



EARTHFIRE INSTITUTE  
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY & RETREAT CENTER  
WINTER 2017

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

# Earthfire Institute: A Powerful Seed Center

The essence of life is the creative force, which flows through all beings. Connecting deeply with nature in any of its forms- be it a house plant, bird, or tree- strengthens the free flow of creative energy in us.

It is for that reason that we need to stay connected to nature, the Earth and her systems. On some level, many of us feel a quiet desperation if we don't have that connection as our baseline in life: we instinctively know we are missing something vital. It is innate in us; a potential source of constant renewal and joy. It is so essential that we help each other connect with nature. That is Earthfire's mission – to help each other reconnect and *stay* connected; and from that vibrant source of nourishment, combined with our personal creativity, be empowered to take action to save the Life that we so honor and love.

With the creative flow moving freely within us, between us and around us (as it does in the flow of rivers and wind and corridors through which life can migrate unimpeded), we can imagine whole new ways

of seeing things. From there can arise whole new solutions to our environmental crises that we might never have even considered before – solutions that work. Anne London, the artist whose artwork graces the cover of this newsletter, speaks of the creative force that underlies her work in the interview on page 4-7. She explains from her point of view how the force that feeds artwork is the same force that helped create such things as the polio vaccine, and could provide answers to some of our most pressing problems: climate change, pollution, environmental disasters. A way of seeing things with new eyes.

To this end, we are exploring a very ancient and potent tool – deep conversation between fellow humans that starts in the heart, and blossoms in a safe, supportive atmosphere. Since May, Earthfire community members (the group is open to all) have been meeting online

for monthly Conservation Conversations. There we practice listening deeply to each other as we explore how to protect and celebrate the Life on our planet, and how to support one another in this quest, against all the inner and outer forces that work against it. To help us move forward out of the morass we are in. We work to open ourselves to the creative flow that happens between humans who are in harmony with one another, each adding their own unique vibration to the whole; each welcomed and appreciated. A safe place to learn to listen to our own true nature, and through that process rekindle our deep natural connection with each other and all Life. We take the same approach in our biannual staff retreat, and in the retreats open to the public. We aim to walk in beauty.

In 2018, we will broaden this conversation, using as many other modes as we can; videos, speaking



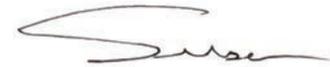
Jean with Nima (left) and Bluebell (right)

and workshops, and online- conversations; through storytelling, art, imagery, contemplation, writing, speaking and teaching, always with the animals' energies woven throughout. We seek to move beyond our human-centered focus and bring in the voices and perspectives of the land, the animals, and all of nature that supports us.

We will invite passionate innovative leaders into conversation with us and post the results online for all to hear. We will reach out through international conferences with an

eye to increasing awareness of who these animals really are that we are driving off the earth, and what we have to gain on every level if we help them to stay. These efforts take the animals' voices out to a larger audience, and helps us bring relevance and richness to share with our community. In the coming year, we will be speaking at the Minding Animals International Conference in Mexico City, and the Globalization for the Common Good Initiative: *Our Sacred Earth, Responding to Ecologic Crisis*.

There is a great thirst among humanity to re-connect. Earthfire and its animals have a unique role to play in this healing, as a powerful seed center from which ideas and practices for living in harmony with Life can emerge and be shared; and in empowering our community with tools and practices that help each of us to make a difference, wherever we live and whoever we may be. Please support us in this work.



Susan B. Eirich, Ph.D.  
 Founder and Executive Director

## Earthfire Council of All Beings | 2018

Inspired by the groundbreaking work of Joanna Macy in spiritual ecology, in 2018 we will be launching a special, year-long program entitled the *Earthfire Council of All Beings*.

This program will be open to all Earthfire community members who make a recurring contribution to advancing and sustaining our mission, and will offer exclusive online opportunities and membership benefits.

Like everything we do, the *Earthfire Council of All Beings* will be a labor of love—and a major commitment of time and resources on our part. We need you—your energy, good will, and financial support—to help us continue our work of healing our connection with wildlife and nature.

