###### NATURE’S PRESENTS

# Honors Thesis

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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 of off real events that happened to me, truly documenting my experiences in the natural world.

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Nature’s Presence

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.

Activist Duck

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?

Field Mouse

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 loose someone close

Or even loose 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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