

Letter to the Editor, April 2006

The Price of Development

I drive along our roads and see another forest bulldozed. I see the trees stacked neatly side by side. I see soil overturned. I see the tangles of vines and thickets and shrubs, once shelter for many, now piled, ready to be burned. I see life disrupted.

I see this change and I wonder...I wonder about the life that lived here. I wonder about the box turtles and wood turtles that lived in the leaf litter now pushed to one side – are they buried in the soil? crushed by the bulldozer? I wonder about the frogs that clasped the tree branches as they fell – did they leap to safety? Where could safety be found?

I wonder about the salamanders that migrated a half mile or more to the secret vernal pool that laid nestled in the forest bottom – a wetland that was never known or noticed....except perhaps by the driver of the bulldozer who wondered why his equipment sank more deeply into that part of the forest floor. Did the 30 year old salamander leave the pool before her home was overturned? What would she return to next year if she had departed in time?

I wonder about the caterpillars and other insects, busily playing their part in this dance of life that was the forest ecosystem. There is no role for them now. I wonder about the foxes, raccoons, opossums, owls and woodpeckers who were raising their young here....their nests and eggs now smashed, their burrows and babies gone. I wonder why we call this “development” and why the cost of this development never includes the true price paid.

There is magic in our woods, our wetlands, our fields. It is the magic of life and diversity yet we plow it under and raze it to the ground. What price are we willing to pay for “development”? How deep will we reach into our pockets before we realize that without nature, we are poor?

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