

View from

# Listening Point

Newsletter of the Listening Point Foundation, Inc.

Volume XXV, No. 1 | Spring/Summer 2022 | www.listeningpointfoundation.org

Dedicated to preserving Listening Point and advancing Sigurd Olson's wilderness philosophy.

# Birds, Books, and Writing

By Annette Drewes

I pull into the gravel dugout parking lot under the tall pines on a brisk spring morning in May. Dark clouds threaten in the west. Burntside Lake slaps against the rocky shore down below while birds send their calls across the open skyways of pine, aspen and maple. Stepping out of my car, I freeze. Head cocked, one black eye peering from the deep blackness of his feathers, a redstart greets me from the shrubs above the dugout.

"Well, hello!" I greet this bold warbler sized bird, bright patches of deep tangerine announcing his presence, color deepened by the pairing against black. Tilting his head, first one way, then the other, he hops among the shrub branches, not yet leafed out, angling for a better look at me. I wait for him to fly off. He flies closer, landing on the top of my car just a couple of feet from my arm resting on the roof.

"Quite a welcome," I say to this black jacketed bird who holds me with his gaze. I turn my head slightly, he turns his. We share a look, a moment. On a whim I hold out my hand, wondering if he is bold enough to fly closer. He flies off, tangerine patches disappearing into the newly awakening woods.

Thus was I greeted on my arrival at Camp Van Vac on the shores of Burntside Lake just west of Ely, Minnesota.

Camp Van Vac is a rustic camp set on a spit of rock, lichen and pine on the southeast corner of Burntside Lake. Pines are everywhere. Cutover pines, for these are the forests that were cut and laid to waste nearly 140 years ago. Greed and a belief that the woods would never run out kept the lumbermen cutting their way across Michigan, then Wisconsin and finally through eastern Minnesota. Until the timber ran out. There are few places where old growth exists in any of these states. The forests, although thick and in places towering, are regrowth.

I have come to Camp Van Vac to explore, to meet Nancy Jo and check out the cabins for a September retreat. Stepping into the small wooden building marked Office I offer a "Hello?" into the empty room. "Be right there!" I hear in response. As she steps out of the backroom, I am already waving my arms in excitement describing my encounter with the American redstart. She laughs and immediately we are friends, finding we share a love of books and birds, and writing.

Sigurd too had a love of birds and books. His library contains several early books on birds, including a Little Nature Library

book titled Birds Worth Knowing (1934), Birds of America (1936), and The Hermit Thrush, a book of poems by Kathleen Millay (1929). On his shelves are more recent books as well: How to Talk to Birds (1960), Hawks Aloft: The story of Hawk Mountain (1952), Birds of Anaktuvvk Pass (1960), and The Sparrow's Fall, a fiction novel by Fred Bodsworth (1967), who is also the author of Last of the Curlews. Sigurd was no stranger to birds.



An impressive two volume set of Birds of Minnesota by T.S. Roberts, published by the University of Minnesota Press (1932) also graces Sig's library. These handsome green tomes are packed with information and illustrations, including some by Francis Lee Jaques, who illustrated Sig's books. Flipping through Volume Two I read about sora rails and the belief at one time that these birds perhaps hibernated in the mud to overwinter. If you've ever seen a sora fly, you understand how this myth may have come about. The birds seem hardly capable of flying across a pond with their back-and-forth flutter flight just lifting them above the tops of the wild rice before they seem to crash down a few yards away. Of course, like most water birds, soras do migrate.

On page 447, in notes attributed to an article by a Mr. Forbush on the Sora in *Bird Lore for 1914* (16:303-306), is the following description of this flight:

"The little wings which erstwhile would hardly raise the birds above the grass-tops now carry them high and far. Some cross the seas to distant Bermuda, and they occasionally alight on vessels hundreds of miles at sea. They have been taken on the western mountains even so high as 12,500 feet, in the sage-brush of the desert, and on the cliffs of Panama."

