

TERRA
ANIMA

LOVING THE
Wet.Land

STORYTELLING
FOR WETLANDS
CONSERVATION

Edited by Špela Kaplja

LOVING THE
Wet.Land

STORYTELLING FOR WETLANDS CONSERVATION

Edited by Špela Kaplja

Some old legends say that wetlands are dark places, places where souls of the dead dwell, places of fright and spook. Wetlands are places where light enters the world. One legend speaks of alder tree groves being places that are closest to magic, this is why faeries choose their homes in the trunks of alder trees. When journeying into the world, they shifted form and became white herons, messengers of light and positive changes.

Wetland is land without real value, says the world of money and progress, let's fill it up with concrete and build commercial zones. Wetlands are the cradles of life with the richest biodiversity of all ecosystems, they are the source of life, treasuries of precious water.

Slimy, disgusting creatures crawl in the wetlands. Salamanders are poisonous. There are mosquitoes and there is much mud. Wetlands are the home of fantastical creatures that are able to live in two worlds, Water and Earth. Those animals capable of transformation, teach us about the ever turning wheel of life. Have you ever looked into the eyes of a frog? They are the most beautiful eyes in the world, golden, containing all of the universe.

Which story are we going to choose?



Fact is that the wetland are endangered ecosystems, way too unknown and not appreciated for their importance. We wish full heartedly to change this, this is the reason why we have ventured, feet mudded, heats wide open, through the branches of the trees, towards the sky. We have ventures ventured, longing to hear the stories of the wetland, hoping to get a taste of its mystery.

LOVING THE WETLAND:

ERASMUS+ MOBILITY OF YOUTH WORKERS
TRAINING ABOUT THE USE OF STORYTELLING IN
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE CASE OF
WETLAND.



In our deep ecology association from Slovenia, Terra Anima, we have joined forces with partners from North Macedonia (SFERA), Hungary (Ecoservice) and Croatia (Laboratorij Zabave). In June of 2022, we carried out a mobility of youth workers training, on the subject of the use of storytelling for the purpose of wetland environmental education and awareness raising. We embarked upon a journey, trying to learn how we can strengthen youth's relationship with wetlands by using storytelling.



The purpose of the booklet in front of you is quite simple, to evoke a love for wetlands in the world. Nothing less.

How can one, or more of them evoke love for wetlands?

Is a handful of dust from the magic wetland cauldron enough to create an alchemical potion to do the work? We surely believe it is, because our faith in the power of wetlands is impeccable.

However, there is something as potent, as magical and as transformational as magic dust. Do you want to know what it is?

Stories.

"If we want to fall in love in the world again, we must open to narrative," says Joanna Macy, the voice of deep ecology.



ŠPELA KAPLJA is a writer, poet, storyteller for nature, environmentalist, facilitator, and above all a spokeswoman for the world of nature, with decades of experience working with young people, developing her own style of forest pedagogics using storytelling and creative writing. She is a part of the Storytelling council for peace, where among storytellers from Europe, she speaks for natural world. Published writer, the red thread of her books published so far: Pejmo drugače, a handbook for volunteering and responsible tourism; Onja; Visiting Indian; How the heart gets green: Secrets from the frog kingdom; Forest book - deep ecology workbook for children in the forest, How the river makes love, is a love for the natural world.



She develops and teaches storytelling in conservation education, helping people to reconnect with Nature - be it to young volunteers trying to raise awareness about whales and dolphins (Atlantic whale and dolphin foundation), teachers to evoke curiosity and wonder in children, tourist guides to add experiences and stories into nature guiding tour and getting a deeper experience, individuals trying to evoke creative flow and explore storytelling in connection to natural world.

NEJA ROJC is the founder of the Terra Anima association and the founder of the Center Kiron, centre for holistic approach to working with horses where she has been successfully conducting trainings for personal growth with the help of horses for several decades, for both youth and adults. A graduate of the Marko Pogačnik School of Geomancy, she is developing her own form called Zoomancy which briefly means in-depth perception of animals and their place in holistic ecology of life.

She is keen to many approaches and exercises for in-depth perception of nature, crucial with helping people develop the sense of nature and self. An artist, sculptor, painter and light maker who illuminates nature with her art and a

passionate environmentalist who uses art as a tool to evoke our nature connection. Through teaching the knowledge of herd, she trains people in non-verbal communication, developing sensual awareness and empathy through it, leading through positive examples and inclusive, non-conflict communication.



DIJANA ZORIĆ is an expert in storytelling and business storytelling, who is continuously improving her skills by attending various prestigious educations in Croatia and abroad. She is Co-Founder and Art Director of STORYing - the 1st international storytelling festival in Croatia which gathers renowned European storytelling artists. Dijana is also a regular expert mentor at the Zagreb Faculty of Education, where she teaches Storytelling and Communication to the Drama Pedagogy students. Dijana is co-owner of the Storytelling training centre Lab and of the Laboratorij zabave (Fun Lab) – studio for promotion of the storytelling culture. She is continuously collaborating with cultural and artistic institutions in



Croatia. She has a rich experience in public and artistic performance that she gathered at numerous socio-artistic events such as Summer at Zrinjevac, Cest is d'Best, Advent at Klovićevi dvori, Advent in Samobor, Legendfest, Fairy Tale festival in Ogulin and many other branded events within Croatian tourism that are important for the cultural and public life in Croatia.

TERRA ANIMA is deep ecology association, dedicated to the study of natural life and our connection with it, introducing nature to people through art. We are developing and sharing the methodology and practice of Storytelling for Nature, which is based on developing didactic tools for educating people on more soulful level about the importance of natural world and implementing activities useful for their personal development and self-knowledge. Since 2010, we have been organizing projects for young people, youth workers and other interested adults, based on experiential learning from nature and the arts as tools for deepening and personalizing knowledge.







STORYTELLING IN NATURE EDUCATION:

Why?

Many people, not being familiar with the wild, get scared when they encounter wildness for the first time. The chaotic lushness of wetland may seem messy. The soft mud may seem only dirty and the frog song, ornamenting the deep velvety night, may seem disturbing to our ears, which are not attuned to the sounds of the wild, but more used to the sounds of the urban life.



I remember bringing a group of children to visit our last free flowing river in central Slovenia, Rovščica, it is the river filling our wetland. The Rovščica has soft curves, her river bank is soft and muddy. I thought it is the ideal playground for children.

"Phew, mud!" I heard them scream, astonished.

"No!" was the first response of my inner voice.

But nevertheless, we started with a story about mud, continuing with the acceptance of a small chunk of mud in the palm of our hand and continuing all the way to drawing mud symbols on our faces, which proved our newfound bond with the muddy wilderness. The children that I brought back home were different children, their eyes were glowing and their voices deeper and more lively. Each of them had a song about the wetland in their pocket.



Being in touch with mud means being in touch with the creative force of life, with all the authenticity and potent magic of ever birthing new types and forms of life. This is the power of the wetland. Wetlands are the source of life.

Stories have the power to re-domesticate us into a world we have always belonged to, yet during the era of our modern development, managed to forget about. They give us the memory that we belong to Nature, which is the most important realization we need. The wound of disconnection from Nature is the deepest wound of humankind. Not being aware of this disconnection, we feed it with consumption, filling wetland with concrete, but still the wound remains. Frogs still sing in the nourishing, healing dark of the night, calling us. The Latin name for frog is rana, which in Slovene means wound. If we listen to the stories of Nature, can we go back and heal this wound?

The art of storytelling was a key tool for our ancestors to learn about the world and understand its phenomena. Stories instilled in them confidence in the natural order, teaching respect and prudent handling of the available resources for life. Because of stories, they believed in the liveliness of natural creatures and treated them with respect, as their equals.



LOVING
THE Wet[®]
Land



ENVIRONMENTAL *Storytelling*

Environmental stories teach listeners about animals, plants, and natural wonders, or introduce ecological concepts such as biodiversity, sustainability, and adaptation.

- Kevin Strauss



Storytelling is the most natural and best way of learning; it is especially useful in Nature education. Education about Nature in our time must, in addition to the function of education, necessarily include stories, as these return an understanding of belonging to Nature and the interconnectedness of everything in the natural world. This empowers young people, inspiring them to act.

Stories are used in many areas; more and more botanical gardens have storytelling corners; museums are increasingly using the art of storytelling to educate children and adults in a fun and engaging way. Ecological scientists use stories to present their discoveries, history and to present activities.





THE POWER OF STORYTELLING FOR *Nature*

Tell me the data, I'll forget it; tell me the story, I'll remember it forever.

