

## *Musings on Mindfulness, Leadership & Nature*

### *Dragonfly Vision*

April 2026

*“Yin Birding”*



*It's a Merlin....I think*

*by b*

*Walking down the street in the neighborhood, when I heard a sound somewhere above, “che che che che, Chrrrrriiiiiipppppppppp” (or something like that) Pausing to listen, look up and around. Let the ‘mindfulness bell’ of the bird talk begin to shape next actions. Curiosity, who is it? Not Cardinal or Jay, definitely not Crow....just subtle shape perched in the winter bared limbs of the tree. “che che che che, Chrrrrriiiiiipppppppp.” Maybe a black tail ...pale brown in the body. Smallish but not tiny. Pulling out the phone, quick pic or two. Who is it? Zoom in...so faint. Breathing, curious, listening, enjoying the slowed tempo of the moment! Off in the near distance more familiar sounds, Cardinal, Robin. Turned on the recorder of my Merlin Bird App...waiting...ahhhhh, speak again before you fly off. Patience, patience...“che che che che, Chrrrrriiiiiipppppppppp” ...identification.....a **Merlin!!** So cool. Small falcon, so cool. Hunter of small birds...life is.... Followed its flight for a couple of trees, while another, maybe its mate circled about. Then gone.*

*Echoes of small joy of the moment. Kind of peaceful too. Curiosity stayed with me all the way home leading me to learning more of this neighbor, or visitor. Also known as a Pigeon Hawk or Lady Hawk, and while potentially migrating through, yet also known to winter over in cities, manifesting a kind of ‘behavioural plasticity’ habituating well to urban settings, hunting the small birds that have also adapted to the buildings and greenscapes of the ‘forest City’. Now better known, now feeling much closer to another in the tapestry of life.*

So much identification of other beings comes with developing one’s capacities for skilful observing and listening. Appreciating that winged beings often offer, at most, a somewhat hidden glimpse of a shape on a perch within the leaves and needles of a

tree or shrubbery, flash of colour, or black silhouette flying through the sky, or snippets of talk or song making my progressive lens laden eyes and aging ears not necessarily the most useful of tools in bird questing. Over the years I have acquired various binoculars and monoculars to aid in my desire to know other beings, along with developing various birding skills, and collecting a selection of identification guides Audubon, Smithsonian, Lone Pine, all good in their own ways. Remembering fondly my first official pair of binoculars, a birthday gift from my parents back when I was a budding biologist in university. These days I have only a monocular in the kitchen drawer, my birding sound App, a friend deeply skilled in the 'arts' of noticing the wild, and the simple intentions of my approach to 'yin birding'.

My 'yin birding' approach has meant mostly letting go of many of the "*Birders*" classic "yoga type *alignment cues*" of the Birding practice; such as carrying bird guides, having good binoculars, maintaining counts and identification lists, flocking with others, comparing success, or fundraising, lobbying to maintain habitat. A way of action so much worth celebrating just not where I am at these days. Instead my present birding approach emphasizes mindfulness intentions and strategies held with a gentle rigour, and willingness to pause looking out my window, to being outside whatever the weather. When sighting or hearing a bird, or noticing signs such as a nest or tracks in the mud, seeing them as a kind of 'mindfulness bell', stimulating a shift from need to 'get stuff done', to instead pause and notice, still and quiet, literally shifting time to be more in the moment. Staying safe. Breathing, lightly leaning into my senses, working to be a bit more present. Choosing to emphasise curiosity, 'who is that?' perched on that limb, making those sounds, manifesting that flight pattern or silhouette, or shape of a foot.

Softening, not needing to get identification exactly right. Even letting go of the need to end up with an identification answer at all. Similar to a process that I learned in my 'Earth Education' teaching long ago, that moves one through a sequence of responses to identification from first simply being in awe, 'so cool'; to then noticing its details. Maybe giving it my own name based on those details such as, "blue rocket delight", instead of defaulting to its more accepted names of Blue Jay or *Cyanocitta Crystata*, that in this case I happen to know. Recognizing in the process of questioning, not knowing or remembering can so easily add a sense of failure in the midst of wonder of the moment.

Allowing myself to simply enjoy the sighting, holding curiosity and question, without answer just small awe. In my yogic way as well, recognizing the potential for arising feelings of spaciousness, 'abbbbbb', peace or joy arising in the presence of the pause. Letting the experience stir a sense of what it means to be interconnected with all life, in what Thich Nhat Hanh describes as 'interbeing', along with a responsibility to do what I can to look after it.

That said, beyond more mindfulness oriented strategies, I still utilize brilliant Birder lessons learned over the years, even though my intentions may be different. Figuring out during that first university ornithology course project that setting up your early morning viewing spot facing east was not a good idea....as the sun rose. Or learning to watch some birds out of the side of my eye rather than pinning them with a full on 'two-eyed stereoscopic predator's gaze' which might spook them. Certainly, learning the importance of listening, so much a key to knowing another. The overlap of birding and mindfulness listening strategies, making me cherish all the more my Merlin Bird Identification App with its bird sound identification feature!

