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**Opinion: For the wild places everywhere**

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Published: 8/20/2022 6:03:48 AM

Modified: 8/20/2022 6:00:15 AM

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Discussing climate change can stir strong opinions and, especially when considering what to do about it, can leave many people feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. It’s made me wonder if there might be a better way to approach this ubiquitous and increasingly foreboding topic.

Consider what Antoine de Saint Exupéry said, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

Thinking of the environment and climate change in a similar way makes sense to me as we’d naturally want to care for and preserve something we’d first grown to love.

This was brought home to me several years ago when my husband and I purchased a 50-plus-year-old off-grid cabin on some acreage on a mountain in southwest New Hampshire. No electricity. No running water or pluming. Frankly, most folks we knew thought we’d lost it, especially our grown children. “You crazy kids!” they all said.

Oh, but in just a few months, I’d discovered some important things, like how much soot and ash can come out of an old wood cookstove and how good it can feel to bring it back to life. How our blessed spring bubbles up our water and sends it down the mountain straight into our sink as long as we keep the hose clear.

How the spirit of the land is wild and has clearly been well loved. How the tall trees and hovering mountains shelter us and whisper in the sweet night sounds. How the old stone fireplace mantel keeps close the special rocks, treasures, from the children in days past and now from our own grandkids.

How a screen porch opening to the wild can be all that’s needed to cleanse, heal and restore a weary soul. How dirty feet, clean hands and a grateful heart become “the” most appropriate attire to dine with the Great Spirit. And how I can walk around the land and, suddenly, without notice, irrupt into singing.

So, crazy? Yes! Thank God! But it would get even better. Early on I started feeling like our new piece of heaven needed a name. About that time, my husband and I had gone for a walk in Mine Falls Park close to where we live in town and I’d found three feathers. I was thrilled because in the Native American tradition feathers are considered special omens from the Great Spirit.

A few days later, as we were heading out to try a new trail near our cabin, I said, “Hey, how about if we call our camp 3 Feathers?”

My husband agreed it’d be okay but pointed out that I hadn’t found the feathers on our land or anywhere near the mountain. So, I let the idea rest. Then, as we were heading back, I saw the most beautiful large feather and then shortly after another one that looked just like it but was much smaller.

Soon, as we came in eye shot of our Jeep, my husband said jokingly with a smile, “Okay, find another one and we’ll call it 3 Feathers Camp.”

And within a few feet, I looked off to my right over a field, and there it was about twenty feet out, the third feather. But not just any feather, a dove’s feather. So now our camp had a name.

I’ve found again and again a sense of wonder, magic, that comes from leaving the paved sidewalks and the known, familiar ways, and stepping out into the wild, untamed, forest all around us. I especially love the old roads, long abandoned, hidden under the moss, grasses, stones and dirt. What stories do they yearn to share if we could only hear?

And the less traveled trails guide me to find all those treasures just waiting for their special place on our mantel. So much beauty to be seen, heard, discovered, held, and loved.

Would I do anything to protect our small piece of heaven? You bet. Could I knowingly hurt it in any way? Never. And, as importantly, it continues to awaken in me a growing sense of care for the wild places everywhere.

So, let’s not assign ourselves tasks to save the environment. Instead, let’s first walk out into the wild, magical forest all around us and allow it to awaken a longing hidden deep beneath multitasking and our over-scheduled way of life.

Let’s bring our fishing poles so the fish may remind us that to thank it for its life is the true blessing. And let’s find an old trail waiting to take us deep into a place we’ve never been, a place that propels us to love.

Then, we’ll know what to do.