

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Earthcare for Friends

Unit 16

Earth Awareness, Earth Activism

by Bill Cahalan and Ruah Swennerfelt

Purposes of this unit

1. To help us relate to nature at a deeper, spiritual level.
2. To help us recognize and perhaps reduce the “armoring” that blunts our full awareness of nature.
3. To offer some regular practices that can make spiritual relationship with nature more a part of our everyday life.
4. To help us discern our own path of activism in preserving and restoring the natural world.

Sacred texts and other inspirational readings

And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

—Matthew 6:28–29

*The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.*

—Isaiah 58:11

Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. There are no larger fields than these, no worthier games than may here be played. Grow wild according to thy nature, like these sedges and brakes, which will never become English hay.

—Henry David Thoreau

Hymns and songs

O God of All Creation. *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, #18, first verse.

When I Needed a Neighbor. *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, #293.

That Cause Can Neither be Lost nor Stayed. *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, #264.

WHEN EITHER OF US holds meetings and leads workshops on Quaker Earthcare, if there is time we open by inviting people to share an experience in nature that was special or meaningful to them. There is normally a wide range of responses, but their stories are always very gratifying. One person might recall lying awake in awe and fright one night as a powerful electrical storm raged outside. Another might relate a sense of kinship with a wild animal encountered in the woods.

In the simplest terms, natural awareness is the process of opening our hearts to the Divine in creation.

The fact that such events are fairly rare in most people's lives is instructive as well. Becoming "civilized" means literally to isolate ourselves within the defensive walls of urban life and perhaps to regard the rest of the natural world as something alien and threatening. We no longer have the intimate association with nature that was common in pre-industrial times. In the supportive environment of our workshops, however, there

may be momentary relaxing of psychic defenses, through which we can discern possibilities for reconnection to the world of wonderful earthy realities.

The purpose of this unit is to move from that sense of possibilities to daily practices that can help us to relate to nature at a much deeper, spiritual level than simply visiting natural areas for relaxation and outdoor recreation. Such heightened awareness can be the first step in making meaningful life-style changes and joining others in Earth activism to preserve this threatened heritage.

Other units in this book have suggested *outward* lifestyle changes, as well as reforms in economic and political structures, aimed at restoring the earth's ecological integrity. "Earth mindfulness" or "Earth awareness" is a complementary *inward* process of knowing and vividly sensing how we exist within the web of life, in the context of an unfolding cosmos. Without such grounding there is a tendency to make only superficial changes or to burn out as we struggle against the mainstream culture.

If you have not had much experience with guided meditations or similar exercises, you may find it difficult to relate to the approach at first. In the simplest terms, natural awareness is the process of opening our hearts to the Divine in creation. We are being asked to stop and take time from our hectic lives, go outside, and really see at what is around us, and listen to nature's language.

Jesus found his spiritual nourishment in the outdoors. He spent time in the wilderness, where he fasted and faced the temptations (Luke 4:1) and asked for God's help in the garden at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:1). The Sermon on the Mount was outdoors and not in a temple or home. We can find many biblical references about nature and its spiritual power.

Article 1, below, speaks of our "armoring," our way of remaining insensitive to the natural world. It may be difficult at first to take off that armor and to be open to what is being offered. You are now asked to shed any preconceptions you might have about experiential activities and dive into an experience that may change your life.

Issue presentations

Article 1

Growing Earth Literacy

by Bill Cahalan

IN MOVING TOWARD sustainable ways of living, we are applying our Quaker testimony of simplicity (along with the peace, justice, and integrity testimonies). We must discover the truth that living more simply, with fewer or less destructive possessions, need not be felt as a deprivation. We may feel enriched if we increasingly ground ourselves in a more harmonious and complex relationship with the web of life. We may find ourselves called to a more direct, sensuous, reverent, give-and-take relationship with our local landscapes and weather, with our waters, soils, wild lands, and neighbors. Moving step by step into such a life in nature seems to be essential to a sense of personal power and spiritual fulfillment. It is also what the community

of life urgently needs from us now, as we assume again a humbler place as plain citizens, rather



than as managers or owners, within Earth's marvelous symphony of life.

