

Back to Basics volume three:

REWILDING

A Primer for a Balanced Existence Amid the Ruins of Civilization

by *Green Anarchy*
and the *Wildroots Collective*

We are often asked what our vision of society looks like, what kind of world we are fighting for, or how we would like to live. As anarchists, it is important to always keep this question open. While we can certainly agree on some basic things we are against: domination, hierarchy, control, government, representation, etc., what we are for is endless. This primer is an accumulation of our collectives' observations, experiences, and some suggestions on how one could reconnect with wildness and to becoming feral. We come from the dirty chaotic moving earth, not sterile white stagnant boxes ...and this is our journey home.

REWILDING

is a process that is going on all around us, all the time. It's going on in our heads, our bodies, our communities, and any forest or river that is recovering from damage. It's the most irrefutable physical fact that we are capable of observing: the reversion to wild form, uncontrolled by the domesticating grip of (a portion of) one species. The old Earth First! Slogan, "Nature Bites Back", forms the basis of a philosophy of rewilding, in the anti-civilization context. This is not necessarily an exaltation of the coming ecological disasters, but rather, an unmediated reaction to something that seems inevitable, and a stern warning to our decadent culture. Of course, nature already IS biting back, on so many fronts — most dramatically in a way that threatens the most basic needs of our species: food and medicine. The pharmaceutical industry has been profiting off of us for decades, and it only gets more and more lucrative, as we get more and more sick (bodily and mentally) from our poisoned habitats, and our toxic culture. The assaultive approach taken by western science to "combat" disease only provokes the diseased organism to fight back, rendering drugs useless, thus maintaining the need for new drugs. New anti-depressants, new antibiotics, etc...this is a reaction of wildness, regardless of its form as mammal or a virus—trying to re-establish equilibrium. Same goes for industrial agriculture and its militaristic techniques which demand more production and faster yield. It upsets the balance of ecosystems by taking more than giving back, strangling native plant communities, stifling biodiversity, and even more detrimentally: preventing mass amounts of organisms from their ability to re-establish that balance. Not to dwell too long on the miserable factoids we all dread.

Rewilding is as much affirmation as reaction. It's the unmediated adventure we dream about and talk of romantically, the original source from which all

adventure springs forth. The trust and receptiveness to let what happens may, combined with a hyper-awareness of and synchronicity with physical surroundings, and a lifetime of learning while watching and doing, is the daily attitude of the forager. In complex, industrial society these fundamental conditions are obliterated. Fear, alienation, and objectification through dissection and compartmentalization form the conditions of a psychic plague that leaves us weak and dependent. Rewilding is a rebellion against that sickness—an acknowledgement, to self and each other, of realness. It is a demand to be free to be guided by that original source. The journey it takes us on is unpredictable and wild, and always seeks to maintain balance between creation and destruction, order and chaos; between that which decomposes, and that which makes a seed sprout.

Anarcho-primitivism provides a foundation for us to understand how people have lived in the past, and what changes in these life ways may have led to social problems. It isn't meant to be a prescription for a return to a stone-age existence, though some of us seek that existence more completely. Of course, our interpretations of that existence are subjective—there is little physical evidence of social relationships remaining from the time before agriculture. We do believe that there is much to be learned from the pre-agricultural peoples who exist now in the world, about truly knowing a place and depending on it for your survival. The perspectives that come from living closely with the rest of nature, unmediated by complex technologies or fixed social arrangements, question the basic philosophical foundations of most "advanced" (read: patriarchal, monotheistic) cultures. As the pressures of the global economy and all its homogenizing institutions assimilate and displace earth-based populations, their traditions and knowledge rapidly fall into disuse. The loss of these life ways is

directly linked to the destruction of their foraging, hunting and migration grounds by mining, oil and other development, to provide the industrial world with the conveniences we all take for granted. To question and move away from reliance on those conveniences is a way of confronting the trend. In this context, traditional knowledge is key to the survival of human communities. Part of a rewilding process can also be to confront those entities that directly threaten the survival of earth-based populations, and thus the survival of their traditional life ways.

On a practical level, rewilding involves both accessing our present situations, and looking back to what has been done before by people. By developing blends of old traditions and new adaptations that are suited to our habitats and all the complexities of modern life, we can reclaim our wildness little by little. Some of us may decide to go as far as we can in eliminating the conveniences and comforts of modern life, and simplifying our existence. Some may strive for self-sufficiency and appropriate technology, preferring more complex food, fiber and medicine systems than our forager ancestors. Others of us incorporate some of that simplicity, while still maintaining a foot in modern culture, including resistance movements within it. Others may wish to learn methods to help us survive the oncoming collapses of ecological and economic systems, and to lessen our dependency on profit-motivated institutions and all the mental control that comes with them. The surest way to protect earth-based life ways, or "earthskills", is to practice them and pass them along as we move through this alienated modern life. Just as we can propagate endangered native plants in the ecosystems from which they have been displaced or re-introduce wolves into areas from which they have been extirpated, we can reclaim our species' lost knowledge of living with the earth.

**NOW, BACK TO FROM WHERE
WE CAME...**

The Journey from

By RedWolfReturns

"Civilized" to "Primitive" Living

or

"How to Become A GODLESS SAVAGE in THREE EASY Steps..."

"When I enter the Forest in my buckskins, supplied with the knowledge of where to find water and food and shelter, I have crossed a bridge and entered the world of the wildlings. I'm there, on their level, feeling the same feelings, having the same needs, extending the same trust in our common Earth Mother to provide. If I'm not awake and aware, I'm forced to become so in order to remain there, to have my needs met. I blend in and move with, rather than walking about and observing. I have crossed the threshold from camping to communing."

-Tamarack Song

I have been involved in the "primitive skills movement" for a little over three years now. For me, this involvement just seemed to flow naturally from my encounters with radical environmentalism, indigenous-rights activism, and anarcho-primitivism. I wanted more than just an intellectual philosophy or a distant revolutionary objective—I wanted a real-world, in-the-dirt experience of what these various lines of thought were aiming at. I wanted to learn what it might mean to be "indigenous" to the land—not as a concept or ideal, but as a living experience.

To that end, I spent a good amount of time traveling around North America studying skills & philosophy with various individuals and attending various gatherings until I finally ended up in a year-long immersion course at the Teaching Drum Outdoor School's primitive camp (called "Nishnajida" which is Algonquin for "where the Old Ways return") in the North Woods of Wisconsin. The program here works toward healing the wounds of civilization and attempting to reclaim a life-way consistent with the ancient ecological wisdom of hunter-gatherer indigenous peoples. We don't try to "play Indian" or superficially mimic Native-American cultural

forms, but rather re-connect with the core of what it means to live as Earth-People again—regardless of race or ethnicity—since the Ancestral lineage for all of us eventually begins with Old Way peoples. Daily life involves learning & practicing such skills as building earth-lodges for shelter, tanning hides & furs for clothing, making fire without matches, weaving baskets and other crafts, predicting the weather, tracking wild animals and wild-crafting edible & medicinal plants. We slowly integrate into the skills and awareness necessary to become more independent

of the cash-economy and more intimately interdependent with both our face-to-face community and the nurturing care of our Bioregion.

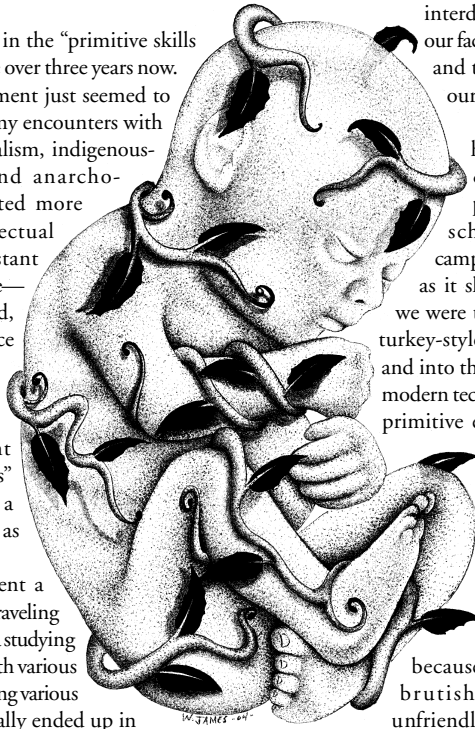
The first week out here (with one's food & shelter already provided by the school) is a lot like camping. This is basically as it should be, because if we were to get dumped cold-turkey-style out of civilization and into the wilderness with no modern technology and no prior primitive experience, our first week would be the beginning of a life and death struggle for survival with very slim chances for success beyond a month or two at most. This is not

because nature is a nasty, brutish, or even mildly unfriendly place; rather it is because those of us who have been raised in civilization have been raised to be highly technology-dependent, unresourceful and unobservant, in a word—stupid, or more politely—domesticated. This domestication not only makes us easily controllable and exploitable, it also creates a powerful division between us and nature—between our perspective and that of our wild kin. If you throw a poodle into the wilderness it will soon become coyote bait, and the situation for most

of us raised in "modern society" is little better. The one difference between the poodle and us, however, is that the poodle has been bred (genetically manipulated) to be pathetic and dependent, whereas we have been educated (psychologically conditioned) to be so. While that poodle cannot change its genetic makeup, we can change our psychological conditioning—even though it may take considerable time and effort.

Sometime around the first month or so out here is when one begins to face some of that psychological conditioning and realize the level of personal healing that needs to take place before one can feel at home in the natural world. For me, this first became obvious when I started feeling overwhelming compulsions to bike into town to binge on junk food and "buy stuff" I thought I needed. I also started smoking again, even though I had quit over a year before. My dreams became troubled—I was fighting against myself. I began to see just how much the outer violence & greed I had been struggling with as an urban activist had obscured my vision from the inner violence & greed that I carried with me wherever I went. I was, in fact, an intimate part of the problem, and carried within me the hollow and manipulative heart of a first-world consumer. I learned that struggles like these (or other such responses—some more dramatic, some less—depending on the individual) are to be expected when one attempts to break free from long-term, entrenched conditioning. This is because psychological & emotional comfort is largely based on maintaining familiar circumstances and habits. Also, the clear mirror of the natural world will reflect on the self in ways most of us are simply not used to when we are acclimated to the near-constant alienation of technological existence. Because of this, facing oneself (& others) honestly can be a frightening experience—as we carry and pass on the trauma acquired throughout our lives inside the cages of institutional society.

