



sense of belonging to a place, of sharing space with other beings that have a right to be there. We try to control nature but its complexity forces us to adjust to its seasons and cycles, to divorce us a little from the illusion of being its supreme master. It interjects an awareness that there is always a measure of risk, but also of inspiration and adventure.

Just across the bay, at the Department of Fish & Wildlife Willapa Bay Field Station, I talked with biologist Brett Dumbault. Brett probably knows as much as anyone about the biology of Willapa, but he was quick to admit to gaps in our knowledge. Research is ongoing, but change has been rapid during our watch. Early observers were not as interested in cataloguing species or estimating populations as they were in finding markets for them. That perspective is being tempered now,

but biologists like Brett must straddle a variety of conflicting interests. Whatever the biological needs of an ecosystem, for humans the bottom line nearly always drives policy. I asked Brett if he thought that vested interests could be satisfied without eroding the health of the ecosystem. "It's going to be a long haul," he said. "I hold out hope for long term ecosystem management. I'd like to see the large picture looked at, but I don't know if they will use it."

My favorite places on the estuary are the fringes, at the upper ends of the saltmarsh. There, small creeks without names emerge from the forest into narrow fringes of meadow. This is where the forest and saltmarsh meet. Its richly diverse mingling of

water and land, of sea and forest, make it a favored place for wildlife. You may see a cautious procession of elk stepping out from a dark wall of forest into slanting afternoon light, or wading through a morning groundfog. Once, as I lay half asleep in the thick mat of tufted hairgrass and pickleweed, a coyote nearly ran over me. There was a cartoon-like moment when we stared bug-eyed and mouths agape, before it turned and retreated across the creek.

The Nature Conservancy protects the estuaries of the Bone and Niawaukum Rivers. The best way to explore these areas is by canoe or kayak. The Bone is off limits for some activities but shortterm camping and kayaking are not discouraged.

For kayakers and canoeists, Willapa offers 40,000 acres of water and many miles of shoreline. Long Island has its ancient cedars and quiet sloughs. The easiest way to get there is from the launch at the headquarters for the Willapa Refuge, on 101. Leadbetter State Park on the tip of the Long Beach Peninsula offers hiking and nice views of the bay and the ocean. If you take Sandridge Road up the peninsula you will be able to visit Nahcotta and Oysterville, places with the understated charm of long occupation and ongoing economic ties to the life of the bay.

It has taken us less than 200 years to turn this seemingly inexhaustible natural wealth into a land of a few carefully marshaled resources. It remains to be seen whether words like "ecosystem management" will lead in the direction of increasing diversity in an ecosystem of growing resilience, or will become a trendy euphemism for various kinds of industrial "farming" in which natural interactions will continue to be compromised. As yet it has its charms: uninhabited shores, still waters that meander through tunnels of forest greenery, places more at home to wildlife than to us. It invites discovery, and a gentle hand.

JIM WEATHERS CARPENTRY



436-1885

LICENSED-BONDED-INSURED

ESKIMO

Eskimo, Eskimo, what pelt do you wear?
I wear caribou, seal or polar bear.
Eskimo, Eskimo, what do you hear?
I hear roaring grizzlies and birds singing in the air
Eskimo, Eskimo, what do you see?
I see the wilderness and wolves running free.
Eskimo, Eskimo, what do you feel?
I feel warm mittens and clothes against my skin.

WOLF

Wolf, Wolf, what do you hear?
I hear caribou and polar bears.
Wolf, Wolf, what do you see?
I see frozen grass and leaves.
Wolf, Wolf, what do you feel?
I feel cold snow under my feet.
Wolf, Wolf, what do you wear?
I wear nothing but my own fur.

-RHIANNON MCKENNEY
(Age 9)



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