

wild idea
wild flower
wild child
wild country
wild state
wild chance
wild woman
wild eye
wild hair
wild ride
wild man
wild oats
wild fire
wild question
wild horse
wild time
wild spore
wild night
wild hope

Another Air

*In October,
the South Fork slides to a stop
here, where
the channel deepens between two shale walls.*

*The sky lies belly up
on her shivering skin.*

*In that other air,
trout align themselves against the wind:
easier than an eagle,
their fan-shaped tails hold them still.*

Beth Chadwick

There's something about the agricultural revolution: taking plants, taking hold of them . . . that's at the basis of property.

ROGER DUNSMORE TALKING

Wilderness is a strictly civilized concept. The idea of wilderness doesn't occur until people have been cut off from direct contact with the land. Luther Standing Bear said that North America wasn't "wild" to the Indians. They lived in nature as part of it. The fact that we see natural areas as "wild" and call them wilderness is an indication of the extent to which we are removed from our own natural state. It must be completely unimaginable to indigenous people that we could call their life-sphere a "wild" place. "It's our home," they would say. They are the first large mammals to go when civilization moves in on a wild place. Wilderness is a home. It's a home for whatever species are there and it's the original human home.

We may want to reverse the sense of what's wild. There are both positive and negative attractions to the concept of wildness. Civilization is a domesticating process. Human beings have been domesticated to the point that they fear anything wild. But they're also haunted by a dim memory of the time when they were not domesticated, and feel that what's happened to them has been a diminishing process.

There's something about the agricultural revolution; taking plants, taking hold of them. There's something about that that's at the basis of property. First possessing the plant and then possessing the ground on which that plant grows. Wild plants can be gathered and picked. They resist the notion of property. Human groups had roughly staked-out claims of areas where they gathered plants every year, but the presumption of ownership that we know wasn't there. There were relationships with the seasons and cycles of plants. Less material oriented and more oriented toward life processes and the ecosystem. Domestication equals possessiveness equals the presumption of ownership. The way indigenous people are situated within their locales precludes those presumptions. When you own things and get deeply into possessive modes of seeing things, you overstructure the relationship between yourself and those things. By doing that, you greatly diminish the possibilities of what can happen. You remove the possibility of magic.

Excerpts from
FILMING MOUNTAIN GOAT JOURNAL

Beth Chadwick

June 21 Goat Lick Middle Fork

As the snow sinks, it takes on a new character, it becomes laced with patterns and delicate shades. The snow droops down from the old slide, a dozen brown rivers seem to flow over it, lacing around small subalpine fir and spruce. What was an avalanche is now slipping into water, water that hums and rattles under, so that you feel always like you walk a thin ice bridge home. At the bottom of this slide, where the mountain's back is straight, there is a depression. And in the summer, the maps say it will be a lake. As I walked up the ridge, I saw through the snow a thin, ice-blue color in that hollow. It shone up through the snow, a robin's egg under ice, a delicate blue eye, waiting to open.

As we walk on the ridge and look down over the goat-cliffs below, the tinkling glass follows us. The red and turquoise falls away from our feet like glass. And the sharp sound seems to ring in the spaces like a bell heard over a great, dense distance. That is the sound that means goats to me; when I hear it, I know that I am in their country. At my feet are the new plants, the first plants of the season, struggling for a place in this shale. I imagine it — slick, like trying to take root on a diamond. Ferns are small stragglers in a crevice. Lichen love this rock, they paint it red and orange and soft green. Yellow-dot saxifrage advances slowly — roots and shoots like tentacles, feeling, groping blindly outward. It forms mounds of moss-like clumps that may die in the center, these pioneers. The rewards are for those who have patience with small things, who spend time on the warm rocks with nothing to stare at but the heart of a saxifrage.

Without the goats, even this ridge would be sterile. The goats are so much a part of these high places; their beds — paved, flat places in shale and the tiny trails winding over talus, and shreds of goat hair waving in the wind, from shrubs and rocks, and the grazed sedges and snipped-off lilies, and the neat tracks across a snow field. Without these things, a ridge top would be so much less! It would not be so alive, nor so magic, it couldn't be so charged with anticipation. What lives up here on these endless, windy mountains will always be a mystery. And when, as Ursula and I did, you wander all day looking for some mythical creature who loves these rocks and winds, who

rubs against a stunted pine and leaves his hair, blowing, to remind you . . . and you don't find him — you feel abandoned. I felt exactly as though I had entered a house whose occupant had left the minute before, in great haste, his belongings strewn about, his pipe still warm. And you wonder if the goats know something you don't know. As, when you find your friend's abandoned house, you wonder what disaster befell him, what called him out? Even though the goats are gone, their presence seems to be alive. Their shadows gang around after they've gone, and their smell, pungent and sweet, sticks to the ledges. It is slightly eerie to wander in their home and have no little face peer suddenly from behind a rock at you and disappear again. And you keep waiting and listening, growing more and more alert and tense, but all that exists is the ring of red glass and the hollow sound of the never-ending wind.



