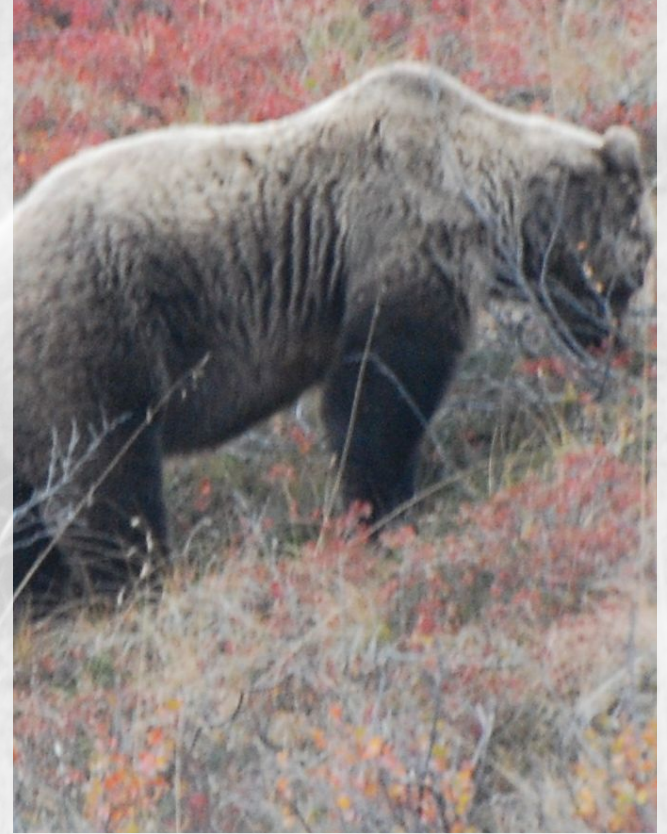


FORAGING for Beginners

Learning to be Responsible Animals

John C. Newman
Madison Public Library
Naturalist-in-Residence, 2022



John C. Newman

- Madison Public Library's first Naturalist-in-Residence, 2022
- Master Naturalist, nature & foraging educator since 2019
- B.S. Botany, UW-Platteville 2010
- "Forager" since 2000, mostly
- Lifelong nature lover, camper, stargazer, & science enthusiast



FORAGING



Searching in a specific place for resources, most often food gathered from non-moving creatures

- Land Plants (Wild Blueberries)
- Fungi, Mushrooms (Morels)
- Green, Red, or Brown Algae (Kelp)
- Bacteria (Nostoc)
- Bivalves, non-moving animals (Oysters)
- Crustaceans & Bugs (Crayfish, Ant larvae)
- Natural Products (Wild Honey)
- Medicine (Wild Ginseng)
- Utility Products (Nettle Fiber)

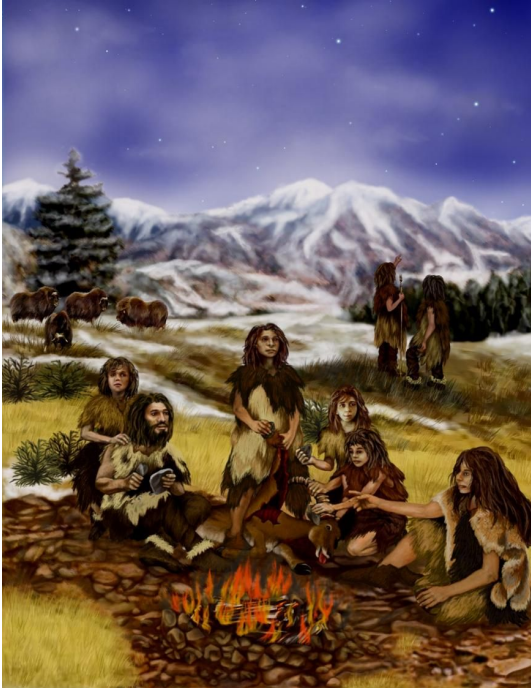
FORAGING (GENERALLY)



Looking around for food and stuff that you don't have to chase or trap (fishing rods are traps)

- Non-meat food
- Weird food
- Goopy food
- Even goopier food
- Sea food
- Creepy food
- Sweet food
- Healing foods
- Stuff, do not eat

RESPONSIBLE ANIMALS



Animals eat, move, make more animals.

