

Graced by the Wild – A naturalist ponders his relationship with nature



In the woods that – mercifully - still grace the hinterlands of our towns and cities, spring is a magical time. Frogs and salamanders emerge from their winter hiding places and migrate to their natal ponds to breed. I too migrate to the ponds at this time of year to splash around in the snowmelt and listen to the frog voices - a glorious soundscape of trills, peeps, grunts and quacks. Darkness conjures the spotted salamanders. I shiver pondside - a spring ritual for me - watching the spectacular salamanders twist and turn in their age-old breeding frenzies.



We live in a society addicted to growth. Roads, condominiums, malls, businesses spread amoeba-like over the landscape, engulfing the woods, wetlands and meadows that once pulsed with the buzz of numberless insects and the heartbeats of myriad animals.

Thank goodness that some natural space has been protected. In my bailiwick, extensive Credit Valley Conservation properties protect woodlands of oak, maple, pine, hemlock. And wetlands where beaver, mink and muskrat, wood duck, snapping turtle and heron can live their wild lives.



Conservation lands also protect streams that gurggle crystalline waters over Niagara Escarpment rock - streams that still harbour secret pools where exquisite brook trout swim.

Nature is a great teacher and an endless wellspring of discovery. I relish uncovering her truths. Alongside the appeal of discovery, nature supports my emotional well-being. I feel a palpable sense of release when I visit

natural areas. I relax, and lose myself in the magic of the wild.

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