Nature's Presents

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NATURE’S PRESENTS

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Education

In the School of Education
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By

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Abstract

When many people are outside in nature, they don’t notice many little events taking place. For example, a person might not notice a field mouse darting under a staircase or a frog that is severely injured. This collection of poems documents my experiences in nature, including many happenings that usually go unnoticed.

During the writing process, I went through many steps, probably the most important of which was the writing period. First, I had to find inspiration. Most of my poems were written at Audubon Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary in Topsfield, MA. I found, as I walked around the sanctuary, that many incidents were happening around me all the time, many which I might not have noticed if I was not so aware of my surroundings. I often took pictures to document these experiences, which I have included in the first section of this collection, titled “Nature’s Presence.” All of my poems were about real events that happened or based off real events that happened to me, truly documenting my experiences in the natural world.
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Nature’s Presents

Nature is my passion
It’s in my heart and soul.
When I’m outside in nature
I feel love right through my bones.

When that deer looks right at me
It makes me want to cry.
And when I hear the chickadees sing
With them I want to fly.

Or when I see that beaver
Who swims right up to me
I want that moment to last forever
But alas it cannot be.

And when I see that hawk so close
Sitting tall and proud
Just see how thankful I am
That I can be around.

So you see I belong in nature
Amongst the animals and trees
And if you don’t understand
Just come with me and you’ll see.
Beaver

The noise disappears
Into darkness.
Silence seeps into
Tense muscles and soul.

Kinks evaporate
Leaving only the sounds
Of our even in, even out breaths.

A gentle hand
Is placed on
The sacred home
Of the beaver.

Thanks is given
To these hard-working creatures
My Native American symbol.

We wait patiently in silence.

I sense her before I see her.

One lone beaver
Leaving the security of her home
To scavenge for food.

She graces us
With her slow commute
In front of us.

With no glance in our direction
She disappears down a well-traveled highway
She knows well.
Salamander

My body is cold
Like the water
So I move slowly
Like I have just awoken
From a deep sleep.

This is where I am
When I hear chatter and footsteps.

They are loud
So I float
My dark brown
And speckled body
Camouflaged in the water
Hoping not to be seen.

One stops and yells
_There! I see one!_
And the whole group is above me
Taking pictures and talking.

I try to move away
But I’m slow
So I stay still
Until they leave.

And it is here
I will remain
Until I lay my eggs
And move on.
Owl Release

You are a small round mass pressed to my body. 
Eyes open wide in daylight.

I look down at you with lazy-eyed blink 
And you return the gesture.

In that blink I tell you
_Everything is okay. Today is the day._
_Just on more picture. I’m sorry._

I let go with one hand 
And you know it’s time.

Your beautiful brown and white-speckled wings 
Spread wide. 
Bright yellow beak pointed 
Toward the sky.

Feathers so soft they could be clouds 
Surround my face ever so lightly 
As you beat your wings.

You land on a branch and look down at Rob, Professor Bade and I
Telling us you’re okay. 
You’re better now.

You look over your shoulder 
Then back at us 
Until we walk away.

We take one last glance 
And my heart swells 
As we see you soar deeper into the wilderness 
That is your home.
Lining up two by two,
Paired male to female
The ducks set off.

A yellow beak opens and out comes a
Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack!
By a beautiful female mallard.

She breaks rank,
Swimming to the outskirts of the flock,
Shouting the whole time.

*Hey! Wake up! This is not right!*
She seems to scream,
*We do not have to listen*
*To what our elders say is right.*

*She swims further away shouting,*
*Come with me,*
*We will do what we want*
*And make our own rules.*
*We can be who we want to be*
*And put an end to this madness.*

But the team stares forward blankly,
Content in where they stand.
Bloody Frog

Brown
Like the dead leaves
Around you.

All brown
But the pool of red
On your back.

What happened?
I wonder.

Was it a bird
Who pecked you
Then saw a better meal?

Or maybe it was a stick
That fell from a tree
And landed on your back.

Or was it a snake
Who bit you
Before it was scared off?

