

# Travelers of Nature's Path – How We Grow

Welcome, fellow travelers, to a journey of discovery and transformation. Together, we will explore the profound connections between the rhythms of the natural world and the cosmic forces shaping our universe, providing us with a microcosmic reflection of the Earth with a macrocosmic understanding of the universe. Through the cycles of light and darkness, the changing seasons, and the hidden lessons of the wilderness, we will uncover how our experiences in nature mirror the fabric of existence itself. *This journey will inspire and equip you with practical tools and insights to navigate and survive in the wilderness.*



Just as the universe is shaped by the visible, the unseen, and the forces that drive it—Normal Matter, Dark Matter, and Dark Energy—our wilderness journeys reveal parallel truths. What we see, what remains hidden, and what propels us forward teach us resilience, adaptability, and a deeper sense of connection. *By understanding these elements, we can build both our inner and outer resilience for any challenges we face.*

This exploration will unify our understanding of cosmic and earthly forces, transforming them into practical guidance for our wilderness travels. By interpreting subtle signs in nature, adapting to challenges like unpredictable weather, and drawing upon essential tools and inner resilience, we uncover insights that address our wilderness needs and deepen our connection to the natural world. Together, we will delve into the wisdom of the earth and the cosmos, discovering how these lessons illuminate our paths through the wilderness. *Moreover, this process will help us better understand our place in the wilderness and how to adapt to its many unpredictable rhythms.*



## Cycles of Nature

The cycles of nature are a symphony of light and darkness, growth and rest, movement and stillness. These rhythms shape the wilderness and offer profound guidance for those who journey within it. As we walk nature's path, we discover that these cycles are not arbitrary—they echo universal principles that govern the natural world. *They also serve as tools for navigation, understanding, and planning, which is critical for any wilderness traveler.*

Understanding these cycles is essential for the wilderness traveler. Light and darkness are not opposites but complementary forces, each offering unique experiences. Daylight provides clarity and fosters activity, whether navigating a trail, foraging, or building shelter. Darkness, in contrast, invites reflection and sharpens senses often overlooked—hearing, touch, and even intuition. A traveler who learns to balance these cycles finds survival and a sense of harmony within the environment. *Try this: observe how your body and mind react differently to the same environment during daylight and darkness; it can reveal your hidden strengths and limitations.*

The changing seasons similarly teach preparation, adaptation, and renewal. With its promise of growth, spring reminds us to sow the seeds of effort and exploration. Summer encourages flourishing and refining skills, while fall's maturity prompts reflection and gathering resources. Winter, a time of rest, allows for consolidation and planning. These rhythms mirror the phases of

a traveler's journey—times of action, preparation, and introspection. *By embracing this seasonal wisdom, we can plan our expeditions more effectively and learn to appreciate their highs and lows.*

These cycles also connect us to broader forces in the natural world. Daily and seasonal patterns provide a framework for survival and adaptation. Subtler rhythms—like how shadows trace True East and West or how all creature types (hereafter referred to as animals) of the wilderness adjust their behaviors at dusk and dawn—reveal the intricate balance of the wilderness. *By understanding these patterns, we can align with their environment, fostering a deeper connection to the world around them. This alignment enhances survival and deepens our respect and gratitude for nature's intricacy.*

As we delve deeper into these ideas, we will explore how these cycles intersect with the practical aspects of wilderness travel. From building a fire under starlit skies to using the seasons for successful preparations, these lessons transcend mere survival. They are tools for adapting to the wilderness, offering guidance and meaning to our journeys. *They also remind us that even in the most challenging conditions, nature provides clues and support when we listen and observe.*

## The Dance of Light and Darkness – Day and Night

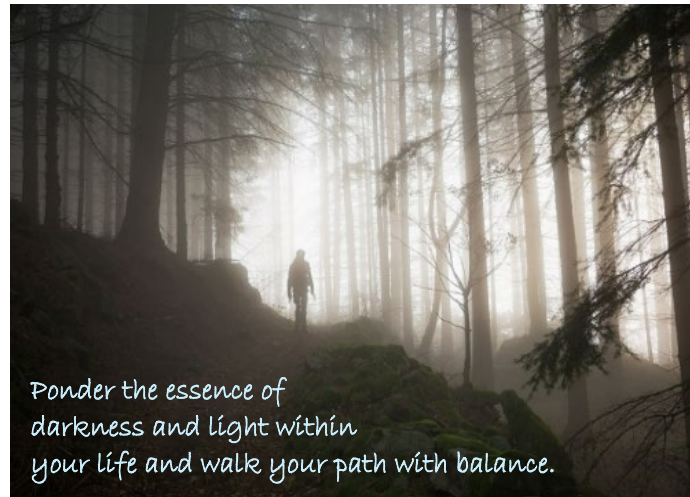
Nature provides a cycle of light and darkness every day and every year. These are not opposing energies (forces) at war; they are partners, each bringing their own qualities. Light offers clarity and activities during the daytime, while darkness encourages reflection, rest, and different activities during the night.

