

# The Pond

Late Summer 2024

A depression filled with stagnant water, here and there

THE STARS TODAY

## BELATED ECLIPSE REPORT

We drove to the path of totality on April 8, 2024, to the place closest to us that would have the longest duration of darkness, approximately three and a half minutes. We could have gone west to Niagara Falls but decided not to because a "state of emergency" had been declared there by the regional authorities — they expected a million people. So we went east, to Prince Edward County, to this little point on the northern shore of Lake Ontario that sat right in the middle of the eclipse's path. Maybe because of the "state of emergency" in Niagara, many people headed the same way as us, and we ended up stuck in traffic anyway.

All along the highway, big signs said things like "ECLIPSE — PLAN AHEAD." It seemed like everyone was driving with the same goal as us, to get to a good location by early afternoon. It was strange to think of what would happen during the eclipse: would all the cars stop? Would they keep driving with their headlights on, like at night? Would there be a cartoonish pile-up, all the cars rear-ending each other in the dark? Would anyone actually be completely surprised by it happening—someone who, for some reason, didn't know?

Afterwards, it was funny to hear people talk about it like it wasn't a big deal: at the restaurant (where we waited for our food for over an hour, as its small kitchen was completely overwhelmed by the eclipse tourism), the waiter said that, Ya, he had seen it, and "it was fine." "It was kinda cool." We overheard other people saying similar things like, "It was OK." It was overcast that day, and the classic image of the



sun blotted out, with its corona encircling a black hole, never appeared.

**The sun wasn't visible, so we couldn't fixate on one point. Instead, we were blessed — asked — to see the entire sky, all around us...**

Instead, from the beach where we ended up, the experience was one of extremely fast, shifting light. More than the darkness, actually, the most remarkable part was the speed. Everything changed so fast! At first it was slow, and then it was so fast. We had arrived on the beach a bit frazzled after the long drive—after being turned away from several diners and cafes who were like, "We're out of food"—with some emergency Babybel cheeses and sliced turkey from the grocery store, we lay down on the pebbles with our eclipse glasses on.

The clouds stayed away at first, and we were able to see the sun with a little fingernail cut out of it, and then a little bit of a longer fingernail, and then a little bit longer. But the clouds pushed back over the sun, and then we were just waiting, eating the cheese, eating the chips, eating the salad, looking around at other people waiting, looking at their phone for the time, eating the cheese, eating the chips. Then, after a certain, indeterminate point, the clouds started changing colours very fast, from light grey to a dark smoke, then to deep blue. The sun wasn't visible, so we couldn't fixate on one point. Instead, we were blessed — asked — to see the entire sky, all around us, and especially over the water of the lake. The clouds were sapphire on one side, and on the other side there was a little sliver of yellow near the horizon. With every blink, the scene changed enormously: the gold disappeared, and the blue, and then it was the dark, which isn't exactly a colour, but more like a texture, velvety, absorbent, and it got darker and darker, deeper into the texture.

CONT'D. PAGE 2

EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

## Inside a turtle shell

It's fair to say that most non-turtles have fantasized about having a shell, like a turtle, and retreating into it once in a while.

STORY ON PAGE 2

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



## Mosquito Killed

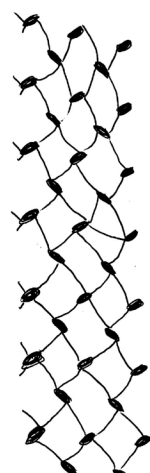
A mosquito was killed by someone who was in midst of having their ass eaten, and with such stealth and accuracy that the person eating the ass didn't even notice this happened. This was one of the sexiest events to have ever taken place at *The Pond*.

RIP Mosquito, who died in such a glorious manner.

MYSTERY ENCOUNTER



STORY ON PAGE 4



## *The Pond* Endorses the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

In solidarity with the people of Palestine and their struggle against the State of Israel's violent and illegal occupation, *The Pond* formally commits to the Palestinian international call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions and adheres to the guidelines of the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI).



