

As High as the Sky

by **T. A. Barron**

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As a youth, I roamed our Colorado ranch with my eyes aimed upward: to the tall ponderosas, to the gleaming mountains, and—most often—to the sky. Thanks, I am sure, to that wide blue sky, I sensed that anything was possible—in Colorado, at least. Perhaps that’s why I live here now, and why I’ve chosen to raise my own children here. And why I know it’s absolutely essential that we save this land for all time.

Colorado can stir our hearts and minds like few other places on the planet. Where else can we touch the depth and vastness of Creation—not just as observers, but as participants? Where else can our own aspirations reach as high as the very sky?

Despite urban sprawl, air pollution, and other modern afflictions, much of Colorado remains wild. So wild that the land and its creatures can often reach us, stirring our souls in powerful and surprising ways.

Just behind my house, on an alfalfa field that is now protected open space, I can see hundreds of geese who spend part of their year on the northern slopes of the Brooks Range, far above the Arctic Circle in Alaska. These geese fly across the Yukon, over western Canada, down the Rockies, all the way to Colorado—and back—each and every year. So by the very beating of their wings, they connect some of the most wild and remarkable places on our continent. And, at the same time, they connect every person fortunate enough to see or hear them with those very same places.

Aldo Leopold, a wonderful writer as well as a dedicated conservationist, was so moved by the flight of migrating geese that he wrote this passage in his journal: “The wind has gone with the geese. And so would I, were I the wind.”

Such wonderful words! Can’t you hear the whooshing of those wings? With words like that—and creatures like that—we can fly as high and far as the geese themselves.

That will only stay true, of course, as long as wild Colorado stays wild. The flight of geese also brings to mind another passage—a sadder one that contains a sober warning. An old English proverb, penned centuries ago, laments: “They jail the thief who steals the goose from the common. Yet they let loose the greater thief who steals the common from the goose.”

That is the paradox, isn’t it? With the unending power of wild places comes their unending fragility. With their infinite gift comes their infinite peril. And our work, the work of The Nature Conservancy, is to protect those places. Not for just another season, or another session of Congress, but for all time.

Thanks to the work of The Nature Conservancy, you and I may continue to roam with our eyes aimed upward. We can join with the geese, as well as the land. And, in the process, we can join with something even greater—something as high as the very sky.

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