

Kathleen Caprario

In August, 2015, Kathleen Caprario spent ten days as an artist in residence at the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest. H.J. Andrews is a 16,000-acre ecological research site in Oregon's beautiful western Cascades Mountains. These notes were made during that time of reflection and research.

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We are an invasive species. As we alter the land, we alter the culture and ourselves; our collective and individual existence and beliefs are inexorably coupled with the environment, its patterns and well-being.

Biodiversity is an important part of what makes life livable on Earth. The value of ecological and cultural diversity plays out both actually and metaphorically within a society. Cultural occupation--through war, genocide, geographic expansion and the imposition of the dominant groups beliefs and customs--is similar to the encroachment of non-native species that take root and threaten whole eco-systems. The often tenuous balance between industry, human desire and the environment is a drama currently played out on ecological stages world-wide.

The systems and matrices that regulate and sustain a healthy eco-existence favor variation and interdependence within species and habitats. Invading species that dominate or eradicate native and cooperative populations limit diversity and often create unsustainable environments of homogenous populations that encourage disease and potential extinction. Similarly, a healthy human population also displays diverse characteristics and behaviors identified as cooperative, fair, inclusive and just.

The question is—can we play “nice” with one another in the same way that the invertebrates of the forest floor work side-by-side and contribute toward turning a 500-year old log into soil and provide for the ongoing sustainability of not only themselves, their species, but the entire ecosystem?

We better.