

**A Song for the Asking**  
**The Electronic Newsletter of**  
**EarthSong Photography**  
**and**

**EarthSong Photography Workshops: Walking in Beauty**

August 31, 2013

Volume XI, Number 3

**Hello to All:**

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**Everybody Needs a Rock (and Some Dirt Too)**

If Earth had come with an operating manual, the first chapter might be titled something like “How to Protect Soil, Mother of All Life.” It would portray soil as the dynamic interface between geology and biology, the bridge between the dead world of rock and the bustling realm of life.

**David R. Montgomery**

from *Dirt, The Erosion of Civilizations*

“And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep....” So begins the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis (KJV), and from this it is plain to me that God is a geologist. For why else would Genesis begin with a basic description of the Precambrian formation of our beautiful planet?

The Precambrian Eon was so very long ago – 4.6 billion to 541 million years – that, for most of us, it is simply not possible to wrap our minds around even the numbers, much less the circumstances, of its span of time; and yet it accounts for roughly seven-eighths (87.5%) of Earth’s history. But, even before that history began something was happening in a wider universe that had been around for another prior nine (9) billion years, or so.

In a region of that vast space, within a large molecular cloud of gas and dust, gravitational forces sparked a collapse of part of the cloud, which became matter that coalesced within the cloud, spinning – because of that same gravity – as it compressed inwardly on itself. Ultimately the spinning would lead to a flattening, which would form a disk-like structure, drawing most of the matter toward its center. In time, the central mass of that matter would become hotter and denser, initiating thermonuclear fusion in its core, giving birth to our star, the Sun. From the remainder of that amorphous matter would also be born the smaller orbs that we know as the solar system, including



**Came Up a Bad Cloud**

the blue-marble wonder we call home, Earth; and in the beginning of the Precambrian, that blue-marble wonder had just been formed. Of the Precambrian we know little; the fossil record is scant and the rocks few. What life that would eventually come to exist during all those years was limited mostly to stromatolites, accretions of mat-like clusters, in shallow water, of a blue-green algae known as cyanobacteria: difficult fossils, indeed, to find even when you are looking. The rocks of the Precambrian can be found here and there, but for the most part they are eroded away, or else remain buried under more recent formations. Many of those that might be studied are so heavily metamorphosed that their origins can only be guessed.



### **As If In the Beginning**

I am standing nearly a mile above the surface of the Atlantic Ocean; and from where I look, I can gaze down into the dawn of Smokies geologic time, almost literally. Far below me, my view spreads out over one of the few places in Great Smoky Mountains National Park where the basement rocks of the Precambrian lie exposed, and as I peer into the depths of Big Cove inside the Qualla Boundary, looking beyond Chiltoskie Ridge, I can see peeking out behind it, along the Park's edge, the outline of a portion of Hyatt Ridge and, between the two ridges, the drainage of Straight Fork.

It is Hyatt Ridge that separates the waters of Straight Fork from its sister stream, Raven Fork, the pair of them coming together at the base of the ridge to form the downstream-most, major tributary of the

beautiful Oconaluftee. It is Hyatt Ridge, also, that is composed of the granitic schists and gneisses whose formation takes us back into that Precambrian world of more than a billion years ago. They originated, those venerable stones, as the metamorphic remains of volcanoclastic and plutonic rocks, pushed upward during the building of even older mountains which had weathered into bumps long ages ago, as an ancient supercontinent had been born and matured.

About 750 million years ago the continental crust of the supercontinent began to pull apart as the tectonic floor beneath it began to expand and spread.

Then, some 540 million years ago, the continental crust split, and the resulting pieces began to move away from each other. Seawater began to spread across the low areas between the crustal plates, creating, in time, entire new oceans.

Early in the process of this crustal expansion, a deep basin, known as the Ocoee Basin, formed along the margin of the supercontinent in what is now the western Carolinas, eastern Tennessee, and northern Georgia; and it began to fill even more deeply. The sediments of silt, sand, clay, and gravel that were draining in from the adjacent highlands began to spread out in layers along the basin floor. As the basin continued to subside over many millions of years, the sediment layers accumulated to



### **Peering into the Basement**

depths of up to 50,000'. Depending on the nature of the materials making up the layers, some of them would ultimately be very resistant to weathering while others would be much less so. These



### **Lines of Resistance**

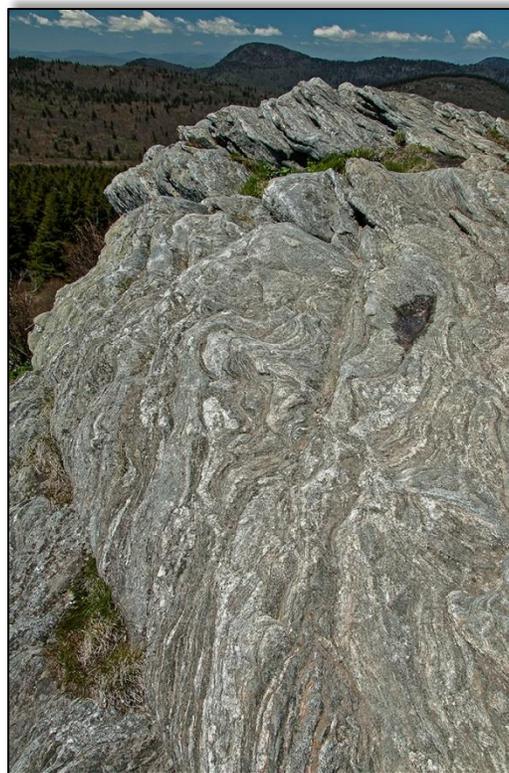
direction, and so did the crustal plates. Now they were moving toward each other once again. As they moved closer and closer, fragments of the seabed floor, islands, and some other continental masses collided with the eastern margin of the ancient North American continent. Over the preceding 100 million years, or so, plants had found their way to dry land, followed by insects and scorpions and even some amphibians.

The ocean between the land masses continued to shrink until around 270 million years ago, when the continents that were ancestral North America and ancestral Africa crunched together ultimately creating yet another supercontinent known as Pangaea. Great masses of rock were pushed westward along the margin of eastern North America. Higher and higher they piled until they formed the mountains we know as the Appalachians.

This mountain building episode, or “orogeny” as it is formally known, was the fourth – and last – of a series of earth-changing orogenies in this region, going all the way back to a middle- Precambrian event known as the Grenville Orogeny, some 1.1 billion years before the present. There are actually rock outcrops along the Blue Ridge Parkway near my home in Asheville that are from that time in history. They are called the French Broad Massif. Could you ever have imagined that thinking about rocks could be so much fun!

sedimentary lithic strata today form the great bulk of the bedrock of the Smokies and are known as the Ocoee Supergroup. They include the massive displays of Thunderhead Sandstone and the Anakeesta Formation seen along the crest of the present mountains, like near the Clingman’s Dome parking lot, and at places such as the Chimneys and Anakeesta Ridge. Those mighty rocks are nothing more than the erosional soils of the late-Precambrian; but we were talking about a seabed, so something must be missing: The ocean that formed during the breakup of the supercontinent continued to expand. This ocean was filled with ancient life forms – bacteria, algae, and lots of invertebrates; but nothing lived on the land. Now imagine a pot of Goldilocks-style porridge being heated over a scalding-hot flame, a flame hot enough to melt rocks. At one point in time the convection currents being driven by the heat send the soupy mass in one direction; at another geologic moment the currents reverse and the mixture blends in a completely different direction. Just so with the interior of our blue-marble wonder of a planet, and the crustal plates riding on the surface of the earthen porridge move at the whim of those great convection flows.