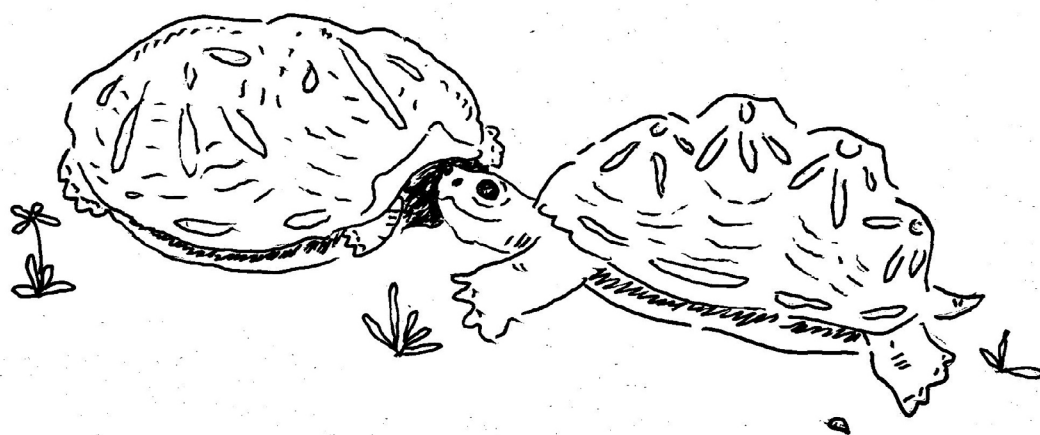
ECLIPSE REPORT CONT'D.

I felt like I couldn't take it all in fast enough, like I wanted to slow it down so that I could process exactly how it was all changing, but even in thinking that, it was slipping away from me. I was wasting the moment by wanting to experience it slower when it was already moving far out of my grasp. Like the other people taking photos, I wished I could slice it up and freeze it, but it couldn't be preserved in that way because it was, by nature, whole and continuous and tubular. This was—this is—the speed at which everything is moving, all of the time.

In the pitch dark, a woman took her sweater off to reveal a fashionable minidress and posed for flash photos in front of the lake, and a group of middle-aged people took off all of their clothes and went into the water. Everyone on the beach cheered for them, and then, like a reversal of what had happened, the dark loosened, and a glowing line of yellow appeared on

the other side of the sky, and then blue clouds on the opposite, and darker grey to lighter grey to regular, overcast daylight again. A bat flew out from a clump of trees and spiralled around in the open briefly. Then everyone on the beach stood up, grabbed their things, and left, as if they hadn't just spent hours and hours anticipating and preparing for what had just happened.

It's almost weird that total solar eclipses don't happen more regularly, like once a year in November or something, to remind us so sternly of the pace and spin of our nearest references in space, and of our own related movement. But the paths are elliptical, and maybe the message is better conveyed as a type of shock. The bat must have been at least a little bit surprised to see the dark, while also knowing it to be the most common occurrence.



A POND EXCLUSIVE

## A Peek Under the Shell

They can intake water through their cloaca — which they also use to pee, shit, and lay eggs — and get oxygen from the water.

**This is what allows turtles to breathe through their butts.**

One of the most popular misconceptions is that a turtle's shell functions like a little house that a turtle wears. But this would be true only if you thought of a skeleton as a house that is inside your body — which is to say that a turtle's shell is really their skeleton — living, active tissue — and not an inert, enclosing structure at all.

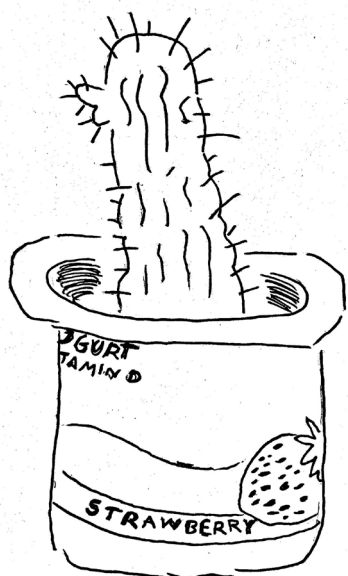
The turtle's shell came from the broadening of their ribs over millions of years. This created stability for digging: ancient turtles lived in elaborate underground warrens. The evolution of the shell also caused challenges in terms of how turtles breathe and move; having super wide ribs that are fused together makes locomotion a bit slower.

