt back down the

tunnel, until it reaches one of many pre-dug, vertical shafts. In pushing soil up one of these shafts and onto the surface, thus forming molehills, a mole lifts around two kilograms – 20 times its own bodyweight. The strongest human can only bench-press twice their own bodyweight.

Moles are solitary, and aggressive towards their neighbours except when mating. In March and April, males are lustily travelling across the countryside in shallow runs, hoping to encounter receptive mates. The females, which are usually just as territorial as the males, briefly let down their guard. The babies, usually around four, are born in late spring, in cosy, underground nests of dried grass.

Moles’ digging brings nutrients to the surface, their tunnels aerate and drain the soil, and their molehills germinate rare herbs. They were once deliberately introduced to control cockchafer beetles. But today moles are seen as an agricultural pest, and in our gardens they are almost universally disliked. Their reputation as a serious farmland pest is not borne out by scientific study, and in Germany moles are protected by law. But moles are still killed in vast numbers in Britain. Their molehills may be unsightly, but they are also a flag that the soil is healthy, and remind us that an industrious, fascinating little animal is going unseen about its business. Instead of being infuriated by molehills, should we not smile and rake them over?

Rob Atkinson

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA

Good news for greyhounds



The good news is that greyhound racing will be banned in New South Wales from July 2017. There have been several exposés on national TV of the cruelty these lovely dogs suffer and the miserable lives they lead. As a result, the NSW Government set up a Commission to look into the industry. This revealed the large numbers of dogs that were killed because they couldn't run fast enough, (called "wastage" in the industry) and the widespread use of live baiting, using small animals, such as possums and rabbits. You can imagine the community anger these images caused. The conclusion was that there seemed no possibility that the industry could be cleaned up, as it has ignored repeated calls for improved standards over many years, and the Premier of NSW, Mr Mike Baird, announced that greyhound racing would come to an end next year. In addition, under the greyhound racing ban, it will not be permitted to send dogs inter-state within Australia to train or race or to send them overseas.

As was to be expected, the industry is fighting back, and it is acknowledged that several hundred people will lose their livelihood. The Government has proposed an assistance package for those who work in the industry. One has also to acknowledge that there will be some excellent owners who treat their dogs well, but from all evidence, these are very much a minority. The challenge is to find homes for hundreds of greyhounds, and I notice there are quite a few out for walkies these days. What a wonderful change for the dogs, from life in cages and running for their lives, to being a family pet.

On 29th August there were rallies in major cities in Australia against live exports as part of a global effort to focus on this hideous trade. I attended the one in Sydney.

On 2nd October there will be a service for animals in the Cathedral here in Newcastle. Always a joyful occasion. I hope some greyhounds will come!

Olga Parkes

SOUTH AFRICA

Thomasina



About 14 years ago, my husband and I were walking past the nearby primary school when we noticed a young grey feral cat suckling 2 tiny kittens in the school garden near the pavement. We immediately went home and fetched some cat biscuits for the very thin cat, who ate

the food hungrily. After contacting the school's authorities, we began feeding Thomasina and her kittens regularly in a sheltered place in the school grounds. So began our on-going involvement with feral cats, both at the school and elsewhere.

Thomasina's kittens grew and flourished; all 3 cats were eventually spayed by the local SPCA. The "school cats" were noticed by some of the students and staff members, who voluntarily donated cat food for "their cats." One of the teachers put a "kitty bottle" in her classroom for the donation of spare coins for the cats' food. The school secretary regularly phoned me to collect the full "kitty bottle" and I collected it, counted the contents, and wrote a thank-you note to the children, from the school cats. The notes were displayed on the class notice-board. The children's response was amazing.

The school also arranged a special morning assembly to which we were invited; and a lovely message of gratitude was given to us because we were caring for and feeding the school cats. We were also presented with a bundle of hand-made thank-you cards by the children who had carefully made them. A heartwarming gesture indeed.

