

**Earth Journalers: Most of the following journal entries were written during a time when they were received by classrooms, by subscription, so the comments after the entries are more directly intended for teachers and for those learning to do Earth Journaling.**

**I want you to read all 54 entries, mostly for the comments, which make little sense without the poem.**

**1) 11.16.2000**

**Yesterday at ten degrees  
ice ascended from my deck  
not by mundane melting and evaporation,  
but by a method more sublime,  
for water is a pilgrim  
that always finds a way.**

**This crystal water suddenly transforms  
from solid state to vapor and lifts  
without a trace into the heavens,,  
invisible and powerful as angels.  
This was named 'sublimation'  
by a science once more devoutly inclined.  
So this ice that just disappeared  
has become sublime.  
So water's very nature is holy.  
It's what life's made of.**

**The mystery of water is very much alive. We simply don't understand much about it, but water is so ever-present that we overlook its mystery. Encourage kids to look at 'ordinary things' sideways, slantwise. Help kids toward the discovery of awe.**

**Entries should be based on personal encounters with nature, but they don't always have to be art. This entry is less a poem than an exposition of ideas. Encourage kids to reflect on ideas in their entries.**

Encourage slow observations of "ordinary, everyday" events. Take a little time, go with the flow . This is hard for kids to perceive as valuable in our society of jump-cut images. Beauty and complex relationships often reveal themselves slowly, blurred at first but coming clearer as you get closer. None of this is news. But kids need continual encouragement to stick with their observations. Tell them that everything on earth, every life, every stone, every drop of rain, has a long story to tell. Your job as an artist/naturalist observer is to find a way to let the thing tell you a little of its story. Or, Your job is to quiet all your busyness and be still long enough to hear a little of the story the other is telling you.

The other night Earth's root stuff  
fell down on us, pretending to be fluff.

2.) **We all have more inside us than we know. Writing is a fine way to discover some of what we know that we didn't know we knew. When you write from nature observation, you find questions more often than answers, and those questions pull us into our existence.**

3) 4.13.2000

In cold high air last morning,  
a rainbow made of crystal ice and light  
played ring around the sun  
a diadem of every color circling gold  
halo without end.  
The disk enclosed was cold and strangely gray  
within the sky-bowl blue.  
In this game of ring the sun  
the rainbow's always open, always closed.

**When we write, we name. Powerful names resonate inside us for hours or days or lifetimes. For example, the name "Ring Around the Sun" bounces all over in my mind, evoking:**

childhood's games; our wide associations with both "ring" and "sun;" **our awe at enormous natural beauty too large for us to emulate. Knowing how words do their work is central to writing.**

4) 5.16.2002

I follow a song out of dream, exchange  
for reverie the voice of a small bird  
whose solo lifts awake the earth.  
Intricate and elegant, each phrase as  
certain as the sun--  
this song could not be other--  
while part of my delight pictures  
small feathered heads cocked,  
with me hearing.

**Wakeful attention is the goal, and a bird's song makes it easy when it catches you and carries you in a moment calm and willing. Being willing is the choice and key.**

5) 5.21.2001

In bright sun,  
the indigo bunting  
flashes in,  
lands on a white tulip,  
bends it for a breath  
and flies.

**Be careful when you look up, you may be ambushed by joy. So much takes place in instants.**

6) 5.23.2002

All night the songs of toad and treefrog

trill and soar on wind, punctuated  
by spring peeper males whose throats  
still swell with hope.

Just before dawn two tree swallows  
mate, she stays perched, he  
flutters and hovers above her  
and each time he comes close  
she prettily lifts her tail to greet him.

Beyond them in the pasture  
two black horses roll  
side to side in quickened grass,  
and whicker when they rise.

**These spring nights and wakings fold me into earth and notify  
my deepest self that I am home and have always been.**

7) 7.5.2002

The raw gape of the new-fledged crow  
is the color of dawn sunfire, is  
itself the fire translated  
into feathers black  
fluttered on the wings,  
and loud groans and caws  
from below the great black  
gaping beak open to the maw of red  
that burns so with its hunger.

**Ah, the transformations. Sunlight through air to seed to egg to  
gaping crow, and finally to air again. All is mutable; all  
transforms continually; eating, growing, becoming again and  
again is what being is about.**

8) 7.22.2002

Babies present everywhere.  
Fledgling birds and toadlets  
fresh from summer nest and pool.  
Sudden lines of swallows fill the wires,  
tiny treefrogs on night glass,  
The 9/11 boomlet of our kind,  
that sweeping urge, demand to live again.

