

A Sense of Place

I am rooted in the Prairies having been born there and lived there until 1958. Perhaps that explains the sense of connection I have with Carden, and the grassland species that are there – flowers and birds, and then the sky, wind, space, silence.

Yesterday was one of those perfect days when it isn't too hot, nor too windy; when something wonderful shows up at every turn in the road – things that make me pat my heart and gasp as I realize I'm holding my breath in awe and wonder.

I was greeted the minute I turned up the road by a winnowing Snipe on a well worn fence post, and then another across the road, calling to its friend, and so the day began to unfold.





The spectacular fields of Prairie Smoke are fading...



and now are covered in white Daisies and pink Clover.





Sedge Wren Marsh is thick with blankets of Anemone, and the Milkweed – both kinds – is ready to burst into bloom (now the Monarchs need to arrive).





Tucked down close to the creek shore – a wee patch of ripe wild strawberries.....utterly sublime as I ate them slowly and soaked up the fantastic taste – what have we been eating all winter?





Millions of tiny winged butterflies, moths, dragonflies, darners and bugs are everywhere.....wee Skippers and a Northern Crescent sharing the road, along with a White Admiral.....the puddles are surrounded!





A marshy wetland on Alvar Road, complete with beaver and Painted Turtles is also the home to the *threatened* Blanding's Turtle seen here showing off its wonderful wrinkly yellow neck – they look like army helmets! I also saw another Blanding's trying to dig a nest in the rock-hard road around the corner on Wylie.





The frogs hide in matching greens and browns, the huddled cattle rest with their newborn calves, the sky goes on and on and prairie birds like Savannah sparrows call from fence lines – their beautiful buzzing song that makes my heart sing. The Eastern Bluebirds are everywhere - including a stunning male atop a telephone pole as I was turning for home at the end of the day – what a sendoff.





As I strive to learn more about birds I am always thrilled to see a new species – Lifer – and yesterday it was a Vesper Sparrow taking a bath in a puddle on the road (alvars are arid, so the ‘watering holes’ are well used by all the creatures). The Vesper sparrow is another grassland bird, with white outer tail feathers, a little white eye ring and cinnamon coloured ‘elbows’ where the wing folds. Oh my!

Then didn’t I come across what looked like a dead Brown Thrasher (bird) lying on the road – sideways like we would in bedhead down on its side, legs out straight. The traffic is so slow due to the horrible pot holes on Wylie Road that I was amazed that anything could be hit. Alas I opened my car door to carry the poor thing off to the edge of the road, and it popped up, had a little shake, looked at me for a minute and merrily flew away.....siesta time in the sand and sun! Joy.



I always keep an eye out for Upland Sandpipers. Their song, their long legs, their speckles, everything about them is a treat and if I am lucky I will see one before the day is out. Heading S on 35, slowly, I heard one so I stopped and it came in to sit on a post right beside me. Another arrived, calling and sat on the next post. Then another – up on the wire overhead, and finally a fourth on another post! There I was gawking at them, stunned! Talk about a gift from Mother Nature! Here they all are!





Prairie blooms.....Wood Lilies,
and Alberta Wild Rose

Decades ago I clipped this poem from somewhere, and it has been on my fridge door ever since:

*Bird Watching
Holds you
not only for bird reasons, but
because it slows you
down enough
silences you
enough to show
so you know
what the place where you stand
sounds like when
you are not there*

Enjoy this day,
Lynn Pady