



RELIGIOUS NATURALIST ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

created by religious naturalists for religious naturalists

June 2025

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Feature Article

Younger By The Day by Terry Findlay

I was recently reminded of the extraordinary resilience of living things and, in particular, of my own body.

I had been experiencing increasing weakness and reduced stamina. I attributed the symptoms to, as my son, an ER doctor, puts it, "too many birthdays". I am 80 and I assumed my body was slowly running down. But when I began falling down on a regular basis my son decided it was time to take me to the hospital where a CT scan revealed the real problem.

I underwent surgery for a bilateral subdural hematoma. Blood had accumulated between my brain and dura, the lining of the skull, and was exerting pressure on my brain. The pressure was causing the loss of strength and stamina.

The treatment involved drilling holes in either side of my skull and inserting tubes to drain the accumulated blood and relieve the problematic pressure on my brain. Fortunately, the surgery went well and I was able to go home after only a day of recovery in the hospital.

It has taken a few weeks to fully recover and during that time I have witnessed the miraculous powers of

regeneration built into my body. Gradually, my stamina and strength have been restored. My bodily systems identified the work that needed to be done and set about making the necessary repairs. The restoration of my body gave me the strange but wonderful impression that I was growing younger by the day.

That the intricacies of the chemical processes involved have been assembled by evolution over millions of years is astonishing in its own right. That I am a conscious of being capable of experiencing and marveling at it all is even more astounding.

For me, the ability of organisms to self-repair demonstrates the capacity of natural selection to arrive at ways of enhancing the chances of survival of living things. By relentless trial and error, over enormous spans of time, nature works its many wonders. I am in awe of being a part of it.

Terry Findlay

Tribute to Michael Dowd

RNA member Connie Barlow shared [this touching tribute](#) to her husband and RNA *Member Eternal* Michael Dowd. The 23-min video is of a beautiful ceremony where Michael's ashes were spread alongside the resting place of Thomas Berry. Connie has also updated the webpage ["Dowd's Worldview Shifts"](#). Michael was on the RNA Board of Advisors.



JD Stillwater's Latest Recorded Talk



["Bædlings, Two-Spirits, & the Science of Sex"](#)

The biology and physiology of sex and gender have come a long way from what you learned in high school. JD Stillwater reviews some surprising truths about how you got to be the gender you are, why you probably don't know what sex chromosomes you have, and how a spirituality based in truth and integrity (ie: the inherent worth and dignity of every person) requires a new approach to people, pronouns, and private parts.

Joel Berning - Chaplaincy Coordinator

Many of our new members are chaplains or have found us through the work of our chaplains. RNA Chaplaincy Coordinator, Joel Berning, is working to welcome these new members to RNA. Joel is Director of Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, where he has been a hospital chaplain since 2010.



Star Island Conference, June 22-29, Portsmouth NH

Spiritual Experience: A Scientific, Philosophical and Theological Retreat

As of May 11 there were 115 registrants for this conference, many of them children, and 21 are RNA members! Enough to fill a small room!

So we will finally be having an RNA meet-up, albeit a small fraction of our >1300 members, and I (Ursula) will be working with the program folks to set aside times for congregating.

The conference organizers, Calvin Chatlos and Barbara Whitiker-Johns, are both RNA members. Our secretary, JD Stillwater, although not able to attend, will be giving a virtual talk. My daughter, member and soprano Jessica Goodenough Sanseverino, is planning musical offerings that will be outstanding if I do say so myself. The kids program is always excellent, so if you're considering coming, give thought to bringing along children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews. There's a \$100 discount on registration fees to all RNA members. The island is gorgeous and the program is rich <https://www.iras.org/2025-summer-conference.html>

Wild Goose Festival, August 28-31

The Wild Goose Festival is held annually in Harmony, NC. RNA is the official sponsor for the Science Tent, curated by JD Stillwater. Science-related experiences will include the science of beer. RNA member Bob Ambrose will co-create two poetry reading experiences.

This festival promotes SPIRIT, JUSTICE, MUSIC, ART. Registration includes a camping space. RNA will provide camping gear if requested. We plan to have a canopy and tent(s) for both daytime and overnight use and will have our own space for gatherings. The Hilton Garden Inn is 15 minutes away for non-campers. If the registration fee is a problem, there are volunteer opportunities. Their website is indeed inspiring: www.wildgoosefestival.org

Please contact me for requests or more info. Marilyn Brien brienrm@gmail.com

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/>

Summer Solstice 2025 And The First Day Of Summer



The first day of summer arrives with the solstice this year on Friday, June 20, 2025, 10:42 p.m. EDT. For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, the Earth tilts mostly toward the Sun during this time. As seen from Earth, the Sun will be directly overhead at noon 23.5 degrees north of the equator, at an imaginary line encircling the globe known as the Tropic of Cancer, named for the constellation Cancer the Crab, its northernmost point.

