

Yarn Club - The Sky is NOT! the Limit

We have been delighted at the response to our regenerated Yarn Clubs. "The Sky is NOT the limit" is the first one for ages where we had to close the doors as we were getting over-subscribed. The first yarns went out this week.

'Lockdown': Knit and Crochet-along

Sadly we've only have three finished entries so far for our prize draw, although I know lots of you are busy with your projects. I've therefore decided to extend the closing date to the end of September, and you can also include projects you've completed since the UK lockdown started in March, but they can be ones you've started before this.

So, get those needles and hooks working and post your entries now for a chance to win £25 towards your next order!

New Design - Veronica Cardigan



The draft pattern for this lace patterned, yoked cardigan design is now with our lovely test knitters and we hope to be able to launch the full pattern in late August/early September - look for details of an introductory offer in the August newsletter. Actual finished sizes range from 36 to 46 inches (92.5 to 116.5 cm) at the bust. Julie is modelling the Size 2 prototype (left and right), knitted in undyed wool, and is now working a Size 1 sample in our Falklands Merino 4-ply in the Brilliant Blues colourway.



Once the pattern is available, we will also have sweater packs of yarn to go with it in a selection of our 4-ply bases and colourways. These will represent a good discount on buying individual skeins.

Help for our British Wool Producers

You may have seen the heart-breaking stories on TV news and social media recently of sheep farmers burning or composting fleeces. Sadly the market price for raw wool has plummeted this year and we have seen reports of producers receiving as little as 5p per fleece. This doesn't cover the cost of shearing sheep or transporting fleece to the Wool Board, so many farmers are either giving fleece away to hand spinners or simply disposing of it. This is a huge waste of a fantastic, renewable resource and it seems criminal that the yarn industry can't make better use of those types which are suitable for knitting with.

We've long been supporters of the British wool industry and will continue in our efforts to persuade more people to knit with the



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beautiful yarns that are available. To this end we're talking to several small producers who offer single flock and specific breed yarns, at least some of which we hope to be adding to our range. We've just tested a sample of a lovely Cotswold 4-ply from a producer with just 19 ewes, which will be available in the webstore next month.



We appreciate that not all wools are as soft as the Merino that is available everywhere these days, and may not be ideal to wear next to the skin, but they are certainly suitable for outer wear and sweaters worn over a shirt or blouse, so we would encourage you to try them. They are also much easier to wash and care for than most people expect. Most have far more character than the commercially produced, superwash-treated - and usually non-native - wools you'll get from the major spinners, and you may just stumble across a gem!

To this end, we're offering a **15% discount** off the following British Wool Yarns, valid until the end of September, using the coupon code **wool15** at the checkout:

Shetland Cobweb Lace; BFL Purest Lace; BFL 4-ply; BFL/Masham 4-ply; Wensleydale 4-ply; plus our BFL 4-ply and Shetland mini-skeins, and the Cotswold 4-ply when it's available.

We'll be dyeing multiple skeins in most of these yarns in the coming weeks, so you'll be able to make larger projects with them.

Did You Know - #65 - Rare Breeds Survival Trust

Regular readers will be aware that we often mention the status of British sheep breeds in this column. This month we thought we would give you all the details of this great charity and explain how you can choose to help if you want.

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is a conservation charity whose purpose is to secure the continued existence and viability of the native farm animal genetic resources of the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1973 by Joe Henson to preserve native breeds. Since then, no UK-native breed has become extinct.



The RBST maintains a watch list of native breeds of cattle, sheep, pigs, horses, goats and poultry and an approved list of farm parks.



Projects have included the collection of genetic material to ensure the future of rare breeds in a farm animal "gene bank". This project received publicity in the wake of the foot-and-mouth disease crisis in the UK and was supported by the Prince of Wales.

They also monitor threats to all the native breeds. Other factors can threaten our breeds such as inbreeding and geographical concentration. Where possible, these threats are reduced.

Breed genetics are saved in the UK National Gene Bank. Genetics are collected from animals, usually semen from males but also embryos, which the RBST use as an "insurance policy". If a breed were to become extinct, the UKNGB can be used to revive it.

In emergencies, RBST will buy genetically important stock and place it in approved breeding centres.

They also promote the breeding and registration of rare and native breeds. RBST staff, members and support groups provide a network of knowledge to support and encourage breeders.

