

NATURE

BOOK GUIDE



VOL. 2 ISSUE 2
WINTER 2023-2024
WWW.NATUREBOOKGUIDE.COM

READING FOR FUN

Fiction, memoir, adventure, mysteries, classics, non-fiction
New and backlist titles

READING FOR INSIGHT

Recommended by naturalists and scientists with local, national, and international perspectives

READING FOR CHANGE

Books to illuminate, inform, challenge, and inspire care for our natural resources

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Welcome to Nature Book Guide

Thank you for downloading our latest Winter issue of the *Nature Book Guide*. We hope you'll find plenty of inspiration for adventures--both outdoor explorations in winter's chilly weather and cozy hours indoors with plenty of books to read.



We're enormously grateful to authors Gary Paul Nabhan and Leila Philip for granting interviews for this issue. Nabhan's anthology, *The Nature of Desert Nature*, was the recommendation of our panelist Lisa Faragson Gordon, Executive Director of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center. And Leila Philip's *Beaverland* was a book we've wanted to feature for quite some time, and we're thrilled to do it now.

To keep our issues easy for readers to download, the interviews are edited for space. **There are TWO ways to access the full interviews: as blog entries or as separate downloads from our website.** After you get a taste of these conversations, you'll want to read them in their entirety.

Nature Book Guide was created, in part, as a way to immerse ourselves in the natural world, to continue to have faith that we can effect positive change for the planet. In her interview, Leila Philip extended that notion with this wisdom she learned attending a recent climate summit:

"Social change happens when it reaches a tipping point. We are at a moment when polling has shown that Americans no longer deny climate change (only 8% of Americans are climate change deniers). That is real change! But we tend not to discuss the topic because we fear controversy. This is a mistake one of the best things we can do is talk about climate change, take actions, however small, to address it in our own life and talk about what we have done. Why? Because talking about climate change helps create social pressure for change."

We've always hoped *Nature Book Guide* could be a starting point for conversation, a way to share great books that inspire us to learn more, wonder more, do more. In addition to encouraging readers to share great books, will you also talk about your actions for climate change, however small? Let us know what you're doing and which books you enjoy. **We would love to hear from you at naturebookguide@gmail.com!**

Beth Nobles

FOUNDER/EDITOR

As a high school student in the Youth Conservation Corps, Beth built trails and trail bridges in two Illinois state parks. Mid-career, she led the Texas Mountain Trail as Executive Director for a decade, and through a partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife, developed the Far West Texas Wildlife Trail and map. Before she retired in 2021, she led the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, an organization supporting an urban trail along a riparian corridor in the Denver metro area. She's organized countless volunteer opportunities to connect others to science and the outdoors; founding *Nature Book Guide* was another effort to do the same.



Book Recommendation Panel Members

Winter 2023-2024 Contributors

Monique "Mo" Fair, Executive Director of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, a nonprofit organization supporting an urban trail and riparian habitat in metro Denver, Colorado.



Adrianna Weickhardt, Fire Prevention Technician with the US Forest Service in the Cascade Mountains of central Oregon. Previously worked 10 years in outdoor education/interpretation and natural resource management in State and National Parks. She recently graduated from Oregon State University with a Master of Natural Resources (June 2023). Her studies examined the social factors that shape a fire adapted community and those that impact the development of effective community wildfire protection plans.



Bill Davison, Value Chain Development Manager for the Savanna Institute, which works to support resilient, scalable agroforestry. Bill has worked for The Nature Conservancy as a Land Steward and spent seven years as an organic vegetable farmer in central Illinois. He transitioned from farming to working as a Local Food System Educator with University of Illinois Extension where he developed programs to support staple crops and agroforestry. Bill writes a gardening and re-wilding newsletter on Substack.



Courtney Lyons-Garcia, Executive Director, Partnership for the National Trails System. Previously served as Executive Director, Public Lands Foundation, Mission Heritage Partners, and Big Bend Conservancy in Texas. Courtney is also the Parks and Trail specialist for the Great Springs Project, a network of spring-to-spring trails and protected natural areas over the Edwards Aquifer between San Antonio and Austin.



Rachel Hutchens, Executive Director of Bluff Lake Nature Center, a nonprofit agency that owns and manages a 123-acre urban wildlife refuge and outdoor classroom in Denver. Bluff Lake educates individuals to be engaged, resilient, and curious; conserves a natural area in the city; furthers equity in outdoor access; and nurtures the health and well-being of communities and ecosystems.



Lisa Fargason Gordon, Executive Director at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI), also known as the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center and Botanical Gardens, Fort Davis, Texas. Sharing her background as an educator, Lisa has helped to create CDRI's acclaimed educational programs, free for youth in the Texas Education Agency Region 18 service area.



Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She manages the Great Texas Wildlife Trail program, coordinates the Texas Paddling Trails Program, and has been a coordinator for the annual Great Texas Birding Classic for more than 20 years. She promotes state parks and works with private landowners and communities on nature tourism development and is an adjunct professor at Texas State University.



Susan Futrell, freelance writer, essayist, and consultant, and the author of *Good Apples: Behind Every Bite* (University of Iowa, 2017). For the past 15 years she has worked with a network of orchards in the northeastern US to develop the Eco Apple® program, a nonprofit collaboration among fruit growers, marketers, and scientists to support ecological orchard practices and local fruit production in the US.



Guest Panelists



Judith Westveer, Ph.D., Assistant Director and Conservation Ecologist, Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT) in Colorado, which has protected over 60,000 acres of prairie. Judith was born and raised in Amsterdam and holds a Ph.D. at the University of Amsterdam’s Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics as a Wetland Restoration Ecologist. She has worked for various environmental non-profit organizations in the Peruvian Amazon including Science Director at Conservación Amazónica, Wildlife Monitor at Fauna Forever, and Affiliated Researcher at Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia. She co-authored the World Wildlife Fund Living Planet Index Report. She’s also illustrated children’s books about nature conservation.



Umilaela Arifin, Ph.D., is an Indonesian herpetologist researching amphibians and reptile diversity of the Southeast Asian region. Umi grew up in Cirebon before moving to Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, and later to Germany. For her contributions, the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group honored her as #ChampionsOfTheEndangered 2022 - a campaign by Synchronicity Earth and the Ellen Fund. She is currently a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change, Hamburg, Germany, and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley. She is also co-editor of the book, *Women in Herpetology: 50 Stories from Around the World*, a collaborative project meant to increase the visibility of women in herpetology across all disciplines.



As Nature Book Guide develops, we'll widen our circle of voices by inviting additional scientists, naturalists, and stewards to join the Book Recommendation Panel.

Learn more about our panel members at www.naturebookguide.com/about

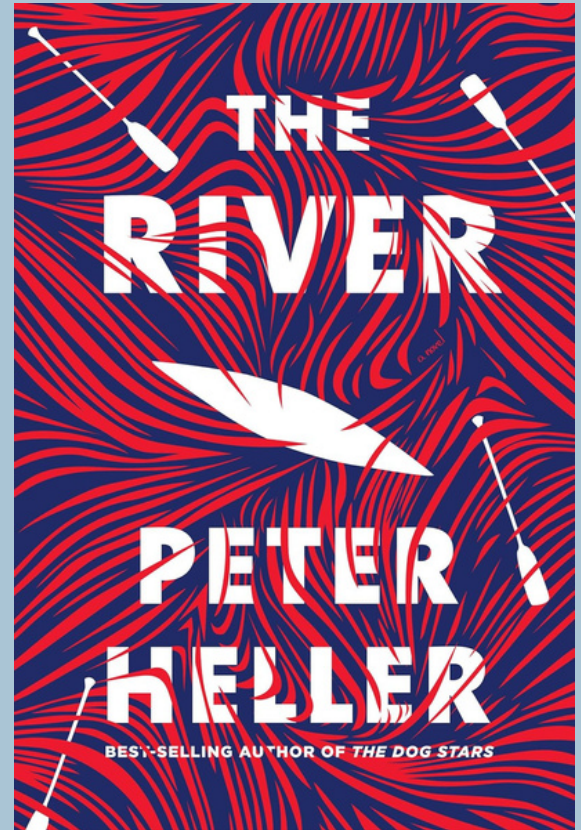
Fiction

“An exhilarating, nail-biting adventure”

The River: A Novel,
Peter Heller, Knopf,
2019, 272 pages

“A few years after returning from my own white-water canoeing and backpacking expedition in the Yukon, a friend, who’s also a fan of great adventures and great literature, shared Peter Heller’s “The River” with me. Echoes of my trip flooded back, at least until things got really hairy in this book, then it was on to a totally new experience of Heller’s design. If you’re looking for a story that will transport you into the middle of the north country on an exhilarating, nail-biting adventure, this might be the book for you! The tale brings you along with two good friends, Jack and Wynn, who embark on a life-changing canoe trip navigating Canada’s Maskwa River. Heller’s storytelling begins as smooth and mellow as glassy waters, slowly getting to know each of the boys, their friendship and love for the Wilderness. But the pace and direction quickly shift when a series of alarming events unfold downstream. From the first detection of a wildfire to stumbling upon what they perceive as a quarreling couple off in the distance, the story evolves into a rapid succession of surprises. Ultimately, this story becomes one of survival, challenging the boys’ instincts, outdoor skills, and their friendship. This book is so easy to get swept away in, you can practically smell the smoke in the air, hear the same eerie voices and sounds as the boys, and may even feel your own tears down your cheeks toward the end of the story.”