We evolved to eat variety w/ friends & family

We remember people, places, foods, info.

We can plan, predict, & cooperate

All animals eat, this is about eating responsibly

...Who do we owe responsibility to?

RESPONSIBLE TO

YOU - Safety, Confidence, Comfort, Taste

YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY - Similar to above

COMMUNITY - Laws, Codes, Boundaries

EARTH - Food itself, Other life, Future



RE: YOUR BODY



Make yourself comfortable:

- Dress for the time & Place
- Have a plan for ticks & mosquitos
- Same for sun protection, first aid, etc
- Don't overburden yourself with books

Plan - and don't plan - to the extent *you* want

- Explorations
- Check-ups
- Harvesting trips



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WHAT I TAKE W/

- Clothes for comfort/utility
- Smartphone (emergencies, camera, notes, map sometimes, occasional internet use)
- A foodsafe way to clean my hands
- **Storage! (depends)**
- **Maybe a knife, trowel, gloves (depends)**
- ***Maybe* one small book**
- A snack & water
- An appetite
- A friend



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WHY DOES IT DEPEND



Every species is different -

- **Berries** are fragile, bring a wide container
- **Apples** are firm, they can be carried in a bag
- **Mushrooms** are divas, they like to breathe and stay dry, you also often want a knife
- **Roots** are hard to pull out by hand
- **Nettles** will sting bare hands!



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WHAT DO I WANT?

- Do I want wild salad?
- Do I want to put in the work for roots?
- Am I interested in wildcrafted medicines?
- Would I like wild herbal/fruit Teas?
- Do I have an aversion to all fungi?
- Do I want to make a wild fruit pie?
- How do I feel about Nettle Soup?
- Do I really want to find wild ramps?

Think about what you want to try most.

Pick 1 just one species *for now.*



RE: YOU & OTHERS



Unique safety concerns:

- **Misidentification**
- **Misuse**
- **Chemical Contamination**
- **Creature Contamination**
- **Unknown Allergy**



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MIS-I.D.

Major concern w/ **some plants & fungi, not all**

Don't try to befriend all plants at once

Trust your eyes and your knowledge

Pace yourself! No need to rush



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Red Raspberry vs. Goldenseal



Black Raspberries

Hard to
mis-ID



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>1 FORM OF I.D.

<https://www.tiktok.com/@alexisnikole/video/7147695694600604971>



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MISUSE



Make sure the part you are eating is the part you're supposed to eat, at the right time, and prepared the right way

Rarely is the whole plant eaten. Think Potatoes

Sometimes you must cook it, like Beans

**Major concern with Mayapples, Nettle,
Parsnip, some Fungi...**



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CONTAMINANTS

Not always a major concern, but trust your gut when it tells you “don’t eat here!”

Avoid roadsides, manicured lands

Speak with caretakers of area

Pay attention to signage

We’re trying to avoid pollution & pesticides



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CONTAMINANTS, 2



Who else has been eating my food?

Has my food been peed on?

Can it be washed off?

Should I cook this?

Is my food moldy?

Major concern with fungi and water plants



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ALLERGIES!

When you try a new food, you don't eat a lot

Take things slowly, like getting to know people

Wait 1-2 days after trying, then try making a dish

It's okay to not finish something you don't like

Listen to your gut, literally!



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RE: THE LAW



Stay on the right side of:

- Federal law
- State law
- County law
- City Ordinances
- Neighborhood associations
- Landowners

Surprisingly easy though -

Public Land vs. Private Land



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PRIVATE LAND

The simplest.

Talk with the owner of the land.

With specific consent, you can take anything

Except...



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ENDANGERED SPECIES



No matter where you are, endangered species are off limits.

Good Identification skills are not just about body-safety, but also legal-safety.

Scientific names become important:

Vaccinium vitis-idaea, Cowberry, Lingonberry, Mountain Cranberry



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PUBLIC LANDS

The Most Accessible!

