

# The Southern Yarn

June/July 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

## downundercalendar

### JULY

#### *Annual Pool Party*

Sorry, not likely this year. Stay cool, stay safe.

### AUGUST

#### *Annual Golf Tournament*

Possibly... stay tuned to updates on our website and by email.



Beau and Jenny. Photo: Corinne Napper

#### *Bushfire Fundraiser Video*

Brian Rougeau has been working on a video that features the entire event from start to finish including musical entertainment, prizes, interviews, guests, food and the venue. The video is almost complete and as soon as it is available, it will be posted online and we will send everyone a link. Stay tuned!



## Thinking of you, dear friend

It's hard to believe you've been gone near a full year, Gord. We often talk about you and laugh about your many sayings and antics, and the DUCW doesn't feel at all the same without you.

I've been wondering what you would have made of the current situation. Not being able to attend live performances at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, keeping six feet from family and friends, watching ANZAC Day commemorations rather than participating in them, no TGIFs at the Mess at 17 Wing, and no DUCW meetings for what seems like an inordinate amount of time, even though it's only been a few months. Hard to believe it has come to this, but as we all know, things change whether we want them to or not.

As for the newsletter, well, it has been our constant. Charlie has been putting it

together, Brian has laid it out and had it printed, Norm has been stuffing the envelopes and mailing them out, and we have been devouring every issue. There's only been two since all this started, but as you always said, "The newsletter is the glue that holds this club together." And while we're not really sure where things will go in the next while, one thing's for certain - the DUCW we know and love is not going anywhere, and we owe much of that to you.

Thinking of you on June 25, Gord. We are forever grateful for knowing you as our dear friend.

Much love,  
Your mates in the DUCW

If you didn't get a chance to read the words shared on behalf of the DUCW at Gord's memorial service last year, take a look now. A year has passed, but the sentiment remains the same - <http://downunderclub.mb.ca/thank-you-gordon-keatch/>

- Jenny Gates

online



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## editorially yours

Charlie Powell



One thing I enjoy about this “job” (as editor of *The Yarn* newsletter) is hunting for good news stories to share. So, it is encouraging to find a good number of sites devoted to offering just that. You will find some of them in the following pages.

It is also fortunate that the pandemic lockdown doesn't apply to the birds! The spring migration this year brought many favourite visitors through our suburban yard again. We have even been treated to some new (for us) sightings. If you are



“friends” on Facebook you will have seen our first-time **indigo bunting** guest.

Another pleasant surprise was in early April when we dared an outing to St Vital

Park. We stayed in the car and parked beside the Red River watching geese avoid ice chunks that were still floating by. Movement, closer, in the dry leaves under an evergreen caught our eye. The camera zoom revealed that, no, it wasn't a squirrel, but a weird bird, which I had to look up later at home. Judging by their range, I would say that we were very lucky to spot an American woodcock this far west – certainly uncommon, if not rare. So that little comic, which I think is the closest we have in North America to a kiwi, is the subject of “Birds I view” on p.8.

Jenny Gates' front page reminiscence on Gordon Keatch brought to mind what brought him to Canada in the first place. So, in ‘getting to know’ over the next couple of issues, we will learn about The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Always pleased to receive newsy contributions from members, so thank you to Lucia for sharing her recent travel experience, on p. 7. Also, thank you to other contributors, our advertisers and you the readers.

## president's ramblings

Peter Munn



Two months on from my last report, and life has changed a lot in that time. Margaret and I were self-isolating for most of that time, picking up online ordered groceries from the Superstore parking lot, using rubber gloves/disinfectant/masks for protection, and generally being careful. With restrictions easing, it's nice to actually see the family and grandkids in person now, rather than on a Zoom call. And to chat with the neighbours over the back fence.

Probably everyone has a story to tell of how Covid-19 has affected them or someone they know. My younger son Tyler had to

postpone his May wedding in Toronto, to when he doesn't know. I run a golf tournament, and the decision was made to cancel it this year because it could not be run in the style which has been the custom for the past 40 years, allowing for current social distancing requirements. And the saddest of all, today I received news from a good friend, of her mother's illness and passing while in a seniors facility, and how the family was not able to gather around the mother at the time due to Covid-19 restrictions.