--Adrianna Weickhardt



**National Bestseller,
Amazon Best Book of March 2019**



Recommended by
Adrianna Weickhardt,
Fire Prevention Technician
with the US Forest Service



The Snow Child:
A Novel, Eowyn Ivey,
Reagan Arthur Books
(Hardcover), 2012, 400
pages



Pulitzer Prize finalist
International bestseller

"The Snow Child is a hauntingly beautiful story that contrasts the physical hardships of homesteading in Alaska in the 1920s with the emotional hardships of loneliness and not having the 'family' you yearned for. The novel borders on magical realism, and despite the heavy themes, every page is filled with the beauty of the forest, the hope that grows as the seasons change, and the strength of love."
—Rachel Hutchens

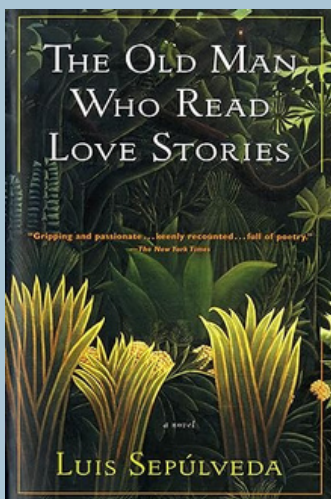
Recommended by Rachel Hutchens,
Executive Director, Bluff Lake Nature Center

*"She was a dove forging through a fire,
burning yet soaring."*

A fictional African village is dying, their water and soil ruined by an American oil company. Imbolo Mbue speaks through generations of children and elders determined to stay on ancestral land despite years of exploitation, promises of reparations, and rebellion. An unforgettable story of faith, the rise of a leader, and a community with few choices.

How Beautiful We Were: A Novel,
Imbolo Mbue, Random House,
2021, 384 pages

**One of the best books of
the year: The New York
Times Book Review, The
Washington Post, Esquire,
Good Housekeeping, Ms.
magazine, BookPage,
Kirkus Reviews**



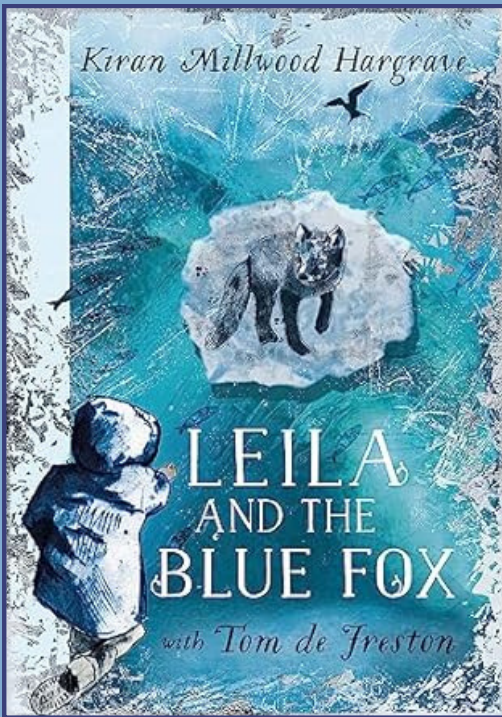
The Old Man Who Read Love Stories,
Luis Sepúlveda,
(Translated by Peter Bush)
Mariner, 1995, 144 pages

*"...his novels that spoke of love in such
beautiful words they sometimes made
him forget the barbarity of man."*

The first novel by celebrated Chilean author, journalist, and political prisoner, Luis Sepúlveda, *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, is set in a remote river village deep in the Ecuadorian jungle at a time when nature is tipping towards the unbalanced. A brutal set of circumstances causes the hunter who has taken refuge in a life of books to resolve a raging conflict between man and nature. A gripping story and quick read of surprising beauty.

For the Child in All of Us

Leila and the Blue Fox,
Kiran Millwood Hargrave (Author),
Tom de Freston (Illustrator), Orion Children's Books,
2022, 250 pages. **Reading Age: 9+**



Based on the true story of an Arctic fox who walked two thousand miles from Norway to Canada, *Leila and the Blue Fox* is a collaboration between award-winning bestselling author Kiran Millwood Hargrave and illustrator Tom de Freston.

Twelve-year-old Leila is mad at her mom, the arctic researcher who she hasn't seen in six years, and who left her in England after fleeing Damascus, and now wants her in Norway. You'll cheer for the intrepid Leila and the fox as they trek across the ice and sea. We loved this book, a rich story of science, climate change, endangered species, immigration, and challenging family relationships. Tom de Freston's choices--using translucent papers to evoke arctic ice and cloudy watercolor to suggest cold and fog--are perfect partners to Hargrave's poetic storytelling.

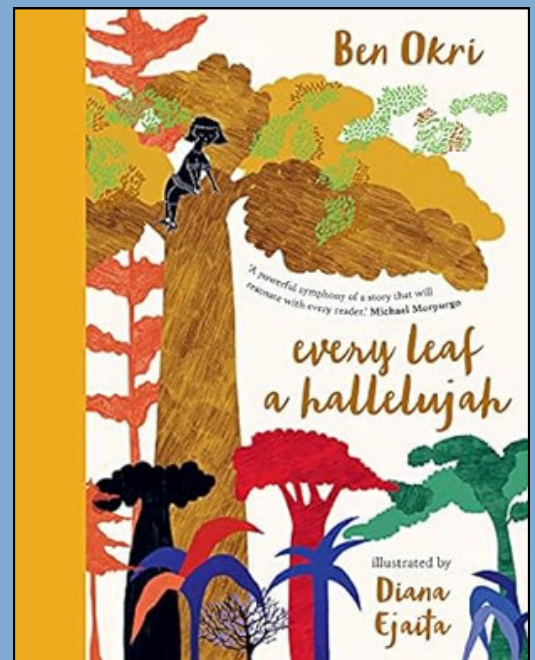
(Currently available in the UK; *Leila and the Blue Fox* will be published in the United States in April 2024 by Union Square Kids.)

The Guardian: Best Children's and YA Book of the Year

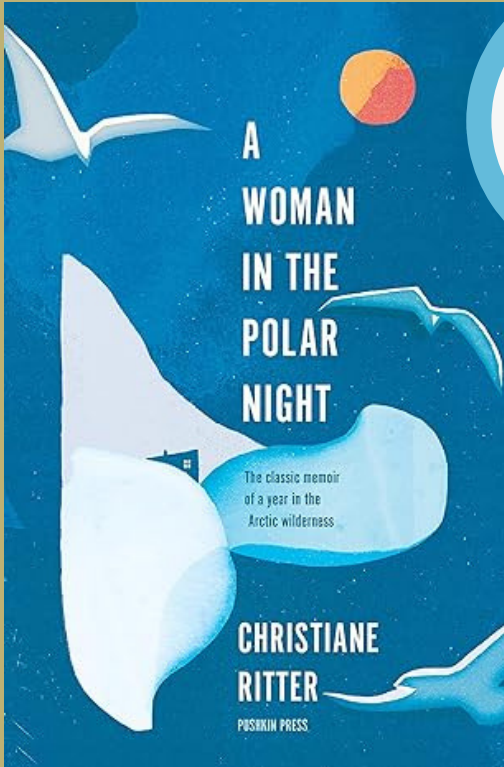
Every Leaf a Hallelujah,
Ben Okri (Author), Diana Ejaita (Illustrator),
Other Press, 2022, 112 pages
Reading Age: 4-8 years

"This is Africa. This place used to be a desert. It is one of the happiest places in the world for trees. We are making the desert live again."

