



Winter's tails

BY STUART WINTER Follow him on twitter: @birdman or email stuart.winter@express.co.uk

Help end the horror of illegal songbird traps

A FRAGILE blackcap nestled in the sunbabe, the aged call of the wild urging it to fly south. My fingers unclenched and the warbler, weighing little more than a few coins, disappeared.

It was lucky. It could so easily have perished in the suffocating nets of a Cypriot bird trapper or, worse still, been served up as a delicacy to a local restaurant in some backstreet taverna, victim of a multi-million euro organised crime racket.

Saving the blackcap was one of the most rewarding assignments I have ever been invited to by the Ministry of the Environment and the British Sovereign Base Area Authorities to tackle illegal hunting on the island.

I was asked to free birds that had become ensnared in the lines of mist nets set up by the crime gangs to trap migrant birds.

Following a thousand other illegal flights, I hope that the days of the barbaric harvest were coming to an end. Not so.

A decade on and the illegal slaughter on Cyprus continues. The birds are sold to project estates 900,000 birds were killed on the British military bases at Dhekelia, the worst level recorded in 12 years.

Defence is a figure controlled by the Ministry of Defence, which has been reluctant to be committed to tackling trapping on its land, saying it arrested 50 poachers and seized 450 nets during the last migration period.

From 17,000 euros, or send them to prison for up to three years. We continue to work with local organisations to discuss how we can do this as a public, an MOD spokesman told me last week.

There are strong hopes that the vast squadrans of songbirds passing through the area-covered scrubby outcrops close to the coast will be protected from the traps that will soon be getting greater protection.

This week, I will be taking part in the



ENSNARED: Stuart Winter frees a bird caught in poachers' mist nets in Cyprus

Champions of the Flyway, an international organisation that has been set up to protect the birds in Cyprus, which has two songbirds named Middle East and North America will descend on one of the island's best birdwatching sites, the Cyprus Wildlife Centre (CWC).

BirdLife Cyprus has been running a public awareness campaign on the island and has raised funds to support key projects.

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Traditionally, trappers used pomegranate stems coated with berry juice to trap songbirds but with a single blackcap selling for £2 poaching is on an industrial scale.

are more effective for catching large numbers of birds, drawn by taped birdsong.

RAKED over the soil to a pretty good tith where my feet had been, so planned to sow a few early spring seeds, there the

Planned to get there a bit earlier too. About one o'clock (early for me). Figured it would be cool but hopefully the sun

was out. It's lovely sowing seeds in the sun.

Well it turned out to be nice and sunny, and on receiving from Kris Collins of Thompson & Morgan some new varieties of radishes and half a row of 'real' turnips, which sound interesting.

The actual names of all these varieties catalogue but will keep you up to date on what I sow, and report on the progress. Don't know if you remember but I grew



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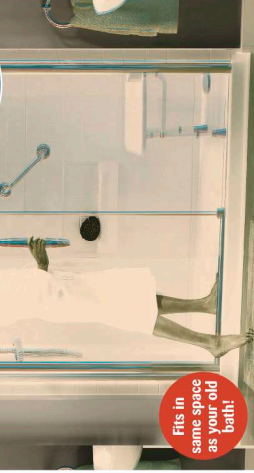
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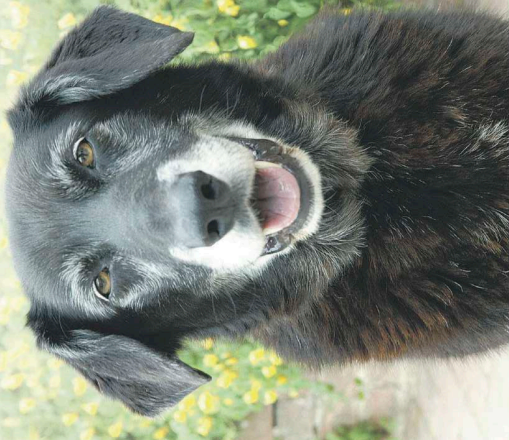


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Be dog smart

Ten steps to living happily with our canine friends, at home and outside

TRAINING children to be sensible with dogs is as important as training dogs to behave around people. Youngsters under nine suffer the highest number of dog bites, and children under 10 are admitted to hospital every day with injuries.

Allowing children to antagonise pets by pulling their tails, disturbing their sleep or smothering them with kisses can have serious consequences.

One of the country's leading animal welfare charities, the Dogs Trust, has launched a new safety campaign to stop children being injured. It is underpinned by what I consider the number one rule with any dog. The basic tips can easily be remembered with this 10-point mnemonic:

- **E**ven if for fun, never tease a dog.
- **D**o not approach a dog without an owner around.
- **N**o sudden movements. If you must pick up the dog to carry him, bend, then stroke gently.
- **S**peak calmly and quietly around any dog.
- **M**ove calmly and quietly around any dog.
- **A**ll that hugging and kissing, dogs do not like it.
- **R**emember all dogs have teeth.
- **T**reat dogs with respect and they will respect you.

Dogs Trust chief executive Adrian Burder explained the importance of teaching children to be smart around dogs. He said: "Children can come into contact with dogs in many ways. While most dogs can have so many wonderful benefits, but the simple fact is that all dogs have teeth and any dog can bite or snap if hurt, scared or hurt. So, to ensure the safety of our children, we need to ensure a dog owner or not, it is important that we all know and teach our children, grandchildren, pupils and friends how to behave around dogs.

But children remember what we tell them and we want to be clear. Smart to be just as well known. Dogs Trust is the charity with expert knowledge in dog behaviour. Our hope is that we can help you to ensure your child always has a happy and safe relationship with any dog, never tease a dog, don't approach a dog you don't know and always ask for permission before you approach a dog could prevent more attacks."



can do mine while he is at it. I could weigh mine up and he could give me back the same weight when they're all done.

and he would end up with some of mine but I can't think of any alternative at the moment.

something, with some food colouring? Then I would know which ones were mine and which ones were his. Take a bit of something out though. Nearly as long as I can, I would like to see the dog. I would leave the barley growing to the farmer.

• **All About Us - The Chase & Dave Story** by Stuart Winter. A hilarious and heartwarming story of a dog and his owner. Available at chaseanddave.com. Brighton, tomorrow and Swansea Grand Theatre on April 2. An Audience With Chas (they must have em) then ask him if he

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CJ WILDLIFE For information on wild birds visit the CJ Wildlife website or call 0800 731 2820 for a free Catalogue Of Garden Wildlife.



some barley last year? Grew OK but I had trouble getting the husks off so I left it in a bag in the shed until I came up with a

in a pillowcase, bang it on a brick wall and that'll do the trick.

I decided to give it a try so I put some into the bag of barley I had stored. I discovered I was more than a tad too late.

Mr and Mrs Mickey Mouse with their kids. I had a party and had eaten the lot. Husks and all, leaving just a bag of barley husks and money calling cards.

despite to grow some more. I could find a farmer who's done the same and is about to put his through his de-husking machine.