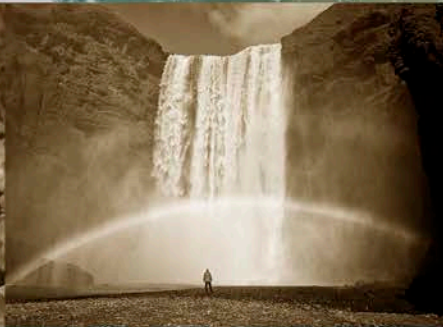
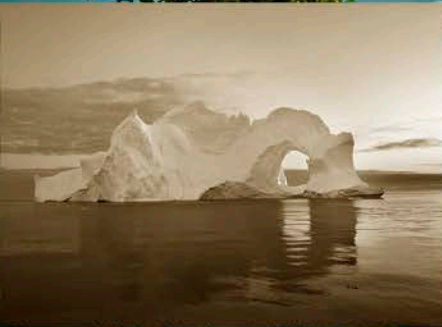


A Beautiful World

the Earth Songs Journals



Brian Luke Seaward



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ONE

Patagonia, Chile: The Land of Enchantment

As the first rays of sunlight hit the spectacular mountain formation known as Torres del Paine, my heart pauses barely long enough to catch my breath. Before me stands an image more beautiful than anyone's imagination could ever conjure—even in a computer graphics (CG) scene from the movie *The Lord of the Rings*. This, however, isn't Middle Earth. Here I am in the middle of nowhere at the bottom of the world, and like Frodo, my adventure took many miles to get here. It was this very scene, a photograph cut from a magazine article and placed on my bulletin board years ago, that lured me to this land of enchantment. Any good storyteller knows that whether it's Middle Earth or the end of a continent, one must remember never to begin a story in the middle ...

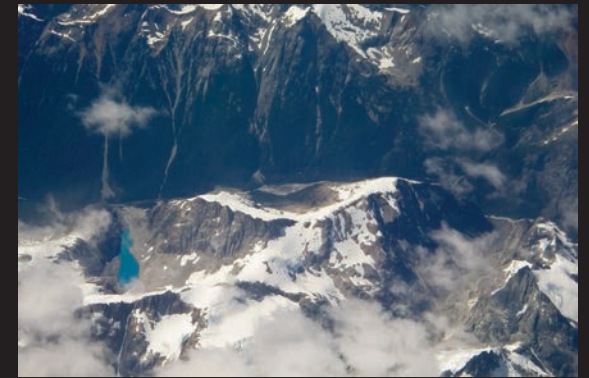
Some people select vacation destinations by spinning a globe on its axis and placing a finger on the surface with the hopes that it lands on some exotic location. I only have two criteria for my trips away from home: mountains and water. In fact, at any nexus where mountains meet water is where my heart, like Maria von Trapp's, sings. In my search for the treasure at the end of each rainbow, I have found the alchemy of cerulean waters, snow-capped peaks and azure skies is nothing less than pure gold. For this reason, the region known as Patagonia in Southern Chile has beckoned me for years, perhaps decades. Patagonia, the line of clothing so abundant in Colorado's high country, only mocked my ambitions to discover this elusive territory for myself. Authentic living may begin with vicarious travel, but it should never end there. In the winter of 2007 (Chile's summer) all factors came into alignment. With a newly issued passport in hand, I was on my way.

Truth be told, I had every good intention of learning Spanish before I bought my plane ticket to Santiago, Chile. In shouldering several responsibilities prior to the trip, however, I failed to make time to increase my vocabulary beyond "hola" and "adios, amigo." It turned out not to matter. Chileans are no strangers to the English language, but given the chance, they welcome the opportunity to teach

Previous Page: Mythical at first glance, Torres del Paine is regarded by many to be the most beautiful mountain range in the world.



Several volcanoes, dormant and active, make up Chile's rugged South American coast.



Chile, a long sliver of land hugging the west coast of South America, is one of the most beautiful countries on planet Earth.



The Chilean Andes have some of the most pristine and unspoiled glacial lakes in the world.



EIGHT

Greenland: Reflections from the 8th Continent

August 1, 2009 (day one): As the plane approached the east coast of Greenland (from Copenhagen, Denmark), well above 30,000 feet, I looked out the window and was speechless at the beauty of the nexus of snow-covered mountains, sapphire blue water and what appeared to be tiny icebergs dotting the water—as far as the eye could see.

It was nothing less than a mythical scene from *Lord of the Rings*—surely one you don't see every day. (I am happy to say I included this scene in the *Earth Songs* documentary too—one of my favorite scenes in the movie!)

