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My Nature Journal: A Personal Nature Guide For Young People

Pajaro (October 1999)
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When bats “listen” for their high pitched squeaks returning to them it is referred to as echolocation. Bats need this to locate the insects they eat. They also prefer to pollinate large, white, musty smelling flowers. Olmstead has created a book that is more than what meets the eye. Meadows, ponds, twilight and the seashore all present fascinating details if one is willing to explore.

After reading this book, one discovers that not only is it a child’s activity book, but it is also a self-guided tour of the natural world. The mysterious evolution of the frog from a tadpole is solved. One is encouraged to visit the pond throughout the process to witness the magic of the frog life cycle. Other activities are in the form of note taking, bird drawings or writing a poem about a lake or stream. Olmstead, a naturalist and also the illustrator of this book, has a history of working with young children. She asserts that a journal allows children to slow down and personally focus on the activities.

Throughout this individual discovery, the author encourages safety practices and sound ecology principles. A set of rules for being safe and respectful of nature is given in such a manner as not to disturb the exploration process. Do wear comfortable clothing, do not stray from paths, do not touch animals and keep nature free from litter are a few of the rules to follow.

My Nature Journal is a tool for discovering nature for the first time or for the hundredth time. Simplicity of form should not discourage all teachers of science. This book is simple enough for the elementary school and creative enough for higher grades. It could be taken on family vacations or sent to summer camp with a child. Adults may even enjoy a refresher course. One may then observe how at twilight the bats emerge to take over for the night shift.
NORVILLA BENNETT (February 14, 2000)

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