



# RELIGIOUS NATURALIST ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

created by religious naturalists for religious naturalists

March 2024

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Photo by [Mila Young](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## Feature Article - March 2024

### Bathing in Nature With Sadie by Terry Findlay

A recent submission to our Members' Contributions section on the RNA website is called [Forest Bathing & Forest Therapy](#). It was written by Laura Emerson. Laura tells us that,

"Starting in the 1980`s, Japanese doctors started encouraging, and then prescribing, shinrin-yoku – unstructured time in nature – for patients suffering from depression, stress and anxiety, including PTSD. Subsequently, doctors in Finland and Canada, did, too.

A number of American wellness sites tout benefits as including relaxation, improved mood and attention, reduced blood pressure, stress, anxiety, and anger. Some small studies point to additional health benefits, such as increased immune function."

Just as I was finish reading Laura's post my dog, Sadie, begins to let me know, in her unmistakable way, that it is time for our morning walk. We are fortunate to live near the water and there is a beautiful walkway along the shore. "Perfect!", I think, "Time for a little nature therapy."

In about 5 minutes Sadie and I reach the walkway. The view from the spot where we enter the walkway overlooks the inner harbour of Victoria, BC. During the shorter days from late fall to early spring we are sometimes blessed with spectacular sunrises. This early spring morning the sun is up and sparkling on the water. The air is crisp and fresh and there is a light breeze stirring the budding tree branches.



Our route takes us through a bird sanctuary and a land reserve. Along the way we may encounter a variety of birds species; ducks, geese, kingfishers, loons, herons. At times when the tide is especially low herons flock to feed in the shallows. One morning I counted 14 of these impressive birds spread out across the bay. The bay is rarely silent in the mornings. Seagulls and ducks punctuate the stillness with their conversations.



Many species of land birds inhabit the area too. A resident pair of Cooper's Hawks have an ongoing and often raucous spat with a gang of local crows. The area is also frequented by otters, racoons, deer, seals, several rodent species, and a robust population of squirrels. Sadie lives to chase the squirrels up the trees. I get the feeling that the squirrels rather enjoy the game too.



It is wonderful how the vegetation changes through the seasons. There are constantly changing smells heralding the seasonal transformations. Varieties of colourful and sweet-smelling wild

flowers and earthy grasses come and go. In the fall the leaves of trees turn all shades of yellow, red, and orange, eventually covering the pathways and the field of an adjacent park with a rustling carpet. This day the welcome smells of early spring are in the air.

Early each morning as Sadie and I make our way to the marina at the end of the walkway, we each engage with nature in our own way. Sadie sniffs and snuffles her way along, exploring whatever catches her fancy, and I remind myself to Pay Attention to, Be Astonished by, and Appreciate this daily but always bountiful and special morning ritual. The whole journey, there and back, takes only about 40 minutes but I always feel invigorated by this sacred encounter with nature. And I'm sure Sadie does too.

Is there a special place that you like to go to bathe in nature? Let us know [newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org](mailto:newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org).

Cheers,  
Terry Findlay

**Help Wanted!** RNA is looking for volunteers with abilities in Accounting, Volunteer Coordinating, Spotify, Google Workspace, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Grant-Writing. Do any of those sound like fun to you? [Say so here](#) and we'll get you started!



## News and Events

### **RNUU Discussion Group: The Rights of Nature**

Thursday March 28th at 2:30 AT/3:30 PT/4:30 MT/5:30 CT/6:30 ET

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9291456582>

What do Unitarian Universalist Religious Naturalists think about the rights of nature. Let's ask a few and find out. Please watch this film, "The Rights of Nature: A Global Movement" <https://youtu.be/kuFNmH7IVTA?feature=shared> and come ready to discuss.

## RNA Store

### RNA “Swag” Now Available!

We are now offering RNA branded merchandise on our website. Get yours here: <https://religious-naturalist-association.org/shop/>

NEW



Classic Tote Bag  
\$24.36



Flexi case  
\$12.73 – \$18.18



Heavyweight  
Unisex Crewneck T-  
shirt  
\$15.93 – \$26.96



White 11oz Ceramic  
Mug  
\$12.60 – \$16.04

## News and Events continued...

### Rites of Nature: Orion’s Spring Launch Event

April 3, 2024, Online at 12pm EDT

This webinar features Sumana Roy in dialogue with Mary Evelyn Tucker. It will explore spiritual rituals practiced across traditions, regions, and time, to learn how the divine repeatedly centers on elements from our environments—and why. They will discuss the ways in which ritual, for all its rhetoric of the sacred, brings us into intimacy with nature. [Register here for this free event.](#)

### Solar Eclipse - April 8, 2024

JD shares about his powerful spiritual experience during the total solar eclipse of 2017. Delivered at the Unitarian Universalist Church of York, PA in March 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJqpdqP5dOw>

