

To spend time with Nancy Carol Willis of Middletown, Delaware is to feel as though you've stumbled into the Discovery Room of a natural history museum, where collectors fill window sills and bookshelves with snakeskins, raccoon skulls, owl pellets, geodes, sea shells, and other natural curiosities.

Since childhood, Nancy has stuffed her pockets with treasures collected on day trips into the beech woods across from her suburban home. Family vacations to the powder-white beaches of Siesta Key, Florida added murexes, limpets, whelks and sand dollars to the collection. For several summers, Nancy's parents loaded the three kids, family poodle, and the Sears canvas tent into the Chevy wagon and drove across country to see the national parks, stopping along the way to forage for petrified wood, jasper, copper and topaz.

Everything ended up in her mid-18th century home and studio, awash in sunlight and overlook-ing farmland, a 2,000-acre marsh, and the Delaware River. Whether asked to draw a horseshoe crab or a marsh wren nest, the specimen likely exists in a cubby hole or cookie tin. Plenty of living subjects perch in the trees, slither through the garden, or trot through the yard, providing ample subject matter for her books, educational posters and magazine articles.

As a child, Nancy took drawing lessons from E. Jean Lanyon, who taught principles of form, light, and composition. The class also sketched outdoors, an activity Nancy still enjoys today. Another early influence was neighborhood illustrator and hermit, William D. White, who told tales of the Welsh stone masons and Brandywine School artists he had known. He gave Nancy nature books such as *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau, and *Gift from the Sea*, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

These experiences grew into a great love of art, nature, and books. However, Nancy worked for two decades in the graphic design and fine arts fields before deciding to write from her own experiences.

In 1996 she wrote *The Robins In Your Backyard*, based on observations from her own backyard combined with experiences as a wildlife rehabilitator for Tri-State Bird Rescue in Newark, Delaware. *Raccoon Moon* (2002) was inspired by the rescue, care and release of orphaned raccoon cubs into the old silver maple tree in her yard.

For *Red Knot: A Shorebird's Incredible Journey* (2006), Nancy did field work with an international team of scientists dedicated to saving this critically-endangered robin-sized bird that migrates 20,000 miles from the tip of South America to the arctic tundra and back.

Her latest illustrated book, *The Animals' Winter Sleep*, is written by noted nonfiction children's author Lynda Graham-Barber. The book gives very young children a close-up peek at how animals survive nose-stinging cold snug in their dens.

Native Delawarean Nancy Carol Willis holds a BS in Graphic and Advertising Design from the University of Delaware and an MBA from Wilmington College in Delaware. After thirteen years employment in the graphic design industry, she left her job as Design Supervisor for The DuPont Company to pursue a career as a fine artist. She exhibited in nationally juried exhibitions and served as president of the Council of Delaware Artists from 1992-1995.

In 1987 Nancy married Larry Field and spent 10 years renovating a Colonial-era farmhouse near the Delaware River to serve as home and offices.

In 1998, Nancy created Birdsong Books, a small independent publisher of natural science books that encourage children to "*Delight in the Discovery*" of the animals and habitats in the world around them.

Widowed in 2001, Nancy began teaching at Wilmington University, in addition to publishing award-winning children's books.

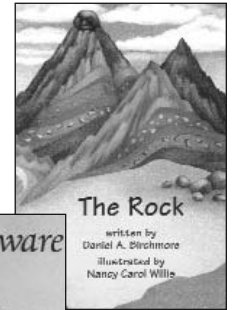
In 2008 she married Paul Willbanks, who shares her joy of singing in the church choir and playing with their Border collies, Alex and Benn.

## Selected Published Writing and Illustration

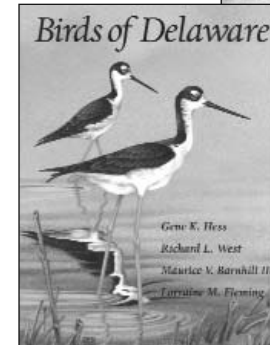


*Delaware Shorebirds*: Design, text and illustrations for an educational poster.

*Delaware Watersheds*: Design, text and illustrations for a curriculum-based educational poster.



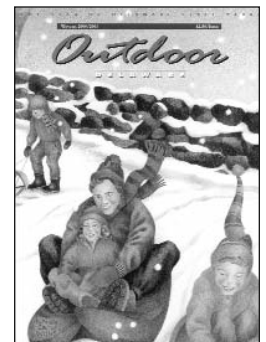
*The Rock*: Illustrations for a 32-page fiction picture book.



*Birds of Delaware*: Cover art and species illustrations for a breeding bird atlas.

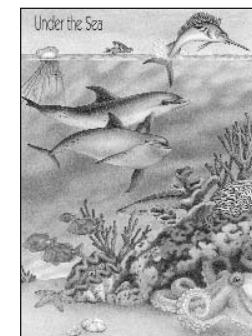
*Outdoor Delaware Magazine*: Cover illustration, Kid's Pages.

