



DISCUSSION COURSE ON

RECONNECTING WITH EARTH

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world than the breathing respect that you carry wherever you go right now?

- WILLIAM STAFFORD



DISCUSSION COURSE ON

RECONNECTING WITH EARTH



NOT FOR FURTHER DISTRIBUTION

Copyright 2009

By



Northwest Earth Institute
317 SW Alder St., Suite 1050
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 227-2807
E-mail: contact@nwei.org
Web site: www.nwei.org

Requests for permission to reproduce any materials
in this course book should be directed to
Northwest Earth Institute.

See Permissions on page 99 for information on reading materials.
NWEI cannot transfer permission rights to others.

This course, originally titled *Deep Ecology and Related Topics*,
was first developed by the Northwest Earth Institute founders, Dick and Jeanne Roy.
The course has been revised over the years by many dedicated NWEI volunteers.
We are grateful to all of those who have contributed in some way to the curriculum process,
especially Chris Coley, Betty Shelley, Melanie Martin, and Lacy Cagle for their work on this latest revision.

Layout and Typography: Margaret Parker
Curriculum Development: Meg O'Brien

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
HOW TO START A DISCUSSION COURSE	6
GUIDELINES.....	8
EVALUATION.....	9
SESSION 1: WILD NATURE.....	11
“The Real World Around Us” by Rachel Carson.....	13
“The Tuolumne Camp” by John Muir.....	15
“The Judgement of the Birds” by Loren Eiseley.....	17
“Seeing” by Annie Dillard.....	19
“The Phosphorescent Soul” by Terry Tempest Williams.....	20
“The Moral Equivalent of Wildness” by Kathleen Dean Moore.....	20
SESSION 2: SHIFTING PARADIGMS.....	23
“Thinking Like a Mountain” by Aldo Leopold.....	25
From <i>The Web of Life</i> by Fritjof Capra.....	26
“The Eight Principles of Deep Ecology” by Naess and Sessions.....	29
“Deep Ecology and Lifestyle” by Arne Naess.....	30
“The Gaia Hypothesis” by <i>Mother Earth</i> editors.....	31
From <i>Seeing the Whole at the Center</i> by F. Marina Schauffler.....	33
SESSION 3: NATURE AND SPIRIT.....	37
“The Greening of the World’s Religions” by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim.....	39
“The Gospel of J. Matthew” by David Roberts.....	42
“First Do No Harm” by Stepanie Kaza.....	45
“Sharing One Skin” by Jeanette Armstrong.....	50
SESSION 4: THE UNIVERSE STORY.....	53
“Cosmology: The Largest Context” by Michael Dowd.....	55
“Comprehensive Compassion: An Interview with Brian Swimme” by Susan Bridle.....	56
“The Universe Is Our University” by Thomas Berry.....	60
“Living the New Story: An Interview with Sister Miriam MacGillis” by Alan AtKisson.....	63

continued

SESSION 5: ECOPSYCHOLOGY	65
"Ecopsychology" by John Seed	67
"When the Earth Hurts, Who Responds?" by Sarah A. Conn.....	69
"Restoring Nature, Restoring Yourself" by Francesca Lyman	74
"Interview with Bill Plotkin" (unknown)	75
"Imagination: Creating a New Reality" by Laura Sewall.....	77
 SESSION 6: BRINGING IT DOWN TO EARTH	 81
"The Learning Curve" by David Orr	83
"The Genius of Nature" by Jeanine Benyus	85
"Developing Bonds to Place" by Starhawk	89
"The Pleasures of Eating" by Wendell Berry.....	91
"The Night of the Razor-Clam Tide" by Kathleen Dean Moore	92
 CALL TO ACTION	 95
 MEMBERSHIP	 97
 PERMISSIONS	 99



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in the Northwest Earth Institute's discussion course, *Reconnecting with Earth*. This course addresses the central issue of our time: What is the appropriate relationship of the human being to Earth? That this relationship must change has become clear as the impacts of industrialized societies have grown more evident and now threaten ecological collapse. The authors included in this discussion guide call for a fundamental shift in the way we humans perceive our place in the world. They argue that this shift is the key to real and lasting change—and our best hope for the future.

The course is comprised of six sessions, designed for weekly discussion. The first five sessions explore our relationship with Earth from a variety of perspectives: that of naturalists, scientists, theologians, philosophers, and psychologists. The readings in the final session offer concrete examples for putting a more Earth-centered worldview into practice.

Each session includes readings, discussion questions for the group, a "Putting It into Practice" list of suggested actions, and suggestions for further readings and resources. Please plan on about an hour of reading each week. Each week when you meet with your discussion group, we invite you to bring your own experience and critical thinking to the process. The selected readings are intended to invoke meaningful discussion, not consensus. With the aid of the readings and the discussion format, participants learn from themselves and each other.

For resources on getting the discussion group started, visit www.nwei.org and visit the "Course Resources" page

for flyers, organizing guides, and press releases. On pages 6–7 of this guide, "How to Start a Discussion Course" provides further information about organizing a course. You may also contact our office at (503) 227-2807. To become a member of NWEI and support the sharing of this work with others, please join at www.nwei.org/join or complete the membership form on page 97.

On behalf of the thousands of organizations, workplaces, and volunteers who are involved in promoting Earth Institute programs, we hope your experience with this course will be of deep and lasting value.

The Northwest Earth Institute currently offers seven other discussion courses:

- **Menu for the Future** explores food systems and their impacts on culture, society, and ecological systems.
- **Global Warming, Changing CO₂urse** addresses the urgent need to respond to climate change.
- **Choices for Sustainable Living** explores choices each of us make that have an impact on the Earth.
- **Healthy Children—Healthy Planet** examines the influence of consumer culture on children and how families can deal with these influences.
- **Discovering a Sense of Place** considers the benefits of knowing and protecting our place.
- **Sustainable Systems at Work** provides organizations with the tools and inspiration needed to transition to a more sustainable future.
- **Voluntary Simplicity** examines the personal and ecological benefits of living with less in a consumer culture.

How to Start a Discussion Course

Thank you for your interest in the programs offered by the Northwest Earth Institute. The following tips are for those of you who would like to organize NWEI discussion groups. We are thrilled that you have taken the initiative to order this guide for small group discussion. While this discussion guide has tremendous stand-alone value, please keep in mind that it was designed to be used with others in a group dialogue setting. As such, we ask that you consider inviting others to participate in the process with you. Below, please find steps for doing so. If you have any questions about the process, please visit our website at www.nwei.org or contact any member of NWEI's Outreach Team at (503) 227-2807, or by email at contact@nwei.org. If you have joined an existing group, please consider organizing future courses. We hope you benefit from participating in this course.

STEP 1: FORM GROUP(S)— IDEAL SIZE IS 8-12 PEOPLE.

