

GALLOPER-SANDS

CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS

AUTUMN 2021



By The Lakes I. H915mm W1220mm. Oil and gold leaf on board

BECKY MUNTING

The Rebirding Residency

GS

GALLOPER-SANDS

Fine Art & Artisan Crafts

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Foreword : *by Melissa Harrison*

“It was just there, in that tree guard,” says Suffolk artist Becky Munting as we peer over a stand of dusty August nettles at the edge of the New Wood on White House Farm. Sadly, the great tits’ nest is now little more than mush, but it’s a sign of the intimate knowledge she built up over many months during her Rebirding Residency in 2020–21.

Set against a luminous background of rich gold leaf, Becky’s birds recall religious icons, drawing the eye and asking us to stop and pay them proper attention, without the distractions of a more natural setting. “I tried gold leaf years ago and couldn’t get it right,” she explains. “It’s a difficult process. Eventually I went back to it and found a way to make it work.” Although she paints naturalistically, she’s not aiming for perfection. “These are idealised birds, I suppose,” she continues. “I want them to communicate a feeling of preciousness, of wonder.” As someone who writes about nature in novels, non-fiction and for the newspapers, I couldn’t agree more: there’s never been a greater need for evangelism about the natural world.



Goldcrests and Teasels

H255mm W180mm

Oil on board



Blackbirds

H255mm W180mm

Oil on board

There’s a running joke in the two children’s nature novels I published this year. They were inspired by Denys Watkins-Pitchford’s Carnegie-winning classics *The Little Grey Men* and *Down the Bright Stream*, the first of which was published 80 years ago – and in my versions, wild animals constantly mislabel my tiny characters, calling them pixies and goblins, gnomes and fairies, to their deep and enduring chagrin. “Excuse me, but we are *not* fairies!” one protests in the first volume, *By Ash, Oak and Thorn*. “*Everyone* knows that fairies turned into songbirds long, long ago.”

It's a throwaway suggestion meant to charm children, but nonetheless the idea has always held a ring of truth to me. Tiny, magical nature spirits with wings, renowned for their revels? What else could have inspired the widespread, complex and persistent mythology of the fae folk, if not birds?

And yet despite (and because of) homo sapiens' astonishing good fortune in sharing planetary time with these astonishing, feathered miracles, numbers of many of our most beloved avian species are falling, day on day. Populations of farmland birds are down by more than 50 per cent since 1970, with true farmland specialists, like corn buntings and turtle doves, down 90 per cent. Numbers of woodland birds have fallen by 30 per cent in the same period, with woodland specialists like the lesser spotted woodpecker and spotted flycatcher down by 80 per cent. This heartbreaking cascade of loss has happened in our own lifetimes: on our watch, as it were. Our landscape is emptying, and many of us have paid it little mind.

"I buy bird books and bird feeders for friends all the time," says Becky. "I just want to share them with people. I want them to *see*."

Becky has been painting for twenty years – always with a focus on the natural world, and in the last five years looking more and more closely at birds. She was offered a Hedge Hut residency at White House Farm in 2019, but due to circumstances beyond her control she wasn't able to take it up straight away; then, when the residency began and Becky planned to visit weekly to paint all the birds she could see and hear over the course of a year, the Covid-19 pandemic intervened.

