

**A Song for the Asking**  
**The Electronic Newsletter of**  
**EarthSong Photography**  
**and**

**EarthSong Photography Workshops: Walking in Beauty**

August 31, 2012

Volume X, Number 3

**Hello to All:**

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**Teaching the World to Wonder**

The evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones...O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason.

William Shakespeare  
from the funeral oration of Marc Anthony  
Julius Caesar, Act III

His footsteps are much less certain now than they will soon become, but he will grow into them; and already he possesses a boundless energy, even when he sometimes feigns fatigue, that I can only vaguely remember with a smile. What intrigues me most, I think, is his unquenchable curiosity toward everything around him – toward the works of men: the machines and tools of labor and discovery, even destruction and death as much as life and art; toward the present as well as the past; toward the natural world, the realm of nature and nature’s science as well as the beauty and his connection to it. As much as “knowing” excites him, he has so much to learn and great effort to put forth before he will acquire the will and the patience to take the time to listen to the answers and consider their relationships and meanings. He will deconstruct the world piece by piece in his search for knowledge before he will gain the wisdom to see it intact and whole.



**Where the footsteps may lead?**

We will always live in different worlds, he and I, but I hope, and fervently pray, that we will share enough of what is common to both of those worlds that in the spaces in between we will engage in an on-going conversation about what is relevant and worthwhile to a planet of seven, no, nine billion

beings with whom he will co-exist by the time he is a grown man.

Today is a special one in our relationship for it is on this day that our footsteps, his and mine, are taking us higher and higher along the lower reaches of the deeply forested slopes of Snake Den Mountain in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Over a 2.1 mile trek we will gain 800' in elevation and reach the beautiful 90' cascade that is Hen Wallow Falls. He is a boy of the Low Country, Coastal Carolina, Charleston; and this is his first waterfall hike. They don't call it The Fall Line for nothing. We are excited. We have come to camp in the out-of-the-way campground of Cosby in the northeastern corner of the Park and to hike to this place of falling water so that he can have this first view of



### Can't See the Forest for the Ferns

what happens when precipitation and porous rock come together on the side of a mountain. His mother and father are here, too, to share in this adventure along with **Bonnie** and me; so it is a family affair, a journey to remember, a story to keep and re-tell in times to come around other campfires at other benchmarks along the way. For it is the stories we create from the fabric of our experience that tell who we are in this world, what we value and what we revere, what we hold in awe and what we love and will strive to protect. The stories are the needle pointing the direction of the compass of our actions to the pole star of our morality as we walk our way through this landscape that is life.

Today as we walk who can say what might be on his mind aside from the questions he asks about rocks or trees or salamanders. For me, I am remembering words spoken more than half a century ago: "A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life as an unyielding antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength."

They were **Rachel Carson's** words, written in the July, 1956, issue of the magazine **Woman's Home Companion** in an article entitled "Help Your Child to Wonder"; and they reflected a subject matter that eventually came to take up a substantial part of Carson's thoughts as a writer in the last



### A Meeting of Elements Called Unity

period of her cut-too-short life.

It was 50 years ago this summer, in 1962, that *Silent Spring*, the work for which she will always be most well-remembered, first appeared in three-part serial form in *The New Yorker*, just prior to its official release in book format on September 27 of that year. The research and writing of *Silent Spring* had taken massive amounts of energy over several years, beginning in 1958, and the toll it had taken on her already cancer-plagued and stress-racked body was enormous.

Tumors had been discovered as early as 1946 and the first major surgery had taken place in 1950, though at the time she was told that there was no malignancy involved. It was only in the spring and summer of 1960 that the discovery and removal of additional cysts began to make it clear that something was radically wrong and that a cancerous malignancy was, in fact, and probably had been, a part of Rachel's life. By then the picture was gloomy and the prospects for a long-term were becoming all-too-grim.

The tremendous accolades with which "Help Your Child to Wonder" was received had led Carson's agent to suggest its expansion into a book. Rachel had agreed, but other pressing projects dictated that it be put on the back burner; and by the time the outline for it had been written in late-1958, the urgency of *Silent Spring* had begun to insinuate itself into her awareness. By the time *Silent Spring* was completed and its aftermath had begun to settle to a dull roar, there was not time.

Though she had spent part of the summer of 1959 pulling together from her field notes short snapshots of experience that she wanted to include in this new creative idea that was so dear, the controversy surrounding *Silent Spring* overwhelmed her. Rachel Carson died on April 14, 1964. In 1965, the "Wonder" book that she had so very much wanted to complete was published posthumously, unaltered in its original magazine form, but transformed in name to *The Sense of Wonder*, one of the most beautiful books I own, both for its message and its art.

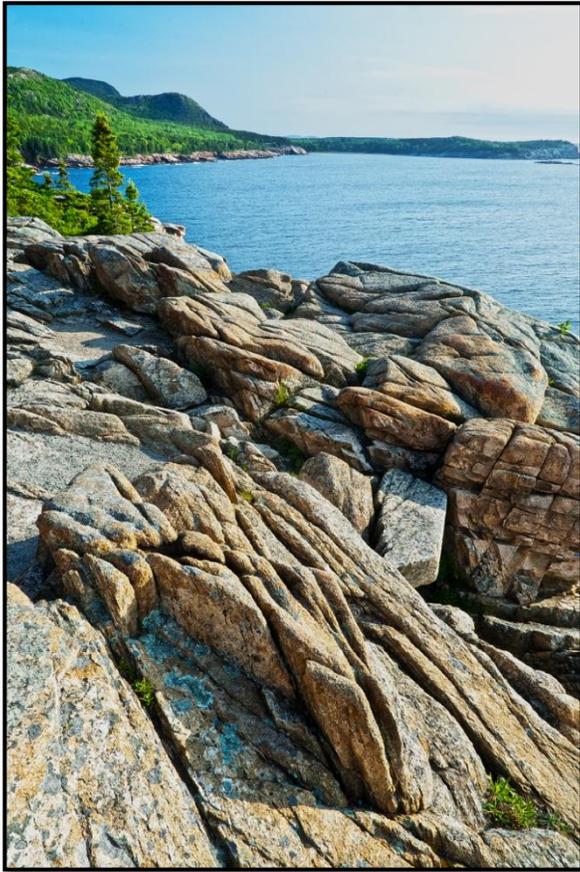
Rachel Louise Carson has been dead now for forty-eight years, yet she remains one of the most canonized and demonized figures of the twentieth century. Lauded and damned for the same piece of writing: for the saintly act, or sin – depending on how you want to see it – of caring too much, of caring too deeply for all of the earth and its life, or of being, as one of her detractors, **Dwight Eisenhower's** Secretary of Agriculture **Ezra Taft Benson** put it in a letter to his President, "probably a communist." Rachel Carson was not then, nor had she ever been, a communist (a fact that was probably well-known to Benson), nor had she ever supported any cause more radical than the National Audubon Society (of which **Theodore Roosevelt** was a lifelong member); and I have to admit that it is wearisome to have to continuously react, still, to the bandying about of labels designed solely to inflame the emotions of susceptible members of the general public. Ask me what I believe in, but get over the label junk; I don't live in a box and neither did Rachel Carson. When are we going to grow up enough as a society to learn to use language as a tool of discussion and understanding rather than as a club?

Among a cluster of 2500' peaks – small mountains if you will – with names like Lyon Hill, Carmer Hill, Cobb Hill, and Triple Divide, scarcely ten miles from the New York State Line in north central



### In Eliot's Eyes

Pennsylvania, the Allegheny River rises in non-descript fashion. Not respectful in the least of political boundaries, it proceeds west by north through and beyond the marshes at Turtlepoint, escaping into



New York at Carroll; but not content with its new jurisdiction it turns west again and then south, returning to its state of origin just downstream from Onoville. From there it makes a meandering southwestward run to the corner of the Keystone State. There, in the City of Pittsburgh, it meets almost head-on with the Monongahela to form the great Ohio River, the largest tributary of the mighty Mississippi. Fifteen miles upstream on the Allegheny from the heart of the Steel City lay the town – now a suburb – of Springdale. In May of 1907 when Rachel Carson was born on the 27th in a two-story house on the western edge of town, Springdale was still, but just barely, a farming community nestled in a great bend of the now grown-up stream. When her parents, **Robert** and **Maria Carson** had moved there with Rachel's older siblings, **Robert** and **Marian** in 1900, Springdale was a bucolic village of 1200 souls; but by the time Rachel came along, industrialization was already spreading up the river. Logging in the forested slopes northwest of town, a glue factory, and the construction of huge power stations, West Penn Power and Duquesne Light, at either end of the village quickly wrought forever changes in the character of the area. Even though the Carson's acreage remained on the edge of the growth for many years, they could watch from the rise on which the house sat as the sprawl began to surround them. When he had

### **Otter Be a Cliff 'Round Here**

purchased the property in 1900, it had been Robert's plan to develop much of the tract into homesteads; however the Panic of 1907, which collapsed the local real estate market and ultimately led to the creation of the Federal Reserve System, thwarted his dream. Although he never defaulted on his obligations, Robert was frequently in arrears and his family was never secure financially. Socially this manifested in a kind of aloofness in the family, keeping mostly to itself, which encouraged the use of their land as a sort of nature-learning, outdoor laboratory. Maria Carson was an avid reader with a deep and abiding interest in natural history, and she easily directed her children's activities along these avenues. By the time Rachel came along, the other Carson children were already in grade-school, so Maria and her youngest child had much of the day to themselves. The enormously popular Comstock readers based of the ***Handbook of Nature Study*** by Cornell University Professor **Anna Botsford Comstock** often came home from school with the older siblings and were used extensively by Maria in her activities with all of her children. Maria was so taken with all of this that she kept a diary – only a few pages of which yet survive – documenting her own love of nature as well as Rachel's early reactions to being in it. Among their greatest satisfactions were the birds.

