

Winter

by Paul Gruchow

From Journal of a Prairie Year, 1985, University of Minnesota Press. In this book, Paul's sections are titled by the seasons and the essays are simply numbered. Here are numbers 1 and 4 from Winter.

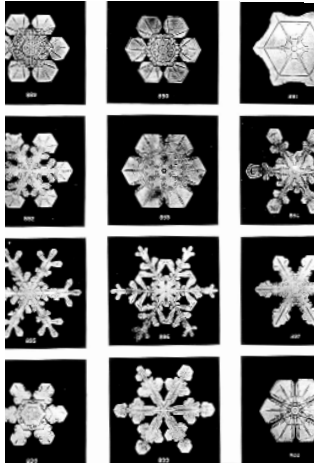


Plate XIX of "Studies among the Snow Crystals ..."
by Wilson Bentley, 1902
Historic NWS Collection; NOAA

1. BY THE SOUND of foot against snow, one can tell the powdery snows of early winter from the wet snows of late winter, and both of them from the denser, harder snows of high winter.

One can tell the crunch of snow against foot on a day of more than 20 degrees Fahrenheit from the squeak of snow on a subzero day. One can distinguish by the sound of it, the thin snow of open places from the drifted snow of sheltered places.

The deep snow of the first of January does not sound at all like the crusted snow after the thaw of early February. The Ojibwe, in fact, named the months for the differences between the two: first there was the Moon of the Deep Snow and then the Moon of the Crusted Snow.

Are the sounds of the snow based on differences in crystalline structure? Snow crystals, with sometimes six, sometimes three, sometimes five sides, form in hexagonal plates at temperatures from 28 degrees to freezing; in needles from 24 degrees to 27 degrees; in hollow prismatic columns from 19–23 degrees; in another kind of hexagonal plate from 11–18 degrees; in fernlike stars from 4–10 degrees; in plates again from minus 13 to 3 degrees, and again in hollow prismatic columns at temperatures below thirteen below zero.

There is some principle of physics at work in the music of snow underfoot, just as there is a mathematical principle to explain why snow drifts at a fenceline in a scalloped pattern of elongated ovals rather than in the straight line of the fence. It does so for the same reason that a river meanders rather than advances in a straight line. I cannot explain the mathematics involved any more than I

can articulate the structural underpinnings of the music of snow underfoot.

If I could explain the sound of a footstep upon the snow or come to know the underlying principles that govern the meandering of the snow along a fenceline, I should then be attuned in a new way to the largely unheard and mysterious music of the universe. It has often been said, and I shall argue the case myself, that the only remark of nature is its silence, but that is not because the world around us has nothing to say. It is because we come unequipped with ears to hear.

I am as unequipped as the next person. I listen in the dead of winter to the song the snow sings, and strain as I might, I cannot make it out. I listen to the coyotes howling in the nights and to the crows cawing in the mornings and to the wind washing in the leaves of the cottonwoods in the evenings, and I know that I have not really heard anything of it except the mystery in it. But the mystery has captivated me, and under the spell of it, I have meandered, like the drifts of snow, across the wide prairies.

4. The blue light of the full moon, the Moon of the Crusted Snow, was already beginning to wane.

Talcot Lake. Midafternoon. The glare of sun on snow was blinding. It was necessary to make a shade with your hands to see into the distance.

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A PUBLICATION OF
THE MINNESOTA PROJECT
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Viewpoint

IF MOST PEOPLE BOUGHT food locally, our farms would stay in business, and grow diverse food crops, with better prices to farmers and fresher, less processed food on our tables.

If our power came from wind, biomass and solar, we would keep hundreds of millions of dollars working for Minnesota's economy.

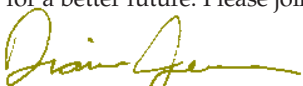
If our farmers had a conservation safety net, they need not fear world trade sanctions, nor watch as commodities continue to fall in price even as they have successfully grown more bushels per acre, using more inputs at greater expense. Farmers of all crops — commodities as well as fruits, vegetables, and livestock — can benefit, as can the public from the healthier soil, water, and foods.