Elsewhere in the same volume is the heading "Questionable Birds." I am drawn to check this out!

"There are a few birds, beneficial under ordinary circum-

#### NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Spring in the north is worth waiting for....

By Patsy Mogush, President

"Spring is worth waiting for...." -Sigurd Olson, *The Singing Wilderness*, p. 21.

Spring arrived a bit later in the north woods this year, although spring usually arrives later than we wish. Every year, we delight in watching the snow melt, walking without a hat or mittens, waiting for the crystal tinkling as the ice breaks up on the lake. Every year, we marvel at the growth and renewal, as we watch the trees budding, the bears lumbering through the woods after hibernation, the beautiful singing of the white-throated sparrows, the return of the peepers near the water. And, wonder of all wonders, the arrival of the loons brings joy each time.

People, as well as the plants and animals, are awakening after over two years of caution. Although we continue to be careful, we are now able to be with friends and family in person. Maybe even inside. We've found new ways of being and doing, some that we'll continue to use, some that we will cast aside.

The earth and its plants and animals thrive through growth and renewal. As do organizations. The Listening Point Foundation has taken advantage of the quiet time during the pandemic to organize, share ideas, create strategies, make new alliances, and prepare for the future.



Thank You Donors

6-7

We are hosting regular open hours at the Listening Point house in Ely as we continue tours at Listening Point on Burntside Lake. We celebrate the return of the LPF booth at the Blueberry Arts Festival in July, and the fall dinner in Ely on September 9, 2022!

The Listening Point Board of Directors is in a continuing process of growth and renewal. Through strategic learning we examine current practices, acknowledge and celebrate growth, and look toward the future. All that we do is focused on our mission and vision.

The mission of the Listening Point Foundation is to preserve Listening Point and to advance Sigurd Olson's wilderness philosophy.

The vision of the Listening Point Foundation is to foster people's connection to wild places by inspiring them to find their own listening point.

We continue to learn and grow, and we invite you to join us in this effort. Check out our website (listeningpointfoundation.org) to learn more about our organization, sign up for our newsletter, read about and join us at upcoming events, register for tours, and watch the beautiful Listening Point film. We're excited for what's ahead.

# Listening Point Women's Writing Retreat September 15-18, 2022 • Ely, Minnesota

# Renew with us on Burntside Lake in September!

- Longing for a deeper connection with nature?
- Craving a creative and growth-oriented community of women?
- Desiring support for personal transition work?
- Seeking inspiration and creative space for your writing?

Space is limited to 8 women. Reserve your spot today!

Your hosts, Annette and Kathryn, have teamed up to facilitate an empowering exploration for you. This retreat is designed to connect you with your creative spirit, strengthen your relationship with self, and deepen your connection to the natural world. No previous experience needed, curiosity invited.

REGISTRATION & MORE INFORMATION AT listeningpointfoundation.org/womens-writing-retreat-2022 REGISTRATION DEADLINE August 10th

## Birds, Books, and Writing continued from page I

stances, that sometimes do sufficient damage, collectively or individually, to bring them into more or less disrepute. Only one or two of these are open to general condemnation."

Among the "questionable birds" listed were Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, and Belted Kingfishers for their fish-eating habits. Surprisingly Baltimore Orioles, Kingbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Cedar Waxwings are also among those listed, primarily for depredation of gardens and fruiting shrubs. The author makes an argument for their protection however as they are also insect and larvae eaters. Woodpeckers and Shrikes also make the list, as do Robins! I believe one could spend a lifetime exploring these two volumes! And if you have an interest in the man who not only wrote these volumes, but also launched the Bell Museum of Natural History, check out *A Love Affair with Birds*, a biography of Thomas Sadler Roberts written and compiled by Sue Leaf (2021).

After showing me her own library of books, and bird guides, and reminding me they are available to borrow during my visit to Camp Van Vac, Nancy jo set me lose to explore the cabins on the point. We will be utilizing the larger, three bedroom cabins for the retreat (# 24 and 25) tucked away on the north end of the property. Set upon foundations of stone, the cabins sit right at the water's edge. After checking out the rooms and indoor space, I wander around to the campfire ring and take a seat on a bench looking out over the lake.