Uprooted flowers insists on bloom  
and making seed,  
to hell with roots and leaves.  
Death teaches sap to rise.

We see it and our cells cry Yes! Continuance is all that every life  
demands, more than food, water, more than memory. It is an  
older need each being serves, but none know it until seized.

9) 8.5.2002

A deer cropped the growing tip  
of a Culver's root plant,  
the tip that grows the flower,

so the plant grew six new tops  
in a circle round the scar  
which each became tall flower spires,

so this morning six spires hum  
with bees who fill their legs  
with pollen gold and suck sweets  
from a white multitude of petaled tubes.

**So. The deer satisfied its casual hunger; the plant provided  
sixfold food for bees, and sixfold seeds for itself. The deer  
intended to eat; the plant intended to make more seeds in the  
face of attack; the bees intend to eat, but pollinate as well.**

**Disaster becomes increase. Within an ecosystem, we all help mutually, without intention.**

10) 8.14.2002

I stand below and listen  
to the singer on the wire,  
he lets me stay and hear  
his variations on the themes  
of love and local power.

Plain and small, he is a native sparrow,  
but his double-voiced trill is ornate.  
His openings are hoarse,  
he likes to end with rasps,  
but between pours out his beak  
melodies without repeat  
on the eternal themes  
of love and local power.

**Yet this little bird's willingness to let me stay and hear him sing  
welcomes me, enlarges me, and helps me know the true power  
in the life community.**

11)3.4.2003

I watch a ramshorn snail  
glide up glass on a fat red foot,  
radula scraping for algae.  
Atop the shell, tendrils of green  
wave in the water,  
green riders that under my glass  
become hydra, whose blind tentacles  
wave all about for food.

Inside the hydras' clear flesh live hordes  
of green Chlorella algae  
that under a strong lens  
reveal separate lives that live on light  
within safe flesh, that nourish hydra  
when food will not drift by.

The snail receives naught.  
Hydra receive mobility.  
Chlorella receive light.  
Hydra receive sugars from algae.  
And that's the tale of the ramshorn snail.

Moral: For a free lunch  
find a green symbiote.  
But first, become clear.

**Lives interlive. The root pattern of life is cooperative. We live on  
and within each other. Each of us is the result of symbiosis.**

12) 6.24.2003

Miles off in starless sky,  
fortress clouds begin to hurl  
water drops high  
and high, cooling, falling,  
hurtling blindly high, falling  
while potential grows  
for hot light to streak sky  
and split it until very air  
claps applause like gods.

Here it's June night.  
Air's dropped dead still.  
Fireflies blink down  
in the grasses and high

in sultry air, light without heat  
that must find applause  
in the chemistry of compulsion.

The great engine of Sol drives  
it all, lifechain, mate light, wind  
that carries June night storm that  
rumbles now and blinks whole skies.

Such a strange lush time is now, sprawled green growth  
pushing out seed, myriads of bugs grazing, crowding windows,  
moths blundering in yellow light, thundered downpours. The  
sum is deep, alive and as sweatily compelling as the lure of  
lightning bugs.

13) 6.27.2003

On the lip of the blue petal  
the small crab spider waits.  
It has become the yellow  
of the iris throat,  
yet it waits  
on the lip of the blue petal,  
front legs spread wide  
to embrace the bee and bite,  
hold tight as it weakens,  
and finally feast.  
It does not imagine as it waits  
without thought, without hope,  
boredom, without fatigue.  
It holds its legs straight out  
all the long sun,  
lowers them only to dark.  
Why in day is it yellow on blue  
when two inches down the throat  
it could be invisible to bees,  
who see color as well as we  
who have thought, have hope,

lack patience,  
who fill our minds with "Why?"

