



RELIGIOUS NATURALIST ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

created by religious naturalists for religious naturalists

September 2024

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lava flowing into the ocean at dusk

Feature Article - September 2024

Secular Faith by Todd Macalister

"I have great faith in a seed."
Henry David Thoreau

With this being a newsletter, and since some types of news can involve new ideas, I thought it could be worthwhile to start with some brief thoughts from a book I recently read parts of: "[This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom](#)" by Martin Hägglund.

In this, the term "faith" is used in a different way than the quote above by Henry Thoreau, but both of these seemed worth a mention.

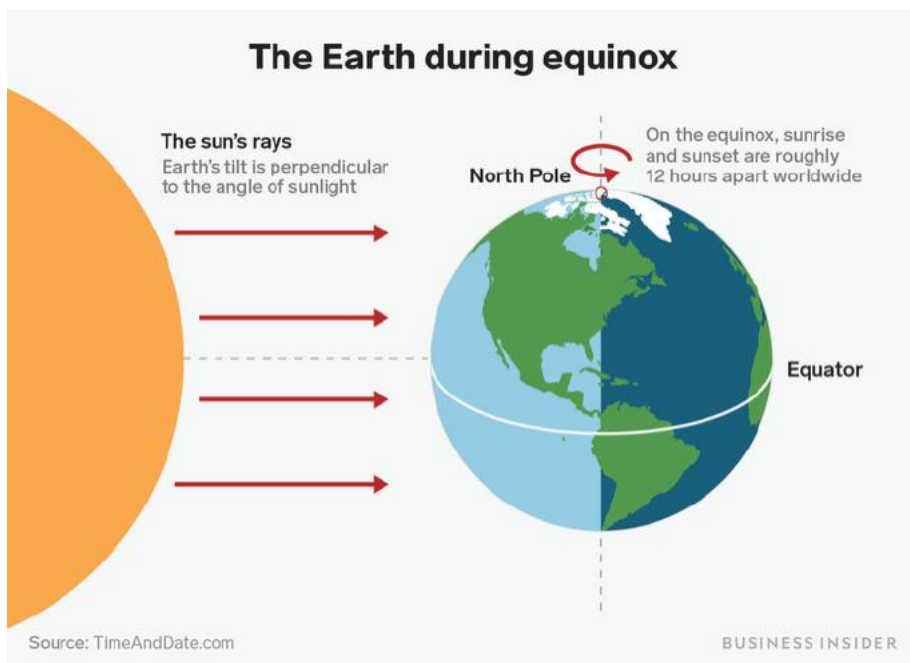
The main point Hägglund makes is that while, in major traditional religions, faith can involve trust in a deity or force (such as karma or tao) that is eternal and often all-powerful, a secular view, like a naturalist view, sees all of life as finite and vulnerable, and where living things are dependent on one another.

With this, rather than aspiring toward eternal life or cosmic rewards, from a secular perspective (which Hägglund sees as based in the Latin word, *saecularus*) we may commit to projects that are *worldly* and *temporal*. And with only this one life to live, as we try ourselves to live longer and to live better, we can also find value and meaning in trying to help one another. As Hägglund put it, "we need to take care of one another because our lives are fragile" and, also, because we

recognize that, if we do not act, someone, or some things (such as the many varied lives in natural environments) may be lost.

In this view, meaning comes not in spite of our lives or achievements being of limited duration. Instead, it is only *because* life is finite that we can have faith that what we do matters. And with this comparison he feels that an eternal life “is not only unattainable but also undesirable, since it would eliminate the care and passion that animate my life”.

To switch from religious philosophy to celestial events, another point of interest this month is that September 22 is the date of the equinox; where, throughout the whole world, the length of day (from sunrise to sunset) is the same 12 hours for all people and all living things. And, while this may not have a major impact on any of us, it can be nice to have occasions to focus on things that are shared by all (and also to enjoy a middle ground that, at this time of year, is as balanced as it gets in each location – not too dark or too light, not too hot or too cold, and often near to a place that seems “just right”).



Todd Macalister

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/>

News & 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>

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/>

News and Events

New podcast on the RNA YouTube channel: "Reverence for Reality"

Discussions with people who identify as religious naturalist or otherwise derive their spiritual inspiration from the natural world.

NEW

Second Episode: Second Episode: Andrew talks with Ursula Goodenough, president of RNA and author of *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (www.sacreddepthsofnature.com) <https://youtu.be/H9CejlHHcWs>

2nd RNA Online Open Mike

On **Wednesday, October 2, 2024 starting at 8:30 pm EDT** (and ending perhaps 90 minutes later at 10pm EDT), the RNA music group will be hosting its second RNA Online Open Mike. We hope again to allot 5-10 minutes per person, depending on attendance. RNA stalwart Michael Cavanaugh has graciously offered his Zoom account access for an even better experience.

Here is the form to sign up:

[2nd RNA Online Open Mike sign-up form](#)

One doesn't have to fill out this form to just attend. The link to the video call will be shared later.