Around three months into the year, I began to fully realize the importance of inter-personal & inter-political relationship skills as absolutely crucial survival skills within the primitive life-way. Humans evolved to be communal beings—much like wolves, and a lone individual living off the land will have a very difficult time compared to a tightly knit group that can flow



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well together to get things done. Traditional indigenous peoples devote a great deal of their cultural energy to this process (much more than to their material culture), with considerable success. For our community out at Nishnajida, this means dealing with individual and group conflicts immediately as they come up. It also means not having anyone with enforcement authority to appeal to when conflicts arise. And finally, it means operating by consensus—not just in a few areas—but in nearly every area of decision-making and daily living. We use the tool of the “talking circle” to create a forum for sacred speech and deep listening while we learn, as best we can, to be in-the-moment truth speakers with each other. When one lives with the same people, sharing nearly all aspects of life together and depending on one another for the long term, conflicts & misunderstandings will often arise. If those conflicts are not faced honestly and resolved in a consensual way for all those involved, then the festering resentment that follows will undermine the group’s flow and simply make life hard for everyone.

When it comes to the material matters of the primitive life-way, I’ve been shown that intimacy and respect are again the key lessons to be learned, while the various technical aspects are more peripheral and flow from these first two ingredients. Certainly the issue of hunting can be controversial, but I’d like to touch on it because I think it illustrates best the differences between primitive approaches vs. more technological ones. Hunting in a primitive manner is really a matter of being deeply attuned to the wild communities of one’s bioregion, and it is nearly impossible to be successful for long otherwise. At Nishnajida we take a considerable amount of time (perhaps many years) to prepare for our first hunt since it is a powerful and sacred act. This preparation entails getting to know our fellow animal peoples in a similar way as we know our human relations—i.e. through direct encounter & the sharing of needs. In this way, we might be aware that, for instance, the old buck that we have seen mature & become an elder these past years has recently injured his leg and will be unlikely to survive the coming winter. Or possibly that one of our neighboring does gave birth to a second fawn that is too weak

to mature into adulthood. With this level of attunement, the equipment needed for hunting that crippled buck or weak fawn might be as simple as a rawhide snare and a stout club. Also, one can then be sure that he is taking what is being offered by his relations rather than disregarding their needs and weakening them (like such practices as when high-tech sport-hunters kill “trophy bucks” and deplete the deer-peoples of their most capable young warriors each year). In the Old Way respect is engendered because, as hunter-gatherers, our needs and well-being really are intertwined with theirs—they are not

the Suckerfish during their spring spawning run. This usually lasts less than a week (and what week it is varies depending on how the seasons change each year), but during that time, hundreds of fish can be caught to then be dried and stored for later.

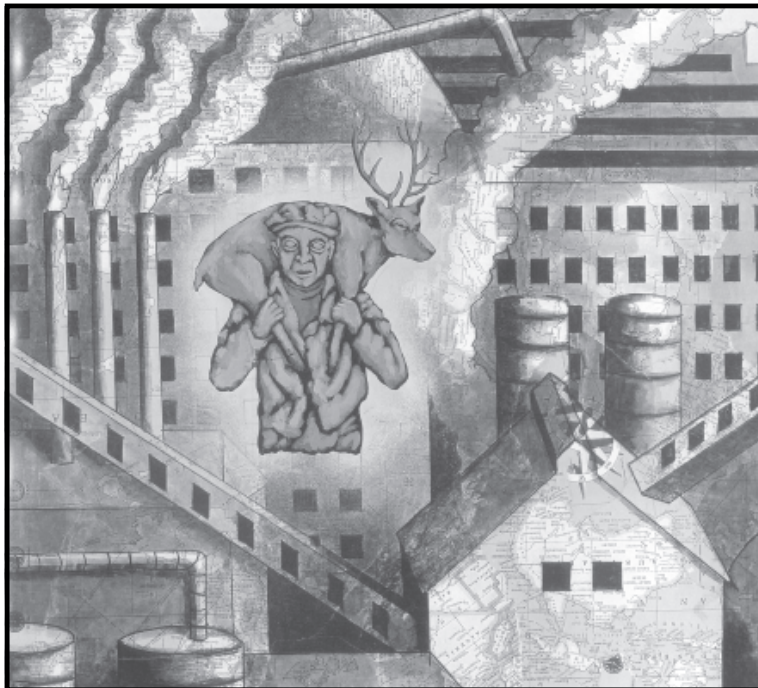
Basically, what all this boils down to is that life for a hunter-gatherer without the “benefits” of modern technology & agriculture is easy if one is attuned and aware in his or her environment, but is difficult if one is out of touch. The Mother will care for Her children lovingly as She has done for countless millennia prior to the advent of, and outside the parameters of industrial “civilization”, but only on Her terms—not ours. One can only learn so much of this through books; most of it must be learned through personal lived experience. That is why it is called “wisdom” rather than just “knowledge”, and why indigenous peoples respect their elders & their oral traditions.

This way of being “in touch” (I am learning) is the key to making primitive living work. One needs to be in touch at all levels of his or her existence—with one’s own self, with one’s human circle, and with one’s non-human relations (i.e. one’s “environment”). This being “in touch” is (I now think) what indigenous peoples primarily mean when they talk about “Walking in Balance” with “All Our Relations.” When it comes right down to it, this isn’t just some rhetorical flourish or new-agey bullshit—it is a base-line and completely practical “survival skill” that makes the difference between whether one views the Earth as a nurturing and caring Mother or one views life in the “wilderness” as being “nasty, brutish, & short.” It seems to me, at least, that being “in touch” in such a manner may be essential to our perspective if we are to understand what is required of us to live in perpetual harmony with the Earth.

Anyone interested in learning more about this life-way can contact me at: redwolfreturns@hotmail.com with any questions or comments, or contact:

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“pests” who eat “our” crops or just “pretty animals” that we like to view—they ARE us, and we are them in the circle of life.

Gathering wild plants is a similar issue. Very few greens are edible and/or available all year long, so a hunter-gatherer’s success comes from knowing a large number of plant communities very intimately—what parts are edible at what times of the year and in what quantity she can gather them without damaging the overall population (which might cause her people to go hungry next year). For instance, wild leek greens are an excellent food source here in the North Woods and can be gathered in great quantity—but they only grow in specific places (you might have to travel miles to get them) and only send up their leaves for a few weeks during the entire year. Fishing works similarly. One can drop a line in any of the lakes around here and catch a few days worth of food. However, if one wants to lay up winter stores for one’s community, then the way to do this is to catch

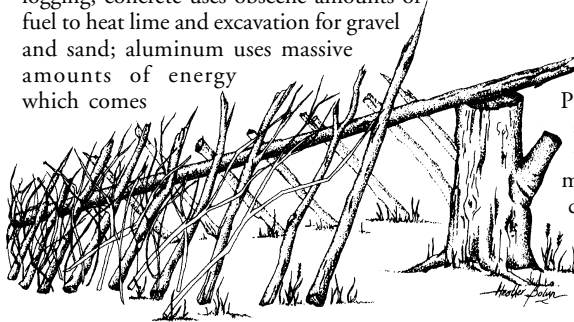
Back to Basics Earthskills

by the Wildroots Collective

Back to Basics Earthskills are skills which allow people to provide for their own basic needs, necessary if we are going to live outside of industrial civilization. The development and practice of these skills has dominated much of the lives of those living in pre-civilized culture. In our own quests to develop these skills we have come to realize that we are like infants; instead of learning skills essential to living, such as crafting tools from earthen materials, skinning animals, making clothing, identifying and preparing wild food and medicine plants, our educations have trained us to be good little participants in a global capitalist system, alienated from our survival, dependent on the technological-industrial-resource-extracting, land-gobbling, animal-enslaving, indigenous culture-destroying machine. The following is a collection of descriptions of some earth skills that we see as fairly basic to a reasonably comfortable survival outside of civilization. In each description we offer reasons for developing the skill within an anti-civilization context, examples of how the skill has been practiced, and visions for how they may be practiced by those who are attempting to go feral, or escape civilization.

Shelter

No matter what contemporary housing is made of it is ecologically exploitative. Commercial timber necessitates industrial logging; concrete uses obscene amounts of fuel to heat lime and excavation for gravel and sand; aluminum uses massive amounts of energy which comes



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from nuclear plants, coal mines, and hydro dams. Modern building materials not only contribute to resource extraction, but also to the degradation of human health from indoor air pollution. As opposed to scary industrial materials, creating structures for ourselves out of materials that we gather envelops us in nature. People have built a wide range of structures throughout history and prehistory out of earthen materials. The form of the houses has varied depending on the degree of nomadism of a given people, the climate in which they lived, and the materials easily found in the surrounding area. These structures took form in wig-wams, long-houses, hogans, tipis, yurts, lean-tos, benders, and debris huts out of materials such as hides, logs, wool, straw, clay, sand, branches, palm leaves, and corn cobs. The shape of structures influences our psychology, and many of these structures surround the inhabitant with curves rather than harsh angles. Some believe that this setting inspires a different way of thinking. There are many people today integrating pieces of different shelter traditions to create their own methods. These new traditions are taking forms in yomes, yerts, earthships, slip-straw-timber frame, straw and kudzu bale walled structures, cob cottages, and many more. As you develop your own shelter, consider the factors that spawned earlier traditions: ease of gathering materials, transportability, appropriateness for climate, and seasonal needs.

Food

Modern foods are lifeless. Pumped full of artificial flavors and carcinogenic, rancid oils, they contribute to countless modern diseases. They even contain what are sometimes called "anti-nutrients" by whole foods nutritionists: hydrogenated oil, carbonation, and refined sugar. The refining process used on grain products removes the majority of fiber and nutrients from the hulls, and strips the carbohydrates down to simple sugars. Modern science says these simple carbohydrates affect your blood sugar in dramatic ways, wearing out your insulin-producing pancreas. Whole grains have a less dramatic affect on blood sugar, and are high in essential nutrients like Vitamin E.

But grains are hard to digest in large quantities, and take lots of space and require complex systems for harvesting, processing, and transporting. The caloric value of the fuel that goes into growing the grain for, making, and transporting a loaf of bread totals more than twice that contained in the bread itself. A grain-based diet was unknown by the human species until the emergence of agriculture.

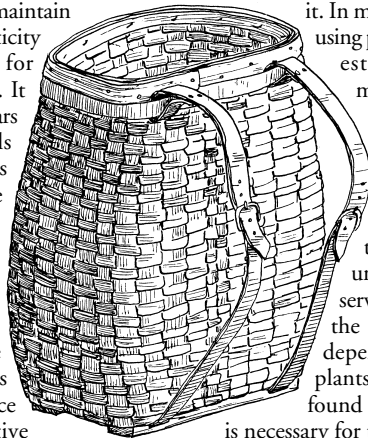


Hemlock ponders how best to get at the "garlicky chicken-like" meat of a roadkill skunk without triggering a spray.

