
ECO-JUSTICE

Summer 2001

A Visit to the Calving Grounds

Impressions of the Artic Refuge coastal plain

By Ken Madsen

Reprinted with permission from Tundra Talk

I wriggled into a comfortable position on the ridge and looked down onto the coastal plain. A clear creek flowed beside a line of hills that paralleled the Jago River. Two hundred and fifty caribou, cows and calves, were scattered in the willows along the stream and up a tussocky slope.

Suddenly the caribou leaped to their feet and stampeded across the creek. Then I saw the grizzly: legs churning, golden fur flowing across powerful shoulders. Caribou scattered in front of the bear's charge like leaves before a whirlwind. I crept up the ridge and grabbed my bear spray. When I returned to my vantage point the caribou were disappearing over the hillside – but there was no sign of the bear. For a moment I wondered if it was moving towards me, hidden by the steep drop-off below. Finally I saw it running full tilt in the opposite direction. My

continued on page 2

Terricide

In the Beginning

By Paul Flack

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the water.

In the beginning of the technological age, man recreated the heavens and the earth. To the earth he gave new form with dynamite and bulldozer, and the void of the heavens he filled with smog

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...Let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear."

Then man took oil from beneath the ground and spread it over the waters, until it coated the beaches with slime. He washed the topsoil from the fertile prairies and sank it in the ocean depths. He took waste from his mines and filled in the valleys, while real estate developers leveled the hills. And man said, "Well, business is business."

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth...Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds." And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

But man was not so sure. He found that mosquitoes annoyed him, so he killed them with DDT. And the robins died, too, and man said, "What a pity." Man defoliated forests in the name of modern warfare. He filled the streams with industrial waste – and his children read about fishing... in the history books.

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Visit to the Calving Grounds
- 1 Terricide
- 2 A Native American Prayer
- 3 Greening Your Cleaning
- 3 Forum on Religion and the Environment
- 4 Organic Gardening: Connecticut Roots
- 4 Calendar

scent had stopped its charge as surely as a brick wall.

As my pulse slowly returned to normal, a lone caribou trotted over the horizon. She walked warily down the slope. She couldn't have been sure that the bear was gone, but she kept coming. I heard a call that sounded like a cross between a mallard and a husky. A wobbly calf stood up in the willows and tottered forward. The cow crossed the stream and they touched noses. The calf butted its head under her flans and started to nurse, but only for a moment. The cow turned and moved away, the calf hanging on until they reached the stream. They separated, splashed across the water and trotted up the slope.

Before we visited the Arctic Refuge, Gwich'in people had told me that the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd is a sacred place. It didn't take many experiences like that of the grizzly and the caribou for me to understand what they meant.

The first thing I learned in the calving grounds was that the cows were extraordinarily sensitive, not like the caribou I'd met in the mountains on previous trips. Any movement sent them trotting away, even a lone hiker on the coastal plain. I remembered what I had seen at Prudhoe Bay. I couldn't imagine the heavy footprint of industrial oil development stomping across the calving grounds.

When the Arctic Wildlife Refuge was expanded in 1980, most of it was designated wilderness. The exception was the "1002 Lands," named for section 1002 of an act of Congress. The act directed the Department of the Interior to prepare a report on oil and gas development. In April 1987, the Department of the Interior recommended full scale development – even though its own studies concluded that oil development would cause major negative impacts on the very qualities for which the Refuge was established.

The Porcupine Caribou Herd uses the coastal plain in the refuge as its principle calving area, with an average of 40,000 calves born there annually. The coastal plain is only 20-30 miles wide in the Refuge, narrower than other places on the north slope. A 1993 study by International Porcupine Caribou Board scientists conclude that there is no alternative to the coastal plain habitat used during calving and post-calving activity. The Department of Interior's own report warns that drilling could jeopardize up to forty percent of the herd and drive caribou away from Firth Nations and villages and hunters.

Research on caribou in the vicinity of the Prudhoe Bay oil

fields suggest that cows with calves avoid noise and activity associated with oil development. The studies linked increased animal stress and extra exertions with lower calf production, lower calf weights, and lower calf densities throughout developed areas. There is no evidence after 20 years of development that pregnant cows or cows with calves have habituated to the oil field development.

Potential disturbance to the herd's calving grounds is a compelling reason to protect the coastal plains in the Refuge. But it isn't the only reason. The coastal plain has been called America's Serengeti. The complex web of life that includes polar bears, musk oxen, arctic foxes, snowy owls, gyrfalcons, and many other species is at risk.

I spent most of last winter in front of my computer, doing the preliminary work to make our Caribou Commons Project a reality. After a week in the calving grounds, I was more determined than ever to inform North Americans what is at stake.

We have to make sure that the calving grounds are protected and that the rest of the herd's range remains healthy. It isn't just for our sakes or for our children's. It is for the intrinsic right for the wild creatures to survive. It is to protect an aboriginal way of life that has depended upon caribou for literally thousands of generations. ♦

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. - Rachel Carson ♦

O Great Spirit, Whose voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me! I am small and weak, I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

I see strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy – myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame. –Native American Prayer

GREENING YOUR CLEANING

In the last fifty years, America's exposure to toxic substances has increased substantially due to a number of influences. Most people don't realize that our exposure to chemicals doesn't just come from dirty power plants and chemical companies. Many hazardous chemicals are found in our own homes, in the form of household cleaners.

Household cleaners not only can be expensive, but many conventional cleaners contain unsafe toxins. Here are some green cleaning tips that can save you money and reduce your exposure to toxins.

USE HALF. Most name brand cleaners recommend that you use more than is necessary for the job. Using half the recommended amount will save you money reduce the amount of chemicals in our air and water.

