

## Wild Forests

### Wild Foresters\*

*Practice Nature's Wisdom*

Alan Drengson and Duncan Taylor

“In wildness is the preservation of the world.” — Henry David Thoreau (*Walking*, 1862)

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.” — John Muir (*Our National Parks*, 1901)

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” — John Muir (*My First Summer in the Sierra*, 1911)

“Water must also be thought of in terms of the chains of life it supports—from the small-as-dust green cells of the drifting plant plankton, through the minute water fleas to the fishes that strain plankton from the water and are in turn eaten by other fishes or by birds, mink, raccoon—in an endless cyclic transfer of materials from life to life. We know that the necessary minerals in the water are also passed from link to link of the food chains. Can we suppose that poisons we introduce into water will not also enter into these cycles of nature?” -- Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*, 1962 p. 46.)

### Overview

In 1997 New Society Books published our anthology *Ecoforestry: The Art and Science of Sustainable Forest Use*.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the paradigms of responsible forest use have continued to evolve. The Ecoforestry Movement found common ground in the general principles of responsible forest use aiming to keep *full functioning forests* intact, while selectively removing trees and other material from them. It is now time for a wider and wilder effort to bring wild and tame forests within a more comprehensive vision to save and care for *all forests*, to restore them where removed, and to sustain cultural and biological diversity to support wild forests.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries John Muir had already written extensively on the benefits of forests and wilderness areas for human physical and spiritual well-being. Nearly a century later, in the 1980s and 1990s, studies at Chiba University in Japan found that time spent walking in forests – especially forests containing larger and older trees – resulted in significantly lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, lower levels of anger and depression as well as increased levels of physical vigor and an improved quality of sleep. In turn, time spent with trees, or what the Japanese refer to as *shinrin-yoku* or “forest bathing”, was also found to result in lower blood pressure levels and heart rates as well as in higher levels of immune system strength and resilience. (Eva Selhub and Alan Logan, 2012, *Your Brain on Nature*. pp. 18-22.)

We use “wilderness”, and “wild”, in these ways:

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“Wilderness” comes from Old English, “wild-deor”, meaning wild animal. It is also the abode of the non-domesticated historically viewed as outside human control. Wilderness is a place where we can experience that which is “other” than our everyday awareness. Our ego tends to view the world in us/them, subject/object, I/it dualisms, and from this we get a sense of ego stability and group identity. However, as Norwegian deep ecology theorist Arne Naess observes – our ego-selves depend on and are embodied in the Earth’s ecosystems for their health and survival. We can recognize and experience this by learning to identify with a larger “ecological self”.

When we mindfully immerse ourselves in a forest of old growth firs, or saunter through a thicket of birches and alders, we can be rejuvenated and restored. We can surrender our need for control – and be open to the energies and life in the forest. Henry David Thoreau in *Walking* (1862) proclaimed that “in Wildness is the preservation of the world” (Thoreau, (1862) in John Elder, ed. 1991, p 95.) Thoreau speaks of “wildness” and not just “wilderness” in this passage. Wilderness contains wildness, but wildness is not necessarily dependent on large areas of untouched land. Rather, the “wild” is known to us in spontaneous spiritual experiences of life-force energy. We more often experience this in places that are relatively untouched by human control and technology. “Wildness” is the creative “ground of all beings,” the pervasive life-force field that we and all life forms are spiritually within.

Wild forests are critical to ecological resilience, flourishing cultures, and thriving communities. Wild forest places are unique and of great variety, thus the *Wild Forest Movement* encourages, respects, honors and supports the diversity of cultures with place based wisdom and technologies, instead of a single development model. It supports moving from fossil fuel dependence into the solar age. People everywhere can contribute to solving the three global economic, warming *and* biodiversity crises. Wild Forests support diverse practices, cultures, worldviews, personal philosophies and lifestyles. Wild Foresters seek perennial knowledge and wisdom to be found in unique forests, places and cultures. Wild Foresting practices involve a wide range of activities and also not acting where silence and contemplation are wise.

### *Three Global Challenges*

Our reflections on the interactions of forests and people are inspired by the present global situation. This essay responds to profound social and economic dysfunctions and environmental uncertainties. A few years after the global media focused on the political and social crises of the *war on terror* and the tsunami in Southeast Asia, news of two other tidal waves of greater *long term significance* swept the planet. In 2005 the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report* stated that we are losing species *and* habitat at unprecedented historical rates. We are approaching the *brink of global ecological disaster*. This Report was followed in 2007 by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report*, which underscored the threats from the global impact of climate changes on economic, social *and* biophysical systems.<sup>2</sup> These changes are a direct result of human practices with industrial development *based on* fossil fuels and petrochemicals.