A professor of business communication gave her students a task. Each of them had to prepare a 60 second business speech, using data and facts. In secret she told one of them to tell a story instead of presenting facts. The results were amazing; only 5% of the students remembered the facts, yet 63% percent remembered the story. When we listen to a presentation full of boring facts and figures, only two parts of our brain activate; the ones responsible for processing the language and giving meaning to the words we hear, but when we listen to a story, the parts of our brain responsible for sensations and feelings is activated. Listening to a story, we experience it almost as if we lived it ourselves. This is why we remember it forever. Our brain is wired for stories.





“The job of storytelling is to inspire people to look again at their environment, both the built and the natural environment, with all its plants and animals.” (From the Scottish Storytelling Centre). The following story about a Beech tree is an example of an environmental story, which I performed at the Scottish Storytelling Festival. It is the result of deep listening to a Beech tree in my forest, written completely according to her dictation. When I later researched the facts about this tree, I was speechless at the accuracy of the metaphors she used to present her “super powers”. A story supported by information about a tree is a great example of learning about nature through storytelling.



BEECH TREE:

facts

The Beech tree, which reaches a height of 30 meters, with its growth, bushy crown and the arch it forms, has been used to inspire cathedral architects. It has silvery bark and reaches a venerable age of up to 300 years, botanically belonging to the same family as the Oak.

In the beliefs of pagan peoples, the Oak was the King of the forest, and the Beech was its Queen. In some places, the Beech was called the MOTHER OF THE FORESTS because of its magnificent appearance. Like any loving mother, the Beech also takes care of its children and bears abundant fruit in autumn. Its three-edged shiny brown fruits, called acorns, are eaten by forest animals and are also used as fodder for domestic animals. Sometimes the fallen acorns were also used by people; they obtained delicious cooking oil from them. In times of severe famine, flour was also made from acorns. If you are in the forest in early spring, you can show children how the big mother Beech tree waits for the young Beech trees to get enough sun and put out leaves, before she puts out her own.

Beech trees are also known for their concern for other members of their species. They help the sick and say goodbye to the dead with great difficulty. The author of the book *The Secret Life of Trees*, Peter Wohlleben, compares them to a herd of elephants, which also deeply mourn the dead. Beech trees have a hard time saying goodbye to a cut down, dead tree. They connect with the root system and start feeding the cut tree. From the log, it often starts to shoot. They really like to grow in a tight, dense hug. Contrary to forestry principals and the Darwinist view, based on the struggle for dominance, the biomass and fertility of beech trees growing in close groups increases.

Beech trees are just, according to the law of balanced justice, they distribute nutrients to each other with the help of their fellow fungi. Those that grow on richer soil give up nutrients to those that live on poorer soil, thus ensuring that there are no rich and poor in Beech forests.



The Beech tree is associated with wisdom, learning and knowledge, especially knowledge from books, because the leaves of the first books were obtained from thin layers of beech wood. This is also confirmed by the etymology of some words: Old Slovenian terms for book are "bukve, bukle", the German word for beech is "Buche", and for book "Buch". Swedes have the same term for book and beech: "bok". Another thing you can observe if you are in the forest with children in early spring, is to show them the youngest shoots of trees that resemble green notebooks. Then you can tell them about the ancient connection of the beech with wisdom and the written word, which was known to ancient peoples.

NOW ROCK YOURSELF GENTLY
WITH THE RHYTHM OF THE STORY:



BEECH TREE:

a story

Q ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A KINGDOM. It was surrounded by a grand, vast forest of Beech trees. In the middle of the Kingdom there was a hill and, on that hill, stood a castle. In that castle lived a young Queen and King. They were happy, in love and in happy expectation of a new life, the seed of their love, which the Queen was carrying under her heart. It was only a question of days now. When the big day came, all the castle was trembling with excitement. This excitement grew thicker by the hour, like the sky outside, which was growing darker.



SYNCHRONICITY

or about the connective power of storytelling.

There was a study in which neuroscientists connected storytellers and their listeners with an fMRI device. They were amazed to find that when a person tells a story to another person, the brains of both show almost identical activity. Their brains synchronize. Can we say that when listening to stories, we are on the same wavelength as the narrator, that the story creates a space in which we can truly hear and understand each other?

RADICAL EMPATHY

can save the world.

I first heard of the term radical empathy when performing at the Scottish Storytelling Festival, which in 2017, was devoted to storytelling for Nature. The term explained the power of storytelling to evoke radical empathy.

“Radical Empathy is not about you and what you think you would do in a situation you have never been in and perhaps never will, it is the kindred connection from a place of deep knowing that opens your spirit to the pain of another as they perceive it.

-Isabel Wilkerson

Stories of natural creatures, told in the first person, allow people to empathize with them and identify with them. Empathy is the way out of human orientated perception of the world into a more respectful, equal and understanding way of being.

Stories help people to make a connection with other beings, who do not speak the human language. In this way they start to care, which is key to educating young people by actively involving them in solving the ecological crisis. Stories make us fall in love with the world; and what we love we will preserve.

CHANGE

Stories change our beliefs and encourage a more sustainable way of living.

Stories can change beliefs about the environment. Suggestions for a more nature-friendly way of life and advice about more sustainable behaviour in everyday life can seem like orders. On the other hand, the story of local residents, who joined forces in a civil initiative and who managed to prevent the construction of a residential complex and protect a valuable part of the forest, inspired us years later.

As part of the Terra Anima Association, we founded a civil initiative for the protection of an area, which the previously mentioned part of the forest is also a part. Thus, this success story inspired us to act and the result we will be gaining protected status for our precious marshland.

POWER OF IMAGINATION

To create a better future we must first envision it.

Stories take us to adventurous journeys into unknown lands, where we meet beasts of earthy power, towers of beams climbing towards the sky and faeries dancing in the mists above the river. They present us with new ideas, open our horizons and activate our inner world.

Falling into hopelessness is an easy trap to fall into, in our modern time. This can lead to passively waiting for the end of the world. It is at this time, when solutions seem impossible, that we need stories even more. We need them to teach us to imagine a better world and

then take action to create it. Stories give our imagination wings which help us to fly out of the familiar concepts and dream the impossible. Our imagination is crucial for the creation of new visions, inventions and practices; a world that we have not known before.

THE STORY OF PEAT MOSS shows us how the impossible becomes possible with the help of faith, even when the solution is far beyond the horizon.

MOSS'S *Love* STORY.

*H*ave you heard about it, the longest love story on Earth? It is about a Moss that fell in love with a Star. But let us not go to fast.

It was an especially beautiful night, sky as velvety black as the skin of a salamander and stars shining like yellow stripes on his back. There was one Star shining brighter than the others, she blinked cutely and shone seductively. When the little Moss noticed her, he turned bright green up to his ears in fascination. He fell in love, fell in love at first sight.

"My dear Star, how beautiful you are, what is your name?" he was asked, his little voice echoing in the void of the vast night sky. The distance between them was great so the answer did not reach him. But never mind, still he kept trying, never losing his hope.

"My name is Moss."

Things were never the same from that night on. All he could think about was his Star. So similar they were to each other, she, a yellow Star in the sky, he a tiny green shaped star on the Earth. All he could think about was how to come closer to her, to talk to her and touch her.

"Oh, how could I do that if I am only a small creature and my Star is so, so far away."

"Nothing is impossible if your longing is strong enough," said the response of his big heart beating with love. So, he decided to persist.

Of course, he told his forest friends about this. Believe it or not, everyone laughed at him. They told him that he was stupid and that no one had ever reached a star. He was also told that he was a dreamer and that it was simply impossible. But he didn't give up. His heartbeat was too strong and his desire too burning to just give up. All night long he thought about it, searching for a way to reach his Star. And on the clear bright morning, it dawned on him:

"I will make a ladder to reach my Star!"

Indeed, he did and this is how he became a Peat Moss. From then and today he is still slowly rising towards his Star. From old roots that die and turn into peat, he grows new roots, new rungs on the dream ladder to his Star. Ever since then and to this day, Peat Moss has been rising towards his Star, making his love story the longest love story on Earth.

* * *

Let me tell you a secret. You may have known that people used to use peat for heating in old times and in some places, they still use it today. But the secret is why. It is because the peaty soil is so ardent with the love of Peat Moss for his Star.





Storytelling is a unique way for young people to develop understanding, wonderment and respect for Nature.

Disconnected from Nature, we have forgotten her liveliness. Young people understand that nature is alive because she grows, blooms, runs and crawls. But, how do we help them understand that nature is alive with feelings and consciousness? To get to know her as a being with whom they can form an equal relationship?

