

The *New Midwestern Nature Stories* series elevates stories about natural areas and our relationships with land and each other. Each drawing pairs with a short story that contextualizes land through compelling narrative that encourages how we think about human, ecological, and bioregional interconnection. It recognizes the importance of shifting ecological and human perspectives so that we can begin to imagine and explore a new mythos of the living world.

In 2016-2019, I traveled over 8000 miles throughout the Midwest to places I had drawn. This nature-immersive journey allowed me to produce a collection of stories that emerged from visiting public parks and natural areas in every Midwestern state.

The trips were documented via field recordings, photography, and film—capturing a layered visual diary of flora and fauna, forests, prairies, rivers and creeks, and geological features, as well as an archive of sound and movement. A small collection of poems, too, arose out of these and other nature-immersive experiences that informed the *New Midwestern Nature Stories* series.

The project is an invitation to become conscious of cycles between land, people, and power. It recognizes that an inherently complicated infrastructure contributes to widespread irresponsible natural resource harvesting. It is an invitation to bring heart-centered, clear thinking to the urgency many are feeling to protect the land and water we all need in order to survive. It's a call to work together toward better legacies without becoming comprehensively content, exhausted, or resentful.

At the same time, it embraces the in-between-ness of our reality, the undefined spaces that terrify and polarize us. It acknowledges that by becoming aware we surrender to living in a state of disorientation, untangling the musts and the maybes of reality; and that magic, science, loss, devastation, hope, and the unknown simultaneously exist.

This artistic approach to land and water comprehension is a pathway to recover optimism amid disorientation. As we become collectively aware of our disconnection from the land that sustains us, we can also begin to build connections toward working collaboratively with nature and each other.