

# GAIA GUARDIANS

## Manifesto

MARCH 2016



# GREY TO GREEN?

I grew up in the grey concrete jungles of the Far East but despite that, or maybe because of it, I fell profoundly in love with Gaia (Mother Earth). That love was separate from my “normal” grey life where I was a responsible corporate citizen. Every day I woke up saying “be thankful you have a job” all the while trying to quell the voice in my head that said “yes, but...”. I wanted out, but didn’t have the courage to make a change. My values and my life were out of whack, but I didn’t know how to fix it. One of the things that brought me solace and peace was photographing nature.

The more time I spent with nature, the more I knew the next thing I did had to centre around helping us find our way back to a sense of reverence for her. In April 2014, despite my fears, I made the leap and became a full-time landscape photographer. It hasn’t been the easiest journey but there is no substitute for greeting every morning with enthusiasm (no mean feat for a non-morning person), and knowing that today is another day where I can make a difference.

This manifesto is for people like you and me, who revere Mother Earth and want to see her better protected. For those of us who know the endless stream of environmental destruction stories (necessary though they are) are leaving people feeling helpless rather than energised; people want to be part of a good news story. For those of us who know that driving change by celebrating nature’s beauty, sharing positive stories of, and getting involved in, the great restoration work being done can heal her.

We’re the **GAIA**GUARDIANS.

# THERE WAS A TIME

***“Every seed is awakened and so is all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being and we therefore yield to our animal neighbours the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land.” - Sitting Bull***

For a long time in human history, nature was a thing to be revered. We paid homage to the gods of the air, earth, and water. We revered Gaia, Mother Earth. We tended to her. We took only what we needed and not more.

We celebrated Gaia’s beauty and bounty with joy and festivities. We taught our children to do the same, and they taught theirs.

***“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children” – Thich Nhat Han***



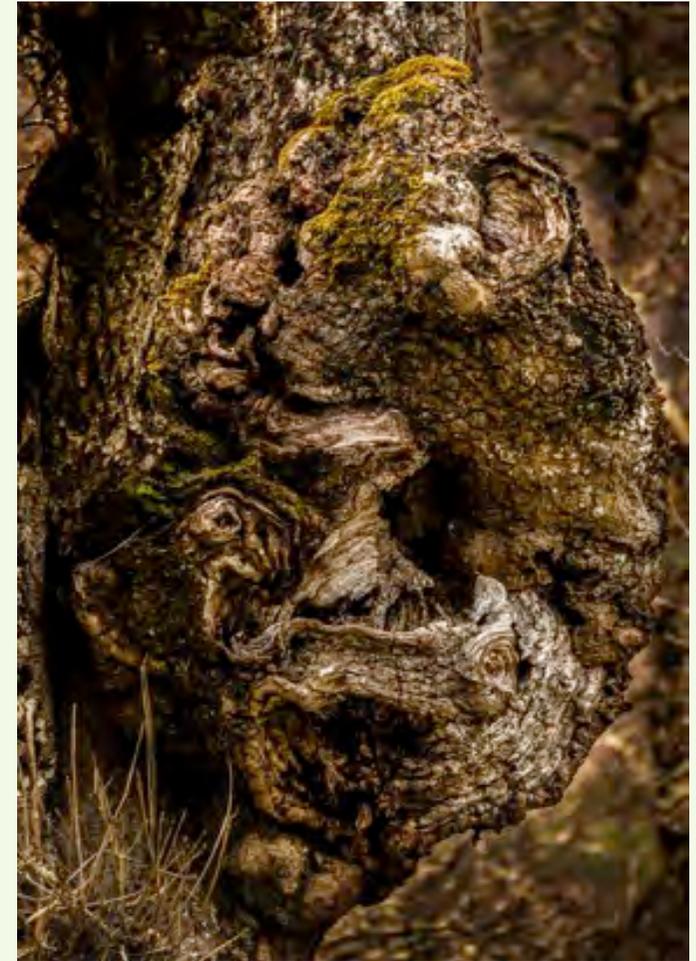
*Heart of Oak © 2015 Karen Thurman*

# WE GOT LOST FOR A WHILE...

Gradually, as we industrialised, our populations grew and we moved from the land into cities. We literally lost sight of Gaia. Trapped in our clusters of grey concrete boxes we forgot that we depend on her for everything: the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. For the medicines that keep us healthy, the ecosystems that prevent the flooding of our homes, and the escape from the busyness of life.

