



# RELIGIOUS NATURALIST ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

created by religious naturalists for religious naturalists

November 2023

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## Feature Article - November 2023

### Poppies for Peace by Terry Findlay

The date is November 11, 2023. People in the streets of Victoria, BC are wearing bright red poppies, the traditional symbol of what we, in Canada, refer to as Remembrance Day. Elsewhere it is known as Armistice Day or Veteran's Day. Originally this day was set aside to honour those who fought and died in World War I. It has since been expanded to encompass recognition of military personnel around the world who have fought in armed conflicts. Poppies have also come to symbolize hope for a more peaceful world.



Remembrance Day Parade in front of the Parliament Buildings in Victoria, BC

This day is typically marked by gatherings meant to show gratitude for the sacrifices made by military personnel who put their lives on the line to protect a way of life we are grateful to enjoy. In the city of Victoria and surrounding communities, ceremonies were held at 11 a.m. in which two minutes of silence were observed allowing participants to remember and think

about those who have fought for our way of life around the world. Sadly, those thoughts likely included, for some, the realization that there appears to be no end to conflicts requiring ever more personnel to fight for causes deemed worth dying for. According to [Geneva Academy](#) there are more than 45 armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, more the 45 in other parts of Africa, 21 in Asia, 7 in Europe, and 6 in Latin America. It would seem there will be no decline in the demand for poppies of peace in the foreseeable future.

In the countries that once made up the Commonwealth of Nations there is a phrase often heard at Remembrance Day ceremonies: “Lest we forget.” Originally a line in a poem by Rudyard Kipling, the words have come to be a reminder that we should never forget the horrors of war or the sacrifices made by human beings in those wars. Unfortunately, it would appear that even when we remember the past we may be doomed to repeat it.

As a religious naturalist I am appalled by the widespread use of arms in the world today and I am moved to ask myself what it might take to bring about a world where these reminders of the horrors of war were no longer necessary, where celebrations of peace replaced ceremonies of regret. In my mind the religious naturalist orientation provides a foundation for just such a possibility. Key concepts such as the four outlined on our Religious Naturalism website (<https://religioustrualism.org>) exemplify ideas that, if taken to heart, could encourage a fundamental change in how we view ourselves and our relationships with one another and our environment.

To me taking Naturalism, A Central Story, Connection, and Religious Responses to heart involves not only a knowledge of these pillars of RN but also an understanding of their implications regarding ways to live together in a more compassionate and sustainable society.

The first of these pillars of the religious naturalist orientation is **Naturalism** which is described as “a view that all that exists and all that occurs is due to natural processes.” This stance places responsibility squarely in our hands. We should not hope for supernatural intervention to save us from ourselves. Naturalism recognizes that there is not, and has never been, an escape hatch on Spaceship Earth. It is clearly up to us to come up with better ways of doing things.

The next key concept is **A Central Story**. An understanding of the evolution of the cosmos and of life on Earth makes it clear that we are all in this together. We share a history that explains our origin and a reason why things are as they are. Through an understanding of this history we can come to better understand ourselves and our place in the world.

Evolution has woven all living things together in complex webs of interdependent interactions. Neither persons nor nations can thrive independently. This is the idea of **Connection**, another pillar of the religious naturalist perspective. Every living thing requires fuel and energy to maintain its existence. Thus every living thing is dependent on its environment. It follows that the environment needs to be able to maintain healthy relationships among its interdependent elements if it is to sustain living things.

Taken independently or together these three key concepts may evoke a **Religious Response** in us as we witness the beauty that natural processes manifest in a spectacular sunrise, contemplate what our origin story tells us about the vast history behind our existence as we express gratitude at Thanksgiving dinner, recognize the astonishing complexity of even simple life forms as we watch enthralled as an ant diligently carries a piece of a leaf much larger than itself. These things are not uncommon and yet they can inspire moments of great awe and wonder.

The four Key Concepts of Religious Naturalism are not merely wishful thoughts. They are facts about the nature of existence and they are supported by rigorous scientific enquiry. As such, I believe we can rely on them to provide direction in terms of ways in which we can live together more peacefully.