**"Monkey curiosity," the shared attribute of primates, is claimed as one reason for our dominance. I suspect that it has as much to do with always being amorous. Emerson, however, claimed, "Were I to hold the truth in my hand, I would let it go for the positive joy of seeking."**

14) 7.1.2003

**Walking**

**Dragonflies zip about  
on wings dazed by spectrum,  
hawk now with faceted eyes  
for everything that flies.**

**Tall cinquefoil blooms in butter,  
orange skipper perched  
closed-wing on top.**

**In the gravel verge,  
birds foot trefoil  
saucy in  
Kandy Korn bloom.**

**The redwing female plucks down  
to soften her nest  
from cattails exploded by time.**

**Life is an art of small remembered moments that, taken together, allow us to go on.**

15) 7.7.2003

Turn over a leaf.  
Doesn't have to be new.  
What will you find?  
A different green,  
the one wind knows.  
Under-veins in light relief,  
Small white cocoons  
where ridged veins join.  
Zoom in, see pores  
that gift you your breath,  
pores that crave  
your exhalation.

**The largest symbiosis on Earth lives under each leaf: exchange of nutrient gases. The stoma (or pores) release water vapor and oxygen, pull in carbon dioxide. A grace filled design.**

16) 7.29.03

How the daisies and wild lettuce  
pop back up and bloom  
after county mowers  
cut them to the ground.  
Tiny wasps, not  
fooled by outer sepals,  
head right for sweet gold centers.

**This sweet determination to flower and seed is strong. We recognize it in ourselves. Mowers happen; we are all cut, but we rise up from the root. We just need pollinators.**

17) 8.4.2003

One daybreak  
a first bird feels

a stirring, opens  
his beak into song.  
Earth perks her ears.  
Small theropods grin,  
lift tails, walk smartly.  
Frogs feel tympana thrum  
sequences never heard.  
Little furies  
poke heads up  
from fernbrake.  
Off in the cycads, the eye  
of the first feathergirl  
gleams.  
Morning is never the same.

The truly amazing thing is that this did happen one time, just as each word we know was once spoken for the first time by one human mouth. So many unknown moments to celebrate. So much inheritance.

18) 8.25.2003

Spotted jewelweed blooms now  
on low ground.  
Orange-lipped blossoms invite  
swift wings to open them.  
When bees and hummingbirds leave,  
carry on beak and leg  
gold pollen to the next  
orange-lipped bloom,  
the blossoms smile, in control.

Yin rules. It seems to take Yang forever to learn that not all dualities are equal.

19) 1.15.2001

The great predator  
bellies down and slinks,  
now, he thinks, invisible,  
toward his chosen prey,  
young and feisty wild turkey toms  
with growing spurs on hard-scaled legs.

The birds outweigh him ten to one  
but when the cat bellies down  
ancient images wake in turkey brains  
and make them fear,  
for through deep time they have been prey,  
and they know hunters belly down and slink,  
so they flap their wings and run away.

All animals have "search images" wired in that tell us what to fear. So turkeys have no choice but to fear a housecat when it slinks. But we humans learn additional search images that are not hard-wired. Racist images are of this kind. But perhaps alone among our cousins, we have the gift of choice. We do not have to act like turkeys.

20) 1.29.2001

Perched close by today is owl,  
who waits for breakfast to appear,  
and mutters under the hook of his beak  
the owl's song of songs:

"To find the All,  
Search out the small."

And quietly flies to eat it.

Owl's song says more simply the old Roman adage *Multum in Parvo*, or Much in Little. Knowledge of the large proceeds from intimacy with the small. See the universe in a grain of sand, a lifetime in a flower. General principles are revealed by close attention to the details of experience. This is as true in science as in art: the theory of evolution flowed from the beaks of small birds.

21) 3.5.2001

Now squirrels bite holes in the bark  
of the sap-sprung trunks of trees  
to lick the first sweetness of the spring.  
Sap wets black the bark below the bite

While woodpeckers come to touch the sap  
with wiry tongues, again, again, a month before  
true sapsuckers travel through  
to hammer their own taps  
to suck sweet sap to fuel their flight.

All these events of renewal shape this turning of the season  
circle. **Encourage kids to discover that when you are attentive  
to the earth's renewals, you yourself become renewed.**

22) 3.27.2001

I watch a white horse  
trying to roll on snow.  
Once down on his side  
legs stretched out,  
he twists black hooves high to roll  
but his rump will not follow

so back he falls, legs flailed.  
Up fly black hooves but again  
falls back, but third time  
is the charm and over  
he finally rolls and just to ice the cake  
rolls twice again on stubborn snow.