Thomasina and her feline family have touched many lives in a totally unexpected, wonderful way. The message of kindness and compassion has reached beyond the school's boundaries. Sadly Thomasina had to be put to sleep on 29th of July this year, because of kidney failure which had caused multiple problems for her. She was a quiet little feral cat whose influence lingers on.

Anne Hemmings

SWEDEN

Success at last!



Support for animal welfare

The Animal Rights movement has yet again taken a firm stand against the horrendous transport of livestock. They have taken part in the International "Stop the trucks" campaign that strives for improving the conditions for animal transport. The Swedish Animal Rights movement presented results from a survey showing that 86% of all Swedes support the campaign and want an improvement for animals and 61% support putting a permanent stop to livestock transports from Sweden to other countries. The animal rights survey also shows that in 2015, 68% of all Swedes were totally against the use of wild animals such as elephants and sea lions in circuses. Today 76% of all Swedes are against it.

Eggs

One of Denmark's largest food corporations has decided to stop selling eggs from caged/confined hens. By 2017 they say those battery eggs will be gone. The animal rights movement has successfully convinced Co-op, Willys, Hemköp, Lidl and Pris Extra to move toward less painful animal treatment. New statistics from the National Board of Agriculture show that Swedes consume 2% less meat than previously, the consumption of eggs, however, has increased by 6%.

Horses

Legally, all horses had to be registered at the National Board of Agriculture by 1st July 2016. An international database will keep track of all horses. Horses staying in Sweden for more than 90 days are legally required to be registered. Horse passports must at all times be available and valid when ridden, competing, transported, stabled or out to graze.

We need to continue to help our animals in every way we can. It is hard at times as their suffering is so great and it can be overwhelming. For each little life we can save or help it means the world of difference. Thanks to ASWA and other societies and organisations we gain strength and hope for the future.

Sandra Kinley

USA



Good things for people and animals

The last of the Waterville People and Animals Together (P.A.T.) free wellness clinics was held on 10th September. This was a very successful clinic, with 53 animals seen. Although there will be no more wellness clinics this year, we continue to offer other services, such as affordable spaying and neutering.

The Humane Society will be having our first "Pet-a-Palooza" fundraiser on 2nd October. Among the fun things we have planned are a pet parade (with or without costumes), an Animal Wellness Clinic, agility course for dogs, pumpkin carving, and a "Dunk the next President". Clinton and Trump are too busy to attend, so we're getting some lookalikes to take their place. There will be lots of food, lots of music and a lot of fun.

We've had a longer "kitten season" this year because of our warmer than usual winter and spring. Fortunately, we have wonderful foster families who help us with not only the cats and kittens, but the bunny moms and newborns as well.

Joann Brizendine

NATIONAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT SERVICE WILDLIFE AWARD 2016

For the seventh year, ASWA once again teamed up with Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA) to sponsor and present the Prisons Wildlife Award. This year it was won by Nicholaston House in the beautiful Gower area of Wales. Nicholaston House is a Christian Conference Centre which supports the Wales Community Payback scheme by offering work in their beautiful grounds to offenders.

Samantha Chandler, ASWA Secretary attended the awards ceremony along with Chris Fegan from CCA. Chris Fegan spoke on behalf of the joint sponsors, CCA and ASWA.

The site was truly beautiful with a stunning view of the Gower peninsula. We were treated to a tour of the grounds which provided important habitats and feeding centres for birds, reptiles and invertebrates. There is also a lovely prayer walk with scripture readings on plaques around the gardens and a lovely stone chapel. Prisoners were fully involved with the scheme. We heard from Mike Hurst on behalf of the Nicholaston House Wildlife project and also Simon Morse-Jones on behalf of the Wildlife Project for Wales CRC.

Once again, both Chris and I were so pleased that both CCA and ASWA are involved in this very important scheme which benefits both wildlife and also offenders/vulnerable humans.

We would also hugely recommend Nicholaston House to anyone looking for a venue for a retreat, either individually or as a small group. They would be very pleased to hear from any ASWA members.

