

Hal Borland: 'The incredible, inevitable renaissance of life'

Rich Heffern | Mar. 2, 2011 Eco Catholic

Hal Borland wrote a nature editorial for many years in the New York Times. This one is reprinted from his book "Twelve Moons of the Year."

March comes, a kind of interregnum, winter's sovereignty relaxing, spring not yet in control. But the pattern is now established.

The incredible but annually commonplace change that is life eternally renewed has begun to stir. Out of the cold and dormant earth will come the leaf, the blossom, and the twig. Out of the pupa, the egg and the womb will come the palpitant swarming of gauzy wing, chitin-clad body, feathers, and fur. The pulse of plasma with its green chlorophyll and red hemoglobin begins its slow vernal throb. Sap stirs. Blood livens. The protoplasm of life begins to quicken.

It is a deliberate process with its own rhythms and responses that are unchanged over the eons. Only man, keying his life to his clocks and calendars, is impatient. The bud and the egg can wait, for a safe temperature or a precise span of daylight. Man measures; they respond. And for all man's vast store of facts, he still cannot alter that response. To grow a blade of grass he must start with a seed or a root, then wait. To hatch a bird he must start with an egg, which contains its own inflexible schedule.

March comes and the sap quickens down at the root of life. Buds, set on the twig last summer, begin to swell toward April. In the woodland's litter and debris there is a slight stir. Ice melts on warm afternoons. Water begins to flow. Chill darkness checks the slow awakening, but another day starts with the deliberate throb again, the slight breath of change, the incredible, inevitable renaissance of life.

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