

THE DISPATCH BY FOLK REBELLION

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE.

DISCONNECTING,
RECONNECTING, AND
NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER

by Pippa Biddle



THE DISPATCH BY FOLK REBELLION



here, Kelley is video chatting from the floor of her apartment in Washington D.C. Soft fall light fills her living room with a warm glow and a large green plant peeks into the right of the frame. On the other side, a wall-mounted fern, maybe a saguaro, appears to balance on her head like a delicate totem to be protected from the elements. The plants fall her apartment, blurring the line between where the indoors ends, and the world of the outdoors begins.

Kelley was first drawn towards the urban outdoors after she suffered an environmental illness caused by mold in her apartment. Her work as a product designer was so stressful that she wanted anything but to be inside. Through this experience, her relationship with the outdoors deepened and she began questioning the perceived distance between what is "outside" and what is "nature." Society said that outside was what was right beyond her door. It was outside of her apartment, where the sun, trees, birds, lights and traffic exist. Nature was something seemingly unreachable in such an urban space. It wasn't accessible; it was something one must search for.

We've convinced ourselves that beauty and the outdoors is luxury, she reflects today, and so she has sought to find ways to make it different from "urban" and "closeby." Once she'd realized that nature was everywhere, and infinitely accessible, the question became, "How do we start to realize that these spaces are available for everyone?"

The pursuit of an answer led Kelley towards becoming a Certified Forest Therapy Guide. The certification process includes an eight-day training during which the participants are immersed in nature, and Kelley was nervous that she'd return home only to discover a newfound hatred for the urban D.C. life. While she says that she was in shock for a bit, beyond the initial excitement of the certification, she quickly realized how her city and a confirmation that she wants to help others in loving it—especially its green spaces.

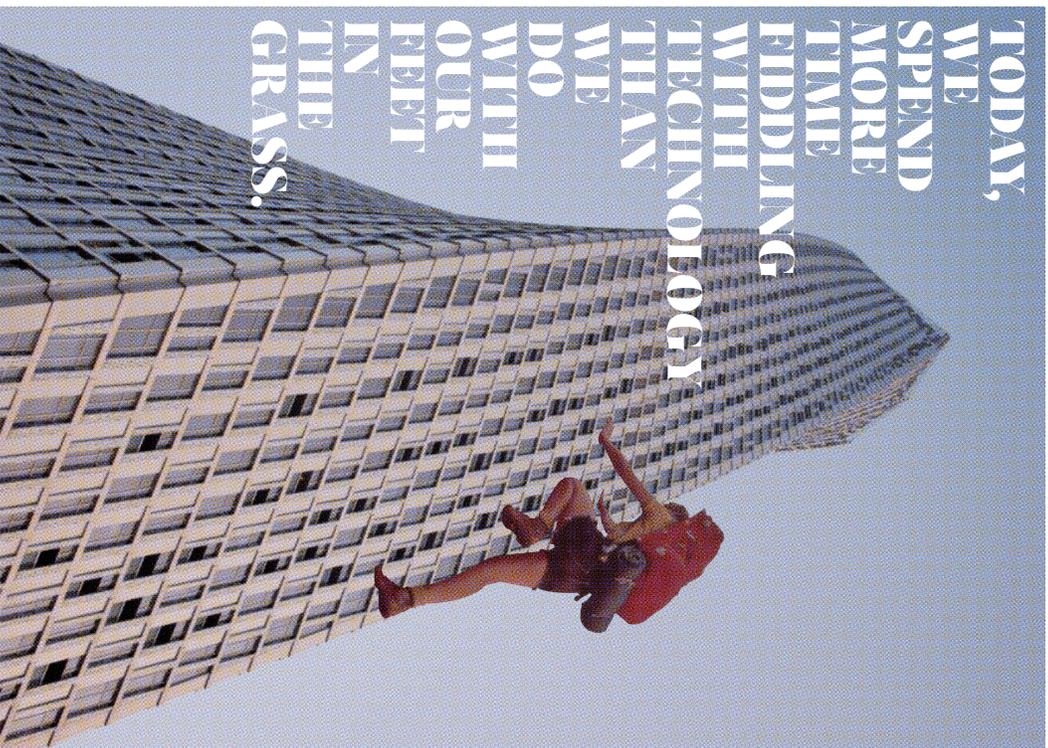
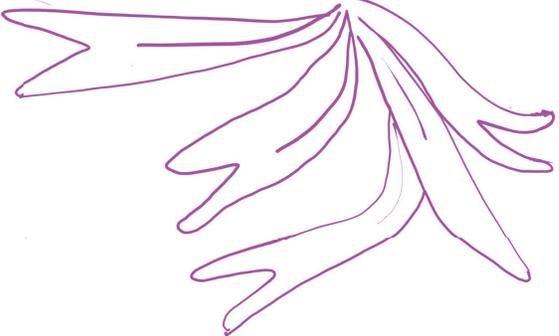
As time progressed, she skyrocketed, time outdoors has plummeted. Today, we spend more time hiding with our staring at technology than

