

2021

Reading the Migration Library

MADAME BEESPEAKER &
LORI WEIDENHAMMER



Feeding the Migration (Painted Lady)



An artist book by
MADAME BEESPEAKER & LORI WEIDENHAMMMER

Feeding the Migration (Painted Lady)

For all those who gaze at stars,

bees, clouds, grasshoppers

and butterflies,

finding themselves

following

them.



Before the adult butterfly
emerges, its chrysalis becomes
transparent.

Eggs are $\frac{1}{64}$ to $\frac{1}{32}$ " wide,
light blue-green
with thin ridges.



Brass

More
Larval plants: Lupine



In 12 to 18 days caterpillars grow from
1/6 of an inch to
1 1/4 inches

Feeding the Migration

Under a flyway in Cactus Lake, Saskatchewan,
I grew up with sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans,
Canada geese, and snow geese all flying south
for the winter landing in golden stubble fields to rest
and refuel. The cranes look like deer when you catch
them out of the corner of your eye, driving past them
in the car, leaving behind cloudy trails of dust on
gravel roads, traveling to music lessons, church, visits
with family and friends.

Back and forth, back and forth, even in blizzards.
We had to move on those flat prairie roads
towards something and then back home again.

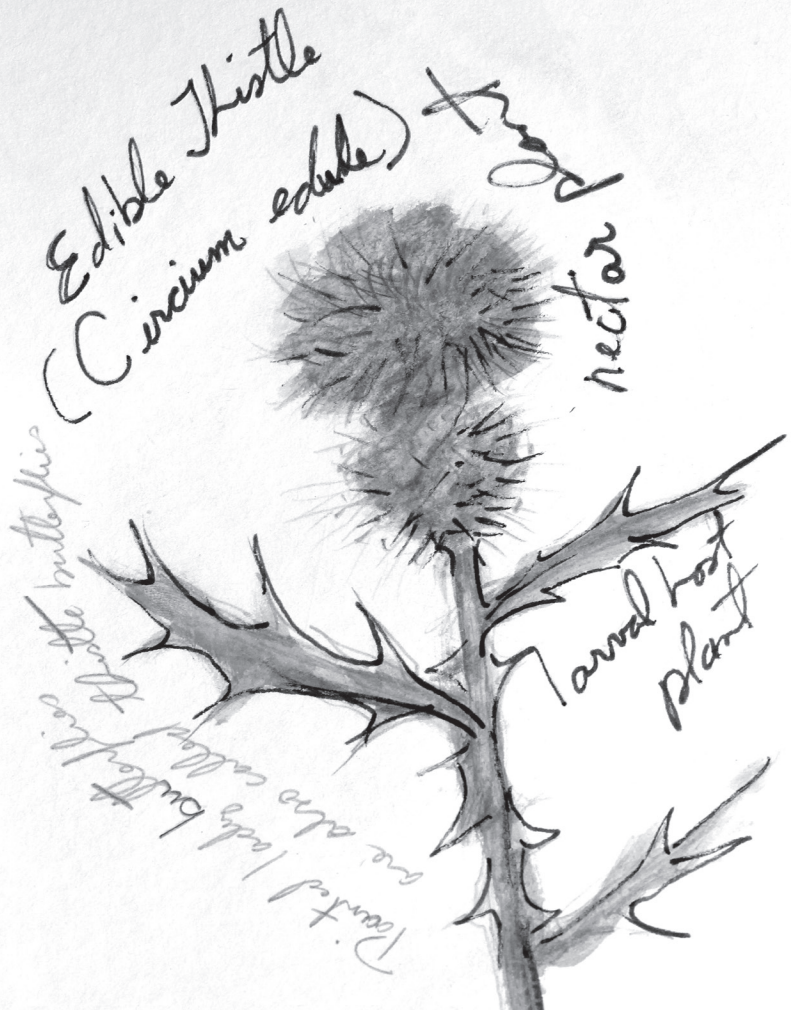
Moving toward promises of ripe Saskatoon berries,
mysterious muddy lakes

and cool turquoise swimming pools,

Sunday dinners with Grandma,

greasy chicken and chocolate rolls

filled with whipped dreams.



We all need to move. We are needy for movement.
 As the toddler breaks free from its mother and then back clinging to her legs.
 Testing the bonds but also strengthening the means of escape.

What moves me now? Why should I move?
 We're in pandemic lockdown and I wander through the back alleys

documenting the flowers

documenting the flow

the flow-ers of nectar

the red clover full of bumble bees

cut down the next day by a neighbor who prefers
 a tidy border wall.

Should I write them a note and tack it
 on the unvarnished fence?

“Don't mow the clover!
 Bees need to eat, meet,
 mate, date, and procreate!”

In other messier corners a cacophony of wildflowers bloom. Should I congratulate those who tossed handfuls of seeds into a pile of leftover soil behind their back fence? A small gesture of hope, empathy and kindness.

“Thank you

for feeding

the bees!”

In my belly a migration of hunger and neediness.

Needing migration.

Feeding migration.

Eating the migration.