Samantha Chandler



ANIMAL BLESSING SERVICE

On Sunday 1st May, I returned for a second time to All Saints' Church in Snodland, Kent for their annual animal blessing service. The service was led by the vicar, the Revd Hugh Broadbent. The preacher this year was the Revd Mandy Young, Curate at All Saints. She gave a bold and inspiring sermon, mentioning as an example St Francis, and explaining that he was once considered a madman for his humble regard for and affinity with all of God's creation. Nowadays, I think that most would regard him as someone who was far ahead of his time. Ms Young's sermon is now on the ASWA website for those who would like to read it.

The Revd Hugh Broadbent led us into the act of commitment, a symbolic time of prayerful words and reflection. The prayer contains the words, "The rainbow in the bible is a symbol of God's covenant, love and commitment towards all his creation. May it also be a sign of our readiness to serve him, and be a universal peace." At this

point in the service, different coloured candles are brought forward to the chancel steps and lit. Each colour has its own prayer and meaning. I particularly loved the words for the Orange candle representing fruitfulness and the prayer, "Bless all that we do in your name, O Lord, that in our labours we may show forth the fruit of the Spirit, and enable every animal whose welfare rests in our hands, to enjoy a freer, fuller and happier existence."

The highlight of the service is, of course, the wonderful animals that come to receive a blessing. For the second year a beautiful proud black feathered cockerel had returned. Last year the cockerel decided to crow at 6pm at the end of the service which created the perfect ending to such a wonderful animal blessing. All Saints' Church always provides such a creative and joyful celebration for Church members, the local community and their animals.

Janet Murphy



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!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

I would like to commend Sarah Dunning and the wonderful ASWA Prayer Text Chain she operates.

My dog, Honey, recently had to have a big corrective operation after “a bad spay” in Uganda (I brought her back with me after working for 6 years with Mukono Diocese).

It is great to know, through the Prayer Chain, that we have so much support and understanding from other animal-lovers at difficult times, and all at the press of some ‘phone keys.

Thank you so much! It’s just great being a member of ASWA!

Mary Mills

Dear Editor

I have recently joined ASWA, as I run a vegan group which meets once a month in a local church hall. None of us go to church, most of us are atheists and not much interested in any theology which seems to teach that animals are there for humans to eat – God-given for that purpose, even. All vegans find that idea repulsive. None of us can find Love in it.

The vicar of the church where we hire a room for our meetings remarked recently that she would like to persuade more of those who use the church halls to actually come to some services and that the church was “working on that”. I am afraid that there will be very little chance of this with any ethical vegans who are not already Christians. I even know some vegan Christians, from contacts on Facebook, who are struggling to even remain in the Church, so discouraged are they by the general attitude of their fellow Christians towards God’s humbler creatures.

Since going vegan about four years ago, I’ve been learning about the many imaginative ways that human beings torture, exploit and brutally kill so many other animals, and, if God does not weep over this, as I do, then he cannot be as compassionate as I am, or as moral. And that simply does not fit with my idea of what God is. I have listened to Christians justifying their love of the taste of animal flesh, or cheese, and felt repulsed by what comes across to me as a complete lack of respect for life. I have been told that, as Jesus wasn’t vegan, there is no need for Christians to be either. How is God glorified in these attitudes?

The God of Love cannot possibly condone what we do, routinely, to the least of our brothers and sisters, the other animals who share His earth with us. None of it is done in my name and I do not think that it can be claimed to be done in God’s name either.

Carol Williams

Worcester Park

CIWF’S GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION: ANIMALS ARE NOT FREIGHT

On Monday 29th August, ASWA Trustee Sarah Dunning joined the rally in London’s Parliament Square for Compassion in World Farming (CIWF)’s Global Day of Action in their campaign Animals are not Freight. Events were happening on this day across the world, to tell governments that carrying live animals on long journeys as freight, also called ‘live exports’, is inhumane and shameful in the 21st century.