But summer is coming at last, so good for everyone to get outside, get warm, and enjoy the loosened social restrictions. Take care, and stay safe.

Peter



Due to the rapidly evolving global COVID-19 situation, the Province of Manitoba has announced that all Manitoba 150 initiated events are being paused until 2021. Funding will remain in place to support community projects and events when public health advises it is once again safe to hold large public gatherings.

Like all Manitobans, we are focused on the critical health and economic issues facing our province and country, and understand the difficult choices that have to be made.

We look forward to gathering with friends and family, relaxing to music with a Manitoba heartbeat, and being united in celebration once it is again safe to do so. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

The year 2020 marks 150 years since Manitoba became Canada's fifth province, the only province to enter Confederation under Indigenous leadership. Manitoba 150 supports programs and events that cultivate pride in our province, foster a profound connection with our diverse cultures and, above all, unite us in celebration. [link]

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## On the Page with Macca

I recently rediscovered Ian McNamara, host of the ABC's "Australia All Over". In fact, I'm listening to one of his podcasts as I type this piece.

When the editor of our wonderful newsletter was looking for content for the next issue of the *Yarn*, I glanced at my



bookcase and saw McNamara's book "On the Road with Macca". Inside, I found tons of stories and poems and even a play. And while I have some ideas for the play, I thought I would share a poem by Patrick Haddock (GyMEA, NSW). A few years back I turned this poem into a song that Gerry Gordon and I performed as Up From Down Under. I did add a chorus, but here is Patrick's poem as originally written for you to enjoy.

– Jenny Gates

## What Australia Means to Me

It's the kookaburra's laugh at dawn,  
The feeling of wool freshly shorn,  
The taste of damper, billy tea,  
The golden sand and crashing sea.

Great Barrier Reef, Uluru,  
The emu, koala and kangaroo,  
We pray for rain, but dread the flood,  
We breathe the dust and curse the mud.

The lucky country wide and free,  
Given to us at Gallipoli,  
It's a spirit, a feeling of pride,  
So many have fought, so many have died.

It's the rising sun on an April morning,  
The 'Last Post' plays as the day is dawning.  
It's mateship, honour, the freedom to be  
An Australian. My country was given to me.

– Patrick Haddock



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## Valuable, safer Aussie vanilla grown in high tech dome

[Source: ABC News, Sean Murphy, 9 May 2020] Inventor David Soo had no idea his life would change dramatically after having dinner with an old friend in Far North Queensland. The Sydney-based engineer's dining partner was a local chef, who had a narrow escape from harm in Papua New Guinea, where he was robbed by bow-and-arrow-wielding bandits.

"He had an export license for vanilla in PNG," Mr Soo said.

"On his last trip, he got ambushed after he'd paid the money and was taking the vanilla beans back down to the city.

"He said he didn't want to do it anymore because it's too dangerous and I thought, 'Well why can't we do it here in Australia?'"

Mr Soo discovered that vanilla was in hot demand.

It sells for about \$600 a kilogram and is the second-most lucrative spice crop in the world, behind saffron.

Discovering a voracious market was one thing; the challenge was developing a commercially viable way to grow the sometimes tricky and labour-intensive crop.

The solution Mr Soo is developing is a custom-designed, 350-cubic-metre greenhouse, with controlled growing conditions that can be adjusted by mobile device.

Now three years into a pilot project on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Mr Soo is growing about 200 vanilla vines in a patented geodesic dome greenhouse.

He claims the vines are growing three times faster than in a plantation environment. [Read more online]



## Laughing during lockdown ...

[Source: The Guardian, Naaman Zhou: 27May2020] An Australian man has used his time in lockdown to create a 750kg sculpture of a laughing kookaburra that he says will bring joy to the community in bleak times.

Dr Farvardin Daliri, an academic and artist, debuted the huge bird this week on the streets of Brisbane, and will soon take it north to the Townsville Cultural Festival.

"I started making it during Christmas," he said. "Then the design was altered and I decided to have it laughing, with movement and stuff. It didn't get completed. But when the lockdown started I had time to basically make it laugh."

Daliri, who is from Townsville but had been in Brisbane due to travel restrictions, said the bird had been designed for a festival celebrating multiculturalism and community.

