News
EarthBeat



A duck splashes in a pond in Oregon, a reminder of the "peace of wild things." (Paul Jeffrey)



by Paul Jeffrey

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Editor's note: *This Season of Creation, join award-winning photographer Paul Jeffrey for "Lens on Creation" as he examines the world through the lens of his camera and his faith. Sign up here to receive Jeffrey's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Aug. 31 to Oct. 4.*

I try not to anthropomorphize animals. They have their own private lives and don't need me projecting my own inadequate emotions onto them. Yet I have a hard time seeing this photo of a duck frolicking in a pond in my backyard and not thinking the duck is, well, happy. It may just be the shape of its bill, but I am sure I see a smile.

Wendell Berry agrees with God that creation is good, and he suggests it can save us from the fear that we've irrevocably messed it up. "When despair for the world grows in me," he begins his poem, "The Peace of Wild Things," and he fears "what my life and my children's lives may be," he finds solace, indeed hope, where a duck "rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds." He finds grace and freedom in "the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief."

I am frightened by the climate crisis and outraged by those who intentionally ignore or deny it. The gutting of important environmental legislation, the cold shoulder turned to climate refugees, the antipathy toward science — all of this causes "despair for the world" to fester inside me. Yet the same creation whose deterioration I mourn also calms my forethought of grief and reenergizes me to do battle with the greedy, to heal the planet.

A laughing duck on the pond, a busy bumblebee with its heavily laden pollen sacs, a cedar waxwing playfully juggling the fruit of an osoberry shrub, the native rose that keeps insolently popping up where I don’t want it — my own backyard window on creation will heal me if I let it, making me a much more effective steward of God's amazing work.

For reflection and action:

When he spoke to Amazonian Indigenous people in Peru in 2018, Pope Francis told them that their territory, the land where they live, is holy ground. The places where

we live are holy in God's eyes, and we are stewards of this land. What can you, your family or your faith community do to help restore a neglected part of your community and celebrate it as holy ground?

[Paul Jeffrey is a founder of Life on Earth Pictures and lives in Oregon. You can follow him on Instagram.]

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This story appears in the **Lens on Creation — Enfocando la Creación** feature series. View the full series.