

planit green

Summer Issue—2014

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WARREN H. WHITE, NaturalDiscoveriesPhotography.com

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Editors Note:

It seems impossible that it is already nearing mid-July! Time flies as the saying goes. It was only a few weeks ago and those in the North were in the grips of a bitter winter and it seemed as if we would never hear the birds singing again. Now, many birds have already fledged a couple of broods of offspring and it won't be long before some of the feathered jewels will be making ready for their long migration back to Southern climes. So goes the seasons of the year, a time to sow and a time to reap.

Interestingly, however, in many locations the times of migration seem to be changing. From fish to fowl, many species of wildlife are now moving at different times of the year because the world around them is changing. Some watery habitats are warming sooner and more than they have in the past. This has changed the dates and even locations of migration for many species. Now that most people are not directly connected to gathering their food during migration, this change in movement patterns and time isn't noticed as much as it once might have been. But the fact is that the world is changing around us all the time. That is the way the world works.

Ecology is the study of changes taking place in the environment. As people tend to distance themselves more and more from nature and natural resources it is becoming easier for people to not pay much attention to changes in the environment, except when something happens to make it more of a personal inconvenience. Through the pages of Planit Green we hope to share information about people who are connected with nature in the hopes that our readers will take some time to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature, and, to the extent possible, reconnect nature to their daily lives.

We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue and if you have suggestions for future articles, or if you know of someone who is busily living a life being connected with nature, we would love to hear from you.



planit green

A digital publication to share entertaining and useful information about Conservation in Action, Green Living and Lifestyles, and ways to Discover Nature at home, work and play. Each issue will feature helpful tips that will save money and help the environment. Showcases of new conservation oriented products, technologies and services will keep readers up to date and informed of new and exciting ways to make a difference in the quality of the environment, while saving money at the same time.

“The natural world’s benefits to our condition and health will be irrelevant if we continue to destroy the nature around us. But that destruction is assured without a human reconnection to nature.”

- Richard Louv

PLANIT GREEN SECTIONS

Conservation in Action.....pages 6-13

The term conservation came into use in the late 19th century and referred to the management, mainly for economic reasons, of such natural resources as timber, fish, game, topsoil, pastureland, and minerals. In addition, it referred to the preservation of forests (forestry), wildlife (wildlife refuge), parkland, wilderness, and watersheds. Since 2000, however, the concept of landscape scale conservation has risen to prominence, with less emphasis being given to single-species or even single-habitat focused actions. Instead an ecosystem approach is advocated by most mainstream conservationists. Protecting ecosystems and fostering sustainable relationships between humans, habitats and species is vital to protecting global biodiversity for good.

Green Living & Lifestyles pages 14-27

Those who choose green living and lifestyles choices attempt to reduce both their and society's use of the Earth's natural resources and personal resources. Practitioners of green living often attempt to reduce their carbon footprint by altering methods of transportation, energy consumption, and diet. Proponents of this type of lifestyle aim to conduct their lives in ways that are consistent with sustainability, in natural balance and respectful of humanity's symbiotic relationship with the Earth's natural ecology and cycles. The practice and general philosophy of green living is highly interrelated with the overall principles of sustainability.

Discovering Nature pages 28-32

Throughout human history, we have lived with a close connection to the land. It has only been in the recent centuries that we've barricaded ourselves in high rises and giant track homes doing our best to keep nature out as if it wasn't an inherent part of who we really are. We lose something when we do this—a piece of ourselves that needs to connect with the natural world.

We must make sure the next generation has the opportunity and motivation to have meaningful encounters with nature, because they cannot grow to love nature if they do not experience it. If children lose their love of nature, who will be the environmental stewards of the future?



This Issue of Planit Green

<p>New England’s Changing Forests.....</p> <p>Moderating a panel discussion on <i>New England’s Changing Forests</i> April 24 opened my eyes (and reminded my tired old brain) to some lessons and realities.</p>	
<p>What is Sustainability?.....</p> <p>To my way of thinking, sustainability is an individual and personal ethic that informs, guides, and inspires actions in daily, personal, and professional life. Practicing the tenets of sustainability is motivated by an individual’s acceptance of a responsibility to, quite simply, make decisions that leave our world better able to meet present and future needs.</p>	
<p>Trapper Rudd Opens Fly Fishing Opportunity on the Mysterious Atoll of Banco Chinchorro.....</p> <p>Step back in time and fish untapped waters for Tarpon, Permit, Bonefish, Snook, Jacks, Snapper, Cuda, Tuna, Marlin, Dorado, Sailfish, Wahoo and more. If you have ever fished the fabled waters of the Mexico’s Yucatan, you may have heard colorful stories from locals of a near mythical atoll named Banco Chinchorro.</p>	
<p>“Summer Storm” – Centerfold.....</p> <p>“One of my favorite destinations to gather material for my paintings has always been Yellowstone National Park. It is a place where the illusion of untouched wilderness is still present if you can ignore the several hundred thousand tourists swarming around you...”</p>	
<p>LA Dodgers Stadium is Certified—Becomes First Ever Major League Baseball Stadium to Become ISC-Audubon Certified!.....</p> <p>If you have ever been to Dodger Stadium, or seen it on TV, you are probably aware that it is one of the most beautiful stadiums in the League. Learn about how this elite stadium has once again set the bar by becoming ISC-Audubon Certified.</p>	
<p>“What’s That Racket?” Birding Made Easy For Beginners</p> <p>There are a few important points that can expedite your transformation from zero to birder in short order. Read about those items and more in this great article.</p>	
<p>Changing the World, One Frog Pond at a Time!</p> <p>So the mucking began. I made the task initially tougher than needed. I shoveled the water-laden organic debris (talk about heavy!) into five-gallon buckets, and then carried them to add richness to a new terraced bed more than 100 feet away. Dozens of buckets later, struggling <i>in</i> and <i>with</i> the muck, I shifted to shoveling to the edges.</p>	
<p>Home Office Energy Conservation Tips</p> <p>These few quick tips for the home office can make all the difference in energy savings!</p>	
<p>Make Your Laundry Green</p> <p>It doesn’t take much to green your laundry. This short article will show you how.</p>	

New England's Changing Forests

Moderating a panel discussion on *New England's Changing Forests* April 24 opened my eyes (and reminded my tired old brain) to some lessons and realities. Our speakers, all foresters or ecologists, included: a noted author and Antioch University New England (AUNE) ecology professor emeritus; a forestry consultant; a University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension forester; and former University of Maine forestry professor and now director of a Keene-area land conservancy and education center. Allow me to share some facts and reflections that may stir your curiosity, fuel your appreciation of nature's wonders, stimulate deep feelings, and lead you to act on behalf of future generations:

- The first half of the Nineteenth Century saw sheep *invade* New Hampshire (okay, herders imported the sheep and expanded the flocks) – four million of them grazed our stony hillsides by 1830. Hillsides that previously supported forests.
- At that time, stone fences (sheep enclosures and exclosures) totaled 125,000 miles in New Hampshire!
- Sheep fever (a fatal disease) decimated the thriving wool industry, then one of the world's premier woolen goods centers.
- Growers abandoned most of New Hampshire's pastures during the 1840-60 period.
- Nature abhors a vacuum – succession reclaimed the land, much of it eroded and depleted.
- New Hampshire is now the most heavily forested state.