About 470 million years ago, in a period of geologic time known as the Ordovician, the currents changed their



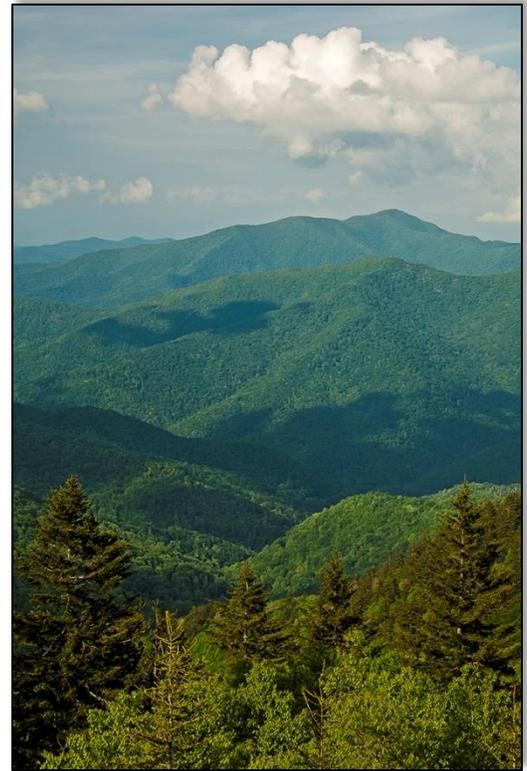
### **Back When Dirt Was a Rock**

And this is just the beginning. By the time all of the convergence and crunching was finished (not that they're ever completely finished) , sometime in the Permian Period of the Paleozoic Era, the rocks of the Ocoee Supergroup had been metamorphosed, folded, subjected to igneous intrusion, faulted, and pushed to heights that would rival, if not exceed, today's Rocky Mountain elevations. Impressive!

However, geology and physics share a common ancestor called "gravity;" and whatever geology and physics push up, gravity will ultimately pull down, especially with the help of a little weathering: wind, rain, freezing/thawing, the usual line-up of agents that break up the hard-won landforms so effectively.

Paleozoic means "Ancient Life." Paleozoic time begins with the onset of the Cambrian Period, some 541 million years ago, and ends with the aforementioned Permian around 252 million years before now. During those blinks of geological eyes, life on Earth flourished; but at the end of the Permian there was a catastrophic event which stripped the planet of some 96% of all species. This catastrophe was driven primarily by the impact of a large extraterrestrial object – an asteroid most likely – the evidence for which points to something on the order of 150-200 miles in diameter. But Life is resilient and by the middle of the Mesozoic (Middle Life) Era, some 200-150 million years before the present, we found ourselves flat in the middle of Jurassic Park, T-Rex and all.

The land, too, is resilient. By the middle-Mesozoic, the Smokies were being carved and shaped by significant



### **What Goes Up. Must Come Down**

erosional forces at work at the same time the larger continental landmasses were still being uplifted. During this period, another of those famous continental breakups began – the separation of Pangaea into its constituent continental forms, the ones which we, in our present time, find as recognizable. Such a process is called "rifting," and it simply refers to an area where continental crustal extension, splitting, or thinning is taking place along certain lines of stress that are within or underneath the crust. Pangaea's fragmentation began in the Early-Middle Jurassic, about 175 million years ago; and in terms of the rifts and motions begun in those long-ago times, the breakup continues to this very day.

As Pangaea pondered her fate, the Great Smoky Mountains, those then-gigantic peaks, pondered their future. From the late-Mesozoic into the early-Cenozoic (New Life) Era, the proud uplifts saw themselves cut lower and lower. Much of the younger rock strata were eroded away, leaving only the considerably older rock exposed. The climate of North America changed from tropical to sub-tropical to temperate as the continental mass moved from near the equator to its present location in the northern hemisphere. As the Cenozoic wore on, the Smokies wore down. Untold tons of rock and soil were stripped away to grace the valleys,



**Weathering in Black and White**

plains, and basins to both the east and the west of their lie. The Atlantic piedmont and coastal plain and the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi River valleys of the North American heartland were the



primary beneficiaries; and now these ancient mountains are gentle, but effective reminders of what has taken place on these wandering oceanic voyagers we call continents for the past several billions of years.

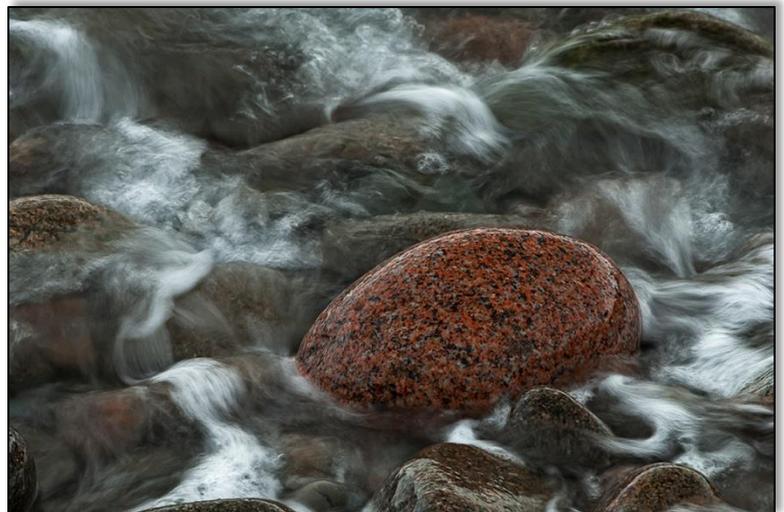
They always serve to remind me of my love for rocks; and I love rocks. Think about the things that you really love; I don't mean people, they're in a category all by themselves. I mean the things that you do, your activities; or the kinds of objects – manmade or otherwise – for which you hold some deep and abiding affinity: those things. Why do you hold them in such esteem? I would be willing to wager that for nearly each and every

### **Headed for New Orleans?**

one of them there is some event or episode in your childhood, or youth, that left upon you such a positive imprint that, as an adult, the feeling persists and accounts for some aspect of your being to which you hold dearly.

When I was ten years old, my beloved great aunt and uncle retired from jobs they had held with the same company in Atlanta for thirty-five years. To show his appreciation for their loyalty and good work, their employer sent them on an excursion by train across the country from Atlanta to Chicago to Seattle to Los Angeles and back to Atlanta. Their journey lasted nearly a month. Everywhere they stopped along the way, my great aunt picked up rocks and stored them in a leather suitcase she carried with her. When they returned home, they gave me the suitcase and all of its wonderful contents, labeled as to location. They had required help just to get it off the train. I still have some of those rocks (and I still have the suitcase). For a ten-year-old boy who loved the outdoors, they were more precious than gold; and they engendered a love of what they were, and are: small pieces of the Earth in all of its majesty – colors, shapes, forms, patterns, stripes: the entire planet in graphic microcosm.

Throughout our house there are rocks that I have collected along my journey; so many, now, that Bonnie has insisted that any new ones be willing to live in the front porch rock garden, or on the back deck. One of my favorite books is a children's volume by a very special writer and illustrator, **Byrd Baylor** and **Peter Parnall**, entitled *Everybody Needs a Rock*. When my grandson, **Rich Padgett**, was six, I gave him a copy of the book and invited him to select from my rocks any one he might choose to be his own. Watching his selection process is a memory I carry with me always.