With the help of stories, definitely. Storytelling has had different meanings at different times, from helping our ancestors to understand the natural world and its phenomena and teaching them how to live connected to the rhythms of the Earth, to connecting communities.

Later, the purpose of stories changed dramatically with the intervention of religion. Nature beings become demonized and presented as evil and dangerous. This way of presenting Nature through stories, served the purpose of the rational and industrial, ruling over the forces of the natural. Stories of captured bears and slayed dragons helped humanity gain the perception that they are above natural forces and rule over them. This caused our alienation from the natural world and domination over it. Many classical fables and folk-tales often attribute negative qualities to animals, which arise primarily from human fear of them and as such we instill a fear of animals in our children.

The stories we need today are stories that reclaim the power of Nature. Stories that show us her aliveness and inspire us with respect, stories that help us to find contact with her again. These stories build a bridge between us and Nature, they are alive and create magic. These are conservation stories, stories for Nature, which arouse enthusiasm, interest and respect in young people.

Stories for Nature awaken the heart-intelligence and enable us to develop a relationship with Nature and its creatures. A relationship no longer based on fear and dominance but on kindness, cooperation and respect. These stories consist of the biological and socio-biological characteristics of the plant or animal, the wisdom of ancient peoples in the form of myths and the symbolic meanings of the plant or animal and the intuitive perception when in contact with the chosen creature of nature.

We are now living with climate change and the disappearance of species, more than ever before, so in desperate need of the art of storytelling. We need this art to help us remember that we are a part of Nature. We need this art to dare us to open our hearts and dare to care about Life and all its crawling, speaking, singing, flying creatures around us. We need this art to help us step out of a human orientated world, fully aware that the creatures, sharing this wonderful Earth with us, are equal to us. It is only in this realization that we can achieve harmonious cohabitation; a Heaven on Earth as it is supposed to be.

There is a myth that the purpose of education is to give one the means for upward mobility and success. The plain truth is that the planet does not need more successful people, but it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, story tellers and lovers of every shape and form. The planet needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world habitable and humane.

- David Orr

Going deeper with the power of the story.



Nature
becomes a
mirror and story
a medicine:
The healing
power of
storytelling.

My first teacher and my role model storyteller, singer and keeper of the heritage, Ljoba Jenče, told me that to become a storyteller, one must first learn to listen. Young and eager to get on and tell, I found it difficult to understand this. I mean, surely, I need to learn how to speak and perform, right? Soon it became clear to me that in order for me to attune with my inner voice, I needed to attune with the voice of the natural world around me. In order to fill my inner well and enrich my language, I needed this dialogue with the wild. Even more importantly, if I am not to just repeat old folk stories, I need to get out and listen to Nature to give me new material.

So, go out and listen.

Listen to a bird singing. Then stop and listen to your response inside. What does it say, what was the bird saying?

This is how we begin to open up to the natural world outside and to the expanse of our own soul inside. Every story, poem or snapshot I wrote showed me my own, still unhealed wound, the challenge that lies before me and the potential that I carry within me. In doing this, we not only begin to learn a language that communicates with the natural world, which communicates on an emotional level in symbolic language, but we also open up to the natural world, who shows us a mirror of our inner world. With this, it illuminates through written insights and stories and provides us with an insight into the picture of our own current internal state.

This deep work with stories and Nature brings healing and personal growth. Communication with Nature is not a one-way process intended to create a story with which we will represent and perform. It is a two-way process in which Nature holds a mirror to us. A mirror that reflects our own emotional state and brings a healing nectar in the form of a story. Of course, a story can only remain a story. But if we are ready to look at the symbols it carries, we get the opportunity to know ourselves and grow.

Following is an example of a personal healing story,...



The spiral of life

A young girl named Žaltys, 5 or maybe 6 years old, used to go to the cold wild river, where she was spending time on the edge of the forest. She was playful, wild and free. didn't care about manners. Whenever she ran to her sacred place, she immediately took off her clothes and jumped into freezing water, to calm her fire a bit. She took the world in with all her senses. She was as open and as sensitive as a human can be.

When the girl cooled off a bit, she took a step into the wet fragrant forest. Always enjoyed feeling the cold mud under her feet, smelling wet air in her nostrils, touching the trees while climbing on them and seeing all the beauty of life around her. Grass snakes accompanied her many times as they were guardians of life and pleasure. Surely this girl was full of life, light and warmth.

But one day Žaltys didn't come. And the next day. And the day after that. The brown serpent queen with a white crown behind her ears called upon all grass snakes of the area for a meeting. All of them felt that something was wrong. It was as if somebody would take away a bit of sunlight. Each day she didn't come it was getting a little bit darker in the wetland. They knew something was happening to the light of life in their protégée and they could not do anything about it. So they called for Saule, the goddess of Sun, light and health. They called for her to help.

Saule said: "Now is the time to wait. Wait until her spark of life starts to grow bigger in a desire to create a new life. What you need to do in the meantime is to grow in number, to reproduce. You need to have enough strength to lit on the sun in her belly, when the time comes."

In the meantime, Žaltys was going to school, being a good girl, dressed properly, behaving as she should. Away from the wetland, away from feelings of life in her. She almost forgot about her times in the forest beside the wild river. About life and pleasure, she felt there. One day after school, while she was walking in her new forest in the city, she almost stepped onto a big snake. She got so scared that she ran through the forest back home, shaking in fear of a snake, in fear for her life.

The grass snakes started to worry. Did she totally forget about the times she used to spend with them? Did she forget about her essence? But they trusted their goddess Saule, so they waited and were multiplying their numbers in the meantime. Men were trying to extinct the snakes away from the Earth as they were not comfortable with the pure light and life they are bringing. But unknowingly they were helping them to breed faster in dung heaps created by men's stock grazing on meadows.

Žaltys was growing up fast. When her sexuality was awakening, snakes started to do their magic, so she would really feel the tingling in her body. But the teenage girl was too shaped by society to just let it be. She did everything to not feel the feelings. Drinking, smoking, working more, worrying, alienating from her feeling body. Running away from herself was easier during the day..

But the nights ... oh, at nights snakes visited here in her dreams more and more often. She was running from them, hiding, locking herself in cages, when they were approaching here in night dreams. She couldn't escape the snakes nor the emotions arising in her body. Young woman was more and more afraid of going to sleep at night as her scary dreams didn't want to leave her alone. But grass snakes started to emerge during the days too. She was not sure if it's only her imagination, but she was seeing snakes in every piece of nature she visited.

Žaltys was still living her ordinary life, alienated from herself and her feelings, but there was strong emotion rising up in her. It was fear. The more she got afraid, the more these scary creatures were emerging in her life.

One summer morning, when she was crossing the green meadow after the rainy night, she felt their presence. As the girl looked up, she saw these brownish green snakes with white crowns appearing from the forest. She started to walk faster. The faster she walked; the more snakes were approaching her. Before she realized, they formed a spiral around her - HER. Žaltis was trying to escape out of it, taking the circular path they formed. Her fear was growing. The spiral of snakes was growing with it. Getting out of it seemed hopeless.

Her fear grew so big that she couldn't take it anymore. She fell on her knees and cried out loudly in fear and despair. She gave up and surrendered.

At that moment grass snakes from all over the place started to slide toward the woman, circling around her. Sliding on her body. Suddenly she started to feel all the sensations of human body at once. Enjoying the pain and pleasure. In that exact moment the spark in her belly exploded in radiating light and the new life emerged.

(Urša Plešnar)



Perhaps this is the most important aspect of storytelling for the time we live in now. Through communication with the natural world, a story allows us to weave a relationship with Nature and return to the living, an all-intertwining matrix of life from where we can act for the highest good of our own souls and the souls of the whole world.

If we do not throw away our human-oriented view of the world, the Earth is doomed. Surface reforms such as recycling can help, but the principle of deep ecology says that our only hope lies in a deeper, emotional, even spiritual relationship with Nature. Stories appeal to us on an emotional level, from where we have the power to empathize, to connect and this helps us forge a personal relationship with Nature.

Terra Anima, a deep ecology society develops the art of storytelling for Nature. With it, we bring the stories of Nature closer to people, teaching them to listen and develop their own language for communicating with the natural world. Stories are an exceptional tool for environmental education, for connecting people to initiatives for the protection of natural areas and for personal growth that leads to a reconnecting with the abandoned wild part of oneself. This profoundly transformative, healing work leads us toward an authentic relationship with ourselves and the natural world. We realise that there is no me here, Nature there, but is instead all here, undoubtedly connected and intertwined.