- Our conservancy panelist projected a 1906 photo of his grandfather (then ten years old) standing in the pasture near the old home place (cabin clearly visible). He followed with a recent photo from approximately the same viewpoint; 30-inch-diameter white pine trees allow just a glimpse of the still-occupied cottage!
- By the mid-Twentieth Century, the recovered forests enabled Keene to earn the title of Porch Chair Capital of the World. In fact, the AUNE "campus" occupies an abandoned furniture factory. Ironic that I began my forestry career in 1973 working for a forest products company, and now I find myself cap-stoning a subsequent higher education career in an old forest products manufacturing facility! Life, like nature, has a way of cycling.
- Today Keene's economic vitality depends heavily on its forest products sector. Across the state we're harvesting only 40 percent of annual growth, which totals 1.37 billion board feet.
- Seventy-six percent of New Hampshire's forest treasure is privately owned, a testament to the power of an individual stewardship ethic combined with a forest products demand that returns dividends to forest management.

Our New England forests tell a compelling tale of nature's resilience. Over a 300 year period we (successive residents):

- Harvested the forests
- Cleared the land
- Eked out a subsistence existence
- Profited spectacularly from a burgeoning sheep/wool



industry

- Watched the soil wash downhill
- Suffered the sheep-fever-precipitated end of the wool industry
- Abandoned the pastures to nature’s reclamation and healing
- Built a strong forest products industry on the regrowth
- Took pride and enjoyment from our densely forested and recreation-rich landscape
- Accepted today’s forest blindly and often without understanding and appreciating the forest’s remarkable perseverance

So where does all this leave us? New England’s forest story is epic – an unparalleled tale of forest clearing, exploitation, abandonment, and recovery, all chronicled and documented in archives, books, and publications. Lessons from this remarkable forest journey are applicable globally. Most notably, we got lucky. Sheep fever struck just in time: before

land abuse in form of over-grazing led us over the precipice; before soil loss took the land beyond the point of acceptable recovery.

The story is compelling, even as it is sobering. We cannot rely on *luck* to save us from ourselves. We must learn the lessons from prior mistakes (and ongoing land and natural resource abuses) and act before it is too late. We only get this one chance to do it right. Borrowing a concept from now deceased author Carl Sagan, we on this *mote of dust*, this *pale blue dot in the vast darkness of space*, will not be saved from afar. No one else will rescue us. We must learn the lessons and take actions ourselves.

I urge you to see the depths of our Earth stewardship dilemma; to see our situation deeply enough to generate strong feelings toward our future; and to feel deeply enough to spur action. See; Feel; Act – a simple three-step journey to assuring a better tomorrow!



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What is Sustainability?

To my way of thinking, sustainability is an individual and personal ethic that informs, guides, and inspires actions in daily, personal, and professional life. Practicing the tenets of sustainability is motivated by an individual's acceptance of a responsibility to, quite simply, make decisions that leave our world better able to meet present and future needs (economic, environmental, and social) of individuals and society.

The tough question however is; "How do I actually get started down the sustainability path?" I would propose that the best place to begin is right outside of your home and through the practice of conservation landscape planning and management.

Biological diversity is crucial to our future and acts as an indicator of our stewardship success

As a wildlife biologist and ecologist I have spent most of my career thinking about and advocating conservation and stewardship of animals and the habitat on which they depend for life. While in the early years, most of my attention was directed toward those species that are rare or threatened with extinction, around 25 years ago my focus shifted to promote conservation of wildlife and habitat where people live, work, and play. Instead of focusing on specific species I transitioned to the belief that the key strategy should be to encourage conservation and stewardship of wildlife and habitat in general and that the location should determine what species needed to be the primary focus. Biological diversity is critically important to our future and it is an indicator of our success and failures in regard to environmental stewardship efforts.

Conservation Landscapes

Over the past few years I have yet again shifted to believe what is really needed is a major focus on advocating conservation landscapes. In addition, I have come to realize that the foundation upon which we should build conservation landscapes is connected with healthy and biologically productive soils. Soils are the most biologically diverse habitat

on Earth, yet most of us hardly consider the value of soils, and we literally are flushing this valuable resource down storm drains, down river systems, and into the oceans. In addition, much of our landscape management efforts are reducing the biological diversity of the soil and destroying many aspects of the soil, upon which conservation landscapes should be built.

Conservation landscapes may be large or small, but all rely on healthy soil

There are many scales of landscapes. On a big scale, we can talk about the landscape of an entire country and on a personal scale we can talk about the landscape of a residential home. But, no matter what the scale, it begins with the soil.

A conservation landscape is a planned and managed system of green spaces, greenways, recreational lands, parks and farm lands in combination with natural lands that collectively offer benefits of water conservation, filtration, and absorption as well as air particle removal and heat relief. Conservation landscapes also contribute to the health and quality of life to people, communities, and entire countries. To achieve those benefits, many communities (and businesses) are, and all should be, using management of natural resources to enhance water quality, abate flooding, lower heat in urban centers, lessen the impacts of climate change and build more resilient



communities.

The Importance of Organic Matter in Healthy Soil



Soil is, literally and figuratively, the beginning of a great landscape. Plants take in much of what they need, in terms of oxygen, minerals, water, and food, from the soil. Open any horticultural or agricultural textbook and you will see advice along the lines of, “If a plant is having problems, check the soil and roots first.” If a tree is ailing, the first place to look is not the leaves, but around the trunk and the soil. (The main reason to look at the trunk at all is to see if movement of water and food from the roots to the top of the tree has been disrupted by a girdling of the tree.) For those interested in keeping an

organic garden, rich, nutrient-dense soil with high organic matter content is a must. Without good soil, landscapes will be fraught with problems above-ground, which would not be a problem if the soil was healthier.

