

As I write this on a late Saturday afternoon, the glow of sunset is still lighting our valley. What a welcome change from even a month ago, when our days turned to dusk by mid-afternoon.

Like other parts of the west, our winter has been extremely cold. The powdery snow that fell around Christmas compressed and became ice as time passed with almost four weeks of no temperatures above freezing.

As the cold sank deeper and deeper into the ground, pipes that were unaffected at first began to freeze, and water seeping from springs and drains formed successive layers of thick ice.

We increased the heat in our bathrooms, kept water dripping in sinks and bathtubs at night, checked outside hose bibs daily, and did our best to keep all of our roads passable even as the snowpack turned to ice. We did additional plowing, scattered ashes from our woodstoves on the icy roads, and even spread several truckloads of gravel to add traction to the roads so that we could drive up to the area around the Main House.

The first day that the temperature rose above thirty-two degrees made us very happy!

Now instead of walking gingerly across ice, we are navigating through the muddy areas and puddles the melting snow is leaving behind. We know that winter is not over (nor would we really want it to be), but most of us have had enough of those sub-zero temperatures for the time being.

Our winter birds have been very active. Some of us put out birdseed during the bitter cold to help them out. We can often hear owls calling to one another at night. Now that the trees are bare, we can clearly see when hawks or owls sit watchfully on the branches. And the pond usually has at least three or four ducks paddling around. During the deep cold, their swimming area got pretty small as the pond iced over, but most of that has melted now.

This is the time of year when large sheep herds are trucked in from Utah to graze on public lands in our valley. Since School property is adjacent to BLM land, we often have sheep grazing right up to our fence lines, watched over carefully by large white Alsatian guard dogs, llamas (sometimes), and sheepherders

on horseback accompanied by border collies. The sheepherders usually park their wagons about half a mile from our northern boundary, which keeps the action close at hand and gives us an opportunity to watch this very unique part of life in the West.

Probably not coincidentally, we have been serenaded with a chorus of coyote calls for the past few weeks, usually at night but sometimes during the day, too. Although it is difficult to figure out just where the coyotes are from listening to their calls, occasionally we can see them running across the fields down by the springs.

The cold weather and short days encourage us to stay indoors and catch up on reading and indoor projects that we may have put off during more hospitable weather. However, we continue with the daily activities that serve the School: readying rooms for visitors, cleaning and organizing, attending mid-week and Sunday classes, and meditations. Our Thursday afternoon class, which is focused on reading and discussing *The Six Days of the Creating Process*, has been especially interesting, and ties in well with our upcoming summer seminar.

Although it's still very early, a few small reminders of spring can be found here and there. Several of the iris leaves on the south-facing slope are turning green. And a look at the cold frame in front of the Murrays' house, which has been covered with snow for over a month, reveals green spinach and an entire row of small salad greens beginning to grow.

No matter where we live, we can tune into the rhythm of the seasons, and know that we are integrated into and cooperate with the energies of that process, whether it be winter's indrawing or spring's slow reawakening.

May the peace and power of the infinite spirit, which passes all understanding, hold us and keep us in the love of the Christed consciousness, while we are seemingly separated one from another.

Susan Wetmore

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