Wild grains represented a minor part of Stone Age diets, but in modern form they are a highly domesticated food. As far as protein goes, vegetarian protein (soy products, etc.) is often extremely dependent on industrial processes. One must hold a large amount of land under domestication to grow enough soy to make enough tofu to sustain a protein-starved vegan body. Wild meat can be sustained in wilderness, rather than in domesticated farmland. While many of us enjoy and have become used to whole foods and vegan cooking, we should challenge ourselves to question the ecological and social relationships at work in an agriculture-dependent food system.

One way to challenge our reliance on the institution of agriculture can be to familiarize ourselves with wild and feral foods—the foods that exist in the community of life around us, and that are not dependent on the artificial life-support system of agriculture. Humans who have fed themselves outside of agriculture

for a million years are our best example, and their superior health is evidence that their underlying dietary patterns can be of use to us now. Studies by anthropologists of primitive diets have confirmed what may seem instinctually true to many of us: that the leanness and purity of wild meat sources, and the superior nutrient content of wild plants helped the humyn species maintain excellent health and robusticity (and possibly longevity) for 99% of humyn evolution. It is only in the last 10,000 years that domesticated animals and plants have (for reasons unknown) entered the picture of humyn cultures. Primitive diets that have been studied in contemporary times have proved higher in calcium than our modern diets, without the use of any dairy products whatsoever. The abundance of leafy greens in primitive diets supplies more than enough calcium and countless other minerals and vitamins, and because of the lack of refining processes and “anti-nutrients” like sugar, caffeine, and carbonation, those vitamins are actually absorbed into the body, unlike in the modern western diet. Similarly, native cultures of the far north, where wild animal proteins make up the majority of the diet, have shown no incidence of the clogged arteries and heart diseases so commonly associated with animal fats in the modern world. Much has been theorized about the social problems that have arisen due to the abundance of food stores used by early agrarian cultures. The excess fat stored by early agrarian females eating grain-based diets in sedentary communities has been linked by some as a primary cause of overpopulation due to hyper-fertility. The active lifestyle of hunter-gatherers is commonly seen as the key to physical fitness. *The Paleolithic Prescription* is an excellent book on this subject, though the title may sound cheezy. www.paleodiet.org is also a good resource.



our water-ways tie us to our neighbors. Many primitive cultures might be said to be fixated on water. The focus on water present in many cultures is extremely practical, for life depends on water. Extracting oneself from the industrial water system shocks one into an understanding of the complexities necessary in making water safe to drink and in moving it. In making a compromise, and using plastic pipe which contains estrogen mimickers, one must consider gravity, air bubbles, and flow; if totally forsaking industrial materials, one must haul a hell of a lot of skins full of water up to quench thirsty tomato plants. This understanding can in turn serve to cause one to question the desirability of irrigation-dependent agriculture. Wild plants, fish, and game can be found in and around water, as it is necessary for their survival; so in terms of sustaining ourselves, waterways are not only sources of drink, but also are abundant with wild foods. In our quest to rewild ourselves, or to become more integrated in our surroundings, we can start with coming to understand the ways that water moves through the food web and our landscapes.

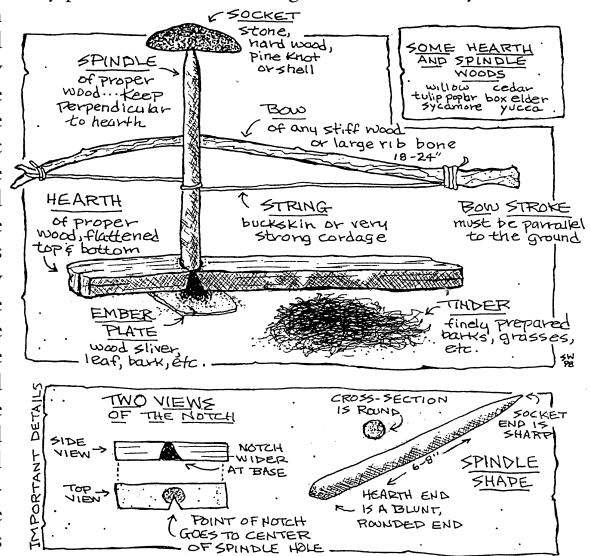
Containers

Containers are fairly essential to keeping your things together and making foraging easier. As a receptive vessel, the container asks to be filled. Tupperware, plastic grocery bags, and even paper grocery bags produced by industrial means fill our lives with waste. The by-products invade our animal and human bodies through the air and water, causing previously unknown disorders of the immune and endocrine (hormone) systems. Plastic sacks and containers have been fairly recently introduced to the global south, where they now carpet roadsides and farmland. Up until very recently the materials made for disposable containers there were plant based (tamales are wrapped in corn-husks and banana leaves), and made great compost. Hand-crafted containers from natural materials require no special-ization or technology. The nature of their form provides us another link to the rest of the web of life. In a wild context,

the container is something that can be put together frequently if needed, though in more sedentary times they may become more elaborate or decorative. These containers have taken shape in jugs and pots made from animal stomachs, gourds, and clay pottery. Animal hides and woven plant fibers are used for satchels and pouches. Baskets are crafted from pine needles, vines like honeysuckle, grapevine and kudzu, splits from white oak or ash logs, and bark from poplar or birch. For earth-based people who live off the abundance of their habitat, the variety of materials that can be used provides limitless possibilities for self-reliance. The lure of convenience has won over some of our species to industrial storage products to fit in with the complex industrial pace of life in the modern world. The pace of life required to sit around making baskets and pouches can create opportunities for a deeper awareness of surroundings and supports social bonds. We can have a little bit of that pace in our lives by practicing the enjoyable and useful earth skill of container-craft.

Fire

It's impossible to talk about gathering food and living from the wild without mentioning fire. Fire plays a huge role in everyone's life – both primitively and even in the modern hyper-sterile prison of industrial civilization. In the latter, it is more easily taken for granted, whereas in our primal state, fire is appreciated within a more intimate relationship. We have always used it to cook our food, to keep warm, to create various tools, and perhaps most importantly, at the end of the day we can gather around the fire to share stories and to dance and sing. In civilized society, the warm



Making fire with a bow drill

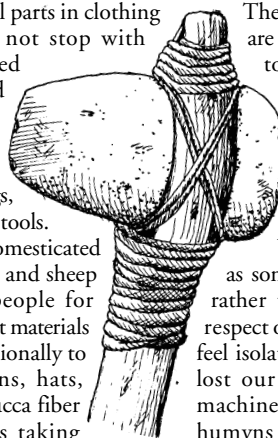
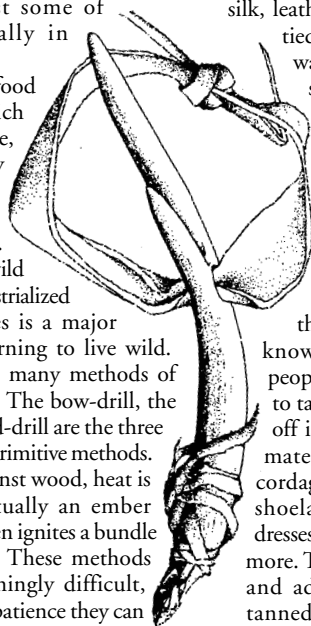
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glow of a healthy community is replaced by the mind-fucking, brainwashing rays of the television and computer. Fire is an awesome force in nature, and besides the ways we have benefited from it, it also plays an important ecological role. Forest and prairie fires have provided a cleansing element without which natural succession in an ecosystem is not possible. Suppression of wildfire in modern society has led to a decline in diversity of species and a stunting of ecosystem health, not to mention a buildup of potentially flammable material that fuels the catastrophic fires that we see today. And when it comes down to it, life on this planet could not even exist without a big ball of fire (the sun) nurturing and feeding it. Although the humyn body is capable of digesting and processing a completely raw diet, all examples of hunter-gatherers still living today use fire to cook at least some of their food, especially in northern climates.

Cooking made new food sources available which were formerly inedible, which was biologically necessary as climate changed and sources of food narrowed. Obtaining fire in the wild without the use of industrialized tools such as matches is a major stepping stone in learning to live wild. Fortunately, there are many methods of building friction fires. The bow-drill, the fire plow, and the hand-drill are the three most common totally primitive methods. By rubbing wood against wood, heat is produced, and eventually an ember begins to glow, and then ignites a bundle of dry tinder nearby. These methods may seem overwhelmingly difficult, but with practice and patience they can be learned and performed with ease. An interesting thing is that not all hunter-gatherers know how to make a friction fire. For example, Pygmies in Africa carry a burning ember encased in a bundle of sticks and dried grasses with them everywhere they go. There is no consensus on whether they ever even knew how to start a friction fire. But then of course they do live in a tropical climate, where if they ever lose their fire, their survival is not dependent on it. Throughout humyn pre-history, people and fire have lived harmoniously and symbiotically. Wherever we went, we brought fire. For hundreds of thousands of years we harnessed and nurtured its powers and in return it fed and warmed us. Now, as the earth is overrun with civilization, the purifying aspects of fire should not be overlooked.

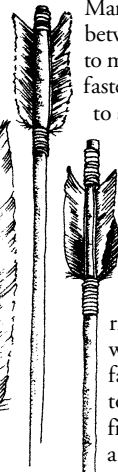
Clothing

How people adorn and clothe themselves reveals who they are, what their cultural traditions are, what they think is beautiful, and how they spend their time. Within the global economy our most visible form of self-expression is controlled by specialist designers, and then manufactured in working conditions extremely cruel to workers. The materials from which contemporary clothing is stitched come from a variety of offensive sources. Cotton is woven into cloth still soaked with the defoliant and pesticides inherent in large scale mono-cropping; wool, silk, leather, and fur are inexorably tied to the cruelty and resource waste of industrial agriculture; synthetics are spun from petroleum extracted from deep within the earth. Primitive clothing is practical and not usually vegan. Skins of animals, with fur on for warmth, or off for flexibility and breathability, make up the basis of primitive garb. The process of softening hides so that they are supple, rather than stiff, is known as tanning. Many traditional peoples use a mixture of water and brains to tan hides. Hides tanned with the hair off is known as Buckskin. It is a prized material that has been used to make cordage (especially for stitching clothing), shoelaces, breechcloths, shirts, skirts, dresses, moccasins, bags, jewelry, and much more. The use of animal parts in clothing and adornment does not stop with tanned hides: untanned ground hog hides are used to make shoe laces; teeth, bones and claws of many animals are made into buttons, necklaces, piercings, and awls and other sewing tools. Hair, wool and hides of domesticated animals like llamas, goats and sheep are used by nomadic people for blankets and clothing. Plant materials have also been used traditionally to make beads and buttons, hats, shoes, grass skirts, and yucca fiber cloth. Rewilding means taking responsibility for fulfilling our own needs. Fashioning clothing and adornment out of natural materials can make practical sense, and allow us to express our intimate relationships with plants and other animals.