As clear as this vision is, it will not be achieved without great effort.

Entrenched interests in agri-business, food and energy are fighting these changes. These interests are willing to bet global warming is not real, the American way of eating — fast and processed — is fine, and that farming will survive on huge mechanized farms, if not here, then in Brazil.

I am willing to bet that you do not agree with them, that you are willing to work for and support positive change.

Please support this change by supporting the Minnesota Project with a generous contribution. We have been and will be successful with your support. As winter leads to spring, so does our work focus on the positive. We see, we work for a better future. Please join us. ♣



Diane Jensen, Executive Director

Dear Readers...

BOOTS CRUNCH ON SNOW, and to hear Chickadee's song, I have to stop walking. Stop walking and pull off my hood, which causes the little sprit of a bird to flicker off. Hood back on, I hunker into the walk and my eyes are rewarded by the flash of Cardinal, red in Cedar branches.

This walk was several years ago. Maybe by the time this newsletter comes into your mailboxes, we will have a taste of "real" winter, but something in me doubts that. Nevertheless, this issue of *Community Connections* discusses winter — true winter — and the cultural power of that season and its gifts. More and more, our culture simply forgets to "go inward" at all, doesn't it? If forced to — by blizzard or below zero — we come out grateful, dizzied by the gift of a "free" day of solitude or family. Yet what if winter didn't ever again force us to slow down? What would?

So one winter gift is a shot at solitude in a crazy race for time. But another is the snap of cold, the art of the frost on an office window, the sharp intake of breath as the door opens to blazing white. And snow — what lovely shrouding, blanketing, comforting, unyielding stuff it is.

I believe that "snow" comes in second only to "love" as a subject for poetry.

We remember Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," with its opening: "Whose woods these are, I think I know. His house is in the village, though; he will not see me stopping here to watch his woods fill up with snow." Ahh for that quiet kind of travel when one might stop and watch.

And go find Mary Oliver's "Lonely White Fields," where the owl "fades back into the branches, the snow goes on falling flake after perfect flake." Or Billy Collins with his poem, "Snow Day" where the Kiddie Corner School is closed, the Ding Dong School, the Little Sparrows Nursery School, the Hi-Ho Nursery School and the Toadstool School — clap your hands — all closed. "And now," continues Collins, "I am listening hard in the grandiose silence of the snow..."

May we all listen that hard and find, in our listening, a worthy winter silence. And let it start here, with the words of Paul Gruchow or great poetry, with Loni's travels seeking silence or Chef Paul's winter recipes. Consider the meaningful projects of the Minnesota Project affecting food, land, and energy. I challenge us all to embrace our seasonal culture and capture winter's solace in the months ahead.

— Beth E. Waterhouse, Editor,
Community Connections, since 1992
beth.waterhouse@usfamily.net

Plants – Energy – Agriculture – Policy

by Mark Lindquist, Minnesota Project

AMERICA FACES daunting challenges in securing sustainable supplies of energy. U.S. oil production peaked in 1973 and has been declining ever since. Natural gas prices have exploded in the past few years. Thus, the environmental consequences of energy choices are sobering, if not depressing. Yet in "light" of all that, U.S. Agriculture has a tremendous opportunity to solve many of our energy problems.

Farm leaders throughout the Midwest and the U.S. are increasingly focused on addressing the country's energy problems in order to create new market opportunities for farmers. One group of national farm leaders has established a vision that farms and forests will provide 25% of all the energy consumed in the U.S. by 2025. The vision is broad and includes

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Bringing It Home

by Trish Johnson, Minnesota Project

I HAD A WONDERFUL conversation the other day with Executive Chef Paul Lynch. We talked about his culinary path and his commitments to regional products and small Minnesota farms. His career has taken him around the world to places like London, Hawaii, the Caribbean, Texas and fortunately for us, Minnesota. “Some chefs prepare the same recipes no matter where they go,” says Chef Paul. “My favorite recipes change depending upon where I am and what is available locally.”

The menu that Chef Paul has created at FireLake Grill House reflects traditions of the Midwest. This time of year, you’ll find things like pumpkin bisque, walleye, scallion and wild rice cakes and bacon-wrapped buffalo ribeye.