And by following the bees I find the secret berries on my restless routes. I'll be crouching down and stowing the dusky purple evergreen huckleberries into a snap top box in my backpack while a small group of maturing women dance Zoomba in the parking lot to keep moving in order to keep moving. "Take only ten per cent," I murmur to myself. "Leave the rest for the birds that need the fuel to keep moving."

Fireweed blooms out of a hole in the sidewalk. Hope comes in the form of flowing fragrant nectar and powdery teal pollen carried by bees on their hairy bellies and back legs.

Hope comes in the form of painted ladies,

tiger swallowtails,

woodland skippers

and the mourning cloak

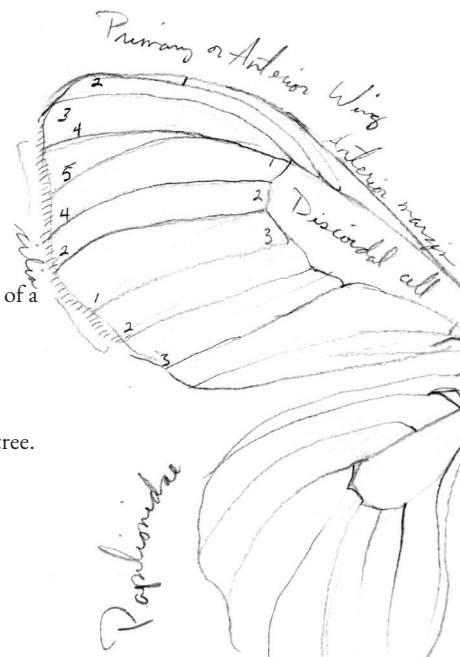
that teases

me

from high

in the branches of a

birch tree.



The butterflies called painted ladies migrate here some years and others not, depending on the factors that govern these sorts of things. They are the world's most widely dispersed butterfly, formerly known as the cosmopolitan butterfly: *Vanessa cardui*. One year they appeared at UBC farm late in the season. There was suddenly one painted lady sipping nectar on every *Echinacea purpurea* in the herb garden. That year there were so many painted ladies migrating across North America they could be seen on radar screens. I mention this in my gardening talks as a sign that there is hope. In the face of insect decline, and mass extinction, there is still hope. In the face of insect decline, there are still masses of painted ladies on radar screens needing to be fed along the way.

The defense mechanisms of the painted lady butterfly include flight and camouflage, tactics of all successful immigrants.

We need to blend in to avoid predators. We need
to fly.

Humans, animals, and insects
need to move to live.

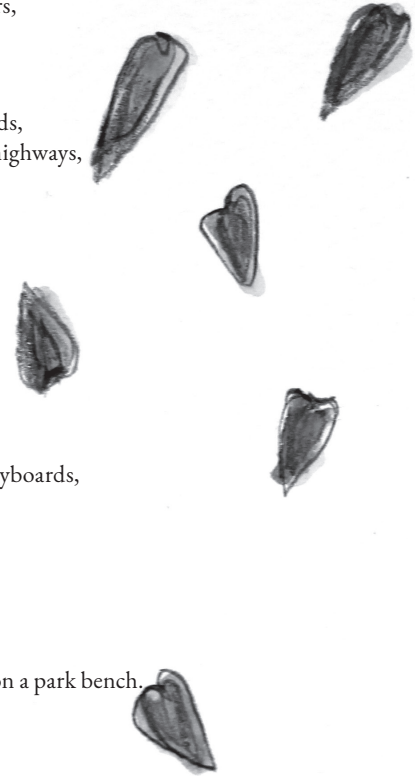
Migration corridors,
flight paths,
ditches,
gravel roads,
highways,
back alleys.

The body
needs
to move.

Fingers need to flick
against keyboards,

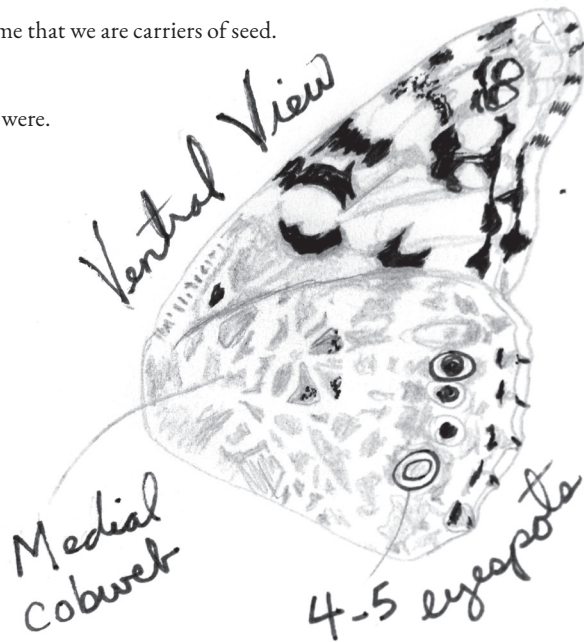
legs swinging

on a park bench.



My child who will not
 go outside
 paces back and forth
 in her room
 like a robin I read about kept inside
 by a woman in Nova Scotia.
 It had to fly inside her house
 back and forth,
 back and forth
 as if migrating all the way to Florida.