These reports note that *ecosystems*, like other non-linear systems, do not always respond to stresses in incremental ways. They can alternate between periods of relative stability and periods of great instability and change. At times of great stress, systems can undergo sudden and dramatic shifts, with discontinuities from one state to another. An example is the rapid loss of Arctic ice and melting of permafrost in the north. A series of feedback loops have a *synergistic effect* increasing temperatures *and* releasing vast amounts of methane from the melting of the permafrost. This leads to further temperature increases, with loss of pack ice, and loss of the reflective capacity of a diminished snow and ice pack to offset solar radiation (the *albedo* effect); this in turn adds to overall temperature increase in an accelerating cycle. Not surprisingly, at the end of August 2007, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center reported the most significant loss of Arctic ice in recorded history.<sup>3</sup>

The loss of Arctic ice is one of many environmental stresses leading even mainstream media to question many common values and assumptions in our lifestyles and development models. The industrial world's faith in progress, defined as unending economic growth and exploitation of *Nature* to satisfy ever-increasing material and energy demands, *is being seriously challenged*. Recent findings on global warming and loss of biodiversity emphasize the importance of appreciating some older traditional values that stress respectful relationships with the Earth and its diverse beings.

The *Current Global Economy* is based on consumerism, the idea of a *totally separate self*, the market as arbiter, and the rightful power of corporations. Its institutions define progress and economic health as continuing growth in *Gross Domestic Product (GDP)*. These practices and values are now being deeply questioned. Alternative socially and ecologically responsible *models and measures of progress and development*, such as *Genuine Progress Index (GPI)*, are emerging in the grass-roots everywhere.

Increasing technological power and other expanding global corporate systems, increase the rate of consumptive change, which continues to increase. Thus, more of the basis of human life and cultures is under extreme pressure. Regional and global ecosystems are undergoing severe alterations; there are dire warnings from a wide range of empirical scientists and other perceptive observers about the global situation. That Modern civilization is on the verge of a collective tipping point that could send our support systems into rapid decline is a common growing concern in academic *and* popular literature. For example, Thomas Homer-Dixon, Director of the Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Toronto, published *The Upside of Down* in 2006. He describes *five interconnected social and biophysical stresses*, including the widening gap between the world's rich and poor, the growing instability of the global economic system, the increasing loss of biodiversity, and climate uncertainty are creating conditions for a perfect storm of global environmental, social disorder and breakdown.<sup>4</sup> The abundant articles and books with similar themes reflect a growing awareness that our *Consumer Industrial System* is not sustainable.<sup>5</sup> It cannot continue *as it is* in the coming decades; it must undergo profound changes in *values, practices and organizations*. These challenging conditions have led us to write this article and publish our anthology on *Wild*

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*Forestry* (2009). *We believe wild forests are critical to our long range survival with a decent quality of life.* Let us explore the *Wild Forest* vision in more depth to see why.

### *Wild Forests Vision*

*Wild Forestry* is ecologically responsible forest use that appreciates, is attuned to, and learns from the forest's diverse wild energies. Wild forests are the *design circles* for the convergence of community ecoforestry, wholistic forestry, permaculture, wild farming, place-based education, ecological restoration, addressing the *Nature* deficit in education, wild-crafting, carbon sequestering, and stemming global warming. *Wild Forestry* activities contribute to the evolutionary integrity and self organization of natural forest ecosystems with their diverse cultures and ecological communities.

*Wild Forestry* connects *Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)* with contemporary ecological sciences. It reconciles Earth's needs with those of humans. It unites a wide variety of practices tailored by local people to the characteristics and values of unique forest places everywhere in the world. It respects and uses local adaptations suited to each forest system, stand and place. *Wild Forestry is part of the deeper global movement for ecological responsibility.* It is in harmony with the value and action platform principles of the *Deep Ecology Movement*, since it stresses the *inherent values of diversity and living beings.*

*Wild Foresters* discover, share and sustain deep forest wisdom, promote forest health and support biological and cultural diversity. Wherever wild forests grow, or are being restored, practitioners discover that *health and life quality* are intertwined with the *integrity and resilience* of diverse ecosystem processes unique to and flowing in local places. *Wild Foresters* honor these processes. They adapt human activities to the values these systems can sustain in perpetuity. These are diverse cultural adaptations that *evolve with forest ecosystems.* Instead of environmental and economic crises, *Wild Forestry* supports local control, personal freedom and rich cultural diversity. It learns the universal language of silence *and* also the melodious sounds in the natural and human world. *It is in tune with the human heart and the creative power flowing through all beings.*

### *Wild Forestry fits into Diverse Ecological Approaches*

Wild Foresters work on every level from spiritual to physical; they contribute locally and globally to solving the problems set forth above. Adopting these approaches we aim to save the wild forests that remain. We aim to restore wild forests negatively impacted by industrial logging. The vast wild forests of the world are crucial to stemming global warming, with its devastating effects on human life and biodiversity. The *Wild Forest Movement* supports a wide range of forest uses that do not interfere with the *forests' evolutionary self organization.* *Wild Foresters bring these values and practices into global efforts by all nations to lower carbon emissions, sequester carbon from the atmosphere, and preserve cultural and biological diversity.*

Many of these contemporary problems are related to fossil fuel based economies that should shift to responsible, nonpolluting *solar budgets* in energy use. We should shift from petrochemicals in agriculture and forestry to products and energy made from natural sources, processes and materials that do not cause long term problems, unlike most plastics and petrochemicals. Wild forests are a *key* to these initiatives, with their vast systems of information, diverse forms of life, rich materials, wise energy uses, diverse life forms and life styles.

