

In Memory Giving – Still remembering Naomi Strachan’s passion to pass on the love of wildlife to others.

With the sad departure of Naomi, her sister Becky and husband Andrew wanted to set up a new JustGiving webpage as a memorial for friends and loved ones to remember Naomi by but also supporting a cause she was passionate about and involved with hands on.

Wildlife was one of Naomi's main passions and she spent many a happy hour observing and enjoying plants and animals both locally and further afield and passing on her love for wildlife to others. She had recently helped out with a local bird survey and was keen to support wildlife projects in the local area.

Andrew, Naomi’s husband, kindly wrote for the Trust about his time with her and why she felt it was so important to share her passion of wildlife:

Naomi was diagnosed with stage four cancer in February 2014 and died 14th September just 202 days later, however, she responded well to a relatively new drug which allowed her to have a couple of months in the summer where the tumours had shrunk and she had more energy. During that time we had a week in a cottage on a nature reserve where we came upon Lady's Slipper Orchids and the Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

It was great to witness her joy on seeing the Lady's Slipper Orchids and this tells you something of her passion for the natural world and "being in it". It didn't take long for Naomi to join me and friends hiking and wild camping round Scotland and western islands, usually at the end of May when the midges hadn't really got going but the days were long. We saw otters quite often, but I remember one encounter very strongly. We had found a spot where we could look out to sea and watch the sun go down and just in front of us, no more than 10 metres away, the unmistakable shape of an otters roll broke the glassy surface with its short tail disappearing last. But there were two tumbling and flowing around each other. Finally, one came out of the water onto a submerged rock with a sizable fish, fought the other off and sat there crunching and mashing its way through its meal. We hadn't moved, but I could sense Naomi's excitement and, when it had moved off round the shore, she turned to me, eyes wide and shiny and clunked her cup (of peaty whisky) against mine. No need for words, we just sat there wallowing in the shared experience.

Sharing ran deep in Naomi's life philosophy. For many years she did bird surveys, breeding bird and winter plover, if I remember correctly. She also spent an hour every Sunday morning logging the birds in the garden and recording the sightings. For some of the surveys, she needed to learn birdsong in order to locate them and correctly identify some bird species. It was great walking with her and she used this skill to share her knowledge and delight in birds. She taught at Brooksby Melton College for over twenty five years and took interested staff and students on early morning walks in the grounds pointing out the birds, their behaviours and where they fitted in the ecological life of the environment. We

erected a bench with a carved owl looking over the shoulder of those who sit on it. After we had installed it, I sat for a while and was rewarded by a woodpecker coming close and a kingfisher diving from a branch overhanging the lake. She would have approved.



Naomi loved flowers and plants and was a keen gardener keeping us in seasonal fruit and veg almost all year round. She was a florist when I first met her and won Interflora's Florist of the Year in 1989 and started a teaching course soon after, which led to her teaching floristry at Brooksby Melton. She then became a student there doing the RHS Diploma in horticulture, which broadened her skillset for the college and she taught on a number of other courses.

While she was growing food and cut flowers for her wedding business, she actively gardened for wildlife and was helped in that by the Grantham Canal, which acts as a wildlife corridor. One of our neighbours couldn't manage the whole of her garden but came to an agreement with Naomi that she would leave the end part to grow wild and remove the fence between us. Naomi then changed the end of our garden to have a woodland feel to match our neighbours with a number of native trees and shrubs, or cultivars including apples and plums. We have a pond on which we had a pair of mallards in her last year and which provides a lot of frogs, toads and newts to help keep pests under control - herbicides and pesticides were rarely and selectively used. Naomi made her own compost and fertilizer from garden and kitchen waste augmented with sweepings from the floristry classroom. The rest of the garden is full of native flowering plants and shrubs and cultivars providing a rich mosaic of colour and texture from spring through to the following winter when fruits and seeds provide sustenance for visiting animals.

There are wide varieties of butterflies, moths, dragonflies, bees and other insects, spiders and other invertebrates. Birds visit and nest in and near our patch and watching them gathering nesting materials was one of her big delights and a sign life was on the move again. She was also fascinated with which species were successful - how many fledged and how many broods. Among the many wildlife highlights are: the vixen that raised three cubs under our neighbour's compost heap; a male fox with a kink in its tail has been visiting for years; the sparrowhawks raiding right up to our back windows (She always said having a top predator meant the rest of the wildlife pyramid must be healthy); a lone badger that dug a home under the shed and moved in for a couple of years, disappeared for a few months then came back for a while.



Naomi's wishes

During one of the sisters' last conversations Naomi was concerned that the main emphasis in biology was on human and animal life, and she was eager to emphasise the importance of

looking after plants as well. She felt that it was important to preserve plant diversity as it is/has been the basis for so many medical treatments and in protecting the environment.

Becky kindly arranged for funeral donations to be paid through the personalised JustGiving page and added a photo. It meant friends and loved ones could leave a donation and a personal message to remember Naomi by at a private and quiet time when they were ready.

Donating through JustGiving is simple, fast and totally secure. Your details are safe with JustGiving – they do not sell them on or send unwanted emails. Once you donate, they'll send your money directly to us at Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. So it's the most efficient way to donate – saving time and cutting costs for the charity. Gift Aid can easily be added to any donations made by UK tax payers too with no extra charge to the donor, increasing the value of their donations by 25%.

Becky stated to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust "We found the webpage and site very easy to use and we are glad that it brought in some donations to help with your valuable work."

Naomi and her husband Andrew were very committed to wildlife and Andrew continues to be so. Naomi's in memory JustGiving page remains live long after the funeral for friends and loved ones to visit as and when they feel like. It's a simple and easy way to remember Naomi throughout the year, at both happy and sad anniversaries, from birthdays to memorable walks and wildlife trips, in the knowledge that that the donations are helping to protect wildlife in the county for the future.