

Here is a nature journal entry from my friend Donna, a math teacher:

Instead of heading home after morning Jazzercise class, I drove to Broadford Park and pulled in near the boat ramp. Placing my folding chair along the shore, I snuggled into a blanket to ward off the 55 degree air and started to read. Three geese leisurely swam by.

A chapter later, the serenity was broken by a squawking "V" of geese flying overhead. They circled, broke rank, then angled down as each bird skimmed the surface of the water on running feet and dropped to a stop. As if responding to an alert, more battalions of V's followed suit joining the convocation. Overwhelming noise echoed as each of the 150 to 200 birds tried to be heard over the others. What was the topic of the debate? Religion? The weather? Zoning regulations? The economic feasibility of environmental issues? Were they the Democrats vs the Republicans fighting over a bill? Did the Montagues confront the Capulets? For twenty minutes, the blaring tune they sang had indistinguishable lyrics. Being monolingual, I'd wished I could translate the language of geese. These foreign words had the power to captivate me, overshadowing the words in my book.

On cue, the flock separated into two assemblies. Each group paddled to a cove provided privacy by a copse of trees on the dividing peninsula. Were they breaking into committees to plan negotiations? Maybe this was a middle school dance with the boys and the girls seeking safe refuge. Their shouting continued to block out the stillness of the morning. A subcommittee of ten birds then swam to the beach, waddled through the sand to the carpet of grass, and took up residence there.

Unexpectedly, a hush fell over the crowd. Tranquility returned with deafening silence. Had they reconciled their dispute? Had they come to a peaceful compromise with the debate settled? Did they table the discussion until the next meeting? Or, did they just give up?

A lone goose flew in. Only one squawk questioned his tardiness.

Another kind of nature called. I packed up my blanket, chair, and book. As I walked to my car, I noticed a caterpillar on the picnic table and hoped that he would bear witness to that afternoon's agenda in my absence.

Driving off, I could hear an occasional chirp. Someone else wanted a voice.