Composted organic matter provides nutrients in a form that can be transported through soil to plants

What Is Organic Matter? To understand why organic matter is so important for soil, first we need to understand what it is. Chemically speaking, the term “organic” refers to molecules with carbon in them. The benefit of organic matter does happen down at the smallest level-atom exchange. Humus is

organic matter that has been completely broken down and can exchange nutrient molecules. Shredded leaves, mulch, and grass clippings are examples of organic matter that has not been broken down. Fully digested, composted, or “broken down” materials are in a form that can be transported through the soil to plants. It is more accurate to use the term transported than eaten or consumed. The movement of molecules from the soil and the plant cell wall is a chemical reaction based on charges (positive or negative) of the molecules and the plant cell. Without going into really boring botany-class mode, it is pretty interesting how plant roots work at the cellular level to take in water, oxygen, nutrients, and minerals that plants need.

Organic Matter Is Not Just Good for Plants

Organic matter is necessary for plants to have the nutrients they need, and it is from organic matter that plants get their nutrients. Organic matter does so much more though. It provides food for micro-organisms and macro organisms that live symbiotically with plants. Those organisms break down larger bits of organic matter into molecules small enough for plants to take in. Organic matter improves soil structure. The myth that healthy soil is completely uniform in consistency is just that – a myth. Water and oxygen fills the spaces between soil particles. If the soil is ground to a very fine dust, it is prone to erosion problems, in addition to problems with drainage and oxygenation. Organic matter helps regulate temperature. It also holds water and improves drainage at the same time, something that is almost impossible to replicate with any synthetically produced material.

Ways to Add Organic Matter to the Soil

Organic matter does affect soil differently depending upon the state of decomposition of the compost. Fresh organic matter will be decomposed by soil organisms. During that process, nitrogen can be tied up. If we apply un-composted organic matter to the soil, we may need to add nitrogen. A good organic form of nitrogen is humic acid. Because the organisms that break down organic matter work based on the temperature of the soil, compost breaks down faster during warm weather and slower during cold weather. (This is different than hot and cold composting.) This is why some

people spread a layer of shredded leaves or organic mulch in the fall and allow it to slowly decompose during the winter. During the spring they turn over the soil and add the broken down organic matter into the soil. The deeper into the soil the organic matter goes, the more water-holding capacity and drought resistance the soil will have.

Leaves applied as a fall mulch slowly decompose over the winter

There is one instance in which you should not add organic matter into the soil. If you are planting a new tree, you should not add the compost into the hole, as that has been determined to discourage root growth beyond the original planting hole. It is better to top-dress the tree planting, using compost as a kind of mulch, rather than a soil amendment. Additionally, never till in the compost – that essentially defeats the purpose of improving the soil structure. Organisms in the soil will digest the organic matter and disperse it throughout the soil naturally.

What Do Conservation Landscapes Do?

Counter Pollution: Investing in conservation landscapes allows nature to restore naturally functioning ecosystems impaired by development, erosion, and storm events. These systems keep pollution under control through natural filters that trap sediments, toxins, and excess nutrients resulting in cleaner air and water. Restoring natural systems saves money on controlling water quality.

Increase Community Resiliency: Conserving valuable wetlands, riparian zones, community trees, and forests helps address climatic changes and improves resiliency during floods and storm events. A loss of natural spaces increases the risk of natural disaster damages that may cost millions of dollars to recover.

Save Energy: Protecting green spaces permits nature to help remove pollutants before they get to a treatment plant. Landscaping elements provide relief from heat island effects in densely populated areas. Trees located near residential



buildings also insulate and shade homes, lowering energy bills.

Encourage Exercise and Activity: The construction of parks, trails, and other green spaces encourages people to spend more time outside and exercising. Families spend more time actively playing with children where there is a safe public park or playground nearby.

Create Safer Communities: Conservation landscape infrastructure creates community cohesion by assisting people to feel a local sense of place and encourages friendliness with neighbors. This results in more community trust and lower crime in an area. Studies have also linked green spaces to improved concentration skills and stress relief.

Improve Land and Property Values: A conservation oriented landscaped area attracts buyers and retains current homeowners in our communities. Property values increase when there is landscaping and tree coverage and energy savings from shade and insulation attract new residents.

What Should Be Done?

No matter the size of the landscape being managed, a soil management program should be developed and implemented. The first step in that effort is to conduct soil tests to determine the present soil quality and health. With that basic information, a planting program needs to be developed that focuses on choosing the correct vegetation for the region in which the landscape is located. Then, it is important to plan and design the landscape in such a manner that it will be as easy to care for as possible. This includes making sure that the vegetation is easy to “get to” when management activities need to take place and making certain that irrigation can take place in ways that minimize water needs, but maximize the efficient use of water when it is needed.

A critical step is the development of a nutrient management program that is based on what the soil



actually needs in order to result in healthy and biologically diverse soils, a program that builds organic matter and results in healthy, drought-resistant vegetation. This step is often accomplished through the use of fertigation systems that apply “micro-doses” of only those materials that are needed, such as organics and other life supporting materials, right through the irrigation system. Thus, liquid nutrients, in micro-dose amounts applied on an as needed basis are the preferred approaches.

A conservation managed landscape saves money and resources, and it also increase property values, improves the quality of the environment and has been shown to improve the quality of life for people. This is truly a win-win-win, and this is the basis of sustainability.

Yes, sustainability is a complex subject. So complex, in fact, that many people decide that it is beyond their means to become involved. But, nearly everyone has a landscape and focusing on creating and managing a conservation landscape is the best place to start the journey toward a more sustainable world.



