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## Nature's Gold

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Issue 05 - Winter 2021





The Nature's Gold contributor community is a mixture of environmental degree graduates, parents, volunteers, business owners, retirees with one eco-driven purpose: how we can create a more sustainable planet for the future of all species that depend on our actions today.

Our aim is to inspire, inform and collaborate – there is a lot of doom and gloom news about the natural world, so we hope to also show you the positive changes that are already in motion, and that there can be hope, especially if we work together.

We put forward scientific thinking that is accessible to all and report on the latest conservation news and politics. We introduce eco-friendly ideas and highlight fascinating and uplifting environmental and conservation projects around the world. We love to promote nature photographers and videographers – images can speak volumes!

We believe that knowledge of the natural world and how best to protect it from further harm, should not solely lie with scientists but with everyone. We all have our part to play, and our planet depends on us. Change is always inevitable, but there's no reason why we can't make it a positive one!

**Our new website is now live:**  
[www.naturesgoldmagazine.com](http://www.naturesgoldmagazine.com)



## Say hello to our contributors



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# Welcome to Nature's Gold

There's a running joke in my parents household that whenever the season of winter comes around, there comes a point when 'Winter' by William Shakespeare has to be recited by my mother.

With a twinkle in her eye, she assumes the role of veteran thespian and with as much flourish as she can muster, she begins.

"Winter by William Shakespeare." (cue dramatic pause for effect)

"When icicles hang by the wall,  
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail..."

Winter for many is exactly how Mr Shakespeare describes it. Cold, dark, quiet and slow.

It is a time of dormancy for many species, a time to hunker down and rest. For our natural world, this normal cycle of seasons is expected. They are adapted, accustomed even, to the sudden changes in temperature and light. They make sure their food stores are prepped and begin to start conserving precious energy.

Nature has much to teach us. We humans find that winter is synonymous with difficulty and stress, both physical and psychological. A lot of the time we resist the season of winter wishing for the warmer, longer days of spring. We carry on believing that we need to apply the same energy to our day-to-day life as we had during spring and summer.

We are species too.



The trees and plants at present may seem bare and without life, but even they are nurturing their energy for spring. Looking to them we can increase our resilience, focusing on self-care and self-compassion by tending our own energy stores during this time. By adopting tools that guide us to be more mindful and grounded, we become aware of our own needs and boundaries and learn when we need to rest. There is power, courage and even productivity in that. We then begin to adapt and embrace change and the uncomfortable, slowly growing into new buds of ourselves. As a result, our natural world benefits as we learn that our well-being and nature is intricately interconnected, part of a healthy, sustainable cycle.

And yet there is a lot of beauty in winter. Many around the world have had significant snowfalls, crunching through parks and forests where trees are laden with snow. In this issue we have a range of experiences of winter, thoughts and scientific concepts on nature and well-being, brought to you by our wonderful community of worldwide contributors. We also have a lovely section on the arts, our 'online gallery', cultivated for everyone to admire and contemplate. At the back, if any of you would like to delve deeper, there is a well-being section where we discuss ideas for nurturing our energy and overall well-being including tips for sleep and online courses and podcasts to explore.

As always thank you for being here. None of this would be possible without your support and of that we are so grateful.

**Emma Kajiyama**

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Photo courtesy of [@neeltje living nature](#)





# WINTER'S CALL TO REST

THE HERBALIST WAY





### Words and photos by Britt Gillman

As an herbalist, I work with bio-regional plants to craft traditional herbal offerings for mind, body, skin and spirit at Pine + Clover Apothecary. Living in the Ottawa Valley - a more Northern region of Ontario, Canada facing the Quebec Laurentian Mountains, we are incredibly lucky to witness four beautiful, unique seasons; some feeling much longer than the others.

I like to say that the mountains over our little river town community are the mirror of the season. If you aren't sure what season we are in, look to the mountains for your answer.

Spring and summer awards us lush green valleys. Fall shows us the colours of our Canadian Birch and Maples.

And winter....

In winter, you can see the bones. When snow tops the tall pines on the mountains and graces the skeletons of the Winter Maples, you feel as though you can see right through to what faces us 365 days of the year. I think of those mountains and that land more than ever in the winter, their age and wisdom showing so well, wondering all they've seen in their time and what they have to share with us.

Winter is a time of great rest for us herbalists, foragers and gardeners. It's also a time of waiting: for ground thaw and baby seedlings unfurling again in

spring. We wait, until the crocus emerge from the snow, signalling a change, letting us know that the violets will soon be on their way, too.

I would imagine that you, reader, are both resting and waiting right now, too.

As we transverse through this season of winter, we can all agree that this year is so different than every other we have experienced, collectively. I think that, in a way, our bones are showing too, this year, just like those of the mountain trees.

Outdoors, we have said goodbye to our plant friends that cared for us, and allowed us to care for them all season. Simultaneously, we are living in another stretch of a global health pandemic; the consequences of lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, social isolation, job loss, and societal change are showing. We see light shone on spots of inequity. There is a grand re-ordering of things that felt important, no longer being so.

Feelings of grief and sadness during this time can emerge for many. Not only are the days shorter, with less light and vitamin D for our bodies to absorb; we are collectively observing quite a bit of death around us: the trees have dropped their leaves, blossoms have died back, the land is grey and barren, the streets more quiet.





During this time, a thought that gives me comfort is that this season is not one of loss: it's an important step of the cycle in the stages of rebirth. It's a calling to rest. And wait. Though it may be hard to do, we can listen. Dream on. Settle in.

So, these days, I do what I only know how. I go to the woods.

Relationship with our local plants and the land inspires curiosity, adaptability, compassion, community, and care.

A truly funny thing happens when we understand the unique gifts that bio-regional plants have to offer humans. Slowly, we begin to consider the ways our humanness has impacted this reciprocal exchange in the past, and wonder aloud how we can weave this connection back together. Thread by thread.

We'll never get it perfect, because we are human, innately messy. Prone to letting our humanness, our sense of self, be more special, more important than the other sentient beings alongside us, above and below us.

And it may take a long time of social change before we can begin to get it right, but we can start, scrappily -- with small, every day actions.

A walk in the woods. Getting your knees dirty. Snow dampened boots. Showing our littlest land stewards the way. Going back, rewilding, remembering the old ways, honoring the first ones and their stories. Leaving the leaves. Touching the tree. Eating our weeds.

If trees can figure this out, this thing called rest, can we, too? If the mycelial network is the greatest love story you've ever heard on giving, receiving, bending, collaborating, merging, then we surely can follow along too, can't we?

I didn't spend a lot of time in nature growing up for an herbalist. And I've come very late to the woods compared to most. But it still feels like coming home. It's warm in here, cosy, and someone's lit us all a welcome fire. I feel as though the woods are inviting us to tuck in for a long nap.

These days it's very easy to focus on what is lost. Certainty and surety both slip through our fingers like fast water.





How appropriate though, that during this season, we can see the outside world going to rest with incredible grace, while offering us abundance of what it can.

Fuzzy tailed squirrels still find nuts for their stores. Black-capped chickadees flit from branch to frozen ground. Our favourite blossoms have withered, yes, retreating for a season of deep slumber. But the evergreens above us, Pine and Cedar, have strengthened. Their volatile oils grew in potency in the cold. Knowing ways to thrive in a barren time.

Our pillars of community care feel a bit shaky right now. Gathering human support is harder than it used to be, as necessary space fills between us and our friends, our families. Like you, I miss meals shared together and our children holding hands. Dreams and plans for the future have been cancelled or put

on hold. Our smiles are a little dimmed under these masks.

But adopting the rhythm of nature allows us to observe seasonal abundance, and connects us with a different kind of support: one that knows how important it is to let go when the time is right, as it has expertly done a billion times before.

This is rest remembrance: a lighthouse calling us home, leading the way. Inviting us to surrender into another turn of the wheel.

We are all a little unsure. Some days, no soft places spotted to land, but we do know this: There is still evergreen to gather for a cup of tea. So we gather what we can, and bring it home. We rest. We wait.

Britt Gillman is an herbalist, photographer, writer and owner of Pine + Clover Apothecary, an online herbal apothecary.

Living in Deep River, Ontario, Canada with her husband and 2 children, she is a life-long student of medicinal plants and the outdoors.

She enjoys crafting bio-regional herbal offerings for her community, spending time in the garden, and living rooted in the rhythm of the seasons.

[www.pineandclover.ca](http://www.pineandclover.ca)





# TANDEM PICTURES



Interview by Emma Kajiyama  
Photos courtesy of Katie Grant, Momentum Pictures, Momentum Releasing and Tandem Pictures

The adverse effects of climate change are widely being acknowledged by many businesses. After the wake-up call that was the extreme weather events of 2020, more and more industries are looking at ways to incorporate sustainability in their ways of working. However, changing behaviours requires more than just knowledge and awareness. Film and television production are one such industry where commitments to more sustainable film productions have been highlighted and are beginning to be put into practise across the board. However, smaller, indie films in particular have been recognised as areas where such green codes of conduct may not have been fully implemented.

According to the British Film Institute (BFI) - “the film production industry produces significant emissions and requires systemic change to reach net zero carbon emissions and to be environmentally sustainable.”