This horse's struggle connected him to me. It was a "been there, done that" moment. A small thing, of no apparent importance, yet afterwards I am connected with this other life. He made me feel better about my own foolish flesh. He said to me, "We are not so different." **Encourage kids to be aware that moments of empathy with other lives creates changes inside themselves.**

23) 3.29.2001

Crow clan calls back and forth all day,  
Caw what seem the same caws, but really say  
*Hey, hey, hey, I'm right here; We're over here;*  
*Now I fly, Where are you?; Let's meet and greet;*  
*Hey hey hey:* talk that knits the fabric of the clan.

When we were kids we rang the night  
with our best Tarzan calls.

**Encourage kids to discover the connections; they are always there. Connections make the rest of earth life personal, and that's the key.**

24) 4.3.2001

Watched sun break open sky  
half-horizon wide,  
watched vermilion shout itself to light.

Heard songbirds this dawn cry,

heard paired geese urgent fly  
to shallow snowmelt ponds in fields  
to bob unfolding tips of green

so when the egg cracks wide  
strong gosling blinks into beckon-sky  
beyond the mother's eye.

**Being is becoming. Continual transformation is life's essence.  
We are processes. Buckminster Fuller said, "I seem to be a  
verb."**

25) 4.5.2001

Phoebe has returned, but  
no open water moves upon the pond,  
not a flying bug in sight  
so phoebe sits in a morning tree  
flicks his tail up and down,  
up and down, flies to  
the mud he'll use for nest, flies back  
and gleams his eye at me.

Tip: Be aware of continuities in the lives around you. This  
phoebe hatched out in the mud and moss nest that is rebuilt  
every year in our screen house eaves. **Continuity creates family.**

26) 4.10.2001

Pileated woodpecker strokes his beak  
on the bark of a young maple,  
switching sides of beak and tree,  
draws his chisel down the bark as if  
to strop the tool that stokes his fires.

Far above, a pair of vultures soar  
on black unmoving wings

against a gray lit sky,  
nostrils open for the scent of death.  
Within this spring, vultures  
seem the wings of paradox.

**Earth continually reminds us that death begets life, that the yin and yang require each other, that complementary opposites do not oppose.** I was struck by the sharp beaks of this spring morning. I was struck by the beauty of these vultures soaring. Encourage kids to see the twin realities.

27) 4.11.2001

I walk out the door  
and great wings sudden me, so large  
they shadow me and spook  
the purple finches glowing feeders.  
Beating on into the marsh is sandhill crane,  
so low his wings stir willow brush,  
while I soar high  
that such deep wings still sweep our sky.

C.S. Lewis invented a great phrase, "surprised by joy," which perfectly expresses what wakeful awareness of earth's gifts offers journalers. **These sudden moments when the heart shouts "Yes!" make all the rest worthwhile. The pre-requisite to being surprised by joy is the willingness to be surprised.**

28) 4.17.2001

The ring-necked pheasant turns his head into a glory  
just before sunfall as the last light rays,  
he displays the crimson velvet that  
surrounds his eyes, expands the textured skin  
until it burns against a bitter wind,  
until it blazes on a ground of iridescent green,  
until I know I feed a bird of paradise.

The capacity of earth to amaze has no end. Every moment carries new delight if you stay open and awake. And that's the rub. In our society we survive by disconnecting our senses. To reconnect them when we choose is a survival skill. It can be practised. More, it can become a Practice. Questions: What gifts do you refuse without knowing they are offered? What do you need?

29) 4.24.2001

I watch the big drops after rain  
coalesce from twig and branch  
until full enough to fall into  
reflecting pools that were lately clouds.

I hear the big drops after rain  
plop into concentric ripple rings and  
look quick at the center  
to see what made the splash  
and there's nothing there but water—  
so at the circle's center  
everything is there.

.....

What if rain could reminisce about  
all the places, all the beings, it has been?

Ninety percent of my brain, I'm told, is rain  
that's cycled earth a billion times,  
time to flow down every river, every vein,  
time to rest in glaciers, time to think in brains.

**What if rain could reminisce? It can.**

Water is the genesis of most creation myths, the source of life. We think of primordial seas and amnions. **Land animals and plants from a Gaian perspective are salty water cleverly self-packaged with bone and lignin so they can stay upright. No question we are wet squelchy beings for true, but how slippery is enough?**

30) 4.26.2001

Maple flowers are in full red hue and cry.  
Around them feeding insects fly.  
Warblers bright in black and gold  
drop in from the hungry sky  
and pounce upon the feeding flies.

So if by spring you would be fed,  
by flowers be you led.  
But this sword, it seems,  
is keen and double-edged.

