



Waterways: Sailing the Southeastern Coast

Jennifer Frick-Ruppert

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Waterways: Sailing the Southeastern Coast Jennifer Frick-Ruppert

“About as smart and lovely a maritime log as one could wish for! Frick-Ruppert dramatizes the rigors and wonders of sailing our southern coast with great flair and a sense of adventure. As a careful, lyrical observer of natural beauty and diversity, she proves herself a true literary heir to Rachel Carson. A fine, important book, and a boat not to be missed.”—Bland Simpson, coauthor of *The Coasts of Carolina: Seaside to Sound Country*

“Rich in history and natural history, *Waterways* is also an elegant travel narrative.”—Margaret Lynn Brown, author of *The Wild East*

“Frick-Ruppert reveals the often hidden and magical world of coastal marine animals. She introduces us to a colony of rhesus-macaque monkeys living on an isolated island in Saint Helena Sound, takes us to the lowcountry mudflats where small creatures slip between grains of sand, and shows how bottlenose dolphins herd fish onto the mudflats to capture their prey.”—Susan A. Cohen, coeditor of *Wildbranch: An Anthology of Nature, Environmental, and Place-based Writing*

When Jennifer Frick-Ruppert and her husband set sail for the first time in their newly purchased 37-foot sailboat, they were hoping to leave colder climes behind, learn something about sailing, and get away from the daily grind. What they didn't expect was that nature would become a partner in their journey and a main character in their story, not simply a backdrop for their adventure.

In *Waterways*, Frick-Ruppert sails *Veleva*—named after a jellyfish with a sail—down the southeastern coast of the United States, from Charleston, South Carolina, to Palm Beach, Florida, and across the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas. Once aboard ship, readers are taken into an enchanting world of coastal animals that few ever experience. From the gleaming decks, Frick-Ruppert describes the wriggling spines of sand dollars, fiddler crabs making their mechanical noises, and bioluminescent flashes of plankton in the Gulf Stream. Gliding through brackish estuaries and the blue open ocean, she explains with the insight of a biologist and the grace of a philosopher the marvelous natural world unfolding before *Veleva's* prow.

Through her stories, we learn that living in the ever-changing environment of the open sea requires patience, reflection, evaluation, and adaptation. Once embraced, the rhythm of the waves and tides and cycles of sun and moon become second nature. A state of resonance is discovered between nature and the harmony of body and being.

Combining insights from ecology and sailing, Frick-Ruppert blends travel narrative and nature writing to delight and educate. She invites us to meditate with her on the relationship between ourselves and our surroundings. More than just a memoir of learning to sail, *Waterways* is a book about the relationships between humans and nature, land and sea, learning to sail and learning to see.

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