

TIME FOR A NEW STORY

HUMANS ARE A STORYTELLING SPECIES and stories have power. We use story to describe the events of our lives and frame memories. We craft personal identities through the stories we tell ourselves and about ourselves. Stories weave history and shape culture.

Stories compose narratives that affect worldviews. Currently much of Western culture is caught in a political climate of battling narratives created and promoted by media and political interests spinning tales that support their agendas. When the swirl of division and disinformation begins to feel disorienting, I find solace and centering turning to the stories nature is telling.

In my home state of Oregon lives a little butterfly called the Fender's blue. It was once nearly extinct, but grassland restoration in the Willamette Valley (the only place this species exists) revived the population. At full growth the butterfly has a wingspan of about an inch, and in its caterpillar stage it is very small and fragile. Over millennia these beings formed a remarkable relationship with several ant species. When the tiny worms are attacked by larger insects like beetles, they jerk their bodies in a hard tweak that creates a high-pitched sound. Ants rush to their defense. In exchange the caterpillar emits a small drop of sweet nectar for the ants to feast on. Western worldview espouses competition, dog-eat-dog, and survival of the fittest, but nature shows life is actually about collaboration and cooperation.

Earlier this year I had the amazing blessing of spending several days on a "glamping" adventure at Borealis Basecamp in central Alaska. For those unfamiliar, glamping is basically camping in luxury. This was my first experience of the northern lights and nature provided a great show. Green and purple swirls and spikes arched and danced across the sky accompanied by bright, shimmering stars. The aurora borealis is the result of plasma flung off the sun that then travels 93

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million miles in 24 to 48 hours to earth, where it gets drawn into the earth's magnetic field and pulled to the poles by magnetic force.

Each morning upon waking at Basecamp, we would find that the snow on and around our cozy, igloo-shaped cabin was dented with tracks from various creatures—snowshoe rabbits, foxes, pine squirrels, and who knows what else.

The northern lights are visible to the naked eye, but the images are much more dramatic in photos because camera lenses capture more light than human eyes can. While we sleep, myriad creatures go about their lives doing amazing things completely unbeknownst to us. Nature is always showing us that there is more going on—more glory, more possibility,

more to the story—than our human senses reveal.

We are in a time of trouble in this world, a heavy time, and there is grief in the bones of humanity. Ancestors and prophecies predicted such and noted that these are times to listen. The earth is always speaking. As we navigate the wild ride of this human part of our journey, it's useful to remember that in the field of possibility there is far, far more potential than what's obvious to human senses.

Cultural historian Thomas Berry wrote, "It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story."

We have the power to weave a new story—about ourselves, our way of being, and our world. Nature is our best writing coach. Now is our time. ☁