

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,  
Jim Butler

Poem and Painting

**SPOILER** alert: 2020 is my last year of writing "Feather Fascinations": my act of devotion to you, bird biodiversity and coexistence. My limited perspective constrains my writing. I believe that after my eight years you would be enriched by a different perspective. Warning: this article contains a deeply complex, highly distilled ecopoem exquisitely exploring our entanglement with birds.



## Harvest

After stripping the branches of berries  
the robin held a handful of seeds  
in her stomach: the robin carried a tree  
– in fact she secretly sowed a whole forest –  
a store of bows and arrows and shields.  
Years found the bird had planted a battle,  
her tiny body had borne the new king.

Men looked up to the skies and blessed  
or blamed the planets moving overhead.  
A blackbird, meanwhile, started to pick  
at the fruit both armies had left.

Birds are continually performing wondrous acts with long-term significance for us, mostly unobserved. We are interdependent with them for our shared planet's wellbeing and we proceed collaboratively with them in the uncertain future of lost biodiversity and climate change. The complex ways we are entangled with them have a profound impact on us: aesthetically, economically, ethically, spiritually. . . The poem time-travels to wooden wars to emphasise the interdependence of the avian and the human. It reminds us we are not the only builders of the surface features and history of this planet.

The "handful" of berries in the Robin's stomach references Millet's painting "The Sower" and celebrates the closeness of the human-avian connection. This emphasis on the significance of birds and the infusion of meaning into the human-avian coexistence is an important theme today. Science demonstrates that blaming the planets and denial of climate change are equivalent. The harvest we have sown is today emerging from the smoke haze.

Birds are more than beauty.

\* 'Harvest' by Isabel Galleymore (Significant Other, 2019) is reprinted here by kind permission of Carcanet Press Limited, Manchester, UK.

– Jim

Contact Jim: [beautifulbirds@y7mail.com](mailto:beautifulbirds@y7mail.com)

Digital Bird Guide: <http://www.moggillcreek.org/>

Image: Female Rose Robin by Ed Frazer at Brookfield