Her earliest memories of her childhood are of being alone, and Rachel remembered herself as being happiest among the birds and other wild creatures; and it is likely not accidental that this is the way she would be her entire life. Aside from these recollections of the natural world she remembered her love of books and reading. From some of her initial writings and drawings, sometime around the age of eight, it seems likely that among Rachel's early inspirations was one of the most popular children's magazines of the period, ***St. Nicholas Magazine***, a publication which could lay claim to being the starting point for some of the greatest writers of our literary history – **F. Scott Fitzgerald**, **E.B. White**, **Edna St. Vincent Millay**, and **Stephen Vincent Benet**. All were winners of the coveted

St. Nicholas League Award. In 1919, at the age of twelve, after having previously won silver and gold badge awards, one of Rachel's stories won her the accolade of "Honor Member" of the League and a ten dollar cash award. Her success in the pages of St. Nicholas convinced Rachel that her fantasy of being a writer could indeed be a dream-come-true.

Among the writers to whom she was particularly drawn from a very young age was **Gene Stratton Porter**, whose children's novels *Freckles* and *A Girl of the Limberlost* are among the great classics of the genre. Porter was one of the staunch proponents of the nature-study movement, who believed that through nature a child was led to God.

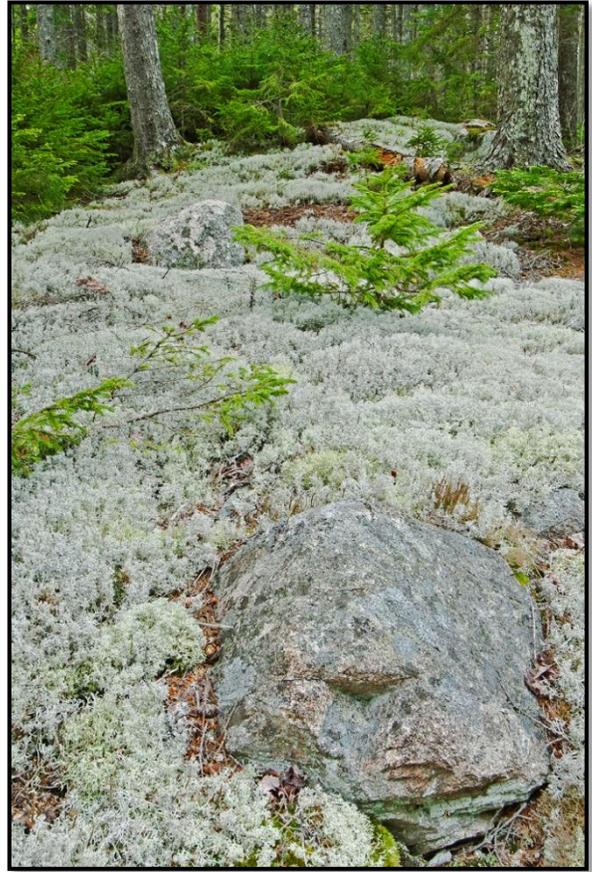
As a student Rachel excelled. She seems to have easily adopted her mother's attitude that intellect and self-worth account for far more than possessions or social recognition; and even if this grew out of Maria's response to the family's financial troubles, it was a stance that would serve Rachel particularly well. She graduated first in her class from Parnassus High School and managed to participate on both the girls' basketball and field hockey teams – never a star, but always competent.

Given the often dire straits of the Carson financial situation, it might have appeared that college for Rachel was a dream beyond reach. Neither of her older siblings had advanced beyond the tenth grade and both had married quite young with unpleasant outcomes. Rachel knew there was a wider world than

Springdale, and she was determined to experience it. Maria Carson considered that there was only one acceptable choice, the Pennsylvania College for Women (PCW) in Pittsburgh (now Chatham University). It had an excellent academic reputation; it was a good "Christian college"; and it was only sixteen miles away.

How to afford it was another matter altogether, but Maria and Rachel were undaunted. Rachel won the \$100 academic scholarship for the 40<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, Robert managed to sell a few of the subdivided lots from the farm, and Maria added new piano students to her teaching roster and, in addition, sold apples, eggs, and the family china. Even so, there was just barely enough and Rachel's clothes were all homemade. What she later learned, too, was that there was still a balance owing on her tuition which was picked up by private donors who were friends of the president and the dean of the college. She was quite aware of the sacrifices being made and was deeply appreciative of the opportunity she was handed, for Rachel Carson held within herself, even then, the still only partly formed notion that she had a destiny that lay ahead – a "something" that she was being called to do in this world – and she was determined to meet it.

In the place of close relationships with others outside her family, especially other young women her own age, Rachel had developed a love affair with the natural world; and her studiousness and introvert nature made her somewhat of an enigma to most of the other girls on campus. Yet she made several friends and she was not unpopular. She had begun her college experience with the intention of majoring in English and graduating to become a writer, and until her junior year this was the course she followed assiduously. However, at the beginning of her sophomore year she had chosen to fulfill her science requirements with a biology course instead of chemistry. It was a practical choice, practically made, with no emotion involved; but it soon became clear that the subject matter, as well as the dynamic charisma and intelligence of her instructor, had lit a fire in Rachel's mind. By the



**Reindeer Lichen in a Fir Nursery**

spring of 1927 what had once seemed a clear path to her desires and goals through writing, suddenly was laden with the obstacles of decision-making: to become a writer or to become a scientist; that was the question. For Rachel it was a terribly hard question, one that she anguished over at great length. It was sometime during that spring of 1927, as she sat studying in her dorm room through a fierce thunderstorm, Rachel read these lines from **Alfred, Lord Tennyson's** poem, "**Locksley Hall**" :

Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.  
Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail or fire or snow;  
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

It was if, in that moment, a light had shown through, and she later would say that she immediately sensed that her own destiny was somehow linked to the sea.

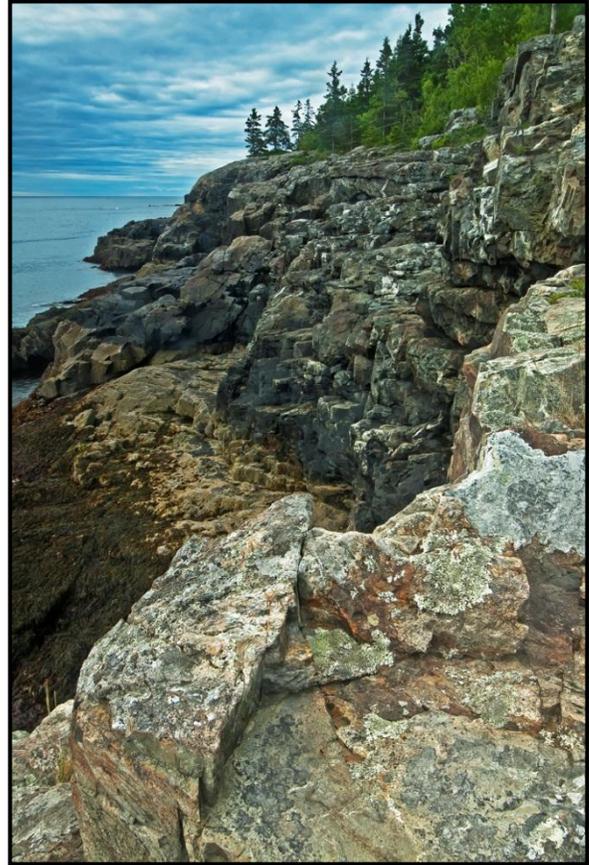
Even though she began her junior year with an English class – on the novel – and biology classes on vertebrates and hygiene, all of which she enjoyed, by the winter of 1927 she was deeply conflicted about her future. In a world entering the middle years of the twentieth century “women” and “career” were not yet words that went together smoothly. Certain few professions – teaching and writing among them – were much more open and receptive to the presence of the female gender. Others, particularly the sciences, were stridently resistant. It was often said that the sciences were too “rigorous” for a woman’s temperament. Thus the opportunities open to women for entry into, as well as advancement in, science were limited and were obstacle enough to dissuade many from even considering such a path.

By January of 1928 Rachel had made up her mind. Biology had won the day.

The role that **Mary Scott Skinker**, the beloved science professor at PCW during the mid-1920’s, played in Rachel Carson’s development as a student, a scientist, and a person, can hardly be overstated.

Her brilliance as a teacher, her joyous but careful enthusiasm as a scientist, and her character and grace as a woman and as a person, all ignited a flame in Rachel that burned itself into a passion for science in general and biology in particular. She was mentor and friend, and her connection with and influence over Carson remained as long as she lived. It was traumatic for Rachel when Skinker decided to leave PCW at the end of Carson’s junior year to pursue her own doctorate at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. If she had possessed the financial wherewithal to do so she would have transferred herself before graduation. As it was, she completed her senior year in Pittsburgh, graduating from PCW in June, 1929, as one of only three magna cum laude students, and then followed Skinker to Baltimore to pursue her Master’s in zoology. Skinker had spent the summer of 1928 at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and her glowing descriptions in her letters to Carson of the work and the place had the intended effect of determining in Rachel the desire to study and work there herself as soon as possible.

In mid-July, 1929, Rachel Carson boarded an eastbound train from the same Springdale station that had always been part of her life. She had spent the previous month at home preparing for this day when the world would suddenly expand beyond the boundaries of Western Pennsylvania. She had observed with sadness the marked changes in the quality of the water and the air wrought by the



### **Looking from Schooner’s Head**

development, the glue factory, and the presence of the imposing power plants bookending the town with their smokestacks. As much as she despaired leaving her mother really for the first time in her life – considering that PCW and Springdale were only sixteen miles apart – she was ready to go. Destiny was calling.

