

Life on the River

I remember as a little girl lying in the back yard in the grass. I could hear the train coming from long distance. Our house was about a football field from the tracks so there was never any fear. It was a welcome sound. The roar of the engine as it got closer was no surprise. As it went by the coal smell of that big black train was like no other. I always felt safe, never any cares. It was a great place to grow up. Of course you don't know that until you are grown. I still live here right across the street. I hear the rumble of the barges as they pass through the channel and go by the Blue Creek Light house. The wave's crash on the shore as the undercurrent takes the water out and slowly sends it back. Such peaceful sound. We are very fortunate that we live in what is known as the Mississippi Fly way. The migrating birds here are not only a sight to behold but a joy to hear. The ducks and geese serenade us all hours of the day and night. They are really something to watch. When they are sitting in our back yard they are on the beach. They feed on the water cress that grows wild there. They are organized, meaning they have certain geese that like captains, they look out for the others. The females and younger ones are protected by these smart and brave souls. They are called signets, you can tell which ones they are easily they are not eating, and they are stretching their necks looking all around to make sure there are no predators waiting to prey on them. We hear them as they leave to cross the highway and land in the field and eat the left over corn from the field across from the school. In the spring, right now they are pairing off, getting ready to build their nests. When a goose picks a mate. It is for life. When one of the pair is shot. It is a sad thing for many many days, the remaining mate will morn and cry a honking that you won't forget. Some of the geese stay all year. They never stay alone, when you see an odd number together, it is safe to assume one has lost a mate. They are so graceful and beautiful.

We have ducks of all kinds, back in the day when fall was upon us the sky was sometimes black with ducks. Mallards, Teals, Mergansers, Buffleheads, Golden Eyes, Canvasbacks and our prized guests Wood Ducks, are something to see as they set their wings to land. You can expect these birds to wing in just about any time after the snow is gone. The Wood Ducks however have a schedule. For about the last 6 or 7 years the Wood Ducks nest in a hole in the tree next door. As we lay in our bed, we can see clear down past the Holmes Center cove. The wood Ducks arrive on a given day every year. In Leap year they are a couple days off. This all happens by Gods design not Al Gores. It is so reassuring when my husband says, as he predicts every year "tomorrow's the day". The Wood Ducks are coming home to nest. They have a job when they first arrive. Other birds have found the Wood Ducks last year's nest. There are birds that are like scabs they never build their own nest they take the nest that someone else has labored hard to provide. They move in bag and baggage. The wood ducks move them out, a lot off squawking going on. These birds such as Blue Jays as well as Grackles will wait until Momma Robin gets her nest built and get in there and throw her eggs out to the ground. Just like a scab that crosses the picket line. I am happy to announce that the Wood Duck wins every time so far. God has a plan for all of his creatures. He knows what's in all hearts. I have been blessed to live here and be a part of this world.

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