

As superintendent of a 21st century national scenic trail, my primary goal is to help new visitors feel welcome. Artist Bibi Calderaro's sensorial walks reflect this generous spirit. They offer a way to experience trails and parks as places of healing and restoration—a special invitation to "Find Your Park" on a deeper level.

– Charles Tracy, Superintendent, New England Trail

Reconnect with the Land and Yourself:

A Sensory Walk on the New England Trail and at Weir Farm

In October 2015, artist Bibi Calderaro led a series of sensorial walks on the New England National Scenic Trail and at Weir Farm National Historic Site that explored the human connection with place through an in-depth walking experience. Bibi uses a unique approach to bring awareness to one's surroundings and draw attention to the multiple ways one may connect with the land. Although aimed at enhancing the relationship between individuals and living landscapes, Bibi's approach allows for a wide range of possibilities and insights from being truly present.



Walking, in and of itself, is a grounding experience...it is to understand, relate...it is to be fully alive. –Bibi Calderaro, Artist

Inviting the Senses

Both the New England Trail and Weir Farm offer beautiful spaces for slowing down and opening up to a new kind of exploration. Participants were led through a series of “invitations”—activities designed to heighten sensory awareness. As their journey unfolded, they discovered new ways to sense their surroundings, their own place, and their connections with others.

Located at the southern gateway of the 215-mile New England Trail, the East River Preserve is one of the largest tidal marsh habitats remaining in coastal Connecticut. Participants were encouraged to follow their intuitions, emotions, and senses as they slowly walked across an upland meadow—alternately with eyes opened and closed—taking care to sense movement around them, including shadows and invisible movements, such as the wind. Another invitation involved sitting on a group of rocks in a glen and offering a poem to the land by taking turns reading it aloud.



This is a useful tool to gently move people out of their everyday routines and reconnect with place and others...if we can't connect with each other, how can we connect with the public?

–Kathryn Hanley, Park Ranger, Weir Farm National Historic Site

Bringing a Sense of Newness to a Familiar Place

Weir Farm National Historic Site in Connecticut is a treasured place dedicated to American Impressionism that celebrates artwork from the past and its continuity in the present. Since this workshop was designed specifically for park staff and volunteers, the goal was “to bring a sense of newness to a familiar place.”

Connecting with site’s history, the walk included a visit to Weir’s library, where participants were guided to touch, choose and hold a book with their eyes closed. Later, the group sat outside and read passages to each other. Through the experiences with the books and library, and other activities, the participants developed a new sensory understanding of the place. Group members later paired up to walk a newly-developed trail while composing haikus based on their experience of moving through the forest.

It was beautiful to learn through haiku how others viewed the trail: each pair had a different experience on the same section of trail.

—Kathryn Hanley



*It takes time to get in synch with the moment,
but in the end there is a sense of coherence.*

— Bibi Calderaro

A Catalyst for Healing

The sensory walk is an artistic practice that creates space for self-reflection and is a catalyst for the restoration and healing that occurs when we connect with the natural world. This connection then awakens a personal sense of stewardship, caring for nature and all the components that comprise it, including ourselves. To expand the community of people who understand and connect to our most special places, including national parks, one of the best places to start is by experiencing nature directly.



These workshops are opportunities where people can begin to have a sense of relationality with what surrounds us, a sense that goes beyond the 'I' as separate from the world.

– Bibi Calderaro