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***PRACTICE: Merlin Bird Identification App***

*There is so much to learn in connecting, studying, using field guides, and listening to songs, learning the wider ground of local ecologies good binoculars and birding groups, but one which, for me can provide a justification for smartphones is the access it provides to a free Merlin Identification App created by a team at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology\*. My biggest use of it has become using its taping feature to attempt to identify who the bird is talking away nearby.*

<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

*Practice: Add Merlin Bird App\* to your phone. Consider regionalizing your choices. Open yourself with **intention to the possibility of pausing** as you move to listen to a bird using its song analysis on the App to name who it could be. As in any birding exploit, allow for being wrong...Wait a moment, is that a life lesson too? :)*

*NEXT: Knowing how our phones can 'suck us in' and I know that walking without a phone is its own powerful adventure, consider turning off your cell data, and turning on 'Airplane Mode' (focusing on a different kind of flight:) As you explore, appreciate that you might look 'odd' to others stopped on a sidewalk or path looking upwards for minutes at a time, to which I have learned to let go of what others might think of my aberrant action...age perhaps:). And, I have also learned to subtly find a tree to lean against or a nearby bench if I don't want to stand out too much.*

*I've learned that it can take time waiting on the bird to speak so that it registers on the App, but oh how it provides a space of time to slow, still, and bring one to the act of "listening" in to the integral flows of the world along.*

*Once you have information, and have moved through the direct experience perhaps allow it to carry you to a next level of learning the story, the life of this amazing being, neighbour, visitor.*

*\*If curious about the origins of the App (I tend to like to know more about the roots of things that move through my life) I found this article about Cornell University helpful. <https://www.cornellsun.com/article/2025/06/kotlikoff-address-alumni-in-2025-state-of-t-he-university-address>*

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*Odd Bird by b*

Overall, remembering how powerful it can be to engage with the flows of nature all around, amidst the dominating busy flows of human kind, cars and travel, work and politics, cultural interactions which so easily distracts and drowns out our capacities to be mindful or present, reflective or spacious, content. Including how those human constructed flows shape our relationship to time and experience making us feel we can get so much done in a day, to never having enough, so often limiting our ability to truly 'drop into' the relationships that nourish. Distractions and busyness, further complicated and accelerated by the advent of springtime's explosive energies. Yet, knowing too from our practice that we may choose to create the balance at any moment, even as spring begins to accelerate. Pausing and listening, opening to curiosity and kindness: allowing the sound of the birds, whether familiar or unknown, moving us to slow, and to know more of our world.

If you might feel drawn to a time of slowing and listening, stilling and going within, nourishing both self and others, ie "yin drawn", April offers "5" Wednesday evening *Yin Space*, practices beginning on a full moon night on April 1st. Offering one source of grounding as the frenetic rhythms of spring begin to accelerate in the sun and the warmth.

*Solidarity Sunday* this month will focus on adding energy to the *International Day of Conscience*, in itself one more 'bird call/mindfulness bell' encouraging 'global reflection, dialogue, and ethical action to foster peace, tolerance, and sustainable development' (UN).

## **Offerings of Dragonfly Vision**

*Mindfulness, Leadership & Nature*

**April 2026**

*Yin Space*, - Livestreamed Wednesday night Yin Yoga classes

Wednesday Evenings

7:00-8:30 pm PST/10:00-11:30 pm EST

Monthly *Sliding Scale* 30.00-40.00 (includes 4 to 5 classes)

Drop In *Sliding Scale* 10.00-13.00

**OR...just pay what you can (just practice!)**

*Please do not let financial obstacles block you from a practice that serves you.*

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**Solidarity Sundays** - free once a month Yin Yoga all levels class focused on adding energy to Global Memorial and Celebration Days. A short hour and five minute gentle yin yoga practice ending with a metta loving kindness meditation for all beings, and folks choosing this work of 'be the change' in the world.

Time: 6:00-7:05 pm PST 9:00-10:05 pm EST

Sunday March 22nd - World Water Day

**Sunday April 5th - International Day of Conscience**

Sunday May 10th World Migratory Bird Day (officially falls on the 9th)

I will send invites to all who have practiced with me in *Yin Space*, before. If you would like to join or know of another please have them contact me before. This is an all levels class.

Spring is upon us, bringing new rhythms and movements of feet and hips; to dance outside the kitchen, walk in the woods, bend down into gardens, find an outdoor space to sit awhile, bike, lesson the layers of clothing for longer periods of daylight. Inviting us to simply be outside MORE. The month of April begins on a full moon night, reminding me of a song, once learned but still alive in me, by Karen Beth (1977) - a reminder of the potential of moving and gathering strength collectively in action.

*Under the full moon light we dance*

*Spirit dance we dance*

*Joining hands we dance*

*Joining souls rejoice.*

To month's ending on the *International Day of Jazz* on the 30th. So spring, with its chaotic, at times discordant, new and old, pulsing, shifting tempos, strengthening, overlapping rhythms and beats that invite us to new steppings. Birds are migrating, mating, nesting and birthing; sap is running and plants are budding, blossoming and

blooming; 'walking/play' shoes pulled out inviting exploration along new/old paths trails; or engaging with the world of worktime in spring of early tourists starting to move, getting taxes done or gardens begun; even looking a bit more intently at the movement of water all about, with greater thoughts of engagement from beach walking to more 'immersive' activities; inviting us to engage more fully with all the special beings in our lives in the world, nature's web, making every day an 'earth day'.

Yet, even as we open to the many opportunities and needs arising within energetic shifting to the more sun-filled 'Yang time of the year of doing', remembering the wisdom of creating balance between actions and rest. Still creating times to pause or move slowly, mindfully...listen to the sound of a bird, walk on the earth barefoot, hold a wee one in your arms with all your attention, walk your dog yet again wearing a few less layers, sit quietly beneath a tree, beside the water, or simply at home, at the beginning, ending or middle of the day, maybe making time for your mat or cushion, inside or out.

in weaving,

*brad*

brad davis

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*I am grateful to be able to live and share these ancient, and evolving practices of mindfulness, leadership and nature from the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lūnaapéewak Peoples ( and present day nations; Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation), in London, beside the river Thames, Deshkan Ziibi.*