

Personal environmental history



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Personal Environmental History As a child my parents instilled in me the need to respect my natural surroundings. This was perhaps best encapsulated in terms of the importance of not littering and leaving my surroundings just as I left them, particularly on family trips to local parks or similar outings. During these formative years of my life I believe that my relationships with the Earth was one as a stranger. While I understood the importance of not littering, as my parents had instructed me as much, I did not have the deeper emotional understanding of the importance of preserving and taking care of my natural surroundings. As I moved into my early teenage years, despite becoming further educated about the nature of pollution and environmental degradation, I became complacent in my relation to the earth such that it became even more estranged to my existence. During this period my friends and I would regularly litter and act with little disregard for nature. These actions were perhaps youthful arrogance personified. It was a general understanding of life and nature that it was plentiful and without end. As I matured I began to have and look back on the experiences I had with nature. As a child growing up my family and I would often go on camping trips where we would venture in the woods, set up a campsite, and enjoy the natural surroundings. I remember venturing down to the lake with my brother and attaching crickets to our fishing line and bringing in fish. As I grew older I remember visiting the Appalachian Trail and spending an entire weekend hiking a significant segment, and camping in the woods. I appreciated the meditative aspects that nature provided. The means of nature as a retreat from the development of the industrialized world and all its social problems, and nature's ability to provide this respite. I read books such as Thoreau's *Walden* and began to appreciate nature not as

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a stranger, but as a close friend. As I continued to age and mature I began to observe how many areas of my youth had been coopted by building development. While I recognize that some modicum of development is necessary, the gradual loss of these natural surroundings lead me to increasingly understand the transitory nature of the Earth. This realization enacted a significant value change within my thought process. No longer did I perceive nature as bountiful and everlasting, but rather I began to understand that unless actions are taken to preserve nature it is possible that business interests will continue to encroach on our natural surroundings. Furthermore, I came to understand that it is important for humans to take measures to preserve the already preserved areas of nature through refusing to litter and pollute, and live an overall conscientious existence. Ultimately, while my values of nature have changed significantly since my youth, I have come to recognize the importance of nature as a friend to not only myself, but to all living things.