



WHERE THE wild things

Already sweltering in the seasonal heat? Let **Leah Scott's** breathtaking adventures at Wild Things Anatomy cool you down – quite literally.

The frozen grass crunches under my bare feet. I can see my frosty breath in the light of my head torch. As I walk under the bridge, the sound of the fast-flowing Thredbo River gets louder, until soon it becomes the only thing I can hear... well, apart from the voice in my head loudly protesting: 'Why didn't you just stay in bed?', 'You're f**king crazy', and 'You can't do this'.

I hover on the bank of the river. It's 6:30 am and still dark. The torch light barely illuminates the icy water. It is the middle of winter here in Mt Kosciuszko National Park, and my car thermometer told me the air temperature is minus 7°C.

The disgruntled voice becomes louder. Part of my mind starts to resist. I can feel fear creeping in and my heart rate rising. I notice that my breathing is short and shallow. This isn't the state I want to be in. So, with a long, deliberate exhale, I wrestle back control of my nervous system and of my thoughts. Almost immediately I feel myself calming down.

It's time. I change into my bathers, and straight away feel the subzero air on my bare skin. My senses come alive – nothing makes you more focused than facing death. With another long exhale I enter, submerging myself in the dark, near-freezing water.

I'm exactly where I belong. A wild thing, immersed in nature.

For a lot of people, the mere thought of the cold causes them to shiver and reach for a blanket. However, once upon a time we were all 'wild things' deeply connected to the natural world. From birth we have powerful innate abilities to survive and thrive in our environment. These abilities enabled us to live, learn, and love side-by-side with nature. Over time, though, through our lifestyles and life choices, we've lost touch with these abilities. We've become unhealthy, stressed, depressed, addicted, and burnt out. We've insulated ourselves. From nature. From our inner wild selves.

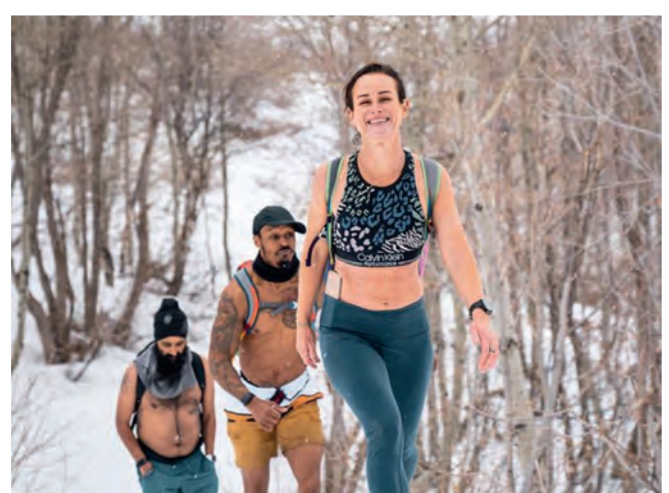


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PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LEAH SCOTT AND WILD THINGS ANATOMY.

There was a time that I was no different, but my divorce in 2015 became the catalyst for incredible change. Initially it felt like death, like a complete loss of identity. Ninety percent of the people in my life were gone overnight. On the day I hit my lowest point I remember being aware of time slowing, the world turning silent and coming to the realisation that I was not the identity I thought I'd lost – that it was simply a construct I'd built and allowed to be built for me – and that I was free to let go of all the rules, beliefs, opinions and perceptions on how I should be living my life. This realisation gave me the freedom to explore, to rebuild and to reconnect, with what I now understand was not just myself, but also the world around me.

That's how I found the Wim Hof Method (or maybe it found me). Of all the bio hacks I explored to improve my health and wellbeing; nothing came close. For me, the combination of breathwork, cold exposure training, and time in nature, is the perfect balance between medicine, mindfulness, and magic.



In early 2018, I travelled to Poland to stay in Wim's house. Over the course of a week, an incredible group of people and I went deep; leaping off waterfalls into icy pools, hiking in horizontal snow dressed only in shorts, night swimming in frozen rivers and discovering new depths to ourselves through beautiful breathwork journeys. By the end I felt bulletproof, no one and nothing could upset me, and I decided to become a Certified Instructor and bring this experience to Australia.



5 TIPS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR INNER WILD THING

- Wake up, walk outside while barefoot, and look at the sunrise for five minutes.
- Take time to become aware of your breath and allow it to get you out of your mind and into your body.
- If you aren't blessed with a river down the road, turn your shower cold at the end, starting from 15 seconds' worth of exposure at a time and eventually working your way up to longer.
- Hike in nature while wearing minimal clothing.
- Be grateful for the gift it is to be human, on this planet, at this point in time.

Four years on, and that decision has seen me teach thousands of people, from all walks of life, on three continents, including alongside Wim Hof himself in Thailand. Regardless of who they are; educator, athlete, doctor, celebrity, friend, or family (I taught my dad earlier this year), there is always that one magic moment in the cold when people connect inward. Mind to body. Body to mind. Their eyes sparkle and the biggest smile spreads across their face. It's normally followed by a silent nod of acknowledgement as they connect with their true self. They beam with pure love... and it is pure gold.

For those who come to train with me in the Snowy Mountains, we dive deeper, or, more accurately, we climb higher. Over the course of several days, I prepare people to hike the snowy backcountry dressed only in a pair of shorts. In this setting, the mountains, the cold, become a mirror, reflecting at you your deepest fears and insecurities. The ones you have forgotten, the ones you have suppressed, the ones you think about every day but avoid. There is no place to hide when you're half naked, halfway up a mountain... and that's why we do it.

In those moments I'm reminded of the George Addair quote: "Everything you've ever wanted is sitting on the other side of fear." And it's true. In those moments, confronting what you are most afraid of is powerful. Transformational. Freeing. The person who begins to climb the mountain, is not the same person who returns down.

And you know what is even more beautiful? There's no end to this exploration: of self, of nature. It is a mountain with no top. It's a constant pursuit of what it means to be human, what it means to once again be a wild thing.

WHAT IS THE Wim Hof Method?

Pioneered by Dutch extreme athlete Wim Hof (also known as The Iceman), the Wim Hof Method posits that, due to wearing clothes and artificially controlling the temperatures in our homes and workplaces, humans have lost touch with their bodies' natural ability to adapt to extreme temperatures and survive in our natural environments. The method is built on three pillars: Breathing (harnessing the power of mindful breathwork), Cold Therapy (exposure to extreme cold to kickstart a cascade of health benefits), and Commitment (the patience and dedication needed to master the first two pillars).

Leah is an accredited Snowy Mountains guide, certified Wim Hof Method Instructor, breathwork specialist, extreme cold tolerance practitioner, and mother of two. Naturally, this has led her to create Wild Things Anatomy, which hosts events and retreats in the Snowy Mountains, around Australia and globally.

Find out more on Instagram: @leahscottie or at leahscott.net