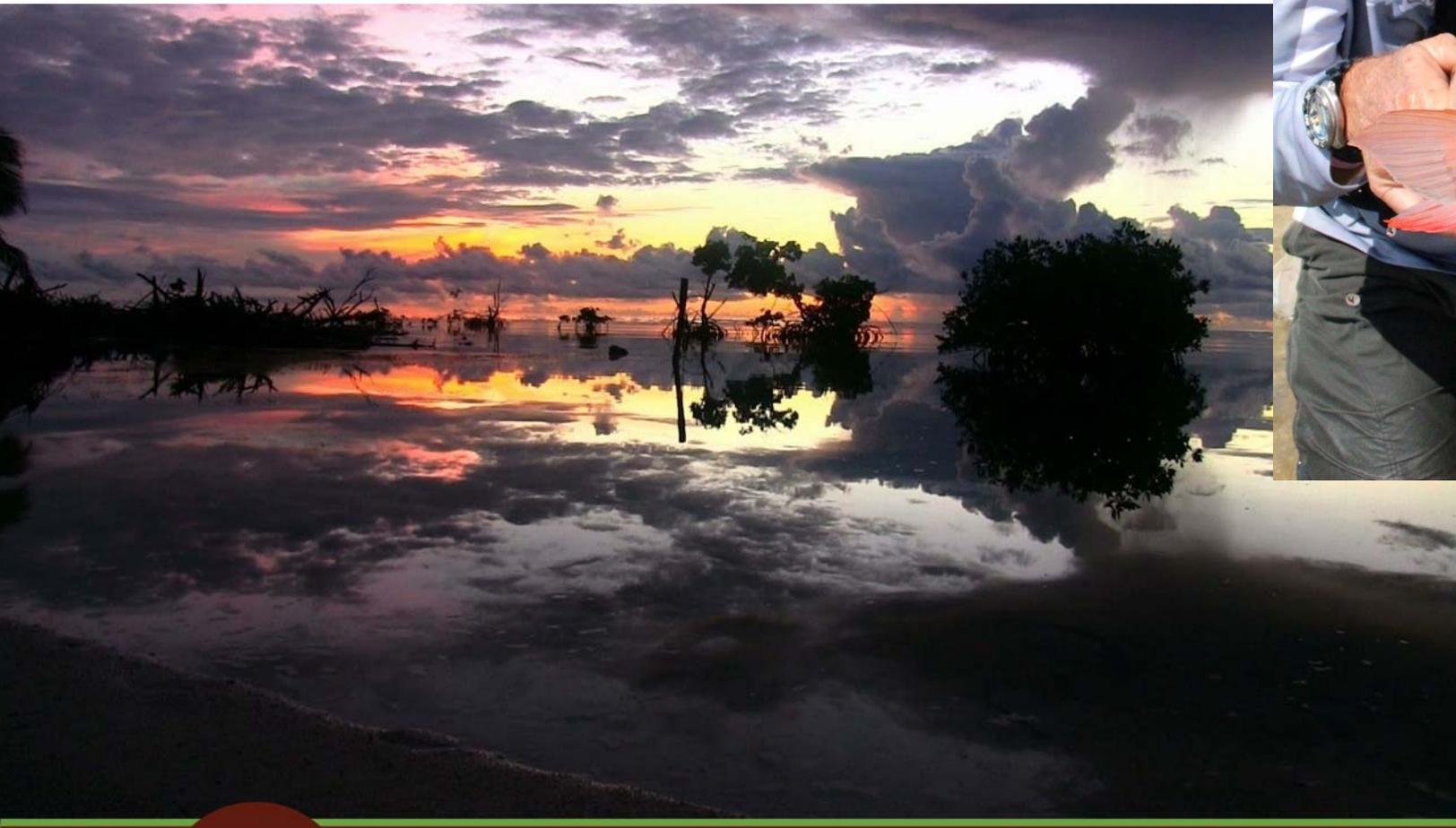
Trapper Rudd Opens Fly Fishing Opportunity on the Mysterious Atoll of Banco Chinchorro

Step back in time and fish untapped waters for Tarpon, Permit, Bonefish, Snook, Jacks, Snapper, Cuda, Tuna, Marlin, Dorado, Sailfish, Wahoo and more.

If you have ever fished the fabled waters of the Mexico's Yucatan, you may have heard colorful stories from locals of a near mythical atoll named Banco Chinchorro. The stories of piracy, shipwrecks, smuggling are all true. So are the modern tales of forty pound permit patrolling the flats, the testimonials of tarpon, massive cuber snapper and snook trapped in brackish lagoons, as well as colossal schools of bonefish that are literally stacked one on top of the other like cord wood. These yarns are also true. After a laborious ten year effort to secure access to this remote atoll, the effort came to fruition.

In November of 2013, just a few months back, I finally received permission from Mexican authorities to explore the roughly six hundred square miles of the atoll. Banco Chinchorro is well known to the mainland local lobster fisherman in the area. It is only lesser known to some savvy scuba-divers on holiday and infrequently visiting wildlife researchers. However, permission to sport fish the area was nearly unheard of. Until now. A major coup has recently been counted.

My great friend, porter, Sherpa and cameraman, Dennis "The Fury" Nied, the Mexican crew and I disembarked the small village of Mahaual and traversed the water offshore to the atoll. Loaded with a staggering additional 800 liters of fuel in barrels, our thirty-four foot panga looked more like a Latin "conga drum band" setting off for some lunch gig for tourists. The panga was also loaded with coolers of ice, food, beverages, an inflatable paddle board and four hundred pounds of fishing,



survival and video gear. I kept thinking if we were to capsize on the trip over to the atoll, our debris field could easily be seen from the International Space Station.



Banco Chinchorro atoll is roughly twenty miles from the mainland of the Yucatan. After crossing the deep water we arrived at the barrier reef and tenuously threaded our way through the submerged coral heads which fringe and comprise the entire atoll. A relatively easy task in daylight, however, we were attempting a (not recommended) “night landing” after departing the dock in Mahahual late, due to last minute supply runs. Our head lamps and search lights kept us on the correct

course until we reached our base camp at Cayo Centro. Cayo Centro, as the name implies, is a small key in the middle of the atoll itself. Once inside the barrier reef, the entire 600 square miles is tranquil water with an average depth of around ten feet. Perfect for searching for large schools of game fish and the perfect habitat for an abundance of lobster, conch and

exotic seafood. It was a feeling of being inside the world’s largest bathtub. Two smaller keys on the north and south ends of the atoll would also provide superb fish-hunting grounds.

The crew and I stowed our gear in a modest “lobster shack” fashioned from plywood and elevated on slender stilts. No electricity, no running water, no internet, perfect. A small cluster of shacks also rest over the shallow water in the bay. We nicknamed this cluster of shacks, Venice.

The exploration began the following morning as we set off to circumnavigate the amoeba-shaped key, search the flats and gather our bearings for potential fishing spots. The curious amounts of resident salt water crocodiles were the main distraction from my normal search routines. Peregrine falcons, vibrant red summer tanagers and a dizzying array of wading birds also provided distraction from the fish reconnaissance. It was no wonder that this remote destination has biosphere reserve status and national park status as well. The variety of flora and fauna is tremendous. I felt secure with the notion that Darwin would have drooled a wee bit at my being here.

Being very superstitious when it comes to my fishing regimen and protocols, I am overly cautious not to jinx myself or taunt the fishing gods when I say, “The fishing was easy”. It was. (I just swallowed the lump in my throat)

Almost immediately we began sight casting to a massive school of bonefish. A school so relaxed that I speculated they must be pet fish. In short order I realized they had just never seen a fly presented to them.

We began clipping small triangular fin samples from the bonefish dorsal fins to send to the Bonefish Tarpon Trust for DNA analysis to assist with their research data base on this iconic species. The vials of DNA samples filled quickly. The Barracuda were ubiquitous. This was important as they provided the staple “cud ceviche” we would ravenously consume for many meals coupled with fresh lobster or snapper cooked with coconut milk over an open fire. Chefs in New York City could only admire and envy the skill and taste of our nightly fare deftly prepared by our native crew.



