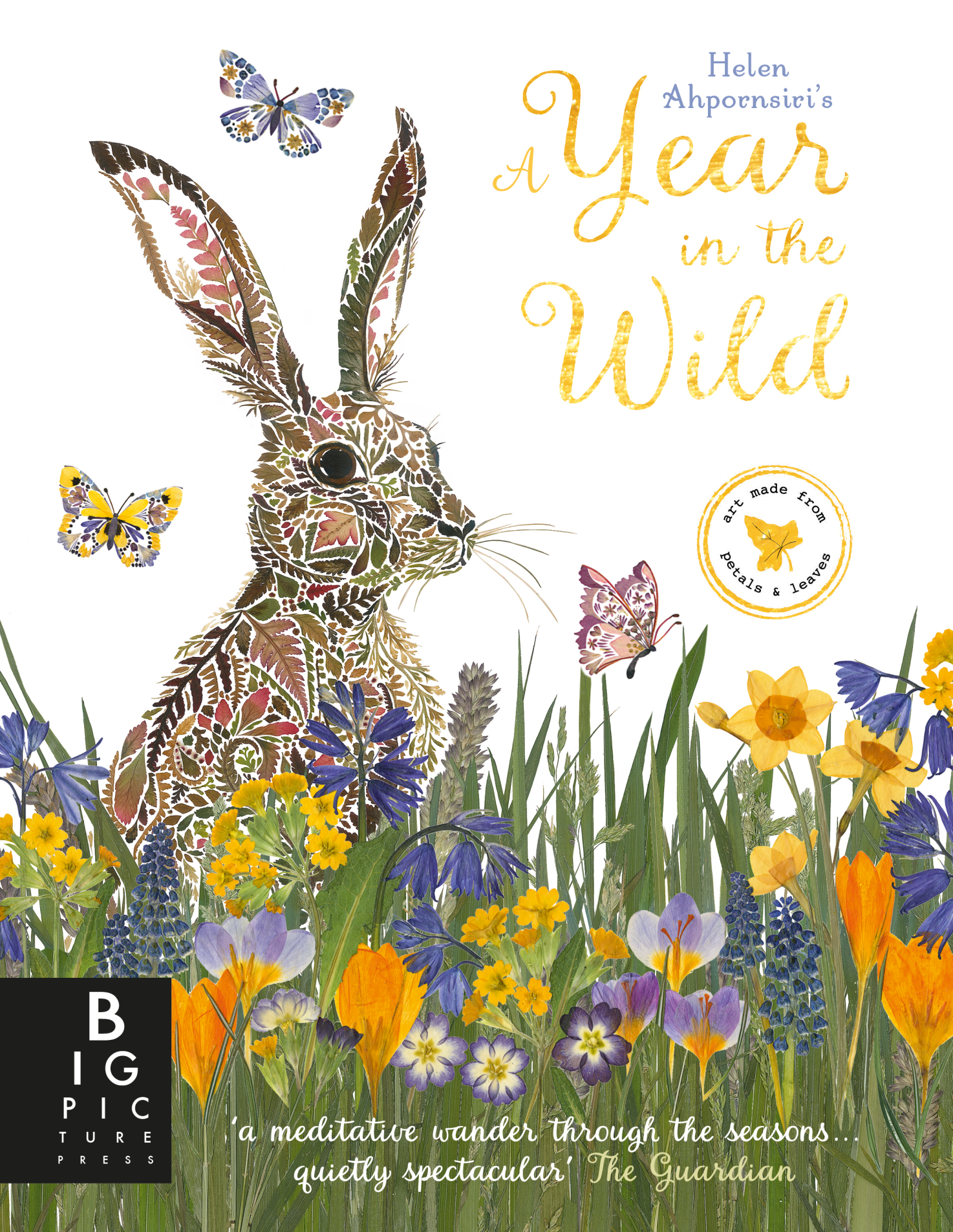


Helen  
Ahpornsiri's

# A Year in the Wild



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*'a meditative wander through the seasons...  
quietly spectacular' The Guardian*



## Spring chorus

The start of spring means just one thing for most birds. It's time to find a mate.

In the hour before dawn there is a flurry of birdsong: the dawn chorus is starting up. In this narrow window between night and day, the birds call out to each other, hoping to get noticed. The fittest males have the best odds of attracting a female as their song is the loudest and carries furthest.

As the sun rises higher in the sky, the birds then shift their attention to other matters. With more light to see by, it's time for them to go and find breakfast...

The blackbird is one of the first birds to sing each morning.



## Nest-building

Look carefully in spring and you may see busy birds with beaks full of twigs, grass and moss – all the materials they need for nest-building.