Will you live
Or will you die
Like the leaves under your body?
My friend and I
Are walking down
Wooden stairs on a path
When I notice a movement
To the right of the next step.

I stop
And hold out my hand
To stop him, too.

We wait patiently
And you poke out your head
Sniffing around.

Then finally
Your whole brown body emerges
Heading for a sunflower seed.

You eat it hungrily
Then raise you head
Sniffing for more.

I take a handful
Of my sunflower seeds
And bend down
As you bolt back under the step.

I place them on the ground
And wait again.

You emerge as you did before
Head first with whiskers trembling
As you smell the air
Until your whole body is out.

You walk in short bursts
Body low to the ground
Checking your surroundings
To make sure it’s safe.

Once you get to the seeds
You take one
In your tiny pink paws
As my friend and I walk away
All of us satisfied.
Chickadee

Let the chickadees pick up those black seeds.
Watch as they peck at them over and over
Until they find the good in the middle
And allow it to enter into their body.

Watch as the outer shell falls to the earth
To be turned into dirt
So we can grow.

Grow with me
Grow with the chickadees.
Let the bad fall away as you absorb the good.

Fly on to share your song
Wherever you go.
NATURAL SURROUNDINGS
6:30 am, Robert Weingarten

Orange-yellow
Ominous sky.

Hues of gray
On illuminated
Mountain tops,
Reflections
Of opaque clouds.

Ocean like
Wrinkled saran wrap
With one
Determined air pocket.

Imagine sunlight
Reflected on water
Warm wafts
Of beach air.

Sounds of seagulls
Drifting over
A never ending blue.

Let it wash over you
Free you
Repair your heart and soul
As the orange-yellow
Takes over.
A Storm Is Coming

Bright red against dreary sky,
Smell old, knarred maple bark,
Kiss summer days goodbye.

Watch cardinals fly,
As the world turns dark,
Bright red against dreary sky.

Take a moment to close your eyes and lie,
There in that dark,
Kiss summer days goodbye.

Let it out, let it in, thigh
Pressed to ground so hard there’s a mark,
Bright red against dreary sky.

Smell the storm and try
To lie still amongst the trees in the park,
Kiss summer days goodbye.

Feel the change in temperature and sigh,
As the first drop of rain hits your skin like a spark,
Bright red against dreary sky,
Kiss summer days goodbye.
Snow

Solid white pieces of water
Fall from the sky.

They darken the windows and cars
Until it is all that can be seen.

Yet it continues to fall.

Down it comes until the lies are covered
And all that can be found is the truth
There in the white.

In that darkness of white,
Look within.

Is there darkness or light there?
Can you find that inner light
And break free?
Or will you be forever stuck
In the darkness?
The Drumlin Trail

There is a feeling here
A feeling of darkness.
Gone is the calmness
Gone is the security.

We look into the darkness
With no light from the moon
To guide us.

Our hearts beat faster.
I look into the bushes
On either side of the path
With the only source of light we have—
A flashlight—
And nothing is there.

Everything is in black and white
There are no tastes in the air.

There is an eerie absence of sound here
Unlike any other trail.
Though the wind blows
No leaves rustle.

I look at Taylor
Into her eyes
And see my own fear
Reflected back at me.

We elongate our strides
Until the end of the path
Where the feeling disappears
Like our breath
Into the cold night sky.
A Hint of Spring

Little brown and black duck butts wiggling in the air,  
Only to be submerged again in the icy water.

Seagulls caw from their icy perch,  
On ocean that is still ice.

Huge white swans dip head  
And question-mark shaped neck into water,  
Scrounging for sea grass, algae and insects.

Ocean waves break on melting snow,  
Piled high upon stone wall.

Clouds thinly stretch upon a horizon gradually darkening  
At a time when the world used to be black.
Black, Gray and Brown World

I close my eyes
And I see
Farmers hauling gray rocks
From the center of the field
To the outskirts.

I open my eyes,
Then close them again.

I see a carriage
Riding along
A brown street.

I open my eyes,
Then close them again.

I see a little
Brown-gray sapling
With smooth bark
Emerging from the ground.

I open my eyes.

I see
Knarred brown-gray bark
In a Tetris pattern.