Then there's the other kind of hunger,
 that of skin needing movement on skin.
 I need your hands moving over my breasts and thighs
 reminding me that we are carriers of seed.
 Or we once were.



Then there's the migration of squash bees
 Have I mentioned the squash bees?

The specialist bees that nest in the ground under the cucurbits have special eyes to work in the dim light of morning just as the blossoms open. Males huddle together hugging the plush stigmas and stamens inside the flowers at night. They have migrated with the squash, come as far North as Oregon. So if we planted a squash bee trail, we might coax them all the way to Vancouver.

Imagine squash bee trails,
 blueberry trails,
 linear edible commons,
 the fertile footpaths,
 the berry-laden hedgerows,
 the liminal gardens between
 the landscaping of late capitalism
 feeding the migration.
 Imagine linear gardens for migrants instead of walls.

Plants seduce us so we will take them with us.
 The seeds carried in the hems of garments,
 intestines, testicles and wombs.

We are flesh-covered seed-carrying devices.
 Our urges are to nurture, but also

disperse,
 disperse,
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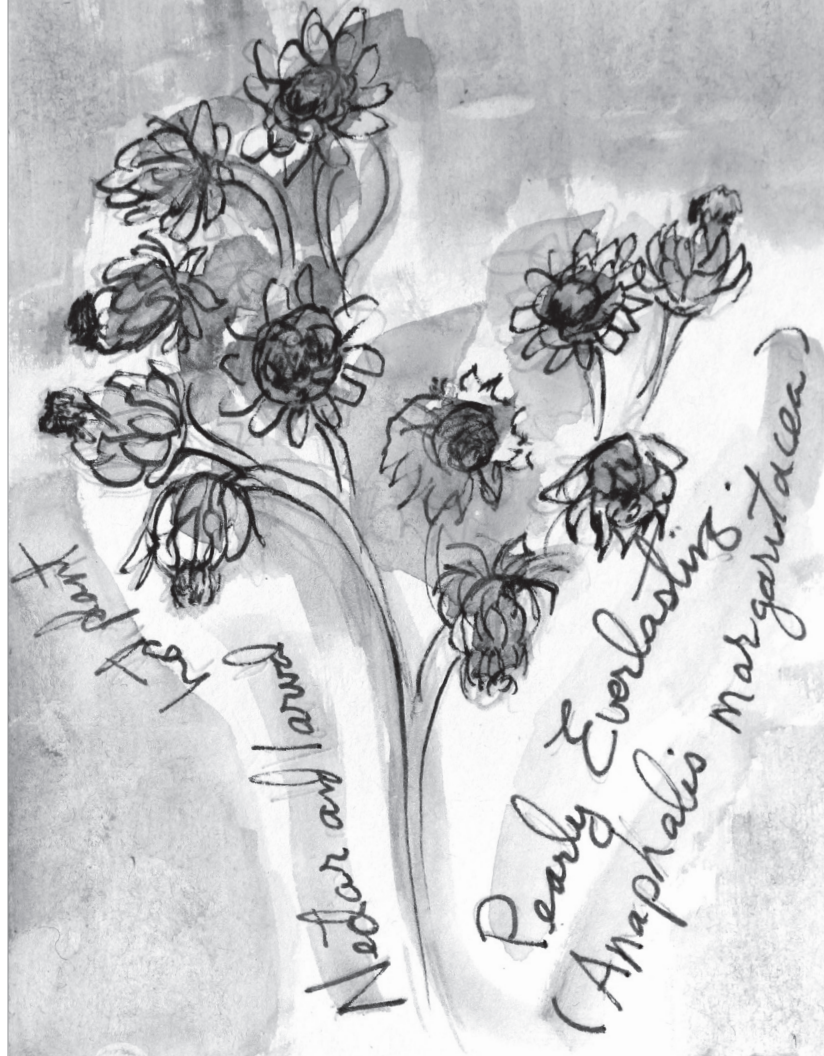


I pass a garden in my neighborhood deemed too elegant for flowers with striped grasses and bamboo against the concrete, metal, and glass exterior of a modernist mansion.

But there is also a goldenrod plant at the back alley going to seed.

It is messy and rich with possibility.

Feeding my imagination
and the migration with hope,
empathy
and kindness.



Woolly Sunflower
(*Eriophyllum lanatum*)
Larval food plant



Nectar for adult butterflies



Yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)

Larval host plant

Biography

Madame Beespeaker is an intuitive naturalist and interspecies communicator. She practices the tradition of *Telling the Bees*. Her work is informed by dreams and interpretations of traditional folklore.

Lori Weidenhammer is a Vancouver performance-based interdisciplinary artist and educator. She is originally from a tiny hamlet called Cactus Lake, Saskatchewan. It is in this place, bordered by wheat fields and wild prairie, that she first became enchanted with bees. She is the author of a book called *Victory Gardens for Bees: A DIY Guide to Saving the Bees*. Lori works with students of all ages on recipes for eating locally and gardening for pollinators.

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An artist book by
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