Burntside lake thrashes the shore like a teenager, persistent

yet slightly petulant, full and heaving against the rocks. The iron clad sky spits an occasional mist. Then the rain stops, clouds shift, sunlight pops through and is gone again. I imagine the lake in September. I imagine this fire ring surrounded with women, laughing and talking, coming together to remember their voices, explore the rocks, woods and water, and share their words in a space warmed with friendship.

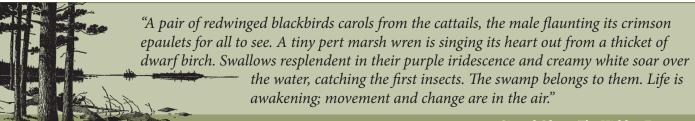
In September we will read from the books of Sigurd Olson, Rachel Carson, Kathleen Dean Moore, Margaret Renkl, David Gessner and others. Words that capture the seasons, carry the sounds of bird song, layer the colors of water, and draw our curiosity outward. Perhaps you will join us?

Birds will be a presence at this retreat. The redstart has already told me so.

Here to send you off are some images from Sigurd's own writing on birds...

"It was mid-April before I heard the first robin singing as only robins can before a rain, the fluid, haunting melody of gurgling notes which sounds like the flowing of water itself." (p.38, The Singing Wilderness)

"...chickadees, juncos, and evening grosbeaks by the score, but what really brought music to the hill were the purple finches....at one time we counted a dozen full-colored males. There were robins and pine siskins and redpolls, and the music of all of them at dawn was something to hear." (p. 41, The Singing Wilderness)



- Sigurd Olson, The Hidden Forest, p. 14

## Historic High Water Levels

This spring and summer, northern Minnesota has experienced unprecedented high water levels, surpassing some all-time records in the Rainy Lake region along the border with Canada. Listening Point was fortunate, as the flooding only minorly impacted the property on Burntside Lake, pushing Sig's



Listening Point dock floating in Burntside Lake. -Photo by Freja Finkle



Freja rescuing the LPF dock. -Photo by Adam Feher



Where the dock is supposed to be.

-Photo by Freja Finkle

wooden dock off of its perch. Other organizations in the region have not been so fortunate. The Oberholtzer Foundation, which manages the small cluster of islands owned by conservationist Ernest Oberholtzer on Rainy Lake, has been extensively affected by the extreme water levels. Visit https://eober.org/ to learn more.

## THIS & THAT

- **Blueberry Arts Festival in July!** If you happen to be in the Ely area during July 29-31, feel free to stop by the LPF booth to say hello! We look forward to seeing you.
- Successful Snowshoe Hikes. We had another great year of Snowshoe Hikes to Listening Point during the Ely Winter Festival. Special thanks to Peta Barett, Patsy Mogush, Sue Duffy, Steve Schon, and Freja Finkle for their dedication to making the tours enjoyable for all!
- \*Another New Listening Point Video in the Works. After the great success of our Listening Point video released last fall, we are currently working on a companion film that focuses on Sig, the Olson home, and Writing Shack. Release date: TBD Fall 2022.

Watch our website and Facebook page for announcements and updates!



## 2022 Scholarship Recipients

Every spring, the Listening Point Foundation is proud to present two \$1000 scholarships to students at our local schools. One award goes to a graduating senior at Ely Memorial High School, and the other to an undergraduate at our local Minnesota North College (previously Vermilion Community College). LPF Scholarships are awarded based on academic achievement, community involvement, need for funding, and a written essay based on the theme: "The Meaning of Wilderness." This year, our recipients were Jon Hakala (EMS) and Nicholas Hagan (MNC). The excerpt below is from Jon's essay that our Scholarship Committee felt particularly connected to Sigs philosophy of how "everyone has a Listening Point," and the impact of wilderness on the human spirit. Congratulations, Jon and Nicholas!

