

# **NATURE'S PRESENTS**

## **Honors Thesis**

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

In the School of Education  
at Salem State University

By

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Commonwealth Honors Program  
Salem State University  
2015

## Abstract

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

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

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## Nature's Presence

## Nature's Presents

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

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

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

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

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

## Beaver

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

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

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

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

We wait patiently in silence.

I sense her before I see her.

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

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

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

## Salamander

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Owl Release

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

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

In that blink I tell you  
*Everything is okay. Today is the day.*  
*Just on more picture. I'm sorry.*

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

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

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

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

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

We take one last glance  
And my heart swells  
As we see you soar deeper into the wilderness  
That is your home.

## Activist Duck

Lining up two by two,  
Paired male to female  
The ducks set off.

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

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

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

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

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

## Bloody Frog

Brown  
Like the dead leaves  
Around you.

All brown  
But the pool of red  
On your back.

*What happened?*  
I wonder.

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

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

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

Will you live  
Or will you die  
Like the leaves under your body?

## Field Mouse

My friend and I  
Are walking down  
Wooden stairs on a path  
When I notice a movement  
To the right of the next step.

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

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

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

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

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

I place them on the ground  
And wait again.

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

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

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

## Chickadee

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

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

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

Fly on to share your song  
Wherever you go.

## **NATURAL SURROUNDINGS**

6:30 am, Robert Weingarten

Orange-yellow  
Ominous sky.

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

Ocean like  
Wrinkled saran wrap  
With one  
Determined air pocket.

Imagine sunlight  
Reflected on water  
Warm wafts  
Of beach air.

Sounds of seagulls  
Drifting over  
A never ending blue.

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

## A Storm Is Coming

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Snow

Solid white pieces of water  
Fall from the sky.

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

Yet it continues to fall.

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

In that darkness of white,  
Look within.

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

## The Drumlin Trail

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## A Hint of Spring

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

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

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

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

Clouds thinly stretch upon a horizon gradually darkening  
At a time when the world used to be black.

## Black, Gray and Brown World

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

I open my eyes,  
Then close them again.

I see a carriage  
Riding along  
A brown street.

I open my eyes,  
Then close them again.

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

I open my eyes.

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

Dark gray fly landing  
On pants of the deepest black.

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

Light gray rocks  
Lined up in a row.

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

## The Loudest Silence

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

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

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

I notice the white snow  
With its dips and mounds.

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

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

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

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

And the world rushes back  
Into my head.

## Maple Sugaring

### Step One:

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

### Step Two:

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

### Step Three:

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

### Step Four:

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

### Step Five:

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

### Step Six:

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

### Step seven:

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

## Rain

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

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

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

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

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

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

**DEER**

## My Spirit Animal

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

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

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

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

I see her  
In my mentor,  
Kind and caring.

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

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

## The Deer

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

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

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

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

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

I am welcome in your home.

## Dead Deer

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

I close my eyes  
And the image remains.

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

Blood everywhere.

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

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

## Deer Tracks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Reassuring Deer

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

There you were,  
A beautiful doe.

You ran across the road  
Making me take notice.

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

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

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

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

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

## Scared Deer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Trailing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Together we give thanks  
My professor and I.  
For we have experienced  
Something  
No money could buy.

**Author's Note:**

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

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

If I were to do this project again, I would set aside a time each week to go into nature and write poems. Because of a busy semester, I did not spend as much time outside as I would have liked, which made it much more difficult to write poems. I need to be in natural surroundings to be inspired because I like to write about what has actually happened to me. Overall, though, I am happy with the message these poems convey and I feel confident that these poems will help the reader better understand my personal connection with nature.

## Acknowledgements

Throughout the process of writing this collection of poems, many people helped directly and indirectly. I first wanted to thank Professor January O'Neil for helping me throughout the whole process. She worked with my schedule, meeting with me outside of normal class hours to edit and create a collection of poems worthy of being presented as an honors thesis.

I also wanted to say thank you to Joanna Gonsalves who did not question me when I asked to change the topic of my honors thesis a few weeks before it was supposed to be complete. Instead, she allowed me to write a collection of nature poems and assisted me in assembling all the paperwork by the deadline.

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

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to recognize Professor Patricia Bade. Without her inspiration, I would not have chosen to write this collection of poems as my thesis. She introduced me to the wonders of the environment and has been my mentor, guiding me through the complexity of the natural world.