



My Double Life: Memoirs Of A Naturalist

Frances Hamerstrom

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This is the charming memoir of one of the most remarkable women on the contemporary American scene. A trailblazer for her profession and her gender, Fran Hamerstrom is an internationally known wildlife biologist and author, honored many times over for work she is still vigorously pursuing in her late eighties. Born to wealth and privilege in 1907 Boston, young Fran Flint had a governess, was a debutante and fashion model, and was groomed in finishing schools to be an international hostess - "to marry an ambassador." Instead, she married the tall, dark man of her dreams and she and Frederick N. Hamerstrom left the proper East to live and work (and make conservation history) in the Midwest. From the early 1930s until the present day Frederick and Fran (and since 1990 Fran alone) worked and studied in Iowa, Michigan, and finally central Wisconsin, where they became the spiritual parents of an entire generation of conservationists. Along the way Fran earned a Master's degree as a student of Aldo Leopold - the only woman ever to receive a graduate degree from the famed ecologist. The central part of this book is a series of vignettes illustrating those years: the hardships and occasional head-knocks of bringing a conservation mentality to the often grim survival imperatives of the land, extraordinary glimpses of the wildlife world and human one "studying" it: episodes of heart and humor, each seeming more memorable than the one before. But the first part of the book is magic: Hamerstrom's evocation of her childhood - written with a child's innocence, remembered with an adult's irony. A domineering father and a compliant mother drove the precocious child into a world of her own and shepeopled it with beings she could love and trust more easily: mammals, birds, and insects. These stories of her youth, some idyllic and others definitely not, reveal the independence and toughmindedness that enabled her to forge a career of "public service and adventure." Fittingly, Ham

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