

Introduction

This book is part philosophical treatise, part survival guide, part post-industrial living manual, part invitation to connect in a deep, meaningful way with the land. An invitation to heal ourselves and the Earth and bridge the gap between wildness and human existence. It is the result of many years spent living in the woods, at the edge of a small city with a group of friends in cabins that we built from scavenged materials on land we squatted. Years spent learning how to live intimately on the land, coming from a time and place where we've had to start from scratch, with no roots, no elders, no intact culture or teachers to guide us. Many hard lessons have been learned through trial and error.

This is a distillation of the most pertinent skills and ideas that have blossomed as a result, written largely by the warmth of fire and the glow of lamplight, in a homey squat that allowed us to bring some of our wildest dreams alive.

It takes for granted that humans want to live meaningful lives, that we want to live with integrity and that we don't want to kill the planet. That for the human animal to be sane, we *need* to have deep connections to the Earth. It is about action. More than just food for thought, these pages offer strategies, skills and ideas for changing our lives.

I have divided it into two parts, the first, "Ideas," and the second, "Endangered Skills."

The reason for this is that without a healthy context to practice them in, these skills are at best pointless, at worst destructive. Likewise, if philosophy doesn't translate into action, it is useless. You can't have one without the other.

This book presents a challenge. It asks us to look at hard truths. To look at how deep our collective problems really are. To not be distracted or dissuaded by industrial society's sad attempts to fake a transition to "green" energy and a seamless march towards a sustainable new world. To grapple with the problem of civilization at its roots, and our place within that problem. It also extends an invitation to rewild—to become part of the dance of this living land. To build independence and autonomy from the system, stepping into interconnectedness with non-humans and humans alike. To look at ourselves, our relationships and all of life through undomesticated eyes. To heal broken land, minds and hearts.

As I write this, the economies of all the great empires of the world are being bailed and beaten, wars are being fought over oil, arctic ice is rapidly in retreat, radioactive fallout is contaminating the rain, revolutions and riots are erupting worldwide as the wealth of nations shrinks and the divide between rich and poor rapidly grows to a boiling point. The future looks extremely uncertain from every angle.

To assume that the system is going to crumble, that any day now the forces threatening life on Earth will grind to a halt and stop leaving us free to live a more simple life, is not strategically wise. Neither is it wise to assume that the system is going to continue as it has been, that a way of life based on perpetual growth, massive inequality, ecological degradation, precarious technologies and ridiculous wastefulness can continue unchecked.

These pages offer skills for coping with changing times that could save lives, feed families and give us autonomy from

increasingly oppressive regimes. Skills, also, for any time one chooses to connect with the wildness that is life. “Hardcore” sustainability skills, for a sustainable future that does not include industrial technology and production—a world most of us are afraid to imagine, but that is, eventually, inevitable.

This book is about reclaiming our future, our sanity, our ability to live in the land, our ability to live with integrity.

Scientists and authors have been saying for decades, “If we don’t change things in the next few years, it’ll be too late!” The time for those warnings has long passed. The reality is that in any relationship it is time to change things the moment they become unhealthy. If that moment has passed, the time is now—and has been for a while.

For Wild Aliveness.