In certain regions, an NWEI representative may be available to assist you in getting started. Visit www.nwei.org/n_american_network to see a list of regions where NWEI representatives may be available to mentor new groups and offer introductory presentations on NWEI.

TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR NWEI COURSE:

- Invite others to join NWEI programs via newsletters, email networks, personal invitations, or the media. Download NWEI program flyers at www.nwei.org. Include location information, times, and dates for the entire program. Set clear registration deadlines for signups. Order any remaining materials from NWEI and give discussion guides to participants before the date of the first group meeting.
- Call a noontime meeting or host a brown bag lunch in a workplace to offer an informal presentation on NWEI programs and how they work.
- Host an introductory group meeting at home, your community or faith center, local library, or municipal office.

*If you would like to host an introductory group meeting in order to form a group, visit www.nwei.org/course_resources to download NWEI's Course Organizer Guide for ideas.

STEP 2: FIRST CLASS SESSION— GETTING STARTED

TAKE THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS WITH YOU TO THE FIRST SESSION: 1) Discussion guide, 2) Course schedule (enclosed) for participants to sign up for an opening and to facilitate the remaining sessions.

HAVE A ROUND OF INTRODUCTIONS. Introductions

serve several important functions, even if the group is already well acquainted. Participants begin to know each other on a personal level and have an opportunity to “get each person’s voice into the room.” A person who has spoken and been listened to early in the session is more likely to participate in the rest of the session. Ask participants to say their names and something personal about themselves. As the organizer of your group, you should give your answer first to model the length and content.

DESCRIBE THE GROUP PROCESS. NWEI programs are designed to encourage discussions that clarify personal values and attitudes. Consensus is not the goal, and the group should not seek to reach agreement at the expense of diversity of opinion. Most groups meet for an hour to an hour and a half for each meeting. Each session will be led by a volunteer facilitator from the group. Point out the guidelines for the weekly facilitator on page 8.

CALL ATTENTION TO THE EVALUATION FORM IN EACH DISCUSSION GUIDE. Encourage participants to fill out the evaluation form on page 9 and share any feedback with NWEI.

FILL OUT THE COURSE SCHEDULE (found on the next page). This gives group members an opportunity to sign up to present an opening and to facilitate one of the sessions. Information on opening and facilitating is included at the beginning of each discussion guide.

STEP 3: FIRST CLASS SESSION— DESCRIBE/PRESENT THE OPENING

Please reference “Guidelines for the Facilitator” located on page 8.

STEP 4: FIRST SESSION— FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR. Tell the group that you will help to keep the discussion personal, focused, and balanced among the participants. Show them the guidelines for the weekly facilitator on page 8. Encourage each person to review these guidelines before facilitating a session.

CIRCLE QUESTION. Following the opening, each person answers the Circle Question found at the beginning of each session. The question provides a focus for the day’s discussion.

STEP 5: FIRST SESSION—CLOSING

Watch the time, and stop discussion a few minutes before the session is scheduled to end. Note whether the course schedule is completed. If not, work with participants

to complete it. Confirm the time and place for the next meeting. Be sure to end the class on time. This shows respect for the participants, and demonstrates that their time commitment is predictable.

STEP 6: DURATION OF NWEI PROGRAM

Your group will meet four to seven times, depending on the chosen discussion course and the meeting dates set by participants. Each session will be led by a rotating member of the group. Note the “Putting It into Practice” and “Further Reading” lists at the beginning of each session for ideas on further educational opportunities as well as tips for applying the learning you gain from the group into your life.

CLOSING: FINAL SESSION—A CALL TO ACTION.

The final session in each discussion guide is an optional celebration, and is an opportunity to:

- Celebrate the completion of the program and evaluate your experience.
- Discuss options for continuing as a group and consider goals and action items.
- Consider organizing other NWEI programs in your community, workplace, or organization.

Don’t hesitate to contact NWEI with questions or for assistance. If you enjoyed this experience and would like to support the Northwest Earth Institute’s work, please see our membership form on page 97.

COURSE SCHEDULE FOR RECONNECTING WITH EARTH

This course schedule may be useful to keep track of meeting dates and when you will be facilitating or providing the opening.

Course Coordinator : _____ Phone : _____

Mentor (if applicable) : _____ Phone : _____

Location for Future Meetings : _____

CLASS SESSION	DATE	OPENING	FACILITATOR
Wild Nature	_____	_____	_____
Shifting Paradigms	_____	_____	_____
Nature and Spirit	_____	_____	_____
The Universe Story	_____	_____	_____
Ecopsychology	_____	_____	_____
Bringing It Down to Earth	_____	_____	_____

PLANNERS

Call to Action* _____

*After the last regular session, your group may choose to have a final meeting and Call to Action. This meeting celebrates the completion of the course and may include a potluck lunch or dinner, and it provides an opportunity for evaluation and consideration of next steps.

GUIDELINES

FOR THE FACILITATOR AND OPENER

For each session of this course, one participant facilitates the discussion. The roles rotate weekly, with a different group member doing the opening and facilitating each week. This process is at the core of the Earth Institute culture—it assumes we gain our greatest insights through self-discovery, by promoting discussion among equals with no teacher.



FOR THE SESSION FACILITATOR

As facilitator for one session, your role is to stimulate and moderate the discussion. You do not need to be an expert or the most knowledgeable person about the topic.

Your role is to:

- Remind the designated person ahead of time to bring an opening.
- Begin and end on time.
- Ask the questions included in each chapter, or your own.
- Make sure your group has time to respond to the action-oriented discussion questions—this is a positive way to end each gathering.
- Keep discussion focused on the session's topic. A delicate balance is best—don't force the group into answering the questions, but don't allow the discussion to drift too far.
- Manage the group's process, using the guidelines below:

Strongly encourage all members to participate and to learn from themselves and each other. Draw out quiet participants by creating an opportunity for each person to contribute. Don't let one or two people dominate the discussion. Thank them for their opinions and then ask another person to share.

Be an active listener. You need to hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Model this for others.

Keep the focus on personal reactions to the readings, including personal values, feelings, and experiences.

Remember, the course is not for judging others' responses or solutions. Consensus is not a goal.

FOR THE SESSION OPENER

- Bring a short opening, not more than five minutes long. It should be something that expresses your personal appreciation for the natural world. Examples: a short personal story, an object or photograph that has special meaning a poem or a visualization. You can be creative.
- The purpose of the opening is twofold. First, it provides a transition from other activities of the day into the group discussion. Second, since the opening is personal, it allows the group to get better acquainted with you. This aspect of the course can be very rewarding.

For more information on the NWEI course model and organizing a course, see "How to Start a Discussion Course" on page 6.