*Wild Foresting engages in the full range of forest uses with cultural appreciation, education and valuing.* Researchers, teachers and students use local forests to experience *Nature* first-hand. Researchers in wild forests appreciate the complexity and diversity of forest communities. Walking in wild forests, meditating, enjoying their beauty are all consistent with sustainable learning, actions and values. Wild foresters understand the necessity of having wild places to restore ourselves and to solve a wide range of environmental and social problems.

The World's wild forests in all their local vitality should belong to themselves for then can they endure the *respectful* use by *all* creatures and humans who  *dwell* in them. Liquidating wild forests to replace them with plantation clones is morally wrong to all creatures and people. *Wild Foresters partner with Ecoforesters* to honor and care for social justice, peace, nonviolence, and ecological responsibility. *Ecoforestry and Wild Foresting* support flourishing vernacular forests cultures, with their unique wild forest dialects and creative ways to attune to the natural world. For Wild Foresters "Ecoforestry" and "Ecoagriculture" are shorthand for a rich diversity of ecologically responsible forest, crop and range land uses. They are a galaxy of positive alternative practices for using forests, trees, air, water and land in responsible, respectful, sustainable ways.

#### *Transcending the Modern-Postmodern Impasse via Ecological Approaches*

*Wild Foresters* integrate local practices with regional and global ways to cooperate and maintain the cultural and biological diversity essential to resilience. These diverse ways and practices are part of an ancient assemblage of values that makes the Earth a treasure in the galaxy. Modern Westerners have tended to think, talk and act as if there is one solution, a single metaphysics, and one way to experience the world. However, current problems offer *multitudes of opportunities* for choices in diverse lifestyles with high quality of life. *Ecological Approaches* offer vast numbers of ways to live sustainably in harmony with the natural world and each other. They offer a diversity of practices, worldviews and cultures, and also a diversity of technologies, *Spiritual Ways*, ceremonies, music, languages, arts, crafts and skills that go with this diversity.

*North American Culture*, especially in some areas, is wrestling with the Modern-Postmodern debate as an impasse. Modernism as a *development paradigm* is now outmoded by ecological systems sciences. The Postmodern *social construction of nature* perpetuates a devalued natural world and leads to unacceptable nihilism. The main

features of this impasse are characterized in five opposing sets of Nature related assumptions given below.

### ***Modern-Postmodern Impasse***

#### *Modern Development Paradigm*

1. Reality is impersonal, has no inherent values, but is controlled by natural laws.
2. We can control Nature by knowing these laws.
3. Specialized sciences are the *only way* to know these laws.
4. We can live well by applying this objective knowledge to practical matters.
5. This theoretical and practical knowledge enables us to *master Nature* with technology.

#### *Versus*

#### *Postmodern Reaction*

1. Reality is neither personal nor ordered.
2. All approaches to knowing the natural world are relative.
3. Nature has no inherent values transcending human subjectivity and cultures.
4. We might not understand Nature, but technological skills give us power.
5. There is no meaning or value in life other than what we create.

The diverse *Ecological Approaches (EA)* transcend this *Modern versus Postmodern Impasse*. These *Ecological Approaches* are emerging in Western and other nations. Preexisting and aboriginal cultures, including some of our ancestors, have similar harmonious approaches to the world in their relationships with all beings. These are characterized by the five features of the *Ecological Approaches*, given below. These also characterize a diversity of shamanic cultures, and other *perennial wisdom traditions of Nature Spirituality*, as for example Shinto in Japan, Taoism in China, Buddhism in Tibet and Hinduism in India. They are in the leading edge work in the new cosmologies of conscious living systems (in the West) described by Ralph Metzner, Ervin Laszlo and *New Story* cosmologist Thomas Berry.

#### *Ecological Approaches Encompass Worldviews Caring for Wild Forests*

1. Reality is personal *and* ordered.
2. Order is partly *created* by multitudes of beings, striving to realize themselves in multi-dimensional relationships.
3. The powers of Nature are in us (and other beings) and we can act wisely through integrating and unifying our powers of knowing, feeling and acting.
4. Nature is filled with diverse intrinsic values, many to be discovered, and ways to create new ones.
5. Completion and fulfillment come from deepening ourselves to *authentically dwell* in harmony with *Nature* and each other, as in living an *ecosophy*. (For example, Christian, Taoist and Shinto ecosophies.)

These outlines highlight the main differences between the Modern, Postmodern and diverse Ecological Approaches. Ecocentric narratives move across cultural differences

that involve diversity related to *Nature* and places (for example local adaptations). Pluralistic narratives based on *Culture-Nature Ecology* encourage mutual respect for diverse traditions of worldviews, ancient and new. They remind us that generations of humans and other beings have preceded and will follow us. They encourage multicultural *nonviolent communication* to further global and local support for basic rights, and the inherent values of humans, cultures, *Nature* and beings of all kinds. Their themes encourage the *flourishing of all beings*. They recognize that *all life is one*. We here focus on *Ecological Approaches* related to harmony with *Nature and wild forests*. We appreciate and support the multicultural and locally diverse features of the platform principles of the *Deep Ecology Movement* as articulated by Arne Naess.