We chat to Tandem Pictures’ founder and CEO - Julie Christeas (JC) and Chief Operating Officer - Jonny Blitstein (JB), who have recently released films such as ‘Black Bear’ and ‘The Surrogate’ and have been putting sustainable talk into action for the past decade. They now hope to pass on their green-led experience to future potential filmmakers.



AUBREY  
PLAZA

CHRISTOPHER  
ABBOTT

SARAH  
GADON

# BLACK BEAR

MOMENTUM PICTURES PRESENTS TANDEM PICTURES, OAKHURST ENTERTAINMENT, BLUE CREEK PICTURES PRODUCTION A PRODUCTIVITY MEDIA AND RADIANT FILMS INTERNATIONAL "BLACK BEAR"  
AUBREY PLAZA CHRISTOPHER ABBOTT SARAH GADON PAOLA LAZARO GRANTHAM COLEMAN DIRECTED BY ROB LEITZELL PRODUCED BY TRACY OSHMAN WITH MATTHEW L. WEISS COSTUME DESIGNER ALLISON PEARCE MUSIC BY GIULIO CARMASSI EDITOR BRYAN SCARY  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALLISON ESTRIN CSA HENRY RUSSELL BERGSTEIN CSA JENN GAW CSA PRODUCED BY WILLIAM G. SANTOR ANDREW CHANG-SANG JOHN HILLS WRITTEN BY JULIE CHRISTEAS p.g.a. JONATHAN BLITSTEIN p.g.a.  
DIRECTED BY LAWRENCE MICHAEL LEVINE CASTING BY RICHARD J. BOSNER AUBREY PLAZA LAWRENCE MICHAEL LEVINE SOPHIA TAKAL MARINA GRASIC AND JAI KHANNA



momentum

TANDEM  
PICTURES

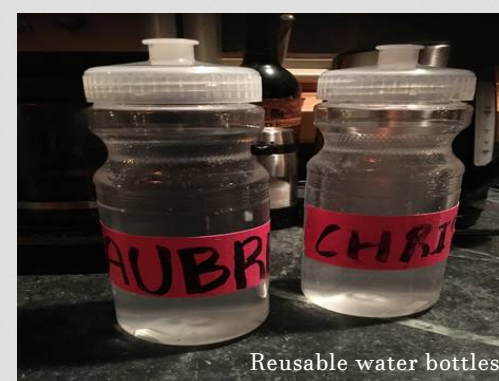
OAKHURST

BLUE CREEK  
PICTURES

RADIANT FILMS INTERNATIONAL

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Could you tell us a little about the story behind Tandem Pictures, how did you start and what is your mission?

**JC** I came up through the New York production office, which was a pretty male-dominated place at the time. I founded Tandem Pictures in 2010 in an effort to give more women opportunities and a voice, both in front of and behind the camera. Our mission evolved organically over the last decade, and we are proud to now be a platform for people, the planet and powerful storytelling. Our mission is one that reflects the ethos of inter-sectional environmentalism - where social justice and environmental justice are inextricably linked.

You received the Green Seal which recognises your green practises on set for your film 'The Surrogate' (congratulations!). I'm sure there are so many processes behind this, but could you tell us about

some of the green practices you have adopted and, in your opinion, what does sustainability look like?

**JB** 'The Surrogate' received the Green Seal, and our second movie released in 2020, 'Black Bear', received the Gold Green Seal. We adhere to the Producers Guild of America PEACH checklist, and the Environmental Media Association guidelines, which provide guidance across every department that can be found on a film or tv set. We meet with each department head and establish guidelines, whereby their team can ensure they are meeting the key benchmarks. These can include everything from avoiding single use plastics and disposable batteries, in favour of reusable water-bottles and rechargeables, to composting food waste, using low-energy lighting equipment, minimising paper usage, increasing group ride shares to set in hybrid or electric vehicles, and more. There are now more than a hundred key areas where we can make a decision to benefit the environment and minimise

waste and CO2 emissions, with a goal of reaching net zero emissions on a film set shooting 20-30 days. Sustainability in the entertainment industry would be when this becomes the standard for all productions in TV, film and even on advertising shoots. The truth is, we're already living in climate change. From hurricanes to wildfires, to the erosion of pollinating insect populations, to increases in asthma due to poor air quality, everyone is being affected. We recognise that the health of people and the health of the planet matter, and both are linked.

**Are you finding that the film industry is moving to more sustainable practices now or are you still part of a minority movement? Are you hopeful for the future of a green film industry?**

**JB** The majority of the big studios and streamers have corporate social responsibility (CSR) or sustainability leadership teams, who have been working successfully since about 2007 on this, when

Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' shook up Hollywood. It's gotten much bigger than just eliminating those single use plastic bottles. However, one issue is investors and finance departments don't always see that these sustainable efforts can save costs on film budgets despite the recent data which shows exactly that. Also, the sustainable practices at the studios are not trickling down fast enough to the independent world where thousands of feature films, short films, pilots and web series are produced each year and submitted to festivals by emerging filmmakers. This is why we are actively out there educating at university film programs and spreading the word on social media so eventually 'green sets' are an industry standard on all productions. So, it is unfortunately still a minority movement but people who care are getting louder. The guidelines from the Producers Guild of America and recent press about Hollywood's sustainability problems are inspiring other producers we know to start to make changes. We are incredibly hopeful





that we can work with others out there to make these changes happen across the board. Of course, COVID-19 has created millions of pounds of new plastic, cloth latex and paper waste from PPE which is required on film sets. We are already working to find compostable and recyclable PPE materials to replace these.

**You are a huge advocate of diversity in film. How do you make sure your company and practices are diverse? What does diversity mean to you?**

**JC** We strive to have a company where diversity means that the global audience is reflected in the film-making team. Having a community of artists and technicians that reflect the world we live in not only brings more equality into the workplace, but it just makes the work better to have different points of views represented.

**Do you have any work or events in the pipeline that we can look forward to?**

**JC** Jonny and I are really passionate about making sustainable film practices standard practices on set. We are starting the new year doing workshops at universities about how students can think about production and building teams with a sustainable mindset. We hope we can be part of a wave that makes being sustainable not only best practice, but standard practice. We also have two films out right now, 'Black Bear', starring Aubrey Plaza, and 'The Surrogate', which is streaming right now on STARZ. We have films in development and ready to go into production this year - if all goes well we will be filming again this summer!

## ABOUT TANDEM PICTURES

Since 2010, TANDEM PICTURES has elevated and given a platform to misrepresented and underrepresented ideas.

“We are filmmakers, driven by justice and representation for both people and the planet. We strive to not only tell stories, but to share learnings with the industry in order to grow positive filming practices across our community.”

Past films include acclaimed festival films **THE SURROGATE**, **BLOODSTRIPE**, **THE EYES OF MY MOTHER**, **THE SLEEPWALKER**, **WILDLIKE**, **GHOST TEAM** and more.







# New Year Snowdrop

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT  
*Galanthus Nivalis*

Words by Chris Marquis  
Photos by Yair Doza and Ikuo Kajiyama

This year has been trying for a lot of us and whilst I usually focus on widely utilised but unknown facts about plants, this article will have more of a calm approach. So, the most wonderful time of the year is here! December, the wreaths are up, the Holly's have fruited, and the Nordmann fir (or another species) Christmas trees are being put up and despite the year we have had, Christmas being the wonderful time it is can signify the end and a new beginning into a new year ahead.





The species that best exemplifies the past year, the diamond in the rough is the common..... Snowdrop, (*Galanthus nivalis*) and whilst not native to the UK it has become common place and a part of the most known British Flora. Usually, this flowering period commences from January however, they are blooming earlier and earlier and can be seen as early as December. Peak flowering time for most flowers are usually the summer months but in winter surrounded by biting winds, dampness and shattering cold the Snowdrop can be found. This has a sort of similarity to how this year has gone, Christmas is the Snowdrop! The time of celebrations, family, and selflessness in a time of chaos. However, this would not be a species spotlight without a few botanical facts here and there! Not only is this species a beauty but there has been ongoing research into Galantamine an alkaloid within this plant that appears to improve brain receptors, which is extremely useful in the study of Alzheimer's disease. There is also use for this alkaloid for sleep improvement (there's some more hope for the insomniacs out there!). The species name as most are is Latin and is a combination of milk (gala(, flower (anthos) and snow (nivalis) which is quite accurate when noting its appearance. Undeservedly, these dainty flowers in the Victorian ages were considered a bad omen which is unfortunate due to the cheer they bring to any garden in the cold months. Finally, a well-known English poet named Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) known most for Children's literature compared the Snowdrop to the holy trinity holding the flower in high regard! The moral of this article is that we are all snowdrops this past year really, prodding along with a hostile world around us but the important thing is that we always return stronger and just as resilient.





# Nature Of Experience

Words by Jessica Spooner  
Photography by Nina Herbert

In 2019 I decided that I was going to move. There was something that I had been slowly working towards for a few years and it was time to finally finish it. This move would include a long car ride, stretching over weeks while I explored new places, and an overnight ferry boat ride. I was moving to Newfoundland, Canada, the famous Rock slicing through the Atlantic Ocean. Named for the unique geological formations that make up this world wonder, including slices from the Earth's mantle!

