

Why We Love to Boat

I love my boat. There, I've said it. My boat makes me happy. It's worth every penny my husband and I spend on it.

Whenever we can get out on the water, we go. I'm excited every time I see a dolphin, alligator, bald eagle, roseate spoonbill, turtle, or really, any critter. I recently spotted a cute little mink swimming like the dickens toward the shore in the Hampton River. It was great! Every trip is different. Every trip is fun.

We know instinctively that being by water makes us happier and reduces stress. Did you ever wonder why? In the book **Blue Mind: The Surprising Science that Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do**, author Wallace J. Nichols presents lots of scientific and anecdotal evidence of water's beneficial effect on us. According to Nichols, "the mere sight and sound of water promote wellness by lowering cortisol, increasing serotonin, and inducing relaxation."

I've often wondered why taking the same trip up and down our home river doesn't get boring. In **Blue Mind**, Nichols explains how nature, and water in particular can be both relaxing yet stimulating for the brain. Nichols writes, "In a natural environment, there is a high degree of statistical predictability because it is so much the same from moment to moment. The background is fairly controlled and a little dreamy...which allows part of the brain to relax. Against that background, the brain is continually looking for perturbation, for something that doesn't fit, something that moves, something that wasn't there before and that doesn't match with my representation of the landscape...When the brain sees a perturbation, it creates a sense of surprise and novelty." For me, looking for splashes, colors, or patterns I didn't expect (e.g., something moving on the bank), etc. is engaging and exciting. My brain really loves those moments.

We've been very busy lately with all sorts of commitments, trips, and appointments, so we haven't had much opportunity to get out on the water; only twice since Thanksgiving – well below average.

Stuck in very bad traffic on St. Simons Island the other day with my husband is not a recipe for calm and peace, but our moods did perk up when we heard this great song. We both loved it immediately. It's called **Buy Me a Boat** by Chris Janson. Some of you country music fans may know it (it was released in 2015), but for those who haven't heard it, here are some of the lyrics:

*I ain't rich, but I damn sure wanna be
Workin' like a dog all day ain't workin' for me
I wish I had a rich uncle that'd kick the bucket
And I was sittin' on a pile like Warren Buffett*

I know everybody says money can't buy happiness

But it could buy me a boat

It could buy me a truck to pull it

It could buy me a Yeti 110 iced down with some silver bullets

Yeah, and I know what they say, money can't buy everything

Well, maybe so

But it could buy me a boat

I doubt Chris Janson understands the neurological underpinnings of his desire for a boat (or even cares), but he definitely knows he needs to be out on the water; just like all of us who love to boat, kayak, or paddleboard.

We got through with most of our commitments and got back out on the water. Life is good again. I love my boat.