

Writing the Land: Wanderings I
Edited by Lis McLoughlin

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Writing the Land: Wanderings I

Edited by Lis McLoughlin
Foreword by Patrick Curry

Published by
NatureCulture LLC
Northfield, MA

Let me try to name some of the processes at work in this book....

One we might call animism. By this I mean the practice of recognizing and honoring the living land, and refusing to see nature as a dead commodity, a resource which can then be manipulated without any ethical considerations, solely for the benefit of a small subsection of humanity.

Another key aspect of the anthology is openness to Indigenous land guardianship and traditional ecological knowledge: the precious wisdom resulting from centuries of living in place and with place, and the practices that result.

A third dimension is green education. The opportunity for children and young adults to experience the natural world on its own terms, unmediated by a screen, in the company of those who can knowledgeably and respectfully introduce it to them, is absolutely essential. How else can they learn to personally appreciate its delicacy as well as strength, and its evolutionary and ecological dynamics, which must otherwise remain dangerously abstract?

Finally, there is art: the moving, touching and funny poems and photographs celebrating all natural beings, from humans to non-human animals of all kinds, plants, trees, rocks, soil, places and moments; celebrating but also, inseparably, elegizing their passing away. For art grows out of our lives as Earthlings, and will eventually – like the rest of us and what we do – return to the Earth. So it is only fitting that art should address it, reminding us that we are never separate from nature.

Together, these processes add up to a deep common thread of ecocentrism: an understanding that the more-than-human natural world is the ultimate source and terminus of all value. That understanding includes humans as part of the natural world, but rejects the limiting of its value to the strictly human world. Overall they convey a profound sense of hope, which seems to be in short supply these days.

Photo (opposite): Storm Over Mountain by Marty Espinola

Yet beyond this common core of respect for nature, there are differences among the chapters as well, and paying attention to them brings another dynamic to light.

Edges and boundaries in the natural world, where one kind of habitat and the life it supports meets another, are often places of the greatest biodiversity. By analogy, it seems to me that where animism/land agency, Indigenous wisdom, green education and art all meet and mingle is precisely where the greatest degree of cultural diversity obtains, including opportunities for the ecocentric virtues here expressed. This book creates a liminal place where solidarity and learning come to the fore, because no single party is in charge. By the same token there is no tyranny of ‘the right position’, only the more important question: are we moving in a good direction? So, long and deep may these land conservation trusts (and others) flourish! For all our sakes.

—Patrick Curry, PhD
The Ecological Citizen, Editor-in-Chief
London, England



Our Quiet Chorus
by Jim Minick

We write the land and the land writes us
a resurrection letter posted every day,
the music of mycelium our quiet chorus.

The skin between us stretches thin and porous.
Maples know this and so does clay
if we write the land and the land writes us.

What is a word? Language limited, yet raucous,
a finger pointing, wild tongue-play.
Always, the miracle of mycelium a quiet chorus.

If Earth suddenly was minus us,
would it rejoice or mourn or simply say
we forgot to write, so the land stopped writing us?

A volcano dances with fire's mad rush,
and lava flows like water over all that we say.
Eventually, mycelium returns to sing its chorus.

Like it or not, the land will survive us.
The last supper will be heaven to a worm and a jay.
Still, if we write the land, the land might right us,
and a mouthful of mycelium will be our quiet chorus.



Photo: Mushroom Bunch in Woods by Marty Espinola

WRITING THE LAND: WANDERINGS I
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PRESUMPCOT REGIONAL LAND TRUST



**Presumpscot
Regional
Land Trust**

Maine

The Presumpscot Regional Land Trust engages with communities to conserve, steward, and provide access to local lands and clean water for current and future generations to enjoy.

-Hawkes Preserve

-Poet: Lisa Hibl

-School Partner: Great Falls Elementary School

Allie Rimkunas, Art teacher, and her students

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust is a community-based nonprofit serving Gorham, Gray, Standish, Westbrook, and Windham. We hold conserved lands with free public access preserves that include trails and water access. We are the water stewards of the Presumpscot River watershed and we coordinate the Sebago to the Sea Trail, a 28-mile trail from Standish to Portland.

We are nationally accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. To learn more about our vision and long term plans see our Strategic Plan.