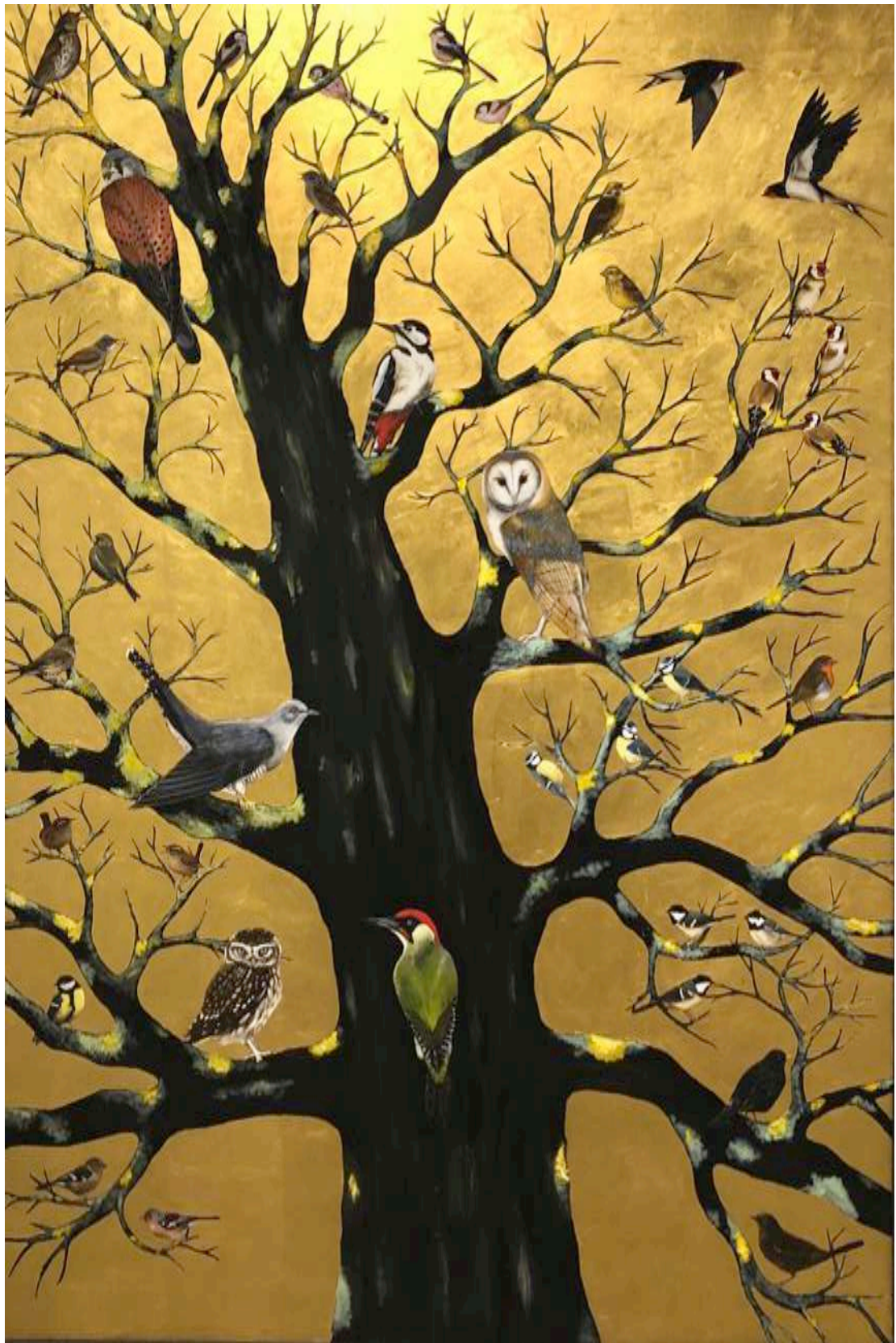
Still, she visited as often as she could and as restrictions eased, she was able to spend more time on the farm discovering the birds it supports, from the vanishingly rare lesser spotted woodpecker to wrens, Britain's most numerous breeding bird, and from huge, statuesque herons to tiny long-tailed tits – both favourite subjects of hers. "You can't choose what you'll see on each visit," she explains, "but over time you get a good idea of what's there. The best thing about the residency is that it's allowed me to spend time waiting, looking and listening, knowing it's actually part of my job to stop for a while and take it all in."

With the autumn migration underway, and winter still to come, Becky's goal of painting every bird on the farm (bar the ducks, geese and hens, of course) is yet to be reached – and she's turning over in her mind the possibility that the large painting she completed as part of her residency, 'All Among the Tree Tops', could become the first of four.

