



Who's Knocking at My Door? `

Terrie Stadler

ReadersMagnet

(34pp)

978-1-956780-28-4

Who's Knocking at My Door? is a whimsical memoir about life around a South Florida pond that celebrates the local ecosystem.

Terrie Stadler's swift memoir for young readers, *Who's Knocking at My Door?*, follows her family's move to a rural area, where they encounter new wildlife.

Centering her story on the wildlife inhabiting and visiting her family's South Florida pond, the book shares observations about blue tilapia, turtles, minnows, and catfish. A white heron and flocks of bug-eating white ibis are frequent visitors, too. But the family's favorite new neighbor is a great blue heron—tall, with long legs and a strong, dark orange bill.

Recalling the family's fun with visiting the pond and feeding its creatures, the book also laments that the pond's size decreased following a drought, after which fewer creatures visited. It witnesses as the pond's inhabitants do their best to adapt to such changes: while the shallow water made fishing easy for the heron, other creatures were not so lucky. Soft-shelled turtles had to bury themselves in the mud, and fish and minnows took refuge in the grasses at the pond's cool bottom.

Clear descriptions of how the cyclical drought was relieved with the arrival of the rainy season, when heavy downpours brought the pond's water level several feet higher than its original depth, are also included. And the family's involvement is used to move the book toward a tidy conclusion: after neglecting to care for the pond's creatures, they are visited by one of the pond's inhabitants, who knocks at their front door.

This is a story that pronounces its feelings of joy over interacting with nature. It ably describes and illustrates the creatures whom it celebrates throughout, working to teach its audience about the impactfulness of rain and drought cycles on Florida's ecosystems. Its watercolor illustrations have a childlike in appearance; most come in shades of blue and green, with occasional touches of brighter colors. Many pair anatomical representations of the creatures with lifelike depictions of the pond itself. The book is also educational in explaining the survival mechanisms that creatures use to mitigate their habitats' changes.

Syntactical and grammatical errors undermine the short book, though, including errant commas, misused words, and an instance of unnecessary capitalization. Further, there is a disagreement between the text and an illustration of a heron: described as having white feathers and dark legs, it is depicted with blue feathers and yellow legs.

Who's Knocking at My Door? is a whimsical memoir about life around a South Florida pond that celebrates the local ecosystem via the relationships forged between wildlife and people.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 6, 2022)

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