### *Deep Ecology Movement Platform Principles*

1. All living beings have intrinsic value.
2. Richness and diversity of life has intrinsic value.
3. Except to satisfy *vital* needs, humans have no right to reduce this diversity and richness.
4. It would be better for humans if there were fewer of us, and much better for other living creatures. (*Responsible reproduction!*)
5. The extent and nature of human interference in the various ecosystems is not sustainable, and the lack of sustainability is rising.
6. Decisive improvement requires considerable change: social, economic, technological, and ideological.
7. An ideological change is seeking a better *quality of life*, rather than a raised standard of living.
8. Those who accept these points are responsible for trying to contribute directly or indirectly to realizing the necessary changes.<sup>6</sup>

### *Personal and Community Wild Forest Ecosophies*

In individualistic societies (like those in the West), people have different philosophies of life, even though they recognize and agree on important general principles. We honor personal philosophies that respect and care for the dignity and rights of individual persons. Having our own whole sense for life enables us to be full community members and to work together on shared aims. We are each dependent on a larger circle of family, friends and community to survive and flourish in home places. As we become more aware and more mature, we realize that we are part of not only a human community, but an *ecological community in a local ecosystem* whose multitudes of members make our lives possible. Our philosophies respect the members of our ecological community; it is the context of our daily language and home places. Individuals and communities can have their own ecosophic ways of living, since ecosophies aim to live by *Nature's* wisdom in harmony with local places and communities.

Naess named philosophies of life honoring ecological values, such as diversity and symbiosis, *ecosophies* for wisdom of household place (combining the ancient Greek *ecos* for household place with *sophia* for wisdom). There can be as many ecosophies as there are persons who appreciate diversity in ecology, cultures and worldviews. There is a major revisioning of *Spiritual Practices* going on throughout the world, inspired by the return to ecological paradigms *and* perennial wisdom traditions. Practicing *Spiritual*

*Ecosophies* engender harmony, unity and compassion. Nonviolent and respectful communication with other cultures and beings is based on respect, gratitude and the awareness that we are interrelated. This is at the heart of Jesus' teachings in the *Gospels*, as shown in the recently discovered *Gnostic Gospels*. Jesus taught that a loved world is filled with values we can know firsthand.

Love is a universal, transformative energy that we can activate in our own ways. Our spiritual challenge is to become *whole, complete persons* by loving and living in harmony and community with the tame *and* wild worlds. The world is always changing and so we change with it.<sup>7</sup> Rigid dogmas are a death knell to *authentic spiritual lives*, which ever deepen in their awareness, appreciation and compassion. Appreciating beauty in the world is a way to know the perennial wisdom in *Nature's ways*. Many forms of indigenous *Nature Spirituality* are *ecosophic* in their approach to the world, as are the *Spiritual Ways* of Hinduism, Taoism, Shinto and Buddhism. *Wild Foresting* celebrates these and other forms of *Spiritual Wisdom*. Forests and trees are woven with images and stories as places where we learn the timeless wisdom of creative living communities of beings. Wisdom is not a single skill or feeling, but a diversity of *creative joy* for living with utmost flourishing.

#### *Respectful Communication for Cooperation in Cultural-Personal Diversity*

Solving the serious international and local problems requires *cooperation and* maintaining cultural and individual diversity. No single worldview or ontology needs to be held by everyone everywhere. Our world would be very impoverished if it was monolithic. In countries such as India, Japan, China, Canada, Norway, England, France, and the United States, there is a great diversity in personal philosophies and worldviews. We each have unique ways to experience, understand, and talk about the world. It is wrong to *force* others to think and feel the way we do, or to *force* them to use language the same way we do. We each have unique feelings and dialects interwoven with our places and personal histories. The freedom to be ourselves enshrines obligations to respect this freedom for others. This also applies to our actions in the natural world with its great diversity of beings. We should recognize *their right to flourish*.

Thus, to be wise, our *communication is nonviolent (Gandhian) and respectful*, especially toward those with whom we disagree. *Nonviolent communication* is compatible with *direct action* to support ecological responsibility to care for home places and wild forests. Perennial wisdom distinguishes between the small-s ego-self and the wider, deeper, ecological sense of Self with which we can identify in our own ways. As we mature we become more tolerant and open to differences. We develop wider and deeper concerns that transcend narrow self-interests. We care more deeply for family, neighbors and home place. Their welfare is more important than ours. We become expressions of our people and places. We can say, "I live in this place and for years have explored it on every level. I love and identify with it." Aboriginal friends say, "We are this land we live in and love. It tells us and others who we are." Our language and daily actions have sense because our feelings, values and practices are deeply connected with knowledge of self and other, and we are attuned to our local human and ecological communities.