Other faith groups were also represented: Barbara Gardner, Chief

Executive of the Animals Interfaith Alliance (AIA), attended, as did Chris Fegan, Chief Executive of Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA) and Thomas Bonneville, a trustee of Quaker Concern for Animals (QCA). ASWA, CCA and QCA are all founder-member groups of AIA.

Parliament Square was packed with hundreds of protesters. Speakers included Philip Lymbery of CIWF, Ian Driver, a campaigner against live exports and former Thanet district councillor, and Keith Taylor MEP, a Green Party spokesman and animal advocate.

Sarah Dunning



Photo courtesy of CIWF

Visit from ASWA Patron Dr Tony Campolo

When we heard that ASWA Patron, Dr Tony Campolo, was in the UK this Summer and he had a free Sunday at the end of August when he could speak about animal welfare, we hurriedly tried to find a suitable venue. The lovely folks at St James's Church, Piccadilly came to the rescue and said that he could speak at their 11.00am Eucharist service. Thanks to the efforts of ASWA member Adolfo Sansolini and ASWA Committee member Sarah Dunning, who both worship at St James's, we enjoyed a wonderful service on 28th August, followed by a vegetarian lunch in the church.

The Church was full, not only with the usual congregation, but also ASWA members from the London area and beyond. One of our members had come from Northern Ireland to hear Tony Campolo! As always, Tony did not disappoint. Without any notes, he spoke about the importance of animals and how animal welfare should be a Christian issue and not one championed mainly by secular organisations. He spoke movingly about the importance of companion animals to the elderly and those who live alone, and also of the suffering of farm animals, particularly chickens.

We are extremely grateful to Tony for his support for ASWA and for being our Patron. We also thank all the clergy and congregation of St James's Church, Piccadilly for making us all feel so welcome.

Samantha Chandler



The Nativity

As this is the last issue before Christmas, this Bible study looks at the traditional image of the Nativity, and the possible meaning of the animals that are typically portrayed as being present at the birth of Jesus.

We are all familiar with the traditional nativity scene: Joseph and Mary side-by-side, the baby Jesus lying in the manger. There are generally shepherds and sometimes the Wise Men have even made an appearance. And usually, maybe in the background, there will be an ox and a donkey. But why do we think these animals were there? Only two of the four gospels – Matthew and Luke – record anything about Jesus' birth. Matthew's account doesn't really mention the birth at all, just what happened before (God's instruction to Joseph to take Mary as his wife) and after (the visit of the Wise Men). In Luke's version, we are told about the journey to Bethlehem, and that the baby was placed in a manger because there was nowhere else available. Luke also tells us that shepherds visit the new-born Jesus. Nowhere, in either of these accounts, are the ox and donkey mentioned. So why do we think they were there? Why have artists so often included them in their visual accounts of the nativity?

The most likely reason that the ox and the donkey are so often pictured in the nativity scene is because they serve a symbolic purpose. One possible symbolic interpretation is that the ox and the donkey, so often depicted peering at the infant Jesus in an attitude of adoration, demonstrate that even though humans might fail to recognise God incarnate, the rest of creation knows its maker. This draws on a passage from Isaiah (1.3):

"The ox knows its master, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

- If we accept the truth behind this symbolism, that these lowly creatures are better attuned to God than many humans, what does this say about the value of non-human animals?
- What can we learn from their simplicity and relationship with their creator?
- Is this symbolism evidence that Christ's redeeming work is for all creation, not merely humanity?

Of course, no nativity scene would be complete without a lamb, either held by or nestled close to a shepherd. Again, there is no mention in Luke's Gospel that the shepherds brought sheep with them when they went to see the infant Christ. So again, the presence of a lamb is symbolic. It is a reminder of just who Jesus is: the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1.29 & 1.36).