"What will be really interesting to see is how things change over time as new habitats, like the scrapes, are created," she says. Like any living landscape, White House Farm is a work in progress, alive with possibility and potential; yet it's subject also to the wider world where changes to planning, conservation and agricultural policy could still affect the loss of nature for good or ill.

Hope may be a fragile thing, but there's more advantage in it than the alternatives. If we can learn to see and value our diminishing natural heritage, and use our voices to call for change it's not impossible that, in five years' time, or fifteen, or fifty, there could be more birds in the woods, fields and water here for artists like Becky to paint.

Melissa Harrison, autumn 2021



All Among The Tree Tops II

H1828mm W1220mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£6,500



By The Lakes I

H915mm W1220mm
Oil and gold leaf on board
£4,500



Heron

H355mm W355mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£725



Kingfishers

H560mm W230 mm

Oil and gold leaf

£725

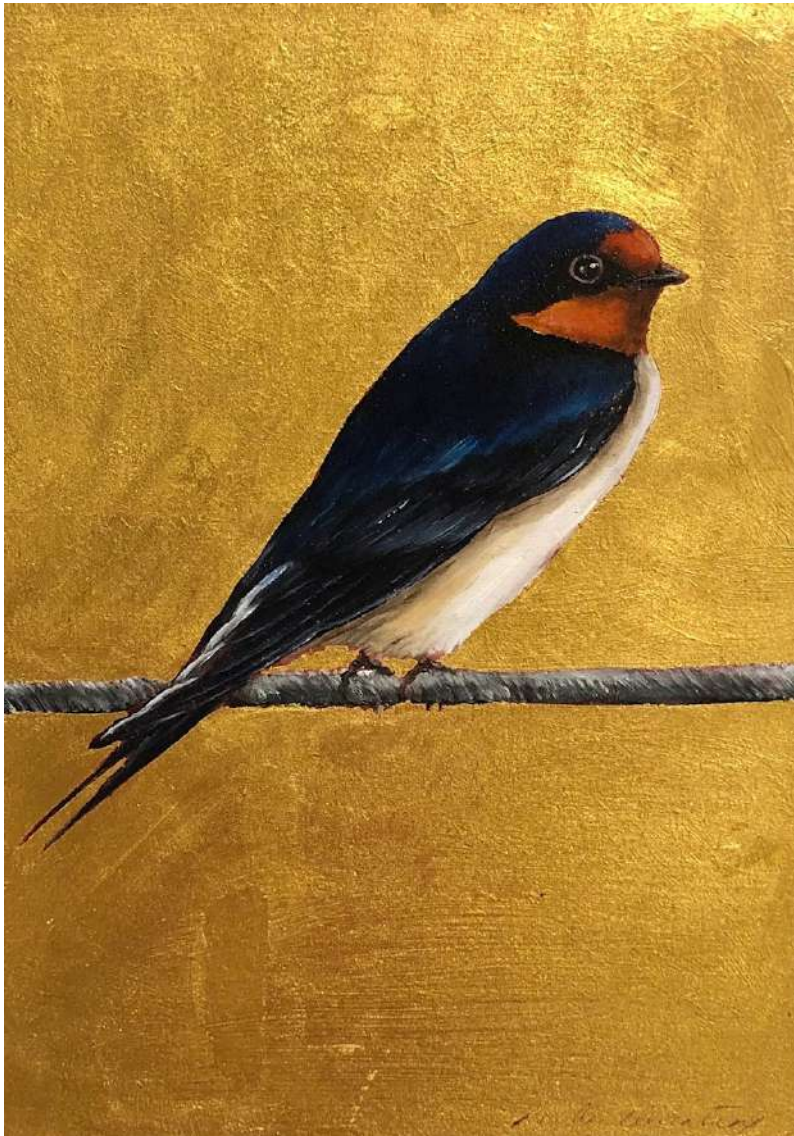


Summer Swallow I

H130mm W180mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Summer Swallow II