Risk Categories

Each of the animal types is assessed and monitored and each breed is given a risk rating



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(from 1 to 6) which are explained below:

1 Critical	less than 150 animals
2 Endangered	150-500
3 Vulnerable	500-900
4 At Risk	500-1500
5 Minority	1500-3000
6 Others	Over 3000

Illustrated here: three of the sheep breeds we have previously featured: Black Faced Welsh Mountain (above); Cheviot (above right) and Clun



The Breeds

Of the native farm animals mentioned above, the most diverse are sheep, with 57 breeds. Of these, 27 are considered 'rare', and are in categories 3-5. There are no sheep breeds in categories 1 or 2 any longer.

The Watchlist

The RBST Watchlist is a document showing the rarity of the UK's native breeds. Every year, RBST collects data from over 130 breed societies, including the number of males and females registered. This data is used to estimate the number of breeding females in the UK for each breed. This is used to place each breed either in one of the 5 categories on the Watchlist, or in the 'Other Native Breeds' category, for those that are not rare but still fulfil the criteria for a native breed.

The RBST includes all domestic animals in their lists – sheep, cattle, horses, goats, pigs and poultry (which includes chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese).

The sheep breeds are shown below – in their respective risk category. The dates in brackets are where we have covered the breed in our DYK feature. Where we show the \$ symbol, this indicates that several breeds were covered in the same piece.

3-Vulnerable (500-900 sheep) 6 breeds

Welsh Mountain Pedigree; Boreray (Aug 17); Lincoln Longwool (Feb 20); Leicester Longwool; North Ronaldsay (Oct 14 – our very first one!); White-faced Woodland (Oct 15).

4-At Risk (900-1500) – 12 breeds

Balwen; Castlemilk Moorit; Cotswold (Jul 16); Derbyshire Gritstone; Devon & Cornwall Longwool; Hill Radnor (Aug 18); Manx Loaghtan (Dec 19); Norfolk Horn (Nov 14); Portland; Soay (Sep 17); Teeswater (Feb 15); Wensleydale (Nov 15).

5-Minority (1500-3000) 9 breeds

Border Leicester; Devon Closewool; Dorset Down (\$ Nov 17); Dorset Longwool; Greyface Dartmoor; Llanrenog; Lonk; Oxford Down (\$ Nov 17); White-face Dartmoor

6-Other Breeds (over 3000 breeding females) 30 breeds

Badgerface Welsh; Beulah; Black Welsh Mountain *; Bluefaced Leicester (Mar 15); Brecknock Hill Cheviot; Clun Forest (Jan 20); Dalesbred; Exmoor Horn (Jul 17); Hampshire Down (\$ Nov 17); Hebridean *; Herdwick (Aug 16); Jacob * (Sep 16); Kerry Hill * (Sep 15); Llandoverly Whiteface Hill; Lley *; North Country Cheviot (\$ Sep 18); Poll Dorset (\$ Nov 17); Romney; Rough Fell; Ryeland * (Apr 20); Shetland * (Apr 15); Shropshire * (Jan 19); South Down *; South Country Cheviot (\$ Sep 18); South Wales Mountain *; Suffolk (\$ Nov 17); Swaledale (Nov 19); Welsh Hill Speckled; Welsh Mountain; Wiltshire Horn *.

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Eleven of these breeds (marked with an asterisk * above) have all been progressed from the other categories (1-5) above, and so are no longer 'at risk'.

You can find out more about RBST at their website - <https://www.rbst.org.uk/>. You can also join the organisation – you don't need to be an animal owner or breeder.

In particular, you may be interested to read that in 2020, RBST is focussing on native longwool sheep breeds. While their Watchlist has shown sheep numbers generally being stable or increasing, some of the longwool breeds have had a sustained decline in numbers over the last decade.

UK Native Longwool Breeds

Border Leicester; Cotswold (we will be featuring Cotswold again next month); Devon & Cornwall Longwool; Greyface Dartmoor; Leicester Longwool; Lincoln Longwool; Teeswater; Wensleydale; Whiteface Dartmoor

On the Road ... 2020

It is looking increasingly likely that we will not be attending any yarn shows this year. We have now heard that Yarnale has been cancelled, although organisers are hoping to arrange a 'digital' show over the same weekend (end of September). We should be able to bring you further news over the next couple of editions of our Newsletter. We have not heard anything further about the Southern Wool Show – due to be held at Newbury Racecourse on 5-6 September. At this stage, it is unlikely that we will attend.

There are no other yarn shows planned this year, whilst we imagine that the one-day lace shows that we had booked in October and November will also be cancelled.

The 'Shawls Weekend', planned for 6-8 November at Moor Hall, Cookham is still 'on' at the moment.