Dark gray fly landing
On pants of the deepest black.

Brown leaves of all shades laying
An even covering on the brown path.

Light gray rocks
Lined up in a row.

Past and present
Meet here
In this
Black, gray
And brown world.
The Loudest Silence

I stop,
Enticed by the loudest silence
I have ever heard.

A silence so deep I hold my breath
As long as I can
Exhaling slowly
So as not to break this spell.

A silence heard by few
A complete and total absence of sound.

I notice the white snow
With its dips and mounds.

I notice the deep blue mountains
Framed by the darkening sky.

I see each pine tree
At the edge of the field.

I see the fence with the fresh dog prints
Running along its side.

A chickadee calls out
“Chicka-dee-dee-dee”
Each syllable pounding against my eardrums.

And the world rushes back
Into my head.
Maple Sugaring

Step One:
Find the right tree-
Egg-shaped, opposite branching,
Grey bark and chocolate brown buds.

Step Two:
Measure the tree-
10 inches or about 40 years old
Will do.

Step Three:
Wait for spring-
Below freezing nights
And warm days is what you need
For the sap to flow.

Step Four:
Tap the tree-
With a bit-and-brace,
Drill slightly upward
On the south side of the tree.

Step Five:
Wait-
Wait for the *ting, ting* sound
And the bucket to fill.
It could take days or weeks.

Step Six:
Boil the sap-
Boil it, then boil it some more.
40 gallons of sap
For 1 gallon of syrup.

Step seven:
Eat the syrup-
The first taste on your tongue
Brings you back to the tree
Which gave you
This delicious treat.
Rain

The first drop hits me.
My eyes close,
Head tilts up to the sky,
Arms lift and stretch out
On either side of me.

The drops increase
And my body is massaged
By each raindrop
That touches my skin.

As the rain drops increase
My body becomes acutely aware
Of the release of energy
And mimics nature.

I feel the negativity
Leave my body
As it absorbs positive energy
Through the rain drops.

The rain increases
Until it feels like a monsoon
Or hurricane
As the smile on my lips grows.

By the time the rain has stopped
My clothes are soaked through to my skin
And the smile on my face
Reflects the light of the sun.
DEER
My Spirit Animal

The deer is my center
My reminder of who I am
Who I was
And who I want to be.

She shows herself
When I lose someone close
Or even lose myself.

She clears my path
Makes me take notice
Finds me when I lose my way.

She is there for the important moments
To reassure me
That everything is okay.

I see her
In my mentor,
Kind and caring.

She is patient with me,
Even when I don’t understand.

The deer is me
As I am her
And she is my center
My pulling force
A symbol of my soul.
The Deer

As leaves crunch
Under my feet
You whip your tail and head up
On alert.

You look at me
Right into my eyes
Through me
Right into my soul.

There you see that I am a friend
Someone who loves you
Someone who would never hurt you.

I stand still and let you take me in
Holding my breath the whole time.

You look for another moment
At my soul stripped bare for you
You put your head back down
And continue to eat.

I am welcome in your home.
Dead Deer

I stop dead in my tracks,
Tears in my eyes.
A moment of silence during which
I am thankful for her life.

I close my eyes
And the image remains.

Head twisted to back,
Ribs picked clean,
Entrails sprawled around,
And blood.

Blood everywhere.

I take a deep breath
And continue on.
I see the herd
Looking right at me.

A lazy-eyed blink
Expresses my sorrow
Before I move on,
As do they.
Deer Tracks

Shih-tzus bound outside,
Into piles of snow.
I follow slowly through the door,
Bracing for the cold.

I step out
Into a different world,
Where the past lives in the present.

I sink to my knees,
Admiring the perfect prints,
Of a friend long ago.

As I lay my hand on the deer tracks,
I look down,
And I have four legs.

I feel the power in these legs
And how quickly I could run.

With my new ears
I hear more than I ever heard in my whole life.
I hear my breath
An owl call deep in the woods
And the squeak of a mouse.

I taste
Smoke on my tongue
From the person burning a fire
Next door.

