

News from the Institute

Events

- Representing The Nature Institute, Craig and Henrike Holdrege, Marisha Plotnik, Ryan Shea, and Bruno Follador participated in a **colloquium in Nailsworth, UK**



on March 23 – 24, initiated by the institute in collaboration with Ruskin Mill Trust. The intergenerational group of 17 individuals engaged in dialogue on **the tasks and the potential of phenomenological research and practice in our time** as well as on collaborations among researchers. The colloquium took place at Ruskin Mill's beautiful Field Centre. On the evening of March 24, a large audience participated in the inauguration of the Ruskin Mill Centre for Research. As part of the event, Craig offered a talk on "Intelligence in Nature? — An Exploration."

- Last May, the faculty of The Nature Institute hosted **Dr. Lenny Moss from Universidad Nacional Autónoma De Mexico** and **Dr. Daniel Nicholson from George Mason University** for a two-day colloquium on questions of agency and how we understand it in relation to organisms. Time spent observing specific organisms grounded the work in shared experience, leading to a more concrete recognition of the differentiated expression of agency in various gestures of wholeness. Both guests expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to actually observe specific organisms, and for the open, exploratory nature of our dialogue.

- Our new colleague Ryan Shea co-led a summer weekend workshop with the eco-poet Scott Edward Anderson called "**Seeing—Reading—Writing: Transforming Our**



Relationship to Language and Nature." Focusing on the milkweed colony that was in full bloom at the institute, they helped participants explore how a creative use of language can intensify, deepen, and transform our experiential encounter with the natural world. As solo presenter, Ryan brought this same topic to students at **The Catholic University of America** in a one-day workshop on October 21.

- In June, the institute welcomed back 18 participants enrolled in our **Foundation Program in Goethean Science** for their final two-week onsite intensive and the completion of their course. You can glimpse some of their varied activities in **the photo essay on page 8** of this issue.



- This past summer, Jon McAlice travelled to San Francisco several times to work with the faculty, staff, and board of the **San Francisco Waldorf School** on questions of school governance and pedagogical creativity. In addition, he led a one-week intensive for the school's high school teachers focused on the development of resonant classroom spaces where students can participate more fully in the learning process.

- Artist Ella Lapointe began teaching the third in a series of "Drawing into Nature" courses at the institute. The fall 2023 course focuses on "**Color and Form in Nature**" with participants meeting every Tuesday afternoon from September 12 through November 14. By necessitating careful observation to serve the activity of drawing, the course aims to help us grow capacities for attention, slowing down, and centralizing our experience of the natural world.



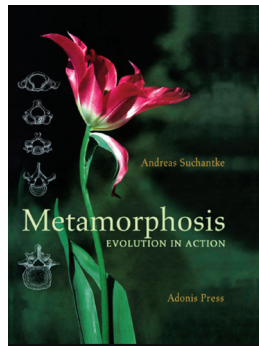
- Jon McAlice was in Switzerland in September to work with Waldorf school teachers on questions of embodied learning and to represent the **International Teacher Education Project** in the preparation of an international teacher education conference planned for April 2024.

- In September, Henrike and Craig participated in the **World Goetheanum Conference 2023** in Dornach, Switzerland. The four-day conference included three-session forums that addressed a variety of challenging societal issues. Craig was a co-contributor in a forum concerned with "**Follow the Science!?**" It considered how we see "the authority" of science, and in what ways science is in need of transformation through artistic and social practices.

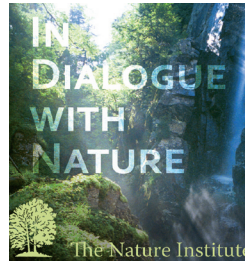
- On November 2, at 7:00 pm, Ryan Shea will give a talk at the institute, **“Living in the Present: Practices for Being In and With Nature.”** He will explore ways to overcome the distractions of modern life and become fully present by working through several concrete practices with plant and animal teachers. Ryan’s talk is free and open to the public.