Simon Bening (Flemish, about 1483 - 1561)

The Nativity, about 1525 - 1530, Tempera colors, gold paint, and gold leaf on parchment

Leaf: 16.8 x 11.4 cm (6 5/8 x 4 1/2 in.)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

FOLLY WILDLIFE RESCUE



Working as a volunteer at Folly's Wildlife Hospital is a rewarding and inspiring experience. There is a lot to do in keeping the hospital running smoothly, especially during the busiest period, spring and summer. We need to keep on top of the cleaning, and some of the smaller animals need feeding throughout the day. Of the hedgehogs that arrive, many are very undernourished and need to gain weight for their survival. During my volunteering I have seen a menagerie of creatures that have been lucky enough to be rescued by Folly.

The work at Folly

Each year some 3500 injured, orphaned, sick or distressed wild animals and birds are admitted to our centre where they receive expert care and veterinary treatment. Some (but very few) have fallen from nests

in high winds, or are the survivors of attack or predation by other wild animals, but by far the vast majority are the victims of human activity. Road traffic accidents, entanglement in netting, fishing line and fish hooks, nest destruction, poisoning, burning, immersion in or ingestion of chemicals and attack by domestic cats and dogs are just a few of the incidents we deal with. Although no precise figures are available, it is likely that many millions of wild animals are being killed and injured every year in the UK in accidents that are largely preventable.

A large part of our work at Folly involves caring for young animals and birds that have been orphaned or separated from their parents, usually as a result of human interference. We hand-rear everything from baby badgers, to day-old sparrows and even tiny goldcrests, and at the height of the breeding season are caring for hundreds at a time. The vast majority of these youngsters are successfully returned to the wild.

Our education programmes, conducted primarily through leaflets and talks to school children and community groups, aim to raise awareness of the plight of our

wildlife and hopefully help reduce the number of accidents and incidents occurring. Additionally, many animals and birds are needlessly and wrongly persecuted and we work to dispel the many myths and misconceptions that can sometimes lead to them being harmed. But our main aim is to promote an interest in, and respect for our wildlife, which is under growing threat and in some cases at great risk of extinction.

If you would like to support Folly's work, there are many ways you could help, including becoming a Friend or making a donation. You can get in touch by post or email, or find out more on the web site.

Folly Wildlife Rescue

Fairview Lane, Broadwater Forest,
Tunbridge Wells, TN3 9LU

Registered Charity No. 1091857

<http://www.follywildliferescue.org.uk/index.html>

HELPLINE - 01892 543213

email info@follywildliferescue.org.uk

Janet Murphy

ASWA MERCHANDISE

ASWA 2016 Christmas card

Once again, this year's beautiful Christmas card has been designed exclusively for ASWA by Thea Olrog. Cards cost £5.00 per pack of 6 (including postage). Made from good-quality stiff card with high-quality envelopes, each card is printed with a Bible verse and has ASWA's details on the back. Sending an ASWA Christmas card is a great way to help raise the profile of ASWA and the work that we do. Cards will be available from 14th October. Please order via the website or by sending a cheque payable to ASWA to ASWA, PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT. If ordering by post, please remember to indicate how many packs you wish to purchase and your address.

Also available from the ASWA web site

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. £0.35 each (minimum purchase 10)

Egg Cards: egg shaped cards with a prayer printed on one side. £0.35 each (minimum purchase 10).

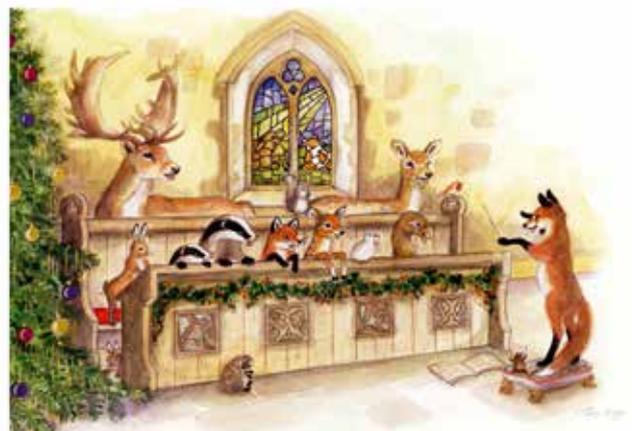
ASWA postcards: 2 designs sold together in a pack of 6. £4 per pack.

