



A snake in the wild is a very astute and patient creature. These reptiles can go for weeks without food, move slowly to conserve energy, and pick affordable targets carefully. It can feel the footfall of a field mouse, pick up the faintest odour of a squirrel, and judge a body's size from the heat it emits. To a snake, a human comes across as a huge, clumsy, and distinctly repulsive creature.

Therefore, snake attacks express neither malice nor virtue, but are based on a simple set of calculations. Is my family or self in danger? Am

Only as a last resort would it fight and bite. This is the exact sequence in which most ordinary humans work through when confronted by strange aggressors....

Except that ordinary humans do not get drunk on power and behave with such indiscretion as America and its allies against those who they like to refer to as "Islamic Terrorists".

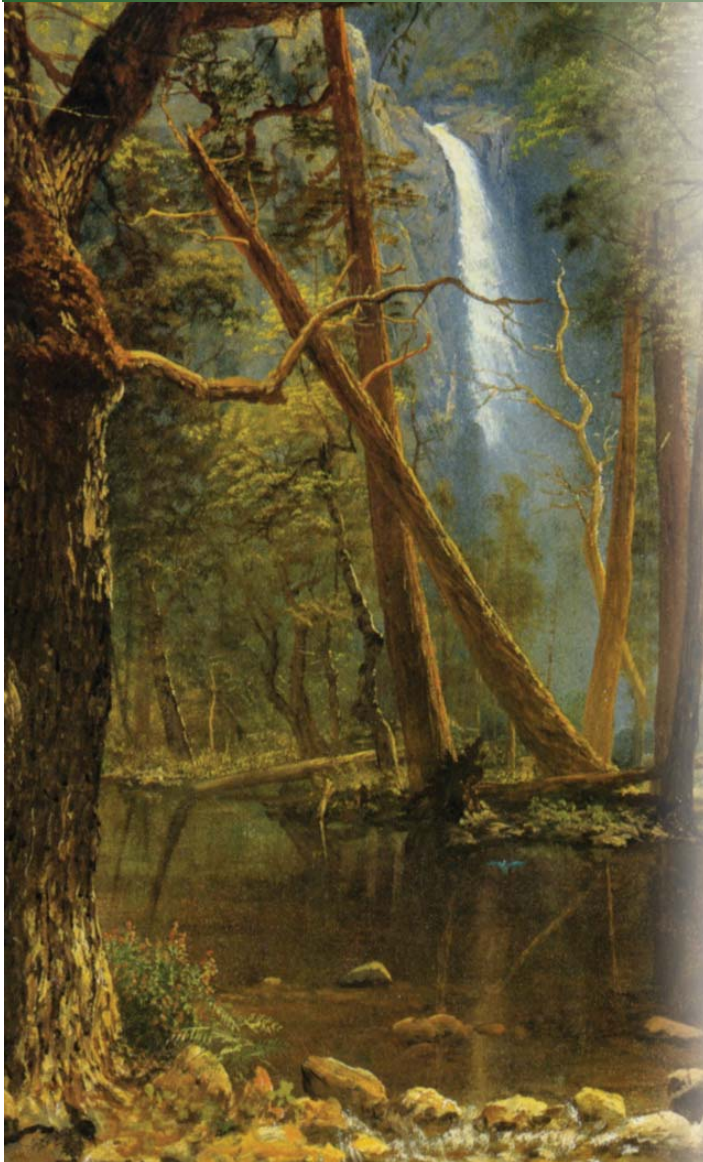
After a long era of killing wild animals, entire human civilisations and the natural environ-

ment, because, seen in the rear-view mirror of hind-sight, you cannot but notice that Islamic fundamentalism has only grown, not declined. To many even in the Western world, Islamic teaching is now seen as more noble and respectable than the obscenity reflected in Western materialism despite the best efforts to demonise the former. Hence, it is a fact that Islam is embraced by more African Americans, while fundamentalism is growing in previously moderate Islamic countries.