I step out of the woods,
Quiet, alert
Using all my senses.
I walk slowly across the clearing
As I have done before.

I spot the path
Heading back into the woods
And begin my trek toward it
As a branch snaps behind me.

My heart races
My ears and white tail shoot up
And I spring into the darkness
Away from the sound.
The Reassuring Deer

One morning,
After my aunt had died,
I left the house
And got on a dirt road
In the middle of the woods.

There you were,
A beautiful doe.

You ran across the road
Making me take notice.

When I came back,
You ran across the road again
In the same exact spot
And did the same thing
The next day.

I wasn’t sure what you meant
Or why you were there
But I was sad when you no longer showed up.

It was my last time on that road
And I wished with all my heart
That I could see you once again.

And there you were
Looking right at me-
Not my car-
At me.

A feeling I cannot explain
Filled my whole body
And I cried
And said thank you.
For I know
In that moment
You were telling me
She was okay.
Everything was okay.
Scared Deer

My friend and I are talking,
Walking,
Crunching leaves and twigs
And paying attention to nothing.

There is a noise
Too loud to be a squirrel,
Then a flash of brown and white
And she is running.

First she runs away,
Then the doe realizes
There is a fence
And panics.

We stop on the path
As she hurls her body
In our direction
So fast and scared
That she runs into the fence.

She is not hindered.
She continues our way
Until she is around the fence
And sprints away
Leaving me ashamed.

I stand there,
Reflecting on the experience
And wanting to cry.

I scared an innocent deer,
And I am reminded
Of the deeper connection I had
Not long ago.

Had I been more aware
She might not have been afraid
And she wouldn’t have run
If only I remembered.
Trailing

We head off the road
With me in the lead.
As always this path appears
Clear as day in front of me.

We follow it
Pausing when it splits in two.
Deciding which way to go
And admiring the view.

A pile of scat
Still fresh and glistening.
We continue on
Carefully watching and listening.

We get to a hemlock tree
Perfect for a bed-down.
We search for signs
Of deer while looking around.

All of a sudden
We hear a sound and freeze.
Two deer appear ahead
Almost fully hidden by trees.

They casually stroll out
Then stop and stare at us.
We look right back
Sending out vibes of love and trust.

The doe put their heads
Down to the ground to graze.
They have accepted us
And received our praise.

We admire their beauty
Until they move on.
I reflect upon this experience
I wish we could prolong.

Together we give thanks
My professor and I.
For we have experienced
Something
No money could buy.
Author’s Note:

When I began this project, I had three goals in mind. My first and foremost goal was to write a collection of poems that showed my personal connection with nature. I wanted to convey to readers that there can be a spiritual connection with nature and you can learn a lot from the environment. I also wanted to share my own experiences in the natural world; all of the poems are real events or based off of real events. Last, I wanted to document how these experiences changed me.

Throughout this project, I learned so much. First of all, I learned more facts about the natural world. I learned what a swan eats, where I am most likely to find a beaver, along with many other facts. I also found that the more open and thankful I was when I went into nature, the more I was allowed to have these experiences of seeing different animals and learning more about their home. Probably the most important thing I learned, though, was just how important my spirit animal, the deer, is to my life. It showed up many times and I wrote so many poems about it, that it had to have its own section in this collection. The doe always seemed to appear at important moments or at times when my connection with nature had weakened. She was always there to pull me back into a better mind-set.

If I were to do this project again, I would set aside a time each week to go into nature and write poems. Because of a busy semester, I did not spend as much time outside as I would have liked, which made it much more difficult to write poems. I need to be in natural surroundings to be inspired because I like to write about what has actually happened to me. Overall, though, I am happy with the message these poems convey and I feel confident that these poems will help the reader better understand my personal connection with nature.
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Throughout the process of writing this collection of poems, many people helped directly and indirectly. I first wanted to thank Professor January O’Neil for helping me throughout the whole process. She worked with my schedule, meeting with me outside of normal class hours to edit and create a collection of poems worthy of being presented as an honors thesis.

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I would also like to thank my parents who were always there for me throughout this amazing and challenging college career. With every new adventure I embarked upon, they offered their advice and support.

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