

Winter Heron Thoughts



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Out early in the cold air, snow crisp underneath, and the sunlight brilliant. I decide to ski right across Mud Lake, passing the newer beaver lodge, inspecting a muskrat home en route, all the way to the swampy-now-icy east end and back. As my skis rhythmically skim the surface, crunching more than cutting through the snow, I realize that I seem to be on a kind of heron patrol, visiting all the sites where I so often see herons standing in the warm weather, when I am usually confined to the shore. Near the old beaver lodge I even find some of the silvered curving stumps which in some lights deceive me into thinking they themselves are herons.

Winter seems so absolute in mid-February that it's hard to recall all the growing season colours of green leaves, orange jewelweed and purple loosestrife stalks – all I can see of them today are dry brown stems and branches, sharp outlines against the hard whiteness of the lake. And yet, just as I know the herons will return, so will summer. I tell myself firmly that this is always so, despite the snow – and notice with joy how the sun has melted a little hollow around each stump and stick protruding through the ice. Wherever there is a darker surface to soak up the sunlight, the warmth is slowly winning. The days are lengthening, and soon this frozen white expanse will crack and melt. Then there will be feathered wings beating across Mud Lake, making different sounds than my swift sliding skis.

So, too, the spiritual life, with its mystical inner heartbeat, is always vibrating around me, around all of us, if we can only stop to notice. Sometimes we sense a divine universal pulse as we watch the seasons shift or listen to the wild birds or the rushing river rapids. Sometimes we need silence to remind ourselves. . . .sometimes it comes upon us in medias res, in the middle of the river of life – or of a frozen lake.

Now, in the evening, I sit by the window, look out at the mountain, close my eyes, and hundreds of wings come toward me. So many wings inside me, a heart full of wings, arms, toes, brain, tongue, all wings.

And a huge motion goes through me, and we travel together.

*Into the silence we come
spirits seeking, mind and bodies
willing to be still, be slow,
praying to the Source:
above, around, below.
Sometimes we are distracted,
our thoughts go --
elsewhere. . . .So
gently return.
The deepest silence
is Divine, I know.
Out of this silence
blessings flow.*

*"A Walk Between Heaven and Earth"
B.N.Holzer*

("Meeting for Worship, February 9, 1992")



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