**Interliving and co-evolution are marvels. Migrating warblers time their flights so that insects are available for fuel. Maples time their flowers to open when early insects are available to pollinate. These flies time their spring waking to the availability of maple flowers to feed from. Consider: These myrtle warblers, these two or three species of flies, these red maples have all been dancing in these co-evolved circles for millions of years. (Migrations don't last long; plenty of flies survive.) The communities of life are all cooperatives. How did all this evolve? Reciprocally, bit by bit. Was it the chicken or the egg?**

If you really want to explore co-evolution, ask yourself how it is that in temperate climates, hundreds of kinds of berries and fruits ripen only in the Fall, just when birds are migrating.

31) 4.30.2001

The trees are (swift as fire) on flower,

catkins dangle green and gold, oaks  
blush red, plums in white, all abrupt  
as the blush and bloom of puberty.  
What magics push through stems  
these sudden blooms  
and the greening ears of leaves?

Suppose it is spring choirs:  
the primal nightsong of the frogs,  
the firstlight chorus of the birds?  
Say it's so. Say the birds release the trees  
while frogsong greens the beings close to soil,  
old liverwort, mosses tossing sporecaps,  
berry bushes, lily thrust.

The choirs are fully throated now,  
in that brief time when dawnbright birds  
overlap the nightsong of the frogs,  
and all turns green and flowering,  
and children almost know their beauty. Say  
everything is fueled by these old harmonies.

**Everything is connected. Our notions of causality are narrow and inadequate. In the Newtonian universe, causes are mechanical and clear, but explanations easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. But we don't live there anymore. In backalong, poets told stories that discovered cause in harmonies. Leafgreen, spring flowers, and puberty are always coeval mythically and metaphorically.**

**But suppose causality is beside the point? Suppose that the is-ness of things is central, that the flow of life and the nature of our participation in that flow is what matters?**

32) 5.11.2001

Cats on windowsills

chatter at the orioles on oranges  
in voices piteous and plaintive  
as carnivores can find.  
Three tails lash intent.  
But they brim so with bird!

The other hunters are so nourished by the moment, so  
incredibly within the present—they show us a wholeness that  
we probably lost the moment we conceived of time. Our envy  
is sadness-tinged, for each of us repeats our species' journey  
into consciousness as we grow past childhood. But we do find  
joy in the almost memory of being so complete. Encourage kids  
to look for themselves within their cats or dogs.

33) 5.21.2001

So many mosquitoes out the window,  
a cloud, a mist of hummers out to use my blood  
to make more of themselves.  
The numbers stagger me.  
Life's fecundity scares me, always has.

The pulsing maggots when as a child  
I turned the robin carcass when it moved.  
The year the army worms ate the forest—  
when they crossed a busy road  
it was green and slick for miles; when they turned  
to moths they were so thick at streetlights  
shovels scooped them into trucks.  
Locust swarms, the dry rasp of a billion  
mandibles chewing.  
The time in Chile I watched a line of cormorants  
fly south dawn to sunfall.

This exuberance, this swarming  
is disquieting. It makes me wonder

how we became a swarm.

Nothing goes to waste; every life is recycled, every robin, every dried forlorn mosquito, each cormorant, each of us. All lives are food, and chained in food. Without mosquitoes, no little fish; without little fish, no big fish; and so on. **All lives belong to one community, and it is the community that eats the swarms. Give that some thinking.**

34) 3.23.2000

Two mallards arrow down  
upon the mirror pond,  
the water rolls the arrow-wake  
in liquid silver for a moment,  
smoothes reflected birches.  
Ice is three days gone,  
and six feet under silver,  
painted turtles start to blink.

Tip: Encourage kids to 'see' beyond the surface of their observations. They will discover that they already know more than they are aware they know. **So much of teaching in ecology and art is not about "new" knowledge, but rather a process of bringing to awareness how very much they already know.**

35) 4.6.2000

(1)

It's cold this dawn, no breakfast bugs today,  
black-capped phoebe sits a pondside branch  
and flicks his tail,  
he calls his name again, again,  
with buzzy voice he marks his space, decides,  
"as long as breakfast's late today  
I'll just say my name again, again, again."

(2)

Painted turtles have risen now  
to the interface of pond and air,  
the ancient resurrection from the mud to sun.