When *The Pond* freezes over and the turtles can't surface, they can breathe through their butts to get oxygen. And when the water is depleted of oxygen, some turtles can still survive. Painted and snapping turtles are able to switch from aerobic respiration (with oxygen) to anaerobic respiration (without oxygen). In anaerobic respiration, glucose is converted into energy. This creates the byproduct of lactic acid, which, if allowed to build up in their body, could kill them. For painted turtles, the shell provides a critical function here: it absorbs the lactic acid, as well as releases a bicarbonate to neutralize the acid. So the shell allows for these turtles to survive an extremely harsh environment by maintaining an internal balance.

In other animals, a muscled ribcage helps create flows of air inside and outside for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Without this, turtles have other muscles in their body to propel the intake and exhalation of air. This is what allows them to breathe through their butts.

In conclusion, a turtle's shell isn't like a building, or armour. Unlike what we see in cartoons or children's books, there is no naked turtle without a shell. There can't be one without the other.

### Cactus Lives in Yogurt Container for Three Years



This cactus lived in a single-serving Activia yogurt container for three years. Over this period, despite the meagre surroundings, the cactus valiantly did its best. Upon repotting to a larger, ceramic container, it had a major growth spurt, increasing by a third of its height, until it basically fell over from getting so much taller. It's now supported by three toothpicks.

IN MEMORIAM

## REST IN PEACE REGINALD D. PRIVETTE, JR.

Our friend Reginald, affectionately known as Reggie or Demale, was murdered on April 11, 2024, in Topeka, Kansas. He was free, in love and loved. Demale was guided by immense trust, a resilience heard in his motto: "All good things come to me." Spiritual without denomination, if asked about faith, he would answer that he was a seeker of knowledge. Demale, a nature lover, was most at home in the countryside. He marvelled at freshly fallen snow, and cherished memories of his grandmother's garden, his grade school tomato patch, and the woods beyond the yard. He raised and trained dogs, and held a great concern for ecology and the effects of pollution. Most

familiar with the southern States, he had plans to see the whole of the United States landscape. Demale adored fantasy novels and had a particular affection for underdog characters and their ingenuity. In his free time, he worked on his fashion line, *C'est dorée*, alongside his music. And no surprise that he was also a bit of a gourmand. He knew exactly what made a dish good and would describe flavours in luxurious detail. Demale cared for, checked in on, and listened closely to those he loved. He asked questions and he knew that vulnerability is where we all meet. Love and solidarity. B EZ, Demale.

### DREAM OF THE "SAUCISSON FINGER"

A saucisson finger is a finger that's like a raw sausage without the casing. Small lumps of raw meat and fat barely holding together, except with a few short bones through its centre. I walk around holding out my saucisson finger. I feel the sting of air between my finger's swollen chunks and dread the moment that it brushes up against anything. With my other hand, I dig through my herbal remedies and vitamins, and knock over containers of evening primrose, fish oil, turmeric, zinc, before spilling a jar of coconut oil.