Vibrant, magical, and full of wonder, *Every Leaf a Hallelujah* is an environmental fairy tale from the Booker Prize-winning author Ben Okri. Seven-year-old Mangoshi must go into the forest in search of a special flower that grows on the oldest tree--a flower that will cure her mother's illness and save her entire village.



Nature Writing in Memoirs



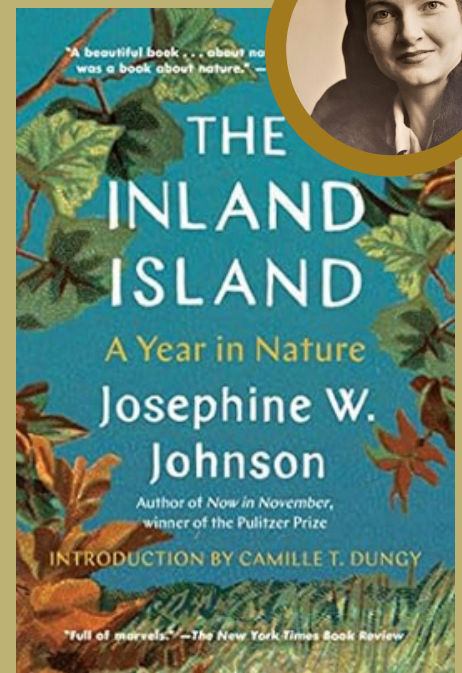
A Woman in the Polar Night,
Christiane Ritter, Pushkin Press,
2019 (first published 1938), 226 pages

A classic of travel writing and memoir originally published in German in 1938, it has never been out of print.

An astonishing memoir of ice and isolation, Ritter's work transports the reader to the Arctic Circle's Spitsbergen (now Svalbard) of 1933. She was eager to join her husband who moved north for a scientific expedition and stayed to hunt. They share a tiny remote hut--the walls coated with an inch of ice--with a Norwegian hunter. The nearest neighbor is sixty miles away. Anxieties about food, the emotional impact of the dark winter, polar bears, and the necessity of a working stove, are just part of the story, for Ritter is an artist in her masterful description of the Arctic's natural beauty.

The Inland Island: A Year in Nature,
Josephine W. Johnson, Scribner,
2022 (first published 1969), 192 pages

We're not quite sure why Josephine W. Johnson remains relatively unknown to modern readers, as she is the youngest person to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction--in 1935 at age 24 for her first novel *Now in November*. No flash in the pan, she also won the O. Henry Award five times. Perhaps the reason lies with her outspoken reactions to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and support of civil rights. Those sentiments are present in *The Inland Island: A Year in Nature*, a memoir of her Ohio garden written in 1969, but they do not dominate her still fresh and brilliant accounts of the changing seasons. Instead, they provide insight into today's turbulent world. Poet Camille T. Dungy writes the introduction to this rerelease, with "I feel as if she's right beside me, walking, walking, witnessing the world." We're grateful for the experience, too.



Poetry and Essays



Echo Loba, Loba Echo: Of Wisdom, Wolves and Women,
Sonja Swift, Rocky Mountain
Books, 2023, 256 pages

“Sonja Swift’s *Echo Loba, Loba Echo* is a glorious and urgent call to see our relationship to wolves as essential to our humanity. Swift weaves language into poetry, memoir and story, steeped in wolf lore gleaned from cultures around the globe, strongly grounded in indigenous knowledge and communities. She delights in exploring the hundreds of names for wolf, the ancient ways wolves are linked with women—in the psyche and in vulnerability—and their persistence in a changing world. Her writing is wolf-like too: fierce, uncompromising, graceful and majestic, quiet and sure-footed, with an occasional howl at the loss and injustice she knows and sees. Her wide-ranging research and her own experience and observations living in proximity to wolves in South Dakota, California, and northern Europe give the simple, direct prose depth and timelessness. Readers who love Susan Griffin, Barry Lopez, and Terry Tempest Williams will respond to Swift’s beautiful and compelling language.

“This is a book I will go back to many times, to re-read many passages that stand alone and together make a ringing call for honoring wolves and wildness. Foreword by Winona LaDuke.

“Swift is a Danish-American poet and writer who lives in California and South Dakota; this is her first book.”
--Susan Futrell

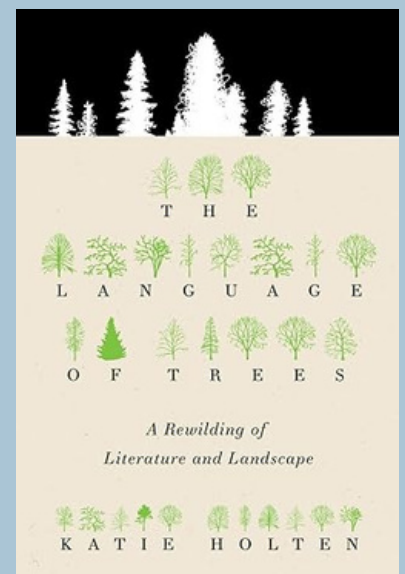


Recommended by Susan Futrell,
Author, essayist, and sustainable agriculture consultant

National Bestseller

*The Language of Trees: A
Rewilding of Literature and
Landscape*, Katie Holten, Tin House
Books, 2023, 320 pages

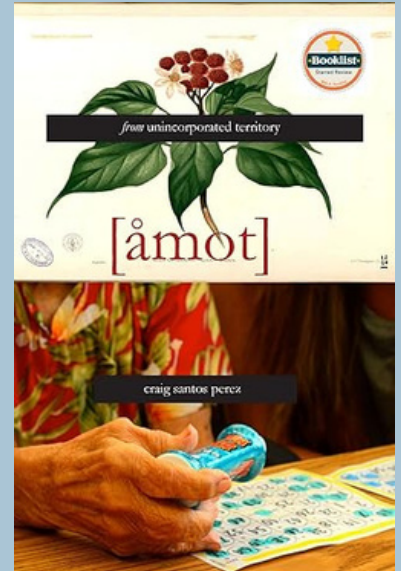
Katie Holten, an artist and activist based in New York City and Ardee, Ireland, created the New York City Tree Alphabet as a way to increase ecological literacy about climate change, urban conservation, and local engagement with nature. Her newest work, *The Language of Trees* is a collection of original writing from more than fifty contributors, including some of our favorite writers: Camille T. Dungy, Ross Gay, Susan Simard, Ada Limon, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Richard Powers, and Robin Wall Kimmerer. Take your time reading this one; savor every page for its reverence for trees, language, and landscape.



from *unincorporated territory* [āmōt],
Craig Santos Perez, Omnidawn Publishing,
2023, 148 pages

Winner, National Book Award for Poetry, 2023

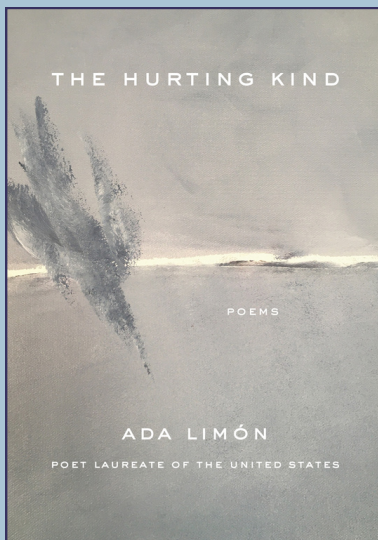
Craig Santos Perez is an indigenous Chamoru (Chamorro) poet, scholar, editor, publisher, environmentalist, and political activist from the Pacific Island of Guam. With his visual poetry in [āmōt]—which refers to the word for medicine and medicinal plants—Perez makes the reader turn the book upside down, peer more closely at lightly printed type, and skip over the unfamiliar words in Chamorro language. And right there, we realize how limited our perspective is and how much we have to learn about Guam, its nature and history, colonialism, and the diasporas of the Pacific.



