

Episode 23: Omni Sparrow  
Written by Jarod K. Anderson  
[www.cryptonaturalist.com](http://www.cryptonaturalist.com)

Anyone who claims that birdwatching isn't an adventurous pastime, hasn't watched the birds that I've watched.

Welcome, to The CryptoNaturalist.

Howdy listeners.

Ahh.

I'm enjoying some peace and quiet here in my RV studio. It's... nearly midnight here. I'm not too far from Neenah, Wisconsin, parked at a highway rest area not far from a stand of dogwood trees. Sitting here with my eyes closed, I imagine that I can just barely catch the scent of their snowy blooms.

I'm heading southward tomorrow. Probably stop by the Mars Cheese Castle on my way out of the state, but for tonight I just need some R&R.

I have all the lights shut off here in Cassandra, there's nothing but the soft green glow of my recording equipment and I've shut my eyes against even that mellow flicker of illumination.

I'm convalescing, you might say. Limiting my sensory input in order to give my mind a bit of break. It's the mental equivalent of icing down a sprained ankle. I guess it's fair to say I have a bit of a sprained brain after today's adventure.

Yet, as I sit here in this medicinal darkness, feeling the cool, finite presence of the microphone clasped in my hands here in front of me, I thought it might do me some good to tell you fine folks about this afternoon's happenings. After all, what could be more healing than a chat with friends?

Where to begin?

Well, first off, I can't say I was taken completely unaware by today's topic of conversation. No, indeed. I was headed to Wisconsin specifically to track its hypothetical migration pattern as it makes a brief pitstop here in the physical dimension, but, to be honest, I only had a rough sketch of this conceptual songbird.

I expect at this point you have guessed that I'm talking about the rare and wonderful Omni Sparrow, a cryptid with only the scantest of mentions in the CryptoNaturalist literature.

Most of our knowledge of the Omni Sparrow comes, of course, from the recently translated macaroni art of the late CryptoNaturalist Mimi Harryhausen, bequeathed to Valentina Blackwood after Mimi's tragic death during her famous expedition to study the Moss Piranha of the Scottish Highlands.

I expect we've all read Valentina's translations, but as far as I know, nobody had picked up the trail of the Omni Sparrow. How could I resist?

I put all my energy to listening to migrating birdcalls in North America, as was suggested in Mimi's writings and I waited to hear, as Mimi put it, "a fractal assault of anti-music that sets your teeth to itch."

Well, I found that song and I can tell you that Mimi's description was apt. It stuck out like a pinata in a cemetery amongst the general cacophony of migratory bird songs floating on the May breeze.

See, I believed I had triangulated that singular birdcall to a spot within the Navarino Wildlife Area. I was making for that spot, heading North on 41 when I came to a winding line of break lights.

Traffic was at an absolute standstill, but that wasn't what made the hair on the back of my neck stand at attention.

As Cassandra rolled to a halt, my trick knee started makin' a fuss and several anomalous readings popped up on my dashboard monitors. There was something not 100 meters up the road, something... well... CryptoNatural.

I stuffed a few odds and ends in a pack and headed out to investigate. My boots crunched on the loose gravel berm and I walked toward whatever had turned the highway into a parking lot.

The first vehicle I passed was a van that didn't seem to have any occupants, though the radio was blaring an angry soundin' AM preacher bellowing about somethin' or other. The next car held a smiling couple. I waved, but they didn't wave back. They were eerily still and the only movement I detected were their irises, rolling up and down in rhythmic unity.

It was hard to predict exactly what I was walking towards, but my gut said that it was bound to be fascinating.

Speaking of things worthy of fascination, how about a little poetry? It's time for today's hidden lore segment!

Today's hidden lore is a poem by Holly Day.

**Hidden Lore Segment:**

## The Lost City Next Door

I tell myself that just over the next hill, around the next corner  
is a world of magic, some proof of God, a rip in time  
something impossible is just moments away. I take one more step  
towards that impossible destiny, then stop myself because  
if it's not there I won't be able to go on.

I have turned my back and walked the other way  
from more miracles than I can count  
from time travelers asking for directions and the exact date  
from talking alley cats, holy gurus reincarnated as sparrows  
mysterious doorways that open into another world.

I know in my heart that they're there and that's enough, I don't  
turn the corner to confront the mystery and find out  
I've been deluding myself this whole time  
I don't want to know that there isn't actually something wonderful  
just over the next hill.

There's an interesting dilemma presented in this poem, the possibility of awe and wonder  
weighed against the threat of disappointment, of hopes unrealized. Of course, my two cents is  
that we should all crest that next hill because, well, there will always be more unknown to  
tempt you forward toward the next horizon.

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *Plainsongs*, *The Long Islander*, and *The Nashwaak Review*. Her newest poetry collections are *In This Place, She Is Her Own* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press), *A Wall to Protect Your Eyes* (Pski's Porch Publishing), *Folios of Dried Flowers and Pressed Birds* (Cyberwit.net), *Where We Went Wrong* (Clare Songbirds Publishing), and *Into the Cracks* (Golden Antelope).

