

June 1, 2002 Issue

Seeing Seabirds



The weather has been magnificent! What more could one ask for? The sun has been shining and the nights are cool and quiet. I have been out grooming my garden for a splendid showing. Several years ago, my husband and I became avid "container gardening" enthusiasts. He began by making large and small concrete decorative pots and bowls. Last fall I filled some of those bowls with tulip, daffodil and crocus bulbs in anticipation of a grand display in Spring. I was not disappointed! Then, as the flowers faded, and the leaves began to wither, I surrounded the plantings with bright colorful annuals. Now there are pansies and petunias to greet my morning routine. The one necessity of container gardening, (especially in concrete pots) is to keep the soil wet enough. The nature of the concrete is to absorb the heat. Great on cool days, but sunny dry weather means extra care. The careful attention to each individual planting is well worth the effort. I am rewarded with delicate beauty to be captured on paper or canvas, and passed along to you as limited edition prints for your viewing pleasure. Now, if you will excuse me, I must run and check the soil under the irises.

Next Issue: Tugboats In Pastels

Living in the great Pacific Northwest affords ample opportunity to see up-close and personally a wide variety of sea birds. I am referring to all those winged creatures that inhabit the shorelines and forests near the ocean. From the magnificent Bald Eagle to the diving, water loving Cormorants, they fascinate me. As a child in the mid-west, I saw an occasional seagull. Of course, I knew they were ocean going birds. I had also heard the story of the miraculous rescue of the Mormon farm land in Utah.. Still, I wondered why the gulls were so far from the sea. I came to find out that they were wandering inland from the mighty Lake Michigan. Wherever there was water, there they were. In school I saw photos and read of the comical looking puffins that inhabit shorelines in various parts of the world. Sanderlings, Sandpipers and their relatives were intriguing. I found myself longing to go to the places where they existed in reality.

My opportunity arose in the late 1960's when my husband and I took our two sons to visit his parents in Washington state. We met at the beach for an impromptu picnic. As I listened to the waves roaring, another distinctive sound grabbed my attention. Was that a small dog

"As I listened...another distinctive sound grabbed my attention."

barking? No, it was above my head. There they were, hundreds of seagulls squawking and whirling and doing seagull antics.

More trips to the seaside gradually introduced me to the winged denizens I had read about as a child. There were the black Cormorants, dipping for their meals and when satiated, would stand on rocks or pilings and extend their wings to dry. There were the tiny sandpipers, scurrying forth and back at the edge of each breaking

wave, stopping abruptly to dip beaks into the sand for a tender morsel before bustling off again, this time in the opposite direction, as fast as their little short legs could carry them. I became acquainted with the habits of the large graceful Great Blue Heron and his relative, the White Egret. While I have yet to see for myself the Puffins in their natural habitat, or experience the awe of observing an American Bald Eagle soar overhead, I've talked to people who have done so.

Recently there have been flocks of California Brown Pelicans migrating to the Northwest Coast. I love to watch them glide over the waves with wings nearly touching the tumbling surface.

"... the awe of observing an American Bald Eagle soar overhead."

These are but a small sampling of the shore and surf fowl that I have been privileged to see since I moved to Washington State. As I study them, I sketch and paint them. They are as much a part of the scene as the cliffs and rocks, the rolling surf, and crashing waves. The plaintive cries of the seagull harmonize with the chirruping of the tiny sanderlings. Flashing white and grey flocks counterpoint the rock-steady quiet poise of the Great Blue Heron. In sunlight and under cloudy skies, these creatures are an enduring part of the ocean scene. I am eagerly looking for those puffins, and hope one day to see a magnificent eagle touch down on the shore and stride elegantly across the sand. Get paint and canvas ready, Carol, that day may just be tomorrow!

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."

Fifteen To One



"The seagulls are resting momentarily from their early morning food foray. With the ocean crashing in the background, and fellow gulls jostling one another for position; the lone black crow seems badly outnumbered; say by 'fifteen to One'."

Seabirds



"These 'Sea Birds', the common guillemot (sometimes called Murrelets), are of the auk family. this pair was sighted on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State near Sekiu. Often referred to as the poor man's penguin, they were sometimes captured and eaten by hungry Indians and early settlers of the Washington Coast."