The Hurting Kind, Ada Limón,
Milkweed Editions, 2022, 122 pages

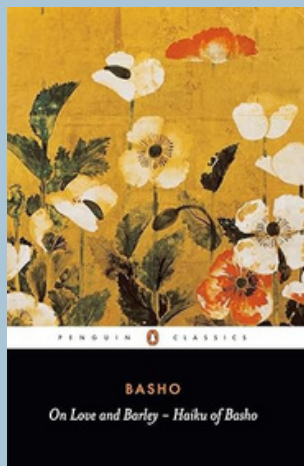
From the U.S. Poet Laureate

**Winner, PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award,
Griffin Poetry Prize, An NPR “Book We Love”
A BookRiot “Best Book of the Year”**



A collection of astonishing work, Limón’s poetry addresses interconnectedness, including our links to nature. *The Hurting Kind’s* pages are divided by the seasons, beginning with a spring observation of a garden groundhog “slippery and waddle-thieving” to winter’s “shiny little knives of ice.”

Recommended by Susan Futrell,
Author, essayist, and sustainable agriculture consultant



On Love and Barley: Haiku of Bashō,
Matsuo Bashō, Lucien Stryk (Translator),
Penguin Classics, 1986, 92 pages

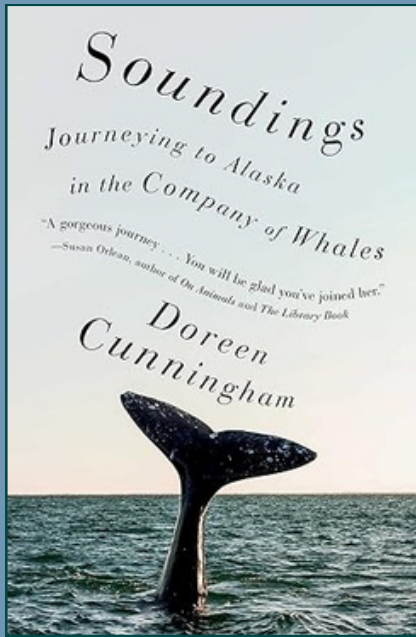
Nature haiku from 17th century Japanese master.

A Nature Poem for Every Day of the Year,
Jane McMorland Hunter (compiler),
Batsford, 2018, 496 pages
Reading Age: 12-17 years

A lovely bedside companion of traditional nature poetry to mark the seasons.



Whales



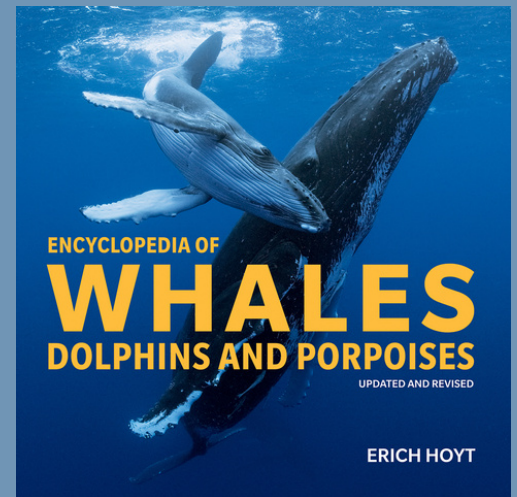
Soundings: Journeys in the Company of Whales: A Memoir,
Doreen Cunningham, Scribner, 2022, 320 pages

“Wind spits spray in my face. Water slops against the sides of our small fishing boat as it shudders out of the harbor, into a dawn that billows fire above and below the horizon. Max, my two-year-old, is up front ‘helping’ drive the boat. I met the skipper, Chris, just twelve hours ago. We are borrowing a dad, one who has lived at sea and might be able to open a door into this secretive ocean.”

Soundings is Doreen Cunningham’s tender memoir of two journeys to Alaska to observe gray whales and whaling communities. She deftly combines themes of motherhood, climate change, and Iñupiaq whaling culture with vulnerability, resilience, and strength.

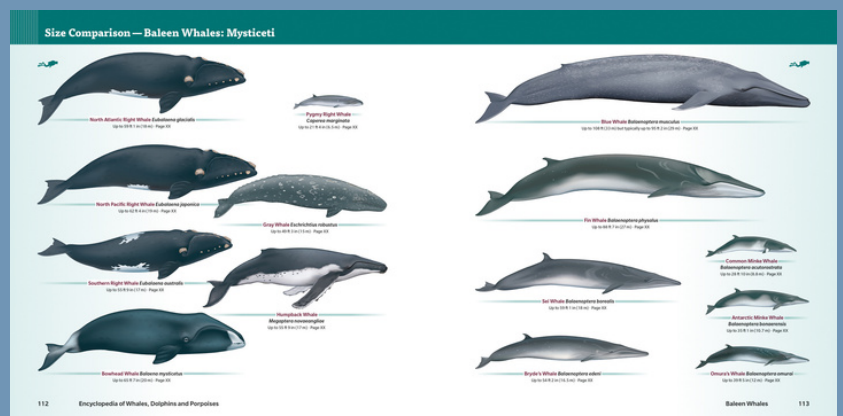
We enjoyed these as a tandem read with Hoyt’s *Encyclopedia* providing gorgeous images and text to illuminate Cunningham’s experiences in *Soundings*.

Award-winning author and whale researcher Erich Hoyt takes you “out into the field to observe, learn about, participate in and enjoy the world of wild cetacean research.” With stunning photography, beautifully crafted illustrations, and engaging text, Hoyt’s 2023 update of *Encyclopedia of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises* is a thrilling adventure. This is one of the most magnificent books we’ve seen on ocean life, and we know readers of all levels of interest will enjoy it—leafing through its gorgeous pages in awe or digging into the well-presented research.

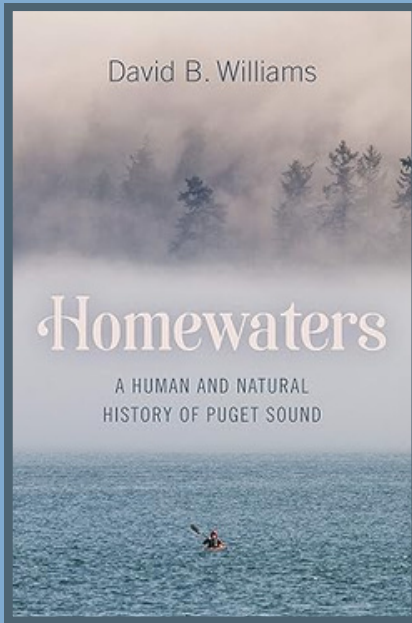


*Encyclopedia of Whales,
Dolphins and Porpoises*,
Erich Hoyt, Firefly Books,
2023, 304 pages

**ASJA Writing Awards Recipient
Honorable Mention
Best Children's/Young Adult
Nonfiction Book 2017**



Non-Fiction



"I have always had a fascination with Puget Sound. *Homewaters* is a comprehensive look at the human and natural history of the region. From an in-depth chapter on kelp forests to a review of the impact of the arrival of Europeans on local communities, this book chronicles the impact of human activity on the Sound. For anyone wanting to understand the region, this is a good starter book."

--Courtney Lyons-Garcia

Homewaters: A Human and Natural History of Puget Sound, David B. Williams, University of Washington Press, (paperback) 2022, 264 pages



Recommended by Courtney Lyons-Garcia,
Executive Director, Partnership for the National Trails System

Alex & Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Uncovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence--and Formed a Deep Bond in the Process, Irene M. Pepperberg, Harper, 2008, 240 pages

From the Publisher's Reading Guide: 'On September 6, 2007, an African Grey parrot named Alex died prematurely at age thirty-one. His last words to his owner, Irene Pepperberg, were, "You be good. I love you." What would normally be a quiet, very private event was, in Alex's case, headline news. Over the thirty years they had worked together, Alex and Irene had become famous--two pioneers who opened an unprecedented window into the hidden yet vast world of animal minds.'