## Earthfire Strategy: PHASES 1 THROUGH 3

<b>PHASE 1—DONE</b> <b>Earthfire Site Relaunch</b>	<b>PHASE 2—ONGOING</b> <b>Online Community Enhancements</b>	<b>PHASE 3</b> <b>Coming Together in Council</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mobile-friendly site</b></li> <li>• <b>Blogs</b></li> <li>• <b>Podcasts</b></li> <li>• <b>Online Seminars</b></li> <li>• <b>Grassroots Fundraising Campaigns</b></li> <li>• <b>Initial Conservation Conversation events</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>International Online “Community of Practice”</b></li> <li>• <b>Special-interest groups and forums</b></li> <li>• <b>Action alerts and mobilizations</b></li> <li>• <b>Membership donation model</b></li> <li>• <b>Expanded Conservation Conversation event series</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annual Earthfire Symposium on Spiritual Ecology</b></li> <li>• <b>International Online “Community of Practice”</b></li> <li>• <b>Expanded Conservation Conversation event series</b></li> <li>• <b>Continue initiatives from Phase 1 and 2</b></li> </ul>



Loki the fox with a retreat participant in the garden at Earthfire



Sheer joy of life

# Speaking the Language of Life

SUSAN B. EIRICH

**“Listening connects us. It opens a channel through which information can pass on a beam of respect and caring. And then, ultimately, love.”** *Susan B. Eirich*

A heart connection comes first in making profound and lasting change. From there we can develop effective ideas and actions that each of us can take to change the trajectory we are on with respect to the Earth and all its inhabitants. When this heart-connection is shared in community, it becomes a powerful catalyst for change. More and more people are coming into the awareness that we are fundamentally connected not only to each other, but to all Life.

Our vision for the Conservation Conversations is to help each other stay tuned to that quiet inner voice that speaks to what is really life-sustaining, support one another in hearing that voice, and live our lives in accordance with it; fostering social change from the inside out.

Gitte, a group member, considers these conversations her “work-space,” where she can explore her thinking and feelings in a safe space with others. Rose De Dan, a shaman whose life’s work is to build a bridge between humans and animals, shared a story of how an animal responded to her silent urgent plea for help. She was then told, “If you call us we will come, but if we come,

you must listen.” One reason for these conversations is to help us to do just that.

In creative fields there is a phrase, “trust the process,” meaning let the work unfold naturally and see where it leads. Not always easy to do, but that is where real change often lies. By letting things unfold, we may find ourselves guided somehow, through threads and currents too subtle for us to see, into what will become a beautiful, profound tapestry of meaning. This is even more true in a group conversation, the threads coming from different voices and unexpected angles that no one of us could put together individually. After every

Conversation, we reflect on what was shared, what we learned, and what further questions were born of our discussion. Reflections on the Conversations are posted in our bi-monthly e-newsletter, and all of the Conservation Conversations can be viewed on our website. To date, our Conversations include:

- **How Connecting with An Animal Can Help Us Heal the Earth | May and June**
- **Tuning in to Life's Inner Wisdoms | July**
- **Becoming the Other: Feeling into the Life of a Non-Human Being | August**
- **The Animals Are Calling Us: Being Supported in Ways We Don't Recognize | September**
- **The Art of Listening | October**

### ***Reflections from The Art of Listening***

There are many ways and levels of listening; from the mystical to the scientific; from the obvious to the extraordinarily subtle. In psychology, my own field, there is something called “listening with the third ear.” You “feel-hear.” It is very powerful and life-affirming for both people involved. In some forms of meditation you listen to the body and it communicates many astonishing kinds of information. In nature-practice you listen to a tree or an animal. If we truly listened – to each other; to beings in nature; things would be very different and, in turn, much happier. We all want to be heard. It calms us.

This is true for all living beings; we bloom in our own way when we are heard. But it requires time and being quiet inside. This is

hard in current times, especially without support, because things are so noisy and rushed all around us. We have to help one another. That is a major wish I have for these conversations. The thing is, we have to slow down first, before we speed up, and we don't do that much in these times. That leads to faulty, ungrounded approaches, opinions and actions – in all fields in fact, but here I am focusing on our Earth and its living beings and systems. To remind herself of this, Gitte brought a little piece of paper with her to the Conversation: the Chinese sign for “listen.” It is one sign made up of five: ear, you, eyes, undivided attention, and heart.