You discover how real risks are when a rock explodes as it hits next to you . . . It's thoroughly risky because you might learn something that could be devastating.

TOM BIRCH TALKING

The essence of the modern "civilized" technological world-view, which is non-ethical, is to gain control over others: people and nature. The essence of an ethical worldview is to establish ties or relationships. An ethical worldview requires the refusal to gain control over others.

What's necessary in order to have a situation that makes it possible to have ties or maintain them. There has to continue to be an other, another person or nature. What's necessary in order for there to be an other? That's where wildness comes in. Wildness is the center of otherness. It's found in others and it's found in ourselves as others. We have to "allow" it in others and we have to allow it in ourselves.

When you try to control people, or when you attempt to control nature, the result is to inevitably alienate yourself from them or it. Rather than being productive in terms of instituting relationships it's counter-productive. It destroys relationships. Our society has become introverted in regard to the natural world and its members are introverted in regard to each other.

One of my main experiences of the unknown, the unpredictable in nature has been with rocks. Rocks come down the mountains for no apparent reason when you're climbing up there, or somebody can knock one loose up above you at any time. You have to watch them carefully — if you're lucky enough to know that they're coming — to see which way they are going to go so that you can move out of the way at the last moment. You can't predict how they're going to move. It's astounding to suddenly have one hit next to you when you're in a steep place.

When you're really relating to people and not your idea of what they ought to be, you don't "understand" them. To think that you do is only self-deception. You have to relate to them continually. This is also true of nature. A trip into the wilderness can show that nature is obstinate and difficult: bad weather, lots of hills to move heavy packs over. Nature definitely makes its otherness known when we undertake a real relationship with it. One of the important things about direct contacts with wild nature is that they can awaken in people the possibility of real contact with other people. It's not a "wilderness experience" but rather an experience of otherness. No matter whether you're in good shape, no matter how many miles you can walk in a day, you discover that the land is making

its otherness felt right through the bottoms of your feet. That carries over into seeing otherness in other people — to recognize that they are there — difficult sometimes, but good, and that they participate in the unknown by being ultimately unknowable, never fully knowable.

Trying to know and say everything that's possibly relevant about something is trying to gain control of it. There's no opposition and there's no otherness. All that's left is our symbolic world, and we become prisoners of it. After that there's no connection with other-realities. That's why we enter into an alienated state when we try to seek control. It destroys the world. It takes a real switch from the technological view of the world to see that we are together here with others and that all the members are necessary in order for all of it to exist. We and them have to be in a living open-ended relationship.

In relating with nature or another person, there are certain places where we have to tread very carefully. There are certain realms of psychic-physical space in other people where it would be morally wrong to push too hard. The same holds for nature. The fact that wilderness areas have been established is perhaps an oblique recognition of that fact. It's not that we can't relate to those places at all, but we have to be very careful because they are sacred places that hold the essence of otherness. They are sources that from a technological point of view are very unreliable because you can't ever say that anything more is ever going to come from them. They might be hands-off spaces sometimes. There are some facets of things and people that should be left alone. Nature's otherness continues to exist in wilderness areas, and one of the things we have to do to fight technological domination is to make sure we don't lose it.

Wilderness areas are often mountainous places where resources development hasn't been established. That's a disappointing fact in some respects because there should be more accessible wild places as well, but it's not totally bad because mountains are obvious places to establish sacred reserves. It's a good place to start because mountains aren't the sorts of places where we normally belong. We're valley creatures. We can go to the mountains to be reborn and find definition. We can bring that back so that we can see wildness every place. Ultimately our front yards are shot through with wildness, and the whole world is sacred.

Things that are good for us may or may not happen as a result of going into wilderness. That also obtains in making ourselves available to human relationships. But making ourselves available to the possibilities of otherness may be what existence is all about. Technology can't cope with that because making yourself available doesn't guarantee anything. You can't define what you might run

into and have to respond to beforehand. You can't devise a technique for guaranteeing that we do make ourselves available. What does technology do in the case of wilderness? It supplies us with a lot of baggage, all the rip-stop equipment to make a so-called "wilderness experience" possible. That's what people come to expect a "wilderness experience" to be. But that isn't what it is. There's no such thing as *the* "wilderness experience." There's no technique to guarantee that it can be made available. You have to be as Thoreau said, "graced to be a walker," to be out there and available to what may happen.

A continuing thing about wild nature is that rather than gaining an experience with a manufactured kind of risk it teaches the absurdity of that approach. You discover how real risks are when a rock explodes as it hits next to you. It's not just risky in some physical manner. It's thoroughly risky because you might learn something that could be devastating. You have to take the risk continually of dying and being reborn.