In these first reborn days they float,  
their green heads poked into the breathing place,  
and paddle round the pond  
to see who else is lazing there  
in surface water warmed by sun.

On lifted heads their eyes catch light.

**We inevitably interpret our cousins in terms of human life. While we must remember that they have no human motivations, what's important for kids is that connections are being created between themselves and other lives. These bonds are infinitely more crucial to kids' developing humanity than biologists' strident fretting about anthropomorphism.**

There is no end to all the ways to celebrate the spring. As earth transforms itself, encourage kids to notice and note all the little changes they can find. Simple description is enough, but as appropriate, encourage them to push farther and question what they see: 'Why is this particular transformation happening?' 'How long has this been going on?' and so forth—context building.

36) 4.1.2003

Three hen pheasants sashay through woods,  
pick and peck at leaves just out from snow.  
Dawn embroiders feathers the color of leaves  
but all earth colors in patterns intricate, cryptic.

A fourth hen follows at distance, minutes after.  
She is utterly here in the moment as her beak  
searches leaves, so intent, so evolved to blend--

when she pauses she keeps losing my eyes.

**The pheasant's state of focused intention enabled me to join her, and lose my ego for a moment. This is the gift of all wild things to over-conscious us.**

37) 11.01.2000

Five crows assemble in the tallest oak.  
They caw and caw. Across blue air  
more crows fly in, first three, then five, three more.  
Another five wing in from all corners of the sky.  
Crows sprinkled like raisins  
on the garrulous oak

Soon the oak is quiet of crow.  
The conclave flown to all the corners of sky.

Take your time observing. This is difficult in the culture of the sound-bite. But natural events are all in process, streams of ongoing experience that we dip into now and then and drink from. Rather than suggest slowing down or 'taking your time', suggest using a heightened awareness, an intensity of seeing. Talk with kids about how time slows down when something compelling is happening, how each person has the power to experience time slowly when they choose to do so. **Gaining a new power is an attractive idea, but being told to slow down is just another control.**

38) 11.28.2000

A sluggish morning, fit for promised fog  
that could not find its way here  
or could not see its way clear  
to grace me with confusion.

I must be content with a mind fogged  
by close November drear  
and stubborn lack of sleep.

But at this moment three chickadees  
in the feeder hammer sunflower seeds,  
and here are three  
windowsill cats whose tails dance  
to the hunger of three chickadees.

When stuck for a way to begin, the weather will always provoke  
some words as your inner state responds to it. Be consciously  
aware of the ways we are mirrors for the moods of earth.

**Allow earth to redeem your shadow moods.**

**39) 4.2.2002**

We've just had six inches of gentle April snow.

They build up on the morning  
like clouds of cottonwood fluff.  
These clumped flakes of snow  
fall so slow they seem to lift and fly  
as if native to the air. And they are.  
These flakes are air's familiars,  
this crystal rain has fallen  
down through air from sky a million times before,  
fallen everywhere on Earth.  
This water has been breathed by jellyfish  
in the Sargasso Sea, once jetted from a squid,  
once overswept Atlantis inside a tidal wave,  
fell as rain in West Australia  
and was caught on dancing children's tongues.  
This melting ice I've just licked from sleeve  
has pumped through countless hearts  
and soon may pump through mine.

All Earth has shared this water circling  
in its dance through space and time.  
Even, I suppose, it has flown before in grace  
right here, as slowly falling flakes of snow.

**The rhythm of the dance is central to the writing, and central to  
our participation in the flow of life on earth.**

40) 4.4.2002

The possum rakes frozen mud  
beneath the feeder.  
Her fur is the unlovely color of my mind  
as I stand beneath a dingy sky  
and stare at snow that will not sink to soil,

until the tail high pheasant walks his cocky walk  
up to the possum, swells his velvet russet breast,  
leaps up to the seeds, breaks his fast  
and breaks my stiff lips into smile.

**I love the ways earth insists I get over my self. If we pay  
attention, our shadows are redeemed.**

41) 4.29.2003

I startle the first  
great heron from the pond.  
Wide wings sweep grayblue,  
sharp-fold head and neck,  
slow cup sky,  
stroke strong.  
We rise.

When beauty flees us, we choose our response. We can retreat to ego and feel badly at our loss. Or second, we can create distance by rationalizing: *The heron's flight is inevitable because over time they have learned that we are dangerous...*" Or, finally, we can accept the gift of the heron's existence and our participation in it, however brief.

