

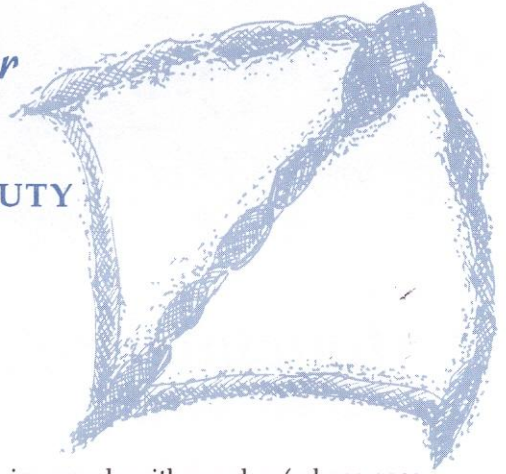
The Editor's Corner



photo by John Macek

WINTER'S TRUE BEAUTY

By
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Since the winter of 95-96, with its record 123.5-inch snowfall in the northern Shawangunks, I don't even pretend anymore. I hate winter. Welcome that first snowflake? Enjoy the beauty of a freshly fallen blanket of white? Bah, humbug! Yank out that snowblower. Quick, plow me a swath. Ah, that wilted brown-green grass looks oh, so divine.

"Winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel if you know where to look for it," wrote Henry David Thoreau in his 1858 journals. Nuts are for squirrels, Mr. Thoreau. I'd rather look for commercials and travel brochures of the Caribbean, of Ireland, of Hawaii.

During the months of darkness and bare trees, I long to be renewed by green forests, to be dazzled by a summer thunderstorm, to be charmed by a lightning bug, to be enchanted by a thrush's silvery strains. I read about one woman, suffering as I do, who once a week flips up the heat, slaps on suntan lotion, and basks on a beach towel in her living room under bright lights. She and I are kindred spirits of summer breezes and late, lazy evenings.

While grumbling my way through the

icy woods with our dog (whose nose knows all seasons), a funny thing happens, though. With its leafy awning gone, the earth bares its ancient soul. I am awash in a fresh stillness and clarity of light.

Thoreau knew well winter's true beauty when he wrote that same day, "If at any time the winter is too bleak and cold for you, keep the sunny side of the trunk, for there is a wholesome and inspiring warmth such as the summer never afforded." Robert Frost also wrote often of winter's mysteries. In "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening," the traveller yearns to connect with the frozen boreal landscape, where "The only other sound's the sweep/Of easy wind and downy flake." It is there, far from the village, that "The woods are lovely, dark and deep. . . ."

Here, in the Shawangunk woods we can know this beauty, too. There is enchantment in silvery snowflakes and renewal in the lovely stillness. Okay, okay. I admit it. I'm grateful for winter's warmth (an oxymoron, Mr. Thoreau, if I ever heard one). Nuts. This happens to me every year.

Gratitude is the theme of this issue. Throughout the year, the Preserve is grateful for the support of its members, volunteers, staff, and directors, and of the surrounding communities. Let us give thanks every day to our friends and family, to our home on the earth (yes, in winter, too!), to our fellow creatures, and to all that sustain us.