EVALUATION

PART 1. PLEASE FILL OUT WEEKLY, while your thoughts and opinions are fresh in your mind. Rate the content of the six sessions.

	POOR CHOICE EXCELLENT					COMMENTS:
1. Wild Nature	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Shifting Paradigms	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Nature and Spirit	1	2	3	4	5	
4. The Universe Story	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Ecopsychology	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Bringing It Down to Earth	1	2	3	4	5	

Were the following articles helpful? Circle "Y" if we should use the article next time or "N" if we should look for better reading material. Leave blank if you didn't read it or have no opinion.

COMMENTS:

- 1. "The Real World Around Us".....Y N
- "The Tuolumne Camp"Y N
- "The Judgement of the Birds".....Y N
- "Seeing".....Y N
- "The Phosphorescent Soul".....Y N
- "The Moral Equivalent of Wildness"Y N

- 2. "Thinking Like a Mountain"Y N
- From *The Web of Life*.....Y N
- "The Eight Principles of Deep Ecology"Y N
- "Deep Ecology and Lifestyles".....Y N
- "The Gaia Hypothesis".....Y N
- From *Seeing the Whole at the Center*.....Y N

- 3. "The Greening of the World's Religions".....Y N
- "The Gospel of J. Matthew".....Y N
- "First Do No Harm".....Y N
- "Sharing One Skin"Y N

- 4. "Cosmology: The Largest Context"Y N
- "Comprehensive Compassion:
 An Interview with Brian Swimme".....Y N
- "The Universe Is Our University".....Y N
- "Living the New Story:
 An Interview with Sister Miriam MacGillis"Y N

continued

SESSION 1



WILD NATURE

This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient, more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

SESSION GOALS

- To get acquainted, set a schedule for future meetings, and identify facilitator and “opening” roles for each session.
- To listen to others’ experiences in nature and to reflect upon our own.
- To explore the meaning of a deep connection to the natural world.

SESSION BACKGROUND

Among the giants of the American conservation movement are naturalists who were grounded by an intimate experience in the natural world. This session includes readings by Rachel Carson, John Muir, and Loren Eiseley, all authors whose influence continues today. Each stands as a tap root of the modern environmental movement.

Carson, best known for her 1962 publication, *Silent Spring*, which exposed the danger of pesticides, also wrote *The Sense of Wonder*, about experiencing nature with children. In “The Real World Around Us,” included here, she

balances a poetic evocation of the beauty and mystery of the natural world with a sobering contemplation of the artificial world humans are creating.

In *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911), naturalist and Sierra Club founder John Muir details his early experiences in the Sierra Nevada. Journal entries from his summer spent at Tuolumne Camp include close observation of life and land forms and reflects his reverential connection to creation.

Loren Eiseley was a highly respected anthropologist, science writer, ecologist and poet. He is known for his writings about humanity’s relationship with the natural world. In *The Star Thrower*, he explores our perceptions of the world and challenges readers to experiment with alternative views to increase their sense of reverence.

More recent voices included are Annie Dillard, Terry Tempest Williams, and Kathleen Dean Moore. In “Seeing,” from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), Dillard describes her first encounter with “seeing deeply and truly.” Terry Tempest Williams then treats us to a vignette of a magical moment shared by her family while swimming in a phosphorescent tide. Finally, Kathleen Dean Moore, an environmental philosopher and essayist, shares her reflections on “wildness” and how we might broaden our understanding of it in “The Moral Equivalent of Wildness.”

Circle Question

(Each Member Answers)

**If you think back to a significant experience in the natural world, what comes to mind?
When was this moment? Where were you?**

Reminder to the facilitator: The circle question discussion should move quickly. Elicit an answer from each participant without questions or comments from others. The facilitator's guidelines are on page 8.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Carson believes that we need the beauty and mysteries of the natural world for our spiritual and emotional development. Does that ring true for you? What are the implications for a culture that spends most of its time indoors?
2. Eiseley describes an incident with a crow that completely altered his perception of reality. Has your focus or perspective in nature ever been altered in such a way? Describe your experience.
3. Dillard writes that "when I see this way I see truly" and suggests that each of us can cultivate a truer way of seeing. How do you, or how could you, create this way of seeing in your life?
4. Muir refers to the "so-called lifeless rocks." Is there any other way to view a rock?
5. Muir details his daily observations of nature. What do your daily observations include?
6. Kathleen Dean Moore explores Thoreau with her students, concluding that "If the natural world is to be preserved...it will be because of how wildness transforms us." In what ways does it transform you? Is Thoreau right?
7. Can we capture the experience of wildness in any setting, as Moore suggests, whether it is urban, suburban or rural? Explain.
8. After reviewing the list in "Putting It into Practice" are there any actions you feel inspired to begin doing?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- Find a special place in nature where you can keep the built environs and other people out of view. Spend five or ten minutes being aware of what you experience with all your senses. Notice color, motion, touch, sound, temperature, form, and smell. Write down your impressions.
- Find at least one new hike or scenic view that you can visit in your local bioregion each month. Keep going back to your favorite ones.
- Adopt a tree and visit it monthly throughout the year. Being still in its presence, note the changes it undergoes as the seasons turn.
- Dig into one square foot of soil in a garden or compost pile. How many living creatures can you observe?
- Start a daily observation journal. Document a natural event every day in words or a sketch. Grow a plant from a seed and sense the miracle of life.
- Provide food and water for birds and spend time observing their behavior.

FURTHER READINGS AND RESOURCES

In *New and Selected Poems* (2004), Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver captures the power and beauty of our natural world.

In *An Unspoken Hunger: Stories from the Field* (1994), Terry Tempest Williams's contends that lack of intimacy with the natural world results in a lack of intimacy with one another. She calls on us to find the courage and heart to stand our ground in the places we love.

Orion magazine delves into the connections between nature, science, justice, art, and politics. Read selected articles or subscribe online at: www.orionmagazine.org.

In *Home Ground, Language for an American Landscape*, edited by Barry Lopez and Debra Gwartney, forty-five writers describe their unique landscapes.

As you complete the weekly readings, remember to fill out the course evaluation form on page 9. Your comments will help NWEI improve the course. Thank you.



THE REAL WORLD AROUND US

by Rachel Carson

From what I have told you, you will know that a large part of my life has been concerned with some of the beauties and mysteries of this earth about us, and with the even greater mysteries of the life that inhabits it. No one can dwell long among such subjects without thinking rather deep thoughts, without asking himself searching and often unanswerable questions, and without achieving a certain philosophy.

There is only one quality that characterizes all of us who deal with the sciences of the earth and its life—we are never bored. We can't be. There is always something new to be investigated. Every mystery solved brings us to the threshold of a greater one.

