

January

I'm a bit later than usual with this, but immediately after Christmas the weather was a bit dull and wet. However the last couple of days have been crisp and clear with cold starlit nights and frost.



This was a walk along the Mardyke Valley earlier this week. The ponds were frozen and there was a clear straight line between the meadow warmed by the sun and the bit in the shadow of the road bridge.



That is a sculpture (obviously); this isn't Texas – our heron are no bigger than anyone elses.



I have not yet found out what this bush is. There was a lot of them, along paths I have also walked in spring and summer, so whatever it is it is common and (when I find out) I expect the name will be familiar.

Emmonsail's Heath in Winter ~ John



I love to see the old heath's withered brake
Mingle its crimped leaves with furze and ling,
While the old heron from the lonely lake
Starts slow and flaps his melancholy wing,
And oddling crow in idle motions swing
On the half-rotten ash tree's topmost twig,
Beside whose trunk the gipsy makes his bed.
Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig
Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread;
The fieldfares chatter in the whistling thorn
And for the haw round fields and closen rove,
And coy bumbarrels, twenty in a drove,
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain
And hang on little twigs and start again.

The bumbarrel is a long-tail tit. Emmonsail's Heath was near John Clare's home village of Helpston; it has since been claimed for arable farmland.

Photographs E Weatherwax England 2017