FILMING MOUNTAIN GOAT JOURNAL 2

Beth Chadwick

June 28 Sperry

It was one of those days that whatever you think the goats will do, they do not. You can never outguess them. I set up the tripod and they bedded, the winds began as the warm valley air hit the cold, snow-covered mountain air. Ursula lay in a crevice, the sun flashed in and out of clouds, and I blew on my numb fingers at the end of June. I dragged the camera and tripod up to the cliffs to photograph shining water as it runs over yellow lichen. The wind hit the magazine broadside, throwing me downhill, or my foot slipped on the knife-edged talus. The camera seemed like a huge unwieldy monster as I straightened out my leg. The camera tilts forward, throwing my weight off balance. Or it hits me on the head because I have lost, sometime in our wanderings, the small pin that locks the camera in place. I do not have enough hands to operate it or enough strength to drag it from ledge to ledge. The sheer physical effort in the wind seems too great.

We waited, huddled in a crevice. Small white Trollius shivered in the wind. Great white clouds skimmed by, followed quickly by thick, dark gray ones, blotting out the sun. Just as we settled our backs to the warm rock, as the goats must in winter, drawing heat from stone, the goats got up. I cursed myself, I'm never quick enough. Did I follow that right, will she move now or in 20 seconds, after I turn the camera off? We dragged the camera up another, higher ledge and looked down on the goats, feeding at the edge of snow. The winds drove them wild, they danced and leapt at one another, then raced down the snow patch, spraying snow everywhere with their horns and hooves. They exploded into motion. And, at last, the camera was on at the right time in the right place! In a minute they were gone and only a series of tracks left to say that what had just happened was real.

Ursula and I waited and watched them move far away across the valley, in a line, tiny carved ivory elephants on a sheer cliff, a cliff steep and slick as glass. Unreal creatures, small white bears, miniature buffalo, diving into snow, racing at one another. They disappeared into the trees. We never saw them again.

It's probably impractical to talk about removing highways, railroad tracks, and transmission lines from the floodplain in the immediate future. In terms of a long range solution, the river is likely to claim its own.

BRUCE BUGBEE TALKING

The idea of "industrial parks" for containing new populations in the Rockies doesn't make sense at all. It's a variation on traditional zoning theory; separating all uses into specialized communities. That doesn't make any more sense than monoculture in agriculture. It's highly energy inefficient and it's culturally degrading. It's carrying the production line into the community. "We'll produce homes and bedrooms here, jobs there, food over there, and culture over here." You put that all together and you have a factory called a community.

It takes people longer than the three-year national average for residency in the U.S. to develop real communities. There's nothing to keep people from the national and international orientation to corporate entities that facilitate their mobility. Higher pay somewhere else, mass production and specialization are going to keep them mobile. They become encapsulated so that they're totally immune to their exterior environment. Their houses are capsules, their transportation is a capsule; they work in capsules and play in capsules. Industrial society keeps reducing to monoculture because it's the only way it can survive. Make everything the same. It totally ignores a sense of place, a sense of community, and the possibility for any real human evolution in a positive sense.

The drama of the mountains invades these capsules. The monotonous tendency of that encapsulated world is shattered by magnificent thunderstorms and magnificent winds and magnificent colors and magnificent cold. As well as subtle breezes at the tops of the pines. There are wide altitudinal and climactic variations that shake you out of the encapsulated and remind you of the place you're in.

The modern West is made of automobile communities. Alternative communities can begin within cities and even within one block. A relatively independent group can work off things that are happening in the larger city. Sustenance is needed to establish any community and sustenance can be drawn from the old. The corporate automobile society leaves a lot of niches for people with alternative ideas to exist in. Most of the mountain cities are disconnected from larger urban centers but they are nonetheless dependent on them for their survival. They're centers of integration of power from the land that take its

resources and give them form in terms of community and wealth which is distributed to other power centers and back to the constituency. Alternative communities would consider real carrying capacity in terms of the region or section of the continent or whole continent because that's what they would be breaking off from, that's what they would be planning a niche within. Ultimately the carrying capacity of the local area would be the final determinant they would move toward.

