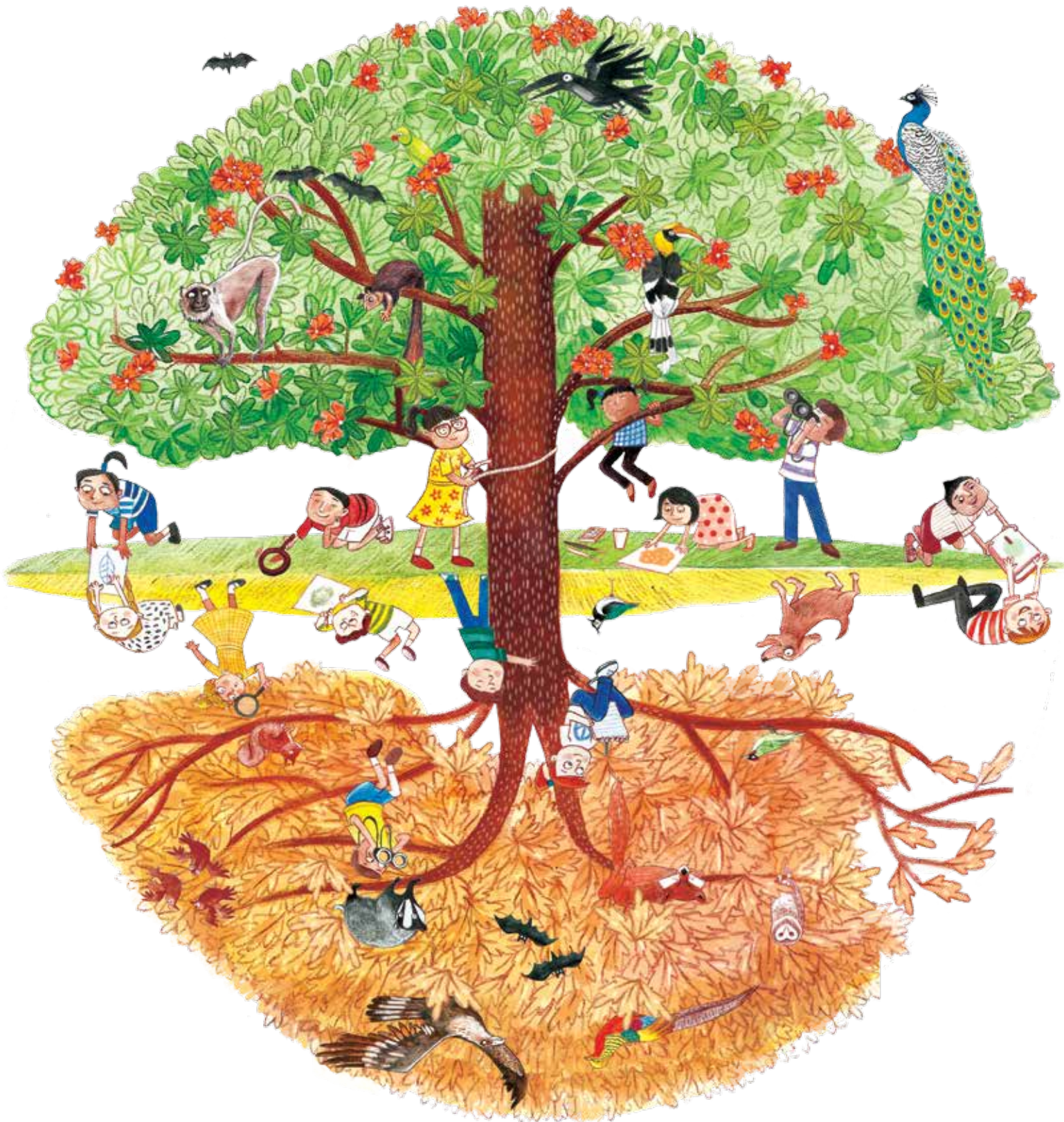


current conservation

kids



India meets the UK in a new pen-pal project for Current Conservation

The pen-pal tradition, where two school children living on different continents share their daily adventures, has become much less common than it once was.

