



Settled in the Wild: Notes from the Edge of Town

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Whether we live in cities, suburbs, or villages, we are encroaching on nature, and it in one way or another perseveres. Naturalist Susan Shetterly looks at how animals, humans, and plants share the land observing her own neighborhood in rural Maine. She tells tales of the locals (humans, yes, but also snowshoe hares, raccoons, bobcats, turtles, salmon, ravens, hummingbirds, cormorants, sandpipers, and spring peepers). She expertly shows us how they all make their way in an ever-changing habitat.

In writing about a displaced garter snake, witnessing the paving of a beloved dirt road, trapping a cricket with her young son, rescuing a fledgling raven, or the town's joy at the return of the alewife migration, Shetterly issues warnings even as she pays tribute to the resilience that abounds.

Like the works of Annie Dillard and Aldo Leopold, Settled in the Wild takes a magnifying glass to the wildness that surrounds us. With keen perception and wit, Shetterly offers us an education in nature, one that should inspire us to preserve it.

Settled in the Wild: Notes from the Edge of Town Details

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Author : Susan Hand Shetterly

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From Reader Review Settled in the Wild: Notes from the Edge of Town for online ebook

Iowa City Public Library says

Settled in the Wild: Notes from the Edge of Town by Susan Hand Shetterly is a lovely book. Shetterly chronicles the three decades she has lived in Maine. She moved to a rugged, seafaring part of Maine as a young woman. She and her husband were going “back to the land”. They lived without electricity and plumbing, had two children and experienced life close to nature.

The book is divided into two parts and twenty nine entries. Shetterly details the changes in the land and the changes in the community as development encroaches and climatic and environmental changes force the fishermen from the seas. Some of the pieces are wrenchingly sad, while other offer vivid descriptions of the land and animals surrounding are achingly beautiful. *Settled in the Wild* is nature writing at its best. Enjoy! -- Maeve

From ICPL Staff Picks Blog

Emma says

This was such a refreshing book, about rootedness, about the place of nature in our lives, about our re-creation at the contact of nature, our re-education through woods, birds, and animals of all kinds. I enjoyed this book even more than Dillard's, I find the author here leads you even deeper in contemplation.

I have to add that this book made me ache like no other: at about every page, I wanted just to drop the book, the blog, internet, and every thing, and just go and live out there. So far I have to be happy with my hiking on week-ends, 3 hours or more when possible, and my living in the middle of the woods a few days a year. I did live in the deep countryside for the first 10 years of my life, and am ready to go back, whenever the opportunity presents itself.

I am grateful for our nice backyard where we can observe the birds coming to the feeders or take their bath, the squirrels rushing along their highway (the heavy electric lines), or the skunks following their daily path along the fence, every night at about the same hour.

I love books, and I believe the book of nature is one to keep open to remain human. If you feel the call of the wild, go check if this book is at your library.

Original post:
<http://wordsandpeace.wordpress.com/20...>
Emma @ words And Peace

Cyndi says

Tons of beautiful imagery of the northern Maine woods. The author came to our Book Club to discuss her

book and was very prolific and kind. Wonderful evening. ?

Linda Robinson says

A beautiful book from another area of the country: this the windy, wild coast of Maine. It was serendipitous to read Laura Bell's "Claiming Ground" immediately before this one. At the beginning of Hand-Shetterly's book, I thought the order would pale the second book against the first. But Bell has her eye on the land; Shetterly is/was a bird rehabilitator, and her eyes are on the marshy waters and its avian residents. We soar and land, and feel the tide surge and retreat. I love the Big Horn territory that Bell claims, and the Maine coasts where Shetterly settled. Reading these two together was sublime.

Heidi Boyd says

I fell right into these exquisite essays. They kept me thinking about our surrounding woods and wildlife long after turning the final page.

Maureen says

lovely collection of short essays about living in nature in Maine. While Shetterley's writing is not as lyrical as Annie Dillard's, it comes from a similar place, with the added bonus (for me) of the Maine setting. Gory in places when talking about dead animals - so don't read while you are eating! :)

Doreen says

This is a great book to read amid the digital rattle and hum of 21st living, reminding oneself that other worlds exist beyond the frame of our devices. It's also about the joys and horrors of being solitary, the risks that incur with age and isolation, but primarily this book imbues the reader with a sense of wonder at that which typically does not get noticed without sustained observation and experience. Its harshness is countered by Shetterly's capacity to bring us into her world through beautiful language and compelling narrative.

Audrey says

Shetterly is a strong writer but as a whole, this collection doesn't pull together. I prefer my nature essays to teach me about nature (re: Kingsolver or Dillard) rather than just be observant and pretty prose, so that's really where this collection fell short of the mark for me.

Patti says

This book was a joy to read and dove tailed with the animal nature exploration kit I just gave my 6 year old grandson. Shetterly describes her experiences in the wild with all the pleasure, sadness and sense of not having to tie everything up in a neat package. Everything can't be known, we can only be observers.

The following passage takes place when Susan is following a coyote's track which had carried off all traces of a dead calf.

