

### **The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating**

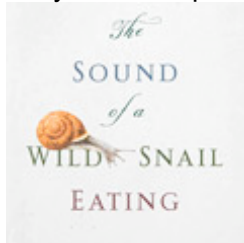
**Bedridden with a mysterious illness, Elisabeth Tova Bailey learns to appreciate the small things in life through observation of a woodland snail.**

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Imagine this: you're a young, healthy vibrant woman in your early 30s getting the most out of life. Until one day, everything changes.

Elisabeth Tova Bailey was 34 when she returned from a trip to Europe. Here, she contracted a mysterious viral or bacterial pathogen, which damaged her autonomic nervous system, eventually leaving her bedridden.

Confined to a studio apartment 50 miles from her farmhouse in New England, Tova Bailey struggled to regain her health and strength. Her only constant companion became a snail that hitched a ride on a plant given to her as a gift. In *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, Tova Bailey recalls her observations of the snail eating, producing its slime, exploring the terrarium where it lives, and eventually reproducing and hatching 118 offspring. Able to move her own body at snail's pace, Tova Bailey begins to relate to the snail.



"Everything about a snail is cryptic, and it was precisely this air of mystery that first captured my interest," she writes. "My own life, I realized, was becoming just as cryptic. My place in the world has been documented more by my absence than by my presence. I was simply homebound, like a snail pulled into its shell."

Months later, Tova Bailey became stronger and was able to return home. The snail was returned to the wild, while some of its children found homes with friends of the author.

In the years after her illness (which was officially diagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome or myalgic encephalomyelitis), Tova Bailey delved into the life of the gastropods. *The Sound of a*

*Wild Snail Eating* is filled with information about the habits and lives of snails, both from her bedside observations as well as years of research from biologists.

*The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* also features quotes from various sources - poets, biologists and even Florence Nightingale - on snails, nature and life. It's an easy read with fewer than 200 pages and small enough to fit in a handbag. This book could easily benefit people searching for emotional and spiritual strength, but it would easily translate to any reading list for a biology or nursing student.

Tova Bailey pulls readers into her quiet contemplative space where she learned to appreciate the small things in life and turn to them in need.

"Illness isolates; the isolated become invisible; the invisible become forgotten," Tova Bailey writes. The snail, however, kept the isolation at bay.

"The snail kept my spirit from evaporating."

Share your thoughts; respond to the questions below or let us know other how this book has influenced you the most:

In your nursing career, have you witnessed a patient's hobby strengthen their willpower? If so, what was it and how do you think it impacted the person's health and well-being?

The snail helps the author feel connected to life. Is there anything in nature to which you turn that makes you feel connected with nature?