

Nature Notes

When it is my turn to put together the Meditation it can be difficult to think of a topic or incident to write about. Sometimes things jump into my mind without much trouble but at other times, like this month, nothing seems to inspire me. This time as I cast my mind around for inspiration I remembered an amazing experience last week. I was standing at the window speaking to my daughter on the phone when I saw a barn owl circling around over the field at the bottom of our garden. Suddenly it changed direction and came towards the house, not only that but it came directly towards me and at the last moment it lifted and flew over the roof. All this seemed to happen in slow motion, so much so that I could see the feathers on its white face, the way it moved its wings, all so smoothly and silently, it looked quite effortless, I was mesmerised and excited, it took me several days to calm down, it was a truly memorable experience.

Another bird that I have had a close encounter with recently has been the Curlew. There seems to be many of these wonderful birds around Slaley. Their bubbling soul-stirring warble draws attention to these birds and I see them circling around above their nests coming down to land only when the coast is clear. One day recently we were walking along a lane and stopped to watch a curlew in flight. It circled several times and we could see it's life long mate had popped up out of the nest waiting to welcome it's partner. A hare shot out from near where we were standing but it wasn't this that prevented the airborne curlew from landing, I think we were too near, a threat to the nest, the eggs or chicks this pair were rearing. During the time we stood at this field gate the curlew did not come down to the nest for fear it gave away its location, we eventually walked on picking up the sound of another curlew as we walked home.

"We have always thought of the curlew's evocative call as an uplifting joyful sound, the essence of the wild open moors, but it has been interpreted by some as being somewhat mournful. In times past it was associated with a sense of foreboding and even disaster and the poet W.B. Yeats associated the bird with loss in his poem '*He reproves the Curlew.*'" (Taken from an article by Steve and Ann Troon, Countryside Magazine).

How blessed we are to live in this wonderful part of the country where we can be so close to God's creatures. Many people have never seen such sights and experienced the countryside as we are able to and I feel extremely blessed that we are able to watch from a window or walk a short distance to experience some of God's magnificent creatures.