GET OUT,
LISTEN
AND TELL:
tools

I.

Stories make personal

PLAY:

Tell a story from your memory of a wetland.
About an animal, plant or a special experience.



Crazy frog woman, or why is it that I journey into the marsh?

Again, it is the time, it is the magical time of the frog song. or, if you ask my dog Brina, it is the crazy time of running for a hundred or more times up and down, carrying frogs across the road.

Tonight, the full moon is shining, the air richly trembling with special anticipation. It's nice, until the moment when the lights shine on me. A car of course, a beer by the pond is so much fun. A frog run over in the middle of a dirt road, under a full moon. I pick up those who survived, a couple of heroes and take them to the lake. I move on. Lights again, Brinka gets excited, I turn around, a four-wheeler, a happy family of three on it. Why would you walk in silence, in the light of the moon, when you can drive and accidentally run over a few frogs. Well, I know that's not their intention.

I feel so alone, under the spotlight of the full moon. A crazy woman with tree frogs in her hands, a headlamp and a dog, rolling her eyes. I ask myself why nobody cares. Warning signs at the beginning of the road, newspaper articles, pleadings to not use this road in the mating season. Life is rushing on, frogs on the road don't stop it and I am sad. Sometimes it all seems hopeless, and yet every evening I still travel there.

Because that's how my compass is set.

Frogs use their own compass, every year they unconditionally and irrevocably return to their pond. Their world is getting smaller, our wetlands are being covered up, the road is busier, frogs are roaming to their source, to give new seeds to start new life there. Nothing stops them, not even difficult circumstances. They go because there is no other way.

That's when it strikes me, what is my source? Unshakable faith in good, in the magic of the world, a hope that never dies. Now I know that I am on a pilgrimage with them. With a bucket full of frogs, I'm not just saving their lives, I'm saving mine. Maybe what I'm doing looks crazy or hopeless, but it's just the opposite. Together with the frogs, I also make a pilgrimage to my source, to refresh my soul and remember what is my essence, my pond, my wetland.

With hope and faith in the magic of the natural world, I wink to the moon and by the fence I see a newt looking at me. Magic in an instant. A world that speaks to those who believe in miracles. With a newt in my hand, I conjure up a world that believes in good, that carries a bucket of frogs to the pond and brings back a bucket full of fairy tales.

That's why I go to the marsh, to my wetland; to remember the fairy tales and that they come to life with the newt in my palm; despite the fact that life hurts, I still believe and look for the frog's song, sparks of beauty that I weave into the web of the reality I believe in.

"What do frogs and stories have in common?" Meti asked me the next morning in our wetland forest.

"Seeds of Light," I shot back like a falling star.

"Stories and frog spawn are seeds of light that bring hope to Earth."

This is what stories and frogs are for me.

(Špela Kaplja)



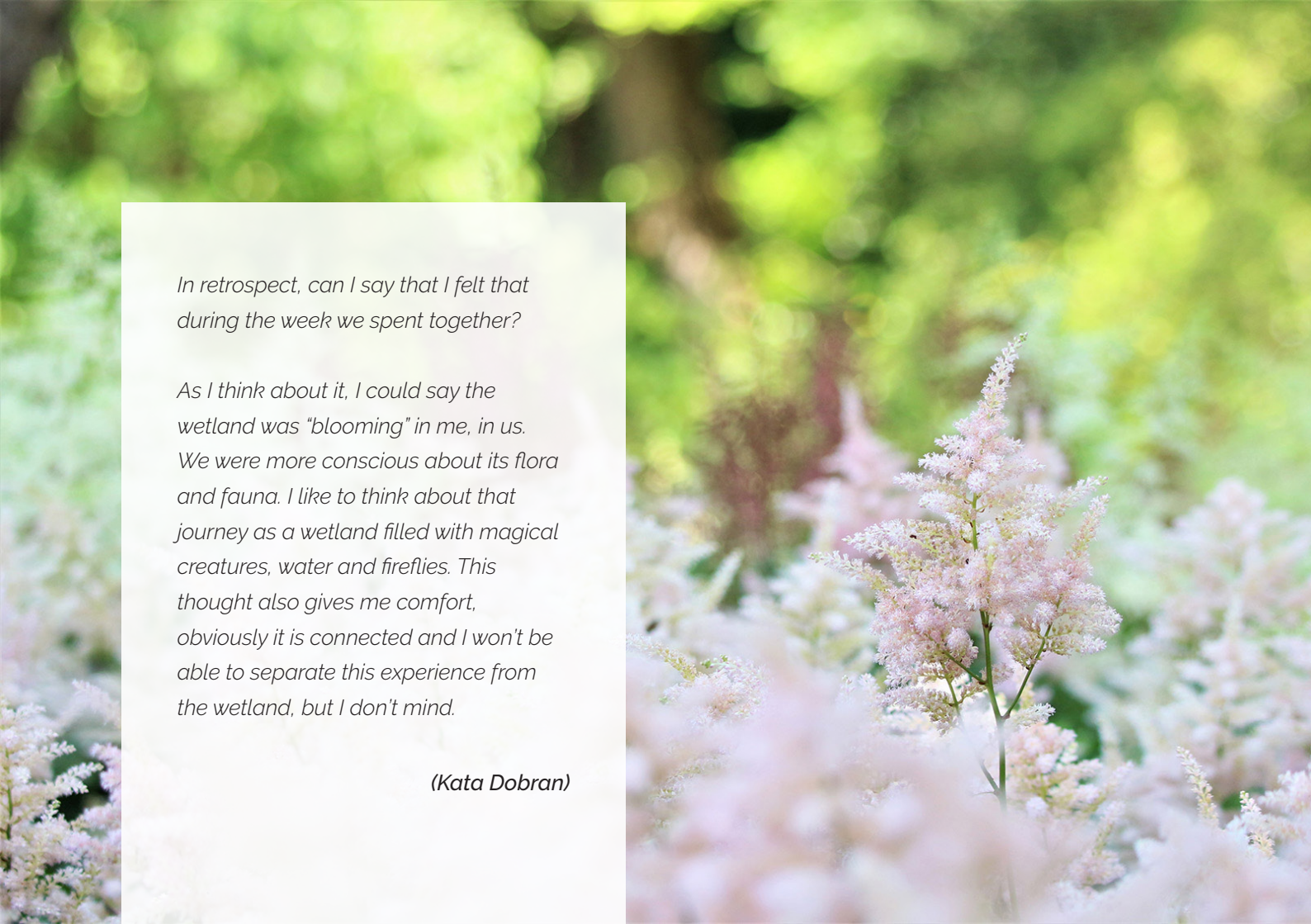
II.

Stories build the bridge

PLAY:

In what period of life, or in what experience were you like a wetland? What state of your life do you associate the wetland with?

The purpose of the exercise is to establish a connection, a personal bond that can become an entry point for getting to know the wetland. It is in the personal connection with our life that we are able to understand an ecosystem deeper and bond with it. Answers vary of course; when I was pregnant and full of water, when I am in the creative process, when I am in connection with myself and the world around me, when I have a childish fear of the dark.



In retrospect, can I say that I felt that during the week we spent together?

As I think about it, I could say the wetland was "blooming" in me, in us. We were more conscious about its flora and fauna. I like to think about that journey as a wetland filled with magical creatures, water and fireflies. This thought also gives me comfort, obviously it is connected and I won't be able to separate this experience from the wetland, but I don't mind.

(Kata Dobran)

*"Already a gentle breeze
Can blow me away now
I don't care about anybody's son
I'll wait till a gentle, soft hand
Brings me out from the mire
And then I'll rise again
From the dust of myself*

(Zsuzsanna Serban)





With every walk in nature, especially in the wetlands, I feel like a microscopic dot that sinks its wide paws into something bigger, more magnificent, where life runs its course. I am only an outside observer who pauses to feel this mysterious serenity and incredible harmony of the beings in this circle. Looking back, I realize that the wetland itself lured me into its home in my early 40s, perhaps to realize how little, or rather nothing, is needed to make life go as it should, without any interference or control. I want to preserve this beautiful balance in nature and protect it from, unfortunately, my own kind.

