

Believing in Fairies
by Jaq D Hawkins

The realm of belief is an elusive creature in the worlds of Paganism, Witchcraft and Magic. There are variations of tradition between one path and another, or even from one group within a specific tradition and another, yet most share some common elements. One of these is usually a belief in some form of natural spirits.

Classic fairies of the Victorian flowery variety generally give way to less fanciful ideas of nature spirits in modern Paganism, yet still there are some who cling to visions of Tolkien elves or folklorish visions of Spriggans, Kobolds and Brownies, among others. Still others will insist on goblinish depictions of the spirits of nature, and many will claim to have seen their own version of nature spirits in the local park or forested area.

In my Spirits of the Elements series (Capall Bann), I try to allow for all of these interpretations of Spirit, as one is not more valid than another. People will perceive the spirits of nature in their own preferred ways. The spirits themselves are of a different sort of body than what we know, and our perceptions of them come from more of a psychic interpretation than the sort of visual light and shadow discernment which we use when interpreting more solid beings, like each other. While some may get carried away into their own fantasies to an extent, no perception of faery is 'wrong' per se. It is only personal interpretation, just as no two artists will perceive or depict something in exactly the same way.

Regardless of our interpretations of the spirits of nature, most Pagans will agree that they do exist in some form or another. Many only recognize the archetypal forms of gnomes, sylphs, salamanders and undines in their rituals, yet still there is an awareness that the spirit of a specific tree is 'other' than these classic categories, which were after all originally named by the Alchemists and popularized by Paracelsus.

Believing in fairies, or nature spirits by any name, seems a natural progression in the pathways of magic. In Paganism of any form, nature worship of some sort plays a part, but how could one worship something which one didn't believe was in some way 'of Spirit'? Some say "reverence for nature" rather than worship, yet the result is the same. Reverence or worship, we all seek the spiritual in our own paths. Although my own magical path takes me far away from the religions of 'The Craft' and well into study of magic for its own sake, I believe that the magic requires a belief in Spirit, and in that is also the recognition of the different forms of spirits of all things in nature.

If hard pressed, many of those who claim to have seen fairies in the local park will confess that they didn't actually see them, but they knew they were there. I have no trouble believing this. There are some who do naturally see nature spirits, and more can learn the knack but by and large the majority perceive them on another level, which does not require visual validation. The important thing is that belief precedes perception.

All too often, many of us know the spirits of nature but keep quiet about it in day to day life, presuming that 'mundane' people, like our co-workers, will think us mad if we confess to believing in fairies. Personally, I have always been very open about my occult interests and wont hesitate to discuss my books with mundane co-workers. Often, they will become interested and eventually someone will come out and ask me if I believe in fairies. My answer is "absolutely!" They don't shy away. In fact, some of them will inevitably admit that they have always known something was there, but didn't talk about it for fear of negative reactions from people they know. It makes one wonder just how many 'ordinary' people share our beliefs in nature spirits on some level. It does, after all, go rather far back in history in some form or another.

Intentionally acknowledging the spirits of nature in daily rituals like the tradition of leaving a bit of milk or honey out for the fairies is, in my opinion, an act of spirituality which admits the world of Spirit into what may be an otherwise ordinary existence. Performing rituals which also acknowledge the spirits, even in the routine of calling quarters, is another way of bringing the spirits of nature into our consciousness, if it is done often enough. A fairy garden tended daily, as described in *Spirits of the Earth*, is a more direct method of daily communion with the spirits of nature and a daily reminder and acknowledgement of one's belief in these creatures.

The benefits of this acknowledgement come not only in the inner peace of spirituality, but also in the options one has for magical practice. Fairies can be very helpful in magic if they choose to be so. They will not always cooperate and anyone who deals with nature spirits frequently will know why there are so many folktales of mischievous fairies, but still the spirits which become familiar to you can be a genuine asset to a magical working. They take the magic outside of oneself, and add their own special touches to the intent. Usually this is good, although again, one must be a bit careful of the possibility for misdirection. Nature spirits are, like nature itself, creatures of chaos. Nature works in patterns which follow parameters, but cannot always be precisely predicted. In consequence, magic which involves nature spirits can deviate from one's intention if the parameters are not specifically set. Methods for doing this are written in my books, presenting a variety of examples. For those who do not wish to run out and buy them, I recommend requesting them from your local library.

Every persons perception of faery is unique, yet what binds us together is the belief of knowing that they are there. House spirits, nature spirits and Aetherial spirits alike, the fairies by whatever name continue to bring magic to the lives of those who choose to acknowledge them, and I for one will always believe in fairies.