

Joy in Nature

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"...To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it." – Ursula K. LeGuin

After a morning of activity, we decided to take a break from our various projects on the land to take a walk in the woods in search of cloudberry. We drove to a part of the forest where we've known them to flourish. Each of us prepared for our excursion and geared-up with tall rain boots to keep us dry in the boggy soil. Dressed in clothing from head-to-toe to protect us from various swarming bugs, we arrived armed with buckets and berry pickers. The group set out from the car with anticipation, each walking in a slightly different direction to maximize our coverage of the land, but close enough to hear our chatter and buzz.



Along the way, unsuccessful in the search of the elusive golden berries, I switched to plucking the plentiful wild blueberries all around me. After some time, I looked up from the ground, refocused my gaze on my greater surroundings and noticed that I had become separated from the group. My only visible companions were the seemingly endless tall, dark and slender forest of trees. My face was greeted by a warm, supportive breeze carrying echoes of the words, "Be still, be still." I obliged, and standing there, I reflected that I was smiling and full of joy to be alone in the wildness around me. A feeling of peace arrived.

Somehow, I had stumbled into the notion that the joy I felt was something much deeper, like something locked away in my tissues, more of a realization that nature is not something separate from me, but a part of me.

"For we forget our origins; in our towns and cities, staring into our screens, we need constantly reminding that we have been operators of computers for a single generation and workers in neon-lit offices for three or four, but we were farmers for five hundred generations, and before that hunter-gatherers for perhaps fifty thousand or more, living with the natural world as part of it as we evolved, and the legacy cannot be done away with."
– Michael McCarthy

There came a small thought that I had briefly penetrated a secret of existence, something much larger than me, more complicated and deeper than I could dive into in that moment. I resumed plucking berries and listened to the faint sound of my family calling for me from the distance.



"The beauty of nature somehow helps to erase the boundary between us and the entire natural world; paving the road." – Oliver Sachs

Childish thoughts hastily rushed to my head to resume my search for berries for our pie. But somehow, as I searched and picked, picked and searched, I couldn't shake the idea that the forest was offering something to me. It was like an invitation to recalibrate my sense of reality and humanity and to exist deeply in time and absolute presence.

I found myself for a moment.