Modern technology has offered wonderful new opportunities for instant long-distance communication. In many ways, it has made distances between people seem much smaller. It is now possible, for one sitting in his bedroom in India, to have a real-time video chat with a friend in London, Hong Kong, Sydney or Shanghai.

Traditional methods of communication, letters and brown paper parcels, are slow by comparison. They are rapidly becoming obsolete. However, traditional technologies have a tangible quality which cannot be replaced by an email. Although email gives us instant gratification, letters allow readers to feel closer. There is much excitement in receiving a hand-written letter, or ripping open, emptying and exploring the contents of a big parcel.

What if you combined the two, making the most of the digital realm's ability to connect people instantly, and sharing physical objects from friends in far flung places? This new Current Conservation project promises much joy for students by resurrecting the pen-pal tradition, and taking the best that old and new postal methods offer.

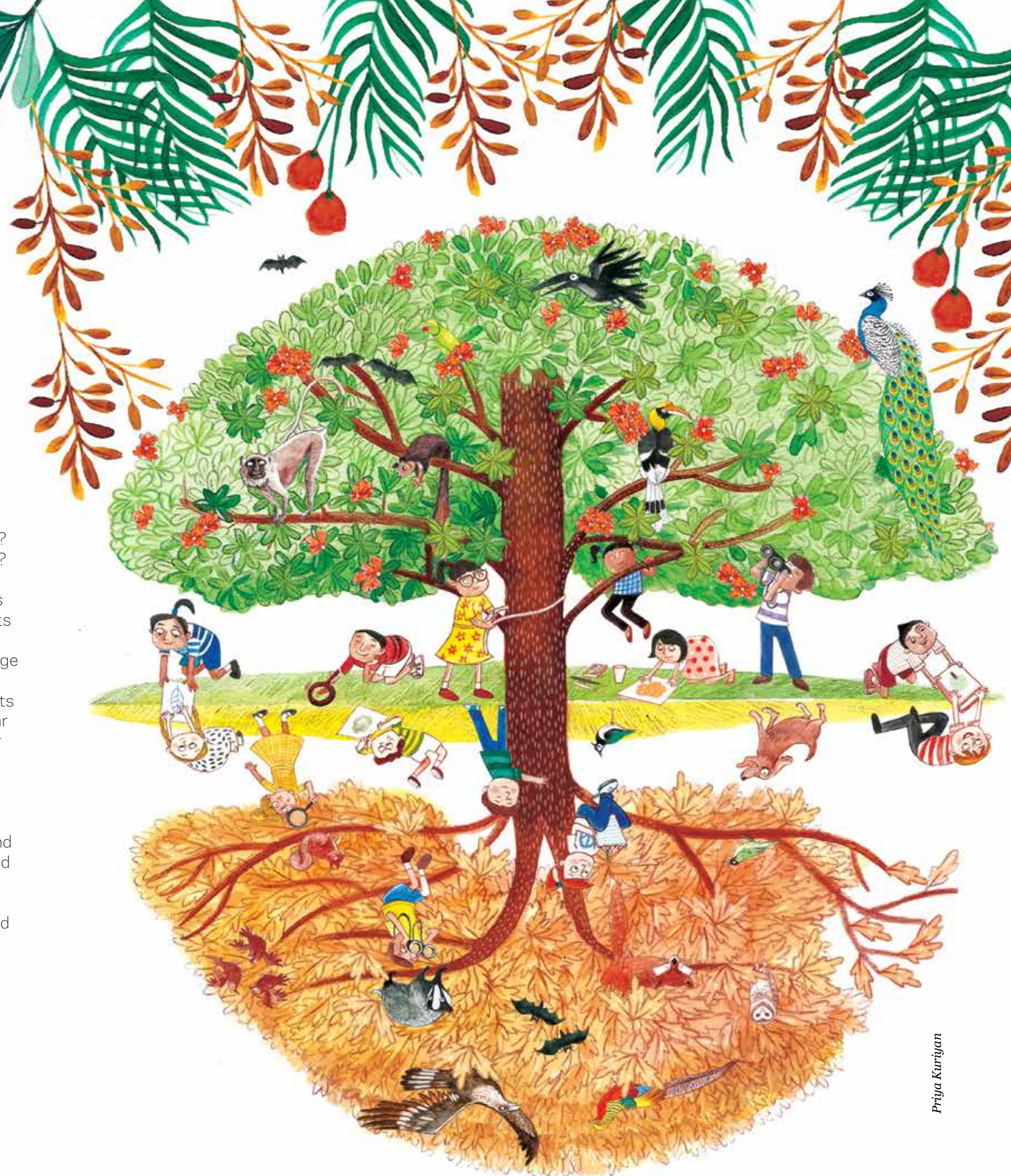
11-13 year olds from two schools, one in Cornwall UK, and another near Bangalore India, will establish the first trial partnership. The students will explore '**a year in the life of a tree**.' Working together and independently, children from both schools will observe a particular tree.