Yet, I have found that neither light nor dark is inherently good or bad. Consider the red-tailed hawk, active in the day, capturing a gray squirrel. For the hawk, it is survival and a means to sustain its offspring. For the squirrel, it is an ending. Similarly, the great-horned owl hunts in silence at night, capturing its prey, such as a rabbit or a fish, under the cover of darkness. The owl's life is sustained, but it is the close of a chapter for its prey. Both cases' events are similar, but the meaning depends on perspective. Nature teaches us that concepts like “good” and “bad” are relative, shaped by the moment and where we are within our understanding and growth on our path of life. *Learning to embrace this nuance can help us face unexpected challenges with a more open and adaptive mindset.*

**Note:** Some animals, like people, travel their path of life in both the cycle of light and darkness. For example, whitetail deer forage for substance in both cycles and find the time to rest and rejuvenate for the next day. *This ability to straddle both realms reminds us to balance activity and rest, adaptation and reflection, in our journeys.*

I have found over a lifetime that my own period of creative energy is strongest at night between midnight and 3:00 AM. This is when the hustle and bustle of the day has passed, and the night's energy flows strongest within me with the knowing that I can relax because the dawn of a new day is still hours away.

I have noticed how the animals' activities shift at night in the wilderness. Nocturnal creatures stir; their rhythms contrast with those of the day. Some animals and people overlap the cycles of day and night, much like through the times of the morning's dawn after the night and the evening's dusk after the day.



*Ponder the essence of  
darkness and light within  
your life and walk your path with balance.*

## Turning Inward: The Power of Darkness

Darkness is often misunderstood. I have found that darkness is not an absence of light but a time for different energies to emerge. Think of a traveler in the wilderness at night. With the path ahead obscured, they must rely on hearing, touch, smell, and a different sight level to navigate. Darkness invites a focus on other senses and perspectives, sharpening awareness in ways that the times of light cannot. *It also teaches trusting our senses, our instincts, and the environment around us.*

When darkness obscures my way, I have found that it offers a chance to adjust and explore different strengths. It allows clarity to emerge not from external sources but from understanding the surroundings in new ways. Try this sometime, do not use a flashlight, and see how night is different and how you adjust using your senses without the sight you had in the day. You will also gain “night vision” as your eyes adjust without an external source impacting the night. Have you ever noticed that vision in the dark of night makes seeing easier when the moon's phases increase before decreasing over its 28-day cycle? *This simple experiment can reveal new ways to connect with your environment and sharpen your survival skills.*

Often, I desire to travel in the darkness of nighttime to be covert and less visible to others. To this end, I rely on the absence of a foreign light source (flashlight) that would draw attention to myself. At specific times when traveling on my path at night where, for example, when I want to check my map, a dim red or green light allows me to see, preserves my longer distance night vision, and is far less visible to others trying to follow me as I walk covertly in the wilderness.

## Seasons: Guidance from Nature

The changing seasons provide a natural rhythm to life. In spring, seeds are planted, and animals are born, beginning their journey of growth. In summer, plants and animals flourish—plants stretch toward the sun while the animals grow stronger, learning the skills needed for survival. Fall brings maturity; plants bear fruit, and animals prepare for the challenges ahead, gathering resources and building reserves for winter. Winter allows for rest—the roots of plants lie dormant, and the animals conserve energy. These cycles are not just for plants and animals—they also guide us. When conditions are bright and fertile, we act. In quieter times, we prepare, reflect, and regroup.

As we observe nature's rhythms, we see that these cycles are part of a larger pattern connecting us to the vast universe beyond. *When we align our plans with these patterns – for a hike or survival in the wilderness – we tap into the universal flow and find greater ease and success in our efforts.*

## Energy: The Lifeblood of Existence

Energy surrounds us, weaving through every facet of the natural world and shaping our journeys. Sunlight fuels the forest, the wind rustles the tree's leaves and branches and drops their seeds to the earth for growth, and a campfire warms us on chilly nights, providing the energy to maintain our body's core temperature. In the wilderness, energy is not just a concept but a vital force that dictates survival and growth.