Little did I know that 2020 was going to be a wild ride in more ways than the obvious. As someone who has adopted a nomadic lifestyle, it was an incredible adventure to hike the magnificent coastlines, gaze at the icebergs as they sailed by, and squeal with delight as humpback whales surfaced to take a breath. The natural landscape of this wild place was an experience like no other. Filled with winds that could turn on a dime, fog which would roll in on an otherwise sunny day, and a crispness to the air in mid-July. This place is nothing if not an experience.

2020 brought not one, but two states of emergency to this island. In January, we received a record snowfall of 29 inches in a 24 - hour period. From my window, it looked like I was living inside of a snowglobe. The whole world appeared to be snowed in, and the only way out was with a shovel and some snowshoes. There were many people, with many different experiences of this winter wonderland. I was fortunate to be able to see a playground when I looked outside. As I stood on 2 feet of freshly laid snow, I peered out at the neighbourhood in childlike wonder.







‘Research has shown, and we know this deep down, that spending just 20 minutes outside can make all of the difference when you are feeling low with the season’.

I had never seen the world in this way before, and I was filled with excitement and curiosity! It's funny what happens when people go through an event like this. It brings the community together in a way that would not have happened otherwise. After months of living in this neighbourhood, I finally met my neighbours as we decided to dig a tunnel through a giant snow mound for fun! A new friendship was forged with this tunnel.

For those in the northern climates, we tend to move towards winter with a slight apprehension, and cling to the hope of spring. We prepare for the long, dark days hoping that it won't be as challenging as last year. Our bodies tighten against the thought of the cold. Every snowfall, ice storm and grey day, brings a sigh of resignation and our minds and bodies feel into this. This seasonal change can feel drastic for some. Warm beds begin to beckon us to stay longer. With the lowered amount of natural light, our disposition shifts into a slight melancholy. We accept the winter as it is, and patiently wait for the first signs of warmth. We frequently hear and hold onto the message that winter is a time for rest and reflection, and it is. Yet, it can be so much more.

The winter world can also be a place for curiosity and wonder. What if we were to get curious with the world around us and embark on a season of discovery

and experience? Spending a bit of time outside each day, can remind us of our childlike selves. Research has shown, and we know this deep down, that spending just 20 minutes outside can make all of the difference when you are feeling low with the season. Notice the world that is around you in that moment. Notice the sounds of the winter birds, the creak of the trees as they gently sway without leaves, and the way your breath forms a small cloud in the cool air. Pay attention to the sounds of the snow crunching underfoot, and the way the sunlight glistens off of the icicles. Lean into the discomfort of being a little bit cold. Notice what this feels like on your hands and face. Bring a mug of hot chocolate with you, and watch the steam rise!

The winter is a time for rest and reflection. It is also a time for play and awe. As I settle into the season of layers and thick mitts, I feel a little spark inside. I don't know what sorts of wonder there will be this year, but I know that I will be out there ready to meet my neighbours again!

Follow Jess, a Forest Bathing Guide and Nature-led Wellness Coach, on Instagram [@rewild\\_wellness](#) and check out her website: [www.RewildWellness.ca](http://www.RewildWellness.ca)

For more photos check out Nina Herbert's instagram [@lostinconservation](#)





# daylighting

Words by Owen Wiseman and Miriam Constantinou  
Photos courtesy John Fraser, Alex Walker and Emma Kajiya

Since the dawn of humanity, when the very first of us looked to the sky and observed the motions of the stars, they recognized the importance of all the heavens had to offer. We have been drawn to the light as a moth is drawn to flame.

What happens when that flame dims? How does the moth find its way? This article is meant to explore the scientific and clinical benefits of daylight while drawing parallels with the story of one of our own. By blending the two, we come to appreciate the aids each of us may need to make it through the darker months.

For our reader and contributor Miriam, it has been a long battle. “I first experienced symptoms of (Seasonal Affective Disorder) as a teenager. As with many others, it was hard to pinpoint the moment when I realised my depression was triggered by the seasons. I remember feeling excessively tired, whilst my sleep patterns reacted to the darkness. Slowly, I felt my brain switch off as though a mental light flipped as the darkness drew close.”

Miriam outlined something really key here – that our sleep patterns react to darkness. There is a small area of the brain known as the pineal gland that responds to select signals. These signals originate from retinal cells located in the eye that respond to changing levels of light. These signals modulate the release of hormones such as melatonin and cortisol that tell the body whether to sleep or wake. Miriam isn’t alone in her experience of SAD as it is thought to affect anywhere from 10 to 20% of those with recurrent depression. She aptly describes her symptoms, “My thoughts would blur, with concentrating on words and even messaging friends seeming excessively difficult as the months dragged on. I gradually distanced myself from loved ones as I felt that finding the energy to socialise and interact with people challenging. I remember feeling as if my body had shut down. At its worst, my speech became slurred as if my brain couldn’t connect my thoughts to word.”

You may be reading this and thinking that it sounds quite similar to your own experience, more so as Miriam continues, “Travelling on public transport became impossible due to the darkness outside triggering panic attacks. I remember having a recurring fear that the darkness would consume my thoughts and push my depression even deeper.”

Her experience is far from abnormal as some of the most common symptoms of SAD include exactly what Miriam described. Low energy, trouble with motivation, a sense of hopelessness, feeling sluggish, and potentially thoughts of suicide. During her outings though, she noticed an environmental cue that provided relief, but it wasn’t until later that she realised what helped.

“The slight relief came from bright lights. I found walking through supermarkets triggered a sense of normality and walking around shopping centres became a place of escape from the darkness.”

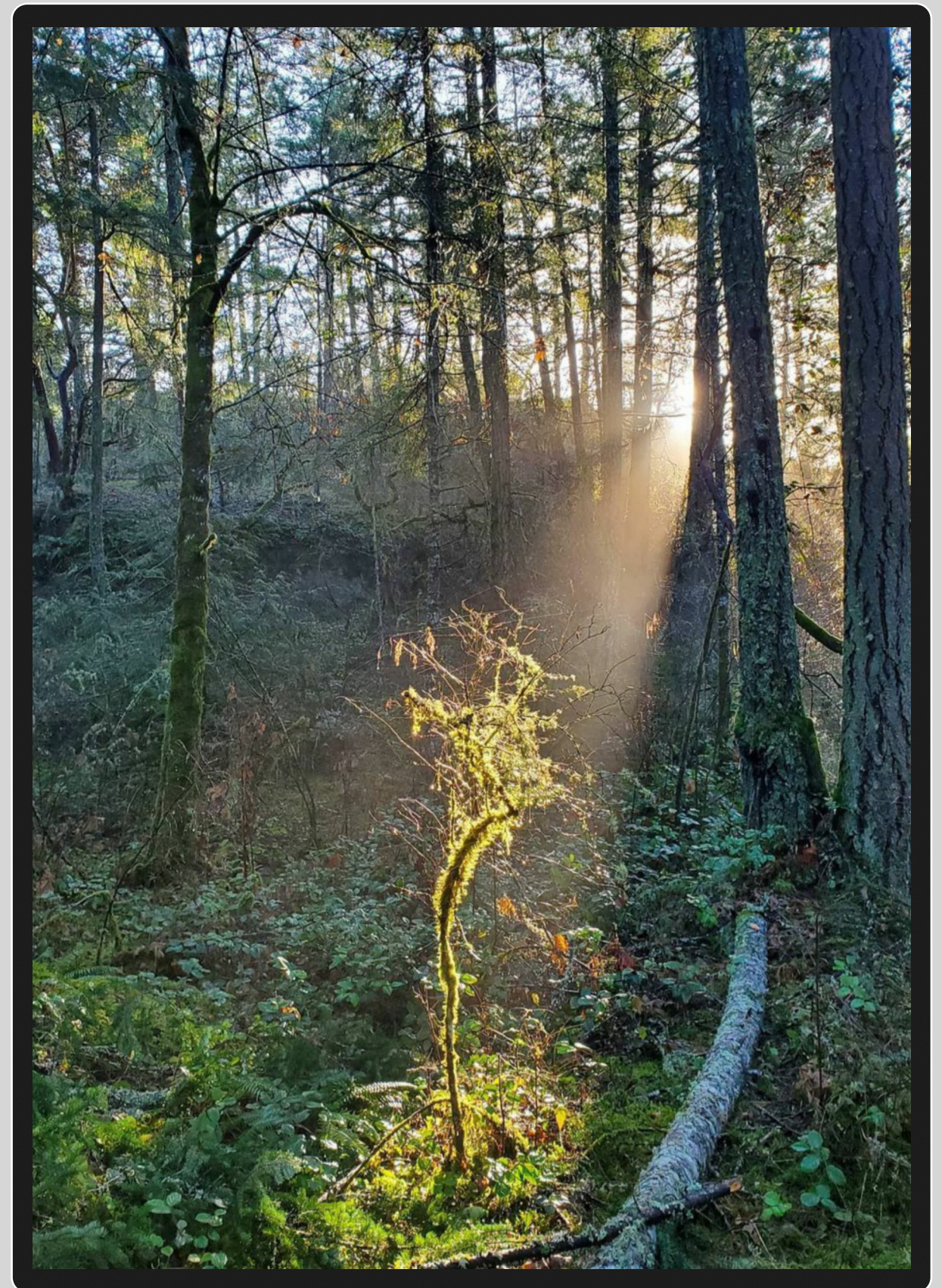


Photo courtesy of John Fraser [@elemental\\_magick](#)





This is far from surprising as the benefits of natural light in regulating our body is something medicine is beginning to grasp and utilize in treatment. A common anti-depressant prescribed by medical staff is something known as fluoxetine, and while incredibly helpful for some, there are side effects.

