

DANCING WITH HERONS

Bearing Witness to Local Natural History

Book Description

DANCING WITH HERONS is a book about being present and aware of one's surroundings, about beauty, creation, and spiritual fulfillment—local natural history. It is the story of a keen observer of her natural surroundings, of a woman who dreams of herons.

On the six-acre plot of land and private goldfish hatcheries she calls home, the author has been observing the seasons, natural events, and inhabitants, and chronicling her personal encounters for more than three decades. The land is not pristine, not miles from civilization, and does not harbor endangered species, but her home is her wilderness. She has been moved and spiritually shaped by her outdoor encounters there. With this intimate chronicle, she unpretentiously offers us the opportunity to join her life's journey, simply hoping that her story will motivate and help others to become better observers, to recognize and value their own local wilderness.

*As it neared her, its legs dropped and the wings fought to slow the forward motion for landing. As its feet touched the earth, its wings came forward and embraced her. Dancing with herons . . . and Becoming. — from ***DANCING WITH HERONS****

JONI L. JAMES is a naturalist, environmental educator, bird watcher, nature photographer, musician, writer, and retired public school teacher, with thirty years of experience in education and nature study. Through her photography, writing, and HeronWatch Nature Programs for children and adults, she educates and mentors anyone willing to observe and listen. Her wish is to generate a greater awareness of and connection to nature and local natural history by example and teaching.

An Excerpt From The Preface & Prologue

THIS BOOK is a collection of personal observations, experiences, and musings. Most events are gleanings from the journals I have kept for over thirty years.

Except for those included as Prologue here, the encounters and observations occurred in what might seem a very unlikely location—goldfish hatcheries located in and around a city of ten thousand people in south-central Indiana. The area in which I live is home to what was formerly the world's largest producer of goldfish. Grassyfork Fisheries was established in 1899. Ozark Fisheries purchased the hatchery from Grassyfork in 1970. They currently have three fish farms in this county. All of my adult life I have birded, studied nature, and photographed at one or another of these units.

This writing is not meant to be pretentious. I am simply one woman who has been blessed to experience these outdoor encounters. I have been moved and spiritually shaped by them. Perhaps they will motivate others to value their own local wildness. . . .

I HAD come that evening to the summit of Maine's Cadillac Mountain to photograph the setting sun. Reflections on the water amid the islands had dissipated and a glorious full moon began to rise from the ocean. Sitting on the ancient granite rocks, I tasted pine and listened to the wind's music as it rushed through conifers. I watched as the ocean gave birth to the luminous, deep orange orb. A rich salmon light was cast for miles across the surface of the water, as the moon was released from the depths of the ocean. The light far at sea was silky, ethereal, and mystical. Rising from far below on a hidden lake, came the call of the wild loon. The primordial sound climbed to the summit and seemed to fill the top of the world. It was elemental. It was rapture. And I wept. Ecstasy.

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My Personal Invitation To You

I invite you to journey with me through the depth and breadth of internal experiences of acceptance, ecstasy, revelation, beauty, unity, compassion, and spiritual awakening – all through my local wildness. Bearing Witness.

Joni

If you would like to share in the journey, this book may be ordered from:

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More information available at:

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