

# The world is a beautiful and wondrous place

by MARK PAVILONS

?The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched ? they must be felt with the heart.? ? Helen Keller

That may be true, but I bet even Helen would have loved to have seen some of the wonders of the world.

I am finding more of them each day I walk on terra firma and Caledon has so much to offer in terms of beautiful scenery and local wildlife.

My son and I love to speculate, banter and calculate. We like to drizzle our awe with butter and garlic sauce.

A rabbit hops by on our residential street at night, as we sit silently on our porch. What an interesting creature ??o well designed and so agile.

A couple of possums wandered up our driveway, only to curse at a broom and hiss at my son when startled. Not very friendly at all, these critters are, with a face only their moms could love.

And yet, they, too, are perfectly designed, tailor-made for their place in the food chain.

The more we talk about the flora and fauna that inhabit this planet of ours, the more intrigued and humble we become.

A?bumble bee, Liam mentioned, can learn, communicate and is self-aware, despite its aerodynamic drawbacks. Self-aware??It knows it's a bee and what its specific job is.

Even ants and earthworms are much more complex and interesting than we know.

Why a tiny insect that lives in a hierarchical society with a royal leader can lift 10 times its weight is beyond me. Why an ant would need to communicate with its brothers and sisters is beyond my limited intelligence. But not theirs. They know their purpose and do what's necessary to foster a successful collective. They are inherently loyal and definitely have that all-for-one mentality.

Birds, who enjoy the amazing ability to fly, float on a breeze and see the world from a different perspective, are also really cool. We love to look at them, watch them in action and admire their colourful plumage.

Maybe they watch us, too. I know crows are pretty smart and it seems like they always have a plan, a next move.

As we gaze toward the stars and plan to travel the cosmos, our world has yet to be fully explored. There's so much still to learn about what's beneath our feet, it's almost mind-boggling.

The vast seas and oceans contain so much life and wonder it's almost inconceivable.

Of course, we all admire the lovable dolphin, who, quite frankly, knows more than we do.

I?firmly believe they have a few secrets they've been sworn not to share with us humans, at least until we've evolved a bit more.

They can communicate, decipher, laugh, even play tricks on us. They are protective of their own. They have been known to save human lives.

There are literally billions of creatures on our world, each intricately created with articulating joints, brains, internal systems and perhaps ?thoughts.?

Many believe that octopi are other-worldly creatures, who can open a jar, change colour, express curiosity and basic emotions. And yet they only live a very short life.

Many of our fellow creatures literally live for the moment, or the season. Only we humans have the benefit of living long, hopefully productive lives.

If only we had the smarts of a dolphin, the zest of an ant and the viewpoint of a bird.

Is our planet alive??Researchers point to evidence that underground networks of fungi can communicate, which suggests that large-scale networks of life could form a vast invisible intelligence that profoundly alters the condition of the entire planet.

We like to think we're masters of our domain, sitting pretty at the top of the food chain. And yet, what do we have to show for thousands of years of history on this planet?

Yes, our ancestors created some fascinating structures, temples and monuments, many of which we can't fully explain to this very day. The more I read about ancient accomplishments and societies, the more I wonder if we reached a level of intelligence, and then God Himself hit the reset button and sent us back to the drawing board.

Well, our ?reset? in the past 2,000 years has been fraught with conflict, religious turmoil, disease, imperialism, greed and more.

Sure, we've built some massive cities with towering glass and metal structures, reaching for the sky. We've built efficient underground people-movers, and above-ground vehicles. But we also fueled social division, inequity, poverty, political mistrust, abuse of power, environmental disasters, and more.

All in the name of progress. Progress? Let's go back to the ?reset??idea. When utopian civilizations reigned, architecture and common wealth flourished.

The Indus civilization thrived for 700 years without war, weapons, royalty or inequality.

The Anasazi in the U.S. built marvels of engineering in the sides of stone cliffs and then just walked away.

Humans still make the trek to marvellous Machu Picchu in Peru. We marvel at the pyramids.

We envy the ancient Greeks for their ingenious innovation in art, science, technology and literature.

We share a collective sigh at the disappearance of the amazing Mayans, Incans and Aztecs.

I have little doubt that our ancestors loved and respected nature and all of its creatures. They revered Mother Earth, Asase Ya, Gaia and Turtle Island.

The majority of earth is unexplored. Much of that is ocean, since water makes up more than 70% of our planet. But mysteries remain in countless jungles, forests, mountain tops where no human has ever stepped foot.

We have this amazing ball of life floating in space and we don't always appreciate it.

Perhaps, when society and technology permit it, our school kids can take their electives travelling the world over, seeing the sights and sounds that make us who we are.

Maybe dolphins will be invited into our classrooms to share their thoughts on climate change.

Maybe, just maybe, we will one day find Atlantis.

So much to explore, so little time. Make the best use of it!