### **Everybody Needs a Rock**

Watching his selection process is a memory I carry with me always. What prompts me here are not my rocks, nor even my love of rocks, but rather what eventually happens – and especially what is happening – to most rocks that are exposed to the forces of

weathering in our world.

Rocks have been turning to dirt in our blue-marble world (which, as you probably know, hasn't always been a blue marble) for as long as wind and rain have been part of our climate, which is to say some 3.5 billion years, or so.

That is not new; nor is it new that once plants became established on land and began to reproduce and die, their roots did two things: they both added to the stability of the early soil and contributed to the breakdown of rocks and larger clumps into a surface-covering layer in which more plants could grow readily and flourish.

It's a simple cycle really: Life makes soil; and soil makes life, and it has been that way for the past half billion years. The evolution of plants and the rise of life on land literally fed the formation of soil, and the soil in turn fed more and larger plants that were the nutritional foundation

of increasingly complex communities of animals. Life and soil were evolving co-creators of an increasingly intricate web of relationships among animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; and this picture held sway until the concepts of modern agriculture began to change the dynamic. That dynamic did not begin with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of new technologies, though with them the stakes of the game have been raised to a new level. It began with the rise of agricultural societies going back some eight to ten thousand years.

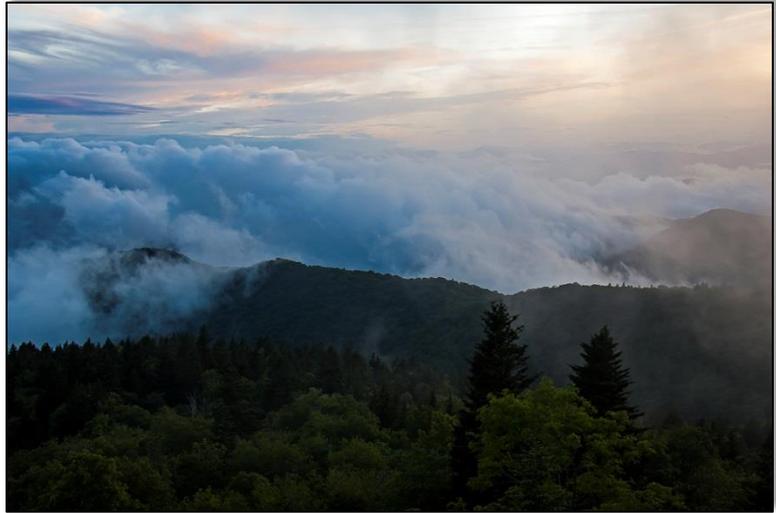
Please don't misunderstand: my immediate ancestors have all been farmers, by-and-large. Farming is

in my genome, and I am grateful to those who work the land so that I can eat. The difficulty arises not in what these folks do, but rather in how it is done, and in the cultural, social, and economic systems that enforce the pressures, sometimes subtly and sometimes not so, on farmers to do much of what they do in their relationships with the land. But I have gotten way out in front of myself in this story.

We humans have not always been farmers and agriculturalists. This we all learned in grade school. Our earliest human ancestors made their living by roaming the countryside – not nearly as casual of a stroll as I make it sound – living and

dying off the bounty, or lack, of the land around them; hunting and gathering, as it were, killing animals and plucking the plants and plant parts that would sustain them. And we were reasonably successful at this endeavor for many thousands of years; in fact, for some 90% of human history, this is how we lived and thrived.

A mere ten thousand years ago our ancestors first learned to cultivate crops and to domesticate animals. This is, perhaps, the most significant development in human history outside the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. It took place when tools were still flint and other rocks; and it is the transition



### **Kissed by Clouds**



### **The Garden of Cades**

between two significant periods of the Stone Age: the old Stone Age, called the Paleolithic, and the new Stone Age, known as the Neolithic; and it is rightly given the weighty title of the Neolithic Revolution, for it was indeed revolutionary beyond imagination. The impetus for this incredible change may have come from the fact that the Earth was, at the time, just coming out of the most recent cold phase of the present ice age.

The retreat of the glaciers – that had until not long before covered as much as one-third of the continental land masses – spurred on a proliferation of plant growth unknown to humans. It does not require a rocket scientist to be able to pay close enough attention to the world around in order to observe that most plants bear seeds, which become new plants, and which can be placed in locations that are optimally favorable to the germination of offspring plants under conditions that are more ideal for tending and harvesting. Suddenly the gatherer could remain in a more closely constrained location and, if all worked well, could reap a quantity of food comparable to that obtained from wandering across more widely flown places. The impulse to settle is a strong incentive indeed, especially in those parts of the world where the food supply seems to encourage it. This does not mean that hunter-gatherers necessarily lived in destitute circumstances, existing from



### **A Tempting Place to Put Down Roots**

hand-to-mouth on the verge of starvation. Most of these societies have been shown to have had available a very stable food supply, and that food procurement was an activity that usually took up not more than two or three hours per day. When faced with the impulse to settle, many of these societies resisted for long periods of time; but eventually combinations of economic and social pressures drove most of them to become sedentary.

One of the results that settled societies did experience fairly quickly was a surge in population such that greater levels of food procurement and production were soon necessary to feed growing populations.

This, in turn, set up the dynamic that has



### **Greening Up...Gravity's Only Exception?**

haunted many of the world's civilizations as they have risen and fallen throughout the intervening millennia, down to our very own.

If you take out of the flow the initial step of the hunter-gatherers becoming sedentary agriculturalists, then a flow chart of the dynamic might look something like this: Agriculturalists gain foothold in virgin/newly acquired land → Agriculturalists select most desirable land to cultivate (low slope, river bottom, etc.) → Agriculturalists initiate agricultural activities usually as small farm units → Crops are plentiful → Plentiful food encourages population growth → Population growth encourages increased food production → This part of cycle repeats until most desirable land is exhausted to point that crops begin to decline → Agriculturalists begin to clear and to cultivate less desirable lands to

augment declining productivity → Population continues to increase → Small farm units become consolidated into larger production units (Plantations) → Less desirable lands begin to be exhausted and output begins to decline → Total agricultural output declines across all cultivated lands → Societal leaders/institutions begin to import food to augment declining productivity → Soil continues to exhaust as good husbandry practices are abandoned for sake of maximum productivity → Soil exhaustion continues to point that productivity cannot support population and population is dependent on primarily outside food sources → Population declines.

With minor variations on the theme, this basic flow has projected itself through societies from the dawn of civilization to modern times.

Cultures as diverse as the Sumerian, the Babylonian, the Ancient Chinese, the Ancient Greek, the Roman, the Mayan, the Pueblo Culture of the Southwestern United States, all can be shown to have declined, at least in significant part, because of their treatment of the one resource more precious than any other, the soil that sustained them. Of course, side channels are occasionally taken, as for example when a society rediscovers good soil husbandry, or new technologies that allow them to delay, or even avoid, adverse consequences. Sometimes the decline of the society leads to an extended period of low population density,



### **After the Hunters Came the Farmers**

which, if of sufficient length, allows for some of the more regenerative soil to be replenished and for a societal resurgence, or the entry onto the land of a new agrarian society.

