

ALDE VALLEY SPRING FESTIVAL EXHIBITION 2020

On a Turning Wing : A Celebration of Birds, Flight & Migration

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE : BEATRICE FORSHALL

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It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome a selection of Beatrice Forshall's beautiful hand coloured engravings for this year's Festival Exhibition. Much of her work focuses on rare and endangered species of plants and animals. In the lead up to the Exhibition we discussed showing a selection of engravings that touched upon key aspects of this year's theme: birds at the farm; migrations; and the endangered status of many bird species around the world.

The latter is an urgent issue. In our own busyness and pre-occupation with the contrasting desires for freedom of movement for some people and border controls for others, it is easy to become blind to the more delicate movement of birds around the planet. And if we overlook that, it is easier to forget that, in being mobile, they need their own places to eat, rest, breed and nest at different stages of their migrations – which often stretch over thousands of miles.

The pressures that we exert on the natural world have resulted in some renowned species of birds becoming globally extinct : the dodo, great auk and passenger pigeon are all well-known examples. But beyond these few famously and tragically extinct species – now lost forever – there are many more that are critically endangered, both locally and globally. To highlight this, the IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] created the Red List of Threatened Species. At present 116,000 species are on the IUCN Red List. Of these, more than 31,000 are at risk of extinction – including 14% of all known bird species.

Beatrice is currently working on an extended series of engravings that record species of wildlife that are on the Red List. These are to become part of a large folio of works, due to be released in 2021. In the meantime, it is an honour to be able to welcome five engravings to this year's Alde Valley Spring Festival Exhibition. We have chosen works that are locally relevant or which have a global reach. They extend from rare birds found at the farm to those that range across Europe, Asia and the Atlantic Ocean.

For all sales, larger images and more details : enquiries@aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk

NOTE

The dimensions given are for the engravings.

Prices are listed for framed works together with additional unframed editions.



1. *Barn Swallow*

Hand painted engraving. H450mm W365mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £480 (framed); £380 (unframed).



2. *Gannet*

Hand painted engraving. H1070mm W760mm.
Limited Edition of 18. £1,200 (framed); £960 (unframed).



3. *Japanese Cranes*

Hand painted engraving. H838mm W1181mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £1,800 (framed); £1,500 (unframed).



4. *Tawny Owl*

Hand painted engraving. H570mm W475mm.
Limited Edition of 8. £980 (framed); £820(unframed).



5. *Dame Blanche*

Hand painted engraving. H815mm W780mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £980 (framed); £850 (unframed).

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I love drawing birds. Their calligraphic form lends itself to engraving. They are apart of our world and yet as they fly above us, we will never fully be apart of theirs. When I was nine years old I had a flock of Birmingham tumblers. I loved the way that they whirled up in the sky and then fell fluttering. I love birds for being descended from dinosaurs, for being so different; for their flocks, their murmurations like shoals of sardines; thousands of birds performing acrobatics within a few inches of each other without colliding; I love them for their markings, their beautiful plumage, the light shining through their feathers, their courtship dances, their heroic migrations crossing thousands of miles over ocean and desert. Birds are so much about movement and yet I am making something which is perpetually still ... so to me that is part of the challenge; to try and convey some of their movement and capture their character and their story.

The world is undergoing the greatest mass extinction of species since that of the dinosaurs. These extinctions are symptoms of a process in which we play a leading role and which will make the planet a less beautiful place and our life here less comfortable, at best. We need to recognise that humans do not have overriding claims to the planet's resources and that this small miracle in a vast, hostile universe should be shared. Whatever the technological possibilities, it is necessary for our own survival and of those with whom we share the planet, that we consume less. I hope that my illustrations of endangered species will help to reconcile people to this unappealing prospect and make them realise that we are all paying a far greater price than that which is printed on the label.

Currently a percentage of the sales of my prints goes towards frontline conservation projects.

Beatric Forshall. 4th April 2020. France.

FESTIVAL EXHIBITION : REBIRDING NOTES

1. *Barn Swallow*

Hand painted engraving. H450mm W365mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £480 (framed); £380 (unframed).

In 2001 there were a few traces of swallows at White House Farm : the muddy stumps of old nests clung to the inner rafters of or walls of buildings here and there. But none had been in seasonal use for a number of years. Then, one spring, a pair flew in. They wheeled around the farmyards and barns, chattering loudly. I ran out and flung open every door and shutter on the farm. The two birds, evidently a pair, responded almost instantly, swooping through the buildings to explore all the newly opened dark, cool interior spaces.

In the end, they settled for the attic of an old granary, flying in through an open window. But the heat under slate roof tiles in high summer was often too much. Several broods failed over two or three years. The granary was made into a studio – the Nightingale Room. With this no longer available, the visiting swallows took up residence in the roof beams of an old stable nearby.

This space has worked well. Over the past two years the swallows have reared at least one and sometimes two broods each summer. As the last chicks fledge and learn to feed for themselves, the birds start to gather in the fields and on the power lines before a communal departure in September. But there still seem to be fewer swallows than when I was a child. Why ? The proliferation of insecticides on arable land and the consequent crash of insect populations must surely be one cause ? The land still looks green but most of the insects have gone, and with them the animals that feed on them. But the return of swallows to the farm has been a source of both joy and hope. This engraving catches beautifully the spirit of the long flight home.

3. *Gannet*

Hand painted engraving. H1070mm W760mm.

Limited Edition of 18. £1,200 (framed); £960 (unframed).