There is great diversity of cultures and languages in the world. We should respect these locally, regionally and internationally, as we should respect basic human rights, social justice and ecological responsibility. Reflecting on the great diversity and complexity of cultures, worldviews and ecological communities is impressive and encouraging. We seek *enlarging conversations*, not debates. We are nonviolent in communication from speech to direct action. (See Naess and others on Gandhi's nonviolence.)

In technology dominated cities and towns, increasing numbers of humans lack contact with the natural world. This is especially critical in the education of children. Designing *Wild Forest Ecosophies* is a way to contact *Nature*. Visit local woods and forests to explore how the beings therein live their ecosophies. What, for example, is the ecological wisdom of cedars, alders, flowers, butterflies, ants and frogs? They have their own stories and live the *ecosophies* of their kind. How can *we* live *respectfully* in a special forest place with ecological harmony and also give something back to forest communities? They give us many gifts, what can we give to them? Take children to the forests so they can learn from them. Ask children what we can do to benefit the forests. When we give back more than we receive, *we act beautifully*, as Naess observed.

#### *Wild Foresting to Help end Nature Deficit in Education*

Many writers and teachers are discussing the *Nature Deficit* in children's education. *Wild Foresting* provides solutions to this growing "nature deficit". We fill this deficit by educating the younger generations to know and care for the natural world. In technological societies computer and other systems provide "virtual experience," but they are no substitute for *authentic experiences in the Natural world*. Many people educated within these systems, from childhood through university, have little *deep personal experience* in the wild natural world. Some might believe (with some Postmodernists) that "nature is only a social construction," and that only the subjective realities of humans and their societies count. The *Ecological Approaches* such as *Wild Foresting* transcend the dead end *Modern-Postmodern Impasse*.

The defenders and eloquent protectors of the natural world and its wild beings are people whose deep childhood experiences were in special places in *Nature*. They played in these places without adult supervision or controlled programs. They created their own games, their own places, their own nests and huts. They dug caves. They played in the trees and built tree houses. They made secret camps. They had special places where they recovered from childhood traumas and injuries. *This was a key influence in their childhood*. This personal contact with *Nature* is a critical healing process for integrated wholeness of teens *and* adults. It is vital to their deep knowledge, and for saving the natural world.

Traditional societies have natural places and spaces for this critically important depth education in human life. It is in the natural world *free of technology* that we deeply connect with ourselves *and* other beings, the plants and animals with whom we share our lives. They are in our dreams. They are our inner animals and plants that guide and tell us where we are, who we are, how to be humble, how to be whole, and how to know

ourselves. It is from these rich, complex origins in specific places that we gain our stories of identity woven through with place-based personal experiences in cultural mythologies.

Many cultures use *ceremonial initiations* to mark changes in life with new names. Stories are given in special places in vision quests and rites of passage, rich with wild inner and outer plants, animals, forests, mountains, rivers and plains. These experiences make us *authentic dwellers on this Earth. From these rich experiences our capacities to love and care for Nature are activated. We become creative, competent, whole humans who can care for and help others to find themselves.* This is how we know and become defenders of wild beings and forests. It is how we know our ecological communities and deepest Selves.

### *Cultures in Nature with Perennial Wisdom*

There is an emerging *and* ancient awareness of *perennial wisdom* found in vision quests in traditional societies, in rediscovery programs, outdoor adventure and therapy programs, Norse *Friluftsliv* (life in the free air), and in Aboriginal walkabouts. Some have systematized the central elements of these experiences and practices, as they surfaced in wilderness journeying in North America. One approach to this system of journeying is the *Wild Way* (Drengson 2010). These activities resonate with practices related to older shamanic journeying ceremonies and wild wandering done with focused intent and receptiveness. Rich mythologies and folk stories are filled with multicultural symbols, complex values grounded in wildness in the natural world. Forests and trees are prominent and of central importance on all levels. They are not merely a setting (space), but rich in communities of beings we can join. We learn over and over again from our experiences, and from the stories we hear around the camp fire circle, *all can be nurtured and taught by this Earth*, with its myriads of cultures, beings, rocks, plants, trees and animals. All of these have wisdom to share, when we appreciate their stories of adaptation, survival and flourishing in this ever changing *Creative Earth*.

The *tree of knowledge* and the *world tree* support the whole of reality in recurring themes of traditional wisdom stories (ecosophies). Spirit animals and plants are helpers and teachers. They have complex roles in cultures that live by *Nature Spirituality* and ceremonial journeying. The more we learn about animals in their natural places, the more we realize that they also learn from each other and share knowledge. A wolf learns fishing from a bear, birds show other birds how to solve puzzles, capture prey, and how to use tools. Tool-using creatures teach other creatures. Animals have cultures and make tools. Their creative capacities show they are aware, feel, sense and know the world. They accumulate and pass on knowledge to their young.

