



Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2022 Written entries

Life on the Path.....

Necklaced buzzard soars high on warm thermals,
Passes a tasty morsel in a parcel drop to his mate.
Majestic Red Kite sits on the uppermost branch of the tallest tree,
Whistling its melancholic call, a constant earworm.
Elite Sparrowhawk bursts into a chattering of sparrows in the hedge
Chaos, alarm, trauma, circles back to its lookout ,
Struggling ball of fluff in its talons to be plucked alive.
Life on the Path, rugged, raw, survival.

Robin and Wren declare their territory,
Who can sing the loudest,
Drown out the other.
Little Jenny , gram for gram wins the day,
Defeated Redbreast puffs up and moves along.
A flash of citrus zigs and zags,
Early Brimstone, hungry, searching for sweet stores .
Life on the Path, hard, home, providing.

At woodland's edge Speckled Wood
Splays its wings on emergent green hawthorn
The suns rays penetrating the pixilated pattern on display.
The hunched brown overcoat of Muntjac treads silently ,
Cautious of dog and gun, moves into cover.
I can't see you so you can't see me.
Startled Pheasant , cocks and steals between tussocks.
Life on the Path, dangerous, short , threatened.

Big Ears Woodmouse sits next to a dead worm,
Fastidiously grooming his whiskers, alert but relaxed
Til our eyes meet and he scurries into Dog's Mercury
Leaving me with the flat, dried corpse.
Dusk now and last male Blackbird sings full- throated
Then alarms, evoking memories of childhood.
Skipping in the road, scrumping, the milkman's horse.
Calls of 'see you tomorrow', 'don't let the bugbears bite'.

Colour fades , night vision blurs
As Tawny wife 'too-wits' and husband 'too-woos'.
Face white-slashed , Badger sniffs the air emerging from slumber.
He can smell Fox as it passes
And leaves its mark on an ancient stone.

Ritual stone of sacrifice and trysts. Feasts and burials.
All Life is here on the Path, ancient, modern and enduring.
You just have to observe.

Carole Barfoot