Science can be a major source of continuing revelation about the nature of reality, including the ways in which the Spirit is present within nature. However, many people still see nature through the eyes of pre-20th century Newtonian physics. In this worldview, the universe is perceived (usually unconsciously) as a clock-like or computer-like mechanism composed of inert matter. The whole is understood as merely the sum of discrete parts. When such reductionist materialism came to dominate Western thinking, it became harder to imagine or experience divinity as present within nature and to feel the passion and compassion required for deep change. Revelations of 20th century co-evolutionary biology, ecology, quantum physics, and scientific cosmology have opened the way to a radically different understanding of the world and our place in it. But most people today—even many scientists—have a hard time letting go of the old mechanistic worldview.

When the revelations of different sciences are integrated with each other and reflected upon, we discover the cosmos as being more like a living organism than a machine—a communion of subjects, rather than a collection of objects. Scientific findings suggest the omnipresence of sentience (the capacity of something to feel the presence of other things and thereby be influenced by them) and creative motion, of an “organizing and animating intelligence,” which permeates and contains all things. Science thus reaffirms and extends an ancient intuitive, mystical awareness that has existed in many cultures for thousands of years.

SOME BASIC PATTERNS seem essential for us to learn as citizens of industrial culture. These patterns have been eclipsed by our pervasive mechanistic, de-spiritualized worldview. The relentless unraveling of Earth's ecological integrity is being caused by an economic system that violates these sacred realities. We must learn, and begin to see and feel, these patterns everywhere in the Creation in order to move toward sustainable lives rooted in a full sense of the Spirit:

1. *A central activity of the universe since the Great Flaring Forth has been the creation of self-organizing systems.* These include hydrogen atoms, ourselves, the earth, stars such as our sun, and the Milky Way Galaxy. And everything in this expanding, evolving universe, although actively maintaining itself, is also a manifestation of the unbroken wholeness of the universe. This Whole is ultimately beyond our rational analysis or comprehension.
2. *All things or events are sensitive and ceaselessly in motion; they have worth or value in and for themselves.* Every atom senses and responds to all other atoms. Matter has evolved from the light and heat of the Great Flaring Forth about 14 billion years ago—to sub-atomic particles/events, to hydrogen atoms, to stars within billions of galaxies. In the hearts of dying stars, the rest of the 105 elements evolved and seeded our solar system. On Earth, molecules, single-celled and then multi-celled organisms, ecological communities, and the Earth community itself organized themselves. There appears to be an organizing and animating intelligence inherent in matter/energy (and in the fertile emptiness which permeates and contains matter/energy). As every being engages in ceaseless self-organizing, it both differentiates itself from other things and communes with them and with the larger whole of which it is a part.

Such sensitivity, motion, and inherent worth seem self-evident when I simply open my senses and extend empathy not only to people but to plants, animals, landscapes, and other events in the more-than-human world.

3. *Everything, including each human, is interwoven with everything else, constantly giving to, receiving from, and changing into other elements and beings.* On Earth, plants turn water, soil, air, and sunlight into themselves. We then transform plants, and animals which ate them, into ourselves. And we turn back into water, soil, and air, and release heat each day in small ways and completely when we die. Each atom that constitutes us has been part of many living things, and in between has been part of the water, soil, and air countless times for billions of years. So, when we pollute our air or water or erode our topsoil, we defile something which has been, and will again become, a living being.

Because of this pervasive interwovenness, every living thing and the elements that compose it not only has inherent worth, but is valuable for its part in supporting other beings and the natural community as a whole. Also, every human action has unavoidable side effects besides the intended effect.