This great treasure in *life knowledge and wisdom* is in danger of being destroyed by the globalizing, monoculturing technology systems created by *Modern Industrial Societies (MIS)*, along with their associated monetary, marketing, and corporate systems. These technological systems are not value-neutral. All systems throughout the human and nonhuman world are systems of knowledge, skills and values; they are living creative processes, not fixed things. Human cultures can have good *and* bad value systems. They

can be adaptive with complementary relationships in the world, and they can be maladaptive with negative impacts on their users and the world. Human societies that went extinct developed systems that destroyed *their inner and outer ecology*. Their selves and places were demolished by their systems of control and consumption. Sometimes they learned before it was too late and changed; sometimes they continued to do the same things that were making them ill with even greater intensity, convinced that if they did, everything would be all right. But it was not and those societies perished. The world is a dynamic creative reality that is ever changing.

*Beautiful Action, Forest Harmony and Joy*

*Wild Foresting* is a clarion call for positive action, commitment, love, hope and renewal. The positive efforts described above point to a silver lining and great promise. We *can* lighten the negative effects on the wild by transforming the dominant expansionist consumer worldview and its lifestyles. Our systems of transportation and communication do not have to be instruments for global control, domination and destruction. We *can* spread awareness that we are all interconnected and that the fate of local and regional ecosystems is in our hands. The future direction of these human created systems is up to us. We can work at individual, community and regional levels to shape new practices and restore older ones in harmony with the great diversity of living wild beings and forests with whom we share the planet.

Complex systems that become unstable are supersensitive. Small fluctuations and pressures can lead to large-scale changes and outcomes. This is called the *butterfly effect*: A butterfly fluttering its wings in California might shift a highly unstable weather system and trigger a storm in Mongolia. A climber walking down from the top of a mountain makes slight shifts in route leading to different valley places and outcomes. What directions can we each shift to help many creative changes be born around us? What can we each do to save wild places and forests, as we learn their ancient wisdom where we live?

We each have far more power and gifts to offer than we might realize. We can be disempowered if deprived of free play in *Nature*, subjected to conditioning and passive entertainment. As Naess remarked, "We each have far more capacity than we realize. We tend to seriously underestimate ourselves." We each can respond in unique ways to these personal and cultural challenges. We can dwell harmoniously in our unique home places. A deep insight we take from wild ways is how shamanic ceremonies *empower each person to connect with their unique genius*. We gain this also from wild wandering and free play in Nature. Do not require everyone to do the same thing. Invite others to contribute *their unique gifts* to global efforts in nonviolent attunement to the natural world and each other. *There are myriad positive ways forward*. There are diverse ways to personal and communal unity for joyful harmony with Nature.

We face important decisions affecting the global future. We can celebrate and support individuals and communities who are role models for living sustainably within their ecological communities and wild forests. Long ago Gandhi said that to create a better

world for all sentient beings, not only must the means and ends for achieving this be *nonviolent*, but also *we must strive* to “be the change that we want to see in the world.” He also wisely said, “We need more production by the masses and less mass production from big machines.” Millions of local adaptations are rich sources for the world’s salvation, not mega-powered large-scaled monocultures. Like leaf cutter ants, we each can offer our *ecosophy* to improve the local community’s ecological integrity and sustainability.

*In conclusion:* It is humbling to see how the countless numbers of remarkable people and communities in diverse places are acting as butterfly wings to set in motion *positive tipping* to renew wild forests, one of Earth’s most precious evolutionary manifestations. As they focus on forests and trees, their efforts benefit places far beyond the forests. The wisdom of learning how to live responsibly in wild forest communities resonates in other areas and kinds of human interactions with *Nature*. Learning to walk gently on the forest floor, we also learn to soften our ego boundaries to experience the *Earth as a vibrant living whole*. Such deep unity experiences take place in Canadian Merv Wilkinson’s *Wildwood Forest* and in shamanic rituals in Peru’s forests. These experiences have subtle and profound effects on all of us and can bring us great joy. It is to this *Spiritual Vision* for renewed health of our planet *with vigorous wild forests* that this article is offered with gratitude and hope.

(Note: For more on *Wild Foresting* see our anthology with this title published in 2009 by New Society Publishers. The outlines on Modernism, Postmodernism and Ecological Approaches are from Alan Drengson’s book manuscript *Caring for Home Places* 2007.)

#### Notes

1. A summary of some main principles were set forth in our earlier *Ecoforestry* book and are assumed in this article. See Appendix 1 pp 281-285 in *Wild Foresting* edited by Alan Drengson and Duncan Taylor, published by New Society in 2009.
2. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. *Living Beyond Our Means: Natural Assets and Human Well-Being*. United Nations Environment Programme, March 2005; *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report*. Fourth Assessment Report, IPCC Plenary XXVII, November, 2007.
3. “Arctic Sea Ice Shatters all Previous Record Lows.” National Snow and Ice Data Center Press Release. Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of Colorado, Boulder, October 2007.
4. Thomas Homer-Dixon. *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization*. Island Press, 2006.
5. Paul Hawken. *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*. Viking, 2007; Bill McKibben. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. Times, 2007; David

Korten. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. Berrett-Koehler, 2006;  
Ervin Laszlo. *The Chaos Point: The World at the Crossroads*. Hampton Roads, 2006.