The incredible bio-acoustics ecologist Bernie Krause, who has spent a lifetime traveling the world recording natural sounds, has come to an understanding of listening from the scientific method of accessing information. In his book *Voices of the Wild* he writes that in time, “we will likely confirm that every living organism generates an acoustic signature and that each unique output signal, individually and as part of a collective expression has inherent meaning.” Through science we get an affirmation of what mystics have always known - that each living being is a unique and precious individual, part of the ever-changing orchestra of life.

He added that engaging with the sounds of nature helps quiet the brain. So does deep conversation; sitting in quiet meditation, or just in silent companionship together. There are many other ways to help quiet us that are worth exploring in future conversations.

**“I used to know a man who could walk by any cornfield and hear the corn singing. ‘Teach me,’ I'd say. He'd say, ‘It takes a lot of practice. You can't be in a hurry...Do this: go get to know one thing as well as you can. It should be something small. Don't start with a mountain...Start with one seed pod or one dry weed or one handful of dirt. You have to respect that tree or hill or whatever it is you are with...Take the horned toad for example. If you think you are better than a horned toad you'll never hear its voice...Don't be ashamed to learn from bugs or sand or anything...”** from *The Other Way to Listen* by Byrd Baylor

To learn to listen takes practice. It is hard to maintain a practice, of any sort. How can we support this? We suggested in the conversation that each one of us take 5 minutes a day just to listen, feel the impact on us, and then share our experience in the next conversation. But let's explore how else we might help each other as well.

The Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh was asked what we need to do to save our world. “What we most need to do,” he replied, “is to hear within us the sound of the Earth crying.”

The Earth is crying to be heard on many levels. And so are we.

**Our Conservation Conversations take place the third Wednesday of every month. We hope you will join us. Register online at [EarthfireInstitute.org/join](http://EarthfireInstitute.org/join).**

# Art is Like a Prayer

## An Interview with Artist Anne E. London

SUSAN B. EIRICH

**Susan:** *You are deeply involved in art and conservation. From your point of view, how would you explain the importance of art in conservation?*

**Anne:** First of all, my choice in subject matter is definitely one that opens doors easier than, let's say, something else. I think people are, on very deep level, attracted to animal imagery. I could go as far as to say maybe it's deeply imprinted on our psyche. You could look at the very first art in caves and say, "Well, there's a tradition that goes pretty far back, all the way back to the times of fire-making." But aside from that, I think that when you present a creative effort to another creative mind, like somebody who's looking at a piece of artwork or reading a book or listening to music; when you present a creative effort, you unlock a whole other way of thinking, an abstract form that is not the same as, say, things that are memorized such as math and history. I think that when you present to another human being the efforts of that part of the human psyche, they respond in a way that's just intrinsically different, and that way would be a creative thought process. It takes creativity to enjoy creativity, in my opinion. I don't think you can have somebody enjoy a beautiful sonata who doesn't appreciate the abstract leap from note to note. And the same thing with artwork that's visual. I think that somebody who's looking at any kind of artwork, the leap

from one tone or color or shade to another, those are all felt decisions; not so much thought decisions.

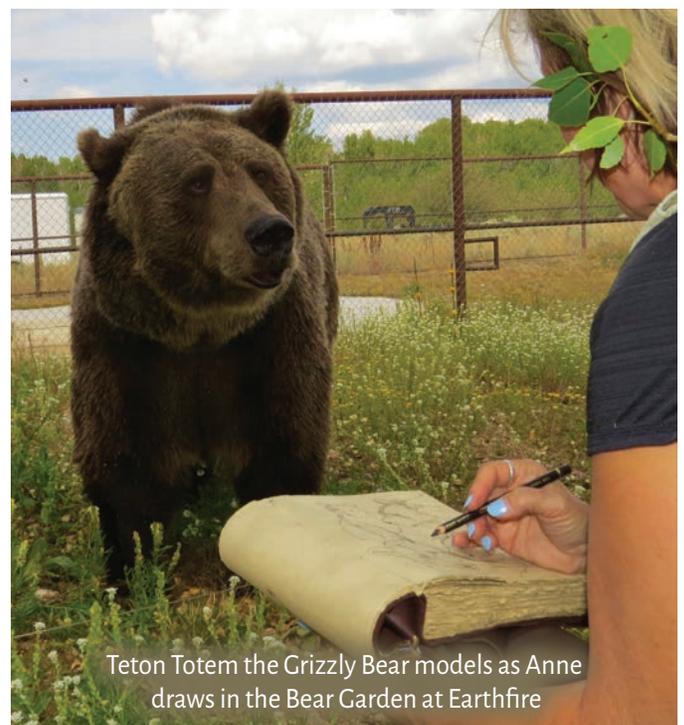
Back to the conservation component of that. I think that, in many ways, creative solutions come from the same fertile ground, and that is our imagination. From there we find a creative solution to the problems that conservation experiences today. We're talking poaching, environmental disasters and pollution, things like that. I think that you can memorize all the salient facts, but it takes creativity to rearrange them in a form that can go forward, and not just remain static. And that's very much what artwork is. Artwork is just rearranging the static information at hand and moving it into a future of a piece that has never existed before. And so that optimism, hope or faith or whatever, is certainly a flavor to anything creative. No good solutions happen without hope, and no good artwork of any kind happens without hope, same thing.