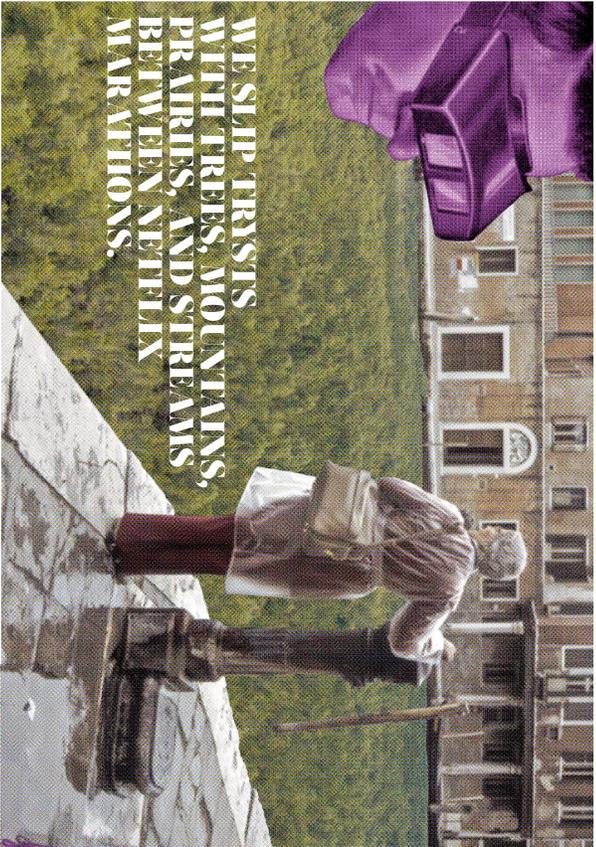
we do with our feet in the grass, an average of more than 10 hours each day according to a 2016 report by Nielsen. Experiencing nature has been replaced with watching it play out on television programs with grandiose titles like Planet Earth, Life, and Wild Africa. While that program report to bring the image of nature to the masses, it has also created a sterile about a screen. "Time outside and in nature has been found to have positive impacts on our physical and mental health and decreased time has been linked to increases in depression and anxiety."

A 1991 study conducted by researchers at Texas A&M University and the University of Delaware, and published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology, found that exposure to "unthreatening natural environments" can have a "stress reducing or restorative influence." Exposure to urban environments, on the other hand, will cause an increase in the feeling of stress, similar to that of a city (Ulrich et al.). The findings offer evidence of the benefits which even short periods of time in nature can provide. Despite this, the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report by the Outdoor Foundation found that only 48.8% of American's participated in any outdoor activity in 2016.

At some point in time, and surely long before the first phone, telephone, or even train, a line was drawn between what is "nature" and what is not, what is "outdoors" and what is simply outside. As cities have grown, the tendency to enclose urbanized environs in a hermetically sealed bubble has emerged alongside it. What we have done is to separate nature from the green parks are a commodity.

The ability to access what is classified as "nature" has become a privilege primarily available to those who can afford country homes, cars, train tickets, or even to live by a park that is not theirs. The term Nature-Deficit Disorder is a 2005 book, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder. While Nature-Deficit Disorder is not a DSM-5 diagnosable disorder, it has gained traction as a catchall term for the adverse effects of being disconnected from green space. More than ten





even after the publication of Last Child in the Woods, giving the problem a name hasn't diminished its pervasiveness. If anything, it's grown in prevalence.

The urban, and even suburban, human relationship with green space has come to revolve around finding feeding times for nature cravings. We slip trysts with trees, mountains, prairies, and streams between Netflix marathons in New York City, walking the dog, sometimes seeing to headphones in arc pulled along by impatient pings. But is it even a walk if you can't hear the snow crunch beneath your feet? And is it time unplugged if phantom vibrations haunt you even when you do leave your phone at home?

However, initiatives around the United States are fighting to pop the bubble of screen time and the glow of yellowing plastic. There are more about the walking decision than the 2012 U.S. National Survey of Children's Health, which found that 20 percent of children in the United States are not walking to school. The American Psychological Association's 2012 World Congress on Nature-Based Therapies for Mental Health and Well-Being also found that 70 percent of people in the United States are not walking to work. The Walk, Clean, Kelley offers are designed to be self-oriented therapeutic outings, an experience known in the United States as forest bathing that is based on the Japanese practice of Shinrin-yoku, a form of medicinal therapy that was developed in the 1980s and has been documented to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve participants' psychological well-being. Located in green spaces that are accessible for urban dwellers, such as West Creek Park, Kelley prices the walks on a

sliding scale so that no one is excluded based on their socioeconomic status. "For me," she says, "it's just not honorable to make the outdoors another piece of exclusivity when it's the most inclusive place there is."

On the walks, Kelley leads participants in what she identifies as the most important part of the time spent outside: nodding. By creating final maps where time is slower, Kelley invites those on her walks to nod from the world around them. Sometimes that even means accepting the background noise of the city as part of nature.

Rather than labeling the sound of a man yelling as an intrusion, Kelley works to accept the landscape as it is. "That doesn't mean ignoring when a concrete disturbance, like a man yelling, could become a risk factor. Like when someone approached her in a park with a crowbar. Rather, it's a toggle between accepting people for who they are, while recognizing opportunities to maintain the ideal that is, streets, but not total entropy." Through this process of tuning in, nodding, and acceptance, "nature connection becomes culture repair."

City dwellers interested in such experiences can find Forest Therapy Circles in their area through the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy Circles & Programs. "Wildflower Forest Therapy Circle Leader Map," a resource for finding local green spaces, is available at www.wildflowerforesttherapy.com. In San Francisco, Atlanta, Boston, and even as far afield internationally as Tasmania, many city parks also offer self-guided walks and tours that can be turned into forest bathing experiences through the application of the same indigenous thoughtfulness that Kelley advocates for.

On Manhattan's East River, another type of forest bathing is taking place outdoors at a floating, food forest called Swale. The rice behind Swale,

which is the brainchild of artist Mary Mattingly, came in part from a gap in legislation. While growing food for public consumption on public lands like in a park in New York City, it isn't illegal on the waterways that surround Manhattan. This is probably because legislators didn't expect anyone to build an edible garden atop a barge.

Loray Gerfman, author of The Catch-Up, Reimund Swale's, Sustainability Advisor and Project Manager, is a leading expert in urban water harvesting and assists in steering Swale. He hopes that it will serve as a blueprint for large projects to come — both in acreage and impact. Open seasonally, Swale offers numerous free opportunities including "open hours," cooking classes, workshops, and educational programming. All of the experiences are tactile and focus on nurturing a physical connection between visitors and the nearly 100 varieties of plants on board.

Impassioned opportunities for reconnecting with nature that are accessible and affordable for urban-dwellers can feel difficult to track down. Nevertheless, they are increasing in supply. After seeing how short-term opportunities can leave kids unable to process their experiences, Outside Respectives Executive Director Nicola Wood, a Licensed Social Worker and seasoned outdoor program leader, committed herself to working with young people in Chicago's public housing projects. She developed a youth-led, nature-based program called "Diverse Outdoor Regeneration" (SOR). SOR Outreach provides thousands of at-risk youth with outdoor opportunities year-round that include skiing, rock climbing, and hiking.

And not all experiences need to be structured, or limited to the young. If you're in New Orleans, head to Oakshore Island, a small island in the middle of the Audubon Park lagoon, where hundreds of birds nest each year. The island is a natural classroom for children and adults alike. The walks, camps, and classes focused on the diverse ecosystems present in the city. Chicago's Nature Oasis program provides a similar array of opportunities that are searchable through the My Chi Parks app. The increased emphasis cities are putting on providing access to green space shows a shift towards what love calls a "nature-rich city," creating the line between urban and outdoors.

Even so, a 2017 study in the UK found that the majority of interactions

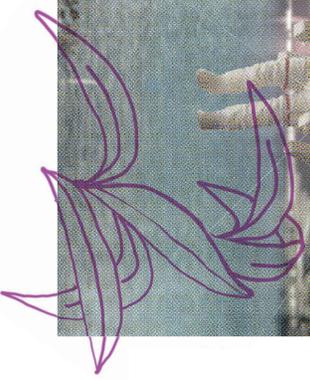
urban community members were having with nature were being expected by only half of the population — so the number of interactions didn't line up with the number of people actually taking part. Even fewer of the people who did report interacting with nature were doing so purposefully, with many reporting that their interactions were incidental (Cox et al. 2017). There was a lot of looking at trees through office windows, but staring under those trees was far less common.

Windows aren't cutting it. "If we are going to have meaningful experiences with nature," Lowy says, "we are going to have to rethink nature within cities." At a larger scale than is currently happening. For the time being, it's up to the people to take charge. Lowy's newest book, *Urban N*, provides parents (or anyone looking to reconnect with nature) with 500 nature-based activities to try out. Even small actions do add up if they are thoughtful, purposeful, and repeated.

On chilly days in Brooklyn, NY in late 2017, visitors walked into a cold white room at the Vector — Mo art gallery, relinquished their phones, picked up a flashlight, and wandered into a dark forest. Guided by the narrow beams of light, they explored the tactile space. (The Ray Lee Project Vol. 1) NDD Immersion Room, an installation by artist Keelid Jones, is a dark, immersive space that uses light and sound to encourage visitors to transport and to challenge. It succeeded at both. While some visitors settled down beside the crackling (simulated) campfire, others talked for their phones.

"There is a constant power relationship between the visitors, and the surrender of technology," Horvath says. "In silence, the scaled viewer becomes part of the semi-artificial wild surrounding the campfire. Some people are more engaged than others. Some people are more interested in some field of medicine." Through this, the visitor becomes as much of a piece of the work as the campfire. — "Without their response to it," Horvath says, "there is no reflection."

And the purpose of the piece is reflection. Reflection on self, reflection on nature, reflection on technology, and reflection on the relationship between the three. It is a project in discernment and reconnection. You are not in nature, but it feels as if one day, you are stripped of your



Dear Folk Rebellion Community:

My name is Dave Romanelli (nickname Yeah Dave). I focus on asking people questions other than the same old boring ones like "what do you do for a living?" I prefer questions like "what is your message?" and "why are you here?"

I love the mission at Folk Rebellion—to unplug and experience deeper feelings and clearer thoughts.

When we speak our message and live our purpose, each day is a sacred act.

To those seeking more clarity and a greater commitment to shifting attention away from technology and back toward nature...

Each year, I lead a 6 month program that culminates in an epic UNPLUGGED location. This year's journey is called INTO THE WILD and I will send you a daily audio guided meditation that gives you encouragement, inspiration, and sometimes a kick in the ass... to look away from all the phones, tablets, desktops and TVs...and look back to the wisdom of the skies, stars, seas and trees. You will conclude with a 5 day retreat to Alaska for the Summer Solstice.

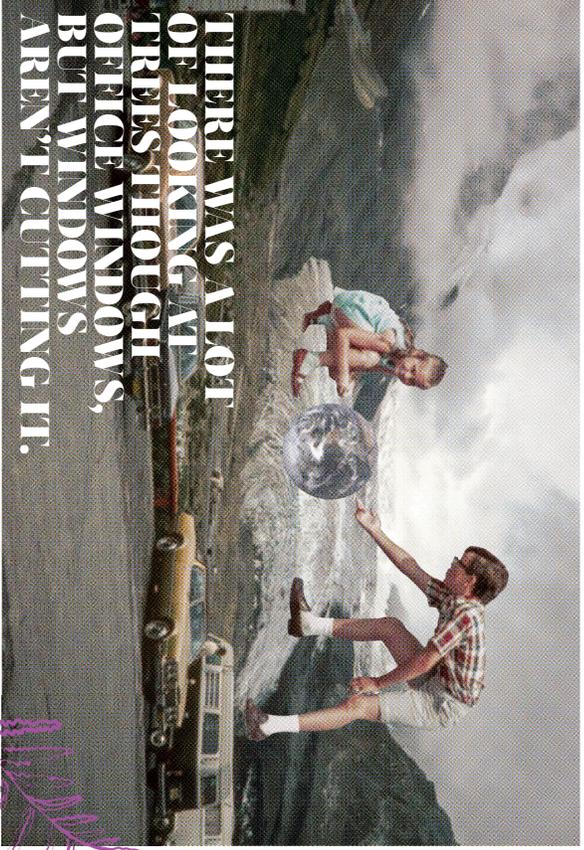
It would be awesome to share a moment with you this summer in Alaska, watching bald eagles soar across the Midnight Sun...

You can start into the wild anytime. Visit www.yeahdave.com for the details

Love... and Enjoy Your Journey

Dave Romanelli

yeah dave!



THERE WAS A LOT OF LOOKING AT TREES THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS, BUT WINDOWS AREN'T CUTTING IT.

technology, but you're surrounded by it. You're immersed in an experience, but the world, like your phone, wants just outside.

Humanity's piece plays into the three senses that Kelley says can be developed through a stronger connection with nature. Proprioception, our sense of our physical place in the world, interoception, our sense of our internal operations, and intuition, the invisible guide that connects us to our environment.

We need to imagine a future, "Lauri says," in which our lives are as immersed in nature every day as much as they are in technology, and this alongside them.

includes a new kind of city that incorporates nature into every building and on every block more green indoors, like Clare Kelley's plant-filled apartment. We need more time outside and need to trade plastic for trees, cars for bikes and need to do a better job at making nature accessible for all because it is everywhere.

It's a futuristic vision for sure, but it's also one that is immensely simple. It's only logical that if a tree can grow in Brooklyn, a person can nest in the middle of New Orleans, an edible garden can float on Manhattan's East River, and an artist can transform a white-walled gallery into a nearly outdoor experience, then nature-inspired lives can be nurtured right alongside them.

* **State Resources About the Use of Food for Wildlife.**

* **The Atlantic 500 and Civil Service: Identifying Current Characteristics of High Performers, such as Speed, Focus + Ours, Team, in their own City.**

* **Avalanche at Lehman's Snow Island Chasmodon and the 1910 Disaster: A Story of Survival and a Lesson in Leadership.**

* **In Zion, the Resurrection of Rachel Lundy is Unplugged: How the World's Largest Religious May Be Linked to a Jewish Holiday from Over 50 Years.**