Born in Iran, Daliri studied sculpture in India before migrating to Australia, and has also created a giant carpet snake, which is a tourist attraction in Burdekin.

"It's a work of love," he told *Guardian Australia*. "The festival in Townsville, 25 years old, has 'unity in diversity' as its motto.

"Native animals and birds, we relate to all of them in the same way. It is a point of transition - from 'I'm a migrant' to 'I've arrived'. These totems make us feel like we've arrived.

"This is the common ground - the land and habitat, owned by Indigenous people for thousands of years. That's what it is. In this land, birds laugh at us."

The giant bird will now join the ranks of Australia's other famous "big things" - from the Big Merino to the Big Banana to the Big Watermelon. [Read more online]

At more than 91 years of age, Norm Marston is almost certainly Australia's oldest active regional newspaper owner and editor. He started work at *The Courier* in Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills in October 1952 on his 24th birthday, and has been with the paper ever since. "I think once you're in it, you can't get out of it," he said. Most Tuesday nights, he can still be found on the printing plant floor, checking on the newspaper his family has owned for more than 60 years. - Prue Adams, ABC News. [Read more online]



## The Courier - a 140 year family survivor story in SA

Two families with a strong newspaper heritage and powerful commitment to their local community have dominated ownership of *The Courier* for most of its 140-year history.

Current owners, the Marston family, first became involved more than 60 years ago on October 30, 1952. But *The Courier's* original owners, the Dumas family, ran the broadsheet newspaper for 58 years from its foundation on October 1, 1880.

The first edition of *The Courier* was printed as a broadsheet on October 1, 1880, by Charles Dumas, then aged 30. In 1898 he was elected to parliament and served the province until he retired in 1902. Charles edited the paper for more than 50 years until his death in 1935.

His daughter, Una, ran the family business until 1938 when Mr and Mrs T. Monger purchased the business and from May 12 that year they printed and published *The Courier* on Thursday afternoons. It was soon after this the paper was altered in size to its current tabloid format. Harry Edmondson and Eric Perry purchased the newspaper from the Mongers in April, 1946, and engaged Harry J. Peake as editor. Mr Peake went on to own the Naracoorte Herald during the mid-50s.

The Marstons entered the business in 1952 when Frank Teare Marston bought Mr Edmondson's shares. Current general manager Norman Marston (Frank's eldest son) was the production manager then and managed the Marston interest until his father sold his other newspapers at Burra and Eudunda to move to Mt Barker.

In 1954 the Marston family become sole proprietors after it acquired the Perry shares. [Read more online]





## Underwater water

[Source: *Science Alert*, David Nield, 22 Mar 2020] A rare freshwater reserve has been discovered underneath the sea off the coast of the South Island of New Zealand, which could help head off future droughts and mitigate the impact of climate change in the coming years.

The offshore freshened groundwater (OFG) was discovered through a combination of seismology and electromagnetic wave scanning techniques, which were used to build up a 3D map of the aquifer under the sea.

While the precise water capacity has yet to be calculated, the researchers think the system could be holding as much as 2,000 cubic kilometres (or nearly 480 cubic miles) of freshwater – that's 800 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, or more than Lake Ontario.

Its location is particularly fortunate, with the wider Canterbury region facing increased pressure from a growing population and extended dry periods. The vast freshwater reservoir could account for half the groundwater in Canterbury, the researchers say.

The research has been published in *Nature Communications* and *Nature*. [Read NC online] and [read N online]



Sir Michael Jones signs the rugby ball, watched by Bernie McCahill, left, and Rob Comer

## Charity Ball ...

[Source: *Make Lemonade*: Kip Brook, 28 May 2020] **Auckland** – A rugby ball signed by All Blacks and other stars sold at auction last night for \$724 which will go towards a teenage seven-handicap golfer who is preparing for the 2023 Special Olympics in Berlin.

The money raised will help Mitchell Brown, 17, from Great Barrier Island, get to Auckland and back for golf practice in the lead up to the Olympics.

Auction organiser Rob Comer says he received help for the ball signing before the

auction from former World Cup winning All Black Bernie McCahill.