As the plane continued on toward Greenland's west coast to the first of my two stops, I continued to look out the plane window to see mountain tops peeking out from what I could only guess to be miles of deep snow and ice. Mountain peaks eventually gave way to fields of ice and snow, hundreds of miles wide, speckled with aqua-blue lakes and rivers sending waters to the nearest fjord at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean.

Kangerlussuaq (all names are in Greenlandic —think Inuit) was my initial two-day stop. On first appearance, Kangerlussuaq is nothing more than an airstrip with a few buildings on either side. The population is less than a thousand people, and you can only live here if you can prove you have a job. This town is a former U.S. military base, built during the Cold War; and although I am told we returned it to Denmark over fifteen years ago, I have seen many U.S. military aircraft come and go from my hotel window that overlooks the airstrip.

Here is an example of how small this town is: Not only is my hotel in the same building as the airport terminal, my hotel *is* the airport terminal. The good news is that baggage claim is right in the hotel lobby, which makes checking out and boarding the plane quite easy. The 777 plane was packed with

Previous Page: A keyhole iceberg punctuates the seascape in the sunset hours off the coast of Ilulissat, Greenland.



Mountain islands grace the azure blue waters off the eastern coast of Greenland.



These mountains in the middle of this massive island are several miles high, revealing a rather deep ice cap.



The east coast of Greenland appears uninhabited yet completely pristine, and nothing less than breathtaking.



ELEVEN

Tahiti: Pacific Polynesian Paradise

One fall semester in college, I wandered into a campus bookstore and filed through a bin of art posters in the hopes of selecting one to adorn my naked apartment walls. Within moments I stumbled across an aerial photo poster of a tropical island that was so picture perfect, I figured it could only have been conjured up in someone's imagination. Jagged, lush-green mountain peaks were surrounded in turquoise blue waters, which, in turn, were surrounded by the most amazing blue ocean I had ever seen.

If there was ever a picture of paradise, this was surely it! I wasn't all that worldly at the time, but I was certain nothing could look this beautiful on planet Earth. On the back of the poster was written one word: Moorea. On an intuitive impulse, I bought the poster, had it framed, hung it up and then looked at it every night before I went to bed as a visual mantra of relaxation.

Some people go backpacking in Europe for months on end after college graduation. I went straight to graduate school. I vowed, however, that upon the completion of my Ph.D., I would treat myself to a trip to the island of Moorea, one of the Society Islands, more commonly known as Tahiti.

In 1986 I not only received my doctorate but my first passport. With a dream in my heart I bought a plane ticket and I was gone. Moorea was everything I had wished for and more. Unknowingly, this trip to the South Pacific whetted an appetite for wanderlust that, happily, has never been satisfied. As much as I loved Moorea, I vowed I would never return until I had seen every amazing corner of the world to be explored.

At the age of fifty-four now, I still have yet to see many of these earthly corners, but Moorea and her sister island, Bora Bora, have been whispering in my ears for decades to return. So I did, in the summer of 2010. A lot can change in twenty-five years; some hotels close, others open. After all this time, I am happy to report that some places called "paradise" can withstand the test of time. Moorea is every

Previous Page: To swim in the South Pacific Ocean in the presence of a baby Humpback whale (2 weeks old) is nothing less than a spiritual experience.



The coral that lives beneath the waters of Tahiti are some of the most beautiful in the world.



Black fin sharks, about 8 to 12 feet long, show no interest in humans as they swim among stingrays and butterfly fish.



The neon colors of these South Pacific tropical fish defy description.



SIX

Wildlife: The Cast of Earth Songs

I live at the crossroads of a migration path. Situated a few miles north of Boulder, Colorado, with a view looking west toward Rocky Mountain National Park, I see with great frequency huge flocks of Canada geese, snow geese, white pelicans, blue herons, sand hill cranes, cormorants, even bald eagles, migrating north or south, depending on the time of year. Every now and then one might see bears, coyotes, deer, moose and, on rare occasion, mountain lions that migrate down from the mountains near my neighborhood (I live near a river wildlife sanctuary) in their perpetual search for food. North, south, east and west—I stand at the center of a symbolic mandala, a living medicine wheel of life, all begging to be filmed a few steps outside my back door.

I can recall as a young child, standing around the backyard bird feeder, cupping some sunflower seeds in my hands and waiting patiently for a chickadee or nuthatch to land on my fingers and eat some millet or sunflower seeds. My grandmother told me, if I was really still and patient, the birds would come, but, she insisted, I would have to be really still. I was, and come they did!