### 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>

#### *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/>

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



## Letters: Kenneth Patton

We've received two wonderful member responses to Ursula Goodenough's article in the [February Newsletter](#) about Kenneth Patton:

From Tony Van der Mude:

I know of Ken Patton quite well, although I never met him in person. He was a Universalist minister originally before consolidation. He ended his career as the minister of the Ridgewood NJ church. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/05/obituaries/kenneth-patton-83-minister-and-writer.html>

Our minister at the time in Summit NJ, Dave Bumbaugh, was a protege of his. Dave and Beverly would visit him often. <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies/kenneth-leo-patton/> He has summed up Patton's work: "It was he who taught a monotone rationalism how to sing; it was he who taught a stumble-footed humanism how to dance; it was he who cried 'Look!' and taught our eyes to see the glory in the ordinary."

So his readings and hymns were a regular part of the experience at our church. Songs of the Living Tradition has five of his hymns -- #s 303, 308, 310, 378, 379 -- and three readings -- #437, 443, 444, where #443 reads ": "Let us worship with our eyes and ears and fingertips/Let us love the world through heart and mind and body..." His readings complement Anne Dillard [#420]: "We are here to abet creation and to witness it, to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach but we notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house."

He was known to be quite a polarizing character. To quote again from the biography:

"Patton's outspoken and provocative preaching offended many, including his more conservative colleagues in the Massachusetts Universalist Convention. He jostled verbally with other ministers and religious leaders. His inability to be a pastoral minister drove parishioners away. His single-mindedness led him to ignore others' concerns and to respond with irritation to their needs. Often tendentious, he refused to compromise or even listen to other points of view. In practice, as a minister, he charged ahead with his own projects and relied on lay leadership to take care of church finances and membership growth."

[A comment from Ursula: Ministry clearly wasn't his calling. True also for [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#) albeit he accrued far larger recognition!]

From Harold Wood:

At the [Universal Pantheist Society](#), we've been aware of Ken Patton for some decades, appreciating his appeal to a kind of humanism that went beyond mere human beings.

At his church in Boston, he had murals and artwork featuring things like galaxies and planets, encouraging people to look beyond mere human society.

He was a rather important figure in Unitarian Universalism in the 1960's, as he was the editor of the new hymn book when the newly-merged Unitarian Universalist Association needed a new hymnal. Even the current UU hymn book is full of Kenneth Patton quotations [see Tony's list above].

The Universal Pantheist Society quoted him as early as our December 1983 issue of *Pantheist Vision* thus:

Kenneth Patton said, "the relationship of art and worship is that they are one and the same thing. Their identity is total."

That said, he tended to believe that the art that best expresses life was the art of movement, song, dance, and drama. For Religious Naturalists, some of the performance arts may be more difficult to enact than visual art, but I am glad that RNA is promoting song as a key part of our practices.

Thank you for reminding folks of an instructive historical figure.

## Letters: Earth Day

These thoughts were prompted in 2020 by the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, celebrated annually around the world to mark global support for environmental protection. Prompted also by a reminder that it's more than half a century since some visionary young Canadians founded the movement we now know as Greenpeace. 1968, was, some said, 'the year that changed the world', when mass protest movements gathered pace.... *mais plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*

### If only you'd believed us back in 1968

– a reminder, for Earth Day

We're poisoning the air we breathe  
with the fossil fuels we burn,  
spewing out toxic greenhouse gas;  
when will we ever learn?

We saw global warming coming  
and we gave it to you straight;  
but nobody believed us  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

The loggers fell our forests  
to grow monoculture crops,  
and strip-mining corporations  
blast away whole mountain-tops.  
We wept to see our wilderness  
in such a sorry state  
but our protests came to nothing  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

The coral reefs are dying;  
the albatross is doomed.  
pollution's fouled the ocean  
wherever the oil-fields boomed;  
and fish that ate your plastic waste  
now end up on your plate.  
We could have done something about that  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

Orangutans will disappear,  
the rhinos, and the whales;  
if the pollinating insects die,  
and conservation fails,  
our eco-systems all collapse  
and threaten our own fate.  
Can't say we didn't warn you  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

The polar bears are starving;  
their hunting ground's been wrecked.  
The arctic ice-cap's melting  
and where once explorers trekked  
now oil-men drill the ocean floor;  
their shares are doing great,  
and they've all made a million bucks  
since nineteen sixty-eight.

Clean drinking water's running out;  
we knew the reasons why.  
they dumped garbage in our rivers,  
and the aquifers ran dry.  
Green fields are turning back to dust  
at a catastrophic rate;  
too bad no-one was listening  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

Now viruses could wipe us out  
in nature's latest twist.  
The drugs big pharma's hustling  
are too easy to resist.  
Evolution's taking over;  
the grim reaper's at the gate;  
but no-one saw that coming  
back in nineteen sixty-eight.

