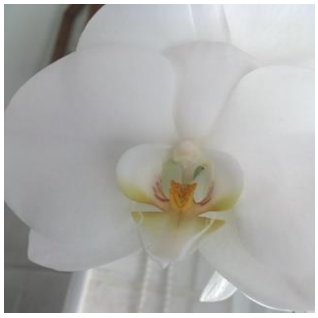
Dear friends

March is such an uplifting month when snowdrops, aconites and daffodils start blooming hearlding spring albeit sometimes with wild winds as we leave the dark evenings of winter behind. Little wonder, then, when the awakening of spring arrives it brings joy with the promise of wonderful dawn skies (as seen in the photo received from a dear friend) with the promise of warmer days. *"A breathtaking dawn view from Gianicolo Hill, Rome which serves to create an atmosphere of pleasent optimism and to lead us back to the moment, the precious moment of life that in its essence passes to make us alive and happy".* As winter thaws into spring it certainly intensifies activity in the garden as my resident woodpeckers have suddernly got into action busy tap-tapping away at the tree barks establishing their territory. Also, sightings of muntjac and wild deer returning in the evening and early morning, a sure sign that the grass has started growing again and further mallards have taken up residency prepared to begin nesting in March.

I cannot believe that my first 'Notes from the wilds of Suffolk' commenced in March 2020 and here we are a year later still experiencing COVID-19 and its consequences on our day to day life with many people and families anxious about what the future holds for them. Regrettably, we remain with restricted measures imposed by government requiring people to continue to adhere to the current recommendations. However, on the positive side vaccines are working well and we have witnessed infection levels falling since the start of the year. Plus, the latest UK government briefings certainly offer hope as the Prime Minister's latest roadmap showing rules will be lifted in stages, this proposes some form of returned normality as the PM indicated that spring and summer would be "seasons of hope, looking and feeling incomparably better for us all."

As our lives currently continue to be restricted, for me positive thinking and effective communication can't be understated as it is an emotional and mental attitude that makes one focus on what is appropriate. I certainly feel uplifted when friends and family make contact for a good chat and catch up especially if the calls are virtual. Since March 2020 our interconnected digital usage has increased especially within the older age groups as technology has become an important feature in our modern day lives. Many elders have learnt and adjusted to becoming digitally minded with productive ways of staying independent through virtual communication with loved ones, friends and neighbours, replacing physical interaction effectively from their own home during the pandemic has been tremendous.

Most importantly regardless of age everyone has an emotional need to be cared for and during times of social distancing, it is especially important to stay connected remembering our friends, colleagues and family. Especially as so many people who live alone and reliant on their families and friends in their everyday lives for social contact may well experience mixed emotions leading to uncertainty, anxiety and a deep sense of loneliness. A simple phone call or video chat could certainly help one feel less lonely or isolated and from personal experience the calls are greatly appreciated *"Time passes unhindered. When we make mistakes, we cannot turn the clock back and try again. All we can do is use the present well." Dalai Lama*



As I close my March note you are all very much in my thoughts in these extraordinary times and I am sending my warmest regards.

Ellie