

4-26-13 Dandelions, Herring and Healing

While some are looking for ways to poison, pull or otherwise eradicate the arrival of what they think of as a weed and invasive nuisance, others welcome the arrival of the dandelion as not only a free-for-the-taking, fine wild edible delight but also as a reminder of the arrival of the herring, aka, alewife. To those who love to fish, the arrival of herring returning to spawn in their fresh water of origin also signals the opportunity to catch striped bass, for the bass know a good thing when they see it, sense it, hear it, smell it. However they know it, they know it and they know that a plentiful food source is a good thing.

It is interesting that most people now have to watch and make note of these lovely, seemingly orchestrated, synchronized events in nature, while the animals and plants just “know” it. I don’t think the bass and the herring and the dandelions knew about school vacation or the tax deadline but they still, through a variety of mysterious biological, meteorological and chemical means, know that mid-April is the time to grow, go and flow. I believe that at one time all humans were part of this knowing circle whose observations were keen, stories were vivid and, most importantly, they lived in and among their animal and plant companions. They, too, knew to look for the herring when the dandelions start to grow. They felt the cues, just as the plants and animals did.

I am sure that people who still live in and amongst the outdoors, living their connection to nature everyday also understand and depend on these matched occurrences, for their life depends on it. Science calls it phenology, the study of where and when nature “times” natural events. Most of us think of it as harmony. And that is a beautiful thing, reassuring us, whether or not we eat dandelions or go fishing.

In a week gone mad with horrific results, it is reassuring to me, to see spring march on. When we think or feel as though we cannot go on after a tragedy, it can at first seem like a stinging nettle, salt to an open wound and the worst of insults that time does not stand still for our pain. In honor of our loss, it might seem as though it should. The natural world, the living earth, would actually come to a quick end if it responded to our feelings. Life is far more powerful than our individual lives and that is a good thing, for not only does life continue even though we have suffered, it also continues when individuals attempt to destroy life.

I am convinced that there are more good people than bad people and even though the evil minority can produce powerful, stunning, shocking, horrible consequences, the majority rules here and the majority are good. Humans are gifted with and also tormented by their ability to think, ponder, and calculate and by their desire to make sense of things. The evil people have become distorted in their goals and become more animal-like, in that they become driven, as if by instinct. Those who are harmed by them will suffer further by trying to make sense of their actions, when it may not make sense at all. And there is a lot of suffering happening just now and on multiple levels.

People are suffering from their direct traumas and there will be widespread trauma to the bystanders, the witnesses, the extended family and friends and even vicariously by the knowledge and awareness alone. In response to this societal degree of Post Traumatic Stress, there is the need for caring friends and talented therapists to support and guide the traumatized in addition to helping the “worried well”. When our instincts are not enough to heal us, we need help from others.

One of those other helping hands is nature. It is there, available, with beauty, refreshing air, and stress-relieving scents and sights. The very security and ongoing presence of it is a relief, if you allow it to be so. For here it is again; nature brings us the dandelions and herrings on time, without waiting to be asked. For that, I am grateful.

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