I like to remember the wonderful old Swedish oceanographer, Otto Petterson. He died a few years ago at the age of 93, in full possession of his keen mental powers. His son, also a distinguished oceanographer, tells us in a recent book how intensely his father enjoyed every new experience, every new discovery concerning the world about him. "He was an incurable romantic," the son wrote, "intensely in love with life and with the mysteries of the Cosmos which, he was firmly convinced, he had been born

to unravel." When, past 90, Otto Petterson realized he had not much longer to enjoy the earthly scene, he said to his son: "what will sustain me in my last moments is an infinite curiosity as to what is to follow."

The pleasures, the values of contact with the natural world, are not reserved for the scientists. They are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of a lonely mountain top—or the sea—or the stillness of a forest; or who will stop to think about so small a thing as the mystery of a growing seed.

I am not afraid of being thought a sentimentalist when I stand here tonight and tell you that I believe natural beauty has a necessary place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society. I believe that whenever we destroy beauty, or whenever we substitute something man-made and artificial for a natural feature of the earth, we have retarded some part of man's spiritual growth.

I believe this affinity of the human spirit for the earth and its beauties is deeply and logically rooted. As human beings, we are part of the whole stream of life. We have been human beings for perhaps a million years. But life itself—passes on something of itself to other life—that mysterious entity that moves and is aware of itself and its surroundings, and so is distinguished from rocks or senseless clay—[from which] life arose many hundreds of millions of years ago. Since then it has developed, struggled, adapted itself to its surroundings, evolved an infinite number of forms. But its living protoplasm is built of the same elements as air, water, and rock. To these the mysterious spark of life was added. Our origins are of the earth. And so there is in us a deeply seated response to the natural universe, which is part of our humanity.

Now why do I introduce such a subject tonight—a serious subject for a night when we are supposed to be having fun? First, because you have asked me to tell you something of myself—and I can't do that without telling you some of the things I believe in so intensely.

Also, I mention it because it is not often I have a chance to talk to a thousand women. I believe it is important for women to realize that the world of today threatens to destroy much of that beauty that has immense power to bring us a healing release from tension. Women have a greater intuitive understanding of such things. They want for their children not only physical health but mental and spiritual health as well. I bring these things to your attention tonight because I think your awareness of them will help, whether you are practicing journalists, or teachers, or librarians, or housewives and mothers.

What are these threats of which I speak: what is this destruction of beauty—this substitution of man-made ugliness—this trend toward a perilously artificial world? Unfortunately, that is a subject that could require a whole conference, extending over many days. So in the few

minutes that I have to devote to it, I can only suggest the trend.

We see it in small ways in our own communities, and in larger ways in the community of the state of the nation. We see the destruction of beauty and the suppression of human individuality in hundreds of suburban real estate developments where the first act is to cut down all the trees and the next is to build an infinitude of little houses, each like its neighbor.

We see it in distressing form in the nation's capital, where I live. There in the heart of the city we have a small but beautiful woodland area—Rock Creek Park. It is a place where one can go, away from the noise of traffic and of man-made confusions, for a little interval of refreshing and restoring quiet—where one can hear the soft water sounds of a stream on its way to river and sea, where the wind flows through the trees, and a veery sings in the green twilight. Now they propose to run a six-lane arterial highway through the heart of that narrow woodland valley—destroying forever its true and immeasurable blue to the city and the nation.

Those who place so great a value on a highway apparently do not think the thoughts of an editorial writer for the *New York Times* who said: "But a little lonesome space, where nature has her own way, where it is quiet enough at night to hear the patter of small paws on leaves and the murmurings of birds, can still be afforded. The gift of tranquility, wherever found, is beyond price."

We see the destructive trend on a national scale in proposals to invade the national parks with commercial schemes such as the building of power dams. The parks were placed in trust for all the people, to preserve for them just such recreational and spiritual values as I have



mentioned. Is it the right of this, our generation, in its selfish materialism, to destroy these things because we are blinded by the dollar sign? Beauty—and all the values that derive from beauty—are not measured and evaluated in terms of the dollar.

Years ago I discovered in the writings of the British naturalist Richard Jeffries a few lines that so impressed themselves upon my mind that I have never forgotten them. May I quote them for you now?

The exceeding beauty of the earth, in her splendor of life, yields a new thought with every petal. The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live. All else is illusion, or mere endurance.

Those lines are, in a way, a statement of the creed I have lived by, for, as perhaps you have seen tonight, a preoccupation with the wonder and beauty of the earth has strongly influenced the course of my life.

Since *The Sea Around Us* was published, I have had the privilege of receiving many letters from people who, like myself, have been steadied and reassured by contemplating the long history of the earth and sea, and the deeper meanings of the world of nature. These letters have come from all sorts of people; there have been hairdressers and fishermen and musicians; there have been classical scholars and scientists. So many of them have said, in one phrasing or another, "We have been troubled about the world, and had almost lost faith in man; it helps to think about the long history of the earth, and of how life came to be. And when we think in terms of millions of years we are not so impatient that our own problems be solved tomorrow."

In contemplating the "exceeding beauty of the earth" these people have found calmness and courage. For there is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of birds; in the ebb and flow of the tides; in the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in these repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

Mankind has gone very far into an artificial world of his own creation. He has sought to insulate himself, with steel and concrete, from the realities of earth and water. Perhaps he is intoxicated with his own power, as he goes farther and farther into experiments for the destruction of himself and his world. For this unhappy trend there is no single remedy—no panacea. But I believe that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

This excerpt is from *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson* (1998). Rachel Carson (1907–1964) was an American marine biologist and nature writer whose writings are credited with advancing the global environmental movement. She also wrote *The Sense of Wonder*, *The Sea Around Us*, *The Edge of the Sea*, *Under the Sea Wind*, and *Silent Spring*.



THE TUOLUMNE CAMP

by John Muir

August 23. Cool, bright day, hinting Indian summer. Mr. Delaney has gone to the Smith Ranch, on the Tuolumne below Hetch-Hetchy Valley, thirty-five or forty miles from here, so I'll be alone for a week or more—not really alone, for Carlo has come back. He was at a camp a few miles to the northwestward. He looked sheepish and ashamed when I asked him where he had been and why he had gone away without leave. He is now trying to get me to caress him and show signs of forgiveness. What a wondrous wise dog. A great load is off my mind. I could not have left the mountains without him. He seems very glad to get back to me.

Rose and crimson sunset, and soon after the stars appeared the moon rose in most impressive majesty over the top of Mount Dana. I sauntered up the meadow in the white light. The jet-black tree-shadows were so wonderfully distinct and substantial looking, I often stepped high in crossing them, taking them for black charred logs...

August 26. Frost this morning; all the meadow grass and some of the pine needles sparkling with irised crystals,—flowers of light. Large picturesque clouds, craggy like rocks, are piled on Mount Dana, reddish in color like the mountain itself; the sky for a few degrees around the horizon is pale purple, into which the pines dip their spires with fine effect.

