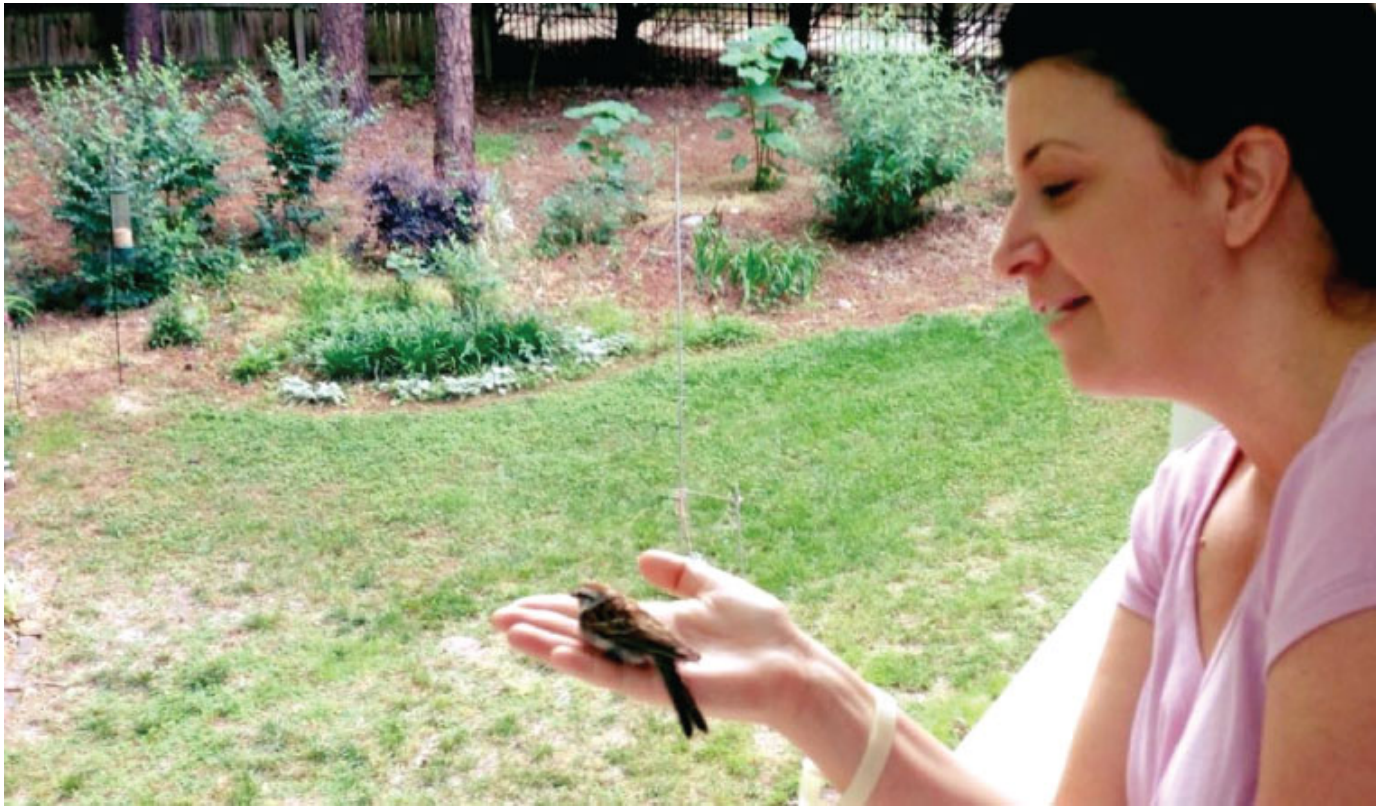


Finding Belonging and Relationship With Place



Katherine Loflin about to release a bird in her backyard, which is a designated tagging/protection zone by the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Smithsonian Program.

Finding Belonging and Relationship With Place
Thursday, September 24, 2015 -- Katherine Loflin

Curator's Note: *Through both research and her own personal experiences, Katherine Loflin has made some important and exciting discoveries about the essence and possibilities in placemaking. We're excited to partner with her in sharing some of those discoveries through a series of blogs this fall. Watch for a new post every other Thursday. The series anticipates the release of her book, Place*

Match: The City Doctor's Guide to Finding Where You Belong, later this year.

People often ask me: “What’s your favorite place?” It’s a fair question given what I do. I work in the art and science of creating loved places — a field called placemaking. Still, I’m always reluctant to answer. My favorite place is personal and really shouldn’t mean much to you, regardless of my expertise on what makes a good place.

Besides, my favorite place isn’t one single place at all. My favorite place is the loved place — any place that is loved by the people who live there. Place is a hot topic these days. And lots of places are vying for your attention and presence. There’s a whole consultancy niche now that helps cities create a place that may attract you, and I’m a part of it. But my position for cities has always been: Be who you are as a place but be the best who you are you can be.

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

Katherine and her daughter enjoying the privilege of walking to school on the first day this year.

But this isn’t about cities right now. It’s about people. I wanted to help people find their loved place, their Place Match, the place they belong. In this era of livability, walkability, sustainable growth and placemaking, I wanted to help people know what to look for in finding a place to call home.

Finding the right place to live is a lot like finding the right person with whom to share your life. I find that the marriage analogy is a good one, because now more than ever, your place is your partner. And like finding your marriage partner, where you live and put down roots is one of the most important decisions in your life.

The insight that our relationship with place is like our relationship with a partner occurred for me in 2010 during a very difficult time for me personally. I was enduring a marital dissolution and learning my new, and frankly unwelcomed, role as a divorced mother of a young child. Plus, I had fallen out of love with where I was living at the time. As marital divorce and place divorce were happening to me personally, professionally I was achieving success in the field of placemaking —

cheerleading love of place and no longer having that myself. I never felt more like a hypocrite.

It just goes to show that all of us — even those of us who focus on place for a living — can be an example of what's right or wrong about our relationship with place. Same as a relationship with a partner: Some days we get it right and some days we don't. Some days we feel in sync, some days we want to isolate. Some days we feel that person is our perfect match, some days we question our choice. Some days we feel the love, some days we fight.

That's OK. It's what makes our relationship with place like any other important relationship in our life. And it is why this decision deserves so much thought and consideration before we make a commitment.

Related Blogs:

[Making the Case for Belonging](#)

[The Path to Belonging: Date Your Place](#)

[Changes: Understanding the Place Relationship Over Time](#)

[Shared Narratives: Our Places, Ourselves](#)

This write-up is reposted with permission of Dr. Katherine Loflin.