Two large scale reviews showed that light therapy at 10,000 lux for 30 minutes daily was as effective in treating SAD as the medication. This tells us there are ways to help those battling SAD, but it is important to recognise what form of depression you face. Labelling a condition can be empowering, but to reach that point is a unique journey that each and every one of us takes on our own time. Miriam's own experience saw her piece together symptoms and while reluctant to accept the diagnosis at first, she came to understand the power in knowing. "It was only talking to loved ones that confirmed the severity of my symptoms. It took others around me who noticed my physical symptoms to highlight the reality of my mental suffering, this made seasonal affective disorder seem more relatable. It was only after appreciating the severity of her state that she created a plan. "I began using light daily and found my mood slowly improving as my energy began to return. I also made sure I went outside for walks. Even on days when it felt gloomy and uninviting, I made sure to pull myself out of bed and experience nature. I found this process healing. Simple changes from walking to work rather than taking the bus, to taking walks on my lunch breaks helped slowly break me out of the sense of exhaustion."

The benefits of natural light are evident in her own recovery. Many studies have demonstrated that natural light can improve mood and morale and reduce fatigue. It can improve the performance and productivity of employees and can even help boost your immune system. For certain immune cells to activate, they require a healthy dose of vitamin D which your body creates when skin is exposed to sunlight or light therapy lamps. Miriam also introduced small moments of light exercise in nature to her routine, which as you know from our green exercise article in Issue 04, carries a host of benefits. While it may sound like a chapter closed, SAD is cyclical, returning every year as the days shorten. It is through her healthy coping habits that Miriam hopes to manage the symptoms. By sharing her story, we hope you feel supported too. "Every year still fills me with a sense of dread, however with the right tools and knowledge, I feel reassured that I can beat the early symptoms and power through until spring."

If you or a loved one suffers from thoughts of suicide or depressive episodes, you are not alone and there is help. Contact your local mental health service centre or call a suicide prevention hotline.

Find out more about our writers by visiting Owen's and Miriam's Instagram pages. Owen highlights nature-based science: [@scienceandnatureofficial](https://www.instagram.com/scienceandnatureofficial/), Miriam highlights wellness: [@miriam.constantinou](https://www.instagram.com/miriam.constantinou/)



# SLEEPING TO SURVIVE

Written by Georgia Lambert  
Artwork by Hilli Kushnir  
Photography by Matthew Nunn

Hibernation is a physiological process which allows animals to avoid challenging conditions. I have been thinking a lot about hibernation this year since we have been using lockdowns to avoid a very challenging virus and with the winter months drawing in, it feels even more relevant. When referring to hibernation I am normally joking about spending hours in my room watching Netflix and drinking tea, but I don't know much about the actual scientific process. As someone studying animal behaviour, I wanted to know more so I decided to do some research.







Although hibernation may look like sleep, it actually involves much more extreme physiological changes - most physiological functions slow down radically to conserve energy. The metabolism of a hibernating animal is reduced. In fact, during deep hibernation, the heart rate of some animals can slow to just three beats per minute. Body temperature also drops to match the ambient temperature of the hibernaculum (the shelter in which the animal is hibernating). For example, the body temperature of Arctic ground squirrels drops to as low as  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$  during hibernation in accordance with the arctic climate. Supercooling, a process by which body temperature can drop to below  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$  without ice crystals forming, is most likely how animals like Arctic ground squirrels avoid freezing during hibernation. These changes allow animals to survive during periods when conditions are particularly harsh (often in relation to extreme weather or food shortages) or potentially to avoid predation since the lack of activity associated with hibernation makes animals far less conspicuous.

Hibernation is commonly associated with cold-climate animals, but some hot-climate species have also been seen to hibernate. For example, fat-tailed dwarf lemurs from Madagascar hibernate in small tree holes from April to October when food and water are scarce but temperatures remain as high as  $35^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Hibernation may even play a role in allowing some animals to endure fires. Australian echidnas can also go into periods of hibernation during and after natural fires to survive the blaze itself and also the resulting lack of food in the burnt-up landscape.

More locally in the UK, you may have noticed that all the frogs and newts seem to vanish from the pond in your garden over winter. This may be because they are in hibernation. In preparation for hibernation, some frogs leave the water and seek shelter in leaf litter or log piles. Others stay in the water but move to the bottom of the pond, where the temperature doesn't plummet as severely, and bury themselves in the mud. Some insects also go into dormancy (slightly different from hibernation but the same idea) when it gets cold. For example, brimstone butterflies become dormant during winter as adults, which is unusual among butterflies, and are some of the first to emerge when spring comes around. They favour cool, dry shelters so you may be able to see some hiding in your shed!

You can help these animals by providing them with safe places to hibernate – leave log and leaf piles undisturbed or maybe consider making a 'bug hotel' (a good DIY for when you are 'hibernating' this winter).

Read more of Georgia's writings on her social media and website:

Twitter: [@GALambert3](https://twitter.com/GALambert3)

Website: [howbeastiesbehave.wordpress.com](http://howbeastiesbehave.wordpress.com)

To see more illustrations by Hilli Kushnir, please see their Instagram page: [@sillyhilli](https://www.instagram.com/sillyhilli)

Check out Matthew Nunn's instagram [@mattimalistic](https://www.instagram.com/mattimalistic) for more incredible nature photos.





# GROWING PAINS

Words and photos by Grace Warner





Your alarm rings, you're lying in your bed, it's 7am and it's still dark outside. It's another day of self-isolation, another day of virtual meetings, another day of societal angst, sprinkled with bouts of happiness if you're lucky. You groan and flop over. How on God's green earth are you meant to have enough energy to give a sh\*t?

Most of us are aware that we are not the only ones suffering at this time – our natural world is too. Maybe a few of us know that we are in the midst of a 'biodiversity crisis', that roughly 10% of all known species are threatened with imminent extinction, that microplastics (tiny pieces of fragmented plastic) are satiating our environment, so much so that most of us consume hundreds of pieces every year from our sea-salt intake alone. We might even know that the evidence is mounting, that increasing over-exploitation of natural resources can lead to the spread of novel diseases, such as Covid-19, and that decreases in ecosystem health can, in extreme circumstances, even exacerbate political conflict. We've all seen the signs, we hear warnings everywhere we go, yet thinking about such things doesn't make getting up to face the day any easier – so why do we have such a mental block against making a change?

There are a few ideas about this; one being that we struggle to understand new concepts that are introduced if they do not align with what we have been taught throughout our life. Each of us has a 'schema', which is essentially a knowledge base or reference, to which we can compare new information. If an idea conflicts with anything from this knowledge base, we are more likely to deny, discredit or reinterpret it in a way that is more suited to our own prior reference. This means that if we have been taught, in any way, whether through upbringing, politics, religion or social media that growth of populations or that economic growth will lead to the best form of global lifestyle, then we are going to have a really hard time engaging with anything that does not support those fundamental ideologies. Yet if we stop to consider that continual quantitative growth and development might not be the panacea for all our societal ills, then we might just recognize that some of those ideals may have gotten us into the many ecological crises we are facing today.

If we can be open minded enough to consider that society may need a grand-scale change in ideologies, what's our next move? How can we, as everyday people make a difference big enough to change the very foundations of our societies? Many of us have taken to living as "greenly" as possible, and for those of you that have done it effectively and passionately, I truly applaud you. However, the vast majority of us, have changed our lives only in whatever way is the least inconvenient – buying less plastic, eating less meat, supporting more local producers etc. which is all very much necessary, and will make a positive difference, but it is unlikely to change the foundations of humanities consumerist tendencies. So how do we change the mindset of 9 billion people? - through self-accountability and knowledge sharing. The time for finger pointing is over, we all know that no-one knows the perfect way out of this situation. But, if we all hold ourselves accountable to be as sustainable as we possibly can be, even in the face of inconvenience, to consume less in all senses (food, clothing, fuel, toiletries), to boycott companies or political agendas that do not abide by this and to acknowledge and talk about the fact that it will be an uncomfortable experience, then we may have a chance.