6. Arne Naess with Per Ingvar Haukeland. *Life's Philosophy: Reason and Feeling in a Deeper World*. University of Georgia, 2002, pp 107-108. An earlier version was discussed in a 1996 exchange between Stan Rowe and Naess: J. Stan Rowe. "Deep Ecology Platform: Moving it from Biocentric to Ecocentric." Online at: [ecospherics.net/pages/RoDeepEcolPlat.html](http://ecospherics.net/pages/RoDeepEcolPlat.html). Naess and others have done empirical research on people's views related to these principles. Many organizations use some version of them, whether or not they refer to the deep ecology movement; for example, see different versions of the *Earth Charter* on the web.

7. These were the teachings of Buddha, Lao Tzu and others.

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*NB: The Vienna Series in Theoretical Biology* now consists of 19 Volumes in 2014, the most up-to-date work published so far about communication and other systems in the natural world. This series completely changes the paradigms for study of and working with animals, plants and natural systems.

*Note:* For more on Naess's work and the deep ecology movement see the 10 volume *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)* listed above. See the Naess Series in *The Trumpeter* at <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca> starting with issue 21.1 through 22.2, including its Supplementary Festschrift. The first issue in this series has an overview of Naess's work and life by Alan Drengson. See the article by Naess entitled "The Basics of Deep Ecology." There he explains the apron diagram that describes the four levels of discourse and why they are important. There are articles on nonviolent communication, ontology, ecosophies, and a wide range of issues. The SWAN volumes provide the greater depth of whole books. *For a generic approach to ecosophies and their design see [www.ecostery.org](http://www.ecostery.org).*

### *Resources and Information Relevant to Wild Foresting*

Here is an annotated list of website addresses relevant to the topics in this article.

#### *Websites Described*

[www.Ancientforests.org](http://www.Ancientforests.org) A wealth of global information about ancient forests around the world with links to wonderful examples.

## Wild Forests

[www.Raincoast.com](http://www.Raincoast.com) Offers a wealth of ancient forest friendly books and catalogs for children and adults about wild forests, other species, and good stories.

[www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org) The Center provides extensive links and information about the state of biodiversity and its importance to culture and human health, as well as programs to encourage support for protection of diversity and the wild.

[www.agroforestry.net](http://www.agroforestry.net) Host to the *Overstory Journal* with a wealth of information about agroforestry and its relationship to other practices and values.

*The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* is an outstanding resource that is now available free online with all 30 years of back issues. It covers all aspects of ecosophies from theoretical to practical, poetic to philosophical. It is located at <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca>

[www.amritapuri.org](http://www.amritapuri.org) Nature care and sacred groves in India in the state of Kerala, which has more sacred groves than any other place in India.

<http://edugreen.teri.res> Sacred groves of India are featured with accounts of their variety and specific features.

<http://www.opalcreek.org> A centre in Portland, Oregon devoted to education on forests with programs for children.

<http://www.conbio.org> The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is an international professional organization dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity.

[www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) Website for *Nature* magazine.

[www.fanweb.org](http://www.fanweb.org) Website of the Forest Action Network devoted to defending ancient forests.

<http://www.resallaince.org> A network of individuals and small groups dedicated to integrating ecological resilience into social organizations for new paradigm self-organization, instead of top down control.

[www.sacredforests.org](http://www.sacredforests.org) Religiously oriented site with lots of links to sacred forests.

[www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org) Alliance of religious and conservation organizations with lots of info on sacred forests and groves.

[www.ecotippingpoints.org](http://www.ecotippingpoints.org) An EcoTipping Point is a key part of an eco-social system that can reverse the direction of change. It's catalytic – a lever that can turn the environment from decline to health and sustainability. The purpose of this website is to provide information about ecotipping points and how one can work in positive ways to set off cycles of improvement rather than downward spirals.

[www.bioone.org](http://www.bioone.org) Is an online journal with readily available scholarly and scientific material related to forests, ecology and other biological subjects.

<http://www.panda.org/news> Source for the online journal of the World Wildlife Federation.

## Wild Forests

<http://www.peopleandplanet.net> Devoted to people and forests and the health and well being of both.

<http://www.sacredland.org> Provides information on Earth Island Institute's film and other projects for educational resources for all ages.

<http://www.sacredsites.com> Offers resources for locating sacred sites, pilgrimages and other connections with details for places around the world.

[www.shinto.org](http://www.shinto.org) Information about Shinto Shrines of Japan and their connections with forests.

<http://www.earthwatch.org> Global organization devoted to active research and education related to Earth caring and knowledge.

<http://www.conservationinstitute.org> Website of the Conservation Science Institute devoted to quality science for knowledge of the earth and its ecological processes, especially as relevant to conservation and restoration.

[www.livingheritage.org](http://www.livingheritage.org) Website of Living Heritage Trust, a nonprofit devoted to the living heritage of Sri Lanka.

<http://www.WiserEarth.org> A generic website with powerful search capabilities connecting people with resources for sustainable, wiser living and restoration.