Tools

Many ask the question “what’s the difference between tools and technology?” Both appear to make tasks easier, or to accomplish them faster. One way to look at the distinction is to ask whether this item can be found easily or crafted by hand without the use of industrial processes or products, which require the extraction of earth’s “resources”. Can it be fixed without resorting to more extraction or the knowledge of an elite population which holds “intellectual property rights” over the rest of us? Can it be left when no longer needed, and then fashioned again somewhere else? Simple tools shaped from bone, wood, plant fiber and mineral are used to accomplish a task, yet the overall balance of give-and-take in the ecosystem is not disturbed. The substance used is not converted into a biocidal compound, or something capable of crippling the regenerative powers of lifeforms. Some examples of primitive tools are knives, bows, arrows, pounding stones, hide scrapers, digging sticks, spears, brooms, cordage, bowls, cups, nets, and traps. Sharp edges are fairly essential to tool-making and to tools themselves, and are flaked from stone like flint and obsidian, and used for cutting hides or cordage, or for attaching to arrow shafts or knife handles. This ancient earthskill, known as flintknapping, can make earth-based life easier without the use of technology. One might use a feral material for flinting that may be easier to find than flint and obsidian; this material is glass shards. With technology, the ends often justify the means, with the ends often being excessive financial gain for a small number of people. The consequences of industrial activity are often hidden from view, or displaced to a far-away population of people who don’t even demand the products of the activity. The more dependent on complex technological systems we become, the more alienated we are from the source of life. We lose awareness of our ecological limitations. We objectify the rest of the web of life as something to be used and controlled, rather than seeking to understand and respect our relationships within the web. We feel isolated in our self-centeredness, having lost our ecological identity. We are like machines ourselves. The observation that humyns have existed perfectly well for a million + years without industrial technology shows us that it’s the norm of humyn existence, and yet most of us in the modern world seem to prefer speed and complexity than simplicity and a humyn pace.



The convenience we rely on is not necessary with a simpler existence, it's just a matter of our rejection of the path of "Progress" and our willingness to live as a member of the web again.

Play

Play is prevalent throughout the animal world. Dogs, raccoons, dolphins, butterflies, wolf cubs and humyns play. Civilization has perverted play itself. Instead of actively participating in the creation of our own entertainment we have become spectators, flocking to stadiums and roosting in front of televisions, computers, and video games. Play has been extracted from other parts of life, the work of entertainment being relegated to professionals. Empire has taken basic ingredients out of play—personal contact and exploration—and replaced them with technology and spectacle. Throughout time people have made music, danced, and participated in physical and intellectual games. The range of materials that can be used in play are endless—balls can be made of hides, drums of skin and logs, flutes from rivercane and reeds, body paint from minerals and plants, and simple "board" games can be played with pebbles in the dirt. Rewilding play can mean putting play into all aspects of our lives. It can mean participating in the creation of our own games, playing jokes, improv, acting out, using skins, twigs, and horns to dress up like animals, and coming up with celebrations that honor the wild in ourselves, and the world that surrounds us.



Bioregionalism is a way of identifying and interacting with our physical surroundings that is rooted in a sense of belonging to our place. Bioregions are areas identified by natural features such as geology, climate, water courses, and plant and animal communities, as opposed to political boundaries. They are usually named according to physical features. The northwest coast of the US and west coast of Canada is called Cascadia, named for the mountain range that extends north to "British Columbia", and south into California; the mountain range is in turn named for the abundant cascading water which defines the area. In the Bay Area of Central California, bioregionalists often call themselves members of the Shasta bioregion. In Maine, one might identify as a resident of the North Woods bioregion. Such identification ties us to what defines our bioregion: nature and the wild. Fundamental to the rewilding process is developing an awareness of the natural features — the plants, animals and minerals — that define our lives. This knowledge can lead us toward a "reinhabituation of place", as bioregionalists have described it. It is crucial to our survival within the web of life. For example, because areas within the same bioregion share natural features, a useful wild thing in one part of a bioregion is likely to be found in another part of that region. But even when classifying according to natural features, nature often defies classification. There are certain ecosystems within different bioregions that make themselves home to similar plant and animal communities. Cattail, a favorite for its edible pollen, roots, and shoots, grows abundantly in the wetlands of Cascadia, Sonora, the North Woods, the Great Plains, and many other bioregions. Before civilization first reared its ugly head in the Americas it was rare to find one plant in as many different bioregions. Native plants have developed for millennia to flourish within very specific niches. Civilization has plowed through these highly ecologically developed regions and replaced the bio-diversity that springs from niche-filling with a limited culture of plants and animals that flourish in waste areas, cities, roadsides, farmyards, subdivisions, overgrazed pasturelands, and parking lots. Some of these industrial niche-filling plants have stowed away on the shoe soles, wagon and car wheels, and the ships and intestines of the invaders. A good example is plantain, which draws toxins out of cuts, and is

called white man's footsteps because it came to the Americas from Europe, and has spread most everywhere that white man has gone.

Other plants were intentionally brought by colonizers, and have since gone wild. In many an old homestead or urban neighborhood street, it is possible to find apples, grape vines, rhubarb, garlic, opium poppies, pears, avocados, yucca, roses, fennel, eucalyptus, cherries, day-lilies, olives, oranges, and himalayan blackberries, and more. Often, these plants are no longer tended; they have gone through a rewilding process, and are now feral. In our own efforts rewilding these feral plants may serve both as food and inspiration. On the following pages, we roughly define the macro-bioregions which lie within the (irrelevant) boundaries of the U.S. We chose to concentrate on the bioregions that encompass land claimed by the U.S. (although some of them extend into land claimed by the Canadian or Mexican governments), because of a lack of space and the limitations of our knowledge base. We mention some useful plants for each bioregion, but we have not lived in each of these regions and do not know all of them intimately. It is limited in its attempt to reduce a multidimensional web of ecosystems encompassing thousands of square miles onto an 11 by 17 sheet on which only a few words are used, but consider it a starting point. Rather than create the ultimate guide to useful plants of the U.S., our intention is to inspire people to get hooked on wild foods, medicines, and materials. It can take only one fabulous afternoon foraging the late summer city for apples, or a night in the desert tipsy on saguaro wine to get you addicted. Once you're hooked, we encourage you to look at the reading list further in the primer to find resources that can tell you more about this very extensive subject — a subject upon which millions of earth-based people have lived their lives. When you do harvest from the wild, please be aware of your effects on the particular plant community you are disturbing. Don't take more than you need, and never take an amount that would have an adverse affect on the plant you are harvesting, unless the plant is kudzu, or a similarly invasive species. A good guideline is to only take a plant if there are at least 5 of the same plant to leave undisturbed, or to only take a small amount from each plant. More about ethical wildcrafting can be found at www.unitedplantsavers.org

The REWILDING Primer

WILD FOODS IN

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

THE U.S. BIOREGIONS AND SOME USEFUL PLANTS COMMONLY FOUND IN THEM:

NORTHWEST/INTER-MOUNTAIN WEST: The Cascadia bioregion of the Northwest US and Canada is defined by the expansive temperate rainforest that stretches from the Cascade mountain crest, to the Pacific Ocean. High annual rainfall and a conifer-dominated forest type create greenhouse-like conditions on the forest floor, which usually extend to the rocky coastlines. An abundance of wild foods like salmon and shellfish, wild berries, and mushrooms makes this region a prized foraging ground. In Cascadia one can find a very rich bioregional identity. The central Pacific Coast begins around the San Francisco bay, where mussels and oysters were once a staple food for native groups like the Ohlone. The lush redwood forest ecosystem of the north gives way to dry chaparral covered slopes, which are rich with acorns. Oceanside habitats in the South are often dotted with feral species such as carob, fennel, and eucalyptus. In the Central Valley of California, agriculture has taken advantage of the hot and dry, almost grassland conditions, irrigated it by draining rivers dry, and has grown millions of acres of oranges, avocados, olives, and other tropical and Mediterranean crops. Grazing and urban development has severely damaged the natural grasslands, but it still supports many edible plants. The Sierra Nevada mountains are home to a dry sub-alpine forest type on high peaks, as well as raging rivers that feed the central valley and eventually run to the ocean. Central Nevada is a good example of the Great Basin, where high desert plains are dotted by dry-forested mountain ranges. This bioregion is similar to the Columbia Plateau, where the Cascade crest gives way eastward to high desert, with the Okanagan mountain range rising to the north. These bioregions support abundant sagebrush (*Artemisia*). The Northern Rockies rise from these high, arid plains to alpine elevations, where pines and firs grow, and wildfires are common. Here, bistort, chickweed and arnica mix with biscuitroot, bitterroot, red raspberries, balsamroot, and morel mushrooms.

Check out:

HOME!: A Bioregional Reader – Van Andrus et al, eds. New Society Publishers, 1990
Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision – Kirkpatrick Sale. Sierra Club Books, 1985
Planet Drum Foundation – www.planetdrum.org (Check out back issues of their publication *Raise the Stakes*)
Columbiana Bioregion (Columbia River watershed) www.columbiana.org/bioregions.htm
Summer 2004 Continental Bioregional Congress – Earthhaven ecovillage, North Carolina, www.bioregionalcongress.org

SOUTHWEST: The Chihuahuan Desert can be visited at Big Bend National Park in southwest Texas. Here, common dry western forest types mix with desert species, covering mesas and plateaus and sinking to low desert. The Apache Highlands host similar biotic communities. The Southern Rockies of Northern Arizona and New Mexico rise to sub-alpine heights, inhabited by common Rocky Mountain species. The Red Rock regions of the Colorado Plateau are abundant in junipers (good medicine) and pinon pine, from which pine nuts are harvested. The Sonoran Desert of Southern Arizona and New Mexico offers agave for sweetener, food, and fiber, jojoba nuts, saguaro cactus fruits, wild grapes, mesquite, and even olives and subtropical fruits in urban areas. The Mojave Desert hosts the memorable Joshua Tree national park. Joshua trees are a type of *Yucca*, whose roots produce saponins, which can be used in soaps. South Pacific Coast/Baja: Urban and rural irrigated areas of southern California offer bounties of avocados, oranges, papayas, and more.