One of the most fascinating books I have read in many years is entitled *Dirt The Erosion of Civilizations* by **David R. Montgomery**. David Montgomery, a geologist who has been recognized for the excellence of his work by a MacArthur Foundation award, is a Professor of Earth and Space Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle. I'd like to share with you a passage from the book:

“The first agricultural communities reached Europe’s doorstep in southern Bulgaria around 5300BC. At first farmers grew wheat and barley in small fields surrounding a few timber-framed buildings. Agricultural expansion into marginal land lasted about two thousand years before the agricultural potential of the soil was fully exploited and persistent cultivation began to exhaust the soil. With no evidence of a climate shift, local populations grew and then declined as agricultural settlement swept through the area. Evidence for extensive late Neolithic soil erosion shows that agriculture spread from small areas of arable soils on the valley bottoms into highly erodible forest soils on steeper slopes. Eventually, the landscape filled in with small communities of several hundred people farming the area within about a mile of their village.

“In these first European communities, population rose slowly before a rapid decline that emptied settlements out for five hundred to a thousand years, until the first traces of Bronze Age cultures then appeared. This pattern suggests a fundamental model of agricultural development in which prosperity increases the capacity of the land to support people, allowing the population to expand to use the available land. Then, having eroded soils from marginal land, the population contracts rapidly before soil rebuilds in a period of low population density.

“This roller-coaster cycle characterizes the relation between population and food production in many cultures and contexts because the agricultural potential of the land is not a constant – both technology and the state of the soil influence food production. Improved agricultural practices can support more people with fewer farmers, but soil health eventually determines how many people the

land can support. Floodplains continually receive nutrients from periodic flooding, but most other land cannot produce continuously high crop yields without extensive fertilization. So once a society comes to depend on upland farming it can cultivate a fraction of its land base at any one time, expand the area under cultivation, keep inventing new methods to counteract declining soil fertility, or face agricultural decline owing to degradation of soil fertility or gradual loss of the soil itself.”

What Montgomery makes clear is that it is always ultimately the health of the soil that determines the fate of a society’s capacity to produce food and that technology is merely an adjunct to that truth.

Technology, on the other hand, in the form of sediment core analysis, especially from lakes and other bodies of water, has been instrumental in allowing us to decipher the journeys of our soils and our populations on every continent; and, when combined with historical records and documents, to make a reasoned evaluation of and connection between agricultural society, soil management, food production, and the well-being of a society at a given time in its history.

The “roller-coaster cycle,” as Montgomery describes it, is all too evident in the history of European agriculture and European society between the collapse of the Roman Empire – sometime, say, between 376AD and 1453AD – and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, sometime around 1733. In fact it was new agricultural technologies, such as the iron plow and the seed drill, which paved the way for the revolution in industry by allowing for increased crop production, which improved people’s diet and health and led to rapid population growth; but also to conditions such that fewer people were needed to work the same amount of land, which, in turn, created a ready force of unemployed laborers to work in the factories which began to spring up across the countryside.

You can probably see where the cycle is next headed. New increases in population demand increased crop production, which requires of the soil higher yields, or more land under cultivation, or both. And there are political currents at play through all of this regarding class, power, control of technology and land ownership and tenure: what good soil husbandry giveth, other factors tangential to the soil taketh away.

As Montgomery notes, “Despite increased agricultural production, food prices rose dramatically in both England and France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Persistent famine between 1690 and 1710 stalked a population larger than could be reliably fed. While enlightened Europe lived on the edge of starvation, Britain largely escaped the peasant unrest that sparked the French Revolution by importing lots of food from Ireland. Real hunger, as much as the hunger for empire or religious freedom, helped launch Europe toward the New World.” As an aside he asserts that relatively few people from northwestern Europe migrated to America while there was still fertile land at home.

The great English geologist, James Hutton, believed soil to be the source of all life, sprung from the fertility engendered by worms as they crunched the bodies of dead animals, fallen leaves, and bits of mineral rock together. This organic overlay he saw as the visible rope in the tug-of-war between the land and the water, specifically water in the form of weather, as it first broke the strata into smaller pieces and then eroded the continental landscape above the ocean’s reach. This battle of erosion, in his mind, was never-ending, and he came to accept the conclusion that the weathering created new



### **How Healthy Is Your Soil?**

– and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, sometime around 1733. In fact it was new agricultural technologies, such as the iron plow and the seed drill, which paved the way for the revolution in industry by allowing for increased crop production, which improved people’s diet and health and led to rapid population growth; but also to conditions such that fewer people were needed to work the same amount of land, which, in turn, created a ready force of unemployed laborers to work in the factories which began to spring up across the countryside.

soil at nearly the same rate that erosion removed it.

During the time that Hutton was proposing these ideas – that soil over geologic time was a dynamic entity – there were correlative arguments being put forth regarding the natural controls on the size and stability of the human population. These arguments came to be embodied in the thoughts of two men: The Reverend Thomas Malthus saw population growth as humanity's albatross in an unending cycle in which population outpaces the capacity of the land to feed people, and disease and famine becoming the eventual balancing points.

In contrast, William Godwin, the English journalist known for, among other things, being the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Shelley, wrote forcefully that scientific progress promised endless prosperity and on-going advances in material well-being. And thus became entwined the issues of human population, agricultural technology, and political systems about which we argue to this very day. To wrap these in a cloak of reality: the summer of 1815, was the coldest on record. It came as the result of the eruption of the Indonesian volcano, Mount Tambora, the largest volcanic eruption in known history, and it led to devastatingly poor crop yields. Food riots in England and France spread across Europe, and, for the next several decades, bred a level of discontent among the working poor in which the price of food was a central issue.



### **A Place Called Home...**

In 1845, a potato blight imported from America arrived on the shores of Ireland. Completely dependent on potatoes, because most of what they grew for their landlords was shipped to England and its colonies, the Irish working-class farmers faced the prospects of literally nothing to eat. Many of those who did not die simply left, so that by 1900, the population of the country was little more than half of what it had been in the 1840s.

I share this bit of trivia for this reason: As the population of postmedieval Europe rose steadily, the response was to bring into agricultural production more and more marginal land. The food produced from this helped sustain the population growth, until, beginning in the eighteenth century, the powers of the continent harnessed the agricultural potential of their colonies around the world to provide cheap food. The self-reliance of Europe on its own agriculture ended, and the effect of this on those colonial possessions was horrendous. Colonial economies displaced the agricultural systems that the local populations had adapted over hundreds of years. Typically this meant the introduction of a single crop mentality, which rapidly led to a reduction of soil fertility.

As David Montgomery describes it:

“Europe solved its perennial hunger problem by importing food and exporting people. About fifty million people left Europe during the great wave of emigration between 1820 and 1930; many European peoples now have more descendants in former colonies than live in the motherlands. Colonial economics and policies that favored plantation agriculture unofficially encouraged soil degradation and perpetual hunger for fresh land. Paradoxically, the drive to establish colonies was itself driven by European land hunger fueled by degradation of upland regions and enclosure of communal farmland into large estates.

“Europeans emerged from under the cloud of malnutrition and constant threat of starvation because their colonial empires produced lots of cheap food. Europeans outsourced food production as they built industrial economies. Between 1875 and 1885, a million acres of English wheat fields were

converted to other uses. With a growing industrial economy and a shrinking agricultural land base, Britain increasingly ate imports. By 1900 Britain imported four-fifths of its grain, three-quarters of its dairy products, and almost half its meat. Imported food pouring into Europe mined soil fertility on distant continents to further the growth of industrializing economies.”

