

January 1986

## Parrots' Wood

Florida Field Naturalist

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### Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1986) "Parrots' Wood," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 14 : Iss. 3 , Article 11.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol14/iss3/11>

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**Parrots' wood.**—Erma J. Fisk. 1985, New York, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 240 pp. \$15.95.—The first time I saw 'Jonnie' Fisk she was standing in a clearing near a central Florida lake with a tiny bundle of kicking, pecking feathers in one hand, banding pliers in the other. I was part of a University of Miami ornithology class. She made short work of us as an interruption. Two days later, at Archbold Biological Station, our group dragged in hot and tired. She offered cold beer all around. I admire someone who has her priorities straight.

The spine of "Parrots' wood" is her most recent ornithological expedition to Belize. Out of this segmented column poke memories and philosophies like ribs, or steps on a ladder to aligned priorities.

On the first page she puts a warm apologetic arm around your shoulder. This is going to be a private but open sharing of Jonnie Fisk with you. Like friends. And she isn't going to be orderly about it.

The tone is conversational and comfortable. She writes economically. When she is sharing a memory, it is written in a whisper. Her philosophies are suggestive, appealing, never imposed. ". . . it is better to pick our flowers and share them with a friend," she writes, "the one who moves in after we're gone may make a parking area out of our garden."

This is a gutsy, witty, funny, sad little book by a gutsy, witty, funny, sad woman. She isn't letting life happen to her. She heaves herself into it. It's the same way she approached bathing in the river on one of her previous journeys to Belize.

It was down a steep muddy bank, she writes. The easiest way to get in was to swing out on a rope and "let go with a mighty splash." Getting out was up the muddy bank.

Like life. Isn't it always?

Since I've read her book, I'll wager when she let go of the rope or "launches (herself) out into chiggers, discomfort, food (she) wouldn't tolerate at home," she mutters Geronimo.

Mrs. Fisk is in her seventies but her book is not for a particular age, it is for a particular attitude.

"Life is a book," she has written. "Its pages empty, or full—of interests, successes, failures, love, adventure."

Her book is delightfully full of all of these, and I recommend, at the very least, letting it happen to you.—**Virginia Rorby Oesterle**, 2901 South Bayshore Drive, Miami, Florida.

Florida Field Naturalist 14: 83, 1986.

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