From now on I’m going to take Remembrance Day as a day to remember and contemplate the

implications for peace that the key concepts of religious naturalism present to us. Each year it will be a day to remember to take these concepts to heart.

Lest we forget.

Peace, Terry Findlay



## News and Events

### Regular Events:

#### *Deep Transformation Network Monthly Meeting*

Attend the live monthly network meeting on the **first Tuesday of every month at 1:00 pm Pacific** (check your time zones carefully!) <https://deeptransformation.network/spaces/10286307/feed>

#### *JD's Calendar*

A calendar of JD Stilwater's upcoming events can be found at <https://www.jdstilwater.earth/events/>

#### *Unitarian Universalist Religious Naturalist Discussion Group*

(Fourth Thursday of the month at 5:30 PM Central Time). Next meeting: October 26th, 5:30 CDT.  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89422158312>

Are you a Unitarian Universalist Religious Naturalist (or RNUU adjacent) and looking for fellow travellers to explore this path? Join us for what we hope will be a lively and enriching conversation as we explore what it means to be on this path. Our topic this month comes from our own JD Stillwater, *Defiant Love* (24 mins) [video with transcript available](#)

Please note we will not meet in November due to the holidays.

#### *Sacred Depths of Nature Presentations and Podcasts*

Follow this link for the latest presentations and podcasts on *The Sacred Depths of Nature* with Ursula Goodenough.

<http://sacreddepthsofnature.com/conferences/>

#### **Interview with JD Stillwater**

In a podcast on Spirit Matters JD Stillwater presents a message for an audience of New Agers and other "spiritual seekers."

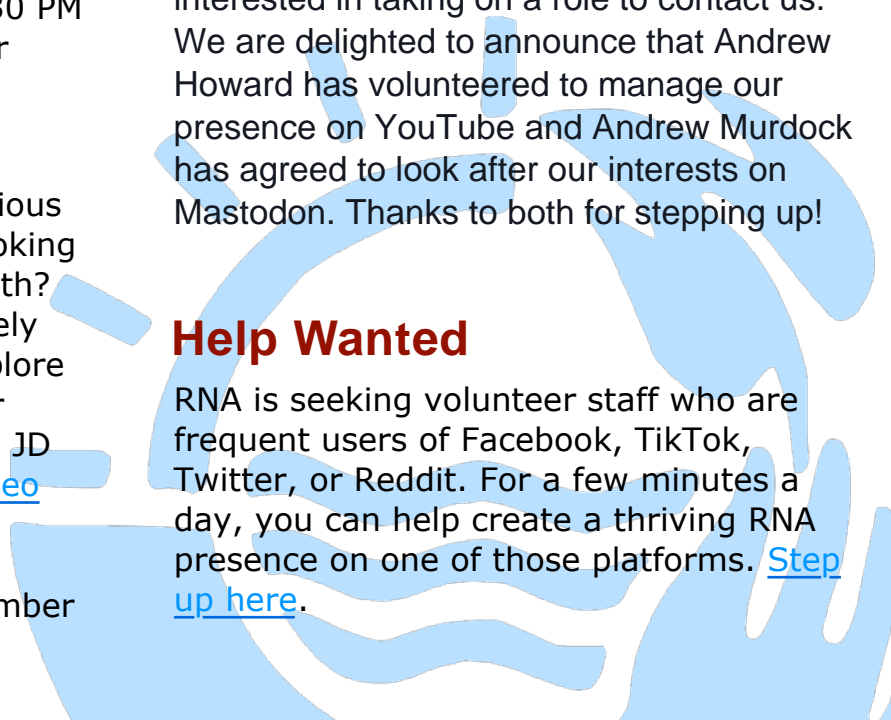
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/41kppdf03Fr7CtwoOdLySN>

#### **A Tale of Two Andrews**

Last month we presented our RNA Organizational Chart and asked anyone interested in taking on a role to contact us. We are delighted to announce that Andrew Howard has volunteered to manage our presence on YouTube and Andrew Murdock has agreed to look after our interests on Mastodon. Thanks to both for stepping up!