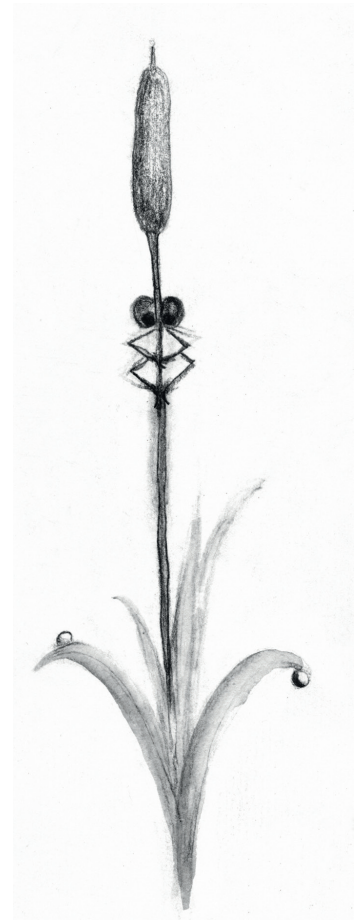
(Mojca Kočar)

III.

Stories blur the boundaries

PLAY:

If the Earth is a living being (which of course it is) and ecosystems are its organs; mountains and rocks are its bones and rivers its veins; which organ in the body of the Earth would wetlands be?



Are wetlands the kidneys of the Earth?

Kidneys are bean-shaped organs that secrete urine. They filter our blood, remove toxins, neutralize acid, create urine, produce hormones and absorb minerals. Every day they filter enormous amounts of fluid (from 150 to 180 liters of plasma) from the bloodstream.

Wetlands, in addition to storing water, also take care of cleaning it. Wetland systems take care of wastewater treatment. Water stagnates here which is why they are an important part of the ecosystem. Plants growing there, with the help of microorganisms, extract excess and toxic substances from the water, which is why the water is cleanest there.

Imbued with cosmic wisdom, these water seeds, like all seeds, hold and guard the deep secrets of life. They say that the kidneys store the basic spark of life with which we came into the world. In Chinese medicine, the kidneys are the most important organ, as they store our life energy. Healthy kidney energy uplifts and supports survival, whether through playful ingenuity, or deep, silent listening.

Wetlands are a living cauldron of life-force spaces that strengthen human creativity and help maintain inner balance. They are treasuries and the purification plants for our rich palette of emotions.

*When I die
Lay out my body like a corpse.
You may want to kiss my lips
Just beginning to decay
Don't be surprised
If I open my eyes
- Rumi*

*In her book, **Body Eloquence**, Nancy Mellon explores the power of stories to influence the body and organs, she writes about the unquenchable power of kidney energy, the spark of life it carries and how it is the last to go out when we die. The number of people with chronic kidney disease in the world is constantly increasing; by 2040, it will be the fifth leading cause of premature death. And the wetlands? We have destroyed up to 90% of them in Europe in the last hundred years. The increasingly common occurrence of burnout among people indicates a decline in vitality. The ecosystems around us and the state they are in, undeniably influences our wellbeing. We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that we are not a separate, untouchable part of the whole of the natural world. Declining vitality, increasing fertility problems, the drying up of excitement about life in all aspects, our precious wetlands filled with concrete, extinction of plant and animal species in the wetlands, lack of creative ingenuity and variety of feelings and expressions, it is all intertwined.*

To be able to preserve ourselves, we must preserve our wetlands, the most endangered ecosystems on Earth, the kidneys that store the star seeds of our existence on Earth. By protecting them, we may rekindle our own spark of life within.

(Neja Rojc)



IV.

Stories teach empathy

PLAY:

Step into the life of a creature and compose a narrative from the first person point of view.



Dragonfly.

Oh my god, I've been living in this little pond, under this lily leaf, for a long, long time.

You know I'm not going to complain, I have many friends here, delicious food, and oh my gosh, these tadpoles and larvae are so yummy. I swim every day, but I've been here almost 5 years and my life is so simple and boring.

OK, it's time to go on a trip. First, I'll go up to the leaf to see what's there.

How lovely it is.

Wow! Mirror, mirror on the pond, who is the most beautiful of all?



With all these colours on me and these huge glowing wings, I'm quite elegant.

Oh, I see now that I am a dragonfly. I'm flying fast and seeing everything around me, the beautiful nature and many delicious meals, flies, mosquitoes, and butterflies.

This is like a magical dream. It was a close call, froggy, I have to keep an eye out for frogs, lizards, and birds. They want to devour me.

Life can be so short, so why am I waiting? I'm off to discover and fill this magical life.

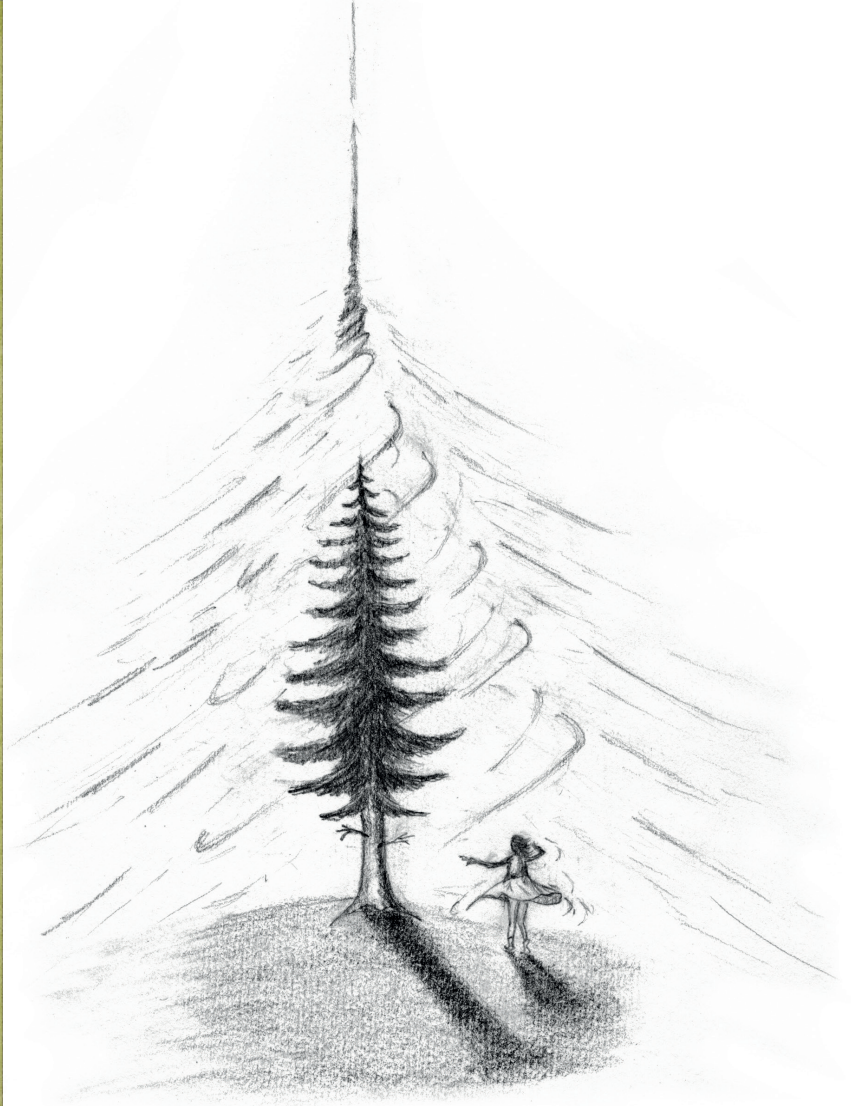
(Verica Arnautovska)


V.

Stories inspire us to
discover Nature's
secrets

PLAY:

Out of the known facts, write an animal or
plant riddle.





*Sometimes you can see sky through me,
but sometimes your eyes just stop on me.
You can hold me with your arms and listen to
the stories from the time people walked by me.
My blood can cure many diseases, you simply
don't know that.
I invite you to lay down beside my tall trunk and
the shadow of my evergreen crown.*

(Pine tree, Mojca Kočar)

*Riddle, riddle, not a tale, that you know
oh, so well
I drink all day but I am never drunk,
I'm the swamp
King with a brown trunk.
What I am?*

(Alder tree, Darko Veljanoski)

VI.

Stories encourage
creative thinking and
awaken our natural
storytelling skills

PLAY:

Sensual adventure

The playful mischief of spontaneous storytelling allows us to begin to develop our own language for talking to Nature and open ourselves to the imagination, which is really the language of the natural world.

The purpose of the exercise, which belongs to the group of spontaneous storytelling exercises and awakens our natural skills in creating and telling stories, is to encourage the participants to use all their senses to awaken imagination. In order to activate the imagination, the recognized things found and sensed in Nature are transformed into a fantasy form, so that, for example, the root of a tree becomes a giant's foot, which then serves to initiate the story.