Once a nest is complete and the eggs are laid, parents take turns sitting on them until the first chicks appear. If everything goes to plan there will be plenty of food for the chicks by the time they hatch – and they don't take long to start demanding food. Many birds lay their eggs so they hatch just as the first juicy caterpillars appear.

This clever timing means they'll never have far to fly to gather food for their young.



Small birds usually lay one egg a day until they have a full nest.

The nest is woven from twigs then lined with soft moss or feathers.



Blossom is the name for the flowers of fruit trees, such as cherries, apples and peaches.

## Butterflies & blossoms

A spring breeze blows, carrying with it a flurry of pink-white petals. They land, like snow, beneath the trees where butterflies flit between banks of bright flowers.

The warm days of late spring tempt more and more butterflies to appear. Some have made long journeys on their migrations while others are just coming out of hibernation. The spring flowers provide a rich source of nectar for the butterflies – just what they need after the winter. You'll see them most on calm sunny days, when neither wind nor rain can threaten their delicate wings.

Butterflies enjoy visiting flowers such as bluebells, crocuses and primroses.





Irises and flowering grasses line the riverbank in summer.

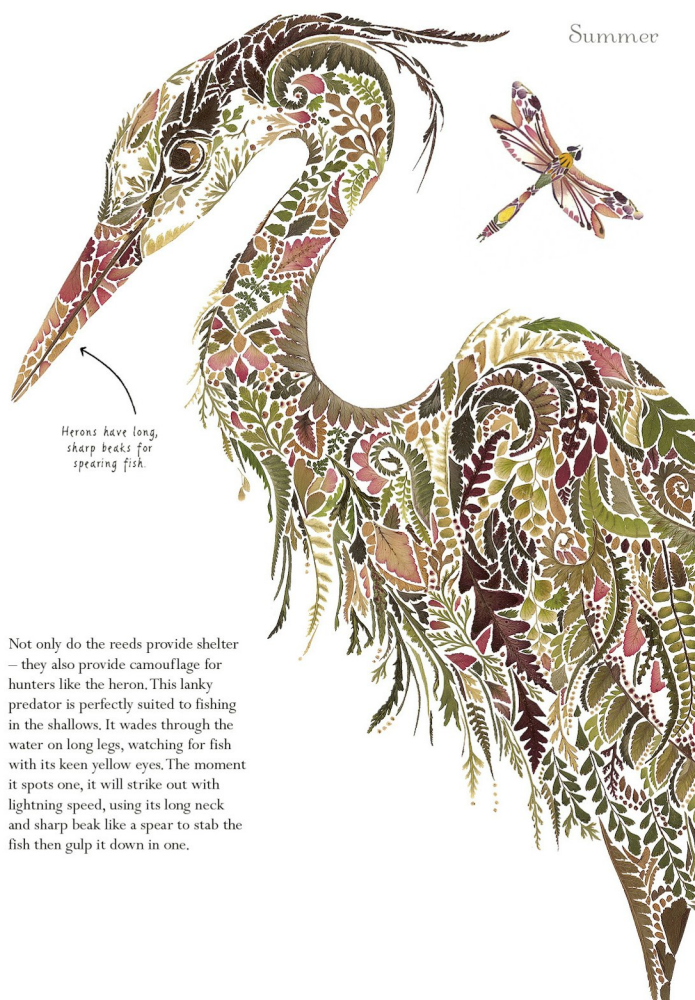


With their bright bodies, dragonflies are easy to spot as they zip between the reeds.

## In the reeds

Along the water's edge the reed beds are full of activity. Flowers and grasses sway on their stalks, while ducks and moorhens hide their young families among the dense mass of stems.

Under the water's surface, the reeds also shelter young insects. Dragonfly larvae live underwater for up to two years, preying on tadpoles, fish and other insects. On sunny days the older larvae crawl out of the water and shed their skins, emerging as adults with colourful bodies and gauzy wings. The dragonflies must dry their wings in the sun before they can fly – but once they take to the air, they are one of the most formidable predators in the insect kingdom.



Herons have long, sharp beaks for spearing fish.

Not only do the reeds provide shelter – they also provide camouflage for hunters like the heron. This lanky predator is perfectly suited to fishing in the shallows. It wades through the water on long legs, watching for fish with its keen yellow eyes. The moment it spots one, it will strike out with lightning speed, using its long neck and sharp beak like a spear to stab the fish then gulp it down in one.

## Red fox at night

On a cold, frosty night a fox sets out, his paws crunching into the snow, ears alert to the slightest sound of movement.

Although the ground is covered in a sheet of white, the fox can hear tiny sounds beneath the snow's surface, and can pounce with great precision. His coat grows thicker in winter, and his bushy tail wraps around him like a blanket when he sleeps – keeping him snug on even the coldest nights.

When temperatures drop below freezing, water droplets freeze and turn to frost, coating everything in white.

