

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Prophetic rainbow of February 16, 2025. The double bow was too faint to capture in this photo. Photo: J. Morton Galetto

Through the Storm

Finding comfort in nature, and a prophetic splendor in the rainbow of February 16.

By J. Morton Galetto, CU Maurice River

Years ago world-renowned glass artist and friend Paul Stankard presented me with one of his floral paper weights and proclaimed, "It's all about sex, birth, life, and death. Isn't everything?"

The paper weight included a cluster of flowers with some of their roots depicted as elongated, stylized, and intertwined people. I reflected on his words as his eyes twinkled and he chuckled his iconic laugh. He was right, and possibly even profound – pollination, germination, blooms, and decay.

In the animal world, the drive is to have progeny, to live one's life, and ultimately to return to the earth. I've spent the last month experiencing the loss of loved ones so I decided not to ignore that which is presented, but rather to embrace it.

Let's begin in the animal world with my favorite species, a genus that I have never before addressed in my column, a kingdom I suppose – the Muppets.

At a departed friend's service the family chose to have a soloist sing "The Rainbow Connection," a Kermit classic. For those who don't know, Kermit is a green frog developed

by puppeteer Jim Henson for the PBS children's show *The Muppets*. The show has a puppet cast of animals and quirky people who creatively teach children some of life's lessons. You could say the philosophy of the show exemplifies "*All I really needed to know I learned in kindergarten.*"

The tune *The Rainbow Connection* was first sung by Kermit in the 1979 *The Muppet Movie*. This is a snippet of the lyrics:

*Why are there so many songs about
rainbows
And what's on the other side?
Rainbows are visions, but only illusions,
And rainbows have nothing to hide.*

*So we've been told and some choose to
believe it
I know they're wrong, wait and see.
Someday we'll find it, the rainbow
connection,
The lovers, the dreamers, and me.*

In its entirety the song is a promise of fulfillment. For those who listen and heed, *the lovers and dreamers* will find an abiding joy. The rainbow connection is the moment when your inner voice acquires spiritual purpose in the physical world – when spiritual and physical connect, and there is joy.



Kermit the Frog's Facebook page shows him singing while strumming his banjo.

Just two days after my friend's service my sister had a marked decline. She and my friend battled the same form of cancer and our family stayed with my sister, just as my friends had done with their loved one.

Some of the family and I decided to take a brief break from our vigil. Our dogs recently had 10 offspring and puppy therapy seemed like just what the youngsters and I needed. It was Sunday, February 16th, and you may recall a wicked front moved across the

country and through our area. We finished visiting the puppies and just as we began the return trip to my sister's the front hit our property. It was swift and violent.

Somehow we drove primarily through the aftermath of storm. We did see a fireball on the electric lines and pulled off the road for a few minutes until it disappeared. The police detoured us away from our planned route. Later we found some trees had fallen in the wooded area on our own property.

As we approached my sister's home a huge double rainbow radiated in the eastern sky in such a way that it appeared to emanate directly from her home. Behind us the sunset was equally magnificent. It was so theatrical that many people talked about seeing that evening's display. It felt all very prophetic – and indeed it was. Shortly thereafter my sister passed on.

People have long associated happenings and/or prophecy with rainbows. Native Americans believed them to be a sacred symbol representing a bridge between the physical and the spiritual worlds. I choose not to judge whether these are simply coincidence or something much deeper. But the phenomenon meant a great deal to me on that day.

I am far from out of touch with the mechanics/science of how a rainbow is created (see "Rainbow Mechanics" below). Yet I don't ignore the beauty of nature, nor do I dismiss the comforting aspects of its splendor.

I suppose some folks think of me as the *bird lady* or some such moniker because they relay to me all sorts of eclectic avian encounters. Over the years, after a loved one passed, many people have told me that a bird visited them at their window, or in their yard, and in that moment nature provided them with a connection to their loved one. The bird's arrival had a special significance for them. They were not suggesting that the bird was a reincarnation of their loved one but rather that it was a messenger of sorts – a loved one's soul hitching a winged ride to share with those who remain earthbound that "things will be alright." A consoling effect, a remembrance, a spiritual moment.

In my experience I have found people expressing these bird-related feelings not to be unusual, especially for those who have taken time to foster an interest in our avian community. In fact, in many cultures birds clearly represent connections between the earthly and the spiritual world.



A friend of the author told her that every time she sees a cardinal she thinks of her departed mother who loved cardinals. She wrote; "One of the birds I hoped to see last year was the vermillion cardinal, endemic to Colombia's NE desert in the edge of the Santa Marta mountains. I was lucky to see both the male and female. Thanks for reminding me of all the connections..." Photo: Pam Higginbotham

Do we give meaning to things, or are they truly prophetic? I don't know which is true; I suppose both. But in any event I don't want to shut out the magic of the world by simply not considering the possibilities. So call me "for the birds." But I'm with the frogs – or frog; Kermit that is. Continuing with the lyrics of the song he first sang in 1979:

*Somebody thought of that
and someone believed it,
and look what it's done so far.
What's so amazing that keeps us stargazing?
And what do we think we might see?
Someday we'll find it, the rainbow
connection,
the lovers, the dreamers and me.*

I encourage you to go outside and find a rainbow, a bird, a tree, a seed – and be open to the possibilities. It will enrich your life.

Sources

The lyrics to *The Rainbow Connection* were written by Paul Williams and Kenneth Ascher.

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Rainbow Mechanics

Rainbows are caused by droplets of water in the atmosphere. When light hits these droplets at 42 degrees refraction the speed of light is slowed down. Refraction bends the sun's rays and spreads color into component wavelengths, making the colors of the rainbow. The rainbow is an optical illusion and does not exist in a specific spot in the sky, but is perceived as present over a wide area.

The "double rainbow" phenomenon is a faint, secondary rainbow that appears above the primary one.

"Double rainbows are caused by light being reflected twice inside the raindrop. As a result of this second reflection, the spectrum of the secondary rainbow is reversed: red is on the inner section of the arch, while violet is on the outside." (National Geographic education).

National Geographic's educator's website describes nine other variations of rainbows.

You can explore these on-line:

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/rainbow/>