Her plan for the remainder of the summer was to find a place to live in Baltimore and then to meet

Mary Scott Skinker and spend several days with her at the family's cabin in the Shenandoah Mountains of Skyland, Virginia. After that she was off to Woods Hole where six weeks of study at the MBL awaited. Rachel's "seat" was paid for by her sponsoring organization, The Pennsylvania College for Women. Woods Hole had been chosen by the esteemed naturalist and first curator at the Smithsonian Institution, **Spencer Baird** during his tenure as the first



### Coconuts in Disguise

U.S. Fish Commissioner, as the headquarters of the U.S. Fish Commission in 1871. In 1888, Baird and a group of highly respected scientists and educators had organized the MBL as an adjunct educational center. From the beginning, women had been encouraged to participate, and even to serve in leadership roles. As quaint as this description may sound today, in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to say it was actually to say something out of the ordinary. Still, by way of indicating the real bias against women scientists in the first half of the 1900's, it should also be mentioned that the leadership capacities for women at MBL had been curtailed demonstrably by the time Rachel studied there; but she was thrilled, nonetheless, to have the opportunity. MBL was, and is, representative of the best and the brightest in American biology. She was enchanted with the environment and the lifestyle of the scientists, and the MBL research library especially delighted her. She had arrived wearing the status of a "beginning investigator" intending to use her time to more clearly define her research on the cranial nerves of reptiles begun at PCW. This would allow her to be more advanced with a project suitable for her master's thesis. By happy coincidence the man who would be her thesis advisor and marine biology professor at Johns Hopkins, **R.P. Cowles**, was also at MBL that summer, and Rachel was able to get to know him as well as benefit from his suggestions regarding her work before actually beginning her masters.

In sum, Rachel's time at MBL in the summer of '29 was productive and rewarding. She had arrived with some trepidation regarding her level of preparedness – of lack thereof – for the tasks she faced. These fears stemmed from the classes her senior year at PCW, which she felt had not trained her adequately in some of the disciplinary procedures of the work she wanted to do. By September those fears had been allayed. Her sense of worth as a scientist had been validated by her peers and by the work she had accomplished, and she was ready to get on with the next phase. After spending a couple of weeks in Springdale with her family she headed east again to Baltimore and the academic rigors of Johns Hopkins. What she could not have known was that it would be the last time she would take leave of her childhood home.

Before beginning her new educational career path Rachel trekked briefly to Washington to visit with Mary Scott Skinker. In looking out for her protégée's future interests Skinker had arranged for Carson to meet **Elmer Higgins**, the acting director of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, Division of Scientific Inquiry. Skinker knew Higgins from her own Woods Hole experience, when the two of them had been there simultaneously.

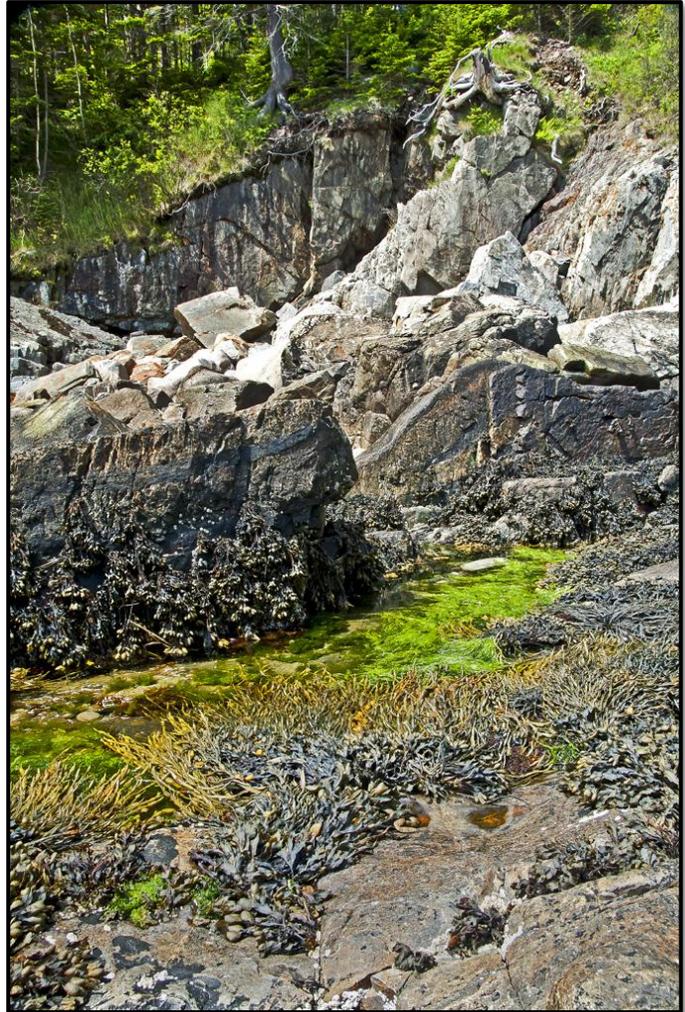
During the soul-numbing years of the Great Depression, as the economic downturn turned more downward, employment throughout the economy was disastrously impacted; and this was equally true of every level of government, except of course the top, which always somehow manages to retain its job security. Elmer Higgins had managed to surf the bureaucracy well and was possessed of a keen understanding of fisheries research. It was his view, expressed in their brief interview, that based on the current conditions she consider a career in government science in preference to one in academia or museum work.

The months and years between the beginning of October, 1929 and June of 1932, when Rachel was awarded her master's degree, were seemingly filled with one challenge after another; and it is perhaps a mark of her courage and determination that she was able to complete the journey at all.

The economy of Baltimore was in better shape than that in Pittsburgh, and this, combined with Carson's angst over being so separated from her mother for so long, compelled her to urge her parents to move east. In a rather drawn out undertaking the elder Carsons were not completely relocated in Maryland until the spring of 1930. Rachel's sister Marian, now a single parent to two daughters, arrived in June, while brother Robert remained in Springdale until he could arrange for the farmhouse to be rented. Living together was the only way all of the family's members could survive financially. Academically her course work proceeded well; however, her thesis essay project, which was changed on more than one occasion for a variety of reasons, stalled. In order to meet financial obligations she had been compelled to become a part-time student while seeking various assistantships in different departments engaged in various aspects of biological research in order to have an income stream. She also accepted a teaching assistantship during the summer months.

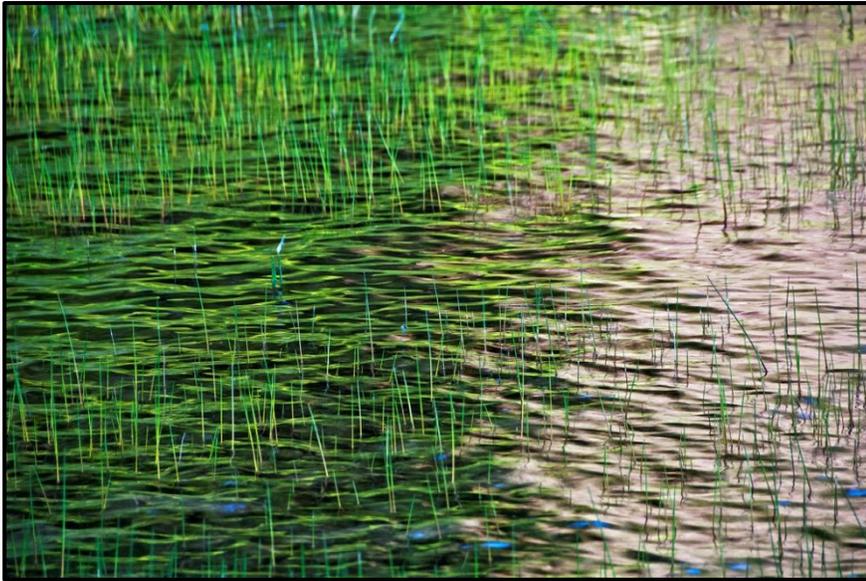
As she fell further behind in her scheduled thesis work and seemed to require more frequent adjustments in her financial arrangements, there were some in the zoology department who began to view her as a difficult student. As it became clearer to her advisor, Dr. Cowles, that money and time were in short supply, he suggested a project for Rachel that involved examining an aspect of the evolution of the urinary system in fish. Even this proved to possess a peculiar difficulty, as it was quite a challenge to obtain a series of fertilized fish embryos.

Finally, in April 1932, her essay, **The Development of the Pronephros During the Embryonic and Early Larval Life of the Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)**” was completed. In early May she stood to be examined by R.P. Cowles and **E.A. Andrews** on behalf of the zoology department. Their



### **The Pool of Tides**

recommendation in support of her candidacy stated that she presented an “excellent review of the literature on the subject” and that the investigation was done with care as well as from an “exceptionally critical point of view.” They found that there were “several points that needed further investigation,” but they concluded that her effort made a “worthy contribution” to the knowledge of the urinary system of fishes. On June 14, 1932, Rachel Carson received her master’s degree. From all that we know it is quite apparent that Carson intended to immediately enroll in the doctoral program at Johns Hopkins. She signed up for the class, “Zoology 6P – Investigations” for the coming academic year. Through the course of the next two years, as the family’s finances became increasingly restricted, it became abundantly clear that Rachel had no choice but to end her academic career. In the spring of 1934 she withdrew as a doctoral candidate in good standing before the start of the new semester. She would never have the opportunity to pick back up with her graduate studies.



### **Yin of Green, Yang of Gold**

Given the severity of her situation it seems almost natural that Rachel would think of returning in some way to her early interests in writing. She dusted off several of her best PWC literary creations and sent them to the top magazines of the day. Her efforts returned a collection of polite rejections. In July 1935 her father suddenly passed away at the age of seventy-one. The two had never been close emotionally, and this event, thought certainly sad, may have been a small blessing; although what little financial stability had existed was now gone. Rachel had become the sole support of herself and her mother as well as being primarily responsible for her sister and two nieces.