SPECIAL SERIES:  
THE ZHUANGZI AS TOLD BY THE POND

# The Great Source as Teacher

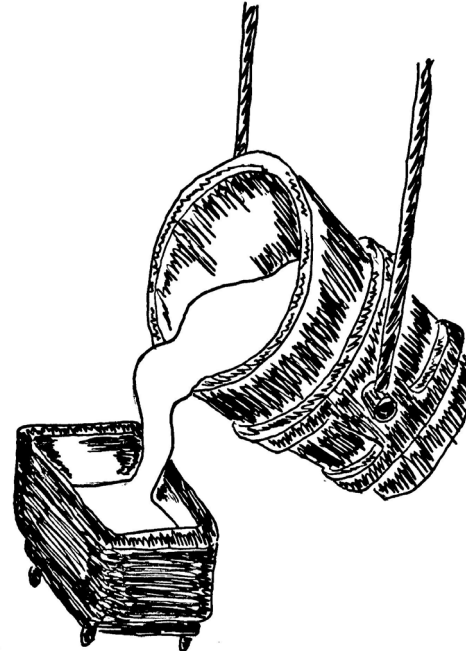
(In the previous episode, Ms Devotion, Ms Bus, Ms Phone, and Ms LetsGo all met and became friends, bonding over their relationships to the void. Ms Bus became sick, and talked to Ms Devotion about her philosophy of “Hang and Let Go.”)

Suddenly, Ms LetsGo became really sick too... Bent over coughing and gasping for air, her husband and children wailed all around her. Ms Phone came over to visit, and shooed them away: “Hey, leave her alone! Don’t disturb her transformation.” Leaning casually through a window into the

bedroom, she said to Ms LetsGo, “Isn’t this process of Creation/Transformation amazing? What will it turn you into, where will it take you? Will it turn you into a mouse’s brain? Or maybe an bug’s leg?”

**The fact is that the Great Clump assigned me a physical form.**

Ms LetsGo replied, “If parents send their child north, or south, or east, or west, she’ll have to go. So imagine the same but with yin and yang—they’re much more than our parents. If I disobey when they send me to my death, that would make me a hypocrite. It’s not their fault. The fact is that the Great Clump assigned me a physical form. I’m worked with life, I’m eased with old age, I’m rested with death. What makes my life good is what makes my death good; that I think my life is good is what makes me think my death is good.



Imagine a talented metalsmith pouring hot, liquid metal into a mold. If the metal jumped up and cried, “I insist that I must be nothing except for the best, most powerful, and most legendary sword of all time,” the metalsmith would definitely think, “This is a most unfortunate chunk of metal!” Now if I, as a chunk of whatever, insisted that I should be “Only a human! Only a human!”

then Creation/Transformation would definitely consider me to be a most unlucky, unfortunate chunk of whatever. So now I see everything as a giant furnace, and the process of Creation/Transformation as a great metalsmith. Where could I go that would not be okay? First, total sleep—then I’ll wake up surprised.”

CENSORED OPINIONS

## Unpublished Letter by The Pond Editors to the Editors of Another Major National Newspaper

The recent letters published in *The Globe and Mail*, criticizing authors who have withdrawn from the Giller Prize in protest of its lead sponsor Scotiabank’s investments in Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems, betray a shameful lack of historical perspective.