The Temple of Understanding

FORUM2024 One Vote, One Planet: Healing Our World with Chief Arvol Looking Horse, Rev. Cathlin Baker, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Bob Thurman, Melanie Goodchild, Nina Simons, Bill McKibben, and Zanagee Artis. Topics include:

- Traditional Knowledge and The Rights of Nature
- Vote Peace and Environmental Justice
- People Power, Building a Movement

Registration is free for the online international FORUM and donations are gratefully accepted by the Temple of Understanding. <https://templeofunderstanding.org/forum-2024/>

Topic: RNA Open Mike

Time: Oct 2, 2024 8:30 PM EDT (7:30 PM CDT)

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2803347265?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2803347265?pwd=YUFETzhSTzZFV2tYVHd1eTZkd1BIUT09&omn=85300418054)

[pwd=YUFETzhSTzZFV2tYVHd1eTZkd1BIUT09&omn=85300418054](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2803347265?pwd=YUFETzhSTzZFV2tYVHd1eTZkd1BIUT09&omn=85300418054)

Meeting ID: 280 334 7265

Passcode: 125861

All Souls NYC Adult Education: The Sacred Depths of Nature

September 22 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am EDT.

Presented by Ursula Goodenough. Click [HERE](#) for more information.



Video of the Month

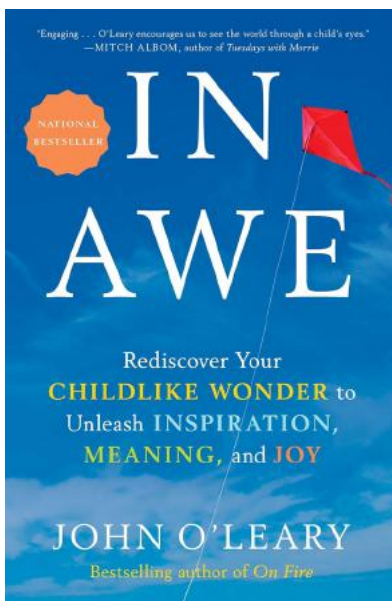
Tipping Points of Climate Change



We're nearly halfway through the 2020s, dubbed the most decisive decade for action on climate change. Where exactly do things stand? Climate impact scholar Johan Rockström offers the most up-to-date scientific assessment of the state of the planet and explains what must be done to preserve Earth's resilience to human pressure.

[Watch on YouTube](#)

[Visit Our YouTube Channel](#)



Book of the Month

In Awe by John O'Leary

In his new book, bestselling author John O'Leary invites us to consider that it is possible to once again navigate the world as a child does. Identifying five senses children innately possess and that we've lost touch with as we age, O'Leary shares emotional, humorous, and inspirational stories intertwined with fascinating new research showing how each of us can reclaim our childlike joy, and why doing so will change how we interact with the world.

[View on Amazon](#)

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!



Music of the Month

Workin' On A World (Lyric Video) - Iris DeMent



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](#)

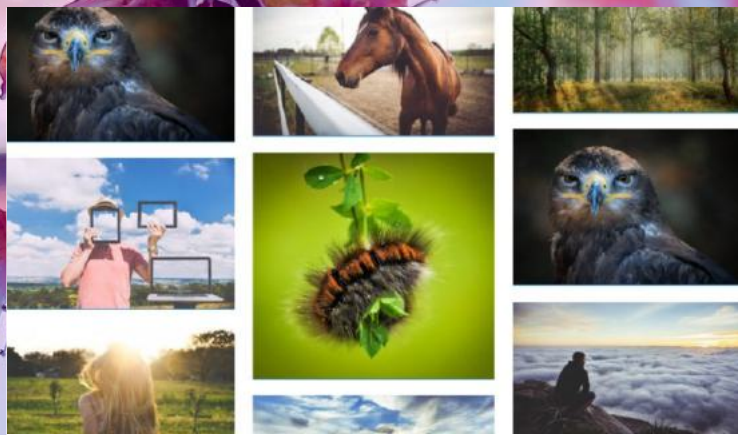
Natural Wonder of the Month

Newly Discovered Smallest Known Reptile

A tiny new species of chameleon has been discovered, and it seems to be the smallest reptile in the world. Known as *Brookesia nana*, or the nano-chameleon, the petite species can perch on a fingertip and may have the smallest adult males of any vertebrate.

[read more](#)





RNA Photo Gallery
add your photos

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Visit us on Social Media



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YouTube



Reddit



Mastodon

Letters to the Editor:

Please send your comments, suggestions, questions, and submissions to 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.

Website of the Month



Center for
**Humans
& Nature**

[Humans & Nature Press](#) shares ideas that build community and inspire action. [Humans & Nature Farm](#) is a place where ideas take root. The Center is a place to experience human connection with nature and consider our responsibilities to the whole community of life.

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.

Recent RNA Blog Post - Where Do We Belong?

Curiously – belonging is one of those spaces within – that truly holds an ache. This shouldn't surprise us as its reckoning – like love – belongs to the heart and all things heart related – hold an ache.

So, let's take a wander down the other path. It is a displaced path, an 'I don't belong path'. Or – as with this very moment we are all in – a separated path. [Go to Post](#)





New Member Books and Member Poems Sections

Two new sections have been added to the page that was previously called RNA Book Reviews. The new page is called Member Books, Poems, and Book Reviews and it's now a place to showcase Books and Poems written by RNA members.

The page is now called Member Books, Poems, & Book Reviews.

If you would like to submit a book, poem, or book review please let us know by sending email to newsletter@religious-naturalist-association.org.

Expansion of Religious Naturalist Voices

Our website includes a link called RN Voices <https://religiousnaturalism.org/rn-voices/> that I compiled a few years ago and describe thusly: The writers highlighted in these Religious Naturalist Voices postings may or may not self-identify as religious naturalists. They're included because their writings speak in various ways to the religious naturalist orientation as I understand it.

It would be wonderful to expand this site by including profiles of additional writers who have spoken to you. Please send me your suggestions goodenough@wustl.edu

Contribute to the RNA website: Help us keep our RNA website fresh and member friendly.

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[Submit your books, poems, and book reviews](#)

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