And this brings me back almost where I started, that beautiful place called home, because, you see, I love this place; I love this land. I love it for the reasons I described earlier: I am a part of it literally, not merely metaphorically. If I stood at the top of Kuwahi with the most powerful microphone imaginable and shouted as loudly as I could, I could not be more emphatic about it.

Okay, so what? So this.

The story goes that at the time the first European colonists arrived on this continent the forests of the eastern seaboard were so extensive that a squirrel climbing into a tree at the tip of Florida could travel northward and not have to touch the ground until she reached Canada. Perhaps it's true, perhaps it isn't; but even if it isn't, there must have been conditions that once existed which were close enough to the



reality that they gave rise to the myth. Such is the nature of myths, but I would ask you to please keep this picture in your mind as we go forward with the rest of the story.

By the time, in October, 1609 that a wounded Captain John Smith would be returning to England, the Virginia Colony at Jamestown was on the verge of collapse. Its founders, the investors of the Virginia Company, had sent its original settlers to the New World expecting to turn a profit for themselves. Instead their colonists had faced starvation and an apparent inability for find anything profitable to do, until they tried tobacco. Without it, the colony would likely have failed; with it, not only would Jamestown remain viable, it would also start a relationship between the early settlers of the eastern seaboard and their soil that would change the face of North America perhaps for all time. But this part of the journey I'll leave for the next issue.

## **What's Now?:**

### **Well, It Must Be Raindrops, So Many Raindrops**

The world is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we belong. The world is a part of our own self and we are a part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our separateness, there can be no healing. And the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature, which is also our own sacred nature.

from *Spiritual Ecology The Cry of the Earth*  
Edited by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

In the part of western North Carolina where I live, the year 2013 has seen the most extreme weather anomaly in the country. Through the end of July we had received a year-to-date rainfall that is 24.6” above normal. As of August 18, we had received over 57” of rain for the year, and it really isn't a matter of whether, but only when, we will eclipse the wettest year on record of 64.91” set in 1973. In contrast, the West Coast has seen one of its driest years ever recorded. From January through July San Francisco received a mere 1.9” of precipitation. I have seen meteorological maps for extended

periods this summer showing the northern hemispheric Polar Jet Stream, that high, narrow current of colder air which normally flows more westerly, across the northern tier of the United States, dipped down so far to the south that its southern extremity was over the northern Gulf of Mexico.



If you combine that with the fact that July was 2.9 degrees cooler than normal – and without checking I would wager that each month since April would show a similar deviation – you have a summer of interesting weather, indeed.

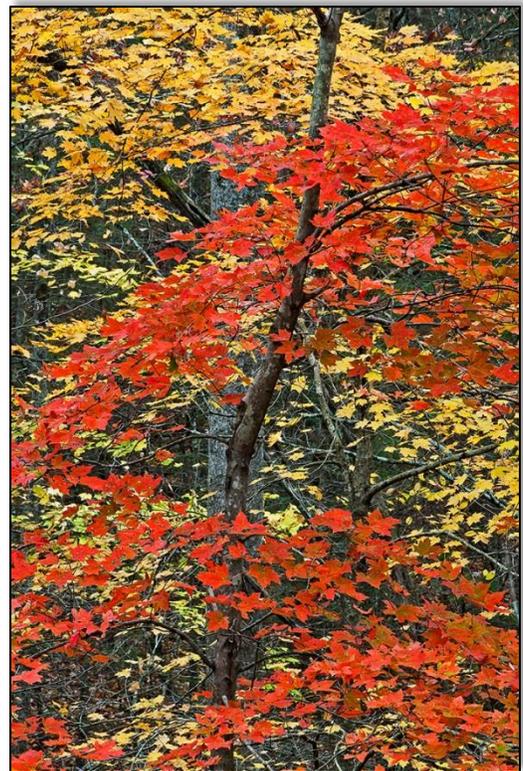
I have seldom seen as much water in the Smokies streams at any time of the year, much less summer, as I have seen in 2013. It has been an amazing spectacle, and the long range forecast is for the wet weather to continue over the next several months. Although the past two weeks have been somewhat drier, and stream levels have dropped noticeably, there is still a good flow, especially considering we are on the cusp of September. The Oconaluftee, West Prong of Little Pigeon, Middle Prong of Little Pigeon, Little, Middle Prong of Little: all of these have been gushing in their rates of moving water and extremely appealing in their imagery. I would anticipate that the coming two to three months will see more of the same. Another marvelous aspect of all of the moisture we have seen this summer has been the numbers of morning fogs that have been present. They have made for some incredible opportunities; and as the situation does not appear to be changing drastically, I would suggest that it made well continue through November before all of the

### **I'm a Little Teapot...Maybe**

leaves come down and even afterward if the soil moisture level remains high. Imagine valley fog, receding ridges, and fall foliage.

And speaking of fall foliage, how it will be is still anybody's guess, but the factors that determine good fall color – adequate rainfall in spring and summer; dry and sunny fall days in September; cool autumn temperatures without an early frost – are still looking favorable. We do need a bit of a dry spell between now and the beginning of October, so let's hope for the best.

The dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) are already up to their usual tricks of beginning to show some red to get everyone excited and make us think the color is just around the corner. But I have observed over the years that this initial display soon turns into a protracted affair, and the dogwoods hang on until the other reds, the sourwoods (*Oxydendrum arboretum*), black gums (*Nyssa sylvatica*), persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*), and cherries (*Prunus*) have made their changes too; and then they complete what they started. Lacking great numbers of maples in the cove hardwood forests, the species I've mentioned are the ones that provide most of the crimson and scarlet of the primary foliage season. The scarlet oaks (*Quercus coccinea*) are usually later in the



**Swatches**

season, and it's often the younger trees that provide the brightest color while the older individuals change to a duller tone.

Keep in mind that there are typically three distinct foliage periods in the Park depending on the elevation. Typically the higher elevations, above 4500', reach their peak sometime in the first two weeks of October; the middle

elevations, 2500-4500', come in during the last two weeks of the month; and they are often overlapped by the lower elevations, below 2500', which enter their glory from the last week of October into the first week to ten days of November. It just depends on the weather for the year and for the season.

As we enter September the bull elk (*Cervus elaphus*) in Cataloochee and Oconaluftee will amend their focus to a sharp point and there will be a single reality on their minds: the annual rut of autumn. Their antlers, now in velvet, will soon be trimmed for combat; and their bugles will resound across the valleys.



### **Which Way Did She Go, George?**

It is a marvelous sight to see, much less to photograph. Just remember to take great care in not disturbing their ritual, and to take extreme caution to not become the target of a testosterone-engorged bull's ire. They take this matter quite seriously.

In November, the whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), whose numbers are always greater in Cades Cove, will begin their annual ritual of mating. Please afford them the same caution and respect you give the elk. The whitetail bucks can be very feisty when they take the notion to.

During September one of the likeliest places on earth to spot a black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is in a

cherry, walnut, or oak tree in Cades Cove. The cherries are ripe at this very moment; and a week ago I saw no less than five of the furry critters either in trees or looking for one. This is the time of year when they are gorging on every available mast crop they can find and trying to put on as much weight as possible for the lean months ahead. Needless to say, they deserve more respect than the herd animals for they can be downright aggressive, but given that restraint, bears are the quintessential Smokies mammal and are incredibly wonderful to photograph.

