



# Learning New Routines

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Since the beginning of March we have had to better understand the meaning of connections. Connections of family, friends, our professional colleagues, and medical experts. We have also needed to learn new meanings of some all too familiar words. Words such as Zooming, social distancing, shelter-in-place, PPE (personal protection equipment), asymptomatic, and essential workers.

It reminds me of another time in our recent history where we all had high anxieties having to learn new meanings and skills. The dawning of the personal computer age. We were introduced to new word usage. Words like bits and bytes, modems, rebooting our computer, the possibility of a memory overload to our computer's hard drive and floppy drives. We even had to accept that a mouse held in our hand made computer commands possible. Both of these periods of time, the present pandemic and that of the personal computer, have radically changed our daily lives. We have had to learn a "new normal." The events beginning in March of this year have created connections in life that are still changing.

As woodland owners, not only in Kentucky but worldwide, we recognize and enjoy the sense of being outdoors. As the new year 2020, woodland owners undoubtedly began the annual lists of "need to do" projects to improve our individual woodlands for the immediate tomorrows as well the distant ones. I made the same list early this year as I sat in front of my woodstove in my home recognizing all too well where the wood comes from and appreciating more the warmth that it provides.

As the crisis began to grow this spring so did my desire to forget the "need to do" list and began to appreciate more the value of my woodlands as they stand today. I began to appreciate my outdoor spaces more. I realized also that not everyone has that experience of seeing a woodland wake up from a deep winters sleep and begin its ritual of restoring new life in the form of flora and fauna that each woodland acre provides. I quickly realized my woodlands connect my family, friends, and worldwide neighbors in each of the products the woodlands produce. Without doing anything to our renewable sustainable managed woodlands, we are providing homes for wildlife and clean water that enters much larger watersheds to be used by others. Without doing anything to these woodlands fresh air is being produced for the health of others.

As spring finally emerged, people that had been quarantined for weeks realized also the social need and value of woodlands—even if it was only a park setting—the need to be outside. To be out and to connect with those outdoor experiences that had been harbored all winter.

I am an absentee woodland owner but this year, knowing the epidemic was not going to be over quickly, I began to revisit my property more often. The visits were made not to check items off items of the "need to do" list, but to simply enjoy, reflect, and be inspired by being out and walking those trails that provide each of us a sense of appreciation.

As you read these words, I do hope all is well with your family and friends and you too have made some connections with woodlands.

*Photo courtesy: Renee Williams*

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