Although economic growth and population growth alone may not be the ideal ‘pinnacles of society’ to aim for, growth and development is still very much necessary. It is rather that quantitative growth, such as increasing GDP’s, may not be as imperative as qualitative growth (such as increasing quality of life and happiness) in creating more sustainable and healthy livelihoods for all. We need to realise that money, or an increase in the number of goods and services produced per capita is no silver bullet to end poverty, starvation, or any other societal injustices if neither quality of life nor equality is accounted for. So, if we’re aiming for growth, let the aim be placed in a more mindful and compassionate sense, where we no longer hide the true cost of resources, or the blatant cruelty that is used to provide them. This means we will have to be awoken to humanities ugly side, in ourselves and others, realizing just what we’re capable of ignoring – and yet in this awareness we can choose to be kind. This is not going to be easy - growing pains are called as such for a reason - growing is painful, and awkward and uncomfortable. But 2020 has given us a chance to realise that we need to change in a way that promotes positive qualitative growth for our global society. If we talk about our concepts, solutions and problems in a way that is open-minded and eager to learn, if we can teach each other without prejudice or bias,

but rather with empathy and gratitude, and if this kind of mindset can spread virally to even those in powerful positions, then we might have a chance of outpacing the mess we have made.

In a time where there is so little human connection possible, we have been afforded the time to be retrospective about what is truly important in life – community, health and shared experiences are some aspects that many people have come to realise are sorely missed when removed from daily living. Money will not alone afford us immunity from a sick environment, nor will technology necessarily be able to replace true human connection or the spirituality we can find in nature. We need to acknowledge what is at stake and be aware of the gravity of our actions. I urge you to stop finding distractions, but rather to listen to warnings that we’re being given. Find your energy and passion in that growing together, we can, and will, find better and more sustainable livelihoods for everyone. The time to give a sh\*t is now.

Check out Grace’s blog at: [mynaturesgrace1.wordpress.com](https://mynaturesgrace1.wordpress.com)





The value of

# BLUE SPACES

on our well-being



## Words and photos by Zoe Laurence

Our own mental health and well-being affects our lives daily. These terms are being used more widely among many, due to the increasing number of people living with mental health illnesses. In England, this is approximately 1 in 6 adults, most likely from a lower socio-economic background.

This is where blue spaces come into it. Blue spaces are the water environments on our planet; from fountains and oceans, and everything in between. Our blue spaces face their own health threats that include overfishing, habitat destruction and ocean acidification, just to name a few. Not only is it important to protect them from environmental detriments and to be able to utilise their physical resources, but they also play a vital role in human health and well-being.

There is ever-growing evidence to support the idea that being by the sea helps to improve human well-being, potentially being even more powerful than green spaces. Supporting evidence suggests that those who live by the coast report better physical and mental health than those who don't, and even without direct access to the coast, those who have a sea view from their homes follow similar trends associated with a lower risk of living with mental health problems. All our senses are affected positively by the ocean. Watching the waves changes our brain wave frequency in a similar way to meditation, the sounds of the ocean affect our prefrontal cortex – the part of the brain associated with emotion, and the smell of ocean breeze relaxes us due to the negative ions the ocean produces that are being absorbed into the body, enhancing immunity, cell metabolism and contributing to better sleep. It should come as no surprise that Hawaii has been rated the happiest US state seven years in a row and being comprised of a group of islands with easy access to the sea definitely plays a vital role in this.



Not only this, but people who live by large bodies of water tend to be more active through water sports, walking or cycling, leading to increased endorphins. As a consequence, nature-based interventions are increasing in trend due to the benefits they provide. Surf therapy is a novel intervention that combines surfing, psycho-education and mentoring activities, benefiting young people living with mental health illnesses. Young people are such a vital demographic as they will be the future, but unfortunately 5-20% of the youth population experience living with mental health difficulties at some point. The Wave Project is the world's first surf therapy project, and over the past 10 years has helped many young people in the UK. It is now part of a global surf therapy movement, the International Surf Therapy Organisation, aiming to increase the understanding, build awareness and promote surf therapy, providing access to those previously unable to engage in it.

It's not just oceans and bigger blue landscapes that have these positive effects on our well-being, but the impact of blue spaces can be incorporated much closer to home by being involved in urban planning. Blue spaces such as fountains can also have a powerful impact, similar to the effect of oceans, giving the suggestion that 'any water is better than none'. Unfortunately, in urban development, blue spaces are undervalued, and more needs to be done to place a higher economic value on them.

There is growing evidence to support the claim that blue spaces have significant benefits to our overall health and well-being. Even just a short trip to the beach every now and again can greatly reduce stress and boost serotonin levels. The colour blue alone tends to have calming impacts and boosts creativity. Science aside, we all could benefit from taking more time to visit our local blue space, to relax from the stresses of everyday life, and appreciate our surroundings.

Check out Zoe's beautiful nature photography and artwork: [@zoelau\\_art](#) / [@zoemlau](#)



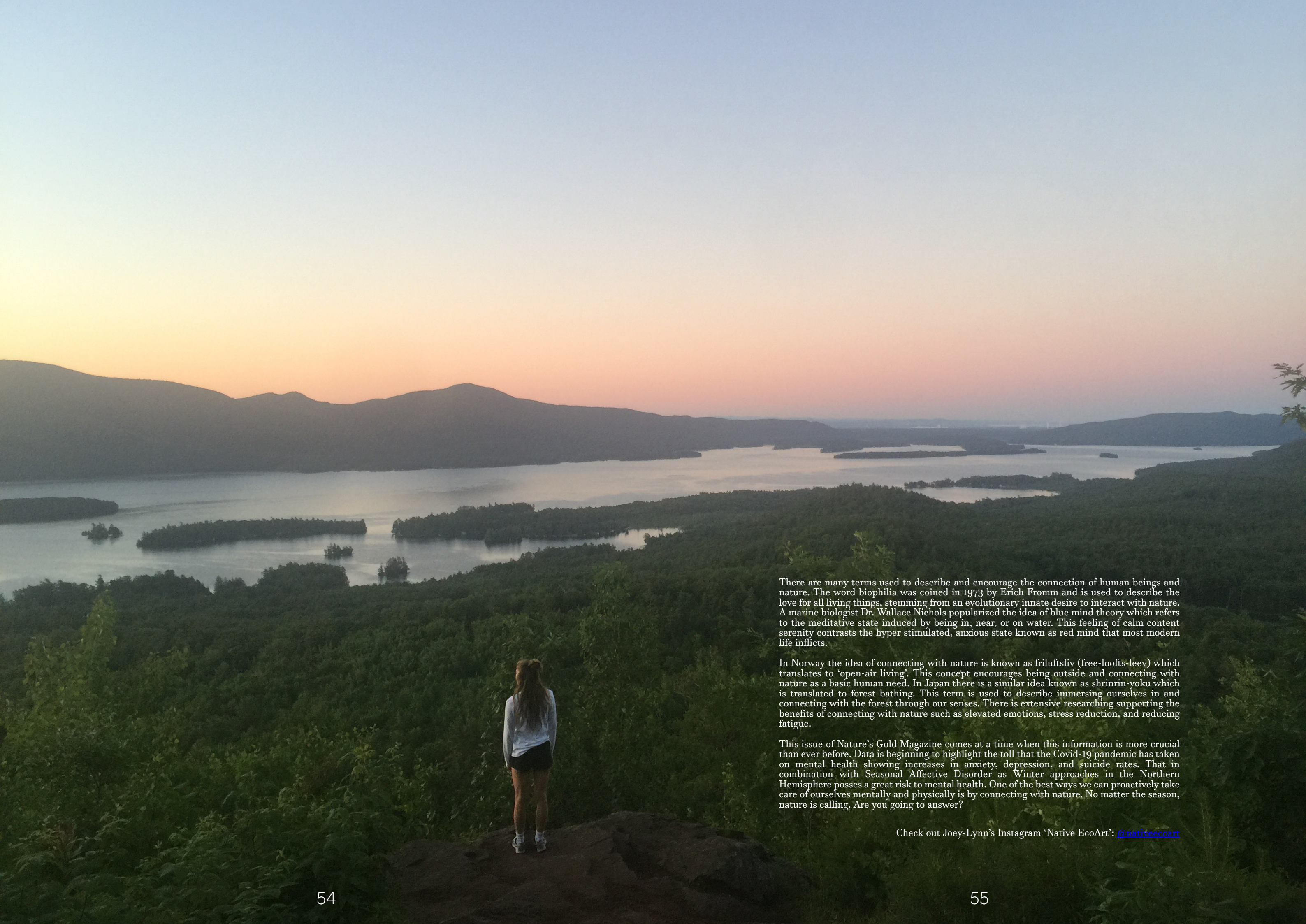
# NATURE IS CALLING

BY  
JOEY-LYNN  
HENDERSON

Close your eyes and imagine the feeling that floods your body as you watch the sun rise from a mountain top or the sun set as you listen to waves crashing along the shore. It is genuinely a feeling like no other, sparking a combination of gratitude, awe, wonder, and joy. This experience invokes a sense of presence in the current moment and seems to put life into perspective as we step out of the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

It is well known that spending time in nature has a multitude of positive impacts on our mental and physical health. There is no shortage of research confirming this idea. A study conducted by Stanford University found “walking in nature yields measurable mental benefits and may reduce risk of depression.” The University of British Columbia concluded that simply taking the time to notice the natural elements around you will increase overall happiness and well-being. In fact, according to a study from UC Berkley and BBC Earth, simply watching a nature documentary can increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions.





