

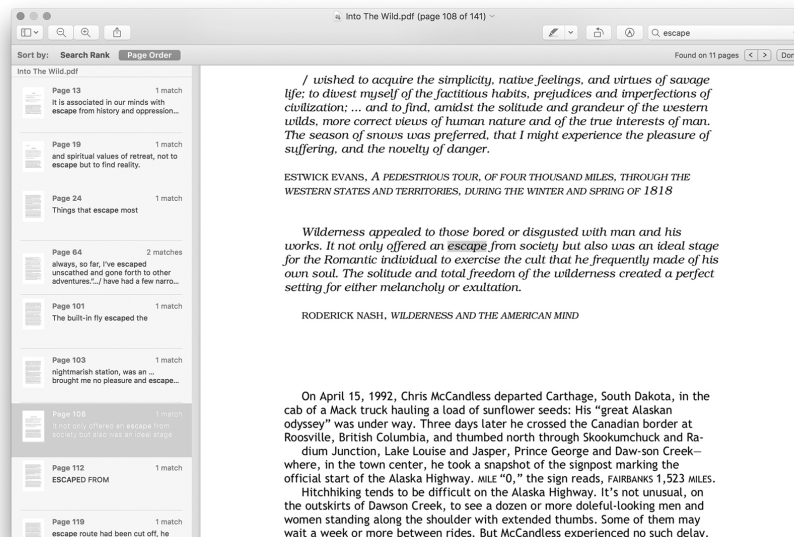
CLIMB THE MOUNTAINS  
AND GET THEIR GOOD TIDINGS.  
NATURE'S PEACE WILL FLOW INTO YOU  
AS SUNSHINE FLOWS INTO TREES.  
THE WINDS WILL BLOW  
THEIR OWN FRESHNESS INTO YOU. AND  
THE STORMS THEIR ENERGY.  
WHILE CARES WILL DROP AWAY FROM YOU  
LIKE THE LEAVES OF AUTUMN.  
—JOHN MUIR



## THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



who would do it in her place.

“NATURE/PURITY,” he printed in bold characters at the top of the page.

Oh, how one wishes sometimes to *escape* from the meaningless dullness of human eloquence, from all those sublime phrases, to take refuge in nature, apparently so inarticulate, or in the wordlessness of long, grinding labor, of sound sleep, of true music, or of a human understanding rendered speechless by emotion!

McCandless starred and bracketed the paragraph and circled “refuge in nature” in black ink.

Next to “And so it turned out that only a life similar to the life of those around us, merging with it without a ripple, is genuine life, and that an unshared happiness is not happiness.... And this was most vexing of all,” he noted, “HAPPINESS ONLY REAL WHEN SHARED.”

It is tempting to regard this latter notation as further evidence that McCandless’s long, lonely sabbatical had changed him in some significant way. It can be interpreted to mean that he was ready, perhaps, to shed a little of the armor he wore around his heart, that upon returning to civilization, he intended to abandon the life of a solitary vagabond, stop running so hard from intimacy, and become a member of the human community. But we will never know,