Subsequent days also provided a vast array of angling opportunities and a colorful palette of fish. While the flats were uber productive, the inner lagoons were a virtual labyrinth of opportunity. Baby and mid-sized tarpon provided days of aerial acrobatics and eagerly inhaled our flies or surface lures. The rod-breaking power of mulatto snapper was stupefying. Snook with golden hues from the tannic, brackish water were stunning and cooperative. The salt water crocodiles were curious, yet timid enough for us to fish without much concern. Permit would ride in with the tide looking for camouflaged crabs in the turtle grass or sandy bottom. Inquisitive frigate birds would often swoop down and size up our catches. Their attempted thievery was often rewarded. Outside the reef in the very blue water only a few minutes away from base camp, nearly every pelagic species

one could imagine are waiting. And wait they must. We simply ran out of time with so much left to explore on the inside of the atoll.

After two weeks of fishing exploration, copious scribbling in journals, video downloading, sunburns, obscenely fresh fish (both on the line and on a plate), laughter and isolation, a pure image emerges. Not some postcard image of a tropical sunset and palm trees, but a collage of a destination that is a truly magical place. A throw back in time. A time when angling was pure, unknown, uncrowded, unpretentious, non-combative and unpressured. A place where one must roll with the vagaries of nature and machine. Logistics are thrown to the wind. Patience and a willing suspension of disbelief become the mantras you inwardly whisper.

Trapper Rudd has a very few select weeks for anglers to visit



and fish at Banco Chinchorro. For more information contact Trapper via his email: trapper@sportinglifetravel.com Check out Trap's video chronicle of this extraordinary trip to Banco Chinchorro on YouTube.



About the Author

Trapper Rudd is a global adventure angler. His exploits on the water have covered every continent on the planet, save Antarctica. Trapper is regularly featured on television fishing programs as a DIY maverick with the uncanny ability to find fish in often remote locations. Trap is also the President of Sporting Life Adventure Travel Company, a company that specializes in destination angling travel. Trapper resides in Naples, Florida, but foreign adventure often keeps his itinerary filled. It is rumored that Trap has a micro-GPS implanted in his neck so his family can find him. Trapper can be reached via his email, trapper@sportinglifetravel.com

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WHERE
THE
FIRST
TWEET
WAS
POSTED.

GET REAL. GET OUTSIDE.



“Summer Storm” - Oil on Panel 14”x19 by Adriano Manocchia

“One of my favorite destinations to gather material for my paintings has always been Yellowstone National Park. It is a place where the illusion of untouched wilderness is still present if you can ignore the several hundred thousand tourists swarming around you. It is however when I hike the less popular trails, cross small clear streams, and wait for the passage of a herd of elk or buffalo that I can truly get in touch with its unspoiled beauty. For me those are precious moments of a deep spiritual experience

The challenging part however is getting there from the East coast. Given the opportunity, we much prefer driving cross-country since it gives us a chance of visiting other interesting sites along the way and meeting some remarkable people. After the traffic and chaos of the more urban areas that really don't let up until we pass Chicago, the long straight roads flanked by cornfield after cornfield seem endless in their sameness. It is however only when we cross the state line into South Dakota that a sense of anticipation takes hold of us because we know that Yellowstone is now within our reach. I can still savor the exhilaration of those moments...

On one particular trip a very good fishing buddy decided to join us and since he was willing to share the driving with my wife and I, we were especially looking forward to the journey. As usual, we started feeling our excitement build as we approached the Dakotas and were truly enjoying viewing the late afternoon light that spread over the plains. The slightly undulating terrain stretched for miles giving way on the horizon to a sky that was getting more vast and open as we approached our destination. It was then that we noticed that the sky was turning a peculiar shade of purple and the shadows getting unusually deep for this time of day. We looked behind us and saw a storm approaching with an intensity and power that bewildered us. The beginning of a twister was evident in the far distance. It was exhilarating and humbling at the same time.



Adriano Manocchia '09

We stopped on the side of the road to view this phenomenon and could already feel the electricity in the air. I started taking photo after photo wanting to capture that exact moment already indelibly etched in my mind. We even dared to drive closer to the storm, adrenaline pumping, and all senses on alert. I was fascinated and attracted by the forces of nature at work, and at the same time, also intimidated. We jumped back in the car with my wife at the wheel so that my friend and I could continue recording these moments on camera. I was sure we could get a little closer without getting in the path of the storm. We started moving toward the storm once more until with a perfect u-turn on the now totally empty road my wife drove off in the opposite direction flooring the accelerator. I was incensed by Teresa's mutiny and started to ask her to turn back immediately when I felt the wind rising all around us and huge drops of rain starting their drumming sound on our car. I turned my head and the spectacle that greeted me was certainly not a reassuring one. Lighting had started to crash from the sky while thunders were chasing us with their rumbles. I knew it would be useless to insist for a closer look. In all truth, bravado aside, I started to realize that putting a little distance between us and the storm wasn't such a bad idea. In any case I knew that my wife wouldn't have listened to me anyway and she had the wheel...

Back at the studio, months later, I came across the photos of that day on the plains and all those emotions came flooding back. I started sketching a composition. I wanted to emphasize that contrast between the peacefulness of the day and the ominous forces of the storm as I had experienced them that day. In "Summer Storm" the dark clouds are just beginning to hover on the otherwise peaceful landscape of a late summer afternoon while the violence of the storm is still far off in the distance. It is that quiet moment before the storm, a moment that captured my mind and my innermost emotions. "

Adriano Manocchia, Official Conservation Artist of ISC-Audubon




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LA Dodgers Stadium is Certified—Becomes First Ever Major League Baseball Stadium to Become ISC-Audubon Certified!

I grew up thinking that native plants were boring, and honestly, ugly. And who wouldn't, when you live in Southern California and can grow almost anything all year long. I continue to be amazed when I make winter visits to family and friends in LA to see the lush green landscape, oranges and lemons on trees and soft, luxurious grass. I am even more amazed when I visit in the summer and see the same vibrant landscape in what is supposed to be a desert.

I have now lived in Kentucky longer than I lived in Los Angeles, and have grown to love, appreciate and actually be a bit snobby about native plants. Our options in my area include beautiful prairie grasses, woodland orchids and amazing flowering bushes. When designed well, your backyard can be in full bloom from April through October, with almost no maintenance.

But desert areas are different, or so I thought. As a staunch environmentalist, I tried to convince my sister to pull out her sprinklers, rose bushes and lemon tree and move toward ice plant and yuccas – the only southern California native plants I knew, in hopes of saving precious western water. She was not convinced.