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Summer Swallow III

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Summer Swallow IV

H180mm W130mm

Oil on board

£165



Goldcrests and Teasels

H255mm W180mm

Oil on board

£245



Goldfinch Icon

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Goldfinch

H180mm W130mm

Oil on board

£165



Hanging About - Blue Tit

H180mm W130mm
Oil and gold leaf
£195



Blue Tit Icon

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Blackbirds

H255mm W180mm

Oil on board

£255



Little Robin

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Little Wren Icon I

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Little Wren Icon III

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf

£195



Little Wren Icon

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf

£195



Cawing Rook

H130mm W180mm

Oil on board

£165

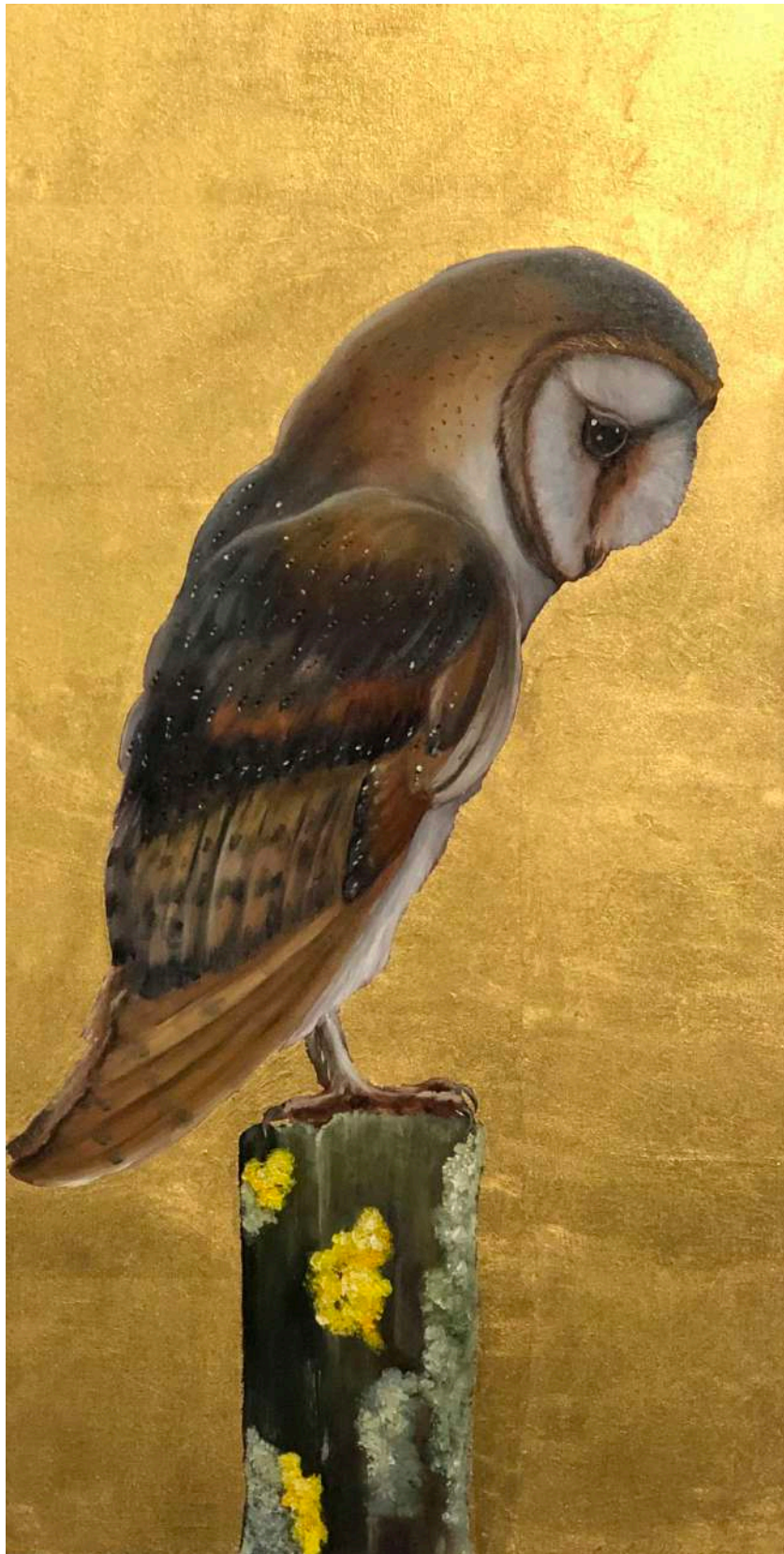


Bullfinch

H180mm W130mm

Oil on board

£165



Barn Owl II

H455mm W230mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£565



Barn Owl I

H455mm W230mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£565



Barn Owl III

H408mm W205mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£565