42) 4.30.2003

The little cat sits upon  
the large painted turtle,  
who easily accepts this weight  
as she lumbers on through leaves.  
The large cat follows, not sure  
what he's seeing, two  
of these three chance-met  
beings not sure what's going on,  
except the wet-shelled painted turtle.  
She is clear:  
she's going to dig a hole  
and squeeze out her wrinkly eggs.

Jem is small but always ready for a ride. Reptile muscle is stubborn and as strong as necessary. The turtle is unafraid. What peace of mind a shell must bring.

FYI: While many turtles are now mating, only a few are laying eggs. Like many reptiles, turtles can sequester sperm in a special pouch for months and years, and use it as needed. And as we swarm, we insist that reptiles are lower life-forms.

43) 12.5.2002

Crows know what roads are.  
Not long ago roads were dirt  
and traffic carriage slow  
and men shot crows  
and poisoned crows  
before learning.

Crows know  
that when men finally knew  
the truth of crow's  
place on earth  
they undertook  
the great Recompense:  
millions of long black altars  
snaking the land  
on which to offer rodents  
for the relish of crows.

Lest crows become  
lazy and slow, men arranged  
fast cars to lift crows  
for a moment from their  
altar offerings  
of rodent and raccoon.  
What roads are for, crows know

We feed crows on every road, and scratch our heads and wonder why there are so many crows. **Perhaps we are following an unconscious imperative, and my little offering is true.**

44) 12.20.2002

On these short dark days  
I look at buds,  
stroke their scaled shells  
which hint of blush.  
Every bare bush and tree buds now:  
red maple buds its flowers,  
red osier its green leaves,  
oak buds both.  
Willow by the water  
buds her furry catkins,  
birch and aspen swell their own.  
All these buds wait with us,  
within us.  
Through dark that swallows day,  
we all wait to unfold.

**A bud is an assumption of hope. Bless roots for insisting.**

45) 11.20.02

**So many of the important experiences are elusive and bubble quick. But they stick with us beyond any apparent significance. Writing is an art of moments.**

46) 5.4.2000

I wake this morning into singing,  
the long nightsurf of trilling chorus frogs  
continues in the gathering of light,  
as redwings wake to dawn,

and whitethroats pipe the day.  
And then sing all the birds named song.

Rose-breasted grosbeaks have returned, violets and rue  
anemones are in full cry.

I could have gone on to name each singer as its voice came in,  
but at the risk of numbing the reader's ear. **Beginning with a list  
is often a good start to recording observations, but you have to  
select and know when to stop.** Today, naming only the voices  
crucial to my waking turned out to be enough.

47) 5.5.2000

Happy Cinco de Mayo!

We are so tender toward the young,  
so gentle in our eyes are lives just opening:  
little ones, the risen seed, the nestling's gape,  
grasshopper nymph in perfect miniature,  
a tulip bud just coloring,  
the spotted fawn in ferns,  
all the small who are potentials,  
all the lives of innocence: but how  
is this survival? Why feel  
so far beyond our kind?  
To make us tender for a moment toward ourselves.

It is not fashionable to explore our interconnectedness with the  
Others. **It is almost reflexive to accuse any such attempt of  
excessive sentiment, but this is really just a last gasp of the  
gendering of science.**

**I dislike emotion overstated to the point of Disney dishonesty,  
and writing about such subjects requires caution, but knowing  
ourselves to be part of the whole is essential to an eco-centric  
worldview. Explore your own responses to other lives; wonder  
how such feelings came to be.**

48) 5.10.2000

Tulip petals now surprise the soil  
with colors bright, but wild cherries  
are in fragrant bloom,  
clustered stars of gold-tinged white  
by next week beads of green  
that will swell and ripen purple black  
to aim themselves  
at the eyes and beaks of August birds.

Think about the why of things. Why are berries? Why cherries? Why are fruits sweet? When a bird or mammal eats a fruit, who is in charge of that transaction? Both benefit. In this ancient symbiosis, the animal receives food and the plant receives a mobile seed distribution service. The plants make their fruit available just when six billion birds need to carbo-load for migration energy. **Maybe plants are a lot smarter than we think. Maybe everything is.**

49) 5.11.2000

Watched a pair of mating dragonflies  
bumble awkwardly around the pond,  
eight stiff wings engaged in birth.  
The male's wings held her just above the surface  
as the tip of her abdomen dipped below  
and pulsed eggs into the pond.  
Each time, they lumber off to find another spot  
to give their offspring every chance,  
around and round the pond.  
I watch and every day see something  
wonder-filled I've never seen before.