Allowed:

- Wisconsin State Parks
- County Parks
- City Parks
- State Natural Areas, Wildlife Areas, & Forests

Depends:

- National Parks & Forests

Prohibited:

- Preserves
- Conservancies
- UW Madison Arboretum



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PARKS ARE FOR YOU



Wisconsin State, Dane County, & Madison City Parks all follow a general guideline - (Natural Areas, Wildlife areas, & State Forests too)

- You can pick Fruits (+Berries), Nuts, Mushrooms, Watercress, and Asparagus.
- Must pick these by hand (no machinery)
- They must be for non-commercial use
- Limits on gathering: none?

Commercial use likely needs a permit, and will be with limits.



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INVASIVES!

Always available! Legally! NR 45.04(1)(a)2. states:

“2. Herbaceous plant species that are listed as prohibited plant invasive species under s. NR 40.04 (2) (b) or listed as restricted plant invasive species under s. NR 40.05 (2) (b) may be removed without a permit issued under this chapter.”

The DNR even made a field guide!



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REVIEWING THE LAW

Wisconsin Endangered and Threatened Laws & List

PUBL-ER-001 2004
REV June 2015

Definitions

Wisconsin Endangered Species: Any species whose continued existence as a viable component of this state's wild animals or wild plants is determined by the Department to be in jeopardy on the basis of scientific evidence.

Wisconsin Threatened Species: Any species which appears likely, within the foreseeable future, on the

Private land: anything the land owner allows
except endangered species

Public Parks: fruits, berries, nuts, mushrooms,
asparagus & watercress, so long as it's for you
and all the invasives you can eat

Conservancies, preserves, Arboretum: nothing,
maybe invasives with permission?

National Parks: **Always depends, ask.**



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RE: THE EARTH



We have other responsibilities:

- Treading respectfully on land
- Picking and cutting carefully
- Harvesting with moderation
- Consuming what we harvest
- **Considering ourselves in relation to these creatures and lands**

INVASIVES

- Not native to this area
- Threaten native life
- Sometimes accidental intruders
- Often brought intentionally - esp. Edibles

Dandelions, Nettles, Dames Rocket, Garlic Mustard, Burdock, Wild Parsnip, Watercress

Some of these used to be farm crops before escaping captivity and popularity



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NATIVES IN DANGER



Ramps are tasty, also

- Not farmable
- Rare in their previously native areas
- Protected/endangered in RI, TN, QC, MN
- 7 years from seed to seed-bearing
- Seeds must germinate that year
- Can clone themselves, not diverse

Ramps are also important foods for the Menominee, Cherokee, Haudenosaunee, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe people



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INDIGENOUS AND RARE

Our culture doesn't have a way to cultivate these:

- They grow and mature slowly
- They aren't profitable
- They aren't predictable
- They won't grow in monoculture
- They won't grow in a lab
- We won't give them the land they want
- They won't tell us what they need

Called “unfarmable,” instead -



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“UNDOMESTICABLE”



These are creatures we cannot tame

So we must meet them on their own terms

They dictate the time and the place

But we can give them more land



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GENTLE HARVEST

Harvest fruits and nuts more than leaves, and leaves more than roots. Cut instead of tear.

Treating the creature with the respect you'd give a friend. Say hello, please, and thank you.

Be mindful of the next generation, of edibles, people and wild creatures. Try a 1-in-5 rule.

Listen a little with your heart.

Eat or give away everything you harvest, compost everything too dirty to eat.



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A WARNING



Nothing we forage can move.

They evolved all of their defenses to protect against impolite foragers and reckless hikers.

If we want easier foraging, we must be polite guests of the wild.

Otherwise? The wild will adapt to us.



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RESPONSIBLE ANIMALS

Walk carefully, and greet the plants that feed us.

Are careful to hurt these creatures and the community they're a part of as little as possible.

Make plans to eat or share these foods before they are eaten by mold and time.

Make plans to assist and give back to the lands and communities that feed us.



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RESPONSIBILITY

It's a recognition that our actions affect others, whether human or animal, plant or fungi, microbe or stone.

We impact the events of the present and future, just as the past impacts us today.
So act with care.



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