

Finding sanctuary in photographing nature during lockdown

Determined to find an uplifting moment every day, the Yorkshire photographer Rebecca Cole has been in search of images that bring spring to her family and friends in lockdown. She has been sharing a daily image with them via Blipfoto for the last six and a half years, but photographing nature has provided a particularly welcome escape in recent weeks

Main image: A blue tit in song. Photograph: Rebecca Cole

The Guardian

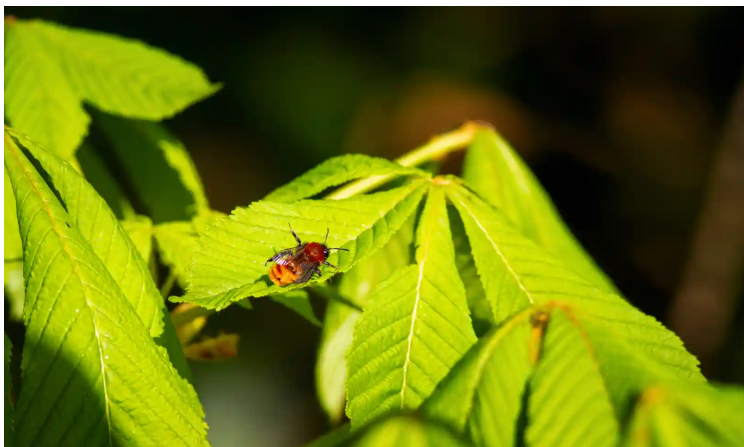
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Cutting short our holiday to Cuba as Covid-19 took off, it was an eerie feeling transferring through an emptying Paris Charles de Gaulle airport in the middle of the day with the shutters down on duty free. I wasn't sure what to expect when we got home but, while life felt uncertain, I knew my wildlife - my haven - would still be there. The countryside around Burley-in-Wharfedale, my home, has become my daily sanctuary, now more than ever.

One stick, five gates. Living in a village, we have the luxury of the countryside on our doorstep, but with it, comes the challenge of multiple gates, now being handled by multiple people. A carefully chosen single-outing stick is doing the trick nicely for every type of opening.

Walking much closer to home and for less time, I've been worried that I wouldn't be able to find my moment with nature anymore, but something always turns up. Here a tawny mining bee fell out of a tree in front of my lens 300 metres from home.





I'm finding moments arriving as if on cue, just when I need them the most. The last time I saw a brimstone butterfly was 2017, so imagine my delight at spotting this one glaring at me in the sunshine in front of a deep gorse dell.





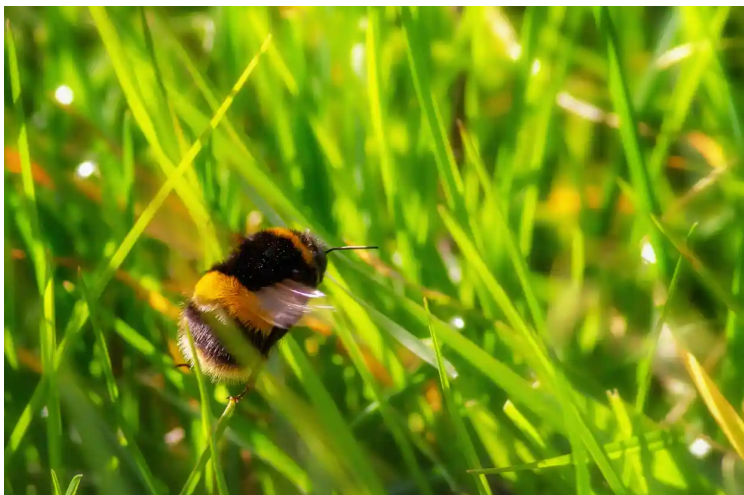
Normally I just enjoy happening on butterflies as the season warms up, but this year I've taken utmost pleasure from looking out for which one is due to emerge next - from the hibernating overwintering adults to the first to emerge fresh from their pupae. The green hairstreak is a local favourite of mine - surprisingly easy to miss!



Even this elusive chiffchaff seemed willing to be on film. Perhaps having recently arrived and being hungry, this one was less cautious about being captured as it picked off tiny bugs from budding trees.



I call this one “crouching toad, hidden dog”. Our dog can’t walk as far as she used to, but I managed to time one of my few walks up onto the moors since lockdown perfectly for the day the toads got active. Perhaps the out-take should have been my record as one clambered onto my glasses when I took a moment to read the settings on my camera.



It seemed trivial to be photographing a bee on the day after it was announced that Boris Johnson was in hospital with coronavirus, but I’ve concluded that everyone has to hang on to their sanity in their own way.



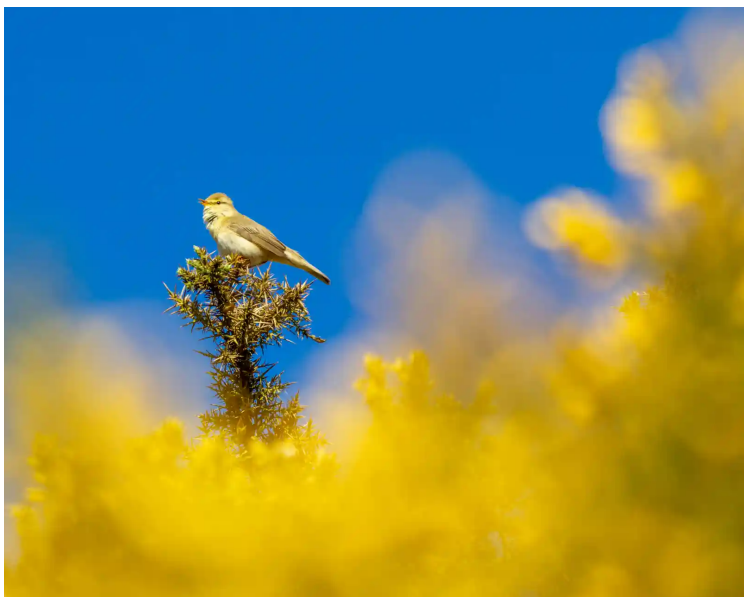
In Yorkshire we can't have been luckier with the weather recently. We've had the luxury of days on end of blue skies and the birds have been making the most of it too.







It's been the colours and the shapes of nature as well as the expressions of wildlife that have given me a daily smile in these uncertain times. In particular, I'm finding the spring colours of lemons and limes giving me a real boost. This willow warbler taken through gorse is my recent favourite. Wildlife has always been and will continue to be my sanctuary.



Over time, I've found a few local nooks and crannies to keep an eye on at different times of the year. This is one of them in a beautiful woodland back garden I walk past. This kestrel seemed to be owning the space here, but in the last few days the jackdaws have moved in and the kestrel has reluctantly moved two metres upstairs into another box. They live with physical distancing as the norm. It works. I'll hold onto that thought.