- This fall, Jon McAlice and Henrike Holdrege are hosting a series of four interactive online presentations for the Anthroposophical Society of America. Each 75-minute session addresses the topic of **“Engaging in Goethean Practice: From Transformation to Metamorphosis.”**

- A group of 14 people who have completed our Foundation Program is currently meeting biweekly online for a period of six months to intensively study Andreas Suchantke’s magnum opus **Metamorphosis: Evolution in Action** (Adonis Press; 2011). Led by institute educator John Gouldthorpe, this collective reading and discussion of the content will also examine both perceptual and cognitive faculties that can help or hinder our ability to be in relationship with the natural world.



- Henrike and Craig will **teach in Brazil** later this year. They will give a 3-day workshop near São Paulo that introduces participants to Goethean practice. The event is hosted by Escola Schumacher Brasil. Afterwards, they travel to **Associação Sagres** in Florianopolis to teach the second (and final) two-week module of their course **“Seeing Nature Whole — A Goethean Approach.”**



Recent Podcast Episodes

You can find our podcast on the institute’s website (natureinstitute.org/podcast/in-dialogue-with-nature) or wherever you access podcasts.

- As of this writing, we are working on a three-episode podcast based on Craig Holdrege’s article, **“Where Does an Animal End? — The American Bison,”** which first appeared in issue #45 of *In Context*. Each of the three episodes will feature Craig first reading a section of the article, followed by his conversation about the text with our podcast host, John Gouldthorpe. Also coming up is an audio and video version of Craig and Henrike Holdrege’s interview in Brazil, describing their work and Goethean science.



- In the episode **“Two Kinds of Darkness,”** institute co-founder and educator Henrike Holdrege joins podcast host John Gouldthorpe to discuss two unique demonstrations she employs to develop a more nuanced understanding of the interplay of light, darkness, and matter.

- In a talk recorded at the institute, **“Experience, Imagination & the Nature of Meaning,”** Jon McAlice briefly traces the philosophical history of human relation to meaning in the natural world through the ideas of various 18th century thinkers. Jon then arrives at his central theme: In a world increasingly objectified by science and technology, are there ways of being that allow us to *experience* the presence of meaning in the natural world?

From Our Mailbox

I have just read Steve Talbott’s “Preface to a Thirteen-Year Project” in issue 49 of In Context. Mr. Talbott’s growth is evident in everything he writes. I admire his ongoing effort to reshape thinking about the foundations of biology. His opening remark about trying to imagine himself as a crow and seeing with “crow vision” has, I think, much broader import than it might seem. At some level, the attempt to see the world as other humans see it — including those biologists Mr. Talbott discusses — is just as alien and just as hard as imagining “crownness.” I commend him for making the effort. — Neil Ruggles

Your recent podcast, “Two Kinds of Darkness,” was a good experience. The descriptions of experiments and experiences played out well and clearly for a presentation where the subject is intangible. . . Compliments on the good audio recording. So often its importance is ignored. Your work has always given me hope that we can meet the Spiritual with clarity.

— Tom Patsenka

Foundation Course Summer Intensive

This past July, the fourth cohort of our Foundation Course, *Encountering Nature and the Nature of Things*, completed the 15-month program with a two-week intensive at the institute. There were 18 participants, some of whom came from as far as Australia, Malaysia, and Brazil. Here we share highlights from the first week of the intensive that was dedicated to exploring essential aspects of our world that we all too easily take for granted — the qualities of solid, fluid, air, and warmth. We carried out many observations and relations, which let

us explore how these qualities interact with each other in dynamic ways: the solid and the fluid, fluid in fluid, warmth interpenetrating with solid, fluid and air. Our explorations and discussions were enriched by our daily study of Georg Maier's essay "The Classical Four Elements as Different Ways of Approaching Nature" (which you can find on our website).

A new Foundation Program begins in March 2024; to learn more about the program visit <https://www.natureinstitute.org/foundation-course>.



Observing the many subtle aspects of a candle flame and the process of burning.



Reflecting on our observations.

You have illustrated the power of reuniting science and art as ways-of-knowing.