Among those who signed the ball were Sir John Kirwan, Zinzan Brooke, Melodie Robinson, Joe Stanley, Bryan Williams, Marc Ellis, Jeff Wilson, Robin Brooke, Sir Michael Jones, Stephen Kearney, David Campese, Craig Innes, John Hart, Laurie Knight, Allan Whetton, Mona-Lisa Urquhart, Ric Salizzo, Justine Lavea and McCahill.

Brown, who studies at the island's learning hub, has considerable travel expenses having to fly on and off Great Barrier Island to get to training. His father Mike and his partner Erika own a cafe on the island called My Fat Puku.

Comer, an ex-firefighter, dive instructor, police officer and private investigator says Great Barrier Island is a small community and having the charity auction is the type of thing they do to support others when in need.

"I just want to help and Bernie has been fantastic in getting the ball signed by all his mates. Now, more than ever, we need to come together as a community to support our youngest in their dreams and ambitions for the future." [Read more online]



## Little Free Stick Library

[Source: *Good News Network*, McKinley Corbely, 21 Dec 2019] Dogs may be man's best friend, but let's not forget that the faithful fetching stick is a dog's *other* best friend.

So when 59-year-old Andrew Taylor noticed that there was a lack of good sticks at his local park, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

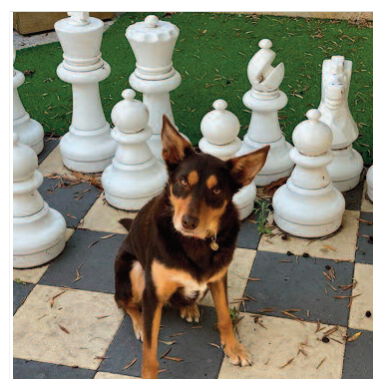
The dad from Kaiapoi, New Zealand had been chopping off excess branches from some trees in his yard when he decided to make them into a "Stick Library" for all the local pups.

After chopping up the branches into several dozen conveniently-sized pieces, he put them into a hand-crafted box emblazoned with the words "Stick Library: Please Return" and brought it to the park.

Since Taylor and his daughter hosted a small neighbourhood inauguration party for

the Stick Library, more than 50 dogs and their owners have enjoyed a game of fetch with the sticks.

"As people started to arrive, there was a disbelief of how simple the idea was, but it's one of those ideas no one had thought of," said Taylor's daughter Tayla Reece. "All the dog owners appreciate it, as they all have experienced the 'good stick search', which isn't always fruitful. It's an idea that just makes sense to them." [More online]



## BushYarn

One of those commercial traveller blokes was driving out in the backblocks when he spied a swagman's campsite by the side of the road.

Pulling over, he couldn't help but notice that the swagman had a chess board set up on an upturned orange crate and sitting opposite him was a red kelpie.

The commercial traveller watched in amazement as the swaggie and the dog were concentrating on the game.

"That's a mighty clever dog you've got there," the traveller offered.

"I dunno about that," growled the swagman indignantly. "I beat him as often as he beats me."

[Source: *Classic Bush Yarns* by Warren Fahey, 2001]

## The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan ...

In 1939, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had a dream which he believed was a sign of “the power of the airplane in determining ultimate victory” for the war effort. That dream became a reality in the form of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). Across the country, Canadians mobilized to take part in this gigantic undertaking – an army of experts had to be assembled, airfields developed and equipment, including airplanes, had to be obtained. Between 1940 and 1945, some 151 schools had been established across Canada with a ground organization of 104,113 men and women. Thousands of members of the Royal Canadian Air Force – Women’s Division trained and worked at BCATP facilities, learning ground trades and doing important support work for the program and the operation of the air bases.

By the end of the Second World War, the BCATP had produced 131,553 aircrew, including pilots, wireless operators, air gunners, and navigators for the Air Forces of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The challenge was formidable.

But when the free world needed a champion, Canada answered the call.

At the start of the Second World War, the British Government looked to the Dominions for air training help because the United Kingdom did not have the space to accommodate training and operational facilities, and because aerodromes in the United Kingdom were vulnerable to enemy attack. In comparison with Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, Canada offered particular advantages: its proximity to Britain allowed for easier transportation of men and equipment; Canada had a larger capacity to manufacture aircraft; and Canadian industries had easy access to the U.S. market for aircraft parts.

