

News from the Institute

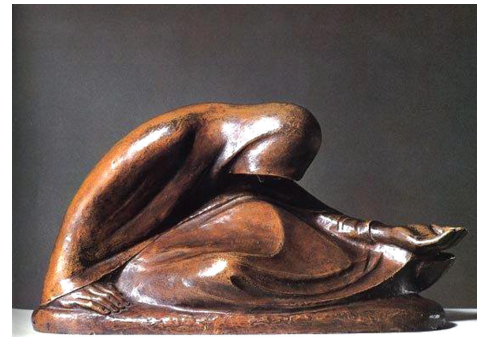
Events

■ In June, the institute hosted a visit from Zheng Yan, director of the **Shanghai Fuyuan Waldorf School** in China, and her colleague Hai Dejun, as part of their exploration of educational resources and opportunities in the US that are available to Chinese Waldorf high school students.



■ Artist Ella LaPointe began teaching a 10-session course, “**Drawing into Nature**,” at the institute in September. Using drawing as an exercise to help us attend to and carefully observe natural phenomena, she also shared some fundamental elements and techniques of drawing. A follow-up course in the spring is being considered.

■ On August 29 and 30, Craig worked with the faculty of the **Green Meadow Waldorf School** in Chestnut Ridge, NY, on the topic of “**Education and Our Responsibility to Children and the Earth**.” He gave a public talk on this topic as well.



■ In her public talk on September 23 highlighting “**Gestures in the Work of Artist Ernst Barlach**,” Henrike Holdrege shared the work of this early 20th-century German artist. His drawings and sculptures bring features of human life to vivid expression in a way that offers much to our times.



■ During their first two-week summer intensive at The Nature Institute, participants in Cohort IV of our **Foundation Course** engaged in guided explorations with our staff covering various topics related to Goethean science. You can see photos of some of the group’s activities on pages 12-13.

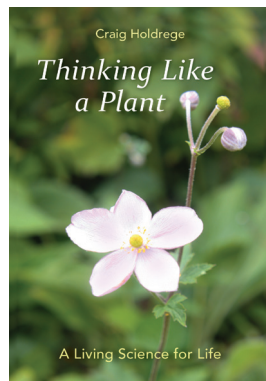
■ “**Studying Gestures in Nature**” was the theme of a public workshop given at the institute by Craig Holdrege on September 24. Together, participants explored the unique qualities of different plants and what gestures we might discern from their individual forms and substance.

As of this writing, other events planned for fall 2022 include:

- The weekend of October 15-16, the institute will host a two-day workshop for the public on “**Seeing and Language: Creative Reading and Writing as a Way to Experience Meaning in Nature,**” led by our adjunct researcher Ryan Shea and Craig Holdrege. Integrating nature observation, readings, and writing exercises, participants will explore the ways in which a creative language practice can amplify and deepen our immediate experience of the world and even enable us to have new capacities of perceiving.

- At the **Camphill Academy** in Kimberton, PA, on October 28-29, Henrike Holdrege will lead a course in projective geometry and Craig Holdrege will offer a workshop in plant study.

- The Escola Schumacher Brasil has created an online course focusing on Craig’s book, *Thinking Like a Plant*. Participants will discuss the book in eight sessions and Craig will be present in the last online session in November to field questions.



- On Wednesday, November 9, at 7:00 pm, Jon McAlice will give a public talk on “**Appreciating Barry Lopez.**” Before his death in 2020, the award-winning writer Barry Lopez spent a half-century traveling to 80 countries in his pursuit of an understanding of human identity and destiny. He generated many nonfiction and fiction works, including volumes of essays on the natural world that some critics likened to those of Thoreau and John Muir. This event honors his life, lyricism, and insights.

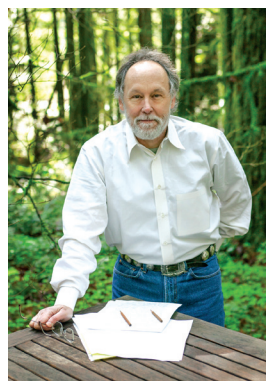


photo credit: David Liittschwager

Recent Podcast Episodes

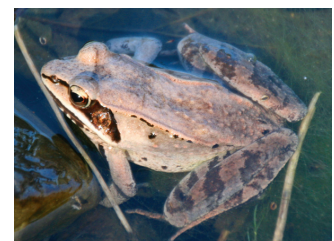


You can find our new and archived work in audio at our podcast page (<https://www.natureinstitute.org/podcast/in-dialogue-with-nature>), or wherever you access podcasts. Recent episodes feature the following topics:

- In 2003, Arthur Zajonc, a professor of physics at Amhurst College, was interviewed by Dr. Otto Scharmer of MIT’s Sloan School of Management about Goethean science. His remarks were featured in our fall 2007 issue of *In Context* (#18) in the article, “**Toward a Participative Science.**” In this episode, podcast host John Gouldthorpe reads the text which illuminates the three stages of Goethean science; how real knowledge is a kind of seeing; and why close and delicate empiricism is vital to scientific understanding.

- In the episode “**Portraying Milkweed,**” listen to Craig Holdrege describe his study of milkweed, a plant he calls both “effusive, yet also specialized. Milkweed invites life, but also holds it back. There is a fascinating tension in this plant.” Reading from an abridged version of his whole-organism study of milkweed published on our website (*The Story of an Organism: Common Milkweed*), Craig brings together his observations with those of other researchers to paint a vibrant picture of the plant and its relationships.

