



Urban Wild_Life
Encounters with Wild Lives in the City
by Jo Scott and Scott Millar

This live audio-visual performance mixes texts, sounds, guitar and vocal loops to evoke encounters with nonhuman wild lives in urban spaces. The mix opens up the feelings of both delight and dread which arise from these encounters with nature in the human-made spaces of the city.

Mourning Song

Just a kerfuffle – a flap, no squawks.
A disturbance on the tiny roof terrace
where a pigeon had nested in our planter
under overgrown shrubs,
her two small charges growing
almost visibly beneath her.

And just her orange eye, without expression,
looking out from where her chicks had been.

And the tiny torn-apart body
fallen on the front step.
Just feathers and viscera
and the seeds it had been fed
from our bird feeder,
gulping down its last meal
in every expectation of the next,
like the clothes you bought
the weekend before you died.

I folded fallen tulip petals into the bag,
next to your remains
and could think of nothing to say
as I lowered you into the bin.

Vaccine Day

Walking round in circles on the road at 5.45am.
I hadn't seen a hedgehog for so long – years? -

and this one was dazed, bloodied, tottering
around the broken white line
And he wouldn't stay in the safety of the hedge
where we guided him -
just kept moving
towards the worst place he could be.

These moments and meetings
Where dazed from some trauma,
you sway into view.

An inappropriate though fierce feeling
for your plight.
It doesn't quite cut it – I know.
It doesn't matter,
but we are mattering and so are you.

I only wanted to save your life, make you safe,
rid myself of the drops of dread and fear and
sadness
imagine you safe, recovered, re-united,
walking in a straight line again.

These moments and meetings
where dazed from some trauma,
you sway into view

Lone Deer

We've seen you before – on the edge of the river,
Cocooned in the long grasses of the meadow,
Between the trees and
stepping across the woodland track.
Today you met us on the path
that leads to the road –
a busy road, even at this hour.

We stopped running and looked.
You looked back and
skittered further down the path,
towards the humming cars and churning lorries.
So we withdrew, found another way out,
tried to meet you at the other end
and drive you back to safe, green places,
but you had gone, again.

And I wished for your unseen life to be one of
relative safety, comfort, repose,
But here – in the heart of the city –
that seemed unlikely.
Just a story to tell yourself
in the absence of a fuller opening.

Heron

An ancient, primeval being, balanced on the
cross bars of an abandoned bike in the river -
still, silent, compressed.

Heron below the bridge,
concertina-ed and contained,
without movement or intention.
Still there when we walk back across,
Echoing another time into this one,
denying the expansive moment of
lift-off and release.

Bat Walk

Walking at dusk through our
green, morning places,
all is shifted and transposed.
The branches align in new patterns –
new shapes emerge.

The eeriness of the meadow at dusk

The evening is warm and we're bat-seeking
wheeling among the tree-tops.
Another layer of life and being
that in the mornings we run past.

The eeriness of the meadow at dusk

Community Garden

The beds are hard and dry – little grows.
We approach their low-level maintenance
with some fatigue.

They give so little back.
Young, fresh plants wither and die there,
some are removed or destroyed.

An unexpected bloom, an unexpected flower -
the crocuses that return in the early Spring.

But mostly it feels barren,
swallowing hopes and offering nothing in return.

They give so little back.
Young, fresh plants wither and die there,
some are removed or destroyed.

Giant Hogweed

Rising majestically on the banks
of the river each summer.
Coming from the high reaches of the Caucasus,

from South Russia and Georgia,
From those high and treacherous peaks
that we reached on a dirt road in a 4x4.

Up there it gasps for air at altitude,
seeks nourishment in rocky outcrops.
Down here, it sinks its roots deep
into the warm wet earth of the riverside.
It breathes the temperate air,
it thrives and flourishes.

It is never defeated – it rises and grows

Brought here by colonising plant hunters –
those that named and classified and collected
and transported, then dropped these species
here to grow as exotic curiosities
in English gardens.

Now it overruns and resists and extends
and bullishly occupies our riversides.

It is never defeated – it rises and grows

How to see this wild life
and its presence amongst us?
As invasive and threatening – a foreign force to
be battled and ultimately defeated?
Or as a fierce and stretching,
wilful and powerful life?

Credits

Texts, vocal loops, visuals and digital sounds
created and performed by Jo Scott

All guitar and vocals on 'Community Garden'
created and performed by Scott Millar

Thanks to Ben Lewis and Outlaws for having us

See more of Jo's work at
www.joanneemascott.com