Spent the day as usual looking about me, watching the changing lights, the ripening autumn colors of the grass, seeds, late-blooming gentians, asters, goldenrods; parting the meadow grass here and there and looking down into the underworld of mosses and liverworts; watching the busy ants and beetles and other small people at work and play like squirrels and bears in a forest; studying the formation of lakes and meadows, moraines, mountain sculpture; making small beginnings in these directions, charmed by the serene beauty of everything.

...And how glorious the shining after the short summer showers and after frosty nights when the morning sunbeams are pouring through the crystals on the grass and pine needles, and how ineffably spiritually fine is the morning-glow on the mountain-tops and the alpenglow of evening. Well may the Sierra be named, not the Snowy Range, but the Range of Light.

August 27. ... Contemplating the lace-like fabric of streams outspread over the mountains, we are reminded that everything is flowing—going somewhere, animals and so-called lifeless rocks as well as water. Thus the snow flows fast or slow in grand beauty-making glaciers and avalanches; the air in majestic floods carrying minerals, plant leaves, seeds, spores, with streams of music and fragrance; water streams carrying rocks both in solution, and in the form of mud particles, sand, pebbles, and boulders. Rocks flow from volcanoes like water from springs, and animals flock together and flow in currents modified by stepping, leaping, gliding, flying, swimming, etc. While the stars go streaming through space pulsed on and on forever like blood globules in Nature's warm heart.

August 28. The dawn a glorious song of color. Sky absolutely cloudless. A fine crop of hoarfrost. Warm after ten o'clock. The gentians don't mind the first frost though their petals seem so delicate; they close every night as if going to sleep, and awake fresh as ever in the morning sun-glory. The grass is a shade browner since last week, but there are no nipped wilted plants of any sort as far as I have seen. Butterflies and the grand host of smaller flies are benumbed every night, but they hover and dance in the sunbeams over the meadows before noon with no apparent lack of playful, joyful life. Soon they must all fall like petals in an orchard, dry and wrinkled, not a wing of all the mighty host left to tingle the air. Nevertheless new myriads will arise in the spring, rejoicing, exulting, as if laughing cold death to scorn...

August 30. ...Mr. Delaney arrived this morning. Felt not a trace of loneliness while he was gone. On the contrary, I never enjoyed grander company. The whole wilderness seems to be alive and familiar, full of humanity. The very stones seem talkative, sympathetic, brotherly. No wonder when we consider that we all have the same Father and Mother...

September 2. ...One is constantly reminded of the infinite lavishness and fertility of Nature—inexhaustible abundance amid what seems enormous waste. And yet when we look into any of her operations that lie within reach of our minds, we learn that no particle of her material is wasted or worn out. It is eternally flowing from use to use, beauty to yet higher beauty; and we soon cease to lament waste and death, and rather rejoice and exult in the imperishable, unspendable wealth of the universe, and faithfully watch and wait the reappearance of everything that melts and fades and dies about us, feeling sure that its next appearance will be better and more beautiful than the last.

...The Sierra Cathedral, to the south of camp, was overshadowed like Sinai. Never before noticed so fine an union of rock and cloud in form and color and substance, drawing earth and sky together as one; and so human is it, every feature and tint of color goes to one's heart, and we shout, exulting in wild enthusiasm as if all the divine show were our own. More and more, in a place like this, we feel ourselves part of wild Nature, kin to everything. Spent most of the day high up on the north rim of the valley, commanding views of the clouds in all their red glory spreading their wonderful light over all the basin, while the rocks and trees and small alpine plants at my feet seemed hushed and thoughtful, as if they also were conscious spectators of the glorious new cloud-world...

September 7. Left camp at daybreak and made direct for Cathedral Peak...



...The Cathedral is said to be about eleven thousand feet above the sea, but the height of the building itself above the level of the ridge it stands on is about fifteen hundred feet. A mile or so to the westward there is a handsome lake, and the glacier-polished granite about it is shining so brightly it is not easy in some places to trace the line between the rock and water, both shining alike... No feature, however, of all the noble landscape as seen from here seems more wonderful than the Cathedral itself, a temple displaying Nature's best masonry and sermons in stones. How often I have gazed at it from the tops of hills and ridges, and through openings in the forests on my many short excursions, devoutly wondering, admiring, longing! This I may say is the first time I have been at church in California, led here at last, every door graciously opened for the poor lonely worshiper. In our best times everything turns into religion, all the world seems a church and the mountains altars. And lo, here at last in front of the Cathedral is blessed cassiope, ringing her thousands of sweet-tined bells, the sweetest church music I ever enjoyed. Listening, admiring, until late in the afternoon I compelled myself to hasten away eastward back of rough, sharp, spiry, splintery peaks, all of them granite like the Cathedral, sparkling with crystals,—feldspar, quartz, hornblende, mica, tourmaline. Had a rather difficult walk and creep across an immense snow and ice cliff which gradually increased in steepness as I advanced until it was almost impassable. Slipped on a dangerous place, but managed to stop by digging my heels into the thawing surface just on the brink of a yawning ice gulf. Camped beside a little pool and a group of crinkled dwarf pines; and as I sit by the fire trying to write notes the shallow pool seems fathomless with the infinite starry heavens in it, while the on looking rocks and trees, tiny shrubs and daisies and sedges, brought forward in the fire-flow, seem full of thought as if about to speak aloud and tell all their wild stories. A marvelously impressive meeting in which everyone has something worthwhile to tell. And beyond the fire-beams out in the solemn darkness, how impressive is the music of a choir of rills singing their way down from the snow to the river! And when we call to mind that thousands of these rejoicing rills are assembled in each one of the main streams, we wonder the less that our Sierra rivers are songful all the way to the sea.

...How delightful it is to be alone here! How wild everything is—wild as the sky and as pure! Never shall I forget this big, divine day—the Cathedral and its thousands of cassiope bells, and the landscapes around them, and this camp in the gray crags above the woods, with its stars and streams and snow.

This is an excerpt from *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911) by John Muir. Muir (1838–1914) was a Scottish-born, American naturalist, author, and early advocate for conservation of the U.S. wilderness. He also founded the Sierra Club.



THE JUDGEMENT OF THE BIRDS

by Loren Eiseley

[There is a] crow who lives near my house, and though I have never injured him, he takes good care to stay up in the very highest trees and, in general, to avoid humanity. His world begins at about the limit of my eyesight.

On the particular morning when this episode occurred, the whole countryside was buried in one of the thickest fogs in years. The ceiling was absolutely zero. All planes were grounded, and even a pedestrian could hardly see his outstretched hand before him.