There are many terms used to describe and encourage the connection of human beings and nature. The word biophilia was coined in 1973 by Erich Fromm and is used to describe the love for all living things, stemming from an evolutionary innate desire to interact with nature. A marine biologist Dr. Wallace Nichols popularized the idea of blue mind theory which refers to the meditative state induced by being in, near, or on water. This feeling of calm content serenity contrasts the hyper stimulated, anxious state known as red mind that most modern life inflicts.

In Norway the idea of connecting with nature is known as friluftsliv (free-loofts-leev) which translates to 'open-air living'. This concept encourages being outside and connecting with nature as a basic human need. In Japan there is a similar idea known as shinrin-yoku which is translated to forest bathing. This term is used to describe immersing ourselves in and connecting with the forest through our senses. There is extensive researching supporting the benefits of connecting with nature such as elevated emotions, stress reduction, and reducing fatigue.

This issue of Nature's Gold Magazine comes at a time when this information is more crucial than ever before. Data is beginning to highlight the toll that the Covid-19 pandemic has taken on mental health showing increases in anxiety, depression, and suicide rates. That in combination with Seasonal Affective Disorder as Winter approaches in the Northern Hemisphere poses a great risk to mental health. One of the best ways we can proactively take care of ourselves mentally and physically is by connecting with nature. No matter the season, nature is calling. Are you going to answer?

Check out Joey-Lynn's Instagram 'Native EcoArt': [@nativeecoart](#)



# Hadfield Community Garden

Words and photos by Emily Pitcher

The past few years there has been a real recognition of the benefits of nature on our physical and mental health. The events of the past year have highlighted the importance of this link more than ever. So many people have sought escapism from current events by going for long walks in the country or found that pottering around the garden on a sunny day can lift the spirits. During lockdown I took almost daily walks around our village and a real highlight for me was our local community garden. Situated on a strip of land behind the local primary school, this previous wasteland is now bursting with fruit trees, vegetables, and herbs; all completely free for anyone to come and pick. At a time when we stuck inside most of the time, having a space to come to with my daughter and pick fresh raspberries and look for insects made all the difference to our day. I believe that spaces like this are so beneficial to communities and especially to people with limited access to outdoor space. I was lucky enough to speak to Joy Hallsworth, who is the driving force behind Hadfield community garden, and find out more about it.







**Hello Joy, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. I have really enjoyed the community garden so much. First of all, where did the idea for a community garden come from and how did you get it started?**

A few years ago, I got a bee in my bonnet about having a community orchard. I went to the council with the idea but the only bit of land they had was not suitable and the idea died down for a bit. Then a few years later a friend got in touch with councillor Edward Kelly (the current Mayor of High Peak) and he did a bit of research and found the spot of unadopted land where the garden is now situated. It was real eyesore; it had been used as a dumping ground for a long time. We adopted the land and with the help of lots of volunteers got it cleaned up. We also had a generous grant from the council which we used to buy apple, pear and cherry trees and blackcurrants.

**It really has been completely transformed. You and all the volunteers have done such an incredible job. How are members of the community able to contribute to the garden?**

We advertised at the beginning for volunteers and the response has been very good, and we now have a core group of volunteers who help out regularly. As well the planting and weeding we do regular litter picks as unfortunately people still do litter. Some people also donate plants when they have too many for their allotment or garden.

**During the pandemic people have found spending time outside really helpful for their well-being. Do you think community gardens are beneficial for people's mental and physical health? For example, providing access to outdoor spaces, forging friendships between volunteers, and giving people access the fresh fruit and vegetables?**

Yes, definitely. The main thing now, I think, is people getting used to it; that it is what it says it is and that they really can help themselves. The soft fruit has been very popular, lots of people have said that their children have enjoyed helping themselves to raspberries and strawberries on the way to school and we managed to give away lots of potatoes and cabbages. I'm hoping people will get used to it and then if they don't have a garden they might come and sit for a bit or do a bit of weeding.

**Has the pandemic had an effect on what you can do in the garden?**

We have had to work socially distanced and there are a few volunteers who have been unable to help this year. We are located by a public footpath and we don't want to put anyone in harm's way but the core of us have been able to keep going through the year. We are going to do a bit of litter picking soon but we will be putting the garden to bed for the winter now.

**What are your plans for the garden for next year?**

Me and Chris (another of the garden's founders) will have a chat about what we want to grow next year, then we like to get things started early in our greenhouses ready to plant out next spring. We will definitely do some onions, garlic and broccoli. We would like to do squash again, but we'll start it off a bit earlier next year. We will have a go at anything anyone fancies really. We'd also like to develop a wildflower garden at one end where it's a bit too shaded for veg growing. We have a few flowers there already, but we'll plant lots of bee friendly flowers to encourage more bees and butterflies.

\*

I can't wait to see what next year brings for the garden and hope that I am able to get more involved with this fantastic project. The past few years there has been a growing interest across the UK in community gardening initiatives, and with a multitude of benefits for the environment and the people of the community I believe community gardens have an important role to play in the well-being of the country.



# Rain before Rainbows *Alicia Hayden*



## INSPIRATION AND BACKGROUND FOR RAIN BEFORE RAINBOWS

I grew up surrounded by nature, encouraged from a young age by my parents, to investigate the natural world and respect wildlife. I have always turned to writing and art to express myself, with notebooks filled with stories, nature poems, and doodles. So, after watching David Attenborough's BBC documentary, *Extinction: The Facts*, in September 2020, I became determined to put my creativity and love for nature to good use.

*Rain before Rainbows* is a collection of 26 poems, with an additional poem, *Where is the Sun?*, written when I was eight years old, prefacing the collection. I wrote the poems over the last ten years, showing that the extinction and climate crises affect all of us, whatever age. Some of the poems I wrote a decade ago, feature things I still feel strongly about – of the difficulties facing our planet. Many of these early poems emphasise the wonder I felt at nature as a young girl, and still feel now – the beauty of the Amur Leopard, the stealth of a Tawny Owl. A number of my more recent poems reflect on environmental pressures facing our planet, from fast-fashion and over-consumerism, to plastic bags and pollution. I think it's really important to highlight the threats facing our natural world, as well as to celebrate its beauty.

The poem after which the collection is named was written during lockdown, inspired partly by the rainbows placed by people in their windows across the country, to show our support for the NHS. I decided to write the poem as a reflection on my experiences with the natural world. *Rain before Rainbows* closes the collection, referencing *Where is the Sun?* in its opening verse, completing the full circle for the whole anthology.

Artwork is a really powerful way to communicate, so I decided to illustrate all of the poems. I work in biro, as I find it's a really flexible tool to use, allowing me to capture the fine details. Although my art style is still developing, at the moment I really enjoy creating photorealistic drawings, which capture the animal's character. One of my favourite illustrations in the book is the whale from *The Whale's Song*, as I love the different ways the drawing can be interpreted. Generally, hares are my favourite animal to draw, as I find them so beautiful and ethereal – they feature several times throughout the poetry collection.

*Rain before Rainbows* has been so much fun to work on, with perhaps the most challenging but rewarding poem being *The Child of a Lion is a Lion* / *Ọmọ kìnúúń ní kìnúúń n ọ́*. This poem was written when I was sixteen, as part of my GCSE art project, and was intended to be spoken in two languages, English and Yoruba. Working with Toluwalase Awoyemi, a student at Oxford University, who translated the poem into Yoruba to make it as authentic as possible, was a really rewarding process, and I am really pleased with the final double-page spread of this poem!

I hope that my readers enjoy *Rain before Rainbows* as much as I have loved creating it. If they take one thing away from the anthology, I hope it is the acknowledgement that the natural world is worth saving, and if we all make small changes to our daily lives, it will make a big difference. We may all make small ripples, but our total effect will amount to a wave of change.



### The Moon Hare

Every night,  
He leaves his house  
to watch the moon.

He sits,  
Long whiskers, pricked ears,  
Waiting.

And finally, it rises;  
An elegant, cream sphere –  
A pearly mirror in the sky.

He gazes with big brown eyes,  
Searching,  
Until he sees it:

Nestled, within the craters –  
A Moon Hare,  
Fast asleep –  
at home with the stars.