We've become too preoccupied with daily life to go out and just enjoy her presence. We rush from home to school to office (where we spend too many hours), to supermarket and finally back home to bed.

Generations of children have never seen a carrot growing in the ground or watched a river level rise with the spring thaw. They've never touched the roughness of the bark of oak, seen the faces hiding in its gnarled trunk or listened for the trill of a tiny wren, sitting on its branches, as he welcomes a new day.



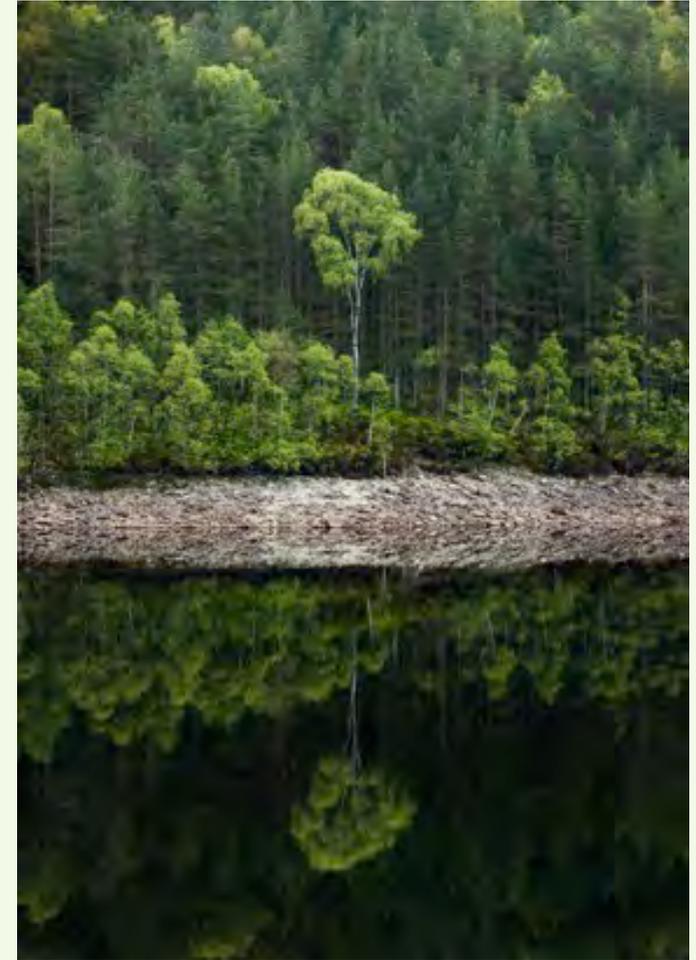
*"Tigger" © 2015 Mick Thurman*

# ...BUT WE'RE FINDING OUR WAY BACK

Today, finally, we're starting to recognise in growing numbers that we're assaulting and damaging Gaia beyond her ability to heal herself. The scale of the problem might seem hopeless, but it's not. More and more people are taking on the challenge of helping her heal.

We're fighting to protect other species and to clean up our mess. We're rewilding large swathes of land, not only by replanting forests, but also by reintroducing the animals that once inhabited those lands. We're more conscious of the impact our buying choices have on the environment and we're using our wallets to punish bad corporate behaviour.

***Once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price – Ansel Adams***



*Silver Birch © 2015 Mick Thurman*

# WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There is still much to be done before we are the majority. Every one of us (yes, you too!) has the power to make change happen.

- Sixteen year-old Pakistani high school student Malala brought girls' education (or lack thereof) to the attention of the world, despite facing great danger doing so.
- PhD student Wangari Maathai defeated plans to clear hundreds of acres of forest for luxury housing in Kenya
- French Red Cross doctors Max Recamier and Pascal Greletty-Bosviel founded Medecins Sans Frontieres with a team of just six, only two of whom were doctors.