However, it turns out that I am wrong about California natives – very wrong.

Thanks to the ISC-Audubon Certification program, I became aware of the incredible work being done at Dodger Stadium – a stone’s throw from my childhood home. Since 2009, Chaz Perea, the Dodger’s Landscape Manager, has been working to not only save water and be more environmentally responsible he is also showing the Dodger fans how beautiful desert plants can be.

Chaz learned about landscape design at Mt. San Antonio College and worked as a landscaper before being hired with the Dodgers. He is a certified tree expert with the International Society of Arborists, the first to hold this certification throughout Major League Baseball. He was hired with the Dodgers as their first landscape manager, and had his work cut out for him.

If you have ever been to Dodger Stadium, or seen it on TV, you are probably aware that it is one of the most beautiful stadiums in the League. I may be a bit biased since I grew up so close to the stadium. I could hear the crowd cheering after each home run, and felt that Elysian Park was my backyard. You are probably also aware that, other than parking lots, there is not one flat area throughout the entire grounds. This provided Chaz a unique opportunity to use the succulents and other drought-tolerant plants to his advantage.

The terrain and the terraces presented an unusual problem for landscaping – mostly for irrigation. Before Perea was hired, landscape crews would spend hours watering the plants by hand since there was no irrigation system in place. He

wanted to find a way to have beauty without the extreme water usage. The answer is succulents, native to the southwestern US, and amazingly these can be beautiful!

Chaz works with “practical selection” of the plants he uses throughout the stadium. This is his phrase used to describe the trial and error process he and his staff of four use to pick species that will not only work in the climate, but also be appropriate for the hilly terrain and the unique “champagne bowl” planters scattered throughout the property.



Chaz has converted a largely unused area of the grounds to create his own greenhouse. Here he starts new young plants and also uses cuttings from plants throughout the property to grow more of the same. The greenhouse allows him to expand what works for the area, as well as experiment with a wide variety of new plants.

His hard work has paid off.



Taking a tour of Dodger Stadium is an amazing sight. Chaz and his crew have managed to make “boring” succulents into vibrant color and texture gardens. He has even been able to find native plants that grow in Dodger blue and white to promote his team.

Water use changes are hard to quantify according to Chaz, because the water bills are shared with the stadium, but he has still noticed a significant difference. His crew spends 60% LESS time watering than before the succulent/native redesign, and his fertilizer costs have been significantly reduced.

The most exciting part of the landscape renovation, in my mind, is the education component. Chaz told me that not only is information included in the printed game programs, but there is also a video that is played on the big screen during home games. In my opinion, doing the environmentally right thing is extremely important, but its impact can grow exponentially when shared with others – especially when you are the LA Dodgers!

In the fall of 2013, Dodger Stadium became certified as an ISC-Audubon Platinum member because of the work and vision of Chaz Perea. Chaz admitted that the 10 step process of certification was helpful in keeping him on track, and helped him plan his goals. Chaz has attributed his success in

certification generally to three steps: horticultural science, practical experience and networking. These are not only steps to getting certified through ISC-Audubon, but also to creating a successful, low maintenance, native landscape.

I am extremely proud of my home team for being a leader in sustainable landscaping, and hope that sports facilities throughout the nation follow suit. Now, if I can only get my sister on board...

Amy Sohner is the Executive Director of Bluegrass Greensource, a nonprofit environmental education organization serving Central Kentucky. She is a Certified Environmental Educator and a board member of: Bluegrass Tomorrow, Women Leading Kentucky, Keep Lexington Beautiful and Empower Lexington. Her hobbies used to include camping, hiking, making stained glass and viewing the Kentucky River palisades from her deck, but now you will usually find her running after her two young daughters: Audrey, 7 and Eleanor 1 ½.

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“What’s That Racket?” Birding Made Easy For Beginners

I never thought that differentiating birds was an easy task and was for a long time remain that, a

content to allow their voices to foreign to my ears. It was just racket of different voices that seemed muddled beyond repair, the very sound of nature in all its plenitude.

As a child growing up in New York State’s Champlain Valley, I can recall the bleary-eyed vexation of my

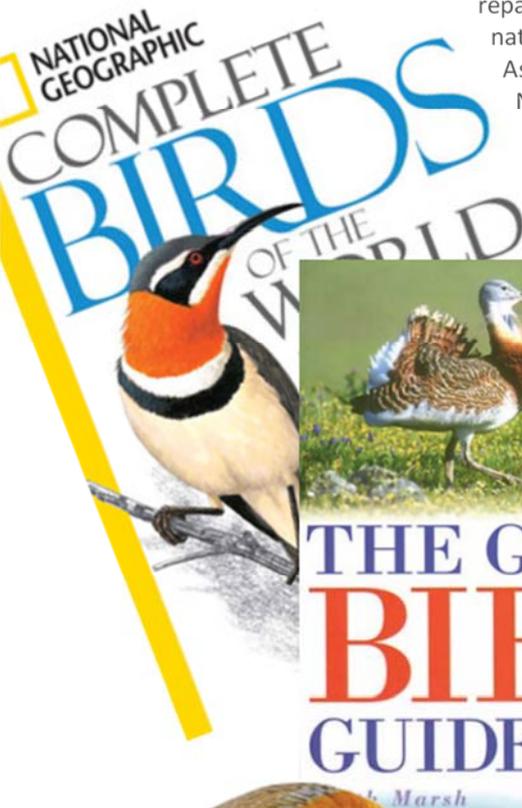
parents who, upon hearing the Mourning Doves for the first time in Spring, would set about decrying the dreadful “hooter” (as they knew it) for having robbed them of precious sleep. They were not birders as evidenced by their lack of taxonomic precision and probably because of that, it has taken me a long time to appreciate song birds as the individual minstrels that they are.

But even an avian philistine such as myself can come to the light eventually. It took me a good number of years to see the forest for its birds but the reality is that it isn’t difficult. Few more oblivious people have blundered into a wooded setting and yet even early on in my recent initiation, I began to see familiar faces and hear familiar songs. I have not gained this ability through hours of study with weighty ornithological textbooks. Only through walks in the woods and a few pointers from a more experienced birder did I come to discern the uniqueness of movement and sound among birds.

My greatest satisfaction this winter came from learning the song of the chickadee, aptly named since it sings “chicka-dee-dee”. As the winter waned, the chickadees switched their song to a single descending note reminiscent of the Colonel Bogey March but more melancholy than chipper. The Kinglets, Titmice, and Nuthatches that populate the woods near Falmouth also chimed in to express their indignation with the weather.