She now turned to Mary Scott Skinker, who had become a respected PhD government scientist, for advice. At Skinker’s urging Rachel prepared for and took the federal civil service exams for junior parasitologist, junior wildlife biologist, and junior aquatic biologist – passing all three. Then she called on Elmer Higgins. Higgins had no openings, but what he did have was a bothersome problem which he had been unable to solve, but for which he thought Rachael might hold a solution. He had been tasked by his superiors with creating a series of fifty-two short radio programs. Their purpose was to excite an educational spark in the general public with regard to marine life specifically. Neither his own scientists nor a professional script writer had proven up to the chore, but he asked Carson if she were willing to give it a try. She accepted, and with the status of “field aide” began the work at \$6.50 per day. Higgins liked her work, the programs were a success, and Higgins’ superiors were very

many of the events that would follow, this seems a tragedy; for her critics have often pointed to the fact that she did not possess that sanctified piece of paper that our society uses to acknowledge academic expertise in anything. Now facing the dire need to secure employment, or at least some income, Carson continued to teach part-time at the University of Maryland in the Dental and Pharmacy School where she had held an assistantship. She also set up a personnel file with the university’s Bureau of Appointments. This file contained, among other documents, several letters of recommendation from

pleased. When the scripts were completed Higgins asked Rachel to write a general introduction to marine life that would be suitable for a government brochure. Later, when Elmer Higgins read her introduction, which she had entitled “The World of Waters,” he told her that it was not acceptable for the purpose of a brochure, that it was too good; and he urged her to submit it to a publication of literary merit such as the *Atlantic Monthly*. Eventually, with some editing and re-writing, her brochure introduction was, indeed, published in the July 1937 issue of the *Atlantic* as “Undersea.” In later years she would acknowledge that it marked the turning point in her writing career. Meanwhile Higgins labored to secure for her full-time professional work with the Bureau of Fisheries. When she had taken the civil service exam for this position, she had outscored all the other applicants; and in June, 1936, she was appointed as a junior aquatic biologist in the Division of Scientific Inquiry within the Bureau. She was only the second female full-time professional in this

position in the Bureau of Fisheries, which would later become the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This would prove to be a real blessing in that her older sister Marian died from pneumonia in January 1937, leaving Rachel as the sole support of not only her mother, but her two young nieces as well. With the research and contacts that were open to her at the bureau she began to write feature articles for newspapers, the first of which she submitted to *The Baltimore Sun*. The acceptance of this initial offering led to a stream of others all of which served to express to Rachel that



### Fog Rollin’In

her writing was indeed worthy and marketable. With the publication of “Undersea” came an inquiry from the publisher, **Simon & Schuster**, regarding her interest in expanding the concept of the article into a book. “Undersea” not only marked a turning point in her writing career, it also created what would become the unique literary voice of Rachel Carson, a style that she would repeat time and time again that expressed both her intelligence and carefulness as a marine biologist, but also her deep humanity and concern for nature and for the earth, and for the natural processes that bespeak the intricacies of the web that is life.

Over the course of the next four years, while engaged in her full-time job, Carson worked on the drafts of the manuscript, writing and re-writing, editing and changing, updating with the latest information as it became available. In 1941 it was published as *Under the Sea Wind*. It received excellent reviews, but was marketed rather poorly, which was reflected in sales. The esteemed marine biologist and naturalist, **William Beebe**, described its “lyrical beauty and faultless science” and he included two chapters from it in his 1944 compilation, *The Book of Naturalists, An Anthology of the Best Natural History*.

The ultimate demise of popular interest in the book came with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into the consciousness rending calamities of World War II. By now I hope it has become abundantly clear that Rachel Carson was both a top-notch scientist and a top quality prose writer whose style was marked by grace and feeling. Her successive promotions within the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), with their increasing responsibilities and opportunities, were reflective of this truth. By 1945 she was the supervisor of a small staff of writers within the Service and in 1949 she became the chief editor of publications at FWS. Recognition as a writer grew

apace. By 1948 she had begun gathering material and working on the early drafts of a second book encompassing the life history of the ocean. When Oxford University Press expressed an interest, Rachel was spurred into high gear. ***The Sea Around Us*** was finished in June, 1950 and by the end of the month she had delivered the completed manuscript. The response to its publication on July 2, 1951 was deafening. Chapter 7, “*The Birth of an Island*” won the **American Association for the Advancement of Science’s George Westinghouse Science Writing Prize**. *The Sea Around Us* would climb quickly to the **New York Times Best Seller List** and remain there for a record-breaking 86 weeks. It would win the **1952 National Book Award for Nonfiction** and the **John Burroughs Memorial Medal** for distinguished natural history writing. Its success would lead to the republication of *Under the Sea Wind*, which in its second incarnation would become a best seller in its own right.

There is one other extremely significant outcome of “*The Sea’s*” success; it allowed Rachel Carson to quit her day job, to leave the security of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to begin to devote herself completely and full-time to her writing, to succeed, or not, by the beauty of her words, the power of her insights, the wisdom of her scientific understanding, and the descriptions of her truths.

By this time in her life, of course, Carson had already undergone two

surgeries for the removal of lumps from one of her breasts. The second of those had been a major event – a walnut-sized lump – although the doctors had suggested no further treatment. Rachel was certainly not a frail person, but it is clear that even by the mid-1940’s she experienced regular problems with her health: exhaustion, frequent colds and other upper respiratory ailments, viral infections, and the like. Even so, she kept to a laborious work schedule. One of the things she had learned about herself, which often made for a struggle when she began working on a new idea or a new piece was that she found it necessary to wrestle with the material until she had found a personal approach – her own way in – to the subject, one with which she could identify and was pleasing to her. Short of realizing that goal, she often experienced real frustration and anguish in the process. In late June, 1946, Rachel had taken her mother along on an extended vacation for an entire month to fulfill one of her own great bucket list fantasies – to visit and explore the coast of Maine. It led to the love of a place that would last and grow for the remainder of her life. While on this trip she wrote a “conservation pledge” for children which she intended to enter into a competition sponsored by ***Outdoor Life*** magazine:



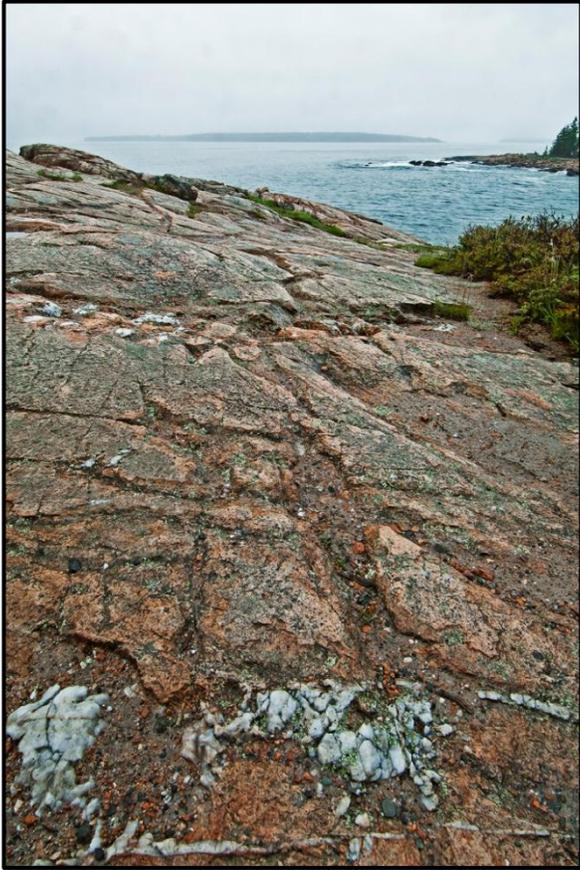
### **Looking Over Jordan**

I pledge myself to preserve and protect  
America’s fertile soils, her mighty forests  
and rivers, her wildlife and minerals,  
for on these her greatness was established  
and her strength depends.

In October she was informed that her pledge had won second prize, a cash award of \$1000. The award was merely tangential to the love that bloomed in her for those rocky coasts and deep inlet harbors that characterize the marge of the Pine Tree State’s meeting with the Atlantic. There was no doubt in

her mind that she would return.

With the success of “The Sea” she could consider her love more deeply than ever. In May 1952 she requested the forms that would formalize her separation from FWS, and in completing them made her resignation effective as of June 3. Having sublet her house in Maryland, Rachel and Maria Carson headed to Massachusetts where she had arranged to do research for several months at MBL. It was a productive period in quite a few respects. In September she and her mother visited Maine over several weekends. On one of them, encouraged by her friends, **N.J.** and **Jacquelyn Berrill**, she looked at property on which she might build her own cottage. On Southport Island, just west of Boothbay Harbor, where an estuary of the Sheepscot River called Dogfish Head merges into the main channel, she found a beautifully wooded piece of headland and immediately knew she was home. Before she left she had arranged not only to buy it, but she had signed a contract with a local builder to create her dream cottage on it.



### How Quartz Was Taken for Granite

was an honorary member, Carson has said the previous year in a presentation that had hardly mentioned her work on “The Edge”, “I am not afraid of being thought a sentimentalist when I tell you...that I believe natural beauty has a necessary place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society. I believe that whenever we substitute something man-made and artificial for a natural feature of the earth, we have retarded some part of man’s spiritual growth... Is it the right of this, our generation, in its selfish materialism, to destroy these things because we are blinded by the dollar sign...? The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonder and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

For anyone with a soul, the far-reaching descriptions of the land-sea-life interconnections found in “The Edge” are the substance of spirit itself, and the antithesis of a compulsion to destroy. And prior to that, in her acceptance speech for the National Book Award in 1952, she had observed, “We live in a scientific age, yet we assume that knowledge of science is the prerogative of only a small number of human beings, isolated and priestlike in their laboratories. This is not true. It cannot be

Going back to 1951, even before the publication of “The Sea”, Rachel had become enamored with the idea of creating a guidebook to the Atlantic coastline. Her original working outline had been put together while she was in Nags Head on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. By the time she was through with the revisions it had become a companion volume to “The Sea”, one which would deal with the biological rather than the physical aspects of the sea. The new scheme would allow her to write about each of the three basic types of coastal geographical areas as a complete ecological community, rather than writing about individual organisms; and by extension she would be writing about all coasts everywhere.

From conception in 1951 to publication on October 26, 1955, ***The Edge of the Sea*** was a work that demanded much intellectual rigor and organization. As it morphed through its various ideations it constantly challenged its author to consider and reconsider its form as well as its content; but in the end it established Rachel Carson as the preeminent interpreter of marine science in the country. Its reviewers heaped praise even if they were not as numerous, or as excited, as had been those surrounding “The Sea.”