Upon considering the United Kingdom’s



September 1939 proposal, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King believed the training plan would be “the most essential military action that Canada could undertake.” It was an opportunity for the Canadian government to make a significant commitment to the Allied war effort without repeating the dark legacies of the

drome opening schedule. To accommodate its shortage of foreign currency, the United Kingdom paid its portion by supplying and transporting necessary materials that Canada could not provide, such as aircraft, spare parts, airframes, and engines.

When the BCATP came to a close on 31 March 1945, the four participating governments had spent \$2.2 billion on the training plan, \$1.6 billion of which was Canada’s share. After the war, the Canadian government calculated that the United Kingdom owed Canada over \$425 million for running British schools transferred to Canada and for purchasing aircraft and other equipment when Britain could not provide the necessary numbers. By March 1946, the Canadian government cancelled Britain’s debt, absorbing the cost itself.



First World War: stalemated trench warfare, unprecedented casualties, and conscription to replace the depleted troops. According to King’s initial conception of the BCATP, volunteers for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) would remain in Canada, training recruits from other parts of the Commonwealth (namely the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand). King could keep his no conscription promise and still help the Allies.

The final agreement – signed by Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand on 17 December 1939 – listed the percentage of trainees each country would send, the percentage of costs each would take on, the training schedule, and the aero-

### And of relevance to the DUCW

The mingling of residents and trainees often permanently altered the demographics of a community. When local women married airmen from Britain, Australia, or New Zealand, the new wives would leave their community and move to her husband’s country. Conversely, many grooms relocated to Canada after the war, bringing with them different cultures and customs. By the end of the war, more than 3,750 RAF, RAAF, and RNZAF members found Canadian wives. [Read more online]



## There and Back Again

Having recently returned from an extended stay in NZ, the trip back was certainly a very different travel experience.

My first attempt to return earlier than planned, due to the rapid spread of Covid-19 and messages from the Government of Canada urging all Canadians abroad to return home as soon as possible, ended with being notified the day before I was due to fly out that two of my four flights had been cancelled. The crucial one being LAX to Calgary. All direct flights to Vancouver were sold out and AirNZ was suspending that route from March 30 to June 30. It has recently advised a further suspension until August 31.

Being apprehensive about coming through LA because of the possibility of being stuck there due to further flight cancellations to Canada, I decided not only for my peace of mind, but also my family and friends, to stay put and enjoy the comparative safety of the NZ environment, and have extra time with some of the family.

April turned out to be one of the three warmest months in the past 100 years, so I was able to go for long walks each day, while enjoying beautiful harbour and ocean views, and the physical benefits of a hilly terrain. Thankfully the good weather continued into May.

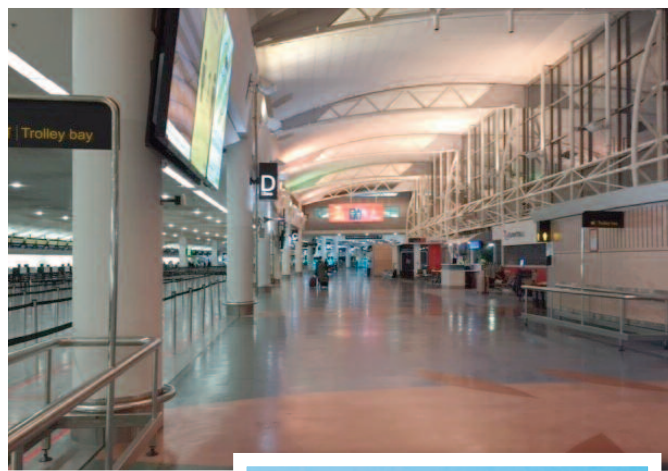
Finally returning home, all five airports I went through were like ghost towns, with very few passengers and staff. Passengers

were well-spaced out on all the flights, and despite restrictions, AirNZ service to LA was superb. This was probably the most hassle free trip I've done ... although eerie to see the airports so empty. It was a definite positive not having to fight for position with hundreds of other travellers. I even found the Electronic Border Security personnel in LA and Vancouver very friendly and accommodating!