Paul’s leadership and passion also speak to the “taste of place” commitments that the Minnesota Project’s Heartland Food Initiative is promoting. Chef Paul is a steering committee member for the Heartland Food Initiative, which unites the efforts of chefs, farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, nonprofit organizations, and public institutions to increase the availability of high quality, sustainably produced local foods and to generate pride in Minnesota cuisine. “Supporting local farmers and producers is the right way to approach our food system,” he states. “As chefs, we can’t sit on the sidelines and watch the erosion of our rural communities and family farms.”

The Heartland Food Initiative is focused on creating a network and distribution framework so that local foods are readily available for restaurants, institutions and markets. In order for this to happen, Chef Paul highlighted three areas that need to change. First, farmers need to recognize that diversifying crops can generate money for their farms. Chefs need to take part in this, pointing out the demand for diverse, local products. Second, distributors need to explain the standards that need to be in place in order for them to purchase from farmers, and then, farmers need to be consistent in delivering such a product. Finally, Chef Paul explains that when chefs order food, they need to be committed to first purchasing what is grown and produced locally. “When melons are in season, for example, we should find as many things as possible to prepare with melons and make those seasonal moments shine. Whether it’s a Sunday dinner at home or a Friday evening meal at a restaurant, seasonal food should be on our tables. We as a society need to get back to celebrating the season.”

In talking to Chef Paul and looking at his menu, I feel a sense of hope that we all really can enjoy more

local foods and regional cuisine. Minnesotans have opportunities every day to impact the availability of local foods. We can ask for more locally grown food at our markets, support restaurants that prepare locally grown foods and most of all appreciate every mouthful of local food that hits our palette. We all play a part in bringing regional cuisine home. ♣

Enjoy two recipes straight from Chef Paul to your kitchens. Trish learned that the local products/providers he used for these recipes are: Pepin Heights Cider and Apples, 6-Points Berkshire Pork, Franklin Street Bakery (for the Cranberry Wild Rice Bread) and Eichten’s Tiltset Cheese. See sidebar.

FireLake Smoked Berkshire Pork Melt with Apple Butter

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 slices Cranberry-wild rice bread
- 1 oz butter
- 1 T. mayo-mustard mix, spread on one slice of bread
- 1 oz FireLake apple butter (see recipe below) – spread on other slice of bread.
- 8 oz smoked pork loin, shaved thin
- 1/2 oz cider reduction
- 3 T. caramelized onions
- 2 oz tilsit cheese, sliced

PREPARATION: Butter bread, brown on griddle. Spread slices as noted, apple butter on one side. Warm pork with splash of cider reduction, spread across bottom slice. Top with onions and cheese, melt in warm oven. Top with bread slice spread with apple butter. Cut in half.

FireLake Apple Butter

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 lbs Macintosh apples (or Cortland) cored and sliced
- 5 lbs tart apple (Haralson) cored and diced
- 1/2 quart fresh apple cider
- 3 cups sugar
- 1/2 T. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. allspice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 T. salt

PREPARATION: Bring cider and sugar to a boil. When sugar is dissolved, add apples and spices. Bring back to a boil, stirring every few minutes. Reduce heat, add lemon juice and salt. Cook apples, cider, and spices over medium heat for 20–30 minutes, until smooth and thick.

Transfer to stock pot. Simmer on medium-low for 5–6 hours, stirring and scraping down every 30 minutes, until smooth and thick.

Sterilize pint canning jars and lids by boiling in water for 10 minutes. Fill jars, leaving 1/2" head space. Process for 20 minutes (make sure water covers the jars by 1") Leave cool overnight. Store in dry, dark place. Will keep for one year. Yield: 3 pints.

Both recipes compliments of Chef Paul Lynch, FireLake Grill House, 31 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402, (612) 216-3473

Clean Energy in Minnesota's Future

by Lola Schoenrich, Energy Program Director

THIS YEAR — three major hurricanes hitting the U.S. in one season, and more named tropical cyclones than ever in history, wild nighttime tornadoes in the South, a glorious long fall that broke one high temperature record after another — all have gotten our attention. It's hard to miss the fact that it's getting warmer, and fast.



