

November 15, 2002 Issue

Wild and Wonderful



A lot of interesting things have started to develop in my life these last couple of weeks. I have begun the research into my biographical book to be published within the next year or two. To this end, I am working with a writer to develop the theme, and the content of the book. I have delved into the archives of my personal photographs, to back up my early years. This is really fun! It is a pleasant "walk" down memory lane. The more things I discover, the more I recall about the advancement of my artistic career. Also, I was contacted by an author of children's books to possibly illustrate, and do some cover art. That is going to be exciting and quite a challenge.

There have been invitations to visit Panama, The Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and the frontier country of Kodiak, Alaska. This will mean traveling to places I haven't yet experienced, with lots of new adventures to portray in future paintings. (Load up the digital camera, and carry plenty of floppies!) This is also the season to get together with friends and family. Since they are scattered throughout the Northwest, We will be driving across mountains and rivers and through farms and cities. More photo ops! It will surely rain, and maybe even snow. This month will find my husband and I on a trip to Mendocino and Point Arena, California. I really enjoy the journey down Highway 101, and the change of scenery as we cruise along the California Coast. So stay tuned; A whole new world is opening up for me in this terrific career.

Next Issue: Still life: Alive and well

As long as I can remember, I have been observing and memorizing the wild creatures of the world around me. In Wisconsin, I saw wild mink in the carpeted pine forests. There were beavers in the waters where they were building their dams, and deer by the score in the vast woodlands of the northern part of the state where I grew up. There was always opportunity to watch the birds building nests, raising their fledglings, and flying southward as the waning days of fall grew ever shorter. In the summertime, when wild berries hung pendulously on tree and vine, black bears braved the open farm fields in their quest for such treats. I saw the red foxes steal noiselessly through grassy meadows. Skunks and raccoons crept out in the nighttime shadows of the full moon. In fall, rabbits grew thick white coats and wild geese winged their v-shaped way to the sunny southern climes.

"Skunks and raccoons crept out in the nighttime shadows of the full moon"

As soon as I could control pencil or crayon, I was depicting these wonderful creatures that shared my world. I illustrated the pages of note books with my vision of the wild animals in their habitats. My favorite was the mysterious and elusive badger, whose reputation awed and frightened me. I had not ever seen one alive, but there were places where I could go to see one mounted, its sharp teeth exposed in a forever grinning snarl. When I got home, I drew it from memory. I heard tales of lynx and bobcats and longed to sketch them someday. The nocturnal "whoooo!" of an owl intrigued me. Other night birds called mournfully. Soon, I was hunting the secret places of the nighthawk, and loon.

When I settled in Washington State, I was thrilled to see some of my old friends inhabiting the fields, farms and forests of the Evergreen State. I was delighted to learn the ways of animals and birds here-to-fore unfamiliar to me. 'Possums seemed to be a standard "nuisance" in the night. I saw pelicans and seagulls by the score. Here were the common crows of my youth as well as the new blue flash of the "Stellar" jay. Robins scratched the rich soil, alongside the Towhee and Varied Thrush. I soon came to recognize their songs and flights.

"I soon came to recognize their songs and flights"

Here was my first sight of a magnificent Bald Eagle. Here was my first encounter with a chorus of sea lions barking their melody from the haven of offshore rocks. Here, to my delight, I observed the grace and dignity of the Great Blue Heron. There are cougars in the mountains, and coyotes on the plains. There are wild sheep and goats in the foothills, and wolves roaming the forests. There were the coastal shorebirds from skittering sandpipers to the comical Tufted Puffins. Cormorants and Common Murres became subjects for me to convey on canvas and paper. I painted the seals in an impressionistic style with gouache to emphasize their harmonious liquid verbalizing. These wonderful wild things will be showing up more and more as I increase my time at the easel these coming rainy winter days.

Carol Thompson

Featured Artwork

Great Blue Heron



"Somewhere at the edge of the sea, a Great Blue Heron stands waiting for the perfect moment to rise and glide to the edge of the surf, where lies a bountiful meal. Alert and poised, this magnificent bird really deserves his title 'Great' blue heron."

Quartet



"Like a barber shop quartet, four sea lions bark in harmony as they lazily lounge on the dock in the bay."

Cormorant



"The 'cormorant' rests on pilings in the harbor. Between forays into the water to catch its meal, it must stand and dry its feathers."