The exercise awakens us to stronger perception of the natural world and shows us through spontaneous exploration and play that stories are everywhere; we just have to open up to them.





Praying.

*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch*

*a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway*

*into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*

- Mary Oliver

PLAY:

Poem of the moment.

The purpose of writing songs from a momentary experience of Nature is to open us to a deeper listening to the natural world and to develop our own language for talking with it. This exercise sharpens our full presence in the moment, using all the senses and opens us to wonder. As Mary Oliver says, the poem serves as a hymn and a portal to a deeper perception of Nature.



Little White Heron.

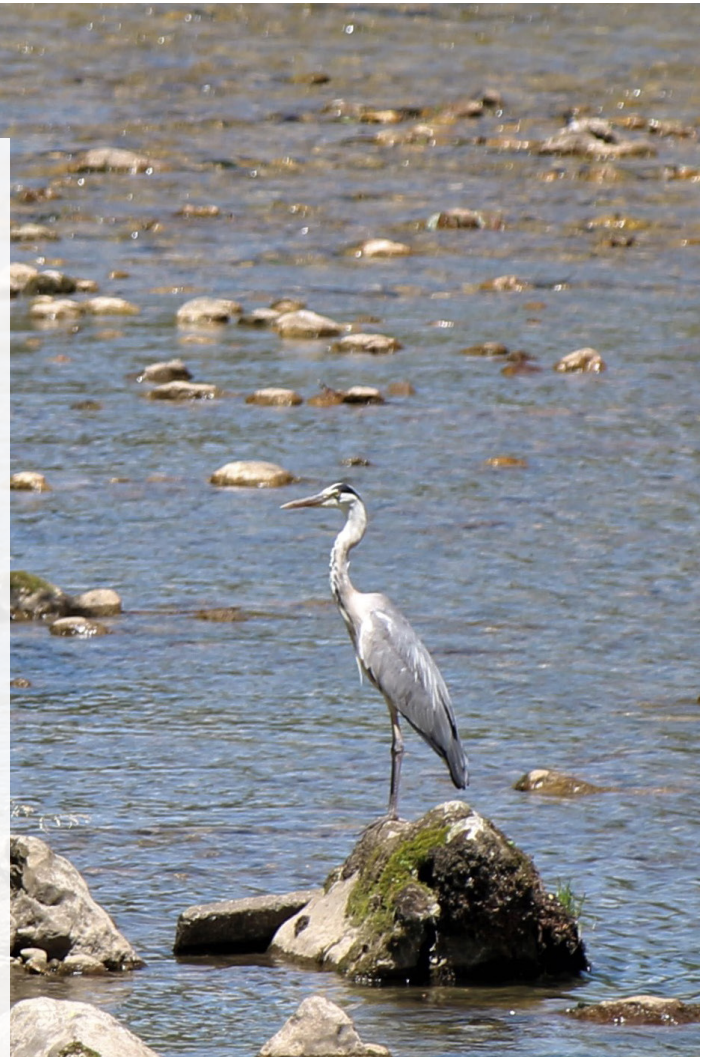
*Amongst the sharpness and the softness
Gather white veils of your feathers
Dangerous and lonely are your journeys
Where does all this life force come from?*

*"Every day I feed on the source of your strength
Life force is the wetlands."*

Močvirje (Swamp)

*Moč vir je (Strength source is)
vir moči je (Source of the strength is)
Močvirje (Wetland)*

(Nika Solce)





Rain Drops.

*Stepped ratio
Of the rain drops*

*In the centre of the Universe on the Earth
On the constellation of Light itself.
Shines the look from the Trees.*

(Ela Zdešar)



Salamander.

*Salamander, thrown in the flame
Try to escape and seek your faith
The rock around you is cooling fast
But your energy won't last*

*Be cool in the pain
Feed on the good flame
Nurture the flame of love
And those who speaks your language
Will become your path*

(Zsuzsanna Serban)

VII.

Stories enable personal growth.

PLAY:

Tree of Life.

This exercise is based on the idea of using a tree as a metaphor for telling stories about your life. Participants are invited to think of a tree, its roots, trunk, branches, leaves, etc. and imagine that each part of the tree represents something about their life. The art of storytelling helps us hear and tell our story first. When we tell it, we recreate ourselves, truly showing ourselves to the world, even to those who do not speak a human language.









НОВА НАДЕЖ ЗА
УЧЕНИЦИТ И МРЩОЛАСИ

VIII.

Stories educate.

PLAY:

Story from Nature.

The purpose of this exercise is to create a story from Nature through deep listening, intuitive perception of Nature through all the senses, research into the biological and socio-biological characteristics of a plant or animal and research of the wisdom of ancient peoples in the form of myths and symbolic meanings.



This is a story about one magical tree. The tale goes like this...

In Oxfordshire, in the ages of dark, there was a righteous King. He was humble and he was happy if the common people were happy. That very thing, his happiness, came and went when his son was born. The new heir was sick from the cradle. The Prince's lungs were broken. Doctors of eloquence tried and tried, but couldn't succeed, in making a difference with his illness. Pain was felt from the King to the last bird of the Kingdom. Sadness was sung, days were obscure and no joyful bells rang.

The song was heard three kingdoms below, by a woman, a witch, that knew a cure. She came to help, to save the Prince's life. But the potion of health didn't work, the Prince died and, in a breath, a cry from the King was heard. The witch said that was all she could do, because she was late and away from the castle she went.

After the rain, an angry sun came. The King's mask changed in a thought. He blamed the witch for the death of his son. Now furious, he wanted revenge. He took all his guards and went after her, for blood.

It was midsummer's eve. One of the King's guards saw her and screamed, "Look over there, on that hill, that's the witch!" And there she was. "After her!", yelled the King. The witch sensed the spears, the sharpened knives and at that very moment, she asked Venus to spare her life. Her wish was answered, Venus shaped her as a glorious Alder tree, with all the powers of the enchanted world. This happened in front of them all. Their disbelief didn't help, the King ordered the cutting down of the witch tree. The new magical Alder, saw the Kings' eyes and threw a spell that contained them all. They were turned into 77 stones.

Even today, they stand surrounding her, the magical witch. They are known as the Rollright stones from the Rollright army of Oxfordshire.

(Darko Veljanoski)



THIS IS A STORY ABOUT ONE MAGICAL TREE - DARKO VELJANOSKI

PUKY - MOJCA KOČAR





Puky

Deep in the forest, just near the highest, tallest black Pine tree, lived a small, blue eyed girl, with long, blond, curly hair, which she was wearing as a dress on her tiny body. She would make clothes from the tree leaves when it was really cold. Her favourite material was fern, she could sew anything she wanted, but mostly she preferred to live as she was born.

Her name was... well we don't really know her real name, but let's call her Puky. Puky was born in the forest, since her mother ran away pregnant from the big city, where she never felt alive. Her mother was a storyteller with a special inner power, she was able to talk and sing with the forest animals. When she was singing, nature just stopped breathing to hear her angelic golden voice and the plants start blooming as a gift to her soul. In Nature she fulfilled herself and living with Puky deep in the forest, was one of the best decisions she made.

Unfortunately, one day she left little Puky alone with her best animal soul mates and she never came back. Puky never found out what happened to her and since then, she lived without contact with any human being, deep in the woods, alone. She was scared, lonely and sad without her Mummy.

Laying in the roots of the tallest Pine tree in the forest, she cried and begged the universe to bring her back, but she never did. Instead, forest animals tried to console her. Each day one of the animals would lay beside Puky to give her a warm, safe place. She felt loved and truly accepted by the forest and the animals.

Her inner wild child was raising and she was becoming wilder and wiser. She knew how to create things from the wood and she was eating forest fruits and wild plants. She knew every single plant from roots to fruit. She became a wizard and the guardian of the forest.

Her best friend was the highest, black, old Pine tree, because this tree was the best listener and it was always there for her. They become inseparable and Puky even made a little shelter under the roots. At nights she climbed up to the top and watched the stars shining. She believed that one of the stars was her Mummy.

One day, as she was walking and singing through the forest, for the first time she saw a group of people, wearing strange clothes and measuring something near her home. She hid behind the wide Beech and watched them from a distance. After a few weeks they came back with machines that Puky had never seen in her life.

They cut the trees.

Puky's heart was dying little by little with each tree. She was sitting on the top of her Pine and cried. She didn't want to leave her best friend alone. She cried and cried, her tears were falling down to the soil, which become impermeable. With a little help from above and a little magic, each tear become a big bubble of water, falling down and it spread out into the forest.