Speaking to the sisters of **Theta Sigma Phi**, the national fraternity of women in journalism of which she

true. The materials of science are the materials of life itself. Science is part of the reality of living; it is the what, the how, and the why of everything in our experience. It is impossible to understand man without understanding his environment and the forces that have molded him physically and mentally...The aim of science is to discover and illuminate truth; and that, I take it, is the aim of literature, whether biography or history or fiction. It seems to me, then, that there can be no separate literature of science.” Spirit, science, and literature; you might deconstruct them into the microcosm



### A Cinnamon Fern Grows in Acadia

tidelines and among its enchanted tidal pools with her great-nephew, **Roger Christie**, as the vehicle for her narrative, she took them along on a wonderful journey of discovery. When the article was published, everyone from her close friend and agent, **Marie Rodell**, to her respected editor, **Paul Brooks** urged that she expand it into a book. In late 1958 she gave Marie an expanded outline of the idea, but there were other issues just over her horizon that she could not see coming then.

As she had watched the woods of Southport Island and the surrounding areas beginning to disappear to development Rachel's concerns for the conservation of these beautiful areas began to grow. She became involved in the organization of a Maine chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Rachel had become smitten by a tract of woods on the island near her home where she wandered at length. She wanted to purchase it herself, but the asking price was more than she could afford. These activities turned Carson increasingly to thoughts of conservation in general, and her writing became more and more reflective of this broadened scope of concern, but even as she wrestled to complete work that embraced this wider view, she struggled with new domestic burdens which sapped her energy and her time.

Roger's mother, Rachel's niece, **Marjorie Williams Christie**, whose health had not been robust for some years, contracted pneumonia and died unexpectedly in January 1957. There being no other family member willing to, or capable of assuming the parenting duties, it had fallen to Rachel to adopt Roger. Her grandnephew had now become her son, and with her aging mother to care for as well

of the subatomic, but in the end they will reconstitute into the integrated whole of the universe, no matter how you describe it.

With the publication of "The Edge" Rachel was overwhelmed with an array of project proposals. More than once she had sworn off magazine article writing, but now an offering from *Woman's Home Companion* caught her eye: an idea for a story encouraging children's awareness of nature. She accepted the overture and placed it in her queue to be completed in due course. In her outline she wrote, "Once you are aware of the wonder and beauty of earth, you will want to learn about it." In the final article she went further, "Once the emotions have been aroused – a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration, or love – then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning."

Recognizing a child's great delight in the pleasure of discovering something for the first time – often the small and insignificant things that grown-ups have come to overlook as their capacity for wonder is slowly lost – Rachel tapped into the sights and sounds and smells and excitements of the night to reveal to her readers the beauty of the natural world. Using her adventures along her beloved Southport Island

Rachel was severely hampered for productive and creative time.

The spring of 1957 has seen the world change beyond reckoning with the successful launch by the Soviet Union of its Sputnik I and Sputnik II satellites. Technology was on everyone's mind and anxiety was rife around the globe. The times, they truly were a changin'. Reflecting on all of this in early 1958 in a letter to her dear friend, **Dorothy Freeman**, Rachel observed, "And man seems actually likely to take into his hands – ill-prepared as he is psychologically – many of the functions of God." Yet she also maintained, even in the face of this technological onslaught, "as man approaches the new heaven and the new earth – or the space-age universe...he must do so with humility rather than arrogance. And along with humility I think there is still a place for wonder."

Technology was not the only part of the world that had seemed to go haywire in 1957. Around the same time that the Russians were congratulating themselves on their achievement, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a plan to launch the specter of chemical warfare across the South and Southwest against an invasive species of fire ant. True enough there had been complaints from farmers, but it was also true that the effort was seen as an opportunity for USDA to expand its influence and leadership in American agriculture. Both of my grandfathers were farmers, and on my mother's side he was a dairyman. My father was on the staff of the Dairy Science Department at the University of Georgia. I remember the conversations well.

The primary weapon that the USDA proposed to use was massive aerial spraying of the World War II-developed chemical DDT. Many people outside of the department, not only conservationists, but in other branches of government, foremost being the Department of the Interior, questioned this approach and objected to it.

At the same time a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, New York, pitted a group of Long Islanders against the USDA and New York Department of Agriculture (NYDA) over the same issue – massive aerial spraying of DDT in an effort to wipe out Dutch elm disease as well as to check mosquitoes. There would be a steady stream of written and oral testimony as to the adverse effects on plants and wildlife from this chemical bath.

Rachel was familiar with the USDA programs. She was beginning to hear of increasing evidence that in addition to killing birds and other beneficial insects, the spraying regimen was producing a growing number of insect pests that had become resistant to the chemicals. From her years of working within the bureaucracy, Rachel's opinion was that too often the predator and pest-control scientists in USDA, as well as in FWS, acted too quickly without an adequate knowledge of the long-term impacts of the chemicals they were studying. In her view, if these substances were used indiscriminately the balance of nature would be threatened, and with it the functioning ecology of the natural world. As she began to talk to other scientists and to gather information regarding this expanded use of pesticides, she became convinced that the calamity spawned by the misuse of them went so far as to include a danger to human health as well.

It was a letter written to the ***Boston Herald*** by an angry New Hampshire resident, **Beatrice Hunter**, in January 1958, outlining the wildlife damage around her home, and the spark it ignited, that would really fire Rachel to action. Hunter's letter had encouraged another New Englander, **Olga**



**Blueberry Fields in Maine Flame**

**Owens Huckins**, to write the *Herald* about her own experience with the spraying program. Huckins and Carson had been friends for several years, and when Rachel received copies of Huckins' correspondence and Hunter's letter, it was the casting of the die that would ultimately lead to the writing of *Silent Spring*.

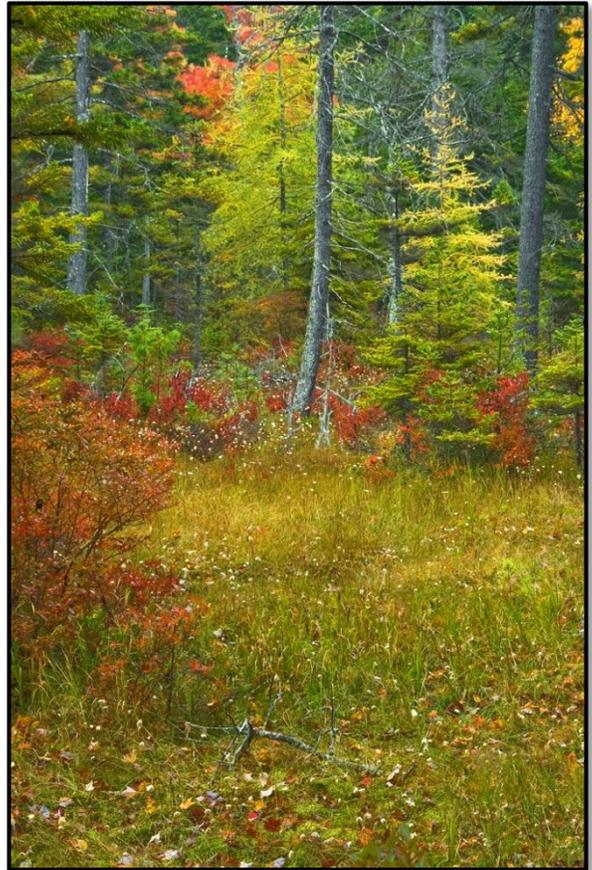
In spite of having to her credit three of the best-selling books of the 1940's and 50's, these are not why most of us remember Rachel Carson. Nor do we quickly recall all of the writings she shepherded into public view in her role as chief editor of publications at FWS. We know Rachel Carson, if at all, because she wrote a little green-covered book that challenged the hubristic notion that man can control nature and the natural world with the products of his imagination and the outcomes of his brain functions, and that he can do so in a way that is "better" than the world in which creation has evolved for billions of years, as if man himself were apart from the world in which he lives. Her little green-covered book did not tell us that we should never use those products and outcomes, but that we should do so carefully and with as full a knowledge as possible of the risks we are taking with regard to the ecosystem as a whole and as complete a

reckoning as possible of the alternatives that might be available – a knowledge that is disseminated broadly and discussed extensively in the public domain, and not merely kept behind the closed doors of a few scientists and other apostles whose motives are to create profit or power for those who employ them. I have read the criticisms of *Silent Spring*, that it is not good science or "real" science, that it advocates elimination of all chemical pesticides and a return to the dark ages, that it advocates a belief in the "balance of nature theory," that it is responsible for the deaths of millions of people from the ravages of malaria. These charges are simply not true – except for the balance of nature. Carson posited a reasonable approach to the use of DDT and other pesticides, and I'll leave it at that. And there has been too much written over the past several years which debunks the notion that deaths from malaria around the world can be laid at the feet of *Silent Spring* or Rachel Carson.

I have visited the Competitive Enterprise Institute's website, and the Rachel Was Wrong site, too; and I have listened to **John Stossel's** commentaries and the Simpleton's Guide to DDT. They mostly are shrill-voiced and polemic (even the soft-spoken simpleton), and seem more calculated to create diatribe rather than dialogue. Unfortunately they are reminiscent of the old **Garfield** cartoon strip showing Garfield wearing one of those arrow-through-the-head hats and a caption that reads, "If you can't convince 'em, confuse 'em."

I am a believer. I would like to believe that those who are enamored with the power of technology to add positively to the clutter of the material world will, in their compulsion to create new forms and processes, always have my best interests at heart; that their primary motive for what they do is human welfare more than the welfare of corporate profit; that they have assessed the dangers involved and can explain those to me like I am a six-year-old, and if they are ignorant of those facts will say so up front. I have no desire to live in a risk-free world; in fact, I enjoy good risks now and again, but I can calculate what they are and can explain them to others.

