

OUT & ABOUT



The Wolf Moon lit by the rising sun in Meadway (Photo: Shelley-Anne Salisbury)

The Wolf Moon

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

Isabelle Ficker sent an email to the HGSList on Sunday 16th January suggesting that 'If skies are clear tomorrow night, look out for the full moon.' By some miracle, the skies were clear and we were treated to the truly spectacular sight of a perfect full moon, resplendent in the cold night air.

This full moon, the first of the year, is called the Wolf Moon and each subsequent full moon has its own name. These names were first used by The Old Farmer's Almanac, an American publication started in 1792 which contained information about all sorts of things: planting charts, recipes, moon and sunrise times and weather forecasts; it aimed to be 'useful and entertaining'. The Moon names that it used (and which we still use today) came from Native Americans.

The January Moon was the Wolf Moon because the howling of wolves was often heard at this time of year. It was traditionally thought that wolves 'lamented the scarcity of food in midwinter', but we know today that wolves howl to define territory, locate pack members, reinforce social bonds and gather for hunting. Sadly there were no howling wolves in the Suburb... or were there?

For the Selenophiles, below is the list of full moon dates. The Strawberry and the Buck moons are of particular interest as they will be supermoons. They occur when the moon's elliptical orbit brings it closest to Earth, making it appear 14 per cent larger and about 30 per cent brighter.

Full moon dates for 2022: January 17 – Wolf Moon; February 16 – Snow Moon; March 18 – Worm Moon; April 16 – Pink Moon; May 16 – Flower Moon; June 14 – Strawberry Moon; July 13 – Buck Moon; August 11 – Sturgeon Moon; September 10 – Harvest Moon; October 9 – Hunter's Moon; November 8 – Beaver Moon; December 7 – Cold Moon



An amazing photograph of the Wolf Moon shot from the Suburb, with a little artistic licence taken by Suburb News! (Photo: Peter McCluskie)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

To my absolute amazement, I saw a green bird in my garden! Now, there is a lot of green in the garden but it is usually in the flora, not the fauna. Birds tend to be brown or black or grey, though the small birds do provide a flash of colour like the red of a robin's breast or the blue yellow and white of a blue tit but, to see an exotic apple-green bird was totally unexpected and made me wonder whether it was a figment of my imagination. I then remembered that I am, mostly, a sensible person so I did the sensible thing and consulted the internet typing 'green birds north London'. The World Wide Web assured me that the green bird was real. It is a ring-necked parakeet, specifically the Indian subspecies which glories in the name *Psittacula krameri manillensis*. Theories as to how or when the

parakeets ended up living in London abound. One of my favourites is that they escaped during the filming of The African Queen (1951). While most of the film was shot on location in Uganda and the Congo, about half the film was shot at Isleworth Studios in Middlesex and the birds were needed to provide local colour, although, having watched the film recently, I don't recall seeing any parakeets. Another story is that Jimi Hendrix released a breeding pair during a 1960s Carnaby Street stunt. Unfortunately, there is no record of such a stunt. The truth is probably more prosaic; parakeets have been popular pets since, at least, Victorian times and some of them must have escaped or been accidentally or intentionally released and, somehow, managed to thrive in London. Perhaps that is not as surprising as it first seems, London is the world's first 'National Park City', it has 35,000

acres of parks, commons, woodlands, wetlands, cemeteries, allotments, gardens and of course a garden suburb. These green spaces offer a range of habitats and lots of opportunities for feeding from nuts, seeds, fruit and berries, not to mention the offerings on bird feeders. But, surely, the weather must have been a problem for such a tropical bird? In fact, the parakeets' native range includes Nepal so London's weather is not a problem.

Parakeets have now become the UK's only naturalised parrot. One could argue that they are illegal immigrants whose presence may adversely affect the indigenous fauna. Or you could choose a different narrative, these elegant, exotic newcomers have beaten the odds, at a time when the dominant stories are of disappearance, loss and collapse, these birds are thriving and are a living source of marvel, mystery and wonder; besides, they truly love the Suburb, their favourite perch in the garden? The apple tree.



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