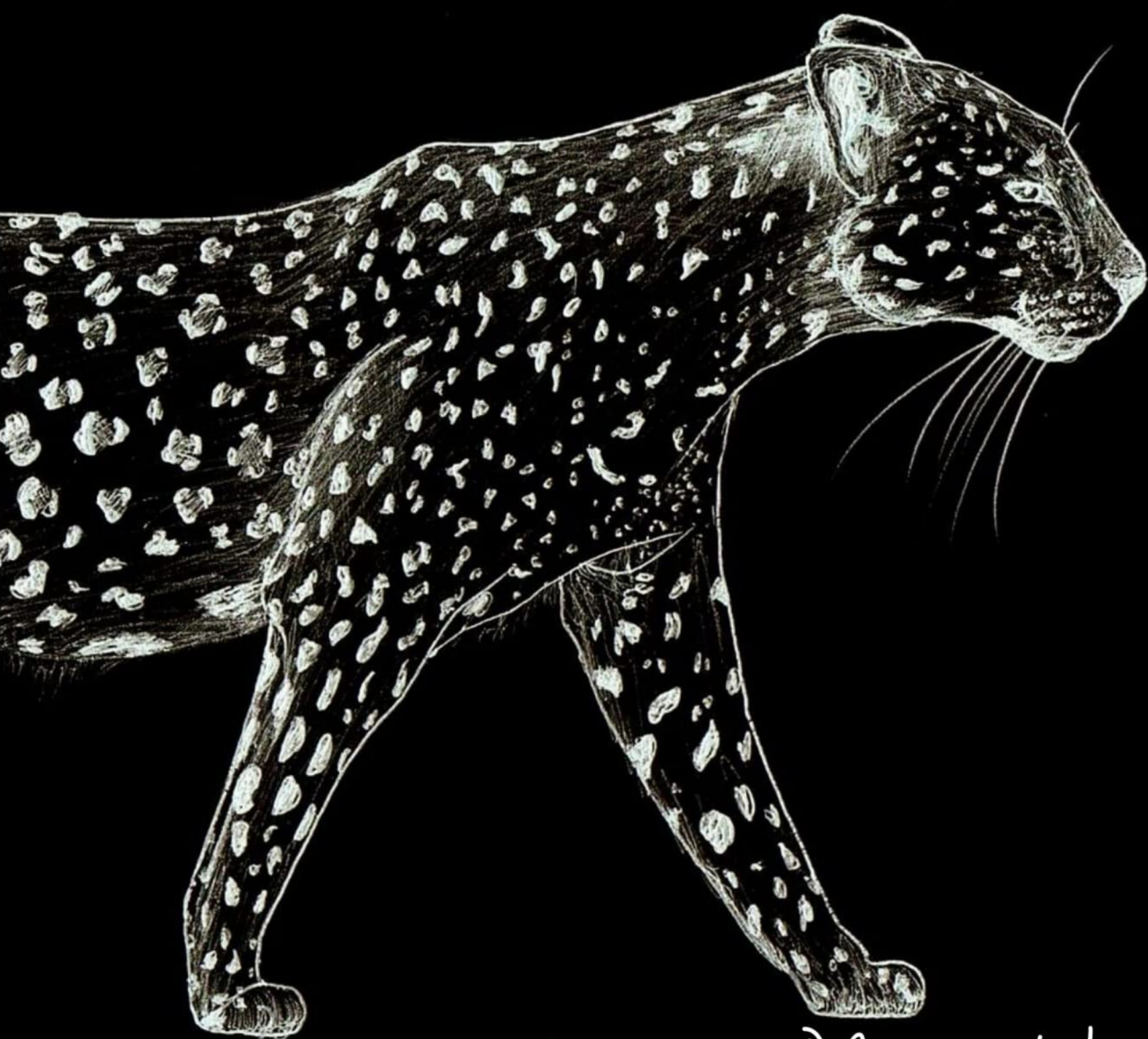
Alicia Hayden, 2019





# Rain before Rainbows

a poetry collection



Alicia Hayden

Alicia has been an avid poetry writer since she was young, and won WWF's My True Nature Poetry competition in 2011 with her poem about a Leopard.

After watching David Attenborough's documentary Extinction: The Facts, she felt compelled to do something positive, and compiled the collection Rain before Rainbows. 50% of the profits from the poetry book will go directly to the wildlife hospital Tiggywinkles, to support their important work.

You can buy Rain before Rainbows here: [aliciahaydenshop.bigcartel.com](http://aliciahaydenshop.bigcartel.com)

Website: [aliciahaydenwildlifephotography.zenfolio.com](http://aliciahaydenwildlifephotography.zenfolio.com)  
Facebook: [aliciahaydenphotography](https://www.facebook.com/aliciahaydenphotography)  
Instagram: [@aliciahaydenwildlife](https://www.instagram.com/aliciahaydenwildlife)



# CAMPBELL YOUNG

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My objective of creating these pieces focuses around emphasizing on what you do not typically see within a standard landscape photo, but more how you would descriptively exaggerate the features and colours if you were present in that environment at a given time. Focusing upon the vivid colours that the natural world freely presents, I aim to enhance these phenomena in my work which would not be justifiably captured by camera alone.

These remote, wild, and rugged places are continually changing from season to season and it has become an attraction for me to highlight a single moment in the environment's ongoing evolution.

The canvases I use are wrinkled and ragged unprimed cotton which I lay across the floor outside in the dirt and sand to capture the scenery at hand. I use mixed media in order to produce these colourful landscape depictions working with oil pastels, acrylic paints, water colours and ink pens to forge my own personal view of these vast areas.

As a frequent rock climber, I plan to couple the creations of these paintings with climbing trips, using my rest days and evenings away from climbing to capture more impressionistic versions of wildly alluring natural places.









# Photography Gallery

We love to showcase beautiful nature photography as images can often convey a message more succinctly than words. Particularly in the environmental sector photography, when done correctly, can be an important tool in conservation.

We also love to communicate our photographers love of nature, whether they focus on wildlife near their home or are photojournalists following a certain conservation story.

Whether you are a professional or just getting started and would like your work to be featured in our next issue, please get in touch:  
[naturesgoldmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:naturesgoldmagazine@gmail.com)



# Richard Lowe

Growing up in a suburb of London, England, I always had an awareness that wildlife was important and interesting, but it was not necessarily 'here'. Wildlife was always something that was 'in the countryside' or abroad. Or so I thought! Over the last year or so, having had more time to explore the local area, there is a surprising amount of interesting animals to be found. Mainly focusing on photographing birds, the discovery, planning and tracking is a difficult task in itself. When you are in position and the patience is contrasted with the fast paced action, it makes for a relaxing, yet exciting experience.

I have always had a passing interest in photography, but I had never realised, until recently, that there was such variety and scope to do any wildlife photography so close to home - the barriers to entry being expense and location, which turns out not to be the case, and that for me, is thrilling.

For more of Richard's photography check out his instagram [@richard\\_lowe\\_photography](https://www.instagram.com/richard_lowe_photography)



*Richard Lowe Photography*





*Richard Lowe Photography*





Richard Lowe Photography





*Richard Lowe Photography*



*Richard Lowe Photography*



*Richard Lowe Photography*





*Richard Lowe Photography*



# TAKING CARE OF YOU

## THE SCIENCE OF WELL-BEING

One of the online courses that I enrolled on back in March 2020, was the Science of Well-being course by Yale University, taught by Laurie Santos. She has kindly allowed us permission to share some of her 'rewiring' techniques and helpful tips that have helped me cope through this past year, and I hope may be of some help to you.

Well-being hasn't been very well ingrained into our modern culture. We've been taught that to get ahead and attain happiness is to be constantly busy. This can cause our sympathetic nervous system (our fight or flight mode) to go into overdrive causing stress, anxiety and sleeplessness. Working smart, not just hard, and going at a slower pace brings us into the present moment, helping us be more patient and resilient. Our parasympathetic nervous system thanks us by calming us down, with long-lasting benefits to our digestive health, metabolism and mood. There is so much value in slowing down and being mindful and identifying particular energy boosts or drains.

Taking the time to stop and truly think about what actually makes us happy and what exactly it is that is standing in the way of our personal well-being, can be a real eye opener. Our brain tricks us into thinking that if we work non-stop for the next promotion, more money, attain specific body goals and buy lots of things, then we will be happy. Numerous studies have shown that this is actually a misnomer.

True happiness is not always what you think will make you happy. I am not a doctor, and I do not intend it to be a medical guide in any sense or a replacement for medication or therapy. I have shared these suggestions simply as gentle prompts to consider and research further. These concepts I have learnt (and still learning!) on this course have been so helpful with regards to my own personal mental health and well-being.





## Rewirement practices: extracted from the Science of Well-being course

Measure your baseline happiness before taking on any new practices by asking yourself:

**On a scale of 1 – 5, how happy are you with your life at the moment?**

After 4 weeks of committing to one of the following practices, re-measure your happiness by asking yourself the same question. Did your happiness levels change? Are you thinking of continuing or perhaps trying another practice?

Below, I will briefly outline the rewirements that you might be interested to try.

### Choose 1 activity and commit to it for 4 weeks

Find your signature strengths and focus on one of your top 4. Take the test here > [viacharacter.org/character-strengths](https://viacharacter.org/character-strengths)

**Savouring:** Using all the senses and being fully present is a wonderful experience. For example, during a morning potter in your garden, really take in the moment and look at all the colours and plants you have cultivated.

**Daily Gratitude Journal:** Every day, write up to 5 things that you are thankful for and really reflect on each one. It's amazing how many things we take for granted everyday – from sunny days to laptops to being able to video call your parents. It can also be a book of memories to look back on, especially if you date each entry.

**Social Connection:** Reach out to a friend or family member you haven't chatted to in a while or join an online community group or volunteer online and reflect how it feels to make genuine connections. Social connections are so important and have such amazing benefits on our wellbeing and health.

**Exercise:** Moving your body is such a great way to clear the mind. Research has shown that just 30 mins of exercise a day boosts your endorphins and drastically improves mood. It's always the hardest to get started, so start with baby steps such as putting out your workout clothes the night before.