— Laura Wallwork

It was tremendously useful to have whole group reflections where we could hear what other people had observed or learned.

— Beatrice Ungard

The course is a transformative and cathartic engagement with the world of the senses, the inner world of my own soul experience, and, most essentially, their intrinsic weaving togetherness.

— Joshua Kelberman



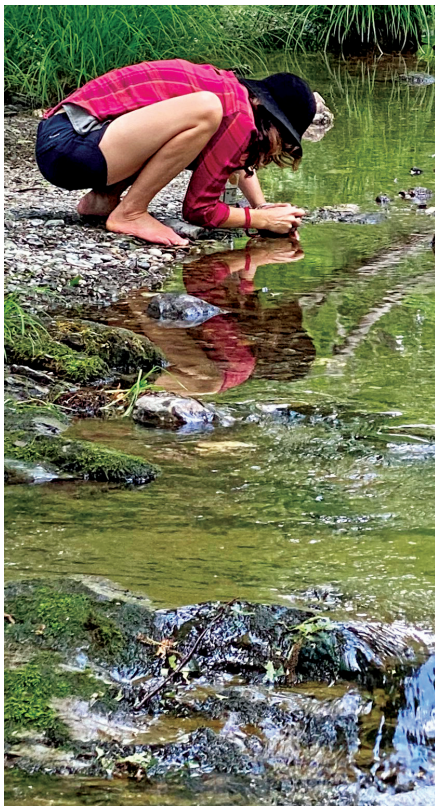
Cold colored water billows upward as it is warmed from below with a heat lamp.



Creating vortex trains in a shallow container by moving a stick straight through drops of ink in sugar water.



Diluted ink dropped into water and stirred to observe.



Exploring fluid dynamics at a creek.



Rock stacking — balance is beautiful, and surprising.

THE NATURE INSTITUTE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Core Intentions, Reflections, and Looking Forward

On September 9th, the institute marked its 25th anniversary with a special and festive public event attended by about 60 local friends and supporters. As Henrike Holdrege remarked in her introductory words, the anniversary presents the opportunity to reflect on the core intentions of the institute and to reflect on the 25 years of work. Following Henrike's introduction and clarinet music by Paul Hasse, five individuals shared thoughts and impressions: director Craig Holdrege, board member Marisha Plotnik, who will join our staff in Fall 2024; our colleague Ryan Shea, who started working at the institute this year; *In Context* editor and outreach coordinator, Elaine Khosrova; and our colleague Jon McAlice. The lively and diverse contributions provided a many-sided picture of what individuals experience as the central contributions and intent of the institute.

It is impossible to give a picture here of all that was spoken. We'd like to share from just one part of Jon McAlice's contribution. He pointed to three qualities of Goethean scientific practice. In our work we delve into concrete phenomena of the world and in doing so, more riddles and questions open up. The world becomes ever deeper, ever richer. This endeavor is humbling and gives rise to what he called increasing humility in encounters with the world. At the same time, the world becomes ever more interesting. Jon spoke of the enthusiasm that arises in attentively exploring that which may at first glance seem simple and mundane. Finally, he characterized Goethean work as a kind of reciprocal hospitality — inviting the richness of the world into our lives through research and education endeavors, and along the way we can begin to experience the world as inviting us in. We move beyond the felt separateness that often colors and places hindrances in the way of our deeper experience and understanding of the world.

In her opening remarks, Henrike emphasized that this anniversary recognizes the past years of work but also marks the commencement of the next 25 years. The Nature Institute is in a phase of transition. The colleagues who have carried the work for so many years have begun working side-by-side with new colleagues. It is the sincere hope of the founders that in this way a new team of colleagues will form in the coming five to seven years and lead the institute into the future.

Since 1998, the core work of the institute has been carried by co-founders Henrike Holdrege and Craig Holdrege, and with Steve Talbott, who joined the institute right after its inception. Steve transitioned into emeritus status in 2023. Henrike and Craig remain active, and along with Jon McAlice, will shepherd the transition process as it develops in the coming years.