While the public now agrees that global warming is here, few of us have any idea what to do about it. Scientists do know, however, and there is a virtual consensus that we will have

to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions by 60 to 80%. Soon. Some say this is needed within 50 years; some give us a bit more time. All agree that we must stop the growth in energy use immediately. The good news is that this offers us an opportunity to re-tool and modernize our energy system, ending our over dependence on coal and oil and creating a clean, efficient, secure energy system for the 21st Century.

Over the past two years, I've been part of a group of 10 foundations and 30 nonprofits from the Upper Midwest, a group calling itself "RE-AMP." We have systematically thought through the opportunities and challenges of a new clean energy system in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. We set the audacious goal of reducing global warming pollution from electricity generation by 80% by the year 2030, and identified four key drivers.

When you think about it, you quickly realize that Minnesota and the Upper Midwest are well equipped to lead in developing a new highly efficient, clean, secure energy system. We have both the natural resources and trained high tech professionals. If we set clear goals and let Midwest ingenuity and technical innovation loose, we can build new industries. We have biofuels, wind energy, and energy from farm waste now. In the future, we could have new bio-based industries that could create pharmaceuticals, plastics, fabric, lubricants, and a host of products from crops instead of oil.

The biggest opportunity, meanwhile, is to greatly increase the energy efficiency in our homes, businesses, and industries. I am honored to be the team leader of the group looking close-

ly at how we can put *efficiency* in place. Did you know that there are cost effective technologies on the shelf today that can greatly reduce our energy use and reduce everyone's bills? How many of you have compact fluorescent light bulbs in your lamps at home and at work? They use just 1/3 the energy of the old-style light bulb. One of our challenges is to make sure that these and hundreds of other technologies and energy saving practices get used. Even greater gains will be realized as innovations come on line.

Our biggest challenges are the twenty-four new conventional coal power plants proposed across the region. If we sink billions of dollars into old technologies that will be with us for decades, it will be much harder to build the 21st Century energy system that we need. Instead, we should be shifting to efficiency, new clean energy, and finding ways to permanently store the carbon dioxide that comes from the coal we do use in old oil and gas wells and other geologic formations.

You may know about the clean energy opportunities in Minnesota. You may know that we could quickly supply about 20% of our electricity from the wind. They do it Denmark and Germany and it's even windier here. Minnesota's Renewable Energy Objective of 10% by 2015 will get us part of the way to that goal. A firm standard that would add enough new renewable electricity to power one million homes

would make it a certainty. Research now being done by the University and private entrepreneurs on storing wind energy and pairing it with biofuels could greatly increase the amount of wind that could be integrated into the electric grid.

A clear roadmap to a new, clean 21st Century energy system in the Midwest will help us at the Minnesota Project stay focused as we move ahead with our energy work. Continuing participation and leadership in RE-AMP will enable us to align with others all across the region. Minnesota Project and other groups will set our sights high and keep focused on success. Take a close look at your energy uses, and stay tuned for more from this Midwest partnership. ♣

"If we sink billions of dollars into old technologies that will be with us for decades, it will be much harder to build the 21st Century energy system that we need."

Conservation Investments

Replacement for a Broken Policy

by Loni Kemp, Senior Policy Analyst

A MERICAN AGRICULTURE IS IN BIG TROUBLE. Yet if you walk into any grocery store, you'll doubt it, seeing plenty of food and relatively low prices. It's what you *can't see* that fortells an unacceptable future for American agriculture if we don't change something. What you can't see behind the grocery shelf are: the environmental degradation, the loss of farmers, the impending failure of export markets, a growing dependence on high-cost energy, and rural decline — all signals pointing to big trouble ahead.

These troubles are not the inevitable result of progress or history, they are the result of specific policies that must be changed. Government subsidies to farmers were created some eight decades ago to soften the normal risks of farming — weather and price fluctuations. These subsidies, applied to the few select crops of corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, and cotton, now continue to be offers that cannot be refused. A sure thing is always better than a risk, and farmers have converted many acres to the subsidized commodity crops, making overproduction and chronically low prices the context for all agriculture policy deliberations.