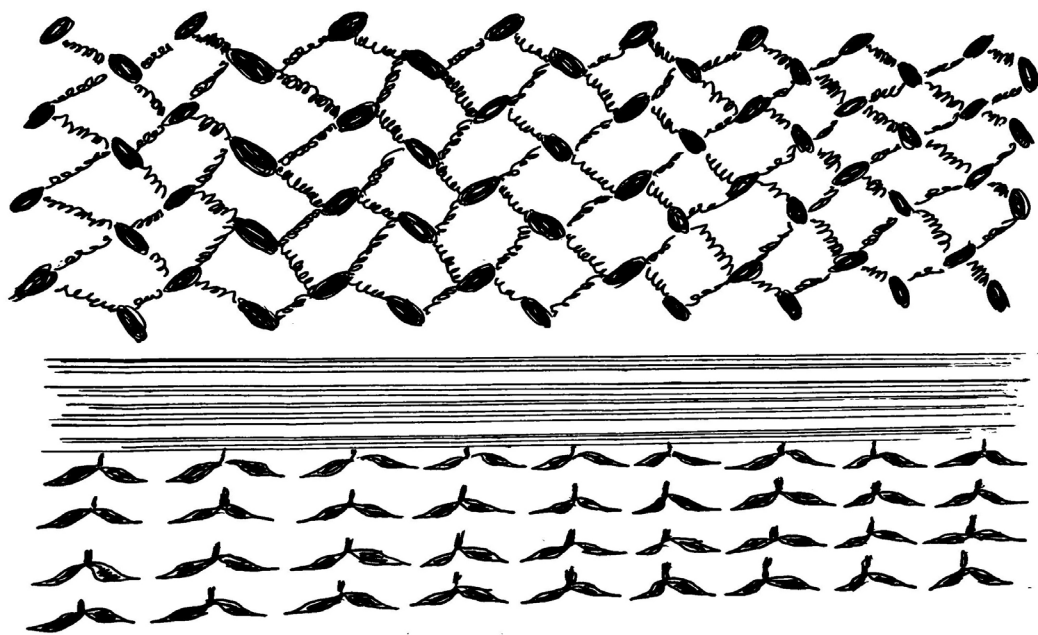
Must those behind the letters be reminded that writers, artists, and cultural workers made early and important contributions to the South African anti-apartheid movement? In 1963, Samuel Beckett was one of forty-seven playwrights who refused for their work to be presented in segregated theatres in South Africa. Today in the National Gallery of Canada’s collection is Hans Haacke’s *Here is Alcan* (1983), a sculpture-as-advertisement decrying Canadian mining company (and cultural sponsor) Alcan’s operations in apartheid-era South Africa. Filmmaker Richard Donner inserted anti-apartheid messages into mainstream cinemas with *Lethal Weapon 2* and *Scrooged* (1988, 1989), and many influential artists, writers, and musicians added their voices to the anti-apartheid movement.

According to UN experts, Israel too is an apartheid state. This truth has been confirmed in reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Israel-based B’Tselem and Yesh Din. Guided by human rights, the authors have justly exposed the war profiteering underlying cultural patronage. Predictably, this act has drawn out bloody-minded reactions ordering literature to be nothing but entertainment and authors to be no one but content providers. These voices would rather a genocide of the Palestinian people than the disruption of an unconscionable status quo.

South Africa was liberated in 1994, thirty-one years after Beckett and company’s small but principled contribution to the movement. Apartheid fell. It will fall again in Israel, just as our writers, artists, and cultural workers are telling us.

FREE PALESTINE

# THE POND COMMITS TO PACBI



In solidarity with the people of Palestine and their struggle against the State of Israel’s violent and illegal occupation, *The Pond* formally commits to the Palestinian international call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions and adheres to the guidelines of the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI).

**With our endorsement, we add to a coalition of cultural organizations supporting the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice, and equality.**

Our endorsement of PACBI is a non-negotiable, anti-apartheid position accountable to Palestinian civil society. In adherence to PACBI, *The Pond* specifically commits to:

- Boycott any cultural product commissioned by an official Israeli body;
- Boycott any cultural product funded by an official Israeli body, even if not commissioned;
- Boycott any cultural product that is partially or fully sponsored or funded by an official Israeli body;
- Refrain from participation in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration, or joint projects with Israeli institutions, including suspension of all forms of funding and subsidies

to/from these institutions;

- Refrain from hosting or circulating any events or cultural products operating under the auspices of “normalization,” or which advance a false symmetry between oppressed and oppressor;
- Support Palestinian academic and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for such support.

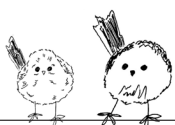
*The Pond* is committing to a boycott of the State of Israel and Israeli academic and cultural institutions complicit in the denial of Palestinian rights. This is not a boycott of individual Israeli artists and cultural workers, nor is it based on individual identity. We denounce Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. We equally denounce the false and dangerous conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

With our endorsement, we add to a coalition of cultural organizations supporting the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice, and equality. If you too are considering endorsing PACBI or have questions about *The Pond*’s decision please reach out.