For the next three or four weeks the final summer wildflowers will burst into view.



### **One Day I'll be Big, and Then...**

Most of these are large-stemmed and yellow or purple, like Three-Lobed Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*), Coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata* var. *humilis*), Crown-beard (*Verbesina occidentalis*), and the Ironweed species, New York (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) and tall (*V. gigantea*), and Sweet Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*). Some, however are smaller and more delicate, like Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Stiff Gentian (*Gentianella quinquefolia*), White Wood Aster (*Aster divaricatus*), Nodding Lady's Tresses

(Spiranthes cernua), Southern Harebell (Campanula divaricata), and Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis). As a final wildflower thought for the season, White Snakeroot (Ageratina altissima) can be found growing in fairly large clusters along the disturbed banks of high elevation overlooks. It can effectively be used as a foreground element in many appealing wide-angle landscape images.

Date:	<u>September 1</u>	<u>September 22*</u>	<u>October 1</u>	<u>November 1</u>	<u>November 3*</u>	<u>November 30</u>
Sunrise:	7:06 a.m.	7:22 a.m.	7:29 a.m.	7:56 a.m.	6:58 a.m.	7:24 a.m.
Sunset	8:02 p.m.	7:32 p.m.	7:19 p.m.	6:40 p.m.	5:38 p.m.	5:21 p.m.

\*The Autumnal Equinox occurs on September 22, although September 26 is closer to an equal day-night split. Daylight Savings Time ends on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Autumn is the season when the sunrise from Luftee Overlook can often be spectacular. The combination of fall color and a sun that rises over the ridges in a potential power point location makes



Luftee an ideal place to greet the new day in September and October. Even with the leaves gone, as they will be in November, the sun alone and in sync with the bare branches still gets my vote as the quintessential Smokies sunrise location. From Clingman's Dome during autumn the sunrise can also be wonderful. The orb will rise far around to the left of the parking lot, but being positioned in that area will allow you to use the sun as an element in conjunction with the dead balsam trunks and then take advantage of the early light as it sweeps across the ridges and valleys below you.

### **The Sun Also Rises**

By early in September, the sun will slip behind the Chimneys and the long ridge of Sugarland Mountain, and the valley of Walker Camp Prong will lose its status as a premier sunset location as viewed from Morton Overlook. Morton, of course, will remain as a wonderful location for late afternoon light and should not be overlooked for this purpose. What Morton loses, Clingman's Dome gains, because for most of the fall the west end of the parking lot at Clingman's is the best sunset site in the Park, at least until access to the Dome is closed off on December 1.

I will remember the Summer of '13 for a long time. There seemed to be water, water everywhere. Perhaps it can best be thought of as a reminder of how truly blessed we are, especially here in the Southern Appalachians and in the East generally. Such a bounty of the liquid that sustains life is found in few other places. Ask the folks in California, or ponder the difficulties, reaching like strangling fingers, toward the Colorado Plateau and its great, but threatened river. It is so easy to take for granted and then to complain about it when it interferes with our plans, or devastates our gardens: that inconvenience of too much water. And when it reaches a destructive pitch, as Superstorm Sandy, showed us is all too possible in a climate-confused world, we are tempted to curse our fate and look for ways to control the forces of nature and bend them to our will so that they do not harm us, not understanding that such control is simply not possible, that there is a larger design of which we can only be a part, and which we may augment and even influence in some way, but never dictate to completely. We can never be the design. It is not the Earth that needs to be regulated; it is how we choose to respond to what we have helped create the needs to be regulated. Could it be that the wisdom of those voices among us, like David Montgomery's, deserve a wider audience?

Perhaps humility is the word I am searching for. Perhaps it is that the Summer of '13 has, in its own naturally flowing way, made me more humble in the face of such awesome power. Those clouds there, I can choose to see them as dire threats on my horizon, or as rainbows waiting for the light to arrive.

## A Tip Is Worth...?

### **A Million Times More, With Feeling: Creative Passion**

In civilized society, obsession is generally viewed as highly suspect and downright dangerous. – it can even imply violence. In the arts, however, it can, if managed properly, translate into a highly positive and helpful characteristic: a sense of urgency about the work. Passion represents here a kind of controlled obsession, where we ride the wave – as Webster's puts it – of a "deep and overwhelming feeling or emotion."

**David Ulrich**

*The Widening Stream*

On the evening of July 24, 1846 **Henry David Thoreau** was given the opportunity to sojourn overnight in the Concord, Massachusetts jail. This stroke of fortune arose from his refusal to pay the poll taxes, which in his mind supported the institution of slavery, to which he was devoutly opposed. The next morning he was released against his will because some unknown person had paid the tax for him. During the course of his time in lock-up he is said to have been visited by his great friend **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, although this exchange is undocumented. At the onset of the conversation Emerson is said to have asked, "Henry, why is it that you are here?" To which Thoreau is said to have replied, "Waldo, why is it that you are not?"

I have often reflected on this supposed discourse because it encapsulates one of my primary observations of the character of one of my favorite humans. It says to me that, whatever else he may have been, Henry David Thoreau was a person of great, deep, and abiding passion. He is saying not only to himself, but to the wider world around him, "This is what I believe; and if it is worth believing, it is worth acting upon, even to the ultimate sacrifice of my freedom. How else could anything be worthy of my belief?"

In the years following my graduation from law school I spent countless hours in the woods, hiking and backpacking every chance I got. Along the way I received my first 35mm camera as part of a legal fee, and it instantly became a necessary appendage. I carried it everywhere, and I shot lots of film and lots of slides; but even after reading the books I could find, I still did not really know what I was doing. I knew that in the viewfinder there was a circle and a needle, and that as long as I kept the needle inside the circle when I released the shutter, life would be good, and I would have an image.

I also knew that when it came to a choice of shutter speeds, there was a number, **30**, on the dial, and that number was printed in red, meaning that if I needed to use a smaller number, I had better be very steady, or else have a tripod, which I did not. This is how I photographed for twenty years, not knowing any differently until 1994 when I took a photography workshop featuring **John Shaw** as guest instructor and sponsored by the Great American Photography Weekend, created by the genius



### **Everywhere Lines...**

of **Bill Fortney**. By then I owned a Nikon 8008 S camera body and two lenses; and just for the workshop I had purchased my first tripod ever, a Benbo Trekker: no cable release, no filters, nada. There were more than 200 folks who had signed up for this event, which took place in Gatlinburg, not too far down the road from where I was living in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains.

It began on Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and John Shaw is an amazing teacher. Now here's the short version: On Sunday morning, April 24<sup>th</sup>, I was standing in front of 200+ people in a very large conference room at the Ramada Inn in Gatlinburg, having just had one of my images selected as the "Best of the Weekend" by the team of the Great American Photography Weekend. I was shaking John Shaw's hand and being given several nice prizes for my work. I was pretty much in disbelief, but as I stood there an awareness shot through me: This is why you are here. This is what you are here to do. Do you get it yet?



### **The Two Came Together as One**

Fortunately for me, I got it. Two weeks later I was working as a photographer's assistant in a commercial studio in Knoxville. At the age of 46, I became a professional photographer; and a professional photographer is what I have been every day of my life since then.

This story, however, is not about me; I am merely a literary device here. This is a story about passion and commitment. I'm just the messenger.