We envision a future where:

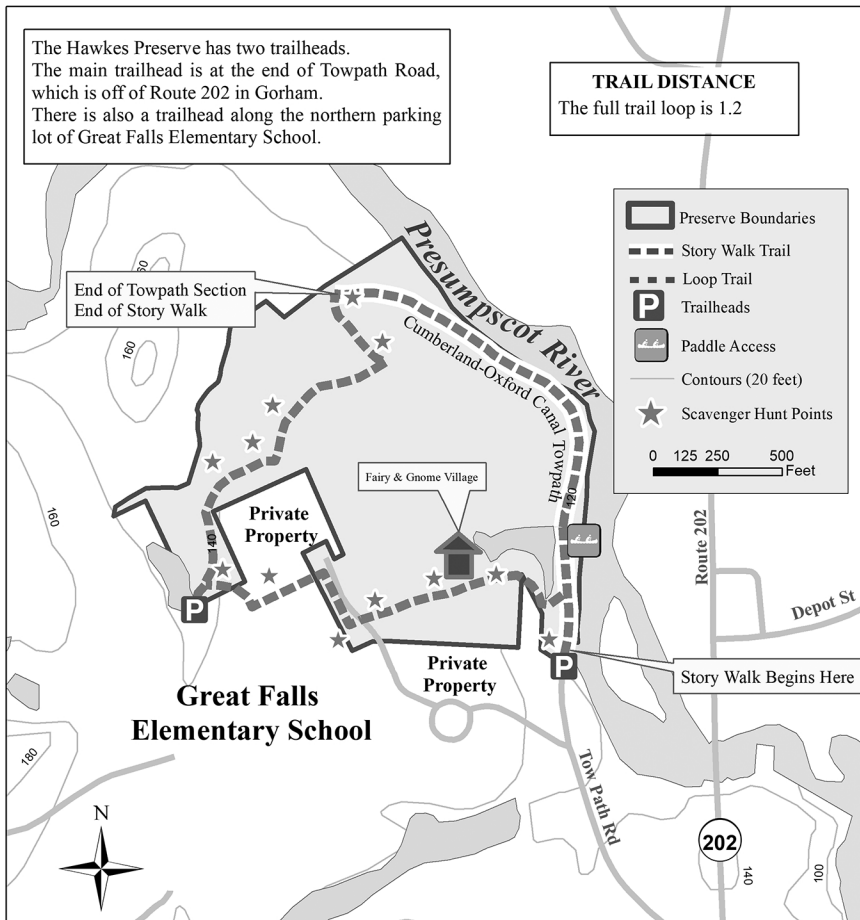
- Networks of conserved land, clean water, wildlife habitat, working farms, and public access to nature are recognized as vital assets to the economy and quality of place.
- People of all ages are connected to the outdoors and the next generation is inspired to be environmental stewards.



Hawkes Preserve by Brenna Crothers



Hawkes Preserve Gorham, ME



Presumpscot Regional Land Trust supports healthy lands, waters, wildlife, and people across the Presumpscot River watershed through conservation, water quality monitoring, education, and public access. Our success is based on member support. To learn more and become a member go to www.prlt.org.

Hawkes Preserve

Hawkes Preserve is located in Gorham Maine. There is a 1-mile nature loop trail on the Preserve, which includes several stops to learn more about the natural area. The trail winds through hemlock forests, along the scenic Presumpscot River and follows along the historic Cumberland and Oxford Canal. The Cumberland and Oxford Canal was built to move products from western Maine to the port of Portland and roughly followed the Presumpscot River from Sebago Lake through Standish, Windham, Gorham and Westbrook. This easy trail along the Presumpscot River includes a few bridges, and is a cool and shady summer hike.

The preserve features a seasonal story walk, which displays a book along the trail with different pages mounted and displayed on posts for readers to enjoy as they walk. The story walk is a fun way to engage families in literacy while being active. The story walk is updated seasonally and is maintained with the help of volunteers and the United Way of Greater Portland.

The Hawkes Preserve is adjacent to the Great Falls Elementary School and the trail can be accessed from the school or Tow Path Road.

- Tow Path Trailhead: At the end of Tow Path Road off Route 202 in Gorham.
- Great Falls School Trailhead: 73 Justice Way, Gorham. Park at the back of the school lot. The trail begins at the bottom of the hill by the school's outdoor classroom.

This Preserve is in the homeland of the Wabanaki People. We respectfully acknowledge these People of the Dawn—past, present and future—and their connection to these lands and waters.

There is no hunting allowed on the Hawkes Preserve and motorized vehicles are not allowed (excluding snowmobiles).

Hawkes Preserve is owned by the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust.

Great Falls Elementary, 5th Grade
Allie Rimkunas, Art teacher

**Partner up. Draw your partner in the foreground and our outdoor classroom in the background. Then write about each. Finally, what do they have in common?*

At the Trailhead: A Composite Poem
by Lisa Hibl

April 14, 2023 - 71 degrees and sunny

Lots and
lots of trees
trees in the foreground
and the background.

My friend is sitting peaceful,
the hills taller than the trees.
Both are peacefully waiting to be a star.

Big green sappy trees,
piney smell,
my friend's sweatshirt
green like the grass.

A hill with a house and a dead tree.
Always looking bored all the time
and half asleep
but 100% awesome.

Wet, rough, icy spicy
slaying ticks,
piney, hot, grass,
I am non-speaking tree #8.

My friends are kind and funny and calm.
Nature is as calm right now as my friends.
They are both beautiful.

I can hear a woodpecker bellowing
as crazy as my friends.

My background has everything
that Mrs. R. loves and I love and
the nature that makes a world.