## Jon Hakala - EMS

Both of my parents worked as forestry technicians for the US Forest Service. As advocates for environmental education, I was taught how to be a steward of the land... I learned about the term "leave no trace". I honored this lesson and wished more people would act accordingly - leaving the wilderness as is! We must all respect nature in this vast land by caring for the vegetation ... [and] not disturbing the wildlife that has made this place their home. My mother was a firm believer in managing natural fires. While on canoe trips, she showed me fire scars in the BWCA, and I have started to notice them myself. From her teachings, I learned how our ancestors used fire as a way to keep the land in check. Fire plays an important role in the life cycle of jack pine and blueberry plants. It improves the habitat for moose to roam. I have only touched on beginning to know wilderness. I have far more to learn. To fulfill my love for the outdoors, I plan to seek a degree in forestry to broaden my knowledge. One day, I will have my own opinions on wilderness.

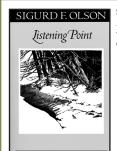
Now as a young man, I still walk the trails with the same awe and excitement as years ago. I stop and listen to the pine swaying in the wind, their soft melody soothing my mind. Even though I will make frequent visits to Blueberry Ridge, a new journey awaits me to seek a new point all my own.



The Listening Point Foun	•		
Asset Summar	У		
as of December 31,	2021		
The following funds are held in trust for uses of the needs are greatest in support of the Listeni	•		ı.
1. Operating Funds			
WFB Checking Account	23,078		
Undeposited Funds	8,243		
Unrestricted funds invested at Edward Jones	226,236		
Inventory	8,559		
Total Operating Funds (Unrestricted)		\$	266,116
2. Maintenance Endowment Fund	239,254		
(Invested permanently to generate income for the List		dation)	
, , ,	, and the second	,	
Total Endowment Funds (Permanently Restricted)			239,254
2. Tanana anadha Bantalata d Fanada			
3. Temporarily Restricted Funds	00.207		
Listening Point Preservation Fund at Edward Jones WFB Savings Account for designated projects	86,207 5,434		
WFB Savings Account for Gusty Island expenses	11,976		
Total Temporarily Restricted Funds			103,617
4. Fixed assets			
Listening Point Property	493,576		
Gusty Island Property	98,000		
106 E. Wilson Street \$ 221,502			
Less accumulated depreciation 34,381 Total 106 E. Wilson St.	187,121		
Total 100 E. Wilson St.	107,121		
Art and books			
F.L. Jaques originals (8) 18,000	)		
J. Brandenburg prints (4) 1,500			
Oil painting acquired w/house 5,000 SFO Books 500			
SFO Books	25,000		
Total Art and books	23,000		
Total Fixed Assets			803,697
Total Foundation Assets as of December 31,	2021	\$	1,412,684

# **GIFT SHOP**

Share the spirit of Listening Point with friends and family with one of these gift items that celebrate Sigurd Olson, Listening Point, wilderness and more!

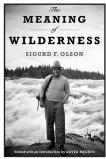


#### Sigurd Olson Classics

Attractive paperback versions of seven of Sigurd Olson's most loved books.

- The Singing Wilderness
- Listening Point • The Lonely Land
- Runes of the North
- Open Horizons · Reflections from the North Country
- Of Time and Place

.....\$16



#### The Meaning of Wilderness

Now available in paperback! First published in 2001, this book features a collection of Sigurd F. Olson's articles and speeches. It offers a lively look at the evolution of one of environmentalism's leading figures and is essential reading for Olson fans, historians, and outdoor enthusiasts around the country.

.....\$18



#### LPF Mug

3 finger handle. With logo, website, and "Sig's legacy ... pass it on!" Available in black or white.



#### Sigurd Olson Outdoor Adventure Cards

11 water resistant colorful cards for outdoor activities. Sig Olson quotes, and nature observation ideas.



