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Snowmass celebrates publication of long-awaited field guide

Snowmass Village, CO. February 18, 2005. For decades, longtime local botanist Janis Huggins lugged a pack full of field books into the backcountry. She always wished someone would lighten her load by creating a book that included plants, animals, and birds of this region. Little did she know that someone would be her.

Huggins celebrated the release of her spectacular book *Snowmass Village—Wild at Heart* this past February and the book continues to receive rave reviews by everyone from renowned Colorado nature photographer John Fielder to the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies' Tom and Jody Cardamone to Pat O'Donnell, President/CEO, Aspen Skiing Company.

“Her words invite us to experience a variety of ecosystems with curiosity, joy and a clear understanding of the interrelationships of living things in each environment,” says Tricia Nichols, a trustee with The Nature Conservancy. “*Wild at Heart* is a rare book, indeed, that guides us towards a more responsible participation in the natural world.”

Called *Snowmass Village: Wild at Heart* in a tribute to the town that funded the book, this impressive nearly 500-page field guide identifies the plants, animals, and birds found in a much larger landscape that includes over four wilderness areas of Colorado and most of the Southern Rockies. With 670 color photos covering 423 plants, 112 birds and 49 mammals and additional information on edible and medicinal uses of plants, conservation status of birds and animals, ecology of various life zones above 7,000 feet, animal tracks drawings and much more, this guide is indispensable to nature lovers all over the southern Rockies and in the Roaring Fork

Valley. No other mountain resort can boast such a thorough, detailed, and useful book that will appeal to both novice and advanced hikers.

Huggins spent nearly five years compiling the fascinating stories and magnificent photos in *Wild at Heart*. The book also includes such useful features as a lay flat binding, plant color key, mammal track drawings, and an extensive appendix.

“No one has ever compiled a comprehensive guide to the plants, birds and mammals for the entire upper Roaring Fork Valley,” said Huggins, who calls the book a bridge between a coffee table book and a technical field guide. “I believe the text will be interesting, fun, and accessible for all levels of outdoors enthusiasts.”

The book’s origins can be traced back to 1994 when the Town of Snowmass Village required a developer to fund a book on local wildlife and native plants. Like Huggins, town wildlife specialist Dawn Barton Keating and Snowmass Land Company President Jim Wells saw the need for a much broader work and, along with additional major funding from the town, contracted Huggins in 2000 to create a guide that would apply to both residents and visitors of the Brush Creek Valley, the entire upper Roaring Fork Valley, and beyond.

“This book wouldn’t have been possible without the tremendous support of the Town of Snowmass Village, and it has absolutely paid off,” says Keating. “This ultimate resource on plants, animals, and birds in the Roaring Fork Valley is something Snowmass can be proud of. People will be using this book for decades to come.”

With chapters on Snowmass trails and geology in addition to almost five hundred pages of lore, ecology, medicinal and conservation information on regional plants, animals and birds, *Wild at Heart* offers readers a new reason to venture out onto local trails and into the wilderness this year.

“My hope is that readers will use this book to expand their understanding of the rich natural diversity around us by delving further into the intricate world of each species,” Huggins says, while pointing out that “immense pleasure is often found in the details.”

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