

Friends' Remembrances of Janie Owens

Janie was a wonderful friend to so many of us. I will treasure the many fond memories I have with her, especially our long days in the field counting birds on the Golden-wings Birdathon. Janie was a real "hoot" and made the day full of laughs and fun. She will be dearly missed by me and all of her many friends.



Janie's most used exclamation was "Dang". A true nature lover, Janie started birding in the late nineties. Due to her acute hearing, she quickly became a valuable member of any birding group. She knew nearly every wildflower in these mountains. She raised caterpillars in a cage on her desk at work so she could see their transformation to butterflies. She was interested in many insects, like dragonflies and spiders. Add to that her love of cooking and various crafts, and she was one busy person!



Janie was outgoing, enthusiastic and loved spending time with her many friends in the WNC birding community. I loved doing bird counts with her because I learned so much. I was doing the Balsam bird count with Janie. At some point she excitedly called out Magnolia, Magnolia! I was looking for the bird, which would have been a good one for that count, when I realized she was excited about seeing a flowering magnolia!



Janie always brought a smile to my face. She was an indefatigable member of the Golden-wings Birdathon team. Despite her bad knees Janie persisted to lead us to victory while simultaneously educating us about the other flying animals (butterflies, dragonflies and others) and the wildflowers we encountered along the way. In those years the local Audubon chapter's Birdathon was devoted to conservation of the Cerulean Warbler, the iconic bird of the Bull Creek Valley Important Bird Area (IBA) along the Blue Ridge Parkway near Asheville. Many birdwatchers have never even seen a beautiful sky-blue male Cerulean Warbler. Because the female Cerulean is camouflaged by her dull coloration, and spends most of her time high up in the trees, the percentage of birders who have seen a *female* Cerulean is minuscule. So when Janie spotted one during our Birdathon on May 6, 2015, the other members of the Goldenwings were amazed to come face to face with one! But none of us were amazed that it was Janie who spotted her first.

Thanks to Janie's sharp eyes and her extraordinarily quick identification, we were able to follow that female to her nest and ultimately observe four or five nestlings in it.



JANIE

Mountain born and raised

Her accent and slang left some folks dazed

There was no one like her ever before

Not even in ancient mountain yore

There will be no one like her ever again

Despite her having lots of kin

Her family always came first

Even when they occasionally behaved their worst

She loved them all dearly, that they all knew

Even when she fussed at them, which she often did do

She loved to cook and eat her tasty meals
For her family this was a really good deal!

Her knowledge of wildflowers was the best around
She added birds and insects, her curiosity knew no bounds
She was also artistic and creative in many ways
Sharing with others the things that she made

One could not ask for a more interesting friend
She was a treasure who will be missed until our own lives end

We all wish she would live at least another twenty years
But she seems to have accepted her fate without any fears

So let us all remember her laughter and smile
As we continue life's journey mile after mile.