

Birdsong Books

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Middletown, Delaware

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Kids book "Raccoon Moon" sheds light on familiar North American animal

Anyone who's tried to evict a raccoon family from their attic knows shrinking habitat has forced us to share home and garden with our wild neighbors. Animals such as fox, raccoon, skunk and opossum seek shelter under our porches and sheds and forage in our vegetable gardens and trashcans. But it's the curious and ubiquitous raccoon that tops the list as most feared and misunderstood. Its litany of offenses includes the destruction of cornfields, chicken coops and native bird nests to the spread of rabies and distemper.

In her children's picture book, "Raccoon Moon," author/illustrator Nancy Carol Willis paints an accurate, but balanced portrait of this mostly nocturnal North American mammal. She begins with an inside-the-den look at the birth of three cubs, then details a year in the life of the raccoon family as the mother teaches her cubs to climb trees, find food and survive predators.

Big, eye-catching colored pencil illustrations portray the cubs learning to catch a frog and eat a fiddler crab. Clear text describes raccoon behavior such as learning to swim and searching for a winter den. Willis dispels the myth raccoons wash their food, saying instead they dunk and manipulate it with sensitive fingers. "Raccoon Moon" conveys the accurate impression raccoons are curious and intelligent,

reminding us why they are one of North America's most familiar and adaptable animals. This 32-page book includes three pages of appended material suitable for an early elementary classroom: a glossary, facts about the raccoon name and range, raccoon relatives and trivia, and handling techniques and diet recipes approved by the Delaware Wildlife Rehabilitators Association.

Willis' odyssey with raccoons began when she rescued orphaned cubs from an old tree at her home in Delaware. She took them to a wildlife rehabilitation facility, where they were nursed back to health and taught survival skills. Willis documented the cubs' progress, including making sketches and photographs. When the cubs were ready for release, Willis built a feeding station in her tree and has maintained a controlled release site for raccoons ever since. Willis' other published works include "The Robins In Your Backyard," which received the Parent Council Seal as outstanding from a learning perspective. She has illustrated "Birds of Delaware" and written and illustrated "Kids Pages" for Outdoor Delaware magazine. Her "Delaware Bay Shorebirds" and "Delaware Watersheds" educational posters are used in curricula statewide.

Raccoon Moon will be available in July in bookstores and through Independent Publishers Group, Ingram, Baker & Taylor, and Birdsong Books, 1322 Bayview Road, Middletown, DE 19709. ISBN 0-9662761-2-4 Cloth \$15.95, ISBN 0-9662761-3-2 Paperback \$6.95, 8 1/2 x 11, children ages 4 to 9. Visit the web site at www.BirdsongBooks.com or contact Steve Hart at (302) 378-7274 for more information.