4. *Through this creative interwovenness, living things have cooperatively evolved into complex natural communities, such as woodlands, which tend toward a mature, stable state.* For example, in my Midwestern broadleaf forest region, there are several kinds of mature forests that have evolved over tens of thousands of years. These communities are composed of a high diversity of soil creatures and microbes, shrubs, herbs, ferns, vines, mosses, trees, insects, mammals, and birds. Their relationships often involve competition, but they are more generally seen in terms of cooperation. They recycle elements and nutrients at limited rates. The community tends not to show a net annual growth, since the microbes recycle dead organisms as fast as new growth happens. These qualities, which allow the communities to sustain themselves over the long run (in contrast with the quantitative growth-orientation of our industrial economy), also tend to exist in other kinds of mature communities in other regions, such as prairie, desert, chaparral, tundra, and lake ecosystems.
5. *The total network of these communities culminates in the whole Earth functioning as a self-regulating being, a vast symphony of life, maintaining balanced states essential for all of our lives.* As I stated earlier, the web of life evolved from matter that is “non-living” but that nonetheless embodies organizing intelligence. We are composed of light and the elements within soil, water, and air. We constantly return part of ourselves, and eventually will return all, to these elements. And miraculously, Earth’s web of life is not only formed from the elements, but also has shaped the composition of soil, water, and air, and actively maintains them in what is actually a state of chemical disequilibrium. For example, the oxygen level is kept close to 21 percent of the atmosphere. Edward O. Wilson has stated that “The biosphere creates our special world anew every day, every minute, and holds it in a unique, shimmering, physical disequilibrium. On that disequilibrium the human species is in total thrall.” Life keeps the elements in the kind of dynamic steady-state necessary for life to continue.

To summarize much of the above, we not only evolved from, are composed of, and will return to, these ever-cycling elements. We also help the web of life to maintain them in a dynamic but steady state. For me, this is a revelation of great beauty and mystery that has the potential to radically transform how we experience ourselves and our fellow beings within Earth’s body, within the wind, the rain, and the very landscape and sky.

6. *Spirit may be thought of (and ecstatically experienced during mystical illumination) as the most basic quality at the heart of reality—the sentient, self-organizing activity of each thing or event as a manifestation of the self-organizing intelligence of the universe; or, alternatively, as a manifestation of a Creator that both contains and dwells within this Creation.* So, although the revelations of science do invite the affirmation of Spirit as present within nature, there are various ways in which different theologies may assert this reality.

Illustrative activities for Article 1

Practicing Earth Awareness

IN OUR EFFORT to become ecologically literate, learning about the realities discussed in the Growing Earth Literacy section may begin primarily on an intellectual level. If our learning remains at that level it will make little difference in how we live and contribute to restoring the earth's ecological integrity. We must respond to the Spirit's call to fully awaken to these realities, embodying them and living them out in a deep, heartfelt way. We call such sensuous, wholehearted recognition and attentiveness "Earth awareness" or "natural awareness."

Experiencing such an awakening to the Spirit is hard for most of us as citizens of industrial-growth culture. The human-built environment distances and shields us from the other-than-human world. We eventually internalize this shielding as a process of personal "armoring." This mostly unconscious activity involves chronically being "in our heads" as we deflect our senses from and numb our emotional responses to nature. The living Earth is often spoken of as "the environment," something separate from ourselves, a collection of resources or mere scenery. Attempting to fill our emptiness, we screen out nature's enticing distractions from our striving as consumers and owners, narrowing our attention to the built environment.

As you read further and try the practices suggested, see if you begin to notice such distancing activity in yourself. The goal I suggest is not to eliminate all armoring, but to gently notice it, engage in it more selectively, and regularly step beyond it through lively attentiveness and deep inward and outward listening.

Earth awareness or natural awareness involves an open-hearted, deep-listening attentiveness to the process of Creation (and therefore of the Spirit) ceaselessly unfolding around us and within us. This practice may become an extension of Friends' listening or waiting-worship practice, which traditionally has tended to be more inwardly focused than natural awareness. Such awareness is enhanced by recognition of the basic realities listed earlier, and involves a more sensuous, relational, and empathic consciousness of the natural world than is usually present in our culture. It includes a less restricted recognition of the Spirit's functioning than many are used to. Natural awareness has the potential to support a radical change in worldview and in behavior.

As William Penn wrote in 1693, "It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and known in the creation of it. For how could men find the conscience to abuse it, while they could see the great Creator look them in the face, in all and every part thereof?"

