

BIRD NOTES by Rick Pyeritz

I do not know that the bird has taught me any valuable lesson. Indeed, I do not go to Nature to be taught. I go for enjoyment and companionship; I go to bathe in her as in a sea; I go to give my eyes and ears and all my senses a free, clean field and to tone up my spirits by her "primal sanities." If the bird has not preached to me, it has added to the resources of my life, it has widened the field of my interests, it has afforded me another beautiful object to love, and has helped make me feel more at home in the world. To take the birds out of my life would be like lopping off so many branches from the tree: there is so much less surface of leafage to absorb the sunlight and bring my spirits in contact with the vital currents. We cannot pursue any natural study with love and enthusiasm without the object of it becoming a part of our lives. The birds, the flowers, the trees, the rocks all become linked with our lives and hold the key to our thoughts and emotions. Not till the bird becomes part of your life can its coming and its going mean much to you. And it becomes part of your life when you have taken heed of it with interest and affection, when you have established associations with it, when it voices the spring or the summer to you, when it calls up the spirit of the woods or the fields of the shore. When year after year you have heard the veery in the beech and birch woods along the trout streams, or the wood thrush May after May in the groves where you have walked or sat, and the bobolink summer after summer in the summer meadows, or the vesper sparrow in the upland pastures where you have loitered as a boy or mused as a man, these birds will really be woven into the texture of your life. What lessons the birds have taught me I cannot recall; what a joy they have been to me I know well. In a new place, amid strange scenes, theirs are the voices and the faces of old friends.

--John Burroughs from *The Gospel of Nature*