**Meditation:** taking up the practice of mindfulness meditation has a myriad of benefits from building self-awareness, learning to be present, stress reduction, breath work, improves relationships, helps sleep, improves concentration... check out the Calm or Headspace apps to help you get going with guided meditations, including inspirational talks and nature soundscapes.



If you would like to find out more about the course which covers all the techniques in-depth (including excellent goal-setting strategies) check out the Science of Well-being course where there are weekly video lectures by Laurie, backed up by scientific research and studies. There is an option to access it completely free of charge, otherwise, if you would like to earn a certificate at the end of completion there is a charge of around £35: [coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being](https://coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being)

### Set intentions and goals for yourself

Tracking your progress is an excellent way to see how your habits have changed and as a double bonus, seeing the change itself is a great motivator to continue. If you want, share whatever you track with a family member or friend you know will always cheer you on no matter what. Sharing your progress has the added benefit of inspiring others, and you may also find more people than you realise can relate to your personal journey.

There are so many ways to track depending on your personal preference - have a go at journalling, write lists or take photos along the way.

Remember that it takes time to form a habit. Once you start putting knowledge into action, you will find that self-care and self-love is worth all the effort.

Merely knowing something is not enough to put into practice.  
Merely knowing something is not enough to actually change your behaviour: if we really have to change our behaviour, we have to change our habits, we can't just learn the stuff.



## SLEEP AND MAXIMISING OUR ENERGY

There is so much advice out there for a good night's sleep: get daily sunlight exposure, reduce blue light exposure, have naps, avoid caffeine, avoid high intensity exercise late in the evening... However, these factors differ greatly from person to person. Those who have a very high tolerance to caffeine can fall asleep very quickly even after consuming large amounts of coffee late at night. Others who are really sensitive to caffeine, have to stop drinking it after midday otherwise they end up tossing and turning at night, wide awake. I, sadly, fall into the latter category and have recently been trying to reduce my caffeine intake.

I have found that my sleep patterns during the UK lockdowns can go a bit haywire if I am not careful and I know I'm not alone in this. The pandemic has caused widespread insomnia, adding to our already full plates with worries about our finances, jobs, isolation as well as the impacting the amount of time we spend outside. A bad night's sleep over and over can incrementally take its toll on our mental health, well-being and can even cause physical health problems such as high blood pressure. During this time of uncertainty and worry, it is more important than ever that we take care to optimise our sleep and look after our health.

### Huberman Lab Podcast

Andrew Huberman is a professor of Neuroscience and lab director at Stanford University. He has been producing free weekly educational podcasts 'Huberman Lab Podcast' where he breaks down in minute detail (and in clear, laymans terms) the science of topics ranging from how to optimise sleep, the benefits of cold showers and ice baths (+ when to have them) and how temperature affects shift workers.

His knowledge and experience shine through his highly articulate lectures, and the information he provides is always backed up by references to numerous research studies from peer-reviewed articles and reputable journals in the field.

For those who would like to listen to Huberman\* firsthand, check out this link for episode two: [Master Your Sleep & Be More Alert When Awake | Huberman Lab Podcast](#) (\*Huberman does not claim to be a medical advisor, so please do consult your doctor or physician before making any radical changes to your lifestyle and health regime.)

### Simple glossary of terms

**CIRCADIAN RHYTHM** = refers to the 24-hour biological cycle that happens naturally for humans, animals, plants and even bacteria. It dictates when to sleep and when to wake. (Circadian comes from the Latin of 'circa' meaning 'approximately' and 'diem' meaning 'day').

**HORMONE** = a chemical substance released from one organ of the body into the bloodstream that acts on other organs in the body including the nervous system, to regulate physiology and behaviour.

**LIGHT** = has the strongest effect on our sleepiness and wakefulness with sunlight being the most effective light for this.

**CORTISOL** = a hormone that is released from the adrenal glands as you wake up, regulating body processes such as metabolism and immune response. You may have heard about this hormone in relation to helping the body respond to stress.

**LOW SOLAR ANGLE** = the best type of light to activate the release of cortisol in your body when you wake. Cortisol pulses that occur later than this (i.e. waking up at midday) have been linked to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

**MELOTONIN** = a hormone that is released from the pineal gland and is associated with kickstarting and maintaining sleep. It is produced when you are in a dark environment and basically winds the body down for restful sleep, (sleeping pills have melatonin).

**ADENOSINE** = an inhibitory neurotransmitter which promotes sleepiness: each hour you are awake, the levels of adenosine slowly increase.

**DOPAMINE** = a chemical that acts as an anti-depressant - vital for our mental and physical health



## Setting your circadian clock

Around sunrise (and up to 3 hours after), the levels of adenosine in your body will be naturally low. As you wake up, a pulse of cortisol and epinephrine (adrenaline) is released (this could also be activated from an alarm clock or naturally as you wake) causing an internal signal for your body to get moving by increasing your heart rate and activating your muscles.

It is important that the peak production of cortisol is released early in the day: a normal, healthy release of cortisol at the beginning of the day triggers an internal timer in your body, set to 12 – 14 hours later, for when another hormone is to be released from your pineal gland – melatonin (which makes you feel sleepy). An early release of cortisol results in positive benefits from blood pressure to mental health.

## How can you trigger the correct timing of cortisol and melatonin release?

You have to get outside within an hour or two of sunrise for 2 – 10 minutes. Viewing the sunlight through our windows does not have enough light or the right quality of light to trigger our circadian rhythms optimally. It has been found that viewing sunlight through a window vs going outdoors is 50 times less effective (Huberman recommends the app 'Lightmeter' which measures how much lux (quality of light) you are being exposed to (outside vs. inside): a random example of the app in action has shown: 9255 lux indoors vs. 17325 lux outdoors – a huge difference in quality of light! As the sun sets, make sure to get outside again, for 2 – 10 minutes, even if the weather is cloudy.

## Impacts on health and well-being

The quality of your sleep can have beneficial or detrimental effects, affecting your learning, well-being and mental health. Poor sleep has even been found to have an effect on dementia. It is so important to make sure you are looking after your sleep patterns.

## What else can we do

As well as getting up and going outside at sunrise and sunset everyday (it is really hard to begin with, but like everything, soon becomes a habit that gets easier), you want to make sure to:

- Get as much light as you can during the day, including blue light
- Get as little light (artificial + natural) as possible after 8pm (with the exception of fireplaces and candlelight – these have shown to have no effect on our sleep)
- Have no light between 11pm – 4am otherwise the light will suppress the release of dopamine and can result in anxiety and reduce our focus and learning.

This will of course vary depending on where you live in terms of light exposure (northern and southern hemisphere or nearer the equator), whether you are a shift worker\* and your general lifestyle and health but overall, these are great pointers to try to stick to.

\*note: The Huberman Lab Podcast also covers shift work, jet lag and insomnia in later episodes.



# Nature's Gold

## RECOMMENDED PODCASTS

### THE ENVIRONMENT...



#### Be Curious Beings Podcast

[@becuriousbeingspodcast](#)

A brilliant platform for the whole community where all aspects of conservation is explored and discussed, with guest speakers ranging from conversations about evolution to using technology to help the environment.

Listen to the podcast here: [linktr.ee/BeCuriousBeingsPodcast](https://linktr.ee/BeCuriousBeingsPodcast)



#### The Sweaty Penguin Podcast

[@sweatypenguinpod](#)

A new podcast episode is released each week, interviewing experts in the field and dedicated to the discussion of the world's environmental problems such as carbon neutrality, old growth forests and light pollution.

Listen to the podcast here: [linktr.ee/sweatypenguinpod](https://linktr.ee/sweatypenguinpod)

### WELLNESS AND WELL-BEING...



#### Huberman Lab Podcast

[@hubermanlab](#)

Weekly educational podcast breaking down the science of sleep covering areas such as shift work, jetlag, metabolism and dreams.

Listen to the podcast here: [youtube.com/c/AndrewHubermanLab](https://youtube.com/c/AndrewHubermanLab)



#### The Happiness Lab

[Happinesslab.fm](#)

From the creator of the Science of Well-being Course, Dr Laurie Santos chats scientific research about what actually makes us happy. And no, it's not money or a better job!

Listen to the podcast here: [www.happinesslab.fm/](https://www.happinesslab.fm/)



#### The Be Well by Kelly Podcast

[Kellyleveque.com](#)

A holistic podcast that covers topics from digestive wellness to hormone imbalances. The latest episode - Episode 74: Supporting Children's Neural Development with Dr. Marion Van Horn.

Listen to the podcast here: [kellyleveque.com/be-well-by-kelly-podcast](https://kellyleveque.com/be-well-by-kelly-podcast)



#### The Earth Locker Podcast

[@theearthlocker](#)

Hosted by Tom Hopper, Robert Sheehan & Bryon Knight

These three hosts chat to entrepreneurs, environmentalists, inventors, and scientists about all things from nutrition and fitness to bacteria and the power of meditation.

(You may recognise two of the hosts as actors starring in Netflix's Umbrella Academy)

Listen to the podcast here: [linktr.ee/theearthlocker](https://linktr.ee/theearthlocker)

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- Writers for interviews for future issues
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