

Some sample Thoreau observations from his Journals; the actual journals--with more entries!--
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July 16, 1840. We are as much refreshed by sounds as by sights, or scents, or flavors, - as the barking of a dog heard in the woods at midnight, or the tinklings which attend the dawn.

As I picked blackberries this morning,
by starlight, the distant yelping of a dog fell on my inward ear, as the cool breeze
on my cheek.

Oct. 7, 1842. A little girl has just brought me a purple finch or American linnet. These birds are now moving south. It reminds me of the pine and spruce, and the juniper and cedar on whose berries it feeds. It has the crimson hues of the October evenings, and its plumage still shines as if it had caught and preserved some of their tints (beams?). We know it chiefly as a traveller. It reminds me of many things I had forgotten. Many a serene evening lies snugly packed under its wing.

Winter 1847. Yesterday I skated after a fox over the ice. Occasionally he sat on his haunches and barked at me like a young wolf. It made me think of the bear and her cubs mentioned by Captain Parry, I think. All brutes seem to have a genius for mystery, an Oriental aptitude for symbols and the language of signs; and this is the origin of Pilpay and AEsop. The fox manifested an almost human suspicion of mystery in my actions. While I skated directly after him, he cantered at the top of his speed; but when I stood still, though his fear was not abated, some strange but inflexible law of his nature caused him to stop also, and sit again on his haunches.

While I still stood motionless, he would go slowly a rod to one side, then sit and bark, then a rod to the other side, and sit and bark again, but did not retreat, as if spellbound. When, however, I commenced the pursuit again, he found himself released from his durance.

Plainly the fox belongs to a different order of things from that which reigns in the village. Our courts, though they offer a bounty for his hide, and our pulpits, though they draw many a moral from his cunning, are in few senses contemporary with his free forest life.

Dec. 19, 1850. Yesterday I tracked a partridge in the new-fallen snow, till I came to where she took to flight, and I could track her no further. I see where the snowbirds have picked the seeds of the Roman wormwood and other weeds and have covered the snow with the shells and husks. The smilax berries are as plump as ever. The catkins of the alders are as tender and fresh-looking as ripe mulberries. The dried choke-cherries so abundant in the swamp are now quite sweet. The witch-hazel is covered with fruit and drops over gracefully like a willow, the yellow foundation of its flowers still remaining. I find the sweet-gale (Myrica) by the river also. The wild apples are frozen as hard as stones, and rattle in my pockets, but I find that they soon thaw when I get to my chamber and yield a sweet cider. I am astonished that the animals make no more use of them.

1852

September 13:

I must walk more with free senses. It is as bad to study stars and clouds as flowers and stones. I must let my senses wander as my thoughts, my eyes see with-out looking. Carlyle said that how to observe was to look, but I say that it is rather to see, and the more you look the less you will observe. I have the habit of attention to such excess that my senses get no rest, but suffer from a constant strain. Be not preoccupied with looking. Go not to the object; let it come to you. When I have found myself ever looking down and con- fining my gaze to the flowers, I have thought it might be well to get into the habit of observing the clouds as a corrective; but not that study would be just as bad. What I need is not to look at all, but a true sauntering of the eye.

Sept. 16, 1852 Thursday, 8 am. To Fair Haven Pond

Since the rains and the sun, great fungi, six inches in diameter, stand in the Woods, warped upward, on their edges, showing their gills, so as to hold half a gill of water. The two-leaved *convallaria* berries are now decidedly red. The sweet-fern has a russet look. The jay screams ; the goldfinch twitters ; the barberries are red. I heard a warbling vireo in the village, which I have not heard for long, and the common *che-wink* note in the woods. Some birds, like some flowers, begin to sing again in the fall. The corn is topped.

September 30, 1852.

The rambler in the most remote woods and pastures little thinks that the bees which are humming so industriously on the rare wild flowers he is plucking for his herbarium, in some out-of-the-way nook, are, like himself, ramblers from the village, perhaps from his own yard, come to get their honey for his hives. All the honey-bees we saw were on the blue-stemmed golden-rod (*Solidago caesia*), which is late, lasts long, which emitted a sweet agreeable fragrance, not on the asters. I feel the richer for this experience. It taught me that even the insects in my path are not loafers, but have their special errands. Not merely and vaguely in this world, but in this hour, each is about its business. If, then, there are any sweet flowers still lingering on the hillside, it is known to the bees both of the forest and the village. The botanist should make interest with the bees if he would know when the flowers open and when they close. Those I have named were the only common and prevailing flowers at this time to look for them on.

