



**Daniel Mapel** (above), developer of Wild Earth Animal Essences, is a spiritual psychologist and counsellor for adults who suffered childhood abuse. He has worked as a wilderness guide in Wyoming, and as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa.

# Essentially Wild

*M*y work as a wilderness guide took me to some of the wildest places in North America – off the beaten track, close to wild rivers and silence, and deep into the territory of the grizzly bears, eagles, otters and moose.

When I experience animals in the wilderness, I often find myself in awe as I witness wild beings living in a state of purity and grace. They are perfect models of what it is to live fully in integrity, clarity and peace.

One encounter stands out in my mind as the most profound experience I have ever had with a wild animal.

After a day of backpacking and fishing we slept out under the stars on a hilltop dense with pine trees, in a national park in Wyoming. In the moonlight I saw a large shadow coming up the trail approaching us. Thoughts of a grizzly bear raced through my mind. I knew if this bear stepped on us there was a high probability that he

would be frightened by our presence and react aggressively and that someone among us would be terribly injured or killed. The animal came close to us, then jumped over us, crashing down the hillside into the brush.

We lit a fire and stayed up most of that night. We awoke at first light, grateful to be alive. We resumed our hike and just a short way down the trail we were amazed to find a large buffalo, sound asleep. It had been a buffalo not a grizzly bear! This was a moment of initiation into my work with the animals – from that day forward the buffalo has been a kindred spirit who guides me.

A second initiation into the inner depths began 15 years ago when I was thrust into a period of deep emotional suffering. I hit rock bottom in 1987

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