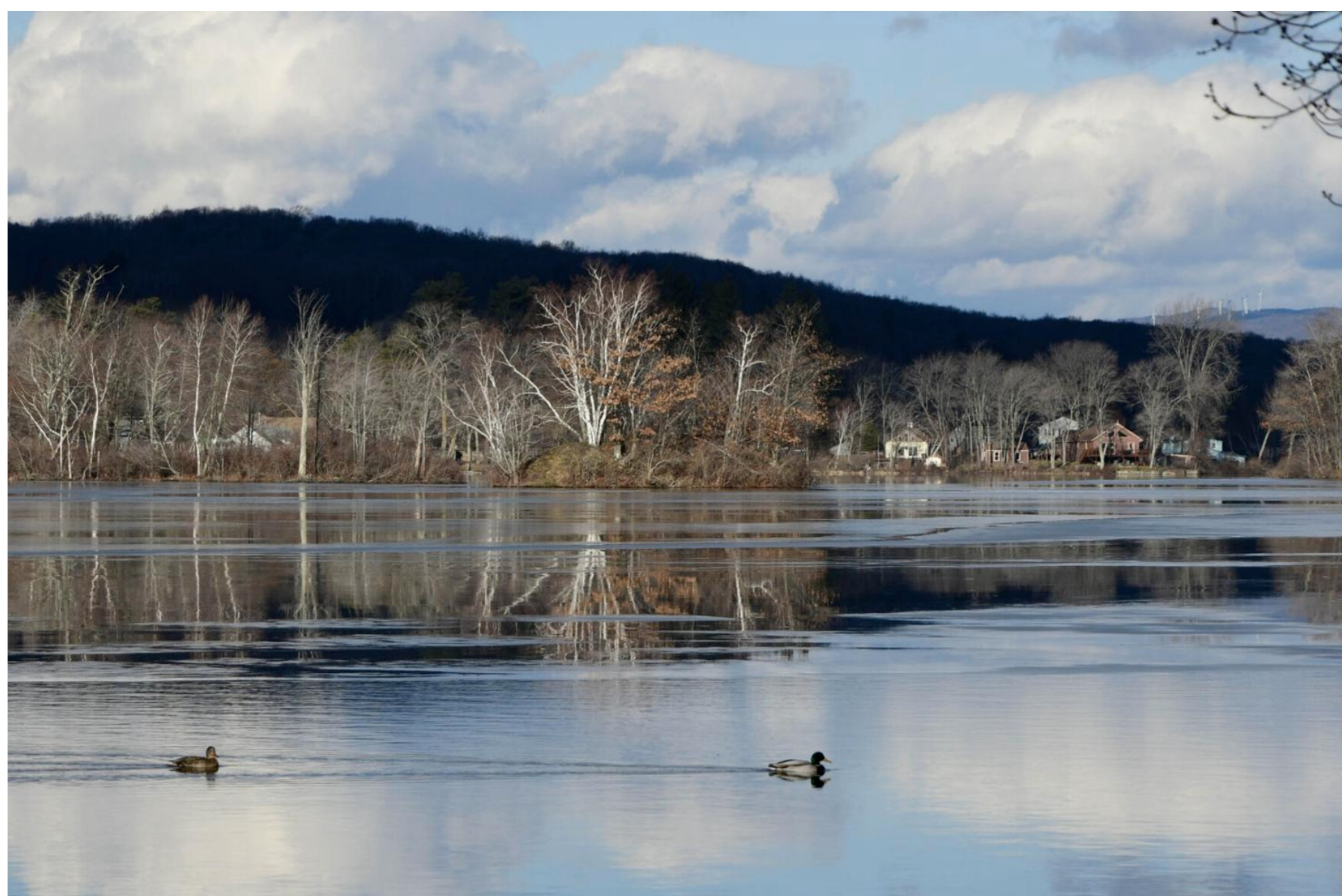


Knowing the wisdom of winter

Jan 18, 2025



Robert Mulhall



What if we allowed ourselves to be taken a bit more by the inward-facing energy of winter, the gentle resting that can happen now so much more naturally than in the other seasons?
GILLIAN HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

“I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.” — Lewis Carroll

We have moved through the winter solstice and 2025 has started. Often there is a big push to set intentions, join a gym, start a new hobby or some other invitation to go, go, go. The more I have connected with my ancestral practices, the more I realize that this is not the time of year for this. We are still deep in winter, most of the other large mammals are hibernating, resting, going slow. We, however, are being pushed and pulled into the “New Year, New You.”

For our ancestors winter was a time of rest and uncertainty. In nature it is a time when it seems like nothing is growing, yet below the surface there is so much happening, slowly and steadily being prepared for emergence. What if we were to allow ourselves more grace to rest and more grace to be with uncertainty. This new year's energy can often come with a push for answers and clarity on what to do next — should I change my job, my relationship etc. What if, instead of trying to push for new answers, we sat with not knowing for a while. What if we allowed ourselves to be taken a bit more by the inward-facing energy of winter, the gentle resting that can happen now so much more naturally than in the other seasons?



Robert Mulhall: This January, give yourself permission to slow down

This is an invitation to sync more with the rhythm of the natural world and to give ourselves permission to not have to feel that pressure to change everything about our lives just because we hear the words “Happy New Year.”

Luckily, those of us with many of our basic needs met do not need to worry about surviving winter, but we often have a mental attitude like this. What if we could turn towards winter and her wisdom and say yes. Yes, I am willing to stay slow, rest more and hold my questions in the soft light of a candle without needing to force an answer or an action. We need winter to allow our questions to circulate within our whole body and being.

A small practice we can offer to ourselves in this time of deep winter:

Light a candle if you wish, or sit by a fire.

Allow your attention to follow your breathing without changing anything.

Let your focus find a place in your body that feels some tension (physical or emotional).

Silently say to yourself "It's ok... I am ok." Allow this to repeat gently for about five minutes.

When you feel it is time to stop, notice your body and being, take a deep breath and release it all. Doing this simple practice can help us to stay present with ourselves during this season.

“Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being was nothing more
than prettiness.”
— Mary Oliver

At Kripalu, we are finding ways to stay slow and steady in this month, knowing that the energetic shift will come soon enough.

I look forward to next month when we can continue this thread of sitting deep in the energy of winter and allowing her wisdom to guide us through.