Common Feral Edibles and Medicinals (escapees from domestication): chestnuts, apples, cherries, mulberries, persimmons, pears, figs, pecans, almonds, citrus, berries, opium poppies, rhubarb, medlars...

your bioregion

UPPER MIDWEST: The North Woods of Minnesota and Wisconsin incorporate boreal forest types with abundant wetlands and lakeshores. Many of the common eastern woodland species grow here, though winter is colder and drier than in many eastern woodland bioregions. Wild sarsaparilla, milkweed, and aquatic plants like cranberries, marsh marigold, cattails, and wild rice are common edibles. The Northern Prairies are largely domesticated by agriculture, but host many important edible plants, especially perennial grains like Illinois bundleflower, intermediate wheatgrass, and compass plant. Also, sweetgrass, sunflower and coneflower (echinacea), breadroot, soapweed, and golden currants grow abundantly here. The Great Plains comprise a massive area of the continent, and has largely been damaged by industrial livestock and grain production. Millions of buffalo once roamed this bioregion, branching out eastward into Tennessee, until the pioneering white settlers drove them to near-extinction. Buffalo-berry, evening primrose, and breadroot are common edible plants here.

EAST CENTRAL: As part of the Eastern Woodlands ecosystem, all of the East-Central bioregions host many of the same plant communities. In the Interior Low Plateau, (much of which is degraded by industrial/urban use) wild onions inspired a "Wild Onion Bioregion" group in the 90s. The southern Great Lakes ensure a bitter cold winter in much of this region, but plenty of humidity for lush plant growth in the summers. The mountains of southern Ohio and Indiana host some of their own distinct biotic communities, but share many with the Central and Southern Appalachians.

MID SOUTH: The Southern Prairies extend into Texas and hosts many of the same species as in the north of this bioregion. Where the prairies meet the piney woods, oaks, prickly pear cactus and hackberries are common edibles. Thornscrub is a bioregion that extends from the south tip of Texas into Mexico, where one can find prickly pear paddles and fruit for eating, and creosote bushes make fabulous medicine.

NORTHEAST: The bioregions of the Northeast can be generally grouped with each other into the Eastern Woodlands ecosystem. Although summers are warm enough for a wide variety of plant communities to exist, winters tend to be harsh, even in coastal regions. The North Woods bioregion runs through northern New England and on into the Upper Midwest. It stands out from the rest of the woodlands because of its transition to boreal forest, dominated by pines and more frost-tolerant species of plants. The Northern Coastal Plain runs from the east side of the mountains to the Atlantic. Its wild foods are similar to those of the rest of the eastern woodlands, but with more forest and bog species like sugar maples, butternut, milkweed, live-forever, wintergreen, and fruits such as cranberries, nannyberries, and hobblebush, and seaweeds and shellfish on the north coast (Maine). The Northern Appalachians and Alleghenies rise to higher elevations than the rest of the bioregions of the Northeast, especially the Northern Coastal plain. American groundnut is a common native edible tuber and adds to many other Appalachian wild foods that will be mentioned in the section on the southern Appalachians.

SOUTHEAST: The Southeast bioregions are distinguished from those in the north by a shorter winter and influences from tropical plant and animal (biotic) communities. Many of the most common Eastern Woodland biotic communities exist in the Southern Appalachians, in addition to some plants and animals that are found only in the Appalachians. Warmer winter temperatures provide conditions for many wild winter plants, and a great diversity of species. The legendary paw paw tree, a native Southeastern banana-like-fruit tree, grows abundantly in this bioregion and into the Central Appalachians. Edibles like poke, black walnuts, sassafras, Virginia waterleaf, elderberry, birch, sochany, blueberry, black raspberry, rivercane (for basketry, etc), hickory, and many uniquely Appalachian plants with medicinal value inhabit this region. The deep south is home to some unique bioregions: The Piney Woods of South Texas and Louisiana, the Gulf Coastal Plain, the Pine Lowlands that stretch to the piedmont of Georgia and the panhandle of Florida, the sub-tropical forest and swamp habitats of the southeastern coast in places like Charleston, SC and Savannah, GA., and the swampy Bayou of the Mississippi River estuary. Known as transition zones between temperate and tropical influences, these bioregions are abundant in marine and terrestrial species diversity, including muscadine grapes, pecans and flatwood plums. The Florida Peninsula and Tropical Florida host more intensely sub-tropical and tropical biotic communities. In the far southern tip of the peninsula, an abundance of introduced tropical fruits such as coconuts, mangos, and bananas grow "feral" in cities and rural areas.

Common Widespread Edible Weeds: dandelion, wild lettuce, cleavers, rose, chickweed, violets, burdock, sour dock, wintercress, lamb's quarters, smartweed, purslane, watercress, and quickweed...

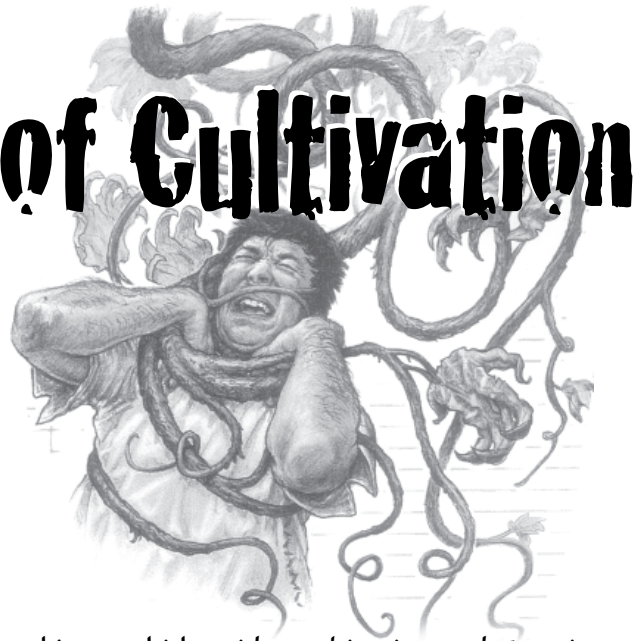
The Question of Cultivation

Forager life ways inform our hopes for the post-industrial emergence of earth-based human communities, but not exclusively. Early horticultural practices that were (and still are in some places) used in the period between foraging and agriculture blend elements of both agriculture and foraging. On a bioregional scale, and outside of any commercial context, they provide a clear model of a possibility of earth-based living that is more tangible in the short term. For even this type of existence, we need knowledge that has been lost to industrial culture. Permaculture is a modern adaptation of early horticultural methods used around the world. It is a useful method and outlook that can inform an earth-based existence, but the difference between it and foraging should not be overlooked. They are distinctly different in motivation. While permaculture is appropriate in many ways given the ecological crisis we are facing (population and people's alienated desires for convenience), any practice that involves the manipulation and control of wildness should be questioned — not only for its long term effect on ecological stability, but also for the psychic and psychological patterns they imprint on us that can reproduce social imbalances.

A foraging lifestyle allows one the freedom to gather what is needed for the short-term, with the expectation that more can be gathered when needed. This existence is often seen as a “starvation diet” because of its uncertainty, yet the abundance of diversity in our surroundings actually provides a high level of “food security.” If oak trees skip a year of dropping acorns, hickories or walnuts will likely produce some nuts in their place. If you trek into the forest to hunt a deer, you may not see one, but you may come across a grouse or turkey instead. To maintain the knowledge of the forager is an activity that is even more fundamental to our physical survival and our freedom from domination than growing our own food. In contrast, the sedentary lifestyle required by agricultural systems sets a stage for more rigid territorial disputes and the erosion of continuously worked soils. The storage of the surplus of crop production creates unhealthy power-dynamics by the owners and managers who control those surpluses. As they become more dependent on the success of a smaller diversity of foods, agricultural systems often justify the exploitation of nature's resources in order to secure a supply. The dependency on crop success can tie horticultural communities to disempowering social relations: when a group's food supply depends on agricultural crop production, it is less likely to voluntarily split off and form a different one, as is common with forager groups.

Even with permaculture and small-scale gardening, dynamics of domestication are at work. A small space is claimed by a human, cleared of a multitude of species that are seen as competition to a small number of species desired by the human, but which are growing in that spot by the chaotic order of wild nature. With permaculture, these spaces are planted in a way that mimics wild nature in the garden, by providing a diverse arrangement of multi-storied plants, and creating a closed cycle of water and other nutrients. The practices of edible landscaping and native medicinal plant preservation can complement the cultivation of garden vegetables as well. These methods are definitely attempts to move away from what has been called “totalitarian agriculture”, and they are useful in the present context. But we shouldn't forget that the unmediated forager experience that dominates our history as a species is where our wild roots are truly located. The primitive landscape was itself influenced by humans, who often burned areas to make it easier to see game and to encourage the growth of berries and other under-story plants. The line of human influence in nature is a fuzzy one, and one that to be truly examined must be explored with experience.

BACK TO BASICS volume #3



Subjects Which Bridge Cultivation and Foraging:

PERMACULTURE – a holistic approach to food cultivation that emphasizes working with the patterns and resources in nature rather than controlling them with external energy and inputs. *Permaculture Activist* magazine, *Gaia's Garden*, and *The Permaculture Garden* by Graham Bell.

Check out: www.permaculture.org

FOREST GARDENING – Forest gardens usually have a diverse collection of plants arranged in multiple layers above a deep mulch. These plants produce flowers, food, and other products for human use. The plants function together, along with the insects and other animals that come to inhabit them, as an ecological system. Indigenous peoples throughout the tropics have created similar gardens for centuries. These gardens, known as tropical home gardens, include a diversity of crops arranged in multiple layers, and in many ways mimic the structure and ecological function of the surrounding natural forests. Robert Hart and others have applied the same principles to the design of gardens modeled after temperate deciduous forests. *Forest Gardening* by Robert DeHart and *How to Make a Forest Garden* by Patrick Whitefield.