"When we had followed the tracks quite far, when we had exited our territory and seemed, eerily, to have entered theirs, without more than a few words between us, we turned around and came back. And that was all."

I am looking forward to exploring Shetterly's numerous childrens books.

Penny says

Beautiful and unromantic essays on living close to the land. There is wonder in nature, peace that comes from being aware of the now. Shetterly's prose paints clear pictures and vignettes for the reader that feel familiar--yet also new--and exploratory.

Be prepared for as detailed a description of a quiet copse of trees--as the rotting deer carcass by the side of the road.

The circle of life/awareness and acceptance of death as part of life, are themes done very well throughout the book.

Dana Clinton says

"They are my daffodils, these birds, and Wordsworth taught us that what dances before the inward eye cannot fail to engage the heart." Susan Hand Shetterly has written this and many lovely passages in her book of reflections *Settled in the Wild*, chronicling observations around her home in the wilds of downeast Maine. This was a book selection for the local library club which meets tomorrow night. I cannot, unfortunately, be there for the discussion due to work commitments, but I wanted nonetheless to read the book. It was a pleasing read, but I think I was not in the mood right now for a book which reminds me of Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*...minute observations of the natural world, and in this case, clearly one most of of have lost in our lives. That said, I confess easily to saying that I would not like to live in the wild (although I do think I live fairly simply). The move to the "edge of town" in a dwelling with no electricity afforded a rich experience for her children and clearly opened her own heart to deep-seated needs... but it also seems to have cost her marriage along the way. Her picture of the Maine woods and flora and fauna, with the different humans and animals she encounters, are all totally intriguing. I look outdoors from my little house in the middle of a small southern Maine town and just try to stay away from the massive mosquitoes and ticks. Susan has found what makes her heart happy and what she needs to feel connected; we all have our ways of doing that, I reckon.... but do we actively seek it?

Ron says

Wonderful essays about the natural world around Shetterly's cabin in rural Maine, as well as the way she and her neighbors relate to the birds, fishes, and other wildlife around them. Just a gorgeous voice, with a poetic eye for detail.

Debbie Ladd says

Ahh! Beautiful writing from a Maine writer, who lives in the Blue Hill area.

Curtis Haderlie says

I'm enjoying this book because it awakens my desire to be connected with nature and reminds me of the significance of the people in our lives. Since I live on a farm I'm quite connected with nature but this makes me think of wild nature. I also took opportunity to learn more about the geography of Maine of which I'm not familiar.

The author asks if a person can imprint on a place which creates a standard of comfort by which you measure whatever else is real in the world and whatever else is beautiful. That seems to describe what happened to me and the family farm on which I was raised and ended up returning to.

The author talks of the great people who enter our lives, and just by being themselves, change the way we live in the world.

Susan Albert says

In this spare, elegant, and compassionate little book, Susan Hand Shetterly takes us with her into the wild world at the unsettled edge of a small village in Maine. She and her husband went there in the back-to-the-land movement in the 1970s, "idealistic, dangerously unprepared, and, frankly, arrogant." But when others moved on, they stayed, having brought with them the willingness to do hard physical work, the desire to practice patience, and—perhaps most importantly—"the ability to pay close attention."

It is the paying attention that accounts for so much of the quiet grace of this book, for Shetterly passionately wants us to see and smell and touch and taste what she is paying attention to: the daily small affairs of birds, periwinkles, green crabs, and clams; a porcupine stripping tender young branches from her willow tree in an April night; a rescued raven; a baby snowshoe hare threatened by a bobcat—the wild things that populate her life on the edge of what's left of wildness in this rapidly urbanizing world.

But it is not just the wild things that Shetterly brings to us from the margins: it is the people who live in the village and share the "hard, dangerous gift" of this place. Danny, who doesn't believe in throwing things away. Clarence, who died upside down in the water, weighed down by a trap he'd thrown overboard. Jack Dudley, counting loons, living a sense of place. Settled in the wild, Shetterly is also settled in community, a small community made up of a few utterly unique human individuals, dwelling in a "neighborhood of

millions of lives, depending on how and whom you count."

In some important ways, the community itself, long ago settled on the shore of the wild bay, remains an unsettled place. When Shetterly helps to create an association to protect the surrounding wetlands, many of the villagers are threatened and antagonistic. Living in a world of private property, where land is worthwhile only when it can be "developed," they find it hard to believe, as does Shetterly and her conservation colleagues, in the "self-renewing community between wild land and human beings," in the "wild commons."

But at its heart, that's what this book is about: the need that we all have to be a part of the wild commons, to recognize and share the bonds that exist between species, ours and all the others who live in our neighborhoods, inhabit the wild hours of the night, roost in the trees, and hide in the grass and plants in our gardens. It is also about our need to watch and listen and observe for a long time, for a very long time, until, as Shetterly says, we become, "instead of watchers, witnesses, heavy with the gravity of what is revealed to us and what we have chosen to carry of it."

I love this book because it teaches what I take to be the most important thing a human being can do to be at home in the world: to simply watch, and look, and listen—to become witnesses