They will collect, illustrate and share stories about the tree and its many visitors. The documentation could be a painting, a collection of leaves, lists of bird species seen among the branches or anything else that has

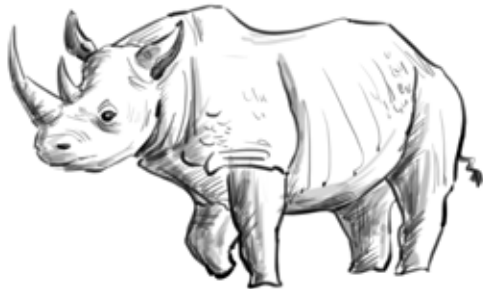
captivated their imagination. What species live in the tree? What do its flowers look like? When does it fruit? What sound do its fluttering leaves make when you sit beneath its branches on a breezy day? The schools will then exchange their natural diaries, and maintain a record of the sights and sounds they see and hear from their windows, and their counterpart's windows, a continent away.

Current Conservation will document this partnership, and display some of the exchanged experiences. The pen-pal project will bridge the gap between the technological and natural worlds.

If your school wishes to participate in the pen-pal project, please write to us at : matthew.creasey@gmail.com (U.K), or hiremath@atree.org (India). We look forward to hearing from you!



The African black rhino
(*Diceros bicornis*)



{Dicero comes from the Greek words, Di = two and Ceros = horn and Bicornis from the Latin words, Bi = two and Cornis = horn} Also called the hook-lipped rhino, it's hook-shaped upper lip helps grasp and rip plants.

Diceros bicornis bicornis
Diceros bicornis michaeli
Diceros bicornis minor and
Diceros bicornis longipes
are all sub-species of the African black rhino found in the dry deserts, wet forests and Savannah grassland.

Length (head and body)

3.0 - 3.8m

Height (at shoulder)

1.4 - 1.7m

Weight

800 - 1,350kg

Larger front horn

0.5 - 1.3m

Smaller rear horn

up to 55 cm

Diet

Herbivorous

2000 BC

Rhinos engraved into rocks in Niger

1930s

Population falling fast

1980

Rhinos found in only two countries, 110 in Cameroon and 25 in Chad

1997

10 - 18 individuals remaining

2006

Extensive survey fails to find any rhinos

Early 20th Century



Increased hunting, land clearance for agriculture & conflict due to crop damage. With the exclusion of indigenous people from many areas, and increased trophy hunting, traditional knowledge and ways of life are lost. This leads to poverty and the search for alternative livelihoods.

1950s - now



Increased use of rhino horn in Chinese medicine (thought to cure rheumatism, gout, fever, typhoid and other conditions. There is little evidence for these medical benefits). Poaching is lucrative and a poacher could make more money in a day than he would otherwise earn in a year.