Monoculture crops use greater quantities of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and practices erode the soils, sending them down the nation's rivers and lakes and into the nation's groundwater. Production choices that benefit the environment — pasture and rangeland hay as well as crop rotations — have been squeezed out, leading to a disappearance of wildlife habitat.

Even the national goal of exporting our bounty to the rest of the world is in deep trouble. This year promises to be the first year when we *import* more food than we export, leaving it to the multinational agribusiness giants to profit from global trade in subsidized grains while even farmers do not profit. The World Trade Organization looms with the definitive blow — the U.S. is

being challenged to drastically cut our own subsidies because they distort trade.

Fortunately, the 2007 farm bill is an opportunity for change. Good policy starts with clear goals, and what we really want are profitable farms that protect the environment. Indicators that we are moving in the right direction would be greater landscape diversity, more young farmers, and a healthy environment.

- **Landscape diversity** reflects more choices for farmers. When there is more land in pasture and other perennials, then there is cleaner water and more habitat. Livestock on grass lead to fewer factory farms and a reduced need for those commodity grains.
- **More farmers on the land** equal a future for American agriculture and new farmers will open new markets, including local demand for fresher foods. Renewable energy from agriculture, including wind and biomass crops, will help the nation solve energy crises.
- **A healthy environment** is the indicator that farmers are producing food and energy sustainably — leaving something for future generations.

These goals are coalescing in a growing national consensus that, when farming supports a healthy environment, it is the outcome taxpayers should support. Few constituents approve of the way subsidy payments fall mainly into

the hands of a few big commodity producers.

All these threads are woven together in a new approach to farm policy appropriately named “green payments,” payments which support farmers for all the things they do to take care of the nation's land and water. Paying incentives for good conservation, including changes in what farmers grow, is the alternative program we need to transform the public investment in agriculture.

We have the basis for such a shift right now. The Conservation Security Program is entering its third year of revolutionizing how policy can help agriculture. This program pays for one primary product of each farm — good care for the environment. And, though it has yet to fully flower due to insufficient funds and overly bureaucratic rules, there is broad support for this innovative policy that provides conservation investments.

How fast to implement change is the burning question Congress must face, remembering the 1996 farm bill, which proved that big change could not stand when it brought unacceptable harm to the income of farmers. Change must include a fair safety net.

So, take half the money now spent on subsidies and roll it over to the Conservation Security Program. Open that program to all farmers up to the \$45,000 limit. Every farmer would have the opportunity for a basic living from conservation. Then reform the remaining subsidy program and crop insurance to provide a safety net from violent swings in markets or from natural disasters.

This shift would head off the trouble in agriculture and would lead to landscape diversity, more farming opportunities, and a healthy environment. Let's go boldly forth with this sensible proposal. ♣

WINTER *from p. 1*

In the open, the snow was packed hard enough to hold the weight of a human. In some spots, it was so hard that the hooves of the passing deer had not completely penetrated it. But in the woods, the snow was soft and deep, and walking was nearly impossible except on the numerous paths the deer had made in their extensive yard. Everywhere there were icy ruts where deer had bedded down and melted the snow with the warmth of their bodies.

I stood in the shadow of an uprooted tree at the edge of the lake and watched and listened.

Beyond the tall plumes of the Phragmites, there seemed at first to be no life. Then one deer stepped out onto the lake, and two, then deer were apparent everywhere, standing along the lakeshore, among the cattail rushes, on the hillsides, in the fields and woods beyond the lake. The lake seemed suddenly to be as alive with the motion of deer as an anthill is with the business of ants on a hot day in August. Then I became aware of a spot of brown at midlake. I realized I was seeing a red fox and that the fox was stalking some invisible quarry.

The deer in the farther distance were, like me, at a standstill. They were gathered in groups, their ears up, their heads high, watching the hunt of the fox too. The fox seemed oblivious to the spectacle it was creating.

It stole forward. Forward a little more. Suddenly, a pair of ducks, the objects of the fox's quest, took to the air with a clamor and headed north to a quieter place. Their quacks grew fainter.

