

Tim Dee

Writer - Non-fiction

Tim Dee was born in Liverpool in 1961. He has worked as a BBC radio producer for twenty years and divides his life between Bristol and Cambridge. He is the author of [THE RUNNING SKY](#) (2009) and [FOUR FIELDS](#) (2013).



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Publications

Non-Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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**GREENERY:
JOURNEYS IN
THE
SPRINGTIME**

2020

Jonathan Cape

A masterpiece of nature writing from the author of *The Running Sky*.

Greenery begins in a midsummer in the middle of a winter. One December, in midsummer South Africa, Tim Dee watched swallows and those birds set him off on a journey in pursuit of the spring as it moves north, bringing swallows and all the other spring migrant birds out of Africa and into Europe.

Spring moves north across the Europe from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Ocean at roughly fifty kilometres a day between the winter and the summer solstice. We could call that four kilometres an hour for twelve hours each day. Spring, therefore, moves north at about walking pace.

Greenery follows swallows and other favoured birds out of Africa from their wintering quarters in South Africa, through their staging places in Chad and Ethiopia, across the colossal and incomprehensible Sahara, and on into Europe. It tries to keep company with the birds and with other animals including some people for whom spring has been the determining season. We hear from a Sámi reindeer herder, a swallow-devotee, an Egyptian taxi-driver, a chronobiologist in arctic Norway. We read of the spring-seeking D. H. Lawrence and of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Migrant storks join the swallows and venture the Straits of Gibraltar. Migrant honey buzzards dodge Sicilian hunters and the lava wastes of Mount Etna. A wait in a hide for a bear that does not come allows a vision of how nature goes when we are not there to crowd it out. On the other side of the European continent, the curious North Sea island of Heligoland is a haven for sea-going landbirds on their tricky northbound journeys. There are bears, there are boars, there are reindeer, there are camels, there are elephants, there are ostriches... A diary of the spring's arrival and passage through Britain interleaves the continental greening.

Greenery ends where the greenery of the European spring ends: on the shores of the Arctic Ocean in northern Scandinavia, where, yes, there are swallows in midsummer as there were in Cape Town in December.

LANDFILL

2018

Little Toller

In *LANDFILL*, Tim Dee argues that rubbish tips sustain life and offer an alternative view of how we should treat any species who dares to live so closely among humans. About the book, Tim Dee says: 'I have been a lifelong birdwatcher but more recently I have found myself spending time watching people watching birds. Gulls in Britain are no longer seagulls and I've been fascinated in the last decade by the various ways that these birds have come ashore and come closer to us. In some ways they seem to have become more like us than any other bird. We might now evolve together.'

GROUND WORK

2018

Jonathan Cape

A timely collection of the best British nature writing newly commissioned by one of the great authorities on the subject.

We are living in the anthropocene – an epoch where everything is being determined by the activities of just one soft-skinned, warm-blooded, short-lived, pedestrian species. How best to live in the ruins that we have made?

This anthology of commissioned work tries to answer this as it explores new and enduring cultural landscapes, in a celebration of local distinctiveness that includes new work from some of our finest writers. We have memories of childhood homes from Adam Thorpe, Marina Warner and Sean O'Brien; we journey with John Burnside to the Arizona desert with Tim Ingold to the Canadian Arctic; going from Tessa Hadley's hymn to her London garden to caving in the Mendips with Sean Borodale to shell-collecting on a Suffolk beach with Julia Blackburn.

Helen Macdonald, in her remarkable piece on growing up in a 50-acre walled estate, reflects on our failed stewardship of the planet: 'I take stock.' she says, 'During this sixth extinction, we who may not have time to do anything else must write now what we can, to take stock.' This is an important, necessary book.

FOUR FIELDS

2013

Jonathan Cape

In his first book since the acclaimed *The Running Sky*, Tim Dee tells the story of four green fields. Four fields spread around the world: their grasses, their hedges, their birds, their skies, and their natural and human histories. Four real fields - walkable, mappable, man-made, mowable and knowable, but also secretive, mysterious, wild, contested and changing. Four fields - the oldest and simplest and truest measure of what a man needs in life - looked at, thought about, worked in, lived with, written.

Dee's four fields, which he has known for more than twenty years, are the fen field at the bottom of his Cambridgeshire garden, a field in southern Zambia, a prairie field in Little Bighorn, Montana, USA, and a grass meadow in the exclusion zone at Chernobyl, Ukraine. Meditating on these four fields, Dee makes us look anew at where we live and how. He argues that we must attend to what we have made of the wild, to look at and think about the way we have messed things up but also to notice how we have kept going alongside nature, to listen to the conversation we have had with grass and fields.

Four Fields is a profound, lyrical book by one of Britain's very best writers about nature.

THE RUNNING SKY

2009

Jonathan Cape

The Running Sky records a lifetime of looking at birds. Beginning in summer with clouds of breeding seabirds in Shetland and ending with crepuscular nightjars like giant moths in the heart of England, Tim Dee maps his own observations and encounters over four decades of tracking birds across the globe. He tells of near-global birds like sparrows, starlings and ravens, and exotic species, like electrically coloured hummingbirds in California and bee-eaters and broadbills in Africa. In doing so he brilliantly restores us to the primacy of looking, the thrill of watching, and takes us outside, again and again, to stand - with or without binoculars - under the storm of life over our heads, and to marvel once more at what is flying about us.
