



## BOOKSHELF

### Waiting For Coyote's Call

(280 pp., softcover, [www.sdshspress.com](http://www.sdshspress.com))

JERRY WILSON GREW up on an Oklahoma farm but few people have sweated as much, literally and figuratively, to learn about South Dakota's natural environment and to preserve it.

Wilson's name will resonate with many *South Dakota Magazine* readers because he served as managing editor for six years before retiring to other pursuits — including the writing of *Waiting for Coyote's Call*. The book chronicles the Wilson family's efforts to build a home and life in Clay County. But *Waiting* also serves as a Thoreau-style exploration of the joys, challenges and responsibilities of living close to the land in East River.

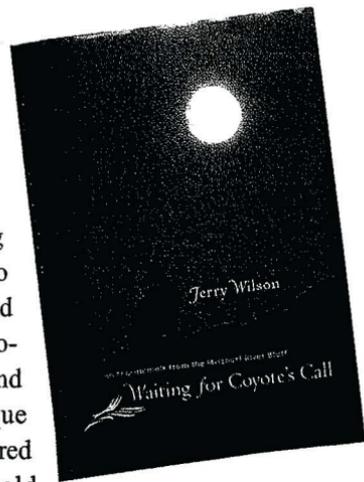
"If I do not wander or stop to wonder, trim a tree, or investigate a bird's nest, I can encircle our 140 acres of rough Missouri River bluff in a brisk hour's walk," writes Wilson in the preface, "yet, my domain, like Thoreau's, is a microcosm of the universe."

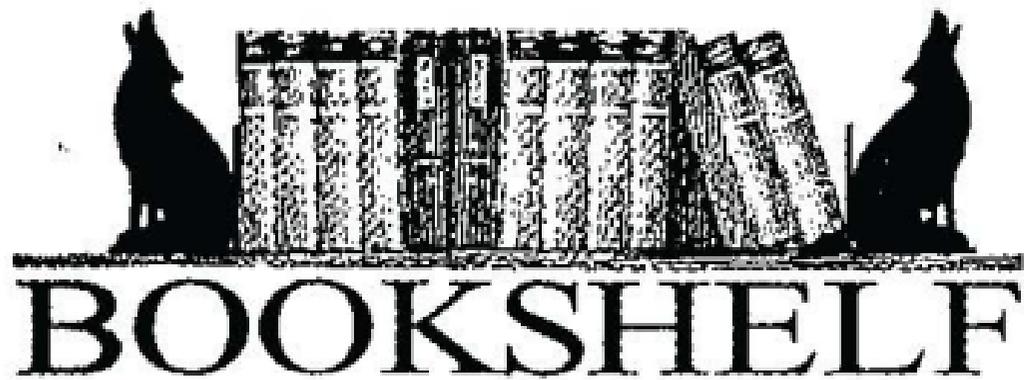
He begins with the story of how he and his then-pregnant wife, Norma, discovered their first 40 acres in 1981. "Had we been chosen by this land?" he wonders. "It seemed that we belonged." They set about to heal the eroded, over-grazed hills and build an earth-sheltered, solar-heated home. It became not a project but a lifetime of care-taking that continues today.

The Wilsons soon discovered that their cares extended beyond their own fence lines. Interesting and thoughtful people came into their lives because of the land, and Jerry and Norma (a respected poet) had the skills to recognize and chronicle their neighbors' unique insights and values. As they admired Arnold Johnson's rock pile the old man said, "You're welcome to them. It takes a lot of the beauty away when you dig them out of the field and pick them up."

The Wilsons also paid close attention to their wild neighbors — the geese, heron, songbirds, deer and coyote. He sees an interesting twist to some counties' "right to farm" law that requires rural residents to sign a waiver acknowledging that they understand they may have to endure odors, dust, noise and chemical usage in the rural neighborhood. "Yet, people build homes in wilderness [mountain] lion country and expect the state to eliminate any cougar they perceive as a threat to them or their pets."

***Waiting* is an easy-reading tutorial on South Dakota's natural life for those who are interested. More importantly, it records the love and respect a man can develop for a big square of dirt and**





grass and woods. Not many books delve into that private relationship; seldom if ever has the subject been explored as passionately by a South Dakotan.