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.

ASWA hoodies: available in small, medium, and large. £24.95 each.

ASWA t-shirts: available in both ladies' and unisex styles in a range of sizes. £16.95 each.

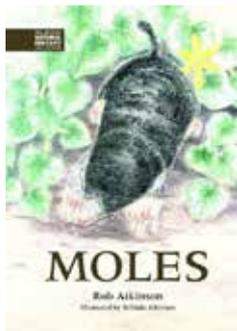


BOOK REVIEW

MOLES. THE BRITISH NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTION.

VOLUME 3.

By Rob Atkinson.
Illustrated by Belinda Atkinson.



Whittet Books
ISBN 978-1-873580-86-8
135 pages
Hardcover
Price £14.99

I read Rob Atkinson's meticulously researched study of one of Britain's commonest but least known mammals with considerable interest. It is a highly informative work by an academic researcher who has studied moles for 25 years in the fields and woods around Oxford where I live (so it has a special local resonance for me). Moreover many of the illustrations, all line drawings, have a particular charm.

Although moles can travel considerable distances above ground and even swim across streams and rivers they live for most of their largely solitary lives in darkness underground. They are active equally in night and in day in their subterranean realm, subsisting on earthworms and other invertebrates. They only make their presence apparent for most of us in through the molehills which suddenly appear above the surface of their dark world of long tunnels running for each individual animal for a vast

distance for such a small animal, some 1,000 metres. Indeed it is the mole's prodigious burrowing activities which distinguish it, as Keats expresses it in a beautiful metaphor in his Ode to Sleep, which Atkinson seems to have missed in his otherwise extensive exploration of literature and myth concerned with moles:

Save me from curious conscience, that still lords, its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole.

Like most creatures inhabiting the countryside, moles have a hard time, from lack of food, from the vagaries of the weather (flood and drought), from diseases and parasites as well as from predation by owls, buzzards, foxes and other carnivores, and of course road casualties. There is an especially high mortality amongst young adult moles seeking to find a new home. Few of these animals, indeed, live beyond a year or so, seven years being the longest recorded life-span. In Scotland and elsewhere the biggest ultimate threat is the New Zealand flatworm which devours the native earthworm. It was introduced through human carelessness, with devastating effects on local mole populations, and its future impact in Britain is a continuing worry.

Nature is like that and I am no sentimentalist, but I have to admit having been morally shocked and as a human ashamed, by the sections of the book concerned with controlling and killing moles and the barbaric cruelties inflicted by superstition in past ages. It seems that we have for centuries been engaged in attempting to eradicate moles, employing

for that purpose traps, poisons (including strychnine) and gas, all of which inevitably cause suffering. In contrast to Germany, where moles are, indeed, protected, they can be killed with virtual impunity here. In actual fact they cause relatively little real damage compared with rabbits, rats and other humans. I exploded into righteous anger when on my first and only retreat in a Benedictine monastery I found mole traps being set into the ground: I threw them into the hedge! I am afraid that experience permanently soured my attitude to that order, for surely it is high time that our species in general and Christians in particular began to learn to live in love with the natural world rather than attempting to control it.

I hope that this book and others in the series will help in that respect. Even though I cannot remember encountering a wild mole face to face I now have a far greater understanding of, and respect for, an extraordinary little creature beautifully adapted to its unique way of life. Atkinson ends his book on what is really a theological note:

There will be no salvation unless we can identify and cherish the inherent worth of the organisms with which we share our world, even if that is sometimes at a small cost to ourselves.

Exactly!

Martin Henig

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A Service for Animal Welfare

St Cross Church, Winchester
Sunday 2nd October 2016, 9.30am
Preacher: the Rt Revd Dominic Walker OGS
ASWA President and former Bishop of Monmouth
All Welcome

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