More information can be found at: <https://bdsmovement.net/pacbi>

## The Pond

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ORIGIN STORY

# WHY THE POND IS CALLED THE POND

A small mountain on its own is called a monadnock. A monadnock is a knob or a rocky hill that was some time back an intrusive rock, meaning it's a nice lump of magma.

Along a trail on a small mountain that we love is a small pond with a sign that reads "L'Étang," which is French for "pond."

This pond is almost a puddle, choked with leaves and bound by soft banks that draw the path's wooden planks into its muck. The sign—L'Étang—is on its way in too. Étang tells us that the water is stagnant. Standing still the pond is full of pond scum, brook silk, and frog spittle. You may know that frogs spit a bit when they talk. They babble back and forth until the spittle forms a puddle and the puddle grows into a pond. In the pond they wrap themselves in

sexy brook silk. Scum is just a fact and something to talk and spit about.

Though they spit a bit when they talk, frogs move easily between several

languages. If asked for the name of the place where they meet and talk they are likely to use étang, pond, and 塘, along with the older "pond." This is because the pond rightly pounds up water, leaves, and pond dwellers. It's a natural compound.

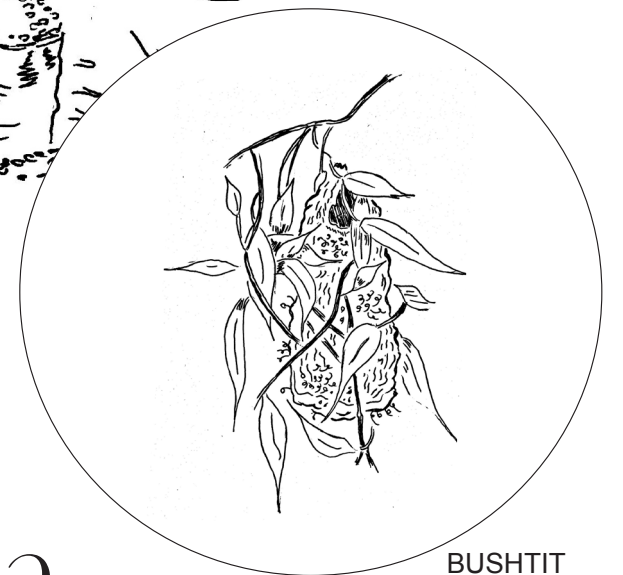
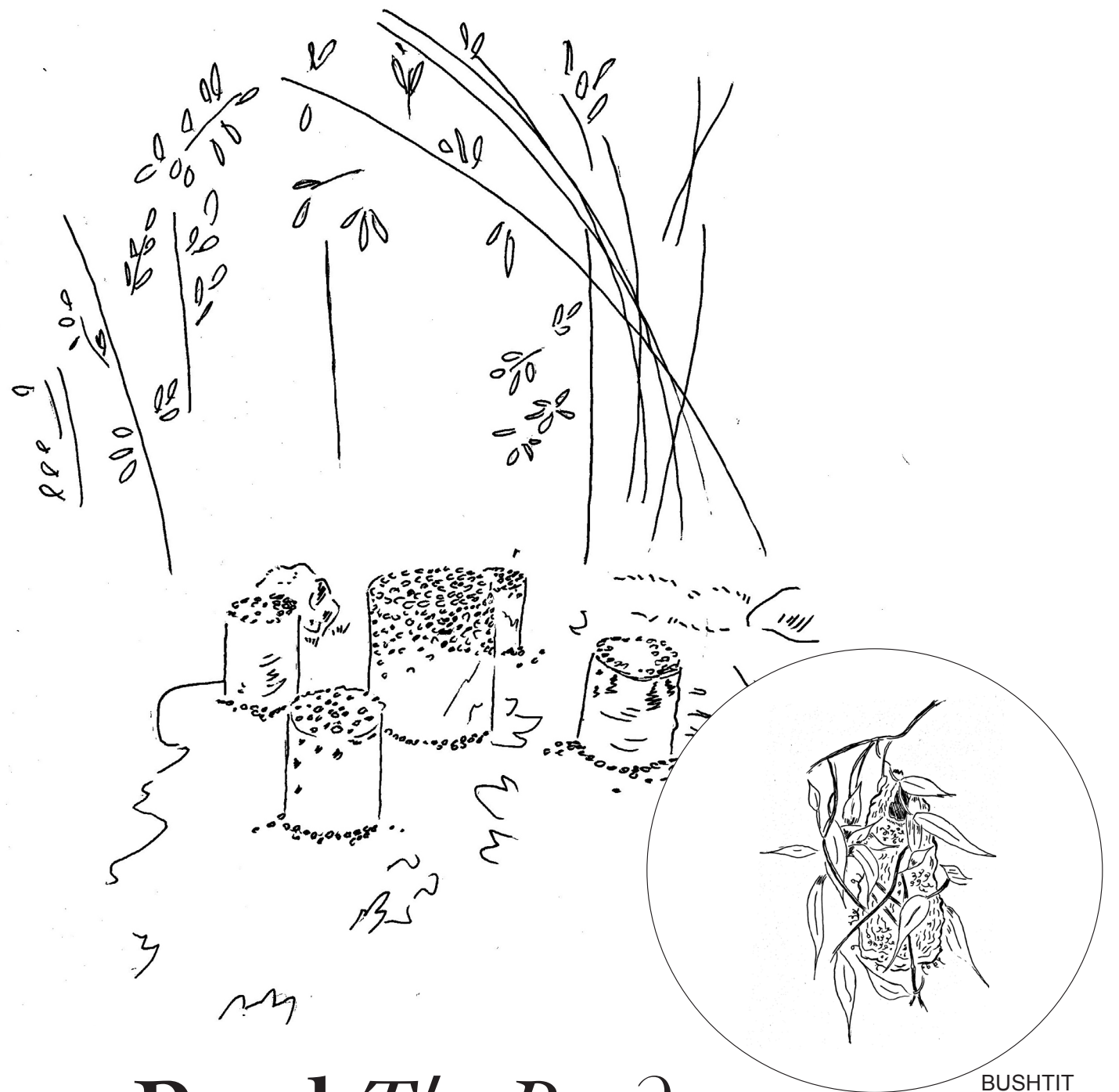
Now, with all this talking and spitting it's assumed that frogs take great pride in expounding, each putting their idea out there and flipping their silk around as they do. In truth, when talking about their talk they prefer the French "pondre." Technically, naturally this means to make one or two eggs (frogs lay anywhere from a couple to a thousand eggs). Yet for frogs, what is important is the casual sense of "pondre" which means to write and compose (sometimes with haste). So for frogs, and for us, the pond is a pooled text that is more than a puddle and less than a lake.