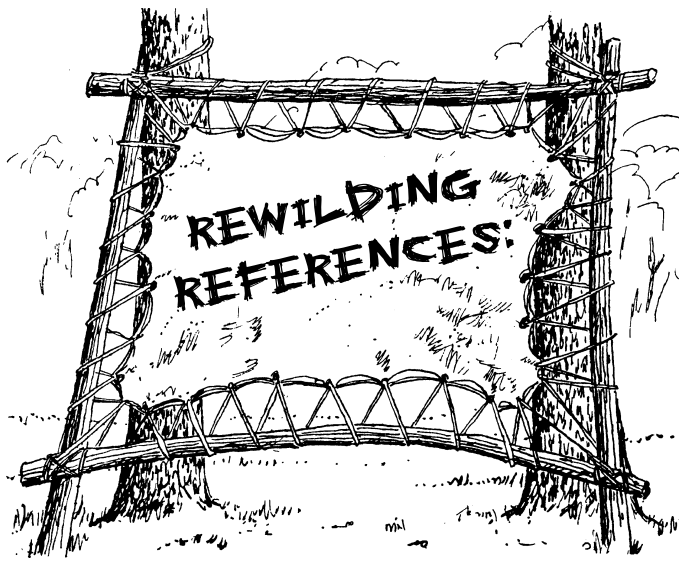
FUKUOKA – A Japanese agro-philosopher who developed a farming practice called “Natural Farming”, in response to modern organic agricultural methods that degrade soil. He encourages “no till” methods of grain cultivation, and the idea of letting nature do the farming work for you. He wrote an important book called *One Straw Revolution* (hard to find), and introduced the idea of “seed balls”, self propagating balls of clay containing hundreds of seeds, to the world: *The Natural Way of Farming* by Masanobu Fukuoka.

Check out: www.seedballs.com

EDIBLE LANDSCAPING – The practice of planting self-seeding perennials such as fruits, nuts, tubers and greens, in and around your garden spaces to provide you with a constant supply of food with little to no work. Especially important are the knowledge and use of wild edibles native to your area. *Designing and Maintaining Your Edible Landscape* by Robert Kourik, *Edible Landscaping* by Rosalind Creasy, and *Forest Gardening* by Robert DeHart.

NATIVE PLANTS – Plants that grow and have evolved naturally in the wild ecosystems found in your region, whether it be prairie, desert or forest, which can be cultivated and encouraged within your garden or in the wild areas around your inhabitation.

Check out: www.nativeseeds.org and www.unitedplantsavers.org



BEYOND PLANTS

We have established in the basics section the reasons that wild meat has been an important food for primitive peoples throughout history, and why it plays an important role in the rewilding process. But how, may you ask, is this wild meat to be obtained, especially when many have forsaken hunting along with industrially produced meat? Although we have come to see hunting as an ideal in rewilding, especially when primitive weapons are used, we still have not successfully hunted anything besides fish. We eat roadkill. It's free, wild, tasty, and full of protein. Certain processes are necessary for transforming dishonored victims of the petroleum age into food which nourishes, and clothing which warms. We think that using roadkill is a wonderful way of honoring the bodies of the animals that we pick up. For more information on how to process critters found by the roadside, check out the zine, *Feral Forager* (see below), as well as our resource list below, and remember, always keep your knife sharp, wear gloves to guard against rabies in raccoons, foxes, and some other animals, and finally, don't cut the spleen open!

BOOKLIST:

- Voices of the First Day: Awakening in the Aboriginal Dreamtime* - Robert Lawlor
- The Forest People* - Colin Turnbull
- Wisdom of the Elders: Honoring Sacred Native Visions of Nature* - Ed. Suzuki, Knudtson
- The Paleolithic Prescription: A Program of Diet and Exercise and a Design for Living* - Eaton, Shostak, Konner
- Primitive Technology I & II: A Book of Earth Skills* - Ed. Wescott
- Naked Into the Wilderness I & II* - John & Geri McPherson
- Earthknack* - Bart & Robin Blankenship (possibly out of print)
- Deerskins Into Buckskins* - Matt Richards
- Blue Mountain Buckskin* - Jim Riggs
- Tracking and the Art of Seeing* - Paul Rezendes
- Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants* - "Wildman" Steve Brill
- Edible Wild Plants* - Peterson's Guide
- Mushrooms Demystified* - David Aurora
- Tom Brown's Guide to Wilderness Survival*
- Botany in A Day and Participating In Nature* - Thomas Elpel
- Wildwoods Wisdom and Wild Roots* - Doug Elliot
- Stalking the Blue Eyed Scallop* - Euell Gibbons
- The Traditional Bowyer's Bible Vol 1-3*
- Journey to the Ancestral Self: The Native Lifeway Guide to Living in Harmony with Earth Mother, Book 1* - Tamarack Song
- Feral Revolution* - Feral Faun
- Wilderness Ways Magazine*
- Journal of Primitive Technology*

WEBLINKS:

- www.gowildordietryin.org
- www.primitive.org
- www.wildmanstevebrill.com
- www.braintan.com
- www.abotech.com
- www.earthskills.org
- www.backtracks.net
- www.teachingdrum.org



GATHERINGS:

* Primitive Skills gatherings are one of the best ways to learn. Not only do you get tons of how-to instruction and experience, but you get a close-up look into the lifestyle of the primitive skills practitioner, for better or for worse. It's a pretty varied community, with patriotic survivalists mixed in with buckskin clad, bamboo flute playin' hippies.

- Winter Count Rendezvous* - February in Arizona
www.backtracks.net
- Rivercane Rendezvous* - late April/early May in North Carolina
www.earthskills.net
- MAPS (Maryland Area Primitive Skills) Meet* - June
www.mapsgroup.org
- Earth Knack Gathering* - June, near Crestone, Colorado
www.earthknack.com
- Rabbitstick Rendezvous* - September in Idaho
www.backtracks.net
- Falling Leaves Rendezvous* - October in North Carolina
www.earthskills.net

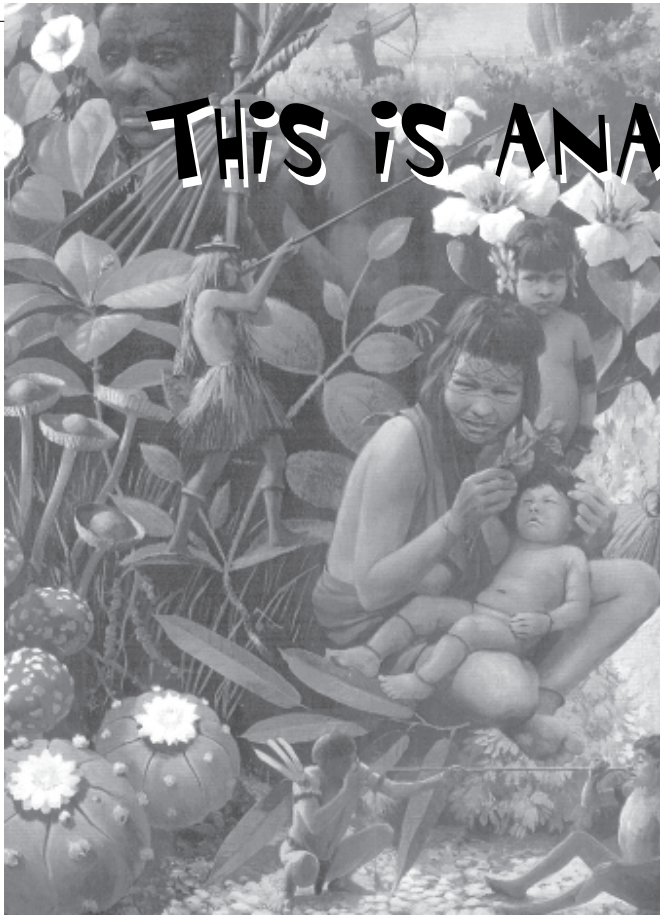
SOME ANTI-CIV CONTACTS:

Wildroots / Feral Forager
PO BOX 1485, Asheville, NC 28802
wildroot SNC@ziplip.com
www.wildroots.org

Green Anarchy/Feral Visions
P. O. Box 11331
Eugene, OR 97440
collective@greenanarchy.org
www.greenanarchy.org

Coalition Against Civilization
P. O. Box 835
Greensburg, PA 15601
coalitionagainstcivilization@hotmail.com
www.coalitionagainstcivilization.org

The REWILDING Primer



THIS IS ANARCHA-HERBALISM

THOUGHTS ON HEALTH AND HEALING FOR THE REVOLUTION

away from the corporate power structure that medicine has become.

The development of a new medical system, or the recovery of ancient models, will be another link in our safety net when industrialism fails. It will keep us alive and kicking out windows now in the system's last days when so many people have no access to industrial medicine. And it will reestablish our connection to the real medicine that is the Earth.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO "ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE"

The sort of herbal medicine popular these days (presented to us by the media and green capitalists as yet another exciting fad) has brought with it very little thought of a new way of healing. The plants, reduced to capsule form or, worse, to their "active ingredients", are just new tools to work with in the same body-machine that industrial medicine sees people as being. They become no different than pharmaceutical drugs or a scalpel blade: something to pry into the body-machine with and use to mess around with the parts. Except of course much less effective, because the herbs have been taken out of the system of healing in which they have their strength.

When the marketers of herbal products get their hands on a new "miracle cure", it can mean extinction for the plant. This is especially sad when so many living creatures go into useless products or are wasted on conditions that they don't treat. (Has anyone else seen that Echinacea shampoo?) The classic example of this is Goldenseal, *Hydrastis canadensis*, a plant close to extinction in the wild. It has a couple of amazing actions in the human body but has mostly been marketed as a cure for the common cold, which it will do almost nothing to help. By the way, the largest brokers of wild-harvested Goldenseal and many other big-name herbs are multinational pharmaceutical corporations. Given American society's obsession with herbal Viagra, weight loss pills, and stimulants, most of the herbs on the mass market

are being sacrificed to these ridiculous causes.

There is an alternative to "alternative medicine". Southwestern herbalist, author, and teacher Michael Moore probably said it best in one of his recent digressions from a lecture: "In this country, the herb business mostly revolves around recently marketed substances with new research, and it comes from them to us. Whereas we're trying to establish as much as possible (in this "lower level" if you will) the fact that we need to create a practice and a model that's impervious to faddism. We're trying to practice in a way that derives from practice rather than from marketing. Not from above to below but from below around. Keep it local. No centralization because centralization kills everything."

HERBA-PRIMITIVISM

So we need another way of looking at our bodies and the plant medicines. Seeing the two as interconnected and in balance is new to industrial culture, but in reality it is the most ancient healing model on earth. We knew it before we were people. Animals know how to use plants to medicate themselves. Their examples surround us, from dogs eating grass to bears digging Osha roots. Probably every human society has had some way of explaining how the body works and how plant medicines work in us.

One thing all herbalists know – dogs and bears included – is that a health problem is best treated before it begins. In more primitive societies where people have the luxury of listening to their own bodies it is easy to spot an imbalance before it turns into an acute disease state. This is where herbs are most effective. They work at this sub-clinical (and therefore invisible to industrial medicine) level of "imbalances" and "deficiency" and "excess".