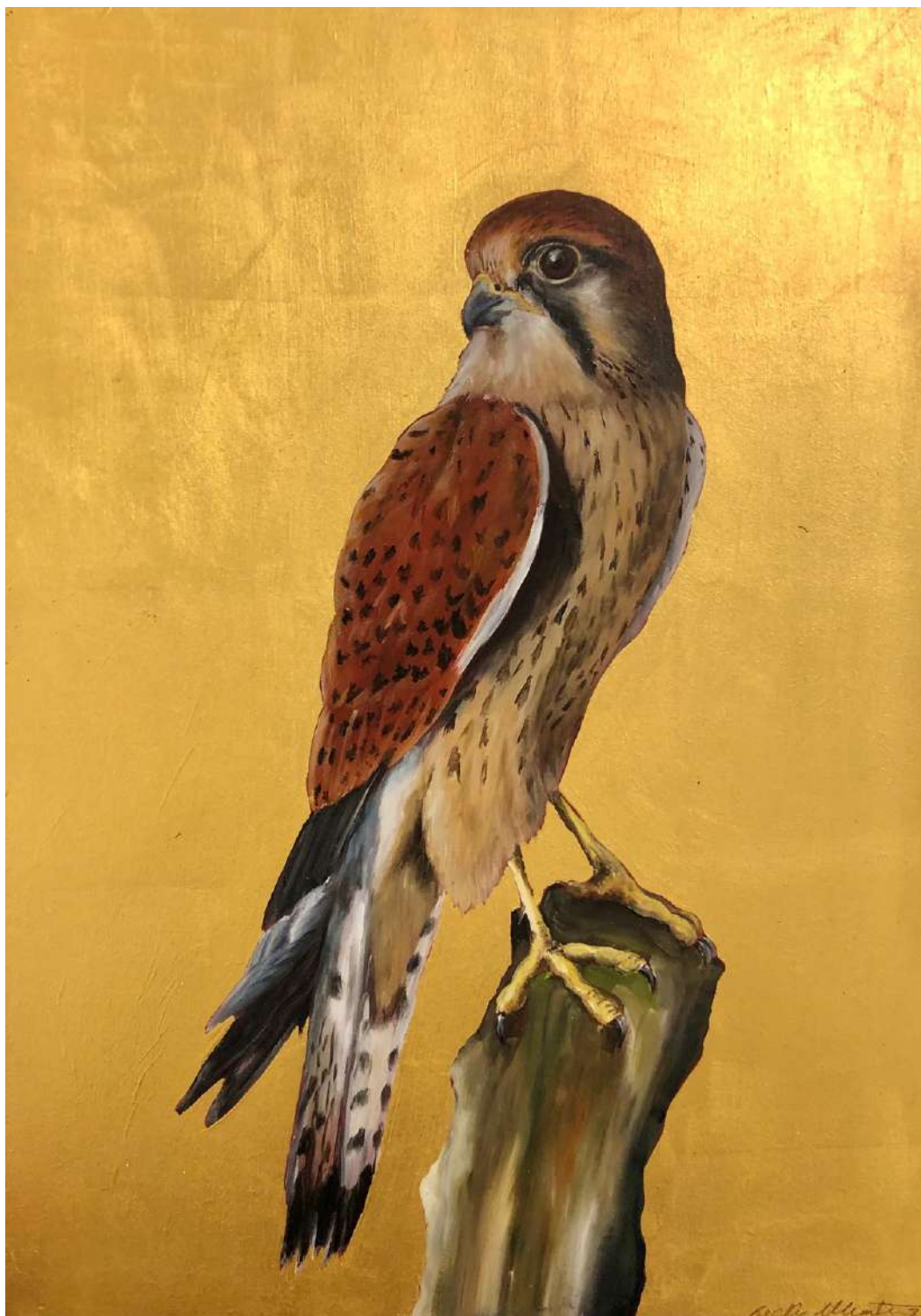


Tawny Owl I

H455mm W230mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£325



Kestrel

H355mm W255mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£395



In Flight I: Greater Spotted Woodpecker

H305mm W230mm

Oil on board

£285

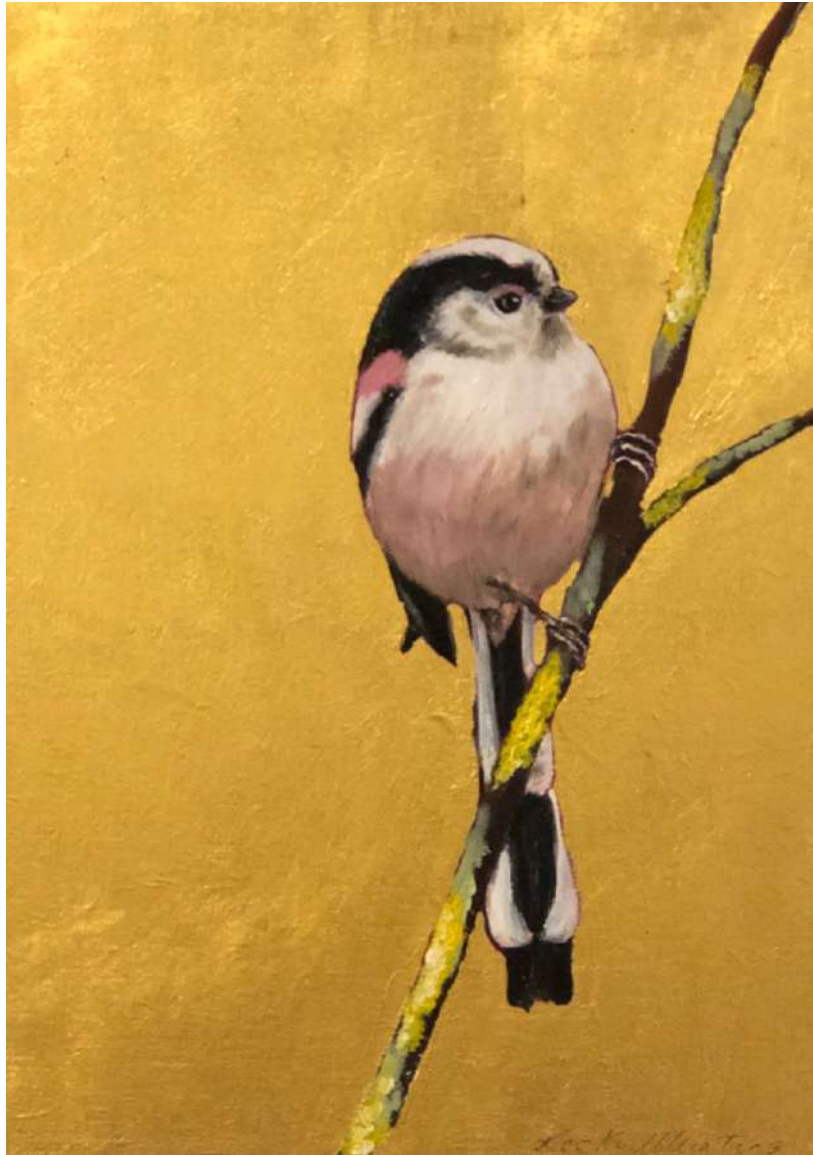


Long Tailed Tit Icon I

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195



Long Tailed Tit Icon I

H180mm W130mm

Oil and gold leaf on board

£195

Galloper-Sands is the online gallery for The Alde Valley Spring Festival Ltd

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