

Growing up, my grandparents bought a second home in Arkansas and would bring me there every single summer. Their home was located on a 3 acre patch of land tucked away down a gravel road amongst a small forest. I would spend a lot of time outside there following my grandfather around while he did yard work. We would collect cool looking rocks and refill the hummingbird feeders. Almost every afternoon we would drive down to Bull Shoals lake, the “swimmin’ hole,” and take a swim.

I always remember my grandparents calling me over to the window when a deer family was in the yard or a few hummingbirds were at the feeders so that I could watch them. My grandfather took the time to teach me the names of all the different trees in the yard. I remember repeating to myself “oak, dogwood, maple” over and over so that I could impress him by remembering. I would rummage around in the yard by myself sometimes to look for interesting rocks to add to my collection, and if I was lucky I would find a turtle. If I did find a turtle I would go get my grandfather so that he could pick it up and put it in the kiddie pool for me to observe for a few minutes. I was always amazed by these creatures. After I finished observing the turtle, my grandfather would pick it back up and return it to the bush I found it in. I would watch in amazement as it slowly stuck its legs out and crawled back under.

I always felt very at peace at my grandparents’ home. It was quiet and full of interesting natural things I never got to see in Illinois. I could definitely tell that my grandparents had an appreciation for nature as well. They disrupted the land around them as little as possible and didn’t see it as nuisance, rather a beautiful view.

I think what Aldo Leopold is getting at in his writing is that we should take the time to appreciate and observe the natural world around us. When we do this, we find that it brings us happiness and has a great value beyond just that of resources. Conservation of the natural world is important in that we are dependent upon it for life. We cannot degrade such a bountiful provider at such a rate in which it will never return to anything like what it once was. Our experiences with nature are what will drive us to reach this conclusion, if only everyone took the time to really immerse themselves in it.