This old/new healing system is subtle and requires a lot of self-knowledge, or at least self-awareness. It uses intuition as a diagnostic tool. Emotion, spirituality, and environment become medicines. The spirit and environment of the plants we gather affect their healing properties, and our relationship with those plants becomes very important.

GREEN HERBALOGY

When we take herbal medicine we are taking in part of the plant's environment. Everything it ate and drank and experienced has formed

MY MEDICINE CHEST IS A COUNCIL OF BIOREGIONS, with representatives gathered together as I make my way around the world west of the Rocky Mountains. The Coptis root was picked out of the churned-up scar left by an excavator, at the retreating edge of the Idaho wilderness. The tiny amount of Pipsissewa leaves came from an ancient grove above the Klamath River just feet away from where the District Ranger sat on a stump talking about his plans to cut it all down. I am drying Nettles from the California creek where salmon die in the silt left after a century of industrial logging.

Every jar holds a story (often a ghost story of dying ecosystems and places gone forever). I am honored to have known the plants in their home places and to have studied their uses as medicine. But for people not lucky enough to roam throughout the wilds, purchased herbal preparations such as tinctures may be the link back to this sort of healing.

Like so much in this consumerist society, it is easy to ignore the connections between a bottle on a shelf in some store and a living, growing plant out in the world somewhere. It can be hard to know if the plant grows a mile away or on another continent. There is much to be said for reconnecting, for educating ourselves about the herbs we use and gathering our own medicine when we can. That's how we will be able to build a whole new system of healing – one that can support our movement

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the medicine you're depending on, so you better make sure it gets all the best. When we are healed by plants, we owe it to them to look out for their kind and the places where they live. Traditional plant-gatherers often have a prayer they recite before they take anything from the wild. I usually say something along the lines of "OK, plant. You heal me and I'll look out for you. I got your back. No one's gonna build over you, or log you, or pick too much while I'm around." So this true herbal healing system has at its heart a deep environmentalism and a commitment to the Earth.

The bioregional concept is important to this model of healing. Plants' actions in our bodies are really quite limited by the chemicals they can produce from sunlight and soil. For every big-name herb on the market cut from the rainforest or dug from the mountains, there is most likely a plant with a similar action growing in your watershed. Some of the best medicines to maintain good health grow in vacant lots and neglected gardens around the world.

ANARCHA-HERBALISM

A society of people who are responsible for their own health and able to gather or grow their own medicines is a hard society to rule. These days we are dependent on the power structure of industrial health care - the secret society of the doctors, the white-male-dominated medical schools, the corporate decision makers with their toxic pharmaceuticals and heartless greed and labs full of tortured beings. That dependence is one more thing keeping us tied down to the State and unable to rebel with all our hearts or even envision a world without such oppression. With a new system of healing, based on self-knowledge and herbal wisdom, we will be that much more free.

Offering real health care alternatives will help to calm some people's fears about returning to an anarchistic, Earth-centered way of life. There is a false security in the men

with the big machines, ready to put you back together again (if you have enough money). What is ignored is the fact that industrial society causes most of the dis-eases that people fear. Living free on a healing Earth while surrounded by true community and eating real food will prove to be a better medicine than anything you can buy.

What steps can we make now towards creating this new system of medicine? We all need to learn what we can about our own health. This can be through training in one or more of the surviving models of traditional healing and/or through self-observation. How do you feel when you're just starting to get a cold? What kinds of problems come up repeatedly, especially when you're stressed out? If you're a womyn, how long is your cycle and what does the blood look like? Understanding how our bodies act in times of health can help us recognize the very early stages of dis-ease when herbs are the most useful.

People who have some background in healing (in the traditional or industrial systems) can be a great help to those of us just learning. Healers who are working to form this new model, whether collectively or through their individual practices, should keep in mind that commitment to the Earth and a decentralized form are central to truly revolutionary medicine.

In these times of change, everything is being examined and either destroyed, rebuilt, or created from our hearts. Industrialism has affected every aspect of our lives - we are just starting to realize how much has been lost. Medicine is just one part of the machine that we have to take back and re-create into a form that works for the society we

will become. Every herb, pill, and procedure should be judged on its sustainability and accessibility to small groups of people. We can start with ourselves, within our communities and circles, but should never stop expanding outwards until industrial medicine rusts in a forgotten grave, a victim of its own imbalances.



BY LAUREL LUDDITE

The Walls Still Stand by Wolfi Landstreicher

Sometimes it seems we could not be stopped; we were crazy feral children, our eyes ablaze with polymorphous lust. Our intensity demanded eternity, an unending flow.

There was no turning back. Reeling, dizzy with joy on the edge of a cliff, our lives so full of now, there was no tomorrow.

We flew burning through the night finding toys with which to create the wonders of our lives.

Bricolage symphonies, cacophonies, insanities.

Our madness was intentional, a godless rite to break down the walls and dams.

The moments of our lives seemed like forever so full of this life they had become.

We lost ourselves in flows of desire, in wandering currents of sensation stronger than the channels that would keep them in constraints.

Our hearts pounded, we were wild-eyed with our energy, flaming tornadoes dancing zig-zag through heaving landscapes...

Smashing the walls...

Smashing the walls...

Smashing... smashing... smashing the walls...

But the walls still stand and I am tired...

Set me aflame once more.

"I think that my favorite victory is the ability to feel. (sigh) Such insincerity...be it appreciation, be it a voyage, be it an adventure that leads back to ourselves, be it a cartwheel or summersault...sincerity is one of my favorite victories in this lifetime. I mean, how much rebellion did I have to experience. How much fighting did I do? How many times did I have to ignore my father's inability to emote? How we all ignore our father's inability to emote in our presence. How much air-conditioning did I have to transcend, and the comfort that goes along with it? The comfortable couches, the television, the magnitude of static that surrounds us. I mean how much daily fighting, infighting, strategizing, evading, running, did I have to do for the ability to feel, for the ability to emote. For the simple moment when I feel actual passion"

- Timothy "Speed" Levitch, The Cruise

The REWILDING Primer

THE FERAL FURY UNLEASHED

by Gimili

Reconnecting with Our Wild Selves Through Violent Conflict with Our Oppressors

No doubt, we live in a violent society. We are fed the line that violence is a necessary response for “national defense” and to “stop the terrorists.” We are encouraged by this patriarchal society that violence, or the threat of violence, is an appropriate method for maintaining social control on institutional and personal levels. We learn to accept violent relationships and dynamics in every aspect of our lives: from our families and friendships, to the jobs we work, to the entertainment we consume, to the food we eat. The death culture needs to indoctrinate us and desensitize us to violence, since its entire undertaking is built on violence and requires it to proceed.

The one place we are told that violence is unacceptable (probably the place that it is most justifiable and needed) is how we respond to and resist the violence of the machine and those who control it. To be sure, this lesson is built into the logic of the system. In fact, the pacification of the population has always been one of its strongest strategies and weapons. Revolutionaries have always argued that violent resistance is a necessary response to the violence

of the system they are up against; that power does not concede to pathetic pleas, symbolic gestures, or well-articulated arguments. Most anarchists, being against all domination, reject reform of the power structure, in favor of its complete destruction. Therefore, anarchists, who are typically opposed to interpersonal violence (except in the realm of self-defense of the individual or community), reconcile that violence against an oppressor or dominator is justifiable and necessary. Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and author from Martinique (*The Wretched of the Earth*, *A Dying Colonialism*, and *Black Skin, White Masks*) offers yet another perspective. He sees physical resistance and violence directed upon one’s oppressor as not only an anti-colonial act, but one of great healing and catharsis. He also sees it as an individually strengthening and culturally unifying condition for those broken and fractured by the colonizer. According to Fanon, “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.” (*The Wretched of the Earth*).

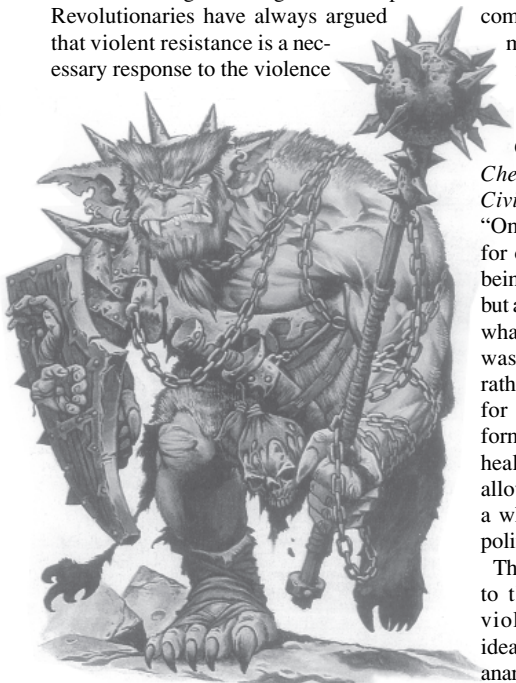
This sentiment is echoed by psychologist, political activist, and writer, Chellis Glendinning (*Off the Map, My Name Is Chellis and I’m In Recovery From Western Civilization*, and *When Technology Wounds*): “One part of healing is being able to stand up for oneself. I see political action as not only being effective in making external changes, but also being psychologically effective. That’s what Frantz Fanon was saying, although he was speaking specifically of violence. I’m rather saying that it’s any kind of standing up for oneself in the political arena, whatever form it takes...As a psychotherapist, I see that healing process as a political act as well, to allow for a healing process, to come back into a wholeness that was ripped from us by the politics of civilization.” (*Green Anarchy* #14).

These perspectives are important contributions to the discussion of the use of political violence, but I would like to incorporate these ideas with a radical Deep Ecologist and green anarchist perspective. As an anarchist born into



a tremendously destructive domesticating process, it is my feeling that we can reconnect with our wild selves, we can break from the civilized order, we can release our feral fury, through violent conflict with those who create, maintain, and benefit from this omniscient system and its apparatus of control.

Before we get too far along, it is important to acknowledge that even using the term “violence” is problematic. As with all language (a mediated mode of comprehension and expression), no one word can describe a complicated dynamic. This term in particular is extremely embedded with the values and biases of those who use it. For instance, the state uses the term to describe the most subtle to the most extreme forms of unwanted or destructive behavior, yet rarely uses it to describe a historical legacy and contemporary reality of state sanctioned brutality, nor the inherent destruction needed to keep the system moving forward. Most pacifists use the term to describe any action or form of resistance which steps outside the symbolic and reformist, and view physical conflict as inherently coercive and predominantly ineffective. Some anarchists argue that property destruction is not violent since it is not harming life, while other anarchists acknowledge violence to be any act of aggression or destruction. And for whatever it’s worth, *Webster’s Dictionary* defines violence as: “1) An exertion of any physical force considered with reference to its effect on other than the agent. 2) Profanation; infringement; outrage; assault. 3) Strength or energy actively displayed



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or exerted; vehement, forcible, or destructive action; force. 4) Hence: a. Intensity; severity. b. Vehemence in feeling; passion; ardor; fury; fervor.” For this discussion, it is probably best to use Webster’s first definition, since it seems to have the least amount of embedded morality.