None of them expected to be great bringers of change, but they were. Our quiet revolution can change how people think about nature. We can inspire them to celebrate and protect Gaia. We can reawaken the reverence for her that was once everywhere.



*Sequoia © 2013 Karen Thurman*

# HOW?

How can we make a difference? By being positive.

We're drowning in messages telling us we're killing the planet. We are, but those messages leave us discouraged rather than ready to fight the good fight. The problem is so big. How can my turning off lights or saving a local woodland make any difference in the grand scheme of things?

We **GAIA**GUARDIANS are going to take the opposite approach and flood people with good news. Who doesn't want to be part of a happy ending, to be part of the solution rather than the problem?

We'll celebrate the beauty of Gaia, and rejoice at news of the great work being done to protect and restore her. We'll join projects working to reverse the damage done, and we'll get our friends to join us. As a community, we'll develop more ways to bring people back to revering Mother Earth, to protecting and caring for her.



*River Affric © 2014 Karen Thurman*

***In a gentle way, you can shake  
the world – Mahatma Gandhi***

# ARE YOU A **GAIA**GUARDIAN?

Here's what distinguishes us from the crowd. **GAIA**GUARDIANS:

- Revere nature
- Are idealistic
- Want to leave a better world for our children and grandchildren
- Want to build a community of like-minded people
- Step outside of our comfort zones

We know that:

- Individuals can change the world
- Nature is intrinsically worth saving, regardless of her value to mankind
- Reverence and respect for nature must be our default state
- Work-life balance is key to living a good life
- Getting into nature brings balance to life
- Experiences are more important than material things
- People respond better to positive message than negative ones
- Art has an important role to play in changing societal norms

# ARE YOU READY TO BRING THE CHANGE?

Are you all fired up and ready to take the first steps? The list below is not exhaustive by any means, and we welcome your suggestions, but here are some things you can do to get started.

- 1 Start by joining our community of like-minded people at [www.gaiaguardians.org](http://www.gaiaguardians.org)
- 2 Join our On Your Doorstep project (see next slide). It's easy!
- 3 Invite your friends to join

When you're ready for the next steps:

- 4 Organise a nature walk near where you live and invite everyone you know to come along
- 5 Send in stories about projects you think we should know about. We'll publish them
- 6 Join an environmental project and/or donate to a relevant charity

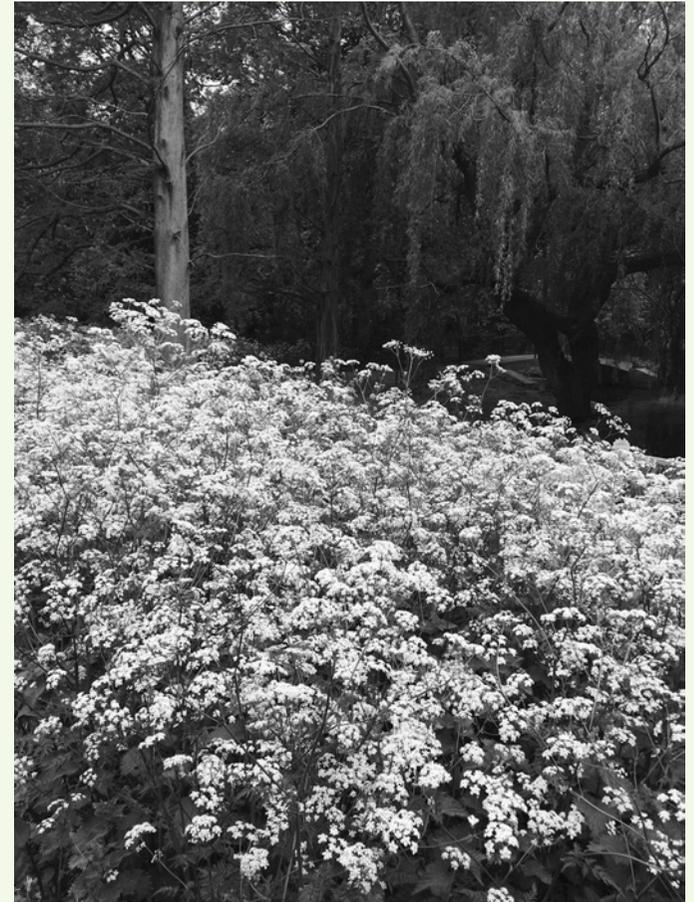
# ON YOUR DOORSTEP (1)