**Susan:** *How do you define creativity?*

**Anne:** Everyone has their own peculiar definition of that, so what I'm about to say will be mine.

**I think that creativity is the thing that makes us viable as a species on the planet.**

I think creativity, and why we honor it so much—many religions speak about God the creator, you know, creativity is the beginning of everything. God created the world. This word occurs in many spiritual writings and thought. I think creativity is how this species, the one I belong to, takes the world and instead of just reacting to it, interprets it. Human beings don't have speed or the claws or the strength that a lot of other species have developed; we have this frontal cortex busyness that gives us a list of what's good and what's bad, and promotes our thinking in certain directions because of it. I think that



Teton Totem the Grizzly Bear models as Anne draws in the Bear Garden at Earthfire

creativity for me would specifically speak to, how do I take the tools of my trade and recreate an experience I've had with an animal, and how does a viewer of that piece of work I've done use their imagination to forget for a moment that they are looking at a flat surface with pigment on it? You see, that's the where the imagination on the part of the viewer comes in, is the suspension of just a reactive reality, and the ability to focus beyond just the facts. Creativity is sort of a two-way street. When I go into an art museum, I'm not looking at flat paintings and drawings, I'm looking at windows into other universes. Maybe creativity is a transcendence of just a reaction to the world, and instead dancing with the world.

**Susan:** *Why did you decide to do wildlife art?*

**Anne:** You know, I don't remember the decision it was so early. Even as a small child, it was so early for me it doesn't feel like decision.

**Susan:** *Could you talk a little bit about how you try to capture the soul of not just the animal species, but that particular animal? Or its intelligence or qualities?*

**Anne:** Well, I have to say—this question, and I hear it often—how did you get the animal's personality or soul into that painting? I would pose a different question: how can you leave it out? Because if you are looking at real models, and that is a key factor to what I do, if you're looking at real models, real living beings, you're not thinking "the hipbone is connected to the leg bone." You're thinking, "Oh, the emotional state of that animal as it looks at me is really something." Everything else is just descriptive, like the carriage that holds that emotion. I do spend a lot of time studying the carriage, so that I can get it right, but the soul part—I'm more nonplussed when I see really technically great work—that has left that out. It seems as though it's more work to leave it out. It's almost like trying to create

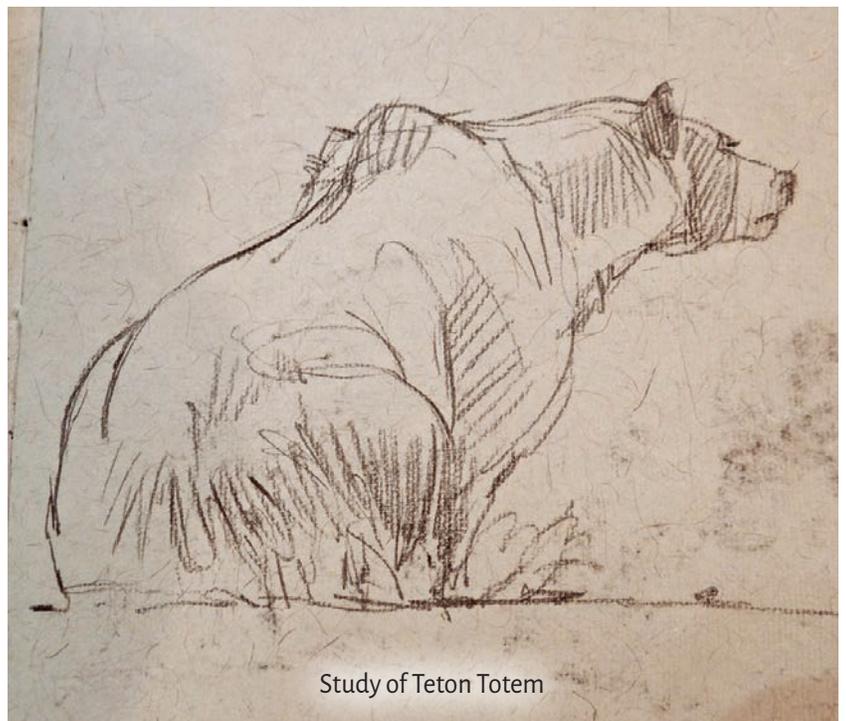
a real animal from a taxidermy one—you can get all the parts completely right, but you don't have a light behind the eyes. If you start from something that's not alive, let's say you only work from photographs (and I will use a photograph for back up here and there for a certain detail), but if you only work from photographs, then you're only getting the same kind of empirical information that a camera can deliver to you.

