

## What the World Needs Now

*Our individual efforts are necessary, but far from sufficient*

*Holly Tanguay*

I have had a lifelong love affair with the natural world. I grew up climbing the second or third-growth trees in my Midwestern urban yard while yearning for vast forests. I rode my bicycle to the bits of woods and water within reach while dreaming of mountains and adventure. For each of two summers, I spent a couple of weeks at a sleep-away camp in the Rockies. It was heaven. At dawn on a horse pack trip to a high, wild valley in Rocky Mountain National Park, I awoke early to greet the day alone. I had come home to the wild. I felt alive and full of gratitude.

Now, I have my small plot of land with my own second and third-growth trees. I still have adventures in the wild on occasion, but my love for the natural world is mostly fed by the beauty in my backyard - by native plants attracting native insects, by songbirds enjoying feeders and a rustic fountain, by family nurturing vegetables and chickens in a mini backyard farm.

Until recently, my climate anxiety was largely for future generations – for my daughter and my grandchildren. I worried that their lives would be shadowed by unknown environmental changes, climate migration, sea level rise, and other threats. Now, smoke from nearby wildfires, record tides, soaring temperatures, and the immigration crises make my climate anxiety immediate. The hazards are right here and right now. It's frightening. Already, I have disaster fatigue. I used

to send a sum to the Red Cross whenever there was a major disaster. Now it feels impossible to respond every time. It's overwhelming.

I rack my brain and do what I can to effect climate change as an individual - install energy efficient mini-splits; evaluate my roof for solar; buy renewable energy through the city; limit air travel; combine car errands into as few trips as possible; buy organic foods and eschew pesticides in my yard; buy little, buy local and buy used when possible; and of course compost and recycle. It all feels like a few drops in a vast bucket. My - our - individual efforts are necessary, but they are far from sufficient.

To effect climate change on a larger scale, I join local and national organizations like Cape Ann Climate Coalition, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, and the Environmental Defense Fund. I vote for candidates who take climate change seriously. I sign petitions and send letters urging policymakers to support climate action. I join Cape Ann Indivisible, and participate in stand outs and marches, hoping to restore our national commitment to democracy, civil liberties and climate action. These steps feel like a few more drops in the bucket, but still far too little.

Sometimes, I despair, and sometimes I bury my head in the sand. Yet to me, hope is a moral obligation. I love the world - my small, beautiful world right here at home and the vast, astonishing world beyond my doorstep. That love requires hope and it requires action. Recently as I was lifting my head out of the sand yet again, I called the Cape Ann Climate Coalition to ask, "What can I do?" They asked for help with some projects that require more skill, knowledge, or time than I have. To those, I had to say no, but when they asked

for help with local salt marsh monitoring and with an essay about my own climate anxiety and actions, I said yes.

Someday I hope to help the Cape Ann Climate Coalition push for greater solar energy production by businesses on Cape Ann. I see lots of flat roofs around here with no solar panels, and that bothers me. I would also love to see a Miyawaki forest planted on Cape Ann. Originally developed by the Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, the Miyawaki technique is a way to build dense native forests. Miyawaki forests are 30 times denser than those traditionally planted and can grow 10 times as fast, becoming self-sufficient in just 2 or 3 years. High density and rapid growth dramatically increase the amount of carbon the forests capture. I would love to help with that.

Love and fear are the strongest motivators I know. Fear can be paralyzing but love moves me forward.

A number of sages have said some version of:

*“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness  
and the world’s deep hunger meets.”*

I am searching for places where my deep gladness in nature and the world’s deep hunger for balance can meet.