

Awareness Quiz by Tamarack Song

These are troubled times. Our Mother Earth is being plundered like never before. The few remaining Native People, along with their dwindling wilderness homes, are rapidly being finished off by mercenaries. Our bodies are being wrecked by senseless work and garbage food, and our minds are drowning in commercial sludge. What is left?

For many of us the time has come to take a stand, join together and help turn things around. Some of us are inspired by the traditional peaceful warrior – the man and woman who dedicate their lives to honorably fighting for a just cause. We admire their clarity of vision and purpose, their sacrifice in the name of service, and their dedication to training and discipline.

An effective warrior needs to be constantly aware of everything that is going on around and within her, and be able to instantly attune to any situation at hand. Rather than being an observer, she needs to be immersed. For example, instead of watching a goose, she becomes the goose – the tug of wind under wing, the honk echoing over the marsh, the exhilaration of slide-landing chest-first in the water.

How does the warrior do this? We who belong to my warrior training fellowship practice by challenging ourselves with special questions that help keen our senses and sharpen our intuitive voices. At the end of this column are two of the questions we have used; see how you do with them and please send me your answers. The exercise should give you a feel for how much richer and fuller your life and your kinship with Mother Earth could be when walking the path of the warrior.

Here are your responses to the questions I posed in last issue's column:

1. Why do Snowshoe Hares and some other small animals often sit tight for a day or so after a new snow?

“Many small animals wait for wind, sun, and other factors to pack the snow. Otherwise they would flounder and sink in the new-fallen fluff and be easy prey for predators,” says Richard West, whose words are echoed by George Phillips and Rob Beiber. J.B. Bingle has another observation, “The air that moves in after a storm is often deadly cold.” “The snow may also physically cover them (as with Grouse),” adds Trapper John, “providing an insulating blanket.”

Tamarack's comment: The folks above did well at covering the two primary reasons. Another is shyness. Prey animals are naturally wary in new environments because they do not know the area or have established escape routes. Every snowfall creates a new environment, and it takes the animals a while to adjust to it.

2. Why does a Pine-Oak forest tend to have acid, sterile soil, while the soil of a Maple-Basswood forest is sweet and rich?

J.B. Bingle and Neal Halloran says that Pine needles and oak leaves are high in tannic acid and thus break down very slowly, whereas Maple and Basswood leaves break down quickly and sweeten the soil by contributing essential nutrients. The acidity of a Pine-Oak soil “helps to keep the weeds and undergrowth to a minimum,” adds Mark Lewis and Mary Esther. Ann Howlett notes that “Pine trees send out tiny feeder roots near the soil's surface by which they quickly assimilate all available nutrients.” Richard West points out that Pines and Oaks are

able to thrive in marginal acid soils, and J.B. Bingle adds that these trees actually help to create such soils.

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Tamarack's comment: When I am out foraging in new territory, I let the forest types show me where particular foods might be found. For example, Leeks (Ramps) and Sweet Sicily like sweet soil, whereas Blueberries and Bunchberries prefer acid. And let's not forget gardening; here are a couple tips: "Oak leaf mulch is a deterrent to slugs and snails." – Ann Howlett. "I gather big loads of Maple-Beech-Ash-Basswood mulch and hand-till it into my garden each fall." – George Phillips

Thanks to all of you for your responses. Following are two new challenges; have fun with them and I look forward to seeing what you come up with. Watch for the answers in the next issue.

New Questions:

1. Blue Jays will sometimes imitate a predator's call (often Hawk's), following it with their own alarm call. What are they up to?
2. Some Grasshoppers make quite a racket when they fly. Everything in the natural realm occurs for a reason; what possible benefit is such behavior to a Grasshopper?

Please address your answers "Quiz" and send to tamarack@teachingdrum.org<mailto:tdrums2@newnorth.net> or Teaching Drum Outdoor School, 7124 Military Road, Three Lakes, WI 54562.