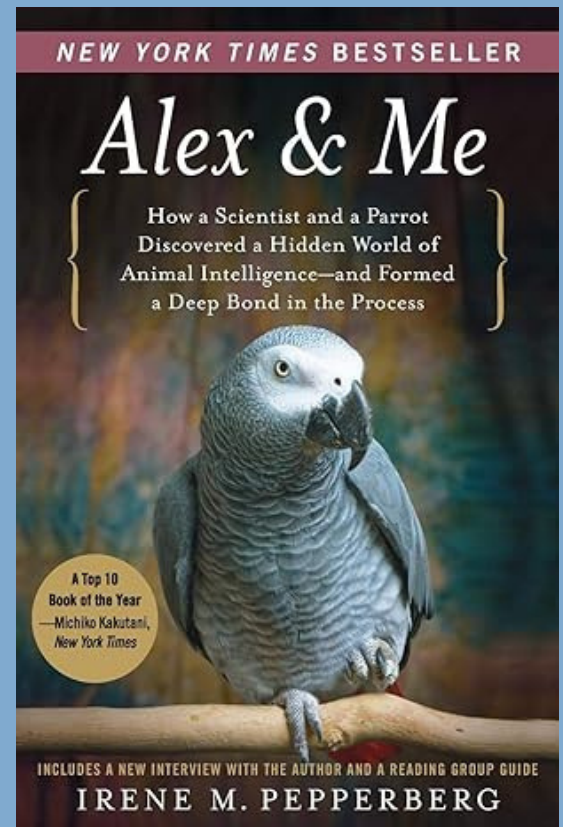
"*Alex and Me: How A Scientist and a Parrot Discovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence--and Formed a Deep Bond in the Process* tells the story of a profound connection between a creative scientist and a parrot. Together, they dismantle stereotypes about animal intelligence and the value of empathy in science."

--Bill Davison

Recommended by Bill Davison,
Value Chain Development Manager for Savanna
Institute working on resilient scalable agroforestry



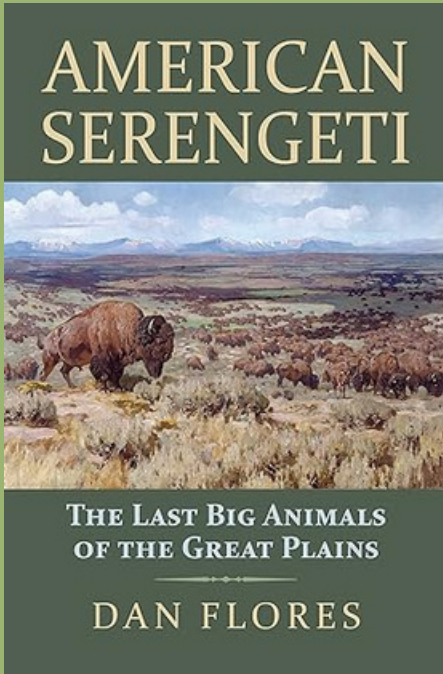
New York Times Bestseller



Winner: Western Heritage Book Award

Spur Award Finalist

Winner of the Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize



“The vanishing prairie is as worth preserving for the wilderness idea as the alpine forests.” --Wallace Stegner

North America’s “flyover country” once supported one of the richest wildlife spectacles in the world, including astonishing numbers of bison, pronghorns, wild horses, wolves, grizzlies, and coyotes. Breaking through “empty and barren” stereotypes, Flores delivers a work of rigorous research on the human and natural history of the Great Plains with a genuine sense of wonder for the fragility and resilience of the ecosystem. The final pages of *American Serengeti* cover conservation efforts for rewilding the Plains. This is an eye-opening and important work that will entice readers to experience the Plains themselves.

American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains, Dan Flores,
University Press of Kansas,
2016, 222 pages



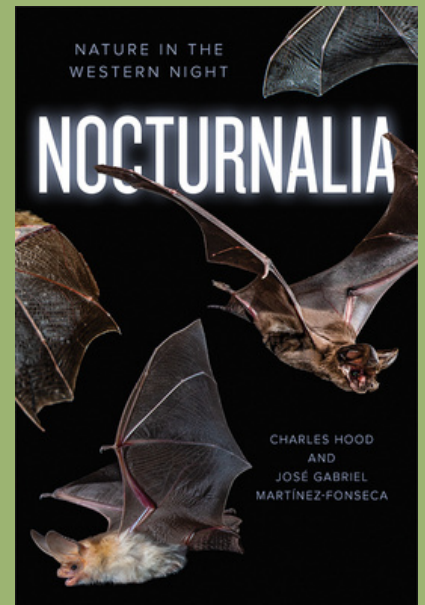
Recommended by Judith Westveer,
Assistant Director, Southern Plains Land Trust

Nocturnalia: Nature in the Western Night,
Charles Hood and José Gabriel Martínez-Fonseca,
Heyday Books, 2023, 240 pages

“In this book, we want to celebrate the other half of life, the unknown half, the surprising half, and what at times might be the scary half. It is normal to be a bit unsure about the dark, especially at first. Please use this book as an opportunity to get past that hesitancy.”

--Charles Hood and José Gabriel Martínez-Fonseca

Winter’s shorter days allow more time to explore and embrace the world after the sun goes down. If you’re in western North America, *Nocturnalia: Nature in the Western Night* can be a perfect complement to nighttime walks, camping trips, and forays into the darkness.



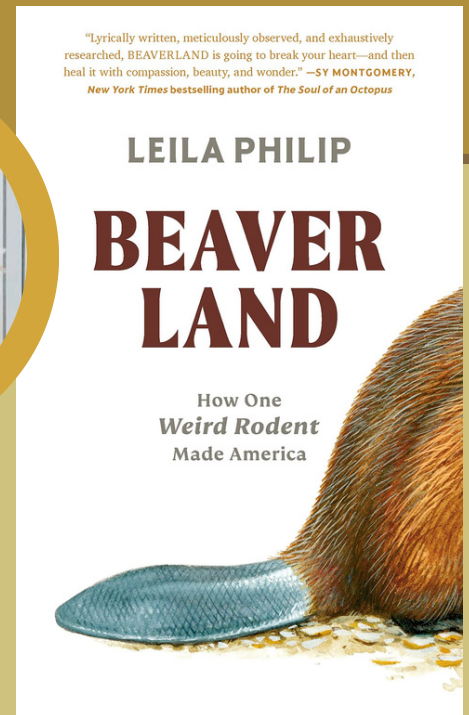
An Interview with Author Leila Philip

The New York Times Editors' Choice,
NPR Science Friday Book Club Selection



**"I think there is an element of
the sacred in the beaver, if
only in its deep weirdness."
--Leila Philip**

*Beaverland:
How One
Weird Rodent Made
America,*
Leila Philip,
Twelve, 2022,
336 pages



***Beaverland* is full of delightfully weird and wonderful characters, places, and revelations. Are there people, places, or revelations from your research that continue to capture your imagination? Or what's the craziest thing you did while researching *Beaverland*?**

I love this question because when I head out on a book like this it is not just that I head to new places that may require physical rigor, (and in this case waders!), but they require journeys of the mind and heart. By that I mean when I worked on *Beaverland*, and I spent six years researching this book before I felt I was done, it required me to become increasingly open and ready to go where the research and the journey of understanding was leading me.

One person whom I wrote about in the book that I still think about a lot is Dorothy Burney Richards, the "beaver lady" who created a sanctuary in Little Falls, NY. I think of her because I am monitoring a beaver site now and it has left me thinking about the role of the citizen scientist. Dorothy Richards made incredible contributions to our understandings of beavers that were ignored in her time and I plan to write more about her.



What was one of the craziest things I did? I still remember how scary it was to walk into a room full of fur trappers for the first time. I literally sat in my car for about twenty minutes wondering what I was doing there. I was a college professor and drove a Subaru and it was 2016 a moment of divisive politics in our country. The parking lot was full of trucks and most were plastered with stickers promoting guns. But I steeled myself and reminded myself that as a journalist I wasn't there to judge but to learn. I learned a great deal that day. The men I spoke to were eager to share with me what they were passionate about, the animals, their experiences, and their expertise. It took time to establish trust, but I learned that when it came to an interest in beavers and the environment, I had a lot more in common with the fur trappers than I had previously understood.

What's the latest new thing you learned about beavers that was exciting to you? Have you found new beaver advocates, projects, or stories you'd like to share?

There's a site I am monitoring here in Woodstock, Connecticut, and have been watching the beavers build a new pond since December. But what has been amazing is that they did not build a dam to stop of an existing current of water, they moved to an apparently dry area--what looked like a dried-out swamp--and built a dam there. Within 14 weeks they had ponded over two million gallons of water by enabling subsurface water to collect and rise to surface. This is critical in light of the Supreme Court decision last May, the Sackett decision, which removed Federal protection for intermittent streams like this. The beavers literally enabled a hidden section of stream system to become reconnected.

You quote filmmaker Sarah Koenigsberg, "Beavers are hope," and you make the case that as a keystone species, beavers can help with almost every environmental challenge we face, including fire, flood, and drought. You've called beavers "one of the best environmental comeback stories." What are some of the most promising efforts to support beavers and their effect on the environment, and how can readers help?