George Fox in his journal described an awakening to the Divine in the creation: "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter.... I was come up into the state of Adam which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me...." The Creation may be opened to each of us as well, if we cultivate the appropriate deep and patient attentiveness.

Earth-body meditation

HERE IS ONE VERSION of a guided experience called an "Earth-body meditation," originally created for retreat participants. Try it in a grassy place near trees, and also ideally near a wild area large enough to lose yourself in during a deep listening walk (described later in this unit) after the meditation. It may help you to enter a relational, sensuous experience of membership within the Earth community or body, leaving behind at least temporarily the more common position of spectator in relation to an external "environment." At first you may want to have someone read the meditation to you, with the indicated pauses, or you can listen to a recording of yourself reading it:

We are members of Earth's body. We help the web of life to maintain the same ever-cycling elements, forms of light from the Great Flaring Forth, which we evolved from, are composed of, and will return to.

Earthcare for Friends—A Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities

Sit down and settle on the ground, allowing yourself to comfortably adjust to the Earth's gravitational embrace.... Close your eyes. Maybe you can faintly feel blood pulsing in your neck and fingertips. Enjoy this automatic cycling, knowing that it is actually part of the larger water cycling of this region. Just as our blood nourishes us, water is the blood of Earth....

Now notice your breathing, and gently follow its rhythm for a few minutes, relaxing any tightening which may be hindering a full, relaxed in-breath and out-breath....

Like blood pulsing, breathing is mostly automatic, an enjoyable and natural, taken-for-granted life process. Know that all the oxygen that you and all animals are taking in at this moment is a gift of green plants, given off by them as they breathe in the carbon dioxide which we and other animals have exhaled.

Open your eyes and slowly scan and take in some of the plants, such as the grasses and trees, which are breathing with you. Feel the temperature and movement of air on your face and hands. As water is Earth's blood, so air is the breath of our larger Earth body....

Now close your eyes again, scanning your body slowly and savoring your own energy, which may have been rising as your breathing has deepened. This energy may be felt as slight movement, readiness to move, tingling, or warmth. Notice also any stiffening you may be doing to interrupt the free movement of energy in yourself. Know and appreciate the source of this energy, which is the sun....

Open your eyes now and take in the sunlight. See the contrast of light and shadow. Allow yourself to slowly take in the landscape, plants, any animals, and the sky, rather than quickly skimming over what you see. This sunlight energy in you is released with each heartbeat and each breath, having come to you from plants through your food chains....

Now use this energy to slowly stand up.... Begin to walk slowly around, feeling and savoring each step.... See the sunlight, present even if the day is cloudy. Let your breathing regulate its own pace and depth. Look at the plants and whatever else is here. See each plant, bird, insect, and person as a way-station for the cycling elements of soil, water, and air, and for the light. See each as a fellow participant within the self-regulating, evolving body of Earth.

Deep listening walk

YOU CAN NOW GO on a “deep listening walk” if you want, wandering or stalking (moving slowly and silently, pausing a lot, versus “hiking”) for an extended time through the nearby wild areas, being led intuitively by your emotional responses to what you see, hear, or smell. Your only goal is to discover the beings, elements, and places that share the land with you, sensing them as emanations of the Divine, and discovering how they may move you or what they have to teach you.

It is typical at first to experience some boredom or anxiety as you withdraw even for an hour from your attachment to the built environment. If you accept these feelings and continue your opening to the world, compassion, wonder, and even ecstasy may eventually come. Allow yourself to open your senses to the places, animals, plants, and weather, silently scanning with a generalized attentiveness. Notice what moves you emotionally, what calls you out of your more contained self. Attend to living things and places as subjective presences, each with special sensitivities and unique functions within the circle of life. They may become sources of spiritual power and primary teachers of lessons for living.

As you slowly wander, stop and linger often with any place or thing which seems to invite you or speak to you. Allow yourself to imaginatively enter its life for a while. What it is sensing? What is it doing within this community? Take your leave when you feel ready, and move on.