LOCAL MYSTERY

## Koi Kisses Turtle

Was it an accident? Did they bump into each other, or was it romance?



BUSHTIT SOCK NEST

PERSONAL HISTORY

## Wedding Vows and Look

First read aloud on a sandy island against a log by lake with a couple of fireants as audience. The day of the ceremony at city hall, family reported that the officiant listened on impressed. Outfits: dawn gleam and blue dusk.

## Where to Read *The Pond*

*The Pond's* official public reading room can be found in the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Park, Vancouver.

### How to Get There

Enter the park through the courtyard on Pender St. and turn left. Follow the path around the jade water pond. If you see any *Pond* contributors in the water, take a moment to peer in and let them know that you're a reader. Once past the Ting (pavilion),

keep left. At this point you'll see a bamboo grove running along the south wall. A little further you'll spot a concrete table and four stools.

### Shortcut

Opposite the reading room past readers have nicely worn a new path through the foliage. Feel free to slip between the bamboo and follow this path back to the exit.

### New Residents

*The Pond* welcomes the bushtits who have built a new nest kitty-corner to our reading room. This past season these sociable songbirds have been eating up spiders and using their webs to build their sock-shaped nest. Hanging from the tip of a bamboo stalk, the nest has a round opening that is just big enough for these ping-pong ball-sized singers to pop in and out.