

RECLAMATION

A chance to open our eyes to the power of nature on our doorstep



By the canal bridge in Mytholmroyd. Gerard Liston (Samsung Galaxy S21)

It is easy for us to feel helpless when faced with the scale of climate change and biodiversity loss, perhaps hoping some unnamed others will find a solution. But we can be agents of positive change in our own ecosystems through local, small-scale action. If only we will give nature a chance.

Research* reveals that the UK ranks lowest of 14 European countries for 'nature connectedness' and wellbeing and that 'countries with a high level of smartphone ownership were strongly associated with a more distant relationship to nature.' And yet the evidence – including experience during COVID lockdowns – shows that a connection to nature can improve human and planetary wellbeing.

So, 'Reclamation' is a challenge to use our smartphones to take photographs of nature restored, instead of just seeing nature unravelling on our TV screens. It is an opportunity to open our eyes and see nature's ability to recover from man-made development in our own neighbourhood. A free drop-in workshop gives you an opportunity to talk through creative ideas about images with photographer Gerard Liston and to discuss environmental issues with nature conservation expert Paul Knights – both of whom live in the Upper Calder Valley. Above all, you are encouraged to take photographs about reclamation by nature in the Upper Calder Valley, whether that is an ivy-clad chimney or grass growing through the cracks in the pavement.

The collection of photographs will be published as a free online photo book, with a selection displayed during the Hebden Bridge Arts Open Space 70 festival Arts Trail in July.

Submit photographs to gerard@objective.uk.com or Text/WhatsApp on 07973 837 342 by the end of May 2023.

* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/23/britain-ranks-bottom-in-europe-for-nature-connectiveness>

Creative Ideas for Smartphone Photos

'Reclamation' is a challenge to use our smartphones to take photographs of nature restored – to open our eyes and see nature's ability to recover from man-made development in our own neighbourhood. You are invited to start taking photographs now, so here are a few practical tips:

FORGET the apps, filters and effects

Smartphones offer all sorts of software to 'enhance' images, which can easily start looking unreal. Nature is powerful enough and lens quality on modern phones is good enough to avoid the need for such treatment. We just need to open our eyes to what is actually there.

Take A LOT of photographs

When something does catch your eye, don't just take one or two photos and move on. Take more than you think you will need, trying different angles and compositions. It is surprising how the best image stands out when you scroll through them all back at home.

Does the image fulfil THE BRIEF?

When sharing photographs with friends and family, we often explain, 'this is a photograph of ...' But our project is trying to share ideas about the power of nature to reclaim man-made development. Will your photograph get this story across to the viewer?

Get yourself CLOSE to the subject

You might know what one of your photographs is meant to be about. But if there is a lot of irrelevant detail around the main subject, then this will distract the viewer and weaken the image. So, even if it seems a bit strange, get in close to the subject matter.

Photography is about LIGHT

By definition, a photograph involves drawing with light. So, try to use lighting that adds something to your image. Soft lighting can create a sense of gentleness. Strong lighting and back-lighting can add drama. You might even choose a scene with very little light.

Open Space 70 is an environmental arts project running in Spring and Summer 2023, culminating in a festival which runs from 13-16 July, with an Arts Trail happening over the weekend of 15 & 16 July. Find out more at qrco.de/openspace. The project is supported with funding from the National Lottery Platinum Jubilee Fund.

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