



Who with a heart, is not moved by the wild?

Tucked into every life, every cell and molecule ~ the push of blood, the lift of sap ~ is the planetary call of *wildness*. It hums in the billions of years of earth's great evolving. It sings in the singular, the communal, the pulsing web. The sounds of these wild ones, call through our recording, drawing us to reach for a wider wisdom.

*Arctic Tern, Sandhill Crane, Caribou, Ruby-crowned Kinglet,
Orca, Red-throated Loon, Fox Sparrow*

Each have their own moment, bringing us the songs and cries of birds, the grunts and clicking ankles of migrating caribou, the echo of orca off submerged fiord walls. Each (except the orca who swims from place to place following food) moves in the rhythms of migration, contributing its unique pattern to a planetary wisdom curved over long sweeps of time - Their very being is their message. Their lives are a resilient engagement with elements and other lives ~ a response to light and darkness, an attunement with the passage of seasons. The ones who join us are ones who yearly leave their wintering homes and head to the far north where continental land meets Arctic Ocean. Their destination is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the north-eastern corner of Alaska, where the refuge shares a common border with Ivvavik and Vuntut National Parks in Canada. The three together comprise one of the largest conservation areas in the world.



We chose to concentrate on the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** ~ a land whose fate lies at the crossroads of those who see its value in being developed for oil and those who see it as an essential legacy of conservation for the generations who come after us. The Refuge includes 20 million acres of mostly protected land, yet 1.5 million acres of coastal plain were left open for further study between use for fossil fuel development or wilderness protection. This contested area is a short strip of coastal plain known as the biological heart of the region. The Bush administration is aggressively determined to open it to drilling, although it would produce only six months of oil for US consumption*. For more than twenty years an equally diligent international movement of environmentalists and indigenous peoples have kept a steady determination to see the plain designated as a permanently protected wilderness. It is a keystone of conservation activism and is expected to affect every other less known effort to save local and regional lands from development.



Proposed drilling site



We chose this fragile gem of biodiversity because it is the chosen place of millions of migrating animals, as well as year round home to others. It is a way to honour and advocate for their rights and for the conservation of *wilderness, within itself the value.*

The geological story: 100,000,000 years ago a time of mountain building began in what is the continent's far north-western land. It formed the Brooks Mountain Range, curving the range up to a place close to the Arctic Ocean in the northeast corner of what is now Alaska. A narrow coastal plain formed between the mountains and the ocean. A convergence of compact ecological zones was formed ~ ocean,

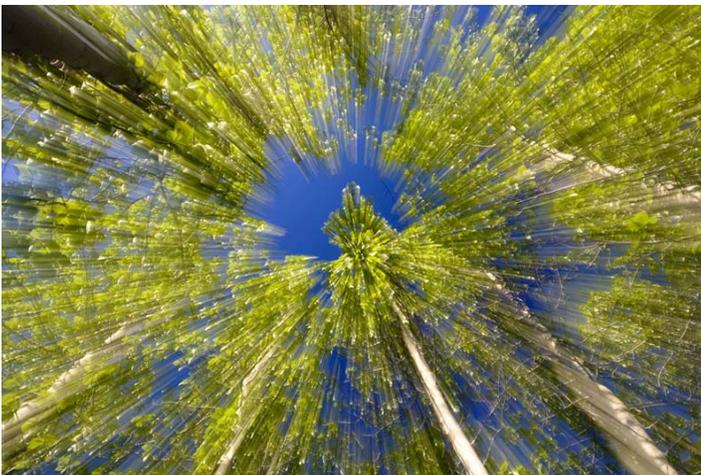
barrier islands, lagoon, coastal plain and foothills of tundra, mountains and the transition from tundra to forest (taiga), and boreal forest ~ each formation is created in relation to each other part ~ earth, air, water, living beings. All this developed within 120 miles, between ocean and the boreal forest south of the mountains.

What shines a contemporary international spotlight on the coastal plain ~ its amazing presence as a living land with the greatest variety of animal and plant life of any circumpolar north conservation area. For thousands of years this stretch of coastal plain has been the favored birthing ground of the 123,000 Porcupine Herd of Caribou ~ pregnant females lead the way, converging there after arduous journeys from their wide inland wintering range. They are joined by a breathtaking influx of birds, coming from six continents, all with the urgency to assure their species' continuance.



Over ten thousand years the Gwich'in Athabascan people of Alaska and Canada have formed their culture around a human/caribou relationship. They speak of themselves as *caribou people*. With reverence they speak of the coastal plain as **Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit**, "*the Sacred Place Where Life Begins*". Elders note that their people have traditionally refrained from going to this place considered sacred to the animals. Inupiat, coastal people with a sea culture woven with the bowhead whale and Gwich'in Athabascan know that *no amount of money can replace a bowhead whale or a caribou herd. Animals, wilderness, homeland ~ once lost ~ are gone forever*

From the wild ones, humanity is learning the freedom that opens with restraint, the expansiveness of love that imagines and protects what we will never see, the mystery that turns the workings of elemental well-being.



All around us is the promise of life.

The cup of tomorrows endlessly pours forth not only the present, but the possible.

Carolyn ~ writing

Jan ~ artistic design

* US Geological Survey estimate

Major sources:

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land by Subhanker Banerjee

Being Caribou by Karsten Heuer