**When looking at another living being from a position of emotional presence, you have the ability with your brain and your two eyes and your whole being to record that other being's state.**

A camera is never going to be able to do that. And there's some great photography out there, don't get me wrong, but there's just something much more arresting looking at a living being. Especially as an artist, when you draw from life, the



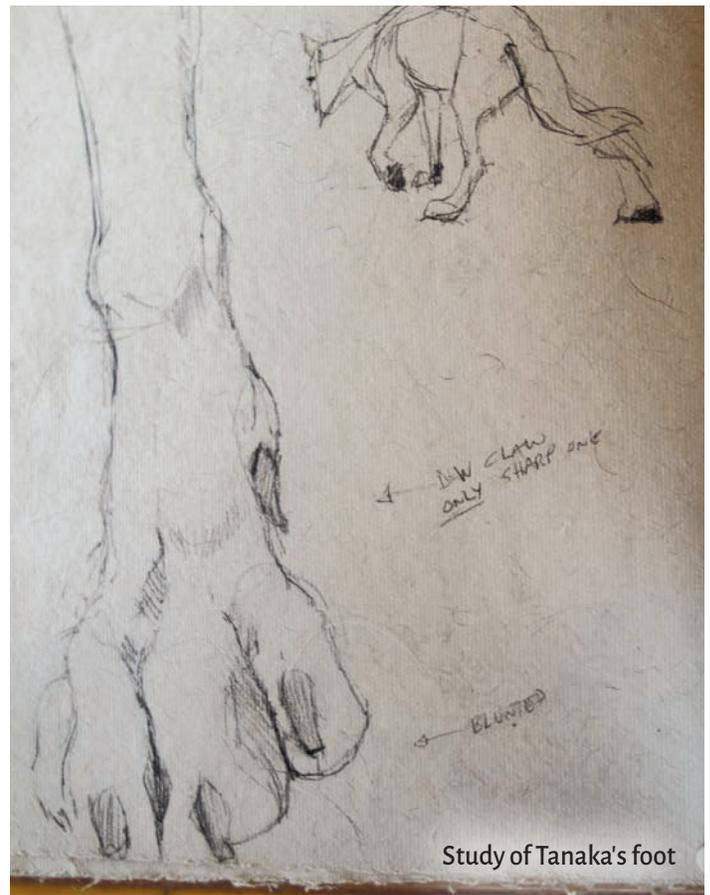
Anne's study of Teton Totem. You can see Anne working on this sketch in the image to the left



Study of Teton Totem



Study of Tanaka the wolf



Study of Tanaka's foot

feeling of that creature informs your line and shading in a way that just duplicating from a photograph cannot. And I think most artists would agree with that. It's hard—harder to work from a moving creature—you know, they don't pose for you, but the rewards are stupendous.

**Susan:** *You almost join with that creature; the being of that creature affects and causes the shape of the line you make?*

**Anne:** Absolutely. Yes.

**Susan:** *You are bonding with it, or connecting with it, so it's almost like there's a link between you and that animal, and it goes from that link, to your hand, to the paper?*

**Anne:** I think that's a perfect way to put it. It's an empathetic effort. I remember being a child riding in the back of my parents' car and looking up at birds hanging on the

telephone wires and thinking to myself, "I can feel the wires in my hands." I can remember thinking that as a child, and that's the same feeling I get when I'm drawing a wolf whose looking at me.

