

When the journey gets rough, look for allies...

# Blue Heron Journey

by Jennifer Scalia

**O**n an early December morning, darkness mixed with the moonlight as I eagerly left to meet my paddling partner for a long anticipated river trip.

As we drove to our kayaking destination, we encountered many frustrating delays in our travel. I began feeling symptoms of tension and unease as we slowly continued towards our drop off on the water. Later, I would find that I had dismissed significant warnings and messages.

When we finally arrived in the mist of nature's wilderness, the river spoke a powerful language that was unfamiliar to me. I felt frightened and uncertain but the temptation to proceed won, as we became its unwelcomed guests.

In merciless waters, we invited ourselves downstream and fallen trees became continuous obstacles. The roaring music was awesome as we padded through whitewater. We began to challenge dangerous, strategic turns of mystery, then laughed like children disguising the apprehension inside of ourselves.

Trying to take control, a force fought back with vengeance; surrendering within a monstrous current, my partner grabbed a tree that loomed up at head level. Her kayak submerged in ice cold water, capsizing her ...



gathered our senses, preparing for what unknowns still remained of our adventure.

With daylight quickly diminishing, I hoped that the worst was over. Then I observed my partners' body becoming rigid, paralyzing her from paddling further. Her eyes were empty as she was hardly present – like an enemy had consumed her, hindering our survival.

On a near-by bank, I stood with feelings of loneliness and despair. Then flying brilliantly close, feeling its movements across my face, a blue heron appeared, joining us in this moment of great indecision. I looked ahead as the blue heron passed me and landed high up on a tree. She seemed to be waiting patiently and I felt a sense of strength from within, knowing it was safe for

Time stood still, as I could only watch helplessly.

Feeling defenseless to the elements, somehow she managed to meet me at the rivers' edge. Now accompanied with shock and fear, we

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us to continue on. With determination, I shared this message with my partner and we were back out on the water and began paddling aggressively through fierce and flowing waters. The blue heron would lead by flying ahead and then waited patiently for us to gain momentum. Bringing even more encouragement to move forward, three hawks began to circle synchronously directly above us. As we would stop on the water to regain energy, the hawks stayed with us. The blue heron and hawks traveled with our pace, yet pushed us enough to move in a rhythm towards safety.

Later the waters became still and heavy, bringing exhaustion throughout our bodies. Darkness in the sky began to envelope the sun and there was silence across the water while the trees fell into a dream. I wondered if I would awaken from this surreal journey, then I noticed the absence of our allies. Seeking them in that moment, our kayaks floated past a large bluff, bringing into view our journey's end – a huge relief after our long battle with wild, sullen river.

Under the clear night's stars, I sighed deeply with gratitude.

Magic is in everyday life, at any place and at any time. There are many animal allies among us, sending messages and giving guidance.

On this journey a blue heron and three hawks helped me discover the power of self-reliance, and the ability of being present and aware while facing challenges.

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*Jennifer offers pet services through her Elemental Pet Care. Contact her at 314-239-4878 or jenzpets@yahoo.com.*