When you eventually circle back to your starting place, you may want to write down, draw, or dance the spirit of a being or place that most stands out in your experience. You may also want to share your experiences with one or more friends, who ideally have taken part in the meditation and the walk with you (out of view, if possible). This can be done in a worship-sharing format. One query might be, “How has the breath of the Spirit, which animates all things, moved you or spoken to you?” You might try empathically assuming the identity of a

being or place that moved you on your walk, and describe “yourself” and the special gift or sensitivity you bring to the gathered people. What recognitions and emotions are aroused in you, in the roles of both speaker and listener? Such activities help you carry the life force and lessons of the Spirit’s embodiments in nature back into everyday living.

Everyday practice

THE MEDITATION AND WALK ideally will suggest activities for a regular practice of natural awareness, extending your current deep listening or waiting worship practice. A compelling reason for engaging in such a practice is that in our industrial culture we are constantly invited by people and the built environment to reassume our culture’s mechanistic, nature-as-separate-environment view, moving back into the stance of armored spectator. It requires regular practice to live in a more richly fulfilling way, grounded in compassionate attentiveness to the movements and patterns of the Divine Presence within Creation. Such a practice may be essential both for informing us and for sustaining us as passionate, compassionate activists for peace *with* Earth as well as *on* Earth.

You may begin walking regularly through or near the wild areas of your neighborhood and home territory, coming to know the landscapes, watercourses, natural communities, plants, and animals. Get to know how these function, and how they affect you physically and spiritually. How do they speak to you and teach you?

Taking time to increase your understanding

PERHAPS YOU CAN DISCOVER how the lay of the land is part of local creek and river watersheds. Book research and consulting with local elders can enrich your sensory discoveries on foot. How were local bedrock, soils, and landscapes formed? What are the common native wild-flowers and edible plants? The major tree and animal species? What were the native old-growth communities, and are any of these left? What phase is the moon in? When is the next seasonal change day, and how does the angle of the sun hint at this? Where does your food come from? Is any of it local, or only coming from outside your region? Where does your household water come from? Your fuel for home and car?

Perhaps you will find yourself drawn into such an activity as a fascinating, lifelong process of discovery.

You also may begin to pause regularly each day from whatever you are doing, noticing and savoring what is happening in the natural world and how you are participating in and responding to this. Some good times to pause mindfully and gratefully include sunrise and sunset; before, during, and after meals; and when turning on the water tap or shower.

You might pause when you need a break from reading or working indoors, briefly stepping outdoors or gazing from a window into the wider world.

Eventually, as you become aware of ways that you are being sustained and nurtured, follow the naturally resulting urge to give back to the Earth and Cosmos. Find ways to begin harmonizing your Meeting, church, household, and lifestyle with basic Earth patterns and cycles.

Also, you may find yourself called to help limit suburban sprawl, to work for wildlife and wild areas preservation, or to move into any of the myriad forms of activism that our Earth community so badly needs from us now. In following these leadings, you move toward becoming a true native, rather than a mere occupant, of your home region, living in harmony with the processes and patterns of the earth, grounded in the Spirit.

We can support each other in our Meetings and our neighborhoods by waking up from the trance of consumerism. We can live simply and richly, regularly opening ourselves to a vivid, enlivening sense of the Divine Mystery at the heart of all that is.

This passage from Ecclesiastes seems fitting here:

One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides forever. The sun arises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where he arose. The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it whirls about continually, and the wind returns again according to his circuit. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again.

—Ecclesiastes 1:4–7

Article 2

Earth Activism

by Ruah Swennerfelt

THERE ARE OVERWHELMING PROBLEMS in the world today. We live in a very complex set of cultures that have to find some harmony to provide a safe place for future generations. There is a rampant amount of greed that is guiding our treatment of the living creatures on our planet. While there are too many problems to name them all, here are some examples which will help illustrate the need:

