

## Let the Wild Be Enough

Earlier this year, I hit a wall - emotionally and mentally. Life felt heavy in all the places it used to feel light. The joy I usually found in wild spaces - the open skies, the rustle of animals in the grass, the thrill of a moment shared with something untamed - was still there, but I was too tired to feel it. Worse, I was starting to feel like I owed the world those moments. That simply being out in nature wasn't enough unless I captured it, captioned it, and shared it.

Nature had always been my escape, my medicine. But somewhere along the line, even that began to feel like a performance.

I founded the *Young Wildlife Photographers* community when I was just 13 years old. Back then, it was simple: I wanted to connect with others who loved animals, photography, and being out in nature as much as I did. I was full of energy and ideas and had no doubt that I was doing what I loved.

Now at 17, although I still love what I do - telling stories about the quiet grace of an antelope crossing a sand road at dawn, the drama of a raptor circling overhead, the beauty of a perfectly tangled thornveld. Sharing these moments has always felt like a gift, a way to bring others into the magic, but this year has asked more of me than I expected.

This year came that pressure, the need to keep it up.

Even in the most peaceful places, a voice in my head would whisper: Is this worth posting? Will people care? What if I go quiet - will they forget me?

That's when I realised, I wasn't just walking through the bush anymore. I was curating it. Filtering it through the lens of what might perform well online, even as my own inner life was unravelling.

In the mess of it all, I started slowing down—not as a strategy, but out of necessity. I stopped trying to document everything. I stopped trying to prove I was still "in it." Some days, I simply went out and sat. No phone. No camera. Just me and the world as it is.

I watched elephants feeding slowly in silence. I sat with the distant call of jackals echoing through the dusk. I let myself lie still under a wide sky, with no audience and no intention. And gradually, I began to feel the shift.

Not in the landscape - it was always magnificent - but in me.

For the first time in a long time, I wasn't trying to turn nature into something useful. I was letting it be enough.

There's a strange kind of exhaustion that comes with constantly being "on." It's not just physical. It's emotional. Mental. Spiritual. It's the fatigue of feeling like your value is tied to your visibility - your productivity, your creativity, your output. In the online world, the wilderness can become just another feed to manage. Every quiet moment, a missed post. Every pause, a potential dip in engagement.

But nature doesn't work like that. It's full of pauses. Full of silence. Full of things that go unseen and unshared. The leopard who melts into the shadows. The dung beetle working diligently beneath a bush. The animal that gives birth under starlight, watched by no one but the moon.

None of them are performing. They're just living.

Let the moment be for you! One of the most healing decisions I've made this year is to let some moments belong only to me. I no longer feel like I have to post everything. If I see something extraordinary - a lion at first light, a fish eagle soaring, a storm breaking over the horizon - I ask myself: *Do I want to share this, or just feel it?*

Some moments still become stories. But others I keep. Quiet, unshared treasures that remind me I am allowed to experience wonder without needing to prove it.

We talk a lot about "being present." But what does that really mean? For me, it means not needing to translate every feeling into a caption. It means letting wild animals be wild - without interruption, without expectation. It means trusting that even when I'm not producing, I'm still growing. Still healing. Still enough. Being present isn't something you do for others. It's something you do for yourself.

It's the feeling of watching a herd of impala and not checking the time. Of hearing the wind through the fever trees and realising you've forgotten your phone altogether. Of crying quietly in a forest because it feels like the first time in weeks you've let yourself feel *anything*.

Nature doesn't ask for an audience. The wild doesn't care if you're keeping up with the algorithm. It doesn't care if your stories are sharp, your captions clever, your feed cohesive. It offers itself freely - to the broken, the tired, the quiet, and the seeking. And that is its greatest gift: it asks nothing of you but your attention.

So, if you find yourself burned out, pulled in too many directions, or wondering whether you're doing enough... step outside. Not to post. Not to perform. Just to *be*.

Let the sun warm your skin. Let the call of something unseen stir your curiosity. Let the silence stretch longer than feels comfortable - and then longer still. You don't have to capture it to keep it. You don't have to share it to honour it. You're allowed to live quietly. To heal slowly. To stop performing and start belonging again.

The wild is still here.

And it's enough.