

23 October 2020

Dear young person

On my walks since lockdown, I've found myself spending a lot of time with geese.

Now, if you'd told me that when I was your age, I'd have run a mile... Literally! The geese I knew then were farm geese, just like the white geese in story books, and as soon as they saw me coming, they'd chase me down the road!

But in my London neighbourhood, different sorts of geese live by the rivers, canals and ponds.

Canada geese are not to be messed with, mind you – when they have their young, the parents are fierce! But I managed to get just close enough to sketch the adorable little goslings pottering along.

There's a gaggle of them in a local pond and they all go and eat together, a procession of them, from the pond to the patch of grass where they feed, then one of them seems to decide it's time to go back and off they go again, in single file.

They're nosy too. One day, I had my sketchbook in a bag that made a rustling sound and in an instant, I had new feathered friends around my feet, clearly hoping for a snack.

We have Egyptian geese too in my neighbourhood. They have beautiful honey-coloured, dark green and black feathers and they're much gentler creatures. There has been a family of six by the river and I've watched them grow up through the Summer. One day, when the goslings were nearly full-grown, they wandered up to me and they were making little chirruping noises – tiny sounds from enormous great birds!

Another day, I saw the goslings by the water, edging closer, looking as though they were playing a game of 'dare' over who'd go in first...

And then there was the day when I spotted the Canada geese having a lunchtime nap – standing up, on one leg. That was impressive – if I tried that, I'd fall over!

So what have London's geese taught me? Well, they've reminded me that you should never lose your sense of wonder – even when you're old!

Best wishes,
Lydia