

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it according to their various kinds." And it was so. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." . . . God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." . . . And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind."*

*And it was so . . .*

*And God saw that it was good . . .*

*Genesis 1:1,11,20,24,25  
The Holy Bible*

As I enjoy my time outdoors with my journal and pen in hand, it's with love and quietness that I give thanks.

Susie



## Section One

### INTRODUCTION

The desire to share my enjoyment of keeping a nature journal lives in my heart and on the pages of *Who Lives in Your Backyard?* I sincerely hope you'll come to enjoy nature journaling as I do!

As you read and follow the ideas in this book, I encourage you to begin recording your observations in your own nature journal. You'll use your journal to capture quick sketches and mini-descriptions of what you observe in nature on any given day. Because part of nature's beauty is its *simplicity*, I also encourage you to draw fresh, quick, and uncomplicated sketches. See "Get Your Pencils Ready" for three quick drawing techniques. These types of sketches lend themselves to the wonderful spontaneity of capturing a special moment in nature.

*You don't have to be an artist or have any drawing experience to enjoy this activity!*

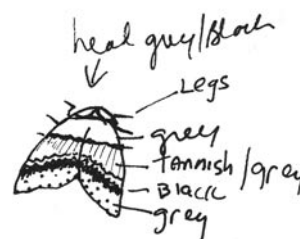
By recording what you see in your nature journal, you'll hone your observation skills and develop favorite sketching techniques. See "It Starts with Observation" to get you going. It offers suggestions to enhance your enjoyment every day you venture into your backyard and beyond.

You'll also get to peek into my journals so you can see firsthand how I record and quickly sketch birds, plants, and animals I observe in the field. In Sections Two, Three, and Four, you'll see records of many special journaling moments I've enjoyed with my favorite feathered and furry friends!

### Wherever You Live

*Who Lives in Your Backyard?* immediately puts you in your own environment—wherever you live. Although my examples come from my own backyard and nearby nature trails in Boulder, Colorado, you can apply all the skills, ideas, and principles from this interactive guide anywhere. They help you discover which birds, flowers, butterflies, and animals actually reside in your own backyard. If you don't have a backyard, visit areas surrounding your home. Go beyond your neighborhood and explore local lakes, parks, or trails—even your entire state and country—as your "backyard." Learn about nature wherever you are and record it in your journal.

Be sure to select the right tools. See "Paper, Pens, Pencils, and Paint" for suggestions on what has worked for me. Record everyday events in the lives of those who live in your backyard. As your observation and sketching skills develop, you'll notice many things you didn't see when you first began. Believe me, there's a lot going on outside!