October 13, 1852

Many maples have lost all their leaves and are shrunk all at once to handsome clean gray wisps on the edge of the meadows, where, crowded together, at a distance they look like smoke. This is a sudden and important change, produced mainly, I suppose, by the rain of Sunday, last. The autumnal tints have commonly already lost their brightness. It lasts but a day or two. *Corn-spurry* and *spotted polygonum* and *polygala*.

November 4, 1852

Autumnal dandelion and yarrow.

I must be out-of-doors enough to get experience of wholesome reality, as a ballast to thought and sentiment. Health requires this relaxation, this aimless life. This life is the present. Let a man have thought what he will of Nature in the house, she will still be novel outdoors. I keep out of doors for the sake of the mineral, vegetable, and animal in me.

December 1857

Dec. 1. P .M .-Walking in Ebby Hubbard's woods, I hear a red squirrel barking at me amid the pine and oak tops, and now I see him coursing from tree to tree. How securely he travels there, fifty feet from the ground, leaping from the slender, bending twig of one tree across an interval of three or four feet and catching at the nearest twig of the next, which so bends under him that it is at first hard to get up it. His travelling a succession of leaps in the air at that height without wings! And yet he gets along about as rapidly as on the ground .

I hear the faintest possible quiver from a nuthatch, quite near me on a pine. I thus always begin to hear this bird on the approach of winter,' as if it did not breed here, but wintered here. I hear of two more flocks of geese going over to-day.

Dec.2. Measuring Little Goose Pond, I observed two painted tortoises moving about under the thin transparent ice. When I broke it with my fist over each in succession, it was stunned by the blow. I put them back through the hole; else they might have frozen outside . There was a brown leech spread broad and flat and roundish on the sternum of one, nearly an inch and a half across, apparently going to winter with it.

August 9, 1860

I observed these plants on the rocky summit of the mountain, above the forest :-

Raspberry, not common .

Low blueberries of two or three varieties.'

Bunchberry .

Solidago thyrsoidea.

Fetid currant, common ; leaves beginning to be scarlet; grows amid loose fallen rocks.

Red cherry, some ripe, and handsome.

Black choke-berry.

Potentilla tridentata, still lingering in bloom .

Aralia hispida, still lingering in bloom .

Cow-wheat, common, still in bloom.

Mountain cranberry, not generally abundant ; full grown earlier than lowland ditto.,

Black spruce.

Lambkill, lingering in flower in cool and moist places.

Aster acuminatus, abundant ; not generally open, but fairly begun

to bloom.

Red elder, ripe, apparently in prime, not uncommon .

Arenaria Greenlandica, still pretty common in flower.

Solidago lanceolata, not uncommon ; just fairly begun.

Epilobium angustifolium, in bloom; not common, however.

Epilobium palustre, some time, common in mosses, small and slender .

Wild holly, common ; berries not quite ripe.

Viburnum nudum, common ; berries green.

White pine; saw three or four only, mostly very small.

Mountain-ash, abundant ; berries not ripe; generally very small, largest in swamps.

Diervilla, not uncommon, still.

Rhodora, abundant; low, i.e.short.

Meadow-sweet, abundant, apparently in prime.

Hemlocks ; two little ones with rounded tops.

Chelone glabra, not yet; at northeast swamp-side.

Yarrow .

Canoe birch, very small.

Clintonia borealis, with fruit.

Checkerberry .

Gold-thread .

One three-ribbed goldenrod, northwest side (not Canadense).

Tall rough goldenrod, not yet; not uncommon .

Populus tremuliformis, not very common .

Polygonum cilinode, in bloom.

Yellow birch, small.

Fir, a little; four or five trees noticed.

Willows, not uncommon, four or five feet high.

Red maple, a very little, small . Water andromeda, common about the bogs.

Trientalis.

Pearly everlasting, out.

Diplopappus umbelatus, in bloom, not common(?); northeast swamp-side, also northwest side of mountain, *Juncos trifidus*.

Some *Juncos paradoxes*? 1 about edge of marshes,

GRASSES

Aira flexuosa.

Glyceria elongata, with appressed branches (some purplish), in swamp .

Blue-joint, apparently in prime, one place.

Festuca oidna, one place.

Cinna arundinacea, one place.

Agrostis scabra (?), at our spring, q.v.

FERNS AND LICHENS, ETC. ~ A large greenish lichen flat on rocks, of a peculiarly concentric growth, q.v.

Some common sulphur lichen.

The very bright handsome crustaceous yellow lichen, as on White Mts., q.v.

Two or three *umbilicaria* lichens, q.v., giving the dark brown to the rocks.

A little, in one place, of the old *hatumbilicaria*, as at Flint's Pond Rock .

Green moss and sphagnum in the marshes. Two common cladonias, white and greenish.

Stereocaulon.

Lycopodium complanatum, one place.

Lycopodium annotinum, not very common. Common polypody.