The fox pursued them for a few yards, stopped, looked sheepish, turned, and loped easily across the lake, passed through the crowds of

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WINTER GUESTS

A season of dormant growth
And starlit stillness
A time for cultivating
Inward luminosity

Keeping doors ajar
For winter guests
To arrive, settle in
Make themselves at home

An archeologist
Uncovering remnants from the past
Shedding light on the present

An astronomer
Seeking new sources of illumination
Navigating uncharted possibilities

A florist
Designing eye-pleasing centerpieces
Rearranging colors, shifting energies

A naturopath
Softening hardened arteries
Restoring translucency

A librarian
Browsing for sustenance
Digesting a series of mysteries

Seasonal visitors reassuring her
Though an aged bulb buried, inactive
She is deeply grounded and fertile
Still capable of reaching for the light

– Sandy Bot Miller

Sandy Bot Miller captures one essence of winter, saying, "Opening our doors to such 'guests' and others like them is one of the biggest reminders and invitations that winter offers us northerners." Sandy writes from her home in St. Cloud, Minnesota, with a focus on "honoring all those who recognize, encourage and practice the importance of doing inner as well as outer work during one's lifetime."



TO BE A LEAF...

Bulging out a nymph green bud
pushing smallness, timidity into air
opening to breathing, breathing to light
slowly warming to the sweet task of life

Waving along a rhythm of wind,
sun, night
taking offered water
lifting silt from a stream of sap
making, merely making

Ushering my small sugar to cambium
joining a trickling course of all
through trunk, stiff strength and history,
to root in the ground, unseen

To last this way for a season
to let go, adrift in trust
to land among the myriad of my kind,
a carpet coating the feet of giants,

and then to crumble into wet loam
yielding every fibrous vein
in view of the tall thousands
and become the soil
to feed a forest

this is my hope.

– Bob Clague

Bob Clague lives, writes, does fine carpentry and cares for his family at his home in Minnetonka, Minnesota. Bob recently read this poem at a church service at Judson Church in Minneapolis. Your editor caught the drifting leaf and presents it to you here. Welcome to Connections, Bob!

Winter Silence

by Loni Kemp

WE SAT IN THE AIRPORT BAR eating our second breakfast of the day, after an early start at 5 A.M. Dishes rattled, music blared, a television news banner flashed along the screen, a woman laughed loudly. Other travelers listened through earphones, chattered into cell phones, or stared into laptops and blackberry devices. My stress level cranked up a notch.

I wonder if people are so used to all the stimuli that they can't stop, even in public or on a journey. Or maybe plugging in is a way to impose some personal control on the increasingly regimented and crowded experience of airline travel.

I sense there is emerging a palpable aversion to silence in modern life. We so often spend our days as consumers – plugged into music, news, radio, movies, TV, email, and the internet – that we forget to balance the taking in with pauses for reflection.

Of course an airport is hardly a place conducive to such contemplation.

I write this from my hotel porch in Tucson, Arizona, overlooking the Catalina Mountains. The foothills are dotted with saguaro cacti, those most human-like plants standing tall with their arms upraised in jaunty greeting. Birds sing, crickets chirp, delivery trucks idle their engines. The locals know it is late fall here because it is not stifling hot, but to me it feels like balmy summer. What they call “winter” will amount to an occasional light frost. I noticed an ad for a “snow experience” to be offered free every evening until Christmas in a nearby shopping mall, for those who never see the real thing.

It makes me think about the value of winter. One of winter's gifts to us who live in the North is the opportunity to experience silence. Beginning as early as midsummer, the cacophony of spring softens as the birds stop their daylong singing and settle into the chores of feeding their young. Next, in late summer, the frogs quiet their almost hysterical calls for mates. Later in September, we notice the crickets have ceased their nighttime symphony. In October, the leaves fall and then even the wind whispers in bare branches of the forest.

By winter, the earth quiets down. If we listen, if we open our ears to the silence, we can transform the experience from one of noticing what we are not hearing to one of really perceiving silence itself. This is the silence of the deep snows, with big fluffy flakes that soften every surface.