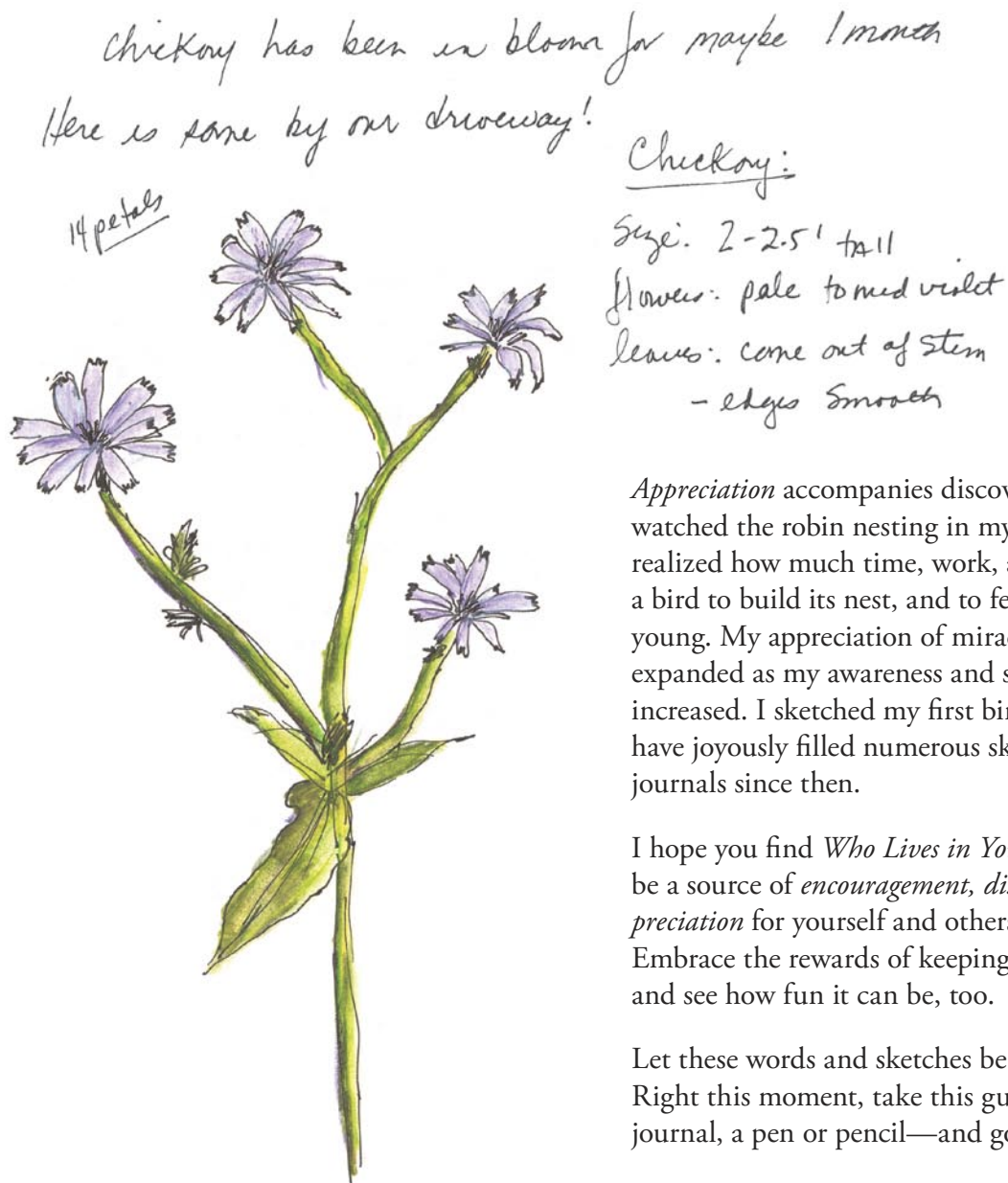


## Just Try It!

Grab your journal and a pencil or pen, then step outside. Sketch something that interests you—a tree, a flower, a bird. Make a few marks on your paper. Simply draw something and write your first journal entry. Refer to “Five Tips for Creating Your Journal” for great ideas to get you started. When you record an entry in your nature journal, you make a connection with nature. It’s fun and doesn’t hurt a bit!

## Discovery and Appreciation

Several summers ago, I discovered that a robin had built her nest in a tree in our backyard. I watched from a distance for days as she incubated her eggs. One morning when she wasn’t in the nest, I took a peek and saw, for the first time in my life, four beautiful blue eggs. What a wonder! I carefully watched each day and soon the blue eggs cracked and baby robins were hatched. I felt like their proud mama when I first saw the nestlings. It was such an exciting *discovery*!



*Appreciation* accompanies discovery. Until I watched the robin nesting in my backyard, I never realized how much time, work, and effort it takes a bird to build its nest, and to feed and raise its young. My appreciation of miracles like this has expanded as my awareness and sense of discovery increased. I sketched my first bird in 1993 and have joyously filled numerous sketchbooks and journals since then.

I hope you find *Who Lives in Your Backyard?* to be a source of *encouragement*, *discovery*, and *appreciation* for yourself and others you share it with. Embrace the rewards of keeping a nature journal and see how fun it can be, too.

Let these words and sketches be your inspiration. Right this moment, take this guide, your nature journal, a pen or pencil—and go outside!

*Susie Mottashed*