

Saving habitats

Some write to me asking that we do more to save habitats and help species survive. As an animal lover I am all in favour of doing what we can to help, and certainly avoiding doing harm to the other species we share the planet with.

We need to understand that to succeed a species need protection from predators and a decent food supply. Species are adaptable, and will respond to human changes in the landscape. We should not seek to fossilise our lives for fear of disrupting the balances, but make sure as we change our lives there are answers for the species around us. Nor should we think that mankind is all powerful and is in some unique position, able to judge the struggle for life and determine all the winners and losers under the process of natural selection.

Some species thrive because human conduct changes. Just look at the success of seagulls as birds now often living well away from the coast. Many of them have traded the hard work and uncertainty of fishing offshore for the easier pickings of a local tip, park or source of food from human contact. Urban foxes know the way to earn a living around the dustbins and discards of human society. Birds flourish in our gardens where many people offer them special meals, and where the human hunter/predator has been replaced by the bird watcher and lover.

Anyone worried about various insects or small mammals can create the kind of habitat they like in their own gardens. Many do. The advance of urban development will remove some natural habitats on the way, but there remains plenty of wild areas, woodlands and parklands where animals can thrive. Some interventions to protect a species requires tough action to reduce or harm a predator.

There is no golden age of animals to restore or some pre ordained balance to be struck. There used to be many more horses because people reared and fed them so they could work for the people who provided for them. Various species from cats and dogs to horses and farm animals have adapted to live alongside humans, whilst more so called wild species are now at one remove adapting to life close to people. Many summer cafes are much attended by small birds with a love of cake.