



IN THE SHADOW OF HIS
WINGS

— 40 —
UPLIFTING
DEVOTIONS
INSPIRED BY
BIRDS

ROSLYNN LONG

IN THE SHADOW OF HIS
WINGS

40 UPLIFTING DEVOTIONS INSPIRED BY BIRDS

ROSLYNN LONG



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group

Minneapolis, Minnesota

In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long

Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission

© 2022 by Roslynn Long

Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in China

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Long, Roslynn, author.

Title: In the shadow of his wings : 40 uplifting devotions inspired by birds / Roslynn Long.

Description: Minneapolis, Minnesota : Bethany House Publishers, a division of Baker Publishing Group, [2022] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021046294 | ISBN 9780764239489 (cloth) | ISBN 9781493437368 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Birds—Religious aspects—Christianity—Meditations.

Classification: LCC BR115.B55 L66 2022 | DDC 231.7—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021046294>

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked *ESV* are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. *ESV Text Edition: 2016*

Scripture quotations marked *NASB* are from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked *NKJV* are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *NLT* are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior photography by Roslynn Long

Cover design by Brand Navigation

Interior design by Sarah Asprey

Baker Publishing Group publications use paper produced from sustainable forestry practices and post-consumer waste whenever possible.

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long

Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission

Introduction

I HAVE SOME VINYL WORDS on my wall that read, “Write your worries in sand, carve your blessings in stone.” It reminds me that the worries of today will diminish over time, washed away like sand castles by the sea. It is also a good reminder to think back on all the ways God has protected, delivered, and provided for me over the years. Writing something in stone creates a long-lasting memorial of an event or person.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often set up stones in places where they experienced the Lord’s deliverance, as a symbol to future generations of the Lord’s faithfulness to them. For example, when the Lord threw the Philistines into confusion so Israel could defeat them, Samuel set up a stone and named it “Ebenezer,” or “stone of help.” First Samuel 7:12 says he called it that because “Thus far has the LORD helped us.”

At some point while I was learning bird photography, I came to see each bird I found as a gift from God. I realized that He

would provide birds according to His plan, and that when I trusted Him, He often gave me a lesson or verse that corresponded to the scene in front of me. Each bird photograph in this book is a kind of “Ebenezer” of my birding expeditions—they are reminders of the love and care of the Lord in even the smallest matters of life.

I hope these words and photos can become touchstones for you as well, demonstrating the goodness of God in every journey.

Consider the Sparrow

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, sparrows have associated with and lived among humans. They rely on our crops and crumbs, and have followed us to the ends of the earth. The oldest fossils of sparrows have been found in Israel, and nearly every House Sparrow in the world has come from this same genetic family tree.¹ They are so numerous and widespread that many people treat them as pests.

During biblical times, these little sparrows were used as a temple offering by the poorest worshippers, who could not afford a bigger sacrifice. A person could buy two sparrows for one small coin, which was an amount equal to about a penny. Jesus mentions this in Matthew 10:29 to illustrate just how worthless most people considered these birds. But He says, “Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.” God cares about the birds and watches over even the smallest living creatures. Then, in verse 31, Jesus goes on to reassure His

disciples, and us, “So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Not much has changed in the past 2,000 years concerning people’s attitudes toward House Sparrows, including photographers. Most serious bird photographers won’t bother taking a photo of a House Sparrow because they are so common and not very attractive. They are considered an invasive species, and therefore not worth consideration. However, when I took this photo, I didn’t care what kind of bird it was. I only noticed the contrast between the soft bird feathers and the hard bars of the barn window. The small size of the bird and the beautiful way the light was shining on it beckoned me to take its picture.

In some sense, we are all little sparrows. In the vastness of the universe, we may feel forgotten. We are only one in a sea of billions of people, yet God loves and cherishes each of us. Nahum 1:7 reminds us: “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.” No matter how small and insignificant we might feel, we are important to the Father. As the Lord shines His heavenly light on us, we become a testimony to the world of the way God transforms a common, ordinary life into something beautiful.



In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission



In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission

Made by Him

MOST DAYS I plan where to go depending on what kind of birds I want to see. On one particular day, however, I walked through the woods without any specific idea about what I hoped to find. I was just hiking and praying. I asked the Lord to spend time with me and show me His creation. I wanted to see what *He* wanted to show me. Immediately I was flooded with a feeling of joy—it felt like spending time with a friend who was excited to show me what they had made.

When someone takes a lot of time and effort making a piece of artwork, for example, they love to share it with others. It brings delight when other people enjoy your work. Imagine the look of excitement on a child's face when they show you something they have made, and how proud they are of their creation. The Lord has created everything to share with us as well. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was

made that has been made.” Jesus made the most fantastic, beautiful piece of art that will ever exist, the intricate and immensely complex work of nature. Colossians 1:16 also reveals, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (NASB). He is pleased when we appreciate His work and praise Him for it.

Psalm 8:3–4 says, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” When we *consider* something, we don’t just give it a passing glance, but we think carefully or contemplate it. Consider the abundance, variety, and beauty of all the plants, birds, and other animals on earth. Consider people—the complex and wonderful way our bodies are formed and function. The intricate balance of life on earth is amazing, and so is our God. Any creative impulse or craftsmanship we may display is but a tiny reflection of God’s creativity. When we enjoy nature, remembering it is something precious God made with care and thought, it can help us feel connected to Him.

Moments after I was overcome by this feeling of joy, a beautiful Bald Eagle flew past me, and I thanked the Lord for showing me a small piece of His glory. However, a short time later, I slipped and fell in the mud, my fall “softened” only by landing on my camera

Through him *all* things were made; without him
nothing was made that has been made.

JOHN 1:3

and cracking my lens hood. Normally I might have been bothered by this turn of events, but that day it didn't seem to matter. When we experience communion with God, our circumstances have less effect on our thoughts and emotions, because we are focused on His power and majesty.



In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission

Camouflaged

WHEN ADAM AND EVE first sinned against God, they went from walking innocently in the beautiful garden to hiding in the shadows and trying to cover themselves with leaves. What prompted such a drastic change in their demeanor? They realized they had sinned against God, and they were ashamed. By trying to hide from the Lord and clothe themselves, they only drew attention to their sinful condition.

Many birds hide in their surroundings using built-in camouflage. Birds' feather patterns can help them blend into their environment so that they don't fall prey to a predator. For instance, the American Bittern is a common bird, but it can be difficult to find because of its amazing camouflage. When it stands perfectly still, it merges into the cattails almost seamlessly. In fact, when this bird moved just a few feet into the

vegetation, I couldn't see it at all—it seemed to disappear in the reeds. Similarly, this Western Meadowlark blended in so well with the surrounding grasses it almost vanished. The only way I found it was by following its flight path and watching where it landed. For birds, hiding is an important skill that God has provided to help them survive.

In the case of Adam and Eve, their attempts to hide from God didn't work because their coverings were borne out of shame. Our human attempts to cover our sin or make up for wrongdoing are never adequate. Genesis 3:21 states, "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." God himself supplied an acceptable covering for them, in a foretelling of the way He would ultimately provide a way to cover all our sins.

The way to receive this covering is to believe in Jesus Christ and repent, or turn away, from sin. When we try to keep our sins covered and refuse to address them, the guilt weighs on our hearts and minds. Psalm 32:3–5 says,

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.



In the Shadow of His Wings • Roslynn Long
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group © 2022 used by permission

Let's not shrink back into the shadows but approach the Lord and accept His gracious forgiveness. When God provides the covering of righteousness, we never have to worry about being discovered. He declares us completely free from all guilt and shame. "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Psalm 32:1).