



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

A Guide to Wild Writing & Nature Poetry



PITCURES: MEGAN LOWE, MARTIN WARREN.

Writing poems or verse about wildlife can help us better notice the nature around us, find meaning in our experiences, and express our thoughts and feelings. Whether a butterfly ballad or a poem about pupae, published poet and author **Rebecca Gethin** shares her tips for getting started with wild writing:

A poem might begin with something quite small that I notice which draws my attention. Miniature discoveries are important to me - then comes the fun of finding out more about it. So it might be a bird, a moth, a stone. Be specific if you can... is the bird a blackbird or a buzzard? Moths and flowers have some beautiful names, often specific to a place. Stones are composed of different minerals. Look these things up or ask someone as this information may lead you somewhere.



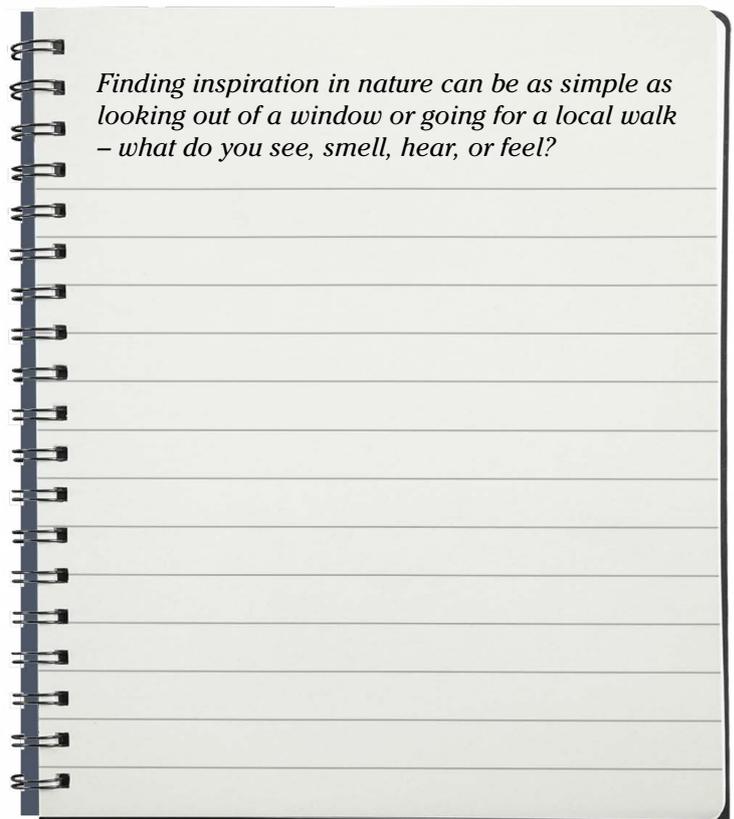
One technique I use is not to always say what it is: for instance I might start off describing a mushroom which can be beautiful but it can also be poisonous and lead to nausea or paralysis. These twists can be useful to a poet and so the mushroom suddenly becomes a metaphor for something else in my life, an edgy relationship or an event that happened in the past. Find a way to add that into your poem to enrich it.

You can design your poem after you have written it: move lines around, cut out words, change the title, decide on length of lines or verses. It's your poem and you can do what you like with it. And it doesn't have to rhyme at all.

Try to think of unusual ways that more precisely describe what you are focussing on: often nature poetry can fall into cliched, everyday images so think about how to freshen up worn-out phrasing so that you can convey your own sense of wonder. Use all your senses or mix them up! Can you smell a colour or hear a flower scent?

Nature poems that are deeply felt are your way of bringing some enchantment to you and your reader. Just get a pen and some paper and write from your heart. Let the mind wander and the pen do your thinking so that your poem may end up somewhere different from your initial thought. And if it doesn't, then that's fine too.

Rebecca Gethin has written 6 poetry publications and two novels. She has been a Hawthornden Fellow and a Poetry School tutor.



For more information and activity guides visit: www.butterfly-conservation.org
Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SC039268)