We can still learn. Indigenous people who lived among predators as well as prey, were smart about avoidance based on close observation and a natural sense of respect. Mindful respect is key. Man is not sovereign. An insensible and intoxicated one is beneath contempt. The might acquired by man's ingenuity does not make him noble.

Human fascination with snakes runs as deep as their fear. Snakes are erotic, undulating, phallic, mysterious and wholly "other". In the

WHY THE HUNTER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BITE OF THE SNAKE



The change in attitudes can be attributed to the influence of conservation biologists who have in recent years described the profound effect of intoxicated hunters on the food chains that include themselves. Ecologically, you could say that Western landscapes have been raised by wolves. Packs of unrelenting wolves descended on hitherto peaceful environments and decimated their populations. Despite propaganda such as the Fox employed when looking down at the goat in a well (viz: Tales of Aesop the Slave) the facts are plain to see.

In some habitats, the deer and the elk populations exploded, and destroyed the delicate river and stream habitats of native fish. The beavers, which fed on the fish, became extinct. Foxes, on the other hand, proliferated, preying on the smaller bunnies. Precious bio-diversity was lost. The abundant predators (not drones) ravaged their prey. So now, the birds do not sing in Iraq, the frogs are silent in most of Afghanistan, the ecosystems of much of the oil belt is destroyed, ruled by coyotes and stalked by hyenas. All this is thanks to the oil-guzzling human drunkard urinating in scarce water-holes during a drought.

The most compelling measure of the world's eco-system's vitality is its harmony and balance. The eco-system along the earth's oil-belt is being deliberately skewed and degraded, sometimes allowed to be overrun by voracious locusts or even secretly introduced insects and parasites, who form the face of evil and a symbol to hate.

Back to the snakes now: The human hunter, downing beer at the bar, complains of their conquered land being "infested" with snakes. The land in question was one of the most robust and was once filled with springs, birds, insects and animals. Snakes are now plentiful because their eating habits and temperaments are rather different. Most other surviving species now envy the snakes' revered position. "Infested" does not characterise their presence so much as reveal an attitude towards creatures which are inconvenient, repellent to the hunter and puts their existence at risk. To them, therefore, a good snake is only a dead one.

The potential for clashes between snakes and human hunters is bound to increase. The foxes promote other humans' lifelong fear of snakes. The serpent has always been a source of veneration or fear. One must now deal with ones' fears through understanding and then by modifying ones' behaviour accordingly. Collectively, our human culture can do the same.

I hungry? A snake normally strikes in self-defence, and the first bite is often retaliatory. Because they are cold-blooded, snakes have predictable behaviours in their habitat. ...

Of course, we humans like to imagine and depict them as always ready to strike; a bit like basing our impression of "terrorists" as bearded and turbaned men in flowing robes. You need to learn that a snake's first line of defence is to be very still and hope it isn't seen. If that fails, the snake would flee. If cornered, it would feign aggression in the hope that the bumbling human would give up or go away.

ment by any means available, America is entering a post-"wipe em' out" era that includes re-introduction of wolves into its distant areas of "influence". They are used to keep a docile or subjugated populace in check. America boasts of being a high-powered hunter who tracked down and slaughtered big carnivores, small herbivores and assorted omnivores and then expropriated their habitat for trophy homes, vacation ranches, oil wells and theme parks.

Perhaps the grand beasts they exterminated only grew larger in stature, more noble than



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dance between nature and culture, the snake will become the serpent, a potent player in religion, folklore and dreams, to the disenfranchised and oppressed.

Once upon a time, lions, crocodiles, sharks, eagles and bears reminded us of our limits and vulnerabilities. Our ancestors were well aware that they lived in a world where every creature fed on, and was in turn, food for some other creature. Each must retain their source of pride while respecting others with profound humility. Human hubris and ultimate hegemony must be abandoned. Perhaps if we can recover something of that lost humility in our damaged world and begin to appreciate the long-term service that all species offer each-other, we can overcome our fears and prejudices and banish the hunter.

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