The forest turned to wetland.

Workers found out that their plans could not be realized because of the sudden mud and that they must quit with their project of cutting trees and making place for a... They disappeared and never come back.

Puky's heart was joyful, when she found out that she had a power to help her friends as they helped her when she was hurt.

After many years, Puky become a woman and in that moment, she felt that she wanted to go out and see the world outside the forest. She noticed a grey haired woman, dancing with frogs on her arms, chasing dragonflies and birds flying all around her. It seems like she was talking or singing to all these little animals.

When their looks met, deep inside her body Puky knew this woman.

(Mojca Kočar)

The rise of the Salamander.

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, in a big volcano lived a Salamander. He was a lizard-like form, with big, yellow eyes and cold, slimy black skin.

When he was a baby, during winter he wanted to sleep in the fire logs that humans were using to make fire. One day, a man tossed him into the fire along with a log. As a result of being tossed into a roaring inferno, he woke up and jumped out of the fire. He was angry and confused. The anger made him roar and he started throwing flames out of his big yellow eyes, setting the house of the man who had thrown him into the inferno, on fire.

The Salamander, full of anger, started walking through the streets with flames bursting forth from his big eyes, setting the whole village on fire and showing no mercy to anyone. Wherever he went, he did the same.

Full of anger and hate and roaming through a dark forest, he noticed smoke coming from a big mountain. There he found his sacred temple, the volcano. He lived there for many years, holding his grudge and setting on fire everything that bothered him, or got close to him. Everyone knew about this mysterious creature and everyone feared it.



THE RISE OF THE SALAMANDER - SARA KRSTEVSKA

ANIMA

One day, when an Alchemist from a village far away from the volcano, heard the story of this beast, he became very interested in its life and so he started travelling all around the world, just to learn about this mysterious creature.

After years of searching for answers, he finally felt ready. "I am going to tame this wild beast," said the Alchemist. Everyone thought that he was crazy and that trying to tame the beast would be suicide. However, the Alchemist was very determined to do what he wanted, so he went to the mountain where the volcano was and he started to silently observe the animal that was living in the fire. Every day for three years he went there and he took notes about the animal's behaviour.

One day, when he wasn't careful enough, he pushed some rocks into the crater. That is when the Salamander saw him. The enormous beast started roaring and throwing flames at the Alchemist, but the man already knew the behaviour of the beast and managed to escape.

This dangerous encounter didn't make him quit. He was even more determined with his idea of taming the wild beast.

After many years of trying, the Alchemist was exhausted and on the edge of quitting, because he hadn't found a way to tame the wild beast.

Then he remembered, "Music!" He shouted proudly. He took his flute and started playing. The Salamander was angry and furious at first, but after a moment he stopped roaring and throwing flames and started enjoying the music. The Alchemist was very surprised and couldn't believe his eyes. He started playing music to the Salamander every day.

One day the huge beast came out of the volcano, looking for the Alchemist. He sat before the man and just listened. The Alchemist was so afraid, but he continued playing music. They were doing this for three months and the day came when the Alchemist felt confident enough to start talking with the animal. He started teaching the Salamander about the purpose of life and what great power he holds.

After many, many days spent together, they became friends. The Alchemist introduced the world to the once untamable beast, who became as tame as a dog.

The Salamander used its powers to help people make fire and they taught him how beautiful it is to live life without hate and anger, but instead, full of joy and happiness.

The Alchemist, as proud as can be, made this magical creature the spirit of elemental fire.

(Sara Krstevska)



Frog: Protector of the Earth.

Once there was a frog. Well, there are still quite some frogs but this story was told to me about this particular one, so... there was a little frog who lived in-between the pond and the great wetland forest, she loved them both equally. She was a little frog and life was new for her. Everything attracted her attention and made her golden eyes stare in awe.

"Wow!" was the most commonly used phrase of hers.

But there was one thing that really blew her over.

It was an early summer night, the sun just laid down to rest behind the great treetops of the pines. The stars sat on them, like birds on branches and shone magically on the forest while the air was fresh from the night whispering her fairy-tales to the forest.

"Wow!" was heard from out of the darkness.

"Mamma, this is magic!"

And a gentle Mamma frog said back, "Yes, my love, the world is full of magic."

They kept going all the way to the pond, where all the frogs from the forest were gathered. The little frog had no idea what was to come next, but obeyed when her Mamma told her to wait on the bank of the pond. Then in the split of a second, all the frogs disappeared deep into the pond.

"Wow!" was heard from amid the slender, tall, wetland grass.

When they came back, the little frog felt as if time had stood still. Fireflies stopped in motion and the wind waited in anticipation.

"Wow!"

The frog choir started to sing and so touched was the little frog that her eyes grew to the size of walnuts, glowing stronger than the stars in the sky. She felt like her heart was going to burst, and it did; out of sheer admiration she started to cry. She was enchanted and felt warm raindrops falling on her soft skin.

"Wow, the sky is crying too. I am sure there is no greater magic than the frog's song," she whispered into the ears of the night. When her Mamma came back, all she heard were questions about when will she be able to join the choir.

"Mamma, Mamma, when will I sing with you?" she kept asking.

"When you will learn to listen to the need of our dear Earth, then my little love?" she said gently and took her home.

Just before she fell asleep, the little frog said, "Teach me to listen to the Earth, will you Mamma?"

And in the days that followed, the little frog got her lessons.

First, she was taught about her senses and the power of sensing even the slightest change in her environment.

"Wow!" said the little frog while discovering the quality of the water through her skin."

"Yes," said her Momma.

"But it is not easy to use, many toxins are being put in the soil, water and air. Waste is being thrown on the forest floor, not only looking nasty but poisoning the groundwater."

"We are the most sensitive ones, sensing the slightest change in the soil, water and the air we breathe. We get sick fast when our environment is sick and this is why we are less and less."

"Mamma?" said the little frog, wiping a tear from her cheek.

"There is hope my little love," she said.

"As long as there is our song, there is hope. Even though our homes are getting smaller and smaller and are not important to human beings. Even though we fight hard to survive, there is hope. You know the power and magic of frog song."

Little frog listened with all her heart, and learned.

She learned about animals and plants in the forest and understood how everything is closely interconnected. She swam in the pond, learning about the life in the water. She was learning fast, making her Mamma proud. One day she felt that it was time.

"Little frog", she said, tonight you will join us in our Earth Council."

"Wow!" she said and jumped high with joy.

When she dove deep to the bottom of the pond with the other frogs, she was uncontrollably proud. She felt her Mamma's hand guiding her and felt safe. When they came to the bottom, she understood her Mamma signaling to her to calm down and she listened. Little frog saw how all the frogs came together, closing their eyes in perfect synchronicity. She watched and followed, closing her eyes in stillness.

*After a moment, an echo filled the water, saying,
"Trees have been cut down and the wetland forest is in mourning. Frogs, call for the water from the sky to ease and cleanse the sadness."*

They all swam back, again in perfect synchronicity, little frog following, feeling like a big frog now. Out on the pond's bank the choir gathered. Without talking or touching they sensed and caught the rhythm and started to sing. Their song shook the ground and touched the roots of the trees. It shook all the sad energy from the air and spread throughout the wide, long forest. Just before they were finished the water came from the sky. Purifying water raining down like tears from the sky, mourning with the trees, easing the sadness and calling new life to grow.

The Earth grew greener and lusher, refreshed by the waters called by the frog's choir and their song. From that night, one the little frog was a proud member of the frog choir, tending the Earths' needs.

After that night, little frog got the most fabulous idea.

"Mamma, Mamma! what if we can get the people to listen? Maybe one of them would be inspired and learn to listen to the needs of the Earth, becoming her protector and helping us sing our loving song of the green lush Earth? Is it possible?"

Well, it was a big idea, but her Mamma would never discourage her, So with the help of other frogs they set up an event.

All dipping their toes into mud, they made posters on tree trunks, inviting people to the evening show.

So it happened that afternoon on that day, a group of children was playing in the forest with their Mum and they noticed the muddy invitations on the tree trunks.

"Let's go!" they said.

And they went, bringing some other children along too.

"Wow!" they said when seeing the scene. All the forest was glowing with fireflies, just as if the stars had come down from the sky. When the frogs started to sing, they listened.

Soon the children felt it in their hearts and sooner still they got inspired. They put their hearts and voices together that night, children and frogs, celebrating the beauty and magic of our beloved Earth. How happy was the little frog, jumping puddles with joy.

