

Dear teacher and reader,

I am so delighted that you decided to bring 'Diary of A Young Naturalist' into your school and your teaching. I really do hope that it opens your eyes to the many themes and issues it raises.

We are living in a world of unprecedented change, challenge and unfortunately catastrophic destruction of nature. If you were to dwell on all the problems, overwhelm would cripple you, to do, nothing. Loving nature and respecting it, seems to go against the norm, which to me seems inhumane. Destructive. So that is where we must start! To notice the beauty, to learn about nature's intricacies and details. To increase our knowledge, fascination and curiosity – the beginnings of this journey of discovery will lead to a never-ending destination of care and compassion for all the species we share our incredible earth with.

I began with noticing and learning. Caring and respecting. Something bubbled inside and poured out, they were words. Words of hope. Words of rage. I wrote about beauty, decline, decimation...but mostly, the joy I felt knowing my place in this world was connected to every living thing. So many people felt affinity with my work, and I felt a deep humble power that writing could make a difference. My words were making a difference to people's lives and how they saw and reconnected with the world. My book had altered their perspective in a positive way and it still fills me with amazement that over two years later I still get many letters describing the affect my book has had on the lives of themselves, loved ones and community.

This book was hard to write in places. It was difficult because my love of nature for which I was bullied. I never wanted to control the joy I felt. The knowledge I wanted to pass on. Seeing and feeling our place in the world, connects us with every organism. My deepest hope, is that in some way, my book can be a bridge that brings us back. To nature. Where we belong. Where we can best co-exist with the web of life that connects us all with invisible threads. Threads that hold us together.

I ask us all to contemplate our interactions with the living world, how we each impact the destruction of nature. The detrimental influence we are having, how global politics and economics can have the biggest bearing and how we can change our consciousness to have a better relationship with nature. I know that collectively, we can all make a difference. You might ask yourself 'What can I do?' You have power. Your voice matters. Speak out and up. Share your joy, your fear, your fury. Your place in this world is precious, you deserve a planet that is balanced and beautiful. Fight for it. Buy less. Notice more. Live simply. Waste nothing. Nature is you and you are nature. We are all connected. Wherever you are, I share that connection, with you.

Wildest wishes

Dara