I believe that passion and creative work are inseparable. I believe... Take some time and watch the process of a thunderstorm. In the very beginning there is nothing to be seen; the thermal differential is causing invisible warm, moist currents to rise. As they lift, they draw in cooler surface currents that are warmed and begin to rise as well. At a point, some of the moisture condenses and begins to form a cloud. As this process continues, these currents and clouds generate a vortex of inflowing wind and cloud masses reaching thousands of feet into the atmosphere. As the warm, rising cloud mass reaches the cooler air layers far above the Earth's surface, the tiny droplets coalesce and form drops too heavy to keep lifting. As the polarities in different parts of the cloud and polarities between the cloud and the ground change, the electrical differential becomes great enough that streaks of lightning bridge the differential gaps. If the differential is great enough, the bolts can be fiercely dramatic and awesome to see. The drops are now falling heavily in the embrace of gravity. The strong winds generated in all of this carry the clouds along lines both invisible and predictable until an equilibrium is reached. The winds subside, the lightning ceases, the clouds have given up their moisture and begin to dissipate. Creativity, including photographic creativity, proceeds in the same way: The impulse builds, the intensity grows, the energy flows as the artist is completely absorbed, and then there is release and the energy subsides to calm once again.

In speaking of the impulse as it relates to creativity, the great Irish writer **Edna O'Brien** has said, "...the obsession is already there, and that obsession derives from an intensity of feeling which normal life cannot accommodate."

In the beginning, in the early obsession, there is a fundamental dilemma that must be addressed. Even as the creative impulse seeks to build, it simultaneously asks for a balancing of energies: between skill and abandon, between reining in and letting go. As **David Ulrich** so astutely observes, "We gently nurture the enthusiasms and passions that arise from our deepest selves while we carefully cultivate their expression. Our passionate inclinations are already there, **an integral part of our being. We encourage their full emergence through our commitment to the process.**"

As we continue to persist in our desire to be photographic artists, something begins to become active. Within the process itself there is a moment when a genuine connection arises, and we experience a new feeling for what we are doing, for the activity itself. Suddenly, and perhaps only briefly, we find ourselves in a flow of energy, and we sense that we are somehow deeply within that flow. At the same



time we become aware of a reciprocity between that incipient creative impulse and our inner sensitivity. We feel an accelerated receptivity to the work itself. And in return we are gifted – we are helped, assisted, guided, and energized by the process. We become willing to take risks, to try new ideas, to experiment and in this we are often carried away by an overwhelming passion for the work. As we establish new connections with ourselves and with the work; these connections call forth a deepened interest and a heightened awareness; and the energy we receive from this helps propel the creative impulse forward.

### **Looking Glass, Looking Glass on the Wall**

loosely be referred to as a hint of awakening, or of heightened consciousness. Ulrich says, “We stand humbly in awe of the workings of a greater intelligence that permeates the moment.” The imminent psychologist, **Rollo May**, posited in his seminal work, *The Courage to Create*, that the second element of the creative act is the “intensity of the encounter.” In this part of the process May suggests “that absorption, being caught up in, wholly involved, and so on, are used commonly to describe the state of the artist or scientist when creating, or even the child at play. By whatever name one calls it, genuine creativity is characterized by an intensity of awareness, a heightened consciousness.”

In this stage we encounter a sense of euphoria, of being “high” on the experience; but likewise, it is essential that we remain grounded and keep in our minds that we are only participants in this marvelously unique dance and not the genesis of it. We have to remember to stay within our bodies, as it were, to that we can continue to attend to the techniques and motions that are required by the task at hand. It doesn’t do much good to become totally absorbed if we don’t remember to set the exposure values. Again Ulrich: “At this point the artist opens to a deeper relationship with the work, with energies that arise from a deeper source, but must stay vigilant and neither allow the ego to assume ownership of the experience nor allow the mind’s endless commentary to impede this sensitive connection.”

As a photographer, at this point, we may well begin to discover unexpected elements and a deepening connection with our images; on the other side of the coin, we begin to serve the process. When we reach this awareness, the work itself will begin to suggest how it may best be revealed through us. Our having known this experience on one occasion, and it being the state to which most artists aspire, we then begin to seek within ourselves for ways to return to the experience again and again. We feel compelled to continue with the work in spite of difficulty, or economic hardship, of lack of public acknowledgement of our work. We have experienced the place within where great energy dwells; we feel that we are co-creators of a deeper order of things.

So what are the factors, or circumstances that we may look at within our lives that may help us to find the pathway that will allow us to remain in the fullness of what we have experienced and now know to be possible?

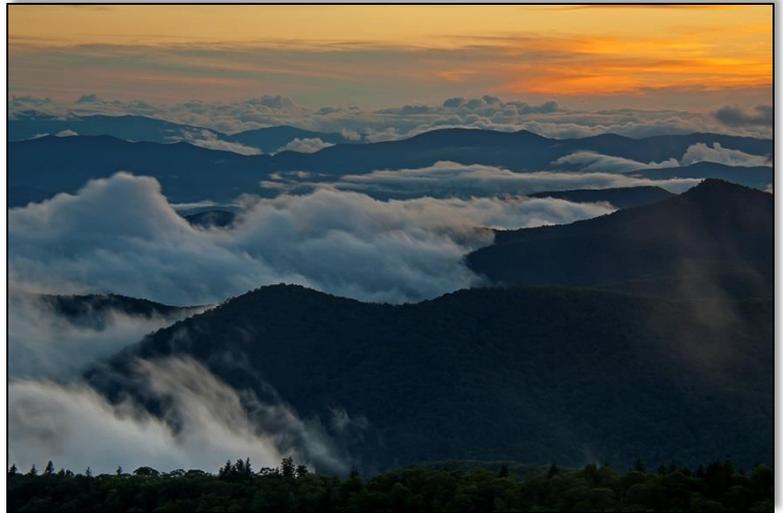
Ulrich suggests three: **1. We must be engaged in something we care deeply about.** We must approach our artistic efforts as we would approach something sacred. **2. We must be mindfully attentive to the quality of our efforts.** This begins with being truly present in the moment of our

interaction with our tools, and simultaneously mindful of our growing relationship with our subjects. We must be connected with our bodies and our feelings; and our minds must be active and alert, ever questioning and searching. 3. **We must understand that we have to remain open and receptive.** When we do this the boundaries between self and the work dissolve and become seamless. We listen to the work, to our intuition, and to the guiding voices within us.

It is so, that the work is an extension of ourselves, and yet we cannot become it. We have to maintain a critical distance and remain capable of objective relationship with our efforts. This, indeed, gives us the freedom needed to be in a real conversation with our materials and our ideas, and to remember the essential truth of the process: the work comes from us, or through us, but it is not of us.

Can passion, then, be created? I do not believe that passion is something that we can simply will into being, but it is something, as Ulrich says, that naturally grows out of our compelling interests, our most vital responses, and our unique experiences. It grows, then, out of our interactions with life and living, and, thus, is something that can be encouraged. We realize passion as we foster commitment to the paths we choose, and as we bring forth within us an increased awareness of ourselves and the world around us.