- When we give careful attention to what is actually happening when a new phase of life develops out of a previous stage, there are large implications for our overall understanding of developmental processes and evolution. That is the theme of Craig’s lecture, “**Do Frogs Come from Tadpoles?,**” featured as a podcast episode. You’ll also find a link on our podcast page to the accompanying illustrations that Craig refers to in his talk.



2022 Summer Intensives

In June and July of this past year, 19 participants from two cohorts enrolled in our 15-month-long Foundation Course in Goethean science spent two weeks at the institute. They worked individually and collectively to develop a practice that involves moving beyond simply noticing and registering natural phenomena to thoughtfully participating in the creative activity that is nature. The new cohort focused on color and plant studies, while the cohort that was concluding the course engaged with the four elements and the study of animals. Here we share scenes from the many activities and some student reflections:



I could describe the whole experience as validating and expansive. More than just the readings and activities, the conversations and community that was built within those conversations was so very strengthening for me. . . I also felt challenged in very important ways, including by the discipline and stamina “encountering” requires.
— Erika

The experience . . . showed me a lot of my difficulty in focusing attention, being patient and being open to the unseen or the unknown. I was struck by finding everyday a detail that was missing the previous days, some of them shockingly evident. I also came to realize something that I thought to have understood only theoretically, which was to become “actively passive,” as for instance when trying to see the afterimages of the colors.
— Augusto





*A rhythm was created around themes that allow one to “live with” the experiences and questions. The contributions of multiple perspectives/voices/ experiences — the communal aspect of it is valuable as well, especially in today’s isolated/ing society. The guidance from the instructors was fluid, focused and flexible, engendering insight and growth of an individual and the group.
— Alexander*



Conversations with Wild Rosemary

CEINWIN SMITH



Born and living in South Africa, Ceinwin Smith was a recent participant in our Foundation Course in Goethean Science and completed the program in July 2022. She wrote the following reflection on wild rosemary as part of her final project in Goethean methodology.

Wild rosemary has many names depending on where it is found and in which language it is being referred to. “Kapokbos,” meaning Snowbush in Afrikaans, is one of the most widely used colloquial names for wild rosemary, which occurs across the diverse landscapes of South Africa.

I chose to study this plant and its relation to space as my project for the Encountering Nature Foundation Course for two reasons: it is a local plant that I encounter almost daily in my garden, on mountain walks, and along the rugged coasts and sandy lowlands around South Africa; and it has a long history of connection to, and use by, people.

On the opposite page, I present a narrative expressed from the plant’s perspective, with the intention of giving a glimpse into my initial conversations with various wild rosemary plants I have encountered and observed over the past ten months. These conversations have opened a doorway into the wildly diverse expressions of wild rosemary and highlighted the intricate relationships woven between people, plants, and wildlife across South Africa’s varied landscapes, cultures, and historical contexts.



Wild and Weathered, Soft and Scented

Growing upward, expanding outward, I sprawl over the dry earth creating a cool web.
Reaching skyward, my young branches form flexible tendrils swaying in the breeze.
Becoming heavy with age, they curve downwards towards the earth — arcing and spine-like.
New growth extends upwards, like hackles raised in surprise.

I appear prickly and bold in form and structure, yet soft and springy, a surprise to the touch.
I am strong and flexible, content in heat and howl.
My thin branching leaves, fleshy, finger-like and feathered with fine hairs.
My stiff woody limbs, knotted and twisting, barely trembling in strong winds.

Curling upward, my branch tips show signs of new growth as small, cupped hands
gathered...open...receptive.
Enclosed in a soft gray felted clasp, tiny buds form as I taste the first rains.
Hesitantly at first, I gently unwrap delicate clusters of tiny white flowers.
As the days cool, I gain momentum and by winter I am woven in lace.

Soon my petals begin to brown, and the first seeds appear
clothed in a soft pale woolen down — the *kapok* or 'snow,' for which I am named here.
Pungent when crushed and a perfect lining for nests,
My soft seeds are sweetly fragrant and a deterrent to pests.

I have been long used in traditional medicine.
My leaves and flowers are a remedy for stomach ailments, muscle spasms, and immune support.
I am focusing, calming, and an active diuretic.

My extracted oils bring potent clarity to the senses,
a sharp clean fragrance, with layers of pepper and mint.
Earthy undertones and a lingering musky sweetness.

Scattered across the wind-swept slopes, clinging to rugged rock-face and unstable sandy scree,
I thrive in salty sea-spray and howling gale, poor soils and sun-parched summers.
My roots are strong and deep, fine and expansive.
Extending outward in a fine web below the surface, gathering moisture from dew and mist.

Flexible in growth,
my adaptive form is long, thin, and wispy in shade and shelter.
Short, compact, and sturdy in glaring sun and gale.
I am fleshy and green in winter, silvery-gray and brittle in summer.

Expanding, crisscrossing, my strong branches weave an intricate woody web
creating a safe haven for seeds and small creatures.
Providing food for antelope and ant,
a shelter for many and a companion to all.

My sprawling growth is unstable with height and best supported by sturdier neighbors.
Dense sweet confetti bush, strong-stemmed cape camphor, edible sea guarrie and
slow-growing milkwood; all lend me their strength and stability,
while I continue to reach out and expand, spreading my woven web across the earth.

— Ceinwin Smith