A community has to embody a full range of experience. It cannot exist simply as a place for access to a wilderness someplace else, or a place to work someplace else. Why do both blue-collar workers and white-collar workers need to get into an RV and go to the wilderness to recreate? What's missing from the places where we live that makes us seek other places? A positive "wilderness experience" within a city could occur. It would have to be designed, but basically it would rely on unintended natural qualities of the place. Restoring the flood plain of the Clark Fork River through Missoula would be an example. Restoring the plants and animals that went with it. There are ballparks and greensward parks there now; the bowling green idea, an extension of the lawn. Nothing could be more alien to a mountain river watershed with its natural dogwood, cottonwood, willows, occasional pines, and a plethora of other plants. Many wild animals are common to this kind of floodplain. It doesn't make sense to spend millions of dollars to establish and maintain grass turf and plant trees all in a row. It makes sense to cut willow and dogwood shoots in the early spring and stick them in the sand next to the river so that they sprout and grow back where there were. Cattle would have to be kept from the river. Cattle and horses strip the bark off the trees, nibble the young shoots, and compact the soil around their roots. It would be a much cheaper solution to having a park in Missoula. Willows and dogwood don't have to be mowed every week, they don't have to be irrigated. Choke cherries, elderberries, wild roses, and other plants could also be restored. The animals would come back in a very short time.

The major determinants of carrying capacity get worked out through trial and error. They can't be encapsulated. There are more people here now than the Rockies can continue to support unless alternative technologies are sought out. Carrying capacity is not simply derived from the number of people but must include what the people do and how they gain their sustenance and how they recreate.

The valley bottoms have to be retained for agriculture. Their ability to grow food crops for people and domestic animals is essential. Trees and grasses are important, but the local limiting factor would be valley bottom land. There's not much of it.

The normal avenues of planning and designing have not proven themselves as offering any long-term possibilities for reinhabitory strategies. Ultimately market factors are determining land use. The basic idea of the possibility of owning things holds the capacity to legally remove from the land aspects of ownership which might be detrimental to it. It is legally possible to place all the development rights in, for example, the Missoula Valley within the ownership of the city, the county, the state, or some community non-profit corporation. Under the proper circumstances, people who would do that could make as much money (if not a little more) as they would if they had developed the land for unharmonious uses. Then the possibility for abuse of hundreds of thousands of acres of valley bottom would be controlled by the community as a whole, a community which would need to keep that land in agriculture to maintain a sustained economy. If growth became necessary or if some areas had been misjudged in their capacity or use, they could be inhabited under tight community controls. But this would require a contract between the whole community and the individual as to how the land would be used. The community could limit the use of land to specific kinds of activity, and the individual couldn't buy the land without buying the restrictions that came with it.



Strategic community ownership would be much more effective than any kind of wholesale zoning restrictions or even restrictive covenants in a deed. If ownership of trees, for example, is owned by a local community "tree corporation" that holds their use for sustained yield cutting in perpetuity, and the by-laws say that trees can only be cut on a true sustained yield basis, then that condition holds as long as the corporation (and the community) exists.

It's probably impractical to talk about removing highways, railroad tracks, and transmission lines from the floodplain in the immediate future. In terms of a long-range solution, the river is likely to claim its own. We should accommodate the necessary corridors to the free movement of the river, and that will create a fair amount of room for the river to move elsewhere as well. When a section of highway gets wiped out by a flood, the highway wouldn't be rebuilt. Utility corridors are often unnecessarily duplicated. It's a waste to have railways, transmission lines, pipelines and roadways, like so many people attempting to pass through a doorway at once, when you have so little bottom land.

Corridor communities could incorporate transportation and transmission on systems within one design so that the electricity in the field around transmission lines can propel various kinds of people-movers; the Japanese and Germans have already done this. Moving the sewer through that same corridor can provide heat. Communications, natural gas, and whatever other arteries are needed to support human systems would also run through the same corridor. Buildings would be built over these corridors as lineal cities. That's the kind of city shape we have in the mountains now, but it could be formalized as a more positive thing. Our highways now waste and misuse space which is extremely important and valuable to mountain communities. Automobiles use up a tremendous volume of space compared to that taken up by the people they're moving.

More Denvers? There's no room here. Denver's growth has been facilitated by a lot of flat land around it. Monoculture relies on flat land. Steep mountains have visible restrictions. It's very expensive to move into the mountains in conventional flat land style and sustain existence. When monocultural principles are applied to the mountains they destroy the possibility of living there for a long time.

Paintings & drawings by Skylark

BARBEQUE ON THE LAND

LIGHTENING-STROCK LAND HEAVING UP MINERALS;
BILLOWS OF SMOKE-AND-ASH, TUMBLING FIREBALLS OF SOTOL,
DRY OLD GROWTH TURNING OVER, THE PRAIRIE'S PLOEHIY-TRICK.
MEAT OF THE CONTINENT BURNING RED, RIVERBED TO RIVERBED.
WITH SLOWING COALS AT DUSK, IN A 'FLEATING HAZE,
WE MANUEVER THROUGH THE SOOT, SINGE AND CHAR
LANDING CARCASSES OF BEASTS TOO BIG TO DIVE BENEATH 'IT ALL,
+ FLIGHTLESS, THE FRIGHTENED, CROPPED OF THE CROP.
DARE SIFT.

GARY PAUL NABHAN HUCHUCA MTS
PLACE OF THE THUNDER