I was groping across a field in the general direction of the railroad station, following a dimly outlined path. Suddenly out of the fog, at about the level of my eyes, and so closely that I flinched, there flashed a pair of immense black wings and a huge beak. The whole bird rushed over my head with a frantic cawing outcry of such hideous terror as I have never heard in a crow's voice before and never expect to hear again.

He was lost and startled, I thought, as I recovered my poise. He ought not to have flown out in this fog. He'd knock his silly brains out.

All afternoon that great awkward cry rang in my head.

Merely being lost in a fog seemed scarcely to account for it—especially in a tough, intelligent old bandit such as I knew that particular crow to be. I even looked once in the mirror to see what it might be about me that had so revolted him that he had cried out in protest to the very stones.

Finally, as I worked my way homeward along the path, the solution came to me. It should have been clear before. The borders of our worlds had shifted. It was the fog that had done it. That crow, and I knew him well, never under normal circumstances flew low near men. He had been lost all right, but it was more than that. He had thought he was high up, and when he encountered me looming gigantically through the fog, he had perceived a ghastly and, to the crow mind, unnatural sight. He had seen a man walking on air, desecrating the very heart of the crow kingdom, a harbinger of the most profound evil a crow mind could conceive of—air walking men. The encounter, he must have thought, had taken place a hundred feet over the roofs.

He caws now when he sees me leaving for the station in the morning, and I fancy that in that note I catch the uncertainty of a mind that has come to know things are not always what they seem. He has seen a marvel in his heights of air and is no longer as other crows. He has experienced the human world from an unlikely perspective. He and I share a viewpoint in common: our worlds have interpenetrated, and we both have faith in the miraculous...



On the maps of the old voyagers it is called *Mauvaises Terres*, the evil lands, and, slurred a little with the passage through many minds, it has come down to us anglicized as the badlands. The soft shuffle of moccasins has passed through its canyons on the grim business of war and flight, but the last of those slight disturbances of immemorial silences died out almost a century ago. The land, if one can call it a land, is a waste as lifeless as the valley in which lie the kings of Egypt. Like the Valley of the Kings, it is a mausoleum, a place of dry bones in what once was a place of life. Now it has silences as deep as those in the moon's airless chasms.

Nothing grows among its pinnacles; there is no shade except under great toadstools of sandstone whose bases have been eaten to the shape of wine glasses by the wind. Everything is flaking, cracking, disintegrating, wearing away in the long, imperceptible weather of time. The ash of ancient volcanic outbursts still sterilizes its soil, and its colors in that waste are the colors that flame in the lonely sunsets on dead planets. Men come there but rarely, and for one purpose only, the collection of bones.

It was a late hour on a cold, wind-bitten autumn day when I climbed a great hill spined like a dinosaur's back and tried to take my bearings. The tumbled waste fell away in waves in all directions. Blue air was darkening into purple along the bases of the hills. I shifted my knapsack, heavy with the

petrified bones of long-vanished creatures, and studied my compass. I wanted to be out of there by nightfall, and already the sun was going sullenly down in the west.

It was then that I saw the flight coming on. It was moving like a little close-knit body of black specks that danced and darted and closed again. It was pouring from the north and heading toward me with the undeviating relentlessness of a compass needle. It streamed through the shadows rising out of monstrous gorges. It rushed over towering pinnacles in the red light of the sun or momentarily sank from sight within their shade. Across that desert of eroding clay and wind-worn stone they came with a faint wild twittering that filled all the air about me as those tiny living bullets hurtled past into the night.

It may not strike you as a marvel. It would not, perhaps, unless you stood in the middle of a dead world at sunset, but that was where I stood. Fifty million years lay under my feet, fifty million years of bellowing monsters moving in a green world now gone so utterly that its very light was traveling on the farther edge of space. The chemicals of all that vanished age lay about me in the ground. Around me still lay the shearing molars of dead titanotheres, the delicate sabers of soft stepping cats, the hollow sockets that had held the eyes of many a strange, outmoded beast. Those eyes had looked out upon a world as real as ours; dark, savage brains had roamed and roared their challenges into the steaming night.

Now they were still here, or, put it as you will, the chemicals that made them were here about me in the ground. The carbon that had driven them ran blackly in the eroding stone. The stain of iron was in the clays. The iron did not remember the blood it had once moved within, the

phosphorus had forgot the save brain. The little individual moment had ebbed from all those strange combinations of chemicals as it would ebb from our living bodies into the sinks and runnels of oncoming time.

I had lifted up a fistful of that ground. I held it while that wild flight of south-bound warblers hurtled over me into the oncoming dark. There went phosphorous, there went iron, there went carbon, there beat the calcium in those hurrying wings. Alone on a dead planet I watched that incredible miracle speeding past. It ran by some true compass over field and waste land. It cried its individual ecstasies into the air until the gullies rang. It swerved like a single body, it knew itself, and, lonely, it bunched close in the racing darkness, its individual entities feeling about them the rising night. And so, crying to each other their identity, they passed away out of my view.

I dropped my fistful of earth. I heard it roll inanimate back into the gully at the base of the hill: iron, carbon, the chemicals of life. Like men from those wild tribes who had haunted these hills before me seeking visions, I made my sign to the great darkness. It was not a mocking sign, and I was not mocked. As I walked into my camp late that night, one man, rousing from his blankets beside the fire, asked sleepily, "What did you see?"

"I think, a miracle," I said softly, but I said it to myself. Behind me that vast waste began to glow under the rising moon.

This excerpt is from *The Star Thrower* (1978). Loren Eiseley's works include *The Mind as Nature* (1962), *The Unexpected Universe* (1969), and *The Night Country: Reflections of a Bone-Hunting Man* (1971). He is a highly respected anthropologist, science writer, ecologist, and poet.





SEEING

by Annie Dillard

It was sunny one evening last summer at Tinker Creek; the sun was low in the sky, upstream. I was sitting on the sycamore log bridge with the sunset at my back, watching the shiners the size of minnows who were feeding over the muddy sand in skittery schools. Again and again, one fish, then another, turned for a split second across the current and flash! the sun shot out from its silver side. I couldn't watch for it. It was always just happening somewhere else, and it drew my vision just as it disappeared: flash, like a sudden dazzle of the thinnest blade, a sparking over a dun and olive ground at chance intervals from every direction. Then I noticed white specks, some sort of pale petals, small, floating from under my feet on the creek's surface, very slow and steady. So I blurred my eyes and gazed towards the brim of my hat and saw a new world. I saw the pale white circles roll up, roll up, like the world's turning, mute and perfect, and I saw the linear flashes, gleaming silver, like stars being born at random down a rolling scroll of time. Something broke and something opened. I filled up like a new wineskin. I breathed an air like light; I saw a light like water. I was the lip of a fountain the creek filled forever; I was ether, the leaf in the zephyr; I was flesh-lake, feather, bone.