Art can be a powerful tool in driving change. Ansel Adams' photography of the Sierras led to the creation of the first National Park in the US. Sebastiao Salgado's Genesis project is about "seeing and marvelling, understanding the necessity for the protection of natural beauty and inspiring action for its preservation."

There is much beauty to preserve and we don't have to go far to find it. In our own country, county and hometown, Gaia's glory abounds.

We already know this, but now it's time to tell everyone. Mother Earth is in the trees that line the street we live on. She's in our parks, woodlands, and coastline. She's even in our back yards and in the kitchen gardens planted on abandoned bits of land.

The picture to the right was taken with a phone at a park in Luton, England, an industrial area famous for being home to a large car manufacturing plant and an airport.



*Wardown Park © 2014 Karen Thurman*

# ON YOUR DOORSTEP (2)

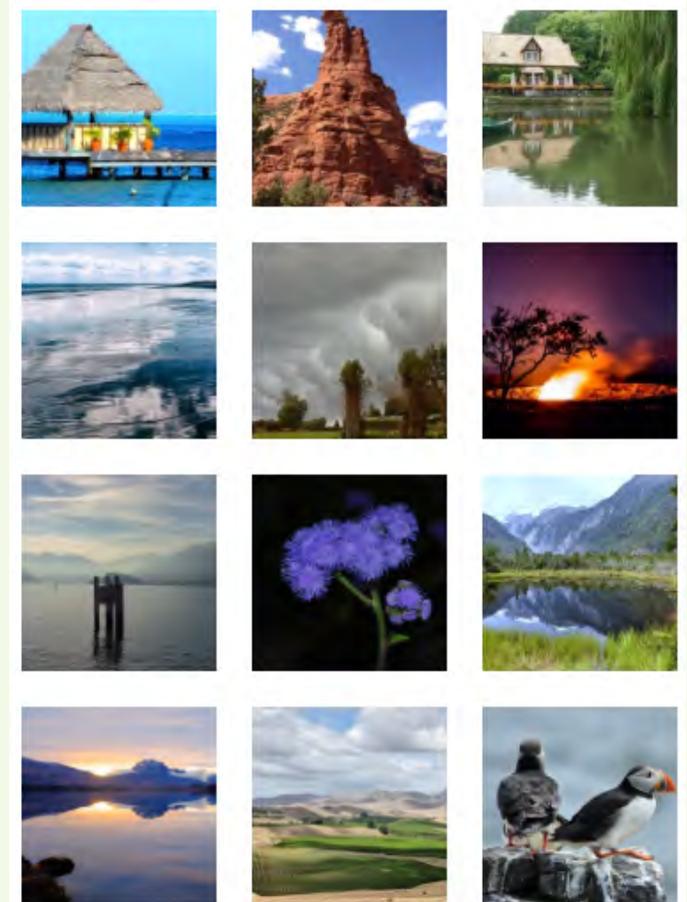
On Your Doorstep is about merging art and love of the environment. This project encourages you to explore what's local to you and then share that beauty in a photograph, a poem, a story, a photo of a painting, a sculpture – anything creative. We'll publish the best on our website and in On Your Doorstep magazine.

You don't have to be a great artist. In fact, you don't have to be an artist at all, just enthusiastic about capturing what you see in some way.

Here are the three simple rules:

- 1 Whatever you send has to be of nature
- 2 It has to have been taken in/based on something from your own country. If you want to add spice to the challenge, draw a circle 20 miles around your home and find the natural beauty there.
- 3 It has to be your own work (no plagiarism or copyright infringement, please)

Send your pictures or stories to [info@gaiaguards.org](mailto:info@gaiaguards.org).



*On Your Doorstep submissions ©2015 various*