

Making Ripples

Aloha, Autumn!

by Amanda Bancroft

Fall is like saying hello and goodbye all at once. In the Hawaiian language, aloha is used for both greetings and partings. Migrating butterflies, hummingbirds and geese pass overhead or visit our ponds and gardens for a brief stopover. Flocks have hardly arrived when they leave again. It is a time of sleeping and dying throughout much of nature, but for many, it is also a time of excitement and activity. Whitetail bucks are in their rut, competing for mates and chasing does at all hours of the day, so beware when driving.

For both squirrels and humans, autumn is the feast season of going out in great numbers and eating lots of food. The holidays are coming! Shout for joy or run and hide, as you wish. October (typically late October) is usually when peak fall color occurs in the Ozarks and Northwest Arkansas, so be on the lookout for rainbows in the trees. Right now is also the time to go looking for osage oranges and ripe pawpaw and persimmon fruits.

Fall may be a time for nature to wind down into winter, but for this writer, it is a time of heightened energy, mental clarity, physical exuberance and joyful living. The “spirit of aloha” has many layers of meaning, and often encapsulates an ethical code, as well as being described by some as the joyful sharing of life energy, or to consciously manifest life joyously in the present moment. What better time than now to do that?

Autumn is a great time to get outdoors when the temperature is nearly perfect and nature’s colors are the brightest (although the spring wildflowers may disagree). Hiking, camping, and outdoor recreation are terrific. But if you want to stay close to home this season, here are a few activity ideas that work well for families: corn husk dolls, painting or carving pumpkins, creating a leaf wreath for the front door or a laminated leaf mobile to hang indoors, or a visit to a local farm to pick pumpkins, navigate a corn maze, or take a hay ride (or a haunted hay ride). And of course there is always jumping in leaf piles!

Any activity you choose for yourself alone or with family is a great opportunity to learn about nature. You’re sure to encounter something unknown, whether it’s a fungus, insect, color pattern or type of plant. Take a picture if possible, and look it up online later – getting more familiar with the change nature undergoes in all four seasons connects us to our home and even teaches us about ourselves and our place on this planet. Besides, it’s fun!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.