One of the main things I wanted to share with readers is the new role beavers play in our environmental future. They truly are a North American Climate Action Plan. The wetlands, ponds, and damming complexes that beavers create mitigate some of our biggest environmental problems--flooding, wildfire, biodiversity, drought. Beavers manage, slow, and cleanse our water because they create wetlands, which are called the "kidneys" of the river system. They literally cleanse the water of sediment and pollutants like nitrogen and phosphorus. New studies have begun to assign an economic value to the ecosystem services of beaver, and the numbers are staggering.



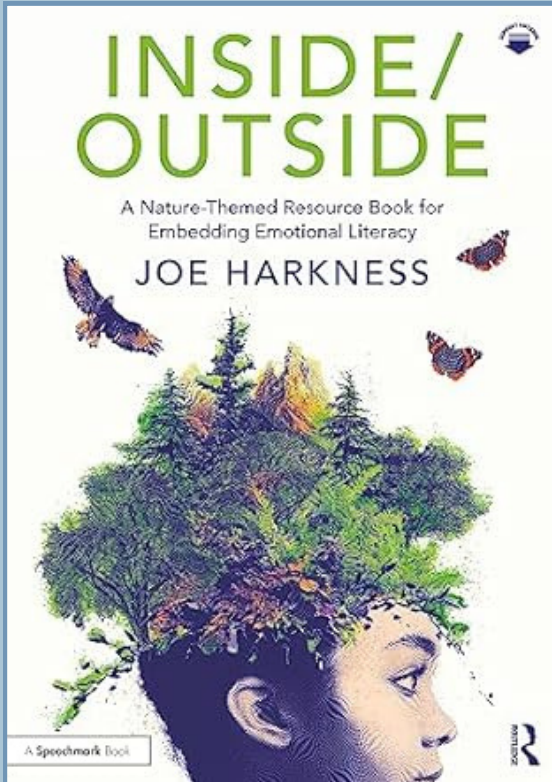
Social change happens when it reaches a tipping point. We are at a moment when polling has shown that Americans no longer deny climate change (only 8% of Americans are climate change deniers). That is real change! But we tend not to discuss the topic because we fear controversy. This is a mistake. What I have recently learned by attending a recent climate summit where I listened to people who study social change discuss the problem of global inertia surrounding policies to address climate change was that one of the best things we can do is talk about climate change, take actions, however small, to address it in our own life and talk about what we have done. Why? Because talking about climate change helps create social pressure for change.

One concrete thing we all can do is find out about the river system where you live by going to the EPA website *How's My Waterway* (mywaterway.epa.gov), which will tell you what watershed you live in and the condition of its waters. Then do what you can on a local, state, and national level to help protect it. You can start by contacting your local conservation commission and watershed protection group. If you are lucky, you might discover that you already have some beavers living nearby.

This interview is edited for space. You can read the full interview on our blog or as a separate download from our website, naturebookguide.com.

For more beaver updates and news, Leila Philip invites readers to follow her on social media as @theleilaphilip

Outdoor Discovery

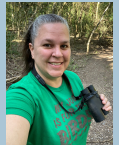


Inside/Outside: A Nature-Themed Resource Book for Embedding Emotional Literacy,
Joe Harkness, Routledge, 2023, 132 pages

"In *Inside/Outside*, Harkness provides many useful and easily adaptable tools for helping kids engage with nature, work through activities alone or in groups, and discover their best path forward to emotional literacy. I can't wait to explore some of these ideas with my own kids! While written for educators and groups who work with kids, I definitely see value for adults who simply want to learn some great games and new ways to engage with the kids in their lives."

--Shelly Plante

Recommended by Shelly Plante,
Nature Tourism Manager for
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department



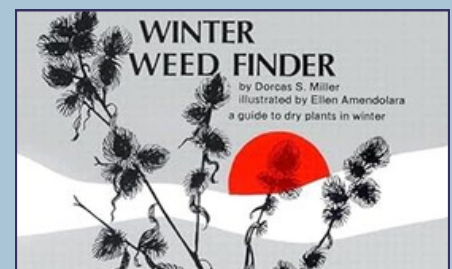
Joe Harkness is a naturalist and teacher in Norfolk, UK, where he runs an autism program in a mainstream secondary school. He's the author of *Bird Therapy*, which was longlisted for the Wainwright Prize in 2020.

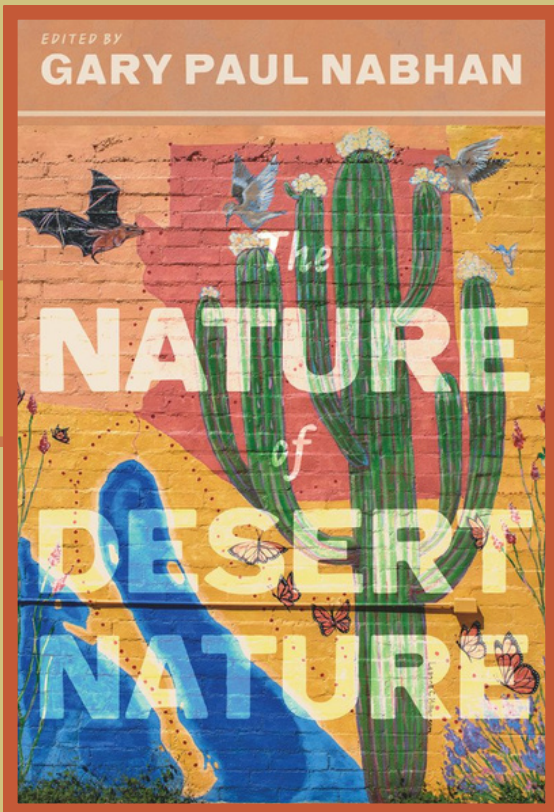
Curious adventurers who want to learn more about plants and plant structure can use these pocket-sized "finders" to explore the use of identification keys in their nature study. The guides are part of a series started by May and Raymond Watts in 1938. The series extends from plant life to constellations to mammals to intertidal life in a variety of North American regions and ecosystems.



Winter Tree Finder: A Manual for Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter,
May T. Watts and Tom Watts, Nature Study Guide Guild Publishers, 1970, 64 pages

Winter Weed Finder: A Guide to Dry Plants in Winter, Dorcas S. Miller (author) and
Ellen Amendolara (Illustrator), Nature Study Guide Guild Publishers, 1989, 64 pages





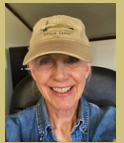
The Nature of Desert Nature
(Southwest Center Series),
Gary Paul Nabhan (ed.),
University of Arizona Press,
2020, 192 pages



An Interview with Author Gary Paul Nabhan

Gary Paul Nabhan is an Agricultural Ecologist, Ethnobotanist, Ecumenical Franciscan Brother, and author whose work has focused primarily on the interaction of biodiversity and cultural diversity of the arid binational Southwest. He is considered a pioneer in the local food movement and the heirloom seed saving movement.

Recommended by Lisa Fargason Gordon,
Executive Director, Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center



How did you approach the development of *The Nature of Desert Nature*? I wanted to shake up our notion of what a desert is, what it can be in our hearts and minds. Through conversations with Lisa Gordon at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center in West Texas, I've had a chance to compare how we educate and create a sense of wonder for inquiring minds who come to Sonoran or Chihuahuan Desert landscapes. So I invited voices familiar with both deserts to express their novel approaches to the question, "What is a desert, and what has it meant to you over your lifetime?"

***The Nature of Desert Nature* has an impressive list of contributors—scientists, artists, poets, writers—and is a beautiful blend of science and spirit. Have you discovered "new voices" who are contributing to the scholarship and appreciation of the desert? Voices that "shake us up to force us to lose our sure footing"?** One is Alberto Mellado Jr, now an elected leader of the Comcaac or Seri tribe in Mexico. He wrote his essay from the desert's point of view! He has five books out in Spanish, all award winners, but his essay in our book was his first in English.

We love your statement of "what the book is about: finding fresher ways to tilt our heads and silence our rants to experience a wider panoply of what the desert might be." How do you, after living in the desert so many years, "silence yourself not only to hear what the desert speaks, but to stay in conversation" with it? I just came back from a retreat on desert spirituality in the Mojave Desert near the Kelso Dunes where we did walking silent meditations at dawn and at other times during the day. It was a chance to listen deeply and see patterns I don't usually see. At home I've planted a contemplative desert garden with over 50 species of agaves and cacti where I meditate on the shapes—some of them golden spirals and mandalas—and where I do silent meditations most mornings. My point is that for millennia, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Indigenous wisdom-keepers have gone into sanctuary in the desert to change their minds and hearts. We need that now, more than ever before.