I continued walking down the highway, glancing into the vehicles as I went.

I saw a little boy in a Spiderman costume who clicked at me with something like echolocation.

There was an old man whose beard had coiled into distinct tentacles and was thoroughly exploring his steering wheel.

Near the end of the line of cars, I saw a man with his head bowed over his cupped hands. His hands were holding his own face which apparently had become liquid and slid off the front of his head.

Don't worry. I'm sure with enough fresh air and rest his face will find its way back onto his head in due time. Faces do tend to wander in the presence of certain cryptids.

I stepped past that final car and, well, I found I had to shut my eyes, but I had already glimpsed the Omni Sparrow.

This is gonna be a little hard to describe, but heck, isn't that just the fun of our finite human language. It's like a jumble of puzzle pieces and we have to hunt up the right ones to build a new picture from scratch.

Let's see...

When I saw the Omni Sparrow, it was both a small, brown bird taking a dust bath on a road side and it was also an infinite kaleidoscope of fractal wings and beaks and inky round eyes stretching to the horizon in every direction.

I had to close my eyes because the immediate sensation was that I was falling upwards into a sky that had become a densely layered mosaic of images of a small bird that were each both part of the creature and simultaneously the whole. Every square inch of an Omni Sparrow seems to be bigger than the sky, even though my reasoning mind understands that one, small songbird can't also be the size of the universe.

It's a puzzler alright. The kind of paradoxical morphology that just might cause your face to seek greener pastures somewhere besides the front of your head.

Thankfully, I have experience with these sorts of situations. Ok, maybe not this exact situation, but Insanity Pigeons are close enough for comparison.

I reached into my pack and pulled out a nice, opaque paper bag and pulled it down snugly over my head.

The interior of the bag is lit with battery powered LED twinkle lights and features nice, simple drawings of basic shapes. Nice, finite shapes to cling to when my perception of reality gets a little slick and slippery.

I took a couple steps forward. I could hear the raspy sound of the sparrow's dust bath in the silence that had fallen in that place.

I reached into my pocket and pulled out a handful of birdseed. I always have at least one pocket full of birdseed and I encourage you to do likewise.

I knelt and offered my hand and heard the sparrow go still.

A moment later, there were a few sturdy pecks at the seeds resting on my outstretched palm.

“Okay, now,” I said, though I expect it was muffled by the bag. “You’re quite a lovely bird, but don’t you think you should be on your way?”

In response to my words, I felt more than heard the Omni Sparrow take a few hops and then it flew from our reality.

Unfortunately... I experienced its passage as roughly a month of condensed, wide-awake time while my body remained frozen in place, a sound like unceasing thunder rumbled in my ears, and an almost painfully intense smell of fresh turned earth filled my nose.

When I did stand up, my joints aching, and removed the bag from my head, all the traffic was gone, save Cassandra who was still parked where I had left her.

I groaned a bit because I could already feel the first signs of something akin to a sunburn on my brain, but that’s not much of a hardship to endure when weighed against all the joys of being a CryptoNaturalist.

All the same, I think I’m gonna spend another day or two resting up before I head back out into the field. Remember, there’s always time for safety and self care.

Until next time, we’re all strange animals. So, act like it.

**END**

**Show Notes/Credits**

**Credits**

**Did you know that there’s a CryptoNaturalist Fan Group on Facebook? Well, there is! It already has nearly 800 members sharing odd nature odd comradery. Search it out and request to join. You won’t be disappointed.**

You can support the production of this show and find bonus content and exclusive episodes by becoming a patron at [Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist](https://Patreon.com/CryptoNaturalist) OR by visiting the Merch and Support sections on [Cryptonaturalist.com](https://Cryptonaturalist.com) for t-shirts, stickers, and more. \$5 a month patrons now have access to monthly CryptoNaturalist correspondence courses, providing detailed lessons on what it takes to become a CryptoNaturalist. You’ll find information about submitting your poetry or prose for our hidden lore segments in the about section of our website. The CryptoNaturalist is written and read by Jarod Anderson. Our theme song is Banish Misfortune, played by Andrew Collins. Stay Curious. Stay Wild. Stay Weird.

**Show Notes: Episode 23: Omni Sparrow (00:17:07)**

Today we learn about the small, migratory songbird that's bigger than all existence.

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *Plainsongs*, *The Long Islander*, and *The Nashwaak Review*. Her newest poetry collections are *In This Place, She Is Her Own* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press), *A Wall to Protect Your Eyes* (Pski's Porch Publishing), *Folios of Dried Flowers and Pressed Birds* (Cyberwit.net), *Where We Went Wrong* (Clare Songbirds Publishing), and *Into the Cracks*(Golden Antelope) .