



Green shoots of Spring: Fine Feather Press

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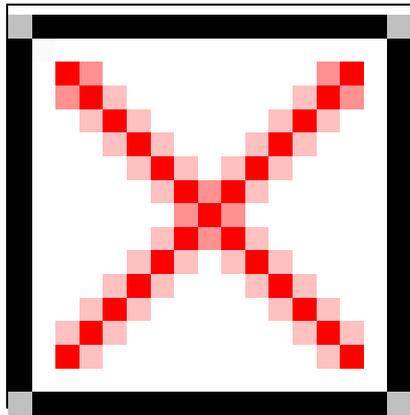
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Byline:

New non-fiction publisher in the spotlight

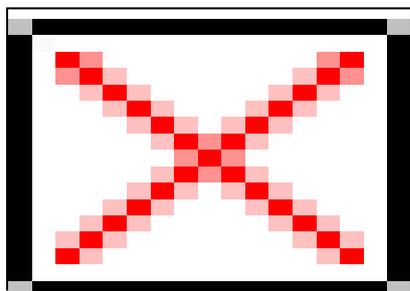
Spring's arrival this year is heralded not just by the appearance of primroses and wood anemones but by a clutch of refreshingly different natural history books. The four **Let's Look** titles - **Seashore, Farm, Woods & Forests, Ponds & Rivers** - from new publisher **Fine Feather Press** make me want to be outside exploring with small children in tow. The spring also marks the first anniversary of **Fine Feather Press**, set up jointly by a duo with a background in book publishing and multimedia.



Andrea Pinnington, joint founder with Caz Buckingham, tells me of their desire to create books that specialise in the natural world. "Our main aim is to get children outside and learning more about the world around them. It's increasingly hard for parents to fight against the lure of screen-based products. We want to offer them more engaging and imaginative formats to share with their children." Neither Andrea nor Caz is against electronic learning per se, but for now they are keen to focus on interactive novelty based books. Both enjoyed childhoods where they were able to play outside from dawn to dusk, but now as parents of teenagers they know how hard it is to allow children to explore on their own, or to tear them away from glowing screens.

Their first title **Get Out!** was launched one year ago, aimed at 5-8 year olds, full of nature puzzles and games. The book reprinted within two months, has earned widespread acclaim from reviewers and continues to sell well. (See **BfK's** 5* review from Margaret Mallett "the sort of nature book I would love to have been given as a child".)

By Autumn 2013 FFP had eight titles in print and a network of sales reps with distributor Bounce. "That was the turning point for us. There's no point in having wonderful children's books sitting in a garage!" says Andrea. "Now our books are available from all major high-street bookshops, outdoor centres and online suppliers."



The books themselves combine novelty elements with information. Stickers and fold-out scenes are interleaved with spreads that include identification, matching pairs, fascinating facts and spotter guides. There are no agency photos here – everything is specially photographed by either Caz or Andrea for use in the books. Their shared love of nature is evident in the blog on their website (www.finefeatherpress.com/ [3]">www.finefeatherpress.com [4]) and it is clear that their enthusiasm to make children look closely at nature is infectious. Above all there is nothing remotely earnest or overtly serious about the books. There is a light touch that ensures it is about active learning through play, having fun while finding out.

The realisation that many children are growing up without even basic knowledge and appreciation of the natural world provides the driving force for FFP. Their concern is shared with organisations like the National Trust who are campaigning to save children's relationships with the outdoors, highlighting the growth of Nature Deficit Disorder, a term coined by US writer Richard Louv to describe a growing dislocation between children and nature. Statistics reveal that fewer than 10% of children play in wild places, down from 50% a generation ago, and the roaming radius for kids has declined by 90% in one generation.

Andrea says "We regard what we do as having two benefits. Our titles help to bring the natural world to young children in a fun and educational way, plus they provide the tools for parents to interact with their children in a way that costs little yet is extremely rewarding."

Caz adds "We produce all the written, photographic and design content ourselves and juggling this with the business side can at times, be challenging. It can seem indulgent to go for a walk on a crisp winter morning, camera in hand, rather than sit in front of our computer screens, but if we didn't get out we'd have nothing to publish! It's certainly a transformation from the days of sitting in endless meetings and we wouldn't swap it for the world." It's heartening too to see a small independent business take root in the face of the ever-expanding giant conglomerates in children's publishing.

The company was recently shortlisted for the IPG newcomer of the Year Award. The judges commented: "**Fine Feather Press** makes the shortlist after establishing itself in its specialism of natural history within a year of launching. The books are beautifully produced with a great sense of nostalgia." So what of future plans? There are titles in production aimed at an older age group and following on from the imaginative **ABC** and **123 Nature Activity Cards**, a wish to produce further materials for pre-schoolers and even board books for babies. Andrea stresses their need and wish to be constantly creative. "We are confident we can build on our success and we will continue to find ways to inspire children to identify with the natural world around them and to empower them to get out and explore it."

Let's Look on the Seashore 978-1-9084-8911-1

Let's Look on the Farm 978-1-9084-8912-8

Let's Look in Woods and Forests 978-1-9084-8914-2

Let's Look in Ponds and Rivers 978-1-9084-8913-5

Let's Look at Birds 978-1-908489-04-3

Let's Look at Butterflies 978-1-908489-05-0

Let's Look at Garden Wildlife 978-1-908489-07-4

Let's Look at Wild Flowers 978-1-908489-06-7

(all £4.99 pbk

ABC Nature Activity Cards 978-1-908489-03-6

123 Nature Activity Cards 978-1-908489-09-8 (each £9.99)

ABC Wall Frieze 978-1-908489-10-4 £6.99

Get Out! 978-1-908489-08-1 £6.99 pbk

Sue Unstead has a background in children's non-fiction publishing and is now an educational consultant and author.

Suggested illustrations:

Let's Look at the Farm ? ?Harder to spot? spread

Let's Look at the Seashore ? What can you find spread

Let's Look at Woods and Forests ? Know your leaves page

Photo of Andrea Pinnington and Caz Buckingham from their website www.finefeatherpress.com/ [3]">
www.finefeatherpress.com [4]

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