

Across a Waking Land: A 1,000-Mile Walk through a British Spring

Roger Morgan-Grenville

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Acclaimed nature writer Roger Morgan-Grenville's book *Across a Waking Land* covers his thousand-mile trek in search of hopeful signs from the distressed planet.

When he was sixty-two years old and not in the best shape, Morgan-Grenville walked from the gentle southern shoreline of the Solent to the forbidding cliffs of northern Scotland's Cape Wrath. Paced in time with the harbinger of a British spring—emerging oak leaves—his trek was slow enough for thoughtful observation. He endured the vagaries of Britain's spring weather, rugged terrain, a bout with COVID-19, and his own drive to keep moving no matter what. And he ruminated on aging, extinction, and Britain's reputation as the most nature-depleted developed country on Earth.

Observing that there is little in nature that seems able to survive prolonged contact with humans, Morgan-Grenville noted the quantities of trash (including some old grey boxer shorts) he found along the way and learned the astounding toll that people's pets take on the environment. He was also worried about the dwindling of indicator species and the visible demographics of Britain's outdoor enthusiasts (most of them middle-aged white men).

But Morgan-Grenville's book also delivers some good news: when treated with kindness, habitat restoration, and for the most part left alone, nature springs back. He encountered people who were making a difference—enough to note that “If you only take away one thing from this story, make it the wonderful web of mycorrhizal strands of human inspiration and effort that is being made every minute of every day, often unseen, unpaid, and unheard” on nature's behalf.

Across a Waking Land is a moving memoir that delivers good news regarding the human-nature connection.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2023)

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