What I would like to believe and what I observe in the culture around me are often at odds with each other, and I am left with a failure of trust. The one thing that I do trust without question is the world



### **Intimacy and Landscape**

of nature. Nature requires of me a struggle to survive, but it will always tell me where it stands and where I stand within it. And in that struggle I am continuously led to wonder – at a world so dynamic and yet so perfectly balanced. Rachel Carson knew something about wonder, she knew it in the way a child knows it, full of awe and reverence. Had she lived longer she would likely have expanded greatly on her understanding of its power to excite, to transform, and to point our way to beauty. As she once said, “The child intuitively apprehends the truth that most adults have forgotten – that we are all part of the natural world.” When she passed away on April 14, 1964, she left a void, not easily filled, in our understanding of what it means to see ourselves as part of our world and not apart from it. Ultimately we climbed those 800’ from the trailhead to the cut-off down to the base of Hen Wallow Falls. As the four adults watched him make his own introduction, Rich said his first hello to a waterfall. I had no doubt that he understood perfectly the natural world of which he is a part, about which he has so much to learn. And I can only hope that there will always be Rachel Carsons in the world to help remind him that wonder is everywhere he goes.

## **What’s Now?:**

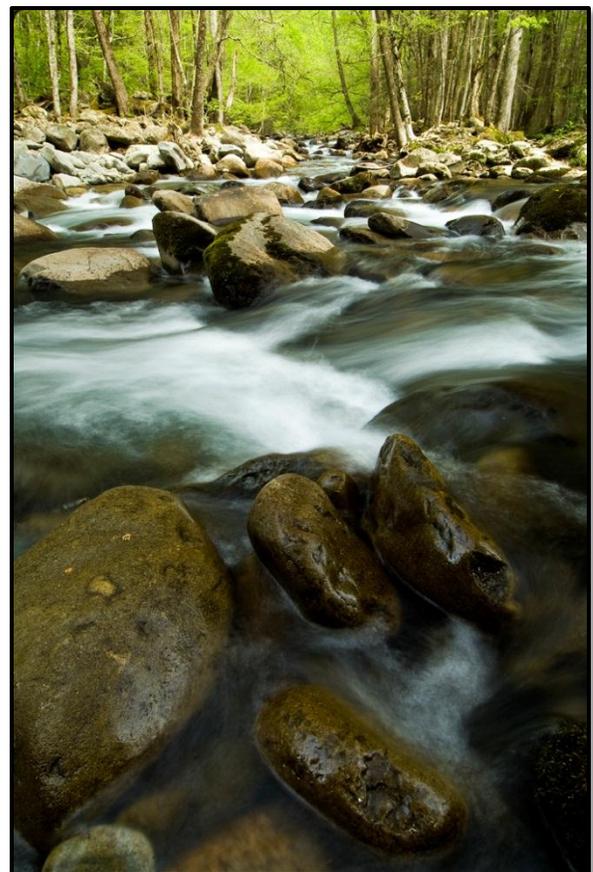
### **The Twentieth-Ninth Day**

The inventor of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), the economist Simon Kuznets, never intended it as an indicator of progress or happiness. Kuznets sent a report to Congress in 1934 that included a new way of reporting on the state of the economy, but cautioned that “the welfare of the nation can...scarcely be inferred from a measure of national income.

Steve Stoll  
Professor of History  
Fordham University

In an Environmental Law course during my last year of law school many years ago I was assigned a paper on “Economic Growth and the Environment.” The more I considered the topic and the more I read, the more convinced I became that those who promoted unfettered and unregulated economic growth had done nothing to evaluate the environmental costs, nor impacts, of their proposals. They simply saw more growth always as better, especially when the cost of the growth did not have to take into account the environmental damage and destruction that accompanied it. Since I had an undergraduate degree in Economics, I felt that I was in somewhat of a position to understand their analyses; and they didn’t seem to add up then, nor do they now.

At the beginning of that paper I offered a little story that I hoped would illustrate my assessment of the situation: There was once a freshwater pond ecosystem which contained a unique species of water lily so that its growth rate was such that it doubled in size every twenty-four hours. In the beginning the pond was so large and the water lily was so small that it scarcely mattered about the size of the lily. But the facts of the lily’s growth rate and the size of the pond were known, and so it was calculated that at the end of thirty days the lily would cover the pond completely. This meant that on the twenty-ninth day



**Half of a River Equals?**

the size of the plant was such that it covered exactly half the pond. On that day the creatures that inhabited the pond were happily aware of all their good fortune at having such a wonderful, large lily in their midst, and they had no idea that on the next day, unless they did something to trim back the size of the lily, their lovely home would disappear.

Now the last thing I consider myself to be is a prophet of gloom and doom; but it does seem to me that the story is worth considering in our today's world. The pond isn't getting any larger and there are water lilies everywhere.

The last time I wrote, it was the end of May. Since then the weather in these old mountains has been on a most interesting roller coaster ride. June and July were very warm. In fact, if I had been made to



### **The Ridges of Summer**

tall (*Vernonia gigantea*): these can still be found in scattered locations in the higher elevations of their ranges. Some of the fruit-bearing plants whose flowers bloomed some months ago are now displaying the results of their flowering. Examples of this can be found on white baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*), affectionately known as “Doll’s eyes”; Solomon’s seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*); false Solomon’s seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*); and, of course Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*). These can become wonderful macro subjects during late-summer.

One of the more wonderful aspects of late summer in the Smokies is the prevalence of morning ground fogs. Early September is a great time for this. Radiation fog, one of the more common types of fog occurring in late-summer, more often occurs when there has been rain on the previous afternoon, the overnight winds have been calm, and the ambient temperature and the dew-point are very nearly the same. When you learn to recognize these conditions from observation and forecast, you will find that you can often anticipate the presence of low-lying, early morning fog, and thus afford yourself the chance to enjoy them photographically.

High ridge areas such as Thomas Divide, Clingman’s Dome, and Heintooga Ridge Road are excellent locations for grand landscapes, while just about anywhere in the Park can be a wonderful place for intimate landscape work. Fog creates an exciting moody effect that allows ordinary elements to

bet on August weather based on those two months, I would have easily said that it’s going to break 100° during the Dog Days. That did not happen; instead August has been decidedly cooler. Over the past two weeks in Asheville, the average daily temperature has been slightly more than 3° below normal. That’s a change that can be felt.

Rainfall on the other hand has been below normal by slightly over .5 inch. So it would seem that where things are headed is anybody’s guess.

As an interesting aside, there are trees in Beaverdam Valley already showing signs of color and in the higher elevations of the Smokies the leaves of the buckeye trees are turning brown and beginning to slowly let loose their grip on the stems that have held them since spring. The fruit on those trees is ripe considerably earlier than I remember it in past years.

Most of the wildflowers that one would associate with late-summer have disappeared, or are fading. Some of the longer-blooming species such as the goldenrods (*Solidago*); some gentians, especially mountain (*Gentiana decora*); some of the Eupatoriums, especially Sweet Joe-Pye-weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*); white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*); crown-beard (*Verbesina occidentalis*), and the ironweeds, New York (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) and

become mysterious and enchanting. It creates a separation that enhances the feeling of depth in an image; and it can often be an element that covers the distractions of human-made objects. Water levels in the Park have fluctuated considerably over the past three months as precipitation amounts have waxed and waned in diverse areas. Some places have received 15"-20" during that time while others have received much, much less. Moreover the target areas sometimes change so that one area will be quite dry for a while and will then receive a spate of downpours. It's the weather. All of that to say that the stream levels, at present, are overall about what you would expect for this time of year: somewhat low except in the wake of a passing shower or thunderstorm. Greenbrier and its beautiful streams, Porter's Creek and Middle Prong of Little Pigeon River are especially attractive at the moment. So is Roaring Fork as it plunges along Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail. The Oconaluftee River upstream from Collins Creek Picnic Area at the confluence of Beech Flats Prong and Kephart Prong is also quite lovely.

Sunrise and sunset in the Park are entering a new phase photographically. The solar disc has nearly slipped behind the long ridge of Sugarland Mountain, so that it disappears some time before it becomes dark. Of course, the valley of Walker Camp Prong below Morton Overlook can still be very beautiful in the late light, but it can no longer be integrated into a real sunset image which includes the sun. The better choice for sunset is the parking area at Clingman's Dome since the sun now disappears below the horizon in the valleys on the south side of the Crest of the Smokies. Beautiful sunsets can also be seen along the Blue Ridge Parkway at Bunches Bald Overlook (MM 459.5) and at Cowee Mountains Overlook (MM 431.4)

Sunrise in the Smokies is reaching a wonderful period of opportunity at Luftee Overlook. The solar ball is moving to the right from behind the Crest of the Smokies at Newfound Gap and is approaching that part of the crest ridge that is above the valley of Beech Flats Prong, which is directly below the overlook.



**Gray Skies Over Luftee**

This means that the sun can now be used as an effective element of composition from this location. As the season unfolds it will become more and more attractive, especially when fall colors light up the beech trees near the head of the valley.