For an institute to be a living endeavor, it needs to be nourished by inspirations that find their way into concrete activities, and those activities can only exist with the support of many, many people and foundations. We want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who, in one way or another, have contributed to the flourishing of our efforts!

Thank You!

We are privileged to thank all who have made donations or contributed goods or services to *The Nature Institute* between April 30, 2023 and October 1, 2023.

PLEDGES

Natalie Reed Adams
Johan Alvbring
Michael & Patricia Holdrege
Barry & Janet Lia
Peter Luborsky
Rachel Maldonado
Evan Mulvaney
Malcolm Panthaki
in memory of
Jimi K. Panthaki
Joseph & Emilie Papas
Tish Streeten
Jo & Michael Thomas Valens
Stephen Vallus
Mark Vecchio

Walter Burkart
Hayley Burtenshaw
Erin Corrigan
Isabel Dancy
Jim Davis & Brooke
Heagerty
Susan Delattre
Peter & Dorothy Denning
Frank & Cheryl Doble
Jill Draper
Mark Ebersole
Rosemary Flickinger
Mark Gardner
Alice Groh
Augusto Gutierrez
Paul & Jonitha Hasse
Christina Holdrege
& Edmund Muller

Gabriele Knecht
Jo Ellen Koerner
Alicia Landman-Reiner
Ella LaPointe
Andy & Polly Leaf
Robert & Suzanne Mays
Jon McAlice
Rick Medrick
Binita Mehta
Christoph & Annelien Meier
Iain Millership
Frank Mulder
Wendy & Sandy Noyes
Jeffrey Onans
Tim & Maggie Paholak
Ann Pasquinelly
Grace Ann Peysson
Anders Pitman

Sarah Stosiek
Jennifer Sturm
in honor of George "Rollie"
Lorenze & Family
Steve & Phyllis Talbott
Jenny Telling
Thorwald Thiersch
Adrian Walker
Bob Walker
Elisabeth Wiley
Christiana Williams
Nathaniel Williams
Lily Wojciechowski
Paul Zachos
Laura Zech

DONORS

& VOLUNTEERS

Anonymous
Carol Alpert
Stefan Ambrose
Michael Babitch
Lisa Bartmann
Julia Birch
Arlene Braithwaite
Michael & Ute Brewer
Judith Brockway
John & Jean Brousseau

John & Deborah Holloway
Malcolm Hudson
Jamie Hutchinson
Marjorie Iburg
Judy Isacoff
Van James & Bonnie Ozaki
in memory of Peter Glasby
Nelle Johansen
Michael Judge
Annette & Christoph Kaiser
Elaine & Mitch Khosrova

Lesley Rice
Neil & Allegra Ruggles
George & Leonore Russell
in memory of Nellie & Tessie
Robin Sand
Volker Seelbach & Drucilla
Boone-Seelbach
Cathy Sims-O'Neil
Ceinwen Smith
Diederick Sprangers
Alice Stamm

ORGANIZATIONS

Bulova Gale Foundation
Mahle Foundation
NoVo Foundation
R. Steiner-Fonds
The Foundation For Rudolf
Steiner Books
The Kathy Yoselson Fierce
Determination Fund
Waldorf Educational
Foundation
Waldorf Schools Fund
Well Sourced Works

Fall Matching Grant

Two of our generous supporters have offered to match all donations to *The Nature Institute* this fall up to \$10,000. With your help, we can raise as much as \$20,000 to support our education programs and provide scholarships for our intensive courses. Every dollar we receive by December 20 will be doubled, up to \$10,000! You can give to the institute by check or credit card using the enclosed envelope, or by credit card at our website (<http://natureinstitute.org/friend>). Thank you for your energizing support.

In this 50th issue of *In Context*, we'd like to extend a very special thank you to graphic designer Mary Giddens, who has skillfully designed every issue since the spring of 1999. For generously giving her time and expertise to support *The Nature Institute* for nearly 25 years, we are deeply honored and grateful.