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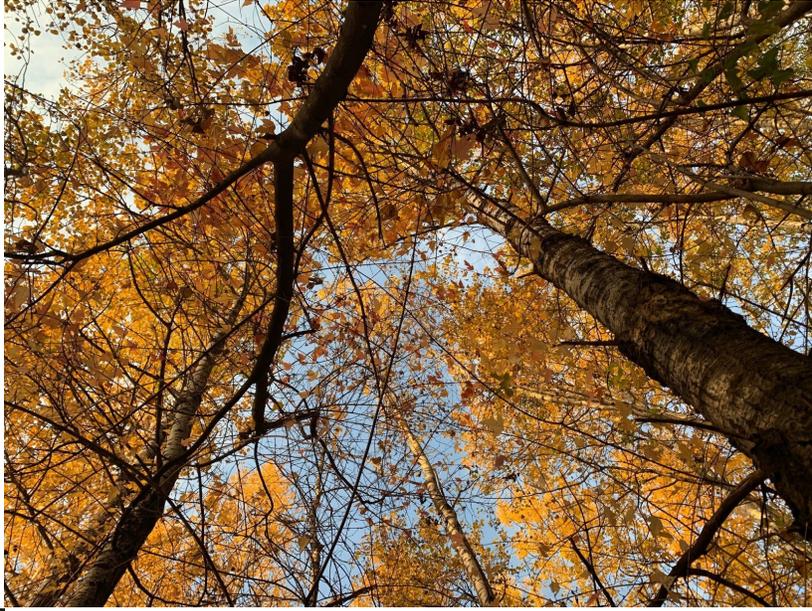
The first imagery upon arriving at Reid Park was a cluster of tall birch trees with bright, yet natural, yellow leaves that let go and danced through the air with each gust of wind.

Given that we biked here we parked our bikes. I took the time to observe some wildflowers. Almost like magic the note I had written earlier fluttered out of my pocket, compelling me to take this photo. "Everything has a purpose." This terrain only extended for a few dozen feet but within the area there's tons of living things, a number so large it is incomprehensible, and this was a unique ecosystem that contrasts the rest of the park.



We went hiking on the trails and came across this mess! It's beautiful, even visually appealing, yet it's comprised of dead, curved trees that formed a network of branches supporting each other. The random yet specific complexity of this was interesting and it looked cool. Again, I thought of the note in my pocket and wondered what beauty might be involved and hidden in these trees that I missed?

A variety of trees towered over me throughout the entire hike. Oaks, maples, birch, and various pines to name a few. I was impressed by the lack of buckthorn that is unfortunately prevalent in many parks and trails nearby.



We rode back home on our bikes as the sun was beginning to set. I realized that hike was the most observant and present I have been in a long time. This proved to be an inspirational, thought-provoking experience. I considered my note again and applied the idea that "everything has a purpose." This thought ran through my brain and eventually was transformed into everything has an effect. A huge effect. The trees yes, but even the microbes in the soil and each and every leaf and twig on a tree. They all affect something that affects another thing. In nature this is very specific. . . very purposeful.

Share the intention you expressed pre-adventure. How did it inform your experience?

My intention was to focus and consider the statement “everything has a purpose.” At first this seemed exaggerated, but as I continued to spend time in nature it began to make sense. This idea that everything has a purpose was illustrated when I realized there were no mosquitos, but last time I was here a few months ago there were a lot of mosquitos. This was because it had dropped below freezing at night a few times so all the remaining mosquitoes died. As I am never outside at night, I was oblivious to this clearly impactful event. However, the mosquitoes died from it and it had many other effects as well. Just because I was unaware did not mean it was unimportant. Furthermore, there are some things that I cannot see, and cannot reason out, and even things that scientists do not know. Yet these things have an effect. It is true that everything has a purpose. This idea deepened my personal connection with nature.

Were you able to stick to the plan you made in the Greener challenge? How did it change?

The plan was pretty consistent. We met in between our houses, biked to the park, hiked, set up hammocks, and had a snack according to plan. We did end up staying

later than we intended despite both of us being insanely busy. I think being in nature provides an opportunity for quiet spontaneity. This is a bit of an oxymoron, but what I mean is that it involves such peace and stillness and at the same time planning ahead only gets you so far. Oftentimes you have to let nature take control and accept the unknown if you are going to truly appreciate nature. Over MEA break next weekend I am going to return to nature and hike on these trails. This time, I hope to go alone because it's not something I do often and is a good way to reflect and consider things of importance.

How did the experience make you feel? Has it strengthened your relationship to Earth and our individual and collective responsibility towards the environment? This experience definitely gave me a sense of connection towards nature and with that, an increased sense of responsibility of the environment. Humans have not adequately appreciated the innate beauty present in nature and often completely disregard it. Nature offers a kind of tranquility that is irreplaceable and after this hike I really understood the urgency of, not just climate change, but also the destruction of natural habitats and the decreasing biodiversity of this world. As Elizabeth Kolbert describes in "The 6th Extinction" the Earth is becoming a "new pangea" and the introduction non-Native species and exposure of Native species to new pathogens is having detrimental effects on global biodiversity. I feel a sense of responsibility towards this, particularly after this hike, because as I came to understand, everything has an effect and a purpose.

Share a reflection on Instagram that includes one inspirational takeaway, along with a picture of your adventure *and* a call for others to go on an adventure of their own. Tag @TurningGreenOrg and @KleanKanteen and use #PGC2020



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 sahs.pgc It's fall and nature is beautiful as always. We focused on the idea that "Everything has a purpose" during a hike today. It was a ton of fun and very enlightening. The peaceful ambiance was a invited break from our loud and busy life!  
@turninggreenorg #pgc2020  
@kleankanteen

8h



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