When I see this way, I see truly. As Thoreau says, I return to my senses. I am the man who watches the baseball game in silence in an empty stadium. I see the game purely; I'm

abstracted and dazed. When it's all over and the white suited players lope off the green field to their shadowed dugouts, I leap to my feet; I cheer and cheer.

But I can't go out and try to see this way. I'll fail, I'll go mad. All I can do is try to gag the commentator, to hush the noise of useless interior babble that keeps me from seeing just as surely as a newspaper dangled before my eyes. The effort is really a discipline requiring a lifetime of dedicated struggle; it marks the literature of saints and monks of every order East and West, under every rule and no rule, discalced and shod. The world's spiritual geniuses seem to discover universally that the mind's muddy river, this ceaseless flow of trivia and trash, cannot be dammed, and that trying to dam it is a waste of effort that might lead to madness. Instead, you must allow the muddy river to flow unheeded in the dim channels of consciousness; you raise your sights; you look along it, mildly acknowledging its presence without interest and gazing beyond it into the realm of the real where subjects and objects act and rest purely, without utterance. "Launch into the deep," says Jacques Ellul, "and you shall see."

The secret of seeing is, then, the pearl of great price. If I thought he could teach me to find it and keep it forever I would stagger barefoot across a hundred deserts after any lunatic at all. But although the pearl may be found, it may not be sought. The literature of illumination reveals this above all: although it comes to those who wait for it, it is always, even to the most practiced and adept, a gift and a total surprise. I return from one walk knowing where the killdeer nests in the field by the creek and the hour the laurel blooms. I return from the same walk a day later scarcely knowing my own name. Litanies hum in my ears; my tongue flaps in my mouth Ailion, alleluia! I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam. It is possible, in deep space, to sail on solar wind. Light, be it particle or wave, has force: you rig a giant sail and go. The secret of seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail, whetted, translucent, broadside to the merest puff.

When the doctor took her bandages off and led her into the garden, the girl who was no longer blind saw the "tree with the lights in it." It was for this tree I searched through the peach orchards of summer, in the forests of fall and down winter and spring for years. Then one day I was walking along Tinker Creek, thinking of nothing at all, and I saw the tree with the lights in it. I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost, charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance. The flood of fire abated, but I'm still spending the power. Gradually the lights went out in the cedar, the colors died, the cells unflamed and disappeared. I was still ringing.

I had been my whole life a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck. I have since only very rarely seen the tree with the lights in it. The vision comes and goes, mostly goes, but I live for it, for the moment when the mountains open and a new light roars in spate through the crack, and the mountains slam.

This excerpt is from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974). Annie Dillard is the Pulitzer Prize-winning American author of *The Maytrees* (2007), *For the Time Being* (1999), *The Living* (1992), and *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (1982).

THE PHOSPHORESCENT SOUL

By Terry Tempest Williams

Every year our family goes to California for a vacation, usually in August. We take our nieces and the whole extended family of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. On the last night of one of these outings, my father was saying, "This younger generation—I just can't believe they have to go to the movies every minute, they have to go to the malls every minute. What is the world coming to?" Nothing will satisfy their hunger, he said. I could see his point, but I responded, "Dad, they are fourteen or sixteen. They're good kids." It was a typical family discussion that happens behind closed doors or around the dinner table.

On this last night, we built a fire on the beach. We were sitting, talking, and eating, and all of a sudden, the moon came up and the surf turned electric green. We all thought, "What are we drinking?! What is in our food?!" The girls exclaimed, "Wait a minute! Did you see that?!" My father started rubbing his eyes, and before we could even think, we were all down at the water's edge, in the surf. The waves were breaking over us, and we were now in the water up to our shoulders, screaming with delight.

It was a beautiful phosphorescent tide. Everywhere you swept your hand, it made magic. The girls wanted to know about dinoflagellates, bioluminescence and on and on. We could never have had this discussion if they weren't literally being baptized in those magical waves. I thought, Steven Spielberg can't touch one night of a phosphorescent tide. This sense of wonder is what makes us human.

This essay originally appeared in *Operating Instructions: The True Biotechnologies* (2004) by Kenny Ausubel with J.P. Harpignies. Terry Tempest Williams is best known for her book *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1992).



THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WILDNESS

by Kathleen Dean Moore

I drifted in my kayak, listening for small sloshes and hushed voices behind me: the sounds of my college students launching their boats in the dark. The night was intensely quiet and dark, like a campsite after the fire goes cold, but the moon was preparing to rise over the mountains in the east, and the lake showed a slick of silver.

I began to see the boats on the lake, scattered shadows floating: two kayaks, a canoe, a raft, a dory. One after another they turned east, stirring silver rings in dark water, until each boat pointed to the cleft in the mountains where the moon would emerge. In time, the top of the moon bulged between the black peaks, swelling upward. Then the whole creamy white orb lifted away from the mountains and floated free. When I looked behind me, the lake was dotted with uplifted, moonlit faces.

They were still for a very long time, the young people in their little drifting boats. Finally I heard oars splash, and the dory moved slowly up the bright pathway toward the moon and disappeared into the mountains' shadow. Then they rowed back again into the moonlight. They rested a moment in the glow of the moon; then back they went into shadow. At first I didn't understand what they were doing. Eventually it dawned on me: Each time they went into the darkness, the moon appeared for them to drop back behind the mountains. And when they returned to the light, the moon rose—setting and rising, setting and rising, this great

enlightenment, over and over again.

As the moon sailed higher in the sky and the night grew colder, the boats came in one by one, oars thumping damply, voices whispering good night. Allen would spend the night in a canoe, floating on that skim of moonlight. Jenna would spread a sleeping bag in the meadow. Walking back to my tent, I passed Alicia wrapped in a blanket, ankle-deep in shallow water, looking at the stars. *My God, that water must be cold*, I thought. By morning there would be frost.

It was a long time before the dory came to shore. I lay in my tent and listened to voices murmuring on the lake. "So what is nature?" one voice asked. "And where is it?" the other replied. I smiled.

This was Philosophy 438, Philosophy of Nature. Every year in September, before the semester begins at Oregon State University, I bring this class to the mountains for a week. The students come from all majors: marine biology, political science, geography, forestry, a very few from philosophy. We camp on a little lake in a forest of subalpine fir and white pine, just under the broken talus slopes of a jagged mountain. The morning after our excursion on the lake, we all sat in sunlight that made us squint, reading Henry David Thoreau. In the meadow where we had convened, frost glittered on each seed head and blade of grass, and mist rose in ribbons from the lake.