It is times such as these that reinforces to me the benefits of booking through a good travel agent, especially for international travel. Jason Webb from Downunder Travel, a long-time Partner and friend of the DUCW, was amazing and I will be forever grateful to him for his support throughout the challenges of this trip, as well as resolving hiccups on the way over in January after a delayed departure from Winnipeg.

I have used Downunder Travel for many years, especially for travel anywhere in the South Pacific, and absolutely recommend them because they are so knowledgeable and helpful.

– Lucia Barron



Top: Auckland International Airport Check-in area.  
Above: Lucia on a daily walk in Wellington.

## Did you know ...

The Anzac biscuit is a sweet biscuit, popular in Australia and New Zealand, made using rolled oats, flour, sugar, butter (or margarine), golden syrup, baking soda, boiling water, and (optionally) desiccated coconut. Anzac biscuits have long been associated with the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) established in World War I.

It has been claimed that biscuits were sent by wives and women's groups to soldiers abroad because the ingredients do not spoil easily and the biscuits kept well during naval transportation. However, this information has been contradicted with the claim that Anzac biscuits were never sent to soldiers and were instead eaten by Australians and Kiwis at home in order to raise funds for the war. In general, it is unclear which of these two competing claims is true. However, evidence has been found which suggests that soldiers were sent homemade biscuits during World War I, suggesting that they could likely have been sent Anzac biscuits.

Anzac biscuits should not be confused with hardtack, which was nicknamed "ANZAC wafers" in Australia and New Zealand. [Source: Wikipedia]





Left: American Woodcock, photo: The Cornell Lab. Right: American Woodcock, photo: C. Powell

## birds*i*view...

by Charlie Powell

### American Woodcock

The Cornell Lab offers the following description: American Woodcocks are plump, short-legged shorebirds with very long, straight bills. Their large heads, short necks, and short tails give them a bulbous look on the ground and in flight. The wings are broad and rounded compared to most other shorebirds.

They are well-camouflaged in light brown, black, buff, and gray-brown tones. The face is buffy, the crown blackish. They are light gray across the neck and back, with dark-and-light patterned shoulders and brown wings. The underparts are buffy to almost orange.

American Woodcock spend most of their time hidden in fields and on the forest floor, where they probe for earthworms. They often rock back and forth while walking along the ground. On spring nights, males perform very conspicuous displays, giving a buzzy peent call, then launching into the air. Their erratic display flight includes a distinctive, twittering flight sound and ends with a steep dive back to the ground. [More online]

According to Wikipedia, the primary breeding range extends from Atlantic Canada (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick) west to southeastern Manitoba, and south to northern Virginia, western North Carolina, Kentucky, northern Tennessee, northern Illinois, Missouri, and eastern Kansas. A limited number of woodcock breed as far south as Florida and Texas. The species may be expanding its distribution northward and westward. [more online]

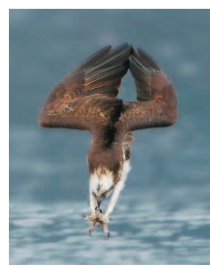
Thank you for your patience as members of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg, as we all make adjustments to rules relating to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and all the risks associated with gatherings. The DUCW executive will continue to monitor rules and risks, and reschedule and/or adapt our activities accordingly. We trust that your connections in New Zealand and Australia are well, and that you are staying in touch to compensate for any travel plans that might have been impacted. Stay healthy!

A poem reproduced from the  
*Bangor News*, 25th March, 2020:

### Dusk Dance

Last night at dusk, I thought ... "Perchance ...  
I'll go and watch the woodcock dance!"  
The field, a rock strewn, rolling moor  
Transformed into his ballroom floor  
Lit by a full moon's silver sheen,  
His stage glowed blue with hints of green.  
The peeper backup played along,  
As the woodcock sang his nasal song...  
Repeated wordless, love-struck cries  
Then he exploded toward the skies...  
His circling whir a siren's song  
To lure his lady...but 'fore long  
He dropped to earth to then begin  
His springtime repertoire again.  
All through the dusk he sings, then flies  
And dances in the soft spring skies.  
My evening walk was much enhanced ...  
I was in the field when the woodcock danced!

[Read online]



### Reader feedback ...

Malcolm in Canberra sent in this bright creation. And Chris and Tara shared a great shot of an osprey in action.



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