We note that you're from Gary, Indiana, and attended the first year or so of college in Mount Pleasant, Iowa. When did you first get the notion that you would become a resident of the desert and that it would inspire your career's work? Was it a trip, a book, or an individual that inspired you to make the move from the Midwest? My grandfather was a Lebanese-Syrian refugee from deserts in the Levant, and I regularly visit cousins there. Deserts are in my blood. Growing up in the Indiana Dunes, I dreamed of deserts. While going to school in Iowa, I took my first backpack trip in the Desert Southwest and was hooked for life!

You wrote *Coming Home to Eat* (2001) about a year-long mission to eat only foods grown, fished, or gathered around your Arizona home. Now more than 20 years later, what are the enduring lessons of that experience? Gratitude to the farmworkers of 42 ethnicities who toil in the fields in 100–115 degrees to bring us our daily bread and sacramental wine.

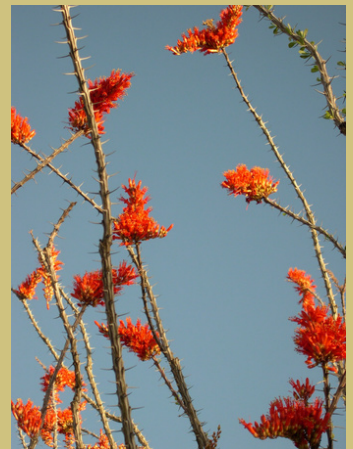
What advice would you give readers who want to advocate for desert ecosystems? Are there personal or political actions you'd recommend readers should consider? Work to reduce the ecological impacts of all mining and all excessive water use by highly subsidized alfalfa and cotton farmers who are pumping our aquifers and rivers dry. Both are extractive industries that are robbing future generations of their food and water security. But change things not by confrontation but through dialogue.

Do you have authors that are always on your "must buy" or "must read" list? Poets Sarah Lindsay, Jim Harrison, Tim Z. Hernandez, and Mary Oliver; short story masters Andrea Barrett, Andre Dubus, and Tom McGuane; spiritual guides Richard Rohr, Douglas Christie, and Rumi. Novelists Richard Powers, Kim Stanley Robinson, Ursula LeGuin, Gustav Sobin, and Jean Giono; non-fiction masters Alan Weisman, Gretel Ehrlich, and David Quammen.

You encourage the reader to "see, smell, hear, taste, and touch the desert as if you have been gifted with new eyes, noses, ears, mouths, and hands." Is there a particular place that still inspires you to do that? I love to be in creosote bush (or greasewood) flats when it rains, and twenty different plant emanate strong fragrances from the aromatic oils on their leaves. The desert is as good to smell as it is to see.

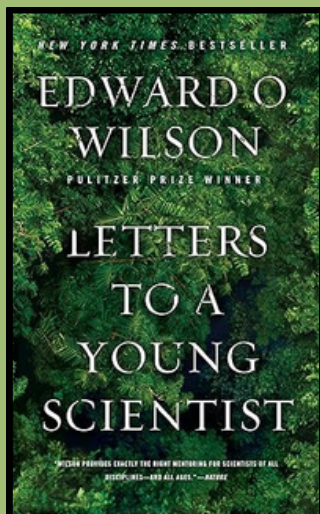
What's the latest new thing you learned about the desert that was exciting to you? That many desert fragrances don't come from the plants alone but from their "collaborations" with endophytic fungi that live within them.

How does your spirituality as a Franciscan come into your writing and conservation work? None of the problems I've mentioned can be solved merely by attempting secular, materialistic solutions. Spiritual and ethical convictions of the heart must guide our work, otherwise the chances are slim of having lasting impact.



This interview is edited for space. You can read the full interview on our blog or as a separate download from our website, naturebookguide.com.

Inspiration



***Letters to a Young Scientist* is an inspirational work from E.O. Wilson, an American biologist, naturalist, ecologist, and entomologist known for developing the field of sociobiology. The letters are reassuring essays on choosing a discipline, navigating through mathematic study, and celebrating audacity.**

"I found myself relating, on a personal level, to a lot of *Letters to a Young Scientist*. Growing up, I didn't even know what a scientist was, so I never thought I would become one. As a kid, the word scientist conjured up the image of a smart, yet nerdy man with a serious face, typically with glasses and in a white lab coat doing experiments that I would never understand.

Letters to a Young Scientist,
Edward O. Wilson, Liveright,
2014, 256 pages

My herpetological journey is probably a rare case. I first got the training during a three-month herpetology expedition, which eventually led me to discover my passion for the beauty of Indonesian nature and fascinating biodiversity through frogs. Wilson starts his book with the chapter 'The Path to Follow,' within which the first section is 'First Passion, Then Training.' In this section, Wilson emphasizes 'put passion ahead of training and to obey that passion as long as it lasts, while also growing them with knowledge.' Perhaps, either way would work! Just explore and take risks!"

--Umilaela Arifin



Recommended by Umilaela Arifin, PhD,
Guest Panelist, Herpetologist, Marie Curie Postdoctoral Researcher,
Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change, Germany

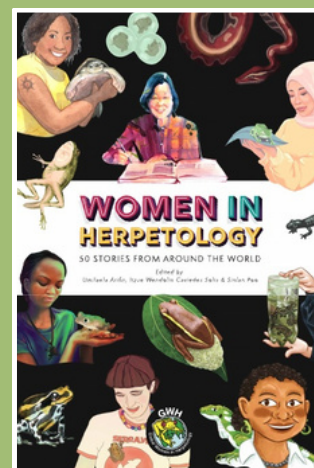
Women in Herpetology: 50 Stories from Around the World,
Umilaela Arifin, Itzue W. Caviedes Solis, Sinlan Poo (editors),
Global Women in Herpetology Project (available Lulu.com), 2023, 335 pages

"I was unprepared for the sheer exuberance and charm of *Women in Herpetology*. One might expect a fairly dull directory of scientists in a volume like this, but each herpetologist brings an infectious energy to their biography and explanation of their work. We get to know these women, their hometowns, how they came to pursue science, the languages they speak, the hobbies they enjoy. Rarely have I encountered such an engaging book. I would purchase a copy for every middle school and high school student I know, with an extra copy for their school's career advisor. Herpetology, and the reptiles and amphibians these women study, are in good hands with these scientists at work."

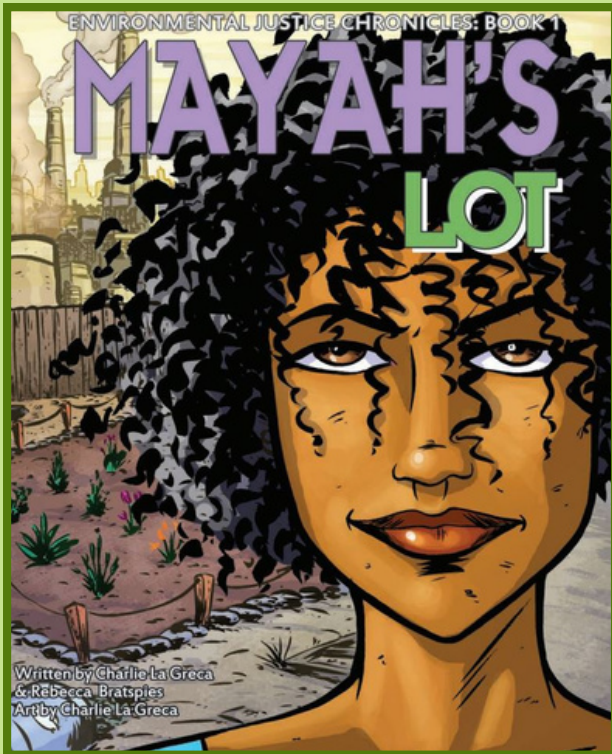
--Beth Nobles



Recommended by Beth Nobles,
Founder/Editor, *Nature Book Guide*



Advocacy



“Just like the roots of the aspen, we’re all tied to each other, holding our cities or towns together” – Mayah, *Mayah’s Lot*

Mayah’s Lot (Environmental Justice Chronicles: Book 1),
Charlie LaGreca and Rebecca Bratspies (authors),
Charlie LaGreca (art), SUNY School of Law
Center for Urban Environmental Reform, 2015, 24 pages

Recommended by Monique “Mo” Fair,
Executive Director, Sand Creek
Regional Greenway Partnership



Mayah discovers a sinister corporation plans to transform a vacant lot in her urban neighborhood into a toxic waste storage facility. She joins forces with her neighbors to halt the development by participating in different forms of environmental activism, including educating her peers, attending community meetings, and pursuing legal action.

