

Cascade Park and The Back Side of Manastash

By Siera Floyd

Cascade Park and the back side of Manastash are places I use to define nature. Nature is defined as a place unfettered by the abundance of humanness—with none to a few man-made buildings, roads, or stores. There is little to nothing that man has done to the area, only what the wildlife wants to have done to it. Where the wildlife can roam free and the trees can grow without any help from man. Nature is the natural way life should be.

In this nature, I feel the calmness from the breeze and a sense of peace from the sun's warmth in the afternoon. The feeling of amazement with the way the animals move and look. Seeing a doe and a fawn is fantastic, but also, curiosity hits. Where did they come from, and where are they going? How do they survive in this natural world of theirs? The feeling of worry for them as well, that they will get hurt or caught by a predator of theirs. At the same time, the thought crosses my mind that it is how their world works. Some survive, and some do not. It is natural selection—the food chain. Then, the sense of relaxation from the trees, as the wind moves while it rains, comes to me, and my worries wash away in the rain. This is a sense of relaxation that is hard to get at home. There is always something to be distracted by or put you



on the edge. It is rare for people just to sit and be in the city. It is always go go go. A sense of peace comes at night while the crickets are chirping and the stars are out. This peace never seems to come in the city due to the noises of human life.

During the day, you can see a hawk, ready to catch his prey, circling an area. In the book *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold sees a similar sight, “A rough-legged hawk comes sailing down over the meadow ahead. Now he stops, hovers like a kingfish, and then drops like a feathered bomb into the marsh. He does not rise again, so I am sure he has caught, and is now eating, some worried mouse-engineer who could not wait until night to inspect the damage to his well-ordered world.” (page 4-5). This is a part of nature where my peace and amazement come from, the way the natural world works. The animal kingdom is a fierce and curious sight to see.

The hawk is not the only animal looking for food today. I find a chipmunk a few feet away, chewing on the brush and grass that was just walked through. He sees me but does not get scared, for I sit still. I sit and watch how he moves through the grass and brush from piece to piece until I move closer. That is when he takes off. These sights may be found in the city but not in a way that brings you curiosity or puts you in a state of observation. Even if you get to that point, there are always noises or movements of others around you that send the animal running. At night in Cascade Park and the

back side of Manastash, you can see what seems like a billion stars. Bright and magnificent in their glory. Here, there is not much artificial light to dim them out.

I can hear the animals, the way the water moves, and the rain hits without the noise of the motorists, from the bees that are buzzing, along with the flies, to the elk bugling on the other side of the mountain. There is no honking of car horns or yelling from the people on the street. No phones buzzing with notifications, no urgencies from the people I pass through the day. Only the squirrel in the tree rustling around, talking as if to say I was too close to his tree. The sound of the deer and elk walking across the draw with the hooves making contact with the rocks. While you walk across that hillside, all you hear is the crush of the grass and brush beneath your feet, along with the sound of your breath. It sounds as if you are walking on popcorn or rice crisps. At night, you hear moths flying around the small light we used to see.

Once it is dark, all you hear is the elks bugling, the creek flowing, the crickets chirping, and the pine needles and rain tapping on the tent. To listen here shows a less industrial side of life, a less human side of life—the way the world used to be. It is easy to agree with Edward O. Wilson when he says, “If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change. Gaia, the totality of life on earth, would set about healing itself and

return to the rich environmental states of a few thousand years go.” Humans have made this world, to a point, a mess. If humans stepped back and learned to enjoy and preserve this nature, we might improve the world. If humans changed some environmental ethics, we would do the world justice.

Throughout my time in these places, I have touched many things. First, I reach out and touch the brush that looks soft but turns out to be rough and spikey. Nevertheless, the next plant that my dad points out looks to be spikey but is the softest thing I believe I have ever felt. The way nature grows and protects itself is a mesmerizing thing. Through my boots, I feel the difference in where I step. In some spots, the dirt is soft like powder; in others, it is thick and rocky. The feeling of the cold water in the creek as it hits your legs and seeps into your boots sends a chill up your spine. While sitting and watching the animals move, the feeling of some crawling comes over me. That is when I notice a bee crawling down my arms. The first thought that comes to mind is to startle, but as I was taught, I stayed calm and let him do his thing. Within seconds, he flies away, and another bug seems to take his place. The best thing is the wind blowing across my face and bringing me that cold, crisp air. Likewise, the way the sun's warmth hits your face while it rises in the morning. There are many amazing things to touch or be touched by out here. These things seem more magical out here than they would feel in the city. People startle and complain about the wind and the cold that comes with it.



I consider this to be natural because there are a lot less of man-made places or things. No sidewalks, pavement, or manufacturing plants that release smog or chemicals into the air. No car zooming down the road, releasing the smell of gasoline, just plants and trees. A place full of wildlife, roaming free and unbothered, for the most part, by man. It has beautiful views that do not involve skylines or city lights, just the natural world. Nature is defined as a place unfettered by an abundance of humanness. Nature should be preserved and respected because”....the degradation of the environment poses a great threat to life as nuclear war and more probable tragedy.” Nature is to be loved and taken care of. A place that should be considered home because it is where we all started. A place unfettered by humanness.



Work-cited

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