

Alexandra—they learn to find a new normal for their family.

Zadie and Plain Vanilla, the Rainbow Alpaca

By Barbara Blount Ziek (*Wild Hair Press*) \$17.99

Young Zadie's grandfather promises that the next cria (the name for a baby alpaca, llama, or other camelid) born on his farm will be hers! Zadie loves all the alpaca colors: lavender, rose-gray, shimmering black, peanut buttery, and chocolate brown, but hers turns out to be a disappointing plain vanilla white. She is a mischievous cria, though, and because of the Frooty Bright drink fiasco, she becomes a rainbow alpaca. The story is beautifully illustrated by Denise Duker

and is followed by a fiber arts project.

The following titles are from Doris Baker's *Filter Press*, located in Palmer Lake:

Colorado's Landmark Hotels

By Linda Wommack \$16.95

The 30 historic hotels featured in Wommack's book have landmark preservation status. All except three are at least 100 years old, and all are in operation today. Hotels played a prominent and often colorful role in the development of mining towns across the Colorado Territory. Built to accommodate the miners, settlers, railroad builders, and businessmen rushing into the area,

these hotels often also served as the social and cultural center of these early communities.

Rescue in Poverty Gulch

By Nancy Oswald \$8.95

Best friends Ruby and Maude's humorous adventures are set in the rough-and-tumble gold mining town of Cripple Creek, Colo., in 1896, when the town was in its heyday. Fun, fast-paced, and completely engaging, right up to the heart-pounding climax, this is historical fiction at its best—a great read for kids ages 8 and older.

John Denver: Man for the World

By John Stansfield \$8.95

Singer and songwriter John

Denver used his musical talents to make the world a better place. He believed that music brings people together and allows them to experience the same emotions, regardless of the language they speak, the color they are, or their politics and beliefs. "Music," he said, "proves we are the same." One of the Now You Know Bios series for young scholars, the book includes black and white photos and stories behind some of Denver's songs.

Midnight Ride of Blackwell Station

By Mary Peace Finley, \$8.95

The heroine of this lighthearted story of the founding of Lamar, Colo., is 9-year-old Raephy McDowell, one of four children who

lived with their parents above an isolated prairie railroad station. When Mama, the telegraph operator, and Father, the ranch foreman, learn of the secret plan to move the station and "boom" a town, they have two problems: how to work around the rancher who owns the land they live on, and how to keep the secret from their very curious daughter.

For a cold, snowy night, or a spring break vacation, these local publications could inform, entertain, or enlighten you along the way. Until next month, happy reading.

The staff at Covered Treasures Bookstore can be contacted at books@ocn.me.

Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide Illustrating birds



By Elizabeth Hacker

Every month for the past eight years, *OCN* has run my column about the birds I see on the Palmer Divide. Following the classical tradition of the early naturalists like John James Audubon and Edward Lear, I've included an illustration of each bird I've written about. Unlike these brave early naturalists who didn't have high-power optics, field guides, and Google, I don't have to kill the birds I'm writing about.

Over the years I have taught numerous classes and workshops on illustrating birds and found that anyone who wants to draw or paint a bird can do it. In the beginning, students will tell me that birds are much too complicated and that they couldn't possibly draw or paint one. By the end of the workshop, students were pleasantly surprised that they could and that illustrating a

bird wasn't all that difficult.

Goal

My goal for illustrating birds is to capture their essence, or that quality that is unique only to that species, and share it with readers. When setting up the illustration, I like to include aspects of the birds' character, habitat, and private life that would be difficult to photograph.

Media

I use a variety of media, including color pencil, watercolor and acrylic paint, and ink. I find it interesting when students try mediums that I don't use because the end results vary widely due to individual interpretation and the intrinsic quality of the material being used.

Bird anatomy

If asked, I couldn't name all the feathers or bones, but I have a basic understanding of bird anatomy that helps me to under-

stand the birds I see and write about. I often refer to anatomical reference drawings located at the beginning of my field guide.