1. When I was a child I went camping each summer with my family in the High Sierras of California. I remember vividly the early morning “scoop” of water from the stream. How cold and delicious it was! My grandchildren cannot go camping today and drink the water from the streams without first filtering it. We are using the waters of the world faster than they can be replenished, and we are polluting them as well.
2. In the 1930s a loaf of bread made from the flour grown in the Midwest was naturally full of vitamins. Today that same loaf of bread has to be fortified with vitamins because the soils are depleted of their nutrients from too much use of chemical fertilizers.* The only naturally healthy loaf of bread today comes from flour grown organically (with natural fertilizers and no herbicides or pesticides).
3. Where I live in Vermont we have an abundance of deer. In the winter there is not enough food for such large herds, and so they painfully starve to death. Humans have killed or driven out the natural predators of deer (such as wolves and mountain lions), and so the system is out of balance.
4. Today there are more shopping malls than high schools! We live in a culture where the dominant voice comes from large corporations who take up much of television and radio air time (even with advertising in our schools), encouraging us to buy more and more and more. Many of these goods come from countries where people are not paid fair wages and where even children are working long days. There is no justification for using children in this way; it's just wrong. Many of the resources used to make the goods are depleting the natural resources of the planet.
5. Our love of the automobile has polluted our cities and is making us demand more and more petroleum. This need for more oil has driven us to other countries to search for it, creating tensions and even leading us to war.

We must speak out

WHEN WE FEEL CLOSE TO SOMEONE, say a friend or family member, we readily help them when they are in need. We care deeply for our pets and wouldn't think of letting them suffer. So, if we practice the suggested activities described on the following page and begin to feel our interconnectedness with all Creation, we may feel called to help wherever the needs may be. We *must* speak out on behalf of those who can't. For our own survival (I don't want to be too human-centered, but this helps illustrate the point) we need the rich biodiversity of the planet. The trees produce oxygen, and the animals and plants provide food, clothing, and shelter. Every living thing is part of a cycle of life. If you remove one part of the cycle, the rest suffers.

Many would like to act, but feel immobilized by the complexity and immensity of the problems. I often hear the following questions:

- ❖ What difference does it make if I take the bus instead of my car? Or if I use cloth napkins instead of paper? Or if I conserve water or electricity?

*The British *Globe and Mail* and Canadian *TV News* examined food tables that were prepared by government researchers in 1951, 1972, and 1999, and compared the nutrients available from 100 grams of the given food. According to the Canadian data, almost 80 percent of foods tested showed drops in calcium and iron, 3/4 drops in vitamin A, 1/2 lost vitamin C, 1/3 lost thiamine, and 12 percent lost niacin. The results were almost identical to similar research conducted in the United States and Great Britain. The UK research was published in the British Food Journal, while the U.S. data have been published only in alternative health journals.

- ❖ What can one person possibly do?
- ❖ Is this important enough that I must make do with less?
- ❖ What will I have to give up?

There is a fear of having to sacrifice for the good of the future. Can we continue this increasing use of the world's resources? The resources are finite, and we have to change. Yes, we will have to do with less. But we can work for a world where we have time for family and reflection. If we took our testimonies seriously, we would no longer feel afraid of change. We would have faith, like those Quakers before us, that with God's help we can live full and rich lives without irreparable destruction of the earth's natural resources.

It is important to keep aware of the issues of the day, not just "environmental issues" because all the issues are interrelated.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

—Matthew 5:19–20

In the next section are some suggested first steps towards a life of Earth activism. Start small. Don't take on more than is possible for you, or you'll set yourself up for failure. But do take those first steps. God's Creation is depending on it.

Illustrative activity for Article 2

Practicing Earth Activism

TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE on behalf of the earth, start by making yourself aware of the issues. Learn from sources in addition to the conventional news reports. At the end of this book is an appendix of resources to help you begin.

Begin examining ways you can reduce your purchases. Buy local, rather than transported, goods. Walk or carpool, or use public transportation more. Buy second hand clothing. Challenge your family to reduce energy consumption by installing compact fluorescent bulbs, turning the thermostat down and replacing old appliances with "Energy Star" rated appliances.

Be willing to talk about what you are doing. This is one of the most important steps. It will encourage others to take first steps so together we can really make a difference.