This engraving is of one of the oceans' most magnificent "*plunge divers*". Some of the largest gannet colonies on the planet are found on remote outcrops of rock around the coasts of France, Great Britain and Eire. Each colony is now known to have its own foraging and hunting grounds, sometimes extending hundreds of miles out to sea. And size of the colonies are, in relative terms, vast. In his book "*The Seabird's Cry*" Adam Nicolson describes the one on Bass Rock.

"Approach Bass Rock, a tall mole-like lump of basalt off the east coast of Scotland, the biggest gannet colony in the world, and it is difficult to grasp quite what you are looking at. I have seen it from 30,000 feet when flying south from Aberdeen to London and thought a long plume of sunlit smoke was blowing away downwind from the summit. On another day in a boat, 10 miles away, coming from the mainland, there seemed to be a haze over the island, like moths above a summer meadow. Beneath it, the meadow itself was white, a summer snowcap, which from those miles away looked as though it might be guano. But smoke, haze, moths, snow, meadow and guano were all one thing : the white plumage of living birds."

In the last chapter of the book, Nicolson returns to the ideas of *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*. First developed by Jakob in Uexküll in the early 20th century, these describe the inner and outer sensory worlds through which seabirds [and all other animals] experience and know both themselves and their surroundings. This acknowledges that, effectively, we are all sentient and all inhabit our own unique sensory universes. With regard to gannets, one observation is that each colony may function partly as an enormous hub for information exchange, with outgoing and returning birds learning from each other where to find fish over vast areas of ocean. The engraving captures a gannet's great expanse of their outstretched wings, ready to suddenly fold back for a plunge dive.

4. *Japanese Cranes*

Hand painted engraving. H838mm W1181mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £1,800 (framed); £1,500 (unframed).

This engraving introduces an outlyer within the Festival Exhibition. Much of the work in the show focuses on birds that inhabit or pass through East Anglia – or even live at the farm. Most of the migratory birds that are represented fly up and down broad longitudes that fall within the realms of Europe, Central Asia and Africa. The Japanese or Red Crowned Crane has its own habitats and migratory routes, but they lie beyond our furthest eastern horizons – in China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and the eastern parts of Russia. There are thought to be just under 3,000 birds left in the wild, with about a thousand semi-resident on the island of Hokkaido in Japan.

Pair bonding is expressed through duetting dances, during which birds move around each other, bobbing, jumping and displaying their wings before circling each other and throwing back their heads to make long rippling calls. This engraving captures a moment within this dance, with one bird bowing down whilst the other jumps up with its head cast back to sing.

Red Crowned Cranes feature very prominently in the folklore and mythologies of Japan, China and Korea. They are variously associated with longevity, immortality, purity and peace. Today they are on the IUCN Red List and considered Endangered. Whilst the population in Japan is increasing slightly, the migratory populations ranging over other parts of continental Asia are still declining. This is due largely to habitat loss, as wetlands and feeding grounds are converted to more intensive agriculture or more industrial land uses. In this context, the engraving feels both iconic and symbolic : it holds within it the essence of the Japanese Crane as a species; and highlights the poignancy of their vulnerability – so much cultural heritage, both avian and human, is at risk of being lost forever.

4. *Tawny Owl*

Hand painted engraving. H570mm W475mm.

Limited Edition of 8. £980 (framed); £820 (unframed).

One thread of enquiry within the Festival was to explore the diversity of raptors that live on the farm and in the surrounding Suffolk landscape. It has been fascinating to see the number of talons increase noticeably over the past two decades. Where once there were just kestrels, there is now the shock and awe of sparrowhawks, the mountain-like cry of buzzards, the occasional glimpse of a hobby and, most recently, the hunch-shouldered shadows of kites – all sharp-clawed and eagle-eyed.

Owls, too, are becoming more common. At White House Farm, the home of the Spring Festival, the expansion of rough pasture, thicker hedges and patches of scrub all seems to have helped. Little owls and barn owls are now easy to spot. Less visible – but certainly present – are tawny owls. They seem to be much more elusive in their habits, staying within the woods by day and hunting only by night when the sky is fully dark – or starlit.

Their presence does become loudly apparent in the spring and autumn, when a cacophony of hoots and to-whit-to-woows will suddenly echo out of the woods, filling the dark night air with a chorus of their calls. It has the sounds of a noisy reunion. Perhaps – migrating birds are returning or family groups are gathering together and swapping news. It lasts for a few evenings, and then they fall quiet again for a few months.

5. *Dame Blanche*

Hand painted engraving. H815mm W780mm.

Limited Edition of 25. £980 (framed); £850 (unframed).

The population of barn owls in Suffolk fluctuates. But there seems to have been a recovery - helped by the expansion of rough pastures and the restoration of heathland. They are now, thankfully, a common sight in the Upper Alde Valley, appearing as if by magic at dusk to hunt over meadows and parkland for voles and other small mammals.

Their total silence in flight - despite the size and depth of their soft, paddle shaped wings - is mesmerizing. It is as though their wing beats actually absorb the sound that they make, pulling it in from the air around them so that in flight they appear to float over the ground, as if dangled or suspended by a silken thread from above.

Their French name *Dame Blanche* - catches more of their majesty and mystery than their more practical English name. But the sight of them quartering the fields at dusk, often as a dew settles, never fails to uplift the heart.

End of Catalogue

For all sales or for more information about any works

Please contact : enquiries@aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk

Website : www.aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk

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