The term “solstice” comes from the Latin words sol (Sun) and sistere (to stand still). At the solstice, the angle between the Sun’s rays and the plane of the Earth’s equator (called declination) appears to stand still. This phenomenon is most noticeable at the Arctic Circle where the Sun hugs the horizon for a continuous 24 hours, thus the term “Land of the Midnight Sun.”

The summer solstice has long been celebrated by cultures around the world:

- In Ancient Egypt, the summer solstice coincided with the rising of the Nile River. As it was crucial to predict this annual flooding, the Egyptian New Year began at this important solstice.
- In centuries past, the Irish would cut hazel branches on solstice eve to be used in searching for gold, water, and precious jewels.
- Many European cultures hold what are known as [Midsummer celebrations](#) at the solstice, which include gatherings at [Stonehenge](#) and the lighting of bonfires on hilltops.

Help Wanted! RNA is looking for volunteers with abilities in 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!



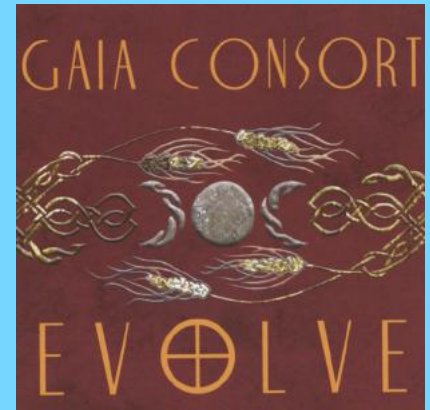
TikTok! LinkedIn! Bluesky! We are seeking enthusiastic people who enjoy these SM platforms to share RNA content on them."

Music of the Month Solstice Call

Solstice Call · from Gaia Consort's album Evolve.

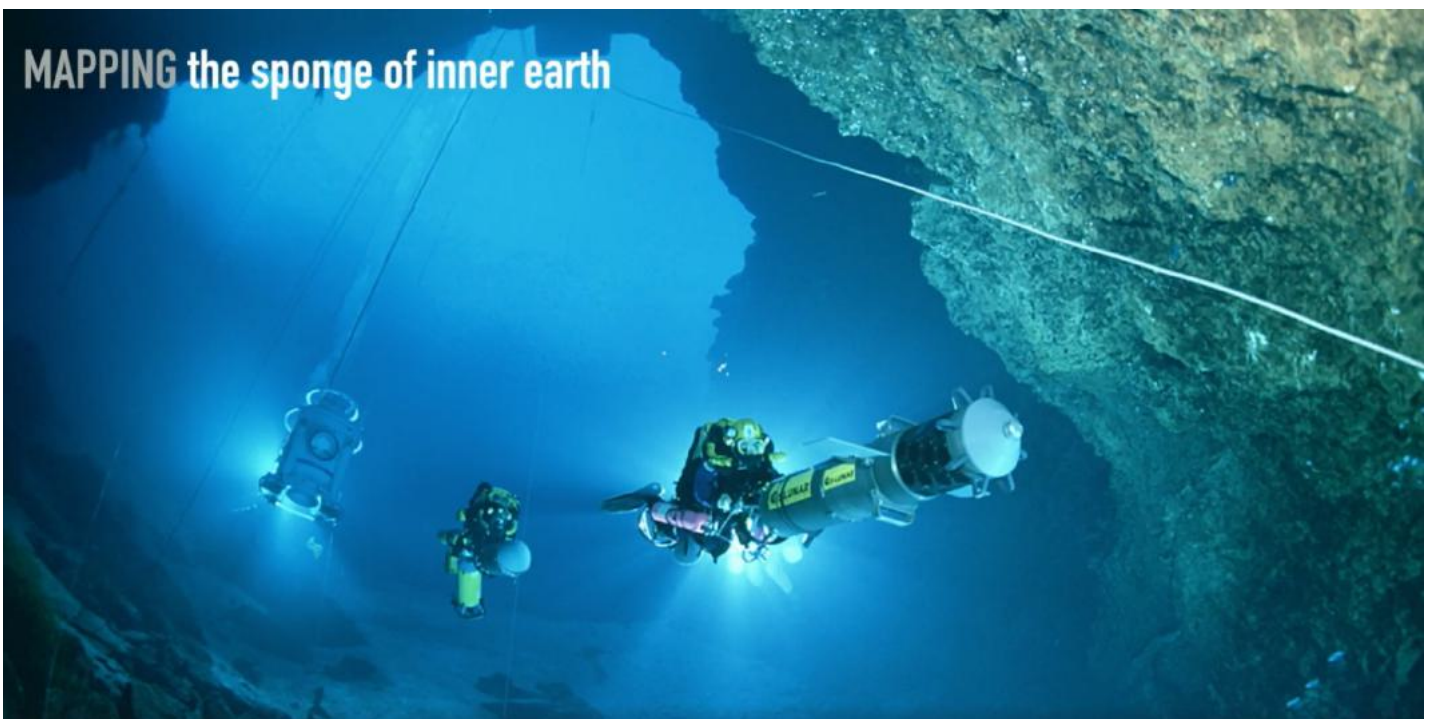
[Lyrics](#)

[Listen on YouTube](#)



Natural Wonder of the Month

The mysterious world of underwater caves



Cave diver Jill Heinerth explores the hidden underground waterways coursing through our planet. Working with biologists, climatologists and archaeologists, Heinerth unravels the mysteries of the life-forms that inhabit some of the earth's most remote places and helps researchers unlock the history of climate change. In this short talk, take a dive below the waves and explore the wonders of inner space.