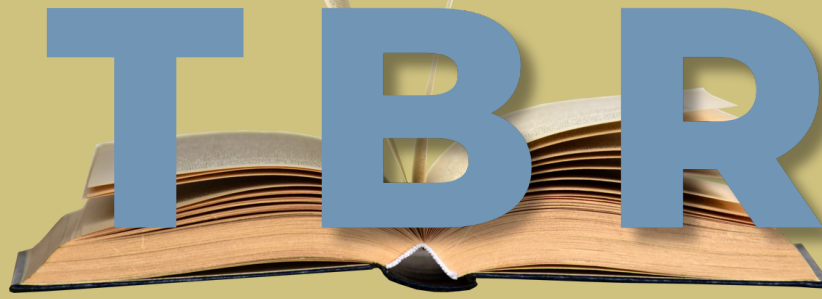
“While the comic book format of *Mayah’s Lot* might initially suggest it’s geared towards a younger audience, the invaluable lessons contained within are important for readers of all ages. This quick yet impactful read sheds light on the profound influence of industry, particularly on marginalized communities striving for a platform to amplify their voices. Above all, it underscores the potency of collective action in driving essential and positive change.

“As someone who grew up in a community akin to *Mayah’s Lot*, I remain profoundly moved and inspired by leaders like Mayah, who believe in their community’s resilience and tirelessly advocate for its betterment.”

--Monique “Mo” Fair, Executive Director, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership

Mayah’s Lot is not available through traditional bookselling venues but is available online (free of charge) from the SUNY School of Law, Center for Urban Environmental Reform. To download *Mayah’s Lot* in .pdf format or view an animated version on YouTube: <https://cuer.law.cuny.edu/>

"TO BE READ" BOOKS IN THE WINTER 2023-2024 ISSUE



Page 7: *The River: A Novel*, Peter Heller, Knopf, 2019, 272 pages

Page 8: *The Snow Child: A Novel*, Eowyn Ivey, Reagan Arthur Books (Hardcover), 2012, 400 pages
How Beautiful We Were: A Novel, Imbolo Mbue, Random House, 2021, 384 pages
The Old Man Who Read Love Stories, Luis Sepúlveda (Translated by Peter Bush), Mariner, 1995, 144 pages

Page 9: *Leila and the Blue Fox*, Kiran Millwood Hargrave (Author)/Tom de Freston (Illustrator), Orion Children's Books, 2022, 250 pages
Every Leaf a Hallelujah, Ben Okri (Author)/Diana Ejaita (Illustrator), Other Press, 2022, 112 pages

Page 10: *A Woman in the Polar Night*, Christiane Ritter, Pushkin Press, 2019, 226 pages
The Inland Island: A Year in Nature, Josephine W. Johnson, Scribner, 2022, 192 pages

Page 11: *Echo Loba, Loba Echo: Of Wisdom, Wolves and Women*, Sonja Swift, Rocky Mountain Books, 2023, 256 pages
The Language of Trees: A Rewilding of Literature and Landscape, Katie Holten, Tin House Books, 2023, 320 pages

Page 12: *from unincorporated territory [âmot]*, Craig Santos Perez, Omnidawn Publishing, 2023, 148 pages
The Hurting Kind, Ada Limón, Milkweed Editions, 2022, 122 pages
On Love and Barley: Haiku of Bashō, Matsuo Bashō/Lucien Stryk (Translator), Penguin Classics, 1986, 92 pages
A Nature Poem for Every Day of the Year, Jane McMorland Hunter (compiler), Batsford, 2018, 496 pages

Page 13: *Soundings: Journeys in the Company of Whales: A Memoir*, Doreen Cunningham, Scribner, 2022, 320 pages
Encyclopedia of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises, Erich Hoyt, Firefly Books, 2023, 304 pages

Page 14: *Homewaters: A Human and Natural History of Puget Sound*, David B. Williams, University of Washington Press, (paperback) 2022, 264 pages
Alex & Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Uncovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence--and Formed a Deep Bond in the Process, Irene M. Pepperberg, Harper, 2008, 240 pages

Page 15: *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains*, Dan Flores, University Press of Kansas, 2016, 222 pages
Nocturnal: Nature in the Western Night, Charles Hood and José Gabriel Martínez-Fonseca, Heyday Books, 2023, 240 pages

Page 16: *Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America*, Leila Philip, Twelve, 2022, 336 pages

Page 18: *Inside/Outside: A Nature-Themed Resource Book for Embedding Emotional Literacy*, Joe Harkness, Routledge, 2023, 132 pages
Winter Tree Finder: A Manual for Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter, May T. Watts and Tom Watts, Nature Study Guide Guild Publishers, 1970, 64 pages
Winter Weed Finder: A Guide to Dry Plants in Winter, Dorcas S. Miller (author) Ellen Amendolara (Illustrator), Nature Study Guide Guild Publishers, 1989, 64 pages

Page 19: *The Nature of Desert Nature (Southwest Center Series)*, Gary Paul Nabhan (ed.), University of Arizona Press, 2020, 192 pages

Page 21: *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Edward O. Wilson, Liveright, 2014, 256 pages
Women in Herpetology: 50 Stories from Around the World, Umilaela Arifin, Itzue W. Caviedes Solis, Sinlan Poo (editors), Global Women in Herpetology Project (available Lulu.com), 2023, 335 pages

Page 22: *Mayah's Lot (Environmental Justice Chronicles: Book 1)*, Charlie LaGreca and Rebecca Bratspies (authors), Charlie LaGreca (art), SUNY School of Law Center for Urban Environmental Reform, 2015, 24 pages

Finding the Books Featured in the Guide

We consider libraries and independent booksellers the primary resources for locating books. Many libraries offer interlibrary loan or can find an electronic copy when books are not in their physical collection. To locate an independent bookseller near you, [Indiebound](#) offers a "[bookstore finder](#)" feature on their website. Another resource is [bookshop.org](#), where every purchase on the site financially supports independent bookstores; readers can specify a favorite shop to receive support, regardless of location. Authors often suggest purchasing through Indiebound, [bookshop.org](#), directly through the publisher, or a local independent bookshop. Some of our selections, including vintage or backlist titles, might be more challenging to locate. We've had good luck finding older titles through [Alibris](#) and other online merchants.

Discovering Inspiring Places



Rocky Mountain Land Library's mission is to help connect people to nature and the land. Their work and their generosity have inspired the *Nature Book Guide*.

Website: [landlibrary.wordpress.com](#) Instagram: @landlibrary



The Poetry Foundation recognizes the power of words to transform lives and works to amplify poetry and celebrate poets by fostering spaces for all to create, experience, and share poetry. Their public space in Chicago provides a quiet space and open library for onsite reading and exploration.

Website: [poetryfoundation.org](#) Instagram: @poetryfoundation



Access Birding is a specialty online store on [bookshop.org](#) related to access, inclusion, disability, and birding. Presented by a disabled birder, an occupational therapist, and an advocate for improving access and inclusion for disabled birders.

Store: [bookshop.org/shop/accessbirding](#) Website: [accessbirding.com](#)

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Nature Book Guide is the result of a community of exceptionally kind people:

- Book Recommendation Panel members are the heart of this project. Friends, your recommendations and your work inspire us, illuminate us, educate, and entertain us. We couldn't put the *Guide* together without you.
- Leila Philip and Gary Paul Nabhan, for giving us time and enthusiasm for your interviews, thank you.
- Friends who've left our bookmarks in Little Free Libraries, who put up posters in public libraries, who thank us for recommendations, and help spread the word about *Nature Book Guide*, thank you.
- Linda, your editorial talents make every page, every sentence better. Thank you.
- Monte, thank you for your thoughtful and insightful enthusiasm and for supporting this project in every possible way.

And to volunteers, who lend the energy, momentum, and imagination to nature and climate organizations. We hope we've inspired you with our book recommendations.

--Beth Nobles, Founder/Editor of *Nature Book Guide*

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