All birds have the same basic bone structure and though their feathers are all similar, they come in different colors, shapes, and sizes. In the bird world, there are huge variations in the size and structure of heads, legs, and feet. A robin is very different from a heron, yet they are both birds and share many similarities. Understanding the similarities as well as the differences is important when both observing and illustrating a bird.

Field observations and research

Watching and sketching birds began for me at an early age. Even today I sketch, photograph, and take notes while observing birds. One day while hiking with my daughter, we came upon a double-breasted cormorant rookery and it was eye-opening. Although I knew cormorants nested in colonies, I'd never seen a rookery and had no idea there would be hundreds of nesting birds and that the interaction between nesting birds would be so vocal and intense. Fortunately my daughter understands my fascination with birds and didn't mind stopping while I sketched and photographed these observations. I've not featured the double-breasted cormorant, but when I do I'll refer to my field notes.

In addition to my own observations, I rely on field guides, magazines, Audubon meetings, and the Internet for information. Some birds have been well studied while there is limited information on others.

Most people have a favorite bird. Hummingbirds, robins, and chickadees tend to be the most



Above: (Left) Illustration by Elizabeth Hacker of Western Bluebird. (Right) Western Bluebird field study. Color versions are posted at www.ocn.me/v13n3bird.htm.

popular birds. When teaching a class, I encourage students to learn about their favorite bird, because knowing about its habitat, diet, and mating behavior provides a better understanding of the subject being illustrated.

Line drawing

Line drawings help me to set up the information I want to include in an illustration. It's easy to make adjustments to a line drawing, which in the end saves time. It's easy to see if the bird has proper proportions or if its legs and feet are in proper alignment, and I can explore various ways to illustrate its habitat. In the end, I may transfer the line drawing or redraw it onto the final canvas.

Final illustrations

Watercolor is my favorite medium, but it takes days to explore color combinations, apply paint, and let it dry. Watercolor mistakes are difficult if not impossible to correct, so it takes careful planning to avoid making them. It's a technique that works

well when time allows. When time is limited, I use color pencils on a sanded paper. Sanded paper absorbs many layers of color, which makes changes and corrections easy and fast. For my field sketches, I use pen and ink. If I'm in a pinch for time or don't have the correct colors, I'll enhance one of my field drawings.

Free demonstration

I am thrilled to be invited to the Pine Forest Antique and Garden Show on April 20 and 21 at Lewis-Palmer High School. At my booth, I will have many illustrations, greeting cards, and other works of art. During the show, I will also be demonstrating my illustration techniques. Stop by to watch a demo, purchase some art, or just say hello. Hope to see you there!

Elizabeth Hacker is a writer and artist. Email her at elizabethhacker@ocn.me to share bird pictures and stories.

Covered Treasures Bookstore presents Women in the Writing World



Thurs., Mar. 7, 6:30-8:00 p.m.—Monument resident **Holly Sly** will sign her book, *Toolbox from Heaven*. Her daughter's bout one Christmas with encephalitis and meningitis, resulting in a profound hearing loss, is just the beginning of this family's courageous story.

Thurs., Mar. 14, 6:30-7:00 p.m.*—**Nancy Saltzman** will discuss her book, *Radical Survivor*. Nancy is a former Colorado Springs educator, Colorado's National Distinguished Principal, and recipient of the American Cancer society's Sword of Hope. Many remember the tragic loss of her husband and two sons in a small-plane crash in 1995; this is her story of survival and triumph.

7:00-8:00: Nancy will sign her books at the bookstore.

Thurs., Mar. 21, 6:30-7:30 p.m.*—**Doris Baker**, owner of Filter Press in Palmer Lake, will discuss the book publishing business.

7:30-8:00: There will be a question and answer period at store; all Filter Press titles will be available at 10% off—*this evening only*.

Sat., Mar. 30, 11:00-1:00 p.m.—**Barbara Ziek** will sign her children's book about alpacas, *Zadie and Plain Vanilla*. Barbara will bring a few of her alpacas to the store for viewing! (*Weather permitting*)

* These speaking events will be held at the Fire Administration Bldg., 166 Second St., Monument. A ticket (\$5) is required for admittance and may be purchased in advance at Covered Treasures; tickets are worth \$5 off the purchase of a book the evening of the event.

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