*Brandywine Creek State Park*: Artwork for a nature center observation room.



*Kindermusik Adventures*: Illustrations for children's music camp.

*Growing with Kindermusik*: Illustrations for two 32-page picture songbooks.



## Nancy's School Programs

have inspired over 50,000 children

- Interactive, curriculum-based programs.
- Small groups that allow for personal interaction.
- Five 45-minute or four one-hour programs per day.
- Young author workshops; Teacher/librarian workshops.
- Programs for Title I and children with disabilities.

\$500/day plus travel for Delaware area; \$600/day plus travel nationally. Fees vary for workshops.

### How Nonfiction Picture Books are Made Grades 2-6: 45-minutes

Nancy takes a step-by-step look at the process of making a nonfiction picture book. Topics include: where authors get their ideas, researching the subject, creating a storyboard and dummy, writing and editing, illustration, printing and binding. Photographs and specimens enhance the program.

### Nature Journals with Nancy

Grades 3-6: One to three one-hour workshops

1. Children observe nature directly, take notes and make close-up sketches. 2. Children write a paragraph in present tense using sensory details to describe the properties of their subject. 3. Children learn design and color blending techniques to illustrate their nature journal pages.

### Delaware Bay Ecology

Grades 4-6; 45-minute program

Nancy's program meets curricula standards for studies in Delaware Bay ecology, shorebird and horseshoe crab physiology, migration, Western Hemisphere geography, scientific research, and species conservation. Includes photographs, specimens, and a learning-based game.

### Write and Illustrate Your Own Picture Book

Grades 4-12: multi-day residency

Students use storyboards to plan the content and flow of their fiction or nonfiction books. Writers edit text for readability and style. Illustrators use various techniques and media to design and illustrate the pages.

### Animal Habits & Habitats

K-2, library programs: 45 minutes

Nancy reads her books and shares curious and amazing facts about animal behavior and adaptations. Photographs, specimens, and personal accounts add to the program.

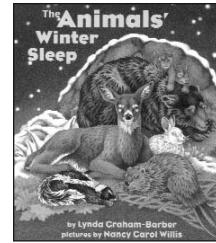
### Writers Workshop

Grades 4-12: one hour to multi-day

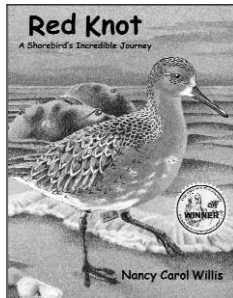
Nancy offers 10 tips for better nonfiction writing. Students share their nonfiction writing and receive positive feedback.

## The Animals' Winter Sleep

When winter snows drift deep, the porcupine is wedged between the rocks, sleeping all alone. Striped skunks sleep together, under a crumbling wall of stone. Enjoy a lyrical nonfiction bedtime read-to-me book for children ages 3 to 5.



## Red Knot: A Shorebird's Incredible Journey



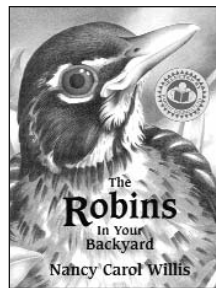
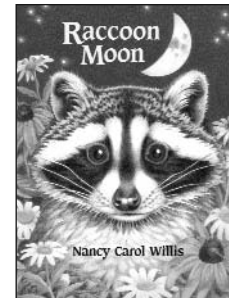
Eric Hoffer Book Award  
Delaware Diamonds Book Award  
Accelerated Reader Program

A robin-sized shorebird called a Red Knot prepares to make one of the longest animal migrations. Will she survive hunger, fatigue, storms, and predators on her 20,000-mile round trip journey to the arctic tundra nesting grounds?

## Raccoon Moon

IRA Notable Book Award  
Delaware Diamonds Book Award  
Accelerated Reader Program

A round April moon rises over the old silver maple tree, where three raccoon cubs are born. Follow them as they grow and learn to climb trees, find food, and escape from predators.



The Robins In Your Backyard  
Parent Council Seal  
Delaware Diamonds Book Award  
Accelerated Reader Program

"Cheerily, cheer-up," sings the spring robin. Take a close-up look as the robins build a nest, lay eggs, and raise and care for their young.

Order books from IPG (800) 888-474, Ingram, B&T, Common Ground, BWI, or directly from:

### Birdsong Books

1322 Bayview Road, Middletown, DE 19709  
Phone (302) 378-7274 Fax (302) 378-0339  
Birdsong@BirdsongBooks.com  
www.BirdsongBooks.com

# Nancy Carol Willis



Writer, Illustrator, Nature Lover

*"My words and pictures reflect a personal response to nature based on a lifetime friendship with it."*

Birdsong@BirdsongBooks.com  
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