A person "needs wildness the way a garden needs its load of muck," Thoreau wrote, and none of us disagreed, there in the meadow with dragonflies clattering past and a great cloud of mayflies rising into the sunlight for one ecstatic day of flight. We tried to imagine what Thoreau's metaphor meant exactly. What is muck? How and when is it best applied to a garden? If plants need muck in heaps at their roots, where they live and grow, what is the significance of this for those of us who live in cities, far from wildness?

Thoreau went on: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." But, the students noticed, he didn't waste much time defining *wildness*. He talked instead about what the muck of wildness nourishes in people: energy, strength, courage, independence, alertness, a way of seeing that penetrates ordinary expectations, joyous gratitude that goes beyond mere gratefulness. If the natural world is to be preserved, he implied, it will be because of how wildness transforms us.

My students thought they knew pretty much what Thoreau meant, because for five days they had been gorging on wildness, swallowing it in great gulps, as if they were starved. Each of them had been transformed that week into

the sort of person who canoes on a wilderness lake late at night, in the silence, in the presence of the moon. They knew that expansive feeling inside. They knew that gratitude. They knew that connection to the moonlit night, the joy that can't be distinguished from love.

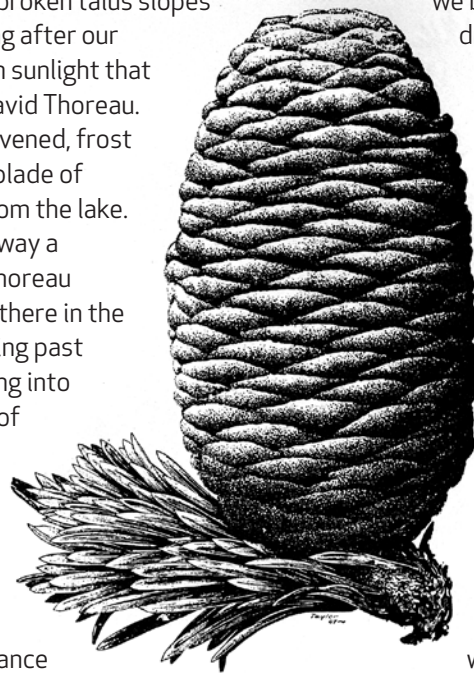
So here is what scared me: the next day, the students would come down from the mountain to the first day of classes on a state-university campus going through fraternity and sorority rush. The cars they'd left in empty parking lots would now be shoulder to shoulder with other vehicles, and the bookstore clerks would be harried and cross. Voice mails would spill invitations, and parties would thump long into the night. And when they called home to say they were safely out of the woods—yes, it was awesome, yes, yes—what would they be able to tell their parents about the experience, as the cell phone signal went in and out and somebody's car alarm beeped and the line for registration pushed out the door?

The question I now asked my students was: Could we bring the values of wild places with us when we drove back down the mountain? Could we hold on to them in our neighborhoods? This was not an idle question. What if it's true that we need wildness the way a garden needs muck, that the preservation of the natural world depends on wildness? Most people don't, *can't* live in the wild anymore. What, then, will nourish and preserve us?

William James noted that war, for all its hideous effects, sometimes brings out characteristics that we value: it can make people brave and selfless and gather them together to serve a common purpose. He searched for something that would bring out these characteristics without the necessity of bloodshed: the "moral equivalent of war," he called it. Wildness, too, changes us in ways we value. We return from the wild "restored," by which we mean filled with new stores that will nourish us, new sources of strength and peace, or maybe with new stories of who we are in relation to each other and to the moon. What we need in the cities is the "moral equivalent" of wildness. But what would that be?

When the discussion ended, the students wandered off in small groups to try to answer my question. Carrying notebooks and steaming cups of tea, they hiked down the trail past green moss heaped in a black-bottomed spring. I watched them talk among themselves, their heads bent together. Between their leaning bodies, light glittered on the lake.

No sooner had the students left than I started to wonder whether I'd given them the right question to ponder. I'd been presupposing that wildness is something we find in





the mountains and not in the valley, something we might transport from wilderness to town. But maybe I was wrong. Isn't there night in the city? Doesn't the moon rise over the sororities as surely as it does over the howling hills? Doesn't mist lift from the broad lawns and catch on the eaves of

the library, and doesn't that damp air smell of the river and the sea? And when the students are sleeping in various combinations in pizza-box-strewn apartments, isn't the moon still there, in the dark outside the window?

Maybe wildness isn't something we need to bring down from the mountain. It's true that legally designated "wilderness areas" are distant from our daily lives. Cartographers can draw lines around this wilderness. But there are no real boundaries to wildness. In the warm afternoon, carbon dioxide from the cities creeps up the valleys and lifts into the clouds. In the cool night, the air drifts down again, the smell of pines lingering between the Chevron and the 7-Eleven, whispering through the valves of our hearts. We are wildness: soil, water, oxygen, sunlight. Wildness is all there is.

Maybe I should have asked not how we can *bring* wildness into our lives, but how we can *remember to notice* the wildness in every sweating pore, every stewed carrot, every solid step; in the morning air noisy with rain; in the reeling stars. Or maybe this is the question: How can we live always as we do in the wilderness, with that same respect and care for what is beautiful and beyond us?

This excerpt is from *The Pine Island Paradox* (2004). Kathleen Dean Moore is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University and the founding director of the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature, and the Written Word. Her works include *Rachel Carson: Legacy and Challenge* (2008), *Holdfast: At Home in the Natural World* (2004), and *Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water* (1996).

Find your place on the planet, dig in,
and take responsibility from there.

— GARY SNYDER

MEMBERSHIP

Inspiring people to take responsibility for Earth.

Thank you for participating in this discussion course.

If you would like to help others discover their role in our planet's future, please consider making a donation to become a member of the Northwest Earth Institute. By joining NWEI, you will be helping us bring our discussion courses to groups and communities throughout the nation who want to explore how we can weave our lives back into the fabric of our natural environment.

Please join the NWEI community and help spread the word.

To join, fax this form to (503) 227-2917, or mail it to Olympic Mills, 107 SE Washington St. #235, Portland, OR 97214. You can also join online at www.nwei.org/join.

I'd like to make a donation to the Northwest Earth Institute.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Telephone: Day (_____) _____ Evening (_____) _____

Email address _____

Membership (tax deductible):

<input type="checkbox"/> Regular	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Household/Contributor	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Earth Steward	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Founder's Circle	\$1,000

I'm already a member. Here's an additional gift. \$ _____

Pay by credit card: Visa MasterCard

Card number _____ Expiration date _____

Signature _____

I would like information on how to offer a course on:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Global Warming: Changing CO ₂ course | <input type="checkbox"/> Discovering a Sense of Place | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Systems at Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary Simplicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Choices for Sustainable Living | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Menu for the Future | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Children—Healthy Planet | |

Thank you for your support!