Now that the weather has warmed, other birds have joined the chorus. The red-winged blackbird is a frequent denizen of the *Phragmites* patches that lie along the beach. They sit in the reeds and buzz at each other. Wallace Stevens might say there are thirteen ways of viewing them but there’s an infinite number of ways to listen to their trill. Cardinals as well have a unique voice that can seem at times like someone doing an impression of a car alarm. My descriptions, while far from scientific in nature, have some onomatopoeic value when it comes to contextualizing their songs. Sometimes the intentional association with noises *not* made by birds can lodge them more permanently in the ear’s memory.

There are a few important points that can expedite your transformation from zero to birder in short order:



Go outside. It may seem obvious that birds are outdoors, but that is the first step in seeing birds. Take ten minutes to quietly sit out on your porch, without distraction from computer or smart phone. As you watch your yard, what birds do you see? How are they shaped? Do they have long or short beaks? Are they crested? How do they walk?

Get a good guide book such as the Sibley Guide to North American Birds that uses illustrations and provides a very handy database of life, breeding, and migratory information. Drawings enjoy an advantage over photos since they depict birds in neutral settings and are not subject to variations in light as often happens with photographs.

Use a pair of quality binoculars that can be carried comfortably and allow you to see birds up close. They don't need the power of the Hubble telescope to be effective. A lightweight pair of Nikon Aculon binoculars will serve well. It can be challenging to spot a bird and then train binoculars on it. However, by training your eyes on a specific branch and simultaneously raising your binoculars (without moving your eyes), this can place the bird you were just viewing directly in your line of sight. It takes practice but the reward of seeing plumage up close is well worth the effort.

Finally, once you've retired back to the house to ponder your afternoon in the woods, be sure to **check out birding websites such as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.** As a free resource, it can lead you to the mystery bird whose call or feathers may have avoided your identification outdoors.

To the aphorism that says: a person who is friends with the birds is never in want of company, I must agree that there is an element of truth. They are our companions whether in

the woods or at the porch feeder and their presence can often be an intrusion of beauty in what would otherwise be a dreary day. Their songs may sound the same now but if you listen closely as you would with human friends, they all have unique stories to tell. They will be glad to share them with you.



Changing the World, One Frog Pond at a Time!

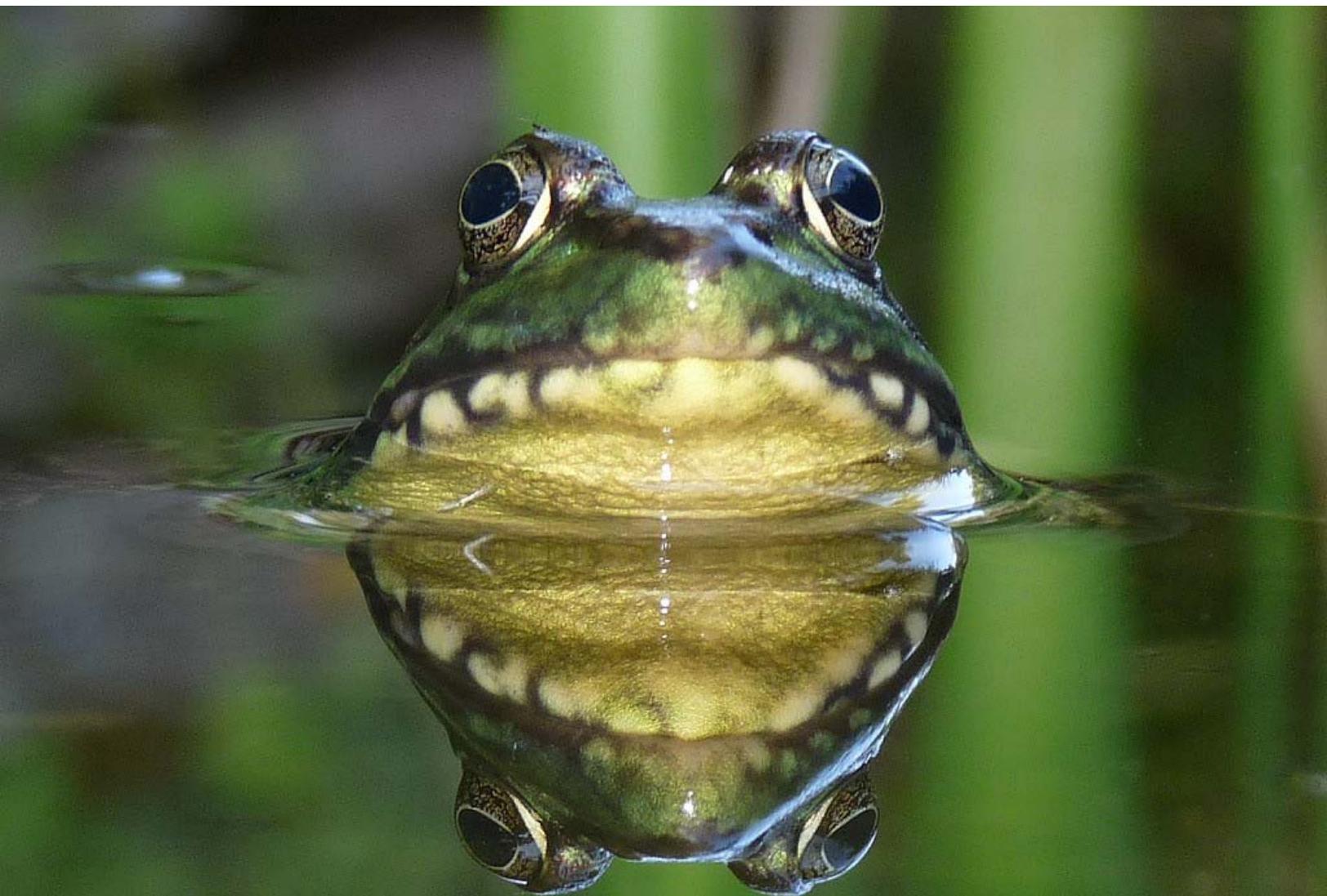
We've made eleven interstate moves in our 42 married years: we came *home* last June to a place we'd never lived before. We moved to Keene, NH where I now serve as President, Antioch University New England, an institution that focuses to a significant degree on natural resources and sustainability, my disciplinary roots.

Sure, we've bloomed wherever we were planted, but this feels different – special. As a forester, for me nothing beats living in the country's most heavily forested state. Our four acres of heaven-on-Earth encompass several hundred feet of New England stone walls running through the dense second growth that reclaimed land cleared 200 years earlier

by intrepid Europeans intent upon taming the land. When more fertile ground beckoned from the Ohio Valley and beyond, walled-in pasture yielded to inexorable succession – brush to forest. The walls now border and interweave among seeming ceaseless forest, stretching from one abandoned homestead to thousands more.