[More...](#)

Video of the Month

Evolution's Gift of Play

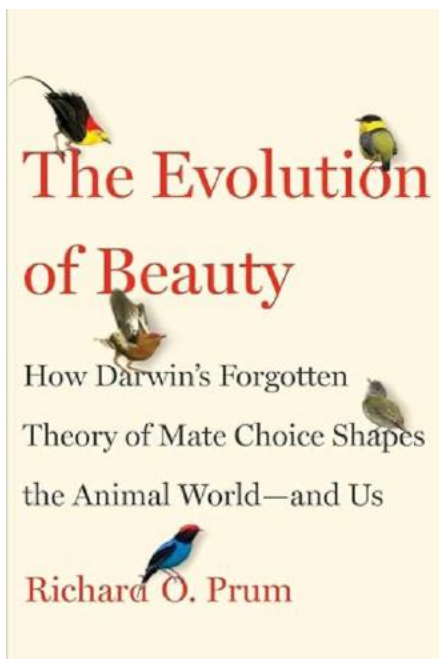
With never-before-seen video, primatologist Isabel Behncke Izquierdo (a TED Fellow) shows how bonobo ape society learns from constantly playing -- solo, with friends, even as a prelude to sex. Indeed, play appears to be the bonobos' key to problem-solving and avoiding conflict. If it works for our close cousins, why not for us?



[Watch on YouTube](#)

Book of the Month

The Evolution of Beauty by Richard O. Prum



A major reimagining of how evolutionary forces work, revealing how mating preferences—what Darwin termed "the taste for the beautiful"—create the extraordinary range of ornament in the animal world.

[View on Amazon](#)

RNA Shop

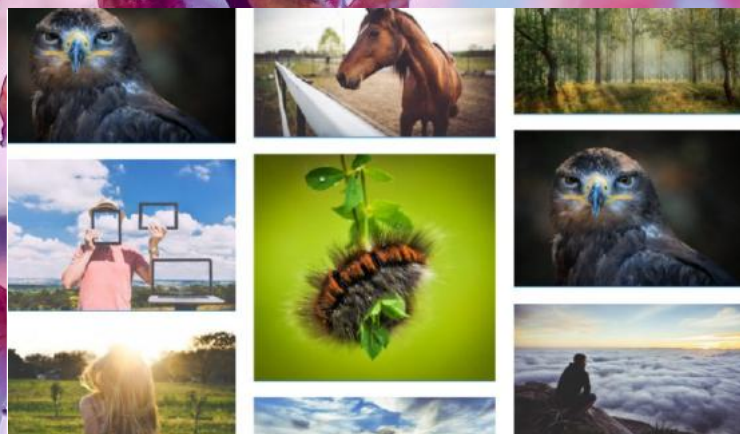
Get your official RNA merchandise at our online store. Choose the color and, where appropriate, the size of the items you order.

[Visit the shop](#)



White 11oz Ceramic Mug

\$7.00 – \$8.91



RNA Photo Gallery
add your photos

[Go to Gallery](#)

Website of the Month



**Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth**

The blog of the Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth.

[visit the website](#)

Visit us on Social Media



Facebook



YouTube



Reddit



Mastodon

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.

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.

RNA Website News



Recent RNA Blog Post

Nature's Spiritual Gatherings

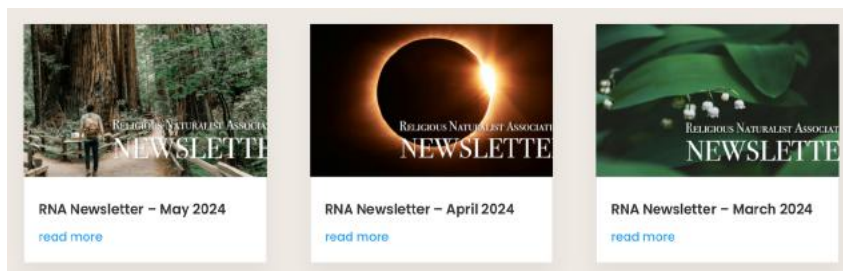
We can and should assemble outdoors. Nature walking, Group meditations, hiking, swimming, gardening, bird watching, and just being outdoors with other people.

[read post](#)

Did You Know?

Did you know that you can view back-issues of our RNA newsletters on our website?

Go [HERE](#) to explore them.



Participate in RNA:

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