



Musing

June 2023

"Rhythms of the Night"

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It is the Summer Solstice, and while the long winter seems a lifetime away, our long sunny days will now begin to dwindle. The shorter days that provide more time for evening campfires and stargazing also increase the hours for our nocturnal creatures to roam, fly, and climb as they go about their lives at the time nature has intended. During the velvety darkness, they forage, hunt, mate, and raise their young. They too must begin preparing for what is to come once the warm summer and brilliant fall fade back into the long, cold, and snowy season of our peaceful woodland winter.

I think about the bat that flew overhead the other night as I stood on our deck at dusk, feeling grateful that mosquitoes are his culinary choice. (While the last few years have not been kind to our friends the bats, nearly decimating them with disease, this one gives me hope for a resurgence due to an abundance of mosquitos this year for food.) To the north I see a deck strung with bright tiki lights, and to the south, a neighbor's yard glows all night long from the flood light installed over their garage. I wonder if there are bats out there still waiting to forage because they are confused by the light at the time when their bellies call for nourishment.

Last night as I lay in bed, drowsing in the cool breeze from the open window, I heard several owls calling to one another, their hooting back and forth reverberating through the woods, emphasizing the stillness, the peacefulness of the forest at night. This is when the owl hunts, a favorite meal being a mouse or other small creature. Seeking its prey with sharp eyes that pierce through the darkness, owls are a natural predator by which the rodent population is regulated. When their numbers are adequately balanced, such critters are less inclined to find their way into our cabins in the winter when food is scarce. I am grateful the tiki lights have not been left on all night.

We sit around the campfire at night, the heavens twinkling with endless stars and planets. Our northern Wisconsin darkest of skies allow the northern lights to dance a florescent green glow across our field of vision. How lucky we are to witness this, unencumbered by the bright lights that prevent city dwellers from viewing the spectacle. With evermore people coming north to enjoy the beautiful lakes, forests, and outdoor activities, we must be vigilant about preserving the nighttime, for this is where and when so much of the magic truly happens.

Circadian rhythms create balance in our ecosystem. As in our human world, there are those that function best during the day, and others that flourish at night. Many of earth's creatures need the darkness to thrive. Then their world wakes up and they make their contribution to the complex balance of nature.

In letting the darkness be, the circle of life continues, allowing all creatures, human and otherwise, to thrive and coexist as Mother Nature intended.