For a traveler, understanding energy begins with recognizing its transformations. The sun's energy causes plants to grow, which sustains the animals that roam the land. The currents in a river, caused by rain and snow falling from the sky, carve valleys over time while also offering hydration and life to those who journey nearby. This interconnected flow reminds us that energy is never lost—it only changes form.

Much like the cosmos, energy in the wilderness operates on visible and invisible levels. The sun's warmth, the gust of a breeze, or the crackling of a campfire are tangible manifestations of Normal Matter—the physical energy we see and feel. Like Dark Matter holding galaxies together, beneath these, subtler forces act. The quiet rhythm of a stream or the shifting patterns of animals reveal an

unseen energy guiding the wilderness. And within us, the will to persevere through a stormy night or innovate when resources are scarce mirrors the expansive drive of Dark Energy.

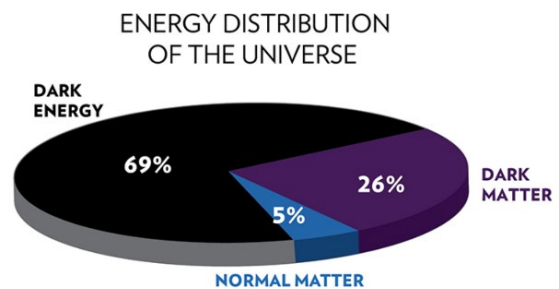
**Note:** I will share more about Normal Matter, Dark Matter, and Dark Energy of the Universe in the following sections.

Observing and aligning with these flows allows a traveler to survive and adapt to the wilderness. Harnessing energy efficiently—whether by setting up a base camp to maximize sunlight, camping a short distance from a water source to save energy when retrieving water for camp use, or pacing oneself on a long hike to conserve one's own energy—can make the difference between struggle and harmony.

## Universal Nature: The Macrocosm and Microcosm

When I step into the wilderness, I am reminded that nature is not merely a destination but a profound reflection of the universe. The **macrocosm**—the vast expanse of stars, galaxies, and unseen forces—finds its mirror in the **microcosm** of my journey. The tools I carry, the natural signs I interpret, and the inner resolve I summon parallel the forces shaping the cosmos: **Normal Matter**, **Dark Matter**, and **Dark Energy**. Have you ever paused on a quiet trail and felt the vastness of the stars above reflected in the stillness of the earth beneath your feet? That feeling—that connection—is the bridge between the universe and the path we walk.

This connection inspires an important question: As you traverse nature's path, how deeply do you sense the interplay of these universal forces—**Normal Matter**, **Dark Matter**, and **Dark Energy**—in your experiences? Understanding this question illuminates how the universe's fabric mirrors a wilderness traveler's journey. In the following sections, we will explore how these cosmic forces create a framework for understanding the wilderness and our place within it:



### Normal Matter – 5%

The tools I relied on during one particularly stormy night—the knife that prepared wood for my fire and food to keep me going, the tarp that became my shelter, and the water purification system that turned muddy runoff into life-giving hydration—reminded me of the visible, dependable foundation of survival, such as the 10-Survival Categories (10-SCs) that I have shared with you in other articles. Without them, that night might have ended far differently. These tangible items are my stars and planets, the visible foundation of my survival.

I remember once, during an unexpected storm, my tarp became more than a piece of gear—it was my sanctuary. I stayed dry and focused as the rain poured, knowing this simple tarp meant the difference between comfort and struggle. These tools grounded me in the physical world, allowing me to respond to the wilderness's challenges confidently. Without them, survival would be infinitely harder. They are the visible, dependable parts of my journey, just as **Normal Matter** forms the fabric of the universe that we can see and touch. What tools do you use to provide shelter and build a campfire on your unique wilderness journeys?

Now let us explore the less visible but the more critical forces, energy, that shape our connection to the natural world.

### Dark Matter – 26%

Yet, like the universe, the wilderness is much more than what is immediately visible (**Normal Matter**). The unseen force of **Dark Matter** holds galaxies together, and in my wilderness



journeys, nature's subtle cues and rhythms guide me. These are not invisible but rather overlooked until we learn to see. Have you ever followed the distant sound of a stream, trusting it to lead you to water? It is in these quiet moments that the unseen reveals itself. It is the way the Sun's shadow moves when we place a stick upright in the ground, marking its path to find True East and West and orient ourselves in the wilderness, and the well-worn trails of animals that guide us to a safe and direct way to travel in unknown places.