**I can almost feel what I must look like through that wolf's eyes. I can feel the cold under my paws, I can feel the wind behind my ears.**

It's a very empathetic moment for me.

**Susan:** *That's wonderful Anne. Are there other things you would like to share?*

**Anne:** I try for the empathetic view. It's not objective as much as it's felt from the same side. So even the choice of composition, even the choice of poses is, for me, a part

of being one with that species I'm drawing. I try to imagine I'm in the other's place. And I've been doing that since I was riding in the back of my parents' car. I've always slipped into what feels like my subject's world, and everything I've done in my whole life to support drawing skills and experience is my attempt to find a way to convey that to other people. Because I think that, intrinsically, people are empathetic, and I think they learn

to be protectively objective. I think that school, I think politics, I think a lot of societal contracts require that you only be objective and not empathetic. And so, when I present something that's empathetic, I see somebody come up to my work, and they get teary looking at it and they don't know why. That's one of the few times I can say, "Oh, see, it worked that time. It really worked



Huckleberry Bear Bear's foot



Nightstar

that time.” And it makes me very glad on many levels. It means that I'm not barking up the wrong tree. It also means that there are people out there that are looking for that experience, as well.

**Susan:** In that sense, great art—which I think yours is—helps people connect with their empathy and helps support it against all the forces against it.

**Anne:** I hope so. I'd like to be an agent of that. Just like when you listen to a truly passionate piece of music, and you're transported. I don't think anybody who comes out of that moment of bliss listening to a great piece of music, comes out a worse person after it's over. I think

they come out a better person.

**Susan:** Yes, even if temporarily. I have this painting you did of lion sitting here on my desk because I enjoy it so much. I can look at it again and again and again. It keeps bringing you back to—I wouldn't say the truth, really, because that's got too many other implications—it keeps bringing me back to what life is, or is about. The sheer stunning beauty of life.

**Anne:** That would be the ultimate compliment. Because I think creativity in any form really is about celebrating and pointing back to this amazing reality that we get to live, right now. It's always bothered me when people speak about heav-

en as something else. Why wouldn't we assume that maybe we're in that place right now? The experience of being a human, I mean, I can't speak to the animals, but the experience of being a human is fantastic. Art is sort of like a prayer—in the prayer, we're talking about the things we all see already, and we're celebrating them by presenting them in a slightly different manner. Like rearranging the silverware on your table before a great feast. You see a painting of a lion. You've never thought of a lion being painted that way before, but it seems even more lion-ish for the viewing. I think a lot of art serves to remind us of the wonder of it all.

*Anne E. London is an accomplished American Artist whose work combines two of her passions: visual art, & the conservation and celebration of endangered species. She travels frequently to Africa & other wild locations across the planet to witness endangered species firsthand and record the face of nature through her "Portraits of the Wild." She features her work in galleries internationally. Over the last ten years, Anne has helped raise close to two million dollars for wildlife conservation programs across the globe. Visit her website at [www.aelondonstudio.com](http://www.aelondonstudio.com).*

## 2017 JULY—OCTOBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Growing the Earthfire Community

Development of Conservation Conversations into a growing international community; Substantial implementation of Phase 2 of the Earthfire Strategy Plan, including a Membership Donation Model; Widely expanded network of connections, partnerships and contacts within the fields of wildlife preservation, conservation and connecting humans to nature; Expanded production of podcasts, blogs, animals stories and action items; Hired Nikki Simon as our Digital Media Manager; Hired Hope McKenzie as our Operations Manager; Hired Sarah Best as our social media consultant to aid us in executing and growing our social media campaign; Held a three-day staff retreat planning for 2018 resulting in plans for a year-long Council of All Beings.

### Creating Sanctuary & Retreat Center Development

Began accepting animals for rehabilitation; Designing rehabilitation facilities and quarantine area; Four profoundly impactful retreats which deepened participant's understanding of their connection to all Life.