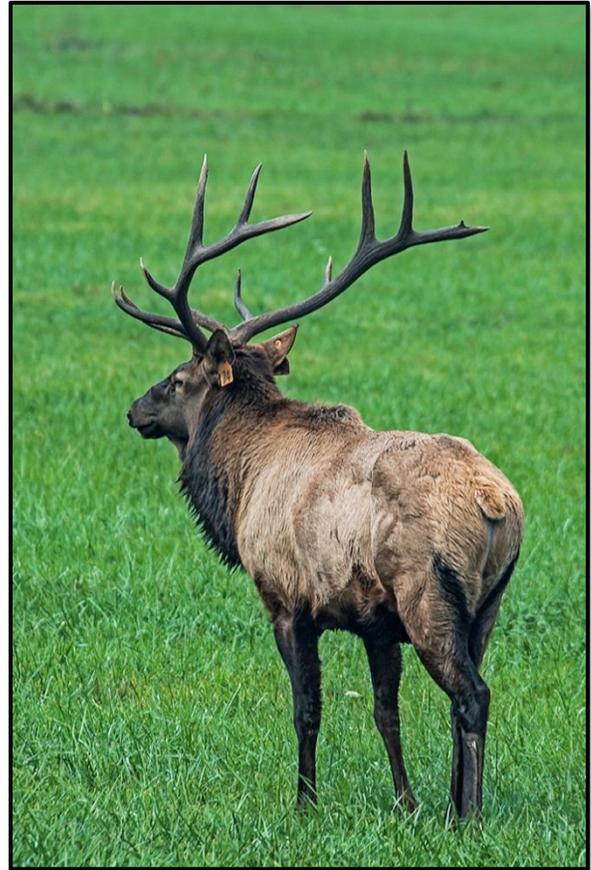
Clingman's Dome can also be a great sunrise location during fall, as the sun is moving out over the valleys of the Deep Creek watershed on the extreme left of the parking area. Used in conjunction with the gnarled trunks of some of the dead balsam firs below the overlook, the ball of the sun becomes a wonderful addition to a composition when it rises in a haze bank that softens the contrast and prohibits glare.

|          | <u>September 1</u> | <u>September 21</u> | <u>October 1</u> | <u>November 1</u> | <u>November 30</u> |
|----------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Sunrise: | 7:05 a.m.          | 7:20 a.m.           | 7:28 a.m.        | 7:55 a.m.         | 7:23 a.m.          |
| Sunset:  | 8:01 p.m.          | 7:32 p.m.           | 7:18 p.m.        | 6:39 p.m.         | 5:21 p.m.          |

The above times are for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center and will deviate a few minutes from the actual locations. Remember to arrive about forty-five minutes early so that you can familiarize yourself with the location and set up your equipment.

During mid-September the annual rites of fall – that great hormonal upswing – will overtake the elk herds and the rut will begin. The bugling of a great bull elk (*Cervus elaphus*) on a foggy morning in Cataloochee Valley is almost a substitute for caffeine, and a lot more beautiful. In spite of the thoughtless murder of three of these magnificent animals earlier in the year, the herd is doing very well. It is estimated that its strength now stands somewhere around 160 members and growing.

In November the whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) will begin their own ritual of procreation. Their energy is more fast-paced so the story is altogether different from the elk. Both are magisterial. Of course, the big news of the next three months is the changing of the colors, the great annual parade that sees these hills come alive with the hues of autumn. Folks always want to ask the question, “When is the peak of fall color?” It’s not quite that simple. Since the elevation in Great Smoky Mountains National Park varies from 6643’ to 876’ there are really three fairly distinct peak color periods. Usually the color in the higher elevations changes first, sometimes beginning in late-September or early-October. Next the middle elevations come in, and this is historically around the middle of October. Finally the lower valleys get in on the act; and this is usually in late-October or sometimes even in early-November. With the changes in global climate that have become more pronounced,



### **Isn't That Just Bully?**

however, the capacity to predict far in advance of the season has become nearly non-existent. Mobility and flexibility have become important traits for anyone wishing to maximize their productivity in a Smokies autumn, but the truth is, if you go during those weeks of the Tenth Month, you'll find something worthwhile and worthy of your rapt attention. Beauty is everywhere.

The times they really are a changin', and we have no real choice but to adapt to them. We must learn to maximize what works and carries us forward, and mitigate what holds us back and hampers our ability to thrive; but nature must be a part of the criteria by which we evaluate the path on which to proceed. To say that we wish for things to be as they once were is to deceive ourselves into thinking that the path does lead backward. I wish it were so; there is so much about the past that I truly love. Perhaps if we could return to the days of the Great Depression when people were more inclined to save and consider thrift as a great good, when they were more inclined to be helpful toward their neighbors, when it was considered wisdom to take as little as was needed and to give back whenever possible; perhaps if we could go back there without all the pain of economic loss and deprivation and split families; perhaps if we could learn to act as if we are under duress when there is no duress; perhaps then we could achieve the greatness that is possible, for us and for the land.

## **A Tip is Worth...?**

### **How Does Your Garden Grow?**

A garden is many things. To some it is a source of food. Many people appreciate the bounty of the

earth as the origin of that which sustains them physically, and for them it is their relationship with the soil and its fruit that spurs their desire to be gardeners. They love watching things grow and ripen into the products that will grace their tables at mealtime. To others a garden is a source of beauty, and the plants they typically nurture are those that give back in return a delight to the senses in the form of their colors and shapes and textures and smells. To yet others a garden is a wellspring of pleasure as manifest in the simple connection they feel with the earth, the fertile land, and its wondrous capacity to bring forth, time and again, the miracle of life, the magical profundity of the dirt-bound seed. To be sure, a garden is all of these things and more; but whatever else it is, a garden is nothing if not an output. It is that which comes in the wake of activity taken on the part of a gardener, who represents a series of inputs which, if undertaken in the appropriate time and with the appropriate tools and the appropriate efforts, are integrated into the earth and reflected back to the tiller as work made real, labor become as life. Nature, too, is a gardener; and though her input efforts are often obscure, her outputs are just as real as those of the hand that bears the hoe and the spade. But my point is not about whom gardeners are, rather what they do.

In the beginning there must be preparation. Prior to the first deposition of a single seed the soil must be made ready. It must be nurtured and made fruitful so that when the seed is planted, the condition of the ground will be favorable to its receipt and growth. In order to accomplish this, the gardener must have the necessary tools and materials to facilitate the required tasks. Seeds may sometimes grow of their own accord, but success in gardening heavily tilts toward the prepared. As **Ansel Adams** would say of his photographic endeavors, "Success favors the prepared mind."

Thus, the gardener himself, or herself, must also be ready. He, or she, must be committed to the work mentally and physically, for gardening demands strength of mind and body and a will and determination to persevere and endure. Moreover, gardening demands of the gardener a certain level of knowledge and skill so that the odds of a good outcome are as favorable as possible.

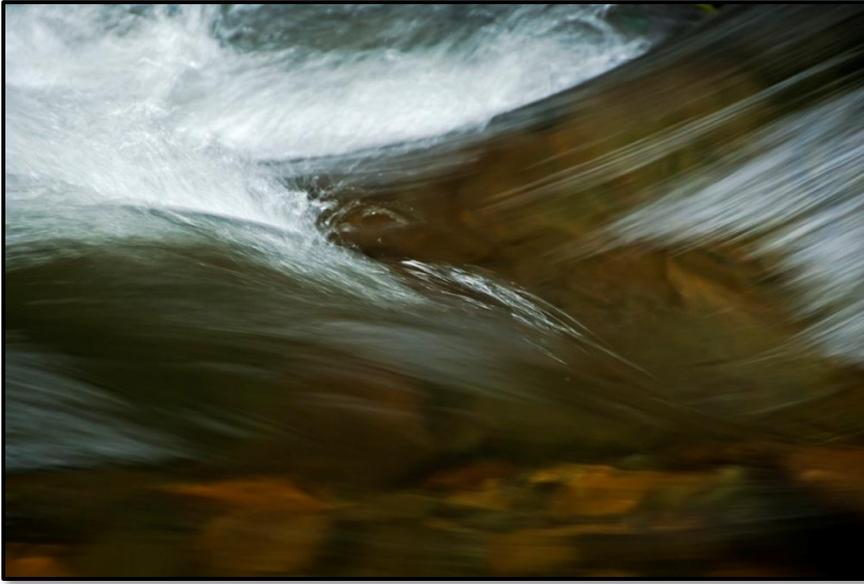
When the land is ready and the gardener has prepared, the seeds can be planted with a realistic hope that they will germinate and grow, but even then the task of gardening has only just begun. For now the gardener must engage in an almost daily regimen involving a cluster of activities. He or she must prevent the introduction of other species that might outcompete the fragile plants and choke off their ability to flourish. He, or she, must keep the soil fertile through watering when there is not enough and aerating when the ground becomes too densely compacted. Sometimes special foods are required to bolster the growing plants, much as the human body requires vitamins and minerals; and these things, too, the gardener must look to if the garden is to be successful. They must be done with a day-in, day-out consistency that approaches reverence. To approach gardening in this way, as to approach life, requires a high degree of persistence and practice, and an almost surreal patience, for Nature is always crafting obstacles for the gardener and constantly challenging his, or her, capacity to thrive. Photography, I think, is very much like gardening, and it is forever fascinating to me as I watch photographers go about their craft, to see how they respond to these issues and concepts. It would be wonderful, for example, to be able to practice photography every day, to actually create images,



**Indians, but not Red**

honing, as we do so, the skills that are requisite for competence. For I think it is true, as **Malcolm Gladwell** asserts in *Outliers*, that 10,000 hours of practice are required to gain expertise at anything, and by that I would include photography, as well.

As it is, unless you do photography as a vocation, and even if you do, life has a way of intruding and there are many days when creating images is simply not possible. Yet the creative process does not involve making images alone; it involves thinking photographically. “Seeing” means looking at images in whatever form they may be found; it means looking for images wherever one happens to be, it means visualizing what any place might look like in different conditions as well as now. It means practicing in one’s mind how one might photograph what one is looking at now, even if one can’t photograph. If photography is one’s creative medium then any effort spent in photographic



contemplation is another step along the path, and every day becomes a moment woven into one’s creative life.

**Brooks Jensen** talks about the “seduction of luck” as the reason there are so many photographers who go about their photographic lives as if this level of involvement in their craft is not a prerequisite for the creation of art, as if they can create great art in any given moment simply by owning an expensive camera and believing in “F/8 and being there.” Of course the camera manufacturers and the software developers would love to perpetuate this myth – whatever my equipment can’t create, I can

### **Wave, It’s the Friendly Thing To Do**

“Photoshop”, n’est-ce pas. I know of no art form whose practitioners seem to set forth this attitude of “creativity without practice” as implicitly, or expressly, as photographers do by their words and acts. Hand in hand with this forbearance from practice is a seeming lack of patience of the part of many photographers that manifests itself in a quest for instant gratification, “I want to be good now and I don’t want to have to practice in order to achieve goodness; after all, isn’t that what I have all of this fancy equipment for. Don’t misunderstand me, I love great equipment as much as anyone, and the gear that is on the market today is superior to any that has existed in my lifetime; but as we all know, gear doth not the photographer make. The gear can do wonders at expressing what I see, but it can never be a substitute for my vision, nor the time and effort spent in developing that vision; and all the layers of Photoshop known to mankind cannot change that.