Later on, little frog continued with her choir. Sometimes the forest was upset from unkind intrusion and their song served as a lullaby that calmed the forest down. At other times they put things in balance and on other occasions their song was a healing one, helping the wounds of the forest to heal faster. Always the frog choir chased negativity as far as possible away with their singing.

The children set up a choir too. So inspired they were that they started making their own songs, spreading the messages of the frogs, but in their own language so more people could understand. They sang and taught of the importance of protecting the wild environments, they sang and celebrated our connection with the living Earth. Sometimes they even brought rain with their song, many times for sure they brought tears into the eyes of their listeners, who were touched by their singing. Oh, how proud she was, the little frog. She came secretly, to listen to the young protectors of the Earth and the Earth grew greener and her heart beat happier.

(Špela Kaplja)







WETLAND

In Slovene, the roots of the word wetland (močvirje) are:
moč: POWER and vir: SOURCE,
this indicates that this is a place that is a source of power.

From an economic point of view, wetlands have little value, so they are filled with concrete and destined to become industrial zones. In the last hundred years, we have destroyed up to 90% of wetlands in Europe. These, the Earth's most vulnerable ecosystems are important as air conditioners in managing climate change, providing drinking water supplies and purifying and enriching groundwater. Wetlands are the most biologically diverse and varied ecosystems.

OUTSIDE IS INSIDE:

How our Soul existence is connected to the existence of the wetlands and how the wetlands lead us back to our own power source.



ENERGY MANAGEMENT: BALANCE:

Wetlands regulate water supplies, storing it in rainy periods for dry periods. On a deeper level this handling of supplies teaches us about efficient management of our own energy supplies. When to retreat, rest, replenish your supplies in the shelter of the inner world, and when to be active in the outer world.

FINDING STRENGTH IN SENSITIVITY:

Wetlands are home to creatures with the most sensitive skin, creatures most sensitive to changes in the environment. Butterflies, dragonflies, frogs, newts, etc. In a world that has labelled sensitivity as weakness, these creatures remind us that it is in developing our sensitivity that we find our greatest strength.

DISCOVERING OUR POTENTIALS AND GIFTS:

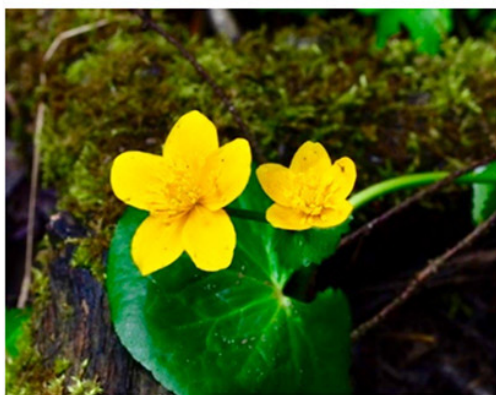
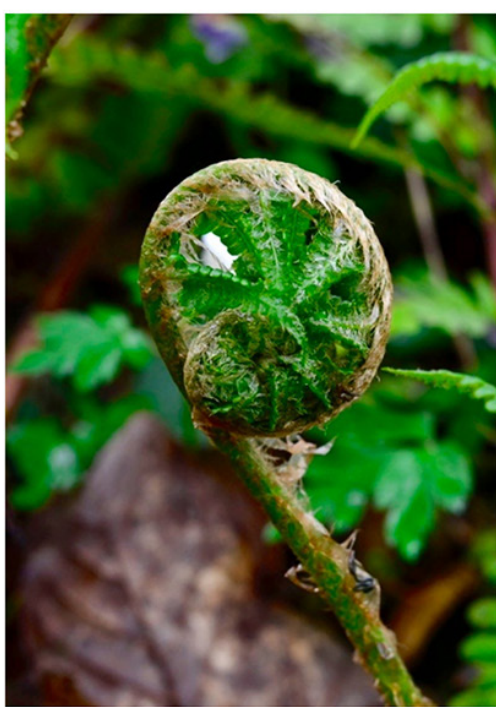
Wetlands are treasuries of biodiversity; where else can we get in touch with our inner diversity. Here we can realize our potentials, gifts and passions.

Wetlands are a living cauldron of life-force, places that strengthen human creativity and help us maintain inner balance. They are treasures and purification plants of our rich emotions and so much more. Contact with the muddy soil of the wetlands helps us to make our dreams and ideas reality, as this mixture of water and soil is the material in which starlight, dreams, visions and ideas come true, gain shape.

Wetlands are the cradles of life, and we cannot see a better place to connect with nature and our own life force.

"You can't reach for your star without having your feet firmly and softly in the mud."

- Špela Kaplja



SOURCES
AND
LITERATURE:

Alviani, Carl: The Science Behind
Storytelling, Protagonist Studio, 2018

Denborough, David: Retelling the Stories
of Our Lives: Everyday Narrative Therapy
to Draw Inspiration and Transform
Experience, 2014

Gersie, Alida in Schiefflin, Edward:
Storytelling for a Greener World:
Environment, Community, and Story-based
Learning, Hawthorn Press, 2014

Kaplja, Špela: Gozdna knjiga – Vaje
globoke ekologije za pristno povezavo z
naravnim svetom, Terra Anima 2017

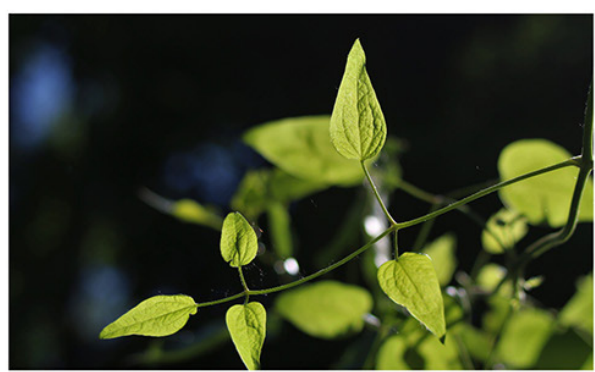
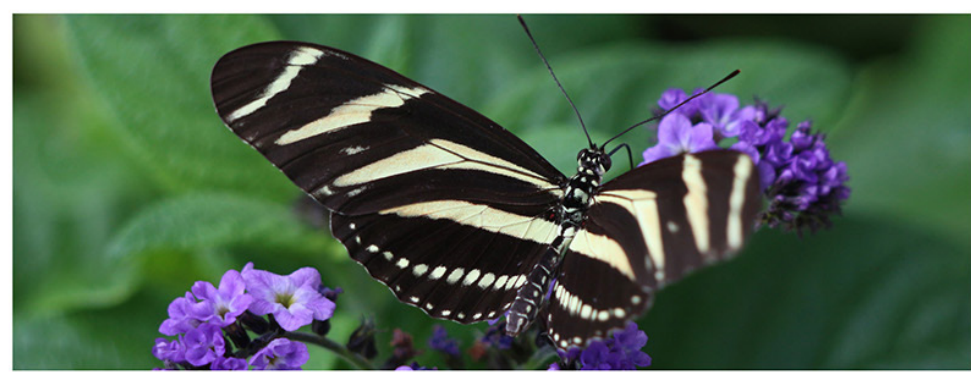
Matthews, Paul: Words in Place:
Reconnecting with Nature through
Creative Writing Steiner/ Waldorf Learning
Resources, 2017

Mellon, Nancy, Body Eloquence, The
Power of Myth and Story to Awaken the
Body's Energies, 2008

Mellon, Nancy: Storytelling and the Art of
Imagination, 2003

Reynolds Thompson, Mary: Reclaiming
the Wild Soul: How Earth's Landscapes
Restore Us to Wholeness, 2014

Wohlleben, Peter: Skrivno življenje dreves,
Narava, 2016



Title: *LovingTheWet.Land*

Subtitle: *Storytelling for Wetlands Conservation*

Edited by: *Špela Kaplja*

Contributors: *Špela Kaplja, Neja Rojc, Ela Zdešar,
Darko Veljanoski, Kata Dobran, Mojca Kočar, Nika Solce,
Sara Krstevska, Verica Arnautovska, Urša Plešnar,
Zsuzsanna Serbán*

Illustrator: *Neja Rojc*

Designer: *Mojca Ažman*

Photos by: *Ela Zdešar, Kata Dobran, Neja Rojc, Špela Kaplja*

Published by: *Terra Anima, association for deep ecology*

E-book

Radomlje, 2022

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.



This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Cobiss ID

131382275

Zapis CIP

Katalogni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in
univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 131382275

ISBN 978-961-95575-2-5 (PDF)



9 789619 557525