#### **Help Wanted**

RNA is seeking volunteer staff who are frequent users of Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, or Reddit. For a few minutes a day, you can help create a thriving RNA presence on one of those platforms. [Step up here.](#)





## Forum Topic of the Month

### Who has inspired you?

We all have people who have had an inspirational effect on us. Who has been or is inspiring to you?

<https://religious-naturalist-association.org/>

## Music of the Month



**Peace Train** featuring Yusef/Cat Stevens - Playing for Change

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QpjR6-Uuksv=i41qWJ6QjPI>

## Video of the Month

### New Naturalism: Resilient, Ecological, Vibrant Gardens



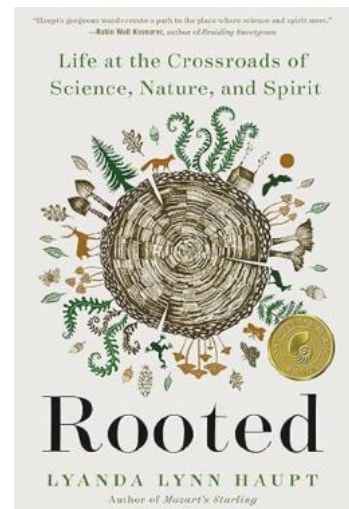
We hear a lot about ecology, but what can we do at ground level in our own gardens? Visionary horticulturist Kelly D. Norris celebrates stylish, naturalistic gardens that connect us to the land under our feet. In *New Naturalism: Designing and Planting a Resilient, Ecologically Vibrant Home Garden*, he fosters gardens where place, plants, and wildlife interact.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/new-naturalism-resilient-ecological-vibrant-gardens-72lmwz/>

## Book of the Month

### Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit

by Lyanda Lynn Haupt



"With her deep intuition and expansive attention as our guides, Lyanda Haupt's gorgeous words create a path to the place where science and spirit meet. It's a barefoot path that wanders through solitudes and into community with frogs, moose, orca, and our own wildness." — **Robin Wall Kimmerer**, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*

[View on Amazon](#)

## Living Thing of the Month

### The Happiest Animal in the World

While there's no formal research on the topic, the happiest-animal-in-the-world title most often goes to the crazy-cute wallaby known as the quokka.

Found exclusively in southwestern Australia—and mainly on the country's remote Rottnest Island—quokkas are small, cat-size marsupials known for their curious natures and cheerful facial expressions. "They always look like they are smiling," says Sally Hollis, corporate engagement officer for the nonprofit Rottnest Foundation, "so they've been referred to as 'the happiest animal on earth.'" <https://www.rd.com/article/happiest-animal-in-the-world/>







## Website of the Month

### Deep Transformation Network

This is an online community for people who recognize that our civilization is in existential crisis—and who want to engage with others in facilitating a deep transformation toward a life-affirming future on a regenerated Earth.

It invites open-hearted, caring, and curious folk, engaged citizens, and changemakers from around the world to come together in helping catalyze the deep transformation our global society needs. It welcomes people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural traditions who share a desire to collaborate in co-creating a flourishing future for all humanity and for the nonhuman relatives with whom we share the Earth.

The community's origins arose from those attracted to the writings of Jeremy Lent, author of *The Patterning Instinct* and *The Web of Meaning*. However, it aspires to become a self-organized, nurturing network for everyone engaged in the collective process of planetary regeneration.

<https://deeptransformation.network/>

### RN Links

**Members Contributions:** Our members contribute sermons, articles, videos, music and other material related to the Religious Naturalist orientation. Go to <https://religious-naturalist-association.org/members-contributions/> to check them out. Please consider contributing your own material. There is a link on the page for submitting items.

### Members' Projects:

The RNA website has a section called [Members' Projects](#). This page provides links to projects of RNA members. If you have a project related to RN that you would like included on this webpage please email a description to [projects@religious-naturalist-association.org](mailto:projects@religious-naturalist-association.org).