

The wild as a post-pandemic tonic

Two new books urge readers to explore nature

One is a slim picture book and the other a chunky movement guide — but even with very different approaches, two Pacific Northwest authors deliver strikingly similar warnings about the 21st century’s deterioration of humankind in relationship with nature. And each offers solutions.

This week’s books

‘The Keeper of Wild Words’ by Brooke Smith, illustrated by Madeline Kloepper

Chronicle Books — 56 pages — \$18.99

‘Grow Wild’ by Katy Bowman

Propriometrics Press — 402 pages — \$31.95

Bend children’s book author Brooke Smith became concerned a couple of years ago when she read an article reporting that the latest edition of the Oxford Junior Dictionary had expunged over 100 words pertaining to nature. The editorial justification for the update was that the dictionary needed to make room for words that were more relevant to today’s youth — words like “chatroom” and “database.”

To channel her outrage, Smith took some of the words that had been discarded and wrote a picture book story around them.

In “The Keeper of Wild Words,” a grandmother gives her granddaughter a checklist of things to look for when they go for a hike. Together, they wander fields and woods search-

ing for a wren, a willow, a brook, blackberries and more.

And yes, these were words that the Oxford Junior Dictionary no longer considered relevant to youth.

As the grandmother explains to her granddaughter: “If we don’t use words, they can be forgotten. And if they’re forgotten ... they disappear.”

Smith clearly aims to keep these words in circulation.

British Columbia artist Madeline Kloepper illustrated “The Keeper of Wild Words” — the human characters are crudely represented but the natural elements are vibrant and enticing.

Meanwhile, up on the Olympic Peninsula in Sequim, Washington, biomechanist Katy Bowman has been preaching the gospel of “nutritious movement” for a while now. Her latest book, “Grow Wild,” has an increasing sense of urgency.

“Today’s kids are more sedentary than their parents,” Bowman writes. “Our kids are movement aliens.”

That failure to keep active goes against the entire timeline of human evolution. Cultural sedentarism also has a devastating global impact.

Like Smith, Bowman pays close attention to vocabulary.

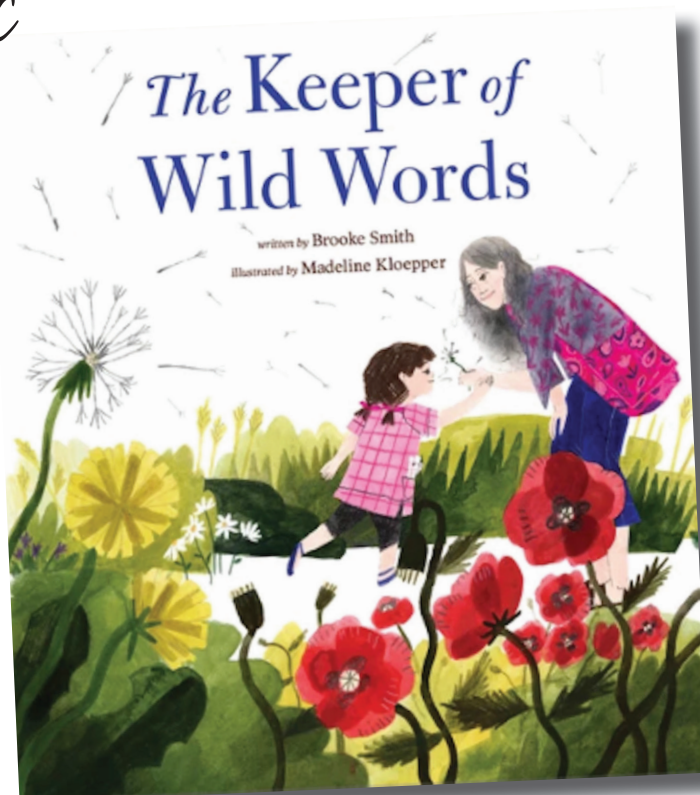
“We talk about the future with terms like ‘carbon footprint’ and ‘climate change,’” Bowman writes, “but this language divorces the problem from our individual behavior. If I’m not stepping, then carbon is. Carbon’s footprint is where our own footprints once were.”

To help reverse that trend, Bowman urges us to get reacquainted with the abundant power of our bodies. And anticipating the argument that we don’t have time to walk to the store, for example, or create meals from scratch, she has come up with the genius concept of “stacking.” The idea is to address the many needs you have in your daily

life — exercise, food acquisition, family time — by stacking them together inventively. In contrast to the soul-fraying practice of multitasking, this is a more holistic, intentional approach to how you might invest your time and energy.

Both “Grow Wild” and “The Keeper of Wild Words” offer sane ways to reframe our actions in a post-pandemic world.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbaralmcm@gmail.com.



An inspiring, original, and even a joyful book, *Grow Wild* is an instant classic.
—Professor Vybarr Cregan-Reid, author of *Primate Change: How the World We Made is Remaking Us*



THE WHOLE-CHILD, WHOLE-FAMILY
NATURE-RICH GUIDE TO MOVING MORE

Katy Bowman
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF MOVE YOUR DNA

From protecting your car and home to preparing for your future, let’s discuss options to meet your needs.



Sheryl Teuscher, LACP, LUTCF, CPIW
Representative
112 West B Street
Rainier, OR 97048-0310
countryfinancial.com/sheryl.teuscher
sheryl.teuscher@countryfinancial.com
503-556-0186

Auto and Home policies issued by COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company®, COUNTRY Casualty Insurance Company®, or COUNTRY Preferred Insurance Company®, Bloomington, IL.
0520-507HC

