

Amager

Tuesday 29th August 2017

Over breakfast in the Tivoli, a crowded space of tourists, business people and convention delegates, I had to be amused by the Middle Eastern couple next to us whose tour leader came and demanded they leave. You should have seen the looks on their faces as the longingly looked at half-eaten plates, dreaming of what had not yet been consumed. I think I talked the man into taking one last bite as he stood and obeyed the call of the “tour”. Sometimes I am glad – mostly I am glad – to be an independent traveller.

Prior to breakfast I completed one of the short listed Man Booker selections for 2017: *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal* by Danish writer Dorthe Nors. There’s a nice review in The Guardian¹. This sentence summarises the main thrust of the novel:

“fiercely nonconformist Sonja is a 40-something Swedish-to-Danish translator of violent Stieg Larsson-style crime fiction, belatedly learning to drive while suffering from real and metaphorical vertigo. Originally from remote west Jutland, she has never got used to big city life in Copenhagen.”

Basically this is an interior novel and I like the irony of making the protagonist a translator of Scandinavian crime fiction. Nors is anything but that type of writer.

Now it is pertinent to note that the resolution of this novel occurs in and around Islands Brygge, the location of our excursion today. Having used up the allotted time on our Copenhagen Card (we bought three days: you can get 1, 2, 3 or 5 day cards) we opted for a slower, less frenetic day and a “cheaper” day by exploring the Amager Nature Reserve.²

Much of Amager consists of reclaimed land and has been used in the past as both a rubbish dump and a military training facility. Large parts of the area did not become publicly accessible until the mid-1980s. The Metro has made the Nature Park easily accessible, and new paths make it possible to cycle along the coast all the way from Islands Brygge to Dragør.

Amager is best known for its birdlife, which is protected by international law. The park plays an important role in bird migration and wintering, and throughout the year rare species are spotted here, including the biggest birds of prey.

The area as a whole is very varied, with different types of nature. Amager Common, closest to Copenhagen, is more park-like than the wilder Kalvebod Common. Pinsekoven and Fasanskoven are naturally occurring forests, while the much older King’s Grove is a plantation originally grown to provide wood at a time of shortages.

The coastal area consists of both artificial dykes and natural salt marshes.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/04/mirror-shoulder-signal-by-dorthe-nors-review>

² <http://www.kobenhavnergron.dk/place/naturpark-amager/?lang=en>

Now I wish for all those other lenses at home. Or do I? My day pack is already heavy and as it is the “fag end” of summer the vegetation is thick and there is much greenery between bird and lens.

Suffice to say we did OK in spotting birds however. Apart from the ubiquitous Mallard and the almost as regular Hooded Crow and Magpie we spotted Wood Pigeon (of course), Grey Heron, Jay, Wren, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long Tailed Tit and juvenile Bearded Tit. In addition there one cooperative Great Spotted Woodpecker. I suspect more birds were out and about but that is not too bad for the middle of the day.



The flock of Long Tail Tits was truly delightful. Mostly there were bushes between camera and bird body and face but the image I did use gives one the feel for this delightful bird. It's one of our favourites here in Europe.



Meanwhile we were inundated with land snails!





And the berries were out in sweet profusion.





Now do resist the anger, Australian friends. Over here they are not rampant weeds!



The one above is Havtorn (in English, Buckthorn), also called Sea-torn , even sea-browed or fennelberries , (*Hippophaë rhamnoides*) and it is a species in the family of oatmeal plants. It has a high Vitamin C load but is best eaten as a jam, cooked to take away the sharpness.



And, yes, the thistles are near their end!





There will be lots of happy seed-eating finches, etc around soon.





And of course there were other delights!



Snog, *Natrix natrix*³



The common frog (*Rana temporaria*), food for that snake!⁴

³ The grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), sometimes called the ringed snake or water snake, is a Eurasian non-venomous snake. It is often found near water and feeds almost exclusively on amphibians.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grass_snake

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_frog

Now I wouldn't be me if I didn't get involved in some campaign or other and as we were peacefully walking around we met a lady, an eager conservationist whose day job is a teacher (afternoon shift apparently). She told us all about a campaign to stop a developer going into the SE corner and building high rise onto what is now rare habitat for other frogs. She was there to try to show TV journalists the site.



Anni Nielsen and Faye

I also ran into two other young(er) female journalists who came here today to research the same story and I gave them a line if they wished to quote it. I think that will be on the cutting floor but the least I will do is write and praise Amager as the lungs of a city.



The developer has been testing for foundations





Truly a delightful set of lungs in the city and worthy of visits at all times of the year. I am imagining winter when the geese and swans arrive on this waterway.