BUY GREEN. Switch from traditional cleaning products to an all-purpose, non-toxic cleaning product. Simple Green and Seventh Generation are to brands that are affordable, effective, and non-toxic. These brands can be found in health food stores, as well as some supermarkets, such as Shaw's.

MAKE YOUR OWN CLEANERS. The typical household spends around \$400 a year on cleaning and laundry supplies. If you made your own, you would spend less than \$100 a year and know that it is environmentally safe. Here's how:

All Purpose Household Cleaner

Mix 2 tbsp. Of vinegar with 1 tsp of borax in a 16 oz trigger bottle. Fill the rest of the bottle with very hot water. Shake until the borax is dissolved. Add ¼ cup of liquid soap or 1/8 cup of liquid detergent. To scent, add 10-15 drops of an essential oil (a combination of lavender and lemon works well.)

Because minerals in the water inhibit cleaning, it's best to use purified or distilled water. It's also important to dissolve the borax in hot water so that it doesn't clog the spray nozzle. And don't mix the soap and vinegar directly together, because the soap will clump up – mix the vinegar, water and borax first, then add the soap last. Borax is an eye irritant and can be harmful if swallowed. Keep out of the reach of children.

How to Use: Spray and wipe! One batch will last at least six months. Happy Cleaning! ♦

Information for this article was taken from Co-op America Real Money, Spring 1999

subdue it, and have dominion over... every living thing.”

So man multiplied and multiplied and spread his works across the land, until the last green glade was black with asphalt, until the skies were ashen and the waters reeked, 'til neither bird sang nor child ran laughing through cool grass. So man subdued the earth and made it over in his image, and in the name of progress, he drained it of its life...

...Until the earth was without form and void, and darkness was once again upon the face of the deep, and man himself was but a painful memory in the mind of God. ♦

Forum on Religion and the Environment

By Terri Eickel

The Interreligious Eco-Justice Network will be sponsoring its first annual Forum on Religion and the Environment on Thursday, October 4 at the Hartford Seminary from 4pm to 9pm. The keynote speaker will be Paul Gorman, from the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. He will be followed by a panel of leaders from different faiths. Rabbi Israel Stein, Iman Abdul Kareem Sasan, Dr. Shalama Raman, and will present thoughts from the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu faith perspective. Patricia Benedict has been invited to speak about the Native American faith traditions.

After the panel concludes, participants will adjourn for a meal and fellowship. The meal will be provided by the Center Squeeze, an all organic restaurant in the heart of West Hartford center.

Following dinner, four workshops will be offered, giving attendees the chance to educate themselves on specific matters. Dr Mark Mitchell, head of the Hartford Environmental Justice Network will lead a discussion on urban issues, Anne Rowthorn will talk about creation-centered liturgy, Steve MacAusland, head of Episcopal Power and Light, will talk about clean power, and Louise Feldman will discuss education in the religious community.

Besides the Connecticut Committee for Interreligious Understanding, the conference is also being sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, the American Baptist Church of Connecticut's Outreach Department, the Capital Region Conference of Churches and the Hartford Seminary.

Ticket prices are \$10 and all proceeds go to the work of creation care and environmental justice. Come one, come all! ♦

CALENDAR

JUNE

EARTH PRAYERS - SOUTHEAST

Monday, June 4, 7:30 PM
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
71 River Street, Milford
(203) 874-8562

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, June 7, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

EARTH PRAYERS

Monday, June 11, 7:30 PM
First Baptist Church of West Hartford
90 North Main Street, West Hartford
(860) 521-9460

JULY

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, July 5, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

ASYLUM HILL FARMER'S MARKET

Wednesday, July 11 12pm – 3pm
Asylum Hill Congregational Church
Asylum Avenue, Hartford
See related article

AUGUST

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, August 2, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

SAVE THE DATE!

FORUM ON RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Thursday, October 4, 4 PM – 9PM
The Hartford Seminary
77 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT

If we were to walk in the woods and a spring appeared just when we became thirsty, we would call it a miracle. And if on the second walk, if we became thirsty at just that point again, and again the spring appeared, we would remark on the coincidence. But if that spring were there always, we would take it for granted and cease to notice it. Yet is that not more miraculous still?
-Israel Ball Shem Tov

Organic Gardening: Connecticut Roots

By Terri Eickel

If you are wondering where to find local, organic produce, look no further than the backyard of Tom and Joan Kemberler. For more than forty years, this couple from Glastonbury has been using organic methods to raise fruits, vegetables, and flowers. They offer a wide variety, including salad greens, tomatoes, beans, peas, melons, broccoli, sweet corn, and berries. They also raise organic sunflowers, astors, and shasta daisies, to name a few.

All of the produce is certified, third party organic by the Northeast Organic Farmers Association of Connecticut. According to Joan, it is a complex process, involving soil samples, interviews, and a 20 page form to guarantee that organic practices are being followed. No chemicals are used in fertilizer and crops are rotated regularly to keep the soil full of nutrients. This is important because, Joan says, "The idea is to feed the soil, not just pour chemicals on the plants." Healthy soil grows healthy plants and provides for a sustainable agricultural system.

The Kemberlers will be selling their wares at the Asylum Hill Farmer's Market every Wednesday this summer starting July 11. The Farmer's Market lasts from 12pm to 3pm and is located at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 814 Asylum Ave, Hartford. ♦

Support the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

The Interreligious Eco-Justice Network has big plans for next year. From the Forum on Religion and the Environment to additional Earth Prayers services, to increased political advocacy and awareness, we are poised to make a difference. Unfortunately, we cannot do it without your help. We need funding to help make our of environmental justice and creation celebration a reality. Please help support the work of Eco-Justice by sending donations to: The Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, 90 North Main St., West Hartford, CT 06107. Thank you very much! ♦