Deep

Wild

Waters

Douglas

Woods,

#### Wilderness Days

University of Minnesota Press has published a new paperback edition of Wilderness Days—a collection of Sig's writings that depicts the essence of the magnificent woodlands and waters of the legendary Quetico-Superior region that borders Minnesota and

#### Deep Woods, Wild Waters, A Memoir

by Douglas Wood. A joy to read - Wood shares bushwhacking skills, hurtling down wild rapids, crossing stormy lakes, or simply navigating treacherous currents and the twisty trails of everyday life.

2022 Listening

Point Calendar

Photography, the

contains 12 beauti-

2022 Listening

Point calendar

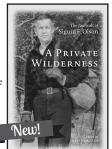
& Root River

Featuring photos by Heidi Pinkerton



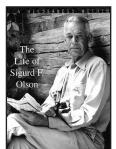
#### The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson DVD

A digitally remastered version of the classic film "The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson" includes more than two hours of conversations with Sig as he speaks about the craft of writing and life in the wilderness. You'll also hear Sig's wife Elizabeth and their son Sig Jr. speak candidly about Sigurd, his profession, and life in the north woods.



#### A Private Wilderness

Edited by David Backes. Written mostly during the years from 1930 to 1941, Sigurd F. Olson's journals describe the dreams and frustrations of an aspiring writer honing his skills, pursuing recognition, and facing doubt. Author of Olson's definitive biography, editor David Backes brings a deep knowledge of the writer to these journals, providing critical context, commentary, and insights along the way.



#### A Wilderness Within

By David Backes. The authoritative portrait of one of the greatest environmentalists of the twentieth century. The book is a stunning look at a man with a vision for the natural world and for himself. Essential reading for Olson fans.

...... \$23 (paperback)



#### **LPF Hats**

For your wearing pleasure! 100% cotton, embroidered with the Listening Point logo. Cranberry, Sage, and Light Blue. Adjustable leather strap. ..... \$18

If you are shopping through Amazon, please consider using AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com).

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers. Every little bit helps!

## See website for complete gift shop offerings

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☐ My contribution is in (select one) honor/memory of:	Please send your check payable to Listening Point Foundation (LPF) to: Listening Point Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 180 • Ely, MN 55731		
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November 20, 2021 - May 31, 2022

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David and Margo Zentner \* denotes brick

# Thank You!

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#### In Honor of...

- Margarita Adler, In honor of Freja and Mabel for giving us such a wonderful
- Arnold Alanen and Lynn Bjorkman, In honor of Kate Lidfors Miller and Pat Miller
- · Michael Barrows, In honor of Sig
- Sharon Freidler, In honor of Deann Barta
- John and Cindy Cantrell, In honor of Al and Lisa Cantrell
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- Priscilla Herbison, In honor of Craig Blacklock
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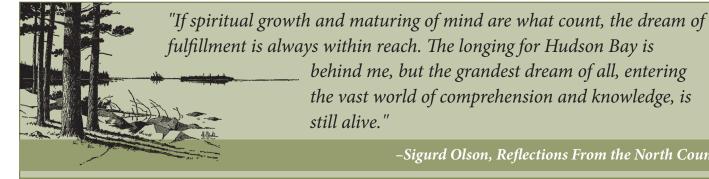
#### In Memory:

- Kathleen Antilla, In memory of Ted Ojala
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- Joe and Joanne Kellogg, In memory of Martin Kellogg
- Jerald and Cynthia Kroetz, In memory of Glenn Bertelson
- In memory of Sigurd Olson for all he did to preserve our wilderness
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\* denotes brick

November 20, 2021 - May 31, 2022



fulfillment is always within reach. The longing for Hudson Bay is behind me, but the grandest dream of all, entering

the vast world of comprehension and knowledge, is still alive."

-Sigurd Olson, Reflections From the North Country



#### THE VIEW FROM LISTENING POINT — SPRING/SUMMER 2022

Special request—so you won't miss any of LPF's mailings. Please send us your winter and summer addresses. Or just give us a call. Thanks.



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www.listeningpointfoundation.org



