

A Creek in a Plain City



Bigeye Shiner: 09/14/25, Natalie Mudd.*

Louisville Kentucky isn't a place renown for its wildlife. I forget the wildlife we have is wonderful in and of itself. Looking to find water bugs to share about, I found a more intimate topic to discuss.

I lived in Appalachia as a youth. It's a mountainous terrain known for its economically disadvantaged community and beautiful wildlife. I remember nothing more fondly than the animals there. It made me lament living in Louisville, even though critters like this shiner are all around us here.

The shiner was my first catch of the day. With a net, because I'd come looking for bugs. When I'd finally caught them I was so thrilled; the silver shine of their scales outside the water was beautiful.

Soon after catching the shiner, I found a toad. One of my earliest memories deals with these toads. I was a twig in height and weight treading through a drainage run with water flowing up to my thighs.

I'd caught eyes with the fattest toad I'd ever seen sitting on one side of the rapid when it'd jumped in. I jumped after, drenching myself and catching the toad. Immediately after I held it, pet it in my lap, then left them on the perch they'd held their part of the stare-off.

Seeing the toad pictured take a hop in the mud I swooped down and caught them too. They gave me that grumpy frog stare and I was so happy. Louisville waters were more than I'd realized.



Fowler's Toad. 09/14/25, Natalie Mudd.



Unidentified Tree with roots spreading into the water. 09/14/25, Natalie Mudd

I suppose what came to me was only a feeling of nostalgia. The feeling was good, but what was important, the observation, followed. I'd trapped myself in this idea that the location I lived in was without wilderness to enjoy. Of course, hikes are nice. Seeing a toad or cool caterpillar during one is even better. But it isn't the Florida everglades, it isn't the Amazon, it isn't the Sahara. It's Louisville Kentucky.

Because of the time spent adoring these small animals, I was able to release with them this self-imprisoning idea. It's not "Louisville Kentucky." It's "Louisville Kentucky!" No, we don't have matabele ants, giant african bullfrogs, or flying fish. What makes an animal or place great to an individual is the act of experiencing. Louisville Kentucky, as any place great or meager, has much to experience.

The future is uncertain. Anyone who is unaware, I urge to read not only on the affects of water pollution, but also on the effect of the broader crisis of climate change and corporate responsibility for its growth. Individuals can live cleaner. On site there was some trash littered, a vape and bottle half-buried in mud. I cannot tell you anything you wouldn't be able to read a thousand times elsewhere on this subject. But I can encourage you to observing your local environment yourself and to encourage others.



Water Strider. 09/14/25, Natalie Mudd.

This strider was the hardest catch. They seem to me a delightfully cute reminder as to the importance of pushing for water cleanliness now. We—all of humanity and life as we understand it—depend on water just like this water strider. Without it we don't just fail to stride.

The best action we can take against water pollution is governmental reform. Individuals pollute, yes. Corporate pollution and government permission accounts for much more than individuals ever could.

We cannot stop or significantly slow water pollution through management of our own behavior. What we can do is appreciate the beauty of the environment around us and get the word of reform in what we do, one way or another.

The last catch of the day was this handsome crawdad. I noticed one of their antennae were shorter than the other and was quite sad. Despite the minor injury, they seemed curious of us.

The feeling of catching this crawdad was invigorating. I hadn't caught one since I was seven. They are so beautiful.

When they stared at me, something occurred to me. Working for reform isn't just the right thing to do. Every day over a hundred species disappear.



Crawdada. 09/14/25, Natalie Mudd

To observe why this needs change, one only needs to experience their environment. For the person who looks to the beauty of the world, it's a necessity.