Part of my vision, to borrow from **Barbara McClintock**, is “a feeling for the organism,” for as **John Shaw** has long maintained, “In order to be a better nature photographer, become a better naturalist.” It seems to go along with the importance of practice. How can I connect with what I do not know? And how is my vision to grow if it does not connect to the world around me?

Persistence, patience, and practice are, in my mind, the essentials of creating art, whether in photography or Frisbee golf.

In his wonderful essay “**Day Jobs**” **Brooks Jensen** says, “Seeing takes time. Photographing takes time. Printing takes time. Fortunately time is doled-out to us equally every day, equally for every one of us. Maybe the great lesson that is presented to us every day is that there will never be time for photography, but there is always time for life. When we find a way to make photography fit our life, we’ll have time for photography.”

Life seems to have become a race from one activity to the next, and it’s sometimes difficult to tell

whether this is by design or circumstance; but for the life of me I can't see where the increase in speed has led to a concomitant increase in quality. And if I'm going faster so that I can be less, maybe I'm going in the wrong direction. Again, Brooks Jensen, "Art is not something we do outside of life. It is our life... (and) the more we look at life as the pursuit of excellence, the more it becomes play and the more that play becomes an extension of our art."

Persistence, patience, and practice all in the service of the pursuit of excellence and the closer we approach it, the more it seems to become as play. Life as the play of excellence; the dance of the spirit, the soul of the divine – in gardening, as in photography, as in whatever you do every day.

## **As for EarthSong/Walking in Beauty...**

### **Walking in Beauty**

As I walk with Beauty  
As I walk, as I walk  
The universe is walking with me  
In beauty it walks before me  
In beauty it walks behind me  
In beauty it walks below me  
In beauty it walks above  
Beauty is on every side  
As I walk, I walk with beauty

### **Traditional Diné Prayer**

Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul.  
If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas.  
For reason, ruling alone, is a force confining; and passion, unattended, is a flame that burns to its own destruction.  
Therefore let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion, that it may sing;  
And let it direct your passion with reason, that your passion may live through its own daily resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own ashes.

Kahlil Gibran  
***The Prophet***

It seems hardly possible that 2012 is 67% complete and that we are sliding now more steeply into the season of autumn. In a mere three weeks we'll be leaving for the Upper Peninsula for what is shaping up to be an outstanding fall workshop there. Then we're off to Mount Desert Island and the wonderland of Acadia National Park for a repeat there. Before going, however, there is the upcoming Cusp-of-Autumn Workshop in the beautiful Smokies setting of Cades Cove. There are actually a couple of openings remaining in that event, so if you are looking for a last minute adventure of fun, fellowship, and photography in a wonderful early autumn setting here's the opportunity. Even though everything that has bloomed this year has been early, we should be set to catch the tail-end



**Someone Will Set the Sparks Off**

of the last summer flowers before they disappear; and the grasses that are going to seed should have turned to the gold of the season.

Of course the black bears (*Ursus americanus*) will already have begun their annual ritual of seeing how much they can eat in how short of a time, and Cades Cove is one of the prime stops on their restaurant circuit, as the ragged-branched cherry trees of Sparks Lane will attest. Another common feature of the Cove in mid-September is low-lying ground fog in the morning. Add to that the unique collection of historic log and other structures, and you have a setting that is incomparable for nature, history, and pioneer culture in the Southern Appalachians.

Before I get immersed in workshop discussions I want to mention a product that is especially designed to answer a need of folks who shoot wildlife at any time. My friends, **Wayne Bennett** and **Ken Blye**, have developed a unique alternative to the beanbag. They call it the **Puffin Pad**. It's a vehicle window-mounted lens cushion that's constructed of automotive foam topped by a half-inch layer of memory foam. It weighs in at 3.4 ounces and is 7x5x5 inches in actual size. Its grooved underside is designed to fit snugly over a partially raised window with the base resting on the door panel. The memory foam topside is ideal for supporting a long lens, telephoto or prime, when photographing from a vehicle is required by existing conditions. You can learn more about it at their website, [www.puffinpad.com](http://www.puffinpad.com). I'll definitely have mine in Cades Cove.

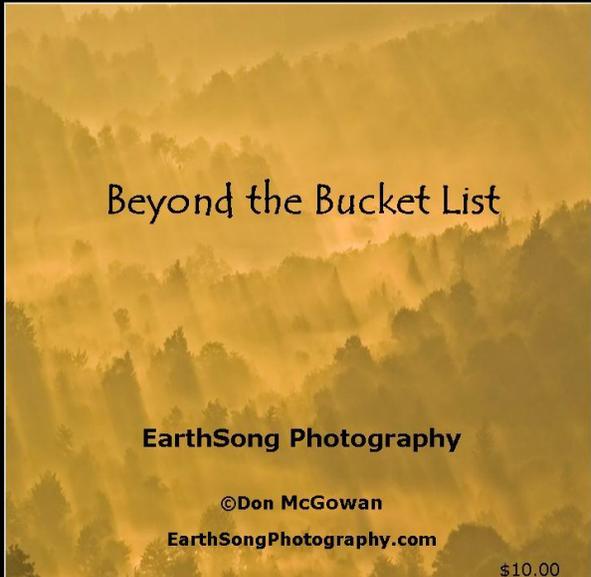
While we're talking about new products, I am really excited to announce my new CD, ***Beyond the Bucket List***. Have you ever been tempted by a drive-by shooting (photographically speaking) and worried that it might be a fatal curse? Don't despair, you're not alone; but take heart, there is both great hope and an easy way out of the dilemma.

This CD explains the pathway through this common predicament and shows you how to connect with wherever you are from Cadillac Mountain to Cartoogechaye Creek. It will make you feel really good about loving your world.

Beyond the Bucket List CD: \$10.00, plus shipping: \$2.00; Total: \$12.00

Autographed Jacket Cover: Priceless

It will soon be available on the website; but you can order yours today by sending an email to me at [don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com). The reviews are coming in, and they look really good.

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|  <p>Beyond the Bucket List</p> <p>EarthSong Photography</p> <p>©Don McGowan</p> <p>EarthSongPhotography.com</p> <p>\$10.00</p> | <p>This CD was created using Microsoft PowerPoint 2010, a component of the Microsoft Office 2010 Suite, on a Microsoft Windows 7 operating system. It will run on Windows XP, Vista, and 7 operating systems simply by inserting it into your CD Drive. If you do not have a version of PowerPoint on your viewing computer, you may first be asked to accept the licensing agreement of the PowerPoint Viewer embedded in the program before being allowed to continue. Thereafter, when the CD is inserted, a dialogue box will appear. In the dialogue box select "Play, using Windows Media Player" and the program will open. It may be necessary to adjust the size of the program to fit your screen by dragging the corners of the program to the edges of the screen. As the program begins you can right click and select "Full Screen" if you wish for the program to appear in full screen mode.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the program, reintroduce the pointer and click on the red "X" box in the upper right; otherwise the program is designed to loop and will begin to play again.</p> <p>For users of Apple's Macintosh computers, when the CD is inserted an icon will appear on your desktop indicating the program "Beyond the Bucket List." Click the icon and a window will open indicating the program is loading. In this window there is also an icon showing "Beyond the Bucket List." When the program is loaded, it will open automatically. Click the "Play" button and it will begin. At the conclusion click the "Exit" button.</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me into your busy life. I hope you enjoy and are inspired by what I have to say, as well as the images that have been selected.</p> <p><i>Don McGowan</i></p> |
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## Beyond the Bucket List

Before I go forward, let me circle back momentarily and mention a special occasion from the recent past. On July 13-15, it was my privilege to be asked to present my **“From Here to There and Back Again: A Journey Through the Wide-Angle Lens”** to the annual conference of the **New England Camera Club Council (NECCC)**, held on the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. The co-chairpersons of the event, the largest of its kind in the country, **Antoinette Gombeda** and **Susan Mosser**, as well as the entire staff and volunteer cadre of NECCC, were gracious and helpful beyond imagining.

Bonnie and I enjoyed ourselves tremendously. We connected with many old friends from New England and met lots of new ones. Over the course of the three days and three presentations nearly 350 people saw the program and over 160 new names were added to the Song List, the e-mail recipient list for ***A Song for the Asking***. We would like to thank everyone involved with this wonderful event for all of their help and hospitality; and we hope to see you all again.

As we look forward to the coming weeks, we are excited about returning to two of the most special places on earth, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Maine’s Mount Desert Island/Acadia National Park. Both of these locations are like second homes to us, and we cherish the times we have spent there, even while we happily anticipate the times to come.

As a final word I want to mention the upcoming **“See-It~Say-It” Weekend Workshop in Asheville, North Carolina, November 2-4, 2012.**



### See It, Say It Creative Capture and Image Presentation

A Workshop  
to Envision the Possibilities  
from  
The Moment You Make the Image  
to  
The Moment You Bring It To Critique

Presented by  
**Don McGowan and Warren Bedell**  
**November 2–4, 2012**

**Asheville, North Carolina**  
~Friday: Instructional Program  
~Saturday: Instructional Program/  
Field Work/ Processing  
~Sunday: Inspirational Program,  
Critique

Tuition: \$275 (Saturday lunch &  
pizza included)  
Limit: Eight (8) participants  
Registration:  
don@earthsongphotography.com,  
828-788-0687  
warren@bedells.net,  
828-883-3605



### See-It~Say-It

If you have any questions, please contact me at [don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com).

Until next time, may the Spirit of Light guide your shutter release.

This newsletter is being sent only to those people who have expressed an interest in receiving it. If you no longer want it, you can get off the mailing list by sending an email requesting removal to [don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com).



**Southwest Harbor Sunrise Panorama**