

What Kind of Person are You?

My friend is a birdwatcher. She can spend hours glued to her binoculars watching birds glide over sand and sea, over mountain and meadow. Occasionally her silent gaze will be interrupted with an "Oh my, look at that! It's a silver tongued, purple-spotted worzelbird. They're rarer than hen's teeth and never around here at this time of the year!" And with that she will disappear into her reference books to investigate the detailed migratory habits of said worzelbird. She finds the beauty of birds, their habits and habitats completely enthralling.

Me? Not so much, so I sigh and sit quietly with my book, reflecting on *Far More Important Things*. You see, I'm not the kind of person who watches birds.

Have you ever done that? Watched someone who is completely passionate and engrossed in something that you wouldn't do if your life depended on it?

There's a small hitch with this, though. My friend lives in the UK, and when visiting, I asked her to show me her England, the places she loves. I figure that when someone shows you what matters most to them, you get a far richer experience and understanding. It's like when you go to a new city and take a tour with local volunteer guides who are passionate about their place. They tell you all the quirky stories and forgotten details that make the city come alive.

So, of course, she took me birdwatching on the Norfolk coast. At first, all my head could tell me was a repetition of the same old stories, that I don't like birds, that sitting with binoculars is boring ... blah, blah, blah. Still, I had asked and she had delivered, so there I was.

At the Norfolk Wildlife Trust Visitor Centre, she handed me the binoculars and disappeared to buy a cuppa for us both. Surrounded by people glued to their binoculars, I figured that I should at least feign interest and see what they were looking at. It took a while to focus my eyes and to scan the horizon, and then suddenly there was this big bird doing swoops and loops, hotly pursued by a bunch of smaller birds who seemed keen to peck it to bits. Please note my highly technical description of the flying action.



You're already on to this, aren't you? Perhaps you've guessed that by the time she returned with the hot drinks, I was bitten and smitten. Within the space of 15 minutes, I'd turned from Not the Kind of Person Who Watches Birds, into One Who Wouldn't Give Up the Binoculars. Our half hour stop turned into half a day. Apparently I'm to ask Santa for binoculars for Christmas.

My new found fascination extended even further when we visited raptor centres and got up close and personal with amazing birds of prey and their handlers. Having a bald eagle fly low over your head, with its talons reaching for a piece of raw chicken, is definitely memorable.

When I made the choice to see the world through someone else's eyes, I discovered the unexpected joy that what she found interesting, could interest me too. This happens when we make a choice to be open to possibility. When we can shelve the rules we've made for ourselves for long enough to consider other options. I was very reluctant because disliking birds has been an integral part of my life story, one I can trace back to childhood and getting mobbed by seagulls at the beach. Scarred for life, I'd avoided contact, near or far for five decades.

Isn't it funny how those stories limit us from finding what we might love? At this point I'm not planning on spending my weekends bird watching, but until I changed my thinking it wasn't even an option. And my friend? She just sat and smiled. Who'd have thought? Indeed!

Does this always happen? No. Will there be interests and opportunities for delight that you'll pass by? Yes. You don't have to like everything. But at least suspend belief for long enough to give it a try.

What stories are you running? How would you complete the sentence 'I'm not the kind of person who...' And if you were that kind of person? How could life be different? What would open your possibility jar wide enough to entertain the thought?

Jenny Magee works with Boomers to make the most of the second half of their lives. Her latest book **A Bold Life – How Boomer Women are Reinventing Life Beyond Fifty** is available at good bookstores or from www.jennymagee.com If you are looking to make significant changes, contact **Jenny** via email to jenny@jennymagee.com