Try writing letters to your state and federal representatives. Friends Committee on National Legislation provides content for letters. Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation publishes the bi-monthly *Quaker Eco-Bulletin* on a variety of issues, as well as periodic "Eco-action Alerts." Work with members in your church or Meeting to provide education classes on the issues of the day including steps for action. (A good resource for such a class is the Quaker Earthcare Witness pamphlet, *Walking Gently on the Earth, an Earthcare Checklist*.) Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers. Write articles for *Quaker Life*, *Friends Journal*, *BeFriending Creation*, or *EarthLight* magazine.

Then, if you have made some personal changes, written some letters, made some phone calls, and engaged others into action, and you still feel you are not doing enough, maybe you are being led to demonstrate your concerns more actively. Encourage others in your Meeting or church to join together and participate in a vigil or march. Search out neighborhood activities such as a plan to clean up a stream or lake, preserve some land for wildlife habitat, create bicycle paths, clean up a park or the roads, or carry out some other worthwhile project. Working with others to make change can be an incredibly inspiring experience.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:14–16

Questions for reflection

- ❖ What do I do daily to remind myself of my connections with people, other creatures, and all that sustains life? How does this bring joy, thankfulness, and nourishment into my spiritual life?
- ❖ Do I treasure as sacred the whole of Creation?
- ❖ Do I honor the Life of all living things, the order of nature, the wildness of wilderness, the richness of the world? Do I seek the holiness which God has placed in these things, and the measure of Light which God has lent them?
- ❖ What actions am I taking to reverse the destruction of the earth's ecosystems, and to promote the earth's healing?
- ❖ Do I contribute ideas, effort, resources to help heal and stabilize our ecosystem?
- ❖ As a member of my Friends community, as well as of my work and home communities, do I seek guidance in the Light for ways that I may lead and participate in actions which both heal the Earth and inspire others regarding the urgency of this healing?

Prayer

Oh Spirit/Creator, hear my intention

To take time each day to be aware of your beautiful Creation!

Help me to hear and listen to your Word by slowing down.

Hear my cry of too much business in my life.

Help me to discern the ways to act on behalf of the Creation.

Help me find my voice to speak out against the destruction of the earth.

Oh Spirit/Creator, hear my call.

Give me courage to make change and I will honor your Creation every day.

Awaken to the Earth

Some of Tom Goodridge's "Wild" Verses

City Tom,
I greet thee.

My feet are sunk in moss

As my skin receives the sun
and intercepts the soft breeze.

Waves lick the pond's edge below me.

Changing from another realm:

I will hold you.

I will hold you.

Let my fluid arms enfold you.

But the crow caws:

Look up, look up,

Where the clouds float free.

Look up, look up,

Come soar with me.

I lean back against this birch,

Knowing my hopes can

perch upon its branches,

Knowing my desires can

descend down into its roots.

I remain here, yet claim the whole Earth as my terrain.

—Wild Tom

City Tom,

Are you dead? Are you alive?

Does your foot feel for the soft, dank earth
under the pavement?

Do you taste the lake as you drink
your beverage?

Do you search for the sunset and bid good-night
to the star that lights your day?

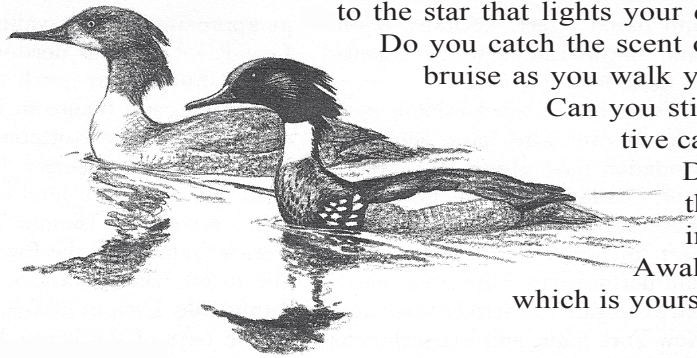
Do you catch the scent of the plants you
bruise as you walk your path?

Can you still hear the plain-
tive call of the loon?

Do you listen for
the often quiet cry
in all living things?

Awaken to the earth,
which is yours for a while.

—Wild Tom



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