When we look at violence, it is first important to try to look at the dynamic somewhat objectively, then from this point we might choose to decide whether it is warranted or desirable. Unfortunately, most of these debates tend to be entirely rooted in morality (occasionally in terms of strategy, and rarely in terms of its psychology) and thus are limited in scope and perspective. Among anarchists, the discussion of appropriate use of force (or violence) should be welcomed in a community’s collective decisions on how to deal with interpersonal violence. However, in relation to outward resistance, or how to deal with systemic or institutional violence, “appropriate” force can only be discussed in terms of effective or ineffective strategy, which is an open question. Put simply, violence is a tool, and one we can choose to use, abuse, or discard.

The most significant element of the civilizing process is domestication. Like any other plant or animal utilized by this system, we are born into an existence in which we are controlled in a fundamental way for the benefit of those in authority and for the perpetuation and the undisturbed functioning of the civilized order. We are swiftly “corrected” and “schooled” whenever we step out of line or attempt to exert any amount of free will outside of the pre-fabricated sandboxes created to release any independent urges and fool us into thinking we can exercise free will. Fortunately, all life has the innate instinct to live free and wild and occasionally a domesticated plant or animal’s yearning to become integrated back into a wild existence can bust out of not only its trained mentality, but also the physical reality of its repressive confines. Essentially, this is the project of “going feral”, and one which is necessary to explore, and ultimately fulfill, if we are to become wild beings once again. While there are many aspects (physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological) to this process, reconnecting with our wild selves through violent conflict with our oppressors is one essential, and often overlooked, aspect of the rewilding project.

A key element of the rewilding process is the reconnection and rekindling of our instinctual nature, both in living and in fighting to live. We are taught to be rational, and to follow procedures which have been determined to be “proven effective” or “in our best interest”. From our “nutritional fulfillment”, to the “healing” of our bodies, to our “relationships” with one another, to our “resistance”, our lives and activities have already been arranged for us by the system

and its logic. With every generation, each of us moves further and further from our natural selves as we trade instinctual knowledge for pre-packaged spectacle. We are taught to not trust ourselves and the life-ways which have sustained our species in harmony with the rest of life for a million years. But by living in the moment, connecting with the land we inhabit, and becoming less alienated from ourselves and those we live with, we can regain our instinctual knowledge and learn to trust our processes of learning, feeling, and understanding, and once again, trust in our ability to act.

The feral fury unleashed is a powerful and necessary activity, not only in the realm of self-defense, but also as a connection to our wild selves. No other species relies on institutions to settle disputes or “protect” them. Breaking down these institutions and taking responsibility for our own lives is not only key to anarchy, but also part of deconstructing society back into the wild. The yearning to live unrestrained is a natural urge within all life. The struggle to survive cannot be seen as a separate or temporary activity, but one every species is deeply connected to and which is itself, life. When we no longer fears death, then we may begin to truly live. One potent example of this fury is in the ongoing resistance to captivity and domestication by some of our animal cousins. This past winter: in San Diego an animal prison guard (zookeeper) was hospitalized after being struck by an antelope’s straight, spikelike horns as the animal was being taken to the zoo veterinarian area for “care”; in Botswana, Diana Tilden-Davis, Miss South Africa in 1991 and a runner-up in the 1991 Miss World contest, was attacked by a hippopotamus while canoeing in Okavango Swamp in South Africa; and in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, a 200-pound wild boar stampeded through manicured yards and at one point charged through the gates of an iron fence, breaking its lock, on its rampage through a ritzy neighborhood. These are but a few of the daily revolts which occur between the wild and the domesticator. These dynamic occasions, along with prison uprisings, slave revolts, and insurrectionary moments, offer great inspiration, but so do the weeds growing in the cracks which eventually tear up the concrete. By living wild, we will inevitably alter the landscape and infrastructure of civilization whenever we come up against it.

The examples of this process are limitless, but share a common characteristic: complete disregard for the legal, moral, and physical boundaries of claimed authority. Every shard of broken glass from corporate stores, every spray-painted wall, every smashed piece of technology, every

punched TV reporter, every burnt bank, every barricade enacted in revolt, every penetrated fence, every destroyed piece of machinery, every charred SUV, every torched mansion, every wounded soldier, every knee-capped executive, every hung politician, every exanimated slavemaster, every castrated rapist, every beheaded king, every shanked prison guard, and every dead cop is the derivative of a rewilding act. Our rage against the death-machine has been pacified for too long, and it must be unleashed on those who attempt to run our lives, their institutions of domination, and their apparatus of control. It is through these acts of revolt and destruction that we can remember what it was like to live, to defend ourselves, and to act on those who wish to harm us.

These are certainly not the only ways to reconnect with a wild existence, but they are often neglected, and it might be argued that they are the most important. If we forfeit the fight for another world, another way of living, then the spaces we do carve out, our projects of a sustainable existence, will be ultimately short-lived and from a practical perspective, mostly illusory. We need to bring joy back into our lives, and as an anarchist filled with rage about the raw deal I was dealt, part of this joy comes from the destruction of my oppressor, both metaphorically and physically.

WE ARE FIGHTING FOR THE WILD AND TO BE WILD ... AND THE WILD FIGHTS BACK!



The REWILDING Primer



Intuition by ardilla as a crucial part of Re-wilding



What would the world look like if non-human animals second-guessed their intuition? If a squirrel, for example, heard a noise and convinced itself that it was “probably nothing”? — it was just being “paranoid.” The squirrel would be eaten within minutes. But instead, the squirrel, like many others, listens to its instincts and then uses its adapted skills to affect the situation. This may involve running away, investigating the scene, and/or mumbling a low warning growl. Civilized humans are the only animals who are so removed from our primal instincts that we often talk ourselves out of what our instincts are telling us. Domestication makes us rationalize our intuition, taking us out of the moment and into a mental battle to talk ourselves out of what we feel. We are told that in order for us to act on our instincts/intuition — we need proof... feelings don't count.

I use intuition and instinct interchangeably because they signify a similar relationship to the body and its surroundings. As the Oxford Dictionary ('97, American edition) says, “intuition is the immediate insight or understanding without conscious reasoning.” It goes on to list synonyms as “instinct, inspiration, sixth sense, presentiment, and premonition.” Interestingly, instinct is described as “an innate pattern of behavior, especially in animals” and as an “innate impulsion” or “unconscious skill; intuition.” I include these definitions to reiterate the connection between intuition and instinct, thus illuminating the importance of listening to our intuition as an act of re-learning more natural/wild ways of living. What has been crushed by the weight of this numbing, industrial nightmare can be revived by following the example of non-human animals and not second-guessing our instincts. Although occasions may arise when it is necessary to think more in-depth, apply rationality, or brainstorm about a particular situation, generally the solution will also become clear when it “feels right.” Those that are wild do not second-guess their intuition. They live by it.

Domestication is civilization's way of gaining control, of removing us from our primal animal selves. We are left with neat systems and formulas that are designed to “problem solve” for us. Western culture's preoccupation with the scientific method (hypothesis > experiment > conclusion) helps to highlight the ways in which our instinct is not sanctioned as a valid way of knowing. Your hunch must be tested... there must be a theory to explain it... it can be objectively assessed... seeing is believing! This process of desensitizing separates and then delegitimizes our instinctual feelings — and so our intuition is severed from our embodied selves. Often described as a “gut feeling” or our first reaction, intuition is a mode of survival that civilization works to dull/remove/paint over. We are told that these emotions are “not rational” and “should be thought through.” However, it is within this second-guessing that domestication proves its ultimate conquest. We begin to cultivate a mistrust of what our bodies are telling us, and what we really feel. We begin to think that other people know what we want more than we do. The mind/body split deepens. We are further cut off from our bodies.

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It is interesting that a connection with intuition becomes gendered too easily, paralleling the dynamics of the dominant paradigm. By exaggerating both men and women's relationship with their intuition, western culture has made an intimate connection with intuition synonymous with hysteria and non-rational thinking, and has thus made the connection to instinct seem unobtainable, therefore perpetuating the man=mind=rational, and the woman=body=emotional misunderstandings. Old story. But it is interesting to see the ways that lessons of domestication are channeled through our understandings of what it means to be women or men. To successfully indoctrinate people into a static understanding of gender roles means that it becomes possible to simultaneously implement a preoccupation with maintaining these fragile facades.

So the spectacle continues. For example, when men acknowledge their intuition, it is often masked in more rational language by saying that he is “a good judge of character.” They are cast into hyper-rational, non-emotional roles that champion out-of-body/objective ways of being. It isn't a coincidence that people in positions of authority (cops, doctors, judges, teachers, government officials, etc.) are generally classified in this way. On the other hand, women's intuition has also been de-legitimized, belittled, and exaggerated, through insinuating that women are somehow solely driven by their intuition, and so are incapable of any rational or deductive thinking. This is similar to the ways that the “other” (the poor, people of indigenous descent, the alter-abled) is generally portrayed. Therefore, it becomes apparent that both men and women are saturated with messages that it is problematic or even impossible to live by listening to instinct. Obviously there are cases and cultures where these dynamics are different, but it can be helpful to explore the patterns that emerge in Western civilization's strategies to keep people from being themselves. In order to break down these dynamics, it is important to look more closely at the ways in which domestication removes us from our intuition and has used strict gender roles to ensure that our animal selves seem unobtainable.

Part of my revolution includes unlearning the lessons of dullness and separation that civilization has forced upon me, and instead embracing a more holistic and instinctual way of living. In order to re-wild, to become more in touch with our primal — animal selves — it is imperative that we can trust our “guts” ... that we listen to our intuition. I feel that following our animal/primal instincts is crucial in the difficult process of re-wilding. I understand re-wilding as part of my struggle to be fully in my body, use all of my senses, and to become in tune with the natural world around me. Letting these phases of awareness shape where I live, who I have affinity with, what I eat, how I spend my time... every part. Re-wilding is a process of unlearning domestication. Of wanting and experiencing passion. Of following our instincts. ***My process of re-wilding involves re-learning who I am — by listening to my intuition.***