To make that connection with wildlife, at such a young age, was a life-changing moment, one that became a stepping-stone in the filming of this movie. When I first began to film the raw footage for *Earth Songs*, I had only mountains and water in mind, but it didn't take long to realize that I was missing a crucial element: wildlife! Mountains and water are a sure thing to capture on film. Not so with wildlife. Neither black bears, nor hummingbirds do second takes (and in many cases don't even audition). Filming wildlife requires a lot of stillness and a great amount of patience. Oh yeah, I forgot luck. Lots and lots of luck.

Previous Page: Intrigued by a potential snack, a wild mountain lion poses majestically in Kalispell, Montana.



Red foxes are common in Colorado, but they are always a delight to see.



A bull moose sits in repose in the Teton National Park of Wyoming.



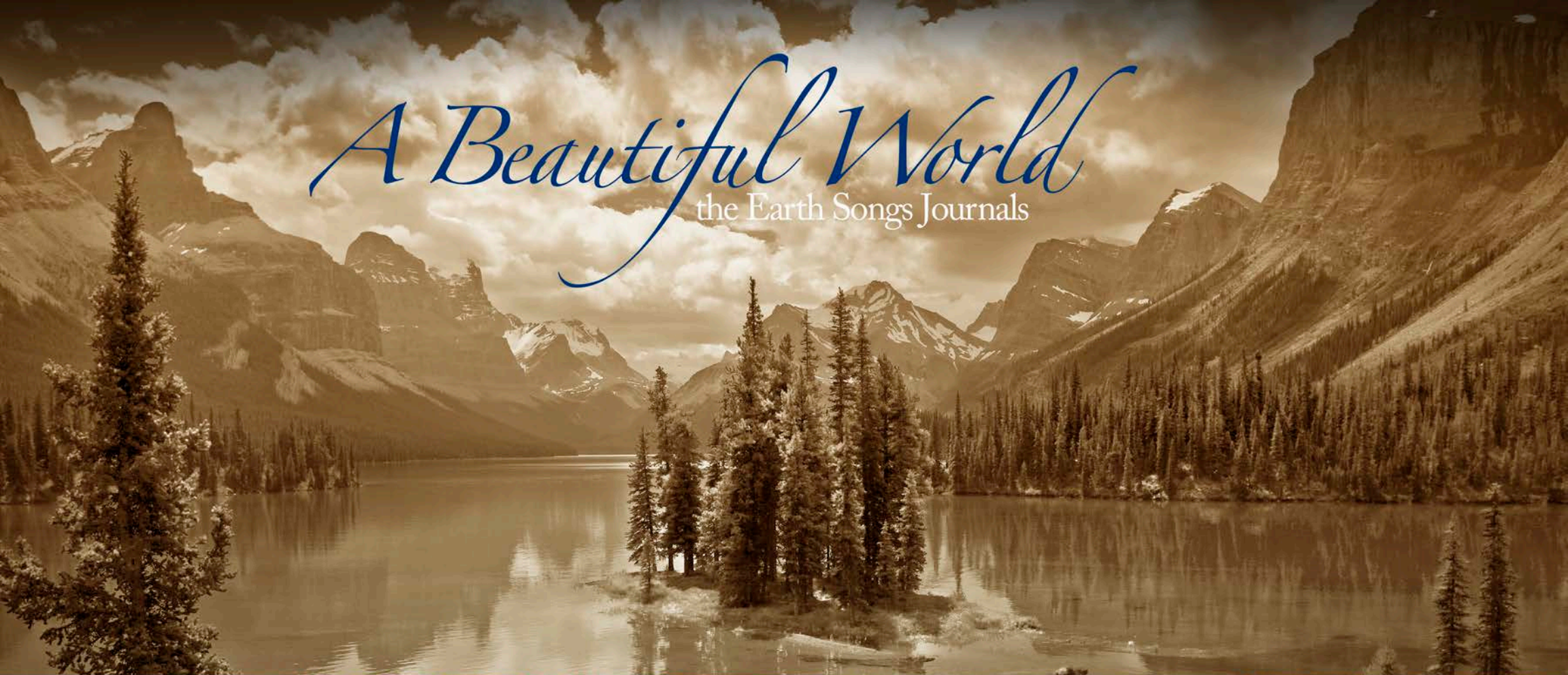
Bald eagles are as common as squirrels in Sitka, Alaska, but that doesn't make them any less fascinating to watch.





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