The children of the shanty towns,  
the homeless, and the poor;  
already on the march, they'll soon  
be knocking on your door.  
A revolution's on the way;  
they've had too long to wait.  
They got the message loud and clear  
In nineteen sixty-eight.

The ocean level's rising;  
there'll be millions on the run  
and it's hard to keep a border closed  
when you face a loaded gun.  
The time for talking's over now;  
they won't negotiate.  
The future's not what it used to be  
in nineteen sixty-eight.

Another billion more of us  
our planet can't sustain,  
and the ghosts of war and hunger  
will haunt the world again.  
Some say there's time to change our ways;  
maybe it's not too late...  
but if only you'd believed us  
back in nineteen sixty-eight!

*Michael Barrett, Oxford  
Earth Day, 22nd April 2020*

If you have the ability you might like to try your hand at putting these words to music. If you do please let us know. [newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org](mailto:newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org)

## Music of the Month

### Mother Nature's Son



This song was released in 1968 on The Beatles' White album. It seems an appropriate choice to accompany this month's feature article on Nature Bathing and Nature Therapy.

[Listen on YouTube](#)

## Suggest Music

### Help Build Our RNA Songbook

Do you know of a song or poem that we could add to our songbook? Click this link to nominate your item.

[Song Nomination Form](#)

[View Songbook](#)

## Video of the Month

### Thomas Berry - In his own words

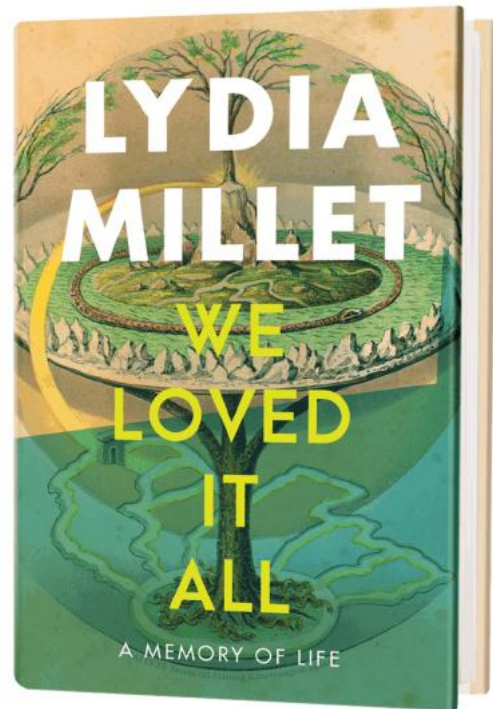


One year before Thomas Berry's death I was fortunate to have interviewed him. I encourage all young people as well as Baby Boomers to listen to his words share it in classrooms. His wisdom is needed more than ever in this world.

[Watch on YouTube](#)

## Book of the Month

### We Loved It All by Lydia Millet



In an era of literature where it has become fashionable to make climate change a plot point, it is refreshing to read a book that is both emphatically beautiful at the line level and deeply insightful at an ecological level. Millet has spent decades immersed in environmental work with the Center for Biological Diversity in Arizona.

[View on Amazon](#)

## Living Wonder of the Month

### The Goblin Shark



The goblin shark (*Mitsukurina owstoni*) is a rare species of deep-sea shark. It is the only extant representative of the family Mitsukurinidae, a lineage some 125 million years old. [read more...](#)



# Journey of the Universe

## Journey of the Universe Newsletter

Rites of Nature

March 2024

[Click to read the newsletter](#)

## Visit us on Social Media



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## Letters to the Editor:

Please send your comments, suggestions, questions, and submissions to [newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org](mailto:newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org).

If your letter has content that we would like to publish in a future newsletter we will contact you for permission.

## RNA Forum:

PLEASE NOTE: **The RNA Forum will be closing down at the end of April.** After introducing this format and using it for several months, we found that it just didn't catch on as a popular communication tool. [RNAnet@googlegroups.com](mailto:RNAnet@googlegroups.com) and [Facebook](#) will remain the main venues for online group conversations. If there is anything on the forum you want to save please copy it from the forum and paste it into a document on your computer before April 30th. [Click HERE](#) to go to the Forum.

## Website of the Month



CREATION SPIRITUALITY  
*Communities*

CSC is a network of individuals and communities who experience our own spiritual paths in connection to the evolving paradigms of the universe.

Through study, community, and practice, Creation Spirituality Communities creates opportunities to deepen our compassion, justice, creativity, and vision for cultural transformation so that we all might experience our sacred connection to the Spirituality of Creation.

<https://cscommunities.org>

## RNA 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).