Why would this behavior of laying eggs in several different places come to be? What survival advantage could it give the eggs just laid? (Hint: imagine all the hungry mouths in the waters of any pond.) **This dragonfly behavior is intelligent, but**

surely flies are not big-brained, not all that smart. So where does this clear intelligence reside? The community, the ecosystem, is what is bright. That suggests that we (all of us living things) live within intelligence. Talk about your sense of wonder!

A note on Diction. I avoided technical language (such as '*ovipositor*' instead of abdomen). My goal is to keep my writing accessible. Too often, technical language is used to exclude, or just show off.

50) 5.12.2000

### **Biosphere**

**Earth is a tapestry woven by life,  
Life is a tapestry woven by light,  
The name of the fabric is Holy.**

We are wetted dust  
that hungers when the soil is dry,  
our spirit's drought,  
when a single drop of rain or sweat  
embraces a million tiny lives with possibility  
for making and unmaking.

51) 5.2.2001

Scout sits on the aquarium, looks  
out the morning window.  
His tail drapes down the glass,  
curls and waves as birds pass by.  
A dozen little rainbowfish surround  
the image of this black tail,  
school with it as it plays against  
transparent mystery.

The cat is seeing birds, whose images transform into curls and twitches of his tail, which in turn become movement in a school of fish, and the whole series becomes squiggles on my computer screen which will shortly fly electrically across the planet.

What can these small fish be seeing? The Mother of Worms? Simple novelty? I have no clue, but the sequence charms. **Transparent mysteries are as directly in front of our eyes as those of aquarium fish—all we do not perceive or whose presence we do not guess.**

52) 5.14.2001

Unfolding leaves of butternut  
tangled green by dawn  
say all I dream  
of spring and opening.

**Sometimes a single image offered by earth pierces us and stays. These brief moments of seeing truly are significant and should be shared. To render such images in words requires careful word choice, rhythm and time. It also takes a little arrogance to think it possible to do. But all we can do is make the attempt to share. Ideally, small image poems like this drop into a receptive mind as a pebble into a pool, and ripple for a time.**

53) 5.15.2001

I wake in blessed quiet,  
unsilent quiet  
of susurrant breeze, calm  
of bird song, wandering trill  
of treefrogs, lull  
of all concern, the quietude  
of blue violet and trillium white  
which speak now of waking

in the youth of life,  
in that blessed bed.

**Nature's dawn sounds do not intrude on inner peace; they deepen it. These are the sounds of my personal dawn, the sounds of waking green. This is one of those occasions when we live within a stream of ancient human consciousness; people have felt this kind of waking since before we walked upright. Entries do not require action. Often they are simply celebrations.**

54) 5.22.2001

When the woods are wet with green  
they sing with light that seems  
to start inside each leaf,  
each lichen on dark bark  
and glows into moist air  
inhaled by every spiracle and lung  
to make more breath for trees.

The greens on rainy days are endlessly astonishing. Diffused sunlight has no point source, so it really does seem to emanate from every object seen. Spiracles, of course, are the pores along the insect abdomen which function like the vertebrate lung. Insects, far more numerous than vertebrates, create much of the CO<sub>2</sub> that plants use to photosynthesize and ultimately feed all of us jumpy types. **Make small celebratory songs simply to express appreciation for the gifts. It is an act that enlarges us.**

55) 5.30.2001

Young squirrel had a problem with a rabbit  
so he rushed him twice  
and startled him to momentary flight, but  
third time was the charm. Rabbit  
reared and spun, leapt up and kicked

squirrel tail over teakettle with his long strong feet.  
Squirrel rolled three yards and rose  
frothing from his new topsy-turvy world.

**Bullies should all be so kicked and rolled. It is satisfying to watch the biter be bit. Fairness is no doubt a complete abstraction, but we do so yearn. Nature shows us much unbalanced pain when we look at single lives, but now and then, if our eyes are open, we see a brief redress. We've made rabbit a symbol of cowardice, but I suspect they are simply mellow and careful beings. When we write about such saving graces, we get to use fine old words and phrases: comeuppance, just deserts, topsy-turvy, the biter bit, the whole lexicon of melodrama--what fun!**