

June 2024



Time Travellers Club

Dear Club Members,

Rachel Carson died 60 years ago. Two years previously, on 23rd June 1962 she published an article in New Yorker magazine entitled Silent Spring. Later that year she published a book of the same title that went on to be a best seller. One year later 15 million people watched the TV special.

A zoologist by training, she was the second woman hired by the US Bureau of Fisheries, working as editor-in-chief of all Fisheries and Wildlife Service publications. Her article, entitled Silent Spring was written in response to a letter from a friend about the effect of pesticides on birdlife. DDT had been used since the 1940's, and had been part of the effort to rid Europe and North America of Malaria, but was now being used in vast quantities in agriculture. This had a two-fold effect of birds, it removed all the insect food sources that many birds rely on, particularly when they are feeding their young. Additionally the effects of DDT became concentrated up the food chain and predatory birds of prey failed to hatch any young at all because the chemical caused thinning of egg shells, leading to eggs being damaged in the nest, and young dying in the shell. It led to some types of bird of prey becoming almost extinct in areas of the world.

Chemical companies tried to label her a "Communist" and a "hysterical woman", but President Kennedy's Science Advisory committee validated her research. This eventually led to the banning of DDT for agricultural use, and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in the USA.

By the time of the publication of her book Carson was very ill with breast cancer, and undergoing regular radiotherapy treatment. She never got to see the long term outcomes that her skilled writing had created. She died aged just 56.

Your fibre this month is a bit of an homage to the hidden beauty of insects, look closely and you'll see iridescence and all sorts of hidden colours. Carson's first love was marine biology. She'd spent years studying marine life, and in 1951 had written another bestseller called The Sea Around Us. On her death apparently her one regret was that she would be most famous for Silent Spring, rather than the great love of her life, the sea... so I was maybe influenced by that a little, and the crystal waters of the beaches in the Isle of Harris where I was on holiday last month.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

13% Tussah Silk

12% Sari Silk

75% Merino

Further Reading-

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/may/27/rachel-carson-silent-spring-anniversary>

<https://www.nps.gov/people/rachel-carson.htm>

<https://www.rachelcarson.org/biography>

Rachel Carson and the Origin of Scientific Environmentalism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezVEzCmiXM4>

Contemporary film footage about DDT, and Rachel Carson talking about Silent Spring

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpbc-6lvMQI>