I remember the day when, for the first time, I placed a stick upright on the ground and watched the Sun's shadow slowly move. By marking its path, I found the True East and West and reoriented myself in the wilderness. Then, I realized how much nature can guide me if I learn to observe and trust its signs. These subtle cues—like the well-worn trails of animals that lead us to a safe path or the sound of wind changing directions and shifting in the trees hinting at an incoming storm—are the framework that holds the wild together, much like **Dark Matter** gives structure to the cosmos.

These elements of the wild—though not physical tools I carry—are just as essential. They form a framework that holds everything together, much like **Dark Matter** gives structure to the cosmos. Learning to recognize and trust these signs transformed my understanding of the wilderness in the younger decades of my life and deepened my connection to it. In many ways, **Dark Matter** teaches us to see the invisible relationships that guide us forward.

### **Dark Energy – 69%**

This energy, the unseen force driving the universe's expansion, mirrors the energy of adaptability and creativity within me. The internal drive—the spirit, the will to move forward—propels me when the path ahead is uncertain.

I recall a night when relentless rain extinguished my campfire, leaving me with only wet wood to start over. Frustration set in as I searched for dry material and found none. Then, I realized the solution was hidden in the dead small trees and branches around me. Splitting them open with my knife, I discovered their dry core, waiting to be used. The wet landscape was difficult to overcome, but persistence and focus were my only way forward. When the flames finally caught, it felt like a triumph—not just over the elements but over myself and the limits I once knew. At 70 years old now, my memories like these remind me how far I have come.

**Dark Energy** also fueled my ingenuity one morning when I shaped a fishing trap, channeling the water flow with rocks and sticks to secure food for later in the day. It guided me when I built a shelter in haste, sensing the approaching storm through changes in the air, the scent of rain, and shifting barometric pressure. Finding a mature pine tree and bringing additional pine branches from the forest around me, I crawled under the spread of the chosen tree, adding the additional branches above and around me; I found protection before the storm struck.



This force within me drives me forward—it pushes my boundaries and allows me to grow, even in the harshest conditions. **Dark Energy** reminds me that survival is not static but dynamic, demanding movement, thought, and adaptation. Much like the universe, we are always expanding—discovering strengths, overcoming obstacles, and finding resilience when the path forward is unclear.

## Summary – Walking Between the Wilderness and Universe

As travelers, we are not separate from the wilderness or the universe. We are part of its rhythms, shaped by the same forces that guide the stars, sustain the forests, and prepare all creatures for their journeys. Like magnetic energies, these forces embody alignment and balance. **Dark Matter**, akin to the pull of harmonized magnets, binds galaxies and our wilderness experiences together and provides a cohesive structure for our journey. Meanwhile, **Dark Energy** mirrors the expansive push of complementary magnetic forces, driving the universe's growth and inspiring our capacity for resilience and adaptation. *Understanding these parallels can help us appreciate and navigate the many layers of connections in our own wilderness life.*

Walking the wilderness path, we are never alone. The universe accompanies us, revealed in every tree, stream, animal, and the moon above. This profound connection reminds us that life is a partnership between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown, the tangible and the transformative.

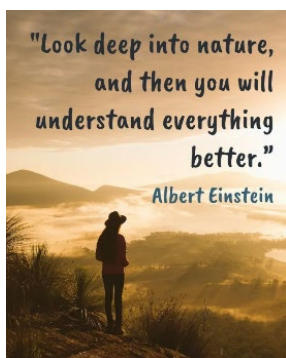
By embracing these forces—**Normal Matter**, **Dark Matter**, and **Dark Energy**—we transcend survival's challenges and connect to a larger story. Like the universe, the wilderness is a canvas for transformation—a space to discover strength, deepen awareness, and connect with something greater than ourselves.

## Closing Thoughts: Flowing with the Energy of Nature and the Universe

Reflecting on this journey together, I am reminded of how deeply connected we are—to nature, to the cosmos, and each other as travelers on this shared path. Survival, as in life, is not just about the tools we carry or the skills we master. It is about embracing the rhythms that shape our world and finding harmony within them.

Each challenge we face—whether coaxing a stubborn flame to life during a downpour or navigating unfamiliar terrain guided by nature's quiet signs—becomes a moment of transformation. These moments reveal that energy transforms, never fading but evolving into something new. As you move forward, consider the unseen forces shaping your path, trusting that growth, like the universe, is an endless process of adaptation and renewal.

So, my fellow travelers, remember that you are part of something vast and enduring as you step into the wilderness. Let the wisdom of nature guide you, trust in your resilience and embrace the journey ahead. And as Dan Wowak of Coalcracker Bushcraft says at the end of his Bushcraft videos, **“Stay in the Woods!”**



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Terry Campbell (01/06/2025)

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