And our 1770 home survives, since dis-mantled beam by beam in 1993, and reassembled a quarter mile north of where it graced the hillside for two centuries. Since late June last year, we've watched summer peak and ebb, fall gain footing, flourish, and fade, and winter grab tight and build a 30-inch snowpack. In fact, winter held sway over our entire four-acre domain. Except for one 12x15 foot element of resistance, a spot on the landscape that refused to yield to the icy grip! I'll explain below.

Our home sits forty vertical feet above our Township road,



with mowed grass and beds sloping east to the thirty foot wide forest edge bordering it. We've honed our landscaping attack plan over our multiple moves, and began an aggressive campaign immediately. Three intended stages before the snow flew. First, we're not big on grass; convert as much grass to perennial and shrub beds as we could manage. Second, include a dry-stack stone wall or two to terrace and highlight. Third, eliminate the invasive buckthorn that had captured a 15-30 foot swath of clearing along most of the south and west sides, steadily encroaching and blocking our view into the forest. Each task warrants a separate blog; for another time!

The Fourth Project

Beyond the small (yet year-round) stream that runs diagonally across our forest and then along our driveway, we cleared the thickest of the buckthorn. I stumbled into (and then avoided) a depression filled to the brim with water-laden organic debris, looking at the surface to be a flat spot of leaf-covered forest floor. Instead, the leaves yielded to decades of muck as deep in the center as 18 inches. Frogs claimed the entire stream length, and I noticed many more at the depression, leaping into the muck when disturbed.

Why a eutrophic *pond* (well, it's too big and permanent to be a puddle or vernal pool) just 20 feet beyond our stream, and a couple feet higher? Time for a little ecologic and geomorphic sleuthing. My long-ago doctoral research evaluated soil-site relationships in the Allegheny hardwood forests of NW PA and SW NY, an area typified by *pit and mound* topography. What's *that* you ask? Imagine a large tree buffeted by winds, toppling over, roots ripping from the earth, pulling a large volume of soil along with them, creating a *pit* where the soil lifted. Eventually, the wood (root, trunk, branches) decays, leaving only the evacuated pit and the elongate (axis perpendicular to the direction of fall) mound of soil. Creating our pond, a three foot high mound (the direction of fall paralleling the stream) supports beech, maple, and hemlock up to ten inches in diameter. The fallen giant has long since decayed.

The puzzle: why does this particular pit hold water, year-round? I decided to answer that question and at the same time determine whether I could convert the muck-hole to standing water, and enhance my amphibian friends' haven.

So the mucking began. I made the task initially tougher than needed. I shoveled the water-laden organic debris (talk about heavy!) into five-gallon buckets, and then carried them to add richness to a new terraced bed more than 100 feet away. Dozens of buckets later, struggling *in* and *with* the muck, I shifted to shoveling to the edges. Throughout the three-weekend project, frogs began to show in greater numbers. As muck yielded to very muddy water, clear water began gurgling from the upslope side, seeming to bubble from the ground. The next morning's visit showed crystal clear. Frogs hopped in as I approached, sometimes a dozen or more. And then I began seeing a salamander or two on the silt-covered bottom. My efforts ceased about then and fall weather dissuaded the frogs from venturing into the uninviting air. I thought, now winter will freeze the surface and protect my amphibious friends from winter's fury.

Okay, now another mystery. The coldest winter in decades, and still our pond supports no ice. Our stream froze over in late December, its voice silent beneath the deep snow and ice. We're not in a true thermal groundwater zone. The recharge I witnessed while mucking does not appear rapid enough to resist freezing, even if the flow is artesian and much warmer than my stream's surface water. We'll solve this one another day.

We're eager for the ultimate response to mucking – will we have created an amphibian nursery? What does the spring hold for them and us? I'll keep you posted. Meantime, reflect with me on whether you are taking real and palpable sustainability steps to make a difference during your own journey through life.

Louis Bromfield, author of **Pleasant Valley** (1945), speaks of his lifelong efforts to restore a worn-out Ohio farm he purchased in the mid-1930s:

“The land came to us out of eternity and when the youngest of us associated with it dies, it will still be here. The best we can hope to do is to leave the mark of our fleeting existence upon it, to die knowing we have changed a small corner of this earth for the better by wisdom, knowledge and hard work...”

I'm convinced we can change the world via even small actions, perhaps one frog pool at a time!



Home Office Energy Conservation Tips

Selecting energy-efficient office equipment and turning off machines when they are not in use can result in significant energy savings.

Using an ENERGY STAR-labeled computer can save 30%-65% energy than computers without this designation, depending on usage.

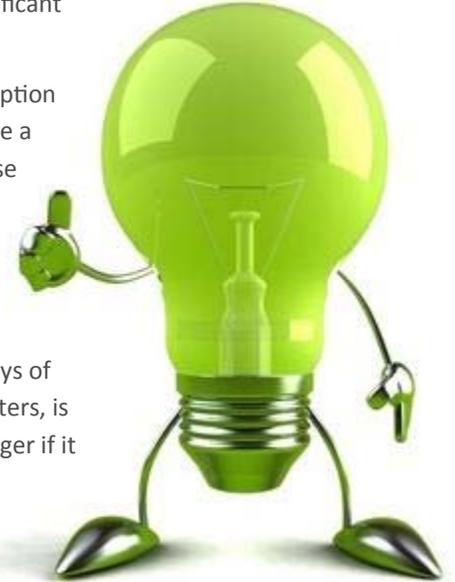
Spending a large portion of time in low-power mode not only saves energy but helps equipment run cooler and last longer.

Putting your laptop AC adapter on a power strip that can be turned off (or will turn off automatically) can maximize savings; the transformer in the AC adapter draws power continuously, even when the laptop is not plugged into the adapter.

Using the power management settings on computers and monitors can cause significant savings.

It is a common misperception that screen savers reduce a monitor's energy use. Use automatic switching to sleep mode or simply turn it off.

Another misperception, carried over from the days of older mainframe computers, is that equipment lasts longer if it is never turned off




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Get efficient. The newest, most-efficient washers use four times less energy than the least-efficient machines, and save up to \$70 a year in energy costs.

Don't overheat. Lowering your water heater's temperature to 120 will suffice for most household needs and cut energy costs.

Get loaded. It takes less energy to do one big load than two smaller ones. But don't overload the machine or nothing will get clean.

Go with the flow. Check your dryer's outside vent. Make sure it is clean and closes properly, or it could allow cold air into your house.

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