Passion is congruent with our capacity to deeply commit our interests and our energies in a desired direction. We are privileged to have been given an amazing gift called “life.” How can we not be interested in it? When we observe the myriad relationships and energy flows that are the Earth, how could it fail to invoke our concentration? Does not passion, then, arise simply from our being observant; and so, again, is it not the capacity for a heightened awareness that is transformative? As Ulrich urges, “Look around. Take the time to see and feel. Go beneath the surface. Everything has meaning. Everything is a reflection of the ultimate cause, an unseen esoteric reality that is the source of creation itself.” Once we have done this I do not believe we can do other than to commit ourselves fully to the process of the work, of seeking connection with the world at our fingertips and the creative tools that are the extensions of our hands and minds and hearts, and of engaging fully in understanding and enriching our relationships with the “things” of that world. And armed with this commitment, can we do other than to live with passion?



### **How Can We Ever Be Bored with This?**

## **As for EarthSong/Walking in Beauty...**

### **Walking in Beauty**

As I walk with Beauty  
As I walk, as I walk  
The universe is walking with me  
In beauty it walks before me  
In beauty it walks behind me  
In beauty it walks below me  
In beauty it walks above me  
Beauty is on every side  
As I walk, I walk with beauty

### **Traditional Diné Prayer**

What do you see? What do you see when you look up at the sky at night, at the blazing stars against the midnight heavens? What do you see when the dawn breaks over the eastern horizon? What are your thoughts in the fading days of summer as the birds depart on their southward journey, or in the autumn when the leaves turn brown and are blown away? What are your thoughts when you look out over the ocean in the evening? What do you see?

**Thomas Berry**

“The World of Wonder”

from *Spiritual Ecology The Cry of the Earth*

Someone remarked to me the other day that the Year 2013 seems to have flown by so quickly. It seems like only yesterday that Bonnie and I were in Pigeon Forge to kick off our year at Wilderness Wildlife Week; and here we are today with the 2014 schedule already filling in quickly. But that is the way of time, and now we are in September, barreling down on another Autumnal Equinox.

Before I go forward, however, I want to take a moment and mention the **Wildflowers, Waterfalls, and Western North Carolina** weekend workshop in Brevard, North Carolina, that we led earlier in August. It was a great group of eight participants, some old friends and some new, who worked really hard and had a lot of fun as we dodged rain showers and patiently outwaited evening fog in order to experience a remarkable sunset. The yellow-fringed orchids were incredible, and Hooker and Triple Falls in DuPont State Forest put on an amazing display of nature’s hydrological energy for us. My workshop co-leader, **Kendall Chiles**, did his usual outstanding job, and **Bonnie Cooper’s** logistics got us where we needed to be when we needed to be there, when it counted – mealtime. Thanks, everyone, for a great experience. We’re going to look seriously at doing it again next year.

### **Late Summer Splendor of Bullington Gardens, September 5-7, Hendersonville, North Carolina:**

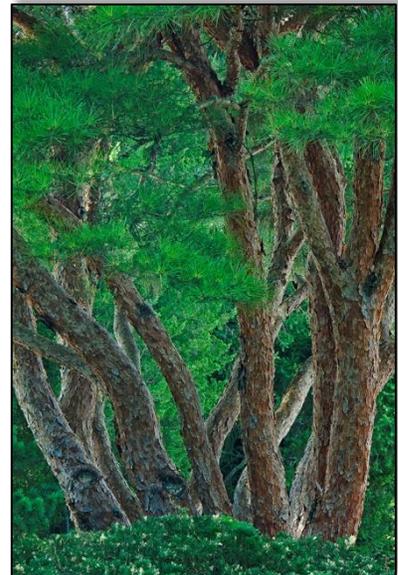
**Participants: 12; Tuition: \$90; 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Bring your Lunch**

This workshop is coming up very quickly, but then it wasn’t very long ago that John Murphy, the Director of Bullington Gardens approached me about doing a photography workshop at the gardens before the summer ended. The small window of time, however, won’t change the wonderful experience in store for those who participate.

Bullington Gardens is a lovely twelve-acre site in eastern Henderson County not far off I-26 at the US 64 Exit. Part of the property is given over to several small formal gardens, including a really neat Dahlia garden. The remainder of the land is natural and wooded with nature trails winding through it.

It will be a wonderful opportunity to work on macro/close-up images and intimate landscapes. We’ll do some classroom work that will include instructional programs and a critique of images taken during the workshop.

If you would like to participate in this unique, first-time event please contact John Murphy, Director at **(828) 698-6104**, or [TheGardens@BullingtonGardens.org](mailto:TheGardens@BullingtonGardens.org)



After our visit with the folks at Bullington Gardens we're off to New England for a wonderful series of weeklong fall workshops in three amazing places that will conclude our workshop year. If you've waited until the last minute to plan your autumn photography experience don't despair, we've still got openings in all three of these events; but you might want to make those plans now to ensure lodging availability.

### **Cape Cod and Its National Seashore;**

**September 21—27; Truro, Massachusetts; The Blue Seas Motor Inn (888) 768-7666;**

**Participants: 8; Tuition: \$1250**

Cape Cod is one of those timeless places where the past and the present mesh seamlessly into an incredible display of oceanic beauty and charm.

History is abundant here; the Pilgrims came by Cape Cod on the way to Plymouth in 1620 and since then the settlers who stayed have made their living at least in part from the sea. There are lighthouses and historic structures; and the beauty of the Cape Cod coast will leave you breathless. The Cape itself is like the delicately crooked finger of a giant beckoning hand inviting you to a place you would definitely wish to go. There is still time to join us on this incredible seaboard adventure. **(828) 788-0687;**

[don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com)



### **Acadia National Park/Mount Desert Island: The Colors of Fall**

**October 5 – 11; Southwest Harbor, Maine: Seawall Motel (800) 248-9250;**

**Participants: 8; Tuition: \$1250**

Acadia in the fall is a photographic experience like none other. From the incredible hardwoods to the ever-present blueberries, that are more like carpet than groundcover, Mount Desert Island comes alive with rainbows of color and with light whose tonality is liquid gold. From the seashores to the ponds and lakes, to the streams and marshes, to the forests and cliffs, Acadia puts on a display of autumn finery that will steal your heart and leave a twinkle in your eye that will last all winter long. We consider Mount Desert Island to be more like a second home than a destination. If I really started listing why I love this place so much, I'd be up all night. Join us and see why

**(828) 788-0687;**

[don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com)



## **The Beauty of the Rhode Island Coast: An Autumn Reverie**

**October 19-25; Narragansett, Rhode Island; The Anchor Motel (401) 792-8550;**

**Participants: 8; Tuition: \$1250**

The last workshop of the season is certainly by no means the least. The rocky Rhode Island Coast is truly a unique place where freshwater ponds (They will tell you that they have no lakes) teeming with waterfowl and wildlife are separated from the Atlantic Ocean by spits of land you can throw a rock across.

There is a subtle color that is startling and a coastline that hides secret cliffs and sandy beaches too. There is a history of resistance here that reveals itself in the austerity of the public architecture and private farms. And there are lighthouses that proclaim man's on-going relationship with the sea. It is a place where you can lose yourself and not wish to be found.

**(828) 788-0687;**

**[don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com)**



We hope you will plan to join us on a photography adventure and a journey of the spirit that will inspire you, challenge you, instruct you, and remain with you always.

Until next time, may the Spirit of Light guide your shutter release.

This newsletter is being sent only to those people who have expressed an interest in receiving it. If you no longer wish to receive it, you can be removed from the mailing list by sending an email requesting removal to [don@EarthSongPhotography.com](mailto:don@EarthSongPhotography.com).



Sunset, Cowee Mountains Overlook, Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina