



# ***A Stone's Throw and Ten Paces: Or Mr. Warbler's Succinct and Useful Field Guide to Flora and Fauna of the Northern Forest***

*Emma Ambrosi, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN, USA*

## **Artist Statement**

*A Stone's Throw* was created as a class project for an undergraduate first-year writing class and is partially based on my own experiences growing up close to a wooded trail in northern Minnesota. My initial intention for the story was to write and illustrate a simple narrative about the mental health benefits of nature exposure, based on both my personal experiences and the findings of several previously published research articles. The basic goal of the story is to introduce the reader to the concept of interacting with nature as a restorative experience and to portray experiencing nature as an accessible activity that requires no prior knowledge or particular skill set.

## Ideas for reflection:

1. Nature can be present around you in many ways, from a state park to a garden to a simple potted plant. What types of nature do you notice around your neighborhood? What types of nature might your students notice?
2. In the narrative, nature journaling is portrayed as one form of interaction with nature. What other forms of interaction could you engage with and/or teach to your students?

## Keywords

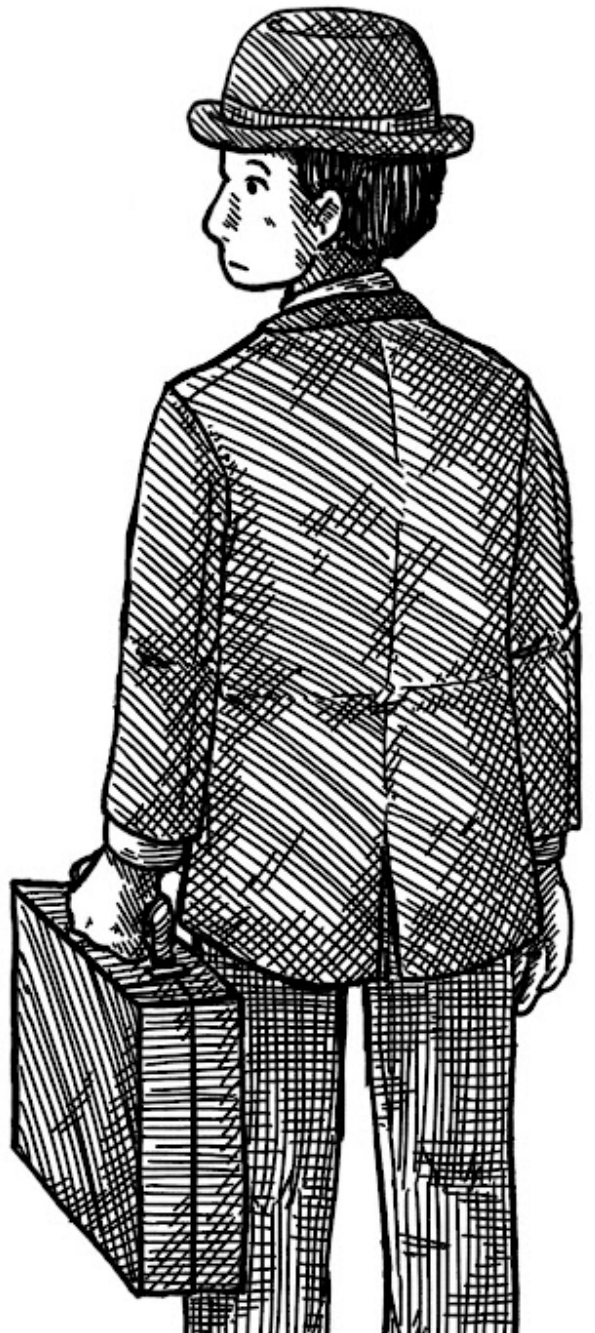
[Nature immersion](#), [embodiment](#), [biodiversity](#), [nearby nature](#), [nature journaling](#)

# A STONE'S THROW AND TEN PACES

OR

*Mr. Warbler's  
Succinct and Useful  
Field Guide to Flora  
and Fauna of the  
Northern Forest*

**Written & Illustrated  
by Emma Ambrosi**



A STONE'S  
THROW AND  
TEN PACES

OR

*Mr. Warbler's Succinct and  
Useful Field Guide to Flora and  
Fauna of the Northern Forest*

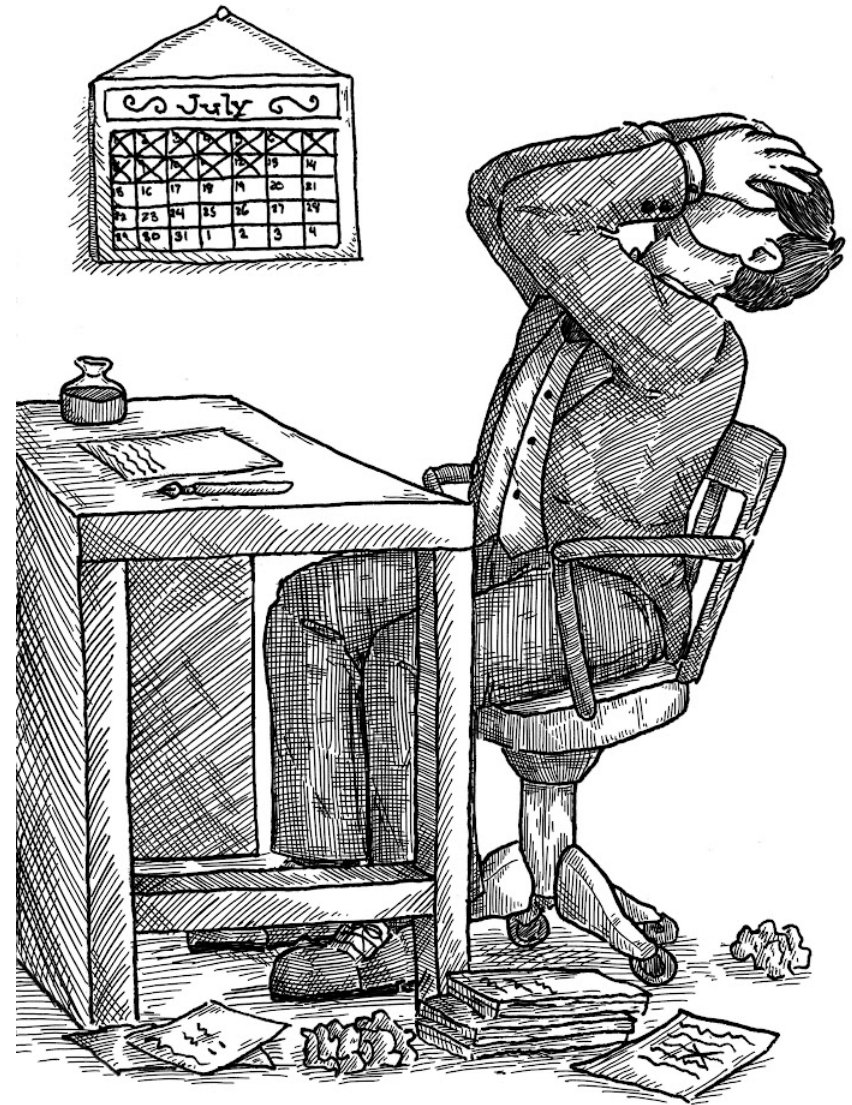


**Written & Illustrated  
by Emma Ambrosi**

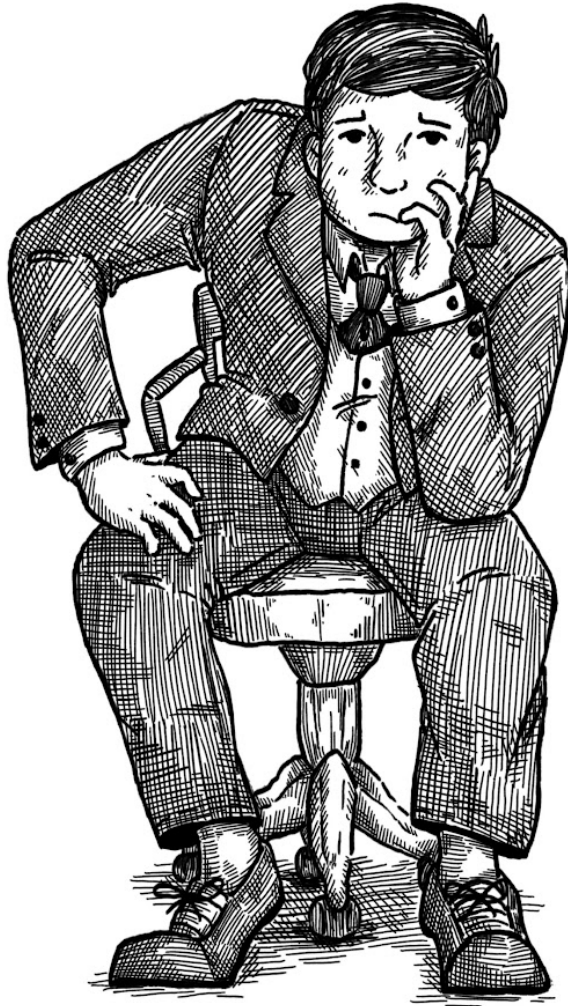
Mr. Henry Warbler is currently sitting at his office desk.

He has been trying for some time to formulate an ad campaign for a brand of toothpaste that comes packaged with cheap plastic figurines.

So far, his ideas are nil.



Through his splitting headache, he attempts to discern  
which word would be better:  
"incredible" or "delightful."



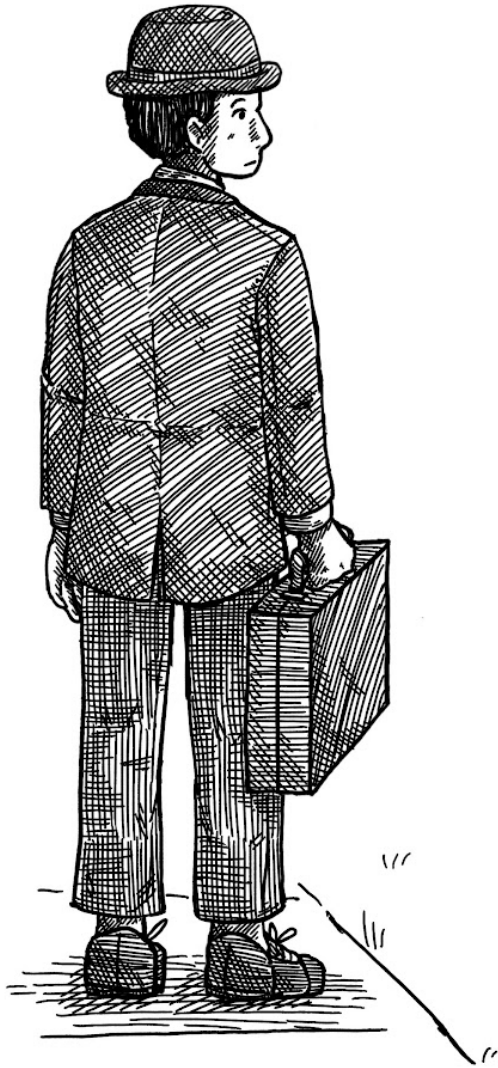
Perhaps the weekend will give him the respite he  
needs to make a decision -- but he is doubtful.

The Elysian prospects of the weekend never seem  
to live up to their potential.

Soon, his mind turns towards its daily ritual of  
retreading all of the minor faux pas and  
professional errors he has committed throughout  
the past decade.

Maybe he just isn't cut out for this.

To avoid aggravating his headache, Mr. Warbler charts a roundabout path home, along the edge of downtown.



During one stretch, he notices a patch of woods on the opposite side, with a trail leading through the trees.



At home, in front of the fire, Mr. Warbler is overcome by a deluge of thoughts.



He thinks about work.

He thinks about deadlines, and headaches, and suffocating waves of ennui.

He thinks about the babbling stream by his parent's house, where he played when he was a child.

He thinks about that little patch of woods, a stone's throw away from the sidewalk.

By Sunday, Mr. Warbler has thought himself in  
enough circles to come to a decision:  
he will visit the trail.

He dusts off a blank sketchbook (bought long ago  
for the sake of since-forgotten pastimes), puts on  
some suitable hiking attire, and strides with  
purpose back to the patch of woods.





Not ten paces after stepping onto the trail, he finds a suitable subject for his sketchbook.



Leaf



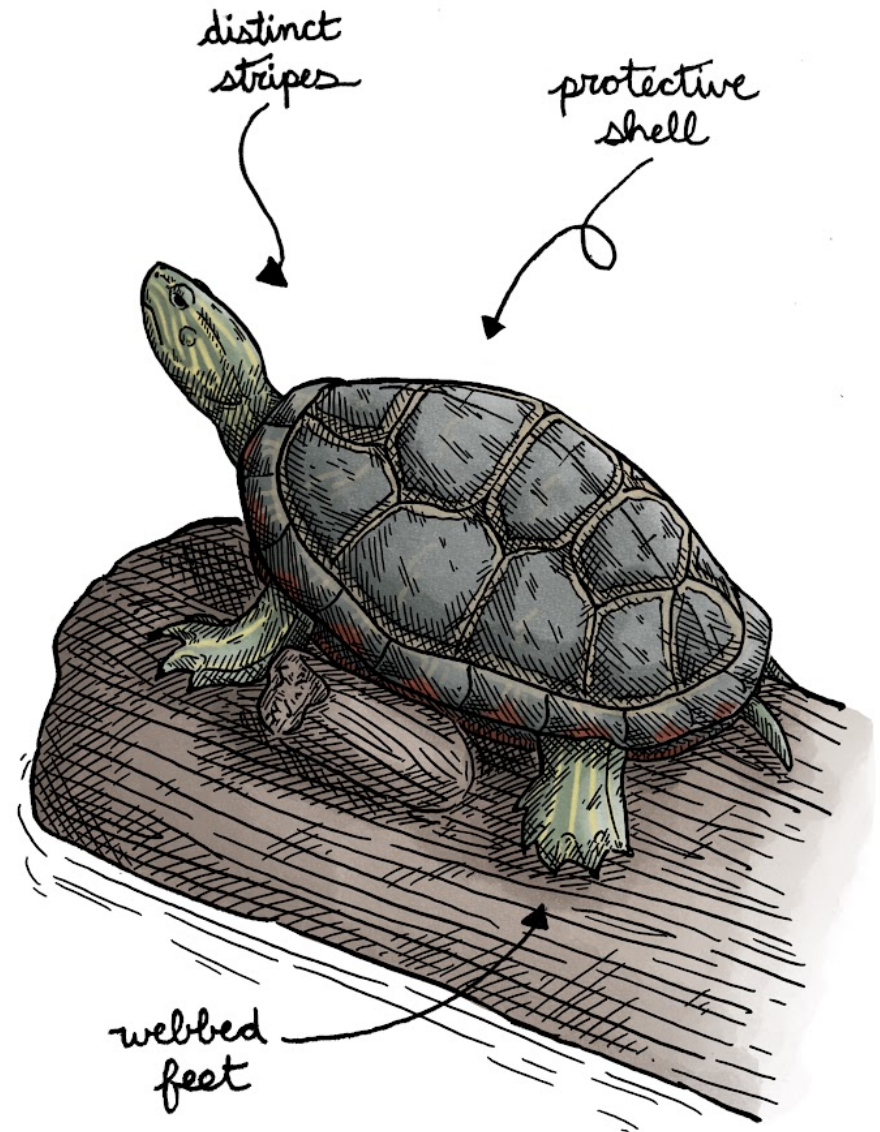
He diligently illustrates it, then labels it in as much detail as he can muster.

Farther down the path, he is suddenly startled by a strange bug fluttering towards him.

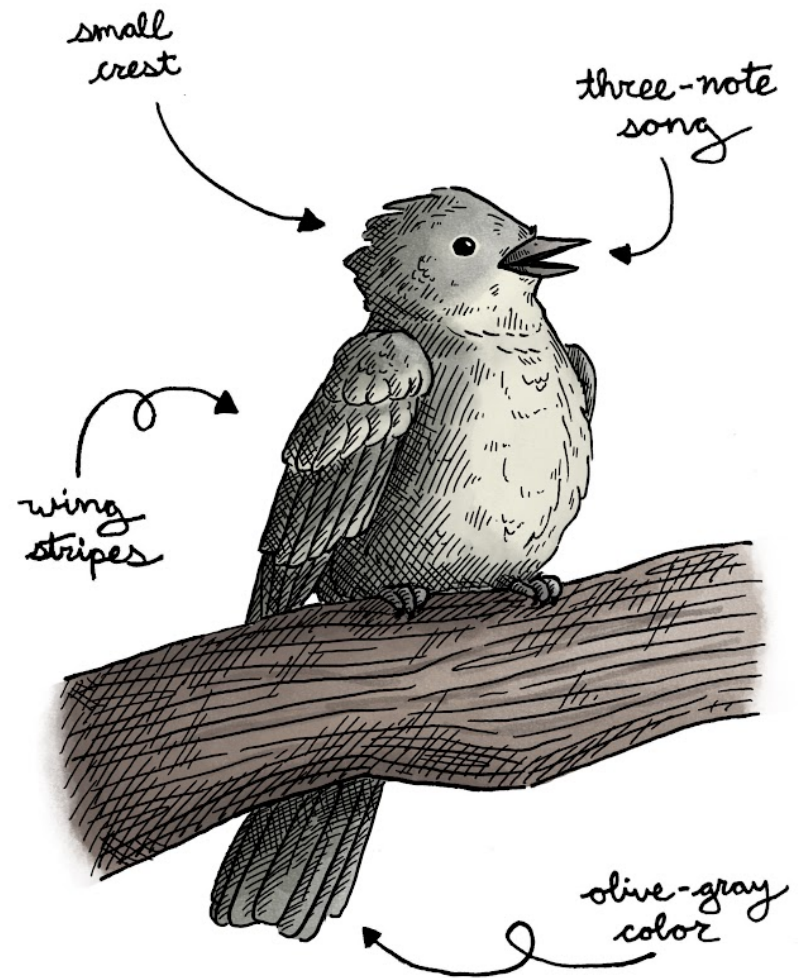
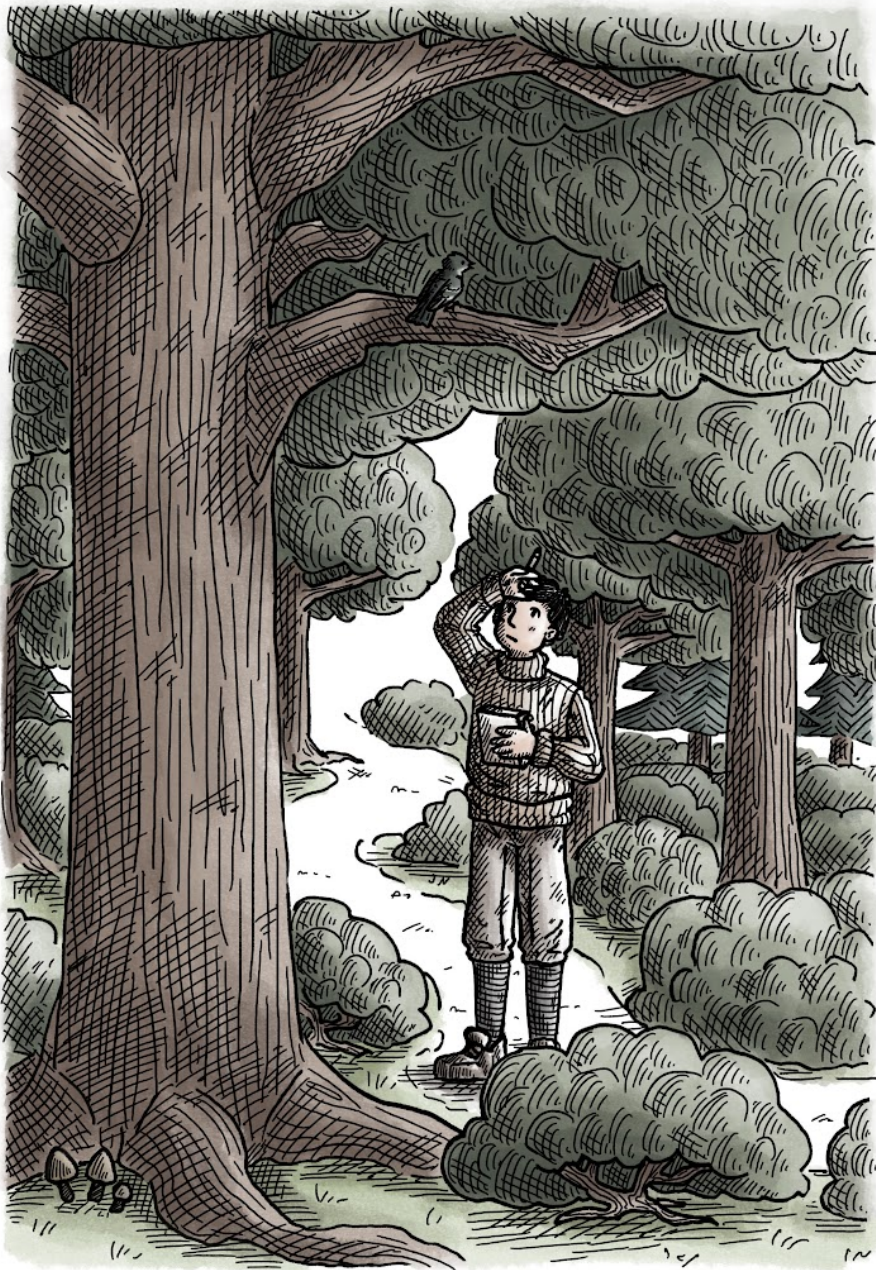


It seems a bit too inquisitive for his liking.

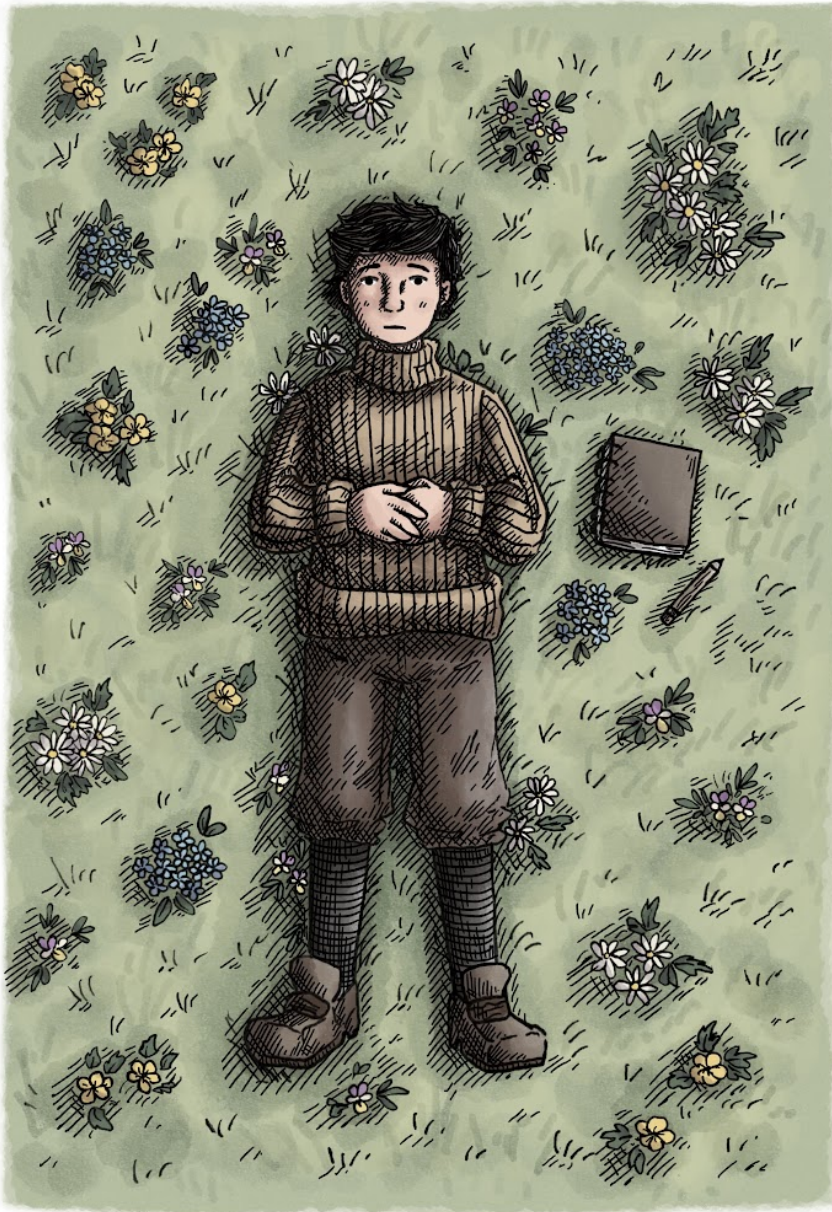
Where the trail branches to meet a pond, the baleful stare of a turtle catches his eye.



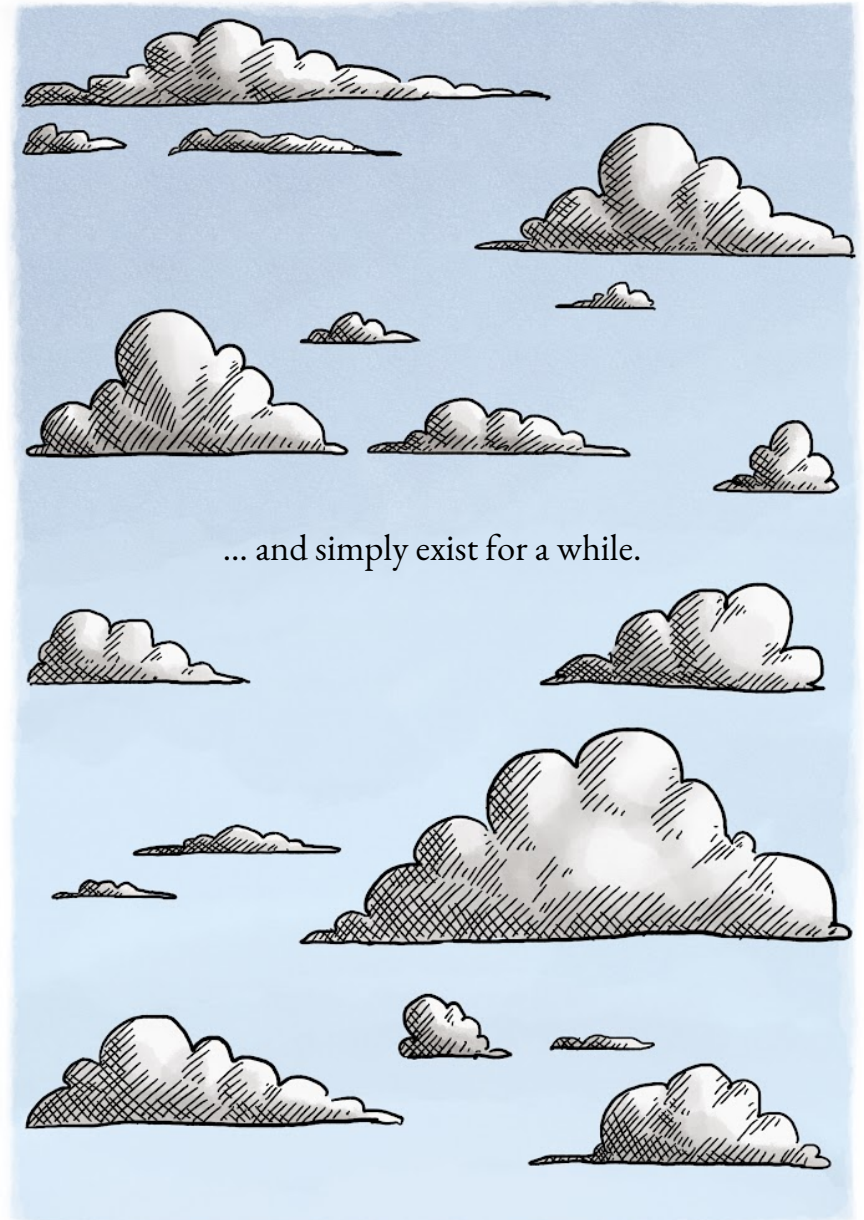
Farther down the path, he hears a little bird singing, and spots it on a tree branch.



After much diligent illustrating and note-taking, Mr. Warbler comes upon a grassy clearing full of flowers.



He decides to lie down, with the clouds overhead...





Mr. Warbler returns home, feeling tired and unkempt,  
but also rather accomplished.

After a brief shower, he eagerly turns his attention to the  
small stack of books now sitting on his counter -- the  
spoils of a detour to the city library.

Each one is filled with detailed illustrations and notes, all  
about the local flora and fauna in the surrounding area.

Their covers proclaim them to be field guides.



The following morning, Mr. Warbler goes back to work.



Perhaps he'll walk this way more often.





THE END

## Species Key



Oak leaf (*Quercus* sp.)



Common Wood-Nymph (*Cercyonis pegala*)



Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)



Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*)



Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)



Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)



Forget-me-not (*Myosotis* sp.)



Johnny-jump-up (*Viola tricolor*)

## Author's Note

This story was inspired and influenced by my own experiences walking through the woods of northern Minnesota. Themes were also incorporated from the following articles:

"A systematic review of evidence for the added benefits to health of exposure to natural environments," by Bowler, D. E. et al., 2010.

"The benefits of nature experience: Improved affect and cognition," by Bratman, G. N. et al., 2015.

"The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework," by Kaplan, S., 1995.

"Stress recovery during exposure to natural and urban environments," by Ulrich, R. S. et al., 1991.

"The effect of exposure to the natural environment on stress reduction: A meta-analysis," by Yao, W. et al., 2021.

