

Stump Jump

Doesn't this just call out to you to play?!

Kids need no instruction to figure out their own games here. Squirrels dart up and down and over and up the various stumps. Every part of nature has function. And taking life too seriously is certainly not something nature always demands. There is plenty of play in the natural world.

Have you ever seen sparrows flying in the rain, catching the drops on their wings, spiraling and diving and darting between drops?

Play is not only the way the young learn about the world, it is the way we release tensions and stress and find our way out of fight or flight and back into life. It is the root of creativity. Nature is constantly creating. Nature is constantly playing.

How does this environment call to you to interact with it? Do you want to jump between the stumps? Do you want to climb on one and just stand a foot higher? Do you use your hands like a drum? How does this environment speak to you? What is your immediate sense of this place? What is your sense of the place after you've engaged in some kind of 'play'?

Are there times in your life you were told to 'behave' or 'smarten up'? Times you were told to work harder and that play was no longer available to you? The messages we get from other people and sources necessarily become embedded in our own consciousness and self-talk and often, recede to the background so that we assume they are our own voices. Of course, they become our own critical voices, but with awareness, we can look at the origin of these ideas and reconsider whether we still believe or need to believe what they are telling us. There are so many examples of play in the natural world. If you are having troubles letting yourself play, contemplate the voices that told you play was problematic. Then, give yourself permission to think about the ways in which you have seen other animals play and perhaps try to emulate that; put yourself in the paws of another creature to expand your own sense of self and connection.

What do you notice? Which parts of you are re-educated by allowing for play? What wakes up inside of you with play? How do you want to bring this sense of play back into the world and share with others in everyday life? How can you bring the essence of play into the words you use to write about play in your reflections or poetry?