For a silence that bores deep into your chest, step outside late at night in the stillness of Minnesota winter on a frozen wilderness lake. One's own heartbeat feels audible and you have to hold your breath to listen. Something about bitter cold temperatures enhances the absence of sound until silence itself is a force you can almost hear. Listen.

With global warming apparently stretching out the warmer seasons, I worry about what will happen to our true winter in the North. Will the next generation know the bite of bitter cold? Will they see the wonder of a heavy snowfall? And will they recognize the sound of their own heartbeats on a rare, dark night of total silence? ❧

WINTER from p. 6

onlooking deer, and disappeared.

The deer began to move again. They came in a steady stream out of the woods and onto the surface of the lake. There seemed to be no end to them.

I thought of the profusion of life that had once teemed upon the prairies: great herds of bison, pronghorn antelopes by the millions, clouds of locusts that blackened the skies, waterfowl in spring and fall settling on hundreds of sloughs by the tens of thousands.

A few of the deer moved around a bed of reeds, passed the dam, and came to within a hundred yards of me. The small doe leading the way was frisky. She seemed to leap for the pleasure of leaping, prancing rather than running. She danced her way across the ice. Then she spied me. She stopped short. She assessed the potential for danger, decided to move ahead. When she did, the frisk had gone out of her step. She ran swiftly in high, bounding leaps.

I watched as she sailed into the cattails. Her white tail was up all the way. It waved back and forth like a flag of truce after the rest of her body had disappeared from view.

Silence again. In a tree overhead, a bird began to sing a homely little song on a high, short, scraping note, like the sound of a door hinge squeaking. Now and then the bird tapped the bark of the tree for small morsels of food. It was like the sound of a carpenter at work in the distance.

The sun came down a little, and the sky began to color. The shadows grew long and sharp. I followed the highway up the frozen river toward home. ❧

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the MINNESOTA PROJECT

working for strong local economies,
vibrant communities, and a healthy environment

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PLANTS – ENERGY – AGRICULTURE – POLICY *from p. 2*

transportation fuels, industrial
fuels and electricity supplies.

Meanwhile, the Minnesota Project is
working with farm leaders from across
the Upper Midwest to create the

Midwest Ag-Energy Network. This network is a loose affiliation of farm organizations and
leaders who see the chance to improve rural communities and meet the need for clean,
affordable and reliable supplies of energy. The Midwest Ag-Energy Network is one of
several networks emerging around the nation.

Midwest Ag-Energy Network members have stressed the need for good public policy to
unlock the potential of agriculture. They have seen how public policy has allowed ethanol,
biodiesel and wind energy to break into heavily protected energy markets. The Midwest
Ag-Energy Network is positioning itself to be a policy incubator.

As such an incubator, the Network will be able to gather, analyze and disseminate informa-
tion about a range of policy options that can create and open markets for farm based ener-
gy resources. The Network is not a lobbying organization but rather a place where diverse
farm organizations can bring their perspectives and knowledge to the table. By bringing
together differing experiences, insights and resources, Network members will disseminate
successful policy ideas and formulate new policy proposals. As concepts are developed,
they will be shared throughout the different participating organizations around the region.
This will allow ideas with the most traction to move forward in participating organiza-
tions' policy platforms, and ultimately in state legislatures as well as Congress. The
Minnesota Project will provide staff and logistical support to the initiative.

We at the Minnesota Project are very excited about this initiative. It renews our optimism
about addressing the very real problems associated with energy in this country. It also
reflects our growing attention to "edge programming." We see increasingly that energy
policy and agricultural policy are inter-linked. If we want renewable energy to supply 25%
of total energy consumption by 2025, then we will need to rely on energy crops. If we want
to have working landscapes that contain more perennials, then we need to have larger
markets for them. Agriculture has solutions for pressing problems: on the environmental
side, ranging from local water quality to global warming. On the economic side, problems
range from developing rural communities to breaking our growing reliance on foreign oil.
The Minnesota Project is proud to embark on this new, complex, and timely initiative. ♣

the MINNESOTA PROJECT

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