<http://www.ecostery.org> A generic ecosophy website for those wanting to create their own wise living practices and harmonious place as an ecostery, from eco and stery (as in monastery).

[www.ecoforestry.ca](http://www.ecoforestry.ca) A website devoted to ecoforestry practices and publisher of the *Ecoforestry Journal*.

<http://www.cnaturenet.org> Children and Nature is a website devoted to reconnecting children with the natural world. Rich in resources and links.

[www.ceres.org/ceres](http://www.ceres.org/ceres) Ceres is the largest coalition of investors, environmental and public interest organizations in North America.

Orion Magazine [www.orionmagazine.org](http://www.orionmagazine.org) is one of the most valuable websites for nature oriented educational resources, and a leading publisher of materials related to place based education for deep connections to the land and ecosystems.

Ecological Footprint [www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org) is devoted to using the footprint method to help us assess our impact on our local and global environment. They provide invaluable tools for gaining knowledge of how to mitigate personal and family impacts.

Redefining Progress is a key element in change to *quality of life* and ecosystem planning, for it is related to how we define and measure progress. There are many organizations devoted to this challenge and one of the best websites for this is at [www.rprogress.org](http://www.rprogress.org). This site offers valuable links and other information about the state of this art.

Big Picture TV: [www.big-picture.tv](http://www.big-picture.tv) streams free video clips of leading experts, thinkers and activists in environmental and social sustainability. They offer a general audience analysis and

commentary from a growing number of world leaders including scientists, journalists, economists, businessmen, designers and politicians.

[www.alice-miller.com](http://www.alice-miller.com) A website rich in material organized by Alice Miller, a leader in healing the traumas and injuries of childhood, so that people of all ages can become whole and happy as they were meant to be. Whole people then can be enlightened witnesses to others and help their journey to their authentic self. Much of our consumerism is driven by deep dissatisfactions that arise out of childhood injuries. Healing these injuries solves an endless cycle of craving.

[www.bestfutures.org](http://www.bestfutures.org) The world as we know it is going to be transformed. Why? Our economic system is based on continuous growth, and unlimited material growth cannot be sustained on a planet with finite resources. Best Futures explores global issues, trends and options. It provides new tools for developing sustainable solutions.

*The websites below have self explanatory names.*

Alliance for Zero Extinction: [www.zeroextinction.org](http://www.zeroextinction.org)  
Anew New Zealand: [www.anewnz.org.nz](http://www.anewnz.org.nz)  
Club of Budapest: [www.clubofbudapest.org](http://www.clubofbudapest.org)  
Club of Rome: [www.clubofrome.org](http://www.clubofrome.org)  
Conservation International: [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org)  
Convention on Biological Diversity: [www.biodiv.org/default.shtml](http://www.biodiv.org/default.shtml)  
David Suzuki Foundation: [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)  
Earth Charter Initiative: [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)  
Earth Policy Institute: [www.earth-policy.org](http://www.earth-policy.org)  
Equator Principles: [www.equator-principles.com](http://www.equator-principles.com)  
Evangelical Climate Initiative: [www.christiansandclimate.org](http://www.christiansandclimate.org)  
Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative: [www.eitransparency.org](http://www.eitransparency.org)  
Forest Stewardship Council: [www.fsc.org/en](http://www.fsc.org/en)  
Friends of the Earth: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)  
Futures Foundation: [www.futuresfoundation.org/au](http://www.futuresfoundation.org/au)  
Green Belt Movement: [www.greenbeltmovement.org](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org)  
Green Cross International: [www.greencrossinternational.net](http://www.greencrossinternational.net)  
Green Institute: [www.greeninstitute.net](http://www.greeninstitute.net)  
Honey Bee Network: [knownetgrin.honeybee.org](http://knownetgrin.honeybee.org)  
Jane Goodall Institute: [www.janegoodall.org](http://www.janegoodall.org)  
Massive Change: [www.massivechange.com](http://www.massivechange.com)  
Mayors for Climate Protection: [www.coolmayors.org](http://www.coolmayors.org)  
Pembina Institute: [www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org)  
Oxfam International: [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)  
Rainforest Alliance: [www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org)  
Resilience Alliance: [www.resalliance.org](http://www.resalliance.org)  
Rocky Mountain Institute: [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org)  
Sierra Club: [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)  
Sierra Legal Defense Fund: [www.sierralegal.org](http://www.sierralegal.org)  
Slow Food: [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)  
Sustainable Scale Project: [www.sustainable-scale.org](http://www.sustainable-scale.org)  
Sustainability Research Institute: [www.sustainability-research.org.au](http://www.sustainability-research.org.au)  
Trees for Life: [www.treesforlife.org.uk](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk)  
Wetlands International: [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org)  
Worldchanging: [www.worldchanging.com](http://www.worldchanging.com)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF): [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org)

Worldwatch: [www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org)

\*This article is a revised version of the introduction to our anthology *Wild Foresting* published by New Society in 2009, Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada. It is also in *The Trumpeter* 29, 1, 2013.

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