1991

50 in Cameroon and none in Chad

2001

5 confirmed and 3 unconfirmed sightings

2011

Western black rhino officially declared extinct

A look into the future

Although facing many of the same threats which caused extinction of the Western black rhino, all three of the other subspecies still survive in the wild. The numbers are increasing, conservationists are optimistic that with effort and pressure from governments and the public, the remaining black rhinos can be saved.

There are critical questions that still need to be answered. Who owns the rhinos? Should rhinos be protected, harvested for their horns or both? How do we balance the rights of people and rhinos? Is there a role for ecotourism?

Population size estimate (IUCN, 2010)



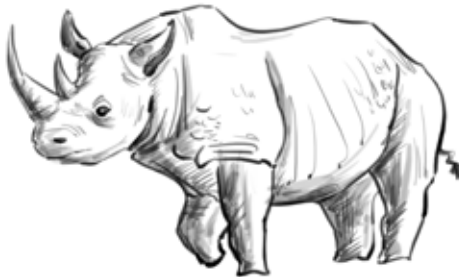
D.b.bicornis (South-Western)

1920



D.b.michaeli (Eastern)

740



D.b.minor (Southern-Central)

2220

Rohan Chakravarty

the BULL,
the BEAR,
and
the BUMBLEY
BEE!

Words: Matthew Creasey
Illustration: Kalyani Ganapathy



The bull, the bear and the bumbley bee,
Sat in the shade of a Gulmohar tree,
Said one to the two, and two to the three,
What lives do we lead, persecuted or free?



I live in the forest, eat termites and ants,
I sleep in my den through the heat of the day,
But I can be grumpy if woken too early,
Surprised or disturbed and I don't like to play.



Should I be chased for not being cheerful?
Don't you feel the same when woken too soon?
I'm happy to share the forests and grassland,
I'll come out at night, by the light of the moon.



Some of my cousins have freedom to wander,
To graze in green pastures, no shackles, no chains,
One brother I have in the Banni,
Fed on crops grown in sweet summer rains.



How different for those in cities and towns,
More buildings built, more green fields lost,
A cow in town must scavenge on garbage,
The city grows bigger, the cow pays the cost.



You both talk of freedom, of cities, of forests,
Loved or revered, you both have your place,
I live here too, am I not important?
I'm so very small and take up little space.



Without me no honey, no flowers, no blossom,
No food for birds, no flutter-byes bright,
I'm sorry to sting, but when we are threatened,
To defend my sisters I'm willing to fight.



The bee, the bull and the snuffly bear,
Were common but now are increasingly rare,
So ask one another would not it be fair,
To live and let live in the country we share?



A Day in the Life of a Raptor Ecologist: Baby Birds with a Powerful Bite

George Swan, a PhD student at Exeter University, UK, recounts his daily climbing adventures with buzzard chicks!

My research involves climbing up to nests of common buzzards (*Buteo buteo*), to collect data on how often the parents bring food to the chicks, and what sort of prey they prefer. Young birds with big beaks – they give me plenty to think about.

This age range is the perfect period, when chicks are large enough to control their temperature, but small enough to be handled easily.

the other side, I attach my climbing rope and pull it up and over. Then I hoist myself up the rope, climb to the nest, install the camera and assemble a recording box at the base of the tree. I try and climb three nests before lunch, and then another two or three in the afternoon.



Rohan Chakravarty



I avoid visiting nests in bad weather as I don't want to disturb the chicks when they are already cold. This means that on sunny days in late spring, I have to be super organised! With my target nests selected, I load the truck with all my climbing and camera gear and head out. Once I've reached a nest, it usually takes 45 minutes to complete everything I need to do. I start by firing a weight attached to some string over a strong branch high up in the tree using a huge catapult. When the weight drops down



Such work can be physically demanding, it is a struggle to climb more than six nests in a day. By dark, I am back at the storeroom where I clean all the gear, check the weather for the next day and get ready to start all over again.