### Taking the Animals' Voices Out to the World

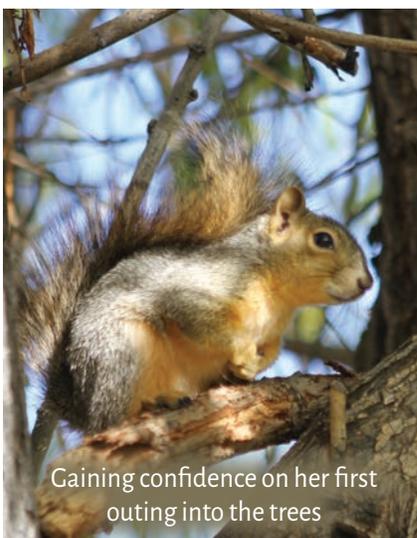
Website engagement has increased 30% in the last 6 months, and has received a 15% increase in new site visitors. Executive Director spoke at the Institute of Noetic Sciences conference in San Francisco in July, and *Where the Wild Things Were*, a gathering to celebrate, protect and explore sacred connections, in Bozeman, Montana in September.

**“You brought a heart connection to animals and our natural world. I sense that more and more people are craving that, yet don't know how to access it. You have created a gateway and I feel more at peace knowing you and the Earthfire team are on this Earth doing incredible work.”** *Mariah Palmer, Where the Wild Things Were*

## Nugget the Squirrel, a Personality—and Soon—a Wild Squirrel



Nugget demands her bottle



Gaining confidence on her first outing into the trees

Earthfire's rehabilitation resident, Nugget, will soon be heading back into the wild world to prepare for her first winter. She'll be moved back to the original tree she fell from, and will be monitored by the loving individuals who first helped her. A large personality in a tiny body who has made a profound impression on the Earthfire Office, and will be missed in all her chattering, demanding, sweet squirrelness.

## 2018 FUNDRAISING NEEDS

**Basic Operating Expenses 2018 / \$494,004 Annually / \$41,167 Per Month**

Animal Care; Staffing; Programs; General Operating Costs; Buildings and Grounds Maintenance

### Additional Programs

#### **Growing the Earthfire Community**

Introduction of Earthfire Council of All Beings; International Conservation Conversations; Podcasts and Interviews with Leaders in the Fields of Spiritual Ecology, Conservation, Wildlife Preservation, and Sacred Activism; Additional Expansion of Earthfire Content and Programs; Social Media Management and Outreach.

#### **Creating Sanctuary & Retreat Center Development**

Animal Habitat and Enrichment; Rehabilitation and Quarantine Facilities; Hospice/Infirmarary/Office; Complete Cat Gardens; Upgrading Retreat Facilities; Hire Ranch Foreman; Hire Understudy for Jean.

#### **Taking the Animals' Voices Out to the World**

Travel, Conferences Including the International Minding Animals Conference in Mexico and Globalization for the Common Good Initiative Conference: *Our Sacred Earth, Responding to Ecologic Crisis* in Lucca Italy, Promotion, Planning, and Further Outreach of Earthfire Content and Programs. Suggested conferences or speaking opportunities welcome.

### 2018 Fundraising Goal

**2018 Total Expenses \$634,000**  
**2018 Total Capital Expenses: \$335,000**

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**Profound gratitude to the From My Heart Charitable Fund; The Sharon D. Lund Foundation; the Tin Cup Challenge of the Community Foundation of Teton Valley; the Judith Haskell Brewer Fund; and to all our individual donors who help us advance our work. This is a joint venture. Thank you!**

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EARTHFIRE  
INSTITUTE

WILDLIFE SANCTUARY & RETREAT CENTER

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## Changing how humans see and therefore treat wildlife and nature

Prairie Smoke the fox.

Front Cover: *Untitled* painting study of Earthfire wolves by Anne E. London.

## Walk on the Wild Side Annual Retreat

EARTHFIRE INSTITUTE RETREAT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ROSE DE DAN



Foxie Moxie the fox visits with a retreat participant

When I first met Rose over the phone, because of a video she had seen of Apricot the wolf,\* she had won permission from zoos to go after-hours to do honoring ceremonies with the zoo animals, worn out by being used for entertainment and never being seen for themselves. On that basis I immediately invited her to host a retreat at Earthfire, and she has done so for the past 8 years. Her main work is to build bridges between humans and animals. The retreats are profoundly moving and for many life-changing; and the animals love them.

\*(see Energy Healing Wolf on YouTube)  
You can contact Rose at Wild Reiki and Shamanic Healing by visiting [reikishamanic.com](http://reikishamanic.com)